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Introduction: Approaches to Adolf Hitler

Since the end of the National Socialist dictatorship and its criminal rule, critical engagement with the individual at the heart of this regime – Adolf Hitler – has been a project for German memory culture and research into contemporary history. Like the public perception of the man, academic studies of Hitler within and outside Germany have gone through various phases and cycles, in which greater or lesser importance – depending on the prevailing trends of the day – has been ascribed to his personal role within the National Socialist dictatorship. In the last five years, the attention given to Hitler in the German media and by historians has risen to a new high. Given that the general consensus had been that there was nothing of significance left to be said about Hitler, this upsurge of interest came as a surprise to many. The renewed interest was driven in part by the controversial lifting of the embargo on Hitler's personal manifesto *Mein Kampf*, following the expiration of the copyright in Germany, and the subsequent publication of a critical edition of the text prepared by the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte München – Berlin* (IfZ – Institute for Contemporary History Munich – Berlin). At the same time, one should not underestimate the intrinsic need felt by researchers in the field of contemporary history to keep returning to the topic armed with new questions, approaches, methods, and even – surprising as it may seem – hitherto overlooked source material.

This revival of scholarly interest in Hitler provides the focus of this third issue of the *German Yearbook of Contemporary History*. It follows the pattern of the earlier yearbook volumes in publishing, in English translation, important articles from recent issues of the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (VfZ), in this case dating from 2015 to 2017, and adding commentaries exclusively written for this publication by experts based in the UK and USA. These articles constitute a representative cross-section of current research in Germany on Hitler. In addition, the present volume introduces an English-speaking readership to a landmark text from 1970 by Martin Broszat, which marked a paradigm shift in the study of National Socialism and its *Führer* when it appeared in the VfZ. In order to situate the articles in this volume in the context of the historiography hitherto, we will start by briefly charting the course of post-war scholarship on Hitler, focusing on its main phases and turning points.

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If the world of German academic history accommodated itself readily enough during the years of the Third Reich to Hitler and his regime, it showed little appetite after 1945 for the task of explaining him. For many years, German historians

left the writing of major biographies of Adolf Hitler to others – journalists outside academia, or British fellow-historians. The detailed and prescient biography of Hitler published in Zurich in 1936/37 by the exiled Munich journalist Konrad Heiden¹ was largely ignored in Germany after the war, and failed to stimulate any new biographical studies of comparable substance. Thus, in the country where the relevance of such a study would have been most immediate, nobody seemed ready to tackle Hitler as a subject for research. It was left to the Oxford historian Alan Bullock to publish the first scholarly biography of Hitler in 1952.² He portrayed the dictator as an “unprincipled opportunist,” whose rise to power had been facilitated by the specific conditions of life in Germany. This image of a politician driven above all by the quest for power, acting on impulse, with no defined program, was later qualified by Bullock in the revised edition of 1962, where he placed greater emphasis on Hitler’s ideological aims. In the course of a debate with Bullock extending over many years, another British historian had insisted on the importance of ideology in Hitler’s political career: Hugh Trevor-Roper, the author of the pioneering study on the last days of Hitler, which had appeared in 1947 as one of the first serious studies of the dictator.³

Bullock’s book, which first appeared in German translation in 1953, remained the standard biography of Hitler until the 1970s, and as such it pointed to a glaring lacuna in West German research on contemporary history. Historical research in the Federal Republic either ignored Hitler completely or concerned itself with matters of detail: unlike Bullock and Trevor-Roper, academic historians in Germany chose not to address the more general problems of Hitler’s personality,

1 See Konrad Heiden, *Adolf Hitler. Eine Biographie*, vol. 1: *Das Zeitalter der Verantwortungslosigkeit*, Zurich 1936; vol. 2: *Ein Mann gegen Europa*, Zurich 1937; English edition: Konrad Heiden, *The Fuehrer. Hitler’s Rise to Power*, London 1944. Konrad Heiden and his books are now being rediscovered in Germany; see Stefan Aust, *Hitlers erster Feind. Der Kampf des Konrad Heiden*, Reinbek 2016; Konrad Heiden, *Eine Nacht im November 1938. Ein zeitgenössischer Bericht*, ed. by Markus Roth, Göttingen 2013; and the single-volume new edition of his two Hitler books, Berlin 2016.

2 See Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny*, London 1952; revised version, London 1962. Late in life, Bullock also published a twin biography of Hitler and Stalin; see *Hitler and Stalin. Parallel Lives*, London 1991. A few years ago, Robert Gellately also set out to compare Hitler with other dictators; see his *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler. The Age of Social Catastrophe*, New York 2007.

3 See Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler*, London 1947. On Bullock and Trevor-Roper and the biographical background to their respective engagement with the history of Nazi Germany, see Richard J. Evans, *Cosmopolitan Islanders. British Historians and the European Continent*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 25, 133–37. On the Bullock/Trevor-Roper controversy, see David Cesarani, *From Bullock to Kershaw. Some Peculiarities of British Historical Writing about the Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder of the Jews*, in: David Bankier/Dan Michman (eds.), *Holocaust Historiography in Context*, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 339–54.

ideology and politics. This disinclination to engage with Hitler as a research topic was rooted in a number of factors: in the memory culture of the early Federal Republic, in which the prevalent tendency was the attempt to draw a line under the past; in the personal histories of individual scholars, some of whom had been members of the NSDAP, or at least sympathetic to it, up until 1945; and in the simple fact that many important source materials were only gradually released by the Allies over time. The disinclination to address the big questions did not only constrain research on Hitler in the universities; there were signs of such reluctance too at the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, which had been established in 1949 for the express purpose of researching the Nazi dictatorship.

These deficits were evident in the Institute's house journal, the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, first published in 1953, which soon established itself as the central forum for West German scholarship on contemporary history. In the 1950s and 1960s, a total of seven full-length articles, five substantial shorter pieces under the rubric of *Miszellen* (each more than ten pages), and thirteen reports on newly-discovered primary sources (so-called *Dokumentationen*) were – going by their titles – specifically about Hitler.⁴ The preponderance here of *Dokumentationen*, most of which presented only a single source, is striking. It is also telling that eleven out of the total of 25 contributions dealt with the early “years of struggle” of the NSDAP, in other words they were concerned with Hitler during the Weimar Republic; only seven addressed the dictatorship in peacetime and six were on the war years. Only three articles published in the VfZ between 1953 and 1969 arrived at more general interpretations: a somewhat curious piece on Hitler's *Über-Machiavellismus* (“super-Machiavellism”), a critical piece by IfZ Director Helmut Krausnick directed against apologetic legends about Hitler's foreign policy, and – significantly – a seminal article by Hugh Trevor-Roper on Hitler's war aims.⁵ This was hardly an impressive tally for a journal in which the reader was told, in 1961: “The biggest, most important, and as yet – despite Bullock's valuable beginning – unrealized project for the history of National Socialism is to write the biography of Hitler, because here, more than anywhere else, an entire political movement was represented and shaped by one man.”⁶

⁴ See the full listing of VfZ contents on the home page of the Institute for Contemporary History Munich – Berlin: www.ifz-muenchen.de/vierteljahrshefte/vfz-archiv/gesamtinhaltsverzeichnis/ [accessed May 7, 2018].

⁵ See Erwin Faul, Hitlers *Über-Machiavellismus*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 2 (1954), pp. 344–72; Helmut Krausnick, *Legenden um Hitlers Außenpolitik*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 217–39; Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Hitlers Kriegsziele*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 8 (1960), pp. 121–33.

⁶ Waldemar Besson, *Neuere Literatur zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 9 (1961), pp. 314–30, here p. 329.

West German historians in the 1960s did supply important potential building blocks for a biography of Hitler that would go beyond Bullock's by now increasingly dated study. Andreas Hillgruber and Eberhard Jäckel, in particular, strongly emphasized the importance of the dictator's ideology and political program.⁷ This view of Hitler and his aims as the driving force behind the Nazi state was also reinforced in research appearing outside Germany, for example the work of American historian Norman Rich on Hitler's foreign policy; for Rich, the dictator was quite simply "master in the Third Reich."⁸ Meanwhile, however, a contrary trend was becoming evident: among West German historians of National Socialism there were clear signs emerging of a fundamental rejection of the approach taken by Bullock, Trevor-Roper, Hillgruber, Jäckel, Rich and other authors who focused on Hitler and his power as an individual. Among those historians who now turned their attention instead to the internal structure and function of the National Socialist regime, the most influential were Martin Broszat, who joined the academic staff of the Institute for Contemporary History in 1956 and was its Director from 1972 until his death in 1989, and Hans Mommsen. Pointing to the polycratic, and at times chaotic, structures of the Nazi system of rule, they questioned Hitler's monocratic omnipotence. In a phrase that has echoed down the years, Mommsen described Hitler as a "dictator who was in many respects weak."⁹

A key work in this shift of perspective away from the "leadership" of Hitler and his closest Party associates and towards the political structures and social underpinnings of the National Socialist state was Martin Broszat's book *Der Staat Hitlers*, published in 1969.¹⁰ This was followed just a year later by his essay in the VfZ, "Soziale Motivation und Führer-Bindung des Nationalsozialismus," in which he elaborated on the new interpretation in his book, and argued that the destructive and self-radicalizing dynamism of National Socialism was driven not by the dictator Hitler, but by German society. This influential text is published here in English for the first time. Broszat wrote it as a key contribution to the issue marking the 20th anniversary of the Institute for Contemporary History, and he used the occasion to formulate his rejection of the empirical positivism that had hitherto been the dominant approach in the VfZ in favour of a systematic structural

7 See Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie. Politik und Kriegführung 1940–1941*, Frankfurt a. M. 1965; Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitlers Weltanschauung. Entwurf einer Herrschaft*, Tübingen 1969.

8 Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims*, 2 vols., New York 1973/74, here vol. 1, p. 11.

9 Hans Mommsen, *Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft. Eine vergleichende Enzyklopädie*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1971, vol. 4, pp. 695–713, here p. 702.

10 See Martin Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers*, Munich 1969.

analysis of National Socialism. In Broszat's interpretation, Hitler was "not the driving force, in the sense of purely personal, socially unmotivated despotism," but the spokesman and charismatic unifying figure of a society "unleashed" by the National Socialist movement, whose social dynamic was powered by an escalating radicalization that finally tipped over into self-destruction.

In his commentary on Broszat's article, Peter Fritzsche confirms both the compelling historical insights and the contemporary relevance of its arguments. At the same time, he develops a critique of Broszat's approach to explaining the destructive dynamism of the regime and his explanation of the mass murder of the Jews and the war of destruction in the East. For Fritzsche, Broszat's functionalist approach has the tendency to portray the destructive dynamism of the regime somewhat too mechanically, depicting it as the necessary outcome of the regime's need to maintain a sense of forward movement. Fritzsche both restates the importance of ideology in the wartime drive towards mass murder, and questions the degree to which the radical social-revolutionary energies of Nazi supporters and activists were simply curbed and diverted after 1933/34.

Broszat's essay was symptomatic of the trend towards structural history that prevailed in the 1970s, not only in studies of National Socialism but across historical scholarship in general. Writing history about "great men" now seemed outmoded. For all the 1960s advances in knowledge about Hitler, West German historians still appeared averse to producing a major biography. Once again it was an author from outside academia, the journalist Joachim Fest, who in 1973 produced a full-length Hitler biography in German, the first since Konrad Heiden's.¹¹ Fest's monumental account of Hitler's life had an enormous public impact and remained in the bestseller lists for many years; the book's popularity was further boosted by the documentary *Hitler – eine Karriere*, which the author, in collaboration with Christian Herrendoerfer, brought to the cinema screen in 1977. From 1973 to 1975, the popular media in West Germany were gripped by a "Hitler boom," with the appearance not only of Fest's bestseller, but also of many other books, articles and films, often of questionable value.¹² West German academic historians readily acknowledged Fest's achievement. At the same time, they sharply

¹¹ See Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler. Eine Biographie*, Berlin/Frankfurt a. M./Vienna 1973; English edition: Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, New York 1974. Between Heiden and Fest, German authors had produced only a handful of shorter, and not particularly compelling, attempts at a biography; see Helmut Heiber, *Adolf Hitler. Eine Biographie*, Berlin 1960; Ernst Deuerlein, *Hitler. Eine politische Biographie*, Munich 1969; Werner Maser, *Adolf Hitler. Legende – Mythos – Wirklichkeit*, Munich 1971.

¹² See Eberhard Jäckel, *Rückblick auf die sogenannte Hitler-Welle*, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 28 (1977), pp. 695–710.

criticized Fest's portrayal, palpably shaped by his own fascination with his subject, of a "modernizing" Hitler who, while certainly "evil," was ultimately not to be measured by normal human standards, and they condemned the fact that Fest largely ignored the subject of the Holocaust. It is not surprising that some of this criticism came from the Institute for Contemporary History,¹³ given that the demonization of Hitler by Fest as a larger-than-life figure, an agent of destruction who nevertheless brought about some modernizing effects, was entirely at odds with the call by Martin Broszat and other historians to cut Hitler down to size and to present him not as "superhuman" but as an historical actor, shaped by and dependent on a host of external factors.

However, no alternative critical biography was forthcoming, in Germany or anywhere else. The reluctance of historians to embrace this genre can also be seen in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, where the number of items about Hitler dwindled. In the 1970s there were only seven articles and one *Dokumentation* where the name Hitler appeared in the title; in the 1980s the number of items declined further, with Hitler mentioned in the titles of just two articles and one *Dokumentation*. After Broszat's pioneering article of 1970, most of what appeared in the field consisted once again of empirical studies focusing on historical detail. The only notable exceptions which addressed more general matters were the critique mentioned above by Hermann Graml of Fest's biography, and Broszat's timely demolition of David Irving's attempts to absolve Hitler of responsibility for the Holocaust.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Fest's biography, a copy of which could probably be found on the bookshelves of every well-read household in West Germany, came to be seen as the standard German text on Hitler. Any further biographical study on this scale seemed surplus to requirements. Meanwhile, for those who wanted something more concise, there was always Sebastian Haffner's virtuoso essay of 1978, "The meaning of Hitler" – again, the work of a journalist rather than a professional historian.¹⁵

After the 1970s, research on Hitler unearthed little in the way of fresh knowledge, but new and divergent approaches emerged in the study of National Social-

¹³ See Hermann Graml, Probleme einer Hitler-Biographie. Kritische Bemerkungen zu Joachim C. Fest, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 22 (1974), pp. 76–92.

¹⁴ See Martin Broszat, Hitler und die Genesis der "Endlösung." Aus Anlaß der Thesen von David Irving, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25 (1977), pp. 739–75. With reference to: David Irving, *Hitler's War*, London 1977. See also Christopher R. Browning, Zur Genesis der "Endlösung." Eine Antwort an Martin Broszat, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 29 (1981), pp. 97–109.

¹⁵ See Sebastian Haffner, *Anmerkungen zu Hitler*, Munich 1978; English edition: Sebastian Haffner, *The Meaning of Hitler*, New York 1979.

ist rule and German society. “Functionalist” analyses of the Nazi dictatorship and its crimes, arguing from structures and their inherent dynamics, largely won out over the older “intentionalist” approach, which focused on Hitler’s ideology and politics – the terms “functionalist” and “intentionalist” having been coined by Tim Mason.¹⁶ The focus of research, particularly from the 1990s onwards,¹⁷ shifted towards the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* with its daily routines, gender relations, adjustments, exclusions and radicalizations. The tendency evident in older studies to personalize and to focus above all on Hitler seemed finally to have been consigned to the past. However, the question remained of how the “Hitler factor” was to be integrated into these new interpretations.

Once again, it was not a German historian, but a British one, who took on the task of the grand synthesis, combining political biography with structural and social history.¹⁸ Ian Kershaw’s massive Hitler biography,¹⁹ many years in the making,²⁰ appeared in two volumes in 1998 and 2000, and in it he sought to reconcile the functionalist and intentionalist approaches. Influenced by Martin Broszat²¹ among others, he interpreted the system of Nazi rule as the social praxis of a society that ascribed charisma to the *Führer* and “worked towards him,” without Hitler having to be involved personally in every decision.²² This structuralist interpretation offered a convincing alternative to Joachim Fest’s portrayal of an all-powerful dictator, while at the same time acknowledging, to a greater extent than functionalists like Broszat and Mommsen, the central role of Hitler and his ideological fixations, particularly with regard to the “Jewish question” and “living

16 See his remarks at the Cumberland Lodge Conference (UK) in May 1979, documented in: Tim Mason, *Intention and Explanation. A Current Controversy about the Interpretation of National Socialism*, in: Gerhard Hirschfeld/Lothar Kettenacker (eds.), *Der “Führerstaat.” Mythos und Realität – Studien zur Struktur und Politik des Dritten Reiches*, Stuttgart 1981, pp. 23–41.

17 See Richard J. Evans, *Coercion and Consent in Nazi Germany*, in: *Proceedings of the British Academy* 151 (2007), pp. 53–81.

18 Kershaw has commented on the experience of being a British historian having his work received in Germany: see Evans, *Cosmopolitan Islanders*, pp. 24–25.

19 See Ian Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936: Hubris*, London 1998; idem, *Hitler. 1936–1945: Nemesis*, London 2000.

20 See idem, *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, London 1985; idem, *Hitler. A Profile in Power*, London 1991.

21 See also Ian Kershaw, *Soziale Motivation und Führerbindung im Staat Hitlers*, in: Norbert Frei (ed.), *Martin Broszat, der “Staat Hitlers” und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus*, Göttingen 2007, pp. 76–84.

22 On the emergence and significance of this key idea, see Anthony McElligott/Tim Kirk, *Editors’ Introduction*, in: idem (eds.), *Working Towards the Führer. Essays in Honour of Sir Ian Kershaw*, Manchester 2003, pp. 1–14, here pp. 6–7.

space [*Lebensraum*] in the East.” Kershaw’s nuanced view was widely praised: that said, some scholars, notably Klaus Hildebrand, questioned whether Kershaw’s weighting of the complementary elements of personal rule and social-structural processes did adequate justice to Hitler’s importance as *Führer*.²³

For all such objections, there was for a number of years from 2000 onwards a broad agreement among German and international scholars as well as among interested sections of the general public that Ian Kershaw’s magnum opus, incorporating the latest research findings, was the definitive scholarly Hitler biography. Following this achievement, there seemed to be scope remaining at most for further detailed studies by specialists. The 1990s and early 2000s correspondingly saw a slight increase again in the number of articles about Hitler published in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, in the wake both of Kershaw’s biography and of the edition of Hitler’s *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen* from the years of the Weimar Republic,²⁴ edited by the Institute for Contemporary History – a total of ten articles and seven *Dokumentationen*.

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So had the market for Hitler studies finally reached saturation with Kershaw’s book? For a while it seemed that – perhaps with the turn of the new century – the academic community and the German public might draw a line under Hitler. It was therefore astonishing, only a decade later, to witness a new “Hitler boom” in Germany. Hitler was “wieder da,”²⁵ not only in the mass media and popular culture²⁶ – and not only in Germany – but also in research on contemporary history. The fact that Hitler was a talking point again also had to do with the expiration, on December 31, 2015, of the copyright (hitherto owned by the State of Bavaria) to Hitler’s autobiographical manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, and the announce-

²³ See Klaus Hildebrand, *Das Dritte Reich*, 6th ed., Munich 2003, p. 191: “Hitler was not the ‘Durchführer’ [person who implements measures] in the way that Kershaw would like to present him, but the ‘Führer’ – this is something that emerges time and again from Kershaw’s otherwise sound account of events.” See idem, *Nichts Neues über Hitler*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 270 (2000), pp. 389–97.

²⁴ See Hitler. *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*. Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933, ed. by the Institute for Contemporary History, 6 vols., plus a supplement, Munich 1992–2003.

²⁵ See Timur Vermes, *Er ist wieder da*, Cologne 2012; first English edition: Timur Vermes, *Look Who’s Back*, London 2014. This best-selling satirical novel was internationally well received, and even made into a German movie in 2015.

²⁶ See Gavriel R. Rosenfeld, *Hi Hitler! How the Nazi Past is Being Normalized in Contemporary Culture*, Cambridge 2015.

ment of a critical edition of this text – hitherto a “banned book” in Germany – to be published by the Institute for Contemporary History. The media debate surrounding the release of *Mein Kampf* and the new edition focused attention once again on the destructive power of the dictator and his ideology. The new interest in Hitler was exploited and promoted by journalists, film producers, publishers, novelists like Timur Vermes, and historians alike.

A number of notable research contributions dating from this recent “wave” can be identified. They include the *Mein Kampf* edition itself: with its detailed scholarly commentary on Hitler’s text, it provides scholars not just with a source edition, but also a work of reference, albeit one which has attracted criticism in some quarters for the sheer bulk of information that it supplies.²⁷ Other studies of relevance to professional historians include a number that cast new light on Hitler’s formative years as a politician and ideologue after World War I. Following on from Brigitte Hamann’s important study of Hitler’s years in Vienna, published in 1996,²⁸ Othmar Plöckinger and Thomas Weber in separate studies suggested that it was not until 1919/20, in the Munich of the early Weimar Republic, that Hitler went from being an aimless “loafer” to a radical antisemite and *völkisch* nationalist.²⁹ But the most significant development was the publication in Germany of three long biographical works on Hitler: the first volume, over 1000 pages in length, of a Hitler biography by the historian and journalist (*Die Zeit*, Hamburg) Volker Ullrich was published in 2013, followed in 2015 by two equally monumental studies by historians Wolfram Pyta and Peter Longerich. In all three studies, the figure of Hitler is once again placed center stage in the history of National Socialism.

Peter Longerich, whose book is the first full-length Hitler biography by a German professional historian, goes furthest in this regard.³⁰ For him, Hitler was neither a mirror, a catalyst or a channel for social forces, dependent on the

²⁷ See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, ed. by Christian Hartmann et al., commissioned by the Institute for Contemporary History, 2 vols., Munich 2016, and the documentation of the debate in the popular media and the reactions of historians and other academics: www.ifz-muenchen.de/das-institut/presse/pressematerial-mein-kampf/ [accessed May 7, 2018]. Important contributions to the debate are presented in the special issue of the Bulletin of the German Historical Institute 39 (2017): Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. A Critical Edition. The Debate, ed. by Andreas Gestrich and Michael Schaich.

²⁸ See Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien. Lehrjahre eines Diktators*, Munich/Zurich 1996; First English edition: Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna. A Dictator’s Apprenticeship*, Oxford 1999.

²⁹ See Thomas Weber, *Hitler’s First War. Adolf Hitler, the Men of the List Regiment, and the First World War*, Oxford 2010; Othmar Plöckinger, *Unter Soldaten und Agitatoren. Hitlers prägende Jahre im deutschen Militär 1918–1920*, Paderborn 2013; Thomas Weber, *Becoming Hitler. The Making of a Nazi*, New York 2017.

³⁰ See Peter Longerich, *Hitler. Biographie*, Munich 2015.

charisma others ascribed to him for his power, nor a fanatical ideologue who held rigidly to a program or even a “phased plan” (*Stufenplan*), to cite the term used by Hillgruber.³¹ Eschewing purely functionalist and intentionalist interpretations alike, the author portrays Hitler as a highly active politician who remained fixated on building an imperium structured according to the principles of racial biology, but who was also able to combine this fixation with “unprincipled flexibility.” In this biography, Hitler is the great shaper and organizer within a system of personalized rule, and the one responsible for every key phase in the regime’s escalating radicalization. Longerich is so firmly wedded to his anti-structuralist thesis that the much-studied and analyzed social context – the *Volksgemeinschaft* – and the complicated power structure of the Third Reich are in danger of disappearing from sight again in his extended narrative, hidden behind the figure of an all-powerful Hitler.

While Longerich’s biography emphasizes Hitler’s personal rule from the point of view of political history, the biographical study by Wolfram Pyta marks a methodological shift in which research on Hitler begins to embrace the possibilities of the “cultural turn,” and in particular the “performative turn.”³² The book is not a biography, but a detailed analysis of Hitler’s forms of rule and techniques of government – though it does follow the chronology of the dictator’s career. Its main focus is Hitler’s self-image as an artist, his self-construction as a performative artist-politician at the start of the 1920s, and his assumption of total military command in World War II as the “field commander-genius.” What is especially significant and innovative about Pyta’s interpretation is that it pays proper attention, for the first time in studies of Hitler, to the paramount importance of Hitler’s role as military leader. By 1941 at the latest, Hitler was indeed primarily a *Feldherr* who operated from his various field headquarters. His public appearances as *Führer*, by contrast, became increasingly rare. Pyta argues that Hitler compensated for the attendant loss of charisma in the second half of the war by drawing on a new source of legitimacy, namely the attribution of military genius.

What the books by Longerich and Pyta have in common is the interpretation of Hitler’s system of rule as a personalized form of power characterized by a strong dictator; Longerich puts the emphasis on Hitler the politician, Pyta on Hitler the “field commander.” The first volume of Volker Ullrich’s biography, which goes up to 1939, is less wedded to a specific thesis.³³ In his study, too, Hitler is ultimately

³¹ See Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie*.

³² See Wolfram Pyta, *Hitler. Der Künstler als Politiker und Feldherr. Eine Herrschaftsanalyse*, Munich 2015.

³³ See Volker Ullrich, *Adolf Hitler. Biographie*, vol. 1: *Die Jahre des Aufstiegs 1889–1939*, Frankfurt a. M. 2013; English edition: Volker Ullrich, *Hitler*, vol. 1: *Ascent 1889–1939*, New York 2016.

the key figure shaping political events. But the notable feature of this biography is something else: Ullrich prioritizes the portrayal of Hitler's personality and private life. Aspects of Hitler's private life, in particular his relationships with women, had figured up to that point mainly in popular works, often drawing on memoirs by members of his close personal circle.³⁴ Ullrich states his approach thus: "Hitler will be 'normalised' – although this will not make him seem more 'normal.' If anything, he will emerge as even more horrific."³⁵ What emerges from this is a complex personality with a mix of engaging and repellent features and considerable criminal energy – "a man of many qualities and numerous masks," who was adept at slipping into his various roles. After decades in which the dictator's personality had been demonized, pathologized, or marginalized, Ullrich, unlike any of Hitler's previous biographers, devotes his full attention to the "private" Hitler.

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The trends and shifts of emphasis evident in the most recent wave of Hitler studies can be seen not only in these full-length books, but also in the articles taken from the 2015 to 2017 numbers of the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* which are reprinted in the present Yearbook, together with the pathbreaking 1970 essay by Martin Broszat already outlined. While their authors all make their own distinctive and original arguments, they also reflect the transitions in recent Hitler research described above. This bears out once again the observation that the pages of the VfZ have charted the course of research in Germany on Hitler ever since the journal first appeared in 1953. The articles represent four current approaches to Hitler:

(1) *Hitler as the fabricator of his own identity.* In his essay on "Hitler's authenticity," Andreas Wirsching presents a surprisingly functionalist interpretation of Hitler's early political life. Like Othmar Plöckinger and Thomas Weber, he places the decisive phase of Hitler's self-formation as a radical nationalist politician in the first years of the Weimar Republic, and, like Wolfram Pyta, he emphasizes the relevance of Hitler's perception of himself as an artist and architect. But Wirsching establishes a link between these two observations by putting forward the novel thesis that after 1919 Hitler largely "overwrote" his personal authentic-

³⁴ For a critical evaluation of this literature, see Johanna Gehmacher, *Im Umfeld der Macht. Populäre Perspektiven auf Frauen der NS-Elite*, in: Elke Frietsch/Christina Herkommer (eds.), *Nationalsozialismus und Geschlecht. Zur Politisierung und Ästhetisierung von Körper, "Rasse" und Sexualität im "Dritten Reich" und nach 1945*, Bielefeld 2009, pp. 49–69.

³⁵ Ullrich, *Hitler*, vol. 1, p. 11.

ity, which was invested in his desire to become an artist, by embracing – opportunistically – a role on the political stage: initially as a political agitator and propagandist, and then from 1923 onwards, and in particular during his incarceration in Landsberg, where he constructed his *Mein Kampf* narrative on the pattern of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, as a politician with a seemingly long-established ideology. This secondary, artificial, and therefore ultimately inauthentic “authenticity,” Wirsching argues, played a key role in shaping the theatrical character of National Socialism and enabling its adherents to distance themselves from personal pangs of conscience.

In his commentary on Wirsching’s article, Helmut Walser Smith underlines the significance of Wirsching’s exposure of the different layers of narrative in *Mein Kampf* and the fictions spun by Hitler in his effort to forge an authentic political persona with a consistent back story encompassing his wartime experiences. Walser Smith’s overarching, at first sight slightly puzzling question: “When was Adolf Hitler?” emerges as an important one: chronology matters, and “figuring out when Hitler’s positions congealed into a coherent, aggressive, political worldview” is vital both for understanding Hitler’s evolution as a politician and for a wider understanding of what Walser Smith calls the “phase shift” of German nationalism “from an ordinary and banal sentiment to a racist, antisemitic and hyper-aggressive ideology.” Walser Smith then turns to the examples of Otto Dix and Ernst Jünger in order to reveal that they, too, presented to the public a story about being inwardly transformed by their wartime experiences (Dix becoming a pacifist, Jünger a radical nationalist) that deliberately downplayed what appears to have been the more decisive formative influences of the turbulent founding phase of the Weimar Republic.

(2) *Hitler as an eclectic, but ultimately distinctive ideologue.* Roman Töppel, one of the editors who worked on the critical edition of *Mein Kampf*, turns his attention to the key significance of the chapter “Volk und Rasse” (Ethnicity and Race) in Hitler’s manifesto. He meticulously traces the writings and ideas that influenced Hitler’s thinking on racial biology. Töppel argues very persuasively that the influence of some of Hitler’s alleged key sources has hitherto been overestimated, while at the same time he confirms or reappraises the significance of others. What his philological research also shows, however, is that Hitler used his sources selectively and for his own purposes, taking from them only what suited his political program. From these many different building blocks, Hitler constructed his own ideology, which in its radicalism and especially in its “relentless hatred of Jews” went substantially beyond the exemplars on which he drew. Töppel’s essay shows how much can be learned from a fresh study of Hitler’s *Weltanschauung*, its roots and its effects.

Eve Rosenhaft in her commentary reiterates the importance of chronology central to the contributions by Wirsching and Walser Smith, and she draws out from Roman Töppel's analysis the argument that Hitler, when drafting the "Volk und Rasse" chapter in 1922/23 that later became part of *Mein Kampf*, was still at that point engaged in pinning down his political positions and searching for a way to articulate and justify his "visceral antisemitism." She ponders the significance of Hitler's endeavor to embed his hatred of Jews within a framework of blood and "race" and then she widens the perspective to consider Hitler's racial thinking in the global context of its time. Re-reading *Mein Kampf* in the light of interpretations that over the last decades have seen antisemitism as part of a wider Nazi vision of a "racial state" that also attacked and excluded 'other victims' (Blacks, Sinti and Roma, those sterilized on grounds of "racial hygiene"), Rosenhaft reminds us that Hitler himself in chapters two and three of the second volume of *Mein Kampf* evoked this wider picture of racial degeneration and salvation with his attacks on miscegenation as the cause of racial downfall. She concludes that a virulent fear of miscegenation, informed by longer traditions of German colonial policy, the international eugenics movement and the exclusionary practices directed against African-Americans in the USA, was an additional originary force in Hitler's thinking that emerged alongside his loathing of the Jews and interacted with it.

(3) *Hitler as a "normal" private individual.* The article by Paul Hoser on Hitler as a lodger living at Thierschstraße 41 in Munich from 1920 to 1929 is testimony to the new interest in Hitler's private life. Hoser confirms the observation of Volker Ullrich – that Hitler had a personal life outside politics, whose importance has hitherto been underestimated, but that in his private life the private and political spheres were very closely intertwined.³⁶ Hitler kept up his "normal" petit-bourgeois existence as a lodger for a surprisingly long time, being treated almost as one of the family by his landlords; but at the same time, he received a growing number of visitors in his room who came on political business of one sort or another. Drawing on newly discovered source material, Hoser throws light for the first time on Hitler's special domestic circumstances, one remarkable feature of which was that the apartment building in which he lived was owned by a Jewish businessman.

(4) *Hitler as military leader.* The *Dokumentation* by Johannes Hürter and Matthias Uhl not only publishes a hitherto unknown source, in the form of the transcript of a meeting between Hitler and Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel in September 1942, but also draws attention to two aspects that future research will need to address: first, the substantial collections of German military documents that still

³⁶ See Ullrich, Hitler, vol. 1, pp. 7–8.

await study in Russian archives; secondly, the historical significance of Hitler's military leadership. During the war, military conferences such as the one in Vinnytsia were not a secondary aspect of Hitler's authority, but lay at the very heart of it. The communications and decisions of the dictator in his role as military leader had far-reaching effects, both for his authority and its legitimacy, and for the course of the war in general. Like Wolfram Pyta's study, the article by Hürter and Uhl argues that military history as a way of approaching and understanding Hitler has been seriously neglected in German studies of Hitler. For the editors, the document reprinted here is symptomatic not only of conflicts within the military leadership, but also of Hitler's leadership style as a *Feldherr*: increasingly at a loss strategically after the summer of 1942, he sought to cover up his failures by reliance on force of will, autosuggestion and aggressive bluster.

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What, then, have recent studies on Hitler added to the sum of our knowledge? What new avenues have they opened up? Opinions on this differ. For Thomas Kühne, this boom, in which he, like Gavriel R. Rosenfeld,³⁷ sees a "discourse of normalization," has yielded little that is new.³⁸ Kühne finds this discourse interesting for what it tells us about memory culture and the history of the media, but beyond that, he argues, everything that can be said about Hitler's role in National Socialism has already been said: contemporary research, according to Kühne, is simply "treading water."³⁹ However, there are good reasons why the field continues to evolve without an imminent end in sight. As Kühne himself notes,⁴⁰ historical research, particularly in Germany, had progressively relativized Hitler's importance within the National Socialist system of rule, its political and social dynamics, and its crimes – initially, from the 1960s onwards, through structural or "functionalist" interpretations, and then later, starting in the 1990s, through intensive study of the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* as a slogan and in its possible substance. At the time, it was important to move beyond the prevailing mainstream of Hitler-centered studies. But there has been a certain tendency since then to lose sight of the dictator as a key player behind a "polycratic" nexus of accomplices – technocrats, bureaucrats and armed groups, administrations,

³⁷ See Rosenfeld, *Hi Hitler*.

³⁸ See Thomas Kühne, *Zwischen Akribie und Groteske. Variationen der "Normalisierung" Adolf Hitlers*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 304 (2017), pp. 405–22, here p. 422.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 408. Kühne cites Peter Longerich's Hitler biography as an example.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 405–06.

staffs and organizations – or in the flux of social processes. The pleas of recent historians to ascribe greater importance again to Hitler and his power, personality and ideology in scholarly interpretations of National Socialism thus send an important signal. Even so, over-personalizing – and thereby over-simplifying – remains a potential trap. The state of knowledge regarding institutional and social practices in the Nazi state and its wartime empire needs to be reflected in all future studies of the dictator; the work of Ian Kershaw, exploring the connections between personality and social context, remains a classic example of such an approach.

Yet the value of contemporary research on Hitler goes beyond the relevance of reappraising the dictator's historical significance. As is clearly shown by the articles from the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* published here and by the commentaries, the new work is not only marked by a variety of approaches and even new evidence, but in some cases breaks new ground. One example of this is the transfer of recent approaches in cultural history to the biography of Hitler. The “shift in perspective from the ‘what’ to the ‘how’,”⁴¹ which characterizes the so-called cultural turn, can offer fresh insights into Hitler's self-constructions and communication techniques, as well as into the performative acts and sources of legitimacy that shaped the relationships between *Führer* and *Volk*. This is an avenue that future research can explore further: in particular, more analysis is needed of the dictator's networks during World War II and his exercise of power through different forms of communication. Here, there is still scope for new empirical research: for example, we do not yet have a critical edition of Hitler's speeches after 1933 to replace the incomplete and unreliable collection edited by Max Domarus.⁴² This omission will be made good by the Institute for Contemporary History over the next few years.⁴³

41 Ute Daniel, Geschichte schreiben nach der “kulturalistischen Wende,” in: Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 43 (2003), pp. 576–59, here p. 577. See Frank Bajohr, Der Cultural Turn und die Gesellschaftsgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus, in: Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 65 (2017), pp. 223–32.

42 See Max Domarus, Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen, vol. 1: Triumph (1932–1938), Neustadt a. d. Aisch 1962; vol. 2: Untergang (1939–1945), Neustadt a. d. Aisch 1963; 2nd ed. Munich 1965; 3rd ed. Wiesbaden 1973; 4th ed., 4 vols., Leonberg 1988; English edition: Max Domarus, Hitler. Speeches and Proclamations 1932–1945. The Chronicle of a Dictatorship, 4 vols., London/Wauconda (IL), 1990–2004.

43 For details of the project “Edition der Reden Adolf Hitlers von 1933 bis 1945,” see www.ifz-muenchen.de/forschung/editionen/projektuebersicht/ea/projekt/edition-der-reden-adolf-hitlers-von-1933-bis-1945/ [accessed May 7, 2018]. Another important new resource, which unfortunately lacks precise source references, is the meticulous compilation by Harald Sandner, Hitler – Das Itinerar. Aufenthaltsorte und Reisen von 1889 bis 1945, 4 vols., Berlin 2016.

There is also a need for historians to pay much more attention to Hitler as the Third Reich's supreme military commander during the war, both in the way that this was reflected in his self-image and performance and in the actual power that he wielded in this role. Here too, the latest research has added to our previous knowledge. The same applies to Hitler's personality, which historians have too often trivialized or underestimated: future analyses will need to move beyond the view that the man was little more than a sociopath with no private life. This is another area where it would pay to review our thinking by taking a fresh look at the source material – much of it well-known, but some of it newly discovered. Meanwhile, the new critical edition of *Mein Kampf*, with its detailed commentary, has reminded us of the historical significance of Hitler's ideology, and how densely interwoven it is with the history of ideas. The examination of this ideology, not just in its effects, but also in its national, and more especially international, antecedents and connections, remains a key task for research.

Finally, the question arises as to whether German research on Hitler has hitherto been too narrowly confined within a national perspective. Some observations by the commentators in this volume suggest as much. Without detracting in any way from Germany's responsibility, Hitler should no longer be interpreted simply as a German or Central European phenomenon, but should be seen, rather, in the broader context of global developments in ideas and practices and how they are transferred. This is perhaps the most compelling challenge for future historians of Adolf Hitler.

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Andreas Wirsching

Hitler's Authenticity

A Functionalist Interpretation

The Concept of Authenticity

Until a new wave of publishing activity began in 1998, Joachim Fest's milestone biography had for more than two decades been considered the definitive work on Hitler. Then, Brigitte Hamann published a meticulous critical study of available source materials that cast new light on the mysteries of Hitler's years in Vienna. Shortly thereafter, Ian Kershaw's magisterial two-volume work set a new benchmark, and more recently Volker Ullrich has published the first volume of a study conceived on a similarly monumental scale. Meanwhile, Thomas Weber has unearthed significant new sources that speak of Hitler's development during World War I. A wealth of new material has also been published by Wolfram Pyta, who combines the literary genre of biography with an interesting and provocative thesis: Pyta focuses on Hitler's life as an "artist," which he claims was the basis of Hitler's faith in his abilities as a military commander and war leader.¹ Peter Longerich, by portraying Hitler as a strong "man of action" also casts him in a significantly different light than biographers such as Kershaw. The key to Hitler's ability to impose his will upon others, argues Longerich, is not to be found in his charismatic appeal, but in the way he could "reorder immensely complex situations by

¹ See Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna. A Portrait of the Tyrant as a Young Man*, London 2010. Less persuasive, because it essentially summarizes the facts as we already know them, is David Clay Large, *Where Ghosts Walked. Munich's Road to the Third Reich*, New York 1997; Joachim Fest, *Hitler*, New York 1974, with numerous later editions. The present essay was inspired in part by my involvement in the project to publish a critical edition of Hitler's "Mein Kampf," under the direction of the Institute for Contemporary History, and in part by the findings of the research program "Historical Authenticity," conducted under the aegis of the Leibniz-Gemeinschaft. I previously set out some thoughts on this subject in my lecture on "Hitler's biography in 'Mein Kampf'," which I gave at the interdisciplinary workshop "Concepts of the Authentic – Processes of Authentication" at the "Institut für Deutsche Sprache" in Mannheim. See also Ian Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936: Hubris*, London 1998; idem, *Hitler. 1936–1945: Nemesis*, London 2000; Volker Ullrich, *Hitler*, vol. 1: *Ascent 1889–1939*, New York 2016; Thomas Weber, *Hitler's First War. Adolf Hitler, the Men of the List Regiment, and the First World War*, Oxford 2010. See also the recent study: idem, *Becoming Hitler. The Making of a Nazi*, Oxford 2017; Wolfram Pyta, *Hitler. Der Künstler als Politiker und Feldherr. Eine Herrschaftsanalyse*, Munich 2015.

skillful, flexible, and – protracted hesitation notwithstanding – decisive political action.”² Other Hitler biographers, such as Brendan Simms,³ are in the process of adding further contributions. More one-dimensional and speculative studies written for a broader audience, such as those espousing theories about Hitler’s homosexuality or drug addiction,⁴ will be disregarded for our present purposes.

It is unlikely that any significant new sources about Hitler’s life will be discovered, especially pertaining to his early years in Linz and Vienna. The most important sources of information about this phase of his life will more than likely continue to be *Mein Kampf* and August Kubizek’s memoirs.⁵ All the more reason, therefore, to take the autobiographical testimony in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* seriously, despite its overblown nature and hideous style, and to try to make as much sense of it as possible within the context of other available source materials.⁶ The best way to do this is to offer a new interpretive perspective by analyzing the early period of Hitler’s life and his autobiography using categories and concepts of knowledge from outside this immediate context, which effectively extends the range of hermeneutic possibilities. A re-reading of *Mein Kampf* informed by such a transdisciplinary approach has the potential to add to our present knowledge by shedding a different kind of light on the subject.

The goal of this essay is to offer just such an innovative interpretation. It builds on an observation that has already been made by a number of other scholars, namely that the structure of Hitler’s autobiography in *Mein Kampf* follows the pattern of the middle-class *Entwicklungs-* and *Bildungsroman* (coming-of-age novel).⁷ The years of Hitler’s youth “in the home of my parents” are followed by his “journeyman years” in Vienna, which then culminate, as it were, in his “years of mastery” in Munich. It is immaterial that Hitler’s text, as one might expect, follows this model only in a highly fragmentary and – in terms of style –

² Peter Longerich, Hitler. Biographie, Munich 2015, p. 549.

³ See Brendan Simms, Against a “World of Enemies.” The Impact of the First World War on the Development of Hitler’s Ideology, in: International Affairs 90 (2014), pp. 317–36. Simms’ main thesis is that Hitler’s thoughts and actions, including his antisemitism, can be explained in terms of his hatred of the Anglo-American powers.

⁴ See Lothar Machtan, The Hidden Hitler, New York 2001; Norman Ohler, Blitzed. Drugs in the Third Reich, Boston (MA)/New York 2017.

⁵ See August Kubizek, Young Hitler. The Story of our Friendship, London 1954.

⁶ For a seminal account of the genesis, reception, and impact of “Mein Kampf,” see Othmar Plöckinger, Geschichte eines Buches. Adolf Hitlers “Mein Kampf” 1922–1945, Munich 2006.

⁷ See Hitler, Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition, ed. by Christian Hartmann et al., commissioned by the Institute for Contemporary History, vol. 1, Munich 2016, pp. 30–31 (Introduction). In the present issue of the Yearbook, the translations of the German quotations from “Mein Kampf” into English were made by Allan Blunden unless otherwise stated.

shamelessly derivative way. Nor are we ever likely to know for certain which texts inspired Hitler. Some elements have clearly been borrowed from the autobiographies of Richard Wagner and Anselm von Feuerbach, as well as Hitler's early companion and colleague, Anton Drexler.⁸ Yet the prospect of anything more specific about Hitler's knowledge of literary history and literary genres coming to light is remote. What is much more important, however, and what previous research has not addressed, is the question of the function of this model for Hitler's own understanding of himself during his imprisonment in Landsberg and for the self-image that he sought to construct for a public audience.⁹

At the heart of the middle-class *Entwicklungs-* and *Bildungsroman* lay a specifically modern dynamic that tapped into a concept of individuality going back at least as far as the Renaissance.¹⁰ Beginning in the 18th century, personal individuality and new opportunities for autonomous self-expression assumed much greater importance, as did the correspondingly altered relationship between the self and the world. Conversely, the dangers of "alienation" manifested themselves for the first time, evoking what was to become – via Hegel, Marx and Max Weber – a key concept of modernity. This constellation inexorably led to the creation of a fundamental psychological need within the individual, which can be defined as the search for authenticity. Authenticity in this sense goes beyond the modern construct of individual identity: what is at stake here is a person's claim to legitimacy and credibility.

The concept of authenticity that interests us here can therefore be traced back to the development of modern subjectivity, to the inwardness of the modern age and its romantic manifestations, which have been widely discussed since the end of the 18th century. Since the time of Rousseau, at the latest, personal authenticity has come to signify the individual "being at one with himself," or rather his "inner voice" that tells him the right thing to do, allowing him to act accordingly.¹¹ Consequently, the modern individual is exhorted to be true to himself at all

⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 127 (Chapter Introduction).

⁹ How far "Mein Kampf" also served to canonize Hitler's biography in the public eye, and to put a stop to the many rumors circulating about his life from the early 1920s onwards, can be seen in Othmar Plöckinger, *Frühe biografische Texte zu Hitler. Zur Bewertung der autobiografischen Teile in "Mein Kampf,"* in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 58 (2010), pp. 93–114. See also Pyta, Hitler, pp. 219–39, with reference to the idea of genius as invoked by Hitler.

¹⁰ See Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, London/New York 1921, here pp. 129–68; Richard van Dülmen (ed.), *Die Entdeckung des Ich. Die Geschichte der Individualisierung vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Cologne et al. 2001.

¹¹ See Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 5th ed., Concord 1996, pp. 25–29. On Rousseau, see Heinrich Meier, *On the happiness of the philosophic life. Reflections on Rousseau's*

times so that he can be seen as an “authentic” person and earn the respect that this merits. In order to appear genuine and credible – or, in other words, “authentic” – to those around him, the (mostly male) individual had to “find himself” and then “be at one with himself.” On the one hand, therefore, authenticity is a concept that has to do with inwardness; it is about the extent to which an individual acquires his own distinctive and unique authenticity. The goal becomes to achieve the ideal self-congruence of conscious intention, inner desires, and concrete action,¹² and the personal authenticity of an individual therefore is predicated on such congruence with the innermost self. That being the case, authenticity is also – on the other hand – a communicative concept directed outwards because it determines to whom authenticity is ascribed within a given context.

In this sense, the modern discourse of authenticity can be traced back to Herder, and above all to Rousseau. In recent times, Charles Taylor has identified authenticity as a central axis of modern “sources of the self,” tracking it back through two centuries of western intellectual history.¹³ It goes without saying that such notions of authenticity were duly reflected in the immensely rich output of autobiographical writing in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Wilhelm Dilthey, for example, viewed autobiography as “the highest and most instructive form in which we encounter the understanding of life.”¹⁴ According to Dilthey, an autobiography was an authentic testimony to its author’s life, his development, and, above all, his significance: “In his recollection he has singled out and emphasized those elements in his life that he felt to be significant, and allowed the rest to sink into oblivion.”¹⁵ In terms of literary genres, there are obvious parallels between the middle-class *Entwicklungsroman*, autobiography as it was under-

Rêveries in Two Books, Chicago (IL)/London 2016, pp. 98–100. For a general summary, see Achim Saupe, Authenticity, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, April 12, 2016; docupedia.de/zg/saupe_authentizitaet_v3_en_2016 [accessed August 29, 2017].

¹² On this, see Julius Kuhl, Psychologie des Selbstseins, in: idem/Andreas Luckner, Freies Selbstsein. Authentizität und Regression, Göttingen 2007, pp. 49–81, here p. 50.

¹³ See Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity, Cambridge/MA 1989; Hartmut Rosa, Identität und kulturelle Praxis. Politische Philosophie nach Charles Taylor, Frankfurt a. M./New York 1998, here pp. 195–211; on the problem of authenticity as a central “indicator of successful identity” in the modern age, see p. 197.

¹⁴ Wilhelm Dilthey, Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften, in: Bernhard Groethuysen (ed.), Wilhelm Dilthey. Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 7, Stuttgart/Göttingen 1958, p. 199. Dilthey called the autobiographies of Augustine, Rousseau and Goethe “the most direct expression of reflection on life.” Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 200. For the context, see Hanns-Georg Brose/Bruno Hildenbrand, Biographisierung von Erleben und Handeln, in: idem (eds.), Vom Ende des Individuums zur Individualität ohne Ende, Opladen 1988, pp. 11–30.

stood by Dilthey around 1900, and the problem of personal authenticity. Autobiography portrays the development of the individual, “the story of his emergence and formation, his gradual assimilation into society”; the story ends with the “clearly-defined identity of the author having finally become established after a long struggle.”¹⁶ This echoes the pattern of the *Entwicklungs-* and *Bildungsroman*, which, in the tradition of the middle-class construct of individual identity, was designed to reveal the personality of the “hero”; it shows him maturing inwardly as he wrestles with all manner of trials and tribulations before finding himself, which eventually allows him to enter into productive interaction with his social environment as an authentic personality. The years of his youth and then time as an “apprentice and journeyman” are followed by the “years of mastery,” which represented the end point of the growth to maturity.

The idea of a fully cohesive concept of the self as presented by an autobiographer now seems rather outdated; after all, literary criticism has not been the only discipline to turn to deconstructionism.¹⁷ From this perspective, any attempt to express personal authenticity appears to be constructed and artificial; strictly speaking, there can be only one, original version of authenticity, which means that all other constructs of authenticity represent different gradations. By applying such an approach to the life of Hitler, the present study distinguishes between an “older” layer of personal authenticity and a more “recent” layer that was constructed as part of a secondary process. Viewed in these terms, the concept of authenticity can be very readily applied to Hitler's biography. Of course, neither Hitler's ascent and seizure of power, nor the social mobilization of the National Socialist regime can be explained without reference to Hitler's mass appeal. But that appeal was itself sustained by the attribution of an irreducible personal authenticity that made the *Führer* – the Leader – credible in word and deed.

Hitler recognized early on how important it was to acquire an authenticity that could be usefully exploited for political ends. Accordingly, the first question that needs to be asked when re-examining *Mein Kampf* is how Hitler acquired authenticity for himself and in his own eyes. Then we must consider how this authenticity relates to his breakthrough as a publicly recognized demagogue in Munich in 1919/20. In a third section, we shall examine what form of authenticity was ascribed to Hitler as he rose to national prominence after 1929. Finally,

¹⁶ Bernd Neumann, *Identität und Rollenzwang. Zur Theorie der Autobiographie*, Frankfurt a. M. 1970, pp. 25, 94.

¹⁷ See, for example, Nadine Jessica Schmidt, *Konstruktionen literarischer Authentizität in autobiographischen Erzähltexten. Exemplarische Analysen zu Christa Wolf, Ruth Klüger, Benjamin Wilkomirski und Günter Grass*, Göttingen 2014, pp. 63–71.

moving beyond Hitler as an individual, we shall explore how the concept of authenticity permits us to draw more general conclusions about the dynamics of National Socialist criminal behavior.

Biographical Authenticity?

What we know about Hitler's early years can be summed up in three statements. Firstly, Hitler suffered at the hands of a domineering father, resulting in a difficult, and on occasion violent, father-son conflict; secondly, these problems with his father made his relationship with his mother all that much closer; and thirdly, by the time he moved on to secondary school (*Realschule*), if not earlier, he was a failing pupil. After he was forced to leave the secondary school in Linz in 1905, he refused to work in a disciplined and consistent manner, resisted the attempts of those around him to influence him for the better, and led an aimless existence.¹⁸ For anyone who wants to know how Hitler set out to attain personal authenticity, in the sense of "being at one with himself," against the background of this rather complicated family and childhood environment, *Mein Kampf* is an excellent source. In its first chapter ("In the home of my parents"), Hitler portrays the outward circumstances of his childhood and youth as the framework that defined his mental and emotional maturation; these two things work together to equip him for his future life.

Hitler deals with his frequently attested inability to fit in socially by proudly styling himself as a wayward, rebellious adolescent. He claims he was a "little ringleader," who was "not 'well-behaved' in the conventional sense," nor averse to getting into boyish scrapes.¹⁹ This tallied neatly with the father-son conflict: According to *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's father was positively obsessed with the idea of forming his son Adolf in his own image, in other words making a civil servant of him. Hitler duly rationalizes almost every negative aspect of his youthful development by reminding us that he had to assert his will against the wishes of his domineering father from a very early age. The personality of the child thus developed and matured in opposition to paternal authority. It was absolutely clear to the young Hitler that he did *not* wish to become a civil servant, in part because, as

¹⁸ In "Mein Kampf," these are described as "the happiest of days, which seemed to me like a beautiful dream." Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, p. [16]. The square brackets in this edition indicate the pagination in the first edition of the two volumes of "Mein Kampf" (1925/27).

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. [3], [6].

he tellingly noted, “my time would no longer be my own.”²⁰ Instead, the twelve-year-old had already “made up his mind” that he wanted to become a painter.²¹ From this perspective, his failure at secondary school, which could not be denied in retrospect because it was a matter of public record, became the result of a conscious effort by his maturing personality. If *Mein Kampf* is to be believed, Hitler deliberately sabotaged his school education in order to prove that the path his father had chosen for him was not the right one.

Defiance and rebellion in the relationship between the self and the surrounding world, early maturation in the face of a “hostile reality,”²² the stirring of hidden talents in spite of outward obstacles – all these defining characteristics of the middle-class *Entwicklungsroman* can be found in the first chapter of *Mein Kampf*. The tension thus set up between the self and the surrounding world is continued throughout Hitler’s “journeyman years,” which he famously entitled the “Years of Study and Suffering in Vienna.” It has long been accepted that this stylized representation cannot in any sense be taken as the autobiographical “truth.” What has not been widely noted hitherto, however, is that the autobiographical passages of *Mein Kampf* have two superimposed narrative layers, each of which is linguistically and chronologically distinct. When read closely, the older of the two layers documents what turns out to be Hitler’s original authenticity: his artistic talent, which was limited, but nevertheless real enough,²³ had already emerged in his formative years. It sparked a passion for art – again, within limits – leading to a firm career choice, albeit one that Hitler later revised; although he dreamt of being a painter, he ultimately decided to pursue a career as an architect. The climax of this development was the rejection that Hitler received from the examination board of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts:

So now I was in this beautiful city for the second time, awaiting with burning impatience, yet proud confidence, the result of my entrance examination. I was so convinced of my success that the rejection, when I heard it, hit me like a bolt from the blue. And yet it was true. When I went to see the principal, and asked if he would explain the reasons for my rejection by the Academy’s general school of painting, he assured me that my portfolio of drawings clearly demonstrated my unsuitability as a painter – but that my abilities clearly lay in the field of architecture; I could never hope to qualify for the Academy’s school of painting, only for its school of architecture. They were astonished that I had never attended

²⁰ Ibid., p. [6].

²¹ Ibid., p. [7].

²² Jürgen Jacobs, *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder. Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman*. Munich 1972, p. 271.

²³ On Hitler’s development as an “artist” and his understanding of art, see the detailed and compelling account given in: Pyta, Hitler.

a school of architecture, or had any formal instruction in architecture at all. I left Hansen's imposing building on the Schillerplatz feeling downcast, at odds with myself for the first time in my young life. For it seemed to me that what I had just been told about my abilities suddenly revealed, like a blinding flash of lightning, a conflict within me that I had been struggling with for a long time, without really being able to understand the reasons why. But now, in the space of a few days, I myself knew that I would one day become an architect.²⁴

It would not be amiss to regard this much-cited passage of *Mein Kampf* as the most authentic in the book. Not only is Hitler, for the first time in his life, “at odds with [him]self,” but also, following his conversation with the principal of the Academy, he now knows precisely what he wants, namely to “become an architect.” True, he lacks the necessary higher education qualifications, but when he returns to Vienna after the death of his mother, the “early defiance” is revived within him, and he now – “once and for all” – sets his sights on this goal:

I wanted to become an architect, and obstacles are not there to be capitulated to, but to be overcome. And I was determined to overcome these obstacles, always having before me the image of my father, who had once fought his way up from poor village lad and cobbler's apprentice to public official. I was starting from a stronger position, and it was easier for me to battle against circumstances; what then seemed to be the harshness of fate, I now bless as the wisdom of providence. As the goddess of necessity held me in her embrace, and often threatened to crush me, my will to resist grew, and in the end my will prevailed.²⁵

So Hitler continued to pursue his “beautiful dream for the future”: “I was quite certain that I would one day make my name as an architect.”²⁶

This determination to overcome all “obstacles” and attain the desired goal does not lead to any concrete outcome in *Mein Kampf*; instead, it sticks out of the personal narrative like a loose end, and it is not pursued any further in Hitler's official autobiography. All the same, the authenticity of the ambition endured, as many other sources attest. For as long as his means permitted, Hitler diligently continued his self-education in Vienna; in terms of the contemporary cult of genius with which Hitler associated himself, this was viewed as a prerequisite for originality and creativity.²⁷ As his childhood friend Kubizek tells us, Hitler effect-

²⁴ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, p. [18].

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. [18–19].

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. [34].

²⁷ Adolf Hitler. *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944*. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims, ed. by Werner Jochmann, Munich 1982, p. 115. See Birgit Schwarz, *Geniewahn. Hitler und die Kunst*, Vienna et al. 2009, p. 75; on Hitler's “architectural vocation,” see *ibid.*, pp. 58–65.

ively became a self-taught student of architecture.²⁸ And although the source materials on this point are fragmentary, there are good reasons to suppose that Hitler during this time did not simply abandon himself to idleness, but was in a way systematically “working.” Focusing his attention on the rich architectural heritage of Vienna’s Ringstraße, and in particular its theater buildings, Hitler acquired a broad knowledge of architectural history and draftsmanship on which he continued to draw in later years.

It was only natural that I should pursue my love of architecture with a passion. Along with music, architecture seemed to me the queen of the arts: in these circumstances, my study of the subject was not “work,” but a supreme delight. I could read or draw late into the night, without ever feeling tired. So my belief grew that one day, however many years it took, my beautiful dream for the future would become a reality.²⁹

Later on in Munich, when he had already become a “politician,” Hitler made frequent reference to what had once been his principal goal in life. In a letter dating from 1921, in one of his earliest autobiographical statements, he wrote: “In my youth, my goal was to become an architect, and had I not taken up politics, I do not believe that I would ever have chosen any other profession.” In Munich, he claimed, he continued to pursue his goal of “becoming an architect.”³⁰ Indeed, when Hitler stood trial after his failed putsch attempt, he was entirely consistent on this point when he gave evidence: he intended to continue training in Bavaria’s capital “to become an architect.” The situation was clarified only by the – alleged – “decision” of November 9, 1918, “to become a politician”: “The great dilemma in my life, whether to take up politics or become an architect, was finally resolved.”³¹

It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that Hitler was “at one with himself” – which is to say, authentic – when he was able to be, or at least dream of being, an “architect” with artistic leanings. For our present purposes, it is unimportant

28 “Often he could look at such a building for hours, memorizing even totally minor details.” Cited in: Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna*, p. 70. For a detailed account of Hitler’s private studies in Vienna focusing on theater architecture, see Pyta, *Hitler*, pp. 81–97.

29 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, pp. [33–34].

30 “Hitler an einen Unbekannten,” November 29, 1921, in: Hitler. *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, ed. by Eberhard Jäckel/Axel Kuhn, Stuttgart 1980, doc. 325, pp. 525–26. According to Anton Joachimsthaler, the letter was addressed to Dr. Emil Gansser, an acquaintance of Dietrich Eckart. It is reproduced here in facsimile, see *Hitlers Weg begann in München 1913–1923* (revised and extended edition, incorporating the years 1920–1924), Munich 2000, pp. 91–94.

31 *Der Hitler-Prozess 1924. Wortlaut der Hauptverhandlung vor dem Volksgericht München I*, ed. by Lothar Gruchmann/Reinhard Weber, Part 1: 1.–4. Verhandlungstag, Munich 1997, pp. 19, 21.

that his understanding of art never progressed beyond a bombastic neo-classicism and that he was unable to comprehend the modernist trends that were so evident in pre-war Vienna, trends which he later portrayed as the work of the hated Jewish “enemy.”³² The fact that Hitler never actually made an effort to formally train as an architect or draftsman is equally irrelevant to the interpretation presented here. It has been pointed out often enough that he shunned regular work, which would have subjected him to external discipline, and that he all too often succumbed to idleness, always blaming others, never himself, for his failures. It is no coincidence that Thomas Mann – doubtless with the empathetic insight of someone who had gazed into similar abysses – recognized in Hitler’s biography a typical, if “debased manifestation of the ‘artist’s life’”:

It is all there, in a faintly embarrassing way: the “difficulty,” laziness, and pitiful indefinability of the early years, the failure to find one’s niche, the whole “what-is-it-that-you-really-want?” thing, the feeble-minded vegetating in a state of profound social and psychological bohemianism, the essentially arrogant rejection of any useful and honest activity because one thinks oneself too good for it.³³

More importantly, however, Hitler always expressed himself precisely and consistently in *Mein Kampf* when writing about his professional “dream for the future.” The passages in question can easily be verified by other sources, and they draw a clear line through Hitler’s biography and his later self-reflections that runs all the way through to the monologues in the *Führer* Headquarters. In April 1942, for example, Hitler told Hermann Giesler “that he was first and foremost an artist, and as an architect, specifically, he had acquired the habits of thoroughness and organic composition.”³⁴ On another occasion he stated that while in Vienna, he had been involved in public tenders for the renovation of the Royal Opera House in Berlin.³⁵ And as late as 1944, he was still proud of his ability “for example [...] to sketch with the greatest of ease the floor plan of a theater building on paper. [...] All that is nothing but the result of my studies back [then].”³⁶ Consequently, what is revealed here in Hitler’s self-image is the older layer of what he presented as the authentic development of his personality: this older layer was focused entirely on

³² On this, see Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna*, pp. 60–82.

³³ Thomas Mann, *Bruder Hitler*, in: idem, *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, vol. 12: *Reden und Aufsätze*, Frankfurt a. M. 1990, pp. 845–52, here p. 848.

³⁴ Pyta, *Hitler*, p. 287.

³⁵ See Hitler, *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier*, November 29, 1941, p. 115; Schwarz, *Geniewahn*, pp. 77–79.

³⁶ “Aufzeichnung eines Gesprächs auf dem Obersalzberg vom 12.3.1944,” cited in: Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna*, p. 71.

the professional dream of becoming an artist and architect. It runs like a common thread through Hitler's biography, and it can be traced from the earliest sources about his life, through to *Mein Kampf*, and then on into the documentary evidence from the very late period.

But, when the autobiographical passages in *Mein Kampf* address the programmatic and ideological foundations of Hitler's persona,³⁷ the writing becomes woolly, verbose, and contradictory. Here, clearly, we are dealing with a more recent layer of text and experience, which thus played a different role for the young Hitler as he sought to establish his authenticity.

From the perspective of the leader of a failed putsch, holed up in Landsberg prison and hoping for a political comeback, it was obvious that he could no longer rely solely on his unrealized ambitions to become an architect to generate personal authenticity. In order to build on his successes before 1923, Hitler needed a kind of authenticity that had an ideological foundation, which could be exploited for political ends. Just such an identity had already been forged in the violence on the streets during his years in Munich after World War I,³⁸ and *Mein Kampf* now offered the biographical narrative with which to express it. Inspired by his history teacher, Hitler now claimed in retrospect, history had been his abiding interest all along. Once again, he described how he went through a rapid process of inner maturation: the "great heroic struggle [of 1870/71]" became his "greatest inner experience," which makes a clear allusion to his admired Ernst Jünger.³⁹ Another lesson that he had learned from history, he wrote, was "that the preservation of German culture required the destruction of Austria."⁴⁰ Hitler recognized this "as a very young man," and drew the logical conclusion: "I became a nationalist." He repeated this claim, noting: "I had become a fanatical 'German nationalist'" or "young revolutionary."⁴¹

The period of inner maturation in his parents' home was thus followed by the steeling of his personality in conflict with a hostile outside world. The material hardship that resulted from his own social failure in Vienna was portrayed by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* as providential. This time of hardship, he claimed, led him to study closely current socio-political conditions and contexts. These issues included the "social question" and the "Jewish question," in addition to

37 On this, see the detailed account in: Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Weg*, pp. 42–46, 96–97.

38 On this, see the seminal account in: Albrecht Tyrell, *Vom "Trommler" zum "Führer."* Der Wandel von Hitlers Selbstverständnis zwischen 1919 und 1924 und die Entwicklung der NSDAP, Munich 1975.

39 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, p. [4].

40 Ibid., p. [14].

41 Ibid., pp. [8], [10], [12].

the workers' movement and "Marxism." Through a combination of reading and sympathetic observation, Hitler maintained, he had come to the realization that Social Democratic workers, for example, needed to be removed from the clutches of their Jewish seducers and reintegrated into the nation; he also mentioned that this might even mean the use of force. If we take *Mein Kampf* at its word, Hitler had secured the "rock-solid foundation of my actions at that time" by the end of his journeyman years in Vienna: he was still a nationalist and revolutionary, but he had also become a "fanatical" antisemite after a long "mental and spiritual struggle." It was as such an ideologically "fully formed" character, deeply affected by Germany's defeat in the war and subsequent revolution, that Hitler then decided – at least according to *Mein Kampf* – "to become a politician" on the night of November 9, 1918.⁴²

This, more or less, is the political-ideological authenticity that Hitler claimed for himself in *Mein Kampf*, which he continued to draw on until his death. According to this account, he had already "found himself" politically during his years in Vienna. In later years, he continued to emphasize the fully established – i.e. authentic – immutability of his views. This immutability was actually even mocked by his contemporary critics, and Fest rightly describes it as a "phenomenon of early rigidity."⁴³ Yet when read from the perspective suggested here and in light of recent research, all indications point to the fact that this political-ideological authenticity was a secondary construct designed for a specific purpose. There is no doubt that *Mein Kampf* contains various ideological ex post facto rationalizations of Hitler's experiences in Vienna, but the fact of the matter is that before 1914, Hitler was leading a vagabond existence as an aspiring artist and showed no sign of having any firm political convictions.⁴⁴ In particular, there are no recorded antisemitic comments made by Hitler in his early years. What we do know is that he was on very friendly terms with Jews, beginning with Eduard Bloch, his mother's doctor.⁴⁵ He does not seem to have taken any special interest in antisemitic themes until the summer of 1919. Even his notorious letter to Adolf Gemlich from September 1919, the first virulently antisemitic document from Hitler's pen, does not necessarily need to be read as an authentic expression of his opinion. It was actually a piece that he wrote for his mentor, Karl Mayr, that recapitulated the standard antisemitic themes prev-

⁴² Ibid., pp. [20], [60], [217].

⁴³ Fest, Hitler, p. 529.

⁴⁴ See the summary of the scholarly literature and available sources in: Pyta, Hitler, pp. 99–129.

⁴⁵ See Ullrich, Hitler, vol. 1, pp. 27–28. For a critical appraisal, see Kershaw, Hitler, vol. 1, pp. 60–67.

alent at the time in Bavaria.⁴⁶ At this particular time, Hitler basically only had to summarize what had already been said so often before by others in order to be heard, and, as he writes, to carry out his mission “properly.” A good deal of evidence thus suggests that the ideological foundations for his racist world view were only laid at this point: in other words in Munich in the wake of World War I. Moreover, we cannot actually dismiss the possibility that his antisemitic outbursts were in fact cynically calculated for effect. It has been claimed, for example, that Hitler told British interviewers in May 1923 “that his anti-Semitic ravings are solely for advertising purposes.”⁴⁷

By 1924, the situation was entirely different, and Hitler now needed credible political-ideological authenticity in order to stage his planned political comeback. Imprisoned in Landsberg, he was able to talk to his followers, in particular Rudolf Heß. As they spoke about Hitler's life and his future prospects, he also put this secondarily constructed authenticity down on paper. In order to further his political aims, Hitler chose to overwrite, once and for all, that older, and in a sense more original, personal authenticity that had clung to him in his younger years as a would-be architect with artistic ambitions.⁴⁸ This insight makes the circumstances under which he launched his political career in Munich in 1919 all the more interesting.

In Search of Political Authenticity

Interestingly, *Mein Kampf* hardly contains any biographical information relating to World War I and the critical period between Hitler's return to Munich on November 21, 1918 and the start of his political activity barely a year later. As far as World War I is concerned, it has been established that Hitler's self-stylization, as undertaken particularly in *Mein Kampf*, is an ex post facto construct. In order to acquire authenticity for political and propaganda reasons, he portrayed himself here as an ardent patriot and nationalist, who survived the war as an active combatant at the front, where he – in the hail of fire – finally for-

⁴⁶ See Adolf Hitler to Adolf Gemlich, September 16, 1919, in: Hitler. Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924, doc. 61, pp. 88–90. On this, see Othmar Plöckinger, *Unter Soldaten und Agitatoren. Hitlers prägende Jahre im deutschen Militär 1918–1920*, Paderborn 2013, pp. 331–38; on Mayr, see pp. 400–01.

⁴⁷ Memorandum on the Hitler Movement in Bavaria, cited in: Plöckinger, *Frühe biografische Texte*, p. 97.

⁴⁸ On the origins and genesis of “*Mein Kampf*,” see Hitler, *Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition*, vol. 1, pp. 13–20; see also Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches*.

mulated the outlines of an ideology for which he had already laid the foundations.⁴⁹ The truth is, however, that there was almost nothing authentic about any of this. In fact, Hitler's contact with the enemy was limited to just two episodes, one in October 1914 in Flanders and the other in October 1916 on the Somme. Moreover, far from admiring him as a brave daredevil, his comrades in the List Regiment looked upon him with some disparagement as an *Etappenschwein*, as someone who was safely tucked away behind the lines during the war. The available sources likewise say nothing about any kind of special political mission. In short, therefore, the older view that the later Hitler as a "leader" and demagogue was effectively "created" by World War I needs to be revised in light of the fact that he seems to have adopted an opportunistic, wait-and-see approach, which minimized exposure to risks and maximized his chances of survival.⁵⁰

After his return to Munich, Hitler continued to pursue an opportunistic path, although he sought to hide this fact in *Mein Kampf*. One of the few specific pieces of information that Hitler gives us here, namely that he was transferred to Traunstein and did not return to Munich until March 1919, is demonstrably false. In fact, his unit was back in Munich by January 1919.⁵¹ Hitler evidently invented this absence from Munich in order to dispel any possible political affinity with Kurt Eisner's Bavarian Republic. In fact, he was actually not nearly as hostile to Munich's revolutionary government as he claims in *Mein Kampf*. Film footage of the funeral procession for the murdered Kurt Eisner on February 26, 1919 possibly shows Hitler among the mourners.⁵² On April 3, 1919, Hitler was appointed as representative for his demobilization company, and on April 14 he was elected to the Battalion Council as a deputy company representative.⁵³ There is no mention of these – fully documented – events in *Mein Kampf*. This does not necessarily mean that Hitler had now become a "functionary in the machinery of Communist world

⁴⁹ See Pyta, Hitler, pp. 223–26.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of this whole topic, see Weber, Hitler's First War.

⁵¹ See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, p. 560, footnote 4; Kershaw, Hitler, vol. 1, pp. 116–17; see also the recent study by Weber, *Becoming Hitler*, p. 25.

⁵² Guido Knopp/Maurice Philip Rémy, Hitler. Eine Bilanz, DVD 1995. See Weber, Hitler's First War, p. 251; Ullrich, Hitler, vol. 1, pp. 79–80. For a more skeptical account, see Plöckinger, *Soldaten und Agitatoren*, p. 43. Whether the person in question really is Hitler cannot be established beyond doubt. It is not entirely improbable, however, given that the executive committee of the Bavarian Soldiers' Council agreed on February 25, 1919, that the demobilization unit to which Hitler belonged should detail 25 men to attend the funeral parade, see Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Weg*, p. 205.

