

House of the Wannsee Conference

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The Wannsee Conference in the Development of the “Final Solution”

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Introduction

On 20 January 1942 Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of the security police and the SD, chaired a meeting of secretaries of state and high Party and SS officials. That meeting would pass into the history books as the 'Wannsee Conference'. Taken by Adolf Eichmann, the minutes of this conference are one of the most important documents recorded on the planning and organization of the murder of European Jewry by the Nazi regime. Because of this document, the conference at Gross Wannsee has become synonymous with the cold-blooded, administratively organized and delegated Nazi genocide. The fact that, without comment, high-ranking representatives of the ministerial bureaucracy were taking note of the lecture being delivered by Heydrich on the fate of 11 million European Jews - in the relaxed and distinctively upper middle-class atmosphere of that SS guest-house - makes it alarmingly clear that responsibility for the genocide reached far beyond the realm of the SS.

I. The genesis of the “final solution” and historical research

Historical research has long occupied itself with the question of what role the Wannsee Conference played within the planning and organization of the genocide of the European Jews. The answer to this question is not straightforward because, on 20 January 1942, when this conference was being held, mass murder of the Jews had already been under way for six months. Already several hundred thousand had been killed by the Nazi regime, particularly in the occupied Soviet territories, but also in Serbia, where the male Jewish population had fallen victim to the Wehrmacht's systematic 'reprisals', and in the Warthegau, with the use of gas vans. Such acts show that the Wannsee Conference in no way heralded the beginning of the genocide. The conference was rather an important stage in the decision-making process that dragged on from the autumn of 1941 to the spring of 1942, in the course of which the leadership of the 'Third Reich' expanded the massacre

of the Jews in eastern and southern Europe into a systematic programme for the destruction of all the European Jews.

Most historians assume that the conference must have been preceded by a fundamental decision to murder every Jew in Europe, and that the meeting was a forum for discussion of the organization and implementation of the genocide that was already underway (1). When such a fundamental decision is supposed to have been taken, however, is disputed. A series of historians have taken the view that this decision had already been made before the beginning of the Russian campaign. Others are of the opinion that the basic decision was taken in the summer of 1941 (2), in a feeling of euphoria at the predicted victory over the Soviet Union, or in the autumn of 1941, in light of the failure - which was already becoming clear - of the 'Blitzkrieg' in the east (3). Christian Gerlach has recently expressed the view that Hitler's 'fundamental decision' to murder the European Jews was taken immediately after his declaration of war on the USA in December 1941. Gerlach's theory has caused a sensation and must be examined more closely (4). There are indications, however, that a final decision to murder all European Jews could only have been made during the spring or summer of 1942 (5). A radical counter-position adopted by Martin Broszat, for instance, holds that there was never any 'Führer's decision', but that the destruction of the Jews was 'seen [by the Nazis] as "a way out" of a cul-de-sac into which they had manoeuvred themselves' (6).

The diverse views of these experts illustrate that the precise reconstruction of the decision-making process culminating in the 'final solution' is methodologically extraordinarily difficult. As regards the validation of sources, it is a laborious venture. The most important decisions leading to the murder of the European Jews would not as a rule have been committed to paper; to the extent that any documents reflected such decisions, the culprits sought systematically and with great success to destroy them. Moreover, the documents handed down despite all this are scattered among numerous archives in many countries. Additionally, the documents dealing with the murders themselves are worded obscurely - the Wannsee Conference protocol being an excellent example of this. In view of the problematic source material, a precise reconstruction of the individual criminal complexes that constituted the genocide of the European Jews is essential - namely, the executions, deportations, murders in the camps, etc. The disparate state of the sources leaves us no choice other than to trace the implementation of these crimes back to the decisions standing behind them.

The debate over the precise reconstruction of the decision-making process is - even if it sometimes has the appearance of an intensely contested debate between specialists over details - more than an argument about dates, itineraries and relations over responsibilities. The question of the beginning of the systematic murder of the European Jews is connected with basic issues of the interpretation of the Nazi dictatorship, the question of Hitler's role, the functioning of the apparatus of power, the behavior of the élite, the role of anti-Semitism and racism and more besides. The dispute over the genesis of the 'final solution' involves finding answers not only to the questions of when and where, but also, ultimately, of why.

Research on the persecution and murder of the European Jews is currently in a state of upheaval. In particular, the opening up since 1990 of the previously inaccessible archives of the former Warsaw Pact countries has considerably enlarged the documentary base for research into the 'final solution'. This applies especially to the 'special archive' in Moscow, whose existence was unknown until 1991, and to countless regional archives in the former Soviet Union and in Poland, as well as the archives and secret archives of the former GDR.

The first studies benefiting from the new archival situation have appeared in the last few years. Initial regional studies are available, important documents have been published, and works on the decision-making process itself have materialized. Further investigations that should close important gaps will appear in the near future. Among the works that are already available, worthy of particular note are the studies by Dieter Pohl and Thomas Sandkühler (7) on the murder of the Jews in Galicia, Christian Gerlach's book on the SD's Jewish policy (8), Michael Wildt's collection of documents on the SD's Jewish policy (9), Götz Aly's book on the 'final solution' (10) and Ralf Ogorreck's study of the Einsatzgruppen (11). One of the most important documents now available for research is Himmler's appointments diary. Christian Gerlach has recently evaluated this source for the first time with regard to the genesis of the 'final solution', and it has recently been published by a group of specialists who have already produced or will produce monographs on the history of the murder of the Jews (12).

A preliminary analysis of this first series of works based on the newly accessible archive stock reveals a very complex picture of the decision-making process of the 'final solution'. These research results raise at least as many new questions as they provide answers. The findings have not so much been the sought-after key documents which give us an immediate insight into the decisions of the highest leadership, but rather documents that reflect the decision-making process in an indirect and fragmentary way; in other words, evidence that allows plenty of scope for interpretation. Many of these newly-discovered mosaic pieces also throw new light on well-known sources; research conclusions previously considered secure are thus being brought into question. This will become evident from the example of the Wannsee Conference minutes.

The newly-appearing investigations produce a much more complete picture of the regional history of the murder of the European Jews, as well as of various individual aspects of the genocide. They help us to understand better the complexity of various events that are generally encapsulated in the term 'Holocaust'. However, though current research is mainly concerned with tracking down and opening up more and more documents, and assembling the still barely estimable number of fragments thus obtained, the results of this

research, as always, depends on the framework of interpretation within which those documents are placed. Their interpretation is mainly determined by the question of what role we ascribe to the murder of the European Jews within the overall history of the 'Third Reich'.

The more that research results on the annihilation of the European Jews are assimilated, the clearer it becomes that this historical event cannot be understood as a mere 'desk murder' - i.e. the bureaucratic enactment of a discrete murder-order. The realization gradually dawns that we are dealing with a massacre lasting for several years on an unimaginable scale in which hundreds of thousands of culprits and their helpers, in large areas of Europe, tortured and murdered millions of victims under the eyes of a huge number of spectators. A great many institutions fulfilling the most diverse functions were involved in the genocide, and considerable differences and chronological discrepancies can be established between the individual countries and regions in which the genocide took place.

In view of the complexity of events, the prehistory of the murder of the Jews cannot be assessed in accordance with the pattern 'decision formation - decision - implementation of decision'. The more we discover about the activity of the apparatus that prepared and organized the murder of the European Jews, the clearer it becomes that the history of the genocide can be presented only inadequately and fragmentarily as the history of its institutions. For an interpretation of the genesis of the 'final solution', we need a wider framework, and it seems that the term 'policy' can help us out here (13). Historiography increasingly comprehends the 'decision-making process leading to the final solution' within a more inclusive framework of a policy of persecuting and murdering Jews under German rule.

II. The elements of the policy of annihilation

The most important elements of this policy of annihilation can be described as follows:

- It was geared to abstract, high-level, ideological aims that were continuously and persistently pursued by the Nazi movement.
- It was closely interdependent with other areas of policy, penetrating and partly re-defining them, but, on the other hand, was also influenced by them.
- It was developed over a long period, and adopted different forms at various stages of the 'Third Reich'. It was flexible enough to be modified, delayed or accelerated on tactical grounds; in certain critical situations it developed rapidly, so that concept, decision-making and implementation could not always be clearly distinguished from each other.
- It was basically a matter of consensus within the leadership of the 'Third Reich'. The fact that there were endless internal conflicts over its implementation, and that parts of the persecution apparatus demanded more radical action, confirms the existence of that consensus, which was never itself called into question in those disagreements.
- It was supported by at least part of the population (the active supporters of National Socialism). It was publicly – even if in semi-camouflaged form – propagated, debated and legitimized. It was of immense importance to the Nazi penetration of German society, and was essential to the safeguarding and expansion of Nazi rule.

The policy of annihilation and its historical pre-conditions occupy a central place in the interpretation of the 'Third Reich'. If it is assumed that the real historical peculiarity and singularity of the Nazi dictatorship was enshrined in the murder of the European Jews, then it seems appropriate to regard the genocide as the central theme of the history of the 'Third Reich' and not to see it as a mere function, side-effect or consequence of other historical phenomena of the period.

The starting-point of any interpretation oriented to the centrality of 'Jewish policy' should be the realization that Nazism had set itself the aim of creating a completely new form of social order, a racially homogeneous 'national community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*). This aim determines the identity of Nazism as a unique historical movement. As a matter of domestic policy, the National Socialists derived their entire claim to power over German society from this mission; and as a matter of foreign policy, the asserted concept of the 'Aryan race', with its accompanying drive for 'living space', was supposed to lay the foundation for a new order for the European continent along racist lines. However, because of the inconsistency of the racist concept, these aims could only be achieved by destructive measures. The 'racial elite' propagated by the Nazis implied permanent exclusion and eradication of so-called 'inferiors'. In addition to 'racial hygiene', the persecution of the Jews took on a central role because of their allegedly 'foreign blood'; the relatively new racist theme was combined with the centuries-old stereotypes of conventional hostility towards the Jews. We must therefore investigate the frightful utopia of a social order whose desired 'homogeneity' and whose attempt at biological 'species enhancement' actually entailed the consistent exclusion and elimination of 'inferiors'.

