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Hitler's Motive for the Holocaust [2014]

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Edited by

Wolfgang Bialas and Lothar Fritze

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Hitler's Motive for the Holocaust

Gunnar Heinsohn

I. The frustration of the researchers

Like nobody else, Léon Poliakov (1910-1997) dealt with the Holocaust as well as with all other murders of Jews. In North America he is called “Mr. Anti-semitism”, after his eight-volumed “The History of Anti-semitism” (1977-1988). From *La Condition des Juifs en France* from 1946 until the English reworking of the Aryan myth (*The Aryan Myth*) in 1996, it had been book after book and essay after essay for half a century. Nevertheless, until shortly before his death Poliakov's helplessness toward Hitler (1889-1945) and the destruction of the Jews would not end. Is it thus really surprising that less experienced historians are despairing completely?

Being an early master of research on Hitler and also a decades-long observer of the debate, Alan Bullock¹ (1914-2004) also belongs to this group: “The more I learn about Hitler, the more difficult it is for me to find an explanation”². Also Ulrich Herbert (*1951), maybe Germany's most renowned junior historian on the NS period³ and a Leibniz Award Winner already in 1999, is not able to find a satisfactory approach to the matter: “As there is no theory on the Holocaust, [...] it is basically discussing the event itself again and again which might lead our interest toward gaining insight”⁴. Götz Aly (*1947), one of the most studious authors on the topic, is at best ready to rule out what cannot have played a crucial role: “These days, no serious historian will attribute [...] the main or even sole responsibility for the murder of Europe's Jews to 'Hitler's obsessions'”⁵. But even this minimal position meets resistance from his colleague Hanns C. Löhner (*1961) who is fifteen years younger: “There is no doubt about Hitler's responsibility for the destruction of Europe's Jews during World War II”⁶. Both scientists are trying to give their best, indeed they summarize their life's work writing on invitation by

1 Cp. Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny*, Odhams Press, London 1952. Idem, *Hitler. Eine Studie über Tyrannie*, Droste, Düsseldorf 1953.

2 Ron Rosenbaum, *Die Hitler-Debatte: Auf der Suche nach dem Ursprung des Bösen*, Europa-Verlag, München/Wien 1999, p. 7.

3 Cp. Ulrich Herbert, *Best. Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft 1903-1989*, Bonn 1996. Idem (ed.), *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik 1939-1945: Neue Forschungen und Kontroversen*, Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, Frankfurt a. M. 1998.

4 Herbert, *Best*, p. 66.

5 Götz Aly, “Die vielfachen Tatbeiträge zum Mord an den europäischen Juden”. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, dated 15 January 2002, p. 49.

6 Hannes C. Löhner, “Hitlers Befehl”. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24 January 2004, p. 33.

the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on the occasion of the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz (27 January 1945).

Even more attention than the above mentioned authors is attracted by Ian Kershaw (*1953), currently the most extensive Hitler biographer.⁷ But even he is unable to provide more than a historic report: “In the worst possible way, Hitler demonstrated what we are capable of. ‘Auschwitz’ comes to the limits of what can be explained: historians can describe how it happened, but why it happened is a completely different question”⁸. Even after seven more years of consideration, he has not come any closer to an explanation: “[Hitler was] an authoritarian type obsessed with an extraordinary and hardly explainable desire for destruction”⁹.

Hardly different from Kershaw are the results by the award winner of the *Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels*, Saul Friedländer (*1932). With his thesis of a specifically German kind of redemption-antisemitism he has produced one of the about fifty general Holocaust theories presented since 1945.¹⁰ However, he was perceived to a lesser degree as, at the time, everyone was still discussing Daniel Goldhagen’s (*1959) thesis of an extremely eliminatory kind of German anti-Semitism.¹¹ However, Friedländer succeeded in being frustrated with the attempt of trying to grasp Hitler’s motivation even twenty years before Kershaw: “We know the details of what happened; we know the chronology of events, but the underlying dynamics of the phenomenon evade our grasp”¹².

Also Israel’s leading Holocaust historian failed his readers: “In principle, Hitler can be explained; but this does not mean that he has been explained”¹³. Is an excursion into philosophy more helpful? As a moral philosopher, Hungarian author Agnes Heller (*1929) stands out in the genre,¹⁴ for which, after seven earlier awards, she was awarded the Goethe Medal in 2010: “The Holocaust can neither be explained nor understood. It did not serve any purpose; it was neither a kind of liberation nor an event within a causal chain. [...] What is irrational and unreasonable *per se* cannot be integrated”¹⁵. Let us turn to Poland’s Wladyslaw Bartoszewski (*1922) who did not only himself suffer at Auschwitz but after-

7 Cp. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889-1936*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1998.

8 Idem, “‘In gewisser Weise war er der Mann ohne Eigenschaften: Die Geschichte Hitlers ist auch die Geschichte seiner Unterschätzung.’ An interview with Ian Kershaw, the author of the new great Hitler biography. .” In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 October 1988, pp. 4-5.

9 Idem, “‘Was wäre gewesen, wenn?’”, Interview by Frank Schirrmacher and Stefan Aust with Ian Kershaw”. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19 March 2005, p. 36.

10 Cp. Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden, 2. Bde.*, C. H. Beck, München 1998.

11 Cp. Daniel N. Goldhagen, *Hitlers willige Vollstrecker*, Siedler, Berlin 1996.

12 Saul Friedländer, “Vom Antisemitismus zur Judenvernichtung. Eine historiographische Studie zur nationalsozialistischen Judenpolitik und Versuch einer Interpretation”. In: Eberhard Jäckel/Jürgen Rohwer (eds.), *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Entschlußbildung und Verwirklichung*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1985, pp. 18-60, here 49.

13 Rosenbaum, *Die Hitler-Debatte*, p. 7.

14 Cp. Agnes Heller, *A Philosophy of Morals*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford/Boston 1990.

15 Idem, “‘Schreiben nach Auschwitz? Schweigen über Auschwitz? Philosophische Betrachtungen eines Tabus. Die Weltzeituhr stand still’”. In: *Die Zeit*, 7 May 1993, pp. 61.

wards completed his education as a historian. He does not give us any hope either: “Today, the historic, political, theological, and philosophical literature on Auschwitz encompasses some thousands of books and an even larger number of smaller contributions, probably in all languages. The phenomenon of Auschwitz is a topic not only for scientists but also for artists. Nevertheless it remains incomprehensible, ungraspable, and most incredible”¹⁶.

What do educated laypeople say? Who could represent them better than Ernst Cramer (1913-2010)? He is one of the Jews who were saved in 1945, and in January 2006, on the occasion of Auschwitz Liberation Day at the German Bundestag, he condensed the sixty years of considering the question this way: “This genocide was the biggest catastrophe which has ever befallen the Jews, and at the same time [the] most ungraspable tragedy of German history”¹⁷.

