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A COMPANION TO
NAZI GERMANY

EDITED BY

Shelley Baranowski, Armin Nolzen
and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann

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A Companion to Nazi Germany

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Introduction

*SHELLEY BARANOWSKI, ARMIN NOLZEN, AND
CLAUS-CHRISTIAN W. SZEJNMANN*

0.1 Overview

During its brief lifetime, National Socialist Germany became one of the most, if not the most, destructive regimes in history (Burleigh and Wippermann 1991; Evans 2003, 2005, 2008). Its imperialism, which at minimum aspired to dominate Europe, entailed the massive expulsions of racial ‘inferiors’ from territories that the Nazi leadership slated for colonial settlement, the ruthless exploitation of agricultural land, natural resources, and labour, and the persecution and murder of many groups, including the total extermination of the Jews (Hilberg 1961; Friedländer 1997, 2007; Mazower 2009). As the most extreme outcome of European continental and global rivalries since the sixteenth century, the Nazi regime succumbed only after a long and ruinous war that ended European hegemony and reshaped a global order dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union for nearly a half a century. The scale of Nazi violence, the extent of its racial ‘purification’, and especially its eliminationist antisemitism continue to disturb us to this day.

Since the end of the Second World War, historians have continually debated the causes of National Socialism’s rise to and consolidation of power and the Nazi regime’s motivations for territorial expansion and genocide (Kershaw 2015). Was Nazism the result of Germany’s pathological development since (variously) the Reformation, the failed revolutions of 1848, the Bismarckian unification in 1871, or the defeat in the First World War, or was it the most extreme outcome of European modernity? Was Nazism the expression of lower middle-class resentment directed especially against the working class, or was it in fact a ‘catch-all’ protest party that cut across class, religious, and regional lines? To what degree was Nazism anti-Marxist or anti-capitalist? To what extent did the Third Reich rule by terror?

Or was popular consent at least as important in sustaining Nazism as repression? To what extent did Germans share Nazism's ideology and objectives, including eliminationist antisemitism? And what exactly was Nazi ideology and how did it relate to and engage with contemporary traditions and ideas? Also, did Hitler and the Nazi leadership plan the 'Final Solution' far in advance or did the extermination of the Jews evolve from 'cumulative radicalization' (Mommesen 1997), the exigencies of war, or the complex interplay between initiatives on the ground and at the top?

Over the last two decades, approaches and themes in the scholarship about Nazism as well as public engagement and the readiness to confront the past have changed dramatically due to developments such as the 'cultural turn' and comparative history, generational shifts, the end of the Cold War, German unification, and the increasing influence of the media and the digital revolution. In the meantime, the burgeoning scholarship on the Holocaust since the end of the Cold War, including 'perpetrator studies' (Hilberg 1993; Herbert 2000; Longerich 2012), recent explorations on Nazism and colonialism, and newer work on the impact of the Nazi 'people's community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*; see Steber and Gotto 2014), is raising new questions about the way the Third Reich operated and about the relationship between the Nazi regime and the German people. Nowadays, it seems highly questionable to consider this relationship a dichotomy between 'authority' (*Herrschaft*) and 'society' (*Gesellschaft*). There is now a 'societal turn', which understands Nazi Germany as a type of a modern genocidal regime in which politics, the economy, law, art, and education intersected and to which more or less all groups in society – civil service, technical elites, middle classes, workers, women, and youths – heavily contributed (Kühne 2010; Stargardt 2015). The central focus on Hitler is greatly diminished, and whilst we do not wish to downplay aspects of terror during the regime (Wachsmann 2015), accommodation, activism, and consent were the most common patterns of behaviour, and resistance to Nazism was a rare exception (Gellately 2002; Fritzsche 2008; Rohkrämer 2013). The focus of this volume will be on covering Nazi society as a whole, showing the interrelations between high politics, mass culture, daily life and collective and individual behaviour. Its main concern is to show how Nazism was able to infiltrate and mobilize German society as a whole and the extent to which 'ordinary Germans' contributed.

