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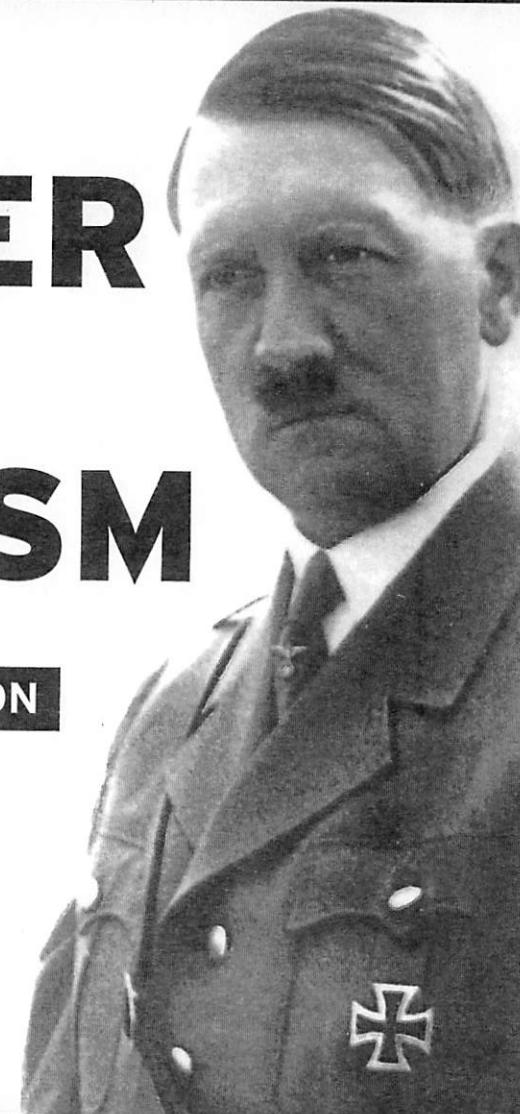
HITLER AND NAZISM

DICK GEARY

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SECOND EDITION

DICK GEARY



War and destruction

In the course of the Second World War the 'warlord' nature of the Nazi regime reached its apogee. This was not simply because Germany was now at war – and on the eastern front in a war of almost unprecedented barbarity – but also because in the newly occupied territories, especially Poland and the Soviet Union, government in the usual sense was replaced by the naked domination of Nazi warlords, who competed for the spoils of victory and controlled massive fiefdoms. Most notable of these was the SS empire erected by Heinrich Himmler. By 1944 there were 40,000 concentration camp guards, 100,000 police informers, 2.8 million policemen and 45,000 officers of the Gestapo. This expansion was a consequence both of increased repression within Germany during the war and of the extension of concentration camps and their role not only as prisons or institutions of slaughter but also as sources of slave labour. The armed units of the SS (the Waffen SS), which played a disproportionate part in the implementation of the politics of genocide, recruited a further 310,000 men from ethnic Germans outside the boundaries of the Reich. Other Nazi warlords included Fritz Sauckel, whose fiefdom dealt with the deployment of manpower, Robert Ley, who was in charge of housing, the chief of the German Labour Front, Fritz Todt and his successor Albert Speer, who had control of armaments and munitions, and Hermann Göring, whose Office of the Four Year Plan spread its empire over transport, mining, chemical production

and price controls, and plundered occupied Poland. The proliferation and fragmentation of offices, which effectively prevented any co-ordinated economic and military strategy until the very last days of the war, was further compounded by the increased authority of the Gauleiter, whose direct links to Hitler subverted the influence of the state bureaucracy. In fact, as the war progressed, it was agencies of the party and the Führer's 'special authorities' which increased their power at the expense of career bureaucrats. The Gauleiter were entrusted with many new tasks relating to the war effort at home but also often put in charge of the newly occupied territories.

What gave the Gauleiter and the special agencies their authority was their personal contact with the Führer, whose power was now absolute. The erosion of traditional governmental structures, which permitted the unchecked exercise of such power, also took place at the very centre of the Reich. The role of Hans-Henrich Lammers of the Reich Chancellery was now undermined, especially after the invasion of the Soviet Union, by the rise of Martin Bormann as head of the Party Chancellery. It was now Bormann who controlled access to Hitler and often bypassed governmental bodies as far as legislation in the occupied territories was concerned. He also oversaw what information reached Hitler and transmitted the Führer's 'decisions', which often amounted to no more than casual remarks at the dinner table, to various agencies of the party and state for implementation. The utterly informal nature of such decision-making was nowhere more obvious than in the euthanasia campaign.

