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Course Code: GE433

Course of Study: Germany & the Holocaust: Interpretations & Debates

Name of Designated Person authorising scanning: Christine Shipman

Title: Aspects of the Third Reich

Name of Author: Broszat, M.

Name of Publisher: Macmillan

Name of Visual Creator (as appropriate):

# 13. Hitler and the Genesis of the 'Final Solution': An Assessment of David Irving's Theses

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The English edition of David Irving's Hitler book,<sup>1</sup> published in the spring of 1977, two years after the expurgated German edition,<sup>2</sup> has created a furore both in England and elsewhere. The British author, who gained a reputation as an *enfant terrible* with earlier publications on contemporary history,<sup>3</sup> has propounded a thesis which is embarrassing even to some of his friends and admirers.<sup>4</sup>

Hitler, according to Irving, had pursued the aim of making Germany and Europe *judenfrei*, that is, clear of Jews; he had not, however, desired the mass murder of the Jews and had not ordered it; this had been instigated by Himmler, Heydrich and individual chiefs of the civilian and security police in the East.

This essay endeavours to re-examine the subject beyond shedding light on David Irving's contentious arguments, an

From *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, No. 4 (October 1977), 739–75. English translation published in *Yad Vashem Studies* (Jerusalem, 1979).

issue already treated unequivocally by internationally recognised historians and Hitler researchers.<sup>5</sup> In view of the confusion which may be sensed by those readers of this well-written book, particularly teachers of history who are insufficiently versed in the details, it seems pertinent to combine a critical analysis of Irving's arguments and text with a documentation of the significant sources which, although known to the author and copiously cited in his work, are nonetheless frequently obscured by him.

Despite their faulty reasoning Irving's theses do, however, afford the challenge of tracing the arguments relating to the origins of the National Socialist extermination of the Jews, which remain controversial to this day; these arguments also touch on an explicit annihilation order issued by Hitler, if such ever existed.

What is important, after all, is the context. The author of this treatise is not concerned solely or directly with a review of the history of National Socialist Jewish policy; Irving is primarily engaged in a re-evaluation of Hitler himself, claiming a solid foundation on known and hitherto unknown sources.

## I THE CONTEXT: THE 'NORMALISATION' OF HITLER

Perhaps one day after he was dead and buried, an Englishman would come and write about him in an objective manner. Hitler is said to have made this remark some time in 1944. Irving grasps at it eagerly in his Hitler book.<sup>6</sup> He seems determined in his own way to make this apocryphal remark come true. His book would finally bring about a de-demonisation of Hitler, so he asserts in his introduction with a sideswipe to Joachim Fest (p. xvii) who anticipated him, without – according to Irving – finding it necessary to comb the archives for new sources. Irving claims, on the basis of newly discovered documents, to draw Hitler as he really was, the real human being: 'An ordinary, walking, talking human, weighing some 155 pounds, with graying hair, largely false teeth and chronic digestive ailments' (p.

xviii). He emphatically promises the reader to purge Hitler's image of the accumulated contamination of the legends of Allied war propaganda and post-war accusations. The tone is set by compensatory overpressure on the part of the author who makes it his business to point out their omissions to his colleagues, and to overturn current concepts about Hitler. For years, according to Irving, historians had only copied from one another: 'For thirty years, our knowledge of Hitler's part in the atrocities has been based on interhistorian incest' (p. xiii).

The author's mastery of his sources, at least regarding the limited scope of his presentation, is incontrovertible; he has also managed to produce a number of remarkable and hitherto unknown contemporary notebooks, diaries and letters of the National Socialist period.<sup>7</sup> These stem mainly from Hitler's inner circle at the *Führer's* headquarters, and from liaison officers of the *Wehrmacht* as well as from individual Reich ministers, adjutants, secretaries, valets and stenographers. These documents are not of equal significance; although they contribute to a clearer understanding of the events at the *Führer's* headquarters (primarily the 'Wolf's Lair' at Rastenburg in East Prussia) and illustrate the atmosphere in Hitler's immediate vicinity, they add hardly anything at all to our understanding of major military or political decisions and actions on Hitler's part, and hardly justify the author's exaggerated claims of innovation. The discovery and utilisation of contemporary primary sources has long been a sort of adventuresome passion of Irving the historian.<sup>8</sup> However, the unprejudiced historian and researcher is obstructed by the passionately partisan author whose insistence on primary sources lacks the control and discipline essential in the selective interpretation and evaluation of material.

He is too eager to accept authenticity for objectivity, is overly hasty in interpreting superficial diagnoses and often seems insufficiently interested in complex historical interconnections and in structural problems that transcend the mere recording of historical facts but are essential for their evaluation. Spurred by the ambition of matching himself against professional historians in his precise

knowledge of documents, he adopts the role of the *terrible simplificateur* as he intends to wrest fresh interpretations from historical facts and events and spring these on the public in sensational new books.

Earlier theses of Irving's<sup>9</sup> revealed the obstinacy of which he is so proud; his Hitler book proves it anew. The perspective of the presentation, however effective it may be from a publicity point of view, shows *a priori* a narrowing of scope in favour of Hitler. In an attempt to illustrate as far as possible the flux of political and military events from Hitler's point of view, from 'behind his desk' (p. xvi), Irving attaches exaggerated importance to the antechamber aspect of the *Führer's* headquarters and to the testimonies of employees, in many cases subordinate officials, his new sources there. This 'intimacy with Hitler' and his claims to objectivity are proved mutually contradictory from the beginning.

The manner of their presentation lends them a particular character. Irving positions and hides himself behind Hitler; he conveys a military and political evaluation of the situation as well as the cynical utterances of the *Führer* concerning his opponents (Churchill and Roosevelt) and the alleged failure of his own generals and allies, mostly with no comment. Beside Hitler all other characters remain merely pale shadows. This subjective likeness of Hitler (as documented by the author) forms the skeleton of a biography and war account.

A great part of the apologetic tendencies of the work stems from this conceptual arrangement, in spite of its reliance on documentation. The terse chronological description of the ever-shifting military and political problems which were brought before Hitler (others are not noted) causes the spotlight to fall mainly on Hitler. As a result, military and political developments appear incomplete since they are not presented in their true perspective.

This lack of critical comment on the part of the author, who pretends merely to describe events in chronological order, reveals his bias. Quite two-thirds of the book, which numbers over 800 pages, deals with Hitler's conduct of the war, with military events and problems. This is not the

author's first description of World War II from the German point of view, others are yet to come.<sup>10</sup> The struggle of the German *Wehrmacht* under the command of Adolf Hitler holds a spell for the author. What emerges 'between the lines' of this detailed and well-documented chronicle is the fascinating story of the superior leader and general and the superior army, who could but yield, after an heroic struggle, to the overwhelming masses of men and *matériel* of an inferior enemy. This is a later version of Ernst Jünger's interpretation of World War I. David Irving, according to an English critic's pointed remark,<sup>11</sup> has remained the schoolboy who during the war stared fascinated at the wreckage of a Heinkel bomber. As an historian he turns his 'childhood war' upside down and fixes his attention on the techniques of armament and strategy and the great and heroic battles of destiny. Above all, his talents as a writer are engaged; on occasion he totally disregards reliable documents. The author is writing a war novel. . . . [Irving's] 'strategy' of de-demonisation is based simply on the attempt to shunt ideological and political considerations onto the broad periphery of purely military events. For instance, actions like Hitler's secret euthanasia order just after the outbreak of the war<sup>12</sup> are frequently (and wrongly) connected with, or justified by military exigencies. In some cases Irving dispenses entirely with reference to documentary evidence.

To this class belongs the newly revived theory (against all well-founded judgements) that Hitler's campaign in Russia forestalled a Soviet attack. Mysterious versions of aggressive speeches secretly made by Stalin to officers of the Red Army at the Kremlin on 5 May 1941, extensively quoted without any proof by Irving (pp. 238ff.) are mustered in support of Irving's thesis of a preventive war. [The author does not seem to be aware that Irving, without acknowledging his source, has taken the quotations from Alexander Werth's book *Russia at War 1941-1945* (London, 1964) pp. 122ff. The book has been translated into German. Stalin in his speech envisaged the possibility of Russia initiating offensive action. *Ed.*] It is on such pseudo-documentation that he bases his rationale for Hitler's orders concerning the liquidation of

Soviet commissars: 'Now the Soviet Union began to reap the harvest she had sown' (p. 262). The shooting of the commissars, according to Irving, was Hitler's answer to the projected 'eradication of the ruling classes' (p. 263) in the western countries which the communists intended to attack – an interpretation which would have been truly congenial to Hitler.

Irving does not conceal isolated acts of killing or annihilation which can be traced to Hitler, but he describes them apologetically and sometimes distortedly and obscures their basic differences. The fanatical, destructive will to annihilate, he defines as mere brutality and he encompasses Hitler in the common brutality of warfare in which the total partisan warfare in the East and the bombing raids of the Allies in the West played equal parts. War itself, the main character in this book, becomes the great equaliser of violence. In this respect Hitler is no longer an exceptional phenomenon.

The predominance of war in Irving's presentation also furnishes him with an explanation concerning the structure and the distribution of power within the National Socialist regime during the war: the 'powerful military *Führer*' played, but a small part in the country's domestic policy during the war. While Hitler was conducting his war, it was Bormann, Himmler, Goebbels and others who ruled the Reich (p. 251): 'Hitler was a less than omnipotent leader, and his grip on his immediate subordinates weakened as the war progressed' (p. xv). Irving himself designates this as his central theme. However, while it might not be entirely mistaken in this generalised form, it is completely erroneous when one applies it, as does the author, to Hitler's part in the annihilation of the Jews during the war. It becomes evident that the policy of the mass murder of the Jews does not fit into the picture of generalised brutality of war as drawn by Irving. Without the unreserved acquittal of Hitler on this, the greatest crime in German history, no 'normalisation' of Hitler could be possible.

Somewhat more is involved than just Hitler and his responsibility, for otherwise we could disregard Irving's thesis or even welcome it as a necessary contribution to

the controversial interpretations of German contemporary history, where Hitler's sole responsibility, if not explicitly assumed, is at least occasionally implied. Irving's thesis touches the nerve of the credibility of the recorded history of the National Socialist period. It was not with Himmler, Bormann and Heydrich, not even with the National Socialist party, that the majority of the German people so wholeheartedly identified themselves, but rather with Hitler. This poses a particular problem for German historians in their review of the National Socialist period. To bear the burden of such a disastrous mistake and to explore the meanings without minimising them, will remain a difficult task for German historical scholarship, but without doing so, the inherent truth would be lost. The distorted picture of Hitler as a mere madman, which Irving pretends to destroy, has long ceased to exist for serious contemporary historical research, if indeed it ever existed. Hitler's place in history does not admit of any such caricature. But the catastrophic influences which he set in motion and which he bequeathed to posterity also preclude any 'normalisation' towards which there seem to be some tendencies, mainly in the Federal Republic, using Irving as a reference.<sup>13</sup> Hitler's power, based above all on his capacity to personify and mobilise the fears, aggressions and utopias of his time and society as no other could – and to make this faculty appear as solid statesmanship – cannot be separated from the mediocre falsehoods, the disgusting monstrosity of the mental and spiritual makeup of this 'non-person', his totally irresponsible, self-deceiving, destructive and evilly misanthropic egocentricity and his lunatic fanaticism which confront the unbiased historian on all sides. All of this cannot be made to disappear through an appreciation of the 'greatness' of his historical influence or through later 'over-Machiavellisation' or rationalisation of Hitler and even less through 'ante-chamber' humanisation of the subject.

Irving himself, near the end of his book (p. 773) cites an utterance that testifies significantly against his Hitler image. In his last address before *Gauleiters* of the NSDAP, on 24 February 1945, in the face of the ruins of his policy and conduct of the war, this *Führer* who had so long been



worshipped by such a great part of his people and who was no longer prepared to make a public speech to them,<sup>14</sup> declared that if the German people now defected to the enemy, they deserved to be annihilated. The monstrosity (not the monster of the caricature) revealed by such utterances can in no way be transformed into the image of a normal war leader.

