

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

**MODERN
GERMAN
HISTORY**

Edited by

HELMUT WALSER SMITH

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

THE THREE HORSEMEN OF
THE HOLOCAUST:
ANTI-SEMITISM, EAST
EUROPEAN EMPIRE, ARYAN
FOLK COMMUNITY

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Two interpretive traditions have, since Hitler's day, commanded scholarly efforts to understand the Holocaust. One emphasizes *ideas*, recounting the intellectual history of anti-Semitism and the aims and political actions of those gripped by its poisoned talons. Its motto might be Heinrich Heine's dictum: 'thought precedes act as lightning thunder.'¹ Paired with this approach is the conviction that history is made by human beings' conscious choice: beliefs inspire purposive behavior seeking their realization. Historical actors are aware of their actions and responsible for them.

In Holocaust historiography, this widespread understanding of history and human behavior has yielded the 'intentionalist' argument. This holds that (1) anti-Semitic ideology of a uniquely aggressive type flourished in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany; (2) Adolf Hitler and other National Socialist leaders embraced it and crafted it into a political program; and (3) the anti-Jewish policies (*Judenpolitik*) of Hitler's 'Third Reich' led, if perhaps by a 'twisted path,' to a mass murder which the Nazis' anti-Semitic ideas, and the dictator Hitler's in particular, authorized and even commanded.

The second interpretive approach, no less venerable than intentionalism, figures in historiographical debate as 'functionalism' or 'structuralism.' It sees complex historical phenomena such as the Holocaust as the outcome of intersecting supra-personal political and social developments, of which individuals—including the the powerful dictator Hitler—are both creations and embodiments. Actors' intentions are

important, but they must be understood as responses to configurations of power and culture over which no one exercises guiding control. Thus, where intentionalists have stressed Hitler's beliefs and commanding will, and the clear-eyed, cold-hearted purposiveness of other National Socialist perpetrators, 'functionalists' have sought to grasp the Holocaust as the expression in Germany of mighty—if dark and pitiless—trends in modern history: the formation of ethnically and culturally homogenized nation states, imperialism, political mass mobilization (driven by utopian, sometimes biologized, visions of modernity), and the emergence of amoral, bureaucratized and militarized states, especially totalitarian states, warring among each other and riddled internally with self-aggrandizing political factions and other institutional struggles. From the interaction of such developments events crystallize, such as the Holocaust, which, though they result from the aggregation of individual thoughts and actions, are only comprehensible in their structural, supra-individual complexity.²

The historical literature on the Holocaust, whether intentionalist or functionalist, has in recent decades focused fixedly on the origins of the comprehensive mass murder of which Auschwitz, as the largest and deadliest of the National Socialist death camps, is the chilling symbol. How did the German leadership arrive at the *decision* to 'annihilate' (*vernichten*) or, in an even more inhuman idiom, 'exterminate' (*ausrotten*) the millions of Jews it held captive? While, as we shall see, a historiographical consensus has emerged that the *implementation* of a *policy* of comprehensive mass murder evolved from the interaction of Hitler, the chief Nazi agencies, and the military and economic situations prevailing after the outbreak of World War II, the *causes* of its gradual adoption remain controversial. Many historians, of an intentionalist cast of mind, view the transition to mass murder as the triumph of Hitler's will, breaking through in the midst of apocalyptic war the shackles of restraint which pre-war circumstances had forged. Other, structuralist-inclined historians emphasize the unpredictable, step-by-step unfolding of a process of 'cumulative radicalization,' driven by 'bureaucratic Darwinism' among National Socialists high and low for the support of a dictator who contented himself with conjuring up desired outcomes—the 'removal' (*Entfernung*) of Jews from the Nazi realm, or their 'annihilation'—without specifying precisely how.³

This debate is necessary and productive. It forces both intentionalists and structuralists to marshal the concrete empirical evidence, and to construct the chronologically framed narratives, without which their approaches remain philosophical-methodological manifestos. This chapter aims, however, to focus interpretation of the Holocaust and its origins, not on the decision-making process of 1941–1942, but on a wider-ranging interplay of factors. The first of these is the ideology and political program of anti-Semitism, especially in its National Socialist form. The second is Germany's drive to establish in conquered eastern Europe a 'Greater German Racial'—or Living-Space (*Lebensraum*)—Empire. The third is the Nazi project of building, among the 'racially' designated 'Aryan' German population—and on an imperial scale—a prosperous, socially mobile, harmonious, and politically alive 'people's or folk community' (*Volks-gemeinschaft*). I propose that only by a linked analysis of these three dimensions can

the Holocaust, both as a National Socialist deed and as an object of our own contemporary knowledge, begin to come adequately into focus.

Nazi anti-Semitism aggressively demanded the 'exclusion' of Jews from German society, and often even—if by unspecified means—from life itself. Yet in the absence of German conquest and attempted empire-building in Eastern Europe, the Holocaust could never have occurred. For the great majority of its victims were east European Jews: among a total of some six million dead, there were roughly 2.7 million Polish Jews, 2.1 Soviet Jews (mostly inhabitants of the historic Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian-Ukrainian borderlands), 500,000 Hungarian Jews, and about 150,000 Jewish citizens of Czechoslovakia. Those who were German or Austrian inhabitants numbered, respectively, some 165,000 and 65,000. In Western Europe the genocidal machinery engulfed 200,000 people, not a few of them refugees from the German lands and Eastern Europe.⁴

To radically simplify: no anti-Semitism, no Holocaust. But also: no east European Nazi empire, no Holocaust. Yet anti-Semitism as an ideology did not always mandate German empire, nor did empire in Eastern Europe inescapably entail lethal anti-Semitism, as German practice in World War I shows. *It is the convergence of these two projects, neither necessarily entailed by the other, that generated the Holocaust.* As for the 'people's community' or *Volksgemeinschaft*, I hold, with other present-day historians, that its creation was the National Socialist regime's foremost promise to its 'Aryan' German subjects. The degree of its realization was the decisive test of Hitlerism's legitimacy, both in the eyes of Nazi rulers and Nazi-inclined 'Aryan' subjects.

Crucially, however, *Volksgemeinschaft* at the Germanic center depended, in the theory and practice of Hitler and the National Socialist governing elite, on the extension of racially exclusivist empire into its eastern periphery. For the 'American-style' prosperity and modernity the Nazis sought for their favored subjects could only, they believed, be attained through the ruthless, colonial exploitation of conquered Eastern Europe. Thus, *Volksgemeinschaft* entailed eastern empire which, as projected by its anti-Semitic conquerors, demanded the 'removal' of its Jewish population, eventually by means of mass murder. In this way, the three factors this essay highlights—anti-Semitism, eastern imperialism, and the promise of social modernization on the domestic front—interlocked to bring forth, in a process the following pages will sketch, the Holocaust.⁵

24.1 ANTI-SEMITISM: THE INTERPRETIVE DILEMMAS OF PRIVILEGING BELIEF

The history of religiously inspired Christian anti-Judaism and secularly grounded modern anti-Semitic ideology serves in many (perhaps most) minds as proof that the Holocaust was a premeditated crime. Yet the religious line of thought commonly concluded that Jews should convert to Christianity, whereupon they would be

embraced. If they refused, they should be segregated and ghettoized, or forced into renewed exile. In extreme form, modern anti-Semitism, born of the late nineteenth century and grounded in the newly emergent 'science of race,' rejected Enlightenment liberalism's strategy of Jewish civil emancipation and acculturation within the democratic nation state. As a biologically-defined separate race, anti-Semites argued, Jews were unassimilable; their inclusion in the nation blocked its healthy development, saddling it with pathologies of modernity (notably predatory capitalism and bomb-throwing, anti-bourgeois revolutionism), which—whether because of God's curse, or biology's—Jews allegedly propagated. In self-defense, anti-Semites held, the European peoples must reverse liberal emancipation, strip Jews of citizenship, and otherwise exclude them from national life.⁶

