

THE SELF-FULFILLED PROPHECY:  
TRACING CONVERGENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND  
CONCEPTION OF THE HOLOCAUST

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my independent work. All sources and literature are properly cited and included in the bibliography.

I hereby declare that no portion of text in this thesis has been submitted in support of another degree, or qualification thereof, for any other university or institute of learning.

I also hereby acknowledge that my thesis will be made publicly available pursuant to Section 47b of Act No. 552/2005 Coll. and AAU's internal regulations.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping letters, likely representing the author's name.

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## ABSTRACT

The following thesis, entitled *The Self-Fulfilled Prophecy:*

*Tracing Convergence In The Development And Conception Of The Holocaust*, seeks to contribute to the lively debate over Adolf Hitler's precise role in the outcome of the Holocaust. For decades this question has been seemingly settled and then re-opened. While a variety of interpretations have arisen that seek to either emphasise, minimise, or relativize his role in light, and in spite, of new archival evidence made public in the 1990s, the following thesis might be interpreted as a synthesis of these variegated and apparently opposing view points.

The main problem with previous interpretations, that this paper sets out to correct, is that of using relatively static interpretive frameworks to make sense of the Holocaust and/or Hitler's role in it. Rather than Hitler always having wanted to murder the Jews, or having always been on the verge and merely needed a nudge, rather than there being no plan but simply an unstoppable momentum of radicalisation, or even a vaguely formulated "consensus on which direction policy should take", I shall endeavour to build upon and refine Christian Gerlach's thesis that the decision for the Holocaust was taken by Hitler, in essence, in the winter of 1941. I shall add depth to Gerlach's analysis by examining the deeper significance of the extermination of Jewry and why it gained this significance at precisely the moment that it did, especially given that, as I shall contend, until this point Hitler was not interested in the murder of the Jews per se.

While his decision did not inaugurate the Holocaust, nor would there have been a significantly lower loss of life without it, it did constitute a symbolic zenith which turned the systematic mass murder of the Jews into an unassailable priority and extended it to a pan-European goal. This absolute and continentally global conception of the 'Final Solution' did not exist among the organisations and ministries of the Third Reich in the months preceding December 1941.

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## *Introduction*

Despite the innumerable renditions of the series of events we now term ‘the Holocaust’, the evidence that historians have had to rely on is too fragmentary and manifold to eliminate all doubt over exactly how it occurred.<sup>1</sup> There are a number of issues that impede our understanding of how Hitler fits into the equation. There is enough evidence of what happened on the ground, going all the way up to Heinrich Himmler, Chief of German Police and Head of the Nazi paramilitary the *Schutzstaffel* (SS), to describe the operations and much of the correspondence therein. However, the elusive part is why exactly these events, particularly those from 1941 onwards, were set in motion. We could imagine a simple enough answer, but the evidence paints a far more complex picture than expected.

There is no concrete proof that Hitler gave an order to exterminate the Jews, and if he did give the order (since there is even debate over this issue) there likely never existed any document for this: Hitler preferred to give informal verbal directives to his cronies.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it has been necessary to try and reconstruct these events occurring at the very top of the Nazi hierarchy, and despite the efforts of many brilliant scholars, we can still only arrived at possibilities—some more convincing than others, perhaps.

The issues that historians have been grappling with in recent decades arise out of Hitler’s ever-adaptational approach to politics that combined a mixture of polycratic government<sup>3</sup> and his own obstinate intuition; the sheer suggestive force of his anti-Semitic rhetoric which constituted of metaphors and vague generalities and the discrepancy between

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<sup>1</sup> Please see: Peter Longerich, “The Wannsee Conference in the Development of the “Final Solution”,” *Holocaust Educational Trust Research Papers* 1, no. 2 (1999/2000): 29–46. Copy available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20150402115820/http://www.ghwk.de/ghwk/engl/texts/wannsee-conference.pdf>. [Note: page numbers differ on PDF file online, where they are listed from 1–17; hence, see p.1-3]

<sup>2</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretations* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p. 101 & 119, Adobe Acrobat eBook Reader.

<sup>3</sup> In this, Hitler was often happy to remain aloof from the practice of policy formation, giving only very general indications of his wishes thus compelling his subordinates to compete for his approval through a process that has aptly been named “working towards the Führer.”

these suggestions and the fact that Hitler never seemed to have communicated explicitly his desire to kill all of the Jews, even to his most intimate entourage;<sup>4</sup> the contrast between his generally reactive role in the formation of anti-Jewish measures until the end of 1941 and the relatively active role he took thereafter;<sup>5</sup> and finally, the fact that certain measures against the Jews may have been used as a means to ends other than violence or persecution for their own sake.

Needless to say, a variety of interpretations have arisen out of this cluster of paradoxes. Some scholars, namely the ‘intentionalists’, have claimed that despite the lack of documentary evidence for a ‘Führer order’, the consistency of Hitler’s violent anti-Semitism and fundamental ideology corresponds to the overall direction of his foreign policy that culminated in a war against the Soviet Union—the spearhead of the reviled Judeo-Bolshevik worldview. They claim that any apparent laxity on his part was purely strategic, allowing him to wait for the right moment to implement his grand design of physical annihilation, and that the evidence is consonant with this view. On the other hand, scholars known as ‘functionalists’ have highlighted the weight and momentum of the Nazi ideology, along with the competition between various ministries and institutions with overlapping competencies, which combined, contributed to the steady radicalisation of Jewish persecution. They draw particular emphasis to the self-imposed problems that the Nazis engendered through their war-time policies that called for increasingly radical solutions, from forced emigration, to reserve planning, to ghettoisation, to expulsion—all of which ultimately failed, leaving only the option of mass murder to make space for the mass of Jews being dumped onto their territories, as well as to alleviate themselves of the economic, hygienic, and psychological burden of maintaining squalid masses of Jews. They claim that the Holocaust developed

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<sup>4</sup> Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> For Hitler’s relatively inactive role see: Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 123–29; and for a brief Hitler’s activity in Holocaust see: Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933–1945: Abridged Edition* (Pymble: HarperCollins, 2009), p. viii, Adobe Acrobat eBook Reader.

piecemeal and that there was no single order that we should look for, since Hitler's role was not quite as (directly) influential as the other group of scholars have claimed. To be clear, they do not attempt to exonerate Hitler of his responsibility, for without him there would have been no Holocaust. Rather, they contend that his radicality and continual post-facto authorisation of increasingly radical measures gave his subordinates the freedom to resolve their decisions in whatever way they saw fit. These two general approaches have been termed the intentionalist or "programmatist" and functionalist or structuralist sides of the debate, respectively.<sup>6</sup>

More accounts and new lines of research have followed the release of many thousands of documents of evidence, that were made public in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the series of localised studies have shed light on the agonisingly complicated nature of the Holocaust that has necessitated more nuanced views in order to make sense of it all.<sup>7</sup> But, a number of issues are still obstructing historiographical consensus regarding Hitler's precise role in these events.

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<sup>6</sup> For a brief historiographical review of the debate between the 'intentionalists' and 'functionalists', see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) p. 110–120.

Otherwise for intentionalists see: Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975); Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final solution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987); and Karl Dietrich Bracher, "The Role of Hitler: Perspectives of Interpretation," in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, ed. Walter Laqueur (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 211–225.

And for functionalists see: Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State* (London: Routledge, 2014); Gotz Aly 'Final Solution': *Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (London: Arnold; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Karl Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz, Nazi Policy Toward German Jews* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970); Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of this process see: Longerich, Wannsee, p. 2–3.

For newer works see: Browning, Christopher, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*. Lincoln and Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press, and Yad Vashem, 2004; Gerlach, Christian. "The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler's Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews," *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (December 1998): 759–812. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/235167>; and: Longerich, Peter, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.



While the degree of autonomous initiative from the ground, during the fateful period from the summer of 1941 onwards, is now unmistakable, we still cannot be certain of Hitler's part in all of this. Was it an explicit but undocumented verbal order that constituted a decision in principle—after which it was left to the SS to figure out how to implement this gargantuan task (hence all of the trial and error and local initiatives); or, was it a series of ‘unmistakable signals’ for the extreme radicalisation of persecution; and, if it was either of these two, when did the order or signals occur and what do their timing tell us about Hitler's exact influence on the events?<sup>8</sup> Or, was his role that of determining the direction of Jewish policy through a political discourse that made it clear to his subordinates that he was inclined towards a program of extermination, thus allowing them to ‘work towards the Führer’ and act in full confidence that their murderous initiatives were what was expected?<sup>9</sup> Some, like Martin Broszat have even proposed that Hitler did very little to advance the Jewish persecution, and simply authorised measures from above, allowing his subordinates to do as they please.<sup>10</sup>

In the following pages, I shall argue that until the period of November–December of 1941, Hitler was content to expel the Jews from Europe, rather than seeking their demise for its own sake. Having said that, I shall not contend that he would have been opposed in principle to a large number of Jews dying during this process. The very manifestation of the Holocaust makes it perhaps difficult to envision, but we must consider the probability that the symbolic difference between deaths indirectly caused through negligence and the intention to murder every last Jew is, historiographically speaking (rather than morally), a substantial one.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 370–73, proposes a series of ‘signals’ or decisions starting in mid-July with the decision to “commence with the immediate and comprehensive murder of Soviet Jewry,” then a tentative decision in September to exterminate all of Europe's Jews, and by the end of October this decision was finalised and being implemented.

<sup>9</sup> See Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Introduction.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State* (London: Routledge, 2014), esp. Ch. 8–11.

Furthermore, I shall argue, in contrast to Peter Longerich, that there was no specific intention for the engineered extinction<sup>11</sup> of the Jews to accompany the originally planned post-war deportations. As with so many other things in Hitler's mind, the exact nature of future policies would likely have been shaped by situational factors. As such, starting in October 1941 and crystallising at the end of November or beginning of December, Hitler's intentions to expel the Jews after the war slowly turned into a desire to murder them all. This was influenced at its core by the mounting obstacles to his quick and decisive victory over the Soviet Union and, on the most conscious level, by the "uncanny" realisation of his January 1939 'prophecy' that another world war would lead not to the Bolshevising of the earth, but to the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe. This 'prophecy', I shall contend, was initially made as a cynical political provocation and diplomatic warning but took on its decidedly prophetic character during the winter of 1941 for a variety of reasons that shall be examined below.

### *A Ruthless War and Cold Ambitions*

In reading the literature of the Holocaust, it quickly becomes apparent that the invasion of the Soviet Union (codename: Operation Barbarossa), in the summer of 1941, was the beginning of the intended end for the Jews of Europe. It is now clear that up until this point, the Germans were genuinely pursuing policies of expulsion and deportation, that is, territorial solutions to the Jewish question (thereby discounting the idea that Hitler was steering the regime toward his long-awaited goal of extermination).<sup>12</sup> On a purely ideological level, Operation Barbarossa presents a neat convergence of Hitler's two most important

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<sup>11</sup> The term here is intended to describe the plan to intentionally expel the Jews into inhospitable territories so that the Jews were soon die afterward from a lack means to sustain themselves, an indirect genocide/Holocaust of sorts.

<sup>12</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, Ch. 2 & 3, has shown that these were not merely elaborate facades or covers aimed at obscuring their actual intention of decimation.

missions: 1) German ascendance built on the acquisition of *Lebensraum* in the East i.e., empire building, and 2) ‘getting rid’ of the Jews—here in the form of the so-called Judeo-Bolsheviks. However, intricate interactions between genuine belief in the risk of local resistance, fanatic racial ideology, conquest, cynical opportunism, and ethnic cleansing might be hiding beneath the veil of an ideologically straightforward presentation of events. This section aims to unravel the interplay between Hitler, Himmler, Operation Barbarossa and the onslaught against the Jews in Soviet territories that increased significantly around mid-July through to around mid-August, and that diffused the murderous atmosphere in which other bold officials were confident enough to seek and administer self-help solutions to their own Jewish problems.

The entry point here shall be the comprehensive, and highly detailed, analysis of Christopher Browning in his acclaimed work, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (2004). The essence of Browning’s argument is that starting in the summer of 1941, and more specifically in mid-July, when the Germans were enjoying spectacular successes against the Red Army, Hitler, under the influence of the euphoria of victory, initiated a series of increasingly concrete and explicit decisions to murder the Jews of Europe. The mid-July decision, according to Browning, was the point at which he made the fundamental decision to kill all of Europe’s Jews, starting in the Soviet territories, and that would then be extended to the rest after the war. There is no hard evidence for such a claim (which Browning admits is speculative) as Hitler did not mention the killing of the Jews specifically at this point. But, he states that Hitler’s comments and actions during this period had clear implications that Himmler would immediately put into action. And thus, the Soviet Jews began to suffer intensified persecution.<sup>13</sup> Hereafter, in September, following another peak of victory and euphoria, Hitler reversed his decision to have the Jews deported from Germany only after the

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<sup>13</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 313.

war, further conveying his murderous intent,<sup>14</sup> and by the end of October “the conception of the Final Solution had taken shape.”<sup>15</sup>

Before commencing, it needs to be emphasised again that the documentary record does not allow for a definitive answer to the many questions and issues that have been raised about Hitler’s role in the Holocaust and that will be addressed herein. As such, I shall import a notion that Kershaw has made valuable use of in this context, and that is that the interpretation of these events must rest on the ‘balance of probabilities’.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, I shall simply be offering another plausible interpretation and arguing why it might be a better representation of the events.

### *Browning’s Thesis: Part One*

Apart from the actions in the Soviet territories, briefly outlined above, Browning has drawn attention to a meeting that Hitler had with certain leaders in the party and military concerning his “fundamental observations” of the situation in the East.<sup>17</sup> In this address, the enraptured Führer boasted that Germany would never leave the occupied territories and that he intended to create a “Garden of Eden” which was to be accomplished by “all necessary measures—shootings, resettlements, etc.” Even though Hitler made no mentions of the Jews throughout this long meeting, Browning sees the implications for the Jews as clear. For, what place could the Jews have in Hitler’s Garden of Eden? Browning rightfully asks. During this meeting Hitler also said that it was fortunate that the Russians gave the order for partisan

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<sup>14</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 361–63.

<sup>15</sup> Browning, p. 374.

<sup>16</sup> Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> This meeting was attended by Hermann Göring , Alfred Rosenberg (Minister of the Occupied territories in the East), Hans Lammers (Head of the Reich Chancellery), Wilhelm Keitel (Chief of the Armed Forces High Command), and Martin Bormann (Head of the Part Chancellery—a new title given to what was previously Deputy Führer).

For the document of the meeting see: International Military Tribunal (henceforth: *IMT*). “*The Blue Series*,” or: *Collection of Documentary Evidence for the Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, Germany, 1945–1946* (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1946–1948), vol. 38, Doc. 221–L, p. 86–94.

[https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/NT\\_major-war-criminals.html](https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/NT_major-war-criminals.html).

warfare because “it gives us the opportunity to exterminate anyone who is hostile to us. . . . Naturally, the vast area must be pacified as quickly as possible; this will happen best by shooting anyone who even looks sideways at us.”<sup>18</sup>

Six days earlier, on 10 July 1941, Hitler had “proclaimed himself the Robert Koch of politics who had discovered in Jewry the bacillus of social decomposition.”<sup>19</sup> And six days after the meeting, on 22 July, Hitler had a meeting with the Croatian General Eugen Kvaternik, during which he drifted again to his bacillus metaphor. Because of a missing page in the protocol, we enter Hitler’s words in midstream:

. . . for if even just one state for whatever reasons tolerates one Jewish family in it, then this will become the bacillus source for a new decomposition. If there were no more Jews in Europe, then the unity of the European states would no longer be destroyed. Where one will send the Jews, to Siberia or Madagascar, is all the same. He [Hitler] would approach each state with this demand.<sup>20</sup>

Browning muses that if Hitler was conveying his desire to expel every last Jew from Europe with Kvaternik, a visiting field marshal from Croatia, then how much more was he sharing with Himmler and Heydrich? After extensive surveys of both primary documents and secondary literature, the eminent historian Ian Kershaw has concluded that there is simply no way of determining the nature of any such link between Hitler and Himmler and Heydrich. He does, however, consider it unquestionable “that the extension of the killing in August 1941” that is, the apparent verbal orders that Himmler gave to his men out in the field in the eastern territories over the course of mid-July to mid-August, “had Hitler’s approval.”<sup>21</sup> Browning does have a specific document in mind as the key to this elusive link though.

At the end of July, Heydrich had received signed authorisation from Hermann Göring that extended his powers—originally granted in January 1939—to organise a solution to the

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<sup>18</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 309.

<sup>19</sup> Browning, p. 309.

<sup>20</sup> Browning, p. 315.

<sup>21</sup> Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 139.

Jewish question via emigration or evacuation. The July 1941 document is deceptively simple according to Browning. It authorised Heydrich:

(1) to make “all necessary preparations” for a “total solution of the Jewish question” in the European territories under German influence; (2) to coordinate the participation of those organizations whose jurisdictions were affected; and (3) to submit a “comprehensive draft” of this plan for a “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.”<sup>22</sup>

As he points out, the authorisation does not mention the mass murder of Jews, and seems to be simply re-affirming his previous authorisation to carry out a territorial solution to the Jewish question. But it does seem odd that Heydrich would ask for a signature to re-affirm the powers he already had. This, especially given that the previous year, when a junior official in the civil administration had brought up, and keenly started working on, the Madagascar Plan, Heydrich simply reminded Foreign Minister Ribbentrop of his 1939 authorisation, and was thereafter kept in the loop and treated as the highest authority in terms of coordination.<sup>23</sup> Why then, Browning asks, would he ask for this new authorisation? Did Heydrich still understand the Final Solution as being a plan to deport the Jews after the war into the inhospitable regions in Asiatic Russia, or was the “Final Solution” now “a term now freighted with a new and even more fateful meaning?”<sup>24</sup> His conclusion is that this document is evidence of a shift in policy couched in characteristic euphemisms, that gave Heydrich the mandate to conduct a “feasibility study” for the extermination of Europe’s Jews, and that the sheer unprecedented nature of the undertaking explains the confused and sometimes contradictory nature of the anti-Jewish policy through to the end of autumn. Nazi officials were feeling their way to the Final Solution as we know it. But what if there was a different way to interpret the events during this fateful period?

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<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Nazism 1919–1945 Volume 3: Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination: A Documentary Reader* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), p. 503, Doc. 824.

