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Into that Dark Night: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933-1939 (Review)

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DATABASE & DISC REVIEWS

EDITOR: CHERYL LaGUARDIA

ELECTRONICALLY SPEAKING......this column features five winning products ranging from Southeast Asian country information to a 19th-century atlas of Massachusetts, from genealogy sites to the Holocaust. What's fascinating is that four of these five standout titles are discs. Only ProQuest's second module in **Reference Asia** is web-based.

CD-ROM INTO THAT DARK NIGHT: NAZI GERMANY AND THE JEWS, 1933-1939

Univ. of North Carolina Pr.
(919-966-3829;
uncpress_orders@unc.edu).
www.uncpress.unc.edu
Windows 95,98,XP,NT/
Mac OS 8.0+: 2002.
ISBN 0-8078-6505-2.
Price: \$34.95.



Produced in collaboration with Drew University and Yad Vashem (The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority), this disc objectively presents the historical and political climate in 1930s Germany that led to the Nazi regime, what many consider to be one of the darkest periods in human history. It includes a history of the rise of Nazism and the political state it created, effectively illustrating the series of political and economic developments that fostered an environment of suspicion toward minorities, in particular the nation's Jewish population. When a charismatic leader full of hate is added to this crucible, incomprehensible atrocities, such as *Kristallnacht*, seem inevitable. The disc goes on to present a clear and balanced view of Germany from the day Hitler became chancellor to the crucial year 1938, when the horrors grew to unimaginable proportions. If this description sounds dramatic, it is intentional. This is a compelling product to experience.

On a much lighter note, installing the CD is quick and easy, even on an older operating system using Windows 98. The main screen presents two choices: Presentation and Library/Archive. Presentation has nine sections comprised of documentary-style multimedia narratives that outline the history of the German State and its impact on German Jewry. Library/Archive is a portal to textual and graphic resources such as maps, charts,

historical documents, and a very detailed lexicon of relevant terms. Library/Archive includes nearly 450 primary full-text documents and over 400 original captioned photographs in addition to dozens of annotated scholarly articles.

One example of what researchers will find is a letter, with full citation, from the American Consul in Berlin written in November 1933 to the U.S. Secretary of State describing the situation of the Jewish people in Germany. But there are also letters written by average Jewish citizens, such as the "Letters of the Rubin family to their friends in the United States," from *Final Letters* (Jerusalem, 1991), ed. by R. Dafni and Y. Kleiman. This kind of material accompanied by its provenance is an enormous boon to researchers.

The structure of the Presentation section is particularly well designed. The main menu is a nine-square grid with three chronological subsections along the side (1933 to 1935, 1935 to the end of 1937, and 1938) and three areas of study across the top (the Nazi State, Anti-Jewish Policy, the German Jews). A more thorough overview of the structure of the program, accompanied by screen shots from the CD-ROM itself, is available at www.history-of-the-holocaust.org. This structure facilitates working through the material either chronologically or thematically, while allowing the user to see clearly the outline of the program and jump into the presentation at any point.

The navigation tools are also excellent. Textual presentations include plentiful use of hyperlinks throughout. Links are included unobtrusively on screen during the audiovisual presentations, enabling a user to skip through introductory text or open the main menu and shift to another part. At the end of each AV presentation, users can open a navigation menu that provides quick links not only to presentation and archive content but also to a word processor feature that opens Microsoft WordPad (or SimpleText for Mac users). Users can also easily toggle between the disc and their own word processor—a feature more digital content producers should incorporate. The overall structure and the multiple access points will appeal to a variety of learning styles.

The Bottom Line: Into That Dark Night is a thoughtful, instructive, and balanced resource that makes effective and sensitive use of images. Such challenging subject matter is difficult to present clearly, objectively, and sensitively, but this resource brilliantly achieves all three. It also makes effective use of CD-ROM and hypertext technology. It will make a powerful addition to any library collection. Highly recommended for all libraries.—*Elizabeth McKeigue, Research Svcs., Widener Lib., Harvard Univ.*

CD-ROM LATE 19TH CENTURY ATLASES OF MASSACHUSETTS—F.W. BEERS ATLAS OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY

Piper Pub. (203-445-2999;
sales@piperpublishing.com).
www.piperpublishing.com
Windows 95/98+.
ISBN 0-9717605-5-1.
Price: \$40.



One in a series of late-19th-century atlases of Massachusetts, this CD-ROM reproduces the complete F.W. Beers's *County Atlas of Berkshire, Massachusetts* (1876), including all the town and village maps, business notices, engravings, tables, title page, and table of contents. The program can be run directly from the CD, which eliminates the need for any installation, and users can access the images through an easy-to-use interface or through the Adobe PDF files.

The interface is straightforward. Within minutes the average user can access, zoom, pan, and print the atlas pages (you can zoom to around 200 percent with clarity). Zooming allows close examination, necessary since a magnifying glass is often needed to read the fine text in print. Compared with the original *Atlas of Berkshire County*, the program's image quality is fantastic, the color matching is excellent, and the resolution is clear. I enlarged one of the images to its original size in Photoshop, and it reproduced wonderfully. The *Beers Atlas* CD even provides an informative introduction that covers the development of Beers atlases.

Improvements could be made to the navigation, output functionality, and accompanying metadata. The CD contains the original printed index. But direct links

LEGEND

Web-based Database

CD-ROM

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