Learning From The Aftermath Of The Holocaust

G. Short, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, United Kingdom

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Introduction

Depending upon how it is taught, students can acquire an understanding of the Holocaust that is ahistorical, shallow or misinformed and derive little or no benefit relating to citizenship. The possibility of this happening is not just a theoretical one, for research over the past couple of decades has uncovered numerous shortcomings in the way the Holocaust is handled in schools; not least, a tendency for teachers to overlook important topics or treat them with insufficient seriousness (Short, 2015). For example, the part played by the Church in the history of anti-Semitism is frequently omitted or marginalised, making it difficult for students to grasp fully Christianity's role in laying the groundwork for the Holocaust. Some teachers also gloss over the record of anti-Semitism in countries other than Germany, inadvertently encouraging students to see Germans as uniquely susceptible to anti-Semitism and maybe to other forms of racism as well. A further concern is that teachers sometimes fail to examine in appropriate depth the range of victim groups persecuted by the Nazis and thereby inhibit their students from coming to terms with the racist mindset. [The leading authority on prejudice, the late Gordon Allport (1954), argued that one of the facts about which we can be most certain is that racists rarely have a single target in their sights.] Equally worrying is that many teachers have been shown to play down Jewish resistance to the Nazis, mentioning perhaps the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943 but little else. Such minimal coverage not only leads to an impoverished understanding of the Holocaust; it also risks students construing passivity in the face of the oppressor as a trait more deserving of contempt than compassion, an outcome patently at odds with any notion of responsible citizenship.

In this article I want to expand upon the notion of diminished or inappropriate learning that results from inadequate content by considering how students can lose out if the Holocaust is taught without making reference to its aftermath. I define the latter in terms of two questions; namely, what happened to those Jews who survived and what became of the perpetrators? Looking in particular at the case of Britain, it appears from the literature (see below) that the majority of researchers and many teachers have ignored these questions. However, they need to be
addressed for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that they can bring a sense of closure (Gray, 2015) in the sense of going some way towards satisfying the need we all have to know how a story ends (Zeigarnik 1927). That said, the benefits are not just psychological; they are also educational. Specifically, an awareness of what happened to those Jews who returned home following their forced exile or incarceration and learning also about the fate of the perpetrators can lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the Holocaust. In other words, certain post-war events illuminate the Jewish experience between 1933 and 1945 and may well influence the way we think about that experience. Studying these events may also help to promote responsible citizenship.

Arguably, the two aspects of the aftermath that are most likely to impact on how students view the Holocaust itself are the return of survivors to Poland and the Allies’ pursuit of Nazi war criminals. I shall discuss each in turn after first showing how researchers in Britain have largely ignored post-war developments of any kind.

The dearth of research

Carrie Supple’s (1992) exploration of how the Holocaust is taught in schools in the north east of England was the first to be undertaken in Britain. She was rather less concerned with matters of content than with the practical problems that teachers face such as how best to deal with their students’ racism. Nonetheless, she carried out a content analysis of available textbooks finding among other things:

…. little information about Jewish people … reproductions of anti-Semitic stereotypes … no description of the variety of Jewish life before the Holocaust; no explanation of the roots of anti-Semitism, no idea of the variety of responses to Nazism, little on the treatment of minorities other than Jews … No mention of resistance or rescuers; no mention of the role or responsibility of the free world; and no attempt to analyse what made some people into SS murderers …

(Supple, 1993, p. 21)

There was no reference anywhere in her report to the immediate post-war years.

