

Introduction

The silent transition from falsehood to self-deception is useful: anyone who lies in good faith lies better. He recites his part better, is more easily believed by the judge, the historian, the reader, his wife, and his children.

Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*

Even more than sixty years after the onset of the National Socialist genocides, the question arises how it could happen that men, women, and children persecuted as Jews or “Gypsies” became victims of a state-sponsored terror that deprived millions of their lives. This book deals with a centrally situated group of National Socialist perpetrators who drove German, Austrian, Polish, Russian, French, Greek, Italian, and Czech Jews from their homes and homelands and carried out deportations into the ghettos, concentration camps, and extermination camps in occupied Eastern Europe. This examination reconstructs the “careers” of Adolf Eichmann and his men in relation to the entire program of racist policies. The National Socialists escalated exclusion from the community of the *Volk* (nation) step by step – from stigmatization, pillaging, and segregation to expulsion, forced labor, and deportation, and all the way to mass murder.

The chronological organization of this study traces this escalation within three main sections:

- the forcible expulsion of Jews from Großdeutschland (the Greater German Reich) and the confinement of Polish Jews in ghettos from 1938 to 1941
- the transition from the policies of expulsion to the policies of mass murder during 1941 and 1942
- the deportation to concentration and extermination camps and genocides from 1942 until 1944.

The “Vienna Model” (Wiener Modell) of the forced expulsion of Jews developed in 1938 represents the beginning of Eichmann’s and his men’s rise in the Schutzstaffel (SS) hierarchy: Simultaneously, it represents a turning point in that phase during which the National Socialist regime disenfranchised, robbed, and forced into emigration German, Austrian, Polish, Russian, French, Italian, Greek, and Czech Jews. Even though various historians have pointed to the intensification of anti-Jewish policies in connection to the *Anschluß* (annexation) of Austria, the “Vienna Model” is nevertheless frequently equated with the foundation of the *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung* (Central Bureau for Jewish Emigration) and discussed in reference to Eichmann’s supposed ideas and organizational skills. Such explanations totally ignore the fundamental sociopolitical dimensions of the indigenous antisemitism of the *Ostmark* (Austria), even though it is precisely the greed for loot and the *Herrenmenschen-Allüren*, the pretensions of the members of the “Master Race,” on the part of the Austrian antisemites, and their participation in racist policies that accelerated the criminal logic of exclusion. This antisemitism in the *Ostmark*, prescribed in no way from above, provided the foundation upon which Eichmann was able to establish the *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung* and soon could report expulsion figures to Berlin that caught the attention of his superiors. The “Vienna Model” looked so successful to the National Socialists that it became the prototype for corresponding institutions established in the *Großdeutsche Reich*, the German Reich comprising the so-called *Altreich* and incorporated conquered territories. At the same time, the appropriation of the strategies and structures developed in Vienna served Reinhard Heydrich as a means of expanding the power of the *SS-Sicherheitsdienst* (SS Security Service, or SD) within the Party and *vis-à-vis* other government organizations discharging anti-Jewish policies.

This study, following an outline of the social, political, and biographical backgrounds of Eichmann’s men, turns to the beginnings of the organized mass expulsions across the German–Soviet line of demarcation in the fall of 1939. During the preparation and execution of these deportations into the Nisko area at the River San, Eichmann and his men were able to demonstrate to their superiors that they could deceive thousands of people with fictive tales about *Umschulungslager* (“retraining” camps) and *freie Ansiedlung* (free settlement programs) and so spirit them out of the country within a few weeks without arousing undue attention. More ambitious plans for expulsion operations organized on a large scale in the fall of 1939, however, failed initially because at that time coordination among the SS, the *Wehrmacht* (Armed Forces), and the *Reichsbahn*, the national railway, was still poor. In the newly established *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (Reich Security Main Office,

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or RSHA) Eichmann became head of his own section, which in 1940 organized the so-called Umsiedlertransporte (resettlement transports) into the Generalgouvernement, the Government General (German-occupied Poland). The controversies that arose among executives of various administrative units in charge of the occupation as a result of the development of the policy of expelling Jews and Asoziale (so-called asocials who in Nazi judgment did not conform to the norms and mores of the German Volksgemeinschaft, the German “national community”) from all territories under German rule and their deportation into Reservate (reservations) were to be resolved by the “Madagascar Plan.” The proposals worked out in cooperation among the Auswärtige Amt, the German Foreign Office, and Eichmann’s RSHA section, however, never advanced beyond the planning stage.