## II THE GENESIS OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST ANNIHILATION OF THE JEWS

Comprehensive descriptions of the 'final solution of the Jewish problem' which have existed for years, may mask the fact that many aspects of the genesis of this programme are still obscure. Careful examination has been checked to a degree by the tendency to regard the extermination of the Jews as a sort of metahistoric event which could have been 'logically' predicted long before 1933 on the basis of Hitler's radically dogmatic anti-semitism and from his preformed psychological motive of destruction.<sup>15</sup> As crucial as this point – Hitler's pathological philosophy – may be for the explanation of the whole, this does not release us from the responsibility of clarifying the historical question of how this ideology came into being and under what conditions, and by what institutional and personal levers it was 'transmitted' and possibly 'distorted'.

Definite as our knowledge seems to be of the various phases, arenas and modes of the execution and of the act of annihilation, based on contemporary documents and later statements of the perpetrators and victims, we know but little of the murderous final step towards the radicalisation of NS policy vis-à-vis the Jews, of those who had shared in the decision-making and of the precise content of these decisions; we know equally little of the form and the manner of their transmission to the special commandos and official agencies who were charged with their execution. In spite of the destruction of the pertinent files, mainly those of the *Sicherheitspolizei* (Security Police) who were primarily responsible, and the methodical removal of all traces after

the actions, as well as the misleading phrasing of the documents themselves, the acts as such could not be hidden. Given the centralisation of all decision-making, however, the attempts to obscure evidence were to a large extent successful.

It is doubtful whether the files of the *SD* chief, who on 31 July 1941 was charged with the organisation of the 'final solution', the files of the *Führer's* Chancellery, which supplied the gassing specialists (formally employed in the euthanasia programme), or Bormann's personal files at the *Führer's* headquarters could have provided unequivocal answers to these questions even if this material had not been largely destroyed before the end of the war. It is remarkable that prominent National Socialist figures who had had frequent dealings with Hitler during the war and who were connected at least partially with the Jewish question and who after the war were still available as witnesses (for instance Göring, Ribbentrop, Hans Frank) or who left extensive notes (like the diaries of Goebbels), while obviously informed about the annihilation of the Jews could make no statement about a specific secret order on the part of Hitler. This not only indicates that all agreements about the ultimate aim of the 'final solution' were adopted and transmitted verbally<sup>16</sup> but also shows that the physical liquidation of the Jews was set in motion not through a one-time decision but rather bit by bit.

The first extensive liquidation act, the mass execution in the summer and fall of (1941), of hundreds of thousands of Jews in the occupied Soviet territories by the *Einsatzkommandos* of the security police and the *SD* was no doubt carried out on the personal directive of Hitler. This, like the order to shoot all Soviet commissars, was obviously based on the fanatical determination of the National Socialist leadership to eradicate 'Jewish Bolshevism' root and stem. This does not yet necessarily signify that physical liquidation, including the Jews of Germany, was the overall aim of NS Jewish policy, and had already been adopted at that time, nor that Göring's order to Heydrich for the preparation of a comprehensive programme for the deportation of Jews dated 31 July 1941, should be interpreted in this sense. Uwe

Dietrich Adam in his study of the National Socialist Jewish policy had rejected this theory some years before, and with good cause.<sup>17</sup>

While the mass murder of Jews (including women and children) as first perpetrated in the occupied Soviet territories necessarily contributed to the adopting of this means of liquidation as the 'simplest' form of the final solution, plans then being formulated for the deportation of the German Jews remained to a great extent undetermined, as was the question of their destination and treatment. All emphasis and decisions were aimed at one target: to get rid of the Jews, and above all to make the territory of the Reich *judenfrei*, i.e. clear of Jews, since earlier plans to deport the Jews from Germany in the winter of 1939-40 had to be postponed.

When in the summer and fall of 1941 in their discussions and written communications the participants spoke only in vague terms of deportation 'to the East', this was not merely semantic obfuscation - it was typical of the manner in which Hitler, Himmler and Heydrich approached the problem of a 'radical solution' to major racial, social and völkisch-political questions. Extensive actions for the transport of masses of people were begun without any clear conception of the consequences. Regarding the deportation of Jews to the East, conceived and planned ever since the summer of 1941 and begun, in fact, in the middle of October 1941, in all probability there existed only a vague idea: to employ the Jews in the East, in ghettos and in camps, at forced hard labour. Many of them would perish; as for those incapable of work, one could always 'help along' their demise, as had been done in German concentration camps and in the labour camps of Poland. They were governed by the concept that the enormous spaces to be occupied in the Soviet Union would in any case offer a possibility for getting rid of the Jews of Germany and of the Allied and occupied countries, and above all, of the multitudes of Jews in the ghettos of the General Government, which since 1940 was visualised as a settlement area for the Germanisation of the East.

In the summer and autumn of 1941, it was clearly Hitler himself who voiced the imminent possibility of deporting Jews to the East to some of the Reich *Gauleiters*, to the Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia and to the Governor General of the occupied Polish territories, as well as to the Axis satellite governments; he himself urged its realisation and thereby in a way set off a lively competition to make their respective territories *judenrein* as quickly as possible.

Some relevant testimonies of this phase show that in spite of the determination of the National Socialist leadership to handle the Jewish question radically, no clear aims existed with respect to the subsequent fate of the deportees. Alongside the Russian East, the old Madagascar plan still figured with Hitler and the competent officials of the SD as an alternative scheme.

The diary of the Governor General (Hans Frank) notes on 17 July 1941:<sup>18</sup>

The Governor General wishes to stop the creation of further ghettos, since according to an express declaration of the Führer of June 19, the Jews will be removed in due course from the General Government, and the General Government is to be, so to speak, only a transit area.

In conference with the Croatian Marshal Kvaternik on 17 July 1941 Hitler remarked, according to the minutes:<sup>19</sup>

The Jews were the scourge of humanity, the Lithuanians as well as the Estonians are now taking bloody revenge on them. . . . When even one state, for any reason whatsoever, tolerated one single Jewish family in its midst, this would constitute a source of bacilli<sup>20</sup> touching off new infection. Once there were no more Jews in Europe there would be nothing to interfere with the unification of the European nations. It makes no difference whether Jews are sent to Siberia or to Madagascar. He would approach every state with this demand. . . .

A certain light is also shed on the planning and thinking of this phase by some parts of Goebbels' diaries<sup>21</sup> which

surfaced a few years ago and which have not yet been published; they contain the following remarks under the date 8 August 1941, concerning the spread of spotted typhus in the Warsaw ghetto:

The Jews have always been the carriers of infectious diseases. They should either be concentrated in a ghetto and left ~~to themselves or be liquidated~~, for otherwise they will infect the populations of the civilized nations.

On 19 August 1941, after a visit to the *Führer's* headquarters, Goebbels notes:

The *Führer* is convinced his prophecy in the *Reichstag* is becoming a fact: that should Jewry succeed in again provoking a new war, this would end with their annihilation.<sup>22</sup> It is coming true in these weeks and months with a certainty that appears almost sinister. In the East the Jews are paying the price, in Germany they have already paid in part and they will have to pay more in the future. Their last refuge is North America but even there they will have to pay sooner or later . . .

The next day, 20 August 1941, Goebbels supplements the impressions he brought back with him from the *Führer's* headquarters:

. . . even if it is not yet possible to make Berlin a city entirely free of Jews, the Jews should no longer be seen in public; the *Führer* has promised me, moreover, that immediately after the conclusion of the campaign in the East, I can deport the Jews of Berlin to the East. Berlin must be cleared of Jews. It is revolting and scandalous to think that seventy thousand Jews, most of them parasites, can still loiter in the capital of the German Reich. They not only spoil the general appearance of the streets, but also the atmosphere. This is going to change once they carry a badge but it can only be stopped once they are removed. We must approach this problem without any sentimentality.

Other testimonies of this time also confirm that Hitler set the targets of this, by now accelerated, activity. On 18 September 1941 Himmler wrote to the *Gauleiter* and Reich Governor of the Warthegau, *SS-Obergruppenführer* Greiser:<sup>23</sup>

7 The *Führer* wishes that the Old Reich and the Protectorate should be emptied and freed of Jews from the West to the East as soon as possible. I shall therefore endeavour to transport the Jews of the Old Reich and the Protectorate as far as possible this year; as a first step, into the newly acquired eastern regions that were annexed by the Reich two years ago, in order to deport them further to the East in the spring. Over the winter I intend to send about sixty thousand Jews of the Old Reich and the Protectorate into the ghetto of Litzmannstadt, which, as I hear, is barely able to accommodate them. I ask you not to misunderstand this measure which will no doubt entail difficulties and troubles for your district, but to support it wholeheartedly in the interests of the whole Reich.

It is possible that Himmler's communication, according to which the placing of the Jews in Litzmannstadt was intended as a temporary solution until they could be transported further to the East the following spring, was a feint while their murder in the occupied Polish areas was already planned at this point.<sup>24</sup>

At the beginning of October 1941, serious controversies broke out over the possible absorption of 20,000 Jews from the territory of the Reich between the governor of Litzmannstadt, *SS-Brigadeführer* Übelhör, and Himmler, and, after deportation had started (in the middle of October), between Übelhör and the security police, because the governor categorically refused to concede any absorptive capacity for the ghettos.<sup>25</sup> This would be hard to explain if the plan for the extermination of the Jews had already been decided upon. Goebbels, too, was informed by Heydrich at the *Führer's* headquarters on 23 September 1941 that (possibly because the transport trains were required by the army and because of the limited capacity of the available camps and ghettos in the East) there were still temporary

difficulties in the smooth deportation of the Jews of Berlin. In his notes of a discussion with Heydrich on 23 September 1941 (entry in diary 24.9.1941 – partly or totally indecipherable). Goebbels states (pp. 18f):<sup>26</sup>

This could occur as soon as we arrive at a clarification of the military situation in the East. They [the Jews] shall finally be transported into the camps which have been erected by the Bolsheviks . . . these [were erected by the Jews themselves] . . . [what could be more fitting than] . . . that they should now also be populated by Jews. . . .

Elsewhere (24 September (1941)) in the diary (pp. 35ff.), concerning his visit at the *Führer's* headquarters, Goebbels writes:

The *Führer* is of the opinion that the Jews are to be removed from Germany step by step. The first cities that have to be cleared of Jews are Berlin, Vienna and Prague. Berlin will be the first of these and I hope that we shall manage to deport a considerable portion of the Jews of Berlin in the course of the current year.

A month later Goebbels was to learn that a rapid and wholesale deportation of the Jews of Berlin into occupied Soviet territory was not feasible. He notes in his diary on 24 October 1941:

Gradually we are also beginning with the deportation of the Jews to the East. Some thousands have already been sent on their way. They will first be brought to Litzmannstädt. . .

On 28 October 1941 Goebbels again complained in his diary about the opposition that prevented the evacuation of Jews from Berlin in the 'shortest possible time'. Steps such as the evacuation had a more negative propaganda influence in the capital than in other cities since 'we have here all the diplomats and the foreign press'. He noted on 18 November 1941:

Heydrich advised me of his plans concerning deportations from the area of the Reich. The problem is more difficult than we had originally envisaged: 15,000 Jews must remain in Berlin as they are employed in the war effort and in dangerous jobs. Also a number of elderly Jews can no longer be deported to the East. A Jewish ghetto could be set up for them in a small town in the Protectorate. . . .

On 21 November 1941, Hitler, who had also come to Berlin, obviously had to damp the hopes of the Minister of Propaganda and *Gauleiter* of Berlin regarding the pace of the deportations. Goebbels noted the following day: 'He [the *Führer*] desires an aggressive policy towards the Jews which, however, should not create unnecessary difficulties for us.'

Considerable difficulties indeed arose, mainly through the unexpectedly arduous progress and, finally, the standstill of military operations in the East and the extra burdening of the already overloaded transportation system.

