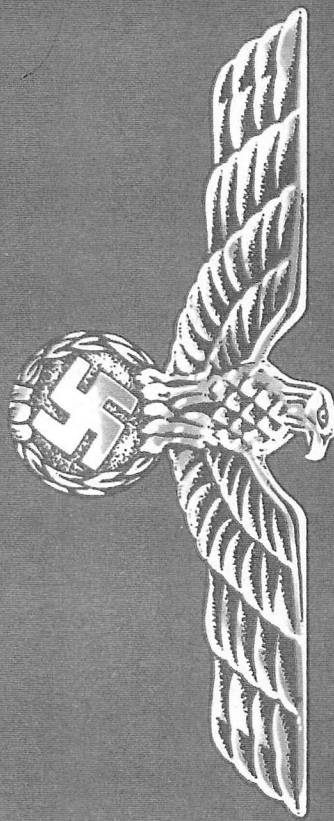


# THE TERRITORIES



K. HILDEBRAND

p. 197; cf. his *War, Economy and Society 1939-1945*, London, 1977, p. 27).

Those historians who, since the 1960s, have set out to differentiate and 'revise' accepted views as to the monolithic or pluralistic, monocratic or polycratic nature of the Nazi system have done valuable service by pointing out the dangers and limitations of a 'Hitlerocentric' approach and devoting more attention to the 'other side' of the Nazi 'dual state'. In some cases they have overshot the mark, however, so that researchers now have to address themselves to 'revisionist' conclusions that appear equally one-sided. This was pointed out by A. Hillgruber (1978), who endeavoured to do justice to the revisionist contribution to the history of the Third Reich while leaving no doubt that he regarded the 'polycratic' thesis as marginal and derivative in character. In this respect – leaving aside, for example, Geoffrey Barraclough's views expressed in 1972 in the *New York Review of Books* ('Mandarins and Nazis', 19 October, and 'The Liberals and German history', 2 November) – Hillgruber is in line with a highly representative tendency of international research. The views of historians such as Alan Bullock, Norman Rich, Renzo de Felice and Eberhard Jäckel may be summed up in the judgement expressed by H. R. Trevor-Roper more than thirty years ago, which seems no less true and pertinent today:

Liberal refugees, theoretical Marxists, despairing reactionaries have pretended, or persuaded themselves, that Hitler was himself only a pawn in a game which not he but some other politicians, or some more cosmic forces, were playing. It is a fundamental delusion. Whatever independent forces he may have used, whatever incidental support he may have borrowed, Hitler remained to the end the sole master of the movement which he had himself inspired and founded, and which he was himself, by his personal leadership, to ruin. (Trevor-Roper, 1947, p. 43)

Research into all other aspects of the history of the Third Reich is at present influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by the debate as to whether the regime was monocratic or polycratic, whether its policies were autonomous or dictated by events. This is of course additional to the study devoted to each subject as a historical theme in its own right. On such traditional questions as, for example, the relationship between the army and the Nazi state we have for some time been relatively well informed (Messerschmidt, 1969, and K.-J. Müller, 1969). At present increased interest is being shown in sociological aspects, for example, the position of women in the Third Reich (Stephenson, 1975). The treatment of 'classical' themes has scarcely lost any of its popularity, as shown, for instance, by the strong public interest aroused, within a few weeks of its appearance in 1977, by the first volume of K. Scholder's work (1977) on the churches in the Third Reich. As already mentioned, some of the principal 'revisionists' apply their theory to the foreign and racial policy of the regime as well as to home affairs, and the controversy concerning this is still in progress.

## 5

## Foreign and Racial Policy

Orthodox Marxist historians, in accordance with their theory of the state-monopolistic character of the Third Reich, interpret the foreign policy of Hitler and his regime as a function, directly or indirectly, of the basic necessities of the capitalist system and its leading economic and political groups and representatives. This view was expressed by GDR scholars in a representative volume of 1975 (Schumann and Nestler, eds) on German imperialist plans from 1900 to 1945. In the West it has frequently been disputed (cf. summary in Hildebrand, 1974) on two main grounds: (1) It ignores the primacy of the political factor (cf. Section 3, pp. 124 ff. above), which characterised Hitler's dictatorship especially in the field of strategy and foreign affairs, and which did not apply to such an extent, for example, in imperial Germany; and (2) it fails to take account (cf. Section 2, pp. 114-15 above) of the multiplicity of forms assumed by different political cultures which share the same background of a capitalist economic system.