<sup>23</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 316.

<sup>24</sup> Browning, p. 315.

To begin with, Hitler's choice of metaphor in his July 10 and 22 comments were likely not capricious expressions of hatred arising out of the euphoria of victory. They appear to be a direct response to the wave of pogroms, seemingly unleashed by local inhabitants of freshly conquered territories in the East. The fact that (what might appear on the outside as) 'ordinary citizens' felt compelled to carry out such violent reactions against the Jews and communists in the wake of political instability, seemed to confirm Hitler's view that the Jewish-Bolshevik system was the oppressor of the people, and that the Jews really were a source of social decay. He would later describe Jews like St Paul and Trotsky as blessings in disguise because they provoked "healthy", defensive reactions from the attacked organism<sup>25</sup>. This was an abstract notion that Hitler came to treat as social theory, rather than simply a vehicle for expressing hatred. The pogroms seemed to have caused some excitement in him regarding the theory's apparent veracity. However, this does not mean that the excitement amounted to anything more than a couple of rhetorical outbursts.

Despite the meeting with Marshal Kvaternik, it may be a stretch to say that Hitler had now put the "European Jewish question on the agenda with renewed urgency."<sup>26</sup> For one, the mandate of 31 July 1941 that Göring had signed for Heydrich appears beyond doubt to have been Heydrich's own initiative, which is consonant with Browning's view, but as Kershaw notes, it is doubtful that this document even reached Hitler's desk. "Since the order technically amounted to no more than an extension of the authority which Heydrich had been granted by Göring in 1939, Hitler's further approval was not strictly necessary."<sup>27</sup>

Admittedly, this is still reconcilable with Browning's view, but it also leaves space for the possibility that Hitler had nothing to do with the mandate. If we return to Hitler's "agenda" it

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<sup>25</sup> Adolf Hitler, Norman Cameron, R. H. Stevens, and Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941–1944: His Private Conversations* (New York City: Enigma Books, 2000), p. 141 (entry 74: Night of 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> December 1941).

<sup>26</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 314.

<sup>27</sup> Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 139.

may offer more clues. There is no evidence, it seems, that Hitler went on to demand of other European nations to expel their Jews “with renewed urgency”. In Browning’s own account, the next conversation Hitler would have with a foreign leader regarding the Jewish question was on 28 November with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the meeting with Kvaternik was not scheduled to occur soon after the mid-July successes in order to discuss the Jewish question with Kvaternik, as it may appear in Browning’s account. The meeting with Kvaternik had been on the agenda since June owing to the particular nature of the Balkan situation and the problems in south-eastern Europe. However, there was no possibility to accept the Croatian Marshal at the headquarters in June or early July because of the military situation.<sup>29</sup> Thus, they received Kvaternik at their earliest convenience in order to discuss the German invasion and the array of problems in the Balkans.

Let us return to the speech that Hitler gave on 16 July, where he outlined his fundamental observations on the East. On the one hand, Hitler’s announcement that “naturally, the vast area must be pacified as quickly as possible; this will happen best by shooting anyone who even looks sideways at us,”<sup>30</sup> when taken in conjunction with the actions of Himmler’s and Heydrich’s men on the ground thereafter, would seem to indicate a veiled hint that the Jews were to be targeted for extermination. On the other hand, there remains the possibility that Hitler was simply being extremely prudent (in his mind, that is)—that he wanted no chances to be taken if anyone appeared suspicious—but not that he was advocating for the slaughter of locals who clearly cooperated, were not supporting partisans, and were not suspicious in any other way.

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<sup>28</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 406.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix A, or:

Files on German Foreign Policy, Series D, vol. 12.2, April – June 1941:

[https://digi20.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00045907\\_00001.html?prox=true&phone=true&ngram=true&hl=scan&fulltext=d%2C+12.2&mode=simple&context=d%2C%2012.2.](https://digi20.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00045907_00001.html?prox=true&phone=true&ngram=true&hl=scan&fulltext=d%2C+12.2&mode=simple&context=d%2C%2012.2.)

<sup>30</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 266f.



As already mentioned, there was not a single mention of the Jews in this protracted meeting between some of the highest officials in the state apparatus.<sup>31</sup> And, while their jurisdictions were respected and taken into account during the meeting on 16 July 1941 i.e., their policing responsibilities, neither Himmler nor Heydrich was invited. This was a meeting in which Hitler “made the essential decisions concerning the structure of future occupation policy in the east.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the meeting and its aftereffects were rather “a bitter personal defeat” for Himmler—a snub to his ambitions. For, the very next day Hitler had officially decided upon a matter that had been left open for months: He chose to deny Himmler “the central role he craved in the political reorganization of the east.”<sup>33</sup> Himmler was put in charge of re-organising Poland along racial and ideological lines, and had hoped to be able to do the same in the Soviet territories. This was not to be.

### *Himmler's War*

After a spectacular rise in the early-mid 1930s, from 1938 onwards Himmler's career had stagnated. Himmler's marginalisation as briefly outlined above was the culmination of a number of failures that included: A botched investigation that threatened ties between Hitler and the military (Wehrmacht) leadership, and which played a large role in provoking a state crisis; his radical proposals against the church that were being sidelined; his SS's atrocities in Poland that “provoked massive criticism from the Wehrmacht, with the result that he had to give way publicly and accept being marginalized during the police ‘processing’ of the conquered north and west European states;” the fact that he had managed to establish only one additional division to his paramilitary corps since 1939; and, his intelligence agency's

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<sup>31</sup> These included Göring, Alfred Rosenberg (Minister of the Occupied territories in the East), Hans Lammers (Head of the Reich Chancellery), Wilhelm Keitel (Chief of the Armed Forces High Command), and Martin Bormann (Head of the Part Chancellery—a new title given to what was previously Deputy Führer).

<sup>32</sup> Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 527.

<sup>33</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 527f.

(the SD's) support for the Romanian Iron Guard's failed putsch against Romanian dictator Antonescu, where they helped the leader of the Iron Guard escape to Germany, and all of which caused a crisis in relations between Germany and its ally. After this, Ribbentrop endeavoured to curtail Himmler's foreign-policy ambitions. There is yet more. Himmler had to increasingly "keep his various 'Germanic' and occult activities 'under wraps', as he was in no doubt that Hitler regarded these ventures with suspicion." Himmler had been planning to concentrate his Waffen-SS units into an independent SS army, and even though his Waffen-SS units were consistently deployed in the vanguard of Blitzkrieg operations, they were always spread across the front. This meant that he was unable to prove their military effectiveness. And, as if that was not enough, his various resettlement programs in Poland, aimed at racially dividing and reorganising the territory, had now "ground to a halt."<sup>34</sup>

Nonetheless, Himmler was ambitious and persistent and saw in Operation Barbarossa an opportunity. He worked on ironing out the details of a suitable arrangement with the Wehrmacht and managed to gain a large amount of autonomy for his men who would no longer be under the military's command, but could rely on them for logistical support in carrying out their tasks. Apparently the Wehrmacht, after bearing witness to the atrocities in Poland, was hoping to distance itself from those that Himmler and Heydrich's men were sure to commit in the upcoming invasion.<sup>35</sup> But, as the evidence below should indicate, this does not necessarily mean that the SS was officially given free reign in the occupied territories.

On 20 April, Hitler appointed Alfred Rosenberg as Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, and with it, gave him responsibility for the overall political administration of the East. His administration would take over following the occupation and pacification of the territories.<sup>36</sup> And, in this, a conflict of interests emerged: Himmler's jurisdiction as the

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<sup>34</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 516.

<sup>35</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 517.

<sup>36</sup> Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Nazism 1919–1945 Volume 3: Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination: A Documentary Reader* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), p. 484f.

Settlement Commissar had not been officially extended to the territories to be occupied in the upcoming invasion, leaving Rosenberg technically in charge of handling the local populations. Apparently they had conflicting views on how to approach the occupation, and cooperation during the month of May 1941 did not go to Himmler's liking. This resulted in a letter to Bormann (who was friendly to Himmler)<sup>37</sup> in which he said that "to work with Rosenberg, let alone under him, is definitely the most difficult thing there is in the NSDAP."<sup>38</sup>

On 10 June 1941, following Himmler's arduous negotiations with Rosenberg, the Reichsführer-SS submitted a suggestion to Hans Lammers, the Chief of the Reich Chancellery, that he, Himmler, be given authority over police "and political" security matters in the eastern territories that were soon to be occupied. As the Commissar for the Strengthening of Germandom, or simply: Settlement Commissar, he would "see to the pacification and stabilization of the political situation."<sup>39</sup> Himmler's choice of wording is telling, because through this request he was seeking to appropriate some of the political responsibilities that technically fell under Rosenberg's authority. Suffice it to say, Rosenberg objected on 14 June 1941.<sup>40</sup>

On 24 June, Himmler gave his head of planning, Konrad Meyer, three weeks in which to incorporate the Soviet territories into plans that were being devised as part of the *General Plan Ost* and less than three weeks later he would assign the responsibility of conducting "a survey of 'ethnic Germans' in the occupied Soviet territories," to the Coordination Centre for Ethnic Germans.<sup>41</sup> Himmler continued to prepare for his agenda, despite Rosenberg's earlier objection. The matter of extending his jurisdiction had not yet been settled, and regardless of setbacks with Rosenberg, he was proceeding as if his jurisdiction had, or would be, extended.

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<sup>37</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 519.

<sup>38</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 516.

<sup>39</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 515.

<sup>40</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 515 & 887, note 2.

<sup>41</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 527.

Himmler's behaviour was simply too incessant and evidently did not only affected Rosenberg. Multiple other officials present at the meeting on 16 July where Hitler outlined his "fundamental observations," seemed to agree that Himmler was overstepping. While Browning points out that Himmler's and Heydrich's interests were taken into consideration during this meeting, this is in fact how they spoke about the Reichsführer-SS during the meeting on 16 July (own emphases):

A lengthy discussion about the realm of jurisdiction of the RFSS [Himmler] begins; it is apparent that all those present also consider the realm of jurisdiction of the Reichsmarschall [Göring].

The Führer, the Reichsmarschall etc. *repeatedly emphasise* that, Himmler *is not supposed to be assigned another jurisdiction* than the one he has in the Reich; *this, however, is of utter importance.*<sup>42</sup>

Here seems to be a sign of fundamental divergence between Himmler's aspirations for occupation zones and the approach that Hitler, Göring, and the others in this meeting were aiming to adopt. Himmler's role was to be confined to strictly security measures, and Hitler made this official the following day. How did Himmler respond to this defeat?

Remarkably, Himmler stubbornly persisted on behaving as if his jurisdiction was extended to the Soviet territories. On 20 July, three days after Hitler's fateful decision on the 17<sup>th</sup>, he would give Odilo Globočnik, the SS and Police Leader (SSPF) of the district of Lublin, a set of orders that highlighted Lublin's role as a future hub of the 'ethno-political' reordering of the East. A large complex of camps was to be built, and preparations made for the settlement of ethnic Germans. Furthermore, Globočnik was to install a network of police and SS posts in the newly acquired Soviet territories, extending out from Lublin.<sup>43</sup> However, this was not all that he did. And this brings us back to the terrible increase in murderous

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<sup>42</sup> See Appendix B for a copy of the original document with translation. *IMT*, vol. 38, Doc. 221–L, p. 93f., [https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/NT\\_major-war-criminals.html](https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/NT_major-war-criminals.html).

<sup>43</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 528.

activity of the *Einsatzgruppen* following Hitler's meeting in mid-July. As Browning reports, Himmler immediately responded by increasing the manpower of the *Einsatzgruppen* who were "committed to behind-the-lines pacification and mass killings."<sup>44</sup>

Robert Gerwarth, in his biography of Reinhard Heydrich, writes how the chief of the Reich Main Security Office carried a fair amount of disdain for Rosenberg's administration based on the fact that party 'Old-Fighters' would be given key positions simply because of their longstanding loyalty. In particular he did not see them as ideal types to oversee a Germanic revival and the creation of the Garden of Eden in the East.<sup>45</sup> There was obviously a clash between the nature of Rosenberg's administration and its approach, and the racial purism of Himmler and Heydrich.<sup>46</sup> From mid-July to mid-August, Himmler and Heydrich would visit their men in the field and ostensibly give them the orders to increase their murder rates.<sup>47</sup> Until this period, the victims of shootings had largely been Jewish men of military age, but now women and children were increasingly included in the death tallies.<sup>48</sup> This, it would seem, had as its first objective that of 'racially cleansing' the areas of at least the most 'undesirable' elements i.e. the Jews. Because Himmler was not granted the authority to oversee the racial reorganisation of the eastern territories, Gerwarth writes, "they [Himmler and Heydrich] decided to unleash a policy of systematic ethnic cleansing of the former Soviet

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<sup>44</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 310.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 194f..

In particular this refers to: Hinrich Lohse was appointed as the Commissar of the *Ostland* (an administrative region encompassing the Baltic states and the western part of Byelorussia); Erich Koch, who was appointed as Chief of the Civil Administration of Bezirk Bialystok (an administrative region encompassing the north-eastern part of present-day Poland); and Wilhelm Kube, who was appointed as the Governor of White Ruthenia ("the part of Ostland carved out of pre-1939 Eastern Poland and Soviet Belorussia,"). There was bad blood between Heydrich and Kube who was previously investigated by Heydrich for embezzlement leading to his conviction. Kube was vain and corrupt and held a grudge against Heydrich.

<sup>46</sup> Rosenberg had told a group of those he described as "the closest participants in the eastern problem," stated that even he, the chief ideologue, was more focused on specific political goals than the Jewish question in the upcoming invasion; see: Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 239f..

<sup>47</sup> Jürgen Matthäus contribution in; Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 279–284.

<sup>48</sup> Browning, p. 311f.; Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 524–27.

territories *before* the civilian administrations were properly installed and not, as originally planned, *after* the defeat of the Soviet Union.” In this way, Gerwarth adds, they could reveal that they “rather than Rosenberg or any other civilian or military authorities, possessed the ideological determination and experience necessary to implement Hitler’s plans for the racial reordering of Eastern Europe.”<sup>49</sup>

However, they simply did not have enough men to carry out this monumental task so, to make up for the deficiency, the Himmler established police units consisting of armed locals to assist in the systematic murder of the Jews,<sup>50</sup> and it is in this matter that the divergence between Hitler’s occupation directives and Himmler’s ambitions can be seen most clearly. On 16 July, during the aforementioned meeting with his leading officials, Hitler categorically demanded the following (original emphasis):

*It is never to be allowed that someone other than the German carries weapons!*

This is especially important; even though it seems easier to gather some foreign, subjected people to support with weapons, it remains wrong! It will absolutely and inevitably go against us one day! Only the German is allowed to carry weapons, not the Slav, not the Czech, not the Cossack, or the Ukrainian.<sup>51</sup>

This was consistent with his order made less than a week after the invasion where: “The 9th Army had notified Wehrmacht commanders in Lithuania that on order of the Führer[,] agencies of the provisional government should be ignored. The only task for local Lithuanian agencies was to restore “quiet and order”; armed Lithuanian units were to be dissolved except where they carried out “purely police tasks.””<sup>52</sup>

As such, when Jürgen Matthäus wrote in his contribution to Browning’s study that “the Berlin center played a characteristically ambiguous role,” in the question of how to

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<sup>49</sup> Gerwarth, *Heydrich*, p. 195.

<sup>50</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 274.

<sup>51</sup> *IMT*, “*The Blue Series*,” 38, Doc. 221–L, p. 88.

See Appendix B for a copy of the original document with translation (Item I) and the “Key to Types and Symbols” page for proof of emphasis in the original document (Item V)

<sup>52</sup>Matthäus in: Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 273.

police the territories with a minimum of manpower, he may have been underplaying the differences between Hitler's and Himmler's approaches to pacification.<sup>53</sup> The former's was to supply the SS and police forces with tanks, something that he "always urged", and for Göring's fleet to be relocated to the new territories where the Ju 52s could drop bombs "in case of turmoil."<sup>54</sup> Tanks and 'bombs if necessary' would have been far from an effective means of conducting a systematic ethnic cleansing of the large tracts of conquered territory. And indeed, they were not utilised for this purpose. Despite the fact that Hitler was concerned about the Reich being forced "to rule areas extending over 300 to 500 kilometers with a handful of people," he made it clear that arming non-Germans was out of the question. Therefore, Hitler may genuinely have been committed to a reactive policy of pacification, so that the words "this will happen best by shooting anyone who even looks sideways at us," were not a veiled hint at a program of systematic extermination, but was simply the ruthless impulse to take zero risks when it came to security.

Conversely, on 25 July 1941, Himmler would claim that the police tasks in the East could not be carried out by his and Heydrich's units alone and proceeded to establish "additional protective units from the ethnic groups suitable to us in the conquered area."<sup>55</sup> These local helpers would come to account for large numbers of Jewish deaths in the late summer and autumn of 1941.<sup>56</sup> The Reichsführer-SS thereby proceeded to arm the very native inhabitants that his Führer had demanded remain unarmed. But unfortunately for the Soviet Jews, Himmler knew well that his Führer believed in their endemic inclination toward resistance and treachery, and was furthermore, not afraid of acting independently of his Führer's directives.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Matthäus in: Browning, p. 273.

<sup>54</sup> IMT, "The Blue Series," 38, Doc. 221-L, p. 92. See Appendix B, Item III.

<sup>55</sup> Matthäus in: Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 273.

<sup>56</sup> Matthäus in: Browning, p. 273f.

Already at the end of June, Heydrich had started asking his commando leaders to send in daily incident reports of their activities that his office would edit and send to the various government ministries in the Reich in order to keep them updated on events happening in the East.<sup>58</sup> The first indication that there was something unusual about these reports is that while the *Einsatzgruppen* made reports of their activity in Poland, they were not as detailed as these, with the numbers of executions completely absent from them.<sup>59</sup> When in the beginning of July, Heydrich re-iterated his orders in condensed form, he reminded the *Einsatzgruppen* of the “most important instructions” which had as their final aim “economic pacification,” and which also came with a list of groups of people targeted for execution. The list included functionaries of the Communist Party, Jews in state and party positions, people’s commissars, and “other radical elements (saboteurs, propagandists, snipers, assassins, instigators etc.)” Apparently the reasons given in reports from the *Einsatzgruppen*, military, and Heydrich’s police units, show that these categories in fact did describe the majority of victims.<sup>60</sup> However, it is not clear “whether incoming reports from the field *were tailored to meet the instructions from Berlin* or whether Heydrich tried to adapt his somewhat belated notification to the actions of his subordinates behind the German front line,” (own emphasis).<sup>61</sup>

As is evident from Heydrich’s own words, he was giving more than just a “belated notification” here: he was reminding his men of the most important instructions they were given before leaving for the invasion. Therefore, it seems unlikely that Heydrich, as the superior, would allow his orders to be moulded by what his subordinates were doing on the

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<sup>57</sup> The debacle with the Romanian Iron Guard was the result of Himmler’s intelligence office working independently of Hitler’s orders, which further incensed the Führer. See: Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 505: “Hitler explicitly disapproved of the SD’s independent initiative and instructed Himmler to keep Jost’s SD foreign department on a tight leash.”