Coming to terms with Nazism shaped both Germanys after the Second World War and continues to influence united Germany since 1990. Issues such as memories, reparations, and pedagogy, and the work of memorial sites and museums have gained in importance and make the topic of continuing relevance today (Reichel, Schmid, and Steinbach 2009). This is because much of the Western world sees the Holocaust and Nazism as a moral 'ground zero' in the past and as the ultimate example of evil, which serve as a lesson and moral standard for the present and the future. However, the days when it seemed the preserve of historians and politicians to engage with Nazism are long gone. Journalists, writers, artists, filmmakers, and also the wider public have often made crucial contributions and shaped debates and approaches, while companies, cities, and public services are commissioning (or resisting!) studies about their particular role during the Third Reich.

Seventy years after the end of the Third Reich, traditional periodization has lost relevance, and contextualizing Nazism and the Third Reich is much broader than before. This volume makes an effort to shed light on continuities and discontinuities by going beyond the years that mark the start and the end of the Nazi dictatorship, 1933 and 1945, for example, by exploring what happened to Nazi perpetrators after 1945 in both Germanys. Today many scholars question whether it makes sense to see the Holocaust as a unique event, or rather as the most extreme example of genocide that has become a horrific feature of modern humankind. These questions will be addressed more thoroughly by a separate Blackwell companion to the Holocaust which will be edited by Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (2018). One thing seems certain: Nazism and the Third Reich occupy an undiminishing importance and relevance in today's societies. It is time to take stock of exciting and path-breaking new developments and approaches. Whilst this volume cannot and does not claim to cover all of them, its contributions nevertheless seek to take stock of, reflect on, and suggest new avenues for research and engagement on some of the major issues surrounding the topic.

0.2 Contents

The *Companion to Nazi Germany* begins with the Nazi Party's emergence in the 1920s, continues through its rise to power in the early 1930s to the defeat of the Third Reich in 1945, and concludes with its complex repercussions in the post-war era. Each chapter assesses the relevant historiographical debates and raises questions that will stimulate new research. The chapters are grouped under five thematic topics: (I) Theories, Background, and Contexts; (II) Structures of Nazi Rule; (III) Economy and Culture; (IV) Race, Imperialism, and Genocide; and (V) Legacies of Nazism. Although it is difficult to avoid overlap among the sections – the most obvious case being the theme of race – we have grouped the chapters according to their primary emphasis.

0.2.1 *Theories, Background, and Contexts*

This section has two objectives: first, to assess the historiography of Nazism, and second, to explore the prehistory of the Nazi regime from the First World War to 1933. Thus, Geoff Eley's 'How Do We Explain the Rise of Nazism? Theory and Historiography' begins by surveying the debates from the 1920s to the present: fascism, totalitarianism, the German 'deviation' from the West (*Sonderweg*), and the discussion about continuities and/or discontinuities from earlier periods in German history to the Third Reich. After surveying the social histories of the rise of Nazism and the dynamics of the Nazi appeal, Eley argues that carefully distinguishing between the political and economic sources of Weimar's delegitimization allows us to appreciate in a fresh way the significance of the republic's last four years. Konrad Jarausch's 'Organic Modernity: National Socialism as Alternative Modernism' zeroes in on one of the most persistent historical debates, the relationship between National Socialism and the modern era. Rather than see Nazism and modernity as opposites or as an example of 'reactionary modernism', as Jeffrey

Herf (1984) argued, Jarausch provides the rubric of ‘organic modernity’, Nazism’s attempt to create a ‘racial utopia’ that would eliminate the social polarization inherent in the democratic and communist variants of modernity.