The precise circumstances surrounding the start of the euthanasia programme are far from clear. It appears that a not insignificant number of Germans, with the rhetoric of Nazi eugenics in mind, had petitioned the KdF for permission to end the lives of their deformed and defective children. It was one such petition that set this barbarous campaign in motion, probably in 1939. A father petitioned Hitler for permission to have his badly deformed child 'put to sleep'. Hitler agreed and had his personal doctor carry out the task. In this way the process of euthanasia began, although the Führer's eugenic beliefs and commitment to racial purity obviously provided the underlying rationale for such action and there had been talk of such a programme for some time. Indeed, to agree with Ian Kershaw, here was another example of German citizens 'working towards the Führer', by requesting actions which they knew he supported. Hitler gave the Führer Chancellery the signal that similar cases could be dealt with in like fashion and subsequently that adults as well as

children could be incorporated into the campaign. Chillingly the doctors of Germany's asylums co-operated in providing the Führer Chancellery with lists of names of the deformed and mentally ill. Ultimately 70,000 were murdered in a programme which was deliberately removed from the control of either the Ministry of the Interior or the health authorities. Some of those responsible for the euthanasia programme were subsequently involved in the extermination of Polish Jews. The inhumanity of the euthanasia programme typified not only the murderous nature of Nazi rule but also its total disregard for due process of law. No law was ever passed authorising it, no minister consulted about it. It began with a single case and no written authorisation. When Hitler was later called upon to issue some written authorisation, he put down a few lines on his own writing paper and – significantly – back-dated the authorisation to the first day of the war.

The onset of war also radicalised the Nazi persecution of 'outsiders' and their treatment in the concentration camps. Previously relatively few 'community aliens' had been killed. Now inmates were shot, given lethal injections, subjected to medical experiments, worked to death and transported to the gas chambers. In 1942 there was a further radicalisation: almost one-third of all 'asocials' incarcerated in the Mauthausen concentration camp died each month in the following year. At the same time there was an increase in the number of official executions in the Reich. Whereas 139 death sentences were passed by the German courts in 1939, the number rose to 4,000 in 1942 alone. In January 1945, 800 prisoners in the Sonnenberg penitentiary (a state prison, not a concentration camp) were executed by 85 officers. At the same time the massive increase in concentration camp inmates (over 700,000 by early 1945) went hand in hand with an increasing likelihood of death – in forced marches and as a result of forced labour, disease, and even gas chambers, which were used in Ravensbrück and Mauthausen.

Terrorism and racial violence culminated in the attempted extermination of gypsies and of European Jewry. The number of gypsies who died in Nazi death camps is not clear: calculations vary from 220,000 to over 1 million. Of course, the annihilation of Jews was on an even greater scale. We have already examined (Chapter 1) the violent anti-semitic prejudices Hitler expressed in *Mein Kampf*. Although the theme was played down in Nazi electoral propaganda between 1928 and 1933, it subsequently re-emerged with the most ghastly consequences. In the spring and summer of 1933 much of

the violence of local Nazi Party branches and SA groups was directed at Jews and their property. In Berlin East European Jews from the capital's Scheunenviertel were seized and subjected to physical abuse by groups of Nazis. In Breslau Jewish lawyers and judges were assaulted. In Mannheim the local SA ordered the closure of Jewish shops. In Straubing Nazi excesses against local Jews ended in murder. Partly to control such uncoordinated violence, the regime organised a boycott of Jewish businesses for 1 April 1933, although this seems to have had little success with the German public at large. On 7 April 1933 the 'Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service' expelled Jews from state employment (unless they or their fathers had served in the Great War – a concession to Hindenburg). Eighteen days later further legislation restricted the number of Jews who could be appointed to jobs in German schools or universities. In September 1933 Jews were forbidden to own farms or engage in agricultural employment and in the following month they were debarred from membership of the Journalists Association. Anti-semitic initiatives were both public and private, both centrally directed and local. Already in March 1933 the City of Cologne closed municipal sports facilities to Jews. In April Jewish boxers were expelled from the German Boxing Association.

