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German-Occupied Europe in the Second World War originated as a group of papers given at an academic seminar held in conjunction with the 2016 conference of the German Studies Association. The dozen contributions to this volume constitute an illuminating sampling of the fascinating original research being done on various aspects of World War II-era occupations in Europe. Each chapter is highly specialized in its focus, even as a strong introduction by the editors and afterword by Shelley Baranowski serve to place the contents in a broader analytical framework. The contributions all strive to contribute to our understanding of this period by moving beyond conventional spatial, chronological, and typological categories. The boundaries of their topics do not necessarily converge with those of any given nation-state or with a rigidly delimited time span. The traditional binary oppositions between collaboration and resistance and even between occupiers and occupied are, as has become virtually obligatory in the field, called into question.

In many ways, this proves to be a productive methodology. A couple of early chapters, by Andrew Kless and Chad B. Denton, respectively, explore continuities between German occupations of Poland during the First and Second World Wars. In both cases, infighting and mutual finger-pointing between military and civilian authorities

—and among the many rival governmental and party agencies operating under the aegis of the Nazis—undercut aspirations toward a streamlined efficiency in the exploitation of occupied territory in support of the overarching war effort. On the other hand, occasional continuity in administrative personnel between the two occupations did sometimes facilitate the cultivation of bureaucratic memory and the application of lessons learned and experience gained: Kless reports that the caloric value of official rations for non-Jewish Poles in Warsaw under the Nazis *prior to the 1944 Warsaw Uprising* was not as low as that of official rations in the city under the previous German occupation (p. 26). In his chapter on Alsace under the Nazis, Devlin M. Scofield highlights the transfer of administrative practices between rival regimes: some facets of the ethno-demographic engineering pursued by the Germans in the effectively annexed French region during World War II were clearly more radical and extreme mirror images of assimilation and expulsion policies implemented by the French Third Republic following the region's reunification with France in 1918. To be sure, there were also continuities with approaches taken earlier by Wilhelmine Germany. For their part, as Elizabeth Vlossak argues, pro-French residents of occupied Moselle reflected a broader, quasi-Orientalist west European preju-

dice against east Europeans in the attitudes some of them displayed toward Ukrainian and Polish laborers transported to the region by the Nazis, even as they rejected the legitimacy of their own subjection to German rule.

While the study of such continuities across the disjunctures of twentieth-century European history proves revealing in some respects, it can prove problematic in others. The search for ideas and practices that bridge the divide between pre-Nazi and Nazi occupations necessarily imposes a certain selection bias. In addition, there is an obvious caveat that must accompany any attempt to portray Nazi Germany's occupation policies (and which is emphasized more in some of the chapters than in others): "except for the exterminationist anti-Semitism" (my phrase). In Poland and Lithuania, after all, Jewish culture experienced a blossoming amidst the otherwise admittedly harsh conditions of German occupation during the First World War.[1] Just over two decades later, German forces returned with a murderously transformed agenda toward this large minority population. It seems dangerous to treat the genocidal aspect of Nazi rule as merely an exception to what was otherwise just a variation on good old-fashioned imperialism or wartime occupation. Cold-blooded economic "pragmatism" alone does not suffice to explain the willingness of Nazi German occupiers to actively undertake the systematic starvation of large segments of the population in parts of the occupied Soviet Union, for instance, all the more so in light of the fact that, as Denton points out, some members of the occupation regime recognized that thus alienating potential support, or at least acceptance, on the part of the targeted peoples would ultimately be self-defeating.

Placing "Hitler's empire" in comparative juxtaposition with the long and varied history of European overseas colonialism has been a fruitful line of inquiry in recent years, and this approach informs some of the essays in this collection.[2] In

Bradley Nichols's article on Nazi Germanization policies across the occupied continent, he argues that "like many empires that preceded it, the Third Reich strove to maintain hierarchies of difference among unlike subjects while simultaneously seeking to amalgamate a sizeable proportion of them into the dominant metropolitan culture" (p. 214). At the same time, he provocatively suggests, "a key distinction from nearly every episode of overseas colonialism ... was that the National Socialists invoked race not just as a rationale for exclusion, subordination, and mass murder, but as a vehicle for inclusion, social mobility, and demographic growth" (p. 214). The "race" in question, of course, was the so-called Aryan one, and Nichols goes on to provide an arresting picture of the tensions and clashes between some of the more pragmatically inclined administrators and SS racial-fitness inspectors (*Eignungsprüfer*) over whether cultural, behavioral, and political criteria or physiognomy and documented ancestry should constitute the litmus test for determining who among the non-Jewish populations of occupied Europe could be identified as having enough "German blood" in their veins to be "salvageable" for the Aryan race and hence eligible for Germanization. The SS did not ignore behavioral factors altogether, but the counterintuitive way in which it thought about them reminds us of just how distinctive certain features of what Nichols calls Nazi "racial imperialism" (p. 213) were: they sometimes perceived a fiercely anti-German attitude and conduct as an indication that a subject might possess Aryan blood, while they were more likely to be skeptical about the racial bona fides of someone opportunistically eager to be Germanized. There were cases of individuals and families (in locations as far afield as Luxembourg and Slovenia) identified as actively or even militantly anti-German who were selected for resettlement and assimilation in German core territories precisely on the premise that such nobly, albeit misguidedly, patriotic conduct must be an indication of descent from racially valuable