<sup>58</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 263.

<sup>59</sup> Browning, p. 28f.

<sup>60</sup> Matthäus in: Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 262. See also Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 204; and Gerwarth, *Heydrich*, p. 191f..

<sup>61</sup> Matthäus in: Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 262.



ground. Given that obviously false pretexts were “formulaically” attached to the reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* until the end of November,<sup>62</sup> it does not seem far fetched that the heads of Heydrich’s *Einsatzgruppen* were doctoring these reports so as to present the shameless murder of their men as something beneficial to the regime. Himmler was determined to have his powers extended and had made multiple previous attempts to do so that failed to affect a positive response from the Führer. Moreover, Hitler had expressly confined his aspirations of racial cleansing to security matters while simultaneously stressing the need to be ruthless and take no risks to ensure security. This policy of ruthless pacification is exactly what gave Himmler and Heydrich the means to operate in a veritable grey area vis-à-vis Hitler’s orders, and allowed them to carry out a program of systematic mass murder of the Jews. Not only did they have the means, but both had the audacity and a strong motivation to do so.

As we know, special reports were made for Hitler that included “illustrative material”.<sup>63</sup> Based on Browning’s account of the invasion and occupation of Poland, this seems to have been a another novelty.<sup>64</sup> Heydrich insisted on playing the role of the coordinator between Berlin and the occupied territories,<sup>65</sup> and while it is often assumed that Hitler had asked for these reports, there is no way to tell whether he did or not, and if so, whether he had asked for illustrative material or not, nor what his reasons were if so.<sup>66</sup> Illustrative material for these reports was only requested at the start of August 1941, further raising the question of why this practice was introduced. Whatever the case, it is obvious that

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<sup>62</sup> Browning, p. 401.

<sup>63</sup> Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 490f., Doc. 814a.

<sup>64</sup> This claim is made on the absence of any mention of a similar practice occurring during the period of invasion and immediate occupation in: Browning, *Final Solution*, Ch. 2, p. 12–35.

<sup>65</sup> Matthäus in: Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 263.

<sup>66</sup> It seems that we can only assume Hitler’s having requested these reports, as it is based a document originating with Heinrich Müller, the Chief of the Gestapo, that says that “the Führer is to receive regular reports about the work of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the East,” before he goes on to say that “for this purpose particularly interesting documentary material . . . is required”. There is no explicit mention of Hitler’s initiation of either the reports or the illustrative material; see: Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 493–5. Doc. 814a.

the “photographs, posters, pamphlets, and other documents,”<sup>67</sup> would have had the effect of legitimising claims of sabotage, anti-German propaganda, and other such documentable accusations. By using legitimate documentary evidence, additional false accusations could appear plausible.

This, along with the steeply incrementing, but uneven,<sup>68</sup> escalation of the murders of the *Einsatzgruppen* from mid-July through to mid-August,<sup>69</sup> created the effect that the SS and police forces were facing increasingly combative inhabitants, particularly Jews, which necessitated harsher and more extreme punishments and reprisals until eventually, the link between Jew and partisan was duly ‘demonstrated’, rendering it indelible.

Part of the tragedy is that on the ground the Nazi ideology likely turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy. After being disproportionately persecuted by both local inhabitants and German SS and police forces alike,<sup>70</sup> and given that in various areas of occupied territories between 10 and 50% of populations could be Jewish,<sup>71</sup> there were bound to be indignant and rebellious Jews. Furthermore, in some states, the Jews did actually play some part (even if exaggerated) in the unpopular Soviet administration.<sup>72</sup> This all served to legitimise the persecution and further convince the Wehrmacht of the Jews’ inherent treachery—that is, those who did not already conflate Jews and Bolsheviks as the higher ranking officers were

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<sup>67</sup> Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 493–5. Doc. 814a.

<sup>68</sup> The unevenness can be attributed to the likely lack of an explicit directive given by Himmler or Heydrich to their men, for the possible reason that there was no Führer order. This, in my opinion, led Himmler and Heydrich to use highly suggestive language to encourage escalation but also to the necessitation of avoiding any official sanction.

For a discussion on the interplay between ideological indoctrination, Himmler’s vague instructions escalating the murder activity, and the “Nazi system’s proneness for lower-level initiative and ad hoc decision making,” see: Matthaüs in Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 279–284; or, for a brief synopsis on the issue see: Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 490.

<sup>69</sup> For brief comments on the uneven escalation process in the late summer, see also: Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 219; and: Matthaüs in Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 282.

<sup>70</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 194; and: Niz. Pr., EG 14 & 38.

<sup>71</sup> Arno Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken: The Final Solution in History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), p. 238.

<sup>72</sup> Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 491.

easily amenable to this equation between the two.<sup>73</sup> It is unsurprising that under these conditions, and because of basic demographic statistics, there would be Jews retaliating by way of arson, rebellion or riots, terrorism and plunder, partisanship, and even minor resistance such as not showing up for work.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, the fact that there was *some* truth to the accusations meant that other false pretexts were easy to slap onto a report *post facto*. These could be used to justify the wholesale murder of Jews who did not present any active or passive resistance at all. Such false pretexts almost certainly included:<sup>75</sup> the spreading of false rumours that the Red Army would take revenge on anyone who rendered the smallest service to the Germans; the circulation of Bolshevik pamphlets; loitering outside the ghetto without the Jewish badge; areas that “suffered especially from Jewish terror” thus justifying the murder of every Jew there; sabotaging the blackout rule by lighting windows during Soviet air raids, or lighting flairs for “Red aviators”; and caravans of Jews filled with looted goods.<sup>76</sup> Then, of course, there were many cases in which large numbers of Jews were massacred due to “communist activity” or simply alongside Communists, thereby giving the illusion that they were political threats, however poorly veiled it was.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> There was a history of ruthless measures, stemming from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Franco-Prussian wars, taken by German armies to combat irregular resistance, whereby the distinction between guerrilla and civilian inevitably blurred and atrocities were normalised. Furthermore, the experiences of various then living German officers in the First World War in Russia had radicalised their perceptions of the Bolsheviks and communists and played off of the Nazi conflation of Bolsheviks and Jews to facilitate the Wehrmacht’s complicity in the mass murder campaign carried out by the SS and police forces. For the experiences of German officers in the First World War and its effect on them see: Mayer, *Heavens*, Prologue, especially p. 3–8. See also Matthäus in: Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 247–8; and for a brief synopsis: Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 487;

<sup>74</sup> Niz. Pr., EG 34, 38, 45, 86, 108, and 113; and: Gerwarth, *Heydrich*, p. 192.

<sup>75</sup> Though even here, it is important to remember that there likely were some genuine cases, as they probably provided inspiration for the charges. But it is impossible to tell where some of these were actually committed by Jews or, other non-Jews whereupon a large group of slaughtered Jews was attached to the crime in the reports.

<sup>76</sup> Niz. Pr., EG 108, 86, 38, and 45.

<sup>77</sup> Niz. Pr., EG 10, 38, and 86.

What the SS and police forces achieved was to successfully and unequivocally insinuate the ‘Jewish question’ into Hitler’s partisan problem, so that soon enough, it became ordinary to launch “operations” to clear areas of Jews and to murder them as a “solution to the Jewish problem.”<sup>78</sup> “Over time,” according to Matthäus, “the growing German fixation on eradicating “partisans” and potential sympathizers—Jews, former Red Army soldiers, “suspicious elements,” and “wanderers”—blurred the borderline separating desirables from undesirables until all locals were seen as presenting a security threat.”<sup>79</sup> He further relates, “during a joint training course on partisan warfare . . . in late September, Wehrmacht and ss officers . . . agreed on the inseparable link between Jews and partisans, which strengthened the need for interagency cooperation.”<sup>80</sup>

Moreover, from late September 1941 onwards, it was made official that the only Special Unit (*Sonderkommando*) of the Security Police was to carry out “the investigation of and struggle against” elements hostile to the Reich.<sup>81</sup> All members of the military were forbidden to take part in “excesses by the Ukrainian population against the Jews,” but more importantly they were also forbidden to “to watch or take photographs of measures taken by the Sonderkommando.”<sup>82</sup> Without a doubt, this measure was influenced by the increasing reports reaching Germans at home of the various excesses and executions carried out against the Jews in the East,<sup>83</sup> but the result was the official sanctioning of Himmler’s SS and police’s monopoly over investigation and sentencing to enable the *Einsatzgruppen*’s false reporting. This was likely the unofficial *modus operandi* in any case,<sup>84</sup> not counting the individual cases

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<sup>78</sup> Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 490f., Doc. 818 & 819.

<sup>79</sup> Matthäus in Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 279.

<sup>80</sup> Matthäus in Browning, p. 288.

<sup>81</sup> The military would only be involved in investigation and punishment if suspects were “part of a hostile military force.”

<sup>82</sup> The Nizkor Project, “The Einsatzgruppen: The Wehrmacht and the Einsatzgruppen Aktionen (September 24, 1941),” Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/heydrich-s-instructions-to-einsatzgruppen-chiefs-september-1939>.

<sup>83</sup> Matthäus Browning, p. 264.

of undisciplined involvement by Wehrmacht troops.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Heydrich would not allow any “especially drastic measures” to occur without his approval, although these were fine in cases of “imminent danger.”<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, if the military, who was operating on the ground, was willing to accept the *de facto* equation of Jews and partisans, it seems clear that Hitler himself could easily become a foul ‘victim’, so to speak, of his own monstrous ideology. Despite the infamous David Irving’s numerous crimes against historiography,<sup>87</sup> there is something to be said here about trying to access Hitler’s perspective from behind his desk. It should not be difficult to imagine the possibility, then, that Himmler’s SS and police were not acting on Hitler’s orders or based on a consensus that the Jews were to be exterminated during the course of the war. After weeks of recurring incidents of “sabotage”, “terror”, “propaganda”, etc., the Jew would have repeatedly been shown to be combative, thus ‘confirming’ Hitler’s ideological bias. Before the invasion was even launched, Hitler had officially prohibited the prosecution of his troops for crimes committed against the population that were committed “out of bitterness over the atrocities or disintegrative work of the carriers of the Jewish-Bolshevik system.” Thus, it was understood that the murder of entire villages was allowed if they were somehow tied to escaped partisans or other attackers.<sup>88</sup> While Hitler did not embark on a war to exterminate the Jews, per se, he was in no doubt that many thousands of Jews would be guilty of Bolshevism, treachery, and partisanship. He was thus already predisposed to believe the

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<sup>84</sup> An *Einsatzgruppen* report from early July reads “In all of these 3 major operations mainly Jews were liquidated. However, there were also Bolshevik officials and snipers among them who were handed over by the Wehrmacht to the security police.”

See: Niz. Pr., EG 14.

<sup>85</sup> Matthäus Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 278.

<sup>86</sup> Matthäus Browning, p. 264.

<sup>87</sup> For a fascinating account of the court case between David Irving and Deborah Lipstadt, written by one of the expert witnesses, and concerning Lipstadt’s accusations that Irving had been consciously manipulating and distorting the historical record to exculpate Hitler and thereby serve a radical political agenda, see:

<sup>88</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 219f.

phony excuses, and had already given his men the freedom to deal with resistance in the harshest terms possible.

There are further details that, alone, do not constitute convincing evidence, but taken in conjunction with the above, make this proposition more likely to be true. Part of this series of ‘soft’ evidence, if you will, are the statements made by Himmler. Longerich has duly pointed to the way in which Himmler would later later talk about this period of intensified blood-letting i.e., the late summer and autumn of 1941. By paying attention to their formulation, Himmler’s words in 1943 seem to support the proposition that it was his own initiative to unleash the program of indiscriminate mass murder against the Jews in the eastern territories. The first quote was to an *SS-Gruppenführer*:

I decided . . . in this case also to find a clear solution. I did not see myself as justified in eradicating the men—by that I mean in killing them or having them killed—only to let their children grow up to avenge them by killing our sons and grandsons.

And when he addressed the Wehrmacht’s generals he would say:

I did not consider myself justified—as far as Jewish women and children were concerned—in allowing children to grow up to be the avengers who would kill our fathers and our grandchildren. I would have seen that as cowardly. As a result, the issue was solved uncompromisingly.<sup>89</sup>

The third statement comes to us by the supposed recollection of Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, the HSSPF of Belarus, detailing Himmler’s words after an execution near Minsk. While citing post-war testimony in this topic of study is always precarious, it does seem to corroborate the above statements. Browning paraphrases: “Himmler became nervous when watching the execution performed by men from Nebe’s *Einsatzgruppe B* and afterward gave a speech that legitimized the killings as a necessary means of defense for which he would bear responsibility.”<sup>90</sup> To be sure, this could have been part of an arrangement between Hitler and

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<sup>89</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 539.

<sup>90</sup> Matthäus in: Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 283.

the Reichsführer-SS, whereby Hitler was not to be associated with the mass murders.<sup>91</sup> But given the mass evidence displayed above, it should be considered at least possible to question whether or not Hitler had explicitly approved of the proactive campaign of extermination in the Soviet territories in the summer and autumn of 1941.

Having said all of this, it is as unlikely that Hitler would not eventually suspect Himmler's men of proactively and indiscriminately murdering Jews. But, I would argue that he likely believed in the gist of the reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* while suspecting that numerous individual excesses were occurring as a result of zealous Nazism. Hitler then, I would like to propose, stood in a vaguely defined area between wilful self-deception and tacit approval. It is likely that he paid more attention to the overall result of the pacification measures, and invested the bulk of his attention on the war being conducted beyond the frontiers of the occupied territories. Himmler had played a fine line, but in the end it paid off. By the beginning of September, he extended Himmler's jurisdiction as Settlement Commissar to include the Soviet territories, and not too long after this, on 24 September 1941, Hitler promoted Heydrich to acting Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>92</sup> These decisions suggest that the two had, since the aforementioned meeting on 16 July, ingratiated themselves with the Führer, most likely through their contributions made to pacifying the Soviet territories.

There are a few more claims by Browning that need addressing before the stage is set for a deeper analysis of Hitler's experience of these events. The following subsection will serve to counter the claims of a Führer decision made before December 1941, since the

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<sup>91</sup> See Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 122. See also: Longerich shows, Hitler had previously tried to distance himself from violent measures to avoid him being associated with certain excesses. See: Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 593.

<sup>92</sup> Longerich, *Himmler*, p. 536.

incremental nature of Browning's Führer order seems to coincide with the analyses of Phillip Burrin and others who place the Führer order in the autumn of 1941.<sup>93</sup>

*Browning thesis: Part Two*

Browning's claim that as of 30 July Heydrich was tasked with conducting a "feasibility study" for the extermination of the the entire European Jewish population runs into a number of problems. The chief issue is the lack of initiative on his part in searching for alternative and more efficient means of killing the Jews. Browning argues that because of how unprecedented such a task was, it was natural for him and his men to have to 'feel their way' to the final solution, which explains the confused state of Jewish policy during the autumn of 1941.

However, if Heydrich was indeed tasked with finding a means of exterminating all of Europe's Jews at the end of July, it is unlikely that he would not have been initiating the search for alternative methods of mass murder. It would be obvious from the very beginning that the ten-million-plus Jews in Europe could not be exterminated with mass shootings. However, throughout the process of innovating methods of mass murder, Heydrich was a largely reactive agent. The only apparent directive from Himmler or Heydrich during the first months of slaughter was an alleged request from Himmler in mid-August to Arthur Nebe, the commander of *Einsatzgruppe B*, to search for a different means of killing due to the psychological burden of his troops. Himmler himself as unable to keep his composure during the shooting he had witnessed just, witnessed, and impassioned. Naturally, the program of extermination his men were essentially conducting could not be carried out much longer in this manner, thus his request.

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<sup>93</sup> Phillip Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews: The Genesis of the Holocaust* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), esp. chs. 4–5. See also: Uwe Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972).



In any case, as Browning admits: “Both [the] earlier Nebe suggestion and his early August request even before Himmler’s visit to Minsk would suggest that it was Nebe who initiated the subsequent exhaust gas experiment, but as of mid-August he did so with the knowledge, approval, and encouragement of Himmler.”<sup>94</sup> He also admits that the initiative had come from Arthur Nebe, in order to facilitate *Einsatzgruppen* killing operations on Soviet territory but insists that now “it was available as one potential solution to ss planners pondering the means for killing the European Jews.”<sup>95</sup> Whether they were really pondering the means for killing all of Europe’s Jews at this point is doubtful. The rest of the initiatives to search for alternative methods apparently also came from lower ranking officials in charge of specific localities. These machinations seem to have constituted solutions to local problems that Himmler or Heydrich would merely approve of.<sup>96</sup>

Browning goes on to show that further gassing tests took place in Auschwitz some time in September, but that this was not intended for the Jews rather, for the Soviet POWs. Again, this was initiated not by Heydrich, but seemingly by the commandant of the (then still) concentration camp, Rudolf Höss.<sup>97</sup> A third crucial development is outlined by Browning, in which Odilo Globočnik, the SSPF of Lublin, seems to have initiated the planning for an extermination camp in Belzec in October 1941.<sup>98</sup> Once more, the evidence suggests a strong influence by local problems that needed a remedy.<sup>99</sup> And again, rather than being initiated by Heydrich this plan only subsequently received sanction from above, and despite Browning’s claim to the contrary, it does seem to have genuinely been “a kind of special program” developed as a response to “the multifaceted crisis facing the General Government.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 355.

<sup>95</sup> Browning, p. 356.

<sup>96</sup> Kerhsaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 142–4.

<sup>97</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 356f.

<sup>98</sup> Browning, p. 358–61.