Anti-semitic sentiment on the part of Nazi radicals and the SA intensified in 1935, not least as a kind of substitute for the loss of power and position resulting from the execution of their leaders in the Night of the Long Knives. Anti-Jewish violence escalated at the end of March and again in June. It was complemented by announcements from the Ministry of the Interior that further legislation, excluding Jews from the armed forces, would be forthcoming. So, rather like the boycott of shops in 1933, the promulgation of the 'Nuremberg Laws' on 15 September 1935 was a response to the undisciplined excesses in the lower ranks of the Nazi movement, as well as a further statement of the regime's prejudice. The Nuremberg laws drew a distinction between those of Aryan blood, who held full rights as 'citizens', and non-Aryan 'subjects'. The 'Law for the Defence of German Blood' prohibited marriage and sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews. Jewish families were henceforth forbidden to employ Aryan servants under the age of 45 and Jews were not allowed to hoist the German flag, which was now to be black, red and white with a swastika in its centre. The laws were expanded in various supplementary decrees later in the year, which forced the remaining (previously exempted) Jewish civil servants, teachers, doctors and

lawyers in state employment out of their jobs and deprived Jews more generally of voting rights and civil liberties. The 'Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People' of October 1935 also aimed to register members of 'alien races' and those of racially 'less valuable' groups. Germans now required licences stating that their prospective marriage partners were 'fit to marry'; and marriage to gypsies, negroes and their illegitimate offspring was forbidden. The aim of this legislation was to isolate Jews from the rest of German society and to make their lives so unbearable as to force them to emigrate. Indeed, this was to remain the dominant theme of anti-semitic policy until the outbreak of war in 1939.

A further wave of anti-Jewish activity was sparked off by Hitler's speech at the 1937 Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg, when he fulminated against 'Jewish Bolshevism'; while *Anschluss* with Austria in the following year produced a more blatant and sadistic display of anti-semitism in the newly annexed territory. Indeed, Austrians seemed 'more avid for anti-Jewish action' (Saul Friedländer) than the Germans of the Old Reich (Germany proper). In Austria the pressure to force Jews to emigrate became more systematic and some were physically pushed over the borders into Switzerland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile further anti-semitic violence occurred in the spring and early summer of 1938 in Germany itself and was accompanied by various initiatives on the part of the regime. In April 1938 Jews were obliged to register their property. In June 10,000 'asocials' and 'habitual criminals' were arrested, of whom 1,500 were Jewish. The Jews among them were shipped off to Buchenwald concentration camp, which had been set up in the previous year. In July various financial services (real estate, stockbroking, credit information) were forbidden to Jews, as was medical practice. In September Jews were forbidden to practise law in Germany.

Though Hitler had called an end to spontaneous acts of violence in June 1938, fearful of their impact on public opinion and foreign governments, his reaction to the murder of a German diplomat in Paris at the hands of a Jewish assassin provides us with an interesting insight into his calculating but nonetheless vicious opportunism. After the assassination he specifically declared that the party was not to initiate anti-Jewish outbursts but also that it was not to prevent them. In effect this was to give the green light to Goebbels, who was to be the principal architect of the pogrom of *Reichskristallnacht* (Reich Crystal – on account of the broken glass – Night) of 9–10 November 1938, even though the pogrom was far from totally

co-ordinated from the top. Jewish businesses and synagogues were attacked and burnt down by members of the SA, SS and NSDAP. Large numbers of Jews were assaulted and some murdered. In the aftermath some 10,000 Jews were taken into custody and authority for dealing with the 'Jewish Question' was transferred to the SS. The intention now was to speed up the deportation of Jews from the Reich, and Adolf Eichmann took charge of this process.

A host of measures sought to drive Germany's Jews out of public and social life. Immediately after the pogrom a decree effectively banned Jews from all economic life with effect from 1 January 1939. On 15 November 1938 Jewish children were expelled from the schools. Two days later, Jews were excluded from the welfare system and subsequently were deprived of access to public places, such as theatres, cinemas, concerts, museums, sports facilities. The aim of forced emigration was repeatedly re-stated; and the separation of Jews from the rest of German society continued apace. From 28 December, for example, Jews had to occupy homes housing only other Jews. In 1939 further decrees established that existing contracts with Jewish businesses could be rescinded and debarred Jews from all health-care activity (such as pharmacy and dentistry). The possibility of Jewish life in Germany was effectively destroyed.