The situation into which the National Socialist leadership had manoeuvred itself in the planning of large-scale deportations of Jews becomes sufficiently clear through the documents already cited. As is clear from Hitler's declarations, Hitler, Himmler and Heydrich launched preparations for the wholesale deportation of Jews as a matter of ideology to be pursued with fanatical eagerness. They made this principle clear in their contacts with the *Gauleiters* of the cities with overwhelmingly large Jewish populations (Goebbels in Berlin, Schirach in Vienna) or the Governor General of Poland. The Chief of the Security Police (Heydrich) and his expert on Jews (Eichmann) had prepared plans for the deportation and had sent their 'advisers' on Jewish questions to the southeastern satellite governments with large Jewish communities. These 'experts' had been sent to Bratislava, Bucharest and Agram (Zagreb) with the objective of including Jews of these areas in the deportations to the East. Hitler obviously had no intention of halting the plan for the massive evacuation of the Jews even when the military situation in the East proved more difficult than had been assumed in the summer of 1941. It was for this reason that the original plans for deportation were curtailed on the



one hand, while on the other decisions were made aimed at eventually removing at least part of the evacuated Jews 'by other means', i.e. planned killing operations.

It thus seems that the liquidation of the Jews began not solely as the result of an ostensible will for extermination but also as a 'way out' of a blind alley into which the National Socialists had manoeuvred themselves. The practice of liquidation, once initiated and established, gained predominance and evolved in the end into a comprehensive 'programme'.

This interpretation cannot be verified with absolute certainty but in the light of circumstances, which cannot be discussed here in detail, it seems more plausible than the assumption that there was a general secret order for the extermination of the Jews in the summer of 1941.<sup>27</sup>

The first massacre of Jews deported from the Reich took place in November of 1941. The Jews of some transports that had been diverted to the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, mainly to Riga, Minsk and Kovno, were not assigned to the local ghettos or camps, as were the majority of the later transports; these Jews were shot upon arrival together with the local Jews in the executions already started by the *Einsatzkommandos* of the Security Police and the SD, as for instance in Riga on the so-called Bloody Sunday of 30 November 1941. At about the same time (November 1941), in the *Reichsgau* of Wartheland the 'Lange Special Commando' arrived in Chelmno (Kulmhof) and proceeded to construct temporary extermination facilities, such as the gas vans of the type used by this commando during the euthanasia killings in the transit camp of Soldau, and as of December 1941 for the killing of Jews, mostly from the ghetto of Litzmannstadt. The action in Chelmno was obviously closely connected with the disputes that had arisen concerning the transport of German Jews to Litzmannstadt. The idea that was initiated the previous summer in Posen,<sup>28</sup> according to which the situation in the ghetto could be relieved through the killing of Jews unable to work 'by means of a quick-acting medium', had apparently fallen on fertile ground. The erection of Chelmno was intended mainly for this limited purpose – to create room for the second and third

waves of Jewish transports from the Reich which would be 'temporarily' lodged in Litzmannstadt during the winter of 1941-2. The ghetto should be cleared of those unable to work (above all women and children), who would be brought to Chelmno for gassing. This action was mainly completed by the summer of 1942 (with the annihilation of about 100,000 Jews). Its *ad hoc* character becomes clear from a letter by *Reichstatthalter* Greiser addressed to Himmler and dated 1 May 1942. With a frankness unusual in a written communication, he reports:

The action for the special treatment of about 100,000 Jews in my province that has been approved by you in agreement with the chief of the RSHA, *SS-Obergruppenführer* Heydrich, will be concluded in the next two or three months.<sup>29</sup>

Only relatively few transports reached Chelmno after the summer of 1942: the installations were dismantled in March 1943 and all traces of the killings were removed. (Only in the spring of 1944 were the buildings again required for further killings.)<sup>30</sup> This process illustrates that the initiative for this partial action originated from the local Security Police staff and the office of the *Reichsstatthalter*. It was however in all probability initiated within the general context of decisions on the increased use of liquidation measures adopted after October-November 1941. An additional document shows that at that time there existed no general order for the annihilation of Jews but rather sporadic liquidation measures prompted by an inability to carry out the programme of deportations as planned. This is the draft of a letter by the expert on Jewish questions of the Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories to the *Reichskommissar* for Ostland, dated 25 October 1941, concerning the use of a gassing van<sup>31</sup> for the killing of Jews; the chief of the *Führer's* Chancellery Viktor Brack (who was responsible for gassing methods after the euthanasia action), had promised to manufacture and deliver it. He writes among other things:

May I point out that *Sturmbannführer* Eichmann, the expert on Jewish questions at the RSHA, agrees to this process. According to reports by *Sturmbannführer* Eichmann, camps will be erected for the Jews at Riga and Minsk which may also be used for the accommodation of Jews from the Old Reich. Jews evacuated from the area of the Old Reich will be brought to Litzmannstadt and also to other camps to be later assigned to forced labour in the East (to the extent that they are able to work). With the present state of affairs, there should be no hesitation about doing away with those Jews who are unable to work, with the aid of Brack's expedient. In this manner occurrences like those at the time of the execution of Jews at W[ilna], as described in a report I have before me, prompted by the fact that the executions were carried out in public in a way that can hardly be tolerated, will no longer be possible. . . .

The practice of annihilation became even more widespread and at this stage was discussed with cynical frankness at the German agencies of administration in the East. Hans Frank declared on 16 December 1941 at a government session in the office of the Governor of Cracow in connection with the imminent Wannsee Conference:<sup>32</sup>

Regarding the Jews, to start with, principally, there is one concern - that they disappear. They have to go. I have started negotiations with the aim of deporting them [the Polish Jews in the General Government] to the East. A major conference on this question will convene in Berlin in January to which I shall appoint Assistant Secretary Dr. Bühler as a delegate. The meeting will take place at the RSHA office of *SS-Obergruppenführer* Heydrich. This will mark the beginning of a great Jewish migration. What however shall happen to the Jews? Do you believe that they will be accommodated in settlement villages in the East? In Berlin they say, why all this bother. We have no use for them either in Ostland or in the *Reichskommissariat*, liquidate them yourselves. . . .<sup>33</sup> In the General government we have an estimated two and a half

and, with half-Jews and their families, three and a half million Jews. These three and a half million Jews we cannot shoot, we cannot poison, yet we must take measures that will somehow result in extermination so that this will be in concert with the major campaign launched by the Reich. The General Government must be as *judenfrei* as the Reich. . .

This additional evidence confirms the impression gained from other documents of this period: the various authorities of the National Socialist regime were ready in late autumn of 1941 for the extermination process aimed at reducing the number of Jews; there existed no real capacity to absorb the mass deportations which everybody urged and, further, the campaign in the East, which had reached a stalemate in the winter, offered no prospect for sending the Jews 'behind the Urals'. There were other reasons as well: the ghettos which had been created in order to isolate and select the Jews for deportation (in occupied Poland as early as 1939–40) spread destitution and disease, which were now regarded by those responsible as typically Jewish 'sources of pestilence' that were to be wiped out.<sup>34</sup> Epidemics and a high mortality rate suggested the possibility of 'helping nature along' in a systematic fashion.

The Jews had to be 'exterminated somehow'. This fatal expression recurs again and again in documents of various origins at this stage (autumn 1941), revealing evidence of the 'improvisation' of extermination as the 'simplest' solution – one that would, with additional extermination camps in occupied Poland,<sup>35</sup> finally generate the accumulated experience and the institutional potential for the mass murders. It could also be exploited in the course of later deportations from Germany and from occupied or Allied countries in Europe.

If we base our interpretation on the concept that the annihilation of the Jews was thus 'improvised' rather than set off by a one-time secret order, it follows that the responsibility and the initiative for the killing were not Hitler's, Himmler's or Heydrich's alone. This does not however free Hitler of responsibility.

We know almost nothing about the way in which Hitler spoke about these matters with Himmler and Heydrich, who bore institutional responsibility for the acts of liquidation performed by the SD- and SS-Commandos, and who at this time frequently visited the Führer's headquarters. We shall discuss the reasons that prompted him to hide the full truth even from high-ranking associates; we shall also examine the fact that these strictly unlawful measures could be ordered only by verbal instructions on the part of Hitler and not by way of legally binding formal directives (written communications). Hitler's responsibility for the murder of the Jews can in any case be established only indirectly: the idea that it would be possible to 'prove' this by means of some document signed by Hitler as yet undiscovered or destroyed before 1945 is derived from false suppositions: Hitler, as is well known, rarely processed files himself, and his signature or handwriting on documents of the Third Reich, except in the case of laws and ordinances, is hardly ever found.

Indications pointing at his responsibility are nevertheless overwhelming. A great number of documents concerning anti-Jewish legislation during the National Socialist period, as for instance the official definition of the concept 'Jew' (in this case Hitler had no need to hide his participation), prove that Hitler concerned himself with numerous details of the planned anti-Jewish measures and that these were contingent on his decisions. It could not be hidden from any prominent functionary of the National Socialist regime that Hitler had the greatest interest possible in the solution of the Jewish question. To assume that such important decisions as the measures for the destruction of Jewry could be usurped by an individual in 1941-2 without Hitler's approval is tantamount to ignoring the power-structure and hierarchic framework of the *Führerstaat*. It is especially baseless with respect to Himmler, whose loyalty to the Führer, especially in questions of basic ideology, was at this stage absolute. Such a concept is also untenable as the preparations for the extermination of the Jews (e.g. the question of transportation and the release of Jews from work essential to the war effort) interfered directly with the

interests of the *Wehrmacht* (and frequently collided with it) and could not at any rate be implemented by Himmler or Heydrich, in view of their limited competence, without the backing Hitler alone could impose. Goebbels reveals in his diaries that every important stage of the deportation of the Jews from the capital of the Reich required the approval of Hitler: at the Wannsee Conference (20 January 1942), which convened to discuss the 'final solution of the Jewish question', Heydrich makes pointed reference to the necessary 'previous authorization by the *Führer*'.<sup>36</sup> All this leads of necessity to the conclusion that the *Führer* specifically vested authority in the *Reichsführer-SS* and the Chief of the Security Police with regard to the massive actions of liquidation, regardless of who might have proposed these measures. (It is indeed possible that it was only with Himmler and Heydrich that the matter was discussed openly.) That Hitler knew of this already in 1941–2 – even while trying to hide it from any wider circle of listeners – becomes clear from the notes of participants in confidential conversations with him at this time (winter 1941–2).

At a 'table talk' at the *Führer's* headquarters on 25 October 1941, in the presence of Himmler and Heydrich, Hitler remarked:<sup>37</sup>

From the rostrum of the *Reichstag* I prophesied to Jewry that, in the event of war's proving inevitable [here the translation is faulty: '... wenn der Krieg nicht vermieden bleibt ...' if the war is not being avoided. See W. Jochmann (ed.), *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944* (Hamburg, 1980), p. 106 *Ed.*] the Jew would disappear from Europe. That race of criminals has on its conscience the two million dead of the First World War, and now already hundreds of thousands more. Let nobody tell me that all the same we can't park them in the marshy parts of Russia! Who's worrying about our troops? It's not a bad idea, by the way, that public rumour attributes to us a plan to exterminate the Jews. Terror is a salutary thing.... [Heim's original notes record: 'It's a good thing that terror precedes us, that we are exterminating

Jewry. The attempt to create a Jewish state will prove a failure.' *Ed.*]

On 23 January 1942, three days after the Wannsee Conference, during a 'table talk' at the *Führer's* headquarters in the presence of Himmler and Lammers, Hitler again referred to the Jewish question:<sup>38</sup> 'One must act radically. When ~~one pulls out a tooth~~, one does it with a single tug, and the pain quickly goes away. The Jew must clear out of Europe. Otherwise no understanding will be possible between Europeans.'

Further on in the same 'table talk', after Hitler had cited the discrimination that the Roman Church State had levelled in former centuries against the Jews, he referred with a mixture of obvious cynicism and hypocritical obscurity to the current deportations and occasional acts of annihilation:

For my part, I restrict myself to telling them they must go away. If they break their pipes on the journey, I can't do anything about it. But if they refuse to go voluntarily, I see no other solution but extermination.<sup>39</sup> Why should I look at a Jew through other eyes than if he were a Russian prisoner-of-war?

