

PART II

SELECTED KEY DOCUMENTS

1

‘The Racists’ Ten Commandments’

The Nazi Party’s intense hostility towards communists and Jews was matched by the warmth of its embrace of the ordinary German: for every Jewish vice, so its propaganda went, there was a stout, respectable German virtue. This appeal to middle-class values is very evident in the following ‘upright’ piece which was widely disseminated by the Nazis. Only the last verse betrays that it was not a product of the Nazi era; it was, in fact, written by one of their most revered mentors, Theodor Fritsch, the late nineteenth-century antisemitic politician:

1. Be proud of being a German and strive earnestly and steadily to practise the inherited virtues of our people—courage, faithfulness and veracity—and to inspire and develop these in your children.
2. Thou shalt know that thou, together with all thy fellow Germans, regardless of faith or creed, hast a common implacable foe. His name is Jew.
3. Thou shalt keep thy blood pure. Consider it a crime to soil the noble Aryan breed of thy people by mingling it with the Jewish breed. For thou must know that Jewish blood is everlasting, putting the Jewish stamp on body and soul unto the farthest generations.
4. Thou shalt be helpful to thou fellow German and further him in all matters not counter to the German conscience, the more so if he be pressed by the Jew. Thou shalt at once take into court any offence or crime committed by the Jew in deed, word or letter, that comes to thy knowledge, lest the Jew abuse the laws of our country with impunity.
5. Thou shalt have no social intercourse with the Jew. Avoid all contact and community with the Jew and keep him away from thyself and thy family, especially thy daughters, lest they suffer injury of body and soul.
6. Thou shalt have no business relations with the Jews. Never choose a Jew as a business partner, nor borrow nor buy from him, and keep your wife, too, from doing so. Thou shalt sell nothing to him, nor use him as an agent in thy transactions, that thou mayest remain free and not become slave unto the Jew nor help increase his money, which is the power by which he enslaves our people.
7. Thou shalt drive the Jew from thy own breast and take no example from Jewish tricks and Jewish wiles, for thou shalt never match the Jew in trickery but forfeit thy honour and earn the contempt of thy fellow Germans and the punishment of the courts.
8. Thou shalt not entrust thy rights to a Jewish lawyer, nor thy children to a Jewish physician, nor thy children to a Jewish teacher lest thy honour, body and soul suffer harm.

9. Thou shalt not lend ear nor give credence to the Jew. Keep away all Jewish writings from thy German home and hearth lest their lingering poison may unnerve and corrupt thyself and thy family.
10. Thou shalt use no violence against the Jews because it is unworthy of thee and against the law. But if a Jew attacks thee, ward off his Semitic insolence with German wrath.

Source: Theodor Fritsch, The Antisemitic Catechism (1883), later renamed Handbook on the Jewish Question. The English version is cited in Paul Massing, Rehearsal for Destruction: A Study of Political Antisemitism in Imperial Germany (Harper and Row, 1949)

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

A favourite antisemitic image from the late nineteenth century was that of the power-crazed Jews engaged in an international conspiracy to undermine the safe and peaceful world of the gentiles, fomenting wars, revolutions, dangerous ideologies and the collapse of organized religion.

The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is the single most notorious antisemitic publication of this type—and certainly the most damaging in its long-term effects. A literary hoax hatched in all probability by an agent of the Russian secret police—in imitation of a French satire, itself entirely unconnected with Jews—it painted a startling picture of an international Jewish leadership bent on world domination and using all the forces of the modern world to achieve it. (The sinister term ‘elders of Zion’ was presumably inspired by the First Zionist Congress which was held in 1897, around the time the *Protocols* were concocted.)

Though it had little impact in Russia itself, after being brought to the west by White Russians fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution it was translated into several different languages and enjoyed wide circulation between the wars, especially in Weimar and later Nazi Germany. (It is still available in many countries today!) The following is a brief, but representative extract:

Protocol Number 1

...Political Freedom is not a fact but an idea. One must know how to employ this idea when it becomes necessary to attract popular forces to one's party by mental allurements if it plans to crush the party in power. The task is made easier if the opponent himself has contradicted the idea of freedom, embracing liberalism, and thereby yielding his power. It is precisely here that the triumph of our theory becomes apparent; the relinquished reins of power are, according to the laws of nature, immediately seized by a new hand because the blind force of the people cannot remain without a leader even for one day, and the new power merely replaces the old, weakened by liberalism.

In our day the power of *gold* has replaced liberal rulers. There was a time when faith ruled. The idea of freedom cannot be realised because no one knows how to make reasonable use of it. Give the people self-government for a short time and it will become corrupted. From that very moment strife begins and soon develops into social struggle, as a result of which states are set aflame and their authority is reduced to ashes.

Whether the state is exhausted by internal convulsions, or whether civil wars deliver it into the hands of external enemies, in either case it can be regarded as hopelessly lost: it is in our power. The despotism of capital, which is entirely in our hands, holds out to it a straw which the state must grasp, although against its will, or otherwise fall into the abyss...

Our motto is Power and Hypocrisy. Only power can conquer in politics, especially if it is concealed in talents which are necessary to statesmen. Violence must be the principle; hypocrisy and cunning the rule of those governments which do not wish to lay down their crowns at the feet of the agents of some new power. This evil is the sole means of attaining the good. For this reason we must not hesitate at bribery, fraud, and treason when these can help us to reach our end. In politics it is necessary to seize the property of others without hesitation if in so doing we attain submission and power...

In all parts of the world the words, *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity* have brought whole legions into our ranks through our...agents, carrying the banner with delight. Meanwhile these words were worms which ruined the prosperity of the *Goys*, everywhere destroying peace, quiet and solidarity, undermining all the foundations of their states. You will see subsequently that this aided our triumph, for it also gave us, among other things, the opportunity to grasp the trump card, the abolition of privileges; in other words, the very essence of the aristocracy of the *Goys*, which was the only protection of peoples and countries against us.

On the ruins of the natural and hereditary aristocracy we have established this new aristocracy on the qualification of wealth, which is dependent upon us, and also upon science which is promoted by our wise men...

Protocol Number 2

It is necessary for us that wars, whenever possible, should bring no territorial advantage; this will shift war to an economic basis and force nations to realize the strength of our predominance; such a situation will put both sides at the mercy of our million-eyed international agency, which will be unhampered by any frontiers. Then our international rights will do away with national rights, in a limited sense, and will rule the peoples in the same way as the civil power of each state regulates the relations of its subjects among themselves...

Do not think our assertions are without foundation: note the successes of Darwinism, Marxism, and Nietzscheism, engineered by us. The demoralising effects of these doctrines upon the minds of the *Goys* should be already obvious to us...

There is one great force in the hands of modern states which arouses thought movements among the people. That is the press. The role of the press is to indicate necessary demands, to register complaints of the people, and to express and foment dissatisfaction. The triumph of free babbling is incarnated in the press; but governments were unable to profit by this power and it has fallen into our hands. Through it we have attained influence, while remaining in the background. Thanks to the press, we have gathered gold in our hands, although we had to take it from rivers of blood and tears.

But it cost us the sacrifice of many of our own people. Every sacrifice on our part is worth a thousand *Goys* before God.

Protocol Number 3

To induce the lovers of authority to abuse their power, we have placed all the forces in opposition to each other, having developed their liberal tendencies towards independence. We have excited different forms of initiative in that direction; we have armed all the parties; we have made authority the target of all ambitions. We have opened the arenas in different states, where revolts are now occurring and disorders and bankruptcy will shortly appear everywhere...

Daring journalists, impudent pamphleteers, make daily attacks on the administrative personnel. The abuse of power is definitely preparing the downfall of all institutions and everything will be overturned by the blows of the infuriated mobs...

Under our guidance, the people have exterminated aristocracy, which was their natural protector and guardian, for its own interests and inseparably connected with the well-being of the people. Now, however, with the destruction of this aristocracy the masses have fallen under the power of the profiteers and cunning upstarts who have settled on the workers as a merciless burden.

We will present ourselves in the guise of saviours of the workers from this oppression when we suggest that they enter our army of Socialists, Anarchists, Communists, to whom we always extend our help, under the guise of the rule of brotherhood demanded by the human solidarity of our social masonry. The aristocracy which benefited by the labour of the people by right was interested that the workers should be well fed, healthy and strong.

We, on the contrary, are concerned in the opposite—in the degeneration of the *Goy*s. Our power lies in the chronic malnutrition and in the weakness of the worker, because through this he fails under our power and is unable to find either strength or energy to combat it.