<sup>99</sup> Kerhsaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 142.

<sup>100</sup> Browning, p. 361.

The General Government was an occupation established after the initial conquest of the western half of

Browning then mentions the planning for the Chełmno extermination camp that began in late October or early November, and relates that it has been argued by scholars that it was another local solution that received special approval from Himmler. Again, the initiative came from below, and as with Bełżec, appears to have originated as a response to the tens of thousands of incoming German Jews and “Gypsies” being dumped on them.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, as Longerich has shown, the initial capacity of Bełżec was very limited, and was only expanded in the spring, further indicating that it was not yet envisioned as a major node in a network of camps meant to exterminate Europe’s Jews.<sup>102</sup>

One last set of developments was the apparent scouting of sites for, and planning of, three more extermination camps—two unrealised and the other being Sobibor. Apparently SS officers had arrived to Sobibor, a small village in Poland, to measure the track and ramp at the train station, “which indicates that the site of that future extermination camp was also already under consideration.”<sup>103</sup> However, when comparing the development of Bełżec and Sobibor, we will notice that the plans for Bełżec had been muted in the beginning of October, with approval for its construction coming in mid-October,<sup>104</sup> and construction beginning on 1 November.<sup>105</sup> Sobibor, it seems, was being considered in the spring of 1941 but construction only began in March 1942.<sup>106</sup> Given that, because of labour shortages owing to the dwindling supply of Soviet POWs,<sup>107</sup> in autumn 1941 Himmler, Heydrich’s RSHA, and Rosenberg’s administration were pioneering a policy that combined concentration and labour camps,<sup>108</sup> it

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Poland in September 1939. It was the part of Poland that was not absorbed into the ‘Greater Reich’ and would contain the vast majority of Poland’s Jewish population by 1941, numbering over two million Jews. Its administrative head was Hans Frank.

<sup>101</sup> Browning, p. 365f., Kerhsaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 143.

<sup>102</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, 296.

<sup>103</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 365.

<sup>104</sup> Browning, p. 365.

<sup>105</sup> Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 24

<sup>106</sup> Arad, *Operation Reinhard*, p. 30.

<sup>107</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 317.

is highly likely that Sobibor was initially seen as being part of this localised framework, such that, when the Nazi regime decided to systematise the extermination process in the winter of 1941/42, the plans had to be re-developed to meet the new expectations. Despite the fact that Nazi officials were planning to work the healthy Jews to death at this point it does not necessarily mean that a conscious, centralised program of extermination was being developed. Rather, by this point, after years of sordid maintenance, dashed hopes and frustrations, after Himmler's 'war against the partisans', and the prevailing trend of using self-help measures to cope with the incoming Jews from the Reich, the Nazi leadership had now come to the consensus that the Jews were utterly expendable. But, this should not be confused with a plan to spend unnecessary resources and effort to exterminate every last Jew in Europe. This threshold had not yet been crossed, and only would be in mid-December.

Concerning the 'death camp' being planned at Mogilev, the only evidence we have was that a large crematorium was being built by the company Topf and Sons which after being delivered in December at some point, was diverted to Auschwitz. That Himmler was discussing the construction of gassing facilities at this point in time at Mogilev is untenable since the only evidence for this are two conflicting testimonies. One unnamed witness said that during a late October visit, Himmler mentioned that solutions other than shooting would soon be available to kill the Jews. The second witness, Bach-Zelewski, recalled Himmler explicitly discussing gas chambers but attributed this visit to a later date.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, the evidence is scant for a network of death camps being devised in autumn 1941 as an exterminatory, pan-European solution to the Jewish question. Rather, the consensus that the Jews were expendable led to local solutions to free space in ghettos for incoming German

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<sup>108</sup> Because the goal was to contribute to the war economy, and because by this time Jewish lives in eastern Europe were increasingly being seen as expendable, the labour camp system was not intended to provide a suitable standard of living to sustain the labourers for long. They were essentially being worked to death. Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 317.

<sup>109</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 366.

Jews, to exploit Jewish labour in the worst possible way. There was no goal as yet, for the murder of European Jewry as a goal in itself. There is much more to go on for a mid-December decision by Hitler to exterminate the Jews. Before presenting this case, however, I shall address two last pieces of evidence that Browning employs for his argument.

Apart from post-war testimony<sup>110</sup> and rumours,<sup>111</sup> these are the only two pieces of concrete evidence that emanate from the highest echelons of the Nazi regime. The first is Hitler's decision in September to deport the Reich's Jews. Browning argues that this decision is synonymous with a tentative decision in principle to exterminate Europe's Jews before the war's end. He again highlights the correlation between this decision and the second peak of military victory, leading Hitler to reverse his previous veto on deporting the Reich's Jews during the war. From this point, Browning argues, "all subsequent decisions were taken and plans were made with the expectation and goal of total eradication."<sup>112</sup> The 'decisions' and 'plans' here, broadly speaking, refer to the ones highlighted above, which Browning believes were set in motion by Hitler's decision to deport the Jews—a watershed moment in Nazi Jewish policy. By the end of October, he claims, the "conception of the Holocaust had taken shape."<sup>113</sup> As with the mid-July "decision", however, Browning has focused too parochially on *what* was happening and the temporal correlation, than delving into *why* such a program would be devised. For while Hitler's decision to deport the Jews did set in motion the search for more efficient means of mass murder, the reasons behind the decision were not made with the destruction of all the Jews in mind. Browning's approach is epitomised in his view that "the likes of Rosenberg, Ribbentrop, and Kaufmann," should not "be credited with greater

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<sup>110</sup> Alfred Streim has convincingly argued that post-war testimonies of *Einsatzgruppen* members claiming that a Führer order was made in the summer of 1941 are most likely false and are hence treated with extreme suspicion by most historians today. See: Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 501–505, especially p. 503–504; Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 138; Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 188f..

<sup>111</sup> Browning, p. 352–373.

<sup>112</sup> Browning, p. 361f.

<sup>113</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 374.

influence on Hitler than Heydrich and Goebbels, whose similar proposals a month earlier were unsuccessful,” and therefore “it is best to see the proposals and interventions of Rosenberg via Bräutigam, Zeitschel via Abetz and Ribbentrop, and Gauleiter Kaufmann more as the occasion than the basic cause of Hitler’s change of heart.”<sup>114</sup>

The context of Hitler’s decision is well summarised and more thoroughly analysed by Longerich,<sup>115</sup> where he goes on to show, quite convincingly, that the impetus behind the decision to deport the Reich’s Jews was manifold. The Soviet deportation of the Volga Germans was the ideal pretext, but there were three things, in my opinion, that had the biggest influence: firstly, the ‘liberation’ of Jewish apartments to be given to homeless Germans following Allied air raids, especially in Hamburg, likely struck a paternalistic cord in Hitler, whose movement, after all was National Socialism;<sup>116</sup> second, to add prudence to this sentimental decision, the increase in propaganda positing Roosevelt as being part of international Jewish conspiracy which had already been occurring, not only allowed the Jews to be blamed for the air raids, but also made it clear to the world that the Jewish question was now tied to Roosevelt’s actions, and hence, the deportations could be used as an ominous portent to deter the US from entering the war, since their entry was looking increasingly likely during this period;<sup>117</sup> thirdly, I contend that the combination of all of these factors and others, including the previous unsuccessful attempts by Goebbels and Heydrich to influence Hitler into taking this decision, was itself, the decisive factor. Browning’s argument seems to treat the “influence” of each individual as mutually exclusive factors when in reality, they

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<sup>114</sup> Browning, p. 326.

<sup>115</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 265–69.

<sup>116</sup> Browning reports that Kaufmann would later write: “The Führer immediately accepted my suggestion and issued the appropriate orders for the deportation of the Jews.” See: Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 325.

<sup>117</sup> And, as Longerich has argued, the fact that these deportations were done in the open, rather than with as much secrecy as they could manage—as they would attempt the following year after the Wannsee Conference—seems to indicate that the deportations were intentionally displayed for the US to see. In this way, Hitler was using the Jews as hostages to prevent the US from entering the war before he could finish off the Soviets.

amounted to converging and incremental influences. The mounting pressure from his subordinates, the hope of diplomatic deterrence, the ideologically sound pretext, the emotional reasoning, and lastly, even the technical means to carry it out, which were now available with the advances of the Wehrmacht, constituted a series of positive encouragements stemming from every relevant aspect of the decision.<sup>118</sup>

Lastly, we have the issue of Himmler and Heydrich officially closing off all overseas emigration to Jews throughout German-occupied Europe on 23 October. One day before this decision was made on 18 October, there was a case of Spanish Jews held in detention in France, whereby the Spanish government suggested evacuating them and all of Spain's Jews to Spanish Morocco. Heydrich denied this request because he said that the Spanish government had neither the will nor the expertise to guard them in Morocco, and furthermore that "these Jews would also be too much out of the direct reach of the measures for a basic solution to the Jewish question to be enacted after the war."<sup>119</sup> This is perhaps the most ominous piece of evidence that Browning has drawn attention to. However, it is not clear what Heydrich meant by the vague sentence quoted above. Heydrich could have been pre-empting a further radicalisation in Jewish persecution, or he could have been denying the Spanish government any chance of negotiation where they might offer to guard the Jews. Furthermore, Browning does not present any documentation relating to Himmler's reasoning for the decision to close off emigration to all of Europe's Jews one day later. It is possible that it was a further measure, taken in the public eye, to deter the US from entering the war. What we can be more sure of, though, is that the driving force behind this decision was not the Führer himself.

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<sup>118</sup> For Longerich's argument, which I heavily drew from, see: Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 265–269. Furthermore, see Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933–1945: Abridged Edition* (Pymble: HarperCollins), p. 260f, Adobe Acrobat eBook Reader.

<sup>119</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 368f.

While Browning makes much of comments made by Hitler to Heydrich and Himmler on 25 October, where he cited his January 1939 Reichstag “prophecy”,<sup>120</sup> blamed the Jews for German deaths in both wars, and went on to say:

Let no one say to me: We cannot send them into the swamp. Who then cares about our own people? It is good when the terror precedes us that we are exterminating the Jews. . . . We are writing history anew, from the racial standpoint.”<sup>121</sup>

However, the contrast between the statement that “it is good when the terror precedes us...” and the aspiration to secrecy that would prevail from mid-December onwards vis-à-vis the fate of the Jews,<sup>122</sup> should strike us as difficult to reconcile with a decision to exterminate all of Europe’s Jews before the winter of 1941. More importantly, however, what Browning does not mention is that Hitler would apparently go on to say the following that same evening (own emphasis):

I have numerous accounts to settle, about which I cannot think to-day. But that doesn't 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. One acts more shrewdly when one bides one's time.*<sup>123</sup>

This statement is difficult to reconcile with the claim that Hitler had already decided to murder the Jews of Europe, and that “by the end of October 1941 the conception of the Final Solution had taken shape.” The fact that his decision to deport the Jews does not count as a

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<sup>120</sup> During a two-hour long speech to the Reichstag, Hitler addressed the Jews in a brief but punctuated manner saying: “Today I will be once more a prophet: if the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevizing of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!” Cf. Hans Mommsen, “Hitler's Reichstag Speech of 30 January 1939.” *History and Memory*, vol. 9, no. 1, Fall 1997, p. 147.

As shall be argued below, this speech was made with the combined intentions of provoking fear among the Jewish population to increase emigration, to put pressure on foreign nations to accept the emigrating Jews, and thirdly, to contribute to the psychological preparation of the German population for war.

<sup>121</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 370.

<sup>122</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 321, Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 393.

<sup>123</sup> Hitler, *Table Talk*, p. 90 (entry 52).

specific action falling under the umbrella of a solution to the Jewish question further suggests that other motives were more important in the decision, and that it certainly was not synonymous with a decision to exterminate them.

Therefore, despite his assiduously detailed survey of the Nazi anti-Jewish policy leading up to the Holocaust, it seems that Browning's analysis is too parochial in its focus on policy and actions, lacking a more sensitive examination of the causes of these policies and actions. Instead, because of a correlation between victory and intensified measures against the Jews, he assumes this explanation to be enough, thereby relying too heavily on ideology. This leaves us with a somewhat circular, teleological account of the Holocaust that takes anti-Semitic and ideological factors as the deepest root of events, leaving little room for human complexity (even the brutish Nazi thugs were complex human beings).

At least for the period of the war until December of 1941, I shall roughly concur with the "functionalists" such as Broszat and Mommsen, that the launch into an all resulted more from the momentum of ideology fuelling rivalries within the Nazi regime and *ad hoc* solutions to self-imposed problems, than they did from the direct .<sup>124</sup>

### *A 'Providentialist' Interpretation*

The emphasis placed on Hitler's violent anti-Semitic remarks, especially in the early- to mid-1920s are not without good reason. Even if numerous scholars have now convincingly shown that the Nazi regime, nor Hitler, was carrying out a specific plan of annihilation from any point before the war,<sup>125</sup> these remarks were the result of a genuine hatred of the Jews.

Hitler's anti-Semitism was vitriolic and ever-present, however, we would do well to

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<sup>124</sup> Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and the Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Hans Mommsen, *Das NS-Regime und die Auslöschung des Judentums in Europa (The Nazi Regime and the Extermination of the Jews in Europe)*, (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2014).

<sup>125</sup>



remember that during this period, even the expulsion of the Jews was a radical proposal, such that in the late 1920s Hitler decided to drop the notion from Nazi propaganda altogether.

While he would continue to exploit raw emotion and deep frustrations as a means of gaining support, he realised that his platform could not be based on his desire to expel the Jews.<sup>126</sup>

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler was of the belief that in any socio-political (or religious) struggle against a faulty movement or system, fighting negatively i.e., aiming to merely eliminate the perceived source and carriers of the flawed movement or system, would not ensure success. Only by fighting for a new cause or philosophy could the current scourge be defeated; only then could the force to extinguish the problem be sustained.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, after Hitler became the ultimate authority in Germany, rather than pursuing the negative goal of harassing and persecuting the Jews, his sights were set on the positive goal of ensuring a Germanic revival instead. Again, it must be emphasised that Hitler did not stop despising the Jews in principle. But, it does seem that the transition from a fringe populist to the most powerful man in Germany sobered up his more radical sentiments, and perhaps opened his eyes to the reality that the Jews were, perhaps, not as threatening as they once appeared. Whereas before he was a small dog barking feverishly at the perceived enemy, now he was big enough to fight bigger and more prestigious battles. This is suggested by the largely reactive role that Hitler played in terms of anti-Jewish policy in the 1930s leading up to the war, as detailed below.

The pattern that characterised Nazi *Judenpolitik*<sup>128</sup> during this period was one that saw Hitler generally focused on non-Jewish affairs such as economics, re-armament, and foreign policy, while smaller fish in the Nazi party—radical activists—pushed for extreme measures

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<sup>126</sup> Peter Longerich, *Hitler: A Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 177f.

<sup>127</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), p. 222–223.

<sup>128</sup> The phrase here is a contemporary word that has subsequently been extensively used in the study of the Third Reich, and cannot be directly translated. According to Peter Longerich, it combines the senses of the ‘politics’ and ‘policy’ of the regime’s anti-Semitic expressions. See: Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 4.

to be implemented against the Jews. Hitler then would have to find a way to compromise his political prudence with the anti-Semitic pressures from below in order to keep the radicals from becoming disillusioned and to avoid losing favour with the German people. Indeed, the infamous Nuremberg laws were the result of just such a compromise.<sup>129</sup>

Hitler was in no rush to expel the Jews if it meant risking what he wanted most: to restore German pride and elevate it to the status of world power. Thus, although at some point Germany would have to deal with its arch-enemies, the Jews, as Hitler stated in the unpublished sequel to *Mein Kampf*,<sup>130</sup> a diary entry by Josef Goebbels clearly demonstrates Hitler's lack of urgency in actually going about this. Kershaw reports on Hitler's lack of initiative in the 'quiet years of 1936–7', and then quotes from Goebbels' diary:

Hitler appears to have spoken directly about the Jews only infrequently, and then in general terms, as in November 1937, when, in a long discussion with Goebbels about the 'Jewish Question', he allegedly said: 'The Jews must get out of Germany, yes out of the whole of Europe. That will take some time yet, but will and must happen'. According to Goebbels, the Führer was 'firmly decided' on it.<sup>131</sup>

During the war we saw this continued, as Hitler announced multiple times that he would give his *Gauleiter*<sup>132</sup> ten years to complete the Germanisation of their provinces, and would not ask any questions about their methods.<sup>133</sup> Hitler gave his *Gauleiter* ample time to get rid of Jews and other non-Germans without having to resort to systematic violence, though obviously, he did not care for their fate. This seems to have been characteristic then, of his stance towards the Jews.

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<sup>129</sup> Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 123–27.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in History and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 252.

<sup>131</sup> Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 126f.

<sup>132</sup> The word "Gauleiter" is both singular and plural and refers to one or more party leaders of a *Gau*—a regional branch of the Nazi Party.

<sup>133</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 108.

Conversely, throughout the 1930s, Hitler was fully in control of Germany's foreign policy. Giving high praise to Zara Steiner's *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933–1939* (2011), Richard Evans confirms her views by stating that “from the moment he became Chancellor, Hitler acted and other statesmen reacted.”<sup>134</sup>

The utter centrality of foreign policy to the Führer's agenda during this period is epitomised by a speech given on 6 November 1937 to War Minister Blomberg, Foreign Minister Neurath and the commanders-in-chief of the army, navy, and the air force. Here Hitler laid out his plans for German expansion through war, and put the need for *Lebensraum* as the principal cause for his decision. He outlined various scenarios under which Germany might go to war, but stated that it should not do so later than 1943-45. The most striking thing about this event is that, afflicted with paranoia that he might die soon, he began the speech by stating that in the event of his untimely death, it was to be considered as his last will and testament. During this two-hour monologue, Hitler did not mention the Jews a single time.<sup>135</sup> Thus, in a speech that he explicitly stated should be considered as his final will and testament in the event of an untimely death, Hitler's sentiments were centred on the expansion of German territory—on the goal of re-establishing German supremacy via empire building. Although he seemed to convey that he had no intention of acquiring ‘living space’ in Eastern Europe during his lifetime, Longerich has convincingly argued (as the historical record seems to indicate) that this was a shrewd attempt to get his generals on board with other “realistic” short- and medium-term plans, in order to lay the groundwork for further expansion after the absorption of Austria and Czechoslovakia.<sup>136</sup>

It is not surprising therefore, that when Hitler was involved with anti-Semitic actions, such as the 1938 November Pogrom (Kristallnacht) and the announcement of the

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<sup>134</sup> Evans, *Third Reich*, p. 251.

