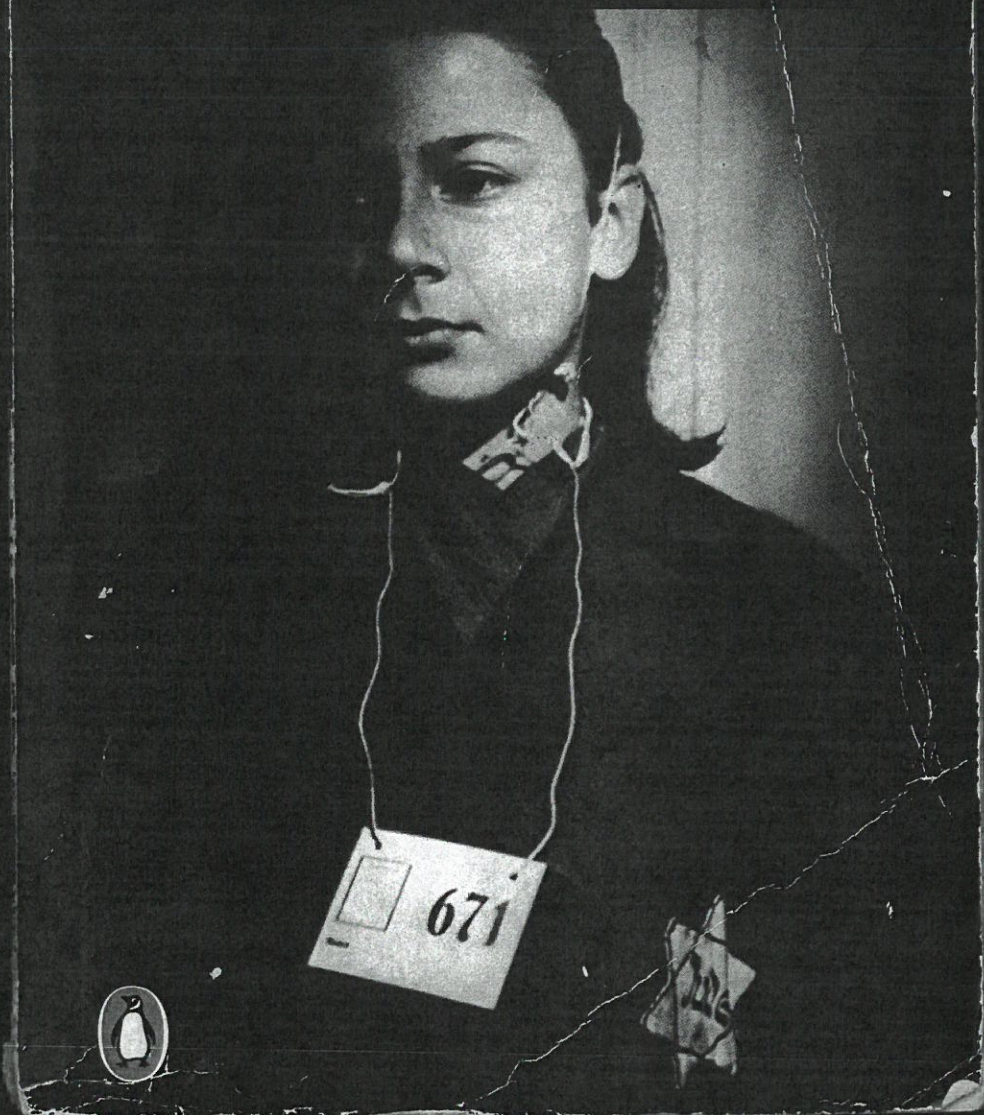


**The War against the Jews**  
**1933-45**  
**Lucy S. Dawidowicz**





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In memory of

Toba (Tobshie) Dawidowicz

Warsaw 1924-Warsaw Ghetto 1943

and

Zarek Dawidowicz

Warsaw 1927-Treblinka 1942 (?)

Two of six million

Approved for the Jews to reach Europe...  
of the...  
...



Archives of the Jewish Labour Bund, and Mrs Sylvia Landress, head of the Zionist Library and Archives, were generous in helping me locate various unpublished materials in their collections.

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Above all, I owe this book to my husband Szymon, who gave me the courage to begin the work and the strength to complete it.

I. S. D.

### Introduction to the Tenth Anniversary Edition

In the ten years since this book first appeared, a vast number of books and articles about the murder of the European Jews have been published. Nevertheless, this book continues to be favourably received by English readers throughout the world and has been published in French, German, Hebrew and Japanese as well. For this new edition I have supplemented the original list of sources with a bibliography culled from the publications of the past decade and I have corrected typographical errors. Apart from this, I have chosen not to alter anything that I wrote.

In the intervening years little new documentation has been unearthed from the rubble of National Socialist Germany. In 1983 the whole world was electrified by the news that sixty volumes purporting to be Hitler's handwritten secret diaries had been discovered. Some very eminent historians vouched for their genuineness, while other equally eminent historians disputed and ridiculed that claim. It didn't take long before the diaries were proved to be a clumsy forgery.

The new evidence that has come to light since my book first appeared provided some interesting items of documentation, but none can be described as significant finds in terms of changing our views of the National Socialist past. Indeed, this additional evidence has further strengthened and corroborated my account of the war that the German dictatorship under Adolf Hitler waged against the European Jews.

When I wrote *The War against the Jews 1933-45*, I undertook to do three things. First, I wanted to present a coherent account of how it came about that National Socialist Germany succeeded in murdering six million European Jews. This is 'Part I: The Final Solution'. Next, I wished to show how the Jews, first in Germany proper and then in Eastern Europe — in Poland and



Lithuania particularly — responded to the assault that was directed first against their rights, then against their livelihoods, and finally against their lives. This is Part II: the Holocaust. Finally, I provided the appendices, 'The Fate of the Jews in Hitler's Europe' and 'The Final Solution in Figures', to give the reader a concise factual overview, country by country, of the murder of the European Jews.

To lay the foundation for the historical account in the first part of the book, I began where this story must begin — with Hitler and with the irrational views of the Jews which shaped his mental universe. I tracked the development of Hitler's ideology from the start of his political career, examining his utterances on Jews as expressed in his speeches, articles and books, until his final political testament, which he dictated just before his suicide.

Next, in an attempt to explain how this uneducated fanatic emerged out of the German political landscape to become the Führer of the German nation, I offered a capsule history of German nationalism and of the racist anti-Semitism that first intruded into Germany's politics in the 1870s and soon became its most enduring staple. In time, the German people became habituated to the uninterrupted presence of anti-Semitism and came to accept it as a familiar element of their political discourse.

The conventional anti-Semitism of those days, as it appeared in the planks of several political parties, advocated stripping the Jews of their newly gained political rights, barring them from public office, forbidding them to teach in Germany's schools and universities, excluding them from participation in the country's cultural and intellectual life, and restricting further Jewish migration into Germany. But Hitler from his earliest days preached a new and radical form of anti-Semitism, in ambiguous and esoteric language calling for the 'removal' or 'elimination' of the Jews. To those who were not among the early insiders of the National Socialist Party, his anti-Semitic goals sounded unexceptional, indistinguishable from the conventional anti-Semitism to which most of them subscribed.

In the years immediately after the First World War, many

Germans could not reconcile themselves to their country's defeat. Blinded by nationalist arrogance, they could not concede even the possibility, let alone the grim reality, that Germany's resources had, in the end, been exhausted. These Germans had, in fact, become so deluded as to believe that their nation had been defeated only because of a 'stab in the back', a conspiratorial betrayal by Jews — in their eyes, the arch-conspirators of history. It is no wonder, then, that these people were prepared to accept Adolf Hitler as their political leader.

In the book's next five chapters, I undertook to describe, stage by stage, how the German government under Hitler and his National Socialist Party began to carry out by all means available to them — law (more correctly, pseudo-law), violence, terror — those ideas that Hitler had salvaged from the rubbish heap of German anti-Semitism and elaborated on, first in *Mein Kampf* and then in his second book (unpublished during his lifetime).

The closing chapter of Part I summed up the documentary evidence I had presented in the earlier chapters, setting forth my interpretation of how Hitler's fantastic idea to murder the European Jews came to be realized with deadly efficiency. It has been my view — now widely shared — that hatred of the Jews was Hitler's central and most compelling belief and that it dominated his thoughts and his actions all his life. That obsession led him, very early in his life, to latch on to the mad notion that the 'solution to the Jewish problem' could be achieved only by radical means, literally by 'eliminating' — that is, murdering — the Jews. It became his fixed idea, one to which he remained steadfast all his life.

From the start, the idea to murder the Jews was just an inchoate phantom inhabiting Hitler's mind. But after he came to power and began to carry out the blueprint for Germany that he had drafted in *Mein Kampf*, that idea began to develop in stages, synchronized with his other notions for the restoration of racial purity in the German people. The documents amply justify my conclusion that Hitler planned to murder the Jews in coordination with his plans to go to war for *Lebensraum* (living space) and to establish the Thousand Year Reich. The conventional war of conquest was to be waged parallel to, and was also



to camouflage, the ideological war against the Jews. In the end, as the war hurtled to its disastrous finale, Hitler's relentless fanaticism in the racial/ideological war ultimately cost him victory in the conventional war.

In Part II, 'The Holocaust', I described the Jewish response to National Socialist Germany's savage onslaught. I undertook to show how the Jews in the ghettos of Eastern Europe adapted to the complex variety of institutions, traditional as well as modern and secular, that had been in place long before the war to operate under the exigent conditions of German occupation. The representative communal organizations were transformed, under duress, into the *Judenräte*, the Jewish councils set up by the SS to administer the ghettos. Other pre-war communal institutions — social-welfare, educational, cultural, religious — carried on as self-help agencies in the ghettos, sometimes legally, more often clandestinely. Most of the pre-war Jewish political parties evolved into an oppositional underground and eventually into a resistance movement.

In summing up Part II, I demonstrated that the experience of Jewish history and of past Jewish persecution was utterly inadequate as a guide for the Jews who now confronted a new phenomenon in their history — a powerful nation that had committed its energies and resources to their total annihilation. Furthermore, I wanted to explain how few were the resources the Jews could mobilize and how much fewer still were the opportunities available to them in their doomed struggle against the power of National Socialist Germany.

In the decades before this book was published, controversies about Jewish behaviour under Nazi rule had generated a lively debate among scholars as well as the general public. One argument centred on the charge that the Judenräte 'collaborated' with the Nazis. Another revolved around the accusation of Jewish 'passivity'. These debates stimulated further research and eventually produced new scholarly works. Though the new scholarship was to some degree spurred by Jewish defensiveness, the more important works — for instance, Isaiah Trunk's *Judenrat* — bore little trace of apologetics and were faultlessly objective.

By the 1980s these debates had all but disappeared from serious scholarly discussion. The allegation that Jews had 'collaborated' with the Nazis persists mainly in the controlled Soviet press and has become a staple of Communist anti-Semitic propaganda in the last decade. It has also penetrated into the propaganda of Arab and Third World countries, where 'Israel' is a term of abuse and 'Zionist' a code word for 'Jew'.

A new scandal confronting historians of the Holocaust erupted in 1977 after one Arthur R. Butz, an associate professor of electrical engineering and computer sciences at Northwestern University, had published a book called *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, which claimed that the Jews of Europe had not been 'exterminated' and that there was no German attempt to exterminate them. Though this book was clearly the product of an unhinged mind, the author's university connection aroused public furor. Capitalizing on the notoriety generated by Butz's views, Liberty Lobby, the largest and best-financed anti-Semitic organization in the United States, set up a new front operation in Torrance, California, called the Institute for Historical Review.

This Institute, camouflaged as a scholarly institution, took on the task of denying the historicity of the Holocaust. Using the talents of anti-Semitic writers with far-out notions of historical reality, many of them from abroad, the Institute, in 1979, launched the first of a series of annual pseudo-scholarly meetings that were parodies of bona fide academic conferences. In 1980 it began publishing a pseudo-scholarly quarterly, *Journal of Historical Review*. The Institute has tried repeatedly to win academic legitimacy, mostly by frequent mail canvasses of the memberships of professional historical associations.\*

This denial of the Holocaust's historical reality particularly exercised the survivors of the camps, who saw it as an attempt to erase from historical memory the evidence of their terrible experiences. Some of the writers and scholars among them soon began to produce articles, pamphlets, and books, mostly of an

\* See Lucy S. Dawidowicz, 'Lies About the Holocaust', *Commentary* 70 (December 1980), pp. 31-7.



apologetic character, proving that Auschwitz, Belzec, Chelmo, Majdanek, Treblinka, and Sobibor did exist.

Almost as outrageous and provocative a view of the murder of the European Jews appeared in David Irving's book *Hitler's War*, published in 1977. Irving, an amateur historian notorious for his perverse and well-publicized historical claims, described Hitler in this book as 'probably the weakest leader Germany has known in this century'. Irving further asserted that Hitler had not wished to murder the Jews, had not ordered them to be murdered, and that those murders were committed without his knowledge or approval. The killing of the Jews, Irving wrote, 'was partly of an *ad hoc* nature, what the Germans call a *Verlegenheitslösung* — the way out of an awkward dilemma, chosen by the middle-level authorities in the eastern territories overrun by the Nazis — and partly a cynical extrapolation by the central SS authorities of Hitler's anti-Semitic decrees.'

Irving claimed that his conclusions were based on new evidence that he had uncovered, but in fact his case rested on only one document, which he willfully misread.\* Readers of his book were especially affronted by his apologia for Hitler. Most recently, Irving's defence of Hitler has degenerated into a species of black comedy. Speaking before the Institute for Historical Review in Anaheim, California, in early September 1983, Irving said that 'the biggest friend the Jews had in the Third Reich — certainly when the war broke out — was Adolf Hitler'.

While no reputable historian has ever offered so bold a whitewash of Hitler as has Irving, revisionist portrayals of Hitler — intended to 'normalize' him — are not new. As far back as 1961 the English historian A. J. P. Taylor, already regarded then as an ageing *enfant terrible* of the profession, argued in his book *The Origins of the Second World War* that 'in principle and in doctrine, Hitler was no more wicked and unscrupulous than many other contemporary statesmen'. Furthermore, Taylor insisted, Hitler had no clear-cut plan and instead was a supreme

\* See Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (pp. 35-8), for a correct reading of that text.

opportunist, taking advantages as they came. To be sure, Taylor distinguished Hitler from those other statesmen by his 'wicked deeds', a conclusion Irving would likely dispute. Taylor's book sparked considerable controversy among professional historians, though his views were largely discounted because of the selectivity with which he used historical evidence.

But in the last decade or so a new faction of historians in Germany has produced a crop of books and articles propounding revisionist views of Hitler, of National Socialist Germany and even of the Final Solution that are as provocative as Taylor's, as implausible as Irving's and as offensive as Butz's. How could this have happened? Each generation, as we all know, rewrites the history of the past according to its own values and standards. But could it have been predicted that a group of historians would presume to sweep into the dustbin of history works that their colleagues had produced just a decade or so before? Yet this is what has been happening in German historical scholarship, and its effect is being felt elsewhere too.

After the collapse of National Socialist Germany, a new cohort of German historians came to maturity. Unlike the historians who had preceded them, they offered no apologia to explain Germany's adventure into National Socialism. In their vanguard was Fritz Fischer, whose book on Germany's war aims in the First World War (1961) attested to the continuity of German history from the Wilhelmine Empire down to the Nazi era. Because they integrated the National Socialist era into the long line of German history, these historians were labelled in their time as 'revisionists'. They uncovered the sources of National Socialist ideas and ideology in the German past and traced their evolution into the policies and practices of National Socialist Germany. They were the first to succeed in confronting Germany's terrible past and to delve unflinchingly into the record of its brutal politics and murderous racism.