As for the contexts of Nazism’s emergence, Benjamin Ziemann’s ‘The First World War and National Socialism’ opens by acknowledging the significance of the war and the German defeat to the emergence of Nazism, which recent scholarship has emphasized. Yet by examining public political performances and symbols, he underscores the limited impact of the German right despite its putschism, emphasizing instead the ability of the republican state and pro-republican groups to create a democratic polity for a time. It was not until the mid-1920s that the right began to realign as the Nazi Party reformed and ultimately assumed leadership, especially as the Weimar economy weakened. Similar to Ziemann’s recognition of the contingencies of the Nazi rise to power, Shelley Baranowski’s ‘The Collapse of the Weimar Parliamentary System’ notes that historians of Germany no longer accept that the Weimar Republic was congenitally flawed from its beginnings. Instead, piecing together recent trends in the scholarship, she suggests that the breakdown of the parliamentary system after 1929 arose from a perfect storm, which combined the increasing reluctance of the First World War allies to exert leverage over Germany (unlike during the hyperinflation and putschism of 1923), the anti-republican radicalization and fragmentation of the German right, and the mushrooming popular support for National Socialism. Alternatively, Claus-Christian Szejnmann’s ‘National Socialist Ideology’ looks at how Nazi ideology was intrinsically interwoven with German traditions and the emotions and expectations of many of its people. He argues against brushing aside Nazi ideology as ‘mere propaganda’ or narrowly focusing on its violent antisemitic core. Instead, he takes seriously the attempts by the Nazis to *persuade* Germans on a variety of pressing concerns during a historically unique crisis by engaging with society and its diverse culture and traditions, by being shaped by it and contributing to it themselves – including the emergence of a powerful anti-capitalist *Zeitgeist* – and by negotiating shared visions as well as differences and conflicts. Szejnmann thus helps to explain the Nazis’ increasing popularity during the Weimar Republic, the binding force and dynamic nature of the ‘people’s community’, and Nazism’s ability to penetrate and mobilize society so comprehensively during the racist dictatorship.

0.2.2 Structures of Nazi Rule

Since the 1960s, the scholarship has moved away from exclusively top-down approaches. Yet it is appropriate to begin our examination of the Third Reich in power with a section on the party itself and its efforts to transform the German state and impose its ideological imperatives. Beginning with the Nazi Party organization, Armin Nolzen’s ‘The NSDAP After 1933: Members, Positions, Technologies, Interactions’ evaluates the history of the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) between 1933 and 1945 by examining its members, positions, technologies, and interactions. With its rapid membership growth, the party developed into four distinct organizational units: the party itself, its divisions, affiliates, and sponsored organizations. Through a process of ongoing differentiation,

each of these units separated from one another after 1933. Simultaneously the NSDAP transformed its positions and cadre politics into a hierarchy, which advanced six technologies to pursue its 'people management' (*Menschenführung*): institutionalization, education, mobilization, violence, social work, and policing. Through those technologies, the NSDAP overcame its inner conflicts. Jens-Uwe Guettel's 'Work(ers) Under the Swastika' argues that the Nazi regime's repression of organized labour in the months immediately following its assumption to power was critical to bringing its other ideological goals to fruition (see also Mason 1993). To be sure, Guettel points out that despite the size of the working-class parties and organizations, workers themselves did not compose a unified bloc and their positions towards the Nazi regime varied from acceptance to begrudged accommodation. Nevertheless, having noted the declining interest in labour history in recent years, he forcefully argues for the reintroduction of labour as indispensable category of analysis (see also Wildt and Buggehn 2014). Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann's 'Resistance' shows how in the historiography about the Third Reich various kinds of 'Widerstand' against Hitler have competed with a narrow interpretation that associated with it the aim to destroy Nazism. In response, he identifies several periods and types of resistance: communist resistance, socialist resistance, dissent and nonconformity on the basis of religious convictions, military opposition, Jewish resistance, youth resistance, and resistance behind barbed wires. The numerous types of resistance, nonconformity, and dissent stress the need for a broad definition of 'Widerstand' which also allows for terminological diversification. Above all, Schmiechen-Ackermann argues that after 1933 accommodation and collaboration were the normal patterns of public behaviour, while 'resistance' aiming to overthrow the Nazi regime was pursued only by a minority.

