Rethinking rescue

Description:
I am currently engaged in writing the history of a resistance and rescue group tentatively titled Rescued from memory. With this study, which like my previous ones is written as a crossover book, my aim is to transform the way we think and write about “rescue”. By this I mean first that rescue itself is a concept in need of revisiting. It is not capacious enough as a concept to capture the varieties of assistance – including the self-help that formed an important element of most survival stories. But above all I want to show that our reliance on postwar memory, and particularly our desire to tell morally, politically or religiously useful stories has seriously skewed our understanding of the experience of giving and receiving assistance.

I show how not only “resistance” but also “rescue” come packaged with a set of assumptions, the former necessarily political, the latter preferably nonpolitical. Whereas resistance as a term has had a thorough going-over in the historiography,
and has been weighed against dissent, non-conformity, opposition, and so forth, our use of rescue is still rather naïve. Using a case study of one particular, extremely well documented but largely unknown German group I show how their wartime experience disappeared from view after the war, not only because it did not fit the accepted categories of resistance or rescue, but also because the group itself simplified and skewed its actions in order to meet postwar expectations.

Publications

Books

*Rescued from memory. The “Bund”, resistance, and rescue in Nazi Germany* (Manuscript in preparation, completion summer 2015)

Articles

„Gerettete Geschichte. Der „Bund“. Gemeinschaft für sozialistisches Leben im Dritten Reich“, *Mittelweg 36* Vol 16 (February 2007): 100-121

Book chapters


