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Manufacturing Murder: A Timeline of Events that Led to the Final Solution in Germany, Poland and Ukraine, 1933-1943

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["Snow Covers Santa Barbara Mountains"](#)

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Letter from the Editors

The Spring 2023 edition of the *Undergraduate Journal of History* is now available, and our team is thrilled to share it with readers. We take pride in offering a platform for undergraduate students to showcase their historical research and encourage open discussions, intellectual debates, and curiosity. Our gratitude goes to the six authors who contributed to this volume and to the faculty and graduate student peer reviewers who made it possible. This latest issue covers various periods and diverse topics to illuminate lesser-known stories and provide fresh historical perspectives. Our undergraduate editors extend a warm welcome to both new and returning readers.

We start this issue with Olivia Bauer's article on Queen Elizabeth I and an examination of her diplomatic relationships with the leaders of the Sa'adian Sultanate of Morocco, the Ottoman Empire, and Safavid Persia, which allowed her to establish trading companies and expand Britain's empire. While the history of English foreign policy towards the Islamic world has often been associated with exploitative enterprises and violent warfare, the author argues that Elizabeth I's relationships with Muslim rulers were founded on diplomatic and peaceful means and explored the politics, gender, and religious factors that contributed to this diplomatic success.

Adrian Hammer's article, "Manufacturing Murder," provides a nuanced examination of the evolution of mass murder methods from 1933 to 1945, emphasizing the need for a deeper understanding of what happened, why it happened, and who it happened to, all to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future. Hammer discussed the significance of memorializing the severity of such atrocity. "The linear teaching of the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust," Hammer writes, "fails to fully capture the extent of the crimes committed and the deranged mindset of those responsible."

Victoria Korotchenko's essay explores the role of children during the French Revolution and how they actively participated in the events of the time, including joining mobs, petitioning legislators, and fighting in wars. Korotchenko writes that, while most scholarship focuses on the perspectives of grown men and women who participated in the French Revolution, "the sweeping changes, violence, and warfare impacted those who had no choice but to grow up during this tumultuous decade." This essay highlights children's curiosity and active nature during this unstable time.

Alyssa Medin's article deciphering Sor Juana as a "proto-feminist figure" in history. Medin examines three questions related to Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz's work: whether her work was published without her consent, was submissive or subversive, and if it can be considered "proto-feminist theology." Medin categorizes Sor Juana's contributions to theology into three areas: a promotion of intellectual pursuits

for women theologians, an aesthetic theological claim, and a pneumatological argument for deepening personal relationships with God through the Spirit.

O’Gorman’s work focuses on the Christian religion and military upheavals in late medieval Europe. He argues that losing Christian positions in the Middle East after the Fall of Acre in 1290 led military orders to reevaluate their identities. Many returned to their non-militaristic origins or expanded their crusading ideals into new regions. By comparing the founding stories and rules of military orders with their actions after 1290, Gorman demonstrated how the rules of military orders, including the Teutonic and Hospitaller Orders, also emphasized their hospital care in addition to their military actions.

Susan Samardjian retrospects upon how the post-war Vietnamese regime under communism in 1975 faced setbacks that disrupted both the nation’s stability and that of neighboring countries concludes our issue. Samardjian argued these setbacks contributed to an already deteriorating economy and formed the communist leaders to reevaluate their attitude toward their neighbors. In response, the communist government implemented domestic and foreign policy reforms to encourage bilateral trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and eventually normalized relations with the US, which had imposed sanctions on Vietnam, leading to economic investment opportunities.

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**Manufacturing Murder:
A Timeline of Events that Led to the Final Solution in Germany,
Poland, and Ukraine, 1933-1943**

*Adrian Hammer*¹

The history of the Holocaust is well-known and well-documented. However, the implementation of the Final Solution and the decision surrounding the techniques they used are up for debate. On one side, there are the functionalists, such as Henry Friedlander, a historian who specializes in Jewish history and the Holocaust, stating in the preface of his book *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, “Eventually, the regime decided to implement a program of mass murder.”² Functionalists argue that the Nazis decided for mass extermination at some point amid World War II. Secondly, there are the intentionalists, such as Klaus Hildebrand, a historian of German political and military history, who states in his book *The Third Reich* that “emigration and deportation... were intermediate stages towards the ‘Final Solution’ which was, in principle, always present in Hitler’s mind.”³ Intentionalists argue that it was always the intention of the Nazi regime to conduct some form of the Final Solution.

To determine how the Final Solution came to be, we must look at the events that transpired and evaluate what influenced the decisions that led to the manufacturing of death through camps such as Chelmno and Auschwitz. There is no denying that the quest for “solving the Jewish problem” was a priority of Hitler; however, genocide was not premeditated, nor was it the Nazi high command’s initial plan for their perceived problem. Genocide became the primary mission of the Nazi regime after failed attempts at removing Jews from their lands and properties to instead settle German citizens there. Examples include the ghettos and unrealistic relocation strategies such as the Madagascar plan, which, if it had succeeded, would have likely resulted in very few Jewish casualties. Considering the move to genocide was a gradual process, it brings to question how the Nazis concluded that death camps were the most effective method in handling the Jewish Question and why they chose to use gas chambers over other forms of execution. This paper will evaluate events that transpired between 1933 and 1943 to

¹ Adrian Hammer is a graduate of California State University Channel Islands with a bachelor’s degree in History and Psychology. His passion for history developed through conversations with his late uncle who inspired this research topic months before his passing. This paper is dedicated to and in memory of Rodger Lee Morris.

² Henry Friedlander, preface to *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

³ Klaus Hildebrand, *The Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 35.

determine why and what prompted them to use death camps, resulting in the wide-scale manufacture of death.

