

Raphaël Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide. By Douglas Irvin-Erickson. Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. 312 pp. Notes. Index. \$90.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.215

Raphaël Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer who developed the concept of “genocide” before and during World War II and who contributed much to the codification of the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” (adopted by the United Nations in 1948), has for some years enjoyed great interest within the studies of international law and the intellectual history of humanitarian ideas. Douglas Irvin-Erickson contributes to this quickly-growing body of research with a book that certainly enriches the scholarly debates around the concept of “genocide” but rather disappoints its readers when it comes to a scrupulous historical contextualization of Lemkin’s ideas and experiences, even though he figures prominently in the title of the book. The author claims not to have written a classical intellectual biography, but rather provided a contextualization of Lemkin’s thought within the field of international humanitarian law. And indeed, he provides a rich genealogy of the concept of genocide, positioning Lemkin in the wider framework of codifying human rights within international law. The main asset of the book is the enormous intellectual erudition with which the author treats the fundamental concepts underlying the codification of the rights of individuals and groups within a system of international law that throughout the twentieth century had to grapple with the mostly-unbroken principle of state sovereignty.

The book is split in two parts that diverge substantially. Chapters 1 and 2 (Lemkin’s youth and his early career in interwar Poland) do not provide the reader with new information, since the author repeats the classical narrative of Lemkin’s youth already described several times. Like other authors before him, Irvin-Erickson refers relatively uncritically to Lemkin’s autobiographical writings (produced after World War II), which in retrospect try to lay the roots for his life theme already in his childhood in the Russian part of partitioned Poland. Since the author does not read Polish, Yiddish, or Hebrew, he cannot grasp important aspects of Lemkin’s early intellectual biography, like, for instance, his involvement within the Zionist movement in interwar Poland, which only recently started to attract the attention of Lemkin researchers (James Loeffler, *Journal of Genocide Research* 19, no. 3 (2017): 340–60). Furthermore, French sources such as the Association Internationale de Droit Pénal (AIDP) are treated with a lack of historical precision. Dealing with Lemkin’s activities in the project of penal law unification within the League of Nations in Chapter 2, the author too quickly connects Lemkin’s attempt to formulate a new classification for crime as acts of “barbarity” and “vandalism” with the politics of National Socialist Germany and the Soviet Union, although in the case of the latter he himself has to admit: “Between 1928 and 1948 Lemkin never wrote anything about ongoing Soviet atrocities” (53). In general, the author seems to misunderstand the work of the AIDP, which did not try to formulate a legal protection of group rights but wanted to lay the groundwork for provisions of an international penal law.

From Chapter 3 onwards the reader is compensated for these weaknesses by the excellent contextualization of Lemkin’s most prominent book in English, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation—Analysis of Government—Proposals for Redress*, 1944, which constitutes a seminal work in the complex process of making genocide a crime under international law by a scrupulous analysis of the practices of occupation during World War II. Irvin-Erickson illustrates how much Holocaust and Genocide research profited from Lemkin’s comprehensive approach that included

not only a detailed description of physical destruction, as well as processes of deprivation of rights and exclusion, but also of the relevance of the Nazi system of forced labor for the fundamental transformation of occupied societies. While the account of Lemkin's activities as a consultant at the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and his lobbying for the adoption of the genocide convention at the United Nations is, again, a rather conventional repetition of already well known facts, the description of the Convention's fate during the Cold War and especially of Lemkin's problematic positioning within a post-war era full of anti-communist paranoia, racism, and great power bargaining excellently elucidates the reasons for the weaknesses of an international human rights regime after World War II. The book concludes with an intelligent relating of Lemkin's concept of the necessity for group protection to the establishment of international bodies enforcing criminal prosecution of mass violence, for example in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. His ideas fixed these newly-developed principles within international relations, namely the "responsibility to protect" to Lemkin's conviction that people have a right to "enjoy the experience of difference" (246).

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In Space We Read Time: On the History of Civilization and Geopolitics. By Karl Schlögel. Trans. Gerrit Jackson. Cultural Histories of the Material World. New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2016. xxiii, 496 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Maps. \$45.00, hard bound.
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This book is an invitation to take a dive into the spaces of the history of the present. Karl Schlögel seeks to "spatialize" the historical emergence of the present and to tie the historical view back to the spatial locale of events as they can be observed in the present. In other words, Schlögel seeks to open the historian's gaze to the spatial aspect of history. The fact that the spatial dimension, or the concept of space, has for such a long time been absent from (at least) German-speaking historical scholarship—and the social sciences at large—has, of course, to do with German history from 1933 to 1945. Then, "space" was used as a valuable argument and instance of social policy with all its well-known drastic implications. In this context and with this space concept, scholarly geography has played an important if inglorious role in the past. The intricate connection of the "blood and soil" and "nation without space" ideologies—both established on the basis of geographical space as a container of social life—has led to the elimination of "space" in the humanities. Not least because of the unholy alliance of these concepts, a radical reorientation of geographical thought was at last embarked on at the end of the 1960s. Given its extreme political implications, this was—and is—one of the most important tasks in the history of science since the Second World War. As there were very few inter-disciplinary points of contact at the time between the humanities and geography, these changes were left unnoticed.

With this book, Schlögel struck a chord with a broad German-speaking audience and rose to the top of the best-seller list. It is distressing that a publication that blatantly draws on the ideas of Friedrich Ratzel, one of the founding fathers of the above-mentioned Nazi geopolitics, could rise to such commercial success and establish an award-winning career in Germany. The popularity of the book among the general public is contrasted, however, with the profound skepticism in the academic