⁵³ See *ibid.*, pp. 198–99, 210 (Joachimsthaler dates Hitler's election to mid-February); Plöckinger, *Soldaten und Agitatoren*, pp. 42–46.

revolution.”⁵⁴ Likewise, it does not necessarily indicate that Hitler harbored any particular political sympathies for Social Democracy, as some of his enemies at the time implied.⁵⁵ But then again, Hitler cannot have been the fanatical enemy of the “November criminals” that he later made himself out to be. He behaved in a consistently opportunistic way and adopted a wait-and-see approach as a part of a calculated political strategy.⁵⁶ The fact that he had no fully formed “world view,” and therefore lacked political-ideological authenticity, probably made it easier for him to use these kinds of tactics. Quite contrary to the account he gives in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler was not interested in being a “politician” during the first half of 1919; rather, he was worried about his future on a more mundane level. With no family, no job training, deprived of his modest living as a watercolor artist by the war, and no longer in the first flush of youth, Hitler faced the prospect of slipping back into the old pattern of failure and poverty that he had come to know and hate in Vienna. According to a description ascribed to Captain Karl Mayr, Hitler’s immediate superior in June 1919:

At this time Hitler was ready to throw in his lot with anyone who would show him kindness. [...] He would have worked for a Jewish or French employer as for an Aryan. When I first met him he was like a tired stray dog looking for a master. However fancifully writers describe him now, at that time he was totally unconcerned about the German people and their destinies.⁵⁷

Mayr later became his political enemy,⁵⁸ so his characterization may be exaggerated and the value of his text as a source may be disputed, but this account is probably nonetheless much closer to the truth than Hitler’s stylized self-portrait in *Mein Kampf*. There are, however, traces of Hitler’s worries about his future existence that plagued him in March/April 1919 in the autobiography: “My mind was

54 Ralf Georg Reuth, *Hitlers Judenhass. Klischee und Wirklichkeit*, Munich 2009, p. 94.

55 See Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Weg*, pp. 199–202. Joachimsthaler himself maintains that Hitler probably had sympathies for the majority Social Democrats at this time. See *ibid.*, p. 203; Konrad Heiden, *Hitler. A Biography*, London 1936, pp. 56–57.

56 The idea of “wait-and-see” is also discussed in: Ludolf Herbst, *Hitlers Charisma. Die Erfindung eines deutschen Messias*, Frankfurt a. M. 2011, p. 96. For a discussion of this topic, see also the recent study by Weber, *Becoming Hitler*.

57 Anonymous, *I was Hitler’s Boss. By a Former Officer of the Reichswehr*, in: *Current History* 1 (1941), pp. 193–99, here p. 193.

58 On the difficulties of identifying reliable sources, see Plöckinger, *Soldaten und Agitatoren*, p. 102, footnote 11. On Mayr, see Benjamin Ziemann, *Hitler’s Turncoat Tutor*, in: *History Today* (2013), pp. 42–49; *idem*, *Wanderer zwischen den Welten. Der Militärkritiker und Gegner des entschiedenen Pazifismus Major a. D. Karl Mayr (1883–1945)*, in: Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Pazifistische Offiziere in Deutschland 1871–1933*, Bremen 1999, pp. 273–85.

filled with an endless succession of plans at this time. For days on end I thought about what I could do with my life, but every time I came up against the sobering realization that I was a complete unknown who had no qualifications whatsoever for any useful activity.”⁵⁹ Hitler’s immediate aim at the time must have been to remain in the *Reichswehr* as long as possible in order to protect his livelihood.⁶⁰ As he could not tell how things would develop, he opted for opportunism, trimming his sails to the prevailing political wind. As the political lines became more clearly drawn after the violent overthrow of the second Munich Soviet Republic, Hitler could once again be found busying himself on the “right” side by May 9, 1919; he served as a member of an internal “commission of inquiry and discharge,” tasked with investigating the conduct of his regimental comrades during the two Soviet Republics.⁶¹ He made a name for himself in this context by denouncing his former colleague on the Battalion Council, Georg Dufter, whom he described as “the worst and most radical rabble-rouser in the regiment.”⁶² At any rate, he thought it worth mentioning his involvement in the commission in *Mein Kampf*.⁶³ In all likelihood, it kept him from being discharged from the *Reichswehr*. While his demobilization company was being disbanded, Hitler was allowed to remain, and he was temporarily assigned to the demobilization station of the 2nd Infantry Regiment.⁶⁴

At this point, for the first time in his life, Hitler received something akin to a systematic political “education.” Faced with a difficult and murky situation in a Munich garrison that was “totally disorganized and still riddled with Communist and Spartacist ideas,”⁶⁵ *Reichswehr* Group Command IV launched a major propaganda offensive. The commanding officer, Major General Arnold Ritter von Möhl, left its execution largely in the hands of the head of the Education and

⁵⁹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, p. [218]. This passage is placed in the context of political activity. It is more likely, however, that it reflects the mundane material cares that must have dogged Hitler at this time.

⁶⁰ The overriding importance for members of the government forces in 1919 to provide for their livelihood and basic necessities has recently been discussed in detail in: Peter Keller, “Die Wehrmacht der Deutschen Republik ist die Reichswehr.” *Die deutsche Armee 1918–1921*, Paderborn 2014, here pp. 117–24.

⁶¹ See Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Weg*, pp. 218–19; Plöckinger, *Soldaten und Agitatoren*, pp. 344–45.

⁶² Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Weg*, p. 212.

⁶³ See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, pp. [218–19].

⁶⁴ See Ullrich, *Hitler*, vol. 1, pp. 82–83; Ernst Deuerlein, *Hitlers Eintritt in die Politik und die Reichswehr*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 7 (1959), pp. 177–91.

⁶⁵ Letter from Ernst von Oven to the Ministry of the ‘Reichswehr’ in Berlin, May 1919, cited in: Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Weg*, p. 221.

Propaganda Section of Group Command IV, Captain Karl Mayr, who sympathized at that time with the radical right. He was the one who “discovered” Hitler and chose him for this task, thereby becoming one of the “midwives” who helped to launch Hitler’s career.⁶⁶

Hitler was assigned to the third in a series of “propaganda and public speaking courses” that ran from 10 to 19 July 1919 – one was offered for officers, while another was for NCOs and other ranks, and Hitler was assigned to the latter. These courses were aimed at “dependable, right-thinking men.” To be eligible, candidates had to demonstrate “maturity, keen intelligence, and dependability.”⁶⁷ Hitler had qualified for this course based on the strength of his work on the internal “commission of inquiry and discharge,” and perhaps through his denunciation of Georg Dufter. His course instructors included the historian Karl Alexander von Müller,⁶⁸ and in particular Gottfried Feder, who had developed a theory on “breaking the bondage of interest.” In Landsberg, Hitler stated that Feder’s analysis had made a profound impression on him, prompting him to make “a thorough study” of economic matters.⁶⁹ Shortly thereafter, Hitler was assigned to an “education squad,” that had been planned on a larger scale, but was limited in its effect after being called into action at the Lechfeld transit camp on August 19, 1919.

At Lechfeld, Hitler had an opportunity to study the propaganda literature of the time far more systematically than before. Much of the material was distributed by the “Bavarian Home Service for Order, Justice and Reconstruction,” and consisted of pamphlets dealing with Bolshevism and revolution, the Great War, and Germany’s defeat; they also contained antisemitic references.⁷⁰ Quite clearly, it was at this point and not earlier that Hitler came across an ideological basis that enabled him to find his feet both ideologically and – more importantly – socially. Shortly after his arrival in the Lechfeld transit camp, he began to talk to his comrades about what he had just read, and it was not long before he drew attention to himself. By the end of August 1919, the first reports of Hitler’s talent as a speaker began to emerge. To many he now appeared to be “a born public speaker, who, through his fanaticism and populist style in a meeting, compels

66 Hellmuth Auerbach, *Hitlers politische Lehrjahre und die Münchener Gesellschaft 1919–1923. Versuch einer Bilanz anhand der neueren Forschung*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25 (1977), pp. 1–45, here p. 18.

67 Plöckinger, *Soldaten und Agitatoren*, p. 107.

68 See Matthias Berg, *Karl Alexander von Müller. Historiker für den Nationalsozialismus*, Göttingen 2014, pp. 91–92.

69 Hitler, *Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition*, vol. 1, pp. [220–21], [226] (citation).

70 See Plöckinger, *Soldaten und Agitatoren*, pp. 240–48.

his audience to pay close attention and follow his argument.”⁷¹ This was the birth of the famous “education officer” Adolf Hitler, as Hitler puts it in *Mein Kampf*, although no such military rank actually existed.⁷²

The impact of Hitler’s speeches during these weeks of August and September 1919 is difficult to assess.⁷³ But it is something else that was actually crucial at this time, in the late summer of 1919, because this was when Hitler abandoned his previous ideological indifference; he finally dropped his wait-and-see approach to politics. Two factors most likely fed into this shift. First of all, it was no longer as risky to take sides because the battle lines had now been clearly drawn. Bolstered by the counter-revolutionary surge in Bavaria, the ever-opportunistic Hitler adopted an ethno-nationalist (*völkisch*) position. The second fact, however, was much more important: For the first time in his life, Hitler was now able, by adopting this position, to achieve something like “success.” In the development of his personality, the older, authentic desire to be an architect now finally faded, only to be replaced by a new form of “finding himself.” He now drew authenticity from stepping up to the rostrum, giving a rabble-rousing speech, and basking in the applause of the audience. This unexpected change of direction in Hitler’s biography has left its mark in *Mein Kampf*:

I started out with the utmost enthusiasm and love. Out of the blue, I had been given an opportunity to speak before a larger audience; and what I had always felt instinctively to be true, without actually knowing it, was now confirmed: I could “speak.” My voice had also improved so much that I could make myself heard everywhere in the room, at least in small squad rooms. No assignment could have made me happier than this: for now I was able to perform a useful service prior to my discharge in the institution that was so very dear to my heart: the army. And I could also claim some success: In the course of my lectures I led many hundreds, if not thousands, of my comrades back to their nation and fatherland. I “nationalized” the troops, and in this way I also helped to strengthen discipline in general.⁷⁴

The fact that Hitler gets the chronology of his activity as an “education officer” mixed up, intentionally or not, is irrelevant for our purposes;⁷⁵ what is important

71 Report dated August 23, 1919, cited in: *ibid.*, p. 125.

72 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, p. [226].

73 Plöckinger warns against giving too much credence to the reports of Hitler’s successes because they “were written selectively and for a specific purpose”; see Plöckinger, *Soldaten und Agitatoren*, p. 126.

74 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, p. [227].

75 On the problem of chronology between August 1919 and the spring of 1920, see Plöckinger, *Soldaten und Agitatoren*, pp. 170–78. In “*Mein Kampf*,” Hitler himself mentions a further occasion in which he discovered his talent for public speaking, namely the meeting of the DAP on October 16, 1919, see Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, p. [377].

is simply the fact that the later *Führer* acquired a new, and as it were secondary, authenticity between August 1919 and the spring of 1920, which is to say that he was “at one with himself” in a new and wholly unexpected way. For the first time in his life, Hitler experienced success; for the first time, he gained an audience; for the first time, he stood for something – simply by wearing the mantle of a radical agitator armed with nationalistic and antisemitic rhetoric.

However, this in itself did not confer genuine authenticity, in the sense of “being at one with himself.” Hitler now had to construct, and propagate this new authenticity, and the means to achieve this was the autobiographical stylization that he practised in *Mein Kampf*. This book would show the world how Hitler remained true to himself in terms of his political ideology; it would enable him to be seen as “authentic” and therefore deserving of appropriate recognition. To say the least, constructing this authenticity from the clichés of a failed biography was for the Hitler of 1924, whose future was uncertain, the only secure basis for his autobiography. This authenticity – that of the political demagogue – then reshaped the older layer of his “original,” ultimately less manipulated version of authenticity in which he sought self-realization through a career as an artist and architect. Thus, in order to appear as politically credible as possible, Hitler – while in Landsberg – transposed his political-ideological awakening or the birth of his “rock-solid” world view, including his unshakable racist antisemitism, from its constitutive phase in 1919/20 back to his time in Vienna. As a critical reading of *Mein Kampf* reveals, both layers overlap in the autobiographical sections, entwined beyond all recognition.

Other available source materials also support the hypothesis that Hitler's biography and identity were underpinned by an older, more original – namely, artistic – authenticity, and a secondary – namely, political-ideological – authenticity that he constructed at a later date. In particular, Hitler's repeated declarations that he became a “politician” reluctantly – “I would never have got into politics if someone else had been available for the job; I would have become an artist or a philosopher” – need to be taken seriously in the light of this.⁷⁶ “I want to be an architect. I became a general against my will,” he claimed on occasion.⁷⁷ The conversations that Hitler – now “*Führer* and Reich Chancellor” – had with his boyhood friend, August Kubizek, tell the same story. In 1939 and 1940, Kubizek accepted a personal invitation from Hitler to go to Bayreuth, where the two men reminisced about their times together in Linz and Vienna. If Kubizek is to be believed, Hitler was still fired up with enthusiasm for his earlier plans to

⁷⁶ Hitler. Monologe im Führerhauptquartier, January 25/26, 1942, p. 234.

⁷⁷ Ibid., October 21./22, 1941, p. 101.

redevelop the city of Linz and for his future projects as the chief architect of the Greater German Reich. “This war is robbing me of my best years,” he allegedly told his friend on July 23, 1940. “You know, Kubizek, how much I still have to do, all the things I still want to build. And I’d like to be around to see them, that’s the point. You know better than anyone how many plans I’ve been working on since I was a boy. So far, I’ve only been able to carry out a few of them. I’ve still got a huge amount to do.” This was followed by a harangue in “that curiously impassioned voice, trembling with impatience,” which Kubizek knew from their teenage years. Hitler outlined his grand schemes for the future: expressways, waterways, the modernization of the national rail network, and much more.⁷⁸

These and other testimonies to Hitler’s architectural and construction plans need be taken seriously. It opens up a different perspective on Hitler’s personality if we see his plans to redevelop Nuremberg, Berlin, Linz, and basically the entire Greater German Reich as something other than just megalomania and the exercise of dictatorial power.⁷⁹ Instead, these plans revealed that early, and wholly personal, authenticity that has been discussed above, which persisted as an older textual layer in the autobiographical sections of *Mein Kampf*. In the face of approaching death, Hitler returned to the authentic dreams of his childhood and youth – a well-known psychological phenomenon. Viewed from this angle, the bizarrely unreal atmosphere inside the *Führerbunker* of the Reich Chancellery during the last weeks of the war, when Hitler spent many hours gazing at a model he had had made of postwar Linz that had been rebuilt on a monumental scale, appears in a new light.⁸⁰

Attributed Authenticity

The thesis advanced so far can be summarized as follows: the desire of the young Hitler to become a painter and then an architect established the first layer of his personal authenticity. Hitler was only “genuine,” credible as a person, and wholly

⁷⁸ August Kubizek, Adolf Hitler. *Mein Jugendfreund. Ein authentisches Dokument mit neuen Bildern*, Graz 1995, p. 288. See also the similarities in the reminiscences cited in: Hermann Giesler, *Ein anderer Hitler. Bericht seines Architekten Hermann Giesler. Erlebnisse, Gespräche, Reflexionen*, Leoni 1978.

⁷⁹ See Jochen Thies, *Hitler’s Plans for World Domination. Nazi Architecture and Ultimate War Aims*, New York 2012.

⁸⁰ See Giesler, *Ein anderer Hitler*, pp. 478–80; see also Kershaw, *Hitler*, vol. 2, pp. 777–83 (based on the sources available to him).

“at one with himself” as a potential architect, forging plans and imagining their realization. There is no evidence to suggest that this authenticity, which had been developing since his earliest youth, had changed by 1914. Only World War I put a halt to the biographical dynamic that fed off this authenticity. The war cut off the authentic potential in Hitler's personality, as limited as it already was and just as blighted by narcissism and failure. The end of the war, and the return to Munich, therefore threatened to cast the 30-year-old back into the state of hopelessness and insignificance that he had come to know and fear in Vienna. As a result, Hitler's primary objective in 1919 was to stay on as long as possible in the Bavarian army because he did not have any other job opportunities on the horizon. Lacking commitment to any political ideology, he adopted an opportunistic or at least a wait-and-see approach in the context of the revolution and counterrevolution. He only changed his stance after the definitive defeat of the Munich Soviet Republic and in the wake of the demagogic success that he increasingly enjoyed when he was posted to the Lechfeld camp in August 1919. This success formed the basis of a newer layer of personal authenticity, which Hitler then went on to construct in detail, albeit unsystematically, in *Mein Kampf*.

If the basic premise of this argument holds true, then it also has certain implications for our historical understanding of National Socialism and the Nazi regime in general. The concept of personal authenticity, as developed out of middle-class notions of individualism, essentially only allows for a single personality to be genuinely “at one with itself”: the construction of a secondary authenticity is not actually possible. In other words: a secondary authenticity of the kind constructed by Hitler for himself and those around him, which was very soon to form the basis of the “Hitler legend,”⁸¹ is intrinsically “artificial.” The personal (and political) credibility that it brings is not rooted within a mature personality at one with itself; rather, this new identity has to be constantly re-affirmed and performatively validated. In practice, this meant that Hitler's demagoguery always contained within it, from its inception in August 1919, the seeds of “artificiality” and self-destruction. The performative-theatrical dimension of his political actions and words overlaid the intrinsic, and more original, authenticity of his personality. Or to put it another way: Hitler was only acting out a *role*. Hence the fact that he and his private court photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, began to try out the most effective poses and the most persuasive gestures in the

81 See the seminal account of these matters in: Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth. Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, reissued, Oxford/New York 2001.

early 1920s. At the same time, the Hoffmann studio did its utmost to create the most flattering photographic images of Hitler.⁸²

In truth, this role-playing was the secret of Hitler's success, his rise to power, and his political credibility. More or less from one day to the next, he found a platform, or rather a stage, that had been there long before he came on the scene. What he said on this stage initially, repeating, intensifying, and hammering home the ranting message until he probably believed it himself, was just the standard-issue *völkisch*-nationalist, anti-Bolshevik, and antisemitic propaganda that could be heard anywhere in Bavaria and the Bavarian army at the time. Hitler found it ready-made, adopted it, absorbed it, and took to the stage with it. His future now depended on his performance on this stage. As time went on, he systematically refashioned all this in his own image during his career, finding the form of aesthetic expression that not only fitted his "world view," but, more importantly, his own persona. Hitler's "artistic" interest in visual and spatial effects enabled him to decorate this stage that he had found waiting for him, which he was then able to turn into an instrument to assert his authority.⁸³ So what made Hitler into the "drummer," and then into the *Führer*, was not an idea, a firmly established, rock-solid world view; rather, he found his stage, and the role appropriate to it, more by chance than anything else. Then, having found his role, the best thing that he could do was to carry on playing it for as long as possible, holding tight to that first success and perpetuating it over and over again. Since Hitler had always been unsure of himself in the past, he was unable to cope with the real, authentic complexity of life. Consequently, he was all the more eager to adopt a role that would determine the future course of his life down to the last detail. In doing so, he submitted himself to a self-imposed and irreversible constraint on this role that required him to keep proving himself, over and over again.⁸⁴ The logic inherent in the charisma that he had thus acquired in 1919/20, which had to be constantly reaffirmed, only began to fade in 1942/43, when the imminent loss of the war became increasingly hard to deny. Significantly, it was at this time that Hitler ceased to be a physical presence on the stage. From 1943 onwards, he avoided public appearances and only agreed to give a radio address on rare occasions.⁸⁵ What ensured that he kept his grip on power to the end, however, was his personal legend. Not only was

⁸² See Rudolf Herz, Hoffmann & Hitler. Fotografie als Medium des Führer-Mythos, Munich 1994.

⁸³ This is the essentially plausible premise put forth in: Pyta, Hitler.

⁸⁴ M. Rainer Lepsius, Das Modell der charismatischen Herrschaft und seine Anwendbarkeit auf den "Führerstaat" Adolf Hitlers (1986), in: idem, Demokratie in Deutschland. Soziologisch-historische Konstellationsanalysen, Göttingen 1993, pp. 95–118, here p. 98.

⁸⁵ See Pyta, Hitler, pp. 200–03.

it immune to changing circumstances, but also it paradoxically received a final, fragile boost as a result of the failed assassination attempt on July 20, 1944.

The role assumed by Hitler from 1919/20 was that of a radical ideologue and demagogue, who reduced, and thereby “explained,” the complexity of the real world in terms of a binary ideological system of friend and foe. This allowed him to escape that complexity, and the concomitant possibility of authentic (and therefore complicated) humanity. He rejected the very suggestion that the modern political and social world was complex, decrying this idea as malicious propaganda put about by democrats. Hitler contrasted this artificial “complication” of public life – as he called it – with the “natural laws of life” and the “natural instinct” of the people.⁸⁶ Or to put it the other way round, he claimed that the solution to the complex problems of the present might ultimately lie in ruthless violence and the annihilation of the declared “enemy.” The price that Hitler paid for this role as a propagandist was the renunciation of the deeper layer of his personal authenticity in favor of a later, constructed identity. As a result, he was permanently engaged in an internal conflict. This manifested itself whenever Hitler had one of his authentic moments of longing related to his ambitions to become an architect. In his heart, he must have known that he was not really “at one with himself,” but just acting out a role.

Such an interpretation of Hitler's persona can be linked to older, functionalist interpretations of National Socialism, which do not view the brutal and inhuman radicalism of the Nazi regime as a premeditated plan, let alone Hitler's personal brainchild, but as the “fanatical adherence to a dynamic movement that had already been set in motion.” According to this perspective, Hitler was driven by his own propaganda, and this propaganda had to be taken more and more “literally” in order to remain credible – which is to say, authentic – as time went on.⁸⁷ Such an interpretation also emphasizes the undeniable theatricality of National Socialist politics, which has frequently been pointed out by historians, most recently by Pyta in the context of Hitler's biography.⁸⁸ In this scenario, Hitler

86 Hitler. *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*. Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933, vol. 2: Vom Weimarer Parteitag bis zur Reichstagswahl Juli 1926–Mai 1928, Part 2, ed. by Bärbel Dusik, Munich et al. 1992, doc. 203, pp. 571–72.

87 See Martin Broszat, *Social Motivation and Charismatic Leadership in National Socialism*, in this yearbook, pp. 211–30, here pp. 221–23.

88 See Pyta, *Hitler*. See also Peter Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches. Gewalt und Faszination des deutschen Faschismus*, Hamburg 2006; Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism. An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, New York 1984; Alexander Schug/Frank Petrasch, *Hitlers Bühnen. Eine visuelle Geschichte der Selbstinszenierung von Adolf Hitler*, Berlin 2012; this book puts (too) much emphasis on Hitler as an “advertising product.” See also the important case studies

himself became the paradigmatic actor-politician as well as the perpetrator on a stage where the appointed drama was played out without pity or mercy. The implications of this for German history in the first half of the 20th century are significant.

In particular, this approach reveals the dark shadows cast by Germany's political culture and its particularities. The stage that Hitler took to had existed long before him and without him. The excessively theatrical – and thus “artificial,” which is to say, inauthentic – streak in German politics, masterfully portrayed by, for instance, Heinrich Mann,⁸⁹ ultimately had its roots in the German Empire. This “great power with no concept of the state” (Plessner) lacked any overarching, universal, and civilizing “mission statement,” which in turn generated an excessive need for political performance. Along these lines, much of what can be called the theatrical and stage-managed element of political culture in the Empire had been focused on the monarchies until 1914 – together with all their sundry absurdities and comedies of errors.⁹⁰ But then the November Revolution deprived the predominantly bourgeois-aristocratic, “national” public of its stage, so to speak. In terms of performative-theatrical, visually communicable political needs, a vacuum was created, which all sorts of amateur political actors initially rushed to fill, including the young Adolf Hitler. By 1925, the “national” public of the Weimar Republic had created a new political stage, where “national” politics were now enacted in increasingly elaborate ways. The principal role was played by Reich President Hindenburg, the legendary victor of Tannenberg. Hindenburg was fully aware of his own performative impact on this stage, and he played a very personal part in honing the charisma that was bestowed him within this theater.⁹¹ When the National Socialists seized power, the idea was that Hindenburg should transfer his charisma, as it were, to Hitler, thus enhancing the credit of

by Siegfried Zelnhefer, *Die Reichsparteitage der NSDAP. Geschichte, Struktur und Bedeutung der größten Propagandafeste im nationalsozialistischen Feierjahr, Nuremberg 1991*, and Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann, *Inszenierte “Volksgemeinschaft.” Das Beispiel der Reichserntedankfeste am Bückeberg 1933–1937*, in: Niedersächsisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege (ed.), *Die Reichserntedankfeste auf dem Bückeberg bei Hameln. Diskussion über eine zentrale Stätte nationalsozialistischer Selbstinszenierung*, Hameln 2010, pp. 10–19.

⁸⁹ See Andreas Wirsching, *Kronzeuge des deutschen “Sonderwegs”? Heinrich Manns Roman “Der Untertan” (1914)*, in: Johannes Hürter/Jürgen Zarusky (eds.), *Epos Zeitgeschichte. Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts in zeithistorischer Sicht*, Munich 2010, pp. 9–25.

⁹⁰ See Lothar Machtan, *Die Abdankung. Wie Deutschlands gekrönte Häupter aus der Geschichte fielen*, Berlin 2008, here pp. 23–32, 52, 264–67 and passim; John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II. Into the Abyss of War and Exile 1900–1941*, Cambridge 2014, pp. 956–60. In this context, see also the 1999 film “*Majestät brauchen Sonne*” by Peter Schamoni, and Gustav Seibt, *Majestät brauchen Sonne*, in: Hilmar Hoffmann (ed.), *Peter Schamoni. Filmstücke*, Film Pieces, Stuttgart 2003, pp. 62–65.

⁹¹ See Wolfram Pyta, *Hindenburg. Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler*, Munich 2007.

the brutal new regime in terms of its performatively communicated legitimacy.⁹² The “Day of Potsdam,” a high point in National Socialist theatricality, sealed this alliance with a public spectacle.⁹³ Moreover, in the years that followed, the much-touted “theatocracy” visible at every level was a key feature of the Nazi regime.⁹⁴

But it was not only the stage that had existed before and without Hitler; the audience, too, had been in place for a long time beforehand. It may not have known exactly which play was going to be performed, but the material that Hitler drew on for his script already existed in one form or another. This is not the place to go into detail about all the ethnic, racist, antisemitic, eugenic, Social Darwinist, anti-Social Democratic, and anti-Communist clichés and pernicious ideological outgrowths that had already played an increasing role in the political culture of the Empire. But, it does need to be noted that many of these ideas became increasingly rampant as the end of World War I approached, and they were poised and ready to take to the stage alongside Hitler.⁹⁵ They formed an ideological pool at the end of the war and particularly in the wake of the November revolution that could be tapped into by anyone who stood outside the political establishment, and who, within the political economy of the day, was betting on radicalism to succeed. Moreover, Munich and Bavaria – a “bastion of order” – were the textbook places for this to happen; after the trauma and violent overthrow of the Munich Soviet Republic, they became the preferred refuge of right-wing extremist opponents of the Republic and home to the reservoir of all those ideological elements that could be used to concoct suitable hate figures and bogeymen.⁹⁶ It

92 See *idem*, *Geteiltes Charisma. Hindenburg, Hitler und die deutsche Gesellschaft im Jahre 1933*, in: Andreas Wirsching (ed.), *Das Jahr 1933. Die nationalsozialistische Machteroberung und die deutsche Gesellschaft*, Göttingen 2009, pp. 47–69.

93 On the Day of Potsdam, see: Christoph Kopke/Werner Treß (eds.), *Der Tag von Potsdam. Der 21. März 1933 und die Errichtung der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur*, Berlin et al. 2013.

94 See Jürgen Matthäus/Frank Bajohr (eds.), *The Political Diary of Alfred Rosenberg and the Onset of the Holocaust*, Lanham 2015, pp. 315–16 (entry for July 29, 1943). The concept, which goes back to Plato's critique of the decline of Athenian democracy, is directed here with polemical intent against Rosenberg's arch-enemy, Joseph Goebbels, “playing the role of a minister” (p. 316).

95 For a representative example of the most recent literature, see the excellent study by Peter Walkenhorst, *Nation – Volk – Rasse. Radikaler Nationalismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1890–1914*, Göttingen 2007. On Hitler's sources, see also the new study by Roman Töppel, “Volk und Rasse.” In search of Hitler's sources, in this yearbook, pp. 71–110.

96 For a recent perspective on this, see Winfried Nerdinger (ed.), *Munich and National Socialism. Catalogue of the Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism*, Munich 2015; see in particular the essays by Hans Günther Hockerts, *Why Munich? How the Bavarian Metropolis Became the “Capital of the Movement”* (pp. 387–96), and Peter Longerich, *Hitler, Munich, and the Early History of the Nazi Party* (pp. 397–406).

is indeed no coincidence that Hitler found his first stage in Bavaria's capital. As he rose to national prominence after 1929, other elements were incorporated into the script that had also been floating around before Hitler arrived on the stage. In his speeches at this time, which started to reach audiences across Germany, the radically antisemitic propaganda element receded into the background.⁹⁷ Hitler increasingly styled himself as a man with a very specific history: he was the one who had identified the root cause of the country's misfortune a long time ago, and who would openly brand those responsible as internal enemies with undying hatred; he was the savior, the political messiah, who would free the Germans from the clutches of their enemies and thereby redeem them for a better destiny to come.⁹⁸

As the Weimar Republic came to an end, Hitler was able to publicly certify the political authenticity that he had constructed and ascribed to himself in *Mein Kampf* by acting out his part on an epic scale. This of course raises the key question of how far, and for what reasons, others then ascribed authenticity to Hitler's role-playing. Since he had overwritten his more original, personal authenticity – that of the architect – Hitler needed a new form of verifiable credibility that could be acted out on stage. Undoubtedly, he was only able to acquire this credibility because of the very specific nature of the time and of the society in which he found himself. As it turned out, the stylized authenticity that Hitler had established in *Mein Kampf* was exactly what the public in the late Weimar Republic wanted – and it was welcomed with enthusiasm.

In the stylized version of his life given in *Mein Kampf* and in countless speeches, Hitler embodied a kind of anonymity that could scarcely have been more complete. Hitler always did his best to maintain this anonymity. In a democratic mass society, in which the institutions of traditional, historically evolved

⁹⁷ See Oded Heilbrunner, *Wohin verschwand der nationalsozialistische Antisemitismus? Zum Charakter des Antisemitismus der NSDAP vor 1933 und seinem Bild in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, in: *Menora* 6 (1995), pp. 15–44; idem, *The Role of Nazi Antisemitism in the Nazi Party's Activity and Propaganda. A Regional Historiographical Study*, in: *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 35 (1990), pp. 397–439. However, when it comes to antisemitism we have to assume that there was a "division of labor" between Hitler himself and representatives of the Party organization, who – especially in Berlin – continued the campaign of antisemitic propaganda and "direct" antisemitic actions throughout the period of the National Socialist rise to power. See, for example, Andreas Wirsching, *Vom Weltkrieg zum Bürgerkrieg? Politischer Extremismus in Deutschland und Frankreich 1918–1933/39. Paris und Berlin im Vergleich*, Munich 1999, p. 466.

⁹⁸ On the messianic expectations in the Weimar Republic, see Klaus Schreiner, "Wann kommt der Retter Deutschlands?" Formen und Funktionen von politischem Messianismus in der Weimarer Republik, in: *Saeculum* 49 (1998), pp. 107–60.

legitimacy – such as the monarchy, aristocracy, the church and the military – had either disappeared, were discredited, or at least badly damaged, anonymity could be converted all the more easily into political capital. In this social landscape, Hitler's anonymity, far from damaging him, promised to confer upon him authenticity and credibility as the “unknown soldier,” which was how he preferred to style himself.⁹⁹ One thing is for sure, however: a society in which a man as anonymous as Hitler is suddenly able to play the part of savior with a substantial measure of approval is most definitely not a pre-eminently traditionalist society in which origin and status are of utmost importance. In Imperial Germany, a society that fetishized the figure of the Prussian reserve officer, Hitler could never have risen to prominence. Indeed, the November Revolution that Hitler hated so fanatically was a necessary prerequisite for his rise to power: It was followed by mass political mobilization as well as the rapid advance of democratization and equalization, which Hitler needed in order to convert social anonymity into political capital.

The inadequacy of Hitler's aims, his tendency to escapism, and his desire to bypass history or shape it to conform to his own “world view,” resonated within the prevailing culture in Weimar Germany, and this served to reinforce Hitler's secondary, constructed authenticity. Wilhelmine Germany was seeking its “place in the sun” – and in doing so, it forgot to keep its feet on the ground. It wanted to become a global political player, but it did not have much patience for taking small political steps. Wilhelmine society tended to overestimate its own capabilities and underestimate realities; this made the collision between the possible and the impossible all the more painful, with the downfall of 1918 as its outcome. Moreover, the vast majority of Germans saw their defeat and its consequences as a cruel and undeserved humiliation that bore no relation to their own conduct; rational and open discussions of the role of Germany and its policy prior to 1914 and during the Great War were few and far between in the Weimar Republic. Analysis gave way to attributing blame.

In a sense, Hitler's biography mirrored the bankruptcy of German society. From the start of his time in Vienna, he fixed his gaze on a pipe dream located in some indeterminate future while in the present lurching from one failure to the next. There is no doubt that his own personal crash was profoundly humiliating to him;

⁹⁹ Hitler. *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen. Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, vol. 5: *Von der Reichspräsidentenwahl bis zur Machtergreifung April 1932–Januar 1933*, Part 1, ed. by Klaus A. Lankheit, Munich 1996, doc. 28, p. 45; see Benjamin Ziemann, *Die deutsche Nation und ihr zentraler Erinnerungsort. Das “Nationaldenkmal für die Gefallenen im Weltkrieg” und die Idee des “Unbekannten Soldaten” 1914–1935*, in: Helmut Berding/Klaus Heller/Winfried Speitkamp (eds.), *Krieg und Erinnerung. Fallstudien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2000, pp. 67–91, here p. 85.

this is expressed very clearly even in the stylized self-portrait of *Mein Kampf*.¹⁰⁰ Hitler did not blame himself for his failure, of course, but its consequences found expression in wounded pride, which in turn later found expression in arrogant defiance directed against an apparently hostile world. In truth, Hitler processed his experience of social decline and fall as many others would probably do: he stylized it for his own consumption and the consumption of others, wrapping it in a cocoon of self-righteousness and self-pity. In early 1914, for example, when he received a summons from the municipal authorities in Linz and asked for an extension for financial reasons, he supported his request with a look back at his time in Vienna. This had been, he claimed, “an endlessly bitter time”:

I was a young, inexperienced man without financial assistance, and too proud to accept such a thing from any stranger, let alone ask for it. Without support of any kind, thrown back on my own resources, the few shillings, and sometimes only pennies, that I earned for my work were barely enough to buy me a bed for the night. For two years, worry and want were my only friends, gnawing hunger my only companion. I never knew the beautiful name of Youth.¹⁰¹

Four of the six claims in this account are demonstrably false. First, Hitler had received financial assistance from his family and through his orphan’s allowance. Secondly, he had certainly not been too proud to accept such assistance. Thirdly, he had actually asked for such help from his Aunt Klara. And fourthly, Hitler’s youth was quite unburdened by material cares. He enjoyed both leisure time and opportunities: the former he lived out to the full while failing to take advantage of the latter.¹⁰²

What would have remained a purely private matter in other times took on a political significance in the Weimar Republic, as Thomas Mann acutely observed:

100 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, pp. [18–19].

101 Adolf Hitler to the municipal authorities of the city of Linz, January 21, 1914, in: Hitler. Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924, doc. 20, here p. 55.

102 It is interesting to note that what Hitler said to the Linz authorities in 1914, writing on a purely personal matter, was repeated ten years later in “*Mein Kampf*”: Vienna, he claimed, had been “the saddest time of my life,” and had “brought me five years of misery and hardship.” “Five years in which I had to earn a crust, first as a laborer, and then as a struggling painter; and a pitiful crust it was, not even enough to keep normal hunger at bay. Hunger was my faithful companion back then, the only one who hardly ever abandoned me.” Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, vol. 1, p. [19]. In fact, thanks to his orphan’s allowance, his mother’s estate, and interest payments from his father’s deferred inheritance, Hitler had sufficient means to eke out an existence for a long time without having to get a regular job. See Kershaw, Hitler, vol. 1, p. 25.

The man is a disaster, but that is no reason not to find him interesting as a character and a life story. To see how circumstances have ordained that the unfathomable resentment, the festering vindictiveness of this feckless, outrageous ten-time failure, this bone-idle, work-shy shelter dweller and neighborhood artist reject, this total loser, coalesce with the (far less justified) inferiority complex of a beaten nation, which doesn't know what to do with its defeat, and is obsessed with the restoration of its "honor."¹⁰³

So the appropriation of ideological elements drawn from radical *völkisch*, racially antisemitic, and Social Darwinist thinking, which Hitler used to write the script for his role, was combined with his performance of anonymity, collapse, and humiliation. The claim that he had lived through these experiences and endured this pain on behalf of the German people, as it were, but also the promise he made to lead them forward into better times – these were integral to Hitler's secondarily-acquired political and moral authenticity. The fact that this sort of authenticity allowed him to play the – ultimately – “artificial” role of the *Führer* and political messiah is one of the inescapable peculiarities of German history.

The Nazi Regime as a Stage for Perpetrators

There was something else, however, that had the most fateful consequences for German and European history. On the stage that Hitler found waiting for him, which he stepped up to and refashioned in his own image, a very different kind of morality prevailed. Right from the beginning in 1919/20, different moral standards applied on this stage that deviated from those that applied in real life, the “life authentic.” What took place on Hitler's stage was the revaluation of all values. The complexity of the real world was transformed here – purely for propaganda reasons at first – into a Manichean dualism of good and evil, friends and foes, victims and culprits. On the basis of such bogeyman stereotypes, this stage could be used, more or less with impunity, to preach hate, threaten violence, and call for extermination. The result was a new, National Socialist morality that rejected the universal principles of Christian-Enlightenment civilization in favor of a radical and malign partiality.¹⁰⁴ Many young SA men were already following the new moral code during the NSDAP's rise to power between 1930 and 1933, when violence was escalating. The roles that had already been rehearsed in election campaigns and the civil-war-like

¹⁰³ Mann, *Bruder Hitler*, p. 846.

¹⁰⁴ On this, see the illuminating accounts by: Harald Welzer, *Täter. Wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden*, Frankfurt a. M. 2011; Raphael Gross, *Anständig geblieben. Nationalsozialistische Moral*, Frankfurt a. M. 2010.

battles against the Republic and Communism as well as the attendant cult of violence driven by extreme nationalism shaped the mentalities of many later Nazi perpetrators.¹⁰⁵ The way in which this new morality swiftly engulfed Germany after January 30, 1933, is one of the most chilling episodes in German history.¹⁰⁶ Within a very short space of time, conduct that a centuries-old Christian-Enlightenment tradition of morality and conscience, justice and law, had condemned as self-evidently wrong was not only permitted, but actually rewarded. As long as crimes – such as extortion, theft, assault and battery, manslaughter, and even murder – were directed against the “right” people who had been stigmatized as “enemies,” they could be seen as entirely commendable acts within the context of National Socialist morality; those who had made their marks on the National Socialist stage by bullying and persecuting those branded as political or racial “enemies” not only escaped punishment, but were also rewarded for their efforts once the Nazis had seized power. The Nazi regime brought out the worst in people, judging such acts by the standards of its own particular morality. In the “Third Reich,” it was in fact possible to be a criminal and yet still be a “decent” person.¹⁰⁷

From the outset, therefore, the Nazi regime harbored an inescapable ambivalence. The interaction between, on the one hand, the unbroken, authentic awareness of good and evil as well as right and wrong, and the imposed but inauthentic National Socialist morality on the other, created a “divided consciousness,” which spread like mildew over everyday life in the Nazi period:

The destruction, physical and moral, wrought by National Socialism is without parallel. The cost, in blood and treasure, of its crazed robbing and killing and its wicked depopulation policies is immeasurable; even more harrowing, perhaps, is the mental and emotional damage it has done through its reign of terror, the defilement and corruption, the

105 Such as the perpetrators involved in “Aktion T4” and “Aktion Reinhardt”; see Sara Berger, *Experten der Vernichtung. Das T4-Reinhardt-Netzwerk in den Lagern Belzec, Sobibor und Treblinka*, Hamburg 2013, pp. 299–300.

106 See the impressive account by Sebastian Haffner, *Geschichte eines Deutschen. Die Erinnerungen 1914–1933*, Stuttgart/Munich 2000.

107 See Gross, *Anständig geblieben*, passim, and the “locus classicus,” Heinrich Himmlers (first) Posen speech of October 4, 1943. The text of Himmler’s speech can be found in: *Der Prozeß gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof. Nürnberg, 14. November 1945–1. Oktober 1946*, vol. 29, Nuremberg 1948, pp. 110–73, here p. 145. See also Bernhard Gotto, *Die Erfindung eines “anständigen Nationalsozialismus.” Vergangenheitspolitik der schwäbischen Verwaltungseliten in der Nachkriegszeit*, in: Peter Fassl (ed.), *Das Kriegsende in Schwaben*, Augsburg 2006, pp. 263–83.

human degradation and disintegration that result from the constant pressure to lie and live a double life, the coercion of conscience.¹⁰⁸

Such was the context in which “ordinary” people became perpetrators.¹⁰⁹ Again, the problem of personal authenticity – of a person being truly “at one with himself” – that was exemplified in paradigmatic form by Hitler himself throws new light on the mechanisms of the Nazi regime. Factoring in the motif of the National Socialist stage with its particular morality makes it easier to provide a more plausible answer to the perennial question of how it was that individual criminality and concrete culpability could be amassed on such an unimaginable scale. In the end, it must have been clear to many perpetrators that they were following a barbaric moral code of partiality shaped by a sustained propaganda campaign, and that they were therefore committing offences against criminal justice; they must have been aware of their transgressions, as well as the fact that they were acting against natural moral law and the most basic principles of common humanity. They surely found it easier to do this and suppress any pangs of conscience because they believed that they had been called to the stage to perform a specific role with certain functions. As discussed earlier, such a dynamic can be seen in a paradigmatic form in Hitler himself. But what was true for Hitler applied all the more to his many active followers, who were “working towards” him: within the increasingly murderous practice of the Nazi regime, it was possible for perpetrators to establish a subjective distance between themselves and the role they were playing. This separation between the person as an individual and the role that was being played, often referred to as “role distance,” allowed the individual to distance himself from his “actual,” which is to say “authentic,” existence and way of life.¹¹⁰ To put it another way: when committing their crimes, these perpetrators were not authentic personalities, and they were not really “at one with themselves.”

108 Thomas Mann, *Deutsche Hörer!* 16.1.1945, in: idem, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, Berlin (East) 1956, p. 730. See also Hans Dieter Schäfer, *Das gespaltene Bewußtsein. Vom Dritten Reich bis zu den langen Fünfziger Jahren*, Göttingen 2009.

109 See Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York 1992. For a summary of recent research on Nazi perpetrators, see Frank Bajohr, *Täterforschung. Ertrag, Probleme und Perspektiven eines Forschungsansatzes*, in: idem/Andrea Löw (eds.), *Der Holocaust. Ergebnisse und neue Fragen der Forschung*, Frankfurt a. M. 2015, pp. 168–85.

110 On the concept of role distance, see the interesting remarks in Welzer, *Täter*, pp. 38–40, which are indebted in part to Erving Goffman.

Needless to say, none of this is meant to imply any “mitigating circumstances”; a distinction must also be drawn between different categories of perpetrators, in particular in terms of when and how they took to the stage. For Hitler himself, and for those who had created the National Socialist stage with him long before 1933, the role they played on it had become the *de facto* reality of their lives. Others, such as the representatives of the “uncompromising generation,” were similarly committed to a nationalist-ethnic idea that was as radical as it was partial long before 1933; for them, the transition from thought to action, from propaganda to deed, probably seemed to be a logical, if not authentic, next step.¹¹¹ But countless Hitler sympathizers and accomplices also became Nazi perpetrators after 1933; they surged onto the National Socialist stage with its perverted morality, either in the hope of securing tangible benefits or because they were summoned to it. In any event, by stepping onto this stage and accepting the role they had to play on it, they were effectively passing a personal point of no return; they could only turn back, if at all, at the cost of a profound and traumatic disruption of their lives. Seeing things from this perspective may help with the “difficulty of reconstructing an individual’s intentionality and inner life.”¹¹²

Acting out an ultimately “artificial,” inauthentic role was made easier by the suggestion that one was taking part in a necessary drama that would go down in history as epochal. This was especially true during World War II, which was depicted as a critical moment in world history in which the very survival of the German nation was at stake. The indisputable power of this suggestion reveals not only the effect of National Socialist propaganda, but also a German political culture deeply impregnated, long before 1933, by the clichés of an inhuman, Social Darwinist, and antisemitic ideology. The appeal to a necessary, if not “difficult,” role that the Germans, collectively and individually, had to play in world history not only appears in the first speech that Himmler gave in Posen, but also in Joseph Goebbels’ final exit. Shortly before the extended suicide that included his family, he declared in a telling speech to his closest associates that combined an awareness of his theatrical role as well as a passion for technology in the service of propaganda: “Gentlemen, a hundred years from now they will be showing a wonderful color film about the terrible days we are living through. Wouldn’t you

111 See Ulrich Herbert, *Best. Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft 1903–1989*, Bonn 1996; Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation. The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office*, Madison/London 2009.

112 Mark Roseman, *Lebensfälle. Biographische Annäherungen an NS-Täter*, in: Bajohr/Löw (eds.), *Holocaust*, pp. 186–209, here pp. 197–98.

like to be an actor in this film? Bear up, therefore, so that in a hundred years' time the audience won't jeer and whistle when you come on the screen."¹¹³

Among those who made up the inner circle of Nazi leadership, Goebbels, cynic that he was, probably had fewer illusions than anyone else about the fact that he was playing an essentially "artificial" and inauthentic role on the criminal, morally perverted, and yet epoch-making stage of the Nazi regime. Not surprisingly, then, the way in which he departed this stage was entirely consistent. Likewise, quite a few other Nazi perpetrators opted for suicide because they did not see a way to return to an authentic reality. Accordingly, the concept of authenticity may also help to explain the inherent tendency to self-destruction within the Nazi regime that became all the more apparent as the end neared. Moreover, since the return to authenticity no longer seemed possible, it was clear to all those who were actors of the National Socialist regime that the stage and the drama that was being played out on it had to be defended to the very end. This explains, at least in part, the self-destructive scenarios witnessed at the end of the war, characterized by the shockingly irrational crimes often referred to as "end-phase crimes."¹¹⁴

Most of these people did attempt to leave the stage as quickly as possible, hoping to escape recognition and reintegrate into the reality of their authentic life. Many succeeded, and their own role in the National Socialist years remained an entirely separate, self-contained, and inauthentic period in their lives; this made it virtually impossible for them to speak openly about it after 1945.¹¹⁵ Correspondingly, those whose Nazi past came under scrutiny in the courts usually denied that they had played any role as a National Socialist perpetrator.

Conclusion

To summarize the argument: Hitler's authenticity resided in his youthful desire to be an "artist" and to realize this goal, initially as a painter and then later as an architect. He lived out this dream up until 1914, leading an aimless existence at the margins of society with no discernible political or ideological direction.

¹¹³ Goebbels speaking in April 1945 about the film "Kolberg," cited in: Erwin Leiser, "Deutschland erwache!" Propaganda im Film des Dritten Reiches, Reinbek b. Hamburg 1989, p. 120.

¹¹⁴ See Sven Keller, *Volksgemeinschaft am Ende. Gesellschaft und Gewalt 1944/45*, Munich 2013.

¹¹⁵ See Harald Welzer, "Grandpa wasn't a Nazi." *National Socialism and the Holocaust in German Memory Culture*, New York 2005.

Consequently, his rise to prominence as a political agitator and propagandist after August 1919 was not the result of any deliberate political intention on his part. Rather, it can be interpreted simply as a function of the success that Hitler experienced in his life for the first time – more by chance than anything else. It was only after the collapse of his successful career as an agitator in Munich in November 1923, while he was imprisoned in Landsberg, that Hitler acquired his secondary authenticity, rooted in his role as a “politician” with an established ideology in the pages of *Mein Kampf*. In order to gain credibility, he portrayed his racist and Social Darwinist “world view” as the product of systematic studies that he claimed to have undertaken in Vienna – a claim that is refuted by nearly all other available sources.

The concept of authenticity thus allows us to make more persuasive connections between intentionalist and functionalist aspects of the Nazi regime than has hitherto been possible. It is true that the battle lines in the great controversy of the 1970s that was fought out by proponents of these two approaches have long since been blurred. That said, however, the last word has by no means been spoken on the issue of how these two elements related to each other within the reality of National Socialism. At all events, Hitler’s biography cannot be understood without reference to its decidedly functionalist and opportunistic dimensions. His “world view” was to a large extent the *function* of his first and only experience of success prior to the age of 31. At the same time, and for this very reason, his success put him under constant pressure to maintain and confirm this role for propaganda purposes. Hitler adopted this newly discovered role in such a way that his original, authentic persona was largely overwritten. He embraced not only this unexpected opportunity in his life, but also his new role as a propagandist with a consistency and rigor that were never open to debate; his genuine and overriding *intention* now became to inhabit this role fully, with every chance of success: “Something that lends itself to functional analysis and interpretation can also be a matter of belief, whether in whole or in part.”¹¹⁶ Taking this argument a step further, the interwoven propagandistic-functional and ideological-intentional poles between which the Nazi regime constantly oscillated were in fact already present within the person of Hitler.

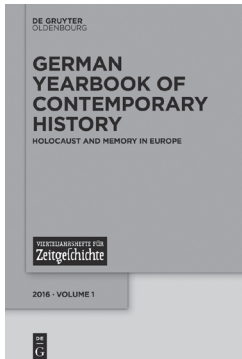
In the pursuit of his fundamentally “artificial,” ultimately instrumental, secondary, and constructed authenticity as a politician and ideologue, Hitler did not engage with the world as a mature, stable, and therefore authentic personality; instead, he was acting out a role on a political stage. The fact that he enjoyed renewed success with this on a national scale after his release from prison, and

116 Herbst, *Hitlers Charisma*, p. 193.

even more so after 1929, determined certain key features of the National Socialist regime in advance. This is true in particular for the theatricality of Nazi politics. Although this latter point has already been made often enough, not enough attention has been paid to the way this theatrical, and therefore inauthentic, aspect of National Socialism was also internalized by individual actors. The critical moment at which these actors could become perpetrators under the Nazi regime was when they chose to ignore their authentic pangs of conscience about what was right and what was wrong in favor of the role that they played within the framework of the perverted moral partiality of National Socialism. This was made easier by recourse to the well-known psychological phenomenon referred to as “role distance.” The *Führer* and his followers thus came together on the stage of National Socialism, where a real-life drama comprised of violence, annihilation, and self-destruction was played out to the bitter end.

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Helmut Walser Smith

When Was Adolf Hitler?

Deconstructing Hitler's Narratives of Autobiographical Authenticity

"Hitler's dictatorship has the quality of a paradigm for the twentieth century."¹ This is the first sentence of the revised edition of Ian Kershaw's magisterial biography of the Nazi dictator. The paradigm has little to do with chronological markers. Instead, it signifies the destructive maw of extreme ideology, the brutality of industrial warfare, the inhumanity of the mass killing of civilians, and the disheartening descent of modern civilization into genocide.

Perhaps because of Hitler's centrality to the "twentieth century," it does not occur to historians to ask, in a serious way: When was Adolf Hitler? Andreas Wirsching, Director of the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, has done us a great service by posing this question. By focusing especially on the genre as well as the autobiographical revelations of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, he forces us to look more closely at how Hitler constructed a story about himself. Then, after deconstructing this story, Wirsching reopens the critical question of the temporal context in which Hitler's *Weltanschauung* first crystalized. Unlike Ian Kershaw, who, however cautiously, paints the prewar years and the war years as important elements contributing to the coalescence of Hitler's worldview, Wirsching follows new work on Hitler's early years and points to how a series of *ex post facto* constructions, most of them by Hitler himself, have skewed our understanding of Hitler's development. *Mein Kampf*, Wirsching further contends, loosely conforms to the outlines of a *Bildungsroman*, an essentially nineteenth-century genre that chronicled the development of the protagonist's mind from childhood through a series of experiences, sometimes culminating in a spiritual crisis, from which the protagonist emerged as a mature figure with a set identity and focused on his or her role in the world. As a concept of authenticity was always inherent to a *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist always becomes who he is meant to be. *Mein Kampf*, Wirsching points out, is thus a constructed tale about how Hitler became his authentic self, and, in line with the genre, this necessarily included thoughts and experiences from his early years.

A superficial analysis would have stopped with the insight about genre, yet Wirsching presses to a deeper level by teasing out the authentic and less authen-

1 Ian Kershaw, Hitler. A Biography, New York 2008, p. xxxii.

tic moments of the narrative. In particular, he shows that the paragraphs that referred to Hitler as a failed artist and then as an architect in training count among the most pointed and convincing passages of the work. Conversely, he shows that Hitler's suggestions in *Mein Kampf* that he had arrived at a clear sense of Germany's mission during World War I are essentially fictitious, just as it is not true that Hitler was a fearless corporal, but rather, as one of his regimental comrades perhaps uncharitably put it, an *Etappenschwein* and one, moreover, who was exceedingly covetous of military distinctions and constantly badgered his superiors to get them.² Pushing the argument still further, Wirsching contends that the mendaciously woven strands of *Mein Kampf* are revealing of the manuscript as a whole and that Hitler did not come to the specifics of his nationalistic antisemitic worldview until, at the latest, sometime in the fall of 1919.

Anyone who has read through Hitler's *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen, 1905–1924*, edited by Eberhard Jäckel and Axel Kuhn, will grasp the evidentiary thrust of this argument.³ The *Aufzeichnungen* (Notes and Letters) are fundamentally sparse for the period before the fall of 1919, with the brief exception of a series of letters to Joseph Popp, from whom Hitler rented a room in Munich, in the winter of 1914/1915. If one wrote a biographical sketch based solely on Hitler's surviving papers from this first period, it would be entirely defensible to describe Hitler's nationalism as banal, not particularly aggressive, and as having little or no antisemitic content. The poems Hitler wrote during the war, one might claim, are revealing in this sense – they extol German virtue but do not vilify the enemy, and there is nothing about Jewish perfidy on the home front. If one then opened a serious scholarly biography – let us take Ian Kershaw's work – a very different story would unfold, and it would conform more closely, if with well-placed caveats, to the one told in *Mein Kampf*. It is a story of the importance of the prewar period, and of the war, in the gradual formation of Hitler's aggressive nationalism and antisemitism.

A close reader of Kershaw's biography would perhaps note a plethora of cautious formulations about Hitler and antisemitism during the Vienna period, such as: "in truth, we do not know for certain why, nor even when, Hitler turned into a manic and obsessive antisemite," or "there is, therefore, no reliable contemporary confirmation of Hitler's paranoid antisemitism during the Vienna period," or "probably no single encounter produced his loathing for Jews," or, summing up,

² The story in Thomas Weber, *Hitler's First War. Adolf Hitler, the Men of the List Regiment, and the First World War*, Oxford 2010, quote on p. 345.

³ See Hitler. *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, ed. by Eberhard Jäckel/Axel Kuhn, Stuttgart 1980.

that: “It seems more likely that Hitler, as he later claimed, indeed came to hate Jews during his time in Vienna. But, probably, at this time it was still little more than a rationalization of his personal circumstances rather than a thought-out ‘world-view.’”⁴ The cautionary formulations also accompany Kershaw’s depiction of Hitler’s ideology during and immediately after World War I. Based largely on the political rant that forms an odd, seemingly arbitrary conclusion to Hitler’s often reprinted letter to Ernst Hepp dated February 5, 1915, Kershaw suggests that Hitler saw the war as “worthwhile for the making of a better, racially cleansed, Germany,” and that “Hitler evidently carried such deep-seated sentiments throughout the war,” even if, as Kershaw also concedes, “he appears to have spoken little to his comrades on political matters.”⁵ Kershaw then avers that “it indeed does seem very likely [...] that Hitler’s political prejudices sharpened in the latter part of the war, during and after his first period of leave in Germany in 1916.”⁶ The evidence for the claim mainly comes from a document written in 1924, which Kershaw, uncharacteristically disingenuously, embraces as a trustworthy source. “There is no reason to presume,” Kershaw maintains, “that this account of his anti-Jewish feelings [...] was a backwards projection.”⁷

Figuring out when Hitler’s positions congealed into a coherent, aggressive, political worldview gets to the heart of an interpretive issue, namely the timing of the supposed trauma that phase-shifted German nationalism from an ordinary and banal sentiment to a racist, antisemitic, and hyper-aggressive ideology. Following Hitler’s *Aufzeichnungen* only, one could conclude that, as it pertained to Hitler, this phase shift did not occur until he became a speaker in the Bavarian Army’s re-education program in August 1919. Wirsching pushes the position a bit further by arguing that the phase shift did not even occur then, but rather only once Hitler grew into the role of a spellbinding speaker. The reader of Hitler’s *Aufzeichnungen* will pause here – because those documents reveal that, beginning on August 25, Hitler’s first recorded speech was antisemitic, and, in the often-cited letter to Adolph Gemlich, dated September 16, 1919, Hitler details the contents of an antisemitism whose “ultimate objective” was “the irrevocable removal of the Jews in general.”⁸ Hitler was recounting “standard antisemitic themes,” Wirsching claims, and he was writing in the service of his mentor and employer,

4 Ian Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936*: Hubris, New York 1998, pp. 60, 64, 66, 67.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

8 Adolf Hitler to Adolf Gemlich, September 16, 1919, in: *Hitler. Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, doc. 61, pp. 88–90. Translation by the author.

Karl Mayr – the letter to Gemlich, a fellow soldier, therefore does not need to be read unconditionally “as an authentic expression of his [Hitler’s] opinion.”⁹

But, if the letter to Gemlich cannot be seen as the “key document” in Hitler’s early biography, when did the authentic shift occur?¹⁰ Wirsching argues that it was indeed at this time, in late August and early September, that Hitler “abandoned his previous ideological indifference,” but the authenticity of Hitler’s turn was a later construction that emerged when Hitler, while in Landsberg prison, had to create a new political persona.¹¹ As Hitler was not reacting to an idea, but rather to the roar of applause and the experience of success, the antisemitism that came together in his mind in late summer 1919 bore “the seeds of ‘artificiality’ and self-destruction.”¹²

The upshot of the new research, and Wirsching’s contribution to it, is the contention that Hitler’s worldview emerged neither from the war, nor from the November Revolution, nor from the subsequent Spartacus Uprising of January 1919, nor even during the Munich Republic of Councils – but after. Hitler, according to this new approach, was a desperate man just trying to get by, with bleak job prospects as well as wavering and unclear politics. He then served in a Bavarian army unit whose task was to purge the Army of leftist elements. As an artist, Hitler was a failure – as an architect, he had promise but did not get far – as a soldier, he was a dispatch runner who only rose to the rank of corporal after four years – and in the early Weimar years, he clung desperately to his army unit because it kept him from falling into penury. The regiment’s task was first to purge and then to reeducate the army. Hitler succeeded at this, and it was the first genuine success in his life. Moreover, he was a real success in one aspect of it in particular: giving speeches. Wirsching emphasizes that it was the sheer experience of a success, any success, that drew Hitler into playing a political role. That role, Wirsching further argues, was an inauthentic secondary one that Hitler assumed for reasons of expediency. Once in this role, Hitler did not leave it until 1943, when it became clear that Hitler and Nazi Germany would lose the war, and Hitler appeared on the public stage with ever less frequency.

The real force of Wirsching’s interpretation now becomes evident. It has long been axiomatic to the intentionalist interpretation that Hitler’s ideas, however

⁹ Andreas Wirsching, *Hitler’s Authenticity. A Functionalist Interpretation*, in this yearbook, pp. 23–57, here p. 34; for the context of the letter, see Ernst Deuerlein (ed.), *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP in Augenzeugenberichten*, Düsseldorf 1968, pp. 89–95.

¹⁰ As it is seen by Volker Ullrich, *Hitler. Ascent 1889–1939*, New York 2016, p. 84.

¹¹ Wirsching, *Hitler’s Authenticity*, p. 40.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

commonplace, were deeply rooted in his psyche. Suggesting they came together because a man was desperately seeking success and applause – disturbing contemporary echoes aside – decisively bends the interpretation of Hitler in a functionalist direction. It also has consequences for how we see World War I as a caesura in modern German history, and it highlights the rupture of Weimar more forcefully.

Strange Parallels? Artists and Writers in and after War: Otto Dix and Ernst Jünger

Wirsching's argument concerning the crystalization of Hitler's political ideology in the post-revolutionary Weimar Republic conforms to what we now know about a whole series of twentieth-century figures whose ideologies we had hitherto assumed to have been transformed by the war itself. Quite a few of these figures, on the political left as well as on the right, were artists, writers, and intellectuals. Taking these examples together, we can argue that it was not so much the war itself that altered people's thinking, but the subsequent reflections on the war as they were generated in the context of the state of political liminality that marked the quintessentially postwar society we call the Weimar Republic.

Consider two examples: The first is Otto Dix. He seemed to emerge from the war as a pacifist, but closer inspection of the chronological timeline of his art actually casts doubt on this, revealing an artist who, like Hitler, only came during the early Weimar Republic to the clear artistic-political positions for which he was subsequently known. As an officer in an artillery unit, Dix fought directly at the front. His letters and diaries describe his unit's daily activities, including tactical aspects of operations, and complain of the boredom of war. Yet they hardly betray any sense that Dix was out of his element, nor do they exhibit any ethical uncertainty or much evidence of wartime soul searching.¹³ On the contrary: After extended engagements in Champagne, Flanders, and at the Eastern Front, Dix participated as a storm trooper in the final March offensive of 1918; he suffered a neck wound in early August, but was back at the front at the end of September 1918. Dix did not, moreover, have a different persona as an artist. During the war, he completed some 500 sketches, many on postcards, and 100 gouaches – all

¹³ See especially Bernd Ulrich, "Dann gehts wieder in die schöne Läuse-Schlampagne," in: Birgit Dalbajewa/Simone Fleischer/Olaf Peters (eds.), *Otto Dix – der Krieg. Das Dresdner Triptychon*, Dresden 2014, pp. 35–46.

told, a significant body of work.¹⁴ These show Dix as an observant camera, depicting clashing armies, quiet trenches, ruined farms, sleeping soldiers, and the work of the artillery soldiers, as in “Bull’s Eye I” (1917), showing the dugout of enemy soldiers blown apart. The sketches evoke the chaos and energy as well as the quiet of war. They reveal a cool, accurate eye and a specific aesthetics of violence – focused on misshapen landscapes and depicting war’s expressive, energetic, almost creative dimension. Revealing next to no introspection, and giving no hint of pacifism, his wartime images were also bereft of social-political commentary.

It was only after war and revolution that this changed.¹⁵ Among Dix’s first postwar paintings was “War Crippled,” a Dadaistic depiction of four injured soldiers arranged as if parading. Like a series of other paintings in 1920, “War Crippled” shows the bitterly ironic fate endured by delusional men who have made sacrifices for a nation that cares nothing for them. Dix records a grotesque world turned upside down – but it is the unfeeling world of Weimar, not the trenches themselves. The same can be said of “Match Box Seller” from the same year, where Dix portrays an ex-soldier seated on the ground with a dog urinating on his wooden leg stumps.

Like Hitler, Dix feigned precise wartime recall.¹⁶ After the series of “war cripple” paintings, he began to study body parts – not by recalling strewn bodies from Flanders, but by going to the local hospital, where doctors presented him with intestines, skulls, and eventually whole corpses to sketch.¹⁷ Dix was, no doubt, also interested in what other painters were doing; in particular, the work of Georg Grosz, to whom Dix was close, may have influenced his direction. He also had greater access to photographs of the war and especially of its victims.¹⁸ Yet at the time, Dix thought of himself as a “verist,” painting truth to war, not as a pacifist or social-critical commentator. He was not even beyond cultivating a

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁵ For the new research on Dix, see especially Birgit Dalbajewa/Olaf Peters, *Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Krieg*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 71–83, here p. 74.

¹⁶ For this argument, see especially Anne Marno, *Otto Dix’ Radierzyklus “Der Krieg” (1924). Authentizität als Konstrukt*, Bonn 2015.

¹⁷ Dalbajewa/Peters, in: Dalbajewa/Fleischer/Peters (eds.), *Otto Dix*, p. 79.

¹⁸ This was a new development: black and white photos of maimed soldiers did not come onto the market “en masse” until 1924 with the publication of Ernst Friedrich’s “War Against War.” But Dix was already working with medical photographs – he requested them in a surviving letter from December 1923 to the photographer Hugo Erfurth. On the connection, see Marno, *Otto Dix*, pp. 99–100.

certain German national sensibility, and he even distanced his style of painting from French models.¹⁹

It is not until Dix's *Atlas*, entitled "The War" and published in 1924, that we see the depictions that unambiguously portray horror. It consists of five folders of aquatint sketches, ten sketches to a folder, and the images are often located – at Langemarck and the Somme, for example – and dated by month and year so as to mimic eye-witness reportage. In fragmentary views that seize the moment, sometimes with close-ups or panorama shots, the *Atlas* depicts fear and brutal indifference, cratered landscapes and dead horses, ravaged skulls and collapsed trenches, fear-filled fleeing soldiers and agonizing, wounded immobile men beyond the reach of comrades. Portraying soldiers in a landscape of death, the sketches are intended to seem realistic, as if Dix had been there. And in fact he had. But he saw differently after the war than during it.

Consider a second figure: The soldier and writer Ernst Jünger. Like Dix, he seems easy to situate, since his writings gave contour to the myth of the front generation and substance to the war-schooled "new nationalism" of the 1920s as surely as Dix seemed to produce pacifist art. Subsequent authorial comments gave credence to these respective characterizations. But as with Dix, the genesis of his work tells a more complicated story – one that draws Dix and Jünger closer together than commonly assumed and brings them nearer to the Hitler portrayed by Wirsching.

Jünger's "Storm of Steel" (*In Stahlgewittern. Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers*, 1920), based on his wartime diaries, did not, for example, start as a nationalist work. Rather, like Dix's characterizations, it sought to document modern war characterized by masses of men and industrialized killing and to show that – its field grey anonymity notwithstanding – twentieth-century warfare still opened spaces for the heroic. Dedicated to "the fallen," the book rehearsed Jünger's mantra that there was a higher meaning to the death of soldiers in war – only, in the first edition, he believed that meaning would be revealed in time. The word Germany barely appears in the first edition of the book, the word national even less often. Rather, Jünger seems to depict war as a natural if mechanized event, a volcanic eruption, destroying but also allowing for creation anew. This all changed by the third edition, published in 1924, which was also the first one printed by a larger publishing house. In the third edition, Jünger sharpened his analysis of the battle-steeled front soldier as foreshadowing the new man of today, hardened for a more brutal, ruthless, mechanical age, and he depicted war

¹⁹ See his own brief account of his life in: Ulrike Rüdiger (ed.), *Otto Dix. Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Druckgrafik. Bestandskatalog der Kunstsammlung Gera*, Gera 1996, p. 57.

in colder, more distanced, objective tones, showing it as at once nihilistic and creative. He also underscored the idea that the soldiers were fighting for the nation.

The prefaces to “Storm of Steel” suggest how long this transition took. At the beginning of the first edition (1920), war, not nation, was the father of all things, and Jünger only knew of his comrades that “you have not fallen in vain.”²⁰ Likewise, in the terse and prosaic preface to the second edition, published in 1922, he merely stated “that the war was a thing in which everyone took part.”²¹ Then came the chaos of 1923. Characterized by the French occupation of the Ruhr, putsch attempts, secessionist movements, and runaway inflation, it also marked Jünger’s departure from the *Reichswehr* and, as such, the acceleration of his search for the meaning of the war. The new preface for the third edition in 1924 strikes an entirely different note:

We have learned from the revolution that every movement without a great, selfless idea does not possess the innate power of conviction that people will jump into the fire for it. For us however, over all that is base, there is one great, clear, and unifying idea: the Fatherland, in its widest sense. For it we are all ready to die. In the passing of time, this is what separates us from others: We are willing to sacrifice.²²

Changes in the text of the work also reveal the transition from sacrifice in search of meaning to a national program centered on the willingness to die for the fatherland. In “Storm of Steel,” the significant passages occur at the end of the book, when Jünger reaches the Clementin hospital in Hannover. In the first edition, he remarks only that “the German landscape was blanched in the shimmer of early autumn,” but by the third edition, this same landscape occasions the “the melancholy and proud feeling of belonging more intimately to the country through the blood spilled in the battle for its greatness.”²³ He tells that when he went to war he thought little of what he was fighting for, but once he and his comrades had endured years of monotony, toil, danger, blood, and loss, he could see that “from all our sacrifices, almost without me noticing, the idea of the fatherland was smelted in ever purer and more glowing form.”²⁴ This was, Jünger wrote in 1924, “the permanent gain [*Gewinn*]” of the experience.²⁵ Before the war, the

²⁰ Eva Dempenwolf, *Blut und Tinte. Eine Interpretation der verschiedenen Fassungen von Ernst Jüngers Kriegstagebüchern vor dem politischen Hintergrund der Jahre 1920 bis 1980*, Würzburg 1992, p. 129.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

nation had been an empty concept beclouded by garish symbols. As he watched his comrades fall, he came to know that they could only have made such a sacrifice for a greater idea, and that the war had taught us “to stand for something, and, if it had to be, to die for it, as men ought to.”²⁶ In fact, however, the necessity of dying for an idea is completely absent from his wartime diaries, finally published in 2010, just as it makes no real appearance in the first or second edition of “Storm of Steel.”²⁷ On the contrary, it was the experience of Weimar, of watching the country unravel in revolution, chaos, and occupation, that turned Jünger.

Common to the three biographies – Hitler, Dix, and Jünger – is that their expressed political positions did not crystalize until after the revolution. Artists and writers as young men, they were perhaps sensitive to what the market bore. In the case of Dix, the success of other artists, notably Georg Grosz, may have had an influence on the emergence of his depictions. For Jünger, his release from the *Reichswehr* and his attempt to earn a living as a writer made him a sensitive seismograph of the nationalism that was emerging from Weimar’s early time of troubles. For Hitler, according to Wirsching, it was the success of his orations that brought about a phase shift, revealing Hitler as a weathervane of a new sensibility, one born of the calamities of Weimar, not the brutality of the war or the trauma of the revolution. Like Dix and Jünger, Hitler stepped into that role and shaped, during the Weimar Republic, an ideology.

The Early Weimar Republic and the New Nationalism

What does it matter that it was not the war, nor even the revolution, that changed people’s politics – and in particular the seeming political certainties of Adolf Hitler? In one reading, it shifts the burden of proximate context from the war and revolution to the second and third year of the postwar era, thereby magnifying the importance of the democratic struggle of the Weimar Republic against the immediate experience of war itself. Neither the brutality of the war nor the so-called trauma of November 1918 can be made into the primordial cause of the ideologies that came later. But how, then, do we narrate the continuities of German history? How do we discuss the roots of Nazism, as expressed in Hitler’s ideology?

²⁶ Ibid., p. 133.

²⁷ See Ernst Jünger, *Kriegstagebücher 1914–1918*, ed. by Helmuth Kiesel, Stuttgart 2010.

A central novelty of Wirsching's essay is that it answers the question, "When was Adolf Hitler?", not simply by adducing proximate context. Rather than just make Hitler a function of the early years of the Weimar Republic, Wirsching goes to great pains to depict Hitler's relation to the intellectual milieu of the prewar radical right, which, in his interpretation, was now given the stage denied to them during the Imperial era. He correctly notes that a kind of banal nationalism dominated the political stage of the prewar era, structuring monarchical rituals and festivities, nationalist kitsch, and jingoistic patriotism. Veterans' Associations, Navy Leagues, monarchical cults, and notable politics still held sway, with something resembling a shift towards extreme or radical nationalism only detectable in the few years immediately prior to World War I.²⁸ Paradoxically, then, it was the tremendous leveling energies of war and revolution that first spawned the populist stage on which Hitler found his role. And yet it was only in the encounter with the ideology and politics of the old empire that Hitler's politics come clearly into view – as indeed the first nine chapters of *Mein Kampf*, all of them mixing autobiography and ideology, suggest. If one goes by the text, Hitler's settling of accounts was not with his political opponents, as intended by his subtitle, but with prewar nationalism. In temporal terms, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* would seem to represent something akin to an unhinged, brutal form of twentieth-century nationalism wrangling with its comparatively timid and restricted nineteenth-century past.