III. Stages in the Nazi persecution of the Jews prior to the summer of 1941

Before the beginning of the war, the Nazis had succeeded in expelling much of the Jewish minority in Germany and in exiling those Jews still living in the country to an existence on the periphery of society. During this process, the multidimensionality of the new political field of 'Jewish policy' had already become clear. Internally, the National Socialists had re-adjusted the manipulated public opinion of the 'Third Reich' to the dominance of racism: There was hardly any area in which the 'Jewish question' did not now play a major role as an imposed model of interpretation. The 'dejudification' of German society had opened up countless opportunities for the Nazi state to intervene, such as - on the occasion of the 'racial legislation' - unprecedented control of the private sphere or - as during the 'Aryanisation' process - far-reaching intrusions into the economy. Also in foreign policy, even before the war, the 'Third Reich' had succeeded in raising a 'Jewish question'. By means of compulsory emigration and expulsion, but also by repeated 'acts of revenge' and threats against the German Jews, who were held 'responsible' for the behavior of 'international Judaism' and were declared as hostages, the persecution of the German Jews was irresistibly made into an international problem that increasingly preoccupied the community of nations.

In September 1939, a completely new phase of 'Jewish policy' began. Although in 1939 the number of Jews in the territory of the 'Greater German Reich' was about 300,000, after the war with Poland there were well over two million Jews under German rule. For the Nazi movement, the war meant the chance to implement its plans to create an empire organized in accordance with racist principles. From a Nazi point of view, the war represented the internal justification for the eradication of 'inferiors', in order to compensate 'ethno-biologically' for the losses of racial 'superiors'. Wartime presented a prime and exceptional opportunity to make this unprecedented attack on civilization. Hitler's threat of 30 January 1939 to annihilate the 'Jewish race' in Europe in the event of a world war makes this connection particularly clear (14).

Even during the war with Poland, in mid-September 1939, the German leadership began to develop a gigantic resettlement programme for the newly conquered territories (15). In the 're-ordering of living space', a start was to be made in the conquered Polish territories. In addition to large-scale resettlements of ethnic Germans and Poles, this programme envisaged the deportation of all Jews living under German rule to a 'Jewish reservation' in the Generalgouvernement, in the district of Lublin. The first transportations from the Reich territory to this 'reservation' actually started within the framework of the so-called Nisko campaign in October 1939, but after a short while had to be broken off because - among other things - of the movements of people caused by the intended resettlement of ethnic Germans in the occupied Eastern Territories. Nevertheless, utilizing smaller deportation batches, the plan for a reservation in Lublin was pursued further.

From the way that the Nisko project was carried out, and from various comments by leading Nazis, it seems that the plan for the 'Jewish reservation' boiled down to concentrating the Jews from the entire German area of occupation into an area in which there were inadequate vital resources. The reservation plan would - by means of a combination of under-nourishment, disease and diminished birth rates, etc - cause the physical demise of over two million people, possibly over a period of several generations. Hitler's prophecy of 30 January 1939, in which he predicted the annihilation of the Jews in the event of a world war, makes it clear that the reservation project also had the character of a gigantic hostage-taking exercise. In the event of any further protraction of the war, in the Jewish hostages - according to the calculations of the Nazi leadership - Germany possessed blackmail potential against the Western powers.

The reservation project equated to a first plan for the 'final solution', namely an idea that, under prescribed circumstances, involved the death of the great majority of the Jews living under German rule. The radical nature of the project becomes absolutely clear when it is considered in association with the other 'racial-political' measures of the Nazi regime after the beginning of the war: the mass shootings of tens of thousands of Polish civilians (including thousands of Jews) (16), and the murder of the sick and handicapped during the 'euthanasia' programme (17).

Over the next two years, the plan for a 'Jewish reservation' was to be maintained, though the location of the reservation changed. After the victory over France, Madagascar (18) was discussed and, at the beginning of 1941, with the preparations for 'Barbarossa' (the code name for the attack on the Soviet Union), the plan was mooted for deporting the Jews within the German sphere to the parts of the Soviet Union still to be conquered (19). Even if the geography of these plans changed, the prospect of the physical 'final solution' was always a common feature, even if it was to be protracted over an extended period. Thus the idea that there was a phase in which 'territorial solutions' were considered, and which - as a result of a fundamental decision some time in 1941 to annihilate the European Jews - was to be distinguished from a later 'final solution phase', in my opinion misses the real focus of the plans of the Nazi 'Jewish policy makers'. The 'territorial solution' was always conceived as a 'final solution', and was intended ultimately to signify the physical end of the great majority of the Jews.

The decisive turning-point for the transition from 'Jewish policy' to annihilation policy occurred in the autumn of 1939. What took place from 1941 onwards was the realization of the annihilation that had been being aimed for since 1939, but which was still subject to certain conditions, and was anticipated over a longer period. During the implementation of this policy, what the 'final solution' idea ultimately entailed was to be realized. Out of the general plans compiled over the long term to bring about the extinction of the Jews within the area under German rule, a comprehensive programme of mass murder was developed which, in the view of the

planners, was to be carried out before the end of the war. In any event, the 'final solution' meant millions of deaths after 1939.

The annihilation policy was radicalized within the context of the expanding war. For the Nazis, the 'living space' and 'race' war included from the outset the prospect of obliterating the Jewish 'enemy', particularly if the war were to expand into a world war as a result of the intervention of the Western powers, thereby endangering the dream of a living space imperium. The escalation of the annihilation policy in war, however, neither represents inevitable automatism, nor can it reasonably be seen as a consequence of a single murder 'decision' at the beginning of the conflict. That escalation was rather the result of a policy being quite deliberately pursued: in order to start the actual annihilation however, certain essential pre-conditions had to be met. As long as the 'reservation' was not set up, as long as the deportations had not yet taken place, and as long as the war had not been expanded into a world war, extermination remained only an intention that could still be countermanded according to circumstances.

IV. The transition to the policy of 'ethnic cleansing' in the summer of 1941

In the summer of 1941, the policy of annihilation reached its second stage of escalation. The showplace for this radicalisation was the recently occupied Soviet areas. While tens of thousands of Jewish men of arms-bearing age had been shot during the first weeks of the Russian campaign, hundreds of thousands of Jews – men and women of all ages, as well as children – were shot from the end of July onwards, and increasingly in August, September and October 1941 (20). In my opinion, this transition from a terrorist modus operandi to a policy of 'ethnic cleansing' can neither be adequately explained by the high spirits prevailing in anticipation of imminent victory, nor can it be derived from the sudden change of mood occurring shortly thereafter in view of the foundering Blitzkrieg strategy.

In the summer of 1941, when it was established that the war would not end in victory within the predicted few weeks, the original 'security police' concept, developed for a brief period of the war and calling for the mass execution of any male Jewish capable of bearing arms, clearly reached its limits. The mass exodus of the Jews, the question of what should happen to any surviving dependants, the army's growing demand for manpower and other factors led to a revision of 'Jewish policy' in the East. In this situation, the German side made a start on the 'new order' of conquered 'living space' in the summer of 1941 – as originally planned, but without waiting for military victory. During the ongoing war, however, the conduct of the intended 're-formation' had to be restricted to purely 'destructive' measures.

In the eyes of the Nazi leadership, the mass slaughter of the Jewish civilian population, the 'dejudification' of whole stretches of land, was the enactment of the initial phase of the plans developed before the war. In accordance with those plans, millions of people on Soviet territory would fall victim to the reordering of 'living space'. This concentration on the Jews corresponded to the Nazi image of the 'Judeo-Bolshevik' enemy complex, and to the conception of a racist hierarchy in which the Jews were on the lowest level. Subordinate authorities kept finding new 'legitimations' for accelerating the killings that were under way: the lack of food, the danger of epidemic allegedly emanating from the Jews, the 'liberation' of 'living space' and so on (21).

Crucial to the launching of the genocide on Soviet territory in the late summer of 1941, which had been planned since the beginning of 1941, was in my opinion the initiative taken by Himmler. He wanted to extend his powers as the Reichskommissar for the consolidation of German nationhood (RKFDV) to the Soviet Union, and finally succeeded in so doing. Hitler's 'consolidation' order to Himmler in October 1939 had embraced not only the 'construction of new German settlements through resettlement', but had also expressly specified the 'elimination' of the harmful effect of 'ethnically alien population groups' as a necessary prerequisite for the planned 'ethnic cleansing'. Himmler also implemented this part of his brief in the eastern territories, extending the murder of Jewish men to that of the entire Jewish population. From Himmler's point of view, the genocide was equated with an entry into the 'new order' for the 'Eastern territories'. He demonstrably desired to start that process during the war, while the distribution of power within the occupation apparatus was still in a state of flux (22).

V. Escalation in the Autumn of 1941 and the start of the deportation of the German Jews

The third escalation stage of the annihilation policy occurred in the autumn of 1941. It started in mid-September 1941, when Hitler took the decision to deport the Jews from the entire Reich area, including the Protectorate, to the occupied Polish territories before the end of the year, and further east in the following spring (23).

As a first step, it was intended to transport 60,000 Jews to the Łódź ghetto. By the end of September, however, this plan was modified and expanded: now 25,000 Jews and gypsies were to be sent to Łódź (24) and 25,000 Jews each were to be transported from the Reich area to the Riga and Minsk ghettos (25). From a remark made by Heydrich to Goebbels in November, it appears that a third wave of deportations was already planned for the beginning of the following year (26).