In his ponderous manifesto *Mein Kampf* (1925), Adolf Hitler celebrated the ideal of a 'folkish state' (*völkischer Staat*). This meant, for the Germans, political unification in one state of all of central Europe's contiguously settled German-speakers—some eighty-five million, as Hitler thought. The collective 'people's body' (*Volkskörper*) required ennoblement through state-guided 'selective breeding' of racially positive human types (hard and war-like, unshakably fraternal, resistant to Christianity's 'slave morality'). This entailed the exclusion—through prohibitions on child-bearing and marriage and even through 'euthanasia' (medical murder)—of 'life unworthy of living' (a flexible concept, as National Socialist practice would show). As a vast organism, the nation or *Volk* must expand geographically on an imperial scale, or wither into world-historical insignificance. Germany's future 'living space'—its *Lebensraum*—lay in eastern Europe, where the enormous Soviet Union (dominated, in Hitler's view, by Jewish influences inimical to stable state-formation) would become, as Hitler later said, 'Germany's India.'⁷

Germany's Slavic-speaking and other ethnically distinctive neighbors in central, southeastern, and Eastern Europe could claim no inherent right to occupation of their lands or even to existence. 'The stronger man,' as Hitler told his generals on the eve of the 1939 invasion of Poland, 'is right.'⁸ As for the German Jews, Hitler's prescription before 1933 (and until 1939) was legal segregation and cultural humiliation paired with a punishing policy of economic marginalization and dispossession that would encourage Jewish 'self-removal' through emigration. Although the implication of biologically grounded racism may be genocidal, it must not necessarily be acknowledged or acted on, as caste-like arrangements and systems of slavery and *apartheid* suggest. In Hitler's case, obsessive and hyper-aggressive anti-Semite though he was, the empirical record does not support a long-standing genocidal intent, nor do present-day historians assert it. There was, Saul Friedländer writes, 'no predetermined enactment of a demonic script.'⁹

Anti-Semitism, even in its pseudo-scientific racialized form, has always lacked plausibility and credibility except in the eyes of true believers, learned and unlearned alike. Its adherents commonly embraced it as righteous justification of ethnic and religious prejudices whose egregiousness and arbitrariness were evident to independent-minded outsiders. Scholars have thus usually interpreted it in its functionality,

rather than its literal claims. Above all, they have understood anti-Semitism as an irrational response to the disquieting 'disembedding effects' of social-political-cultural 'modernization.' It appears too as a millennialist creed, promising in place of received religion (under siege by rationalist modernity) utopian fulfillment on earth, should allegedly baleful 'Jewish influences' finally be defeated, so as to enable the 'people's body' (under appropriate political traineeship) to splendidly flourish. Hitler's 'folkish state' was the most clearly limned and consistently blueprinted of all anti-Semitic visions.

Because anti-Semitism incorporates irrational anxieties and longings, it is impossible to avoid regarding its adherents as subjects, in some degree, of psychic disturbance: imperfect ego formation, projected self-hatred, paranoia—conditions that social discrimination and disabilities, as well as political shocks, can engender among even considerable segments of a large population. Yet historians rarely push this point, for not only did Hitler and his colleagues display considerable political and technological-managerial prowess, but to judge them as psychologically deranged risks absolving them of moral competence.¹⁰

Doubtless the interpretation of National Socialism most widely accepted, both among scholars and the western public, holds that it embodied and enacted the most extreme form of anti-Semitism. The outstanding recent formulation of this argument is conveyed in Saul Friedländer's magisterial two volumes on *Nazi Germany and the Jews* (1997–2007). Here, National Socialism figures 'as a political religion, commanding the total commitment owed to a religious faith.' Nazi anti-Semitism was 'redemptive.' It synthesized a 'murderous rage'—above all, Hitler's own—'and an "idealistic" goal, shared by the Nazi leader and the hard core of the party, [leading] to the ultimate decision to exterminate the Jews.'¹¹ The broad German public was drawn into the vortex of genocidal complicity, because 'for a regime dependent on constant mobilization, the Jew served as the constant mobilizing myth.' Altogether, 'Nazism confronts us with some kind of "sacralized modernism,"' proving that 'modern society does remain open to—possibly in need of—the ongoing presence of religious or pseudoreligious incentives within a system otherwise dominated by thoroughly different dynamics,' that is, economic self-interest, amoral political logic and bureaucratic rationality.¹²

Friedländer dwells far more on National Socialist *Judenpolitik* than he does on the Nazis' 'idealistic goal'—doubtless the racial-imperial *Volksgemeinschaft* enjoying 'American' living standards. Yet, *from his narrative*, and from the empirical record in general, it is evident that Nazi anti-Semitism did *not* drive Hitler's central political actions. Rather, the regime's anti-Jewish policies (as distinct from its anti-Semitic impulses and enthusiasms) were largely subordinated to—that is, they were *functions* of—its feverish pursuit of economic recovery and rearmament, subjugation of Austria and Czechoslovakia, military defeat and violent Germanization of Poland and, finally, conquest and exploitation of the Soviet Union.

The National Socialist regime's far-reaching exclusion in 1933–1934 of Jewish Germans (along with defiant republicans and outspoken leftists) from public sector employment, including academia, as well as from medicine, law, and the arts and entertainment branches certainly sent a powerful anti-Semitic message. Yet such

purges also rewarded Hitler's followers in the middle classes with vacated jobs, while terrorizing adherents of the fallen Weimar Republic, and so helped consolidate the new populist dictatorship. Grass-roots anti-Jewish violence, to which rank-and-file Nazis, SA storm troopers, and Hitler Youth were drawn, found regime approval in the pre-war years only to a limited, strategic degree, and was as often suppressed from above so as not to interfere with higher priorities. In the 1930s communist activism and other forms of anti-Nazi resistance, not Jewish identity, led to Gestapo jail-cells and the new concentration camps.¹³

The 1935 Nuremberg Laws stripped Jewish Germans of citizenship, segregating them from 'Aryan' Germans on 'racial grounds'—if grandparents' religious practice of Judaism (the Nazis' identity test) can be called racial. This would establish, Hitler hypocritically proclaimed, 'tolerable relations with the Jewish people,' enabling them, through government-sanctioned, specifically Jewish social-cultural institutions, to pursue 'their own *völkisch* life' more freely than in other European countries.¹⁴ This policy, alongside continued toleration of Jewish Germans' private-sector business enterprise, aimed to 'normalize' and 'legalize' segregated Jewish life in Hitler's Germany, and defuse foreign criticism and reprisals against National Socialist anti-Semitism, emanating especially, as the Nazis feared, from Jewish organizations in western Europe and America. The short-term aim, largely attained, was to avoid obstacles on the road to German economic recovery.

When, after 1936, the regime began expropriating—'aryanizing'—Jewish business, it did so principally to seize assets whose further sale or nationalization allowed the regime to significantly offset rearmament's colossal costs. Yet the politically ill-steered 'wild aryanization,' pursued to the accompaniment of severe anti-Semitic street violence in Austria following Hitler's veiled subversion and annexation of that country in March 1938, accelerated anti-Jewish radicalism within the National Socialist party in Germany itself. This culminated amid anxieties over renewed European war triggered by Hitlerian aggression against Czechoslovakia—superficially assuaged at the October 1938 Munich conference—in the 'Crystal Night' pogrom of November 9, 1938. Its nation-wide grass-roots (but Nazi-directed) violence—hundreds of synagogue-burnings, innumerable shop-plundering, beatings, some one hundred immediate deaths by murder, police razzias brutally imprisoning twenty thousand and more Jewish men—inaugurated a government-managed terminal confiscation of Jewish assets in Germany and a massive wave of Jewish emigration from the land.

In this way, by the time of Hitler's September 1939 Polish invasion, the religiously marked German Jewish population, which in 1933 had stood at about a half million, had declined by 60 percent, leaving a remnant of largely impoverished and elderly people, and a disproportionate number of women, to face gradual extinction through material deprivation and 'social death.' This state of affairs came close to constituting a 'final solution' of the 'Jewish problem' in Germany itself, preceding the outbreak of mass murder in Eastern Europe. It fulfilled Hitler's pre-1933 hopes of Jewish 'removal' from the 'Aryans' midst, with the additional advantage of its having, through 'aryanization' of Jewish property, substantially aided German economic recovery and rearmament.

