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**Policy of Destruction
Nazi Anti-Jewish Policy
and the Genesis of the “Final Solution”**

Peter Longerich

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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JOSEPH AND REBECCA MEYERHOFF ANNUAL LECTURE
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THE JOSEPH AND REBECCA MEYERHOFF ANNUAL LECTURE on the Holocaust has been endowed by a 1994 grant from the Meyerhoff family to promote excellence in and to disseminate Holocaust research. Lifelong residents of Baltimore, Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff were involved in philanthropic activities in the United States and overseas in music and the arts, Jewish learning and scholarship, and human services, among other concerns. Jewish history and education were a primary focus in their philanthropic efforts. This tradition has been upheld and enhanced by their children and their children's children. Their son, Harvey M. Meyerhoff, is Chairman Emeritus of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. The annual lecture is held in the Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Theater of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

I am very grateful to the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for giving me the opportunity to present some thoughts and theses that have emerged from the research for my latest book, *Politik der Vernichtung* (Policy of Annihilation). Unfortunately, the book has as yet been published only in German and I am therefore particularly obliged to the Center for this invitation.¹

I would like to discuss two topics this evening: first, I will address some of the basic problems and challenges I faced when writing this book. In the second part of my presentation I will make some suggestions for revising what many historians currently accept as the chronology of the decision-making process leading to the “Final Solution.”

Today, more than fifty years after the systematic murder of European Jewry, the historiography of the Holocaust involves a growing number of different perspectives and research areas. In general, four areas of research can be distinguished: studies on the victims, research on the perpetrators, work on the bystanders, and analysis of the aftermath of the Holocaust. My own research has concentrated on the history of the perpetrators. In my view, research in this area has to address one very simple and fundamental question: Why did the Nazi regime organize and implement a program to systematically murder the European Jews?

Some Basic Problems of Research

The first basic problem with this research perspective is that it requires the researcher to concentrate on certain aspects of the Holocaust while necessarily neglecting others. It leads inevitably to an imbalance in the presentation of the historical events and requires a certain level of abstraction as well as a rather sober analytic style and reserved language. Research that focuses on the perpetrators can also not produce a narrative description that adequately deals with the catastrophe that befell European Jewry during WWII or with the suffering of the victims. I doubt, however, whether the historical profession as a whole possesses the means adequately to describe the full horror of the murder of the Jews.

But in my view, our task as historians is not to provide a description of events, but rather to supply a responsible, fact-founded explanation. In the case of the Holocaust, this responsibility brings us clearly to the limits of our abilities. Yet, if we do not meet this challenge, if we give up looking for an explanation for this catastrophe which overshadows the history of the twentieth century, historiography would, in my opinion, be a senseless venture.²

The second significant problem of perpetrator-based research derives from the sources for such a project: the most important decisions that were made regarding the murder of European Jewry were not, as a rule, written down. In so far as documents were produced, for the most part they reflect the decision-making process indirectly, from the periphery, and in a fragmentary way. Furthermore, they were written in camouflaged language. Most documents, however, were systematically destroyed by the perpetrators, and the relatively few surviving documents are dispersed between numerous archives in many different countries. These are the basic working conditions for a researcher in this field.

New opportunities—and new problems—emerged a few years ago when the archives in Eastern Europe became accessible to researchers. Large quantities of documents were discovered, particularly in the archives of the former Soviet Union, of Poland, and of the former German Democratic Republic; these materials are helping us to reconstruct the history of the Holocaust even more accurately. A large number of these documents are already available in the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which is currently in the process of building up and cataloguing a unique collection of material on the Holocaust. At the moment, historians of the Holocaust are trying to integrate this new material from Eastern Europe into their work.

This process has been going on for four or five years now and it is becoming possible to evaluate in a general way the significance of this new material.

On the whole, one can say that the opening of the archives in Eastern Europe has not fundamentally changed the situation of research. Those who believed that in the Eastern European archives we would find those key documents that would allow us completely to reconstruct the decision-making process that led to the “Final Solution” have been disappointed. Yet, we have in our possession more and more fragments, more documents that give us an insight into the work of the apparatus that carried out the systematic mass murder of European Jews.

Of course, some of these documents also shed new light on well-known documents and thus challenge our accepted interpretations.

As a result, historians who are concerned with the genesis of the “Final Solution” are working very much as they did in the 1980; i.e., they are attempting to reconstruct specific events by means of relatively laborious spadework that involves piecing these documents together.

This difficult situation regarding sources notwithstanding, we still find it imperative to attempt an exact reconstruction of the single acts that make up the genocide. This involves the reconstruction of executions, deportations, the murders in the camps, and analogous atrocities. As a result of the disparate character of the sources, a historian who is interested in the perpetrators has no choice but to try to reconstruct single acts of mass murder in order to analyze the decisions that lay behind them. For this reason, an historian who begins his or her research in the relatively abstract field of decision-making will sooner or later be forced (if the research is being done in a serious manner) to deal directly with the murders.

However, because of the disparate character of the sources and because the reconstruction of events remains in many cases fragmentary, *interpretation* of events inevitably plays an important role in our field. This brings me to the third problem that I would like to discuss today.

The reconstruction of the launch of the systematic murder of the European Jews is tied to the basic question of the present-day interpretation of the Nazi dictatorship and involves fundamental problems such as the role of Hitler, the functioning of the power apparatus, the behavior of the elite, the role of anti-Semitism, racism, and much more.

During the past two decades research in this field has been dominated by a confrontation between two schools: the so-called “functionalists” and “intentionalists.” Whereas the “intentionalists” present the murder of European Jewry as the product of the ideology and long-term planning of Hitler and the Nazi leadership, the “functionalists” stress the role of the bureaucratic apparatus and the “cumulative radicalization” process that emerged from the competition between rival institutions.

The confrontation between these two perspectives has stimulated research for a number of years. It is generally held today, however, that this debate has largely come to an impasse. It has done so after running its course through the most important phases of a typical historiographical dispute, namely, the development of arguments, their transformation into dogma, polemical discussion and, finally, an attempt to harmonize the various points of view.³

A series of publications that have appeared in the past four or five years open new perspectives on the Holocaust and will, in my view, help to supersede this still engaging but more or less deadlocked debate between “intentionalists” and “functionalists.” This research, mainly done by a new generation of German scholars, appears to be characterized by two trends: regionalization and thematic diversification.

