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***BEYOND THE PALE THE HOLOCAUST IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS***, By Ayse Dietrich\*, Published by University of Rochester Press, Edited by Crispin Brooks and Kiril Feferman, Year of Publishing: 2020. Subject Area: Holocaust in the North Caucasus. Book Type: Soviet History. Total Number of Pages: 303. ISBN: 978-1-64825-003-3, hardback, \$99.00.

The North Caucasus has been a hotbed for violent events for centuries, and the Caucasus had prolonged suffering due to mass deportations and ethnic cleansing of many Caucasian nations such as the Circassians, Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Karachais, Balkars and the Crimeans during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, especially during Joseph Stalin' rule. The Russians had also displayed anti-Semitic attitudes against the Jewish community that began very early in Russia's history and continued till the end of the Soviet Union. In addition to the the Russians, the Germans conducted mass murders of the Jews in the North Caucasus during the World War II.

This collaborative book is about the *Holocaust* conducted in the North Caucasus under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Union during the World War II against the Jewish community, and their struggle in an unfamiliar territory.

The book consisted of an Introduction and nine articles. In the Introduction, Brooks and Feferman state that the articles in this book discuss the questions whether the behavior, treatment, and fate of local Caucasian Jews was different from non-local Jews during the occupation of the region by Nazi Germany; to what extent the local population assisted the Germans, how much violence was carried out against the population and if there were any ethnic mass deportations in relation to the violent events.

They criticize the unavailability of the archives and the major sources from the time of the Soviets, and state that even after the fall of the Soviet Union, local North Caucasian archives are less accessible than those in other parts of Russia.

The authors state that their book is the first book in English devoted solely to the Holocaust in the North Caucasus, and that their aim is "to create a volume of case studies going into detail on

selected topics, and to bring into focus the broader contexts of the North Caucasus, rather than viewing the Holocaust in isolation”. The contributors of this book are from different nationalities and from different fields and all have different perspectives on the region.

After a general history of the North Caucasus, the authors state that the North Caucasus was beyond the Pale of Settlement: Jews were not supposed to live there and comprised only a tiny fraction of the region’s population. While the largest number belonged to the Ashkenazi in the region, there was also an indigenous Jewish group, the Mountain Jews, who had lived there for centuries and were largely detached from the main centers of Judaism. They emphasize that although the Germans conducted two large-scale executions of Mountain Jews in the North Caucasus, communities of Mountain Jews survived the Holocaust in the towns of Nalchik and Mozdok. Most of the Jews who were local to the North Caucasus are believed to have fled or been evacuated before the Germans arrived.

Despite an absence of overt local anti-Semitism and a lack of German labor, the Germans nevertheless had sufficient local help to kill almost all of the Jews in the region.

The authors state that during the two-and-a-half-month occupation of Nalchik, the Mountain Jewish community was able to organize, present itself as non-Jewish, and, helped in part by Kabardian locals, convince local German commanders who were receiving mixed messages about their racial origins. The same circumstances of short occupation and German hesitation about the Mountain Jews likely also contributed to Jewish survival in Mozdok; additionally, the Jews seem to have taken matters into their own hands by organizing a leather factory so as to appear useful to the Germans, and likely also by not registering themselves as Jews. They also discuss different aspects of memory work in the North Caucasus during the Soviets.

In the first article, *The Caucasus: A Rock in the Grinding Wheels of World History*, Derluguian talks about history of the region, languages spoken, Russian occupation and arrival of modernity, arrival of Islam, the appearance of Jihadis, internal conflicts with locals and the capitalist transformation of the ethnic societies, the continuation of episodes of intense violence, ethnic conflicts, terrorist campaigns, and forced migrations even after the Soviet collapse in 1991.

In the second article, *Dwelling at the Foot of a Volcano? Jewish Perspectives on the Holocaust in the North Caucasus*, Feferman tries to answer what motives were behind the Jewish decisions *not* to escape from the region before the summer 1942 German offensive. The article begins with a brief overview of the history of Jewish presence in the North Caucasus leading up to the events of 1941–42. It discusses Jewish evacuation and flight into and out of the region and the interactions of Jews with the Soviet authorities and the local population. It is followed by an analysis of the information available to the Jews from official and informal sources that could impact their evacuation-related decisions. The article draws on testimonies of Jewish survivors preserved mainly at the Yad Vashem Archive, the Department of Oral History at the Hebrew University Institute of Contemporary Jewry, the State Archive of the Russian Federation, and the Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation, as well as on official Soviet records.

In the third article, “*Operation Blue, Einsatzgruppe D, and the Genocide in the Caucasus*,” Andrej Angrick talks about the Nazi mass murder operations in the North Caucasus between August 1942 and January 1943 and claims that Einsatzgruppe D and the Wehrmacht acted together in the North

Caucasus when they implement their “Final Solution of the Jewish Question,” with the help of local collaborators, and that the Einsatzgruppe split into several units, known as *Einsatzkommandos*, operating in specific towns and areas. Based on German postwar trial documentation, Angrick provides information about the execution sites, dates and the number of killings committed by each unit operating in the North Caucasus.

