

The path to genocide : essays on launching the final solution

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Nazi Resettlement Policy and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939–1941

In recent years the historiographical discussion of Nazi Jewish policy has reflected the wider debate on National Socialism between so-called “intentionalists” and “functionalists” and the even broader division within the historical profession between those who explain history through the ideas and decisions of individuals and those who explain history through the impersonal and underlying structures of society and institutions that limit and shape the actions of individuals.¹ The intentionalists concentrate for the most part on political and diplomatic history and have focused their interpretation of the Nazi period on the central role of Hitler and the continuity of his ideological goals from their crystallization in the 1920s through their realization in the early 1940s. The functionalists (also referred to as “structuralists”) are generally social and institutional historians. They have emphasized the polycratic nature of the Nazi regime and have sought to explain the course of events during this period in terms of the improvisation and cumulative radicalization produced by the contradictory nature and chaotic decision-making process of this regime rather than by the dominant role of Hitler and the calculated pursuit of his ideological goals.²

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¹ The research for this paper was undertaken while I had the privilege of being a Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

² The terms “intentionalist” and “functionalist” were coined by Tim Mason, “Intention and Explanation: A Current Controversy about the Interpretation of National

Initially the debate on Nazi Jewish policy focused on the 1930s, with the intentionalists arguing that this policy was a conscious and calculated preparation for the realization of Hitler's "unalterable" program and the functionalists portraying it as a "planless" radicalization along the "twisted road" to Auschwitz.³ More recently this controversy has centered on the events of 1941 and Hitler's particular role in the decisions and orders for the Final Solution in that year.⁴ By the time these issues were debated at a conference in Stuttgart in May 1984, the lines of polarization, at least among German historians, had been clearly drawn.⁵

The functionalists who argued for an evolutionary view of Nazi Jewish policy in the 1930s claimed either that Hitler made no decision and issued no orders for the Final Solution in 1941 (Broszat and Mommsen) or did so only in the Fall of 1941 (Adam). In either case the Final Solution resulted primarily from the dashed expectations of the Russian

Socialism," Gerhard Hirschfeld and Lothar Kettenacker, eds., *Der Führerstaat: Mythos und Realität* (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 21–40. The next two articles in this volume starkly contrast the two approaches: Hans Mommsen, "Hitlers Stellung im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem," pp. 43–72; and Klaus Hildebrand, "Monokratie oder Polykratie? Hitlers Herrschaft und das Dritte Reich," pp. 73–97.

³ For contrasting views, see for instance: Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews* (New York, 1975), Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship* (New York, 1968), and Helmut Krausnick, "The Persecution of the Jews," *Anatomy of the SS State* (New York, 1968) on the one hand, and Karl Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz* (Urbana, Illinois, 1970) and Uwe Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf, 1972) on the other.

⁴ Uwe Adam first articulated the functionalist side of this aspect of the debate in *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich*, pp. 303–316. It was developed further by Martin Broszat, "Hitler und die Genesis der 'Endlösung.' Aus Anlaß der Thesen von David Irving," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (hereafter cited as *VfZ*), 25/4 (1977), pp. 739–775. A "moderate functionalist" reply to Broszat can be found in Christopher R. Browning, "Zur Genesis der 'Endlösung.' Eine Antwort an Martin Broszat," *VfZ*, 29/1 (1981), pp. 97–109. A starkly intentionalist stand, which took aim at David Irving rather than Broszat, appeared with Gerald Fleming, *Hitler und die Endlösung. "Es war des Führers Wunsch. . ."* (Wiesbaden and Munich, 1982). A further articulation of the functionalist interpretation followed with Hans Mommsen, "Die Realisierung des Utopischen: Die 'Endlösung der Judenfrage' im 'Dritten Reich,'" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, IX/3 (Autumn, 1983), pp. 381–420.

⁵ The conference proceedings, both papers and debate, have now been published as Eberhard Jäckel and Jürgen Rohwer, eds., *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Entschlußbildung und Verwirklichung* (Stuttgart, 1985).

campaign. Plans to solve the Jewish question by expulsion into the wastelands of conquered Russia had been thwarted. The eastward movement of Jews already underway was backing up, and whether by Hitler's decision or local initiative, mass murder emerged as the way out of the *cul-de-sac* into which the Nazis had maneuvered themselves.

For the intentionalists, in this case Eberhard Jäckel and Andreas Hillgruber, there was a fundamental connection in Hitler's mind between the acquisition of *Lebensraum* through the invasion of Russia and a solution to the Jewish question through systematic mass murder, which together constituted the nucleus or *Kernstück* of Hitler's racist ideology and were his conscious goals since the 1920s.⁶ The Final Solution emerged in 1941 from a series of decisions taken by Hitler during the preparations for Barbarossa in the Spring of 1941 and the euphoria of victory in the following Summer that inaugurated policies to achieve these long-held and inextricably connected goals simultaneously.

In my opinion these contrasting positions are unduly polarized. A middle position that views the development of Nazi Jewish policy as evolutionary rather than programmatic but at the same time credits Hitler with making the key decisions in the Spring and Summer of 1941 in close connection with the preparations for and initial euphoria of the Russian campaign is not contradictory. What might seem a reckless jumping from the functionalist to the intentionalist horse in midstream turns out not to be a jump at all if one looks more closely at the relatively ignored interim years of 1939 and 1940 that lie between the two periods that have hitherto been the center of attention, that is the development of Nazi Jewish policy in the 1930s and the fateful events of 1941.⁷

⁶ Andreas Hillgruber, "Die 'Endlösung' und das deutsche Ostimperium als Kernstück des rassenideologischen Programms des Nationalsozialismus," *VfZ*, 20 (1972), pp. 133–153, reprinted with updated footnotes in Manfred Funke, ed., *Hitler, Deutschland und die Mächte* (Düsseldorf, 1978), and "Die ideologisch-dogmatische Grundlagen der nationalsozialistischen Politik der Ausrottung der Juden in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion und ihre Durchführung 1941–1944," *German Studies Review*, II/2 (1979), pp. 263–296. Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power* (Middletown, Connecticut, 1972).

