

inmates to the local health authorities but also his private patients and even visitors to his office hours. Under his leadership, the hospital also filed more than one hundred petitions for sterilization, in seeming defiance of the bishops' order. The warden of the local prison, on the other hand, an ordained priest, asked the diocese for explicit permission to delegate the issuing of petitions for sterilization to his non-Catholic deputy. The diocese agreed, paving the way for dozens of prisoners to be brought before the hereditary health courts.

According to Klein, the church's protest against the sterilization law petered out in the early years of the Third Reich. In a pastoral letter of 1934, the Bishop of Trier referenced the pope's condemnation of sterilization in his 1930 encyclical and regretted the "confusion" (236) which had taken hold in the German people. Such allusions to the sterilization program subsequently disappeared from the bishop's communiques, even as he condemned various aspects of Nazi policy toward the church. Catholic opponents of National Socialism included sterilization among the list of reasons that voters in the neighboring Saarland should reject the referendum on rejoining the Reich, but the issue evidently found less resonance in the propaganda of resistance within Germany.

Klein's case study of the implementation of the Hereditary Health Law in Trier challenges arguments that the Catholic Church became more unified in its opposition to racial hygiene as the radical nature of Nazi policy became apparent. (See also Ingrid Richter, *Katholizismus und Eugenik in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich* [2001].) Klein suggests that historians look more carefully at the role of Catholic institutions in facilitating sterilization. It is possible that the legacy of eugenic thinking within the Catholic Church was more lasting and more consequential than has been previously acknowledged.

Klein's discussion of the mass murder of Trier patients is less conclusive and less compelling. More than 500 patients from two Catholic institutions in Trier were transferred from the region. Around half of them died during the war, either in the T4 program or while confined in institutions scattered around Germany. Klein explores various possible motives for the evacuation from Trier and concludes, somewhat shakily, that it was due to military preoccupations. He reaches no conclusions concerning the extent to which citizens in Trier knew about the fate of the ninety patients sent to the gas chambers. He takes a similarly cautious stance regarding whether the 130 former Trier patients who died in institutional settings were deliberately murdered by neglect and deprivation.

More research will be required in order to reach definitive conclusions on these latter questions. This study should be praised for carefully setting the stage for future work.

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## **Dispossession: Plundering German Jewry, 1933-1953**

**Edited by Christoph Kreutzmüller and Jonathan R. Zatlin. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020. Pp. 402. Cloth \$90.00. ISBN 978-0472132034.**

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This edited volume is an important work that aims to revise our understanding of the economic process of dispossession perpetrated against Jews during the National Socialist era, and the aftermath of this dispossession. The book can also be seen as a response to the

debate stirred by the controversial work of Götz Aly (*Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* [2007]). As the editors explain in their thoughtful introduction, the volume is predicated on the premise that possession is fundamentally a political matter with profound implications. Modern societies have connected property to political rights, linking personhood to property ownership. In the case of Imperial Germany, the conflation of political and economic rights led to a three-tiered political system that ensured that propertied men enjoyed greater political power. By pointing to the intersection between political and economic rights and to the basic ideas of civic belonging and even personhood that the possession of property has come to imply, the introduction suggests a new understanding of Jewish emancipation in Central Europe and ultimately of its reversal. The editors argue that the dispossession of German and later European Jews should not be seen merely as a secondary outgrowth of the Nazis' ideological and political aims but instead should be understood as a fundamental component of them: stealing the belongings and property of Jews "symbolically" took away "their belonging to the *Volk*" (5). By depriving Jews of their possessions, the National Socialists and their allies revoked Jews' "right to belong and to belongings," effecting an "economic assault . . . that was integral to their persecution and murder" (14).

