

Chapter 1 : Human Rights after Hitler | Reading Religion

Human Rights After Hitler: Foreign Language News Clips Dan Plesch is director of the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS, University of London. He is the author of *America, Hitler and the UN*, coeditor of *Wartime Origins and the Future United Nations*, and has been a frequent contributor to the *Guardian* and other media.

For over a half century after they were created, the copious records of the Commission lay virtually untouched by researchers. Those who wished to access them needed to obtain permission from both the United Nations UN secretary general and their own national government before they were allowed even restricted access. Plesch describes a research trip in which he was not allowed to take notes or to dictate to assistants, and was only able to record his recollections of the documents later, from a coffee shop down the street. Thanks to his persistent efforts, the records of the Commission were made available to the public by Ambassador Samantha Power in . Plesch draws out narrative threads from these eight thousand cases that are equal parts exciting in their forward-thinking jurisprudence and frustrating in their decades-long absence from the legal and historical record. The UNWCC was created in , in the midst of World War II, through an agreement between seventeen of the Allied nations; it represented the first multinational agreement that sought a means to deal with international war crimes. Although it has been overshadowed by the more public and dramatic Nuremberg trials in most discussions of post-war international justice, the UNWCC did crucially important work to define and apply international law, ultimately charging over thirty-six thousand individuals with war crimes over its short existence. Plesch seeks to highlight the precedents that could have been useful in more recent war crimes trials, and offers suggestions for how the lost history of the UNWCC might be assimilated into current international law. The book combines strands of history with discussions of the modern-day prosecution of human rights violations. At times, the strands diverge widely, making certain chapters much more interesting for the legal theorist or human rights activist than for the historian, and spreading historical arguments haphazardly throughout the chapters. Nonetheless, Plesch provides several key interventions in Holocaust history, offering clear evidence that both the United States and the United Kingdom were aware of the Nazi genocide, its location, and its methods by the middle of the war. The UNWCC archive allows him to focus the story of the modern human rights movement around the popular effort to define, record, and prosecute war crimes in every theater of World War II. He takes earlier historians to task for dismissing UN human rights efforts as one-sided or stillborn , and ultimately makes it difficult to dismiss the immediate postwar attempts to establish real, effective human rights norms. Continuing the work of historians who seek to decenter the West in the narrative of the creation of human rights norms, Plesch highlights the contributions of Chinese, Ethiopian, and Indian representatives and jurists. As a counterpoint to discussions of torture, rape, and mass murder, Plesch points out the successes of governments in exile and civilian resisters in gathering and preserving evidence . These descriptions turn the story of the UN War Crimes Commission into a strangely hopeful reminder of just how much humans can endure without giving up on the possibility of survival, renewal, and justice. Rather than continuing the work of the Commission and seeking justice for all victims of the war, the US worked to shut down the UNWCC before its work was complete, and ultimately to bury the records of the proceedings, including German crimes and American wartime knowledge thereof, so deeply that the true story of the Commission could only come to light with significant effort some seventy years later. These records will drive future inquiries into the history of human rights, post-war European reconstruction, and the development of international law. About the Reviewer s: Rachel Feinmark is a historian of 20th century US labor, religion, and human rights.

Chapter 2 : Human Rights after Hitler | Georgetown University Press

Human Rights after Hitler: the story of the UNWCC Before Nuremberg - before tribunals in Rwanda, Yugoslavia - before the ICC - there was the United Nations War Crimes Commission. Founded in the darkest moments of WWII, the UNWCC was a little-known United Nations agency which identified, classified, and assisted national governments trying.