It was a successfully fulfilled anti-Semitic program, *but* also one that was *subordinated* to the attainment of Hitler's fundamental objectives: eastern conquest through rearmament, and social appeasement and modernization through government spending programs (including better wages paid and confiscated Jewish housing redistributed). Friedländer acknowledges the dimension of 'economic rationality' in National Socialist *Judenpolitik*, especially the linkage in 1938–1939 between 'economic expropriation and expulsion of the Jews.' He adds, though, that, two years later, 'another "logic"' was to appear.¹⁵

Anti-Jewish policy following the 1939 war's outbreak consisted primarily in the effort to expel Polish Jews from the 'incorporated eastern territories,' that is, the large part of defeated Poland annexed directly into what had become the 'Greater German Reich' (*Grossdeutsches Reich*). In this conquest German occupation authorities and ethnic German vigilantes executed some 45–65,000 Polish citizens, about 7000 of them Jewish, the rest members of the Polish political and intellectual classes, as well as soldiers and ordinary people. Among 50,000 prisoners of war, roughly 25,000 classified as Jewish died in winter 1939–1940 from a deliberately applied maltreatment that was a harbinger of worse things to come. In the German-annexed major industrial city of Łódź and in occupied central and eastern Poland—that is, in the colonially conceived and administered 'General Government' (*Generalgouvernement*)—Nazi policy began forcing the millions of Polish Jews into ghettos, sealed in 1940, where rampant death through malnutrition and disease set in.¹⁶

Friedländer views this state of affairs in occupied Poland, which lasted into 1941, as a 'holding pattern' on the 'Reich model.'¹⁷ But it was much worse—indeed, arguably, the beginning of the Holocaust, understood as mass death induced by state violence and abuse. As Götz Aly and Susanne Heim have shown, in 1939–1941 National Socialist *Judenpolitik* confronted impasses whose implications were ominous. Nazi authorities, above all SS leaders Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich—Himmler's second-in-command responsible for operationalizing Jewish policy—sought feverishly to deport Poles and Jews from the newly-acquired 'incorporated eastern territories' so as to settle in their place ethnic Germans from east European minority communities, especially those under Soviet control (whose emigration Stalin had agreed with Hitler to allow).¹⁸

The German–Polish ethnic frontier had, since the late nineteenth century, been a site of embittered nationalist competition for predominance in population and land-holding.¹⁹ The National Socialists now inaugurated what they intended to be a 'final solution' to this 'nationality struggle' (*Nationalitätenkampf*) by the most ruthless decimation of the Polish political leadership class, uprooting of Polish farmers, and rapid-fire settlement of German colonists, pushing the German ethnic boundary far eastward in the course of but a few years. German policy in subjugated Poland meant cultural genocide for the Poles.²⁰ Friedländer writes that 'the ongoing violence in occupied Poland created a blurred area of murderous permissiveness that, unplanned as it was, would facilitate the transition to more systematic murder policies.'²¹ The violence, however, was planned—aimed at the Poles (3000 more political leaders, among 30,000 fresh arrestees, were shot in May 1940), though raging local ethnic German militias, SS death squads and army units plundered and murdered individual Poles and Jews at will.

Meanwhile, it intensely frustrated the Nazi authorities that the captive Polish Jews especially, but also German, Austrian, and Czech Jews, could not be successfully 'removed' through deportation to somewhere in occupied eastern Poland, as the abortive 1939 'Nisko Reserve' plan had foreseen. Ghettoization in Poland amounted to human warehousing pending shipment to a still-unknown destination. After Germany's military defeat of France in spring 1940, hopes arose among National Socialist leaders, Hitler included, that the large East African island of Madagascar (today's Malagasy Republic), hitherto ruled by France, could be acquired as a destination for Nazi-deported Jews (who would live—and perish—there under German SS rule). But Britain's refusal to capitulate and its continued naval domination of the high seas doomed this malevolent idea.

Thus, in the first two years of the war, National Socialist *Judenpolitik* depended on a course of events driven by Hitler's pursuit of *Lebensraum* through war and *Volksge-meinschaft*-expansion through German colonization in 'the East.' If, in occupied Poland, extensive Jewish death was commencing, this was the consequence of the German effort to build an east European racial empire, while plundering a shattered Poland for food and other assets with which to offset the cost of war and maintain, and possibly raise, living standards in Germany. If such an outcome gratified Hitler and other anti-Semites, it nevertheless represented 'collateral damage' more than achievement of official *Judenpolitik*'s objectives (which, so far as captive Jews were concerned, still focused on deportation).

Instead, the burden of policing and minimally sustaining millions of Jewish hostages appeared to National Socialist planners as a deficit whose continued weight 'German society' could not be expected to bear. It had been clear to Nazi officials responsible for food supply that war would require replacement of lost overseas imports at Eastern Europe's expense, where crops and livestock would be seized for German consumption. There was no place in this calculus for captive Jews. In Germany itself, the question whether the residual Jewish community should even continue to have a beggarly claim on now scarcer food and other consumer goods grew ominous.

The June 1941 invasion of Stalin's Russia promised Hitler world-power, perhaps world-domination, through extension of German *Lebensraum* far eastward, to the Ural Mountains, if not beyond. The dictator foresaw the German population soon swelling to 125 million and more, and the German language conquering Europe. British resistance would buckle, and a German imperium from Atlantic and Mediterranean to Black Sea and Arctic would begin its thousand-year sway. This was, too, a 'war against the Jews,' for Hitler understood the Bolshevik political class as 'racially' Jewish or Jewish-controlled. Hence, his notorious 'Commissar Order' on the invasion's eve, mandating summary execution of captured Communist political-administrative functionaries. To this end, and to murderously suppress anti-German subversion and partisan resistance, which Soviet Jews were, according to anti-Semitic formulas, expected to launch *en masse*, the SS-commanded Task Forces (*Einsatzgruppen*), which had already performed execution duty in Poland, were greatly expanded and sent into action on Soviet soil. By the end of 1941 they had shot a half-million Jews, eliminating, among others, the entire Jewish population—man, woman, and child—of the occupied Lithuanian-Baltic region.

On 31 July 1941 Hermann Göring commissioned Reinhard Heydrich to draft a plan for 'the final solution of the Jewish Question in Europe.' Friedländer interprets this as an 'overall extermination plan of all European Jews.' Certainly it registered the deadly escalation that the anti-Soviet war inaugurated. Food-supply planners, led by the SS's Herbert Backe, intended systematic starvation of captured or besieged Russian cities, and in plundered Soviet, mainly Ukrainian, agricultural districts. Nazi authorities accepted that the victims would number in the tens of millions: the greatest mass death, Göring complacently observed, since the seventeenth-century Thirty Years War.²²

Since spring 1940 Himmler and his staff had been elaborating plans for the Germanization of the Polish provinces incorporated into the Reich in 1939 through colonization and eastward deportation of non-Germans. These culminated in the 'General Plan for the East' (*Generalplan Ost*), which Hitler approved—as Himmler reported of 'the happiest day of my life'—in July 1942. This document in its several drafts foresaw the reduction, in thirty or even twenty years, of the mainly Slavic population—from the Polish General Government eastward into Russia—of between thirty to fifty million people. They would perish from the rigors of hard labor, aggravated by undernourishment, deportation, and medical neglect. Millions of selected children would be kidnapped and Germanized. Millions of others, children and adults, would be kept alive as servile workers. Polish, Russian, and the tongues of other doomed cultures would survive, if only into the mid-range future, as helot-languages. Hitler favored an analogy between *Lebensraum* colonization in Eastern Europe and the nineteenth-century conquest by white settlers of the North American west. As he lectured his dinner-guests in October 1941, 'we eat Canadian corn [i.e., wheat] and don't think of the Indians.' Some four million Soviet prisoners of war fell into German hands in the 1941 invasion. They were, under the regular German army's guard, mostly starved to death in their camps, though some half-million died by firing squad. By February 1942 but one million remained alive, of whom fewer than half were deployable in forced labor.²³

The captive Jews' fate remained unresolved. In the Polish General Government, National Socialist ghetto administrators steered toward short-term 'productivization,' keeping able-bodied workers alive to render useful wartime services, while the 'useless eaters' perished through deliberate neglect. In Berlin, where most of the remaining German and many Austrian Jews had huddled together, some 40,000 young adults were dragooned into munitions and other war industries. This violated Hitler's and other high-ranking Nazis' conviction that Jews embodied subversive revolt in the making, on analogy with what they remembered as the 'Jewish-bolshevik'-led strikes and anti-war demonstrations—the 'stab in the back'—which in 1917–1918 had undermined (as they thought) an otherwise triumphant Germany.