⁷ One important recent study that has in fact examined the relationship between the Nazi policies of expulsion and mass murder is that of the East German historian Kurt Pätzold, "Von der Vertreibung zum Genozid. Zu den Ursachen, Treibkräften und

Nazi Jewish policy in this interim period centered on the resettlement or expulsion schemes of the Lublin Reservation and the Madagascar Plan. For many historians these schemes have seemed too bizarre and feckless from the post-Auschwitz perspective to be taken seriously. For instance, the first historian to make a scholarly study of this subject, Philip Friedman, concluded in 1953 that “[a]midst all these projects for population transfers the deportation of the Jews could easily pass as a part of the general plan. There was therefore little suspicion, at first, that behind this innocent mask of ‘resettlement’ a scheme was in preparation of a quite different nature – nothing less than the total extermination of the Jews.”⁸ Another early historian of the Holocaust, Gerald Reitlinger, also treated these plans as a subterfuge, as did Lucy Dawidowicz some years later.⁹ Hillgruber and Jäckel likewise were unable to fit these resettlement schemes into a programmatic view that emphasizes the continuity between Hitler’s goals of the 1920s and policies of the 1940s. They therefore dismissed these resettlement schemes as “half-hearted” policies or “opportunistic detours” of a cynical and calculating Hitler who awaited the right moment for the realization of his long-held plans.¹⁰ In his most recent book, *Hitler in History*, Jäckel stated emphatically of the Madagascar Plan in particular, “There is no indication that Hitler had ever intended it seriously.”¹¹

On the other hand, functionalists, who maintain that Hitler was envisaging an expulsion of Jews into Russia even as late as the Summer or Fall of 1941, have taken the seriousness of these resettlement schemes for granted. But they have not examined whether the frustra-

Bedingungen der antijüdischen Politik des faschistischen deutschen Imperialismus,” *Faschismusforschung: Positionen, Probleme, Polemik* (Köln, 1980), pp. 181–208.

⁸ Philip Friedman, “The Lublin Reservation and the Madagascar Plan: Two Aspects of Nazi Jewish Policy during the Second World War,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Studies*, VII (1953), pp. 151–177.

⁹ Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (New York: Perpetua Edition, 1961), pp. 77–79; Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews* (New York, 1975), pp. 154–155.

¹⁰ The term “half-hearted” is Hillgruber’s. “Opportunistic detour” is a phrase used by Eberhard Jäckel in a paper “Hitler und der Mord an den europäischen Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg” delivered in Warsaw in April 1983.

¹¹ Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler in History* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1984), p. 51.

tions and failures of these schemes might not have led the Nazis in general and Hitler in particular to take decisions for mass murder earlier than the military failure of late 1941. Nor have they sought to analyze what the shaping of Nazi Jewish policy in this interim period indicates about the key role of Hitler and the manner in which he made decisions setting the parameters within which the Jewish question was to be solved.

It is my argument that for any reassessment of the resettlement schemes of 1939 and 1940, the historian must avoid the distortion of hindsight and seek to understand Nazi Jewish policy in this period as the Nazi perpetrators themselves did. Seen in this perspective, Nazi Jewish policy was part of a wider demographic project that aimed at a racial restructuring of eastern Europe. But within this wider demographic project, Jewish policy did not *yet* have the priority or centrality in the Nazis' own sense of historical mission that has been argued for on the basis of what happened later. I do not dismiss the significance of Nazi ideology or Hillgruber's and Jäckel's characterization of it as racist and Social Darwinist in nature. But I do argue that such terms as *Lebensraum* and *Endlösung* were not rigidly programmatic, excluding all but one interpretation, and that Jewish policy was not always the undisputed priority or centerpiece of Nazi racial policy. Between 1939 and 1941 the Nazis understood *Lebensraum* and *Endlösung* differently than in the post-Barbarossa period, though not in a way inconsistent with Hitler's racist Social Darwinist outlook.¹² But the Nazis' self-understanding of their historical mission in this period was no less real for being superseded. This was not a "phony war against the Jews" awaiting the real offensive. Let us trace the outline of Nazi racial and

¹² In this regard I find myself closer to Martin Broszat, who sees Hitler's ideology not as narrowly programmatic, but rather as "goal-setting" or "direction-setting." However, I would give greater importance than does Broszat to Hitler's individual decisions, in response to changing circumstances, for determining how far in these directions Nazi policies would actually evolve. I would not go so far as Hans Mommsen who evaluates Hitler's statements on the Jews primarily from the "propagandistic aspect" as "threats" against the Allied governments presumed to be under Jewish influence. Martin Broszat, "Soziale Motivation und Führer-Bindung im Nationsozialismus," *VfZ* 18/4 (1970), pp. 392–409. Hans Mommsen, "Die Realisierung des Utopischen," pp. 390–392.

demographic policy from September 1939 to March 1941, taking the Nazis' schemes for population resettlement as seriously as the Nazis did then.

Specific Nazi plans for racial policy and *Lebensraum* in Poland took shape only during September 1939, not before the invasion. Certainly there was a general consensus beforehand on a "fourth partition" of Poland and a "neutralization" of anti-German elements through mass arrests and shootings.¹³ But it was only on September 14 that Heydrich reported to his division chiefs that "proposals are being submitted to the Führer by the Reichsführer [Himmler] that only the Führer can decide. . . ."¹⁴ Thus it was in the euphoria of victory over Poland that Hitler approved a specific policy, with the results transmitted to the army commander-in-chief Brauchitsch on September 20 and to Heydrich's division heads and *Einsatzgruppen* commanders on September 21.¹⁵ The border areas of West Prussia, the Warthegau, and East Upper Silesia were to become purely German through the expulsion of all Poles, Jews, and Gypsies, and the resettlement there of ethnic Germans or *Volksdeutsche* from eastern Europe. The Poles were to be deported eastward into what became the General Government, and deprived of

¹³ National Archives Microfilm, T 175/239/2728499–502 (conference of Heydrich's division heads, September 7, 1939). Zentralstelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen in Ludwigsburg, "Einsatzgruppen in Polen: Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei, Selbstschutz und andere Formationen in der Zeit vom 1. September 1939 bis Frühjahr 1940" (hereafter cited as "EG in Polen"), II, pp. 22–29. Helmut Krausnick and Harold Deutsch, eds., Helmuth Groscurth, *Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers 1938–40* (Stuttgart, 1970), p. 362 (Document Nr. 14, Groscurth memorandum over verbal orientation by Major Radke, September 22, 1939). *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (hereafter cited as *NCA*), V, p. 769 (3047-PS: notes by Lahousen from diary of Canaris). For a general overview of the development of Nazi occupation policy in Poland: Martin Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik* (Stuttgart, 1960); and Waclaw Dlugoborski, "Die deutsche Besatzungspolitik gegenüber Polen," in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke, and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, eds., *Nationalsozialistische Diktatur 1933–1945* (Bonn, 1983), pp. 572–590.

¹⁴ National Archives Microfilm, T 175/239/2728513–5 (conference of Heydrich's division heads, September 14, 1939).

¹⁵ National Archives Microfilm T 175/239/2728524–8 (conference of Heydrich's division heads and *Einsatzgruppen* leaders, September 21, 1939); *NCA*, VI, pp. 97–101 (3363-PS: Heydrich *Schnellbrief* to *Einsatzgruppen* leaders, September 21, 1939); Helmuth Groscurth, *Tagebücher*, p. 362. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, ed., Franz Halder, *Kriegstagebuch* (Stuttgart, 1962), I, pp. 79, 82.

potential leadership elites through systematic executions (and subsequently through the sifting out of those deemed racially suitable for “re-Germanization”). As for the Jews, they were to be deported to the furthest extremity of the German empire, the Lublin region between the Bug and Vistula rivers, with at least some of them being expelled over the demarcation line into the Soviet zone.¹⁶ The Nazi plan thus envisaged three belts of population – German, Polish, and Jewish – from west to east. As Hitler told Rosenberg at the end of September, only time would tell whether – “after decades” – the German settlement belt would move yet further eastward.¹⁷ The man appointed to be in charge of this vast movement of peoples, both coming and going, was Heinrich Himmler. Within the burgeoning SS, the Reich Commissariat for the Strengthening of Germanism (Reichskommissariat für die Festigung des Deutschen Volkstums – RKFDV) was created to coordinate ethnic German resettlement, while Heydrich’s Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt – RSHA) handled expulsions eastward.¹⁸ If the Nazis’ self-imposed Jewish problem had mushroomed with the conquest of Poland, it is important to remember that in their own minds they now also had a Polish problem and a *volksdeutsch* problem of immense magnitude, and the attempt to solve all three of these simultaneously would often necessitate an ordering of priorities.