The foci of this investigation are the transitions from policies of expulsion to the policies of mass murder during the years 1941 and 1942, as well as the importance of Eichmann’s Section IV B 4’s involvement in them. One chapter each deals with the disputes over the deportations to Łódź (renamed Litzmannstadt by the Germans in 1939) in the fall of 1941, the occupied territories of the Soviet Union in the fall and winter of 1941, and the decisions before and during the “Wannsee Conference” to pursue policies of mass murder. During this phase Eichmann’s section functioned as a mediating and switching station. On the one hand it coordinated requests for mass deportations. On the other hand, in search of locations that could receive the deported, it accepted, examined, and passed on to superiors more radical, even murderous proposals from subordinate or affiliated departments and, once they were approved, took charge of implementing them.

This book reconstructs the decision-making processes in the conflicts between central government authorities and occupation agencies. It studies the effects of the savage conduct of Operation Barbarossa, Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, on the development of the strategies of mass murder, as well as the attitudes of the Wehrmacht and German civil administrative bodies in occupied Eastern Europe. The commonly assumed existence of Hitler’s specific order for the destruction of European Jewry in the summer/fall of 1941 is another subject of investigation. The book decodes the meanings that the policy makers of the Third Reich attached to the term “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” during these various phases up to the Wannsee Conference, where it was finally established as the synonym for mass deportations, Selektionen (selections of individuals for killing), and various methods of mass murder. The Final Solution also involved the differentiation between victims to be considered *arbeitsfähig*, fit or capable of work, or *arbeitsunfähig*, unfit or incapable of work; the rapid murder of those categorized as “incapable of

work”; and forced labor in ghettos and concentration camps under conditions that for almost all victims “capable of work” would come to mean a slow, protracted death.

The execution of the programs of deportation agreed upon in principle at the villa in Wannsee gave Eichmann's men from Vienna another opportunity to distinguish themselves. Through the progression of the “Vienna Model” to merciless manhunts they already had concluded the mass deportations from the Ostmark in October of 1942. From then on the Austrian man-hunters could be deployed wherever the progress of the deportations had been delayed or had come to a standstill. As a Sonderkommando, a special detachment most frequently under the command of Alois Brunner, they employed all those methods they had developed and practiced in Vienna: in 1942 in Berlin, in the spring of 1943 in Salonika, and, starting in the summer of 1943, in France.

In 1942 the deportation trains from the Ostmark and the Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (formerly western Czechoslovakia), for the most part were bound for Maly Trostinets, a killing site virtually unknown to this day. It was located near Minsk in the Reichskommissariat Ostland, the Reich Commissariat Ostland, which comprised the German-occupied Baltic States and most of Belorussia. At about the same time the trains from France and Slovakia started rolling into the concentration and extermination camps being built or enlarged in occupied Poland. How was it possible that in the years 1942–1944 hundreds of thousand of men, women, and children could be seized, interned, and sent to their deaths by just a small number of deportation specialists, and what kind of support did the SS man-hunters receive from German and local authorities? The importance of the collaboration of non-German administrative agencies in the execution of National Socialist programs of expulsion unfolds by examining deportations that Eichmann's men conducted from occupied and unoccupied France in 1942 and the participation of Slovak and Croat antisemites in the discrimination, despoilment, expulsion, and murder of Jews. In Slovakia as well as Croatia large segments of the population participated in racist policies and profoundly accelerated the exclusion of Jews and specific ethnic groups. The fascist-clerical rulers of Slovakia accepted, with goal-oriented zeal, Berlin's “offers” to deport Jews. The Ustasche (Ustasha), Hitler's Fascist puppet regime in Croatia, also carried out its own genocide programs, and in the infamous death camp Jasenovac. There, that regime butchered thousands of Croat Jews, as well as large numbers of Roma (Gypsies) and Serbs.

As a result of close cooperation of departments of the Wehrmacht, the Auswärtige Amt, and the SS-Sonderkommando in the spring of 1943, almost

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50,000 people were deported from northern Greece within a few weeks. Following their deployment in Salonika, the SS-Kommando, consisting of Viennese deportation specialists, was sent to Paris to jump-start the stagnating expulsion there. In 1943–1944, despite brutal manhunts in Paris, Nice, and other French cities, SS-Hauptsturmführer (Captain) Alois Brunner's Kommando was unable to meet the quotas set in Berlin.