Hunger gives to capital greater power over the worker than the legal authority of the sovereign ever gave to the aristocracy. Through misery and the resulting jealous hatred we manipulate the mob and crush those who stand in our way... This hatred will be still more accentuated by the economic crisis which will stop financial transactions and all industrial life. Having organised a general economic crisis by all possible underhand means, and with the help of gold which is all in our hands, we will throw great crowds of workmen into the street, simultaneously, in all countries of Europe. These crowds will gladly shed the blood of those of whom they, in the simplicity of their ignorance, have been jealous since childhood and whose property they will then be able to loot.

They will not harm our people because we will know of the time of the attack and we will take measures to protect them...

Remember the French Revolution, which we have called 'great'; the secrets of its preparation are well known to us, for it was the work of our hands. Since then we have carried the masses from one disappointment to another, so that they will renounce even us in favour of a despot sovereign of Zionist blood, whom we are preparing for the world.

3

The Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917)

At the height of the First World War, as British troops in the Middle East were poised for the capture of Palestine from the Ottoman Turks, the British government made a remarkable undertaking—later to prove highly controversial—to assist in the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine (the site of biblical Israel). This declaration, which was in effect a statement of intent to the entire Jewish world, took the form of a letter written by the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour and addressed to Lord Lionel Rothschild, Honorary President of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain. Balfour asked Rothschild to communicate its contents to the Zionist Federation. The letter is dated 2 November 1917.

This declaration would later form the basis of the creation of the British Mandate in Palestine (1920–48) and for the eventual establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The text of the declaration, taken from the letter, is as follows:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done that may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in other countries.

[Arthur James Balfour, British Foreign Secretary]

Adolf Hitler: A Letter on the Jewish Question

This is the earliest recorded expression of Hitler's views on any subject. While it may appear significant that this letter is preoccupied with the Jewish question, it should be borne in mind that it was written expressly in response to a request by Adolf Gemlich, his military superior, who wished to know the place of the Jewish question within the German army's anti-revolutionary propaganda (Hitler was at that time employed as a secret agent of the Press and Propaganda Office of the political department of the *Wehrmacht*).

Precisely what Hitler meant at this early stage (1919) by the words, 'complete removal of the Jews' is impossible to state with certainty. The German he used—*die Entfernung der Juden überhaupt*—is no more specific than its English equivalent. What is clear, however, is his prophetic commitment to a two-staged assault on the Jews of Germany, starting with a systematic 'legal' campaign.

Antisemitism as a political movement should not and cannot be determined by emotional factors, but rather by a realisation of the facts. And these facts are:

First, Jewry is clearly a racial and not a religious group... All that which is for men a source of higher life—be it religion, socialism or democracy—is for the Jew merely a means to an end, namely, the satisfaction of his lust for power and money.

His actions will result in a racial tuberculosis of peoples.

Hence it follows: antisemitism based on purely emotional grounds will find its ultimate expression in the form of pogroms (which are capricious and thus not truly effective). Rational antisemitism, however, must pursue a systematic, *legal* campaign against the Jews, by the revocation of the special privileges they enjoy in contrast to the other foreigners living among us. But the final objective must be the complete removal of the Jews.

Source: Adolf Hitler to Adolf Gemlich, 16 September 1919, Hauptstaatsarchiv München, in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds), The Jew in the Modern World (Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 484

5

The 25-point programme of the National-Socialist German Workers' Party

The following document is the first complete and coherent statement of aims and objectives of the infant Nazi Party. This programme would later form an important part of the basis of the Party's successful appeal to the German electorate.

The Programme of the German Workers' Party is a programme for our time. The leadership rejects the establishment of new aims after those set out in the programme have been achieved, for the sole purpose of making it possible for the Party to continue to exist as the result of the artificially stimulated dissatisfaction of the masses.

1. We demand the uniting of all Germans within one Greater Germany, on the basis of the right to self-determination of nations.
2. We demand equal rights for the German people with respect to other nations, and the annulment of the peace treaty of Versailles and St. Germain.
3. We demand land and soil to feed our People and settle our excess population.
4. Only Nationals can be Citizens of the State. Only persons of German blood can be Nationals, regardless of religious affiliation. No Jew can therefore be a German National.
5. Any person who is not a Citizen will be able to live in Germany only as a guest and must be subject to legislation for Aliens.
6. Only a Citizen is entitled to decide the leadership and laws of the State. We therefore demand that only Citizens may hold public office, regardless of whether it is a national, state or local office.

We oppose the corrupting parliamentary custom of making party considerations, and not character and ability, the criterion for appointments to official positions.

7. We demand that the State make it its duty to provide opportunities of employment first of all for its own Citizens. If it is not possible to maintain the entire population of the State, then foreign nationals (non-citizens) are to be expelled from the Reich.
8. Any further immigration of non-Germans is to be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who entered Germany after August 2 1914, be forced to leave the Reich without delay.
9. All German citizens must have equal rights and duties.
10. It must be the first duty of every Citizen to carry out intellectual or physical work. Individual activity must not be harmful to the public interest and must be pursued within the framework of the community and for the general good.

We therefore demand:

11. The abolition of all income obtained without labour or effort.

Breaking the servitude of interest

12. In view of the tremendous sacrifices in property and blood demanded of the Nation by every war, personal gain from the war must be termed a crime against the Nation. We therefore demand the total confiscation of all war profits.
13. We demand the nationalization of all enterprises (already) converted into corporations (trusts).
14. We demand profit-sharing in large enterprises.
15. We demand the large-scale development of age-old pension schemes.
16. We demand the creation and maintenance of a sound middle class; the immediate communalization of the large department stores, which are to be leased at low rates to small tradesmen. We demand the most careful consideration for the owners of small businesses in orders placed by national, state or community authorities.
17. We demand land reform in accordance with our national needs and a law for expropriation without compensation of land for public purposes. Abolition of ground rent and prevention of all speculation in land.
18. We demand ruthless battle against those who harm the common good by their activities. Persons committing base crimes against the People, usurers, profiteers, etc., are to be punished by death without regard to religion or race.
19. We demand the replacement of Roman Law, which serves a materialistic World Order, by German Law.
20. In order to make higher education—and thereby entry into leading positions—available to every able and industrious German, the State must provide a thorough restructuring of our entire public educational system. The courses of study at all educational institutions are to be adjusted to meet the requirements of practical life. Understanding of the concept of the State must be achieved through the schools (teaching of civics) at the earliest age at which it can be grasped. We demand the education at the public expense of specially gifted children of poor parents, without regard to the latter's position or occupation.
21. The State must raise the level of national health by means of mother-and-child care, the banning of juvenile labour, achievement of physical fitness through legislation for compulsory gymnastics and sports, and maximum support for all organizations providing physical training for young people.
22. We demand the abolition of hireling troops and the creation of a national army.
23. We demand laws to fight against *deliberate* political lies and their dissemination by the press. In order to make it possible to create a German press, we demand:
 - (a) all editors and editorial employees of newspapers appearing in the German language must be German by race;
 - (b) non-German newspapers require express permission from the State for their publication. They may not be printed in the German language;
 - (c) any financial participation in a German newspaper or influence on such a paper is to be forbidden by law to non-Germans and the penalty for any breach of this law will be the closing of the newspaper in question, as well as the immediate expulsion from the Reich of the non-Germans involved.

Newspapers which violate the public interest are to be banned. We demand laws against trends in art and literature which have a destructive effect on our national life, and the suppression of performances that offend against the above requirements.

24. We demand freedom for all religious denominations, provided they do not endanger the existence of the State or offend the concepts of decency and morality of the Germanic race. The Party as such stands for positive Christianity, without associating itself with any particular denomination. It fights against the Jewish-materialistic spirit *within* and around us, and is convinced that a permanent revival of our Nation can be achieved only from *within*, on the basis of:

Public interest before private interest

25. To carry out all the above we demand: the creation of a strong central authority in the Reich. Unquestioned authority by the political central Parliament over the entire Reich and over its organizations in general. The establishment of trade and professional organizations to enforce the Reich basic laws in the individual states.

The Party leadership promises to take an uncompromising stand, at the cost of their own lives if need be, on the enforcement of the above points.

Munich, February 24, 1920

Source: Das Programm der NSDAP (Berlin, 1933). Translation appears in Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Abraham Margalio (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981)

6

The Nuremberg Law

On 15 September 1935, at its annual Party Congress at Nuremberg, the Nazi Government passed two momentous decrees as part of an overall legal assault upon the Jews of Germany.

