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978-0-521-83875-7 - Jewish Forced Labor Under the Nazis: Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938-1944

Wolf Gruner

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## Jewish Forced Labor Under the Nazis

Forced labor was a key feature of Nazi anti-Jewish policy and shaped the daily life of almost every Jewish family in occupied Europe. For the first time, this book systematically describes the implementation of forced labor for Jews in Germany, Austria, the Protectorate, and the various occupied Polish territories. As early as the end of 1938, compulsory labor for Jews had been introduced in Germany and annexed Austria by the labor administration. Similar programs subsequently were established by civil administrations in the German-occupied Czech and Polish territories. At its maximum extent, more than one million Jewish men and women toiled for private companies and public builders, many of them in hundreds of now often-forgotten special labor camps. This study refutes the widespread thesis that compulsory work was organized only by the SS and that exploitation was only an intermediate tactic on the way to mass murder or, rather, that it was only a facet in the destruction of the Jews.

Wolf Gruner currently holds a position at the Institute for Contemporary History Munich-Branch Berlin, where he is coeditor of a multivolume collection of primary sources on the persecution and extermination of the European Jews under the Nazis from 1933 to 1945. He is the author of many works on the history of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany and has held a visiting professorship at Webster University and a fellowship at Harvard University and at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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# Jewish Forced Labor Under the Nazis

## Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938–1944

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WOLF GRUNER

*Institute for Contemporary History Munich-Branch Berlin*

Translated by

KATHLEEN M. DELL'ORTO

*Published in association with the United States  
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## Abbreviations

AdZ	<i>Dokumentationszentrum der Staatlichen Archivverwaltung der DDR</i>
AOK	<i>Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse</i>
AP	<i>Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu</i>
BA	<i>Bundesarchiv</i>
BA-MA	<i>Bundesarchiv – Militärarchiv</i>
BdS	<i>Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD</i>
BLHA	<i>Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv</i>
CAHJP	Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People
CCP	Catalogue of Camps and Prisons in Germany and German-Occupied Territories
CJA	<i>Stiftung “Neues Synagoge Berlin – Centrum Judaicum” Archiv</i>
DÖW	<i>Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes</i>
GG	General Government
GIS	<i>Generalinspektor für das Deutsche Straßenwesen</i>
HHStA	<i>Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv</i>
HSSPF	<i>Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer</i>
IfZ	<i>Institut für Zeitgeschichte</i>
IKG	<i>Israelitische Kultusgemeinde</i>
IMT	International Military Tribunal
ITS	International Tracing Service
JNBl.	<i>Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt</i>
LA	<i>Landesarchiv</i>
LBIA	Leo Baeck Institute Archive
LHA-SA	<i>Landeshauptarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt</i>
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i>
NW-HStA	<i>Nordrheinwestfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv</i>
OBR	<i>Oberste Bauleitung der Reichsautobahnen</i>
OHW	<i>Oberschlesische Hydrierwerke</i>
OKH	<i>Oberkommando Heer</i>
OKW	<i>Oberkommando Wehrmacht</i>
OSOB	Center for the Preservation of the Historical Documentary Collection (Moscow)

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ÖStA/AdR	<i>Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Archiv der Republik</i>
Osti	<i>Ostindustrie GmbH</i>
OT	<i>Organisation Todt</i>
RAB	<i>Reichsautobahn</i>
RABD	<i>Reichsautobahndirektion</i>
RHSA	<i>Reichssicherheitshauptamt</i>
RWM	<i>Reichswirtschaftsministerium</i>
SA	<i>Sturmabteilung</i>
SD	<i>Sicherheitsdienst der SS</i>
Sopade	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i>
SS	<i>Schutzstaffel</i>
SSPF	<i>SS- und Polizeiführer</i>
StA	<i>Staatsarchiv</i>
StadtA	<i>Stadtarchiv</i>
SteiLA	<i>Steirisches Landesarchiv</i>
USHMM	<i>United States Holocaust Memorial Museum</i>
WiG	<i>Wehrkreisbefehlshaber im Generalgouvernement</i>
WL	<i>Wiener Library</i>
WVHA	<i>Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt der SS</i>
YV	<i>Yad Vashem Archives</i>
ZAL	<i>Zwangsarbeitslager</i>
ZwA	<i>Zwischenarchiv</i>

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## Introduction

For millions of people in German-occupied countries in World War II, forced labor was the order of the day.<sup>1</sup> As one of the first persecutory measures after occupation, the National Socialists regularly imposed forced labor on the local Jewish population, whether in Poland, the Soviet Union, Norway, Serbia, the Netherlands, France, or even Tunisia.<sup>2</sup> Utilization of forced labor began in Germany itself after *Kristallnacht* at the end of 1938, with obligatory assignment of German Jews to manual labor in municipalities and private enterprises. Forced labor ended where it began, in Germany, with the exploitation of Hungarian Jews and concentration camp prisoners in underground construction and factories for war production. At the zenith of Jewish forced labor, more than one million Jewish men and women, many of them elderly or young people, toiled for the German economy in occupied Europe.

After the war, Hugo Schriesheimer wrote about his experiences as a forced laborer in the Nazi state: “It was heavy physical labor to which we were not accustomed. . . . I thought of the process in biblical times, when the Jews in Egypt had to perform compulsory labor for the pharaoh and to haul bricks for his temple. . . . Except that our tormentor was not the pharaoh but Hitler.”<sup>3</sup> As for Hugo Schriesheimer, forced labor thus shaped the daily lives of countless Jews under Nazi rule. Almost every Jewish family was affected directly or indirectly. Tens of thousands of men and women had to leave their homes and live for months, even years, in labor camps, of which there were far more than one thousand.

