

## Introduction

This is another study of the relationship between Germans and Jews in the modern era, from the Enlightenment to the Holocaust; but its focus is rather different from that of previous works. Most treatments of this encounter have proceeded within the context of the philosophical chasm between modern, secular, German ethno-nationalism and anti-Semitism on the one hand, and the political liberalism of the great majority of German Jews on the other. The former espoused the idea of religious, ethnic, or racial exclusivity as the basis of national life, while the latter rejected it. They have considered the tension between a rigidly *völkisch*<sup>1</sup> German nationalist ideology that demanded a uniformly German and Christian *Volksgemeinschaft* as the basis of the life of the German state, and a legally emancipated and rapidly assimilating German Jewry that demanded inclusion and civic equality for Jews as “Germans of the Jewish faith.” Thus, these studies have focused on the diametrically opposed and incompatible world views of most non-Jewish Germans on the one hand, and the dominant, liberal, and “assimilationist”<sup>2</sup> inclinations of most Jewish

<sup>1</sup> The term *völkisch* is understood and used here and throughout this study as an organic, ethno-nationalist concept and definition of nationality that has been dominant in Central Europe in the modern era.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this book, I use the term “assimilationist” to refer to those secular, non-Zionist or anti-Zionist German Jews who viewed themselves as Jewish by some confessional or cultural identity or practice, but German by nationality and culture, and who were very much integrated into the political, economic, social, and cultural life of their German homeland. It is important to remember that both the Zionists and the Nazis referred to them and their various organizations as “assimilationist.” However, the great majority of these so-called assimilationist German Jews neither sought to deny their Jewish identity nor stopped believing that one could be both Jewish and German at the same time. Ruth Gay’s distinction between “assimilation,” implying the total elimination of all distinctions between Jews and the non-Jewish majority, and the more relevant term “acculturation,” implying the adoption of language, culture, and social convention, while retaining a distinct, religious and historical identity, can be helpful here. See Ruth Gay, *The Jews of Germany: A Historical Portrait* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 202. See also more recently Saul Friedlander, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 5.

Germans on the other regarding the position of Jews in German society. That incompatibility was centered on the mutually exclusive convictions of both sides: the view of most non-Jews that a Jew, for religious, cultural, biological, and/or other reasons, could not be both German and Jewish at the same time, and the view of most Jews that she or he could.

This study looks at a somewhat different confrontation, one that was perhaps not as direct, formal, or even openly public, but that was, nevertheless, real, with significant consequences for the Jews of Germany during the Third Reich. It was the relationship of a *völkisch* German nationalism and anti-Semitism, and the various political movements they spawned, to Zionism, a *völkisch* Jewish nationalist ideology and movement that started from some of the same philosophical premises as German nationalism with regard to nationality, national life, and the proper definition and organization of peoples and states in the modern world. Few attempts have been made to consider the nature and impact of their responses to each other, within the context of the pressing questions of Jewish life in Germany prior to the Holocaust. Nevertheless, the evidence seems clear that Theodor Herzl and other Zionist leaders in Germany and elsewhere who came after him believed that Zionism would ultimately neutralize a large part of the Jews' very real and intensifying problem – anti-Semitism. Non-Jews, including both liberals and anti-Semites, and even Hitler's regime for a while, concluded that Zionism provided a useful mechanism for the elimination of their imagined problem – the Jews.

This study examines the ideologies of German anti-Semitism and the modern Zionism it helped to spawn, and their relationship in modern German history before the Holocaust.<sup>3</sup> Each presented itself at times and in varying degrees as the most practical solution to the other's "problem," and as a suitable means to achieve the other's particular ends. Theirs was a relationship that revealed certain common assumptions about the conflicts generated in post-emancipation Germany and elsewhere over the role of Jews in modern society, and how best to resolve those conflicts. To be sure, it was also one that created ideological contradictions and political discomfort on both sides. In the end, and in spite of some of those common assumptions, their mutual discomfort proved to be a reflection of their obvious imbalance of power and, ultimately, their ideological incompatibility.