The first law stripped all Jews of their citizenship, reversing at a stroke the entire process of Jewish emancipation, which the Jews of Germany had struggled to achieve since the French Revolution of 1789 (emancipation had eventually been granted with the unification of Germany in 1871).

The second law outlawed marriage and sexual relations between Jews and those of 'German or related blood'. An implementing decree of 14 November 1935 defined more precisely the terms 'Jew', 'Aryan' and 'Mischling' (one of mixed parentage). Christians whose parents or grandparents were Jewish could now be considered as full Jews for all purposes. The Nuremberg Laws effectively institutionalized Nazi racism and served as the basis for many further anti-Jewish regulations and pronouncements.

What follows is an excerpt from the two Nuremberg Laws and the Implementing Decree.

Reich Citizenship Laws 15 September, 1935

Paragraph 2

- 1) A Reich citizen is a subject of the State who is of German or related blood, who proves by his conduct that he is willing and fit faithfully to serve the German people and Reich.
- 2) Reich citizenship is acquired through the granting of a Reich Citizenship Certificate.
- 3) The Reich citizen is the sole bearer of full political rights in accordance with the Law.

Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour 15 September, 1935

Moved by the understanding that purity of the German Blood is the essential condition for the continued existence of the German people, and inspired by the inflexible determination to ensure the existence of the German nation for all time, the Reichstag has unanimously adopted the following Law, which is promulgated herewith:

Paragraph 1

- 1) Marriages between Jews and subjects of the State of German or related blood are forbidden. Marriages nevertheless concluded are invalid, even if concluded abroad to circumvent this law.
- 2) Annulment proceedings can be initiated only by the State Prosecutor.

Paragraph 2

Extra-marital sexual relations between Jews and subjects of the State of German or related blood are forbidden.

Paragraph 3

Jews may not employ in their households female subjects of the State of German or related blood who are under 45 years of age.

Paragraph 4

- 1) Jews are forbidden to fly the Reich or National flag or to display the Reich colours.
- 2) They are, on the other hand, permitted to display the Jewish colours. The exercise of this right is protected by the State.

Paragraph 5

- 1) Any person who violates the prohibition under Paragraph I will be punished by a prison sentence with hard labour.
- 2) A male who violates the prohibition under Paragraph 2 will be punished with a prison sentence with or without hard labour.
- 3) Any person violating the provisions under Paragraphs 3 or 4 will be punished with a prison sentence of up to one year and a fine, or with one or the other of these penalties.

First [Implementing] Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law 14 November, 1935

Paragraph 4

- 1) A Jew cannot be a Reich citizen. He has no voting rights in political matters; he cannot occupy a public office.
- 2) Jewish officials will retire as of 31 December, 1935...

Paragraph 5

- 1) A Jew is a person descended from at least three Jewish grandparents who are full Jews by race.
- 2) A subject of the State of mixed descent (Mischling) who is descended from two full Jewish grandparents is also considered a Jew if: (a) he belonged to the Jewish religious community at the time this law was issued or joined the community later; (b) he was married to a Jew at the time the law was issued, or if he married a Jew subsequently; (c) he is the offspring of a marriage with a Jew, which was contracted after the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour went into effect; or (d) he is the offspring of extra-marital intercourse with a Jew and will be born out of wedlock after 31 July, 1936.

Source: Reichsgesetzblatt, I, (1935, p. 1333). English translation by Priscilla Fishman in Yisrael Gutman and Chaim Schatzker, The Holocaust and its Significance (Zalman Shazar Center, 1984, except for paragraph 5, 2) which appears in Bernard Dov Weinryb, Jewish Emancipation Under Attack (The American Jewish Publication Committee, 1942) reproduced in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds), The Jew in the Modern World (Oxford University Press, 1980)

An eyewitness response to Kristallnacht

On the night of 9–10 November 1938, in a clearly orchestrated campaign throughout the length and breadth of Germany, gangs of SA thugs, other party members and hooligans roamed the streets in an orgy of violence. The operation took the form of the destruction or burning of synagogues, the ransacking of Jewish shops and warehouses and the terrorization, beating up and murder of Jewish individuals. According to the Nazis' own reports, 91 Jews were killed, more than 7,000 Jewish-owned shops destroyed and approximately 300 synagogues razed to the ground. The Nazis were apparently impressed by all the broken glass from the synagogue windows and named this violent night 'Kristallnacht' (the Night of Shattered Glass).



2 Destruction of the synagogues, 9/10 November 1938

The reaction abroad was predictably outraged. And even among ordinary Germans, the general response was far from supportive of, and at worst indifferent towards, their own government's measures at that time.

From then on, concerted physical attacks against Jews—including, after 1941, mass systematic extermination—would take place outside German soil.

The American consul in Leipzig described the event and the public reaction to it in these words:

The shattering of shop windows, looting of stores and dwellings of Jews...was hailed subsequently in the Nazi press as a 'spontaneous wave of righteous indignation throughout Germany'... So far as a high percentage of the German populace is concerned, a state of popular indignation that would lead to such excesses can be considered as non-existent. On the contrary, in viewing the ruins and attendant measures employed, all of the local crowds observed were obviously benumbed over what had happened and aghast over the unprecedented fury of Nazi acts that had been or were taking place with bewildering rapidity...

At 3 a.m. on 10 November 1938 was unleashed a barrage of Nazi ferocity as had had no equal hitherto in Germany, or very likely anywhere else in the world since savagery began. Jewish buildings were smashed into and contents demolished or looted. In one of the Jewish sections an eighteen-year-old boy was hurled from a three-storey window to land with both legs broken on a street littered with burning beds and other household furniture and effects from his family's and other apartments... It is reported...that among domestic effects thrown out of a Jewish building, a small dog descended four flights on to a cluttered street with a broken spine.

Three synagogues in Leipzig were fired simultaneously by incendiary bombs and all sacred objects and records desecrated or destroyed, in most cases hurled through the windows and burned in the streets. No attempts whatsoever were made to quench the fires, the activity of the fire brigade being confined to playing water on adjoining buildings...

Tactics which closely approached the ghoulish took place at the Jewish cemetery where the temple was fired together with a building occupied by caretakers, tombstones uprooted and graves violated. Eyewitnesses considered reliable the report that ten corpses were left unburied at this cemetery for a whole week because all gravediggers and cemetery attendants had been arrested...

Having demolished dwellings and hurled most of the movable effects onto the streets, the insatiably sadistic perpetrators threw many of the trembling inmates into a small stream that flows through the Zoological Park, commanding horrified spectators to spit at them, defile them with mud and jeer at their plight. The latter incident has been repeatedly corroborated by German witnesses who were nauseated in telling the tale... These tactics were carried out the entire morning of 10 November without police intervention and they were applied to men, women and children.

Source: The full report from which this extract is taken appears in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (eds), Nazism 1919–1945. A Documentary Reader, Vol. II: State, Society and Economy (Exeter University Press, 1984), Document 424

German Foreign Ministry memorandum on ‘The Jewish Question’, 25 January 1939

How the Nazis themselves weighed up their Jewish policy and its central significance in the drama of 1938 can be assessed in this revealing extract from a German Foreign Ministry memorandum on ‘The Jewish Question’, dated 25 January 1939:

Subject: The Jewish Question as a Factor in Foreign Policy in 1938

1. Germany’s Jewish policy as condition and consequence of foreign policy decisions in 1938.
2. The aim of German Jewish policy: emigration.
3. Means, ways and destinations of Jewish emigration.
4. The Jewish émigré as the best propaganda for Germany’s Jewish policy.

It is probably no coincidence that the fateful year of 1938 brought not only the realization of the concept of a Greater Germany, but at the same time has brought the Jewish Question close to solution. For the Jewish policy was both pre-condition and consequence of the events of 1938. More than the power politics and hostility of the former enemy in the World War it was the penetration of Jewish influence and the corrupting Jewish mentality in politics, economy and culture which paralysed the strength and the will of the German people to rise once more...

But the need for a radical solution of the Jewish question also resulted from the developments in foreign affairs which added 200,000 persons of the Jewish faith in Austria to the 500,000 living in the old Reich. The influence of the Jews in the Austrian economy made it necessary to take immediate steps to eliminate the Jews from the German economy...

The campaign launched in reprisal for the assassination of Secretary of Legation vom Rath has speeded up this process so greatly that Jewish retail trade—so far with the exception of foreign-owned stores—has vanished completely from our streets. The liquidation of Jewish wholesale and manufacturing enterprises, and of houses and real estate owned by Jews, is gradually progressing so far that within a limited period of time the existence of Jewish property will in Germany be a thing of the past...