The historical works that they produced, most notably Karl Dietrich Bracher's *The German Dictatorship* and Eberhard Jäckel's *Hitler's Welanschauung*, together with a host of other books, all models of methodological integrity and critical scholarship, were energized by that necessary measure of moral passion that



distinguishes all great history. It seemed that these historians had erected a secure foundation for the history of the Hitler era.

Then came the student riots of 1968 in Germany. The New Left politics that overwhelmed the universities soon radicalized students and faculty as well. A school of historians came to the fore who undertook to revise drastically the scholarship about the Nazi era that had been produced in the late 1950s and 1960s. Thus they became known as neo-revisionists. Political differences have mainly accounted for the division between the two groups of historians — revisionists versus neo-revisionists — but the surface debate between them has been over historical method and interpretation, specifically about structuralism. It was an approach in vogue among those historians on the left who, having rejected the Marxist approach because its economic determinism and dogmatism on class conflict were too rigid, took on instead a more up-to-date version of social determinism. The neo-revisionists, impressed by theoretical ideas derived from the structuralist movement, undertook to interpret the National Socialist past by applying the concepts of 'system, structure and function' which they borrowed from sociology and anthropology. Critics of structuralist theory, however, believe that the measures of system, structure and function are too static to do justice to the dynamics of history. They argue further that history is made by men and women, not by structures; that it is people who create, operate and destroy structures. Furthermore, people are moved to action not by structures, but by their ambitions, intentions and goals. They are motivated by ideas, values, beliefs and the force of passion.

One of the earliest influential structuralist works was Martin Broszat's *Der Staat Hitlers* (Munich, 1969). In this book he ventured to correct what he described as the 'oversimplified picture' of the National Socialist state as 'a monolithic system' and 'a well-oiled super state'. He examined the internal power structure of the 'Hitler state', studying how the 'structures' of the pre-Nazi state apparatus were merged or coordinated with those of the Nazi Party and how they operated in the light of the Führer principle governing Hitler's Germany.

According to that principle, which Hitler himself conceived in the days of the party's infancy, all power emanated from him, the Führer, and he delegated authority downwards to his deputies and satraps. In areas where, for one reason or another, Hitler failed to establish a clear authority, a bureaucratic jungle of competing jurisdictions sprang up. Personal rivalries, conflicts over interests and power, intrigues and conspiracies then developed among the Nazi loyalists in their scramble to win Hitler's approval.

Broszat interpreted these rivalries and struggles for power in the Nazi hierarchy as 'the "polycracy" of individual office-holders, each seeking to recommend himself to Hitler through a particular ability to get things done'. He coined the term 'polycracy' — rule by many — to explain how National Socialist Germany functioned. (The common term for power-sharing as conceived in classical Greek political theory is 'polyarchy'.) He painted a picture of the German dictatorship as a state ridden by chaos, anarchy and competing rulers. It was a bizarre interpretation of National Socialist Germany.

To be sure, some Nazis in high places ran their jurisdictions like private fiefdoms, but none ever shared power with Hitler or governed independently as a 'polycrat' or a 'polyarch'. In areas where Hitler failed clearly to articulate his wishes, his satraps vied with each other in trying to carry out the policies that they thought most satisfactorily reflected his wishes. None dared to carry out a policy that did not accord with Hitler's will.

In repudiating what he called 'the growing tendency of historians to resort to the history of personalities', Broszat downgraded Hitler's role in the dictatorship. 'It was not Hitler alone who enforced absolute control,' Broszat declared. That view of Hitler was to become an article of structuralist faith in interpreting Nazi Germany. Similarly, another structuralist, Hans Mommsen, argued in 1970 that Hitler was 'a weak dictator' — a characterization predating David Irving's similar assessment. Hitler, Mommsen said, was easily influenced by those in his reinue. Denigrating Hitler as a man without a program, Mommsen described him as 'a man of improvisation, experimentation and spur-of-the-moment inspiration'.



The structuralists' devaluation of Hitler as a leader was in part a negative reaction to the recurrent waves of popular interest in Hitler and a protest against the portrayal of Hitler in the popular literature as the arch-friend of history. But more importantly, the structuralists were persuaded by their theory rather than by the evidence to minimize Hitler's role in shaping the character of National Socialist Germany. For like the Marxists, they minimize the role of 'personality' in history and instead regard social and economic processes as the determinants of history.

If Hitler was not the absolute leader of National Socialist Germany, as the structuralists claimed, how then was the rule of his dictatorship enforced? Broszat had a ready explanation: 'Despotism,' he wrote in his book, 'was the outcome of the regime's internal law of motion.' That sentence, with its abstract nouns and impersonal construction, described a political system that we are unlikely to encounter in this world. Broszat evoked a science-fiction fantasy of government by automation, 'robotically' driven by an 'internal law of motion,' generating 'despotism' without human intervention, without human leadership.

This mechanistic interpretation of National Socialist Germany has become the hallmark of structuralist history. It is at variance with everything we have known and learned about that state for the last fifty years. The structuralists have defined the Hitler state as a system operated by the inertia of its bureaucratic structures, performing their functions mechanically, except when those functions have been impaired by the disorder, chaos and anarchy produced by the indecisiveness of a weak leader. They regard political decisions as the by-products of the state's structures or functions and not as the expression of the will or intention of the state's leaders. Accordingly, no human agent can then be held responsible for decisions or for their consequences. The structuralists have thus eliminated the exercise of free will in human society and deprived men and women of their capacity to choose between good and evil.

By removing the moral aspect of decision-making in the Hitler era, the structuralists initiated a new cycle of apologetics in German history. But this neo-revisionist history has not gone

unchallenged in Germany. Some of the Federal Republic's most distinguished historians have been provoked to rebut the structuralist gospel. They have expressed their critical dissent with its historiographical method and their disapproval of the exsistence of the moral element from the history of National Socialist Germany. Karl Dietrich Bracher, one of the sharpest critics of the neo-revisionists, charged that 'they would like to leave behind the questions of [Germany's] guilt and responsibility in favour of an allegedly modern realistic analysis. But in so doing they have fallen into the danger once again of underestimating and trivializing National Socialism.'<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly, the structuralists advanced some bizarre interpretations also about the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question', the Nazi codename for the murder of the European Jews. Though their contributions to this field have been modest in quantity and in quality, their ideological fashionableness has ensured them a respectful hearing not otherwise warranted.

The first work to apply structuralist theory to National Socialist Germany's anti-Jewish policies was Uwe Dietrich Adam's doctoral dissertation *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (1972), which dutifully rehearsed the structuralist litany about chaos, competing jurisdictions, lack of direction, a weak and indecisive dictator. Like most structuralists who have been interested in the operation of bureaucracies, Adam restricted himself to domestic affairs. He made no attempt to explain the escalation of Nazi Germany's domestic anti-Jewish programme in terms of Hitler's foreign policy and his plans for war in the East. Yet

<sup>1</sup> Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Zeitgeschichtliche Kontroversen: Um Faschismus, Totalitarismus, Demokratie* (Munich, 1976), p. 62. This is one of Bracher's several essays on the subject. Other historians who have questioned the methodological and political assumptions of the neo-revisionists as well as their version of history include: Andreas Hillgruber, *Endlich genug über Nationalsozialismus und Zweiten Weltkrieg? Forschungsstand und Literatur* (Düsseldorf, 1982); Klaus Hildebrand, 'Monokratie oder Polykratie: Hitlers Herrschaft und das Dritte Reich', in Gerhard Hirschfeld and Lothar Kerstner, eds., *Der Führerstaat: Mythos und Realität* (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 73-95; Walter Hofer, '50 Jahre danach, Über den wissenschaftlichen Umgang mit dem Dritten Reich', in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 34 (January 1983), 1-28.



Hitler, unlike the structuralists, was more interested in the pursuit of racial empire, war and conquest than in the operation of bureaucracies.

By forcing a random assortment of evidence into his structuralist framework, Adam concluded that 'the Jewish policy of the Third Reich was not planned in advance' and that Hitler merely reacted to the existing circumstances and did not create them himself. Nevertheless, presumably in deference to the prevailing scholarship, Adam conceded that Hitler *might* have made a decision to murder the Jews. He dated that decision sometime between September and November 1941.

Could one have expected that a responsible scholar would so urgently wish to accommodate the historical evidence to his theory that he would be prepared to suppress the essential facts? Adam expunged from the historical record the staggering statistic that by the end of November 1941 — his date for Hitler's decision to murder the Jews — nearly a million Jews had already been murdered.

That was mass murder on an unprecedented scale, carried out systematically and uniformly on a vast territory by four military formations, called *Einsatzgruppen* (see pp. 160–71). The men and officers of these *Einsatzgruppen* had been recruited and trained in May 1941 under the direction of Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police. Hitler himself had delegated the authority for those killing operations to Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS. That authorization, dictated by Hitler, was written into a military directive issued by General Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the High Command of the German Armed Forces, on 13 March 1941, in connection with Operation Barbarossa, the codename for the invasion of the Soviet Union.

In the last decade the chief proponents of the structuralist interpretation of how the murder of the Jews came about have been Broszat and Mommsen, and their writings have appeared in German learned journals. Both have built their case on those contrary insights about the Nazi state for which we are indebted to the structuralists. Like Uwe Adam, they concentrated on the domestic aspects of the Jewish question and did not correlate it

with Hitler's foreign policy and with the war in the East. They believed that there was no plan for the murder of the European Jews, but that it 'happened' as a consequence of individual initiative and bureaucratic inertia. (One is reminded of Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, who just 'grewed'.\*) Unlike Butz and David Irving, Broszat and Mommsen conceded that Hitler was driven by his anti-Semitic obsessions and that historians must attribute to him some share in the responsibility for the murder of the Jews. But they have insisted that his anti-Semitism was no more than a propaganda ploy to rally popular support. Back in 1970 Broszat had already characterized the 'Jewish question' in the Nazi state as merely 'the primary symbol of the ceaseless domestic struggle', denying that anti-Semitic propaganda in Nazi Germany had programmatic substance or practical consequences. Still earlier, in *Der Staat Hitlers*, Broszat offered a hypothesis that the anti-Jewish policies of Hitler's Germany, beginning with the 'use of legal discrimination against Jews' within Germany and ending with the murder of six million European Jews, were unplanned.

Even in the face of an impressive accumulation of scholarship to the contrary, Broszat and Mommsen have continued to hew to the structuralist dogma that Hitler's intentions and goal did not determine policy in National Socialist Germany. They have rejected the widely accepted view that Hitler's ideas and intentions — especially those concerning racial purity, racial empire and the Jews — became the centre of his political programme and determined his plans for war and conquest. Mommsen even coined the term 'intentionalist', used pejoratively to distinguish those historians who believe that intentions have consequences for history from the 'functionalists' who see the truth and properly assign the history-making role to structures and functions.\*

\* Hans Mommsen first used the term 'intentionalist' in his article 'National Socialism: Continuity and Change', in Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide: Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Cal. 1976). There he characterized Karl Dietrich Bracher's interpretation of the events surrounding the Reichstag fire as 'strongly intentionalistic'. See also Tim Mason, 'Intention and Explanation: A Current



Broszat, in an otherwise respectful review-essay on David Irving's book *Hitler's War*, chided him for his preposterous notion that Hitler had no responsibility for the murder of the Jews. But he supported Irving's view about the so-called hazardous character of the mass murder and expressed his scepticism that Hitler had ever issued an order, thereby paring company from Uwe Adam. Broszat surmised that 'the destruction of the Jews, more likely developed from individual actions' and par-phrased Irving approvingly:

The destruction of the Jews began, so it seems, not only out of an alleged will-to-destruction, but as a 'way out' of a blind alley into which one was manoeuvred. Once begun and institutionalized, the process of the liquidation attained its dominant importance and in the end did in fact evolve into a comprehensive 'programme'.

Broszat's style, as we have seen, requires explication. What did he mean to say here? To whose 'alleged will-to-destruction' was he referring? Who found a 'way out' of what 'blind alley'? Who began the 'process of liquidation' and who 'institutionalized' it? What precisely was 'the dominant importance' that the 'process of liquidation' attained? Was that Broszat's allusion to the millions who were being murdered?

Broszat's diction and syntax call to mind the propensities of German bureaucratic jargon for abstractions, weak and intransitive verbs, passive constructions, a jargon that gave birth to Nazi-Deutsch, the language used in the chancelleries of Hitler's Germany. Those who have studied the Nazi documents that recorded the Hitler state's terrible crimes know how artful they were as exercises in equivocation and circumvention, in con-

Controversy about the Interpretation of National Socialism', in Hirschfeld and Kettenacker, eds, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-46. Mason, an avowed Marxist, is a partisan of the structuralists. Readers of this book will readily understand why the structuralists have labelled me as an 'arch-intentionalist'.

\* Hitler und die Genesis der "Endlösung". Aus Anlass der Theseen von David Irving, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25 (October 1977): 759-74. An English version appeared in *Vad Vashem Studies* XIII (1979), 73-125, but it does not convey with sufficient precision the nuances of the original German text. The citation above is my translation.

cealing rather than communicating, in evading the attribution of personal responsibility.

Broszat admitted that he could not prove his interpretation with certainty, but he remained convinced that 'it was more plausible than the hypothesis that there had been a general secret order for the annihilation of the Jews'. But those counterpoised alternatives are not the only historical possibilities. Indeed, no historian has, to my knowledge, speculated that Hitler ever issued such 'a general secret order'. The only ones to clamour for such an order have been David Irving and those who deny that the Jews were murdered at all. They have challenged historians to produce such a general order, hoping that its absence will prove that Hitler had no hand in the murder of the Jews or that the Jews were not murdered.

In point of fact, a rich body of primary documentary sources exists to support the hypothesis, to which most historians subscribe, that Hitler had a general plan - as distinct from an order - for the murder of the Jews. There is ample evidence to prove, as this book does, that Hitler implemented his plan, in stages, seizing whatever opportunities offered themselves to advance its execution. This interpretation tracks the course of Hitler's mind. It establishes how his ideas became intentions, how those intentions were converted into plans, how those plans were embodied into the Hitler state's policy, and how that policy was executed by the 'structures' of the National Socialist state and Party. This is an interpretation that makes the best sense of the accumulated evidence, and that offers the most satisfactory explanation for that terrible sequence of events.

The structuralist interpretation fails to convince because it takes no account of ideas and intentions, even such monstrous ones as Hitler's. For history begins in the minds of men and women, in the ideas they hold and in the decisions they make.

\* Gerald Fleming, an English researcher, took up Irving's challenge in his book *Hitler and the Final Solution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Cal., 1984). His tireless research yielded no general order, but he expounded some new evidence, not all of it as persuasive as evidence previously known, that Hitler had ordered the murder of the Jews.



'Every idea,' Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote in a judicial opinion, 'is an incitement.' History renders an account not only of battles and wars, elections and revolutions, intrigues and alliances, but above all of the ideas, ambitions and goals of the people who set those events in motion.

The English historian and philosopher R. G. Collingwood made the distinction between the outside and the inside of an event. The outside of the event, he said, was its action; the inside was the thought of the agent of that action. To penetrate the inside of an event, the historian has to enter into the minds of the men and women whose actions make history and in effect recreate their thoughts. The minds of these agents of history are, to the historian, as important as any battlefield or house of parliament. They are far and away the most strategic sites of history.