The outbreak of war, which saw a radicalisation of all aspects of Nazi rule, was also accompanied by a radicalisation of policy towards the Jewish community. In fact Hitler had predicted such a development in a speech to the Reichstag on 30 January 1939, when he threatened that the advent of war would end with the annihilation of European Jewry. Other countries were already refusing to accept large numbers of Jewish emigrants, thus undermining Nazi strategy, even before 1939. The outbreak of hostilities made voluntary emigration virtually impossible. Furthermore, the acquisition of territories in the east brought ever more Jews into the rapidly expanding Reich. *Anschluss* and the annexation of Czechoslovakia placed 300,000 more Jews under Nazi control. The occupation of Poland added a further 3 million; and subsequently the number of Jews in German-controlled territory rose to 10 million. The strategy of emigration had thus become impossible. With the defeat of Poland, part of the country – the 'General Government' under Hans Franck – was transformed into a massive ghetto of 'inferior peoples', to which rounded-up Jews were transported in cattle wagons and where they were kept in the most unsanitary and increasingly enclosed conditions. An early result for many was death through disease and starvation, especially

as forced labour became the norm in the Jewish ghettos. Yet this was nothing to what happened in the wake of the invasion of Russia in 1941. The war against Russia was, to use Hitler's own words, a 'war of extermination', in which the army co-operated with the security organisations in killing the political commissars attached to the Red Army. Himmler's right-hand SS-man, Heydrich, issued instructions that Communist Party officials and 'Jews in the service of the [Russian] state' should be liquidated. As more and more POWs and Jews fell into German hands, the *Einsatzgruppen*, the squads which implemented Heydrich's instructions, became increasingly indiscriminate in their campaign of murder. Now all Jews, not just adult males, fell victim to mass murder by shooting, in which not only the regular army and the SS were involved but also police battalions, which often included Lithuanians and other locals with strong anti-semitic traditions. Subsequently the order was given for the deportation of German Jews (*Aktion Reinhard*) to the east. Extermination camps, such as those at Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor, were built; and former members of the euthanasia campaign became involved in preparations for the systematic murder of Jews by gassing (a 'solution' more 'humane' for the murderers in Himmler's opinion!). This 'Final Solution' was the Holocaust, the extermination of millions of Jews.

Given Hitler's vicious anti-semitic prejudices, what he had written in *Mein Kampf* and the content of his Reichstag speech of January 1939, it is not surprising that the 'Final Solution' has been seen as the logical and inevitable outcome of the Führer's intentions. There are several reasons, however, why I believe such a view to be too simple. First, many of the anti-semitic actions in the Third Reich were not necessarily initiated at the political centre, especially given the polycratic system of government and the institutional chaos described in the previous chapter. Second, it is far from clear that the 'Final Solution', as it occurred – that is the systematic extermination of Jews – was always the ultimate goal. These remarks will be explained in greater detail below; but I wish to make it clear at the outset that they are in no way intended to absolve Hitler from personal responsibility for genocide. Even where others within the Nazi Party were responsible for anti-semitic initiatives (Goebbels in the case of *Kristallnacht*, Göring in the case of the Aryanisation of the economy), they always acted with reference to the Führer's wishes and known views. It was, after all, Hitler's 1937 denunciation of 'Jewish Bolshevism' that formed the background to the events that led up to the *Reichskristallnacht*. Several of the most important

decisions, such as the decision to deport German Jews to the east, required and got Hitler's approval. Any suggestion that Hitler did not know about or approve of the 'Final Solution' is simply not credible. Saul Friedländer has also made the interesting point that, whereas the Führer was intimately involved in the evolution of anti-semitic policy in the early days of the regime, his later role was one of issuing fairly general (albeit often murderous) policy statements, the implementation of which varied from one Gauleiter to another (as in the case of Germanisation in Poland).

This said, the actual development of Nazi policy towards the Jews was often a response to initiatives that had begun from below: the organisation of the 1933 boycott of Jewish businesses, for example, was partly an attempt to harness the violence to people and property dispensed by local Nazi groups. The same could be said of the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. In a sense, spontaneous and often unpopular thuggery was replaced by more formal and centralised, though equally repulsive and discriminatory, policy and legislation. Such was also the case after *Reichskristallnacht*, when responsibility for the Jews was transferred to the SS. Furthermore the vagaries of anti-semitic policy, what Schleunes has described as the 'twisted road to Auschwitz', make it far from certain that Hitler and the Nazis already had a distinct view as to how they would deal with the Jews. It is not clear that they always intended genocide. Indeed, there is considerable evidence to the contrary. Here we have to be careful not to read Hitler's early remarks with the hindsight of the Holocaust. Hitler did speak of ridding Europe of Jews and did on occasion use the language of 'eradication' (*Ausrottung*). In fact he used this term more frequently than the word for extermination (*Vernichtung*). Even in his infamous speech to the Reichstag on 30 January 1939, in which he spoke of the annihilation of the Jewish race in the event of war, Hitler also spoke of an alternative: 'The world has enough space for settlement'.