In the fourth article, *The Kaukasier Kompanie (“Caucasian Company”): Soviet Ethnic Minorities, Collaborators, and Mass Killers*, Stephen Tyas provides information about the German intelligence officers who used anti-Soviet sentiments to recruit more than thousand Caucasian POWs, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Georgians for their own purposes to collaborate in the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question,” and to help the Einsatzgruppe and its subunits to kill the Jews of the Caucasus between 1942 and 1944. Based on German sources, Tyas states that thirty thousand people in the North Caucasus were killed by Einsatzgruppe D and 90 percent of them were Jews.

In the fifth article, *Mass Executions in Krasnodar Krai: Cross-Checking Sources for the Holocaust in the North Caucasus*, Andrej Umansky uses the oral testimonies gathered by Yahad-in Unum to prove that the ChGK number of people killed by Teilkommandos of Einsatzkommando 11 as well as units of Sonderkommando 10a in fifty different cities and villages in Krasnodar krai was 15,660. He also mentions that all the executions witnessed by neighbors, that and people were sometimes forced to watch the executions, and the largest executions took place in Belaia Glina, Petropavlovskaja and Ladozhskaja in 1942.

In the sixth article, *In the Shadow of “Mass Treason”: The Holocaust in the Karachai Region*, Crispin Brooks talk about the executions focusing on the issue of local collaboration in the Karachai region. The Soviet authorities abolished the Karachai autonomous oblast and charged the Karachais with betraying the Soviets by joining German units to fight against them, as well as forming local militias almost immediately, and helping the Germans with reconnaissance. In November 1943, the entire Karachai population was deported to central Asia, resulting in thousands of deaths during the journey and in exile. For Karachai historians the mass treason charge was “fictitious, groundless and a dirty falsification of reality” that was “fabricated against the Karachai people by Beria and Suslov”. The author believes that only a small number of Karachai collaborators participated in killing hundreds of Jews in the region. He makes his argument based on “materials from the 1939 census, the Main Resettlement Administration (1941–42), the Extraordinary State Commission (ChGK) from 1943, the NKVD’s Main Directorate for the Struggle against Banditry (GUBB) from 1944, NKVD investigations from 1945–46 and 1966 provided to West German prosecutors, investigations of Soviet citizens exiled to Kazakhstan (1948), interviews with Jewish survivors recorded by the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation in 1997–98 and 2019, interviews with local residents recorded by Yahad-in Unum in 2017, the 2011 manuscript of a survivor held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and, finally, some documents from the United Kingdom and United States national archives”.

In the seventh article, *Rescue and Jewish-Muslim Relations in the North Caucasus*, Sufian N. Zhemukhov and William L. Youmans believe that Jewish survival in the North Caucasus was based on the efforts of their community leaders and their cooperation with the local population, Nazis, and a collaborationist government. They believe that the majority of Jewish fatalities in the region were refugees who arrived from elsewhere. The authors discuss how the native Jews (Mountain Jews) of

Nalchik, the capital of the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, survived during the German occupation from October 28, 1942 to January 3, 1943. They also discuss the conditions, decision-making processes, and actions that help the Mountain Jews survive. They list five factors: “The first was the ability of the Nalchik Jewish community to organize. The second was their strategic decision to seek official recognition as a different racial identity than the one demarcated for extermination. Third, friendly relations between Nalchik Jews and the local Muslim Kabardian population won them the support of the collaborationist government. Fourth is the Bierkamp factor; the governing SS officer of that name allowed himself to be persuaded about the Mountain Jews’ non-Jewish identity. Last, German scientific research was ultimately conflicted about the Mountain Jews’ race”.

In the eight article, “*We Were Saved Because the Occupation Lasted Only Six Months*”: (Self-) *Reflection on Survival Strategies during the Holocaust in the North Caucasus*, Irina Rebrova examines the main routes of Jewish survival through oral historical sources. A few of the tactics used by the Jews were: to change their names (orally or amending documents, or destroying documents), to try to look local (clothing or gestures), and to pass as Armenian. The author analyzes the interviews with people who were born, survived, and spent all their lives in the North Caucasus, and the interviews of people who were born and lived in different parts of the former Soviet Union, but transported to the North Caucasus.

In the ninth article, *The Holocaust on Soviet Territory—Forgotten Story? Individual and Official Memorialization of the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don*, Christina Winkler analyzes the postwar and post-Soviet treatment of a mass atrocity committed by Sonderkommando (SK) 10a of Einsatzgruppe D in Rostov-on-Don, and discusses the disappearance of the large Jewish community in August 1942 through an analyses of individual memories, interpretations of this crime, recollections of events and experiences of the local people shared within the community.

This book is a comprehensive analysis of the Holocaust of the Jewish populations in the North Caucasus through the archival sources, libraries from Germany and Russia, and interviews. It is a well-written and well-documented reference book for specialists and academics who are interested in Jewish history, particularly, the Holocaust in the North Caucasus during the World War II.

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