<sup>135</sup> For original document see: *IMT*, Vol. 25, Doc. 386-PS, p. 402–13.

<sup>136</sup> Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 533–35.

aforementioned “prophecy” to the Reichstag concerning the fate of the Jews if they were to unleash another world war, that Hitler’s foreign policy interests had something to do with it. The combination of these interests and the possibility of enacting at least a partial solution to the Jewish question through emigration explains Hitler’s authorisation of the pogrom, and the announcement to the Reichstag on 30 January 1939.

### *The Night of Broken Glass*

It is a well-known fact among scholars of the Third Reich that, the so-called Kristallnacht pogrom, while receiving the green light from the Führer, was not his own initiative.<sup>137</sup> Goebbels had recently fallen out of favour with his leader and wished to brush over past differences with the Führer. With the assassination attempt on the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath, by a 17-year-old Jew, the Nazi party had a ‘welcome pretext’ to unleash a pogrom against the Jews. Goebbels capitalised on this to win back favour with Hitler by overcoming his past scruples about Hitler’s plan for psychologically preparing the population for war. For, according to Peter Longerich, it was during these weeks in October and November 1938, that Hitler “was trying to find an issue that would enable him to bring about a fundamental change in the Third Reich’s public persona, a shift towards maximum solidarity, ideological radicalism, and readiness for war.”<sup>138</sup>

The impending war seems to have been Hitler’s highest concern but, the lucrative and effective emigration scheme set up by Adolf Eichmann<sup>139</sup> in Austria following anti-Semitic violence there was an attractive bonus, for it also contributed to Hitler’s long-term goal of getting rid of the Jews. By sparking a wave of open violence, hitherto inconceivable, Eichmann’s scheme could be used in the rest of the Reich to economically profit from the emigration of the Jews, satisfying both ideological and economic thirsts.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 127, and Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 590f.

<sup>138</sup> Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 591.

<sup>139</sup> Eichmann was a second lieutenant in the SS during this time (SS-Untersturmführer).

At the same time US President, Theodore Roosevelt, was behind the initiative to convene an international refugee conference in Évian, which only revealed the unwillingness of the participating countries to admit entry to any significant numbers of Jewish refugees in the wake of the events in Austria, and soon to be in Germany proper. The only positive result of this conference was the setting up of an Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees that was to work out future arrangements through consultation with the Reich. Therefore, as Longerich argues, “there was an incentive to speed up expulsions in order to put pressure on the Committee to act.”<sup>141</sup> The pogrom, as well as Hitler’s order for the arrest of 20,000-30,000 Jews and the ineligibility of the Jews to claim insurance damages on their destroyed property, served this purpose very well. Hitler certainly approved of the pogrom, as Goebbels’ diary noted, but there was a limit to this, and the moment things would go too far, the propaganda minister was to pull the plug.<sup>142</sup>

### *The ‘Prophecy’*

During a speech to the Reichstag that lasted over two hours, in a brief but punctuated moment Hitler stated:

Today I will be once more a prophet: if the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevizing of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!<sup>143</sup>

Hans Mommsen and Peter Longerich have both detailed the ulterior motives for this acute stab at the Jews. Longerich affirms Mommsen’s argument that the primary motive, in light of the Évian conference and the Rublee–Wohlthat negotiations, for such a statement was (as

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<sup>140</sup> Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 590.

<sup>141</sup> Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 589–90.

<sup>142</sup> Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 128.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Hans Mommsen, “Hitler’s Reichstag Speech of 30 January 1939.” *History and Memory*, vol. 9, no. 1, Fall 1997, p. 147.

with the pogrom) to provoke fear that would effect an increase in Jewish emigration, as well to increase the willingness of foreign countries to receive them.<sup>144</sup> Kershaw also affirms this view stating: “Emigration, which had significantly increased in the panic after the pogrom, remained the main aim, and was to be channelled through a central office set up in January 1939.”<sup>145</sup>

Longerich adds further layers by saying that it was another part of the propaganda campaign to prepare the population for war, and was also part of a strategy to blame the outbreak of an impending war on Germany’s enemies. This was especially directed at the United States, whom Hitler was hoping to deter from entering the war by hanging the responsibility of an intensified program of Jewish persecution over its head.<sup>146</sup>

If we are to claim then, as I shall, that Hitler not only approved of the local initiatives to “liquidate” the Jews but also sought to extend them into a comprehensive and absolute program to murder Europe’s Jews, we need a deeper understanding of the significance of this such a conception to Adolf Hitler. Two issues must be addressed before accessing, what I shall claim, was the conception of the Holocaust. The first is the elusive matter of Hitler’s ‘spiritual’ beliefs, and the second, a simple concept but of crucial importance.

### *Hitler’s Spiritual Beliefs*

The topic of Hitler’s religious beliefs (or lack thereof) has been hotly debated by historians and non-historians alike for many decades. As with the matter of Hitler’s role in the Holocaust, conflicting interpretations exist, only in this, there are far more categories to consider. Remarkably, despite the obvious hatred of materialist communism that Hitler and the Nazis carried, and despite the stark contrast between the morality of the Christian Bible and Hitler’s actions and sentiments, there are scholars who have drifted towards either of these

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<sup>144</sup> Mommsen, *Reichstag Speech*, p. 147–161.

<sup>145</sup> Kershaw, *Dictatorship*, p. 128.

<sup>146</sup> And, Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 603–605.

extremes.<sup>147</sup> Other labels used to denote Hitler's religious views include occultist, deist, theist, non-Christian monotheist, pantheist, panentheist, and neopagan. As such, Richard Weikart has stated, "the debate over Hitler's religion is not a sterile academic controversy over the musty past, but a dispute that still arouses deep and intense passions."<sup>148</sup> Weikart's study represents a thorough reading of the various arguments made about Hitler's religious views, the result of which is that Hitler was by and large a scientific pantheist who deified nature above all, in its eternity and determinism.<sup>149</sup> To Weikart, nothing is more consistent and pervasive than Hitler's attribution of divinity to the laws of nature, even if it cannot be certified in an iron-clad fashion.<sup>150</sup> He rejects the notion that Hitler

The fact that Hitler often spoke of "God", the "Almighty", "eternal nature", "Providence",<sup>151</sup> "Creator", and "Eternal Creator",<sup>152</sup> did not renounce his membership of the Catholic church,<sup>153</sup> believed in World Ice Theory,<sup>154</sup> and contained many occultist books in his library,<sup>155</sup> has certainly created confusion, and historians have long been debating the

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<sup>147</sup> For the argument positing that Hitler was a sincere Christian at least until 1937, after which he departed from institutional Christianity but still held Christian values and influences see: Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For the materialist-inclined view that admits that Hitler was not strictly atheist, but mainly due to his belief in his own destiny precluded the possibility, and otherwise describes him as a materialist in his dismissal to religion and in his insensitivity to humanity see the biographical works: Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny, revised ed.* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), and: Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

<sup>148</sup> Richard Weikart, *Hitler's Religion: The Twisted Beliefs that Drove the Third Reich* (Washington DC: Regnery History, 2016), iBook. The labels mentioned here are addressed by Weikart in the introduction and chapters 7 & 8. For a thorough and impressively researched work on the influence of the occult and other supernatural notions on the Nazi regime see: Eric Kurlander, *Hitler's Monsters: A Supernatural History of the Third Reich*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017; see also: George Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999).

<sup>149</sup> The basic difference between scientific and mystical pantheism, according to Weikart, is that "Mystical pantheists believed that the cosmos had a mind or will that was supreme, while scientific pantheists stressed determinism, i.e., the strict rule of natural laws." Weikart, *Hitler's Religion*, Ch. 8, par. 9.

<sup>150</sup> Weikart, *Hitler's Religion*, Ch. 8; in the last section of this chapter he admits the lack of absolute certainty, but finds his views most closely aligned with pantheism.

<sup>151</sup> Weikart, *Hitler's Religion*, Ch. 7, par. 1–5.

<sup>152</sup> Weikart, *Hitler's Religion*, Ch. 8, par. 1–4.

<sup>153</sup> John Toland, *Adolf Hitler: The Definitive Biography* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976) p. 703.

<sup>154</sup> World Ice Theory, conceived of by Hanns Hörbiger, is a complex theory that in its essence states that "that history, science, and religion could be explained by moons of ice hitting the earth in prehistoric times." See Kurlander, *Hitler's Monsters*, p. xi. See also: Hitler, *Table Talks*, p. 249 (entry 125).

<sup>155</sup> Timothy Ryback, *Hitler's Private Library: The Books that Shaped his Life* (New York: Knopf, 2008), Ch. 6, Section 2, par. 1, iBook.

exact nature of Hitler's spiritual beliefs. Richard Weikart's thesis concerning Hitler's pantheism is convincing given the profusion of evidence to support his claim.<sup>156</sup>

However, it seems that an urge to produce a single answer that best encapsulates Hitler's spiritual beliefs is a problematic premise. Indeed, the majority of Weikart's monograph consists of dispelling other claims, an endeavour made necessary by the sheer plurality and eclecticism of Hitler's beliefs. As Weikart himself says "A third possibility is Hitler simply had his metaphysics muddled. He was not a rigorous thinker, and he admitted that he did not know much about the nature of God, so perhaps he did not know himself whether to believe in a pantheistic, panentheistic, deistic, or theistic God."<sup>157</sup> One inevitably runs up against the unsystematic nature of Hitler's thought when trying to understand, define, and portray the man. A likely source for this ambiguity is the inherent opposition that Weikart has described between the determinism of natural laws that Hitler glorified and the emphasis he always placed on will power. Weikart writes that Hitler and the Nazis seemed to overcome this paradox through the notion that whatever they did was in accord with the laws of nature and the inevitable flow of history. Though he seems to be technically correct, as the evidence shows, there is nothing particularly useful about this conclusion, for this is about as far as he gets in terms of positive analysis (the rest of his work, as alluded to above, is devoted to arguing against other claims).

After reading everything that Hitler is not, one is left simply with the fact that Hitler worshipped nature as expressed through the laws of nature that were essentially a Social-Darwinian construct. Again, while this view is correct, it does not seem to be the whole picture. Regarding this analysis of Hitler's role in the Holocaust it tells us nothing except for how he may have justified it. Obviously there is no obligation for his analysis, if proven correct, to be useful in this matter, but the most obvious downfall in his work is the fact that

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<sup>156</sup> See: Weikart, *Hitler's Religion*, ch. 8.

<sup>157</sup> Weikart, *Hitler's Religion*, ch. 8, Concluding Section, par. 2.



the determinism of the laws of nature provide no room for individuality and personal intuition. Remarkably, while he goes to great lengths to describe how Hitler's understanding of instinct stemmed from the basic drive for self-preservation, which often included procreation and a struggle with other races,<sup>158</sup> Weikart has completely marginalised the role of intuition and has subsumed the role of destiny within racial determinism. While the latter may have been correct again in a general sense, meta-historical sense, it still leaves us with very only a one-dimensional image of the Führer.

By brushing aside the matter of intuition Weikart has left out the key mediator between Hitler's will power and the laws of nature. As much as Hitler was adamant about the rigidity of the laws of nature, these were far too general to help him make most decisions. In fact, Hitler seems to have relied far more on chance and intuition in his decision making than simply adhering to the laws of nature. The latter only provided moral justification for his actions and a very general direction in which to head. Apart from the many major decisions that went against the grain of advice given to him, Hitler would prefer not to rely on rationalisation even in many smaller matters:

[Heinrich Hoffman] admitted that Hitler read a good deal about astrology and the occult, but "as a matter of principle Hitler stood opposed to astrology." Nevertheless, Hoffmann thought Hitler was superstitious in some ways, because on occasion he would flip a coin to make a decision.<sup>159</sup>

This comment was further corroborated by Otto Dietrich who claimed that:

When Hitler was out driving and did not know where he wanted to go, he would sometimes flip a coin to decide. However, Dietrich continued, "This was, by the way, the only concession Hitler made to superstition. Of course he often expressed supreme belief in himself and his 'racial destiny.'"

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<sup>158</sup> Weikart, *Hitler's Religion*, Ch. 3 & 9.

<sup>159</sup> Heinrich Hoffman was Hitler's personal photographer. See: Weikart, *Hitler's Religion*, Ch. 7, 5<sup>th</sup> par. from the end of chapter.

This matter, although apparently trivial, it seems to indicate two important aspects of Hitler's relationship to reality. The first is the fact that Hitler welcomed chance into his life, and the second is the extreme belief he had in himself. The boldness to gamble and take risks combined time and again to produce an image of reality in which his own intuition seemed extraordinary and connected to something deeper. A significant motif in Ian Kershaw's biography of Hitler entitled *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris*, is the all-or-nothing gamble. He notes that “the all-or-nothing gambler's instinct for the highest stakes,” was an integral part of his personality.<sup>160</sup> And both Alan Bullock's and John Toland's biographies contain the motif of a big gamble, with the latter writing that he was “a born gambler.”<sup>161</sup> And we know that Hitler too saw himself as a gambler, saying the following when he resolutely decided to invade France via the Low Countries:

No one has ever achieved what I have achieved. My life is of no importance in all this. I have led the German people to a great height, even if the world does hate us now. I am setting this work on a gamble. I have to choose between victory and destruction. I choose victory. . . . In the last years I have experienced many examples of intuition. Even in the present development I see the prophecy. If we come through this straggle victoriously—and we shall—our time will enter into the history of our people.<sup>162</sup>

And the following about the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact:

My party members know and trust me; they know I will never depart from my basic principles, and they will realize that the ultimate aim of this last gamble is to remove the Eastern danger and thus to facilitate, under my leadership, of course, a swifter unification of Europe.<sup>163</sup>

Even until the end, this was the case making it clear when he signed the order for the Ardennes counteroffensive that it was a last gamble, a do-or-die proposition.<sup>164</sup> He once told

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<sup>160</sup>Ian Kershaw: *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), Introduction: Reflecting on Hitler, 7<sup>th</sup> par. from the end, iBook.

<sup>161</sup> Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York & Evanston: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 323, 438, 558, 581f., 661, 760, and 764.

John Toland, *Adolf Hitler* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), Ch. 6, Section 5, par. 11.

<sup>162</sup> Bullock, *Tyranny*, p. 569.

<sup>163</sup> Toland, *Adolf Hitler* Ch. 9, Section 3, par. 23.

<sup>164</sup> Toland, *Adolf Hitler*, Ch. 29, Section 2, par. 9.

Hans Frank: “You know I am like a wanderer who must cross an abyss on the razor’s edge . . . But I must, I simply must cross.”<sup>165</sup> Along with this gambling instinct, which was nourished by the fact that it had repeatedly paid off in elaborate fashion, Hitler genuinely seemed to believe in the ability to access information, omens, or presentiments, things unexplainable by scientific method. Sometimes, this could be latent or delayed as he would indicate on 19 February 1942: “I’ve always detested snow; Bormann, you know, I’ve always hated it. Now I know why. It was a presentiment.”<sup>166</sup> At other times he could receive a sign when it was urgent, as he showed when explaining how he had once intended to cross an occupied zone in the Rhineland on a specific day but that:

That same morning an unpleasant presentiment made me abandon the project. Two days later, I learnt in a letter from Dreesen that, contrary to the usual custom, the check at the frontier had been very strict. If I’d fallen into their hands on that occasion, the French would not have let me go!<sup>167</sup>

Toland tells of the time in 1933 when Hitler had broken a cornerstone after striking it energetically with a silver hammer. There was an awkward silence because superstition said that the architect of the building would die in such an event, and when Goebbels tried to make light of it Hitler remained disturbed because he was convinced it was a bad omen. A few days later the architect of the building was hospitalised and died a few months later.<sup>168</sup> This no doubt contributed to Hitler’s uneasy relationship with omens and superstitions. While he claimed not to be superstitious, it appears that he rejected highly traditionalised superstitions, still carrying some of his own when he was overcome in the moment by a certain feeling. In an even more wholehearted belief, he seemed to think that Providence had chosen him and was keeping him alive to carry out his task.<sup>169</sup> And, on 24 August 1939 at 3am, while Hitler

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<sup>165</sup> Toland, *Adolf Hitler*, Ch. 17, Section 2, par. 22.

<sup>166</sup> Hitler, *Table Talks*, p. 319 (entry 151).

<sup>167</sup> Hitler, *Table Talks*, p. 64 (entry 41).

<sup>168</sup> Toland, *Tyranny*, Ch. 15, Section 2, par. 3.

<sup>169</sup> For the fascinating episode on 8 November 1939, involving a predicted assassination by an astrologer, warnings by Göring, unease felt by Frau Troost about Hitler’s lack of security, Hitler’s response that he is

and his entourage where at his Berghof residence looking at the northern lights, “a startling red glow from these Northern Lights was cast on the Unterberg, a mountain of legend,” the same red light had bathed bathed their hands and faces and “Hitler abruptly turned to his Luftwaffe adjutant, Below. “Looks like a great deal of blood . . . This time we won’t bring it off without violence.””<sup>170</sup>

Despite Weikart’s insistence on the primacy of the laws of nature, there was nothing in either the laws of nature (which do not care about the individual) nor in Hitler’s racial beliefs to explain his own seemingly extraordinary intuition, nor the apparent signals he might receive from time to time from some higher power or deeper force. He was not the only such man of destiny though, for even a cursory glance over world history will reveal the obvious fact that some men simply were out of the ordinary, that there had always existed special cases of remarkable leaders, of unique historical figures, and they always would. These men were larger than life and seemed to be the epitome of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, and Hitler admired them more than anyone.<sup>171</sup> Hitler had said that “even stupid races can accomplish something, given good leadership. Genghiz Khan's genius for organisation was something quite unique.”<sup>172</sup> Not to mention the fact that he hated all things Bolshevik but held Stalin in the very high esteem.<sup>173</sup> But, Nietzsche’s über human could not explain his gift of foresight or intuition, nor did Kant help much in this matter for all he did was state the existence of that which he felt he had access to but could not understand. As such, it is not surprising that Hitler would acquire a sizeable collection of ‘occultist’ and alternative philosophical works, and buy into what Weikart calls “quack hypotheses”<sup>174</sup>

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being protected by Providence, and his unusually early departure after giving a speech which saved him from a bomb attack, see: Toland, *Tyranny*, Ch. 21, Section 3, par. 9–20.