Until 1939 Nazi policy placed its faith in deportation and enforced emigration, i.e. a non-genocidal strategy. Walter Gross, head of the NSDAP's Racial Policy Office, reported what Hitler had told him about the aims of the Nuremberg laws, namely that they were intended to limit Jewish influence inside Germany and to separate Jews from German society. They were also enacted because 'more vigorous emigration' was necessary. Somewhat ironically, emigration to Palestine was especially promoted! Statements from the SD (Security Service) in May 1934, others at a conference in the Interior

Ministry in September 1936 and yet more in Goebbels' diaries in November 1937 all confirm that total emigration was the desired policy. This became even clearer after *Anschluss* in 1938, when 45,000 Jews were expelled from Austria within six months, as it did again after the subsequent occupation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, when vigorous attempts were made to expel Jews from the newly occupied area. On 12 November 1938 Heydrich reminded listeners that the priority of the regime's policy was to get Jews out of Germany. Less than a month later (on 6 December) Göring, following instructions from Hitler, again gave top priority to emigration; and in 1939 German representatives attended meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees, which met at Evian, and discussed plans for Jewish emigration from Germany. In 1939, 78,000 Jews were forced out of Germany and a further 30,000 out of Bohemia and Moravia. The body created by the Nazis on 4 July 1939 to represent Germany's Jewish community also had one task above all else: to facilitate emigration. Most significantly of all, Jewish emigration was not forbidden by the Nazis until October 1941.

This strategy of enforced emigration proved unsuccessful when countries such as Switzerland, the United States and Britain began to limit the number of refugees they were prepared to accept. It was also overwhelmed, as we have seen, by the massive increase in the number of Jews in the expanded Reich after *Anschluss*, the annexation of Czechoslovakia and the conquest of Poland. However, the occupation of Poland opened up new and even more dreadful possibilities. Eastern Europe was to be restructured along racial lines. This involved the settlement of some areas in Poland by ethnic Germans, the uprooting of Poles to other areas of the country, the transportation of Polish Jews to ghettos in specified towns in Eastern Poland and ultimately their resettlement in a huge reservation to the south of Lublin. Between December 1939 and February 1940, 600,000 Polish Jews were transferred to this area in cattle trucks. The sheer numbers involved, however, soon made it clear that the strategy could not succeed, especially as Germanisation policies drove Poles into areas previously set aside for Jews and as Franck, the head of the General Government, complained that his administration could no longer sustain all the incomers on top of the 1.4 million Jews already under his jurisdiction. The policy of deportation was brought to a temporary halt. In the meantime the Jews in Poland were forbidden to change

residence, subject to a curfew, obliged to perform labour services, forced to wear a yellow star and enclosed in ghettos.

Even as the plan for the Lublin reservation came to nothing, however, sections of the SD were working on the 'Madagascar Plan', a scheme to deport Jews to the island in the Indian Ocean! Such a scheme, a clear indication that the 'final solution' was not the only possibility, had been discussed as an alternative to emigration even before 1940 and the defeat of France. In fact it had first been suggested by the anti-semite Paul de Lagarde and was popular in right-wing circles in Germany in the 1920s. Heydrich had expressed an interest in a Madagascar project in 1938 and Himmler is known to have been enthusiastic. The idea was to transport 4 million West European Jews to the island, leaving Eastern European Jews in Poland as a deterrent to American intervention in the war. With the defeat of France, this plan seemed for a short period realistic and was taken quite seriously by Heydrich and some of his associates. Franck even instructed his staff to abandon further ghettoisation plans in Poland precisely because of Hitler's anticipated plans to send the Jews to Madagascar after the war! It has to be remembered that defeated France possessed Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia in this period. What is more, serious discussions were taking place in the Reich Chancellery at this time about the possibility of a German Central African Empire. In the summer of 1940 the names of possible governors of a future German East Africa were mentioned. It seems, at least according to Götz Aly, that Heydrich at this time preferred the Madagascar 'solution' to 'biological extermination', which he believed too 'undignified' a course of action for civilised Germans. Of course, this plan not only required the co-operation of Vichy France but also the defeat of enemy seapower. That Britain remained undefeated put an end to it.