The first step in this grandiose program of population transfers was initiated by Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller on October 6, 1939, when he authorized Adolf Eichmann to contact the Gauleiter of East Upper Silesia concerning the deportation of Jews from that region. As Müller told Eichmann, “This activity shall serve first of all to collect experiences, in order . . . to be able to carry out evacuations of much greater numbers.”¹⁹ As the first step, Eichmann was to organize one train of

¹⁶ The area east of Cracow and north of the Slovak border was initially earmarked as the *Judenreservat* until Germany unexpectedly found itself with the Lublin region instead of Lithuania by its treaty with the Soviet Union of September 28, 1939.

¹⁷ Hans-Günther Seraphim, ed., *Das Politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs* (Göttingen, 1956), p. 81.

¹⁸ Robert Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy 1939–45* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957). This important study deals primarily with the resettlement of the *Volksdeutsche* and only tangentially with the expulsion of Poles and Jews.

¹⁹ Yad Vashem Archives (hereafter cited as YVA), 0-53/93/283 (Eichmann note, October 8, 1939).

deportees from Kattowitz and one from nearby Mährisch Ostrau in the Protectorate, where many Polish Jews had fled during the recent fighting. Eichmann immediately tried to shift the center of gravity of this deportation experiment from East Upper Silesia to his old stamping grounds, Austria and the Protectorate, with regular trains from there to a transit camp in Nisko in the Lublin region. From here the Jews were to be expelled eastward. Moreover, it was Eichmann's openly expressed expectation that within three to four weeks, his deportation program would encompass the Old Reich as well.²⁰ But no sooner had the first transport departed from Mährisch Ostrau than on October 19 Berlin ordered an end to Eichmann's increasingly ambitious program.²¹ When the irate Gauleiter of Vienna vented his displeasure on Arthur Seyss-Inquart, Hans Frank's deputy, whom he blamed for preventing the deportation of the Viennese Jews, Himmler intervened and made clear in no uncertain terms that the decision to stop the Nisko transports had been his own – due, he said, to “technical difficulties.”²²

Why did the Nisko experiment come to such an abrupt halt? Many unconvincing reasons have been suggested. Protests from Hans Frank or local authorities in Poland against the unwanted influx could not have been decisive, for the Himmler decision was made even as the first of five transports was just arriving. Concern for Russian sensibil-

²⁰ Two recent studies of the Nisko plan are: Seev Goshen, “Eichmann und die Nisko-Aktion,” *VfZ* 27/1 (January 1981), pp. 74–96; and Jonny Moser, “Nisko: The First Experiment in Deportation,” *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, II (1985), pp. 1–30. For the rapid expansion of Eichmann's plans from two experimental transports to a comprehensive deportation program, see: YVA, 0-53/93/258–9 and 284 (Günther notes on conferences of October 9 and 10, 1939), pp. 223–224 (memorandum of October 17, 1939 on Eichmann-Ebner-Becker meeting of October 16, 1939), p. 206 (note for Eichmann of October 18, 1939), p. 289 (Braune to Wagner, October 13, 1939), pp. 299–300 (Eichmann to Nebe, October 16, 1939), pp. 227–229 (Günther-Braune FS-Fernspräch, October 18, 1939); Eichmann Trial Document T-1135 (Löwenherz memorandum, October 10, 1939); Gerhard Botz, *Wohnungspolitik und Judendeportation in Wien 1938 bis 1945: Zur Funktion des Antisemitismus als Ersatz nationalsozialistischer Sozialpolitik* (Wien, 1975), pp. 164–186 (Document VII: Becker memorandum, October 11, 1939).

²¹ YVA, 0-53/93/235–8 (Günther daily report, October 19, 1939), p. 220 (undated Günther telegram), and p. 244 (Günther note, October 24, 1939).

²² NCA, VI, 116 (3398-PS: Seyss-Inquart to Himmler, November 4, 1939), and Botz, *Wohnungspolitik und Judendeportation in Wien*, p. 196 (Document X, Himmler to Bürckel, November 9, 1939).

ities was not crucial, for expulsions over the demarcation line continued into December. Demand for transport was indeed great, but Eichmann found upon inquiry that deportations were not totally excluded for this reason.²³ Nor was Eichmann being disciplined for improvising, given his subsequent appointment as Heydrich's specialist in charge of Jewish affairs and evacuations within the RSHA. In my opinion the decisive factor was the arrival of the first Baltic Germans in Danzig on October 15.²⁴ The problem of finding space in West Prussia and the Warthegau for the incoming *Volksdeutsche* now took priority over deporting Jews from East Upper Silesia and especially from Austria and the Protectorate. The deportation of Jews from those regions simply did not provide the lodging and livelihood for incoming *Volksdeutsche* where Himmler needed them. The consolidation of *Lebensraum* in the incorporated territories and solving the Jewish question were turning out to be competing rather than complementary goals, and as we shall see, the latter continually gave way to the former during the next year.

The next major impetus for setting in motion the Nazis' vast resettlement program was a Himmler order of October 30, 1939. By the end of February 1940, the Reichsführer wanted *all* Jews (estimated at 550,000) removed from the incorporated territories along with *all* so-called "Congress Poles" from West Prussia, and a sufficient number of anti-German Poles from the other incorporated territories to bring the total to one million.²⁵ Meanwhile the resettlement of Baltic Germans in West Prussia bogged down, as Gauleiter Albert Forster became increasingly uncooperative. His antipathy to Himmler was no secret; he had been overheard to say of the Reichsführer: "If I looked like him, I would not speak of race at all."²⁶ On November 28, Heydrich

²³ YVA, 0-53/93/256-7 (Brunner to Eichmann, October 28, 1939).

²⁴ Hans Umbreit, *Deutsche Militärverwaltungen 1938/39: Die militärische Besetzung der Tschechoslowakei und Polens* (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 218.

²⁵ *Faschismus, Getto, Massenmord* [Berlin (East) 1960], pp. 42-43 (NO-5586: Himmler Order of October 30, 1939). *Trials of the War Criminals before the Nürnberg Military Tribunal*, IV, p. 873 (NO-4095: General Orders and Directives of RKFDV, undated, signed by Creutz). YVA, JM 21/1, Frank Tagebuch: Streckenbach report of October 31, 1939.