In the p.o.w. camps, many are dying. It's not my fault, I didn't want either the war or the p.o.w. camps. Why did the Jew provoke this war? [The notes of those taking down the 'Table Talk', Heinrich Heims, and Dr H. Picker, do not contain this passage. It is to be found only in the English translation of *Hitler's Table Talk*, introd. by H. R. Trevor-Roper. *Ed.*]

Four days later (27 January 1942) Hitler again said on the occasion of a 'table talk' at the *Führer's* headquarters:<sup>40</sup>

The Jews must pack up, disappear from Europe. Let them go to Russia. Where the Jews are concerned, I'm devoid of all sense of pity. They'll always be the ferment that moves peoples one against the other. They sow discord everywhere, as much between individuals as between peoples.

It's entirely natural that we should concern ourselves with the question on the European level. It's clearly not enough to expel them from Germany. We cannot allow them to retain bases of withdrawal at our doors. . . . [These lines are also not contained in the original notes. Ed.]

On 24 February 1942 Goebbels notes in his diary after a visit of Hitler's to Berlin:<sup>41</sup>

The *Führer* again voices his determination to remorselessly cleanse Europe of its Jews. There can be no sentimental feelings here. The Jews have deserved the catastrophe that they are now experiencing. They shall experience their own annihilation together with the destruction of our enemies. We must accelerate this process with cold brutality; by doing so we are doing an inestimable service to humanity that has been tormented for thousands of years. . . .

The accumulation of Hitler's aggressive statements and destructive will regarding the Jewish question, at this stage, as well as the allusions inherent therein to concrete measures for the Jews' expulsion and decimation, are sufficiently conclusive when interpreted within their historical context. They clearly reveal Hitler's fixation concerning the Jewish question and show his passionate interest in it. These facts preclude any possibility of his indifference to the continuing progress of the solution of the Jewish question.

At a much later period, in a secret speech of Hitler's to generals and officers of the *Wehrmacht*<sup>42</sup> on 26 May 1944, in which he expounded on the liquidation of the Jews which had meanwhile been largely completed, he let drop a remark which seems to confirm that the annihilation of the Jews, as it 'developed' in the winter of 1941-2, was a radical 'expedient' adopted as an escape from the difficulties into which the National Socialists had led themselves. 'If I remove the Jews', according to Hitler's justification at a later stage of the war, 'I have removed any possibility of the development of revolutionary cells or sources of infection.



Someone might ask me: could this not have been achieved in a simpler manner – or, rather, not simpler, *because anything else would have been more complicated*<sup>43</sup> – but solved more humanely . . . ?'

David Irving has correctly deduced that (p. xiv) the annihilation of the Jews was partly a solution of expedience, 'the way out of an awkward dilemma'. However, he finds himself on an apologetic sidepath if he concludes, contrary to all evidence, that some of the subordinate SS and party leaders had instituted the murders in cynical extrapolation of Hitler's remarks and against his will.

### III DAVID IRVING'S 'PROOFS'

In his book about Hitler, David Irving has not presented in any systematic way either the factual events of the 'final solution' or Hitler's manifold utterances about the treatment of the Jews during the war. His revisionist theory is not derived from any incontrovertible historical conclusion; rather the arguments mustered in its support to which he constantly refers, often arbitrarily scattered in the text and footnotes, are in the main controversial, drawn from a dozen different sources, citing only specific aspects and documents relating to 'Hitler and the extermination of the Jews'. He marshals inconclusive arguments to which he authoritatively appends irrelevant and erroneous inferences, presenting them as foregone conclusions or to be assumed as such. Once the author had committed himself to this theory, no shred of seeming evidence was too shabby to support it.

The other Irving appears again and again behind the laboriously spliced argument of his revisionist theory, with ambition and great acrimony vaguely citing all pertinent documents even when these barely relate to the main argument. And within the categorical vindication of Hitler one suddenly encounters thoughtful and cautious reflections and formulations: Hitler's role in the context of the 'final solution' was a 'controversial issue' and 'the negative is always difficult to prove' (p. xiii). In another place (p. 391):

'Hitler's was unquestionably the authority behind the *expulsion* operations; on whose initiative the grim procedures at the terminal stations of this miserable exodus were adopted, is arguable.'

Irving poses the justified question (pp. 270ff.): what exactly did Hitler mean when he promised the Governor General (of Poland) in June 1941 to expel the Jews 'further to the East': '... did Hitler now use "East" just as a generic term, whose precise definition would be perdition, oblivion, extermination? The documents at our disposal do not help us.'

Unfortunately the author did not confine himself to such cautious questions. He blocked the path for new insights for himself and others by presenting false stereotypes and artificial argumentation clearing Hitler.

In his introduction the author already reveals what he regards as his principal discovery (p. xiv): Hitler ordered on 30 November 1941, that there was to be 'no liquidation of the Jews'. In a facsimile of the original documents (p. 505) which Irving appends to his book, the reader can see for himself: a page from Himmler's hand-written telephone notes dating from the years 1941 to 1943.<sup>44</sup> Although nothing is found there concerning Hitler or any general prohibition of the liquidations, Irving, in his senseless yet literal interpretation of this note, would like to make us believe so in various parts of his book. This document reveals one fact only: Himmler held a telephone conversation from the *Führer's* bunker at the Wolf's Lair with Heydrich in Prague at 13:30 hours on 30 November 1941, and as one of the subjects of the conversation he noted: 'Jew transport from Berlin, no liquidation.' Whether Himmler had spoken to Hitler before this conversation and if its contents derived from Hitler is questionable.<sup>45</sup> In any case, this contention cannot be substantiated, nor can it be conclusively stated that Himmler relayed an order of Hitler's to Heydrich. The contents of the note prove one thing: the words 'no liquidation' are connected with 'Jew Transport from Berlin'. This was a directive or an agreement concerning a *particular* situation, and not a *general* order. It is not possible to determine precisely the occasion and the subject of the

conversation from these few words; however, what can be determined with certainty, is that they were connected with the execution of Jews from the Reich that had taken place some days before in Kovno (Kaunas).<sup>46</sup> The purpose of the telephone conversation between Himmler and Heydrich was evidently to forestall the liquidation of another Jewish transport from Berlin that had left for Riga on 27 November 1941, which obviously could not have been prevented. On precisely that day (30 November 1941) an extensive mass execution took place near Riga and this was the reason that Himmler telephoned Heydrich once again on 12 December 1941.<sup>47</sup> These semi-public executions as well as the treatment of the German Jews who had been deported to the East, had been attracting considerable attention among the German military authorities, as well as among some members of the civil administration in the Ostland. *Gauleiter* Kube, the *Kommissar* General of White Ruthenia who the day before had visited the German Jews who had newly arrived in Minsk, to the surprise of the local SS and Security Police, had remarked angrily that in his view a number of persons whose close relatives served at the front had been unjustly deported. Heydrich was forced to contend with these reproaches for months to come.<sup>48</sup>

It might have been this intervention or the particularly sensitive situation in Berlin, where American journalists had begun to evince interest in the fate of the deported Jews – until the entry of the USA into the war even Hitler had to take this mood into consideration – that made the liquidation in Kovno or Riga of the Jews of Berlin, which could not be kept secret, seem undesirable either to Hitler or to Himmler. This and no more can be inferred from the telephone note. This is additional evidence pointing to the improvisatory character of the annihilation, still typical for this phase, with all its contradictions and occasional misunderstandings between those who had been charged with the execution of the 'final solution' and those who issued the orders. Even assuming that the telephone conversation between Himmler and Heydrich was based on Hitler's directive (with the aim of preventing the transport of Berlin Jews on their way to Riga from being executed upon arrival) as had been done

once before in Kovno), one cannot conclude, as Irving does, that Hitler was not aware of the murder of the Jews. On the contrary: the exceptional directive (in *this* case) would indicate that Hitler knew in principle about the practice of annihilation.

Irving's interpretation, that Hitler had on 30 November 1941 issued a general prohibition against the liquidation of the Jews which would also be binding for the years to come is, however, totally mistaken. In fact it was at this point that the more institutionalised and better 'regulated' way of carrying out the 'final solution' began. On 20 January 1942 the Wannsee Conference in Berlin took place, which made it clear, even in vaguely worded minutes, that those in charge intended to make sure that a great part of the deported Jews would not long survive deportation.<sup>50</sup>

The first extensive mass execution of Polish, German and Slovak Jews began in the spring of 1942 at Auschwitz and in the newly erected extermination camp of Belżec in the eastern part of the General Government (the first of four extermination camps under the supervision of SS and Police *Führer* Globocnik at Lublin). Goebbels notes this in his diary<sup>51</sup> on 27 March 1942:

Beginning with Lublin, the Jews under the General Government are now being evacuated eastward. The procedure is pretty barbaric and is not to be described here more definitely. Not much will remain of the Jews. About 60 per cent of them will have to be liquidated; only about 40 per cent can be used for forced labour.

The former *Gauleiter* of Vienna, who is to carry out this measure, is doing it with considerable circumspection and in a way that does not attract too much attention. Though the judgment now being visited upon the Jews is barbaric, they fully deserve it. The prophecy which the Führer made about them for having brought on a new world war is beginning to come true in a most terrible manner. One must not be sentimental in these matters. If we did not fight the Jews, they would destroy us. It's a life-death struggle between the Aryan race and the Jewish bacillus. No other government and no other regime would

have the strength for such a global solution as this. Here, once again, the Führer is the undismayed champion of a radical solution, which is made necessary by existing conditions and is therefore inexorable. Fortunately a whole series of possibilities presents itself to us in wartime which would be denied us in peace. We shall have to profit by this. The ghettos that will be emptied in the cities of the General Government will now be refilled with Jews thrown out of the Reich. This process is to be repeated from time to time. Jewry has nothing to laugh at.

One feels, on reading this document, that Goebbels, who apparently had just heard of the new practice of murder through gassing, was talking himself out of his feeling of horror and clinging desperately to the bacillus theory of his Führer whom he calls 'the champion of a radical solution'.

Irving's interpretation of this well-known diary entry is revealing. He mentions it without citing it in detail (p. 392) and above all, conceals the explicit reference to 'the Führer'. He even manages to indicate the reverse by his accompanying remark. Basing himself on his theory of Hitler's prohibition of the liquidation, he submits that the Minister of Propaganda as well as Himmler and Heydrich were one with the plotters whose purpose was to hide from Hitler the fact that new acts of murder had begun on the largest possible scale. Goebbels, so he writes, entrusted his diary with a frank description of the horrible events in the death camps 'but he obviously kept silent when he met Hitler two days later'. Further, so the author doggedly insists when writing about this conference, Goebbels had noted in his diary only the following expressions of Hitler concerning the Jewish question: 'The Jews must pack up, disappear from Europe; if necessary we have to apply the most brutal means.' Since there is no record of Hitler using the word gassing, he knew nothing about it; this is the manner in which Irving arrives at his 'faithfully documented' deductions to prove his point, here as well as in other parts of his book. When examining Irving's thesis the historian, who is obliged to be sceptical as well as critical, might wonder why

Hitler's statements concerning the Jewish problem during the war contain – contrary to Irving's statement – words like extermination and annihilation which are by no means scarce,<sup>52</sup> and generally reveal Hitler's murderous intentions but make hardly any direct references to various phases or specific aspects of the extermination of the Jews.

The fact that no written order signed by Hitler concerning the exterminations has come down to us cannot be recognised as a decisive factor. We have already indicated that it is quite possible that such a one-time general order to wipe out the Jews never existed. It might be added that the act of mass execution according to legislation still in force at that time made a *a priori* a written confirmation of the order by the head of the German Reich quite unthinkable, unless Hitler was prepared to risk causing extreme embarrassment to the orderly administration and the judicial authorities of the Reich which were still fundamentally based on law and justice. This was the advantage of strict adherence to rules of semantics: the various branches of the civil administration, without whose organisational cooperation it would not have been possible to carry out the mass actions of the 'final solution', were informed 'officially' only about those aspects or portions of the general action which were still just permissible from a legal point of view: about 'evacuations', 'Jew transports', etc. Those parts of the action which were totally criminal and unlawful – the liquidations – occurred under the formal responsibility of special bodies in the Security Police and the *SD* who were above the law. More or less open mention of these matters was therefore acceptable on occasion, as can be seen on inspecting written communications between the *SS* and police authorities or between them and the heads of civil administration in the occupied areas of the East, who were outside the scope of the ordinary administration of the Reich.

Hitler as Head of State had to be far more formal and punctilious than, for instance, Himmler, about the process of law and order in the regular administration of the country. He had ample reason to refrain from any explicit verbal or written reference that a third party could have interpreted as an official directive on the unlawful

annihilation of the Jews. It is also known that at the time of the euthanasia programme Hitler was patently unwilling to furnish even a minimum of formal confirmation in the form of an obscure handwritten 'authorization' (by no means 'order'). However, confirmation was unavoidable in 1939, for with the killing of the mentally deficient being carried out within the boundaries of the German Reich, i.e. within the sphere of competence of regular civil administration and judicial authority, the euthanasia doctors and specialists had to be in a position, if necessary, to cite a formal authorisation on the part of Hitler. But as far as the killing operations in the occupied territories were concerned, within the framework of the prevailing emergency situation, the manifold restrictions within the jurisdiction of the civil administration obviated this necessity. Here Hitler could content himself with verbal authorisations that were kept strictly secret.

Thus, when Himmler, at a later date, for instance in his secret speeches at Posen before SS commanders and district governors on 4 and 6 October 1943, spoke openly about the annihilation of the Jews, he called this 'the heaviest task' of his life,<sup>53</sup> the reason probably was not that 'faithful Heinrich' had acted behind the *Führer's* back in the extermination of the Jews, or had voluntarily 'relieved' him of this burden – as Irving claims contrary to all evidence – but obviously that Himmler could not cite any official mandate because Hitler entrusted him not only with the massacre of the Jews but, in addition, expected him to keep the order strictly secret. The extent to which Hitler took pains to keep that 'last' truth about the fate of the Jews from the German public is also revealed in Bormann's confidential circular addressed to Reich and district governors of the NSDAP, dated 11 July 1943.<sup>54</sup> He prohibits 'by order of the *Führer*' any mention of a 'future overall solution' in public dealings on the Jewish question and advises only mentioning 'that the Jews are being employed in gangs as a labour force'.

It was very likely that not only formal considerations led Hitler to refrain from referring explicitly to the extermination of the Jews. With the sure instinct of the demagogue, and such he remained at his table conversations, he knew just

what demands he could make on his listeners. In his official speeches during the war any declaration of his virulent anti-semitism – his desperate determination to take ‘revenge’ on the Jews – was received with applause (as for instance in his speech of 30 January 1942); any description of an actual massacre of the Jews however would have (as in the case of Goebbels) aroused quite different emotions. Since our knowledge of Hitler’s attitude towards the Jewish question during the war is based almost exclusively on records of his conversations and speeches, our interpretation is confined by the limits of his demagogic point of view.

There is, however, some indirect evidence about Hitler’s intervention in measures connected with the annihilation of the Jews. We may take as an indication the stepping-up of the killings that became operative in the summer of 1942 with the ‘running in’ of Sobibor and Treblinka in the General Government. Himmler as well as SS and Police Commander Globocnik were, for reasons of secrecy, anxious to carry out the action ‘as quickly as possible’.<sup>55</sup> There was some resistance on the part of the *Wehrmacht*, because of the need for Jewish labour (for instance regarding the c. 400,000 Warsaw Ghetto Jews) and further, due to the still chronic shortage of transport trains, for which the *Wehrmacht* had other priorities. For that reason Himmler required Hitler’s full support. It was obviously on this subject that he conferred with Hitler at the *Führer*’s headquarters on 16 July 1942 and it was from there, on the same day, that his liaison officer to Hitler, *SS-Obergruppenführer* Wolff, made an urgent telephone call to the Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Transport, concerning the availability of additional transport trains. It was three days later, only after these conditions had been met, that Himmler could, on 19 July 1942, issue the directive to the senior SS and Police Commanders that the accelerated resettlement of the entire Jewish population of the General Government was to be carried out and terminated by 31 December 1942. Exempted should be solely the Jews in some of the labour camps.<sup>56</sup> On 28 July 1942, Assistant Secretary Ganzenmüller issued Wolff this comforting communication: ‘Since July 22, one train per day with five thousand Jews was leaving



Warsaw for Treblinka, and that twice a week a train was leaving Przemysl with five thousand Jews for Belzek [!] . . .'

Wolff expressed his gratitude on 13 August 1942 for the efforts in this matter and declared that it gave him 'special pleasure' to learn that 'daily trainloads of five thousand members of the Chosen People are going to Treblinka and that we are thus being enabled to accelerate this migration'.<sup>57</sup> Wolff's intervention on the day of Himmler's conference with Hitler is only one of the indications that deportation and extermination activities were repeatedly granted special priority by the *Führer's* headquarters.<sup>58</sup>

It is all the more fantastic when Irving claims (p. 327) that not only Hitler's secretaries and stenographers, but Wolff who accompanied Himmler while inspecting Auschwitz, as well as Globocnik at Lublin, in the summer of 1942 still knew nothing about the killings. It was in this vein that Wolff pleaded against charges of complicity in the killings at his trial in the Munich District Court in 1964. The court could not, as recorded in its judgement 'accept the claim of the defendant since it is not in accordance with the truth'.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Irving treats Wolff's version as if it were a proven fact and makes no mention of the dissenting opinion of the court although he was aware of this.

On the whole it seems that the author owes a great debt to Wolff.<sup>60</sup> It was the latter who in the early 1950s was the first to propound the theory that Himmler, in his bizarre zeal for the *Führer* and the *Führer's* ideology, saw it as his task personally to relieve the Commander-in-Chief, engaged in an external war with the world, and to take upon himself the anti-semitic objectives without burdening Hitler himself. This theory of Irving's was obviously supported by the evidence of the author's witnesses of preference, Hitler's junior staff, who knew Hitler from a servant's perspective only as a more or less charming 'boss'. They could well imagine that 'A.H.' (as they were still calling him) was once again kept in the dark, as Hitler had claimed often enough, and deceived on account of his good nature and naïvety.<sup>61</sup> Even Hitler's valet, Krause, whose memoirs lend wholehearted support to the popular refrain 'if only the *Führer* knew about this', has not been shunned by David

Irving as a source of information.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand Irving often failed to take into consideration, or treated with impatience, the post-war statements of witnesses who were personally involved in the killings or who had had access to secret information. He refers to the statements by Walter Blume and Otto Ohlendorf, the former commander of one of the *Einsatzgruppen*, confirming the 1941 verbal instructions to commanders about the killings, expressly issued under Hitler's instructions; although these are cited by the author they are distorted in the reproduction.<sup>63</sup> He completely ignores the remarkable statement of the former *SD* officer Wilhelm Höttl<sup>64</sup> and those of the commander of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss.<sup>65</sup> The testimony of Adolf Eichmann, too, is passed over and declared misleading (p. 858).

Irving claims that the only evidence of the fact that Hitler had ordered the annihilation of the Jews came from the former *SD* officer and expert on Jewish questions in Bratislava, Dieter Wisliceny, but is of no value.<sup>66</sup> Irving attempts to refute this testimony by citing a particularly weak parallel – 'Given the powerful written evidence that Hitler again and again ordered the "Jewish problem" set aside until the war was won' (p. 858/fn). He refers to the conversations with Bormann, Goebbels and others in the summer of 1941 concerning oppositional stirrings within the Catholic Church (Count Galen), in which Hitler opposes the tendency to apply radical measures against the opposition spokesmen of the Catholic clergy suggested by the NSDAP and particularly by Bormann in order to forestall opposition of the Church-going public. Just as in the case of the Church, Irving claims (p. 331) that Hitler sought to postpone the Jewish problem until after the war. That Irving does not hesitate to manipulate his documentary evidence in order to add conviction to a thesis that is misleading *ab initio*, reveals the obstinacy of his reasoning.<sup>67</sup>

This argument is obviously intended to support Irving's main thesis that Hitler was too busy with the conduct of the war to attend to the Jewish question himself and left Heydrich and others to deal with it. Irving's want of historical understanding and his lack of textual cohesion become especially obvious in this thesis. Even a cursory

inspection of Hitler's wartime declarations concerning the Jews makes it clear that there was a widely motivated and powerful link in Hitler's thinking and will between military operations, particularly the war against the Soviet Union, and his ideological war against the Jews. It is precisely this very obvious connection that robs Irving's revisionist theses of all conviction, especially since without this ideological-pathological linkage between the war and the annihilation of the Jews (in Hitler's world-view) the latter could hardly be explained.

If one seeks to grasp the full significance of this philosophy as a motivating force, it does not suffice to trace it back to a paradigm of rational ideological interactions.<sup>66</sup> Hitler's philosophy, and especially the anti-Jewish components, had always been a non-wavering dogma, combined with sudden outbursts of paranoic aggressiveness. Anyone considering only the first portions necessarily concludes that there had been neither evolution nor radicalisation. The final solution of the Jewish problem appears as a realisation of a long-established programme methodically and 'logically' carried out step by step. Closer inspection of the National Socialist Jewish policy shows that such a hypothesis is incorrect and does not adequately explain some important facts. The violent *Reichskristallnacht* which opened the door for the lawless persecution of the Jews is a particularly telling example. Ever since, Hitler's fixation and impatience for a solution of the Jewish question were reinforced – evident from the frequency and intensity of his official utterances and the diplomatic activities with which he approached the Jewish question at the beginning of 1939 – and cannot be explained on the basis of Hitler's ideology alone. Whichever explanation – with its inevitable concomitant psychological undertones – one prefers, be it the overwhelming euphoria of success to which Hitler was then subject and which drove him to exceed his still rational, political aims, means and calculations; or the later (post-winter 1941) and by no means insignificant motive of revenge and retribution for the unsuccessful conduct of the war, it is certain that Hitler's dogmatic ideological anti-semitism was not independent of factors of time and events. Its development

was not merely programmatic but rather pathological and was weakened or intensified by current events; these fluctuations were at least as important a motive for decision and action as was a fixation on a specific dogma. This is mirrored in the alternately spontaneous or constrained nature of actions relating to the Jewish policy and the killings, which did not proceed smoothly and according to plan but rather in an improvised and jerky fashion.

From this angle the interdependence between the war and the Jewish question gains even greater importance. The war did not only offer – as noted cynically by Goebbels in his diary on 27 March 1942 – opportunities for violent procedures that did not exist in peacetime, but was *welcomed* (and not only *risked* for political imperialist reasons). Hitler's prophesied destruction of Jewry, made on 30 January 1939, in the event of a new world war which has subsequently been cited so frequently, was from a psychological point of view not only a 'warning' but in itself part of the motivation.

The war, however, in its further course, offered ideal fuel for the constant 'recharging' of a manic-aggressive anti-semitism, and not to Hitler alone. The confrontation with the masses of *Ostjuden* in occupied Poland, in the Baltic states and in Russia, provided emotional nourishment and confirmation for an imperialist racial ideology that had until then been propagated only in the abstract; there now existed a concrete picture of an inferior race which had to be eradicated. The psychologically cheapest and most primitive form of self-confirmation and self-fulfilling prophecy could now be set in motion: the discriminated against, crowded, tormented and frightened Jews in the East finally looked the way they were caricatured in the anti-semitic periodicals. Epidemics in the ghettos made them a threat to the health of the general population; their terrified flight into the forest created the danger of 'Jewish gangs' that one pretended to remove prophylactically just as one had to eradicate their expected propagation of defeatist ideas and plots in the occupied or Allied neighbouring countries. All this and other motives were exploited not only by Hitler and Himmler but also by Goebbels and Ribbentrop and by the district military and civil administration chiefs. They were

also employed by diplomats charged with the pressuring of the Allies into further intensification of the final solution in Europe, and were used and produced especially in the last stages of the deportations and exterminations in 1943-4. These motives can be understood not only as semantic rules for the accomplishment of real ideological objectives, but rather as a conglomeration of various factors stemming from ideology, propaganda and, first and foremost, unexpected reactions of the individual which exceeded objectives set forth by racist ideology and brought into play so many 'accomplices' and 'assistants'.

With Hitler, too, the assessment of the motives mirrored in his remarks on the Jewish question during the second half of the war is of major significance. As the military struggle appeared to become hopeless, the 'war of fate' against Jewry was promoted as the real war (which would be won).<sup>69</sup> The death of hundreds of thousands of German soldiers had to be expiated and biologically revenged through the liquidation of an even greater number of Jews. Also with Hitler the 'security' problem came to the fore; Jews had to be eliminated, otherwise he feared that there could be internal unrest<sup>70</sup> due to increased partisan warfare in the rear, defeatism and defection of Axis countries. It was for that reason the final intensification of radicalism took place in Hitler after Stalingrad, and seems to be one of the motives for the intensified measures that aimed to encompass, if possible, all the Jews within the German sphere of influence into the extermination programme.<sup>71</sup>

Hitler's numerous references to the interrelation of the war and the Jewish question show with sufficient clarity how untenable Irving's argument is. One example of Hitler's increased intervention in the final solution after Stalingrad is his discussions with the Romanian head of state, Marshal Antonescu, and with the Hungarian Regent Admiral Horthy in April 1943.<sup>72</sup> We shall examine these records in more detail at the close of this discussion, since not only do they once more document Hitler's intransigence and his way of thinking, but also give us an opportunity to demonstrate how the author of the Hitler book manipulates such documents. By describing the anti-Jewish measures in

Germany (in the area of the Reich there remained only a few thousand Jews), Hitler attempted to persuade both heads of state to adopt a similar radical line towards the Jews of their respective countries. He bluntly expressed himself to Horthy on 16–17 April 1943. It had aroused his particular dissatisfaction that Hungary's 800,000 Jews could, in spite of some anti-Jewish laws that were promulgated in 1938, still move about with relative freedom. On 16 April 1943<sup>73</sup> Horthy answered the reproaches levelled against him on this matter by enumerating the manifold measures that had been taken by his government to restrict the Jewish influence; he closed his remarks with a clear allusion to the reports known to him about the German measures for the liquidation of the Jews: 'He had done everything that could decently be done against the Jews, but it was after all impossible to murder them or otherwise eliminate them'. Hitler, who was obviously embarrassed by this hint, declared, according to the records: '... there is no need for that; Hungary could put the Jews into concentration camps just as had been done in Slovakia...' He continued by counter-attacking while twisting the argument in his typical manner: 'When there was talk of murdering the Jews, he [the *Führer*] had to state that there was only *one* murderer, namely the Jew who had provoked this war...' Hitler and Ribbentrop did not give up and on the next day (April 17) brought up the subject again. The most important parts of the record read:

In reply to Horthy's question, what should be done with the Jews after he had deprived them of almost any means of existence – to murder them is not possible – the Foreign Minister answered that the Jews must either be destroyed or put in concentration camps – there is no other way.

Hitler complemented the straightforward speech of his Foreign Minister first by a long-winded dissertation on the decay that the Jews caused wherever they were found and, with a typical mixture of openness and obscurity, arrived at

the heart of the matter: the massacre of the Jews in the concentration camps, to which Horthy had alluded.

They [the Jews] are just parasites. This state of affairs had not been tolerated in Poland; if the Jews there refused to work, they were shot. Those who could not work just wasted away. They had to be treated as tuberculosis bacilli which could infect a healthy organism. This was by no means cruel when one considered that even innocent creatures like hares and deer had to be put down to prevent damage. Why should the beasts that had brought Bolshevism down on us, command more pity.

These documented statements on the part of Hitler could not be ignored even by Irving. He reproduces some passages (p. 509) but attempts to modify their significance methodically by a number of manoeuvres: Ribbentrop's declaration in the presence of Hitler (that the Jews must either be destroyed or put in concentration camps) is concealed in a footnote to the appendix of the book.<sup>74</sup> Hitler's own remark (in Poland the Jews who refused to work were shot and those who could not work perished) Irving introduces with the reference to the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt which had been suppressed shortly before (and that had not even been mentioned in the conference with Horthy); he thus makes it falsely appear as only referring to an action that was limited in scope and carried out for a specific reason. In order completely to obscure the impression that the *Führer's* utterances, which could hardly be misunderstood, were indeed a confirmation of this policy of annihilation, Irving allows the discussion with Horthy to terminate, contrary to the documented facts, with Hitler's evasive remark of the previous day (16 April 1943) in reply to Horthy's direct question if he should murder the Jews ('there is no need for that'). Irving cites these words at the end of his quotation and they are the only ones he cites *verbatim* and stresses with quotation marks. Irving finally ends the thoroughly manipulated course and content of the conference with some further remarks that are intended to

relieve Hitler of responsibility and are typical for Irving's apologetic interpretation (p. 509). As an illustration we shall quote them *verbatim*:

What had prompted the earthier [!] language now employed? It is possible to recognise the association in his mind of certain illogical ideas; half were unconscious or the result of his own muddled beliefs, but half had deliberately been implanted by trusted advisers like Himmler and Goebbels: the Jews had started the war; the enemy was the international Jew; the most deadly of the Bolsheviks, like Stalin's propagandist Ilya Ehrenburg, were Jews: Ehrenburg and the Jews behind Roosevelt were preaching the total extermination of the German race. The saturation bombing of German cities, their blasting and burning, were just the beginning. In his warning to Horthy that the 'Jewish Bolsheviks' would liquidate all Europe's intelligentsia, we can identify the influence of the Katyn episode. . . . But the most poisonous and persuasive argument used to reconcile [!] Hitler to a harsher treatment of the Jews was the bombing war. From documents and target maps recently found in crashed bombers he knew that the British aircrews were instructed to aim only at the residential areas now and to disregard the industrial targets proper. Only one race murdered, he told the quailing Horthy, and that was the Jews, who had provoked this war and given it its present character against civilians, women and children. He returned repeatedly to this theme as 1943 progressed; in 1944 it became more insistent; and in 1945 he embodied it in his Political Testament, as though to appease his own conscience and justify his country's actions.

With these 'explanations' our author has done it again: without the British bombing war that had been initiated by Churchill, Hitler would not have been such a hater of the Jews. The prejudice of the author, transforming his hatred of Churchill into an apology for Hitler, is apparent in this passage, and indeed, characterises the whole book.



It is not possible, and indeed it is quite unnecessary to delve into Irving's distorting interpretation. Over and above our criticism, it is a point in the author's favour that we are provided an opportunity to re-examine the subject. In spite of his mistaken conclusions Irving has drawn our attention to some of the hitherto inadequate information and existing interpretations.

46. Klein, *Germany's Economic Preparations*, Statistical Appendix: Table 60. p. 254.
47. Dietmar Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik im Dritten Reich* (Stuttgart, 1968), p. 30.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 183. Rearmament expenditures were about 8,000 million Reichmarks in 1937.
49. Imports of wheat from the United States rose from 17,000 tons in 1937 to 243,900 tons in 1938, the highest annual quantity since 1928 (*Sondernachweis des Aussenhandels Deutschlands*).
50. Marguérat, 'Le protectionnisme'.

### 13 HITLER AND THE GENESIS OF THE 'FINAL SOLUTION': AN ASSESSMENT OF DAVID IRVING'S THESES

1. David Irving, *Hitler's War* (London, 1977).
2. David Irving, *Hitler und seine Feldherren* (Frankfurt, 1975). The German publisher (Ullstein Verlag) insisted on the omission of those theses of Irving's that were, in his opinion, untenable and irresponsible: relieving Hitler of the responsibility for the extermination of the Jews. The publishing of the German edition caused a breach between author and publisher.
3. *Accident, The Death of General Sikorski* (London, 1967) German edition: *Mord aus Staatsräson, Churchill und Sikorski, eine tragische Allianz* (Berne, Munich, Vienna, 1969) and *The Destruction of Convoy PQ 17* (London, 1968), which had sensational repercussions in court (see note 9 below). 'PQ 17' is the story of the sinking of the British convoy, which was withheld from the public, the blame for which Irving placed on the commander of the Navy's escort flotilla.
4. See the discussion by Heinz Höhne in *Der Spiegel* of 4 July 1977, pp. 71-4. One of Irving's German friends Rolf Hochhuth, who adopted Irving's thesis about Churchill's alleged assassination of Sikorski and used it as the theme of his play *Soldaten*, found it necessary to dissociate himself decidedly from Irving's theory, in his introduction to Goebbels' diaries of 1945, published by Hoffmann and Campe, Hamburg (Introduction, p. 40).
5. Cited here primarily are the detailed discussions by Alan Bullock in the *New York Times Book Review* of 26 May 1977, of Hugh Trevor-Roper in the *Sunday Times Weekly Review* of 12 June 1977 and of Eberhard Jäckel in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 25 August 1977.
6. Irving, *Hitler's War*, p. 424. The abridged German edition does not carry this passage. According to Irving, this remark was made in the course of a discussion between Hitler and one of his doctors on the Englishman J. Daniel Chamier's book about Emperor Wilhelm II. Hitler had remarked on this occasion, so Irving cites (p. 424) significantly: 'that a foreigner probably finds it easier to pass judgement on a statesman, provided that he is familiar with the country, its people, language and archives'. Irving does not refer to the source of his quote in the notes.
7. To be noted here among others is a not very extensive notebook of the former ambassador Walter Hewel, Foreign Minister Ribbentrop's liaison at the Führer's headquarters (it had to be partly translated from the Indonesian and was therefore particularly attractive to Irving) and the probably more significant notes of Dr Werner Koeppens, liaison officer to Alfred Rosenberg, the *Reichsminister* for the Occupied Eastern Territories, recording conversations at the Führer's headquarters. See the introductory part of Irving's book. A great part of this material has been put at the disposal of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ) by Irving. It is to be commended that he has not, as a rule, withheld his sources

from other historians and has also made them accessible to his critics. This has allowed the author of this paper access to Irving's material and helped him to grasp how Irving made use of it.

8. Characteristic is the description of his – in this case futile – search of several weeks' duration (with a supersensitive mine-detector) in a forest in East Germany for a waterproof container with a microfilm copy of Goebbels' diaries allegedly buried there in 1945. See Introduction, p. xxi.

9. Best known is Irving's alleged proof that the fatal 1942 airplane crash involving the Polish prime minister in exile, General Sikorski, was caused by sabotage on Churchill's order. Irving reverts to this thesis in his Hitler book (Introduction, p. xiii) although a British court of law established its untenability. Trevor-Roper deals with it in his discussion in the *Sunday Times Weekly Review* on 12 June 1977 and writes: 'It is well known that some years ago Mr. Irving convinced himself that General Sikorski, who died in an air crash at Gibraltar, was "assassinated" by Winston Churchill, to whom in fact his death was a political calamity. Not a shred of evidence or probability has ever been produced in support of this theory and when it was tested in the courts, Mr. Irving's only "evidence" was shown to be a clumsy misreading of a manuscript diary (I have myself seen the diary and feel justified in using the word "clumsy").'

10. Cf. David Irving, *The Destruction of Dresden* (London, 1963) (German edition Gütersloh, 1964) and by the same author. *Die Tragödie der deutschen Luftwaffe, Aus den Akten und Erinnerungen von Feld-marschall Milch* (Frankfurt, Vienna, 1970); *The Trail of the Fox, The Life of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel* (London, 1977), *The War Path* (London, 1978).

11. Michael Radcliffe in *The Times*, 16 June 1977, p. 14.

12. Irving introduces the paragraph about this event (p. 20) with the remark: 'The ostensible occasion for this formal decision was related to war needs. About a quarter of a million hospital beds were required for German mental institutions. . . They occupied bed space and the attention of skilled medical personnel which Hitler now urgently needed for the treatment of the casualties of his coming campaigns.' None of the relevant documents contains this particular justification of the euthanasia programme.

13. The *National-Zeitung* published in Munich dedicated its front page on 2 September 1977 to 'New Ideas about the Führer', and exulted over Irving's book and the illustrated pocketbook of the Hitler film by Joachim Fest: 'the demonization of Hitler is approaching its end' and a 'normalization' of Hitler in contemporary history is slowly taking place. [Irving, sponsored and paid for by the editor of the *National-Zeitung*, has and still is addressing private and public gatherings in West Germany. These are held under the auspices of the *Deutsche Volks Union* (DVU), a body close to Irving's 'Focus' group in the UK. Ed.]

14. See Joseph Goebbels, *Tagebücher 1945, Die letzten Aufzeichnungen*, (Hamburg, 1977); English edition, Joseph Goebbels, *The Final Entries 1945, The Diaries of Joseph Goebbels* (London, 1978). The entries of 27 and 28 March 1945 show that at that time Goebbels urged Hitler in vain to broadcast to the German people.

15. Characteristic of these is one of the most recent comprehensive commentaries on the NS Jewish policy, Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (London, 1975).

16. The post-war statements of persons who had been entrusted with individual acts of extermination of Jews refer to verbal instructions: see below, notes 62-65.

17. Uwe Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf, 1972), esp. pp. 305ff.

18. *Das Diensttagebuch des deutschen Generalgouverneurs in Polen 1939-45*, published by Werner Präg and Wolfgang Jacobmeyer (Stuttgart, 1975), p. 386 (hereafter –

*Diensttagebuch*). That at that time (summer 1941) the authorities of the SD who were dealing with the Jewish problem were still unaware of the general extermination order (which would have been surprising if it had already existed) is illustrated by the draft of a letter by the chief of the SD unit in Posen who was in charge of the Warthegau and was addressed to the expert on Jewish questions, Adolf Eichmann, at the RSHA on 17 July 1941, precisely because this draft deals with an independent decision on the part of the security police and the SD in Posen to kill a part of the Jews of the ghetto of Litzmannstadt. It was to be considered, so the document says, referring to a conference about 'the solution of the Jewish question' which took place at the office of the district governor in Posen, that in view of the overcrowding of the Litzmannstadt ghetto it might be the most humane solution to finish off those Jews who were unable to work by some quick-acting medium. In any case this would be more pleasant than to let them starve. 'These things sound partly fantastic,' writes the SD chief of Posen, 'but are, in my opinion, absolutely feasible.' Copy of this draft was discovered in Posen and was presented in evidence at the trial against *Reichsstatthalter* Greiser in *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce*, vol. XIII (Cracow, 1960), doc. 271/28.

19. See Andreas Hillgruber, *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler*, vol. II, (Munich, 1970), p. 556.

20. According to a note by Werner Koeppens, for which we are indebted to David Irving, Hitler remarked on the evening of 10 July 1941 at the Führer's headquarters: 'I feel like Robert Koch in politics. He discovered the bacilli and pointed many things in a new direction. I discovered the Jews and the bacillus and their fermenting agent of social decomposition. . . .' IZ Archives, Irving Collection.

21. These are in the possession of the Hoffmann and Campe publishing house, Hamburg (hereafter quoted as Goebbels' Diary, Hoffmann and Campe). For permission to inspect these closely I am indebted mainly to the former business manager of the firm, Dr Knaus.

22. Hitler stated at the Reichstag on 30 January 1939: 'If the international finance-Jewry inside and outside Europe manages just once more to precipitate the world into war, the outcome will be, not the Bolshevization of the earth and the consequent triumph of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.' During the war Hitler again and again referred to this speech in public addresses as well as in private conversation, for instance in his speeches at the *Reichstag* on 30 January 1941 and on 30 January 1942. However, he dated them incorrectly (intentionally or subconsciously) to 1 September 1939. That it was an intentional change of date, in order to stress the connection of the military struggle against the Jews, is indicated by its regular appearance and the fact that it was retained in the official publications of Hitler's speeches, for instance in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.

23. Personal Staff RFSS, IZ Archives, MA 3/9, folder 94.

24. According to Koeppens' notes on 7 October 1941, Hitler stated on 6 October 1941 concerning the Protectorate: 'All Jews have to be removed from the Protectorate, not only to the General Government but straight on to the East. Only the great shortage of transport prevents this being done at once. Together with the Jews of the Protectorate all the Jews of Vienna and Berlin must disappear.' IZ Archives, Irving Collection.

25. See a letter from Übelhör to Himmler dated 4 October 1941, from Himmler to Übelhör on 10 October 1941 (containing the sentence: 'I demand that they [the Jews] be placed in the houses that, due to the considerable decrease in the number of Jews in the last one and a half years [through mortality and

deportations to the General Government] have become vacant.’), Personal Staff RFSS, IfZ Archives, MA 3/9, folder 94.

26. The following quotations according to Goebbels’ diaries, Hoffmann and Campe (see note 21).

27. Also Adam, *Judenpolitik*, (especially p. 312) assumes such a secret order but prefers to date it later (‘between September and November 1941’). It appears to me however that no comprehensive order for the extermination existed and that the ‘programme’ for the extermination of the Jews developed through individual actions and gradually attained its institutional and factual character by spring of 1942 after the construction of the extermination camps in Poland (between December 1941 and July 1942).

28. See above, note 18.

29. Nuremberg document NO-365.

30. Details about Chelmno are contained in documents published by Adalbert Rückerl, *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungslager im Spiegel deutscher Strafprozesse – Belzec, Sobibór, Treblinka, Chelmno* (Stuttgart, 1977), see also Ino Arndt-Wolfgang Scheffler, ‘Organisierter Massenmord an Juden in nationalsozialistischen Vernichtungslagern’, in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, No. 4 (Stuttgart, 1976), 116ff, (hereafter – *Vierteljahrshefte*).

31. Nuremberg document NO-246/247.

32. See *Diensttagebuch* of the Governor General . . . *ibid.*, p. 457.

33. Omitted in the original diary.

34. An illustration of this is the ‘report’ that Goebbels wrote in his diary on 2 November 1941 about his visit to the Vilna ghetto the day before. Goebbels’ Diary, Hoffman and Campe pp. 15ff: ‘The picture becomes terrifying on a short tour of the ghetto. The Jews are squeezed together here, horrible creatures not to be looked at even less to be touched.... Horrible shapes loiter in the streets whom I would not care to meet at night. The Jews are the lice of civilized humanity. They have to be exterminated somehow; otherwise they will continue to play their tormenting and troublesome role.’

35. The Belzec extermination camp in the Lublin district was opened as early as March 1942: the gassings at Auschwitz-Birkenau began at about the same time, the extermination camps of Sobibór and Treblinka in the Eastern part of the General Government were erected in the following month, July, where already in 1942 a great part of the Jews of the General Government perished. See Arndt-Scheffler, ‘Organisierter Massenmord. . .’ pp. 105-35.

36. See the exact quotation below, note 50.

37. The following (retranslation) of *Hitler’s Table Talk 1941-44* (London, 1953), p. 87.

38. *Hitler’s Table Talk*, p. 235.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 235-6.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

41. *Goebbels – Tagebücher*, published by L. P. Lochner (Zurich, 1948), p. 87. In the English edition, *The Goebbels Diaries*, translated and edited by Louis P. Lochner (London, 1948), this entry was omitted.

42. Personal Staff RFSS, IfZ Archives, MA 316, BL 4994ff.

43. Italics are the author’s.

44. Collection of copies in IfZ Archives, F 37/2.

45. As can be seen from the note, Himmler had already telephoned to Berlin two hours before (11:30 hrs) from his own special train (‘Sonderzug Heinrich’). He had been, as can be seen from Hitler’s table talk (p. 135), among others, a guest at Hitler’s table in the evening. Accordingly any long conversation with

Hitler on 30 November 1941, could only have taken place on the afternoon of this day.

46. See 'Gesamtaufstellung der im Bereich der Einsatzkommandos [*Einsatzgruppe* A of the Security Police and the SD] bis zum 1.12.1941 durchgeführten Exekutionen' (IfZ Archives, Fb 101/20). The documents show that on 25 November 1941, at Fort IX in Kovno, which had been used as an execution place by the *Einsatzkommandos*, 2,934 Jews from Munich, Berlin and Frankfurt had been shot. A further shooting on 29 November 1941 ended the lives of 2,000 Jews from Breslau and Vienna.

47. See note No. 43. A telephone note of Himmler's on 1 December 1941 states: '13:15 hrs, SS *Ogr.* Heydrich, execution at Riga.'

48. See fragment of action report by SS *Obersturmführer* and Criminal Commissar Kurt Burkhardt, concerning this affair, dated January-February 1942, IfZ Archives, Fb 104. Also Helmut Heiber, 'Aus den Akten des Gauleiters Kube', *Vierteljahrshefte*, No. 4, (1956) 67-92.

49. Goebbels had already pointed out those sensibilities in his diaries (see above, p. 91). From his entries (they are missing for the month of December 1941) we can derive no clues for the interpretation of Himmler's telephone notice on 30 November 1941.

50. Heydrich referred at this conference particularly to 'further possibilities of a solution after previous authorization by the Führer' which was the ultimate purpose of the 'evacuation of the Jews to the East'. He explained further:

Under appropriate direction, in the course of the final solution, the Jews are now to be suitably assigned to labour in the East. In big labour gangs, with the sexes separated, Jews capable of work will be brought to these areas, employed in roadbuilding, in which task a large part will undoubtedly disappear through natural diminution.

The remnant that may eventually remain, being undoubtedly the part most capable of resistance, will have to be appropriately dealt with, since it represents a natural selection and in the event of release is to be regarded as the germ cell of a new Jewish renewal.

Minutes of the conference, pp. 7ff., made public at the Eichmann Trial, Document of evidence No. 74.

51. This entry became known through *The Goebbels Diaries*, published by L. P. Lochner, that were accessible to him at the time (see above note 41). The last sentence is missing in the English edition.

52. See e.g. the above-mentioned table talk of Hitler's on 23 January 1942. Accordingly it is simply not correct when Irving states on p. 327 of his book: 'All the surviving adjutants, female secretaries and staff stenographers' had 'testified unanimously' that the extermination had never been mentioned at the Führer's headquarters. This thesis, whose confirmation Irving had obviously obtained from Bormann's assistant at the time, Heinrich Heim, is all the more misleading since Heim has recorded the above-mentioned table talk as well as other brutal utterances on the part of the Führer and the records of the table talks are based mainly on Heim's notes. To what extent Irving's still living 'star witnesses' contribute to this thesis was discovered by the English writer Gitta Sereny who took the trouble to interview five of those questioned by Irving. They all declared, as was to be expected, that Hitler never spoke about the extermination of the Jews in their presence; they could not however imagine that he had known nothing about them. A report about this is in the *Sunday Times Weekly* dated 10 July 1977. [As indicated above Heim's notes do not contain this passage. They record Hitler's words only during the night 22/23 January 1942 and resume on 24 January 1942 in the evening of that day. *Ed.*]

53. In Himmler's address at Posen before SS commanders [This is in need of qualification: 'Higher SS- and Police Leaders' were present but not a single commander of the Waffen-SS. *Ed.*] (4 October 1943) he revealed in a remarkable twist the meaning of the formula that had long been used by saying: 'I am referring now to the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people.' This 'the heaviest' task as he declared in the address of 6 October 1943 had been undertaken by the SS 'as an obligation towards our people, our race . . . our Führer'. See text in IZ Archives, F37/3.

54. Part of the collection of printed matter 'Vertrauliche Informationen der Parteikanzlei', IZ Archives, Db 15.06.

55. Illuminating for this is a letter by SS-Oberführer Brack (Chancellery of the Führer) to Himmler on 23 June 1942 (Nuremberg document NO-205) in which the former reports that he had supplied further specialists upon Globocnik's request (for the gassing installations). 'On this occasion Globocnik advocated finishing the whole Jewish action as quickly as possible so as not to remain stuck midway. . . . You yourself, *Reichsführer*, have stated to me that one had, if only for reasons of camouflage, to work as quickly as possible.' If one wanted to achieve this and on the other hand wished to employ the Jews who were able to work for the production of armaments, Brack continued, he recommended the sterilisation of all the Jews who were still employed by means of 'X-ray castration' which could be accomplished 'in the shortest time'.

56. Since it also evolved that in the district of Lublin a number of Jewish workers could not yet be spared, e.g. those employed at Beskiden Oil Co. on behalf of the *Wehrmacht* and thus the planned Germanisation of the district with ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) – requiring total evacuation of the Jews – could not yet be achieved, Himmler turned to Hitler with this problem once more in the middle of September 1942. The outline of Himmler's talk with Hitler on 17 September 1942 contains, under the heading 'Folkdom and Resettlement' the note '1) Deportation of Jews, how to proceed further, 2) Resettlement Lublin: Lothringians, Germans from Bosnia, Bessarabia . . .' IZ Archives, F37/3.

57. Nuremberg document NO-2207.

58. Additional evidence is Himmler's draft for an address before Hitler on 10 December 1942. In that draft he noted among other things: 'In France there are still 600,000–700,000 Jews and other enemies of the Reich.' After the discussion Himmler noted: 'To get rid of them.' On the same day Himmler noted: 'The Führer has issued the directive that the Jews and other enemies in France are to be arrested and deported. However this is to be done only after he has discussed the matter with Laval.' (Microfilm IZ, Archives, MA 316, B1. 615330 and Nuremberg document PS-1994.) The above testimonies are all contained in the file which Irving assembled in preparation for his book, but their contents have hardly been used in his presentation. When a year later, in June 1943, Himmler was concerned with getting rid of the remaining Jews in the General Government in view of the increased danger of partisan warfare, he turned again to Hitler in an address on 19 June 1943. In a note on this address to the Führer we read: 'The Führer in response to my address, expressed the opinion that the evacuation of the Jews had to be carried out radically in spite of the disturbances that might break out in the next 3–4 months.'

59. Sentence of the Jury at the District Court in Munich II in the criminal action against Karl Wolff, p. 236 (Copy IZ, Qm 07.29/2).

60. He adopts for example the opinion (certainly misleading and advocated by Wolff for obvious reasons) that only about 70 persons in Germany had known about the extermination of the Jews.

61. Notes by Karl Wolff, 11 May 1952, IZ Archives, ZS 317.

62. Karl Wilhelm Krause, *Zehn Jahre Kammerdiener bei Hitler* (Hamburg [1949]). On page 71 we find among others the following conclusion on the part of Krause: 'Hitler had no perception of people . . . the greatest part of the responsibility for the crimes that were perpetrated in Hitler's name should rest with the *Reichsleiter* Martin Bormann and Himmler. . . . Hitler had been informed about many things . . . either nothing at all or very little or vaguely through these two evil spirits. About the horrors in the concentration camps nothing was known in the circle surrounding Hitler. These matters were never discussed. . . . I wish to state again that these matters and also the fight against the Church have their origin with Bormann and Himmler.'

63. Ohlendorf, chief of the *Einsatzgruppe D* in 1941–2, had stated on 3 January 1946 at the Nuremberg Trials: 'In the late summer of 1941, Himmler was in Nikolaiev. He assembled the officers and men of the *Einsatzkommando* and reiterated the extermination order that had been issued to them . . . the responsibility was his and the Führer's.' Irving (p. 326) quotes the last sentence in this manner: 'That he [Himmler] alone, in association with Hitler was responsible.' The 'alone' is Irving's invention. In continuation he mitigates the blame further: 'Himmler's formulation was perhaps purposefully vague.'

64. Höttl stated during the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem in June 1961: The leader of *Einsatzgruppe A*, Dr Stahlecker, had explained to him during the war that the orders to the *Einsatzgruppen* concerning the annihilation of the Jews 'came from Hitler personally and were communicated to the *Einsatzgruppen* by Heydrich'. Höttl further stated that as witness in Nuremberg in the years 1945–7 he spoke with former leading functionaries: 'the unanimous understanding of these people' had been 'that the physical annihilation of the Jewish people should definitely be traced back to Hitler personally'. Eichmann Trial, interrogation of Wilhelm Höttl by the District Court Bad Aussee, 19–21.6.1961, proceedings, p. 22.

65. *Kommandant in Auschwitz*, Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen von Rudolf Höss (Munich, 1963), p. 157; English edition, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, The Autobiography of Rudolf Hoess, translated by Constantine FitzGibbon (London, 1959), p. 153.

66. Wisliceny claimed after 1945 that Eichmann had shown him a written order concerning the extermination of the Jews. Eichmann denied this in his statements in Jerusalem; he confirmed however, that Heydrich had summoned him (Eichmann) to inform him that the Führer had ordered the physical annihilation of the Jews. Irving seizes upon this contradiction between the statements of Wisliceny and Eichmann, that does not however touch upon the essence of the matter, which is their unanimous statement that the extermination programme, as they had been told, derived from Hitler, as the occasion for an arrogant remark with which he tries to play down the significance of these testimonies: 'This kind of evidence, of course, would not suffice in an English Magistrate's court to convict a vagabond of bicycle stealing.' (p. 858fn.).

67. Irving refers to the note of Hitler's table talk on 25 October 1941 (this appears only in the English version, p. 91) where Hitler remarked in the presence of Himmler and Heydrich in the course of a discussion of Christianity, the Church and other subjects: 'I have numerous accounts to settle, about which I cannot think today. But that does not mean I forget them. I write them down. The time will come to bring out the big book. Even with regard to the Jews, I've found myself remaining inactive. There's no sense in adding uselessly to the difficulties of the moment. . . . When I read of the speeches of a man like Galen, I tell myself that . . . for the moment it is preferable to be silent. . . .' The formulation 'even with the Jews' makes it clear that Hitler viewed this question differently from the question of the Church. Irving falsifies this by omitting the word 'even' in his



quote of this sentence (p. 331) and inserts instead 'too' which does not appear in the original version. In place of the recorded sentence ('Even with the Jews I found myself remaining inactive') Irving writes: 'with the Jews too I have found myself remaining inactive'. It may be that Hitler referred in this remark to the earlier enforced 'inactivity' concerning the aim to make Germany *judenfrei* that had meanwhile been replaced by a purposeful activity. It is however possible that he was referring to the difficulties that had been set in the path of a rapid deportation of the Jews by the unexpected course of the eastern campaign; see the above remark by Hitler to Goebbels on 21 November 1941 (p. 752).

68. This is also the weakness of Eberhard Jäckel's study, *Hitlers Weltanschauung* (Tübingen, 1969); English edition, *Hitler's Weltanschauung, A Blueprint for Power*, translated by Herbert Arnold (Middletown, Connecticut, 1972).

69. Indicative of this are Hitler's detailed utterances regarding the Jewish question, recorded in Goebbels' diary on 13 May 1943: 'Therefore the modern nations have no other choice than to exterminate the Jews. They will resist this gradual extermination campaign with all the means at their disposal. One of these means is war. We have to realize that in this confrontation between Aryan humanity and the Jewish race, we shall have to endure many hard battles, because Jewry has managed to bring great population groups of the Aryan race, knowingly or unknowingly, into its service. . . . It is the firm conviction of the Führer that world Jewry is facing a great fall . . . the nations which have first recognized and resisted the Jew for what he is shall rule the world in his place.'

70. In his secret address to officers and generals at Obersalzberg on 26 May 1944 (see above, note 42) Hitler declared among other things: 'I have squeezed Jewry out of its positions, without consideration . . . with this I have removed the last catalyst from the masses. By removing the Jews, I have removed any possibility for the formation of a revolutionary infection. . . .'

71. The intensification of the deportations from France beginning in the spring of 1943, the simultaneously increased pressure on Hungary *vis-à-vis* the Jews, the annihilation of the Jews in the Ukraine (spring 1943) and other evidence point to the fact that the war of extermination against the Jews was again waged with the greatest intensity, after the military struggle was already, more or less, lost. Eichmann too, during his trial in Jerusalem, testified on 21 June 1961 that after 'Stalingrad' a 'considerable effort on the part of the Reich leadership' could be noted 'in order to intensify the deportations [of the Jews]'. The first 'high point' of the intensification had been in the spring of 1942, the second after the death of Heydrich, the third fell in the phase after Stalingrad.

72. See the minutes of Hitler's conference with Antonescu and Horthy according to the German records in Hillgruber, *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler*, Vol. II (1970). On Hitler's utterances concerning the Jewish policy (p. 233) e.g. the following sentences: 'For this reason, it was the Führer's opinion, in contrast to Marshal Antonescu, that the more radically the Jews were dealt with, the better . . . he [the Führer] . . . would rather burn all bridges behind him, since the Jewish hatred was in any case enormous. In Germany one had, due to the solving of the Jewish question, a unified nation without opposition at one's disposal. However, there was no turning back once this path had been taken.' Although Irving mentions the conference (p. 508) he omits Hitler's remark about the Jewish question.

73. Minutes see Hillgruber, *Staatsmänner*, Vol. II, pp. 245ff., 256ff.

74. P. 872 (note on p. 509). Horthy had correctly interpreted Hitler's remark as a request for the annihilation of the Jews. This is confirmed by the draft of a letter from Horthy to Hitler regarding the conference at Klessheim, which was prepared by the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and which reads: 'Your Excellency further

reproached me that my government does not proceed with stamping out Jewry with the same radicalism as is practiced in Germany.' (In Horthy's actual letter to Hitler, dated 7 May 1943 this passage had been omitted; see *The Confidential Papers of Admiral Horthy* (Budapest, 1965). However, in his footnote Irving 'coily' cites the term *Ausrottung* as 'extirpation'; whereas in the text of the book he uses the vague 'stamping out' (not as he did originally in the handwritten translation in the margin of the copy of the Horthy letter used by him, IIZ, Irving Collection).

#### 14 THE 'ARISTOCRACY OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM', THE ROLE OF THE SS IN NATIONAL SOCIALIST GERMANY

1. G. Reitlinger, *The SS: Alibi of a Nation, 1922-1945* (London, 1956). The most authoritative analysis of the SS as a whole is now as before the collaborative work by H. Buchheim *et al.*, *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, 2 vols (Freiburg-Olten, 1965). (English abridged edition, *Anatomy of the SS-state*, New York, 1968).

2. For a broader analysis of the ideological impact of the idea of *politisches Soldatentum* see H. Buchheim, 'Befehl und Gehorsam', in *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, vol. 1; and B. Wegner, *Hitlers Politische Soldaten: die Waffen-SS 1933-1945. Studien zu Leitbild, Struktur und Funktion einer nationalsozialistischen Elite* (Paderborn, 1982), Part I.

3. A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich, 1933), p. 386.

4. Speech by Himmler on 8 November 1938, as quoted in B. F. Smith and A. Petersen (eds), *Heinrich Himmler - Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945* (Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, 1974), pp. 31f.

5. *Reichssicherheitshauptamt/ Amt I/ Arbeitsgemeinschaft für SS-Führeranwärter: Grundriss Nr. 9, Judentum* (Bundesarchiv Koblenz: R 58/844, Bl. 72).

6. *SS-Gruppenführer Pancke* as quoted in J. Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologe* (Göttingen, 1970), p. 156.

7. As he did, for example, in a speech on 8 November 1937: 'we want to create an upper class for Germany, selected constantly over centuries, a new aristocracy, recruited always from the best sons and daughters of our nation, an aristocracy that never becomes old' (National Archives: microfilm T-175/ roll 90/ . . . 2447).

8. 'Erschliessung des germanischen Erbes', undated memorandum of the *Reichsführung-SS* (1937), published in Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler*, pp. 253f.

9. For details see H. Ueberhorst, *Elite für die Diktatur. Die Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalten 1933 bis 1945. Ein Dokumentarbericht* (Düsseldorf, 1969); H. Scholtz, *NS-Ausleseschulen. Internatsschulen als Herrschaftsmittel des Führerstaates* (Göttingen, 1973). H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development* (London, 1975).

10. See M. Kater, *Das 'Ahnenerbe' der SS 1935-1945. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart, 1974).

11. See L. V. Thompson, *Lebensborn and the Eugenics Policy of the Reichsführer-SS, Central European History*, iv (1971), 54-77.

12. A decree of the *Reichsminister des Innern* of 11 November 1938 allowed the *SD* to work for the state administration as well; see also *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, vol. 1, p. 74.

13. G. Buchheit, *Der deutsche Geheimdienst. Geschichte der militärischen Abwehr* (Munich, 1967), pp. 428ff.

14. For the 'Dachau model' see M. Broszat, 'Nationalsozialistische Konzentrationslager 1933-1945', in *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, vol. II, pp. 46ff., and F. Pingel, *Häftlinge unter SS-Herrschaft. Widerstand, Selbstbehauptung und Vernichtung im Konzentrationslager* (Hamburg, 1978), pp. 35ff.