In recent years, a string of important studies have, for the first time, fundamentally examined the Holocaust in particular areas of Eastern Europe, doing so on the basis of the archival material found there. Thanks to the work of a whole series of authors, we today have much more precise ideas about the history of the Holocaust in, for example Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Galicia, the Lublin area of Poland and in other regions.⁴ Further important regional studies are expected in the near future.⁵

Historians also have begun to research new thematic aspects of the Holocaust. We have seen studies that, in particular, have established a connection between the murder of the Jews and the planning of German economists and demographers, who called for or justified the “disappearance” of the Jews on “rational” grounds.⁶ It has been claimed that the mass murder of the Jews began after the failure of the Germans’ policy to resettle millions of people into the occupied areas.⁷ On the other hand, other research has connected the beginning of the Holocaust with the Germans’ policy systematically to starve out the occupied areas.⁸ More recent studies show that only on superficial examination did forced labor offer temporary chances of survival to a minority of Jews concerned. In fact, work projects were an integral part of the German policy of murder in the sense of “extermination through work.”⁹ Detailed research of

the murders carried out by SS Einsatzgruppen and other killing units has shown that the actions of these groups became more and more radical in the course of the first weeks and months of the war against the Soviet Union, and that the inherent momentum of the situation and the initiative of the subordinate officers on the ground played a large role in this.¹⁰ The question of the extent of the Wehrmacht's joint responsibility for the murder of the Jews is being discussed once more against the background of the results of detailed research.¹¹ Since the ground-breaking work of Robert Jan van Pelt and Debórah Dwork on the building of the gas chambers at Auschwitz, we know that the history of the building of the extermination camps is of great significance for the reconstruction of the decision to implement the "Final Solution."¹²

The large number of works on concentration camps has been increased by further important studies.¹³ Other works show the role of the various branches of the bureaucracy in the process of the systematic annihilation of the Jews.¹⁴ The question of who profited from the usufruct of Jewish property has come to the fore: the discovery that in many places Jewish household goods were auctioned publicly and that the homes that Jews had been forced to leave were much sought-after,¹⁵ makes particularly pertinent the question of how popular the "disappearance" of the Jews actually was. In this context, scholars continue to discuss how much the German population knew about the aim of the deportations.¹⁶ Comparisons have been made between the persecution of the Jews in the countries occupied by Germany and their persecution in the countries allied to Germany. These show that Germany alone was not decisive for the fate of the Jews, but that the readiness of the local population, or rather administration, to collaborate was also of key importance.¹⁷

A consequence of this new regional emphasis and thematic specialization is that the identities of more and more complicit individuals and institutions are emerging. It can be documented that these provided "arguments" advocating the "disappearance" of the Jews from their area, and they provided concrete suggestions for how this could be accomplished, as well.

Two conclusions emerge from the explosion of information about perpetrators provided by recent research: first, it is becoming increasingly clear that this historical event cannot be described as a series of coolly organized administrative deaths. Rather, we are dealing with an unimaginable massacre lasting several years, in which hundreds of thousands of perpetrators and helpers tortured and killed millions of victims under the eyes of millions of observers in large parts of Europe.

As the results of research on the murder of the European Jews unfold, it is also becoming increasingly clear that the genesis of the murder of the Jews cannot be understood in terms of a schema such as: formulation of intentions by the protagonists—decision-making process—decision—implementation. The more we find out about the activities of the apparatus that prepared and organized the murder of the European Jews, the clearer it becomes that a history of the genocide written as the history of individual decision-makers, of institutions and of their interaction can only be inadequate and fragmentary. In view of our knowledge of the scale of the Holocaust, it is in my opinion no longer appropriate to put the genesis of the mass murder down to original “intentions” of the leading Nazis, or rather to one single “decision” at the highest level.¹⁸ In my view, discussion of the Holocaust has, until now, concentrated too much on trying to explain why the machinery of murder was set in operation. A second, equally as important, but much less discussed question is, however, why this machinery was kept in operation right up until the spring of 1945, until the liquidation of the last camps and the perpetuation of the death marches. This question can hardly be answered adequately with reference to the original intentions of the decision-makers. Instead, it is becoming clearer through research that the mass murder over many years was possible only because the majority of the perpetrators at the various levels were fundamentally convinced that they were doing the right thing; they continually reinforced each other in this basic conviction. It is also becoming ever clearer that the murder of the European Jews required a continuous process of decisions at many different levels until literally the last days of the war. Behind the individual measures taken by the various people and institutions, there was, quite obviously, an all-powerful will to annihilate, a will based on a relatively broad consensus. Yet because this research is conducted in a highly specialized manner, the sheer mountain of information being produced threatens to make us lose sight of the broad phenomenon—and this seems to me the main dilemma of current research.

In my view, there is a danger that, as a result of a kind of over-specialization and compartmentalization, the Holocaust will come to be understood as the product of an aggregation of different crises that emerged in the second half of 1941 in different regions, following upon the collapse of the great resettlement plans and when food and housing problems became more pressing, or when regional party leaders came under pressure to make the main cities of the Reich “free of Jews,” etcetra, etcetra.

It seems too tempting to create a scenario in which the accumulation of crises led functionaries in different offices to come to the conclusion that the best solution would be to get rid of the Jews. Overspecialization of research could lead to a “multi-causal” explanation that would leave out, as I see it, the essential aspect of the Holocaust. Facing this general trend towards specialization, I see my book as an attempt to take another look at the decision-making process and its prime focus; to go back to the basic question: what actually was the role of racism and anti-Semitism in the history of the Nazi movement and the Third Reich?

To answer this question we have to go back to the roots of the Nazi movement and look for an interpretative framework that would allow us to make sense of the flood of new information and knowledge about the “genesis of the Final Solution,” and would take us beyond the deadlocked debate between the functionalists and intentionalists. Instead of couching our discussion in terms such as “decision-making processes, decisions,” and “genesis of the Final Solution,” and the like, we should, I believe, go back to the concept of policy as an interpretative framework that could help us understand historical events much better. Therefore, I suggest that we should as a number of writers have recently done, examine the *policy* of persecution and annihilation of the Jews under German rule.¹⁹ If we assume that the Nazi regime was pursuing a “policy” of persecution and murder of the European Jews, then a number of elements that, in the previous discussion, were isolated, incompatible and even inconsistent with each other, can be brought together.

The concept of “policy” implies, among other things, that in persecuting and murdering the Jews, the Nazi leadership (as the intentionalists have suggested) was in principle guided by specific ideas and ideologies, and that the regime pursued this policy persistently and, to some extent, continuously. Yet, as functionalist historians have suggested, on the other hand, the Nazis were prepared to behave tactically and were flexible. They repeatedly re-orientated themselves when conditions changed. This policy therefore assumed quite different forms at different phases of Nazi rule without losing its coherence. Thus, the bureaucratic apparatus, like all other political systems, pursued its own interests and had its own dynamic, so that function sometimes seems to have dominated content.

The concept of “policy” also implies that the mass murder was supported by a relatively broad consensus within the Nazi movement; that it was placed under a certain

amount of pressure to legitimize itself and expressed itself in a semi-public discourse, typical for the Nazi period, about the persecution of the Jews.

Nazi persecution of Jews was not one-dimensional. The policy of persecution and annihilation was multifaceted, went through different phases and served different functions at different times during the dictatorship. As a result of this, the *policy* of the Nazi dictatorship towards the Jews can, to a certain extent, also be understood as anti-Jewish *politics* (the German term “*Politik*,” which I used in my study, covers both dimensions).

My suggestion to try to understand the Holocaust within an interpretative framework of a policy of annihilation does not mean framing it within an abstract definition of political science. Rather, I would like to attempt to provide a multidimensional framework in order to understand better the complexity of the historical events.