The ultimate aim of Germany’s policy is the emigration of all Jews living in German territory... The Jew has been eliminated from politics and culture, but until 1938 his powerful economic position in Germany and his tenacious determination to hold out until the return of ‘better times’ remained unbroken...

But the Jew had underestimated the consistency and strength of the National-Socialist idea.

The...question, to which countries the organized emigration of the Jews should be directed, could [not] be solved...by the Evian Conference; each of the countries taking part expressed its agreement in principle to help solve the refugee problem, but declared that it was unable to accept large masses of Jewish emigres into its territory. While in the years 1933–4 more than 100,000 Jews from Germany made their way abroad, legally or illegally, and were able to gain a foothold in a new host nation, either with the aid of relatives living abroad, or the pity of humanitarian circles, by now almost all countries in the world have sealed their borders hermetically against the burdensome Jewish intruders...

Even the migration of only about 100,000 Jews has been sufficient to waken the interest in, if not the understanding of, the Jewish danger in many countries, and it can be foreseen that the Jewish question will develop into an international political problem when large numbers of Jews from Germany, Poland, Hungary and Rumania are set in motion by the increasing pressure of their host nations. Even for Germany the Jewish question will not be solved when the last Jew has left German soil...

Palestine, which has already been designated by a popular catchword as the target of emigration, cannot be considered as such because its absorptive capacity for a mass influx of Jews is insufficient. Under pressure of Arab resistance the British Mandatory government has limited Jewish immigration into Palestine to a minimum.

At first the emigration of German Jews to Palestine received extensive support from Germany through the conclusion of an agreement with Jewish representatives in Palestine... But Germany is obliged to discern the danger in the creation of a Jewish State, which even in a miniature form could provide world Jewry with a basis for action similar to that of the Vatican State for political Catholicism, and could absorb only a fraction of the Jews. The realization that Jewry will always be the implacable enemy of the Third Reich forces us to the decision to prevent any strengthening of the Jewish position. A Jewish State would give world Jewry increased power in international law and relations...

Germany has an important interest in seeing the splintering of Jewry maintained. Those who argue that this will cause the creation of sources of boycott and anti-German centres all over the world disregard a development already evident, that the influx of Jews arouses the resistance of the native population in all parts of the world and thus provides the best propaganda for Germany's policy towards the Jews.

In North America, in South America, in France, in Holland, Scandinavia and Greece—wherever the stream of Jewish migrants has poured in, a clear increase in anti-Semitism has already been recorded. It must be the aim of German foreign policy to strengthen this wave of anti-Semitism...

The poorer the Jewish immigrant is and the greater the burden he constitutes for the country into which he has immigrated, the stronger the reaction will be in the host country, and the more desirable the effect in support of German propaganda. The aim of this German policy is a future international solution of the Jewish question, dictated not by false pity for a 'Jewish religious minority that has been driven out' but by the mature realisation by all nations of the nature of the danger that Jewry spells for the national character of the nations.

Source: Excerpted from Document 58 in Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margalio (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981)

Hitler threatens Jews with annihilation

Hitler's dream of a Europe 'purified' of Jews was expressed in a surprisingly open and threatening way in a speech he delivered to the German Parliament on 30 January 1939:

In connection with the Jewish question I have this to say: it is a shameful spectacle to see how the whole democratic world is oozing sympathy for the poor tormented Jewish people, but remains hard-hearted and obdurate when it comes to helping them...

The world has sufficient space for settlements but we must once and for all get rid of the opinion that the Jewish race was only created by God for the purpose of being...a parasite living on the body and the productive work of other nations. The Jewish race will have to adapt itself to sound constructive activity as other nations do, or sooner or later it will succumb to a crisis of an inconceivable magnitude.

One thing I should like to say on this day which may be memorable for others as well as for us Germans: in the course of my life I have very often been a prophet, and have usually been ridiculed for it. During the time of my struggle for power it was in the first instance the Jewish race which received my prophecies with laughter when I said that I would one day take over the leadership of the State, and with it that of the whole nation, and that I would then settle the whole Jewish problem. The laughter was uproarious, but I think that for some time now they have been laughing on the other side of their face.

TODAY I WILL ONCE MORE BE A PROPHET: IF THE INTERNATIONAL JEWISH FINANCIERS IN AND OUTSIDE EUROPE SHOULD SUCCEED IN PLUNGING THE NATIONS ONCE MORE INTO A WORLD WAR, THEN THE RESULT WILL NOT BE THE BOLSHEVIZATION OF THE EARTH, AND THUS THE VICTORY OF JEWRY, BUT THE ANNIHILATION OF THE JEWISH RACE IN EUROPE!

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margaliot (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union, (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 59

Reinhard Heydrich's Order, 21 September 1939

During the early days of the Second World War, Reinhard Heydrich, Head of the Reich Security Main Office and of the Security Police, was given the responsibility of devising a systematic interim method of dealing with the Jews in occupied Poland until a more permanent solution could be found. On 21 September 1939 Heydrich issued the following instructions to the leaders of the *Einsatzgruppen* (the *Einsatzgruppen* were special 'task forces' [i.e. death squads] of the Security Police which operated behind the German front-line troops). They would later play a murderous role in shooting to death over two million civilians—including an estimated 1.5 million Jews in territory taken from the Russians.

The subject of his directive was 'the Jewish question in the occupied territory' of Poland and established the basis for the organization, concentration and ghettoization of Jews that would define Jewish life in Poland until the death camps were ready to receive them:

I refer to the conference held in Berlin today, and again point out that the *planned total measures* (i.e. the final aim) are to be kept *strictly secret*.

A distinction must be made between:

1. the final aim (which will require extended periods of time) and
2. the stages leading to the fulfilment of this final aim...

The planned measures require the *most thorough preparation* with regard to technical as well as economic aspects.

It is obvious that the tasks ahead...cannot be laid down in full detail...

For the time being, the first prerequisite for the final aim is the concentration of the Jews from the countryside into the larger cities. This is to be carried out speedily...

In this connection it should be borne in mind that only cities which are rail junctions, or are at least located on railroad lines, should be selected as concentration points.

On principle, Jewish communities of less than 500 persons are to be dissolved and transferred to the nearest concentration centre...

II Councils of Jewish Elders

1. In each Jewish community a Council of Jewish Elders is to be set up which, as far as possible, is to be composed of the remaining authoritative personalities and rabbis... The Council is to be made *fully*

responsible, in the literal sense of the word, for the exact and prompt implementation of directives already issued or to be issued in the future.

2. In case of sabotage of such instructions, the Councils are to be warned that the most severe measures will be taken.
3. The Jewish Councils are to carry out an approximate census of the Jews in their areas...
4. ... The reason to be given for the concentration in the cities is that the Jews have taken a decisive part in sniper attacks and plundering.
5. ...The concentration of the Jews in the cities will probably call for regulations in these cities which will forbid their entry to certain quarters completely and that...they may, for instance, not leave the ghetto, nor leave their homes after a certain hour in the evening, etc.

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and, Abraham Margalio (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vasbem Publications, 1981), Document 73

11

The Warsaw Ghetto: The Jewish response

The horrific implications of Nazi rule for the Jews of Poland were understood in the following way by a contemporary Warsaw Jewish chronicler, Chaim Kaplan. Yet he also believed, quite prophetically, in the indomitability of the Jewish spirit.

March 10, 1940

The gigantic catastrophe which has descended on Polish Jewry has no parallel, even in the darkest periods of Jewish history. Firstly—the depth of the hatred. This is not hatred whose source is simply in a party platform, invented for political purposes.

It is a hatred of emotion, whose source is some psychopathic disease. In its outward manifestation it appears as physiological hatred, which sees the object of its hatred as tainted in body, as lepers who have no place in society... It is our good fortune that the conquerors failed to understand the nature and strength of Polish Jewry. Logically, we are obliged to die. According to the laws of nature, our end is destruction and total annihilation. How can an entire community feed itself when it has no grip on life? For there is no occupation, no trade which is not limited and circumscribed for us.

But even this time we did not comply with the laws of nature. There is within us some hidden power, mysterious and secret, which keeps us going, keeps us alive, despite the natural law. If we cannot live on what is permitted, we live on what is forbidden...

The Jews of Poland—oppressed and broken, shamed and debased, still love life, and do not wish to leave this world before their time. Say what you like, the will to live amidst terrible suffering is the manifestation of some hidden power whose nature we do not yet know. It is a marvellous, life-preserving power... The fact that we have hardly any suicides is worthy of special emphasis.