In turn, Thomas Schaarschmidt's 'Centre and Periphery' describes the establishment of the Nazi state beginning with its destruction of federalism, which had been a key principle of the German constitution since the Reich's founding in 1871. After Hitler came to power, it took just two years to establish a highly centralized state in which regional institutions were supposed to be little more than administrations working on behalf of central authorities. Nevertheless, the improvised character of the Nazi state provoked new power arrangements on the intermediate level which helped to mobilize social and material resources for Hitler's military objectives. In this context, regional party leaders became key players. Since they were invested with new powers during the war, they became crucial for the interaction of the central, intermediate, and local levels in Nazi Germany. Thomas Pegelow Kaplan's 'Information Policies and Linguistic Violence' describes the efforts of the Nazi propaganda ministry under Joseph Goebbels to redirect the resources of the state to fight Nazism's enemies. Noting that historians have either overemphasized or minimized the power of Nazi propaganda, he focuses instead on the 'linguistic violence' that Nazi information agencies deployed, which permeated everyday discourse. Using the Reich 'Crystal Night' (*Kristallnacht*) pogrom as an example, Pegelow Kaplan argues that 'linguistic violence' targeted racial 'enemies' and in turn spawned actual violence. Although 'enemies' carved out some space to contest their persecution, the agencies associated with the propaganda ministry were crucial to reconstructing the language to exclude and punish those whom the regime assaulted.

Kiran Klaus Patel, in ‘Education, Schooling, and Camps’, stresses the continuities with earlier periods in Nazi educational thinking and practice. He points out the inconsistencies and conflicts in the Nazi educational system and emphasizes the active role of ordinary citizens. While some Germans opposed the Third Reich’s educational efforts and others were excluded from its remit, many actively embraced its educational agenda. This held true for Germans of both sexes. Self-mobilization was therefore often more important than top-down ideologization, and individual educational institutions were often less influential than the fact that Germans were increasingly part of a society shaped by Nazi values. Michael Grüttner’s ‘Research and Scholarship’ shows that National Socialism indeed was an anti-intellectual movement that restricted academic freedom. Yet Nazism was not anti-science, as has been claimed for a long time; rather it tried to use science for its own purposes. The Nazi regime developed an instrumental attitude towards science with different consequences for various academic disciplines. Whereas the Third Reich supported the natural and engineering sciences, the humanities stagnated and theology feared for its existence. Nevertheless, scholars and scientists in numerous fields willingly participated in the regime’s repression, racial cleansing, imperialism, and genocide. To a certain degree, they were motivated by a particular Nazi morality which Thomas Kühne discusses in his chapter. Its components – race as the law of nature, a code of honour, an ethic of hardness, and the dictatorship of the community over the individual – were to replace Judaeo-Christian and Western moralities. Yet the Nazi regime did not succeed in replacing the older moralities. Instead, the murderous violence of the Third Reich arose from the competition between Nazi morality and its predecessors.

Finally, Richard Overy and Sven Keller shift our attention to Germany internally as the prospect of defeat loomed. Both contributions converge on the question as to why Germans held firm until the war’s end. Overy’s ‘The German Home Front Under the Bombs’ focuses on a central problem for the dictatorship in keeping together a wartime consensus and ensuring that there was no repeat of the crisis in 1918, particularly once heavy bombing of German working-class districts began. After examining social and economic experiences, the impact of Allied bombing, and the regime’s effort to uphold a consensus, Overy concludes that most clung to the hope that ultimately Germany would prevail. Similarly, Sven Keller’s ‘Total Defeat: War, Society, and Violence in the Last Year of National Socialism’ surveys four topics to demonstrate the recent scholarly attention to the final years of the Third Reich: the impact of military setbacks, the nature of Nazi rule and internal crises, Nazi violence, and finally the impact of defeat. In response to the question about why the Germans ‘stuck it out’ (*durchhalten*), Keller argues that the Nazi regime remained sufficiently stable to ensure its survival until the Allies defeated it.

