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The Persecution of Jews in the "Greater German Reich"

What happened to Jews in areas annexed to Nazi Germany between 1935 and 1941? In what ways was their persecution similar or different from that of Jews in the old Reich? What do we learn about the Nazi regime more generally by examining anti-Jewish policies in the annexed areas? This elegant volume explains how the unique demographic, economic, and social situation in each area annexed to the Third Reich played out in antisemitic policies. For some areas, such as Memel, Eupen-Malmedy, and Alsace, it offers the first overview of the persecution of Jews in a particular area. In other locations, such as Austria and East Upper Silesia, the volume presents a stellar overview of areas of the Final Solution that scholars have already well documented. But as the editors' introduction underscores, the real strength of the volume is that it examines the cases together. This, in turn, reinforces insights into some of the fundamental dynamics of the Final Solution, including the role of local initiative and the transfer of Nazi persecution practices from one area to another.

The volume examines each area in the order in which it was annexed. Each essay then follows the same three-part outline: a discussion of the situation of Jews before annexation, of Nazi policies during the initial period of annexation, and then of antisemitic practices during the years of occupation. As the contributions illustrate, each case had a unique aspect that shaped Nazi persecution practices and thus the Jewish experience in the given area and beyond. The peculiar situation of each newly annexed area also gave the Nazi authorities in charge of the region considerable latitude in initiating the persecution of Jews.

For the Saar region, Gerhard J. Teschner shows how the League of Nations insisted that Jews be given a one-year reprieve from antisemitic measures after annexation; that year (beginning in March 1935) allowed many Jews to leave Nazi Germany with their property in tow. Three years later, Austria provided the model for the speedy dispossession and forced emigration of Jews. As Albert Lichtblau expertly describes, the "Vienna model" (p. 92) was possible not least because of the widespread antisemitism among the Austrian population. JÃ¶rg Os-

terloh shows how the annexation of the Sudetenland was distinguished by the fact that Jews could (and did) flee to the remaining parts of the Czechoslovak Republic in the months following the German takeover. Popular antisemitic harassment, as well as the rapid Aryanization of Jewish property, convinced half of the twenty-nine thousand Jews who lived in the Sudetenland to leave their homes within two months of annexation. In the nearby Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia there was no similar antisemitic consensus–until the onslaught of Jewish refugees from the Sudetenland prompted the Prague government to order the expulsion of the refugees (a despicable act that nonetheless saved many Jews' lives). Here, as Wolf Gruner explains, nationality politics, involving Czechs, Germans, and Jews, complicated antisemitic measures after annexation. The Germans, for example, used Aryanization to strengthen their economic presence in the protectorate; Emil HÃ¡cha, the collaborationist Czech leader, protested against the "tool of Germanization under the guise of Aryanization" (p. 154).

Ruth Leiserowitz describes the situation in Memel, where Jews enjoyed social mobility and a vibrant community life during the interwar years. In anticipation of German occupation, many Jews fled to neighboring Lithuania. Once Memel was annexed in March 1939, Erich Koch, the Nazi *Gauleiter* of East Prussia, gave Jews fourteen days to leave the city–or face arrest. While Memel became virtually *Judenrein* (free of Jews), its former Jewish residents who found refuge in Lithuania were soon trapped. Unable to emigrate from Soviet-occupied Lithuania, many were among the earliest victims of the Final Solution in summer 1941. In his piece on Danzig-West Prussia, Wolfgang Gippert focuses on the forced expulsion of Jews from Danzig in the late 1930s, when the Free City had a Nazi government, but was not yet part of the German Reich. At the time of annexation, in fall 1939, there were just 1,660 Jews in Danzig, and approximately 2,000 Jews in West Prussia. Inge Loose explores the Wartheland, the area with the largest Jewish population–about 435,000 individuals–of the annexed areas. He rightly situates the story of the Final Solution there in the brutal rule of Arthur Greiser, the Nazi *Gauleiter* who aimed to Germanize the area through a massive demographic reordering.