At this particular time in history, eugenics research had been a key focus of the sciences for about four decades. The idea that certain humans were replaceable or otherwise too burdensome to allow to reproduce was nothing new to the global scientific community. While Germany is seen as the be-all and end-all for eugenics and manipulating a minority group that is otherwise incapable of protecting themselves, Great Britain founded their eugenics program around the same time as pre-Nazi Germany in 1905. Across the pond, the United States was the first to forcibly sterilize “idiots,” the “feeble-minded,” and “promiscuous” women beginning in 1907. Eugenics was not isolated to the United States— Hungary, France, Italy, Argentina, Mexico and Czechoslovakia were concerned about the spread of feeble-mindedness and developed their own eugenics organizations by the end of World War I.⁴ Equally important to note is that organizations in the United States also promoted the ideology that the white race was “superior” to all other races. Would it be possible that Hitler and his *fidus Achates* drew some inspiration from the most powerful country on earth and its allies on how to normalize the sterilization process?

Operation T4, also known as the euthanasia program, was the first step in determining the method of execution. However, the thought process behind it was not related to the Final Solution at the time. Unbeknownst to the manufacturers of the euthanasia programs, their process would be later reintroduced and adopted on a large scale during the Final Solution. The grounds of Operation T4’s undertaking began on 14 July 1933, with the passing of the “Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Offspring,”⁵ which was officially implemented on 1 January 1934. This law provided the Nazi regime with a legal means of sterilizing people they viewed as a liability to the German *Volk*— those who prevented the Aryan race from flourishing.⁶ By conducting forced sterilizations, they were under the impression that they were saving the German race and economics by preventing the birth of children considered *lebensunwertes Leben* (“lives unworthy of life”).⁷ The law stated, “Anyone suffering from a hereditary disease can be sterilized by a surgical operation if, according to the experience of medical

⁴ National Human Genome Research Institute, “Eugenics: Its Origin and Development (1883-Present),” 2021; Indiana Assembly, “Laws of the state of Indiana, passed at the sixty-fifth regular session of the General Assembly, 1907,” (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, contractor for State printing). <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/1053/1907%20General%20Acts-%20OCR.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

⁵ Henry Friedlander, “Step by Step: The Expansion of Murder, 1939-1941,” *German Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (1994): p. 496.

⁶ Friedlander, “Step by Step,” p. 496.

⁷ Gisela Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State,” *Signs* 8, no. 3 (1983): p. 412.

science, there is a high probability that his offspring will suffer from serious physical or mental defects of a hereditary nature.”⁸ Its application targeted neurological and physical ailments, including congenital mental deficiency, schizophrenia, manic-depression, epilepsy, Huntington’s chorea, blindness, deafness, physical deformity, and chronic alcoholism.⁹ Despite the law focusing on hereditary ailments, a racial component was not referenced but still viewed as a threat. To maintain a pure white race, forced sterilizations predominantly targeted Roma Gypsies, German Africans, and Polish minorities in Upper Silesia.¹⁰ These procedures were conducted unbeknownst to the patients via sterilization by x-ray and were legalized alongside other forms of non-consensual castration in a Law from 3 July 1934.¹¹

Hitler declared in 1934 that sterilization was an “offensive against this [hereditary predispositions] threat of the gradual disintegration of the *Volk*,”¹² further justifying the Reich’s actions toward disabled individuals. Sterilization efforts would adapt, however, with Hitler envisioning the Third Reich as free of incurably sick persons. To free the Reich, Hitler and the Nazi party would have to purge the country in its first attempts at systematic murder. Hitler had discussed the euthanasia programs with Dr. Gerhard Wagner, the head of the Nazi organization for physicians, before the Nuremberg Rally in 1936.¹³ At the rally, Dr. Wagner discussed these concerns at length, at one point using religion as a basis for his reasoning stating, “The creator himself established the laws of life, which harshly and brutally let all that is unworthy of life perish to make room for the strong and healthy to whom the future belongs.”¹⁴ Yet Dr. Wagner was not looking at this from a religious perspective; he was

⁸ German Historical Institute, “Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases (July 14, 1933),” *Nazi Germany (1933-1945)*, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=152.

⁹ German Historical Institute, “Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases.”

¹⁰ Patricia L. Heberer, “‘Exitus Heute in Hadamar’: The Hadamar Facility and ‘euthanasia’ in Nazi Germany,” PhD diss., (University of Maryland, 2001), p. 69. <https://proquest.ezproxy.csuci.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/exitus-heute-hadamar-facility-euthanasia-nazi/docview/304698936/se-2>. In reference to Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State.”

¹¹ Bock, “Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany,” p. 409.

¹² Adolf Hitler, “January 30, 1934,” in *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations, Volume I, 1932-1934*, ed. Max Domarus (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1990), p. 421.

¹³ *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949-1953), Vol. 1 (“Medical Case”): p. 894, https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/llmlp/2011525364_NT_war-criminals_Vol-I/2011525364_NT_war-criminals_Vol-I.pdf. Testimony given by Dr. Karl Brandt during the Nurnberg Military Tribunals in February, 1947.

¹⁴ German Propaganda Archives, “Race and Population Policy,” Calvin University, Dr. Gerhard Wagner, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/pt36grasse.htm>. Original source: Gerhard Wagner, “Rasse und Bevölkerungspolitik,” *Der Parteitag der Ehre vom 8. bis 14. September*

trying to appeal to the general public that it was necessary to rid Germany of lives that did not benefit the state.

In late 1938 and early 1939, Hitler would have the opportunity to justify the euthanasia program to provide a “mercy death” to those unfortunate enough to be born with a hereditary ailment.¹⁵ According to Dr. Karl Brandt, the Reich Commission for Health and Sanitation and member of the Reich Research Council, “The father of a deformed child approached the Fuehrer and asked that this child or this creature should be killed.”¹⁶ The child’s fate would result in death by euthanasia, making the point “that the Nazi leaders were responding to a popular wish.”¹⁷ This case would be used as the pretense for Hitler’s decision to authorize the killing of disabled infants.¹⁸ In the summer of 1939, family physicians whose primary job was assisting in delivering children were ordered to report mentally deficient and physically deformed babies.¹⁹ Dr. Brandt and Reichsleiter Bouhler would then determine the fate of each child. If a child was deemed unworthy of life, they were either given a lethal injection of phenol, or they would be operated on “in such a manner that the result was either complete recovery or death.”²⁰ Newborns and children were not the majority of the disabled population, however, so efforts had to be broadened.