The Jews in German hands had seemed politically useful as pawns in gaining the western powers, especially the United States, toleration of Hitler's empire-building. But as President Roosevelt deepened his commitment to British resistance and German defeat, such considerations—in any case delusive in view of Nazi abuse of the captive Jews—faded. Yet the idea of deportation persisted. In February 1941 Hitler, speaking confidentially to Nazi leaders, said that 'originally he had only thought of breaking the power of the

Jews in Germany, but now his goal had to be the exclusion of Jewish influence in the entire Axis sphere . . . If only he knew where to put several million Jews, there were not so many after all.' But he would not risk German ships to deliver them to Madagascar. 'He was thinking of many things in a different way, and not exactly more friendly.'²⁴ Ominously, in mid-October 1941 Heydrich blocked any further Jewish emigration from Nazi-occupied Europe, even when foreign entry visas and external economic support were on offer.

Friedländer, like many other historians, sees Auschwitz's shadow arising out of the anti-Soviet war's violence. By fall 1941, genocidal killing was issuing from the barrels of SS guns, already broken in to mass executions earlier in Poland. Other SS men were adapting the technique of gas-chamber murder—previously employed in the 'T-4' euthanasia program to kill tens of thousands of German and, later, Polish mental hospital inmates—for use against east European Jews. But however murderous the drift of Nazi policy, Hitler's 'final decision,' Friedländer holds, was only made 'as a result of the American entry into the war.' It was on December 12, 1941, one day after his declaration of war against the United States—in solidarity with his Japanese ally—that Hitler, addressing a broad audience of top National Socialist leaders and regional NS-Party Gauleiters, announced that 'the world war is here, the extermination'—that is, destruction (*Vernichtung*)—'of the Jews must be its necessary consequence.' This was a reference to his oft-cited Reichstag speech of 30 January 1939, in which he had threatened 'destruction' of the European Jews should 'international finance Jewry'—from their supposed British and American bastions of influence—provoke a new world war. On December 18, Himmler noted of a private meeting with Hitler: 'Jewish Question [:] exterminate as partisans;' in other words, all Soviet Jews, at least, were to be murdered on the pretext of eliminating partisan resistance.²⁵

In January 1942 the Wannsee Conference near Berlin gathered, at Heydrich's invitation, a wide array of key German government ministerial officials. They readily agreed to commit resources, including the railroad systems, to Jewish 'deportations to the East,' where the able-bodied would be put to hard labor which, if it did not kill them, would be followed by 'appropriate treatment.' It was understood, but left unspoken that, for the Jewish masses unable to 'build roads,' camps were under construction equipped with gas chambers and massive crematoria. Doubtless the previous smooth operation of the T-4 euthanasia program, which by 1942 claimed 70,000 victims, had proven that German officialdom was prepared to co-operate in the dictatorship's murderous programs, if only so as not to appear indifferent to the regime's bureaucratic imperative of 'working toward the Führer,' that is, attempting to anticipate Hitler's will and satisfy its demands by means of maximally hard measures. Mass death was, by winter 1942, becoming Nazism's familiar accompaniment: as the Wannsee participants toasted each other, millions of Soviet prisoners of war were already dead or dying, while the guns of the SS *Einsatzgruppen* continued to blaze.

Poor harvests and food shortages in 1941–1942 prompted SS officials, backed by Himmler, to mandate by the end of 1942 the 'liquidation' of the General Government's ghettos. The productivization strategy saved a core of workers in the Białystok ghetto until the fall of 1943 and in the larger Łódź ghetto until 1944. But otherwise the German

regime, reassured by fulsome harvests in summer and fall 1942, undertook to nourish better its non-Jewish slave laborers from east Europe and elsewhere (notably France), so as to send the captive Jews—including the politically suspect German Jews—to perish in the death camps. This was a process to a large degree completed in 1943, although the deportation of Hungarian Jews and other victims to Auschwitz in 1944 raked the lethal coals back into flame.

It corresponds to Friedländer's emphasis on 'redemptive anti-Semitism' that Hitler and other leading Nazis, notably Joseph Goebbels, celebrated—sometimes very publicly and bluntly—the Jewish mass murder. In a speech on 30 January 1942 at the Berlin Sportpalast, Hitler exulted that 'the hour will strike when the most evil world enemy of all time will have ended its role at least for a thousand years.' In a self-styled political testament, dictated shortly before his suicide on 29 May 1945, Hitler blamed 'international Jewry' for the war and the sufferings it imposed on Germany, justified his fight ('by humane methods') with the Jewish arch-enemy, and called for 'the strictest keeping of the race laws' and 'merciless struggle' in the future 'against the universal poisoner of all people.' Since 1919, Friedländer concluded, 'nothing seems to have changed in Hitler's innermost ideological landscape.'²⁶

As for the dictator's German subjects' co-operation in the 'redemptive final battle for the salvation of Aryan humanity,' it was, Friedländer writes, their 'frenzied devotion,' their 'hysterical adoration and blind faith,' which cemented the tie to the charismatic Führer (*Führer-Bindung*), guaranteeing their acquiescence in all his commanded works. This was less an anti-Semitic bond than a pseudo-religious one, whereby defeat of the 'universal poisoner' was the precondition of folkish felicity. But Friedländer concedes, too, the strength of historian Götz Aly's insistence on the popularity of plundering Jews and other victims for the benefit of the 'Aryan' *Volksgemeinschaft*. 'Robbing the Jews,' Friedländer writes, 'contributed to the upholding of the *Volksstaat*; murdering them and fanning the fears of retribution became the ultimate bond of Führer and Volk in the collapsing *Führerstaat*.'²⁷

If the Holocaust fulfilled an ideological program entailing belief that world salvation required 'removal' of 'the Jews,' it appears in this light far more clearly *after its occurrence* than before or during it. For prior to the Wannsee Conference and the subsequent inauguration of the death-camps, *Judenpolitik* figured in contemporaries' minds, as we may see it too, as a function or concomitant of objectives independent of narrow anti-Semitic postulates. That is, the Greater German East European Empire and its corresponding *Volksgemeinschaft* were the goals for which the Third Reich fought and died. If, officially, their realization entailed Jewish exclusion, or even mass murder, it was nonetheless these objectives that beckoned to Nazi enthusiasts as the great positive destinations lying on the far side of the solution to the 'Jewish question' (and also the 'questions' posed by biologically 'unworthy' existences at home and in non-German eastern Europe). It was in large measure because National Socialists could view the world in this racialized and totalitarian manner that they accepted with no moral scruples the human destruction their actions wrought.

