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GÖ¶tz Aly. *EndlÖ¶sung: VÖ¶lkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europÖ¤ischen Juden.* Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1995. 446 pp. gebunden, ISBN 978-3-10-000411-6.

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Goetz Aly's *Endloesung* makes a vital contribution to the scholarship on Nazi Germany, World War II, and the Holocaust. Aly demonstrates how crucial it is to examine these events in relation to one another rather than isolating them by too narrow a gaze. To understand the origins of Nazi genocide, Aly contends, we need to approach the murder of Europe's Jews both in the context of the war and as part of a dynamic, conflicted, monstrous project to transform the demographic face of Europe. Aly proceeds to trace the emergence of the Holocaust from those wider processes in a combination of analysis and chronology that moves from the German conquest of Poland in 1939 to the Wannsee Conference in 1942.

Aly's central argument is captured in his title. The Nazi murder of European Jews during World War II, he maintains, was inextricably linked to a broader agenda of deportation and resettlement (p. 11). As of October 1939, Heinrich Himmler, the man Richard Breitman and others have dubbed the "architect of genocide," was also, Aly points out, *Reichskommissar fuer die Festigung deutschen Volkstums*. In that capacity, Himmler oversaw the ambitious program that was to bring half a million *Volksdeutschen*--ethnic Germans living outside the borders of Germany--*Heim ins Reich* and settle them in the homes, farms, and workshops of people deemed unworthy inferiors (p. 14). It was not only Jews who would be forced out to make space for the new arrivals; Himmler, Heydrich, and their underlings targeted millions of Polish gentiles for expropriation and expulsion too (p. 251). They even cooperated with colleagues in the T-4 program to murder occupants of mental institutions in order to clear beds for "fragile" *Volksdeutschen* (pp. 193, 329).

According to Aly, it was not the success but the failure of one grandiose resettlement scheme after another that upped the murderous ante repeatedly between 1939 and 1942, culminating in a program of systematic annihilation (pp. 95, 397). Clashes among the myriad bureaucracies and interests involved in the German-conquered east, self-imposed pressures to meet targets for expulsion and settlement, the growing impatience of ethnic Germans who had been promised so much and often received so little, military miscalculations and setbacks--these factors combined to create a situation in which Nazi experts reached for

ever-more radical "solutions" to the problems they had created for themselves. Their "final solution" was murder of those at the bottom of their feeding chain: the Jews. But the seeds of that "Endloesung" had long been present, in the Nazi view of some human beings as congenitally inferior to others, in the Fuehrer's insistence that the word for "impossible" had been banished from the German language (p. 396), in bureaucrats' brutal willingness to act as if Jews were in fact already dead (p. 400).

The breadth of Aly's analysis reveals the inability of simple explanations to account for a program as huge and deadly as the Shoah. His complex interpretation indicates the importance of combining the familiar top-down approach to the study of Nazi decision-making with what might be called a middle-out perspective. It is not only Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich that interest Aly but also the lesser-known policy-implementers and initiators down the ranks of the Nazi elite: people like Peter-Heinz Seraphim, the "Jew expert" at the *Institut fuer Deutsche Ostarbeit* in Krakow, or Rolf-Heinz Hoeppner of the *Umwandererzentralstelle* in Posen (pp. 177, 327). Precisely those men in the middle generated much of the large and labyrinthine paper trail that Nazi perpetrators left behind. Indeed, one of Aly's greatest contributions is his exposure of some of the less well-known of those sources in numerous and extensive quotations. Aly's widely researched study reminds us that archival work remains fundamental, even--or perhaps particularly--in our well-traveled field. Aly used German archives in Bonn, Koblenz, Berlin, Potsdam, and Munich, but he also sought out materials in Warsaw, Poznan, Lodz, Lvov, and Moscow that were long inaccessible or available only with difficulty to most scholars. The footnotes alone are worth the price of the book for anyone interested in the locations of Nazi records.

Endloesung speaks to many of the old and new historiographical debates about Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. In a brief section on "Historiker-Kontroversen," Aly establishes himself as a functionalist who stresses the initial experimental nature of the programs of destruction (p. 398). He describes Hitler as neither an all-powerful nor a weak dictator, but rather as a political handler who inspired and empowered his subordinates to develop their own initiatives "to make what seemed impossible possible" (p. 396). Elsewhere, Aly reluctantly offers the first weeks of October 1941 as the most likely date for an official decision for systematic murder of the Jews (p. 358). He even anticipates the Goldhagen debate by recasting the familiar question--"how much was known?"--in terms of German acquiescence: "Why did the Germans want to know so little?" (p. 373).

None of Aly's positions is startling in itself. But what is innovative--and eminently admirable--is Aly's ability to address these familiar controversies without letting them set his agenda. Here it is always the sources that shape the investigation and its outcomes. And the sources convince Aly that the quest for a "Fuehrer Order" that unleashed the Holocaust is a futile one. Decision-making in Nazi Germany did not work that way, he shows. It may satisfy our own desire for clarity to be able to point to an order or announcement that Hitler made at some specific moment, but the real decision was a *process*, in which ideology, possibilities, and initiatives at all levels converged on genocide. Aly's careful charting of this process toward mass murder has an almost Hegelian form. Conflicting Nazi plans and rival offices represent series of theses and antitheses, but the synthesis in every case was the same: an increase in scope and brutality of attacks on the target populations: patients of mental institutions, Polish gentiles, and above all, Jews.