In the Zichenau District, also annexed to Koch's East Prussia, roughly half of the eighty thousand Jews fled to Soviet-occupied Poland or the General Government in fall 1939; the remaining Jews were placed in ghettos. Andreas Schulz embeds the Final Solution in Zichenau in the context of attempted Germanization: once the Jews were murdered at Auschwitz or Treblinka, Poles were forced into ghetto buildings, and the better Polish apartments were used by ethnic Germans. Likewise, Sybille Steinbacher shows how the Final Solution in East Upper Silesia, the location of Auschwitz, was part of a broader Germanization story. In this region, the most important center for German military production after the Ruhr area, the Nazis introduced the so-called Schmelt system. It deployed Jews as slave laborers in the weapons industry and in infrastructural projects to Germanize the region. Unlike most other annexed regions (but like the Warthegau), Jews "capable of work" were used for labor purposes until well into 1943 and, in some cases, even 1944. In the end, though, Schmelt's forced labor system only prolonged Jews' agony; the vast majority of East Upper Silesian Jews also lost their lives in the Holocaust.

The final section of the volume addresses the annexed areas in the western parts of the Reich. In a fine piece, Christoph Bruell shows how the absence of a native Jewish population in Eupen-Malmedy, in Belgium, shaped the local population's reaction to Jewish refugees and to the introduction of Nazi antisemitic policies. Bruell speculates that the absence of Jewish property available for confiscation might explain the lack of antisemitic zeal in the area. In Luxembourg, over three thousand of the original four thousand Jews present in early 1940 left the country either as part of a pre-invasion evacuation or through forced expulsion shortly after annexation. As Marc Shoentgen suggests, once the area was a de facto part of the Gau Koblenz-Trier, some Luxemburgers expressed their dissatisfaction with the German regime by aiding the remaining Jews. Finally, Jean-Marc Dreyfus describes the situation in Alsace-Lorraine. While Alsace went to *Gauleiter* Robert Wagner's Baden, Lorraine became part of Josef Buerkel's Saarpfalz. Wagner's treatment of Jews was also part of a larger Germanization scheme: on July 14, 1940, Wager announced that all oppositional, "francophile" (p. 373), and Jewish individuals were to leave the region within twenty-four hours. Just a month later, he declared Alsace *Judenrein*. In August 1940, BÃ¼rckel similarly expelled the few hundred Jews in Lorraine. In October, these measures were imitated in the German parts of Baden and the Saarpfalz; for a time, it seemed that Nazi authorities would solve their "Jewish problem" through a westward deportation of Jews. After the October deportations, however, the Vichy regime energetically refused to accept any more Jews from the Reich; this foreclosed the option of westward deportation.

The Alsace-Lorraine story is a good entry point into

the many important connections that existed among the various annexed areas *vis-Ã -vis* the persecution of Jews. As the editors argue, there was considerable transfer of perpetrator knowledge from one place to another. BÃ¼rckel provides a particularly salient example. He was brought from Saarpfalz to Vienna on the strength of his experience of annexing the Saar to the Third Reich. In Vienna, Adolf Eichmann and others were busily creating the "Vienna model" for the persecution of Jews. Institutions first created in Vienna–such as the Zentralstelle fÃ¼r jÃ¼dische Auswanderung (the Central Agency for Jewish Emigration)–were later introduced in other annexed areas. Members of BÃ¼rckel and Eichmann's Viennese staffs were eventually transferred to other newly annexed areas to deploy their persecution know-how. The volume also describes the imitation of persecution practices: once Wagner quickly expelled the Alsatian Jews, BÃ¼rckel followed suit in Lorraine, and shortly thereafter in Saarpfalz. At the same time, there was a transfer of victim experience. Many Jews in annexed areas had seen what had happened to their counterparts in other regions annexed to the Reich. They thus knew to leave their native country as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, their flight often exacerbated the precarious situation of their fellow Jews in the areas to which they fled–many of which soon also came under Nazi occupation.