If science and philosophy fail, it is time to ask the artists. Arguably, nobody else has spent as much time on the destruction of the Jews as Claude Lanzmann (*1925) who in 1985 presented the nine-hour-long film *Shoa*: “I claim that there are no [historic explanations]. It was my iron rule not to be interested in understanding. To the question “why”, an SS man answered to the prisoner Primo Levi: There is no “why” here. That is the truth. Searching for “why” is absolutely obscene. / Historians create their causal chains: the Great Depression, unemployment, the defeat in World War I, Bolshevism, the time of Hitler’s youth, and so on. These may have been some of the conditions which were necessary for the development of murderous anti-Semitism, but they are not sufficient”¹⁸.

Of course, there are also Holocaust researchers who, for reasons of popular education, are not interested in looking for Hitler’s motivation. They are afraid of whitewashing his countless helpers if they only concentrated on the overlord. Indeed, such a danger cannot be ruled out. However, once you have several hundred murders on your desk, it soon becomes clear that there is never a lack of ready and willing henchmen but that, in most cases, they do not occupy positions from which it is possible to give orders.¹⁹ Thus, the fact that perpetrators can be found in almost every case does not provide an explanation, for these people are available also before and after the killings.

According to Léon Poliakov, the most experienced and medially multi-talented of all researchers on Hitler was Joachim C. Fest (1926-2006). For 43

16 Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, “‘Unfassbar, unbegreiflich, unglaublich: Die Baupläne von Auschwitz’“. In: *Die Welt*, 17 February 2009, p. 7.

17 Ernst Cramer, “‘In vielen Menschen hatte der Teufel über Gott gesiegt’“. In: *Die Welt*, 28 January 2006, p. 4.

18 Claude Lanzmann, “‘Der Tod ist ein Skandal’. Der französische ‘Shoah’-Verfilmer Claude Lanzmann über sein Leben, seinen Memoirenband ‘Der patagonische Hase’, die Erinnerung an die Judenvernichtung und die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit“. In: *Der Spiegel*, 6 September 2010.

19 Cp. Gunnar Heinsohn, *Lexikon der Völkermorde*, Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1999.

years he presented works on Hitler's Germany.²⁰ Two years before his death he seized the occasion to lament the futility of his work: "I do not comprehend it [the murder of the Jews – G. H.], and nobody who has ever dealt with it has even come close [...] to a convincing interpretation"²¹. How are parents, educators, teachers, pastors, , journalists, politicians, and professors to be able to explain it if their question "Why Auschwitz" cannot even be answered by the best experts? Pupils despairing over their elders cannot even find a solution in Wikipedia shortly before class starts:

"Only by Hitler's permission and approval, and on his orders, as is the general consensus among historians, were the subordinate groups of the NS perpetrators able to systematically exterminate the Jews. Nevertheless, it is still being debated which factors were crucial for the escalation"²². However, what is investigated is not Hitler's motivation behind his "permission". Only the controversies about the indeed not always easily comprehensible steps toward implementation are presented. For example, most experts see the Holocaust start as early as autumn 1939.²³ Others do not deny the early killings in Poland but believe that things started as late as December 1941 because that is when the USA joined the war.²⁴ However, the chronological distance between the shots he fires does not say anything about a murderer's motives. About this, the analysts stay tight-lipped.

However, the nestor among them all, i.e. Poliakov, does not look all too pessimistic anymore at the end of his long way. In his last essay "Les vraies raisons des crimes hitlériens" ("The real reasons for Hitler's crimes") — he quotes the following passage from his own French translation: "Hitler does not leave any doubt about his knowledge that his genocidal 'methods' are in accordance with archaic law. That is precisely why he wants to reestablish the pagan law of antiquity, which had had to give way to the Jewish law. On 6 August 1942 he monologizes: 'I imagine that these days the one or the other wonder: how can the Fuehrer destroy a city like Petersburg <Leningrad>! When I recognize that the species is in danger, my emotions are replaced by ice-cold reason: all I see are the victims of the future if something is not sacrificed today. / Petersburg must disappear. Here,

20 E.g. Joachim Fest, *Das Gesicht des Dritten Reiches. Profile einer totalitären Herrschaft*, Piper, München 1963. Idem, *Hitler. Eine Biographie*, Propyläen, Frankfurt a. M. 1973. Idem, *Die unbeantwortbaren Fragen. Notizen über Gespräche mit Albert Speer zwischen Ende 1966 und 1981*, Rowohlt Taschenbuch, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2006.

21 Idem, "'Mitleidlosigkeit bis zum allerletzten Punkt'". In: *Die Welt*, 10 September 2004, p. 3.

22 Wikipedia, "Holocaustforschung". In: <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaustforschung>, last access in November 2010.

23 Cp. Peter Longerich, "Die Eskalation der NS-Judenverfolgung zur 'Endlösung': Herbst 1939 bis Sommer 1942". In: *Symposium on the Origins of Nazi Policy*, Gainesville/FL 1998.

24 Cp. Hans Safrian, *Die Eichmann-Männer*, Europa-Verlag, Wien 1993. Christian Gerlach, "Die Wannseekonferenz, das Schicksal der deutschen Juden und Hitlers Grundsatzentscheidung, alle Juden Europas zu ermorden". In: *WerkstattGeschichte*, vol. 6 (1997) no. 18, pp. 7-44. Idem, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord: Forschungen zur deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Hamburger Edition, Hamburg 1998.

one must apply ancient principles, the city must be completely razed to the ground. [Also] Moscow as the seat of the [Communist] doctrine will disappear from the earth. / I do not feel anything when razing Kiev, Moscow and Petersburg to the ground'.²⁵ / 'Conscience is a Jewish invention' Hitler espoused already at the beginning of the 1930s. By his decision for the extinction of Jewry, this obstacle to genocide was to be cleared out of the way"²⁶.

This passage by Poliakov comes from *Why Auschwitz?*, which this author, two years after having presented a first version of the thesis in an essay²⁷ – published in 1995.²⁸ Soon, the psychoanalyst Béla Grunberger followed Poliakov.²⁹ However, he was predominantly interested in the author's thesis of the occidental hatred of Jewry as an expression of the conflict between the God of Abraham who spared the son, and the Christian God who sacrificed his son.³⁰ In 1998, the Catholic intellectual Carl Amery (1922-2005) based his *Hitler as Predecessor* on *Why Auschwitz?* However, it was to take half a decade³¹ until with Dan Stone (University of London), a Holocaust researcher in the stricter sense, adopted the thesis of *Why Auschwitz?*.³² In 2005, Rolf Zimmermann followed with *Philosophy after Auschwitz*. In 2001, Jonathan C. Friedman (University of Maryland, College Park) adopted these ideas in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*.³³ Thus, the author did not have much to present which might convince his colleagues.