We have seen, however, that the 'path to Auschwitz' did not proceed directly from *Mein Kampf*, but rather that it opened up on the roads to Warsaw and Moscow, especially once Hitler had burned his bridges to the West. Recent scholarship emphasizes that, however comprehensive Hitler's murderous intent, the mass murder's scope was never firmly fixed, and so consisted of a series of decisions, rather than following from a single dictatorial death sentence. The Holocaust amounted to an unfolding process, dependent on circumstance—especially capture of Jewish populations, such as the Hungarian, outside Nazi control (in this case, until mid-1944), or loss of control over Jewish fate, as occurred when, after 1943, the once pro-Hitler Romanian government retreated from further murder of its multitudinous Jewish subjects.²⁸

Had Europe and America managed to halt German expansion in the borders of summer 1939, the Holocaust in the sense of Jewish mass murder would never have occurred, even if central European Jewry could not have avoided disappearance through forced emigration and brutal maltreatment. A *grossdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft*—confined to Germany, Austria, and the Czech lands—would have focused Nazi energies, including such murderous eugenic impulses as propelled the T-4 program. The fate of the east European Jewish millions—though perhaps hard—would not have been mass death under the auspices of pseudo-scientized anti-Semitism. But could the Third Reich have survived without external war? Would it have consumed itself in mad internal 'cleansings' and purges? Could it have persuaded other, friendly authoritarian or fascist regimes to adopt its ruthless anti-Jewish policies? Might it have ossified into an inward-turned authoritarianism? Would domestic rebellion have upended it?

24.2 IMPERIAL VIOLENCE THE HOLOCAUST'S PROGENITOR

Although, like many other historians, Friedländer traces the Holocaust to anti-Semitic beliefs, he recognizes that, as a process of mass murder, it grew from the soil of Nazi-occupied western and central Poland and Nazi-assaulted Soviet or Soviet-controlled lands: the Baltic countries, Belarus, Ukraine, and eastern Poland. It was a response to German capture of millions of east European Jews. This was, as these pages emphasize, the consequence, not of anti-Semitism, but of German imperialism. Yet National Socialist racism, not imperial domination, prescribed Holocaust murder. In World War I, the Kaiser's Germany held sway over roughly the same east European lands as Hitler had conquered by 1941–1942. Toward the Jews of the region German World War I policy was in part protective, in part economically exploitative, certainly not without anti-Jewish prejudice, yet not driven by anti-Semitism and not aimed at anti-Jewish violence. Similarly, the Kaiser's government sought to create friendly, conservative-ruled satellite-dependencies of the Poles and other peoples transferred from tsarist to German rule, and not to enslave and obliterate them, as the National Socialist *Generalplan Ost* forecast.

A multifarious literature has found synthesis and analysis in Mark Mazower's *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (2008). Deepening an earlier furrow in British historiography, Mazower finds the roots of the National Socialist imperium 'not in anti-Semitism, nor in the blind lust for conquest, but rather in the quest to unify Germans within a single German state,' a project traceable to the liberal-democratic revolution of 1848.²⁹ Yet, in fact, this quest found *fulfillment* in 1938 through annexation of Austria and the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia. Hitler's subsequent program of eastward expansion and ruthless Germanization flowed from other sources: above all, the ideological fusion of eugenicist racism, anti-Semitism, German nationalism, and the geopolitical postulate that the twentieth-century future belonged, not to mere nation states, but to nations raised to continental/imperial scale.

Mein Kampf blueprinted the bio-political, folkish empire, but Mazower does not pause long over its lineaments. Instead, he underscores the enthusiasm Hitler displayed, in his unpublished 1928 'Second Book,' for the United States. There 'the best Nordic forces' had subjugated a rich continent and its indigenous inhabitants. Racial segregation and post-World War I blockage of immigration by ethnically stigmatized people ensured the future of a dominant white society, characteristic of European settler colonies. Hitler celebrated, Mazower writes, 'the geopolitical potency of a state that had overcome both food scarcity and threats to its racial purity'.³⁰ This was his goal for Germany, as he repeatedly told his generals in coaching them for a war for *Lebensraum*, self-sufficiency in food-supply, and overall economic autarchy. These could only be gained in eastern Europe, not—as he told them in November 1937—'on the basis of liberal-capitalist conceptions about the exploitation of [overseas] colonies' (although Hitler never lost his admiration for the British Empire, whose racist and extractive features he praised while dismissing its 'civilizing mission' as obfuscation and cant).³¹

Hitler's empire was more modern than Mazower's stress on continuity with the *grossdeutsch* nationalism of 1848 allows. Likewise, emphasis on the 'intense nostalgia for the past' that Mazower discovers in Nazi conceptions of east European empire (with their visions of a sturdy Aryan peasantry and SS nobility) distracts from Hitler's and other Nazi planners' enthusiasm to plunder east European resources, including its labor-power, to rapidly catch up with or even outstrip 'American' modernity in the future *Volksgemeinschaft*—in industry and technology, population growth, living standards, and social mobility.³² The future Germanized eastern Europe would be dotted with technologically and architecturally cutting-edge cities, criss-crossed by freeways, enabling visitors from the Reich to comfortably drive to the Crimea on the Black Sea—in Hitler's mind, Germany's future 'California.' The question has often arisen: might not the east European Jews, who as Yiddish-speakers were easily assimilable to German-language culture, and whose urban occupations could have been useful to German purposes, have been desirable recruits into the *Volksgemeinschaft*? Yet in Nazi eyes, the eastern Jews in a great majority were far too poor and backward in their socio-economic practices to qualify for such a role, leaving aside the pro-Bolshevism and other defects anti-Semitic ideology attributed to them.³³

Of the Holocaust, Mazower writes, consistent with these pages' argument, that 'the "war against the Jews" essentially grew out of Hitler's "war for the Germans."' Granted Hitler's anti-Semitic aggressiveness, the fate of captive Jews, nevertheless, 'grew out of the circumstances of the war and fluctuated according to its fortunes.' Because the 'Final Solution' emerged from 'even more ambitious Nazi plans for the racial reorganization of much of eastern Europe, the boundaries of the killings were always unclear.' The Nazis targeted other groups for extinction. A German official in the General Government generals was not wrong to attribute the Poles' underground armed resistance to their fear that the Jews' fate conjured 'an atrocious picture of their own destiny.' Mazower cautiously evokes the 'ever wider horizons of annihilation' that might have opened beyond the Holocaust.³⁴ Yet such horizons had dawned before the Jewish mass murder began.

Hitler's New Order occupies the far right wing of a stage on which Europe's other modern empires stand. If it seems to contrast jarringly with the Dutch, French, and British imperiums, remembering their foundations in slave-economies and the demographic decimation they wrought among their non-white populations, by violence or disease, reduces the distance between them. In the twenty years of its existence, Belgian king Leopold II's rapacious Congo Free State halved its large African population through brutal exploitation and murder. Nor, as Hitler self-servingly emphasized, can such white-settler colonies as the Spanish and Portuguese American empires, British North America, Australia, and South Africa escape their own semi-genocidal shadows. Stalinist Russia worked at the 'liquidation' of 'enemy nations' within its vast boundaries, while militarist Japan ruthlessly occupied China, targeting Manchuria (like Korea before it) for settlement as the Nazis did Poland.

Mazower may go too far, then, in holding that other European empires never dealt with 'the power of numbers'—that is, those of the colonially dominated, slated for cultural eclipse—as violently or hastily as the National Socialists. But he is right to emphasize that, in their assault on the Soviet Union, they overreached themselves, creating shortages of food and other vital materials, which 'turned their cult of force and racial geopolitics ... into a programme of extermination'—foreshadowed, it may be added, in the Nazi-occupied Poland of 1939–1940—'on a scale which had no precedent.'³⁵

24.3 VOLKSGEMEINSCHAFT: 'PEOPLE'S STATE,' 'PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY,' 'PEOPLE'S BODY,' 'FOLK-ALIENS'

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An accelerating current in historiography on National Socialism has swept away from the political and social-structural history of Hitler's regime toward the *Volksgemeinschaft* as Nazi theory and practice. Enthusiasts for this reorientation include those who, like the influential senior historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler, stress the importance of ordinary

Germans' yearnings for prosperity and social mobility in sparking their consent to Hitler's rule (though Wehler emphasizes no less the politics of charismatic totalitarianism). Götz Aly has provoked debate, but won much qualified support with his reading of National Socialism as a 'favor-bestowing dictatorship' (*Gefälligkeitsdiktatur*): the Nazis were 'classic feel-good politicians' (*Stimmungspolitiker*), who 'on a daily basis bought themselves public backing or anyway indifference through crowd-pleasing improvements in social welfare benefits, wage and tax advantages, and egalitarian undercutting of elite privileges and pretensions.'³⁶