Why this wrangling? It is because *Mein Kampf* was primarily addressed to the extreme nationalist base and only in the second instance to a wider audience. The initial print run of the first edition of volume one was 10,000, though it sold out in a few months, necessitating a second printing.²⁹ When Hitler wrote the book, he was a struggling "identity entrepreneur," reinventing himself and staking a claim to lead the nationalist right.³⁰ The members of this subculture, not the "blind masses," were thus the book's intended audience. In fact, the book dispenses a great deal of advice on how to persuade and manipulate the masses. It is, in this sense, almost a manual.³¹ Reassuring his base after a disastrous putsch, Hitler stressed the spoken word over the printed, announced the importance of propaganda for manipulating the masses, and offered ever more grandiose visions

28 See James Retallack, *The German Right, 1860–1920. Political Limits of the Authoritarian Imagination*, Toronto 2006; Retallack's book remains one of the best guides to this issue.

29 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition*, ed. by Christian Hartmann et al., commissioned by the Institute for Contemporary History, vol. 1, Munich 2016, p. 68.

30 For the term "identity entrepreneur," see Jacques Sémelin, *Purify and Destroy. The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*, New York 2007, p. 55.

31 See Albrecht Koschorke, *On Hitler's "Mein Kampf."* *The Poetics of National Socialism*, Cambridge/MA 2017, p. 41.

about master races and Germany's place in the world. Yet when the book hit the market on July 18, 1925, these aggressive poses stood in awkward contrast to the actual impotence of Hitler and the National Socialists: in the Reichstag election of December 1924, the Nazis had barely received three percent of the vote.

Especially in its early years, when it remained mired in a "continuum of violence," Weimar Germany was less a peacetime democracy than a struggling postwar society whose constitutive political vocabulary was martial.³² Friend and foe, *Volkgemeinschaft* (people's community) and those outside of it, and the state of exception: these are not peacetime democratic conceptions like compromise, inclusion, representation, and deliberation. They are wartime conceptions. But it was not the experience of the trenches that lent proximate context to this new and more menacing nationalism, nor the war itself. Rather, it was the defeat and subsequent humiliation suffered by the country. It was the occupation of the Ruhr and the radical reduction of the army. It was the callous treatment of veterans, despite well-intentioned legislation. This is what Dix saw in 1920 and what compelled Jünger's search for meaning. It is also what Hitler was reacting to and what called forth a nationalism of the "front generation" that attracted legions of young men too young to have actually fought in the war.

The new nationalism was nevertheless a war nationalism – generated by the long shadow of war as surely as it eventually generated a second European war. When Jünger eventually found his way to it, he expressed the "new nationalism" in explicitly martial terms. In the second edition of his novel "Fire and Blood" (*Feuer und Blut*), published in 1926, Jünger described the kind of state that the "new nationalism" called for: "Love of fatherland, camaraderie, courage and discipline will be expressed by it," he wrote, "in other words, it has to be organized as national, social, armed [*wehrhaft*], and authoritarian."³³ This was not yet National Socialism. For while Jünger was certainly antisemitic, his antisemitism did not partake of the racialized, social-Darwinian, dystopias of a Germany free of Jews expressed by Adolf Hitler in his letter to Gemlich – the antisemitism, in other words, that led to the first "solution of the Jewish question [...] by emigration or evacuation," as Göring later summarized the charge he had given to Reinhard Heydrich in January 1939.³⁴ War nationalism, forged in peace, was certainly

³² See Robert Gerwarth, *The Continuum of Violence*, in: Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. 2: *The State*, Cambridge 2014, pp. 638–57.

³³ Dempewolf, *Blut und Tinte*, p. 130.

³⁴ Quotation from the infamous note of Hermann Göring to Reinhard Heydrich, July 31, 1941, in: Yitzhak Arad/Israel Gutman/Abraham Margalit (eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust*, 8th ed., Jerusalem 1999, p. 233. The note refers to Göring's directive to Heydrich on January 24, 1939.

part of the problem. But it was this social-Darwinist, racist dystopia that was responsible for the large-scale massacres of Poles and Jews in wartime occupied Poland; it was what fueled a different kind of war in the second half of 1941, the *de facto* genocide of more than 800,000 Jews shot and killed by militarized units of the SS while the German Army created conditions for twice that many Soviet Prisoners of War to starve and freeze to death, not just in the East, but also in the well-fed *Reich*. It was a racial ideology, not a frontline experience, that led – through however crooked a path – to the “final solution” for the killing of all the Jews of Europe. Likely decided upon in December 1941, but first implemented in 1942, this solution rested to a significant degree on a civilian administration charged with the identification, round up, and deportation of Jews from communities throughout Europe to Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka, extermination camps in the German-occupied *Generalgouvernement* in Poland. It was also this ideology that led to the creation of a factory of death in National Socialist Germany: Auschwitz. When was Adolf Hitler? In the time when war and peace, civil and military, bled into each other and history rounded off its dead to zeros; when, as the poet Wisława Szymborska writes, “a thousand and one is still only a thousand.”³⁵

35 Wisława Szymborska, *Starvation Camp Near Jaslo*, in: idem, *Map. Collected and Lost Poems*, Boston (MA)/New York 2016, p. 75.

Roman Töppel

“Volk und Rasse”

In Search of Hitler’s Sources

Dedicated to Dr. Annette Hahn

Introduction

Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* has attained mythical status. Not only the current heated public debate in Germany about its re-publication following the expiration of the book’s copyright, but also the huge media interest generated by the critical edition prepared by the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* (IfZ – Institute for Contemporary History) attest to the lasting impact of this work.¹ Of course, critical editions of many of Hitler’s other writings had already been published in West Germany several decades earlier. When Gerhard L. Weinberg published Hitler’s so-called “Second Book”² in 1961, nobody took offense, apart from a few historical revisionists who branded the book a fake.³ Likewise, all Hitler’s known notes and speeches from the years 1905 to 1924 were published in 1980.⁴ Between 1992

1 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Eine kritische Edition, ed. by Christian Hartmann et al., commissioned by the Institute for Contemporary History, 2 vols., Munich 2016. My research for this article was part of the IfZ project. I would like to thank all the student assistants and interns who provided valuable support during the search for and evaluation of sources for the chapter “Volk und Rasse,” especially Courtney Burrell, Markus Köck, Laura Notheisen, and Gil Shohat. Valuable information was provided by Dr. Othmar Plöckinger, Dr. Pascal Trees, and Ute Elbracht, all of whom I would like to thank. Special thanks go to my colleague PD Dr. Edith Raim, who not only gave me help and advice at all times, but also encouraged me to write this article.

2 See Hitlers Zweites Buch. Ein Dokument aus dem Jahre 1928, introduced and annotated by Gerhard L. Weinberg, introduction by Hans Rothfels, Stuttgart 1961.

3 See, for example, Udo Walendy, *Europa in Flammen. 1939–1945*, vol. 2, Vlotho 1967, pp. 382–88. In 1961, when Weinberg published “Hitlers Zweites Buch,” the quantity and quality of the sources concerning its historical origins were still very poor. New research has improved the situation so much that there is now no doubt about its authenticity; see Othmar Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches. Adolf Hitlers “Mein Kampf,” 1922–1945*, 2nd ed., Munich 2011, pp. 161–64.

4 See Hitler. *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, ed. by Eberhard Jäckel/Axel Kuhn, Stuttgart 1980, and Eberhard Jäckel/Axel Kuhn, *Neue Erkenntnisse zur Fälschung von Hitler-Dokumenten*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 32 (1984), pp. 163–69.

and 2003, the IfZ also published an edition containing nearly all the speeches, writings, and directives from the period between the re-establishment of the NSDAP in February 1925 and the “seizure of power” in January 1933.⁵ Hitler’s “Second Book” was also newly edited as part of this project.⁶ Although this ambitious publication was well received by the academic community, it went largely unnoticed by the general public, despite the fact that nearly everything in *Mein Kampf* can be found in Hitler’s speeches and writings, sometimes in an even clearer and more radical form. Hitler had in fact held himself in check when he wrote *Mein Kampf* because he was still on parole after having been released from Landsberg prison on December 20, 1924.⁷ As an Austrian national, he risked being deported back to his home country if he behaved too provocatively in Germany.⁸

When compared with Hitler’s speeches and ethno-nationalist writings of the late 19th and early 20th century, *Mein Kampf* contains nothing surprisingly new and very little that is original. Yet the book had acquired its mythical aura long before its reprinting was prohibited and many people came to believe (as many still do) that the book was on the index of banned books.⁹ Since the National Socialists worshipped it as their “Bible,”¹⁰ it was probably not a coincidence that

5 See Hitler. Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen, Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933, ed. by Institute for Contemporary History, 6 vols., plus a supplement, Munich 1992–2003.

6 “Hitlers Zweites Buch. Ein Dokument aus dem Jahre 1928” was published with improved annotation in vol. 2. A with the title “Außenpolitische Standortbestimmung nach der Reichstagswahl Juni–Juli 1928.” “Mein Kampf,” which actually should have been part of the edition, could not be included for copyright reasons.

7 See Otto Gritschneider, Bewährungsfrist für den Terroristen Adolf H. Der Hitler-Putsch und die bayerische Justiz, Munich 1990, pp. 58–60, 97–141; Volker Dotterweich, Vom “Marsch nach Berlin” zum “Marsch nach Landsberg.” Hitlers Wege nach Landsberg 1923–1939, in: idem/Karl Filser (eds.), Landsberg in der Zeitgeschichte. Zeitgeschichte in Landsberg, Munich 2010, pp. 151–93, here pp. 171–72.

8 See Plöckinger, Geschichte eines Buches, pp. 56–57, 76, 214–24.

9 This came to my attention in several discussions with interested individuals after I began working on this edition. Many people believed that “Mein Kampf” was banned in Germany and that not only reprinting the book, but even owning or buying it was an offense. On this point, see Marion Neiss, “Mein Kampf” nach 1945. Verbreitung und Zugänglichkeit, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 60 (2012), pp. 907–14. This article does contain some errors: almost 12.5 million copies of “Mein Kampf” were printed, not ten million. The book was not presented to “all newlyweds” from 1936 onwards, but only to married couples in municipalities that purchased the wedding edition of “Mein Kampf” – and by no means all municipalities were willing to do so. Furthermore, Neiss erroneously labels the serious internet platform Internet Archive (www.archive.org) as a “radical right-wing online marketplace.”

10 Plöckinger, Geschichte eines Buches, pp. 349–86, quote pp. 349–52, 405–06.

the jubilee edition, published in 1939 to mark Hitler's 50th birthday, resembles the Gospel in size and design, albeit with a sword instead of a cross on the cover; it also has a so-called *Sonnenrad* – a swastika with curved arms resembling a sun wheel – on the spine.¹¹ From 1936, *Mein Kampf* was even promoted as the “Book of the Germans” in a film, as well as in advertising brochures and promotional material put out by the publisher Eher Verlag.¹² This label stuck: the term “Book of the Germans” turns up in some of the inscriptions inside surviving copies of *Mein Kampf* that were written at the time by National Socialist (hereafter abbreviated as Nazi or NS) functionaries.¹³ Not surprisingly, the print runs were enormous. By the autumn of 1944, a total of 12,450,000 copies had been printed in at

11 The book was advertised by the publishing house Franz Eher as “an anniversary edition in one volume, encyclopedia format, full leather binding, gilt edging,” and it cost the tidy sum of 32 Reichsmark (RM), approximately the equivalent of the gross weekly wages of an unskilled laborer in the ceramics or glass industry. A skilled worker in the textile industry earned average gross weekly wages of approximately 34 RM, a bricklayer approximately 43 RM, and a skilled worker in the metal industry an average of 56 RM; see *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, ed. by the Statistisches Reichsamt, vol. 59 (1941/42), Berlin 1942, p. 382. The most frequently printed one-volume popular edition of “*Mein Kampf*” initially cost eight RM, from 1932 it was priced at 7.20 RM. The cheapest version, a two-volume edition bound in paperboard, was available for 5.70 RM. See, for example, the publisher's advertisement at the end of the first edition of the “thin-paper edition” from 1940. A copy of this edition can be found in the Bavarian State Library in Munich (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München; shelf number 40.2483). The IfZ's library owns several copies of the anniversary edition. See also *Idee und Erfüllung. Adolf Hitlers “Mein Kampf” als Jubiläumsausgabe – 5-Millionen-Auflage erreicht*, in: *Bücherkunde* 6 (1939), pp. 217–18, and Othmar Plöckinger (ed.), *Quellen und Dokumente zur Geschichte von “Mein Kampf,” 1924–1945*, Stuttgart 2016, doc. 161, p. 651.

12 See Bernhard Eck, Adolf Hitler “*Mein Kampf*.” Das Buch der Deutschen, Viermillionenaufgabe bereits überschritten, in: *Bücherkunde* 5 (1938), pp. 524–26; Knut Hickethier, Die Welt ferngesehen. Dokumentarische Sendungen im frühen Fernsehen, in: Heinz-Bernd Heller/Peter Zimmermann (eds.), *Bilderwelten, Weltenbilder. Dokumentarfilm und Fernsehen*, Hitzeroth 1990, pp. 23–48, here p. 28; Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches*, pp. 56, 61, and idem (ed.), *Quellen und Dokumente*, pp. 642–46.

13 In the spring of 1941, Munich Gauleiter Adolf Wagner gave German Red Cross helpers copies of “*Mein Kampf*” with the dedication, “Accept the Book of the Germans, Adolf Hitler's ‘*Mein Kampf*,’ as a token of my thanks and appreciation.” One such copy is privately owned today. I would like to thank Mr. Rainer K. of Munich for this information and for providing me a copy of the dedication.

least 1,116 editions.¹⁴ At least 16 printing works were involved in the production of *Mein Kampf*.¹⁵

Despite the book's wide distribution, Germans were by no means all familiar with its contents. In his diary entry dated December 12, 1944, the judicial inspector Friedrich Kellner (1885–1970), a Social Democrat and staunch opponent of National Socialism who had studied Hitler's *Mein Kampf* closely, wrote:

Hitler is not a devious man. On the contrary, he wears his heart on his sleeve. Hitler expressed his innermost thoughts quite openly in *Mein Kampf*. It's just that other people didn't believe in the possibility that he would carry out his plans – or else they didn't bother to read "Mein Kampf" at all! And many contemporaries have indeed confessed to me, somewhat shamefacedly, that they haven't read *Mein Kampf*. Even Party comrades! Incredible, but true!¹⁶

Even so, it is simply not true as Joachim Fest and others claim that *Mein Kampf* "suffered the fate of all prescribed and official literature" in that it was never read.¹⁷ The extensive press and media coverage given to *Mein Kampf* at the time and the public library lending statistics up to 1945¹⁸ tell a different story. Even

14 This refers only to the German-language editions and not to the numerous foreign-language editions of "Mein Kampf." The copies of "Mein Kampf" still available in public libraries can be used to establish the following numbers of German printings (excluding the various deluxe and special editions, of which only a few copies were printed): popular edition in one volume (including wedding editions): 1,031 printings; paperboard edition in two volumes: 51 printings; one-volume thin-paper edition: 22 printings; two-volume cloth and half-leather editions: ten printings; anniversary editions: two printings. I would like to thank Dr. Othmar Plöckinger from Salzburg for providing me a list of copies of "Mein Kampf" in German and Austrian libraries. No new information was gained by asking German and Austrian antiquarian booksellers whether a printing later than the last one known thus far in public libraries has turned up for sale.

15 See Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches*, pp. 195–96. At least two more printing shops can be added to those listed: Union Druckerei GmbH in Stuttgart (verifiable from the 12th and 22nd printings of the thin-paper edition) and Buchdruckerei "Rota II" in Riga (14th printing of the thin-paper edition).

16 Friedrich Kellner, "Vernebelt, verdunkelt, sind alle Hirne." *Tagebücher 1939–1945*, ed. by Sascha Feuchert et al., vol. 2, 2nd ed., Göttingen 2011, pp. 905–06. See also Markus Roth, *Chronist der Verblendung. Friedrich Kellners Tagebücher 1938/39 bis 1945. Beiheft zur Ausstellung – Die Last der ungesagten Worte. Die Tagebücher Friedrich Kellners 1938/39 bis 1945*, Bonn 2009.

17 Joachim Fest, *Hitler. Eine Biographie*, 11th ed., Berlin 2010, p. 309. Corresponding statements can also be found in new research, see Dirk van Laak, Adolf Hitler, in: Frank Möller (ed.), *Charismatische Führer der deutschen Nation*, Munich 2004, pp. 149–69, here p. 164, footnote 57; Bernhard Sauer, "Nie wird das Deutsche Volk seinen Führer im Stiche lassen." *Abituraufsätze im Dritten Reich*, Berlin 2012, p. 120.

18 See Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches*, pp. 203–444; Angelika Königseder, "Mein Kampf."

more revealing are two representative surveys carried out by the Americans shortly after World War II in the U.S. occupation zone. Seven percent of those interviewed in the first survey in February 1946 said that they had read *Mein Kampf* in its entirety. A further 16 percent stated that they were familiar with parts of the book. The figures were slightly lower for the second survey, conducted in November 1947: five percent of respondents claimed to have read *Mein Kampf* from cover to cover, while a further 14 percent said they had read parts of the book.¹⁹ Based on these figures, it is safe to assume that several million Germans had read *Mein Kampf* in its entirety.²⁰ One of these many readers was the historian Alexander Cartellieri (1867–1955), who noted in his diary on May 18, 1933: “I have read all of Hitler’s ‘Mein Kampf’ and found it most stimulating; I shall have to reflect carefully on his views on foreign policy.”²¹

There is plenty of evidence to show not only that Hitler’s book had a wide general readership prior to 1945, but also that it was studied in schools and read within the academic community. As early as July 1932, a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Bonn announced plans for a course of lectures on the subject of “Political psychology as applied psychology, with reference to ‘Mein Kampf’.”²² After 1933, *Mein Kampf* became a key source for a number of scholars in the humanities, such as Hajo von Hadeln, whose doctoral thesis was entitled “Vom Wesen einer nationalsozialistischen Weltgeschichte” (On the Essence of a National Socialist World History),²³ and Gisela Reuter, who wrote her dissertation about pro-

Entstehung und Verbreitung bis 1945, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 60 (2012), pp. 898–906, here pp. 904–05.

19 Surveys Section, Report No. 2, Intelligence Branch, ICD, OMGUS, USFET, Who in Germany has read “Mein Kampf,” in: Archiv des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte (Archive of the Institute for Contemporary History, henceforth: IfZ Archive), MA 1304, roll 1; Report No. 92, February 9, 1948, ICD Opinion Surveys, OMGUS, APO 742, Berlin, Germany, Readers of “Mein Kampf,” in: *ibid.*, roll 2.

20 The German Reich (excluding Memel Territory, Danzig, the incorporated eastern territories, Eupen, Malmedy, and Moresnet) had 79,375,281 inhabitants as of May 17, 1939. Approximately 59.8 million of them were 16 or older and were potential readers of “Mein Kampf,” see Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 59 (1941/42), pp. 7–8, 24–25. According to the results of the survey in 1947, approximately three million Germans had read “Mein Kampf” in its entirety; the 1946 survey indicated a readership of more than four million.

21 Alexander Cartellieri, *Tagebücher eines deutschen Historikers. Vom Kaiserreich bis in die Zweistaatlichkeit (1899–1953)*, ed., introduced, and adapted by Matthias Steinbach/Uwe Dathe, Munich 2014, p. 661.

22 See Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches*, pp. 415–16; Volker Ullrich, *Adolf Hitler. Biographie*, vol. 1: *Die Jahre des Aufstiegs 1889–1939*, Frankfurt a. M. 2013, p. 432.

23 See Hajo von Hadeln, *Vom Wesen einer nationalsozialistischen Weltgeschichte. Eine Studie über Adolf Hitlers “Mein Kampf” und Alfred Rosenbergs “Der Mythos des XX. Jahrhunderts,”* Frankfurt a. M. 1935.

paganda in World War I.²⁴ The National Socialist League of Teachers expressly recommended *Mein Kampf* as a text for use in schools.²⁵ Ideas from the book were certainly circulating in German schools, as we can see from essays written for the *Abitur* (upper secondary school leaving exam) during the Third Reich.²⁶ Moreover, anyone who wanted to familiarize themselves with the central arguments of *Mein Kampf* without going to the trouble of reading the book could resort to one of the many condensed versions that appeared after 1933.²⁷ Likewise, sections of *Mein Kampf* that Hitler regarded as particularly important were published separately in brochure form. Chapter 13 from the second volume, for example, appeared as early as 1926.²⁸ After 1936, parts of chapter eleven from the first volume, together with parts of chapter two from the second volume, were published separately under the same title as chapter eleven of *Mein Kampf*, namely “Volk und Rasse (Nation and Race).”²⁹

The Chapter “Volk und Rasse” in *Mein Kampf*

Historians today still tend to see “Volk und Rasse” as the key chapter of the book, as did Hitler’s contemporaries at the time.³⁰ In this section, Hitler discusses the

24 See Gisela Reuter, *Deutsche Karikaturen als Waffe der feindlichen Hetzpropaganda im Weltkrieg* (dissertation), Berlin 1942.

25 See Rudolf Benze, *Wegweiser ins Dritte Reich. Einführung in das völkische Schrifttum*, ed. by the Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund (National Socialist League of Teachers), Gau Südhannover-Braunschweig, 2nd ed., Braunschweig 1934, p. 5.

26 See Sauer, *Nie wird das Deutsche Volk seinen Führer im Stiche lassen*, pp. 38, 67, 80.

27 See Benedikt Welser (ed.), *Hitler-Worte. Aussprüche aus “Mein Kampf” und aus den Reden des Führers*, Breslau 1934; Werner Siebarth (ed.), *Hitlers Wollen. Nach Kernsätzen aus seinen Schriften und Reden*, 6th ed., Munich 1939; Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches*, pp. 192, 413–15.

28 Chapter 13 of the second volume of “*Mein Kampf*” is titled “Deutsche Bündnispolitik nach dem Kriege” (German Alliance Policy after the War); the title of the brochure is “Die Südtiroler Frage und das Deutsche Bündnisproblem” (The Question of South Tyrol and the German Alliance Problem), see Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches*, pp. 95–96, 178.

29 See Adolf Hitler, *Volk und Rasse*, aus “*Mein Kampf*,” Munich 1936. Five editions of the brochure appeared before 1939.

30 See for example Barbara Zehnpfennig, *Hitlers “Mein Kampf.” Eine Interpretation*, 2nd ed., Munich 2002, p. 127; Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Vom religiösen über den sozialen und politischen zum rassistischen Antisemitismus. Ideengeschichtliche Bedingungsfaktoren für die nationalsozialistische Judenfeindschaft*, in: Manuel Becker/Stephanie Bongartz (eds.), *Die weltanschaulichen Grundlagen des NS-Regimes. Ursprünge, Gegenentwürfe, Nachwirkungen*, Berlin 2011, pp. 41–59, here p. 45; Othmar Plöckinger, *Unter Soldaten und Agitatoren. Hitlers prägende Jahre im deutschen Militär 1918–1920*, Paderborn 2013, p. 270.

supposedly fatal consequences of any form of “racial intermixing,” in particular for the “Aryan race.” He goes on to describe the cultural achievements and the fundamental importance of “Aryans” for the development of mankind, and he contrasts them with the Jews as “two polar opposites.” In an extended passage, he lists the supposed characteristics of “the Jew”³¹ and his methods for attaining “world domination,” while outlining the “evolution of Jewry” in European history. At the end, Hitler brings the argument full circle by stressing the need for racial purity. He claims that the “old Reich” had “failed to address the question of preserving the racial basis of our [German] ethnic identity,” which had led to Germany’s defeat in World War I: “If we examine all the causes of Germany’s collapse, we are left at the end with one decisive factor: the failure to recognize the racial problem, and in particular the Jewish danger.”³² “Volk und Rasse” thus describes the real essence of the National Socialist world view, as contemporaries were quick to recognize. Writing under the pseudonym Manuel Humbert, the Berlin journalist Kurt Caro (1905–1979), who had emigrated to France in 1933, observed in 1936 that this chapter “was the real starting point for the political constructs of National Socialism. Unless we understand what it says, the other goals of this movement, whose seminal text this is, can never be understood.”³³

Hitler started work on this section of *Mein Kampf* in 1922 or 1923, prior to his detention in Landsberg. During his imprisonment in the summer of 1924, he had time to work intensively on the chapter, restructuring and then finally completing it.³⁴ “Volk und Rasse” begins with a seemingly simple, but “immutable logical principle of nature”: the alleged “notion that every species of living beings on earth is self-contained.” Using false biological analogies, Hitler then tries to establish a parallel with human “races”: these should not be allowed to mix, because nature – which Hitler anthropomorphizes and endows with a “will” – wants the “species” and “races” of all living beings to remain pure, and resists their intermixing. “The stronger must rule, and not mix with the weak, thereby sacrificing its own potency” is a typical phrase used in this kind of argument.³⁵ Nature, according to Hitler, demands constant struggle, so that the stronger can

31 In the present article, the word “Jew” in quotation marks is part of a citation from “*Mein Kampf*.”

32 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1: *Eine Abrechnung*, Munich 1925, pp. 346–47. In the present article, every citation from an originally German book without a published English translation was translated by Allan Blunden.

33 Manuel Humbert, Adolf Hitlers “*Mein Kampf*.” *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Paris 1936, p. 203.

34 See Florian Beierl/Othmar Plöckinger, *Neue Dokumente zu Hitlers Buch “Mein Kampf,”* in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 57 (2009), pp. 261–318, here pp. 290–94.

35 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 301.

prevail in the process of natural selection; higher development is only possible through such a fight. The highest and most noble “race” of men, which must prevail in this struggle, is the “Aryan,” the “Prometheus of mankind,” to which the world owes every form of higher cultural development. As long as the “Aryan” remains racially pure, Hitler claims, he is invincible. But, when he violates the laws of nature and mixes with other “lower races,” his very survival is threatened – and with it the survival of the entire world. Cultural progress, according to Hitler, is therefore impossible without the “Aryans”: “If they perish, all the beauty of the earth goes to the grave with them.”³⁶

The polar opposite of the “Aryan,” says Hitler, is “the Jew.” While the “Aryan” strives for higher cultural development and is inspired by idealism, the materialistic Jew pursues the contrary goal of destroying culture. Unlike the “utterly honest Aryans,” he does not fight openly, but employs underhanded methods, such as deliberately depleting the stock of other “races” by “racial intermixing.” Once these other populations have been “mongrelized,” they are unable to resist the Jews; only then can “the Jew” achieve his ultimate goal of world domination. Of course, Hitler argues, if the Jews were to succeed, mankind would die out anyway: as soon as the Jews had nothing to fear from other peoples, they would “turn on each other and seek to destroy each other.”³⁷ So the time has come, he concludes, to save the world and equip the godlike being, the “Aryan,” to do battle against his adversary, the “diabolical” Jew, by restoring “racial purity” and developing a “Germanic state of the German nation” as a “*völkisch* organism.”³⁸

Precisely because “Volk und Rasse” represents the ideological core of *Mein Kampf*, it comes as a surprise to discover that Hitler’s arguments here are particularly weak in comparison to other sections of his book. Even contemporary critics noted this point when the book first appeared. Kurt Caro, for example, wrote in 1936 that Hitler expressed his thoughts in language that was “even more unclear and woolly than usual” in his chapters on race, which meant that his argument lacked all intellectual precision.³⁹ Similarly, the philosopher Kurt Hildebrandt (1881–1966) wrote in his memoirs that he studied the tenth edition of *Mein Kampf* in the early 1930s and was astounded by Hitler’s dilettante grasp of racial theory.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., p. 305.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 319.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 349.

³⁹ Humbert, Adolf Hitlers “Mein Kampf,” p. 97.

⁴⁰ See Kurt Hildebrandt, *Erinnerungen an Stefan George und seinen Kreis*, Bonn 1965, p. 211. Hildebrandt claims to have read “Mein Kampf” for the first time in 1931. However, the 10th edition of “Mein Kampf,” which he expressly mentions, did not appear as a popular edition until 1932, with the two-volume edition following in 1933.

To the modern reader, “Volk und Rasse” likewise appears not only repetitive, but also lacking in rigor.⁴¹ At times, Hitler’s line of argument is downright grotesque, and it has often been pilloried – especially the notorious passage: “Every creature mates only with another of the same species. The bluetit mates with the bluetit, the finch with the finch, the stork with the stork, the field mouse with the field mouse, the house mouse with the house mouse, the wolf with the wolf, etc., etc.”⁴² The botanist and naturalist Hugo Iltis (1882–1952), himself one of the fiercest critics of Nazi racial ideology, commented on this passage back in 1936:

The whole dishonesty and ignorance of racism comes across in these sentences, whose target audience is clearly the lowest common denominator. Anyone with half a brain will see at once that he is writing about different *animal species*, which could never mate with one another. In the case of humans, however, we are talking about different types within the same species.⁴³

Not that Hitler was the first or only antisemitic author to misuse basic biological concepts and draw questionable analogies. Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927), an iconic figure at the time for all *völkisch* commentators on current affairs, had written in January 1900: “What have previously been called human ‘races’ – Aryans, Semites, Mongols, Negroes, etc. – are in fact ‘species.’”⁴⁴ Chamberlain, too, had drawn dubious parallels between the characteristics of humans and animals:

Horses and especially dogs give us every chance of observing that the intellectual gifts go hand in hand with the physical; this is specially true of the *moral* qualities: a mongrel is frequently very clever, but never reliable; morally he is always a [scoundrel].⁴⁵

Chamberlain is one of the few authors whom Hitler mentions by name in *Mein Kampf*.⁴⁶ Many passages from the chapter “Volk und Rasse” are similar to statements made by Chamberlain in his principal work, *Die Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts* (The Foundations of the 19th Century), but there are also significant dif-

⁴¹ The chapter “Volk und Rasse” was the most heavily copyedited part of the book in the editions following the first edition of 1925; however, this barely improved its readability. See Hermann Hammer, *Die deutschen Ausgaben von Hitlers “Mein Kampf,”* in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 4 (1956), pp. 161–78, here pp. 164, 167–68.

⁴² Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 300.

⁴³ Hugo Iltis, *Der Mythos von Blut und Rasse*, Vienna 1936, pp. 54–55 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁴ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Die Rassenfrage*, in: idem, *Rasse und Persönlichkeit. Aufsätze von Houston Stewart Chamberlain*, Munich 1925, pp. 73–74.

⁴⁵ Idem, *The Foundations of the 19th Century*, vol. 1, New York 1911, p. 261 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁶ See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 285.

ferences. Yet the question remains: what other sources did Hitler consult when writing “Volk und Rasse”?

In Search of Hitler's Sources

Identifying Hitler's sources is not easy because Hitler was always at pains to appear original. Christa Schroeder, his private secretary from 1933 to 1945, offers striking testimony to this in her memoirs:

As much as Hitler liked to surprise other people with the breadth of his knowledge in order to demonstrate his superiority, he was careful not to reveal the sources of his knowledge. He had a great knack for making his listeners believe that everything he said was the result of his own reflections and critical thinking. [...] Soon after I started working for him, I decided one day that I would try to clarify this. Hitler had just surprised us with a highly philosophical discourse on one of his favorite subjects. To my astonishment, I realized that he had just been reciting a page from Schopenhauer that I had read recently myself. I plucked up my courage and pointed out the similarity. Hitler, a little surprised, shot me a glance and then replied in a fatherly tone: “Don't forget, my child, that all knowledge comes from other people, and that each individual only contributes a tiny part himself.”⁴⁷

Hitler's efforts to make his followers think his ideas were original could sometimes descend into absurdity. On July 10, 1941, he told Walther Hewel, the liaison officer from the Reich Foreign Office: “I feel like the Robert Koch of politics. He discovered the bacillus, and opened up whole new areas of medical research in consequence. I discovered the Jew as the bacillus and ferment of all social decomposition. Its ferment.”⁴⁸ In fact, the phrase “ferment of decomposition,” commonplace among antisemites of the time as a label for the Jews, was not coined by Hitler, but by the historian Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903). In his magnum opus, “The History of Rome,” he had written: “Even in the ancient world Judaism was an effective [ferment] of cosmopolitanism and of national decomposition [...].”⁴⁹ Mommsen soon came to regret this statement because it became a popular

⁴⁷ Christa Schroeder, *Er war mein Chef. Aus dem Nachlaß der Sekretärin von Adolf Hitler*, ed. by Anton Joachimsthaler, 5th ed., Munich 1992, p. 77.

⁴⁸ “Tagebuch Walther Hewel, 1941, vollständige Abschrift,” in: IfZ Archive, Irving collection, ED 100, vol. 78, fol. 112. Hitler made similar statements to Heinrich Himmler on February 22, 1942: see Adolf Hitler, *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims*, ed. by Werner Jochmann, Munich 2000, p. 293.

⁴⁹ Theodor Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, vol. 5, New York 1905, p. 419.

rallying cry among antisemites – from whom Mommsen strenuously distanced himself.⁵⁰

The defamation of Jews as “bacilli” and “germs” was likewise nothing new among antisemites, any more than the belief that “solving the Jewish question” was the key to society’s “return to health.” In his notorious *Handbuch der Judenfrage* (Handbook on the Jewish Question), Theodor Fritsch had already catalogued a whole collection of antisemitic statements from the 19th century. The “resolution of the Jewish question,” according to Fritsch, was a task that could only be accomplished by “a towering genius with infinite courage. [...] But the man who accomplishes it will be the greatest hero of all time, the real dragon-slayer, the true Siegfried.”⁵¹ Fritsch sent a copy of the 30th edition of his *Handbuch* to Hitler in 1930. In his letter of thanks dated November 28, 1930, Hitler wrote: “I studied the *Handbuch der Judenfrage* closely during my early youth in Vienna.⁵² I am sure that it played a very special part in preparing the ground for the National Socialist antisemitic movement.”⁵³

Such acknowledgements from Hitler about what he had read are not only rare, but also they need to be treated with great caution because these statements were often used retrospectively to create a specific self-image for the purposes of *Mein Kampf*. For example, Hitler recounts in his book how he became an ardent antisemite while he was in Vienna,⁵⁴ but recent research has cast doubt on this fact; it now appears that Hitler’s radical antisemitism first took shape in the immediate aftermath of World War I.⁵⁵

50 See Christhard Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum im Werk deutscher Althistoriker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Leiden 1988, pp. 87–132; idem, *Die Verteidigung der liberalen Nation. Mommsen gegen Treitschke im ‘Berliner Antisemitismusstreit’ 1879/1880*, in: Alexander Demandt/Andreas Goltz/Heinrich Schlange-Schöningen (eds.), *Theodor Mommsen. Wissenschaft und Politik im 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2005, pp. 62–88; Jürgen Malitz, “Auch ein Wort über unser Judentum.” Theodor Mommsen und der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit, in: Josef Wiesehöfer (ed.), *Theodor Mommsen. Gelehrter, Politiker und Literat*, Stuttgart 2005, pp. 137–64.

51 Theodor Fritsch (ed.), *Handbuch der Judenfrage. Eine Zusammenstellung des wichtigsten Materials zur Beurteilung des jüdischen Volkes*, 26th ed., Hamburg 1907, p. 408. The first 25 editions appeared with the title “Antisemiten-Katechismus” between 1887 and 1893.

52 Hitler lived in Vienna from 1907 to 1913; see Ian Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936*, Stuttgart 1998, pp. 55–106. This phase of his life is described in considerable detail by Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien. Lehrjahre eines Diktators*, 3rd ed., Munich 2000.

53 Hitler. *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, vol 4: *Von der Reichstagswahl bis zur Reichspräsidentenwahl. Oktober 1930–März 1932*, Part 1, ed. by Constantin Goschler, Munich 1994, p. 133.

54 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, here pp. 56–57.

55 See Plöckinger, *Unter Soldaten und Agitatoren*, pp. 113–15; Wolfram Pyta, *Hitler. Der Künstler als Politiker und Feldherr. Eine Herrschaftsanalyse*, Munich 2015, pp. 105–29, 144–49.

Hitler's propensity for retrospective self-stylization is also apparent in his identification with Arthur Schopenhauer, whom he repeatedly extolled as one of the greatest philosophers, along with Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche.⁵⁶ He liked to quote Schopenhauer's observation that the Jews were "highly accomplished liars."⁵⁷ The phrase turns up four times in *Mein Kampf* alone.⁵⁸ On May 19, 1944, Hitler claimed: "I carried the five volumes of Schopenhauer's works around with me in my knapsack for the whole of World War [I]. I learned a lot from him."⁵⁹ Hitler's boyhood friend, August Kubizek, also reports in his memoirs that Hitler was constantly surrounded by Schopenhauer's books.⁶⁰ That may be so; it is more likely, however, that Hitler was not actually introduced to Schopenhauer properly until after World War I by the private scholar Adolf Vogl in Munich and his friend and mentor Dietrich Eckart.⁶¹ Eckart (1868–1923), who published the antisemitic journal *Auf gut deutsch* from 1918 and became editor-in-chief of the *Völkischer Beobachter* in 1921, revered Schopenhauer, and he was constantly quoting the philosopher's antisemitic comments in his publications. In Eckart's pamphlet *Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin* (Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin), which was published posthumously in 1924, Schopenhauer's characterization of the Jews as "highly accomplished liars" is quoted three times.⁶² Eckart cast this antisemitic pamphlet of just 50 pages as an imaginary dialogue between Hitler and himself; Hitler does nearly all the talking, and Eckart simply feeds him a few cues. While it is doubtful that the remarks that Eckart attributed to Hitler actually stemmed from the man himself,⁶³ there is no question that Eckart had a powerful influence on Hitler.⁶⁴ As late as January 16, 1942, Hitler declared fondly that Eckart had been a "lodestar" for him: "Everything the others wrote was so boring. When he took someone to task, he did it with such wit and panache! Back

56 "Tagebuch Walther Hewel, 1941, vollständige Abschrift," in: IfZ Archive, Irving collection, ED 100, vol. 78, fol. 113. See Hitler. *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier*, p. 411.

57 This statement was originally found in Schopenhauer's work "Parerga and Paralipomena" (1851), see Arthur Schopenhauer, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Wolfgang Freiherr von Löhneysen, vol. 5, Frankfurt a. M. 1986, p. 421.

58 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 244, 323, 337, 372.

59 Hitler. *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier*, p. 411.

60 See August Kubizek, *Adolf Hitler, mein Jugendfreund*, 5th ed., Graz 1989, p. 190.

61 On Vogl and his influence on Hitler, see Pyta, Hitler, pp. 158–63.

62 Dietrich Eckart, *Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin. Zwiegespräch zwischen Adolf Hitler und mir*, Munich 1924, pp. 11, 17, 25.

63 See Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches*, pp. 14–15; Pyta, Hitler, pp. 171–72.

64 See Margarete Plewnia, *Auf dem Weg zu Hitler. Der "völkische" Publizist Dietrich Eckart*, Bremen 1970, pp. 61–62.

then, I was still an infant in terms of style.”⁶⁵ But even under the influence of Eckart and Vogl, Hitler’s understanding of Schopenhauer’s work was never more than piecemeal.⁶⁶

Hitler’s Chief Press Officer Otto Dietrich (1897–1952) is undoubtedly right when he notes in his memoirs that Hitler was not interested in Schopenhauer’s “doctrine of pessimism, his epistemology and ethics, but only in the brilliant language of the aphorisms, the scathing irony and dismissal of the academic orthodoxy of his times, the brilliant criticism and vitriolic polemics.” Furthermore, Dietrich writes, Hitler had “no personal connection at all with the intellectual world.”⁶⁷ This is confirmed by what remains of Hitler’s personal library, which does not contain a single work of philosophy.⁶⁸

Along with Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Anton Drexler, Gottfried Feder, and Henry Ford, Dietrich Eckart is one of the few authors of antisemitic writings that Hitler mentions by name in *Mein Kampf*.⁶⁹ In contrast to Hitler, Eckart provides references for his antisemitic statements, which at least gives an indirect indication as to Hitler’s possible sources. The letters of Hitler’s private secretary and later “Deputy of the *Führer*,” Rudolf Heß, provide one of the best means for identifying Hitler’s sources for *Mein Kampf*. Heß was imprisoned in Landsberg with Hitler in the summer of 1924, and he repeatedly wrote about Hitler’s work on *Mein Kampf* – and about what Hitler was reading – in his letters to his fiancée.⁷⁰ Likewise, a list of “books that every National Socialist must know” also offers much insight. Allegedly compiled by Hitler himself, and printed on the NSDAP membership card, the list includes many of the standard antisemitic texts from the period 1918–1922.⁷¹ The books from Hitler’s personal library that were collected by the Library of Congress in Washington after World War II can also help

⁶⁵ Hitler, *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier*, p. 208.

⁶⁶ See Andreas Hansert, *Schopenhauer im 20. Jahrhundert. Geschichte der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2010, pp. 93–99.

⁶⁷ Otto Dietrich, *Zwölf Jahre mit Hitler*, Cologne 1955, p. 164.

⁶⁸ See Reginald H. Phelps, *Die Hitler-Bibliothek*, in: *Deutsche Rundschau* 80 (1954), pp. 923–31, here p. 924.

⁶⁹ The entire second volume of “*Mein Kampf*” is dedicated to Eckart, see Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 2: *Die nationalsozialistische Bewegung*, Munich 1927, p. 353.

⁷⁰ The letters of Heß have been published only in part, see Rudolf Heß, *Briefe 1908–1933*, ed. by Wolf Rüdiger Heß, Munich/Vienna 1987. The original letters can be found in the Bundesarchiv Bern (Swiss Federal Archives Bern, henceforth: BArch Bern), shelf number J. I. 211, 1989/148.

⁷¹ See Timothy W. Ryback, *Hitlers Bücher. Seine Bibliothek, sein Denken*, Cologne 2010, pp. 84–86. This book was originally a title in English: Timothy W. Ryback, *Hitler’s Private Library. The Books That Shaped His Life*, New York 2008.

identify some possible sources.⁷² The collection consists of some 1,200 volumes that are known to have belonged to Hitler. Admittedly, these represent only a fraction of his former collection, and ownership of a book does not tell us whether the owner actually read and engaged with the text, especially since Hitler was constantly being given books as gifts and very few of his books contain handwritten annotations.

What other writings might Hitler have consulted when he was drafting *Mein Kampf*? Most scholars largely take it for granted that he read many essays and articles in newspapers and magazines, such as Eckart's *Auf gut deutsch*, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, the magazine *Deutschlands Erneuerung*, and the magazine *Der Weltkampf*, which was published by the NSDAP's chief ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg. In May 1925 Hitler described Rosenberg's publication as "a highly effective weapon" for the "entire *völkisch* and national movement"; it should be "part of the armory of every National Socialist leader," and copies should be available "at every local branch of the Party."⁷³

The recollections of contemporary witnesses about Hitler's reading habits, however, are generally less helpful. There are certainly a good number of references to books that Hitler is said to have owned or read in the written records left by former companions and colleagues;⁷⁴ some of these authors even boasted that they gave Hitler ideas.⁷⁵ But did Hitler really read every book that he – allegedly or actually – owned or borrowed? And if so, did all of these books actually influence his world view? A letter dated May 19, 1924, from Rudolf Heß to his fiancée shows that this was by no means the case. Heß writes that Hitler was then "devouring the little book by Rosen with its brief but striking characterization of Americans."⁷⁶ He was referring to *Amerikaner*, published in 1920 by author and journalist Erwin Carlé, who wrote under the pseudonym Erwin Rosen. In this book,

72 See Jehuda L. Wallach, Adolf Hitlers Privatbibliothek, in: *Zeitgeschichte* 19 (1992), pp. 29–50; Philipp Gassert/Daniel S. Mattern, *The Hitler Library. A Bibliography*, Westport/CT 2001.

73 Hitler. *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, vol. 1: *Die Wiedergründung der NSDAP. Februar 1925–Juni 1926*, ed. by Clemens Vollnhals, Munich 1992, p. 85.

74 Starnberg dentist Friedrich Krohn, an early member of the NSDAP, compiled a list in 1952 of more than 100 books and articles that he "most assuredly" had lent to Hitler between 1919 and 1921; "Fragebogen über Adolf Hitler und Beantwortung des Fragebogens über Adolf Hitler," in: IfZ Archive, ZS 89, fols. 4–23, here fols. 9–15. On criticism of Krohn as a contemporary witness, see Albrecht Tyrell, Vom "Trommler" zum "Führer." *Der Wandel von Hitlers Selbstverständnis zwischen 1919 und 1924 und die Entwicklung der NSDAP*, Munich 1975, pp. 85, 209, 228, 243, 280. For an example of memoirs, see Ernst Hanfstaengl, *15 Jahre mit Hitler. Zwischen Weißem und Braunem Haus*, 2nd ed., Munich 1980, pp. 52–53.

75 See Hamann, *Hitlers Wien*, pp. 316–17.

76 Heß, *Briefe*, p. 328.

Carlé writes that the United States is “one of the great wonders of population development” in that “from this Babel of human races and languages, a unified people with a very strong ethnic identity of its own could emerge.” Carlé goes on to say that this wonder is attributable to the American motto: “The American lives free!”⁷⁷ Yet such ideas fully contradict Hitler’s argument in the chapter “Volk und Rasse.” Hitler actually distinguishes between a largely “Germanic” North America, in which hardly any “racial intermixing” has so far taken place, and Central and South America, which has been shaped by extensive intermixing between the “immigrants mainly from Latin Europe” and the indigenous population. “The pure and less intermixed Germanic race,” according to Hitler, “has risen to become master of the American continent; so it will remain, until such time as it, too, falls victim to blood desecration.”⁷⁸ This passage is more reminiscent of sections from the essay *Die natürlichen Grundlagen amerikanischer Staatsentwicklung* (The Natural Foundations of the Development of the American State), which a specialist in American studies, Franz Termer (1894–1968), published in January 1924 as part of the first issue of the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* (*Journal of Geopolitics*). Termer compares South and North America: “On the one hand, Latin blood, on the other hand, Germanic blood; in one continent, extensive intermixing of foreign and native blood, in the other, a high degree of racial purity, based on noble racial pride and racial awareness.” From a “racial standpoint,” Termer went on, “the United States, with its predominantly white population, is much better placed than the Latino republics, held back by the dead weight of their politically indifferent Indian populations.”⁷⁹ We know that Hitler had access to the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, published by Karl Haushofer, while he was at Landsberg prison; in August 1924, Rudolf Heß had asked to be sent copies of all the issues published to date.⁸⁰

Perhaps more importantly, however, Hitler’s reading habits further confound any attempt to determine where Hitler got ideas from. Hitler himself describes this in *Mein Kampf*:

Anyone who has mastered the art of reading will find, when reading any book, magazine, or pamphlet, that his attention is instinctively and immediately drawn to everything that in his opinion is germane to him, and it becomes permanently fixed in his mind. As soon as

⁷⁷ Erwin Rosen, *Amerikaner*, Leipzig 1920, p. 11.

⁷⁸ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 302.

⁷⁹ Franz Termer, *Die natürlichen Grundlagen amerikanischer Staatsentwicklung*, in: *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* 1 (1924), pp. 28–35, quotes pp. 29, 33.

⁸⁰ See Christian W. Spang, *Karl Haushofer und Japan. Die Rezeption seiner geopolitischen Theorien in der deutschen und japanischen Politik*, Munich 2013, pp. 386–87.

the knowledge thus acquired becomes incorporated into the image of this or that thing that we have somehow already created in our minds, it will have a corrective or complementary effect, making that image either more accurate or more complete.⁸¹

In this way, Hitler pieced together his own view of the world from the received ideas he found in various articles, ignoring passages that contradicted his way of thinking while borrowing other passages that confirmed it, sometimes almost word for word. The next section looks in more detail at this specific form of reception and transmission with reference to two different topics that are central to the chapter “Volk und Rasse.”

Biology and Eugenics

Readers acquainted with the works of the “race pope” Hans F. K. Günther (1891–1968), which were highly regarded at the time, must have already been quite familiar with the topos of the blindness of mankind to the workings of nature that appears at the start of “Volk und Rasse.”⁸² In his book *Ritter, Tod und Teufel* (The Knight, Death, and the Devil), published in 1920, Günther writes that “the German walks through the streets of our cities” without realizing that the physical features and gestures of people give him an “insight into the natural history of western man.”⁸³ Two years later, in his *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (Racial Science of the German People), Günther observes: “It is the most blindingly obvious things, the things that we simply see without even thinking about them or having a view on them, that are least likely to stick in the mind of modern man.” There is, according to Günther, “plenty that is evident, not to say eye-catching.” But we simply “do not learn how to see.”⁸⁴ Hitler regarded Günther very highly, and he was known to have possessed several copies of his *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, including a copy of the third edition from 1923.⁸⁵ The influence of Günther’s writings can be seen in many passages in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler asserts, for example, that civilization depends on the preservation of a pure “master race” and that racial intermixing will lead to its fall. These ideas had

⁸¹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 35–36.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 300. On Hans F. K. Günther, see Peter Schwandt, Hans F. K. Günther. Porträt, Entwicklung und Wirken des rassistisch-nordischen Denkens, Saarbrücken 2008.

⁸³ Hans F. K. Günther, *Ritter, Tod und Teufel*. Der heldische Gedanke, Munich 1920, p. 135.

⁸⁴ *Idem*, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, 4th ed., Munich 1923, pp. 7, 9.

⁸⁵ See Gassert/Mattern, *The Hitler Library*, p. 125.

already been put forth by the French writer Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882), whose chief work, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853–1855), had become a standard text for German racists by 1900 at the latest, when it appeared in German under the title *Versuch über die Ungleichheit der Menschenrassen*.⁸⁶ Gobineau had written “that a people would never die out if it remained constituted from the same national elements for all time” and preserved the “purity of its blood.”⁸⁷ Since it is doubtful that Hitler read Gobineau’s book, it is more likely that he took these ideas from Günther, who claimed in 1920 that the “Nordic race” had “become dissipated in the world since primitive times,” and had “repeatedly been absorbed into the racial identity of other populations since primitive times – enhancing the physical beauty and intelligence of these populations, but at the cost of losing its own identity and disappearing from view among an alien people.” According to Günther, not only ancient Greek civilization, but also the development of the Roman Empire, the conquests of the Celts and Teutons, and the creation of the medieval German Empire were all the “racial deeds of Nordic people.” That said, Günther notes, the combined effects of “racial intermixing” and combat losses meant that “Nordic blood” had been progressively depleted.⁸⁸

Hitler uses very similar language in “Volk und Rasse.”⁸⁹ Whereas Hitler speaks of “Aryan waves of civilization,” Günther uses the phrase “waves of the Nordic race,” identifying the Celts and the Teutons as the last two of them in Europe. Günther was not the first to view human cultural development as a cyclical phenomenon. Gobineau and the cultural philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), with whose works Günther was familiar, were prominent predecessors in this regard. Gobineau, according to Günther, was the first to formulate the idea of the “decline” of the Western world, while Spengler had failed to recognize the cause of the decay – namely, “the petering-out of the Nordic bloodline within these ethnic groups.”⁹⁰ Hitler also knew Spengler’s principal work, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West), and occasionally referred to it. For example, in an interview with the *International News Service* on October 14, 1930, he claimed that a Bolshevik Germany would be “a catastrophe for the world”; Oswald Spengler’s prophesied decline of the West would then come true

⁸⁶ See Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, *Versuch über die Ungleichheit der Menschenrassen*, 4 vols., Stuttgart 1898–1901.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 42.

⁸⁸ Günther, *Ritter, Tod und Teufel*, pp. 139–42, quote pp. 139–40. See also Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, pp. 276–366. The fourth edition used here is an unchanged reprint of the third edition, of which Hitler owned a copy.

⁸⁹ See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 308–09, 313.

⁹⁰ Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, pp. 307, 330.

sooner than Spengler himself had predicted.⁹¹ A letter that Rudolf Heß wrote to his fiancée from Landsberg on May 19, 1924, confirms that Hitler had read Spengler's book while writing *Mein Kampf*: "But please don't get the Spengler; we've got at least three copies already. [...] I'll read it and see what I think. The tribune [Hitler] is not very taken with him."⁹² In his May Day address on May 1, 1935, Hitler indicated his negative opinion of Spengler's book in a passing remark: "We should not be talking about the decline of the West, but rather about the resurgence of the peoples of the West!"⁹³

Günther's understanding of cultural cycles based on the rise and fall of the "Nordic race" appealed to Hitler much more than the somber scenarios of decline invoked by Gobineau and Spengler. For Günther believed, just like Hitler, that it was possible to bring about a resurgence of the "Nordic race" through a targeted program of "Nordicization." Not that Hitler agreed with Günther on every point: Günther, for example, rejected the term "Aryan" as a "misnomer," and "strongly" discouraged the use of the expression "Aryan race."⁹⁴ Instead, he always used the term "Nordic race" – a formulation that Hitler used hesitantly and only occasionally from the second volume of *Mein Kampf* onwards.⁹⁵ The direct influence of Hans F. K. Günther can be seen, however, in the chapter "Der Staat." Hitler writes: "Not only do the basic racial elements differ from one region to another, they also differ at the individual level within the same region: Eastern (*östisch*) people alongside Nordic, Dinaric alongside Eastern, Western (*westisch*) alongside both, and mixed races in between."⁹⁶ This is exactly the same racial taxonomy that we find in the early editions of Günther's *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*. After 1924, Günther successively added further racial "types": the "East Baltic," "Phalian," and "Sudeten" races.⁹⁷

Hitler's assertion that there is a "sharp demarcation between the individual races and the outside world" may well have come from Günther, too.⁹⁸ Günther states in *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*: "Racial boundaries allot to each race a

91 Hitler. Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen, vol. 4/1, p. 21.

92 Heß, Briefe, p. 328.

93 Max Domarus, Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen, vol. 2, 4th ed., Leonberg 1988, p. 502.

94 Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, pp. 27, 278.

95 See Christian Bergmann, *Der Nordische Gedanke. Der Nordizismus Hans F. K. Günthers und die nationalsozialistische Rassenideologie Adolf Hitlers im Vergleich* (unpublished master's thesis), Kiel 2012, p. 66. See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 2, pp. 27, 29, 309.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

97 See Bergmann, *Der Nordische Gedanke*, p. 24.

98 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 301.

sharply delineated territory of its own, outside of which awaits only the destruction of its essence, only formlessness, abstinence, and a sequence of decline and fall.”⁹⁹

Statements in a similar vein made by Günther and Hitler attracted fierce criticism from contemporaries. Although he was an early member of the NSDAP and the SA, the botanist Friedrich Merckenschlager (1892–1968) published a polemic against Günther in 1927 entitled *Götter, Helden und Günther* (Gods, Heroes, and Günther). He claimed that Hans F. K. Günther displayed “a shockingly low level of biological knowledge.”¹⁰⁰ Shortly after the end of World War II, Merckenschlager wrote: “When I picked up a copy of *Mein Kampf* in 1925, I discovered so many absurdities on every page that I never for a moment thought it possible that such a crackpot ‘biology’ could alter the course of history.”¹⁰¹

Hitler may also have borrowed ideas that were biologically questionable, or had already been discredited, from the antisemitic Viennese writer Otto Hauser (1876–1944). Hauser, the author of numerous publications on “race” and Jews, was a controversial figure in the *völkisch* movement because he was not antisemitic enough for many of its adherents.¹⁰² But his *Geschichte des Judentums* (History of the Jews) is referenced repeatedly by Dietrich Eckart in his monograph *Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin*.¹⁰³ So, at the very least, Hitler is likely to have encountered Hauser’s writings through his mentor Dietrich Eckart. On the subject of “racial intermixing,” Hauser states in his book *Rassezucht* (Racial Breeding) from 1924: “Essentially, nature refuses to allow this”; not only does it “afflict” individual mongrels with infertility, but “intermixtures” are very often “intrinsically unfit for the struggle of life.”¹⁰⁴ Houston Stewart Chamberlain also maintained that the mongrelization of races that differ too much from each

⁹⁹ Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, p. 171.

¹⁰⁰ Friedrich Merckenschlager, *Götter, Helden und Günther. Eine Abwehr der Günther’schen Rassenkunde*, Nuremberg 1927, p. 22.

¹⁰¹ Cited by Gerd Berghofer, Friedrich Merckenschlager. Ein Wissenschaftler trotz den Rassegedanken der Nazis, Treuchtlingen 2010, p. 60.

¹⁰² See Wiebke Wiede, *Rasse im Buch. Antisemitische und rassistische Publikationen in Verlagsprogrammen der Weimarer Republik*, Munich 2011, pp. 100–03. Alfred Rosenberg’s periodical “Der Weltkampf” published the following comment on Hauser’s “Rasselehre” in May 1925, in the column “Bücherschau:” “Hauser is known as an author who writes about race questions. We regret that we cannot approve of his work unreservedly, as we did in the case of the work by Dr. [Hans F. K.] Günther. Apart from some interesting additions, it follows outdated lines of thinking. We continue to regard Günther’s ‘Rassenkunde’ as the work most deserving of being read”; *Der Weltkampf* 2 (1925), p. 478.

¹⁰³ See Otto Hauser, *Geschichte des Judentums*, Weimar 1921; Eckart, *Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin*, pp. 10–11, 20, 34, 51–55.

¹⁰⁴ Otto Hauser, *Rassezucht*, Braunschweig 1924, pp. 12–13.

other leads to “degeneration and sterility.”¹⁰⁵ What is striking, however, is the strong similarity between what Hauser writes and the corresponding passage in the chapter “Volk und Rasse” in *Mein Kampf*: nature, according to Hitler, will use “all available means” to stop “mongrelization,” and “its most visible form of protest is either to deny mongrels the ability to reproduce, or to limit the fertility of later generations; but in most cases, nature robs them of their capacity to resist disease or enemy attacks.”¹⁰⁶ Hitler’s subjectification of nature, to which he ascribes a will “to breed a higher form of life in general,”¹⁰⁷ is echoed by Otto Hauser: nature, according to Hauser, wants “to preserve the existing races in their unity and purity.” Nature is “wholly intent on racial purity.”¹⁰⁸ Yet science had already discredited the claim that racial “mongrels” were infertile, as Chamberlain, Hauser, and Hitler had argued – the latter using the terms “species” and “race” interchangeably in the “Volk und Rasse” chapter of his book.

Further light is cast on the matter by the study *Grundriß der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene* (Principles of Human Heredity and Racial Hygiene), published in 1921 by the three prominent geneticists Erwin Baur (1875–1933), Eugen Fischer (1874–1967), and Fritz Lenz (1887–1976).¹⁰⁹ “Baur-Fischer-Lenz,” as the work was soon dubbed, quickly established itself as the standard textbook on racial hygiene.¹¹⁰ A second edition appeared in 1923, followed by a third edition with a revised title in 1927. Hitler is known to have possessed a copy of the latter.¹¹¹ In 1931, Fritz Lenz himself claimed intellectual co-authorship of the passages on racial hygiene in *Mein Kampf*. He asserts that Hitler had read the second edition of *Grundriß der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre* in Landsberg in 1924, as was evident from many passages in *Mein Kampf*.¹¹² Then again, “Baur-Fischer-Lenz” tells us “that interbreeding between races, and between mongrels, produces fertile

105 Chamberlain, *Foundations*, vol. 1, pp. 389–93, quote p. 393.

106 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 300.

107 *Ibid.*, p. 301.

108 Hauser, *Rassezucht*, pp. 12–13.

109 See Erwin Bauer/Eugen Fischer/Fritz Lenz, *Grundriß der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, 2 vols., Munich 1921. A published translation of the third German edition appeared in 1931 under the title “Human Heredity” (New York).

110 See Heiner Fangerau, *Etablierung eines rassenhygienischen Standardwerkes 1921–1941. Der Baur-Fischer-Lenz im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Rezensionenliteratur*, Frankfurt a. M. 2001, here pp. 51–52.

111 The third edition was titled “Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre;” see Gassert/Mattern, *The Hitler Library*, p. 48.

112 See Fritz Lenz, *Die Stellung des Nationalsozialismus zur Rassenhygiene*, in: *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie einschließlich Rassen- und Gesellschaftshygiene* 25 (1931), pp. 300–08, here pp. 302–03.

stock.” Furthermore, “mongrels” grow “taller and stronger than either of the parent races” – a claim that is supported by modern studies.¹¹³ Hitler evidently chose to ignore such arguments because they were at odds with his own world view.

Other passages in “Baur-Fischer-Lenz” tally with Hitler’s arguments in the chapter “Volk und Rasse.” Both books correlate the degree of “racial intermixing” with the birth rate. Hitler writes:

Since the inferior are always more numerous than the best, the inferior would reproduce so much more quickly – given the same standard of living and opportunities for reproduction – that in the end the best would inevitably be overtaken and left behind, unless corrective action were taken.¹¹⁴

In “Baur-Fischer-Lenz” we read that “those countries where the Nordic race is predominant generally have much lower birth rates than those where other races predominate.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, Hitler’s claim that “true genius” is “always innate, never inculcated or learned,” seemingly finds confirmation in “Baur-Fischer-Lenz.” In a section written by Fritz Lenz, the author argues that extraordinary talent can be inherited, but that “a large number of genes would have to come together [. . .] in order to produce an outstandingly gifted individual.”¹¹⁶

Hitler’s method of piecing together an ideology from the received ideas of other authors, while ignoring anything in their work that runs counter to his own view, can be seen even more clearly in what he says about the central theme of his chapter “Volk und Rasse,” namely the dichotomy between “Aryan” and “Jew.”

“Aryans” and Jews

It is striking, first of all, that Hitler uses the term “Aryan” exclusively to refer to his beloved “master race” throughout the chapter “Volk und Rasse.” The word “Aryan” comes from the Sanskrit *ārya*, meaning nobleman, and it was originally

113 Baur/Fischer/Lenz, *Grundriß der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre*, vol. 1, pp. 105, 117. See Ernst Mayr, *Artbegriff und Evolution*, Hamburg 1967, p. 96; Klaus Schwenk/Nora Brede/Bruno Streit, Introduction. Extent, Processes and Evolutionary Impact of Interspecific Hybridization in Animals, in: *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 363 (2008), pp. 2805–11.

114 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 302.

115 Baur/Fischer/Lenz, *Grundriß der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre*, vol. 2, pp. 104–05. The claim that “the inferior” multiply more quickly can also be found in Chamberlain’s chief work, *Foundations*, vol. 1, pp. 290–91.

116 Baur/Fischer/Lenz, *Grundriß der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre*, vol. 1, p. 272.

understood by philologists to refer to the Indo-Germanic inhabitants of Iran and the Indian subcontinent, whose ancestors had probably immigrated from the Caucasus and southern Russia.¹¹⁷ These peoples called themselves “Aryans,” as did members of the upper castes in India. At the end of the 18th century, the English Orientalist William Jones (1746–1794) determined that ancient Indian Sanskrit was related not only to Greek and Latin, but also to “the Gothick” (i.e. Germanic) and Celtic languages. The notion that India was the cradle of the human race then gained currency, particularly among German writers and philosophers such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schlegel. In 1819, Schlegel popularized the term “Aryan,” which had been used occasionally before this point, and used it synonymously with “Indo-Germanic” and “Indo-European.” Other German scholars such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), an Orientalist residing in England, together with French academics such as Jules Michelet and Ernest Renan, concluded that peoples who shared a linguistic affinity were also related to each other by race.

By the end of the 19th century, the terms “Aryan” and “Aryan race” were widely used, not just by anthropologists and archaeologists. At the same time, scientists such as the Austrian anthropologist Karl Penka (1847–1912) put forth the view that the “Aryans” did not originate in India, but rather came from southern Scandinavia or northern Germany. This theory held that they had then spread from there across Europe and all the way to Asia. It gained much popularity around 1900. Many scientists now used the term “Nordic race” rather than “Aryan race” to refer to the aboriginal Indo-Germanic people, who were said to have had blond hair, blue eyes, and elongated skulls. Other scholars continued to use the Indo-Iranian term “Aryan,” so that the word ceased to have a precise meaning. As Hitler’s *völkisch* rival Otto Dickel (1880–1944) rightly noted in his 1921 book *Die Auferstehung des Abendlandes* (The Resurgence of the West):

The term “Aryan” is thrown around with gay abandon these days. This only serves to confuse all those who have not the time or the opportunity to form their own judgments. The term “Aryan” has a precise scientific meaning. It should be used to refer only to Indians and Persians, never to Germanic peoples, Greeks, or Romans.¹¹⁸

117 On the following, see: Hans-Jürgen Luthhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920–1940*, Stuttgart 1971, here pp. 114–18; Léon Poliakov, *Der arische Mythos. Zu den Quellen von Rassismus und Nationalismus*, Hamburg 1993, pp. 209–94; Klaus von See, *Der Arier-Mythos*, in: Nikolaus Buschmann/Dieter Langewiesche (eds.), *Der Krieg in den Gründungsmythen europäischer Nationen und der USA*, Frankfurt a. M. 2003, pp. 56–96.

118 Otto Dickel, *Die Auferstehung des Abendlandes. Die abendländische Kultur als Ausfluss des planetarischen Weltgefühls, Entwicklung und Zukunft*, Augsburg 1921, p. 66.

Hitler had read Dickel's book before he wrote *Mein Kampf*, but thought it of no interest.¹¹⁹ Yet other authors whom he did esteem – including Hans F. K. Günther and the authors of “Baur-Fischer-Lenz” – likewise rejected the use of the term “Aryan” as misguided, referring instead to a “Nordic race.” In the journal *Ostara*, which first appeared in 1905, and which Hitler is said to have read during his time in Vienna, editor Joseph Adolf Lanz (1874–1954), writing under the pseudonym Jörg Lanz-Liebenfels, used an entirely different term to describe the “Aryan” or “Nordic” race. In an issue of *Ostara* that appeared in 1908 under the title *Beschreibende Rassenkunde* (Descriptive Racial Science), Lanz rejects the terms “Aryan,” “Germanic,” and “Nordic” to describe “the most noble race,” and he speaks instead of the “Aesic [*asisch*] race.”¹²⁰ According to Lanz, the word “Aesic” meant “heroic,” and it was taken from Nordic mythology in which the Aesir are “the mightiest among the gods.”¹²¹ But neither Hitler nor other *völkisch* authors adopted Lanz's term. “Aryan” was still being used many years later as part of the official racial terminology of the Third Reich, where it increasingly became interchangeable with the terms “non-Jew” and “non-Jewish.”¹²²

Much the same is true of the term “Jewish race,” which Hitler employs throughout *Mein Kampf*, disregarding the then accepted view – accepted among *völkisch* authors as well – that the Jews were a people, but not a race. Joseph Adolf Lanz, for example, writes that it is “not permissible” to speak of a “Jewish race.” In actual fact, he goes on to say that the Jews are a “Mediterranean-mongoloid mixed race.”¹²³ In Günther's *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, we read: “Science tells us that the Jews are *not* a race [...], but a *people*. In racial terms, Jewry is made up of more individual races than any western population group.”¹²⁴ The anthropologist Felix von

¹¹⁹ See Tyrell, Vom “Trommler” zum “Führer,” p. 118.

¹²⁰ Jörg Lanz-Liebenfels, *Beschreibende Rassenkunde* (Ostara No. 27) [1908], Rodaun 1913, p. 20. On Lanz and his supposed influence on Hitler, see Hamann, *Hitlers Wien*, pp. 308–19.

¹²¹ Eckart Peterich/Pierre Grimal, *Götter und Helden. Die klassischen Mythen und Sagen der Griechen, Römer und Germanen*, 4th ed., Munich 2004, p. 182.

¹²² See Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd ed., Berlin 2007, pp. 54–62.

¹²³ Jörg Lanz-Liebenfels, *Einführung in die Rassenkunde* (Ostara No. 26), 3rd ed., Mödling 1917, p. 2; idem, *Rassen-Psychologie des Erwerbslebens*, vol. 1 (Ostara No. 40), Rodaun 1910, p. 7. See John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race. Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, New Haven/CT 1994, p. 3; Benoit Massin, *From Virchow to Fischer. Physical Anthropology and “Modern Race Theories” in Wilhelmine Germany*, in: George W. Stocking (ed.), *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic. Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*, Wisconsin 1996, pp. 79–154, here p. 90; Brigitte Fuchs, “Rasse,” “Volk,” “Geschlecht. Anthropologische Diskurse in Österreich 1850–1960,” Frankfurt a. M. 2003, pp. 149–50.

¹²⁴ Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, pp. 435–36 (emphasis in original).

Luschan (1854–1924), a fierce critic of contemporary concepts of race, writes in his 1922 book *Völker, Rassen, Sprachen* (Peoples, Races, Languages):

Just as there is no Indo-Germanic or “Aryan” race, so there is no Jewish race; nor is there a Jewish type, but only a very general *Oriental* type, which includes not only Jews, but also Greeks and Armenians and, to a lesser extent, many other Middle Easterners.¹²⁵

Such scientific findings and arguments were evidently of no interest to Hitler unless they could be exploited for propaganda purposes. The conflation of the two terms of central importance for him – “race” and “Jew” – was entirely consistent with his strategy of concentrating his firepower on a single, defined enemy. In *Mein Kampf*, he says that “a multiplicity of enemies who differ among themselves” must “always be lumped together, so that in the eyes of the mass of one’s own followers, the fight is being waged against a single enemy only.”¹²⁶ In the end, the terms “Jew” and “Jewish” became ciphers for anything and everything that the National Socialists were fighting against. The entrepreneur Eduard August Scharrer (1880–1932) records what Hitler had said back in December 1922: “The fight against Jewry plays a key role in channeling the energies of the masses who support the National Socialist Party. This rallying cry cannot be abandoned because it serves to make the masses see every new adversary as their mortal enemy, and react accordingly.”¹²⁷

In contrasting “Aryans” and Jews in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler drew on the repertoire of 19th-century racist writers not just for his terminology, but also for various standard tropes and clichés. His distinction between races that “create” culture and civilization, and races that “receive” what others have created, can be found in Gobineau, as can his account of the rise and fall of “advanced civilizations.”¹²⁸ In *Mein Kampf*, for example, he writes: “It is no coincidence that the first civilizations arose where the Aryan came into contact with lesser peoples, subdued them, and made them subject to his will.”¹²⁹ The civilizations to which Hitler is referring can be found in Gobineau’s *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines*. Gobineau explains that there have only been ten great civilizations in the history of mankind, all of whom owed their origins to the influence of the “Aryans”: India, Egypt, Assyria, Greece, China, Italy, Germania, and America (North America, Mexico, and Peru).

¹²⁵ Felix von Luschan, *Völker, Rassen, Sprachen*, Berlin 1922, p. 166 (emphasis in original).

¹²⁶ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 123–24.

¹²⁷ Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, p. 775.

¹²⁸ Gobineau, *Versuch über die Ungleichheit der Menschenrassen*, vol. 1, pp. 42, 230, 287, 289; vol. 4, pp. 318–21.

¹²⁹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 312.

