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Chapter 1 : Project MUSE - Philosopher as Witness, The

CHAPTER Willful Murder in the Lublin District of Poland Michael L. Morgan, Benjamin Pollock; State University of New York Press; In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content.

Film Reviews See for example, Christopher R. Peter Lang, ; idem, Nationalsozialistischer Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien Indiana University Press, Richard Breitman, The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution New York: Knopf, , pp. Indiana University Press , p. Yad Tabenkin, , pp. Blackwell, , May 23, , pp. I thank Professor Dan Michman for bringing these to my attention. Princeton University Press, Who set the stage for the murder of the Jews during the Holocaust? Who participated in the murder? To what extent were the participants in the murder willful perpetrators? To what extent were they anonymous bureaucrats doing their small part, or low-ranking field officials following orders? These are among the questions that have concerned historians for many years. However, research published during the last decade has shown conclusively in every case examined to date that the participants in the murder were generally both willful and knowing. He has undertaken to examine the civilian administration of the Lublin district of the Generalgouvernement GG , and the results of his extensive and in-depth research are noteworthy. Musial also benefited from access to archives that were not yet open when Pohl did his original Lublin research. The foci of the two books, therefore, are different, though complementary. For example, whereas Pohl sees the SS as decisive in Jewish policy in the Lublin district from very early on, Musial sees the civilian administration as having the upper hand in the first two years of German rule. Yet at the root of their disagreements on various interpretations, there is also quite a bit of agreement, as in the willfulness and cooperation of the various German authorities during the murder. The result is generally complementary analyses and conclusions based on a great deal of shared information. Musial demonstrates conclusively that the civilian administration of the GG, and especially of the Lublin district, had an important role to play in all anti-Jewish policies, including the murder. Individuals and governmental departments that might otherwise escape our attention are here brought into focus, and this focus is telling. Like their SS and police counterparts, they, too, were willing, knowing, and active participants in the persecution and then in the murder of Polish Jewry. It took several months for the civilian administration of the Generalgouvernement to become fully manned and operational after its official inception on October 26, They jockeyed for authority in many policy areas, including Jewish policy. Frank had no authority over the SS or police, and this rankled him, as the SS pursued independent policies that affected all of the Generalgouvernement. One of the main points of contention, Musial notes, was resettlements. Himmler had plans for a major demographic reordering of Central and Eastern Europe, and this involved moving millions of people. As part of these grandiose schemes, some , Poles were deported from the Germanannexed eastern Polish territories to the GG between the autumn of and early Frank opposed these resettlements for logistic, administrative, and sovereign reasons. These masses of refugees disrupted the smooth running of the GG and infringed upon his authority. Within his introductory comments on this issue, Musial reveals one of the great strengths of this book " as well as one of its weaknesses. Musial has examined a wealth of documentation in Poland and Germany, much of it never before addressed so thoroughly by historians. In this case, early in the book p. Musial takes advantage of the many statistics accumulated by this department, which, among its other duties, was responsible for keeping track of the GG population. As Musial so effectively shows throughout the book, within the German civilian regime in the GG and in Lublin, the BuF played a central role in planning and implementing anti-Jewish policy. If he had engaged in no analysis whatsoever, he would already have done a service to historians merely by highlighting the BuF material. But were these Jews deported as Poles, as Musial intimates? Musial is generally clear in the book that German anti-Jewish policy was specifically that " anti-Jewish. But at the same time, a basic, underlying perception that Poles and Jews were treated more or less the same and were destined to suffer the same fate creeps in repeatedly throughout the book. The question of Nazi long-range plans for Poles and Slavs in general