<sup>170</sup> Toland, *Tyranny*, Ch. 9, Section 2, par. 3.

<sup>171</sup> For Hitler’s admiration and affinity for great historical figures see: Hugh Trevor-Roper’s introduction to Hitler, *Table Talks*, p. xxvii–xxxiii.

<sup>172</sup> Hitler, *Table Talks*, p. 666 (entry 302).

<sup>173</sup> Hitler, *Table Talks*, p. 8 (entry 4).

<sup>174</sup> Weikart, *Hitler’s Religion*, Ch. 7 10<sup>th</sup> par. from the end of chapter.

Weikart briefly glosses over one Timothy Ryback's analysis of Hitler's private library and dismisses it his findings because the method of analysing Hitler's books and their marginalia is not, strictly speaking, the most historiographically reliable method of conducting research. This is mainly because what was left by Hitler (unsurprisingly) was mostly just underlining and question, or exclamation, marks. As such, Weikart rightfully states that there is doubt as to whether Hitler had made them at all. And yet, the question must be raised as to how unreliable Ryback's work is versus how inconvenient it is to Weikart's thesis, seeing as Ryback's entire work is written off on the basis of these objections, and not a single point is taken for consideration. Despite Weikart's scrutiny, Ryback's monograph has convincing evidence of Hitler's interest in occultist and alternative philosophical works.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, the particular influences on Hitler that I will be drawing from are far too consonant with his behaviour and beliefs—as indicated by himself and as described by close associates—to be ignored.

### *A Man of Destiny*

If there was one phrase that best encapsulates what Hitler's own view of himself was, it would almost definitely be: man of destiny. This is probably best epitomised in his comment on the night of 25–26 September 1941 that runs as follows: “If I weren't myself hardened by this experience, I would have been incapable of undertaking this Cyclopean task which the building of an Empire means for a single man.”<sup>176</sup> Hitler saw himself as another Frederick the Great and not just but Napoleon but Oswald Spengler and Napoleon wrapped up in one, a “world phenomenon”.<sup>177</sup> Given the mixture of Hitler's obvious pantheistic bent in

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<sup>175</sup> Ryback, *Private Library*, Ch. 6, Section 2, par. 1. Furthermore, see Appendix A for Frederick Oechsner's account of Hitler's library, in which he details that the third largest section, while containing a considerable amount of books on diet and nutrition, is characterised by its astrological and spiritualistic bent.

<sup>176</sup> Hitler, *Table Talks*, p. 44 (entry 26).

<sup>177</sup> On Frederick the Great, whom Hitler much admired, see: Ryback, *Private Library*, Ch. 9, par. 4; and on Napoleon and Spengler see: Hitler, *Table Talks*, p. xxix.

which he deified nature, his belief in special historical figures, and his proven faculty of intuition and presentiment, Ryback's claim that Hitler likely drew a strong inspiration from Ernst Schertel and Maximilian Riedel, is a highly convincing fit. This is further suggested by the fact that it the former's *Magic: History, Theory and Practice* was one of the most heavily marked books that Ryback had come across in the (albeit dwindled) collection he was to study.<sup>178</sup>

Ryback summarises Hitler's philosophical core with condescension, describing it as a "dime-store theory cobbled together from cheap, tendentious paperbacks and esoteric hardcovers,"<sup>179</sup> but nonetheless shows that Hitler engaged with numerous philosophical works that aimed to bridge the spiritual and physical worlds.<sup>180</sup> Among them were Ernst Schertel's *Magic: History, Theory and Practice*,<sup>181</sup> and Maximilian Riedel's *Law of the World*, the latter concurred with Schertel's belief in the ability "to connect to the deeper forces that moved the world, those universal "reservoirs" of knowledge."<sup>182</sup> Ryback's quotes Riedel's theory of the trinity and interposes:

Riedel's "trinity" seems to have attracted Hitler's particular attention. A dense penciled line parallels the following passage: "The problem with being objective is that we use objective criteria as the basis for human understanding in general, which means that the objective criteria, that is, the rational criteria, end up serving as the basis for all human understanding, perception and decision-making." By using the five traditional senses to achieve this "objectivity," Riedel declared, human beings exclude the possibility of perceiving—through the additional seven senses he identified—the deeper forces of the world, and are thus unable to achieve that unity of body, mind, and soul. "The human mind never decides things on its own, it is the result of a discourse between the body and the soul."

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<sup>178</sup> Timothy Ryback, "Hitler's Forgotten Library," *The Atlantic*. May 2003.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2003/05/hitlers-forgotten-library/302727/>.

<sup>179</sup> Ryback, *Private Library*, Ch. 6, par. 46 (or 5<sup>th</sup> par. from the end of the chapter).

<sup>180</sup> See Ryback, *Private Library*, Ch. 6.; see Ch. 4 for a discussion on Hitler's other philosophical influences, generally concerning those more known such as Kant, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer. For further reading on Hitler's more commonly known philosophical influences, see Weikart, *Hitler's Religion*, Ch. 2.

<sup>181</sup> Ryback, Ch. 6, par. 13.

<sup>182</sup> Ryback, Ch. 6, par. 37.

As Ryback highlights, this was clearly echoed in statements made by Hitler during one of his table talks on 13 December 1941:

"Mind and soul ultimately return to the collective being of the world," Hitler told some guests in December of 1941. "If there is a God, then he gives us not only life but also consciousness and awareness. If I live my life according to my God-given insights, then I cannot go wrong, and even if I do, I know I have acted in good faith."<sup>183</sup>

As such, it seems fair to say that Ryback's research was not a waste of time.

Returning to Schertel's work, it is reasonable to assume that Hitler came to view himself 'as "the materialization of the divine' that is both "incomprehensible" to and "unrecognized" by the common man.'<sup>184</sup> Just like all of the great cultures of the past that were 'willed into existence by individuals of "imaginative power," who were not "slaves" to empirical realities,"<sup>185</sup> so too Hitler would channel his "ektropic genius" to shape the course of the world. This so-called ektropic genius, Schertel admitted, may often be perceived as antagonistic, even evil, but ektropic powers were "beyond good and evil", they inevitably created their own system of values that would come to constitute the norm.<sup>186</sup> The 'ektropic' dynamic dispensed with notions such as real and unreal, true and false, right and wrong, it was something much deeper than the rational concepts that had 'calcified' the modern European man, that 'mollified' and 'castrated' him.<sup>187</sup>

Schertel described a perception of the world that allows one to sense its "predetermined fate" and wrote that "every man of genius possesses this power and all nations whose histories have not simply 'run their course' have possessed this."<sup>188</sup> This seems to be corroborated by the recollections his secretary Traudl Junge. Ryback interviewed her in 2002 where she would refuse to ascribe to Hitler a particular spiritual belief but said that she

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<sup>183</sup> Ryback, *Forgotten Library*, 2<sup>nd</sup> par. from the end.

<sup>184</sup> Ryback, *Private Library*, Ch. 6, par. 40.

<sup>185</sup> Ryback, Ch. 6, par. 42.

<sup>186</sup> Ryback, Ch. 6, par. 45.

<sup>187</sup> Ryback, Ch. 6, par. 44–45.

<sup>188</sup> Ryback, Ch. 6, par. 40–47 (or 11<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> par. from the end of the chapter).

was convinced that (in Ryback's words) "he believed in the existence of a deeper force that moved the world as evidenced in the laws of nature, of the presence of a deeper intelligence, or, as he himself said, of a "creative force" that gave shape and meaning to the world."<sup>189</sup>

Although the following premise is admittedly not without its problems, I would propose to look at the nature of Hitler's table talks as they progressed over the course of the summer to the winter of 1941. In counting the number of times that the Jews seem to appear and the manner in which they appear during these accounts, it is clear that Hitler from mid-October onwards would begin to sharply intensify his rhetoric against the Jews and ruminate more deeply over their nature and faults. To be sure, there are many days missing from July, as this was obviously when the note taking first began, and was likely tentative at first, and furthermore, notes were only taken for things that particularly struck the stenographers as significant. But, given the sample size we are dealing with, it is worth entertaining this premise. For what appears is that for the period from the beginning of July until 17 October 1941, there are 41 total entries and only 4 mentions of Jews. Not only were there so few mentions, but they were also usually mentioned in less threatening way than they would be talked about later. From October until 13 December there were 34 entries and 12 separate mentions of the Jews, which involved much longer diatribes. The second half of October and November saw a marked shift in the way that he spoke about the Jews during his table talks, at least this is what the remaining accounts demonstrate.<sup>190</sup>

And then something strange would occur. On the night of 1-2 December 1941 Hitler proceeded to make an uncharacteristically ambivalent statement about the Jews, defending German women who are married to Jews (for not even the intellectual class knew what the Jew was ten years before), and saying that he is convinced that there are Jews who have behaved correctly and refrained from doing injury to the German idea; but, that he also knew

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<sup>189</sup> Ryback, *Private Library*, Ch. 6, par. 7.

<sup>190</sup> See: Hitler, *Table Talks*, Entries for 5 July 1941–13 December 1941.



that not one of them stood up against his ‘co-racialists’ to defend the German idea against them. Everything they do is self-serving. Later he would ominously speak about the circle of life with smaller creatures being devoured by bigger ones until the biggest fall prey to microbes, and during these musings he mentions the return of the body and soul to nature.

So, what can we make of this? What I propose is as follows: Every single foreign policy and military success that Hitler enjoyed convinced him more and more of his grandeur-to-be in the annals of history. On a tour of famous monuments in Paris in 1940 Hitler allegedly murmured to Hermann Geisler (one of his most favoured architects) “You will build my burial place,” while standing in front of Napoleon’s tomb.<sup>191</sup> All this time, Hitler’s immediate ambitions had slowly drifted away from the negative goal of getting rid of the Jews (this was always crucial, but the constraints laid by society and preoccupations with the economy, foreign policy, and military preparations removed the sense of urgency here) and felt himself as the forerunner of a spectacular Germanic revival. Providence i.e., some higher power or deeper force, had chosen *him* to carry out the Cyclopean task of building the Thousand-Year Reich. In the summer of 1941, Hitler was still vague about what he wanted from the Jews, his words to the Croatian Marshal Kvaternik said it all: he could send them to Siberia or to Madagascar, it did not matter, as long as they were gone.

However, the invasion in the East did not advance as hoped, and despite some added successes in September, the rains began in mid-October, slowing the German advance and threatening to end the Blitzkrieg. An unusually early and extreme winter occurred that year, something Hitler would emphasise.<sup>192</sup> As the conditions worsened so Hitler’s anxiety grew. After years and years of multiple divine interventions, after veritably demonstrating to everyone that he was indeed the man of destiny he believed that he was, that must have been

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<sup>191</sup> Ryback, *Private Library*, Ch. 8, par. 11.

<sup>192</sup> William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 773f.. For comments on early winter see: Hitler, *Table Talk*, p. 200 (entry 105).

kept alive to carry out his mission, something terrible was beginning to happen, which was only being made worse by the international Jewish conspiracy working to bring the US into the war so as to tie the Germans down in a two front war. At the same time, Jews were being murdered in their tens of thousands in the East because of their treachery, but also because the men were absolutely ruthless in carrying out reprisals. In mid-late August 1941, Hitler references his prophecy for only the second time since making it, and remarks that it is appearing to come true with an “uncanny certainty.”<sup>193</sup> This comment seems to indicate a level of unexpectedness, since the *Einsatzgruppen* were by now including much large numbers of women and children, and at the same time, the US had signed the Atlantic Charter, signalling the possibility that it might enter the war. However, at this point, Hitler was still having to be persuaded to take any action against the Jews at home.

Eventually, with a powerful combination of influences, Hitler decides to authorise the deportations. This sparks off its own chain of events on the ground that slowly coincide with the worsening of the situation on the front, and Hitler’s anti-Semitic vitriol starts to return as anxiety sets in. Nonetheless, he decides to bide his time before making a decision, as was his wont,<sup>194</sup> and continues to ruminate over the ‘despicable’ Jew. This was a transformative period in the mind of the Führer.

On 17 November, Ribbentrop (and so soon Hitler) finds out about the likelihood of a Japanese attack on the US,<sup>195</sup> the “liquidation” of the Jews is proceeding with confusion but

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<sup>193</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008) p. 105.

<sup>194</sup> Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 543. Longerich explains with regard to the Blomberg–Fritsch crisis (an affair that threatened ties between Hitler and the officer corps) that once again, Hitler had let a crisis come to a head, then after a critical period of delay, he intervened in sweeping fashion to reorder the entire political agenda in his own interest and overcame the crisis. This was not the first time he did this, and it appears that Hitler had a habit of letting issues bubble up, while he collects his thoughts and intervenes on a massive scale to save the day and come out stronger on the other side. Thus, my interpretation below would follow this well established pattern, one that he had hinted he would on 25 October 1941.

<sup>195</sup> Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 784.

with many thousands of deaths nonetheless,<sup>196</sup> and on 26 November, the Red Army retakes Rostov on Don, sending the Germans into a headlong 70km retreat to a position that Hitler categorically did not want his troops at over the winter. Hitler's invasion is showing serious signs of looming crisis, with extreme sub-zero temperatures setting in,<sup>197</sup> and the conflict between Japan and the US is looking ever more likely.

The unplanned and uncanny manner of the prophecy's fulfilment was decidedly profound to the spiritual mind of Adolf Hitler. A mind that had so long gravitated towards thoughts of omens, Providence, and presentiments: Hitler truly believed in his ability to sense the future and that Providence was behind his unending success. The confirmation that Japan will definitely attack the US arrives on 1 December (possibly 2 December), and late that night Hitler would speak of the Jews ambivalently and with a sense of "fairness", but goes on to say, in a detached manner:

Probably many Jews are not aware of the destructive power they represent. Now, he who destroys life is himself risking death. That's the secret of what is happening to the Jews. Whose fault is it when a cat devours a mouse? The fault of the mouse, who has never done any harm to a cat? *The role of the Jew has in a way a providential explanation.* If nature wanted the Jew to be the ferment that causes peoples to decay, thus providing these peoples with an opportunity for a healthy reaction, in that case people like St. Paul and Trotsky are, from our point of view, the most valuable. By the fact of their presence, they provoke the defensive reaction of the attacked organism. Dietrich Eckart once told me that in all his life he had known just one good Jew: Otto Weininger, who killed himself on the day when he realised that the Jew lives upon the decay of peoples.

It seems that by this point, Hitler's decision was sinking in and rather than treating it as a matter of anger or excitement, he was justifying it as the laws of nature that Weikart has been apt to emphasise. On 5 and 6 December the Red Army launched its massive

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<sup>196</sup> Christian Gerlach, "The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler's Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews," *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (December 1998): p. 765–69. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/235167>.

<sup>197</sup> Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 774–7.

counteroffensive, something the Germans did not think was possible, with the temperature down to  $-38\text{C}$ .<sup>198</sup> Heydrich just recently sent out invitations to coordinate the current program of resettlement and labour (and presumably partial liquidation) of the Jews, and Japan attacks Pearl Harbour on 7 December leading to Hitler's declaration of war on the US four days later on 11 December 1941.

The convergence of all these events likely made Hitler think once again that "what before I had simply felt within me, without in any way knowing it, was now proved by reality,"<sup>199</sup> that by making the 'prophecy' in the first place, he unwittingly reached into "those universal "reservoirs" of knowledge."<sup>200</sup> This abstraction (a mere cogitation) was pushed into reality by the anxiety over the fact that Hitler's greatest achievement, everything he had been working towards and was destined for, was in grave risk. Further factors of encouragement and momentum was the need for reassurance of his status as a man of destiny, his previous series of great gambles, his urge to cross the abyss on razor's edge facilitated the decision, as well as the fact that his subordinates had already made much headway in the extermination of the Jews.

What Hitler essentially did was to metaphysically appropriate the current mass murder of the Jews, that was already going on, and would have gone on anyways, into an event of transcendental quality, a symbolic zenith whereby he merged the fate of the war with the fate of the Jews and convinced himself that by exterminating them now, he was preventing another stab in the back, and was at the same time carrying out a mission that was inchoately formed within him all along. He was doubling down on his belief in his grand mission, and soon after would assume control of the armed forces himself. Whether he decided that every single Jew had to be killed is a difficult question to answer, perhaps he was simply giving his

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<sup>198</sup> Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, p. 777.

<sup>199</sup> These were the words that Hitler spoke after realising that he could actually "speak!", as in, speak to large crowds, the beginning of his meteoric rise to power. Kershaw, *Hubris*, Ch. 5, subsection III, par. 7.

<sup>200</sup> Ryback, *Hitler's Private Library*, Ch. 6, par. 37.

full support for the extermination of the Polish and eastern Jews, while planning to expel and use the others for slave labour (that would naturally grind them down). What is clear is that he sought to solve the Jewish question by the end of the war one way or another (*so-oder-so*).

What should be quite certain though is that the prophecy had a vital role to play in Hitler's decision making process. After mentioning it only three times in almost as many years (from January 1939 to December 1941), Hitler would make reference to it no less than four times in the next three months, and continued thereafter do so as we shall see below.

### *The Fulfilment*

Christian Gerlach's thesis is probably the most famous of those that posit a basic decision for the murder of Europe's Jews, made by Hitler, on the 12 December meeting with his *Gauleiter* and *Reichsleiter*.<sup>201</sup> This is both striking and controversial. The afternoon of 12 December 1941 was the first time since the preceding January that Hitler himself referred to the prophecy outside of private conversation with Goebbels.<sup>202</sup> From that conversation up to this point, it was clearly part of a propaganda scheme directed at the public to prepare it for the deportation of Jews and likely used to build on the Führer's mad of destiny cult status.

During the December speech, however, Hitler communicated that now the prophecy was of tangible, murderous consequence. A number of facts indicate this. Hitler chose an intimate setting to convey this profound change in attitude and his thoughts on the consequences of waging war on the U.S., that is, his private residence in the Old Reich Chancellery, to which he invited mostly party members who already had, and would have, a hand to play in the extermination of the Jews.<sup>203</sup> Goebbels' account of Hitler's speech that afternoon shows that Hitler was "determined to make a clean sweep" with regards to the

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<sup>201</sup> Gerlach, "Wannsee Conference, 759–812.