But what are we talking about? Even for him in those days there was no doubt that the murder of the Jews had been decided before the beginning of the war when he points to Reinhard Heydrich's (1904-1942) secret order issued three weeks after the beginning of the war (21 September 1939). As the head of the "Reichssicherheitshauptamt", Heydrich was Hitler's executor but not the one

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- 25 Albert Speer, *Der Sklavenstaat. Meine Auseinandersetzung mit der SS*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1981, p. 422. Bibliographic information is not in Poliakov's translation of the original Heinsohn, 1995 (see below FN 28).
- 26 Léon Poliakov, "Les vraies raisons des crimes hitlériens". In: *L'Infini. Littérature, Philosophie, Art, Science, Politique*, vol. 46 (1996), pp. 76-79, here 77.
- 27 Cp. Gunnar Heinsohn, "Umweltapokalyptiker und Ökokrieger: Die Zukunft des Völkermords". In: Joachim Wilke (ed.), *Zum Naturbegriff der Gegenwart. Kongreßdokumentation zum Projekt „Natur im Kopf“*, Stuttgart, 21. - 26. Juni 1993, Bd. 1: *Problemata*, published by Kulturamt des Landeshauptamtes Stuttgart, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1993, pp. 225-260.
- 28 Cp. Gunnar Heinsohn, *Warum Auschwitz? Hitlers Plan und die Ratlosigkeit der Nachwelt*, Rowohlt, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1995, pp. 164.
- 29 Cp. Béla Grunberger/Pierre Dessuant, *Narzißmus, Christentum, Antisemitismus: Eine psychoanalytische Untersuchung*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 2000.
- 30 At first Gunnar Heinsohn, *Was ist Antisemitismus? - Der Ursprung von Monotheismus und Judentum*, Eichborn, Frankfurt a. M. 1988.
- 31 Cp. Dan Stone (ed.), *Theoretical Interpretations of the Holocaust*, Editions Rodopi, Amsterdam/Atlanta/GA 2001, pp. 94.
- 32 Cp. Gunnar Heinsohn, "What Makes the Holocaust a Uniquely Unique Genocide?" In: *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 2 (2000) no. 2, pp. 411-430
- 33 Cp. Jonathan C. Friedman (ed.), *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, Routledge, London/New York 2011, p. 509.

providing him with motivation. Raoul Hilberg (1926-2007) said that not even Heydrich comprehended his Fuehrer: "Heydrich told him [Adolf Eichmann, 1906-1962]: The Fuehrer has now decided the physical extinction of the Jewish people. And even Heydrich seemed to have been disturbed. Even he was not able to really comprehend the extent of the consequences of these words."³⁴ Nevertheless, he issued the order for the extinction:

"To the heads of all Einsatzgruppen of the Sicherheitspolizei concerning: the Jewish problem in the occupied [Polish] territory. I refer to today's meeting in Berlin and once again point out that the intended overall measures (that is the final goal) must strictly be kept secret. It must be distinguished between
The final goal (which will require longer periods of time)
1. The steps toward achieving the final goal (which will be carried out in the near future)
The intended measures require the most thorough preparations both in respect of technology and of economy. It is a matter of course that from here the oncoming tasks cannot be determined in every detail. At the same time the following instructions and guidelines are meant to instruct the heads of the Einsatzgruppen to make practicable considerations."³⁵

Thus, even the allegedly arbitrary acts by which SS leaders are said to have changed the Holocaust into an independent process against Hitler's wishes, or at least without his knowledge, are here directly ordered in the form of demanding "practicable considerations".

II. Hitler's indisputable motives for his other large-scale killings

The first large group of victims of the more than 300.000 originally targeted by Hitler-Germany, more than 100,000 from September 1939 on, was eliminated because they were considered a costly burden for the nation, thus weakening it from the inside.³⁶ Beginning in Poland, everywhere within the borders of the intended great empire the mentally and physically handicapped were killed. However, the handicapped outside of the demarcation lines were not targeted.

Another large group of victims that was eliminated were the Sinti and the Roma: vasectomies were enforced from 1934 on, with deportations starting in 1936 and ending with at least 200,000 dead by 1945 because they were considered

34 Raul Hilberg, "Podiumsdiskussion". In: Eberhard Jäckel/Jürgen Rohwer (eds.), *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Entschlußbildung und Verwirklichung*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1985, p. 187.

35 "Schnellbrief Heydrichs an die Chefs der Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei vom 21. September 1939, die 'Judenfrage' in den besetzten Gebieten Polens betreffend". In: <http://forum.ioh.pl/download.php?id=65003&sid=da446dc1a4f1064e25c40689840351d4>.

36 Ernst Klee, "Euthanasie" im NS-Staat. Die "Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens", Fischer, Frankfurt a. M. 1983.

social parasites despite the fact that, doubtlessly, they were Indo-Aryan. The Roma living outside the borders of the intended great empire were not killed. The same holds true also for select contingencies within these borders although it is no over-interpretation to understand Heinrich Himmler's so called Auschwitz edict of 16 December 1942 as the instruction for a final solution.³⁷

Homosexuals were persecuted because they were under suspicion of hardly, or not at all, reproducing themselves and of 'infecting' others. Being stigmatized by having to wear a pink triangle, 5,000 to 15,000 of them were deported to concentration camps starting in 1935. Between 50 to 60 per cent of them died. Nevertheless, there were no intentions to murder all the homosexuals within the Reich or outside its borders.³⁸

The Slavs were by far the largest group of victims of Hitler-Germany. The "General Plan East"³⁹ targeted more than 150 million of them, 100 million from the USSR alone. About 11 million, not including the soldiers killed in combat, died after September 1939. They had been living in the territories which were meant to become the "Lebensraum" for 30 million German settlers. Slavs living outside the borders of the intended great empire were not persecuted. This holds true also for Germanized Slavs (Ruhr Poles etc.) who might even have become settlers themselves.⁴⁰

Probably the smallest group of minorities persecuted was that of the 25,000 to 30,000 Jehovah's Witnesses that did not even constitute 0.04 per cent of the Reich's population. Their strict observance of the Jewish sanctity of life, which found its expression in conscientious objection, was punished as their most severe crime. Almost one-half of all Jehovah's Witnesses suffered persecution and imprisonment. 2,000 of them, – marked by a purple triangle, – were taken to concentration camps. About 1,500 of them died, and 270 were executed for conscientious objection.⁴¹ As they also rejected anti-Semitism, the ideological attacks on the Jehovah's Witnesses were most similar to those on the Jews.

The second-largest group of victims of Hitler-Germany persecuted immediately after 1933, whose loss totaled five-and-a-half million people, were killed Europe-wide. They were killed even in territories which were not meant to become parts of the Reich (Hungary, France, and the Balkans etc.). For the time being, there is no consensus at all in reference to Hitler's motives for these mass

37 Distributed as an express letter from the Reichskriminalpolizeiamt [Imperial Criminal Police] of 29 January 1943. Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid. Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"*, Wallstein, Hamburg 1996, pp. 301.

38 Cp. Rüdiger Lautmann/Winfried Grikschat/Egbert Schmidt, "Der rosa Winkel in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern". In: Rüdiger Lautmann (ed.), *Seminar Gesellschaft und Homosexualität*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1977, pp. 325.

