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Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Enemy in the East: Hitler's Secret Plans to Invade the Soviet Union*. Trans. Alexander Starritt. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015. Pp. xiv, 316. ISBN 978-1-78076-829-8.

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In *Enemy in the East*,<sup>1</sup> prolific military historian Rolf-Dieter Müller (Humboldt University, Berlin)<sup>2</sup> delves deeply into both the inner workings of the German high command in the Second World War and the nature of European great power politics in the decade preceding the war. The book comprises an introduction laying out key questions to be addressed, five easily digested chapters, and a tidy conclusion summarizing the author's arguments.

Müller explores in detail the origins of German planning for an invasion of the Soviet Union and the place of Poland in those plans. He also takes up a number of related topics, including the planning specifically for Operation Barbarossa (the eventual 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union) and the evolution of the operation from a relatively limited campaign into an ideologically charged war of annihilation. Müller is not afraid to take aggressive positions. In particular, he asserts that, almost from the beginning, Nazi Germany was bent on war with the Soviet Union. He believes that political factors made it likely the Germans could have succeeded in such an endeavor and that it was not virtually predestined to failure, even if they could not achieve victory within weeks of the onset of hostilities.

*Enemy in the East* also examines Imperial Germany's position in Eastern Europe from the late nineteenth century through the Weimer Republic's alliance of convenience with the Soviet Union. The author maintains that, despite ideological reservations, the Germans acted pragmatically in engaging with the Red Army as each nation developed its war fighting doctrines. The Germans saw Poland, along with France, as their primary threat during these years.

Much of this discussion is fairly conventional, but Müller puts such well known matters in the context of a potential future clash of arms in Eastern Europe. For example, his treatment of the 1920 Battle of Warsaw demonstrates that "rapid, long-range advances and surprising concentrations of force, when firmly and decisively led, allowed even numerically inferior armies to defeat their opponents" (14). Both the Reichswehr and the Wehrmacht learned valuable lessons from the Polish-Soviet clash of arms, as later German war plans for invading the Soviet Union attest.

The author carefully describes Germany's relations with Poland and the Soviet Union in particular, after Adolf Hitler became chancellor. He stresses the Führer's hatred of the Soviet Union and his intent to secure Lebensraum for the Reich. He also points out Hitler's pragmatic if risky approach to consolidating Germany's position in Central Europe, rightly stressing that his ideas were far from universally accepted inside the Reich's highest leadership circles. Within the German Army in particular there were quite active attempts to influence Hitler's quest for Lebensraum.

In this early strategic planning, Müller detects the genesis of Barbarossa. For achieving the German Army's goal of a limited expansion along the lines of the First World War Brest-Litovsk treaty would mean annexing the most economically productive regions of the Soviet Union, thus "making Germany again able to defend itself" rather than "lastingly dependent on the goodwill of the Soviet Union" (28). Hitler's persis-

1. German original: *Der Feind steht im Osten: Hitlers geheime Pläne für einen Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion im Jahr 1939* (Berlin: Ch. Links Vlg, 2012).

2. He is also Scientific Director of the German Armed Forces Military History Research Institute in Potsdam. His earlier books include *Der letzte deutsche Krieg 1939-1945* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005), *An der Seite der Wehrmacht: Hitlers ausländische Helfer beim "Kreuzzug gegen den Bolschewismus" 1941-1945* (Berlin: Ch. Links Vlg, 2007), *Hitler's War in the East, 1941-1945: A Critical Assessment*, 3rd ed. (NY: Berghahn Books, 2009), and *The Unknown Eastern Front: The Wehrmacht and Hitler's Foreign Soldiers* (NY: I.B. Tauris, 2012), among others.

tent attempts to persuade Poland to join in a pact against the USSR or at least grant Germany the Danzig corridor were designed to ensure a northern route of advance into the Soviet Union to complement a southern route via Hungary and Romania.

Conversely, the book includes a detailed look at Józef Piłsudski—the military and political leader of the interwar Polish state. The coverage here of German-Polish rapprochement and political maneuvering highlights Hitler's eagerness to create conditions favorable for attacking the Soviet Union. Müller contradicts the conventional wisdom that Poland was always in Hitler's crosshairs as a target for subjugation. He shows in compelling detail that Poland and Japan should have been natural allies of the Third Reich against the USSR and that the Germans even saw Poland as a potential member of the Anti-Comintern Pact of November 1936.

