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Michael Wildt, *Hitler's Volksgemeinschaft and the Dynamics of Racial Exclusion: Violence against Jews in Provincial Germany, 1919–1939*

Hitler's Volksgemeinschaft and the Dynamics of Racial Exclusion: Violence against Jews in Provincial Germany, 1919–1939 by Michael Wildt

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about Jews, finance, capitalism, and gender; and on theories of capital and economic behavior. Drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital—which includes economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital—Niederacher stresses the distribution of capital along gender lines. Like Bourdieu, she rejects economically determined behavior theories that attribute human economic behaviors to rationality and efficiency alone, but, unlike Bourdieu, she takes gender and Jewishness into account as determining secondary characteristics. She also contributes to the unraveling of the notion of separate spheres of activity for men and women—the public/private dichotomy—by revealing women's “behind-the-scenes” involvement in family businesses. In turning to the effects of the Nazi expropriation on Jews during the Holocaust, she supports the position taken by scholars such as Gisela Bock, namely, that gender was a relevant factor in the Nazi persecution of Jews. Especially in the area of intermarriage, gender played a decisive role in the way Jewish assets were confiscated by the Nazis: “The policy toward the so-called mixed marriages represents one of the few areas in which a gender-specific approach of the Nazis was placed on a quasi-legal basis” (154). She found no evidence, however, that gender played a role in the success or failure of obtaining restitution and/or compensation after 1945. Her discussion of the Austrian General Civil Code (ABGB) of 1811 and its amendments also deserves mention, particularly the provision that allowed women in Austria (unlike other European countries) the right to retain their property during marriage.

On gender stereotypes of Jewish women, Niederacher correctly asserts that Jewish men and women were subject to different portrayals in antisemitic texts, but she overlooks the prevalence of stereotypes of the “Jewess” when she states that Jewish women were represented less often than non-Jewish women (as “victims” of seduction by Jews), “which meant that Jewish women in the group of ‘the Jews’ as well as of ‘women’ remained relatively invisible” (16). The reader wonders how the integration of a more nuanced discussion of stereotypes of the Jewish woman might play out in terms of Niederacher's analysis and conclusions. The larger implications of a gendered analysis of Jewish economic assets and the question of continuity among the various time periods discussed, given the impact of external factors such as the devastation of the interwar period and Nazi persecution, might also be more fully addressed.

This thoroughly researched, theoretically informed, and original study will be of interest to scholars in many fields, including Jewish studies, gender studies, Austrian history, modern European economic and social history, and Holocaust studies, to name a few. While the technical nature of the discussion can be challenging for the nonspecialist, *Eigentum und Geschlecht* provides many insights about the impact of gender on the lives of Viennese Jews in the twentieth century.

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**Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft* and the Dynamics of Racial Exclusion: Violence against Jews in Provincial Germany, 1919–1939.** By Michael Wildt. Translated by Bernard Heise.

New York: Berghahn, 2012. Pp. x+311. \$95.00.

Distinct trends in modern Jewish and German historiography may be revealed by contrasting Jehuda Reinharz's foundational *Fatherland or Promised Land? The Dilemmas of the German Jew, 1893–1914* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1975) with *Hitler's Volksgemeinschaft and the Dynamics of Racial Exclusion: Violence against Jews in Provincial Germany, 1919–*

1939, by Michael Wildt, originally published in German as *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung: Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg, 2007). Reinharz's study focuses on the interplay between politics and ideology among German Jews as they sought to define themselves and negotiate a position along the spectrum of Germanness and Jewishness, particularly as embodied in the conflict between the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (the CV; i.e., the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith) and the nascent Zionist movement. Wildt's current book is less concerned with Jewish internal matters and not expressly a history of the CV—by far the Jewish people's choice over Zionism. Nonetheless, it brilliantly excavates the CV's records as well as those of the Pinkas Kehillot (the archives of provincial Jewish communities [7]), and, in the process, gains a nuanced picture of the Nazi onslaught against the Jews from the birth of the Nazi Party until the outbreak of the Second World War, especially in Germany's smaller cities and towns (142–46).

Wildt primarily details the perpetration of right-wing violence against individual Jews, assaults on their homes and businesses, and the installation of the Nuremberg Laws. He also casts a fresh eye on what is retrospectively termed "Reichskristallnacht" (the night of the broken glass; November 9–10, 1938) and the in-and-out-of-court harassment of Jews for alleged "racial defilement of Aryan women." Complementing Saul Friedlander's and Michael Meyer's excellent studies of German Jewry under the Nazis,<sup>1</sup> Wildt underscores two themes: that Nazi violence against Jews before 1939 was more frequent and extreme than has been portrayed, and that attempts to confront the Nazi menace by Jews and their chief representative body, the CV, were vigorous (85–86)—even though an effective self-defense was virtually impossible (137–38, 154, 279). He also asserts that "from the perspective of the NSDAP, on the other hand, the problem was rather that there were still far too many people maintaining contact with Jewish Germans" (204). Although this work does not deal with the Final Solution per se (8), it is a stellar contribution to the historiography on the Holocaust, integrating a painstaking reconstruction and analysis of both the perpetration of Nazi violence and the responses of Jews to threats against their personal security and livelihoods.