²⁶ Fred Taylor, ed., *The Goebbels Diaries 1939-41* (London, 1982), p. 157 (entry of October 30, 1939); Koehl, *RKFDV*, p. 62; Herbert S. Levine, "Local Authority and the

intervened from Berlin, drastically scaling back the deportations ordered by Himmler one month earlier. As a short-range plan he ordered that 80,000 "Poles and Jews" were to be deported from the Warthegau by mid-December so that the incoming Baltic Germans could be lodged there instead of in West Prussia.²⁷ In a frightening display of brutality, the Warthegau Nazis exceeded this quota, deporting 87,833 people in 80 trainloads by December 17.²⁸ In some reports the unfortunate deportees were referred to collectively as "Poles and Jews," elsewhere only as Poles, and no German records ever distinguished the specific number of Jews involved. The primary thrust of what was to become known as the "first short-range plan" had not been to solve the Jewish question but rather to find space for the Baltic Germans. Many Jews were undoubtedly involved, but that was not what was on the Germans' minds at the moment.

Immediately following the conclusion of the Warthegau deportations of the "first short-range plan," Adolf Eichmann was appointed Heydrich's "special adviser" for evacuations and Jewish affairs.²⁹ Recalling Himmler's October 30th order, Eichmann lost no time in convening a Berlin conference on January 4, 1940, to announce once again the "urgent" deportation of *all* Jews from the incorporated territories in the coming months.³⁰

This was Eichmann's second attempt to get massive Jewish deportations underway, but it fared no better than his Nisko venture. Sobered by the devastating and chaotic influx of Warthegau deportees in December, the Governor General Hans Frank balked at receiving more

SS State: The Conflict over Population Policy in Danzig-West Prussia," *Central European History*, II/4 (1969), pp. 331–355; "EG in Polen," II, p. 117.

²⁷ *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich W Polsce* (hereafter cited as *Biuletyn*), XII (Warsaw, 1960), pp. 15F–18F (Heydrich to HSSPF Krakau, Breslau, Posen, and Danzig, November 28, 1939; and Heydrich to Krüger, Streckenbach, Koppe, and Damzog, November 28, 1939).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22F–31F (Rapp report of December 18, 1939); YVA, JM 3582 (Rapp report of January 26, 1940).

²⁹ YVA, JM 3581, Müller to all Staatspolizeileitstellen, December 21, 1939, and Heydrich to Sipo-SD in Krakau, Breslau, Posen, Danzig, and Königsberg, December 21, 1939.

³⁰ *Biuletyn*, XII, pp. 37F–39F (Abromeit note of January 8, 1940 on conference of January 4, 1940).

trainloads of starving, frozen, and penniless refugees. In this he was fully supported by the SS leadership of the General Government, a not very frequent concurrence of views. Heydrich thereupon countermanded Eichmann's impending Jewish deportations in order to ensure at least the more urgent deportation of some 160,000 Poles to make space for the incoming Baltic and now Volhynian Germans. Only after the completion of deportations immediately connected with the *volksdeutsch* resettlement would the deportation of *all* Jews from the incorporated territories, along with 30,000 Gypsies from the Old Reich, take place "as the last mass movement."³¹

A meeting of Himmler, Frank, the eastern Gauleiters, and Göring at the latter's Karinhall estate on February 12, 1940, did little to clarify the issue of deportation priorities. Göring opposed the deportation of any useful manpower, especially agricultural labor, from the incorporated territories. The first priority, he stated unequivocally, was to strengthen the war potential of the Reich by making the new *Gaue* the granary of Germany. As for Jewish deportations, he was not opposed as long as the trains were sent in an orderly manner with prior notification. Frank openly allied himself with Göring's pragmatic stance. Himmler ignored Göring's offer to support Jewish deportations under orderly conditions but immediately emphasized the gravity of the *volksdeutsch* problem. He needed space for 70,000 Baltic Germans and 130,000 Volhynian Germans, and the latter had to be settled on Polish farms in a strip along the border with the General Government, i.e., precisely the disruption of agriculture that Göring opposed. Himmler volunteered to postpone the return of a further 220,000–270,000 Lithuanian, Bukovinian, and Bessarabian Germans, as well as the ethnic Germans of the General Government. But the 30,000 *Volksdeutsche* east of the Vistula in the Lublin region had to be resettled too, because their present homeland was eventually destined to become the *Juden-reservat*. He did promise, however, that he and Frank "would agree upon the procedures of future evacuations."³²

³¹ *Biuletyn*, XII, pp. 44F–45F (NO-5322: conference of January 30, 1940).

³² *Trials of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal* (hereafter cited as *IMT*), vol. 36, pp. 300–306 (EC-305: Karinhall conference of February 12, 1940).

Himmler seemed to think that by scaling back the pace of ethnic German resettlement and indefinitely postponing Jewish deportations, he could sufficiently minimize disruption in both the incorporated territories and the General Government so as to continue with his cherished project for resettling *Volksdeutsche* and expelling Poles, despite the misgivings of Frank and Göring. For Himmler the rescue of the *Volksdeutsche* and the consolidation of *Lebensraum* in the incorporated territories clearly had priority over deporting Jews at this time. Frank's understanding of what had transpired at Karinhall was different. He assumed that Göring had given him the power to veto any undesired deportation. Moreover, he boasted,

the great resettlement ideas have indeed been given up. The idea that one could gradually transport 7½ million Poles to the General Government has been *fully abandoned*. It is now only a question of the transfer of some 100,000–120,000 Poles, some 30,000 Gypsies, and a still to be determined number of Jews from the Reich, because the final goal shall be to make the German Reich free of Jews.

It was “indescribable” how Berlin still clung to the idea of a Jewish reservation east of the Vistula, Frank noted. However, “That that shall not occur in a year and especially not under the circumstances of war, Berlin also recognizes.”³³

In fact, even as Himmler was meeting with Frank and Göring at Karinhall, the SS was unilaterally launching new deportations – 1,000 German Jews from Stettin on February 12 (an exception to Heydrich's own rule against Jewish deportations from the Old Reich at this time) and 40,128 Poles from the Warthegau between February 10 and March 15, in what was known as the “intermediate plan.”³⁴ Frank appealed to Göring, who specifically forbade further deportations of Jews without both his permission and proof of Frank's prior agreement.³⁵ Against the

³³ Italics mine. Hans Frank, *Diensttagebuch*, pp. 131 and 146–147 (Sitzung des Reichsverteidigungsausschuß, Warsaw, March 2, 1940, and Dienstversammlung der Kreis- und Stadthauptmänner des Distrikts Lublin, March 4, 1940).

³⁴ YVA, 0-53/48/650–2 (Umwandererzentrale Abschlußbericht 1940).