39 Cp. Czesław Madajczyk (ed.), *Vom Generalplan Ost zum Generalsiedlungsplan. Dokumente*, Saur, München 1994.

40 Cp. Isabel Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut. Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas*, Wallstein, Göttingen 2003.

41 Cp. Gerald Hacke, *Die Zeugen Jehovas im Dritten Reich und in der DDR. Feindbild und Verfolgungspraxis*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2011.

murders: “One will have to turn toward Hitler once again. [...] At the top, it was Hitler alone!”⁴²

III. Hitler’s personal hatred of Jewry

From his time in Austria (1889-1913) “we do not know of any anti-Semitic remark by the young H.[itler]. / Thus, the crucial question of when anti-Semitism became the pivotal element in Hitler’s thinking cannot be answered for his time in Linz and Vienna. Its development must be attributed to later years. When, in 1919, Hitler appeared as a politician in Munich, he was already using aggressive anti-Semitic slogans”⁴³. Apart from this, the question concerning the reason for Hitler’s personal hatred of the Jews must be considered “unanswered and possibly unanswerable”⁴⁴. Of course, it further contributes to our frustration that, in Austria, the young Hitler had admired Jewish artists, defended Zionists against anti-Semites, definitely not been cheated by Jewish merchants, therefore leaving his small paintings only for them to sell, and also not been rejected by the Jewish professors at the academy of arts. As late as 1939, after the “Anschluss” of Austria in 1938, Hitler personally vouched for the safe passage of his admired family doctor, Eduard Bloch (1872-1945), from Linz to America.⁴⁵

What then exactly did Hitler say against the Jews as early as 1920, when he was not spitting with rage as according to the Gemlich letter of 16 September 1919 with a similar content?⁴⁶

“Do not think you will be able to fight a disease without killing the agent, without destroying the germ, and do not think to be able to fight racial tuberculosis without taking care that the people will be free of the agent of racial tuberculosis. The workings of Jewry will never stop as long as the agent, the Jew, is not taken away from us”⁴⁷.

That this “illness” or “racial tuberculosis” was not referring to racist-biologist anti-Semitism becomes obvious already by the fact that Hitler did not hate Semites as such. The Arab. i.e. “Semitic”, Palestinians were offered participation in the extermination of the Jews, and their leader, Mohammed Amin al-Husseini

42 Eberhard Jäckel, “Der SS-Intellektuelle: Bedurfte es keiner Befehle Hitlers, um die Vernichtungspolitik in die Welt zu setzen?” [Review of Herbert, Best]. In: *Die Zeit*, March 29, 1996, p. 18.

43 Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien. Lehrjahre eines Diktators*, Piper, München 1996, pp. 498-502.

44 Joachim Fest, “Der Auftrag kam von Hitler“. In: *Die Woche*, 29 November 1996, pp. 38-39, here 38.

45 Cp. Hamann, *Hitlers Wien*, pp. 56.

46 Cp. Eberhard Jäckel/Axel Kuhn (eds.), *Hitler. Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905-1924*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1980, pp. 88.

47 Ibid., pp. 178.

(1893-1974), became obsessed with it.⁴⁸ It was Husseini who made “Reichsleiter” Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946) work on a ban on the term “anti-Semitism”:

“The use of this term will again and again hit the Arabian world which, according to statements by the Great Mufti, is in its overwhelming majority friendly towards Germany. The enemy countries use the fact that we use the word ‘anti-Semitism’ to insinuate that this is also meant to express that we throw the Arabs into the same pot with the Jews.”⁴⁹

The expression “racial tuberculosis” must be understood as a spiritual and not a biological reference emphasized by Hitler in one of his last statements (on 3 February 1945). There, he also made clear that he did by no means consider “Aryans” or “Germans” the peak of the human species, which should permanently reproduce itself toward ever higher superiority:⁵⁰

“I never held the opinion that the Chinese or the Japanese, for example, were racially inferior. [...] I admit that their tradition is superior to ours. / Our Nordic racial consciousness is aggressive only towards the Jewish race. However, we speak of a Jewish race only for reasons of linguistic convenience, for [...] *from the genetic point of view there is no Jewish race*. Circumstances make us label in this way a racially and *spiritually* coherent group, membership of which is claimed by Jews all over the world, no matter which individual citizenship is given by passports. This group of people we call the Jewish race. [...] *The Jewish race is most of all a spiritual community./ Spiritual race is tougher and more enduring than natural race*. The Jew, wherever he goes, stays to be a Jew [...] and to us he must appear as a sad *piece of evidence for the superiority of ‘spirit’ over flesh*”⁵¹

Nevertheless, Hitler was not without racism. In its purest form it was directed at Black Africans. About 2,000 of them who lived within his domain were taken to internment camps where many of them died as a result of brutal living conditions. There were no mass shootings or gassings.⁵² Others survived the war in Berlin, for example as entertainers, appearing in films on Africa. Until 1937, about 400 Afro-Germans were subjected to enforced sterilization.⁵³ An Apartheid system was in-

48 Cp. Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem und die Nationalsozialisten. Eine politische Biographie Amin el-Husseinis*, updated, fully revised edition, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 2007. David G. Dalin/John F. Rothmann, *Icon of Evil. Hitler's Mufti and the Rise of Radical Islam*, Random House, New York 2008.

49 “Die Benutzung des Begriffs hat zu unterbleiben“. In: http://www.ns-archiv.de/verfolgung/antisemitismus/begriff_erschaffen.php.

50 E.g. Richard Weikart, *Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2009.

51 Hugh Trevor-Roper/André Francois-Poncet (eds.), *Hitlers Politisches Testament. Die Bormann Diktate vom Februar und April 1945*, Albrecht Knaus, Hamburg 1981, pp. 66-69 [Bold Type by G. H.].

52 Cp. Bettina Schäfer, “Nachwort zur deutschsprachigen Ausgabe“. In: Michèle Mailet, *Schwarzer Stern*, Berlin 1994, pp. 187-188, here 188.

53 Cp. May Opitz, “Rassismus, Sexismus und vorkoloniales Afrikabild in Deutschland“. In: Katharina Oguntoye/May Opitz/Dagmar Schultz (eds.), *Farbe bekennen. Afro-deutsche Frauen*

tended for the German colonies in Africa, which were to be reconquered. However, there were no intentions for a murderous “final solution of the Negro problem”.⁵⁴

Hitler made unmistakably clear that his fight against Jewry served other purposes than his devaluation of Black Africans, when he discussed both in the same passage:

“From time to time magazines tell the German Philistines that here or there for the first time a Negro has become a lawyer, teacher, or even a priest, nay, a heroic tenor or something. While the stupid bourgeoisie marvels at such a miraculous circus act, / the Jew is smart enough to use this as another evidence for the correctness of his theory of the equality of man, which he tries to ram down people’s throat. This completely rotten bourgeois world will not understand that it is criminal madness to train a born semi-ape man long enough to believe that he has been made a lawyer”⁵⁵.