The policy of extermination and its historical preconditions should be at the center of an interpretation of the Third Reich. If we assume that what was unique and specific to the Nazi dictatorship was the murder of the European Jews, then it seems appropriate to regard this historical event as the central theme in the history of the Third Reich, rather than seeing it as a function, side-effect, or consequence of other contemporary historical phenomena of this period. But, the anti-Jewish policy should be central to an interpretation of the Third Reich not only because of its dreadful consequences, but also because of the very nature of the Nazi movement and the Third Reich.

We must also remember that the Nazi Party's whole dynamic and self-image were sustained by the illusory notion that the Party would create a completely new social order that would be a racially homogeneous national community. This was its highest goal and the main dynamic power of the movement. This objective shaped the identity of National Socialism as an independent historical movement.

Because of inconsistencies in the concept of race, however, the racial homogeneity to which the Nazis aspired could be implemented only negatively, i.e., by the permanent discrimination, exclusion and, finally, eradication of so-called inferiors. This policy was directed primarily against the Jewish minority, which had been stigmatized for centuries.

The Nazis created a new, independent field of policy that cut across the existing spheres of politics such as foreign policy, social policy, and the like, and, in doing so,

influenced and dominated them. “Jewish policy” was of central significance for the implementation, dissemination, and securing of National Socialist rule—at first within the Reich and later, when it had escalated into a policy of annihilation, within German-dominated Europe. The power-political role of anti-Jewish policy (the instrumentally rational application of an irrational ideology within a system of co-ordinates defined by the National Socialists) seems to me to be absolutely crucial to an understanding of the Nazi persecution of the Jews. This perspective can explain why the Nazis repeatedly pushed the persecution of the Jews to more radical stages, both in the course of establishing and developing their power, but also in the face of its imminent loss. I should therefore like to suggest that, rather than seeing National Socialist anti-Jewish policy, as the functionalists do, as a sequence of conditional decisions following abruptly one from the other, or, as the intentionalists do, as the consequence of an ideological mania, the context and continuity of Nazi anti-Jewish policy be more strongly emphasized in further discussion on the genesis of the Final Solution, since the functionalist and intentionalist approaches have the effect of isolating it from the general history of the period as a phenomenon that, ultimately, cannot be rationally explained.

The role of racism and anti-Semitism as instruments for the extension of the power and influence of the Nazi movement was apparent from the very first years of the Nazi dictatorship. The racial laws (e.g., the Nuremberg Laws) allowed the Nazi movement to penetrate the private sphere of every citizen—the general trend was to abolish the private altogether. The “Aryanization” of Jewish property signified the Party's basic right to intervene in economic affairs.²⁰ The so-called “de-Judification” of culture and education provided the Nazi movement with the opportunity to bring schools, universities, theaters, film and musical life under their control. The removal of German Jews from their positions in cultural and educational institutions was only the first step in a more comprehensive elimination of the “Jewish influence.” (This expression proved to be a general-purpose weapon that the Nazis used against almost all the trends in cultural life that they disliked.) By excluding Jews and other groups from social benefits, the character of social policy was fundamentally altered. It was no longer a case of employing social benefits to compensate for individual inequality of opportunity; rather the “re-”production of the mythical “Aryan People’s Community” had precedence. Social policy became what the Nazis called “*Volkspflege*” (“Care of

the Nation”).²¹ In this way, racial and anti-Semitic policy penetrated the individual’s lifestyle and private sphere and redefined it in a Nazi sense.

Thus, even in this formative phase of Jewish Policy, purpose-created institutions developed their own terminology and trained their own specialists. These institutions were to become decisively radicalized in the course of the war. In this context, I am thinking not only of the Jewish Departments in the Gestapo and SD,²² and of “scientific” institutes that dealt with the “Jewish Question” and other “questions of race,”²³ but also of the Jewish Departments that were set up in most Government ministries.²⁴

Nazi Policy of Annihilation: Four Steps of Escalation

In the following section I will discuss the actual thesis of my book: the decision-making process that led to the murder of the European Jews.

I am primarily concerned to get away from the attempt to pinpoint a specific point in time for the decision to murder the European Jews. Instead, I would like to describe the genesis of the policy of annihilation as a process that did not proceed autonomously, but rather in close connection with developments in other political spheres. I also intend to straighten out the chronology of the decision-making process and place it in the context of the general history of the Third Reich.

Most researchers, like Christopher Browning, Philippe Burrin and others, argue that a decision to murder the European Jews was taken at some point in the second half of 1941. The months of October and, more recently, December are named relatively frequently.²⁵ Richard Breitman is an exception among participants in this debate since he argues that a fundamental decision was taken in early 1941 and that this decision was implemented in August and September of that year.²⁶

In contrast to prevalent trends among historians, I have tried to stress the events in the phase before the beginning of the actual mass murder as being formative for the Holocaust. On the other hand, I take the view that the decision-making process concerning the principal question of the murder of the European Jews was not fully concluded until the spring/summer of 1942.

In my opinion, the policy of annihilation can be seen as having developed in four stages of escalation.

The first stage in this scheme is the year 1939. The beginning of the war spelled the actual transition from the so-called Jewish policy to the policy of “extermination.”

Whereas the Nazis had originally hoped to have driven almost all German Jews away by the beginning of a war, in fact there were still about 300,000 Jews in the “Greater German Reich” in September 1939, and the war against Poland increased this number sixfold.

During the war with Poland, in mid-September, the German leadership began to develop a resettlement program on an enormous scale for the newly conquered areas. What they planned was the deportation of all the Jews living in the areas under German rule into a “Jewish reservation” in the Lublin district of the Generalgouvernement. The first transports from the Reich into this reservation took place in October 1939 under the Nisko scheme, but they soon had to stop.

The Lublin/Nisko Plan was followed by two comprehensive resettlement plans: after the defeat of France, Madagascar was brought into the discussion; at the beginning of 1941, with the preparations for Barbarossa, a plan was drawn up to deport the Jews to the parts of the Soviet Union that were to be conquered and brought under German rule.²⁷ But, what were the intentions of the Nazis when they developed these deportation plans?

In my opinion, a general genocidal intention existed from the start of the planning of the deportations. A number of statements by high-level Nazi functionaries and informed contemporaries can be cited as evidence for this theory. Leading Generalgouvernement officials such as Hans Frank, Friedrich Schmidt, the leader of the Lublin district, and Odilo Globocnik, Lublin’s SS and Police leader, but also other Nazis, were speaking openly since the end of 1939 of letting a large number of Jews die or starve to death.²⁸ But also the way in which the first deportations, for example those to Nisko, were carried out supports this thesis.²⁹

In fact, the plans for a Jewish reservation amounted to the concentration of the Jews from the whole area under German rule in a space that could not support life adequately. Thus the intention was to bring about the deaths of millions of people through a combination of malnutrition, epidemics, and the like, as well as achieving a low birth rate, possibly in a time frame of several generations. Hitler’s prophecy of 30 January 1939, in which he predicted the annihilation of the Jews of Europe in the event of a world war,³⁰ makes clear that a reservation project would also be hostage-taking on a huge scale, allowing him to blackmail the Western powers. The plan for a reservation therefore must be seen as a first step towards the Final Solution. It was, in other words, a project that, under certain circumstances, provided for the death of the vast majority

of the Jews living under German rule. Its radical nature becomes clear when it is seen in connection with the two programs of murder based on “racial-hygiene” or on “racial” policy that the Nazi regime initiated after the beginning of the war: the “euthanasia” program, to which at least 70,000 disabled and ill people fell victim within the following two years,³¹ and the shooting of tens of thousands of members of the Polish ruling classes, including again, thousands of Jews.³² By the early phase of the war, the regime had taken the crucial step towards mass murder.

