

The Jewish Contribution to European Integration, eds. Sharon Pardo and Hila Zahavi (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 2020), 196pp.

In situating the notion of *The Jewish Contribution to European Integration* in scholarly discourse, this volume, edited by Sharon Pardo and Hila Zahavi, makes its mark. An "outcome of three international workshops upon which this book derives" were organized by the Israeli Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in 2013, 2014, and 2015, "in cooperation with the Centre for the Study of European Politics and Society (currently known as The Simone Veil Research Centre for Contemporary European Studies) at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Beer Sheva and Jerusalem." Pardo and Zahavi, however, had the bad luck of compiling their work around the time of Brexit and the Trump election, which upended many previous assumptions about international relations and diplomacy surrounding Jews, Europe, and Israel.

In some respects, the central weakness of this volume mimics its post-1945, European subject. It has a bureaucratic, box-ticking feel, and focuses more on structures and operations than people and events. To the extent that the book does reflect on "unsung heroes"--Walther Rathenau, Fritz Bauer, and Simone Veil--none of these are approached by appropriate scholars, and their treatment reveals a lack of familiarity with the relevant historiography.

It also is telling that the chapter the editors regard as an outlier is by far the most outstanding of the volume: "The Jewish World's Ambiguous Attitude toward European Integration" by Diana Pinto. Pinto is distinctive among the contributors for tracing the genealogy of the visceral anti-European-ness of the Neo-cons as (supposedly) pro-Israel advocacy, and its exaggeration to fever-pitch under Benjamin Netanyahu, which has negated any possibility of an ongoing "Jewish contribution to European integration." By aligning himself so vociferously with Putin and Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu--who was Trumpian in advance of Trump—and those Jews who insist that Jewishness is only compatible with a right-wing incarnation of greater Israel, style themselves as foes of European integration. It is unsettling on several counts that this book does not contain a single reference to George Soros. As the mouthpiece of his Prime Minister father, in September

2017 Yair Netanyahu demeaned Soros through grotesque antisemitic stereotypes, which has continued in tweets and speeches since then.

In addition to downplaying the Neo-cons, Bibi, and Trump in light of the ideals of post-Second World War Europe, the potential value of this book also is constrained by a narrowness of vision. Jews, including Israeli Jews, have indeed contributed to European integration, such as through sport and entertainment--but this has been missed. Although there are but few of them, Israeli soccer and athletes in Europe (and alas, when Britain was in Europe), is regarded as normal. Israel not only is included, but has enjoyed success in the wacky but weighty Eurovision song contest. This has been part of a pronounced affinity between Israel and Europe, and especially the gay subcultures of each. Certainly Israel and Eurovision, from Ofra Haza to Dana International, deserves a chapter. In addition to pop music, the extent to which translated Hebrew literature has become part of the European intellectual landscape is certainly noteworthy.¹

Another dimension of European integration that is strangely subdued is Judaism's relationship to the major Christian denominations. The editors have underestimated the individual and institutional efforts that helped fortify Europe's churches as the anti-antisemitic bulwarks they have become. On the one hand, progressive varieties of Judaism have often been slighted by the European states compared to Orthodoxy, Habad, and other "traditional" alternatives. But on the other hand, British Jewish rabbis such as Albert Friedlander, Julia Neuberger, and Jonathan Wittenberg were tireless in their attempts to engender a liberal Europe through contact with, and fertilization of the more open-minded varieties of European Judaism.

One of the reasons why something akin to the Holocaust is hard to imagine in post-Second World War Central Europe is because the churches, along with political parties, have been weaned from antisemitism with the deliberate assistance of local and European-wide Jews. Gerhard Riegner and the World Jewish Congress was critical in this regard.² Along with Judaism in itself, the academic study of Judaism and Jewish Studies, broadly conceived, should be considered as an important factor in making Jewry a rightful part of the European mosaic. In this realm, it would have been intriguing to refer to scholars such as Gershom Scholem, Theodor Adorno, John Klier,

Ulrich Beck, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimlet, Antony Polonsky, Vivian Liska, Dan Diner, Marc Gelber, Susannah Heschel, Michael Brenner, Aron Rodrigue, Esther Benbassa, Liliane Weissberg, Sander Gilman, George Mosse, Jonathan Webber, and Matti Bunzl, who have enabled Jewish history and literature to materialize in the emerging whole cloth of European academe. The omission of Bunzl is especially troubling because he has produced seminal articles about the changing self-perceptions of Jews in Austria and elsewhere as Europeans.³

Pardo and Zahavi earnestly dedicate their book to "Lars Hänsel and Michael Mertes, the past directors of the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung Israeli Office. It is the work and the writings of these two staunch Europeanists, as well as their commitment to the idea of Europe, for which we express our admiration", and which inspired this volume. Incorporating the efforts of Hänsel and Mertes, and their circle, would have made this a better book. The editors also might have expended more energy in exploring those who have sought to undermine the vision that was so dear to them and their predecessors, such as Rathenau, Bauer, and Veil. Much work remains in order to develop a historically-driven, comprehensive, nuanced, and perhaps more ominous reflection on "the Jewish contribution to the European integration process."

Michael Berkowitz

University College London

¹ See Derek Penslar, "Hebrew Fiction and the World Market," posted on June 14, 2015, at derekpenslar.com/2015/06/14/hebrew-fiction-and-the-world-market/ [accessed 10 January 2021].

² Gerhard M. Riegner, *Never Despair: Sixty Years in the Service of the Jewish People and the Cause of Human Rights*, trans. William Sayers (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, in Association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006).

³ See Matti Bunzl, "Austrian Zionism and the Jews of the New Europe," in *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Winter, 2003): 154-73.