The National Socialists, Aly argues, delivered their populist gifts at the cost of the murdered Jews and their 'aryanized' property—which in the aggregate across central and eastern Europe possessed an enormous value—and through the plunder of the occupied territories in general. Nazi 'extermination-policy' (*Vernichtungspolitik*) drew its energy less from intellectualized ideological anti-Semitism than from this program of social redistribution: 'it oriented itself to the people's well-being (*Volkswohl*).'³⁷ Hence, Aly charges, the weakness of anti-regime opposition, and even the widespread lack in the German population of a later sense of guilt.³⁷

Doubtless Aly exaggerates, but his argument's thrust finds support in the scholarly consensus that expropriation of Jews and economic exploitation of both eastern and Western Europe served vitally to sustain living standards in wartime Germany and so undergird the Nazi regime's popular acceptance. If the 'favors' National Socialism bestowed in the way of living standards and social mobility were lower than advertised, the effect of their half-delivery and future promise did, indeed, elicit an enthusiasm that only Allied bombing, which in 1943 began to destroy German big-city life, gradually diminished. Yet in the war's final years, Eastern Europe—and France too—went hungry to the German consumer's advantage, and comprehensive misery only struck Germany *after* the 1945 defeat.

Industrial society's shaping as ethnically homogeneous, nationally integrated and politically mobilized—and as raised to maximal biological health and reproductive vigor by means of state-guided programs of citizenship-formation, secularized public education, and eugenics-informed medical and mental-health programs—figures as the central dynamic of 'modernization' or 'modernity' in historically-contoured social theories, in part inspired by Michel Foucault, which in recent decades have flowed from the pens of Zygmunt Bauman, Detlev Peukert, Peter Wagner and others.³⁸ Many research historians have shown concretely how the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* was meant to embody this social utopia, and how especially its pursuit consigned Jewish Germans to exclusion on supposedly scientific racial grounds. The fact that gas-chamber technology was developed and first applied to inmates of psychiatric institutions reveals, before the onset of Holocaust violence, the murderous potentiality of bio-political utopianism (and the amoral potential of modern science and technology).

Ultimately, the eugenic-racist stigmatization of Jews in particular could only occur because of the earlier history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. Yet very many Nazis, especially degree-holding SS and Nazi party planners and functionaries, but also Hitler and Goebbels, dismissed old-fashioned 'bourgeois' anti-Semitism in favor of the 'racial

science' inspiring their vision of eugenic modernity. To the considerable extent that the Holocaust served the realization of this social Darwinist dream, the emergence of modern right-wing nationalism underpinned by racist eugenics figures as a fundamental cause of the Jewish mass murder. Its triggering power was, arguably, more potent than that of the older anti-Semitism which, had it not undergone reformulation (however untenable) in modern scientific discourse, would likely have gradually disappeared (as has happened in Western Europe and North America) in the interstices of religious obsession and crank politics.

24.4 GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION AND THE HOLOCAUST: INDIFFERENTISM, COMPLICITY PASSIVE OR WILLING, FOREBODINGS, GUILT

The enormity of National Socialist murder raises the question of the German population's knowledge of the regime's genocidal actions, the degree of their active complicity, and the depth of their assent. On one side stand those who underscore the Nazi regime's 'consensualist' nature. They argue that support for Hitler's dictatorship skyrocketed from a near majority in 1932 to massive acclamation of its, in certain respects, stunningly successful accomplishments by the eve of the war in 1939. Whether for reasons of material self-interest, political conviction, or quasi-religious self-immersion in the sea of collective belief, most Germans—so this view holds—accepted National Socialism. They regarded its iron-fisted repression of Communists and Social Democrats, its antagonism to the Catholic church and liberal Protestantism, its eugenic program (including forced sterilizations), and its persecution of Jewish Germans as justifiable and necessary to the attainment of the yearned-for *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Consensualist historians point to the absence of effective resistance to National Socialist rule (while underestimating resistance *attempts*) and to the regime's own confidential soundings of public opinion in concluding, so far as official *Judenpolitik* was concerned, that most Germans either actively embraced the anti-Semitic program or viewed it with the indifference of bystanders for whom everything else was more important. Nazi indoctrination of youth was indeed, by all accounts, widely effective, so that many young NS party activists and recruits into the armed forces and SS showed little hesitation in acting as 'Hitler's willing executioners.' The scruples of those of their elders still bound to the allegedly fading sub-cultures of liberalism and Christian morality encountered contemptuous dismissal among regime functionaries and zealous youth alike.³⁹

Two clouds trouble the consensualist skies. One is cast by the ultra-repressive character of Hitler's dictatorship, and especially its judicial-administrative and police powers. Opposition and regime-criticism were from the start serious crimes, frequently

punished by imprisonment or death. Monthly Gestapo arrests of Germans as late as October 1941 numbered 544 for 'Communism and Marxism,' 1518 for 'opposition,' 531 for 'prohibited association [often sexual] with Poles or prisoners of war,' and 7729 for 'stopping work.' This amounted to some 65 arrests daily throughout the Reich for often severely penalized political offenses. During the war, the German armed forces staged three million court-martials, including 400,000 against civilians and prisoners of war. Thirty-thousand German soldiers received death sentences, of which two-thirds were carried out (in contrast to forty-eight soldiers put to death during World War I). The civil criminal courts imposed on German citizens 16,000 wartime death penalties, three-quarters actually carried out (amounting to six executions daily in a six-year period, usually widely reported in the press as warnings to others). In 1944, the Justice Ministry began drafting a law empowering the courts and police to eliminate 'community aliens' (*Gemeinschaftsfremde*), an omnibus term encompassing defeatists, critics, misfits, outsiders, 'failures' (*Versager*), and 'folk-pests' (*Volksschädlinge*).⁴⁰ Of jailed Germans deemed physically unsightly, a 1944 Justice Ministry conference concluded: 'they look like miscarriages of hell . . . It is planned that they too shall be eliminated. Crime and punishment are irrelevant.'⁴¹

Under such circumstances, Germans—as much evidence testifies—widely enacted the script attributed to them by a clandestine informant of the exiled Social Democratic Party in March 1940: 'The comprehensive terror compels 'national comrades' [*Volks-genossen*] to conceal their real mood, to hold back from expressing their real opinions, and instead to feign optimism and approval. Indeed, it is obviously forcing ever more people to conform to the demands of the regime even in their thinking; they no longer dare to bring themselves to account. The outer shell of loyalty that forms in this way can last a long time yet.'⁴²

This psychologically insightful report points to the second cloud casting shadows on consensualism. In the fullest and most sophisticated study of German attitudes on National Socialist anti-Jewish policy so far undertaken, Peter Longerich has shown that the dictatorship suppressed 'public opinion' in any meaningful sense.⁴³ It was, instead, the task of Nazi propaganda, notably press and radio, but even also of the regime's own confidential internal reports on the public mood, to *create* and *mold* opinion. This was vital to imposing assent to anti-Jewish policy both within officialdom and on a population that was widely suspected by the political leadership of inclining against it—for example, in deploring the violence and cruelty of the 1938 *Kristallnacht-Pogrom*, or in observing with disquiet and alarm the fatal deportation of the German Jews beginning in October 1941, or in (rightly) fearing, as the war turned toward defeat, that mass murder in Eastern Europe would spell disaster for German society. The regime's opinion-formation figured also as a step in the implementation of successively more radical stages of official anti-Jewish policy, in that it simulated—through periodic blaring press campaigns, distribution of posters and other advertisements, or release of anti-Semitic films—public support for new steps, aiming simultaneously to repress such dissent as they might otherwise elicit.