Parallel to these decisions, important administrative measures were instituted in rapid succession in preparation for the deportation: the identification of German Jews with the yellow star in September 1941 (27); the emigration ban of 23 October 1941 for all Jews in the sphere of German power (28); and finally, the 11th amendment to the Reich Citizenship Law in November 1941 whereby, on crossing the border, Jews lost their German statehood and their property (29). In September 1941, without waiting for victory over the Red Army, Hitler implemented the plan devised at the beginning of 1941 to deport the European Jews to the newly conquered areas after the anticipated victory over the USSR. A month earlier, in August, he had declared that that deportation could not take place until after the end of the Eastern campaign (30).

The first two waves of deportations to Minsk and Riga took place between mid-October and the beginning of February (the deportations to Minsk, however, had to be broken off after a few transports). In March 1942, as announced by Heydrich in November, the third wave of deportations to the Lublin district - the original 'Jewish reservation' - finally began. How can we explain this decision to conduct the deportations during rather than after the Soviet conflict?

The official reason given, that it was a matter of a retaliatory measure for Stalin's deportation of the Volga Germans (31), appears to be as much of a pretext as the alleged motive that 'Jewish homes' were needed to accommodate those whose homes had suffered bomb damage (32). The relatively low level of bomb damage at that time proves the latter 'argument' wrong. Indeed, although many a Gauleiter accepted the challenge to 'liberate' the 'Jewish homes' and made every effort to speed up the deportations, the connection between the question of the homes and the deportations should not be sought on this pragmatic level, but rather on that of ideology and propaganda. In other words, by 'liberating' the 'Jewish homes', the Jews were supposed to be punished for 'pulling the strings' in the bombing war, and the city-dwellers given an immediate taste of that punishment. Thus for the Nazis, the aim of living space was not exclusively practical either but was, as were almost all policy areas, closely tied in with racial and Jewish policy.

However, the deportations that commenced in October 1941 were chiefly pre-emptive reprisal measures against the USA. The more-or-less open threat to kill the deported Jews - in accordance with Hitler's prophecy of 30 January 1939 - was intended to prevent the United States from entering the war. The propaganda theme in these months of branding the US government as the tool of 'international Jewry' signifies this intention, as does the openness of the deportations from the cities, which were carefully recorded by the international press (33) - publicity which the hostage-taker could only have wished for. The fact that this renewed, most radical re-run of the old ethnic hostage concept (34) was miscalculated was of course due to the absurd distortion of reality to which the Nazi race policy-makers subscribed. Neither was there an 'international Jewry' as a powerful player on the international stage, nor was the government of the United States under any 'Jewish control'.

The Nazi government's decision (taken between September and November 1941) to deport the Jews in the German sphere gradually eastwards simultaneously incorporated the decision to arrange the murder of the Jews native to the temporary reception areas. The strategy of 'Jew-free areas' that had been adopted in the Soviet Union by the end of the summer was now applied to the occupied Polish territories. Even more radical solutions were demanded of those responsible on location, with the intention of sending tens of thousands more Jews to the already overfilled ghettos.

In Łódź, Reichsstatthalter Greiser had personally made a public proposal, as a 'return service', for the reception of Jews from the Reich, to 'reduce' the then Jewish population of the Warthegau by 100,000 people, i.e. to murder them. In order to carry out this slaughter, before the end of the 1941 a gas van station was constructed in Chelmno (35). In Minsk, at the beginning of November, one day before the first transport had departed from Hamburg, about 12,000 inhabitants of the ghetto were murdered by the German security police. In Riga, where there had originally been an intention to build gas chambers, over 25,000 Latvian Jews were shot between the end of November and the beginning of December on the orders of the HSSPF Jeckeln, who claimed that he had received the order directly from Himmler. In the course of this massacre, Einsatzkommando 2 murdered the people who were in the first six transports destined for Riga, immediately after meeting the trains in Riga or in Kovno (Kaunas). This was not in accordance with Himmler's policy. The Jews arriving in the Reichskommissariat Ostland were not killed on the spot but were incarcerated in ghettos in inhuman conditions (36).

In the Generalgouvernement, particularly in Lublin, preparations were begun in October 1941 for mass murder of the Jews living there, after the government had been informed that any expulsion of the Jews from this area eastwards could no longer be counted on in the foreseeable future (37). The preparations for constructing the Belzec extermination camp also began in October and, at the same time, with the 'shoot-order', leaving the ghettos became punishable by the death penalty (38). These measures, however, were still not preparations for the murder of the entire Jewish population of the Generalgouvernement, but related mainly to Lublin, where preparations were being openly made for the reception of the third wave of deportations from the Reich the following spring.

In the autumn/winter of 1941-42, facilities for mass gassing were installed in Belzec (in Lublin) and Chelmno (in the Warthegau). There is also evidence of preparations for the construction of such installations in Riga (39), and there are indications that Mogilev (near Minsk) and Lvov (or Lemberg, in Galicia) were further possible sites (40). With the use of gas as a method of killing, a start was then made in the scheduled deportation areas.

In October and November, there were more frequent statements by leading Nazis on the fate awaiting the Jews. Thus at his round table conference on 25 October, after once again recalling his 'prophecy' of 30 January 1939, Hitler made the following remark: 'this criminal race has the two million deaths of the world war on its conscience, and now hundreds of thousands more. Let no-one tell me: But we cannot send them into the swamp! Who then will worry about our people? It is a good thing if the fear precedes us that we are eradicating Judaism' (41). From such statements, it can be assumed that the Nazi leadership was striving for further radicalization of the annihilation policy already started on a regional level.

In a leading article in the 'Das Reich' periodical of 16 November 1941, entitled 'the Jews are guilty', Goebbels recalled Hitler's January 1939 prophecy. He went on to say, 'we are experiencing the fulfillment of that prophecy, and the fate of Judaism is thus being realized, which may be hard, but is more than deserved. Any sympathy or regret is completely misplaced'. With the words that 'world Jewry' was suffering 'a gradual annihilation process', the Minister for Propaganda and Gauleiter of Berlin made it clear what fate ultimately awaited the Jews deported from the German cities some weeks previously.

VI. Preparation for and postponement of the Wannsee Conference

When on 29 November 1941 Heydrich invited a number of secretaries of state and high Party and SS officials to a meeting on 9 December for the purpose of negotiating the precise details for the 'overall solution of the Jewish question in Europe' (42), the original intention to produce a 'final solution' (in the sense of an unspecified physical demise) after the end of the war had already fallen through. The Nazi regime had already murdered several hundred thousand people, without actually reaching the 'final solution' stage (in the official terminology).

From Heydrich's point of view, the main purposes of the conference were, firstly, to establish the overall control of the deportation programme by the RSHA over a number of important Reich authorities and thereby, secondly, to make the top representatives of the ministerial bureaucracy into accomplices and accessories to, and co-responsible for, the plan he was pursuing. To reiterate: the plan was to exile all Jews in the present and future areas under German rule to Eastern Europe, where they were to be exposed to extraordinarily harsh living conditions and fatally exhausted or murdered. Heydrich had pursued this deportation plan since the beginning of 1941; in July 1941, Göring had given him the authority to execute it; and with the first deportation of Jews from central Europe in October, the first stage in that pan-European design had been realized. With his first invitation to the conference, Heydrich had waited until the second wave of deportations to Riga, Minsk and Kovno had already begun. He clearly wanted to present the representatives of the supreme Reich authorities with a *fait accompli*.

On 8 December, the meeting originally scheduled for the next day was postponed. In the end, 20 January 1942 was fixed as the new date (43). The meeting-place was now no longer the headquarters of the International Criminal Police Commission at 16 Am Kleinen Wannsee, but the SS guest house at 56-58 Am Grossen Wannsee. Two developments are generally assumed to be the reason for the postponement. Firstly, the imminent German declaration of war on the USA (which was meant to take place on 11 December) after the Japanese surprise attack on the American fleet in Pearl Harbour. Secondly, the Red Army's major offensive, which started at the beginning of December, and which ultimately destroyed all hopes of a rapid military success in the east, and thus of any speedy completion of all the deportation plans (44). Thus the expansion of the series of European Blitzkriegs into the world war must have had a fundamental effect on German 'Jewish policy'. The question of whether this effect was so serious that Heydrich felt compelled to change the programme originally intended for the conference, and whether that was the decisive reason for postponing the conference for almost six weeks, cannot be answered conclusively on the basis of the available documentary evidence (45).

Christian Gerlach has drawn our attention to the fact that on 12 December 1941, one day after the declaration of war on the USA, Hitler delivered a speech to the Party Gauleiters and Reich leaders in which he once again recalled his 'prophecy' of 30 January 1939 and announced the 'annihilation' of the Jews under German rule. This can be seen from the Goebbels diaries: 'as regards the Jewish question, the Fuehrer has decided to sort things out [*reinen Tisch zu machen*]. He promised the Jews that if they should cause another world war they would experience their own annihilation. This was no empty threat. The world war is under way, and the annihilation of Judaism must be the inevitable consequence. This matter must be addressed without any sentimentality. We are not here to sympathize with the Jews, but to sympathize with our German people. If the German people have sacrificed another 160,000 dead in the Eastern campaign, the perpetrators of this bloody conflict must pay for it with their lives' (46).

The fact that the world war was now under way lent special emphasis to the 'annihilation' of the Jews which had been repeatedly threatened by the German leadership in the event of such a conflict. However, it would be wrong to regard Hitler's speech of 12 December, as has Christian Gerlach, as the announcement of Hitler's 'basic decision' to murder the European Jews, and to infer therefrom that such a dramatic resolution on a given date was decisive for the change of strategy (47). Hitler's speech was instead a further appeal for speeding up and accelerating the annihilation policy already implemented with the mass executions in the Soviet Union, Poland and Serbia and with the deportations from central Europe. In its radical rhetoric, Hitler's

speech closely resembled his remarks of 25 October and Goebbels' article of 16 November, as well as Rosenberg's statements at a press conference on 18 November where he spoke about the 'elimination of the Jews of Europe' (48).