<sup>202</sup> For an account of the use of the prophecy by Hitler to send signals for the escalation for mass murder, see: Kershaw, *Final Solution*, p. 104–111.

<sup>203</sup> Gerlach, 'Wannsee Conference', p. 786.

Jewish question. To eliminate any ambiguity as to the meaning of the term “destruction” in his prophecy, he stated that the prophecy “was no empty talk” and that because the world war had arrived, the logical consequence must be the extermination of the Jews; he then makes the connection between extermination and death absolutely explicit by communicating that “the instigators of this bloody conflict will have to pay for it with their own lives.”<sup>204</sup>

Scholars like Ian Kershaw and Peter Longerich have argued that these words did not constitute anything radically different to the rhetoric he had used until then, and that he likely would not have conveyed such a decision in front of a group of some 50 people. Furthermore, they say that the section in Goebbels’ diary entry on this matter was a mere seven lines out of nine printed pages.<sup>205</sup> However, if Goebbels’ account is accurate, few times had Hitler made the connection between extermination and death so explicit than in this address when he announced that they would have to pay for their lives. He reiterated that his words were no empty talk. Furthermore, such an argument disregards the context. The liquidation of the Jews had been going on for some months, and had reached a most daring stage in its development. If they did not already know what was happening, they certainly heard rumours, as Hitler’s own words on 25 October suggest were circulating. Therefore, the address to some 50 odd officials in the ‘intimacy’ of his private residence, to a group of people who had or would have a large role to play in the extermination of the Jews was the perfect way, under the conditions, to announce his decision. He did not need to go on and on about the Jews, he simply needed to give a clear message that what was going on must continue, and that naturally meant expand. This was clarified over the next few days, it seems.

Those that attended the meeting left with no doubt in their mind as to the significance of Hitler’s reference to the prophecy that afternoon. The announcement caused a splash in the records, as a flurry of meetings and speeches regarding the Jewish question took place soon

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<sup>204</sup> Kershaw, *Final Solution*, p. 107.

<sup>205</sup> Kershaw, *Dicatorship*, p. 147–49.

after.<sup>206</sup> Just two days after Hitler's address to his *Gauleiter* and *Reichsleiter*, Himmler meets with Viktor Brack, where the topics of the meeting are listed as “[. . .] Course in East Minist[ry]” and “Euthanasia.”<sup>207</sup> On 18 December, Dr. Otto Brautigam finally replies to Hinrich Lohse's letter of 15 November concerning whether exceptions should be made for workers in the execution of Jews, by saying that “the Jewish question has probably been clarified by now through verbal discussions. Economic considerations are to be regarded as fundamentally irrelevant in the settlement of the problem.”<sup>208</sup> On 16 December, Hans Frank mentions the prophecy while announcing to his subordinates that they must find some way to exterminate their estimated 3.5 million Jews since they cannot shoot or poison them. He closely mirrored Hitler's rhetoric (at least as it was recorded by Goebbels) during the address of 12 December when he stated that sympathy should be reserved only for the German people.<sup>209</sup> In contrast to the confusion over Jewish policy registered before this meeting, “by the time Heydrich sent out a new invitation on January 8 for a noon meeting on January 20, this time “with lunch included,” the process of initiation, dissemination, and integration was quite advanced.”<sup>210</sup>

It is during this period that the ever-diligent accounts of Joseph Goebbels, recorded in January 1942, describe Hitler as “consistent”, and not “inhibited by bourgeois sentimentality” vis-à-vis the Jewish question.<sup>211</sup> Given Hitler's comments on the evening of 25 October, it is reasonable to conclude that this statement was made in relation to previous inconsistency and inhibitions, but that now, he was emanating the much hypothesised “unmistakable signals” that indicated his violent wishes. Hitler's meeting on 18 December with Himmler where the only remnant documentation of its contents is a cryptic note that says “Jewish question: to be

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<sup>206</sup> Gerlach, ‘Wannsee Conference’, p. 782–783.

<sup>207</sup> Gerlach, ‘Wannsee Conference’, p. 781.

<sup>208</sup> Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 496f., Doc. 820 & 821.

<sup>209</sup> Gerlach, ‘Wannsee Conference’, p. 790.

<sup>210</sup> Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution*, p. 410.

<sup>211</sup> Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 1175, note 61.

exterminated as partisans.”<sup>212</sup> This is as close to an explicit Führer order for the Holocaust as there is, although it is possible that it still only referred to the eastern Jews if Hitler had not yet authorised it. It seems unquestionable that this note represents some kind of change in official policy, whether it was Hitler giving official sanction to Himmler to carry on what he was already doing, but did not receive authorisation for before; or whether it be, as Gerlach has suggested, the official line to be taken for the extermination of all of Europe’s Jews.

Nonetheless, it is telling that it happened on the same day that Brautigam had replied to Lohse, citing verbal discussions that had probably clarified the matter of economic considerations by then (by the time of writing the letter). Furthermore, as Gerlach has pointed out, the strikingly long delay between the first Wannsee Conference scheduled for 9 December and the postponed one that took place on 20 January further indicates a change of planning and a re-conceptualisation. Indeed, at the conference in January 1942 Eichmann had prepared a list of *all* of the Jews in Europe, including countries not even occupied by or allied with Germany such as England and Ireland. Hitler reiterated his prophecy in his New Year’s proclamation, on the anniversary of the ‘seizure of power’ in a speech to the Sportpalast (30 January), and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the party’s foundation on 24 February—all very symbolic events following his 12 December meeting.<sup>213</sup>

Gerlach, however, focuses on pragmatic reasoning for Hitler’s change of mind. He states that the prophecy was of necessity a self-fulfilling one given that German claims to supremacy were justified and that any opposition to German interests stemmed from a global Jewish conspiracy. Thus, he takes the prophecy at face value and considers it a factor that Hitler had made it in the first place to bring about the opportunity to destroy the Jews. The second factor proposed is that the entry of the United States into the war was a welcome

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<sup>212</sup> Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 505.

<sup>213</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 320.



pretext to make a decision that he and others had likely already been contemplating. Thirdly, with U.S. entry into the war, it was no longer possible to hold the Jews hostage to prevent U.S. involvement (in essence this is not too different to the second reason). And the fourth reason is that with the war worsening and enemies located all around the world, the Germans needed to face the conflict with a European fortress mentality, ridding themselves of any troublesome elements within.<sup>214</sup> All of these (except for the first reason, in my opinion) were likely considered and influential to varying degrees, I believe that Gerlach has missed the deeper significance of this moment.

Following the decision, the administrative apparatus received the boost of confidence and sense of solidarity to pursue their double program of extermination and annihilation through labour i.e., working Jews and others to death. This systematisation of the murder practices that occurred over this winter in regards to the killing of the Jews, certainly looks like the next logical step based on the prevailing practices up until that point, but we cannot simply assume that without Hitler's speech on 12 December that it would have occurred as such. It is at least as likely that partial solutions and amenability to contingency would have characterised Nazi Jewish policy had it not been for the intervention of the Führer.

At the Wannsee Conference, a meeting attended by mid-level officials,<sup>215</sup> Alfred Meyer a representative of Rosenberg's administration in the eastern territories, and Josef Buhler of the General Government (of which the head was Hans Frank) both asked at the end of the meeting to get a start in their territories with a 'solution' since transport was not a problem there.<sup>216</sup> Meyer was the only official at the conference also present at the 12 December meeting of Hitler and his *Gauleiter* and *Reichsleiter*. Buhler, on the other, hand

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<sup>214</sup> For the paragraphs relating to Gerlach's explanation for a 12-December-1941 decision to exterminate the Jews see: Gerlach, 'The Wannsee Conference', p. 786–787.

<sup>215</sup> For a list of officials, the document itself, and Eichmann's post-war testimony in Israel see: Pridham and Noakes, *Nazism*, p. 535—542., Doc. 849 & 850.

<sup>216</sup> Gerlach, 'The Wannsee Conference', p. 795.

was likely instructed by Frank, or simply on the basis of Frank's announcement in 16 December, was the other official requesting the liquidation of the Jews in his district. As such, even though it will never be possible to tell exactly to what length of specificity Hitler went when conveying his wishes for the Final Solution to be implemented, and whether immediate total extermination was the explicit goal, it seems clear that his decision did have the effect of smoothing out the previous issues of cooperation, and the terrible systemisation of local initiatives that had already been pioneered were now extending into a grand program.

What is more, Hitler had decided that the war and the Jewish problem were now interlinked, affected each other, and had to be overcome together. That Hitler had managed to save his army from collapsing probably served to legitimise his belief in the power of his prophecy and the dual mission he was now on. As such, a system of work and death camps were devised in order to meet the war economy's needs and to take care of the 'Jewish problem'. Attacks in Berlin by pro-communist terrorists and the belatedly successful assassination attempt on Heydrich likely drew even more attention to the Jewish threat on the home front, and caused a further escalation, or perhaps, urgency is the better word, in the expulsion and extermination plan.<sup>217</sup>

Longerich seems to think that because there were increased transports in May and July 1942, that these represented further points of escalation that preclude the notion of any one order that set the Holocaust in motion. However, given that the Nazis were trying to operate under secrecy and not to let the population find out what was happening,<sup>218</sup> and that Heydrich had still not worked out the outline for the comprehensive proposal to be sent to Göring, it would have made sense to begin more tentatively at first, but when the attacks occurred, this may have been escalated for 'security' reasons. Not to mention the fact that Sobibor and

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<sup>217</sup> Friedländer, *Nazi Germany*, p. 293f.

<sup>218</sup> Eichmann's wrote that they would send older Jews to Theresienstadt so as to "preserve outward appearances," since the false pretext of sending the Jews East to labour camps would obviously be exposed if they were sending Jews incapable of working there. See Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 321.

Treblinka had only become operational at the end of April and July respectively,<sup>219</sup> which must have had something to do with the increased transports.

During this period, coincidentally, on 8 May 1942, the Germans launched a new offensive and by the end of June “On all fronts—and in the Atlantic—the Germans heaped success upon success; so did their Japanese allies in the Pacific and in Southeast Asia.”<sup>220</sup> Again, a correlation could be construed between the fate of the Jews and the outcome of the war. The mass murder program brought with it successes on the battlefield. Or, at the least, nothing was going wrong. That Hitler did indeed make this connection seems to be further suggested by his orders from 20–22 September 1942 that all Jews be taken out of armaments factories and to replace them with foreigners.<sup>221</sup> This occurred after “the crisis of September 1942 [which] probably led Hitler to the realization that since the summer campaign had failed to achieve its objectives, the war could no longer be won on his own initiative.”<sup>222</sup>

Furthermore, this is another juncture at which Hitler make reference to the prophecy.<sup>223</sup>

Indeed, Johannes Hürter and Matthias Uhl go so far as to say that over the course of 1941/42, Hitler had gone on to reinvent himself as the *Führer-Feldherr*, styled after Frederick the Great. Now, however, Hitler was feeling increasingly betrayed by those around him, accusing his generals of not carrying out orders, and sabotaging his war and legacy.<sup>224</sup> Indeed, the functionalist interpretation is hard pressed to explain the obsession with carrying out the Holocaust to the end (which must have been influenced by Hitler’s denial of defeat until long after even he should have admitted it). Saul Friedländer has asked the pertinent questions:

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<sup>219</sup> Yitzhak, Operation Reinhard, p. 36 & 43.

<sup>220</sup> Friedländer, Nazi Germany, p. 289.

<sup>221</sup> Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 324.

<sup>222</sup> Johannes Hürter & Matthias Uhl, “Hitler in Vinnytsia: A New Document Casts Fresh Light on the Crisis of September 1942,” in *German Yearbook of Contemporary History: Hitler—New Research*, ed. Elizabeth Harvey and Johannes Hürter (Berlin: Institute for Contemporary History Munich, 2018), p. 168.

<sup>223</sup> Browning, *Final Solution*, p. 391f..

<sup>224</sup> Hürter & Uhl, Hitler in Vinnytsia, p. 161f.

“Why would the Nazi leader have personally decided in the fall of 1943 to forge ahead with the deportation of the Jews of Denmark and those of Rome, notwithstanding the serious risks involved (the possibility of unrest in Denmark and that of the pope’s public protest) and the nonexistent benefits of both operations? What was the urgency and benefit, for that matter, in deporting the poor Jewish communities of the Aegean islands in July 1944, and the hundreds of Jewish children from Paris three days before the liberation of the city?”<sup>225</sup>

The answer here seems to be that Hitler’s self-conception as a man of destiny, who knew well just what it took (after reading countless books on military history) to overcome even the worst odds and prevail on the winning side of history. His decision might be summed as follows:

No one has ever achieved what I have achieved. My life is of no importance in all this. I have led the German people to a great height, even if the world does hate us now. I am setting this work on a gamble. I have to choose between victory and destruction. I choose victory. . . . In the last years I have experienced many examples of intuition. Even in the present development I see the prophecy. If we come through this straggle victoriously—and we shall—our time will enter into the history of our people.<sup>226</sup>

Before the prophecy, Hitler seems to have genuinely lacked any such voracious and politically imprudent attitude toward the Jewish question. Until September, his subordinates had to exert themselves just to get the order to deport the German Jews while the war was raging on. Hitler’s infallibility had led him in the path of his own personal heroes, a path of imperial conquest and glory that was a far more attractive proposition than the risk of causing unrest and instability at home in order to deport the Jews, whom he did not consider a major threat until the late summer or autumn of 1941. His public exhortations were designed to radicalise sentiment and to mobilise the destructive power of his nation so they could oblige his imperial ambitions. However, when this endeavour was threatened in December 1941, and his subordinates had already done the dirty work of handling and now liquidating the Jews,

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<sup>225</sup> Friedländer, *Nazi Germany*, p. viii.

<sup>226</sup> Bullock, *Tyranny*, p. 569. A speech he gave announcing his determination to invade France in 1940.

his anti-Semitic fervour would reawaken, his sense of presentiment and his assuredness in his destiny would interpret the struggles of his current mission requiring him to cross the abyss, to go all out in order to achieve a most spectacular victory. Unfortunately, Hitler truly was a man of destiny, one that the world might never forget, and for all the wrong reasons.

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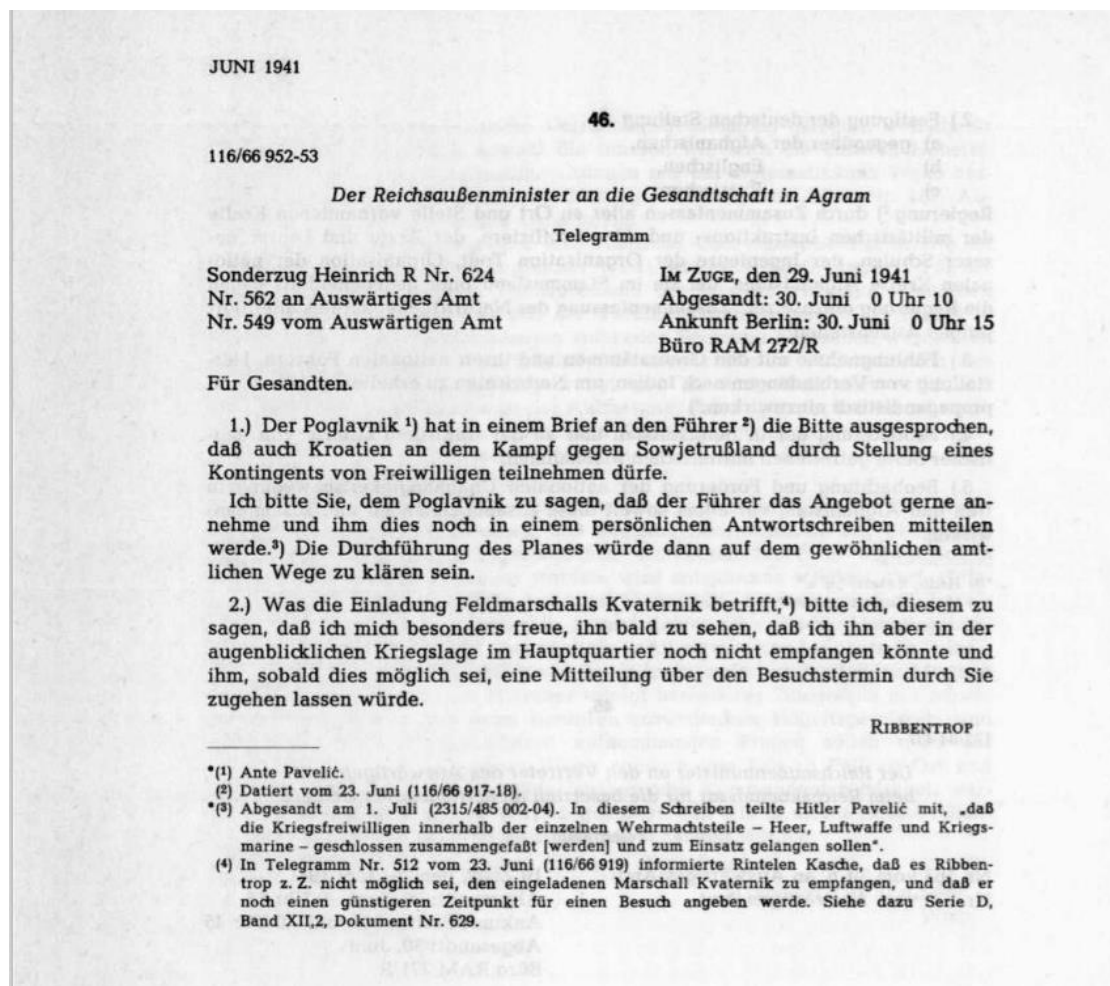
Files on German Foreign Policy, Series D, vol. 12.2, April – June 1941:

[https://digi20.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00045907\\_00001.html?prox=true&phone=true&ngram=true&hl=scan&fulltext=d%2C+12.2&mode=simple&context=d%2C%2012.2](https://digi20.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb00045907_00001.html?prox=true&phone=true&ngram=true&hl=scan&fulltext=d%2C+12.2&mode=simple&context=d%2C%2012.2)



## Appendices

### Appendix A:



### Google Translation with minor corrections<sup>1</sup> (starting with “Für Gesandten”):

For envoys.

1.) In a letter to the Führer<sup>2</sup>, Poglavnik<sup>1</sup> asked that Croatia also be allowed to take part in the fight against Soviet Russia by providing a contingent of volunteers.