But the structuralists will have none of this. They have imposed their theory on the outside of events; the inside of events has become the black hole of their historical universe. Because they use structures and functions to explain critical decisions made at historical junctures, structuralists cannot assign historical responsibility to their historical actors. They are consequently unable to make historical judgements.

As for the history of the murder of the European Jews, the neo-revisionists have forced that history into the procrustean bed of structuralist theory. Their account, as we have seen, explains nothing. It has, however, served their political interests. This was most evident in an essay in which Hans Mommsen propounded the structuralist interpretation of the murder of the Jews. Writing in that dense jargon we have come to associate with the structuralists, he concluded that the Holocaust is not only a warning against racist phobias and social resentments directed against minorities; at the same time it directs attention to the persistent danger also from advanced industrial societies which takes the form of the manipulative crippling of public and private morality.\*

\* Hans Mommsen, 'Die Realisierung des Utopischen: Die "Endlösung der Judenfrage" im "Dritten Reich"', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983), p. 420.

Thus the structuralists exploit the murder of the European Jews for their ideological views. The Holocaust has become just another 'stick' with which to beat the Western world and to equate 'advanced industrial societies' with National Socialist Germany.

Still, it would be unfortunate if readers of this book were to think that the history of National Socialist Germany and of the Holocaust has become the property of the neo-revisionists in Germany or elsewhere. This new wave of structuralist historians has, in fact, failed to undermine the historical edifice erected in the last quarter of a century. That history has remained authoritative because of the integrity of its scholarship and its moral perspective on the German dictatorship. Most of the historians who produced that history are still at work. The important books on this subject that have appeared in the last decade are listed, some with annotations, in the Supplementary Sources beginning on page 538.

The discipline of history has in its own long existence witnessed many assaults by those who would use the knowledge of the past for purposes other than knowing that past. From the days of the Bible on, partisans of one faction or another tried to enlist history on their side. In National Socialist Germany the historical profession itself undertook to rewrite German history for the greater glory of Adolf Hitler and his Third Reich. In the Soviet Union Stalin not only commanded the erasure of the past but also prescribed how it was to be rewritten. The Soviet satellites, Poland especially, have become adept at historical erasure and revision.

Yet history, as a way of knowing the past, has survived the partisanism, the ideological distortions, the attempts to extinguish its light and even to murder its practitioners, and it will continue to do so. Its most terrible chapter — the murder of the European Jews — will surely remain forever recorded.

Lucy S. Dawidowicz  
New York City, 1984



...the Jewish question... the annihilation of six million Jews... the Second World War... the German state... the question persists: how could it have happened? That question embraces several questions, each charged with passion and moral judgement. They are:

- 1. How was it possible for a modern state to carry out the systematic murder of a whole people for no reason other than that they were Jews?
- 2. How was it possible for a whole people to allow itself to be destroyed?
- 3. How was it possible for the world to stand by without halting this destruction?

Part I of this book, 'The Final Solution', attempts to answer the first question. Part II, 'The Holocaust', attempts to answer the second. A partial answer or partial answers to the third question can be found in Appendix A, 'The Fate of the Jews in Hitler's Europe'; in Appendix B, 'The Final Solution of the Jewish Question', was the code name assigned by the German bureaucracy to the annihilation of the Jews. The very composition of the code name, when analysed, reveals its fundamental character and meaning to the Germans who invented and used it: The term 'Jewish question', as first used during the early Enlightenment/Emancipation period in Western Europe, referred to the 'question' or 'problem' that the anomalous persistence of the Jews as a people posed to the new nation-states and the rising political nationalisms. The 'Jewish question' was, at bottom, a euphemism whose verbal neutrality concealed the user's impatience with the singularity of this people that did not appear to conform to the new political demands of the state. Since a question demands an answer and a problem a solution,



various answers and solutions were propounded to the 'Jewish question', by foes and even friends, that entailed the disappearance of the Jews as such – abandonment of the Jewish religion or its essential elements, of the Jewish language, Yiddish, of Jewish culture, Jewish uniqueness and separatism. The histories of Jewish emancipation and of European anti-Semitism are replete with proffered 'solutions' to the Jewish question'. The classic illustration is the 'solution' offered by Constantine Pobedonostsev, chief adviser to Tsar Alexander III, in 1881: one third of the Jews were to emigrate, one third to convert and one third to die of hunger.

To this concept that the National Socialists adopted they added one new element, embodied in the word 'final'. 'Final' means definitive, completed, perfected, ultimate. 'Final' reverberates with apocalyptic promise, bespeaking the Last Judgement, the End of Days, the last destruction before salvation, Armageddon. 'The Final Solution of the Jewish Question' in the National Socialist conception was not just another anti-Semitic undertaking, but a metahistorical programme devised with an eschatological perspective. It was part of a salvational ideology that envisaged the attainment of Heaven by bringing Hell on earth. 'The Devil is loose', Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen noted in his diary on 30 October 1942. The most important event of our time, André Malraux said, was *le retour de Satan*, citing the German system of terror.

To attain its heavenly Hell on earth the German dictatorship launched a war that engulfed the whole world. Over 35 million people were killed, more than half of them civilians. On the battlefields 1 out of every 22 Russians was killed, 1 out of every 25 Germans, 1 out of every 150 Italians and Englishmen, and 1 out of every 200 Frenchmen. The human cost of 2,191 days of war surpassed the losses of any previous war in the world. That war brought death to nearly 6 million Jews, to 2 out of every 3 European Jews. Through one third of them managed to survive, though the Jewish people and Judaism have outlived the Third Reich, the Germans nevertheless succeeded in irreversibly destroying the life and culture of East European Jewry. The Final Solution transcended the bounds of modern historical experience. Never before in modern history had one people made the killing of another the fulfilment of an ideology, in whose pursuit means were identical with ends. History has, to be sure, recorded

terrible massacres and destruction that one people perpetrated against another, but all – however cruel and unjustifiable – were intended to achieve instrumental ends, being means to ends, not ends in themselves.

The German state, deciding that the Jews should not live, arrogated to itself the judgement as to whether a whole people had the right to existence, a judgement that no man and no state have the right to make. 'Anyone who on the basis of such a judgement', said Karl Jaspers, 'plans the organized slaughter of a people and participates in it, does something that is fundamentally different from all crimes that have existed in the past.'

To carry out this judgement, designated as the Final Solution, the German dictatorship involved and engaged the entire bureaucratic and functional apparatus of the German state and the National Socialist movement and employed the best available technological means. The Final Solution destroyed the East European Jews. In doing so, it subverted fundamental moral principles and every system of law that had governed, however imperfectly, human society for millennia.

In writing the history of the Final Solution, I approached the subject from the inside as best I could. Here the Germans are the actors and their acts are viewed through the lenses of German documents. In dwelling on Hitler's ideas about the Jews and on the development of modern German anti-Semitism, I have tried to show the intellectual and historical origins of the Final Solution. Throughout I tried to demonstrate the mutual influences and interplay of ideology and action, belief and programme, national character and political behaviour.

Part II, 'The Holocaust', describes the Jewish response to the Final Solution. 'The Holocaust' is the term that Jews themselves have chosen to describe their fate during the Second World War. At the most superficial level, the word 'holocaust' means a great destruction and devastation, but its etymological substratum interposes a specifically Jewish interpretation. The word derives from the Greek *holokáuston*, the Septuagint's translation for the Hebrew *olah*, literally 'what is brought up', rendered in English as 'an offering made by fire unto the Lord', 'burnt offering', or 'whole burnt offering'. The implication is unmistakable: once again in their history the Jews are victims, sacrifices.



The Holocaust, then, becomes another link in the historic chain of Jewish suffering. The very word summons up the remembrance of the Jews in 1096 during the First Crusade. The chronicles and liturgical poetry of those days, in a striking concurrence, evoke the image of the Akedah, the Binding – or sacrifice – of Isaac, as the prefiguration of their own ordeals. For the Jews the Holocaust did not transcend their own ordeals. For the Jews the Holocaust did not transcend been the Jewish historic experience. Still, within the perspective of Jewish history, the Holocaust is the most massive and disastrous catastrophe since the earliest days of that history. Even at the time of the greatest Jewish national trauma, the destruction of the Second Temple, the physical survival of the Jews was not in such jeopardy as during the Holocaust. In 70 C.E. only about one fourth of the Jews lived in Palestine, while the rest lived in the Diaspora. More Jews lived in Alexandria than in Jerusalem. In 1939, in contrast, two thirds of the world's Jews lived in Europe and three fourths of them – half of all world Jewry – were concentrated in Eastern Europe.

The destruction of East European Jewry brought to an end the thousand-year-old culture of Ashkenazic Jewry that had originated in the Rhine Basin and that by 1939 was concentrated in Eastern Europe. It was a culture whose religious teachings and traditions defined its secular character and values. It was a culture whose language was Yiddish, the language in which Jewish males studied the Talmud, in which mothers sang lullabies and little children played games, in which merchants conducted business and preachers delivered sermons, in which shrews scolded and roughnecks cursed, in which young men courted their girls. Yiddish was a vehicle for a great religious and secular culture, and it generated a rich literature.

East European Jewry created a culture that venerated the *sefer*, the book of religious learning, but whose people laughed at themselves. It was a culture that put its people, familiar with poverty and hardship, on speaking terms with God. It was a culture unique in all Jewish history, and East European Ashkenazic Jewry, which fashioned that culture, was the wellspring of Jewish creativity for Jewish communities throughout the world.

Part II, 'The Holocaust', opens with a chapter about the German Jews in their encounter with National Socialism in the first stage of its

rule. Thereafter, Part II focuses on the experiences of the East European Jews, mainly in Poland and Lithuania, because they were the most numerous of all European Jews, because they constituted a unique civilization and because Eastern Europe was the central locus of the Final Solution.

The primary task I set myself was to describe the responses of the organized Jewish community to the Final Solution in its several stages. I have stressed the role and functions of Jewish communal institutions and communal leadership at various levels in the re-ordered Jewish society under German occupation. To the best of my ability and within the limits set by the availability of sources, I have tried to delineate the varieties of Jewish communal policy as formulated and carried out in different communities and by different communal leaders at various levels, sometimes in harmony and sometimes at variance with each other, and to show wherever possible the responses of the masses to these policies. Consistently, I have used Jewish sources as the lenses through which to view the Jewish community and to analyse Jewish behaviour.

One impediment was the inadequacy of Jewish documentation, despite its enormous quantity. Holocaust documents were composed under extreme persecution, and they are the quintessential products of external censorship and self-imposed restraints. Jewish official documents that have survived reflect the writers' awareness of the omnipresent Germans and their all-seeing eyes. The absence of vital subjects from the records may be explained by the predicament of terror and censorship; yet, lacking evidence to corroborate or disprove, the historian will never know with certainty whether that absence is a consequence of an institutional decision not to deal with such matters or whether it was merely a consequence of prudential policy not to mention them. The terror was so great that even private personal diaries, composed in Yiddish or Hebrew, were written circumspectly, with recourse to Scripture and the Talmud as a form of esoteric expression and self-imposed reticence.

Survivor documentation, on the other hand, frequently suffers from subjectivity, bitterness and partisanship – commonplace and habitual defects of most historical records. These documents have a further shortcoming. For the most part, the experiences recounted by survivors bring to mind the adventures of Stendhal's Fabrizio del



Dongo at the Battle of Waterloo. Like him, they are never quite certain what great events they are witness to. Like him, they have just missed seeing the Emperor – in their case, they have been too distant from communal responsibility to be able to describe with any authority those critical situations at which significant decisions were made and policies framed for the Jewish community.

With the liquidation of the ghettos, Jewish communal existence came to an end. Some 5, perhaps 10, per cent of East European Jews lived a brief while longer in closed concentration/labour camps, but no formal Jewish communal institutions existed any more. A minuscule number of Jews, atomized individuals, managed to survive even the death camps, but their story is not the history of the Jewish community. For this reason this book closes with the liquidation of the ghettos.

Appendix A, 'The Fate of the Jews in Hitler's Europe', is an attempt to put on record the essential bare facts about the Jews in each European country. Each country is considered individually and its wartime status described. A sketch of that country's pre-war Jewish population follows, and then the course of the Final Solution in the country is briefly recounted. It was my intention here to provide, in a kind of historical shorthand, a summary account of the fate of the European Jews during the Second World War and, at the same time, within the limits of the presentation, to enable the reader to distinguish those political, historical, social and geographic factors that accounted for the different treatment accorded to the Jews in various countries.

This is not a value-free book. The very subject matter of the Final Solution precludes neutrality. In writing about a nation that transgressed the commandment 'Thou shalt not murder', it is impossible to be what Charles Beard characterized as 'a neutral mirror'.

Whereas the Germans, in planning and executing the Final Solution, played the role of the Devil and his hosts, the Jews during the Holocaust were, alas, merely human, saints and sinners, imperfect earthlings. In writing about the Holocaust I have tried to avoid moral judgements, though I have not hesitated to describe demoralization. In discussing the deeds of the handful of Jewish leaders who have been charged by survivors and scholars with criminal behaviour, I have

been persuaded by Professor Herbert Butterfield's view that the historian can never quite know men from the inside, because he can never carry his investigation into the interiority of their minds and hearts, where 'the final play of motive and the point of responsibility' are decided.

As best I could I have tried to present what actually happened. I strove to follow the two methods that Wilhelm von Humboldt perceived to be the historian's task in the approach to the historical truth: 'The first is the exact, impartial, critical investigation of events; the second is the connecting of the events explored and the intuitive understanding of them which could not be reached by the first means.'



## The Jews in Hitler's Mental World

If at the beginning of the War and during the War, Hitler wrote in the last chapter of *Mein Kampf*, 'twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best German workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain.'

Did the idea of the Final Solution originate in this passage, germinating in Hitler's subconscious for some fifteen years before it was to sprout into practical reality? The idea of a mass annihilation of the Jews had already been adumbrated by apocalyptic-minded anti-Semites during the nineteenth century. Yet even the most fanatic and uncompromising anti-Semites, when confronted with political actualities and social realities, invariably settled for an aggregation of exclusionary measures. Hitler did not. He succeeded in transforming the apocalyptic idea into concrete political action. The mass murder of the Jews was the consummation of his fundamental beliefs and ideological conviction.

The nexus between idea and act has seldom been as evident in human history with such manifest consistency as in the history of anti-Semitism. Jew-hatred is one of those 'unit-ideas', to use Arthur Lovejoy's phrase, with 'long life-histories of their own'. Yet not until Hitler's accession to power in Germany and his dominion over Europe had the abstract idea of Jew-hatred assumed so terrible a concrete and visible reality. Nor had anti-Semitism ever before been so obviously a product of a system of beliefs. For Hitler's ideas about the Jews were the starting place for the elaboration of a monstrous racial ideology that would justify mass murder whose like history had not seen before.