For the Nazi movement the war represented a *chance* to realize their plans of creating an empire ordered along racial lines. The war provided an *inner justification* for the eradication of “inferiors” in order to compensate for the loss of people considered to be racially valuable. The war as a state of emergency first provided the *opportunity* for such an unprecedented break with humanitarian traditions.

Common to all of these so-called territorial or reservation plans was always the prospect of a physical Final Solution, even if it was to stretch out over a long period of time. In my opinion, the view that there was a phase during which the Nazis thought about territorial solutions and resettlement schemes, and that this was separated from a later Final Solution phase by a decision to exterminate the European Jews on principle, taken sometime during 1941, misses the essence of Nazi Jewish policy.³³ The territorial solution was always conceived as a Final Solution. It was ultimately intended to lead to the death of the vast majority of Jews.

Thus, the crucial turning point in the transition from anti-Jewish policy to extermination policy came during the autumn of 1939. What happened from 1941 onwards was the accomplishment of the annihilation that had been envisaged as early as 1939. However, it had been made dependent on certain conditions, and was seen as a long-term process. In the course of the implementation of this policy after 1941, the notion of what the Final Solution was to mean became increasingly radical. What had begun as general, long-term considerations about ensuring that the Jews die out within the area under German rule was developed into a comprehensive program of mass murder that, in the opinion of the planners, should in essence be completed before the end of the war. From 1939 onwards however, in both cases the Final Solution would lead to millions of deaths.

This connection between war and extermination policy should not be seen as inevitable or automatic. Nor should it be understood to mean that a decision to murder the European Jews had been taken at the beginning of the war. Rather, it should be seen

as the outcome of policy. In order for the annihilation to start, certain crucial conditions had to be fulfilled. Until the reservation had been set up, until the deportations had begun, and until the war had become a world war, extermination remained an intention, which, under certain circumstances, could still be reversed.

In the summer of 1941, when the Nazis started their war of racial extermination against the Soviet Union, the policy of annihilation went through its second phase of escalation. In this phase too, the anti-Jewish policy has to be seen in a broader racial context. One has to take into consideration that during the planning phase for the war, the German authorities planned the death of about 30 million people in the territories that were to be conquered. In particular, no preparations were made to supply the Soviet prisoners of war with food.³⁴ As regards the anti-Jewish policy, the decisive escalation was reached at the end of July/beginning of August, approximately six weeks after the beginning of the war.

During the first weeks of the Russian campaign, tens of thousands of Jewish men of military age had been shot (a crime similar to the murder of members of the Polish elite in 1939 and 1940). However, from the end of July and, increasingly, from August, September and October 1941 onwards, a new stage in the escalation of policy was reached when hundreds of thousands of Jewish men, women and children of all ages were murdered.³⁵ This transition from terrorism to a policy of what we have more recently come to call “ethnic cleansing” cannot be adequately explained by the feeling of elation produced by victory, nor by the change in mood in response to the failure of the Blitzkrieg strategy.³⁶ Rather, it became apparent that in the summer of 1941 the German side was beginning to “restructure” the conquered *Lebensraum*, just as originally planned, without waiting for military victory.

As the war continued, the planned restructuring of the Eastern territories had to be limited to purely “negative” measures: murdering the Jewish civilian population on a massive scale and “clearing” whole districts of Jews was, in the view of the Nazi leadership, an anticipation of the plans discussed before the war, by which about 30 million people in the Soviet area were to die. In my opinion, the essential element here was Himmler’s initiative, although I cannot go into details here. The Reichsführer-SS wanted to ensure by his brutal behavior in the late summer of 1941 that he received the authority to undertake the reorganization of the new *Lebensraum*. He therefore extended the existing practice of murdering Jewish men to include the whole Jewish population. The fact that the war had not been won in a very short time, as planned,

prompted Himmler to start implementing the racial restructuring of the occupied areas, a process intended to take place after the victory, during the war itself—and he managed to get Hitler’s consent for his radical policy.³⁷

The third stage of escalation in the policy of extermination can be dated to the autumn of 1941. In the middle of September 1941, Hitler made the decision to deport all the Jews from the Reich to the conquered areas of Poland, and to complete the process as far as possible that year. His plan was to send them farther east in the spring of 1942. The deportations were to take place in a number of waves.³⁸

A number of important administrative measures were taken in preparation for the deportations, such as the introduction of the yellow star for German Jews in September, the general ban on emigration for all Jews in areas under German control in October, and the regulation of November 1941, which ensured that Jews would lose their German citizenship and their property upon crossing the border. In my opinion these measures served to safeguard the deportation of all the Jews to the East. We have no proof that these measures meant that immediate murder in extermination camps already had been decided upon. In internal statements the Nazis gave various reasons for the deportations: the need to make homes occupied by Jews available to those whose own homes had been destroyed in air raids, “retaliation” for the British air raids, counter-measures against the forcible resettlement of the ethnic Germans from the Volga (which had just been decided on by the Soviet Union), and there are also indications that the deportations were even intended as a “warning” to the United States to keep out of the war.³⁹ Whatever justification the Nazis gave for the beginning of the deportations, what is decisive in my view is the fact that they actually set the deportation plan, which they had developed as early as the beginning of 1941, in motion, i.e., they started the deportations to the East in the fall of 1941 despite the fact that they had not yet won the war.

The first two waves of deportations, to Lodz, Minsk and Riga respectively, took place between mid-October 1941 and the beginning of February 1942. In March 1942, the third wave, which had already been announced by Reinhard Heydrich in November, finally began. Its destination was the Lublin district, the original “Jewish reservation.”⁴⁰ The decision taken by the Nazi government in autumn 1941 to start the deportations to the East must, as further developments show, have been followed immediately by the resolution to organize the mass murder of the local Jews in the provisional reception areas. The strategy of clearing whole areas of Jews, making them

“*judenfrei*,” a strategy that had been adopted in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union at the end of the summer, was now transferred to the areas of Poland under occupation—the prospect of further tens of thousands of Jews being sent to the already bursting ghettos demanded more radical solutions from those who were in charge on the ground.

In Lodz, where the first wave of deported Jews arrived in fall 1941, the request of the local authorities, to murder 100,000 Polish Jews, was granted. A station for gassing vans was set up at Chelmno before the end of 1941 in order to implement this mass murder.⁴¹ In Minsk and Riga, where the second wave of deportees from Germany were bound, tens of thousands of local Jews were shot shortly before the trains from Germany arrived. In Riga and in Mogilev near Minsk, preparations were made to build gas chambers, but they were not completed.⁴² In the Lublin district, the reception area for the third wave, preparations for the mass murder of the Jews living there began in October 1941 with the building of an extermination camp, Belzec.⁴³

It becomes clear that the Nazi leadership erected or planned the first gas chambers in exactly those areas that were intended for the first deportations from the Reich. The purpose of the extermination camps in Chelmno and Belzec was, first of all, to kill large numbers of the local Jewish population in order to make room for the arriving Jews from Central Europe. What was decided in fall 1941 was to extend the mass murder, which had been going on in the Soviet Union for several months, to certain other areas.