In the early, euphoric weeks of the war against the Soviet Union the deportation of Jews to somewhere east of the Urals was still being contemplated; but the logic of a war of 'extermination', the barbarity of the German military effort (some 3 million Russian POWs were shot), increasing logistical difficulties and the slowdown in the advance of the German forces, who found ever more Jews under their control, led irreversibly to a massive escalation of murder. In this process it was not just the SS, Nazis and the *Einsatzgruppen* who played a part, but also the army itself. Yet, emphatically, none of this would have been possible without the obsessive anti-semitism and anti-Bolshevism of the Führer himself.

The development and scale of the killing in the Soviet Union initially varied from one area to another, which suggests there was no uniform project of total annihilation at this stage. However, although Heydrich's order to kill specifically referred to Jews in the service of the Russian state, the *Einsatzgruppen* often killed all Jewish males and in some cases also the Jewish women and children they encountered. The move to wholesale slaughter took place more quickly in some units than in others. In many cases, as in Lithuania, the killing was aided by local residents with strong anti-semitic traditions. By the winter of 1941-42 some 500,000 Jews had been shot. At the same time, with increased Russian resistance, the idea of resettlement across the Urals ceased to be feasible, while ever more Jews were forced into ghettos and the strain on German resources became ever greater. Locally SS leaders embarked upon the mass slaughter of Jews. Subsequently the gas chambers of the extermination camps became the instrument of that genocide, which has become known as the 'Final Solution'.

The point at which Hitler or other elements of the Nazi leadership decided upon the attempted extermination of *all* Jews is far from clear. I have already given my reasons for rejecting the view that this was always the intention of Hitler and his regime. However, it is also true that the mechanised slaughter of the death camps, unlike the first shootings of the Russian campaign, must have been the consequence of a policy decision. It could not have been 'improvised'. Thus even those such as Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen, who see the evolution of anti-semitic policy as driven by deteriorating circumstances and cumulative radicalisation, rather than central policy, do recognise that some kind of central decision was necessary for the 'Final Solution'. So does Saul Friedländer in his subtle account of the interaction of intention and reaction to circumstance in the development of Hitler's ideas of a 'solution' to the Jewish 'problem'. When the decision to exterminate was taken is a source of heated debate. For Richard Breitmann the decision was made before the invasion of the Soviet Union, in April 1941. Most historians settle for a later date. Christopher Browning believes that the initial victories over Soviet forces now enabled the Nazis to do what had previously been unthinkable. So the fateful decision was taken in the summer of 1941 in the euphoria of victory. The Swiss historian Philippe Burrin, on the other hand, sees the decision as a consequence of the slowdown of Germany's advance and of increasing German difficulties, and pushes it back to a later date in 1941. The most recent

research of Götz Aly on Nazi resettlement policy and the discoveries of Christian Gerlach, however, now suggest – and with great plausibility – that the decision was not taken until mid-December 1941. This conclusion is reached on the basis of entries in Goebbels' diary dated 12 December 1941 and in Himmler's official diary (*Dienstkalender*) dated 18 December 1941. This would explain why the date of the Wannsee Conference had to be postponed and its agenda changed – from expediting deportation to the 'Final Solution' – to suit the new policy. At this point things were going seriously wrong in Russia with the rise of partisan warfare. At the same time the entry of the United States into the war removed the last reason for constraint; and the resettlement policy had broken down. On 5 December the German army had been halted at the gates of Moscow and temperatures on the Russian front had fallen dramatically. Zhukov had appeared on the scene with 100 divisions, of which the Germans had no prior inkling. In the Reich itself Cologne had suffered heavy bombing on 7 December, as had Aachen the following day. In these circumstances the solution of the 'Jewish problem' moved into its final, barbaric phase. Whether the Nazi Holocaust was simply pre-programmed by Hitler's anti-semitic beliefs or was the consequence of a more complicated process of 'cumulative radicalisation', driven forward by many different agencies and not only by the Führer, however, the indisputable result was the extermination of millions of Jews.