The predominant form of forced labor by Jews in Europe, however, was neither exploitation in concentration camps nor in other SS (*Schutzstaffel*) camps, but in “*Der Geschlossene Arbeitseinsatz*,” that is, segregated labor

<sup>1</sup> For a general discussion, see Mark Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz: Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und Häftlinge im Deutschen Reich und im besetzten Europa 1939–1945* (Stuttgart, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> See Martin Gilbert, *Die Endlösung: Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung der europäischen Juden. Ein Atlas* (Reinbek near Hamburg, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> Omissions by the author are indicated with [. . .]; quoted from Hugo Schriesheimer, “Die Hölle von Gurs – Das Ende der badischen Juden,” in *Oktoberdeportation 1940*, edited by Erhard Wiehn (Constance, 1990), 182.



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deployment, organized by the labor administration. This concept, developed by the labor offices (*Arbeitsämter*), referred to involuntary, segregated, and discriminatory employment of workers who had been selected on the basis of racial criteria. The labor administration's leadership role meant at the same time that compulsory labor was set up with an eye to economic interests. In Germany and the countries it occupied, the "columns of Jews" (*Judenkolonnen*) represented cheap resources for the hard-pressed war-time labor market, resources that were available without need to consider social factors. The laborers' value lay not only in their numbers, but also in the location and type of labor performed. The Jews were purposefully compelled to work in strategic areas where labor shortages were severe, including infrastructure construction, *Wehrmacht* (armed forces) projects, and the armaments industry. Public builders, private enterprises, and government agencies profited from recruitment of the Jews. The Jewish forced laborers, who numbered in the tens and hundreds of thousands, depending on the country, were a significant factor for the labor market and the Nazi economy in Germany, Austria, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and Poland.

In stark contrast to these facts presented in this book, research studies have scarcely considered forced labor to be an important factor in Nazi anti-Jewish policy. Instead, historians have regarded forced labor as an intermediate solution or as a separate step on the way to mass murder.<sup>4</sup> The most recent of these scholars, Hermann Kaienburg, maintains, "In all periods and regions, the forced labor of the Jews was considered only temporary and transient."<sup>5</sup> Some authors, such as Daniel Goldhagen, even equated labor from the outset with extermination.<sup>6</sup> Because of these "preconceptions," until now there has been a dearth of independent studies either on planning and organization or on the background and objectives of the forced labor programs.

The fact that compulsory labor for Jews originated in Germany itself has likewise remained unnoticed. A different view still held sway during World War II and in the years that followed. The first books on the Nazi persecution of European Jewry, published in the United States, assumed on the basis of German reports that forced labor for Jews played a key role in everyday persecution from the beginning of 1939 on.<sup>7</sup> This view promptly disappeared

<sup>4</sup> See Ulrich Herbert, "Arbeit und Vernichtung," in *Europa und der "Reichseinsatz": Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und KZ-Häftlinge in Deutschland 1938-1945*, edited by Ulrich Herbert (Essen, 1991), 90-105.

<sup>5</sup> Hermann Kaienburg, "Zwangsarbeit von Juden in Arbeits- und Konzentrationslagern," in "Arisierung": *Volksgemeinschaft, Raub und Gedächtnis*, edited by Irmtrud Wojak and Peter Hayes as commissioned by the Fritz Bauer Institute (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2000), 219-240, here 236.

<sup>6</sup> Goldhagen supports his hypothesis only with the description of three SS camps at the time of the mass murders; Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitlers willige Vollstrecker. Ganz gewöhnliche Deutsche und der Holocaust* (Munich, 1996), 335-382.

<sup>7</sup> Institute of Jewish Affairs, *Hitler's Ten-Year War on the Jews* (New York, 1943), 24; The Jewish Black Book Committee, *The Black Book* (New York, 1946), 170.

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when the process of analyzing the historical events began. Indeed, few documents on forced labor turned up at first. During the last phases of the war, the officials in the labor offices – no doubt conscious of their crimes – had, throughout Germany, thoroughly destroyed files on the subject. In his 1961 book *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Raul Hilberg nevertheless outlined the social and historical context of Jewish forced labor in Germany, and in Poland as well.<sup>8</sup> In 1974, H. G. Adler added new details in his unjustifiably neglected study *Der verwaltete Mensch*.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, however, the view spread among historians that forced labor for German Jews had not been introduced until March 1941.<sup>10</sup> This topos influenced not only research, but also became part of the public discussion; it still comes up today in museums and exhibitions. The thesis regarding late introduction of forced labor thus set for a long time the historical stance on the persecution process; as a consequence, the duration, extent, and historical significance of forced labor were inexcusably underestimated. Avraham Barkai, who in 1987 for the first time analyzed material of Jewish institutions and published new information about the implementation of forced labor and the working conditions of the individuals affected in Germany, succumbed to this false assessment.<sup>11</sup> The same is true of Konrad Kwiet, who shortly thereafter advanced the state of research with survivors' statements on forced labor conditions and with source material on the last phase of forced labor, which was affected by deportations.<sup>12</sup> A first monograph on German Jewish forced labor appeared at the end of 1994; the study moves beyond the topos but fails in its detailed representation to analyze the course of events and their background.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (London, 1961); *ibid.*, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden*, new and expanded edition of the translation into German of 1982 edition, Vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> H. G. Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch. Studien zur Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland* (Tübingen, 1974), 205–234.