Eichmann and his men conducted deportations until the military defeat of the Third Reich. With active support from the army, one Kommando under Anton Burger in the spring and summer of 1944 sent thousands of Jews from the Greek mainland and the Greek isles to Auschwitz. In the fall and winter of 1944 Alois Brunner hunted Slovak Jews who had survived the suppression of the Slovak Rebellion. Eichmann himself organized the deportation of half a million people from Hungary. Not just in Hungary but also in other countries that formerly had been part of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy a labor-sharing alliance between the SS and a specifically Central European antisemitism came into being. The latter was indigenous and religiously and materially motivated.

During the postwar period, as this book describes in closing, the traces of many of Eichmann's men dissipated. Very few were arrested at the end of the war and forced to account for their deeds. The rest, like Eichmann himself, went underground, lived with false identification papers in Austria or the Federal Republic of Germany, or with the help of their old associates, were able to escape to South America or the Middle East.



This study has been guided by the determination to examine the activities and “careers” of those SS men, almost all of them Austrians, who with Adolf Eichmann between 1938 and 1945 drove hundreds of thousands of people from their homes and homelands or deported them to concentration or extermination camps. The general public knows little about “Eichmann's Men,”¹ as they are referred to in standard historiographies about the Holocaust. Their names generally appear only when one of them is arrested and tried or when – as was the case with Alois Brunner who may yet be alive in Syria – Western or Central European states demand their extradition.

By examining court records and original documents, struggling with sources, and trying to connect their contents, the historian becomes increasingly aware of inaccuracies and contradictions between these documents and historiographic presentations and interpretations. Were Eichmann's men mechanical parts of a machine, as the social science literature suggests, or did personal initiative determine their actions? Were they dogged bureaucrats

blindly following the directives of superior authorities, or did they make personal decisions within the parameters of their assignments? What was the nature of their basic orders in the first place? The effort of characterizing subaltern perpetrators necessitated reexamining the prevalent characterizations of Adolf Eichmann, as well as reexamining the available sources for representations of the ambience and structures within which Eichmann and his men operated.

In the course of the last decades assessments of Adolf Eichmann's role have varied widely. Immediately after the war Eichmann was demonized. Robert H. Jackson, one of the prosecutors of the Nuremberg Trial against the main *Kriegsverbrecher* (war criminals), describes him as "the sinister figure who had charge of the extermination program."² Joe J. Heydecker and Johannes Leeb's book about the Nuremberg Tribunal refers to him as "the Number One Destroyer of Jews,"³ and Robert M. W. Kempner calls him the "Commissar of the Jews" invested with an "incredible degree of power," the "Lord over life and death of European Jewry."⁴ This exaggerated view of Eichmann's power, assessments that dominated the 1940s and 1950s, also informed the indictment brought against him at his trial in Jerusalem.

Since Hannah Arendt's report of the trial, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report of the Banality of Evil*, published in 1963, other evaluations have come to the fore. Arendt opposed overblown imputations and reduced Eichmann's significance within the machinery of destruction. In so doing, however, she placed too much emphasis on his mediocrity: "Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all. . . . It was sheer thoughtlessness – something by no means identical with stupidity – that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period."⁵ It was precisely these arguments that historians following Hannah Arendt adopted in characterizing the attitudes and motives of functionaries of the National Socialist genocide machinery, referring to "misdirected fulfillment of duty," "slavish bureaucratic obedience," and "subaltern mindset." Eichmann had not acted "primarily on account of antisemitic motives," Hans Mommsen declares in the introduction to Arendt's Eichmann Report. He argues in a similar vein in his article "Die Realisierung des Utopischen: Die 'Endlösung der Judenfrage im Dritten Reich'" ("The Realization of Utopia: The 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' in the Third Reich"), published in 1983, in which he presents Eichmann as a "spectacular example of the mechanism of compartmentalized responsibility coupled with bureaucratic perfectionism and absolute subjugation to the demands of totalitarian state power."⁶