We have remained naked. But as long as that secret power is concealed within us, we shall not yield to despair. The strength of this power lies in the very nature of the Polish Jew, which is rooted in our eternal tradition that commands us to live.

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Marguliot (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 88

12

The Wannsee Conference

On 20 January 1942, a conference was convened beside Lake Wannsee in Berlin. Its purpose was to coordinate the activities of all bodies and organizations whose participation would be needed for the 'Final Solution'. Although the key decisions had clearly already been reached at the highest levels of government, this conference is highly significant because Heydrich (who chaired the meeting) was able to gain unchallenged administrative supremacy for the SS in all matters relating to the implementation of Holocaust policy. Seated at this meeting were highly educated and cultivated Germans from many different branches of government—the cream of the German leadership. They calmly and deliberately listened to plans for the annihilation of an entire people.

This document makes it abundantly clear that the Nazis were, by the beginning of 1942, unswervingly committed to killing every single Jew (according to their estimate 11 million) on the continent of Europe, including those living in countries that were neutral, for example Eire, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain, or not yet conquered and occupied, for example Great Britain and the central and eastern regions of the Soviet Union.

A copy of the minutes of the conference, prepared by Adolf Eichmann, has survived intact. It constitutes one of the most important documents on the history of the Holocaust. The following is an excerpt:

In view of the dangers of emigration in war-time, and the possibilities in the East, the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police (Himmler) has forbidden the emigration of Jews.

Emigration has now been replaced by evacuation of the Jews to the East, as a further possible solution, with the appropriate prior authorization of the Führer.

However, this operation should be regarded only as a provisional option; but it is already supplying practical experience of great significance in view of the coming final solution of the Jewish question.

In the course of this final solution of the European Jewish question approximately 11 million Jews may be taken into consideration, distributed over the individual countries as follows:

The Jews are to be utilized for work in the East in an expedient manner in the course of the final solution. In large (labour) columns, with the sexes separated, Jews capable of work will be moved into those areas as they build roads, during which a large proportion will no doubt drop out through natural reduction. The remnant that eventually remains will require suitable treatment; because it will without doubt represent the most (physically) resistant part, it consists of a natural selection that could, on its release, become the germ-cell of a new Jewish revival (witness the experience of history).

Europe is to be combed through from West to East in the course of the practical implementation of the final solution...



3 Jews marked out for death, 20 January 1942

The evacuated Jews will first be taken, group by group, to so-called transit ghettos, in order to be transported further east from there.

Source: Excerpted from Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margalit (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 117

	Country	Number
A.	Germany	131,800
	Austria	43,700
	Eastern Territories	420,000
	General Government (i.e. central Poland)	2,284,000
	Bialystok	400,000
	Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia	74,200
	Estonia – free of Jews	
	Latvia	3,500
	Lithuania	34,000
	Belgium	43,000
	Denmark	5,600
	France: Occupied territory	165,000
	France: Unoccupied territory	700,000
	Greece	69,600
	Holland	160,800
Norway	1,300	
B.	Bulgaria	48,000
	England	330,000
	Finland	2,300
	Ireland	4,000
	Italy, including Sardinia	58,000
	Albania	200
	Croatia	40,000
	Portugal	3,000
	Rumania, including Bessarabia	342,000
	Sweden	8,000
	Switzerland	18,000
	Serbia	10,000
	Slovakia	88,000
	Spain	6,000
	Turkey (European portion)	55,500
	Hungary	742,800
	USSR	5,000,000
Ukraine	2,994,684	
White Russia, without Bialystok	446,484	
	Total:	over 11,000,000

Notes: * Figure in brackets=percentage of votes cast (no data available for Bavarian's People's Party).

** The Independent Social Democratic Party ceased to exist after 1924. Some of its members went back to the Social Democrats and the rest joined the Communists.

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margaliot (eds), *Documents on the Holocaust* (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 6

The Einsatzgruppen death squads: An eyewitness account

Over one million Jews were shot to death during the first 15 months of Nazi Germany's campaign in the Soviet Union, following the launch of Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941. At the Nuremberg Trials of 1945 the following graphic account of one such massacre was given by a German builder, Hermann Gräbe:

A few lorries were parked in front of the mounds from which people were being driven by armed Ukrainian militia under the supervision of an armed SS man. The militia provided the guards on the lorries and drove them to and from the ditch. All these people wore the prescribed yellow patches on the front and back of their clothing so that they were identifiable as Jews...

I could now hear a series of rifle shots from behind the mounds. The people who had got off the lorries—men, women and children of all ages—had to undress on the orders of an SS man who was carrying a riding or dog whip in his hand. They had to place their clothing on separate piles for shoes, clothing and underwear. I saw a pile of shoes containing approximately 800–1,000 pairs, and great heaps of underwear and clothing. Without weeping or crying out these people undressed and stood together in family groups, embracing each other and saying goodbye while waiting for a sign from another SS man who stood on the edge of the ditch and also had a whip. During the quarter of an hour in which I stood near the ditch I did not hear a single complaint or plea for mercy. I watched a family of about eight a man and a woman, both about fifty-years-old with their children of about one, eight and ten, as well as two grown-up daughters of about twenty and twenty-four. An old woman with snow-white hair held a one-year-old child in her arms singing to it and tickling it. The child squeaked with delight. The married couple looked on with tears in their eyes. The father held the ten-year-old boy by the hand speaking softly to him. The boy was struggling to hold back his tears. The father pointed a finger to the sky and stroked his head and seemed to be explaining something to him. At this moment, the SS man near the ditch called out something to his comrade. The latter counted off some twenty people and ordered them behind the mound. The family of which I have just spoken was among them. I can still remember how a girl, slender and dark, pointed to herself as she went past me, saying, 'twenty-three'.

I walked round the mound and stood in front of the huge grave. The bodies were lying so tightly packed together that only their heads showed, from almost all of which blood ran down over their shoulders. Some were still moving. Others raised their hands and turned their heads to show they were still alive. The ditch was already three-quarters full. I estimate that it already held about a thousand bodies. I turned my eyes towards the man doing the shooting. He was an SS man; he sat, legs swinging, on the edge of the ditch. He had an automatic rifle resting on his knees and he was smoking a cigarette. The people, completely naked, climbed down steps which had been cut into the clay wall

of the ditch, stumbled over the heads of those lying there and stopped at the spot indicated by the SS man. They lay down on top of the dead and wounded; some stroked those still living and spoke quietly to them. Then I heard a series of rifle shots. I looked into the ditch and saw the bodies contorting or, the heads already inert, sinking on the corpses beneath. Blood flowed from the nape of their necks. I was surprised not to be ordered away, but I noticed three postmen in uniform standing nearby. Then the next batch came up, climbed down into the ditch, laid themselves next to the previous victims and were shot...

I am making the above statement in Wiesbaden, Germany on 10 November 1945. I swear to God it is the whole truth.

Source: Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, Nazism 1919–1945. A Documentary Reader, Vol. III (Exeter University Press, 1988), Document 823

Appeal to the outside world

The Jewish Labour Bund, which had enjoyed massive pre-war support among the Jews of Poland, strove to maintain its political activities underground. It was represented in the Polish Government-in-exile in London and liaised, wherever possible, with the Polish underground in Warsaw and elsewhere in Poland. The following appeal, made in May 1942, is a poignant example of one of its attempts to communicate the agony of Poland's Jews to its overseas contacts, in this case urging the Polish Government-in-exile to take immediate action.

From the day the Russo-German war broke out, the Germans undertook the physical extermination of the Jewish population on Polish territory, using for that purpose Ukrainians and Lithuanian Siauliai [fascist paramilitary police units]. It began first of all in Eastern Galicia in the summer months of 1941. Their method everywhere was as follows: men from 14 to 60 were slaughtered, machine-gunned, or killed by hand grenades. They had to dig their own graves first. Children in orphanages, inmates of old-age homes, and the hospitalised sick were shot, women were killed on the streets. In many towns Jews were taken away to an 'unknown destination' and executed in the nearby woods. 30,000 Jews were murdered in Lwow, 15,000 in Stanlawow, 5,000 in Tarnopol, 2,000 in Zloczow, 4,000 in Brzezany (the town had 18,000 Jews, now has 1,700). The same happened in Zborow, Kolomyja... and [many] other places.

The extermination actions in those towns recurred repeatedly in many towns: they are still going on...

In October and November the same thing began to happen in Vilna, the Vilna area and Lithuanian Kovno. In Vilna 50,000 Jews were murdered during November. There are now 12,000 Jews, in Vilna. According to various estimates, the number of Jews bestially murdered in the Vilna regions and Lithuanian Kovno is put at 300,000...