The present state of historical research does not permit us to say, however, that the murder of the European Jews had already been decided upon by the fall of 1941. Thus, the Jews deported from Central Europe were usually not yet murdered directly upon their arrival in the ghettos. Where this did occur, for example in the case of mass executions outside the Reich, in Kovno and Riga, it was obviously not authorized by the Nazi leadership. Himmler himself tried to prevent the shooting of 1035 Jews, who had been deported from Berlin to Riga.⁴⁴

I therefore maintain, in contrast to prevailing current academic opinion, that the fall of 1941 was not a phase in which the Nazi leadership was considering whether to implement the decision, taken previously, to murder all the European Jews. Rather, I see the autumn and the following winter as a transitional phase, during which a significant amount of discretionary power was still available.

Those responsible continued to assume that the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” would take place after the end of the war, and, although this is difficult to understand in retrospect, regarded the murders that they organized in the Soviet Union and in Poland as regionally limited measures in anticipation of the future “Final Solution.”

However, what proved to be decisive was that, in the winter of 1941–42, the notion of the war and how long it would last had to be revised in the light of the entry of the US into the conflict and the failure of the Blitzkrieg strategy in the East.

The more those responsible began to grasp that the war was not going to be won quickly, the more they began to persuade themselves that they could solve the “Jewish problem,” created as a result of their own policy, before the end of hostilities. In view of the increasing number of victims of the various acts of regional murder, they came to the conclusion that this genocide could be accomplished with the means of mass killing available to them.

In the course of the winter of 1941–42, a new way of thinking took precedence. Previously it had been thought that, after the end of the war, the European Jews would be deported to a desolate area in the East where they would be condemned to death. But, at this time the idea began to take hold that the Final Solution could be accomplished in the course of the war by the direct means of mass executions and poison gas. Evidence of this change in thinking is provided by the fact that in the winter of 1941–42, leading Nazis, especially Hitler, Goebbels and Rosenberg, spoke quite openly about the future destruction or extermination of the Jews.⁴⁵ How and when this annihilation would take place were, however, open questions.

This process of radicalization, whereby the mass murder took on the proportions of a systematic and Europe-wide program of extermination, is reflected in the minutes of the Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942.⁴⁶ A precise study of the minutes shows, in my opinion, that the final decision systematically to murder all Jews as soon as possible still had not been made at that point.

Heydrich’s words at the Wannsee Conference indicate that the RSHA then was still adhering to the plan that the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” would be undertaken in the occupied areas in the East, and that this “Final Solution” could only be completed after the war. Heydrich was also clear about what the term “final solution” meant: the European Jews should be exterminated by means of a combination of forced labor and mass murder.

The minutes also reveal when the deportations would start: as soon as the military situation would allow it, i.e., spring 1942. But, the fact that the figure of 11 million Jews, which Heydrich mentioned, included Jewish minorities in Great Britain, Spain and Turkey reveals his post-war perspective.

We have no evidence to indicate that, during the course of the Wannsee Conference, there already was a plan to deport Jews from Central and Western Europe directly to extermination camps. On the contrary, the first deportations from Germany and from other countries in Central and Western Europe (from Slovakia and France), deportations that began in the spring of 1942, did not lead directly to extermination camps. The killing facilities in the extermination camps were not rapidly enlarged directly after the Wannsee Conference, but rather in late spring and summer of 1942.⁴⁷

At the same time, the minutes of the Wannsee Conference make it clear that participants debated a suggestion that the Jews in the Generalgouvernement and in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union be withdrawn from this general plan and killed immediately. The minutes additionally reflect discussion of how this “final solution” was to be implemented technically, i.e., the use of gassing probably was discussed. The minutes do not, however, make clear whether or not a decision was made on this point.

After the conference, the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA) updated the deportation plans for the Jews in the Greater German Reich and extended them into the first Europe-wide deportation program, which originally included six countries.⁴⁸

First, the RSHA organized the third wave of deportations out of the Reich, an action that already had been scheduled for the fall of 1941. In the course of this third wave, approximately 50,000 people were deported to ghettos in the Lublin area between March and June 1942. Many of them died miserably after just a few weeks.⁴⁹

As of March 1942, the local Jewish population in the Lublin area met the same fate that those in Lodz, Minsk and Riga had met the year before: a significant proportion of the local Jewish community was murdered in the Belzec killing center, whose construction had begun the previous fall.⁵⁰ Deportations to Belzec also started from the neighboring district of Galicia, i.e., the area of eastern Poland that had been conquered only the previous summer in the course of the war against the Soviet Union. Although these areas had been annexed to the Generalgouvernement on August 1, 1941, the SS had carried out mass executions there during the winter, as they had in the other former Soviet territories. So, until spring 1942, the murders in Galicia followed the pattern set in the occupied Soviet territories.⁵¹

Goebbels' remark in his diary, that one could "certainly ascertain that 60% of them must be liquidated, while only 40% can be set to work," is informative about the nature of the policy of annihilation in the districts of Lublin and Galicia.⁵² The methods used in the deportation of Central European Jews and the extermination of Eastern European Jews were the same as had been used in the first two waves of deportations in the fall of 1941 and in the following winter.

In March 1942, the deportations were extended to two countries outside Eastern Europe and the German Reich—to Slovakia and France.

The initial deportations from Slovakia were to the district of Lublin, as well as to Auschwitz, where the deportees were at first used as slave laborers.⁵³ In France, the deportations began with the first "hostage train," composed largely of Jews taken as hostages "in retaliation" for attacks by the resistance movement. Further hostage transports left France in June. These were already part of the RSHA's first Europe-wide deportation program, which had been developed in the interim.⁵⁴ An important clue to the existence of such programs is a comment made by the office of the Slovak prime minister, Tuka, on April 10 about a visit from Heydrich.⁵⁵ Heydrich explained to Tuka on this occasion that the planned deportation of the Slovakian Jews was merely "a part of the program" and that, at the time, a "resettlement" was taking place of altogether "half a million Jews" "out of Europe to the East": Slovakia was not alone in this; the Reich, the Protectorate, the Netherlands, Belgium and France were also being affected.

In May and June 1942, while these first RSHA deportation programs were being implemented in six European countries, a further escalation in the policy of extermination took place. While the mass murder had hitherto been limited to particular areas and could be described by those responsible as an answer to specific problems arising in those areas, the policy of extermination was now extended to the area under German rule in general. By the middle of 1942, those responsible had accepted the concept that what had been mass murder in specific regions was no longer merely regionally limited. The killings no longer simply anticipated the coming Final Solution, which they had thought would be implemented thoroughly after the end of the war. They now saw that, by means of an intensification and extension of this murder, the Final Solution could be achieved in the course of the war itself and, in fact, with the use of the murder installations that had been originally set up for mass murder in specific regions.