<sup>10</sup> See Joseph Walk (ed.), *Das Sonderrecht für die Juden im NS-Staat. Eine Sammlung der gesetzlichen Maßnahmen – Inhalt und Bedeutung* (Heidelberg and Karlsruhe, 1981), IV/174, 336; Avraham Barkai, "Vom Boykott zur 'Entjudung'. Der wirtschaftliche Existenzkampf der Juden im Dritten Reich 1933–1943," in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXXVI* (1991), 393; Bruno Blau, *Das Ausnahmerecht für Juden in Deutschland 1933–1945*, reworked 3rd edition (Düsseldorf, 1965), 86; Helmut Genschel, *Die Verdrängung der Juden aus der Wirtschaft im Dritten Reich* (Göttingen and Berlin, 1966), 253.

<sup>11</sup> Although he assumed that forced utilization of Jews occurred earlier, his representation focused, using the well-known historiographic topos, on the period beginning in 1941; Barkai, "Vom Boykott zur 'Entjudung,'" 173–181.

<sup>12</sup> Konrad Kwiet, "Nach dem Pogrom. Stufen der Ausgrenzung," in *Die Juden in Deutschland 1933–1945*, edited by Wolfgang Benz (Munich, 1988), 574–596. Kwiet published the part of his study that was devoted to forced labor in 1991 as a reworked article; *ibid.*, "Forced Labor of German Jews in Nazi Germany," in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXXVI* (London, 1991), 389–407.

<sup>13</sup> Dieter Maier, *Arbeitseinsatz und Deportation. Die Mitwirkung der Arbeitsverwaltung bei der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung in den Jahren 1938–1945* (Berlin, 1994).

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I published two monographs in German in 1997 and 2000 that for the first time systematically authenticated forced labor as an important element of anti-Jewish persecution in Germany and Austria.<sup>14</sup> As in Germany, the subject of mandatory labor outside the concentration camps has been neglected by historical researchers in Austria as well. In contrast to Germany with its numerous studies, only a very few monographs, document collections, and essays on persecution of Austrian Jews appeared until well into the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> Those works focused on specific aspects of anti-Jewish policies, such as the perpetrators, the theft of property, or the policies regarding segregated housing.<sup>16</sup> In the last decade, a few additional regional studies have been published.<sup>17</sup> Forced labor of Jewish Austrians has been discussed before only in a few pages of Rosenkranz's monumental 1978 work on Jewish persecution.<sup>18</sup> And yet, Austria was where the idea of Jewish forced labor was conceived, as will be shown. For the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the Czech national territory occupied by Germany, scarcely any systematic studies have been written before now on persecution of Jews and none at all on forced labor. In contrast, a whole series of books on persecution and extermination policies in occupied Poland have appeared in the last few years. These studies, however, seldom devoted any particular attention to Jewish forced labor. Christopher Browning's works, published since the end of the 1980s, are an exception. Browning provided for the first time an overview of the development of forced labor in the General Government.<sup>19</sup> When other historians

<sup>14</sup> Wolf Gruner, *Der geschlossene Arbeitseinsatz deutscher Juden. Zur Zwangsarbeit als Element der Verfolgung 1938–1943* (Berlin, 1997); Gruner, *Zwangsarbeit und Verfolgung. Österreichische Juden im NS-Staat 1938–1943* (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Munich, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung und Selbstbehauptung. Die Juden in Österreich 1938 bis 1945* (Vienna and Munich, 1978); Hans Safrian and Hans Witek, *Und keiner war dabei. Dokumente des alltäglichen Antisemitismus in Wien 1938* (Vienna, 1988). Jonny Moser has published a number of long articles, for example, "Die Katastrophe der Juden in Österreich 1938–1945 – Ihre Voraussetzungen und ihre Überwindungen, in *Der Gelbe Stern in Österreich. Katalog und Einführung zu einer Dokumentation* (Eisenstadt, 1977), 67–133.

<sup>16</sup> Among others, Hans Safrian, *Die Eichmann-Männer* (Vienna and Zurich, 1993); Gerhard Botz, *Wohnungspolitik und Judendeportation in Wien 1938 bis 1945. Zur Funktion des Antisemitismus als Ersatz nationalsozialistischer Sozialpolitik* (Vienna and Salzburg, 1975); Herbert Exenberger, *Kündigungsgrund Nichtarier. Die Vertreibung jüdischer Mieter aus den Wiener Gemeindebauten in den Jahren 1938–1939* (Vienna, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> For example, Friedrich Polleroß (ed.), "Die Erinnerung tut zu weh." *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im Waldviertel* (Horn-Waidhofen and Thaya, 1996); Robert Streibel, *Plötzlich waren sie alle weg. Die Juden der "Gauhauptstadt Krems" und ihre Mitbürger* (Vienna, 1991); August Walzl, *Die Juden in Kärnten und das Dritte Reich* (Klagenfurt, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> Rosenkranz, *Verfolgung*, 173–174, 208–210, 234–235, 271–273.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Browning, "Nazi Germany's Initial Attempt to Exploit Jewish Labor in the General Government: The Early Jewish Work Camps 1940–1941," in *Die Normalität des Verbrechens. Festschrift für Wolfgang Scheffler zum 65. Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1994), 171–185; Christopher Browning, "Jewish Workers in Poland: Self-Maintenance, Exploitation, Destruction," in *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (Cambridge, New York, and

