

PETER LONGERICH



THE UNWRITTEN ORDER

HITLER'S ROLE IN THE
FINAL SOLUTION

'A compelling account of how Hitler came
to take the decision to kill the Jews.'

SIR RICHARD J. EVANS

PREFACE

At the end of 1997 I received an unusual request. My colleague Richard Evans, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University and Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, and Anthony Julius, of the London law firm of Mishcon de Reya, asked if I would be prepared to appear as an expert witness in the forthcoming civil action of Irving *v.* Lipstadt.

The background to this spectacular civil action is well known and need not be repeated here in much detail: David Irving, the author of several books on the Nazi period and the Second World War, had begun proceedings against Professor Deborah Lipstadt, Professor at Emory University, Atlanta, because in her book, *Denying the Holocaust*, she charged him with having deliberately falsified the history of the Nazi period, in particular by denying the murder of the Jews and Hitler's responsibility for it.¹ In response, Deborah Lipstadt and her publishers Penguin Books decided not only to take up Irving's challenge and face the charge, but also to take the offensive in their conduct of the case. In other words, they resolved to subject Irving's methods to detailed scrutiny before the court and make them the true object of the trial. As part of this strategy, the defence called on a number of historians, who were to demonstrate to the court just how untenable was Irving's attempt to cast into question substantial aspects of the history of the murder of the European Jews that are generally accepted. The goal that the defence set itself was reached: as is also well known, the trial ended in April 2000 with Irving's total defeat.

For the action of Irving *v.* Lipstadt the historians who had been engaged as expert witnesses prepared written reports, some of them very extensive. In the main submission, Richard Evans dealt in detail with 'David Irving, Hitler and Holocaust Denial', but there were four further specialist submissions: a study of the history of the construction of Auschwitz by Robert-Jan van Pelt, an architectural historian teaching in Canada; a study by America's leading Holocaust expert Christopher Browning on the source materials available on the subject of the 'final solution'; and my own two expert reports, the first on 'The Systematic Character of National Socialist Policy for the Annihilation of the Jews', the second on 'Hitler's Role in the Persecution of the Jews by the National Socialist Regime'.

The two reports prepared by me were therefore concerned with two central elements of the history of the murder of the European Jews that have repeatedly been challenged by Holocaust deniers, namely the fact that the murder of the European Jews was the result of the systematic implementation of a specific policy, and the fact that this policy was pursued by the highest authority of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler. It was not the purpose of either report to deal with Irving's absurd theses (which were to be refuted expertly and in detail by Richard Evans's report); but to explain the current state of research on the events that we call the 'Holocaust'. These considerations also lie at the root of the present undertaking to publish the report elucidating Hitler's role in the 'final solution' in an extended form.

At the point when I took on the commission to write a report on Hitler's role in the persecution of the Jews, I anticipated that the experience of appearing as an expert witness in a British court would be highly interesting but did not expect any great insights to emerge from the writing itself. Seen from an academic perspective, the topic 'Hitler and the Holocaust' seemed unattractive for two main reasons. Firstly, however much historians may debate the genesis of the 'final solution', they are all agreed that Hitler played a central role in the annihilation of the Jews. The way in which he fulfilled this role may be disputed, but the fact that he played a role is not regarded by specialists as a problem that is academically particularly interesting or difficult to solve.

The desire of so-called revisionists like David Irving to deny Hitler's central role in the murder of the European Jews – despite his well-documented vituperative anti-Semitism and despite his unfettered freedom of action as omnipotent dictator – may be of real interest to political historians, psychologists and the like. But to a historian it is clear that this form of argument relies on simple sleight of hand. The starting point is the fact that an unambiguous written

order from Hitler for the murder of the European Jews does not exist (and may well never have existed). The argument that the so-called revisionists develop from this fact is trivial and misleading: it rests on the spurious suggestion that one can derive from the absence of a historical document a negative conclusion about events; what is not documented is therefore non-existent.

Historians are familiar with this classic trap from their training. There is even a specialist term for it, the *argumentum ex silentio*, or the fallacy of deriving far-reaching conclusions about what happened (or did not happen) in history from the absence of documentary evidence.

On the other hand – and this is the second reason why I was initially not particularly interested in the topic of ‘Hitler and the Holocaust’ – the fact that Hitler played a decisive role in developing the policy for murdering the Jews offers only a very limited explanation for the full extent of what happened. After decades of intensive study of the history of the National Socialist dictatorship, it is perfectly clear that Hitler was the driving force and constant stimulus for radicalising the persecution of the Jews. In this area of policy he had considerable room for manoeuvre, which he employed exactly as he saw fit. Nowadays the vast majority of historians who are concerned with the history of the Third Reich would subscribe to the theory ‘no Holocaust without Hitler’. Or, to argue counterfactually, if Hitler had died in 1940, it is extremely questionable whether the Nazi regime would have followed that fateful path under different leadership, or whether the indubitably destructive energy of the system would have been expended in a different direction. But what does the phrase ‘no Holocaust without Hitler’ actually explain? Seen in purely logical terms it denotes a necessary but not a sufficient condition, so the phrase ‘no Holocaust without Hitler’ cannot be reversed to give the thesis ‘the Holocaust took place merely because Hitler willed it’. For the historical event of the Holocaust to occur, a whole series of other conditions had to be fulfilled alongside ‘Hitler’, and these conditions had to merge into a historical process that produced the event.

In fact contemporary scholars are working intensively on identifying explanations for the historical events that we now generally term ‘the Holocaust’. Amongst the questions that interest modern historians is the question as to the motivation and mentality of the perpetrators, above all of the functionaries in the SS and the police, and in the German civil administration in the occupied countries. They are also concerned just as intensively with the problem of the stance taken by the traditional elite groups towards the so-called ‘Jewish Question’ and with how far they participated in the genocide – this includes the generals, the various branches of bureaucracy, the medical profession,

scientists and scholars in a wide variety of disciplines (including historians), amongst other groups.

In addition, studies are being undertaken into the persecution of Jews at regional level, looking at the question of how far local official bodies possessed room for manoeuvre in anti-Jewish policy, and focusing on the relationship between ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’. Scholarship is also keenly interested in how much the general German population knew about the Holocaust and how it reacted, in the question of whether there was a particularly radical form of anti-Semitism in Germany, and if so, what the historical conditions were that led to it.

Research is slowly clarifying the link between the persecution of the Jews and other areas of National Socialist policy, such as nutrition, the use of foreign workers, the occupation of other countries and policies relating to the relocation of millions of people. Gradually we are reaching an understanding of how the development of policy towards the Jews was influenced by these other areas, and, in reverse, how the ‘Jewish Question’ influenced these areas, too. This list of the important topics of contemporary historical research could easily be extended, but even a truncated account shows clearly how any attempt to claim that the murder of the European Jews could be reduced exclusively or even primarily to the factor of Hitler himself would be wrong-headed.

However, the more I worked on the subject of ‘Hitler and the Holocaust’, the more my initial lack of enthusiasm for it grew into keen interest – again for two reasons. The first of these is essentially practical in its nature, but has broader implications. Whilst I was preparing the expert witness report, it turned out to be more difficult than I had imagined to assemble the key documents relating to this epochal crime. One might have imagined that a scholar interested in the process of decision-making leading to the ‘final solution’ could turn to a well-ordered repository of central documents – perhaps even to a printed version of the key documents comparable to an edition of diplomatic papers or a collection of cabinet minutes – yet this is by no means the case here. The documents relating to the murder of the European Jews are dispersed in archives literally all over the world. Publication has only been partial and in so disparate a manner that only specialists are really in a position even to locate such published documents in a reasonable length of time. This is all the more regrettable because the opening of Eastern European archives in recent years has led to the discovery of a whole series of new sources for the subject, which are only gradually being published, again often in very obscure places.

This unsatisfactory situation made the compilation of a report based almost exclusively on original documents preserved in the most varied of archives

far and wide a particular challenge. The hearing was to show the great importance of documents from the period in the reconstruction of the historical events by the court. It proved to be the case that most of the questions under debate could only be settled by a precise examination of the relevant documents and often hours were spent in discussion about the authenticity, dating, original authorship, translation and interpretation of individual papers. In some cases it was even necessary to have documents faxed during the hearing from the relevant archives in various countries – an impressive demonstration of some of the gaps in the documentation of the Holocaust that remain to be closed, especially when one keeps in mind the possibilities of electronic communications.

The purely practical challenge that arose from this situation naturally gave rise to the question of why an event with the historical significance of the Holocaust is so comparatively badly documented. It also highlighted the question of the discrepancy between this lamentable state of affairs and the high degree of attention that this topic has attracted in the media, in politics and in the efforts being made for a culture of remembrance. For me, this discrepancy was one of the most significant experiences of the London hearings.

As well as this apparently practical aspect of my work, there was a methodological question closely related to the problems of sources that concerned me as I was compiling my report. This was the question of how best to demonstrate the central role of Hitler in the context of the 'final solution' and, above all, once Hitler's key role had been proved, what conclusions could be drawn from it, less in relation to the man himself than in relation to how we should assess the so-called Jewish policy of the regime and its historical significance.

Historiography has produced two classic methods of dealing with the problem of the Führer's missing order for the 'final solution'. The first approach consists of the attempt to reconstruct the apparently lost order from other documents, fragments and other indications – in other words, to fix a date and a place for when and where such an order must in all probability have been issued. The second method is more structurally oriented and stresses the gradual or incremental nature of the events: it is assumed that the 'final solution' did not result from a single order given by Hitler, and what is stressed is the destructive inherent momentum of the machinery of persecution and annihilation once it had been set in motion. The 'cumulative radicalisation' (Hans Mommsen) of the whole process gives only secondary importance to the question of whether and in what way the dictator was himself involved. This is not to say, however, that the historians who take this view question Hitler's responsibility for the whole process.

Nevertheless, on the basis of my own research I had chosen a different approach. I was not concerned with looking for a single order issued by Hitler; neither did I wish to work from the idea that Hitler's involvement in the murder of the Jews was solely implicit and to be supposed only on the grounds of his position within the Nazi system and of his well-known anti-Semitic stance. Instead, I set myself the task of demonstrating via documentary evidence Hitler's almost continuous involvement with this issue, the task therefore of collecting the many individual decisions made with regard to the 'Jewish Question', and of establishing from these an overall picture of a policy that was pursued logically and consistently. At the same time, I intended to explain, at least in outline, the central role of this anti-Jewish policy in the history of National Socialism and to show the general context for the gradual radicalisation of the persecution of the Jews in the various phases of the development of the National Socialist regime.

If Hitler as an individual stands at the centre of this, it is not intended to attribute the murder of the European Jews directly to the single human being, if that is the right word, but to depict Hitler as a decisive exponent of this policy. Besides the systematic and comprehensive manner of its execution, what is special and so far historically unique about this crime is the will to totally annihilate that drove its perpetrators, a murderous intention that was expressed over and over again, internally and in public speeches, by the leader of the Nazi Party, the head of state and commander of the armed forces. It is the fact that the perpetrators saw themselves as legitimised by the authority of their Führer and were prepared on the basis of this authority to commit a crime of unparalleled magnitude that must serve as the decisive point of departure for any explanation of the historical events – not an account that is restricted to the personal activity of Hitler himself.

Whilst the fact that the anti-Jewish policy was continually given sanction and impetus by the regime's highest authority does not offer a complete explanation for this policy, it does make clear its central importance for National Socialism. The 'removal' of the Jews, in whatever manner, the comprehensive 'clearing' of Jews from German society, was the fundamental basis on which the National Socialists intended to erect a racially homogeneous 'community of the people', and at the same time it became the key means of enforcing their rule, first in Germany, later in Europe.

The key role played by Hitler in the decision-making process towards the 'final solution', and the fact that as the 'Jewish policy' was gradually radicalised the protagonists repeatedly appealed to his authority, both articulate the central role of the persecution of the Jews in National Socialist politics as a whole.

And this is, of course, the reason why Holocaust deniers so stubbornly challenge Hitler's central role in the genocide.

The literature dealing with the causes, the historical conditions and the background for the National Socialists' murder of the European Jews is quite vast, and cannot be summarised here in anything like adequate detail.² Hitler's role in this process has naturally been stressed by the so-called intentionalist school, with the object of making Hitler's hatred of the Jews the sole, or at least the main, explanation for what occurred. In this context one might cite authors such as Helmut Krausnick, Klaus Hildebrand or Philippe Burrin,³ but above all mention should be made of the British historian Gerald Fleming, who, thirty-five years ago, collected and gave a concentrated analysis of the documents then available on Hitler's central role in the 'final solution'.⁴ On the other hand, despite being more interested in structures and processes than in the individual role of the dictator, the functionalist school has made important contributions to his personal involvement. This is especially true of the moderate functionalists, represented best by Christopher Browning, but is also the case for one of the more radical representatives of this school, Martin Broszat.⁵ Finally, it is important to make special mention of Ian Kershaw's massive biography of the dictator, which contains the most recent comprehensive depiction of Hitler's role in the National Socialist persecution of the Jews.⁶ My own contribution to this topic is *Politik der Vernichtung (The Policy of Annihilation)*, which appeared in 1998.⁷ It formed the basis of the report compiled for the court case and also, therefore, of its publication here in book form.

The original report on Hitler's role in the persecution of the Jews was significantly expanded for the purposes of this publication. I have taken the liberty of incorporating large portions of the second report into the text: the nature of the argument links both expert reports closely together and it seemed sensible to move away from the two-stranded form that was determined only by the preparations for the court case and to combine both texts once more. Above all, intensive work on the topic of the murder of the European Jews during preparations for the case and during the trial itself led to a collaborative exchange of views amongst those involved that is in some aspects still continuing and has encouraged me to expand the text in various places.

For this, and for co-operation of an exceptionally high order during the trial, I should like to thank in particular my fellow expert witnesses: Richard Evans, Christopher Browning and Robert Jan van Pelt, as well as Hajo Funke (who as a political scientist shed light on Irving's radical right-wing connections in Germany). I should also like to thank the Defence's research assistants: Tobias Jersak, Nick Wachsmann and Thomas Skelton-Robinson, and

Deborah Lipstadt's legal team. Alongside the collaboration with Anthony Julius, Mark Bateman and James Libson, my intensive discussions with Richard Rampton (who as Queen's Counsel represented Deborah Lipstadt in court) count amongst the most interesting experiences of the whole trial. As an experienced lawyer, he succeeded time and again in surprising the experts with astute observations, unconventional conclusions and fascinating hypotheses on the history of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and in making us consider further.

I should also like to thank the directors and staff of the archives whose holdings were consulted during the compilation of the reports: the President of the Bundesarchiv, Hartmut Weber, the Director of the Zentrale Stelle zur Aufklärung von NS-Verbrechen in Ludwigsburg, Willi Dressen, and the Archivist at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich, Klaus Lankheit. During the trial itself, they were all prepared to supply urgently required documents from their holdings at short notice, sometimes within hours. That, too, was a unique experience.

Finally, I should like to thank my colleagues and students in the German Department at Royal Holloway, University of London, for their forbearance throughout the period of the trial.

Peter Longerich
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REMOVE, ANNIHILATE, EXTIRPATE

Hitler's Anti-Semitic Language

There can be no doubt that Hitler's behaviour throughout his political career – from the end of the First World War until the end of the Second World War – was characterised by radical anti-Semitism. In one way or another, Hitler wished to put an end to the existence of Jews within the 'living space' (*Lebensraum*) of the German people, and this objective carried a very high priority in his political practice.

Of course Hitler's anti-Semitic stance cannot by itself explain the persecution and murder of the European Jews by the Nazi regime. A history of the 'final solution' must nevertheless take account of his central role in the decision-making process, not least because Hitler's constant authorisation and legitimisation of this policy articulated the central importance of persecuting the Jews for National Socialist policies as a whole.

