Book Reviews

***The Crisis of Genocide,* vol. I: *Devastation: The European Rimlands, 1912–1938,* vol. II: *Annihilation: The European Rimlands, 1939–1953*, Mark Levene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 545 pp. and 535 pp., each volume $130.00.**

Mark Levene's two-volume study offers a thorough analysis of the genocidal "crisis" that raged in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. The aim of this polyptych is "to understand the phenomenon of genocide as an aspect of world-historical development" (p. xiii). Volume I consists of six chapters: one on the First World War as the incubus of mass violence; a long chapter on the Armenian genocide; chapter 3 on the consequences of the armistice era; chapter 4 on interwar assaults on minorities in new nation states; and two chapters on the rise of the Stalinist and Hitlerite states. Volume II covers, also in six chapters, the second "crisis of the rimlands" in the deadly 1930s; the Nazi extermination of Jews and Roma; non-German perpetrator regimes such as those of Romania, Hungary, and Croatia; a chapter on "all against all" during World War II; violent postwar settlements and expulsions; and a weighty fifty-page conclusion. Together, these volumes constitute a compelling examination of the epoch and a major contribution to the study of genocide.

Victor Hugo famously said: "If a man is killed in Paris, it is a murder; the throats of fifty thousand people are cut in the East, and it is a question." Levene has avoided that kind of Orientalism in this study of mass violence. Too often, *génocidaires* outside Europe have been rationalized as products of "brutal" cultures. Modern political crimes have been attributed to inherently evil men with large moustaches who are from exotic areas such as the Balkans or the Caucasus, representatives of "tribalism" or "oriental despotism." In accounts of the Armenian Genocide or of the Holocaust, Kurdish and Ukrainian perpetrators have too often figured as faceless killers, undifferentiated and unexplained, "tribesmen" or "Trawniki men" appearing in the Anatolian or Galician killing fields *ex nihilo* to murder people for little apparent reason other than innate cruelty. Levene's study, by contrast, takes the perpetrators and the victims as participants in complex but very real historical and political situations.

Levene divides the "rimlands" into three zones: the Balkans; a Caucasus-Black Sea-East Anatolia swath of territory; and the so-called "Land Between" stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea (Timothy Snyder's "Bloodlands"). But Levene's *tour d'horizon* also covers the academic landscape: the introduction to volume I and the conclusion of volume II in particular demonstrate a thorough familiarity with all explanations for genocides under consideration. Levene sees those genocides not as deviations

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but as integral, even "intrinsic" (II, p. 5) to the "mainstream" historical trajectory of global systems of neighboring nation-states. In the first half of the twentieth century, two world wars, two major dictatorships, and many smaller nation-states imposed such systems in the rimlands. This development was a directional, but "blind" process (Norbert Elias): no "puppet master" conspired to move the globe in a homogenizing direction, but nevertheless it so moved, both through inter-state antagonism *and* co-operation, as well as through intra-state policies carried out by nationalist elites.

Levene scrutinizes existing paradigms such as "extreme ideology," "total war," and "late state formation." But genocide, he argues, has autonomous causative factors of its own (I, p. 23). He suggests at least three shaped the rimlands: an evolving anti-semitism, new forms of imperialism, and ethnic-nationalism. These three elements produced several fateful constellations of state- and nation-formation in the rimlands of Europe.

Conventional approaches to understanding events have been split: some have assumed that "Europeanization" tended to civilize and quell the violent tendencies inherent in the wild frontiers; others have assumed that Europeanization was one of the causes of the conflicts. *The Crisis of Genocide* circumvents this conundrum by combining both points of view: yes, the European-inspired nation-state system expanded onto the peripheries (and the world), but much violence in the rimlands (and elsewhere) was the product of homemade programs of population politics. The macro-historical idea that (ethnic) nationalism spread outward from a Western European ground-zero, however, discounts the agency of local groups—whether ethnic, religious, regional, class, or others.

Three basic approaches to genocide have shaped the historiography: juxtaposition, diachronic comparison, and transnational transfer. Levene does justice to all three. The common approach of simply comparing through juxtaposition—essentially placing events next to each other for analysis—has been employed to highlight differences and similarities and more clearly focus on each instance's peculiarities. Unfortunately, while this may lead to cross-pollination and sharpened understandings, it carries the risk of historical de-contextualization. *The Crisis of Genocide* offers the advantages but suffers virtually none of the drawbacks of juxtaposition: it is peppered with comparisons both casual and systematic, but it remains grounded in the local historical contexts. One example is the fresh comparison of Kemalism with contemporaneous authoritarianisms (I, chap. 4), along with other comparisons of authoritarian governments' abuses of their minorities in the same chapter; the volume suggests new insights into authoritarianism theory, authoritarian leaders (I, p. 252), "expropriation frenzies," peasant motives for supporting such regimes, the Turkish assault on Kurdish and the British assault on Scottish tribal societies, Nazi versus Soviet treatment of the Roma (I, p. 408), the appalling violence of World War II on the Eastern Front (II, pp. 244–5), the post-1945 mass expulsions, and other experiences.

