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## Nazi Hunger Politics: A History of Food in the Third Reich (Rowman Littlefield Studies in Food and Gastronomy)

*Gesine Gerhard*

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**Gesine Gerhard : Nazi Hunger Politics: A History of Food in the Third Reich (Rowman Littlefield Studies in Food and Gastronomy)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nazi Hunger Politics: A History of Food in the Third Reich (Rowman Littlefield Studies in Food and Gastronomy):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent  
By Leobiscuit  
Extremely readable, well-written, and engaging. Thoroughly enjoyed it!  
1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One More Try, Then ...  
By Arnold E. Bjorn  
A little while ago, I posted a somewhat lengthy review of this book. I see now that it was apparently removed by : the first time this has happened to me, and presumably because I phrased my criticism too strongly. I will now attempt, therefore, to summarize my views more succinctly, and in words that hopefully should not offend anyone.  
Put briefly, Professor Gerhard's rather short book disappoints because of her shallow analysis. Her research as such is not very bad, albeit mostly into secondary sources (though including, to her credit, some German-language works). The problem is that she lacks the necessary background knowledge to place what she gleans of her own subject, Nazi food and agricultural policies, into the broader context of Germany's political and economic situation; for this reason, she treats its rulers' every decision in a vacuum, as though the German government were free of practical and pragmatic limitations, never mind considerations. Thus, every policy document becomes purely a product of ideology, and statements of intentions are often not followed up with any examination of their implementation and its results.  
At the same time, the author unduly speculates on what-might-have-beens without discussing what alternative lines of action the German economic base was actually physically equipped to support, often lending her narrative an insubstantial, in places idiosyncratic air. The part where this most clearly shows is her sections on policy in the occupied Soviet Union in the war years (in particular, around pages 90ff.). My original review included a more extended discussion of this as a case study, along with supporting quotes; here, I will be content to note my conclusion, namely that she does not appear to understand the material realities of logistics in the 1940s.  
The prior research Gerhard makes use of, on the other hand, is, as noted, mostly adequate, although there is a certain over-reliance on the greatly overrated works of Christian Streit. There are still, however, a few odd lacunae in her reading list. Perhaps the most surprising such shortcoming is that she appears to completely ignore the very learned two-part study that Dr. Karl Brandt and his collaborators at the Food Research Institute at Stanford University produced on her exact topic in the 1950s: "The Management of Agriculture and Food in Germany" and The Management of Agriculture and Food in the German-Occupied and Other Areas of Fortress Europe. Neither volume is even listed in her bibliography, though both are rather more substantial works than her own contribution.  
These volumes will also supply my concluding recommendation, here: the reader will learn more from these, old but carefully reasoned and well grounded in the primary-source documents, than he will from this latter-day effort, which is inferior in just about every way.  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. this book is a great read for anybody interested in World War II  
By MR  
This is a well-written account of one of the darkest and not well known chapters of the Nazis crimes committed during World War II. Based on original research that includes the diaries of the wife of Herbert Backe, the Nazi Minister of Food and Agriculture, this book is a great read for anybody interested in World War II, the Holocaust, and the history of food politics. I highly recommend it!

During World War II, millions of Soviet soldiers in German captivity died of hunger and starvation. Their fate was not the unexpected consequence of a war that took longer than anticipated. It was the calculated strategy of a small group of economic planners around Herbert Backe, the second Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture. The mass murder of Soviet soldiers and civilians by Nazi food policy has not yet received much attention, but this book is about to change that.  
Food played a central political role for the Nazi regime and served as the foundation of a racial ideology that justified the murder of millions of Jews, prisoners of war, and Slavs. This book is the first to vividly and comprehensively address the topic of food during the Third Reich. It examines the economics of food production and consumption in Nazi Germany, as well as its use as a justification for war and as a tool for genocide. Offering another perspective on the Nazi regimes desire for domination, Gesine Gerhard sheds light on an often-overlooked part of their scheme and brings into focus the very important role food played in the course of the Second World War.

Food has been a vital part of war since time immemorial, from early biblical sieges to the Hunger Blockade of November 1918 and the later Soviet and Chinese mass starvation of millions. Decades ago, the noted historian C. Paul Vincent, in *Politics of Hunger* (CH, May'86), concluded that the withholding or interruption of the availability of foodstuffs had become a basic political weapon of modern warfare, against both foreign enemies and vulnerable internal minorities. By WW II, food policy in Germany was as important as the manufacture of arms and fell to the hard-liner Herbert Backe, a failed academic who ingratiated himself in R. Walther Darrs Reich Ministry for Food and Agriculture. As a wartime intimate of Hitler and Goering, Backe played a major role in the allocation of food rations to the public, the mass murder of Soviet soldiers and civilians, and the use of food shortages as a justification for genocide. Indeed, in the very capable hands of historian Gerhard, this excellent volume, based on original diaries, interviews, and outstanding research, examines the use and misuse of food, which may indeed have been Nazi Germany's justification for the war itself.  
Summing Up: Highly recommended. All academic levels/libraries.  
(CHOICE)Gerhard populates her entire book with such tidbits that astonish any unfamiliar with Germany history; even experts can learn something new by reading this book. Gerhard is a subject matter expert, and she has produced a short work that can be read fruitfully by general interest readers. (Agriculture and Human Values)Herbert Backe is

hardly unknown in the pantheon of Nazi villains, but Gesine Gerhards clearly written account of German food and agricultural policy before, during, and after the Second World War uses his personal letters and diaries to reveal his considerable responsibility for the bizarre, brutal and ultimately brainless policy decisions that lost Germany the war. This is an important book for historians of rural Europe in the twentieth century and for anyone who still wonders why Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. (Paul Brassley, University of Exeter) This is more than another book on the Third Reich. It regards the Third Reich through the lens of food and, thereby, gains new insights in the Nazis' efforts to build the 'German people' and fight their enemies. (Ernst Langthaler, Director of the Institute of Rural History, St. Plten/Austria, and Privatdozent of Economic and Social History at the University of Vienna/Austria) About the Author Gesine Gerhard is professor of History at the University of Pacific in Stockton, California. She has published on agricultural and food policy, the Nazi era, and environmental history in many academic journals.