Further specific objections can be raised to the Marxist interpretation: (1) It overlooks the fact that Hitler's ideas on foreign and racial policy, embodied as points in his 'programme', were framed long before he came to power or had any contact with industry. Hitler's programme was developed and pursued more or less independently of economic motives. (2) Not a single document exists to show that business circles took any initiative to make demands on Hitler in the field of foreign policy, which might have led him to alter or supplement his programme. Both in 1933-9 and especially during the Second World War the initiatives as to economic policy, for instance in occupied territories, always came from the state, the party or the army, and not from economic groups. In this respect too the history of the Third Reich was basically different from that of the Kaiser's Germany, where the Chancellor, von Bethmann Hollweg, had to pay more attention to representations from 'pressure groups' at the beginning of the First World War than Hitler ever did.

Hitler's systematic foreign policy was not in the first instance a complex of economic aims transferred into the political sphere – this is clear from a glance at its origins. Its roots lie in the latter years of the First World War, when there was a basic movement of political thought among the military leaders of Prussian Germany concerning problems of future warfare and peacetime organisation (cf. Hillgruber, 1967, pp. 58-67). Finally (3) Hitler's attitude to the Jews, which was

decisive for the history of the Third Reich (cf. Section C2, pp. 69 ff. above), was at the very roots of his foreign policy, and was in principle diametrically opposed to any capitalist considerations of profit. Orthodox Marxist history has so far treated the persecution of the Jews in a purely 'functional' light, thus failing to understand and, in a sense, whitewashing it. If, however, it is viewed in its true character, the 'absolute priority of political aims' (Bracher) in the Nazi system becomes scarcely disputable.

The 'Jewish question' is equally a refutation of any explanations which, while not attempting to produce direct and personal evidence of economic influence on political events, postulate some anonymous historical process as the basis of a more or less complete identity of principle between politics and economics. According to such explanations, every policy is dictated by a capitalist 'structure' that is thought of as more or less omnipotent, operating as it were behind the backs of the ostensible agents and determining all they do. As against such views, Hitler's Jewish policy demonstrates the dominance of a racial doctrine over economic and rational considerations. Indeed, it can clearly be seen in the foreign policy, racial policy and strategy of the Third Reich that economic substance and political power were more and more divorced from each other. This was the intensification of a tendency which – apart from the Weimar years – was to some extent typical of modern German history, and which may help to explain the social and constitutional distortions in Prussian Germany that were part of the background to the Third Reich.

The subjection, postulated in Marxist theory, of Nazi foreign policy to the economic interests and social requirements of the traditional ruling classes of Prussian Germany did not in fact exist, either in the form of intentional acts that can be documented or as an empirically observable 'structural process'. In non-Marxist research the primacy of Hitler's foreign policy, and its high degree of autonomy, are universally emphasised, though with variations as to the exact degree of its independence.

While Marxist history over the years has only modified the emphasis, and not the substance, of its interpretation of Nazi foreign policy, in Western research there has been a lively debate and a corresponding development of knowledge in this area.

In the aftermath of the Nuremberg trials it was once supposed that Nazi foreign policy consisted of a revisionist phase until 1937 and an expansionist period thereafter. This view has long been abandoned, however. As Hillgruber writes: 'On the basis of the evidence produced in the trial of major war criminals at Nuremberg, where particular key documents were for juridical reasons given more than their due historical weight, until about 1960 the Hossbach memorandum of the conference on 5 November 1937 with the service chiefs and the Reich Foreign Minister, at which Hitler revealed his intention to pursue a war policy, was treated as a turning-point between a peaceable phase which was essentially the continuation of the revisionist policy of the Weimar Republic, and a phase of warlike expansion on a major scale' (Hillgruber, 1973a, p. 8).