Longerich shows that anti-Semitic violence in pre-1939 Germany, and even such important events as issuance of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws and the November 1938 pogrom, were downplayed or suppressed in the official media. After the war began, substantive factual information on violence against Jews in Eastern Europe rarely found official expression. With the regime's turn in 1941 and 1942 to systematic genocide, proclamations of the 'final solution,' of the Jews' 'total destruction' or 'extermination' were accompanied by news blackouts concerning the Holocaust's details. In spring 1943, Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry undertook a two-month campaign in which, while attacking the Soviet Union for mass murder at Katyn of captive Poles, it brazenly acknowledged that Jewish populations under Nazi command had largely ceased to exist.

This revelation aimed to stiffen German resistance to the Soviet offensive by making it clear that the entire society must stand behind the Holocaust. Grim warning of Soviet reprisals, often (self-projectively) depicted as 'Jewish death squads,' induced an unnerved and fear-ridden reaction in the German population, encouraging denial of knowledge and complicity. Already in October 1942 Göring bullied his listeners in a nation-wide radio broadcast: 'This war is not the Second World War, it is the Great Racial War (*grosser Rassenkrieg*). It was a life-and-death struggle between 'German and Aryan and Jew . . . Let no one fool himself into believing he can come forward later on and say: I was always a good democrat among those terrible Nazis.'⁴⁴

The effect of Nazi opinion-molding was to destroy alternative public spheres at home from which the German population could gain information and understanding about *Judenpolitik* and the unfolding Holocaust. While many grasped that the deported Jews were being transported to their doom, and while rumors of death by gas circulated, the scale of the death-camp slaughter was rarely understood. This was also true even in the West, where credible, eye-witness reports on the genocide arrived from Polish underground sources. Locked in private isolation, many people continued anachronistically and deludedly to conceptualize the 'Jewish question' in pre-1933 or pre-1939 terms, revolving about legal disenfranchisement, economic dispossession, and forced emigration. Among Nazi true believers, the regime's messages concerning anti-Jewish policies were doubtless complacently accepted or welcomed. Yet there is also evidence that relatively well-educated and serious-minded NSDAP members preferred to block information and rumors about the nightmarish mass murder from their minds.⁴⁵ So too did masses of ordinary people, for whom—as Longerich concludes—*Judenpolitik* and anti-Semitism troubled, rather than solidified their relationship to Hitler's regime. He, too, sees *Volksgemeinschaft* as the mobilizing force, but war shattered it.

24.5 CONCLUSION

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A certain analytical disposition will ask: 'what was German National Socialism a case of?' A brief answer, leaving depths unplumbed, would say that it was an extreme example of nation state-formation shading off, as happened in many European

countries, into an imperialist expansion entailing ethnic cleansing of minorities inhabiting borderlands and other conquered spaces. It was an anti-liberal, anti-socialist, anti-communist fascism that, like many other right-wing mobilizations in Europe, stigmatized 'the Jews' as partisans and even creators of the hated ideologies of capitalist democracy and Marxist revolution. It was a utopian project promising the blessings of technological modernity on an imperial scale, rivaling those on offer by Soviet and Anglo-American competitors. It orchestrated a backlash against the ambiguities, subjectivities, relativisms, and incomprehensibilities of cultural and scientific modernity.⁴⁶

It is not surprising that Germany, recovering from defeat in World War I, should have renewed its bid for European hegemony and east European empire. Britain and France emerged weakened from their seeming victory of 1918, while in Russia a regime far more menacing to German interests and values than vanished tsarism had arisen under Stalin's rule—which yet also seemed, to Hitler, easy prey to his soldiers, tanks, and artillery. But there was no place in his empire for the millions of mostly poor, Yiddish-speaking, economically old-fashioned Jews the German armies captured on their march eastward, any more than there was for supernumerary Slavic captives and subjects.

The Holocaust's 'industrial' or 'factory-like' efficiency and bureaucratic rationality have sometimes been, for philosophically understandable reasons, exaggerated. In part, the mass murder was a succession of terrible bloodbaths, executed with guns and horses. Although not the first or last of genocides, it is especially hard to contemplate because of the helplessness, innocence, and abandonment of the Jewish victims, the pitilessness, arrogance, and ideological self-delusion of the murderers, and the deployment of modern science and technology in Auschwitz's and the other death camps' terrible enterprise. In our eyes, neither empire, nor *Volksgemeinschaft*, nor ideologically promised redemption could ever justify it. Yet in other eyes, they did.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This essay represents an interpretive response to current and recently published broad-gauged synthetic literature. The works highlighted here, both in text, notes, and bibliography, comprise a dialogue and debate, so that on issues of interest to readers, it is recommended that they compare the relevant studies.

NOTES

1. 'Der Gedanke geht der Tat voraus, wie der Blitz dem Donner.' Heinrich Heine, 'Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland,' in Heinrich Heine, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, Manfred Winfuhr (ed.), vol. 8, 1 (Düsseldorf: Hoffmann and Campe, 1979), 118.

2. For historiographical orientation, see Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). This valuable survey and critique of Holocaust historiography of recent decades abstains from advancing a large-scale interpretation of its subject such as this chapter offers. It neglects the interplay of east European empire and Aryan folk community highlighted here, as it does National Socialist repression and terror directed toward German society, which I underscore. Essential too are Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Arnold, 2000) and Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1987). See also Nicolas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker. Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2003) and Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies* (New York: Berghahn, 2000 [German original: 1998]), 1–52 and passim.

Valuable recent accounts and interpretations of National Socialist anti-Jewish policy and violence are Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010 [German original: 1998]) and Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997); idem, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945: The Years of Extermination* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007). The pioneering master-work, first published in 1961, still unrivaled in empirical depth, and stamped by structuralist-determinist emphasis on bureaucratic process, is Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3 vols, 3rd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). In *The Third Reich in Power* and *The Third Reich at War* (London: Penguin, 2006–2008) Richard J. Evans integrates anti-Jewish policy and violence into a larger account of the National Socialist regime. See also Michael Wildt, *Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); Alan E. Steinweis, 'Judenverfolgung und Holocaust,' in Dietmar Süß and Winfried Süß (eds), *Das 'Dritte Reich': Eine Einführung* (Munich: Pantheon, 2008), 287–310; Doris Bergen, 'Occupation, imperialism, and genocide, 1939–1945,' in Jane Caplan (ed.), *Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 219–245; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, *Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914–1949* (Munich: Beck, 2003).

3. Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution. The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004), as well as Longerich, *Holocaust*; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*; and Stone, *Histories*, ch. 2; on 'cumulative radicalization,' cf. Hans Mommsen, *Von Weimar nach Auschwitz* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999).
4. Süß and Süß (eds), *Das Dritte Reich*, 303. Cf. Wolfgang Benz, *Dimension des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: DTV, 1996). The National Socialists also murdered some 130,000 Greek, Yugoslavian, and Bulgarian-Macedonian Jews. Of the 200–275,000 Jewish victims under Romanian rule, most died at the hands of their own militarist-fascist government. In *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), Timothy Snyder offers a new assemblage of numerical data on Jewish and non-Jewish loss of life resulting from politically driven mass murder under Stalinism and German National Socialism, but without altering the order of magnitudes expressed in the text above. See also Snyder's 'Holocaust: The Ignored Reality,' *New York Review of Books*, LVI:12 (July 16, 2009), 14–16, an essay which, like *Bloodlands*, emphasizes the Holocaust's east European locus and its genesis