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have taken up Jewish forced labor in Poland in recent years, they have examined either ghettos<sup>20</sup> or the SS labor camps in eastern Poland.<sup>21</sup> While historical researchers have thoroughly explored the development of persecution in the Lublin district during the last decade, no comparable works have been published on the other districts of the General Government. Thus, the Lublin region, in which the SS under Odilo Globocznik developed its own forced-labor program, has until now forged our image of occupied Poland. The most recent studies on the Galicia district have reinforced the impression that the SS controlled forced labor in Poland.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, interest in utilization of forced labor in the concentration camps of the SS and their economic enterprises has generally continued without interruption until today.<sup>23</sup> Thus, a closed circle connects historical research to public debate, which likewise projects a narrow picture of forced labor directed and organized by the SS.

This perspective must be thoroughly revised. The case studies presented here, which summarize my research over the years as well as recent new investigations,<sup>24</sup> analyze Jewish forced labor as a constituent element of a specific stage of Nazi persecution, which preceded the decisions to commit genocide. In this phase of anti-Jewish policy – whether in Germany, the annexed territories, or the occupied countries – Nazi rule ended the Jews' free access to any given job market by placing prohibitions on employment

Melbourne, 2000), 58–88; Cf. Christopher Browning, *Die Entfesselung der "Endlösung": Die nationalsozialistische Judenpolitik 1939–1942* (Munich, 2003), 209–248 (in English, Nebraska University Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Hanno Loewy and Gerhard Schoenberger (eds.), "Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit". *Das Getto in Łódź 1940–1944. Eine Ausstellung des Jüdischen Museums in Zusammenarbeit mit Yad Vashem u. a.* (Frankfurt am Main and Vienna, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Dieter Pohl, "Die großen Zwangsarbeitslager der SS- und Polizeiführer für Juden im Generalgouvernement 1942–1945," in *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager. Entwicklung und Struktur*, edited by Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth, and Christoph Dieckmann, Vol. I (Göttingen, 1998), 415–438; Jan Erik Schulte, "Zwangsarbeit für die SS Juden in der Ostindustrie GmbH," in *Ausbeutung, Vernichtung, Öffentlichkeit. Neue Studien zu nationalsozialistischen Lagerpolitik*, edited by Norbert Frei for the Institute for Contemporary History (Munich, 2000), 43–74.

<sup>22</sup> Eliyahu Yones, *Die Straße nach Lemberg. Zwangsarbeit und Widerstand in Ostgalizien 1941–1944* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999); Hermann Kaienburg, "Jüdische Arbeitslager an der 'Straße der SS,'" in *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 11, 1 (1996): 13–39; Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich, 1996); Thomas Sandkühler, "Das Zwangsarbeitslager Lemberg-Janowska 1941–1944," in *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, Vol. 2 (Göttingen, 1998), 606–635.

<sup>23</sup> Most recently, Michael Thad Allen, *The Business of Genocide: The SS, Slave Labor, and the Concentration Camps* (Chapel Hill, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> While the Introduction, Prologue, Chapters 5, 6, and 9, and the Conclusion in this book are entirely new, the author's texts for Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8, which were published earlier in German, have been reworked and expanded extensively. For the source citations, see the particular chapter.

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and trade. As a consequence, the majority of the Jews were without any income and thus dependent on public welfare, so the Nazi state organized forced labor programs. These programs assured a minimum income to Jewish families, provided cheap labor, and at the same time guaranteed strict control over individuals among the Jewish population who were capable of resistance.

Forced labor shaped – decisively and for years – the everyday life of most victims of Nazi anti-Jewish policies. Segregated labor deployment was of course viewed from contradictory vantage points by the people affected, given that they were employed in various jobs in many sectors of the economy. While activities such as garbage sorting, construction, and street cleaning predominated in the beginning, forced laborers soon also were used in agriculture and forestry, then later primarily in industry. Whereas the father of Karla Wolf collapsed physically and mentally while working as a painter's assistant,<sup>25</sup> the writer Gertrud Kolmar regarded her work in an armaments operation as a challenge.<sup>26</sup> Years later, long after the end of the war, survivors' reflections remained just as contradictory. For many German survivors, the memory of the deportations to Poland overshadowed any memory of forced labor in Germany. That was not the case, however, for Marga Spiegel, whose husband lived in an early labor camp. She wrote, "My husband had to perform forced labor. Jews could be deployed only in columns of about 17 men and had non-Jewish supervisors. For many of our acquaintances, the concentration camp existence began at that time. They had supervisors who ordered them around like slaves and harassed them when in the mood."<sup>27</sup>

The fact that hundreds of special forced labor camps existed for German, Austrian, and Polish Jews, entirely independently of the SS-administered concentration camp system, is scarcely known even today. These camps were established and supported by private companies, public builders, the army, even municipal administrative offices. For example, as early as spring 1939, half a year before the beginning of the war, the German city of Kelkheim im Taunus established its own "Jewish camp" in cooperation with the Frankfurt am Main labor office. After being informed about the introduction of the forced labor program, the Bürgermeister requested Jewish laborers for a local road construction project. On his order, the twenty men sent from Frankfurt to Kelkheim were beaten immediately upon arrival. The Jews were allowed to spend their narrowly restricted free time only in a "fifty-meter long and twenty-meter wide patch of woods" on the other side of the camp, in order that their presence "not mar other parts of the woods." They were

<sup>25</sup> Karla Wolf, *Ich blieb zurück* (Heppenheim, 1990), 26.