Another interpretation which can no longer be considered representative is that originally put forward by Alan Bullock (cf. Section 2, p. 120 above) and endorsed by, for example, the Swiss historian Walther Hofer (1955), according to which Hitler's foreign policy and strategy were those of a Machiavellian opportunist who treated war as an end in itself and took whatever fortune offered him at any given moment. The trend of historical science in this field was basically set by Hugh Trevor-Roper in his article on 'Hitler's war aims' (1960), which emphasised the consistency of Hitler's ideas on foreign policy ever since the 1920s, with the basic purpose of conquering *Lebensraum* in European Russia. This view has been largely accepted by subsequent research, with one or two exceptions such as Aigner (1978) and Michalka (1976a), and has meanwhile been developed in two directions. Eberhard Jäckel (1969) accepted Trevor-Roper's basic thesis, confirmed it in principle and elaborated it in detail. Hitler's foreign policy and plans for an alliance were reconstructed in this framework, and Jäckel also concentrated attention on the anti-Semitic doctrine which lay at the roots of his foreign-political and strategic ideas. The ultimate objectives, according to Jäckel, were the conquest of *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe and the racial regeneration of the national socialist empire.

Other historians consider Hitler's foreign policy as involving essentially wider aims, beyond the borders of continental Europe. This is on the whole the conclusion of Milan Hauner's summary of the evidence (1978). As far back as 1937 Konrad Heiden described Hitler's ultimate aim as 'the re-creation of an Aryan élite which is to rule the world' (Heiden, 1937 (vol. 2 of German original), p. 239). In the postwar period this view was launched by Günther Moltmann in his article of 1961 on 'Hitler's ideas of world domination'. Andreas Hillgruber made a decisive contribution to the discussion with his post-doctoral thesis at Marburg University on Hitler's strategy, published in 1965, and later works, including his book on German policy prior to the two world wars (1967) and articles on 'the American factor in Hitler's strategy, 1938–41' (1965b) and 'the "final solution" and the German Empire in the East' (1972). He regards Hitler's policy in this respect as one of advancing by stages (Hillgruber, 1973a, p. 9), and explains that his 'globalistic' conclusions are 'based initially on Trevor-Roper's approach, but placed in a wider perspective by the much more abundant source material that has since become available'. He maintains that Hitler's programme 'did not end with the planned conquest of additional living space in the East, but was of a worldwide character. After the creation of a European continental empire buttressed by the conquest of Russia, a second stage of imperial expansion was to follow with the acquisition of complementary territory in Central Africa and a system of bases to support a strong surface fleet in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. Germany, in alliance with Japan and if possible also Britain, would in the first place isolate the USA and confine it to the Western hemisphere. Then, in the next generation, there would be a "battle of

continents" in which the "Germanic empire of the German nation" would fight America for world supremacy' (ibid.).

The 'continental' and the 'global' theories of Hitler's ambitions have this in common, that they regard the conquest of *Lebensraum* and racial supremacy as basic to his philosophy and policy. Thus Norman Rich in his great work *Hitler's War Aims* describes racialism as 'the very rock on which the Nazi church was built' (1973, vol. 1, p. 4). Rich regards Hitler's continental aims, especially in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, as decisive: he describes them in detail, but also refers to those aspects of Hitler's foreign policy which looked beyond Europe. After the appearance of Rich's work, which presented a very full picture of the state of research, Jochen Thies in 1976 published his thesis on Hitler's aims: this supported Hillgruber's view with a variety of documents, some already known but others new (not least those relating to Nazi architectural plans), which lent much force to the contention that Hitler indeed envisaged world domination.

The idea of a 'gradual plan' (*Stufenplan*), introduced by Hillgruber as a heuristic device, is still disputed by some, but has been described by K. D. Erdmann (1976a, p. 342) as 'in any case a fruitful suggestion'. Admittedly such terms as 'gradual plan' and 'programme' can at times be criticised as implying too systematic a design on Hitler's part. However, it must be borne in mind that they are not meant to suggest a 'timetable for world conquest'. They are rather intended to cover the essential motives and immutable central aims of Hitler's foreign policy – namely, the conquest of *Lebensraum*, racial supremacy and world power – without losing sight of the dictator's 'improvisations' (Erdmann) and his highly developed tactical versatility.