0.2.3 *Economy and Culture*

This section shifts our attention to the complex reception, relationships, and negotiations between the Nazi regime, the drivers of the German economy, German cultural institutions, and German society at large. Consistent with recent scholarship, one of the most prominent themes of the chapters here challenge once

hard-and-fast distinctions between support for the regime and opposition to it, inasmuch as the lines between them were murky, variable, circumstantial, and dependent on personal or group commitments and interests. If many Germans had reservations about the regime, those did not suffice to produce sustained opposition. Some of the chapters in this section deal with ambiguities in the broader society and in the interior lives of Germans; ambiguities which reveal both the limits of opposition to the Nazi regime and the durability of identities that pre-existed National Socialism. Yet they also underscore the subtle ways in which Germans aligned themselves at least partially to Nazi values and objectives.

Stephen Gross's 'The Nazi Economy' capitalizes on the rediscovery of Franz Neumann's pioneering work of 1942, and in particular devotes attention to four issues relevant to the relationship between the Nazi state and the German economy: imperialism, crises in foreign trade, the guidance of private industry, and 'Aryanization' (*Arisierung*). After assessing the numerous debates about the economy, Gross emphasizes the complex mix between coercion and collaboration that linked the state and German corporations forged by the Depression, war, and imperialism. Likewise, Kim Christian Priemel's chapter, 'National Socialism and German Business', deals with corporations but specifically challenges the long-standing controversy as to whether in the Third Reich politics dominated the economy or vice versa. Therefore, he highlights how negotiations between the Nazi government and corporations shaped economic policies and business strategies and demanded compromises on both sides. Although big business did not bring the Nazis to power, Priemel argues, entrepreneurs and managers supported the regime's most central objectives. Expanding the discussion from production to consumption, Pamela Swett's 'Individual Consumers and Consumption in Nazi Germany' analyses various aspects of consumer culture in Nazi Germany ranging from the regime's 'people's products' to privately marketed consumer goods. She argues that the enticements to 'Aryan' Germans to consume reflected trends begun before 1933 and seen elsewhere in Europe. Swett maintains that despite the Nazi regime's calls for a *Volksgemeinschaft*, which would eliminate social conflict, class difference continued to shape individuals' identities as consumers and corporate efforts to sell goods and services. Pre-existing social structures and international trends proved at least as strong as Nazi appeals to a 'people's community'.

Shifting our attention to the diverse components of culture in the Third Reich, Elizabeth Harvey examines how gender was implicated in the regime's racially defined order of exclusion, inclusion, and subordination. She focuses especially on practices of persecution and exclusion in Germany after 1933, models of activism and comradeship within the Nazi movement, and conquest and territorial expansion in the Second World War. From its beginnings, Nazism championed virility and male 'comradeship' and presupposed the subordination of women. Yet Harvey notes that the opportunities for women's participation expanded during the Third Reich, which made women complicit in its racist practices and imperialism. Manfred Gailus's 'Religion' analyses the complex history of Protestants and Catholics during the Third Reich. Religious revival and an avoidance of open opposition to antisemitic policies characterized both major churches, although bitter internal divisions characterized Protestants more than Catholics. Inconsistency characterized the

religious policy of the NSDAP and the Nazi state. Gailus argues that in the long run, despite the hopes of both churches for a 're-christianization' of society, the Nazi regime aimed at superseding the 'old belief' (Christianity) with a 'new belief', the Nazi quasi-religious and racial 'German Belief' (*Deutschglaube*). Lisa Pine's chapter, 'Family and Private Life', deals with the inherent racism implemented by the Nazi regime to redress both the 'crisis of the family' and the decline in the nation's birth rate. She examines a series of measures and incentives designed to achieve the goal of increasing the birth rate. In the process, she explores the blatantly sinister side of Nazi family and population policy, including the sterilization law of July 1933 and legal measures to prevent marriages between Jews and 'Aryans' and marriages between healthy 'Aryans' and those deemed 'unfit' for marriage due to physical or mental illness.