<sup>26</sup> Gertrud Kolmar, *Briefe an die Schwester Hilde (1938–1943)* (Munich, 1970), 158–161, Letter of July 19, 1942.

<sup>27</sup> Marga Spiegel, *Retter in der Nacht. Wie eine jüdische Familie überlebte* (Cologne, 1987), 14.

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housed in the large dance hall of the local inn, Taunusblick. The men had to work sixty hours a week; that was not at all usual in the period before the war. Most of the labor recruits had never before performed excavation work and were entirely overtaxed physically. In short order, seven men had to be sent back because of illness. The Kelkheim Bürgermeister did not as a rule release any of the men, most of whom were married, unless they were unable to work. Cases of social need, emigration preparations, or urgent personal requests from relatives went ignored. The difficult living circumstances soon even led to suicides. After half a year, in October 1939, the Kelkheim camp was closed.<sup>28</sup>

As many of these camps existed only for a few months because of the limited duration of the construction projects, they are often forgotten today. They were managed by municipal or forestry administrations and private enterprises, so they do not appear in books on the Nazi camp system, which focus on the SS.<sup>29</sup> Only since the mid-1980s have there been descriptions of the history of local labor programs or individual labor camps in Germany.<sup>30</sup> Hundreds of comparable camps existed in the Warthegau and the General Government as well, supported by the Reich highway authorities or by local hydraulic construction offices; those camps likewise have barely been examined in any detail to date. By describing the extreme conditions in these labor camps, which operated completely independently of the SS, the present study places the issue of compensation for forced laborers in a new light.<sup>31</sup> After the war, for example, the reestablished Republic of Austria refused to compensate Jewish victims for their exploitation as forced labor by the labor administration. According to Rudolf Fischl, who slaved for five years in a camp at a power plant construction site, former forced laborers received no money because such camps were not considered detention facilities.<sup>32</sup> The same applies for Germany, where segregated labor deployment was not compensated until the conclusion of government negotiations in 2000. And even in the case of forced labor for private enterprises in concentration camps or in SS camps, the victims did not receive a penny until

<sup>28</sup> Wolf Gruner, "Terra Inkognita? – Die Lager für den 'jüdischen Arbeitseinsatz' 1938–1943 und die deutsche Bevölkerung," in *Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung*, edited by Ursula Büttner (Hamburg, 1992), 131–159 (revised paperback edition, Frankfurt am Main, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Gudrun Schwarz, *Die nationalsozialistischen Lager* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 1990), 73–76.

<sup>30</sup> For example, recent publications, such as Hubert Frankemölle (ed.), *Opfer und Täter: Zum nationalsozialistischen und antijüdischen Alltag in Ostwestfalen-Lippe* (Bielefeld, 1990); Joachim Meynert, *Was vor der Endlösung geschah. Antisemitische Ausgrenzung und Verfolgung in Minden-Ravensberg 1933–1945* (Münster, 1988); Margrit Naarmann, *Ein Auge gen Zion . . . Das jüdische Umschulungs- und Einsatzlager am Grünen Weg in Paderborn 1939–1943* (Cologne, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> See Chapters 2–3 and 7–9.

<sup>32</sup> Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW) Vienna, Doc. No. 20100/2495, no folio numbers, CV of Rudolf Fischl (undated).



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recently. Benjamin Ferencz has impressively described the survivors' odyssey and the very embarrassing behavior of German companies in his 1979 book *Less than Slaves*.<sup>33</sup> As the result of international pressure, surviving Jewish forced laborers have recently received monetary compensation from a common fund of the German government and private enterprises.

The following case studies systematically and comparatively analyze the preconditions, planning, and implementation of forced labor programs for Jews in Germany and Austria, as well as in the annexed Czech territories and the occupied Polish territories (see map 1, p. 10). Political, social, and economic motives for the introduction of forced labor systems are discussed, as well as their stage-by-stage development and national and regional characteristics.

Because very few files of the central, regional, and local labor administrative offices with evidential value regarding segregated labor deployment came to light in the archives, I have consulted other collections of national, regional, and local source materials. The documents of some companies, which were freely available in archives of the former German Democratic Republic, were included. In addition, I used Nazi institutional materials held at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Authority and at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. The diverse materials were supplemented by documentation of Jewish institutions found in archives in Israel, the United States, and Germany. Diaries, letters, and memoirs of Jewish forced laborers of both genders were also used. Information from contemporary witnesses and the documents scattered in Germany, Israel, the United States, and Austria, pieced together like a puzzle, made possible a systematic description of this hitherto unknown facet of persecution.

I will demonstrate that forced labor was implemented in Germany shortly after the November 1938 pogrom. Initially, in the first years after the assumption of power in 1933, the leading National Socialists had not developed any concept of forced labor, even though the stereotype of the "lazy Jew" had been widespread since the nineteenth century. From 1933 on, the expulsion of Jews was a high priority.<sup>34</sup> Nazi anti-Jewish policy, the development of which I will briefly outline in the prologue, rapidly produced unemployment and poverty in the Jewish population as restrictions on professional activities and trade increasingly obstructed speedy individual emigration. After the March 1938 Anschluss, the inherent contradictions became increasingly pronounced by the radicalized persecutory policy. However, even a Reich-wide, brutal pogrom in November 1938 did not achieve the desired result – the

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Ferencz, *Less than Slaves: Jewish Forced Labor and the Quest for Compensation* (Cambridge, 1979), reprinted in 2002 by Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

<sup>34</sup> For the expulsion priorities, see Philippe Burrin, *Hitler und die Juden. Die Entscheidung für den Völkermord* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), 12.

