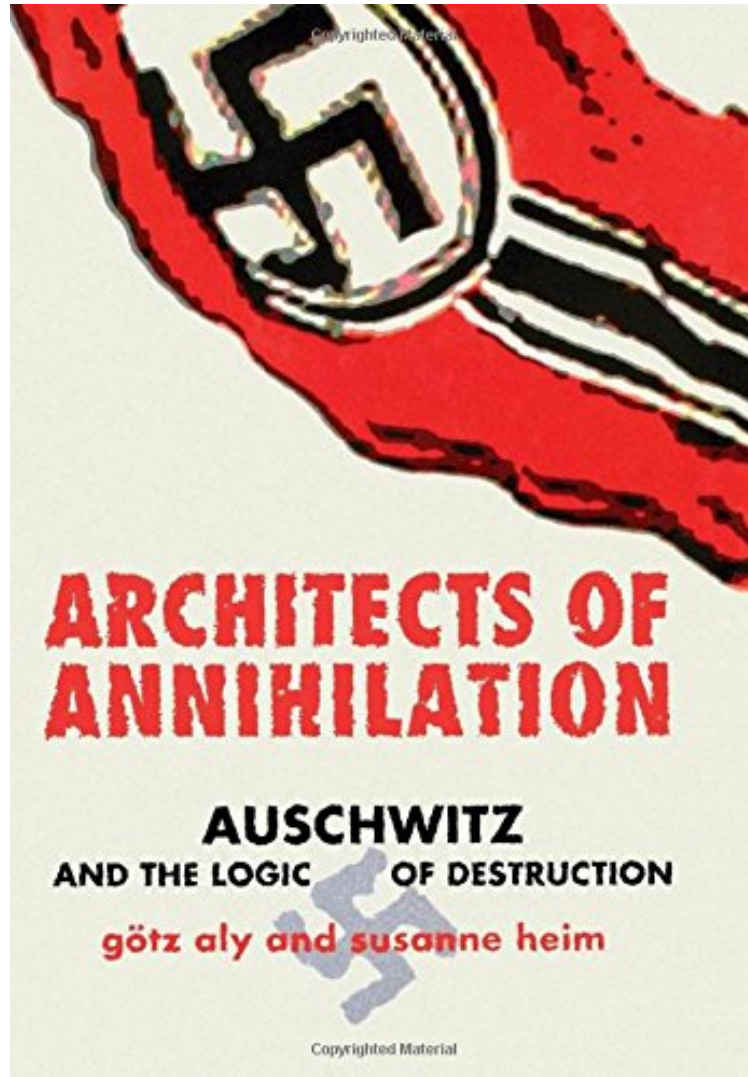


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## Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction

*Gtz Aly, Susanne Heim*

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**Gtz Aly, Susanne Heim : Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction:

20 of 23 people found the following review helpful. A Deep Look at the HolocaustBy M. SwansonThis book will take sometime. It reads like a PhD dissertation. Perhaps it is because it is a translation of a German book. Whatever the reason, it is well worth your time and will give you a deeper understanding of the holocaust.This book focused on the people who planned and managed the holocaust - demographers, geographers, economists, civil servants, and academics. They saw population movement, control, and elimination as levers to modernize the German economy and