The topics of sport, cinema and the arts, emotions, and the environment further expand this volume's attention to the diverse expressions of culture. Frank Becker's chapter on sports describes its integration into the National Socialist concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Sports were to embody the National Socialist idea of humankind, which was oriented towards action and deed. They were to procure health, strength, and beauty for the 'German body' (*Volkskörper*) in the following ways: to provide statistical data and facilitate biopolitical interventions; to allow the practical experience of 'racial identity' (*Rassenidentität*) through body-centred actions; to put the *Volksgemeinschaft* on display during mass performances; to toughen the people for work and war, and to provide a perceptual foil for warfare using sport's competitive character. To accomplish these tasks, the valuation of sports greatly increased in the German educational system, as well as in National Socialist mass organizations. The traditional German system of sports clubs and associations was aligned to the Nazi Party's structure (*gleichgeschaltet*). Yet Nazi organizations that promoted sports engaged in a process of negotiation that had the effect of integrating even self-described nonconformists. Daniel Mühlenfeld's chapter on cinema, art, and music, aspects of culture that several institutions (from the propaganda ministry to the German Labour Front) sought to shape, offers a threefold examination of cultural policy in the Third Reich, the role of artists, and popular reception. He argues that although the Nazi vision of culture lacked a coherent agenda other than the negative identification of what was 'Jewish' or 'degenerate', popular reception was critical to Nazism's paramount consideration, the prevention of social unrest. Thus, the need for entertainment and escapism increasingly defined the regime's support of the arts, especially that projected by the radio and cinema. Alexandra Przyrembel applies the insights of a relatively new field of study, the history of emotions, to enable a better understanding of the popular acceptance of National Socialism, one that broadens the current discussion about the extent and limits of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The two 'emotional regimes' that she uses as examples, the 'positive' emotions of love and caring in the case of women and ambivalent or negative feelings towards Jews as reflected in court cases, became 'spaces of communication' that eased their acceptance of National Socialism, especially its racial politics. Finally, Charles Closmann's chapter analyses the contradictions in the Nazi regime's seemingly 'positive' environmental policy of sustainability and preservation. At the outset of Nazi rule, some high-ranking Nazi leaders supported

sustainability and an array of ecological initiatives, and overall its record was comparable to that of the Weimar and Federal Republics. In fact, the Reich Nature Protection Law of 1935 allowed unprecedented power to expropriate land to preserve natural monuments and resources without compensation. Nevertheless the regime's work creation programmes, the centrality of autarky and expansionism, and total war triumphed over sustainable forestry, clean water, the fertility of the soil, and biodynamic farming.

0.2.4 *Race, Imperialism, and Genocide*

In the 1980s and 1990s, historians shifted away from debating the class bases of Nazism and redirected their attention to Nazi ideology, especially its racism and antisemitism. Part of this was driven by an attempt to explain the participation of 'ordinary' Germans in the Nazi regime's crimes. These trends, together with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the reunification of Germany between 1989 and 1991, significantly expanded the archival sources available for studying the war itself and increased the desire among scholars to overcome the once dominant (and narrow) focus on the Nazi regime before the war.

Dieter Pohl's chapter covers the uses of terror before and during the Second World War. He emphasizes first that the Nazi regime aimed at intimidating and destroying its real and potential opponents. Though distinct from systematic racial violence like the crimes against Jews, Roma, the mentally ill, or the mass deportations of Poles and Slovenes, terror was also inherent in racial persecution. Pohl analyses four phases of terror beginning with the *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power) of 1933/34, which revealed the typical pattern of acquiring and sustaining power in an authoritarian dictatorship. Second, he describes the deployment of terror within the camp system, in addition to the camps' political and economic functions and development over time and space. Third, he describes terror in the process of conquering foreign countries during the campaigns in 1939 and 1941, which was closely connected to warfare but also included the systematic killing of the intelligentsia in Poland and the Soviet Union. Fourth, he addresses the policies of suppression and 'reprisal' in occupied territories. Alternatively, Debórah Dwork's 'Flight and Exile' focuses on those who struggled to escape Nazi terror. She pushes beyond the usual concentration on flight from a particular country to a particular destination. Instead she focuses on the escape, especially of Jews, to a variety of destinations from the entirety of Nazi-occupied Europe. Arguing that the experiences of refugees have mostly escaped the attention of Holocaust historians, Dwork suggests that the history of flight and exile expands the history of the Holocaust into a previously underexplored area. Although fortunate to have escaped the cataclysm, being uprooted and in many cases only partially integrated into their receiving nations, many refugees continued to lead difficult lives.