The historiographical results that are here outlined have deprived of scientific force the highly unorthodox or apologetic interpretations of Hitler's policy expressed in A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London), and David L. Hoggan, *Der ertzwungene Krieg. Die Ursachen und Urheber des 2. Weltkrieges* (Tübingen), both published in 1961. No doubt in a spirit of opposition to the generally accepted view of Hitler's guilt, Taylor ('perhaps the most eccentric demythologiser of Hitler' – Hauner, 1978, p. 17) argues that the dictator was basically a 'revisionist' politician whose policy did not differ in essentials from that of Stresemann. Thus the Second World War was merely an accident for which all the states involved were responsible, a link in the long chain of European wars. In arguing thus, Taylor has been repeatedly criticised (cf., for example, Jasper, 1962) for ignoring fundamental differences between Stresemann's peaceful revisionist policy and Hitler's warlike expansionism, as well as the racial ideology by which Nazi foreign policy was inspired. As for David Hoggan's politically coloured interpretation, which represents the war as 'imposed' on Germany and lays the blame on Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, it has never been taken seriously by competent scholars (cf. Jasper, op. cit.).

Today a different controversy stands in the foreground of academic discussion of the problems of Nazi foreign policy. Believing that it is not sufficient to treat the foreign policy of the Third Reich solely or primarily from the standpoint of Hitler, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen in his large work (1968) attempted to describe the 'structure' of that policy and the multiplicity of agencies and institutions that were concerned with it. In so doing he left no doubt, however, that Hitler's programme was finally valid and that he had the last word. As against this, many contemporary German historians of the 'revisionist' school (cf. Section 4, pp. 138 ff. above) at present tend to regard Hitler's foreign policy as the 'ideological accentuation of dynamic social forces' (Schieder, 1976, p. 18). Taking issue with the 'programmologists' (Schieder, op. cit., p. 163), members of this school seek to relativise Hitler's omnipotence in foreign as well as home affairs, maintaining that 'the polycratic power structures of the so-called Fuhrer state' (op. cit., p. 166) apply to this field as well. Probably the most thoughtful attempt to show 'that the polycratic internal system of the Nazi state . . . also affected foreign policy' (op. cit., p. 169) is that by Martin Broszat (1970). Broszat attempts to set off against each other the Nazi power system and Hitler's foreign policy in terms of 'ideological metaphor'. He regards Hitler's ultimate aims as symbols intended to justify ever-fresh activity on the part of the regime, whose basic principle was incessant motion and change for its own sake.

The idea that Hitler's foreign policy and strategy were not primarily independent phenomena but functions of a complex social process has hitherto been received rather coolly by foreign scholars, some of whom – for example, Norman Rich (1973–4) – opposed it with more or less indirect arguments. In West Germany, on the other hand, it has led to a continuing controversy, in which the chief opponents of the revisionist view have been K. D. Bracher, A. Hillgruber and the present author. Their main objections (summarised in Hildebrand, 1974, pp. 645–7) are as follows:

- (1) The revisionist interpretation of Nazi foreign policy overlooks the high degree of autonomy of Hitler's programme, the aims of which were formulated and implemented by the dictator. To ascribe to them too much of a 'functional' or derivative character also ignores the fact that Hitler was basically concerned not to perpetuate the existing political and social structure system in Germany but to overthrow it.
- (2) To treat the aims dictated by Hitler's *Weltanschauung* as a mere ideological outcome of social processes hardly accounts for the fact that, for example, the dictator's anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism are to be regarded not solely or even mainly as 'functional' but as primary, independent political aims.
- (3) In this sense the 'revisionists' are in danger of raising undoubted effects and consequences of Hitler's policy to the status of primary aims, and failing to distinguish properly between what is essential and what is derivative.
- (4) As the explicit, autonomous objectives of Hitler's programme were achieved one by one, it became harder and harder for Hitler to control the

dynamism of his own system. But this never forced him to adopt basic alternatives against his will. It did not affect the formulation of the aims that he set for himself and the German people, but rather reinforced them as intentions, although at times making them more difficult of achievement.

This criticism, however, should not prevent our appreciating the merits of the 'revisionist' interpretation and the possibilities it opens up. In the light of these, the position may perhaps be seen as follows:

(1) The new approach is a clear warning against the danger, which has been recognised in the past, of ascribing too much regularity and coherence to Hitler's foreign policy and neglecting the activities of other persons and institutions. It is true that the 'revisionists' in their zeal overlook the fact that these alternatives are not so new as they suppose, but can already be found in the works of 'programmologists' and 'traditionalists'.