I too have been negligent in this respect. In a series of studies beginning in the mid-1990s, I interviewed many teachers on an assortment of topics without at any stage asking whether they focused on both the Holocaust and its aftermath. In the first of these studies (Short, 1995) the investigation had a marked emphasis on content. I looked at whether teachers drew parallels between the Holocaust and other genocides and enquired about the amount of time they spent on the history of anti-Semitism and on the role of the Church in promoting it. Other questions concerned rescue, Jewish resistance and the plight of non-Jewish victims, but I did not at any point probe teachers on how, if at all, they covered post-war developments. In common with Supple, I analysed a number of textbooks in widespread use finding them deficient in a variety of ways. Some distorted the truth (depicting Jews, for example, as a monolithic entity, invariably wealthy and committed to Judaism) while others contradicted it. I also commented on the books’ failure to allude to the positive side of Jewish history but I made no mention of events post 1945. In a later study (Short, 2001), I explored how the Holocaust is approached in religious education. Teachers were questioned on issues relating to theology and history (most obviously on the role of the Church during the Holocaust), but they were asked nothing about the attitudes and practices of the Church once the war was over. This was a surprising omission on my part as in the introduction to the article I had written:
(Teachers) will mislead their students, and possibly reinforce anti-Semitic sentiment, if they fail to apprise them of the changes in Christian theology *vis à vis* the Jews that have taken place since the war. Students should know that the charge of deicide was repudiated at the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1961 and in the papal declaration *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

(Short, 2001, p. 43)

Latterly, I have focused on how Muslim youth relate to learning about the attempted annihilation of European Jewry (Short, 2013). In this study the Holocaust syllabus was a secondary consideration and, once again, post-war events, framed in terms of the two questions referred to above, were not addressed.

Other researchers have had their own particular area of interest. Brown and Davies (1998) were ostensibly concerned with citizenship, but focused rather more on the day-to-day management of school-based Holocaust education. Among other things they urged history and religious education departments to work more closely with one another. They largely ignored matters of content. In Scotland, Cowan and Maitles (2007, et seq), in a series of articles, have looked at the possibility of teaching the Holocaust in the upper reaches of the primary school and at the longer term impact of such teaching on children’s attitude towards minority groups. As far as I am aware, they have never shown any interest in the post-war era.

The most recent illustration of researchers ignoring the aftermath of the Holocaust has come from the Institute of Education (IOE) in London (Foster et al. 2015). Nearly eight thousand students aged between 11 and 18 were asked forty questions in order to assess their knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust. Only one of the questions, however, had any sort of link with the post-war years. Students were asked if they could identify a photograph of Peter Eisenman’s famed memorial to the Holocaust in the centre of Berlin.

A few years earlier, the same team from the IOE published what I believe is the only empirical study with an explicit focus on the period immediately following the Holocaust (Pettigrew, Salmons and Foster, 2009). This study, because of its scale, provides the most compelling evidence that many schools in Britain do not address post-war developments when teaching about the Holocaust. The survey was conducted with an online opportunity sample comprising over 2000 secondary school teachers from across England, not all of whom actually taught the Holocaust. Twenty-four of those who did and 44 of their colleagues subsequently participated in an in-depth interview.

Teachers in the online sample who taught the subject were presented with a list of 35 topics each of which could reasonably form part of a project on the Holocaust. They were asked to identify those they included in their teaching and to indicate, on a five-point scale, how strongly they felt about including them. Among the choices was ‘The experience of Holocaust survivors since 1945’ and ‘Post-war justice and the Nuremberg trials’, but no guidance was offered on how these category headings were to be interpreted. The experience of Holocaust survivors since 1945 could mean nothing more than noting how those who fled to the West, either before or after the war, managed to re-build their lives by starting families and pursuing a career. It does not necessarily entail an exploration of the fate awaiting survivors who returned to their former homes in eastern Europe. It is not clear from the survey just how many teachers were asked if they cover this topic (regardless of how they chose to define it), but the figure of 409 who claimed to do so contrasts with the 900 who selected the most popular of the proposed topics, namely, ‘the experiences of individual men, women and children who were persecuted by the Nazis.’ Similarly, we cannot be sure what is meant by ‘Post-war justice and the Nuremberg trials.’ Is the rubric to be understood as dealing only with Nuremberg or does it extend to the trials held...
elsewhere in Germany and in other countries (notably that of Adolf Eichmann in Israel) over subsequent decades? And does the term ‘post-war justice’ embrace those who managed to evade it such as Josef Mengele who found a haven in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay and Alois Brunner who escaped to Syria? The number of respondents who included this category in their teaching was just 374.