Only Hitler's followers took his ideas about the Jews seriously. His opponents found them too preposterous for serious consideration, too



irrational and lunatic to merit reasonable analysis and rebuttal. Today, looking at his photographs, it seems easy to understand how Hitler could have been underestimated, disparaged. He was of medium height, with beady eyes and a comic moustache. The unmanageable cowlick of his pomaded hair became the burlesque symbol of unrestrained passion. He was a strutter and a posturer, 'one of those men without qualities', wrote Konrad Heiden, his face 'without radiance'.<sup>2</sup> Hermann Rauschning too characterized his look as lacking 'the brilliance and sparkle of genuine animation'. An authority on 'racial' biology described Hitler as he saw him in 1923: 'Face and head: bad bones, mongrel. Low, receding forehead, ugly nose, broad cheek-mandible with full self-control, but betraying insane excitement. Finally, an expression of blissful egotism.'<sup>3</sup>

A raw-vegetable Genghis Khan, wrote Friedrich Percyval Reck-Malleczewen, observing Hitler without his usual bodyguard in a deserted restaurant, to shoot Hitler. 'If I had had an inkling of the role this piece of filth was to play, and of the years of suffering he was to make us endure, I would have done it without a second thought. But I took him for a character out of a comic strip and did not shoot.'<sup>4</sup>

A ravaging lunatic, a comic-strip character, a political absurdity. Yet his voice mesmerized millions, 'a guttural thunder', according to Heiden, 'the very epitome of power, firmness, command and will'. Was it the sheer physical quality of the voice that hypnotized them? Or was the charisma in the dark message of racial mastery and the rule of blood? Serious people, responsible people thought that Hitler's notions about the Jews were, at best, merely political bait for disgruntled masses, no more than ideological window-dressing to cloak a naked drive for power. Yet precisely the reverse was true. Racial imperialism and the fanatic plan to destroy the Jews were the dominant passions behind the drive for power.

Hitler's ideas about the Jews were at the centre of his mental world. They shaped his world view and his political ambitions, forming the matrix of his ideology and the ineradicable core of National Socialist doctrine. They determined the anti-Jewish policies of the German dictatorship from 1933 to 1945, and they furnished the authority for the murder of the Jews in Europe during the Second World War.

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Few ideas in world history achieved such fatal potency. If only because these ideas had such consequences, they deserve serious analysis despite their irrationality, historical falsehood, scientific sham and moral loathsomeness.

*Mein Kampf* provides much of our knowledge about Hitler and his ideas. He wrote it in the prison at Landsberg, while serving a highly abbreviated term (11 November 1923–20 December 1924) of a five-year sentence for high treason in organizing the unsuccessful Munich Putsch. Graceless, prolix, disorganized, incoherent in parts, repetitious, *Mein Kampf* was written in the tradition of confessional biography, in which the hand of Destiny is clearly seen to be shaping the course of the writer's life. It is, above all, a self-aggrandizing document, in which the author is presented as intellectual nonpareil and political saviour. Nothing was to detract from this image of Hitler, and consequently he suppressed mention of persons or events that moulded and influenced him. As for his ideas, we can never really be confident that his descriptions in 1924 of the ideas he held in 1904 or 1908 or 1912 are honest, or whether he re-created his intellectual development swathed in legends. During his lifetime Hitler's champions and enemies furnished additional bits and pieces to the sketchy information about his early life. Subsequent scholarship has yielded a few more details to the portrait of the authentic Hitler. Still, much mystery surrounds his origins and early life.

Adolf Hitler was born on 20 April 1889, in the town of Braunau, on the Inn river, at the Austro-German border, the fourth child of Alois Hitler and Klara, his third wife, twenty-three years his junior.<sup>5</sup> Alois (1837–1903) was the illegitimate son of Maria Anna Schicklgruber (1795–1847), in whose name he had been christened. The identity of Adolf Hitler's paternal grandfather has remained an unravellable historical mystery of more than passing interest, since it raised doubts about Adolf Hitler's pure 'racial' ancestry. Nearly all the evidence is in dispute.

In 1842, when Alois was five years old, his mother married Johann Georg Hiedler (the family name variously spelled Hütler, Hüttler, Hitler). Alois, however, seems to have been brought up by Georg's younger brother, Johann Nepomuk, who, according to another version, was his real father. In 1876, when Georg was eighty-four



years old, he formally acknowledged Alois, then thirty-nine, as his son, who, legitimated, took the name of his father, real or putative. Another version has it that with Georg long dead, Nepomuk managed to get the parish records changed, by bringing three witnesses to testify that they knew Georg had accepted Alois as his son.

A more fanciful version of Adolf Hitler's origins exists: the allegation that his paternal grandfather was Jewish. Its source was the confession by Hans Frank, governor general of German-occupied Poland, written while awaiting execution at Nuremberg. According to Frank, William Patrick Hitler, the son of Alois, Jr., Hitler's half-brother (by his father's second wife), had threatened in a letter to divulge Hitler's Jewish ancestry. Hitler asked Frank, then legal adviser to the NSDAP, confidentially to investigate the charge, which Frank claimed to have substantiated, that Maria Schickelgruber's child had been fathered by the nineteen-year-old son in a household, presumably Jewish, where she had been employed as a domestic. Post 1945 investigations of the local records indicate, however, that no Jews lived in that area at the time, and the story was probably groundless. Still, uncertainties about his own ancestry must have obsessed the man who made ancestry the measure of the Aryan man.

Adolf's father was a customs official in the Austrian civil service, and the family moved whenever his assignments were changed. Three years after Adolf's birth they moved to Passau, another border town. In 1894, when Adolf was five years old, they moved to Leonding, a suburb of Linz, where they finally stayed. Alois retired the next year and spent his time buying and selling farms, strolling about the neighbourhood, and socializing at the local tavern. His relations with his son Adolf were stormy and tense. An indifferent and indolent pupil, Adolf was, at his father's insistence, enrolled in the *Realschule* in Linz, a secondary school whose training would lead to a technical or business career. In sharp conflict with his father, Adolf wanted instead to become a painter, an artist. When Alois died in 1903, the pressure on Adolf ceased. Klara continued to draw her late husband's pension and Adolf continued his schooling.

The next year he was transferred out of the *Realschule* because of his poor scholastic record. He was enrolled in the *Staatsschule* at Steyr, where he boarded and which he left in 1905, with indifferent success, after completing four years of secondary school. The only

two subjects in which he excelled were freehand drawing and gymnastics. He failed to take the final examinations and never received a diploma. Years later one of his teachers described him as lacking self-discipline, 'being notoriously cantankerous, willful, arrogant and bad-tempered'. When he returned home from Steyr, his mother sold the house at Leonding and moved with Adolf to Linz proper. Living on her monthly widow's pension and the proceeds of the sale of the house, she supported Adolf, who seemed to have no thought of settling down or looking for work.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler minimized the influences on him of his family, friends and general milieu in Linz. He said he did not remember having heard the word 'Jew' during his father's lifetime, characterizing Alois's views as 'more or less cosmopolitan'. There were just a few Jews in Linz, whom, Adolf said, he regarded merely as Germans of a different religion. He claimed that he 'did not so much as suspect the existence of an organized opposition to the Jews'. His boyhood friend August Kubizek remembered otherwise. Alois Hitler, he said, was a supporter of Georg von Schönerer, Pan-German nationalist and anti-Semite. One of Hitler's elementary school teachers was said to have been an open anti-Semite, and the *Realschule* had several teachers 'with decided anti-Semitic views'. According to Kubizek, Hitler himself was a confirmed anti-Semite as early as 1904. While attending the *Realschule* at Linz, he was reading the local anti-Semitic paper, *Linz'er Fliegenden Blätter*. Furthermore, Linz was where Hitler discovered Wagner as composer and ideologue. He went to the theatre to hear Wagner, and in Linz he discovered Wagner's prose writings and no doubt read *Jews in Music* and the grandiloquent *Decay and Regeneration*. Wagner, Hitler would later write, stands besides Frederick the Great and Martin Luther: 'Whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must know Wagner.'

He visited Vienna briefly in 1906 and then managed to convince his doing mother to finance a lengthier trip there to fulfil his ambition of entering the Academy of Fine Arts. In October 1907 he submitted his drawings to the academy, but they were rejected as unsatisfactory. He stayed in Vienna, living on money sent by his mother, and applied again the following year to the academy. This time he was not even admitted to the test. Meanwhile his mother had developed breast cancer and was rapidly succumbing to the disease. On 21 December



1908 she died and Hitler came home for the funeral. A few weeks later he left Linz for good and returned to Vienna, where he would live in anonymity for four cheerless years.

These years in Vienna are the most obscure in Hitler's life. After he spent his modest inheritance and orphan's pension, he had to move into a doss-house. He joined forces with a Reinhold Hanisch, a tramp in the same lodgings. Hitler painted postcards, copying views of Vienna, which Hanisch peddled about town. In 1910 Hitler thought he was being cheated by Hanisch and brought a suit against him. Hanisch was put in jail and that broke up the partnership. Very little is known of Hitler's life during the next three years in Vienna, except that he continued to live the same miserable marginal existence that he later described as the unhappiest years of his life.

In *Mein Kampf* he set down the record of how he wanted the development of his intellectual life to appear. Vienna, Hitler said, transformed him into an anti-Semite. For me this was the time of the greatest spiritual upheaval I have ever had to go through. I had ceased to be a weak-kneed cosmopolitan and became an anti-Semite. The apprenticeship in anti-Semitism that he had served in Linz was glossed over. Hitler wanted his discovery of the 'truth' to be wholly his own, untrainted by any influence, especially a paternal one. Still, Vienna was far more decisive than Linz as the place where his ideas about Jews took shape and where he began to give serious attention to thoughts of race and racial biology.

Hitler dramatized his first confrontation with East European Jews: 'Once, as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? was my first thought.' Observing the man, his next question was: 'Is this a German?' To find an answer, he turned, 'as always', to books: 'I bought the first anti-Semitic pamphlets of my life.' But he found the literature unsatisfying, for, he said, it presupposed knowledge or understanding of the Jewish question. Besides, the 'dull and amazingly unscientific arguments' were unconvincing. Only his own study, his own experience, his own 'slowly rising insights' brought him to an understanding of what the Jews were and of the need to combat them. That is, Hitler was saying, without the reinforcement of the then existent anti-Semitic movement, without prior influences from home, without benefiting from the plenitude of anti-

Semitic literature then in the public domain, he himself mastered the 'Jewish question' in the solitary genius of his mind. Vienna was for him, he wrote, 'the hardest, though most thorough school' of his life, where he obtained the foundations for 'a philosophy in general and a political view in particular', which remained with him for the rest of his life.

But outside influences were plainly at work upon him. In Vienna, in Hitler's time, anti-Semitic politics flourished, anti-Semitic organizations proliferated, anti-Semitic writing and propaganda poured forth in an unending stream. Despite his down-and-out doss-house existence, he was aware of much of the anti-Semitic doings. He was, for one, an avid, if unsystematic, reader. He tells us that he read the 'so-called world press', the *Neue Freie Presse* and the *Wiener Tagblatt*. Impressed at first, he soon came to see in them, he claimed, the ugly manipulation by the Jews. The hostile attitude the Viennese press took toward Germany particularly vexed him. On this subject, he admitted, 'I was forced to recognize that one of the anti-Semitic papers, the *Deutsches Volksblatt*, behaved more decently.' The *Deutsches Volksblatt* was a popular Viennese paper whose appeal was derived from its anti-Semitism, anti-capitalism, and anti-liberalism. Hitler was familiar, then, with the anti-Semitic press. Perhaps he read it regularly. In fact, by his own admission, he bought and read anti-Semitic pamphlets.

Which ones? Of the superabundance of such writings in those days in Vienna he probably sampled a variety. We know that he was for a time fascinated by the publications of Lanz von Liebenfels, an eccentric occultist-racist.<sup>6</sup> Between 1907 and 1910 Lanz published a series of pamphlets called *Ostara: Briefbücher der blonden Mannesrechtler* (*Newsletters of the Blond Champions of Man's Rights*), in which he depicted the struggle between the blond Aryan heroes and the dark, hairy ape-men representing the lower races. All human existence revolved around this struggle, whose central burden was to preserve the purity of Aryan women from the demonic sexuality of the ape-men. *Ostara* was available at many newsstands, and Hitler had picked up a copy at the corner tobacconist's and then began to buy it regularly. In 1909 he sought out Lanz to get back issues, which Lanz, flattered, provided free of charge.

The ape-men in *Ostara* were not always explicitly identified as



Jews, perhaps because Lanz thought that the racial conflict as he depicted it was sufficiently lurid to gratify the erotic fantasies of his rootless, unemployed, down-and-out readers, most of whom, like Hitler, were unattached men. With regard to the Jews, Lanz wrote in an issue of *Ostara*: 'We would never dream of preaching pogroms, because they will come without encouragement. Sterilization, the castration knife, would, Lanz held, solve the Jewish problem. The swastika was regarded as a symbol of racial purity, and *Ostara* dwelt tirelessly on the swastika's origins and secret meanings. Practising what he preached, Lanz hoisted the swastika over his castle, Burg Wertenstein, in 1907.

Besides *Ostara*, Lanz wrote pamphlets on race occultism, at least one of which was found in Hitler's private library: *Das Buch der Psalmen* (*The Book of Germanic Psalms: Prayerbook of Ariosophic Race Mystics and Anti-Semites*). Another, *Das Gesetzbuch der Mann und die Rassenpflege* (*Manus' Book of Law and Race Cultivation*), published in 1908 and hence available to Hitler in those days, advocated that the 'mongrelized breed' of Jews and other inferior beings be wiped from the face of the earth. These horror tales of race defilement and the lurid depiction of the perils confronting Aryan womanhood obviously gratified the young Hitler, feeding his fears and obsessions—personal, sexual, racial.\* *Ostara's* influence—or its function as reinforcement—is evident in a much-quoted passage from *Mein Kampf*: 'With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people.'

Another racist pamphleteer whom Hitler read and perhaps also encountered was Guido von List, an indefatigable pseudo-scholarly occultist. During the years that Hitler lived in Vienna, List published several works, in which he glorified the ancient Germanic past and

\* Some psychoanalysts have suggested that Hitler's hatred of the Jews was a projection of his self-hate and a consequence of guilt feelings for his dark and evil fantasies, and perhaps also for his putative Jewish ancestry. Still, not all self-haters became savage anti-Semites. People living in an anti-Semitic milieu—as Hitler did—already viewed Jews as diseased and filthy creatures, degenerate and corrupting, outsiders beyond fraternity or compassion. Since the society had already branded the Jews as loathsome pariahs, the Jews could then serve the symbolic and pathological needs of the obsessed and guilt-ridden.

extolled the Germanic wisdom in pagan nature which Christianity, regrettably, had enteebled. The way to restore the true Germanic life force, List believed, was through the deciphering of ancient runic script and symbols. Like Lanz, List also regarded the swastika as one of the Teutonic mystic symbols. But, unlike Lanz, List gave political expression to his racial and ritual occultism. He was associated with Georg von Schönerer's anti-Semitic Pan-German movement and wrote for its publication. His political mysticism envisaged a leader who would be reincarnated from the Teutonic warrior heroes. When that leader came, List promised, the Reich would be divided into *Gaue* (districts), each with its own *Gaulleiter*—archaic terminology that the Nazis revived when they came to power.

Hitler's Vienna was the locus of two major political movements—Schönerer's Pan-Germans and Karl Lueger's Christian Socials. By the time Hitler came to Vienna, Schönerer (1842–1921) was played out, but two decades earlier he had built the Pan-German movement into a significant force in and beyond Vienna, introducing anti-Semitism as a basic component in the ideology of Pan-Germanism.

Lueger was something else. For him, anti-Semitism had become the most successful of all political expedients, and his Christian Social party showed the greatest political viability of any anti-Semitic movement formed in Germany and Austria after the 1880s. The Viennese adored him and in election after election after 1895 returned him to the mayoralty (he did not take office till 1897 because both the Church and the Emperor refused to confirm his election).