As for Europe, Gobineau claims that “the European peoples have not known true civilization except when the Aryan branches ruled over them.”¹³⁰

Other passages from the chapter “Volk und Rasse” echo further statements by racist authors from the 19th century. In order to evoke a particularly repulsive image of “the Jew,” for example, Hitler falls back on the familiar metaphor of the rat: “The Jew shows solidarity only when a common danger threatens or a common prize beckons; in the absence of either motivation, rank self-interest takes over, and a united people turns in an instant into a bloody pack of fighting rats.”¹³¹

Similar views are expressed by the journalist Wilhelm Marr (1819–1904), who likewise describes the Jews as rats in his writings from the second half of the 19th century: “People say that the Jews stick together, but this solidarity is more of a calculated isolation, which puts like with like out of self-interest and does not stop them cheating one another.” Only when the Jews believe “their exceptional Jewishness is under threat,” asserts Marr, do they “cluster together.”¹³² Marr and Hitler apparently overlooked the glaring contradiction between the supposed egoism of the Jews and their alleged striving for world domination, which binds “the Jews” together like no other people, beyond party and class and across continents and centuries – an allegation that surfaces repeatedly in “Volk und Rasse.” In contrast, Houston Stewart Chamberlain observes in *Die Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts*: “We cannot, by purely egoistic consideration of interests, found a nation which survives being scattered; such a belief is an error of judgment.”¹³³ For his part, Hans F. K. Günther praises the “racial loyalty” and “racial consciousness” of the Jews, which will ultimately bring them success – even without the alleged “world conspiracy.” Günther found a neat way of resolving the contradiction between his use of the term “[Jewish] racial consciousness” and his own assertion that there is actually no such thing as a “Jewish race”: religiously motivated “selection processes,” according to Günther, had “paved the way for the creation of a kind of second-order race.”¹³⁴

Words of praise for the Jews, which appear sporadically in the writings of Günther and Chamberlain, are entirely absent from Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. His borrowings from these two authors are confined to statements that accord with his own world view – such as Chamberlain’s allegation that the Jewish religion

¹³⁰ Gobineau, *Versuch über die Ungleichheit der Menschenrassen*, vol. 1, p. 289.

¹³¹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 319.

¹³² Wilhelm Marr, *Der Judenspiegel*, 5th ed., Hamburg 1862, p. 39; idem, *Goldene Ratten und rothe Mäuse*, Chemnitz 1880, pp. 7, 10, 17–20; *Religion und Race im Judencharakter*, in: *Die Deutsche Wacht. Monatszeitschrift für nationale Entwicklung* 2 (1880/81), pp. 322–35, quote p. 330.

¹³³ Chamberlain, *Foundations*, vol. 1, p. 483.

¹³⁴ Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, p. 471.

pursues “only *practical* ends [...], no ideal ones. It is to provide for prosperity in this world, and aims particularly at power and wealth, it is moreover to provide for happiness in the future world.” The Jewish religion, according to Chamberlain, is “[d]ownright materialism.”¹³⁵ Hitler goes one step further and associates the expediency of the Jewish religion not just with economic success, but also with social and “racial” solidarity:

Jewish religious teachings are chiefly instructions about how to preserve the purity of Jewish blood and regulate relations between Jews, but more so with the rest of the world – with non-Jews, in other words. But here, too, we are not talking about ethical problems, but rather about extraordinarily trivial economic ones.¹³⁶

Hitler and Chamberlain also share common ground with the claim that princely rulers were responsible for the decline and fall of peoples because they were in league with the Jews.¹³⁷ Their commentaries on mixed marriages between Jews and Christians are likewise similar. Hitler accuses “the Jew” of “keeping his race strictly segregated”:

He may let his women consort with influential Christians on occasion, but he keeps the male line pure at all times. He poisons the blood of others, but keeps his own clean. The male Jew never marries a Christian woman; it is always the Christian man who marries the Jewess.¹³⁸ But their mongrel offspring always take after the Jewish parent. In particular, a section of the aristocracy is becoming completely degenerate.¹³⁹

Chamberlain writes in a similar vein: “While the mixture is taking place, the great chief stem of the pure unmixed Jews remains unimpaired.” The Jewish “law in its

135 Chamberlain, *Foundations*, vol. 1, p. 422 (emphasis in original).

136 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 324.

137 See Chamberlain, *Foundations*, vol. 1, pp. 347–48; Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 328–29.

138 This claim of Hitler’s was already refuted in a critique of “*Mein Kampf*” that was published in October 1925: “Everyone can surely find sufficient examples of the opposite in his own circle of friends. Are they just exceptions? As a true ‘völkisch’ writer, the author [Hitler] dispenses with evidence, and for that reason, it is a good idea to have a look at the statistics. They offer proof, of course, to the contrary”; Ludwig Kaempfer, *Adolf Hitlers Lehren über Juden und Judentum*. (Ein Beitrag zur Kritik seines Buches), in: *Abwehr-Blätter. Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus* 35 (1925), pp. 96–100, here p. 96. Actually, a total of 30,121 marriages between Christians and Jews were performed in the German Reich between 1901 and 1925, 17,823 of which involved a Jewish husband and a Christian wife; see Kerstin Meiring, *Die Christlich-jüdische Mischehe in Deutschland 1840–1933*, Hamburg 1998, p. 95.

139 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 334.

strictest form,” he goes on, does not allow Jews to marry non-Jews.¹⁴⁰ In practice, however, it is only the sons who are not permitted to marry non-Jewish women. Daughters are allowed to enter into mixed marriages:

That is also a perfectly correct view. By the marriage of a daughter with a Goy [non-Jew], the purity of the Jewish stem is in no way altered, while this stem thereby gets a footing in the strange camp [...]. Thus was the Jewish race kept pure in the past and it is still kept so: daughters of the house of Rothschild have married barons, counts, dukes, princes, they submit to baptism without demur; no son has ever married a European; if he did so he would have to leave the house of his fathers and the community of his people.¹⁴¹

Chamberlain goes on to say that mixed marriages between Jewish women and “Indo-Europeans” resulted in the latter being “infect[ed]” with Jewish blood; “[i]f that were to go on for a few centuries, there would be in Europe only one single people of pure race, that of the Jews, all the rest would be a herd of pseudo-Hebraic mestizos, a people beyond all doubt degenerate physically, mentally and morally.”¹⁴² Hitler clearly had Chamberlain’s remarks in mind when he wrote of “the Jew”: “In this world he will only ever be lord of the mongrels. Which is why he systematically seeks to weaken other races by steadily poisoning its individual members.”¹⁴³

In casting “the Jew” as a bogeyman, Hitler also takes a cue from Hans F. K. Günther. He writes in “Volk und Rasse”: “His life among other peoples can only continue in the long term if he succeeds in making them think that he does not belong to a separate people, but to a ‘religious community,’ albeit a special one.”¹⁴⁴ Günther argues in his *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* that Judaism is not a religious faith, but “a racially determined and quite separate ethnic entity.”¹⁴⁵ The extent to which Hitler was directly influenced by Chamberlain and Günther remains unclear for the most part. This is because, for one thing, many antisemitic tropes were already commonplace in the racist literature of the 19th century. Moreover, a flood of antisemitic writings appeared around 1920 in Munich – just at the time Hitler was living there – in which the old stereotypes resurfaced, mixed with a set of new clichés.¹⁴⁶ For example, claims that “the Jews” are work-shy and incapable of civic organization could already be found in

¹⁴⁰ Chamberlain, *Foundations*, vol. 1, p. 332.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 331.

¹⁴³ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 345.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

¹⁴⁵ Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, p. 479.

¹⁴⁶ See Plöckinger, *Unter Soldaten und Agitatoren*, pp. 251–53.

the works of Wilhelm Marr.¹⁴⁷ They were later given wider currency by others such as Heinrich Claß (1868–1953), the chairman of the Pan-German League. Writing under the pseudonym Daniel Frymann, he published his book *Wenn ich der Kaiser wär* (If I were the Kaiser), which is said to have made a deep impression on Hitler.¹⁴⁸ More importantly, however, such claims also figure prominently in the writings of Hitler's mentor, Dietrich Eckart, and the chief ideologue of National Socialism, Alfred Rosenberg.¹⁴⁹

Other antisemitic stereotypes can also be traced back to the 19th century, such as Hitler's claim "that such a thing as Jewish art has never existed, and therefore does not exist today; that in particular, nothing original has ever been done by a Jew in either of the two supreme art forms, architecture and music."¹⁵⁰ Back in 1819, Hartwig von Hundt-Radowsky (1780–1835), one of the most virulent antisemites of his time, had maintained in his *Judenspiegel*:

The Jews, as artists, are incapable of *creating anything by themselves*; while they possess great physical potency, they have no intellectual creativity at all. [...] The children of Israel can only copy and imitate others, but their imitations are like them: vile, repulsive caricatures.¹⁵¹

Even better known in this context is Richard Wagner's essay *Das Judentum in der Musik* (Judaism in Music, 1850): "Our entire European civilization and art have remained a foreign language to the Jews [...]. In this language, this art, the Jew can only imitate what others say, and make art that mimics theirs; he cannot really speak, write, or create works of art on his own."¹⁵² Wagner's essay became

147 See Marr, *Der Judenspiegel*, pp. 21, 40; idem, *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum. Vom nicht confessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet*, 8th ed., Bern 1879, p. 6; idem, *Goldene Ratten und rothe Mäuse*, p. 1.

148 See Daniel Frymann, *Wenn ich der Kaiser wär*. Politische Wahrheiten und Notwendigkeiten, 5th ed., Leipzig 1914; Alfred Kruck, *Geschichte des Alldeutschen Verbandes 1890–1939*, Wiesbaden 1954, p. 192; Johannes Leicht, *Heinrich Claß 1868–1953. Die politische Biographie eines Alldeutschen*, Paderborn 2012, pp. 287–88.

149 See Dietrich Eckart, *Das Judentum in und außer uns. Grundsätzliche Betrachtung*, in: *Auf gut deutsch. Wochenschrift für Ordnung und Recht* 1 (1919), pp. 28–32, 45–48, 61–64, 79–80, 96–97, 109–12, 190–92; Alfred Rosenberg, *Der staatsfeindliche Zionismus, auf Grund jüdischer Quellen erläutert*, Hamburg 1922, pp. 62–63.

150 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 320.

151 Hartwig von Hundt-Radowksy, *Judenspiegel. Ein Schand- und Sittengemälde alter und neuer Zeit*, Würzburg 1819, pp. 90–91 (emphasis in original). See Peter Fasel, *Revolte und Judenmord. Hartwig von Hundt-Radowsky (1780–1835)*, Berlin 2010, pp. 127–217.

152 Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, vol. 5, 4th ed., Leipzig 1907, p. 71.

one of the most infamous and influential examples of an antisemitic text that questioned the ability of Jews to produce anything of cultural value. An article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* from April 19, 1922, notes that Wagner’s *Das Judentum in der Musik* is “now more topical than ever.”¹⁵³ It seems likely that Hitler read this well-known text when he was writing *Mein Kampf*, especially since he revered Wagner above all other composers. Other passages in the chapter “Volk und Rasse” suggest as much, such as the passage where he views the Jews’ proficiency in languages as a measure of their ability to dissimulate. “The Jew,” according to Hitler, can “speak in a thousand tongues,” and yet remains “one and the same Jew.”¹⁵⁴ In similar vein, Wagner writes: “The Jew speaks the language of the nation in which he has lived for generations, but he always speaks it as a foreigner.”¹⁵⁵

Other earlier authors who likely inspired Hitler when he was writing “Volk und Rasse” are Julius Langbehn (1851–1907), whose book *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Rembrandt as Educator) (1890) was widely known in antisemitic and *völkisch* circles;¹⁵⁶ and Eugen Dühring (1833–1921), who championed a radical, racist antisemitism in his writings. In 1881, Dühring wrote of the Jews: “Left to themselves, they would devour one another, not having other peoples to feed off. If they had their own separate Jewish state, it would lead to the extermination of the Jews, by the Jews.”¹⁵⁷ A similar idea is formulated in “Volk und Rasse”: “If the Jews were alone on this earth, they would suffocate in filth and garbage and be consumed by hatred in their efforts to cheat and kill each other.”¹⁵⁸ Again, it is impossible to say whether Hitler borrowed directly from Eugen Dühring’s writings, or whether he absorbed Dühring indirectly via one of the countless antisemitic books and pamphlets that were printed and published after World War I, many of them in Munich. These included titles such as: *Weltfreimaurerei, Weltrevolution, Weltrepublik* (World Freemasonry, World Revolution, World Republic), by the Austrian jurist and politician Friedrich Wichtl (1872–1922);¹⁵⁹ *Judas, der Weltfeind* (Judas, the World Enemy), written by the Bavarian regional author Franz

153 Cited by the *Völkischer Beobachter* on April 19, 1922: “Richard Wagner und das Judentum in der Musik.”

154 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 330–31.

155 Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, vol. 5, p. 70.

156 Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*. Von einem Deutschen, 47th ed., Leipzig 1906.

157 Eugen Dühring, *Die Judenfrage als Racen-, Sitten- und Culturfrage*. Mit einer weltgeschichtlichen Antwort, Karlsruhe 1881, p. 110.

158 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 319–20.

159 See Friedrich Wichtl, *Weltfreimaurerei, Weltrevolution, Weltrepublik*. Eine Untersuchung über Ursprung und Endziele des Weltkrieges, Munich 1919.

Schröngamer-Heimdal (1881–1962);¹⁶⁰ and *Judas Schuldbuch* (Judah's Register of Debts) by the Saxon tax officer Paul Bang, alias Wilhelm Meister (1879–1945).¹⁶¹ These texts are all on the list of “books that every National Socialist must know.” A letter written by Rudolf Heß on May 6, 1920 telling his uncle that he would send him *Judas Schuldbuch*, which Heß had just read himself, indicates that these texts were also being read by Hitler's entourage.¹⁶² Hitler's *Mein Kampf* contains several passages that echo statements in Bang's inflammatory pamphlet, such as the contention that the Jews' efforts to attain emancipation are in reality an attempt to gain world domination or the assertion that “the Jew [...] has never had a culture of his own.”¹⁶³ Hitler's derogatory remarks about Freemasonry may have been inspired by Friedrich Wichtl's pamphlet *Weltfreimaurerei, Weltrevolution, Weltrepublik*,¹⁶⁴ while Franz Schröngamer-Heimdal could have been the source for his false claim that the payment of interest was invented by the Jews.¹⁶⁵

One of the most shocking passages in the chapter “Volk und Rasse” contains a whole series of ludicrous antisemitic stereotypes that had already been discredited by the time Hitler was writing *Mein Kampf*. “The black-haired Jewish boy,” according to Hitler, “lies in wait for hours, an expression of satanic joy on his face, for the unsuspecting maiden whom he defiles with his blood, thus removing her from the bosom of her own people.”¹⁶⁶ The “black-haired Jewish boy” remained a standard trope of Nazi literature in the years that followed. Alfred Rosenberg wrote in 1932: “It is no coincidence that the upholder of the tradition of honor should be a tall, slender, bright-eyed, strong human being, while the descendants of old Jacob are deformed, flat-footed, black- and curly-haired creatures.”¹⁶⁷ Yet a knowledge of Günther's *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* should have sufficed to deter Hitler and other *völkisch* writers from perpetuating such absurd clichés as the “black-haired Jewish boy” who routinely rapes “Aryan”

160 See Franz Schröngamer-Heimdal, *Judas, der Weltfeind*. Was jeder über die Juden wissen muß. Die Judenfrage als Menschheitsfrage und ihre Lösung im Lichte der Wahrheit, Munich 1919.

161 See Wilhelm Meister, *Judas Schuldbuch*. Eine deutsche Abrechnung, 3rd and 4th improved eds., Munich 1919.

162 Carbon copy of a letter from Rudolf Heß to his uncle Adolf, dated May 6, 1920, in: BArch Bern, literary estate of Rudolf Heß, J. I. 211, 1989/148, vol. 25: Private Letters 1920, folder 1, March 17–24, 1920.

163 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 331 (quote) and p. 318. See Meister, *Judas Schuldbuch*, pp. 34, 42.

164 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 333; Wichtl, *Weltfreimaurerei*, for example p. 151.

165 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 327; Schröngamer-Heimdal, *Judas, der Weltfeind*, p. 27.

166 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 344.

167 Alfred Rosenberg, *Das Wesensgefüge des Nationalsozialismus*. Grundlagen der deutschen Wiedergeburt, 3rd ed., Munich 1932, p. 13.

girls. In an appendix entitled *Rassenkunde des jüdischen Volkes* (Ethnology of the Jewish People), which was greatly expanded and published as a separate monograph in 1930, Günther writes:

Most Jews have dark-colored hair, either brown or black. But there are also a significant number of Jews with red hair, and even blond hair is so commonplace among Jewish people that in southern Europe the Jews are sometimes more blond than their non-Jewish neighbors.¹⁶⁸

As early as 1886, the physician and anthropologist Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902) had published a study of the eye, hair, and skin color of Jewish schoolchildren, which had been conducted throughout the German Empire in 1875/76. Of the 75,377 children examined, only 8,644 had black hair (11.5 percent); 24,154 children were blond (32 percent); and the rest had either brown or red hair.¹⁶⁹ Remarkably, 8,421 of the blond Jewish children also had blue eyes, which meant that they conformed essentially to the “Aryan” or “Nordic” ideal of beauty. With regard to criminality, Günther also notes: “In Germany, however, the Jews commit fewer sex-related crimes such as rape, sex with children, and sodomy.”¹⁷⁰

Hitler’s claim that “the Jew” would defile the unsuspecting “Aryan” girl with his blood and thus remove her “from the bosom of her own people”¹⁷¹ is an allusion to the so-called impregnation theory. Around 1900, there was a general belief among animal breeders that a female animal was “impregnated” by the sperm of the male at their first mating. Even if the female subsequently mated with other male partners, she would henceforth only bear young that showed characteristics inherited from the first male. This idea was taken up by racist authors and applied to humans.¹⁷² The “impregnation theory” was quickly called into question by experts such as the Royal Saxon State Director of Animal Husbandry, Gustav Pusch, who published a critique of the theory in 1904 in his textbook *Lehrbuch der Allgemeinen Tierzucht* (Handbook of Animal Husbandry).¹⁷³ The “impregnation theory” persisted nonetheless. In 1908, for instance, Joseph

168 Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, p. 442.

169 See Rudolf Virchow, *Gesamtbericht über die in der deutschen anthropologischen Gesellschaft veranlassten Erhebungen über die Farbe der Haut, der Haare und der Augen der Schulkinder in Deutschland*, in: *Archiv für Anthropologie* 16 (1886), pp. 275–475, here pp. 474–75.

170 Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, p. 447.

171 See footnote 166.

172 See Hermann Greive, *Geschichte des modernen Antisemitismus in Deutschland*, Darmstadt 1988, p. 109; Ute Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich. Diskurs, soziale Formation und politische Mentalität*, Göttingen 1998, p. 91; Franz K. Stanzel, *Telegonie. Fernzeugung. Macht und Magie der Imagination*, Vienna 2008, pp. 41–45.

173 See Gustav Pusch, *Lehrbuch der Allgemeinen Tierzucht*, Stuttgart 1904, pp. 164–66.

Adolf Lanz stated: “If a woman has sexual relations with a number of men, the sperm of all the men will affect all the children this woman bears; this is due to the phenomenon of ‘physiological impregnation,’ as I call it.”¹⁷⁴

After 1917, the “impregnation theory” became very popular following the publication of the bestseller *Die Sünde wider das Blut* (The Sin against Blood) by the antisemitic writer Artur Dinter (1876–1948). Dinter declares that “motherhood resulting from base male blood” would “poison the entire organism of the female of noble race, and degrade it to the level of the baser race.” Consequently the “female of noble race” could only “give birth to base offspring, even if she is inseminated by a male of noble race.” The implications of this “racial law” are particularly serious for humans, he claims. “Just imagine the damage,” Dinter goes on, “that is being done to the German race year after year by Jewish boys who seduce thousands upon thousands of German girls each year!”¹⁷⁵ Dinter is known to have given Hitler a signed copy of his novel in January 1927, but this does not exclude the possibility that Hitler had already read the book by this time or owned an earlier edition of it.¹⁷⁶ It is likely that Hitler’s derogatory observations on Jewish religious doctrine in “Volk und Rasse” were also taken from Dinter, who had written an open letter to the senior rabbi of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach on January 28, 1919; the letter was subsequently published as a brochure by the *Deutschvölkische Buchhandlung* in Berlin, under the title *Lichtstrahlen aus dem Talmud* (Rays of Light from the Talmud).¹⁷⁷

Apart from Dinter, other possible sources for Hitler’s interest in the “impregnation theory” could have been Alfred Rosenberg and Julius Streicher. In April 1925, Rosenberg wrote in his magazine *Der Weltkampf*: “It is a well-known fact that the swarthy Jew seeks to pollute as many blonde women as possible.”¹⁷⁸ In his rabidly antisemitic newspaper *Der Stürmer* and in his speeches, Streicher also promoted the view that Jews were deliberately defiling “Aryan” virgins in order to “impregnate” them with their sperm, which passed into the blood of the women and permanently “polluted” it.¹⁷⁹ Streicher’s radical antisemitism was too much

174 Jörg Lanz-Liebenfels, *Rasse und Weib und seine Vorliebe für den Mann der minderen Artung* (Ostara No. 21), 2nd ed., Mödling 1916, p. 10.

175 Artur Dinter, *Die Sünde wider das Blut*. Ein Zeitroman, 16th ed., Leipzig 1921, p. 266.

176 See Gassert/Mattern, *The Hitler Library*, p. 87.

177 See Artur Dinter, *Lichtstrahlen aus dem Talmud*. Offener Brief an den Landes-Rabbiner von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, Berlin 1919, p. 5; Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 324.

178 Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Fall Bettauer*. Ein Musterbeispiel jüdischer Zersetzungstätigkeit, in: *Der Weltkampf* 2 (1925), pp. 337–51, quote p. 344.

179 See for example *Der Stürmer*, No. 15/1923: “Jüdische Rassenschändung”; No. 26/1925: “Neuer Sittlichkeits-Skandal!”; No. 48/1925: “Schützt die deutsche Frau vor dem Tier im Juden”;

for many in the *völkisch* camp – but not for Hitler. He remarked on December 28, 1941: “What Streicher has done in *Der Stürmer* is to idealize the Jew in his cartoons; the Jew is actually much more vile, bloodthirsty, and satanic than Streicher has portrayed him.”¹⁸⁰

Other sections of the chapter “Volk und Rasse” betray the influence of Theodor Fritsch and Dietrich Eckart. Hitler’s polemic against a Jewish national state in Palestine as the “headquarters” for Jewish “international skulduggery” is reminiscent not only of passages from articles in Fritsch’s magazine *Hammer* from 1919/20, but also from Fritsch’s own inflammatory text, *Der falsche Gott* (The False God), from 1916.¹⁸¹ The claims that the Jews are a “pure race” and that “the belief in an afterlife is entirely alien to them” could have come from Dietrich Eckart.¹⁸² Eckart’s antisemitism was not as radical as that of his friend and disciple, Adolf Hitler. Unlike Hitler, Eckart always put the emphasis on the religious, rather than the racial, antithesis between Jews and Christians. Moreover, he regarded the Jews as a necessary counterweight to the “Aryans,” with their “urge to overcome the world.” According to Eckart, Judaism was “integral to the organism of mankind,” just as certain bacteria are “integral to the human body – the one being just as necessary as the other.” Since “existence is not possible without affirming the world,” the “demise of the Jewish people” would mean that “the end of time” had come.¹⁸³

But Alfred Rosenberg most likely had the greatest influence on Hitler’s antisemitism. Numerous passages from the chapter “Volk und Rasse” are redolent of statements in Rosenberg’s early writings – and it is surely no coincidence that Rosenberg has more titles than anyone else on the list of “books that every National Socialist must know.” Hitler’s account of the “evolution of Jewry” was clearly inspired by Rosenberg’s book from 1920, *Die Spur des Juden im Wandel der*

Deutsche Volksgesundheit aus Blut und Boden January 1, 1935: “1935. Der Kampf geht weiter!”; Alexandra Przyrembel, “Rassenschande.” Reinheitsmythos und Vernichtungslegitimation im Nationalsozialismus, Göttingen 2003, p. 181; Franco Ruault, Tödliche Utopien. Julius Streicher und die “Lösung der Judenfrage,” Frankfurt a. M. 2009, pp. 101, 115, 120, 344, footnote 73; Daniel Roos, Julius Streicher und “Der Stürmer” 1923–1945, Paderborn 2014, pp. 264–70.

180 Hitler. Monologe im Führerhauptquartier, p. 158.

181 See Hitler, Mein Kampf, vol. 1, p. 344; Theodor Fritsch, Der falsche Gott. Beweismaterial gegen Jahwe, 9th ed., Leipzig 1924, p. 160; Reginald H. Phelps, Hitlers “grundlegende” Rede über den Antisemitismus, in: Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 16 (1968), pp. 390–420, here pp. 405–06.

182 See Hitler, Mein Kampf, vol. 1, pp. 324, 330; Eckart, Das Judentum in und außer uns, pp. 80, 95; Eckart, Das ist der Jude! Laienpredigt über Juden- und Christentum, Munich 1920, pp. 4–6, 14.

183 Eckart, Das Judentum in und außer uns, pp. 80, 95.

Zeiten (The Trail of the Jew through the Ages).¹⁸⁴ Hitler claimed that the Jews, as leaders of the workers' movement on the one hand and the sponsors of capitalism on the other, were staging a fake war among themselves in order to destroy the national economy; the unsuspecting workers were being used by them as a "battering ram"¹⁸⁵ – an image used by Rosenberg four years earlier, when he wrote: "At all events, the proletariat has been chosen as the battering ram to clear away, through revolutionary action, obstacles that cannot be removed other than by violent means."¹⁸⁶ Rosenberg reiterates the claim that all revolutionary upheavals have been staged by Jews anyway in his pamphlet *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion und die jüdische Weltpolitik* (The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and Jewish World Politics).¹⁸⁷ This pamphlet likely had a strong influence on Hitler's own view of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," one of the key antisemitic texts of the 20th century, especially since there are a number of textual similarities that indicate as much.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, Hitler's assessment of the Russian Civil War is interesting for two reasons:

The most terrible example of this kind is Russia, where [the Jew], in a truly satanic orgy of violence, and with inhuman cruelty, slaughtered or starved nearly thirty million people, just to give control of a large nation to a gang of Jewish literati and stock-market crooks.¹⁸⁹

First, this recalls a very similar observation in Rosenberg's *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion und die jüdische Weltpolitik*: "A monumental example of these Jewish efforts to destroy the world is Russia."¹⁹⁰ Secondly, Hitler uses Rosenberg's figures for the number of victims killed in the Russian Revolution and Civil War. At an NSDAP meeting in Rosenheim on August 19, 1921, Hitler had spoken of 40 million dead in Russia.¹⁹¹ A year later, at an NSDAP meeting in Munich on July 28, 1922, he cited a figure of 30 million.¹⁹² Hitler clearly took this revised figure,

184 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 326–35; Alfred Rosenberg, *Die Spur des Juden im Wandel der Zeiten*, Munich 1920.

185 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 337.

186 Rosenberg, *Die Spur des Juden*, p. 99.

187 See Alfred Rosenberg, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion und die jüdische Weltpolitik*, Munich 1923, p. 31.

188 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 325, 337, 346; Rosenberg, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion*, here pp. 41, 53.

189 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 346.

190 Rosenberg, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion*, p. 41.

191 See Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, p. 458.

192 See *ibid.*, p. 663.

which is also repeated later in *Mein Kampf*, from Alfred Rosenberg’s 1922 book *Pest in Russland!* (Plague in Russia!).¹⁹³

Hitler was selective, however, in how he used Rosenberg’s writings, taking from them only what served his purposes. Unlike Hitler, who rejected the Christian tradition out of hand, Rosenberg saw a Christianity “cleansed” of all Jewish and Catholic influences as a religion that suited the “sensibilities” of the “Slavo-Celto-Germanic peoples.” Just like Hitler, he described the Jews as “parasites” and “agents of destruction,” and in his principal work, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (The Myth of the 20th Century, 1930), he spoke of “the parasitic people, always hostile to us.” But he did not – yet – call for any exterminatory consequences:

We must show the Jew, as a human being, the same consideration as any other person: protection of human life, equality before the law, acts of charity. But we must also be able to protect our own ethnic identity by law, and to cultivate and maintain its integrity, without allowing any foreign, Jewish, and inevitably hostile element to acquire any influence over it.¹⁹⁴

Twenty-one years later, when Rosenberg was Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, he was singing a very different tune. The “Jewish question,” said Rosenberg on November 18, 1941, in a speech to a private audience, could be resolved only “through the total biological extermination of European Jewry.”¹⁹⁵

Overestimated Influences

Historians have hitherto underestimated Rosenberg’s early influence on Hitler’s world view, whereas the influence of other authors has been greatly overestimated. This applies in particular to the two “Ariosophs,” Guido List (1848–1919) and Joseph Adolf Lanz.¹⁹⁶ If we compare the chapter “Volk und Rasse” with the

193 See Alfred Rosenberg, *Pest in Rußland! Der Bolschewismus, seine Häupter, Handlanger und Opfer*, Munich 1922, pp. 5, 78.

194 Rosenberg, *Die Spur des Juden*, pp. 68, 135, 150, 160, 163; idem, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit*, 4th ed., Munich 1932, p. 32.

195 Alfred Rosenberg, *Die Tagebücher von 1934 bis 1944*, ed. by Jürgen Matthäus/Frank Bajohr, Frankfurt a. M. 2015, p. 577.

196 See Hamann, *Hitlers Wien*, pp. 293–319.

writings of Guido List, we find relatively few textual resemblances.¹⁹⁷ If Hitler actually read List's work in Vienna, it cannot have left much of an impression on him.

Much the same is true for Lanz, who is repeatedly mentioned as a source of inspiration for Hitler's world view, even in more recent studies.¹⁹⁸ If we compare Hitler's chapter "Volk und Rasse" with issues of Lanz's *Ostara* magazine, we find many more differences than similarities. First of all, they employ different terminology, and their views on the relationship between God and nature, for example, are quite different. Hitler believed that nature is one manifestation of God at work and that nature desires the "racial purity" of all living creatures. Lanz, by contrast, thought that God and nature were diametric opposites: the divine order, according to Lanz, demands "racial purity," but nature is programmed "to seek constantly to bring forth new species and races through interbreeding."¹⁹⁹ Lanz and Hitler were already starting from very different positions: for Hitler, the dichotomy between "Aryan" and "Jew" was central, whereas for Lanz, the Jews were not the main enemy, but simply one adversary among many. In Lanz's way of thinking, the fundamental dualism lay between blond people and "dark" people, the term "dark" being applied to anybody who was not actually blond. Hence the fact that his *Ostara* series of publications all formed part of what he termed "Bücherei der Blonden" ("Library for those who are blond").²⁰⁰ Lanz regarded all "dark" people as inferior – not an idea likely to appeal to the dark-haired Hitler.

Another author whose influence on Hitler is grossly overestimated is Karl May (1842–1912), the famous writer of adventure stories. An annotated U.S. edition of *Mein Kampf* published in 1941 claims that Hitler's comments about America in the chapter "Volk und Rasse" were influenced by Karl May's novels.²⁰¹ Such views were later given wider currency by – among others – Hitler biographer Joachim Fest.²⁰² Moreover, they can still be found in more recent studies.²⁰³

197 The chapter "Volk und Rasse" was compared with Guido List, *Der Unbesiegbare. Ein Grundzug germanischer Weltanschauung*, Vienna 1898, and idem, *Die Namen der Völkerstämme Germaniens und deren Deutung*, Vienna 1908.

198 See, for example, Ernst Piper, Alfred Rosenberg. *Hitlers Chefideologe*, Munich 2005, p. 48.

199 Jörg Lanz-Liebenfels, *Das Geschlechts- und Liebesleben der Blonden und Dunklen*, 2 vols. (*Ostara* No. 38 and 39), 2nd ed., Mödling 1915, vol. 1, pp. 2–3; vol. 2, quote p. 4.

200 Idem, *Ostara. Bücherei der Blonden*, No. 1: *Die Ostara und das Reich der Blonden*, Magdeburg 1922.

201 See Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Complete and Unabridged. Fully Annotated, New York 1941, p. 419, footnote 13.

202 See Fest, *Hitler*, pp. 481, 615.

203 See for example Klaus P. Fischer, *Hitler & America*, Philadelphia/PA 2011, pp. 19–23.

The dissemination of such misguided views may well have been encouraged by a claim made by Karl May's widow Klara, an ardent National Socialist, soon after Hitler's "seizure of power": she maintained that her husband had been "a kind of trailblazer for the present Hitler age."²⁰⁴ This was certainly not the case; the writer, who had died in 1912, had expressly *opposed* antisemitism and stressed the moral unity and equality of all human beings. Hitler did in fact read many of Karl May's books, and he loved them. On February 17, 1942, he remarked: "I would reprint Karl May's books, if I had my way; they taught me my first lessons in geography! I used to read him by candlelight, and if the moon was bright I used a large magnifying glass!"²⁰⁵ All the same, Hitler's view of America, as presented in *Mein Kampf*, was not influenced by Karl May, and the relevant passages from the chapter "Volk und Rasse" are not prefigured by anything in the works of this famous writer of adventure tales.²⁰⁶

Another author whose alleged influence on Hitler's image of America is constantly mentioned is the U.S. jurist Madison Grant (1865–1937).²⁰⁷ In 1916, Grant, one of the most radical proponents of racial segregation and racist-eugenic legislation in the United States, had published a book entitled "The Passing of the Great Race," which had attracted a good deal of attention.²⁰⁸ Hitler possessed the first German edition of Grant's book, and ideas from it do turn up in his later writings and remarks.²⁰⁹ However, the German edition of Grant's book did not appear until Hitler had already written the chapter "Volk und Rasse." The original English edition had not gone unnoticed in Germany – Günther, for one, refers to it in his *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*. But the references are only mar-

204 Helmut Schmiedt, *Karl May oder Die Macht der Phantasie. Eine Biografie*, Munich 2011, pp. 289–90.

205 Hitler. *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier*, p. 281. On Hitler's relationship with Karl May, see also Gerhard Linkemeyer, *Was hat Hitler mit Karl May zu tun? Versuch einer Klarstellung*, Ubstadt 1987, pp. 21–24, 50–55; Werner Graf, *Adolf Hitler begegnet Karl May. Zur Lektürebiografie des "Führers,"* Baltmannsweiler 2012, pp. 13, 76–78.

206 I would like to thank Karl May experts Prof. Dr. Gert Ueding, Tübingen, and Dipl.-Ing. Hans Grunert, Radebeul, for this assessment.

207 See Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection. Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism*, New York 1994, p. 85; Edwin Black, *War against the Weak. Eugenics and America's Campaign to create a Master Race*, New York 2003, pp. 259–60.

208 Madison Grant, *Der Untergang der großen Rasse. Die Rassen als Grundlage der Geschichte Europas*, Munich 1925.

209 See Philipp Gassert, *Amerika im Dritten Reich. Ideologie, Propaganda und Volksmeinung 1933–1945*, Stuttgart 1997, pp. 95–96; idem/Mattern, *The Hitler Library*, p. 120; Ryback, *Hitlers Bücher*, pp. 126–49.

ginal, and it is highly unlikely that Grant's ideas had any influence on the first volume of *Mein Kampf*.

The language barrier is likely to have prevented Hitler from engaging with the then very influential French anthropologist Georges Vacher de Lapouge (1854–1936). Werner Maser claims that Hitler “worked through” his principal work, *L’Aryen. Son rôle social*, which appeared in France in 1899.²¹⁰ This is absurd, however, since Hitler lacked any foreign language skills to read the text in the original.²¹¹ The German translation of Vacher de Lapouge’s book did not appear until 1939, under the title *Der Arier und seine Bedeutung für die Gemeinschaft*.²¹²

Similarly, the influence of the geopolitician Karl Haushofer (1869–1946) on Hitler is often overestimated. Haushofer was definitely not “Hitler’s tutor,” as has occasionally been claimed.²¹³ This is clear from Hitler’s observations on Japan.²¹⁴ Hitler was undoubtedly familiar with Haushofer’s work, both through his own reading and through Rudolf Heß, who was friendly with Haushofer and worked for a while as his assistant. In a letter from Landsberg dated May 19, 1924, Heß reports that Hitler was reading Haushofer’s “Japan book,” by which he meant the author’s 1923 study *Japan und die Japaner* (Japan and the Japanese).²¹⁵ Hitler, however, turned Haushofer’s admiring comments about Japan on their head.²¹⁶ Haushofer had attributed the successful modernization of Japan to the “innate characteristics” of the Japanese. These were due “in large measure to a very fortunate mix of blood from the Malay, Mongol, and Ainu elements.” He also claims: “The resulting racial virtues are reflected in the achievements of the Japanese

210 See Georges Vacher de Lapouge, *L’Aryen – Son rôle social*. Cours libre de science politique, professé à l’Université de Montpellier (1889–1890), Paris 1899; Werner Maser, *Hitlers Mein Kampf*. Entstehung, Aufbau, Stil, Änderungen, Quellen, Quellenwert, kommentierte Auszüge, 2nd ed., Munich 1966, pp. 81–82.

211 See Rainer F. Schmidt, *Die Außenpolitik des Dritten Reiches 1933–1939*, Stuttgart 2002, p. 52.

212 See Georges Vacher de Lapouge, *Der Arier und seine Bedeutung für die Gemeinschaft*. Freier Kursus in Staatskunde, gehalten an der Universität Montpellier 1889–1890, Frankfurt a. M. 1939.

213 See Bruno Hipler, *Hitlers Lehrmeister. Karl Haushofer als Vater der NS-Ideologie*, St. Ottilien 1996; Holger H. Herwig, *The Demon of Geopolitics. How Karl Haushofer “Educated” Hitler and Hess*, Lanham/MD 2016.

214 See Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, pp. 306–08.

215 See Karl Haushofer, *Japan und die Japaner*. Eine Landeskunde, Leipzig 1923; Heß, *Briefe*, p. 328. The exact title of Haushofer’s book, which is not clear from the letter dated May 19, 1924, is stated in a letter from Rudolf Heß to Ilse Pröhl dated September 7, 1923, in: BArch Bern, literary estate of Rudolf Heß, J. I. 211, 1989/148, vol. 31: Private Letters 1923, doc. 22.

216 I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Klaus Vollmer of Munich for the useful information regarding Japan, Haushofer, and Hitler.

people.”²¹⁷ Hitler, on the other hand, maintains that Japan owed its technical and cultural advances entirely to “Aryan” influences from Europe and the United States. Were it not for these, Japanese culture would “ossify, and sink back into the slumber from which it had been roused by the Aryan cultural influx.”²¹⁸

This example shows once again how selective Hitler was in his use of other people’s work. Even in the case of authors who demonstrably had a great influence on him, such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Dietrich Eckart, he took from them only those elements that fitted into his world view. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hitler’s own antisemitic statements are notably more radical than almost everything written by the authors he drew on. In the end, the ideology that Hitler pieced together from the received ideas of earlier authors was his, and his alone.

Conclusion

Tracing Hitler’s sources for the chapter “Volk und Rasse” in *Mein Kampf* is no easy task. For one, Hitler rarely names authors who inspired him, especially since he was always at pains to appear original. Furthermore, he generally took only ready-made ideas from the books and articles he read, and he ignored everything that did not fit within his own predetermined world view. But it is possible to throw some light on the mystery surrounding his sources by examining the few references to specific authors that Hitler himself does make and, more importantly, the letters written by his private secretary, Rudolf Heß. The remnants of Hitler’s personal library offer further clues, as does a painstaking comparison of the chapter “Volk und Rasse” with the books and magazine articles that were being promoted at the time within *völkisch* circles. All of this suggests that the following writers did have a significant influence on Hitler’s thinking: Richard Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Julius Langbehn, Heinrich Claß, Theodor Fritsch, co-authors Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz, as well as Paul Bang, Dietrich Eckart, Otto Hauser, Hans F. K. Günther, and Alfred Rosenberg. At the same time, it appears that the influence of some authors whom historians have repeatedly identified as key sources for Hitler has been greatly exaggerated to some extent. These include Guido List, Joseph Adolf Lanz, Karl May, Georges Vacher de

²¹⁷ Karl Haushofer, Dai-Nihon. Betrachtungen über Groß-Japans Wehrkraft, Weltstellung und Zukunft, Berlin 1913, pp. 7–9.

²¹⁸ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, p. 307.

Lapouge, Karl Haushofer, and – at least as far as the first volume of *Mein Kampf* is concerned – Madison Grant. There are also many parallels between Hitler's "Volk und Rasse" chapter and the works of some of the most prominent racist writers of the 19th century, such as Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, Wilhelm Marr, and Eugen Dühring. It remains unclear, however, whether Hitler was directly acquainted with their works, or whether he simply imbibed their ideas through the countless antisemitic pamphlets and articles that appeared shortly after World War I, many of which had been published in Munich.

Interestingly, Hitler espoused far more radical and one-sided views than most of the authors who are known or thought to have influenced him. From the building blocks they supplied, Hitler constructed his own, murderous ideology, whose central theme was a relentless hatred of Jews. In his hands, the figure of "the Jew" as an evil bogeyman became a monolithic hate figure, the antitype to that "racially pure" creator of culture and civilization, the "Aryan." Theodor Fritsch, whose works Hitler read, had written in his *Handbuch der Judenfrage* that the "Jewish question" could be solved only by "a towering genius with infinite courage," who would be "the real dragon-slayer, the true Siegfried."²¹⁹ Hitler plainly saw himself in the role of Siegfried, and he regarded the task of "resolving the Jewish question" as his life's work.

219 Fritsch (ed.), *Handbuch der Judenfrage*, p. 408.

Eve Rosenhaft

Hitler's Antisemitism and the Horizons of the Racial State

Roman Töppel's prodigious literary detective work has provided the most definitive account of the sources behind the ideas that feature in Hitler's chapter "Volk und Rasse" from *Mein Kampf*. Regarded by both scholars and contemporaries as the key section, "Volk und Rasse" is the eleventh chapter of the book's first volume in which Hitler laid out, in Töppel's words, "the real essence of the National Socialist world view."¹ Hitler not only identifies the central conflict in world history as that between Aryan and Jew, Töppel notes, but he also elaborates on the threat posed by the Jewish presence in terms of blood and "race." Töppel adduces detailed evidence for Hitler's long-observed intellectual "dilettantism" in questions of race and racial theory, marked by his tendency to pick and choose arguments while simply ignoring aspects of theories that might run counter to his own argument. Examples of this include his selective use of the work of Hans F. K. Günther, who expressly rejected the term "Aryan" as well as stereotypes about the physical appearance of Jews, and his dismissal of the idea put forth by Günther and other *völkisch* race theorists that the Jews were to be understood as a *Volk* but not a race. Likewise, Hitler continued to insist on the degenerative effects of miscegenation in spite of arguments to the contrary in (among other works) the *Grundriß der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene* (1921) by Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz, which is otherwise an important source for "Volk und Rasse." Additionally, Töppel finds evidence to explain the unsystematic character of Hitler's thinking in his reading habits, which are documented in eyewitness testimonies and his surviving private library.

Hitler's thinking on "race" was inconsistent, derivative, and intellectually vacuous, even by the standards of a pseudoscience devoted to the study of a wholly constructed category. Although all this will come as no surprise to most readers, Töppel nonetheless provides some valuable food for thought in exposing the genealogy of "Volk und Rasse." By investigating not only the sources for the chapter, but also the circumstances of its composition, he confirms its originary character. The scholarly consensus has been that Hitler's antisemitism was a product of his wartime and postwar experiences, yet the fact that "Volk und Rasse" was first drafted in 1922–23, before his imprisonment in Landsberg that

1 Roman Töppel, "Volk und Rasse." In *Search of Hitler's Sources*, in this yearbook, pp. 71–110, here p. 77.

provided the impetus and time to write the rest of the first volume, bespeaks how urgent a business it was for Hitler's own politics to think through his antisemitism that was still inchoate at that stage. Töppel thus exposes the way in which Hitler's reflections on blood and race in this part of *Mein Kampf* serve as a retrospective structure for rationalizing and giving articulate voice to his hatred and fear of Jews. As Töppel puts it, given that Hitler's antisemitic statements were significantly more radical than those of any of the thinkers on whose work he drew, what Hitler was doing in "Volk und Rasse" was to use their ideas to cobble together "his own, murderous ideology, whose central theme was a relentless hatred of Jews."² Hitler was giving his visceral antisemitism the argumentative bones and muscle that could make it the basis for an entire political program.

As valuable as it is to see Hitler's *Weltanschauung* thus anatomized, Töppel's analysis is particularly useful in provoking some wider questions about the character and operation of National Socialism. Among these are questions about the functions of reading, ideas and "ideas" in fascist movements, but what I would like to focus on here are questions raised by the indications that in this chapter Hitler is using pseudoscientific principles of "race" to rationalize a pre-existing antisemitism. These questions interrogate the place of this chapter – and Hitler's ideas more broadly – in the construction of a "racial state." Where do Hitler's thoughts about "race" sit in what we now see as a constellation of preconceptions and apprehensions about genetics, bodies, and social hygiene that underpinned the Nazi system of oppression? Indeed, in light of the understanding of this system that currently prevails among historians, what kind of assessment and analysis can adequately situate that originary antisemitism for which "race" was manifestly an afterthought? In short: What (if anything) can Hitler's writings tell us about how "race" became institutionalized in an increasingly destructive spiral of everyday practices? And from this point of view, is "Volk und Rasse" really the key chapter – and, if so, key to what?

I invoke Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann's phrase "racial state"³ here to signal a number of related shifts in the historical understanding of National Socialism whose cumulative effect has been to resituate (Hitler's) antisemitism. At the very least, this concept has redirected attention to how the priority that

² Ibid., p. 110.

³ For the origins, appropriation, and critique of the phrase, see Michael Burleigh/Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State. Germany 1933–1945*, Cambridge 1991; Rita Chin et al. (eds.), *After the Nazi Racial State. Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe*, Ann Arbor/MI 2009; Eve Rosenhaft, *Blacks and Gypsies in Nazi Germany. The Limits of the "Racial State,"* in: *History Workshop Journal* 72 (2011), pp. 161–70, and Devin O. Pendas/Mark Roseman/Richard F. Wetzell (eds.), *Beyond the Racial State. Rethinking Nazi Germany*, Cambridge 2017.

Hitler gave to the elimination of Jews affected the evolution of the totality of Nazi policy *at any given historical moment*, without necessarily denying its centrality to National Socialism or its peculiarly destructive outcomes. For instance, it has led to increased attention, both in scope and depth, to the “other victims” of Nazi persecution and Nazi body/bio-politics in particular: those defined as “of alien blood” (*fremdblütig*), including notably Sinti and Roma (“Gypsies”) and Blacks; those “of German blood” (*deutschblütig*) but genetically damaged and therefore leading “lives not worthy of life” (*lebensunwertes Leben*), including the disabled and incurably ill; and “aliens to the community” (*Gemeinschaftsfremde*), including homosexuals, “antisocials” (*Asoziale*), and socially marginal individuals, whose condition was defined by the system in terms of a shifting combination of genetic predisposition and antisocial intent. In conjunction with the more long-standing and now well-established functionalist reading of National Socialism as a system, studies of these victim groups have allowed for the elaboration and critique of the proposition that there was a progressive continuity of practice “from euthanasia to the Final Solution,” an idea that was articulated by Henry Friedlander in 1995.⁴ One consequence of this has been to “mainstream” the evidence for the foundational imbrication of health, eugenics, and “race” in Nazi Germany, which had been proposed in relatively specialist legal and medical history studies in the 1980s: an explicit vision of the “unity of eugenic and racial policy” (*Einheit der Erb- und Rassenpflege*) reflected in the notion of “race hygiene” (*Rassenhygiene*) drove Nazi policy and underlay the institutional gears that linked “racial” policy at the top and everyday medical and police practices at the local level.⁵ This unitary vision informed the way in which Wilhelm Frick, as National Socialist Minister of the Interior, guided the development of the relevant legislative infrastructure. And *this* package of eugenic and racial ideas had a genealogy and tradition of its own that, over several decades, had interacted in complicated ways with the specifically antisemitic ideology crystalized in “Volk und Rasse.”

Among other things, of course, eugenic thinking in both positive and negative terms was a global phenomenon in the early twentieth century, and National

⁴ See Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide. From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, Chapel Hill/NC 1995.

⁵ For early specialist studies, see Lothar Gruchmann, “Blutschutzgesetz” und Justiz. Zu Entstehung und Auswirkung des Nürnberger Gesetzes vom 15. September 1935, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 31 (1983), pp. 418–42, and Alfons Labisch/Florian Tennstedt, *Der Weg zum “Gesetz über die Vereinheitlichung des Gesundheitswesens” vom 3. Juli 1934. Entwicklungslinien und -momente des staatlichen und kommunalen Gesundheitswesens in Deutschland*, Düsseldorf 1985.

Socialist policymakers could draw on models found abroad – notably in the United States and Sweden. Such insights signal a second shift in the historiography of the “racial state” since the 1990s, namely a widening of its geographical horizons. A key dimension of this has been the exploration of various links between National Socialism and colonialism. Research on the nature of Germany’s rule in its own colonies before World War I has exposed practices of violent repression and acknowledged genocide in Southwest Africa, and there is also plenty of evidence suggesting that the global color line enforced by European imperialism informed domestic debates about the limits of racial tolerance and the legitimacy of mixed marriage in Wilhelmine Germany, just as in other colonial states. Historians have thus identified specific similarities in practice and discourse between colonial racism on the one hand and Nazi racism and genocide on the other, though the evidence for material continuities remains disputed.⁶ At the same time, considerable attention has been given to identifying and analyzing the colonial features of Nazi foreign policy and, in particular, German occupation policies during World War II (which themselves were prefigured in some German planning efforts during World War I). These notoriously included the “recovery” and promotion of German “blood” from all corners of Europe as well as the subjection of the populations of Eastern Europe and/or their removal in order to enable the settlement of conquered territories by *Deutschblütige*. The movement for settlement in the conquered East depended on the promotion and mobilization among Germans of a mentality that combined enthusiasm for pioneering adventures, a commitment to a civilizing mission, and the certainty of racial superiority in ways very similar to the values that drove nineteenth-century imperialism.⁷ Moreover, Germans had another point of reference for dreams of the frontier, in addition to their very limited experiments with settler colonialism

6 See Jürgen Zimmerer, *From Windhoek to Auschwitz. On the Relationship between Colonialism and the Holocaust*, London 2018. For a critique of the continuity thesis, see Birthe Kundrus, *From the Herero to the Holocaust? Some Remarks on the Current Debate*, in: *Africa Spectrum* 40 (2005), pp. 299–308.

7 A key study on the mobilization of civilians to settle the East is Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East. Agents and Witnesses of Germanization*, New Haven/CT 2003. For a recent overview, see Birthe Kundrus, *Colonialism, Imperialism, National Socialism. How Imperial Was the Third Reich?* in: Bradley Naranch/Geoff Eley (eds.), *German Colonialism in a Global Age*, Durham/NC 2015, pp. 330–46. The locus classicus for the “turn to the East” in Nazi and Holocaust studies enabled by the post-socialist opening of the archives is now Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, London 2010. Here, and more emphatically in his more controversial *Black Earth. The Holocaust as History and Warning*, New York 2015, Snyder envisages Eastern Europe as a contested frontier territory.

or even those of their European rivals: America's conquest and settlement of its own continental hinterland and its celebration of pioneer values imbued with fatal ambivalence towards indigenous populations.⁸

We see very little of this wider landscape of "race" in the chapter "Volk und Rasse," where Hitler is struggling to parse the European canon of racial antisemitism in order to formulate his own political program and rationale for action. But, in fact, its outlines are present in *Mein Kampf*: they are developed at some length in the second volume, written during 1925 and first published in 1926.⁹ While "Volk und Rasse" focuses on the threat embodied by the Jewish presence, the second volume places more emphasis on practical measures to forestall this danger and comparable threats, simultaneously grounding policy prescriptions in more elaborate statements about the character of human races in general and about what constitutes Aryans/Germans in particular. Its first chapter, "Weltanschauung und Partei" (Ideology and Party), sets out a principle of inequality between races that calls for the protection, propagation, and cultivation of those who are the bearers of the highest civilizational values, rising to the vision of "a supreme race as master among nations" (vol. 2, pp. [11–13]). Chapter two, "Der Staat" (The State), shows us the state as the means to this end, whose purpose is to foster a "community of living creatures who are physically and spiritually alike" and the "originary racial elements that are the source of the beauty and dignity characteristic of a higher form of humanity because culture emanates from them" (vol. 2, pp. [23–25]). It thus explicitly draws the argumentative link between biological race, cultural productivity, and state practices.

The themes of miscegenation and hybridization introduced in "Volk und Rasse" recur in "Der Staat." Here Hitler seems to confront biological evidence more directly than in the first volume. While he remains firm on the fundamental principle of blood and the dangers of blood-mixing, he replies directly to argu-

⁸ The most persuasive accounts here are those that emphasize cultural and discursive resonances rather than material continuities or conscious imitation: Kristin Kopp, *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space*, Ann Arbor/MI 2012; Jens-Uwe Guettel, *German Expansionism, Imperial Liberalism, and the United States, 1776–1945*, New York 2013; idem, *The U.S. Frontier as Rationale for the Nazi East? Settler Colonialism and Genocide in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe and the American West*, in: *Journal of Genocide Research* 15 (2013), pp. 401–19. Hitler himself cited the influence of the romantic visions of the German novelist Karl May.

⁹ The quotations from "Mein Kampf" are taken from: Hitler, *Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition*, ed. by Christian Hartmann et al., commissioned by the Institute for Contemporary History, 2 vols., Munich 2016. In the present article, all quotations from "Mein Kampf" were translated into English by Eve Rosenhaft. The square brackets in this edition indicate the pagination in the first edition of the two volumes of "Mein Kampf" (1925/27).

ments against the idea that hybridization is inherently degenerative. Thus while characterizing successive admixtures of alien blood in historical time as a source of weakness for the German territories, he allows for the possibility that a complete hybridization (*Durchmischung*) would at least have created a unified – and possibly more satisfied – *Volk*. His counter-proposition remains that this *Volk* would have been inferior (vol. 2, pp. [28–29]). In a long passage on the miserable condition of “mongrels” (*Bastarde*) (vol. 2, pp. [31–40]), he suggests that their decline is not absolute, but contingent on the continued existence of peoples who are more powerful because of their purity of blood; in a second step, of course, this becomes an argument for prophylactic measures to prevent the further “mongrelization” that would undermine the pure peoples. And it is indeed in this chapter that not only the prevention of mixed marriages, but also the compulsory sterilization of the diseased and disabled (vol. 2, p. [35]) as well as pro-natalist policies directed at the racially desirable (vol. 2, pp. [37–39]) are advocated, along with positive measures to promote their physical health and strength.

The global and colonial framework in which “race” operates for Hitler as well as his contemporaries is alluded to in “Der Staat” in a reference to the future settlement of conquered territories that will be pioneered by racially pure colonists (vol. 2, pp. [37–38]) and the throwaway line (looking back to the history of colonial migration) that a Black or a Chinese who masters the German language does not thereby become a German (vol. 2, pp. [18–19]). And while the threat posed by a black presence features in “Volk und Rasse” only to bolster antisemitic arguments – “it was and is the Jews who have brought the *Neger* to the Rhineland” (vol. 1, p. [345]) – explicit and implicit references to people of African descent play a prominent role in chapter three of the second volume, “Staatsangehöriger und Staatsbürger” (National and Citizen).

As the title of this third chapter suggests, the key proposition introduced here is that “racial” belonging must be the precondition for membership in the political community: only those of German blood may be citizens (*Staatsbürger*); others who are not legally aliens can at best be “nationals” (*Staatsangehörige*), subject to the laws of the nation but without the corresponding rights. This anticipates the terms of the Reich Citizenship Law, which was one of the key “racial” laws promulgated in 1935 known as the Nuremberg Laws. It is not insignificant that the Nuremberg Laws named only Jews as the people “of alien blood” who were to be excluded from citizenship and, in a second law on “the Protection of German Blood and Honor,” from intermarriage, sexual intercourse, and the sharing of households with those “of German blood” – a point that I will return to later. In “Staatsangehöriger und Staatsbürger,” however, Hitler draws both explicitly and implicitly on examples from the *black* diaspora to build his argument. He cites African migrants in Germany as a negative example: “A *Neger* who

used to live in the German colonies and is now resident in Germany produces a 'German citizen' when he brings a child into the world" (vol. 2, p. [76]). Hitler's statement was in fact entirely spurious, as many German born blacks learned to their cost, because residence in Germany never in itself conferred citizenship and the children of non-citizens did not acquire citizenship by birth in Germany. His positive model is the United States: "The American Union, by refusing physically unhealthy elements the right to immigrate as a matter of principle and simply excluding particular races from the right to citizenship, is already approaching the position that is at the heart of the *völkisch* concept of the state." (vol. 2, p. [78]) What the *völkisch* state will do, he argues, is to introduce consistency by writing the liminal status of *Staatsangehörige* into its constitution.

Töppel points out that sections of "Der Staat" were published with "Volk und Rasse" as a separate booklet from 1936 onwards. Thus, once the Nuremberg Laws were in place (at the latest), the enforcement of a wider vision of "racial" or blood purity through specific constitutional practices – in which the exclusion of Jews was articulated as a *particular* (if particularly urgent) case – was being identified as the core of Hitler's own thinking. A unitary vision of "race hygiene" is implicit in the way that Hitler's statement about American racial policies links health/disease with "race," informing not only persistent Nazi propaganda tropes (the association of Jews and rats in "Volk und Rasse," whose power and ubiquity Töppel reflects on), but also everyday medical and police practices.

Hitler's empirical observations about American practices point directly to the wider universe of sources and influences – the global frame of reference – that Hitler shared with his contemporaries.¹⁰ The statement that people in poor health were not allowed to enter the United States is manifestly true, but rather more problematic is the claim that "certain races" were "simply exclud[ed]" from becoming citizens – since there was no legal or constitutional sanction for exclusion from political rights on the grounds of "race" after 1870. The reality was, however, that in many parts of the United States one particular group, African Americans, were systematically denied citizenship rights by legal instruments that nominally avoided the charge of racial discrimination while laws enforcing segregation and criminalizing miscegenation effectively denied them access both to public goods and private happiness. There is good reason, then, to believe that when Hitler referred to "certain races" he was thinking quite specifically about the situation of African Americans.

¹⁰ As Töppel points out, Hitler cannot have used the work of the American Madison Grant for "Volk und Rasse," because it was not published until 1925, but Grant's work could have informed the second volume of "Mein Kampf."

There is a growing awareness among historians (as there was among contemporaries) of the ways in which German racists, including National Socialist policymakers, looked to the United States for models of segregation and exclusion, a process ambivalently related to romantic visions of the frontier and the more concrete ways in which American social and agrarian experiments in the wake of abolition served as a model for German colonial modernity.¹¹ The American legal historian James Q. Whitman has most recently and comprehensively argued the case for “Hitler’s American model.”¹² He does this not least by painting a persuasive picture of early twentieth-century America as an aspirational “racial state” in its own right. Whitmore demonstrates how firmly embedded and widely accepted the actual exclusion of African Americans from civic life was as well as how pervasive eugenic and exclusionary arguments and practices had become in the management of the American polity since the turn of the century. In doing so, he points to the long history of genocide and second-class citizenship status experienced by Native Americans and the more recent denial of political rights for the native populations of territories won by the United States in colonial wars (Puerto Ricans and Filipinos) and Chinese immigrants. But he also adduces detailed evidence indicating an awareness of these policies and practices among German observers, including not only Hitler, but also several others who made crucial contributions to the drafting of Nazi racial legislation.

These influences are indeed apparent in the process of legislative consultation that led to the Nuremberg Laws. The importance of the American (and colonial) emphasis on skin color/phenotype in establishing racial categories is clear even in the approach of Wilhelm Frick, who later became chief framer and enforcer of the Nuremberg Laws. As Minister of the Interior in Thuringia in 1930, he had introduced a ban on Black performances, i.e. *Negerkultur*. Similarly, the committee led by Hans Kerrl, Prussian Minister of Justice that was charged with devising a penal code for the new National Socialist state proposed a number of measures in 1933 that banned not only miscegenation, but also “scandalously consorting in public” between people of German blood and members of “colored races.”¹³ In fact, their draft made direct reference to practices in the American South. A similar reference to the United States (rather than Germany’s own colo-

11 See Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa. Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*, Princeton/NJ 2010, and Guettel, *German Expansionism*, pp. 79–126.

12 See James Q. Whitman, *Hitler’s American Model. The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*, Princeton/NJ 2017.

13 *Nationalsozialistisches Strafrecht. Denkschrift des Preußischen Innenministers*, Berlin 1933, p. 48. Translation by Eve Rosenhaft.

nial history) was voiced by a Prussian Interior Ministry spokesman when suggesting a marriage ban in March 1934.¹⁴ In the immediate pre-Nuremberg discussions, Reich Justice Minister Franz Gürtner observed that it would be easier if all racial “aliens” could be identified on sight: “The idea of criminalizing race mixing as such would face far fewer difficulties if only it wasn’t the Jews who were de facto at the top of the list.”¹⁵

15 years ago, Alexandra Przyrembel provided a significant new analysis of these discussions, embedded within the context of a study of *Rassenschande*, i.e. the forms of “race mixing” and miscegenation criminalized by the Nuremberg Laws.¹⁶ On closer examination it seems clear that the central preoccupation of Nazi racial legislation and its framers was less the existence or presence of *Fremdblütige* as such, but rather the danger of “race mixing.” The fear of miscegenation informs all policy and practice towards *Fremdblütige* in Nazi Germany. We can see it in the way in which Frick positioned himself. As noted, the Nuremberg Laws explicitly targeted only Jews, and, as early as February 1935, Frick himself had declared that “the Jewish question” had priority among “questions of racial law and racial policy” when he claimed sole responsibility for the enforcement of the race laws.¹⁷ But, after the Nuremberg Laws were promulgated, he issued a statement naming Blacks and “Gypsies” as *Fremdblütige* within the terms of the Laws – and then it was specifically in terms of the danger that “mongrel” children might be born that he extended the ban on mixed marriages to those groups. This focus on reproductive power meant that sterilization would become a characteristic form of oppression and source of terror for both Blacks and “Gypsies.”

At the same time, though, the rationale for preventing or sanctioning miscegenation differed between target groups in ways that reflected those independent pre-histories of racism and discrimination. In the case of Blacks, the undesirability of racial mixing could be taken for granted against the background of Atlantic slavery and colonial histories, but the question had a particular valence for Germans: *visibly* mixed-race individuals were a living refutation of the notions of degeneration harbored by racists like Hitler. The children of colonial migrants

14 See “Schreiben des Preußischen Ministers des Innern an das Auswärtige Amt vom 28.3.1934,” in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Inland I Partei 84/4, reproduced in Reiner Pommerin, “Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde.” Das Schicksal einer farbigen deutschen Minderheit 1918–1937, Düsseldorf 1979, pp. 96–101.

15 Cited by Alexandra Przyrembel, “Rassenschande.” Reinheitsmythos und Vernichtungslegitimation im Nationalsozialismus, Göttingen 2003, p. 142.

16 See *ibid.*

17 Gruchmann, “Blutschutzgesetz” und Justiz, p. 425; see also Günter Neliba, Wilhelm Frick. Der Legalist des Unrechtsstaates, Paderborn u. a. 1992, p. 164.

and French colonial occupying troops were also living reminders of a lost empire and a lost war. In the case of “Gypsies,” on the other hand, the theories of race hygienists such as Robert Ritter, adopted by SS-Leader Heinrich Himmler, rationalized long-standing prejudice by proposing that it was “mixed-” rather than “pure-blooded” “Gypsies” who had congenitally criminal tendencies.¹⁸ From this point of view, it is the scale of “racial” belonging established for Jews in the wake of the Nuremberg Laws – whereby higher proportions of “Jewish blood” incurred the most virulent sanctions while *Mischlinge* and those already in mixed marriages enjoyed some protection – that appears as an anomaly or at least as one of many policy inconsistencies rather than as a norm against which the cases of “other victims” could be judged as exceptions.

In short, the redrawing of the landscape of “race” in Nazi Germany by historians has not served to reconcile the contradictions and inconsistencies apparent in the system, still less to “domesticate” either Hitler or the antisemitic priorities that he and other leading Nazis shared. Often the elements of variation, improvisation, and catch-up that we see in relation to racial “other victims” serve to underline the fact that (in Gürtner’s terms) the Jews really were at the top of the list for Hitler. It was as a result of his direct intervention that the Nuremberg Laws explicitly targeted only Jews.¹⁹ And this brings us back to “Volk und Rasse” and Roman Töppel’s anatomy of Hitler’s early thought. As Töppel points out, even in “Volk und Rasse” the fear of miscegenation is central to Hitler’s intellectual tergiversations, leading, for example, to his insistence on the notion that insemination is a form of infection in the gendered division of procreative labor and that the Jewish youth was a sexual predator. Similarly, the assertion “it was and is the Jew who has brought the *Neger* to the Rhineland” has as its central point of reference not the (transient) presence of black occupying troops, but rather the lasting presence of their mixed-race children, who were among the first victims of systematic sterilization on “racial” grounds after 1933. This is not to deny that elements of sexual fantasy quite independent of questions of procreation were powering Hitler’s racism as they do all racist and colonial imaginaries.²⁰ But, a re-reading of both Töppel and Hitler suggests that a visceral fear of miscegenation *as such* begins to emerge as an originary force, surely not prior to a fear of the

18 Cited by Guenter Lewy, Himmler and the “Racially Pure Gypsies,” in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 34 (1999), pp. 201–14.

19 See Neliba, Wilhelm Frick, pp. 198–221; Gruchmann, “Blutschutzgesetz” und Justiz; Przyrembel, “Rassenschande,” p. 142.

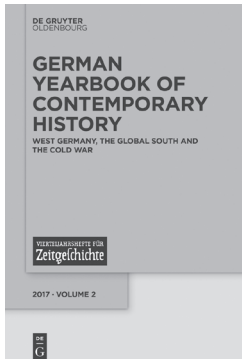
20 On the multiple dimensions of the episode of the “Rheinlandbastarde,” see most recently Julia Roos, *Racist Hysteria to Pragmatic Rapprochement? The German Debate about Rhenish “Occupation Children,” 1920–30*, in: *Contemporary European History* 22 (2013), pp. 155–80.

Jews, but operating on its own terms in interaction with antisemitism. In terms of how we understand the sources of Hitler's ideas, then, his rejection of the science that demonstrated the positive consequences of hybridization really is key, especially since the Jewish threat (the antisemitic *Weltanschauung*) is not the sole QED, even in "Volk und Rasse." It remains a paradox that Hitler seems typical of his generation in his reception of a comprehensive, "unified" vision of "race" as a global issue yet also demonstratively different from most of his contemporaries in the absolute priority that he assigned to the "Jewish question." But pursuing the sources for his ideas in a wider sense does call for an exploration of the ways in which a *Weltanschauung* was formed under the political and material circumstances that defined a generation.²¹ While we cannot do without the kind of close reading and analysis of textual sources that Töppel has provided, we need to be aware of even more than the global context outlined above, the world of parallel text corpora and distinct and interweaving genealogies of discourse about "race," nation, territory, and empire. Harder to encompass, but absolutely crucial, is the texture of experience that constituted the historical moment of the early twentieth century in which anxieties about all of these things fused to generate a new and peculiarly toxic configuration of fears and hopes – one in which "race" turned out to be anything but an afterthought.

²¹ For recent approaches, see Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation. The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office*, trans. Tom Lampert, Madison/WI 2009, and Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives. Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships*, Oxford 2011.

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Paul Hoser

Thierschstraße 41

Hitler the Lodger, a Jewish Landlord, and a Restitution Problem

From the Barracks to a Rented Room

Adolf Hitler was discharged from the army on March 31, 1920. Up until this point, he had received his army pay and allowances, plus free lodging and meals.¹ He had even chosen not to apply for any benefits to which he might have been entitled.² It is not known for certain how he supported himself during the subsequent months of 1920.

With his discharge into civilian life came a change of address in Munich: Hitler moved from the barracks to a rented room. On May 1, 1920, he moved out of the 2nd Infantry Regiment's barracks at Lothstraße 29 and into Thierschstraße 41 in the Lehel district of the city.³ He moved into a room on the second floor of this house, which was otherwise occupied by the businessman Ernst Reichert and his wife Maria. The room had been allocated to him by the housing office.⁴ Hitler was

1 See Volker Ullrich, *Adolf Hitler. Biographie*, vol. 1: *Die Jahre des Aufstiegs 1889–1939*, Frankfurt a. M. 2013, p. 109; Othmar Plöckinger, *Unter Soldaten und Agitatoren. Hitlers prägende Jahre im deutschen Militär 1918–1920*, Paderborn 2013, pp. 163–65, 177–78, and Thomas Weber, *Wie Adolf Hitler zum Nazi wurde. Vom unpolitischen Soldaten zum Autor von "Mein Kampf"*, Berlin 2016, pp. 262–63.

The present English version of this article was shortened by Paul Hoser. It was originally published in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 65 (2017), pp. 131–61.

2 See Ernst Deuerlein, *Hitlers Eintritt in die Politik und die Reichswehr*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 7 (1959), pp. 177–227, here p. 182; a facsimile of Hitler's wartime personnel roster is reprinted on p. 190.

3 On life in the barracks, see Anton Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Weg begann in München 1913–1923*, expanded new edition, Munich 2000, p. 217; and on his move to Thierschstraße 41, Archive of the Institute for Contemporary History (*Archiv des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte*; henceforth: *IFZ Archive*), ZS-287, fol. 2, "Protokoll der Unterredung von Georg Franz[-Willing] mit Antonie Reichert, 20.6.1952." A facsimile of the registration form is reprinted in Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Weg*, p. 21, with no source information.

4 *IFZ Archive*, ZS-287, fols. 2, 4, "Protokoll der Unterredung von Georg Franz[-Willing] mit Antonie Reichert, 20.6.1952." According to Hermann Esser, it was Joseph Berchtold, as of 1923 the leader of the "Hitler Shock Troops" that later became the SS, who found the room for Hitler. Berchtold's parents lived next door at No. 39. It is possible that Hitler was tipped off about the

formally registered as the tenant of Maria Reichert's father, valet Anton Dachs, who was still alive, and whose apartment was opposite that of his daughter.⁵ After his death, the apartment passed to his widow Karolina.

The best-known account of Hitler's rented room and its furnishings comes from Ernst Hanfstaengl, who had met him in the winter of 1922:

The room that he occupied as the tenant of a Frau Reichert was clean and tidy, if somewhat small and cramped and not exactly lavishly furnished. The floor was covered with cheap, worn linoleum and a few small, threadbare rugs. Against the wall opposite the bed, whose bedposts partially obstructed the window, stood a chair and table, as well as some bare wooden shelving housing Hitler's treasured books.⁶

Hitler was given breakfast by his landlords, and he read the newspapers while he ate. He generally came home late and got up late the next day.⁷ At lunchtime, he would go to the Party office in the Sterneckerbräu. He usually ate there, in some other cheap restaurant, or in the public soup kitchen on Theresienstraße.⁸

The offices of the *Münchener Beobachter* had been located at Thierschstraße 15 since October 15, 1919.⁹ Renamed the *Völkischer Beobachter* on January 3, 1920, the paper was acquired by the publishing house Franz Eher Nachf. on December

room by Berchtold, and then got approval from the housing office. The housing market was still regulated at that time, so this was a requirement; IfZ Archive, ED 561/1, vol. 1, p. 46, "Interview Essers, 24.2.1964." See also Adreßbuch für München (Munich Address Book) 1920, Section II, Munich 1920, p. 722; Weber, Hitler, pp. 263–64, and Martin H. Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt. Revolution, Inflation und Moderne. München 1914–1924*, Göttingen 1994, pp. 226–31. Translator's note: second floor (American usage) = first floor (UK usage).

⁵ On Hitler's subsequent registration as the tenant of Dachs's widow, see Peter Fleischmann (ed.), *Hitler als Häftling in Landsberg am Lech 1923/24. Der Gefangenen-Personalakt Hitler nebst weiteren Quellen aus der Schutzhaft-, Untersuchungshaft- und Festungshaftanstalt Landsberg am Lech*, Neustadt a. d. Aisch 2015, p. 85.

⁶ Ernst Hanfstaengl, *Zwischen Weißem und Braunem Haus. Memoiren eines politischen Außenseitters*, Munich 1970, p. 52. Further descriptions can be found in Weber, Hitler, p. 264, and in a remark by Esser; IfZ Archive, ED 561/1, vol. 1, p. 80, "Interview Essers, 25.2.1964." One of Esser's interviewers mentioned that the wife of a Hans Hitler had talked about a rent of DM 35. He must have meant 35 Reichsmark (RM), of course. On Hans Hitler, an allegedly illegitimate son of Hitler's half-brother Alois, see Annabel Wahba, *Nachfahre Hitlers. Ein deutsches Leben*, in: *ZEITmagazin* 50 (2013), pp. 52–58.