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Notable in more recent historicism is that, without exception, descriptions of the perpetrators and reconstructions of the basic decisions for the introduction of genocide are based on the statements that Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höß and Adolf Eichmann made after 1945. Especially Eichmann's declarations are frequently accepted in a totally uncritical manner. What strategies of exculpation and defense informed Eichmann's and Höß's reports are at best marginal considerations. Historians have neglected even the most fundamental rules of using sources: They have cited, circulated, and constructed, ignoring the "manipulation of memory" in the testimonies of both Höß and Eichmann. "When fate put them before judges . . . they built a convenient past for themselves and ended by believing in it," Primo Levi observes about the perpetrators in *The Drowned and the Saved*.⁷ Just like Höß and the other accused National Socialist criminals indicted after 1945, Eichmann styled himself as an absolutely obedient recipient of orders who personally had nothing against Jews and adorned this basic statement with bits and pieces of reality. At the same time he fell back on lies and half-truths he had already employed since 1938 whenever he passed orders to the representatives of the Jewish communities in Vienna, Prague, and Berlin to ensure the smoothest possible accomplishment of his measures. Not everything he said in Jerusalem was a lie; he just recast his part and used what seemed advantageous to him.

One of the few extant "private" documents of that time provides an impression of the tone prevalent in Eichmann's circle. At the end of February 1943 the then-Hauptsturmführer Alois Brunner wrote a letter from Salonika to a comrade in Vienna in which his own words provide a glimpse of his activities as well as his personal impressions far from home (errors and idiosyncracies reflect those of the original).

Dear Rudolf! You are probably saying already that Brunner once more confirms that ingratitude is the way of the world. Not so Rudolf. First I wanted to look around thoroughly before saying what it really looks like here . . . The weather is becoming more and more beautiful and our work is progressing terrifically. On February 25 the yellow stars started gleaming here. Many a soldier said, oh no, my girl is wearing a star too. And the Greek population is so delighted with this marking and the ghettoization that I tell myself what a crime that such measures were not taken much earlier. Inflation and the black market could never have achieved such dimensions if the Jews had been watched closely. These days there is hardly a store without the sign Jewish stores hanging outside. And when we take off with them the jubilation among the Greeks will really start.

When Alois Brunner wrote this letter, he had been in Salonika only three weeks but had already drastically affected the life of the Jewish community. "Misdirected fulfillment of duty" and "bureaucratic mindless obedience" – nothing of the sort was happening here. With unmistakable satisfaction and undisguised glee Brunner reports the "gleaming of the yellow stars" and the "terrific progress of his work." He couldn't wait to "take off with them" – to deliver thousands of people to their murderers in Auschwitz – and was so adept at connecting "his work" – the hunt for human beings – to his plans for entertainment and self-enrichment that he wanted his cronies to partake of these amenities as well.

And now to personal matters. You need to picture the Greek women of antique heritage here as a little shorter and darker. But otherwise they are said to be very grateful. They especially like the Viennese dialect. What luck that I do not speak Viennese. A few days ago I had a deathly cold. I allowed myself to be persuaded to take a Turkish bath and was cured. Rudolf that is something you just have to experience. It's simply fantastic. You know with these baths the Turks got the women in their harems "ready for bed." And with your strength that kind of bath wouldn't hurt you at all. No matter what in addition to your Africa expertise I could here show you a quite nice bit of European orient too. Don't you have any business here? If so you would have to come while I'm still here. Of course everything would be taken care of on this end. If necessary even the Greek ballet will dance for you at dinner. And dear Rudolf I have a personal request too. Don't let the last Jew leave [Vienna] until my black box has been delivered because otherwise my buddy Berger's junk will break in the suitcases. And please write me or tell my wife if the possibility of a crate of dishes for my sister still exists . . . Greetings to Miss Hilde and all our acquaintances, many greetings to you your Brunner Lois, Heil Hitler!"⁸

By that time Alois Brunner was no longer a neophyte when it came to the persecution of Jews. As Eichmann's successor, or rather as the successor of Rolf Günther in the position of Director of the Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung in Vienna, he and his coworkers between February 1941 and October 1942 already had transported the majority of Vienna residents who, according to the Nuremberg Laws, were classified as Jews, for Aussiedlung "resettlement" or Abwanderung in den Osten "emigration to the East," to use the parlance of the SS bureaucrats.

The style of Brunner's letter, his obvious delight in his "work" and in acting out the racist pretensions of the Herrenmenschen, provide a stark contrast to the Nazi perpetrators' self-justification efforts that have become part and parcel of historiography. This contradiction is one of the main lines of investigation in this study. How could subordinate employees, as Eichmann and men such

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as Theodor Danneker, Alois Brunner, the brothers Hans and Rolf Günther, Franz Novak, Anton Burger, and Siegfried Seidl were at the beginning of their SS “careers,” get to be decision makers whose orders decided the life or death of hundreds of thousands of people?



