Robert Oppenheimer), and so on. People with important roles in history share the reader's attention with such figures as Seiko Ogawa, a thirteen-year-old resident of Hiroshima.

People are admittedly more interesting to read about than cyclotrons or gaseous diffusion plants, but Kurzman's approach means that some aspects of the story get short shrift. The immense effort in finding and committing human and material resources is touched only lightly. The giant complex at Hanford, Washington, is mentioned only twice. Kurzman's excursions into the antecedents of his main characters, while always interesting, sometimes take the narrative very far afield; thus the reader is treated to an account of the Forty-Seven Ronin and of the family background of Henry L. Stimson. Journalist Kurzman goes further than some historians would in his work of "probing minds, motives and actions." The reader is allowed to share Hirohito's thoughts during his coronation; he learns that Harry S. Truman was "terrified" at becoming president, that Winston Churchill was "rabid" at the thought his American allies might not share atomic secrets. Such touches make Kurzman's book very good reading—and in the main it is not bad history, either.

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A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press during World War II. By Patrick S. Washburn. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. xi + 296 pp. $19.95.)

During World War I over one thousand writers, speakers, and pamphleteers were convicted of violating federal sedition statutes; in dramatic contrast, World War II yielded only thirty-three such convictions. The major reason for that difference, Patrick S. Washburn asserts, was the presence during 1941–1945 of Attorney General Francis Biddle. "Almost single-handedly" Biddle "forced his interpretation of First Amendment press freedom on a reluctant and sometimes angry government."

Washburn's vehicle for attempting to make that argument is a study of the black press, which, despite many federal criticisms of its reporting of racial discrimination in the military, suffered no crackdown or prosecutions during World War II. "In a basic sense," Washburn admits, "this study is negative history, an account of something that did not occur." Nonetheless, Washburn strives energetically to make his case, without seeming to realize that he is stretching his material beyond its limits when he seeks to portray federal interest in the black press as surprisingly massive.

"The black press was in extreme danger of being suppressed," Washburn states in his introductory chapter, "until June, 1942, when Biddle decided quietly that no black publishers would be indicted for sedition during the war." Somewhat later he notes that references to "the black press virtually did not appear in White House or Justice Department documents during the first three months of the war." Dismissing out of hand the possibility that officials did not have the time or awareness to make black newspapers a high priority in early 1942, Washburn concludes instead that "the more likely explanation is that the black press was too hot an issue to discuss on the record, even in a confidential memorandum."

Analysis such as that does not inspire confidence in Washburn's scholarly judgment; nor do his apparent unfamiliarity with the publications of black-press historians such as Henry L. Suggs and his failure to cite important archival collections such as the Claude A. Barnett/Associated Negro Press Papers at the Chicago Historical Society inspire confidence in the thoroughness of his research. Washburn has made productive use of materials in the National Archives, but his apparently very modest use of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests also disappointed this reviewer.

Washburn correctly notes that many federal officials drew "no distinctions . . . between whether the black press was promoting discontent or merely reporting it. The war had to be won, and anything that made that goal more difficult"—such as highlighting the racially discriminatory policies of the United States military—"could not be tolerated." He also reports that by the summer of 1942, following repeated federal warnings and entreaties to black publishers, the black press had "become

less critical" and "toned down considerably." Thereafter the government displayed "a noticeable acceptance of the black press," with black reporters enjoying more access to federal officials than ever before.

Such valuable observations notwithstanding, Washburn's study nonetheless unfortunately remains a thoroughly disappointing book.

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Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps. By Robert H. Abzug. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. xv + 192 pp. $16.95.)

This is a horrifying and very readable book, with some genuine insights and notable deficiencies. Approximately one-half of it is composed of appalling photographs of the liberated concentration camps, some massacres outside camps, and their victims, dead and alive. Six chapters provide potted histories of the camps and lengthier descriptions of their discovery and liberation, the reactions of the liberators, and the conditions of the dead and survivors. A seventh chapter recounts how soldiers, Germans, numerous delegations of senators and congressmen, and journalists toured the camps and how citizens in the United States responded to the newsreels, newspaper and private photographs, and written or oral accounts. The last chapter sketches the efforts to remedy the disastrous health, food, and sanitary conditions in the camps, the behavior of the liberated inmates, their physical and psychological traumas, the hierarchy within the ranks of the millions of displaced persons, and their relations with the American occupying forces and the Germans.

Abzug ought to have read scholarly work in German so as to establish what actually happened in some camps, particularly whether gassings took place and whether lampshades and shrunken heads, which appear here in a photograph, were made from victims. Other works describe the prisoner of war camps, in which millions of Russians died from slave labor, mistreatment, and disease, as well as the reactions of the British and French forces, and the Germans themselves, who are barely mentioned rather than systematically examined.

A better understanding of the attitudes of the American soldiers to the wider war might have facilitated profounder understanding of their reactions to the camps. A colleague of mine who saw the ghastly charred corpses at Thekla said that the rush of invasion and conquest across Germany was surrealistic and dislocating, that he lost his bearings on the normal world, that outlandish forms of death, atrocities, awesome destruction were the norm but unassimilable. Much of this is in J. Glenn Gray's *The Warriors.*

Survivors of the camps are seen through the eyes of the liberators; perusal of the literature explaining their behavior might have prevented remarks about them, especially the Jews, that seem unintentionally insensitive and lacking in nuance. Abzug uses only American films of the camps; wasn't other footage also viewed quite widely? Above all, he might have related the liberation of the camps to recent denials that the extermination of the Jews took place and to claims that the larger number of deaths suffered in 1944 and 1945 were due to Allied disruption of transportation and to the inroads of disease. This book confirms the already well-known picture of murder, starvation, and boundless cruelty imposed by the Nazi state.

The genuine insights have to do with the inability of firsthand viewers to grasp what they were seeing, their efforts to distance themselves from their experience, and the skepticism, sometimes near denial, of what Nazi Germany had done by others whose experience was secondhand. Thus this problem is of long standing. Abzug's extensive research in the recollections of numerous soldiers and in other manuscript collections helps compensate for the book's deficiencies.

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American Culture and Society since the 1930s. By Christopher Brookeman. (New York: Schocken, 1984. xv + 241 pp. $22.00.)

It is to the author's credit that the most