An account of Hitler's role in the genesis of the 'final solution' is complicated by the fact that the dictator avoided the use of explicit written directives relating to the murder of the Jews, and only issued oral instructions on the subject to a single individual or in front of a small group of people. When he did speak about the subject, he used formulations that certainly left room for interpretation or deliberately concealed the true state of affairs. Hitler's behaviour in this respect was initially determined by the desire for secrecy. The murder of the European Jews was treated as classified information by the organs of the Third Reich on principle, which is to say that no public discussion of the topic whatsoever was permitted.¹ As Himmler said in his speech to the

SS elite in Posen in October 1943, it was 'an unwritten, never-to-be-written page of glory in our history'.²

The official silence on the topic of the 'final solution' did not prevent leading representatives of the regime from indicating in public, repeatedly, in very general terms, that the Jews of Europe were moving towards their downfall or destruction – which, as we shall see later, is what Hitler in 1939 had announced would happen in the case of a world war.³

However, it was not only the aspect of secrecy, inconsistently practised as it was, that made Hitler and other leading National Socialists follow the official policy and not speak openly about the murder of the Jews even when amongst themselves or in small groups, leading them to disguise their references to it. This behaviour was doubtless also partly governed by the refusal to take in the reality of the murder of millions of people. By speaking abstractly of 'annihilation', they kept the horror of it at a distance. It was forbidden to refer in any way to the fate of the Jews in Hitler's immediate surroundings, in his entourage and in front of his guests.⁴ Such denial of reality and self-deception became increasingly characteristic of the atmosphere in Hitler's headquarters.

The fact that the murder of the European Jews was linguistically obscured in this way makes interpreting the relevant key documents particularly challenging. The difficulty of this task is considerably increased by the tendency of the key words used by the National Socialists in describing the objectives of their anti-Jewish policy to change their meaning over the years as the persecution of the Jews became more and more radical. From mid-1941 onwards, and increasingly from the spring of 1942, Hitler and other leading National Socialists used words such as 'annihilation' (*Vernichtung*), 'extirpation' (*Ausrottung*), 'final solution' (*Endlösung*), 'removal' (*Entfernung*), 'resettlement' (*Umsiedlung*) or 'evacuation' (*Evakuierung*) as terms to camouflage the mass murder of the Jews. In the period before this, they used the same terms with reference to the Jews but without necessarily implying a programme of mass murder. And when they are applied to other ethnic groups, the same terms may have a quite different meaning.

When interpreting the meaning of these terms, therefore, it is important to take into account the various phases of the National Socialists' anti-Jewish policy. They have no meaning independent of the time factor. During the 1920s and as late as the mid-1930s, the main aim of Nazi anti-Jewish policy was to undermine the legal and economic situation of the German Jews so as to force them to emigrate. The Jews were to disappear from German public life and, later on, disappear from German territory altogether. When the Nazis used the term 'annihilation' (*Vernichtung*) during these early years, they referred on the one hand to the planned destruction of the allegedly dominant position

of the Jewish minority in German society. On the other hand, however, from the context of the relevant texts it is obvious that at this point the term already had a violent and even murderous component to its meaning, however vaguely defined this might have been. In a cautious interpretation, it would not be an exaggeration to describe the meaning of the term 'annihilation' in this early phase as ambiguous. The perspective of mass murder was already present. By way of a summary one is compelled to say that during this period (from the early 1920s to the mid-1930s) the Nazis envisaged as the final goal of their Jewish policy, as the 'final solution', a potentially violent 'removal' (*Entfernung*) of the Jews from German public life and eventually also from German soil.

At the end of the 1930s, the Nazis intensified the pressure for emigration or expulsion. During this period, terms like 'removal' (*Entfernung*) or 'final solution' (*Endlösung*) indicated that the continued existence of a Jewish minority in Germany was no longer possible. The violent aspect of anti-Jewish policy became more and more significant. In the last year before the outbreak of the Second World War the term 'annihilation' (*Vernichtung*) pointed clearly to the possibility of genocide.

Between the outbreak of war in summer 1939 and the middle of 1941, the Nazis were looking for a so-called 'territorial solution' to the 'Jewish problem'; that is, they were planning to deport the Jews to territories on the periphery of their empire where there were insufficient means to subsist and where they would inevitably perish. Technically the terms 'resettlement' (*Umsiedlung*) or 'evacuation' (*Evakuierung*) still denoted the idea of the geographical relocation of a mass of people, but one must not fail to note that this vocabulary increasingly incorporated the perspective of the physical end of the Jews in Europe. In this period the term 'final solution' was used in the same way.

Between the summer of 1941 and the spring of 1942 the meaning of these terms changed. They were now increasingly used as synonyms for mass murder. However, even in this period (particularly between autumn 1941 and spring 1942), the terminology can in some cases still be ambivalent. For an accurate interpretation each phrase has to be analysed in its historical context. In particular, in a period in which one Jewish minority after another was being included in the process of systematic mass murder, one has to determine which Jewish minority was indicated by each of the relevant phrases. For example, one cannot exclude the possibility that, in April or even May 1942, i.e. at a point when preparations for the systematic murder of European Jews were well under way, Hitler and the leading organisers of the murder programme might occasionally have talked about 'alternative' plans for a 'final solution'.⁵ It is quite possible, even at this stage, that they may have been referring on certain

occasions, in conversation, to earlier plans to deport the European Jews to an area on the outskirts of the German-controlled territories, where they would be killed or allowed to perish. This is especially plausible if such conversations were concerned with the Western European Jews, who in summer 1942 had not yet been officially included in the programme of systematic murder.

The occasional mention of 'alternatives' can be interpreted as reluctance on the part of Hitler and other members of the leading circle of Nazis to articulate openly the true consequences of the decision to kill millions of people, a decision which at this point had already been made and implemented.

2

COMPLETE REMOVAL OF THE JEWS

Hitler's Statements on the 'Jewish Question' During the Rise of the NSDAP (1919-1932)

Scholarly opinion is divided on when precisely Hitler became an anti-Semite. The widely accepted suggestion that he had already developed his hatred of the Jews during the Vienna years (1907-13) looks plausible at first sight, but it cannot be documented satisfactorily. It is impossible, for example, to reconstruct what he was reading during his youth, and the fact that in *Mein Kampf* Hitler himself attributes his anti-Semitic 'awakening' to experiences he had undergone in Vienna tends to arouse rather than to allay suspicion. It seems perfectly plausible that Hitler wished to reinterpret retrospectively a dull and difficult period in which he was living from day to day, a failure as an artist and incapable of making a decision about which direction his life should take. The reader of *Mein Kampf* is supposed to see the Viennese years of 'apprenticeship and suffering' as a time of renunciation, a period of heroic attempts to better himself, when the author uses his bitter experience of life as a way of developing his unshakeable ideological principles. But it is no more possible to prove Hitler's assertions in *Mein Kampf* that since then he had refined his anti-Semitic stance during the periods of convalescence and the leave that he spent in Germany in the years 1916, 1917 and 1918.

It is indeed highly probable that Hitler became susceptible to anti-Jewish influences during his time in Vienna - which was one of the main centres of European anti-Semitism - and it is equally credible that he was influenced in the second half of the war by the sharp rise of anti-Semitism in Germany: but even if such a predisposition is plausible, it is only from 1918, during his stay in

Munich and under the influence of defeat, revolution and the rule of Socialist workers' councils, that it is possible to prove how it intensified to become a programmatic anti-Semitic ideology.¹

The anti-Semitic stance that Hitler finally adopted in the transitional period of 1918–19 is clearly not an isolated circumstance but has to be seen in its context as a mass phenomenon. Anti-Semitism had received a sharp boost from 1916 onwards, but from about the middle of 1919 it is possible to detect a further increase in hostility to Jews in Germany. After the true consequences of the German defeat had come to light in Versailles, after the revolution had been put down with violence and republican forces were on the defensive, there was talk of a 'wave from the right', whose most important indicator was anti-Semitism.

A brief explanation of this phenomenon may chiefly be sought in the fact that significant parts of the radical political Right were now coming to the fore. Anti-Semitic tendencies from the radical Right had repeatedly been making themselves heard since the end of the 1870s, and now they were staking their decisive breakthrough on the anti-Semitism card. After the collapse of the authoritarian Wilhelmine state in 1918, the radical Right began to look closely at its 'ethnic' (*völkisch*) roots. It was believed that a reminder of the virtues and values that were supposedly slumbering deep within the German people would achieve a total renewal of 'Germanness', from below, from the level of the people itself. It turned out, however, that this search for identity was best realised negatively, by distinguishing a German identity from a sector of the population that had for centuries been the object of hatred and scorn: the Jewish minority, who were largely assimilated and in any case represented less than 1 per cent of the total population. From then on, the political Right made 'the Jews' responsible for well-nigh every glitch in the development of Germany – for revolution and defeat, for Socialism, for economic difficulties, for the harsh conditions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, for the decline of tradition and moral values, and more. Being 'liberated' from the Jews, on the other hand, meant redemption from the greatest evils. With the help of anti-Semitism, the radical Right had not only created a dominant new political agenda, it had produced something akin to a negative identity.

The upsurge in anti-Semitism was not only manifested in the founding of large numbers of anti-Semitic organisations, although these were very significant, too: the largest of them, the Deutschvölkische Schutz- und Trutzbund (German League for Protection and Resistance), had more than 100,000 members and possessed considerable propaganda resources. This upsurge was

evident, too, in the adoption in April 1920 of anti-Semitic thinking into the programme of the German National People's Party, the political union of the German conservatives. It was noted that Jews had emerged to play leading roles in the revolutionary period, and that the Republic was now represented by Jewish politicians, and this took on central importance in the climate of anti-Semitic agitation. Hitler's early anti-Semitic statements, which will now be considered in more detail, were therefore perfectly in tune with a strong element in the zeitgeist.²

Hitler's very first political statement, his letter to Adolf Gemlich of 16 September 1919, already includes a clear declaration of his anti-Semitic position. Gemlich had taken part in a programme of political education to which Private Hitler had been assigned as an instructor in summer 1919, his oratorical talent having attracted the attention of his superiors. Such programmes were intended as a means of immunising soldiers who were about to be demobilised against dangerous revolutionary ideas. Hitler's tuition had already displayed a strong anti-Semitic tendency, so strong, in fact, that the officer responsible for the course in his training camp had warned him that he should moderate his views. Four weeks after the end of the course, on 16 September 1919, Hitler wrote to Gemlich on behalf of Captain Karl Mayr, who had been responsible for the course syllabus:

Anti-Semitism of the purely emotional sort finds its ultimate expression in the form of pogroms. Rational anti-Semitism, on the other hand, must lead to the systematic judicial opposition to, and elimination of, the privileges which the Jews hold in contrast to the other aliens living amongst us (special legislation for aliens). Its ultimate unalterable objective must be the removal of the Jews altogether.³

This attitude is constant throughout all Hitler's early public statements on the issue. Almost all his speeches contain anti-Semitic passages;⁴ time and time again he demanded the 'removal' (*Entfernung*) of the Jews from Germany.⁵ The radical nature of his statements at this point is remarkable: as early as 1920 he was speaking of 'extirpation' (*ausrotten*) and 'annihilation' (*vernichten*). Thus, according to a police report of a NSDAP meeting on 6 April 1920, he declared:

We have no intention of being emotional anti-Semites intent on creating the atmosphere of a pogrom; instead, our hearts are filled with an inexorable determination to attack the evil at its core and to extirpate its root and branch. In order to achieve our goal every means will be justified, even if we have to make a pact with the devil.⁶

In a speech to a meeting of National Socialists in Salzburg on 7 August 1920, he said:

Do not imagine that you can combat a sickness without killing what causes it, without annihilating the germ; and do not think that you can combat racial tuberculosis without taking care to free the people from the germ that causes racial tuberculosis. The effects of Judaism will never wane and the poisoning of the people will never end until the cause, the Jews, are removed from our midst.⁷

It can be demonstrated that Hitler used the words 'remove' (*entfernen*) and 'annihilate' (*vernichten*) synonymously. In a letter to a sympathiser, headed 3 July 1920, he wrote:

I cannot reproach a tuberculosis bacillus for doing something that means destruction for a human being but life for the bacillus itself; I am no less compelled and legitimated in conducting the battle against tuberculosis by annihilating [*vernichten*] its cause, because my very existence depends on it. Over thousands of years, the Jew is becoming and has become a racial tuberculosis affecting many peoples. To fight him means to remove [*entfernen*] him.⁸

Hitler left no room for doubt that the ultimate goal of National Socialist Jewish policy could only be attained by using violence. In a speech made in April 1921 he shouted:

For this reason solving the Jewish Question is the central question for National Socialists. This question cannot be solved delicately; faced with the terrifying weapons of our opponents, we can only solve it by using brute force. The only serious way of fighting is fighting hard. Lord Fisher said, 'if you strike, then strike hard! The only serious fight is one that makes your opponent scream.'⁹

Hitler's involvement in drawing up the NSDAP party programme in 1920 was decisive. Amongst other things, this programme called for the removal of German citizenship from the Jews and their treatment under 'special legislation for aliens'. As early as 1922 Hitler made a public speech in which he demanded the death penalty for 'any Jew caught with a blond girl'.¹⁰ In January 1923, in Munich, he promised:

There is no possibility of accommodation here: the Jew and his accomplices will forever remain enemies in the hearts of our people. We know that when they

take the helm, our heads will roll; we also know, however, that when we have power in our hands, God have mercy on you!¹¹

In his book *Mein Kampf*, which appeared in 1926, and especially in a manuscript written in 1928 that remained unpublished until after 1945 (his 'Second Book'), Hitler put his radical views about 'removing' the Jews from Germany in the context of a theory for which he tried to find a historical derivation.¹² According to this theory, the meaning of world history is a permanent struggle between races or peoples for 'living space' (*Lebensraum*). In this model the Jews, whose particular racial disposition is said to prevent their developing their own territorial state or culture, play the role of parasitic beings, acting together with other Jews in an international conspiracy, who seek to destroy from within the construction of empires of *Lebensraum* by superior races. Hitler describes this 'theory' most clearly in a lengthy section of his 'Second Book':

Because they lack their own productive capacity, the Jewish people are incapable of establishing their own state territorially. Rather they need the work and creative capacity of other nations as a basis for their own existence. The very existence of the Jews thus becomes parasitic on the lives of other peoples. The ultimate goal of the Jewish struggle for survival is therefore the enslavement of productive peoples. To achieve this goal, which in reality represented the struggle for existence of Jewry in all ages, the Jew makes use of all weapons that correspond to the whole complex of his being. On the domestic level, he fights within individual nations initially for equality, and then for superiority. The weapons he uses for this are cunning, cleverness, subterfuge, malice, dissimulation, etc., qualities that are rooted in the very essence of his ethnic character. They are ruses in his struggle for survival, like the ruses used by other peoples in combat by sword.

On the level of foreign policy he attempts to make nations restless, distracting them from their true interests, propelling them into internecine wars. In this way, with the help of the power of money and of propaganda, he attempts to impose himself on them as their master. His ultimate goal is 'de-nationalisation', the pro-miscuous bastardisation of other peoples, the lowering of the racial standards of the best; at the same time he aims at gaining mastery over this racial hotch-potch through the extirpation [*Ausrottung*] of the native intelligentsia and its replacement by members of his own people.

The end of the Jews' struggle for world domination will therefore always be bloody Bolshevism, which in truth is the destruction of the intellectual elite

that derives intimately from the essence of a nation, with the result that he can ascend and make himself master of a mankind rendered leaderless. Stupidity, cowardice and wickedness play into his hands. It is in the bastard that he secures for himself the first opening that will enable him to break into the body of another people.

The end of Jewish domination is always the decay of all forms of culture, finally even the insanity of the Jew himself. For he is a parasite on a nation and his victory signifies his own end as well as the death of his victim.¹³

As *Mein Kampf* and his 'Second Book' clearly demonstrate, Hitler perceived the situation of Germany after the end of the First World War as the consequence of an international Jewish conspiracy: Jews dominated both 'international finance capital' and the Socialist movement; they were responsible for war, revolutions, the decline of national values and for the pernicious 'mixing of the races'.