If by Jewish “racial tuberculosis” Hitler did not refer to anything biological but to a “spiritual race” which might “decompose” other mentalities, what would be its most important feature? Current interpretations are unable to imagine anything concrete, but they believe that Hitler considered Jews even to be “biologically immoral” and by their destruction tried to “rid the world of immorality”⁵⁶. Others are convinced that in no way does “spiritual race” refer to anything religious but rather that for the first time it “was not for their faith that the Jews were persecuted in Hitler’s day”.⁵⁷

What now is the moral foundation of Jewish religion? This is expressed briefly in *Hosea* 6:6: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice”. Its most impressive commandment is “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17). Its commandment for the protection of man is most difficult to meet: “If there is a foreigner living in your country, you shall not suppress him. He shall live with you like any native, and you shall love him like yourself” (Leviticus 19: 33-34). The creed on which all of Jewry agrees is condensed in the so-called “Golden Rule”:

“Lo, today I have presented to you life and the good thing. / Today Heaven and Earth shall be my witnesses: I have presented to you life and death, blessing and curse so that you will choose life” (Deuteronomy 30. 15-19).

auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte, Orlanda Frauenverlag, Frankfurt a. M. 1992, pp. 17-64, hier 58.

54 Cp. Clarence Lusane, *Hitler’s Black Victims: The Experiences of Afro-Germans, Africans, Afro-Europeans and African Americans during the Nazi Era*, Routledge, New York 2002.

55 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf (1925/27)*, “*Volksausgabe*“ in einem Band, Franz Eher Nachfolger, München 1930, pp. 478.

56 Weikart, *Hitler’s Ethic*, p. 198.

57 Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945*, Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford 1990, p. 5.

Already in antiquity other peoples were surprised at the principle of the holiness of life. At about 300 BC, Hekataeus of Abdera contrasted the Jewish ban on killing children with the Greek right of abandoning children and of infanticide.⁵⁸ In the first century AD, Tacitus wrote on the Jews: “It is a deadly sin to kill an unwanted child”.⁵⁹ Might it be that Hitler identified the “Jewish spirit” precisely in this commandment? At the Nuremberg Party Conference in 1929 he spoke directly against the Jewish law, – since Constantine the Great also a Christian one, on the protection of life:

“If in Germany one million children were born each year and 700,000 to 800,000 of the weakest ones would be disposed of, in the end the result might even be an increase in power, after all. It is most dangerous that we ourselves cut off the natural selection process [by caring for the disabled and weak – G. H.]. The clearest racial state in history, Sparta, did systematically carry out these racial laws”⁶⁰.

Already in *Mein Kampf* Hitler had condemned the ethics of the holiness of life:

“Not coincidentally it is first of all always the Jew who tries to implant such deadly and dangerous ideas [of birth control and keeping every new born child alive; GH] into our people.”⁶¹

The first large-scale killing, personally signed by Hitler, concerned full-blooded Aryans who, having been disabled or severely mutilated during the invasion of Poland (1 September 1939), lived in his domain. This “euthanasia” was definitely met with resistance. For example, Eugen Stähle (1890-1948), Hitler’s commissary for the killing of disabled people at the Grafeneck asylum in Wuerttemberg, defended himself against Senior Church Council member Reinhold Sautter from Stuttgart (1888-1971). During a private conversation this man with a basically national attitude accused him of violating the Ten Commandments by “killing life unworthy of living”. Stähle answered: “The 5th Commandment, ‘Thou shall not kill’ is not at all a commandment by God but a Jewish invention”⁶².

Now, one might object that Stähle was not Hitler. Also, this Wuerttembergian principal is not known for having been dealing with the history of the ban on killing. Yet, things were different under Hitler so that it may definitely be possible that Stähle was acting as a mouthpiece for his supreme commander. If this statement did not come from the latter, , another source must be identified. Neverthe-

58 Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism. Vol. 1: From Herodotus to Plutarch*, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem 1976, p. 29.

59 Idem, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism. Vol. 2: From Tacitus to Simplicius*, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem 1980, p. 26.

60 Hans-Walter Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie. Von der Verhütung zur Vernichtung “lebensunwerten Lebens“ 1890-1945*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1992, p. 152.

61 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 149.

62 Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie*, p. 321.

less, one cannot claim that Hitler knew the passage in Philo (about 15 BC-40 AD) on the Jewish ban on infanticide:

“Not allowed [for us Jews] is the abandonment of children – a crime which is common with many other peoples, due to their innate misanthropy. [...] It would be stupidity to believe that those would be friendly to strangers who have betrayed those who are related to them. However, those laying their hands on them provide the clearest evidence that they themselves are manslayers and child murderers”⁶³.

That already Philo no longer understood the ban of infanticide but idealized it as a peculiar humaneness cannot be discussed here any further. From this author’s point of view it results from the ban on child sacrifice, which was perhaps continued by polytheistic Israelites who did not want to become monotheistic Jews, under the cover of birth control infanticide.⁶⁴

If it was not Stähle but Hitler himself who attacked the ban on killing as a “Jewish invention”, we must return to the President of the Danzig Senate, Hermann Rauschning (1887-1992) who joined the NSDAP in 1932 but left it in 1934, yet in the in-between time met with Hitler up to thirteen times.⁶⁵ The authenticity of Hitler’s statements in Rauschning’s *Hitler Speaks* is very much debated among scientists. Established historiography defends the basic substance of his reports.⁶⁶ Other authors, among them some from the far right⁶⁷, completely reject him as a source.⁶⁸ This is why several of the authors do not quote Rauschning at all whereas others use him *cum grano salis*. All the participants in the debate agree that Rauschning does not present any records of his meetings with Hitler and that his text includes his own interpretation. Here, I will follow neither the “mostly correct” fraction– nor the other extreme position of “just a complete invention”. I will however make use of some similar passages which are known from other sources. If we simply reject what Rauschning reports on Hitler’s ideas on the “conscience”

63 Philo, “Über die Einzelgesetze, 3, XX: 110-119“. In: <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book29.html>.

64 Cp. Gunnar Heinsohn, “Theorie des Tötungsverbotes und des Monotheismus bei den Israeliten sowie der Genese, der Durchsetzung und der welthistorischen Rolle der christlichen Familien- und Fortpflanzungsmoral“. In: Joachim Müller/Bettina Wassmann (eds.), *L’invitation au voyage zu Alfred Sohn-Rethel. Festschrift für Alfred Sohn-Rethel zum 80. Geburtstag*, Unibuchladen Wassmann, Bremen 1979. Gunnar Heinsohn, *Die Erschaffung der Götter: Das Opfer als Ursprung der Religion*, Unibuchladen Wassmann, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1997, pp. 147.

65 Cp. Theodor Schieder, *Herrmann Rauschnings “Gespräche mit Hitler“ als Geschichtsquelle*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen 1972.

66 Ibid. Martin Broszat, “‘Enthüllung? Die Rauschning-Kontroverse’“. In: Idem, *Nach Hitler. Der schwierige Umgang mit unserer Vergangenheit*, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1988.