Wildt addresses a question similar to that in recent interpretations of National Socialism by scholars such as Alexandra Przyrembel (164–92), Robert Ericksen, Peter Fritzsche (148–49), Thomas Kuhne, and Jeffrey Herf (116), namely, how did the Nazis attempt to realize their version of an ideal community? With the uncompromising thought of Carl Schmitt (28–29, 240, 242, 266, 277) providing a legal rationale for Nazi thuggery, Wildt shows the syncretism between spontaneous outbursts, mainly from teenagers and young adults, the Nazi intention to remove Jews from an inclusive German nation (as promised by the kaiser at the outset of the Great War), and the Nazis' willingness to use and extol violence as a chief means to advance their aims. Wildt's deft interweaving of Nazi perspectives with Jewish ones demonstrates that large numbers of Germans, even in far-flung places, witnessed firsthand brutal public humiliation and bloodthirsty physical assaults on Jews with varying levels of interest and enthusiasm. Almost everywhere, crowds of onlookers to such acts gathered of their own volition, and objections were hardly ever registered.

Just as the perpetrators were people who did not merely receive orders and carry out directives but indeed helped define the situation and the violent acts, so the spectators, passersby, and bystanders played an elemental role as people who granted tolerance and

<sup>1</sup> Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 2 vols. (New York, 1997); and Michael Meyer with Michael Brenner, eds., *Renewal and Destruction, 1918–1945*, vol. 4 of *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, ed. Michael Meyer with Michael Brenner, 4 vols. (New York, 1996–98).

approval and acted as accomplices to these assaults. The victims had to endure their helplessness, while the *Volksgenossen* could experience their empowerment in everyday life. And even those who did not directly participate but rather only stood by and watched could partake complicitly in the exercise of power (280).

Wildt is, however, careful both to note exceptional instances in which non-Jews did attempt to intervene and come to the aid of the besieged and to show the different degrees of virulence advocated by Nazi leaders (201–6). To the extent that there was a pattern of discomfort about Nazi actions, it was more in the nature of suspicion of overtly economic motivations in enforcing economic boycotts and effacing Jewish businesses than of concern that Jews were being treated indecently.

In the text and notes, Wildt is precise, but never pedantic, in distinguishing his views from those of Peter Longerich (156–57), the late David Bankier (209–10), Uwe Adam (216), Otto Dov Kulka (191), and many others. Unfortunately, the time lag between his writing of his book and this English edition of it prevented him from commenting on the related recent work of Lars Fischer on German Social Democracy and antisemitism (158), Alan Steinweis on Kristallnacht, and Martin Dean on the looting and robbery of Jewish assets by the state. Given the immense outpouring of scholarship on Jewish history and Nazism, no historian is expected to be apprised of the entire corpus. Wildt's contention, however, that "only in recent years has the National Socialist concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* entered the purview of historical research" could have been modified by the giving of credit to George Mosse's pathbreaking work on *Völkisch* ideology (*The Crisis of German Ideology* [New York, 1964]) and Jacob Talmon's treatment of "totalitarian democracy" (*The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* [London, 1952]). While neither Mosse nor Talmon claimed a stake in legal history, both helped to nurture questions relevant to the constitution of the German national community that scholars began posing in the 1960s (270–71).

But these are minor reservations. For a relatively compact work of under three hundred pages of main text, the thick, compelling narratives and insightful historiographic remarks make this an unusually engaging book, one that is certain to enlighten seasoned scholars as well as those embarking on a serious study of the Third Reich.

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**Die Anfänge der Wiener SS.** By *Christiane Rothländer*.  
Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2012. Pp. 653. €59.00.

On March 12, 1938, shortly before dawn, Heinrich Himmler touched down at Aspern airport near Vienna. Accompanied by a small entourage of close associates, the reichsführer sought to convey the impression that his SS alone had undertaken a "bold coup" by incorporating Austria into the German Reich. As Viennese Nazis had already seized control of the city the night before, Himmler's escapade would have been considered risible had he not moved quickly to establish Gestapo headquarters on Morzinplatz and to consolidate his control of the underground and exiled SS in Austria. Eleven days later, official registration figures revealed that 11,560 Austrian SS men stood ready to follow his orders. Of the officers and men now clad in black gabardine, a substantial number were hardened terrorists who had perpetrated, from 1932 to 1934, a campaign of mayhem, violence, and murder, which culminated, on July 25, 1934, in the assassination of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß. Following that aborted coup, those men who had not