It is necessary at the outset to provide some contextual clarification about the ideas, individuals, and organizations discussed in this book. This is particularly important for the Zionists in Germany and their organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, lest the reader imagine that the

<sup>3</sup> Contemporary discussions of the relationship between Zionism and anti-Semitism have taken on a different context and framework from that of this study, fueled as they are in a post-Holocaust, post-colonial world by events in the Middle East and South Asia, and such issues as terrorism, American foreign and geopolitical policy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, political Islam, and others. See, for example, the collection of essays in the recent special edition of *The Journal of Israeli History*, Jeffrey Herf (ed.), "Convergence and Divergence: Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism in Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Israeli History* 25 (2006).

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purpose of a study such as this is to somehow equate Zionism with National Socialism, Zionists with Nazis, or to portray that relationship as a willing and collaborative one between moral and political equals. The research, analysis, and conclusions contained in these pages do not in any way support such notions. The existence of certain common assumptions on the part of Zionists on the one hand, and nationalist and anti-Semitic Germans on the other, does not in any way connote moral and/or political equivalency. Rather, they demonstrate the cultural, intellectual, and political realities of the times, realities that cultivated an environment that in turn shaped the values and world views of non-Jewish and Jewish Germans alike. This is especially important when we consider the program and goals of the Zionist movement in Germany before and after the turn of the twentieth century.

Most German Zionists, like most Jews in Germany, were culturally and spiritually German. Many were urban, secular, and educated, and shared a common culture with non-Jewish Germans of similar backgrounds. Most were highly assimilated Jews and, like their non-Jewish fellow-citizens, products of their time and place. But unlike the majority of their fellow German Jews at the time, they strove to revive a separate Jewish national identity and life in an ethnically-defined Jewish state as perhaps the best way to deal with the twin dilemmas that were the outcome of the Enlightenment: acceptance and consequent assimilation, and the rejection of modern anti-Semitism. That they responded as they did to the idea of a *völkisch* basis of national life in Germany that the great majority of their non-Jewish neighbors demanded should be neither surprising nor unsettling. The dominant Zionist approach, like that of most non-Jews at the time, shared a reliance on the idea of an ethno-nationalist state, an idea that was the societal norm in Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their embrace of that norm does not make the Zionists the moral equivalent of Nazis. Nor does the willingness of the Zionist or any other Jewish organization in the Third Reich to cooperate with the state make them willing collaborators in the Nazi destruction of Jewish life in Germany; to suppose that any Jewish organization in Hitler's Germany prior to the "final solution" had the option of refusing to work on some level with the state is fantasy.

The three quotations in the opening pages of this volume reflect the questions this study seeks to address. They represent three approaches to the so-called Jewish question in Germany prior to the Holocaust that reflected the struggles and tragedy of Jewish life in Germany from the Enlightenment to the "final solution." The first, from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, conveys the optimism and hopes of most Jews and some non-Jews during the Enlightenment era that a Jew ultimately could be a Jew and a German at the same time because of the higher common humanity shared by both. The second, a Nazi song with lyrics that demonstrate modern anti-Semitism's total rejection of Lessing's view, condemns the idea of a common humanity of Germans and Jews, emphasizes their supposed "racial" differences, and demands the total separation of the Jews through their expulsion to

Palestine. Finally, the third, a Zionist view, positions itself somewhere in between, with Herzl's willingness to accept the logic of German-Jewish separation and the national uniqueness of each people without denying their common humanity and the idea of human equality.

The historiographical context of this study is rooted in the larger debates that have dominated the scholarship on Nazi Germany, the Holocaust, and German-Jewish history for more than half a century. One debate is evident in the vast literature on the nature and history of anti-Semitism in modern Germany that has appeared since the publication of Paul Massing's *Rehearsal for Destruction: A Study of Political Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany* in 1949. Initially, it centered on the question of whether the anti-Semitism of the Nazi leadership and state was part of a larger continuity in modern German history or a relatively brief, discontinuous, and apocalyptic aberration in that history.<sup>4</sup> In the past decade or so, moreover, especially since the publication of Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* in 1996, that debate has become more intense and contentious, with its focus on whether German anti-Semitism as a whole, particularly among "ordinary Germans," was unique among the nations of Europe in both its nature and its application.<sup>5</sup> Thus, countless studies have appeared over the years that directly or indirectly address the nature of German anti-Semitism and the ways in which it shaped the attitudes of ordinary and not-so-ordinary Germans from the Second Reich to the Third. Was there some continuous link between a peculiarly German anti-Semitism and the policies of the Wilhelminian, Weimar, and Nazi governments toward the Jewish community in Germany? Was there something unique about German anti-Semitism that made the Nazi extermination of the Jews of Europe during World War II more likely, or even inevitable? More to the point of this study, what were the reactions of German anti-Semites from the *Kaiserzeit* to National Socialism to

<sup>4</sup> On the question of continuity vs. discontinuity in the history of anti-Semitism in modern Germany, see, for example, Donald Niewyk, "Solving the 'Jewish Problem': Continuity and Change in German Antisemitism, 1871–1945," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 35 (1990), 335–370; Richard Levy, *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975); Shulamit Volkov, "Kontinuität und Diskontinuität im deutschen Antisemitismus 1878–1945," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 33 (1985), 221–243.

<sup>5</sup> See Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), and Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996). Since the publication of the latter, a substantial literature has developed out of the debates surrounding Goldhagen's controversial theories on the nature of German anti-Semitism. See the numerous reviews of Goldhagen's book itself, as well as Julius Schoeps, ed., *Ein Volk von Mördern: Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1996), and Robert Shandley, ed., *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Controversy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). See also Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), especially Chapters 5 and 6.

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the altogether different perspective and approach of Zionism to the Jewish question in Europe, and what do they tell us about the nature of German anti-Semitism in general before the Holocaust?

This last question points to another heated if now largely exhausted debate among scholars, evident even in the earliest histories of the Holocaust following the initial publication of Raul Hilberg's groundbreaking work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, in 1961. A subject of on-going, intense scrutiny that reached its peak in the 1980s, it centered on the question of the Nazi regime's decision-making process that led to the "final solution," the decisions in 1941 to systematically murder the Jews of the Soviet Union and the rest of Europe. "Intentionalists" and "functionalists," and the "structuralist" off-shoots of the latter, have articulated different conclusions in this debate. The former, beginning in the late 1960s and the 1970s with the work of scholars such as Karl Dietrich Bracher, Lucy Dawidowicz, Gerald Fleming, Andreas Hillgruber, Eberhard Jäckel, and others, asserted generally that the genocide perpetrated against the Jews of Europe, centrally directed from the top by Adolf Hitler, was part of an earlier inclination or specific plan that pre-dated its actual implementation, one that had always been focused ultimately on the physical annihilation of all of the Jews of Europe.<sup>6</sup> The latter, represented initially by scholars such as Karl Schleunes, Uwe Dietrich Adam, Christopher Browning, and others, countered with the argument that the chronically bureaucratic or "polycratic" nature of Hitler's regime precluded this precise scenario.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the 1990s, most "functionalists" were in general agreement that Hitler had indeed always played the decisive role in providing the top-down direction that Nazi Jewish policy, particularly the "final solution," would ultimately take.<sup>8</sup> But they also continued to argue that following the dramatic course of events during the first two years of World War II, the decision in the fall of 1941 to systematically murder the Jews of Europe represented yet another stage in the evolution of Nazi Jewish policy

<sup>6</sup> See Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die deutsche Diktatur: Entstehung, Struktur, Folgen des Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1969); Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1975); Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Andreas Hillgruber, "Die 'Endlösung' und das deutsche Ostimperium als Kernstück des rassenideologischen Programms des Nationalsozialismus," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 20 (1972), 133–153; Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> See Karl Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews, 1933–1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970); Uwe Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972); Martin Broszat, "Hitler und die Genesis der 'Endlösung.' Aus Anlass der Thesen von David Irving," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25 (1977), 739–775; Christopher Browning, *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 8–38, and *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 142.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Peter Longerich, *The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution* (Stroud/Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2003).

since 1933. It was one that had developed out of the essentially hit-and-miss nature of previous policy. That policy had been driven by the input of a multiplicity of competing party and state agencies, as well as the course of events following the implementation of Nazi policies, and specifically in the search for a “solution” to the so-called Jewish question, first in Germany and then throughout Europe.