This last escalation in the policy of extermination can be most clearly observed through the following events:

—At the end of May/June 1942, the systematic murder of the Jews in the districts of Lublin and Galicia was extended to all districts of the Generalgouvernement. In May, the Sobibor killing center was opened and, at about the same time, construction work on the third such camp, Treblinka in the district of Warsaw, was begun. However, because of transport blockages that occurred in June, the beginning of these deportations within the Generalgouvernement was largely delayed until July.⁵⁶

—Similarly, in the middle of May, the systematic murder of the Jews in annexed Upper Silesia began. Between May and August, 38,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz and murdered by gassing immediately upon entering the camp.⁵⁷

—As of May 1942, those Central European Jews who were deported to Eastern European ghettos were no longer kept in the ghettos, but generally were shot in the forests nearby or were sent to be gassed. This was also the case for German Jews who were deported from the Reich to Minsk in the fourth wave of deportations. Similarly, those Jews from Slovakia who arrived in the Lublin district were no longer settled in ghettos, but were instead immediately deported to the Sobibor killing center.⁵⁸

—With the recent escalation in extermination policy in the spring of 1942, the concept of “transitory ghettos” for Jews from Central Europe was abandoned. This further radicalization had the result that in May 1942 the almost 11,000 Jews, who had been transported to Lodz from Central Europe during the preceding autumn and who had survived horrible living conditions, were now murdered in gassing vans stationed in Chelmno.⁵⁹

—At the beginning of June, a specific deportation program was set up for the West. It was to be completed no later than mid-September.⁶⁰ This Western program continued the Europe-wide plans that had first emerged at the beginning of April. Those in the transports from the West, like those from Slovakia and the Reich, were sent to Auschwitz. After the two provisional gas chambers had been completed, these deportees were treated in the same way as those who were sent to Minsk and Sobibor: beginning with a transport from Slovakia on July 4, the majority were murdered in the gas chambers immediately on their arrival.⁶¹

When I published my book at the end of 1998, I drew the conclusion from these various events that, in the second half of April 1942, a final decision must have been taken by the Nazi leadership to extend the ongoing mass murder into a Europe-wide program for systematic annihilation.

In early 1999, a team of German researchers published Himmler's appointment book for the years 1941 and 1942, and I found in this calendar a number of entries that were consistent with my reconstruction of the events. According to the calendar, Himmler met Heydrich six times in the last week of April and the first days of May at various locations (in Berlin, Munich, and Prague). This series of meetings is framed by three conferences between Hitler and Himmler.⁶² Himmler's appointment book reveals nothing about the substance of the consultations. Perhaps future research will be able to discover whether during these meetings the final decision was made on the implementation of a Europe-wide program of deportation and murder.

As a result of transport problems, it was to take about two months until these murder and deportation programs were set in full motion. In July 1942, after the transport embargo had been lifted, the full program of deportation and murder came into effect. About a week after the lifting of the transport embargo, Himmler reassured himself of the program's viability. He met Hitler several times in mid-June, and pressed the Transport Ministry on July 16, to allocate more trains to the deportations.⁶³ He then visited Auschwitz on July 17–18, in order to witness a demonstration of people being murdered in gas chambers. In the evening, at a social gathering organized by the Silesian Gauleiter, he expressed his deep satisfaction. From his comments, one of the people present drew the conclusion that the murder of the European Jews had been settled upon. This information was passed on to Switzerland and provided the basis for the Riegner telegram, which transmitted this alarming news to the Western world.⁶⁴ After his visit to Auschwitz, Himmler visited Globocnik in Lublin; it was from here, on July 19, that the Reichsführer-SS issued the crucial order that the "resettlement of the entire Jewish population of the Generalgouvernement was to be complete by December 31, 1942."⁶⁵

Already in June, at the time of Heydrich's funeral, Himmler had announced that the extermination of European Jews would be completed within one year.⁶⁶ This means that in the summer of 1942, a time plan for the implementation of the murder program had already been established.

By the time of the expansion of the war in the winter of 1941/42, the extermination program had thus gone through a change in function:

The beginning of the deportations from various occupied and Axis countries during 1942 raised the Lebensraum policy, hitherto concentrated on the East, into a policy that encompassed the re-ordering of the whole of Europe. As a result, Germany's allies and the forces in the occupied areas that were prepared to collaborate submitted to the hegemony of racism. They became tools and accomplices of a criminal policy and were thus tied to Germany, for better or for worse. The extension of the deportations also had the effect of strengthening the radical forces within the German occupation administrations, and thereby led to a general redistribution of power in favor of the National Socialist Party and the SS. In this way, the policy of annihilation held Germany's occupation and alliance policies together. It also served to make conditions in Germany more radical: the fact that it was treated as an open secret⁶⁷ was intended to let the German people know that they had allowed themselves to be involved in a crime of the most serious kind, and that, in the case of defeat in the war, they would be called to account for it.

Therefore, it was almost two years before the Nazis had reshaped their first, still very general visions of a violent end to Jewish existence in Europe into a concrete program of annihilation. But, important decisions in Nazi "Jewish Policy" were also made after the summer of 1942—decisions that meant life or death for hundreds of thousands of Jewish people. This was because a number of "*arbeitsfähig*" (able to work) Jews had been taken out of the extermination program, and because not all of Germany's allies had yet agreed to the deportation of their Jews. To achieve the inclusion of both of these large groups of Jews (more than two million people) in the extermination program was one of the SS leadership's most important objectives in 1943/44.

Therefore, even after 1942 the history of the Holocaust is not the history of an extermination program that progressed without deviation as a result of a single order, but is rather the history of a process, in the course of which various interests were weighed, priorities established, and decisions made—a process that was, in short, the result of a policy, but shaped by politics.

Notes

¹ Peter Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, (Munich: Piper, 1998). The April 1999 lecture has been expanded for publication, and the footnotes have been brought up to date.

² Yehuda Bauer, “Is the Holocaust explicable?,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5:2 (1990): 145–55. A different view is held by Saul Friedländer, “The ‘Final Solution’: On the Unease in Historical Interpretation,” in *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World*, ed. Peter Hayes (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1991), pp. 23–35.

³A review of this debate is given in Christopher Browning, “Beyond ‘Intentionalism’ and ‘Functionalism’: The Decision for the Final Solution. Reconsidered,” in *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 86–121, and in Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Arnold, 1985), ch. 5.