This raises a further question: to what extent was Nazi policy towards the Jews a consequence of popular anti-semitism? To what extent was it what 'the German people' wanted? For Daniel Goldhagen the answer is simple: 'Germans' favoured the Holocaust; and that is why it happened. He portrays German history as 'abnormal' in its eliminationist anti-semitism and recites examples of anti-Jewish hatred stretching back over centuries. In seeking to explain how millions of Jews could be shot in cold blood by 'ordinary Germans' who made up the police battalions, he finds his answer in the prevalence of murderous anti-semitic views. Now there can be no doubt that large parts of German society possessed some history of anti-semitism. James Retallack has identified a widespread conservative anti-semitism in Baden and Saxony in the middle of the nineteenth century, while Olaf Blaschke has analysed the growth of anti-semitism in Catholic rural areas. In both cases the issue of rural credit and a discourse of Jewish 'usury' played a part. Anti-semitic political parties had risen to prominence in the 1880s and 1890s. Though these declined after 1900, anti-semitism was deeply embedded in various

conservative organisations, such as the Agrarian League (*Bund der Landwirte*) and the Pan-German League before the First World War, and in the DNVP thereafter. Indeed, Nationalists in Hitler's early cabinet played a part in the drafting of anti-semitic legislation. The Evangelical (Protestant) Church adopted the discriminatory 'Aryan Paragraph'; and although the Confessing Church of Dietrich Bonhoeffer did all it could to protect Jews who had converted to Christianity, it did little for Jews who had not. Neither Church openly denounced anti-semitic policy. The German professoriate colluded in ridding their profession of Jews; and university students were even more vicious in their hostility, embracing the Nazi position to a very large extent. The Catholic Church in Germany in general subscribed to what Saul Friedländer describes as 'moderate anti-semitism', wanting to remove 'undue Jewish influence' from social and cultural life. There is further evidence that the Nuremberg Laws were widely welcomed in 1935.

However, although the evidence of fairly widespread anti-semitism is indisputable, it does *not* justify Goldhagen's conclusion that the Holocaust was what most Germans wanted and that this made Germans in some way 'abnormal'. First, large numbers of non-Germans were implicated in the extermination of European Jewry: Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Rumanians. Second, pogromic anti-semitism was more at home in Eastern than in Central Europe, for reasons that were discussed in the first chapter. The heartlands of anti-semitism were Poland, Rumania and the western parts of Russia. At the end of the First World War 250,000 Jews were massacred by Ukrainians, Russians and Poles. Third, the barbarism of Nazism extended not only to Jews but also to gypsies, to Slavs generally and even to those Germans it regarded as 'diseased' or 'alien'. Some 3 million Russian prisoners of war were shot by the German army. Arguably, therefore, genocide was informed not only or even necessarily by a specific anti-semitism but also by more universal conditions of inhumanity. Fourth, Goldhagen simply ignores a large amount of evidence that does not fit his schema. Christopher Browning has demonstrated how 'ordinary Germans' could kill Jews for reasons that had little to do with ideological anti-semitism (peer pressure, group solidarity, following orders); and yet he is able to come to this conclusion using much the same material as Goldhagen. Why the Nazis were so concerned to keep the 'Final Solution' secret is difficult to explain, if the German people wanted the Holocaust. Equally, the resort to gas chambers to reduce the impact of slaughter

on the perpetrators would make little sense if Goldhagen's claims were true. In fact the German Jewish community was relatively well integrated into German society before 1914 and inter-marriage with Christians was far from uncommon. The largest party in the Reich at this time, the SPD, was not anti-semitic. Its leader, August Bebel, characterised anti-semitism as the 'socialism of fools'; many of the party's leaders were Jews; and when one of these, Paul Singer, died, 1 million German workers turned out for his funeral. The boycott of Jewish shops in 1933 was not popular, as Goebbels noted. Nazi injunctions not to trade with Jews were ignored by most peasants in the mid-1930s and by many in small towns in the late 1930s. Economic interest clearly outweighed prejudice here. Outright violence against Jews often produced an unfavourable reaction; and one of the reasons why the Nuremberg Laws were popular was that they were seen as bringing to an end the measures against the Jews, rather than as being a prologue to genocide. What this means, therefore, is not that Germans were not anti-semites but that we should beware of generalisations on this score. Moreover, popular anti-semitism was neither a prime concern of most Germans, nor was their anti-semitism usually eliminationist, except in the case of Nazi radicals and a few others. Goldhagen tends to lump together all forms of anti-semitism and assume their desire to exterminate Jews rather than to demonstrate it. In any case, even if the Holocaust were 'popular' – and we have seen enough to know that such a claim is unwarranted – it would still not explain the 'Final Solution'; for we have seen the tortuous way in which this policy was finally decided.