Dan Plesch 19 April A timely and groundbreaking book breaks the silence over a little-known UN agency operating between and , the UNWCC – a key chapter in our war-time experience. Drawing upon newly-unsealed UN documents, *Human Rights after Hitler* describes a proven alternative model for international law today. The post WW2 system of human rights and security is under threat, and despite its flaws, nothing better is on offer. It is very timely to discover that the post-war system of values rests on a far larger, richer and more relevant paradigm than we normally understand. The role of great people – the Roosevelts, Lemkin and Lauterpacht in building post-war human rights standards has been over emphasized at the expense of the global popular, political and governmental that motivated the war effort and propelled the creation of the post war institutions. The records of this organization were finally released by Ambassador Samantha Power in . In the s a few UNWCC cases were published and were used as precedent in the Yugoslavia trials of the s, validating the wider archive as legal sources. Even while the Nazis still ruled, the resistance in occupied Europe began war crimes indictments. These included charges for the extermination of the Jews at Treblinka and Auschwitz, of Hitler himself. Prosecutions included crimes of rape, attempted rape and forced prostitution, water boarding and other torture along with mass murder and systematic terrorism. Nevertheless, our historical memory is based on the narrow paradigm of a few dozen top officials tried before the international tribunals in Nuremberg and Tokyo. We all learnt that despite heroic efforts of individuals the Holocaust was never officially condemned while it was under way, let alone prosecuted. These thousands of indictments were considered by a Commission of seventeen Allied nations – including the United States, China and pre-independence India, but not the USSR – each state brought its national cases to the Commission for approval, which acted as a pretrial examining magistrate. Although it drew up its charges in secret because of the pressures of war and could not therefore include neutral states, let alone the enemy, it sought to apply the highest international standards of law and had diplomatic status as an international organization. The United Nations alliance of the Second World War has only recently been given attention by scholars. However, the UN Charter of is explicit that the first members of the United Nations were those that signed the Declaration by United Nations of which is the first international political agreement supporting Human Rights. The war crimes commission was one of several pre-Charter UN bodies. Today, disillusionment with the baroque and biased practices of the ICC has led to renewed interest in the role of national courts in applying international criminal legal standards. The Commission offers a model of a cooperative approach to justice and sovereignty where the international advises and supports national efforts delivered with fairness, speed and economy. Low level soldiers did then and should now face trial along with their leaders. Amal Clooney leads the call for justice for the crimes of Daesh and for the collection of evidence. For example, many members of the EU, China, India and the US and UK created a system for gathering war crimes evidence through debriefing refugees and released prisoners in the mids. If they could do that in the s with all the other pressures upon them, they have even less excuse now. UNWCC precedents on crimes of sexual violence as war crimes outside the context of Crimes Against Humanity and for conspiracy are other examples of what can be used today. Writing off human rights Nuremberg is usually presented as a lone star of international justice, it is better to see it as the jewel in the crown of the global movement. The work of the UNWCC also counters the intellectual trend to write of the end of human rights and at the same time to place their origins in the post-war period, sometimes as late as the s or s. Samuel Moyn maintains that the texts of Raphael Lemkin on genocide and Hersch Lauterpacht on crimes against humanity were stillborn creations that had to be reborn in the s. Lynn Hunt argues that human rights only started with the American-French political enlightenment. Pop into undergraduate classrooms, or indeed grade school classes on religion and civics, nowadays and you will find a chart of this precept common to philosophies and