These two questions, the nature of German anti-Semitism and the decision-making process that culminated in genocide, are, of course, intimately related. The nature of a pathological hatred aimed at a specific group of human beings, especially one as vulnerable as the Jews of Europe prior to the Holocaust, will usually condition the manner in which that hatred is transformed into action or policy. But the reverse may also be true when constraints that actual events inevitably impose on policy generate inconsistencies and contradictions in the implementation of an ideology. The relationship between concrete, identifiable practice or policy, and the complex and at times contradictory ideology behind it, specifically between the various anti-Jewish actions and policies of the Nazi regime and the anti-Semitism behind those actions and policies, remain at the center of scholarly debate. To what extent were the perpetrators, from “ordinary Germans” to their leaders, motivated by anti-Semitic attitudes and ideology, or by other factors? If they were motivated primarily by the former, what was its nature? And was genocide its logical or inevitable outcome?

In introducing his study of Nazi Germany and the Jews during the 1930s, Saul Friedländer observes that, notwithstanding the central role of Nazi perpetrators and their policies after 1933, “the surrounding world and the victims’ attitudes, reactions, and fate are no less an integral part of this unfolding history.”<sup>9</sup> With this in mind, this study also considers an important aspect of the victims’ response to German, and specifically Nazi, anti-Semitism. It examines the intellectual and political origins of modern Zionism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the mainly Central European roots of its nationalist ideology, its development in Germany, and its relationship to German anti-Semitism and its National Socialist variant before the “final solution.” Since these roots were akin to those that produced the *völkisch* character of modern German nationalism during the nineteenth century, they created a different Jewish response to the anti-Jewish hostility of that nationalism and the anti-Semitism that it helped to sustain. As George Mosse has suggested, we must “... come to grips with a German-Jewish history which [sic] is part of the history of German and Jew alike, however much we would want to deny such a connection today.”<sup>10</sup> At the heart of the Zionist response was the immediate challenge of modern anti-Semitism, nurtured by centuries of religious and cultural Judeophobia, as well as that of

<sup>9</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 2, and his *The Years of Extermination*, 4ff.

<sup>10</sup> George Mosse, *Germans and Jews: The Right, the Left, and the Search for a Third Force in Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970), 78.

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Enlightenment theories of human equality and their application to the position of Jews in non-Jewish society. These historical realities in modern Jewish history were the critical starting points for both political and cultural Zionism. For the former, gentile rejection in the form of modern, secular, racial anti-Semitism generated among some Jews a likewise separatist, Jewish nationalist response; for the latter, gentile acceptance in the form of Jewish civic emancipation and consequent assimilation weakened Jewish religious and cultural identity and necessitated a similarly separatist, albeit mainly cultural and spiritual, Jewish response. The result for both was an organic definition of nationality and nationhood, similar to the German, with varying degrees of ethnic, religious, and cultural uniformity as the basis of the state.

Notwithstanding the inherent sensitivity in any consideration of the ideological and practical relationship between Zionism and anti-Semitism in modern German history, it is useful to keep in mind David Vital's important observation that Theodor Herzl's purpose in publishing *Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage* (*The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution to the Jewish Question*) in 1896 was at least in part tactical. Among other things, it was also meant to attract the necessary non-Jewish support for proposals that, particularly among Jews, were controversial and not at all popular at the time. While most of the reaction to Herzl's book naturally came from Jewish sources, much of it negative, it was also meant to elicit a positive response from non-Jews. And respond they did, ranging from indifference to varying degrees of acceptance and even enthusiasm. In all, Herzl characterized the reaction of anti-Semites in general in the following way: "The anti-Semites treat me fairly."<sup>11</sup> That the relationship between anti-Semitism and Zionism would be a sensitive one for both sides in the years to follow seems to have been on Herzl's mind at the time of the publication of *Der Judenstaat*. Whereas today non-Jewish criticism of Zionism or the state of Israel is often dismissed as motivated by a deeper anti-Semitism, in Herzl's day an opposite non-Jewish reaction, one of support for the Zionist idea, might have resulted in a similar reaction. For example, Herzl commented in his diary on 22 July 1896 that the Archduke of Baden feared that his public support for Herzl's plans might be misconstrued by Jews and non-Jews alike as an expression of anti-Semitism.<sup>12</sup>

Since the end of World War II, the sensitive and at times contentious nature of this historical relationship has been a product of several factors, not the least of which has been the reluctance of post-Holocaust discourse to recognize the significant impact of *völkisch* ideas on German Jewry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Again, it was George Mosse who observed that Jews were not merely objects of such a world view, but that many also embraced it as their own, in different ways, whether it was in the form of a *völkisch* German or a *völkisch* Jewish nationalism.<sup>13</sup> It has also been the result of the

<sup>11</sup> David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1980), 267.

<sup>12</sup> See Theodor Herzl, *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, Vol. I (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1922), 501.

<sup>13</sup> See Mosse, *Germans and Jews*, Chapter 4.

political agendas of some non-Jews and Jews in the post-Holocaust era, especially in conjunction with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The historical and ideological relationship between these two diverse movements in Europe during the half-century or so before the mass murder of the Jews of Europe during World War II sometimes involved a fundamental, pragmatic convergence of interests as each sought to translate nationalist ideology into concrete policy on the way to achieving its own political objectives. Yet, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, many have found it inconceivable, intellectually and emotionally, that any Jewish interests might in any way have converged with those of German nationalism and anti-Semitism, or that Jews might have found it necessary to cooperate with a Nazi state that would brutally curtail Jewish life in Germany during the 1930s before going on to annihilate some two-thirds of all the Jews of Europe during World War II.

A consequence of this historical convergence has been the a-historical assertions of some non-Jewish and even some Jewish critics that simplistically dismiss Zionism as yet another example of racism, the substance of which has not been very different from German National Socialism.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, some have raised sincere moral objections to the displacement of a sizeable part of the Arab population of Palestine in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, and to Israeli occupation and settlement policies in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza strip after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. There have also been charges by some mainly Jewish critics that Zionists collaborated with the Nazi regime in Germany in an effort to secure their own narrow self-interests at the expense of non-Zionist Jews before and during the Holocaust.<sup>15</sup> Finally, on the

<sup>14</sup> Before Hitler's assumption of power in 1933, the most prominent critics of Zionism tended to be Jews. Most did not base their opposition to Zionism on alleged racist affinities with National Socialism. They stopped well short of this by resting their arguments on a rejection of Zionist claims that the Jews were a distinct people, aliens in the countries in which they lived. See, for example, most recently Avraham Barkai, "Wehr Dich!" *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens 1893–1938* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), 52ff, 205ff. For the American Jewish context, see Thomas Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990). But a few did condemn Zionism as a racist ideology. One of the most extreme cases was Victor Klemperer, whose bitter condemnation of Zionism included direct comparisons to Nazism. See his *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten: Tagebücher 1933–1941*, Vol. I (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1995), 111, 193, 220, 319, 458, 529, 695. See also Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators: A Reappraisal* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), Chapter 5. For the necessary background to assertions that Zionism is racism in connection with the conflict between Israelis and Arabs since 1948, see, for example, Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–2001* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), and Avi Schlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Edwin Black, *The Transfer Agreement: The Dramatic Story of the Pact between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 1999), and Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*, 55ff. Important counterarguments to some of this have conclusively demonstrated that after the upheavals of 1938 in Germany, but particularly following early reports that confirmed Nazi mass murder in Eastern Europe in the spring of 1942, the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the Zionist movement in general recognized the

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other side of the political spectrum are non-Jews, mostly Holocaust deniers and Hitler apologists, who make the claim that Zionism and the state of Israel are responsible for many of the same things as the Nazis. Some have even suggested that, in the end, Hitler was not so bad, that he gave the Jewish people an independent Jewish state, and that his Jewish policy was intended to achieve that end all along.<sup>16</sup>

In the end, the relationship between Zionism and anti-Semitism in Germany helps to define what each was and, perhaps more importantly, what each was not during the period of about a half-century before the onset of the “final solution.” Most anti-Semites could never embrace Zionism and its institutions as partners in a common quest because Zionists were, after all, still part of what they believed to be a monolithic world Jewry. As a result, Zionism could amount to no more than a convenient policy mechanism in the solution to a “problem.” Even for those Germans who did accept Jewish assimilation into German society before 1933, but only on the condition that the Jews cease to be Jews altogether, Zionism was often considered a useful option for those Jews who would not meet this criterion. Thus, many prominent non-Jewish Germans, politicians, activists, academics, political philosophers, and others, from virulent racist anti-Semites to liberal proponents of total Jewish assimilation, came to view Zionism as an attractive and practical solution to the Jewish question in Germany. They concluded that Zionists were Jews who essentially accepted their own fundamental premise that Jews could not be both Jewish and German at the same time, who generally agreed that the Jews were a distinct people, and not merely Germans of a different religious community, and that their German citizenship neither made them part of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* nor entitled them to political, economic, and social equality in Germany.