This section then moves to the preparations for war and the conduct of the war itself. In his account, 'Germany and the Outside World', Lars Lüdicke discusses the menacing underpinnings of Nazi foreign policy. On 30 January 1933, the German Reich was considerably demilitarized and multinationally embedded in and dependent on the 'outside world' – and thus was further away from being ready for war

than other European Great Powers. And yet, only six and a half years later, on 1 September 1939, Hitler was able to unleash a long-lasting global ‘racial war’ (*Rassenkrieg*) towards victory or downfall. Within six years the Reich was armed and several crucial barriers were broken. That the other European powers failed to cooperate against the initially weak Nazi state between 1933 and 1939 cannot be explained from the perspective of national history, but only in terms of a ‘history of facilitation’ derived from multipolar interaction and by taking the strategies of the ‘outside world’ into account. For his part, Jörg Echternkamp focuses on German ‘militarism’ and Nazi preparations for war, starting soon after Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933. Because military conflicts of the future were likely to involve total war, these preparations had to mobilize society as extensively as possible. As Echternkamp shows, the Wehrmacht benefited heavily from that process because it increased its manpower by universal conscription and the paramilitaries of the NSDAP, especially the Hitler Youth. At the beginning of the war, the Wehrmacht mobilized some 4 556 000 men following the almost unchecked build-up and expansion of the army, navy, and air force. Of those, 750 000 made up the active force (22 600 officers and some 150 000 NCOs) and 3.8 million served as their replacements. The mobilization of personnel, rearmament, and the nation ideologically ‘ready to defend itself’ turned the 100 000-strong army of the Weimar Republic into a ‘military community’ which numbered some 10 million conscripts in total among the 18 million German soldiers who fought in the Second World War.

We then turn our attention to three chapters that demonstrate the recent interest in the Nazi regime’s racial agendas. Isabel Heinemann evaluates National Socialist race theories and racial policies, their preconditions, practices, and outcomes. She asks first whether the deeply rooted belief in different categories of ‘racial worth’ (*Rassewert*) and ‘racial degradation’ (*Entartung*) helps to explain the internal functioning of the Nazi regime and the unbroken loyalty of perpetrators, bystanders, and collaborators until the very end. Second, she analyses to what degree Nazi racism differed from race theories and policies common in the Western countries during the first half of the twentieth century. Heinemann concludes that ‘race’ needs to be considered as the central integrating principle of the Nazi state, one that incorporates other basic tenets, including the economic exploitation of the occupied countries. Marc Buggeln and Alexa Stiller deal with populations subject to Nazi rule. Buggeln’s ‘Unfree and Forced Labour’ addresses modern dictatorships’ inherent tendency to limit or even abolish free employment relationships that predominate in democratic capitalist states. For him, it comes as no surprise that from 1933 the Nazi regime introduced various forms of compulsory and forced labour. Yet it was not until the beginning of the war that the Nazi authorities established an almost Europe-wide network of forced labour based on deportation, hunger, violence, and finally mass murder. Civilian forced labourers, prisoners of war, and concentration camp detainees were coerced into working under disastrous conditions to keep the German war economy running. Foreign forced labourers deported to Germany usually were, in material terms, better off than in their home countries, but they often faced a hostile environment. Stiller’s ‘Ethnic Germans’ turns our attention to *Volksdeutsche* (‘ethnic Germans’) living in Nazi-occupied countries. The alleged homogeneity of these groups, she argues, was in

fact a political construction of the Nazis. The Nazi regime made *Volkstum* (ethnicity) policy a guide for imposing a uniform identity on Germans outside the Reich. Its support for ‘ethnic Germans’ in Europe was the reverse side of its policy towards Jews and other ‘undesired’ populations. ‘Ethnic Germans’ were targets of, witnesses to, and perpetrators of Nazi mass violence during the Second World War.