religions around the planet. Many writers have detailed these globally socially embedded universal values of human rights. In general terms though Anglo-American leaders had begun to speak of crimes against humanity in response to the Armenian massacres and then in response to the crimes of Nazi Germany. Thus, on two occasions when Anglo American officials had to form policy in response to atrocities, they found it necessary to move beyond Christianity to an all-encompassing description of humanity. This denial that scholars and politicians from the Global South helped create and value human rights is also extremely dangerous. It permits a flow of self-serving political thought amongst western elites. Just as seriously, it provides legitimacy for repressive governments outside the west to denounce human rights as imperial impositions: This too was part of the rationale for letting key Holocaust perpetrators go free in the s on grounds of political expediency, and for the suppression of the records of the UNWCC to supposedly enable the rebuilding of Germany and Japan. Nuremberg is usually presented as a lone star of international justice, it is better to see it as the jewel in the crown of the global movement. With the war over and rebuilding Germany and Japan the priority the State Department along with Allen Dulles acted to shut the Commission down and have its archives sealed. Then led by Senator Jo McCarthy there was a campaign to vilify the prosecutors and release imprisoned Nazis. Led by Senator Jo McCarthy there was a campaign to vilify the prosecutors and release imprisoned Nazis. A fundamental and positive shift in understanding the role and potential of human rights after Hitler comes from understanding the work of the UNWCC. It has only been in recent decades that it has provided the basis for prosecutions.. Lest we forget UNWCC For US officials opposed to universal human rights at home and abroad, the crippling, and then closure, of the UNWCC, and its erasure from political memory were a triumph, while non-binding declarations and unratified treaties were a far lesser problem. Consider the counterfactual, a well-resourced UNWCC continuing into the s with the Genocide Convention reinforcing the pursuit of all those indictments processed by the Commission. That is hard to imagine, and it is far easier to see this encouraging human rights globally. The continuation of prosecutions outside America for human rights abuses would have likely fed back positively into US politics in the manner feared by Henry Stimson who argued against Crimes Against Humanity on the grounds that they could be used by foreigners to prosecute the US for lynchings. Henry Stimsonâ€ argued against Crimes Against Humanity on the grounds that they could be used by foreigners to prosecute the US for lynchings. The international legal response to human rights abuses was, and can be, the achievement of victims and their witnesses, and was not and should not be the preserve of great powers, great leaders, and great thinkers. It was and can be the creation of normal people in abhorrently abnormal conditions. Auschwitz was not, and should not be regarded as, beyond human response, as negating the human condition. It was, with the other death camps, responded to as best they could by victims, and government officials high and low in peril of their lives and in the relative safety of missile-bombarded London. The critiques of the s human rights agreements as still-born, or solely western-driven, are founded on a narrow view of that inheritance. Once again, xenophobia, Holocaust denial, antisemitism and anti-Muslim prejudice are on the march. Sadly there can be little comfort in the warming thoughts of political philosophers such as Steven Pinker, who see present society as continually improving, albeit with setbacks.

Chapter 3 : Human Rights after Hitler | the history of the United Nations War Crimes Commission

Drawing upon newly-unsealed UN documents, Human Rights after Hitler describes a proven alternative model for international law today. The post WW2 system of human rights and security is under.

Chapter 4 : Chicago Tribune - We are currently unavailable in your region

The launch of Dan Plesch's book - Human Rights After Hitler - The Lost History of Prosecuting Axis War Crimes (Georgetown University Press) - will be hosted at the Wiener Library on May 4th

Chapter 5 : Human Rights after Hitler â€ HFS Books

Human Rights After Hitler. Dan Plesch is director of the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS, University of London. He is the author of 'America, Hitler and the UN', co-editor of 'Wartime Origins and the Future United Nations', and has been a frequent contributor to the Guardian and other media.

Chapter 6 : Human Rights After Hitler (Audiobook) by Dan Plesch | www.nxgvision.com

Human Rights after Hitler reveals thousands of forgotten US and Allied war crimes prosecutions against Hitler and other Axis war criminals based on a popular movement for justice that stretched from Poland to the Pacific.

Chapter 7 : News + Blog | Human Rights after Hitler

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Chapter 8 : Human Rights after Hitler: The Lost History of Prosecuting Axis War Crimes by Dan Plesch

Human Rights after Hitler reveals thousands of forgotten US and Allied war crimes prosecutions against Hitler and other Axis war criminals based on a popular movement for justice that stretched from Poland to the Pacific. These cases provide a great foundation for twenty-first-century human rights and accompany the achievements of the Nuremberg.

Chapter 9 : Human Rights After Hitler | IHRA

The saga of Dan Plesch's struggle to access the records that inform his book, Human Rights After Hitler, is nearly as dramatic and compelling as the story he tells of the United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC).