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# War in the East and the Extermination of the Jews\*

Andreas Hillgruber

## “Jewish Bolshevism”: Hitler’s Racial-Ideological Dogma

Special units of the SS commenced the systematic extermination of the Jews in the occupied Soviet territories as soon as the attack on the Soviet Union was launched, on June 22, 1941. In order to arrive at an adequate historical explanation, we must start with the racial doctrine of radical, universal anti-Semitism as the “activating, dynamic motive.”<sup>1</sup> This was accompanied by “fixed” concepts in Hitler’s mind of Bolshevism as the rule of the Jews over the Slavic masses in Soviet Russia, which tied in with the Nazi “ideology.”

There is a historical controversy as to whether Hitler’s early anti-Semitic prejudices developed gradually in “thrusts” since his youth in Linz and Vienna, toward hate and intent to exterminate beyond the clichés of the period; or whether a psychic shock caused a quantum “jump” from regular anti-Semitism to something extraordinary.<sup>2</sup> But there is no argument about the fact that the

\* This essay appeared in “*Unternehmen Barbarossa*” — *Der deutsche Überfall auf die Sowjetunion 1941*, Gerd R. Ueberschär and Wolfram Wette, eds., Paderborn, 1984, pp. 219-236.

<sup>1</sup> Definition by Martin Broszat, “Hitler and the Genesis of the ‘Final Solution’: An Assessment of David Irving’s Theses,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 1979, vol. XIII, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Now documented in detail by the edition of Eberhard Jäckel and Axel Kuhn eds., *Hitler. Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, Stuttgart, 1980.

agitation of Hitler as a politician was determined by this extraordinary anti-Semitism after 1919. In the "first document of his political career," a letter of September 16, 1919,<sup>3</sup> Hitler differentiates his anti-Semitism, directed toward political consequences, from the general anti-Jewish emotions prevalent in postwar Germany:

Anti-Semitism based on pure emotions will find its ultimate expression in pogroms.<sup>4</sup> But the anti-Semitism of reason must lead to a planned legal fight and the removal of the privileges enjoyed by the Jew, in contrast to the other foreigners living among us.... But the ultimate, unshakable aim must be the complete removal of the Jews."

The letter does not specify the meaning of the last phrase.

Matters were clarified in a speech which Hitler delivered on April 6, 1920:<sup>5</sup> "We do not want to be emotional anti-Semites seeking to create a pogrom mood, but we are inspired by the inexorable determination to grasp the evil at the base and exterminate it root and branch." But in this period (1920) he still spoke of "emigration" now and then, or "expulsion" of the Jews, and thus "removal" could be interpreted accordingly. In a speech of August 13, 1920,<sup>6</sup> given verbatim in a postscript, Hitler repeats the intended aim of a "thorough solution," by the "removal of the Jews from among our people." But for the first time he now stresses the international character of Jewry. From then on "Jewish internationalism" plays a key role in his agitation. This expanded perspective moved the "defensive campaign" against the Jews beyond the national framework.

In his book *Mein Kampf* (written in 1924),<sup>7</sup> Hitler combined a universal, anti-Semitic, racist fanaticism with a foreign policy "program" (developed meanwhile) into a self-appointed, pseudoreligious historical "mission," which was to form a self-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> In the original "Progromen."

<sup>5</sup> Jäckel and Kuhn, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>7</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, London, 1969.

contained entity<sup>8</sup> in his concepts from that date. He viewed the prevention of a global triumph by the Jews<sup>9</sup> as the quasi-defensive aspect of a “struggle” by the National-Socialist “movement” under his leadership:

Should the Jew triumph over the nations of this world by means of his Marxist creed, his crown will be mankind’s dance of death; and this planet will move through space devoid of man, as it did millions of years ago<sup>10</sup> ... thus today I believe myself to be acting in the sense of the Almighty creator: by defending myself against the Jew I fight for the Lord’s work.

His “decision” to “become a politician”<sup>11</sup> follows the core phrase<sup>12</sup> at the end of Chapter 7 in *Mein Kampf*: “There is no treating with the Jew, but only the hard either-or.”

In his book, Hitler repeatedly<sup>13</sup> describes the Jew, with biological crudeness, as a “parasite,” “sponger” and “vampire,” using Bolshevik Russia as evidence:

In gaining political power the Jew casts off the few cloaks that he still wears. The democratic people’s Jew becomes the blood-Jew and tyrant over peoples. In a few years he tries to exterminate the national intelligentsia and by robbing the peoples of their national leadership makes them ripe for the slave’s lot of permanent subjugation.

The most frightful example of this kind is offered by Russia, where he killed or starved about thirty million people with positively fanatical savagery, in part amid inhuman tortures, in order to give a gang of Jewish journalists and stock exchange bandits domination over a great people.

The end is not only the end of the freedom of the peoples oppressed by the Jew, but also the end of this parasite upon the nations. After the death of his victim, the vampire sooner or later dies too.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The basic reference is Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitlers Weltanschauung. Entwurf einer Herrschaft*, Stuttgart, 1981.

<sup>9</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> The 1st ed. of *Mein Kampf* had “millennia.”

<sup>11</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 54, 113, 138, 175-176, 274-275, 277, 280-281, 295-296.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 296ff.

However — and not contradictory in Hitler's view — the aim of “Jewish rule” over Russia was different: “We must regard Russian Bolshevism as Jewry's attempt to achieve world rule in the twentieth century.”<sup>15</sup>

The (derived) offensive side of his envisioned aims was revealed by Hitler in the second volume of *Mein Kampf*, in Chapter 14, “Eastern Orientation or Eastern Policy.”<sup>16</sup> “The struggle against Jewish world-bolshevization requires a clear attitude toward Soviet Russia.” Hitler's conclusion, drawn from his racist-ideological premises and his Social-Darwinist axioms, determined the external expansion of a Reich led by him:

We stop the endless German movement to the south and west, and turn our gaze towards the land in the east.... If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states.

Here Fate itself seems desirous of giving us a sign. By handing Russia to Bolshevism, it robbed the Russian nation of that intelligentsia which previously brought about and guaranteed the existence of a state ... for centuries Russia drew nourishment from this Germanic nucleus of its upper leading strata. Today it can be regarded as almost totally exterminated and extinguished. It has been replaced by the Jew. Impossible as it is for the Russian by himself to shake off the yoke of the Jew by his own resources, it is equally impossible for the Jew to maintain the mighty empire forever. He himself is no element of organisation, but a ferment of decomposition. The Persian empire in the east is ripe for collapse. And the end of Jewish rule in Russia will also be the end of Russia as a state. We have been chosen by Fate as witness of a catastrophe which will be the mightiest confirmation of the soundness of the national racial theory.<sup>17</sup>

Hitler's vision of “removing” the Jews assumed even clearer contours in *Mein Kampf*:

*Today it is not princes and princes' mistresses who haggle and bargain over state borders; it is the inexorable Jew who struggles for his*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 604 (letter-spaced in the original).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 605.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 598f.

*domination over the nations.* No nation can remove this hand from its throat except by the sword. Only the assembled and concentrated might of a national passion rearing up in its strength can defy the international enslavement of peoples. Such a process is and remains a bloody one.<sup>18</sup>

... If at the beginning of the War [1914 — A.H.] and during the War twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best German workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain. On the contrary: twelve thousand scoundrels eliminated in time might have saved the lives of a million real Germans, valuable for the future.<sup>19</sup>

Hitler reproached the German Imperial Government for not having acted in 1914 at the start of war, “against the entire crooked association of the Jewish nation-poisoners”:<sup>20</sup>

It would have been the duty of a serious government, now that the German worker had found his way back to his nation, to exterminate mercilessly the agitators who were misleading the nation.

If the best men were dying at the front, the least we could do was to wipe out the vermin.<sup>21</sup>

In Hitler’s “second book” of 1928<sup>22</sup> (not published but edited only in 1961), foreign policy in its narrower sense formed the core. But this work also reflects Hitler’s fixation upon “Jewish Bolshevism.” He argued that a German-Russian pact would “result” in the total rule of Germany by the Jews ... as in Russia.<sup>23</sup> The Bolshevik Revolution gave Russia

its new leaders — Jewry. With the help of Slavic racial instincts, Jewry striving for ruling<sup>24</sup>-class status, and therefore supreme

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 595

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 620.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>22</sup> *Hitler's Secret Book*. A document from 1928. New York, 1961.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>24</sup> Hitler always wrote “*Schichte*” instead of “*Schicht*”.

control, exterminated the previous alien ruling class. If Jewry has assumed control of all spheres of Russian life with the Bolshevik Revolution, this is a natural process, because the Slavic people lack all organizational talent, and thus also that power which forms and maintains states.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Hitler deemed it “conceivable, that an internal change could occur within the Bolshevik world, so that the Jewish element could possibly be displaced by a more or less Russian national one.”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, he went so far as to prophesy that “the struggle of the invariably anti-state pan-Slavic idea against the Bolshevik-Jewish state idea ... would end with the extermination of Jewry.”<sup>27</sup>

The residue would then be a Russia of low state power and deeply rooted anti-German attitudes .... A future pact between Germany and Russia makes no sense for Germany, when viewed from a position of sober expediency. To the contrary, it is indeed fortunate that this development took place, since it broke a ban which would have prevented us from seeking the aims of German foreign policy in the only possible direction: space in the east.<sup>28</sup>

There is no controversy<sup>29</sup> on the continuity of racist and geopolitical guidelines in Hitler’s mind, and their transfer as central axioms to National-Socialist “ideology” — in itself highly vague and ambiguous. There are different views about the extent to which these guidelines determined practical policy in the Third Reich, and influenced the details of the anti-Jewish measures taken by the regime in the “peace years” from 1933 to 1939.<sup>30</sup> During this period,

<sup>25</sup> *Hitler's Secret Book*, p. 138.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>29</sup> This continuity is most amply documented in the study by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik 1933–1938*, Frankfurt/M.-Berlin, 1968, pp. 446ff., 598ff. Further documents in Helmut Krausnick, “Kommissarbefehl und ‘Gerichtsbarkeitserlass Barbarossa’ in neuer Sicht,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (henceforth *VfZ*), 25, (1977), pp. 718ff.

<sup>30</sup> Jäckel, *Hitlers Weltanschauung*, *op. cit.*, and Jacobsen, *op. cit.*, as well as Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945*, New York, 1975, all

Hitler retained the formula "Jewish Bolshevism" in his speeches. For example, in his Reichstag speech of January 30, 1937, he called Bolshevism "a pestilence which we had to bloodily oppose in Germany," when "Jewish-international Moscow Bolshevism sought to enter Germany."<sup>31</sup> He had avoided "every close contact with the carriers of these poisonous bacilli."<sup>32</sup> On February 20, 1938 he told the Reichstag: "More than ever, we regard Bolshevism as the incarnation of the human destructive impulse."<sup>33</sup> Until the turn of 1938/1939 the slogan of "Jewish Bolshevism" remained central in National-Socialist agitation. But then, the temporary tactical need for a rapprochement with the Soviet Union dictated the separation of anti-Semitic propaganda from anti-Bolshevik slogans for two and a half years, with the former becoming intensified. In the winter of 1938/1939 Hitler's expressions regarding his comprehensive anti-Jewish aims became clearer than before in his conversations with foreigners. On November 24, 1938 he told the South African Minister of Defense, Pirow, that "the Jews ... would disappear from Europe one day."<sup>34</sup> But, he continued: "World Jewry does not wish the Jews to disappear from Europe, but regards them as the vanguard for the Bolshevization of the world. The Jews hate him [Hitler], because he prevented the Bolshevization of Europe...." He "exports only one idea, which is not National Socialism ... but he exports anti-Semitism."<sup>35</sup> Hitler told Czech Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky on January 21, 1939: "We shall exterminate the Jews. The Jews will not get away with their responsibility for November 9, 1918 — this day will be avenged."<sup>36</sup>

emphasize the systematic nature of the Jewish policy, even in this period. However, Uwe Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich*, Düsseldorf, 1972, and Broszat, *op. cit.* take the opposite view.

<sup>31</sup> Max Domarus ed., *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen 1932-1945*. vol. I: *Triumph (1932-1938)*, Neustadt an der Aisch, 1962, p. 671.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 799.

<sup>34</sup> Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945. Serie D (1937-1941), Bd.IV. Baden-Baden, 1951, p. 293.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.



The radical nature of his public anti-Semitic declarations made all earlier statements pale by comparison. In his Reichstag speech of January 30, 1939 Hitler "prophesied"<sup>37</sup> a direct connection between war and the extermination of the Jews:

During my struggle for power, it was the Jewish people, primarily, who laughed at my prophecies that I would one day take over the leadership in Germany and thus of the entire nation. And that I would then, *inter alia*, also find a solution for the Jewish problem. I believe, that this resounding laughter of the Jews in Germany has in the meantime been choked off in their throats. I wish to be a prophet again today: If international Jewish finance in and beyond Europe should succeed once again in plunging the nations into a world war, the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth and hence Jewry's victory, but the extermination of the Jewish race in Europe!<sup>38</sup>

During the war Hitler often reverted to this "prophecy" and — typically — invariably attached false dates to it. He "switched" this statement to his Reichstag speech at the outbreak of the war on September 1, 1939, instead of on January 30, 1939. He did this for the first time on January 30, 1941, i.e., when all preparations for attacking the Soviet Union had become accelerated, in a speech in the Berlin Sport Palace:<sup>39</sup>

I do not wish to forget the hint, which I already gave in the German Reichstag on September 1, 1939, namely that if the rest of the world should be thrust into a general war by Jewry, then all Jewry will have played out its role in Europe! Perhaps they are still laughing today, even as they laughed at my earlier prophecies. The coming years and months will prove that here too my prediction was correct.

In his proclamation to the German people on the day of the attack upon the Soviet Union (June 22, 1941), Hitler instantly readopted the phrase "Jewish Bolshevism":

<sup>37</sup> Broszat, *op. cit.*, p. 771, does not interpret this from a psychological point of view as a mere "warning," but in itself "part of the motivation."

<sup>38</sup> Max Domarus, ed., *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen 1932-1945*, vol. II: *Untergang (1939-1945)*, Neustadt an der Aisch, 1963, p. 1058.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1663.

“For more than two decades the Jewish-Bolshevik regime in Moscow has tried to set fire not merely to Germany, but to all of Europe.... The Jewish-Bolshevik rulers in Moscow have unswervingly undertaken to force their domination upon us and the other European nations, and that not merely spiritually, but also in terms of military power.”<sup>40</sup>

Hitler viewed his decision to invade the Soviet Union from the aspect of his anti-Semitic world struggle, which he had expected since the mid-1920s, and for which he had “prepared” in the broadest sense of that word. “Now ... the hour has come, in which it is necessary to confront this plot of the Jewish Anglo-Saxon warmongers, and the equally Jewish rulers of the Bolshevik center in Moscow.”<sup>41</sup>

National-Socialist propaganda had thus regained its traditional racist-ideological “foe-image” of “Jewish Bolshevism,”<sup>42</sup> which remained the central axiom throughout the war, until 1945. Now these core-theories of National-Socialist doctrine were also communicated to the three million German soldiers of the Eastern Army which attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Directly before the assault, they had been issued ‘Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia’ by their High Command (OKW):

Bolshevism is the deadly enemy of the National-Socialist German people. Germany’s struggle is against this disintegrative ideology and its carriers. This struggle demands ruthless and energetic action against Bolshevik agitators, partisans, saboteurs, Jews — and the radical elimination of all active and passive resistance.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1727.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1731.

<sup>42</sup> Jacobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 459, footnote 21, reproduces the secret instructions to the German press after June 22, 1941 (switch to “the destruction of Bolshevism”). On July 10, 1941 an “anti-Jewish action” commenced: “... the subject Jewry and World Bolshevism must be written up (as previously).”

<sup>43</sup> Nuremberg-Document NOKW-1962. For general continuity, see Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges. Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1938–1942*, Stuttgart, 1981, pp. 107f.

## The Mass Murder of the Jews in the Conquered Areas of the Soviet Union

The exact date on which Hitler decided<sup>44</sup> upon the systematic extermination of the Jews in the wake of his racist-ideological war of extirpation in the conquered areas of European Russia is controversial. Nevertheless, there are many indications that the order was given in the preparatory stages of his planned attack on the Soviet Union, at the end of June and the beginning of July 1940. The command to shoot all Jews in Russia appears to have been communicated verbally either to Himmler or Heydrich at the end of May 1941, some weeks before the attack. This order was then passed

<sup>44</sup> The period extends from summer 1940 (Eberhard Jäckel) through March 1941 (Helmut Krausnick) until the beginning of July 1941, i.e., shortly after the start of the campaign (Hans-Günther Seraphim). Broszat, *op. cit.*, p. 96, footnote 26, and p. 97, doubts the existence of a "comprehensive, order for the extermination" by Hitler concerning the "Final Solution," in the sense of the physical destruction of all Jews in German-ruled Europe. However, he states that 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." (*Ibid.*, p. 85.) The present author claims — in opposition to the views of Martin Broszat, *op. cit.* and Uwe Dietrich Adam, *op. cit.*, — that there was definitely an order by Hitler (probably verbal) already in July 1941, and that this order extended the ongoing "Final Solution" practiced in the occupied Soviet territories (since the start of the German attack upon the Soviet Union) to the areas of Western and Central Europe. This basic order by Hitler was put into action in the extermination camps in Poland, after discussion and planning of the "best" possible implementation between December 1941 and January 1942. A similar position is taken by Christopher Browning, "Eine Antwort auf Martin Broszats Thesen zur Genesis der 'Endlösung,'" *VfZ*, vol. 29, 1981, pp. 99ff. In his memoirs, Adolf Eichmann (*Ich, Adolf Eichmann. Ein historischer Zeugenbericht*, edited by Rudolf Aschenauer, Leoni, 1980, pp. 177ff.) mentions an order by Hitler, conveyed to him verbally by Heydrich "around the turn of the year 1941/1942," as the activating factor for the "physical extermination of the Jewish foe." A recent study by Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution*, University of California, 1984, emphasizes the direct responsibility of Hitler, and seeks to establish the exact processes in the summer of 1941, which marked the path from Hitler's order to the commencement of the mass exterminations.

on verbally by Reinhard Heydrich at the Border Police School of Pretzsch near Wittenberg, to the commanders of the so-called *Einsatzgruppen* or *Einsatzkommandos*.<sup>45</sup> At that time Heydrich headed the Main Office of Reich Security — RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt), the Security Police, and the Security Service (SD). Since March 1941, Hitler had given quite unequivocal hints, in his orders to leading military commanders, and in a speech, to the effect that the coming war in the east would differ from that in the west. He personally edited subparagraph B of the “Guidelines in Special Spheres re Directive No. 21 (Operation Barbarossa),” on March 13, 1941:

In the operations area of the Army, the *Reichsführer SS* has been given special tasks on the orders of the Führer, in order to prepare the political administration. These tasks arise from the forthcoming final struggle of two opposing political systems. Within the framework of these tasks, the *Reichsführer SS* acts independently and on his own responsibility.<sup>46</sup>

In a speech to some 200–250 leading military commanders on March 30, 1941, Hitler became more specific. Nevertheless, the key words noted by the Chief of the General Staff, *Generaloberst* Franz Halder, contain no mention of Jews. The soldiers, however, had long been familiar with the catch phrase “Jewish Bolshevism,” against which war was now to commence. Halder’s notes read:

Struggle between two ideologies. Scathing evaluation of Bolshevism, equals antisocial criminality. Communism immense future danger .... This is a fight to the finish. If we do not accept this, we shall beat the enemy, but in thirty years we shall again confront the Communist foe. We don’t make war to preserve the enemy.... Struggle against Russia: Extermination of Bolshevick Commissars and of the Communist intelligentsia.... Commissars and GPU personnel are criminals and must be treated as such.... The struggle

<sup>45</sup> Heinz Höhne, *The Order of the Death’s Head*, London, 1969, pp. 358ff; Helmut Krausnick, Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Anatomy of the SS State*, London, 1968, pp. 61-62, cite the relevant depositions by Otto Ohlendorf and Walter Blume.

<sup>46</sup> Nuremberg document PS-477. IMT, Nuremberg, 1949, vol. XXVI, p. 54.

will differ greatly from that in the west. In the east harshness now means mildness for the future.<sup>47</sup>

Negotiations between Heydrich and Quartermaster General Eduard Wagner established the spheres of joint or separate action for the Army and the SS *Einsatzgruppen* in the fulfillment of their "special tasks." This resulted in an order issued by the Army's Commander-in-Chief, General Fieldmarshal von Brauchitsch, on April 28, 1941. Concerning the action against the Jews, practical cooperation between the Army and the *Einsatzgruppen* led to an order by the Army Commanders, which called for the identification and registration of Jews in their domiciles directly after the troops had occupied any area. This was effected by large posters,<sup>48</sup> which simplified the task of the Security Police and SD units. Unless, of course, individuals or groups of Jews fled into the forests or went "underground" — after learning of their imminent fate. Four *Einsatzgruppen* were raised for the prospective campaign against the Soviet Union, each consisting of 500 to 990 men, a total of some 3,000 drawn from the Gestapo, the detective force, the constabulary, foreign auxiliary police and the Waffen-SS. They were subdivided into *Einsatz-* and *Sonderkommandos*.

While the systematic killing of the Jews in the operational areas of the armies and army groups was the task of the *Einsatzgruppen*, this task devolved upon the "Senior SS and Police chiefs" (*Höhere SS — und Polizeiführer — HSSPF*) — *inter alia* — in the occupied Soviet areas under German civil administration. At first, a written notice of July 2, 1941, issued by Heydrich to the four HSSPF, limited the killings. He instructed them in a "concise fashion" pursuant to direct, previous "basic orders" for the *Einsatzgruppen* and *Kommandos*. We read, under "4. Executions":

<sup>47</sup> Generaloberst (Franz) Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, ed., vol. II, Stuttgart, 1963, pp. 336f.

<sup>48</sup> Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden. Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941-1945*, Stuttgart, 1978, pp. 1-13. On the cooperation between the army and the *Einsatzgruppen*, see Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*, *op. cit.*, pp. 205f.

All the following are to be executed:

Officials of the Comintern (together with professional Communist politicians in general)

Top and medium-level officials and radical lower-level officials of the Party, Central Committee and district and sub-district committees

People's Commissars

Jews in Party and State employment, and other, radical elements (saboteurs, propagandists, snipers, assassins, agitators, etc.)

insofar as they are, in any particular case, required or no longer required, to supply information on political or economic matters which are of special importance for the further operations of the Security Police, or for the economic reconstruction of the Occupied Territories....<sup>49</sup>

However, in "Order No. 8" issued by Heydrich on July 17, 1941, the "elements" to be separated from the bulk of the Soviet POW's included "all Jews,"<sup>50</sup> as well as Communist officials. On November 5, 1945, in the Nuremberg Trials of the principal war criminals, Otto Ohlendorf stated that "a secret verbal order was issued to all *Einsatzgruppen* commanders in May 1941." Furthermore, in the *Einsatzgruppen* trial on June 29, 1947,<sup>51</sup> Dr. Walter Blume stated the same. Both witnesses related that Heydrich, addressing "a limited circle" of *Einsatzgruppen* and *Einsatzkommando* chiefs in June 1941, declared that "Eastern Jewry is the reservoir of Bolshevism, and is thus to be exterminated, in the view of the Führer."

Even if we were to question their evidence, the very large number of Jews reported killed by the *Einsatzgruppen* and the HSSPF in the first weeks of the campaign leaves no doubt that these actions could hardly have been limited to "only Jews in party and state positions." At the least, these figures indicate an intention to kill immediately all Jews in the German-occupied areas of the Soviet Union in the course of the campaign in the summer and fall of 1941. Due to the vast number of prospective victims, this soon led to almost insoluble problems.

<sup>49</sup> Document no. 171 in Y. Arad, Y. Gutman, A. Margalioth eds., *Documents on the Holocaust*, Jerusalem, 1981, p. 377.

<sup>50</sup> Nuremberg Document NO-3414.

<sup>51</sup> IMT, vol. XXXI, p. 39 (Otto Ohlendorf) and Nuremberg Document NO-4145 (Dr. Walter Blume), Institut für Zeitgeschichte, München.

All the killings (“liquidations”) of Jews and other “enemies of the Reich and State” within the operational areas of the *Einsatzgruppen*, were recorded from the start of the campaign in the “Reports of Events in the USSR” — “*Ereignismeldungen UdSSR*.”<sup>52</sup> These reports were initially compiled daily, and then every 2–4 days, starting with No. 1 of June 23, 1941, and finally ending with No. 195 of April 23, 1942. Extracted from reports to the RSHA, they were sent, at first, only to Himmler and several sections of Bureau IV, and later saw wider distribution. From May 1, 1942 they were replaced by “Reports from the Occupied Eastern Territories,”<sup>53</sup> starting with No. 1 and ending with No. 55 of May 21, 1943. However, the evidence in the latter is inferior to that of the “*Ereignismeldungen*.”

From the “*Ereignismeldungen*” we learn that *Einsatzgruppe A* (behind the north section of the Eastern Front) executed 136, 421 Jews up to November 25, 1941; its victims also included 1,064 Communists, 56 partisans, 653 mentally disturbed persons, 44 Poles, 28 POW’s, 5 Gypsies and 1 Armenian.<sup>54</sup> By February 1, 1942 the number had risen to 229,052.<sup>55</sup> *Einsatzgruppe B* (behind Army Group Center) killed 45,467 up to November 14, 1941; *Einsatzgruppe C* (behind Army Group South) accounted for 95,600 up to the beginning of December 1941. *Einsatzgruppe D* (in the southernmost section of the Eastern Front) killed a further 92,000 Jews up to April 8, 1942.<sup>56</sup> In a second, large “wave” of extermination in the Ukraine, South Russia and the Bialystok area, another 363,211 Jews were shot between August and December 1942.<sup>57</sup> This yields a total of 824,000 up to November 1942. We must

<sup>52</sup> Now in Bundesarchiv Koblenz, R 58/214-221.

<sup>53</sup> Now in Bundesarchiv Koblenz, R 58/697-699; R 58/222-224.

<sup>54</sup> IMT (as in footnote 46), vol. XXX, p. 72.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Chicago, 1960, p. 256, footnote 85; Krausnick, *Anatomy of the SS-State*, *op. cit.*, p. 64 (compilation based on “*Ereignismeldungen UdSSR*”). |

<sup>57</sup> Himmler’s report to Hitler, December 20, 1942 (Nuremberg-Dokument NO-511) on “Anti-Partisan Successes” since August 1942 in “South-Russia, Ukraine, Bialystok,” divided by Himmler into sub-paragraphs: “a) arrested..., b) executed..., c) Jews executed...” (this document is extensively quoted, and contradicts, due to the differentiation between killed Jews and actual partisans,

take into account “gaps” in the available documents, as well as possible exaggerations in the reports.

The first phase of mass executions ended in the winter of 1941/1942, and during the following intermediate phase (until July 1942) the surviving Jews were “concentrated” in ghettos in the larger population centers. This led to forced labor in the ghettos, labor camps and armaments plants outside the ghettos.<sup>58</sup> The second “wave” commenced in the late summer and fall of 1942, under the inappropriate designation “gang suppression.”<sup>59</sup> It was directed mainly at the ghettos and the number of victims reached the aforementioned high figure within a short time. On October 27, 1942, Himmler ordered the destruction of the last big ghetto, at Pinsk.<sup>60</sup>

These systematic murders in the occupied Soviet territories attained a last zenith<sup>61</sup> in the Ukraine, after the surrender of the remnant of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad on February 2, 1943. An order from Himmler to HSSPF East, dated June 21, 1943, states:

I order that all Jews still remaining in ghettos of the eastern area be assembled in concentration camps. As of August 1, 1943, I forbid the exit of all Jews from these camps for work.... The maximum possible number of male Jews are to be shifted to the concentration camp in the oil-shale area, for the mining of oil-shale. The unneeded Jewish ghetto-dwellers are to be evacuated eastwards.<sup>62</sup>

The “few tens of thousands”<sup>63</sup> still remaining in these concentration camps were shifted to camps in Germany upon the

the thesis of “Anti-Partisan Operations.” Quoted in Andreas Hillgruber, “Die ‘Endlösung’ und das deutsche Ostimperium als Kernstück des rassenideologischen Programms des Nationalsozialismus,” *VfZ*, vol. 20, 1972, p. 148.

<sup>58</sup> For this phase, see Krausnick, *Anatomy of the SS-State*, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>59</sup> See pp. 20-21 in the text, concerning the link between the extermination of the Jews and anti-partisan warfare, in the versions by Hitler and Nazi propaganda.

<sup>60</sup> Nuremberg-Document NO-2027, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich.

<sup>61</sup> See Martin Broszat, *op. cit.*, p. 121, footnote 70.

<sup>62</sup> Nuremberg-Document NO-2403, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich.

<sup>63</sup> Krausnick, *Anatomy of the SS-State*, *op. cit.*, p. 73.



approach of the Red Army. It is likely that many of them died in the last months of the war.

To illustrate the large number of victims in these mass exterminations of Jews, we have extracted statistics from the "*Ereignismeldungen UdSSR*" for the larger Soviet towns. On November 30, 1941, in Riga alone, 10,600 Jews were killed<sup>64</sup> by *Einsatzkommando 2* of *Einsatzgruppe A*. In the ravine of Babi-Yar near Kiev, 33,771 Jews were murdered by *Einsatzkommando 4a* of *Einsatzgruppe C*.<sup>65</sup> In "special actions" carried out by *Einsatzkommandos* in the summer and fall of 1941,<sup>66</sup> the following numbers of Jews were liquidated: in Kamenetz Podolsk, 23,600; in Berditchev, 1,303 (including 875 "Jewesses above the age of 12"); in Dnepropetrovsk, 10,000; in Rovno, 15,000; and in a "big action" in the ghetto of Minsk, 2,278.

These mass murders were limited by the economic needs of the German occupation authorities, quite apart from such "technical problems" as "extreme cold which hampers mass executions" or the "wide dispersal" of the Jews. Thus, in the report of *Einsatzgruppe A* of February 1942 we read:<sup>67</sup> "The systematic mopping-up in the east includes, according to the basic orders, the most radical elimination of Jewry which can be effected.... However, the final and basic removal of the remaining Jews in the area of Byelorussia after the German entry involves certain difficulties": some of the skilled workers are "still essential."

<sup>64</sup> "*Ereignismeldungen UdSSR*": No. 156 of January 16, 1941. Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: Hitler's Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945*, Berlin, 1961, p. 246, sets the number of Jews murdered in Riga in 1941 at a minimum of 24,000. The commander of *Einsatzgruppe A* — Stahlecker — estimates 27,800. Reitlinger deems this exaggerated and reduces the numbers given for "Blood-Sunday" (November 30, 1941) to 4,000, basing his argument on the "*Ereignismeldung*" for that day. However, an action of similar scope followed in Riga on December 8, 1941. The Riga mass killing of November 30, 1941 included a transport of Jews shifted eastward from the Reich. Between the 25th and 29th of November 1941 the first 4,934 German Jews were shot in Kovno (see Martin Broszat, *op. cit.*, p. 104, footnote 45).

<sup>65</sup> "*Ereignismeldungen UdSSR*," No. 101 of October 2, 1941 and No. 106 of October 7, 1941.

<sup>66</sup> Compiled from Raul Hilberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 193ff., whose source is the "*Ereignismeldungen UdSSR*."

<sup>67</sup> IMT, vol. XXX, pp. 76ff.

It is impossible to arrive at an accurate total for the Jews killed in Soviet territory. Apart from the aforementioned “gaps” in the available reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* and the HSSPF, there is the question of which of the territories newly annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939/1940 are to be included in “Poland,” the “Baltic States,” or Romania (as in the case of Bessarabia and north Bukovina). Furthermore, from the fall of 1941, Jews from Germany were transported to the “east” — primarily to the Baltic areas — and there subjected to extermination.<sup>68</sup> Lastly, Soviet statistics regarding religious denomination are highly inaccurate, especially for Jews.<sup>69</sup> Taking into account all these problems and sources of error, Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm has estimated that “a total of more than 2.2 million Jews perished as a result of the Nazi terror and the persecutions of Hitler’s allies.”<sup>70</sup> The first “wave,” from summer 1941 to spring 1942, comprised about a third during this period of mass shootings (i.e., approximately 700,000), with the *Einsatzgruppen* accounting for a mere quarter, i.e., some 500,000.<sup>71</sup>

At the latest from March 1941, the racist-ideological extermination of “Jewish Bolshevism” formed an integral component of the war on the Eastern Front. Some weeks before the onset of Operation Barbarossa, the *Einsatzgruppen* were informed of the intended “liquidations” in Soviet territory. This supports the thesis that the mass killings of the Jews had no original connection with the anti-partisan operations, which expanded rapidly behind the German front from the end of 1941. We must not overlook the immense discrepancy in the numbers of Jews and partisans killed in the so-called “anti-guerrilla warfare,” as appearing in the “liquidation” reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* and of the SS. Stalin’s appeal of July 3, 1941 for a partisan war behind the German front

<sup>68</sup> See footnote 64 above.

<sup>69</sup> The estimated number of Jews in the Soviet Union in 1941 fluctuates by over 1 million. This involves primarily the unanswered — and unanswerable — question of how many Jews managed to escape from the Germans into the unoccupied territories. Calculations vary from 2.665 million to 1.6 million. For details, see Gerald Reitlinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 558f.

<sup>70</sup> Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*, *op. cit.*, p. 621.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 622.

made it possible for Hitler to effect a propagandistic combination of both campaigns. This provided the German army in the east with a convincing psychological justification for the mass killings of Jews. In the circle of his intimates — Göring, Bormann, Lammers, Rosenberg, Keitel<sup>72</sup> — Hitler said on July 16, 1941: “The Russians have now issued an order for a partisan war behind our front. This partisan war has its advantage: it allows us to exterminate all who oppose us.”

The factually inaccurate combination of Jews and partisans<sup>73</sup> was obviously intended for the psychological relief of German soldiers, who witnessed the mass executions of Jews, or heard of them. In the fall of 1941, this excuse also appeared in the orders of certain army commanders, such as von Reichenau, von Manstein, etc. On October 10, 1941, Reichenau stated that “the soldier must achieve full understanding of the necessity for a harsh but just vengeance against Jewish subhumanity,” since “experience has proven that revolts in the rear of the army were invariably incited by the Jews.”<sup>74</sup> In an order of November 20, 1941, Manstein describes “Jewry” as

the middleman between the enemy at our rear and the still fighting remnants of the Red Army and the Red leadership; more than in Europe, it [Jewry] occupies all key posts of the political leadership and administration, of trade and crafts, and forms the nucleus for all disquiet and possible revolts. The Jewish-Bolshevist system must be exterminated once and for all.<sup>75</sup>

Subsequently, the category of “unreliable elements” increasingly and arbitrarily comprised “partisans, saboteurs, possible enemy groups, parachutists not wearing uniforms, Jews, leading Communists, etc.”<sup>76</sup> The Jews were thus placed in a category to

<sup>72</sup> IMT, vol. XXXVIII, Nuremberg-Document L-221.

<sup>73</sup> Jews who fled into the forests before the massacres of the *Einsatzgruppen* played only a minor role in the formation of Soviet-controlled partisan units.

<sup>74</sup> IMT, vol. XXXV, Nuremberg-Document D-411.

<sup>75</sup> IMT, vol. XX, pp. 698ff.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, an operation order by the Commissioner of the Security Police and the SD, attached to the Commander of the hinterland Area South / Sonderkommando 11b, of January 12, 1942 (Nuremberg-Document NOKW-3453, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich).

which they did not belong, i.e., “gang-helpers and suspects” in the ongoing partisan warfare.

Consequently, this artificial connection cannot be used by historians to justify the extermination of the Jews — a goal sought and largely attained by Hitler in the occupied Soviet territories. Some contend that this occurred as a part of a partisan campaign and if, indeed, the Hague Convention for Warfare on Land was not observed, the relevant offenses can be described as “war crimes,” comparable to those which also occurred in the war on land, at sea and in the air between the combatants. The excuse that the extermination of the Jews was a part of anti-partisan struggle, and the comparison with other “war crimes” cannot be accepted. The mass killings of the Jews arose directly from the extreme, anti-Semitic race doctrine of Hitler and of National Socialism. This produced a “dogmatic fixation” combined with “spasmodic paranoid aggressivity.”<sup>77</sup> The Nuremberg Trials of 1945–1946 described this as a “crime against humanity,” although it would have been more accurate to term it a “crime against mankind.” This crime was justified by Hitler and Himmler as part of the pseudo-religious, historical “mission” which they were forced to fulfill. The Jews were not regarded as humans to be “fought,” as opponents or enemies in or out of uniform (like the partisans), involved in any way in combat against the German occupation forces. Quite the contrary: as in World War I, the German troops were initially welcomed by the Jews as their “liberators.” Furthermore, the Jews could not even be regarded as specific representatives of the Red Army, such as the commissars, against whom the notorious “Commissar Order” of June 6, 1941 was issued. They could not even be rationally considered as particularly representative adherents of the “enemy” ruling system. Rather, an arbitrarily selected, large group of people had been declared to be a “deadly enemy” before the war; they were to be physically exterminated in a purely arbitrary fashion, based on the racist-ideological doctrine. This exceptional event cannot thus be compared with any other kind of “war crime,” beyond the accepted international laws of war.

<sup>77</sup> Broszat, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

The mass murder of the Jews in the German-occupied territories of the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1944 is beyond any doubt. The “*Ereignismeldungen UdSSR*” and other primary evidence from SS sources from 1941–1944 constitute irrefutable testimony for the historian, both of the act itself and its magnitude. The sole “explanation” of these mass crimes ordered by Hitler and Himmler can be found in the racist-ideological frame of reference. Furthermore, the sources documenting the many general expressions by Hitler and Himmler, as well as those quite specific to the crime itself, are irrefutable. There is no room for doubt about the connection between the racist-ideological doctrine and its realization in practice. Even if we

know hardly anything of the way in which Hitler discussed these measures with Himmler and Heydrich, who bore the institutional responsibility for the liquidations carried out by the Security Police and SS-Kommandos. During this phase both men were frequently present at the Führer’s headquarters.<sup>78</sup>

### Hitler’s Open Declarations on the Extermination of the Jews in Europe

It is noteworthy that in his public speeches and proclamations during 1942 and at the beginning of 1943 Hitler invariably referred to the “prophecy” in his Reichstag speech of January 30, 1939. By this means, his “prophecy” on the “solution” of the Jewish problem assumed a significance which was to be “pounded into” the heads of all who heard his speeches and read his proclamations. In his New Year’s speech to the German people on January 1, 1942, he spoke of the “struggle against the Jewish-Capitalist-Bolshevik World Conspiracy”.<sup>79</sup> “The Bolshevik monster to which [Churchill and

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98, also p. 116: 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 unclear phrasing of the documents themselves, the acts as such could not be hidden. Given the centralization of all decision-making, however, the attempts to destroy evidence were to a large extent successful.

<sup>79</sup> Domarus, *op. cit.*, p. 1821.

Roosevelt — A.H.] want to deliver the European nations, will ultimately subvert them and their nations. However, the Jew will not exterminate the European nations, but will be the victim of his own plot.” In his address in the Berlin Sport Palace on January 30, 1942, he declared:

It is clear to us that the war can only end with the extermination of the Aryan nations, or that Jewry will disappear from Europe. On September 1, 1939 I already stated in the German Reichstag — and I avoid premature prophecies — that this war will not end as the Jews imagine, namely, that the European-Aryan nations will be exterminated. On the contrary, the result of this war will be the extermination of Jewry. For the first time, the genuine, ancient Jewish law will be applied: “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth!”.... And the hour will come when the most evil world-enemy of all times will have played out his role for at least a thousand years.<sup>80</sup>

On the 22nd anniversary of the Party’s foundation — February 24, 1942 — Hitler<sup>81</sup> wrote in a “message” to the “veteran fighters”:

...my prophecy will be fulfilled, that this war will not destroy Aryan humanity, but will exterminate the Jew. Whatever the struggle will bring, or however long it may last, this will be its final result. And only then, after the removal of these parasites, will the suffering world see a long period of understanding among the nations, and with it true peace.

On September 30, 1942 Hitler declared in the Berlin Sport Palace:<sup>82</sup>

Once the Jews laughed at my prophecies in Germany, too. I do not know whether they are still laughing today, or whether in the meantime their laughter has ceased. Even now I can declare that their laughter will cease everywhere. And these prophecies will also come true.

Addressing the “veteran fighters” on November 8, 1942 in the Löwenbräukeller, Munich, Hitler said:

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1828f.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1844.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1920.

You will remember the session of the Reichstag in which I declared: If Jewry should imagine that it can bring about an international world war for the extermination of the European races, the result will not be the extermination of the European races, but the extermination of Jewry in Europe. As a prophet I have always been ridiculed. Of those who laughed at me then, an immense number no longer laugh today, and those who still laugh will perhaps cease to do so in a little while. The realization of this will spread throughout the entire world. We National Socialists will ensure that international Jewry will be recognized in its entire, demonic threat.<sup>83</sup>

And in his festive proclamation on "Party-Founding Day," February 24, 1943, he repeated: "This struggle will not end ... as intended, with the extermination of Aryan mankind, but with the extirpation of Jewry in Europe."<sup>84</sup>

Given a most benign interpretation, these public statements could, of course, be regarded as a "mere" expression of demagogic "determination" of racial anti-Semitism "to carry out ruthless 'revenge' against the Jews," without indicating their actual extermination.<sup>85</sup> However, in view of our knowledge of the events occurring simultaneously in the east, this would hardly be possible. Such an interpretation is excluded when one reads Hitler's remarks in his "table talk." He often reverted to his old "biological" axioms. For instance, on July 10, 1941 he said:<sup>86</sup> "I feel like Robert Koch in politics. He discovered the bacillus, and led medical science into new paths. I discovered the Jew as the bacillus and the ferment in social decomposition." Goebbels recorded in his diary the gist of his talks with Hitler at his "Wolfsschanze" H.Q. in East Prussia (entry for August 18, 1941):<sup>87</sup>

The Führer is convinced that his former conviction expressed in the Reichstag is being confirmed. Namely, that if Jewry were to succeed in once again provoking a war, this would end with the extermination of the Jews. This is being confirmed with well-nigh

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1937.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1992.

<sup>85</sup> See Broszat, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>86</sup> The notes of W. Koeppen, quoted by Broszat, *op. cit.*, p. 88, footnote 20.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted from Broszat, *op. cit.*, pp. 88ff.

uncanny certainty in these weeks and months. In the east, the Jews must pay the bill....

In a "table talk" on October 25, 1941, in the presence of Himmler and Heydrich, Hitler expressed his thoughts with special cynicism:

From the rostrum of the Reichstag I prophesied to Jewry that, in the event of war's proving inevitable, 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.

The attempt to create a Jewish State will be a failure.<sup>88</sup>

After a visit to the ghetto of Vilna on November 1, 1941, Goebbels recorded the following 'impressions':<sup>89</sup>

The picture becomes dreadful after a short trip through the ghetto. The Jews are squatting on each other, horrible figures, not to be seen, let alone to be touched ... horrible figures starve in the streets, whom I would not like to meet at night. The Jews are like the lice of civilized mankind. Somehow they must be exterminated, or they will invariably resume their tormentive and molesting role.

In the presence of Himmler and Lammers on January 25, 1942, Hitler declared in one of his "table talks":<sup>90</sup>

It must be done quickly; it is worse if I allow a tooth to be extracted gradually, a few centimeters every three months. Once pulled, the pain is gone. The Jew must get out of Europe. Otherwise we shall never have a European understanding .... I simply say, he must go. I can't help it if he is smashed in the process. I see one thing only: absolute extermination, if they don't leave of their own will.

Two days later (January 27, 1942) he added:<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944*, London, 1973, p. 87.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted from Broszat, *op. cit.*, p. 97, footnote 33.

<sup>90</sup> Werner Jochmann (ed.), *Adolf Hitler, Monologue im Führerhauptquartier 1941-1944*, Hamburg, 1980, p. 106

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.



The Jew must leave Europe! It's best they go to Russia. I have no mercy for the Jews. They will always remain an element which incites the nations against each other.

All this was said after the notorious Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, at which Heydrich informed all the representatives of the German authorities involved about the organized "Final Solution" throughout German-ruled Europe. Their various roles were determined, and the physical extermination of all Jews in Central and Western Europe was initiated.

On February 14, 1942, Goebbels summed up a visit with Hitler in Berlin, in his diary:<sup>92</sup>

The Führer once again stated that he was ruthlessly determined to finish with the Jews in Europe. There is no place for sentimental impulses. The Jews have deserved the catastrophe which they now experience. They will experience their own destruction together with that of our enemies. We must accelerate this process with cold ruthlessness; by this we are performing an incalculable service for mankind, which has been suffering and tormented for millennia....

Hitler openly discussed the extermination of European Jewry with certain foreign statesmen and diplomats, since he was interested in including the Jews of all European countries. On July 21, 1941 he told the Croatian Minister of Defense, Kvaternik:<sup>93</sup>

...If a single state would suffer, for whatever reasons, one Jewish family, this would become a focus of bacilli for a new decomposition. If there were no more Jews in Europe, the unity of the European nations would no longer be disturbed.

Hitler still spoke of Madagascar or Siberia as possible destinations for the expelled European Jews, although the *Einsatzgruppen* had already started the mass murder of Jews in Soviet Russia. But in April 1943, Hitler made himself perfectly clear

<sup>92</sup> Louis P. Lochner ed., *Goebbels' Tagebücher 1942/43*, Zurich, 1948, pp. 87f.

<sup>93</sup> Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945. Serie D, Bd. XIII. Göttingen, 1970, Anhang III, p. 838.

to the Rumanian Chief of State, Marshal Antonescu, and to the Hungarian Regent, Admiral Horthy.

On April 13, 1943 he told Antonescu:<sup>94</sup>

...the Jews are the natural allies of Bolshevism, and candidates for the places of our present intelligentsia who are to be murdered by Bolshevization. Therefore he was of the opinion — in contrast to Marshal Antonescu — that the most radical approach to the Jews was the best one. He ... prefers a sea battle of Salamis rather than an undecided engagement; this is why he prefers to burn all bridges behind him, since Jewish hatred in any case was gigantic. Due to the removal of the Jews, Germany is a united nation without opposition.... Of course, there is no return from this path.

On April 16, 1943 Hitler said to Horthy:<sup>95</sup>

Germany is morally strengthened because the Jews have been removed; in a short while the last of them will disappear eastwards. Problems created for Germany by Jewish influence in 1918 cannot occur now. If the Jews are not driven out, they will once again destroy the economy, the currency and morals ... one must not be fearful of the anti-Jewish measures. Hungary had not pursued an anti-Semitic policy and wound up with a Béla Kun just the same. Neither had the Baltic States nor Poland followed an anti-Semitic policy, but they were overrun by the Jewish Bolsheviks. This implies that if one is going to experience the unpleasant aspects of a struggle in any case, there is no need to hesitate about engaging in an energetic struggle against the Jews. There can be no faltering, and anyone who believes in compromises on this question is mistaken. Besides, why should the Jews be handled with kid gloves? After all, they had instigated the [first] world war and were responsible for all the millions who died as a result. Afterwards they had caused the [Russian] revolution, and again inflicted untold harm. They are also responsible for the present war, and the forms it is assuming....

The demand to intensify anti-Semitic measures in Hungary was answered by Horthy.<sup>96</sup> He claimed that he had taken every possible

<sup>94</sup> Andreas Hillgruber ed., *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler. Zweiter Teil: 1942-1944*, Frankfurt/M., 1970, p. 233.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 245f.

measure, within the realm of decency, against the Jews, but one could hardly murder them or otherwise deprive them of life. Hitler's reaction was a typical about-face: "This was not necessary, Hungary could accommodate the Jews in concentration camps." And "if one speaks of murdering the Jews, he must ... state that only *one* was guilty of murder — the Jew — who instigates wars, and has given this war its present turn against civilians, women and children." When Horthy remarked that "he must blushing admit that he had sent 36,000 Jews to the front in labor battalions, most of whom probably perished during the Russian advance," Hitler replied "that the Regent need not blush; since the Jews had instigated the war, and one need not therefore have mercy upon them, even if the war involved serious consequences for them."

On the next day, in a conversation in the forenoon, Horthy reverted to the question<sup>97</sup> "what he should do with the Jews, after he had more or less deprived them of all means of livelihood — he could by no means kill them." Ribbentrop answered "that the Jews must either be exterminated or sent to concentration camps. There is no other possibility." Hitler added:

that contrary to all fears which ... had also been voiced to him repeatedly in Germany, everything continued, even without Jews. Wherever the Jews were left to themselves, as, for example, in Poland, the most cruel misery and depravity prevailed. They are simply pure parasites. This situation has been drastically remedied in Poland. There, if the Jews refuse to work they are shot. If they cannot work they must perish. They must be treated like tuberculosis germs, which can infect a healthy body. That is by no means cruel, when one considers that even innocent creatures like hares and deer must be killed to prevent damage. Why should we show more consideration for these beasts who wished to bring us Bolshevism? Nations who do not defend themselves against the Jews perish.

One year later, on March 16, 1944, in an argument with the Bulgarian Regency Councillor, Hitler said<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 379.

that he had often been reproached for having made the Jews his bitter enemies by his ruthless action against them. His answer was that the Jews would have been his and Germany's enemy in any case, but that he had removed them entirely by eliminating them as a focus of danger to internal morale.

When talking to the Hungarian Prime Minister, Sztojaj, on June 7, 1944, Hitler again reverted to his Reichstag declaration of January 30, 1939.<sup>99</sup> He recalled that he "had declared in his Reichstag speech, that if the Jews began the war, not we, but the Jews will be exterminated.... If the Jewish race were to be victorious, at least 20 million Germans would be exterminated, and several millions would starve."

### Non-public Statements of Hitler, Himmler and Goebbels Concerning the Mass-Murder of the Jews

Himmler and Hitler did not mince words when talking to leaders of the Party and SS, and also top military men — and certainly not among themselves. In a speech to the *SS-Korpsführer* on April 24, 1943, Himmler declared:

We were the first to really answer the race problem by action, by the race problem we naturally did not mean anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is exactly like delousing. The removal of lice is not an ideological question, but a matter of hygiene. Thus anti-Semitism is not an ideological issue, but a matter of hygiene, which will soon be behind us. We are almost deloused, we have only some 20,000 lice left, and then it will be ended in all of Germany.<sup>100</sup>

"The modern nations ... have no choice but to exterminate the Jews," as Goebbels summarized Hitler's views in his diary on May 13, 1943:<sup>101</sup> "It is the firm conviction of the Führer that world Jewry

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 474.

<sup>100</sup> Bradley F. Smith and Agnes F. Peterson eds., *Heinrich Himmler. Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945 und andere Ansprachen*, Frankfurt/M.-Berlin-Vienna, 1974, pp. 200f.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted from Broszat, *op. cit.*, pp. 120f., footnote 68.

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.”

When Hitler received a report by Himmler<sup>102</sup> on June 19, 1943, he asked the latter “to effect the radical evacuation of the Jews in the next three to four months, despite the resulting disquiet.” When speaking to a number of *SS-Gruppenführer* in Posen on October 4, 1943,<sup>103</sup> Himmler said “that those participating in the mass killings of the Jews had remained decent, apart from exceptions of human weakness.” He described “the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people,” as the “most difficult task.” He thus dropped the cover name “evacuation” for the extermination. “Most of you will know what it means when 100 corpses lie side by side, when there are 500 or 1,000. To have gone through this ... is a never written and never to be written page of glory in our history....”

In a speech of October 6, 1943 delivered to the Reichsleiter and Gauleiter in Posen two days later, Himmler said:<sup>104</sup>

The sentence “the Jews must be exterminated” with its few words ... is easily said. But for him who must carry out this demand it is the hardest and most difficult of all.... We faced the question: what about the women and children? I have decided to find a perfectly clear solution. I did not consider it justified to exterminate the men — that is to kill them or let them be killed — and allow the children to live as avengers, for our sons and grandchildren. For the organization which performed this task, it was the hardest ever. It has been done.... Perhaps much later we can reflect on whether more should be told the German people about this. I think that it is preferable that we — all of us — who have done this for our people, who have taken this responsibility upon ourselves (responsibility for a deed, not for an idea), should take this secret with us to our graves.

In a speech to several Generals at Sonthofen on May 24, 1944, Himmler declared:<sup>105</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Note by Himmler of June 1943 (Bundesarchiv Koblenz), quoted from Krausnick, *Anatomy of the SS-State*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>103</sup> IMT, vol. XXIX, Nuremberg Document PS-1919, p. 145.

<sup>104</sup> Smith and Peterson *op. cit.*, pp. 169f.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

Another problem, decisive for the internal security of the Reich and Europe, was the Jewish problem. This was solved as ordered, and in accordance with our national perception (applause)<sup>106</sup>.... I did not feel justified — and this concerns the Jewish women and children — to allow the children to grow up as avengers, who will then kill our fathers<sup>107</sup> and our grandchildren. The problem was thus solved without compromise.... But I have one conviction. I would fear for the front built in the east of the General Government [Poland], if we had not solved the Jewish problem there, if the ghetto of Lublin still existed, or the giant ghetto of 500,000 people in Warsaw....<sup>108</sup>

Two days later, on May 26, 1944, he addressed the same subject when speaking to high-ranking officers:<sup>109</sup>

I have thrust Jewry out of its positions ruthlessly .... I have thus deprived the broad masses of their last catalyst. By removing the Jew, I have prevented the possible formation of any revolutionary core or focus of bacilli in Germany. One can, of course, ask me: Yes, but could you not have solved this in a simpler way — or rather not simpler — but in a more humane fashion?

Even when the final catastrophe of the Third Reich could no longer be ignored, Goebbels and Hitler repeated their anti-Semitic hate tirades. On January 21, 1945, Goebbels wrote in the weekly *Das Reich*: "Mankind would sink into eternal darkness and revert to a primitive and apathetic primeval age, if the Jews were to win this war."<sup>110</sup> On March 14, 1945 he wrote in his diary: "The Jews must be killed like rats the moment one has power. Thank God we have done this radically in Germany. I hope that the world will follow our example."<sup>111</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Recording: cf. Smith and Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 305, footnote 60.

<sup>107</sup> Appears thus in the text. Probably an error for "sons."

<sup>108</sup> A similar speech, again to generals at Sonthofen, on June 21, 1944, condensed in Smith and Peterson, *op. cit.*, pp. 203ff.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted from Broszat, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 121, footnote 69.

<sup>110</sup> The weekly *Das Reich*, January 21, 1945 (quoted from Walter Hegemann, *Publizistik im Dritten Reich*, Hamburg, 1948, p. 483).

<sup>111</sup> Joseph Goebbels, *Tagebücher 1945. Die letzten Aufzeichnungen*, Hamburg, 1977, p. 223.

In his last conversation recorded by Martin Bormann on April 2, 1945, Hitler said:<sup>112</sup>

In a world ever more morally polluted by Jewish poison, a nation immune to this poison must finally gain the upper hand. Seen thus, National Socialism will earn eternal gratitude for exterminating the Jews in Germany and Central Europe.

One day before his suicide, on April 29, 1945, a week before the surrender of the Third Reich, Hitler ended his “political testament” with a demand:<sup>113</sup>

Above all I oblige the leadership of the nation and their adherents to scrupulously observe the racial laws, and offer merciless resistance to the world poisoner of all peoples, International Jewry.

<sup>112</sup> Hitler's political testament. *Die Bormann-Diktate vom Februar und April 1945*, Hamburg, 1981, p. 122.

<sup>113</sup> Domarus, *op. cit.*, p. 2239.