stock. And in Scandinavia, of course, the SS viewed much of the local population as prime Germanization material, as reflected in the highly active role played by the *Lebensborn* organization in Norway on behalf of local women made pregnant by German men. As Caroline Nielsen makes clear in her contribution on this topic, the real object of the SS's concern was the prospective offspring of these unions, who were generally slated for adoption by a German family, to be raised into a future generation of Nazi cannon fodder.

Needless to say, the cases of anti-German partisans selected for Germanization were a drop in the bucket compared to the untold numbers slaughtered in the course of German counterinsurgency and mass reprisal campaigns. And Nichols takes care to emphasize that this form of "inclusiveness" on the part of the Nazis does not remotely mitigate the horror of their genocidal endeavors. It is, in fact, the other side of the same racist coin, and the amoral and single-minded earnestness with which the regime pursued its racial ideology to its most illogical and self-defeating conclusions in fact constitutes the feature which sets it apart most clearly from other imperial ventures, even as race and racism also clearly constituted an area of connection and overlap with the ideological and behavioral patterns of European overseas colonialism.

Perhaps nothing captures this ambiguous relationship better than the point made by Eric Roubinek in his chapter on the mutual influence and dialogue between Nazi and Italian Fascist advocates of overseas colonialism, who were fixated on the expansion or restoration of their countries' respective colonies in Africa. Portraying their aspirations as a joint project in the revival of European global dominance, and buoyed by Italy's conquest of Ethiopia in 1935-36 and then by German general Erwin Rommel's initial successes in the North African campaign, the publicists and advocates associated with these projects and pipe dreams criticized the British and French overseas

empires as in decline essentially because they were not racist enough! The Rome-Berlin Axis promised to fix that. On the African continent, this vision for an even more viciously inegalitarian form of imperialism did not have a chance to expand beyond the initial territories that fell to the fascist regimes. But in Europe, the Nazis and their collaborators were free for all too long to indulge their perverse extremism to their hearts' content.

There is that word: collaborators. To insist on viewing everything that happened in occupied lands through the lens of collaboration and resistance is to impose a reductionist framework on a highly complex set of moving pieces. But to discard such conventional concepts altogether can be counterproductive as well. The nuanced case studies in this volume remind us that the application of this or that conceptual framework or interpretive paradigm to a historical phenomenon is not right or wrong *per se*. It is, rather, a matter of bringing different analytical lenses to bear on history. Each one can serve to highlight certain features and patterns while simultaneously obscuring others. The key is to be aware that many of the labels we apply are heuristic devices rather than categorical judgements and that the key to comparative history is to let points of contrast highlight what makes each case distinctive even as we observe certain common patterns.

Limitations of space prevent me from giving adequate attention to all of the contributions to this volume, but suffice it to say that this thimble packs a lot of punch. It would serve well as a source of reading assignments in a graduate seminar and it reflects well on a scholarly field that continues to generate new information and important new perspectives on a period of modern history that was as ghastly as it was transformative.

Aviel Roshwald is Professor of History at Georgetown University, Washington, DC. He is the author of the following books: The Endurance of Nationalism: Ancient Roots and Modern Dilem-

mas (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006*); *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East, 1914-1923 (London: Routledge, 2001)*; and *Estranged Bedfellows: Britain and France in the Middle East during the Second World War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990)*. He is the co-editor, with Richard Stites, of *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)*. With Matthew D'Auria and Cathie Carmichael, he is a co-editor of *The Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism (in progress)*. His current research focuses on comparing responses to Axis-power occupations during the Second World War across a range of European and Asian examples.

Notes

[1]. Aviel Roshwald, "Jewish Cultural Identity in Eastern and Central Europe during the Great War," in *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918*, ed. Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 89-126; Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[2]. Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2009); Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

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