³⁵ Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (hereafter cited as PA), Inland IIg 173, Göring telegram of March 23, 1940.

vociferous protest of Gauleiter Greiser, who was most anxious to expel the Jews of Lodz, Himmler agreed with Frank to postpone all Jewish deportations until August, when the Volhynian resettlement action –involving the expulsion of 120,000 Poles in the “second short-range plan” – was due to be concluded.³⁶

Himmler’s grandiose design for a sweeping racial reorganization of eastern Europe had been steadily whittled away. In the Fall of 1939, he had envisaged the deportation of about one million people (including all Jews) from the incorporated territories into the General Government by the end of February 1940, and eventually the removal of all so-called racially undesirable elements from these lands. By March 1940, however, Frank was boasting that the idea that one could gradually transport 7½ million Poles to the General Government had been “fully abandoned.” Moreover, the Jewish deportations had been postponed repeatedly – most recently to August – and Göring had invested Frank with a virtual veto power over them. Even the resettlement of ethnic Germans had been scaled back. But if Frank could go over Himmler’s head to Göring, Himmler now sought to re-legitimize his threatened dream by going over Göring’s head to Hitler.

Since his pronouncements of the previous Fall, Hitler had played no visible role in shaping racial policy. In a typical example of the “institutional Darwinism” of the Third Reich, implementation had been left to a struggle between his subordinates, while the Führer himself turned his attention to loftier matters of grand strategy, in particular preparations for the offensives into Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and France. But by Spring Hitler seemed to have lost faith in his resettlement plan, at least insofar as it concerned the Jews in Lublin. According to Walther Hewel, Hitler told Colin Ross on March 12, 1940, that:

the Jewish question really was a space question which was difficult to solve, particularly for him, since he had no space at his disposal. Neither would the establishment of a Jewish state

³⁶ Frank, *Diensttagebuch*, p. 158 (entry of April 5, 1940), and p. 204 (entry of May 19, 1940); *Dokumenty i Materiały Do Dziejów Okupacji Niemieckiej W Polsce*, vol. III, *Getto Łódzkie* (Warsaw, 1946), pp. 168–69 (Regierungspräsident to officials of Bezirk Lodz and Kalisch, May 8, 1940).

around Lublin ever constitute a solution as even there the Jews lived too close together to be able to attain a somewhat satisfactory standard of living. . . . He, too, would welcome a positive solution to the Jewish question; if only he could indicate a solution; this, however, was not possible under present conditions when he had not even sufficient space for his own people.³⁷

The brilliant success of German arms in the first two weeks of the French campaign, however, gave Himmler the opportunity in late May to seek Hitler's approval for his racial design that stood in stark contrast to the pragmatic arguments of Göring and Frank and included an even more radical resettlement solution for the Jews than the now faltering Lublin Reservation.

Sometime in May 1940 Himmler drafted a memorandum, "Some Thoughts on the Treatment of Alien Populations in the East." The 15 million people of the General Government and the 8 million of the incorporated territories – "ethnic mush" in Himmler's view – were to be splintered into as many ethnic groups as possible for "screening and sifting." "The basis of our considerations must be to fish out of this mush the racially valuable, in order to bring them to Germany for assimilation." The ethnic identity of the leftovers, deprived of their racially valuable stock and dumped together in the General Government along with those from Germany "of the same racial and human type," would gradually disappear. This non-descript, denationalized population would then serve as a reservoir for migrant labor to Germany.³⁸

The Jews were also to disappear but in a different way. "I hope completely to erase the concept of Jews through the possibility of a great emigration of all Jews to a colony in Africa or elsewhere." Concerning

³⁷ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, D, VIII, pp. 912–913 (Hewel memorandum on conversation of Colin Ross and Hitler, March 12, 1940).

³⁸ Helmut Krausnick, ed., "Einige Gedanken über die Behandlung der fremdvölkischen im Osten," *VfZ* V/2 (1957), pp. 194–198 (NO-1880). Himmler did not start from scratch in writing this memorandum. A much longer study, "The Question of the Treatment of the Population of the Former Polish Territories according to a Racial-political Viewpoint," developing most of the ideas contained in the Himmler memorandum (with the notable exception of deporting the Jews to an African colony), had been submitted by Erhard Wetzel and Gerhard Hecht of the Racial Political Office on November 25, 1939. *Documenta Occupationis*, V (Poznan, 1949), pp. 2–28 (NO-3732).

this systematic eradication of the ethnic composition of eastern Europe, Himmler concluded: "However cruel and tragic each individual case may be, this method is still the mildest and best, if one rejects the Bolshevik method of physical extermination of a people out of inner conviction as un-German and impossible."

On May 25, a week after the German panzers reached the English Channel, Himmler submitted his memorandum to Hitler. Himmler's timing was impeccable, and he scored a great triumph. "The Führer read the six pages through and found them very good and correct," Himmler noted. Moreover, "The Führer desires that I invite Governor General Frank back to Berlin, in order to show him the memorandum and to say to him that the Führer considers it correct." Himmler then asked Hitler to authorize its distribution to the eastern Gauleiters and Göring, with the message that the Führer "had recognized and confirmed" the memorandum as containing authoritative guidelines. Hitler agreed once again.³⁹

This episode is of singular importance, in that it is the only first-hand account by a high-ranking participant, i.e., Himmler, of just how a Hitler decision was reached and a *Führerbefehl* was given in the shaping of Nazi racial policy during this period. The initiative came from Himmler. However, he did not present Hitler with a precise plan. It was instead a statement of intent, a set of policy objectives. The details of implementation would be left to Himmler. Hitler indicated not only his enthusiastic agreement but also with whom this information could be shared. Hitler gave no specific orders to the likes of Göring, Frank, and the eastern Gauleiters. He simply allowed it to be known what he wanted or approved. Presumably business was often conducted in such a way in the Third Reich.

Himmler's enthusiastic memorandum-writing continued into June, when he encountered the argument that Polish labor would always be necessary in the incorporated territories for economic reasons. Himmler set out as his guiding principle: "One only possesses a land when even the last inhabitant of this territory belongs to his own people." Thus the alien population had to be forced off the land into construction work, with seven-eighths of them gradually deported to the east and

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 195–196 (Himmler memorandum, May 28, 1940).

one-eighth Germanized. "I am convinced that in the east we can get by without native Polish labor in the long run, and that we cannot and must not leave Poles in the eastern provinces even for economic reasons."⁴⁰

The beleaguered Hans Frank thus not only faced the influx of Jews scheduled for August, but now also saw resurrected the very plan he thought "fully abandoned" in March, that is the deportation of more than seven million Poles from the incorporated territories into the General Government as well. Frank became increasingly desperate concerning the "catastrophic effects" of continued resettlement, when suddenly a surprising order from Himmler stopping the impending expulsion of the Jews into the General Government came to Frank as a veritable deliverance.⁴¹ Himmler had found his colony in Africa for the Jews – the island of Madagascar!

Madagascar had long exercised a fascination among anti-Semites as the ideal dumping ground for the European Jews, but the idea did not take on real form as a concrete proposal among the Nazis until put forward by the Jewish expert of the German Foreign Office, Franz Rademacher, in early June 1940, when Germany's power to redistribute the French empire seemed at hand.⁴² The alacrity with which the proposal was seized upon by the Nazi leadership is a measure of the frustration that had built up over the bottlenecks of demographic engineering in eastern Europe over the past nine months. By June 18 Hitler had informed Mussolini of his intention to use Madagascar as a Jewish reservation, and he broached the subject again with Admiral Raeder on June 20.⁴³ On June 24 the ever attentive Heydrich asserted

⁴⁰ National Archives Microfilm, T 175/122/2665958ff (Himmler memorandum, June 24, 1940).