The language that Hitler used in this early period to refer to the Jews was filled with boundless hatred. Eberhard Jäckel once compiled a series of typical designations for Jews from *Mein Kampf*: 'like a maggot in a rotting corpse', 'a pestilence worse than the Black Death', 'a germ-carrier of the foulest kind', 'mankind's eternal bacterium', 'the spider began to suck the blood of the people slowly out of its veins', 'a pack of rats fighting bloodily among themselves', 'a parasite in the body of other peoples', 'a sponger radiating further and further like a harmful bacillus', 'the eternal bloodsucker', 'a parasite on the people' and 'vampire'.¹⁴

An analysis of Hitler's public pronouncements in the second half of the 1920s clearly shows that anti-Semitism was continuing to play a central role in his thinking. In Hitler's speeches from that time hatred of the Jews was by no means a marginal element used only for purely demagogic purposes. Rather anti-Semitism was the central component of the ideological structure that he endeavoured to convey to his listeners with stubborn perseverance.

For even if Hitler was *primarily* concerned in his public utterances in the second half of the 1920s with the political questions of the day, in the great majority of his speeches and articles he would return to the ideological trains of thought that he had developed in *Mein Kampf* and his 'Second Book'. For him these were the explanation of the precarious situation in which Germany found itself at the end of the First World War.

Central categories in Hitler's public statements thus continued to be 'space' and 'race': the future of the Germans as a racially superior people depended, he said, on their being in control of as great a space as possible.¹⁵ The fulfilment of this historical mission, which, according to Hitler's central argument, was

decisive for the security of the existence of the German people, was obstructed by systematic attempts on the part of the 'Jewish race' to prevent it.

Over and over again, Hitler repeated in his speeches his stereotypical grievances against the Jews: he said that they were not able to work productively and were incapable of creating culture;¹⁶ that they lacked a positive attitude towards the soil; that instead they had others work for them and gained interest from them.¹⁷ He therefore called the Jews 'parasites' or 'spongers' (*Schmarotzer*).¹⁸ In Hitler's view their cunning activities had enabled them to gain control of the economy.¹⁹ Despite themselves being incapable of producing culture, they had been able to dominate the culture industry and the press, and therefore controlled public opinion.²⁰

In addition, the political parties were in his view dominated by the Jews.²¹ This was especially true of the Socialist parties.²² In a characteristic statement he called Marxism the 'great instrument for the annihilation of the Aryan peoples, for the annihilation of the intelligence of these Aryan peoples and for the constitution of a thin Jewish upper class'.²³ In the Soviet Union he felt that this goal had already been largely achieved through Stalin's dictatorship.²⁴

On an international level, too, the Jews were said to have achieved a dominant position in the economy: he claimed that 'international finance Jewry' used their position to put additional economic and political pressure upon Germany.²⁵ Communism and capitalism were, in Hitler's view, both instruments in the hands of Jews for the attainment of a position of world domination: 'Western democracy on the one hand and Russian Bolshevism on the other are the forms in which the present Jewish world conspiracy finds its expression.'²⁶ The international order created by the Treaty of Versailles was an instrument by which the Jews could annihilate the German people.²⁷

In Hitler's view, the Jews had thus largely succeeded in infiltrating, manipulating and dividing the German people. The Jews were responsible for the fact that the German people had already begun to turn away from the task that was decisive for their future – that of accumulating soil and working it.²⁸ The inner dividedness of Germany, the political conflict between the bourgeoisie and the workers, was also the work of the Jews.²⁹ In his speeches, Hitler frequently used the metaphor of a 'body of the people' (*Volkskörper*) penetrated by a foreign germ in order to describe the supposed dominant position of the Jews within the German 'Volk',³⁰ or that of a 'cancer' to be removed.³¹

This chain of reasoning led Hitler to the conclusion that Germany's problems could only be solved properly by eliminating the supposed dominance of the Jews. He developed specific concrete suggestions for achieving this that were entirely based upon the Party programme of the NSDAP.

These involved the elimination of the economic ascendancy of the Jews and – in the event that they should not submit to this – their physical removal: 'If he conducts himself well then he can stay, if not then out with him!'³² Hitler also prepared his listeners for the concept that this settlement of accounts with the Jewish mortal enemy would not be an easy task, but might involve a difficult and, if necessary, violent confrontation.³³

If one considers the function of anti-Semitism within Hitler's thinking, it becomes clear that it played the role of the central binding element in a hotchpotch of highly contradictory ideas. Hitler's public statements in the second half of the 1920s make it clear that his world view was inconceivable without his anti-Semitism. He promised his listeners that once the 'Jewish problem' was dealt with, he could solve Germany's basic dilemmas in the areas of foreign and domestic policy, as well as in the economic, social and cultural realms.

After 1930, when the NSDAP had become a party with a mass appeal, the anti-Semitic element began to recede markedly. Clearly Hitler was aware of the fact that the number of those voting for him had surpassed the number of radical anti-Semites in the German population.³⁴ A more precise analysis of his speeches reveals, however, that he had not in any way altered his basic ideology.

In the years 1930–1933, too, when the NSDAP attained unprecedented electoral success, the basic elements of Hitler's ideology – 'space' and 'race' – remained at the centre of his speeches.³⁵ On various different occasions, Hitler stressed that he continued to regard the 'Jewish race' as the main enemy of the German people. Thus in a speech in Munich made on 29 August 1930, a few days before the greatest electoral victory of the Nazis in the Reichstag elections, he stated with regard to the Jews, 'the head of another race sits upon the body of our people [*Volkskörper*]; the heart and the head of our people are no longer one and the same.'³⁶ In another speech a few weeks later, he portrayed the struggle against the Jews (without naming them) as a divinely appointed task:

When we as German try to protect ourselves against being poisoned by another people, then we are trying to return into the hands of the almighty Creator the very same essence that he has bestowed on us.³⁷

Thus, even if the anti-Semitic elements in Hitler's rhetoric were reduced after 1930, the 'Jewish Question' had clearly by no means given up its central position in his ideological world view. He and the leadership of the NSDAP

continued to proceed on the premise that the solution to this 'problem' would give them the key to shaping the decisive questions that concerned Germany's future. From their perspective, however, making Germany 'free from Jews' was also the crucial step towards gaining complete power in the land.

ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF THE FÜHRER

Deportation and Plans for Deportation (1940-1941)

Hitler's great interest in the further development of 'Jewish policy' is manifested particularly by his personal involvement in subsequent plans for deportation over the following months.

The initiative for the deportation to France of approximately 7,000 Jews from the two Gaue (i.e. Party districts), Baden and the Saar-Palatinate area, which took place on 22 and 23 October 1940, most probably lay with the two responsible Gauleiter, Josef Bürckel and Robert Wagner.¹ These transportations were specifically approved by Hitler, as is clear from a handwritten note by the Jewish expert of the foreign office, Franz Rademacher.²

Whilst these deportations can readily be interpreted as preparations for the planned expulsion of the European Jews to Madagascar, Hitler's statements in the following months show that he was turning his attention away from Madagascar as a potential destination for deportees and thinking more seriously once more of the Generalgouvernement Poland. The Madagascar plan was eventually dropped at the end of 1940: the length of the war with Great Britain had rendered the African island unreachable.

At the beginning of November 1940, Hitler made a personal decision concerning the distribution of 200,000 ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) who were to be accommodated in the territories of Germany before the end of the year, thanks to agreements with the Soviet Union and Rumania negotiated in September and October. In this connection, on the occasion of a conference with leading military personnel on 4 November, he made a decision about the

further deportation of Poles and Jews from the annexed Eastern Territories to the Generalgouvernement Poland: 'Gouvernement: plus 150-160 thousand Poles and Jews from the newly conquered territories.'³

On the very same day, discussions began on the agreement concerning a quota for those to be deported from the areas that had formerly been Poland and had been annexed by Germany, as we learn from Goebbels' diaries. According to this source, Hitler had 'laughed' when he created 'peace' between Gauleiter Erich Koch (from East Prussia) and Gauleiter Albert Forster (Danzig-West Prussia):

Everyone wants to throw their rubbish in to the Generalgouvernement Poland: Jews, the sick, the lazy, etc. And Frank resists. Not entirely without justification. He would like to make a model country out of Poland. That is going too far. He can not and should not do this. Poland should be a large work reservoir for us - this is what the Führer has decided. [...] And the Jews - we will throw them out of these areas later as well.⁴

At this same meeting or directly thereafter, deportation quotas were set for the two Gaue - and according to this commitment mass deportations of more than 47,000 Poles (Jews and non-Jews) from the annexed territories into the Generalgouvernement Poland followed in the next months.⁵

At the beginning of December, Lammers informed Baldur von Schirach (the Gauleiter of Vienna) that his wish, first expressed two months earlier, for the deportation (*Abschiebung*) of Vienna Jews had been approved by Hitler. This is further proof of Hitler's direct involvement in the plans for deportation:

As Reichsleiter Bormann has informed me, the Führer has decided on the basis of one of your reports that 60,000 Jews who are living in the Reichsgau of Vienna should be deported to the Generalgouvernement Poland as rapidly as possible, i.e. while the war is still going on, because of the housing shortage in Vienna.⁶

In anticipation of this deportation, beginning in February/March, 5,000 Jews from Vienna were deported to the Generalgouvernement Poland.⁷

After the Madagascar plan had become obsolete by autumn 1940 because of the continuation of the war in the West, and after a comprehensive deportation of the Jews from German-controlled areas into the Generalgouvernement Poland had for various reasons proved to be difficult, Hitler assigned the responsibility for deporting the Jews to the occupied Soviet areas to the Reich Security Main Office (Heydrich's office where he directed the various branches of the

security apparatus including the Gestapo, the Criminal Police, and the SD). This decision, which was made parallel to the preparations for 'Barbarossa' in late 1940 and early 1941, can be reconstructed on the basis of a series of documents.

On 21 January, the Gestapo's Jewish expert in Paris, Theodor Dannecker, noted the following in a paper prepared for Adolf Eichmann:

According to the will of the Führer, after the war the Jewish Question within the German-controlled or German-dominated parts of Europe should be pursued towards a definitive solution [*endgültige Lösung*]. The chief of the Security Police and the SD [Heydrich] has already received a mandate from the Führer - via the RF-SS [Himmler] or through the Reichsmarschall [Göring] to submit a proposal for a final solution project [*Endlösungsprojekt*]. On the basis of the wide experience of the departments of the Cds [Chief of the Security Police] and SD in the treatment of the Jews, and thanks to the lengthy preparations made in this domain, the most significant features of this project have been worked out. It is now in the hands of the Führer and the Reichsmarschall.

It is clear that the execution of this plan entails an enormous amount of work and that it can only be successful if the greatest care is taken in its preparation. This must be based upon a comprehensive deportation of the Jews as well as upon the planning of a settlement action prepared to the smallest detail to take place in a territory which has not yet been decided upon.⁸

In addition we learn from a statement to the Propaganda Ministry submitted on 20 March 1941 by Eichmann, who had been head of the department in the Reichssicherheitshauptamt responsible for 'evacuation matters' (*Räumungsangelegenheiten*) since December 1939, that:

Pg. Heydrich, who had been commissioned by the Führer with the final evacuation of Jews, had presented the Führer with a proposal 8 to 10 weeks earlier which had not been implemented for the sole reason that the General-gouvernement Poland was not at that point in a position to accept a single Jew or Pole from the old Reich.⁹

Taking these various pieces of information together, it becomes clear that, sometime before January 1941, Heydrich had received a commission from Hitler (via Himmler and Göring) to prepare a first draft for a 'final solution project' to be realised 'after the War' for the total deportation of all Jews into a territory yet to be decided. This plan was ready in January 1941, but because of the situation in the Generalgouvernement Poland it could not be

implemented. On 15 March the deportations to the Generalgouvernement Poland were halted because of the transport situation that had arisen in view of military preparations for the attack on Russia.¹⁰

Apparently completely unaffected by the halt to deportations which had been called two days earlier, those gathered at Hitler's luncheon table on 17 March conversed about further deportation programmes, as Goebbels described almost euphorically in his diary:

Vienna will soon be totally free of Jews. And now it is Berlin's turn. I discuss this with the Führer and with Dr Franck [sic]. He sets the Jews to work and they are also obedient. Later they must leave Europe entirely.¹¹

Frank, who had in the meantime returned once more to the Generalgouvernement Poland, also expressed himself on the issue of Hitler's further plans concerning the persecution of the Jews. Thus the minutes of a meeting of 25 March read as follows:

SS-Ogruf [Obergruppenführer, SS-General] Krüger announced the provisional stoppage of the resettlement of Poles and Jews in the Generalgouvernement Poland. Frank says that the Führer has told him that the Generalgouvernement Poland will be the first area made free of Jews.¹²

From these statements by Frank and Goebbels we thus can conclude two things: first, that the Generalgouvernement Poland was not the final destination for the intended 'evacuation of the Jews' because it was itself to be made 'free of Jews' and the Jews were to 'leave Europe altogether'; second, that the assurances given by Hitler to Goebbels and Frank to make their respective areas of domination 'free of Jews' were promises that could only be realised over the long term. What Hitler's timetable for a 'Germanisation' of the Generalgouvernement Poland really was can be deduced from another statement by Frank, made on the same day, 25 March 1941: 'In the course of the next 15 to 20 years, the Führer is decided to make this area [the Generalgouvernement Poland] a purely German land.' Shortly thereafter Frank moved on to planning the Warsaw Ghetto, which implied at least a medium-term existence for the Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw.¹³ Goebbels' diary entry for 22 March also shows that the Propaganda Minister had in the meantime understood that the 'evacuation' from Berlin could only be implemented over a longer period of time: 'The Jews can not be evacuated from Berlin since 30,000 work in the armaments industry there.'

And indeed, by March 1941 at the very latest, the Nazi leadership was clear about the true destination planned for the Jews who, long-term, were to be expelled from 'the whole of Europe': they were to be deported to the newly conquered Eastern Territories after the war against the Soviet Union for which Hitler had concretely begun preparations as early as the last months of 1940.¹⁴

More evidence for this intention is supplied by a memo by Heydrich from 26 March 1941 concerning a discussion with Göring:

In relation to the solution of the Jewish Question, I reported briefly to the Reichsmarschall and showed him my draft, which he accepted, with one alteration regarding Rosenberg's jurisdiction, and which he ordered me to resubmit.¹⁵

By 'Rosenberg's jurisdiction' was meant the latter's designated role as chief of an authority that was to administer the Eastern occupied territories – what was later to become the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories. This makes it clear that the planned 'solution to the Jewish Question' was to take place in the soon-to-be-occupied areas of the Soviet Union. The draft was resubmitted on 31 July 1941, when Göring entrusted Heydrich with the responsibility for 'preparations in organisational, technical and material respects for the complete solution to the Jewish Question in the German area of influence in Europe',¹⁶ taking into account the 'jurisdictions of other central authorities'.

What those involved in the preparation of 'Barbarossa' actually understood by the term 'final solution' within the Soviet Union after it was conquered is not clear. Before the start of 'Operation Barbarossa', the German attack upon the Soviet Union, no preparations had been made for a 'reservation' or for mass murder. Just as with the plan for a 'reservation' in Poland and with the Madagascar plan, in the case of a deportation to the Soviet Union the European Jews would have met with a situation in which the basic conditions for human existence were not present – particularly since German policy there consisted of the starvation of the Soviet population.¹⁷ Death on a massive scale would have been the inevitable consequence.