(2) The 'revisionist' critique rightly draws attention to trends and effects which are part of the history of the regime's foreign policy. The reservations of this school against unduly 'Hitlerocentric' interpretations may be regarded as convincing in so far as they do not lead to the error of considering the dictator as a mere instrument of social processes.

(3) The 'revisionist' thesis may have brought out more clearly than before the need for the type of study undertaken by W. Michalka in his thesis (1976b) on 'Ribbentrop and German policy towards Britain, 1933-40', drawing attention to 'the discussion of concepts of foreign policy in the Third Reich' and assessing the relative importance of monocratic and polycratic elements.

On the whole, apart from the 'revisionist' critique there is widespread agreement in international research that Hitler exercised 'personal rule' (W. J. Mommsen) in foreign affairs, and that his policy was not 'metaphorical' or symbolic, as M. Broszat suggests, but was genuinely intended to be carried out. It was not basically a means of achieving integration on the home front, but was directed towards expansion and racial domination. It was not a product of social dynamics but had a relatively high degree of autonomy; the dynamics of the Nazi regime derived from it, not vice versa, though admittedly they often tended to achieve an independence of their own.

In connection with the debate as to how far the foreign policy of the Third Reich was autonomous or 'functional', another controversy arises concerning Hitler's racial policy, which was essentially linked with it: namely, whether the Nazi extermination of Jews is to be regarded as a matter of deliberate intention or improvisation. In view of the fact that no document from Hitler's hand ordering the mass murder of the Jews has yet been found, traditional research has generally assumed that he issued a secret order to this effect as part of the preparation for the attack on Russia, which was the kernel of his ideological and political programme, and that this order, which first applied to captured Soviet territory, was afterwards extended to the whole of occupied Europe. Eberhard Jäckel dates the decision to the summer of 1940, while Helmut Krausnick places

it in March 1941. Hans-Günther Seraphim believes it took place at the beginning of July 1941, shortly before Operation Barbarossa (cf. Hillgruber, 1977, p. 35, n. 43). In a further legal opinion of 1978 Hillgruber expresses the view that 'Hitler's oral instruction to Himmler or Heydrich to have all Jews in Russia shot was communicated orally by Heydrich, head of the RSHA, the SIPO and the SD, to the heads of the *Einsatzgruppen* and *Einsatzkommandos* [special extermination squads] at the end of May 1941, that is, some weeks before the attack on Russia, at the school for frontier police at Pretzsch near Wittenberg' (op. cit., p. 9). These writers leave no doubt as to the leading part played by Hitler in this matter, his personal and decisive action and his direct and absolute responsibility.

The most recent comprehensive account of the treatment of Jews in the Third Reich is L. Dawidowicz's *The War against the Jews* (1975). This does not entirely follow the line of K. A. Schleunes's *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz* (1970), but stresses the consistency of Nazi racial policy during the years of peace as well as the Second World War. Uwe Dietrich Adam (1972), on the other hand, takes a distinctly different view, the main effect of which is to relativise Hitler's role in the Jewish policy of the Third Reich. While admitting that the dictator played a part of some importance in the treatment of the Jews and the extermination process (op. cit., p. 360), he considers that in the last resort it was the institutional structure of the Third Reich which resulted in the order being given for the holocaust. His argument is that the chaos caused in the occupied Eastern territories by the arrival of trainloads of Jews had intensified the disorder typical of Nazi arrangements. When the German advance in Russia was brought to a halt in November-December 1941 there was still less room for deported Jews, and, as it seemed unlikely that more territory would be conquered, the organisational incompetence of the regime forced Hitler to improvise the solution of killing off the Jews. 'Certainly Hitler's order to have millions of people killed was his own personal decision; but the dynamic development of his state was not the result of ingenious calculation but was an inner development that in no small measure constrained Hitler himself' (ibid.). This conclusion was recently paraphrased by H. Mommsen: 'It cannot be proved, for instance, that Hitler himself gave the order for the final solution, though this does not mean that he did not approve the policy. That the solution was put into effect is by no means to be ascribed to Hitler alone, but to the complexity of the decision-taking process in the Third Reich, which brought about a progressive and cumulative radicalisation' (H. Mommsen, 1977, 'Nazionalsozialismus oder Hitlerismus?' in M. Bosch, ed., *Persönlichkeit und Struktur in der Geschichte*, Düsseldorf, p. 66).