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler discussed both Schönerer and Lueger at length and dismissed them both. Yet he confessed: 'When I came to Vienna, my sympathies were fully and wholly on the side of the Pan-German tendency.' Those sympathies had been formed in Linz, for when Hitler came to Vienna, Schönerer was then past sixty-five, a has-been, his movement torn by ideological differences and divided over tactics and strategy, impotent before Lueger's irresistible personality and pragmatic politics. But Schönerer had pioneered in legitimating anti-Semitism in Austrian politics. Still, Hitler is silent about any involvement on his part with the Pan-Germans. He devotes over twenty pages in *Mein Kampf* to the errors and misjudgements committed by the Pan-Germans. But he concedes, in one pithy sentence, that they were right on one point: the anti-Semitism of the



Pan-German movement' was based on a correct understanding of the importance of the racial problem, and not on religious ideas'. The racism is understandable. Any elaboration on the 'correct' anti-Semitic doctrines of the Pan-German movement would expose Hitler's intellectual and ideological borrowings.

As for Karl Lueger's Christian Social movement, Hitler praised its tactics but condemned its 'wrong' approach to anti-Semitism and its disinterest in German nationalism. Lueger, he believed, did not properly understand the 'Jewish danger', and his anti-Semitism was flawed because it 'was based on religious ideas instead of racial knowledge'. That, Hitler thought, was no way to combat the Jews: 'If the worst came to the worst, a splash of baptismal water could always save the business and the Jew at the same time.' The Christian Socials, Hitler asserted, engaged in 'sham anti-Semitism'. Hitler had a point: Lueger, the master of pragmatic politics, regarded anti-Semitism primarily as a political tactic rather than an evangelistic doctrine. His classic statement that must have been familiar to Hitler was '*Wer Jude ist, das bestimme ich*' ('Who is a Jew, that I decide').

Hitler never mentions that he belonged to any political party or organization in Vienna. Yet, given his ideas, it seems strange that he did not seek out some kindred group, or even stumble upon one of the numerous societies that made anti-Semitism the centre of their activity. As a matter of fact, Kubizek asserted that 'one day in 1908' Hitler came into their room with the announcement: 'Hey! Today I became a member of the anti-Semitic Bund and I enrolled you too.' Perhaps indeed Hitler did drift into some small anti-Semitic group, composed of down-and-outers like himself, misfits and malcontents who gathered to talk about the vile conspiracies afoot in Vienna for which the Jews were responsible. Perhaps it was a group that failed to recognize or acknowledge Hitler's abilities. 'In my little circle', Hitler writes in *Mein Kampf*, 'I talked my tongue sore and my throat hoarse', but to no avail. But, he confesses, 'speaking in the narrowest circles', he gained experience: 'I learned to orate less.

But perhaps Hitler deliberately failed to mention any organizational affiliations he may have had because he wanted to preserve the classic legend of the man in the making, the political leader who reaches political maturity, while having protected his political virginity. 'Today it is my conviction that in general . . . a man should not

engage in public political activity before his thirtieth year,' he wrote in *Mein Kampf*. 'Otherwise he runs the risk of either having to change his former position on essential questions, or . . . of clinging to a view which reason and conviction have long since discarded.' Hitler was exactly thirty when he joined the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei in Munich in 1919.

What he 'learned' about Jews in the Vienna period, as recorded in a brief span of ten pages of *Mein Kampf* ('Years of Study and Suffering in Vienna'), is a mere foreshadowing of the ideas to come. Images of the Jew as unclean predominate: 'unclean dress', 'physical uncleanness', Jews were at the heart of everything that was diseased. They were to blame for prostitution in Vienna and the white-slave traffic. (Psychologists suggest here a projection of his guilt feelings about his sexual fantasies.) He had 'discovered' that Jews dominated the liberal press in Vienna and the city's cultural and artistic life, that they were behind the Social Democratic movement - Marxism. Triumphant, he had at last found an answer to the original question he had posed about the Jew: 'The Jew was no German.'

With this intellectual baggage, the claptrap of the conventional anti-Semitism of the time, and deep fears of political democracy, Hitler left Vienna in May 1913 and came to Munich, the Mecca of Germanism.

He arrived in Munich, a rootless young man of twenty-four, without friends, without family, without career or occupation, in a restless search for his identity or, as he would have put it, his Destiny. He found a room with a tailor's family in a working-class quarter of Munich and continued the same hand-to-mouth existence he had led in Vienna, peddling sketches and drawings. He continued the anti-Semitic racist 'studies' he had begun in Vienna, reading the papers and pamphlets, 'observing'. He seems to have become more aggressive, more confident, speaking publicly in taverns and beer cellars. He had already cast himself as prophet: 'In the years 1913 and 1914, I for the first time in various circles which today in part faithfully support the National Socialist movement, expressed the faith-vision that the question of the future of the German nation was the question of destroying Marxism.

What various circles? Hitler makes them appear to have been more



than a casual congregation of beer drinkers in a tavern. Did he perhaps belong to a National Socialist fore-runner group? Of the various nationalist and anti-Semitic groups in Munich there were at least two proto-Nazi organizations he might have belonged to or frequented. The Germanen- und Wälsamgorden (Order of Teutons and Volstungs), founded in 1912 as a Masonic-style racist society, is a possibility. One of its offshoots or branches was called Armanenorden, and the inscription to Hitler found in a book in his private library supports the idea of such membership. It regarded its central function to be the struggle against the 'secret Jewish conspiracy'. The Germanenorden was replete with Teutonic vocabulary and symbols; its journal *Runen* was decorated with swastikas.

Another group that Hitler could have joined would have been the local Munich branch of Theodor Fritsch's Reichshammerbund, a minuscule network of nineteen discussion and propaganda groups throughout Germany, closely associated with the Germanenorden. As for Fritsch, he was the grand old man of anti-Semitic propaganda and it is inconceivable that Hitler could have failed to have read his classic work, *Antisemiten-Katechismus (Anti-Semites' Catechism)*, later entitled *Handbuch der Judenfrage*, which went through innumerable editions.

Still, if Hitler actually ever belonged to any group, he made no lasting associations. In later years no one came forward with reminiscences that could locate him in any specific anti-Semitic organization. Though *Mein Kampf* indicates that he had become more confident of himself, and had found places to frequent that were attuned to his ideas, he still appeared to have retained the characteristics of an eccentric loner.

The assassination of Ferdinand at Sarajevo unleashed the First World War, and the war unleashed the pent-up nihilistic impulses that were raging within Hitler: 'The sense of approaching catastrophe turned at last to longing: let Heaven at last give free rein to the fate which could no longer be thwarted.'

On 1 August 1914, the declaration proclaiming war was read in Munich's Odeons Platz before a flag-waving, anthem-singing assembled mass. A photograph that later came to light showed Hitler in the crowd, eyes popping, mouth open, wildly exultant. Two days later, he submitted a petition to Ludwig III, the last king of Bavaria,

to join a Bavarian regiment. The request was approved. 'For me, as for every German, there now began the greatest and most unforgettable time of my earthly existence.'

He fought in France, was wounded, received the Iron Cross, Second Class, returned to the front, was wounded a second time. Then, fighting at the front again, he was promoted to lance corporal, and fought again in France. In October 1918, blinded in a British gas attack, he was sent to a military hospital. That last year he received the Iron Cross, First Class, a decoration seldom given to a soldier of his low rank, though no one knows for what act of bravery it was presented. While at the hospital, he witnessed the Bavarian revolution of November 1918, led by Kurt Eisner, the overthrow of the monarchy, the armistice and the creation, in weakness and indecision, of the Weimar Republic - in his mind, all the work of the Jews.

It was then, Hitler recollected, that he decided to go into politics. He returned to Munich, where the following April he saw the establishment of a Soviet republic, and then, within a month, its suppression in blood by the Reichswehr. He got a job as educational officer, the first real job he ever had, in the Press and Propaganda Office of the Political Department of the District Army Command in Munich. The department's function was to indoctrinate Reichswehr recruits on the dangers of radicalism. Hitler had become an employee in the very centre of the military apparatus that would help undermine the new republic. He was called on to submit reports on various political organizations active in the Munich area. In 1919 he was assigned to cover a newly formed group called the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (German Workers' Party). He joined the group. On 24 February 1920, its name was changed to Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), when the new twenty-five-point programme that Hitler had drafted was adopted.

In the immediate post-war years in Munich Hitler's social life changed drastically from his pre-war solitariness. He was in contact with several circles of like-minded people and those associations gave him certitude and reassurance. Under a variety of influences - people, books and pamphlets - his ideas about race and about Jews

\* cf. Friedrich Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe*: 'The exaltation of spirit experienced during the August days of 1914 . . . is one of the most precious, unforgettable memories of the highest sort' (p. 25).



crystallized. He had come to Munich with much of his anti-Jewish racist ideology already formed. He had emerged from the war still more politically paranoid, wildly blaming the Jews for the *Dolchstoß*, war. Still, the influences in Munich were decisive, for they would make it possible for him to cast his ideas into one coherent system. One group with which he early came into contact was the Thule Germanenorden, which was involved in assassination attempts on Eisner and the leaders of the Munich Soviet. Besides counter-revolutionary violence, the Thule Society engaged in Volkist racist propaganda. Its members included Rudolf Hess, who was to become Hitler's most slavish follower; Karl Harrer, a co-founder of the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei; and Dietrich Eckart, an important influence on Hitler in those early Munich days.

Eckart (1868-1923) was the one man whom Hitler acknowledged as mentor and teacher, closing the second volume of *Mein Kampf* with a tribute to him: 'That man, one of the best, who devoted his life to the awakening of his, our people, in his writings and his thoughts and finally in his deeds; Eckart, in his rootlessness and agitated mental state, was an elder version of Hitler, but was more Bohemian, addicted to alcohol and drugs. An unsuccessful playwright, he blamed the Jews for his failure. During the war he moved to Munich, barely managed to control his addictions, and became the hard of the Volkist movement. In 1919 he began publishing *Asif gu Deutsch*, a weekly replete with Volkist anti-Semitism, continuing until early 1921, when Hitler appointed him editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. One of Eckart's pamphlets, *Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin - Zwiegespräch zwischen Adolf Hitler und mir (Bolschewism from Moses to Lenin - Dialogue Between Adolf Hitler and Me)*, published posthumously, has been adduced as an example of Eckart's influence on Hitler's ideas prior to *Mein Kampf*.

Eckart took Hitler under his wing, showed him the ropes, introduced him to influential and wealthy nationalists and proto-Nazis. In 1920 Eckart took Hitler with him on a flight to Berlin to join up with the right-wing Kapp Putsch, just before it collapsed. But Eckart's most lasting contribution to Hitler's intellectual develop-

ment was merely coincidental. It was he who introduced Alfred Rosenberg to Hitler.

Rosenberg, the Baltic German whom Hitler would later ridicule and despise, enlarged Hitler's intellectual horizons, stretching his concepts beyond the borders of Germany. Rosenberg was one of those many Russian émigrés from the Bolshevik Revolution who imported into Western Europe the anti-Semitic notions of Tsarist Russia's Black Hundreds ('beat the Jews and save Russia') and mingled the anti-Semitism of Russia's darkest reaction with the anti-Semitism of Germany's paranoid nationalism. Rosenberg was born into a family of middle-class German Bats in 1893, in Reval (Tallinn), a Hanseatic city that since the early eighteenth century had been part of the Russian empire. In 1910 he was admitted to the Institute of Technology in Riga, where he studied architecture. In 1915, when the German front advanced, the institute was evacuated to Moscow, and Rosenberg went along with the complement of faculty and students. In January 1918 he received his diploma and returned home. His world collapsed when the revolution erupted. He started his peregrinations and finally left Russia with the retreating German army that had been in occupation.

When Rosenberg came to Munich, his interests were no longer cultural, but political - the politics of reaction and counter-revolution. Like many another Russian émigré, he had brought with him a booklet that utterly possessed him: the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. An implausible forgery concocted by the Tsarist secret police at the turn of the century, it purported to disclose the secret plans of the so-called international Jewish conspiracy for world domination. (It was 'incomparably' done, Hitler was to write in *Mein Kampf*.) The *Protocols* first appeared in German in 1920 and was constantly being reprinted thereafter. Rosenberg made something of a name for himself as a German commentator on the *Protocols*, writing innumerable articles and pamphlets on the subject.

His higher education, his penchant for wide-ranging philosophic schemas and the scope of his philosophic reading admirably equipped Rosenberg for the role of Hitler's intellectual mentor. From nineteenth-century West European thought - Fichte, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain - Rosenberg



took those ideas of nation, Volk, nationalism, race, the rise and fall of civilizations, and conjoined them all with the crude and superstitious anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevik ideas that the Russian émigrés had been nurtured on in their mother country. Chamberlain, Rosenberg confessed years later, was 'the strongest positive impulse in my youth', and it is no surprise that Rosenberg was said to have prepared, for Hitler's easy study, excerpts from Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (*Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*).

Russian-speaking and authoritative about Russian culture and politics, Rosenberg became Hitler's mentor also on Russia and Bolshevism. He inducted Hitler into the domain of international relations and prepared him for the geopolitical concepts he would pick up from Rudolf Hess and Hess's teacher and friend, Karl Haushofer. Haushofer, general turned professor, probably introduced Hitler to the concept of 'space as a factor of power', but Rosenberg elaborated the idea of *Lebensraum* which was to become a cornerstone of National Socialist ideology and one of the chief objectives of Germany's foreign policy. Those early days in Munich were no doubt Rosenberg's finest. Hitler would never again regard him so seriously.

While the international aspects of National Socialist ideology were still germinating within him, Hitler's general ideas about the Jews were fixed by 1920. In a letter, dated 16 September 1919 and written at the request of his military superior in the Press and Propaganda Office, in reply to one Adolf Gemlich, who asked for enlightenment on the Jewish question, Hitler set forth some of the ideas that in *Mein Kampf* he claimed to have already discovered in Vienna.<sup>2</sup> 'Anti-Semitism as a political movement', he wrote, 'cannot and should not be determined by emotional factors, but on the contrary by an understanding of the facts.' The 'facts', he continued, are that 'in the first instance, Jewry is without question a race and not a religious fellowship'. He then expatiated on the alleged Jewish single-minded pursuit of money and power, touching on the already classic anti-Semitic notion that Jews dominate, falsify and exploit the press. 'The effect of Jewry will be racial tuberculosis of nations.' (In *Mein Kampf*, in the same context, he wrote: 'It was no accident that man mastered the plague more easily than tuberculosis'.)<sup>3</sup>

From his analysis, Hitler concluded that anti-Semitism grounded

merely in emotion would find its ultimate outlet in pogroms. That was not enough.

Rational anti-Semitism, however, must lead to a systematic legal opposition and elimination of the special privileges which Jews hold, in contrast to the other aliens living among us (aliens' legislation). Its final objective must unswervingly be the removal [Entfernung] of the Jews altogether.

That paragraph carries, in the post-Auschwitz world, a staggering freight. It prefigures the political realities of the German dictatorship under Hitler, when the Jews were deprived of all rights systematically and 'legally', and then 'removed altogether', the ambiguity of the word 'removal' now more apparent than it was in 1919.

Hitler made his first public speech at a meeting of the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei on 13 November 1919, in a Munich beer cellar, and soon began to attract large audiences. Invariably he held forth on Germany's defeat in the war, which he blamed on Jewish treachery. On 29 April 1920 the subject of his address was 'Jewry', and according to the summary in an army political report, he concluded with a promise: 'We will carry on the struggle until the last Jew is removed from the German Reich.'

On 13 August 1920 he spoke at an NSDAP public meeting in a large hall on the topic 'Why Are We Anti-Semites?', the text of which has recently been published.<sup>4</sup> That speech differed in one respect from *Mein Kampf* in that it was directed towards working people and stressed the need for social and economic reform. Exalting labour, Hitler followed an old anti-Semitic tradition, asserting that Jews degraded and exploited labour. His evidence was the Pentateuchal injunction: 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread', which he interpreted to mean that the Jews regarded labour as 'a curse from God'. But in addressing himself to the subject of race and of Jews, the speech laid out the basic concepts that he was to develop in *Mein Kampf*.