For the months before 'Barbarossa' there is a series of concrete indications that Hitler in particular had declared himself in favour of such a comprehensive deportation 'to the East'. Frank explained to Goebbels directly before the beginning of the attack on the Soviet Union that he was preparing for the banishment (*Abschiebung*) of the Jews, as reported in the Goebbels diaries:

Dr Franck [sic] talks about the Generalgouvernement Poland. There they are already looking forward to being able to banish the Jews. Jewry in Poland is

gradually decaying. A justified punishment for having incited the people and instigated war. The Führer has also prophesied this to the Jews.¹⁸

From statements which he made a few weeks later, it becomes clear why Frank was so certain: he informed his staff on 17 July 1941 that there would be no further ghetto construction in the Generalgouvernement Poland; according to an assurance that Hitler had given him on 19 June, in the foreseeable future the Jews would be removed from the Generalgouvernement Poland, which would then become a 'transit camp' (*Durchgangslager*).¹⁹

A further source is a complaint that the Rumanian Head of State, Ion Antonescu, made to Hitler on 16 August 1941. Antonescu complained that Bessarabian Jews who had been expelled from their homes by Rumanian troops and had been forced further to the east, to Ukraine, were now being pushed back from there by the Wehrmacht. This practice, according to Antonescu, was in contravention of 'the guidelines regarding the treatment of Eastern Jews given to him by the Führer in Munich'.²⁰ According to Antonescu, he had been told during his meeting with Hitler in Munich on 13 June 1941 that the Jews of Eastern Europe were to be deported to the conquered Soviet areas, and this is what his troops did right away, without waiting for the end of the war as Hitler had intended that they should.

This chapter shows, then, that Hitler gave his full approval to the plans of the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt* for the deportation of the Jews to the Soviet Union once it had been conquered.

11

THE JEWISH-BOLSHEVIK INTELLIGENTSIA ... MUST BE ELIMINATED

The Conduct of the War and Mass Shootings (Summer 1941)

In the course of the preparations for the racist war of extermination against the Soviet Union, it was Hitler who converted Nazi ideological thought into concrete instructions. On 3 March 1941 Hitler gave instructions to Alfred Jodl, the Chief of the Leadership Staff of the Wehrmacht, for a new version of a proposal presented to him by the High Command of the Wehrmacht (OKW) on the 'guidelines for special areas relating to instruction no. 21', which was to constitute the basis for the occupation administration in the Soviet territories that were to be conquered:

The forthcoming campaign is more than just an armed struggle; it will also lead to the conflict of two world views. In order to end this war, given the vastness of the territory, it will not suffice merely to defeat the enemy army. [...] The Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia, hitherto the oppressor of the people, must be eliminated.¹

A week before this, whilst reporting to Göring, the leader of the OKW Armaments Office, Georg Thomas, had learned of Hitler's view that 'the Bolshevik leaders had first to be dealt with quickly'.²

In accordance with Hitler's orders of 3 March, Jodl issued the 'directive concerning the special areas of Barbarossa' on 13 March.³ In this directive it says:

In the army's operational area, the Reichsführer SS is granted special responsibilities on behalf of the Führer for the preparation of the political administration;

these special responsibilities arise from the struggle that has ultimately to be acted out between two opposing political systems. In the context of these responsibilities, the Reichsführer SS will act independently and on his own responsibility.

What the military understood by these 'special responsibilities' becomes clear from Jodl's directive of 3 March for the compilation of the definitive version of the guidelines, in which he had spoken of the 'necessity for rendering all Bolshevik chieftains and commissars harmless without delay'.⁴ The tenor of Hitler's statement of 17 March to the highest ranks in the army was just as explicit:

The intelligentsia installed by Stalin must be destroyed. The leadership machine of the Russian empire must be defeated. In the Greater Russian area the use of the most brutal force is necessary.⁵

On 30 March, Hitler made a similar speech to a meeting of generals, as Chief of the General Staff of the Army, General Halder, records in abbreviated fashion:

Struggle of two world views against one another. Devastating judgement about Bolshevism – it is akin to social criminality. Communism immense danger for the future. We must move away from the standpoint of soldierly camaraderie. The Communist is not a comrade, neither before nor after. We are talking about a war of extermination [*Vernichtung*]. If we do not look at it this way then we might well beat the enemy, but in 30 years we will once again be faced with the Communist enemy. We are not waging war in order to conserve the enemy. [...] War against Russia: extermination of the Bolshevik Commissars and the Communist intelligentsia.⁶

The 'Directive on the Exercise of Jurisdiction and Particular Measures by the Troops' signed by Hitler on 13 May 1941 determined that criminal offences committed by members of the Wehrmacht against the civilian population in the Soviet areas to be conquered were no longer automatically to be punished by Wehrmacht courts, but would be dealt with by these only in special cases. In addition, military courts would no longer be responsible for 'criminal offences committed by enemy civilians' at all; these were to be punished by the troops directly as and when they occurred. The 'Guidelines for the Treatment of Political Commissars' signed by Keitel, the Chief of the OKW, on 6 June also corresponded closely to Hitler's instructions: they made provision for shooting this entire group of people. The 'Guidelines

for the Behaviour of the Troops in Russia' issued on 19 May also matched Hitler's conception of the conduct of the war in the East: they encouraged 'drastically ruthless and energetic measures against Bolshevik agitators, guerrillas, saboteurs and Jews'.

In accordance with the guidelines of 3 March that had been made more rigorous on Hitler's instruction, the Army High Command (OKH) and the Reichsführer SS were in agreement about deploying 'special units (*Sonderkommandos*) of the Security Police and the SD in the army's operational area' and that these were to carry out 'their tasks on their own responsibility', as contained in the order from the OKH dated 28 April 1941.⁷

In order to put this agreement into practice, Himmler decided on 21 May that Higher SS and Police Leaders should be deployed in the Eastern areas that were to be occupied, and that 'in order to carry out tasks assigned directly by me', SS and police troops and security police were to be subordinate to the Higher SS and Police Leaders or HSSPF (as regional representatives of Himmler who were able to use Himmler's authority to override other branches of the SS and police).⁸

The leaders of the special units received oral instructions from Heydrich shortly before their departure. Their exact formulation is not known, but their substance can be reconstructed on the basis of two written documents by Heydrich.⁹ Heydrich's note to the heads of the *Einsatzgruppen* (task forces consisting of SS and police personnel subordinate to the Reich Security Office or *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*) of 29 June referred to the order previously issued orally to foster 'self-cleansing efforts' (*Selbstreinigungsbemühungen*), i.e. pogroms of the Jewish population. These 'self-cleansing efforts by anti-Communist or anti-Jewish groups in the area to be occupied' were, according to Heydrich's instructions, 'not to be hindered'. Instead, they were to be 'initiated without betraying the identity of the initiators, to be intensified where necessary, and to be steered in the right direction'.¹⁰

In a further note dated 2 July, Heydrich informed the Higher SS and Police Leaders of 'instructions of the greatest importance issued by me to the special units and commando groups of Security Police and the SD'.¹¹ Here it was once more a question of 'self-cleansing efforts (*Selbstreinigungsversuche*) of anti-Communist or anti-Jewish circles in the areas to be occupied' which were 'not to be hindered', but to be encouraged, again 'without leaving a trace'.

Furthermore, in the same note from 2 July, Heydrich listed under the key word 'executions' those groups of persons who were to be shot by the *Einsatzgruppen*:

To be executed are all:

- functionaries of the Comintern (as well as all professional Communist politicians)
- the higher, middle and radical lower functionaries of the Party, the Central Committees, the district and regional committees
- people's commissars
- Jews in Party and state posts
- other radical elements (saboteurs, propagandists, snipers, assassins and agitators, etc.)

This order is certainly not to be interpreted as meaning that Heydrich intended to limit executions to those Jews who held 'Party and state posts'. Given the fact that in the course of war preparations the supposedly close connection between Jews and the Soviet system was repeatedly emphasised, it can be concluded that the instructions to execute 'other radical elements' were primarily directed against the Jewish population. Even the last word of this list, 'etc.', shows that the circle of 'other radical elements' was by no means clearly delineated.

The idea that efforts were made from the beginning to limit the set of Jewish victims specifically to 'all [...] Jews in Party and State posts' is also incompatible with the intention of allowing collaborators to initiate these 'self-cleansing operations', or pogroms and massacres. A pogrom once begun could not be confined to specific Jewish victims chosen according to their function.

The massacres by the four *Einsatzgruppen* (the task forces consisting of SS and police personnel subordinate to the Reich Security Office) commenced with the beginning of the war in the East. They are extensively documented, above all in the situational reports (*Ereignismeldungen*) for the USSR, put out by the Reich Security Office; these reports openly describe the murder of hundreds of thousands of people, more than 90 per cent of them Jews.¹²

From the reports and other sources it is evident that at first, in accordance with their orders, the *Einsatzgruppen* supported pogroms initiated by the local population and began at the same time to carry out mass executions of Jewish men.¹³ The way in which the units acted was not completely uniform, and much depended on the initiative of each of the unit commanders and on local circumstances. However, a closer investigation of the events demonstrates that a unified model for the activities of the units can in fact be reconstructed.

Thus pogroms were initiated mainly by *Einsatzgruppen* A and B during their advance through the Baltic States,¹⁴ in particular in Kovno,¹⁵ Vilna,¹⁶ Riga¹⁷ and in other Latvian and Lithuanian cities.¹⁸ The experience of these *Einsatzgruppen*

was that the pogroms could be sparked off partly by 'appropriate influence' on the auxiliary police who were made up of local men.¹⁹

Pogroms initiated by the Germans can be shown to have been the work of *Einsatzgruppe* C in various cities and localities in western Ukraine, in the former Polish districts that had been under Soviet occupation since 1939, particularly in Lvov²⁰ and Tarnopol.²¹ In many cases it is not possible to reconstruct whether the initiative for the more than fifty pogroms that can be proved in these areas in summer 1941 stemmed from the German side or from Ukrainian nationalists. Proper analysis here is made even more difficult because the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) was to a significant extent steered by the Germans.²²

However, at the end of July *Einsatzgruppe* C was forced to admit²³ the local population was no longer prepared to incite pogroms.²⁴ *Einsatzgruppe* A had also come to the conclusion in July that pogroms could only be brought about in the first days after occupation.²⁵

Mass executions of Jewish men can be proved for almost all *Einsatzgruppen* from the first weeks of the war onwards. This is true of three of the four units in *Einsatzgruppe* A,²⁶ and also of its subordinate group, the 'Tilsit special unit' (*Sonderkommando Tilsit*), which carried out large-scale massacres in the border area immediately after the war had begun. This is also true of all four units of *Einsatzgruppe* B,²⁸ for all four units of *Einsatzgruppe* C²⁹ and for *Einsatzgruppe* z.b.V., which was recruited from amongst the Security Police of the Generalgouvernement Poland and had been sent to support *Einsatzgruppe* C in the Eastern Polish regions.³⁰ Mass executions of Jewish men can also be proved for all five units of *Einsatzgruppe* D up to the beginning of August 1941,³¹ and also for various battalions of the German police.³²

The various special units and police units quickly began shooting not only particularly 'suspicious' people or 'Jews in Party and State posts', but all persons who belonged to a very vaguely defined Jewish 'intelligentsia' or elite. In the first weeks of the war, many units also shot Jewish men of military age and in some places all men in this age group.

The units were instructed to carry out this radical procedure by Himmler, Heydrich and other high-up SS commanders, who undertook frequent tours of inspection amongst their units during these critical weeks and months. The unit commanders thus obviously had a certain room for manoeuvre in which they were first left to their own initiative; when they did not live up to expectations, the higher level of command gave them guidance.

Himmler and Heydrich accordingly appeared in the German-Lithuanian border area at the end of June, where they were briefed on the mass shootings

of the Tilsit special unit, which they then approved 'in their entirety'.³³ Shortly afterwards Heydrich gave the 'commanders of the SPSD [Security Police and Security Service – the Nazi Party intelligence service] and the units of the State Police in the East permission' – after the model of the Tilsit special unit – 'to carry out cleansing operations in the newly occupied areas opposite their own sectors of the border for the purpose of relieving the *Einsatzgruppen* and *Einsatzkommandos*, and above all in order to secure for them the greatest possible freedom of movement'.³⁴

On 30 June Himmler and Heydrich came to Grodno in Lithuania and complained that the sections of unit EK 9 deployed there and in Lida had so far liquidated 'only 96 Jews'. The commander of *Einsatzgruppe* B at once gave the order 'to intensify activity here significantly'.³⁵ On 9 July Himmler and Heydrich appeared in Grodno again³⁶ and were able to satisfy themselves that the command of *Einsatzgruppe* B to extend the range of liquidations had by then been followed.

According to the testimony of Higher SS and Police Leader Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, during a discussion with officers of the SS and the police in Bialystok, Himmler said, 'all Jews are to be regarded as partisans, without exception'.³⁷ On the following day, Daluge, Chief of the uniformed civilian police force (*Ordnungspolizei*), who had also appeared in Bialystok, announced to members of the Police Regiment Mitte that 'Bolshevism would now finally be exterminated'.³⁸ Two days later, on 11 July, the commander of the Police Regiment Mitte in Bialystok ordered the shooting of all Jewish men between the ages of 17 and 45 who have been arrested for plunder.³⁹ The police made the 'conviction' of the Jewish 'plunderers' very easy for themselves: three days previously members of Police Battalion 322 had already searched the Jewish quarter and designated all confiscated goods as 'plunder'.⁴⁰ Finally, during the massacre carried out by Police Battalions 316 and 322 in the middle of July in Bialystok about 3,000 Jewish men were killed.⁴¹

From the very beginning this gradual extension of the murders, partly on the initiative of the unit leaders, partly on direct interventions by Himmler and senior SS officers, precisely corresponded to the open transmission of orders to the units. By using this procedure those responsible were supposed to grasp the essence of what was being demanded of them, and when necessary precise orders were added on site. In his meetings and instructions before the beginning of 'Barbarossa' Hitler had made certain of creating the appropriate climate for these orders to carry out murder. The murders were part of his conception of a war of racial extermination.

12

... SHOOT EVERYONE WHO EVEN LOOKS ODD

Extension of the Executions to Genocide (Summer and Autumn 1941)

After these murders had begun on a large scale, Hitler once again explicitly endorsed the brutal course that was being pursued. On 16 July 1941, at a conference with leading functionaries assigned to the Eastern Territories at which the ground rules for the future policy of occupation were being established, he said, 'The vast area must naturally be pacified as quickly as possible; this will best be achieved by shooting everyone who even looks odd.'¹

With the initiation of the mass murder of the Soviet civilian population in the summer of 1941, a stage had been reached by which these statements and similar ones by Hitler could no longer be understood as general threats of violence. The 'eliminator' language of the dictator must be seen in the context of the mass murder that was now under way and that was being carried out by special units set up 'by special order of the Führer'. When Hitler now spoke of the 'extermination' (*Vernichtung*) of people, his subordinates must have understood it as it was intended: as direct or indirect instructions for the radicalisation of the mass murder already begun.

In accordance with this, the special units soon went on to extend their killings to women and children. This extension will be elaborated upon somewhat at this point, since it permits us to draw conclusions about the manner in which the instructions were given and about their nature. The way here was led by two SS brigades commanded directly by Himmler with the aid of a special staff. On 19 and 22 July these brigades were put at the disposal of the Higher SS and Police Leaders for Russia Centre and Russia South, Erich von dem

Bach-Zelewski and Friedrich Jeckeln, Himmler's immediate subordinates in these areas.²

In the area behind the central section of the front, it was the SS Cavalry Brigade that led the policy of extermination into a new stage with massacres of hitherto unparalleled scope. This brigade carried out a first 'cleansing operation' in the Pripjet Marshes between 29 July and 23 August under the leadership of Bach-Zelewski, during which more than 25,000 Jews were shot.³ Shortly before these two 'actions', Himmler had visited Baranovichi where he had issued the following order: 'All Jews must be shot. Jewish women to be driven into the marshes.'⁴

This order by Himmler introduced the escalation of the murders in the area of HSSPF Russia Centre: the Cavalry Brigade was indeed at first supposed to confine the killings to Jewish men, but the large number of their victims and Himmler's clear signal that women also were in future not to be spared had a radicalising effect on the operations of all units operational in this area.

Most of all this affected the units in the area for which the *Einsatzgruppe* (EG) B, deployed by Bach-Zelewski, was responsible. It can be proved that *Einsatzkommando* (EK) 9 shot women and children in the first half of August in Vileyka.⁵ According to Alfred Filbert, the commander of EK 9, the order to shoot women and children had been given to him by Arthur Nebe, the commander of EG B.⁶

Otto Bradfisch, the commander of EK 8, also testified that in the first half of August he had received an order of the Führer's (*Führerbefehl*) from Nebe, which authorised the shooting of women and children⁷ and which he had confirmed personally by Himmler in Minsk in the middle of August.⁸ The earliest point at which the indiscriminate shooting of women and children can be documented in the case of EK 8 is September, but it was intensified from October onwards.⁹

According to its own records, Police Battalion 322 had shot sixty-four Jewish women in Minsk on 1 September,¹⁰ and on 25 September in the context of a 'demonstration exercise' (*Lehrübung*), the battalion performed the formal searching of a village before representatives of the Wehrmacht, police and SD. During this 'exercise', nineteen Jewish women were murdered.¹¹

It was only after this bloody demonstration that special units, the police, the civilian authorities, as well as local police, began indiscriminate massacres of men, women and children, thousands at a time, in Mogilev,¹² Bobruisk, Borissov, Vitebsk and Gomel.¹³ City by city, district by district, the entire Jewish population was systematically murdered, with the exception of a small number kept alive to serve as a workforce. EG B reported a total of 45,467 liquidations for their area by the end of October.¹⁴

The First SS Brigade, directly under the command of the HSSPF Russia South, Friedrich Jeckeln, moved on to the murder of Jewish women on the occasion of a 'cleansing action' at the end of July, on the explicit orders of Jeckeln.¹⁵ According to the Brigade's own report 800 people, 'Jews and Jewesses between the ages of 16 and 60', were shot.¹⁶ There followed further mass executions in which Jewish women were also shot.¹⁷ At the end of August, the brigade carried out a massacre in Kamenets-Podolsk which exceeded all previous 'actions'. According to the event report of 22 August, after speaking to the Quartermaster-General of the army,¹⁸ 'in three days 23,600 Jews', men, women and children, 'were shot by one unit sent by the Höherer SS-und Polizeiführer [HSSPF]'.¹⁹

After this point, Jeckeln continued the massacres, first in Berdichev²⁰ and in Zitimir,²¹ then with the murder of the Jews of Kiev in the gorge of Babi Yar,²² and then in Dnepropetrovsk.²³ By the end of October, he had murdered more than 100,000 people.²⁴

For the special units and police battalions that had been deployed in the south sector, and which had sometimes already been directly involved in the large 'actions' initiated by Jeckeln, these massacres represented the decisive impetus for a move to the comprehensive destruction of those Jewish populations.

From the beginning of August onwards, EK 4a murdered women in large numbers, and shortly afterwards murdered children too;²⁵ it extended these operations in the following weeks.²⁶ In September EK 5 murdered all the Jewish inhabitants of one town,²⁷ and according to information given by the unit commander, Erwin Schulz, he had been instructed to do this by Otto Rasch, the leader of EG C, who had himself received the order from Jeckeln.²⁸ EK 6 only began shooting Jewish women in October, which was in Krivoi Rog, after Himmler had been to visit it on 3 October.²⁹ Police Battalion 314 shot women and children as early as July,³⁰ Police Battalion 45 did the same from the end of July or early August onwards.³¹ Both units were part of the Police Regiment South.

The shooting of women and children in the area of EG D is documented for the first time for the period at the end of August. On about 29 August, in the region of Jampol, EK 12 shot several hundred women, men and children,³² and shortly thereafter, at least three and possibly all four of the commandos of EG D proceeded to murder systematically the entire Jewish population of different villages.³³ The decisive order for the transition to this new stage of mass murder came at the end of August or the beginning of September from Otto Ohlendorf, according to testimony after the war by the commander of EK 12, Gustav Nosske, and one of his subordinates, Max Drexel.³⁴

For the period between 30 September and 6 October there is documentary evidence that the Reichsführer SS made a tour of inspection in the Ukraine on which he visited Nikolayev and Cherson, where mass executions took place at that time or shortly thereafter.³⁵ And in the following months EG D continued this murderous process and reported whole areas 'free from Jews' (*judenfrei*).³⁶ Finally there is EG A: EK 3 (stationed in Lithuania) and EK Tilsit made the transition to shooting women and children at the end of July or at the beginning of August;³⁷ EK 2 probably did so during the month of August.³⁸

Taking all this together, we have the following picture: some units extended shooting to women and children as of the end of July 1941, but for others this began only in September or early October. Whilst for some units this extension to the murder of women and children was linked directly with murdering the entire Jewish population in certain districts, in the case of other units, the time lag between these two levels of radicalisation was several weeks. Those Jews who had survived the first wave of murders (those needed by the Germans as workforces, for example), and those who were enclosed in ghettos, in September and October 1941 became victims of the ghetto liquidation measures that extended through the winter of 1941-2 into the entire year of 1942.

In order to force through this decisive stage of the radicalisation process, the orders given at the beginning of the war had to be extended over the course of the summer. A reconstruction of the events leads to the conclusion that this was not done by means of a single written order sent to all units at the same time; repeated oral instructions must rather have come from the SS leadership to the unit leaders, who were then to take the initiative themselves and proceed more radically in their shooting programmes.

Important stages in this radicalisation process were Himmler's oral instruction of 30 July to drive 'Jewish women into the marshes' and his stay in Minsk on 15 August in which he alluded to the imminent shootings of women and children. From statements made by different unit commanders it is apparent that they were likewise encouraged by their superiors to shoot women and children in August and September (Filbert and Bradfish by Nebe, Schulz by Rasch, Nosske and Drexel by Ohlendorf). It is also significant here that the HSSPF Russia Centre and Russia South, who were immediate subordinates of Himmler's, took the decisive initiative: by deploying the SS Brigades as well as by implementing 'major actions' that brought together the EK, police battalions and other units, they increased the numbers of victims to hitherto unparalleled levels, killing women and children as well. In this way, the direct participation in such 'actions' of a large number of units in the centre and

south districts encouraged them to more radical steps. Repeatedly Himmler appeared at the places concerned either shortly before or shortly after the 'major actions' in order to strengthen the members of the SS and police in their murderous activities.

The extension of the shootings to women and children in the summer and autumn of 1941, which had initiated the murder of the entire Jewish civilian population in the occupied Soviet areas, was carried out by means of the 'indirect' method of giving orders. The SS leadership gave a general context for activity which the unit commanders had to fill in using their own initiative and intuition.

It seems in fact that it was Himmler, the point at which the various chains of command met, who took the decisive initiative in the extension of the murders of the Jewish civilian population in the occupied Soviet zones. He did so after a decisive meeting on 16 July, at which Hitler established the basic outline of the occupation policy and recommended 'shooting everyone who even looks odd'.³⁹ Himmler was not present at this summit meeting and was entrusted only with using the police to secure the newly conquered Eastern Territories, not with the 'pacification and consolidation of political matters' in these areas. This may have encouraged him to extend of his own accord the authority and jurisdiction he already had. This he did in two ways. First, he extended the mass shootings of Jews, whose victims had so far been Jewish men of military age, who were all indiscriminately suspected of being plunderers, communists or supporters of the partisans, expanding the range of victims to include the whole Jewish population. By extending what were at first terrorist murder campaigns to the level of genocide, he put into practice during the war itself a policy that the National Socialist regime had originally planned for the time after the war. According to the plans made by the regime,⁴⁰ the population of the Soviet Union was to be decimated, reduced by some 30 million people, and it was self-evident for them that the members of the Jewish minority were to be the first victims of this policy. What had originally been, in their terms, a utopian plan for the time after the end of the war was now turned into concrete measures by Himmler, since the war could now not be won within a few months, as had been planned. The mass murder of the Jews was in his eyes the first step towards the 'new order', in racial terms, in the conquered territories.

The second way in which Himmler expanded his own sphere of authority was to extend his jurisdiction as Reichskommissar (Reich Commissioner for the consolidation of the German Volk) to the Soviet Union, without first being given explicit authority for this by Hitler. It should be borne in mind that as Reichskommissar Himmler was responsible not only for the settlement

of German nationals but also, and especially, for the 'exclusion of damaging influences from [...] sectors of the population who were not truly part of the German Volk'. At the beginning of September, when the extension of the shootings to include women and children was fully under way, Hitler satisfied Himmler's wishes by declaring that the Occupied Eastern Territories now also fell under the jurisdiction of the Reichskommissar for the consolidation of the national character.⁴¹ By extending the mass shootings, Himmler had therefore succeeded in expanding his responsibilities in the areas of the police and the 'Consolidation of the Volk' such that he was now taking a leading role in the racial 'new ordering' of the occupied areas.

At a later point, in a speech to the Reichsleiter and Gauleiter on 6 October 1943, and in a speech to the Generals on 24 May 1944, Himmler was to use formulations that suggest that extending the murders to women and children was done on his initiative. He was to make it just as clear, however, that this decisive step was taken within the context of the policies authorised by Hitler. These speeches will be examined later.⁴²

What has already been established for the manner in which orders were given within the SS and the police apparatus will be true of Hitler's concrete instructions to Himmler: Hitler's instructions allowed him relatively wide scope for action. The Reichsführer SS was acting on the basis of general precepts and a general authority, on the basis in fact of a fundamental consensus. Much depended on his own initiative and on his own intuition, and he repeatedly made certain that his actions were in accord with Hitler's intentions.

The rabidly anti-Semitic tenor of Hitler's fundamental instructions for the war of racial destruction indicates his attitude. He did not only agree in principle with Himmler in the matter of the 'Jewish Question', he validated his actions with his own authority and was fully informed of the murders in the Eastern Territories.

The SS took no measures whatsoever to keep the mass murders in the East secret within the structures of power. The event reports from the USSR – the main source of our information on these mass murders – had a relatively wide circulation. For example, forty-five copies of event report no. 40 of 1 August 1941 were distributed; they were sent not only to numerous offices of the SS and the police but also to the Leadership Staff of the Wehrmacht. In a radio telegram to the *Einsatzgruppen* on 1 August, Gestapo chief Müller, who was responsible for the compilation of event reports, ordered that 'especially interesting visual material' should be sent to Berlin because 'the Führer is to be presented continuously with reports on the work of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the East from here'.⁴³ The distribution list of event report no. 128 of 3 November 1941,

of which there were fifty-five copies, included the Party Chancellery, which communicated between Hitler and the Party. A folder with the first six detailed activity and situation reports submitted by the *Einsatzgruppen* (July–October 1941) circulated in the Foreign Ministry and was initialled by no less than twenty-two civil servants.⁴⁴ It is therefore not possible to argue that the mass murders by the *Einsatzgruppen* were kept secret from other agencies by the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* and there is no question that they were available to Hitler. The grounds for the mass executions given by the *Einsatzgruppen* correspond precisely with the justifications offered by Hitler for the extermination of the 'Jewish–Bolshevik complex' before the beginning of the war, and once again they express the fundamental conformity of outlook on the 'Jewish Question' between Hitler and the SS leadership.

IT IS GOOD IF THE TERROR THAT WE ARE EXTERMINATING THE JEWS GOES BEFORE US

The Start of Deportations (Autumn 1941)

In the middle of September 1941 Hitler ordered the deportation of the Jews from the Greater German Reich into ghettos in Eastern Europe. He thereby set in motion the deportation plans which he had pursued at the beginning of 1941, without waiting for the original precondition – the military victory over the Red Army. Only a month earlier, in the middle of August, Hitler had spoken against ‘evacuations’ of Jews from Germany.¹

At the same point, the middle of August, he had, however, explained to the Minister for Propaganda that he had not given up his plans relating to this matter:

We were talking about the Jewish problem. The Führer is convinced that the prophecy he made in the Reichstag – that if the Jews succeeded in provoking another world war he would finish by destroying the Jews – is now being confirmed. It is coming true in these weeks and months with almost uncanny certainty. In the East the Jews have had to settle their account; in Germany they have partly settled and will have to pay even more in future.²

On 18 September 1941 Himmler informed Greiser, the Gauleiter in the Warthegau, of the following:

The Führer would like the Altreich and the Protectorate from the West to the East to be emptied and liberated of Jews as soon as possible. As a first stage, I am therefore trying – hopefully this year still – to transport the Jews of the Altreich

and those from the Protectorate into the Eastern Territories that have been newly absorbed into the Reich in the last two years; this is in order to push them further East in the coming spring.

I intend to place about 60,000 Jews from the Altreich and the Protectorate in the Litzmannstadt [Lodz] ghetto, which I understand has enough room to accommodate them, for the winter.³

In the following weeks Hitler repeatedly confirmed his determination to deport the Jews from Central Europe to the East. On 6 October he announced to his lunch guests as he described proposed penalties against the Czechs that all Jews from the Protectorate must be ‘removed’ (*entfernt*), not just sent to the Generalgouvernement Poland but rather ‘immediately sent further away, to the East’.⁴ According to Hitler, however, this was not possible at the moment, because of the shortage of transport capacity. At the same time as the ‘Protectorate Jews’, the Jews were also to ‘disappear’ (*verschwinden*) from Vienna and Berlin.

On 25 October Hitler made the following remark at table, after he had once again made mention of his ‘prophecy’ of 30 January 1939:

This criminal race has the two million dead from the World War on its conscience, now hundreds of thousands more. No one can say to me: we can’t send them into the morass! Who then cares about our people? It is good if the terror that we are exterminating the Jews goes before us.⁵

The deportations from Germany did in fact begin on 15 October 1941.⁶ Why did Hitler at this point take the decision to start on deportations that he had been planning since early 1941, even though the war was not yet won? Leading functionaries of the regime were demanding these measures. Amongst others, the Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, Rosenberg, had suggested deportations in September as a reaction to Stalin’s decision to deport the Volga Germans to the East.⁷ At this point, too, several Gauleiter were demanding that Jews be pushed out of their living areas in order to create housing for those affected by the bombing raids.⁸ For Hitler it seems that yet another motive played a role: by deporting the Central European Jews he wanted to send a warning to ‘world Jewry’ (*das Weltjudentum*) – in the sense of his ‘prophecy’ of 30 January 1939 – and thereby prevent the entry of the United States into the war. The leadership of the USA, in his opinion, was a puppet of ‘world Jewry’, a theme that was particularly conspicuous in German propaganda in the following few weeks.⁹

Hitler's motives become apparent from a memo written on 20 September by Werner Koeppen, the representative for the Eastern Ministry in Hitler's headquarters. Koeppen wrote that Ambassador Steengracht (representative of the Foreign Office in the headquarters of the Führer) had told him that Hitler was considering the question of postponing possible reprisals (*Pressalien*) against the German Jews 'for the eventuality of an American entry into the war'.¹⁰ One of the motives for the deportations of October 1941, which took place openly and were registered by the international press, was thus also the idea of using the Jews as hostages. This motive had also been involved in the projects of a 'Jewish reservation' in Poland and a police government on Madagascar.

These different motives for the implementation of the deportations appear secondary however, when one remembers that from the beginning of his political career Hitler had intended to get rid of the Jews within the German *Lebensraum* in one way or another and had pressed forward with plans for mass deportation from the very beginning of the war. With the conquest of the enormous Soviet area it seemed to him for the first time that a practical possibility was available for the realisation of these plans.

Hitler's decision in September to deport the Jews from Central Europe did not yet include the resolution immediately and systematically to murder them at their destinations in occupied Poland and the Soviet territory (especially Lodz, Riga and Minsk). Evidently Hitler initially clung to the idea of deporting these people further to the East once the expected military victory over the Soviet Union had been achieved.¹¹

On 24 September, after a meeting with Heydrich on the previous day, Goebbels wrote in his diary, 'we must evacuate the Jews from Berlin as soon as possible.'¹² He added that:

this will be possible as soon as we have cleared up the military situation in the East. In the end, they should all be transported [to the] camps set up [by the] Bolsheviks. These camps have been constructed by the Jews; what would be more apt now than to have them peopled by the Jews.

At a meeting in Prague two weeks later on 10 October, where Eichmann was also present, Heydrich said the following:¹³

There are at this time about 88,000 Jews in the Protektorat as a whole, 48,000 of whom are in Prague. [...] There have been difficulties because of the evacuations. It was intended to begin on or around 15 October, and to roll out the transports gradually until 15 November, up to the level of about 5,000 Jews - from Prague

alone. [...] Minsk and Riga are to receive 50,000. [...] In the coming weeks the 5,000 Jews are to be evacuated from Prague. SS-Brigadeführer Nebe and Rasch could take Jews into the camps for communist prisoners in the operational area.¹⁴ According to SS-Sturmbannführer Eichmann, this measure has already been initiated. [...] The Gypsies to be evacuated could be brought to Stahlecker in Riga, whose camp is operated along the lines of the one in Sachsenhausen. As the Führer wishes the Jews to be brought out of German territory by the end of the year if possible, all unsettled questions must be solved immediately.

In a first wave of deportations between 15 October and 5 November, 10,000 Jews from the Altreich, 5,000 each from the Protektorat and Vienna, and 5,000 Gypsies from the Austrian Burgenland, were deported to Lodz¹⁵ in twenty-four transports. Between 8 November 1941 and 6 February 1942, altogether thirty-four different transports went to Riga,¹⁶ Kovno¹⁷ and Minsk.¹⁸ Originally this wave of deportations was to have been stopped by the beginning of December, and was to encompass the deportation of 50,000 people.¹⁹ The deportations to Minsk, however, had to be broken off at the end of November due to problems of transportation. By then approximately 8,000 people had been deported into the Minsk ghetto. The transports to Riga were completed at the end of February, having fulfilled the planned quota of 25,000 people.²⁰

However, in autumn 1941 the RSHA's plans for deportations extended beyond Central Europe and were aimed at the whole territory under German domination. We can tell from a statement made by Heydrich that at the same time as or shortly after his decision taken in mid-September to deport the Jews of Central Europe, Hitler took the more far-reaching decision to make preparations for the deportation of all the Jews in territories under German rule. In a letter to the General Quartermaster of the Army of 6 November 1941, Heydrich defended his explicit assent to the attacks on seven synagogues in Paris that had been perpetrated by a group of French anti-Semites in the night of 2-3 November. The suggestion to carry out this attack, according to Heydrich, was:

accepted by me only at the point where the Jews were identified on the highest authority and most vehemently as being those responsible for setting Europe alight, and who must ultimately disappear from Europe.²¹

A further indication in favour of a decision to extend the deportations across the whole of occupied Europe that was taken in September 1941 is the activity of the 'Jewish expert' in the German Embassy in Paris, Carlheo Zeitschel.²²

Through the intervention of Abetz, the Ambassador in Paris, Zeitschel succeeded in securing Himmler's fundamental approval for the eastward deportation of the foreign Jews interned in France.²³ This was in mid-September 1941, that is at exactly the time Hitler had decided to start the deportations from Germany. (In his proposal Zeitschel had taken it for granted that the removal of this group represented only the first step in the deportation of all Jews under German domination to the Occupied Eastern Territories).²⁴ In autumn 1941, the German military administration in occupied France fell in line with Zeitschel's proposal of mid-September. As a reprisal for attacks by the French Resistance, it decided to deport a large number of Jews and communists, who had been arrested in mass raids in May and August 1941,²⁵ and send them 'to the East' to carry out forced labour.²⁶ From December 1941 onward, Jews and communists were singled out by name for these deportations. These 'hostage deportations', although initially put back by transportation problems, eventually started operation in March 1942.²⁷

There are a few other indicators that the deportation of all European Jews was being planned as early as autumn 1941. In a meeting with representatives of the Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories on 4 October, Heydrich indicated the possibility of companies claiming Jewish workers. This, however, 'would destroy the plan of a total evacuation of Jews from the occupied territories'.²⁸

Also the head of the Jewish desk of the Foreign Office, Franz Rademacher, still assumed at the end of October 1941 that the Serbian Jews who had survived the repressive measures of the Wehrmacht would be 'removed by ship into the transition camps in the East'.²⁹ This was to happen as soon as 'the technical feasibility within the general framework of the comprehensive solution to the Jewish Question' was established.

Was the deportation of Jews 'to the East' at this time already a metaphor for their planned murder in the extermination camps? The current state of research does not offer sufficient evidence for this conclusion.³⁰ Until early 1942, in fact, neither the Central European nor the French Jews were sent directly to extermination camps. Furthermore, these camps were not significantly expanded until early 1942 and early summer 1942. Until the contrary has been proven, one should thus take the statements of leading Nazis literally – that the intention behind the deportations and the planning of autumn 1941 was still to deport all European Jews to camps in the occupied Soviet Union, after victory had been achieved.

The RSHA's programme of deportations for German Jews, and their broader plans for the deportation of Jews throughout the area under German control, were secured by a number of administrative measures. On 1 September 1941

German Jews were required by police decree to wear the 'yellow star' with the word 'Jew' on it,³¹ after Hitler had given his express consent to a suggestion of this nature made by Goebbels a few days previously.³²

At the beginning of November 1941 the German Finance Ministry issued regulations concerning the acquisition of the wealth owned by 'Jews who are to be moved in the coming months to a city in the Eastern zone'.³³ This procedure was considerably simplified by the eleventh decree pertaining to the *Reichsbürgergesetz* (German citizenship law) passed on 25 November.³⁴ The effects of this were that the Jews deported to the East lost their German citizenship when they crossed the German border and everything they owned immediately became the possession of Germany.³⁵

Finally, on 23 October a decree of the RSHA in Himmler's name prohibited the emigration of all Jews from the whole area under German rule.³⁶ The decision to take this step was made by the RSHA in the middle of October. It was prompted by information from the Foreign Ministry to the effect that Spanish Jews living in France were intending to leave for Spanish Morocco. The RSHA opposed this move 'because of the measures that are to be taken after the end of the war towards a final solution of the Jewish Question'.³⁷ The decision to ban emigration was therefore taken at precisely the same time as the deportation of Jews from Germany began. It was a decisive precondition for the implementation of the plan, still current, which envisaged the total deportation of all Jews in areas under German domination into the Occupied Eastern Territories after the end of the war.

Immediately after issuing the ban on emigration, in November, the Foreign Ministry asked the governments of Slovakia, Croatia and Rumania if they had any objections to the deportation of their Jewish citizens residing in Germany. All three governments replied that they had no objection.³⁸

WE ARE EXPERIENCING THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PROPHECY

The Extension of Mass Murder in Autumn 1941

Parallel to the beginning of the deportations, the transfer of gas-killing technology into the Eastern European regions began from September and October 1941 onwards. This technology had been under development in the context of the 'euthanasia programme' since 1939.

The transfer was initiated after the programme of 'euthanasia' had been stopped in August 1941. The so-called 'euthanasia programme', which had been planned in 1939, had involved the murder of approximately 20 per cent of all inmates of psychiatric institutions in Germany. Altogether more than 70,000 people had been killed in the framework of the 'Operation T4' (*Aktion T4*) when it was brought to an end.¹ Only a few weeks later, the first preparations can be documented for the construction of gas chambers in Eastern Europe.

The decision to build the first extermination camp in Belzec was made in mid-October 1941.² The killing was to proceed using exhaust gases from a permanently installed motor. Construction started at the beginning of November, and the murder experts from 'Operation T4' were ordered to Belzec in December 1941.

Likewise in October 1941, the Chancellery of the Führer, which was responsible for 'Operation T4', began preparations for building gas chambers in Riga. This is clear from a document in which Erhard Wetzel, the specialist for racial questions in the Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories, offered Reichskommissar Heinrich Lohse, who was in charge of the former Baltic States and White Russia, 'gassing apparatus' that was to be put at his disposal by

the Chancellery of the Führer.³ Gas chambers were not in fact erected in Riga. Instead, so-called 'gas vans' were employed.

These gas vans were developed by the Criminal Police in autumn 1941.⁴ After a first attempt in which mentally ill patients were killed using engine exhaust gases in an asylum in Mogilew in September 1941,⁵ the RSHA took the decision that its *Einsatzgruppen* (or task forces) would use mobile gas chambers. The SK Lange (Lange Special Unit) had already used such vehicles in winter 1939/40 to murder asylum inmates in Poland. Now, however, instead of using carbon monoxide gas bottles, as previously, the exhaust of the vehicles was pumped directly into the passenger carriage.⁶ At the beginning of November 1941, the first 'test' of such a vehicle took place in Sachsenhausen. About thirty prisoners were killed by exhaust fumes.⁷ In the occupied Soviet territories, the gas vans were first used to kill people in November or early December. By the end of 1941 gas vans were in use by all four task forces.⁸

At around the same time, from October or November 1941 onwards, the gas vans were also deployed by the special unit SK Lange in the Warthegau to murder Jews. On 8 December the killing began in Chelmno, where gas vans were established permanently – a further variant of an extermination camp.⁹

While the mass murders using exhaust gases were being prepared or had already been committed in Belzec, the Warthegau and in the Occupied Eastern Territories, the Commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp took another course. In September or December 1941, 600 Soviet prisoners of war and 250 selected sick prisoners were murdered in the basement of Block 11 of Auschwitz by means of a high concentration of the extremely poisonous disinfectant Zyklon B. At a later point, in December 1941, a further 900 Soviet prisoners of war were murdered using poisonous gas.¹⁰

Writing in Cracow prison after the war, the former Commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höß, described how the question of the most suitable poison gas to be employed had been discussed on the occasion of a visit by Eichmann.¹¹ The date of this visit is still not certain – some of his comments indicate the autumn of 1941, others point to a later date, perhaps spring 1942. Höß further states that during the time that he was not in Auschwitz himself, his deputy used Zyklon B on his own initiative to kill Soviet prisoners of war.¹²

In November 1941, Topf & Söhne of Erfurt, a company specialising in the construction of crematoria, received the assignment to build an enormous thirty-two-chamber furnace in Mogilev, White Russia. This installation was needed – so the company was told – to dispose of corpses hygienically because of the great danger of epidemics in the East. As the construction was not completed, the ovens which were no longer needed went to Auschwitz.¹³

It is possible that this crematorium installation was in fact planned as part of an extermination camp in Mogilev, whose function was taken over by Auschwitz and the Polish extermination camps in the following months.¹⁴

Thus, at the end of 1941, preparations were under way for the construction of extermination camps not only in Auschwitz, but also in Riga, in the area of Lodz (Chelmno), in Belzec and presumably also in Mogilev, that is, in the area of Minsk, thus in the proximity of all the ghettos that had been chosen as the destinations for the first to third waves of deportations from the Greater German Reich.¹⁵ The parallels in timing between the beginning of the deportations and the preparation and installation of the murder machinery reflect the plan of the Nazi regime to extend the strategy of 'Jew-free' (*judenfrei*) areas – already implemented in the Soviet Union – to the Polish territories. In certain regions of central importance for the arrangements for the displacement of people in the racist 'New Order', the elimination of those elements of the local Jewish population who were 'unfit for work' was the minimum requirement. In the preceding months, attempts on all sides to develop or improve on technologies of mass killing using gas are clear indications of comprehensive preparations to extend the scale of mass murder in the near future. (In the case of Auschwitz these preparations were concerned with Soviet POWs and the sick, and not yet primarily with Jewish prisoners.)¹⁶ However, at this time plans for the systematic mass murder of the Jewish population only extended to certain regions. At the same time, though, the intention was still to deport the remaining Jews to the occupied Soviet territories after the war.

In autumn 1941 regional murders of some parts of the Jewish population were not only carried out in the Warthegau and the district of Lublin, where deportation trains from Germany were expected, but also in the district of Galicia, part of the Generalgouvernement Poland and in Serbia. By the end of 1941 these four regions give a picture as follows. In the Warthegau, after Hitler's decision of mid-September 1941 to begin with the deportations of Jews from the Greater German Reich, the first deportation trains began to arrive. Twenty thousand Jews and 5,000 Gypsies were enclosed in the ghetto at Lodz, which was already filled to over capacity. At about the same time, probably still in October 1941, the mass murder of local Jews began in the area of Konin in the southern Warthegau.¹⁷ In an 'action' lasting several days at the end of November, 700 Jews were killed in gas vans at the camp of Bornhagen (Kozminek) in the area of Kalisch.¹⁸ This was carried out by the SK Lange, which had already murdered thousands of mental asylum inmates in gas vans in the annexed Polish regions in 1939–40 and in June–July 1941.¹⁹ In October 1941, Lange's unit was called to Novgorod by Himmler in order to kill the patients of mental

asylums there.²⁰ Lange's driver testified that he had been told to chauffeur Lange around the Warthegau in the autumn of 1941 in order to find a suitable place for a stationary murder installation. After a suitable building had been found in Chelmno, Lange's unit started killing Jews there, using gas vans, on 8 December. At first, it was mainly local Jews who had been deported from various areas of the Warthegau to Chelmno that were killed. From January 1942 onward, however, it was predominantly Polish Jews from the ghetto of Lodz who were put to death at Chelmno.²¹

A letter to Himmler from Greiser, Governor of the Warthegau, dated 1 May 1942, gives important evidence for the reconstruction of the decision to carry out the mass murder of Jews in the Warthegau.²² In this letter Greiser writes that the 'special treatment of around 100,000 Jews in my district [which was] authorised by you in agreement with the Head of the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt* SS Oberguppenführer Heydrich' could be 'completed in the next 2–3 months'. If Himmler and Heydrich had to 'authorise' this mass murder, then it is to be assumed that this suggestion was made by Greiser himself.²³ The murder of the 100,000 people (Polish Jews 'unfit for work') was hence presumably the 'quid pro quo' that Greiser had demanded of Himmler to take approximately 25,000 Jews and Gypsies (instead of the 60,000 originally proposed by Himmler) into the ghetto of Lodz in October and November 1941.

From spring 1941, the authorities in the Generalgouvernement Poland had been working under the assumption that the Jews in their area would be deported to the conquered Soviet areas in the near future. In a private conversation of 13 October 1941, Frank renewed his suggestion to Rosenberg to deport 'the Jewish population of the Generalgouvernement Poland into the Occupied Eastern Territories'. Rosenberg responded that there was no possibility of the 'implementation of such resettlement plans' at the moment. For the future, however, Rosenberg expressed his willingness to 'promote Jewish emigration to the East, especially seeing that there is the intention to send all social elements of the Reich to the thinly inhabited Eastern Territories'.²⁴ From this point onward, the authorities in the Generalgouvernement Poland began to think about a 'final solution' to the 'Jewish Question' on its own territory.

A series of meetings of the leadership of the Generalgouvernement Poland was of great consequence for the general radicalisation of policy with respect to the Jews in this area. These were arranged in the district capitals by Frank, immediately following his return from Germany (14–16 October in Warsaw, 17 October in Globocnik's district of Lublin, 18 October in Radom, 20 October in Cracow, and for the first time in Lvov, 21 October). At the meeting in Lublin on 17 October, the 'Third Regulation Concerning Restrictions on

the Right to Reside in the Generalgouvernement Poland' was discussed. This regulation introduced the death penalty for leaving the ghetto and was issued only a few days later.²⁵ On 20 October, at the government meeting in Cracow, Governor Wächter indicated 'that an ultimately radical solution to the "Jewish Question" is unavoidable, and that no allowances of any kind – such as special exceptions for craftsmen – could be taken into consideration'.²⁶ At the meeting on 21 October in Lvov, Eberhard Westerkamp, the Head of the Department for the Interior in the Generalgouvernement Poland, announced that 'the isolation of the Jews from the rest of the population' should be enforced 'as soon and as thoroughly as possible'. On the other hand, he pointed out that 'the government order has prohibited the establishment of new ghettos, since there was hope that the Jews would be deported from the Generalgouvernement Poland in the near future', even though Rosenberg had unambiguously shattered this 'hope' a few days previously.²⁷

While the treatment of the 'Jewish Question' at these meetings indicated that the leadership of the Generalgouvernement Poland was pursuing a unified anti-Jewish policy throughout the region under its control, two districts took the lead in the implementation of the 'final solution'.