For both ideological and practical reasons, Zionists offered their approach to the Jewish question as a useful means for German anti-Semites to translate their antipathy toward all things Jewish and their desire to end Jewish life in Germany into specific action or policy in a way that would be beneficial, and not harmful, to Jews. In doing so, however, they directly challenged some of their own ideological assumptions before the Holocaust. This was particularly so with regard to their proper role in an environment of Jewish emancipation that was under assault by an organized, state-sponsored, anti-Semitism that

critical link between its own survival and the survival and well-being of all Jews in the Diaspora. Even on a practical level, the Zionist view was that if the Nazis succeeded in murdering the great majority of Jews in Europe, a Jewish majority and state in Palestine might never be achieved. See, for example, Dina Porat, *The Blue and Yellow Stars of David: The Zionist Leadership in Palestine and the Holocaust, 1939–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> This position is described and effectively rejected in Michael Wolffsohn, *Ewige Schuld? 40 Jahre deutsch-jüdisch-israelische Beziehungen* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1988), 10–20, and in his “Ohne Hitler kein Israel?” which appeared in “Juden und Deutsche,” *Spiegel Spezial*, 2 (1992), 126–136.

enjoyed a high degree of public support. Jewish emancipation had created the conditions of Jewish life that were essential to effective Zionist work in the Diaspora. But it also was responsible for the Jewish assimilation that, in the end, they rejected. Moreover, how could the Zionists defend the conditions of emancipation against a threat that they deemed inevitable and impossible to overcome unless and until Jews in the Diaspora embraced Zionism and emigrated to Palestine?

For most anti-Semites in Germany, therefore, including the Nazis prior to 1941, their willingness to use Zionism and the Zionist movement was never based on an acceptance of the Zionist view of itself, namely, that it represented a force for the common good and for the renewal of the Jews as a people in the modern world. When Zionism and Jewish emigration eventually ceased to be useful or relevant policy tools in the larger context of the conquest of German *Lebensraum* in Europe during the first two years of World War II, Zionism became irrelevant as an instrument of policy and dropped in favor, ultimately, of mass murder. Herein lies the fundamental disconnect in earlier Zionist assessments of anti-Semitism and its potential usefulness in the reeducation of Diaspora Jews, the struggle against assimilation, the rebirth of the Jews as a nation, and the establishment of a Jewish state. It was an approach shaped in part by the conviction of some and, at a minimum, the hopes of others that the nationalist priorities and goals of both movements might on some level prove to be compatible. This seemed to be so at least until the first year or so of Nazi rule shattered such hopes. Zionists had initially believed that traditional and even modern racist antipathies toward the Jews would decline or even disappear altogether once the Jews renounced assimilation and removed themselves to their own state, where they would then live side by side with a “new” Germany in mutual respect and friendship. This view, of course, so difficult for some to resist before the rise of National Socialism, was in the end incompatible with the kind of anti-Semitism that motivated the policies of the Nazi regime once it was securely ensconced in power and its violent quest for “living space” in Europe seemed on the verge of realization.

What, then, do the ideology and policies of German anti-Semites toward Zionism and the Zionist movement, from the late nineteenth century through the Nazi period, tell us about the nature of German anti-Semitism before 1945? This study argues that, at a minimum, it reveals a lack of consistency and a plethora of contradictions in its attempts to implement that ideology. Recognition of that reality alone may not be particularly new or illuminating; but it is significant when applied to the Nazi period, a time in modern German history when the explicit and primary mission of the state was to translate its official anti-Semitism into concrete policy. As such, the question of implementation forms an essential backdrop to the Nazi decision-making process that led to genocide. Thus, the policies of Hitler’s regime toward Zionism and the Zionist movement in Germany before 1941, as examples of the implementation of its anti-Semitic ideology, only diminish the likelihood that the “final solution” was part of an earlier plan or intention to ultimately mass