He emphasized the need for a political organization to combat the Jews. It was not enough, he claimed, to deprive them of their economic power. The campaign for social reform must be accompanied by a struggle against 'the opponents of any social measures: Jewry'. The solution to the Jewish question must be 'removal



[*Entfernung*] of the Jews from our nation, not because we would begrudge them their existence – we congratulate the rest of the world on their company – but because the existence of our own nation is a thousand times more important to us than that of an alien race.

During his enforced political inactivity in Landsberg prison, Hitler undertook to put his ideas together in *Mein Kampf*, which was autobiography, ideological doctrine and party manual all in one. In *Mein Kampf* he expounded on race as the central principle of human existence and explicated the relationship, since the start of time, between the two world adversaries – the Aryans and the Jews. 'The racial question', he wrote, 'gives the key not only to world history, but to all human culture, for, he believed, 'in the blood alone resides the strength as well as the weakness of man'. All 'great questions of the day' he held to be momentary and derivative: only 'the question of racial preservation of the nation' was determinative, only that was significant as a causal factor in the rise and fall of civilization. An understanding of the 'Jewish problem' was a prerequisite for an understanding of the racial problem. The 'resurrection of Germany' would never be achieved 'without the clearest knowledge of the racial problem and hence of the Jewish problem'.

The 'Aryan' race was the 'bearer of human cultural development' and, consequently, 'human culture and civilization' are inseparably bound up with the presence of the 'Aryan'. The 'Aryans', therefore, by their nature, their 'blood', were chosen to rule the world. The very existence of world civilization depended on maintaining and safeguarding the purity of the 'Aryan' race:

*What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people, the sustenance of our children and the purity of our blood, the freedom and independence of the fatherland, so that our people may mature for the fulfilment of the mission allotted it by the creator of the universe.*

The state, according to Hitler, existed merely as a means to an end – the preservation of the racial community. States that did not serve that purpose were 'misbegotten, monstrosities'. The Volkist state 'must set race in the centre of all life', for it is thus acting as 'the

guardian of a millennial future'. The mission of the German people is the formation of such a Volkist state, which will have 'the task, not only of assembling and preserving the most valuable stocks of basic racial elements in this people, but slowly and surely of raising them to a dominant position'.

But the obstacle, or threat, to the fulfilment of this racial millennium is the Jew: 'The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew.' In Hitler's system, the 'Aryans' represented the perfection of human existence, whereas the Jews were the embodiment of evil. 'Wer kennt den Jude, kennt den Teufel', the saying went ('Whoever knows the Jew, knows the Devil'). Indeed, Hitler wrote, the 'vileness' of the Jew is so gigantic 'that no one need be surprised if among our people the personification of the Devil as the symbol of all evil assumes the living shape of the Jews'. The Jew as outsider, as the Other, had been transformed into the ultimate evil.

The vileness of the Jew, he claimed, resided in the blood of the race and was evident in the Jew's physical, mental, cultural being. This vileness, Hitler declared, had permeated nearly every aspect of modern society. Over and over again he kept describing the Jews in terms of filth and disease: 'if the Jews were alone in this world, they would stifle in filth and offal'. Jews, he asserted, were at the centre of every abscess, were 'germ-carriers', poisoning the blood of others but preserving their own. The Jews were, Hitler said, 'a ferment of decomposition', quoting a phrase used by Theodor Mommsen which, out of context, had become an anti-Semitic platitude. The depiction of the Jews as the carriers of filth and disease and, hence, of death and destruction, goes back in the history of anti-Semitism to the Middle Ages, when Jews were accused of spreading the plague and poisoning the wells. As late as the seventeenth century, a pestilence in Vienna was readily explained: 'It is well known that such pestilential epidemics are caused by evil spirits, by Jews, by gravediggers and by witches.' Hitler accused the Jews particularly of sexual defilement and even blamed them for the presence of syphilis in post-war Germany. Nor did Hitler disregard cultural pollution: 'Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it?' The 'poison' of the press allegedly controlled by the Jews 'was able to penetrate the bloodstream of our people'.



From the concept of the Jew as parasite, vampire, bloodsucker, contaminating the Aryan race, it was but a small step to the Jew as figurative bloodsucker in the financial and economic spheres: 'The spider was slowly beginning to suck the blood out of the people's pores' through the war corporations. That image had its source in the leftist anti-Semitic stereotype of the mid- and late-nineteenth century.

How had the Jews succeeded in insinuating themselves into the body of the Aryan race? By gigantic fraud and deception, Hitler said, by 'the first and greatest lie', that the Jews are 'a religious community while actually they are a race - and what a race!' As Hitler saw it, 'the Mosaic religion is nothing other than a doctrine for the preservation of the Jewish race'. He believed that the Jews had no language or culture of their own, that they sapped and drained other cultures and races so as ultimately to destroy them. That way, Hitler maintained, the Jews would achieve dominion over the world: 'It is the inexorable Jew who struggles for his domination over the nations.'

The Jews had many conspiratorial techniques and vehicles for achieving world mastery, Hitler said, and in modern society these were Freemasonry, the press, democracy, parliamentarianism, the trade union movement, Marxism and Social Democracy. As for democracy, he held that 'only the Jew can praise an institution which is as dirty and false as he himself'. 'The Jewish doctrine of Marxism', Hitler contended, rejects 'the aristocratic principle of Nature'. The goal of Marxism 'is and remains the destruction of all non-Jewish national states'. Marxism itself, Hitler believed, 'systematically plans to hand the world over to the Jews'.<sup>10</sup>

He did not have to scour long for evidence. The best proof for his argument was what had happened in Russia, or rather to Russia. Hitler's association of the Jews with Russian Bolshevism - an idea fostered and insisted on by Rosenberg - was, in its delusional conclusion, more original than his other ideas about Jews and race that derived from the ample sources of European anti-Semitism and racial doctrine. That the Jews were the revolutionaries *par excellence*, the masterminds of the Bolshevik Revolution - that was nothing new. The reality of Leon Trotsky and the forgery of the *Protocols* documented that charge to the satisfaction of most anti-Semites. But Hitler went beyond this and 'penetrated' beneath the surface of the conspiracy:

*The Jews in Hitler's Mental World*

'In Russian Bolshevism we must see the attempt undertaken by the Jews the twentieth century to achieve world domination.' All Russia, he believed, had somehow become captive of the Jews. Schooled by Rosenberg, Hitler had concluded that the Slavs were an inferior race, incapable of building a state. For centuries, Hitler explained, 'Russia drew nourishment' from the 'Germanic nucleus of its upper leading strata'. But those strata, 'exterminated and extinguished', were then replaced by the Jews. (A similar fate, he warned, faced Germany, unless it would show sufficient national will to resist.) Since the Russians, according to Hitler's view, could never by themselves shake off Jewish domination, the Russian empire must necessarily collapse. Having reached this point in the development of his ideas about Russia, Hitler then elaborated his doctrines of race and space that culminated in his foreign-policy programme for a National Socialist Germany. Spurning with contempt the suggestion that Germany ought to conclude an alliance with the Soviet Union, Hitler solemnly declared: 'The fight against Jewish world Bolshevization requires a clear attitude towards Soviet Russia. You cannot drive out the Devil with Beelzebub.' (That metaphor was one of Hitler's favourites all his life, but he used it expediently. In a speech on 6 April 1920 he was reported to have said that in order to achieve the National Socialist goal of extirpating the evil - the Jews, that is - root and branch, 'every means is justified, even when we must ally ourselves with the Devil!')<sup>11</sup>

*Mein Kampf* is a vision of the apocalyptic conflict between the Aryans and the Jews, of the two world systems struggling for dominion. It was his own Manichaean version of the conflict between good and evil, between God and the Devil, Christ and the Antichrist. He saw himself as the Messiah who would bring deliverance from the Devil. 'Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.'<sup>12</sup> Some years later Hitler told Rauschning: 'We are God's people.' He repeated what he had written in *Mein Kampf*: 'Two worlds face one another - the men of God and the men of Satan. The Jew is the anti-man, the creature of another god. He must have come from another root of the human race. I set the Aryan and the Jew over and against each other.'<sup>13</sup>

The Jews inhabited Hitler's mind. He believed that they were the



source of all evil, misfortune and tragedy, the single factor that, like some inexorable law of nature, explained the workings of the universe. The irregularities of war and famine, financial distress and sudden death, defeat and sinfulness - all could be explained by the presence of that single factor in the universe, a miscreation, that disturbed the world's steady ascent towards well-being, affluence, success, victory. A saviour was needed to come forth and slay the loathsome monster. In Hitler's obsessed mind, as in the delusive imaginings of the medieval millenarian sectarians, the Jews were the demonic hosts whom he had been given a divine mission to destroy.

All his life Hitler was seized by this obsession with the Jews. Even after he had murdered the Jews, he had still not exorcised his Jewish demons. At 4:00 a.m. on 29 April 1945, the last day of his life in the Berlin bunker, he finished dictating his political testament. His last words to the German people were: 'Above all I charge the leaders of the nation and those under them to scrupulous observance of the laws of race and to merciless opposition to the universal poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry.'

The question continues to oppress us: how could a man with this poor baggage of deranged ideas and prejudices become Chancellor of Germany? How was it possible that a state whose people and culture ranked high in the world's civilization should have entrusted its fate to this deluded man who believed that he had been chosen to lead a holy war against the Jews?

Many answers have been given and perhaps many are needed, for no single theory can satisfactorily explain Hitler's phenomenal success with the German people. They were mesmerized by his voice, and they responded to his message. Was it because their mortal sense, at

\*Historians interested in Hitler's psychobiography put another question: what made Hitler an anti-Semite? Their search to establish the motivation for Hitler's anti-Semitism (which they look for in his personal life and psychology) may have a clinical interest for the psychoanalyst and trillate the general reader, but it seems to me irrelevant, by-passing more important historical and political questions. Thousands of Hitler's contemporaries in Central Europe were being shaped and developed as anti-Semites. Their psychological motivations are of relatively little interest to the historian, for they did not effect the course of history. Hitler's motivations - e.g., his putative Jewish origin - was not nearly as significant as his ideology and his programme, that is, his beliefs and inten-

least with regard to the Jews, had become atrophied under the effect of generations of virulent anti-Semitism? Had the German people already become mithridatized by anti-Semitic poison, so that they had become immune even to Hitler's deadly brand? Was it because he spoke for them?

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and each one has his one decent Jew. Sure, the others are swine, but this one is an A-1 Jew. Of all those who talk this way, not one has seen it happen, not one has been through it. Most of you must know what it means to see a hundred corpses lie side by side, or five hundred, or a thousand. To have struck this out and - excepting cases of human weakness - to have kept our integrity, this is what has made us hard. In our history, this is an unwritten and never-to-be written page of glory.... 41

## 8. A Retrospective View

The Final Solution had its origins in Hitler's mind. In *Mein Kampf* he tells us that he decided on his war against the Jews in November 1918, when, at the military hospital in Pasewalk, he learned, in rapid succession, of the naval mutiny at Kiel, the revolution that forced the abdication of the Emperor, and finally the armistice. 'Everything went black before my eyes,' he wrote. In the ensuing 'terrible days and even worse nights,' while he pondered the meaning of these cataclysmic events, 'my own fate became known to me'. It was then that he made his decision:

There is no making pacts with Jews; there can be only the hard: either - or I, for my part, decided to go into politics.

Did Hitler really decide then, in November 1918, on the destruction of the Jews as his political goal? Or did the idea remain buried in his mind until it took shape in *Mein Kampf*, which he wrote in 1924? *Mein Kampf* was the basic treatise of Hitler's ideas, where he brought together the three essential components that formed the embryonic concept of the Final Solution. Each component originated in a politically commonplace notion that Hitler transformed into an inordinately radical one. First, he turned political anti-Semitism into a racial doctrine whose purpose was the destruction of the Jews. Second, having defined Bolshevism as a Jewish conspiracy for world rule, he transformed anti-Bolshevism into a holy crusade to liberate Russia from its allegedly Jewish masters. Third, using race as a rationale, he transformed the imperialist drive for autarky and world power into the concept of *Lebensraum*. These three notions were consolidated into a unified concept that became the theoretical, ideational foundation of the Final Solution. In *Mein Kampf* that concept appeared in its matured form and remained a central tenet in Hitler's ideology from which he never deviated. It was already then a fixed idea, in both the



everyday and psychiatric meaning of the term, awaiting only the political opportunities for its implementation.

If *Mein Kampf* is the *terminus ad quem* for the conception of the Final Solution, does its beginning indeed go back to November 1918, as Hitler himself claimed? It is a hazardous task to construct a chronology of the evolution of this idea in Hitler's mind. The historical evidence is sparse and no doubt would be inadmissible as courtroom evidence. The very idea of the destruction of the Jews as a political goal demanded, when Hitler first began to advocate it, camouflage and concealment. Its later consummation demanded, within limits, secrecy. Consequently there is a paucity of documents, and even those we have handicap the search for definitive evidence because of the problem of esoteric language.

How does one advocate publicly an idea or a programme whose novelty lies in its utter radicalism? No matter how anti-Semitic the Munich of 1919 and 1920 was, the explicit transformation of a slogan like '*Juda verrecke*' into a practical political programme would have brought on the censorship of the local authorities and discredited the incipient National Socialist movement even among conventional anti-Semites. In this situation Hitler availed himself of a time-honoured device — the use of esoteric language. In all periods of history, when government or society has put limits on public discussion, those who wish to circumvent censorship resort to the use of esoteric language. Exoterically understood, the text is unexceptionable, but to the insiders who know how to interpret the words, the message is revolutionary and dangerous to the *status quo*.

Hitler complained in *Mein Kampf* that in the early days it was hard to get a hearing for the anti-Semitic point of view. 'Our first attempts', he wrote, 'to show the public the real enemy then seemed almost hopeless.' He exaggerated, as usual, but the problem was that the National Socialists did not want to be dismissed 'merely' as anti-Semites, single-minded crackpots without political solutions to contemporary problems. In the Reichswehr, where Hitler's oratorical talents and anti-Semitic presentations to the recruits were much admired by his superiors, there was anxiety that these speeches would be characterized as 'anti-Jewish agitation'. Instructions were consequently given for a cautious treatment and the avoidance of 'plain references' to the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

The National Socialists in their public meetings seldom exercised such caution, for the word 'Jew' occurs with obsessive repetitiveness. Still, according to the earliest reports of Hitler's speeches, the code words he used for Jews outnumbered the plain references: usury (usurers), profiteering (profiteers), exploiters, big capitalism (big capitalists), international big and/or loan capital, international money power, Communists, Social Democrats, November criminals, revolution criminals, aliens, foreigners. References to the press unmistakably were meant and interpreted as 'Jewish' press. In one circumlocution, Hitler spoke of the fight 'against the races [sic] who are the money representatives'.<sup>2</sup>

The code words served to invest the crude anti-Semitic agitation of the National Socialists with the dignity of political argument and economic analysis. Simultaneously they served to depict for the insiders the vast ramifications of the 'Jewish conspiracy' and to document the multifarious roles of the mythic Jew. From the use of these code words, the insiders came to learn that all of Germany's enemies were Jews or tools of Jews.