67 Such as Wolfgang Hänel, *Herrmann Rauschnings “Gespräche mit Hitler“ – Eine Geschichtsfälschung*, Veröffentlichungen der Zeitgeschichtlichen Forschungsstelle Ingolstadt, Ingolstadt 1984.

68 See also Fritz Tobias, “Auch Fälschungen haben lange Beine. Des Senatspräsidenten Rauschnings ‘Gespräche mit Hitler’“. In: Karl Corino (ed.), *Gefälscht! Betrug in Politik, Literatur, Wissenschaft, Kunst und Musik*, Greno, Nördlingen 1988, pp. 91-105.

having been developed by Jewry, which are typically right-wing and Nietzsche-inspired, we must declare Rauschning to have been the inventor of these ideas. . At least, the manuscript of *Hitler Speaks* (published in 1940) had already been completed by 1939, that is, before the large-scale killings began. Accordingly, the ideas look much more harmless than what was about to happen.

“Not the entire book deserves defamation. Parts of it, most of all the two final chapters, are a mixture of literature and historic sources (maybe a comparison to the works by Alexander Kluge would be helpful), unique also because of the fact that they tell about events that took place in 1933/34 - and were written by a protagonist from an exposed territory. The book’s bad reputation is partly a result of historians initially using it as a convenient source of quotations. ‘From sensational excitement to scandalous condemnation’ might be a slogan for the history of its reception. But it is a historical source written by an intelligent observer who got to the heart of the substance of the dictator and his work long before the latter’s end”⁶⁹.

From his meetings with Hitler Rauschning distills: :

“This devilish ‘Thou shall, thou shall!’ And that stupid ‘Thou shall not!’ We must clean our blood from it, from this curse of Mount Sinai! [...] The day will come when against these commandments I will erect the tables of a new law. And history will recognize our movement as the great battle for the liberation of mankind, liberation from the curse of Sinai. [...] That is it what we are fighting: this masochistic attitude of self-torturing, this curse of so called morality, which is made an idol to protect the weak from the strong, given the eternal fight, the great law of Divine nature. It is the so called Ten Commandments that we fight”⁷⁰.

The few grandees of the Reich opposing the dictator seemed to understand him. And it is conspicuous that the Church representatives among them did not first of all refer to their Christian attitude but to Jewish ethics, which they felt obliged to as well. So, it was not a whimpering “Jesus died for my sins” based on the New Testament but the thunderous voice of the prophets of the Old Testament. Correspondingly, the Bishop of Muenster, Clemens August von Galen (1878-1946) condemned Hitler for the murder of disabled people during a public sermon on 3 August 1941:

“Woe to mankind, woe to our German people, if God’s holy commandment ‘Thou shall not kill’, which with thunder and lightning the Lord announced on Mount Sinai, and which right from the beginning God the Creator has inscribed into man’s conscience, is not only violated but if this violation is even accepted and exercised without punishment.”⁷¹

69 Bernd Lemke, “Rauschning, Hermann: Gespräche mit Hitler. Mit einer Einführung von Marcus Pyka, Zürich 2005” [Review]. In: *H-Soz-u-Kult vom 02.08.2006*, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/2006-3-081>>.

70 Hermann Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler*, Europa-Verlag Wien 1988, p. 210.

71 Heinrich Portmann, *Kardinal von Galen. Ein Gottesmann seiner Zeit. Mit einem Anhang: Die drei weltberühmten Predigten* [1948], Aschendorff, Münster 1961, p. 357.

However, Hitler considered the ban on killing as well as the conscience not only a restriction to his interior demographic policy against disabled people but even more a restriction to his external plans for conquest and extinction. Accordingly, he was convinced (11 November 1941) that World War I had been lost most of all as a result of pious considerateness: “During the World War we had this experience: the only religious state was Germany; and precisely that state lost the war”.⁷² Already before his attack on Poland he boasted in the presence of the League of Nations’ High Commissioner, Swiss Carl Jacob Burckhardt (1891-1974):

“If I have to wage war, I would prefer waging war the sooner the better. I would wage it differently from the Germany of William II. which constantly had scruples about using its arms to the utmost. I will fight ruthlessly to the last”⁷³.

During the mega-killings in the East aimed at tens of millions, Hitler’s thoughts circled around this gigantism, again and again:

“The ridiculous number of one-hundred thousand Slavs will be absorbed or pushed away [to Siberia]. If, in this context, someone speaks about caring, he must immediately be sent to a concentration camp”⁷⁴.

He knew that for this purpose he had to revoke the regulations of international law from the Jewish-Christian age:

“We are obliged to depopulate, just as we are obliged to adequately care for the German population. A technique of depopulation will have to be developed. You will ask: What do you mean by depopulating? Do I want to get rid of entire peoples? Yes indeed, it will be something like that. / It will be one the most important tasks of German politics for all times to prevent by all means the further growth of the Slav peoples. Natural instinct tells every being that an enemy must not only be defeated but destroyed. In ancient times it was the conqueror’s good right to extinguish entire tribes, entire peoples. / Our revolution is not just a political and social one. It is only by our movement that the Middle Ages will come to an end. Mankind has been on the wrong track. The tables from Mount Sinai have lost their validity. The conscience is a Jewish invention”⁷⁵.

Hitler read Friedrich Nietzsche’s (1844-1900) original work on the “conscience”, *The Happy Science*, in 1924 during his time at Landsberg prison:

72 Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier. Vollständig überarbeitete und erweiterte Neuausgabe mit bisher unbekanntem Selbstzeugnissen Adolf Hitlers, Abbildungen, Augenzeugenberichten und Erläuterungen des Autors: Hitler wie er wirklich war*, Seewald, Stuttgart 1976, p. 77.

73 Ernst Deuerlein, *Hitler. Eine politische Biographie*, List, München 1969, p. 144.

74 August 6, 1942, Speer, *Der Sklavenstaat*, p. 422

75 Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler*, pp. 129, 210.

“The sin is a Jewish emotion and a Jewish invention, and considering this background of all Christian morality indeed Christianity had the intention to ‘Judaize’ the whole world”⁷⁶. In the same book, Nietzsche extends this finding by an understanding of that what later psychoanalysis will call the sublimation of drives, when calling the Jews “the moral genius among the peoples” because “they were more contemptuous of man inside than any other people.”⁷⁷

Hitler researched history for patterns of mass killings that were defined as crimes against humanity not before the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century in major bodies of international law. He wanted to go back to lines of arguing way before, e.g., Franciscus de Vittoria (1486-1546), who had demanded:

“As a first legal title, the natural community and the community of all men may be referred to. / How may the innocent be treated during a just war? Firstly: ‘Though shall not kill the innocent and just’ [Exodus 23:7 – G. H.] / In a state it is not legal to punish innocent people for the crimes of the evildoers. Thus it is also illegal to kill the innocent among the enemies for the crimes of evildoers. / Even if the Prince is powerful enough to wage war, still he must not at first look for opportunities and reasons for war but must ‘if possible, live in peace with all men’, as St. Paul commands [Romans 12:18 – G. H.]. But also he shall consider again and again that the others are our neighbors whom we shall love as ourselves [Leviticus 19:18/33 f.; St. Mark 12:31 – G. H.]. / Once war has started for just reasons, it must not be waged to destroy the people against which it is waged.”⁷⁸

If Hitler’s movement was to conclude the “Middle Ages”, he apparently divided history into three ages, the final one being the one in which his own law would be valid. The first age had lasted until Moses’ Law was passed on Mount Sinai and had been determined by the common right to extinguish peoples. The second age, from Moses’ Law to Hitler, had been burdened by the blatant curtailment of the right to the extinction of peoples as well as the right to the selection of newborn children within one people in the Spartan way. The third age had begun with Hitler’s assumption of power which, for the Germans, meant that the rights to infanticide and genocide had been restored. For, as he announced as early as August 1930: “The Jew destroys the natural instinct of self-preservation within every human”⁷⁹.

