



On the whitewashers of Nazi crime

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To cite this article: Martin Broszat (1976) On the whitewashers of Nazi crime, Patterns of Prejudice, 10:5, 11-14, DOI: [10.1080/0031322X.1976.9969327](https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.1976.9969327)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.1976.9969327>



Published online: 28 May 2010.



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THE article by Dr Ino Arndt and Dr Wolfgang Scheffler does not claim to be, in every detail, the result of original research into hitherto unknown facts. It is intended rather to impart essential information on the basis of scientifically established knowledge about a central complex of Nazi crime—the mass extermination of Jews through gassing during the second world war. The rulers of the Third Reich took great care to conceal the facts and even tried to remove the traces afterwards. There is reason to assume that the crimes are still shrouded in the twilight of imperfect knowledge — despite extensive historical research and judicial investigation, both designed to establish the facts beyond all reasonable doubt. This lack of definitive information has prepared the ground for much recent tendentious and propagandist literature, of more or less obviously extreme Right-wing origin, which methodically attempts to cast doubt on, or altogether deny, the existence of all mass extermination centres equipped with gas chambers and operated in occupied Poland since 1941-42.

The quantitatively largest part of the Nazi action to destroy the Jews is the mechanical factory-type killing of at least three million Jewish people by gas in the camps at Chelmo, Sobibor, Belzec, Treblinka, Majdanek and Auschwitz-Birkenau. In addition, systematic mass shootings of Jews were carried out (a) mainly by the mobile *Einsatzgruppen*; (b) later by stationary commandos of the security police, and (c) police units on general duties in the occupied Soviet territories, as well as by local units of the security police in the *General Gouvernement*. The number of Jewish victims of these latter actions pro-

bably exceeds one million. The third large complex of the "Final Solution" was the number of Jews from the whole of the Nazi-controlled areas who were not actually killed outright, but, as indirect victims of the persecution, perished in vast numbers on deportation transports, in reception and slave labour camps, in enforced ghettos, also through epidemics, and, in the last months of the war, through hasty evacuation and supply failure on the roads, in trains or in the overcrowded concentration camps of Germany itself.

The extermination by gas, though only one aspect of the whole picture, symbolizes most clearly the perverse racialist conception of Hitler's antisemitism, which regarded its victims as so much vermin; it also demonstrates the mechanical, cold-blooded mentality which carried it out: technical genocide perpetrated by people who were no "pogromists", who had no directly motivating religious, national or social feelings of hostility. This crime cannot be explained by ideological hatred of "Jewish Bolshevism" nor by a syndrome of fear, aggression, need for self-assertion, or a savage state of unreasoning excitement which can, under certain circumstances, be released in an army actually fighting a war. This deliberate, planned murder of Jews in the gas chambers defies all categories of comparison or possible speculation.

Here we can recognize an important psychological motive for those who seek to "prove", in the teeth of all the incontrovertible evidence, that the gassing of Jews never took place. They say it could not be shown to be true in every detail, it was an invention by the victors, based on confessions extorted by blackmail from SS defendants—the result of systematic lies designed to condemn the German people for ever. They blame the "re-education" which had "corrupted" the scientific, professional writing of history, as well as the German courts of law trying to establish the facts of the extermination camps.

The pathology of this amok-running against reality is evidenced by a number of publications with such characteristic titles as *Auf der*

* This article by the director of the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte*, Munich, appeared as an introduction to an investigation, in the Institute's journal *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 24, No. 2, April 1976, pp. 105-112, by Dr. Ino Arndt and Dr. Wolfgang Scheffler, into the "Organised Mass Murder of Jews in Nazi Extermination camps".

Suche nach der Wahrheit ("In quest of truth")¹, *Warum werden wir Deutschen belogen?* ("Why are they lying to us Germans?")², *Hexeneinmaleins einer Lüge* ("The witches' cauldron of a lie")³, *Die Auschwitz Lüge* ("The Auschwitz lie")⁴. The authors and their faithfuls simply refuse to accept historical information which does not suit them (here the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* has much relevant experience), and in a pathetic exclusivity they constantly quote and refer to each other. A blatant example are Heinz Roth's *Zitat Broschüren*, carefully worded to avoid legal proceedings for stating falsehoods.⁵ Another example is the calculated propaganda use of the same false arguments, uncorroborated "counter-evidence" which is intended to gain acceptance through repetition.⁶ Yet another example is provided by the previously quoted pamphlet of Heinz Roth's. It refers to information given by the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* and with a quick sleight-of-hand changes it to mean its opposite. He says:⁷

The Institut für Zeitgeschichte to whom I addressed a relevant enquiry gave me the following answer:

"... as far as the Führer's order for the murder of Jews is concerned, this has not been found in written form, but it can

be concluded from many testimonies that it must have been issued verbally."