An important factor in the preparations for the 'final solution' in the Generalgouvernement Poland was the fact that Galicia was absorbed into its territory on 1 August: this was an area in which mass executions of Jews had taken place on a large scale since the beginning of the war against the Soviet Union and were continuing. The special commando unit EG z.b.V. (which had been deployed in this area and became the office of the Commander of the Security Police in the district of Galicia once Galicia had joined the Generalgouvernement Poland) focussed its operations first against a vaguely defined Jewish elite.²⁸ From the beginning of October, however, the Security Police began to kill members of the Jewish population indiscriminately in Galicia as well. On 6 October in Nadvorna, about 2,000 men, women and children were murdered by members of the Stanislaw outpost of the Commander of the Security Police in Galicia.²⁹ According to a statement made by Hans Krüger, the Chief of the Security Police in Stanislaw, this 'action' had been planned down to the last detail at a meeting with the Commander of the Security Police in Lemberg.³⁰ From the beginning of October, massacres of this type were carried out almost every week. One that deserves special notice was the so-called 'Blood Sunday of Stanislaw', 12 October 1941, when between 10,000–12,000 Jews were murdered.³¹ The Security Police in Galicia were thus following the same pattern of radicalisation as the units in the occupied Eastern areas, independently of the political subordination of the district. These mass execu-

tions necessarily radicalised the anti-Jewish policy throughout the Generalgouvernement Poland.

Concrete preparations for the mass murder of Jews in the Generalgouvernement Poland had also been under way since October in the district of Lublin that bordered on Galicia. This was the territory which had been planned for a 'Jewish reservation' in 1939 and which in spring 1942 was to serve as a receiving area for the third wave of deportations from Germany, as well as for deportations from Slovakia.

The SS and Police Commander of the district of Lublin, Odilo Globocnik, played a key role in the murder of Jews in this district. On 13 October, Globocnik met Himmler³² to speak to him about the proposal that he had made two weeks earlier to limit the 'influence of the Jews' against whom it was necessary to take steps 'of a security policy nature'.³³ It was presumably at this meeting that Globocnik received the assignment to build the Belzec extermination camp, since at the beginning of November, two to three weeks after this meeting and after the 'Jewish Question' had been discussed by the leadership of the Generalgouvernement Poland at several meetings, work began on the construction of Belzec, which was a relatively small group of barracks.³⁴ By the end of the year, the delegated euthanasia personnel of the 'T4 Organisation' had arrived in Lublin.³⁵

The killing capacity of Belzec was still relatively limited at this point (it was to be considerably expanded early the following year), and the construction of the remaining extermination camps in the Generalgouvernement Poland did not begin until early 1942. These facts indicate that by autumn 1941 Globocnik had not, as yet, received the order to prepare for the killing of all Jews in the Generalgouvernement Poland and that his assignment only encompassed the district of Lublin, and possibly also the district of Galicia.³⁶

Alongside the events in the Generalgouvernement Poland and the Warthegau a further sequence of regional mass murders began in October 1941, namely the systematic murder of the Jewish men in Serbia. From the beginning of July 1941 onwards the German military administration had hostages, communists and Jews shot almost daily to 'avenge' acts of resistance.³⁷ In August, arrests were extended to all Jewish men. As was already the case in the Soviet Union, the 'avenging measures' in Serbia were thus directed against the image of the enemy as a 'Jewish Bolshevik'. Despite the shootings, the Serbian resistance to the occupying power continued to grow. After twenty-two German soldiers were killed in an ambush, the General in command in Serbia, Hans-Joachim Böhm, ordered on 4 October 'the immediate shooting of 100 Serbian prisoners for each German soldier killed', as 'a reprisal and an atonement'.³⁸

Those to be executed were prisoners of the concentration camps in Sabac and Belgrade, 'principally Jews and communists'.³⁹ About 2,000 Jews and 200 Gypsies from these concentration camps were killed between 9 and 13 October.⁴⁰ Böhme's policy of directing his 'avenging measures' against Jews in the first instance had influential support: in a letter of 16 September Martin Luther, the Head of the German Department of the Foreign Office, had directed the representative of the Foreign Office in Belgrade to treat all imprisoned Jewish men as hostages,⁴¹ and on 13 October 1941 Eichmann had recommended that the entire group of persons in question should be shot.⁴²

On 10 October, Böhme issued the general command 'to shoot 100 prisoners or hostages for every German soldier or ethnic German (men, women or children) killed or murdered', and to shoot '50 prisoners or hostages for every wounded German soldier or ethnic German'. To be arrested as hostages 'at once' were 'all Communists, all male inhabitants suspected of being Communists, all Jews, a certain number of nationalist and democratically minded inhabitants'.⁴³

In accordance with this scheme, a further 2,200 men were shot a few days later, Jews and Gypsies once more among them.⁴⁴ In the two weeks following the order of 10 October, Wehrmacht units shot more than 9,000 Jews, Gypsies and other civilians.⁴⁵ By the beginning of November, 8,000 Jewish men had been executed by the firing squads.⁴⁶ The families of those murdered were interned in concentration camps during the winter and murdered the following spring, in gas vans.⁴⁷

Despite this rapid increase in mass murders, it should be observed that in autumn 1941, the mass murders and the preparations for wide-ranging killing campaigns were restricted to the Jewish population in the newly conquered former Soviet districts, to the Warthegau, now annexed, to the districts of Lublin and Galicia in the Generalgouvernement Poland and to Serbia.

After a total of 5,000 people from five transport trains arriving from Germany had been shot in November 1941 in Kovno on the instructions of the local offices of the security police,⁴⁸ Himmler ordered Heydrich by telephone on 30 November not to shoot 1,000 Berlin Jews who were already on a transport destined for Riga.⁴⁹ This order arrived too late, however, and the Berlin Jews had already been murdered. The fact that Himmler reprimanded Jeckeln, who was the HSSPF in charge and responsible for the shootings, and instructed him in future to keep to the 'guidelines' of the RSHA for the treatment of the Jews deported from Central Europe,⁵⁰ clearly shows that Jeckeln had acted on his own authority. The shooting of Jews from the area of the Greater German Reich was not authorised at this point. It is important to remember

that in September 1941 Hitler had spoken of reserving reprisals against Central European Jews for the event that the USA entered the war.⁵¹

Whilst these regional mass murders were being perpetrated or prepared, in autumn 1941 there was an increasing number of statements being made by leading representatives of the regime that openly addressed the question of the 'annihilation' (*Vernichtung*) of the Jews that was to come. In a leading article for the journal *Das Reich* of 16 November 1941, Goebbels returned to the subject of Hitler's 'prophecy' of 30 January 1939 under the title 'The Jews are to Blame' (*Die Juden sind schuld*):

We are now experiencing the fulfilment of this prophecy, and Jewry is suffering a fate that, although hard, is still more than deserved. Here compassion or regret is completely amiss.

When he said 'world Jewry is now [undergoing] a gradual process of extermination', with this formulation Goebbels made clear the fate which was awaiting the Jews who had been being deported from German cities over the past few weeks. Two days later, Rosenberg spoke at a press conference of the Ministry of the Eastern Territories of what was to come – the 'eradication' (*Ausmerzung*) of the Jews of Europe:

There are still about six million Jews in the East and this question can only be solved through a biological eradication of all of European Jewry. The Jewish Question will only be solved for Germany when the last Jew has left German territory, and for Europe when there is no longer a Jew left standing on the European continent as far as the Urals. [...] And for this it is necessary to push them beyond the Urals, or otherwise eradicate them.⁵²

Whilst it is true that extending the murders to particular areas outside the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1941 was done in the context of the deportation programmes ordered by Hitler, no one has yet been able to find a direct order for the execution of these new mass murders or for the use of poison gas. However, it can be indirectly demonstrated that Hitler gave the authorisation for these new mass murders, by looking at the sequence of events.

Looking at the events of autumn 1941 as a whole, it becomes evident that institutions with regional responsibility were each, in a systematic manner, attempting to kill a substantial proportion of the Jewish population in their areas with the help of a particular method of murder. In the Warthegau the initiative lay with Gauleiter Greiser, who had been authorised by Himmler to murder

100,000 persons and did so with the help of gas vans. The preparations for the murder of Jews 'incapable of work' in the districts of Galicia and Lublin lay in the hands of Globocnik, the SS and Police Commandant of Lublin. In Serbia it was first the Wehrmacht that carried out mass executions of Jewish men and later the initiative passed to the Security Police, who killed the remainder of the Jewish population using gas vans. In every case, what was being carried out was a planned programme of annihilation. These regional annihilation programmes cannot be seen in isolation as independently running campaigns that had been started on the initiative of the regional authorities. They were instead components of a supra-regional policy that was being guided centrally.

As has been pointed out several times, the mass murders in the Warthegau and the district of Lublin were carried out in the context of a comprehensive deportation programme that initially affected only Germany, but whose extension to the whole of Europe had already been anticipated. The regional murder campaigns were designed to create 'room' for the first waves of deportees in the regions. Greiser and Globocnik were therefore not acting autonomously but had first to seek the agreement of Himmler before they could proceed with the mass murders in Chelmno and Belzec. As we have seen, the extension of these murders to the districts of Galicia and Lublin was a process that actively involved the civil administration of the Generalgouvernement Poland. The policy of extermination in Serbia was not a unique or isolated development but corresponded to German policy in the occupied Soviet areas, put back a little chronologically. Wehrmacht commander Böhme began with the execution of Jewish men only when the relevant positive instructions from the RSHA and the Foreign Ministry had been received. The mass executions in Galicia were again at first a component of the policy of annihilation in the occupied Soviet areas; later, with the deportations to Belzec, the same methods of murder were used here as had been used in the neighbouring district of Lublin.

An important feature common to all four regions (Warthegau, Lublin, Galicia and Serbia) is the use of gas to murder people. This method of murder fitted into a higher-level policy that can also be demonstrated to have operated in winter 1941-42 in Auschwitz (Zyklon B) and in the occupied Soviet areas (gas vans).

There was not only a close correlation between the deportations, the transfer of gas technology and the beginnings of the murders in the regions; the execution of these complex operations involved a whole series of organisations outside the SS and the police, such as the Reichsstatthalter in the Warthegau, the civil administration of the Generalgouvernement Poland, the Foreign Ministry, the Wehrmacht and the Chancellery of the Führer. An operation of this mag-

nitude could only be carried out in the Third Reich if it was covered by the authority of the Führer himself: he alone, as Head of Government, leader of the Nazi Party and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces had the authority to give instructions to all the offices involved. Whether we should conceive of such authorisation as a single instruction, as a series of orders or as the general empowerment of one of his subordinates (Himmler, for example), and whether the initiative for the policy came from him in the first instance or from someone else – these questions cannot be settled. This does not, however, absolve Hitler from responsibility for the extension of the mass murders, as is emphasised by the following events.

THE WORLD WAR IS HERE, THE EXTERMINATION OF THE JEWS MUST BE THE NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE

The Radicalisation of Anti-Jewish Policy in December 1941

With the declaration of war against the USA on 11 December 1941, the concept of taking the West and Central European Jews 'hostage' became obsolete. At this point the 'final solution' – the systematic murder of all European Jews – was introduced and Hitler's central role in this last stage of escalation can once again be demonstrated.

On 12 December, one day after declaring war on the USA, Hitler gave a speech to the Party's Gauleiter and Reichleiter. Referring once more to his 'prophecy' of 30 January 1939, he announced the 'extermination' (*Vernichtung*) of the Jews under German domination, as Goebbels' diaries show:

As far as the Jewish Question is concerned, the Führer is determined to make a clean sweep. He prophesied to the Jews that if they once again brought about a world war they would experience their own extermination. This was not just an empty phrase. The World War is here, the extermination of the Jews must be the necessary consequence. This question must be seen without sentimentality. We are not here in order to show sympathy with the Jews, we must sympathise with our own German people. If the German people has now once again sacrificed as many as 160,000 lives in the Eastern campaign, then the authors of this bloody conflict must pay with their lives.¹

Rosenberg, the German Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, reported in his diary that on 14 December he showed Hitler the manuscript for an address

he was planning to give in Berlin. Rosenberg, who in a press conference of 18 November had openly spoken of a 'biological eradication (*Ausmerzung*) of the entirety of Jewry',² was now 'after the decision' (i.e. after the declaration of war on the United States) uncertain as to whether his planned 'remarks about Jews of New York did not perhaps [...] have to be somewhat altered'. He wrote:

I took the view that I should not speak about the extirpation [*Ausrottung*] of the Jews. The Führer agreed with this attitude and said they had saddled us with the war and they had brought about the destruction; no wonder that they are the first to feel the consequences.³

Rosenberg's uncertainty was therefore related to representation of the 'extirpation' in propaganda and not to the fact itself, about which he and Hitler were in agreement.

On 18 December, Himmler noted the following key words in his appointments diary regarding a conversation with Hitler: 'Jewish Question – to be extirpated [*auszuwotten*] as partisans'.⁴ It is evident from this note that Hitler was expressly confirming to Himmler that he should continue and intensify the mass murder of the Soviet Jews, which by then had cost several hundreds of thousands of lives, using the same pretext as before.⁵ This memo is thus significant proof of the direct and fundamental participation of Hitler in the decision-making process concerning the mass murder of the Jews.

The deportations that resumed on a large scale in the spring of 1942, after the Wannsee Conference of 20 January, were preceded in January and February 1942 by a series of public declarations by Hitler in which he unambiguously returned to his 'prophecy' of January 1939, according to which the Jews of Europe would be exterminated if there was a new world war. Both the recent entry of the USA into the war (whereby the war had been extended into a world war), and the fact that in his statements Hitler continually assigned the date of 1 September 1939 to his prophecy, underlined his threat in a particular manner.

Accordingly in his New Year address, Hitler said, 'the Jew will not extirpate the peoples of Europe, he will be the victim of his own attack'.⁶ In his address in the Sportpalast (the infamous assembly hall in Berlin where Hitler made many speeches) to commemorate 30 January, Hitler exclaimed, 'we are clear that the war can only end either if the Aryan peoples are extirpated or if Jewry disappears from Europe'.⁷ In a statement read on 24 February 1942 in the Munich Hofbräuhaus, on the twenty-second anniversary of the founding of the Nazi Party, Hitler once again had the statement made (he was not

present) that, 'my prophecy will find its fulfilment in that through this war it will not be that Aryan mankind will be exterminated, but that the Jew will be extirpated'.⁸ Hitler expressed himself similarly in a smaller circle, among members of his entourage and private guests: 'The Jew must get out of Europe! It would be best if they went to Russia! I have no sympathy with the Jews. They will always remain an element which stir up the peoples against one another.'⁹ And in February 1942:

The Jew will be identified! The same battle that Pasteur and Koch had to fight must be led by us today. Innumerable sicknesses have their origin in one bacillus: the Jew! Japan would also have got it had it remained open any longer to the Jew. We will get well when we eliminate the Jews.¹⁰

On 14 February he said to Goebbels that he was determined:

to be quite ruthless to clear out the Jews in Europe. There was no place here for an access of sentimentality. The Jews have fully deserved the catastrophe that they are facing today. They will also experience their own annihilation with the annihilation of our enemies. We must accelerate this process with cold ruthlessness, and in doing so we shall be rendering an inestimable service to suffering humanity that has been tortured by Jewry for thousands of years.¹¹

In my view, the statements made by Hitler between December 1941 and February 1942 are not the expression of a unique 'basic decision' on the part of the dictator to destroy the European Jews now that the USA had entered the war. Other leading representatives of the regime had used similar formulations before December 1941 to describe the goal of 'annihilating' and 'extirpating' the Jews. But Hitler's statements are evidently an important impetus for radicalising the whole of 'Jewish policy' after the United States' entry into the war. To match the radical rhetoric, thoughts of postponing the 'final solution' to the 'Jewish Question' (in the form of a gigantic deportation programme) until after the end of the war were now receding, and instead possibilities were being sought for extending the murders during the war itself.