manage its war economy. They blamed much of the economic problems of Europe on "excess" population and moved from birth control, sterilization, starvation, to the gas chambers to "manage" the social structures of Europe. They were not goose-stepping cartoon Nazis or manic racists. They just wrote reports and made analysis. The book shows that Nazi Germany was not just a nation of conquerors who just happened to hate Jews so they killed them, but that the killing was an integral logic of the state and its modernization program. If they had won the war and eliminated every Jewish person from the face of the earth the gas chambers would still have kept running, because it was seen as a tool of social policy by the people who oversaw them in their offices. A pure picture of immorality and horror in which everything - life and death - is at the whim of the state.<sup>8</sup> of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Fascinating Work on the Economic Aspects of the Nazi-German Genocide of Jews and Slavs: Erhard Wetzel Clarified By Jan Peczkis This paradigm-shattering book goes beyond Nazi anti-Semitism and racism as the sole explanations for German genocidal policies. The author is a German scholar. German economists, as elaborated by Aly, had studied Poland and come to the conclusion that her inefficiencies had been caused by a combination of Polish mismanagement and Jewish economic dominance. (pp. 53-59; see also p. 230). There was "overpopulation" (p. 43, 54, etc.), defined as follows: "Consequently, they would be consuming the theoretically possible surpluses that could otherwise have been invested in increasing the national income or promoting industrialization". (p. 60). "Useless eaters" (mentally handicapped, etc.) throughout the Reich were killed. In order to increase conquered Poland's productivity for Germany's benefit, the Germans lowered the living standards of the Poles still further through massive exploitation, and removed "surplus" workers by murder or deportation. Millions of "redundant" Polish farmers were sent to the Reich's factories for productive work. This paralleled the earlier forced collectivization and industrialization under Soviet Communism. (pp. 66-69). In order to increase the productivity of the remaining Poles (pp. 133-134, 138-139, 160-on), Jews were removed: first sent to ghettos, then to would-be Lublin-province or Madagascar, and, failing that, to death. Germans got rich off Jewish properties by keeping the best ones and reselling inferior ones at inflated prices to Aly-described needy [not greedy] Poles. (p. 121). The Auschwitz complex was not solely a concentration camp and death factory. It was part of the long-term German project to develop Silesia into the "second Ruhr" (p. 102), and was intended to be used for at least 10-20 years. (p. 112). Holocaust-uniqueness proponents have long contended that, whereas all the non-Jewish genocides in history had been rational acts intended to benefit the perpetrator, the Holocaust was a deeply irrational act that only harmed Germany economically and militarily. Aly soundly debunks this myth. He writes: "To put it another way: the railroad system in the East, already overstretched by the war in the Soviet Union, was placed under increasing strain with every day that the Warsaw Ghetto remained in existence. Even under a policy of total starvation, several hundred wagon-loads of goods had to be shipped in every day to keep the ghetto supplied, whereas the carriage costs involved in transporting those people to their death were much lower--and they were incurred only once." (p. 184). Nor did the extermination of the Jews create a labor shortage and hinder wartime production. Just the opposite: It was part of the 1942-1943 productivity-enhancing elimination/consolidation of 144,100 businesses in just the GG. (pp. 210-213). [Of course, some Jewish laborers, deemed productive throughout, were kept alive, and survived the war.] To increase productivity further, Germans replaced locals entirely, at ratios of 1:2 to as much as 1:10 (p. 269), in such places as western Poland, the Zamosc area (pp. 275-279), and parts of Russia. This was only the beginning of the planned systematic Germanization of Slavic lands. German planners spoke of at least 30-50 million "surplus" Slavs. (p. 159). Those who emphasize Poles and Jews as unequal victims are prone to cite Erhard Wetzel, who had said that obviously Poles couldn't meet the same fate as the Jews. What is left out is Wetzel's next statement: the fact that extermination of the Poles would cause intolerable world-opinion problems for Germany. (pp. 269-270). Friedrich Gollert came to an identical conclusion. (p. 272). Clearly, the different treatment of Jews and Poles owed to tactical reasons, not to Poles having some inherent right to exist. However, plans did exist for the extermination of the Poles (e. g., pp. 128-129, 353) and other Slavs. (p. 185, 237). In addition, mass-sterilization methods were being developed--ones that could be done efficiently and preferably with the ignorance of the victims. (p. 265, 268-269, 281, 353). Fortunately, Germany was defeated. Ironically, the Reich's economic advisor, Helmut Meinhold, toyed with the notion of the desirability of immediate-postwar widespread German population starvation, all because: "Meinhold now saw in Germany the economic chaos he had previously seen in Poland: severe overpopulation due to the influx of refugees, destruction of production facilities and lack of capital. In his terms, the erosion of manpower due to the war had not kept pace with the erosion of capital, at least not as far as the Germans were concerned. Consequently there were too many people living in Germany in 1945 for their combined labour resources to be exploited to the full with the capital that remained." (p. 183).<sup>3</sup> of 3 people found the following review helpful. Dissecting the bureaucracy of genocide By Alex Lint If you read this book you will never look at World War II the same again. Most BIG IDEAS fail. Regardless of whether they are good or bad, moral or immoral, they never get adopted or, if they are adopted, they end up watered down or adhered to only in lip service. On the rare occasions where they are truly carried out, there is usually more than ideology at work. Usually a confluence of many trends, some of them unrelated, come together to make huge paradigm shifts work in practice. Thus it was with Naziism and genocide. The second to last chapter of this book, for example, deals with the issue of food supplies and German policies in occupied Soviet territory. Very early in the Nazi period, agricultural planners realized that Europe as a