There is more evidence from the mid-December period that Hitler wanted to further radicalize the persecution of the Jews after the declaration of war on the USA. No really compelling case for a 'basic decision' can be made, however (49). Moreover, Himmler's brief entry in his appointments diary, discovered in the Moscow special archives, about a conversation with Hitler on 18 December is only supported as evidence for Hitler's 'fundamental decision' by a wide-ranging but ultimately inconclusive interpretation of events (50). On the other hand, the words: 'Jews - to be eradicated as partisans' ('*Judenfrage - als Partisanen auszurotten*') (51) can be read more realistically as renewed confirmation by Hitler for the continuation and intensification of the mass murder of Soviet Jews under the pretext previously given. As obviously only very few references are to be found on the theme of 'murdering Jews' in the various Himmler diaries, a general skepticism about any significant inferences from such disparate statements is advisable.

A far weightier piece of supporting evidence for any further radicalization of the persecution of the Jews emanating from the top leadership of the Third Reich in December is the notorious speech made by Hans Frank, the Governor-General of occupied Poland, on 16 of that month in Krakow (52). It is clear from Frank's speech that the original intention to deport the Jews under his rule to the occupied Soviet areas had been not only postponed, but had been shelved completely in the medium term. As he said, 'one way or another – and I can tell you this quite openly – an end must be put to the Jews'. Frank also recalled Hitler's 30 January 1939 'prophecy'. Any sympathy for the Jews, he said, would be completely misplaced: 'basically, my only expectation of the Jews is that they disappear. They must go. I have started negotiations for the purpose of exiling them to the east. In January, an important meeting about this subject is being held in Berlin, to which I am sending Secretary of State Dr Bühler. This meeting is to be held in SS Obergruppenführer Heydrich's office in the Reich security head office. In any event, a great Jewish migration will start. But what should happen to the Jews? Do you think they will be accommodated in settlement villages in the Ostland? In Berlin, we were told: "Why go to such trouble?; we cannot do anything with them in the Ostland or in the Reichskommissariat [Ukraine], kill them yourselves!" Gentlemen, I must ask you to arm yourselves against any considerations of sympathy. We must annihilate the Jews, wherever we encounter them and wherever it is at all possible, in order to maintain the overall structure of the Reich here'.

By mid-December 1941, the method and duration of this mass murder were still completely unresolved, as emerges from Frank's subsequent words: 'We cannot shoot these 3.5 million Jews, and we cannot poison them, but we can undertake certain operations which will somehow result in their destruction, to be precise, in connection with the great measures being promised by the Reich. The Generalgouvernement must be just as free of Jews as is the Reich. Exactly where and how this will happen is a matter for the authorities which we must set up and install here and whose effectiveness I will announce to you in good time'. On 20 January 1942, Frank's State Secretary Bühler was to find out from Heydrich the details of the 'where' and 'how' of the 'final solution during the Wannsee Conference.

VII. The minutes of the Wannsee Conference

We do not know the precise wording of the statements made at the conference. Eichmann said in 1960 in Israel that he had to edit the minutes considerably at Heydrich's insistence, and that the participants at the conference had used far more drastic language, and had spoken about deaths, elimination and annihilation (53). Eichmann possibly wanted thereby to divert attention from himself and incriminate third parties. In my opinion, the minutes should not therefore be read as a basis for speculation about what was 'actually' said at the conference, but as the guidelines authorized by Heydrich for the RSHA's allotted task of the 'final solution'. The starting-point for any interpretation of 'Jewish policy' at the beginning of 1942 should not be the actual proceedings of the conference, but rather their quintessence, which Heydrich presented to other supreme Reich authorities as the binding resolution of that meeting (54).

In the minutes produced, Heydrich had the results of the conference drawn up as follows. Firstly, he referred to his 'appointment' by Göring on 31 July as the 'official in charge of the preparations for the final solution of the European Jewish question'. He had already enclosed a copy of this document with his first letter of invitation, dated 29 Nov. Before proceeding with the compilation of a 'draft of the organizational, factual and material interests involved in the final solution', he apparently explained to the conference that he wanted to agree the subsequent procedures with the 'central authorities involved'.

Next, the minutes go on to say, Heydrich gave an overview of the persecution of the Jews to date. The main aim of the 'Jewish policy', he said, was, firstly, forced migration, which had been stopped by Himmler 'in light of the dangers of a migration during the war, and with regard to the potential [for mass reception] of the east'. The minutes then continue with Heydrich's remarks that 'instead of emigration, another possible solution, which has been given the relevant prior approval of the Fuehrer, is now the evacuation of the Jews to the east'. Such 'campaigns' were simply 'alternatives' wherein 'practical experience could be obtained' which would be 'of great significance as regards the coming final solution'.

For the coming 'final solution', a total of 11 million people were involved, whom Heydrich broke down according to country of habitation. In the minutes, Heydrich described the anticipated 'final solution' in the following fashion: 'Under appropriate leadership, the Jews are to be used for suitable work in the course of the final solution. In large work gangs, separated by sex, the Jews who are fit for work are to be taken to specified areas to be used for road-building, during which the majority will no doubt drop out through natural reduction'. Any 'others remaining at the end' would have to be 'suitably dealt with' in order to prevent any 'nucleus of a new Jewish build-up arising', as they would constitute 'no doubt the most resistant elements'. The Jews were then to be taken to 'transit ghettos', from which they were to be transported further eastwards at a later date. Thus Heydrich developed the prospects of a gigantic deportation programme, the purpose behind which was to destroy the displaced people with forced labor, and of murdering the survivors.

The idea of a comprehensive deportation of the European Jews to the east had, as we have seen, been pursued by the RSHA throughout 1941. By the beginning of 1942, it was becoming ever clearer that such a programme could no longer be implemented. The deportations continued, however, mainly for the lack of any clear alternative proposals having been developed. Conspicuously, Heydrich did not explain in his speech what should happen to any Jews who were 'unfit for work', particularly children and mothers looking after them. (He merely said that any Jews over 65 should be taken to an 'old people's ghetto' – Theresienstadt). Conversely, it seems extremely unlikely that, by January 1942, Heydrich was already in possession of a complete plan to murder those Jews who were 'unfit for work' in extermination camps. No efforts can be detected prior to the spring of 1942 indicating any general build-up of the extermination camps for such a pan-European murder programme. On the other hand, the proposal for 'road-building' work-gangs who labored 'in the east' under murderous working conditions, was no figment of the imagination, as will be shown below.

VIII. The escalation of the annihilation policy immediately after the Wannsee Conference

In order to understand better the historical role of the Wannsee Conference, its immediate consequences should be examined. In the weeks following the conference, the policy of annihilation changed significantly. As announced in the autumn of 1941, the deportations were from then on extended to the entire area under German control; this will be examined in more detail in the next section. Moreover, the deportations and murders were carried out within the context of a comprehensive programme of forced labor.

Since the autumn of 1941, the SS had gone over to developing the perfidious system of 'annihilation through work' (*'Vernichtung durch Arbeit'*). This system meant that people were fatally exhausted under inhuman working conditions within the shortest time, that a threshold was established at which people who were no longer fit for work or who were deemed unusable would necessarily falter. Since the summer of 1941, the Einsatzgruppen had developed the policy of 'annihilation through work' in the occupied eastern territories. Einsatzgruppe C had explicitly formulated this concept in September, when it proposed the 'solution of the Jewish question through comprehensive use of the Jews as workers', which would 'result in the gradual destruction of Judaism' and would correspond to the 'economic conditions of the country' (55). In the occupied eastern territories, to some extent since July, and to a greater extent since August and September 1941, as part of the then systematic annihilation policy, the Einsatzgruppen went over to confining the adults and their dependants who were 'fit for work' in ghettos, and using them as a labor pool (56). In further selections in the ghettos, 'fitness for work' and demand for labor were the decisive criteria. The fact that the selection of 'those fit for work' was often completely arbitrary and chaotic evinces the real purpose lying behind this 'labor deployment': the murderous decimation of the Jews.

In January 1942, Himmler advised the Inspector of Concentration Camps, Richard Glücks, that – as 'no Russian prisoners of war were to be expected in the near future' – he would be 'sending to the camps a large number of Jews and Jewesses who had emigrated from Germany'. 'In the next four weeks', wrote Himmler, 'prepare to receive 100,000 male Jews and up to 50,000 Jewesses in the concentration camps. In the next few weeks, the concentration camps will be faced with major economic tasks' (57). During the February - March 1942 period, the organizational foundations for the optimal exploitation of the prisoner workforce were laid by incorporating the Administration and Construction Department of the SS and the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps into the newly-formed SS Economic-Administration Head Office (WVHA). In an order dated 30 April 1942, the head of the WVHA, Oswald Pohl, made the camp commandants 'responsible for the use of the workforce'. This move was perfectly consistent with the increase in the prisoners' performance ordered by Himmler: as Pohl continued, 'this [labor usage] must be exhausting in the true sense of the word, so as to achieve peak performance' (58).

Since the autumn of 1941, tens of thousands of Jewish workers had been used in the construction of 'transit route IV' ('Durchgangstrasse IV'), a strategically important supply route for conducting the war in the east which was scheduled to go from Lvov (Lemberg) deep into the Ukraine. The project was under the control of the regional SS and police leader and, since 1942, it had been assigned the highest priority as a result of a Fuehrer order (59). The high death rate in the camps on transit route IV suggests that the work gangs proposed by Heydrich at the Wannsee Conference, which were taken to the east 'for road building' and were thereby supposed to fall prey to 'natural reduction', were real enough entities. The transit route IV project was

an important interim step in transferring the system of annihilation through work developed in the Soviet occupied areas to the Generalgouvernement. It was a kind of pilot project for the take-over by the SS of all forced labor in the Generalgouvernement in the spring and summer of 1942. Quite consistent with the idea of annihilation through work, this decision placed responsibility for the systematic murder of the Generalgouvernement's Jews in the same hands as the deployment of forced labor.