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The diachronic focus has helped historians elucidate why mass violence has occurred repeatedly within a single society. Germany in the first half of the twentieth century of course offers a compelling example. But a long-term perspective on societies such as Chechnya, Algeria, or Colombia also suggests that large-scale violence often repeats itself over the decades. According to Levene, such repeated episodes of mass violence are generally the product of externally-imposed crises such as wars and occupations; at the same time they also may be caused by continuities internal to a political culture, for example the persistence of regimes or the continuation of underlying contradictions. One example Levene treats with clarity is eastern Turkey, which at least three times (1895, 1915–1918, 1925–1938) was the scene of large-scale violence against unarmed civilians: first Armenians and Syriacs, then Kurds. (Levene corrects a trend in historiography on the poorly studied third case, in which apologetic scholarship has cast Kemalism in an anti-Islamic, and thus "progressive" light.

The third approach, "transnational transfer," focuses on what political elites have learned from each other during and after periods of mass violence. Levene's perspective also offers new understandings of the genesis, scope, and implications of violence occurring in separate countries. In volume I, for instance, Levene considers the long and extremely destructive implosions of the Russian and Ottoman Empires (1912–1923). He explores how the violence of one crisis traveled across state borders to spark new violence either just across the frontier or at greater distance between antagonistic states. A familiar, if not hackneyed, example is Hitler's possible understanding of the failure of the international community to do much about the Armenian Genocide as evidence that it would do just as little in a future instance. Levene convincingly demonstrates how the international politics of forced population movements in the post-Ottoman and post-Romanov areas between 1912 and 1923 served as models for Eastern Europe expulsions and population exchanges between 1939 and 1946. In particular, Levene argues, the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923 inspired future powerful actors such as Stalin, Churchill, and Beneš to conduct or accept mass transfers of human beings along ethnic lines.

The volumes under review, in conjunction with Levene's *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State*, offer not only a history of genocide, but also a history of genocide scholarship. Beyond the discussion of the three approaches specifically considered here, Levene includes admirable considerations of many other outstanding issues in genocide studies. One gem is Levene's argument that some states' manipulation of ethnic minorities in rival states energized the nation-state system: "By seeking to encourage revolt, sabotage, or even plain dissent among ethnic communities who were the subjects of enemy powers, the Great War adversaries were not simply implicating such communities in their own devious stratagems but encouraging them, whether through passive non-action or even active betrayal, to behave treasonably" (I, p. 49). One could even extend such conclusions to the Cold War, when political elites in post-colonial states often acted violently out of their self-perceptions of inadequacy or in

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response to Western hegemony. Levene discusses Stalinism as genocidal (I, chapter 5) though stressing the grounding of Stalin's campaigns of mass murder in multiple factors: ethnicity, class, region, ideology. Levene also takes short sidetracks, for instance on the notion of peacetime genocide—he rightly points out that the Stalinists and Kemalists murdered their victims in the absence of external war (II, p. 408).

Most historians write one *magnum opus*. Levene's scoreboard now stands at four. Few scholars match his panoptic erudition, synthetic ability, cosmopolitan sensitivity, and attention to detail. He has covered virtually all relevant literature in English, German, and French; all Polish, Turkish, Romanian, Hebrew, Russian, Hungarian, Armenian, Serbo-Croatian, and Italian concepts are impeccably translated. Having built this edifice over many years, Levene guides visitors through the wings of the palace: indeed, the book's very strength is perhaps its only real weakness: Levene himself confesses to being "discursive" (I, p. 29): the volumes are exhaustive, arguably almost verbose. Hoping for concise analyses, readers may wonder what, in these 1,100 pages, could not have been said in 700. Nevertheless, this is a very well-written, thoroughly researched, convincingly argued, and informative book that can be recommended for a broad audience including upper-level undergraduate and graduate students.

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***Holocaust versus Wehrmacht: How Hitler's Final Solution Undermined the German War Effort*, Yaron Pasher (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas 2014), xiii + 364 pp., cloth $34.95, electronic version available.**

This book addresses four German defeats during World War II, each chronologically close to a wave of deportations of Jews: Moscow 1941, as the first transports left Germany; Stalingrad 1942–43, during Operation Reinhard (the massacre of the Jews of Poland); Kursk 1943, following suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; and the Allied invasion and breakout from Normandy in 1944, overlapping with the deportations from Hungary. The author contends that in each case the diversion of locomotives and rolling stock to the Holocaust translated into a decisive shortage of German troops and supplies.

Pasher challenges two established historical consensuses. The first is that Germany's defeat in each of these instances was virtually pre-determined. The arrival at Moscow of fresh armies from Siberia in November 1941; the Red Army's destruction of the irreplaceable Hungarian, Italian, and Romanian troops on the German flanks before Stalingrad; the Soviet superiority of more than two to one at Kursk; and the landing of

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