Shortly after introducing euthanasia for children, the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registering of Serious Hereditary and Congenital Illnesses would expand its reach to adults. This led Hitler to issue a memorandum in October 1939, which he backdated to 1 September 1939. Bouhler, at a meeting with the Nazi high command on 10 August 1939, argued that Hitler needed to justify the cruelty. He used the start of the war as part of his reasoning. Euthanasia was merely a wartime measure to free up hospital beds and personnel for the coming war.²¹ The memorandum authorized doctors to commit involuntary euthanasia without prosecution on those performing the depraved task. In his memorandum, Hitler designated Reichsleiter Bouhler and Dr. Brandt with the “responsibility to

1936. *Offizieller Bericht über den Verlauf des Reichsparteitages mit sämtlichen Kongreßreden* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1936), pp. 150-160.

¹⁵ Sources are not conclusive on the exact date of the Knauer example, see Heberer, “Exitus Heute in Hadamar,” p. 85; Friedlander, “Step by Step,” p. 497; and *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 1 (“Medical Case”), p. 894.

¹⁶ *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 1 (“Medical Case”), p. 894.

¹⁷ P. Weindling, “Nazi Euthanasia,” *Eugenics Archive*, 2014, <https://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/tree/535eed177095aa0000000242>.

¹⁸ Friedlander, “Step by Step,” p. 497.

¹⁹ *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 1 (“Medical Case”), p. 844.

²⁰ *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 1 (“Medical Case”), p. 844.

²¹ Peter Hayes, *How Was It Possible?: A Holocaust Reader*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), p. 284. In reference to Friedrich Kaul’s Nazimordaktion T-4.

broaden the authority of certain doctors to the extent that [persons] suffering from illnesses judged to be incurable may, after a humane, most careful assessment of their condition, be granted a mercy death.”²² After receiving complete authority over the euthanasia program, Bouhler and Brandt were determined to find a method that would not appear as inhumane as lethal injection. Lethal injection tended to be slow, unreliable and necessitated a human connection between victim and perpetrator due to the physical contact.²³ Thus Viktor Brack, a subordinate to Bouhler and Brandt, and Albert Widmann, an SS officer and chemist, recommended using carbon monoxide gas.²⁴

According to postwar testimony, Viktor Brack and Widmann would get their opportunity to test the use of carbon monoxide gas on human subjects in December 1939 or January 1940. They convened with other physicians from the T4 program for the first trial run at the former Brandenburg penitentiary.²⁵ To test the efficiency of carbon monoxide gas, they converted a room in the former penitentiary to resemble a shower room to prevent mentally disabled victims from becoming hysterical. Over the next two days, the tests would conclude with eight male victims’ lives coming to an end, providing the physicians and their compatriots with the evidence they needed to pursue the use of carbon monoxide as the primary killing method during the euthanasia program.²⁶ After the test had concluded, Brandenburg would continue to be developed to increase efficiency, becoming the first assembly line for death. Next to the “shower room” was a small storage room used to store the carbon monoxide tanks and control the levers to release the deadly fumes into the room through the piping system. On the same floor was the crematorium. The crematorium consisted of two mobile ovens heated by oil, where the remains of the victims were burned to ash and dust.²⁷ Five more facilities would be established after Brandenburg, including one in Hadamar in December 1940. The Hadamar facility would be the beginning of the end of the euthanasia program due to public outcry, specifically by Bishop Limburg. In a letter to the Reich Minister of Justice, he stated, “Several times a week buses arrive in Hadamar.... School children of the vicinity know this vehicle and say ‘here comes the murder-box again.’...I beg you most humbly... to prevent further transgressions of the Fifth Commandment of

²² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Adolf Hitler Authorizing the T4 (Euthanasia) program,” Photograph Number: 67072, 1939, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa15074>.

²³ Nestar Russel, *Understanding Willing Participants, Volume 2: Milgram’s Obedience Experiments and the Holocaust*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 76.

²⁴ Russel, *Understanding Willing Participants*, p. 76.

²⁵ Heberer, “Exitus Heute in Hadamar,” p. 115.

²⁶ Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, pp. 102-103.

²⁷ Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, p. 105.

God.”²⁸ After Dr. Hilfrich’s letter to the Reich Minister of Justice, Hitler grew concerned over public opinion becoming hostile and would order all euthanasia facilities to be closed. With these six facilities, however, we see the introduction of organized mass killing conducted by the Nazi regime. Brandenburg became influential in future endeavors by Hitler and the high command after the invasion of the East during Operation Barbarossa.

Before Operation Barbarossa, the Nazis gained significant knowledge regarding railway usage that could transport hundreds of thousands of people in a minimal amount of time. This is important because the primary method of transportation used during the Final Solution was the rail system. Nahplan I, II, and III was essentially the training grounds for the *Reichsbahn* (the German National Railway) and Heinrich Himmler regarding deportations. The key objective of the Nahplan was the deportation of Poles and Jews from the Wartheland, relocating them to ghettos and labor camps within Poland. During Nahplan I, they were able to evict and deport 87,833 Poles and Jews from their homes between 1 and 16 December 1939.²⁹ Despite meeting the goal of 80,000 evictions in Nahplan I, the deportations underwent extraordinary difficulties. During the seventeen-day ordeal, they ran into issues such as no predesignated drop-off zones, frequently causing reroutes, incomplete or incorrect evacuation lists, and individuals bringing too many belongings, causing problems with the number of people they could fit into a train car.³⁰ Issues like these brought attention to the need to revise the deportation plans. During Nahplan II, between May 1940 and April 1941, they successfully deported 235,961 individuals.³¹ Learning from the mistakes of Nahplan I, the regulations surrounding deportation changed drastically. Limits on personal goods prevented deportees from bringing more than thirty kilograms worth of personal belongings, tight schedules for the trains and predesignated pick-up and drop-off zones.³² Nahplan III had a very short cycle with limited results. Between January and March of 1941, the deportations were significantly less, counting at 26,226.³³ Nahplan III was less

²⁸ “Nazi Extermination of People with Mental Disabilities: Letter from Dr. Hilfrich, Bishop of Limburg, to the Reich Minister of Justice, August 13, 1941,” in *A Teacher’s Guide to the Holocaust*, University of South Florida Archive, <https://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/document/DocEuth.htm>. The letter is accessible in Vol. I of *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, pp. 845-846.