The volume is divided into four sections and includes a total of fourteen essays. The first section explores the major legislation and financial institutions that made possible the process of dispossession. The first essay, by S. Jonathan Wiesen, seeks to present an overview of National Socialist attitudes to the economy and their goal of replacing supposedly destructive Jewish economic practices with more "virtuous" German ones. For Wiesen, "stealing Jews' income and property was not an incidental byproduct of the Holocaust; rather it constituted a key component of the Nazi racial renaissance" (33). Here, ideological visions and economic programs (as well as economic realities) informed one another: antisemitism conditioned fantasies about Jewish wealth but also saw the solution in creating a new form of economic interactions that would somehow overcome "rampant materialism" (35). Albrecht Ritschl's essay on confiscatory taxation explores how German Jews were taxed "out of existence" (67). His statistical analysis not only confirms the profound devastation wrought by punitive taxation schemes but also lays to rest any lingering assumptions about presumed Jewish wealth (which was, as the author concludes, simply "in line with the Jewish population share," 68). Christine Schoenmakers's contribution focuses on the German Gold Discount Bank, showing that it played an important role as both tool and agent in the process of dispossession by providing critical information to the regime and predatorily assuring its own financial advantage.

The second section of the book explores distinct sectors of the German economy. Pamela Swett's chapter analyzes the role of sales representatives of the shoe company Salamander in dispossessing Jewish store owners. Swett examines case studies of Jewish shop owners and how they confronted attempts at dispossession but also investigates the attempts by Salamander and its staff to brand itself as an "Aryan" company that engaged in "honorable salesmanship" (113, 121). Johannes Klass Beermann-Schön's powerful contribution on German freight forwarders focuses on how German moving companies went above and beyond to ensure that they would financially benefit from the liquidation of Jewish property. The chapter highlights the high numbers of individuals and companies that were directly involved in the practical dispossession of Jews and underlines the eagerness with which the task was carried out: "Commercial self-interest provided support for and even accelerated the Nazis' 'utopia' of a Germany without Jews" (136). Dorothea Hauser's contribution on the Warburg Bank aims at correcting certain myths about the bank and its fate. The author dispels any suggestion that the Warburg bank existed as long as it did because of a supposed friendship between Hjalmar Schacht and Max Warburg. The author also points to the bank's role in actively aiding fellow German Jews. Unlike other Jewish-owned banks, the Warburg bank "emphatically underscored its Jewishness from 1933 onwards" and succeeded in helping German Jews flee Germany (in some cases, succeeding in circumventing some discriminatory financial policies) (149).

The third section explores cases of dispossession during the Second World War. Jonathan Zatlin's essay on spurious retirement-home contracts, which elderly Jews deported to the

Theresienstadt concentration camp were forced to sign, highlights the “sadistic” ruse that Adolf Eichmann orchestrated. Zatlin’s essay ends with a reflection on Hannah Arendt’s assessment of Eichmann, in which Zatlin argues that “Despite his performance of banality, Eichmann was no ordinary opportunist but rather a fanatic guided by an ideological antisemitism that viewed liberating Europe from Jewry as a moral imperative” (184). Tal Bruttman’s essay explores how property owned by Jews in France was identified and seized with disturbing speed. The major actors in the narrative are the French police, though the reader is left wondering what other state or private organizations participated in the process. Christoph Kreutzmüller takes the case of dispossession in the Netherlands to explore both the process of dispossession but also the tensions that existed between German and Dutch dispossessors. Stefan Hördler’s contribution explores two levels of plundering within the concentration camp system: the official practice of dispossessing Jews of their last possessions and the widespread problem of corruption that emerged as individuals sought to enrich themselves. Returning to a major theme of the book, Hördler concludes that the last acts of theft perpetrated against concentration camp inmates were critical steps to their physical annihilation.

The fourth section explores the postwar challenges of restitution. Benno Nietzel’s chapter takes the case of Frankfurt to explore the process of dispossession and restitution. While the author concludes that “in most cases, the companies were returned to the former owners or they were compensated financially” (though not adequately), he notes how those who had participated in the dispossession used the process of restitution to create narratives that allowed them to exculpate themselves. These claims also resulted in narratives that allowed for the “achievements of German-Jewish entrepreneurs” to fade from public memory (277). Mark Roseman continues the theme of restitution but does so through the story of one survivor’s long fight for restitution, which required time, money, connections, and emotional strength. As the case study suggests, many if not all who sought restitution faced emotional burdens that were bound to the quest to seek justice for the dead. Jonathan Petropoulos’s chapter on art dealers points to the secretive networks that continued after the war, allowing professional art dealers with connections to Nazi officials to continue to profit from stolen art. The volume ends with Zuzanna Dziuban’s essay on cases of grave robbery in postwar Poland at the mass graves around Nazi killing centers. Although it was illegal and condemned on a national level, grave robbery around sites such as Bełżec became common practice, one that required individuals to forget “the fact that this appropriation was conditional on the death of the previous owners” (335). This act of forgetting influenced local authorities, too, as they appealed to economic (not moral) claims when decrying the practice. Yet, as the author shows through several anecdotes, many Poles expressed unease and guilt in their use of “post-Jewish” (336) property, even if they often failed to consider their own role in this dispossession.