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immediate and complete emigration of all Jews. The Nazi state thereafter began to redirect its program of persecution: first, to expel as many Jews as possible, and second, to socially isolate the remaining Jews. Under Göring's supervision, persecution was organized centrally and involved division of labor. As the first three chapters will demonstrate, part of the program was forced employment of Jews who had no earnings or income, which was to be arranged by the Reich labor administration. At the end of 1938, the labor offices began to utilize Jews, mostly for excavation work – usually without their consent and without regard to their professions, qualifications, or suitability – in columns segregated from the other workers. Half a year after the November pogrom, yet still before the beginning of the war, 20,000 German Jews were in segregated labor deployment. In 1940, the labor administration extended the forced labor requirement to all individuals capable of working. Many Jews were sent to labor camps, where they had to spend months, sometimes years. Mass recruitment in spring 1941 led to peak exploitation, with more than 50,000 people – men and women, the elderly, and even children – performing forced labor. Those who were deployed in many cases were exempted for a time from the mass deportations. The notorious 1943 *Fabrik-Aktion* (Factory Operation) and the deportation of the last forced laborers ended this chapter of persecution. Soon after, however, the labor administration arranged for the forced deployment of Jews in “mixed marriages,” as well as tens of thousands of so-called *Mischlinge* (individuals with a Jewish parent or grandparent).

The system of segregated labor deployment became the model for the forced labor of hundreds of thousands of Jews in all the occupied countries, and beyond that, for the forced labor of millions of so-called foreign workers in Germany. Chapters 4 and 5 show how the labor administration introduced forced labor for Jews in Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. There, too, thousands of Jews were obligated to work in construction, agriculture, forestry, and industry. Contrary to what was hitherto believed, the SS played no role in the planning and organization of forced labor. Only in the Protectorate, the Central Office for Jewish Emigration (*Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung*) of the SS Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst* or SD) in Prague controlled parts of the labor program, the result of the relatively late introduction of forced labor in early 1941. The practical planning and organization, however, remained in the hands of the labor administration. Chapters 6 through 9 describe how the regional labor administration and the municipal administration responsible for the Lodz ghetto arranged forced labor of Polish Jews in the territory of the Warthegau. With the establishment of the General Government in the other Polish territories, sole authority for Jewish forced labor passed to the SS for the first time in fall 1939. That lasted only for a few months, however. The SS had to give back responsibility to the civilian administration in summer 1940, because it was incapable of matching the work forces to the requirements of the labor market. After systematic labor programs had been established by the



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labor offices of the General Government, some of the regional Higher SS and Police Leaders (*Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer* or HSSPF) in Poland, in Lublin, and later in Galicia, attempted to set up their own parallel labor systems. In Upper Silesia, a newly founded SS agency even took over the organization of Jewish forced labor in late 1940. Despite the explicit orders of the Nazi leadership, many of those Jews from Upper Silesia, as well as inhabitants of the Lodz ghetto, were used on German soil as forced laborers for Reich highway and armaments construction. While in the Warthegau the labor administration continued to organize Jewish workers, the SS resumed control in the General Government in summer 1942, in the course of the progressing genocide. However, many laborers were exempted for a long time from mass murder because of the needs of the armaments and defense industries, and many were able to survive because of this.

Persecution of the Jews could not be effected by the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*), the SA (*Sturmabteilung*), or the Gestapo alone. The deployment of hundreds of thousands of Jewish forced laborers shows that the persecution process was organized pragmatically, with an eye toward division of labor, contrary to the widespread conception of National Socialist behavior as irrational and motivated by anti-Semitism alone. Agencies of the state (from the Ministry of Labor to the local labor offices), private enterprises (from industrial concerns to small underground engineering firms), as well as public enterprises (from the highway agency to municipal garbage collection services) participated in the organization and exploitation of forced labor. In the occupied territories, the administration and the Wehrmacht were among the entities that profited the most. Far more than has been assumed previously, the requirements of the labor market, interests of the economy, and goals of war production shaped the form and course of the forced labor system. After 1940 the German labor administration managed to push through the mass utilization of Jews in skilled jobs in industry rather than in construction, despite concrete planning for deportation; at the same time the labor administration took over control of forced labor from the SS in the General Government. These circumstances change our previous perception of the conditions and course of anti-Jewish policy. The fact that deportations were modified in favor of forced labor and that the National Socialists even coordinated the genocide program with the requirements of the labor market and the economy in Germany and in Poland fundamentally refutes the thesis that compulsory work was only an intermezzo on the way to mass murder, or rather was only an element of the destruction of the Jews.