²⁹ Phillip Terrell Rutherford, “Race, Space and the ‘Polish Question’: Nazi Deportation Policy in Wartheland, 1939-1941,” PhD diss., (Pennsylvania State University, 2001), p. 142, <https://proquest.ezproxy.csuci.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/race-space-polish-question-nazi-deportation/docview/251426790/se-2>. Data obtained through the United States National Archives and Records Administration.

³⁰ Rutherford, “Race, Space and the ‘Polish Question,’” pp. 148-149.

³¹ Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*, (London: Cornerstone Digital, 2014), p. 109.

³² Rutherford, “Race, Space and the ‘Polish Question,’” p. 261.

³³ Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution*, p. 109.

successful than the previous plans due to the attention of the Nazi high command swaying from deportations in the East to war in the East.

Operation Barbarossa began on 22 June 1941 and was the key to unlocking Nazi aggression against populations they despised, particularly the Jews. The eastward invasion, however, was a plan of Hitler's long before it came to fruition. Hitler had the intent to invade the Soviet Union as early as 1939, declaring in his speech at the Berghof conference, "My pact was only to stall for time, and, gentlemen, to Russia, will happen just what I have practiced with Poland— we will crush the Soviet Union."³⁴ The pact he referred to was known as the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, which would be implemented the day after his statements, on 23 August 1939. This pact entailed not an alliance or peace between the two nations. It was a mutual understanding that neither of the countries would aid a third-party nation in the event of war between one of the signatories and that Russia would not meddle in Germany's military affairs for ten years. Russia had a stipulation that increased its land mass by acquiring Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and part of Poland. Considering Germany wanted to expand itself to provide more land for the *Volk*, there was no conceivable way Hitler would allow this to play out. Hitler believed that if the German military "crushed" Russia, the English would have no one else to turn to and enable Japan to focus all of its forces on the United States to "prevent the latter [The United States] from joining in the war."³⁵ After the commencement of Operation Barbarossa, the Einsatzgruppen and German SD units were dispatched behind the front lines with orders from Himmler and Heydrich to eliminate "Jewish Bolshevism" and that "Jews in party and state positions" were to be shot.³⁶ Because of the broad orders given to these military units, and their exemption from being court-martialed on the merits that they were destroying Bolshevism, there was a dramatic increase in mass killings.

Heinrich Himmler assigned SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Security Police and SD, to assemble a new mobile unit called the Einsatzgruppen in 1939.³⁷ Heydrich hand-picked many men who held the same convictions, with ideologies that believed Jews were to blame for Germany's problems and that eradicating them was the only plausible answer. The Einsatzgruppen consisted of highly trained and highly intellectual individuals, with many of the higher-ranking members

³⁴ Alan Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian-German Conflict* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1966), p. 25.

³⁵ Hitler, "January 30, 1934," in *Hitler: Speeches and Proclamations*, p. 2355.

³⁶ Jürgen Matthäus, Jochen Böhrer, and Klaus-Michael Mallmann, *War, Pacification, and Mass Murder, 1939: The Einsatzgruppen in Poland*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2014), p. 129.

³⁷ Jadwiga M. Biskupska, "Extermination and the Elite: Warsaw Under Nazi Occupation, 1939-1944," PhD diss., (Yale University, 2013), p. 30, <https://proquest.ezproxy.csuci.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/extirmination-elite-warsaw-under-nazi-occupation/docview/1492740304/se-2>.

earning a Ph.D. before the onset of World War II. Regardless of their education and previous successes in life, many of these men operated under the pretense that they would be leading figures in the new Reich if they were willing to do what was deemed necessary by Hitler and the Nazi high command. These units operated independently from the rest of the military. Still, they received a considerable amount of aid from the German troops when it came to their logistical needs for things such as supplies or transportation. Most of their operations were considered top secret, and their reports were very vague to conceal the atrocities they committed, which is represented by the fact that there is only one “surviving written order, from Heydrich to his field commanders.”³⁸ Their effectiveness was primarily associated with their constant mobility and flexibility, allowing them to go virtually anywhere to complete a task.³⁹ On the Eastern front, they were better known as death squads because wherever they went, death would be soon to follow.

After only one month of Nazi occupation in the East, Hermann Göring would also assign Reinhard Heydrich with the sole responsibility of making preparations for the implementation of a “total solution of the Jewish question,” requesting that Heydrich submit “an overall plan showing the preliminary organizational, substantive, and financial measures for the execution of the intended final solution of the Jewish question.”⁴⁰ Göring’s order would lead Heydrich to search for a means of executing every Jew in Europe, from France to Russia. Heydrich would enlist the Einsatzgruppen to carry out his orders and inflict as much damage to the Jewish population as possible. However, if the Nazi regime were to slaughter the Jewish people systematically, the method would have to meet three specific criteria based on my analysis. First, it had to be coordinated, with the ability to inflict massive amounts of casualties. With some ten million Jews in Europe, small, inconsistent executions would not meet the desired goals of solving the Jewish Question. Second, it had to be repeatable, without mental detriment to the Nazi soldiers carrying out the executions. As much as we think of the Nazis as stone-cold killers, many reports were signaling emotional distress among all ranks of soldiers, referenced by Dr. Becker, Adolf Eichmann, Heinrich Himmler, and many others. Psychological well-being had to be considered because if the men were psychologically damaged, they would be unable to perform the tasks they were being ordered to do. Psychology played a significant role in executing the Final Solution through gas chambers. Lastly, there had to be a way to dispose of the evidence. Having received negative responses to the euthanasia programs, the Nazis were intent on not drawing any further attention to what they were doing.

³⁸ David Cesarani, *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 10.

³⁹ Cesarani, *The Final Solution*, p. 30.

⁴⁰ “Letter from Hermann Goering to Reinhard Heydrich, Berlin, July 31, 1941,” *Harry S. Truman Library*, Translation of Document No. 2586 (E), <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/translation-document-no-2586-e-letter-hermann-goering-reinhard-heydrich>.

Mass execution by gunfire had already proved to be an effective method of murdering large groups of people, with an estimated 1.5 million Jewish men, women, and children being executed in this manner during the Holocaust. One of the most notable events during the Holocaust regarding mass shootings was Babi Yar. Babi Yar was one of the first and most well-documented mass shootings of the Holocaust in the small town of Babi Yar outside of Kyiv, Ukraine. Beginning on 29 September 1941 and ending on 30 September 1941, it is estimated that 33,771 Jews of all ages were killed by machine guns, rifles, and pistols and buried alive. On the day preceding the beginning of the executions, 28 September, the Nazis gave notice to herd all the Jews into one concentrated area. The notice read, “All Jews living in Kyiv and its vicinity must come to the corner of Melnikova and Dokhturovka Street by eight o’clock on the morning of 29 September 1941. They are to bring documents, money, valuables, as well as warm clothes, underwear, etc. Any Jews not carrying out this instruction and who are found elsewhere will be shot.”⁴¹ Thinking they were going to be relocated, the Jews came in numbers unforeseen by the Einsatzgruppen, reflected by a report sent out by Einsatzgruppen C, stating “it was initially thought that the action would only involve some 5,000 to 6,000 Jews, more than 30,000 Jews reported.”⁴² The report also noted that despite 75,000 Jews being executed this way, it had become “apparent that this method will not provide a solution to the Jewish problem.”⁴³ Regardless of this statement, and with full knowledge of the downsides of committing such atrocities, mass shootings would continue until the war’s end.

Babi Yar failed to meet two of the requirements listed above— seen in its mental strain on the executions and the inability to cover it up— making mass shootings a less than reliable method for continuation and achieving the overarching goal of complete eradication of the Jewish people. The Einsatzgruppen and German soldiers had failed to destroy any evidence until it was too late, and it harmed the mental health of the soldiers who conducted the murders. After shooting 33,771 innocent people, the Nazis brushed their hands of what had happened at the Babi Yar ravine and had the Ukrainian locals fill the mass grave with dirt. It would not remain that way for long, however: they recognized in 1943 that the Soviets would come across the ravine and discover what had happened there. Russia was pushing back the German forces and would regain control over Ukraine, making it paramount that the Nazis acted quickly to cover up what they had done. To prevent anyone from finding out about the massacres that happened at Babi Yar, SS-Standartenführer Paul Blobel came back to Babi Yar under Aktion 1005 to remove all traces of the event. Aktion 1005’s purpose was to “wipe

⁴¹ Michael Olive and Robert J. Edwards, *Operation Barbarossa, 1941*, (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2012), p. 195.

⁴² Ernst Klee, Willi Dreßen, and Volker Riess, “*The Good Old Days*”: *The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, (New York, NY: Free Press, 1991), p. 68.

⁴³ Klee, Dreßen, and Riess, “*The Good Old Days*,” p. 68.

out the traces of the mass graves of people executed by the Einsatzgruppen,”⁴⁴ with the expected outcome of avoiding future persecution. The corpses were stacked on funeral pyres from a nearby cemetery and lit ablaze using a combination of wood, gasoline, and oil. While attempting to destroy the evidence of what had happened at Babi Yar, Paul Blobel’s men had ordered: “Russian prisoners of war to burn all the bodies, destroying all the evidence of the crime.”⁴⁵ However, after the Russian prisoners of war had burned their bodies, their overseers failed to gun them down, allowing three of them to escape. Having escaped, they told the story; it was later reported to the *New York Times* in 1943, which wrote that “the Germans had machine-gunned from 50,000 to 80,000 of Kyiv’s Jewish men, women, and children.”⁴⁶

From the perpetrator’s perspective, a significant amount of psychological damage was also attributed to the mass shootings. Blobel, speaking of the events at Babi Yar, stated during the Nuremberg trials, “men who took part in these executions suffered... a lot, psychologically.”⁴⁷ There are reports of commanding officers giving their soldiers “large amounts of alcohol to alleviate the stress.”⁴⁸ This is referenced by Kurt Werner, a soldier in Sonderkommando 4a, an attachment of the Einsatzgruppen, who stated that, after shooting Jews at Babi Yar from six in the morning until five or six at night, “we were taken back to our quarters... [and] we were given alcohol (schnapps) again.”⁴⁹ Soldiers being instructed to consume large amounts of alcohol was somewhat expected when carrying out these mass shootings to cope with the scenes they witnessed and contributed to. Nevertheless, alcohol was not the answer to all their problems. Often it was a temporary solution to more significant reactions by the nervous system. In a court proceeding in Germany after the war had ended, the members of the Einsatzgruppen recounted that “The members... were in the long-run not up to the mental strain caused by the mass shootings.” In a conversation between Bach-Zelewski and Heinrich Himmler, Bach mentioned the effects on the men, stating, “Look at the eyes of the men in this Kommando, how deeply shaken they are! These men are finished for the rest of their lives.”⁵⁰ These men were not stone-cold killers. They could not mentally process what they were doing and why they were doing it, which caused their nervous systems to shut down. Himmler, considered one of the most dreaded Nazi leaders of all

⁴⁴ *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 4 (“Einsatzgruppen Case”), p. 212, https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/llmlp/2011525364_NT_war-criminals_Vol-IV/2011525364_NT_war-criminals_Vol-IV.pdf.

⁴⁵ W.H. Lawrence, “50,000 Kiev Jews Reported Killed,” *New York Times*, 29 November 1943.

⁴⁶ W.H. Lawrence, “50,000 Kiev Jews Reported Killed.”

⁴⁷ *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 4 (“Einsatzgruppen Case”), p. 491.

⁴⁸ Henri Zukier, “The Twisted Road To Genocide: On The Psychological Development of Evil During The Holocaust,” *Social Research* 61, no. 2 (1994), p. 431.

⁴⁹ Klee, Dreßen, and Riess “*The Good Old Days*,” p. 67.

⁵⁰ Zukier, “The Twisted Road To Genocide,” p. 431.

time, was left shaken after he experienced a mass shooting. During a visit to Minsk, Himmler wanted to view one of the shootings for himself, and after “witnessing the execution of a hundred men... nearly collapsed from shock,”⁵¹ “...he couldn’t stand still. His face was white as cheese, his eyes went wild and with each burst of gunfire he always looked at the ground.”⁵² From his experience in Minsk, Himmler would demand that other forms of execution be found that were less personal and more “humane,” not further to impair the soldiers carrying out the executions.

Side effects of the emotional distress caused by these shootings also impacted the victims in an unforeseen way; what should have been a quick and painless death became something entirely different. Some of the soldiers “were husbands and fathers,” and they were unable to focus on what they were doing, causing them to wince “as they pulled their triggers” because they were reminded of their family at home when staring directly at the innocent people they were shooting.⁵³ Whether it was due to a wince before pulling the trigger or aiming poorly to avoid killing their victims on the spot, trying to spare what lives they could, the result was a more agonizing and slow death. The leaders of these units would then walk around with their pistols or rifles and end the moans of their victims, likely not for the sake of the person dying but for the psychological well-being of their comrades.⁵⁴ SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, the man responsible for sending millions of Jews to their deaths, also felt a moral responsibility to the men, at one point mentioning that “young people are being made into sadists”⁵⁵ due to the mass shootings and that these shootings will cause German people to “go mad or become insane.”⁵⁶ In an attempt to prevent any further complications, the Einsatzgruppen began to experiment with different methods with less personal interaction.

Gas vans, also known as murder wagons and Kaiser-coffee cars, were introduced to “humanely” kill Jewish individuals with few negative side effects to the operator. Initially, the gas vans were experimented with in 1940, using mentally disabled children as their subjects. Yet, the Einsatzgruppen would make them well known in late 1941 as a more accessible and large-scale execution method. By combining multiple facets from past experiences, the Nazis could develop something new that resembles the gas chambers later used during the Final Solution. Using the gas chambers during the Final Solution was likely a combination of the experience gained using gas vans and the rooms constructed during Operation T4. Like mass shootings, gas vans had their inadequacies. Despite finding a more “humane” method that was less hands-on, the men carrying out the duties of driving the vans and emptying them had reported psychological issues, primarily because of the screams they could hear while driving the

⁵¹ Zukier, “The Twisted Road To Genocide,” p. 430.

⁵² Russel, *Understanding Willing Participants*, p. 108.

⁵³ *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 4 (“Einsatzgruppen Case”), p. 448.

⁵⁴ *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 4 (“Einsatzgruppen Case”), p. 448.

⁵⁵ Russel, *Understanding Willing Participants*, p. 109.

⁵⁶ Russel, *Understanding Willing Participants*, p. 109.

van. There was also no good way to dispose of the bodies, leaving traces of evidence. Similarly to the mass shootings, the men driving the gas vans would drop their victims off in a predesignated mass grave or drop-off zone.

Gas vans went through several different stages of appearance and operational ability. When they were first implemented, the gas vans used a system like Operation T4. A hose was installed from the cabin, where a pure carbon monoxide canister was, into the cab or bed of the truck where the victims were. This method seemed to work seamlessly, allowing up to 40 persons to be executed at a time. Between pick-up, execution, dumping of the bodies, and returning with an empty cabin, it only took roughly three hours.⁵⁷ Although these numbers do not seem extremely significant compared to events such as Babi Yar, it is assumed that as many as 700,000 Jews were victims of the gas vans. That is nearly an eighth of the total number of people who were mercilessly killed during the entirety of the Holocaust. Due to budget constraints, the Einsatzgruppen was issued less-than-perfect vehicles. Pure carbon monoxide would no longer be an option because of the limited resources for these efforts, leaving the emissions from the vehicle as the only suitable means of execution.

The second series of these vans would have appeared to be built with haste. They used wood flooring in the van's bed, drilled a small hole in the back or bottom of the vehicle and connected a hose from the tailpipe to the hole to fill the cabin with carbon monoxide. The dependability of the men operating these vehicles was also a significant issue, which resulted in horrendous deaths for the victims forced into the vans. What they were trying to accomplish was a peaceful transition from life to death, or at least that is what they argued, where the victims would slowly go unconscious and eventually die due to a restriction of oxygen. Wanting to end the misery of the victims as quickly as possible, the drivers would press "the accelerator to the fullest extent. By doing that, the persons to be executed suffer death from suffocation and not death by dozing off as was planned."⁵⁸ This caused the victims of these horrendous deaths to have "distorted faces and excretions,"⁵⁹ which was ruled to be fixed with adjustments to the levers, which limited the amount of carbon monoxide that could pass at any given time, making death come quicker and presumedly make "the prisoners fall asleep peacefully,"⁶⁰ which prevented the aforementioned distorted faces and excretions according to Dr. August Becker in a document sent to SS-Obersturmbannführer Rauff. Another major issue noted in reports sent by the units operating these vans was the unreliability when the weather wasn't near perfect. Dr. Becker also

⁵⁷ Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, pp. 152-153.

⁵⁸ "Report from SS (Schutzstaffel) Lt. Dr. August Becker to SS Lt. Col. Walter Rauff," *United States National Archives*, Record Group 238, Exhibit 288, 1942, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/596664?objectPage=3>. Translation taken from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/nazi-correspondence-regarding-gassing-vans>.

⁵⁹ "Report from SS (Schutzstaffel) Lt. Dr. August Becker to SS Lt. Col. Walter Rauff."

