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**Alex J. Kay.** *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder: Political and Economic Planning for German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1940-1941.* Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006. 242 pp. $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84545-186-8.

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## Preliminaries for Conquering "Lebensraum"

In his doctoral thesis, Kay characterizes the German occupation of the Soviet Union in World War II as an "organized chaos." But as his thoroughly researched work shows, this state of affairs did not result from a lack of planning, as in fact quite a few concepts and intentions were floating about. Kay's study examines the period between 1940 and 1941, in which the subsequent anarchy of German occupation policy was formed; his study covers the time period up to the first days of the occupation and thus completely reveals the foundations and the context of exploitation, resettlement and mass murder. "Neuordnung" and "Hungerpolitik," which can best be translated as "reorganization" and "starvation policy," were the two crucial ideas formulated by National Socialists for the eastern territories. The outcome of their plans can be envisaged in the partial implementation of economic and political goals that finally led to mass murder and genocide against the local population.

Kay focuses on the compatibility of the different objectives, the structuralist battles of the different Nazi organizations, and especially on the role of Alfred Rosenberg as Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories. Although a widely agreed upon economic "rationality" predominated, which stated that Russian soil could provide enough heavy goods, raw materials and foodstuff to ensure victory, by no means did any consensus prevail on how to achieve the exploitation. As the conquest of the Soviet Union was a central element of Nazi ideology, however, and only there could the long-desired autarky be gained, several of Adolf Hitler's subordinates started planning approximately one year before the invasion. Kay demonstrates the development of these concepts in a chronological presentation based on German archival sources and the relevant literature, although works from 2006 are not included. It is well worth mentioning that the book comprises only 210 well-written pages of text and thus sets a benchmark for German dissertations, which are rarely completed in less than twice so many pages. All that is needed for an excellent work should and can be said in a compact form, if the author is willing to make the effort. Grateful readers will enjoy not being bored by overwhelming masses of details.

First, the book deals with the main planning institu-

tions for the East, Hermann GÃ¶ring's Vierjahresplan-behÃ¶rde and Alfred Rosenberg's Nazi party organization, the AuÃenpolitisches Amt, but Kay also shows the executive organs of Wirtschaftsstab Ost and the civil occupation in the occupied territories. After the overview, chapter 3 starts with a chronological description of the decisive process finally leading to the attack on the Soviet Union. Kay convincingly concludes that Hitler had decided on war even before Vyacheslav Molotov's visit to Berlin on November 12, 1940.

A crucial point supporting the eastern expansion was Germany's need for food, which was strongly emphasized by Herbert Backe, StaatssekretÃ¤r in the Reich Ministry for Food and Agriculture and a key figure in the Nazis' economic struggle for Europe. Backe forecast massive starvation if fighting extended beyond 1942 with rations unchanged, thus constructing a perceived necessity to attack the Soviet Union. As chapter 4 demonstrates, Backe found many followers, including Hitler himself. Goals in the East were no longer only ideologically determined, but became based on perceived economic necessities. Criminal aspects went hand in hand with ideology, as the German food plans included the starvation of millions of local inhabitants as early as February 1941; in fact, the Reich Ministry for Food and Agriculture stipulated its murderous ideas in the last weeks of 1940. The civil administration, under Alfred Rosenberg and his major subordinates, and the tasks assigned to these men are also considered. Kay shows that choosing the right personnel was not easy, as several institutions and ministries presented lists of suitable leaders. Rosenberg as Minister for the Eastern Territories was by no means in the position to select on his own, but he and Hitler agreed that Nazi party membership as well as ruthlessness were the most important criteria; thus adequate functionaries like Fritz Sauckel or Backe were proposed for Ukraine, but finally rejected by Hitler, because he needed them in the Reich.

The next part of the book deals with German population policy. Kay states that while resettlement and the murder of an alleged Judeo-Bolshevik intelligentsia were planned long before the war, a genocide had not been ordered at that time. It is quite possible that it may have been projected even in 1940 or 1941, but no explicit commands have been recorded. As time went by, German plans for the Soviet Union became more concrete and even more radical, focusing on the Ukraine as a territory with grain surplus. The Nazis wanted to gather enough food to feed their own people, even as millions of Slavs were doomed to starve.

The foundations of the German *Vernichtungskrieg* are clearly shown in this book, which corrects and clarifies its chronological development by assembling little-known facts into a sound study of Nazi planning. Unfortunately, Kay does not really point at new or unknown evidence or present new archival sources. But as this work clearly demonstrates, despite the previous exploitation of such sources, a fundamental explanation of the logistical preparation for Nazi crimes still remained to be written. Although Kay in general prefers strong hypotheses to a broad discussion of former research, he presents a really valuable portrayal of the topic. For a long time to come, historians will have no need to focus special interest on these aspects of Nazi history, as they now can be perused in this book.

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