So they assume that "it must have been issued verbally." This sort of answer, in my opinion, says virtually nothing. When a Government Institute like this has to admit that, in a matter of such importance, no written order exists, but only surmises that it must have been given verbally (not even "has been"), no further comment seems necessary. It is thus definitely proved that no order on the highest level was ever given for the annihilation of the Jews.

More than 15 years ago the French journalist Paul Rassinier produced the model of such propagandist arguments in his "unmasking" pamphlets which were marketed by Right-wing publishers in the Federal German Republic.⁸ The frequent repetition of pure inventions and distortions of the kind previously quoted can obviously have an effect on a public which is ill-informed and therefore incapable of criticism and easily confused. Apart from this, Rassinier and his imitators had the advantage of a few incorrect or exaggerated statements from former prisoners or witnesses (i.e. during the Nuremberg trials) and other contradictions

ber of European Jews under Axis rule alone in 1941-42 was, in 1939, roughly nine million), it is significant that no evidence is produced to lend substance to the alleged statements either of the UNO or of the "Canadian Anti-Defamation Committee"; it is therefore impossible to check Scronn's assertions. An enquiry by the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* at Scronn's publishers in Brazil remained unanswered.

In a letter to the Institut dated 1 August 1974, the UN representative of the Federal German Republic made the following statement: "So far as we know, the United Nations have never broached the question of the war losses. However, the UN Sub-Committee for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, on 19 September 1973, passed Resolution 4 (xxvi) calling for a study to be drawn up on the subject of genocide and the work was entrusted to Mr. Ruhashyankiko (Ruanda). . . . May I also point out that the number of 200,000 Jewish victims of the Nazi regime, which you mentioned in your letter to the Foreign Office dated 22 August 1975, definitely has no basis in any statements by the United Nations".

7. Heinz Roth, *Warum werden wir Deutschen belogen?*, p. 40. Emphasis is mine.

8. See particularly P. Rassinier, *Die Lüge des Odysseus* ("The Lie of Odysseus") and *Was nun Odysseus?* ("What now Odysseus?", both published in Wiesbaden, 1959 and 1960; also *Zum Fall Eichmann: Was ist Wahrheit? oder die unbelehrbaren Sieger* ("About the Eichmann case: What is Truth?, or Those Victors will never learn"), Druffel Verlag, 1962.

1. Title of a series of pamphlets published by Heinz Roth since 1970 at Odenhausen, near Marburg.

2. Author: Heinz Roth, published at Witten, 1973.

3. Author: Emil Aretz, published at Pähl, Bavaria (Franz von Bebenburg), 1970.

4. Author: Thies Christophersen, published at Mohrkirch, 1972.

5. Legal investigations against Roth on grounds of subversive incitement" were discontinued in 1974.

6. An example is the German-language pamphlet by Alexander Scronn (presumably a pseudonym), *General Psychologus. Eine Studie der psychologischen Kriegsführung gegen das Deutschland*, published in Brazil in 1965 (Itatiaia Buchversand, P.O.B. Itatiaia E.F.D.B., Estado de Rio). On p. 42 Scronn writes: "Meanwhile the UNO has dealt with the question of the war losses with regard to all the nations involved in the war. These data were used by the Canadian Anti-Defamation Committee of Christian Laymen which found that in the 12 years of Hitler rule 200,000 Jews died, both through violence (killing, execution, as partisans or saboteurs, shot, through bombs dropped on camps, or other acts of war) but also through natural causes, i.e. illness and old age". These losses, Scronn goes on, "relate to a total population of four million European Jews".

Quite apart from the factual errors (the num-

which may have appeared at some time or other, in the press and literature about the "Final Solution." Based on occasional justified individual criticism, methodical attempts are made to create the impression that the entire evidence of the mass extermination of Jews is unreliable. For example, the gas chamber of Dachau was in fact never used, and Rudolf Hoess did contradict himself in his statements about the number of Jews killed at Auschwitz; this incidentally has long been known, was admitted by him, and has of course been taken into consideration by scholars.⁹

A contributory cause of the confusion is that the two categories "concentration camps" and "extermination of Jews" which were kept strictly separate, institutionally and organisationally, between the SS and the security police, were never sufficiently distinguished in public discussion, particularly as in Auschwitz the two were actually connected. Frequently the high mortality rates of inmates (including Jews) of concentration camps and the particularly large number of killings which took place in the camps were understandably confused with the "special treatment of Jews", e.g. the existence of gas chambers. The former consisted of shooting or murder of political opponents, Soviet commissars, hostages, sick or disabled inmates, killing in connection with medical experiments, etc.¹⁰ As mentioned earlier on, the extermination of Jews in the institutional sense (the "Final Solution") by means of gas chambers was exclusive to the above named camps in occupied Poland.