⁶⁰ "Report from SS (Schutzstaffel) Lt. Dr. August Becker to SS Lt. Col. Walter Rauff."

reported that “the vans... stop completely in rainy weather. If it has rained for instance for only one-half hour, the van cannot be used because it simply skids away. It can only be used in absolutely dry weather.”⁶¹ Considering the weather in the East was frequently less than ideal, the vans were often rendered useless. With all the issues these vans had and the screams from the people inside, this caused many of the operators to develop serious psychological problems.

The purpose of the gas vans was to allow for a more humane form of execution because the shooting harmed the executioners. Himmler states, “by using these gassing vehicles, the troubles connected with shooting would fall to the wayside.”⁶² Himmler would soon realize how wrong he was. Considering the operators were close to the victims, with only a thin layer of metal separating them, they could hear the screams and groans of their victims as they began to suffocate and go into convulsions. Reality would set in very quickly, however, with documentation from a soldier by the name of Lauer writing, “I can still hear the hammering and the screaming of the Jews— ‘Dear Germans, let us out!’”⁶³ Months into their campaign of murder by death van, the operators were already expressing psychological issues as early as November 1941. If the screams and pounding were not enough to break them, removing the deceased from the vehicle, with distorted faces, excrement, and fumes leaking out, tended to be enough.

Some men believed that the gas vans were more grotesque and gravely worse psychologically than the shootings. Dr. Becker reported concerns about this and sought a solution not to implicate the operators in the post-mortem activities, writing, “I brought to the attention of the commanders of those concerned, the immense psychological injuries and damages to their health which that work can have for those men, even if not immediately, at least later on.”⁶⁴ In a Nazi criminal’s case in Munich in 1972, a defendant named Schuchart gave vivid details of what he had witnessed: “When the doors were opened the bodies were all entangled and covered with excrement. As a result of complaints... Schuchart later refused to use the gas vans again, on the grounds that it was impossible to persuade his men to carry out such a task.”⁶⁵ Operators were not the only ones affected. During an interrogation of Adolf Eichmann, he recounted his observations of the unloading of a gas van: “I couldn’t bring myself to look closely, even once.... The screaming and, and, I was too upset.... The van drove up to a long trench, the door was opened, and bodies thrown out. They still seemed alive, their limbs were so supple... I’d had more than I could take.”⁶⁶ He may have witnessed Einsatzkommando or men of the Einsatzgruppen emptying the

⁶¹ “Report from SS (Schutzstaffel) Lt. Dr. August Becker to SS Lt. Col. Walter Rauff.”

⁶² Russel, *Understanding Willing Participants*, p. 146.

⁶³ Russel, *Understanding Willing Participants*, p. 169.

⁶⁴ *Nuernberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 4 (“Einsatzgruppen Case”), p. 449.

⁶⁵ Russel, *Understanding Willing Participants*, p. 171.

⁶⁶ Klee, Dreßen, and Riess “*The Good Old Days*,” pp. 221-222.

vans. Nevertheless, due to the severity of psychological distress caused by mass shootings and gas vans, the Nazis frequently used Jews, prisoners of war, or locals to handle such duties.

First-person accounts, like Petrivna, a Ukrainian girl, give a glimpse of what it was like for everyday citizens of countries invaded by Germany. In an interview with Father Patrick Desbois, she recounts a day that still haunts her, along with two other girls who were forced to “pack down the bodies of the Jews and throw a fine layer of sand on top of them so that other Jews could lay down.”⁶⁷ During his interview with Father Patrick, Adolf Wislovski made similar statements, stating, “Russians and perhaps others, locals. They were digging the pits.”⁶⁸ Innocence was not an option if you were selected to serve the Nazis in their sadistic efforts. Petrivna learned this at a young age from her mother, being told, “Go, if you don’t go, they will kill you!”⁶⁹ In this statement, her mother tells her that if she does not go and comply with the soldiers’ demands, she too will be lying dead inside the pits that the locals were forced to dig. In the minds of the Nazi high command, this was a large experiment to determine the best means for manufacturing murder on a scale reminiscent of a factory producing cars or toys.

This would culminate in the creation of new units explicitly used for post-mortem activities. These units were referred to as the “Sonderkommandos.” Sonderkommandos were not German men who served in the Nazi military forces; quite the contrary, Sonderkommando units consisted of camp inmates, who were more often than not Jews. Some time between May and September 1942, the first Sonderkommandos took part in a gassing operation inside a renovated cottage called Bunker I.⁷⁰ Their job was retrieving the corpses inside Bunker I and burying them in pre-dug ditches. In September of 1942, the term would be official, as it was the word used by Blobel’s people at the facilities in Chelmno.⁷¹ The duties of the Sonderkommando varied. None of the jobs were anything less than torture, with some Jews choosing to commit suicide by jumping into the burning flames.⁷² With many different steps in the process, the Sonderkommando was in charge of calming people arriving at the gas chambers, collecting their goods and clothing, retrieving the corpses from the gas chambers, harvesting gold teeth, and cremating the remains of their fellow Jews. According to accounts from Jews who served in the Sonderkommando, such as Leon Cohen, a survivor of Auschwitz and a member of the Auschwitz Sonderkommando, they could live somewhat freely within the building of the crematorium. He recalled, “We could do whatever we pleased, as long as we didn’t leave the area of the crematorium

⁶⁷ Father Patrick Desbois and Paul A. Shapiro, *The Holocaust By Bullets: A Priest’s Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 84.

⁶⁸ Desbois and Shapiro, *A Priest’s Journey*, p. 118.

⁶⁹ Desbois and Shapiro, *A Priest’s Journey*, p. 84.

⁷⁰ Gideon Greif, *We Wept Without Tears: Interviews with Jewish Survivors of the Auschwitz Sonderkommando*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 6-7.

⁷¹ Desbois and Shapiro, *A Priest’s Journey*, p. 8.