I am indebted to my friend Peter Hayes of Northwestern University for encouraging me to write this book. The Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and its staff supported my research, especially on the Protectorate, when I was there as the Pearl

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### Anti-Jewish Policies in the Nazi State before 1938

Persecution of Jews in Germany did not follow a clear course defined by the NSDAP in or before 1933. It evolved in an open process, with participation of far more German agencies than scholars previously assumed and with active and passive involvement at all levels of society. Anti-Jewish policy was planned, determined, and shaped by a diverse and changing cast of actors. The result was parallel lines of development and, indeed, contradictory elements.<sup>1</sup>

After establishing the dictatorship, the Nazi leadership professed that expulsion of the Jews was its main goal, without, however, formulating clear guidelines for achieving that. As a consequence, central and local administrations, as well as public and private institutions, gained sufficient latitude to develop, or to impede, anti-Jewish measures. Beginning in 1933, not only the government and the NSDAP leadership but also various ministries and other Reich agencies assumed responsibility centrally for conceiving and transforming persecutory policy. At the local level, the municipalities played a subsequently long-overlooked but nevertheless important role in defining anti-Jewish policies, more than local party groups or SA gangs did. A key factor in the rapid radicalization, in addition to widespread anti-Semitism, was the dynamic interchange between local and central administrative offices.

In March 1933, ministries initiated measures to exclude Jews from the legal professions, SA troops directed violent acts against personnel of the universities and courts, and the boycott on “Jewish” businesses began. At the same time a number of municipalities instituted administrative measures. After many Weimar-era mayors were rapidly and forcibly replaced with NSDAP party-liners, especially in big cities, many of the new officeholders presided over the “cleansing” of personnel in the municipal administrative

<sup>1</sup> For the prologue, see Wolf Gruner, “Die NS-Verfolgung und die Kommunen. Zur wechselseitigen Dynamisierung von zentraler und lokaler Politik 1933–1941,” in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 48, 1 (2000): 75–126; Wolf Gruner, “Anti-Jewish Policy in Nazi Germany 1933–1945. From Exclusion and Expulsion to Segregation and Deportation. New Perspectives on Developments, Actors and Goals,” in *The Comprehensive History of the Holocaust: Germany*, published by Yad Vashem (Nebraska University Press, forthcoming).

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offices, prohibited their functionaries' official contact with Jews, and severed commercial ties with Jewish-owned companies and businesses – without any central orders to do so.

Beginning in mid-March, the Nazi leadership prepared a central media campaign that accelerated the spread of municipal anti-Jewish measures. With the April 1, 1933, boycott, which was organized centrally for the entire Reich, the Nazi government succeeded on the one hand in synchronizing local violent acts and municipal actions, and on the other hand in creating an anti-Jewish atmosphere in which the first anti-Jewish laws were launched. For reasons relating to foreign policy and the economy, the Nazi leaders decided against implementing comprehensive plans for discrimination. However, they subsequently issued partial professional and educational restrictions on Jews. As they saw their behavior affirmed by the central authorities, many municipalities introduced new anti-Jewish regulations in the next few months, particularly regulations that restricted access to municipal facilities. Those local initiatives were supported and coordinated by the German Council of Municipalities (*Deutscher Gemeindetag*), which was founded in May 1933 and to which all of the local governments had to belong.

After summer 1933, the Nazi leadership moderated its openly anti-Jewish state policies because of foreign policy considerations. This change brought about a shift of anti-Jewish activities to the regional and local levels,<sup>2</sup> a shift that until now generally has been interpreted by researchers as an abatement of persecution. Despite several central orders against separate local operations, however, in practice the Nazi leadership and ministries tolerated, even encouraged, exclusionary initiatives by city and community authorities. It was specifically in the municipalities that the inequality between Jews and non-Jews first became institutionalized.<sup>3</sup> While Reich laws until the end of 1934 usually affected individual Jewish social or political groups through restrictions on professional activities, education, and trade, all Jewish Germans experienced the concrete stigma of public exclusion at the sight of the sign “*Für Juden verboten*,” posted in front of the entrance to the municipal swimming pool. Putting up anti-Jewish signs was only one of many symbolic acts, such as marking businesses and park benches or prohibiting the Nazi flag from being raised at Jewish homes and businesses, which were intended to create separate worlds for Jews and non-Jews. These initiatives, which in some cases were inspired by local party organizations but in most

<sup>2</sup> Uwe Adam's view that there was in this phase no uniform approach to Jewish policy because regional measures predominated is for that reason only half true; Uwe-Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf, 1972), 74.

<sup>3</sup> Similar observations on the question of individual operations can already be found in Reinhard Rürup, “Das Ende der Emanzipation. Die antijüdische Politik in Deutschland von der ‘Machtergreifung’ bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Die Juden im Nationalsozialistischen Deutschland 1933–1945. The Jews in Nazi Germany 1933–1943*, edited by Arnold Paucker et al. (Tübingen, 1986), 109.

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cases originated in the municipalities, served as a warning to the persecuted and as a signal to the rest of the population.

After strengthening Germany's domestic and foreign policies, the Nazi leadership again turned intensively in spring 1935 to anti-Jewish policy, introducing legislation that excluded Jews from the army and from the Reich Labor Service. Measures in the economic sector and measures to prevent contact between non-Jews and Jews were now vehemently discussed in the ministries. The chief of the Secret State Police (*Geheime Staatspolizei* or Gestapo), Reinhard Heydrich, brought forth for the first time his own radical proposals. At the same time the SA, fueled by intensified anti-Jewish internal party propaganda, committed new regional acts of violence, and many municipal administrative offices also initiated new measures. In summer 1935, the Nazi state managed, with an unprecedented anti-Jewish media campaign, to synchronize local violent acts, local separation of Jews in public facilities, and central anti-Jewish law projects. National anti-Jewish policy reached a new level in Nuremberg in September 1935. Introduction of the infamous "racial laws" marked the transition from the stage of state discrimination to that of legal exclusion: On the basis of a racist group definition, Germans of Jewish origin were robbed of their political and civil rights.