⁷ IfZ Archive, ED 561/1, vol. 1, pp. 83–85, "Interview Essers, 25.2.1964."

⁸ IfZ Archive, ED 561/2, vol. 1, p. 25, "Interview Essers, 27.2.1964."

⁹ See Adolf Dresler, *Geschichte des "Völkischen Beobachters" und des Zentralverlages der NSDAP Franz Eher Nachf.*, Munich 1937, p. 67.

20, 1920, becoming the official organ of the NSDAP.¹⁰ So Hitler was now living just a few doors away from his Party's newspaper publisher.

Hitler was well liked by the Reicherts as a tenant, as their daughter Antonie testified: "Hitler always paid the rent on time. [...] Hitler trusted his landlords implicitly. He was treated like one of the family. He never locked his rooms. The Reicherts could use his gramophone and books whenever he wasn't there."¹¹ For their part, the Reichert family let Hanfstaengl play their out-of-tune piano for Hitler, too.¹² They were very fond of their lodger:

On a personal level, there is only good to be said about him, nothing negative [...]. When he got home after a meeting, he washed in hot water, as he was generally bathed in sweat. Old Frau Dachs usually stayed up late to see to his needs. Relations between Hitler and his landlords were always cordial and harmonious. [...] He always paid his rent and telephone in advance.¹³

Hitler's landlord Ernst Reichert was so impressed by him that he joined the NSDAP in 1920. As Reichert later declared, he was convinced that Hitler's "view of the world was the only right one."¹⁴

10 See Paul Hoser, *Die politischen, wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Hintergründe der Münchner Tagespresse zwischen 1914 und 1934*, vol. 1: *Methoden der Pressebeeinflussung*, Frankfurt a. M. 1990, pp. 122–26.

11 IfZ Archive, ZS-287, fols. 2–3, "Antonie Reichert, 20.6.1952." The testimony of Antonie Reichert was probably based largely on what her parents had told her. She herself was still a young child when Hitler moved in and not quite 16 when he moved out in 1929; Stadtarchiv München (Munich City Archive, henceforth: StadtA München), "Meldekarte [registration card] Ernst Reicherts."

12 See Hanfstaengl, *Zwischen Weißem und Braunem Haus*, pp. 54–55.

13 IfZ Archive, ZS-287, fol. 3, "Antonie Reichert, 20.6.1952." Hanfstaengl also mentions the good relationship between Hitler and his landlady, Maria Reichert. The "old Frau Dachs" mentioned in the quotation comes up repeatedly in secondary literature, see *Zwischen Weißem und Braunem Haus*, p. 53. The term "old Frau Reichert" also appears; Walter Görlitz/Herbert A. Quint, *Adolf Hitler. Eine Biographie*, Stuttgart 1952, p. 245. However, Anton Joachimsthaler notes that Maria Reichert (1886–1951) was only 45 in 1931, see *Hitlers Liste. Ein Dokument persönlicher Beziehungen*, Munich 2003, p. 332. The discrepancy in the descriptions is easily explained; it is a matter of distinguishing between Maria Reichert and her mother Karolina Dachs, the widow of the valet Anton Dachs.

14 Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (Federal Archive Berlin-Lichterfelde, henceforth: BDC), PK 068, "Fragebogen für die ersten Mitglieder der N.S.D.A.P. (D.A.P.) mit anhängender ehrenwörtlicher Erklärung, 8.10.1933."

The House at Thierschstraße 41, its Surroundings, and its Owner

When Hitler moved into the house, it still belonged to the widow of the copper-smith Karl Schweyer, Anna Schweyer, who had inherited it from her husband in 1899.¹⁵ On October 1, 1919, before Hitler moved in, Hugo Erlanger had rented shop premises on the ground floor of the house for a branch of his retail business selling men's clothing and sporting goods.¹⁶ On October 31, 1921, he purchased the house for 205,000 Mark.¹⁷ Hugo Erlanger was a Jew – which Hitler must have known. In 1910, 5.1 percent of the population in the Lehel district were Jewish.¹⁸ Munich's second synagogue, the Ohel Jakob Synagogue on Herzog Rudolf Straße, had opened in the district in 1892.¹⁹ Erlanger was not the only Jewish house owner on Thierschstraße. Seven other houses on the street were owned by Jews.²⁰

Hugo Erlanger was born in Augsburg on April 19, 1881.²¹ His father, Jakob, had a shop there that sold woolen and linen goods as well as haberdashery and draperies.²² He came from Buchau in Württemberg, and his wife Emilie, née Neu-

15 Staatsarchiv München (Munich State Archive, henceforth: StAM), Land Registry 12655, fol. 936 1/5.

16 StadtA München, "Polizeimeldebogen [police registration form; henceforth: PMB] Hugo Erlanger."

17 StAM, Land Registry 12655, fol. 936 1/5, and StadtA München, KA 3988, "Schreiben des Oberrechtsrats der Landeshauptstadt München, Dr. Heinz Sauter, an die Wiedergutmachungsbehörde Oberbayern, 12.4.1949." The change of ownership was entered in the land registry on November 8, 1921.

18 See Gerhard Neumeier, *München um 1900. Wohnen und Arbeiten, Familie und Haushalt, Stadtteile und Sozialstrukturen, Hausbesitzer und Fabrikarbeiter, Demographie und Mobilität. Studien zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte einer deutschen Großstadt vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt a. M. 1995, p. 246.

19 See Elisabeth Angermair, *Die orthodoxe Religionsgemeinschaft Ohel Jakob und ihre Synagoge an der Herzog-Rudolf-Straße*, in: Beth ha-Knesseth – Ort der Zusammenkunft. Zur Geschichte der Münchner Synagogen, ihrer Rabbinen und Kantoren, published by the Munich City Archive, Munich 1999, pp. 141–64.

20 StAM, Land Registry 12655, fols. 186, 197–199, 1090, 1095. On the situation of the Jews in Munich in the years of the Weimar Republic, see Heike Specht, *Zerbrechlicher Erfolg (1918–1933)*, in: Richard Bauer/Michael Brenner (eds.), *Jüdisches München. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 2006, pp. 137–60.

21 Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (Bavarian Central State Archive, henceforth: BayHStA), Dept. II, Bayerisches Landesentschädigungsamt (Bavarian State Restitution Office, henceforth: LEA) 10512, "Kopie der Meldung Jakob Erlangers an das Standesamt Augsburg, 22.4.1881."

22 Adreß-Buch der Stadt Augsburg nebst Häuser-Verzeichnis 1888 (Address Book for the city of Augsburg, with listing of house owners, for 1888), Augsburg 1888, p. 37.

burger, was from Fischach in the administrative district of Schwabmünchen.²³ After finishing primary school, the younger Hugo attended St. Stephan *Gymnasium* (upper secondary school), which focused on classical learning, for four years. He then transferred to the more science-based *Realgymnasium*, which he left three years later.²⁴ Some evidence indicates that he was living in Munich from October 4, 1898.²⁵ He worked in the garment trade. In April 1918, Erlanger stated that he was a salaried sales representative and partner in the Rosenthal Fleischer & Cie corset factory, located in the town of Göppingen in Württemberg. He drew a fixed salary of 12,000 Mark a year, and he was paid a variable bonus. He estimated his assets at 30,000 Mark.²⁶

On August 2, 1914, the 33-year-old Erlanger volunteered for military service. When he was recommended for a promotion to the status of reserve officer in 1918, his advancement was opposed by serving officers from the two regiments in which he had served. The real, but unspoken reason was known at the deputy corps headquarters of the 1st Army Corps: “In the case of both regiments, the reason for the rejection is that E. is a Jew.”²⁷ But the commander, General von der Tann, insisted that it was only right and proper to promote Erlanger to officer rank given his outstanding military record. On July 30, 1918, Erlanger was duly awarded the rank of second lieutenant in the army reserve.

In the immediate postwar period, Erlanger found himself in economic difficulties from time to time. But it seems that he was soon able to re-establish himself successfully in his chosen line of business so that he was in a position to purchase the house at Thierschstraße 41 by October 1921. He moved into a third-floor apartment in the house on March 1, 1922,²⁸ and, by this point, he had also become the sole proprietor of the wholesale textile company “Hugo Erlanger.” His son Hugo Klemens had been born on March 17, 1910, in Munich, and nearly ten years later (on February 4, 1920) his second son, Egon Ehrlich, was born. Erlanger finally married the mother of his children, Anna Eckl, a Munich-born Catholic, on May 5, 1920.²⁹

23 BayHStA, Dept. II, LEA 10512, “Eidesstattliche Erklärung Hugo Erlangers vom 5.10.1945.”

24 BayHStA, Dept. IV, “Offizierspersonalakt [officer’s personnel record, henceforth: OP] 19069, note, April 25, 1918, and StadtA München, “Volkskarteikarte 742, Kennkartenkopie Erlangers, 11.8.1939.”

25 StadtA München, “PMB Hugo Erlanger.”

26 BayHStA, Dept. IV, OP 19069, “Bericht des Majors und Kompanieführers von Stegemann (Augsburg), 26.4.1918.”

27 BayHStA, Dept. IV, OP 19069, note, July 6, 1918.

28 StadtA München, “PMB Hugo Erlanger.” Translator’s note: third floor = second floor.

29 Information on the two sons provided by StadtA München, July 30, 2015; also StadtA München, Volkskartei registration card 742, copy of Erlanger’s identity card, August 11, 1939

After the Beer Hall Putsch

Hitler's reputation as a political agitator was growing. Even before he left the military, he had been active as an NSDAP speaker. On February 24, 1920, in the Hofbräuhaus, he had proclaimed the party program of the NSDAP, the successor to the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers' Party).³⁰ On November 9, 1923, his political career came to a temporary halt with his failed putsch and the death of 16 of his followers, who had been killed in a gun battle with the Bavarian State Police as they marched to the Feldherrnhalle.³¹ On November 11, he was arrested at Hanfstaengl's house in Uffing on the Staffelsee and taken to Landsberg Prison. On April 1, 1924, the Munich People's Court I sentenced him to five years' imprisonment, with the possibility of parole after five months.³² The Bavarian state government then approved his release on December 19, 1924.

How he managed to keep up his rent payments during his incarceration is not known. At all events, relations with his landlords were not adversely affected. Maria Reichert even visited him three times in Landsberg.³³ On December 20, 1924, a cold winter's day, Hitler was released from Landsberg Prison. There are conflicting reports about the circumstances surrounding his homecoming. The first account, by Hermann Esser, one of Hitler's most active supporters, appeared in his newspaper *Der Nationalsozialist* on December 25, 1924. According to this account, Hitler arrived back at Thierschstraße at 2:10 p.m., where he was met by Ulrich Graf and Christian Weber. Led by Ernst Woltereck, a delegation from the Schwabing section of the *Großdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft* (Greater German People's Community), the successor organization set up by Hitler's radical followers when the NSDAP was banned, was waiting by the front door to welcome him home with flowers. His first visitor, we are told, was Max Amann, a city coun-

(Anna Erlanger's date of birth) and records of the Munich II Registry Office, M II B 1920/697 (date of marriage). Anna Erlanger died on March 18, 1950. She belonged to the Catholic parish of St. Ursula; BayHStA Dept. II, LEA 10512, file memo, June 5, 1954, fol. 103, and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 20, 1950: Death Notice.

³⁰ See Hitler. *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, ed. by Eberhard Jäckel/Alex Kuhn, Stuttgart 1980, pp. 109–11.

³¹ See Walter Ziegler, *Hitlerputsch*, 8./9. November 1923, in: *Historisches Lexikon Bayerns*; www.historisches-lexikon-bayerns.de/artikel/artikel_44511 [accessed February 15, 2018].

³² See *Der Hitler-Prozess 1924. Wortlaut der Hauptverhandlung vor dem Volksgericht München 1*, Part 1: 1.–4. Verhandlungstag, ed. by Lothar Gruchmann/Reinhard Weber, Munich 1997, pp. XL, 342–65.

³³ See Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Liste*, p. 20, and Fleischmann (ed.), *Hitler als Häftling*, pp. 237–38. The prison officer present when Maria Reichert visited Hitler in Landsberg on December 5, 1923, noted that their conversation was about everyday matters, mainly to do with the apartment.

cilman and the publisher of his new book. Shortly before 4:00 p.m., Esser and Julius Streicher arrived at the house, having telephoned ahead to check whether Hitler wished to see them. Hitler allegedly assured them: "I was, am, and remain a National Socialist and nothing else!"³⁴ He spoke about his homecoming himself on the night of February 3 and 4, 1942: "Adolf Müller came with Hoffmann. [...] Outside my place of residence on Thierschstraße, the Füssens, the Gahrs, and a few other faithful families had turned up; they had hung up some garlands and laurel wreaths, one of which I still have."³⁵ We get a rather different account from the author of a gushingly admiring Hitler biography published in London in 1934; this author had interviewed a number of people who had known Hitler for some time in the year that the book came out, including an early supporter, Magdalena Schweyer.³⁶ She had a shop at Thierschstraße 38, directly across the street from the house at No. 41, where she sold fruit and groceries. She said that on the day Hitler returned from Landsberg, she and other women supporters had decorated his room with flowers and laid the table with good things to eat.³⁷ He arrived by car shortly before two in the afternoon. He got out, came up to her, and shook her hand. Then he went up to his apartment on his own. An hour or two later, a neighbor came into her shop to ask for donations to the organ fund for St. Anna's Church. Schweyer suggested that she try Hitler. She did so and came back a few minutes later with a beaming smile on her face. Hitler had given her 50 *Reichsmark* (RM), a substantial sum of money in those days, which his supporters

34 Der Nationalsozialist, December 25, 1924. Esser's later memories tell a very different story. According to this later version of events, Hitler had given strict orders that nobody was to see him or be there to welcome him. He did not get back to Munich until 11:00 p.m. or midnight. Esser had disregarded Hitler's ban on visitors and called at the Reicherts' home late in the evening. Hitler had apparently received him rather unenthusiastically: "I don't want to hear anything about the '[G]rossdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft,' or about the newspaper, or about the others, etc. I am not receiving any visitors for now. I just want to have a few days to myself, so that I can think things over quietly. We then talked about purely personal matters. He became more responsive and agreeable then." IfZ Archive, ED 561/4, vol. 2, pp. 21–22, "Interview Essers, 11.3.1964."

35 Adolf Hitler. *Monologe im Führer-Hauptquartier 1941–1944*. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims, ed. by Werner Jochmann, Hamburg 1980, p. 260. See also Heinrich Hoffmann, *Hitler wie ich ihn sah*. Aufzeichnungen seines Leibfotografen, Munich/Berlin 1974, pp. 40–42; and on the jeweler Josef Fueß, see Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Liste*, pp. 225–27. The engraver and goldsmith Otto Gahr had his workshop at Mariannenstraße 3, not far from Hitler's apartment; see *Adreßbuch der Stadt München und Umgebung* (Address Book for Greater Munich) 1929, Dept. II, p. 575.

36 See Heinz A. Heinz, *Germany's Hitler*, London 1934, pp. 132–34. To date, nothing is known about the author Heinz.

37 See *ibid.*, pp. 138–41. It is quite conceivable that Magdalena Schweyer conflated different occasions and projected them onto the same day.

had collected for him and placed in a drawer for the day of his homecoming.³⁸ He allegedly said: “The priests don’t like me, but that’s neither here nor there.”³⁹

The rebirth of the NSDAP at the end of February 1925, made possible by Hitler’s promise to do nothing illegal, was accompanied by a modest improvement in his living situation. According to Esser, Hitler was renting a second room in the Reicherts’ home from February 27 and 28, 1925 – the room previously occupied by their daughter Antonie. He used this small room facing the courtyard as his bedroom, while the room at the front of the house became his living room.⁴⁰ In the corridor, which Hitler made into his anteroom, he had a sofa where his adjutant, Julius Schaub, frequently slept.⁴¹ In the living room, there was a sitting area with a sofa, an oval table, and a couple of chairs belonging to the landlords. There were also two glass-fronted bookcases. The bedroom was furnished with a bed, a washstand, a large wardrobe, and a chest of drawers. These items of furniture had likewise been provided by his landlords.⁴²

Hitler seems to have been content with his modest lodgings. The absence of a bathroom did not bother him. We are told that he used the local public baths, the Müller’sches Volksbad.⁴³ His only complaint was the noise from the streetcars. At the time, the Thierschstraße streetcar stop was located on the opposite side of the street from No. 41, a few houses farther along towards the Maxmonument.⁴⁴

38 The average annual income per capita in Germany at the time was 961 RM; see Dietmar Petzina/Werner Abelshäuser/Anselm Faust, *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch*, vol. 3: *Materialien zur Statistik des Deutschen Reiches 1914–1945*, Munich 1978, S. 102.

39 Heinz, Hitler, p. 141. Antonie Reichert also mentions a donation of 50 RM that Hitler made, but she is vague about the dating; IfZ Archive, ZS-287, fol. 3, “Antonie Reichert, 20.6.1952.”

40 IfZ Archive, ED 561/5, vol. 1, pp. 24–25, “Interview Essers, 16.3.1964.”

41 IfZ Archive, ED 561/7, vol. 1, pp. 27–29, “Interview Essers, 1.4.1964.”

42 As well as Esser’s description of Hitler’s two rooms, we have five others: from Antonie Reichert (IfZ Archive, ZS-287, fol. 2, “Antonie Reichert, 20.6.1952”); from Julius Schaub, see Olaf Rose (ed.), *Julius Schaub. In Hitlers Schatten. Erinnerungen und Aufzeichnungen des Chefadjutanten 1925–1945*, Stegen 2005, p. 41; from Kurt Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler. The Story of a Nazi Who Escaped the Blood Purge*, New York 1937, pp. 271–72; from Baldur von Schirach, *Ich glaubte an Hitler*, Hamburg 1967, pp. 44–45; and from the house owner himself, Hugo Erlanger (see Heinz, Hitler, pp. 276–77).

43 IfZ Archive, ED 561/5, vol. 1, p. 24, “Interview Essers, 20.3.1964.” On Hitler’s love of these baths, see Hitler. *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, p. 214.

44 IfZ Archive, ED 561/6, vol. 1, p. 10, “Interview Essers, 20.3.1964.” The stop had been there since 1890; see Martin Pabst, *Die Münchner Tram. Geschichte, Linien, Fahrzeuge*, Munich 2010, p. 123. A contemporary city map shows that the stop was situated outside No. 44, opposite Hildegardestraße, which at that time joined Thierschstraße here; see Brunn’s neuester Plan von München (Munich 1922).

Many active National Socialists visited Hitler at home.⁴⁵ After his release, and before the NSDAP was re-established, he was visited by Kurt Lüdecke; Hitler was interested in him because of his foreign connections and the possibility that he might have been able to raise money outside Germany.⁴⁶ Lüdecke's detailed account is one of the few that we have of a conversation with Hitler in his lodgings on Thierschstraße. Lüdecke was close to the group around Ludendorff and Rosenberg, which had no time for the extreme radicals like Esser and Streicher. He failed to persuade Hitler, however, to exclude these radicals from the Party when it was re-established; he fared no better with his suggestion that they should focus their efforts exclusively on Thuringia so that they could try to get into government and thereby establish a power base for the Party.⁴⁷

Another of Hitler's visitors was the former Protestant cleric Georg Schott, who eked out a living as a freelance lecturer:

We had talked about this and that, about the hardships and sufferings of our people; and without intending to, or even noticing, we had got onto questions that transcended the events of the passing moment and all historical reality – the deep mysteries of life. Hitler got to his feet. [...] He strode up and down the room several times, then came up to me all of the sudden – I'll never forget his voice, nor the expression in his eyes – and said: "We are all just little men, so many John the Baptists. I am waiting for the Christ!"⁴⁸

45 According to Antonie Reichert, Hitler's frequent visitors – in addition to Hanfstaengl, Schaub, and his chauffeur Emil Maurice – included Oskar Körner, Rudolf Schüßler, Anton Drexler, Hermann Esser, Max Amann, Franz Ritter von Epp, Ulrich Graf, Rudolf Heß, Heinrich Hoffmann, Wilhelm Brückner, and Philipp Bouhler. In 1923, Emil Gansser and Ernst Pöhner also dropped by. Another early guest was the editor of the "Völkischer Beobachter," Josef Stolzinger-Czerny, who wrote a brief account of his visit in the "Aichacher Zeitung," April 19, 1933. Ludendorff and Hermann Kriebel were also occasional visitors. The collector Friedrich Rehse often came to the house; the leader of the SA, Franz Pfeffer von Salomon, also came to see him there. From 1925, the list of visitors included Dr. Rudolf Buttmann, Karl Fiehler, Dr. Wilhelm Frick, and Franz Xaver Schwarz, as well as the schoolteacher and later ministerial counsellor Anton Haderer (StAM, SpkA, K 595, Anton Haderer). Another name mentioned is Michael Steinbinder, a member of the Hitler Shock Troops who served a four-month sentence in Landsberg for his involvement in the Beer Hall Putsch (StAM, SpkA, K 1764, Michael Steinbinder). A succession of Hitler's early female admirers also came to the house: Helene Bechstein, Elsa Bruckmann, Hermine Hoffmann, Jenny Haug, and Eleonore Baur, also known as "Sister Pia." The actress Renate Müller, who was only 22 years old in 1929, is also said to have visited him at home – as did Winifred Wagner, who met him for the first time on October 1, 1923. All the names of his visitors can be found in: IfZ Archive, ZS-287, fols. 1–2, "Antonie Reichert, 20.6.1952."

46 On Hitler and Lüdecke, see Peter Longerich, *Hitler. Biographie*, Munich 2015, pp. 115–16.

47 Lüdecke had visited Hitler even before the putsch; I knew Hitler, pp. 273–78.

48 Georg Schott, *Das Volksbuch vom Hitler*, Munich 1924, p. 55. The meeting mentioned here took place before November 9, 1923. Schott joined the NSDAP in September 1920 and visited Hit-

Baldur von Schirach had become involved with the National Socialists as a *Gymnasium* pupil in Weimar, where he met Hitler in March 1925. He attended Munich University in 1927, studying German language and literature (among other things), and he was active in the local university branch of the National Socialist German Student League founded in 1926.⁴⁹ In mid-November 1927, he saw Hitler strolling along Maximilianstraße and followed him home to the cold, unheated apartment of the Reicherts. Schirach was hoping he could interest Hitler in the elections for the General Students' Committee:

I asked Hitler if he would speak at a large student meeting. He hesitated. "I don't know..." He didn't sound very enthusiastic. [...] "The thing is," replied Hitler, "I don't think we'll ever get more than ten percent of university students to support us, or ten percent of the intelligentsia as a whole..." "I disagree," I said. "We could have the majority of university students behind us in a few years' time, if you would only speak to them yourself."⁵⁰

After some hesitation, Hitler agreed, but said he would come only if the hall was full.⁵¹

A collection of testimonies by *Jungmädels* members published in 1937 also contains a detailed account of a meeting between Hitler and three unknown young girls from Munich on April 19, 1925. They wanted to give him a present for his impending birthday. Since Hitler was still sleeping, Frau Reichert sent them away, telling them to come back in an hour and a half. Hitler's young admirers were then let in at 7:00 p.m., and they were allowed to sit and wait in the Reicherts' living room. They had to sit in the dark, as the electric lights were off because of a power outage: "Then we heard the footsteps of the Führer in the corridor; we could clearly see his silhouette behind the frosted glass of the door because he was carrying a candle, which cast the shadow we could see."⁵² They

ler several times in his lodgings. Some of what they talked about found its way into the book he published while Hitler was in prison, which annoyed Hitler, who had spoken too frankly about his political intentions and viewed this as a tactical error; see Wolfram Pyta, *Hitler. Der Künstler als Politiker und Feldherr. Eine Herrschaftsanalyse*, Munich 2015, pp. 172–73.

⁴⁹ See Schirach, *Ich glaubte an Hitler*, pp. 23–24, and Hitler. *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen. Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, vol. 1: *Die Wiedergründung der NSDAP. Februar 1925–Juni 1926*, ed. by Clemens Vollnhals, Munich 1992, pp. 48–51.

⁵⁰ Schirach, *Ich glaubte an Hitler*, p. 45.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, p. 46. Schirach was in luck: the hall was packed on November 21, 1927. The speech is reprinted in: Hitler. *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, vol. 2: *Vom Weimarer Parteitag bis zur Reichstagswahl Juli 1926–Mai 1928*, Part 2, ed. by Bärbel Dusik, Munich 1992, pp. 550–57.

⁵² [Author unknown], *Wir gratulieren dem Führer!*, in: Lydia Schürer-Stolle, *So sind wir. Jungmädels erzählen*, Berlin 1937, pp. 220–26, here p. 223. The "Jungmädelsbund" was the junior section (10–14-year-olds) of the "Bund Deutscher Mädels."

were eventually led into his study: Hitler stood at the open window, looking down onto Thierschstraße:

[...] the Führer turned round and came slowly towards us, smiling broadly. We stood smartly at attention; [...] A chorus of "Heil!" greeted him: "Heil, Herr Hitler!" He took my hand in both of his and gazed into my eyes so deeply and fervently that I felt my spine tingle: "You can put your trust in me for evermore!" [...] Then the Führer began to speak about the tasks that we girls and German women have to perform in the nation. [...] We sat together like this for three-quarters of an hour; while the rain outside dripped onto the window sill, the candlelight flickered on our faces inside. We listened to the Führer with bated breath, gazing at him intently the whole time. [...] It was late, and the Führer rose to his feet.⁵³

Word had clearly got out that Hitler owned a dog. The girls had brought a sausage with them for the dog:

Wolf was called in; he leapt into the room, his tongue hanging out and his eyes flashing. The Führer gave a whistle and the dog sat; the Führer took a small knife from his trouser pocket, cut off a small piece from the sausage, and placed it on the dog's muzzle. Then he carried on talking to us, as if nothing had happened. He gave a sign – and the sausage was gone, just like that; the trick was repeated [...]. You can imagine how impressed we were, and you'll understand why I said to the Führer: "My goodness, Herr Hitler, you certainly know how to train dogs!"⁵⁴

In this propagandistic account of Hitler as a *Führer* who was both warmly avuncular and a commanding figure used to giving orders who held the future of the nation in his hands, the setting itself – the modest apartment in the Lehel district – is suffused with some of the adulation that its occupant received from his supporters.

A tragicomic episode from Hitler's private life also played out at Thierschstraße 41. On July 14, 1924, his 16-year-old niece, Geli (Angela) Raubal, was allowed to visit him in Landsberg prison.⁵⁵ It seems that Hitler's fellow inmate and later chauffeur, Emil Maurice, fell in love with her on this occasion.⁵⁶ In November 1927,

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 223–25.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 225.

⁵⁵ See Fleischmann (ed.), *Hitler als Häftling*, pp. 42, 44, 48, 360. Ernst Hanfstaengl, *The Unknown Hitler. Notes from the young Nazi Party*, London 2005, pp. 52–53, also mentions in this English version a visit from Geli's mother, Hitler's half-sister Angela Raubal, and her son Leo, in Hitler's rooms on Thierschstraße. Apparently, Hitler was not pleased to see them when he turned up unexpectedly.

⁵⁶ See Anna Maria Sigmund, *Des Führers bester Freund. Adolf Hitler, seine Nichte Geli Raubal und der "Ehrenarier" Emil Maurice. Eine Dreiecksbeziehung*, Munich 2003, pp. 56, 60.

she was in Munich as a medical student for a short time.⁵⁷ In a quiet moment at the wedding of Rudolf Heß on December 20, 1927,⁵⁸ Maurice revealed to Hitler that he was engaged to his niece and planned to marry her. To his great surprise, this sent Hitler into a fit of rage. The next day, Hitler allegedly threatened Maurice with a revolver in his apartment on Thierschstraße, in Geli's presence, and demanded that the two end their relationship immediately.⁵⁹ As Maurice was not prepared to break their engagement then and there, Hitler sacked him the following day. In the summer of 1928, Hitler forced them to formally end their engagement by threatening to stop providing financial support for Geli and her family.

At this point, Hitler was already in a position to pay his niece's considerable costs.⁶⁰ He could also afford a private secretary, a personal adjutant, and his own chauffeur, and he was able to rent Haus Wachenfeld on the Obersalzberg in 1928.⁶¹ All of this shows that his material circumstances had improved considerably.⁶² Even so, for the time being, he still saw no reason to move out of his very humble lodgings in the house owned by Hugo Erlanger.

Erlanger himself remarked on his encounters with Hitler:

I hadn't much to do with him myself as he wasn't directly a tenant of mine. His room was a sub-let. And since I am a Jew, I concerned myself as little as possible with the activities of my lodger and the National Socialists. I admit, I liked Hitler well enough. I often encountered

⁵⁷ See Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Liste*, p. 312.

⁵⁸ See Kurt Pätzold/Manfred Weißbecker, *Rudolf Heß. Der Mann an Hitlers Seite*, Leipzig 1999, pp. 77–78.

⁵⁹ See Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Liste*, pp. 314–20, and Sigmund, *Des Führers bester Freund*, pp. 96–129. Esser gives a different account of the conflict. According to him, Hitler had rented a room for Geli on the ground floor of the house at Thierschstraße 41. Here he had come across her with Maurice and threatened the latter with his bullwhip. Maurice jumped through the window into the courtyard and ran off; IfZ Archive, ED 561/6, vol. 1, pp. 1–2, “Interview Essers, 20.3.1964.” According to Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Liste*, p. 312, Geli was officially living in a boarding house – Pension Klein – at Königinstraße 43 at the time, where she stayed until July 5, 1928. She was then in Linz for a month and then back in Munich, where she was registered as resident again from August 5, 1928. Hitler had then sought out a furnished room for her at Thierschstraße 43, in the home of the Rupprecht family.

⁶⁰ See Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Liste*, p. 322, and Ullrich, *Hitler*, vol. 1, p. 313.

⁶¹ See Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Liste*, pp. 84, 87, 283–87, and Albert A. Feiber, “Filiale von Berlin.” *Der Obersalzberg im Dritten Reich*, in: Volker Dahm et al. (eds.), *Die tödliche Utopie. Bilder, Texte, Dokumente, Daten zum Dritten Reich*, 6th ed., Munich 2011, pp. 53–187, here p. 121. Joachimsthaler believes that Hitler spent more time in Haus Wachenfeld near Obersalzberg than he did at his place on Thierschstraße.

⁶² IfZ Archive, ED 561/6, vol. 1, pp. 27, 29, “Interview Essers, 20.3.1964.” On Hitler's official income at this time, see Oron James Hale, Adolf Hitler. Taxpayer, in: *The American Historical Review* 60 (1955), pp. 830–42, here p. 837.

him on the stairway and at the door – he was generally scribbling something in a notebook – when he would pass the time of day with me pleasantly enough. [...] He never made me feel that he regarded me differently from other people.⁶³

Clearly, Hitler had no problem with living in a house owned by a Jew.⁶⁴ He did, however, avoid places that he believed to be frequented by Jews. So whenever he walked past Café Annast near the Hofgarten – as we learn from the café's owner – Hitler always wore a scornful expression.⁶⁵

Ever since he first appeared as a public speaker for the NSDAP, he had constantly attacked and denigrated the Jews, often in the vilest and crudest language.⁶⁶ In 1922, retired Army Major Josef Hell, who later worked on the staff of Fritz Gerlich's weekly newspaper *Der gerade Weg* that was fiercely hostile to National Socialism,⁶⁷ made notes while interviewing Hitler, and he used these as the basis for a text that he wrote in 1945. According to his account, Hitler had said:

When I come to power properly, my first and most important task will be the extermination of the Jews. As soon as I have the power to do it, I'll have rows of gallows erected, on Marienplatz in Munich, for example [...]. Then the Jews will be hanged, one after the other, and they'll be left hanging until they stink. [...] As soon as they are cut down, the next lot will be hanged, and this will go on until the last Jew in Munich has been exterminated. We'll do the same in all the other cities, until Germany is completely cleansed of Jews.⁶⁸

In light of this, Hitler's attitude towards the people with whom he had actual contact seems all the more astonishing. One gets the impression that the Jews he attacked with such emotive vehemence were just the grotesque figments of his imagination, whereas individual Jews who were real and visible did not trouble him at all.⁶⁹

⁶³ Cited in Heinz, Hitler, p. 276.

⁶⁴ Before World War I, when he was living in the men's hostel in Vienna, he had no problems living alongside his Jewish fellow residents: see Ullrich, Hitler, vol. 1, p. 58. Brigitte Hamann has already pointed out, in *Hitlers Wien. Lehrjahre eines Diktators*, Munich/Zurich 1996, pp. 498–500, 507–08, that Hitler was on friendly personal terms with Jews during his youth in Vienna.

⁶⁵ StAM, SpkA, K 29, "August Annast, Erläuterung zum Antrag meines Entnazifizierungsverfahrens, 8.7.1946."

⁶⁶ See Hitler. *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, pp. 113–989; and on Hitler's attitude at this time, see Weber, Hitler, pp. 266–84.

⁶⁷ On Hell, see Fritz Gerlich. *Ein Publizist gegen Hitler. Briefe und Akten 1930–1934*, ed. by Rudolf Morsey, Paderborn 2010, p. 374.

⁶⁸ IfZ Archive, ZS-640, fol. 006, "Aufzeichnungen von Major a. D. Josef Hell nach Notizen von 1922."

⁶⁹ See also Alan Bullock, Hitler. *Eine Studie über Tyrannei*, vol. 1: *Der Weg zur Macht*, reprint, Frankfurt a. M. 1964, p. 32, where Bullock argues that Hitler's antisemitism was not based on actual events or encounters, but was pure fantasy.

As of October 5, 1929, Hitler's registered address was Prinzregentenplatz 16, where he rented an apartment with nine rooms for an annual rent of 4,176 RM.⁷⁰ Maria Reichert found this for Hitler, and she also moved to this new address with her husband at Hitler's own request.⁷¹ Hitler paid the rent for the Reicherts. The real reason for the move was that he wanted to keep a closer eye on his niece Geli. Officially, she was living there as the Reicherts' lodger, because he did not want to jeopardize his reputation. Hitler acknowledged his debt of gratitude to the Reicherts until the end and sent them Christmas presents every year.⁷²

Thierschstraße 41: A Shrine Cleansed of its Jewish Connections

Even before the world economic crisis hit in 1929, which spelled disaster for many wholesale businesses, Hugo Erlanger was facing economic difficulties.⁷³ Since the beginning of 1928, he had fallen behind with the interest payments on his mortgage. On January 10, 1930, bankruptcy proceedings were initiated against him and his assets in the Munich District Court.⁷⁴ He managed to pay off his business creditors with a court-imposed settlement. The mortgage receivables for the house, however, were not included in the bankruptcy assets. The City of Munich, which was the principal creditor, agreed by a resolution of the main committee of the City Council on March 5, 1931, to reduce the rate of interest to six percent. The city did not apply for the forced sale of the property, as it was unlikely to get a good price for it in the economic climate at the time. But the situation did not improve as time went on.⁷⁵

By September 26, 1933, the unpaid interest amounted to 10,525.54 RM. Following a resolution of the City Council dated November 23, 1933, the city finally

⁷⁰ See Benedikt Weyerer, *München 1919–1933. Stadtrundgänge zur politischen Geschichte*, Munich 1993, p. 12, and Peter Hoffmann, *Die Sicherheit des Diktators. Hitlers Leibwachen, Schutzmaßnahmen, Residenzen, Hauptquartiere*, Munich 1975, p. 189.

⁷¹ IfZ Archiv ED 561/1, vol. 1, pp. 15–16, "Interview Essers, 20.3.1964."

⁷² See Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Liste*, p. 14.

⁷³ StadtA München, KA 3988, "Finanzreferat der Stadt München an die Aussenstelle des BLVW München, 7.1.1948."

⁷⁴ StadtA München, "PMB Hugo Erlanger, Zeitungsnotiz."

⁷⁵ StAM, WB I a 773, fol. 15, and StadtA München, KA 3988, "Dr. Heinz Sauter an die Wiedergutmachungsbehörde Oberbayern, 12.4.1949."

opted for foreclosure.⁷⁶ Erlanger hired the lawyer Dr. Michael Siegel,⁷⁷ who lodged an appeal with the Munich District Court on March 21, 1934. He contested the amount of outstanding interest claimed by the city. The city administration responded on April 12: “We firmly reject such an un-German misrepresentation of the facts of the case.”⁷⁸

The forced sale of the property duly went ahead on September 28, 1934.⁷⁹ According to the city administration, no other interested party put in a bid, and the city itself had put it up for auction only out of necessity in order to recover its debt. But according to Erlanger’s account, the two proprietors of the private bank Schneider & Münzing had been interested in making an offer. Shortly before the auction, however, Dr. Christian Müller from the city administration had allegedly told them that the city was determined to acquire the property at all costs, so there was no point for them to bid. If anyone else would have bought the property at auction, the municipal mortgage loans would have immediately become due for repayment.⁸⁰ The proceeds from the sale amounted to 61,084.80 RM.⁸¹ After deduction of the accrued interest arrears, the city was left with 20,961.37 RM.⁸²

76 StadtA München, KA 3988, “Referat 10 der Stadt München (Rechtsabteilung) an Finanzreferat, 4.10.1945.” The mortgage loan from the city Sparkasse (savings bank) amounted to 50,000 RM; another 20,000 RM were loaned by the city endowment fund and 15,000 RM by the Schneider & Münzing bank.

77 See Reinhard Weber, *Das Schicksal der jüdischen Rechtsanwälte in Bayern nach 1933*, Munich 2006, p. 259, and Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Als Hitler unser Nachbar war. Erinnerungen an meine Kindheit im Nationalsozialismus*, Munich 2014, p. 102. Dr. Michael Siegel had already been victimized on March 10, 1933, when members of the SS had marched him barefoot through the city with a sign around his neck because he had protested to the police on behalf of his client, Max Uhlfelder, whose department store had been vandalized and looted.

78 StadtA München, KA 3988, “Vermerk des Referats 10 der Stadt München, 18.12.1945,” and Punkt 31, “Neuland an das Zentralmeldeamt Bad Nauheim, 14.9.1948;” see also StAM, WB I a 773, fol. 3.

79 StadtA München, KA 3988, “Vermerk des berufsmäßigen Stadtrats Herrenberg (Werk- und Fiskalreferat der Stadt München), 18.5.1949.”

80 StadtA München, KA 3988, “Eidesstattliche Erklärung Erlangers, 9.6.1949, Vortrag des Stadtrats Erhart vor dem Stadtrat, 19.7.1949,” and StadtA München, “Ratsprotokolle [minutes of council meeting] 722/3,” fols. 3133–35. The document “Neuland an Wiedergutmachungsbehörde Oberbayern, 28.5.1949,” also confirms this, and can be found in StAM, WB I a 733, fols. 24–25, as well as in StadtA München, KA 3988.

81 StadtA München, KA 3988, “Vermerk des Referats 10, 13.6.1949.” The mortgages on the property at the time of the auction, excluding arrears of interest and taxes, were unchanged from 1930.

82 StadtA München, KA 3988, “Finanzreferat der Landeshauptstadt München an Referat 10, 2.11.1945.”

On March 22, 1935, the Munich Municipal Authority was entered in the land register as the new owner of the property.⁸³ Erlanger got nothing from the sale of the house.

In the restitution proceedings initiated in 1948, the arguments presented by Erlanger's lawyer, Siegfried Neuland, made it clear why the city was so keen to get its hands on the property. It had put the house up for sale, not:

because there were arrears outstanding, but because the city wanted to get rid of Erlanger, a Jew, as the owner of the property. Adolf Hitler had lived in the house. The house was to become a shrine, effectively, placed under protection as a historic building, which is what then happened. Up to 1945, there was a commemorative plaque affixed to the front of the house with Hitler's name on it.⁸⁴

The commemorative plaque, however, was not the end of the story, as Erlanger later related: "On Hitler's birthdays, they insisted on decorating the house, which was done by the local Party group. It cost a lot of money, and the property owner had to pay for it."⁸⁵

Hugo Erlanger under the Hitler Regime

In the early years of National Socialism, Erlanger was able to continue doing business as usual. But, in the summer of 1938, the city gave him notice to vacate his home. He moved in with his son Hugo Klemens, who lived at Simmernstraße 12. On August 9, 1938, he had his company name removed from the commercial register. On December 29, 1938, the head office of the Municipal District Inspectorate reported that he was no longer engaged in any commercial activity; since November 10, he had felt that it was pointless to carry on. Hugo Erlanger was now entirely dependent on the support of his son.⁸⁶ He had particular reasons for citing November 10, 1938 as a turning point: on that day,

83 StAM, Land Registry 12665, fol. 936 1/5. The municipal authority assumed the mortgage from the savings bank.

84 StAM, WB I a 773, fol. 2, and StadtA München, KA 3988, Punkt 31, "Antrag Neulands an das Zentralmeldeamt Bad Nauheim, 14.9.1948." According to information supplied by Dr. Burkhard Körner from the Bavarian State Office for the Preservation of Historic Monuments, September 14, 2015, there are no contemporary documents confirming Neuland's claims about plans to give the building protected status.

85 StadtA München, KA 3988, "Eidesstattliche Erklärung Erlangers, 9.6.1949."

86 StadtA München, "Gewerbebeamte, Akte Hugo Erlanger sen, Vermerk der Bezirksinspektion des 27. Stadtbezirks, 29.12.1938."

he had been arrested at 1:30 p.m. by the Munich Gestapo and sent to Dachau concentration camp.⁸⁷ He was only released a month later, on December 10, 1938, on the strength of his record as a war veteran. Even after his release, he was kept under surveillance by the Gestapo, and his home was searched several times.

In the spring of 1941, a barracks camp, or *Barackenlager*, for Munich's Jews was erected on Knorrstraße, in the Milbertshofen district of the city.⁸⁸ Now nearly 60, Erlanger received a summons from the Jewish community administration on March 27, 1941, that asked him to report for labor deployment⁸⁹ at the site of the camp on April 3, 1941. The Jewish camp leader, Hugo Railing, who was deported and murdered a year later,⁹⁰ initially assigned him to help with the excavations for the camp as an unskilled laborer. When the construction work was completed, Erlanger was put in charge of buying and bringing in all the camp's food supplies. A particularly insidious system forced the Jewish camp administration to assist with the preparations for deportations. Erlanger was given the task of organizing the luggage of the people scheduled for deportation. He was also used as a baggage porter for nearly all the transports. The camp was closed down on August 19, 1942.⁹¹

Erlanger was then transferred to another camp for Jews, set up in the convent of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in the city district of Berg am Laim.⁹² He was once again put in charge of the camp's food supplies. This camp remained in existence until March 1, 1943. Transports were also dispatched from here to the death camps. Because of his "privileged" mixed marriage to a non-Jewish

87 BayHStA, Dept. II, LEA 10512, "Eidesstattliche Erklärung Erlangers, 5.10.1945," and "Bescheinigung der International Refugee Organization, Arolsen, 22.3.1950."

88 See Maximilian Strnad, Zwischenstation "Judensiedlung." Verfolgung und Deportation der jüdischen Münchner 1941–1945, Munich 2011, p. 29.

89 StAM, SpkA K 713, Gebhard Hinteregger, blue fol. 34, "Erlanger an den Staatskommissar für die Betreuung der Juden, 27.5.194."

90 See Strnad, Zwischenstation, p. 52.

91 See Christl Knauer-Nothhaft/Erich Kasberger, Berg am Laim. Von den modernen Siedlungsanfängen zum modernen Stadtteil Münchens, Munich 2007, pp. 341–80, here p. 363. The relevant chapter is "Die 'Heimanlage für Juden Berg am Laim,'" written by Erich Kasberger.

92 See *ibid.*, and Else Behrend-Rosenfeld/Siegfried Rosenfeld. Leben in zwei Welten. Tagebücher eines jüdischen Paares in Deutschland und im Exil, ed. and annotated by Erich Kasberger/Marita Krauss, Munich 2001.

woman, Erlanger did not have to live in the camps himself.⁹³ However, he received no payment for his work there.⁹⁴

From July 1 to December 4, 1943, he had to work in the Florian Streicher sheet metal shop at Reichenbachstraße 27, and from December 18, 1943, to May 5, 1945, he was assigned to work in Café Annast near the Hofgarten.⁹⁵ Officially, Erlanger was employed as a dishwasher and messenger, but because of his commercial experience, Annast let him work in the office – unbeknownst to the Gestapo.

Restitution: A Road Paved with Obstacles

When the war ended, Erlanger was 64 and unemployed. Although fast approaching retirement age, he was determined to try and make a living for himself again. In 1946, he started working as a traveling salesman selling linens, knitwear, hosiery, and corsets.⁹⁶ He tried to get back into wholesaling, but without success; he did not have sufficient working capital to maintain stock levels and finance sales.⁹⁷

Erlanger had begun efforts to get his house back as early as October 1, 1945. But the Real Estate Transactions Division of the Munich Department of Municipal Affairs maintained on October 12 that the house had been put up for auction solely because Erlanger had fallen behind on his interest payments. Erlanger's contention that the forced sale had been fast-tracked because his lawyer, Dr. Siegel, was a particular *bête noire* of the National Socialists, was rejected by the city authorities as "totally unfounded."⁹⁸

⁹³ Erlanger himself later pointed out that he was one of the privileged Jews; BayHStA, Dept. II, LEA 10512, "Erlanger an die Regierung von Oberbayern, Generalanwaltschaft der rassistisch, religiös und politisch Verfolgten, 16.2.1950."

⁹⁴ As he had not lived in the camps, he was not entitled to later compensation for this period of time; BayHStA, Dept. II, LEA 10512, fol. 3, "Vermerk, 8.11.1951."

⁹⁵ BayHStA, Dept. II, LEA 10512, "Abschrift aus dem Arbeitsbuch von Hugo Israel Erlanger, 13.12.1943," and "Eidesstattliche Erklärung Wilhelm G.s, 31.8.1949."

⁹⁶ BayHStA, Dept. II, LEA 10512, fol. 22, "Bayerische Staatsbank an Bayerisches Landesentschädigungsamt, 19.5.195," and "Eidesstattliche Erklärung Hugo Erlangers, 5.10.1945."

⁹⁷ BayHStA, Dept. II, LEA 10512, "Arbeitsamt München an Bayerisches Hilfswerk, München 2.12.1949."

⁹⁸ StadtA München, KA 3988, "Vermerk des Referats 10 der Stadt München, 18.12.1945."

In the spring of 1946, he asked the lawyer Siegfried Neuland⁹⁹ to act on his behalf. Neuland advised the city not to make life difficult for Erlanger by dragging the matter out, but simply to give the house back.¹⁰⁰ But the head of the Department of Municipal Affairs, City Councilman Karl Erhart,¹⁰¹ stuck to the city administration's existing argument.¹⁰²

However, the city could not fend off Erlanger's claims as easily as that. By January 8, 1947, the vice-president of the Bavarian State Office for Asset Management and Restitution (BLVW), which had been established in July 1946, determined that the house was a looted asset. The city, he found, had exploited to its own advantage the difficult situation in which Erlanger had found himself through no fault of his own, even though he was willing to pay.¹⁰³ On June 2, 1947, the Munich office of the Upper Bavarian branch of the BLVW placed the house under the control of trustee August Fink.¹⁰⁴ Neuland presented the city's treatment of Erlanger in 1933/34 in a very different light than the city administration:

Although all the requirements of the regulation dated May 26, 1933, were met, Mr. Erlanger was not given the option of keeping his property. Instead, the city authorities pressed for the forced sale of the house. [...] The aforementioned regulation was specifically intended to assist those defaulters who were unable to make payments as a result of a substantial decline in their earned income, due to circumstances beyond their control. Anybody else would have been granted some latitude at that time. But the city administration of the time enforced the rules strictly where Jews were concerned. In fact, the city authorities exploited – to their own advantage – the difficult situation in which Erlanger found himself through no fault of his own: the property at Thierschstr. 41 was seized by the city and is therefore now a looted asset.¹⁰⁵

99 Neuland was president of the Israelite Religious Community of Munich from 1951 to 1969 and a specialist in restitution cases; www.hdbg.de/parlament/content/persDetail.php?id=3598 [accessed February 15, 2018].

100 StadtA München, KA 3988, "Neuland an Referat 10, Abteilung Grundstücksverkehr der Stadt München, 11.5.1946." In all probability, the letter is incorrectly dated, as a question mark inserted over the month strongly suggests. The receipt stamp is dated June 14, 1946.

101 See Ingelore Pilwousek (ed.), *Verfolgung und Widerstand. Das Schicksal Münchner Sozialdemokraten in der NS-Zeit*, Munich 2012, pp. 142–43.

102 StadtA München, KA 3988, "Erhart an Referat 10 – Treuhandstelle für Haus- und Grundbesitz, 19.6.1946." Also involved in the city's decision-making process was city councilman Dr. Christian Müller, who had legal training and had played the key role in the foreclosure proceedings back in 1934; StadtA München, KA 3988, "Vermerk Dr. Müllers, 5.9.1946."

103 StAM, "Vermögenskontrolle München-Stadt [Property Control, Munich City] 1094, Feststellung des Vizepräsidenten Dr. Josef Oesterle, 8.1.1947."

104 StAM, "Vermögenskontrolle München-Stadt 1094, Vermerk, 10.6.1947."

105 StadtA München, KA 3988, "Neuland an Referat 10, Abt. Grundstücksverkehr, 10.3.1948."

Neuland's argument had no effect initially. Consequently, on September 14, 1948, he then submitted an official application for restitution to the Central Registration Office in Bad Nauheim.¹⁰⁶ This request was entered on March 3, 1949, in the land register kept by the Munich District Court.¹⁰⁷ The city's legal department lodged an objection.¹⁰⁸ Neuland countered as follows:

It made no difference whether he was a Christian or a Jew – a foreclosure auction would have taken place anyway. So claims the city administration today. Back then, they thought differently, and they acted differently. [...] I'd like to ask the Munich city administration this question: how many foreclosure auctions did the then "capital of the Nazi movement" conduct against Party comrades or non-Jews after May 26, 1933?¹⁰⁹

The lack of sensitivity displayed for so long by Erhart and City Treasurer Erwin Hielscher,¹¹⁰ both powerful government officials and SPD party members, and their blind reliance on subordinates are quite astonishing. And particularly so in Erhart's case, given his history: an active Social Democrat since 1906, he had become chairman of the General Federation of German Trade Unions in Munich in 1921, lost his job in 1933, and was incarcerated in Dachau concentration camp from August 23 to October 13, 1944.

It was not until June 1949 that the city was prepared, finally, to change its tune. An amicable settlement was reached. The city declared itself willing to give back the house, while Erlanger assumed responsibility, as a personal debtor, for all the charges that had applied on the day of the auction, September 28, 1934.¹¹¹ On August 23, 1949, the City of Munich's name was removed from the land reg-

The regulation referred to here was the Regulation on Measures Relating to Foreclosures May 26, 1933, Reichsgesetzblatt, Part I, May 29, 1933, No. 56, pp. 302–09.

106 StAM, WB I a 773, fol. 2, and StadtA München, KA 3988, "Neuland an das Zentralmeldeamt Bad Nauheim, 14.9.1948."

107 StadtA München, KA 3988, "Amtsgericht München an Stadt München, 3.3.1949," and StAM, WB I a 773, fol. 18, "Grundbuch des Amtsgerichts München Steuergemeinde St.-Anna-Vorstadt," vol. 10, p. 37, fol. 100.

108 StadtA München, KA 3988, "Werk- und Fiskalreferat der Stadt München an Wiedergutmachungsbehörde Oberbayern, 13.4.1949."

109 StAM, WB I a 773, fols. 24–25, and also in StadtA München, KA 3988, "Neuland an Wiedergutmachungsbehörde Oberbayern, 28.5.1949."

110 On Hielscher, see www.hdbg.de/parlament/content/persDetail.php?id=3525popH=960 [accessed February 15, 2018]; StadtA München, KA 3988, Hielscher to the Bavarian Relief Agency, October 8, 1946.

111 StAM, WB I a 773, fol. 32, and StadtA München, KA 3988, "Niederschrift, aufgenommen in nicht öffentlicher Sitzung vor einem Mitglied des Güteausschusses (Wiedergutmachungsbehörde Oberbayern), 13.6.1949."

ister as the owner of the property.¹¹² But from the day he got it back, the house was a constant source of financial worries for Erlanger, especially since he had no success with his business endeavors. His life did not get back on a reasonably even keel until 1955, when he was granted a pension under Germany's Federal Restitution Law in recognition of his prison term in Dachau and his loss of earnings after being forced to give up his job.¹¹³

Summary

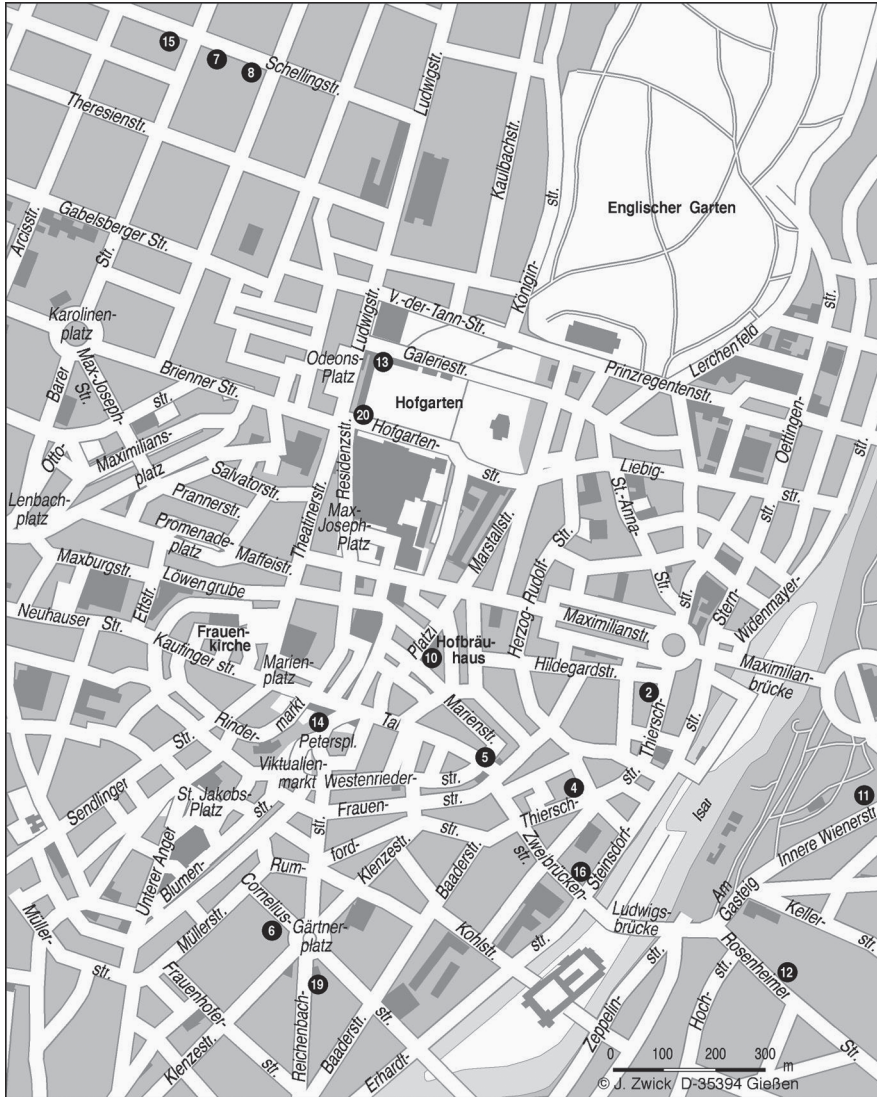
The circumstances of Hitler's life, from his youth until his death, have been exhaustively researched by historians. Hardly any attention has been paid, however, to his living arrangements during the early period of his rise to political power. As Volker Ullrich recently observed, most scholars have disregarded Hitler's personal life outside politics as of no particular interest – indeed, they have claimed that he had no private life at all. Ullrich goes on to say that it is time to revise this perception: “The idea that he was essentially incapable of forming relationships is quite wrong. What set him apart, however, was the absence of any sharp divide between the political and the private sphere; instead, the two spheres were interconnected in a highly unusual way.”¹¹⁴ This was precisely the case in the house on Thierschstraße, too, where Hitler also received his political followers.

At this time, Hitler's private life took place in two different social worlds. On the one hand, he inhabited an informal, lower-middle-class setting, comprised

112 StadtA München, KA 3988, “Schreiben des Amtsgerichts München (Grundbuchamt), 23.8.1949.”

113 Erlanger desperately needed money because of the house. In order to get it quickly, he agreed on April 22, 1952, to accept, by way of settlement, a one-time payment of DM 7,400, which was half of what he was entitled to under the Restitution Law. It was only later that he discovered he would have been entitled to a pension as well, and he then successfully contested the settlement; BayHStA, Dept. II, LEA 10512, fols. 18, 69, “Der Allgemeine Vertreter des Landesinteresses to LEA, 14.7.1952, Entscheidung, 12.7.1955.” Erlanger died in Munich on August 29, 1964 at the age of 83; BayHStA, Dept. II, LEA 10512, fol. 108, “Eintrag des Standesamts I München Nr. 1766/1964.” His liabilities in March 1965 amounted to DM 73,353.13. The sale value of the house was estimated to be DM 300,000. The executor of Erlanger's estate, Dr. Rolf Fiedler, sold the house on July 2, 1965 to the master butcher Franz Götz; StAM, AG München Nr. 1964/4419, “Nachlaß Hugo Erlanger, Testament Erlangers, 16.11.1962,” and fols. 31, 33–34, “Dr. Rolf Fiedler an Amtsgericht München, Nachlassgericht, 22.6.1967 u. 7.9.1970.”

114 Ullrich, Hitler, vol. 1, p. 17; see Der Spiegel of May 7, 2016: “Ein kleines Licht, eigentlich,” pp. 126–29.



Hitler's places of residence

- 1 Lothstraße 29: Barracks of the 2nd Bavarian Infantry Regiment (residence until May 1, 1920)
- 2 Thierschstraße 41: Hugo Erlanger's house
- 3 Prinzregentenplatz 16 (residence since October 5, 1929)

Party institutions

- 4 Thierschstraße 15: Party publishing house Franz Eher Nachf. GmbH (after 1927, it also included Thierschstraße 11), February/March 1925 also Geschäftsstelle der NSDAP (Nazi Party offices)
- 5 Tal 54: Sterneckerbräu, Geschäftsstelle der NSDAP until October 1921
- 6 Corneliusstraße 12: Geschäftsstelle der NSDAP, November 1921 till November 1923
- 7 Schellingstraße 50: Geschäftsstelle der NSDAP, April 1925 till September 1930
- 8 Schellingstraße 39: Editorial offices of the *Völkischer Beobachter*

Places of assembly

- 9 Marsfeld (i.e. Marsstraße 43): Zirkus Krone
- 10 Platzl 9: Hofbräuhaus
- 11 Innere Wienerstraße 19: Hofbräukeller
- 12 Rosenheimerstraße 29: Bürgerbräukeller

Restaurants

- 13 Galeriestraße 2: Café Heck
- 14 Petersplatz 8: Café
- 15 Schellingstraße 62: Osteria Bavaria

Baths

- 16 Zweibrückenstraße 31: Müller'sches Volksbad

Locations of Erlanger's forced labour

- 17 Knorrstraße 148: Barackenlager (barrack camp) Milbertshofen (April 3, 1941, to August 19, 1942)
- 18 Clemens-August-Straße 9–11: Berg am Laim camp, Heimanlage für Juden [home units for Jews], Kloster der Barmherzigen Schwestern [Convent of the Sisters of Charity] (August 20, 1942, to March 1, 1943)
- 19 Reichenbachstraße 27: Bauspenglerei (tinsmith / plumber) Florian Streicher (July 1, 1943, to December 18, 1943)
- 20 Odeonsplatz 18: Hofgartencafé Annast (December 18, 1943, to May 5, 1945)

Johannes Hürter/Matthias Uhl

Hitler in Vinnytsia

A New Document Casts Fresh Light on the Crisis of September 1942

When people reflect on the culminating moments of World War II and its greatest and most important theater, the war in the East between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, they rarely focus on the late summer of 1942 as a key turning point. Given the primary focus on the Battle of Stalingrad in German (and Russian) collective memory, the stalling of the German advance along the Volga and in the Caucasus in September 1942 barely registers. Military historians, on the other hand, have pointed out that this period was enormously important in operational and strategic terms, not to mention its impact on the course of world history. Bernd Wegner, in particular, has persuasively argued that the turning of the tide on the Eastern Front was a cumulative military disaster that unfolded in three principal stages.¹ First, the planned *Blitzkrieg* against the Soviet Union (“Operation Barbarossa”) failed in July 1941, as did the assault on Moscow (“Operation Typhoon”) in December 1941 and then the second German Eastern Campaign (“Operation Blue”) in September 1942. From then on, the German military leadership was “at

¹ See Bernd Wegner, *Hitlers Strategie zwischen Pearl Harbor und Stalingrad*, in: *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (henceforth: DRZW), published by the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, vol. 6: Horst Boog et al., *Der Globale Krieg. Die Ausweitung zum Weltkrieg und der Wechsel der Initiative 1941–1943*, Stuttgart 1990, pp. 97–127; idem, *Der Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1942/43*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 761–1102, here pp. 1094–1102; idem, *Von Stalingrad nach Kursk*, in: DRZW, vol. 8: Karl-Heinz Frieser (ed.), *Die Ostfront 1943/44. Der Krieg im Osten und an den Nebenfronten*, Munich 2007, pp. 3–79, here pp. 3–8; idem, *Deutschland am Abgrund*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 1165–1209, here pp. 1192–1209. Historians disagree as to the relative importance of these three stages. There are good reasons for viewing December 1941 as the most significant of the three dates, with the crisis at the gates of Moscow and the entry of the USA into the war; from this point onwards there was no realistic prospect of the war being won by the German Reich and its allies. See Klaus Reinhardt, *Die Wende vor Moskau. Das Scheitern der Strategie Hitlers im Winter 1941/42*, Stuttgart 1972; Johannes Hürter, *Hitlers Heerführer. Die deutschen Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941/42*, 2nd ed., Munich 2007, pp. 318–50. Furthermore, quite apart from the loss of men, materiel and operational capability, the psychological effect of the total destruction of the German 6th Army at Stalingrad in January/February 1943 should not be underestimated as a “turning point.” The intriguing theory advanced by Wegner – that, from the autumn of 1942 onwards, Hitler became increasingly fixated on “choreographing” his own downfall in spectacular fashion – calls for more extensive discussion. See also the recent study by Wolfram Pyta, *Hitler. Der Künstler als Politiker und Feldherr. Eine Herrschaftsanalyse*, Munich 2015.

its wit's end" strategically.² Even before the military catastrophe at Stalingrad, Hitler had no overall strategy for winning the war, either on the Eastern Front or in its totality.

His volatile and aggressive reaction in Vinnytsia in September 1942 – the Ukrainian town outside which the *Führer* Headquarters ("Werwolf") was located from July 16 to November 1, 1942 – indicated just how far the dictator had come to realize that German military planning on the Eastern Front, which that year bore his personal stamp much more plainly than in 1941, was heading for a total failure that might cost him the war. His disappointment over the military crisis erupted in fierce arguments with his generals, but the man who bore most of the brunt was perhaps his closest military adviser, the Chief of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff (*Wehrmachtführungsstab*) in the Wehrmacht High Command (OKW: *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*), General of Artillery Alfred Jodl.³ This crisis of leadership can be reconstructed in detail from the military files and eyewitness accounts that have survived, but what we know of Hitler's behavior up to now

² Wegner, *Hitlers Strategie*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, p. 125.

³ The German military ranks are not equivalent to the ranks of the U.S. army or the British army and therefore cannot be translated literally. For a better understanding of the German officer ranks, see the following list of the terms used as translations in this article:

German military rank	Translations in this study	U.S. army equivalent
Generalfeldmarschall	Field Marshal	General of the Army
Generaloberst	Colonel-General	General
General der Infanterie	General of Infantry	Lieutenant General
der Artillerie	of Artillery	
der Kavallerie	of Cavalry	
der Panzertruppe	of Panzer Troops	
der Gebirgstruppe	of Mountain Troops	
der Pioniere	of Engineers	
der Flieger	of Aviation	
Generalleutnant	Lieutenant-General	Major General
Generalmajor	Major-General	Brigadier General
Oberst	Colonel	Colonel
Oberstleutnant	Lieutenant-Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel
Major	Major	Major
Hauptmann	Captain	Captain
Oberleutnant	Senior Lieutenant	1 st Lieutenant
Leutnant	Lieutenant	2 nd Lieutenant

Abbreviations: OKH = "Oberkommando des Heeres" (Army High Command), OKW = "Oberkommando der Wehrmacht" (Wehrmacht High Command), OKL = "Oberkommando der Luftwaffe" (Luftwaffe High Command).

has been based on second-hand reports. Now, however, an astonishing find has come to light: a shorthand transcript of a meeting that took place on September 18, 1942, between Hitler and the Chief of the OKW, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel. This document was found among the German documents captured by the Russians before the end of the war and after. It is a uniquely detailed and full account – recorded almost verbatim – of the arguments employed by the dictator and his slippery assistant Keitel at a moment of fundamental crisis in military operations and leadership. At the same time, the publication of this particularly interesting find, complete with a commentary and annotations, serves to draw attention to a large new collection of Wehrmacht files that over the coming years will be made available in its entirety as an online resource.

The Document Collection

The Central Archive of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense in Podolsk near Moscow (TsAMO: *Tsentral'nyi arkhiv Ministerstva oborny Rossiiskoi Federatsii*) houses "Collection 500," which contains an impressive 28,000 or so looted file folders of German origin, comprising up to two and a half million pages organized into more than 50 inventories or sub-collections. The vast majority of these are Wehrmacht documents, most of which have been unavailable to historians until now.⁴ The German Historical Institute (DHI) in Moscow, represented by Nikolaus Katzer, Sergei Kudriashov, and Matthias Uhl, is currently working together with TsAMO, under the leadership of its director Igor Permiakov and other Russian partners, on the digitization of the entire collection. In April 2015, digital copies of the first documents from the three sub-collections – Wehrmacht High Command (OKW), Army High Command (OKH), and Army Group Center – were posted on the Internet.⁵ The remaining files in Collection 500 will be published successively online. This ambitious German-Russian project is scheduled for completion by 2018. In April 2012, the project was launched in Moscow with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Max Weber Stiftung (Bonn), which is the umbrella organization of the German Historical Institutes (GHI) abroad, and

⁴ One of the few exceptions is DRZW, vol. 8: Frieser (ed.), *Ostfront 1943/44*, where the author was able to consult barely a dozen of the captured German files stored in Podolsk for his account of the Battle of Kursk and the retreat of Army Group North to the Baltic region.

⁵ The Wehrmacht files from TsAMO Collection 500 that are currently available in digital form can be accessed via the following: www.germandocsinrussia.org/de/nodes/lbestand-500 [accessed May 7, 2018].

the Federal Archival Agency (*Federal'noe arkhivnoe agenstvo*) of the Russian Federation. This memorandum affirms the intention of both partners to make these files available to historians in digital form, regardless of the fact that the two countries disagree on the legal status of the captured German documents. Following further discussions, TsAMO also joined the project in the summer of 2012 as a negotiating partner. A series of protracted internal consultation processes took place on the Russian side because several government ministries and commissions had to give their approval for the proposed project. Then, as a result of last-minute problems, various deadlines for the signing of the already drafted official agreements came and went. It was only through the personal intervention of the then head of the Administration of the Russian President, Sergei Naryshkin, and a change of leadership at the top of the Ministry of Defense at the end of 2012, that the necessary order was finally issued to TsAMO so that it could begin work on the digitization of its looted German document holdings in cooperation with the GHI. Once the process got started, the first step was to put the necessary technical systems in place locally and develop a workflow. Beginning in the spring of 2014, a series of 465 files relating to World War I were recorded in electronic form as part of an initial pilot project; these documents have been available online since August 2014.⁶

Where do the files in Podolsk come from? There is no precise information about the origins of the collection or how the Wehrmacht files fell into the hands of the Red Army and were later acquired by the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense because the necessary internal TsAMO documentation pertaining to the acquisition of the records and the history of the collection is missing. It is likely that a small proportion of the surviving files were captured on the battlefield by the Red Army and later sent to Moscow for further processing.⁷ Another small batch of the German documents held in Podolsk came from intelligence service sources in the USA. Consequently, the TsAMO only holds photocopies of some individual documents from the collections for the OKW and Luftwaffe High Command (OKL). These photocopied pages also bear the stamp of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS),⁸ indicating that they originated with the U.S. military intelligence service. How these files reached

⁶ See: tsamo.germandocsinrussia.org/de/nodes/1-deutsche-beuteakten-zum-ersten-weltkrieg-im-zentralarchiv-des-verteidigungsministeriums-der-russischen-federation-bestand-500-findbuch-12519 [accessed May 7, 2018].

⁷ TsAMO, Collection 500, Inventory 12480 (Wehrmacht documents captured by Soviet military intelligence, with their Russian translations), containing 332 files relating mainly to the tactics and organizational structure of the Wehrmacht.

⁸ TsAMO, Collection 500, Inventory 12450 (OKW), File 21, Russian Naval Forces (strength, distribution, bases), status as of 1939; TsAMO, Collection 500, Inventory 12452 (OKL), File 180, Catalogue of Airfields in the USSR, status as of January 1943.

the Soviet Union is unclear. It is quite conceivable that they were handed over to the relevant Soviet authorities under the collaboration arrangements between the Allied intelligence services,⁹ but it is also possible that agents of the Red Army's military intelligence service acquired the copies illegally in the USA.

The vast majority of the German documents were captured by Red Army troops shortly before the end of the war or immediately thereafter, including file collections that have survived virtually intact, such as the more than 2,100 German files relating to "Operation Sea Lion", the planned Wehrmacht invasion of Great Britain. It appears that there was some kind of internal Red Army order to refrain from handing German military files over to the special units of the NKVD (*Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*; People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs), the Soviet intelligence service that was officially responsible for such matters, because the former special archive of the Main Archival Administration of the USSR Council of Ministers – today a separate section of the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA: *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv*¹⁰) – holds only those fragmentary Wehrmacht records that were directly seized by NKVD units. Fully intact Wehrmacht files, on the other hand, were sent by the Red Army for analysis and safekeeping to the Red Army General Staff in Moscow or to Navy Main Staff headquarters in Leningrad, where various Soviet military intelligence agencies carried out an initial assessment of the captured documents.¹¹ In the mid-1950s, the Soviet military intelligence agencies handed over at least a portion of the files to the archives and libraries of the appropriate Historical Departments of the Red Army General Staff or the Main Staffs of other branches of the armed forces.¹² By the end

⁹ On this collaboration, see, for example, Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina 1941–1945 godov. T. 6 (vol. 6): *Tainaia voina. Razvedka i kontrrazvedka v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny*, Moscow 2013, pp. 216–21; *Ocherki istorii rossiiskoi vneshnei razvedki*. T. 4 (vol. 4): 1941–1945 gody, Moscow 1999, pp. 399–415.

¹⁰ Russian State Military Archive (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv*, henceforth: RGVA), which is not under the control of the Ministry of Defense, but rather the Federal Archival Agency, houses the documents of (i) the Red Army from the period 1918–1941, (ii) the Internal Troops of the NKVD/MVD, and (iii) the Central Administration for Prisoners of War (POW) and Internee Affairs, as well as the bulk of the German trophy collections in the Russian Federation. A good overview of the German files available there can be found at www.sonderarchiv.de [accessed May 7, 2018], the website developed by Sebastian Panwitz.

¹¹ TsAMO, Collection 500, Inventory 12452 (OKL), File 187, Detailed Reports of Ic Service West of the Luftwaffe, No. 21, February 1, 1944. A memo is pasted into the file that indicates that it was held until at least 1952 by the Special Department of the Navy Main Staff of the Soviet Navy.