The shift to the concept of 'annihilation through work' did not follow any detailed plan, but was a modification of the existing annihilation policy under the conditions of the protracted war. Simply, the elimination of the maximum number of Jews had to be reconciled with the rising demand for labor. In this way, a system arose out of a 'use of labor' that frequently exceeded the bounds of physical capability, involving minimal food and care, and constant selections of Jews who were no longer 'fit for work' or no longer 'required'. The perfidy of the system of 'annihilation through work' was particularly obvious when there were very few compulsory work projects for Jews or none at all, as this provided a pretext for stamping 'unusable' Jews as 'superfluous'. Alongside the mass executions in the east, the continuing plans for deportations from central and western Europe, and the start made on building extermination camps in Poland, the murderous 'Jewish labor deployment' formed a fourth complementary element in the 'final solution'.

The deportations that were resumed on a larger scale in the spring of 1942 were preceded by a series of public speeches by Hitler in which he unequivocally returned to his 'prophecy' of January 1939 that, in the event of another 'world war', the Jews of Europe would be annihilated. Hitler's threat was underlined by the USA's recent entry into the war, the expansion of the war into a world war, and the fact that the 'Fuehrer' deliberately falsified the date of his January 1939 prophecy as 1 September 1939.

In Hitler's new year address of 1942 he declared 'the Jew will not eradicate the European peoples, but will become the victim of his own assassination attempt' (60). In that speech in January 1942 in the Berlin Sportpalast, as an excuse for 'seizing power' on 30 January 1933, Hitler stated 'we are quite clear about the fact that the war can only end with either the eradication of the Aryan peoples or with Judaism disappearing from Europe' (61). In a declaration read out on 24 February 1942 on the occasion of the 22nd anniversary of the foundation of the Party in the Munich Hofbräuhaus, Hitler had it announced once again that 'my prophecy will come true that Aryan mankind will not be destroyed by this war, but that the Jew will be eradicated' (62).

IX. Outlines of a pan-European deportation programme

In the weeks and months following the Wannsee Conference, the outlines of a pan-European deportation programme could be discerned. First of all, on 31 January 1942, Eichmann informed the state police stations within the territory of the 'Greater German Reich' that deportations of further 'contingents of Jews' to the east were to be expected, and he specified individually which groups of people were to be excluded initially from these deportations.

In a discussion between Eichmann and representatives of the Gestapo on 6 March 1942, it became clear that, in the meantime, a third wave of deportations had been prepared within the RSHA. During the discussion, Eichmann announced that first of all 55,000 Jews from the Reich territory, including the 'Ostmark' and the Protectorate, were to be deported. As part of this process, 'Prague, with 20,000 Jews to be evacuated, and Vienna with 18,000 [were] to be most heavily involved' (63).

This third wave of deportations began on 20 March 1942 and lasted until the end of June. It is little researched in its details but can be extensively reconstructed from the deportation lists that have been recovered, from fragments of Lublin district administration files, from local research and from memoirs. As part of the new deportation phase, at least 43, possibly 45 or more, trains each containing 1,000 people headed for ghettos in the Lublin district, i.e. the original 'Jewish reservation'. At least 22 of the trains, but probably 24, were from the old Reich territory, 6 were from Vienna and 15 from Theresienstadt/Prague. The order of magnitude of 55,000 people quoted by Eichmann on 6 March as the target figure could well have been attained (64).

At the beginning of March 1942, a decision was again taken to arrange a mass murder of the Jews in the reception areas of the Lublin district. This decision also affected the neighboring district of Galicia, which, according to the model of the Nazi leadership, formed a kind of advance base for the planned 'new order' of 'living space' in the east. Of particular significance here is the boast made by Goebbels in his diaries that he wanted 60 per cent of the Jews living in both districts to be murdered (65). This decision, made at the beginning of March, had been preceded by the preliminary work for this campaign that had been carried out since October 1941 by SSPF Globocnik with the consent of the SS leadership. The episode displays significant parallels to the mass murder of the Jews of the Warthegau, which was also carried out in the autumn of 1941. Only in the method of murder, the use of a stationary gas chamber, did Globocnik's modus operandi differ from Greiser's. As in the Warthegau, however, the mass murder of the local Jews in the Lublin district was directly associated with deportations from Reich territory.

The pattern of deportations of the Central European Jews and the simultaneous annihilation of the East European Jews matched that adopted in Łódź, Riga and Minsk. The living conditions in these ghettos, most of whose inhabitants had been murdered shortly before the arrival of the trains from the Reich, led to the wretched death of the vast majority of the deportees within a few months. Whoever did not die in the ghettos was generally deported to the extermination camps in the Generalgouvernement.

From the very outset, the deportations to the east had had a murderous intent. However, despite the high death rates and executions, the intention of later 'resettlement' as the 'ultimate solution' – which became ever more fictitious during the winter of 1941/42 – was maintained. With the third wave of deportations to Lublin and the preparation of the extermination camps in the Generalgouvernement, the intention for later resettlement in the east was definitively jettisoned, but the genocide was still carried out behind the facade of a resettlement programme. The deportees were treated as 'resettlers' who had not grown accustomed to the conditions of the settlement area. Thus (in the Nazi 'justification'), in view of the limited food and accommodation available, of the danger of epidemic, and because the war situation blocked any possibility of further 'resettlement', the Jews 'had to be' killed. The annihilation was carried out in the following stages within a comprehensive process that was apparently subject to various constraints: deportation to the district; selection as fit or unfit to work; assignment to ghettos or forced labor; continued selections among those who survived the unbelievable living conditions; deportation to the extermination camps; and finally liquidation of the ghettos and the murder of any who had survived the previous stages.

X. Expansion of the deportations and the move to indiscriminate murder

While the third wave of deportations was taking place between March and June, the RSHA was making preparations for a much more extensive European programme of deportations. As a result of an agreement of 25 March 1942 with the Slovakian government, 20,000 young Jews from Slovakia were being deported to Auschwitz and Lublin for 'labor deployment'. Even as the first transports were setting off, the Slovakian and German Governments had agreed to extend this deportation to all Slovakian Jews, a total of about 90,000 people. By the end of June, 50,000 Jews had been deported from Slovakia. In March 1942, the first deportation of hostages from France to Auschwitz also took place, and by the middle of July, 6,000 people in six transports had been sent there.

One important clue that these initial deportations from areas beyond the 'Reich' were already part of a pan-European programme is a comment emanating from the office of the Slovakian prime minister, Tuka. Dated 10 April 1942, it concerns a visitor described as the 'authorized representative of the RFSS [Reichsführer SS] and chief of the German police, Himmler, and as the official appointed by Reichsmarschall Göring, who had been given a direct order by the Reich Chancellor and Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, to solve the question of the European Jews'. Heydrich, who the visitor in question, told Tuka that the planned deportation of the Slovakian Jews was 'only a part of the programme'. At that time he said, a 'resettlement' of altogether 'half a million' Jews 'was under way, from Europe to the east'. In addition to Slovakia, the countries involved included the Reich territories, the Protectorate, the Netherlands, Belgium and France (66).

If it is assumed from this that the RSHA was planning to carry out the deportation of all Jews from the Reich (excluding the incorporated eastern territories), the Protectorate and Slovakia, and if this is taken as the basis for the figures presented at the Wannsee Conference (a total of 340,000 people), this would leave a deportation quota for the west in the order of 160,000 people (the 'half a million' quoted by Heydrich is naturally only a rough estimate). From this, we can conclude that by no later than the beginning of April, the RSHA was planning the deportation of one third of the total of 500,000 Jews living in Belgium, the Netherlands and France.

The fourth escalation stage of the annihilation policy commenced in April-May 1942. At this point, there was a deviation from the previous plan to deport the central European Jews to specific areas where the local Jews had already been murdered. At the end of April or the beginning of May, the decision was seemingly taken to murder any Jews indiscriminately and with immediate effect.

Apparently, at the end of April or in May 1942, the Nazi regime decided to extend the murder of the Jews of Lublin and Galicia to the entire Generalgouvernement (67). At the same time, the decision must have been taken to murder *en masse* the Jews of Upper Silesia; in May and June, thousands were deported to Auschwitz and killed there immediately. The systematic mass murder of the Jews in the Generalgouvernement began in June, but then was broken off for a few weeks because of the transport hold-up. Those transport difficulties, caused by military developments in the east, ultimately had a radicalizing effect on the development of genocide. The deportations from the western areas was speeded up, and during the period the planners evidently had the opportunity to re-think and consolidate their ideas, so that the overall programme could be resumed in July with devastating effect. For example, at this stage, the SS took over the complex of Jewish forced labor in the Generalgouvernement, and thus took control of the prisoners who had been first excluded from annihilation as being 'capable of work'.

At about the same time as this fundamental decision about the Jews of the Generalgouvernement, and in any case before the middle of May, the major decisions on radicalizing the entire murder programme must have been taken. These involved increasing the deportations from the 'Reich' beyond the quota set in March, and murdering all or nearly all those Jews already deported from central Europe on the arrival of the transports in the eastern reception areas. This is how the Jews deported from the Reich were dealt with in Minsk from the middle of May onwards, and likewise those deported from Slovakia in Sobibor from the beginning of June (68).