This investigation by the IOE is useful in so far as it makes us aware that many schools avoid the subject of the aftermath of the Holocaust. However, it provides no data on how the subject is handled in schools where it is taught. This is not to imply that the teaching in such schools is necessarily inadequate in some way. On the contrary, it might be undertaken to a high standard, not least because of the information to be found in Lessons of the Holocaust (Holocaust Educational Trust/Spiro Institute, 1997), the one commercially produced curriculum of note published in Britain which was sold to well over a thousand secondary schools before being replaced. Written by the distinguished historian Robert Wistrich, the curriculum contains a section on the aftermath to the Holocaust that deals explicitly with the fate of both survivors and perpetrators. Even so, the fact remains that we do not know how teachers approach this topic and are left to speculate because the appropriate research has not been carried out. We can explain this gap in the literature in a number of ways. It may be that researchers are not sufficiently informed about the immediate post-war period to appreciate its relevance to understanding the Holocaust. Alternatively, they might be very well-informed about the period but believe it has no bearing on what can usefully be learnt about the Holocaust. A third possibility hinges on the research community drawing too rigid a distinction between the Holocaust and its aftermath, defining the former as an event that ended with the liberation of Auschwitz or, more accurately, with the formal cessation of hostilities in May 1945. Anything related to the Holocaust that occurred after that date is then necessarily seen as extraneous and as being off limits to researchers (with many teachers thinking along the same lines).1 I might well have fallen prey to this rationale myself. Operating with a sharp conceptual distinction between the Holocaust and its aftermath does have a certain logic to it, for ‘the Holocaust’ has to end at some point, but I now believe that in the interests of sound pedagogy we should blur the distinction. In my view a number of post-war developments are integral to learning about the Holocaust and ought to be both taught and researched. I consider next the most significant of these developments as they affected survivors and perpetrators and highlight their relevance for students’ learning.

The Jewish experience in Poland 1945–1946

At the end of the war, the remnant of Polish Jewry, having survived the camps or the forced exile in the Soviet Union, returned to Poland to reclaim their homes. They were not welcomed by their non-Jewish compatriots; on the contrary, their presence was deeply resented by those Poles who had gained materially from the Holocaust, having taken over and plundered abandoned Jewish-owned property which they now believed they were in danger of losing (Grabowski, 2011). Jews were frequently killed by those determined to hold on to their ill-gotten gains. According to the historian Jan Gross (2006), the desire of Poles to profit from the catastrophe that had overtaken the Jews even extended to digging up former death camps like Treblinka in search of skulls

1 Interestingly, the Lessons of the Holocaust curriculum, referred to above, was superseded in 2014 by a cross-curricular scheme of work entitled Exploring the Holocaust containing a timeline that ends in May 1945. Also, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (2015), the charitable organisation that since 2005 has been responsible for Britain’s annual memorial day, refers to the Holocaust as follows: ‘Between 1941 and 1945, the Nazis attempted to annihilate all of Europe’s Jews. This systematic and planned attempt to murder European Jewry is known as the Holocaust.’
containing gold teeth that the Nazis had somehow missed. Post-war incidents of this kind should leave students in no doubt that the Holocaust was not just a case of mass murder; it also involved mass theft and not only by the Germans. In Niall Ferguson’s (2006) view:

While the ‘final solution’ was unmistakably German in design, it is impossible to overlook the enthusiasm with which many other European peoples joined in the killing. … Some were undoubtedly motivated by a hatred of the Jews as violent as that felt by the Nazi leadership. Others were actuated by envy or base greed, seizing the opportunity afforded by German rule to steal their neighbour’s property.