¹² *Ibid.*, File 189, Detailed Reports of Ic Service West of the Luftwaffe, No. 23, February 22, 1944. The file contains a stamp indicating that it was handed over on May 31, 1956, to the Historical Department of the Navy Main Staff.

of the 1950s, these files had then been transferred from here to either the Archive of the Ministry of the Armed Forces of the USSR or to the Central Archive of the Navy.¹³ Research institutes of the Soviet army also used documents of a technical nature for an indeterminate period of time before this material was also handed over to the central archives of the armed forces.¹⁴

In the 1960s, the trophy collections of German documents held by the Soviet armed forces were centrally catalogued and stored at the Central Archive of the Soviet Union's Ministry of Defense. Staff at TsAMO, both before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, reorganized the captured German files several times – evidently to accommodate new accessions from other archives, such as the Central Archive of the Navy – and grouped them into a series of inventories based on the organizational structure of the Wehrmacht.¹⁵ Either complete file folders were catalogued under the relevant Wehrmacht institution or individual documents relating to a specific Wehrmacht authority or command post were grouped together to create new file folders. Within Collection 500, the sub-collections follow the military hierarchy of the Wehrmacht from the top command level (OKW, etc.) down to company level.¹⁶ The collection also contains thousands of military situation maps.

Which other Russian archives might house German documents awaiting discovery in the future? The Archive of the President (AP RF: *Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii*) is shrouded in mystery, but – as recent publications have shown – it houses at least some fragmentary collections. Apparently, some of the German documents held there have been acquired only in Russian translation. We know, however, that the German originals of captured Wehrmacht documents were sometimes presented to Stalin.¹⁷ The 30,000 or so investigation files on

13 See the stamp of the Archive of the Ministry of the Armed Forces on *ibid.*, File 201, Luftwaffe Operations Staff Ic/Foreign Air Forces West, GB Air Force: British Pathfinder Operations, March 1944; stamp of the Central Archive of the Navy on *ibid.*, File 202, Detailed Reports of Ic Service West of the Luftwaffe, No. 35, March 31, 1944.

14 See, for example, the inventory stamp of Unit No. 27177 (the Central Scientific Research Institute for Naval Shipbuilding in Leningrad) on TsAMO, Collection 500, Inventory 12452 (OKL), File 216, Detailed Reports of Ic Service West of the Luftwaffe, No. 56, June 16, 1944.

15 See the copies of the inventories of Wehrmacht collections in Podolsk that are held in the Military Archive of the German Federal Archive in Freiburg im Breisgau – status as of 1991.

16 For the benefit of the readers of the present article, a tabular overview of the files contained in Collection 500 has been published on the “Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte” website: www.ifz-muenchen.de/vierteljahrshefte/zusatzangebote/beilagen/.

17 See the combat report of the 19th Panzer Division for July 5–18, 1943, September 13, 1943, reprinted in: Sergei V. Kudriashov (ed.), *Vestnik Arkhiva Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Voina: 1941–1945*, 2nd edition, Moscow 2015, pp. 644–50. The Russian translation of the report of the

Wehrmacht, SS, and police personnel, as well as German diplomats and civilians, who were accused of war crimes, espionage, and other criminal offenses also promise to be valuable sources for the study of the German occupation of the Soviet Union. These are held in the Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (TsA FSB: *Tsentral'nyi arkhiv FSB Rossii*).¹⁸ For example, the investigation file compiled by the People's Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) against SS-*Gruppenführer* Paul Scheer, who commanded the *Ordnungspolizei* (Order Police) in Kiev in 1942, and Major-General Hans von Tschammer und Osten consists of 27 folders, which suggests that numerous German documents were filed in evidence along with the court papers. In the course of the investigations against SS-*Brigadeführer* Hellmuth Becker – commander of the “Totenkopf” SS Panzer Division – 31 folders were compiled by the Soviet state security service, while the material on the commander of the XXXVIII Panzer Corps, General of Artillery Kurt Herzog, amounted to 54 folders.¹⁹ A volume of documents published at the end of 2011 by the head of the FSB's Archive and Registry Administration shows that German Foreign Office documents are also held in TsA FSB: these files were gathered as evidence to be used in cases against German diplomats.²⁰ Because TsA FSB – like TsAMO – is the archive of a state authority and therefore not subject to Russian archive legislation, it has only been possible to access its materials in a few exceptional instances. At present, it is impossible to say how many documents from this archive were made available to the East German Ministry of State Security (MfS) by the Committee for State Security of the USSR.²¹ Originals or copies of German documents captured

19th Panzer Division was sent to Stalin by Nikita S. Khrushchev, following a personal discussion between the two men. The same collection also contains the German copy of a report of the II SS Panzer Corps on the fighting between the Don and the Dnieper in 1942–1943, which the head of Soviet military intelligence, Viktor S. Abakumov, sent to Stalin at the beginning of October 1943, together with a Russian translation. AP RF, Collection 3, Inventory 58, File 455, fols. 138–56. We are grateful to Mr. Kudriashov for drawing this document to our attention.

18 See Vasilii S. Khristoforov, *Stalingrad. Organy NKVD nakanune i v dni srazheniia*, Moscow 2008, p. 126.

19 Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (Tsentral'nyi arkhiv FSB Rossii, henceforth: TsA FSB), No. 18–1384 – reference catalogue.

20 See Vasilii S. Khristoforov/Vladimir G. Makarov (eds.), *Tainy diplomatii Tret'ego reikha. Germanskie diplomatii, rukovoditeli zarubezhnykh voennykh missii, voennye i politseiskie attashe v sovetskemu plenu. Dokumenty iz sledstvennykh del. 1944–1955*, Moscow 2011.

21 For example, the copies of files from the Army Group Center, discovered in the Stasi documents by Johannes Hürter, have not yet turned up as captured original files; see: *Auf dem Weg zur Militäropposition. Tresckow, Gersdorff, der Vernichtungskrieg und der Judenmord. Neue Dokumente über das Verhältnis der Heeresgruppe Mitte zur Einsatzgruppe B im Jahr 1941*, in: Vier-

by Soviet troops during World War II can also be found in several collections housed in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF: *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii*). In Collection R-7021 alone, which was assembled by the Extraordinary State Commission appointed to investigate German war crimes in the Soviet Union, there are some 1,900 German documents, amounting to a total of about 180,000 pages, most of which originated from concentration camps in the German Reich, in occupied Poland, and in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. What we do not know, however, is which provincial archives in the Russian Federation might still house German trophy collections. Once the process of digitizing the collections in TsAMO is completed, the GHI in Moscow will endeavour to resolve this question.

The Document

The stenographic transcript of the meeting between Hitler and Keitel on September 18, 1942, published here has been taken from the files of the Wehrmacht High Command in TsAMO. It is part of a collection of 271 file folders catalogued as “Inventory 12450.” This sub-collection is relatively small and heterogeneous. The captured OKW files contain, among other things, personal documents relating to the Chief of the OKW, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, draft documents on the invasion of the Soviet Union prepared by the Wehrmacht leadership, reports on the campaigns in Poland and Western Europe, files on the progress of the fighting on the Eastern Front in 1941–1945, documents on the administration of the occupied Eastern territories and conduct towards the civilian population, files on Prisoners of War administration, information about the German armaments industry, documents on the military and economic collaboration between the German Reich and Romania, correspondence about the attempt on Hitler’s life on July 20, 1944, and documents on the unconditional surrender of the German Reich.

File 137 consists simply of a cover sheet in Russian and the transcript of the meeting on September 18, 1942. Like so many of the German papers housed in TsAMO, this captured document has survived as a single item, without a file reference or any other documents that could be directly related to it. Although we cannot completely reconstruct the process by which the document ended up in

teljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 52 (2004), pp. 527–62. On the NS Archive of the MfS, see Dagmar Unverhau, Das “NS-Archiv” des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit. Stationen einer Entwicklung, Münster 2004.

Podolsk, we do know that it was stored for a while by the Military History Administration of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces, under archive number 31/1. The transcript must have been at least cursorily translated while it was there because the content of key passages was summarized in brief handwritten notes in Russian on the margins. These notes on the content have been omitted from this published edition. At present, we have not been able to establish when the transcript, along with other documents, was handed over to TsAMO.

Despite such gaps in our knowledge, we can still contextualize this document, not only in terms of its content, but also its history and genesis. This was made possible, first and foremost, by the plucky intervention of U.S. Army Sergeant George Allen, who rescued at least a fraction of the stenographic transcripts of Hitler's meetings with his generals for the years 1942–1945 from the ashes near Berchtesgaden in May 1945. Secondly, the standard edition of these transcript fragments published by Helmut Heiber in 1962 were also an invaluable resource.²² Thanks to these efforts, historians are well informed about the origins and function of the “Stenographic Service in the *Führer* Headquarters.” Hitler's fierce argument with Jodl in Vinnytsia on September 7–8, 1942, to which we shall return later, prompted Hitler to push through a plan immediately that he had evidently been contemplating for some time. As the dictator felt that he had been deliberately misquoted by Jodl, he demanded that all his future military briefings were to be recorded verbatim by stenographers – in order to create a record of the *Führer*'s intentions and wishes, as communicated to the military elite, and to legitimize his decisions in the eyes of posterity. The process of setting up the Stenographic Service began forthwith on the morning of September 8; between September 9 and 16, a total of six stenographers arrived in Vinnytsia from the Reichstag Stenographic Office, which had been somewhat under-employed since 1933.

The Stenographic Service began its work on September 12, 1942. From then on, the regular daily briefings – usually two of them, one at lunchtime and one in the evening – as well as the military “special briefings” in the *Führer* Headquarters were recorded in shorthand by two stenographers, using either the Gabelsberger system or the Stolze-Schrey system. The stenographers then used their shorthand texts to dictate the longhand transcripts; the top copy was reserved for Hitler's personal use (the “*Führer* copy”), and two carbon copies were made on paper of the same weight. One of the carbon copies was filed for reference in

²² See Helmut Heiber (ed.), *Hitlers Lagebesprechungen. Die Protokollfragmente seiner militärischen Konferenzen 1942–1945*, Stuttgart 1962. The following remarks are based on Heiber's Introduction, pp. 11–34.

the office of the Stenographic Service, the other one was sent to Hitler's military historian, Walter Scherff, who was present at most of the briefings. Normally, no additional carbon copies were made, and the military personnel attending these meetings did not see the transcripts. Even Hitler did not seem to take any further interest in them, nor did he revise or correct the texts.

By the time the stenographers finished their work on April 22, 1945, some 103,000 pages of verbatim transcript (longhand) had been produced. Shortly before the fall of Berlin, the "*Führer* copies" and shorthand notes were evacuated to the Obersalzberg bunker above Berchtesgaden. As the U.S. Army approached, this source material of inestimable value was burned at a nearby lake, the Hintersee, by SS men on the orders of Hans Müller, a senior adviser to Bormann. Some time around May 10, 1945, U.S. Army Sergeant Allen sifted through the ash heap and found records of some 50 briefings, mostly shorthand notes, and had them transcribed into longhand a second time by the German stenographers who had also been evacuated to Berchtesgaden. So, at the very least, a hundredth of the entire document collection was rescued and subsequently edited by the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich (IfZ). The whereabouts or fate of the two sets of carbon copies has not been established with complete certainty. Scherff is thought to have destroyed his copies shortly before he killed himself in Berchtesgaden in May 1945; the reference copies filed in the stenographers' office were presumably burned in the Reich Chancellery at the end of April 1945, although there are conflicting eyewitness accounts of this.²³ The likelihood of this key collection of Nazi documents ever turning up again intact is virtually nil.

The likely loss of 99 percent of the briefing transcripts is also due to the fact that no further records of the regular daily briefings were kept, apart from the three copies mentioned above; this meant that there was no parallel transmission outside the *Führer* Headquarters. However, this is not always the case for the shorthand transcripts of the more intimate special briefings that took place between Hitler and some of his military advisers or other military personnel. The Heiber edition already contained two documents that were not among those rescued in Berchtesgaden, but rather came into our hands in different ways. A carbon copy of the transcript of Hitler's meeting with Jodl on July 31, 1944 was found among the papers of the Personal Staff of the *Reichsführer* SS, Heinrich Himmler.²⁴ Similarly, the transcript of Hitler's meeting with Keitel and Kurt Zeitzler on June 8, 1943, at the Berghof was sent as a carbon copy to the Wehrmacht Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht High Command. A copy of this transcript, bearing the internal

²³ See *ibid.*, p. 23, footnote 2.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 584–609.

circulation stamp of the Quartermaster Section and the initials of various OKW officials, was submitted in evidence as Document PS-1384 at the Nuremberg Trial of the Major War Criminals.²⁵ A further copy, likewise a stand-alone document without a file reference, is preserved in the OKW sub-collection of the TsAMO files (Collection 500, Inventory 12450, File 161).²⁶ In all probability, the original carbon copy sent to the OKW is still in the archive of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces – or so the archive stamp on the document would seem to indicate. If this supposition is correct, then the document used in evidence at the Nuremberg Tribunal was supplied by the Soviets.

Similarly, it seems as if the second, previously unknown transcript acquired by TsAMO was an extra carbon copy that was made in addition to the three standard copies. Even though the transcript of the Hitler/Keitel conversation on September 18, 1942 has no receipt stamp and no name stamps for authorized recipients, it is likely that this copy was intended for Keitel and was captured by the Red Army along with other personal files belonging to the Chief of the OKW. The document is an original carbon copy of the typed transcript (the longhand version of the shorthand notes), consisting of 58 single-sided pages, punched with five holes on the left-hand side; it contains a few handwritten corrections, perhaps added by Keitel himself. The recorders were the Reichstag stenographers Dr. Hans Jonuschat and Dr. Ewald Reynitz, who had both arrived in Vinnytsia only two days previously, on September 16, 1942, and were recording their first conversation in the *Führer* Headquarters at that meeting on September 18.²⁷ The meeting between Hitler and Keitel lasted 85 minutes, from 15:30 until 16:55, so it evidently took place after the regular lunchtime briefing, whose normal time slot was between 12:00 and 15:00. As the earliest surviving transcript of a briefing prior to this find is dated December 1, 1942,²⁸ the document dated September 18, 1942, published here for the first time, is now the earliest known transcript produced by the Stenographic Service in the *Führer* Headquarters, which had just begun its operations six days previously. For this reason, too, the new find is a welcome addendum to Heiber's edition.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 252–68, and the Archive of the Institute for Contemporary History, Munich, Nuremberg Documents, PS-13840.

²⁶ See: wwii.germandocsinrussia.org/de/nodes/2297-akte-161-stenogramm-der-besprechung-bei-a-hitler-in-berghof-ber-die-behandlung-der-kriegsgefa#page/1/mode/grid/zoom/1 [accessed May 7, 2018].

²⁷ See Heiber (ed.), *Hitlers Lagebesprechungen*, p. 16. It seems that these two “Regierungsräte” did not subsequently work together as a pair, especially as Jonuschat used the Stolze-Schrey system of shorthand and Reynitz the Gabelsberger system.

²⁸ Evening briefing on December 1, 1942, in: *ibid.*, pp. 50–71.

The Crisis

The historical context of the document was briefly indicated at the beginning of this article. After the grand plan “to defeat Soviet Russia in a swift campaign”²⁹ had failed decisively in the second half of 1941, not least because of serious mistakes at the strategic and tactical level, Hitler had personally assumed direct command of the army in December 1941. His self-confidence as the *Feldherr* (supreme field commander) had been reinforced by his management of the great military crisis of the battle of Moscow. From 1942 onwards, therefore, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht and new Commander-in-Chief of the Army set his personal stamp on military operations to a greater extent than ever before.³⁰

The strategic objective of “Operation Blue,” which began on June 28, 1942, and was limited to the front held by Army Group South, was the seizure of raw materials and especially oil from the Caucasus in order to enable Germany to continue fighting the war against the Soviet/Anglo-American alliance. Because of the severe fuel shortage, Hitler judged the occupation of the Caucasus region with its oil fields, in particular those around Maykop, Grozny and Baku, to be critical for the outcome of the war.³¹ By depriving the Russians of this key resource, as well

29 Order No. 21 “Fall Barbarossa,” December 18, 1941, in: Walther Hubatsch (ed.), *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung 1939–1945. Dokumente des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, Frankfurt a. M. 1962, pp. 84–88, here p. 84.

30 The following overview is greatly indebted to the detailed account in Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, pp. 761–1102. See also Christan Hartmann, Halder, Generalstabschef Hitlers 1938–1942, 2nd ed., Paderborn et al. 2010, pp. 311–42; Pyta, *Hitler*, pp. 403–36. – Like Operation Barbarossa in 1941, the objectives of this campaign were not just military and economic; it set out to occupy territory for reasons of racial ideology and to carry out a policy of extermination that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of POWs and civilians. In the northern Caucasus alone, which was conquered and administered by the Wehrmacht, nearly 50,000 Jews had been murdered by December 1942, while the non-Russian population of the multi-ethnic Caucasus region was initially treated better – by the standards of a perverted racial hierarchy – until hunger and exploitation became the norm here, too, under the German occupation. These events formed the dark backdrop to the military operations discussed on the following pages. On the German occupation in the Caucasus, see Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord. Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941–1943*, Hamburg 2003, pp. 557–681; Manfred Oldenburg, *Ideologie und militärisches Kalkül. Die Besatzungspolitik der Wehrmacht in der Sowjetunion 1942*, Cologne 2004, pp. 259–306; Dieter Pohl, *Deutsche Militärverwaltung – Die bessere Besatzung? Das Beispiel Kaukasus 1942/43*, in: *Mitteilungen der Gemeinsamen Kommission für die Erforschung der jüngeren Beziehungen der deutschrussischen Geschichte* 2 (2005), pp. 52–60.

31 According to a later statement by Colonel-General Friedrich Paulus, Hitler admitted at the beginning of June 1942: “If I don’t get the oil from Maykop and Grozny, I’ll have to end this war.” On May 28, 1942, at a conference to discuss the situation regarding war supplies and services, Keitel

as the heavy industry of the Donets Basin, and destroying a large part of the Red Army, the balance of power on the Eastern Front would shift decisively in Germany's favor before Great Britain and the USA could open up a second front in the West. As Hitler was expecting an Allied landing in France or Norway as early as 1942, or by 1943 at the latest, he believed time was of the essence for the second *Ostfeldzug* (Eastern Campaign) – and failure was not an option.

Unlike the dictator, who thought in broader strategic and economic terms, the army generals remained focused on operations on the ground, on “battles.” Nonetheless, no serious disagreements emerged in the planning and execution of the offensive initially. Order No. 41, issued on April 5, 1942, directed the army as follows: first, to break through in the direction of Voronezh; second, to advance down the Don to the south; third, to reach the Volga near Stalingrad; and fourth – and expressly *after* destroying the enemy forces “pressing forward on this side of the Don” – “to secure the oil fields in the Caucasus region and to cross over the Caucasus Mountains themselves.”³² Beyond that, Hitler was not alone in fantasizing about a continuation of the advance as far as Mesopotamia. The OKH around Halder and the senior troop commanders supported this operational plan and largely shared Hitler's optimism, even encouraging him with misleading assessments of the situation. Conflicts only erupted again when rapid successes and territorial gains could no longer conceal the fact that the bulk of the Red Army had escaped annihilation – contrary to hopes – and that rather than a lightning campaign, another long war of attrition was coming. The first casualty was the Commander-in-Chief of Army Group B, Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, whom Hitler blamed for the delayed advance;³³ von Bock was duly relieved of his command on July 15, 1942.

The clashes between Hitler and the army generals in July 1942 resulted on the one hand from frustration at the failure to engage the enemy in major battles of annihilation and, on the other hand, from differences of opinion regarding the further conduct of operations.³⁴ As the month went on, Hitler progressively

said “that our operations in 1942 need to get us to the oil. If we don't succeed, we won't be able to conduct any operations next year.” Both citations in Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, p. 783.

³² Order No. 41, April 5, 1942, in: Hubatsch (ed.), *Hitlers Weisungen*, pp. 183–88, citation p. 184.

³³ See Generaloberst Halder, *Kriegstagebuch. Tägliche Aufzeichnungen des Chefs des Generalstabes des Heeres 1939–1942*, published by Arbeitskreis für Wehrforschung, vol. 3: *Der Rußlandfeldzug bis zum Marsch auf Stalingrad* (June 22, 1941–September 24, 1942), ed. by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, Stuttgart 1964, p. 480 (July 13, 1942).

³⁴ See Halder's diary entry for July 23, 1942, in: *ibid.*, p. 489: “[...] Fit of rage, accompanied by serious accusations against the commanders. The long-standing underestimation of the enemy's capabilities is becoming increasingly ludicrous – and dangerous. It's becoming more and more impossible. There's no serious work being done anymore. Pathological over-reaction to every

changed the original plan of operations against the advice of Halder and other generals; his Order No. 45, dated July 23, 1942, finally stipulated that the third and fourth phases of “Operation Blue” should no longer be carried out consecutively, but rather simultaneously.³⁵ Army Group A was tasked (“Operation Edelweiss”) with securing the eastern coast of the Black Sea as far as Batumi and occupying the heights of Maykop and Armavir, as well as thrusting farther east into the area around Grozny, blocking the summits of the passes on the Ossetian and Georgian Military Roads, and then seizing the coast of the Caspian Sea together with Baku. Simultaneously, Army Group B (“Operation Heron”) was to seal off the territory between the Don and the Volga, take Stalingrad, and then advance along the Volga as far as Astrakhan.

If one considers Hitler’s strategic premise that Nazi Germany needed access to the oil of the Caucasus as soon as possible and certainly before the end of 1942, this interference in the operational plan had a certain internal logic. But, in operational terms, splitting the offensive into two parts, one of which – conducted by Army Group A – was further subdivided into several parallel thrusts, was a mistake that probably cost Hitler the campaign. The forces deployed were far too inadequate to attain all the objectives at once, especially in the absence of any clear priorities.

It soon became clear that the Wehrmacht was totally overextended – which brings us to the immediate prehistory of the following document. The key to success on the Caucasus Front appeared to be the destruction of the strong Soviet defensive position on the Black Sea coast.³⁶ The German attacking forces planned to advance along three routes: *Armeegruppe Ruoff*, consisting of the 17th Army under Colonel-General Richard Ruoff and the 3rd Romanian Army, was to advance beyond Novorossiysk down the Black Sea coast; the 1st Panzer Army (Colonel-General Ewald von Kleist) would advance from the area around Maykop down to the port city of Tuapse; and the XXXIX Mountain Corps under General of Mountain Troops Rudolf Konrad would cross over the high mountains and make for the coastal town of Gudauta farther to the southeast.³⁷ Achieving these objec-

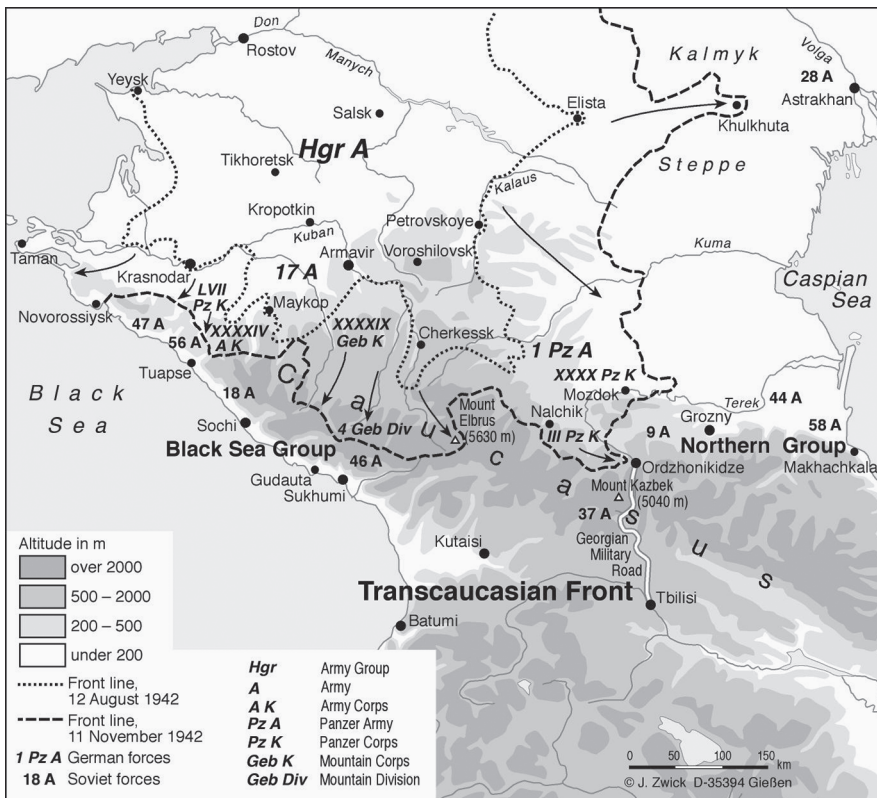
passing impression and a total inability to evaluate the command structure and its capabilities – these are the hallmarks of this so-called ‘leadership.’”

35 See Order No. 45, July 23, 1942, in: Hubatsch (ed.), *Hitlers Weisungen*, pp. 196–200, here pp. 197–98.

36 See Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, pp. 927–51. On the defense of the Caucasus by the Red Army, see, for example, Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina 1941–1945 godov. T. 3 (vol. 3): *Bitvy i srazheniia, izmenivshie khod voyny*, Moscow 2012, pp. 292–371.

37 On August 17, 1942, the forces of the 1st Panzer Army that were set to attack the Black Sea coast (LVII Panzer Corps, XXXIV Army Corps, XXXIX Mountain Corps) were placed under the command of the 17th Army.

tives would have neutralized the Soviet defenses and enabled the Wehrmacht to advance rapidly towards the important Black Sea port of Batumi, perhaps even along the Turkish border as far as Baku, a hub of oil production. But the first two attacks ground to a halt in the closing days of August and the first few days of September, while the third had to be abandoned completely. Meanwhile the 1st Panzer Army advance in the center of the Caucasus Front, towards Grozny, was making little progress, and the oil fields of Maykop turned out to be so badly damaged that no oil could be pumped for quite some time. On the Stalingrad front, too, operations were stalled. Spread too thinly over too many operations, the Wehrmacht lacked the power and momentum to break through.



German advances in the Caucasus, August to November 1942

In other words: by the end of August/beginning of September 1942, even the greatest optimists in the military leadership were forced to conclude that the Caucasus offensive – and therefore the main priority of the entire summer offensive –

had effectively failed. Nobody was more disillusioned than the man who had gambled strategically on the bid to secure fuel supplies and who was responsible for the highly risky strategy of dividing his military forces: Adolf Hitler.³⁸ He had made the Caucasus offensive, and the decision to bring it forward, his own personal cause. Now, in time-honored fashion, it was a matter of finding scapegoats for its failure.

This military crisis led to the escalation of the internal crisis that was already brewing. The trigger was the “failure” – as Hitler saw it – of the most senior commanders of Army Group A to achieve the planned operational objectives on the Black Sea coast. As this new document confirms beyond all doubt, Hitler was fixated on the capture of Tuapse with its port, railroad station, and terminal for the Grozny-Maykop-Tuapse oil pipeline. Only when it emerged that, instead of taking part in this operation, powerful German forces had already pushed farther east towards Grozny and, in the case of the XXXIX Mountain Corps, into the mountains to the southeast, did a further option present itself: to support the advance along the road from Maykop to Tuapse by cutting the Soviet supply line farther to the southeast near Gudauta. Irritated by the absence of any good news from the fighting front, Hitler insisted at the end of August that the 4th Mountain Division begin the assault on Gudauta. He topped his demand with sharp criticism of Army Group A and the OKH, which he accused – not without reason – of failing to concentrate forces at key points.³⁹

38 As late as August 20, 1942, in conversation with Goebbels in Vinnytsia, he was still very optimistic about the outcome – which gives some measure of the disillusionment that followed: see *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels* (Goebbels, *Tagebücher*), ed. by Elke Fröhlich, commissioned by the Institute for Contemporary History and with support from the State Archival Service of Russia, Part II: Diktate 1941–1945, vol. 5: July–September 1942, Munich 1995, p. 354 (August 20, 1942): “Once we have taken Maykop, the Führer’s intention is to take Krassny [Grozny] and Baku this summer and autumn; this will not only secure our own oil supplies, but also cut off all oil supplies to the Bolsheviks. Without oil, the Soviet system will not be able to continue the war in the same manner. But that isn’t all. The Führer is pursuing an immensely ambitious goal: to reach the Russian border, then push on into the Middle East, seize Asia Minor, overrun Iraq, Iran and Palestine, and thus cut off England’s last oil reserves after the loss of its Far Eastern sources of supply.”

39 Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 513 (August 29, 1942): “With the Führer: very resentful comments on the conduct of operations by A, hence telephone call to Field Marshal List to discuss what might be done to get the operation moving again.” Ibid. (August 30, 1942): “Today’s briefings with the Führer were again marked by serious accusations of poor military leadership by senior army commanders. They are accused of intellectual arrogance, obtuseness, and an inability to see what is important.” This new document gives us a clearer picture of Hitler’s criticism of operations in this sector of the Caucasus Front than previous finds.

After some back-and-forth discussion, the Commander-in-Chief of Army Group A, Field Marshal Wilhelm List, declared that the operation was not feasible and asked to discuss the situation again with Hitler's closest military adviser in the OKW, Alfred Jodl – clearly in the belief that the OKH, with which responsibility properly rested, no longer had sufficient influence over the dictator. On September 7, Jodl flew “on the Führer's instructions” to Army Group headquarters in Stalino; but here, contrary to his *Führer's* expectations, he did not impose Hitler's will, but rather was won over to the view of List and Konrad that an assault on Gudauta would be “too risky” and that the Mountain Corps would be better employed supporting the advance on Tuapse – the success of which, however, was “by no means guaranteed.”⁴⁰

When Jodl reported back to Hitler after his return to Vinnytsia on the night of September 7–8 and countered the accusations leveled against List's conduct of operations with the argument that the Commander-in-Chief of Army Group A had simply followed the orders that he had been given, this retort, which came as a surprise and was clearly not delivered tactfully, was greeted with an outburst of fury. The war diary of the OKW recorded that “The Führer is extremely angry about the views expressed by General Jodl, which are diametrically opposed to his own.”⁴¹ Halder likewise noted: “The lack of progress by Army Group A has been a bitter disappointment to the Führer. Serious accusations against the leadership and the generals as a whole. Jodl's mission to List results in [Jodl's] request not to continue the advance of the Mountain Corps, but to pull it back. Deep resentment about this.”⁴² A sulking Hitler gave way on the substantive point at issue on September 8,⁴³ but then decided to remove both List and Halder from their posts. On the afternoon of September 9, he ordered Keitel to have Halder carry out the first dismissal while at the same time letting Halder know that his own position was

⁴⁰ See Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht (Wehrmachtführungsstab), on behalf of Arbeitskreis für Wehrforschung, ed. by Percy Ernst Schramm, vol. 2: 1.11942–31.12.1942, ed. by Andreas Hillgruber, 1st half-volume, Frankfurt a. M. 1963 (henceforth: KTB/OKW, vol. II/1), pp. 690–91 (September 7, 1942), and *ibid.*, footnote 1 (extracts from the war diary of Army Group A).
⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 696 (September 8, 1942). “He insists on seeing all the paperwork for orders relating to the command of Army Group A since the crossing of the Don.” See also the – obviously one-sided – retrospective comments of Walter Warlimont, in: *ibid.*, p. 697, which note that Hitler's outburst was “unusually furious.”

⁴² Halder, Kriegstagebuch, vol. 3, pp. 518–19 (September 8, 1942).

⁴³ See *ibid.*, p. 519 (September 8, 1942), about a conversation with Keitel at 21:00 hours: “If the C-in-C [List] believes he cannot advance to the coast with the 4th Mt. Div. as his main force – which the Führer finds incomprehensible and can only note as List's stated view – then he should leave it.”

acutely vulnerable.⁴⁴ Hitler himself assumed temporary command of Army Group A, while Halder's planned replacement, surprisingly, was Kurt Zeitzler, Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief West. Jodl and his deputy, Walter Warlimont, were also expected to be replaced.⁴⁵

The serious "crisis of confidence"⁴⁶ was not confined to this small group, but rather extended to the entire military leadership. The dictator made his disappointment and distrust abundantly clear to virtually all the officers in Vinnytsia: he shut himself away⁴⁷ and subsequent military briefings were conducted "in a frosty atmosphere."⁴⁸ On September 8, as already described, he sent for the first stenographers, who were to transcribe – "for the record" – all his discussions with the military, word for word. The "sudden change in climate in Vinnytsia"⁴⁹ revealed Hitler's deep resentment against nearly all the army generals more clearly than ever before. That September, no officer – whether in the OKW, the OKH, or at the Eastern Front – could be sure of still being "in the Führer's good graces." One exception was his Wehrmacht Chief Adjutant, Rudolf Schmundt,

⁴⁴ KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 705–06 (September 9, 1942); Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 519 (September 9, 1942), about a conversation with Keitel at 16:30 hours.

⁴⁵ KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 705 (September 9, 1942).

⁴⁶ Ibid. For the best account of the "September crisis," see Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, pp. 951–61; also Reinhard Stumpf, *Die Wehrmacht-Elite. Rang- und Herkunftsstruktur der deutschen Generale und Admirale 1933–1945*, Boppard am Rhein 1982, pp. 315–19; Hartmann, Halder, pp. 332–42; Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Hitler und die Generäle. Das Ringen um die Führung der Wehrmacht 1933–1945*, Paderborn et al. 2006, pp. 218–29. For an account focusing specifically on Jodl, see also Bodo Scheurig, Alfred Jodl. *Gehorsam und Verhängnis. Biographie*, Berlin/Frankfurt a. M. 1991, pp. 210–14. In the two best-known biographies of Hitler, the events are treated in a somewhat cursory fashion: Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler. Eine Biographie*, Frankfurt a. M. et al. 1973, pp. 903–04; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, vol. 2: 1936–1945, Stuttgart 2000, pp. 698–701. The memoirs of those directly involved are atmospheric and, in some cases, useful as additional sources of information, if also plainly intent on enshrining the contrast between the "good" generals and the "evil" dictator as a self-exculpatory narrative; see Adolf Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit. Schicksalsstunden der deutschen Armee 1923–1945*, Tübingen/Stuttgart 1950, pp. 198–200, 205–12; Walter Görlitz (ed.), *Generalfeldmarschall Keitel. Verbrecher oder Offizier? Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente des Chefs OKW*, Göttingen et al. 1961, pp. 305–09; Walter Warlimont, *Im Hauptquartier der deutschen Wehrmacht 1939–1945. Grundlagen, Formen, Gestalten*, Frankfurt a. M. 1962, pp. 267–71; Hildegard von Kotze (ed.), *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler 1938–1943. Aufzeichnungen des Majors Engel*, Stuttgart 1974, pp. 124–29. The last-named source is not a contemporary diary at all, but a reconstruction from memory in diary form, with numerous factual inconsistencies and incorrect dates, which should therefore be used by historians and scholars with more caution and scepticism than hitherto.

⁴⁷ See the comments of Warlimont after the war, in: KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 697 (September 8, 1942).

⁴⁸ Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 520 (September 11, 1942).

⁴⁹ Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, p. 952.

whom he now consulted intensively on personnel matters. It was clear that Hitler was contemplating a major shake-up that included fundamental changes in army personnel. The rumor mill went into overdrive. Colonel-General Friedrich Paulus, Commander-in-Chief of the 6th Army, was named as a possible successor to Jodl,⁵⁰ and even Keitel's future as Chief of the OKW seemed very much in doubt.⁵¹

In this situation, Wilhelm Keitel seized the initiative to try and salvage his influence and his job. On the afternoon of September 18, he was able, probably for the first time since the crisis erupted on September 7–8, to speak to Hitler alone about the recent events and the resulting consequences for organization and staffing. The confidential nature of their meeting is underlined by the fact that there is no reference to it in the war diary of the OKW – evidently, the only individuals present, apart from Hitler and Keitel, were the two stenographers.

The shorthand transcript shows that the discussion can be divided into three sections. In his introductory presentation, Keitel begins by trying to justify his own conduct in the crisis. His long-winded and tentative arguments give an indication of how worried he was at the time that he himself might be sacked. This is followed by a lengthy tirade from Hitler, at once eloquent and repetitive as his tirades so often were, in which he gives full rein to his dissatisfaction with operational developments at the front and the “disloyalty” of Jodl, but also with List and Halder, interrupted occasionally by affirmative comments and interjections from Keitel. Relieved and reassured by Hitler's comment – that “of course” he would be retaining him as Chief of the OKW – Keitel becomes noticeably more self-confident and tries to put forward his own suggestions for personnel changes. He has prepared a large reshuffle chart for some of the key headquarters and frontline command positions, which he tries to present to the dictator. However, as Keitel discovers, the decisions on the three key personnel changes have already been made by Hitler, in consultation with Schmundt: Halder was to be replaced immediately by Zeitzler, Jodl – after the fall of Stalingrad – by Paulus, and Schmundt was to take over the Army Personnel Office on October 1, 1942.

Keitel's personal agenda – to abandon his closest colleague Jodl and thereby salvage his own damaged position; to restore his influence within the military

50 The memoirs cited in footnote 46 all confirm this point. For a concise account, see also Torsten Diedrich, Paulus. *Das Trauma von Stalingrad. Eine Biographie*, Paderborn et al. 2008, p. 240. The transcript of the meeting on September 18, 1942, confirms Hitler's firm intention to replace Jodl with Paulus.

51 Some memoirs, such as Kotze (ed.), *Heeresadjutant*, p. 127 (the “Engel diary,” September 18, 1942), mention Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, the Commander-in-Chief South, as the proposed successor. The new document published here suggests, however, that this was just a possible option for the future, if at all.

command structure and bypass the OKH on staffing issues; and to ensure that Chief Adjutant Schmundt did not become too powerful – comes across very clearly in the document, in contrast to Keitel's unreliable and exculpatory comments after the war.⁵² It was too late to prevent Schmundt from having a significant say on staffing matters.⁵³ But what does this source document tell us about Hitler? While it provides some interesting new details concerning the crisis in Vinnytsia in September 1942, its greatest value is that it records the dictator's thinking during this crisis for the first time, directly and in detail as a contemporary transcript. The document confirms Hitler's frustration at the lack of any victories on the Caucasus Front as well as his consistent overestimation of German capabilities – notwithstanding his undeniable technical knowledge – and of his own military leadership abilities. It also indicates his obsessive fixation on a particular allegedly decisive "point" on the strategic map (in this case, Tuapse); his concern about a possible second front in the West on the heels of the attempted Allied landing at Dieppe; his disappointment with Jodl; his – not always unfounded – criticism of Halder, List, and the army generals as a whole; his high opinion of Paulus and Zeitzler; and his voluntaristic style of leadership as supreme commander, which demanded unconditional allegiance.

This last aspect is particularly noteworthy. The document shows the categorical nature of Hitler's insistence, as early as the summer of 1942, on giving the key orders as *Führer* and Supreme Commander-in-Chief, not just at the strategic level, but also at an operational and even, on occasion, tactical level – orders that had to be obeyed and carried out at every level of command. By demanding unquestioning subordination from his generals while also insisting on the authority of his every spoken word – which is why they were to be taken down in shorthand from then on – he was making it abundantly clear that he would no longer tolerate any generals in the Moltke tradition, either in his military entourage or on the front, but only energetic assistants who would transmit and execute his orders. The planned shake-ups of the OKH, OKW, and senior troop commanders, plus an overhaul of army staffing policies, were designed to help him achieve this objective. The shorthand transcript dated September 18, 1942, in which all this is discussed, vividly highlights the transfer of military control to Hitler, which the dictator had been pushing since December 1941 when he assumed supreme command of the army and which had now reached its apogee.

⁵² See the passages in his note dated September 29, 1946, in: Görlitz (ed.), Keitel, pp. 305–09, which quite clearly refer to the meeting of September 18, 1942, but seek to draw a veil over his own opportunistic behavior.

⁵³ Keitel admitted as much in retrospect; see *ibid.*, pp. 308–09.

The meeting thus sheds light on one of the most important transformational processes within the Nazi regime. The separation of civil governance and supreme command of the army, which had prevailed in Germany from the wars of unification until the end of 1941, was annulled by Hitler, both in form and substance. In a kind of reconstruction and refinement of the concept of the *roi-connétable* (king-general), as exemplified by Frederick II of Prussia who was a figure much invoked by Nazi propaganda,⁵⁴ Hitler reinvented himself in 1941/42 as the infallible *Führer-Feldherr*,⁵⁵ who blamed every defeat on the “treachery” and “failure” of his generals and sought to document his own military achievements (not least for posterity) by recording his military briefings on paper. This self-construct, and the concept of the *Führer-Feldherr*, reflected the radically militant ideology and practice of National Socialism in which the *Volksgemeinschaft* (people’s community) also signified – and the more so as the war went increasingly badly for the Nazi dictatorship – a militarized fighting community with the repressive elements of strict regimentation, harsh discipline, and a clearly defined hierarchy⁵⁶ – with the *Führer* at the top as head of state and generalissimo.

What were the direct consequences of the leadership crisis and Hitler’s meeting with Keitel? The only important personnel changes that were implemented immediately were the sacking of Halder on September 24, 1942, which had already been decided, and the transfer of new powers to Chief Adjutant Schmundt, who was now given charge of the Army Personnel Office; at the same time, responsibility for the general staff officer personnel was taken away from the OKH. In a meeting with his departing Chief of the General Staff, Hitler emphasized the “need to instill a fanatical belief in the cause within the Gen. Staff. – Determination to impose his will absolutely on the army as well.”⁵⁷ Hitler hoped to achieve this, first, through Halder’s successor, the pro-Nazi Zeitzler, who was sufficiently adroit to take full advantage of Hitler’s vote of confidence in him and

54 See the summarized account by Dennis Showalter, *Roi-Connétable und Kriegsherr. Friedrich II. (1712–1786)*, in: Stig Förster/Markus Pöhlmann/Dierk Walter (eds.), *Kriegsherren der Weltgeschichte. 22 historische Portraits*, Munich 2006, pp. 147–67.

55 The whole issue of “Hitler as Feldherr” has been sorely neglected by historians, particularly by Hitler’s biographers. A notable exception is the recent study by Wolfram Pyta, see Pyta, *Hitler*.

56 In the concluding discussion session of the conference “The place of the ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ in German social history,” Hannover 25.–27.6.2015, Thomas Kühne (Worcester/MA) drew attention to the aim of forging the nation into a “military fighting unit” as a hitherto neglected dimension of “Volksgemeinschaft” as a historical term and analytical concept. See also Johannes Hürter, *The Military Elite and Volksgemeinschaft*, in Martina Steber/Bernard Gotto (eds.), *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany. Social Engineering and Private Lives*, Oxford 2014, pp. 257–69.

57 Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 528 (September 24, 1942).

curtail the influence of the OKW on the conduct of the war in the East. Secondly, he looked to Schmundt, as the new head of the Army Personnel Office from October 1942 onwards, to oversee a radical “elite manipulation” within the officer corps along National Socialist lines.⁵⁸ Schmundt’s reforms did, in fact, result in a “leadership selection” based more strongly on merit as well as a more socially inclusive military elite. But, by the end of the war, the measures had had only a limited impact on the army’s upper echelons. The top positions, in particular, were dominated throughout the war by men of the trained general staff officer type, which included Zeitzler and Schmundt. Many other staff changes were discussed by Hitler and Keitel, but this was mostly about replacing older, “burnt-out” generals with younger, “fresh” (and supposedly more politically acquiescent) generals with a similarly traditional career profile; it was not at all about the advancement and promotion of genuine outsiders. Most of the proposed changes were either never implemented or only carried out much later, not least because the Soviet counteroffensive at Stalingrad and the prospect of the collapse of the German front in the southern sector of the Eastern Front soon concentrated minds on more pressing matters, not to mention the fact that a number of possible replacements (Paulus, Seydlitz) were no longer available. Contrary to what was discussed, therefore, the other two Commanders-in-Chief of the much-maligned Army Group A, Kleist and Ruoff, were not sacked along with List. Even the Chief of the Operations Staff of the OKW, despite Hitler’s stipulation that “Jodl must go,” was allowed to remain in his post until the end of the war, albeit in a weakened position for a while; Jodl never again dared to take an independent line with his supreme commander. In essence, nothing much changed, even after the serious crisis of leadership in September 1942: Hitler needed the professional cooperation of the “old” Wehrmacht elite in order to fight his war,⁵⁹ and he could safely depend on their continuing compliance.

In terms of military operations and strategy, the crisis of September 1942 probably led Hitler to the realization that since the summer campaign had failed to achieve its objectives, the war could no longer be won on his own initiative. Having

⁵⁸ See Stumpf, *Wehrmacht-Elite*, pp. 320–48; Jürgen Förster, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat. Eine strukturgeschichtliche Analyse*, Munich 2007, pp. 9–129; also Hürter, *Heerführer*, pp. 347–50. See also Dermot Bradley/Richard Schulze-Kossens (eds.), *Tätigkeitsbericht des Chefs des Heerespersonalamtes General der Infanterie Rudolf Schmundt, fortgeführt von General der Infanterie Wilhelm Burgdorf, 1.10.1942–29.10.1944*, Osnabrück 1984.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, Part II, vol. 5, p. 361 (August 20, 1942), on a conversation with Hitler about the “useless bunglers” among the army generals: “But there’s nothing to be done for the moment. The Führer needs these generals. We left it too late, unfortunately, to start reforming the Wehrmacht.”

previously insisted on the crucial importance of Caucasian oil and continuing the offensive after the campaign had been split,⁶⁰ the fact that German operations on the Eastern Front had generally ground to a halt inevitably left the dictator disillusioned and at a loss. Raging at his “incompetent” and “disloyal” generals provided an outlet for his frustration at this turn of events, which was largely the result of his own miscalculations and bad decisions – something that Hitler would not, and effectively could not, admit to himself and his entourage, given the power structures within the *Führer* state. The disappointment with the situation as a whole finds direct expression in the transcript of the conversation that took place on September 18, 1942. This marked the end of the line for strategic planning. It was increasingly replaced by Hitler’s autosuggestive references to sheer willpower, fanatical endurance, and divine providence as the only remaining recipes for success.⁶¹ The *Führer*

60 See Hitler’s remark on the importance of the oil, footnote 31, and in conversation with the Italian ambassador, Dino Alfieri, on August 4, 1942, in: Andreas Hillgruber (ed.), *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler. Vertrauliche Aufzeichnungen über Unterredungen mit Vertretern des Auslandes*, vol. 2: 1942–1944, Frankfurt a. M. 1970, p. 94: “The events of the next six weeks on the Russian front would decide the outcome of the war. Within this time, he (the Führer) hoped to have achieved the goals he had set his sights on.”

61 See, for example, the notes preserved in the TsAMO files (Collection 500, Inventory 12450, File 167) recording remarks made by Hitler on October 13, 1943 – notes that presumably come from the files of the Stenographic Service in the Führer Headquarters. The same file contains an index, compiled in the same month, of the shorthand notes taken at the military briefings attended by Hitler. Transcript of the document, see wwii.german-docs-in-russia.org/de/nodes/2303-akte-167-sachregister-zu-den-stenogrammen-der-militarischen-besprechungen-beim-fuehrer-stand#page/48/mode/inspect/zoom/4 [accessed May 7, 2018]:

Shorthand notes, 13.X.43.

The Führer on the problem of how the war can be brought to a victorious conclusion.

With a war such as the present one, one cannot always choose an ideal outcome as the “only possible one. The main thing is to keep on fighting, and to do as much damage to the enemy as possible, and never to give up, but to seek out and exploit any weakness, and never even think about capitulation, or a so-called accommodation without any sort of gains.” ...

“It’s important, too, to have the strength of spirit not to capitulate, never to give up. You never know when the moment will come.” ...

“Crises can and do occur. The fact that I fight tooth and nail for every square meter, and refuse to give it up again, doesn’t mean that if I do have to give it up, I then sit back and do nothing. I’ll keep on fighting and make sure that I can turn a bad situation to my advantage somehow.” ...

“As long as one lies in wait like a cat, seizing every opportunity to strike a blow at the enemy, all is not yet lost, because there will always be new opportunities. The enemy will have his moments of weakness. It’s just a matter of being determined to exploit them.” ...

“In a war where the future of the nation is at stake, there can be no peace without victory.” ...

“History shows us countless examples of how victory comes, in the end, only through dogged tenacity.” ...

and military commander Adolf Hitler was now heading down the road that led Nazi Germany to total defeat.

The Stenographic Transcript

Central Archive of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense in Podolsk (TsAMO), Collection 500, Inventory 12450, File 137.

Carbon copy of the typed full transcript from the shorthand notes, 58 sheets of paper, foliated; abbreviations of the stenographers: folio 1, top left, "Dr.Jt/Bn." (Dr. Hans Jonuschat), folio 35, top left, "Dr.Rey/Ke." (Dr. Ewald Reynitz);⁶² handwritten corrections and additions in the text; marginal notes in Russian (summarizing the content).

Meeting of the Führer with Field Marshal Keitel on September 18, 1942.

Beginning at 15:30 hours.

KEITEL:⁶³ My Führer! I should like to discuss some personnel matters that all relate to the events of the past few weeks. I should add that – as you may already

A single internal breakdown on the other side could trigger the sudden collapse of the entire enemy front.

Today there are "niggling disagreements between the British and the Americans." ... "The moment could come when that really works to our advantage." The Americans could lose their appetite for continuing the war. There are tensions between the two.

"There are three people on the other side on whom an immense amount depends." ... "With 60–70-year-olds, you have to reckon on the possibility of such things happening; but I'll leave that aside."

It's possible that things could change in the USA next year. Roosevelt can't acquire much more territory than he has already taken from the British and French.

So it's entirely possible that an isolationist movement could suddenly start up in the USA, because there are no more economic advantages to be gained from the war. Waiting for this to happen requires patience and endurance.

"Who's to say that one day the Allies won't suddenly come to blows, that they won't suddenly reach the point where their underlying differences can no longer be covered up." ...

Reports of internal difficulties were coming in from Russia too. Stalin is said to be in failing health. But there is no successor of suitable caliber waiting in the wings. "The direction of travel now in Russia, from a military point of view, is away from Communism. There's no doubt about it."

62 The abbreviations Bn. and Ke. evidently refer to the secretaries who wrote up the transcripts dictated to them by the two stenographers.

63 Wilhelm Keitel (1882–1946, executed), July 1940 Field Marshal; February 1938 to May 1945 Chief of the OKW. – Short biographies here refer mainly to the years of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union (June 1941 to May 1945).

know – on the day after the Reich Marshal⁶⁴ met with you at your invitation, I also had a meeting with the Reich Marshal, at which the Reich Marshal responded to various points and questions that I put to him. He told me that he was not authorized to discuss other people with me. I have, however, learned, on the basis of the facts and General Schmundt⁶⁵ told me yesterday, that you decided to receive Blumentritt⁶⁶ and that you have sent General Schmundt and Blumentritt to Paris today accordingly.⁶⁷ May I say now that as far as I am concerned, I am just grateful that you have made this arrangement and the matter will now be resolved. General Zeitzler⁶⁸ will also be coming here, and you will be talking to him here. The situation has deteriorated further, and this will clear up a question on which you know my own views that I discussed with you on the day I returned from Stalino, when I also talked to the Reich Marshal.⁶⁹

My Führer! It seems to me that other decisions are also up for discussion. As I have not been informed, not least about the matter that you recently discussed

64 Hermann Göring (1893–1946, suicide), July 1940 Reich Marshal; from August 1932 President of the Reichstag, April 1933 Minister-President of Prussia, May 1933 Reich Minister of Aviation, October 1936 Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan, April 1945 removal from all offices.

65 Rudolf Schmundt (1896–1944, succumbed to his injuries suffered during the July 20 assassination attempt), August 1939 Colonel, January 1942 Major-General, April 1943 Lieutenant-General, September 1944 General of Infantry; January 1938 to October 1944 Chief Adjutant of the Wehrmacht to Adolf Hitler, October 1942 to October 1944 Chief of the Army Personnel Office (Heerespersonalamt).

66 Günther Blumentritt (1892–1967), January 1942 Major-General, December 1942 Lieutenant-General, April 1944 General of Infantry; October 1940 Chief of Staff of the 4th Army, January 1942 Senior Quartermaster I of the General Staff of the Army, September 1942 Chief of Staff of Army Group D, from September 1944 commander of various army corps and armies.

67 See KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 739 (September 18, 1942): “The Führer has appointed General of Infantry Zeitzler to succeed Colonel-General Halder as Chief of the General Staff of the Army. General Blumentritt will replace him as Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief West.” Halder, Kriegstagebuch, vol. 3, p. 524 (September 17, 1942): “Gen. Blumentritt has been summoned to a meeting with the Führer and will be sent to France to replace Zeitzler. He will arrive there on September 19, so I can expect my successor to be back here around September 22.” Halder was dismissed by Hitler on September 24, 1942; see *ibid.*, p. 528 (September 24, 1942).

68 Kurt Zeitzler (1895–1963), June 1939 Colonel, February 1942 Major-General, September 1942 General of Infantry (without having been Lieutenant-General), January 1944 Colonel-General; March 1940 Chief of Staff of Panzer Group 1 (from October 1941, 1st Panzer Army), April 1942 Chief of Staff of Army Group D, September 1942 to July 1944 Chief of the General Staff of the Army.

69 Keitel had flown to the headquarters of Army Group A in Stalino on September 10, 1942 to explain to List why he was being relieved of his command. See Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, p. 952. Nothing further is known about the conversations that Keitel had with Hitler and Göring shortly after his return.

with General Konrad⁷⁰ – Schmundt told me only that you had asked him a few questions that he had to answer and that you would tell me more yourself – I assume that is not related to these things. But what is related to them, I believe, is the situation as I see it and the leadership issues here in the Wehrmacht High Command. On a number of occasions last winter, and even before that in the late autumn, my Führer, I and others broached the question with you as to whether you might be willing to accept my suggestion to appoint General of Infantry von Manstein⁷¹ as Chief of the Operations Staff or whatever it is called.⁷² At that time, he was still a corps commander [*Kommandierender General*]. He then assumed command of an army in the Crimea, was promoted, and has now become a Field Marshal. So, as far as staffing changes are concerned, the Manstein option, so to speak, is off the table. But the thinking behind it, I believe, is still relevant.

But I do not need to go over what has happened. My Führer, you know me well enough to know that I am bound to feel the outcome of that situation on the evening after the return of General Jodl⁷³ from Stalino very keenly. I wish to add to this, if I may, my Führer. As things have worked out in recent years, General Jodl started out as my assistant, in effect, and then gradually assumed a more prominent role, entering at a certain point in time into a more direct working relationship with you and with the overall leadership of the Wehrmacht. More than once, it has to be said, I have to make it clear to General Jodl that he does not have decision-making authority and does not bear that kind of responsibility. And the way it has worked in the past, my Führer, is that whenever situations of any kind arose, whether back in the day of the Commander-in-Chief

70 Rudolf Konrad (1891–1964), February 1941 Lieutenant-General, March 1942 General of Mountain Troops; November 1940 army liaison officer to the Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, December 1941 Commander of the 7th Mountain Division, December 1941 to May 1944 Commander of the XXXIX Mountain Corps, January 1945 Commander of the LXVIII Army Corps.

71 Erich von Lewinski, called von Manstein (1887–1973), June 1940 General of Infantry, March 1942 Colonel-General, July 1942 Field Marshal; March 1941 Commander of the LVI Army Corps (mot.), September 1941 Commander-in-Chief of the 11th Army, November 1942 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group Don, February 1943 to March 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group South.

72 See Keitel's claim after the war (September 29, 1946), in: Görlitz (ed.), Keitel, pp. 289–90, that he had suggested to Hitler, after the latter had assumed supreme command of the army (December 19, 1941), that Jodl should be appointed Chief of the Army General Staff and Manstein should be made Chief of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff. In December 1941, Manstein and Jodl were both being considered as possible successors to Halder; see Hartmann, Halder, pp. 303–04.

73 Alfred Jodl (1890–1946, executed), July 1940 General of Artillery (without having been Lieutenant-General), January 1944 Colonel-General; August 1939 to May 1945 Chief of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff of the OKW.

of the Army,⁷⁴ or in any kind of crisis, you have instructed or authorized me, or given me permission at my suggestion, to make direct contact immediately with these individuals or duty stations; and I have always assumed from this that you also expect me to take the initiative in such situations and intervene directly in these matters.

So that was the situation. I do not need to remind you that I had already suggested transferring General Jodl to another post, where he could occupy himself with other matters, because I have always felt and foreseen the necessity of this. I find myself unable to repeat the suggestion today, although I did discuss it with you in this connection, two or three weeks ago now.

It seems to me that we need to proceed as follows. A change has to happen, in my view, and there is an opportunity for a change to happen and on your orders. I speak quite frankly, my Führer, as I always have, with regard to myself and to General Jodl. It is the sacred duty of everyone who has enjoyed your confidence and who has worked with you to ensure that you do not have to deal with stressful matters of this kind. It is intolerable that you should have to shoulder such heavy burdens personally when there are other people there to deal with them.

I do not know what you have decided. When I asked the Reich Marshal about this, he told me that he was not authorized to answer my questions. All he said was that the main priority for you, right now, is to settle the matter of the Chief of the General Staff. It seems to me that settling the matter of this appointment obviously has implications for the working arrangements here in your immediate staff, in so far as it affects the Wehrmacht leadership, that is, the Wehrmacht Operations Staff.

I see two possible solutions here: either a solution in keeping with the thinking that prevailed at the time when the Manstein option was still open and I mentioned his name to you, because at the time I thought him the best man for the job; or, of course, the alternative solution involving the appointment once again of a younger general to take on these tasks.

I do not know what your intentions are, my Führer. Nothing was said to me directly in my conversation with the Reich Marshal, but I think you must have, and will have, intentions in this regard, and for my part I shall be very pleased if a clear solution can be found, one that also reinforces the basic principle that the responsibility attached to any specific position has to be strictly defined and delimited. From what took place in Stalino on the day that General Jodl was in Stalino, I can only draw the conclusion that it is completely unacceptable for

74 Walther von Brauchitsch (1881–1948), July 1940 Field Marshal; February 1938 to December 1941 Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

such a thing to happen without your knowledge and also, I must add, without my knowledge and without any prior consideration of what might be discussed there. All I knew was that at the last meeting Field Marshal List⁷⁵ had with you here, he was given a clear order by you.⁷⁶ This is what I was told at the time. I was not present myself, of course, at the meeting with Field Marshal List. I inquired about it afterwards and was told that you, my Führer, had given a very clear and unambiguous order, in the presence of the Reich Marshal, as I subsequently learned, and as Field Marshal List subsequently confirmed when I was down there with him.

In this instance, the way I see it as a mere bystander, so to speak, is this: You had given a clear order. You had not given any instructions or permission to consider, discuss, or decide anything that deviated from this order. As such, and in so far as the ultimate responsibility would have rested with me, this has, of course, created a situation that is completely unacceptable. Such a crucial and important issue, on which a decision was clearly taken on the basis of a discussion here, cannot simply be revised by someone else on his own authority. The facts here are so clear that even if you had not raised the matter yourself, I myself would have found it impossible to work in this manner. I can only say that I am, perhaps, partly to blame for the fact that General Jodl has gradually pushed the boundaries of his position so far that he feels able to act on his own authority – and this is

75 Wilhelm List (1880–1971), July 1940 Field Marshal; August to October 1939 Commander-in-Chief of the 14th Army, October 1939 to October 1941 Commander-in-Chief of the 12th Army, July to October 1941 Wehrmacht Commander Southeast, July to September 1942 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group A.

76 On August 31, 1942, in a conversation between Hitler and List in Vinnytsia – they spoke alone first, and were then joined by Göring, Halder, Jodl, and Jeschonnek (Keitel was in Berlin that day) – it had been decided that Army Group A would attack in three places on the western Caucasus Front, in order to occupy the Black Sea coast as far down as Sukhumi: 1. near Novorossiysk along the coast, 2. down the road from Maykop to Tuapse, 3. at the 4th Mountain Division towards Gudauta. This is confirmed by the three key war diaries for this day: Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, pp. 513–14; KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 662; *Kriegstagebuch* (War Diary) of Army Group A, in: *ibid.*, footnote 1. The reservations of List and his troop commanders Ruoff (“Armeegruppe Ruoff”) and Konrad (XXXXIX Mountain Corps) about the attack on Gudauta were evidently put on hold for the moment, but returned in force after List returned to his headquarters. See *Kriegstagebuch* of Army Group A, September 2, 1942, in: *ibid.*, pp. 690–91, footnote 1, about a telex that List sent to the OKH: “We need to consider whether 4th Mt. Div., which after regrouping will have max. 7 battalions, some of them under strength and whose extended flanks are likely to be under constant attack, should be committed for the advance to the coast. C-in-C [List] points out that supply will be difficult and will tie up substantial forces for an extended period, and that it will not be possible to pull back the attacking force later if the situation should require it. C-in-C says he is prepared to present these thoughts again to the Führer in person.”

definitely a case of high-handedness, pure and simple. I should perhaps have put a stop to this earlier. I failed to do so, and to that extent I am partly responsible for him and his actions. I should have clarified this beforehand, and said to him: look here, what have you got to discuss down there? He simply told me: I have been asked to go and see Field Marshal List, General Konrad will be there and there is to be further discussion about this course of action – concentrating the Mountain Corps.⁷⁷

THE FÜHRER: That's not the only key issue here, as far as I am concerned.

KEITEL: But for me it is something that needs to be resolved at the end of the day.

THE FÜHRER: The key issue is something else. I have to have total, one-hundred-percent loyalty from the people who work with me.⁷⁸ If I do not have such

77 For Jodl's visit to List's headquarters in Stalino on September 7, 1942, when he was won round to a different point of view, contrary to Hitler's expectations, see *Kriegstagebuch* of Army Group A, in: KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 691, footnote 1: "September 7 Meeting of C-in-C [List] and Commander XXXIX Mt. Corps [Konrad] with Gen. Jodl on plan for 4th Mt. Div. It is agreed that the advance on Gudauta is too risky. Reasons: Difficulties of terrain – attack has to be launched over a mountain track. Supplies have to be transported 60–70 km as the crow flies, on pack animals, which means a six-day march each time. We are 1,900 pack animals short of the required number. In the event of flooding, bridges would be destroyed. No guarantee that the attacking force will reach the coast. Even if breakthrough succeeds, our forces will be constantly exposed to enemy attacks, esp. against extended flanks as well as from the air and sea, with no means of defense. No guarantee that the advance on Tuapse and beyond will succeed quickly enough so that we can link up with them before winter. Essential to propose to Führer that we abandon this attack and pull back our forces to the passes across the main ridge, thus freeing up another mt. div. for the push down to Tuapse."

78 The exact course of the conversation between Hitler and Jodl late on the evening of September 7, 1942, to which Hitler refers in what follows, is not recorded. What is clear, however, is that Jodl backed List's view, "that the XXXIX Mountain Corps must be pulled back to the north, leaving rearguard units to block the Caucasus passes, and redeployed in the area around Maykop, so that we have additional forces available there, trained in mountain warfare, for the thrust to the coast;" and that Hitler reacted with extraordinary fury to this change of plan, which came as a complete surprise to him; KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, pp. 695–96 (September 8, 1942); see also Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, pp. 518–19 (September 8, 1942). The new document serves to confirm two related points that are made by the authors of later memoirs. According to Heusinger (*Befehl*, p. 198 – with incorrect dating), Hitler's fury was directed against List's conduct of operations in general: "If he had concentrated his forces on the road to Tuapse, we would have broken through ages ago. Instead, he has spread them too thinly over the entire mountain front and failed to gain ground anywhere." According to Warlimont (*Hauptquartier*, p. 268), who was not present himself and cites Jodl as his source, Jodl countered Hitler's accusations with the argument that "Field Marshal List had adhered strictly to the instructions he had been given." It is not known what documents and maps he used to support this contention, but what follows shows clearly

loyalty, then any form of collaboration is out of the question. It is outrageous that, as has happened here, a justification for some action has been fabricated after the event, based on orders picked out at random, without making the slightest effort to establish: 1.) how those orders came about; and 2.) without taking into account the instructions given by me here on a daily basis to the Chief of the Army General Staff,⁷⁹ which were quite clear and unequivocal. It is even more outrageous that, in order to lend credence to such a fabrication, drawings were subsequently made that, due to a cardinal error that escaped the attention of these gentlemen, already show that this is a complete fabrication, concocted after the event.

The situation – just to go over it briefly once again – was that the push towards Maykop and Tuapse was not something that was announced out of the blue in a written order issued on such-and-such a date; it had been discussed at countless meetings and formed the basis of all our planning.⁸⁰ In many of these briefings, I repeatedly pointed out to the Chief of the General Staff that it was important for us to get a foothold on the coast as quickly as possible – to secure our supply lines, apart from anything else.

As things stood, one possible place was the sea crossing at Kerch. I rejected that for fear that things could go wrong there. That left only three routes that I was aware of. These were also the only three routes marked on the maps that I had, on a scale of 1:500,000 and 1:300,000. One route was the one from Maykop to Tuapse, which would allow us to advance south along the Black Sea coast, to the west of the Caucasus and to the east of the Black Sea coast itself. The second

that the dictator was particularly incensed by what he saw as a fabrication after the event. This is why Hitler demanded to see “all the paperwork for orders relating to the command of Army Group A since the crossing of the Don” (KTB/ OKW, vol. II/1, p. 696, September 8, 1942) and ordered all future military briefings to be taken down in shorthand.

79 Franz Halder (1884–1972), July 1940 Colonel-General; September 1938 to September 1942 Chief of the General Staff of the Army.

80 The importance of the Black Sea port and transport hub Tuapse, and the plan to capture it in an offensive launched from Maykop, had indeed been emphasized repeatedly in the military briefings and orders. See, for example, OKH order dated July 31, 1942, in: KTB/OKW, vol. II/2, p. 1285: “The next and most important task for Army Group A is to take and occupy the Black Sea coast with all speed [...]. [...] The remaining mobile units of Army Group A, under Panzer Army High Command 1, together with the divisions initially available, will advance along the Kropotkin-Armavir line in the direction of Maykop, where some elements will block the way of the enemy forces retreating to the Caucasus, while other elements will advance via Tuapse along the coast towards Batumi.” Halder’s notes from Hitler’s meeting with List on August 31, 1942, in: Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 514: “Tuapse is the key objective.”

route was the Georgian Military Road,⁸¹ and the third route ran along the eastern flank of the Caucasus to Baku.

Of these three routes, I regarded the first, via Tuapse, as the most important, because only the capture of Tuapse offered the chance to exploit Maykop as well. I told the gentlemen expressly that we cannot assume that we will get refineries there, that we will therefore have to ship the crude oil out, but that we have a certain amount of reserve refinery capacity in Romania, and that we must therefore get to Tuapse at all costs – the road, the rail line, and the pipeline all go there – in order to ship this crude oil to Romania. All of this was expressly discussed here. Not once, but repeatedly, I pointed out that the breakthrough to Tuapse was the key to bringing this off.

General Jodl now acts as though none of this was talked about. He keeps on saying this was not clear from the order. Well, I'm bound to say: what is the point when I get a presentation by the Chief of the General Staff or the Chief of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff here, and I state my views, and afterwards, what I say is not just ignored, it's actually disputed, and people produce documents to try and prove something different?

I went on to say that rapid units would have to try and push through via Maykop to Tuapse in a series of surprise assaults and raids. Now, afterwards, I'm told: the thing about Maykop is that the oil-producing region is not located west of Maykop, but to the east.⁸² I didn't know that at the time, nor did General Jodl or the Reich Marshal – nobody knew; all any of us knew was that the oil-producing region is somewhere around Maykop and to the west of the rail line. The rail line was the crucial thing, along with the pipeline. I had no idea that they later found oil strikes in other places.

As far as the central sector is concerned, I said from the outset that crossing by the Georgian Military Road is out of the question for us. The Georgian Military

81 The Georgian Military Road is the main crossing over the Central Caucasus, running between Ordzhonikidze and Tbilisi.

82 Contrary to expectation, the oil field was not located in the area immediately around Maykop, but 40–60 km to the southwest, near Khadyzhensk, to the west and east of the mountain pass road and rail line to Tuapse, which were the scene of fierce fighting. On the great hopes, and even greater difficulties, of exploiting the Maykop oil field, see Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, pp. 942–44; Dietrich Eichholtz, *Krieg um Öl. Ein Erdölimperium als deutsches Kriegsziel (1938–1943)*, Leipzig 2006, pp. 122–32. The work of the “Technische Brigade Mineralöl” (Petroleum Technical Brigade) was hampered not only by the destruction of the oil facilities and the almost impassable mountain terrain of the thickly forested Caucasus, but also by the fact that parts of the oil field had become a battlefield. By the time the Wehrmacht pulled out of the Maykop area in January 1943, only a small quantity of oil had been pumped.

Road can be blocked very easily – it has some very large engineering structures,⁸³ and it cannot be kept clear of snow in winter – we simply don't have the resources here for that. But the main thing is that we don't have the capacity to carry on operations, being short of gasoline anyway, or to keep traffic moving down the Georgian Military Road to Tbilisi just with fuel trucks. I said we must follow the route along the rail lines. That means, first and foremost, west of the Caucasus via Batumi to Tbilisi and on the other side, east of the Caucasus, via Baku to Tbilisi. That was the third route, and the only one that I regarded as feasible.

So I told them: the critical priority is the push to Tuapse and the next thing is the shielding of the Georgian Military Road and the thrust through to the Caspian Sea to reach Baku. I've said all this here so often that I find it almost insulting to be given a piece of paper that more or less says that these things were never discussed. I give a presentation here every day, I tell Colonel-General Halder what I want done. And it is all a waste of time, because Jodl stands there and takes no notice at all, but concocts some tale and points to the map and says: the rapid units, as the map shows – the map was drawn up afterwards, which I find quite outrageous – were launched en masse against the area around Grozny and Ordzhonikidze⁸⁴ and part of this force is to push to the east. But it had already been agreed that the 13th Panzer [Division] or the SSW [SS *Panzergranadier Division* "Wiking"], or both of them together, were first supposed to try and break through very quickly and get to Tuapse.⁸⁵ That had certainly been decided, and if General Jodl is now disputing that, I regard it as a disgrace.

If General Jodl is now saying that an order then came through to go over the other mountain passes,⁸⁶ then I have to say: who mentioned these passes in the first place? I knew nothing about these passes, but General Jodl came to me and said that there are any number of passes crossing over. I knew nothing about

83 In German: "Kunstbauten" = bridges and tunnels.

84 The city of Ordzhonikidze (which reverted in 1990 to its former name of Vladikavkaz, meaning "rule over the Caucasus" in Russian) is where the Georgian Military Road begins. The Wehrmacht failed in its efforts to take Ordzhonikidze or Grozny.

85 The 1st Panzer Army (Colonel-General von Kleist) had taken Maykop on August 9, 1942 and continued its advance towards Tuapse, spearheaded by the 13th Panzer Division and the SS Division "Wiking;" but, the advance had largely stalled by the middle of the month. See Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, pp. 937–39. As of the second half of August, both of these "fast" divisions were redirected to take part in the push by the 1st Panzer Army to reach the River Terek.

86 A reference to the Adzapsh pass (2,579 m) and the Kluchor pass (2,781 m) to the west of Mount Elbrus, whose summit (5,630 m) had been reached by troops of the 1st Mountain Division on August 21, 1942. It was the capture of the Adzapsh pass by the 4th Mountain Division in the second half of August 1942 that opened up the option of pushing on to Gudauta and the coast.

that. I specifically vetoed the suggestion to go over the pass I know about, on the Georgian Military Road, because I thought that was pointless. I must point out, however, that this was the time when the advance began to falter in the central sector as well, as a result of the fuel not being correctly allocated. That was the reason. We could have broken through very quickly in the beginning – which was actually the plan. Field Marshal List has been lax in his leadership. When a man says, the only map I have is on a scale of 1:1 million, I don't know any other one – then we might as well pack up and go home.⁸⁷ It's a ludicrous state of affairs. He tells me, I don't have that map. Then Heusinger⁸⁸ informs me that they did get it on June 6 – that's established beyond a doubt. It was issued to the Army Group on June 6. What's-his-name [*Der Dings*] says he knows nothing about this. Now I just don't understand how a Field Marshal can command his troops in the mountains using a map on a scale of 1:1 million and then say afterwards about Maykop: I didn't see the marking on the map, I didn't know anything about it, or the marking had been altered. That's just ridiculous.