⁴ Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland, 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999); idem, “German Economic Interests, Occupation Policy, and the Murder of the Jews in Belorussia, 1941–43,” in *National-Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Oxford/New York: Berghahn, 2000), pp. 210–239; Bernhard Chiari, *Alltag hinter der Front: Besatzung, Kollaboration und Widerstand in Weißrußland, 1941–1944* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998); Dieter Pohl, “Schauplatz Ukraine: Der Massenmord an den Juden im Militärverwaltungsgebiet und im Reichskommissariat 1941–1943,” in *Ausbeutung, Vernichtung, Öffentlichkeit: Neue Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Lagerpolitik*, eds. Norbert Frei, Sibylle Steinbacher, and Bernd C. Wagner (Munich: Saur, 2000); Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia, 1941–1944: The Missing Center* (Riga: Historical Institute of Latvia in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1996); Wolfgang Benz and Marion Neiss, eds., *Judenmord in Litauen: Studien und Dokumente* (Berlin: Metropol, 1999); Thomas Sandkühler, “Endlösung” in *Galizien: Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die*

Rettungsinitiative von Berthold Beitz, 1941–1944 (Bonn: Dietz, 1996); Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien, 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (München: Oldenbourg, 1997); idem, “The Murder of Jews in the Generalgouvernement,” in *National-Socialist Extermination Policies*, ed. Herbert, pp. 83–103; Dieter Pohl, *Von der “Judenpolitik” zum Judenmord: Der Distrikt Lublin des Generalgouvernements, 1939–1944* (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1993); Bogdan Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung im Generalgouvernement: Eine Fallstudie zum Distrikt Lublin, 1939–1944* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999); Sybille Steinbacher, *“Musterstadt” Auschwitz: Germanisierungspolitik und Judenmord in Oberschlesien* (München: K.G. Saur, 2000).

⁵ Christoph Dieckmann (Frankfurt) is about to complete a dissertation on the Holocaust in Lithuania, Peter Klein (Berlin) is working on a dissertation about the Wartheland, Wendy Lower (Washington) has completed a dissertation on the German occupation of the Zhitomir area.

⁶ Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung: Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1991).

⁷ Götz Aly, *“Final Solution”: Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (London/New York: Arnold, 1999).

⁸ Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*; idem, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord: Forschungen zur deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1998); Christoph Dieckmann, “The War and the Killing of the Lithuanian Jews,” in *National-Socialist Extermination Policies*, ed. Herbert, pp. 210–39.

⁹ Bernd C. Wagner, *IG Auschwitz: Zwangsarbeit und Vernichtung von Häftlingen des Lagers Monowitz, 1941–1945* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2000).

¹⁰ Ralf Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen und die “Genesis der Endlösung”* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1996); Andrej Angrick, Martina Vogt, Silke Ammerschubert, and

Peter Klein, “‘Da hätte man schon ein Tagebuch führen müssen’: Das Polizeibataillon 322 und die Judenmorde im Bereich der Heeresgruppe Mitte während des Sommers und Herbstes 1941,” in *Die Normalität des Verbrechens*, eds. Helge Grabitz, Klaus Bästlein, and Johannes Tuchel (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1994), pp. 325–85; Peter Klein, ed., *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion: Die Tätigkeits- und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1997), contains articles by Scheffler, Gerlach, Pohl, and Angrick on the four Einsatzgruppen; Konrad Kwiet, “Auftakt zum Holocaust: Ein Polizeibataillon im Osteinsatz,” in *Der Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Ideologie und Herrschaft*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1993), pp. 92–110; Klaus-Michael Mallmann, “Vom Fußvolk der ‘Endlösung’: Ordnungspolizei, Ostkrieg und Judenmord,” *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch* 25 (1997): 355–91; Jürgen Matthäus, “What about the ‘Ordinary Men’? The German Order Police and the Holocaust in the Occupied Soviet Union,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 10:2 (Fall 1996): 134–50.

¹¹ Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann, eds., *War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II* (Oxford/New York: Berghahn, 1999).

¹² Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* (New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1996). The publication of van Pelt’s report about the gas chambers of Auschwitz, which was presented in the trial of David Irving in London at the beginning of 2000, will contain further relevant information.

¹³ Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth, and Christoph Dieckmann, eds., *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager: Entwicklung und Struktur* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1998); Karin Orth, *Das System der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager: Eine politische Organisationsgeschichte* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999); idem, *Die Konzentrationslager-SS: Sozialkulturelle Analysen und biographische Studien* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2000).

¹⁴ Dieter Maier, *Arbeitseinsatz und Deportation: Die Mitwirkung der Arbeitsverwaltung bei der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung in den Jahren 1938–1945* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1994); Wolf Gruner, *Der Geschlossene*

Arbeitseinsatz: Zur Zwangsarbeit als Element der Verfolgung 1938–1943 (Berlin: Metropol, 1997).

¹⁵ Wolfgang Dressen, ed., *Betrifft: "Aktion 3". Deutsche verwerten jüdische Nachbarn: Dokumente zur Arisierung* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1998); Frank Bajohr, "Arisierung" in *Hamburg: Die Verdrängung der jüdischen Unternehmer 1933–45* (Hamburg: Christians, 1997), pp. 331ff.

¹⁶ David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

¹⁷ Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine 1941–44* (Houndsmills/London: Macmillan, and New York: St. Martin's, both editions in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2000).

¹⁸ This problem is discussed in Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

¹⁹ Ulrich Herbert, "Extermination Policy: New Answers and Questions about the History of the Holocaust in German Historiography," in *National-Socialist Extermination Policies*, ed. Herbert, pp. 1–52.

²⁰ Bajohr, "Arisierung"; Gerhard Kratzsch, *Der Gauwirtschaftsapparat der NSDAP: Menschenführung—"Arisierung"—Wehrwirtschaft im Gau Westfalen-Süd* (Münster: Aschenhoff, 1989).

²¹ Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy, 1933–1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1997); Uwe Lohalm, *Fürsorge und Verfolgung: Öffentliche Wohlfahrtsverwaltung und nationalsozialistische Judenpolitik in Hamburg 1933–1945* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1998); Wolf Gruner, "Die öffentliche Fürsorge und die deutschen Juden 1933–1942," in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 45 (1997): 599–616.

²² George C. Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State: The Formation of Sipo and SD* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990); idem, *Hitler's Enforcers: The Gestapo and the SS Security Service in the Nazi Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Michael Wildt, ed., *Die Judenpolitik des SD 1935 bis 1938: Eine Dokumentation* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995).

²³ Fritz Bauer Institut, ed., "*Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses...*": *Antisemitische Forschung, Eliten und Karrieren im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus, 1999).

²⁴ The classic study of a "Jewish Department" in a Government ministry remains Christopher Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office: A Study of Referat D III of Abteilung Deutschland 1940–43* (New York/London: Holmes & Meier, 1978).

²⁵ Christopher Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Philippe Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews: The Genesis of the Holocaust* (London: Arnold, 1994); Christian Gerlach, "Die Wannsee-Konferenz: Das Schicksal der deutschen Juden und Hitlers politische Grundsatzentscheidung, alle Juden Europas zu ermorden," in *Werkstattgeschichte* 18 (1997): 7–44; L.J. Hartog, *Der Befehl zum Judenmord: Hitler, Amerika und die Juden* (Bodenheim: Syndikat, 1997).

²⁶ Richard Breitman, "Plans for the Final Solution in Early 1941," in *German Studies Review* 17:3 (1994): 483–93.

²⁷ Magnus Brechtken, *Madagaskar für die Juden: Antisemitische Idee und politische Praxis 1895–1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997); Hans Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan: Die beabsichtigte Deportation der europäischen Juden nach Madagaskar* (Munich: Herbig, 1997); Aly, "*Final Solution*," ch. 6.

²⁸ Frank on the 25.11.39 as well as the 23.4.40 (Werner Präg and Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, eds., *Das Diensttagebuch des deutschen Generalgouverneurs in Polen*,

1939–1945 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1975)); Globocnik on the 14.2.40 (ibid.); Schmidt (2278-PS, IMT XXX, pp. 84f). Further examples of such statements can be found in Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 260f, as well as in Steinbacher, “*Musterstadt*” *Auschwitz*, p. 120.

