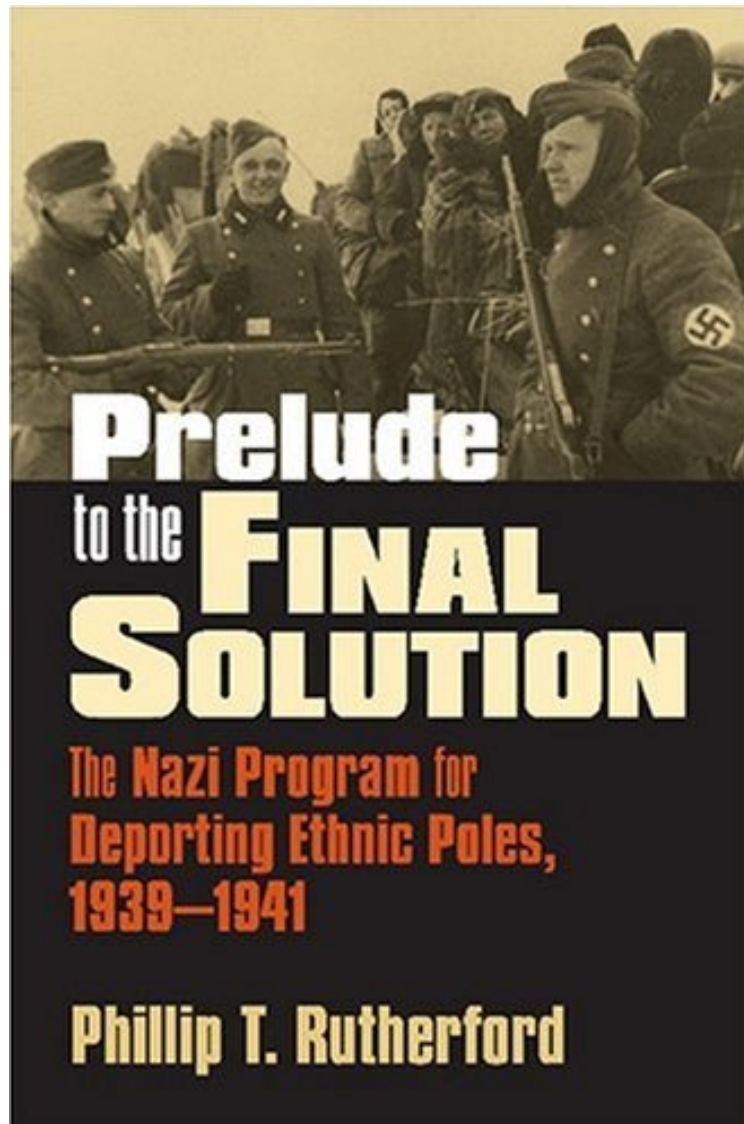


(Download pdf) Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941 (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))

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Phillip T. Rutherford

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Phillip T. Rutherford : Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941 (Modern War Studies (Hardcover)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941 (Modern War Studies (Hardcover)):

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. The Radicalization and De-Radicalization of Nazi Polices Against Jews and Poles. Slavs Not Exterminated for Utilitarian Reasons By Jan Peczkis I organize my review by topics: PROTO-NAZI GERMAN CONDUCT AGAINST POLES The main subject of this book is the once mixed German-Polish population of Wartheland (near Poznan, or Posen). Rutherford observes a close continuity between the Second-Reich's (Bismarck, von Bulow, etc.) anti-Polish policies and those of the Third Reich. He views the HAKATA movement as a proto-Nazi one (p. 25). In spite of the onerous challenge, the Poles remained indomitable: "Far from eradicating Polish national consciousness and cultural autonomy, Germany's long-standing anti-Polish stance, laced with Teutonic hubris and ethnocentric nationalism, had only reinforced the Poles' desire to shake the foreign yoke and reestablish a state of their own." (p. 32). HITLER MORE ANTI-POLISH RACIST THAN ANTI-BLACK RACIST For all his racism, Hitler said that he preferred to rule over Negroes than Poles (p. 244). Heinrich Himmler once planned to kill 30 million Slavs as a byproduct of the upcoming Operation Barbarossa. (p. 297). REICH TO BE POLENREIN, NOT JUST JUDENREIN During the German conquest of Poland in 1939, local Germans (the VOLKSDEUTSCHE SELBTSCHUTZ) attempted the expulsion of the Wartheland Poles on their own initiative. (p. 74). Soon this became official German policy. Owing in part to Polish resistance, the Germans fell far short of their goals. (p. 164). Poles resisted expulsion through such means as sleeping in the fields and otherwise avoiding their homes. (p. 159). The endangered Poles also engaged in economic sabotage. They slaughtered their livestock and sold the meat on the black market. (p. 278). If deported, they often returned. (p. 279). FOR A TIME, POLES AND JEWS WERE EQUAL VICTIMS For the first year and a half of the German occupation, the Wartheland Poles and Jews were treated much the same (p. 124). In fact, for Himmler, the pursuit of lebensraum policies took precedence over dealing with the Jews (p. 128), and the extermination of the local Jews didn't begin until late 1941 at Chelmno (Kulm). (p. 172). POLES CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT BE GERMANIZED Hitler rejected the notion that ethnic Poles could ever become Germans. However, Polonized Germans could, and should, be re-Germanized. By spring 1941, the growing need of local Poles for forced labor had forced the Germans to discontinue their expulsion of the Wartheland Poles. (p. 193). To rationalize the continued existence of Poles in this Reich-annexed region, the Germans were forced to relax their racist policies (pp. 207-211) over Himmler's objections. (p. 210). In time, even those Wartheland Poles who simply exhibited "German characteristics" (e. g., cleanliness, sense of order, etc.) were allowed to sign the DVL (DEUTSCHE VOLKSLISTE)! The de-Polonization of Wartheland was relegated to a decades-long postwar project. (p. 203). SLAVS NOT EXTERMINATED BECAUSE OF CIRCUMSTANCES, AND NOT BECAUSE THEY WERE ESTEEMED MORE THAN JEWS Owing to the foregoing turn of events, Rutherford's advanced the premise that, as WWII continued, Nazi policies against Poles became de-radicalized while those against Jews became radicalized. His reasoning is, at best, oversimplified. To begin with, and by his own admission, Hans Ehlich realized that the Nazis could not afford to lose seventy million Slavic workers by exterminating them, even had they won the war. (p. 219). Consequently, they de-radicalized their policies against Slavs because they were forced by circumstances to do so! In addition, radicalization and de-radicalization are relative terms, and Rutherford overlooks essential facts. Nazi actions against Jews never became so radicalized as to prevent some German full-blooded Jews (e. g., the SCHUTZJUDEN) from being deliberately spared and re-labeled Aryans. Never did Germany invade its reluctant allies, Bulgaria and especially Finland, to kill off their Jews. At no time did Nazi policies go as far as killing Jewish Allied POWs. Nor did Hitler ever compel Sweden or Switzerland to turn over their Jews as a condition of their continued neutrality. As for "de-radicalization", one must realize the fact that the Germans never stopped murdering Poles (notably the intelligentsia), and that Nazi cultural genocide against Poles never ceased either. In fact, German units attempted to blow up the cultural treasures of Czestochowa and Krakow in the waning hours of the German occupation of Poland. Unfortunately, Rutherford uncritically cites neo-Stalinist John Connelly, who asserted that, whereas the Germans came to see Slavs as useful, they never came to think of Jews in that way (pp. 219-220). This is patently incorrect. The Germans, realizing the usefulness of Jews, diverted a few hundred thousand of them from the gas chambers and into forced labor. (A large fraction of these ended up surviving the war). The successful Kastner-Eichmann deal, as well as attempts to release Jews in exchange for Allied payment in money or trucks, also proves that the Nazis did in fact come to see Jews as an economic commodity.

