Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich by Michael Burleigh
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Published by: Oxford University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/575233
Accessed: 17/08/2012 13:04

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According to Proctor, German physicians supported Nazism for several reasons: virulent anti-Semitism, partly due to Jewish competition for medical jobs at a time of mass unemployment among doctors; hostility to the bureaucracy of the insurance companies; support for the demographic medicine introduced by the Nazis, through which everyone was tested aged 6, 10, 14 and 18; and enthusiastic support for laws on euthanasia, marriage and sterilization. The author fully examines the euthanasia programme, stressing the nasty fact that Hitler did not force doctors to comply with his order; he merely empowered them to indulge their enthusiasms. Proctor finds that complicity of the medical profession in wartime atrocities was also virtually a voluntary affair, and points out that medical experiments on concentration-camp victims were not just acts of pointless sadism, but were carried out seriously by trained professionals as part of established research programmes, the results being presented and discussed at medical and scientific conferences. Furthermore, he argues, medical arguments were used to provide a rationale for the concentration of Jews and gypsies which preceded their extermination. Whether these inhuman attitudes should be attributed to the politicization of science under the Nazis, or to the positivistic and apolitical tendency of science, which leaves it vulnerable to such disastrous results, seems an open question. Proctor is unsparing towards father figures in the profession, however august. He traces exterminatory plans back to the First World War, when, he notes drily, ‘the argument was made more acceptable by the fact that even some doctors in this period were going hungry’. The author devotes a chapter to ‘organic’ medicine, and the Nazi support for nature-healing, homeopathy and midwifery. Here as elsewhere, the Nazis fomented resentment towards big institutions, and monopolistic bureaucracies. This strategy involved support of alternative medicine, but, Proctor believes, does not signify a special Nazi tinge to its ideals. As in other kinds of ‘Green’ Nazism, followers of pre-Nazi holistic thought found they could adhere to the regime, but were never fully integrated within it. The economic and social context of German medicine over this period provides fascinating reading, and Proctor has delved into a very wide range of archival sources. His linking of ethology and systems theory with Nazism may be doubtful, and occasionally errors creep in when he uses less reliable secondary literature; but this does not detract from the usefulness of this work, which will be the definitive text on the subject for a long time to come. It is an interesting and thought-provoking read.

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The treatment of the Poles, Jews and other East European peoples by the Germans in the Second World War has been described in great detail by many historians; but comparatively little attention has focused on the assistance furnished by German historians in this field. That is the subject of Michael Burleigh’s monograph, Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich (Cambridge: U.P., 1988; pp. xi + 351. £30). Even before 1933 the Auswärtige Amt, as well as the German Ministry of the Interior, was heavily involved in Ostforschung on account of the territories lost in 1919, and paid subsidies to researchers of the correct ilk. The ‘German’ character of these lands was to be proved, and Polish historians working on related topics were carefully screened and their researches often impeded. After 1933, the publications office of the

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Prussian State Archives was used for openly political ends; their director-general, Professor Albert Brackmann, played a sinister role in underpinning German imperialistic aims and using 'history' for political purposes. He was assisted by many historians, some with well-known names, such as Hermann Aubin, Erich Maschke, and Brackmann’s successor, Johannes Papritz. *Leitsätze* drafted by a Professor Dr Reche at Brackmann’s suggestion in September 1939 envisaged the removal of millions of Poles, Jews, etc. from the newly occupied lands: ‘The emigrant Poles may take their movable goods . . . with them; one may proceed less charitably with the Jews. . . . All traces of Polentum must disappear from the area of German settlement’ (pp. 170–1). Polish libraries were looted wholesale or destroyed. A special problem was presented by some small Slav nationalities, such as the Sorbs of eastern Germany or the Kashubians and Masurians of the Baltic area. They were to be deprived of their national character and to be absorbed by the Germans. They were not allowed any publications in their own languages and their cultural institutions were closed. After the war, many Ostforscher found it comparatively easy to regain university posts, whether Aubin and Maschke in West Germany or Brackmann in East Berlin. The latter was busy writing denazification testimonials for his erstwhile colleagues. All this is documented here in meticulous detail, proving the extent in which Ostforscher co-operated with the SS and SD. But the German word Wende for the western Slavs has no ‘pejorative associations’ (p. 117). It still occurs in the ‘Wendland’ district of West Germany on the left bank of the Elbe and in many place-names starting with ‘Wendisch’ or ‘Windisch’ in eastern Germany and Austria. Innumerable initials of German institutions and organizations occur throughout: some, but not all, of them are explained when first mentioned, and there is no list of the abbreviations used – which would have been a great help to the reader. Yet to anyone interested in the activities of the German mandarins this book will well repay reading.

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*German Resistance to Hitler*, by Peter Hoffmann (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard U.P., 1988; pp. 169. £19.95; pb. £7.95) is the revised and enlarged version of a book published in German in 1979. Even now it contains only 135 pages of text. Forty of these are devoted to describing Hitler’s rise and fall. The main resistance groups and their ideas are listed. An account is given of the various attempts to bring about a military coup or, when that appeared hopeless, Hitler’s assassination. Something is said about contacts abroad, but not much about the reasons why they met with little response. As will be seen, vast knowledge has been compressed within narrow limits; every word is carefully weighed. The inevitable questions are whether the result is not too tabloid for the beginner to appreciate, and whether the book will tell those who are not beginners much they do not know already. But the author, who is a leading authority on the whole subject, must obviously have considered these questions carefully and, as he shows so much good judgement everywhere else, he is entitled to credit here as well.

Burford

MICHAEL BALFOUR

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