Having defined the enemy exoterically and esoterically, Hitler in his speeches began to indicate how he would deal with that enemy. In those early days his favourite words were '*Entfernung*' and '*Aufräumung*', both meaning 'removal', 'elimination', 'cleaning up'. (In *Mein Kampf* he preferred to use '*Beseitigung*', also meaning 'removal', 'elimination', but less ambiguous about its finality.) According to a Reichswehr report of a meeting of 27 April 1920, Hitler in his closing remarks said: 'We will carry on the struggle until the last Jew is removed [entfernt ist] from the German Reich.' According to the Bavarian police report, Hitler's conclusion that the NSDAP would make a revolution that would 'thoroughly clean out [aufräumen] the Jew-rabble' received 'protracted, stormy applause'.<sup>3</sup>

Whether he used both words interchangeably or whether the several reporters 'interpreted' what they heard, Hitler had resorted to language whose meaning he intentionally made ambiguous, to be understood both exoterically and esoterically. 'Removal' or 'elimination' could be understood to mean 'expulsion', and no doubt some of Hitler's listeners thought, if they thought at all about specifics, that he planned to drive the Jews out of Germany.

In this very early period only two documents are extant that are



authentically Hitler's, the direct product of his hand and mind. These lend themselves better to a probing of his meaning than the second-hand reports of Reichswehr and police. The first document is his letter to Gemlich, written while he was still working for the Reichswehr. Here, once more, is that key passage:

Rational anti-Semitism, however, must lead to a systematic legal opposition and elimination [Beseitigung] of the special privileges that Jews hold, in contrast to the other aliens living among us (aliens' legislation). Its final objective must unswervingly be the removal [Entfernung] of the Jews altogether.

What Hitler is saying here is that a systematic programme of anti-Semitism consists of two stages: a preliminary stage in which Jews are deprived of all rights, and then the accomplishment of a 'final objective' - 'removal of the Jews altogether'. The phrase is obviously open to two interpretations. It was not that Hitler was unable to express himself clearly and unequivocally. Rather he deliberately used a word that could be interpreted two ways - one, vague and conventional; the other, specific and radical.

Such ambiguous usage persisted in the National Socialist movement until the end, though its function became somewhat different. Himmler, in his speech to the S-S-Gruppenführer on 4 October 1943, used the word '*Ausschaltung*', meaning 'elimination', as synonymous with '*Ausrottung*', meaning 'annihilation'. There was no reason to invoke esoteric language to that particular audience on that occasion at that late date, but by then the political need for esoteric language had given way to the psychological need for euphemistic language.

In the second Hitler document, the text of his speech of 13 August 1920, a typescript apparently made from a stenographic record, with editorial emendations in Hitler's own hand, '*Entfernung*' reappears as a solution to the 'Jewish question':

Removal of the Jews from our nation, not because we would begrudge them their existence - we congratulate the rest of the whole world on their company [great merit], but because the existence of our own nation is a thousand times more important to us than that of an alien race.

Here Hitler has introduced the very question of whether the Jews are to live or die. The irony is heavy. But precisely where does it

begin? How did the inflections of his voice, his pauses and emphases communicate his message? Does the irony begin with the phrase 'not because we would begrudge them their existence'? Perhaps the party members are already responding to an inside joke, whereas the outsiders get the joke only at the next clause, which itself compounds the original ambiguity of the word 'removal'. Are the Jews to be expelled from Germany and thus forced upon other countries, or is Hitler referring to the Jews already living in other countries? The ambiguity is calculated. Nevertheless, Hitler posed an incontrovertible dichotomy: 'their existence' versus 'our existence'.

The 'either - or' that he had predicated in *Mein Kampf* was already evolving. In a speech on 12 April 1922 he said, referring to the 'Jewish question': 'Here, too, there can be no compromise - there are only two possibilities: either victory of the Aryan or annihilation of the Aryan and the victory of the Jew.'<sup>4</sup> Hitler frequently used the rhetorical device of paired antitheses. Strictly, the construction should have read:

either victory of the Aryan [and annihilation of the Jew]  
or  
annihilation of the Aryan and the victory of the Jew.

The ellipsis of half of one pair was a signal to the cognoscenti of what he meant to say. Today we can appreciate a similar ellipsis in his famous prophecy of 30 January 1939:

Bolshevization of the world and a victory of the Jews  
or  
[Aryanization of the world and] destruction of the Jewish race.

In 1922 Hitler had to propagate the annihilation of the Jews in esoteric language. In 1939 he used the same technique to express his ambition for world dominion.

In the summer of 1922 a young man named Kurt Ludecke joined the National Socialist party and first met Hitler. Overwhelmed by both, he described his feelings at that time about the goals the movement had set for itself. These were his perceptions:

The hugeness of the task and the absurdity of the hope swept over me. Its execution meant the liquidation of Jewry, of Rome, of liberalism with its tangled capitalistic connections; of Marxism, Bolshevism, Toryism -



in short, an abrupt and complete break with the past and an assault on all existing world political forces.<sup>5</sup>

Hitler's goals had unmistakably been communicated, despite the handicaps of esoteric language. Within the movement, the destruction of the Jews seemed to have been accepted as a basic programmatic task, though the average National Socialist probably still thought of pogrom, despite Hitler's frequently expressed opposition to such 'emotional' outbursts of anti-Semitism. Still, even in those early days of the movement, when plans were being laid for the *Putsch* and the takeover of political power the Jews figured importantly in Nazi strategy. The destruction of the Jews was not just a matter of words, in esoteric language even then, but a deadly reality. Hermann Esser, one of Hitler's earliest party comrades, at an NSDAP meeting held in December 1922, at which plans for a forthcoming *Putsch* were discussed, mentioned the possibilities of foreign intervention on behalf of the Weimar Republic. That would not work, he said, for there would be '500,000 Jews as hostages carefully guarded, who will be ruthlessly dispatched, if even a single enemy crosses the German frontier'. At the time of the *Putsch*, one battalion was assigned to keep the Jews from fleeing Munich, presumably to ensure their remaining as hostages.<sup>6</sup>

A draft constitution prepared by one of Hitler's associates in readiness for the NSDAP takeover provided, as a start, for the expropriation of 'all movable and immovable property of the members of the Jewish people'.<sup>7</sup> Any attempt to circumvent expropriation was punishable by death. Concentration camps (*Sammlungen*) were to be set up to 'cleanse' the 'cities, spas, and resort towns', especially 'for the removal of all persons dangerous to security and useless carers'. Since these were to be the first steps during the transitional period while the NSDAP would be consolidating its power, it does not appear unlikely that still more draconian measures were in store for the Jews.

In retrospect, it seems likely that Hitler had settled on his radical 'either-or' anti-Semitism, as he formulated it in the Gemlich letter of 1919, already back in November 1918, as he claims in *Mein Kampf*. During the next few years Hitler's thinking remained geographically

limited to Germany, albeit a 'greater Germany'. In his mind, the destruction of the Jews was the way to restore Germany to its virile Germanness. But once he encountered Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler's political horizons expanded; he began to see the Jews primarily as an international group, whose destruction demanded an international policy.

This new approach is distinctly evident in his speech of 28 July 1922, delivered a month after Rathenau's assassination and upon Hitler's emergence from prison where he had served one month for breaking up an opposition meeting. The enforced leisure of prison had given him time to think, as later in Landsberg. Hitler now viewed his struggle against 'Jewish world domination' in global terms:

Today we all of us feel that two worlds are struggling with one another, and not alone in our country, but everywhere we look, in oppressed Russia, in Italy, in France and England, etc. An inexorable struggle between the ideals of those who believe in a national people and the ideals of the intangible, supra-national international...<sup>8</sup>

The content of this speech was a mostly familiar attack on the Jews and the 'Jewish' conspiracy in which 'the stock-exchange Jew and the labour leader' together 'pursue a single direction and a single aim'. The new factor was Hitler's global perspective: 'How long will it be before the whole world falls to ruin...?'

Rosenberg further showed Hitler the possibilities of exploiting Russia as the political locus of international Jewry, thus providing him with the eventual major theatre of operations for his war against world Jewry. Under the influence of Rosenberg and the other Russian and Ukrainian émigrés with whom he associated and with whom the National Socialist movement collaborated, Russia became a key element in Hitler's thinking. The émigrés spoke constantly of the imperative need to invade Russia so as to liberate it from the bondage of the 'Jew-Bolsheviks'. In the very first issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Rosenberg speculated that the Soviet Union would shortly invade Poland and argued that Germany should then intervene in what he called 'the eastern marches of Germany'. (Hitler was to use this idea in *Mein Kampf*.) Here, in Rosenberg's mind, is the justification for Germany's 'liberation' of the Eastern territories from the 'Jewish



Bolsheviks', which would simultaneously restore the land to its original German owner. It was an idea that Hitler and Himmler were to hold tenaciously for the next twenty years. Thus, fitting piece by piece into a large scheme, Hitler combined the annihilation of the Jews with the destruction of Bolshevism, both of which could be accomplished by an invasion of Russia. The whole was supported in racial terms: the innate racial perniciousness of the Jews and the innate racial superiority of the Aryans whose culture justified their need for *Lebensraum*.

Hitler probably derived the components for the idea of *Lebensraum* from the impositions of the Versailles Treaty. His earliest speeches all dwell, in one way or another, on the treaty, for which, as he saw it, the Jews were responsible. He often referred to Germany's lost colonies, the forfeiture of her merchant and fishing fleets, the obligatory deliveries of coal to France and the Low Countries, and the burdensome monetary payments. According to the Reichswehr report of a speech of 10 December 1919 on the 'shame of the Versailles Treaty', Hitler spoke of Germany's need to import raw materials; according to the Bavarian police report, he complained that there was eighteen times more land for every Russian than for every German. (In that speech, he expressed the view that the Russian had a right to his land, a position he did not long hold.) In a speech on 20 September 1920 the racial justification for *Lebensraum* had already emerged. According to the Reichswehr report, Hitler said that Germany had a right to live, not only on the basis of its population, but also 'on the basis of its culture'. Thus, with the help of Rosenberg and eventually Haushofer, Hitler shaped his concept of *Lebensraum*, in which racial ideology became as vital as the imperialist drive.

Hitler wrote the first volume of *Mein Kampf* in Landsberg prison in 1924 and the second volume in 1925, when he was forbidden to engage in public speaking. The tone of the second is more aggressive and outspoken than that of the first; Volume 2 is said to have benefited also from professional editorial assistance. The writing of *Mein Kampf* forced Hitler into a process of organizing his ideas in one all-embracing schema, however unsystematic and inchoate the final product. At its centre was the war against the Jews that would culminate in their annihilation and the world supremacy of the Germans. The language, especially in the second volume, is no longer esoteric, but plain-spoken.

Though Hitler's hysteria and chiliasic rhetoric made the prose appear deceptively metaphorical, the words were meant to be taken literally. The destruction of the Jews is advocated time and again (all italics in original):

*Only the elimination of the causes of our collapse, as well as the destruction of its beneficiaries, can create the premise for our outward fight for freedom.*

... It is the inexorable Jew who struggles for his domination over the nations. No nation can remove this hand from its throat except by the sword. Only the assembled and concentrated might of a national passion rearing up in its strength can defy the international enslavement of peoples. Such a process is and remains a bloody one.

Writing about the failure of the 1923 *Putsch*, Hitler accused the Weimar government of lacking sufficient nationalism: 'And in my opinion, it was then the very first task of a truly national government to seek and find the forces which were resolved to declare a war of annihilation on Marxism and then to give these forces a free road... Not only was the government derelict in its task, Hitler argued, but so were all the political parties, which 'continued to bicker with the Marxists only out of competitors' envy, without any serious desire to annihilate them.'

At the same time, Hitler kept projecting on the Jews the very destructive ideas he held about them: 'The Jew would really devour the people of the earth, would become their master', 'the international world Jew slowly but surely strangles us', 'the Jew destroys the racial foundations of our existence and thus destroys our people for all time'.

He even argued retroactively for a 'preventive' war against the Jew in 1914-18, which could have saved Germany from defeat:

It would have been the duty of a serious government, now that the German worker had found his way back to his nation [in August 1914], to exterminate mercilessly the agitators who were misleading the nation.

If the best men were dying at the front, the least we could do was to wipe out the vermin.

If at the beginning of the War and during the War twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas... the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been



in vain. On the contrary: twelve thousand scoundrels eliminated in time might have saved the lives of a million real Germans, valuable for the future.

In the years between 1919 and 1925, the political climate had changed and Hitler now openly espoused his programme of annihilation, without having to resort to concealment or camouflage. But only his followers took his words literally. Others, when they listened to Hitler or read *Mein Kampf*, dismissed his words as lunatic ravings. Yet these words were to become the blueprint for his policies when he came to power and would become, astonishingly, political and military reality.

Once Hitler adopted an ideological position, even a strategic one, he adhered to it with limpet-like fixity, fearful lest he be accused, if he changed his mind, of incertitude or capriciousness on essential questions. He had long-range plans to realize his ideological goals, and the destruction of the Jews was at their centre.

The grand design was in his head. He did not spell it out in concrete strategy. Nothing was written down. (On 29 April 1937 he advised NSDAP leaders: 'Everything that can be discussed should never be put in writing, never!')<sup>10</sup> He even elevated his tactics of secrecy into a strategic principle: as few people as possible to know as little as possible as late as possible.<sup>11</sup>

The implementation of his plans was contingent on the opportunism of the moment or the expediency of delay. As head of both the German state and the National Socialist movement, he had to weigh the urgent passions of the little man in the party against the foreign-policy interests of the state, and to balance his own desire for surprise attack with the state's readiness to mount one. Often he decided suddenly that the opportune occasion had arrived to carry out a specific aspect of his programme, and then the practical work had quickly to be improvised.

In Hitler's schema, the removal of the Jews from posts in the state apparatus and from society's cultural and educational institutions represented, along with the re-militarization of Germany, the first phase of his programme, the internal cleansing and healing of Germany. Whereas the anti-Jewish legislation of 1933 was for him merely the prerequisite for later stages of his programme that would culminate in

the Final Solution, this undoing of the emancipation of the German Jews represented for the conventional anti-Semites the attainment of their political ambitions. That was the time when the widest consensus existed in Germany with regard to anti-Semitism, when the values and goals of the conventional anti-Semites were identical and undistinguishable from those of the radical anti-Semites. That particular convergence made it easier for the conventional anti-Semites subsequently to acquiesce to the radical anti-Semitic programme.

At the National Socialist party congress in Nuremberg in September 1935 Hitler introduced new anti-Jewish legislation, describing these laws as a repayment of a debt of gratitude to the National Socialist party, under whose aegis Germany had regained her freedom, and as the fulfilment of an important plank of the movement's programme.<sup>12</sup> The Reich Citizenship Law, depriving the German Jews of the rights and protections of citizenship, marked the goal of conventional anti-Semitism – the total disenfranchisement of the Jews.

The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, on the other hand, even though it drew heavily upon a half-century's tradition of racist anti-Semitism, was a new departure. With its implementing decrees and with those of the Reich Citizenship Law, it initiated Hitler's programme of radical anti-Semitism, with the process of identifying and isolating the Jews from the non-Jews, readying them, as it were, for their later fate.

The Nuremberg Laws were a watershed also in another respect, to which Hitler alluded ominously. In introducing the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, he said that it was 'an attempt to regulate by law a problem which, in the event of repeated failure, would have to be transferred by law to the National Socialist party for final solution.'<sup>13</sup> He was, it now appears, indicating that the state had come to the end of its competency in handling the Jewish question and that thenceforth all anti-Jewish measures would be carried out by the party. In this period, too, he spoke of sweeping plans for the Jews, involving ghettos and possibly a reservation, and on another occasion he talked of carrying out the 'euthanasia murder programme once war came.'