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is an important one about which there is a body of literature and differences of opinion among scholars. Yet Musial does not enter the discussion by devoting a thorough chapter to this question. Thus, his periodic and unsubstantiated lumping of German anti-Polish policy with their anti-Jewish policy is awkwardly out of step with the rest of the book, which has such a strong documentary foundation. The book has three main sections: He attributes the somewhat slower development of the civilian administration in Lublin mainly to two factors: In order to understand the development and implementation of German policy toward the Jews in the GG, then, we must examine the BuF and the Kreishauptleute. This Musial does, and, indeed, one of his main contributions is in delving into this civilian apparatus. In the first part of the book, we already meet most of the main characters that feature in this civilian administration. Musial reveals that the GG and Lublin German civil service included many qualified people. Ds, and two had professional diplomas in the field. Of sixty staff members in the district labor department in October , fifteen were high-ranking civil servants p. Yet at the same time, many of them were sent by their government ministries in Berlin to the GG because they were problematic workers in the eyes of their superiors. Moreover, these professional civil servants constituted only a small fraction of the GG government bureaucracy and were augmented by a variety of opportunists, professionals, people looking to rehabilitate their reputations, party members receiving cushy jobs, ideologically motivated Nazis, and so on. Top quality officials tended to look upon a job in the GG as undesirable, particularly in Lublin, which was viewed as uncultured and monotonous. The low quality of many of these civil servants in the GG also led the top officials to lower their expectations of them. They turned a blind eye to minor infractions and mediocre job performance, leaving men of doubtful quality in their posts. For example, Musial cites the case of Josef Ackermann, who was sent to Lublin bearing a previous conviction. He remained there until the German retreat in pp. It is, therefore, even more telling when Musial points out that, not only did the ranks of the Kreishauptleute, the pillars of the German administration, include any number of such dubious officials, but also the fate of the occupied peoples depended to a large degree on who their Kreishauptmann was pp. Musial strikes a distinction in the approach to anti-Jewish policy: The SS had neither the manpower nor the expertise to run the day-to-day affairs of the Jews on the local level, unless it was in the large cities, where SS forces were concentrated. Thus, much of what constituted local policy regarding the Jews, until the end of , was in the hands of the German local authorities “ whether it be isolation, ghettoization, property and business expropriation, or much of the forced labor. However, this might not be as clear-cut as he indicates. Musial believes that Frank played an important role in the discussions that led to the murder of the Jews in the Generalgouvernement. By October , Musial shows, most GG officials, SS, and police were unified in their opinion that the Jews needed to be killed, although their reasons were not identical. For those who were not yet fully convinced, Frank launched into his speech on December Still, the decision to murder the Jews of the Generalgouvernement is not at the heart of the book; rather, it concentrates on the consensus with regard to the murder. Still, the points of consensus and attempts at cooperation at this time seem far more significant “ even more so than Musial seems to believe. This consensus regarding the murder is reflected in the civilian initiatives undertaken in the Lublin district to deport and kill Jews. Indeed, given their close, hands-on contact with the implementation of policy, they were the most appropriate officials to organize deportations. They also took command of deportations in quite a few places. No case has yet been uncovered of opposition to the murder. The only matter that worried them, apparently, was that the murder of those Jews deemed unfit for labor the large majority was progressing too slowly p. Here the civilian authorities played a secondary support role to the SS, focusing largely on concentrating the Jews in a few localities so that they would be ripe for the taking. Yet this secondary role did not mean that the civilians did not take the initiative in brutality. Moreover, the civilian officials played an active role in the hunt for Jews who had escaped. Whereas Globocnik and his staff were in charge of the hunts, the local German officials did much of the work, together with local Poles and Ukrainians. As the author notes, they escaped justice with far greater success than the Jews escaped their murderous clutches. Not only were they not brought before the bar of justice, but also a number of these officials actually rose in the ranks of the postwar German judicial

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system. Musial provides dozens of illustrations of postwar success in order to make his point regarding the lack of justice for these perpetrators. Of all of these, three stand out in particular for this reviewer. After the war he rose to a high-ranking civil-service position in the press and information office of the Federal Republic of Germany. Claus Volkmann was a veteran Nazi and member of the SS. Did his record of endangering Jews provide the necessary experience for this post? He became active in West German politics after the war, especially in fighting for the rights of Germans who had been expelled from other countries. Here, too, his wartime experience with moving large numbers of people, even to their deaths, seems to have qualified him. Musial has made extensive use of German and Polish sources and has used Jewish sources to some extent. Other available Jewish sources in Polish and German archives not to mention Israeli and American have also not been consulted. However, the very same place appears in Jewish sources as a hachsharah training camp to which Zionist youth movements from Warsaw and other parts of the GG tried to send their members. Yet he does not discuss if the official weekly rations of g. Jewish survivor testimony indicates that the rations in Lublin were actually much smaller. What food rations did the Jews actually receive? How do we reconcile these conflicting records? These are questions worthy of discussion, but only an examination of a wider variety of sources can allow us even to raise them, let alone provide answers. And this goes back to the broader question “ the ongoing discussion between scholars in Germany and Israel regarding how to approach research on the Holocaust. Musial is very much a part of the German school of history that seeks to understand the perpetrators through their own documentation and testimony.

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