⁴¹ NG-1627 (Frank to Lammers, June 25, 1940). *Biuletyn XII*, 96F-97F (Note on Höppner-IV D 4 discussion, July 9, 1940).

⁴² Leni Yahil, "Madagascar – Phantom of a Solution for the Jewish Question," in George Mosse and Bela Vago, eds., *Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe* (Jerusalem, 1974), pp. 319–332. Christopher R. Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office* (New York, 1978), pp. 35–43.

⁴³ Galeazzo Ciano, *The Ciano Diaries 1939–43* (Garden City, New York, 1947), pp. 265–266. Paul Schmidt, *Hitler's Interpreter* (New York, 1951), p. 178. Klaus Hildebrand, *Vom Reich zum Weltreich: Hitler, NSDAP, und koloniale Frage, 1919–1945* (Munich, 1969), pp. 651–652. In August Hitler told the German ambassador to France, Otto Abetz, that he intended to expel all the Jews from Europe at the end of the war. *Akten zur Deutschen Außenpolitik*, D, X, p. 389. Even American diplomats

his jurisdiction vis-à-vis the Foreign Office over Jewish resettlement there.⁴⁴ The news spread quickly eastward. On July 1, Adam Czerniakow, the head of the *Judenrat* in Warsaw, learned from an SD official, “that the war would be over in a month and that we would all leave for Madagascar.”⁴⁵ Frank knew by July 10 that he was not only reprieved from the expected deluge of Jews from the Reich but would now be rid of his own Jews as well – a “colossal relief” he boisterously expounded upon to the *Heiterkeit* or “amusement” of his assembled court.⁴⁶ On Frank’s orders ghetto building in the General Government came to an abrupt halt as pointless in view of the “plan of the Führer” to send the Jews to Madagascar.⁴⁷ If Frank was ecstatic, Greiser in the Warthegau was distraught. The Jewish deportations scheduled for August were cancelled, and he now faced the prospect of having to keep his own Jews for the duration of the war. His attempt in late July to get Frank to take the Warthegau Jews as an interim measure met with a flat refusal.⁴⁸

Realization of the Madagascar Plan required the defeat of not only France but also Great Britain. By mid-September it was clear that this was not imminent, and the plan quickly faded. It was no less real for its brief existence, however. In cancelling the August deportations and halting ghetto construction in the General Government, Nazi leaders were not carrying out an elaborate sham to deceive future historians; they were making decisions based on the Madagascar Plan as the reality of Nazi Jewish policy in the Summer of 1940. Despite the constant postponements, the self-imposed “obligation” to solve the Jewish question still weighed heavily upon the Nazis. The greater the frustration, the lower the threshold to systematic mass murder. Thus

in Bucharest heard rumors of Hitler’s mentioning the Madagascar Plan to Rumanian diplomats. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, II, p. 769. I am grateful to Itzhak Mais, director of the Yad Vashem museum, for this last reference.

⁴⁴ PA, Inland IIg 177, Heydrich to Ribbentrop, June 24, 1940.

⁴⁵ Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron, and Josef Kermisz, eds., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow* (New York, 1979), 169 (entry of July 1, 1940).

⁴⁶ Frank, *Diensttagebuch*, p. 248 (entry of July 10, 1940), p. 252 (Abteilungsleitersitzung, July 12, 1940) and p. 258 (entry of July 25, 1940).

⁴⁷ *Faschismus-Getto-Massenmord*, p. 96 (report of Kreishauptmann of Minsk Mazowiecki, October 11, 1940) and p. 110 (Schön report of January 20, 1941).

⁴⁸ Frank, *Diensttagebuch*, pp. 261–263 (entry of July 31, 1940).

the Madagascar Plan was an important psychological step toward the Final Solution.

Even as Hitler in the last half of 1940 commenced planning for the invasion of Russia, which would fundamentally alter the Nazi perspective on eastern Europe, population transfer policies were not immediately affected. While neither the Lublin Reservation nor Madagascar Plan had been realized by the Fall of 1940, old habits, thought patterns, and temptations died hard. Through the Spring of 1941, the expulsion policy spasmodically revived as local Gauleiters along the borders of the Third Reich – both west and east – successfully prevailed upon Hitler to rid themselves of some of their undesired population through piecemeal deportations into Vichy France and the General Government. Hitler's open encouragement inspired the demographic engineers to produce yet another plan for massive population transfers of both Poles and Jews in early 1941, only once again to encounter insurmountable obstacles and cancellation.

With the defeat of France, Alsace and Lorraine had been reannexed to the Third Reich and joined to the Baden and Saarpfalz *Gaue*. Beginning in July the Germans began deporting Jews, Gypsies, asocials, criminals, mentally ill, and ardent French nationalists out of these newly annexed territories into France.⁴⁹ By mid-December the Germans had deported over 70,000 people, including 3,300 Jews, from Alsace-Lorraine, and barred the return of an even greater number who had fled.⁵⁰

In this massive upheaval of humanity, it is not surprising that someone perceived the possibility of including the German Jews of Baden and Saarpfalz, thus making those *Gaue judenfrei*. According to Eich-

⁴⁹ That Himmler saw these population expulsions in the same light as the expulsions from the incorporated territories in the east can be seen in his speech to officers of the Waffen-SS in Metz: "Exactly the same thing took place in Poland at 40 degrees below zero, where we had to ship out thousands and tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands, where we had to have the toughness – this you should hear but then immediately forget – to shoot thousands of leading Poles." *IMT*, vol. 29, p. 104 (1918-PS: Himmler speech at Metz).

⁵⁰ For Lorraine: *IMT*, vol. 31 pp. 283–294 (2916-PS: overview of evacuations to November 15, 1940, compiled by the Chief of Sipo-SD). For Alsace: Akten der Parteikanzlei der NSDAP, 101 23821 (Chef der Zivilverwaltung im Elsass, April 22, 1941, to Bormann, on census of February 15, 1941).

mann, it was the Gauleiter of Baden, Robert Wagner, who made the proposal to Himmler, and the latter agreed "impulsively" without even considering the possible complications.⁵¹ With Hitler's approval 6,504 German Jews were expelled into Vichy France on October 22–23 past the unsuspecting French border guards who assumed they were deportees from Alsace-Lorraine.⁵² The ensuing diplomatic hassle at the armistice negotiations in Wiesbaden made further such deportations in the west impossible, however.