<sup>10</sup>In his speech of 27 April 1920 Hitler was reported to have said, with regard to carrying out his planned anti-Jewish programme: 'First we try to carry it out kindly, and then, when that does not work, with ruthless violence.'



By the summer of 1936, Hitler believed that the first phase of his programme – the internal domestic stage – was virtually completed and in August, having composed a memorandum on the Four Year Plan, he entered into preparations for the second phase – the Four Year and war. That memorandum, with its ideological justification for a war against Jewish Bolshevism, transformed *Mein Kampf* into state policy. The doctrine of the party leader now became the plan for the state. The annihilation of the Jews, who are explicitly referred to as the power behind Bolshevism, is implicit in Hitler's familiar rhetorical construction (italicized in the original): '*For a victory of Bolshevism over Germany would not lead to a Versailles Treaty but to the final destruction, indeed to the annihilation, of the German people.*'<sup>13</sup> As further clarification, Hitler specified that the Reichstag would have to pass a law expropriating the Jews. Thus the expropriation of the Jews had become, in Hitler's thinking, correlated with the advancement of his war plans. That decision explains why Hitler rejected the insistent demands of the National Socialist movement between 1935 and 1938 to plunder Jewish property and possessions.

That decision explains also Hitler's apparent indifference to the unregulated pluralism with regard to the Jews that then flourished within state and party – the use of National Socialist law, arbitrary violence, normal bureaucratic procedures for normal migration coexisting with the SD's ideas of forced emigration. Hitler's toleration for such assorted 'solutions' extended only until he was ready to put his war plans into operation.

Hitler appointed Göring to be his Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan and gave him a copy of that memorandum. They surely discussed aspects of this programme, and Hitler must have shared his plans concerning the Jews. At least one other person also shared Hitler's confidences in this respect at this time – Heinrich Himmler. In the early summer of 1936 Himmler had, with Hitler's support, become Reichsführer-SS and Chief of the German Police, directly subordinate to Hitler and only to him. Hitler had by then already decided to hand over to the National Socialist movement the authority to 'solve' the Jewish question. Himmler, then one of the most powerful figures in the party, had probably been inducted into the innermost circle and told of Hitler's plans for war and the destruction of the Jews – a task that would fall, at the proper time, within his jurisdiction.

How often and how specifically Hitler discussed his plans with Göring and Himmler no one knows. Yet they spoke, for instance, about ghettos as an interim measure, because Göring, at his post-war Kristallnacht inter-ministerial conference of 12 November 1938, proposed ghettos as a possible means of concentrating the Jews. (Heydrich's objections at that time indicate that he had not yet become privy to these plans.)

If the plans for dealing with the Jews were vague and non-specific, so were the plans for military invasion, as the Hossbach protocol reveals. Hitler's military and diplomatic staffs were appalled to learn in November 1937 of Hitler's intentions to invade Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938, not so much because of the suddenness with which they had to confront these plans, but because of lack of preparation. Their demurral, however, cost them their posts and careers, for Hitler remained inflexible, committed to his timetable. The Austrian invasion advanced smoothly, but Chamberlain's intervention in Czechoslovakia frustrated Hitler's plans. It appears that he had intended, under cover of the seizure of Czechoslovakia, to carry out the expropriation of the Jews, for the first National Socialist legislation in this area was issued early in 1938. Hitler no doubt counted on the general public upheaval over Czechoslovakia to muffle protests about robbing the Jews.

Thwarted by Chamberlain, but impatient to move ahead according to his schedule, Hitler took the first opportunity that would give him apparent justification to expropriate the Jews: the assassination of vom Rath. That opportunism proved doubly useful, for it gave the little Nazi a last chance for a fling. The pogrom and the expropriation were not really part of Hitler's new, radical anti-Semitism, but rather a reversion to medievalism, when Jews were subjected not only to violence, but to all sorts of taxes, fines, levies, exactions, amercements and confiscations. In the Middle Ages complete expropriation went hand in hand with expulsion, and for the brief period that National Socialist pressure for Jewish emigration intensified following the Kristallnacht, Hitler seemed to be emulating Edward I and Philip the Fair. But pressure for emigration was, in Hitler's plans, only by-play. After the Kristallnacht the Jews in Germany became little more than hostages, perhaps no different from the way Hitler and Esser had envisaged the situation in 1923. The Reichszentrale, which Göring had



instructed Heydrich to set up on 24 January 1939, effectively put the Jews at the mercy of the police and SD. (Probably then, Heydrich was made a party to the plan to destroy the Jews.)

On 30 January 1939 Hitler made his declaration of war against the Jews, promising 'the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe'. The decision to proceed with this irreversible mission had already been taken. Thenceforth the Final Solution entered the stage of practical planning for implementation. Hitler's first opportunity to put into practice his ideas about killing the crippled and insane presented itself at this time, and shortly thereafter, on 3 April 1939, he instructed Keitel to start planning the invasion of Poland.

Hitler's gamble, then, was on a quick military victory in Poland, to be completed before Russia could gather wits or force to act. Afterwards he would consolidate his position, using Poland as the launching pad for his invasion of Russia. (The rapprochement with Russia, ideologically embarrassing but tactically expedient, did not at all affect his long-range plans, but merely eased his short-range military risks.)

While planning the Polish invasion, Hitler, Himmler and Heydrich worked out the first stage of the Final Solution, concentrating the Jews while consolidating the Polish gains. Heydrich's instructions to the chiefs of the Einsatzgruppen on 21 September 1939 are clear enough about present programme and future intentions. The second, ultimate stage of the Final Solution was to be synchronized with the attack on Russia, when 'Jewish Bolshevism' would be destroyed.

While the Jews in Poland were concentrated in ghettos and began to expire slowly of 'natural' causes like hunger, disease, cold, exhaustion, the idea of systematically killing the Jews began to appear as an inevitable and even desirable development to a number of Germans not privy to the still-secret plans for the Final Solution. Thus SS-Brigadeführer Friedrich Uebelhör, Regierungspräsident of Lodz (the top official in the civil administration of the district of Lodz), on 10 December 1939, in planning to establish a ghetto, already thought of its destruction:

The establishment of the ghetto is of course only a provisional measure. I reserve for myself the points in time and the means with which the ghetto and thereby the city of Lodz will be cleansed of Jews. The end goal [Endziel] in any case must be that we burn out this pest-hole without a remainder.<sup>14</sup>

Uebelhör's hubris reveals that he knew nothing of the plans for the Final Solution, otherwise he would hardly have arrogated to himself a decision of the highest state and party priority.

A year later, on 20 December 1940, Governor Hans Frank addressed a Wehrmacht battalion stationed in Cracow. Remarking, as he often did, that their families must commiserate with them for having to serve in Poland, where there were so many lice and Jews, Frank said it would indeed be nice if they could write home and say that things with regard to lice and Jews had improved: 'To be sure, in one year I can do away with neither all the lice nor all the Jews [incrimination]. But in the course of time and, above all, if you help me, that will be made attainable.'<sup>15</sup>

Still later, in July 1941, an official by the name of Höppner, in the city administration of Posen, sent Eichmann the official minutes of a discussion regarding the 'Solution of the Jewish Question' in the Wartheland. One proposal read:

There is an imminent danger that not all the Jews can be supplied with food in the coming winter. We must seriously consider if it would not be more humane to finish off the Jews, insofar as they are not fit for labour mobilization, with some quick-acting means. In any case this would be more agreeable [angenehmer] than to let them die of hunger.

In his covering letter asking for Eichmann's comments, Höppner was optimistically categorical: 'These things sound to some extent fantastic, but in my view absolutely practicable.'<sup>16</sup> Eichmann, for his part, at precisely that time was working on the practicability of such fantastic ideas.

In December 1940 Operation Barbarossa entered the formal planning stage, and Hitler then no doubt explored with Himmler, and perhaps Heydrich, various practical possibilities for the last stage of the Final Solution. By February 1941 they had decided on a two-pronged attack against the Jews. In the active war zone, the Einsatzgruppen would coordinate their murder attack on the Jews with the military invasion. The rest of the European Jews in countries under German occupation or governed by rulers sympathetic to Germany would be brought to annihilation camps in or near the Generalgouvernement of Poland. (Himmler's visit to Auschwitz on 1 March 1941 was obviously exploratory, for he did not inform Höss then why Auschwitz



was to be expanded.) All the decisions had been taken. The rest was a matter of technology, administrative clearance, and efficient operation. Through a maze of time Hitler's decision of November 1918 led to Operation Barbarossa. There never had been any ideological deviation or wavering determination. In the end only the question of opportunity mattered.

The Final Solution grew out of a matrix formed by traditional anti-Semitism, the paranoid delusions that seized Germany after the First World War, and the emergence of Hitler and the National Socialist movement. Without Hitler, the charismatic political leader who believed he had a mission to annihilate the Jews, the Final Solution would not have occurred. Without that assertive and enduring tradition of anti-Semitism by which the Germans sought self-definition, Hitler would not have had the fecund soil in which to grow his organization and spread its propaganda. Without the paranoid delusion of the Doltschross that masses of Germans shared in the wake of Germany's military defeat, political upheavals, economic distress and humiliations of the Versailles Treaty, Hitler could not have transformed the German brand of conventional anti-Semitism into a radical doctrine of mass murder.

Anti-Semitism was the core of Hitler's system of beliefs and the central motivation for his policies. He believed himself to be the saviour who would bring redemption to the German people through the annihilation of the Jews, that people who embodied, in his eyes, the Satanic hosts. When he spoke or wrote about his 'holy mission', he used words associated with chiliastic prophecy (not only in the millennial concept literally rendered as the 'Thousand Year Reich'), like 'consecration', 'salvation', 'redemption', 'resurrection', 'God's will'. The murder of the Jews, in his fantasies, was commanded by divine providence, and he was the chosen instrument for that task. He referred often to his 'mission', but nowhere so explicitly as in *Mein Kampf*: 'Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.' From the moment he made his entrance on the historical stage until his death in a Berlin bunker, this sense of messianic mission never departed from him, nor could

any appeal to reason deflect him from pursuing his murderous purpose.

Generations of anti-Semitism had prepared the Germans to accept Hitler as their redeemer. Layer upon layer of anti-Semitism of all kinds — Christian church teachings about the Jews, Volkist anti-Semitism, doctrines of racial superiority, economic theories about the role of Jews in capitalism and commerce, and a half century of political anti-Semitism — were joined with the solder of German nationalism, providing the structural foundation upon which Hitler and the National Socialist movement built. Of the conglomerate social, economic and political appeals that the NSDAP directed at the German people, its racial doctrine was most attractive. Yet for the average National Socialist, and still more for the party's fellow travellers, out of the whole corpus of racial teachings, the anti-Jewish doctrine had the greatest dynamic potency. The reports of early NSDAP meetings reveal, from the record of audience responses, that violent attacks on the Jews provided orgasmic outbursts and that Hitler was most adept at getting the blood to tingle with his threats against the Jews.<sup>17</sup> For the audience, the convulsions of Hitler's ideology were, in the end, reduced in significance to the time-worn slogan of German anti-Semitism: '*Juda verrecke!*'<sup>18</sup>

The insecurities of post-First World War Germany and the anxieties they produced provided an emotional milieu in which irrationality and hysteria became routine and illusions became transformed into delusions. The delusional disorder assumed mass proportions. Germans, otherwise individually rational, yielded themselves to pathological fantasies about the Jews.<sup>19</sup> In that climate, where masses of Germans had lost the ability to distinguish between the real Jew and the mythic Jew, of anti-Semitic invention, the chiliastic system of National Socialist beliefs could further influence their already distorted sense of reality. Belief in National Socialism was like belief in magic and witchcraft during the Middle Ages, similarly ruling and inflaming the minds of men.<sup>20</sup> In the Middle Ages private misfortunes and public calamities were attributed to witches and demons, whereas in modern Germany the Jews were regarded as the source of evil and disaster. A popular children's book of the time made it plain:



*Ohne Lösung der Judenfrage*  
*Kein Erlösung der menschheit* 21

(Without solution of the Jewish question,  
 No salvation of mankind.)

In medieval days entire communities were seized with witchcraft hysteria, and in modern Germany the mass psychosis of anti-Semitism deranged a whole people. According to their system of beliefs, elimination of the Jews resembled medieval exorcism of the Devil. The accomplishment of both, it was variously held, would restore grace to the world.

German hysteria was rooted in fear. 'That which drives the German to cruelty,' wrote Curzio Malaparte, 'to deeds most godly, methodically and scientifically cruel, is fear.'<sup>22</sup> That fear, which assumed pandemic proportions, operated through projection. What the Germans hated and feared most in themselves they projected onto the Jews, endeavoring the Jews with those terrible and terrifying attributes they tried to repress in themselves. The farther the image of the Jew receded from reality, taking on the fantastic distortions of primeval hatred, the more abhorrent it became.

There were, fundamentally, two totally disparate and mutually contradictory images of the Jew that collided with each other in the paranoid propaganda of National Socialist anti-Semitism, both inherited from the recent and medieval treasury of anti-Semitism. One was the image of the Jew as vermin, to be rubbed out by the heel of the boot, to be exterminated. The other was the image of the Jew as the mythic omnipotent super-adversary, against whom war on the greatest scale had to be conducted. The Jew was, on the one hand, a germ, a bacillus, to be killed without conscience. On the other hand, he was, in the phrase Hitler repeatedly used from *Mein Kampf* until the end of the war, the 'mortal enemy' (*Todesfeind*), to be killed in self-defence.

Also the counter-images that the Germans held of themselves were dual and inconsistent. In one scenario, the 'Aryan' German was the wholesome, vigorous superman, invulnerable to Jewish poison, who was destined by innate racial superiority to rule the world. According to the other scenario, however, the Germans saw themselves as latter-day Laocoöns in the grip of a death struggle. In a paranoid vision, they believed themselves to be innocent and aggrieved victims, outwitted by the machinations of a super cunning and all-powerful antagonist,

engaged in a struggle for their very existence. It was a struggle, as Hitler put it, of 'either - or'.

Once the illusory notions about 'Jewish' power had been transformed into delusions about a Jewish conspiracy to rule the world, the Germans became possessed by the belief that mythic world Jewry was committed to their destruction. Consequently, in the deluded German mind, every Jewish man, woman and child became a panoplied warrior of a vast Satanic fighting machine. The most concrete illustration of this delusion is the now familiar photograph taken from the collection attached to Stroop's report of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. It shows uniformed German SS men holding guns to a group of women and children; in the foreground is a frightened boy of about six, his hand up. This was the face of the enemy.

Hitler skillfully translated this mythic warfare into a real war in which the Germans engaged the real enemy along with the mythic enemy. On 15 April 1945, when six million Jews were already murdered, Hitler issued his last military order. He exhorted his soldiers to perform their utmost: 'For the last time our mortal enemies the Jewish Bolsheviks have launched their massive forces to the attack. Their aim is to reduce Germany to ruins and to exterminate our people.'<sup>23</sup>

In one sense the German war against the Jews fitted into Clausewitz's classical definition of war as a political act, the continuation of politics by other means. This was National Socialism's innovation, having transformed conventional anti-Semitism with its metaphorical imagery of combat into a literal war of annihilation. 'True wars,' said Himmeler, 'wars between races, are merciless and fought to the last man, until one side or the other is eliminated without trace.'<sup>24</sup> But only the truly mad could have believed that it was war that they were waging against the Jews. For the Jews were a civilian population, dispersed among the European nations, having no country and no political power, and consequently none of the resources that even small nations could muster for war.