Focusing on the annexed areas highlights many other important aspects of the Final Solution. In the annexed areas, the dispossession and removal of Jews occurred much more rapidly than in the old Reich. Tried and tested policies that took years to introduce in the old Reich were put into place within weeks or months in the newly annexed areas. In most cases, this meant that the Jews in question fared worse: murder, rather than emigration, was more often their fate. The fact that many of these areas were initially or throughout ruled by a *Chef der Zivilverwaltung* (head of civil administration, or CdZ)–directly subordinate to Hitler or the military–meant that Reich ministries had little say; this allowed for extraordinarily arbitrary rule in the annexed areas. The volume also does a fine job of showing tensions between Reich Germans and the native Germans of a given area. In the Sudetenland (as virtually everywhere else) the Aryanization of Jewish property was a top priority. But while Reich Germans wanted to make use of the Sudetenland's industrial potential for military purposes, Sudeten Germans wanted former Jewish businesses to provide jobs for their own. Such passages point to a further strength of the volume: each contributor exposes the legal chicaneries by which the Nazis expropriated Jewish property. Yet this matter also points to one of the essay collection's lost opportunities. In areas annexed to the Reich where there was no other "foreign" population–as in the Saar–expropriation only benefited Nazi coffers. But in areas in which a third nationality was dominant, expropriation helped to further Germanization goals. The volume might have more explicitly addressed and compared how antisemitic measures aided the Germanization of border regions of the Nazi Reich.

As with any edited volume, the quality of the contributions is uneven. The essays on Danzig-West Prussia, the Wartheland, and Alsace-Lorraine are perhaps least satisfying. Dreyfus barely addresses the situation in Lorraine. Gippert gives little attention to the persecution of Jews in West Prussia during the occupation, and he virtually ignores Stutthof, an important concentration camp located in the Danzig area. Even if few local Jews ended up in Stutthof, the atrocities carried out there deserve attention in any discussion of the persecution of Jews in Danzig-West Prussia. Neither Gippert nor Loose discuss the fact that Greiser first helped drive the Jews out of Danzig before he adopted more radical policies in the Warthegau. In addition, Loose might have more forcefully outlined just what distinguished the Wartheland from other regions under Nazi occupation. After all, the Warthegau saw the first (and longest-standing) ghetto in Nazi-occupied Europe (the Litzmannstadt ghetto), one of the largest networks of forced labor camps for Jews, and the first mass gassings of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. Moreover, in many ways the Wartheland served as a model for the persecution of Jews in the General Government. This, in turn, raises a broader issue about the volume. As the editors note, Jews' fates in the annexed areas were very different: while 90 percent of the Jews who lived in the Saar region survived the Third Reich abroad, 95 percent of the Jews in the Zichenau region were murdered. In light of these very different outcomes, the editors might have directly addressed the issue of just how the status of annexation influenced the persecution of the Jews. In their introduction, they give one example: individuals deported to Auschwitz were individually expropriated because a 1941 law only foresaw the automatic dispossession of Germans who had lost their citizenship but were living abroad. Since Auschwitz was technically part of the Third Reich, a different expropriation procedure was necessary for that camp's victims. Yet given the murderous nature of Nazi measures against the Jews, the manner of their expropriation seems trivial. Did the status of annexation have any greater signif-

icance for the persecution of Jews?

The saddest part of this story is that, despite the differing initial situations, the outcome for Jews was everywhere the same: they were forced to leave their native areas. Some, it is true, survived due to their emigration, but for many, initial emigration was a first step in an arduous journey that ended in death. Focusing on the different regions of annexed "Greater Germany" shows the specificity of Nazi persecution practices toward Jews. In the end, though, these different forms of persecution were channeled into the general project of the dispossession and, more often than not, murder of Jews.

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