In the east the momentum behind expulsion policy was also decreasing, as Polish peasants stubbornly evaded roundups by spending their nights in the field or forest. Often only 40 percent of those earmarked for arrest could actually be seized.⁵³ No one was more pleased about this than Hans Frank. At a rare meeting of the eastern Gauleiters in Hitler's apartment on October 2, 1940, Frank could not resist boasting to Hitler about his success in the General Government, noting in particular the ghettoization of the Warsaw Jews then underway. Baldur von Schirach, the attentive Gauleiter of Vienna sitting on the other side of Hitler, immediately burst in that he had 50,000 Jews that Frank must take. Koch of East Prussia immediately proffered some Poles and Jews of his own. Hitler made no explicit decision and did not even mention the Jews specifically, but he did indicate his general line of thinking. The population density of the General Government was unimportant, he is alleged to have noted. It was only to be a "great Polish work camp."⁵⁴

A month later Hitler, according to Frank, made clear to him his "urgent wish" that more Poles be taken into the General Government. In December Hitler was reported by Frank to have been even more insistent, declaring that "the Polish resettlement in the General Government was in line with his policy"⁵⁵ The renewed deportations were to

⁵¹ Eichmann Interrogation, vol. I, pp. 141, 145.

⁵² Bernhard Lösener, "Als Rassereferent im Reichsministerium des Innern," VfZ IX/3 (1961), p. 295.

⁵³ *Documenta Occupationis* (Poznan, 1959), VIII, p. 62 (Lodz Gestapo report, July 25, 1940).

⁵⁴ *IMT*, vol. 39, pp. 426–429 (Bormann note on Hitler discussion of October 2, 1940).

⁵⁵ Frank, *Diensttagebuch*, p. 302 (entry of November 6, 1940) and p. 327 (entry of January 15, 1941).

include not only Poles but also Jews, as Hitler intervened directly to authorize the expulsion of Viennese Jews to solve the housing shortage in that city.⁵⁶

With Hitler's encouragement expulsion fever among the Germans was clearly on the rise. Eichmann's experts in the east were summoned to Berlin on December 17 for a meeting on the "third short-range plan" for the resettlement of ethnic Germans from Bessarabia, Bukovina, Dobrudja, and Lithuania.⁵⁷ To make room for the ethnic Germans, Heydrich intended to deport no less than 831,000 people in the coming year. In addition the army wanted 200,000 people relocated to the General Government to create vast training areas. Thus over one million people were to be moved to the General Government within the framework of the "third short-range plan." By its own statistics, that is not including the refugees who fled on their own and "wild" deportations, the SS had deported a total of 261,517 people to the General Government between December 1939 and January 1941.⁵⁸ Thus Heydrich was actually planning to deport four times as many people into the General Government in the coming year as had been deported in the last. In short, the Nazis hoped in 1941 to dwarf the demographic upheavals they had already engineered.

Once again, however, the grandiose schemes of the Nazis reflected their ambitions more than their capacities. The problem was no longer opposition from Frank, who now found Hitler's wishes in this matter all too clear.⁵⁹ Instead the transportation situation in the months before Barbarossa made realization of expulsions on the planned scale unattainable. The deportations, begun in late January, uprooted some 25,000 people – including 9,000 Jews – before they were abruptly stopped on March 15.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ 1950-PS (Lammers to Schirach, December 3, 1940).

⁵⁷ YVA, 0-53/66/231 (Eichmann to Höppner, Krumei, Abromeit, Schlegel, and Riedel, December 12, 1940).

⁵⁸ YVA, JM 3582, Abschlussbericht 1941.

⁵⁹ Frank, *Diensttagebuch*, p. 309 (entry of December 2, 1940), and p. 326 (conference of January 15, 1941).

⁶⁰ YVA, 0-53/68/682-3 (report on Jewish evacuation in Danzig-West Prussia, February 19, 1941). YVA, JM 3582, Abschlussbericht 1941. Herbert Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung: Die Juden in Österreich 1938-1945* (Munich, 1978), pp. 261-

The repeated failure of German plans for massive population transfers, especially those for solving the Jewish question, frustrated not only the demographic engineers of the SS but Hitler as well. According to an account by Hitler's adjutant, Major Engel, the Führer ruminated openly about the Jewish question before Bormann, Keitel, Speer and Ley in February 1941. Hitler observed that while the war would speed a solution, it also brought forth many more difficulties. Originally he had thought only of breaking the power of the Jews in Germany, but now his goal had to be the exclusion of Jewish influence in the entire Axis sphere. "If [I] only knew where one could put several million Jews, there were not so many after all," he lamented. When he remarked that he would make France provide Madagascar, Bormann questioned how the Jews could be sent there during the war. Hitler replied that one would have to consider that problem. He would provide the entire German navy for that purpose, except that he would not subject it to the risk of attack. According to Engel, Hitler then revealed that he "was thinking of many things in a different way, that was not exactly more friendly."⁶¹

Indeed, preparations for Barbarossa not only cut short the expulsions of the "third short-range plan" but opened the way for Hitler and the Nazis to think about many things in a "different way" by reorienting and transforming the Nazi slogans of *Lebensraum* and *Endlösung*. As articulated and practiced between 1939 and 1941, *Lebensraum* meant a long-term process of racial consolidation in the incorporated territories. On several occasions Hitler remarked that his eastern Gauleiters had ten years to tell him that Germanization of their provinces was complete, and he would ask no questions about their methods.⁶²

262. *Biuletyn*, XII, 138F–139F (Müller to Königsberg, Gotenhafen, Posen, Lodz, Wien, March 15, 1941).

⁶¹ Hildegard von Kotze, ed., *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler 1938–1943: Aufzeichnungen des Majors Engel* (Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 94–95. Though cast in the form of diary notes written at the time, this account was compiled by Engel later. The dating of events has been shown to be unreliable in at least several instances (see the note of the editor on p. 67).

⁶² Groscurth, *Tagebücher*, p. 381 (Document Nr. 24, unsigned memorandum of October 18, 1939). *IMT*, vol. 39, pp. 426–429 (Bormann note of Hitler statement, October 2, 1940). *Hitler's Secret Conversations* (New American Library, 1961), p. 48 (entry of August 1, 1941).

Likewise Hitler told Rosenberg in September 1939 that only time would tell if Germanization would – “after decades” – expand further east. Himmler’s argument of June 1940 that a land belonged to the German people only when every last tiller of the soil was German also implied years, even generations, of consolidation. The *Endlösung* in this period meant the expulsion of the Jews to the furthest extremity of the German sphere of influence, first Lublin and then Madagascar. Little was done immediately to implement this version of the final solution, however. Of the nearly half-million Poles and Frenchmen expelled by the Nazi demographic engineers in this period, less than ten percent were Jews. Eichmann’s frequent attempts to set full-scale Jewish deportations underway in October 1939, January 1940, and again in the Summer of 1940 all came to naught, for the Nazis temporarily conceded priority to the need to rescue and resettle endangered ethnic Germans. The Jewish question was just as important though not as urgent as *volksdeutsch* resettlement.