Drawing on a number of often overlooked documents, the author also tracks the stages in Hitler's drive toward war in the East: the Wehrmacht's operational planning for invading the USSR beginning in 1936; the German Navy's 1938 war games showing that a successful invasion in 1938–39 was plausible; and the incredible speed of Barbarossa's first real draft in summer 1940.

Müller convincingly maintains that Germany could have successfully invaded the Soviet Union and seized its primary economic resources in the late 1930s, when Stalin's purges were at their height. But this presupposes that Germany could either sideline or incorporate Poland into its plans and take several or all of the Baltic States. The author overreaches a bit here. For only after Germany's deployments in Austria and Czechoslovakia and its military operations in Spain, Poland, and against the Allies did the Wehrmacht begin to emerge as the formidable, highly mobile combined-arms force it would be at its peak in 1941. And, too, as Müller notes, the Red Army was in a sorry state in 1938–39 when significant assets were tied down by the Japanese.

The received interpretation of Hitler's intentions at the start of 1939 is that he wanted to control Poland as a forward base in the east so as to first undertake an offensive in the west and then subsequently wage war against the USSR. But there were no especial military measures or plans in place for an imminent war against the western powers. The Wehrmacht's activities continued to be directed eastward and aimed at preparing the ground for an expansion into the USSR. Hitler's decision to order a gigantic naval building programme and his recent emphasis on Germany's demand that her colonies be returned did not contradict this orientation on the east. These moves were not those for a proximate war against the western powers, but rather those of appearing to present a threat and of making Germany able, at a far later date, to wage the war for world domination.... The decision to first extend Germany's Lebensraum eastward and seize the raw materials required to subsequently wage a larger, global war was therefore far more obvious. And the colonial demands will not have been more than the gamesmanship needed to reach the coveted agreement with Great Britain. The best guarantee of good odds in the next phase of German expansion would still have been British passivity, for which Hitler could have offered to exchange the relinquishment of these colonial claims. The offer to Poland (Danzig for parts of the Ukraine) fitted in with the German desire to make a deal with Britain; Germany would renounce its former colonies if Britain agreed to allow Hitler a free hand in the east. (109)

But Poland not only refused to budge on Danzig or to emulate Hungary and join the Anti-Comintern Pact, it entered into a pact with Britain guaranteeing its security.

The author painstakingly recreates the context of Germany's August 1939 Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviet Union. Most historians portray Hitler's deal with Stalin as a stroke of genius, enabling him to quickly turn west after Poland fell. But Müller instead argues that the land lost as a result of the agreement amounted to a borderline strategic defeat for Hitler's goals in the East (124, 161–62). Stalin ultimately managed in effect to extend the borders of the USSR hundreds of miles to the west, at the expense of the Baltic States, eastern Poland, and parts of Romania. This allowed the Red Army to absorb the body blows it endured in the initial months of the German invasion and to reorganize and bring up reserves to stop a Wehrmacht weakened by struggling over terrain Hitler originally had no desire to fight for.

Müller makes good use of previously neglected sources for German military studies and war gaming to explain how Barbarossa came together so quickly in precisely the form it did. He also considers why the German Army's leadership, though intimately involved in planning a war of aggression in Eastern Europe,

largely escaped the postwar fate of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht's leadership. In this regard and for a host of other reasons concerning the final form of the Barbarossa plan, the Chief of the General Staff during these critical years, Franz Halder, comes in for special and much deserved criticism.

The book has one glaring flaw. In his account of the German invasion of Poland, the author states that "the Wehrmacht had not conducted the Polish campaign as an ideologically aggravated war of annihilation. Unlike two years later against the Red Army, the rules of the Hague Convention were largely respected, although there were some excesses and abuses" (163). This grossly understates the severity of the war crimes committed by the Wehrmacht in Poland from virtually the first day of the invasion.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, *Enemy in the East* offers an engaging and clearheaded look at the evolution of German attitudes towards Poland and the USSR in the interwar period. It constitutes a much needed corrective to traditional accounts of the Third Reich's foreign policy vis-à-vis Poland. Rolf-Dieter Müller also provides a comprehensive explanation of how and why Barbarossa took the form it did. Even well informed readers will find here many unique points of emphasis and analysis. Though the author at times overreaches, his arguments are well grounded and cannot be ignored.

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3. The best book on the subject is Alexander B. Rossino's *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 2003).