Ferguson (2006, pp. 454-455)

As is well known, many Poles rescued Jews during the Holocaust but because of the level of anti-Semitism in the country after the war they were keen that their fellow Poles did not get to know about it. The anti-Semitism manifested itself in different ways and with varying degrees of severity. At the lower end was institutionalised discrimination in the labour market and children at school having to contend with violence from fellow pupils. There was also Jews’ particular vulnerability to attack on trains. To quote Gross:

Train-station attacks took place in several locations. The episodes were typically brief, lasting not much longer than a scheduled stop. … The use of heavy iron objects – rail sections or pieces of railroad equipment – to crush people’s skulls were reported. Jews had to be identified before being murdered and … boy scouts played a particularly active role in this process. Men in uniforms with shotguns – railroad guards or travelling soldiers – joined in these rapid assaults and often used firearms.

(Gross, ibid., p. 110)

At the other extreme was mass murder. It is estimated that as many as 1500 Jews died at the hands of ethnic Poles in the fifteen months or so following the end of the war (Michlic, 2005). The first pogrom occurred in August 1945 in Krakow. The second, much better known and far more deadly, took place in the south-eastern town of Kielce in July 1946. In the course of a single day, 42 Jews lost their lives with at least the same number seriously injured. The immediate cause of the violence was a blood libel, the medieval slander that Jews kill Christian children in order to use their blood to make matzo (unleavened bread eaten during Passover). An eight-year-old Christian boy had, in fact, gone to stay with a friend without informing his parents. To avoid punishment he told his father on his return that he had been kidnapped by Jews and it was this false accusation that ignited the violence. The subsequent deaths in and around the town’s Jewish community centre (where the boy had allegedly been held captive) were caused by gunfire from the army and police and by beatings from local residents, many of whom worked at a nearby steel mill. A contributory cause of the violence was the widespread perception in Poland at this time of Jews as supporters of the Communist government that had recently come to power. In Michael Fleming’s words: ‘The linkage of Jews with communism was a long-standing stereotype repeatedly promulgated by both the Right and the Catholic Church in Poland.’ (Fleming, 2009, p. 60).

Learning about the origins of this pogrom can help students deepen their understanding of stereotypes. They are certainly able to recognise the potential longevity and devastating consequences of a hostile ethnic stereotype, for the blood libel began life in England as far back as 1144 and, over the centuries, has led to the deaths of an untold number of Jews. Students can learn too about the limitless geographical reach of an ethnic stereotype. The blood libel spread effortlessly throughout the Christian world and by the nineteenth century had infected the Middle East as well, courtesy of Christian missionaries. Most importantly, students should
learn from this pogrom that venomous stereotypes can lead to carnage despite their being wholly without foundation. Indeed, as illustrated by the blood libel, they can be patently absurd, as Jews were arguably the first people to outlaw human sacrifice (Genesis, 9:4; Deuteronomy, 18:10) and are explicitly forbidden by their scriptures from consuming any kind of blood (e.g., Leviticus, 3:17).

In so far as responsible citizenship involves reflecting critically on the society in which one lives, knowledge of the Kielce pogrom might have the added benefit of prompting students to think about why it is that some people are willing to believe completely unfounded rumours. It might further prompt them to ask how society can help such people become less gullible. The stereotype linking Jews to Communism was rather different in that it did contain a kernel of truth; a number of assimilated Jews being prominent members of the Ministry of Public Security. That said, the danger inherent in any ethnic stereotype is that those exposed to it will assume that what is true of some members of the targeted group is true of all of them and consequently, any action based on the stereotype will likely punish the innocent along with the guilty. Students should be made aware of this danger. The Kielce pogrom highlights it graphically as there were a number of children among the dead.

