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<i>ADDITIONAL NOTES</i>	

# Review of *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany*, by Margarete Myers Feinstein

Margarete Myers Feinstein. *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. viii, 330. \$85.

By Alan Rosenfeld

Margarete Feinstein's *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany* provides a bridge from the horrors of genocide to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine by tracing the emergence of a community of memory in the displaced persons' (DP) camps of occupied Germany. Focusing on the American and British Zones, the author examines DP camps as sites in which survivors mourned their losses while reclaiming control over their destinies. Zionism, in particular, enabled Jewish DPs to channel their feelings of triumph and revenge into the creation of a heroic national consciousness that offered an explanation for the past and a program for the future.

Feinstein portrays the relationship between Jewish survivors and the surrounding German community in terms of mutual distrust and resentment. DPs blamed Germans *en masse* for their wartime suffering, with their desire for revenge even manifesting itself in physical attacks on former collaborators and SS men. Germans associated DPs with occupation, finding Jewish survivors to be convenient targets for their growing frustrations with Allied authorities. Here the author stresses the 1946 arrival of "infiltrates" from Eastern Europe, including Polish Jews expatriated from the Soviet Union. Coupled with the simultaneous influx of ethnic German expellees, these outsiders "put a strain on local resources and local tempers" (191). However, while expellees could be incorporated into a postwar German narrative of victimization, displaced Jews faced outbursts of lingering antisemitism.

The author convincingly argues that survivors conducted "instinctual group therapy" in DP camps as they consciously fashioned a memory community (10). Although allied officials often encouraged survivors to repress the past, Jewish DPs developed countless vehicles for confronting their wartime experiences, including newspapers, plays, poetry, and music. Of particular note are the instances of public commemoration and group mourning that enabled Jewish DPs to combat depression and loneliness through the performance Jewish ritual. Feinstein stresses that these commemorative events, such as reburials and death march reenactments, helped forge

and reinforce collective memories of the Holocaust (85). At the same time, however, these shared experiences of mourning provided a space for the expression of a Jewish national consciousness imbued with Zionist ideals.

The rapid crystallization of collective Holocaust memories fueled DP demands for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Not only was this state to be a refuge for survivors, but also a living monument to those they mourned. Feinstein meticulously traces the reshaping of Jewish identity in the DP camps, as the old "stereotype of the passive, victimized Jew of the Diaspora" (80-81) gave way to the dual images of the combative and vengeful Zionist male and the heroic partisan girl. While Jewish extremists inside of Palestine attacked British installations, DPs in Germany demanded speedy immigration and readied themselves for life in the Holy Land. The author argues that Zionism even captured the hearts and minds of those who chose to relocate outside of Israel. However, she also rejects the portrayal of Jewish DPs as pawns of Zionist leaders, arguing that survivors "made the best decisions for themselves that they could under the circumstances" (301).

All told, Feinstein's book serves as a fascinating point of intersection for deeply entangled memories and narratives. The author combines oral interviews with archival materials from Germany, the United Kingdom, Israel, and the United States to create a vivid picture of Jewish life in DP camps. Unfortunately, Feinstein provides scant information on Holocaust survivors' interactions with non-Jewish DPs and expellees or the experiences of Jewish survivors in the French and Soviet Zones. Nevertheless, she has accomplished a great deal in 300 pages. *Holocaust Survivors* would certainly be an appropriate selection for upper-division or graduate-level courses on history and memory, internment, modern Jewish history, or Zionism, not to mention Holocaust studies.