One significant indication of Himmler's order in May 1942 to extend the murders has been obtained. In the middle of May 1942, Gestapo chief Müller told the commander of the security police in Riga, Jäger, that, in accordance with a 'general order of the Reichsführer-SS and chief of the German police', any 'Jews and Jewesses fit for work aged between 16 and 32 are to be excluded from the "special measures" (69) until further notice. These Jews are to be assigned to use as closed labor. Concentration camp or labor camp'. This exclusion rule contains an implicit indication of what treatment the older prisoners, the younger ones unfit for work, and children under 16 could normally expect within the concentration camp system: they were subjected to 'special measures'. It is possible that Himmler's order, which Müller quotes here but is not available in its original form, was more precise as regards the group of people not falling under the exception rule.

Probably on 17 April 1942, on the occasion of a visit - which he had already discussed in detail with Hitler - to the Warthegau, Himmler ordered the murder of approximately 10,000 central European Jews from the Łódź ghetto (70). (These Jews had managed to survive the inhuman conditions of the ghetto since their arrival in October 1941.) With the complex of decisions taken in late April or early May 1942, and implemented in May-June, the idea of a 'reservation' in the eastern part of the Generalgouvernement or in the occupied eastern territories was now definitely abandoned. The connection between this renewed escalation of the annihilation policy and the military development is clear: on 5 April, Hitler issued his order to prepare for the summer offensive in the east, which was meant to commence at the beginning of May in the Crimea.

At the beginning of June, a specific deportation programme for the west was drawn-up, which was meant to be implemented within three months from the middle of July (71). (Thereafter, a further transport stoppage was expected to last until the end of 1942). To a great extent, this decision pursued the terrible, peculiar logic of the overall programme already in existence. With the realization of this western programme, the 'pan-European' plans initially discernible at the beginning of April were brought forward and geared to the conditions created by the transport hold-up in the east in June-July 1942.

The destination of the transports from western Europe was Auschwitz, to which, as a result of the transport hold-up, all Slovakian Jews were now taken. The same procedure was adopted here as had already been started in Minsk and Sobibor: With effect from 4 July 1942, most of the Jews who had arrived in Auschwitz, initially those from Slovakia, and then those from the other transports also, were murdered immediately after their arrival (after 'selection' on the 'ramp') in the gas chambers which had been installed temporarily in two farmhouses (the 'bunkers' I and II) (72).

In July 1942, after the resolution of the transportation difficulties, the deportation and murder programme moved into top gear. On 9 July, Himmler discussed with the Higher SS and Police Leader of the Generalgouvernement, Krüger, and with Globocnik, proposals that the latter had made at the beginning of June and which affected 'ethnic' and Jewish policies in Lublin (73). After he had had meetings with Hitler on 11, 12 and 14 July (74), and after he had pressed the transport ministry on 16 July to provide more trains for deportations (75), he inspected Auschwitz (on 17 and 18th July) (76), in order to witness a demonstration of murder in the gas chambers. On the evening of that day, at a party given by the Silesian Gauleiter, he declared himself extremely satisfied. From remarks that he made on this occasion, one of his audience concluded that the matter of the murder of the European Jews was already settled - this information reached Switzerland and formed the basis for the so-called Riegner telegram, through which the news was passed on to the western world (77). After his visit to Auschwitz, Himmler went to see Globocnik in Lublin. On 19 July, he issued the crucial order from there that the 'resettlement of the entire Jewish population of the Generalgouvernement should be carried out and completed by 31 December 1942' (78).

During the summer of 1942, the first preparations were already under way to enable the resumption of deportations at an increased level from the west and the south east of the German sphere after the anticipated transport stoppage of the coming winter. By July, the decision must have been taken for the Croatian government to surrender its Jews to the Germans. This resulted in the deportation of about 5,000 Croatian Jews to Auschwitz by August (79).

XI. Review of developments between the autumn of 1941 and the summer of 1942

If we now review the development of the policy of annihilation between the autumn of 1941 and the spring-summer of 1942, between the third and fourth escalation stages, a picture emerges. In the autumn of 1941, when the extensive deportation programme did actually get under way, the foremost motive was as a threat to the United States. As such - in the spirit of Hitler's January 1939 'prophecy' - it was intended to make clear what fate awaited the German Jews should the war expand into a world war. At the same time, these over-hasty deportations into overcrowded ghettos or camps that were still not ready were used as a lever to demand more radical solutions on site from those responsible, i.e. to apply the familiar strategy of 'Jew-free areas' used in the Soviet Union to occupied Poland (the Warthegau and Lublin and Galicia). The murder of the Jewish men of Serbia is an important parallel in the radicalization of annihilation policy, which in this case was carried-out by the Wehrmacht in the form of repressive measures.

The USA's entry into the war drastically altered the situation of the 'Third Reich'. It now faced a long-term war on two or three fronts. The war would be conducted as an alliance war and involved controlling a large occupation area – and under the simultaneous pressure of full mobilization of all internal resources. In this situation, the annihilation policy acquired a completely new status, which can only be briefly described hereafter. To that end, it must be borne in mind that the 'Third Reich' could not reveal or specify its actual war aims – the racial reordering of Europe – as this would have begged the question of the status of the other (non-Jewish) ethnic groups within the 'New Europe' (80). Further, the Reich was not in a position to introduce the planned 'new order' with 'constructive' measures during the war, for there were insufficient resources for more extensive settlement and other projects. Just as the 'racial policy' of the regime in Germany between 1933 and 1939 had been restricted to exclusion and eradication, the policy of a European racial reordering during the war was fully occupied with the persecution and elimination of unwanted ethnic groups. From the Nazi viewpoint, the deportation and murder of the European Jews during the war was the only possible route into the 'new order'. And as the Nazi leadership was resolved not to give up its 'revolutionary' vision at any price, further radicalization of the persecution of the Jews (which formed the main plank of 'racial policy' even prior to 1939) was unavoidable, even to the extent of a policy of systematic annihilation.

With the beginning of the deportations from the various occupied and allied states during 1942, the 'living space policy' previously focused on the east was re-stylized as a 'new order' policy encompassing the whole of Europe. As a result, the allied states and collaborating forces in the occupied areas were subjected to the hegemony of racism; they became the tools and accomplices of a criminal policy and were thus inextricably linked with the German leadership. At the same time, the expansion of the deportations resulted in an increase in radical powers within the German occupation authorities and thus a general shift in emphasis in favor of the Party and the SS within the periphery of the area under German rule. In this way, the policy of annihilation shackled the German occupation and alliance policy.

The policy of annihilation was also an instrument of internal radicalization in Germany. As a result of the deportations that were not concealed from the public, of the tangible rumors and information on the mass executions in the east which assumed the form of a 'public secret', and of the widespread emergent fear and revenge propaganda about an international Jewish conspiracy since the change in the tide of war in 1942-43, it was made clear to the German population that it also had allowed itself to become inescapably entangled with Nazi anti-Jewish policy. This subliminal threat to the German population, which provides a subtle insight into the latter's complicity with the regime, seems to me to be the real issue behind the question of the Germans' awareness or unawareness of the Holocaust.

The regime reacted to the criticism of the murder of the Jewish workforce – which contradicted the war effort – by separating the policy of annihilation from any connection with the deportation programme, and placing it conceptually within the context of a work power exploitation programme. In this way, the people destined to be murdered were still being used 'sensibly'. In the long term, it was believed that the work-power problem could be solved by recruiting millions of non-Jewish 'foreign workers'.

Examined within this context, it becomes clear that from 1942 onwards the annihilation policy took on key functions in the regime's war policy. It served as a substitute for more creative initiatives towards the 'new order', as a shackle on German occupation and alliance policy, as a spur to internal radicalization and a lever for the complicit involvement of the German people with the mission of the regime, and finally as a programme of the tireless exploiting and exhausting of Jewish manpower. These functions of the annihilation policy explain why the prolongation of the war at the end of 1941 resulted in a wider radicalization of the killing.

The systematic murder of the European Jews cannot be fully explained as the result of the individual decisions of the dictator, nor was it primarily the result of any acquisition of independence by an irrational ideology which was blind to reality, nor can it be solely traced to the activity of an overheating, cumulatively self-radicalizing bureaucracy. It was instead the result of a consistently pursued policy of the Nazi leadership that was adapted to external circumstances in the various phases of the 'Third Reich'. Only if the annihilation policy is seen as an integral part of National Socialist war policy, as a major factor alongside strategic, military-economic and alliance policy considerations, can its role within the history of the Nazi regime be assessed. These changes in the context of the annihilation policy bring us back to the interpretation of the Wannsee minutes.

XII. The Wannsee minutes as snapshot of a moment in a transition stage

The Wannsee Conference marked a watershed. On one hand, the total deportation and annihilation in camps in the occupied Soviet areas ('road-building' being synonymous with forced labor under inadequate living conditions) were still being adhered to as originally intended and as already initiated in some places. On the other hand, it was already obvious that an early victory as a prerequisite for implementation of the plan could no longer be expected in the short term.

The Wannsee minutes, therefore, represent a snapshot of a moment in a process in which the senior ranks of the SS underwent a change of perspective far removed from the idea of a 'final solution' after the end of the war. The new intention was to be able to carry out larger and larger sections of the 'final solution' during the war (i.e. 'to anticipate' it). Initially, this new perspective still included the period after the end of the war, but in the critical period we have examined, deportation to the east became more and more of a fiction, and, correspondingly, mass murder in the Generalgouvernement became more of a reality. In the most serious crisis of the war thus far, the participants at the conference were given the impression that the RSHA was planning to have the mass murders started in the various occupied areas, leading to a 'total solution' ('*Gesamtlösung*') that was to be developed over the long term.

This twin perspective is evinced in the minutes. On the one hand, Heydrich spoke of the 'coming final solution', i.e. the deportation programme to be completed after the end of the war, involving 11 million Jews, including those in Great Britain, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain and Turkey – all countries that would only be under German control after a victorious conclusion of the war. Heydrich made a distinction between *ad hoc* measures and this 'coming' solution when he described the evacuation of the Jews to the east as a 'further potential solution conditional upon the relevant prior consent of the Fuehrer'. He said these 'actions' (i.e. the deportations already started) were simply 'alternatives' by means of which 'practical experience would be gathered' which would be 'of great significance in the coming final solution of the Jewish question'. Besides, the fact that Heydrich made particular reference to the prior 'consent of the Fuehrer' for these deportations indicates that the relevant permission for the implementation of the 'coming final solution' had not by then been given.