The events of July 1946 reveal the depth of hostility felt towards Jews by many within the Catholic Church in Poland for, as Jan Gross (op. cit., pp. 134-142) makes clear, even after the Holocaust, many of the clergy were unwilling to see the Jews of Kielce as the innocent victims of an unprovoked attack. With one notable exception, no member of the Catholic hierarchy in the country issued a statement after the pogrom that unequivocally condemned anti-Semitism. The exception was the bishop of Czestochowa, Teodor Kubina and he was quickly reprimanded by his fellow bishops for stepping out of line. The titular head of the Polish episcopate, Cardinal Hlond, even appeared to deny that an anti-Semitic incident had taken place in the town when he questioned whether the outbreak of lethal violence could be attributed to racism. The enmity shown towards Jews by most Catholic clergy in Poland at this time can help students to understand why there was never an outright denunciation of anti-Semitism by the Vatican during the twelve years of Nazi rule (Cesarani, 2009). Whilst the Church was silent partly to protect its interests in Nazi Germany (doing so initially via the Concordat of 1933) it was also motivated to keep its own counsel by religious hostility, perceived ideological differences and particularly by a fear of communism that it believed was spread chiefly by Jews. According to Wistrich (2002, p. 154), in most Catholic minds Jews ‘were seen as being linked with the forces of liberalism, Freemasonry, rationalism and secularism in the democratic west and with a dictatorial and ruthless Bolshevism in the east.’

Manifestations of anti-Semitism in post-war Poland were not entirely unexpected, for they were nothing new. Despite its diversity and vibrancy, animosity towards the country’s Jewish community was rampant before the war leading Ferguson (op. cit., p. 70) to note that ‘even as late as 1939, it was by no means clear that the Nazis were the worst anti-Semites in continental Europe.’ We know that Poles aided the Germans in destroying the Warsaw ghetto and were responsible for the deaths of at least 340 Jews in Jedwabne in 19412 (Gross, 2003), but the extent to which ordinary Poles were anti-Semitic is, perhaps, best illustrated by a meeting in August 1945 of a thousand delegates of the centrist Peasant Party. One speaker proposed a resolution, to tumultuous applause, thanking Hitler for destroying the Jews (cited in Gross, 2006, p. 226).

2 Jedwabne is a small town in north eastern Poland. After its capture by the Germans in 1941, the mayor agreed to facilitate a massacre of the town’s Jews by their Polish neighbours. About half the men of Jedwabne’s 1,600 strong Catholic community participated, corralling the Jews into a barn which was then set ablaze.
The fate of the perpetrators

Recently, Reinhold Hanning, a 94-year old former Auschwitz guard was sentenced to five years in prison for aiding and abetting the murder of more than 170,000 prisoners at the death camp (Charter, 2016). Should students learn of this or similar cases (and further prosecutions are in the pipeline) they may well assume that the search for justice that started shortly after the war has proceeded without interruption ever since. The truth is rather different. The prosecution of leading war criminals by the Allies began in Nuremberg in November 1945 and continued either at Nuremberg or elsewhere in Germany until around 1948, by which time the Cold War, having eclipsed all other political concerns, was dictating a change in priorities. The Allies needed to strengthen West Germany economically, militarily and in other ways and this required a substantial reduction in the number of prosecutions. By the early 1950s they had effectively stopped. For the Allies, perceived national interest took precedence over the quest for justice and this meant that many former Nazis were allowed to return to their previous jobs in the armed forces, in the judiciary, in industry and in other areas of the economy. The Allies actually went further and not only abandoned the search for justice but began actively to recruit those they knew or suspected of having committed war crimes (Cesarani, 2001). In particular, the United States sought scientists, such as Wernher von Braun, to work on the country’s space programme and to develop its nuclear weapons capacity. Braun had not only joined the Nazi party but had been a member of the SS and had employed slave labour to produce V2 rockets. Such hypocritical behaviour on the part of the United States, prosecuting some Nazi war criminals at the same time as granting American citizenship to those they considered useful, should make students question just how seriously the Allies took the search for justice after the war and how much they ever really cared about the suffering of Jews and other victim groups under the Nazis. The seriousness with which Britain took the pursuit of former members of the Waffen-SS and Nazi police units who had entered the country from eastern Europe in the late 1940s can be gauged from the fact that the government did not set up an official War Crimes Inquiry until 1988, more than 40 years after the end of the war.