In November and December, the annihilation action was begun in the Polish territory incorporated into the Reich, i.e. *Warthegau*. The annihilation was carried out by means of gassing, which took place in the village of Chelmno, 12 km. from Kolo. A special van [gas chamber] was used, in which 90 people were loaded. The victims were buried in special graves in a clearing in the Lubard Forest. The graves were dug by the victims themselves. On average, 1,000 people were gassed daily. Between November 1941 and March 1942...35,000 Jews from the Lodz ghetto, as well as a certain number of Gypsies, were gassed in Chelmno.

In February 1942, the annihilation of Jews in the territory which is called the General Government was started. The beginning: Tarnow and Radom, where Gestapo and SS men began visiting the

Jewish districts daily, systematically killing Jews in the streets, courtyards and houses. In March, a mass action began in Lublin of deporting all Jews from the city. Children and old people, in the orphanage and old-age homes and also the patients in the general hospital and the hospital for contagious diseases, were bestially put to death, and also many people were killed in the streets and in their homes. The total number of victims was over 2,000. Some 25,000 Jews were taken from Lublin in sealed railroad cars to an 'unknown destination', after which every trace of them has disappeared. Some 3,000 Jews were confined in barracks in Majdanek Tatarow, a suburb of Lublin. Not a single Jew is left in Lublin today. In the last days of March in Cracow, fifty Jews were rounded up, from a list prepared beforehand, and were shot in the yards in front of their homes. In Warsaw, in the night of April 17/18, the Gestapo organised a blood bath in the ghetto. According to a prepared list, they dragged out more than fifty Jews, men and women, from their homes and murdered them in front of their buildings. Many were not found at home. Starting with April 18, even in broad daylight, they kill a few Jews a day in their homes and on the streets. This action is conducted with prepared lists, comprising all strata of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. There is talk of bloody nights to come. To date the Germans have murdered an estimated 700,000 Polish Jews.

The above facts confirm irrefutably that the criminal German government has undertaken to carry out Hitler's prophecy that five minutes before the war ends, however it ends, he would annihilate all the Jews in Europe. We firmly believe that Hitler's Germans will at the proper time be presented with an appropriate reckoning for their atrocities and bestialities. For the Jewish population, which now endures an inconceivable hell, this is not consolation enough. Millions of Polish citizens of Jewish nationality are threatened with imminent extermination.

We therefore turn to the Government of Poland, as custodian and representative of the whole population living on Polish soil, immediately to take the necessary steps to prevent the annihilation of Polish Jewry. To that end, the Government of Poland should bring all its influence to bear on the governments of the Allied Powers and on all authoritative circles in those countries so that they will, without delay, apply a policy of retribution against German citizens and the fifth columnists living in the countries of the Allied Powers. The Government of Poland and the governments of the Allied Powers should notify the German government as to the application of retribution. It should be made aware that Germans in the United States and in other countries will even now be answering for the bestial annihilation of the Jewish population.

We realise that we are asking the Government of Poland to take extraordinary measures. This is the only possibility of rescuing millions of Jews from certain annihilation.

Source: Excerpt from copy of original housed in YIVO Archives, cited in Lucy Dawidowicz, A Holocaust Reader (Behrman House, 1976), pp. 316-18

15

Inside the mind of a perpetrator

Case No. 1: A letter home from the Russian 'Front'

Crude prejudice, naked fanaticism and bloodlust were often satisfied in those who formed part of the killing squads. What follows is an extract from a letter written by a German police-sergeant serving in an EinsatzKommando unit in the southern Ukraine:

We men of the new Germany must be strict with ourselves even if it means a long period of separation from our family. For we must finish matters once and for all and finally settle accounts with the war criminals, in order to create a better and eternal Germany for our heirs. We are not sleeping here. There are three or four operations a week. Sometimes Gypsies, another time Jews, partisans and all sorts of trash... We are not carrying on a lawless regime here, but when an action requires immediate atonement we contact the SD and justice takes its course. If the official judicial system were operating, it would be impossible to exterminate a whole family when only the father is guilty.

I do not know if you...ever saw such frightful kinds of Jews in Poland. I am grateful for having been allowed to see this bastard race close up. If fate permits, I shall have something to tell my children. Syphilitics, cripples, idiots were typical of them. One thing was clear: they were materialists to the end. They were saying things like: 'We are skilled workers, you are not going to shoot us.' They were not men but monkeys in human form.

Ah well, there is only a small percentage of the 24,000 Jews of Kamenetz-Podolsk left. The Yids in the surrounding area are also clients of ours. We are ruthlessly making a clean sweep with a clear conscience and then...the waves close over, the world has peace.

Source: Jeremy Noakes And Geoffrey Pridham, Nazism 1919–1945. A Documentary Reader, Vol. III (Exeter University Press, 1988), Document 912

Case No. 2: The diary of SS Dr Johann Paul Kremer

Especially perplexing and disturbing is the behaviour of the SS doctors, some of whom performed grisly experiments on human guinea-pigs in the camps. They tended to justify their endeavours as contributions to the advance of medical knowledge. Such 'medical' activity involved sterilization, castration, the removal of

living foetuses at different stages of development, transplanting human organs, seeing how long a man could survive in freezing water and many other experiments besides. The following excerpt is taken from the diaries of SS Doctor Johann Kremer, Professor of Medicine at the University of Münster and assigned to the death camp at Auschwitz for only ten weeks.

2 September, 1942—First time present at a special action at 3 a.m. Compared with this, Dante's *Inferno* seems to me a comedy. Not for nothing is Auschwitz called the 'extermination camp'!

5 September, 1942—This afternoon present at a special action for prisoners in the female camp: horror of horrors. Dr Thilo is right when he told me this morning that we are in the 'anus mundi'. In the evening, at approximately eight, I was again present at a special action for the Dutch. The men all want to take part in these actions because of the special rations they get, consisting of a fifth of a litre of schnapps, 5 cigarettes, 100 g. of sausage and bread.

6 September, 1942—Today, Sunday, excellent lunch: tomato soup, half a hen with potatoes and red cabbage (20 g. fat) sweets and marvellous vanilla ice...in the evening at eight outside for a special action.

9 September, 1942—This morning I got the pleasant news from my lawyer ...that I got divorced from my wife on the first of the month (Note: I see colours again, a black curtain is drawn from my life). Later on present at a corporal punishment of eight prisoners and an execution by shooting with small calibre rifles. Got soap flakes and two pieces of soap... In the evening present at a special action for the fourth time.

23 September, 1942—Present last night at the sixth and seventh special actions ... In the evening dinner in the commandant's house...a real banquet. We had apple pie, as much as we wanted, good coffee, excellent beer and cakes.

3 October, 1942—Today we fixed living material of human liver, spleen and pancreas...

12 October, 1942—Inoculation against typhoid, after that feverish in the evening. In spite of that, present at a special action during the night (1,600 people from Holland). Terrible scenes near the last bunker. The tenth special action.

13 November, 1942—Living, fresh material of liver, spleen and pancreas taken from a Jewish prisoner of 18 years of age, who was very atrophic. First we took a photo of him. Liver and spleen fixed as usual in Camoy and pancreas in Zenker (prisoner no. 68030).

Source: Elie Cohen, Human Behaviour in the Concentration Camp (W.Norton, 1953)

Case No. 3: Heinrich Himmler, Head of the SS

SS Leader Heinrich Himmler, who had almost fainted when he attended a mass execution at Minsk, was nevertheless able to deliver the following address to senior SS officers in Poznan on 4 October 1943. There

are two emphases in his speech, first the need for absolute secrecy in this 'glorious' task and secondly his insistence that the 'honour' of the SS remain unsullied:

I also want to speak to you here, in complete frankness, of a really grave chapter. Amongst ourselves, for once, it shall be said quite openly, but all the same we will never speak about it in public... I am referring here to the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people. This is one of the things that is easily said: The Jewish people are going to be exterminated,' that's what every Party member says, 'sure, it's in our programme, elimination of the Jews, extermination—it'll be done.' And then they all come along, the 80 million worthy Germans, and each one has his one decent Jew. Of course, the others are swine, but this one, he is a first-rate Jew. Of all those who talk like that, not one has seen it happen, not one has had to go through with it. Most of you men know what it is like to see 100 corpses side by side, or 500 or 1,000. To have stood fast through this and—except for cases of human weakness—to have stayed decent, that has made us hard. This is an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory in our history...