There is clearly an intimate connection between the war in the east and the 'Final Solution'. For Hitler the war, and in particular the war against Russia, was nothing less than a crusade: a crusade against the restrictions of Versailles, against Marxism and against the Jews, who, he believed, controlled Russia and international Marxism. Yet the development of German foreign policy between 1937 and 1941 was not simply the consequence of long-term ideological goals and it did involve the opportunistic exploitation of crises not necessarily of Hitler's own making. On 5 November 1937 Hitler had addressed Germany's military leaders in the context of growing economic difficulties (the navy, for example, was facing an acute shortage of raw materials) and a fear that any military advantage the country enjoyed at that moment might soon be eroded. Hitler stated that a war for living space could wait no longer than 1940 and that it would begin with Austria and Czechoslovakia. However, any opportunity that

arose before that date might be exploited for the desired aims. Yet *Anschluss* with Austria was triggered when the Austrian Chancellor Schussnigg unexpectedly called a plebiscite on the issue of uniting with Hitler's Reich and subsequently when, in response, the German march into Linz received a hugely enthusiastic welcome from the locals. Equally, the precise timing of the invasion of Czechoslovakia was a response to Czech mobilisation in May 1938, and the invasion of Poland followed the refusal of Britain to accept German diplomatic initiatives. That Hitler acted opportunistically and that others were involved in the escalation of these various crises is beyond dispute. It is also true that military and economic pressures played a role additional to the demands of ideology. Yet this cannot justify the conclusion that Hitler had no long-term aims of expansion: he did, of course, and that is precisely why he used opportunities in the way he did to expand eastwards. In fact every extension of the front in the Second World War (outside the Pacific area) was the result of Nazi initiative (in Poland, the Netherlands, France, Norway, Russia), except in the case of Greece and Albania, where, aware of the potential threat to the Rumanian oilfields, Germany had to bail Mussolini out of his military difficulties. As early as 31 July 1940 Hitler was planning the destruction of Russia in a campaign that was supposed to last no more than five weeks. Once again a great deal of the motivation was diplomatic (the desire to bring Britain to surrender), military (fear of Soviet military expansion) and economic (the fear that such expansion might include the Rumanian oilfields), although the tortured argument that the invasion of the Soviet Union was a 'pre-emptive reaction' to a likely Soviet attack beggars belief. Again we can see that the Second World War was not simply a consequence of Hitler's ideological obsessions. But it was most definitely a result of these, too. Once it began, the anti-Jewish and anti-Bolshevik crusade unleashed the horrendous consequences of these obsessions.

The invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 rested on a grossly mistaken view of Russia's resources and military capacity. It led, of course, to the defeat not only of the German armed forces but of everything that Hitler and his murderous regime stood for. El Alamein and Stalingrad spelled the beginning of the end; and Hitler could no longer escape the charge that his was the major responsibility for the disaster. Under these pressures Hitler's health deteriorated and with this deterioration came increased nervous anxiety and depression. He spent more and more time on his own and increasingly lost

touch with reality, as he visited neither the front nor his German public. Physical illness and mental depression became even more serious in the aftermath of the July 1944 bomb plot; and the few who had access to the Führer spoke of one who had aged dramatically in the last years of the war. One result was that although Hitler's personal authority was never challenged by any other figure in the regime, it was an authority exercised in an increasingly arbitrary and infrequent manner: it became more difficult to get a decision out of him as the Reich fell apart. When Hitler did intervene in military matters, on the other hand, the benefits were, at best, somewhat dubious. He was not an ignoramus, as far as the waging of war was concerned, and he had a good memory for detail. However, he relied too much on his own experience as an infantryman in the First World War and failed to appreciate the need for fast rather than heavily armed tanks to combat the Russians. His preference for offensive rather than defensive weapons also led to vast expenditure on the V1 and V2 rockets and a failure to develop defensive rocketry that might have been deployed against the Allied bombing raids, which flattened so many of Germany's major cities. Here the concentration of power in Hitler's hands was clearly dysfunctional for the war effort. Yet the disaster, when it came, was no simple consequence of a series of individual and mistaken military decisions: it was implicit in the Nazi programme of military expansion and the racial state from the very start. Germany simply did not possess the resources of geopolitical supremacy (a point that became even clearer after the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941).

Surrounded by ruins, increasingly volatile in his moods and determined that no part of *his* Germany should outlive him (he had ordered a scorched earth policy in the face of the Allied advances), Hitler committed suicide in the bunker of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin on 30 April 1945. Within a few days the Third Reich capitulated and ceased to exist.