- out of Hitler's anti-Soviet war, launched in June 1941. Snyder posits a mutually reinforcing dynamic between German and Soviet political violence, though without holding that the anti-Jewish genocide depended on it. In harmony with Mark Mazower's *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Penguin, 2008), Snyder's narrative highlights the Nazi project of *Lebensraum*-empire. But neither author proposes the present chapter's causal linkages and interdependencies.
5. On the National Socialist economy and its relation to war and imperial expansion: Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Viking, 2007). Cf. Tooze, 'The Economic History of the Nazi regime,' in Jane Caplan (ed.), *Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 168–195.
 6. For a broad-ranging history of anti-Semitic politics and ideology in German central Europe, emphasizing the transposition of anti-Semitic modernization anxieties into racialized terms, see Massimo Ferrari Zumbini, *Die Wurzeln des Bösen. Gründerjahre des Antisemitismus: Von der Bismarckzeit zu Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2003). Cf. Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, and Helmut Walser Smith (eds), *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); William W. Hagen, 'Before the "Final Solution": Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Antisemitism in Interwar Germany and Poland,' *Journal of Modern History* (July 1996), 1–31.
 7. Hitler to Otto Abetz, September 1941, quoted in Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 558.
 8. From Hitler's briefing on 22 August 1939, cited in *ibid.*, 64.
 9. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, I, 5. Cf. Hilberg's judgment: 'The bureaucracy had no master plan, no fundamental blueprint, no clear-cut view of its actions.' Hilberg, *Destruction*, I, 1064. For interpretations of Hitler, see Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (New York: Norton, 1999) and *Hitler, 1936–45: Nemesis* (New York: Norton, 2000), esp. I: xix–xxx and II, chapters 3, 10; Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, IV, 598–917, and *passim*.
 10. For interesting psychoanalytic analysis, see Jacques Sémelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (London: Hurst, 2007); Ernst Simmel (ed.), *Anti-Semitism, a Social Disease* (New York: International Universities Press, 1946). Writing in the Holocaust's immediate aftermath, German pedagogue and Weimar-era activist against anti-Semitism Michael Müller-Claudius, in *Der Antisemitismus und das deutsche Verhängnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1948), stressed the post-1914 interaction of German anti-Semitism as an ego-wounded and paranoid society's defense mechanism with authoritarian-militarist traditions. Cf. David Redles, *Hitler's Millennial Reich. Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
 11. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, I, 3, 71–72.
 12. *Ibid.*, II, xix (italics removed), 656–657.
 13. Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung: Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2007). Cf. Peter Longerich, 'Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!' *Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933–1945* (Munich: Pantheon, 2007).
 14. Quoted in Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, I, 141.

15. *Ibid.*, I, 247–248.
16. Figures from Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, 15, 21, 53. Cf. Alexander B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Gustavo Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos: Voices from a Beleaguered Society, 1939–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
17. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, II, 188.
18. Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung. Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993). Isabel Heinemann deepens the ideological-racial dimension of Aly and Heim's argumentation in her 'Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut.' *Die Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003).
19. William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
20. Philip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution. The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939–1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007).
21. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, II, 187–188.
22. *Ibid.*, 237; Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 147.
23. Quotations in Mazower, 205, 385. Czesław Madajczyk (ed.), *Vom Generalplan Ost zum Generalsiedlungsplan* (Munich: Saur, 1994); Mechthild Rössler and Sabine Schleiermacher (eds), *Der 'Generalplan Ost': Hauptlinien der nationalsozialistischen Planungs- und Vernichtungspolitik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993); Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Alex J. Kay, *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder: Political and Economic Planning for German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1940–41* (New York: Berghahn, 2006); David Furber, 'Near as Far in the Colonies: The Nazi Occupation of Poland,' *International History Review*, 26 (2004), 542–579.
24. Hitler quoted in Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution*, 101.
25. Quoted in Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, II, 279–81.
26. *Ibid.*, II, 322, 645, 660.
27. See Longerich, *Holocaust*, 422–435, and idem, *The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution* (London: Tempus, 2005). Götz Aly speculates that resistance within the German civil government to the Wannsee's genocidal blueprint might have stilled the machinery of the death camps, or slowed it, forcing Nazi *Judenpolitik* to continue in its emphases on ghettoization, 'productivization,' and attrition. Aly, *Endlösung: Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), 398–389.
28. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 656–8. Cf. Aly, *Volksstaat*.
29. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 30.
30. *Ibid.*, 556.
31. Quotation from notes on Hitler's briefing of 5 November 1937 ('Hossbach Memorandum'), www.ns-archiv.de/krieg/1937/hossbach. Cf. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 58, 259.
32. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 180–181. Cf. Götz Aly, *Hitler Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005).
33. Cf. Aly and Heim, *Vordenker*.
34. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 12, 412–415. On Polish perceptions of their fate under National Socialist occupation, see Klaus-Peter Friedrich, *Der nationalsozialistische Judenmord und das polnisch-jüdische Verhältnis im Diskurs der polnischen. Untergrundpresse (1942–1944)* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2006).

35. Mazower, 588. On European imperialism: C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), chapter 12 and passim. On the Holocaust-like plunder of the Congo: Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998). Cf. Pascal Grosse, 'What does German colonialism have to do with National Socialism?' in Eric Ames et al. (eds), *Germany's Colonial Pasts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 115-135; Philip Ther, 'Imperial Instead of National History: Positioning Modern German History on the Map of European Empires,' in Alexei Miller and Alfred J. Rieber (eds), *Imperial Rule* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 47-66; Benjamin Madley, 'From Africa to Auschwitz: How German Southwest Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Europe,' *European History Quarterly*, 35 (2005), 429-464.
36. Aly, *Volksstaat*; Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft*; Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, v. 4. Cf. Jill Stephenson, 'Inclusion: Building the National Community in Propaganda and Practice,' in Caplan (ed.), *Nazi Germany*, 99-121. Frank Bajohr and Michael Wildt (eds), *Volksgemeinschaft: Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2009).
37. Aly, *Volksstaat*, 36-38, and passim.
38. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Peter Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline* (London: Routledge, 1994); Detlev Peukert, 'The Genesis of the 'Final Solution' from the Spirit of Science,' in David Crew (ed.), *Nazism and German Society, 1933-45* (London: Routledge, 1994), 274-299. On the political multivalence of eugenic and other bio-scientific projects: Edward Ross Dickinson, 'Biopolitics, Fascism, Democracy: Reflections on Our Discourse Concerning "Modernity,"' *Central European History* 37 (2004), 1-48.
39. See Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Stone, *Histories*. Cf. the ultra-consensualist argument by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996).
40. See, including for figures on court-martials, Evans, *Third Reich at War*, 365, 501, 513-514, 537-538. Evans offers a persuasive appraisal of the Nazi regime's consensual and coercive dimensions. See also the second volume of his trilogy, *The Third Reich in Power* (London: Penguin, 2005) and his 'Coercion and Consent in Nazi Germany,' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 171 (2007). Cf. Nicholas Wachsmann, 'The Policy of Exclusion: Repression in the Nazi State, 1933-39,' in Caplan (ed.), *Nazi Germany*, 122-145.
41. Quoted in Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, III, 1067.
42. Quoted in Evans, *Third Reich at War*, 560-61.
43. Longerich, 'Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!' (see note 13, above). In harmony with Longerich's line of analysis is also Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
44. Longerich, 'Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!', 204.
45. Müller-Claudius (see note 10) clandestinely elicited and recorded the views of 61 NS party members on the November 1938 'Crystal Night' pogrom and later, in fall 1942, as awareness spread of Jewish mass murder in eastern Europe, of 41 NS party members on their appraisal of official *Judenpolitik*. In both cases, he encountered firm or vociferous support for radical violence among only a small minority, while willingness to criticize it, high in 1938, declined precipitously. He concluded that only a few by 1942 had freed

- themselves from National Socialism's anti-Semitic world-view, while somewhat more were inclined—unrealistically—to imagine an end to anti-Jewish persecution at war's end. He reckoned that some five percent had actively surrendered themselves to Nazism's murderous postulates. The majority, though professing regime loyalty, were reluctant to express opinions on the 'final solution.' Such a guarded, morally and emotionally paralyzed posture does not seem identical with 'indifference.' Müller-Claudius, *Antisemitismus*, 162–172.
46. Benjamin Liebermann, *Terrible Fate: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making of Modern Europe* (Chicago: Dee, 2004); Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Jörg Baberowski and Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Ordnung durch Terror. Gewaltexzesse und Vernichtung im nationalsozialistischen und im stalinistischen Imperium* (Bonn: Dietz, 2006); Christophe Charle, *La crise des sociétés impériales: Allemagne, France, Grande-Bretagne, 1900–1940: essai d'histoire sociale comparée* (Paris: Seuil, 2001); Enzo Traverso, *Im Bann der Gewalt: Der europäische Bürgerkrieg, 1914–1945* (Munich: Siedler, 2008).

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