The contradictory scholarly interpretations and presentations of the development of National Socialist genocide policies led to a further expansion of the original research inception.

One of the main historiographical efforts of interpretation originates in the thesis of linear “execution of a world view” – as states the subtitle of the book *Hitlers Herrschaft: Vollzug einer Weltanschauung* (Hitler’s Reign) by Eberhard Jäckel. The British historian Gerald Fleming in *Hitler and the Final Solution* advances this argument most distinctly:

The line that leads from... Hitler’s remark to his childhood friend August Kubizek,... “that does not belong here in Linz”... as the two passed the small synagogue in the Bethlehemstraße in Linz,... [to] the first mass shooting of German Jews in Fort IX in Kovno on 25 November 1941 and in the Rumbuli Forest outside Riga on 30 November 1941 at 8:15 AM... [is a direct one. A straight path leads from that day] in April 1908 when Hitler joined the Viennese *Antisemitenbund* (Antisemite Association)... to Report 51 “addressed to the *Führer*” [to announce under the heading] “campaign against gangs” the execution of 362,221 Jews during the period of 1 September to 1 December 1942.⁹

Jäckel and Fleming are representatives of the so-called Intentionalist School of interpretation, which stresses the direct, immediate connection between Hitler’s antisemitic ideology, plans, directives, and the realization of mass murder.

A second interpretive approach proposes the “twisted road to Auschwitz,” as it is so characterized in the title of Karl A. Schleunes’s study in which he presents his conclusion that the “Final Solution,” as it developed in 1941–1942, was not the product of a grand design of a large-scale planning operation. The representatives of this “Structuralist,” sometimes also referred to as “Functional” School of interpretation, among them historians Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen, point to a “cumulative radicalization” of National Socialist racism and, by doing so, modify the importance of Hitler’s unequivocal directives for the execution of genocides. Origin and translation into action of National Socialist genocide policies, according to this approach, can therefore not be deduced to have developed in a straight line from one specific point,

such as antisemitic ideology. Instead, they can only be approximated from the step-by-step radicalization of individual motives and the concentration and interplay of a variety of different elements.

A third interpretive direction espoused by, among others, Herbert A. Strauss points to the absolute incomprehensibility of the Holocaust. Dan Diner, for example, suggests considering Auschwitz as a “black box.” “Auschwitz is a no-man’s-land of comprehension, a black box of explaining, a vacuum of extra-historical significance sucking up any and all historiographic efforts of interpretation.”¹⁰

The reinterpretation of the central strands of development of National Socialist policies and the formation of the apparatus of genocide necessary for this examination of the “careers” of Eichmann’s men is based on the fact that the genocides of Jews and Roma took place in an industrialized society using methodologies involving division of labor. This premise rests mainly on the findings of the research by Raul Hilberg, the author of the seminal work on the destruction of European Jewry. He refers to the apparatus that conducted these genocides as the “machinery of destruction” to which four hierarchical groups of the German power bloc under Hitler provided specific support.

The civil service infused the other hierarchies with its sure-footed planning and bureaucratic thoroughness. From the army the machinery of destruction acquired its military precision, discipline, and callousness. Industry’s influence made itself felt in the emphasis on accounting, penny-pinching, and salvage, as well as the factory-like efficiency of the killing centers. Finally, the party contributed to the entire apparatus an “idealism,” a sense of “mission” and a notion of “history-making.”¹¹

What remains unanswered in Hilberg’s work, however, is who actually put this machinery of destruction into motion and what specific interests of National Socialist rulers or specific segments of society informed its decisions. Hilberg is convinced that more than five million Jews were murdered because “it had meaning to its perpetrators. It was not the arrogant strategy for the attainment of some goal but an undertaking for its own sake, an event experienced as *Erlebnis*, an adventure lived and lived through by its participants.”¹² Even though Hilberg does not explain just what that “meaning” was, he is nevertheless convinced that this self-sufficient process could have been initiated only by Hitler himself. During a panel discussion Hilberg, in response to Structuralist interpretations of the genesis of National Socialist genocide policies, pointed to the premise upon which all his research is based: “I was always convinced that there must have been a *Führerbefehl*, Hitler’s express order of genocide; that such a bureaucracy could not have functioned from