I will say just one thing: I didn't know there is a passable road to the west of Mount Elbrus. It wasn't marked on any of our maps. Afterwards, I was told that the road isn't very good. But I must point out that when the advance on Tuapse got bogged down, I immediately warned against having the mountain divisions move on.⁸⁹ I thought it was important and said that they should be deployed to Tuapse, to push through there. I was told: no, the *Jäger* [light infantry] divisions were there,⁹⁰ and they would be quite sufficient. I pointed out here repeatedly, two or three times, that I thought it was a mistake to move the mountain divisions on. All we need to do, after all, is to block the Georgian Military Road – and we

87 See Halder's notes from Hitler's meeting with List on August 31, 1942, in: Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 514: "List did not have a 1:500,000 map."

88 Adolf Heusinger (1897–1982), August 1940 Colonel, December 1941 Major-General, January 1943 Lieutenant-General; October 1940 to July 1944 Chief of the Operations Department of the General Staff of the Army.

89 Hitler is talking about the thrust by the XXXIX Mountain Corps from the Armavir region into the high mountains to the west of Mount Elbrus, which ran counter to the planned prioritizing of Maykop/Tuapse. This lay at the heart of the accusation against Army Group A – that it had spread its forces too thin by moving in too many directions. In his meeting with List on August 31, 1942, Hitler had again said that he "would have preferred it, in hindsight, if the Mt. Corps had been deployed on the road to Tuapse;" *Kriegstagebuch* of Army Group A, August 31, 1942, in: KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 662, footnote 1.

90 The XXXIV Army Corps with the 97th and 101st "*Jäger*" Divisions was operating on the Maykop-Tuapse road alongside the LVII Panzer Corps. Both corps, along with the XXXIX Mountain Corps, had been reassigned on August 17, 1942, from the 1st Panzer Army to Army Group Ruoff.

can do that just as easily with other forces. Apart from that, we should press on east of the Caucasus. This was always discussed in these terms. Jodl is acting as if that was never the case.

KEITEL: That slipped through my fingers too, if you'll pardon the expression. On the evening when the decisions were being made, I had said that he should provide the documents and reports, the ones we don't have as orders, because we already have the Wehrmacht orders. He then sent off for them to Army High Command and produced the orders later on. I said to him: you showed us a map as well. Where is it? And he said: I don't have a copy, that was a proposal made by the Army Group before the attack was launched.

THE FÜHRER: The map – –

KEITEL: I never saw it.

THE FÜHRER: The map is a joke. It's completely wrong – it certainly doesn't prove anything; it shows something completely different from the attack that was ordered. The order was that the SSW and the 13th Panzer were to try and push straight through to Tuapse first, and I only said that we should try to bring up at least another half division after that failed.

One of the things that Jodl said here was that there were much better ways to get across farther south. I have to say that it was all the same to me, at the end of the day, where we got across, just as long as we got there as fast as possible. So if Jodl now explains it all to me, with his documents and paperwork, then he should take responsibility for it – and it turned out that he couldn't. But then he can't shift the blame onto someone else; General Jodl is responsible, or whoever it was. Konrad told me he knew nothing about these other crossing places; he was only informed about them then. I am convinced that it came from here, from General Jodl, but it doesn't really matter.

The crux of the matter was this: the thing had ground to a halt, and so I ordered Field Marshal von List [sic!] to come here. I gave Field Marshal von List his instructions here: you must push through to the coast at all costs, here are four battalions of the 4th Mountain Division, make sure you bring up a few more battalions and then advance to the coast, so that you at least block off the road, because the enemy is sending more and more forces to Tuapse, and if you can cut them off, so much the better.⁹¹ The Reich Marshal was at the meeting. We talked about the problem of maintaining supplies. I said to him right away: you

⁹¹ See Kriegstagebuch of the Army Group A, August 31, 1942, on Hitler's meeting with List, in: KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 662, footnote 1: "The forces of the Mt. Corps are to join up with the 4th Mt. Div. in the area south of the Adzaph pass; the thrust to the coast must be carried out as soon as possible."

don't need to bring supplies over the mountains, we can get them to you by sea. The Reich Marshal said: my Führer, I can bring them in by air immediately. I also asked Konrad what he needed. Konrad says he needs 3–4 tons a day. That's two Ju 52s.⁹² In Demyansk we kept more than 80,000 men supplied nearly all winter from the air.⁹³ Here I need two Ju 52s a day, which have to fly only 140 km over water, in complete safety. There were plans for two airfields: one of them perfect, the other an emergency landing strip.⁹⁴ It was decided that we should at least secure the emergency landing strip.

I gave List the order here that this must be done at all costs, since he is there, and the pullback – who knows how long it would take, it would take forever.⁹⁵ I asked Jodl: how long will that take? Does this mean we can't attack any sooner? Jodl says: no, the attack can begin on the 12th. They won't wait, they'll move right away. I then said: what's the point of moving up the mountain divisions or the shattered division, these fragments of the two mountain divisions? What purpose will that serve? I was told: so that we can catch our breath, get supplies, etc. I

92 The workhorse of the Luftwaffe, the Junkers Ju 52 ("Auntie Ju"), was Germany's most important transport aircraft during World War II.

93 From February 6, 1942 until their relief on April 28, 1942, six German divisions in the Demyansk pocket (Army Group North) had been supplied by the Luftwaffe. This example of successful "endurance" by encircled units influenced Hitler's subsequent expectations of his forces to hold "fortified positions" and pockets. See DRZW, vol. 4, Horst Boog et al., *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion*, Stuttgart 1983, pp. 634–42 (article by Ernst Klink).

94 The question of whether the 4th Mountain Division would have been able to use an airfield at Gudauta after pushing through to the coast had also been discussed at the meeting between Hitler and List. See Halder's notes from Hitler's meeting with List on August 31, 1942, in: Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 514: "4th Mt. Corps via 4th Mt. Div. (road and rail). Port and airfield needed. Where airfield for 4th Mt. Div.?"

95 Here Hitler looks back and repeats his objection to the proposal of Army Group A, which Jodl endorsed, not to attack towards Gudauta, but instead to "pull back our forces to the passes across the main ridge, thus freeing up another Mt. Div. for the push down to Tuapse" (*Kriegstagebuch* of Army Group A, September 7, 1942, in: KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 691, footnote 1). After Hitler had given way, with the greatest reluctance, over the issue of Gudauta on September 8, 1942 – "then he [List] should leave it" – he was all the more insistent that the attack on Tuapse should be continued without delay: "He [List] needs to get his Mt. Corps together and get it into action as quickly as possible in the interests of the mission he's been given. The attack on Tuapse needs to be continued with all possible force and speed – and it must not be made dependent on bringing up reinforcements from the Mountain Corps." Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 519 (September 8, 1942); see also *Kriegstagebuch* of Army Group A, September 9, 1942, in: KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 692, footnote 1. Despite every effort, the attack on Tuapse failed to make any further significant progress in the following months. The front line was held by the Red Army some 20 km from the city, and, by the end of December 1942, the German retreat had begun.

refused to accept this and said: the crucial thing is to prevent the enemy from bringing up more men than us. In practical terms, over so many weeks, I can bring up four or six Mountain Battalions, while the enemy can bring in five or six divisions, because he can use the rail line and the road. So it's important that we deny him that.

So that was the order List was given before he left. Jodl has no right to go down there and change the order, for reasons that, as it transpired here, were described by General Konrad as spurious.⁹⁶ Jodl told me the next day: it has to be retaken in two attacks anyway, and besides, there aren't four battalions here. General Konrad says: I have four battalions. It was Jodl who disputed that. I asked Konrad: how severely have you been under attack here? He says: they were small-scale attacks, just skirmishes really, nothing of importance. I had the stenographer make a record of all that. I then asked him: do you think you could not have pushed through to the coast? – No, he says, we could have done that. It was just a question of what to do about supplies afterwards. I say: that's not a problem; you're up there on the mountain ridge, so you can be supplied by sea or from the rear. By sea is easier, definitely. I asked him again: so you didn't retreat because enemy pressure forced you back? – No, he said, that wasn't the case. I finally put the question to him: do you think you can get through with six battalions? And he says: no problem. I asked: what is your replenishment requirement? He said: 3–4 tons a day. So if we get two, three or four Ju 52s in the air and they drop a couple of rations-delivery bombs, that will take care of it. He then said: the only thing that has created difficulties is getting fodder for my mules. I didn't even know that he had any. That has been a problem. But it's easier for him to feed the mules on the southern slopes, where there's hardly any snowfall anyway, than on the northern slopes, and certainly easier if I can get to the sea in the first place. In any case, it will make the attack on Tuapse easier if I can get there and cut off the approach. But Jodl just changes all that on his own initiative. It's outrageous. And afterwards he tried to make out that someone else is responsible. I need to know that the people on my staff will fight tooth and nail for my point of view. It's completely unacceptable for one of my people to go and say: I take a different

⁹⁶ Hitler is referring to his meeting with General Konrad on September 14, 1942, for which the entry in KTB/OKW, vol. II/1, p. 721, merely states: "[...] there is no record of what was said by him or the Führer." Halder's summary is similarly bereft, in Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 522 (September 14, 1942): "Meeting between Gen. Konrad (Commander Mountain Corps) and Führer. Discussion about commitment of Mountain Corps." If the recorded statements by Konrad that now follow are indeed accurate, they are partially at odds with the position he took at the meeting with List and Jodl in Stalino on September 7, 1942 (see footnote 77 in the present article).

view myself. When I send one of my people somewhere, he has no right to adopt the view of the other person; he's been sent there to state my view.

KEITEL: My Führer, if I can add something to that: he most definitely was not authorized to revoke an order from you by reporting to me that the order is not being carried out. I was there at the time.

THE FÜHRER: That is outrageous – and that's why I can't work with General Jodl any more.

KEITEL: I completely understand.

THE FÜHRER: This kind of collaboration has to be based on absolute loyalty or not at all. But it's outrageous anyway, quite apart from the fact that he is no strongman himself. He was the one who suggested the great solution last winter – retreat immediately! – which would have cost us everything.⁹⁷ So that was another time when he chose not to back my view – which he knew exactly – but rather the views of weaklings at the front, and he made himself the spokesman for these views, which is completely unacceptable. It's unacceptable for someone working for a superior authority, in this case the supreme authority, not to represent the views of the supreme authority, but instead to try and impose other views on the supreme authority – for completely spurious reasons. His reasons were spurious. The picture painted by General Jodl has been totally contradicted by General Konrad. The thing about the two attacks was also drawn in [on the map] here for me. – I'm quite flabbergasted, says Konrad, who is really in a very awkward position and told me he assumes that it is all based on misunderstandings. I couldn't care less.

KEITEL: That is why I came, my Führer. I did not want to agitate you again with these things last week, before you had spoken to Konrad.

THE FÜHRER: If General Konrad had said: my Führer, it was not possible to get through there! I asked him another question. I said: do you think, General Konrad, that it is easier to get through at Tuapse? He said: no, definitely not, it's exactly the same. There are probably more forces there.

KEITEL: My Führer, just to say: I have not spoken to Konrad myself, I haven't done that.

⁹⁷ See Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 378 (September 9, 1942): "Several conversations with v. Kluge, Jodl: major decision about pulling back the front now needed. Führer cannot make up his mind and wants to speak to Kluge. So further postponement of this urgent issue and loss of valuable time." Jodl evidently supported the requests from the OKH and the field commanders, in December 1941/January 1942, to retreat before Moscow to prevent the destruction of Army Group Center. On January 11, 1942, Hitler again vetoed this "great solution" in a meeting with Halder and Kluge and insisted on his order "to defend every yard of ground" (*ibid.*, p. 379). On the winter crisis before Moscow in 1941/42, see Reinhardt, Wende; Hürter, *Heerführer*, pp. 318–50.

THE FÜHRER: It's all been recorded by the stenographers.

KEITEL: Schmundt told me, my Führer, that you would fill me in – I wondered if that might happen the day after – and said he was not authorized to put me in the picture. So I did not press him. From my point of view, and the way I see all this, I must say that I find this whole sequence of events all the more incomprehensible because General Konrad was present at the meeting in Stalino, or at least must have spoken his mind to List. That's when List must have said: I can't take responsibility.

THE FÜHRER: I am convinced that List didn't want that, and Jodl, who shares the responsibility for the decision in question, tried to get himself out of the situation by advising an immediate retreat himself. It was a fateful decision, because we would have been down on the coast for certain by now and would have established a hedgehog defense with six or eight battalions. Then I could have deployed air force units down there. I've discussed this with the Reich Marshal. Then we could have brought in one or two regiments and deployed them, not by parachute – they could have landed there because an airstrip of sorts was available. All this could have been done.

And it would have been possible to supply them by sea, using rapid attack craft [*Schnellboote*], if that was the only option. If worse had come to worst, I could have brought supplies in at night with the one U-boat⁹⁸ we have down there. But the distance is nothing, as I said to General Jodl – what is it? 120 or 130 km in a straight line from our air base? It was obvious that we would be on the Taman Peninsula⁹⁹ very soon. What are 150 km, when I already had to supply Narvik with everything from 1,500 km away? Here he has artillery, mountain troops, the lot, whereas Dietl¹⁰⁰ has nothing at all in Narvik.¹⁰¹ So there's no comparison between the two situations. He could also have established an all-round defense

98 In 1942/43, six German Type II B U-boats stationed in the Baltic were sent overland and down the Danube to the Black Sea. Hitler is evidently referring here to U 24, which was the first German U-boat to enter service in the Black Sea, albeit not until October 14, 1942.

99 The Taman Peninsula, which faces Kerch across the straits that lead into the Sea of Azov, had been captured by Army Group Ruoff by September 5, 1942. See Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, pp. 935–36.

100 Eduard Dietl (1890–1944, killed in an airplane crash), July 1940 General of Infantry (later: of Mountain Troops), June 1942 Colonel-General; June 1940 Commander of the Mountain Corps Norway, January 1942 Commander-in-Chief of the Army Lapland, June 1942 Commander-in-Chief of the 20th Mountain Army.

101 From April to June 1940, Dietl had been able to hold out against numerically far superior British and French forces in and around the Norwegian port of Narvik. See DRZW, vol. 2: Klaus A. Maier et al., *Die Errichtung der Hegemonie auf dem europäischen Kontinent*, Stuttgart 1979, pp. 219–20 (article by Bernd Stegemann).

very easily, as the enemy can't attack with armor in that terrain. He just needed to secure his position on the road. You could bring up tanks to do that. If worse had come to worst, he didn't need to stay on the road, but could pull back and keep the road under fire, could destroy the rail line and keep it under fire. Everything's possible. I find General Jodl's behavior intolerable; it is just not acceptable.

As far as Field Marshal von List is concerned, I can only say this. Even at that time, I regarded his tour of Norway as a direct evasion of my order, because the order was to go up there and inspect.¹⁰² By that I mean something like what Colonel-General Haase¹⁰³ is doing in the West. But for someone to go up there and go to Oslo and talk to Colonel-General Falkenhorst,¹⁰⁴ then go on to Drontheim and talk to the commander there, then talk to the commander at Narvik, then go to Kirkenes and have another conversation there – I don't need to send somebody up there to do all that; all I need to do is order Colonel-General von Falkenhorst or the others to report back to me. But because I no longer have absolute faith in their reports, I send people up there to see for themselves whether the reports are accurate. Because the person I send then reports back on the others. I don't need to send anyone, any officer, to the front for the purpose of seeing for himself, if he is just going to go to the nearest corps headquarters or one of the armies and ask: how are things with you at the front? If I tell someone to go and inspect the front for me, check out the artillery disposition, I won't have him going off to the commander of Army Group North and simply asking: how have you deployed your artillery? I can ask that question for myself at any time, I don't need to send someone specially.

KEITEL: I completely understand.

THE FÜHRER: So General Jodl has to go.

KEITEL: I'm not going to defend him, I myself also bear responsibility for all this.

102 Following an extended period of illness, List had been sent to Norway and northern Finland in February/March 1942, tasked with inspecting the defenses against an Allied invasion and assessing their state of readiness. See Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 418 (March 25, 1942): "Führer: Long presentation by Field Marshal List on his travel impressions of Norway and Lapland. Rejects the idea of a Wehrmacht High Command for the North as unnecessary because northern sector always needs to act alone and southern sector is under tight control." See also Robert Bohn, *Reichskommissariat Norwegen. "Nationalsozialistische Neuordnung" und Kriegswirtschaft*, Munich 2000, pp. 373–74.

103 Curt Haase (1881–1943), June 1940 Colonel-General; February 1941 to November 1942 Commander-in-Chief of the 15th Army.

104 Nikolaus von Falkenhorst (1885–1968), July 1940 Colonel-General; July 1940 to December 1944 Wehrmacht Commander in Norway, December 1940 to December 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Norway, June to December 1941 Commander-in-Chief in Northern Finland.

THE FÜHRER: As I see it, there is only one man for the job, someone I trust myself, and who has the necessary front-line experience. And that's General Paulus.¹⁰⁵

KEITEL: Then that would be the solution to go for. I did not really want to bring this matter up again. I take the view that, it is no longer up to me to defend General Jodl in this matter. I have no intention of doing so. Please understand me correctly, my Führer. I am personally affected by these things. If you have any confidence in my position with regard to you, he cannot make arrangements behind my back and then inform me after the fact.

THE FÜHRER: And the complete opposite of an order that was given here.

KEITEL: That's why I regret giving him greater latitude over time – in the belief that he would grow into the job and see the bigger picture – since I myself had so many other tasks to attend to as well. So I am partly to blame for the fact that he has gradually been getting above himself, if I can put it like that, and has perfected a method that he cleverly adopts whenever certain things are being discussed in his presence. His interest in the whole thing perked up when – apart from the presentation that he had to give based on the report – the question of the Mountain Corps came up. I was struck by that. Then we had to listen to his thoughts on mountain warfare and mountain troops,¹⁰⁶ and he insisted on putting his oar in – not to put too fine a point on it – leadership matters. That is what happened, my Führer. He just added his comments on these things, offering explanations and suggestions, and holding forth on this and that. But that was not his job. And it was entirely unacceptable for him to go down there with a clear order that you have issued here, which he has heard – I had not heard it myself – and to take part in a discussion there and report back, and then later on General Konrad is summoned to see you and he claims that he hasn't said anything of the kind and that this is just unacceptable. Such a decision had to come from something that Konrad said.

THE FÜHRER: He shouldn't have gone at all, and if he did go, he should have done so for one reason only – to tell the others: look here, the Führer has given a clear order, and your job is to obey that order, come what may,

(Keitel: That's right!)

105 Friedrich Paulus (1890–1957), August 1940 Lieutenant-General, January 1942 General of Panzer Troops, January 1943 Colonel-General, January 1943 Field Marshal; May 1940 Senior Quartermaster I of the General Staff of the Army, January 1942 to January 1943 Commander-in-Chief of the 6th Army, afterwards prisoner of war of the Soviets.

106 As a senior lieutenant in an artillery regiment, Jodl had gained experience with mountain warfare on the Carpathian front in 1916/17. See Scheurig, Jodl, p. 14.

it is essential that you see it through, no matter what; the reasons are very clear, the Führer has explained them to us, and all I can say is: carry out this order to the letter.

I take the view, as I said, that this is not acceptable. But it's this disloyalty, more than anything – the fact that such a map is put in front of me here! Why do I bother to talk at all? – This is why I have finally decided to have every word taken down in shorthand. If I say something in a meeting with the Chief of the Army General Staff and also with the Chief of my Wehrmacht Operations Staff and nobody takes any notice, then it's a waste of my time talking to these gentlemen. Why bother to brief people in person? It's a complete waste of my time. In future, I might as well just have the papers and all the reports brought to me, spend time studying them myself, and then dictate my instructions, and then the job is done. If I get a briefing here, whether from the Chief of the Army General Staff or the Chief of the Wehrmacht High Command, and I respond to it, my response amounts to the same thing as a written order;

(Keitel: Absolutely!)

otherwise I would have to say that these gentlemen are not to brief me in person, I'll ask for the paperwork instead, stay up an hour or two longer, study it and deal with it, and I can save myself the trouble of the briefing.

KEITEL: Something definitely has to change. On the personnel issue, I'd like to say this: if you say you have full confidence in General Paulus, then the decision has already been made, essentially. That would mean, however, that you have decided to appoint an older general rather than a younger one. Otherwise, as an alternative, I would have suggested a younger general who I believe also enjoys your confidence.¹⁰⁷ I mentioned this to the Reich Marshal, and he took note of it.

THE FÜHRER: General Paulus can't be moved for the moment. He has to see this Stalingrad business through. So for the time being, things will have to stay as they are here. The first change that must be made, because there really is not a moment to lose, is to find an immediate replacement for Colonel-General Halder.

KEITEL: I agree that this is the most urgent priority.

Now I must ask you: do you wish me to stay on in my post?

THE FÜHRER: Of course.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Unclear who is meant here.

¹⁰⁸ On the relationship between Hitler and Keitel, see, for example, Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, Part II, vol. 5, p. 360 (August 20, 1942), about a conversation with Hitler in Vinnytsia: "Most of the senior generals do not share our ideology, and some may even be hostile to it. The Führer told me some

KEITEL: Strictly speaking, Jodl is my subordinate, and in this case he has let me down badly, quite apart from the fact that he has obviously let you down. To that extent, I must take responsibility for his actions and for the fact that I myself did not think – unfortunately, because I had not been present at the meeting with List – to ask him: what are you going down there for? I should have known, or else I should have asked.

THE FÜHRER: I honestly thought he was going down there, obviously, to make my views known, in no uncertain terms, and to impress them upon General Konrad in particular, whom I thought he knew personally. But for him to go down there and contradict what I said is simply outrageous.

KEITEL: And even if he didn't actually contradict you as such, but simply adopted the view taken by List, that is unacceptable.

THE FÜHRER: It comes down to the same thing. He was here at the briefing. I expressly ordered that this was to be done. If I'm told that the order wasn't yet issued in writing, then all I can say is that under these circumstances, there is no point in discussing anything face to face.

KEITEL: List did get the order. He has admitted that. List told me: I received the order and passed it on immediately.

THE FÜHRER: Of course he got it. I'm just saying: if Jodl is now claiming that it was just a word-of-mouth thing, and that only written orders are valid, then I don't need to have meetings anymore. If we follow General Jodl's logic, then we'll have to start doing things completely differently here. And I won't need any more briefings at all. Because when somebody briefs me now, and I respond, I assume that the briefing has been given to the best of that officer's knowledge and belief, so my response to it is tantamount to an order.

KEITEL: Not just a decision, but an order. That's how List understood it, too. He expressly notified me: I have received the Führer's order, and it is perfectly clear; there are one or two points I would have liked to discuss with him, but that is not possible now, because the Führer has made his decision, and I am bound by the order. But then the next day – or so I understand – he called Konrad and then called here to speak to Jodl, or got someone else to call him and ask him if he could come down for a meeting with Konrad, and Jodl then asked you, my Führer, in my presence – I had returned from Berlin in the meantime – if he could fly down. And there was no reason to object.

things about his working relationship with Halder that are fairly depressing. [...] The Führer is very pleased with Keitel's attitude. Keitel is not the brightest of the bunch and he's no tactical genius on the battlefield, but he's a decent and well-meaning colleague, who sincerely wants to do everything that the Führer expects of the Wehrmacht."

THE FÜHRER: I thought my Chief, who had been at the meeting the day before, would go to work with uncompromising zeal and would certainly not make any decision that ran counter to what I'd said,

(Keitel: Unbelievable!)

and then afterwards he tries to tell me that a decision that's already been made, backed up by arguments that later turn out to be spurious, is an order from me. How dare he? What he's done is completely unacceptable.

KEITEL: I now might, regarding the overall situation – –

THE FÜHRER: I would like to talk about the front first. That's the most important thing. Firstly, I can't release General Paulus until the Stalingrad business is finished. Things can't change here until then.

KEITEL: Then I'd like to suggest someone to take over his command. I wouldn't hesitate to take him away beforehand, for the following reason: I would suggest General von Seydlitz as his successor.¹⁰⁹ He currently commands the central corps, so is in charge of infantry combat operations in Stalingrad. He has acquitted himself outstandingly well in the fighting. He saw action at Kharkov, fought in the Bryansk pocket, was ill with jaundice for more than a week, but would not leave the front line, commanded his corps from there, and is currently in the central sector of the Stalingrad front.

THE FÜHRER: There is another reason, though. When Stalingrad falls, the credit will undoubtedly be due to General Paulus. He has stuck it out with nerves of steel, especially when the tanks that had broken through wanted to withdraw. And he took complete responsibility for that decision.¹¹⁰

(Keitel: As at Kharkov!)

– At Kharkov, too, he proved his mettle.¹¹¹ So General Paulus has earned the right to have his name linked with the fall of Stalingrad, no matter what, and it

109 Walther von Seydlitz-Kurzbach (1888–1976), December 1939 Major-General, December 1941 Lieutenant-General, June 1942 General of Artillery; March 1940 Commander of the 12th Infantry Division, May 1942 to January 1943 Commander of the LI Army Corps, afterwards prisoner of war of the Soviets.

110 See Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 511 (August 26, 1942): “Tensions are high at Stalingrad after superior counterattacks by the enemy. Our divs. are not as strong as they were. Commanders are under severe nervous strain. Von Wietersheim [XIV Pz. Corps] wanted to pull back from the Volga salient. Paulus would not allow it.” The XIV Panzer Corps had reached the Volga on the northern city limits of Stalingrad on August 23, 1942. This marked the beginning of the Battle of Stalingrad, which ended catastrophically for the German side on January 31/February 2, 1943, with the capitulation of the 6th Army. See Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, pp. 962–1063.

111 In the battle fought around Kharkov in May 1942, the 6th Army under Paulus, together with the 17th Army (Ruoff) and the 1st Panzer Army (Kleist), successfully halted a Soviet offensive and encircled the Soviet forces in a counterattack; see *ibid.*, pp. 852–64.

would be an injustice in my eyes to remove him beforehand. He must stay until then.

KEITEL: Then I would suggest we give the 6th Army to General von Seydlitz after that.

I have a number of other suggestions that I can outline briefly for you. We will have to fill a whole series of other positions in the autumn.

THE FÜHRER: Someone else who has to go is General Ruoff.¹¹²

KEITEL: There are two men who could replace General Ruoff. There's a General Angelis¹¹³ down there, a man from the Ostmark [Austria], who arranged the whole handing-over back then and has performed very well as a divisional commander and corps commander in the war ever since. I have heard excellent things about him, and he is down there in that sector. The second man who could go down there is Konrad. I'd suggest one of those two – Konrad because he's the mountain expert and really knows his stuff when it comes to mountain combat operations and deploys his corps. We could replace Ruoff either with the relatively young Konrad or with the somewhat older corps commander, Angelis. Konrad would be the more dynamic option, and Angelis might be a good choice to command an army somewhere else. He comes highly recommended by all three Army Groups and the armies he has served with, so we would have a deputy there. I've given careful thought to all the possible replacements. If Kleist¹¹⁴ goes, Mackensen¹¹⁵ should take over. He has the III Corps. If Ruoff goes, one of the two – either Angelis or Konrad – must take over the 17th Army.

THE FÜHRER: Kleist needs Zeitler. The attack there was wrong from the start. He should have pushed on to Grozny, and then he could have swung back

112 Richard Ruoff (1883–1967), May 1939 General of Infantry, April 1942 Colonel-General; May 1939 Commander of the V Army Corps, January 1942 Commander-in-Chief of the 4th Panzer Army, May 1942 to June 1943 Commander in-Chief of the 17th Army.

113 Maximilian de Angelis (1889–1974), August 1940 Lieutenant-General, March 1942 General of Artillery; September 1939 Commander of the 76th Infantry Division, March 1942 Commander of the XXXIV Army Corps, April 1944 Commander (“mit der Führung beauftragt”) of the 6th Army, July 1944 Commander of the 2nd Panzer Army, September 1944 Commander-in-Chief of the 2nd Panzer Army.

114 Ewald von Kleist (1881–1954, as a prisoner of war of the Soviets), July 1940 Colonel-General, January 1943 Field Marshal; November 1940 Commander of Panzer Group 1, October 1941 Commander-in-Chief of the 1st Panzer Army, November 1942 to March 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group A.

115 Eberhard von Mackensen (1889–1969), August 1940 General of Cavalry, July 1943 Colonel-General; January 1941 Commander of the III Army Corps (mot.), November 1942 Commander-in-Chief of the 1st Panzer Army, November 1943 to July 1944 Commander-in-Chief of the 14th Army.

around.¹¹⁶ He could have blocked off the enemy there. At the start, there were no enemy forces there at all.

(Keitel: I agree!)

Kleist obviously needs Zeitzler.

KEITEL: Who was also the driving force behind all of it. The necessary provision has been made for that, too. I've got all the Army Groups covered. I've drawn up my list of all the people who would be suitable as army commanders.

THE FÜHRER: We must also make a change in the central sector this winter, I think.

KEITEL: I would not have anyone else but Model¹¹⁷ in charge of the central sector as we go into the winter. He's the only man who thinks positively. In a really critical situation, he stays positive and sees possibilities. We must make a change there before the start of the winter campaign. Model is the man I am looking at for this. For the West, if anything should happen – you can never be sure with older commanders – we've got Haase, who is certainly up to it.

THE FÜHRER: Kluge¹¹⁸ would also do in the West.

KEITEL: Better still. Then we'll have Haase as a reserve, which we always need. In that case, I'd obviously move Haase to the North, since we have casualties there and because Haase is a good artilleryman. All the problems in the North are the sort that can be solved with artillery and tanks. That's all that is needed. Haase is also a very placid man. He's had some stomach problems.

THE FÜHRER: I read his things. If he was given an order like the one I gave List, he's the man to carry it out properly.

KEITEL: Then I have one more option for Haase and that's as a replacement for Falkenhorst. Haase in Norway would be just like Haase on the Channel coast. He has a great deal of experience. – I have a heap of suggestions to make, and then

116 The thrust of the 1st Panzer Army (Kleist) towards Grozny and beyond to Makhachkala and Baku on the Caspian Sea had likewise ground to a halt at the beginning of September 1942, dashing the great hopes and expectations of Hitler and the OKH. See Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, pp. 947–51.

117 Walter Model (1891–1945, suicide), March 1940 Lieutenant-General, October 1941 General of Panzer Troops, January 1942 Colonel-General, March 1944 Field Marshal; November 1940 Commander of the 3rd Panzer Division, October 1941 Commander of the XXXXI Army Corps (mot.), January 1942 to November 1943 Commander-in-Chief of the 9th Army, January 1944 Commander of Army Group North, March 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group Northern Ukraine, June 1944 Commander of Army Group Center, August 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group D and Commander-in-Chief West, September to April 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group B.

118 Günther von Kluge (1882–1944, suicide), July 1940 Field Marshal; August 1939 Commander-in-Chief of the 4th Army, December 1941 to October 1943 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group Center, July to August 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group D and Commander-in-Chief West.

we must come to some decisions – for example, sending Haase to Oslo to read the riot act. Such things lose their immediacy very quickly. Our man there¹¹⁹ thinks he has done a great job. He no longer bothers to check whether his own measures are being carried out. If Haase goes up there, they'll find out what the word "inspection" really means. He'll sniff around all day from one base to the next. I've been reading these things for weeks and months now. He's also quite a personality, solid to the core. And apart from that, he knows his artillery and knows how to use it. The navy people won't be able to fool him. If Haase inspects the coastal batteries, they won't be able to pull the wool over his eyes. I'm quite sure of that. He sorted out that whole business with the navy on the Channel coast.

And then there's Rommel,¹²⁰ of course. Manstein must definitely take over an Army Group. We could appoint someone new to the 11th Army, if we need to appoint someone at all. I have a few names here that I can go through. Von Salmuth¹²¹ would make a useful army commander. So would Mackensen. I have some very recent assessments. I have written to Model again myself, and he has confirmed them. Model has written to me about Vietinghoff,¹²² who distinguished himself last winter in the winter campaign and stood in for Model when he was away for three months: he performs particularly well under pressure, apparently. I don't know him that well myself. But this comes direct from Model. I think we can trust Model's judgment. He expects a lot from his people.

Blumentritt is also available to us. He will be given another job. I think he would make a good army commander right now. I am also of the opinion that the

119 Colonel-General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, Wehrmacht Commander in Norway with his official seat in Oslo.

120 Erwin Rommel (1891–1944, suicide under duress), July 1941 General of Panzer Troops, January 1942 Colonel-General, June 1942 Field Marshal; February 1941 Commander of the German Africa Corps (from August 1941, Panzer Group Africa), January 1942 to February 1943 Commander-in-Chief of Panzer Army Africa, February to March 1943 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group Tunis, August 1943 to October 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group B.

121 Hans von Salmuth (1888–1962), August 1940 General of Infantry, January 1943 Colonel-General; May to December 1941 Commander of the XXX Army Corps, April 1942 Commander of the 17th Army, June 1942 Commander of the 4th Army, July 1942 to February 1943 Commander-in-Chief of the 2nd Army, June 1943 Commander of the 4th Army, August 1943 to August 1944 Commander-in-Chief of the 15th Army.

122 Heinrich von Vietinghoff, called von Scheel (1887–1952), June 1940 General of Panzer Troops, September 1943 Colonel-General; November 1940 to June 1942 Commander of the XXXXVI Army Corps (mot.), September 1942 Commander of the 9th Army, December 1942 Commander-in-Chief of the 15th Army, August 1943 Commander-in-Chief of the 10th Army, October 1944 to January 1945 deputizing Commander-in-Chief Southwest, January 1945 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group Kurland, March 1945 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group C and Commander-in-Chief Southwest.

following could be made full army commanders immediately, rather than corps commanders: Wöhler,¹²³ Kluge's Chief of Staff, he would be suitable; then Model's Chief of Staff, Major-General Krebs;¹²⁴ [then General of Artillery von Loch,]¹²⁵ who was recently highly recommended to me, again by Model, and who could perhaps be used as a commander of an army instead of Busch;¹²⁶ a young General Staff officer named Krebs, he's very good.

So I have a very clear plan right now. Let me list the duty stations, the current occupants, the deputies, and their possible replacements in order of priority, so that we can make the changes this October in those places where it's possible and go into the winter – as we have agreed – with fresh, new people who are not tired out. There are three people who are now with the 6th Army: Seydlitz, then Mackensen, whom they didn't want to let go at the time – they sent Stumme¹²⁷ down instead – and Konrad or Angelis for the 17th Army. If you will give me the authorization now, my thought would be – I spoke to the Reich Marshal two or three days ago – that we make a change here. Ruoff distinguished himself last winter.

THE FÜHRER: Some serious mistakes have been made there in failing to recognize the main priority – which was the road to Tuapse. This has often been said. But I take the point, if the Chief of the General Staff can't be bothered to pass

123 Otto Wöhler (1894–1987), January 1938 Colonel, January 1942 Major-General, October 1942 Lieutenant-General, June 1943 General of Infantry; October 1940 Chief of Staff of the 11th Army, April 1942 Chief of Staff of Army Group Center, April 1943 Commander of the I Army Corps, August 1943 Commander of the 8th Army, November 1943 Commander-in-Chief of the 11th Army, December 1944 to March 1945 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group South.

124 Hans Krebs (1898–1945, suicide), October 1940 Colonel, February 1942 Major-General, April 1943 Lieutenant-General, August 1944 General of Infantry; December 1939 Chief of Staff of the VII Army Corps, January 1942 Chief of Staff of the 9th Army, March 1943 Chief of Staff of Army Group Center, September 1944 Chief of Staff of Army Group B, February 1945 standing in for the Chief of the Operations Department of the General Staff of the Army, April 1945 exercising the tasks of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army.

125 Handwritten brackets with marginal note: Misunderstood! – Herbert Loch (1886–1975), March 1940 Lieutenant-General, October 1941 General of Artillery; September 1939 Commander of the 17th Infantry Division, October 1941 Commander of the XXVIII Army Corps, March 1944 Commander of the 18th Army, September 1944 to April 1945 Senior Command (“Höheres Kommando”) Eifel (from February 1945, Senior Command B).

126 Ernst Busch (1885–1945, as a prisoner of war of the British), July 1940 Colonel-General, February 1943 Field Marshal; October 1939 Commander-in-Chief of the 16th Army, November 1943 Commander of Army Group Center, May to June 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group Center, March 1945 Commander-in-Chief Northwest, May 1945 Commander-in-Chief North.

127 Georg Stumme (1886–1942, killed in action), June 1940 General of Cavalry; February 1940 to July 1942 Commander of the XXXX Army Corps (mot.), September to October 1942 Commander of Panzer Army Africa.

on the order! I don't discuss these things with the Chief of the General Staff for his personal amusement, but in the expectation that he will pass it on immediately.

KEITEL: I told him that. There's nothing we can do about it now, my Führer.

THE FÜHRER: I told him that so often. The road to Tuapse was the main priority. That's where the rail line and the pipeline go. Before the onset of winter last year, the thinking was: breakthrough, if at all possible, via Rostov, Maykop, Tuapse. Now General Jodl is acting as though that was a completely new idea that had come out of nowhere only a few days ago. I demand absolute loyalty from any colleague, come what may, and if I give an order, he does not have the right to contradict it or support a different point of view; his job is to go out there, tell them what I want, and not take "no" for an answer. Because he doesn't have the responsibility, either. Now he's trying to cover his back with various documents and claiming that the order came from me.

KEITEL: My Führer, all I can say is that it is an appalling lapse, which I would not have thought possible four weeks ago. I believe, my Führer, that you yourself had a different opinion of him before all this,

(the Führer: Yes)

but I have the feeling – and I can say this as the older man of us two, since I am ten years older than Jodl – that I have been taken in. I should have done something about it much sooner. I have done so on several occasions recently, and once or twice I have taken General Jodl severely to task in your presence for making claims at the table about things he knew nothing about. When the Wehrmacht budget was discussed, he knew nothing about that – as he admitted to me afterwards. He only knew about the 500,000 Reichsmark budget, which he spoke about on account of all the piffling little things he's done: he wanted to get rid of grade crossings and wanted various things built for the Reich Postal Service.

THE FÜHRER: Exactly this business. The Reich Marshal got really worked up about that; he said it was the craziest thing he'd heard of.

KEITEL: I can tell you, I was pretty worked up about it myself afterwards. I think you will recall that I said at table: General Jodl, how can you make such assertions, you know nothing about these things! – And that was in your presence, when one doesn't like to call a subordinate to task in this fashion. It came to a head on that occasion – I gave him a severe talking-to in the evening. It wasn't about operational matters, but about something pretty outrageous that he'd said. If you don't know something, you shouldn't voice an opinion about it. I've reprimanded him directly a number of times for casually tossing out an opinion without knowing the first thing about it or knowing what had gone on. These were the things I had to complain about, the things I rectified. But with what has happened now, I have to admit to you: I let him grow gradually into the role of a

Chief of General Staff of the Wehrmacht, if I can put it like that. It was my idea – and my wish too.

THE FÜHRER: This case here is a very serious one, of course;
(Keitel: Immensely serious!)

because so many mistakes have been made, an enormous number of mistakes, even by Field Marshal von Bock,¹²⁸ who also chose to simply disregard an order he had been given.¹²⁹

KEITEL: You took up my suggestion immediately, and we went down there the next day.

THE FÜHRER: He lost four or five days as a result! When every day counts for catching and destroying the Russians, he gets bogged down up there with the four best divisions, especially the 24th Panzer Division and the “Großdeutschland,” and won’t let go of Voronezh. I told him: don’t force the issue if you encounter resistance anywhere, just go south to the Don; it doesn’t matter; the only thing that counts is getting south quickly, so that we actually get the enemy encircled! – But no, the man does the exact opposite. Then it all went wrong, a few days of bad weather – it was one thing after another – and suddenly the Russians had gained eight or nine days, enough time for them to pull back before the trap closed.

(Keitel: And then there was the new attack by the 6th Army.)

– The whole thing went wrong from the start.

My biggest disappointment was List. His advance on Rostov from the north was madness, of course.¹³⁰ He claimed it was not possible to go along the coast. It

128 Fedor von Bock (1880–1945, attack by low-flying aircraft), July 1940 Field Marshal; June to December 1941 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group Center, January to July 1942 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group South (from July 1942, Army Group B).

129 On the conflict over the further conduct of operations at the beginning of July 1942, see Wegner, *Krieg*, in: *DRZW*, vol. 6, pp. 876–85. Whereas Bock wanted to secure his flank first by taking Voronezh, thereby tying up the XXXXVIII Panzer Corps, Hitler and Halder called for a rapid thrust south. On July 3, 1942, Hitler travelled to Poltava, to the headquarters of Army Group South, and urged Bock to press on rapidly to the Don, ignoring Voronezh. When the advance was further delayed, Bock was blamed by Hitler and Halder for the failure of the first phase of Operation Blue to result in the major encirclement battle they had been hoping for, and he was relieved of his command on July 13, 1942. See Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 480 (July 13, 1942): “The blame for this delay is attributed to the fact that the 24th Pz. Div. and ‘Großdeutschland’ were rushed on towards Voronezh, despite the Führer’s objection, so that their availability was delayed.”

130 See *ibid.*, p. 489 (July 23, 1942): “Führer briefing: After he himself had ordered – against my will – the concentration of rapid units at Rostov on July 17, and on July 21 ordered the 24th Pz. Div. to be put under the command of the 6th Army, we now have a concentration of rapid units in Rostov that makes no sense, even to a layman [Hitler], while the important outer wing at Zym-

turned out that this wasn't a problem at all, since a single SS division, "Wiking," actually advanced along the coast and broke straight through into the city. The 13th Panzer Division was on its left flank. If they had combined the two, both divisions would have gone in from the left, and we would have cut off who knows what. So this is how he pushes through. The leadership then was appalling, splitting up our forces, abandoning every point of main effort, when it was clear that the enemy could not operate in the gap with major forces, but only with small detachments. But this business is not the key issue for me.

(Keitel: Nevertheless, the importance I did – –)

– These were very big mistakes, but what they've done now is catastrophic, all this moving around, endless delays, no guarantee that these five or six battalions can be brought into action, while we know for certain that the enemy can bring up seven or eight divisions that we could have cut off. It's an appalling catalogue of errors! Either they should have broken straight through to Tuapse, or, having gone for the other thing at Jodl's own suggestion, they should have broken through there in one place – but not in seven places! Seven! Now I hear – just today! – that the passes have to be taken first, absolutely vital! – Halder said today: what's going on down there is just a minor skirmish [*kleiner Leutnantskrieg*]. So I'm letting them have our two best mountain divisions, including the best one we've got – the 1st Bavarian is the best of the lot – just so that they can engage in a little skirmish down there!

(Keitel: I think he just meant that there are no enemy forces there.)

– It's obvious there's nothing happening there; the enemy won't be coming over there.

KEITEL: I would like to ask again: when the Stalingrad business is finished, will General Paulus be brought in immediately? – And the next thing is: should General Jodl be sent to the front or should we not use him? Do you want him dismissed?

THE FÜHRER: I don't know.

KEITEL: My thought was that we should give him a corps; at the end of the day, he can still do well as a corps commander. I wanted to ask you first.

THE FÜHRER: I don't know where we would give him a corps.

lianskaia is starved of resources. I warned them specifically about both these things. Now, where the results are clear to see, we get a fit of rage, accompanied by serious accusations against the commanders."

KEITEL: At Army Group Center's front or somewhere. We always have vacancies. Maybe in Norway? General Weißenberger¹³¹ [sic!] is based near Rovaniemi – Dietl has written me a letter: he's an academic, not a commander.

THE FÜHRER: Up there near Norway? His brother¹³² is serving with Dietl. I don't think that's a good idea; if Jodl has an opinion about something, he'll pass it on to Dietl via his brother, and Jodl often has wrong opinions.

KEITEL: I take your point. I'd forgotten about his brother. I was just thinking that the Weißenberger corps is a mountain corps. We could also give him the Konrad corps, or ...¹³³ as corps commander. If we appoint Konrad as Ruoff's successor, then we'll have Lanz¹³⁴ right there on the spot; he would be a very good choice. He's right there, an excellent successor ready and waiting. So if the decision is made to act immediately, we can give Konrad the army and Lanz the mountain corps. He is very sound – a good general – you were very impressed with him personally, and I can vouch for him completely, everyone tells me he is outstanding. He commands the 1st Mountain Division. He can be given the mountain corps. It doesn't have to be right now, but if you agree in principle to give him a corps, it could be done.

THE FÜHRER: I'd like to discuss all these changes with Zeitzler, when he gets back.

KEITEL: Then may I request that I be present when all these personnel matters are discussed?

THE FÜHRER: Of course. – I'm bound to say that I find Halder's briefings, for example, very tiresome. Heusinger is a very different kettle of fish. It would have been better if Heusinger had done the briefings; he presents things very clearly. The main problem with Halder is that he can't make it clear whether an attack is being carried out by 200 men, 100 men, six battalions, or two divisions. He

131 Karl Weisenberger (1890–1952), January 1940 Lieutenant-General, April 1941 General of Infantry; October 1939 Commander of the 71st Infantry Division, March 1941 Commander of the LIII Army Corps, November 1941 Commander of the XXXVI Mountain Corps, August 1944 Commander of Military District XIII (Nuremberg).

132 Ferdinand Jodl (1896–1956), November 1940 Colonel, February 1942 Major-General, September 1943 Lieutenant-General, September 1944 General of Mountain Troops; October 1940 Chief of Staff of the XXXIX Mountain Corps, January 1942 to March 1944 Chief of Staff of the 20th Mountain Army, May 1944 Commander of the XIX Mountain Corps, November 1944 Commander of Army Detachment Narvik.

133 Gap left in the text here, but not subsequently filled in.

134 Hubert Lanz (1896–1982), November 1940 Major-General, December 1942 Lieutenant-General, January 1943 General of Mountain Troops; October 1940 Commander of the 1st Mountain Division, January 1943 Commander of Army Group Lanz, June 1943 Commander of the XXXIX Mountain Corps, September 1943 Commander of the XXII Mountain Corps.

sees “pressure points.” When you press him for more details, it turns out that the attacking force consisted of 200 or 300 men. He sees pressure points here, but none there until it is too late and disaster strikes. But all that will change!

KEITEL: May I just ask: when Zeitzler gets back, will you speak to him in private first, discuss it all with him, and then bring him in directly, right away? In that case, I would inform General Halder immediately that he should go on leave, and then I will dismiss him. We can find something for him to do –

THE FÜHRER: Absolutely not! I don’t believe him capable of commanding a division!

KEITEL: Maybe in the West, as a replacement for Blaskowitz?¹³⁵ That would perhaps have been a job for him – more a job behind the front line, inspecting the training of the replacement battalions. He would have to be officially designated, of course. I’m just mentioning it now, I’ll come back to it later on.

The Reich Marshal has just reminded me again about what you said back in the spring or January –

THE FÜHRER: Just a minute, I want to show you something – it’s so typical. Get someone to find out who wrote the article. Here is the “Nationalzeitung Basel.” It was published in Sweden [sic!], and has been picked up by all the international press. You must read it word for word.

(Keitel: I can see from the opening words ... Creator of the German Reichswehr ..., – was this written by an officer?!)

– It must have been!

KEITEL: I’ll read it, if I may, and return it to you myself.

I’d like to move on to the other things I wanted to talk about. You told me back in January, just after Brauchitsch had left, that you wanted a change in the Chief of the Personnel Office. I can now announce that it’s all done. I have reorganized the Personnel Office from the bottom up, based on what I think is needed; in other words, on my visits to Berlin I have made a point of seeking out and speaking to the people who run the main departments responsible for filling officer vacancies, General von Drabich-Waechter,¹³⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel

135 Johannes Blaskowitz (1883–1948, suicide as a prisoner of war of the British), October 1939 Colonel-General; May 1940 Commander-in-Chief of the 9th Army, October 1940 Commander-in-Chief of the 1st Army, May to September 1944 Commander of Army Group G, December 1944 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group G, January 1945 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group H, April 1945 Commander-in-Chief of the Netherlands.

136 Viktor von Drabich-Waechter (1889–1944, killed in action), August 1940 Major-General, August 1942 Lieutenant-General; October 1940 to September 1942 Chief of Main Group P1 (“Amtsgruppe P1: Personalangelegenheiten der Offiziere”) in the Army Personnel Office, June 1943 to August 1944 Commander of the 326th Infantry Division.

Gebb¹³⁷ etc. Some of the people are already gone. Gebb is gone; he has been replaced by a Colonel Burgsdorf¹³⁸ [sic!], who was picked by Schmundt and me. I discussed all this with Schmundt back then. Burgsdorf is a very good man. I can vouch for him one hundred percent, especially as far as his mental outlook and his attitude to the Party and National Socialist principles are concerned. He is to become the so-called Office Group Leader [*Amtsgruppenleiter*], or office head, who will take over responsibility for filling officer vacancies for general officers, divisions etc. He has been learning the ropes since July; he's out here, not in Berlin, in the "engine room," so to speak, but out here in the field, so he can see all these things for himself. He has toured the front, has been to all the Army High Commands and spoken to the commanders on the ground, the individual divisional commanders. In my view, he is an excellent choice. General von Drabich-Waechter is going. The Chief of the Personnel Office is all ready to go with the reorganization, in accordance with my personal directives – he's my brother, of course¹³⁹ – so that the order can be given at any time for so-and-so and so-and-so to take over the Personnel Office.

I should also say that I had lined up General von Bernuth¹⁴⁰ for the job. He would have made an excellent Personnel Office Chief – and Schmundt especially was very much in favor. He was in a Storch¹⁴¹ that crashed and burned during the offensive, so he's no longer with us. I had discussed these matters with him.

I spoke to Schmundt again, yesterday evening and then again this morning. He told me: "The Führer has told me again that he wants me to take over this

137 Werner Gebb (1896–1952, as a prisoner of war of the Soviets), January 1939 Lieutenant-Colonel, December 1941 Colonel, July 1944 Major-General; October 1940 Head of Department in the Army Personnel Office, October 1943 Commander of Infantry Regiment 116, June to August 1944 Commander of the 9th Infantry Division, afterwards prisoner of war of the Soviets.

138 Wilhelm Burgdorf (1895–1945, suicide), September 1940 Colonel, October 1942 Major-General, October 1943 Lieutenant-General, November 1944 General of Infantry; May 1940 Commander of Infantry Regiment 529, May 1942 Head of Department in the Army Personnel Office, October 1942 Deputy Chief of the Army Personnel Office, October 1944 Chief of the Army Personnel Office and Wehrmacht Chief Adjutant to Adolf Hitler.

139 Bodewin Keitel (1888–1953), April 1940 Lieutenant-General, April 1941 General of Infantry; March 1938 to September 1942 Chief of the Army Personnel Office, March 1943 to November 1944 Commander of Military District XX (Gdansk).

140 Julius von Bernuth (1897–1942, killed in action), December 1940 Colonel, April 1942 Major-General; June 1941 liaison officer of the Army High Command to Army Group South, January 1942 Chief of Staff of the 4th Army, April to July 1942 Chief of Staff of the 4th Panzer Army.

141 The Fieseler Fi 156 "Storch" ("stork," also known as the "flying jeep") was a short take-off and landing (STOL) aircraft used by the Wehrmacht on every battlefield for close reconnaissance work and – primarily – as a courier and army liaison aircraft.

responsibility. It was decided back then.” – My Führer, the handover can take place any time. I asked the Chief of the Personnel Office to come here this morning, before Schmudt flew out.

THE FÜHRER: The thing is, I really want to have the Chief of the Personnel Office here with me.¹⁴² He must be present at all our briefings, but he must also tour the front in person, go and see what’s happening out there for himself – see the division commanders at work; he must be able to make suggestions; he must have a picture of how I see the situation, make a note of it; and he must get an overall picture of what’s going on. All he needs is a deputy over there to whom he can give his instructions.

KEITEL: He would be – I’ve spoken to my brother as well – the Chief of the Army Personnel Office and at the same time your Chief Adjutant, and he has a deputy Chief of the Personnel Office, for which I plan to appoint Colonel Burgsdorf. Colonel Burgsdorf is a young frontline commander, who was decorated with the Knight’s Cross when he commanded an infantry regiment at the front – he was on the front line until the end of April. I then had him pulled out of the line and took a look at him. He was in the Personnel Office on July 1 to take over these matters. The set-up with the heads of department still needs to be fine-tuned, but these are internal matters that you can leave entirely to us.

THE FÜHRER: I just want one thing to be sorted out now once and for all: the Personnel Office of the General Staff – –

KEITEL: – – has to go now immediately, because it must be ... as a group into the Personnel Office – – well, there’s no such thing, never has been, and never can be; an officer corps setting itself up within the officer corps.

THE FÜHRER: We can’t have a state within a state!¹⁴³

142 Schmudt was appointed Chief of the Army Personnel Office on October 1, 1942, while retaining his position as Wehrmacht Chief Adjutant. See Bradley/Schulze-Kossens (eds.), *Tätigkeitsbericht des Chefs des Heerespersonalamtes*, p. 2 (October 2, 1942): “The appointment of Major-General Schmudt, who answers directly to the Führer, established the direct access to the Führer that was desirable for practical reasons. This organizational change was all the more necessary as the Führer had ordered a fundamental shake-up of the way personnel policy was conducted. Result: the fact that both posts are held by one person is working out to the benefit of the army in every way. Having the Führer’s ear and being present at the daily military briefings means that action can be taken immediately and that far-sighted measures can be put in place regarding leadership intentions.”

143 See *ibid.*, p. 6 (October 5, 1942): “With the appointment of a new Chief of the Army Personnel Office, the Führer gave orders that the Chief of the Army Personnel Office should henceforth be responsible for dealing with the personnel matters of General Staff officers. On the matter of the General Staff as such, the Führer set out his views, which are to be implemented in future: a) There is only one officer corps. The most able officers must be given additional training that enables them to

KEITEL: I didn't want to bother you with these things. How many times have I said to Halder: let these generals go! They should have been given divisional commands a long time ago. Now they'll have to become army commanders; they are the best people we have. But it would have been better for them if they had commanded a corps in the meantime. But he wouldn't let any of them go, whether it was Greifenberg¹⁴⁴ [sic!] or anybody else, he wouldn't let anyone go and clung to them like a burr; he only then became reasonable when I persuaded him to promote regimental commanders from the front to general-officer rank and give them command of divisions, in accordance with your instructions, so that the so-called pre-dated commissions [*Vorpatente*] held by General Staff officers were overtaken by frontline officers. That makes them sit up and notice. Obviously they are not bad as General Staff officers; but, since they are supposed to be an elite, they should have been at the front a long time ago, commanding a brigade, a division, or a corps.

So you are in agreement that I should prepare the handover, perhaps for October 1, so that Schmudt takes over on October 1. Everything is in place, no problem, we just need to name the day.

I would also like your consent for him to decide when the present Chief of the Personnel Office is no longer required.

Third, I'd like to suggest that the Chief of the Personnel Office be granted some leave to restore his health. He has problems with his arm, some sort of palsy. He's borne it all very well, without complaining.

Finally, I'd like to ask that he be made a deputy corps commander, when his health permits. He is utterly loyal and supports your ideas totally. Everyone I've spoken to has confirmed this, Gauleiters and the Reichsführer¹⁴⁵ have said

take up senior field command positions early on; b) training numbers will not be limited by quotas, additional training will be given to all the most able field officers – to ensure that General Staff officers do not lose touch with the troops in the field, the pool of available officers must be maintained at a level such that a constant, healthy alternation between General Staff assignments and front-line deployments is guaranteed. These field officers with additional General Staff training must be promoted on a fast track, so that they are available to command large units as young generals, fit in body and mind. It is a cardinal sin to confine such leadership personalities to a purely staff role, thereby keeping them away from their true element, which is the command of troops in the field.”

144 Hans von Greiffenberg (1893–1951), August 1940 Major-General, April 1942 Leutnant-General, April 1944 General of Infantry; May 1941 Chief of Staff of Army Group Center, April 1942 Chief of Staff of Army Group A, October 1943 Military Attaché in Budapest, April 1944 General Officer, with Plenipotentiary Powers, of the German Wehrmacht in Hungary.

145 Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945, suicide), June 1936 “Reichsführer SS” and Chief of the German Police, October 1939 Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom (“Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums”), August 1943 Reich Minister of the Interior, July 1944 Commander-in-Chief of the Reserve Army (“Ersatzheer”) and Chief of Army Equipment.

as much to me. I spoke to the Reichsführer about things yesterday, about the change, and about Mr. Drabich-Waechter, whom I haven't cared for much for a long time now and who is now going. I'd like to prepare the ground in this way: A deputy Chief, Personnel Group General Staff, comes in,¹⁴⁶ Mr. von Zielberg¹⁴⁷ [sic!] has to go. I'd like to have a suggestion afterwards from Zeitzler, and I'll be discussing with him who should take over the Group. I have a couple of people in mind who seem suitable and have discussed this with Scherff:¹⁴⁸ a colonel of the same rank and about the same age as Scherff, under the authority [of] and represented solely by the Chief of the Personnel Office.

And now a question that relates to the top leadership and these matters: should I offer an additional suggestion?¹⁴⁹

THE FÜHRER: That stays as it is.

KEITEL: Then it only remains for me to report, my Führer, that in the time since you assigned this task to me,¹⁵⁰ we have dismissed 177 generals on the grounds that they are too old and no longer suitable for their positions – including 66 combat generals. The rest are serving in positions back in the home country. Eight have just received their notices of dismissal, so that by October 1 we will have removed a total of 185 generals from their posts since February 1.

The process will continue automatically, but, of course, always depending on the availability of people convalescing after their release from the Eastern Front,

146 From November 17, 1942, the personnel matters of General Staff officers were dealt with by the newly created subsection P3 of the Army Personnel Office, rather than within the Army General Staff.

147 Gustav Heistermann von Ziehlberg (1898–1945, executed), February 1941 Colonel, August 1943 Major-General, June 1944 Lieutenant-General; December 1939 to November 1942 Chief of the Central Department of the General Staff of the Army and therefore responsible for the personnel matters of the officers of the General Staff, January 1943 Commander of Grenadier Regiment 48, May to December 1943 Commander of the 65th Infantry Division, April to October 1944 Commander of the 28th “Jäger” Division.

148 Walter Scherff (1898–1945, suicide), April 1939 Lieutenant-Colonel, September 1941 Colonel, September 1943 Major-General; February 1941 Chief of the Military History Department of the OKW, May 1942 Plenipotentiary of the Führer for Military Historiography.

149 Keitel is evidently seeking further confirmation here from Hitler that he wishes to retain him, Keitel, as Chief of the OKW.

150 When Hitler superseded Brauchitsch as Commander-in-Chief of the Army on December 19, 1941, Keitel had taken charge of the “ministerial business” (Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 354) of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Since then, the Army Personnel Office, run by his brother Bodewin Keitel, had been under his control. The crisis at the gates of Moscow had led Hitler to conclude that older, “struggling” generals should be replaced by younger men with front-line experience. See Hürter, *Heerführer*, pp. 347–49; Förster, *Wehrmacht*, pp. 103–09.

in some cases because of combat injuries, who will take their places. These positions will be earmarked for them.

Only three of the military district [*Wehrkreis*] commanders are still in place. The next one I'd like to replace – with your permission – is General von Giehnant¹⁵¹ [sic!] in the General Government. I would replace him with General Hänecke¹⁵² [sic!]. He fought in the Volkhov pocket; he's not the youngest of men, but he's very experienced. I happened to be talking about him yesterday with the Reichsführer; he is the father-in-law of Dietl – his daughter is married to Dietl. So a very sound man, whom I'd like to have in the General Government as a military district commander.

Then I only have Berlin, Schrott¹⁵³ [sic!] who is ill, and another in Salzburg, name of Schaller.¹⁵⁴ I'm looking for replacements who now could do the job of Reich Commissioner/Gauleiter as well. I can't use anyone else. If someone is not up to the job, he'll be replaced.

I'll draw up the lists on that basis – as I say, I have everything at hand, ready at a moment's notice – for army commanders, corps commanders, all listed in order, so that there's no hold-up.

As a replacement for Paulus to command the 6th Army, I'd again suggest Seydlitz. He is outstanding, and everyone rates him as an uncommonly fine soldier. There was a time when nobody would have believed it of him. Before the war, he was a horse-artillery battalion commander in the army for many years and had become a bit obsessed with his horses, but he has now shown himself to be extremely tough and decisive in this war, with excellent leadership qualities.

I'd also like to put in a good word for Haase again.

THE FÜHRER: The thing is, if Kluge – –

(Keitel: We have to get this sorted out before the winter, whatever happens.)

151 Curt Ludwig Freiherr von Gienanth (1876–1961), September 1940 General of Cavalry; July 1940 Military Commander in the General Government, July to September 1942 Military District Commander in the General Government.

152 Siegfried Haenicke (1878–1946, in Soviet imprisonment), November 1941 Lieutenant-General, April 1942 General of Infantry; August 1938 Commander of the 61st Infantry Division, April to June 1942 Commander of the XXXVIII Army Corps, October 1942 Commander of the Army District for the General Government, September 1944 Commander of Senior Command 384 in the General Government.

153 Walther Schroth (1882–1944, killed in an accident), February 1938 General of Infantry; February 1938 to February 1942 Commander of the XII Army Corps, May 1942 Commander of Military District IV (Dresden), May 1943 to October 1944 Commander of Military District XII (Wiesbaden).

154 Hubert Schaller-Kalide (1881–1976), December 1940 General of Infantry; September 1939 to January 1943 Commander of Military District XVIII (Salzburg).

– Kluge has to go before the winter, but I'd like to tell him in person – as I did with Rundstedt¹⁵⁵ – that I plan to use him again.

(Keitel: So can I come over some time?)¹⁵⁶

– Rundstedt might suddenly go off the rails. I think Kluge would do a good job in the West.

KEITEL: He is mobile, but lacks toughness; in that respect a bit of a showman [*Blender*].

FÜHRER: He did a good job of commanding the 4th Army.

KEITEL: As you may recall, the advice I gave in the case of List proved to be most unfortunate,¹⁵⁷ but in the case of Kluge, my advice was sound. You almost picked him for a position last year that he was not suited for. That was when I dissented somewhat vehemently and used the term “showman” for the first time. But it has turned out to be the case. I'm not claiming any special credit here – I knew from experience what he is like. We were both lieutenants together in the same regiment for twelve years.¹⁵⁸ And these personal characteristics don't change in later life. The man he was as a lieutenant is the same man he was as a corps commander and now as an army commander.

I have a number of other opinions, but I don't need to mention them all now.

Then there is the organizational issue, my Führer: If you decide to make General Paulus the Chief of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff in this instance, do you want to, how can I say, detach him a little more from me, so that he reports to you personally? At present, in organizational terms, he is directly subordinate to me, which means that I would be responsible to you for his actions. This is why I said to the Reich Marshal: “I've decided to go and see the Führer; I didn't go in the first few days after it happened” – I really didn't want to agitate you any more – “we had to do things in a tremendous rush.” That's the reason I didn't come and see you, but sent Bodenschatz¹⁵⁹ over instead and informed the Reich

155 Gerd von Rundstedt (1875–1952), July 1940 Field Marshal, June to December 1941 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group South, March 1942 to July 1944 and September 1944 to March 1945 Commander-in-Chief of Army Group D and Commander-in-Chief West.

156 Meaning unclear.

157 See Görlitz (ed.), Keitel, pp. 304–05, on the appointment of the C-in-C of Army Group A in July 1942: “Halder and I suggested – independently of each other – Field Marshal List. Hitler kept on putting off the decision, without saying what he had against him. When a decision eventually had to be made, Halder and I had a meeting with Hitler alone; after lengthy hesitation, he agreed to our suggestion.”

158 Keitel and Kluge, both born in 1882, entered the 46th Royal Prussian (Lower Saxon) Field Artillery Regiment, based in Wolfenbüttel, in 1901, with the rank of lieutenant.

159 Karl Heinrich Bodenschatz (1890–1979), January 1940 Lieutenant-General, July 1941 General

Marshal accordingly. He already arrived on Monday and said he would not receive me until after he had spoken to you. I went to see the Reich Marshal afterwards, and this was one of the matters I raised. I said: one thing is clear, General Jodl made a decision in the field that went against the Führer's order and could not be revoked. This is unacceptable for me, I have to report it to the Führer; I cannot work with the General any more, he has put me in an impossible position vis-à-vis the Führer. – To which the Reich Marshal replied: "Listen, Keitel, if I were you, I would not go to the Führer right now and ask for permission to dismiss General Jodl immediately. I don't know if the Führer expects that from you, and to be honest" – and he made some remark to the effect: "It will look as if Keitel is throwing Jodl to the wolves." I replied: no, Reich Marshal, that's not how it is, and personally I don't think about how such things look, I really don't care; but in such matters you have to be very clear in your mind about what is acceptable and what is not. Either I take the responsibility for these things with the Führer, in which case he must discipline me, or General Jodl takes the responsibility. In this instance, the only thing the Führer could really accuse me of is that I – –

THE FÜHRER: General Jodl was here that evening – you were not – when I gave the order to List. The behavior of General Jodl is intolerable, particularly when considering the consequences. If he had come to me and said: "My Führer, I have made a mistake," or something like that! But trying to justify himself and then claiming that something that was by then a *fait accompli* was what I had ordered – he says nothing can be done about it now – I refuse to be treated like that!

KEITEL: I understand completely. All the same, I am sorry that something like this has happened. I've seen his good qualities, too, over the years, even though his judgment in a number of cases was wrong. At the time, I believed I had acted as you would have wished, when I said: the front must hold!

THE FÜHRER: I've said it so often. Jodl's desire to retreat – a great solution, a "great strategic solution"! – would have been a disaster for the German army. I've now heard two things about Paulus. Of all the top officers in the Wehrmacht, Paulus was actually the first one that caught my attention.¹⁶⁰ It was during that transport exercise they staged in the Upper Palatinate [*Oberpfalz*]. I was sitting with a group of officers – I've forgotten their names – and there was one officer

of Aviation; April 1938 to May 1945 Chief of the Office of Ministerial Affairs in the Reich Ministry of Aviation and liaison officer of the Luftwaffe to Adolf Hitler.

160 From October 1935 to November 1938, Paulus was Chief of the General Staff of Panzer Troops Command, with the rank of Colonel. The episode recounted by Hitler here presumably dates from this time.

who argued his case quite fanatically – unlike others – regarding the importance of motorized transport and the Panzerwaffe [armored force]. That was Paulus. Since then, I’ve seen him twice in critical situations, including the time at Kharkov when he kept his nerve and held on, even though his situation was anything but good.

(Keitel: It was almost desperate!)

– He held firm, and so he showed himself in my eyes to be a really dependable character in a time of crisis. Anyone can cope with success and victory, but at a time of crisis, when destiny beckons, you find out what a man is made of. Bock proved to be a complete failure back then.¹⁶¹

(Keitel: He was ill; his nerves were shot at the time.)

– And that’s the sort of situation where I had to make a decision within 30 minutes. He told me: we’re already in the process of entraining – it’s almost too late to call it off; one motorized division has to come down at all events, and if that one is re-routed, we won’t have sufficient forces. So it was a matter of making a decision far removed from the action and believing that it was the right one. And it was only afterwards that I found out Bock’s own advisers had argued strongly against him.

(Keitel: Refused to go along with it!)

– I didn’t have the feeling that Bock understood that.

KEITEL: He still doesn’t! I wanted to have a meeting with him in Berlin and tell him: that’s not acceptable. We have generals who sit around and write letters. I’m not writing to him, not giving him something in writing to keep. I tell these people to come and see me. I’ve already seen Förster¹⁶² here. I summoned him to me and told him: first, be grateful that nothing else happened to you back then, and second, you are accused of this and that, all very straightforward – just accept it and keep quiet. – Since then the letter-writing has stopped. There’s no point in answering these carefully crafted letters, which manage to say something and nothing. They

161 Shortly after the start of the Soviet offensive at Kharkov on May 12, 1942, Bock had requested permission to abandon his own partial offensive (“Operation Fridericus”) and to use some of the divisions allocated to that offensive on the defensive front of the 6th Army instead. His own general staff, Hitler, and the OKH were all firmly opposed to this and insisted that Bock proceed with Fridericus. See Wegner, *Krieg*, in: DRZW, vol. 6, p. 858.

162 Otto-Wilhelm Förster (1885–1966), April 1938 General of Engineers; November 1938 to December 1941 Commander of the VI Army Corps. – Förster had been relieved of his command on December 30, 1941, because he had allegedly disobeyed Hitler’s “order to halt.” Förster had already made himself so unpopular with the dictator in May 1938, over differences of opinion about the construction of the Siegfried Line, that Hitler repeatedly cited him as an example of an “incompetent” general. See, for example, Heiber (ed.), *Lagebesprechungen*, p. 135 (February 1, 1943), p. 605 (July 31, 1944), pp. 174–75 (December 29, 1944).

then go around showing these things. I insist in these cases on telling them what I think face-to-face and in private, and I send them home with that.

THE FÜHRER: As I said: in the Stalingrad business, the crucial decision was the one to push the tanks through to the Volga and not pull them back, although they moaned and whined that they were caught in a pinch. That was the crucial decision.

(Keitel: Which Paulus made.)

– Which Paulus made and saw through to the end. My recent impression was once again that he is a cool, level-headed character who is taking on something here. And there is another important consideration for me: it has to be someone who, in my eyes, will at least let me get away from here for a day, or two or three days. Imagine what would happen if I had a dental operation someday. I am terrified at the thought of being away for even five hours, let alone a whole day, because something could happen in the meantime. There has to be someone here who will take a strong line at the end of the day, in collaboration with the Chief of the Army General Staff

(Keitel: And Jeschonnek!¹⁶³)

and Jeschonnek. If there are any sudden surprises, those three must get together, immediately if need be, and then really come to a clear and workable decision. The man must also be able to present it in a briefing and take responsibility for it, otherwise it's pointless. If I were to have an abscessed tooth in my jaw today, for example, I couldn't get away, I'd be stuck here. I couldn't help thinking:¹⁶⁴ I hear that here on the Don they are pulling back forces everywhere; I'm told that tanks are suddenly appearing. That the Russians are not afraid that they will be attacked by the Italians, – – it's ridiculous, the Russians know exactly how many are really there.

I've already told Buhle:¹⁶⁵ this one regiment from the 23rd Division must become the basis for a proper division.¹⁶⁶ I'd like to divide it into three, as we used

163 Hans Jeschonnek (1899–1943, suicide), July 1940 General of Aviation (without having been Lieutenant-General), March 1942 Colonel-General; February 1939 to August 1943 Chief of the General Staff of the Luftwaffe.

164 It is possible that the stenographer misheard at this point (“gedacht” for “gelacht”), in which case the translation would be: “I couldn't help laughing.”

165 Walter Buhle (1894–1959), August 1940 Major-General, April 1942 Lieutenant-General, April 1944 General of Infantry; August 1939 Head of Department in the General Staff of the Army, January 1942 Chief of the Army Staff at the OKW, February 1945 Chief of Wehrmacht Armaments.

166 The 23rd Infantry Division had been withdrawn from the sector of Army Group Center in June 1942. The bulk of it was transformed into the newly formed 26th Panzer Division, while Infantry Regiment 68 was transferred to Denmark and used as the core of a new 23rd Infantry Division.

to do, so that we always get a new regiment out of a battalion. That's the tripling principle, which we used to have in the old Reichswehr. I don't care how long it takes. I'd like to transfer this division to Denmark. It needs to happen up there. Up there, we must get a complete division out of this regiment. If I send the 161st Division over and bring it up to strength with that, I'll have no replacement in the East, so I'll probably transfer the division, but it needs to be brought up to strength here – it'll get a complete regiment.¹⁶⁷ But I don't have a replacement in the East, while we must gradually start to ensure that we always have a number of divisions in the West that we can transfer to the East, if necessary, as a complete division for relief purposes. The divisions that have been badly shot up here in the East deserve that – to be transferred over here and relieved by a good division again.

Quite apart from the fact that we need troops stationed in Denmark, I regard such a good regimental body as a sound basis. When I think that I have divisions out on the Eastern Front, and companies, that have been reduced to 20 to 15 percent of their strength – they need to be replenished and brought up to strength again after a while. Then I'll be able to make a decent division out of a force here that's currently equivalent to 33 percent of a division. We'll see to that.