Generally, however, although concentration camps had crematoria for burning the large numbers of prisoners who had died or were killed, they had no gas chambers. Where these did exist in individual cases like Ravensbrück, Natzweiler, Mauthausen,¹¹ they were not used for the extermination of Jews in the sense of the "final solution". They were to provide some psychological relief for the work of the killing squads, which was previously carried out by shooting, injection of phenol, etc. Concentration camps were mistaken for extermination camps immediately

9. Cf. Rudolf Höss, *Kommandant in Auschwitz*. Stuttgart. 1958, pp. 162 ff.

10. The Jews deported for the purpose of extermination were never imprisoned in concentration camps except when, e.g. often in Auschwitz, they were provisionally reprieved ("selected") and despatched to a concentration camp as prisoner labour.

after the end of the war when British troops found thousands of bodies of inmates in camps like Bergen-Belsen. It was then easy to assume that these were some of the notorious extermination camps. In fact, many of those who perished in Belsen¹² and in the subsidiary Dachau camps were Jewish workers who had been evacuated from still existing ghettos, labour camps and concentration camps in the East. This evacuation had been improvised in the last phase of the war.

The whitewashing literature completely ignores the wealth of testimony regarding shooting actions by execution squads with full details of numbers of individual incidents. Nor does it take any notice of the still existing camp documents of Auschwitz and other extermination camps, with lists and details of transports of Jews and "selections", the many documents concerning the "disbanding" of ghettos in Poland in 1942-43, the removal of their inhabitants into the extermination camps, and the documents concerning the deportation, often traceable down to minute detail, of Jews from Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, Hungary, Greece and other occupied countries in 1941-1944.

These documents and testimonies, mentioned in the great histories by Reitlinger and Hilberg,¹³ were later complemented in the Eichmann trial and the great trials by German courts of camp officials from Auschwitz, Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka and Belzec. These facts were thus once more critically evaluated and amplified by further investigation and statements by witnesses. In view of all this, the denial by German authors and their friends abroad of the mass extermination of Jews must seem almost weird.

More effectively than through the book market they operate through the distribution of

11. Of the relevant essays in *Studien zur Geschichte der Konzentrationslager* (series of the *Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte*, No. 21, Stuttgart, 1970) and *K. Z. Lager Natzweiler Struthof* (published by the Comité National pour l'Erection et la Conservation d'un Mémorial de la Déportation au Struthof. 1966).

12. Cf. Eberhard Kolb, *Bergen-Belsen. Geschichte des "Aufenthaltslagers"*, 1943-1945. Hanover. 1962.

13. Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution. Hitler's Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (London, 1953); Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago. 1961). See also a number of regional studies, e.g. Paul Sauer (ed.), *Dokumentation über die Verfolgung der jüdischen Bürger in Baden-Württemberg durch das nationalsozialistische Regime 1933 bis 1945* (Stuttgart. 1966. Four volumes).

leaflets, the "grey literature" of so-called "enlightening pamphlets", as well as for some time now through a body called "German Citizens' Initiative", and apparently more in the provinces than in the large cities. Apart from this propaganda campaign, it is perhaps the still present psychological barrier against the collective crime syndrome which is responsible for the fact that ordinary people as well as academics in the Federal Republic approach the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* with questions, which show how little is known about this subject and how widespread the doubts as to whether the extermination of Jews actually took place.

Dr. Broszat then goes on to quote from some of the enquiries received, nearly all relating to Heinz Roth's leaflets on the faked "UNO" figure of 200,000 Jewish dead and the denial of the existence of gas chambers.

The article by Frau Arndt and Herr Scheffler is not intended to teach confirmed apologists of the Nazi regime. That would be a hopeless undertaking. It rather reflects practical experience in dealing with often perfectly straightforward questioners. Dr. Arndt has for years worked in this Institute answering relevant questions and giving expert opinion, while Dr. Scheffler, from Berlin, was asked to help with critical advice and additional information. Hence the dual authorship. The article, also obtainable as a reprint, describes the most important facts known about the killing by gas in the extermination camps in occupied Poland. It is based on the results of judicial investigations and hearings which have increased the knowledge of these matters through critical use of all relevant documents. Because of their painstaking caution, giving the accused the benefit of any doubt, the courts of the Federal Republic have, over the years, done more to clear up the Nazi crimes, particularly in the extermination camps, than would have been achieved by historians. It is expected that hundreds of pages of court judgments, bearing on the conditions at Chelmno, Sobibor, Belzec and Treblinka, will soon be made available to the general public. They will enable a conclusive verdict to be passed on the non-sense of the tendentious literature of special pleading which has been dealt here.

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this kind of comprehensiveness and do not purport to be alternatives to religion. . . . The non-religious life-styles which have enough similarity with the religious to make it right for them to be included within religious education syllabuses (Humanism, Communism, possibly Fascism and the counter-culture) must be included in their own right and not simply as a foil for religion".

These are as yet proposals, though some local councils have already begun to adopt them. They will have to overcome strong opposition to what is still widely regarded as indoctrination in political ideology which has little in common with the teaching of religion.