Therefore, , Hitler’s “revolution” of moral terms was directed against the biblical division of history into three ages. There, the First Age is the *aera ante legem* (the age before the law). It lasts from the beginning of mankind until the Ten Commandments are passed on Mount Sinai. The Second Age is the *aera sub lege* (the age under the rule of law). It lasts from Moses to Jesus. The Third Age is

76 Friedrich Nietzsche, “Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft” [1882]. In: Idem, *Werke, 2. Bd.*, ed. by Karl Schlechta, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1966, Aphorismos 135.

77 Ibid., Aphorismos 136.

78 Franciscus de Vittoria, *De Indis recenter inventis et de jure belli Hispanorum in Barbares* [Vorlesungen über die kürzlich entdeckten Inder und das Recht der Spanier zum Kriege gegen die Barbaren, 1539], ed. by Walter Schätzel, Mohr, Tübingen 1952, p. 43.

79 Enrico Syring, *Hitler. Seine politische Utopie*, Propyläen, Berlin 1994, p. 42.

the *aera sub gratia* (the age under the grace of God). It lasts from the Incarnation (*incarnatio*) of Jesus until the end of all days. .

Thus, Hitler wanted to go back to pagan antiquity:

“Already in antiquity whole peoples had been liquidated. Tribes had been resettled in passing, and just recently the Soviet Union had set an example of how things could be done”⁸⁰.

The decline of this age was blamed on Jewish ethics:

“That same Jew who in those days smuggled Christianity into the world and killed that wonderful thing, once again he has identified a weak spot: the guilty conscience of our world. / Peace will only be by way of a natural order. This order requires that the nations will be structured in a way that those being capable will lead. This way the inferior will receive more than he could achieve on his own. Judaism destroys this order”⁸¹.

Still, in the midst of victories, Hitler was obsessed by the idea that just a few Jews might undermine these successes. Accordingly, he adjured Croatia’s Minister of War, Slavko Kvaternik (1878-1947), on 21 July 1941: “If only one state were to accept a Jewish family, no matter for which reasons, it would become the germ centre for renewed decomposition”⁸².

Education was supposed to prevent such susceptibility, at least for the future. All men fit for military service would receive this in practical education. Since the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the soldiers were guaranteed not to be persecuted for war crimes; they could then act like the death squads of the SS because now, new archaic laws had become a valid once more. As early as 13 May 1941, the soldiers were given a general license to kill:

“Concerning acts committed by Wehrmacht members and those in their wake against enemy civilians, there is no obligatory legal persecution, not even if the deed is at the same time a military crime or offence”⁸³.

For the time being, the victims were still restricted to members of the Communist Party (Order of 6 June 1941): “Thus they [the commissars], if encountered when *fighting* or committing acts of *resistance*, must generally be finished immediately.

80 Hildegard von Kotze, *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler 1938-1943. Aufzeichnungen des Majors Engel*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1974, p. 71.

81 Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier*, p. 106.

82 Andreas Hillgruber (ed.), *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler 1939-1942*, Bernard & Graefe, Frankfurt a. M. 1967, p. 614.

83 „Erlaß über die Ausübung der Kriegsgerichtsbarkeit im Gebiet ‘Barbarossa’ und über besondere Maßnahmen der Truppe vom 13. 5. 1941” [Kriegsgerichtsbarkeitserlaß, Nuremberg-DocumentC-50]. In: http://www.1000dokumente.de/index.html?c=dokument_de&dokument=0093_kgs&object=translation&st=&l=de.

/ Commissars are not recognized as soldiers; the protection provided by international law is not applied on them. After separation they must be finished”⁸⁴. Behind this order there is the confidence that convictions can be eliminated by killing those being convicted. At least Wilhelm Keitel (1882-1946) as the head of the Wehrmacht’s Supreme Command (September 23rd, 1941) does not see any problems for such a practice. For him, the killing of the commissars means the “destruction of an ideology” with which he agrees and which he backs.⁸⁵ Why should the NS leadership believe that the appropriate elimination of Jewish ethics would be less feasible than that of Leninism-Marxism?

Those being selected for the SS were free to kill immediately whereas the Wehrmacht was still dominated by “Judaized” Christians: “These ‘tasks’ [the killing of the commissars] were so difficult [Heydrich] that ‘the army could not be burdened with it’”.⁸⁶ Hitler closely observed the slow progress in the killer morality complaining on 18 October 1942 that:

“Indeed he was aware that the army had only reluctantly followed the orders such as the Commissar Order. The Supreme Command was to blame, which was trying to change the profession of the soldier into that of a pastor. If it were not for his SS, what orders may not have been carried out! Jodl replies that even in war international agreements are valid also for the sake of one’s own troops.”⁸⁷

However, in the course of the genocide in the East, which was wrongly labeled the Polish and Russian campaigns, an ever increasing number of common soldiers participated in the killings. Nobody knows how many people were killed, however, as many as 50% are considered possible.⁸⁸ “Dejudaization” and the removal of the Jewish aspect of Christianity remained the goal while changing the Wehrmacht into an SS, that is, in transforming all German soldiers into killers. Thus, in September 1943, Hitler declared that the “SS was the best he could leave his successor and ‘that the build-up of the Wehrmacht in the Germanic countries had to happen under the supervision of the SS’”.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, his “decomposition” worries would not dissipate, which is why all German youths, long before they were fit for military service, were

84 Hans Buchheim/Martin Broszat/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen/Helmut Krausnick, *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1967, pp. 501-502 [Bold Type by G. H.].

85 Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie: Politik und Kriegführung 1940-1941*, 3rd edition, Bernard & Graefe, Bonn 1993, p. 530, FN 62.

86 Buchheim/Broszat/Jacobsen/Krausnick, *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, p. 452.

87 Kotze, *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler 1938-1943*, pp. 130.

88 Cp. Christian Hartmann, “Krieg und Verbrechen – Zur Struktur des deutschen Ostheeres 1941-1944“. In: Horst Möller/Aleksandr O. Cubar’jan (eds.), *Mitteilungen der Gemeinsamen Kommission für die Erforschung der jüngeren Geschichte der deutsch-russischen Beziehungen*, Bd. 2, Oldenbourg, München 2005, pp. 18-26, here 18.