The wealth they possessed we took from them. I gave a strict order...that this wealth will of course be handed over to the Reich in its entirety. We have taken none of it for ourselves. Individuals, who have erred will be punished in accordance with the order given by me at the start that anyone who takes so much as a single Mark of this money is a dead man. A number of SS men—they are not very many—committed this offence, and they shall die. There will be no mercy. We had the moral right, we had the duty towards our people, to destroy this people that wanted to destroy us. But we do not have the right to enrich ourselves by so much as a fur, as a watch, by one Mark or a cigarette or anything else. We do not want, in the end, because we destroyed a bacillus, to be infected by this bacillus and to die. I will never stand by and watch while even a small rotten spot develops or takes hold. Wherever it may form we will together burn it away. All in all, however, we can say that we have carried out this most difficult of tasks in a spirit of love for our people. And we have suffered no harm to our inner being, our soul, our character.

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margaliot (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 161

Case no. 4: Rudolf Hoess, Commandant of Auschwitz

The following three documents are drawn from the startling reminiscences, rationalizations and self-evaluation of Rudolf Hoess. For three blood-drenched years Hoess was the Commandant at Auschwitz, where he oversaw the slaughter of more than two million people. He was himself executed at Auschwitz in 1947.

- a) In the summer of 1941—I cannot remember the exact date—I was suddenly summoned to the Reichsführer SS...Contrary to his usual custom, Himmler received me without his adjutant being present and said in effect:

'The Führer has ordered that the Jewish question be solved once and for all and that we, the SS, are to implement that order.

‘The existing extermination centres in the East are not in a position to carry out the large actions which are anticipated. I have therefore earmarked Auschwitz for this purpose, both because of its good position as regards communications and because the area can easily be isolated and camouflaged ... It is difficult and onerous and calls for complete devotion notwithstanding the difficulties which may arise...

‘You will treat this order as absolutely secret, even from your superiors. After your talk with Eichmann you will immediately forward to me the plans of the projected installations.

‘The Jews are the sworn enemies of the German people and must be eradicated. Every Jew that we can lay our hands on is to be destroyed now during the war, without exception. If we cannot now obliterate the biological basis of Jewry, the Jews will one day destroy the German people.’

- b) I must emphasize here that I have never personally hated the Jews. It is true that I looked upon them as the enemies of our people. But just because of this I saw no difference between them and the other prisoners, and I treated them all in the same way. I never drew any distinctions. In any event the emotion of hatred is foreign to my nature. But I know what hate is, and what it looks like. I have seen it and I have suffered it myself...

When in the summer of 1941 Himmler gave me the order to prepare installations at Auschwitz where mass exterminations could take place, and personally to carry out these exterminations, I did not have the slightest idea of their scale or consequences. It was certainly an extraordinary and monstrous order. Nevertheless the reasons behind the extermination programme seemed to me right. I did not reflect on it at the time.

I had been given an order, and I had to carry it out. Whether this mass extermination of the Jews was necessary or not was something on which I could not allow myself to form an opinion, for I lacked the necessary breadth of view.

When asked if he had ever regarded the Jews he butchered as guilty of any crime or in any way deserving of their fate, Hoess attempted to explain that the question was in some way inappropriate as he had been living in a totally different reality.

- c) Don't you see, we SS men were not supposed to think about these things; it never even occurred to us. And besides, it was something already taken for granted that the Jews were to blame for everything... We just never heard anything else. It was not just newspapers like the *Stürmer* but it was everything we ever heard.

Even our military and ideological training took for granted that we had to protect Germany from the Jews... It only started to occur to me after the collapse that maybe it was not all quite right, after I heard what everybody was saying. But nobody had ever said these things before: at least we never heard of it

Now I wonder if Himmler really believed all that himself or just gave me an excuse to justify what he wanted me to do. But, anyway, that really didn't matter. We were all so trained to obey orders without even thinking that the thought of disobeying an order would simply never have occurred to anybody and somebody else would have done just as well if I hadn't... Himmler was so strict about little things, and executed SS men for such small offences, that naturally we took it for granted that he was acting according to a strict code of honour...

You can be sure that it was not always a pleasure to see those mountains of corpses or smell the continual burning. But Himmler had ordered it and had explained the necessity and I really never gave much thought to whether it was wrong. It just seemed a necessity.

Sources: a) &b) Commandant of Auschwitz: The Autobiography of Rudolf Hoess (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959); c) Gustav Gilbert, Nuremberg Diary (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974)

The victims: Defiant responses

a) The following proclamation, calling for resistance, was issued in January, 1942 in the ghetto of Vilna, Lithuania, by the Jewish Pioneer Youth Group:

Jewish youth, do not be led astray. Of the 80,000 Jews in the 'Jerusalem of Lithuania' (Vilna) only 20,000 have remained. Before our eyes they tore from us our parents, our brothers and sisters. Where are the hundreds of men who were taken away for work by the Lithuanian 'snatchers'? Where are the naked women and children who were taken from us in the night of terror of the 'provokatzia'?

Where are the Jews (who were taken away) on the Day of Atonement?

Where are our brothers from the second ghetto?

All those who were taken away from the ghetto never came back.

All the roads of the Gestapo lead to Ponary.

And Ponary is death!

Doubters! Cast off all illusions. Your children, your husbands and your wives are no longer alive.

Ponary is not a camp—all are shot there.

Hitler aims to destroy all the Jews of Europe. The Jews of Lithuania are fated to be the first in line.

Let us not go as sheep to slaughter!

It is true that we are weak and defenceless, but resistance is the only reply to the enemy!

Brothers! It is better to fall as free fighters than to live by the grace of the murderers.

Resist! To the last breath.

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and, Abraham Margalio (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 196

b) The following call to armed self-defence was made to the Jewish population of Warsaw in a *Ha-Shomer Ha-Zair* (Zionist movement) article which appeared in a Warsaw underground publication, *Jutrznia* ('Dawn'), on 28 March 1942.

We know that Hitler's system of murder, slaughter and robbery leads steadily to a dead end and the destruction of the Jews. The fate of the Jews in the Soviet Russian areas occupied by the Germans, and in the Warthegau [areas of western Poland annexed to German Reich] marks a new period in the total annihilation of the Jewish population. The huge murder machine has been turned against Jewish masses that are weak, unarmed, brought low by hunger, camps and deportations. With satanic methods it liquidates the Jewish population centres one by one. The victory over the Jews will have to

serve the Germans as recompense for the losses they have suffered at the front. Spilling the blood of defenceless Jews will have to take the place of Hitler's great dreams that failed to come true.

We also know that the march of Hitler's troops has been halted by the heroic Red Army and that the Spring Offensive will see the beginning of the far-reaching destruction of the Nazis in Europe. For the Jewish masses this will be a period of greater bloodshed than any in their history. There is no doubt that when Hitler feels that the end of his rule is approaching he will seek to drown the Jews in a sea of blood. Jewish youth must prepare in the face of those difficult days. There must therefore be a start to the recruiting of all creative forces among the Jews. For generation upon generation passivity and lack of faith in our own strength had pressed upon us; but our history also shows beautiful pages glowing with heroism and struggle. *It is our duty to join this period of heroism.*

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margaliot (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 125

c) Despite the hopelessness of most forms of Jewish armed resistance, what it meant to those who took part can be gauged from the following document. It is taken from the last letter written by Mordechai Anielewicz, the leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

It is impossible to put into words what we have been through. One thing is clear; what happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the ghetto. One of our companies held out for 40 minutes and another for more than 6 hours... Several of our companies attacked the dispersing Germans... Y(echiel) fell. He fell a hero, at the machine gun. I feel that great things are happening and what we dared do is of great, enormous importance...

It is impossible to describe the conditions under which the Jews of the ghetto are now living. Only a few will be able to hold out. The remainder will die sooner or later. Their fate is decided. In almost all the hiding places in which thousands are concealing themselves it is not possible to light a candle for lack of air.

With the aid of our transmitter we heard a marvellous report on our fighting ... The fact that we are remembered beyond the ghetto walls encourages us in our struggle. Peace go with you, my friend!... The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self-defence in the ghetto will have become a reality. Jewish armed resistance and revenge are facts. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men in battle.