⁷² Desbois and Shapiro, *A Priest’s Journey*, p. 294.

building, of course.”⁷³ They also had access to any food brought by the Jews who were forced into the gas chambers: “Unlike the other Auschwitz prisoners, [we] were not undernourished... we had plenty of food.”⁷⁴ All of this, however, came at the cost of their mental well-being. Dealing with the death of men, women, and children daily, twelve hours at a time, forced them to repress their emotions to feel like “normal people,” which resulted in them being able to view what they were doing as “work.”⁷⁵ From the Nazis’ point of view, the Sonderkommando was a saving grace for their men. They didn’t have to deal with death on such a personal level. They were only responsible for dropping the canisters of gas into the chambers or turning the valve, making them feel less accountable for the atrocities they were committing.

Through trial and error, the Nazis developed what they viewed as the most systematic process of execution, which led to the deaths of nearly four million Jews over two years within the death camp system. Its multivariable approach was established by incorporating aspects of all the previous actions committed by the Nazis, ranging from Operation T4 and the Euthanasia programs to the psychological battles the men had from mass shootings and the use of gas vans. With a new system in place, SS-Sturmbannführer Gricksch, a member of the SS Main Office and camp inspector, confirmed this, portraying Auschwitz as having “The most advanced methods permit the execution of the Führer-order in the shortest possible time and without arousing much attention.”⁷⁶ This would result in the Nazis being prepared to carry out the Final Solution of the Jewish Question. These “most advanced methods” included all the criteria for the Nazis to conduct mass extermination. The death camps, such as Auschwitz, were coordinated, with the gathering of Jews, shipping them to the camp, and processing them through the camp where they met their inevitable death. Actions taken were repeatable, with much of a hands-off approach when it came to the actual implementation of death, resulting in much less psychological anguish for the men operating the camps, and they had a way to dispose of the evidence.

Auschwitz reflected the efforts made in creating an assembly line style death machine. In a report directed at Herff and Himmler, Gricksch explained the process step-by-step, providing us with the most accurate interpretation of what it was like to see the assembly line in action:

The Jews arrive in special trains (freight cars) toward evening and are driven on special tracks to areas of the camp specifically set aside for this purpose. There the Jews are unloaded and examined for their fitness to work by a team of doctors, in the presence of

⁷³ Desbois and Shapiro, *A Priest’s Journey*, p. 304

⁷⁴ Desbois and Shapiro, *A Priest’s Journey*, p. 304.

⁷⁵ Desbois and Shapiro, *A Priest’s Journey*, p. 299.

⁷⁶ “Auschwitz: Report from Alfred Franke-Gricksch entitled ‘Resettlement of Jews,’” in *A Teacher’s Guide to the Holocaust*, University of South Florida Archive, <https://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/resource/document/DocAusch.htm>.

the camp commandant and several SS officers. At this point anyone who can somehow be incorporated into the work program is put in a special camp. The curably ill are sent straight to a medical camp and are restored to health through a special diet... The unfit go to cellars in a large house which are entered from outside. They go down five or six steps into a fairly long, well-constructed and well-ventilated cellar area, which is lined with benches to the left and right. It is brightly lit, and the benches are numbered. The prisoners are told that they are to be cleansed and disinfected for their new assignments. They must therefore completely undress to be bathed. To avoid panic and to prevent disturbances of any kind, they are instructed to arrange their clothing neatly under their respective numbers, so that they will be able to find their things again after their bath. Everything proceeds in a perfectly orderly fashion. Then they pass through a small corridor and enter a large cellar room which resembles a shower bath. In this room are three large pillars, into which certain materials can be lowered from outside the cellar room. When three- to four-hundred people have been herded into this room, the doors are shut, and containers filled with the substances are dropped down into the pillars. As soon as the containers touch the base of the pillars, they release particular substances that put the people to sleep in one minute. A few minutes later, the door opens on the other side, where the elevator is located. The hair of the corpses is cut off, and their teeth are extracted (gold-filled teeth) by specialists (Jews). It has been discovered that Jews were hiding pieces of jewelry, gold, platinum etc., in hollow teeth. Then the corpses are loaded into elevators and brought up to the first floor, where ten large crematoria are located. (Because fresh corpses burn particularly well, only 50-100 lbs. of coke are needed for the whole process.) The job itself is performed by Jewish prisoners, who never step outside this camp again.⁷⁷

After reconstructing the process in such vivid detail, there is little left to the imagination. As we can see, there are references to all the previous actions undertaken by the regime, some more subtle than others. The Nahplans are represented in how the Jews were shipped to the camps. The unfit, like the disabled during Operation T4, were sent directly to their death and adopted similarly constructed rooms resembling showers—none of what had happened at the camps happened by chance. Every procedure used in the death camps resulted from prior experimentation, deliberately crafted to end lives in the most diabolical ways. These deaths were not naturally occurring due to the ongoing war. They were specific individuals, carefully selected, and chosen to be killed in the least sympathetic way possible to conform to the delusion that they were no better than animals.

⁷⁷ “Auschwitz: Report from Alfred Franke-Gricksch entitled ‘Resettlement of Jews,’” in *A Teacher’s Guide to the Holocaust*.

Conclusion

The sad reality is that Jews were being sentenced to death for merely existing, and their brethren were forced to take part in the process, resulting in their demise. It was intolerable and was caused by the deranged opinions of a sadistic man who had argued that it was done for the interest of the German *Volk*. Despite Hitler's dreams of a Germany free of the Jewish population, it was a dream that evolved from incoherent to insane. Based on the scholarly work that has already been done and the primary resources available surrounding Hitler, the Nazis, and their implementation of the Final Solution, it is clear that before 1941, their only solution to the so-called Jewish Question was not predetermined to be genocide. It was in the year 1941 that Hitler must have given a verbal order to begin seeking a means to end the Jewish race, dealing with it once and for all and setting the groundwork for the thousand-year German Reich. If Hitler had premediated the Holocaust and the Final Solution, it would also mean that he had planned to go into the war with methods to commit genocide. This paper has shown that it was a lengthy and indiscriminate process that included disabled Germans, Ukrainians, Roma people, and others, that concluded with the construction and use of the death camps, taking the most suitable elements of previous actions and getting rid of the features that caused harm to the perpetrators. Despite the individual point of view on the topic, it is a topic that must be discussed to provide us all with the insight to prevent such an atrocity from happening again.