The decision to invade Russia brought about a reversal of these priorities. Driven on by his frustration with the military stalemate in the west, his own fervent anti-Bolshevism, his vision of Russia as a land destined for German expansion, his calculation that through the growth of the U.S. and USSR time worked against Germany, his increasing sense of himself as the man of destiny who must do all in his own lifetime, and the pervasive and ceaseless activism that possessed his own psyche as well as the Nazi movement, Hitler opted for Barbarossa.⁶³ The ideology of *Lebensraum* as practiced between 1939 and 1941 was radical in its methods but relatively conservative in its foreign policy implications. It did not compel an invasion of Russia; on the contrary,

⁶³ For the most recent discussion of Hitler’s decision to invade Russia, see the contribution of Jürgen Förster in: *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, vol. IV, *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion* (Stuttgart, 1983), pp. 3–37. Förster argues that Hitler’s anti-Bolshevism and vision of *Lebensraum* in Russia dovetailed with the strategic impasse in which he found himself. “Das Ausgreifen nach Osten, das große außenpolitische Ziel seit den zwanziger Jahren, war für Hitler nun auch zum Mittel geworden, Deutschland aus der Zwangslage zu befreien, in die es durch seine axiomatische Grundvorstellungen, sein politisches Vabanquespiel, die nachgiebige Haltung der britischen Regierung sowie die konsequente globale Politik Roosevelts hineingeraten war.” (p. 33)

it was transformed by that invasion from a doctrine of gradual racial consolidation into one of limitless expansion.

In the process the Nazi view of a final solution to the Jewish Question was radicalized as well. Limitless expansion into Russia meant ever more Jews. A problem that had already proved intractable threatened to reach immense proportions. The whole sequence of thwarted expulsion plans between 1939 and 1941 had both accustomed the Nazis to thinking in terms of an imminent final solution and frustrated them as, like a mirage, this vision of a *judenfrei* German empire continually receded before their advance. The time was ripe to break the vicious circle. Murder was in the air as the Germans prepared for a *Vernichtungskrieg* in Russia, and in these circumstances the Russian Jews could hardly be spared the fate awaiting so many others.

This whole tendency was intensified by the fundamental position of the Jewish-Bolshevik identity in Nazi ideology. When the Nazis invaded Poland in September 1939, the fate of the Polish Jews could wait but the fate of the Polish intelligentsia could not. The *Einsatzgruppen* were targeted to carry out the immediate genocidal elimination of all potential carriers of the Polish national identity. As the Nazis prepared to confront Bolshevism in 1941, neither the Russian commissars nor Russian Jews could wait; both would have to be eliminated by the onrushing *Einsatzgruppen*, for ultimately they were one – the political and biological manifestations of the same ‘Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy.’

Once underway the mass-murder of the Jews rapidly intensified. In the Summer of 1941, probably in July, Hitler indicated his approval for the preparation of a plan for the mass murder of all European Jews under Nazi control, though just how and when this was communicated to Himmler and Heydrich cannot be established. By October the plan for the Final Solution had emerged in the form of deportation to death camps equipped with poison gas facilities, and steps were being taken (the transfer of euthanasia personnel from Germany to Poland and the beginning of death camp construction at Chelmno and Belzec) that were inconceivable without Hitler’s general approval.⁶⁴ The physical

⁶⁴ Christopher R. Browning, *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York, 1985), pp. 8–38.

extermination of all European Jewry had become a top Nazi priority, while other visions of demographic engineering as outlined in the *Generalplan Ost* were for the most part postponed.⁶⁵

Thus the achievement of *Lebensraum* through the invasion of Russia and the Final Solution to the Jewish Question through systematic mass murder were intimately connected and did indeed become the nucleus of Nazi policy, as Hillgruber and Jäckel have so cogently argued. But was this primarily the result of a clever and calculating Hitler awaiting the opportune moment to implement programmatic ideological goals that had crystallized in the 1920s? I would say no. The programmatic view is based primarily upon various statements made by Hitler, such as those in the late 1920s threatening a ‘‘bloody’’ solution ‘‘through the sword’’ or his famous January 1939 Reichstag prophecy that the outbreak of war would mean the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe.⁶⁶ My interpretation does not ignore such evidence or dismiss it as mere rhetoric. I am merely arguing that such statements should be seen in a pre-Auschwitz perspective, remembering that the reality of Auschwitz was literally inconceivable to its contemporaries.

If actually implemented, the Lublin Reservation or Madagascar Plan – with the inevitable decimation of the Jewish population that would have been involved – would not have been viewed as falling short of Hitler’s pre-war threats of blood and destruction. In this light Hitler’s remarks about ‘‘removal’’ or *Entfernung* of the Jews on the one hand and his threats of destruction on the other should not be seen as duplicity and camouflage juxtaposed with malevolent hints of the Final Solution to come. Rather they referred to one and the same general vision, the destructive expulsion of the Jews (first from Germany and then from a German-dominated Europe) as eventually embodied in the resettlement schemes of 1939–1941. Certainly, Hitler’s explicit endorsement of and support for these expulsion schemes do little to sustain the idea that he did not take them seriously. Nor does the fact that Jewish emigration from Germany was permitted until October 1941 indicate that Hitler already had in mind the ultimate Final Solution, that

⁶⁵ Koehl. *RKFDV*, p. 146–162, 226–228. Helmut Heiber, ed., ‘‘Der Generalplan Ost,’’ *VfZ*, VI (1958), pp. 281–325.

⁶⁶ Cited in Jäckel, *Hitler’s Weltanschauung*, pp. 60–61.

is the compulsive attempt systematically to murder every last Jewish man, woman, and child within the German grasp. Thus the period of 1939–1941 was not a hiatus or detour from Nazi ideology but rather a real attempt to implement *Lebensraum* and the *Endlösung* as they were understood at the time. The transformation of these concepts was brought about in large part by the changing situation and cumulative frustration that the Nazis experienced.

A brief look at chronology would also suggest that the transformation may have been induced as much by Hitler's fluctuating moods as by a fanatically consistent adherence to a fixed program. In September 1939, in the flush of victory over Poland, Hitler approved the initial plan for a demographic reorganization of eastern Europe along racial lines. In May and June 1940, with the astonishing victory over France, he approved Himmler's memorandum on the treatment of the eastern populations and the Madagascar Plan. In July 1941, after Nazi armies had torn through Russian border defenses, encircled huge numbers of Russian troops, and raced two-thirds the distance to Moscow, he approved the drawing up of a plan for the mass murder of European Jewry. And in October 1941, with the great encirclement victory of Vyasma and Bryansk and a brief rekindled hope for final triumph before Winter, he approved the Final Solution.⁶⁷ Nazi racial policy was radicalized in quantum jumps that coincided with the peaks of German military success, as the euphoria of victory emboldened and tempted an elated Hitler to dare ever more drastic policies. It was with the end of military victories that Hitler clung stubbornly and fanatically to the precepts of 1941, investing them with a permanence and ultimacy they did not have until then.

⁶⁷ On Hitler's briefly renewed confidence in quick victory, recalling the atmosphere of July, see Andreas Hillgruber, *Staatsmänner bei Hitler* (Frankfurt, 1967), vol. I, pp. 626–627, 630.