The conditions that subject populations endured in German-occupied Europe were horrendous, especially in the East where the Third Reich imagined its enlarged imperium. Forced labour, hunger and starvation, repression, and mass executions were routine. Yet the Holocaust – the extermination of the Jews – reached another level of horror. Antisemitism was central to the Nazis’ conspiratorial interpretations of the past and present, and eliminating the Jews was crucial to creating the *Volksgemeinschaft* and expanding Germany’s *Lebensraum* (‘living space’). Therefore, this section concludes with two essays that illuminate both the current debate and the experiences of the initiators of the Holocaust and their victims. Andrea Löw focuses on the Nazi practice of ghettoization with which the Nazi regime continued its policies of the spatial segregation of ‘ordinary Germans’ and their ‘objective enemies’. The majority of Jews persecuted by the Nazis were forced to live in ghettos for periods of varying duration. Some ghettos existed for several years, others only for a few weeks or even days. Particularly in the larger ghettos, social structures developed and the ghetto dwellers tried to organize their lives. They tried to fight constant hunger and disease and even established some kind of cultural life and education for their children. The different Jewish reactions to ghettoization and persecution are at the centre of Löw’s interest. Wendy Lower’s ‘Holocaust Studies: The Spatial Turn’ indicates that the widening geographical scope for studying the ‘Final Solution’ has become the most important recent development in Holocaust Studies. She closely examines four topics that have recently occupied the attention of Holocaust scholars – decision making and proximity to sites of mass murder, biography with its attention to individual agency, collaboration, which has incorporated the participation of thousands of non-German actors and sources, which multiplied especially with the collapse of the Soviet bloc. As a consequence, Lower sees the potential for the further development of a European-wide research agenda, which pushes historians to become ‘transnational comparativists’, who explore more deeply the complexities of the Nazi system, the relationships between occupiers and occupied, and the further incorporation of non-Jews and non-Germans into the categories of victim and perpetrator.

0.2.5 *Legacies of Nazism*

The catastrophic defeat, division, and occupation of Germany after 1945 and the Allies’ determination to punish Germans for Nazism’s manifold atrocities left Germans to cope with untold suffering and bitterness. Thus, coming to terms with the recent past was wrenching for both post-war Germanys despite the striking differences in their interpretations of the Third Reich. Aleida Assmann analyses distinct phases of remembering and forgetting in the 70 years of the Federal Republic of Germany’s post-war history that evolved due to historical change, the construction of new social frames, the introduction of new values, and the rise of new

actors. In these various phases we may discern a larger pattern of transformation that can be described as a shift from ‘mastering the past’ to ‘preserving the past’. This transformation in memory involves another important shift from a ‘finishing line’ to a ‘dividing line’. The past is no longer overcome by bracketing, silencing, or forgetting it, but by remembering it. David Clarke outlines the official politics of memory in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in relation to National Socialism, and discusses the relationship between this official memory and the ways in which ordinary GDR citizens interpreted Germany’s history. He concludes by examining the controversy surrounding the anti-fascist legacy of the GDR in post-unification Germany. Last but not least, Karl Heinrich Pohl and Astrid Schwabe address the topic of presenting and teaching the past since 1945 by emphasizing the remembrance of the Holocaust in different countries and in a global context. They conclude by noting that in recent decades a plethora of new research and presentation approaches to the Holocaust has emerged that indicates a dynamic international interest and a paradigm shift.

We noted at the outset of this introduction that National Socialism has not lost its relevance in today’s societies. In the course of producing this volume, looking to the history of the Third Reich has become even more pressing with the emergence of radical nationalist movements, especially in Europe (including the Russian Federation) and the United States – movements that threaten the underpinnings of the post-Second World War political order, the neoliberal global economy, and even the ecological future of the planet. Not surprisingly, many have looked to the rise of fascism in the 1920s and 1930s for parallels that help us to understand the present. Historical analogies can be crude, misleading, and insensitive to the peculiarities of time and context. Yet, without denying the dangers in too-facile analogies, examining the fascist and National Socialist past can raise probing questions about the present.

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