Ghetto, April 23 1943

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margaliot (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 145 (written to Yitzhak Cukierman, a leader of the Pioneer Underground in occupied Poland and representative of the Jewish Fighting Organisation on the Aryan side in Warsaw)

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Spiritual resistance

a) The following extract, taken from the Warsaw Ghetto diary of Avraham Levin, demonstrates not only the intrinsic importance of recording and remembering but—in such tragic circumstances and against all the odds—the intensity of the Jewish commitment to life and survival:

One of the most surprising side-effects of this war is the clinging to life, the almost total absence of suicides. People die in great numbers of starvation, the typhus epidemic or dysentery, they are tortured and murdered by the Germans in great numbers, but they do not escape from life by their own desire. On the contrary, they are tied to life by all their senses, they want to live at any price and to survive the war. The tensions of this historic world conflict are so great that all wish to see the outcome of the gigantic struggle and the new regime in the world, the small and the great, old men and boys. The old have just one wish: the privilege of seeing the end and surviving Hitler.

I know a Jew who is all old age. He is certainly about 80. Last winter a great tragedy befell the old man. He had an only son who was about 52. The son died of typhus. He has no other children. And the son died of typhus. He has no other children. And the son died. He did not marry a second time and lived with his son. A few days ago I visited the old man. When I left—his mind is still entirely clear—he burst out crying and said: I want to see the end of the war, even if I live only another half an hour!

Why should the old man wish so much to stay alive? There it is: even he wants to live, 'if only for half an hour' after the last shot is fired. That is the burning desire of all the Jews.

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margalot (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 89

b) Some Jews, faced with imminent death, wished to preserve the memory of their terrible fate for future generations. Israel Lichtenstein, a teacher of Yiddish, set out his last will and testament during the eleventh day of a 'resettlement' action in Warsaw. In it he displays not only resignation but a desperate wish that he and his family be remembered.

With zeal and zest I threw myself into the work to help assemble archive materials. I was entrusted to be the custodian; I hid the material. Besides me, no one knew. I confided only in my friend Hersh Wasser, my superior.

It is well hidden. Please God that it be preserved. That will be the finest and best that we achieved in the present gruesome time.

I know that we will not endure. To survive and remain alive [after] such horrible murders and massacres is impossible. Therefore I write this testament of mine. Perhaps I am not worthy of being remembered, but just for my grit in working with the society 'Oneg Shabbat' [clandestine Jewish communal archives in the Warsaw Ghetto] and for being the most endangered because I hid the entire material. It would be a small thing to give my own head. I risk the head of my dear wife Gele Seckstein and my treasure, my little daughter, Margalit.

I don't want any gratitude, any monument, any praise. I want only a remembrance, so that my family, brother and sister abroad, may know what has become of my remains.

I want my wife to be remembered. Gele Seckstein, artist, dozens of works, talented, didn't manage to exhibit, did not show in public. During the three years of war worked among children as educator, teacher, made stage sets, costumes for the children's productions, received awards. Now together with me, we are preparing to receive death.

I want my little daughter to be remembered. Margalit, 20 months old today. Has mastered Yiddish perfectly, speaks a pure Yiddish. At 9 months began to speak Yiddish clearly. In intelligence she is on a par with 3- or 4-year-old children. I don't want to brag about her. Witnesses to this, who tell me about it, are the teaching staff at the school...

I am not sorry about my life and that of my wife. But I am sorry for the gifted little girl. She deserves to be remembered also.

May we be the redeemers of all the rest of the Jews in the whole world. I believe in the survival of our people. Jews will not be annihilated. We, the Jews of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, are the scapegoats for all Israel in all the other lands.

July 31, 1942

Source: YIVO Archives, cited in Lucy Dawidowicz, A Holocaust Reader (Behrman House, 1976), pp. 296–97

The psychology of the victim

When considering the behaviour of the victims, the Nobel Prize-winning writer, Elie Wiesel, himself a survivor of the camps, put it thus:

Reduced to a mere number, the man in the concentration camp at the same time lost his identity and his individual destiny. He came to realise that his presence in the camp was due solely to the fact that he was part of a forgotten and condemned collectivity. It is not written: I shall live or die, but: someone—today—will vanish, or will continue to suffer; and from the point of view of the collective, it makes no difference whether that someone is I or another. Only the number, only the quota counts. Thus, the one who had been spared, above all during the selections, could not repress his first spontaneous reflex of joy. A moment, a week, or an eternity later, this joy weighted with fear and anxiety will turn into guilt. 'I am happy to have escaped death' becomes equivalent to admitting: 'I am glad someone else went in my place.' It was in order not to think about this that the prisoners so very quickly managed to forget their comrades or their relatives: those who had been selected. They forgot them quickly—trying to shut their eyes to the reproachful glances which still floated in the air around them.

Why did the Jews in the camps not choose a death with honour, knife in hand and hate on their lips? It is understandable that all of us should wonder why. Putting aside the technical and psychological reasons which made any attempt at revolt impossible (the Jews knew they had been sacrificed, forgotten, crossed off by humanity), to answer we must consider the moral aspects of the question. The Jews, conscious of the curse weighing them down, came to believe that they were neither worthy nor capable of an act of honour. To die struggling would have meant a betrayal of those who had gone to their deaths submissive and silent. The only way was to follow in their footsteps, die their kind of death—only then could the living make their peace with those who had already gone.

I attended the Eichmann trial, I heard the prosecutor try to get the witnesses to talk by forcing them to expose themselves and to probe the innermost recesses of their being: why didn't you resist? Why didn't you attack your assassins when you outnumbered them?

Pale, embarrassed, ill at ease, the survivors all responded in the same way: 'You cannot understand. Anyone who wasn't there cannot imagine it.'

Well I was there. And I do not understand. I do not understand that child in the Warsaw Ghetto who wrote in his diary: 'I'm hungry, I'm cold; when I grow up I want to be a German, and then I won't be hungry any more.'

I still do not understand why I did not throw myself upon the Kapo, who was beating my father before my very eyes. In Galicia, Jews dug their own graves and lined up, without any trace of panic, at the edge of the trench to await the machine-gun barrage. I do not understand their calm. And that woman, that mother, in the bunker somewhere in Poland, I do not understand her either; her companions smothered her child for fear its cries might betray their presence; that woman, that mother, having lived this scene of biblical intensity, did not go mad. I do not understand her; why and by what right, and in the name of what, did she not go mad?

I do not know why, but I forbid us to ask the question.

Source: Elie Wiesel, Legends of Our Time (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968)

Jewish disbelief at reports of mass annihilation

The following extract is taken from a report by Yitzhak Cukierman, a leader of the Pioneer Underground in occupied Poland and representative of the Jewish Fighting Organisation on the Aryan side in Warsaw. It was written in Warsaw in March 1944 and sent to London on 24 May 1944 via a courier for the Polish Underground.

The liquidation of the Jews in the General Government began at Passover 1942. The first victims were the Jews of the city of Lublin, and shortly after that the Jews of the whole District of Lublin. They were evacuated to Belzec, and there they were killed in new gas-chambers that had been built specially for this purpose. The Jewish Underground newspapers gave detailed descriptions of this mass slaughter. But [the Jews of] Warsaw did not believe it! Common human sense could not understand that it was possible to exterminate tens and hundreds of thousands of Jews. They decided that the Jews were being transported for agricultural work in the parts of Russia occupied by the Germans. Theories were heard that the Germans had begun on the productivisation of the Jewish lower-level bourgeoisie! The Jewish press was denounced and charged with causing panic, although the *descriptions* of the ‘rooting out’ of the population corresponded accurately to the reality. Not only abroad were the crimes of the Germans received with disbelief, but even here, close by Ponary, Chelmno, Belzec and Treblinka, did this information get no hearing! This unjustified optimism developed together with the lack of information, which was the result of total isolation from the outside world and the experience of the past. Had not the Germans for two and a half years carried out many deportations of Jews—from Cracow, from Lublin, from the Warsaw district and from the ‘Reich’? Certainly there had been not a few victims and blood had been shed during these deportations, but total extermination?

There were some people who believed it, however. The events at Ponary and Chelmno were a fact, but—it was said—‘that was just a capricious act of the local authorities’. For, after all, the German authorities in the General Government did not have the same attitude to the ghettos in the cities and the small towns, not until death brought an equal fate to all. More than once, in various places, the reaction to the information we had about the liquidation of the Jews was: That cannot happen to us here.’

It was of course the Germans themselves who created these optimistic attitudes. Through two and a half years they prepared the work of exterminating the three and a half million Jews of Poland with German thoroughness. They rendered the Jewish masses helpless with the aid of ghettos and deportations. In years of unceasing experiments the Germans perfected their extermination methods.

In Vilna they had needed several days to murder a thousand Jews, in Chelmno half an hour was enough to kill a hundred, and at Treblinka ten thousand were murdered every day.

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman and Abraham Margalio (eds), Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Yad Vashem Publications, 1981), Document 127

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