While the Nazi leadership announced professional prohibitions with increasing frequency in 1936 and 1937, and imposed further trade and educational restrictions on the Jewish population, persecution on the local level advanced far more rapidly. As a result of laws sanctioning the inequality between Jews and non-Jews, the municipalities now had a "legal basis" for their own initiatives at their disposal. And although at the end of 1935 the Nazi leadership once again officially prohibited individual operations, it tolerated behind-the-scenes radicalization by the local authorities. In reality, the local and central levels were not separated by conflict, but rather interacted dynamically in concert. In 1936 and 1937, the municipalities expanded the range of exclusion of Jewish Germans primarily in the area of public facilities such as baths, libraries, markets, and pawnshops. Jewish welfare dependents were discriminated against; Jews who were sick were isolated in public hospitals. The German Council of Municipalities supported the cities even against individual intervention by ministries. Mayors and municipal officials discussed anti-Jewish ideas in the German Council of Municipalities and its various specialized committees and working groups. This led to the spread and unification of local discrimination standards. Increasingly similar anti-Jewish orders took effect in a growing number of cities. While the centrally devised measures during these two years can be characterized as exclusionary, the Jewish population at the local level had already been systematically separated from the rest of the population. In the Nazi state, there were no "quiet years" for the Jews, despite researchers' previous characterization as such of the years 1934 and 1936–37.

The expectation of war, the doubling of the Jewish population in German territory as a result of the March of 1938 Anschluss, and the rapidly

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dwindling possibilities for emigration decisively modified the conditions for “Jewish policy.” The Nazi leadership resorted to new, tougher administrative measures for the Reich, primarily relating to the economy. Terror produced by violent acts and by mass deportations to concentration camps also played a role. At the same time, a coordinated central approach was designed to bring together the divergent plans of the ministries, the SS leadership, and the Security Police. Beginning in spring 1938, Jewish property was registered. At this point, discussions were underway in the ministries about the state-organized theft of Jewish property. Prohibitions on professional activities and trade were increasingly introduced. Moreover, the first central measures were imposed to ensure isolation within the society, as were the first collective deportation orders for Jews with non-German citizenship. Several anti-Jewish laws and regulations that had long been called for by the municipalities – for example, isolation of Jewish patients in public hospitals – were introduced by summer 1938. As a result, the municipalities and communities lost what had been until now their “innovative” role in the persecutory process, but that did not by any means spell the end of local anti-Jewish initiatives. Increasingly, highly symbolic measures were employed to make apparent the segregation of the persecuted from German society. Municipal administrations used the color yellow for indicating “Jewish benches” or for printing special administrative forms for Jews.<sup>4</sup>

In view of a possible war, by September 1938 the Gestapo and the SS Security Service (or SD), as well as ministries, were discussing ghettoization and forced labor as options. Violence became the means of choice. At the end of October 1938, the police arrested 17,000 Jews of Polish origin and deported these men, women, and children to the Polish border. Only two weeks later, the attempt on the life of a German embassy official in Paris was adequate pretext for Hitler and the Nazi leadership to organize a pogrom against all the Jews in the Reich. On November 9 and 10, synagogues burned all over Germany. The SA and the SS not only destroyed many businesses but also demolished numerous residences and Jewish facilities – a fact barely noticed until now. Considerably more than 100 Jews were murdered. Close to 30,000 men were taken to concentration camps, where many died of beatings, hunger, and cold in the next weeks.

Even so, violence could not solve the basic problem of persecutory policy: An ever-growing number of people without means no longer had any chance of emigrating. Instead of responding to this contradiction by relaxing its own policy, the Nazi leadership agreed in 1938, after the November pogrom, on a radicalization and reorientation of anti-Jewish policy that was to have serious consequences historically. On the one hand, Jews were to be forced out by any means available, and on the other, the remaining individuals were to be dispossessed of all property and isolated from German society. This

<sup>4</sup> For the latter in Berlin, see Wolf Gruner, *Öffentliche Wohlfahrt und Judenverfolgung. Wechselwirkungen lokaler und zentraler Politik im NS-Staat (1933–1942)* (Munich, 2002), 135.

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marked the beginning of a new phase of central Nazi policy, the transition from a policy of expulsion to one of systematically segregating the Jewish population. In the following months, laws and regulations mandated taxes, expropriation and forced Aryanization of Jewish property, and a total ban on Jewish involvement in business activities. Jews were excluded from the school and welfare systems, and the decision was reached that they were to be ghettoized. The policy redefined in the weeks after the November pogrom not only extended to isolating most of the German Jews who were unable to emigrate, but also to reorganizing their lives, whether in terms of education or social welfare. The vehicle was to be a new compulsory organization, the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* (Reich Association of Jews in Germany). Germans of the Jewish faith, as well as Germans considered Jews on the basis of racist criteria, were thus systematically separated out by the Nazi state as a compulsory community (*Zwangsgemeinschaft*).

From that point forward, Hermann Göring centrally coordinated the persecutory process, which was organized according to the principle of division of labor. While the Reich Ministry of Economics took charge of the Aryanization of business enterprises and the municipalities took responsibility for concentrating the Jewish population in so-called Jews' houses (*Judenhäuser*), the Gestapo and the Security Service of the SS, charged with forcing emigration, oversaw the means and activities of the Reichsvereinigung. Another important but nevertheless often overlooked element of the new policy was a forced labor system, to be organized by the German labor administration.