whole, and Germany in particular, were net food importers. In the event of full scale war with Great Britain and the USSR, the continent would have to cope with inevitable blockades and a drastic reduction in food supplies. The question then became: how to make up the difference so that the German people would not suffer, thus eroding the war effort and public support for the regime? First was to get rid of the excess animals. The arithmetic of animal husbandry is that it takes several kilos of grain to produce one kilo of animal flesh. After conquering various parts of Europe, therefore, the Nazis ordered the slaughter of most of the chickens and cattle. This freed up huge amounts of grain, while simultaneously producing mountains of meat that was then stored and kept for future use by German consumers. But that was not nearly enough. Before WWI, continental Europe received a great deal of grain from the Ukraine and other parts of Russia, but after the Bolshevik revolution those patterns of trade shifted. More important, the USSR in 1941 had more than 30 million more people than before who had to be fed. If Germany was to profit agriculturally and make up the shortfall of a blockade, something had to happen to the extra mouths in the USSR. Starvation was the key. According to these historians, the Nazi armies deliberately shied away from conquering populous areas of the USSR while concentrating on securing the Ukraine. They were frankly surprised that the population of Leningrad survived their deliberate tactic of encirclement coupled with food blockade. Their goal was that excess Slavic populations would either die or relocate east, to Siberia or elsewhere, leaving a depopulated grain basket that would then supply the Reich. In the long run, when the Slavic population was dead, they would be replaced with German farmers, but before that, it was necessary that the Slavs die so that the Germans could eat meat. Also in line with this was the deliberate starvation of Soviet prisoners, who died en masse when their Nazi wardens deprived them of food. The authors' documentation of the rapid drop in surviving Soviet POWs is chilling. The arithmetic of food blockade and starvation is compelling. Once Germany embarked on expansion, food imports had to be replaced, and that necessitated starvation and death for subject peoples. This is just one chapter in a compelling book. Other chapters deal with the economic logic of expanding German multinational companies by eliminating small scale wholesalers and competing manufacturers, especially in Poland but also in the Reich itself, all in the name of larger scale efficiency. It was, of course, quite convenient that most of the mid-level brokers and small scale manufacturers were Jews, whose property confiscations fueled economic expansion and a more streamlined economy. Leave out the genocidal aspects of the plan, and it sounds remarkably like the gobbling up of small firms that we now call globalization. I disagree with reviewers who say that this book refutes theories that the Nazis planned genocide from the beginning, and that instead genocide was a byproduct of other policies. Instead, I'd say this book shows that genocide and German expansion, especially in the east, dovetailed so perfectly that it was as if they were made for each other.

Two of Germany's most provocative investigative historians examine the frightening role of young educated careerists in building the Holocaust's ideological and material infrastructure. Moving from the waning Weimar Republic to Auschwitz's fully operating gas chambers, *Architects of Annihilation* shows how the unthinkable technocratic "solutions" to Germany's wartime problems were not only thought but spelled out and implemented. Documenting the eager participation of some of the country's best and brightest, it rejects interpretations that identify only Nazi leaders as the perpetrators of the Holocaust. For Hitler's thinkers--career-minded demographers, geographers, economists, civil servants, and academics in the Third Reich's think tanks and bureaucratic offices--Europe was a drawing board on which to work out their grand designs. They were encouraged to rationalize production methods, standardize products, introduce an international division of labor, and modernize and simplify social structures. Ultimately, their work on everything from food shortages to birth control led to the sinister plan to "adjust" the ratio between "productive" or "unproductive" population groups. The ideas of these ever more radical and ideologically aggressive technocrats culminated in proposals that--using carefully guarded scientific and academic euphemisms--advocated state-directed mass extermination as a necessary and logical component of social modernization. And, not well known outside of Germany, these thinkers proposed not only one "final solution" but serial genocides, planned in detail to be carried out over several decades. This groundbreaking and controversial account of Hitler's planners received widespread attention when it appeared in Germany. Now a masterful translation makes it available to an English-speaking audience for the first time.

"It is illuminating to read Aly and Heim's work in conjunction with contemporary history of technology and business. . . . [I]t is a great service that Princeton University Press has made Aly and Heim's work readily accessible to American historians of business and technology."--Michael Allen, *Technology and Culture*

From the Inside Flap: "Gtz Aly and Susanne Heim are known in Germany for challenging both establishment historians and the apologists. This book has no rival. It will be a must-read for students of German history and of the Holocaust."--Robert Gellately, Center for Holocaust Studies, Clark University

From the Back Cover: "Gtz Aly and Susanne Heim are known in Germany for challenging both establishment historians and the apologists. This book has no rival. It will be a must-read for students of German history and of the Holocaust."--Robert Gellately, Center for Holocaust Studies, Clark

