

Browning, Christopher. "From 'Ethnic Cleansing' to Genocide to the 'Final Solution': The evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, 1939-1941." In Browning, Christopher. *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. ix +57. Introduction, map.

Thesis: In true Christopher Browning style, he minces no words about his intended objective with this essay. "I will argue that the theory and practice of what we now call ethnic cleansing was an important prelude to the decisions for the Final Solution that followed". (p. 2) He discussed the intentionalist/functionalist debate inasmuch as to claim that the argument itself has removed form from its own context.

Themes: This is the first essay in a collection dealing with Nazi Policy and the evolution of the Holocaust. This work is essentially a rundown, based on scholarly research, of who knew what and when they knew it. The chapter also includes which ideas were in place before the war, and which ones sprang up in reaction to current affairs during it. One example, in Hitler's Reichstag speech, Browning says that Hitler "prophesied that a world war would mean the destruction of the Jews in Europe". (p. 3)

Himmler and Heydrich carried out chancellor's orders. There were discussions early in the war of "long-term goals"; this included "the deportation of Jews into non-German region" and "short-term goals" such as "the immediate concentration of Jews into Ghettos". (p. 4) Plans were slightly altered when Germany had to surrender Lithuania to the Soviets and received Polish territory in return. Not missing an opportunity "Hitler told Alfred Rosenberg that all Jews, including those from the Reich, would be settled into this newly acquired territory". (p. 4)

Browning also shows how success on battle campaigns strengthened resolve and abilities to carry out more devious plans. "Germany's stunning victory in France", he says, "Emboldened Himmler... to revitalize his plans for the total expulsion of Poles... and to suggest and even more radical expulsion plan for the Jews". (p. 13) Browning shows how the answers to the same questions are getting more and more radical as the war progresses.

A fact little mentioned in other readings is that the German Policy makers had a "fantastical attraction" with deporting the Jews to Madagascar. The idea was proposed "that in planning for the peace treaty with France, Germany should consider removing...[Jews] to the French Colony of Madagascar". (p. 16) Germany nixed the Madagascar plan after failing to beat Great Britain as quickly as they had the French.

Browning discusses many of the plans that came and went during the ordeal involving German ideologies and the coming invasion of Soviet territories. Browning agrees with others, "the ultimate decision was made and orders were given for the Final Solution on Soviet Territory beginning some 4 weeks after the invasion". (p. 24) However, he does mention that "the *implied genocide*" in the future of Jews on Soviet territory was not yet the Final Solution for all Soviet Jewry, much less the other Jews of Europe". (p. 25)

In what Browning called “fateful months” after Operation Barbarossa, one of the decisions reached was what the Nazis called “the Final Solution to the Jewish Question”. (p. 25)

Style: Browning wrote this essay in a very concise, if conversational tone. He is again, true to his style of matter-of-fact research and the presentation of facts in any favoring or overly critical manner. The facts are presented apparently without any judgment or opinion on the matter. He arranges things chronologically and tells how each step and misstep led to a new order, or a changed decision in how to deal with the “Jewish Question”

Evidentiary Base: Never at a shortage of primary sources, Browning uses court documents, army records, as well as letters, and other official and unofficial correspondence between German service men. The secondary sources that he utilized are all from high quality researchers according to external reviews.

Weaknesses: Written in essay form, a topic as broad as the Holocaust can get lost in details. Shorter more fact-laden readings can leave the reader with a feeling of the story leading nowhere. There are also areas in which background information is left out. This could be trying to a reader not familiar with Holocaust studies. In this chapter alone, there is not as much about the Genocide as there is about the Ethnic Cleansing and Deportation.

Strength: This work was written as the “George Macaulay Lecture at Cambridge University”. (p. ix). Since it was going to be delivered orally, it has an heir of conversation, or story telling about it. Browning style is always fairly easy to read, this work even more so. Even though this was to just be a lecture, the importance of the study is not lost. Browning remains true to the facts and the trial and error approach to the Final Solution that the Nazi policy makers apparently went through. His work avoids battling in the “intentionalist/functionalist controversy” (p. 1) Instead he shows how there were many more things influencing the evolution from “Ethnic cleansing to genocide to the Final Solution”.