Taken together, these essays present a multifarious picture of the economic, political, ideological, and human dimensions of dispossession. I would be remiss, however, if I did not address two curious editorial decisions. The first is the subtitle of the book, *Plundering German Jewry*, which is a bit of a red herring. The book does not deal exclusively with the case of German Jews. Instead—and to the volume’s credit—several chapters focus on the plunder of property owned by Jews in France, the Netherlands, and across East Europe. Given the editors’ aim of exploring the links between economic dispossession and the Holocaust, a nod to the larger geographical scope in the title itself would have been more appropriate. Secondly, the editors go to lengths in their introduction to explain the problematic nature of the term “Aryanization” and propose instead the use of terms like “dispossession,” which they argue “re-embeds . . . the assault on the Jewish economic activity in larger social and political developments in Germany” (14). In practice, however, the term “Aryanization” (albeit in quotation marks) is regularly used by several authors. The use of terminology thus appears inconsistent and seems to undermine the editors’ goals.

The merits of the volume, nonetheless, outweigh these criticisms and remind us of the profound value of such collaborative projects. Students and scholars of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany will find useful material for both classroom and research. The overall conceit

of the volume provides a powerful way to understand everyday forms of complicity and collaboration. The authors do not ignore ideology as a motivation, but in focusing on economic interests, the reader is made aware of the profound ease with which individuals and institutions implemented racial policy and worked towards these goals, all the while enriching themselves at the expense of a persecuted minority.

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## **The Polish Catholic Church under German Occupation: The Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939-1945**

**By Jonathan Huener. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021. Pp xv + 352. Cloth \$90.00. ISBN 978-0253054029.**

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Beginning in late 1940, Catholic priests arrested by Nazi authorities across Germany and occupied Europe began to be gathered into the Dachau concentration camp. This group of several thousand prisoners was thus quite diverse, including individuals from the far corners of the continent. And yet about half of all of those interned in Dachau and a clear majority of those who died in the camp actually came from a single region: the Reichsgau Wartheland, composed of territory in interwar West-Central Poland subsequently annexed to the greater German Reich. In this province, the Nazi regime persecuted the Roman Catholic church with an intensity and ferocity unparalleled in the rest of Germany or even in the rest of conquered Poland.

The trajectory of that persecution is the subject of Jonathan Huener's monograph, which develops and expands on themes previewed in an article in *Central European History* in 2014. Drawing on church and state archives within the region and in Berlin and Warsaw, along with a wide array of published primary material and periodicals, Huener provides a richly detailed account of the Nazis' campaign to hobble and perhaps destroy an institution seen as an irredeemably anti-German menace. The book's eighteen concise chapters take a largely chronological approach, following the escalation of measures against the church between 1939 and 1941, then the somewhat more ambiguous developments between 1942 and 1945. Several chapters provide harrowing accounts of the treatment of the local parish clergy, most of whom faced deportation and/or imprisonment, and almost half of whom perished. Other chapters describe the harsh, albeit less systematic, persecution of Polish nuns in the region; draconian restrictions on Polish-language worship services and other religious practices; and the Nazi regime's preoccupation with enforcing ethnic segregation within the church. In addition to the running central focus on the actions and aims of the Nazi authorities, Huener also provides briefer but informative and insightful analyses of responses by the regional Catholic clergy and the local Catholic population, and of the controversial response (or lack thereof) of the Vatican to the persecution of the church in occupied Poland.

A question that runs through the book is what we should make of the promotion of the Wartheland as a "model Gau," especially by its Gauleiter, Arthur Greiser. Huener argues that while Nazi policy in the Wartheland should not be seen as a "blueprint" laying out measures that would inevitably be applied elsewhere, it did represent a "testing ground" that might pave the way for a "Reich-wide Kirchenpolitik in the future" (69). This could have involved not only harsh repression of Catholicism across all of the Polish lands or even of the Roman