An awareness of the ambivalent attitude of the Allies to the prosecution of war criminals might well encourage students to view certain events between 1933 and 1945 in a more critical light. I have in mind the Jews’ search for a haven before the war and the later decision of the Allies not to bomb Auschwitz. Regarding the former, President Roosevelt convened the Evian conference in July 1938 to discuss the Jewish refugee crisis. Thirty-two delegates from around the world attended, but the vast majority were at pains to explain why they could accept no more refugees. Students familiar with the Allies’ lack of commitment to bringing Nazi war criminals to justice after 1945 may be less inclined to accept at face value the delegates’ reasoning (often related to the economic downturn and high unemployment) and to see their real motivation more in terms of indifference to the fate of the Jews. As for the justification for not bombing Auschwitz, one might question whether, as the Allies maintained, it was because of technical difficulties and not wanting to divert resources that would have delayed the end of the war, or whether, as David Wyman (1984) believes, it was more to do with not caring about what happened to the Jews. With knowledge of post-war developments, students are better placed to decide between these competing claims.

Only a small proportion of those responsible for the mass killing of Jews during the war ever faced trial. One explanation for this low number is that thousands of former Nazis managed

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3 By the end of the 1950s and especially after the capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann, the authorities in Germany and elsewhere began again to pursue war criminals seriously.
to evade capture by taking advantage of one of the so-called ‘ratlines’ established by Catholic clergy. These were escape routes, mainly to countries in South America, but also to the United States, Great Britain and Canada and to countries in the Middle East. The most prominent of the clerics involved was Bishop Alois Hudal, rector of a seminary in Rome for Austrian and German priests. He ministered to German-speaking prisoners of war in Italy and it was in this capacity that he aided the escape of Nazi fugitives including Franz Stangl, commandant of Treblinka, Gustav Wagner, commandant of Sobibor, Alois Brunner, responsible for the Drancy internment camp near Paris and Adolf Eichmann who orchestrated the mass deportation of Jews to ghettos and extermination camps across German-occupied eastern Europe. According to Aarons and Loftus (1991) Hudal provided these high-ranking Nazis with false papers including identity documents issued by the Vatican Refugee Organisation. They further claim that despite Hudal expressing views that were publicly and increasingly pro-Nazi, the Vatican promoted him in June 1933 from priest to titular bishop. They maintain that he was very close to Pope Pius XII.

It is, of course, important for students to know that many Nazis did stand trial and, in ways that I discuss below, their testimony can be used to promote students’ political literacy.

Potential benefits of learning about the aftermath

I suggested in the Introduction that in addition to providing a sense of closure, a study of the aftermath of the Holocaust can lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the Jewish experience between 1933 and 1945. By focusing on Poland, students are able to see that the Holocaust indisputably involved theft as well as murder and that the Germans were not the sole beneficiaries. The need to emphasise this dimension of the Holocaust was evident in the 2015 survey by the IOE cited earlier. When asked to define the Holocaust, not a single student mentioned or even alluded to theft, their answers referring exclusively to the killing (Foster et al., 2015, op. cit). Whilst addressing this misconception does not require teachers to go beyond 1945, it would appear from the IOE survey that teachers either ignore the issue of theft or make reference to it in a way that is quickly forgotten. A study of post-war Poland, however, highlights the issue with particular poignancy, making it difficult to overlook and, arguably, more difficult to forget. The same can be said for attempts to ensure that students do not associate anti-Semitism with Germany alone. This possibility is clearly one of the drawbacks of teaching the Holocaust and has led some commentators to argue for the subject’s exclusion from the curriculum (Rowley, 2011). It obviously helps to rebut the criticism if students learn that anti-Semitism over the centuries has had a significant impact on many countries other than Germany. Whilst it is not difficult to achieve this objective when teaching just about the Holocaust and the build-up to it, the depth, viciousness and widespread nature of anti-Semitism in post-war Poland is likely to impact particularly strongly on students, not least because it occurred after the Holocaust and the murder of most of the country’s Jews.