The 'coming final solution' was also referred to in the proposal for a gigantic labor exploitation programme in the east. Heydrich also highlighted the fact that the 'individual major evacuation campaigns should be largely independent of any military developments', that is, they could not be carried out until the end of the winter at least. He went on to say that the entire area under German rule was to be 'combed through' from west to east 'as part of the practical implementation of the final solution'. In this process, developments in the Reich area, including the Protectorate, would have to be 'anticipated'. This sentence highlights two levels being dealt with: the large, 'coming' solution, and the *ad hoc* measures already introduced. When Heydrich went on to say that the 'evacuated Jews' would be 'gradually taken to so-called transit ghettos, from which they [will] be transported further east', he then openly described an interim 'solution' for this group of people during the period leading up to the 'final solution'.

It can also be seen from the Wannsee minutes that the murder of the Jews living in the Generalgouvernement and in the occupied Soviet areas had already been derived from the larger 'final solution'. While Generalgouvernement State Secretary Bühler conveyed to the conference his government's desire to start 'with the final solution... in the Generalgouvernement' because 'the transport problem [did] not play a major role' and because 'any manpower exploitation grounds would not delay the course of this action' (given that few Jews there were 'fit for work'), he nevertheless expressed the view that any Jews 'unfit for work' should be murdered on the spot, just as they had been in the USSR and in the Warthegau. Gauleiter Meyer of the Eastern Ministry took the same view: namely that 'certain preparatory work in the course of the final solution could be carried out at the same time in the areas affected themselves'. ('Kill them yourselves', as Frank had so aptly characterized the answer from Berlin). However, the time schedule for these annihilation measures remained an open matter.

According to the wording of the minutes and our analysis of the events in the spring and summer of 1942, it is clear that the 'coming final solution' did not begin until May 1942, i.e. about four months after the Wannsee Conference. Moreover, it did not get into top gear until July 1942 because of the interruption of the transport hold-up. The 'preparatory' measures in the Generalgouvernement began in March with the murder of most of the Jews from Lublin and Galicia, and were resumed in June and stepped up in July when the systematic annihilation of the Jews of the Generalgouvernement started. The murder of Jews in the Soviet Union, which had started in the summer of 1941, seems to have escalated again in the summer of 1942 (81).

It seems perfectly possible that the final aim of the deportations within the framework of the 'coming final solution' was still undetermined at the time of the Wannsee Conference. Thus it is also possible that only gradually during the ensuing months would there be acceptance of the idea of diverting the deportations originally destined for the occupied territories of the Soviet Union to the extermination centers being constructed in occupied Poland. For Heydrich, two things mattered above all others on 20 January 1942: first, the deportations had to be accepted by the decision-making authorities of the Reich (everything that happened after the deportations was a matter internal to the SS and did not have to be agreed with the other offices). Secondly, the range of those to be deported had to be decided on, thus the status of the 'Mischlinge' and of those who had married non-Jews had to be clarified (82).

The second half of the Wannsee Conference was devoted to the latter purpose. Heydrich proposed that so-called first degree Mischlinge should, with certain exceptions, be deported. Similarly, any Jews or 'first degree Mischlinge' who had married 'Aryans' should as a rule be expelled from the Reich area or be sent to an 'old-age ghetto'. The absurdly complicated classification of 'Mischlinge' under the Nazi race laws, as was made perfectly clear in Heydrich's speech, would have made large numbers of individual case decisions necessary. In order to avoid 'endless administrative work' resulting there from, the State Secretary for Internal Affairs, Stuckart, proposed that 'forced sterilization be proceeded with'. This topic could not be fully discussed at the

conference and therefore had to be dealt with in several follow-up discussions – which did not, however, yield any conclusive results either.

As a direct result of the detailed discussion of problems with 'Mischlinge' and 'mixed marriages', the representatives of the ministerial bureaucracy were made accessories to, and co-responsible for, the 'final solution'. It was precisely because of the reservations raised among their ranks about including certain peripheral groups in the deportations that the ministerial officials let it be known that they had no reservations about the principle of deporting Jews. That was the decisive result of the meeting and was the main reason that Heydrich arranged for the guidelines of the future annihilation policy to be recorded in detail in the minutes.

Notes

- 1 Particularly Helmut Krausnick, 'Judenverfolgung', in: Hans Buchheim et al., *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, vol.2., 2nd ed. (Munich: dtv, 1979), 235-366, pp297, 305f; Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide. Himmler and the Final Solution*, (New York: Knopf, 1991); Wolfgang Benz, *Der Holocaust*, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), p50ff.
- 2 Saul Friedländer, 'Vom Antisemitismus zur Judenvernichtung: Eine historiographische Studie zur nationalsozialistischen Judenpolitik und Versuch einer Interpretation', 18-62, p47, in: Eberhard Jäckel, Jürgen Rohwer (eds.), *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Entschlußbildung und Verwirklichung*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1985); Raul Hilberg, 'Die Aktion Reinhard', in *ibid*, 125-136.
- 3 Phillipe Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews. The Genesis of the Holocaust*, (London: Arnold, 1989), p115ff.
- 4 Christian Gerlach, 'Die Wannsee-Konferenz, das Schicksal der deutschen Juden und Hitlers politische Grundsatzentscheidung, alle Juden Europas zu ermorden', *Werkstattgeschichte*, vol. 18 (1997), 7-44.
- 5 See for instance the exposition by Pohl, *National-sozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944* (München: Oldenbourg, 1996), p203ff.
- 6 Martin Broszat, 'Hitler und die Genesis der "Endlösung". Aus Anlass der Thesen von David Irving', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol.25 (1977), 739-775, p752. Similarly argued is Hans Mommsen, 'Die Realisierung des Utopischen: Die "Endlösung der Judenfrage" im "Dritten Reich"', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, vol.9 (1983), 381-420, p417, in which he establishes apodictically that it may be fundamentally discounted ('grundsätzlich auszuschließen') that Hitler set the policy of genocide in process with a direct 'Führer-instruction' ('Führerweisung').
- 7 Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*; Thomas Sandkühler, *Die 'Endlösung' in Galizien. Der Judenmord in Ostgalizien und die Rettungsinitiative von Berthold Beitz, 1941-1944*, (Bonn: Dietz, 1996).
- 8 Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde; Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944*, (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999).
- 9 *Die Judenpolitik des SD 1935 bis 1938*, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995).
- 10 Götz Aly, *'Endlösung': Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden*, (Frankfurt/M: S Fischer, 1995). Eng. trans. *'Final Solution': Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews*, (London: Arnold, 1995).
- 11 Ralf Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen und die 'Genesis der Endlösung'*, (Berlin:Metropol, 1996).
- 12 Peter Witte et. al. (eds.), *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich 1941/42*, (Hamburg: Christians, 1999).
- 13 On the concept of 'Judenpolitik' see in the first instance Uwe Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich*, (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1972), or more recently Wildt (ed.), *Judenpolitik*.
- 14 Speech of 30 January, reproduced in Max Domarus (ed.), *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen*, (Würzburg: Domarus, 1962/1963) vol. 2, p1047ff, for the appropriate passage pp1055-1058.
- 15 As illustrated in detail by Aly, *'Endlösung'*.
- 16 Christian Jansen, Arno Weckbecker, *Der 'Volksdeutsche Selbstschutz' in Polen 1939/40*, (Munich:Oldenbourg, 1992).
- 17 Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance. 'Euthanasia' in Germany, 1900-1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Ernst Klee, *'Euthanasie' im NS-Staat. Die 'Vernichtung unwerten Lebens'*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1983); Henry Friedlander, *The origins of Nazi genocide. From Euthanasia to the final solution*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
- 18 Magnus Brechtken, *'Madagaskar für die Juden'. Antisemitische Idee und politische Praxis*, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997).
- 19 Aly, *'Endlösung'*, p268ff.
- 20 Ogorreck, *Einsatzgruppen*; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, p293ff.
- 21 Rolf-Dieter Müller, 'Von der Wirtschaftsallianz zum kolonialen Ausbeutungskrieg', in Horst Boog et al., *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion*, (Frankfurt a. M: Fischer, 1991), 141-245, p184ff; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, p44ff.
- 22 For details, see Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, p362ff.
- 23 International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal (IMT)*, 42 vols., (Nuremberg: IMT, 1947-49), XXVI, p255f, Nuremberg document 686-PS.
- 24 Peter Witte, 'Two Decisions Concerning the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question'; Deportations to Lodz and Mass Murder in Chelmno', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol.9 (1995), 318-345.
- 25 Hans Safran, *Die Eichmann-Männer*, (Vienna/Zürich: Europa-Verlag, 1993), p134ff.
- 26 Elke Fröhlich (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels, Teil II, Diktate 1941-1945*, 15 vols. (Munich: Saur, 1994-1996), entry of 18 November 1941.
- 27 Police edict 1 September 1941, *Reichsgesetzblatt (RGBl) 1941 I*, p547.
- 28 Decree of the Reich Security Head Office (RSHA), Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris, XXVb-7, printed in: Serge Klarsfeld (ed.), *Die Endlösung der Judenfrage. Deutsche Dokumente 1941-1944*, (Cologne: Klarsfeld, 1977), p26, but with the incorrect date of 23 August 1941.
- 29 Order of the Reich Minister of the Interior, 3 December. Nuremberg document NO 5336, in: Hans-Günther Adler, *Der*