Indirectly but effectively, Aly takes a stand on another issue that has shaped discussions about the Holocaust: the debate about uniqueness and comparability. Among the impulses that moved him to begin the study, his afterword explains,

were the wars in Croatia and Bosnia (p. 434). From those assaults, Aly borrows the vocabulary of "ethnic cleansing"--"ethnische Flurbereinigung" --, and the World War II processes Aly describes resonate all too familiarly with the 1990s. But rather than relativizing or diminishing the Shoah, Aly's allusions to the present both highlight the uniqueness of that past and illustrate its many links: between the agony of Jews and the suffering of their handicapped, Soviet POW, Polish Catholic, and Gypsy contemporaries on the one hand, between the torments of the victims of Nazi genocide and the pain of those victimized in similar ways in our own times on the other hand. In considerable measure, Aly achieves what perhaps all good history attempts: to bring past and present together in a way that enhances understanding of them both.

For all of Aly's strengths, his book has its weaknesses too. Some are stylistic and mechanical--in some cases matters of taste--and others are perhaps reflections of haste. There is an urgency and brilliance about much of the work, as if Aly could not get his ideas out quickly or forcefully enough. That energy is compelling, but it also leaves many loose ends. At times I felt I was reading research notes rather than the finished product, an impression deepened by the point-form chronologies throughout and the unanalyzed quotations at the end. Some relevant new literature does not appear here: for example, books by Christian Jansen and Arno Weckbecker (1992) and Valdis O. Lumans (1993), as well as my article drawing connections between the Nazi definition of *Volksdeutschen* and the murder of Jews (1994). There are disappointingly few citations to materials from the Center for Preservation of Historical Documentary Collections in Moscow (Osobyi), and the list of abbreviations is incomplete. For example, "ZStL," which appears in several notes, is nowhere to be found. Presumably it refers to the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen* in Ludwigsburg, but nothing in Aly's bibliography suggests that he worked there. In fact, the bibliography regrettably includes no information at all regarding the archival sources.

There is also room to dispute some of Aly's larger points. Having read many of the same files that Aly has consulted, I have no doubt that he is right to see connections between the expulsion and murder of Jews and Polish gentiles and the resettlement of ethnic Germans in territories of what before the war had been Poland. But perhaps he overstates his case by suggesting too strong a causal link and downplaying underlying ideologies. If you decide to bring your mother to live with you and then kill one of your children to free up a bedroom, it could hardly be said that the decision to bring your mother into the house caused the death of your child. Something else had to precede that decision; something was clearly wrong with your relationship to your child. The analogy is crude, but by the same token, the fact that so many Nazi bureaucrats at all levels immediately saw theft, enslavement, and murder of Poles and Jews as the "solution" to their self-generated shortages of housing and farms, indicates that destruction was always their priority. Ideology still merits more attention than Aly is willing to grant it.

One of the most astounding parts of Aly's argument involves the links that he shows between arrival of ethnic Germans, for example from the Baltic states, and murder of people deemed handicapped. Here too, the connections are undeniable given the archival records Aly produces: real smoking guns (e.g.: p. 123). But what kind of a state solves its shortage of hospital beds by killing certain patients? And why are some groups vulnerable whereas others are not? These questions force us beyond the realm of the rational where Aly's analysis resides. The case of the Gypsies provides a telling illustration. As Aly notes, the killers often included Gypsies on their hit-lists (pp. 35, 165). But even skewed Nazi logic could see little practical advantage to expropriation and expulsion of people who had neither homes nor prop-

erties suitable for the *Volksdeutschen* resettlers. Pre-existing prejudices must have been a factor. Certainly Nazi ideologues and planners offered destruction of their perceived enemies--Slavs, Gypsies, people deemed handicapped, and above all Jews--as the solution to the challenges of resettling the ethnic Germans. But on closer examination, it is apparent that in fact they offered the same "solution" to every problem they faced, whether it was crime, supposed degeneracy in the arts, lack of "living space," pornography, economic hardship, military setbacks, or national disunity. Saul Friedlaender's concept of "redemptive anti-semitism" might provide a helpful model here for understanding the interplay of fantasy and policy in the Nazi system.

To Aly's credit, he concedes the incompleteness of his interpretation and offers it as a supplement and corrective rather than a rejection of the work of others. There is a refreshing, open-ended quality to the book that invites dialogue and encourages more research. Aly himself graciously acknowledges his debts to many scholars: most notably Raul Hilberg, Hans Safrian, and the more contested Andreas Hillgruber. Meanwhile, his originality and scope assure Aly a following of his own. *Endloesung* belongs in the libraries of everyone serious about understanding the Nazi decisions and actions that wrought such terrible havoc in Europe between 1939 and 1945.

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