KEITEL: We've never had any problems in the artillery department; we have enough replacements there.

My Führer, I also wanted to give you a summary of the situation regarding officer replacements: between August 1 and September 15, Army Groups, regimental commanders, battalion commanders, battery commanders and platoon leaders.

(Presents document.)

I have also just written to the army commanders to tell them we cannot have majors commanding battalions and captains commanding companies, as has happened in one division. Four majors in charge of battalions and eight captains in charge of companies, in the case of one division. This has happened because they won't let go of any of their people. They should have been released ages ago for regimental and battalion commands. I have given orders for monthly lists to be submitted, showing what they've still got in the way of staff officers and captains, so that I can pull them out regardless. We can't have them shot to pieces at Rzhev, when we have no replacements.

THE FÜHRER: Captains in charge of companies – that's no longer acceptable!

167 The 161st Infantry Division (Army Group Center) was transferred to France in November 1942, replenished, and partially reorganized.

KEITEL: In our present situation, it's madness. We've got some fine second lieutenants and splendid first lieutenants with two or three years' officer experience. They just can't do that; it's a huge waste of resources. It's become a real psychosis: they hang on to everything they've got, they're completely selfish in that sense – and it's doing serious damage to the army as a whole.

THE FÜHRER: If possible, of course, I'd like to go to Berlin next week.¹⁶⁸

(Keitel: The officer candidates are due to come on the 26th.)

– There's that first; second, I need to get my Gauleiters all together; third, meetings to discuss the Atlantic Wall. I think it is absolutely essential for this discussion to take place, on account of what I've read from Haase – although some of what he says is still not quite clear. I have the feeling that they have not quite got the measure of the situation in one or two areas, not least because they have misread the implications of the Dieppe incident.¹⁶⁹ People need to understand that in the case of Dieppe, the enemy's air support operations did quickly run into trouble, of course, when our own air force intervened; but we have 200 fighters and the other side has 2,000. If they keep this up for three days somewhere, and I'm losing 37 to 40 aircraft a day, we are finished. The enemy has lost 400 aircraft, but still has 1,600.

(Keitel: Absolutely – a huge risk.)

– The upshot of the whole episode then would be what we had before, in the Great War, when the wrong conclusions were drawn from a battle – Cambrai – that was technically a victory for us.¹⁷⁰

KEITEL: One more brief report: At any one time, we have between 270,000 and 280,000 men away from the Eastern Front on leave. They get 20 days. There are 14 or 15 trains leaving every day, each one carrying 750 to 800 men. The days spent in transit have to be added on to that. From November, the number will be 465,000 men. Based on the figures for the Wehrmacht at full strength in the East, we've calculated that 7½ to eight percent of our units are currently on leave, and

168 Hitler was in Berlin from September 27 to October 5, 1942 (included in his schedule were a speech to the military commanders operating under the Commander-in-Chief West on September 29, a speech to mark the opening of the Winter Relief campaign on September 30, and a meeting with Gauleiters on October 1), after which he returned to Vinnytsia.

169 On August 19, 1942, a British raid on the port of Dieppe on the northern French coast ("Operation Jubilee"), in which 6,100 troops, mainly Canadians, took part, had been repelled with heavy losses.

170 In the "tank battle of Cambrai" in November 1917, the attack by 400 British tanks was successfully driven back by the Germans, despite major initial gains. This defensive victory encouraged the German Supreme Army Command to attach relatively little military value to the new armored force. See A. J. Smithers, *Cambrai. The First Great Tank Battle 1917*, London 1992.

from November it will be nine percent. That means that all our fighting troops on the Eastern Front can be given three weeks or 22 days' annual home leave, not counting days in transit.

THE FÜHRER: Not counting days in transit?

KEITEL: Twenty days, not counting days in transit. It's calculated on the basis of one day each way from the border – one day from the German border and one day inside the country here. It means that they are away from their units for a total of 24 days – 270,000 to 280,000 men at any one time, not counting the other elements – just the troops.

THE FÜHRER: And the wounded and the sick have to be added to that.

KEITEL: So now I just have one more request regarding personnel changes – I spoke to Schmundt again – whether I could get your signature on this for October 1. It's really just routine changes, promotions of officers and men killed in action who have been promoted posthumously.

(Presents document).

So when Schmundt gets back, I would submit the order that conclusively puts Colonel Burgsdorf into the Personnel Office, to mark the beginning of the establishment of the new Personnel Office.

Meeting concluded at 16:55 hours.

Martin Broszat

Social Motivation and Charismatic Leadership in National Socialism

Introduction

In the recent historical literature on National Socialism, we find a growing number of studies that seek to illuminate various aspects of the internal structure and functioning of the Hitler regime, which are not accounts that simply document and record the actual facts of history.¹ Such studies have often been prompted by newly discovered source material that calls into question previously held views on the Nazi regime and suggests the need to rethink or reinterpret certain key concepts, or indeed to revise them entirely.

By their very nature, specialized studies of this kind, which have also appeared in this journal and other publications of the Institute for Contemporary History, can by and large claim to offer only partial interpretations of the general fabric of the Nazi regime from the perspective of their particular field of inquiry. It therefore seems fitting on the occasion of this special issue celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Institute's foundation to attempt to highlight at least some of the central problems of interpretation concerning the internal structure and functioning of the Nazi regime. For much of what follows, I shall be drawing on my book about the "Hitler state," which was published a year ago.² Yet, the present essay will address issues that were only hinted at, and not systematically explored, in that book, which focused primarily on the institutional structure of

1 To take the most important new historical studies that have appeared since 1966, this applies in particular to Hans Mommsen, *Beamtentum im Dritten Reich. Mit ausgewählten Quellen zur nationalsozialistischen Beamtenpolitik*, Stuttgart 1966; Alan S. Milward, *Die deutsche Kriegswirtschaft 1939–1945*, Stuttgart 1966; Heinz Höhne, *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf. Die Geschichte der SS*, Gütersloh 1967; Dietmar Petzina, *Autarkiepolitik im Dritten Reich. Der nationalsozialistische Vierteljahrsplan*, Stuttgart 1968; Hans Adolf Jacobsen, *Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik 1933–1938*, Frankfurt a. M./Berlin 1968; David Schoenbaum, *Die braune Revolution. Eine Sozialgeschichte des Dritten Reiches*, Cologne/Berlin 1968; Peter Diehl-Thiele, *Partei und Staat im Dritten Reich. Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von NSDAP und allgemeiner innerer Staatsverwaltung 1933–1945*, Munich 1969; Peter Hüttenberger, *Die Gauleiter. Studie zum Wandel des Machtgefüges in der NSDAP*, Stuttgart 1969; Reinhard Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner. Studien zum Machtkampf im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem*, Stuttgart 1970.

2 See Martin Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers. Grundlegung und Entwicklung seiner inneren Verfassung*, Munich 1969.

Nazi rule. The main problem that will be addressed here is how the social promise and social roots of the regime, as distinct from – though ultimately, of course, not divorced from – its power-political and constitutional evolution, are to be understood, and how this can be reconciled with the absolute leadership of Hitler and the ideology of National Socialism.

The Social Promise of National Socialism

In light of the popular support that National Socialism enjoyed even before the Party came to power, especially among the German middle classes, we must ask not only whether these social classes were ideologically predisposed to National Socialism, but also whether they were manipulated by the power of National Socialist propaganda. Naturally, the question about the real drive for social change behind National Socialism is equally important. However skilful and suggestive their propaganda was, Hitler and his Party could not simply create the fertile grounds for an effective appeal to the masses. Moreover, in the atmosphere of panic generated by the economic crisis, it took more than the traditional anti-democratic ideology and propaganda of the German nationalist opposition to kick-start a radical, national mass movement. In Germany, to the surprise of many contemporaries, the economic crisis, which in objective terms meant the impoverishment and proletarianization of broad sections of the population, gave little or no impetus to Marxist socialism, and did not necessarily produce class warriors and Communists, but rather a far greater number of National Socialists. It can therefore be surmised that large sections of the population saw the Hitler movement as the best answer to their simultaneous need for continuity *and* change.

Marxist theory, which diagnosed National Socialism as the last refuge of a dying capitalism confronted by the threat of a proletarian revolution and therefore merely as a force of social reaction, has not been adopted in such a radical form by non-Marxist historians. But, broadly speaking, the view that National Socialism was essentially a socially reactionary movement has been so prevalent that not enough attention has been devoted to the real social dynamic propelling change and to the equally utopian desire for restoration that lay behind National Socialism and was largely responsible for its mass appeal. The view that National Socialism was socio-politically reactionary in character appears to be confirmed by the illusionary and contradictory character of the socio-political propaganda and ideology of the NSDAP, and in particular by the fact that neither the program of the socialist Strasser wing, nor that of the National Socialist Factory Cell Orga-

nization (*Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation*, NSBO), and neither the re-agrarianization plans of Darré and Himmler, nor the goals pursued by middle-class National Socialist politicians, were ever implemented or achieved; instead, they were superseded after the seizure of power by the opportunistic accommodation with big industry and the conservative forces in the army and civil service. But the lack of coherence and the mendacity of the social promises made by the NSDAP do not invalidate the significance of the social dynamic that was really at the heart of the Party's successful appeal to the masses, a dynamic that was driven and sustained by the Nazi regime. Moreover, the failure to deliver on the socialist promises contained in the NSDAP manifesto prior to 1933 does not mean that this regime did not have a significant and lasting social impact.

Even critical Marxists such as the Viennese psychologist Wilhelm Reich conceded that the grass-roots support for National Socialism at the time of the economic crisis cannot be explained just in terms of its appeal to a *Lumpenproletariat* willing to try something new; Reich wrote in his *Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* (Mass Psychology of Fascism published in 1933), that Germany's "petite bourgeoisie in revolt" contained "not only the forces of reaction, but also dynamically progressive forces." It was not just the *struggle* of the Communists that mattered for the proletarian elements in the SA and other organizations within the Hitler movement, but also their *hope* that the National Socialist rebellion would quickly tip over into proletarian revolution.

The successful mass appeal of the National Socialists, particularly among the lower middle classes, small farmers, and students, was certainly not motivated by any subjective desire to preserve or defend the existing social system. The desire for change, which found expression in the turn towards National Socialism, also extended to society as it was currently constituted, and the sudden eruption of support for the Party suggests that it was driven by a powerful, underlying social dynamic. The successful mass appeal of National Socialism showed that the Marxists, by narrowing their perspective on social reality to the economic dimension alone, had neglected the no-less-real factors of social mentality, which is the product of education, cultural influence, and the social environments of work and family, and the self-image that results from all of this. If "the mysticism of National Socialism has won out over scientific socialism at a time of profound hardship and impoverishment," wrote Reich, this points to serious "shortcomings in the Marxist understanding of political reality."³ The anti-Marxism of the middle classes was fueled in part by the fact that revolutionary Marxists were

3 Wilhelm Reich, *Massenpsychologie des Faschismus. Zur Sexualökonomie der politischen Reaktion und zur proletarischen Sexualpolitik*, Copenhagen 1933, p. 16.

able to formulate the general goal of social emancipation largely in terms only of the dictatorship of the proletariat, proletarian equalization, or other kinds of class-specific wagedworker mentalities. The National Socialists profited from this failure, addressing themselves, like the Marxists, to large population groups that were looking for radical change, while seeking to satisfy the specific needs that resulted from the combination of the proletarian situation and bourgeois mentality that prevailed among broad sections of the middle class.

For the millions of new Hitler voters in the years 1930–1932, who, more for psychological reasons than for reasons of self-interest, wanted nothing to do with the Marxist parties, a vote for the NSDAP generally did not signify a conscious commitment to specific tenets of Nazi ideology; rather, first and foremost, it represented a protest against existing conditions, together with a rejection of the mentality and objectives propagated by the socialist parties, and an acceptance of the Hitler movement as the only promising, non-Marxist force that seemed to be determined to change the way things were. Not least, it also signified a desire for forceful political representation on the part of those classes and population groups (farmers, the new middle class, and young people) who felt that they were not, or no longer, adequately represented by the existing bourgeois single-issue parties and therefore felt neglected and isolated. Writing about fascism in Romania and the Iron Guard, Eugen Weber noted that the main grass-roots support came from social classes in isolated rural regions, who were hardly, if at all, represented within the previous political system.⁴ The same therefore applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the success of National Socialism in Germany prior to 1933. It was this sense of alienation that shaped the Nazis' populist style of agitation, which was directed against a political "system" that was no longer perceived to be representative, thereby explaining the mass mobilization of former non-voters by National Socialism.

The absence of any rational analysis of social and political conditions by the NSDAP, which was already apparent to contemporary critics, and the ambiguity and lack of clarity in its political program were hardly viewed as a disadvantage by most of those who voted for Hitler. On the contrary, they were seen by many as evidence of flexibility and vitality, which encouraged the hopes of individuals and certain groups that they could steer National Socialism in the direction they wanted in order to turn it into the kind of force of revolutionary action that they wanted. The irrational faith that this attitude betokened can certainly be characterized as a hysterical aberration – an irresponsible act of self-abandonment – or

⁴ See Eugen Weber, *Die Männer des Erzengels Michael*, in: Walter Laqueur/George L. Mosse (eds.), *Internationaler Faschismus 1920–1945*, Munich 1966, here pp. 164–65.

a politically illiterate expectation of salvation; but the social dynamic that drove this mass process cannot be explained away in these terms. The very irrationality of this unthinking desire for change speaks volumes about the pent-up social pressures that found release in the Hitler movement, and it is an indication that the removal of authoritarian, bureaucratic, feudal, upper-class structures and barriers was something that the broad mass of the middle-class population also regarded as long overdue, despite its hostility to Marxism.

A characteristic feature of National Socialism was that it did not adopt an unequivocally socially reactionary stance, and it did not simply call for the conservation or restoration of old social orders and values; instead, it promised to restore lost prestige and status by new means and through a process of “revolutionary renewal.” Like the concept of “national socialism” itself, most of the ideological-propagandistic leitmotifs of the Hitler movement exhibited this ambiguous relationship with traditional society and values that was both revolutionary and restorative. To that extent, National Socialism found itself broadly in line with other ideologies of the time that had campaigned since World War I – and in reaction to the Bolshevik Revolution – under apparently oxymoronic slogans (such as “conservative revolution” or “revolution from the right”) for the restoration of elitist, class-based and authoritarian concepts of order by means of a totalitarian national revolution. Romantic images and values from the past were repackaged as the battle cries of a young, avant-garde, populist movement aiming for renewal. The regress to a pre-social, natural human condition and a family-centered community was translated into the social ideal of a disciplined and egalitarian, high-achieving *Volksgemeinschaft* (people’s community). What was required of the individual citizen was not obedience of a subaltern kind, but a committed “loyalty to the nation.” The exclusive elite of aristocratic rulers was replaced by the “*völkisch* [ethnic-national] blood aristocracy” of the Germanic master race, accessible to all. The charismatic leader of the nation, with whom one could identify, broke down the barrier that had previously separated the princely monarch from his subjects. The new slogans, all revolving around the vague concept of national and social renewal, were a reflection of the direction and motivation of the social dynamic driving the middle classes that formed the mass support base of the NSDAP. They appeared to resolve and abolish the old contradiction between the authoritarian German political and social system and the growing calls for emancipation and equalization in the wake of advancing industrialization.

The persistence, on the one hand, of a provincial, class-based bourgeois mentality and social morality that permeated the working class, which the peculiar character and history of German life did much to encourage, as well as the dynamic unleashed by the broad middle classes striving to escape from status

inferiority, social dependence and economic impotence on the other hand, came together to produce a powerful and effective German “extremism of the center.” This extremism manifested itself in the form of National Socialism, which claimed both to embody and to set a new norm for the nation.⁵ It was a development that signified nothing less than the belated social liberation of the middle class, delivered on fascist terms – i.e. in return for the surrender of political autonomy – and it was accompanied by the extraordinary dynamism generated by such “liberation.”

The social momentum that swept the NSDAP to power had already manifested itself during the “time of struggle” in the astonishing industriousness, capacity for innovation, self-sacrifice, and energy of its members and followers. More importantly, it explains the extraordinary dedication and commitment of large portions of the nation during the Hitler regime. World War I had already shown that under the right conditions – namely, a truce within the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the leveling effect of a national battle for survival – civil society could be energized to reach its maximum, or in other words totalitarian, potential. The Hitler regime turned this emergency situation into a system. State and society were permeated by the various organizations of the Party, oriented towards the great national goals set by the plebiscitary leadership and pressured to put in the effort and commitment required to achieve them. In the process, horizontal social stratification and class divisions tended to become obscured. The psychological leveling brought about by the regimentation of *all* social classes diminished the distance that separated the lower from the upper classes. Above all, however, the multi-tentacled Party system embracing millions of people with its associated organizations and the many new subsidiary social and self-governing bodies established by the regime (from the *Reichsnährstand*, which regulated farming and food production, to the German Labor Front – *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*) created a new political society alongside the old social stratification. Offering people different kinds of career opportunities and positions of influence, it overlapped in part with the old society, but it also competed with it; at all events, it created new paths for advancement and the formation of elites that were largely independent of social origin and material circumstances. It was not the revolutionary overthrow of the old social order, but rather the diminution of its ability to function within the power system of the Third Reich and the constant threat of revolution

⁵ See Seymour Martin Lipset, “Der ‘Faschismus.’” *Die Linke, die Rechte und die Mitte*, in: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 11 (1959), pp. 401–44, and Rainer Lepsius, *Extremer Nationalismus. Strukturbedingungen vor der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung*, Stuttgart 1966.

with which it was confronted in the shape of certain ideological goals and individual officials and organs of the regime⁶ that weakened and destroyed the pillars of the old, conservative social order in the family and the school system, in administration and business, and in the armed forces and the universities.⁷ There was no mistaking the fact that social leveling and increased horizontal and vertical mobility, not to mention the psychological emancipation of previously apolitical social classes, were the direct results of the Hitler regime; despite the curtailment of intellectual and political freedoms for many, it made German society look like a more open society than ever before.

Ralf Dahrendorf described National Socialism in this sense as “the German revolution.” Indeed, unless we acknowledge the dynamic social forces that drove National Socialism, we will not be able to fully understand the nature of the regime as a movement, nor the extraordinary productive energy mobilized by the regime. This energy also enabled the “Hitler state” to compensate for the enormous waste of resources that resulted from the chaotic power struggles and in-fighting within its command structure.

The release of social energies, however, was achieved at the cost of chaotic fragmentation and depoliticization. The social “revolution” of National Socialism was not about creating some new order, but simply about unleashing forces, while simultaneously divesting the population of political responsibility and participation. It also makes sense to view the eventual function of capitalism and big industry in the Third Reich from this perspective. The relationship between business and politics under the National Socialists was not characterized by the excessive political influence of monopoly capitalism – to invoke a Marxist construct – but rather by the relegation of capitalist and large-scale industrial interests to the acquisition of economic power alone and the technical organization of the economy.⁸ The resignation of Schacht as Minister of Economics and President of the Reichsbank from 1937 to 1939 effectively signaled the end of the direct political influence exercised by capitalist big business on the fundamental political decisions of the regime, as well as shared interests and conceptions between the two. This, in turn, had a direct impact on business and industry. Essential as it was for the country’s economic self-sufficiency and the production of armaments, heavy industry was made increasingly dependent on a system of centralized allocation for foreign exchange, raw materials, and labor during the war years that

⁶ See Schoenbaum, *Braune Revolution*.

⁷ See Ralf Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland*, Munich 1965.

⁸ See Tim Mason, *Der Primat der Politik. Politik und Wirtschaft im Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Argument* 8 (1966), pp. 473–94.

had been introduced at the time of the Four-Year Plan; at the same time, however, its opportunities for profit were expanded. This development undermined the old system of industry federations and, with the effective suspension of free-market trading conditions, gradually broke down any united industry front that sought to protect common social interests. The result was an unfettered free-for-all, as individual firms and economic sectors jockeyed to win the best government contracts, subsidies, and resource allocations.

Business and industry became incapable of defending their common interests; the corrupting effect of the *Führer* regime also permeated the business community, turning it into a dependent beneficiary or a willing tool without the power to determine government policy. By the same token, the decoupling of political decision-making and planning from the relatively pragmatic and rational calculation of interests by capitalist big business only served to reinforce the political leadership's irrationalism and waning sense of reality.

The regime had no difficulty in sustaining and accelerating the dynamism of social forces seeking to escape from old allegiances and demarcations, nor in harnessing them to propel labor productivity. It was also able to increase social mobility in general by dismantling and eliminating the class-bound, conservative forces of resistance, which depoliticized social interests and masked these antagonisms in terms of both perception and psychology. Yet it was incapable of creating the basis for a lasting and rational new social order. Instead, the regime's own inner logic forced it to direct the irreconcilable and utopian social expectations that it had exploited and mobilized towards increasingly grandiose long-term goals, thus setting politics on a course of self-destruction brought about through overextension.

Hitler's Leadership and National Socialist Ideology

Most historical accounts of the Nazi period agree that the person of Hitler is pivotal to the history of the NSDAP and the Third Reich. Nowhere is the inadequacy of the Marxist view of history, and in particular the theory that fascism was an agent of monopoly capitalism, more apparent than in the case of Hitler, who, according to this view of history, must have been just the "stooge" of other forces. The difficulties that historians in East Germany got themselves into when they took great lengths to sideline the figure of Hitler in their research and writings on the Nazi period hardly make their work more persuasive. But, we would be deceiving ourselves if we did not acknowledge that non-Marxist historians have

also failed to produce any theoretically satisfactory interpretation of Hitler's position within the structure of the National Socialist movement and regime. A great deal has been written about Hitler, of course, but there has been a tendency to avoid reflecting on the theoretical premises or consequences of certain assessments of Hitler.

This dilemma becomes apparent, for example, when we try to define the relationship between ideology and leadership. It has been pointed out with good reason that what distinguishes the Hitler movement from other ideologies is the fact that National Socialism was not primarily an ideological and programmatic movement, but rather a charismatic one; its ideology or philosophy was embodied in its leader Hitler, and it would have lost all its power to attract and unify without him.⁹ Seen from this perspective, Hitler was not the spokesman for an idea that would have meant more or less the same without him; rather, the utopian Nazi ideology acquired its reality and specificity only through the person of Hitler. This is why (it is argued) no effective opposition to the *Führer* on ideological grounds was possible within the NSDAP (unlike in the Marxist parties). Indeed, Hitler did allow the Party a great deal of latitude for initiative and experimentation when it came to ideology (and organization for that matter), but he always intervened if it seemed that his position of absolute leadership was being called into question on ideological and programmatic grounds, as at the meeting of Party leaders in Bamberg in 1926 or in the case of Otto Strasser in 1930. Later on, whenever internal factionalism and disagreements about programmatic and ideological matters threatened Party unity, none of the contending groups or individuals ever turned against Hitler himself; instead, each tried to win Hitler over to their side, i.e., they acknowledged him as the arbiter of the "right" line of thinking. Moreover, it is clear that, after 1933, it was Hitler who decided which of the many different ideas that made up the ideological baggage of the NSDAP should be adopted as Party policy in all important cases, and he was the one who determined what should be dropped or put on the back burner.

From this perspective, it looks very much as if the ideological determinants of politics in the Third Reich and the nature of this ideology could be analyzed simply as "Hitler's ideology."¹⁰ At the same time, it is not difficult to show that Hitler's only consistent ideological beliefs were a fanatical antisemitism and anti-Bolshevism, together with the foreign policy goal of gaining new "living

⁹ This view has been argued with particular force by Joseph Nyomarkay, *Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party*, Minneapolis/MN 1967.

¹⁰ See, for example, the recent study, Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitlers Weltanschauung. Entwurf einer Herrschaft*, Tübingen 1969.

space” in the East, all embedded in a Darwinist-heroic view of history based on the idea of constant struggle and the survival of the fittest. Correspondingly, this would suggest that the relatively fixed core of Nazi ideology consisted solely of these ideas, meaning that all the rest was just rhetoric.

What does such an interpretation tell us, and what should we conclude from it? For one thing, this explanation tells us nothing about the ideological issues that made National Socialism so appealing to the masses. Antisemitism and the acquisition of large tracts of land in the East played only a subsidiary role in the propaganda of the NSDAP during the years that were crucial for its mass success (1930–1932). The main issues at that time were the fight against Marxism and the democratic multi-party state, as well as the call for social and national rebirth, etc. The ideological core that can be extracted from Hitler’s writings and private comments was not – or was only partially or indirectly – the subject of official Nazi propaganda. Rather, it would be more fitting to describe this core as Hitler’s secret vision, the *arcandum* of the *Führer*’s authority, which did not lend itself to full disclosure (hence the *secret* extermination of the Jews); consequently, it could not be the primary determinant of National Socialism’s mass success.

In fact, singling out the core ideas of Nazi ideology that Hitler embodied only serves to lend credence to the view that the history of the Third Reich was ultimately dictated by the person of Hitler and his own very personal belief system, which was not, or not discernibly, motivated by social forces. The primary elements of his ideology that emerge from a study of his thinking – the fanatical antisemitism and the distant goal of colonizing large expanses of territory in the East – differ from other elements of Nazi ideology and propaganda precisely to the extent that they scarcely related at all to the real and rationally definable interests of any specific social groups. Showing that Hitler clung to these core elements of his ideology to the bitter end and pursued them with fanatical determination would then mean that a few abstract ideas, which had taken root in Hitler’s brain as compulsive delusions or fantasies of salvation, were the real driving force behind the politics of National Socialism. The reality of National Socialism, therefore, would be reduced to the caprice of one solitary man and his delusional imaginings.

Such a conclusion, which may not be stated in so many words in Hitler biographies or studies of his ideology but nonetheless hangs unspoken in the background as a basic premise or consequence, does not hold up under scrutiny. Rather, the issue addressed here – namely the relationship between ideology and leadership – shows that historical research faces a particularly difficult dilemma in trying to define Hitler’s place within the structure of the political and social system of Nazi rule. Attempts to solve this problem will have to examine to what extent Hitler, while not being merely the agent of certain interests, was neverthe-

less the spokesman for inherently antagonistic forces and tendencies that sought a fanatical outlet of the kind that he embodied.

The desire and willingness to achieve *völkisch* and social regeneration is a common, generalized formula that sums up the primary motivation that drove National Socialist ideology and its utopian visions. It could be interpreted in various ways, of course, but if it had been pinned down to a specific meaning, it would have led inevitably to ideological sectarianism and organizational fragmentation. When Hitler, who was himself guided by certain verities of *völkisch*-antisemitic “worldly wisdom” that he had brought with him from Austria, joined the *völkisch*-National Socialist movement in Munich in 1919, he was the one who most clearly recognized these disastrous organizational and political consequences of the fragmented *völkisch* movement and the one who took decisive action to counteract them. His subsequent leadership rested on two closely related primary principles: for one, he was the most persuasive mouthpiece of *völkisch*-National Socialist feelings and wishes; yet he also represented the most powerful political will, totally intent on using the notion of a utopia to political effect and translating it into practical organization and political success. The one role was in fact dependent on the other. Hitler could only become the unifying figure of the Nazi movement capable of exercising discipline over it because he was its best missionary and propagandist. Indeed, his superior powers as an agitator rested to a large extent on the fanatical political determination that informed all his rhetoric and gave it its compelling force.

Charismatic leadership, the “revolutionary force in times bound by tradition” (Max Weber), had already been prefigured in German middle-class society before 1914 (e.g., through the “Kaiser book,” published by the head of the Pan-German League) as the expectation of national and social renewal in the face of disenchantment with the failing authority of Kaiser Wilhelm II.¹¹ With the national psyche thus predisposed to embrace a charismatic popular leader and “renewer,” Hitler found his role waiting for him. But he could play it convincingly and successfully only because of his total self-identification with this role – in his person, his oratory powers, and his force of will.

Through the image of unflinching resolve that he presented, Hitler was able to articulate and celebrate the subconscious wishes and feelings of his audience. He said aloud what they secretly thought and desired while reinforcing their tentative longings and prejudices. He gave them a deeply satisfying sense of self-

¹¹ See Daniel Frymann (the pen name of Heinrich Claß), *Wenn ich der Kaiser wär*. Politische Wahrheiten und Notwendigkeiten, Leipzig 1912. Three more editions had been published by 1914; in 1925, the book entered its seventh edition with a print run of 31–35,000.

affirmation and the feeling of sharing in a new truth, and he also awakened in them a selfless and single-minded dedication and willingness to work for the cause. This kind of rousing oratory in a charismatic leader could not come from a mature personality at peace with himself and comfortable in his own skin. As with the leaders of other fascistic or otherwise inspirational-revivalist movements, it required a mental and psychological make-up *in extremis*, one that was itself so deeply marked by the mood of crisis and panic within its own social class at the time that it instinctively hit the right notes; a person such as Hitler, who, with the growing self-confidence of a successful popular agitator, was discovering his true mission and the glorious sense of self-fulfillment that he had hitherto sought in vain by one curious means or another.

Hitler's sudden rise from anonymity, as well as intellectual and social mediocrity, to the national political stage is confirmation that his leadership could come to the fore only at a time of crisis in which the prevailing atmosphere was shaped by a specific collective psychology. What made Hitler into the *Führer* – the “leader” – was the unusual fervor with which he embraced this general pathology, together with the absolute determination with which he applied himself to expressing it and translating it into action. Against this backdrop of general exaltation, he was able to experience his private neurosis as a general, public truth and to turn this collective neurosis into a sounding board for his own obsessions. From the outset, therefore, Hitler's leadership lent itself to two differing and seemingly contradictory interpretations: on the one hand, he could be seen as merely the spokesman for a broad, nationalist psychosis; on the other hand, he seemed to be the unifying figure of this “movement,” which could not achieve a political breakthrough without such unity.

It is clear from this that the history of National Socialism cannot be divorced from the personality of Hitler. But it is also clear that Hitler's ability to influence history was psychologically dependent on very specific, pre-existing conditions, far more than that of other politicians and statesmen. In terms of the cornerstone of Hitler's ideology, the question that needs to be asked is: for what objective reasons did these particular elements become so firmly established in Hitler's thinking, and why were they the only ones that he actively pursued?

As already indicated, one of Hitler's objective functions as *Führer* was to hold together the diffuse Party ideology with its tendency to sectarian fragmentation. This meant that the *Führer* stood above ideology and was not bound by specific, practical points of policy. But a dynamic, committed mass following was unthinkable without an overarching “idea,” i.e., without some sort of directional goal, however vaguely formulated, which reflected social needs and expectations; moreover, it was not possible without identifying implacable enemies who had to be fought to the death. True to the political rationale of the Party he led,

Hitler always avoided pinning himself down on points of policy, thereby keeping the movement open and flexible. At the same time, psychological necessity dictated that he be a passionate proponent of certain ideological goals, both positive and negative, in which he believed fanatically. The leader of the National Socialist movement had to be able to produce a number of immutable “ideas” that expressed, both positively and negatively, the utopia of national and social renewal as well as the goal of freeing oneself from internal and external dependencies and enemies. But, in order to avoid the risk of fragmentation, these ideas had to be framed in such a way that they did not expose the disparity of objective interests among the followers and partners of National Socialism.

The cornerstone beliefs of Hitler’s personal ideology met these conditions. Antisemitism/anti-Bolshevism and the goal of gaining new “living space” in the East for the German people – the negative and positive poles of Hitler’s metaphysics of history as a relentless struggle for survival between races and peoples – were tantamount to religious truths for Hitler himself; they were his articles of faith, without which all his agitation and politics would be nothing more than a nihilistic struggle for its own sake. Objectively, however, they also functioned as a reference point for the vague urge for social and national renewal and as a way to deflect this urge from real, concrete programs of reform: antisemitism and anti-Bolshevism mobilized the social and national resentment of the middle classes against supposed conspirators or exploiters as well as against the dreaded cultural-social proletarianization; likewise, the “living space” utopia served as a fantasy of salvation through *völkisch*-social regeneration, the vision of a completely independent and self-sufficient territorial great power, which promised a return to a healthy, vital, *völkisch* life and social elite status for the whole nation. On the other hand, these ideological goals (or more accurately, broad policy directions) had so little to do with immediate social reality that they were not really subject to modification through real-world constraints or opposing interests. Hitler was able to hold fast to them, no matter what; moreover, as other Party reform ideas proved unworkable, he was forced to keep on reverting to them in order to sustain the momentum of the movement.

Not long after 1933, the confrontation of Nazi ideology with reality, marked by the transition from a propaganda movement to a command structure, took place during the so-called seizure of power and subsequent *Gleichschaltung* (social and political “realignment”). It locked many conservatives who held positions of power in state and society into the Nazi movement, resulted in a filtering of most Nazi ideological intentions that reduced them to measures that were workable under current circumstances when it came to practical matters of national and social policy. This development revealed the unreality of nearly all National Socialist ideas about the structural reform of state and society. The replacement

of the *Reichswehr* by a “Brown Army” or the creation of corporatist structures – the so-called *Ständischer Aufbau* – proved to be just as impracticable as National Socialist plans for reforming the relationship between the Reich and Länder (*Reichsreform*), the introduction of a “Germanic” legal system, or the enactment of a new constitution.

The power and the capacity of the Nazi movement were limited almost entirely to challenging and undermining the status quo. With virtually every attempt to reform a specific area of state and society along National Socialist lines, it became clear that the Nazi ideas were controversial and therefore met with successful resistance both within the Nazi movement and among those elements whose collaboration and support was necessary for the Nazi regime. The less effective the ideology-driven policies of National Socialism were in bringing about constructive reform, the more their focus shifted to certain negative measures that affected specific legal and humanitarian principles without establishing any fundamentally new constitutional or social order.

The current state of the constitution and the distribution of power within the Hitler state determined the way in which these principles of National Socialist ideology were implemented and the extent to which they were realized, just as the present interests and sense of crisis among those sections of the population that could most readily be mobilized shaped the primary thrust of National Socialist propaganda prior to 1933. So, for example, the disempowerment of the SA and other social-revolutionary elements within the NSDAP – such as *Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation* (National Socialist Factory Cell Organization; NSBO) or *Nationalsozialistische Handwerks-, Handels- und Gewerbeorganisationen* (Nazi Craft, Commerce, and Trade Organizations; NS-Hago) – in 1934 was driven in part by Hitler’s desire to consolidate his position of absolute leadership, which had been challenged by the power claims of these elements. Yet it was also certainly propelled by the interests of the army, the business community, and the civil service, whose support Hitler needed at the time in order to consolidate the power and prestige of the Nazi state at home and abroad. At the same time, it was imperative to ensure that the constitutional and social order achieved by 1934 did not become established in law and that the “movement” could be kept going in other ways. Otherwise, curbing the revolutionary National Socialist movement from the grass roots (1933/34) would serve to strengthen those elements that wanted to see the regime transition to a regulated, authoritarian, administrative state – a development that would inevitably diminish the status of the charismatic leader and that of the Party, halt the momentum of the movement, and disappoint the social expectations of broad sections of the population that supported it. The dynamic sense of “movement” was maintained after 1934 mainly because the Party, together with its various departments and organizations, was

able to exert its influence on government, society, and the public sphere. It did this through comprehensive personal information-gathering, propaganda, and training, but also through activities that competed with those of the state, and it emerged in the process – if no longer as a revolutionary force – as a source of permanent pressure, with a claim to ideological leadership and an unsatisfied appetite for personal power and authority. At the same time, it was crucial for the Party's sense of its own power, and for maintaining its claim to ideological leadership and control, that ideology was translated into reality at least in some instances. The easiest way to do that, i.e., without the risk of provoking its conservative partners and powerful interests in state and society, was through measures targeting certain minorities who were powerless anyway: persons suffering from a congenital disease, the mentally disturbed, the socially marginalized, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Jews. These measures were enforced by the state and criminal police, who were fully under the control of the SS, or through discriminatory legislation (such as the Law on the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring and the Nuremberg Laws).

Even if Hitler himself repeatedly endorsed these negative tendencies in the *völkisch*, ideology-driven politics of National Socialism and encouraged the Party to take appropriate initiatives, such measures should not be seen simply as a consequence of the influence of his personal ideas. Rather, Hitler represented the internal logic and radicalism of a system that could not survive without the stabilizing support of the established conservative power brokers in state and society, but which itself fed off the energy of the broad lower and middle classes who were exploited for propaganda and organizational purposes.

These negative stereotypes had always been the only specific thing on which the National Socialist "extremism of the center" could agree, allowing it to masquerade as a community of action. The inflation of one's own national worth, positively represented in racial theory, and the inflation of one's own social importance and achievements, positively represented in the concept of the exclusive native *Volksgemeinschaft* of the Germanic master race, could not be translated into concrete political practice in a positive form without conflict; rather, it could only be accomplished in negative terms through the rejection and defamation of everything "foreign" and "abnormal," not to mention those "undesirable elements" that did not conform to the national, middle-class value scheme of social discipline and hard work. Precisely because the middle classes that backed National Socialism had no common social interests and they were not capable of successfully representing their own political interests by themselves, they merged their interests with those of the state and nation. They thereby entrusted their salvation and their representation to the Nazi ideology – cobbled together from elements of middle-class social morality and exclusionary nationalism – or

to the movement and the *Führer*, who was supposedly acting in the name of this ideology.

The selection of negative ideological elements that went on during the seizure of power and the subsequent course of the Third Reich (these being the only elements that were implemented in practice because the positive utopian schemes remained just distant goals espoused in edifying propaganda) also implied, however, an increasing radicalization, refinement, and institutionalization of brutality and persecution. If the practical and not just propagandistic continuation of the ideology-driven movement after the seizure of power did not come to fruition in a revolutionary reordering of state and society, but instead became increasingly and ever more exclusively reliant on negative enemy targets, then it could only move forward by constantly ratcheting up its measures against the Jews, the mentally ill, the socially marginalized, etc. But this kind of discrimination could be taken only so far: the “movement” could end only in the “final solution.” Such was the consequence – the internal logic – of National Socialism, which Hitler embodied. But in its policy on the Jews, as in its pursuit of some irrational “living space” utopia, the Nazi leadership was incapable of understanding the internal logic of its own momentum. Hitler’s own “logic” thus had nothing to do with planned, systematic action.

Nothing indicates that the mass murder of the Jews that began in 1941/42 was part of a long-term plan that had been decided upon in secret several years beforehand. The forced emigration of German Jews that was prioritized and promoted by the regime until 1939 and the Madagascar plan that had been bandied about in 1940 did not aim to achieve the physical liquidation of the Jews. Their purpose was simply to remove the Jews from the sphere of German power, not to bring about their complete extermination; these steps in and of themselves would not have led to the emergence of that most radical form of antisemitism that had come to shape Hitler’s policy and thinking from 1941/42 onwards. The Third Reich’s policy on the Jews, as on other matters, makes sense only in terms of a process of radicalization, which does not necessarily mean that the most radical solution was not already present in the minds of Hitler and some of his followers as a potential move. But, this is the point: it was only a *possibility*, and it was only later, as circumstances changed, that the decision was made to turn this idea into a reality.

In comparison, the goal of colonizing large areas of “living space” in the East, which is documented in *Mein Kampf*, in Hitler’s so-called “Second Book,” in his remarks to the army generals immediately after his appointment as Chancellor, in his memorandum on the Four-Year Plan in the summer of 1936, and on fre-

quent occasions thereafter,¹² seems to have been a much more definitive ideological commitment. In fact, it is constantly cited as the most striking example of the fanatical single-mindedness with which Hitler pursued distant ideological goals in his practical policy-making. But, here again, we need to ask how this single-mindedness should be interpreted, and what objective function was served by this characteristic persistence of purpose.

Did the idea of conquering and colonizing territory in the East derive from the kind of rational, power-political calculation that Hitler frequently displayed when planning specific foreign policy initiatives? Had Hitler instinctively recognized the specific power-political opportunities that would open up for Germany in Eastern Europe once the supranational empires of the tsars and the Habsburgs had gone, leaving a power vacuum behind them? Furthermore: had he consciously decided to exploit the ideological and political isolation of Russia under Soviet rule in order to legitimize German expansion towards the East on anti-Bolshevik grounds in the eyes of the small East European countries and the Western powers, with the expectation that he could count on their support or at least their acquiescence? In the years after 1933, these objective circumstances did in fact prove advantageous for Hitler's practical anti-Soviet policy. Tellingly, however, they are not mentioned in any of the key statements justifying expansion towards the East that Hitler made in the contexts referred to above. Instead, anti-Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe and beyond is justified purely in ideological terms, as a *necessity* for the restoration of Germany as a *völkisch* entity (militarized settlement policy and land grabs, rather than civil trade and colonial policy) and as a *possibility* resulting from the disintegration of the Russian nation and the power of the Russian state allegedly brought about by the Jewish-Marxist-inspired Soviet system. These considerations, both of which turned out to be illusory (a large-scale ethnic-national program of re-agrarianization and colonization of the East defied the logic of industrialization that the Third Reich also promoted, and the assumption of Soviet weakness would turn out to be Hitler's biggest mistake), show how much Hitler's plans for expansion in the East were out of touch with the reality of the situation. Interestingly, there is also no indication that he thought through the specifics of a plan to which he clung with typically fanatical persistence before 1939.

The uncertain status of Poland in this plan is a good example. The plan for annexing territory in the East, as set out in *Mein Kampf* and in Hitler's "Second Book," was clearly directed against the Soviet Union, but as the latter did not

12 See Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper, Hitlers Kriegsziele, in: Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 8 (1960), pp. 121–33.

border Germany directly, it was not possible to achieve this goal without the annexation, displacement, or total subjugation of Poland under German control. The question of Poland's future was obviously crucial, therefore, for the political realization of the effort to claim territory in the East at the expense of the Soviets. Yet, there is no mention of the "Polish problem" in any of those key statements that Hitler made on his policy for securing "living space" in the East. Likewise, German foreign policy papers prior to the spring of 1939 do not give any clear indication as to how Hitler planned to deal with this problem, which ultimately had a critical bearing on the nature, extent, and geographical direction of any expansion towards the East.

So, here again, it is difficult to discern any methodical thinking or preparation for action aimed at achieving the end goal in practical policy terms.

While there is no denying Hitler's single-minded conviction in pursuing the aim of securing "living space" in the East, this does not really indicate that there was a rational plan of action designed to achieve a limited, concretely envisioned objective; rather – as in the case of Hitler's antisemitism – it should be seen as a fanatical refusal to let go of a dynamic movement once it had been set in motion. In the area of foreign policy, this characteristic gave Hitler total freedom of action in the game of power politics, which he initially displayed by revoking and breaking all multilateral alliances and agreements made under international law; ultimately, this turned into open aggression, territorial annexation, and the establishment of a power base and hegemony over a wide area. Hitler's vision of a future German (or Germanic) imperium – a German zone of influence extending over a large land mass – was a radical rejection of all dependence on international treaties, alliances, and constraints. In his adherence to this negative line, which began in 1933 with Germany's exit from the League of Nations and crossed the threshold to open aggression in March 1939 with the brusque rejection of the partnership offered by the Western powers in the context of a European four-power concert, Hitler was nothing if not consistent. In the end, the idea of an extensive colonial dominion in the East was just a metaphor and utopian code for this continual endeavor to attain ever-greater freedom of action in the arena of power politics, an endeavor that was, by its very nature, not limited by time or space. The East was seen as the predetermined direction for this expansive thrust mainly because it was only the East that could offer endless wide-open spaces. It only seemed possible to realize the ideal of economic self-sufficiency and the visions of re-agrarianization and an elite master race – those social utopias that were inextricably bound up with the whole "living space" project – by reviving historical memories of German colonization in the East and by reactivating war aims from World War I in pursuit of extensive German hegemony and settlement in the East on a grander scale.

Until 1939/40, the goal of securing new “living space in the East” had largely served as an ideological metaphor, a symbol to justify a steady succession of new foreign-policy initiatives aimed at attaining the “final state” of perfect national freedom (which was also a prerequisite for realizing the social utopia embodied in the idea of an elite master race). It is also quite telling that when Hitler spoke about “living space in the East” during this period in public speeches, diplomatic conversations, or at meetings of senior army officers, he did not choose to emphasize the radical master-race utopia, but rather stressed other considerations that sounded much more rational and plausible, such as the acquisition of territory for the population surplus and access to new sources of raw materials and food for domestic consumption. In other words, he addressed what appeared to be concrete issues and interests. Just as the “Jewish question” was the primary symbol for the ceaseless struggle on the domestic front, “living space in the East” became the symbolic justification for the ongoing activity and expansion in the international arena. As such – a symbolic end goal envisaged for what was in reality a movement and an accumulation of power predicated on endless progression – this idea was a psychological necessity and a fanatical article of faith for Hitler, which meant that he required nothing in the way of rational political planning prior to 1939/40.

But the more Hitler was forced to keep invoking these symbols as the only way to satisfy the “movement,” the more these symbolic narratives became a reality. In the end, rhetorical promises had to be turned into reality; what had objectively only made sense as an ideological instrument designed to mobilize the nation’s combat-readiness and faith in the future now had to be carried out literally. Herein lay the ultimate absurdity of the Nazi regime in that the movement literally put an end to itself. The secret annihilation of the Jews, which implicitly spelled the demise of antisemitism as an instrument of propaganda, illustrates the delusional transposition of combat symbol and end goal. The same holds true in terms of the policy on war and occupation in the East. Hitler’s decision to attack the Soviet Union, taken as late as the autumn of 1940, was not a calculated plan to realize the vision of “living space in the East”; rather, his hand was forced by the need to escape from the military stalemate of summer 1940 and to achieve an outcome that would decide the war. It was only after the decision to invade the Soviet Union was made on military grounds that the ideological motivations were introduced and taken literally. *Lebensraum* ideology then played a similarly self-destructive role in shaping occupation policy as did the “final solution to the Jewish question,” and it signified the end of further movement and expansion in objective terms.

The Nazi regime was unable to stop the “movement” that was its *raison d’être* without sacrificing the plebiscitary social dynamic that it had set in motion,

thereby rendering itself redundant in the end. Only continuous, ongoing action could keep the movement unified and deflect the antagonistic forces within the unfettered society of the Third Reich. Such action, however, was bound to become ever further removed from rational control and calculation, eventually tipping over into self-destructive delusion. In this, too, Hitler was the vital unifying figure, the man at the center of it all, but he was not the driving force behind any kind of purely personal, socially unmotivated despotism.

Peter Fritzsche

Social Mechanics and Ideological Motivation

Martin Broszat on National Socialism and Hitler

For anyone born in 1926, as Martin Broszat was, historical research into the Nazi period necessarily involved an autobiographical component. For Broszat's postwar generation, the writing of history could be at once exculpatory, in order to retrospectively preserve strands of German tradition from Nazi contamination, or exploratory, in order to understand the imbrication of so much and so many in National Socialism. Broszat himself, who was long associated with Munich's Institute for Contemporary History and served as its celebrated director from 1972 until his death in 1989, commented on his inability to find intellectual foundations as a young man because he was torn between the influences of his Christian upbringing at home (a suburb outside of Leipzig) and his Hitler Youth experiences away from home (in the Saxon countryside and as part of the children's evacuation program known as the *Kinderlandverschickung*).¹ Broszat's approach to Nazism, particularly in his seminal 1969 book, *Der Staat Hitlers*, and in his brilliantly argued 1970 essay derived from it, "Social Motivation and Charismatic Leadership in National Socialism," also owed a great deal to his early work at the institute where his research on anti-Jewish atrocities in eastern Europe led to his service as an expert witness for the prosecution at the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials in 1965. In his obituary for Broszat, Ian Kershaw remarked that his colleague's immersion in "the direst, most inhumane aspects of Nazi rule" propelled him to use a wide range of primary sources in a critical way in order to understand precisely the murderous dynamic of National Socialism, its self-destructive energy, and also its broad mass support.² In "Social Motivation and Charismatic Leadership

1 See Norbert Frei, Hitler-Junge, Jahrgang 1926, in: *Die Zeit*, September 11, 2003. Not all scholars accept Frei's claim that Broszat applied for membership in the Nazi Party in 1944, but never received the membership card that would confirm his acceptance. According to Frei, Broszat never knew that he was registered as a member with the number 9,994,096; to lie about it would have been risky in his student days in the Soviet occupation zone and to subsequently conceal it would have been out of character.

2 Ian Kershaw, Martin Broszat (1926–89), in: *German History* 8 (1990), pp. 310–16, here p. 311. With regard to the significance Kershaw attributed to this article in particular, see Ian Kershaw, *Soziale Motivation und Führer-Bindung im Staat Hitlers*, in: Norbert Frei (ed.), *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus*, Göttingen 2007, pp. 76–84.

in National Socialism,” Broszat reflects on the ability of the Nazis as a movement and Hitler as the movement’s unquestioned leader to achieve political power and on the capacity of the regime to translate that power into destructive practice.

Two sets of words dramatize Broszat’s analysis. First, Broszat deploys stormy and smoldering nouns to describe the social activity of German citizens and the political activism of National Socialists. He draws attention to “social forces”³ (pp. 217, 218, 220) mobilized in the 1920s and 1930s in order to break with traditional political and social norms. He emphasizes the energy and dynamics associated with the forward-striving social dynamic or *soziale Schubkraft* that became embodied in the Nazi Party and which obeyed only the law of “movement” (p. 228). National Socialism was not persistently portrayed as a “movement” for no reason. The Nazis were both the product and the motor of an enormous release of energy. Secondly, Broszat underscores the sheer scale of all this incendiary activity; he favors adjectives such as “*unerhört*” (“astonishing”) and “*außerordentlich*” (“extraordinary”) (p. 216) to take measure of the all-encompassing scope of the social mobilization from which the Nazis profited in the rise to power and then later institutionalized upon coming to power. The adjectives also indicate the unprecedented nature of Nazi mobilization in modern German history. He writes:

the social momentum that swept the NSDAP to power had already manifested itself during the “time of struggle” in the astonishing industriousness, capacity for innovation, self-sacrifice, and energy of its members and followers. More importantly, it explains the extraordinary dedication and commitment of large portions of the nation during the Hitler regime. (p. 216)

What impresses Broszat is a process of immense forward-looking activation going back to at least the beginning of World War I. While he recognizes signs of what Theodor Geiger referred to as “the panic among the middle classes”⁴ as the Great Depression worsened, Broszat’s analysis generally rejects the contingency of an explanation that relies on this economic state of emergency. He probes much further into the twentieth-century past and insists on deeper motivations for those attracted to the Nazi phenomenon, and he thus resists evoking the disorientation implicit in the idea of panic. In my view, notions such as “panic” or “protest” are inconsistent with the fact that voters who abandoned their political loyalties in the years 1930 to 1933 did so with a deliberation that historians some-

³ These and the following citation are from Martin Broszat, *Social Motivation and Charismatic Leadership in National Socialism*, in this yearbook, pp. 211–30.

⁴ See Theodor Geiger, *Panik im Mittelstand*, in: *Die Arbeit* 7 (1930), pp. 637–54.

times neglect: they showed considerable determination, switching either to the Nazis or to the Communists; smaller, alternative parties that had flourished in the 1928 and even 1930 elections disappeared.⁵

The sheer movement and evidently untapped potential of National Socialism as well as the intentions of its *Führer*, Adolf Hitler, dominated the political scene in 1931 and 1932 to an extraordinary degree. Brüning's cabinet spent long hours in formal and informal sessions trying to make sense of the growing popularity of the Nazis. Jewish intellectuals were suddenly confronted with the need to figure out what the antisemite Hitler meant to their home in Germany. In small towns across Germany, householders looking down the street to the market square often enough found it occupied by SA formations, military bands, and swastika-emblazoned flags. It was not "wave after wave of rallies" washing over the countryside, wrote Rudolf Olden, one of Hitler's first biographers; it was "an unending rolling ocean. There is no town, no village or housing project, where their activists do not press relentlessly forward."⁶ The scene, whether in novels or in newspaper commentaries, is framed by constant interruptions: the shouts, songs, and marches of the Communists and particularly the Nazis who, in their campaigns, went out of their way to leave behind the familiar precincts of neighborhood and home.

For Broszat, the "mass support base" (*Massenbasis*) that the Nazis obtained during the "economic crisis" (p. 212) is a culmination of longer-term trends that the depression obviously exacerbated. What the economic crisis highlighted was not social panic, but rather the complete inadequacy of economic, Marxist, and even conventional sociological assumptions. It surprised many observers that the looming proletarianization of broad sectors of the German population, which drank half as much beer in 1933 as it had in 1929, "did not necessarily produce class warriors and Communists, but rather a far greater number of National Socialists"⁷ (p. 212). But the rejection of Marxism did not necessarily make Nazi voters social reactionaries. Broszat moves from the specific alarm of the "economic crisis" to the general "mood of crisis and panic" (p. 222) characteristic of the times, which is not precisely dated but illustrated by the already popular resonance of manifestos such as Heinrich Claß' *Wenn ich der Kaiser wär* (If I Were the Kaiser, 1912).

⁵ See Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter. The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919–1933*, Chapel Hill/NC 1983, p. 127, and Jürgen Falter, *Hitlers Wähler*, Munich 1991.

⁶ Quoted in Detlev Grieswelle, *Propaganda der Friedlosigkeit. Eine Studie zu Hitlers Rhetorik, 1920–1933*, Stuttgart 1972, p. 31.

⁷ On beer, see Eve Rosenhaft, *The Unemployed in the Neighborhood. Social Dislocation and Political Mobilisation in Germany 1929–33*, in: Richard J. Evans/Dick Geary (eds.), *The German Unemployed. Experiences and Consequences of Mass Unemployment from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich*, New York 1987, pp. 194–227, here p. 208.

Broszat also notes the historical precedence of the “truce within the *Volksgemeinschaft*” and overall “leveling effect” (p. 216) of World War I. For the origins of the “unending rolling ocean,” a nice literary rendition of Broszat’s “social dynamic,” one that so roiled the mostly middle-class precincts of nationalist politics during the late Weimar years, it is necessary to go back at least to the turn of the century.

“National Socialism,” writes Broszat, “found itself broadly in line with other ideologies of the time that had campaigned since World War I” (p. 215). The nationalist spirit of “the times” was characterized not only by a resolute and somewhat frightened anti-Bolshevism, but also by an assertive movement of political self-determination and social liberation. The latter was directed against Germany’s social and political elites and the vehicles of their parliamentary power – that is the traditional middle-class parties and the interest politics that had become so closely associated with them. At the same time, it also opposed the whole stifling social stasis of notables and the world of status, social barriers, and deference that Heinrich Mann mocked with great success in *Der Untertan* (The Loyal Subject), a bestseller when it was published in 1914. It is entirely consistent with Broszat’s argument that the mass success of the Nazis in the early 1930s was the culmination of longer-term trends related to an awareness of the explosion of grass-roots political activism in the nationalist camp – just think of Munich since 1919, Hindenburg’s victory in 1925, the rise of the *Stahlhelm* long before the Great Depression – and the serial exhaustion of the traditional liberal and conservative parties. This shift could be seen in the slow burnout of the German Democratic Party, which reached its electoral apex in 1919, then of the German People’s Party, which slid downhill after 1920, and finally of the German National People’s Party, which began to lose voters after 1924, marking a cumulative corrosive process that preceded and paved the way for the Nazi electoral breakthrough in September 1930. In other words, a “national socialist” assault was underway many years before the rise of the National Socialists and before the onset of Germany’s wrenching economic crisis. In any case, the unprecedented nature of the adjectives “astonishing” or “extraordinary” is one measure of the extreme agony of nationalist politics in the 1920s; people in this right-wing tent were mobilized, scandalized, and radicalized in ways that broke with political norms. The Nazi electoral breakthrough in September 1930 was only a dramatic recapitulation of what had been happening in nationalist precincts across the country since the end of the war and the revolution in November 1918.

However, small-town “national socialism” did not and could not completely displace the structures built up long ago by local notables. Moreover, it could not effectively diminish the influence of the Social Democrats who, despite their constructive municipal programs of social uplift, were casually and contemptuously tarred with the same Bolshevik brush as the rising Communist movement

after 1930. To be sure, the nationalist Right scored incontestable gains: Hindenburg was elected in 1925 with great fanfare, and, incidentally, his electoral success is the single best predictor of Hitler's vote tally in 1932. Nonetheless, the goal of creating broad-based "bourgeois blocs" that could contend with the socialists, retake the public square, and overcome the fragmentation of middle-class interests (debtors versus creditors, realtors versus renters, small business versus big, tariff legislation versus consumption incentives) proved to be a failure. By 1928, a "Grand Coalition" even returned the Social Democrats to the chancellery. Yet the growing anti-socialist and anti-democratic authoritarianism of German nationalism could hardly contain what Broszat pointedly calls the deep-seated *Wille zur Veränderung* or "desire for change" (p. 213). This "will" produced the widespread sense that the Weimar Republic was in crisis as much as the social, economic, and cultural crisis produced the "will."⁸ The perhaps surprising appeal of a "charismatic people's leader" and a more egalitarian, but anti-Marxist *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) expressed the deep desire for national and indeed *völkisch* renewal. Hitler's charisma, affirmed Detlev Peukert a half-generation later, could only have established itself in "conditions of the perceived hopelessness of the political, social, and economic crisis," a sense of being at a dead end that distinguished Germany's misery from that of Great Britain or the United States.⁹ The Nazis proved to be the most successful exponents of both the hopes and fears of this stalled and inchoate populist insurgency. In the end, Broszat explains a striking affinity:

Romantic images and values from the past were repackaged as the battle cries of a young, avant-garde, populist movement for renewal. The regress to a pre-social, natural human condition and a family-centered community was translated into the social ideal of a disciplined and egalitarian, high-achieving *Volksgemeinschaft* [people's community]. What was required of the individual citizen was not obedience of a subaltern kind, but a committed 'loyalty to the nation.' The exclusive elite of aristocratic rulers was replaced by the 'völkisch [ethnic-national] blood aristocracy' of the Germanic master race, accessible to all. (p. 215)

The appeal of the *Volksgemeinschaft* rested on egalitarian and social reformist ideals that spoke to middle-class and youthful constituents committed to change but completely unwilling, in step with the generation of their fathers, to sign up for a proletarian revolution, even despite their willingness to cast aside old

⁸ See Moritz Föllmer/Rüdiger Graf/Per Leo, Die Kultur der Krise in der Weimarer Republik, in: Moritz Föllmer/Rüdiger Graf (eds.), Die "Krise" der Weimarer Republik. Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters, Frankfurt a. M./New York 2005, pp. 9–41.

⁹ Detlev J. K. Peukert, Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne, Frankfurt a. M. 1987, p. 236.

social conventions. *Volksgemeinschaft* was also an action-oriented concept that promised to overcome social fragmentation, which compounded both the political impotence of German nationalists at home and the cherished German nation abroad. The Nazis championed the *Volksgemeinschaft* as the way to pave Germany's future. Cleansed politically and racially, the people's community would be the entity that could mobilize itself and become a historically valid subject. The National Socialists also effectively incorporated this end in their means. While the large paramilitary group, the Stahlhelm, which was basically as big as National Socialism well into 1932, invaded the "red" cities of Berlin and Hamburg with impressively large patriotic parades in 1927 and 1928, respectively (a glimpse of the event appears in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*), the Nazis far more effectively invaded "red" neighborhoods in places such as Berlin's Wedding and Neukölln. In doing so, the Nazis not only invited direct and aggressive confrontations with local Communists, but also they far more successfully canvassed the workers they accosted to join their ranks. What Broszat does not discuss is the large working-class component of the Nazi Party's membership and in the Nazi electorate. But his insistence on the social radicalism at the grass roots of National Socialism's "populist" insurgency illustrates his overall argument that these nationalists – the Nazis, that is – advertised their resolve to break with the past, to embrace the "desire for change," and to make good on promises for social reform. However, the best advertisement for the Nazis, at least in Broszat's view, was Hitler, to whom he turns in the second half of the essay.

Broszat accepts the idea that Hitler was guided by a few leitmotifs that hardly coalesced into a world view reflecting a coherent political program: Hitler saw the world in terms of Social Darwinist notions of the struggle for existence that presumed a permanent state of emergency in which the strongest and most race-conscious would prevail. This flowed into his fixation on territorial expansion, power monopolization, and *Lebensraum* ("living space"; p. 223). Antisemitism and later anti-Bolshevism were the concrete components that corroborated this basically militarized conception of what it meant to live in the world. An early postwar generation of scholars deduced from the centrality of these notions to Hitler's conceptual outlook and the centrality of Hitler to Nazism that "the reality of National Socialism" could be "reduced to the caprice of one solitary man and his delusional imaginings" (p. 220). To accept such a proposition is to eliminate the active role of the movement as well as its engagement with the social base that supported it. Broszat thus turns around the idea of capriciousness or arbitrariness. He sees Hitler as a politician who was unusually dependent on the resonance of his own apocalyptic ideas of jeopardy and renewal. Without the "time of crisis [and] specific collective psychology" generated in the postwar years, Hitler never would have emerged out of "intellectual and social mediocrity" and anonymity.

But once his simple-minded obsessions resonated with the “general pathology” and “collective neurosis” and his fanatic determination indicated a path to salvation, he could become a *Führer*. In the end, without Germans’ psychosis, no Hitler: “He said aloud,” Broszat concludes, “what they secretly thought and desired while reinforcing their tentative longings and prejudices. He gave them a deeply satisfying sense of self-affirmation and the feeling of sharing in a new truth” (pp. 221–22).¹⁰ This is a tautological argument because collective psychosis and individual pathology mutually define themselves, but it allows Broszat to underscore the political salience of Hitler’s obsessions and his ruthless determination to integrate the movement of salvation to create a political entity that seemed to avoid factional struggles over specific programmatic points and thus to portray its own unity as the most superior way forward. The movement’s most compelling message was movement. The sense that the Nazis were unstoppable, and that they could and would act once in power, became an integral part of their appeal after the Party’s electoral breakthrough in September 1930.

The crisis that shredded the economic security of ordinary Germans served as a hypertrophic manifestation of Hitler’s idea of the struggle for existence. However, Hitler indicated that the subject of struggle was not the individual, but a racially defined collective “us.” This effort to define the subject under attack, which as far as the Nazis were concerned was the racial entity of the German people, was the object of National Socialist political activity. Nazi rhetoric created an immense and dangerous field of enemies – “the system,” Jews, Communists – but also a decisive battlefield (an action-minded dictatorship) where they could be vanquished in the name of the beleaguered but pure *Volk*. By conjuring up a perilous state of emergency, Hitler also evoked final struggles and battles to the finish. He thereby yoked together the depravity of the present and salvation in the future. The first defined the second, and the second followed the first in close conceptual and temporal proximity. Hitler could not have succeeded had his audiences not already envisioned the perilous state – here he was in a relationship of dependency – but he was able to convince them that the Nazis were the effective force to save Germany’s future. Here, his personal fantasies and obsessions were the key means that persuaded voters and integrated party activists. Broszat maintains that his analysis of Hitler avoids making the *Führer* all-powerful since the social and political resentments and expectations of constituents remain prior to Hitler’s activity: there was a readiness among Germans. And his analysis explains

¹⁰ See also Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft und Führererwartung in der Weimarer Republik*, in: Ute Daniel et al. (eds.), *Politische Kultur und Medienwirklichkeiten in den 1920er Jahren*, Munich 2010, pp. 181–204, here pp. 184, 193.

why Hitler of all people was able to mobilize this readiness with such success. His personal obsession, fanaticism, brutality, and energy all became socially desirable ways of translating resentment and expectation into action. The crisis thus entailed a kind of depoliticization by displacing specific agendas and programs to a meta level in which action was the key end and military preparedness the meritorious virtue. Here we are close to a classic definition of populist opportunity.¹¹

Broszat's emphasis on the radical nature of populist expectations among Nazi voters and his argument for Hitler's dependence on the state of emergency blend together in his analysis of the Third Reich in power. Once the lines of investigation cross the year 1933, the forces of conservatism are suddenly reevaluated and redeployed. In Broszat's view, "curbing the revolutionary National Socialist movement from the grass roots (1933/34)," plain to see in Hitler's confrontation with the SA, ultimately "serv[ed] to strengthen those elements that wanted to see the regime transition to a regulated, authoritarian, administrative state" (p. 224). Part of the reason for this, Broszat explains, is that the social revolutionary dynamic on which the Nazi rise to power was based jeopardized Hitler's monopoly of power after he was appointed chancellor. Compromises with Germany's military and economic elites – in some ways the institutionalization of the 1931 Harzburger Front – also enhanced "the power and prestige" of the new National Socialist state (p. 224). It is not exactly clear why the so-called end of the Nazi revolution took the form that it did, if Broszat's assumptions about the broad disappointments among its supporters after 1933 are correct, or even if the end or "stop" to the revolution is an accurate description given the increasingly racialized definitions of citizenship embodied in laws such as those mandating involuntary sterilization (of what became nearly one-half million Aryans). In any case, in Broszat's model, the resonance that Hitler's movement had found among constituents eager for radical change before 1933 was replaced by disappointment in the absence of construction work on the new order after the seizure of power. However, this disappointment created its own particular and fateful dynamic because Hitler depended on "the plebiscitary social dynamic that it had set in motion" to legitimate his charismatic leadership and the claims of the Party on total power. "Only continuous, ongoing action could keep the movement unified and deflect antagonistic forces," concludes Broszat (p. 230). Ultimately, Hitler set a process of cumulative radicalization in motion that was continuously pushed by new emergencies and new "discriminatory legislation" (p. 225) and guided – in Broszat's view – primarily by his central ideological fixations on Jews and *Lebensraum*; Broszat parenthetically corrects himself when he suggests that these ideo-

11 See Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, New York 2005.

logical goals are more properly understood as “broad policy directions” (*Aktionsrichtungen*) to emphasize the logic of movement over particular objectives (p. 223).

Broszat’s argument works in terms of explaining the Third Reich’s self-destructive drive into a continental race war after 1941. He points out that the final destruction of the Jews, which had to be realized in secret, ended up depriving the regime of antisemitism as an instrument of propaganda and mobilization. This was an indication of the “delusional transposition of combat symbol and end goal.” Moreover, Broszat argues, the invasion of the Soviet Union was primarily a way to break out of the “military stalemate” of summer and fall 1940 and thereby force a decisive resolution to the war that had been launched earlier in the spring. Only once the military decision had fallen were the ideological and racial goals of *Lebensraum* pursued, and pursued in such a way that Germany’s occupation policies in the East would become completely self-destructive. “It signified the end of further movement and expansion in objective terms” (p. 229).

The strokes of this argument asserting the self-destructive dynamic of the Third Reich, an extension of the *Schubkraft* that brought the Nazis to power in the first place, are clean and logical, but they come at a high intellectual price. Both the persecution of the Jews and Hitler’s expansionist foreign policy are regarded primarily as the means to keep moving, to pursue a relentless mobilization of the population. Indeed, Broszat concedes that “colonial dominion in the East” was ultimately simply a “metaphor” for “this continual endeavor to attain ever-greater freedom of action” (p. 228). Although he does not explicitly describe the final solution in this manner, it is implicit in his argument. In similar fashion, he argues that the relentless manner in which “negative enemy targets” (p. 226) were pursued after 1933 has to be understood in terms of the Party’s unwillingness or inability to realize a “revolutionary reordering of state and society,” which would have required challenging the Third Reich’s “conservative partners and power interests.” National Socialism’s freedom of action was restricted to the pursuit of racial and other enemies who were powerless anyway: “persons suffering from a congenital disease, the mentally disturbed, the socially marginalized, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Jews” (p. 225). Just as “the pent-up social pressures” (p. 215) during the Weimar Republic worked to the advantage of the Nazis, who with their electoral successes succeeded or at least appeared to do so in breaking through, so the very same kind of blockages posed by the same sort of conservative elites who got in the way of radicals before 1933 directed the Nazis to their racial enemies. Once again, the explanatory model privileges mechanics – the motion of energy and dynamism. Broszat has not completely evacuated ideology, but he has subordinated it to the demands of mobilization and the formal requirements to acquire imminent dangers and declare states of emergency.

Most scholars would object to this formal argument in the wake of the emerging consensus around a modified idea-driven intentionalist explanation for the overall programmatic ambitions of the Third Reich. Moreover, the mechanical model disregards the enthusiastic and energetic Party supporters whom Broszat had introduced with such extraordinary adjectives at the beginning of the essay. The rank and file reappears in his analysis of the Third Reich in power only as the mass of disappointed social revolutionaries. In my view, Broszat exaggerates the demobilization of Nazism's ideological cadres after 1934, especially if one thinks about the professional elites described by Michael Wildt as well as the more proletarian SA.¹² And finally, I think it is dubious to make such a sharp demarcation between the "positive" new organization of state and society, which was not realized, and the pursuit of "negative" enemies, which drove the Third Reich forward. Racial legislation had both anti- and pro-natalist aspects, and the goal was fortification and purification, which was a thoroughly positive goal in the Social Darwinist eyes of the Nazis. Race also played a larger role in the Third Reich than Broszat (along with most scholars in the 1970s) considers. It demanded that citizens reassess their own selves and bodies, their responsibilities to the *Volk*, and their interactions with neighbors. The work of repairing and building the *Volks-gemeinschaft* mobilized huge energies. All this construction work made living in the Third Reich feel very different than living in Weimar Germany.

Broszat's essay is rich and merits rereading, even if colleagues today would qualify the overly formal character of his argument. At least here, in 1970, Broszat quite clearly resists acknowledging the social scale of the reorganization of broad elements of state and society in the name of the *Volks-gemeinschaft*. "The social 'revolution' of National Socialism was not about creating some new order," Broszat insists, "but simply about unleashing forces, while simultaneously divesting the population of political responsibility and participation" (p. 217). I am not sure Germans in the Third Reich felt that they had been dispossessed of political responsibility and participation. They worked hard for a common good that they increasingly came to acknowledge. Indeed, in 1945, many blamed the Nazis for destroying what they held dear: the Third Reich. It was possible, to put it pointedly for the sake of clarity, to hate the Nazis and love the Third Reich. The real problem for scholars is grappling with the changing nature of the "political." As Broszat himself notes when he discusses the inadequacy of Marxist and even standard socio-political analysis, fascism and the study of fascism raises huge epistemological problems because it scrambles standard and previously reliable

¹² See Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation. The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Main Security Office*, Madison/WI 2010.

categories and expectations about political behavior, about Left and Right, and about the nature of the “political” in social action. The epistemological challenge of explaining the rise of National Socialism has in many ways returned today as scholars attempt to explain new nationalist and populist movements in Europe and the United States. After almost fifty years, Broszat’s retrospective essay seems to be all the more relevant.

About the Contributions to this Yearbook

The articles by Peter Fritzsche, Eve Rosenhaft and Helmut Walser Smith were written specifically for this volume and have not appeared previously.

Martin Broszat's article was published originally as *Soziale Motivation und Führer-Bindung des Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 18 (1970), pp. 392–409.

Paul Hoser's article was published originally as *Thierschstraße 41. Der Untermieter Hitler, sein jüdischer Hausherr und ein Restitutionsproblem*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 65 (2017), pp. 131–61.

Johannes Hürter's and Matthias Uhl's article was published originally as *Hitler in Vinnica. Ein neues Dokument zur Krise im September 1942*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 63 (2015), pp. 581–639.

Roman Töppel's article was published originally as *“Volk und Rasse.” Hitlers Quellen auf der Spur*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 64 (2016), pp. 1–35.

Andreas Wirsching's article was published originally as *Hitlers Authentizität. Eine funktionalistische Deutung*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 64 (2016), pp. 387–417.

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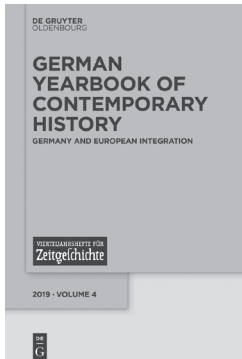
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Since 1945, Germany's role in the project of European integration has been central to the economic and political development of Europe. The fourth volume of the *German Yearbook of Contemporary History*, edited by Mark Gilbert (Johns Hopkins University), Eva Oberloskamp and Thomas Raithel (both Institute for Contemporary History Munich–Berlin), assembles articles which have been published previously in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, and specially commissioned contributions. The chapters cover a wide range of topics. The theories and visions of European integration that were articulated after World War II are the starting point for the volume. The period covered by the book stretches to the earliest stages of European Economic and Monetary Union, which received substantial momentum from German unification in 1989/90.