This view has been amplified by Martin Broszat (1977) in a well-argued and perceptive article on 'Hitler and the genesis of the final solution'. The same article convincingly refutes the opinion put forward by David Irving in *Hitler's War* that Himmler organised the killing of Jews on his own authority and that

Hitler did not learn of it till 1943. Irving's view was also rebutted by H. Trevor-Roper (*Sunday Times*, 12 June 1977), A. Bullock (*New York Review of Books*, 7 July 1977) and E. Jäckel (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 August 1977 and 22 June 1978).

Apart from this, however, Broszat takes the view that Hitler probably gave no specific order for the extermination of Jews, and that the dictator's decision was due to a combination of ideological dogma and pathological improvisation. Broszat considers that anti-Semitism was so strong a factor in Hitler's foreign policy that the desire to strike a blow at the Jews may have been one reason why he took the risk of war in September 1939. On the whole, however, Broszat believes that the destruction of European Jewry was not basically due to conscious planning on Hitler's part but to the uncontrolled dynamism of the regime, with its tendency towards improvisation and, in consequence, the ever-increasing radicalisation that finally defeated its own object. Broszat does not deny that Nazi ideology was in principle ready at all times for the most radical solution of the 'Jewish question'; but he believes that the actual historical situation determined acts of policy towards the Jews, which took place without co-ordination and in separate stages. According to Broszat it was the holding-up of the advance in Russia, the impossible situation created by the deportations to the Eastern territories, and the independent initiatives of local authorities, which increasingly compelled the top leaders to seek a desperate way out by putting into effect what became the 'final solution'.

Hitler probably saw no reason to call off the plan for the wholesale deportation of Jews merely because the military difficulties and commitments in the East proved greater than had been expected in the summer of 1941. In the light of the situation in autumn of that year it seems that the original deportation plans were slowed up and reduced in scale, and that it was decided to do away with at least some of the deported Jews 'in a different way', that is, by systematic executions. The extermination of Jews came about, it would seem, not only because of the professed intention to destroy them but also as the way out of an impasse into which the regime had manoeuvred itself. However, once the process of liquidation had begun and was systematised, it became a dominant factor and finally led to an actual comprehensive 'programme'. (op. cit., pp. 752-3)

However, this new approach does not lead Broszat to dispute Hitler's responsibility in any way. 'If our interpretation is based on the view that the extermination of the Jews was an improvised solution, not something planned long before and put into effect by a single secret order, this indeed implies that responsibility for the initiative was not confined to Hitler, Himmler, or Heydrich; but it in no way exonerates Hitler' (op. cit., p. 756). However, Broszat clearly opposes the traditional view of Hitler's Jewish policy as an action

specifically planned at an early stage. 'It is certain that Hitler's dogmatic ideological anti-Semitism was not independent of time and actuality. It did not develop according to a timetable but in a pathological fashion; at different times it was more or less highly charged, and this degree of intensity played at least as great a part as the unchanging dogma itself in determining Hitler's decisions and actions. This applies in particular to the persecution and annihilation of the Jews, which was not a steady, planned operation but was of a more improvised and fitful character, carried out by intensified *ad hoc* measures from time to time' (op. cit., p. 770).

Broszat's suggested interpretation will no doubt raise objections, among which the following may be mentioned: (1) The fact that no written order by Hitler for the killing of Jews has been found by no means proves that there was no such order, written or oral. To accept it as probable that there was such an order has nothing to do with any 'conspiracy theory' on the part of traditional historians, based on 'idealistic intentionalism': for there is ample documentary evidence that secrecy as to the Führer's intentions was a basic feature of politics in the Third Reich. As against this, the validity of the thesis that the regime was characterised by improvisation is still subject to question.

(2) The executions of Jews in Russia were co-ordinated with the German advance and took place regardless of personal rank, position, or activity, on the mere ground that the victims were Jews. Broszat's interpretation in 'situational' and derivative terms does not adequately account for this policy, which must surely have been ordered by Hitler and carried out on a planned basis. In qualitative terms the executions by shooting were no different from the technically more efficient accomplishment of the 'physical final solution' by gassing, to which they were a prelude.