Engaging with the aftermath also allows students to reflect more critically on certain contentious issues arising from the Holocaust. A case in point concerns the long-standing debate over the role of the Catholic Church and specifically whether it did enough between 1933 and 1945 to protect Jews (See Rittner, Smith and Steinfeldt, [2000] for a balanced discussion). Students should be made aware of this debate and of all the evidence, direct and circumstantial, that has a bearing on it. The circumstantial evidence has surely to include the response of Catholic clergy to the Kielce pogrom and the part played by the Vatican in aiding the escape of leading Nazis. Another contentious matter relates to the decision not to bomb Auschwitz. If students learn about the Allies’ inconsistent attitude towards prosecuting Nazi war criminals and also about their willingness to recruit and grant citizenship to former members of the SS, they might reasonably conclude that the murder of Europe’s Jews was not regarded by the Allies as an especially heinous crime. Such
indifference on the Allies' part to the plight of the Jews offers students an alternative and credible explanation for the failure to bomb Auschwitz; it also offers them another way to understand the largely unsuccessful outcome of the Evian conference. This more cynical cast of mind is not only plausible but has the added benefit of shielding students from the anti-Semitic charge that the Allies had fought the war on behalf of the Jews. [The need to protect students from this malicious and baseless allegation is clearly a real one for, according to Foster et al (op. cit., p. 2), over a third of the students they questioned believed that the Holocaust 'triggered Britain's entry into war.']

Learning about the aftermath of the Holocaust can also be of value to students in respect of citizenship education. The background to the Kielce pogrom enables them to deepen their understanding of racism by familiarising themselves with one of its key components, namely ethnic stereotyping. They are able to learn about both the durability and extensive influence of such stereotypes and also about their destructive potential even when lacking a grain of truth. Moreover, the pogrom serves to remind students of how social institutions can foster and perpetuate ethnic stereotypes and the danger of them doing so. I refer specifically to the role of the Catholic Church in associating Jews with communism and the consequences of this association in terms of the suffering caused to innocent and guilty alike.

Useful knowledge relevant to citizenship also emerges from the war crimes trials that took place. Defendants' testimony, freely given, can help to promote students' political awareness by shedding light on the nature of the totalitarian state and on how such states shape the thinking of the individual. Stern Strom (1994) demonstrates these benefits with reference to the trial of Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz. At one stage during the trial he was asked whether he thought the Jews he murdered deserved their fate. He replied as follows:

Don't you see, we SS men were not supposed to think about these things: it never even occurred to us ... And besides it was something already taken for granted that the Jews were to blame for everything ... We just never heard anything else. It was not just newspapers like Der Stuermer but it was everything we ever heard. Even our military and ideological training took for granted that we had to protect Germany from the Jews ... It only started to occur to me after the collapse that maybe it was not quite right, after I had heard what everybody was saying ... We were all so trained to obey orders without even thinking that the thought of disobeying an order would simply never have occurred to anybody and somebody else would have done just as well if I hadn't ... You can be sure that it was not always a pleasure to see those mountains of corpses and smell the continual burning. But Himmler had ordered it and had even explained the necessity and I really never gave much thought to whether it was wrong. It just seemed a necessity.

(Stern Strom, 1994, p. 433)

We know that many schools in Britain do not teach about the aftermath of the Holocaust and there is no reason to think that the situation in other countries is any better. Wherever schools provide Holocaust education I would urge them to address those aspects of the aftermath that can provide students with a sense of closure, influence the way they understand the Holocaust and help develop their political literacy. Researchers, in turn, need to realise that the topic is worth investigating, for we currently have no knowledge of how teachers who do engage with the aftermath go about it and a continued lack of research risks entrenching bad practice. However, the practicalities involved in schools incorporating the additional content will likely prove difficult because of the well documented problem of teachers having to work within severe time constraints.
Correspondence

G.A.Short2@herts.ac.uk

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