- Verwaltete Mensch. Studien zur Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland*, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974), p503f.
- 30 Eichmann's contribution to a discussion in the Propaganda Ministry, 15 August 1941. See Walter Strauß (ed.), 'Das Reichsministerium des Innern und die Judengesetzgebung. Aufzeichnungen von Dr. Bernhard Lösener', in: *Vierteljahreshfte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 9 (1961), 262-313, p303 (from a note for Wilhelm Frick).
- 31 HD Heilmann (ed.), 'Aus dem Kriegstagebuch des Diplomaten Otto Bräutigam', in Götz Aly et al (eds.), *Biedermann und Schreibtischtäter. Materialien zur deutschen Täter - Biographie*, (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1987), 123-187; Fröhlich (ed.), *Goebbels-Tagebücher*, entry of 9 September 1941.
- 32 Witte, 'Decisions', p323f; Longerich, *Politik*, p428f.
- 33 See for instance the reports of the Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and the *New York Times* from October; the sources were United Press International reports.
- 34 The 'boycott' of 1933, the 'Reichskristallnacht' of 1938 and the deportations to Poland from 1939 were earlier attempts at extortion from the western powers as 'hostage-takings' of the German Jews.
- 35 Longerich, *Politik*, p450ff; Eugen Kogon, Hermann Langbein and Adalbert Ruckerl (eds.), *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas: eine Dokumentation*, (Frankfurt/M: S Fischer, 1983), p110ff
- 36 On Minsk und Riga, see Safrian, *Eichmann-Männer*, p150ff.
- 37 Bundesarchiv, Berlin (BAB), NS 19/1438.
- 38 Third decree on restriction of movement of Jews in the Generalgouvernement, backdated, 15 October 1941, printed in Jewish Historical Institute Warsaw (ed.), *Faschismus - Ghetto - Massenmord. Dokumentation über Ausrottung und Widerstand der Juden in Polen während des zweiten Weltkrieges*, (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1961), p128f.
- 39 Letter from the specialist for race questions in the Eastern Ministry (Ostministerium), Wetzel, 25 October 1941, to the Reichskommissar Ostland, Lohse, Nuremberg document, NO 365, printed in Krausnick, *Judenverfolgung*, p337f.
- 40 Christian Gerlach, 'Failure of Plans for an SS Extermination Camp in Mogilev, Belorussia', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol.11 (1997), 60-78; Sandkühler, *Galizien*, p159ff.
- 41 Werner Jochmann (ed.), *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims*, (Hamburg: Knaus, 1980).
- 42 Foreign Office Political files (PAA), Inland Ilg 177, Heydrich to Luther.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 See in particular Safrian, *Eichmann-Männer*, p169.
- 45 In accordance with the argument of Gerlach, 'Wannsee-Konferenz'.
- 46 Fröhlich (ed.), *Tagebücher*, entry of 13 December 1941.
- 47 According to Christian Gerlach ('Wannsee-Konferenz'), the first historian to draw our attention to the significance of this speech with respect to the 'final solution'.
- 48 Printed in Hans Heinrich Wilhelm (ed.), *Rassenpolitik und Kriegführung, Sicherheitspolizei und Wehrmacht in Polen und der Sowjetunion*, (Passau: Richard Rothe, 1991), p131f.
- 49 As Rosenberg remarked in his diary on a conversation with Hitler on 14 December 1942, during which he submitted the manuscript of a planned speech at the Berlin Sportpalast. (Rosenberg diary, Nuremberg document PS-1517, IMT XXVII, p270ff, 16 December 1941, reproduced in Wilhelm, *Rassenpolitik*, p132): 'On the Jewish question I say that the remarks about the New York Jews should now be altered somewhat in the light of the decision. I remain of the view that the destruction of Jewry should not be spoken of. The Führer agrees with this position and says that [the Jews] have dragged us into war and have brought destruction upon us, so it is no wonder if they are the first to bear the consequences.'
- The 'decision' ('Entscheidung') identified by Rosenberg is according to Gerlach Hitler's 'fundamental decision on principle' ('Grundsatzentscheidung') which, he considers must have been taken between 7 and 14 December ('Wannsee-Konferenz', p24). It seems to me that the 'decision' clearly refers to the German declaration of war on the USA, as a result of which the former German policy of forestalling American entry into the war - by enacting 'reprisals' against the German Jews and of targeting in propaganda the 'Jewish warmongers' around Roosevelt - was thoroughly revised. Further antisemitic threats against the USA would thereafter be counter-productive, because they would simply prove the limited effectiveness of German propaganda.
- 50 Gerlach, 'Wannsee-Konferenz', p22ff.
- 51 Witte et al (eds.), *Dienstkalender*.
- 52 Ernst Präg, Wolfgang Jacobmeyer (eds.), *Das Dienstagebuch des deutschen Generalgouverneurs in Polen 1939-1945*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1975), p457f.
- 53 Institut für Zeitgeschichte, G 01 (trial transcript, German version), session of 24 July.
- 54 The only surviving copy of the 30 sets of minutes to have been issued is no.16, that of State Secretary Martin Luther (Foreign Office). The handwritten date of issue probably signifies that the minutes were sent out as a result of an inquiry. (See Peter Klein, *Die Wannsee-Konferenz vom 20. Januar 1942. Analyse und Dokumentation*, [Berlin: Edition Hentrich, no date], p14)
- 55 Institut für Zeitgeschichte, operational-situational report ('Ereignismeldungen') UdSSR, No.86.
- 56 This is revealed in the relevant Einsatzgruppen operational-situational reports.
- 57 *Faschismus*, p268.
- 58 Nuremberg document 129-R, IMT XXXVIII, p365ff.
- 59 Hermann Kaienburg, 'Zwangsarbeitslager an der "Straße der SS"', 1999, vol.11 (1996), 13-39.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p1828f.
- 61 *Verordnungsblatt*, 26 February 1942; Domarus II, p1844.
- 62 Nuremberg document PS-1063, printed in: Peter Longerich (ed.), *Die Ermordung der europäischen Juden. Eine umfassende Dokumentation des Holocaust*, (Munich: Piper, 1989), p165f.
- 63 Minutes of meeting 9 March 1943, Eichmann trial, document 119, printed in: Longerich (ed.), *Ermordung*, p167f.
- 64 For details, Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, p483ff.
- 65 Fröhlich (ed.), *Goebbels-Tagebücher*, entry of 27 March 1942.
- 66 Moreshet-Archive, Givat Haviva, Israel. I thank Yehoshua Büchler for drawing this document to my attention and for translating it from the Slovakian.
- 67 Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, p504ff. Important evidence in support of this position is the beginning of the

construction of Treblinka and the extension of the authority of HSSPF Krüger, who in June acquired responsibility for all Jewish affairs.

68 On Minsk, Safrian, *Eichmann-Männer*, p183ff; on Sobibor, Yehoshua Büchler, 'The Deportation of Slovakian Jews to the Lublin District of Poland in 1942', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol.6 (1991), 151-166.

69 Zentralstelle für Landesjustizverwaltung, Ludwigsburg, Nuremberg document UdSSR 401.

70 Witte, 'Decisions', p335f. The deportations and murders took place between 4 and 15 May 1942.

71 On 11 June 1942 the details of these deportations were discussed in the 'Jewish buro' ('Judenreferat') of the RSHA. In total, approximately 125.000 human beings were involved. Note by Dannecker, 15 June 1942, Nuremberg document RF 1217, printed in Serge Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz. Die Zusammenarbeit der deutschen und französischen Behörden bei der Endlösung der Judenfrage in Frankreich*, (Nördlingen: Greno, 1989), p379f

72 Details in Danuta Czech, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939-1945*, (Reinbek: Rohwoldt, 1989).

73 BAB, NS 19/1755.

74 However not on 16 July 1941, as is often maintained in the literature. See the individual entries in Himmler's appointment calendar for reference to the meeting: BAB, NS 19/3959.

75 BAB, NS 19/2655, 29 July 1941. The telephone call of Karl Wolff, arranged by Himmler on 16 July, was made on the same day. (Telefonnotizen, NS 19/1439) On 13 August Wolff thanked Ganzenmüller of the Transport Ministry on his behalf and that of Himmler: 'With particular joy I noted your assurance that daily now for fourteen days a train has departed to Treblinka with 5,000 members of the chosen people, so that we are now in a position to conduct this population movement at an accelerated tempo. ('Mit besonderer Freude habe ich von ihrer Mitteilung Kenntnis genommen, daß nun schon seit 14 Tagen täglich ein Zug mit 5.000 Angehörigen des auserwählten Volkes nach Treblinka fährt und wir doch auf diese Weise in die Lage versetzt sind, diese Bevölkerungsbewegung in einem beschleunigten Tempo durchzuführen.')

76 BAB, NS 19/3959; Martin Broszat (ed.) Rudolf Höß, *Kommandant in Auschwitz. Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen*, (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1958), pp157f , 176ff.

77 Christopher Browning, 'A Final Decision for the "Final Solution"? The Riegner Telegram Reconsidered', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol.10 (1996), 3-10.

78 BAB, NS 19/1757, printed in Longerich (ed.), *Ermordung*, 201.

79 Raul Hilberg, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden*, 3 vols., (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1990), p761ff.

80 On the failure of German propaganda concerning Europe and the 'New Order', see Peter Longerich, *Propagandisten im Krieg. Die Presseabteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes unter Ribbentrop*, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1987), p85ff.

81 The genocide in the occupied Soviet territories has not yet been completely researched. A series of studies show a renewed escalation of murder in May and summer 1942: Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, p683ff; Shmuel Spector, *The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941-1944*, (Jerusalem: Achva Press, 1990); Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

82 See particularly Jeremy Noakes, 'Nazi Policy towards German-Jewish "Mischlinge"', in: *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. 34 (1989), 291-354.

*) Longerich, Peter: 'The Wannsee Conference in the Development of the Final Solution'.

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