(3) Even if one is prepared to ascribe a relatively high degree of importance to the historical situation in bringing about the Nazi extermination of Jews, it must not be overlooked that the genesis of the 'final solution' lay much further back in time, in Hitler's account of his own programme, and that the destruction of European Jewry was based on the racial dogma contained in the Nazi ideology. But for that ideology, the alleged spur-of-the-moment action would have had nothing to base itself on. Hitler's racial dogma was the root cause of Nazi genocide. That dogma may have brought about situations that called urgently for the radical application of a solution which had long been envisaged as a practical possibility. In other words, the situational element in the regime's attitude to the Jews may have contributed secondarily to the implementation of the racial dogma, but certainly did not create the latter as a new and essential feature of Nazi policy.

(4) While historical situations may have served to reinforce original intentions and plans that had already been set on foot for pathological reasons, Hitler's programmatic ideas of destroying the Jews and establishing racial supremacy remain the prime cause and essential goal of the 'Jewish policy' of the

Third Reich. They constituted the dynamic impetus of the regime, which modified and accelerated Hitler's plans but at no time rushed him into solutions that he had not long envisaged and wanted.

Addressing himself to the problem of the treatment of Jews during the Second World War from a different standpoint to the 'revisionists', Sebastian Haffner has recently sought to explain the adoption in December 1941 of the policy of physical extermination by a technically perfected method, which from 1942 onwards was extended to the whole of Europe under German occupation or influence. Haffner believes that Hitler's calculations were the sole determining factor as regards the inception, development and planning of the extermination policy. 'So long as Hitler was still hoping to achieve in Russia a similarly rapid victory as a year before in France, he was also hoping that Britain would come to terms, since in Russia she would have lost her last "continental sword".' But for that purpose he must present himself as an acceptable party to negotiations with Britain. For this reason

the systematic murder of the Jews had been confined to Poland and Russia, and its cumbersome method had been mass shooting . . . What he was doing in Poland and Russia could, so he had reason to hope, be kept secret from the outside world at least while the war was on; but mass murder in France, Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg, Denmark, Norway and even Germany itself would become immediately known in Britain and would make Hitler totally unacceptable there – which is what actually happened . . . In other words, Hitler would only be able to fulfil his long-cherished wish to exterminate the Jews from the whole of Europe if he abandoned all hope of a negotiated peace with Britain (and the associated hope of preventing America from joining the war). And that he only did after 5 December 1941, the day when the Russian offensive before Moscow rudely awakened him from his dreams of victory in Russia. (Haffner, 1979, p. 142)

Haffner thus sees no qualitative difference between the mass shootings of East European Jews on Polish and Soviet territory up to December 1941 and the subsequent gas-chamber operations (prepared as far back as June–July 1941) involving Jews from all over Europe. He regards both these as long-planned phases of Hitler's Jewish policy, separately put into effect in direct accordance with his ideological and strategic decisions. Future research will show whether Haffner's interpretation, based on penetrating conjecture, can be attested by sufficient first-hand evidence to make it generally acceptable to scholars.

Reviewing the present state of research concerning the foreign and racial policy of the Nazi regime, it appears desirable that historians should turn their attention to the following questions in particular:

(1) It would be timely to investigate and present in a comprehensive manner the ideological aspect of Hitler's foreign policy and conduct of the war: for this

was closely linked with his plans for world power, and contributed in a high degree, though not decisively, to undermining and destroying them. Historical science urgently needs an account of the Nazi regime's policy towards the Jews, together with its euthanasia and eugenic programmes; all these were part of Hitler's ideology and complemented one another.

(2) The history of Nazi foreign policy has already been more thoroughly researched, but it must be set in the historical context of international politics in the 1930s and 1940s, so as to establish how far Hitler was able to influence the course of world affairs during the twelve years of his rule, and how far international circumstances enabled him to carry out his plans or forced him to limit or modify them.

(3) Continuing and developing the studies by A. Hillgruber (1965a) on Hitler's strategy, B. Martin (1976) on peace initiatives and W. Michalka (1976b) on Ribbentrop, it would be useful to devote attention to the existence of variants in the foreign policy (and foreign trade policy) of the Third Reich, whether intrinsic to the system or involving a modification of it, such as were envisaged, for example, by Hjalmar Schacht and perhaps even by Göring. This would throw light, *inter alia*, on the possibilities and limitations of the activity of opposition groups in the Third Reich, and would illustrate more clearly than before how fluid the transition between co-operation and resistance often was under the Nazi dictatorship.