89 Bernd Wegner, *Hitlers politische Soldaten. Die Waffen-SS 1933-1945*, 4th revised and improved edition, Schöningh, Paderborn 1990, p. 314.

sworn to a new catechism where “Thou shall not kill” of Mount Sinai was replaced by an archaic commandment of the “eternal fight”:

“Thou shall not spare your enemy but encounter him with grim defense, for he wants to be slain by you.
His task is to goad you, your task is: to defeat him.
Do not worry that one day there will be no enemy left; there will always be new ones. All vermin is overly fertile and hawkish; that is why we are forced to fight it.”⁹⁰

For this education toward Dejudaization, nothing was left to chance. For example, the young elite who succeeded in being sent to the SS’ “Wewelsburg” ate at tables with skulls painted on them and assembled in chapels whose benches were also decorated with skulls and bones.⁹¹ Never again, these youths shall hear: “I have presented to you life and death, blessing and curse, so that you will choose life” (Deuteronomy 30: 15/19). For never before had Jews, who would have been able to tell them this, been destroyed for their religion in such a terrible manner.

IV. What was the destruction of the Jews supposed to achieve?

Hitler wanted to revive the archaic tribal practices of infanticide and genocide, and in order to do this, he intended to extinguish the people of the Mount Sinai ban on killing.

Soon after World War I he identified Jewry as the cause for overcoming the age-old custom of killing one’s enemies. He blamed “religious principles” for the defeat of the German Empire in the war of 1914-1918. These had been kept solely by the German side as a result of which the will to unconditional killing had been “dissolved”. Hitler made this analysis expressly without any personal hatred of the Jews. He was free of ‘hooligan anti-Semitism’.

Hitler did not see himself as a particularly ruthless violator of the Jewish ban on killing but as somebody who eliminated it unscrupulously. From his studies of history he drew the conclusion that before the development of the Jewish ethics of the holiness of life and the protection of foreigners, completely different norms had been valid, which allowed a people to become inwardly stronger by killing their disabled offspring as well as invincible outwardly by extinguishing instead of simply defeating the enemy. He wanted to make these traditional rights to killing valid once more for the sake of a leading role for Germany globally, and the Germanization of Europe all the way to the Ural Mountains. More than one hundred million Slavs were supposed to be eliminated by immediate killing,

⁹⁰ Theodor Fritsch, *Der neue Glaube*, 3rd edition, Hammer, Leipzig 1936, p. 169.

⁹¹ Cp. Karl Hüser, *Wewelsburg 1933-1945. Kult- und Terrorstätte der SS*, Bonifatius, Paderborn 1987, p. 217.

forced labor, “repopulation”, or deportation to Siberia. By the end of the war, about 11 million will have died.

The elimination of the Jews in order to extinguish Jewish ethics was meant as a measure to reestablish the right to kill all internal “parasites” and “decomposers” as well as all territorial-political enemies, particularly most of the Slavs. That was the reason why this happened *parallel* to the conquest for lebensraum in the East. These were not regular wars such as the campaigns against France, Denmark, or Norway but genocidal mega-killings under the protection of the Wehrmacht. It was indeed this intention, enforced with an ideological iron fist against the generals attempting to find alliance partners, which then strengthened the Slavs’ resistance.

Never again were the German soldiers during their bloody and never-ending work and “fight for nationhood” to win and defend such gigantic territories to be inhibited by a guilty conscience, which for Hitler had been a Jewish invention. In the midst of their extinction work, no-one should ever again be allowed to utter “Thou shall not kill” to them. And if anyone still did this, it was not to arouse any mercy within them. This is also why the SS, the Ost-Heer, and the Hitler Youth, who were doing the “job of a hundred years” (Alfred Rosenberg), – shall lead the Germans, also emotionally, toward the code of killing again.

In cold, modern language, one might say that Hitler had the hardware, the Jewish people, smashed to erase the software, – the Jewish principle of the holiness of life, from the German mind.

Also non-Jews, particularly Christians, were to be eliminated if they *actively* supported their ethical Jewish heritage of the protection of life. This included most of all the Jehovah’s Witnesses – as they proved to be “infected” with Judaism. Thus, in the national socialist model country, the Warthegau, which had been annexed from Poland, not only were the Polish priests killed but the German Protestants were also made subject to the control by the SS; the Concordat which, formally, had remained valid in the Reich proper, became invalid. In the case of Christians, the ethics of love and life were in principle considered to be a “Jewish infection” which could be cured. After all, the belief in Christ’s sacrifice as an act of salvation, that is, the non-Jewish aspect of Christianity, provided enough religious matter for redemption.

Jews, on the other hand, could not count on any mercy even if they forswore their religion. Since, after millennia of persecution, they were still present, they were considered to be incurably “infested” with the holiness of life and hence a dangerous “germ center” for all non-Jews.

To get rid of Jewry, Hitler activated all available anti-Semites, religious opponents, racists, anti-Zionists, Palestinians, and economic competitors. So, Hitler was “the culprit who gave all the other culprits their chance”⁹².

92 Clive James, “Blaming the Germans: The much Lauded Revisionist Study of the Holocaust [by Goldhagen] Goes too Far”. In: *The New Yorker*, April 22, 1996, pp. 44, here 50.

Nevertheless, Hitler did not establish an anti-Semitic alliance. If only 50% of the 11 million Slavs killed were anti-Semites, he had as many anti-Semites killed as Jews, and they were not even saved by previously having actively contributed to their extinction. .

By employing slurs such as “Jewish-plutocratic war-mongers” in reference to Churchill and Roosevelt or “Jewish-Bolsheviks” against the partisans behind the German front, additional pretexts were created to convince also those Germans who were not yet ready to kill. However, it was not the traditional kinds of anti-Semitism or the grasp on the Jews made possible by the war which almost automatically so to speak resulted in Auschwitz. Rather, more specifically, it was Hitler’s specific motive for eliminating all ethical restraints which then allowed all other anti-Jewish intentions to come into effect.

This, at least, is the author’s opinion. However, he is not claiming to have the last word. If we take the year 1967 as the starting point for the most impressive, best-funded, and most unbroken wave of Holocaust research up to now, we may well assume, on the one hand, that the results presented will be quite different. On the other hand, it may be that Isaac Deutscher’s conclusions, which he had worked on intensively in 1967 until shortly before his death, will be supported:

“For the historian trying to understand the mass destruction of the Jews, the most difficult obstacle is the absolutely unique nature of this catastrophe. It is not only a question of time and historical perspective. I doubt that in one thousand years one will be able to understand Hitler, Auschwitz, Majdanek, and Treblinka any better than we do today. Will we then have a more sufficient historical perspective? On the contrary, it might even be that posterity will understand things even less than we do”⁹³.

93 Quoted from Friedlander, *Vom Antisemitismus zur Judenvernichtung*, p. 18.