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AFTER APPROPRIATE PRIOR APPROVAL BY THE FÜHRER

The Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942

The Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942 served Heydrich's intention to present the mass murders in the various occupied areas as part of a general plan – ordered by Hitler and directed by the RSHA – for the 'solution to the European Jewish Question'. This presentation was to take place in the presence of a number of high-ranking functionaries of the Party and the SS, as well as leading ministerial officials, which allowed Heydrich to ensure that they, and especially the ministerial bureaucracy, would share both knowledge of and responsibility for this policy.

The central passage of Heydrich's address concerning the general aims of the future 'Jewish Policy' is as follows:

After appropriate prior approval by the Führer, emigration as a possible solution has been superseded by a policy of evacuating of the Jews to the East. Although these actions [the deportations that had already been begun] are to be regarded merely as possible alternatives, nonetheless practical experience is already being accumulated in this area that will be of great importance for the impending final solution of the Jewish Question.¹

First and foremost, therefore, Heydrich was making it clear that the new 'possible solution' had been explicitly authorised by Hitler. On a more detailed level, he was distinguishing precisely between two chronological stages: the 'impending final solution' and the provisional measures intended for

the near future, or 'possible interim solutions' (*Ausweichmöglichkeiten*). In the impending 'final solution', according to Heydrich, a total of 11 million Jews would be involved, a figure which was broken down by country in a statistical addendum to the transcript. This list not only includes Jews living in areas under German control, but also those of Great Britain, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain and Turkey. Included in the 700,000 Jews for unoccupied France are those of the North African colonies. Heydrich thus clearly distinguished the programme of deportations that had already been set into motion from a far more comprehensive plan, whose execution he said was 'dependent on military developments', and could therefore only be realised fully after a German victory. According to the transcript, Heydrich made the following remarks concerning the 'final solution' that he envisaged:

As part of the development of the final solution, the Jews are now to be put to work in a suitable manner under the appropriate leadership. Organised into large work-gangs and segregated according to sex, those Jews fit for work will be led into these areas as road-builders, in the course of which, no doubt, a large number will be lost by natural wastage.

The remainder who will inevitably survive, who will certainly be those who have the greatest powers of endurance, he adds, will have to be dealt with accordingly in order to prevent their becoming 'the seed-bed of a new Jewish regeneration'. Initially the Jews were to be taken to 'transit ghettos', from which they were to be 'transported further toward the East'.

Heydrich thus developed the conception of a gigantic deportation programme which would only be fully realisable in the post-war period. The Jews who were to be deported 'to the East' were to be worked to death through forced labour or, if they should survive these tribulations, they would be murdered. The fate of those 'unfit for work', children and mothers in particular, was not further elucidated by Heydrich. In the context of his speech as whole, however, it is clear that these too were to be killed. For as Heydrich said, he wanted to prevent the survival of a 'germ cell of a new Jewish regeneration' at all costs.

Heydrich went on to say that 'in the process of carrying out the final solution', the whole area under German rule would be 'combed through' from the west to the east; in the area of Germany, including the Protektorat, these measures would have to have been completed already, by way of 'anticipation'. Here once more the distinction is being made between the 'final solution'

realisable only in the long term, and the smaller, 'anticipatory' steps already under way. Jews over the age of sixty-five, Heydrich goes on to say, should be removed to an old-people's ghetto (*Altersghetto*) in Theresienstadt. This special regulation for the elderly was designed to lend the idea of a labour programme in the East a degree of added plausibility.

Heydrich's exposition indicates that the RSHA was at this time still proceeding according to the plan, followed since the beginning of 1941, of implementing the 'final solution' after the end of the war in the occupied Eastern areas. Heydrich also made clear what was understood by the phrase 'final solution': the Jewish people were to be annihilated through a combination of forced labour and mass murder. The fact that it was Jewish forced labour that gained importance at the turn of 1941-2 speaks in favour of taking Heydrich's remarks literally.² On the other hand, there is no evidence to suggest that there were already plans at this point in time to deport the Jews straight out of Central and Western Europe into extermination camps. On the contrary, the first deportations from non-German countries (Slovakia and France) which began in March and April 1942, as well as the simultaneous 'third wave' of deportations from Germany, were not to lead directly to the gas chambers of the extermination camps. Neither immediately before nor after the Wannsee Conference, but only in late spring 1942 was the capacity of the extermination camps suddenly and hurriedly expanded.

The transcript of the Wannsee Conference does however make it clear that the idea of a post-war solution was being firmly adhered to, whilst at the same time there was a debate over the proposal to exempt the Jews in the Generalgouvernement Poland and the occupied Soviet areas from this general plan and kill them in the short term.

Five weeks prior to the Wannsee Conference Generalgouverneur Frank had already learned in Berlin that the deportation of the Jews from the Generalgouvernement Poland could not be counted on, even in the medium to long term.³ As Reichsleiter, Frank was part of the group of people to whom Hitler had announced the impending 'annihilation' of the Jews on 12 December 1941. He drew on the consequences of this knowledge at a meeting on 16 December in Cracow:

In Berlin they said to us 'What is all this trouble for? We can't do anything with them in the Ostland or in the Reichskommissariat [Ukraine], liquidate them yourselves!' Gentlemen, I must ask you, arm yourselves against all considerations of compassion. We must annihilate the Jews wherever we come upon

them and wherever this is at all possible, in order to preserve intact the [entire] structure of the Reich.⁴

The method and time frame for this mass murder were still open in mid-December 1941, as we can see from Frank's further remarks:

These 3.5 million Jews cannot be shot, we cannot poison them, but we will be able to intervene in such a way that will somehow lead to a successful extermination – in the context of the greater measures from the Reich that are to be discussed. The Generalgouvernement Poland must become just as free of Jews [*judenfrei*] as the Reich. Where and how that happens is a matter for the official bodies that we must set up and run, and whose effectiveness I will inform you of in due course.

The determination of the leadership of the Generalgouvernement Poland to achieve this 'successful extermination' in the short term within the Generalgouvernement Poland itself is the background to the remarks of the representative of the government of the Generalgouvernement Poland, Secretary of State (Staatssekretär) Bühler, near the end of the Wannsee Conference. He stated that the Generalgouvernement Poland would:

welcome the initiation of the final solution to this question in the Generalgouvernement Poland, because the problem of transportation does not play a decisive role here and because problems related to labour will not obstruct the course of this action.

In addition, the approximately 2.5 million Jews who were to be removed from the Generalgouvernement Poland 'as soon as possible' were overwhelmingly 'unfit to work'. Bühler followed this with a clear proposal to murder the majority of the Jews of the Generalgouvernement Poland in the Generalgouvernement itself.

Then they discussed the question of how the Jews of the Generalgouvernement Poland and the occupied Soviet Areas were actually to be 'removed' – in other words, they talked concretely about the methods for murder:

In the concluding stages different possible solutions were discussed. Both Gauleiter Dr Meyer [the representative of the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories] and Staatssekretär Dr Bühler took the position that certain preliminary measures in the process of the final solution should immediately

be put into effect in the relevant area itself, but necessarily in such a way as to avoid causing disquiet amongst the local population.

The transcript does not give any evidence that a decision was taken on the proposals of Meyer and Bühler at the conference itself.

IN THIS MATTER THE FÜHRER IS THE UNTIRING PIONEER AND SPOKESMAN FOR A RADICAL SOLUTION

The Extension of the Deportations and Mass Murders in Spring 1942

After the Wannsee Conference, the RSHA continued planning for the deportation of the Jews from Greater Germany and expanded it to an initial European deportation programme, encompassing a total of six countries in the first instance.

In an express letter to the main and subsidiary offices of the Gestapo of 31 January 1942, Eichmann made it clear that 'the recent evacuations of Jews from individual areas to the East' represented 'the beginning of the final solution to the Jewish Question in the Ostmark and in the Protektorat of Bohemia and Moravia'.¹

From a discussion between Eichmann and representatives of the main Gestapo offices on 6 May, it emerges that a further deportation programme for the whole of Germany had been set up within the RSHA, namely what Heydrich had already announced in November 1941 as 'the third wave'.² Eichmann explained that in the course of this next programme 55,000 Jews would be deported from the territory of Germany inclusive of the Ostmark and the Protektorat. He also announced that most of the remaining Jews from the Altreich (Germany within the borders of 1937) would in all probability be forcibly removed to Theresienstadt (which was then being cleared), in the course of the summer or the autumn of 1942.

Within the framework of this third wave of deportations, Jewish people from different parts of the territory of the Altreich and from Vienna, as well as Theresienstadt, would be forcibly carried off between March and June 1942

and brought to a series of ghettos in the district of Lublin (in particular Izbica, Piaska, Zamocs and Trawniki). The inhabitants of these ghettos had been deported to the extermination camp Belzec shortly before. As a rule, the deportation trains from Germany stopped in Lublin, where those men 'fit for work' were separated out in order to be put to work in the forced labour camp at Majdanek.³ There is conclusive proof of forty-three transports, which each usually carried 1,000 people. However, there are indications of further transports, amounting to a probable sixty trains in all.⁴

The deportation of Central European Jews and the extermination of the Eastern European Jews in spring 1942 followed the same pattern as the first two waves of deportations in autumn 1941 and the winter following. The miserable living conditions in the ghettos in the district of Lublin meant that the great majority of the deportees died within a few months of their arrival. Those who survived the conditions of the ghetto were generally deported to extermination camps in the Generalgouvernement Poland.

In March 1942, the deportations were also extended to two countries outside Germany. According to the terms of an agreement with Slovakia, young Jews who were 'fit for work' were deported to Majdanek in the district of Lublin and to Auschwitz. Directly after this programme was introduced, and in response to a request from the Germans, the Slovakian government declared their willingness to deport all Slovakian Jews (close to 90,000 people). The deportation of families began on 11 April. By June, eleven trains had arrived in Auschwitz and a further twenty-eight had gone to ghettos in the district of Lublin, or the camp at Majdanek.⁵ In France the military administration had decided in December 1941 to send the first hostage transport of 1,000 Jewish men to the East. Preparations had been made at the beginning of January 1942, but the convoy was not able to leave because of a lack of transport.

After Eichmann had agreed to the deportation of those 1,000 people on 1 March,⁶ a discussion within the RSHA of 4 March resulted in a decision to propose the deportation of a further 'c.5,000 Jews to the East' to the French government. This was recorded by Theodor Dannecker, the expert on Jewish matters in the Paris Gestapo.⁷ Dannecker also told Carltheo Zeitschel, the Embassy staff-member in charge of Jewish affairs, that Heydrich had given an assurance to the effect that, after the deportation of the first 1,000 people, 'a further 5,000 Jews would be transported in the course of 1942' and that he had 'agreed that further, even larger transports could be carried out in 1943'.⁸ While the first transport – which left on 27 March 1942 and arrived in Auschwitz on 30 March⁹ – was still described as a reprisal against the French resistance, the coming 'hostage transports' were to be part of a concrete programme of deportations.

The deportation of 5,000 people to Auschwitz that Heydrich had announced at the beginning of March 1942 was carried out between 5 June and 17 July. At this point these five transports, as well as the transports of families from Slovakia that started in April, were already part of the RSHA's first European-wide deportation programme. An important piece of evidence as to the existence of this programme is found in a note from the office of the Slovakian Prime Minister, Votek Tuka, dated 10 April and concerning a visit by Heydrich.¹⁰ On this occasion Heydrich explained to Tuka that the planned deportation of Slovakian Jews was only 'a part of the programme'. At the time, he said, there was a 'resettlement' of altogether 'half a million' Jews 'out of Europe to the East'. Besides Slovakia, Germany, the Protectorat, the Netherlands, Belgium and France were affected.

On 11 June 1942 a discussion took place in the Department for Jewish affairs in the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*). The German experts on Jewish affairs stationed in Paris, The Hague and Brussels gathered to discuss the occupied Western European part of the general European deportation programme. Dannecker, the expert for Jewish affairs of the Gestapo in Paris, made a note to himself stating that Himmler had given the order to 'deliver larger quantities of Jews to the Auschwitz concentration camp, to increase the workforce'. 'This is on the primary condition that the Jews (of both sexes) be between 16 and 40 years old. 10% who are not fit for work can be sent with them.' Starting on 13 July, 15,000 Jews were to be deported from the Netherlands, 10,000 from Belgium and 100,000 from France.¹¹

In parallel with the deportations, the mass murders were extended in the 'reception areas' and elsewhere.

Preparations for the 'resettlement' of Jews from the districts of Lublin and Galicia can be traced back to January 1942.¹² By this time 'resettlement' was clearly a euphemism for their planned mass murder. In mid-March the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto marked the beginning of the systematic murder of those Jews 'unfit for work' in the district of Lublin, which had been in planning since the decision to build the extermination camp, Belzec, in autumn 1941.¹³ The bloody liquidation of the ghettos and the deportations to Belzec thus started at precisely the time that the deportation trains were arriving in the area of Lublin from Germany and Slovakia. Like the Warthegau the previous year, and like the mass executions in the ghettos of Riga and Minsk in November and December 1941,¹⁴ local Jews were murdered in order to make 'room' for the deported Jews. The presence of Himmler in Lublin on 14 March, two days before the clearing of the ghetto, underscores the interest that Himmler had taken in the 'Jewish Policy' in the district of Lublin from the beginning.¹⁵ At the same time as the mass

murder commenced in the district of Lublin in mid-March 1942, the SS began the liquidation of the ghettos and the deportations in the district of Galicia.¹⁶ The escalation of the extermination policy in this district should not be seen in the context of the programme of deportation in Central Europe but in relation to the mass murders in the Soviet Union. Galicia had been occupied by the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1941, and was conquered by the Wehrmacht in 1941; from the summer of 1941, and with increased force in October 1941, German units had carried out mass executions, and by the end of 1941 60,000 people had been killed here.¹⁷

Some light is cast on the annihilation policy in these two districts by a remark in Goebbels' diary from 27 March 1942, according to which 'a barbaric procedure that I will not describe in more detail is being applied, and of the Jews themselves there is now not much left'. He says, 'that 60% of them must be liquidated whilst only 40% can be used for work'.¹⁸ In this note Goebbels leaves no doubt about Hitler's responsibility for the mass murder:

A penalty will be exacted from the Jews, and whilst it may be barbaric, they have deserved it. The prophecy that the Führer made for their having caused a new world war is beginning to be realised in the most terrible manner. In these matters we must have no truck with sentimentality. If we did not defend ourselves from them, the Jews would destroy us. It is a life-and-death struggle between the Aryan race and the Jewish bacillus. No other government and no other regime could summon the strength necessary to solve this question across the board. In this matter, too, the Führer is the untiring pioneer and spokesman for a radical solution that is demanded by the very nature of things and which is therefore inevitable. Thank God the war means that we now have a whole series of possibilities that were denied to us in peacetime. We must exploit these possibilities.

A few days previously Goebbels had reported on a meeting with Hitler:

At the end we spoke about the Jewish Question once more. In this matter the Führer is still unrelenting. The Jews must be driven out of Europe, if necessary by using the most brutal of means.¹⁹

At the same time as the deportations from the districts of Lublin and Galicia were beginning – in mid-March 1942 – in Serbia the SS began the murder of those Jews who had survived the 'retaliatory measures' in the previous autumn. The RSHA informed the Commander of the Security Police in Belgrade of the impending arrival of a gas van. With the aid of this vehicle, by the beginning

of May 1942 about 500 men as well as about 7,000 women and children who had been imprisoned in the Belgrade camp of Sajmiste were murdered.²⁰ This meant that about 90 per cent of all Jews living in Serbia had been killed.

The German procedure in Serbia followed the same model as in the Soviet Union, albeit at a slightly later stage: first the Jewish men were shot under the pretext of 'retaliation' and in a later phase their dependants were killed, all of them, in accordance with the plan that had been drawn up.