I would ask you to tell Poglavnik that the Führer will be happy to accept the offer and will notify him in a personal response letter. The plan will then be carried out in the usual official manner.

2.) Regarding the invitation of Field Marshall Kvaternik, I ask you to tell him that I am particularly pleased to see him soon, but that I cannot receive him in the current war situation at the headquarters, and to him as soon as possible, would send you a message about the appointment.

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<sup>1</sup> For reference, I have copy pasted the text in the original German below the translation.

- 
- (1) Ante Pavelić.  
(2) Dated June 23 (116/66 917-18).  
(3) Submitted on July 1 (2315/485 002-04). In this letter Hitler informed Pavelić that the volunteers of the war were to be grouped together within the individual parts of the Wehrmacht - army, air force and navy - and that they should be deployed.  
(4) In telegram No. 512 of June 23 (116/66 919) Rintelen Kasche informed that Ribbentrop z. Z. it was currently not possible to receive the invited Marshal Kvaternik and that he would indicate an even more favorable time for a visit. See Series D, Volume XII, 2, Document No. 629.
- 

Original German Text:

Für Gesandten.

1.) Der Poglavnik<sup>1</sup> hat in einem Brief an den Führer<sup>2</sup> die Bitte ausgesprochen, daß auch Kroatien an dem Kampf gegen Sowjetrußland durch Stellung eines Kontingents von Freiwilligen teilnehmen dürfe.

Ich bitte Sie, dem Poglavnik zu sagen, daß der Führer das Angebot gerne annehme und ihm dies noch in einem persönlichen Antwortschreiben mitteilen werde.<sup>3</sup> Die Durchführung des Planes würde dann auf dem gewöhnlichen amtlichen Wege zu klären sein.

2.) Was die Einladung Feldmarschalls Kvaternik betrifft,<sup>4</sup> bitte ich, diesem zu sagen, daß ich mich besonders freue, ihn bald zu sehen, daß ich ihn aber in der augenblicklichen Kriegslage im Hauptquartier noch nicht empfangen könnte und ihm, sobald dies möglich sei, eine Mitteilung über den Besuchstermin durch Sie zugehen lassen würde.

RIBBENTROP

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\* (1) Ante Pavelic.

(2) Datiert vom 23. Juni (116/66 917-18).

\* (3) Abgesandt am 1. Juli (2315/485 002-04). In diesem Schreiben teilte Hitler Pavelic mit, daß die Kriegsfreiwilligen innerhalb der einzelnen Wehrmachtsteile - Heer, Luftwaffe und Kriegsmarine - geschlossen zusammengefaßt [werden) und zum Einsatz gelangen sollen".

(4) In Telegramm Nr. 512 vom 23. Juni (116/66 919) informierte Rintelen Kasche, daß es Ribbentrop z. Z. nicht möglich sei, den eingeladenen Marschall Kvaternik zu empfangen, und daß er noch einen günstigeren Zeitpunkt für einen Besuch angeben werde. Siehe dazu Serie D, Band XII,2, Dokument Nr. 629.

## Appendix B:

### D)

221-L

— Seite 3 —

Grundsätzlich kommt es also darauf an, den riesenhaften Kuchen handgerecht zu zerlegen, damit wir ihn

- erstens ::-:: beherrschen, ::-::
- zweitens ::-:: verwalten und ::-::
- drittens ::-:: ausbeuten ::-:: können.

Die Russen haben jetzt einen Befehl zum Partisanen-Krieg hinter unserer Front gegeben. Dieser Partisanenkrieg hat auch wieder seinen Vorteil: er gibt uns die Möglichkeit, ::-:: auszurotten, ::-:: was ::-:: sich gegen uns stellt. ::-::

\*1 Grundsätzliches:

Die Bildung einer militärischen Macht westlich des Ural darf nie wieder in Frage kommen und wenn wir hundert Jahre darüber

\*2 Krieg führen müssten. Alle Nachfolger des Führers müssen wissen: die Sicherheit des Reiches ist nur dann gegeben, wenn ::-:: westlich des Ural ::-:: kein fremdes Militär existiere; den Schutz dieses Raumes vor allen eventuellen Gefahren übernimmt Deutschland. Eiserner Grundsatz muss sein und bleiben:

\*1 **Niedarferlaubt werden, dass ein Anderer Waffen trägt, als der Deutsche!**

Dies ist besonders wichtig; selbst wenn es zunächst leichter erscheint, irgendwelche fremden unterworfenen Völker zur Waffenhilfe heranzuziehen, ist es falsch! Es schlägt unbedingt und unweigerlich eines Tages gegen uns aus. Nur der Deutsche darf Waffen tragen, nicht der Slawe, nicht der Tscheche, nicht der Kossak oder der Ukrainer!

Keinesfalls dürfen wir eine Schaukel-Politik führen, wie dies vor 1918 im Elsass geschah. Was den Engländer auszeichnet, ist sein immer gleichmässiges Verfolgen einer Linie und eines Zieles! In dieser Hinsicht müssen wir unbedingt vom Engländer lernen. Wir dürfen demgemäss unsere Stellungnahme auch nie abhängig machen von einzelnen vorhandenen Persönlichkeiten: auch hier ist das Verhalten der Engländer in Indien gegenüber den indischen

— Seite 4 —

Fürsten usw. ein Beispiel: Immer muss der Soldat das Regime sicherstellen!

Aus den neugewonnen ::-:: Ostgebieten ::-:: müssen wir einen ::-:: Garten Eden ::-:: machen; sie sind für uns lebenswichtig; Kolonien spielen dagegen eine ganz untergeordnete Rolle.

Auch wenn wir einzelne Gebietsteile jetzt schon abteilen, immer müssen wir als Schützer des Rechts und der Bevölkerung vorgehen. Demgemäss seien die jetzt notwendigen Formulierungen zu wählen

### **Translation (translated by Tiziana Heck, former AAU student, German native speaker and national):**

It is never to be allowed, that someone other than the German carries weapons!

This is especially important; even though it seems easier to gather some foreign, subjected people to support with weapons, it remains wrong! It will absolutely and inevitably go against us one day! Only the German is allowed to carry weapons, not the Slav, not the Czech, not the Cossack, or the Ukrainian.

## II)

Auch wenn wir einzelne Gebietsteile jetzt schon abteilen, immer müssen wir als Schützer des Rechts und der Bevölkerung vorgehen. Demgemäss seien die jetzt notwendigen Formulierungen zu wählen

88

221-L

wir sprechen nicht von einem neuen Reichsgebiet, sondern von einer durch den Krieg notwendigen Aufgabe.

Im einzelnen:

Im Baltikum muss jetzt das Gebiet bis zur Düna nach näherer Festlegung mit Feldmarschall Keitel in Verwaltung genommen werden. Reichsleiter Rosenberg betont, nach seiner Auffassung sei in jedem Kommissariat eine andere Behandlung der Bevölkerung notwendig. In der Ukraine müssten wir mit einer kulturellen Betreuung einsetzen, wir müssten dort das Geschichtsbewusstsein der Ukrainer wecken, müssten eine Universität in Kiew gründen und dergleichen. Der Reichsmarschall stellt demgegenüber fest, dass wir doch zunächst an die Sicherung unserer Ernährung denken müssen, alles andere könne doch erst viel später kommen.

(Nebenfrage: \*Gibt es überhaupt noch eine kulturelle Schicht in der Ukraine oder gibt es Ukrainer gehobenen Standes lediglich ausserhalb des heutigen Russland als Emigranten?)

Rosenberg fährt fort, auch in der Ukraine müssten gewisse Selbstständigkeitsbestrebungen gefördert werden.

— Seite 5 —

Der Reichsmarschall bittet den Führer um Mitteilung, welche Gebiete anderen Staaten zugesagt seien.

Der Führer erwidert, Antonescu wolle Bessarabien und Odessa nebst einem Streifen, der von Odessa in West-Nordwest führt.

Auf die Einwände des Reichsmarschalls und Rosenbergs stellt der Führer fest, dass die neue von Antonescu gewünschte Grenze wenig ausserhalb der alten rumänischen Grenze führe.

Der Führer betont weiter, den Ungarn, den Türken und den Slowaken sei nichts Bestimmtes zugesagt worden.

- \* Der Führer stellt dann zur Erwägung, ob man nicht den alt-österreichischen Teil Galiziens sofort zum Gouvernement geben soll; auf Einwände hin bestimmt der Führer, dieser Teil solle nicht zum Gouvernement kommen, sondern lediglich gleichzeitig dem Reichsminister Frank unterstellt werden (Lemberg).

Der Reichsmarschall hält es für richtig, verschiedene Teile des Balten-Landes, z.B. die Bialystoker Forsten, Ostpreussen zuzuteilen.

Der Führer betont, das gesamte Balten-Land müsse Reichsgebiet werden.

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### Translation (translated by Tiziana Heck, former AAU student, German native speaker and national)::

Even if we already separate individual territorial sectors, we always need to act as protectors of law and the population. Thus, the wording has to be chosen accordingly.

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We do not speak of a new Reichsgebiet, but of a necessary task due to war.

In detail:

Now in the Baltic states, the territory up to the Düna needs to be taken under administration after more concrete consultations with Feldmarschall Keitel. Reichsleiter Rosenthal emphasises, that according to his opinion, a different treatment of the people is necessary in each commissariat. In the Ukraine, we would have to start a cultural care, we would have to awaken the historic awareness of the Ukrainians, would have to establish a university in Kiev and suchlike. On the other hand the Reichsmarschall states that first we should consider to safeguard our nourishment, everything else could follow later on.

### III)

221-L

(Vermerk für Pg. Klopfer:

Bitte erbitten Sie sich baldigst bei Dr. Meyer die Unterlagen über die beabsichtigte Organisation und über die beabsichtigten Stellen-Besetzungen.)

Der Reichsmarschall betont, er wolle die Halbinsel Kola dem Gauleiter Terboven zur Ausbeutung übergeben; der Führer ist damit einverstanden.

Der Führer betont, Lohse solle also zunächst, wenn er sich dieser Aufgabe gewachsen fühle, das Balten-Land übernehmen, Kasche Moskau, Koch die Ukraine, Frauenfeld die Krim, Terboven Kola und Schickedanz den Kaukasus.

— Seite 9 —

Reichsleiter Rosenberg schnitt dann die Frage der Sicherung der Verwaltung an.

Der Führer sagt dem Reichsmarschall und dem Feldmarschall, er habe immer darauf gedrängt, dass die Polizei-Regimenter Panzerwagen bekämen; für den Einsatz der Polizei in den neuen Ostgebieten sei dies höchst notwendig, denn mit einer entsprechenden Anzahl von Panzerwagen könne ein Polizei-Regiment natürlich ein Vielfaches leisten. Im übrigen, betont der Führer, aber sei die Sicherung natürlich sehr dünn. Der Reichsmarschall werde aber alle seine Übungs-Flugplätze in die neuen Gebiete verlegen und wenn es notwendig sei, dann könnten selbst Ju 52 bei Aufruhr Bomben schmeissen. Der Riesenraum müsse natürlich so rasch wie möglich befriedet werden; dies geschehe am besten dadurch, dass man

Jeden, der nur schief schaue, totschieße.

Feldmarschall Keitel betont, für ihre Dinge müsse man die Einwohner selbst verantwortlich machen, denn es sei natürlich nicht möglich, für jeden Schuppen und für jeden Bahnhof eine Wache zu stellen. Die Einwohner müssten wissen, dass Jeder erschossen würde, der nicht funktioniere, und dass sie für jedes Vergehen haftbar gemacht würden.

Auf die Rückfrage Reichsleiter Rosenbergs erwiderte der Führer, Zeitungen — auch z.B. für die Ukraine — müssten wieder ins Leben gerufen werden, um die Einwirkungsmöglichkeit auf die Landeseinwohner zu bekommen.

Nach der Pause betont der Führer, wir müssten uns darüber klar sein, dass das heutige Europa nur ein geographischer Begriff sei, in Wirklichkeit ginge Asien bis zu unseren bisherigen Grenzen.

**Translation (translated by Tiziana Heck, former AAU student, German native speaker and national):**



The Führer tells the Reichsmarschall and the Feldmarschall, he always urged, that the Polizei-Regimenter should be provided with tanks; regarding the engagement of the police in the new Eastern territories this would be of utmost importance, because with the appropriate number of tanks a Polizei-Regiment could certainly achieve much more. Besides, emphasises the Führer, the security obviously remains quite weak. The Reichsmarschall will move all of his Flug-Übungsplätze to the new territories and if necessary, also the Ju 52 could drop bombs in case of turmoil. This vast area certainly needs to be pacified as soon as possible; this will be best achieved by, shooting dead everyone who just looks askant.

Feldmarschall Keitel emphasises, the people should be made responsible for their own concerns, because it certainly is not possible, to provide guards for every shed and every train station. The people should be aware that everyone will get shot who does not abide by the rules, and that they will be held liable for every misdemeanour.

#### IV)

Der Reichsmarschall wird zur Dienststelle Rosenberg die Ministerialdirektoren Schlotterer und Riecke abstellen.

- \* Reichsleiter Rosenberg bittet nun um ein entsprechendes Dienstgebäude; er bittet um das Gebäude der Handelsvertretung der Sowjet-Union in der Lietzenburgerstrasse; das Auswärtige Amt sei zwar der Auffassung, dieses Gebäude sei exterritorial. Der Führer erwidert, dies sei Unsinn; Reichsminister Dr. Lammers wird beauftragt, dem Auswärtigen Amt mitzuteilen, das Haus sei ohne Verhandlung augenblicklich an Rosenberg zu übergeben.
- \* Rosenberg macht dann den Vorschlag, einen Verbindungsmann zum Führer abzustellen; diese Aufgabe solle sein Adjutant Koeppen übernehmen; der Führer ist damit einverstanden und erklärt, Koeppen solle die Parallel-Rolle zu Hewel übernehmen.

Rosenberg macht dann den Vorschlag, einen Verbindungsmann zum Führer abzustellen; diese Aufgabe solle sein Adjutant Koeppen übernehmen; der Führer ist damit einverstanden und erklärt, Koeppen solle die Parallel-Rolle zu Hewel übernehmen.

— Seite 10 —

Reichsminister Dr. Lammers verliest nun die von ihm gefertigten Entwürfe (siehe Anlage).

Eine längere Diskussion setzt über die Zuständigkeit des RFSS. ein; offenbar wird dabei von allen Beteiligten aber auch an die Zuständigkeit des Reichsmarschalls gedacht.

Der Führer, der Reichsmarschall etc. betonen wiederholt, Himmler solle ja keine andere Zuständigkeit bekommen, als er sie im Reich habe; dies aber sei unbedingt notwendig.

93

221-L.

Der Führer betont wiederholt, in der Praxis werde sich der Streit sehr rasch geben; er erinnert an die hervorragende Zusammenarbeit zwischen Heer und Luftwaffe an der Front.

Abschliessend wird bestimmt, das Balten-Land solle Ostland genannt werden.

Anlagen

A lengthy discussion about the realm of jurisdiction of the RFSS begins; it is apparent that all those present also consider the realm of jurisdiction of the Reichsmarschall.

The Führer, the Reichsmarschall etc. repeatedly emphasise that, Himmler is not supposed to be assigned another jurisdiction, than the one he has in the Reich; this however is of utter importance.

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The Führer emphasises repeatedly, in practice the conflict will resolve very rapidly, he reminisces on the outstanding cooperation of the Heer and the Luftwaffe at the frontline.

V)

## KEY TO TYPES AND SYMBOLS

Explanatory Notes and Footnotes . . . . . Petit Bodoni  
(See Specimen Document overleaf)

In the reproduced documents:

Print or typing . . . . . *Borgis Excelsior*  
Handwriting . . . . . *Borgis Excelsior (italic)*  
Rubber stamps . . . . . **Petit Erbar (bold)**

Underlining (hand-drawn) will be indicated by the symbol :::: before and after the underlined passage; underlining (other than hand-drawn) by widely spaced lettering.

In general, the nature of the document (book-quotation, official letter) will show whether the original was printed or typed; in other cases the footnotes will indicate passages in print. Supplementary information will also be given in the footnotes.

## ABBREVIATIONS

|           |                                    |        |                                   |
|-----------|------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|
| Ab        | Abschrift                          | Phot   | Photokopie                        |
| Abs       | Absatz                             | Pl     | Plan                              |
| Adr       | Adressat                           | pr     | Präg . . .<br>(z. B. Prägstempel) |
| Ausf      | Ausfertigung                       | Purpur | Purpurstift                       |
| BeglVm    | Beglaubigungsvermerk               | r      | rechts                            |
| begl Phot | beglaubigte Photokopie             | Rd     | Rand                              |
| BK        | Briefkopf                          | RdVm   | Randvermerk                       |
| Blau      | Blaustift                          | Rosa   | Rosastift                         |
| Blei      | Bleistift                          | Rot    | Rotstift                          |
| Ds        | Durchschlag                        | S      | Schriftstück                      |
| E         | Entwurf                            | Sk     | Skizze                            |
| EingVm    | Eingangsvermerk                    | Stp    | Stempel                           |
| gedr      | gedruckt                           | T      | Text                              |
| gestr     | gestrichen                         | Tb     | Tabelle                           |
| Grün      | Grünstift                          | teilw  | teilweise                         |
| hs        | handschriftlich                    | Ti     | Tinte                             |
| hs'es     | Handschriftliches                  | Tu     | Tasche                            |
| Hx        | Handzeichnung                      | u      | unten                             |
| IMT       | International Military<br>Tribunal | U      | Unterschrift                      |
| Kl        | Klammer                            | Üb     | Überschrift                       |
| Kop       | Kopierstift                        | unl    | unleserlich                       |
| l         | links                              | Urk    | Urkunde                           |
| Lila      | Lilastift                          | urspr  | ursprünglich                      |
| mschr     | maschinenschriftlich               | verb   | verbessert                        |
| Mi        | Mitte                              | Vert   | Verteiler                         |
| n         | neben                              | Verv   | Vervielfältigung                  |
| o         | oben                               | Vm     | Vermerk                           |
| Orange    | Orangestift                        | W      | Wiedergabe                        |
| Org       | Original                           | wdgb   | wiedergegeben                     |
| P         | Paraphe                            | Z      | Zeile                             |