²⁹ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 256ff.

³⁰ Hitler’s prophecy: Max Domarus, *Reden und Proklamationen* (Würzburg 1963), vol. II, p. 1057.

³¹ Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance: “Euthanasia” in Germany, 1900–1945* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

³² Christian Jansen and Arno Weckbecker, *Der “Volksdeutsche Selbstschutz” in Polen 1939–40* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992).

³³ Christopher Browning makes clear that, in the period between the end of 1939 and spring 1941, the term “resettlement” “must (already) be understood as a euphemism for brutal expulsion and population decimation” (*Beyond “Intentionalism,”* p. 89). However, in my opinion, the genocidal character of these plans has to be even more clearly underlined: their aim was to bring about the end of Jewish existence within the German sphere of influence.

³⁴ Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*.

³⁵ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 293ff.

³⁶ These are the contrary explanations of Burrin and Browning.

³⁷ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 352ff.

³⁸ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 427ff.

³⁹ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 427ff.

⁴⁰ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 448ff, 483ff.

⁴¹ Eugen Kogon, et al., eds., *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas: Eine Dokumentation* (Frankfurt a. M: Fischer, 1986), pp. 110ff.

⁴² Hans Safrian, *Die Eichmann-Männer* (Vienna/Zurich: Europa-Verlag, 1993), pp. 143ff. Christian Gerlach, "Failure of Plans for an SS Extermination Camp in Mogilev, Belorussia," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 11:1 (1997): 60–78.

⁴³ Pohl, *Judenpolitik*, pp. 104ff; Musial, *Zivilverwaltung*, pp. 206ff.

⁴⁴ Himmler's telephone call came too late—the Jews from Berlin had already been shot on the morning of 30 November. But I would argue that, during this call, Himmler did not, as Browning claims, revoke an order given previously, to murder even the German Jews (Browning, *Nazi Policy*, p. 52f). Rather, he was stopping the unauthorized decision-making of Jeckeln, who was not differentiating between native and German Jews. Himmler reminded him of guidelines (not orders) that Himmler himself and the RSHA had issued for the treatment of German Jews, and reproached him for his unauthorized behavior. Himmler's rebuke demonstrates that Jeckeln's action was not covered by an explicit order from the Reichsführer. On the other hand, had he ignored a clear order from Himmler, he would have been severely disciplined. (Witte, et al., eds., *Dienstkalender*, 30.11.41, 1.12.41, 4.12.41).

⁴⁵ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 447f.

⁴⁶ Peter Longerich, *The Wannsee Conference in the Development of the "Final Solution"* (London: Holocaust Educational Trust, 2000). An English translation of the minutes is printed in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945:*

Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination: A Documentary Reader, vol. 3, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), pp. 1125ff.

⁴⁷ Belzec (June/July); Sobibor (July-September); Treblinka (May or June 1942); Auschwitz (March 1942: Bunker I, June 1942: Bunker II, September 1942: Krematorium II); Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 68ff, 126; 75ff, 128; 37ff; Dwork and van Pelt, *Auschwitz*, chs. 9 and 10.

⁴⁸ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 493ff.

⁴⁹ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 483ff.

⁵⁰ Pohl, *Judenpolitik*, pp. 104ff.

⁵¹ Pohl, *Judenverfolgung*, pp. 139ff.

⁵² Elke Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, part II, vol. 3 (Munich: Saur, 1994), 27.3.42.

⁵³ Yehoshua Büchler, “The Deportation of Slovakian Jews to the Lublin District of Poland,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 6:2 (1991): 151–66.

⁵⁴ Ulrich Herbert, “Die deutsche Militärverwaltung in Paris und die Deportation der französischen Juden,” in *Von der Aufgabe der Freiheit: Politische Verantwortung und bürgerliche Gesellschaft im 19. u. 20. Jahrhundert*, festschrift für Hans Mommsen zum 5. November 1995, eds. Christian Jansen, Lutz Niethammer, and Bernd Weisbrod, (Berlin: Akademie, 1995,) pp. 427–50.

⁵⁵ Longerich, *Politik*, p. 496.

⁵⁶ Pohl, *Judenverfolgung*, pp. 208ff.

⁵⁷ Steinbacher, *Auschwitz*, pp. 285ff.

⁵⁸ Büchler, *Deportation*.

⁵⁹ Peter Witte, “Two Decisions Concerning the ‘Final Solution to the Jewish Question’: Deportations to Lodz and Mass Murder in Chelmno,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 9:3 (Winter 1995): 293–317.

⁶⁰ Longerich, *Politik*, pp. 491ff.

⁶¹ Longerich, *Politik*, p. 515.

⁶² According to Himmler’s official diary, 23.4.42–3.5.42 (Witte, et al., *Dienstkalender*).

⁶³ Bundesarchiv Berlin, NS 19/2655, Ganzenmüller to Wolff, 29.7.41.

⁶⁴ Christopher R. Browning, “A Final Decision for the ‘Final Solution’?: The Riegner Telegram Reconsidered,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 10:1 (Spring 1996): 3–10.

⁶⁵ Bundesarchiv Berlin, NS 19/1757, printed in Peter Longerich, ed., *Die Ermordung der europäischen Juden: Eine umfassende Dokumentation des Holocaust* (Munich: Piper, 1989), p. 201.

⁶⁶ Bradley F. Smith and Agnes F. Peterson, eds., *Heinrich Himmler: Geheimreden, 1933–1945 und andere Ansprachen* (Frankfurt a.M/Berlin/Vienna: Propyläen, 1974), p. 169.

⁶⁷ Bankier, *Germans*.

Peter Longerich's scholarship sheds new light on the origins of the “Final Solution,” including the debate between those who hold that Nazi policy toward the Jews evolved over time in response to specific historical situations and those who argue that from the outset Hitler and the Nazi hierarchy placed top priority on the murder of European Jews. Dr. Longerich is Professor in the Department of German, Royal Holloway College, University of London, and obtained his Ph.D. in history from the University of Munich. He is the author of numerous documentary studies and monographs, including *Politik der Vernichtung: Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung* (Persecution of the Jews); *Deutschland 1918-1933: Die Weimarer Republik* (Germany 1918-1933: The Weimar Republic); *Hitlers Stellvertreter: Führung der NSDAP und Kontrolle des Staatsapparates durch den Stab Heß und Bormanns Partei-Kanzlei* (Hitler's Deputy: Leadership of the Nazi Party and Control of the State Apparatus by the Hess Bureau and the Party Chancellery of Martin Bormann), *Die Ermordung der europäischen Juden: Eine umfassende Dokumentation des Holocaust* (The Murder of the European Jews: A Comprehensive Documentation of the Holocaust); and co-editor of the German edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*. Dr. Longerich has been a researcher at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Munich), and a consultant to the Crown Office, War Crimes Investigation, Edinburgh. He has received research fellowships from the German Historical Institute (London), the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, and Yad Vashem. He acted as an expert witness for the defendant in the Irving vs. Lipstadt case in the High Court of Justice, London.

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