The fate of Polish Jews under the German occupation has been well documented, but not as much is known about the wartime ordeal of non-Jewish Poles. Phillip Rutherford investigates Nazi policies of "ethnic cleansing" to reveal the striking anti-Polish nature of the crusade to Germanize newly occupied territory and to show that these actions were a dress rehearsal for the Holocaust. Rutherford explores the origin and implementation of Nazi resettlement schemes in occupied western Poland, where Germany sought to reclaim territory for its expanding population by booting out the "ethnically inferior" Poles who had lived there for generations. Focusing on the Wartheland region, he examines four major deportation operations carried out between December 1939 and March 1941, including the day-to-day logistics and actions overseen by the powerful German Central Emigration Office. Drawing on both German archival and Polish-language sources, Rutherford considers a subject often marginalized by historians, but one that underscores the crucial relationship between the Nazis' early anti-Polish actions and their later annihilation of the Jews. He shows in

detail when, where, and how the Nazis' operations evolved into a highly efficient "science" of human roundups, expropriated property, and human cargo shipments en masse. Ultimately, the need for forced labor drove the Nazis to deport fewer Poles than they had planned. In light of the unresolved tensions between racial ideology and economic necessity, Rutherford makes a convincing argument that Nazi deportation policy vis--vis the Poles underwent a steady deradicalization. He concludes that, while the concept of cumulative radicalization seems to lead inevitably to the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question," it falls short of explaining all Nazi racial policies. Nevertheless, what the Nazis learned about the logistics of deportation at the expense of the non-Jewish population of western Poland was eventually put to horrific use in the mass murder of European Jewry. Without it, it's unlikely that the Holocaust would have proceeded as swiftly as it did. From that perspective, *Prelude to the Final Solution* provides a chilling portrait of the Nazis' training for genocide.

Bit by bit, we are coming to understand the whole bizarre, cruel complex of Nazi racist policies. Rutherford has filled in an important section of that mosaic, illuminating the fate of those all-but-forgotten Polish victims and also showing us the links to the more deadly deportations to follow. Geoffrey P. Megargee, author of *Inside Hitler's High Command* Expertly exposes the conflict between the reach and grasp of Nazi resettlement policy in the East as ideology collided with wartime and economic realities on the parade ground of National Socialism. Edward B. Westermann, author of *Hitler's Police Battalions* Carefully researched, engagingly written, with provocative and compelling arguments. Doris L. Bergen, author of *War and Genocide* From the Back Cover "Bit by bit, we are coming to understand the whole bizarre, cruel complex of Nazi racist policies. Rutherford has filled in an important section of that mosaic, illuminating the fate of those all-but-forgotten Polish victims and also showing us the links to the more deadly deportations to follow." -Geoffrey P. Megargee, author of *Inside Hitler's High Command* "Expertly exposes the conflict between the reach and grasp of Nazi resettlement policy in the East as ideology collided with wartime and economic realities on the 'parade ground of National Socialism.'" -Edward B. Westermann, author of *Hitler's Police Battalions* "Carefully researched, engagingly written, with provocative and compelling arguments." -Doris L. Bergen, author of *War and Genocide* About the Author Phillip T. Rutherford is assistant professor of modern European history at Marshall University and is a former Charles H. Revson Foundation Fellow at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies.