



ADOLF HITLER



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N. DEN

*Herzliche Glückwünsche zum Weibnachtsfest
im Jahreswechsel*

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**A ridiculous
hundred million Slavs**

Tadeusz Mantuffel Institute of History
Polish Academy of Sciences

www.rcin.org.pl



A RIDICULOUS HUNDRED MILLION SLAVS

Concerning Adolf Hitler's world-view

Au chere capitaine Zige Lmeyer
de la part de son ami
major Tarhoff.

7.11.1947.



TADEUSZ MANTEUFFEL INSTITUTE OF HISTORY
POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

JERZY W. BOREJSZA

A RIDICULOUS
HUNDRED MILLION SLAVS

Concerning Adolf Hitler's world-view

Translated from the Polish by David French



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*We shall absorb or expel a ridiculous hundred million Slavs.
(Adolf Hitler, 6 August 1942, the HQ Werwolf)*

PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

Racism is an age-old phenomenon. It probably accompanied our ancestors since the dawn of the human race. Various forms of racism have been active for centuries. Among them is anti-Semitism; which is a well-known and established phenomenon on several continents. In spite of the genocidal shock experienced by Europe, which saw Adolf Hitler's racist theories – transformed into reality – resulting in the murder of six million Jews, anti-Semitism did not vanish from Europe. As the acclaimed German socialist, August Bebel, wrote over a hundred years ago: anti-Semitism does not need Jews – it can exist without them. It turned out that Islamophobia does not always need Muslim communities. Negative stereotypes and ideologies prepare the ground for genocidal racial and religious wars.

Europe did not draw thoroughgoing conclusions from the Holocaust. Nazi Germany's willing helpers – the anti-Semitic murderers of Jews from Romania, Ukraine, Lithuania and numerous other countries – were not brought to account. How arduous and incomplete has been the settling of accounts with Polish anti-Semitism, which endured the years 1945 and 1968, and still exists today in the attitudes of certain areas of society.

Hitler and his German Third Reich became the teachers of genocide under the watchword of "race". But in twentieth-century Europe people were also murdered in great numbers under the banner of class war. The greatest paranoid of all time – Joseph Stalin – excelled at that. People were also killed in the name of manifold nationalisms and chauvinisms. German chauvinism was streaked with racism. Only a short distance separated the disdain for "backward" Eastern European nations and contempt for Slavic "barbarians" who

were unable to govern or manage their own economies from the treatment of them as subhuman.

Anti-Slavism – the focus of this book – turned out to be an ideology which was not only propagated, but was transformed into genocide carried out on millions of Russian civilians and POWs, on Poles, and also on Ukrainians and Belarusians. German ideology, which presented Slavs as subhuman, provoked Stalin and his entourage to attempt a revival of the old pan-Slavic ideas of tsarist Russia. But the All-Slavic Committee created during the Second World War turned out to be short-lived and flimsy. The idea of the Slavs' uniqueness and their inter-connectedness was soon discredited by the conflict between Stalin's USSR and Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia.

Anti-Semitism was and remains a "pan-concept", an idea which has spread throughout the world. Anti-Slavism was a local and quite restricted phenomenon. For some time it went beyond Germany, and occurred in Hungary, Romania and Austria. Underpinned by nationalist – but not racial – antagonisms in Central and Eastern Europe. Today, anti-Slavism belongs rather to the past. I nonetheless call it to mind for two reasons.

Firstly, in order – in spite of the utter uniqueness of the Holocaust – not to limit it solely to Nazi racism. Secondly, in order to demonstrate once again that the apparently insane theories of populist "Führers" ought to be nipped in the bud before they seize power and begin to put their theories into practice.

My book discusses the ideology leading to genocide. It demonstrates that the views of a second-rate writer, who unfortunately possessed the hypnotic charisma of a leader and orator, became after a few short years a murderers' bible.

My book warns against making light of racist views. Few politicians treated Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* with due gravity. Few grasped the threat of the concept of *Lebensraum* (living space) mentioned repeatedly in the book. One of those few was Winston Churchill, who, after his conversation with Joachim Ribbentrop in 1937, wrote that the demands of *Lebensraum* represented a mortal danger to the Slavs.¹

¹ Cf. Eva Hahn, Hans Henning Hahn, *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnerung. Legenden, Mythos, Geschichte* (Paderborn, 2010), pp. 206–207.

Only few of the politicians wielding power over millions of Slavs appreciated this. They included the presidents of Czechoslovakia: Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš. In Poland, some journalists pondered over *Mein Kampf's* genocidal message, but leading politicians did not want to comprehend it. *Mein Kampf* was justifiably described as a “boring” and “worthless” book, but was erroneously described as “out of date” since it was written before Hitler had seized power. People saw in it a rebirth of the *Drang nach Osten* programme, but it was not read as a harbinger of the extermination of entire nations. It would be difficult to find any evidence that Ignacy Mościcki, Józef Beck or Edward Śmigły-Rydz thoroughly acquainted themselves with it. However, the ruling elite of the USSR read *Mein Kampf*; in the 1930s the two volumes were translated into Russian by Grigory Zinoviev, former member of the Politburo; Nikolai Bukharin quoted *Mein Kampf* at the 17th Congress of the AUCP(b) in 1934, Joseph Stalin drew attention to Hitler’s programme, and Mikhail Kalinin knew the book. Karol Radek understood immediately the danger of *Mein Kampf*, which forecast the metamorphosis of the Soviet Union’s inhabitants into slaves. But the Soviet elite interpreted *Mein Kampf* more as evidence of bellicose German imperialism. The racist threads were not the main focus of attention for its Muscovite readers.²

The Holy See – where *Mein Kampf* was known – did not include it on its list of banned books. It did not want to provoke Adolf Hitler. And the matter was considered from the point of view of which of the two brands of totalitarianism – Stalinism or Nazism – was more dangerous for Catholicism and with which one could negotiate.

Today, *Mein Kampf* is popular and still being read with an anti-Israeli, anti-Jewish slant in certain Arab countries and Turkey. Antoine Vitkine, the French journalist, has written an instructive book about this.³

Today, *Mein Kampf* is indirectly mobilising people not only to take up arms against Jews, but against non-Muslims in general. It is

² Cf. Othmar Plöckinger, *Geschichte eines Buches. Mein Kampf 1922–1945* (Oldenbourg, 2006), pp. 513–548.

³ Cf. Antoine Vitkine, *Mein Kampf, Histoire d'un livre* (Paris, 2013).

an example of how a racist ideology may be used to exterminate one's enemies.

The first decades of the twenty-first century have been marked by racism in a wide variety of forms, and by violence motivated by ideologies and religions. They can be seen occurring on the African and Asian continents with great intensity (and a revival of which we can now see in Europe). They often bear the traits of the large-scale slaughter we know from twentieth-century Europe, from the period this book discusses.

Warsaw, June 2016

FOREWORD

I was a child of almost ten when the Second World War ended. Some of the images and associations I have do not just originate in the cinema, television and books. The Warsaw scenes in Roman Polański's *The Pianist* were played out in the streets of my childhood. Street executions and the Warsaw Ghetto in flames are not abstractions to me.

The generation of politicians and historians born after 1945, and the youngest generations from the 1970s and 1980s, occasionally fall into digressions taken out of the historical context of Europe and the world from the first half of the twentieth century. This results in the actual course of World War Two being forgotten. It leads to an equalising of incomparable phenomena: the expulsion and displacement of Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia are placed on the scales with the extermination of millions of their neighbours carried out by the Third Reich. Did only Hitler and the leader's entourage accomplish it? Or was it effected by a significant part of German society?

There was no ideology behind the ruthless expulsion of Germans from Poland in 1945. It was justified by blaming them for starting the Second World War, for the plans to conquer Europe and for the military domination of the entire world, for the ruthless occupation of vanquished countries, and for the Holocaust against the Jews and the extermination of the peoples of Europe, mainly Slavic Eastern Europe. It was justified by the fact that Germany was twice held chiefly responsible for starting the world wars of the twentieth century. And the desire of not just the Russians, Poles and Czechs – but all the allies – was to do whatever was possible to preclude German aggression in the future.

There was, however, no state-sanctioned racist ideology behind the displacement of Germans. Propaganda invoking the collective guilt of Germans was also very swiftly curbed. The countries of the Soviet bloc were to a certain extent bound by Stalin's famous assertion: "Hitlers come and go but the German people and the German nation remain".

The desire to take stern measures against Germany for the harm it caused and the crimes it had committed was universal in the first post-war period. I remember a column of prisoners of war moving along Piotrkowska Street in Łódź in spring 1945. People were crowding the pavements. Several women shouted and lunged forward to slap the faces of the POWs. They were held back.

Recently popular victimological research leads on occasion to the equalisation of crimes; their scale and motivations. The study of victims – victimology – runs a serious risk by demonstrating how torturers turn into victims and victims into torturers. Every mass crime has its own historical context, from which it cannot be detached. Using the same name for different phenomena often obscures their essence. History is aware of large-scale genocide in running into millions of victims committed against the native peoples of the American continent, against the inhabitants of the African colonies of European powers, and against Jews. It does not, however, mean that one ought to apply the expression "Holocaust" in defining such phenomena. Each of them has its own distinct features, specific motivations and outcomes.

Twenty years ago I began to wonder why, in spite of the existence of a host of excellent monographs about the enslavement and conquest of Slavic countries by Hitler, in spite of the extermination by the Third Reich of millions of Slavs, scholars of Nazi racism focus almost exclusively on anti-Semitism and do not distinguish clearly enough the phenomenon of anti-Slavism.

I wrote a brief dissertation, *Adolf Hitler's Anti-Slavism (Antyślawizm Adolfa Hitlera*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1988), for that reason. The present volume – which is based on it – is at once a continuation, expansion and clarification of some of the ideas. Above all – unlike *Adolf Hitler's Anti-Slavism* – it is less Polonocentric. On the scale of evaluation of the Slavs, a special – actually the worst – place was occupied not

by Poles, but by Russians and those that Adolf Hitler included in that concept by way of shorthand. I also devote appropriate space to them in this book.

The term “anti-Slavism” itself appears repeatedly in various combinations – but not as a separate phenomenon – in studies about the racial theories of the Nazis or studies about the conquest of Eastern Europe. In discussions of various Nazi practices in the East the anti-Slavic motivation behind them is still underestimated. As an historian of the epoch I also discern an absence of accounts of how millions of Germans were confirmed in their belief of being the master race, or what kind of self-awareness the millions who proved their Aryan identity in the Third Reich had.

These are very sensitive matters. Young people might deem that many years after the war it is unnecessary to be reproachful and hark on about the past. But this is not an issue of grossly unscientific “historical politics” or “historical propaganda”; the tools of *ad hoc* manipulation by politicians or careerist historians. It is the need for a more complete reconstruction of the past, the taking of a few more steps towards historical truth. I consider studies of the racism of Nazi Germany to be incomplete if they lack chapters dealing with “anti-Slavism”, “the master race, consciousness and criteria”, “non-white races”, et cetera, to supplement the dreadful concepts of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

The German-Greek historian Hagen Fleischer recently observed from the perspective of Athens that during the cold war, West-German and anti-communist attitudes were accompanied by a clear echo of anti-Bolshevist and anti-Slavic prejudices from the Nazi era.¹ Did anti-Slavism die out entirely after 1945? In any case, it did not only come into being along with Hitler and the Nazi Party elite. Nor did it embrace only them.

Politicians who made light of the racist hierarchy of values in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* could see during the Second World War how the apparent ravings of a madman and his entourage became reality.

¹ Hagen Fleischer, ‘The past beneath the present. The resurgence of World War II public history after the collapse of communism: A stroll through the international press’, *Historien*, vol. 4 (2003–2004), p. 45.

The Third Reich did not utterly exterminate the Jews. It merely began the extermination and colonisation of the Slavic nations. But the knitting of Hitler's views into a defined whole allows us to realise what fate he intended for them.

In gathering the materials for this book, I became aware to what extent ideological principles and abstract theories took precedence over the demands of wartime reality in Hitler's actions. From 1941 onwards, Hitler consistently rejected enlisting Russians, Ukrainians and Poles as henchmen (never mind partners) in the fight against the USSR. He feared that giving them arms and specific rights might result in the renewed founding of independent Slavic states. He was categorically opposed to it. As a negative example he referred to the Legions, which became the inception of Piłsudski's reborn Poland. For Hitler, the concept of "racial enemy" was manifest and overpowering.

In his last bunker in Berlin in the spring of 1945, Hitler was aware that the allies would judge his deeds as monstrous crimes. Talking about his intention to commit suicide he mentioned he would not let the Russians drive him around in a cage and display him like a wild animal.

The Russians were the first to reach the ruined *Führerbunker*. Only afterwards did they lead allied officers into it. Among them was the French lawyer, the Alsatian Captain Victor Ziegelmeier. A year later he placed his signature on the temporary constitution of Greater Berlin on behalf of France. He became friendly with the Russians in the Allied Control Council. The French dedication on the back of the photograph written by the Russian to his friend reads: "To dear Captain Ziegelmeier from his good friend Major Tarkov, 7 February 1947". The cold war was approaching Berlin slowly.

Captain Ziegelmeier gathered up some papers strewn across the wooden desk and floor of the *Führerbunker*. He later donated them to his home town of Colmar. He gave me some of the last blank forms and Hitler's cheques. Among them a standard form survived in Hitler's last documents bearing Christmas greetings from 1939 (a happy year for the chancellor): "Adolf Hitler, Berlin, im Dezember 1939. Herzliche Glückwünsche zum Weihnachtsfest und zum

Jahreswechsel” (Adolf Hitler, Berlin in December 1939. Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year).

That sower of racial hatred probably could not have foreseen that the meagre remains of the documents from his last hours would end up in the hands of Russians, a Frenchman and a Pole of Jewish descent.

Warsaw, 2006

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A world-view is a specific way of seeing the world.
A world-view is thus an attitude and not a dogma.

Alfred Rosenberg, Journal¹

Hitler took the salute of the German Army on 5 October 1939 in Ujazdów Avenue in Warsaw following the victory over Poland. At that time he was not planning to wipe Warsaw from the face of the earth. But from the first months after the invasion of the Soviet Union he had the total destruction of that country's main metropolises in mind. The disclosures he shared in his headquarters on the night of 17 October 1941 are typical: "During the bombing of Paris we limited ourselves to the airports situated around it, in order to protect the ancient centre of civilisation. Of course, the French people *en masse* behave badly, but in some senses though they are akin to us [...] On 22 June [1941] a gate opened in front us beyond which we did not know what was hidden. We may have expected germ warfare with the use of gas and the spectre of uncertainty was hanging over me. The people there are utterly alien to us. The Bolsheviks have taken away everything linked to civilisation. And when I raze Kiev, Moscow and St. Petersburg to the ground I will not feel a thing [...]"²

From the beginning of the war with the USSR Hitler talked about razing Moscow to the ground and building a reservoir in its stead.³ A march past of the German Army in the capital of the USSR

¹ *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs 1934/35 und 1939/40*, ed. Hans-Günther Seraphim (München, 1964), p. 241.

² Adolf Hitler, *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims*, ed. Werner Jochmann (Hamburg, 1980), p. 93.

³ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis* (New York–London, 2000), *passim*.

never happened, of course. The defeat began there. That did not stop a Polish historian – the author of academic textbooks – from discussing quite recently the benefits of a possible alliance between the Second Polish Republic and Hitler. I feel compelled to quote an entire paragraph from the text published in the popular Polish newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*:

We did not want to find ourselves in an alliance with the Third Reich, and we ended up in one with the equally criminal Soviet Union. And even worse, under its absolute domination. Hitler, however, never treated his allies like Stalin treated the countries defeated after the Second World War. He respected their sovereignty and self-determination, merely imposing certain limitations on their foreign policy. Our dependence on Germany would thus have been significantly less than what we experienced at the hands of the Soviet Union after the war. We could have found a place alongside the Reich almost like that of Italy's, and certainly better than Hungary and Romania's. We would finally have stood in triumph in Moscow and Adolf Hitler and Edward Rydz-Śmigły would have taken the salute of the victorious Polish-German Armies. The Holocaust, of course, has grim connotations. If one were to ponder over this at length, however, one may come to the conclusion that a swift Germany victory may have meant the Holocaust would never have happened, since the Holocaust was to a large extent a consequence of German wartime defeats.⁴

Historians, as it is often said, have more power than the gods: they can create history according to their inclinations. Except that that kind of history is storytelling, probability theory unacceptable to scholars – and not science. Theories of historical probability must be based on actual facts and evidence. Adolf Hitler and Edward Rydz-Śmigły taking the salute for the victory over the USSR in Moscow? The Polish Army as the determining factor in the defeat of the Soviet Union? Poland by Hitler's side with almost the same status as Fascist Italy? A swift victory by Hitler averting the Holocaust? And so Józef Beck is to blame? Beck, who, as Paweł Wiczorkiewicz

⁴ Prof. Paweł Wiczorkiewicz, 'W 66. rocznicę agresji sowieckiej na Polskę', *Rzeczpospolita* (17–18 Sept. 2005), pp. 8–9.

said, did not see or perhaps ignored some of the “instructions of the Marshal” (Piłsudski).⁵

For several decades, hundreds of biographies and monographs have reconstructed how Hitler and his Third Reich treated their allies. Every significant act of defiance or attempt to leave an alliance with Hitler ended in the blackmail, imprisonment or execution of the leaders of the allied, satellite states. Suffice to recall the fate of Miklós Horthy or Mussolini’s son-in-law, Galeazzo Ciano, who was shot under German pressure.

To write that the Holocaust would have never happened under certain specific circumstances is to ignore almost everything Adolf Hitler himself said and wrote in the years 1919–1945. It means to ignore the fact that the leader of the Nazi Party had been planning the physical annihilation of the Jews since the 1920s. It means ignorance of the nature of the *Reichskristallnacht* on the nights of 9 and 10 November 1938, which brought Hitler’s genocidal plans regarding the Jews beyond the attention merely of Europe’s political elite.⁶ Hitler’s genocidal anti-Semitism was one of the two or three constant and immutable components of his personal programme.

Were the plans to annihilate the Jews equivalent to the plans to annihilate the Slavs? Absolutely not. But the combination of Hitler’s anti-Semitism, the plans for *Endlösung* (the Final Solution) and the theory of *Lebensraum* (living space seized in the East) are only too obvious for anyone who has at least cursorily acquainted themselves with *Mein Kampf* or Hitler’s speeches. Finland and Bulgaria did not lie on the road towards the East devised by Hitler for the Third Reich. Poland did. For Hitler, Slavs meant Russians, Czechs, Serbs, Ukrainians and Poles. He considered them all inferior races. He had formed an opinion about the first three groups during his younger days in Vienna and Munich. In spite of the worst epithets hurled in his philippics for the crowds from the period of the Silesian Uprisings, he had a somewhat better opinion of Poles.

⁵ Ibid. Piotr Zychowicz recently picked up these threads in his book *Opcja niemiecka czyli jak antykomuniści próbowali porozumieć się z III Rzeszą* (Poznań, 2014).

⁶ In Polish literature see: Karol Jońca, *Noc kryształowa i casus Herszela Grynszpana* (Wrocław, 1998).

Hitler's views of the world included a shifting classification of Slavs. After all, he was still able, in October 1941, to utter to his closest circle the following sentence: "compared to Russia, even Poland proved to be a civilised country".⁷ That kind of comment meant little. The camp in Auschwitz (Oświęcim) had been running for over a year by then. It had originally been established for Polish political prisoners, and was subsequently transformed into an enormous death factory for the Jews and people of other nationalities, using "advanced German technology". Only the industrial methods of mass genocide were not developed in advance by Hitler personally. But his theories regarding the extermination of "subhuman" Jews and Roma people had been tried out and were ready for the "future reality" long before Auschwitz was built.

Hitler's war in the East was an "ideological" one. He did not avoid that term. Quite the opposite. During the Second World War he spoke ceaselessly about conflicts of ideology. Ideological imperatives defined not only his attitude to the "non-human, verminous" Jews, but also to the "sub-humans" of the European East; chiefly Slavs. On Hitler's racial scale, the Italians, Hungarians and Romanians – his official satellites – although rated low by him, were judged superior to the Slavs. We must not for a moment forget Hitler's fanatical racism when we examine his foreign policy. Politics of global conquest forced Hitler into an alliance with imperial Japan. But if only from the documents of the German foreign ministry it is clear how troublesome that alliance with an "inferior" "yellow race", with "people of a different skin colour" was. The Japanese were "Asian". The concept "Asian" had negative, contemptuous associations. The Japanese – yes. The Indians and Chinese – no.

In Hitler's eyes the Soviet Union consisted of: Jews, Bolsheviks, political Commissars, Russians, and Asians. He used these concepts interchangeably and extremely imprecisely, combining them together and equating them with each other. But he had planned the resettlement and extermination of the peoples of the European East well before he began his conquests in 1938.

⁷ Hitler, *Monologe*, p. 93.

Had Poland – as some historians theorise today – joined forces with Nazi Germany, it would also have meant participation in the physical extermination of Russians, Ukrainians and other citizens of the Soviet Union. I shall not mention here that at German instigation widespread or forced participation in pogroms of the Jewish population may have resulted. Before Germany invaded the USSR, it had inspired anti-Jewish attacks and pogroms not only in occupied Europe, but in allied Romania.⁸ The Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks – Hitler’s allies – took part in the extermination of Jews in great numbers.⁹

The Romanians and Hungarians were non-Slavs. Hitler tolerated Father Tiso’s fascist-leaning Ludak state, seemingly partially owing to its anti-Czech tendencies. The Bulgarians – ruled by a German dynasty – were benignly excluded from the common Slavic denominator, as were the Croatians, who were controlled by the fascist Ustaše party. But the fundamental principles of his conduct towards the Slavs: Russians, Ukrainians, Poles and Czechs – as “sub humans” – had been in place since 1939.

The distinguished German historian, Eberhard Jäckel, legitimately wrote about Hitler’s panic-stricken fear of changing his mind.¹⁰ And Hitler did not change his mind on the subject of the Slavs’ future, nor during the war did he accept any suggestions from his advisers to temper his policy in order to win over the Russians, Ukrainians or Poles in the fight against Stalin. The Reich Chancellor remained deaf to all suggestions of that kind even in the final months of the Reich’s existence.

Anti-Semitism was the central and most dreadful part of Adolf Hitler’s racism. But by no means the only one. The Führer of the Nazi Party and the Third Reich categorised the Slavs very early in the circles of his racial hell. The Holocaust – the extermination of all Jews – was an extraordinary phenomenon, unique, difficult to

⁸ Cf. Tomasz Szarota, *On the Threshold of Extermination. Anti-Jewish Incidents and Pogroms in Occupied Europe* (Peter Lang, 2015).

⁹ Cf. Ivan Kamenec, *On the Trail of Tragedy. The Holocaust in Slovakia* (Bratislava, 2007).

¹⁰ Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler’s World View: A Blueprint for Power*, trans. by Herbert Arnold (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

compare owing to its scale and methods with his other plans to exterminate “inferior races”. The term “Roma Holocaust” might be used. Extending that term to other nations, however, puts non-identical phenomena on an equal footing. The Nazi Holocaust signified the destruction of a particular race down to its very last member.¹¹ But plans for the partial extermination and enslavement of other nations were transformed into reality in the Third Reich and had their own ideological justification in the leader’s world-view. So as not to over-use the concept of “world-view”, let us agree with Rosenberg that they were often not fully developed dogmas, but only specific attitudes, images and stereotypes. Let us not forget that the unfulfilled painter and architect that was Hitler perceived the world visually to a large extent. His visits to the front lines in the years 1939–1941 influenced his assessment of Poles, Russians and Ukrainians, how he saw land in the East and his decisions about the locations of the concentration and death camps.

While avoiding the terms “Russian Holocaust” or “Polish Holocaust”, I must at the same time repeat a question I posed in the 1980s: May we talk about Adolf Hitler’s anti-Slavism as one of the essential elements of his racism? In 1985 I submitted the first results of my research to be publicly debated before the *Historische Kommission zu Berlin*. It astonished me how the attitudes of many ordinary Germans were reflected in Adolf Hitler’s image of the Slavs, in his blatant, although imprecise anti-Slavism, where details contradicted themselves.

My attempt to introduce the concept of anti-Slavism to a wider circle of academics of Nazism in Germany was ignored. During the public debate in Berlin in 1985 the validity of the concept of “Adolf Hitler’s anti-Slavism” was supported by the historians: Eberhard Jäckel, Wolfgang Wippermann and the anti-fascist Hans Heinrich Herwarth von Bittenfeld, former first secretary of the German Embassy in Moscow in 1939. And only by them. As a German historian friend of mine explained to me after the debate: “Forty years after the war the community is tired of ceaseless breast-beating. Accountability for

¹¹ Cf. e.g. Richard C. Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust. The Poles under German Occupation 1939–1944* (Hippocrene Books, 3rd edition, 2001).

the Holocaust is already a sufficient burden". The *Historikerstreit* – the attempts to redefine judgements of the past by German historians – which broke out in the nineteen-eighties, veiled those issues.

My slim volume *Adolf Hitler's Anti-Slavism*, published in Warsaw in 1988 with a large print run, aroused interest in Poland, but not in Germany. Lengthy summaries appeared at once in Polish foreign-language magazines.¹² It would be a vain search, however, to find references to "Adolf Hitler's anti-Slavism" in German studies.¹³ Greater interest in that publication was shown by the French, who printed excerpts in a compilation by the IHTP (Institut d'histoire du temps present).¹⁴ The term "anti-Slavism" has existed for some time in the French language, after all.

What forms did Hitler's anti-Slavism assume? Was it legitimate of me twenty years ago to add that concept to the list of elements of the Third Reich's leader world-view drawn up by Eberhard Jäckel? What was the correlation between the concepts of *Lebensraum* and anti-Slavism?

The abundance of literature about National Socialism occasionally obscures our vision of the main themes and characteristic traits of Adolf Hitler's movement and state. Even serious scholars diligently searching for Hitler or Himmler's precise orders, stating the number of murdered people in millions, seem to ignore the fundamental traits of totalitarian systems, particularly those of Nazism. Hitler and Himmler deliberately failed to preserve many orders given orally, and camouflaged genocide under various terms and euphemisms. In numerous studies in the last decade, Götz Aly, Suzanne Heim, Christian Gerlach, Ulrich Herbert, Christoph Dieckmann, and many

¹² 'Anti-Slavism: Hitler's Vision or the Germans', *Polish Perspectives*, 1988, no. 2, pp. 23–39. Also available in the French and German languages.

¹³ An exception is the book by Helmut Schaller, *Der Nationalsozialismus und die slawische Welt* (Regensburg, 2002). It, however, does not deal with anti-Slavism, and extremely selectively and 'defensively' the history of Slavonic philology and Slavic studies in the Third Reich.

¹⁴ Jerzy W. Borejsza, 'Racisme et antislavisme chez Hitler [Hitler's Racism and anti-Slavism]', in: *La politique nazie d'extermination [Nazi Extermination Policy]*, ed. François Bédarida (Paris, 1989), pp. 57–74. The following article ought to be mentioned: John Connelly, 'Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice', *Central European History*, vol. 32 (1999), no. 1, pp. 1–33.

others have written about this.¹⁵ Let us recall the recently published diary of Heinrich Himmler from 1941–1942.¹⁶

We find a succinct note “[Tea with] the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs von Ribbentrop’ dated 20 October 1941 at 5.00 pm. The publishers deciphered this note in a lengthy text: Himmler talked to the president of Slovakia Tiso, Prime Minister Tuka and Minister of Domestic Affairs Mach “about the solution of the Jewish question in Slovakia” at a tea party held by Ribbentrop. It continues: “It concerned the first successful attempt to involve the allied government in the German plan to deport European Jews to Eastern Europe. At the beginning of November 1941 the governments of Slovakia, Croatia and Romania gave their assent [...]”.¹⁷

Using expressions like “tea”, “supper”, “state visit”, “visit”, and “SS administrative plans”, decisions about the displacement, imprisonment and deaths of not hundreds of thousands, but millions of people were concealed under various individuals’ names. Himmler’s diary, containing 570 handwritten pages with deadlines, names, and also occasionally topics of conversations, was brought back to life thanks to the work of an entire team of young German historians from Hamburg lasting several years.

The book runs to almost eight hundred pages, but Himmler’s professional schedule is only part of it. The hundreds of pages are mainly filled with very extensive annotations and Himmler’s records of conversations, which were found with a schedule in a Moscow archive, and supplementary material from German archives (information from Himmler’s pocket diary and the official diaries of his closest associates).

Himmler’s diary shows day by day, hour by hour, that the *Endlösung* – the extermination of millions of Jews, the executions

¹⁵ Cf. i.a. Götz Aly, Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung. Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg, 1991); Christian Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord, Forschungen zur deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 1998); Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005).

¹⁶ *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941–1942*, ed. Peter Witte et al. (Hamburg, 1999).

¹⁷ Ibid.

carried out on Russians, Poles, mass resettlements and the shooting of prisoners of war, were the joint work of an entire elaborate, bureaucratic police and civilian machine comprising the Gestapo, the SS and the Wehrmacht, and dozens of ministries and departments, all fighting over the limits of their power in the turmoil of war. It was not just an SS state.

The evidence of the crimes was covered up. In this context, the doubts of the well-known Belgian historian Jean Stengers as to whether or not Himmler could have spoken about the planned “extermination of 30 million Slavs’ just before the attack on the USSR seem unfounded and taken out of the broad context of totalitarian Germany”.¹⁸ The words *Verdrängung* (displacement), *Vernichtung* (destruction), *Aussiedlung* (resettlement) and similar ones often concealed plans for mass murder.

It is sufficient to recall Hitler’s very momentous comments during his monologues in the Führerhauptquartier Werwolf on 6 August 1942. Infuriated not only by the resistance of the Red Army, but also by the partisan war in the Soviet Union, Poland and Yugoslavia and the recent assassination attempt on Reinhard Heydrich in Prague, the Führer said: “We shall absorb or expel a ridiculous hundred million Slavs”.¹⁹

Hitler did not predict that his most dangerous opponent would turn out to be the people of the Soviet Union, those “ridiculous Slavs”, those Asians, barbarians, and inferior races. In time he changed his mind about their value as soldiers. But he remained faithful to his ideological principles and theories.

¹⁸ Cf. Jean Stengers, ‘Himmler et l’extermination de 30 millions des slaves’, *Vingtième Siècle*, July–September 2001, no. 71, pp. 3–11. What is more, Stengers did not acquaint himself with the existing literature on the subject, cf. Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945*, p. 353.

¹⁹ Hitler, *Monologe*, p. 331.

CHAPTER 2

VIENNA AND MUNICH: SCHOOLS OF HATRED

The intellectual elite always denied Adolf Hitler the epithet of a theoretician. Behind that was a concealed moral condemnation of his views and a contempt for an ignoramus operating with journalistic clichés, for an upstart insinuating himself among real statesmen. When he was already in power, in June 1934, the French press ridiculed Hitler in front of the whole world after his meeting with Mussolini, writing that the Reich Chancellor, with hat in hand, looked like “a little plumber holding a troublesome tool in front of his belly, not knowing what to do with it”.

Were not many of the views of that “little plumber”, that funny little fellow described by Bavarian police informers in the years 1919–1920 as a “comedian” and parodied from the nineteen-thirties onwards by Charlie Chaplin, simply the views of great numbers of the German nation?

Did Adolf Hitler have to simplify his views, like the leaders of the revolutions of 1789 and 1917, when they realised that the masses did not always understand their language and slogans? Was not Adolf Hitler’s view of the world simply the beliefs of a considerable part of ordinary Austrian, Bavarian and German folk?

One thing is beyond doubt: Hitler carried out a selection of negative concepts taken from a world-view shared by hundreds of thousands of Germans and organised them into his own system of hatred, phobias, resentments, prejudices, longings and revisionist demands, and reducing them to the common denominator of anti-Semitism and racism. He mobilised the masses around that negative programme.

None of the notorious European dictators of the last two hundred years had had such a meagre intellectual preparation, none had

travelled such an astonishing road. Anyone that too effortlessly compares Hitler to Stalin forgets that the latter was a well-read person, an autodidact of wide educational interests.¹ This was demonstrably apparent in Stalin's private library, which contained books with his annotations. Adolf Hitler, in many respects a very mediocre, uneducated Austrian-German member of the petty bourgeoisie, had exceptional ability at seizing and exercising power, and at wielding global power. He was a skilled orator who perfectly understood the mentality of the masses and an expert, brilliant organiser of collective hatred.

The amorality of Adolf Hitler's views about the world and his limited attractiveness in intellectual circles do not change in any way the fact that those views became the motivation and justification of the activities not only of the leader of the Third Reich, but also of millions of its citizens. In authoritarian regimes the dictator and his usually narrow ruling elite determine the system's nature. The totalitarian system, at least when it is being established, during the initial phase of its existence, depends upon mass support, on widespread mobilisation. In the case of Nazi Germany Hitler enjoyed mass support right until the end of the Third Reich. The world-view of this Viennese and Munich bohemian and German Army corporal, who never received a higher education, standardised the activities of millions of Germans. For that reason he must be placed from the outset in the spotlight of research by historians of fascism, from when he began his path from being a "nobody" to becoming the leading man in Germany, when he was transformed from being the embodiment of German mediocrity into a dictator wittingly accepted by the majority.

Historians who accuse that approach of returning to the outdated Great Man theory of history fail to take into account the historical reality of the Third Reich, or the specific structure of Hitler's rule and his extraordinary role as an individual, and instead fall into over-theoretical abstract solutions that divert us from historical truth.

The distinguished British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper wrote about Hitler that he was "the Rousseau, the Mirabeau, the Robespierre,

¹ Publications in Russian by Roy Medvedev.

and the Napoleon of his revolution; he was its Marx, its Lenin, its Trotsky and its Stalin. By his character and nature he may have been inferior to most of them, yet he succeeded, as none before him, in controlling his revolution in each phase, even in the moment of defeat. *This speaks for a considerable understanding of the forces he has brought about* [emphasis mine – JWB]. He became a terrifying historical phenomenon, but was also an important historical phenomenon and we cannot afford not to give him our attention”.² Even if we judge Trevor-Roper’s reasoning – placing the poorly educated *Reichsführer* on a par with the outstanding political thinkers of the modern age – as exaggerated or not completely apposite, there is no doubt that he was right to point out that none of the political leaders on the European continent of the last two hundred years possessed such absolute control over their “revolutions” and – let us add – such widespread, visible, direct, everyday support of the majority of his nation right up to the ultimate defeat.

The specific structure of the totalitarian system of the Third Reich, Hitler’s system, determined that all the most important decisions in the field of foreign and military policy belonged to him, very often exclusively to him, and it makes little difference here if posterity denies his abilities as a statesman capable of predicting the distant future or demonstrates that he achieved the opposite than intended effect.

That co-creator of the world’s contemporary history considered himself both a politician and the architect of a programme. So his definition of himself – as German historian Eberhard Jäckel showed – was fully justified.³ Adolf Hitler possessed his own – in its own way coherent – world-view, irrespective of how we might judge his intellectual and moral capacity. This world-view consists of a few constants, above all racism, and alongside it arguments about the

² *Hitlers politisches Testament. Die Bormann-Diktate vom Februar und April 1945*. Provided with an essay by Hugh R. Trevor-Roper and an afterword by André François-Poncet (Hamburg, 1981), pp. 17–18. Cf. Timothy W. Ryback, *Hitler’s Private Library. The Books that Shaped His Life* (New York, 2010).

³ The final German edition: Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitlers Weltanschauung. Entwurf einer Herrschaft* (Stuttgart, 2002). The first edition of the book came out in Germany in 1969.

necessity to exterminate the Jews as a racial blot on humanity. The second constant of that world-view turned out to be – which is only apparent after lengthy research – a thesis that was single-mindedly espoused for twenty-five years that the seizure by the Germans of “living space” (*Lebensraum*) in the East was necessary and legitimate. It was illustrative that in the first edition of his 1969 book *Hitlers Weltanschauung* (*Hitler's Worldview*) Jäckel entitled the relevant chapter “The Outlines of Foreign Policy” and then deliberately changed the title to “Capturing Living Space” in the second edition which came out twelve years later, in 1981, reflecting changes made to the text and a different apportionment of emphasis.⁴

That need to obtain living space in the East was not only motivated by the fact that Russia was eighteen times more sparsely populated than Germany, as Hitler said at a meeting in Munich on 10 December 1919.⁵ Not only by the Germans’ cultural superiority. Behind Hitler’s idea that it was necessary to capture living space in the East was the conviction about the racial superiority of the Germans and the racial inferiority of the Slavs, and about the mission of the Teutonic race to defend race and culture. It assumed its most powerful expression in the years of the Second World War. But Hitler had expressed that conviction in his first public appearances during the Nazi Party’s Bavarian beginnings, twenty years earlier, before he set out to conquer Central and Eastern Europe. One cannot deny him consistency in his views. As far as the Jews are concerned, he succeeded in transforming a considerable part of his dystopia into genocidal reality. What would fate have had in store for the Slavs had Hitler been victorious?

Research into Hitler’s world-view demands from us not just a critical interpretation of his intellectually banal works and mediocre speeches. It compels us to examine the Führer’s words and deeds, since, according to Alfred Rosenberg for Adolf Hitler and his entourage “world-view was a specific way of seeing the world. Thus

⁴ Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitlera pogląd na świat*, transl. into Polish by Anna Danuta Tuszyńska (Warszawa, 1973), pp. 29–54 (German edition: *Hitlers Weltanschauung. Entwurf einer Herrschaft* [1969]).

⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, ed. Eberhard Jäckel, Axel Kuhn (Stuttgart, 1980), p. 96.

a world-view is an attitude and not a dogma".⁶ Hence the validation of Hitler's views must to an even greater extent be sought in the practices of the Third Reich. Indeed, those practices are often the expression of views not articulated by spoken or written words. After all, it is typical that scholars have not paid suitable attention to the definition of world-view which the Third Reich's official ideologist, Rosenberg, articulated.

The anti-Semitism of Hitler, the Nazi Party leadership and Nazi Germany later spawned a huge volume of academic literature in many world languages. Every European with even a very limited education knows that the slogans of Adolf Hitler, the Nazi Party and the Third Reich are linked to concepts such as anti-Semitism, Auschwitz, the Holocaust, *Endlösung* and Shoah. Today's Germans are aware of how the season of genocidal anti-Semitism dishonoured their nation. One could not have supported without knowing that the persecution of the Jews was a central feature of his views. If Hannah Arendt claimed long ago that eighty per cent of Germans became staunch supporters or sympathisers of National Socialism at some moment in their lives, then it can be regarded as an indirect indicator of how widespread anti-Semitism had taken root in Germany.⁷ And, after all, an anti-Jewish mind-set was not alien even to Hitler's opponents. Thus Carl Goerdeler, the Mayor of Leipzig until 1937, who from a historical perspective became for many the most prominent figure of the anti-Hitler nationalist-conservative opposition movement, was, as West-German scholars demonstrated, a supporter of limiting the rights of Jews in public life, and even agreed with many principles of the 1935 Nuremberg decrees.⁸ That same opponent of Hitler, who was executed in Plötzensee Prison,

⁶ *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs [aus den Jahren] 1934/1935 und 1939/1940*, ed. Hans-Günther Seraphim (München, 1964), p. 241.

⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*, vol. 3: *Totale Herrschaft* (Frankfurt am Main–Berlin–Wien, 1975), p. 108.

⁸ Christof Dipper, 'Der Widerstand und die Juden', in: *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus. Die deutsche Gesellschaft und der Widerstand gegen Hitler*, ed. Jürgen Schmäddeke, Peter Steinbach (München–Zürich, 1985), pp. 606–607. Cf. Martin Broszat, 'Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus', *Merkur*, 39 (1985), 382–383.

demanded a Germany with boundaries extending far beyond its territory of 1937 (including the inclusion of Greater Poland) in his World Peace Programme of 1943. Were those merely claims linked to the old traditions of German imperialism?

We do not have an answer to the question of whether the contemptuous attitude to Slavs as an inferior race became almost as universal during the war years as the racial hatred of the Jews was before 1939. The reports of the Social Democratic Party of Germany from the years 1934–1940, for instance, show that anti-Semitism had already become widespread in the first years of the Third Reich.⁹

What were the motivations behind the policy of the Eastern European conquest presided over by Adolf Hitler? It is known that the fundamental differences in the occupation policy in the USSR, Poland and Yugoslavia compared to France, Belgium and Holland did not merely result from the different escalation of the fighting or different administrative directives.¹⁰ The disproportion of losses suffered by the Slavic nations as compared to those of other ones had a more profound rationale in the views of Adolf Hitler and many citizens of the Third Reich. Were those views only imposed upon them after 1933?

As a historian of European fascism I was unable not to pose those questions. Comparing European fascist movements, I became convinced that on the basis of comparisons from the nineteen-thirties, not to mention the period of the Second World War, that a sense of nationalist and racial superiority made it impossible for Nazis to enter into close dialogue even with similar political movements, for example with the Romanians of the Iron Guard. It is impossible not to notice that historians of Nazism on one hand generally limit its racism to anti-Semitism, and on the other pass over the great problem of how far millions of Germans identified with the binding doctrine of the Germanic race's superiority, and with what degree of conviction millions of Germans in the Third Reich demonstrated

⁹ *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands 1934–1940* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980), vols. 1–7.

¹⁰ Cf. Czesław Madajczyk, *Faszyzm i okupacje 1938–1945* (Poznań, 1983–1984), vols. 1–2.

their Aryan descent when completing official forms. In other words, historians have not fully demonstrated either the negative character (with the concepts of “enemy” and “foreign race”), nor yet the “positive” character (with the concepts of “our nation, our race”) of the racial hierarchy of the world promoted by Adolf Hitler and his entourage. To what extent did the views of Adolf Hitler differ from those of his circle, had they grown out of tradition or did they contradict it? To what extent were they imposed on the citizens of the Third Reich?

German nationalism was often pervaded with racist motives. As Ian Kershaw in the newest biography of Hitler writes:

The *völkisch* variant of nationalism remained a minority taste before the First World War, though gaining influential backing through the Pan-Germans, through the dissemination of popular racist works, such as those of Theodor Fritsch and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and through the popularising of the exclusivist and aggressive ethnic nationalism in countless schools and youth organisations. The central strands of the *völkisch* ideology were extreme nationalism, racial anti-Semitism, and mystical notions of a uniquely German social order, with roots in the Teutonic past, resting on order, harmony, and hierarchy. Most significant was the linkage of a romanticised view of Germanic culture (seen as superior but heavily threatened by inferior but powerful forces, *particularly Slavs and Jews* [emphasis mine – JWB]) with a social Darwinian emphasis upon struggle for survival, imperialist notions of the need for expansion to the Slavic east in order to safeguard national survival, and the necessity of bringing about racial purity and a new élite by eradicating the perceived archenemy of Germandom, the spirit of Jewry.¹¹

Anti-Semitism before 1914 – hatred of the “archenemy” – was accompanied, however, by a sense of the internal threat of Slavs much more intensely in the Habsburg Empire than in the Hohenzollern Empire. Over half the population of Vienna around 1900 was made up of foreign elements, and among them chiefly of Slavs: Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Ukrainians, Slovenians, Croatians, and Serbs. Poles – the largest Slavic minority in the Second Reich – were seen as

¹¹ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936. Hubris* (Penguin Books, 2001), pp. 135–136.

a lesser threat than the Czechs or southern Slavs in Austria-Hungary after the granting of autonomy to Galicia in 1867. That also had an effect on the attitude of the Austrian Adolf Hitler.

THE CZECHS AND THE "SLAVIC REICH"

'I know the Slavs from my fatherland', said Hitler to the Strasser brothers in the nineteen-twenties.¹² But did he really know them? The Slavs he encountered most often in the Habsburg monarchy were Czechs. He had many prejudices about them, but contrary to popular opinion, placed them highest on the scale of Eastern European nations. He seemed not to bear hatred towards the Poles. According to Otto Strasser, Hitler advised Austrian volunteers against taking part in the fighting against the Poles in Upper Silesia.¹³ (Although in his speeches he gave at rallies Hitler thundered against the "banditry" of the Polish insurrectionists.) The same Strasser, reproducing his generation's mode of thought, recalled that "for three centuries every self-respecting Prussian has acknowledged only three enemies, three powers that threaten him: France, Austria and Poland".¹⁴ Hitler did not share that Prussian way of thinking.

Martin Broszat, distinguished historian of National Socialism and my mentor, in the 1970s wrote:

It is difficult to find any proof of specific hatred towards Poland in the speech and writing of the "Austrian" Hitler. Unlike his attitude to the Czechs and Hungarians, with regard to whom Hitler never rid himself of inherited German-Austrian traumas, his relationship to Poland before 1939 was rather free of such feelings. On the contrary, Hitler's admiration for Piłsudski, the conqueror of the Red Army in 1920, inclined him towards a sympathetic evaluation of the political and military potential of the Polish nation. *That evaluation obscured his theoretical concept of the Slavs' racial inferiority for many years* [emphasis mine – JWB]. Of course, Hitler did not treat the alliance

¹² Otto Strasser, *Ministersessel oder Revolution?* (Berlin, 1930), pp. 13–14.

¹³ Id., *Hitler et moi* (Paris, 1940), p. 27.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 223.

formed on 26 January 1934 with dictatorially-governed Poland any more seriously than any other alliance. For that reason the agreement was rightly taken with a pinch of salt in the wider circles of the Nazi Party and its supporters who were aligned more with German nationalism than Nazism [...] as in the case of South Tyrol in relation to Italy it was hoped that it was only a matter of “tactics” for the Führer. On the other hand, right up until the first weeks and months of 1939 nothing in fact indicated that Hitler would not be prepared – in the case of Poland’s unconditional declaration to go over to his side – to grant it a similarly privileged place in the reconstructed region of East and Central Europe governed by Great Germany that he later assigned to the Slovaks, Hungarians and Romanians [...] until 1938 he had also intended to use an alliance with Poland as a tool of his foreign policy in the future, and, should a suitable consolidation of his own position occur, to transform that alliance into a satellite relationship and use it as the political foundation for an anti-Bolshevik expansion and colonisation of the East encompassing huge areas and exceeding far beyond all border revisions.¹⁵

Hitler’s pronouncements about the Poles before 1939 were not as homogeneous as Martin Broszat thought and did not exclusively serve propaganda aims. Hitler would simply change his mind. And furthermore, becoming acquainted with the lengthy litany of banalities and clichéd phrases allows one to establish what universal and German stereotypes functioned in his utterances and from what period; see below. But Hitler’s views from the years 1919–1938 and his Viennese youth by no means determined Poland’s fate in the Second World War.

August Kubizek, Hitler’s close friend from the time of his youth, recalls that they came into contact with fellow pupils of Czech origin at school every day. The Sokol movement was established in Linz at that time, the Capuchin Jurasek was said to deliver sermons in Czech and was planning to open a Czech school. Kubizek writes: “That caused a big stir in the town and nationalistically-predisposed minds saw the preparations for a Czech invasion in the actions of

¹⁵ Martin Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik 1939–1945* (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 10–11.

the fanatical Capuchin. That was, naturally, an exaggeration. In spite of that the Czech activities actually aroused in the somewhat insipid residents of Linz the feeling that they were under threat, and in that way they appeared to be unanimously brothers in arms in the bitter struggle for nationality".¹⁶ Hitler and Kubizek visited the Austrian Parliament in Vienna and listened to the speeches of Czech deputies. Hitler's indignation was also triggered by workers conversing in Czech in the streets of Vienna.¹⁷

When Hitler lived in Vienna, every fourth resident of that city bore a Slavic surname, and every fifth was of Czech descent. Fear of a further influx of people from Bohemia and Moravia manifested itself very clearly. Radical German nationalists claimed that "the cities of Austria built by German strength and German efforts were now being endangered by Slavic culture. Prague has already fallen, Brno is waging fierce battles with the foe and Vienna is called – to German shame – the largest Slavic city on the continent".¹⁸ So wrote *Alldeutsches Tagblatt*.

Vienna was witness to many anti-Czech clashes and demonstrations. Czechs had to fight hard for the right to their own schools. Anti-Czech demonstrations extended well beyond Vienna. The efficient Czech banks in Vienna, like Czech tailors and shoemakers, were also a thorn in the side of German nationalists. The bringing of children in great numbers from Czechoslovakia to be apprenticed to Viennese craftsmen was criticised. In spite of Hitler not displaying overt aggressiveness towards Czechs in his Viennese youth – according to the few surviving testimonies – his later anti-Czech comments are laced with such recollections. As his lieutenants noted during the Second World War: "The Führer constantly stresses that he knows the Czechs very thoroughly".¹⁹

For Hitler, they were the most hated ethnic group in Vienna after the Jews. It was no accident that he shared the following with his trusted inner circle in the Wolf's Lair on 25 June 1943: "I've

¹⁶ August Kubizek, *Adolf Hitler. Mein Jugendfreund* (Graz–Stuttgart, 1975), p. 90.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 171, 243.

¹⁸ Quoted after: Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien. Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (München, 1991), p. 443.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 462–466.

managed to get the Jews out of Vienna, now I also want to get the Czechs out of there”.²⁰

On 7 May 1929 Hitler presented himself as an expert on linguistic and ethnic relations from the time of his early Austrian youth in the district court in Munich. He said in court: “The Germans in Austria had just one opponent, which was indeed a mortal one: the Social Democratic Party. Neither Czechs, nor Italians, nor southern Slavs were their opponents – no, only the so-called German Social Democrats. Social Democracy occupied a position opposing the German cause everywhere, was constantly the ally of Czechs and southern Slavs, and the process of Czechization was carried out in Vienna with its help, which led in every case to disastrous results”.²¹

The young Hitler in Vienna and Munich was a nationalist who displayed hostility towards everything that was not German. So he did not conceal his dislike of Italians. He was annoyed by everybody who did not use the German language. But he did not regard language as a criterion of ethnicity. As the years went by, he increasingly subordinated nationality to racial affiliation. He spoke about the delusions of Bismarck, who assumed that by forcing Poles to speak German he would turn them into Germans. And he said the same about the plans of the Mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, who thought he would Germanize Czechs by compelling them to master German.

Attempts are still made today to link Hitler’s prejudice against the Czechs to his supposed Czech, Slavic or hybrid descent, to a negation of his own roots. Those arguments, like the rumours about Hitler having a Jewish antecedent which have been completely refuted on the basis of documentation, are mere casual digressions.²²

Poles play no part in Kubizek’s recollections. Only once, I believe, do we come across them in a list, when he writes: “Was Vienna – to

²⁰ “Die Juden habe ich aus Wien schon heraus, ich möchte”, Adolf Hitler, *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims*, ed. Werner Jochmann (Hamburg, 1980), pp. 297–300; “[...] auch noch die Tschechen hinaustun”, *ibid.*, p. 405.

²¹ Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, vol. 3, part 2, ed. Klaus A. Lankheit (München, 1994), p. 248.

²² Cf. Peter Schwind-Waldeck, *Wie deutsch war Hitler? Eine historisch-psychologische Untersuchung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), pp. 19–36.

which Czechs, Hungarians, Croats, Poles, Italians, Slovaks, Ruthenians and above all Galician Jews flocked from all sides – still a German city at all?”²³ In the first year of their stay in Vienna, Hitler and Kubizek allegedly lodged with a Czech woman called Maria Zakreys.²⁴ Kubizek thought her to be a Pole. Hitler must have come into contact with the names and activities of the Polish ministers who sat in the Viennese government, such as Kazimierz Badeni and Leon Biliński, Polish deputies cooperating with the Austrians.²⁵ It may have influenced his assessment of Poles as potential allies against Russia. We have no direct proof. In his Munich period, Hitler would often condemn the pro-Polish and anti-Russian politics of the Habsburg government as short-sighted.

Hitler acquired a panic-stricken fear of German ethnicity dissolving in the other “eastern nations” surrounding during his Austrian youth, particularly in Vienna. He was to mock Alfred Rosenberg, accusing him that his nationalist enthusiasm derived from the fact that in the East he had not been accepted as a Russian. He drew attention to the fact that the Czechs were especially dangerous because of being able to imitate Germans and assimilate, and would speak about German aristocrats who recalled family ties with Poland more than their nationalist responsibilities. Hitler acquired from the Habsburg monarchy not a conviction about the benefits of co-existence of the nations in a federal union, but quite the contrary, fear of the Germans losing their separate identity among other nations. He arrived in Munich from Vienna with contempt for the weak Austro-Hungarian state. But that German Empire, by whose might he was originally enchanted, collapsed before the eyes of Corporal Hitler in the First World War. Years later he would blame the German nation – when the Third Reich was falling – that by its lack of its fighting spirit and its submissive stance

²³ Kubizek, *Adolf Hitler*, p. 249.

²⁴ Frantz Jetzinger, *Hitlers Jugend. Phantasien, Lügen und die Wahrheit* (Vienna, 1956), p. 234. They remained with Maria Zakreys (Zakryś?) at 31 Stumpergstrasse until 18 November 1908. The flat was near the editorial offices of *Alldeutsches Tageblatt*. About Zakreys see also, Hamann, *Hitlers Wien, passim*.

²⁵ Cf. William Alexander Jenks, *Vienna and the Young Hitler* (New York, 1960); Bradley F. Smith, *Adolf Hitler, His Family Childhood and Youth* (Stanford, 1967).

during the First World War it had created the need to start another world war.

The fact of Hitler's Austrian identity has been emphasised repeatedly by his biographers. One of the earlier ones – Konrad Heiden – wrote in 1936: “He [Hitler] took from his fatherland to Germany his concept about an elite and a privileged race, which in healthy times would not have gained respect or recognition owing to its hysterical demagoguery [...]. His National Socialism was an attempt by a failed Austrian patriot to console himself”.²⁶

Wilfried Daim maintained: “Hitler was never a Prussian. He had more than the cold distrust of an Austrian, a Catholic Austrian, regarding the state, which he did not take seriously at all. To him laws were merely rules of chess in a power game. Responsibility towards the state was totally alien to him. Hitler was not a Prussian soldier, he just impersonated one, and here he was believed”.²⁷ It has often been stressed that Hitler was attractive to his German partners owing to his “Austrianness”, his “foreignness”. It is said that some issues of German life remained alien to the Catholic, Austrian Hitler until the end: the relationship of Church and state, of Protestants and Catholics. One of the standard claims in literature is that he was more sympathetic to Catholics.²⁸

It is often emphasised that Hitler's anti-Semitism had Austrian or Eastern European – and not German – roots. Sebastian Haffner wrote: “Hitler's anti-Semitism was of the Eastern European type. Anti-Semitism was declining at the turn of the century in Western Europe, as it was in Germany. Jewish assimilation and integration were welcome and gaining in strength. But in the east and south-east of Europe, where numerous Jews existed either freely or under duress as an isolated nation within a nation, anti-Semitism was (and is?) endemic and deadly, and was directed not towards assimilation or integration, but towards expulsion and extermination”.²⁹

²⁶ Konrad Heiden, *Hitler* (Zürich, 1936).

²⁷ Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab* (München, 1958), pp. 234–235.

²⁸ Cf. e.g. *Geschichte der Bekennenden Kirche in Ostpreussen 1933–1945. Allein das Wort hat's getan*, ed. Manfred Koschorke (Göttingen, 1976), p. 509.

²⁹ Sebastian Haffner, *Anmerkungen zu Hitler* (München, 1978), p. 16.

Haffner returns many times to this issue in his well-known deliberations about Hitler. The issue is not devoid of deeper subtexts.

The question of Hitler's Austrianness repeatedly arises against a perspective which is extremely important to us: to what extent was Hitler the continuer of Prussian and German traditions? Was he a transient, external, alien phenomenon in Germany's history? The issue of Hitler's Austrian identity has been emphasised many times in the context of responsibility for the National Socialist era.

Is Hitler's Austrian youth the main key to his views? Undoubtedly the beginnings of his world-view derives from Linz and Vienna. We may believe Hitler, who stressed so often the significance of Vienna in the formation of his views. Except that he only exploited, thought through and systematized the dreams from the time of his youth *ex post* at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919. His ideas that one can only learn to rule other nations by controlling them clearly owe their beginnings to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the same time he gained from it his hatred for that mixture of nationalities and races, in which divisions between Germans, Austrians, Jews, and Slavs were lost, where there were so many compromises, and such little pugnacity and heroic spirit of conquest. So for that reason when he arrived in Vienna in 1938 he made a declaration, opposing that Habsburg Austrianness: "Some say I have become a Prussian; I'm more than a Prussian, I'm a super-Prussian".³⁰

Hitler – rebelling against Imperial and Royal Vienna – found in Wilhelmine Germany what he had been searching for: the cult of the German state and army.

Attempts have been made many times to prove that Hitler's views were greatly influenced by the anti-Semitism of the Mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, and Georg von Schönerer's Pan-German Movement. His adoption of the ideas of Jörg Lanz-Liebenfels, the publisher of the magazine *Ostara*, and of his associate Adolf Harpf, have also been discussed.³¹ Harpf warned against the offensive of the Slavic nations,

³⁰ Cf. P. Broucek, *Ein General im Zwielicht. Die Erinnerungen Edmund Glaises von Horstenau* (Wien-Köln-Graz-Böhlau 1983), vol. 2, pp. 358–360.

³¹ Cf. Friedrich Heer, *Der Glaube des Adolf Hitler. Anatomie einer politischen Religiosität* (München, 1968), pp. 709–718.

against Pan-Slavism. He warned against Slavic leaders educated in German schools. He wrote that Slavs were “racially inferior”, that Teutons – in order not to perish in a Slavic deluge – had to be the world’s leading military nation.

To Adolf Hitler, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a “conglomerate of nations” (*Völkerkonglomerat*), a “Babylon of nations” (*Völkerbabylon*), a “mishmash of nations” (*Völkerbrei*). In the unpublished dissertation “Hitler’s Image of Austria” Eleonora Kandl demonstrated many years ago that his view in these matters agreed precisely with what the Austrian press were writing at the beginning of the century, above all *Alldeutsches Tagblatt*.³² The Pan-German camp in Austria portrayed the Austrian Germans as the most courageous and capable of nations, which, separated from the German Reich and left to fend for itself, was being overwhelmed by the Slavic and clerical majority. The image sketched in *Mein Kampf* of the Habsburg monarchy as a corpse, whose symbol was the hoary Emperor Francis Joseph, concurred precisely with earlier writings in *Alldeutsches Tagblatt*. As Hitler had accused the House of Habsburg of a policy of the “Slavization” of the monarchy, *Alldeutsches Tagblatt* accused the Second Reich of indifference regarding the fate of ten million Austrian Germans who should not have been abandoned. That theme features often in the writings of Hitler up until the Anschluss. Czechs appear as the Germans’ main Slavic enemy in *Alldeutsches Tagblatt*, after whom the threat of Pan-Slavism and Russia loomed.

Hitler’s conviction that the Germanization of the Slavic nations could only weaken the Teutonic race were nothing original against the backdrop of discussions raging in the Austrian press, which Hitler read. Hitler even accused the one Habsburg leader he respected – Joseph II – of lowering the *rassisches Niveau*: the racial purity of Germans. The minor cult of Joseph II was also only a reflection

³² Eleonora Kandl, *Hitlers Österreichbild* (Wien, 1963), the manuscript is in the collection of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, University of Vienna. I drew on it in 1988 in *Adolf Hitler’s Anti-Slavism*. Eight years later, Brigitte Hamann, the author of a widely known monograph of Adolf Hitler’s youth, quoted Kandl. Kandl’s manuscript has never, unfortunately, been published. For a discussion on that subject, see: Norbert Schausberger, ‘Hitler und Österreich’, *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur*, no. 6 (1984), 363–377.

of the opinions which predominated during Hitler's youth in Linz and Vienna. We can find the echoes of this attitude in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler was fiercely critical of both Germanization and, naturally, Slavization, as phenomena which erased racial boundaries and were harmful to the Teutonic race in both cases, although to varying degrees.

Hitler above all burdened the Catholic clergy with the responsibility for Slavization. He thought that the Czechs did not possess sufficient state-building power and existed owing to the structure and German culture of the Habsburg state. Hitler's pronouncements about the Czechs and Slavs from the years of the Nazi Party and the Chancellery were deceptively similar to the slogans from the Viennese press at the beginning of the twentieth century. So, for example, even the liberal *Neue Freie Presse* wrote that the Czechs had never demonstrated in history the "perseverance to build a state".³³ Hitler expressed it in *Mein Kampf* as follows: "One ought to cast the utmost doubt on the state-building power of the Slavs".³⁴

Hitler indeed, later drew a parallel in *Zweites Buch* between the "Catholic" politics of the Habsburg state and the stance of the centrist parties in Germany. He wrote: "Even for the centre in Germany the German point of view was not all-important. Every Pole, every Alsatian traitor and friend of the French was closer to those gentlemen than a German who did not want to join a similar criminal organisation".³⁵

From the beginning, Hitler rejected the idea of combining the House of Hohenzollern with the Habsburg "Slavic Reich", seeing in it a further weakening of the German race. He considered only the possibility of incorporating Austrian Germans into the Third Reich. Schönerer's *Alldeutsches Tagblatt* was the only newspaper to unwaveringly express that position among the German-speaking press of the Habsburg Empire. Hitler's attitude to the occupation and annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, the echo of which we can

³³ Kandl, *Hitlers Österreichbild*, p. 77.

³⁴ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (München, 1933), p. 39.

³⁵ *Hitlers Zweites Buch. Ein Dokument aus dem Jahr 1928*, ed. Gerhard L. Weinberg (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 88.

find in his *Zweites Buch*, was also the reflection of views promoted in the Austrian newspapers he once read.

He considered the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina a misfortune for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In Hitler's eyes it a) signified the further Slavization of the monarchy and b) heightened the threat from Russia to Germany – an ally of Austria-Hungary. Hitler's position clearly coincided, as Eleonora Kandl demonstrated, with what he might have read years before in *Alldeutsches Tagblatt*. He considered that the defence of Slavic interests (i.e. the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) had needlessly brought Austria-Hungary and above all Germany to the brink of a European war. Kandl proves with complete justification on the basis of a comparison of quotations and terms that Hitler's "knowledge of Austria's historical facts makes reference without exception to the Viennese press from the years 1907–1913".³⁶

It is a pity that a critical interpretation and comparison of the Munich press from the years 1918–1920 with the relevant comments of Adolf Hitler has still not been carried out. A comparison of the Bavarian press from the years 1913–1914 – when Hitler appeared in Munich for the first time – with the Viennese press would also be valuable. What would the similarities and differences be? The results that come to mind after reading Eleonora Kandl's collation are simple: as regards his views, Hitler was only one of thousands of convinced readers of the Pan-Germanic Viennese press. He took his core slogans from it and later from the German Far-Right press. In this sense they were a reflection of the views and moods of the wider masses, the entire bloc. These views – set against front-line experiences and those of the collapse of the Second Reich – led him to conclusions and plans which he did not completely reveal either in *Mein Kampf* or even in *Zweites Buch*. He only made them fully known in the practice of the Second World War.

Brigitte Hamann showed in her excellent book about Hitler's Vienna how he constructed his world-view in Munich and Berlin from dozens of often random ideas taken from newspapers, and from kaleidoscopic fragments of knowledge acquired in Vienna.

³⁶ Kandl, *Hitlers Österreichbild*, p. 104; see also pp. 66, 123.

She proved that the Viennese youth recorded in Hitler's excellent memory defined the later use of the swastika, the sinister "Heil" salute borrowed from the followers of Georg Ritter von Schöner, the cult of the Teutons, his attitude to the Gypsies, and above all else anti-Semitism and racism.

SOME OF HITLER'S STEREOTYPES ABOUT SLAVS

Hitler granted the right to be a Slav arbitrarily. In his eyes, Slavs were chiefly the Russians. The autodidact Hitler's freedom in passing racial judgements and laying down definitions is seen most clearly, perhaps, in the records of his "Table Talk", and the monologues he delivered in the Führer Headquarters during the Second World War. He often refers in them to his younger days in Vienna. The amount of nonsense he solemnly spouted which was then recorded in shorthand by audiences with their eyes fixed reverently on the Führer is enormous. Like, for example, on 12 May 1942:

Hitler assumes it is not possible to generalise on the extent to which the Slav races are susceptible to the Germanic imprint. In point of fact, Tsarist Russia, within the framework of her Pan-Slavic policy, propagated the qualification Slav and imposed it on a large diversity of people who had no connection with the Slavonic race. For example, to label the Bulgarians as Slavs is pure nonsense; originally they were Turkomans. The same applies to the Czechs. It is enough for a Czech to grow a moustache for anyone to see, from the way the thing droops, that his origin is Mongolian. Among the so-called Slavs of the South the Dinars are predominant. Turning to the Croats, I must say I think it is highly desirable, from the ethnical point of view, that they should be Germanized.³⁷

On 25 January 1942, Hitler argued as follows:

Of all the Slavs, the Czech is the most dangerous, because he's a worker. He has a sense of discipline, he's orderly, he's more a Mongol than a Slav. Beneath the top layer of a certain loyalty, he knows

³⁷ Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 287.

how to hide his plans. Now they'll work, for they know we're pitiless and brutal. I don't despise them, I have no resentment against them. It's destiny that wishes us to be adversaries. To put it briefly, the Czechs are a foreign body in the midst of the German community. There's no room both for them and for us. One of us must give way.

As regards the Pole, it's lucky for us that he's idle, stupid and vain. The Czech State – and that's due to the training the Czechs have had – was a model of honesty. Corruption practically didn't exist amongst them. Czech officials are generally inspired by a sense of honour. That's why a man like Hácha is more dangerous than a rogue of a journalist. He's an honest man, who won't enrich himself by a crown in the exercise of his functions. Men liable to corruption are less dangerous. Those are things that the Second Reich never understood. Its way of behaving towards the Poles was a deplorable set-back. It only succeeded in strengthening their sense of patriotism. Our compatriots of the frontier regions, who would know how to set about things with the neighbouring peoples, were repressed by the kindly Germans of the interior—who suppose, for their part, that kindness is the way to win these foreign hearts for Germany.³⁸

He warned about the Czechs – “Every Czech is a born nationalist, who subordinates all other responsibilities to his own interests”. He regretted that people from the old Reich had no idea about ethnic problems, about the problems of an Austria torn apart by Czechs, Croats and Serbs.

In mid-September 1941 Hitler stated: “The Slavs are a mass of born slaves, who feel the need of a master”.³⁹ Unlike the Nordic-Germanic race “The Slav peoples are not destined to live a cleanly life. They know it, and we would be wrong to persuade them to the contrary. It was we who in 1918 created the Baltic countries and the Ukraine. But nowadays we have no interest in maintaining the Baltic states, any more than in creating an independent Ukraine”.⁴⁰ During a visit to Berchtesgaden in April 1943, Baldur von Schirach

³⁸ Hitler, *Monologe*, p. 228; *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941–1944, His Private Conversations*, transl. by Norman Cameron and R. H. Stevens (London, Enigma Books: 2000), p. 473.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

dared to ask Hitler whether a free Ukraine with its own hetman would not provide the Reich with more benefits than a *Reichskommissariat* subordinated to it. Hitler immediately gave the young Gauleiter from Vienna a dressing down. "Please do not speak, Schirach, about matters that do not concern you. The Slavs are utterly incapable of governing themselves".⁴¹ The intensity of Hitler's prejudice and the motivations driven by his world-view manifested themselves very powerfully during the Second World War. Contrary to the suggestions of Rosenberg and other advisers, Hitler was unable to undertake any other policy in the occupied territories beyond the physical strategy of exterminating the Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews and other nationalities of the USSR for racial and ideological reasons. The author of the now classic study on the policies of Germany in the occupied territories of the USSR ends by drawing attention to the "obstinacy with which Nazi Germany, in defiance of all empirical experience, clung to its dogma".⁴²

Hitler divided up the "less racially valuable" nations of Eastern Europe according to his own personal hierarchy. For example, in the Wolf's Lair on 22 January 1942, he stated in the presence of Himmler: "In the 1840s, a Czech was ashamed of his language. His pride was to speak German. The summit of his pride was to be taken for a Viennese. The institution of universal suffrage in Austria was necessary to lead to the collapse of German supremacy. As a matter of principle, the Social-Democrats made common cause with the Czechs. The high aristocracy behaved in the same way. The German people are too intelligent for such fellows. They always had a preference for the backward peoples on the periphery. The Czechs were better than the Hungarians, Romanians and Poles. There had grown up amongst them a hard-working and conscientious small bourgeoisie, quite aware of its limitations. To-day they'll bow before us again, with the same sense of mingled rage and admiration as before: 'People like us, people from Bohemia, are not predestined to rule', they used to say. With the habit of rule, one learns to command.

⁴¹ Baldur von Schirach, *Ich glaubte an Hitler* (Hamburg, 1967), pp. 290–291.

⁴² Alexander Dallin, *Deutsche Herrschaft in Russland 1941–1945, Eine Studie über Besatzungspolitik* (Düsseldorf, 1958), p. 695.

The Czechs would probably have lost their inferiority complex by gradually observing their superiority to the other peoples who, like them, belonged to the periphery of the empire of the Habsburgs”.⁴³

Hitler remarked many times that the Czechs were not without their virtues, that they were in some respects similar to Germans, but without inventiveness or managerial abilities. They were mainly interested in material issues and many of them would have been prepared to collaborate with the Third Reich.⁴⁴ In April 1942, comparing the Poles to the Czechs, he stated: “In politics, the use of that little word ‘if’ must be avoided. Where should we be to-day IF the Czechs had had a little imagination, or IF the Poles had been realists and had gone about their affairs with a little more honesty? It is precisely the fact that the Pole is a dreamer and the Czech is an out-and-out realist which has enabled us swiftly and successfully to establish the new order in the territories formerly known as Czechoslovakia and Poland”.⁴⁵

Hitler often remarked that what the Czechs shared with the other Slavs was that they did not possess state-building abilities. He cited both statements of Beneš from his youth, and those of Hácha from 1939. For him the Poles stood above the Russians in the hierarchy of Slavic nations. “In comparison with Russia, even Poland looked like a civilised country”.⁴⁶ In his eyes, the Poles differed favourably from the Czechs and Bulgarians in that they did not have Pan-Slavic tendencies and had a hostile attitude towards the Russians. Hitler’s notions of Bulgarians were actually more than scant. He stressed that they were a potentially devoted ally against

⁴³ Hitler, *Monologe*, s. 216; cf. Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 87; *Hitler’s Table Talk*, pp. 228–229.

⁴⁴ Hitler, *Monologe*, s. 180, 209. Hitler’s contemptuous attitude to the Czechs is blatantly betrayed in this statement about the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. He stated as follows: “One can now turn the Czechs into fanatic supporters of the Reich, if they are given as connoisseurs a double argument and not sent to fight in the East. They would then consider it their moral duty to intensify their work in the arms industry and so on”, Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 322.

⁴⁵ Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 209.

⁴⁶ Hitler, *Monologe*, p. 93.

the Turks.⁴⁷ His confidence in the Bulgarians was above all linked to the person of Tsar Boris III, who – like his father – Hitler considered the embodiment of German traditions. The primitivism of Hitler's racial reasoning is astonishing; Ion Antonescu and Kemal Atatürk, politicians whom he respected, must, in his opinion, have been descended from the Teutonic race since they were outstanding individuals. Blue eyes and blond hair in statesmen or Ukrainian children were condition enough for Hitler to assume Teutonic influences.⁴⁸ His principle idea – along with Himmler's – was that only members of the Teutonic race could constitute the state-building element among the Eastern nations.

Hitler talked about German settlers in the East as advocates of culture, appealed to the traditions of the Teutonic Order,⁴⁹ and emphasised the role of Germans as the builders of Prague. He stressed the cultural-historical affiliations of Krakow and Poznań to the Reich. During the Second World War, however, he adhered absolutely to the dogma that the Germans ought not to bring their culture to inferior races, that it was a culture reserved for the "master nation".

It is difficult to find in Hitler's comments a clearer expression of "German history and German destiny" than during a secret speech of 23 November 1937 at the opening of the Ordensburg Sonthofen in Allgäu. Hitler addressed his local political activists as follows:

We were once the dominant white power and white race, we civilised and cultivated great swathes of European living space. Without German blood there would be neither the Russian state, nor any other eastern states, which remain in its debt for the founding of their states and cultures.

The German nation carries within it a hunger for such a mission, hence all of its organisational undertakings among other nations can be attributed to an unconscious aspiration towards an expansion

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 334.

⁴⁸ *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler. Vertrauliche Aufzeichnungen über Unterredungen mit Vertretern des Auslandes 1930–1941*, ed. Andreas Hillgruber (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), vols. 1–2.

⁴⁹ Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, pp. 284–285 ff.

of its position as a power. We have not lacked the courage to bear the gravest consequences [...].⁵⁰

Less than two years before the outbreak of the Second World War, Hitler recalled that the German nation was always capable of a blood sacrifice of many millions, greater than what the English suffered building their empire. He saw the German ability to wage wars at the cost of great blood sacrifices as an unbroken thread running from the Thirty Years' War to the First World War. Hitler ascribed the ability to conquer the world not to tribes, countries, nations, states, dynasties or religious communities, but to race. Race, the Teutonic race, was the dominant concept – overriding that of nation – in his political thinking. The Germanization of racially foreign elements was in his eyes a weakening of the might of the German nation. The racially pure German nation had to capture *Lebensraum* in the East, isolating itself from the nations there, by shifting their areas of habitation. He wrote in 1928:

The National Socialist Movement, on the contrary, will always let its foreign policy be determined by the necessity to secure the space necessary to the life of our Folk. It knows no Germanizing or Teutonising, as in the case of the national bourgeoisie, but only the spread of its own Folk. It will never see in the subjugated, so called Germanized, Czechs or Poles a national, let alone Folkish, strengthening, but only the racial weakening of our Folk. For its national conception is not determined by earlier patriotic ideas of government, but rather by Folkish, racial insights. Thus the point of departure of its thinking is wholly different from that of the bourgeois world. Hence much of what seems to the national bourgeoisie like the political success of the past and present, is for us either a failure or the cause of a later misfortune.⁵¹

The nation could make mistakes. Race's infallible instinct had to guide it. At that time, in 1928, he was lamenting the utopianism of the German nation, which in the nineteenth century was capable of supporting the Phanariotes or the Polish insurrectionists of

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 482.

⁵¹ *Hitlers Zweites Buch*, p. 26.

1830. He wrote: "The German Folk, which possesses neither a foreign policy tradition nor a foreign policy aim, will by itself rather be inclined to pay homage to Utopian ideals, and thereby neglect its real vital interest. For what has our Folk not raved over in the last hundred years? Now it was Greeks whom we wanted to save from the Turks, then Turks on whom we bestowed our affection against Russians and Italians, after which our Folk again found an enchantment in waxing enthusiastic over Polish freedom fighters, and then in indulging their feelings for the Boers, and so on. But what have all these most stupid soulful gushings, as incompetent politically as they were garrulous, cost our Folk?"⁵²

He returned once more to the "deceptive affection" of the Germans for the national liberation struggles of the Boers, the Greeks and the Armenians in an article published on 24 May 1930 in *Politik der Woche*. He recalled: "Poland was just as much a favourite object of our affection. Much has been said about Polish independence and Polish freedom in newspapers, brochures and books; homage has been given to the Polish insurrectionists, the Polish leaders have been presented as heroes, and all this at a time when the Germans did not have the slightest reason to yield to such utterly non-political and impractical feelings [...]"⁵³

Hitler held up to his inner-circle the British as teachers of racism, as examples to the Germans. He said: "what India was to England, *Ostraum* (space in the east) will be to us". He argued that the Czechs and Poles were a "rabble not worth a penny more than the inhabitants of Sudan or India. How can they demand the rights of independent states?"

This autodidact possessed a certain stock of randomly gathered historical knowledge about the events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He categorised it according to his racial schemata. In his eyes, Pan-Slavism represented above all an ideology which was meant to hold together the Slavic race. He occasionally accused the Bulgarians of pro-Russian, pro-Soviet and Pan-Slavic attitudes.

⁵² Ibid., p. 136.

⁵³ Hitler, *Reden*, vol. 3, part 1, ed. Bärbel Dusik, Klaus A. Lankheit (München, 1994), pp. 203–204.

He was capable, nonetheless, of drawing attention to the valour of Bulgarian soldiers and their loyalty to the German dynasty. He was more critical of the Serbs. He reproached them for causing the outbreak of the First World War. He compared their conduct in 1941 with that of 1914. Hitler's view of the Serbs included considerable condemnation of that inferior race, of the savage and barbarian Slavs. That picture did not differ from the one popularised by the German press before 1914.

He praised the Croats as comrades in arms with links to German culture. He was quite well informed about their actual sympathies during the Second World War. His general instruction was, however, to divide the Slavs, set them at variance with and defeat each other.⁵⁴

HITLER'S TEACHERS IN MUNICH

Hitler moved to Munich in 1913. Catholic Bavaria had been closely akin to neighbouring Austria. Munich – a provincial city – was not one of the political capitals of Europe like Vienna. But as in Vienna, the democratisation which ensured the advancement of various social groups and political diversity later spawned there sectarianism, xenophobia, ultra-nationalism and anti-Semitism. The latter was fuelled by the influx of the so-called *Ostjuden* – Jews from Galicia, from the Russian partition and more remote parts of the Romanov Empire.

Munich – somewhat startlingly – was not short of German-Slavic tensions. Many refugees from Slavic countries and students from Russia and Serbia lived there. The police would receive anonymous warnings about Serbian nationalists. One of the founders of the local Pan-German League, Julius Friedrich Lehmann, later a Nazi Party activist, accused the Holy See of favouring the Slavs over the Germans. After 1914, Russian POWs began to be sent there. Following the suppression of the Bavarian Council Republic in May

⁵⁴ Max Domarus, *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen* (Wiesbaden, 1973), vol. 1, part 2, p. 927; vol. 2, part 1, p. 1368, 1402 ff.; vol. 2, part 2, pp. 1687, 1689, 1830–1831 ff.

1919, fifty-five of the 142 people who were immediately killed on the strength of martial law turned out to be Russian prisoners of war. The leading role which people – Jews and Russians – from the Russian Empire played in the Red Bavarian revolution was later exploited repeatedly by Adolf Hitler in his speeches.⁵⁵

Munich's political and cultural climate significantly influenced the later development of Adolf Hitler's views. Here the Viennese vagrant found platforms to demonstrate his outstanding oratorical talent after the end of the First World War. He began to polish his image and cultivate himself in circles of educated people or at least able writers, including Dietrich Eckart, Gottfried Feder, Rudolf Hess and Professor Karl Haushofer's circle, Alfred Rosenberg, Bernhard Stempfle, Ernst F. Sedgwick Hanfstaengl and Hermann Esser. Hitler avoided mentioning his predecessors or spiritual fathers, in order to highlight his own originality as much as possible. But the works of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer were all on his essential reading list.

It is difficult to state to what extent the geopolitical theories of Karl Haushofer influenced Hitler. Haushofer undoubtedly moulded his student, Rudolf Hess. And the latter played a huge role beside Hitler in the 1920s. Hans Adolf Jacobsen stresses that Hitler's view of the world was formed before he met Haushofer and that Haushofer's influence has been overestimated. Haushofer's biographers judged that he met Hitler around ten times in the years 1920–1938. Undoubtedly, however, Haushofer's theories about the necessity to extend the "living space" of certain countries, the concept of *Lebensraum* which he supported, and seeing geographical factors as determining the relationships between nations, all strengthened Hitler's conviction that land and population size determine the potential of states to become world powers. After Hitler seized power, geopolitics became a university subject. Haushofer still supported the ideas and foreign policy of Hitler in 1940. Some experts claim that his

⁵⁵ David C. Large, *Hitlers München Aufstieg und Fall der Hauptstadt der Bewegung* (München, 1998), pp. 28, 81, 153, 158 ff. The following book is essential regarding the forming of Hitler's view of the world: Frank-Lothar Kroll, *Utopie als Ideologie. Geschichtsdanken und politisches Handeln im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn, 1998).

loyalty to Hitler had ended two years earlier. Haushofer's biographer highlights many differences between Hitler and Haushofer in their interpretation of the concepts "large spaces" (*Grossraum*) and "living space". He especially emphasises that Haushofer did not link the capturing of living space for Germany with exterminatory racism. But it is difficult not to notice the racism in Haushofer's attitude to *Ostjudentum* (Jews from the East), regardless of whether his wife fell into the category of the Nuremberg decrees. The professor's son, Albrecht, paid with his life for his links to the would-be assassins of 20 July 1944. The professor himself committed suicide in 1946 at the age of seventy seven.⁵⁶

This does not change the fact that the nationalist and imperialist theories of the geo-politicians, led by Haushofer senior, were quite telling arguments for Hitler, when he was planning his conquest of the world.

If German authors of recent years consider that Haushofer had only limited influence on Hitler's theories, then the Americans were of a completely different opinion in 1945. Drawing on the research into Haushofer by Raphael Lemkin, they considered him Hitler's "godfather" and that he contributed more to the writing of *Mein Kampf* than Rudolf Hess. In connection with that a suggestion was even made to add Karl Haushofer to the list of most important war criminals.⁵⁷

The American historian David Clay Large summarised Munich's role in his history of the capital of the "National Socialist movement" as follows:

At the end of the nineteenth century Munich was not only a bastion of anti-Semitism, but played a tremendous role in the related

⁵⁶ Cf. Karl Haushofer, *Der nationalsozialistische Gedanke in der Welt* (München, 1933). Haushofer claims in it, i.a., that all the internationalist ideas and "pan-ideas" were directed against National Socialism (p. 42). For more about Haushofer, see: Hans Adolf Jacobsen, *Karl Haushofer, Leben und Werk* (Boppard am Rhein, 1979), vol. 1–2. Jacobsen thought that Hitler's world-view had been formed before he met Haushofer and that the latter's influence has been much over-emphasised (vol. 1, p. 451). See also: Frank Ebeling, *Geopolitik. Karl Haushofer und seine Raumwissenschaft 1919–1945* (Berlin, 1994).

⁵⁷ Cf. Jacobsen, *Karl Haushofer*, vol. 2.

Pan-German movement. Admittedly Munich in no sense was the only city to offer a forum to the Pan-Germans, but Pan-Germanist propaganda appeared there particularly belligerent, which, perhaps, was linked to the presence of rival Bavarian particularism and with the geographical location of the city on the Reich's south-western periphery. Munich's ultra-nationalists, of whom many were Protestants, wanted at any price to prove they were precisely as 'German' as their fellows in the country's central regions. In this sense they had plenty in common with fellow supporters of the same ideas in Vienna, who saw themselves as an island of German purity on the rough sea of ultramontanistic Catholicism, Jewry and unbridled nationalism.⁵⁸

Did Bavarian political life, with which Hitler had been linked for over a dozen years, not have a greater influence on his thinking and political attitude than his earlier Austrian years? Could ideological anti-Semitism have become reality, the motivation of top-down, officially controlled *Endlösung* without the cult of the state, or the governmental and bureaucratic mechanisms which had emerged in Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? People who emphasise that Hitler's anti-Semitism was of Austrian provenance forget that it was born in the Habsburg Empire, which simultaneously provided the conditions for the mass assimilation of Jews at the turn of the twentieth century. They also forget that the Austria of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg did not turn anti-Semitism into a state doctrine, nor transform it into an everyday practice leading to the total extermination of the Jews. Whereas it did take place in the German state under the rule of Hitler. Hence Hans Mommsen quite properly writes:

“The fact that the Holocaust became reality may only inadequately be explained by drawing on ideological factors: the influence of anti-Semitic propaganda and German political culture with its traditionally authoritarian bent. The political and bureaucratic mechanisms that led to the transformation of extermination ideas into reality may also be imagined in other social conditions. The atavistic structure of the National Socialist system of government linked to

⁵⁸ Large, *Hitlers München*, p. 27.

the scope of power of *minor bureaucratic machines* [emphasis mine – JWB] turned out to be the deciding factor both regarding which elements of the world-view were chosen, and the rapidly-growing loss of a sense of reality of which the climax was Hitler's mind. The fact that it led to the Holocaust is a cautionary tale of what usually normal individuals can succumb to if they find themselves in conditions of a permanent state of emergency, in conditions of the disintegration of legal and institutional structures and the uncritical acceptance of criminal activities as national reality".⁵⁹

Did Hitler's plans for the conquest of the European East originate in Austria or Germany? When did they arise? Hitler's programme after 1924, like that of the entire nationalist camp in Bavaria, included the abolishment of the Treaty of Versailles, the unification of Austria with Germany (*Anschluss*) and the return to colonies. As Helmuth Auerbach claimed: "That exhausted the call for land and soil (*Land und Boden*) until 1923. The demand for living space (*Lebensraum*) in the East was only later added to it".⁶⁰ In the opinion of the Munich historian, Hitler addressed those issues for the first time in 1921 under the influence of Erich Ludendorff. At the beginning of the nineteen-twenties the legendary commander of the Eastern Front, whose name was linked to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, a theoretician of total war, shaped many ideas of Hitler, Rudolf Hess and the entire leadership of the Nazi Party concerning the European East, about the possibilities it created, and the culturally inferior nations dwelling there.⁶¹

Ludendorff, who was born near Posen (Poznań), had already expressed the conviction during the war that the Polish state must by its very nature be Germany's enemy, since it threw into question the existence of the "entire German East". It was Ludendorff who, in August 1915, personally demanded the detachment of the small General Government of Warsaw (*Generalgouvernement Warschau*) and

⁵⁹ Hans Mommsen, 'Die Realisierung des Utopischen. Die "Endlösung der Judenfrage" im Dritten Reich', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 9 (1983), 420.

⁶⁰ Helmuth Auerbach, 'Hitlers politische Lehrjahre und die Münchener Gesellschaft 1919–1923', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 25 (1977), no. 1, 15.

⁶¹ Auerbach refers to the analysis of Rudolph Binion, *Hitler among the Germans* (New York, 1976), which strongly emphasises Ludendorff's influence on Hitler.

the incorporation of Łomża and Ostrołęka into the Reich.⁶² Later he and Hindenburg continued the Polish Border Strip (*Grenzstreifen*) campaign demanding the displacement of their Polish landowners from those territories.⁶³

Hindenburg wrote in his memoirs in 1920: "However a solution to the Polish problem has been sought, Prussian Germans end up making sacrifices".⁶⁴ As President of Germany he often gave voice to the hope that the Polish state would vanish from the map of Europe at the appropriate moment.

Hans von Seeckt expressed it succinctly in 1922: "With Poland, we come to the crux of the eastern problem. The existence of Poland is intolerable, and cannot be reconciled with the essential conditions Germany needs to live. Poland must vanish and will vanish as a result of its own internal weakness and thanks to Russia – with our help".⁶⁵

Hundreds of quotations and examples of this kind could be cited. It is no accident that Heinrich Himmler, then a twenty-one-year-old student of agronomy, noted on 22 November 1921 after hearing a paper by General Rüdiger von der Goitz in Munich: "Now I know more clearly than at any time that I will join the ranks, if a military expedition should occur again in the East. The East is of the greatest importance to us. The West dies easily. We have to fight and settle in the East".⁶⁶

Ludendorff (von Tempelhoff on his mother's side), von Hindenburg, von Seeckt, von der Goltz – this was a long Prussian Junker tradition. The views of the defeated generals of the First World War had a great influence on Hitler and his comrades, directing their

⁶² Erich Ludendorff, *Vom Feldherrn zum Weltrevolutionär und Wegbereiter deutscher Volksschöpfung. Meine Lebenserinnerungen von 1919 bis 1925* (München, 1940); id., *Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914–1918* (Berlin, 1919), p. 532 ff.

⁶³ Werner Conze, *Polnische Nation und deutsche Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Cologne, 1958), pp. 101–102; Imanuel Geiss, *Der polnische Grenzstreifen 1914–1918* (Lübeck, 1960); Leon Grosfeld, *Polityka państw centralnych wobec sprawy polskiej w latach pierwszej wojny światowej* (Warszawa, 1962).

⁶⁴ Paul von Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben* (Leipzig, 1920), p. 202.

⁶⁵ Cited in Enno Meyer, *Deutschland und Polen 1914–1970* (Stuttgart, 1971), p. 25; cf. Hans von Seeckt, *Die Zukunft des Reiches* (Berlin, 1929), pp. 160–161; and Hans Meier-Welcker, *Seeckt* (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), p. 459 ff.

⁶⁶ Josef Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologe* (Göttingen, 1970), p. 198.

attention towards the East. Irrespective of whether they were supporters of an alliance with Russia, or of its further dismemberment, they shaped the views of the Nazi Party's leaders. Hitler shifted decisively from the terms ,*Grund und Boden* (soil and land), *Boden* (earth, soil), *Grund* (soil, land), *Recht auf Erde* (right to territory), towards the use of the terms *Lebensraum* (living space) and *Ostraum* (Eastern living space).⁶⁷ His terminology was further strengthened by becoming acquainted while in prison with Friedrich Ratzel's *Der Lebensraum*. But one cannot ultimately observe any great precision in the use by Hitler of the concepts *Slawen* (Slavs), *Ostvölker* (eastern nations), *Oststaaten* (eastern states), *Ostraum* (eastern space), *Ostmark* (eastern march), *Ostpolitik* (eastern politics), or *Osteinsatz* (eastern action).

The plans for resettlement, the repopulation of the European East, colonisation and settlement had a clear German lineage in Hitler's thinking, regardless of their Austrian components.

⁶⁷ Cf. Karl Lange, 'Der Terminus "Lebensraum" in Hitlers "Mein Kampf"', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 13 (1965), no. 4, 426–427.

CHAPTER 3

RUSSIA – THE ULTIMATE GOAL

Traditional images about Slavic nations and Pan-Slavism from the Wilhelmine Era were superimposed on the Nazi image of Russia. Slavophilic theories of the German enlightenment were eradicated. Capturing the East and yoking the Slavs were to be the measure of Germany's greatness. The image of Russia, which was said to have owed its economic, scientific and cultural achievements mainly to the German elites, was still rooted in bygone centuries. But a great imprint had been left on that image by the militant extreme anti-communism (anti-Bolshevism) of the Nazi Party. That image was neither clear nor precise. In the antinomy between Germany (i.e. the Nazi Party) and Russia only the first part, concerning the role of the Third Reich and how Hitler and his entourage saw it, was well-defined.

The image of Russia in the theories of the Nazi movement was above all created by Hitler and Rosenberg. At first anti-Bolshevism was not synonymous with anti-Russianness. Hitler's opinion of the European East was a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles. The post-Versailles world order placed both Germany and Russia in the losers' camp. Hitler waited, not knowing how the situation would develop in Russia. At the beginning of the 1920s, Rosenberg was more anti-Russian and anti-Slav than Hitler was. He rejected the possibility of even the limited agreements with the defeated Russia recommended by some German military and economic activists.

Once a clear image of his future plans emerged, following the publication of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler consistently espoused the necessity of capturing land – “living space” – in the East. As Manfred Weissbecker remarked, in *Mein Kampf* Hitler justified that conquest

more even by the use of “racist, anti-Slavic concepts” than anti-Bolshevist ones.¹

There existed substantial differences in the attitudes about Russia in the rapidly growing Nazi Party of the 1920s. The visions imposed by Hitler and Rosenberg were not then universally binding. Gregor Strasser appealed: *Das deutsche Mitteleuropa – im Kampf gegen den Westen, mit vorläufiger Unterstützung des Ostens!* (“German Central Europe in the fight against the West with the provisional support of the East”). Goebbels, a supporter of the Strasser brothers, even wrote that “we have more in common with ‘Eastern Bolshevism’ than with ‘Western capitalism’”. He stressed that both Russia and the Nazis wanted to follow the path to socialism. Goebbels also declared that the “Nazis did not want to cut off their access to the Russian nation forever”.²

Hitler firmly opposed the tendencies of the Nazi Party’s left wing by writing and saying that a German-Russian alliance would be tantamount to “national suicide”.

During those years, Hitler still occasionally (though seldom) treated the Bolsheviks as rivals and not enemies, speaking of the possibility of Munich becoming the “Moscow of our movement”. In those years speeches were still given by gauleiters who planned the capture of Poland and Czechoslovakia as the proper *Lebensraum*, with the consent of Russia. But at the end of the 1920s, after defeating the left wing of the Nazi Party, there followed a unification of both the image of Bolshevik Russia and the means of capturing *Lebensraum*.

Manfred Weissbecker concluded: “Nazi thinking about land in the East as well as their own readiness for violence up to and including genocide and the thought of the coming war were previously inextricably bound up with each other, irrespective of certain official party statements about the Soviet Union, which appeared in abundance directly after 30 January 1933 under the aegis of the dominant peace-orientated demagogy”.³

¹ Manfred Weissbecker, “Wenn hier Deutsche wohnten...”. Beharrung und Veränderung im Russlandbild Hitlers und der NSDAP”, in: *Das Russlandbild im Dritten Reich*, ed. Hans-Erich Volkmann (Cologne, 1994), p. 18.

² Ibid., p. 20.

³ Ibid., p. 23.

According to Hitler, Aryan, Teutonic Normans founded Russia and were the creators of her statehood and culture. He also used the term “Northern Teutonic Vikings” described as “sailors and the founders of the Russian state”. With time, the Russians, steered by the Jews, removed and destroyed the German elites. The Bolshevik Revolution was chiefly about the seizure of power by the Jews. Hitler thought that growing Russian nationalism would lead to the overthrow of the Jewish-Bolshevik state. Not unreasonably, he observed in Stalin’s politics growing elements of Great-Russian chauvinism. But he warned that Pan-Slavic Russia would be anti-German; that Pan-Slavism meant anti-Teutonism.

Hitler played on the juxtaposition of the hell in the USSR and the heaven he was creating in Germany. He exploited that dichotomy in various speeches from the 1920s onwards. The misery of Stalinist Russia and the boundless prison it had become supplied him with more than enough examples.

ANTI-BOLSHEVISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

In Hitler’s propaganda, the Jews were the cement binding the Bolshevik Revolution to capitalist plutocracy. He presented the USSR as a state dominated by international, Jewish financial capital. And repeated that Nazi Germany was the only socialist state. Slavs, he said, were too backward – too “racially inferior” – to exist other than under a brutal dictatorship of a foreign race or the Bolsheviks. He fantasised about conquering the USSR, and listed the innumerable raw materials of that country, freely inventing facts. As Edmund Dmitrów wrote:

He was excited by the gigantic scale of the conquests. He planned an undertaking to last “many centuries”, mapped out the job for himself and future generations: a change in the map of habitation, including, among others, the destruction of the great Russian metropolises, the creation of a new system of German towns and the dislocation of entire nations. He envisioned plans for the rebuilding of the economic structure and construction of a new transport network, including intercontinental motorways. Dmitrów wrote that he must

have felt omnipotent in his creative fervour at those times, he also enthusiastically imagined the future life in the German-conquered East in the tiniest details.

His statements about Russia give the impression that it was an uninhabited country [...]. Hitler looked on Russia as a land of *Untermenschen*, since he was “first of all” an extreme racist, which he expressed above all in his anti-Semitic and anti-Slavic opinions. [...] Hitler did not see the need, moreover, to distinguish between the Slavic nations inhabiting the USSR, and nor did he, for example, rate Ukrainians higher than Russians [...].⁴

His knowledge was random, fragmentary and limited. But he contrasted the Slavs in the USSR with the peoples of the Caucasus, of whom he thought highly.

Terror, crime, criminality – that was the picture of Russia Hitler painted. The criminality of the Russian “Bolshevik-Jewish” barbarians was one of Hitler and Goebbels’ chief propaganda slogans. It was not just propaganda. Hitler wanted to see – and saw – the residents of the USSR as beasts and barbarians. His visions, phobias and prejudices – and not reality – determined this.

Hitler was impressed by the Russians’ “world-view-related fanaticism”. He used that to explain that the Russians were “Germany’s only genuinely great opponents”. He considered that anti-Russians – i.e. Germans – should also bear the traits of fanaticism.

Edmund Dmitrów stresses how far Hitler drew on the experience of British and German colonies from before the First World War, and how he used the stereotype of the Russian as “savage”. The removal of one’s hat and standing to attention in the presence of a German – which were employed in some parts of Poland incorporated into the Reich and in the ghettos – were mechanically adopted from colonial practices. Dmitrów wrote that “Half a century later the Germans could in practice treat the local people in conquered Slavic countries as animals to be hunted regardless of their sex or age”.⁵

⁴ Edmund Dmitrów, *Obraz Rosji i Rosjan w propagandzie narodowych socjalistów 1933–1945* (Warszawa, 1997), pp. 133–134.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

With reference to Dmitrów let us remind ourselves again of the kind of future Hitler was predicting for the Slavs: “Slavs were supposed to live short lives and reproduce as little as possible. For that reason Hitler ruled out in advance the provision of hygiene and medicine, aside from contraception, abortion and sterilisation [...]. Hitler reluctantly admitted that it would be best only to teach them to understand sign language, but unfortunately it would probably be necessary to ‘instruct’ them more widely [...]. It would be best if each village-commune had its own religious sect and practiced a ‘magical cult’ as Negroes and Indians do. That would encourage the disintegration of ‘Russian space’. For which reason one ought to interfere with the creation of unified churches for the majority of the country”.⁶

Following the Soviet example, Hitler and Goebbels planned the setting up everywhere of cable radio and television, in order to universalize and standardize the control both of “sub-humans” and “full” citizens of the Third Reich.

Summing up his research – some of the most complete in world literature – the Polish historian comes to the following conclusions: “The Nazis constructed and promoted a vision of Russia with the intention of its conquest and colonisation [...]. The vision was created on the basis of negative images and prejudices connected with Russia and the Russians and other elements of German shared intellectual heritage and collective consciousness that did not apply directly to Russia. Its roots consisted of: 1) anti-Slavism and Great German imperialism directed towards the East; 2) racist, racial-hygiene thinking, social Darwinism and the redemptive and modernisation-focused utopias derived from it; 3) anti-Semitism; 4) chauvinism underpinned by racist categories; and 5) earlier anti-communism and modern anti-Bolshevism as a response to the revolution in Russia”.⁷

The Nazis indeed constructed and promoted an image of Russia with the aim of its conquest and colonisation. A war conducted by the Third Reich against the USSR had the support of a significant

⁶ Ibid, pp. 143–144.

⁷ Ibid., p. 377.

part of German society, of fanatical Germans in uniform, who had been subject to many years of propaganda. But it was opposed for various reasons by many important personages in the Nazi ruling elite, senior military figures and society. The war against the Soviet Union, against Bolshevik Russia, was Hitler's war, in the sense that he had above all striven towards it for almost two decades, he alone decided when and how to attack, he also exclusively dictated how it was to be fought, paying no attention to anybody's reservations or protests.

Hitler accused Wilhelmine Germany that by supporting the Slavized Habsburg Monarchy it had antagonized Russia. But that did not mean in any way that he ever seriously saw the need for a long-term alliance either with tsarist or Soviet Russia. Neither in 1919, nor in 1939. His articles, public speeches and deliberations in the first years following the Treaty of Versailles about whether there was any sense in allying with a Russia purged of Jews and Bolsheviks were a yielding to pro-Russian currents existing in Germany. They did not derive from a profound, inner conviction, as was the case with England.

Were we to examine Hitler's pronouncements about Russia from the years 1919–1924, we would have to state that he had pitifully little to say. In the summer of 1920, when the Red Army was approaching Warsaw, he discoursed on the subject of the rebirth of Pan-Slavism. He saw in it the source of Soviet Russia's military successes. He expressed the conviction that "Bolshevism is only a smokescreen for creating a great Russian Reich".⁸ He even briefly thought that "the nationalist wave would purge Bolshevism from Russia. An alliance with Russia might only have benefitted us at that time if we had been a strong, nationalistically-minded nation".⁹

Hitler emphasised that Russia did not belong to the ranks of Germany's relentless enemies. All the same, he thought that any agreements with "Jewish-Bolshevik Russia" were out of the question, that it was becoming a relentless foe.

⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, ed. Eberhard Jäckel, Axel Kuhn (Stuttgart, 1980), p. 166.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

At a rally on 6 August 1920 in Rosenheim he said: “A dictatorship of the proletariat reigns in Russia, but the proletariat is under the diktat of 478 plenipotentiaries of the people, of whom 430 are Jews, and each of them is the greatest enemy of Russian nationalists”.¹⁰

He ceaselessly thundered on about the “Jewish or Jewish-Bolshevik terror in Russia, about mass killings, and about the devastated Russian economy”. He called Lenin a “mass murderer”. He painted the lives of Russian workers in the blackest colours: twelve-hour working days, piecework, widespread deprivation. He repeatedly tried to convince his listeners that Bolshevism in Germany would end up the same way.

In Hitler’s eyes “Jewish-Bolshevik Russia” had little chance of survival from the outset. When it endured, he named it enemy number one, the embodiment of Jewish rule, a country ruled by a movement he considered a mortal enemy of Nazism. The fight against Bolshevism, conceived interchangeably as the fight against world Jewry, became a leading motif in Hitler’s activities. He owed his main successes in the international arena and in Germany itself after 1939 to it.

Hitler, talking unremittingly about the necessity to fight Bolshevism, and drew on the tradition of *Drang nach Osten*, presenting the push for the East as a constant in German history. He saw in Bolshevism a new religion. A year before seizing power he envisaged its future:

Bolshevism – should European and American thinking remain unchanged – will slowly spread through Asia. When world-views are in question, thirty or fifty years plays absolutely no role at all. It was only three hundred years after Christ that Christianity began to penetrate the whole of southern Europe and seven hundred years later it also embraced the north of Europe. Five hundred years later, world-views of such a fundamental nature can still manifest their absolute ability to conquer, if at the beginning they are not broken owing to the self-preservation instinct of other nations [...]. In three hundred years, if the movement continues to grow, they will see in

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 172.

Lenin not only the revolutionary of 1917, but the founder of a new global science, possibly revered like the Buddha.¹¹

The programme of the conquest of Russia was openly formulated in *Mein Kampf*: “If one desires land and soil in Europe, it may only happen, taking everything into consideration, at the expense of Russia, and then the new Reich will again have to set off on a march in the footsteps of the ancient military orders, in order for the German sword to provide the German plough with soil for the nation and daily bread”.¹²

Hitler presented a picture of extremely primitive masses that were always governed by a narrow, elite group of non-Russian and non-Slavic intelligentsia. In Hitler’s eyes “Russian illiterates have been turned into slaves by their Jewish dictators”.¹³ Those dictators were “enzymes of decomposition”.

Hitler expressed himself equally pessimistically about the alternative to Pan-Slavic Russia in *Mein Kampf*: “I cannot forget the constant audacious threat that Pan-Slavic Russia dared to create then; I cannot forget the constant attempts at mobilisation, whose only purpose was to compel Germany [to do the same]; I cannot forget the moods of public opinion in Russia that tried to outdo itself in the virulent attacks against our nation and the Reich, I cannot forget the great Russian press, which was always much more enthusiastic about France than about us”.¹⁴

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler warned that Germany was most in danger from Bolshevism. He wrote: “We ought to see in Russian Bolshevism an attempt by Jewry to achieve world domination in the twentieth century [...] Germany is the next great military target of Bolshevism today”.¹⁵ Stalin was erroneously presented as the person “who planned to help the Bolshevik idea to achieve victory. In reality he is merely Russia, the continuation of tsarist Pan-Slavism! To him

¹¹ Max Domarus, *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen* (Wiesbaden, 1973), vol. 1, part 1, pp. 77–78.

¹² Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (München, 1933), p. 154.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 586.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 753.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 751.

Bolshevism is a means to an end: it serves as a smokescreen before the Teutonic and Latin nations".¹⁶

Hitler went on to claim in 1928 in his *Zweites Buch* that Russia, in spite of its immense land area and population, was not a danger to the world, because of its weak economic potential. In this credo – which was not published during his lifetime – Hitler had no doubt that any agreements with “Bolshevik-Jewish” or “Russian-anti-capitalist” Russia were completely out of the question.

In 1932 Theodor Heuss, giving an account of Hitler’s views, asserted: “An essential goal of German development lies in Eastern Europe, certainly not in new ambitions in foreign lands. It is difficult to decide how far a role is played by the anti-Slavic complex, either influenced by the times of his Austrian youth, or cultivated by Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler’s adviser on matters of foreign and domestic policy”.¹⁷

Hitler’s “ultimate goals” crystallised in the years 1919–1926. Jochen Thies was even inclined to remark that in broad outline they were already clear in the years 1919–1920. Unlike them, his “short-term goals” were formulated during the writing of *Mein Kampf*.¹⁸ The stages of the emergence of Hitler’s foreign policy programme are as follows: in 1919 he decided to declare war on France, in 1920 he decided on an alliance with the Italians, in 1923 on an alliance with England, in 1924 on capturing *Lebensraum* in a war with Russia.¹⁹ Historians feud over whether ideological factors or factors concerning politics and world powers dominate in Hitler’s political programmes. The disquisitions of Axel Kuhn concerning the total domination of political-world power factors in the plans of Hitler, who sought an alliance with England in order to wage war against the USSR, were rightly opposed by Josef Henke.²⁰

¹⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims*, ed. Werner Jochmann (Hamburg, 1980), p. 180.

¹⁷ Theodor Heuss, *Hitlers Weg. Eine historisch-politische Studie über den Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart, 1932), p. 97.

¹⁸ Jochen Thies, *Architekt der Weltherrschaft. Die “Endziele” Hitlers* (Düsseldorf, 1976), p. 188.

¹⁹ Cf. Eberhard Jäckel, *Frankreich in Hitlers Europa* (Stuttgart, 1966), p. 18.

²⁰ Josef Henke, *England in Hitlers politischem Kalkül 1935–1939* (Boppard am Rhein, 1973), p. 28; Klaus Hildebrand, ‘Hitlers Mein Kampf. Propaganda oder

Hitler hesitated for a long time about what stance to take regarding Bolshevik Russia. At first he did not believe – like many contemporary politicians – that it would endure. He thought that the October Revolution only signified a change in the class governing the huge, uncreative mass of Slavs. The German ruling class had been replaced by Jews. The German element had been creative. In his conviction, the Jews, who had seized power with the help of the Bolshevik Revolution, were an “agent of decay”. Hitler long harboured hopes that “the enormous empire in the East was ready to collapse”.²¹ He would even have been willing to enter talks with the Russia that had arisen from its own ruins. He did not expect the Bolsheviks to stay in power for long. At a Nazi Party meeting in June 1927 in Munich he was still expressing hope for a great conflict between England and Russia. He feared that the USSR would not only revolutionize China, but India too. “Whoever talks today about keeping world peace is a bastard and a scoundrel, since world peace only serves Jews to destroy the German nation. The German nation – Hitler continued – ought to welcome with approval all manner of unrest and revolutions in the world [...]”.²² In his eyes, the Jews, Bolsheviks and Marxists had merged into one. When he saw that Bolshevik Russia had the chance of a longer existence he began regarding it as enemy number one. It had replaced the France of 1919 in his beliefs. That is why in *Mein Kampf* we can read clearly: “However, when we say territory and soil today in Europe, we can only think about Russia and the border-states under her control”.²³ In the second volume of *Mein Kampf* which came out in 1927, Hitler precisely presented his views about the future composition of international relations in the fourteenth chapter entitled “Eastern

Programm? Zur Frühgeschichte der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung’, *Neue Politische Literatur*, 14 (1964), pp. 72–82; id., *Deutsche Aussenpolitik 1933–1945. Kalkül oder Dogma* (Stuttgart, 1976); Axel Kuhn, *Hitlers außenpolitisches Programm. Entstehung und Entwicklung 1919–1939* (Stuttgart, 1970).

²¹ *Mein Kampf. Die nationalsozialistische Bewegung von Adolf Hitler* (München, 1927), vol. 2, p. 317. In the first edition the term “Persian Empire” is used.

²² Adolf Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, vol. 2, part 1, ed. Bärbel Dusik (München, 1992), p. 369.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 317.

Orientation or Eastern Policy”. He dreamed of a war against the Slavic-Jewish colossus in the East in an alliance with racially-similar England. In his 1928 *Zweites Buch* he discourses at length even more openly with the supporters of any kind of alliance with Russia regardless of its political composition. He thought there was no point in any alliance with Russia. Only in the East – not in the South or West – “could the problem of living space for our nation be resolved”.²⁴

Hitler writes:

In general, it seems self-evident in national circles that we cannot very well ally ourselves with a Jewish Bolshevik Russia, since the result, according to all probability, would be a Bolshevisation of Germany. Obviously, we do not want this. But we base ourselves on the hope that one day the Jewish character – and thereby the most fundamentally international capitalistic character of Bolshevism in Russia – might disappear in order to make place for a national communism, anticapitalist on a world scale. Then this Russia, permeated once more by national tendencies, might very well come up for consideration in terms of an alliance with Germany. This is a very great error. It rests on an extraordinary ignorance of the psyche of the Slavic Folk Soul.²⁵

Hitler went on at length in Berlin on 13 July 1928 over the delusions of the German petit-bourgeois that any possibility of an alliance with Russia existed. He believed that Russia had previously been formed by an upper stratum of Teutonic blood and later of Jewish blood. Meanwhile, Hitler claimed that the “pure Slav” is totally alien to us; “feminine and effeminate” and closer to the French than to the “tough German”.²⁶

Hitler warned against the danger of Pan-Slavism. He repeatedly argued for the impossibility of reaching agreement with the USSR for two reasons: the racial one and the necessity to capture *Lebensraum*. He said to Strasser in 1930: “The Nordic race has the right to

²⁴ *Hitlers Zweites Buch*, p. 155.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Hitler, *Reden*, vol. 3, part 1, ed. Bärbel Dusik, Klaus A. Lankheit (München, 1994), p. 16.

rule the world and we must make that racial right the *guiding light* of our foreign policy. Thus any cooperation with Russia, where a Jewish head sits atop a Slavic-Tatar body is out of the question”.²⁷

Hitler compared Russia with Italy – Marxism with Fascism – at a meeting of the Nazi Party in Munich on 7 April 1931, underscoring the superiority of Mussolini’s state. Hitler said: “It makes no difference what shape or form Marxism assumes, whether as the anarchy of communism, or as Bolshevism or Social Democracy. The nation that does not defend itself from these putrefying poisons will perish from it”.²⁸

At the same time Hitler lamented that eastern European states were beginning to become industrialized and grow independent of Germany. He declared himself decisively against supporting the development of the economy and civilization in Eastern Europe. “Regarding the Bolshevization of Russia we lost an immense region as a market. The five-year plan is nothing more Russia’s preparation to become totally independent of us. The German communist is pleased with the growth of Russia, but from our point of view forgets that he is helping to cut the branch he is sitting on, which is the basis of life for him, since he does not live on communist manifestos, but on work and bread. There are people among us who approve of the Indian fight for freedom. They do not see, however, that it is not an Indian or internal English problem, but a fight of the white race, because the white race is losing its basis for life. That is the question”.²⁹ And Hitler clearly favoured the defence of the white race.

In Hitler’s deliberations he often equated Russia with the USSR or the Comintern. Here is an example: in a text addressed to Walter von Reichenau on 4 December 1932 he expressed it as follows: “Russia is not a state, but a world-view, which for now is limited to that territory (or perhaps rules it), but in every other country it maintains sections that not only aspire to the same revolutionary

²⁷ Otto Strasser, *Ministersessel oder Revolution?* (Berlin, 1930), p. 13.

²⁸ Hitler, *Reden*, vol. 4, part 1, ed. Constantin Goschler (München, 1994), p. 267.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, part 1, p. 317.

goals, but are also organizationally subordinate to the headquarters in Moscow”.³⁰

Hitler thought that Bismarck, as an advocate of friendship with Russia, was dealing with a different kind of state, one whose leadership was not Slavic. He wrote: “Since the time of Peter the Great there were, above all, very many Baltic Germans who formed the skeleton and the brains of the Russian State”.³¹ Hitler said that even though Russified and Russian-speaking, they remained German. “Russia is indebted to this Teutonic upper stratum for her political State as well as for what little exists of her cultural value”.³² The weakening of Russia, in Hitler’s opinion, was an effect of the decimation of racially valuable forces in numerous wars, the weakening of the Teutonic ruling class. “The World War itself then brought about a further [the last] bleeding of Russia’s Nordic German elements, and the last remains were finally extirpated by the Revolution and Bolshevism”.³³ Hitler ascribed the destruction of Teutonic elements in Russia not to the “Slavic racial instinct”, but to Jewry. “Take away all the elements which are not purely Slavic from Slavdom, and it will immediately succumb to disintegration as a State”.³⁴ For a short time he even did not rule out an alliance with Russia against France.

But already in 1928 he was stating that an alliance with Russia made no sense in any respect. “The whole mentality of present-day and future Russia is opposed to this”.³⁵ “It is good fortune for the future that this development has taken place in just this way because, thereby, a spell has been broken which would have prevented us from seeking the goal of German foreign policy there where it solely and exclusively can lie: territory in the east”.³⁶

After seizing power, the tone of Hitler’s utterances about Bolshevism and the USSR underwent a marked change. Still emphasising that the fight against Bolshevism, communism, and Jewish-

³⁰ Ibid, vol. 5, part 2, p. 242.

³¹ *Hitlers Zweites Buch*, p. 156.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 158.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 159.

³⁶ Ibid.

communism remained the chief goal of Nazism, he began to separate German foreign policy from domestic policy. For example, on 23 March 1933, he made an official statement that the Reich Government was prepared to make friendly approaches to the USSR, although the “fight against communism in Germany is a domestic issue which will never bear any interference from the outside”.³⁷

After Hitler had strengthened his position, he did not hesitate at certain times to talk openly about conquering the USSR. At a Nazi Party rally in 1936 Hitler formulated with absolute clarity what the German worker and all Germans could expect if suitable *Lebensraum* could be captured in the East. In that declaration Hitler did not limit himself only to the Urals. He planned the capture of Siberia. Here are his words: “If the Ural Mountains, with their immeasurable natural resources, Siberia with its rich forests and Ukraine with its endless crops lay in Germany [...] every single German would have more than enough abundance for life”.³⁸

Formal governmental declarations on the subject of a peace-oriented policy towards the USSR were only a cover for an anti-Bolshevik propaganda war. In an interview for *The Daily Mail* he gave to its correspondent Ward Price on 17 February 1934 soon after signing the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact, Hitler pooh-poohed his suggestions that that act was preparation for joint aggression against the USSR with the aim of capturing “Russian territory”.³⁹ But there was no doubt that the extensive propaganda carried out inside the country, and everyday Nazi indoctrination was preparing millions of Germans for aggression against the “sub-humans”, inferior races, Jewish-Bolsheviks, Asians, Slavs, and barbarians threatening German civilisation. The Nazi Party’s press frequently repeated that the Russian national character defined the face of Bolshevism. And that Tatar, Mongol and Slavic elements were supposedly the components of that character. Propaganda presented the people of the USSR/Russia as citizens of inferior worth. “Slavism” and “Pan-Slavism”

³⁷ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 236.

³⁸ Manfred Weissbecker, “Wenn hier Deutsche wohnten...”. Beharrung und Veränderung im Russlandbild Hitlers und der NSDAP”, in: *Das Russlandbild im Dritten Reich*, ed. Hans-Erich Volkmann (Cologne, 1994), p. 10.

³⁹ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 365.

were written about as the frontline opposing the German organisation of Europe. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact came as a shock to Nazi Party activists and created a great commotion. The sign on the Berlin office of the Anti-Comintern organisation was taken down in order not to offend the new ally. But it was generally accepted that the new ally was rather a temporary one. Anti-Bolshevist Propaganda was toned down, but not interrupted. Disinformation continued to prevail in news about the USSR. The image of the USSR as a “colossus with feet of clay”, which could not cope with the valiant, racially superior Nordic Finnish nation was easy to interpret and hear in media circles, although formally the Third Reich – unlike Fascist Italy – did not declare its support for Finland.

Hitler frightened Europe with the spectre of Bolshevism right up until the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, for example portraying France in 1936 as a country which was becoming Bolshevik as a result of signing the Franco-Soviet Treaty of Mutual Assistance with the USSR.

Hitler essentially gave voice to the same opinions on 19 September 1939, by claiming that “Russia would remain what it was and Germany would also remain what it was. In any case both of the regimes are clear about one thing: neither the Russian nor the German regime intends to sacrifice a single person in the interests of Western democracy”.⁴⁰

In the years 1939–1940 Hitler concurred with the opinion that Stalin had freed himself from the power of the Jews. He told Sven Hedin on 4 March 1940: “Stalin has become utterly transformed. He is no longer an international Bolshevik, but presents himself as an absolutely nationalistically-disposed Russian and is carrying out exactly the same inborn nationalistic-Russian politics of the tsars [...]”.⁴¹ Benito Mussolini concluded much earlier than Hitler – at the beginning of the Great Purge – that Stalin had broken up with the ideas of early Bolshevism.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Hitler returned – irrespective of his convictions – to his former clusters of ideas.

⁴⁰ Ibid, vol. 2, part 1, p. 1361.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 1474–1475.

In Nazi propaganda of 1941–1945 the Soviet Union stood for the rule of Jews, Bolsheviks, and Commissars, and the threat of Slavic and Asiatic barbarians.

In a proclamation to the German nation on 22 June 1941 on the day the Soviet Union was invaded, Hitler put all the blame on the “Jewish-Bolshevik government”.⁴² He justified his decision to sign the pact with Moscow in 1939 by referring to the politics of Great Britain, whose government was unable, according to him, to understand the genuine interests of the West. He presented himself as the defender of European civilisation against Bolshevik barbarians. He merged the concepts of “Jewish-Anglo-Saxon warmongers” with the “Jewish leaders of the Bolshevik Moscow headquarters” into one. Despite everything, he hoped that an alliance with London for a joint assault on the Soviet Union was still possible. The maniacal faith in the sense of an alliance of the Germans with the racially-akin English, which he had been espousing for twenty years, was only shattered after 22 June 1941. When – on 30 January 1943, after the defeat at Stalingrad – Hitler issued another of his proclamations, no hopes lurked behind his “conspiracy of international capitalism and Bolshevism”, cemented by “international Jewry”.⁴³ He possessed such great power to self-delude that in 1943 he seemed to sincerely believe in the theory.

War with the Soviet Union made Hitler realise how he seriously he had underestimated his opponent. He was capable of making generalised, prophetic assessments. On 26 August 1942 he confided in his associates:

Were Stalin to remain in power for ten or fifteen years, Soviet Russia would become the most powerful state on earth. 150, 200 or 300 years could pass, it is such a remarkable phenomenon! There is no doubt at all that the general standard of living has risen. People were not suffering from hunger. Taking everything together, it should be said: they have built factories – factories of the size of the Hermann-Göring-Werke – where two years ago there were still unknown villages. They have railways that are not marked on the

⁴² Ibid., part 2, p. 1727.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 1978.

map at all [...] I have a book about Stalin; it must be said he is an exceptional personage, a true ascetic, who has brought together a huge state with an iron fist. But should anyone say it is a social state, it would be an exceptional fraud! It is a country of state capitalism: 200 million people, iron, manganese, nickel, crude oil, kerosene and everything one could wish for – with no limits. Led by a man who says: is the loss of 13 million people too much for a great idea?⁴⁴

“A PRISONER OF IDEOLOGY”

Prejudices and concepts of German imperialism, anti-Slavism and anti-Semitism merged together in Adolf Hitler’s view of Russia and the USSR. The dreadful and savage threat of Pan-Slavism looked more threatening in the eyes of the Austrian Hitler than it did in German tradition. Even in his political will and testament he did not forget to write: “When influenced by circumstances, Russians are capable of freeing themselves completely from Jewish Marxism simply in order to live in the cruellest and most savage degeneracy of everlasting pan-Slavism”.⁴⁵ Let us not forget that Hitler formulated those words at a time when on Stalin’s orders Moscow circulated propaganda during the war that trumpeted Slavic Unity against Germany, by creating, among other things, an All-Slavic Committee.

Theories about the necessity to colonise the German East, initially supported by arguments about Germans as “bearers of culture” (*Kulturträger*), theories about Proto-Aryans and their rights, and later about the organisation and biological resilience and superiority of the German nation, were bound together in Adolf Hitler’s Reich by the idea of the racial superiority of Germans and the inferiority of Slavs; the inferiority of the nations of Eastern Europe. Wolfgang Wippermann stressed that “Hitler’s utterances about the Slavs and German expansion in the East are influenced by ‘Greater German’, ‘Lesser German’ and ‘Pan-German’ and also ‘Völkisch’ newspapers

⁴⁴ Hitler, *Monologe*, p. 366.

⁴⁵ *Hitlers politisches Testament. Die Bormann-Diktate vom Februar und April 1945*. Provided with an essay by Hugh R. Trevor-Roper and an afterword by André François-Poncet (Hamburg, 1981), p. 100.

in their tiniest details and their choice of concepts and metaphors (e.g. the ‘path of the Teutonic Knights’, ‘sword and plough’ etc.)”.⁴⁶ Wippermann points to nineteenth-century precedents in combining anti-Semitism and anti-Slavism, for example in 1885, when 35,000 Poles and eastern Jews (*Ostjuden*) were deported from the German Empire. He also considers that Hitler lent a new dimension to these ideological premises, reducing them to the single, common denominator of racism.

In the historiography of recent years, the opinion has been increasingly prevalent that Hitler’s actions were strongly dependent on his world-view, his ideological premises. Thus Gerhard Schreiber, who compiled and commented on contemporary statements about Hitler, entitled the chapter devoted to Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union “A Prisoner of Ideology”.⁴⁷

Rupert Breitling writes about that ideology in his book about National Socialist racism: “The waging of the war by Germany and its occupation policies in the East differed fundamentally with regard to its racial-political goals from its policies in the West. The aim all along was the ruthless subjugation and decimation of the Slavic peoples, in order to make possible the longed-for *Lebensraum*”.⁴⁸

Hans Mommsen claims that the vast majority of military commanders with “minor exceptions” were responsible – consciously even – for the “horrifying treatment of Russian prisoners of war”, particularly during the first year and a half of the war against the USSR. I quote him word for word: “A crucial role was played by ideological premises in the attitudes of the generals (who were mainly in favour of the war) in this deliberately unacknowledged mass murder – alongside the ‘final solution of the Jewish question’ [...]”.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Cf. *Hitler und Russland. Elemente, Herkunft und Bedeutung der “Lebensraum” – Ideologie* (which presents the arguments of Wippermann’s talk given in June 1985).

⁴⁷ Cf. Gerhard Schreiber, *Hitler Interpretationen 1923–1983. Ergebnisse, Methoden und Probleme der Forschung* (Darmstadt, 1984).

⁴⁸ Rupert Breitling, *Die nationalsozialistische Rassenlehre* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1971), p. 75.

⁴⁹ Hans Mommsen, ‘Hitlers Stellung im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem’, in: *Der “Führerstaat”: Mythos und Realität. Studien zur Struktur und Politik des Dritten Reiches*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, Lothar Kettenacker (Stuttgart, 1981), p. 65.

And so the crucial question returns again of to what extent the Führer’s world-view coincided with the world-view of the upper echelons of the Third Reich, with the mentality of part of the German nation?

Hitler knew no limits in sacrificing the lives not only of his enemies, but also of his own people, the Germans. He considered that as a great creator of contemporary history, he had the right to do whatever he considered justified and possible, he accorded himself the right to precipitate any event, in any country, at any moment. What Hitler actually did, without developing any great theories for it, found its grounds in fascist doctrines. It was consistent with the teaching of Giovanni Gentile about the rights of history’s “great history-makers”. But such “great history-makers” are not born in a vacuum, be they Napoleon, Mussolini or Hitler. For several decades the historiography of the Third Reich has wrestled with the problem of whether Hitler was the expression of a continuity of the implementation of German ideologies, traditions and state mechanisms, or was an accident in its history; whether the twelve years of the Nazi regime was a hiatus in German history or an expression of its continuity. How did that look in the context of anti-Slavism?

There is no need to carry out an exegesis of all Hitler’s statements on the subject of the fate in store for the central European nations after his victory for the hundredth or thousandth time. In 1952 Alan Bullock, the author of the biography now considered a classic *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny*, concluded: “Even power he conceived of in the crudest terms: an endless vista of military roads, S.S. garrisons, and concentration camps to sustain the rule of the Aryan ‘master race’ over the degraded subject peoples of his new empire in the east”.⁵⁰

The British historian David Irving, whose views are very far from those of his countryman Bullock, and is furthermore known for his empathy for the ideas of the Third Reich, writes in *Hitler’s War*: “Hitler’s army had fallen upon the hated Poles with well-documented relish”.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny* (Penguin Books, 1990), p. 804.

⁵¹ David Irving, *Hitler’s War and the War Path 1933–1945* (London, 1991), p. 220.

Irving again, referring to documents he uncovered: “The army generals became restless about deeds being enacted by the SS in Poland, but Himmler reassured them in a secret speech at Koblenz in 1940, of which his handwritten notes survived. He explained that now for the first time, under Adolf Hitler, the solution of the thousand-year-old problem of Poland was possible: only the infusion into Poland of Germanic blood had made some Poles great and dangerous; now that Germany was strong she must see to the ‘final annexation of the area, its purification and Germanization’”.⁵²

Whereas later, relating the attitude of the Third Reich’s leader towards the citizens of the conquered USSR, Irving writes that Hitler regarded his difficulties on Polish territory as a trifle in comparison to the problems Germany faced in the Eastern territories: “Just what Hitler’s New Order would be in Europe was a secret Hitler closely kept. That Slavs and Bolsheviks – particularly if they were Jewish – would not prosper under it was obvious”.⁵³ Thus writes a contemporary historian often considered too favourably disposed towards Hitler, combining three categories into one.

Ian Kershaw, the third British historian whose opinions I cite, is the most distinguished living biographer of Hitler (Bullock died in 2004). He justifiably writes that Poland nevertheless occupied a minor place in Hitler’s plans. We find few words about Poland in *Mein Kampf*. To Hitler, *Lebensraum* meant Russia, the USSR from the 1920s onwards.

Kershaw stresses, as do many others, that the two main elements of Hitler’s world-view were the destruction of the Jews and the capture of “living space”. The British author writes: “War against Russia would, through its annihilation of ‘Jewish Bolshevism’, at the same time deliver Germany its salvation by providing new ‘living space’”. Crude, simplistic, barbaric: but this invocation of the most brutal tenets of late nineteenth-century imperialism, racism and anti-Semitism, transposed into eastern Europe in the twentieth century,

⁵² Ibid., p. 222. Cf. *Heinrich Himmlers Taschenkalender 1940. Kommentierte Edition*, ed. Markus Moors, Moritz Pfeiffer (Paderborn, 2013). See also: Peter Longgerich, *Heinrich Himmler. Biographie* (München, 2008).

⁵³ Irving, *Hitler’s War*, pp. 411–412.

was a heady brew for those ready to consume it”.⁵⁴ The concept of *Lebensraum* – living space – often played the role of a euphemism for Hitler. “Capturing living space” meant exterminating the peoples living on route to the Urals.

Immediately after becoming chancellor, Hitler spoke bluntly in a conversation with the generals of his inner circle on 3 February 1933 in the context of Russia and the USSR about capturing *Lebensraum* in the East and its “ruthless Germanization”.

The historian Manfred Weissbecker generalises about his research into the attitude of Hitler to Russia as follows: “The simple and yet explicit thought about the beautiful, rich and desirable country of the Russians and its inferior people is one of the most striking and fateful principles in the depiction of Russia, which apart, from that, had many variants and various expressions in the Nazi Party”.⁵⁵ Weissbecker emphasises that the “most barbaric occupation regime”, which he considered incomparable to that in any other country occupied by Germany during the Second World War resulted from those principles.

Kershaw writes:

During 1940 the twin obsessions of Hitler – “removing the Jews” and *Lebensraum* – had come gradually into sharp focus. The development was scarcely accidental. But it had, even so, been in many respects an indirect process. The radicalisation of anti-Jewish policy had largely been pushed along by the leadership of the Security Police, for the most part without specific involvement of Hitler (though certainly with his approval), until in Poland genocidal mentalities in near-genocidal conditions had acquired their own momentum. In the crucial area of war strategy, where his own active involvement was unquestionably crucial, Hitler’s old obsession about “living space” had returned via the difficulties he encountered in trying to force Britain out of the conflict. Now, in the first half of 1941, the practical preparations for the showdown that Hitler had always wanted could be made. In these months the twin obsessions would merge into each other. The decisive steps into genocidal war about to be taken.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936. Hubris* (Penguin Books, 2001), p. 250.

⁵⁵ Weissbecker, *Wenn hier Deutsche wohnten*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Irvin Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945. Nemesis* (New York, 2000), pp. 336–337.

“Economic, military, strategic and ideological motives – Ker-shaw writes – were not separable in Hitler’s thinking. They blended together and were used by him with different strength at different times in persuading those in his company of the correctness and inevitability of his course of action. The cement holding them in place was, as it had been for nearly two decades, doubtless the imperative to destroy once and for all ‘Jewish Bolshevism’ – an aim which would at the same time provide the necessary security in ‘living space’ and give Germany political and military dominance over the continent of Europe. But it was not until 1941 that Hitler began to emphasise the overriding ideological objective of ‘Operation Barbarossa’”.⁵⁷

Hitler took many key decisions at the end of 1941. It is clear from Goebbels’ diaries that the Führer made the decision about *Endlösung* at that moment. On 13 December 1941 Goebbels recorded further deliberations of Hitler about the role he had mapped out for the European East. “The Führer sees in general a future India for us in the East. It is a colonial country that we want to settle. Huge farms must be created there for the sons of our farmers and the veterans of our Wehrmacht. That country, which has often been captured and settled by Germans, ought – as a genuine border and ethnically German territory – to be incorporated into the German Reich. In three or four generations we must treat it as absolutely German. The Führer will turn Crimea into the ‘East Land of the Goths’ (*Ost Gotenland*) using the best human material from all the acknowledged Nordic nations”.⁵⁸

And the same day Goebbels wrote: “He [Hitler] considers our future absolutely guaranteed. Only the capturing of land and soil on which subsequent farming generations will be able to serve the national life will justify in historical and Völkisch terms the present immense blood sacrifice”.⁵⁹

Official disinformation and Hitler’s inability to take reality into account appeared in full force after June 1941. In the euphoria of the first months of the war with the USSR all he wanted was to see in everything

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 343–344.

⁵⁸ *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, part 2: *Diktate 1941–1945*, vol. 2: *Oktober–Dezember 1941*, ed. Elke Fröhlich (München, 1996), p. 499.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the confirmation of his dystopia regarding the USSR, the Russians, the Slavs and Bolshevism. Contrary to reality. If it was not congruent with his vision, so much the worse for reality. He did not, for example, take into account the suggestions of Rosenberg, who wanted better relations with the Ukrainians and Belarusians than with the Russians. Hitler did not make distinctions regarding “subhumans”. Like Robert Ley, Martin Bormann and Hermann Göring, he saw them as future slaves, and Russia as a “huge cake” that ought to be utterly exploited.

Hitler and Rosenberg’s visions of Russia, in Weissbecker’s opinion, were very similar. What differed was their attitudes regarding the practice to be applied in the conquered country. Neither of them hid the fact that they wanted a division of Russia into smaller territorial units and for it not to be reconstructed with a new tsar at the helm. Their vision of Russia, as the German author emphasises, was “almost identically coloured by anti-Slavism”.⁶⁰

The hatred and contempt for everything Russian dictated from above was boundless. The performing of works by Russian composers and playwrights was banned, and after Stalingrad also even the staging of German plays with Russian themes.

Following Stalingrad, some of Goebbels’ co-workers began to demand a change in the direction of propaganda regarding the “Eastern nations”. Eugen Hadamovsky suggested that expressions such as “beasts”, “barbarians”, or “colonial policy” ought not to be used. It was also recommended not to compare Poles with Jews in propaganda.⁶¹ But hopes that Hitler would change anything in his language or directives towards the European East turned out to be in vain.

The reality of the final weeks of the war forced Hitler to revise his views about the hierarchy of the races. He remarked tartly that the Slavic race had turned out to be stronger than the Teutonic one, and thus the German nation had condemned itself to extinction.⁶² It did not, however, hamper him in creating hopeless fantasies about subsequent clashes with the Slavs.

⁶⁰ Weissbecker, *Wenn hier Deutsche wohnten*, p. 36.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp 45–46.

⁶² Cf. Wolfram Wette, ‘Russlandbild in der NS-Propaganda. Ein Problemaufriss’, in: *Das Russlandbild im Dritten Reich*, p. 61.

CHAPTER 4

HITLER ON POLES AND POLAND 1919–1939

In 1933, Józef Beck – as Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs – conducted a survey on the orders of Marshall Piłsudski that was meant to reveal whether communication with the new German government led by Adolf Hitler would be possible. Beck presented the first results in the autumn. They announced that the “National Socialist movement had an unquestionably revolutionary character”. It was supposed that Hitler – like all reformers of that type – would be ready to begin the history of his nation from the beginning, “from year one”. It was observed that Hitler himself “is more of an Austrian, and in any case not a Prussian. Beyond that there is also the striking matter that there is not a single Prussian among his closest associates”.¹ On the basis of these premises and the conviction that Hitler would be utterly preoccupied with internal issues and the completion of the process of national unification begun in the nineteenth century, Beck and his colleagues came to the conclusion that a unique chance to improve Poland’s international situation and to establish good relations with the new German chancellor had presented itself.

Following the two presidents and the thirteen former chancellors of the Weimar Republic, Adolf Hitler was the first to be inclined to reach agreement with Poland – the one important European state with an authoritarian regime with which Germany bordered at that time. It was not only Beck who looking into the subject of Hitler’s new methods and goals. The Reichsführer did the same regarding the Poles. He saw in Piłsudski and his associates candidates to

¹ Joseph Beck, *Dernier Rapport. Politique Polonaise 1926–1939* (Neuchâtel, 1951), p. 29.

join forces with against the USSR, against communism. Following Piłsudski's death, Hitler and his comrades for a long time pinned their hopes on Beck having pro-German and anti-democratic sympathies. It was no accident that on 21 May 1935, nine days after the death of the creator of the newly reborn Poland, materials with the umbrella title: "Beck's position within his government" were compiled in the "Office of the Personal Adjutant of the Führer and Reich Chancellor".²

It was no accident that hopes were placed on Poland joining the Anti-Comintern Pact.³ And finally, after Beck was interned in Romania during the Second World War, he was kept under surveillance and attempts were made – albeit in vain – to exploit his memoirs and declarations for German propaganda purposes.⁴ Much time was needed before that cunning strategist realised in what direction an alliance with the Nazi Germany of Adolf Hitler was leading him. Only after Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw in 1939, on the fifth anniversary of the Non-Aggression Pact with Poland, did the minister announce to a German anti-fascist journalist: "If this remains off the record, I may tell you what I presently have to consider the goal of German policy in the East: a shared border between Germany and Japan".⁵ A mere eight months separated the world from the outbreak of war.

At that time no one dwelt too much on Adolf Hitler's Austrian identity. In the eyes of Europe he appeared a dangerous continuator of the Wilhelmine Germany. During the war and directly after the fall of the Reich, Polish public opinion generally considered Hitlerism, Prussian culture and German culture to be identical, as it did Hitler, Bismarck and Frederick II; the conviction was universal that Hitler was just crowning the thousand-year history of the struggles between Germany and Poland and the Slavic realm, that he was the conscious heir of the Teutonic Knights and the continuator

² Bundesarchiv Koblenz, NS 10, no. 58.

³ Marian Wojciechowski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1933–1938* (Poznań, 1965), pp. 332–335.

⁴ Auswärtiges Amt-Bonn, Politisches Archiv, Dienststelle Ribbentrop, Akten betr. chem. poln. Aussenminister Beck 1940, 9/3 ff.

⁵ Immanuel Birnbaum, *Entzweite Nachbarn* (Frankfurt am Main, 1968), p. 49.

of German traditions of the thrust towards the East – *Drang nach Osten*.⁶ In 1945 very few people, including the well-known columnist and Silesian, Edmund Osmańczyk, appealed for a fight against the Prussian spirit, against the “nationalism pushing towards the East”, and not with the German nation.⁷ The extremely simplified views, which merged Hitler into one with the tradition of German imperialism and racism, and the notion of associating the entire German nation with the Nazis, removed the need to ask questions about the nature of Hitler’s personality, whether and in what way he differed from his inner circle, and whether and in what way he differed from the German nation.

The propaganda thesis about Hitler and his system as the absolute continuation of German history in almost all of its dimensions also spread to Polish historical literature of the first post-war period. This allowed the avoidance of difficult questions regarding whether and to what extent Hitler’s system was “revolutionary”, or (so as not to tarnish the generally positive connotations of the word “revolution”) to what extent it was a great qualitative change in Germany’s history, and not a simple continuation.

People did not reflect on whether totalitarian systems are capable of compelling a nation which approves of such a system or has been forced into its framework to wreak destruction on any other nation regardless of its former traditions, prejudices and hatred or racial, nationalistic and religious sympathies, regardless of whether those traditions possessed a long historical past.

1919–1933

After the Treaty of Versailles, the German borders with the newly established Polish state, the future of that state, and its military power and politics were among the main issues focussing the attention

⁶ Cf. Andreas Lawaty, *Das Ende Preussens in polnischer Sicht* (Berlin–New York, 1986); Edmund Dmitrów, *Niemcy i okupacja hitlerowska w oczach Polaków. Poglądy i opinie z lat 1945–1948* (Warszawa, 1987).

⁷ Edmund Osmańczyk, *Sprawy Polaków* (Katowice, 1946), p. 99.

not only of German statesmen, but also the entire thinking and politically committed part of German society. Hence it comes as no surprise that we encounter the Poles and Poland several times in the speeches and articles of Adolf Hitler, beginning at the end of 1919.

On 10 December 1919, during a speech at a meeting of the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* in Munich, Hitler defined Germany's enemies as either "ancient" or "temporary". He said, among other things: "Let us observe our enemies! We divide them into two groups: one includes our absolute opponents, England and America, the second, nations which as a result of their own unfortunate location or other circumstances have been our enemies. Russia has always searched for ways to reach the sea and has entered into conflict with various nations. We have pursued a Polish policy since Bismarck".⁸ In his eyes Poland did not belong among the absolute enemies.

Criticism of Bismarck's unsuccessful Polish policy was to return in Hitler's pronouncements many years later, too. He thought that the Iron Chancellor had deceived himself by believing that Polish peasants could be transformed into loyal citizens of the Reich. It collided with Hitler's deep conviction that it was pointless undertaking the Germanization of racially foreign elements, including the Poles. Hitler judged the German Empire from the perspective of its defeat and collapse in the years 1918–1919, shifting some of the blame on its co-founder. Despite occasionally encountered judgements of historians, Hitler did not consider himself Bismarck's heir either in foreign or in domestic policy, including also his attitude to Polish matters. He compared Frederick the Great favourably to Bismarck many times, he idealised Frederick and considered him the main point of reference for himself in Germany's history. Let us not seek out, however, too many facts or truths in Hitler's historical expositions.

For Hitler, history was not a collection of facts whose existence should be taken into account. It mainly served to support the belief of the "National Socialist idea" that he propagated.

⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, ed. Eberhard Jäckel, Axel Kuhn (Stuttgart, 1980), p. 96.

Hitler repeatedly invented historical myths, and with his immense ability to self-delude he believed in them himself. If the truths he peddled totally departed from reality, all the worse for reality. It is puzzling how utterly alien to him was a sense of perspective towards his own ideas, how he was unable to bring himself to criticise himself, not to take himself seriously, or admit privately to the cynical manipulation of ideas. His manic belief and the priestly solemnity with which he treated his mission, his conviction about his own charisma and infallibility make him stand out even amongst the greatest and most murderous totalitarian dictators. That trait of Hitler intensified as the years went by.

The thirty-year-old Hitler accused the politicians of the Bismarckian Reich of having lost. He fully justified, however, Germany's involvement in the First World War. In a speech of 17 July 1920 at a meeting of the Nazi Party in Rosenheim, he blamed the war – as did many of his contemporaries – on England. Hitler claimed that “neither the emperor, nor German ‘militarism’ could be blamed for the war. Wars will endure as long as the world exists. Today after the so-called peace, Europe is in greater turmoil than before the war. [...] The rule of war is ‘force before law’. England is primarily to blame for the war”.⁹

In the first post-war years, Hitler was inclined to search for German allies in Russia. He had not started believing that Soviet Russia would endure, and the fate of Poland as a temporary state seemed sealed to him. On 21 July 1920 he voiced that in another speech in Rosenheim: “The Triple Entente ought to realise that the writing’s on the wall for Poland. Our rescue never comes from the West. We must seek a bond with nationalistic anti-Semitic Russia. Not with the Soviets. Laws which cannot be enforced are empty words. The world war proves that a nation without weapons is pointless. Can Socialists govern any nation on the earth without the nation being armed? In Soviet Russia there exists the most brutal armed leadership, a dictatorship. Marxism has been totally rejected in the soviets, the Jew rules there”.¹⁰

⁹ Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen*, p. 147.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

Hitler's views about Poland's fate were shared at that time by many Germans and Europeans. The Red Army's offensive on Warsaw seemed unstoppable. Soviet Russia itself, plunged in hunger and anarchy, under attack from the outside and the inside, did not appear to be a state with a future. The Red Army's successes in the fight against the Poles were ascribed by Hitler to "nationalist feelings" aroused in the Pan-Slavists. He thought that nationalism would devour Bolshevism. His arguments about it in Munich at a meeting of the Nazi Party on 27 July 1920 met with great acclaim from the audience – according to police accounts. It is worth quoting them: "Bolshevism is only a cover to create a single, huge Russian Reich. France sent Poland help in order to turn Germany into an enemy again. A union of Russia with Germany can only be achieved when Jewry is removed".¹¹

Not linking the Poles with the concept of Pan-Slavism, which was indeed historically justified, and above all faith in Bolshevism being engulfed by nationalism, endured in Hitler's pronouncements with monotonous immutability until his death.

Also constantly present in Hitler's speeches are attacks on the Entente, the resolutions of the Treaty of Versailles, and the cult of the army, military strength and war. On 6 August 1920 he wrote: "No other nation has been deceived in a more shameless way than Germany. Eleven and a half million Germans find themselves under foreign rule in Europe. At the same time, when the Entente out of love for an independent Poland summons the whole world to help it against the Russian tyrant, it gags Germany and oppresses millions of *Volksgenossen* in occupied territories, forces millions more Germans in Czechoslovakia and Romania to stay silent, and robs Germany of Danzig (Gdańsk) to give it to Poland [...]"¹²

He defended Wilhelmine Germany from accusations of imperialism and denounced the Social Democrats in the great hall of Hofbräuhaus in Munich on 25 August 1920: "The Social Democrats are protesting against arms supplies to Poland, while they themselves contributed to the arming of Poland by disarming Germany.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 165–166.

¹² Ibid., pp. 170–171.

The Social Democratic Party, which uses posters to threaten citizens that if they do not disarm, the French will invade, engages in duplicity. The more arms we give up, the greater will be the danger of the French invading”.¹³ In Hitler’s opinion, Social Democracy, the Marxists and the Bolsheviks were all being manipulated by the Jews. The Entente, too.

From the very first moment, Anti-Semitism dominated over all other slogans in Hitler’s programme. It is difficult to determine when he began to manifest it with such intensity. It heightened in the second half of the 1930s and lasted, as we know, until the final moments of his life. Hitler thought that no Poles or Germans of Jewish descent existed. He emphasised many times: “Jewry is above all a race and not a religious community. Jews do not define themselves as Jewish Germans, Jewish Poles or let us say, Jewish Americans, but unwaveringly as German, Polish or American Jews”.¹⁴

From the beginning, Hitler refused Jews all rights to assimilate. In a speech *Why are we anti-Semitic?* at a Nazi Party rally on 13 August 1920 in Munich he referred to his recollections as a soldier amid general mirth and applause. He accused “Jewish bloodsuckers” of turning Poles in Galicia to drink. And said: “Whoever was a soldier will recall that you could see those Abrahams standing at every station in Galicia or Poland. Jews have penetrated and put pressure on other nations for millennia [...]”.¹⁵

Hitler would repeatedly return to the role of Galician Jews as the initiators of the unrest not only in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, but also of the Bolshevik Revolution. The knowledge of the Nazi Party’s leader not only about the Poles, but about his chief enemy – the Jews – was strangely scant. He refers to what he had heard, to his own limited experience and to his reading of newspapers. His audiences at rallies in Bavaria did not need much more; they were already prejudiced against Jews and the Treaty of Versailles.

Beside world Jewry, Hitler’s most virulent attacks were directed towards communists and socialists of all stamp. From the end of

¹³ Ibid., p. 213.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 191, 203.

August 1920, following the “Miracle on the Vistula”, after the repulsion of the Red Army and the Polish Army’s counter-offensive, Hitler began to express himself differently about Poles. On 25 August 1920 in the *Festsaal* of the Hofbräuhaus “as a result of the position taken regarding Poland, the speaker turned against the MSPD, USPD and KPD”.¹⁶ He again accused the entire Left Wing for helping the Poles arm, and saw in it a growing threat to Germany.

Hitler went on at great length about the nationalism and imperialism of the Italians, Poles and Serbs, contrasting them with the Germans. He claimed that the states of those nationalities were “a thousand times more imperialistic than the German Reich”.

He used the concepts of tribal and ethnic communities and ethnic territories imprecisely and interchangeably. He repeatedly mentioned that the weakness of Soviet Russia also derived from its multi-ethnic composition. He also spoke about the Poles in this context. “The Russians are themselves responsible for not yet achieving peace; had they been concerned about purely Russian territories, then no Ukrainian, Pole or Latvian would have dared act against Russia”.¹⁷

After August 1920 the problem not of the national status of Gdańsk and Eastern Prussia, but above all Silesia, occurs dozens of times in Hitler’s speeches.¹⁸ The Polish state became an actual fact, the victory in the Polish–Soviet War raised Poland’s prestige immensely; not only in Hitler’s eyes. From 1920 until midway through the 1930s Hitler was convinced about the strength of the Polish Army. In his reckoning – and in the estimation of other European politicians – it was becoming a power to be reckoned with.

He wrote in an unpublished article of 10 March 1921: “France occupies fresh German territories, Poland is mobilising and the threat of a Polish war to seize Upper Silesia is looming dangerously on the horizon, but Simons is keeping calm. Gessler is even more composed, capable in this hour of demanding only one thing from the German nation, namely: to keep a cool head. For if he does not

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 214.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 216, 260.

¹⁸ Cf. Axel Kuhn, *Hitlers außenpolitisches Programm. Entstehung und Entwicklung 1919–1939* (Stuttgart, 1970), pp. 62–67.

do that, the Poles may perhaps find a convenient pretext to invade Upper Silesia”.¹⁹

The main objects of Hitler’s attacks was the Minister for Reconstruction and later, from 1920 Minister of Defence, Otto Gessler and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Walter Simons. His score-settling with Gessler ended with the latter being incarcerated in Ravensbrück at the end of the Second World War. Hitler asked in 1921: “Does Minister Gessler seriously think that the Poles will have to cross other Prussian borders if Upper Silesia stands entirely wide open and defenceless before them? And what nonsense is the minister spouting that the honour of the Entente will never allow Polish crimes?”²⁰

In an article of 28 April 1921 published in *Völkischer Beobachter*, however, he made the succinct charge that the only compensation for the sacrifice of German blood in the First World War was the “creation of the Polish state”.²¹ He accused Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg by name of pro-Polish politics causing the opposite results than the intended ones. Instead of supplying the German Army with ready, loyal recruits he armed the Poles to fight for their own state. Hitler often put forward those arguments at that time. Ludendorff, who contributed so much to bringing down Bethmann-Hollweg, had talked for a long time about the unsuccessful Polish politics of the First World War.

Hitler renounced the pacifists who propagated agreement and forgiveness, and showered abuse on the German Social Democrat government. He spoke unremittingly about the millions of German *Volksgenossen* in “foreign fetters”, and about the murders committed on thousands of Germans in Upper Silesia.²²

He ridiculed the faith of Social Democrats in the pledges of Lloyd George and the French. His statements about the national catastrophe of the loss of Upper Silesia by Germany are worth quoting more fully. Their central motif is that the “loss of Silesia means the beginning of the end of Germany”.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 340.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 372.

²² Ibid., p. 389.

He claimed in *Völkischer Beobachter* on 15 March 1921 that:

The Entente intends to award Upper Silesia entirely or in part to Poland regardless of the results of the election. If one continues the line of thought that in accordance with the peace treaty to finally regulate the fate of the plebiscite territories it is to be decided not by a plebiscite as such, but by a commission, if one continues the line of thought that in spite of the fact that at one time 97% of the population in Eastern Prussia voted in favour of Germany, and that the same commission awarded Poland a corridor fifty kilometres wide, then even the most insouciant are beginning to understand what danger Upper Silesia is in. What the loss of Upper Silesia means to Germany is known by at least every thinking person today. It's not a problem that only concerns the bourgeois, the Junker, the capitalist or the reactionary, but a problem of life and death for the entire German nation. Whoever takes Upper Silesia from the Germans is taking away the chance to live from 15 million people. In this case only one choice is left to our nation: either to die of hunger, and that may not be slow, but as a result of rapid starvation, or to put up resistance. And that resistance – which every German ought to be convinced about – will soon erupt against Poland. The German nation will throw itself into resistance.²³

Hitler's thunderous calls for armed resistance do not sound especially convincing. More and more often impotence and a sense of defencelessness concerning the Entente's resolutions regarding Poland can be heard in them. The peace treaty signed in March 1921 between Poland and Soviet Russia was in Hitler's eyes fraught with dreadful consequences for Germany, because it allowed the Poles to begin an expansion against the former territories of the Reich.

Hitler weighed up Great Britain's more restrained position towards Poland. He lamented, however, that it did not yet mean readiness for an English-German agreement.

He wrote in the article "The Villainy of the Dwarfish Polish Assassins" on 15 May 1921 that allied units in Upper Silesia were not stationed to stop the Poles from rising up, but quite the opposite, to give them the opportunity for "full preparation and organisation of

²³ Ibid., pp. 350–351.

a revolution. The loss of Upper Silesia means the beginning of the end for Germany. At a time when it was necessary to cut off around 43 million tonnes of coal annually, carrying out diktats from Paris is becoming utterly impossible. Over the course of a few months Germany will once more be portrayed by its opponents as treaty breakers”.²⁴ Later, in another article, Hitler attacked Chancellor Wirth for believing in the fair play of the Entente in the Silesian question.²⁵

He wrote off the Third Silesian Uprising as a “Republic of Wastrels” in an article where he settled scores with Ebert and Noske. He wrote that “for some time the leader of the Polish robbers, Korfanty, the general of the little Poles responsible for cutting off ears and commissioner for gouging out eyes, declared war against the Holy German Reich or the Republic”. But Ebert and Noske’s republic did not exist, in Hitler’s opinion, nor was there one able general capable of cracking down on the “Polish gang leader” Korfanty. And Hitler finished with the conclusion: “No one really knows who the greater wastrels are; Korfanty and his supporters or our own Jewish government and its comrades”.²⁶ On 25 May he repeated in the article ‘Germany Betrayed’ that the loss of Upper Silesia meant the utter economic destruction of Germany.²⁷ He returned to the subject in two further articles “The Fate of Silesia” and “The Logic of German Nationalists” on 29 May. In view of the fact that some of the German press described the antics of Bavarian volunteers rushing to Silesia, claiming that the apparent fight for Upper Silesia was only a mask behind which was hidden the desire to start a new civil war, Hitler turned against Jewish press intrigues, ending with the words: “The idea of a state in Germany will once again be in order the day the last Jew is thrown out of the Reich”.²⁸

Hitler, writing about the fight for Upper Silesia, used the opportunity to express his virulent anti-Semitic feelings. He ridiculed the “old newspaper Jewess” the *Münchener Post*, which condemned the anti-Semitic attitudes of the Bavarian volunteers in Silesia, who

²⁴ Ibid., p. 393–394.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 399.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 412–413.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 415.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 419.

refused to enlist Jewish volunteers in the army or pay attention either to the kindness of Jewish people in Silesia, or to people who, owing to their pseudo-Polish language, considered themselves supporters of Korfanty and the idea of Great Poland.

Thus Hitler mocked the *Münchener Post*: “But what damage are our people doing there? They confused the *Wasserpolnisch* with *Schnappspolnisch* again and by doing so created the greatest imaginable threat to Germany”.²⁹

After the Council of the League of Nations confirmed the new border in Silesia in October 1921, at a Nazi Party meeting in Munich Hitler returned to the idea of an alliance with England against Russia with the aim of capturing land in the East: “In the years 1898 and 1899 England proposed in Berlin an alliance against Russia. It would have been a chance to acquire more territory [...] Thus it would have created the opportunity for unlimited expansion in the East”.³⁰ He saw an alliance with Russia against England as an alternative. Characteristically, the reference to the possibility of an alliance with Russia was greeted by Hitler’s listeners with enthusiastic applause. In the context of Upper Silesia it was clear support for the idea of another partition of Poland.

Hitler’s exposition about the direction of the German Empire’s foreign policy and the Russian Revolution was typical:

Russia, which mainly engages in agriculture, is not revolutionary. The Russian Revolution was carried out by Polish Jews with the help of Austrian crowns from the revolutionary headquarters in Krakow and Lwów (Lviv). Austria has always been Russia’s ancient enemy and thought it could destroy the Russians by means of revolutions. The black and red majority at the Reichstag bears the responsibility for military conflict having broken out between Germany and Russia. Still during the war there would have been the time and the opportunity to switch allegiance; we ought to have dropped Austria so she could have collapsed, and then marched alongside Russia. The black-red-and-gold members of the Reich’s

²⁹ Ibid., p. 431.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 505. For a competent interpretation of this part of Hitler’s speech entitled *Oberschlesien, das Opfer des Börsenparlaments*, cf. Kuhn, *Hitlers außenpolitisches Programm*, p. 66.

government are to blame for Germany's unsound wartime policies! The creation of a Polish state had to be disastrous for Germany.³¹

Hitler enthusiastically spoke in the role of a prophet who had predicted the loss of Upper Silesia: "When we first spoke publicly, we rejected the new parliamentary government, which was nothing but an instrument of the Jewish stock market and Jewish press. We predicted – in the face of the politics imposed at that time – the surrender of Upper Silesia, the Ruhr district and Rhineland. The first of those has been carried out now: no politics of fulfilling obligations (of the Versailles Treaty) helped. The entire Polish politics of Bethmann-Hollweg suffered from misunderstanding Polish national hatred. The creation of the Polish state was the greatest crime ever committed against the German nation".³²

On 1 March 1922 at a rally of the Nazi Party in Munich he said: "Poland, which sprang from German blood, can maintain 500 000 soldiers, and the same is true of Czechoslovakia".³³

Hitler encouraged talks with the government of Fascist Italy almost from the outset. We learn about it on 14 November 1922 in a typical context: "Idle chatter about South Tyrol, and empty protests against Fascists harm us and push Italy away from us. There is no sentiment in politics, but only impudence. Why should we suddenly be outraged as a result of the closure of a dozen German schools in South Tyrol, if the German press remains silent about the closure of thousands of German schools in Poland, Alsace and Lorraine, and Czechoslovakia".³⁴

He regarded the role of the Habsburg Monarchy as irreversibly over. In his well-known public declaration from prison in Landsberg on 16 October 1924 he stressed that the Habsburg state only hampered the unification of the German nation. At that time he also condemned "Vienna's short-sighted Polish politics against Russia". According to him, Habsburg Austria "stirred up trouble in St. Petersburg: 'The road to Vienna leads through Berlin'. It goaded

³¹ Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen*, p. 505.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 506.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 590.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 728.

the Russians until it had achieved the appropriate level of mortal hatred between Russia and Austria. Austria lacked the spirit needed to maintain a state. Attempts were made to maintain that impossible creation and Germany had to suffer that impossible creation”.³⁵

Even before the writing of *Mein Kampf*, in his public appearances and articles Hitler did not envision only his goals, but also his methods: large-scale ethnic cleansing and the annihilation of other races, war, violence and the use of gas. For a long time Europe did not take the declarations of the leader of the German extremists seriously. Those goals and methods seemed to those who follow the fortunes of Hitler and the Nazi Party in the 1920s a barbaric, inhuman dystopia that no one would have been capable of, or dared to turn into reality in Europe. The reaction of the “master” Mussolini following his first meeting with the “student” Hitler, then chancellor, in Venice in June 1934, are significant. He described him as a barbarian and a madman.

As the years went by, Hitler’s attitude to the Polish question, Poles and Poland became more and more a function of the Germany-Russia relations. Either with Moscow against the Poles or with the Poles against Soviet Russia. Fiery tirades about Upper Silesia quickly vanished from Hitler’s repertoire. With Hitler they seems to play a much more instrumental role than in the speeches of dozens of other orators of that time. It is characteristic that in the 1930s Hitler concentrated on claims for Danzig and the Polish Corridor; there was almost nothing in the utterances of the Reich Chancellor about Silesia in the years 1933–1939. The Hitler of 1919–1924 did not have any personal relationship with the eastern borders of the Second Reich. He used the standard arguments of German revisionism of that time. Something else makes him stand out: a tendency to have his own global visions. In the 1930s he needed Danzig much more than Silesia for the sake of those visions, in order to unify German territories and if necessary march against the USSR, eastwards, not through Poland, but with Poland.

During the period that Hitler was writing *Mein Kampf* he had not yet assigned a clear place for Poland in his plans for acquiring

³⁵ Ibid., p. 889.

Lebensraum. He stated vaguely: “However, when we say territory and soil today in Europe, we can only think about Russia and the border-states under her control”.³⁶ In the chapter “Eastern Orientation or Eastern Policy” he recalled: “[...] between Germany and Russia lies the Polish State, which is entirely in French hands. In the event of a war with Germany and Russia both fighting against Western Europe, Russia would first have to flatten Poland in order to bring the first soldier to the German front lines”.³⁷ In the chapter “The State” we read: “The often demanded policy of Germanizing the Polish East unfortunately always rested on the same myth. Here, too, they believed the Polish element could be Germanized by simply changing the language. This would have had a fatal result. A people of an alien race would express their alien thoughts in the German language, thereby compromising the nobility and dignity of our nationality by its own inferiority”.³⁸

And, finally, in the first volume, in the chapter “Causes of the Collapse” he recalls that: “The Polish policy was a perfect example of these half-way measures. The policy caused irritation without ever taking any serious action or exerting any control. The result was not a victory for Germany, not the appeasement of the Poles, but the arousal of Russia’s hostility. Russia became an enemy”.³⁹ The story of *Mein Kampf*’s distribution in Poland and unsuccessful attempts at its translation, are characteristic, even in the years 1933–1938. The book was banned almost the entire time, even when the Polish Foreign Office maintained that after the pact was signed in 1934, formal prohibition had been rescinded.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Mein Kampf. Die nationalsozialistische Bewegung von Adolf Hitler*, vol. 2 (München, 1927), p. 316.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁹ *Mein Kampf. Eine Abrechnung von Adolf Hitler* (München, 1925), p. 287.

⁴⁰ The history of the translation and distribution of *Mein Kampf* in Poland is significant. Hitler’s credo was banned and confiscated for a long period. A year after the signing of the Declaration of Non-Aggression with Poland, Ambassador Hans Adolf von Moltke announced on 15 January 1935 the revoking of the ban on *Mein Kampf*. However, difficulties with distribution continued. The Polish government was especially sensitive to the sale of *Mein Kampf* in the regions of Poznań, Katowice and Bydgoszcz. The issue of the book’s distribution was

After writing *Mein Kampf*, Hitler observed the coup d'état executed by Józef Piłsudski in May 1926. That event was welcomed with visible approval by the German Right. Ernst von Weizsäcker, then in Copenhagen, wrote on 15 May 1926: “The revolutions of this world do not move us much in this most peaceful corner of Europe. If Mr Piłsudski remains victorious in Poland, it can only suit us”.⁴¹ And Heinrich Brüning stated: “Piłsudski’s conduct regarding the opposition in Poland is a powerful incentive for right-wing parties”.⁴²

In 1928 Hitler repeated in *Zweites Buch* by and large the same arguments from *Mein Kampf* about the impossibility of Germanizing the Poles. “The Folkish State, conversely, must under no condition annex Poles with the intention of wanting to make Germans out of them some day. On the contrary, it must muster the determination either to seal off those alien racial elements, so that the blood of its own Folk will not be corrupted again, or it must without further ado remove them and hand over the vacated territory to its own National Comrades”.⁴³ They are, as we can see, more stridently formulated. The terms “throw out”, “remove”, belong to that “euphe-

repeatedly brought to court in Katowice and Łódź. Representatives of the Third Reich issued vain assurances that Hitler’s book represented “no danger at all to the Polish state”. Only excerpts of *Mein Kampf* appeared in print. Polish translators approached publishers and the German authorities several times for permission to translate it. So, for example, a correspondent of the *Kurier Warszawski* Maria Męcińska obtained the permission of the Auswärtiges Amt (Federal Foreign Office) for a translation in 1933. She identified Gebethner and Wolff as a Polish publishing house willing to published *Mein Kampf*, informing that it was a “Christian publishing house of German origin”. The translation, however, was not published. In accordance with Goebbels’ instructions, translations of *Mein Kampf* needed Hitler’s direct approval. It was instructed that sections which were sensitive to particular nations be removed from foreign-language versions; Auswärtiges Amt-Bonn, Politisches Archiv, Presseabteilung, P 16, 73/3–73/4. Cf. Grzegorz Krzywiec, ‘Recepcja *Mein Kampf* w polskiej opinii publicznej do 1939 roku. Prolegomena’, in: *Lesestunde / Lekcja czytania*, ed. Ruth Leiserowitz et al. (Warszawa, 2013), pp. 241–268.

⁴¹ *Die Weizsäcker-Papiere 1930–1932*, ed. Leonidas E. Hill (Berlin, 1982), vol. 1, p. 375.

⁴² Heinrich Brüning, *Memoiren 1918–1934* (Stuttgart, 1970), p. 185.

⁴³ *Hitlers Zweites Buch*, pp. 29.

mistic language” of the Nazis, that replaced the words “physically eliminate, displace”, etc.

In the chapter discussing how the borders of 1914 were not his goal, Hitler once again condemns the idea of creating a Polish “buffer state” from the First War. He described Poland as being in the system of French alliances “from Paris to Belgrade via Warsaw and Prague”.⁴⁴ In 1934 he was to consider the fact that he had considerably reduced the significance of Franco-Polish bonds as one of the greatest virtues of the pact he signed with Piłsudski.⁴⁵ The telling words of Hitler: “Berlin, the Reich’s capital, is barely 175 kilometres from the Polish border. It lies scarcely 190 kilometres from the nearest Czech border, [...]”⁴⁶ appear in *Zweites Buch*. Hitler recalled that “Poles systematically lay waste to anything that even reminds them of the name of Germany”.⁴⁷ He drew attention to the removal of the monuments of Bismarck in the territories of the former Prussian partition. He thought that expert Viennese diplomats had craftily driven Berlin to proclaim the Polish state, for which German soldiers shed blood.⁴⁸ Hitler also recalled Ludendorff’s dashed hopes of thus gaining Polish recruits during the Second World War. He cited that example when there was talk of the establishing Andrey Vlasov’s army and units similar to it in Eastern Europe.

PIŁSUDSKI AND HITLER

Zweites Buch, where Hitler developed the theses of *Mein Kampf*, was not published during his lifetime and thus could not influence the assessment of the Nazi Party’s programme abroad. It probably would not have fundamentally changed the attitude of Polish government politicians to Hitler anyway. Piłsudski allegedly predicted very early that the Nazi Party’s Führer had a chance to seize power in Germany

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁵ Otto Meissner, *Staatssekretär unter Ebert, Hindenburg, Hitler* (Hamburg, 1950), p. 345.

⁴⁶ *Hitlers Zweites Buch*, p. 73.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 201.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 186

and as a result ought to be negotiated with. As ambassador Neville Henderson joked in 1937, the Polish marshal had bought shares in Hitler when their price was still low.

Many years before, the distinguished Polish historian Piotr Wandycz had signalled that the typewritten memoirs of Otto Wagener (1888–1971), former chief of staff of the SA in the years 1929–1930 and head of the Political-Economic Department in the Reich Leadership of the Nazi Party in the years 1931–1932 suggested that Marshal Piłsudski had ordered Hitler to be contacted in autumn 1930.⁴⁹ He had received the text for inspection from a Yale colleague, Henry A. Turner Jr., who published it soon after.

Wagener's information sounds sensational to historians of Polish-German relations. Almost thirty years after discussions about it were begun it has not been conclusively confirmed. But can it be lent absolute credence? Turner summarised the relevant passage of Wagener's memoirs as follows:

In autumn 1930, Wagener went on, a Polish lawyer whose name slipped his memory and who had lived in Poznań before the war, and was thus a German citizen appeared in the *Reichsleitung* of the Nazi Party in Munich. Since Hess and Hitler were away, he received the guest and spoke to him at length. The Pole introduced himself as an unofficial envoy of the Polish president [sic!], Marshal Piłsudski, with the task of making contact with Hitler, and gave Wagener a letter, which was meant to accredit him.

The guest from Warsaw stated in his conversation with Wagener that Piłsudski was following with great interest and fondness the growth of Nazism, since he was also a nationalist owing to his own experiences during the liberation of Poland. Piłsudski was worried about chauvinism, which he considered an inevitable phenomenon accompanying the rebirth of a nation. Hence Piłsudski thought that a peaceful settling of the issues between the new nations of Germany and Poland ought to be prepared in advance. He saw in the Polish Corridor a stipulation of the Treaty of Versailles that would be unacceptable to Germany in the long term and had created

⁴⁹ Piotr Wandycz, 'Próba nawiązania przez Marszałka Piłsudskiego kontaktu z Hitlerem jesienią 1930 roku', in: *Niepodległość* (New York, 1978), vol. 11; cf. *Polska a zagranica* (Paris, 1986).

a potential cause of military clashes. In order to avoid that danger, Piłsudski instructed the envoy to suggest to Hitler that immediately after the Nazis seized power Germany and Poland should enter into a ten-year agreement of peace and friendship [...]

Russia was the greatest threat to Poland, the guest from Warsaw told Wagener, since Poland could not expect the Western powers to provide any protection from Russia. Piłsudski understood and turned his attention towards Germany. Before the envoy's departure to Munich the marshal had told him: "Please tell Herr Hitler that he must hurry. I am old now!" The Polish envoy, who was en route to Baden-Baden, left his address in the town and declared his readiness to come to Munich again and present his mission personally to Hitler.⁵⁰

Then Turner quoted Wagener's text word for word:

The envoy went to Baden-Baden, and I briefly informed Hitler, who was in Hamburg, about the visit. Hitler returned a few days later. When I presented to him a full account of the visit and the entire conversation without any omissions, he said after a moment's silence: 'Yes, matters are developing. The construction of our SA is not yet complete, the party is still – where personalities are concerned – in short trousers, our economic ideas are barely taking shape, social policy is in an embryonic state, we have not thought once about future reforms of the state, and now the head of a foreign state appears here with problems of foreign policy and we may not shirk from taking a position regarding it [...] Who do I have as a political adviser? Who in my circle knows the significance of the problem of the corridor, who has examined the possibility of solving this problem at a deeper level than what we have learned from the press, from a few books and studies?.'⁵¹

Soon after, as Wagener recalled, a meeting was held between Hitler and Piłsudski's envoy. Hitler was said to have told him later: "I am determined to take up Piłsudski's incentive at once after seizing power and enter a ten-year agreement with Poland. What a response that kind of agreement will have in Germany and in the

⁵⁰ Otto Wagener, *Hitler aus nächster Nähe. Aufzeichnungen eines Vertrauten 1929–1932*, ed. Henry A. Turner Jr. (Frankfurt am Main, 1978), p. 118.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119

whole world!”⁵² Wagener claimed that in this context Hitler was once again talking about an anti-Bolshevist alliance with England.

Wagener offered the following as a statement by Hitler: “I am searching for work and bread in the East for those millions of people, too many of whom live in Germany. There is space in the East! There are opportunities in the East! And the threat of Bolshevism is forcing us even to turn our front towards the East. Central Europe, Ukraine under German influence, is solving all the needs of the European nations [...] The agreement with Poland is the first step towards unifying Central Europe. And you will see – even England will offer us help then, to remove the threat to the world posed by Bolshevism”.⁵³

Turner defended the credibility of Wagener’s recollections, comparing their value with Rauschning’s *Gespräche mit Hitler (Conversations with Hitler)*.⁵⁴ The documentary credibility of the latter, as is known, was questioned in numerous places. There is also the difference, after all, that Wagener remained a convinced Nazi until the end of his life and only wrote his memoirs in a British POW camp in the years 1945–1946, chiefly drawing on his memory and not notes. One thing is certain though, that Wagener is often mistaken in dating events. The meeting of the Polish envoy with Hitler cannot then have taken place precisely in autumn 1930. On the other hand, though, it would actually have been justified by the huge success of the Nazi Party in the election to the Reichstag in September 1930.

After weighing up all the pros and cons, Wandycz wrote that the “fact of the visit of Piłsudski’s envoy ought to be accepted as probable”. He nonetheless thought that Wagener, years later, had created a synthesis of various commentaries linked to relations with Poland in Nazi Party circles from the 1930s, including those that were in circulation right after the signing of the joint German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact in 1934. Wandycz wonders whether the envoy acted on Piłsudski’s direct or indirect instructions.⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid., p. 120

⁵³ Ibid., p. 122

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. VI–VII. Cf. Theodor Schieder, *Hermann Rauschnings “Gespräche mit Hitler” als Geschichtsquelle* (Opladen, 1972).

⁵⁵ Wandycz, *Próba nawiązania*, p. 134.

Piłsudski, who had had a lengthy education in conspiracy, was prepared to resort, as we know, to secret methods and personal diplomacy. A secret mission to the leaders of the Nazi Party and the SA would have been in keeping with his style. Wandycz recalled that in March 1931 there was a meeting with the agreement of the Warsaw Foreign Office between Aleksander Ładoś, the Polish consul general in Munich, and Ernst Röhm. As an official of the Polish diplomatic service, Stanisław Schimitzek, recalled:

until 1933 we did not have any direct contact with the Nazi Party's leaders, who were trying to outdo each other in their chauvinistic frenzy with other nationalistic German parties. Only the consul general in Munich, Aleksander Ładoś, with the permission of the Foreign Office accepted the offer of a meeting on neutral ground at the home of a mutual acquaintance, Ernst Röhm, chief of staff of the Nazi SA. Röhm's reflections during the meeting, which took place for certain in March 1931, with – in the opinion of Ładoś – Hitler's certain knowledge, if not on his outright initiative, led to the pronouncement that what was said publicly – *zum Fenster hinaus* – at rallies of his party, did not reflect the true views of its leadership. The Nazis would gain power in a year or two and then it would transpire that their agreement with Poland would be easy in the face of the threat of communism both countries were facing. He wanted to travel to Warsaw, since he was convinced it would be possible to find common ground with Piłsudski, since he was not a Germanophile. Warsaw did not react to a report about that conversation.⁵⁶

Wandycz's observations that the conversations of Ładoś may have been a continuation of previous ones (for example initiated by Wagener) are insightful, that it was typical that essentially they were carried out, it appeared, behind the back of the Warsaw Foreign Office and finally that they were aimed at the SA headquarters – at a military force, which, let us add, must have counted most in Piłsudski's eyes.

Wandycz writes: "Assuming that Piłsudski wanted to make contact with Hitler, it would have been natural for him to instruct the emphasis of his own (Piłsudski's) friendly attitude to German

⁵⁶ Stanisław Schimitzek, *Drogi i bezdroża minionej epoki* (Warszawa, 1976), p. 208.

(and not Prussian) nationalism, which Hitler represented, and to present the idea of a Polish-German pact to his German collocutor in the most attractive form possible. At the same time it is difficult to imagine that Piłsudski offering any territorial concessions in advance or was seriously thinking about a union of Central-Eastern Europe under German control”.⁵⁷ Piłsudski probably did not offer any territorial concessions in advance. He was too wily an old fox. But the outstanding expert in Polish-German relations many years ago, before the publication of Schimitzek or Wagener’s accounts, wrote: “One can also suppose that Piłsudski would not in principle have been opposed to certain territorial concessions regarding Germany, if it could have brought a genuine settlement and allowed him to devote himself utterly to preparations for the war with the Soviet Union which in his opinion was inevitable sooner or later”.⁵⁸

It is difficult to predict how much more it will be possible to clarify on the subject of contacts between representatives of the Piłsudski camp and Hitler and the SA headquarters. It would seem that the trail might lead to military rather than diplomatic archives. Of course, Piłsudski was neither a Germanophile, nor an admirer of Hitler. In Poland’s foreign policy, which was perhaps his strongest suit, he had – like the Reichsführer – the ability to see globally. In the years of the dictatorial governments of 1926–1935, Piłsudski clearly pushed ideological motivations – National Socialism, communism and parliamentary democracies – into the background. He was neither in this nor had previously been a dogmatist, as his secret negotiations with “Bolshevik Russia” proved. The most important thing to him was to weigh up whether to ally with Germany against the Soviet Union, or with the Soviet Union against Germany. He looked for ways of establishing contact with both Moscow and Berlin (even via Munich). He tried both force and clandestine negotiations. In the calculations of Polish politicians, the fact that Hitler was not a Prussian – but came from Austria – played a serious role. The myth of the Austrian who was sympathetic towards Poland, the myth of a certain community of interest from the last

⁵⁷ P. Wandycz, *Próba nawiązania*, p. 136.

⁵⁸ Jerzy Krasuski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1919–1932* (Poznań, 1975), p. 270.

years of the Habsburg Monarchy clearly managed to take hold among Poles who either came from Galicia, or – like Piłsudski – had been active there before the First World War.

The threat of war with Germany seemed close. Let us recall an excerpt of a report from the end of 1926 by Polish envoy in Berlin, Kazimierz Olszowski, which was widely known at that time among Polish politicians. He wrote: “Regaining Pomerania is a cardinal fundament of Germany’s politics regarding Poland [...]. Giving up Pomerania to Germany is absolute inconceivable to Poland, since it would harm the existence of the state by doing away with its access to the sea [...]. It should be considered extremely probable that a clash of those two theses will occur in the form of an armed conflict between those two countries. Within the bounds of human prediction it may be said that the clash will occur more or less in eight to ten years [...]. It is beyond all doubt that it is in our interests to extend the period under discussion as much as possible [...]”.⁵⁹

Piłsudski did everything to convince the world of Poland’s military strength and gain a consolidation of its international position in order to avoid war. We must remember these factors as we examine the possibility of even sporadic contacts with Hitler before 1933. Piłsudski’s intended or bluffed “preventative war” against Germany had a considerable influence on Hitler’s conduct in 1933.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 269.

⁶⁰ Dozens of Polish and foreign historians, and associates of Piłsudski have written about a preventative war. Many confirm that Piłsudski indeed thought about the idea of such a war (including Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, Juliusz Łukasiewicz, Mieczysław Lepecki, and historians Tadeusz Kuźmiński and Piotr Wandycz). I would like to add to the unending discussion that rumours about a Polish preventative war were very widespread from 1932 onwards. We can encounter Polish plans in various documents. Chancellor Dollfuss, for example, warned the Reich Government that the Polish Government had informed him that in the case of a Nazi Party victory in Danzig and the seizure of the city by the Germans, Warsaw would declare war. A report of the deliberations of the Austrian Council of Ministers on the subject ended up in Hitler’s office and was distributed among the Reich’s ministers of foreign affairs and military personnel (cf. Auswärtiges Amt-Bonn, Politisches Archiv, Büro Reichsminister, Österreich, 16 March 1932 – 27 April 1933, vol. 10, Bericht über Vorgänge im österreichischen Ministerrat am, 4 May 1933).

Hitler was convinced for a long time about Poland's military strength and the weakness of the Soviet Union. He is thought to have said to Mussolini in June 1934 during their first meeting: "For 10 years Poland was militarily stronger than Russia. But no longer. They entered into a pact with us through fear of Russia".⁶¹

It was a meeting of the master Mussolini with an admirer and student. Il Duce had not backed Hitler, as is known, until 1933; and later, after Hitler gained power, it took a long time for Mussolini to be convinced by him. Against this, the fact that Piłsudski probably appreciated and acknowledged the potential possibilities of the new movement before Hitler gained power assumes even greater significance. Ought one not to search here for additional reasons for Hitler's admiration of Piłsudski, which he expressed even after 1939? Fritz Wiedemann, Hitler's former superior during the First World War, and later, in turn, his personal adjutant, still recalled the tremendous respect of his superior for Piłsudski twenty years after the fall of Berlin.⁶²

To Hitler, Piłsudski was not only a man with a strong arm, not only the conqueror of the Red Army in 1920, but perhaps also the statesman who first treated him as a future partner in foreign policy.⁶³

Around 1930, Hitler – like his contemporaries – already knew that the Soviet Union was not a seasonal state, that it was not going to be overthrown from the inside, that reality had to be taken into account. Giving up for good the thought of agreement with Russia, he still partly contrasted Slavic ideas with Jewish ideas. Wagener probably intentionally repeated the words of Hitler from that time: "The Communist International, which originates in Russia, is not in fact either Russian, or Slavic, but Jewish. We ought not to deceive ourselves that there is a Russian-Slavic idea concealed behind it that still ought to have a creative content. What the people of the Comintern are engaged in right now is utterly destructive".⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs [aus den Jahren] 1934/1935 und 1939/1940*, ed. Hans-Günther Seraphim (München, 1964), , p. 40.

⁶² Fritz Wiedemann, *Der Mann, der Feldherr werden wollte* (Dortmund, 1964), p. 152.

⁶³ Wagener's recollections and the attempts by Piłsudski to contact the Nazi movement directly have found a limited response in Polish historiography up to now. Is this the influence of the poorly understood cult of Józef Piłsudski?

⁶⁴ Wagener, *Hitler aus nächster Nähe*, p. 292.

Yet, Hitler encountered politicians in the 1930s, even after taking power, not only in the army and the diplomatic service, but also among the leaders of the Nazi Party who wanted an alliance or truce with Moscow. For some of them, like Ribbentrop, it resulted from diplomatic calculations, for others from ideological motivations.

Let us not forget that among the leaders of the Nazi Party there were many, particularly from Gregor Strasser's old "clientele", who even after throwing in their lot with Hitler did not abandon certain anti-capitalistic ideas. As an example I will take the liberty to quote a passage from the memoirs of the Gauleiter Rudolf Jordan: "Many National Socialists, myself included, have seen in the new attitude to Russia fresh attempts at Bismarckian foreign policy regarding the largest country in the East. From the time of the war of liberation against Napoleon common interests have been seen and acknowledged [...]. For many National Socialists who came from the 'Left', who joined Hitler out of 'anti-capitalist longings', the main threat was to be found not in Moscow, but in capitalist Wall Street in New York and London's City".⁶⁵

Even after Hitler had broken up the Nazi Party's left wing, it retained that view until the end. In general, certain inclinations to reach agreement with Russia went hand in hand with contempt for Poland among "left-wing Gauleiters". Their position may be summarised concisely: yes, to conquering Poland and Czechoslovakia, but aggression towards the Soviet Union was a different matter. That was clearly evident in the attitude of Goebbels, who was extremely unhappy with the signing of the pact with Poland in 1934. Anti-Polish prejudice did not yet mean for Goebbels anti-Slavic racism. It ought, though, to be strongly emphasised that he was a ferocious anti-Semite.

Rosenberg, Himmler and Darré stand out among those at party headquarters in Munich as the most avid supporters of Hitler's plans to conquer the European East. But none of those three paladins planned to assign Poland any separate role. Rosenberg, on the contrary, based his calculations on the liquidation of Poland and the building of a satellite Ukraine.

⁶⁵ Rudolf Jordan, *Erlebt und erlitten. Weg eines Gauleiters von München bis Moskau* (Leoni am Starnberger See, 1971), p. 197.

In the summer of 1932, Darré gave a speech at the Nazi Party's Munich headquarters about policies in the "Eastern living space". He spoke about a new aristocracy that ought to be cultivated in Central Europe. That new aristocracy was to create farms, bulwarks of German culture in the foreign-language space of the future Reich. Darré planned a "solid base with a great central state in its centre with Czech, Moravia, Austria as its integral constituent parts; it would be [...] the backbone of the Great German Reich. The Baltic states; a medium-sized Poland trimmed to its ethnic dimensions and cut off from the Baltic; a larger Hungary; Serbia and Croatia divided into their constituent parts; a reduced Romania; Ukraine created from many independent parts; and the southern-Russian, Caucasian states. That is to be the future federated Reich. Germany should be the foundation of its strength. Finland would be a pillar in the north-east and Georgia in the south-east. All of it linked by a common army, a common economy and currency, and a common foreign policy".⁶⁶

According to Darré, the most serious danger to the Nordic race was the great biological fecundity of the eastern-Slavic peoples, who, like all inferior people, made up for a lack of quality by quantity. The agricultural reforms after the First World War which had led to the fragmentation of land ownership made it impossible, in Darré's opinion, for small farmers to produce more offspring. Thus one ought, he claimed, to confiscate the farms of minor Slavic landowners and give them to the German "master caste". Darré claimed that in the entire Eastern territory only Germans ought to have large peasant-farms.⁶⁷ Foreign peasants would once again have to become farm workers or unskilled industrial labourers in the service of the Reich. The biological breeding of a new Nordic type, a hierarchical structure in the new Europe, a German elite that would govern it, a "new aristocracy of blood and soil" – that was Darré's programme.

⁶⁶ Hermann Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler* (Zürich–Vienna, 1940), p. 37. Cf. Richard W. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (Berlin, 1938, first edition was published in 1930). The presentation of the views of Darré and Hitler in the issues reported later seems to coincide with the truth irrespective of whether Rauschning had heard it directly from them.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Hitler, as we know, supported Darré. Like Darré, he also stated that the new classless society the Marxists were aspiring to was utter nonsense. He considered the existence of a ruling caste a historical necessity. In a discussion about Darré's paper he allegedly said in 1932:

We will never be able to carry out great policies without possessing a hard, steel core of strength in the centre. A core consisting of eighty or a hundred million Germans settled together! [...] Austria is part of that core. That is obvious. Bohemia and Moravia and Poland's western territories within defined strategic borders are part of it. The Baltic states, which for many centuries had a small German elite, also belong here, and this may not be overlooked. Today ethnically foreign tribes largely inhabit all of those territories. Our task will be, if we wish to found our great Reich such that it lasts forever, to remove those tribes. There is no reason why not to do that. Our times supply us with the technological potential to carry out similar resettlement plans comparatively easily.⁶⁸

This account, which we owe to Rauschnig, seems likely, since the former president of the Senate of Danzig recorded it before Hitler had begun to realise his great plans for resettlement and destruction. The tenor is actually the same as in the articles in *Völkischer Beobachter* a decade earlier.

From the conversations of Rauschnig with Hitler, Poland emerges as a function of the relationship with Russia. Referring to the attitude of the Gauleiters, who in the first years of the Third Reich had wished for an alliance with Russia as the only possible solution, but above all to the suggestions of Gregor Strasser's friend Erich Koch, Hitler said: "Koch wishes to persuade me that an alliance between German and Russia will get us out of all our difficulties. He wants me to ally with Russia against Poland. Why should I not make a pact with Russia, if I can improve my situation by doing so? That is legitimate. One day it may undoubtedly happen. And what is to occur will above all depend on Poland".⁶⁹ And he added at once: "We will change the frontlines and not only the wartime ones. But we will remain above all loyal to our prin-

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

principle that we see in Bolshevism our sworn enemy".⁷⁰ Rauschning repeated those words of Hitler's in 1940 during talks between Germany and the USSR. They were to be confirmed the following year. Such an unequivocal citing by Rauschning of a war against Bolshevism as Hitler's main goal, when it seemed to have receded into the background, is evidence which additionally weighs in favour of the account's veracity. And that is regardless of the fact that Rauschning actually developed those views even further, saying that Hitler did not possess any permanent political goals, that he was a circumstantial actor and pragmatist. It was indeed Rauschning, as I have previously indicated, who contributed to the consolidation among many historians of the unjustified belief that "Hitler's politics were absolutely circumstantial, throwing overboard with great carelessness even what appeared to be its hard, fundamental premise".⁷¹

The years 1932–1933 brought a fresh threat to the existence of the Polish state. The favourable position of the Western powers regarding the question of a revision of Poland's borders intensified Germany's hostile stance. In such a situation, August Zaleski, an advocate of close collaboration with France and the League of Nations, was made minister of foreign affairs by Józef Beck in November 1932, with the task of searching for new solutions in Poland's relations with Germany and the USSR. The author of a standard monograph on Polish-German relations wrote that at the time of taking power Hitler did not have a "totally crystallised view on the forming of relations with Poland. Coming to power on the basis of slogans of the revision of 'Versailles', Hitler had to continue publically to voice anti-Polish slogans. This simultaneously contrasted with Polish readiness to enter into talks with Germany, about which he had certainly heard before gaining power".⁷²

Hitler presented his vision of Germany's past and its condition following the Treaty of Versailles at a Nazi Party rally in Weimar

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 126.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 127.

⁷² Wojciechowski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie*, p. 21; cf. Günter Wollstein, *Deutschland und Polen. Die Bemühungen Hitlers und Neuraths um einen Ausgleich mit Polen. Das Deutsche Reich und die Grossmächte in der Anfangsphase der national-sozialistischen Herrschaft in Deutschland* (Bonn, 1973).

on 4 July 1926. He lamented that “we have become a small scrap, like Poland, Serbia or Croatia”. “The German nation occupied the territories they deserved. Our ancestors, pushing on unwittingly in the most justified direction, established the foundations owing to a broadly conceived, admirable colonisation policy in the East. This Reich is based on that”. Hitler kept recalling the territorial proportions and populations of the USA, the British Empire and the USSR. And made an appeal: “What is Germany today in relation to the states that are creating the history of the world today?”⁷³

In a pronouncement to the first issue of the newspaper *Der Vorposten* published by Gauleiter Albert Forster on 3 February 1931 we can read: “One of the most important tasks of the Nazi movement is to awake in the German nation the awareness that our future lies much more in Europe itself than across the seas [...] Germany will play a small role, economically and as a political power, while the 70-million nation is squeezed into less than 500 000 square kilometres. The German nation ought to turn its gaze not to the South and not to the West, but first of all to the East. We, National Socialists, want to concern ourselves with what today is our outpost in the East, what was once a broad front, and ought to become a huge fatherland”. Hitler ended as follows: “Let us hope that our new combat organ in Danzig may help us to awaken the understanding in that most endangered territory of the German Reich, for the only movement in the entire Reich whose mission will be to return this city to the German Reich”.⁷⁴

Hitler’s entire geopolitical programme was contained in this concise pronouncement: not a colonial empire across the seas, but to capture the eastern part of the European continent as a goal, since the number of people and amount of land a state captures are the measure of its power. He openly alluded to the German tradition of *Drang nach Osten* and military conquests. Danzig is defined as an outpost of “German heritage”. After the capture of the Polish territories the General Government would be called *Vorplatz des*

⁷³ Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, vol. 2, part 1, ed. Bärbel Dusik (München, 1992), p. 21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, part 1, ed. Constantin Goschler (München, 1994), p. 185.

Reiches: the Reich foreground, or *Nebenland*: an associated, neighbouring territory.

The day before he gained power, Hitler strongly emphasised that the interests of the German nation were the only thing the Nazi movement was concerned with. He explained that the Germans were not interested in building locomotive factories in China or textile factories in Poland, nor in the export of locomotives or ready-made textiles to those countries. The “Bolshevik world-view” which was spreading in the world – warned Hitler – could lead to an equalisation of the races.⁷⁵

Hitler made assurances, on 19 April 1932 in Allenstein, that the National Socialists would defend Germany’s borders. He reminded his listeners that his comrades had fought in Upper Silesia against the “greedy and covetous little Poles”.⁷⁶

1933–1939

The Polish armed demonstration in Westerplatte on 6 March 1933 and the atmosphere of a preventative war against the Third Reich created and maintained by Warsaw, and also tactical demonstrations of rapprochement with Moscow (the visit of Karol Radek to Warsaw in July 1933 and the sending of Polish military airmen to the USSR for the celebrations of the fourteenth anniversary of the October Revolution) caused a great stir in Berlin. Regardless of the fact that Hitler had told Rauschning about the wretchedness of the Polish soldier, the demonstrations of Poland’s military readiness produced an effect.⁷⁷

Hermann Rauschning was among those who believed in the danger of a preventative war. Reporting his conversation with Piłsudski to Hitler at the beginning of 1934 he expressed his conviction that Poland was in any case interested in averting German expansion from

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 317, 417.

⁷⁶ Ibid., vol. 5, part 1, ed. Christian Hartmann (München, 1998), p. 77.

⁷⁷ Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler*, p. 33. That statement coincided with the opinion expressed by Hitler to Mussolini.

Poland's borders as long as possible. Rauschning also strengthened Hitler's conviction that Piłsudski indeed wanted lasting agreement with the Reich and was aspiring more to expansion towards the East and North-East than the West.

In the conversation with Rauschning, Hitler stressed that yielding Ukraine to the Poles was out of the question by way of compensation for possible changes in the west (Danzig, the Danzig Corridor). "I do not need a military power or a new Polish power beside our borders [...] What interest would I then have in a war against Russia?"⁷⁸

The motives of a joint war against Bolshevism, against Soviet Russia, appeared soon after during negotiations with Alfred Wysocki, the Polish envoy in Berlin. During the first conversation on 18 April 1933, Hitler is said to have told him: "It is a threat to both of us from the greatest enemy of western civilisation".⁷⁹

Hitler told Wysocki unequivocally that he saw the German-Polish agreement as an agreement of nationalists with nationalists. In the conversation closing the negotiations with Józef Lipski (recently appointed as a Polish member of parliament) Hitler continued to develop his vision of a common anti-Soviet policy. According to Lipski, Hitler

stressed that contrary to other people he was an optimist where Russia was concerned. Namely that he feared that in the future that colossus which was a dominant force in the field of armaments might become a threat to Europe. He stressed that according to his information, e.g. in the field of tractors, Russia was four times better equipped than Germany. The Chancellor, talking at length about the Russo-Japanese War, expressed his opinion that bearing in mind Japan's rapid growth, Russia would have to give up its positions in the Far East. Then it could shift its centre of gravity towards the West. In such an event, a serious danger may arise for the civilisation of the West, all the more so since Russia was bound by the communist doctrine. Based on that point of view the Chancellor considered Poland's role tremendously significant. He said that

⁷⁸ Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler*, pp. 112–113.

⁷⁹ Alfred Wysocki, *Tajemnice dyplomatycznego seifu* (Warszawa, 1974), pp. 140–141.

Poland was the last bastion of civilisation in the East. In any case Poland had already played a similar role in history. The chancellor was making an allusion to the Battle of Vienna.⁸⁰

The Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact was signed on 26 January 1934, which was meant to remain in force for ten years. The diplomatic history of Polish-German relations in the years 1934–1939 are extremely well-known. “There is no doubt that from the German perspective an agreement with Poland only became possible after the Nazis gained power. Because the ‘new’ Germany was inclined to abandon previous foreign policy dogma. The stance of the Weimar Republic’s governments to Poland was as intransigent as ever; based on the swift execution of territorial revisions of the Treaty of Versailles. The goals of Hitlerism went beyond the desire for a ‘Versailles revision’ [...]”.⁸¹

Rauschnig quotes the opinions of “inner circles” which thought that Hitler was only taking a provisional step, wanting to gain time in order to isolate Poland from the West and to reunite former Prussian territories that had belonged to Poland with the Reich. Rauschnig himself thought that Hitler might have been planning both measures, and may have been weighing up real collaboration, but concealing it from his associates.⁸²

Max Domarus, commenting on the signing of the Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact, wrote: “The case of that agreement evoked a considerable sensation, since it was contrary to anti-Polish mentality, which at least since Bismarck, but also during the partitions of Poland, could be observed in Germany: in National Socialist circles there were celebrations as a result of the new accord with Poland, seeing in it a miracle of diplomatic statesmanship. Had the treaty been constructed seriously, it might really have had positive aspects. However, the further development of events revealed Hitler’s intention to use the alliance simply to gain time and then unscrupulously

⁸⁰ *Diariusz i Teki Jana Szembeka*, ed. Tytus Komarnicki (London, 1964), vol. 1, p. 132. Cf. Józef Lipski, *Diplomat in Berlin 1933–1939*, ed. Waclaw Jędrzejewicz (New York–London, 1968).

⁸¹ Wojciechowski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie*, p. 109.

⁸² Rauschnig, *Gespräche mit Hitler*, p. 109.

act against Poland”.⁸³ Domarus simplified, as did many others, the premises that motivated Hitler.

A collection of declarations and speeches of the Führer about German-Polish matters, in which thirty-one of Hitler’s major addresses have been copied for the internal use of diplomats, is deposited in the dossiers of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It begins with a conversation with Member of Parliament Wysocki on 2 May 1933, and ends with a speech by Hitler in the Berlin Sportpalast on 26 September 1938.⁸⁴ Many of Hitler’s statements were added to another extensive dossier of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, containing fifty-eight texts from the years 1933–1939, entitled “The Führer and the Problem of Nationality”.⁸⁵

They were directives for officials of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, but naturally only reflect Hitler’s true views to a very limited extent. Quoting these persistently monotonous and generally very similar texts would not have much sense in research terms. They seem to be, though, one more sign of how far Hitler must have overcome the anti-Polish attitude of the ruling elite both of the party and the state. It was difficult to gain the obedience of the latter, however. One could present an entire assemblage of the declarations of Weimar Republic politicians from those planning the complete and rapid destruction of the Polish state to moderate ones, which meant those aimed at regaining the eastern territories of Wilhelmine Germany without war.⁸⁶

Günter Wollstein came to the conclusion, in a special study, that throughout the whole lifetime of the Weimar Republic, as far as territorial demands regarding Poland went, unanimity among the various political camps could be observed.⁸⁷ Even Gustav Stresemann, one of the most peace-oriented and moderate politicians,

⁸³ Max Domarus, *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen* (Wiesbaden, 1973), vol. 1, part 1, p. 348.

⁸⁴ *Auswärtiges Amt–Bonn, Politisches Archiv, Abt. III, Polen Sonderakten, Erklärungen und Reden des Führers zur deutsch-polnischen Frage*, no. 99 (1933–1934), no. 100 (1934–1938).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Kult-Pol., Inf. 59/4.

⁸⁶ Cf. Krasuski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie*, passim.

⁸⁷ Wollstein, *Deutschland und Polen*, p. 122.

said: “A lively interest was taken in Germany, regarding the matter of the ‘eastern Locarno Treaty’, understood as a guarantee of Poland’s borders. There is no need to fear a similar ‘eastern Locarno Treaty’ and it will never be demanded of us”.⁸⁸ Dozens of senior officials of *Auswärtiges Amt*, beginning with the incumbent Foreign Minister, Konstantin von Neurath, were decidedly anti-Polish in attitude. Soon after the seizure of power by Hitler, von Neurath declared that it was impossible to settle for a solution of the issue of the Polish Corridor itself, that only another partition of Poland could be considered.⁸⁹ Bernhard von Bülow and Ernst von Weizsäcker adopted a similar position.⁹⁰

The Polish envoy in Vienna, Jan Gawroński, whom no one ever blamed years later, as they did Beck or Lipski, for signing the pact with Hitler, could take the liberty of reconstructing in his memoirs the actual reactions of the Polish politicians in January 1934: “Whoever experienced those long years of constant tension of Polish-German relations and the rapidly growing threat of Prussia’s return to military strength will remember what impression was made by the dry press release heralding an unexpected turnaround in the traditional attitude of our western neighbour marked by a centuries-long curse [...] As far as Germany was concerned it was a revolutionary act in comparison with the methods of Poland’s previous treatment: instead of the dismissive treatment of Poland as a ‘temporary state’ it seemed to be the acknowledgement of its equal position as a power”.⁹¹

Hitler was capable of crushing all the resistance of his diplomats and inner circle, from whom he chose, as we know, Hermann

⁸⁸ Gustav Stresemann, *Vermächtnis*, Berlin 1933, vol. 3, p. 247.

⁸⁹ cf. John L. Heineman, *Hitler’s First Foreign Minister Constantin Freiherr von Neurath, Diplomat and Statesman* (Los Angeles, 1979), p. 97 and ff.

⁹⁰ cf. *Misstrauische Nachbarn. Deutsche Ostpolitik 1919/1970*, ed. Hans Adolf Jacobsen in collaboration with Wilfried von Bredow (Düsseldorf, 1970); Hans Roos, *Polen und Europa. Studien zur polnischen Aussenpolitik 1931–1939* (Tübingen, 1965); *Die Weizsäcker-Papiere 1933–1950* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), ed. Leonidas E. Hill, vol. 2.

⁹¹ Jan Gawroński, *Moja misja w Wiedniu 1932–1938* (Warszawa, 1965), pp. 116 and 90.

Göring for negotiations with Poland. Joseph Goebbels was included in the German-Polish talks several times, but he did not feel comfortable in the role.⁹² He did not have such a clear conception as Hitler regarding the Polish question. He only saw Poland as an ally chosen for a limited time – tactically – against the USSR. He did not think at all about removing the tensions in Polish-German relations.⁹³ Göring at least dissembled and, like Hitler, encouraged the Poles to engage openly against the USSR and Bolshevism for the entire five years of the collaboration. From the outset, Piłsudski adopted a reserved attitude, underlining that Poland – and not Germany – shared a border with the USSR.

A recurring theme in Hitler's speeches on Polish matters was praise for Piłsudski as a "great patriot and statesman". After the marshal's death he often emphasised – with reference to him – that Poland was not a democratic country, and expressed his hope for a joint anti-Bolshevist crusade.

Tomasz Szarota studied in precise detail the attitude of Hitler – as Reich Chancellor and representative of an occupying power – to the Piłsudski cult. He points out that after 1930 there are really no decidedly negative images of the marshal in the Nazi press, which would indirectly confirm the possibility of negotiations with Hitler in the autumn of 1930. Szarota describes the tributes Hitler paid to the memory of Piłsudski after 1941. At the same time, he shows that in the spring of 1941 the occupying powers on Polish territory before the crusade to the East issued instructions ordering the removal of portraits and busts of Piłsudski from public buildings and schools, and of all mementoes linked to his cult from private homes.⁹⁴

⁹² Cf. Beck, *Dernier rapport*, pp. 30, 33. It is worth examining Goebbels' speeches in Gdańsk (6 April 1935 and 17 June 1939). An anti-Polish tenor is apparent even in the first ones, given at the peak of formal collaboration; Joseph Goebbels, *Reden*, vol. 1: 1932–1939, ed. Helmut Heiber (Düsseldorf, 1971), pp. 206, 333–335.

⁹³ Günter Wollstein, *Vom Weimarer Revisionismus zu Hitler* (Bonn, 1973), p. 283.

⁹⁴ Tomasz Szarota, 'Hitler o Piłsudskim oraz okupant wobec kultu Marszałka', in: *Gdańsk–Gdynia–Europa–Stany Zjednoczone w XIX i XX wieku. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Profesor Annie Cieniale*, ed. Marek Andrzejewski (Gdańsk, 2000),

Hitler spoke many times about conquering the “eternal hostility” – *Erzfeindschaft* or *Erbfeindschaft*. Or was it just for tactical reasons, completely ad hoc? We are not completely convinced. Poland, which he saw for a few years as a large, potentially satellite state in the fight against the USSR, even without Pomerania, Silesia and the Poznań region, needed the acceptance of the masses of the German nation. Hitler, as accounts of meetings and even film chronicles show, was able with some effort to force people to accept, to impose it on them. Almost immediate, unforced massed support was achieved, not, however, by a short-term policy of negotiating with Poland, but by a propaganda campaign begun against it in spring and summer 1939 and ending with the invasion of Poland.⁹⁵

The year 1937 was a high point in Berlin's efforts to have Poland join the Anti-Comintern Pact. The Polish-German declaration in the matter of ethnic minorities of 5 November 1937 coincided with Italy joining the pact, which generated certain illusions in world opinion about a joint bloc. Berlin's attitude to the fate of the German minority in Poland was extremely guarded until 1939. A contemporary German historian flags this up by writing: “Even if the theory that Poland was a junior partner of Germany is rejected, one could however claim that Hitler was looking for a junior partner, indicated by the abandonment of the German minority in Poland. In this context it is sufficient to compare Hitler's involvement in support of Sudeten Germans with his attitude to the German minority in Poland”.⁹⁶

Hitler's attitude regarding the fate of the German minority in Poland was for some time something of a departure from his general principles about the necessity to unite all Germans. In his speech at a conference of the *Auslandsorganisation* on 13 September 1935 Hitler said that a German abroad “puts the feeling that he belongs to one nation beyond all tribes and states above all others”.⁹⁷

pp. 240–251. Also cf. Heidi Hein-Kircher, *Kult Piłsudskiego i jego znaczenie dla państwa polskiego 1926–1939* (Warszawa, 2008).

⁹⁵ Cf. Jutta Sywottek, *Mobilmachung für den totalen Krieg* (Düsseldorf, 1976).

⁹⁶ Gerd Wehner, *Grossbritannien und Polen 1938–1939* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), p. 107.

⁹⁷ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 14 September 1935.

Racial undercurrents were apparent in Hitler's most conciliatory speeches. They lurked behind a great number of his utterances on all sorts of subjects. Thus in the Reichstag on 21 May 1935 he said: "National Socialism is a science that refers exclusively to the German nation. Bolshevism emphasises its international mission. We, National Socialists, believe that in the long run man can only be happy amongst his own nation".⁹⁸ Indeed the further history of the Third Reich confirmed that unlike, for example, the Italian fascists, the Nazi Party only aspired to unite, and gather Germans, countrymen of one blood under a single flag, and it attached less importance to ideological bonds. This prevented the creation of a "Fascist International" around Berlin.

Speaking about ethnic issues in Europe, Hitler liked to use the terms of *Volks Grenzen* and *Staatsgrenzen*; he saw the origin of conflicts in the fact that nation and state borders often did not coincide. He often emphasised the role of the idea of nationality which triumphed in the nineteenth century. The Treaty of Versailles, not taking into consideration ethnic ideals or borders in Europe, led inevitably, in his opinion, to new wars and conflicts.

The concept of "nation" itself had a negative ring in Hitler's ears. It is known that he considered "nation" to be a political means to support democracy and liberalism: "We must eliminate this false concept again and replace it with the not yet worn-out concept of race". "National Socialism will conduct its revolution towards establishing a new order in the world with the concept of race".⁹⁹ When in his speeches from 1933–1938 he recalled the possibilities of Germanization, he clearly distinguished the Poles from the French and the Austrians. Austrians belonged to the same race. After the Anschluss, Hitler frequently repeated: "The Reich established the eastern border at one time".¹⁰⁰ He did not treat the French – much less the English – as racially inferior nations. With regard to the Poles that element was implied in many of his speeches from the "best years" of 1934–1938.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 22 May 1935.

⁹⁹ Rauschnig, *Gespräche mit Hitler*, pp. 218–219.

¹⁰⁰ Speech in Vienna, *Völkischer Beobachter*, 9 April 1938.

A constant feature of Hitler's utterances in the years of collaboration with Poland was an emphasis – with various weight – on the German character of Danzig, and from time to time also that the issue was unresolved.

The participation of Poland in the occupation of Czechoslovakia in autumn 1938 connected it, in Hitler's opinion, with the German chariot. That is why from, October 1938, pressure from Berlin began, firstly – for Poland to “at least” give up Danzig to the Reich and ensure an ex-territorial German railway line and motorway through the so-called Polish Corridor, and secondly – for Poland to join the Anti-Comintern Pact. That second demand is too often forgotten. It became a personal defeat for Hitler, who was prepared to give up some revisionist postulates regarding Poland in exchange for its participation in an anti-Bolshevist crusade, and that Warsaw should again rescind that demand, not only those territorial claims, at the turn of 1939. It forced him to make corrections to the programme which had consolidated his position as leader.¹⁰¹

Hitler was unable to comprehend the Poles' attitude. He understood their national character too poorly. Relying himself on irrational premises, he was unable to evaluate the irrationality of an opponent that attached immense importance to such imponderables as “national honour”, “independence”, or the entirety of the borders obtained in the years 1918–1921. The excessive faith of Polish politicians in their own strength and the overestimation of their own potential “set distinct boundaries for Hitler in his aim to draw Poland into an anti-Soviet alliance as a junior partner”.¹⁰²

In his excellent book about Ribbentrop's politics, Wolfgang Michalka points out that the minister was firstly free of the intense anti-Polish resentment of his subordinates like von Weizsäcker, and secondly that in January 1939 he deceived himself with the hope of drawing the Poles into an anti-British game.¹⁰³ Hitler thought of the

¹⁰¹ Cf. Wollstein, *Vom Weimarer Revisionismus*.

¹⁰² Wolfgang Michalka, *Ribbentrop und die Deutsche Weltpolitik 1933–1940. Aussenpolitische Konzeptionen und Entscheidungsprozesse im Dritten Reich* (München, 1980), p. 272. In Polish literature see Marek Kornat, *Polska 1939 wobec Paktu Ribbentrop–Molotow* (Warszawa, 2002).

¹⁰³ Michalka, *Ribbentrop*, p. 276.

Poles as allies against the USSR. And here Poland let Hitler down. Both sides were severely disappointed.

Hitler was already inclined by February 1939 to believe that relations with Poland should be regulated with the use of force. His adjutant noted on 18 February: “The frankness with which the Führer spoke about the further political aims and solutions that remained was astonishing. The Wehrmacht as an essential guarantee of success. Long expositions about a world-view, which was not yet the common property of the entire Wehrmacht. Quite clear statements regarding his plans for Poland, to abolish the Treaty of Versailles; should the need arise with the help of other means than diplomatic ones, [...]”¹⁰⁴

The British guarantees regarding Poland from March 1939 came as a surprise to Hitler. From that moment the constellation of forces changed. An attack on Poland would not only mean its final rejection as a satellite state, but also the shattering of the possibility of an alliance with Great Britain against the USSR. Right after Chamberlain’s announcement in the House of Commons on 31 March, Hitler warned Poland as a “satellite state” that Germany would not shrink before the Western powers.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, on 3 April Hitler issued a directive concerning *Fall Weiß*: a possible war against Poland. In the section “Political Premises and Goals” he still counted on the possibility of his territorial claims being accepted by Warsaw and avoiding war. He stated: “Intervention by Russia, if it was capable of it, would not – according to all predictions – benefit Poland, because it would have to mean her destruction by Bolshevism”¹⁰⁶

For a very long time, until after September 1939, Hitler did not completely abandon the thought of even the partial use of a defeated and dismembered Poland as a satellite state against the USSR. The Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact was a necessity to him. He considered it only as a tactical move from the outset. He did not want to believe in

¹⁰⁴ *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler 1938–1943. Aufzeichnungen des Majors Engel*, ed. Hildegard von Kotze (Stuttgart, 1974), p. 45.

¹⁰⁵ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 1122.

¹⁰⁶ *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegsführung 1939–1945*, ed. Walther von Hubatsch (Frankfurt am Main, 1960), p. 17.

Great Britain entering the war against Germany. After 3 September 1939, with his unpublished *Zweites Buch* in mind, he said to Rudolf Hess: “My entire work is falling apart. I wrote the book in vain”.¹⁰⁷ Hitler consistently clung to his anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevist opinions. From Hitler’s point of view his speech of 28 April 1939 was still couched in a moderate tone regarding Poland; he took up the issue of damage caused by the Treaty of Versailles, but did not put forward the entire package of territorial claims, and only the case of Danzig and the Polish Corridor. He acknowledged that Poland had unilaterally violated the agreement of 1934, and declared it non-existent.¹⁰⁸ In a speech of 1 May 1939 he stressed: “Securing German living space is of the utmost importance to us”.¹⁰⁹

Hitler’s propaganda war against Poland intensified in summer 1939. On 23 May in a closed meeting with the military Hitler said: “The Poles are no additional enemies. Poland will always be on the side of our enemies. I am not referring to Danzig. For us the issue of extending living space in the East is under way for us [...]”.¹¹⁰ Poland was included by Hitler among the Reich’s chief enemies for the first time.

The whole of *Auswärtiges Amt* and the generals backed Hitler up in his plans for a revision of the Treaty of Versailles regarding Poland, and broad public opinion supported him. The great majority of the nation was in favour of the fresh inclusion in the Reich of territories confiscated following the First World War, but hoped that the goal would be achieved at most with the help of a local war against Poland.¹¹¹

A well-documented conversation between Hitler and the High Commissioner of the League of Nations in Gdańsk, Carl J. Burckhardt, took place on 11 August 1939. Hitler expressed his bitterness

¹⁰⁷ Cited in A.V.N. van Woerden, ‘Hitlers Verhältnis zu England: Theorie, Vorstellung und Politik’, in: *Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik*, ed. Wolfgang Michalka (Darmstadt, 1978), p. 240.

¹⁰⁸ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 1163.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1185.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1197.

¹¹¹ Cf. Rainer A. Blasius, *Für Grossdeutschland – gegen den grossen Krieg. Ernst von Weizsäcker in den Krisen um die Tschechoslowakei und Polen* (Cologne–Wien, 1981).

towards the Poles, who were waging a war of nerves against him, overestimating their own strength, and disinclined to negotiate; he declared that he possessed the plans of the Polish general staff, “much more daring than all the visions of Alexander the Great and Napoleon”.¹¹²

He said to his commanders on 22 August 1939 in Obersalzberg: “Our relations with Poland have become unendurable. My previous Polish policy was contrary to the nation’s opinions”.¹¹³ That day, in his inner circle, Hitler instructed: “The destruction of Poland is a priority. The aim is to remove living forces, and not to secure a specific line. Even if war should break out in the West, the destruction of Poland is the priority”.¹¹⁴

As Eugeniusz Cezary Król stresses, the list of famous German “experts on the East”, who developed plans to “organise space” and Germanize the conquered Slavic lands during the Second World War, is very long. He quotes, inter alia, Professor Otto Reche, the director of the Institute for Race and Ethnology at the University of Leipzig, who stated in 1939: “The Polish people is a very unfortunate mixture of elements of the ‘Proto-Slavic’ (related to Scandinavian Lapps), ‘Eastern-Baltic race’ and ‘Ost-See race’ [Nazi racist terminology – JWB] with locally extremely noticeable Mongoloid influences. In any case we must avoid blending [...] the ‘Slavic’ people with Germans, and that can be achieved only by removing the Poles”. The message was explicit. Hitler was planning how to “give traditional anti-Polish prejudices and facts lingering among Germans a dimension of racial and nationalist paranoia”.¹¹⁵ The Polish historian referred to dozens of images, prejudices and stereotypes. He drew attention to slogans linking Poles with the Jews (*Die Juden und die Polen, die wollen Danzig holen*).¹¹⁶

¹¹² Carl J. Burckhardt, *Moja misja w Gdańsku 1937–1939* (Warszawa, 1970), p. 241.

¹¹³ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 1235.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1238. Cf. Wilfried Baumgart, ‘Zur Ansprache Hitlers vor den Führern der Wehrmacht am 22. August 1939’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 1968, no. 2, p. 140.

¹¹⁵ Eugeniusz Cezary Król, *Polska i Polacy w propagandzie narodowego socjalizmu w Niemczech 1919–1945* (Warszawa, 2006), p. 345.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

It is important and justified what Kershaw writes about distinguishing between the rhetoric of hatred and the implementation of genocidal programmes, about the differences between a global plan of genocide against the Jews and other ad hoc and partial extermination plans. One of Hitler's favourite words was *Vernichtung* (annihilation, destruction). As Kershaw writes: "He tended to reach for it when trying to impress his threats on his audience, large or small".¹¹⁷ He often used it in summer 1939 when revealing his intention to 'annihilate' the Poles.

As Kershaw states, after the Sudeten Crisis "The leaders of the SS were now looking to territorial gains to provide them with opportunities for ideological experimentation on the way to the fulfilment of the vision of a racially purified greater German Reich under the heel of the chosen caste of the SS élite. In a world after Hitler with 'final victory' achieved, the SS were determined to be the masters of Germany and Europe".¹¹⁸

One could categorise anybody as an ideological enemy conceived of in that way: Russians understood as Jews and Marxists, the English as Jews and free masons, and the Poles as members of the Church. Himmler, significantly, clearly predicted a war which would lead to utter extinction: "These forces – of which I presume the Jews to be the driving spirit, the origin of all the negatives – are clear that if Germany and Italy are not annihilated they will be annihilated (*vernichtet werden*)".¹¹⁹

The road that Hitler had opened with the Anschluss of Austria and the invasion of Czechoslovakia led to that inevitable alternative: either the Axis states or the rest of Europe. From ruthless occupation onwards to the utter annihilation of the enemy. It is thus difficult then to agree with Kershaw, when in his biography of Hitler he wrote about the Poles: "Horrific though their treatment was after 1939, no genocidal programme followed".¹²⁰ A specific programme known as the *Generalplan Ost* was begun, however.

¹¹⁷ Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1941. Nemesis*, p. 133.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

At the end of 1939, a plan for the Germanization of already captured territories was drawn up, as well as for the exploitation of further predicted conquests in the East of Europe. The first outline was ready in mid-1941. The plan submitted to Himmler in May 1942 was written by a professor of agricultural policy, the SS officer Konrad Meyer. The participation of senior German academics in the plans to Germanize the European East was substantial. The plan consisted of the mass expulsion and resettlement of non-Germans, and of the settlement of Germans and elements considered worthy of Germanization on the territories thus gained. The plan even allowed for the possibility of resettlements to Siberia. It included five further five-year plans of Germanization. It included the enslavement and extermination of millions of *Ostvoelker*. The first trial territory for such resettlements was Zamość and the surroundings. The operation was begun on 24 November with the brutal evacuation of Polish people, arrests and deportations to camps. It triggered mass resistance. In August 1943 the campaign was suspended as a result of defeat on the Eastern Front.¹²¹

¹²¹ Cf. *Vom Generalplan Ost zum Generalsiedlungsplan*, ed. Czesław Madajczyk (München, 1994); Bruno Wasser, *Himmlers Raumplanung im Osten. Der Generalplan Ost in Polen* (Basel, 1993); Dietrich Eichholtz, 'Der "Generalplan Ost" und die genozidale Variante der imperialistischen Ostexpansion', in: *Der 'Generalplan Ost': Hauptlinien Der Nationalsozialistischen Planungs- Und Vernichtungspolitik*, eds. Mechtild Rössler, Sabine Schleiermacher (Schriften der Hamburger Stiftung fuer Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts: Berlin, 1993), pp. 118–124; Beata Mąciór-Majka, *Generalny Plan Wschodni* (Krakow, 2007).

CHAPTER 5

HITLER'S OPINIONS ABOUT POLES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Martin Broszat quotes Hitler's address to the High Command of the Wehrmacht and the highest ranking ministers of the Reich in October 1939 which expressed the necessity to wage a "hard ethnic fight" in Poland. It appears from Bormann's notes of 2 October of the following year that Hitler ordered Hans Frank literally "to make unconditionally certain that there would be no Polish masters", and if there were, "to kill them, although it sounds brutal".¹ Martin Broszat shows that the source of Hitler's Polish policy was an "ideological programme of destruction" based on racial premises.²

Hitler launched the invasion of Poland on Friday 1 September 1939 at 4.45 a.m. "In the eyes of the German nation the German attack on Poland was not the beginning of a great war, but a regulation of issues from the Treaty of Versailles", one of Hitler's adjutants commented later. "Only when the British and French declared war on 3 September 1939 did the war begin for the Germans".³

Hitler made a speech in the Reichstag on 1 September justifying the attack on Poland. "It was not one of Hitler's better speeches"⁴, writes his excellent biographer. It emanated genuine anger and disappointment that Polish politicians had not accepted his "generous proposals", which in Hitler's opinion no other German politician would have dared to offer. "Nothing could have been more loyal

¹ Martin Broszat, *200 lat niemieckiej polityki wobec Polski*, transl. by Elżbieta Kazimierzczak and Witold Leder (Warszawa, 1999), p. 323.

² Martin Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik 1939–1945* (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 18–26.

³ Nicolaus von Below, *Als Hitlers Adjutant 1937–1945* (Mainz, 1980). p. 203.

⁴ Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny* (London, 1960), p. 467.

and modest than the proposals I presented”.⁵ Hitler pretended that peaceful coexistence with the Polish state after solving the problem of Danzig and the Polish Corridor was possible. His speech was acknowledged with applause which was “by order, but sparing”.⁶ The elite of the leadership and the Prussian Junkers were whole-heartedly with him, however. A graduate of Oxford and Lausanne, Count Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk, Reich Minister of Finance, frankly recalls in his memoirs published in 1977: “When in September 1939 our army stormed through Poland at breathtaking speed, in spite of everything my heart beat more strongly”.⁷ Enthusiasm is clearly apparent in the diary of Hitler’s secretary Christa Schroeder, published posthumously in 1985, and generously interlaced with letters from those days.⁸

If the German nation was not as enthusiastic as the fanatics of Hitler’s headquarters, then in any case the great majority was not against the war. The well-known right-wing writer, but opponent of the Nazi regime, Jochen Klepper, who listened to Hitler’s speech on the radio at 10.00 in the morning, only lamented that he had not mentioned a word about God at that decisive hour.⁹ Klepper wrote in his diary on 3 September: “We do not wish for any predictions that would result from dreadful German dilemmas. We cannot wish for the collapse of Germany out of resentment towards the Third Reich, as many are doing. It is quite impossible. Neither may we, at this time of danger from the outside, pin our hopes on rebellion or revolt”.¹⁰ Jochen Klepper committed suicide in 1942 with his Jewish wife and stepdaughter.

The impressions from the first days of the war noted by Klepper are very mixed: fear of widespread fires, joy that England and France

⁵ Max Domarus, *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen* (Wiesbaden, 1973), vol. 2, part 1, p. 1313.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1317.

⁷ Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk, *Memoiren* (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 196.

⁸ Christa Schroeder, *Er war mein Chef. Aus dem Nachlass der Sekretärin von Adolf Hitler*, ed. Anton Joachimsthaler (München–Vienna, 1985), pp. 98–100.

⁹ Jochen Klepper, *Unter dem Schatten deiner Flügel. Aus den Tagebüchern der Jahre 1932–1942* (Stuttgart, 1962), p. 796.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

had not undertaken any genuine military action, and that casualties were not as great as expected. The sense of loyalty towards their own government and state which were deeply instilled in Germans acted in Hitler's favour.

Anti-Polish propaganda in summer 1939, the exaggerated reports about the persecution of the German minority in Poland, the danger of Germany "being surrounded", and the need to put right the damage of Versailles were great concerns for German society. Added to that were reports about the incredible atrocities and murders of defenceless Germans carried out by the Poles in the first days of the war. This all meant that in spite of the fact that the outbreak of war – unlike in 1914 – was greeted without enthusiasm and its necessity for many was unclear, "as a result of deep-rooted anti-Polish feelings, anti-Polish propaganda had no difficulty convincing public opinion that the Poles were in error".¹¹ And in the final analysis, as the British historian writes, "Hitler's war became Germany's war and even ideological opponents of Nazism turned out to be prepared from patriotic reasons and from a strong sense of duty towards the fatherland, which was combined into one thing with a duty of loyalty towards the Führer, to follow Hitler into a war they did not want".¹²

German opinion was inclined to believe that Hitler had done everything to avoid war. The third of September – the date of Britain and France's entry into the war – was for many a great shock, but later that *drôle de guerre* (Phoney War) had a soothing effect on the general mood. Hitler personally directed the wartime propaganda. It is characteristic that the entire severe anti-English propaganda campaign, carried out very unwaveringly from the first days of war to the last, was couched in quite different language than anti-Polish, anti-Russian or anti-Slavic propaganda. It was emphasised in instructions to the press – some of which came directly from Hitler – that it was necessary to distinguish between the government ("the Jewish plutocratic ruling class") and the English nation. It was instructed to contrast them and always to remember that the English nation was

¹¹ Irvin Kershaw, *Der Hitler-Mythos. Volksmeinung und Propaganda im Dritten Reich* (Stuttgart, 1980), p. 126.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 127.

not to be defined as “racially inferior”.¹³ Anti-English propaganda was received differently than its anti-Polish equivalent. It did not have that same foundation of prejudice or sense of superiority that were often overtly framed in racist ideology. It was much more difficult for Hitler to mobilise anti-English feeling than anti-Polish. Public opinion repeatedly deluded itself over the chances of a separate peace with Great Britain. The future of Poland was for it a subordinate matter, although Hitler himself continued to ponder over the future rank of Poland as a state throughout September, which is also confirmed by his instructions to the media.¹⁴

Overall, though, as Kershaw comments: “During the war also the astonishingly strong and enduring obedience with which most Germans assumed the responsibilities and hardships of wartime, was in the main based not on Gestapo terror, but above all on far-reaching consensus with their leaders which endured for a long time. That consensus, however, as it turned out more and more compellingly, did not yet mean an acceptance of Hitler’s military goals, which going far beyond traditional nationalist notions and interests”.¹⁵ It was the nation’s blind faith in Hitler.

One of Hitler’s theses – which ran through all the propaganda – stated that England would bear responsibility for Poland’s position, for its involvement in the war, and for its fate. “England – this is your work”, announced posters written in Polish and depicting war destruction which were displayed in the occupied territories. In his “appeal to the German nation” Hitler phrased it succinctly: “England persuaded Poland to take that position, which rendered any chances of a peaceful settlement impossible. Through its declaration about guarantees to the Polish government it opened the possibility of provoking Germany with impunity; why even to be able to attack it”.¹⁶

From 3 to 26 September 1939 Hitler spent time in the combat zone, in Pomerania, in Silesia, in the Kielce and Łódź regions, in Galicia by the River San and again in Pomerania. He twice flew

¹³ Helmut Sündermann, *Tagesparolen. Deutsche Presseweisungen 1939–1945. Hitlers Propaganda und Kriegsführung* (Leoni am Starnberger See, 1973), pp. 46–47.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 70–72.

¹⁵ Kershaw, *Der Hitler-Mythos*, pp. 129–130.

¹⁶ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 1340.

from Sopot to near Warsaw on 22 and 25 September, observing military activity in many places around the capital of Poland. He only returned to Berlin on 26 September. He used a special train, aeroplane and car, he became acquainted at first hand with Poland's cities and remote provinces, drawing various conclusions. The Polish achievements in building Gdynia remained in his memory, but above all also the huge size of the Jewish community in small towns, to which he would return later in conversations.

In the summer of 1939 a close associate of Rosenberg warned during the intensifying pre-war tension: "The entire Jewish problem in Poland has not been examined. On the basis of various Jewish publications I think that the number of Jews in the whole of Poland, and specifically in the area where they occur in a concentrated mass, in Galicia and Wołyń (Volhynia), had not previously been sufficiently appreciated. The combined number of Jews there represented perhaps the largest reservation".¹⁷ But it took Hitler's "personal visit" to Poland to influence him directly. It seems that a conviction about the pointlessness of maintaining any kind of satellite Polish state since it was undermined by a mass of Jews numbering millions combined with Hitler's anger and hatred towards the Poles for "starting the Second World War" and the sense that there was no way to talk to the incompetent Polish ruling class, the aristocracy or the clergy.

One of Hitler's adjutants, Gerhard Engel, noted at the beginning of October 1939:

In a small circle the Führer unreservedly expressed his views about the Jewish problem that vividly appeared in front of him during his visit to Poland and which must be solved not only in Germany, but in all the countries falling under Germany's influence. The entire matter is not a religious, but a racial problem. One constantly wonders why he appeared so humane and magnanimous regarding the Nuremberg Laws [...] Even if the political influence of the Jews in Poland is insignificant, the entire matter must be settled

¹⁷ Cf. A. Schickedanz to H. Lammers, 15 June 1939, in: *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs [aus den Jahren] 1934/1935 und 1939/1940*, ed. Hans-Günther Seraphim (München, 1964), Anhang, p. 168.

unyieldingly. The setting up of huge ghettos have been begun in Lublin and Łódź. But that is insufficient and it is necessary to add something more to it. Ideally some kind of exercise yards or strongholds. Jews would be given their own councils there, even their own police force, and could settle their conflicts among themselves: it goes without saying that they would have to work. The chance to introduce such a system in Germany has been squandered. Badges and the like were not enough. He, Himmler and Heydrich will decide how far it is possible using those methods to transfer the majority of Jews there or to the Protectorate now that the Poland is in our grasp.¹⁸

David Irving remarks that Hitler owed his first, real contact with the “East” to his trips to the Polish front. They reinforced his pathological notions concerning ‘sub-humans’ and Jews. Has Europe ended right here? Meagre wooden shacks covered in straw were scattered haphazardly around among neglected fields. Beside the roads, shrouded in dust stirred up by the Führer’s column of cars, stood obedient groups of Polish civilians. Hitler saw among them Jews with sidelocks in tall hats and long coats: they were the spitting image of medieval anti-Semitic prints.¹⁹

Hitler and Goebbels’ impressions of Poland were similar. The Third Reich’s Propaganda Minister noted on 2 November 1939: “A trip along Polish roads. It is now Asia. We shall have much to do to Germanize this region [...] Acting radically against the Poles and maximum protection for everything German”.²⁰

On 15 October Engel gave an account of Hitler’s outrage regarding the protests of the Wehrmacht against the “arbitrary executions”

¹⁸ Note from 8 October 1939, after: *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler 1938–1943. Aufzeichnungen des Majors Engel*, ed. Hildegard von Kotze (Stuttgart, 1974), p. 65. Engel’s notes differ from similar accounts of many of his colleagues in their authenticity. Incidentally it may be emphasised that the problem of Polish Jews was examined before 1939 by Gottfried Feder, one of the first Nazi Party ideologues, who stressed that the anti-Semitism of the Nazis was much more extensive and thoroughgoing than ordinary anti-Semitism; Gottfried Feder, *Die Juden* (München, 1933), p. 9.

¹⁹ David Irving, *Hitler’s War and the War Path 1933–1945* (London, 1991).

²⁰ *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, part 1: *Aufzeichnungen 1923–1941*, vol. 7: *Juli 1939–März 1940*, ed. Elke Fröhlich (München, 1998), p. 177.

of Jews and Polish intelligentsia. Hitler thought the Wehrmacht “ought not to stick its nose into things it does not understand”.²¹

During the Polish campaign Hitler gave little attention to the issue of controlling military operations, which is mentioned by another of his adjutants, Nicolaus von Below. “He was certain of success and was waiting every day for a signal from the Poles that they wanted to surrender and begin negotiations on the subject of the ‘remains of Poland’”.²²

Leaflets were dropped from aeroplanes onto the besieged Warsaw on 16 September 1939 with an appeal for civilians to surrender within twelve hours. Hitler probably wrote it himself.²³ He referred in them to the right of nations: “Your government has broken the right of nations by calling on civilians to carry out armed resistance against German units, thus beginning a partisan war”.²⁴

On 19 September Hitler drove through Sopot and Oliwa to Gdańsk (Danzig) accompanied by the ringing of church bells, where he gave a lengthy speech in Długi Targ (*Langer Markt*) which was later circulated, including as a Polish translation. Following 17 September and after the invasion by the Red Army, Hitler was anxious to stress before the entire world that credit for crushing Poland was due entirely to the German Army. Hitler once again held England responsible for the outbreak of the war and recalled the “nonsense” of the Treaty of Versailles. He referred to the experiences of the First World War: “Gentlemen, please take note: the generation that today governs in Germany is not the generation of some Bethmann-Hollweg or other! Today the Germany of Frederick the Great stands before you again!”²⁵ He spoke at length about an alliance with the USSR, delivering many of his typical assurances that Russian territories and Ukraine did not interest him at all: “we have very limited interests”.²⁶ But he was unable entirely to conceal his mistrust regarding his freshly acquired ally. He still had not ruled out the

²¹ *Heeresadjutant bei Hitler*, p. 66.

²² Von Below, *Als Hitlers Adjutant*, p. 205.

²³ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 1352.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1363.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1361.

possibility of establishing some kind of Polish state entity. The speed with which he found himself face to face with the “Bolshevik state” was a great problem. Hence his statement “Poland according to the Treaty of Versailles will never be resurrected. Ultimately, not only Germany, but also Russia, guarantees that”²⁷ has at least an unclear meaning. Had he still not begun to think about a buffer state that would formally separate him temporarily from the USSR? Hitler once again contrasted the Polish government with the Polish nation. He mocked Rydz-Śmigły not for the first or last time: ‘Marshal Rydz-Śmigły lost his way. He landed up in Chernivtsi instead of in Berlin, and with him the entire government and all those seducers who have driven the Polish people mad’. And at the same time: “We want to give the Polish soldiers their due. The Poles have fought valiantly in many places. Their lower command made desperate efforts, their medium command was too unintelligent, their higher command was poor, beneath all criticism. Their organisation was Polish”.²⁸

As usual, he contrasted the Polish government with Piłsudski, with whom he had found a means towards a peace agreement of the two nations, irrespective of the Treaty of Versailles. “As long as the marshal lived, it seemed that that attempt would perhaps have contributed to a détente. However, immediately after his death, fighting was started again, redoubled attempts to destroy German culture began again”.²⁹ Hitler’s constant reverence for Piłsudski was confirmed by his laying of wreaths on the marshal’s grave after Krakow was seized by the Germans. They were not purely propaganda steps. A year and a half later, on 4 January 1941, in a conversation with the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Bogdan Filov, Hitler emphasised how soberly Stalin assessed political reality compared to men like Mościcki or Rydz-Śmigły. And added: “Were old Piłsudski still alive, the Polish war would probably not have broken out. Admittedly under his rule the Germans did not prosper too well in Poland either, but their situation was at least bearable. It was

²⁷ Ibid., p. 1362.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 1360.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 1356.

also possible to talk to him about Danzig, the Polish Corridor and contact with East Prussia. When he passed on, relations in Poland under his successors changed fundamentally”.³⁰ Hitler, with his tendency towards self-delusion, probably himself believed that oversimplified cliché, contrasting Piłsudski with his successors.

The image of the Polish state sketched by Hitler was overlaid on the stereotypes also functioning in the political imagination of many citizens of democratic states in Western Europe:

Poland has never been a democracy. A quite thin, meagre upper stratum ruled as a dictatorship, not only over foreign ethnic groups, but also over its so-called “own nation”. It was a state of violence, ruled by rubber police truncheons, and in the final analysis by the army. The fate of Germans in that state was dreadful. At the same time one ought to distinguish between whether a culturally inferior nation has the misfortune to be ruled by a culturally superior nation, or whether the cultural superior nation is falling prey to being violated by the culturally less developed one. Since all the inferiority complexes of the inferior nation emerge and are vented on the superior nation, the bearer of culture. Then it will harm the superior nation cruelly and bestially. The Germans were for almost twenty years the victim of such a fate.³¹

Hitler, as he did in the case of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, emphasised the artificiality of Poland being a multi-ethnic state. Hitler expressed his true feelings about the Poles most fully when depicting them as a nation with a lower level of cultural advancement. This excerpt of a speech of his is worth quoting literally:

The Danzig Land was a victim of the absurdity of that time, while the Polish state was a product of that stupidity. What Germany had to offer that Polish state is perhaps not sufficiently known to the world. I must, therefore, express one thing here: all the territory that was then incorporated into Poland owes its development to

³⁰ *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler. Vertrauliche Aufzeichnungen über Unterredungen mit Vertretern des Auslandes 1930–1941*, ed. Andreas Hillgruber (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), vol. 1, p. 416.

³¹ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 1355–1366.

German energy, German diligence and German creative work. The fact that more than one province was taken away from the German State and awarded to that new Polish state was motivated by nationalistic needs. Moreover, voting later revealed that in those provinces no one longed to return to the Polish state. Poland, which arose owing to the blood sacrifice of innumerable German regiments, grew at the expense of the former German areas of settlement and above all at the expense of all good sense and economic capability.

Over the course of the last twenty years it has been shown irrefutably: Poles, who did not create that culture, were incapable of maintaining it. It turned out again that whoever is culturally creative is able to preserve true cultural achievements in the long run. A further fifty years of Polish rule would suffice for those territories, which the Germans wrested from barbarity with diligence and effort, to return to a state of barbarity. Evidence of regression and collapse is all already visible everywhere today.³²

Lengthy quotations from Hitler's Danzig speech are deliberately given in this coarse translation which was carried out at that time by order of the victors.

Hitler sent a telegram from Gdańsk on 19 September to Field Marshal August von Mackensen, the former military commander before 1914, informing him with "friendly greetings" of the return of the Baltic port to the fatherland.³³ There was a significant exchange during a meeting that occurred soon after the end of the military activity against Poland. The almost ninety-year-old Mackensen, who knew Poland from former times, congratulating Hitler on the victory, declared: "My great Führer, were I a few years younger, I would offer my services to you, sir".³⁴

On 22 September, Hitler visited units of the German Army stationed between Mińsk Mazowiecki and Warsaw and observed Praga – over which fighting was raging – through binoculars.³⁵ His

³² Ibid., p. 1355.

³³ Ibid., p. 1353.

³⁴ Heinz Linge, *Bis zum Untergang. Als Chef des Persönlichen Dienstes bei Hitler* (Berlin, 1980), p. 186.

³⁵ For Hitler's precise itinerary during the war against Poland see: Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitlers Strategie. Politik und Kriegführung 1940–1941* (München, 1982), pp. 659–661.

adjutant recalled: "That day, as we drove along the main roads, I was deeply affected by the movement of refugees. Younger people predominated, including many Jews".³⁶ On 22 September Hitler found himself near the place where Werner von Fritsch met his death. Hitler had removed von Fritsch from the High Command along with Werner von Blomberg. Colonel General (*Generaloberst*) von Fritsch, who was decidedly anti-Polish, had applied for ordinary frontline action as the artillery commander of one of the regiments.

On 25 September Hitler once more observed Warsaw in flames. On 30 September, referring to the German-Soviet Frontier Treaty signed with the USSR two days previously, Hitler stressed: "The new extent of the Reich's borders in the East correspond in general to former German settlement territories, and apart from that include areas which, owing to military, economic, armaments, transport and technical reasons are particularly valuable".³⁷

After the capture of Warsaw, Hitler ordered bells to be rung for seven days between 12 and 1 o'clock throughout the Reich. On 5 October 1939, at 11.30 a.m. on a sunny Sunday, Hitler landed at Warsaw Okęcie airport, welcomed by Generals von Rundstedt, von Reichenau and Blaskowitz. From there he drove along Ujazdów Avenue, where he received a two-hour parade of the Eighth Army. Hitler's favourite at that time, General Erwin Rommel, commander of the Führer's headquarters during the military activity in Poland, stood in the centre, directly in front of Hitler's box.³⁸ Hitler visited Belvedere after the parade and paid homage to the memory of Piłsudski. The German press exploited the occasion once again to contrast Piłsudski with his heirs.³⁹

The next day Hitler summarised the Polish campaign in the Reichstag. Referring to the motifs of his Danzig speech he stressed that his "humane instructions" to spare civilians would result in a continuation of the fighting until October. Hitler devoted a longer speech to a description of the "Polish arrogance and bestiality"

³⁶ Von Below, *Als Hitlers Adjutant*, p. 207.

³⁷ Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik: 1918–1945, aus dem Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, vol. 8, p. 137.

³⁸ Hermann Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler* (Zürich–Vienna, 1940), pp. 180–181.

³⁹ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 1376.

enacted on Germans and the notion of *polnische Wirtschaft* as a symbol of organisational incompetence.⁴⁰ Hitler would frequently return to his speeches of 19 September in Danzig and 6 October 1939 in Berlin, especially during the winter of 1939–1940.

Hitler expected the war against Poland to last longer, perhaps much longer.⁴¹ Victory bolstered his conviction that he would quickly succeed in forcing a peace agreement or in defeating the Western powers. Historians emphasise that the capture of Poland put Hitler into a state of intoxication that encouraged him to attempt further rapid conquests.⁴²

For some time Hitler still pondered over the idea of a Polish *Reststaat*. On 6 October 1939 he suggested the “creation of a Polish state, whose structure and government would guarantee that it would not become a new trouble spot against the German Reich nor would develop as a centre of schemes against Russia and Germany”.⁴³ The reason for creating that state or buffer state may have been: firstly, to make peace with Great Britain and France, secondly, to exploit it for future expansion against the USSR. A long time ago, Czesław Madajczyk expressed the view that the abandoning of the project for a “Polish rump state” was determined by the “failure to make peace and the rejection by England and France of Hitler’s proposals”.⁴⁴ The issue of the Polish *Reststaat* would return several times before the end of 1939.⁴⁵ For Hitler, however, it seemed to have been settled with the establishment of the General Government. The order concerning administration in occupied Polish territories was signed by Hitler on 12 October 1939.

The name “General Government” (*Generalgouvernement*) referred to a tradition from the times of the First World War. But the old

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 1377–1394. Full text in *Völkischer Beobachter* of 7 October 1939. See also e.g. Hitler’s speech of 11 December 1941, in: *Der grossdeutsche Freiheitskampf. Reden des Führers* (München, 1942), vol. 3, p. 126.

⁴¹ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 1603.

⁴² Liddell Hart, *Deutsche Generale des 2. Weltkrieges* (Düsseldorf, 1964), p. 41.

⁴³ *Völkischer Beobachter* dated 7 October 1939.

⁴⁴ Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce* (Warszawa, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 98–99, 115.

⁴⁵ Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik*, pp. 16–18.

name was meant to serve new realities. Hitler again recalled that Ludendorff had been naive to believe in 1916 that Polish recruits would fight against Russia in return for the founding of the *Generalgouvernement Warschau*, and not fight for the rebirth of Poland.⁴⁶ The impossibility of finding any Polish politicians who would agree to be seen as a pro-Hitler government may also have influenced the abandonment of attempts at creating any kind of Polish state structure.

Ambassador Hans von Moltke informed Secretary of State Ernst von Weizsäcker on 25 September 1939 that considering such extensive parcelling up of Polish land it seemed impossible to create a “government capable of negotiations”.⁴⁷ The publishers of Hans Frank’s diary draw attention to the significance of that aspect of Hitler’s attitude to the Poles. They write: “The causes of that radicalism are multifaceted and mutually connected: Hitler’s intense irritation resulting from the refusal of the Poles, who in the years 1938–1939 did not want to assist in the planned great expansion towards the East and did not fall into dependence on Germany, intensified still more as a result of the total failure of the German efforts in September 1939 to win over Polish collaborators of some standing in possession of significant support. Beyond these specific experiences, Nazi racial theory – an ideological instrument justifying policies of imperialistic violence against the Polish nation – was influential”.⁴⁸

Hitler’s views about the Polish question underwent rapid radicalisation in September–October 1939. He emphasised repeatedly that the Church and aristocracy were bastions of Polishness. “It is common knowledge how far the Catholic Church was operating side by side with the Poles in its political fight”.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy*, p. 170.

⁴⁷ Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik*, p. 16.

⁴⁸ *Das Diensttagebuch des deutschen Generalgouverneurs in Polen 1939–1945*, ed. Werner Präg, Wolfgang Jacobmeyer (Stuttgart, 1975), p. 8.

⁴⁹ Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 285. Hitler also expressed his mistrust towards the Prussian nobility, in his opinion easily becoming Polishised and governing above all using caste and national ties and orders. He complained about the “green Comintern” of hunters and accused it of going so far as to replacing German farm workers with Polish ones. It is not a matter of chance that General Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski,

Hitler expressed himself brutally and frankly in his inner circle, particularly during the war. "If we wish to correct the mistakes of the last century in the eastern territories, we must conduct radical German nationalistic politics. As the Teutonic Knights fought their way through not in kid gloves, but with also carried swords along with the Bible, so our men detailed to the East as warriors of the National Socialist world-view must carry out the interests of our nation, using physical violence, if the need arises".⁵⁰ Hitler cited, for example, the French in Alsace as people who capable of using "brutal violence" in order to replace German culture with French culture.

In the light of the findings of numerous historians, there is no question that Hitler personally issued orders concerning the extermination and murder of the ruling class of the Polish nation (the intelligentsia, clergy and landowners). Many years ago, Helmut Krausnick, who had compiled the documents and statements of Heydrich and Himmler, proved that the "unleashing of terror in Poland was based on the clear orders of Hitler".⁵¹ Krausnick also recalled the formulation of Hitler's programme, written down in October 1940 by Martin Bormann: "For the Poles there ought to exist only one master and he ought to be a German; [...] so all members of the Polish intelligentsia must be executed. It sounds brutal, but this time it is the law of life".⁵²

The details of these instructions of Hitler's may partly be found in Hans Frank's Diary. The Governor-General from Krakow was

who commanded the army against the Warsaw insurrectionists in 1944 on Himmler's orders in 1940 "de-Slavized" himself by giving up the second part of his surname.

⁵⁰ Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*.

⁵¹ Helmut Krausnick, 'Hitler und die Morde in Polen', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 11 (1963), no. 2, p. 206.

⁵² Helmut Krausnick, Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges. Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1938–1942* (Stuttgart, 1981), part 1, p. 33. See the chapters: 'Die "verbrecherischen" Befehle' in the book by Christian Hartmann, *Halder. Generalstabschef Hitlers 1938–1942* (Paderborn, 2010), pp. 241–254. General Franz Halder realised – like many other Wehrmacht commanders – that it was an ideological war of extermination, and Hitler was consciously breaking all norms of international law.

aptly named by Joachim Fest the “copy of a practitioner of power”.⁵³ He faithfully repeated the words of his master: Hitler. He copied Hitler in his speech, but that complicated and multifaceted man did not always match the Führer in ruthlessness and brutality in his deeds. Forced to manoeuvre between Hitler’s instructions and various camps of the Third Reich’s leadership, and jealous of his own prerogatives, he did not always abide by what the Führer wanted. On 19 January 1940 he reported that Hitler and Göring’s orders were to “remove from Poland whatever could be removed for the German armaments industry. Thus my relationship with the Poles is the relationship of an ant to an aphid”.⁵⁴ Frank expressed Hitler’s instructions precisely by stating that the Poles were needed as a reservoir of manual labour.⁵⁵

On 2 September 1940 Frank spoke to his subordinates: “Up until now we have conducted a policy of total separation of the Germans from the Poles. The Führer has decided again in response to my question that the restrictions we have implemented are to remain in force. No Pole may achieve a higher rank than factory foreman, no Pole may gain higher education in national institutions”.⁵⁶

Frank often recalled that after October 1939 Hitler intended to treat the General Government “as the remains of the Polish nation, as a kind of rump state”. Under the influence, however, of various pieces of information, including those regarding the possibilities of “great German colonisation activities”, he decided “not to establish any protectorate or forms similar to it”, but an entity “clearly remaining under German rule”, “in which the absolute control of the Polish working lower class by German elements would be protected”.⁵⁷

Hitler often repeated to Frank in various permutations that he did not intend to change the structure of the General Government, which was to remain a reservoir of manpower for the Third Reich. After some time, after the extermination and expulsion of the Poles and the settlement of the territories by Germans, they were intended

⁵³ Joachim Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich* (London, 1979).

⁵⁴ *Das Diensttagebuch*, p. 94.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 280–281.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

to be incorporated – after having been fully Germanized – into the Third Reich.

Germanization – in Frank's view – was also to mean the complete restoration to the Teutonic race of the "Teutonic racial core", meaning Teutonic elements selected from the Polish people. It has to be admitted, however, that they were extremely imprecise plans, just as the use by Frank of the term "Germanization" was vague. Frank said that the future incorporation into the Reich of un-Slavicized Polish territories might occur after fifty or a hundred years, but that goal ought to be kept in mind.⁵⁸ Referring to Hitler, Frank described the General Government as *Nebenland* (a borderland). He said: "The General Government ought to become an immense space for the Polish workforce to live in the service of the entire German economy".⁵⁹ Hitler confirmed to Frank in spring 1943 that he was not intending in any way to change his plans regarding the Poles and the General Government.⁶⁰

On 1 September 1944 there was a characteristic exchange between Hitler and General Hermann Fegelein about the Warsaw Uprising. Hitler had ordered the use of the Luftwaffe, which would drop mines on Warsaw and burn down buildings to leave only bare walls.⁶¹

Himmler presented Hitler with news about the uprising in Warsaw as follows: "Mein Führer, the time is unsuitable. Looking [however] from a historical perspective, it is a blessing that the Poles are doing that. We will cope with it in 5–6 weeks. But then Warsaw, the capital, the centre, the intelligentsia of a once 16–17-million nation will be wiped out. A nation that for 700 years has blocked the East from us and which from the first Battle of Tannenberg (Grunwald) has always been in our way. Then the Polish problem will not be a historically great problem for our children or for anybody who comes after us, nor even for us".⁶²

Goebbels, writing about the Warsaw Uprising in his memoirs, remarked that the Poles had carried out a "Katynization" of the

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 659, 688.

⁶¹ *Hitlers Lagebesprechungen*, ed. Helmut Heiber (Stuttgart, 1962), p. 627.

⁶² Irving, *Hitler's War*, p. 603.

Polish intelligentsia themselves. He used that expression – his own coinage – on 16 August 1944 among others, writing in his diary: “It was evident that Polish emigrants in London appealed to Warsaw partisans to resist because they thought that Stalin would enter the Polish capital forthwith. However, Stalin did not do them that favour. As a result of that the Warsaw underground movement was subject to a massed operation of our armed forces; one can imagine the outcome. The underground movement suffered great losses and one can observe that it was totally eliminated. Even if here and there they put up strong resistance on the streets of Warsaw, it has minor importance. Thus the Polish emigrants in London lost their only support in the Polish capital. And Stalin cheaply Katynised the Polish aristocracy and nationalist camp”.⁶³

Beside anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism, anti-Polishness joined the permanent fundamental components of Hitler's world-view during the war years. It is an extremely significant conclusion. Hans Frank still hoped in the years 1943–1944 that anti-Bolshevist feelings would somehow automatically mobilize the Polish nation to collaborate with the Third Reich. He did his best to convince Hitler of the necessity of using the Poles in the fight against the USSR.⁶⁴ For Hitler all that remained was ethnic cleansing, destruction and murder.

On 12 May 1942 Hitler's adjutant noted: “the aim of his [Hitler's] eastern policy – in the long term – is to make space for settlement available for around a hundred million German people. We must do everything to transport million after million of German people there with iron tenacity. He wants to receive a report no later than in ten years stating that at least twenty million Germans are living in the re-incorporated territories or in the eastern territories (Danzig, West Prussia, *Reichsgau Wartheland*, *Regierungsbezirk Zichenau* and *Bezirk Bialystok*) occupied by our forces”.⁶⁵

On 6 August 1942 he encapsulated the matter succinctly: “We shall absorb or eject a ridiculous hundred million Slavs. Whoever

⁶³ *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, part 2: *Diktate 1941–1945*, vol. 7: *Januar–März 1943*, ed. Elke Fröhlich (München, 1993), pp. 243–244.

⁶⁴ Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik*, pp. 188–190.

⁶⁵ Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche*, p. 284.

talks about caring for them should at once be put into a concentration camp”.⁶⁶ Hitler mainly had in mind Russians, Poles and Ukrainians. It is clear from Hans Frank’s memoirs that the leader of the Third Reich intentionally gave the territory of Bohemia and Moravia the form of a protectorate, regarding the people there as superior to Poles and Russians. The Bulgarians and Slovaks, who were allied with the Third Reich, were not included at that moment in the plans to destroy the Slavs. Score-settling with the Serbs and Croats (who were partly faithful to Berlin) occurred differently. Neither was it insignificant – and let us repeat it again – that they lived in regions that did not lie on the route to the great eastern *Lebensraum*.

Hitler made a dogma out of the destruction of the Poles. He was supported in this by Himmler, Bormann, Rosenberg and many others. But Hitler remains the greatest issuer of orders and the guiding spirit. Describing his conflicts with Himmler, Albert Speer claimed that “similarly to the destruction of the Jews, Himmler became only the organiser of that mass of slaves in the East: the programme itself was not Himmler’s, but Hitler’s”.⁶⁷ And recalling discussions between Hitler and Himmler about the ruthless execution of those plans, he wrote that the outcome of the programme – “the elimination of millions of Slavs” – had probably still not been worked out in all its details. “But the goal was irrevocable: he presented a programme that Hitler saw as the historical documentation of his life’s work for future generations”.⁶⁸

From Frank’s perspective, Hitler’s programme for the General Government was as follows. It was to be a “gateway” to the East. “That region of the General Government – said Frank – would become the next component part of Europe to undergo the absolute colonisation by Germans directly after the re-Germanization process of the Reich’s eastern territories was completed. We intend to build great motorways that will run across our country. Great German settlements will be built beside those Reich motorways. Large

⁶⁶ Hitler, *Monologe*, p. 331.

⁶⁷ Albert Speer, *Der Sklavenstaat. Meine Auseinandersetzungen mit der SS* (Stuttgart, 1981), p. 421.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

military bases will be built in carefully selected strategic points, in order for zones of German life to be gradually developed around them. Then we shall be able to push back dispensable nationals towards the East, in order not create insurmountable difficulties, so that the ethnically German element can take hold more firmly, and the ethnically-alien elements may be pushed even further away”.⁶⁹

Frank used Hitler's language by saying that “we are not bothered about the prosperity of that country”. “We measure achievements according to how impossible the chance of the Poles ever rising has become”.⁷⁰ Frank boasted at a large meeting of the Nazi Party on 1 August 1942 in the Lwów (Lviv) opera house: “You can say that at least two Poles are hanging from every lamppost – I can only answer to you: the Poles have not left us so many lampposts, there are not so many in that culturally blessed country”.⁷¹

Arguments about cultural or racial superiority played a lesser role in Göring's actions than in Hitler or Himmler's. At the beginning of 1941 Göring was capable of saying: “It is more important that we win this war than conduct racial politics”. Frank immediately echoed: “Today we must be pleased with every Pole we have in factories. It does not matter at all if that Pole or Jew suits us; it is only important that they indirectly serve the German nation”.⁷²

In 1944, facing permanent defeats, Frank obtained greater freedom to act, and began on his own account to search for means for “some kind of agreement” with Polish society. Citing a conversation with Hitler during the Warsaw Uprising, he announced in an official speech of 23 September the principles of the *neue Polenpolitik* he had suggested to the Führer.

In his own name he stated: “We ought not to succumb to ideology, but only rely on purposeful activities among wartime events. Everything ideological is evil if it breaks the manpower of our nation, irrespective of how it is defined or what it means. It would be false if we were to aim to turn the Poles into Nazis or Germans”.⁷³

⁶⁹ *Das Diensttagebuch*, p. 459.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 535.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 914.

He predicted a more extensive attracting of the Polish element into state and administrative activities. He emphasised that the situation in the territories subjugated to him was safe enough to mean that there was no threat from the 2.7 million Jews living there, who had formerly inhabited the General Government. Using symbolic language, he praised the *Endlösung* as a “necessary step”. Frank’s hopes to exploit the Poles were based on a conviction that their hatred of the Bolsheviks was stronger than their hatred of the Germans. He hoped for the help of priests. “The uprising in Warsaw – he said – is a work of insanity of a few criminals, arising from the fear that Warsaw might be captured by the Bolsheviks and lead to the demise of Polish mentality”.⁷⁴ How far was that also Hitler’s opinion? It was extremely important to him that Warsaw would remain in German hands. He was furious about the capture of Warsaw by the Red Army and warned General Guderian that he would interrogate the officers from the General Staff who were responsible for it. On 19 January Kaltenbrunner and the head of the Gestapo Müller interrogated Guderian himself in connection with the capture of Warsaw.⁷⁵

In his New Year orders to the German Wehrmacht on 1 January 1945 Hitler announced: “The extremist tendencies of Jewish-Eastern Bolshevism correspond to Jewish-Western capitalism. In either case, free nations are transformed into slaves. Herr Churchill has announced that at least the whole of Eastern Germany, specifically not only East Prussia and Danzig, but even Pomerania and Silesia, ought to be incorporated in Poland – which means in reality Soviet Russia”.⁷⁶

Against the backdrop of inevitably approaching defeat, Hitler constantly returned to the subject of who was to blame for the outbreak of the Second World War. Invariably and above all he laid the blame at the feet of the Jews, the English and the Poles.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 913–914.

⁷⁵ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 2190.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 2185.

⁷⁷ Cf. ‘Die Schuld am 2. Weltkrieg nach Hitlers Interpretation’, in: Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 2263.

CHAPTER 6

THE WORLD-VIEW OF THE LEADER OR THE NATION?

A totalitarian society cannot be complex: its political, social and economic structures are simplified to the maximum. Neither can a totalitarian society possess a developed ideological programme which is instilled into the massed millions. Quite the opposite: a view of the world which is usually limited to a few basic ideas is imposed on them. Those ideas are repeated over and over in all possible contexts. In Adolf Hitler's state there was no room for any alternative. All goals and solutions had to be explicit.

Hitler picked out and gathered ideas that he considered appropriate and noteworthy, and combined together all the negative racist and nationalistic stereotypes which suited him. He exploited them and transformed them into a global programme, into the ideology of the Third Reich. The mechanism of his totalitarian state enabled him to eliminate at extremely great speed from school and university teaching, and from official circulation, all positive stereotypes or ideas that opposed his views.

The transformation of stereotypes and concepts which up until 1933 have not even filled half the German political imagination into a single, prevailing characteristic was a break – both in politics and ideology – with the pluralism of the views of the Weimar Republic and Wilhelmine Germany, and with the continuity of German pluralist traditions. But Hitler simultaneously took advantage of stereotypes and notions which had functioned in Prussian and German political life for decades and centuries. He was the undoubted continuator in this dimension, too.

ETHNIC STEREOTYPES

Negative portrayals of Slavs has a long tradition in Germanic countries, beginning with the frequent equating of the concepts *Slave* (Slav) and *Sklave* (slave), based on a pseudo-etymological principle. In the eyes of many German theoreticians, the Russia of Nicholas I – a state of slaves governed by a narrow ruling class (including many politicians and generals of German descent) – somehow seemed to confirm that thesis. Apart from the Russians, no Slavic nation had ruled its own state up until the 1870s. That only confirmed the belief that Slavs are born servants and not masters. That became fixed in German stereotypes.

The Germans often portrayed Slavs as nations incapable of creating culture, who need to be provided with the German language and culture. While specific Slavic nations were still ascribed positive characteristics, the collective concept of “Slavs” had an unambiguously negative content. “Just as Germans were portrayed as the personification of culture in contrast to Slavs, who embodied everything alien, and even hostile and contrary to culture – writes Maria Lammich – so also the ‘bad’ traits of Slavs were contrasted with the ‘good’ traits of Germans”.¹ Already in the nineteenth century Russians were described as half-Asians or half-barbarians. “Barbarian” and “Asian” are the most commonly used terms referring to Russia.²

Prejudices regarding the Czechs, which increased markedly after 1919, were later presented by Nazi propaganda in the 1930s as a millennial struggle in which the Czechs were driven by “racially justified hatred” towards the Germans, whose territory they had invaded in Central Europe.³ Baldur von Schirach, who after leaving prison posed as a “Nazi with a human face”, forgot about the documents which he left. After the death of Heydrich in June 1942 he declared that the bullets of the Czech assassins had

¹ Maria Lammich, *Das deutsche Osteuropabild in der Zeit der Reichsgründung* (Boppard am Rhein, 1978), p. 37.

² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³ Jutta Sywottek, *Mobilmachung für den totalen Krieg* (Düsseldorf, 1976), p. 123.

wounded all Nazis and that he would purge Vienna of the Czechs (he would make it *tschechenfrei* or “Czech-free”), as they had of the Jews.

German dictionaries, regional dictionaries and German encyclopaedias give a pretty unambiguous portrait of Poles. *Polack*, *polatschen*, *polnisch*, *polaken*. The concept of the *Polak* from the beginning of the nineteenth century depicts in the German language a stupid, base, wicked, crude, dirty, clumsy, drunk (*polenvoll*, *voll wie ein Pole*), a savage, hot-tempered person, who works incompetently and badly. *Polnischer Reichstag* (literally a Polish parliament) or total chaos (at least from the eighteenth century), and *polnische Wirtschaft* (literally Polish economy) or total mismanagement (from the turn of the nineteenth century) became widely-held concepts in the German language in existence for centuries. The author of *Preussisches Wörterbuch*, Heinrich Füschbier, stated in 1883 that the “neighbouring country of Poland occurs repeatedly in contemptuous linguistic expressions”. Tomasz Szarota concluded that this judgement may refer not just to Prussia, but to the whole of Germany.⁴

The rebirth of Poland in 1918 was received as a negative phenomenon by most Germans. It caused mass aversion and a universal wave of revisionist demands. In this atmosphere of widespread hostility the picture of Poland and the Poles took on even more negative characteristics than before 1914. The concept of “Polish patriotism” became pejorative, since it began to be expressed as a threat to the German state, and Polish religiousness seen as a weapon of the Poles against Germany. Poles also occur in literature at the time of the Weimar Republic as devious, wicked and brutal people. As Dorothea Friedrich concludes in her thorough treatise on the image of Poland in the literature of the Weimar Republic, “the most frequently occurring nationalistic expressions are gathered around the following concepts: patrimony, blood, the German and Polish eagle, the mutilated body of the nation and the Slavic deluge”.⁵

⁴ Cf. Tomasz Szarota, ‘Pole, Polen und polnisch in den deutschen Mundartenlexika und Sprichwörterbüchern’, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 50 (1984), pp. 81–113.

⁵ Dorothea Friedrich, *Das Bild Polens in der Literatur der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), p. 367.

A Polish author writing about the period before 1914 comes to similar conclusions: “in short, popular German literary works, the healthy world is the world of dignified German landowners and thrifty settlers, good teachers, and the morally sick world is a world of superficial, frivolous and wasteful landed nobility of unstable character, and even criminal instincts, and dirty, lazy, drunken peasants treated as manual labour”.⁶

Henryk Olszewski is right in several respects in his book, which provoked polemical comments in Germany, not least when he writes “The historiography of the Wilhelmine Period and the Weimar Republic treated Polish issues with such hostility and presented the problem of the partitions so nationalistically that Nazi authors were left with barely any opportunity to criticise the ‘negligence’ of the ‘guild’”.⁷ The West-German historian Christoph Klessman shared this view.⁸

The entire German nineteenth century consisted – with few exceptions (the nineteen-thirties, *Polenlieder*, the attitudes of Marx, Engels, Herwegh, and Vogt, some other individuals from 1848, and Social Democrat leaders such as Wilhelm Liebknecht) – of the creation of stereotypes about Polish backwardness and immorality. The Poles themselves were blamed for the partitions of Poland. The occupation and colonisation of the western regions of the former Commonwealth by the Germans was portrayed as a kindness. G.K. Chesterton mocked the situation of Prussians magnanimously organising lectures about the hereditary disease of the man they had killed.

From spring 1939 Goebbels’ propaganda drew on ancient negative stereotypes of Poland and the Poles. The expression *polnische Wirtschaft* returned to the press. Poland again began to be portrayed – after the short intermezzo of the years 1934–1938 – as

⁶ Arno Will, *Motywy polskie w krótkich formach literackich niemieckiego obszaru językowego 1794–1914* (Łódź, 1976), p. 106; cf. id., *Polska i Polacy w niemieckiej prozie literackiej XIX wieku* (Łódź, 1970).

⁷ Henryk Olszewski, *Nauka historii w upadku. Studium o historiografii i ideologii historycznej w imperialistycznych Niemczech* (Warszawa–Poznań, 1982), p. 509.

⁸ Cf. e.g. Christoph Klessmann, ‘Osteuropaforschung und Lebensraumpolitik im Dritten Reich’, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung “Das Parlament”*, vol. 7 (1984), pp. 33–45.

a centuries-old enemy. It was described as a state which did not respect the norms of international law, human rights or ethical norms. “For the average German – writes Tomasz Szarota – the word ‘Pole’ came to be associated explicitly with rape, murder and plunder, and reacted to with feelings of anger and hatred”.⁹ Accounts about the cruel persecution of the German minority in Poland were meant to serve that purpose. The stereotype of the Pole as an enemy was meant to mobilise the hatred of the army and the entire German nation, justifying Hitler’s blatant appeal to the military commanders he addressed on 22 August 1939 in Obersalzberg: “Be ruthless, be brutal”.

The myth of the Bydgoszcz Bloody Sunday of 3 September 1939 concerning the murder of hundreds of defenceless Germans by armed Poles took permanent root in the psyche of German society. In Goebbels’ propaganda the hundreds of victims became transformed into thousands, and thousands into tens of thousands. It was ordered that the expression *Bromberger Mörder* become established in the German language. During the Second World War, German propaganda successfully spread the stereotype of the Pole-as-murderer in Western Europe.

Other – less extreme – stereotypes accompanied that of Pole-as-murderer: Poles as reckless, insane people, governed chiefly by persons of foreign descent (Germans) without the ability to create their own culture.

During the war, racial propaganda played an important role in the formation of Germans’ views about Poles. In August 1939 it could be read that: “Poland as a state with a large Jewish population is a danger to the whole of Europe”. Referring to the old repertoire

⁹ Tomasz Szarota, ‘Stereotyp Polski i Polaków w oczach Niemców podczas II wojny światowej’, *Sobótka* 33 (1978), no. 2, p. 194. In the context of “Bloody Sunday” in Bydgoszcz, Kershaw writes: “Terrible though these atrocities were, they were more or less spontaneous outbursts of hatred that took place in the context of panic and fear following the German invasion. They did not remotely compare with, let alone provide any justification for, the calculated savagery of the treatment meted out by the German masters, directed at wiping out anything other than a slave existence for the Polish people”, Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945. Nemesis* (New York, 2000), p. 241.

of anti-Polish prejudices it was written that “Poland in the past was neither a nation, nor a state, but a contradiction of both”.¹⁰

A relevant directive of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda dated 24 October 1939 ordered Poles to be treated as sub-humans. Czesław Madajczyk points out that the press were ordered to depict Polish society like that, “until every German treats every Pole subconsciously – irrespective of whether he is a farm worker or a member of the intelligentsia – like vermin”.¹¹

The stereotype of Polish vermin was moving closer to the stereotype of the Jew as a parasitic insect. “In both cases – writes Szarota – the aim was identical: to break the psychological barrier accompanying the killing of people, convincing Germans that they were dealing with *Untermenschen* – insects, who ought not just to be fought (since fighting them meant partnership), but for hygienic reasons to be destroyed, just like vermin. The use of an animal stereotype meant references not only to feelings of anger or hatred, but was supposed to trigger a feeling of disgust and aversion towards the members of, as it were, another species”.¹²

It is not a literary embellishment to claim that in keeping with the racial theories of the Third Reich, the fate of the Jews was being planned for the Poles. Some Germans made appeals for the total extermination of the Poles, others to convince Poles that a “final solution” was not awaiting them. The director of spatial planning in Warsaw, Friedrich Gollert, wrote on 29 March 1943 that one ought to counter the opinion of the Polish resistance movement that “the fate of the Jews would also become the fate of the Poles one day. The fact that in the Reich – partly even in legislation – we place Jews and Poles on a par provides that agitation with perfect ammunition”.¹³

When in 1985, during a scholarly discussion in West Berlin, I finished my presentation about the future of Poles in Hitler’s “New Order” with the words that the extermination of the Jews was the most important constituent part – but not the only one – in Adolf

¹⁰ Sywottek, *Mobilmachung*, p. 226.

¹¹ Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce* (Warszawa, 1970), vol. 1, p. 483.

¹² Szarota, *Stereotyp Polski i Polaków*, p. 200.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

Hitler's programme, and that the Poles, beside the Russians, were to become the "Jews of tomorrow", one of the historians accused me of using literary embellishments. So great is the strength of stereotypes that reduce the racism of Hitler's Third Reich to anti-Semitism. So let us remind ourselves that regarding both the Russians and the Poles there were many blatant directives instructing the treatment of them as sub-humans, vermin and an element destined in the main for extermination.

Czesław Madajczyk wrote in connection with this that "some Polish historians equate the fundamental aim of the policies of the Nazi occupant in Poland – the rapid destruction of the Polish nation – with biological extermination. It is doubtlessly a simplification".¹⁴ But that author, after enumerating the existing forms of biological extermination of the Polish population, develops his statements:

When the far-reaching plans regarding the Poles became apparent, when in certain areas they began to feel a threat, similarly to that of the Jews, then it turned out that they were, however, vital to increase the effort of the German military machine, and at the same time in regions where Polish existence was being directly threatened, then Polish resistance acted with amazing strength. However, ultimately the obviation of the danger of the nation being destroyed only occurred at the time of the liberation. An eloquent example is Warsaw, which was destroyed six months before the surrender of the Third Reich.

The enormous civilian casualties allow one to predict what the Polish nation would have suffered had the Germans succeeded in completely carrying out their plans. The period of the war was merely to have been the play's first act.¹⁵

After the Jews had been utterly exterminated, the Third Reich would have had to organise even more intensely utter hatred for the next mythologised enemies: the Russians, and then the Poles. Had not a degree of that utter hatred been achieved against the Russians? Adolf Hitler's plans were not precise, but planned destruction and did not rule out complete extermination.

¹⁴ Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy*, p. 369.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

With regard to the Poles, the programme was outlined quite clearly: the extermination of the intelligentsia, the clergy, and the ruling class, the destruction of education and culture, then the reduction of the Poles to the rank of mindless working masses, harnessed in slavish service to the Third Reich, and ultimately the resettlement of Poles to Belarus or further, and the giving of land to German settlers.

Franciszek Ryszka claims that “Hitlerism did not conjure up enmity towards the Poles from nowhere [...] Hitlerism gave it new contents and promulgated a demonised image of the Pole-as-barbarian much beyond the regions of border conflicts. Everywhere: in the regions of the Elbe, the Rhine and the Isar, where knowledge of Poles was quite minimal”.¹⁶

I am not convinced whether it was only Hitlerism that propagated a demonised image of the Pole-as-barbarian. The Nazi movement before 1939 was not especially interested in the Poles. Neither did it stand out especially in the description – the “paradox of history” (*Treppenwitz der Geschichte* or “staircase joke of world history”) – in the context of other revisionist tendencies. Up until after 1939 – with the possible single exception of the first months after Hitler gained power – Poland and the Poles were not only protected from attacks in the press, the objects of which they had become in the Weimar Republic, but for example their virtues were actually promoted as the defenders of Europe against the Asian-Russians and against Bolshevism in Nazi films of the pact years of 1934–1938. They were portrayed as brave insurrectionists and soldiers who loved their fatherland.

If after the change in focus of Nazi propaganda it proved possible over the course of a few months – from summer 1939 – to so quickly impose an image of the Poles as criminal barbarians, murderers of Germans, and enemies of all the people protected by Germany, it was probably mainly because anti-Polish stereotypes had been deep-rooted for a long time and were widespread throughout Germany and not only in border regions but also in the regions of the Isar and the Rhine. This is confirmed by Tomasz Szarota’s

¹⁶ Franciszek Ryszka, *U źródeł sukcesu i klęski. Szkice z dziejów hitleryzmu* (Warszawa, 1972), p. 133.

lexical research which demonstrates the existence of many pejorative linguistic expressions about Poles, both in Prussia and along the Rhine. German studies of public opinion at the time the Third Reich was coming into being discuss this.¹⁷

Hitler and his followers, when launching anti-Polish propaganda in summer 1939, made reference to images which had intensified from at least the second half of the nineteenth century. Hitler's "achievement" was to present the dislike and enmity in the context of an unambiguously racist doctrine, exploiting them to incite feelings of universal aggression against Poles. And, finally, utilising them in his plans for the mass destruction of the Polish nation.

Prejudices – nineteenth- and twentieth-century stereotypes – were similarly exploited against the Russians, Jews and Bolsheviks. In accordance with Hitler's orders, the nation's hatred was to be concentrated on one single enemy; it could not be watered down. The Jews-Bolsheviks-Russians of the USSR were the first enemies of the Third Reich to be overtly named. Anti-Bolshevist propaganda had diverse aims: it justified the plans to capture *Lebensraum* for the flourishing German nation, it justified in the process German armaments policy, and it was meant to make Germans aware that shortages in the Third Reich were a trifle in comparison with the destitution that Bolshevism brought with it. Owing to anti-Bolshevist propaganda it was hoped to finally gain the recognition of European opinion for the Third Reich as the defender of Europe against the Asian barbarians. That propaganda was only suspended for a short time in the years 1939–1940. After 1941 the enemies were often standardised under the catch-all epithet of "Slavs".

The propaganda was precisely supported "scientifically" and was controlled. Hence the well-known Breslau historian, Werner Markert wrote in 1934: "To science, the road to the East means a fight, a fight in the vanguard for new land. We have to carry out specific work building the road the Führer has indicated. Today it is a scientific and political assignment on the study into Eastern Europe".¹⁸

¹⁷ See, for example, Dorothea Friedrich, *Das Bild Polens in der Literatur der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984).

¹⁸ Based on Klessmann, *Osteuropaforschung und Lebensraumpolitik*, p. 37.

The dispute about whether the Third Reich was or was not the continuator of German state policy towards the European East often assumes completely abstract – or in the negative meaning of that word, academic – dimensions. Some historians put forward the thesis that considering the scale of Nazi genocide and the plans for unlimited aggression intended to engulf the whole world, the Third Reich broke qualitatively with the traditions of German foreign policy. The concepts of “quality” and “quantity” are in this case extremely relative, just as the definition of concepts such as “continuation”, “breaking with”, “break in historical continuity”¹⁹ are difficult to define unambiguously.

THE LEADER'S STEREOTYPES

The concept of *Lebensraum* cannot be treated separately from the conviction about “German superiority” – or, as it was termed in the Third Reich, “racial superiority” – concealed behind it. Nazi racism found its expression above all in anti-Semitism, and later in its attitude to the nations of Eastern Europe, and thus mainly to Slavs. A vaguely defined and articulated, but quite overt racism – anti-Slavism – lurked behind the concept of *Lebensraum*, one of the two permanent components of Hitler’s programme.

Two sources may be distinguished in Hitler’s image of Slavs: the German and the Austrian. His hostility towards the Czechs clearly emerged from Linz and Vienna, not Munich or Berlin, where the intensity of antipathy towards Czechs was less. Neither were the Slovenians, who appeared here and there in his deliberations, a notion that existed in the imagination of the average citizen of Wilhelmine Germany or the Weimar Republic. However, Adolf Hitler’s image of the Poles was not at first charged with the abundance of negative traits present in Prussian or German stereotypes. The number one Slav enemy for citizens of former Wilhelmine Germany were Poles. But not for Hitler. He was right when he said to his generals

¹⁹ Cf. Wolfgang Wippermann, *Der “deutsche Drang nach Osten”: Ideologie und Wirklichkeit eines politischen Schlagwortes* (Darmstadt, 1981).

on 22 August 1939: "My previous Polish policy was contrary to the views of the nation".

One may discuss Hitler's very personal attitude towards the Jews or the Bolsheviks, one may also wonder whether his hostility towards the Russians did not often carry a more Austrian or German flavour, but when describing the attitude towards the Slavs of Hitler, the Chancellor of the Third Reich, as a whole, it is difficult not to recall the words of Konrad Heiden: *Hitler ist ein deutscher Zustand* – "Hitler is the state of Germany".²⁰

For the Austrian Hitler, fondness, affection or "pro-Russian delusions" typical for many diplomats and military men of the German Empire or Weimar Republic were alien. The former Russia of the Romanovs seemed to the Austrian Hitler a centre of pan-Slavism, which might with the help of other Slavic nationalities flood Central Europe. To the Austrian Hitler, Pan-Slavism sounded much more dangerous a threat to German culture than to the average German.

The images of Slavs among Austrian Germans and citizens of Wilhelmine Germany were superimposed on each other in broad outline. And here and there the pan-German movement saw Slavs as a synonym of backwardness, an inferior civilisation, an inferior race, and as a threat to all things German. The severity of that view was deepened by the fact that the ethnically and racially alien territories of Eastern and Southern Europe were inhabited by hundreds of thousands of Germans who had arrived there at various times. Their fundamental rights to those lands were allegedly justified by their civilizational and racial superiority. Those views, still compelling in the German press before 1914, would find full expression in Adolf Hitler's programme; the programme of Anschluss and the occupation of Czechoslovakia and Poland in the defence of the rights of oppressed German minorities.

The Austrian Hitler, taking up the conquest of Central-Eastern Europe in 1938, and describing himself as he entered Vienna as a super-Prussian, combined in his programme all possible negative Prussian, Austrian and German elements of the image of Slavs.

²⁰ Konrad Heiden, *Hitler* (Zürich, 1936), vol. 1, p. 119.

He tried to fully exploit their motivational strength for the conquest and destruction of the nations of Eastern Europe in the years 1939–1945. (The image of Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy actually included more positive elements than in the Wilhelmine Period). The image of “sub-human Slavs” was not an exclusive creation of either the Prussian, Austrian or Bavarian Adolf Hitler. He did not impose it on his supporters.

That image was not identical in its details with the image of the Slavs of Rosenberg, Darré, Himmler, Koch or Frank. It was a collection of negative stereotypes functioning in the German mentality, which the great destroyer of Europe used for the mass murders carried out in its eastern regions. Exploiting these stereotypes with the goal of genocide can be considered Adolf Hitler’s original “achievement”, since plans for genocide in the name of racial superiority had been alien to the vast majority of Germans when he came to power on 30 January 1933. They were yet to experience at first hand that whoever approves of a system of absolute power has to be prepared to become a co-participant and accomplice in genocide.

The chief trait of Hitlerism, unlike Italian Fascism or Francoism, was racism, which was manifested above all in the theory and practice of anti-Semitism. The coming to power of Hitler undoubtedly contributed to the incitement of anti-Semitic activities and racist theories in Central and Eastern Europe in Austria, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia and other countries. Mussolini, who was for a long time reluctantly and simply negatively inclined towards Nazi anti-Semitism, decided, nonetheless, to create racist laws in 1938, knowing what importance the German Führer attached to the issue. He also hoped that by flourishing racist slogans he would turn Italian society into a totalitarian state in imitation of Hitler, while eliminating the influences of the monarchy and the papacy. That imitation turned out to be a failure. Renzo De Felice, who is not only the most famous biographer of Mussolini, but also an expert on the history of Italian Jews, writes that “Fascist propaganda experienced a heavy defeat for the first time with its racially-motivated campaign, and for the first time large masses of Italians who had previously been Fascists, or if you will, Mussolini supporters, but

certainly not anti-Fascists, began to look at Fascism and Mussolini himself in a new light".²¹

In the context of Adolf Hitler's German racism – above all his anti-Semitism, but also his anti-Slavism (the sense of racial superiority towards Eastern European nations), and his racial-cultural mission in the east of Europe became a factor which did not drive people away from the regime, but on the contrary were powerful factors that mobilised people around the Nazi movement and state.

Hitler never stopped delivering anti-Semitic and racist declarations. Directly after taking power, when he was assuring the world of his peaceful intentions, he continued unchangingly to recall that racist principles were the background of the National Socialist idea. The terms *Rassengrundsätze* and *Rassenlehre* are repeated ceaselessly in his official speeches after 1938. It is puzzling how many officials of the *Auswärtiges Amt* accepted anti-Semitic politics almost at once. During conversations between the *Auswärtiges Amt* and members of the Nazi Party in November 1934 he only insisted that “for reasons of external politics racial legislation should only be limited to Jews”. Vico von Bülow-Schwante stated in a relevant note on that subject that the “Nuremberg Laws replaced the negative concept of ‘un-Aryan’ with the positive one of ‘Jewish’”. He strongly emphasised the political damage that was being done in foreign policy by the blatant extension of kinship principles with Germans or the racial foreignness of other nations. What ought to be the law for members of the Nazi Party, he claimed, could not regulate the Third Reich's internal systems. Walter Gross, a physician and head of the Nazi Party's Racial Policy Office, believed, however, that racial principles (the protection of German blood) could not be abandoned, unless one occasionally had to make concessions for tactical reasons.²²

Modern history shows that the picture of a mythologized, often allegedly camouflaged or hidden enemy always draws on existing premises: prejudices, enmity, stereotypes, and on facts and real

²¹ Renzo De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Turin, 1972), p. 302.

²² *Auswärtiges Amt-Bonn, Politisches Archiv, Inland I Partei, 87/2, Rückwirkung der deutschen Rassenpolitik auf die Beziehungen zu fremden Staaten (1934–1941).*

notions: “public enemy”, Jew, Bolshevik, freemason, partisan, capitalist or Slav.

Totalitarian systems are characterised by a specific ability to create enemies and sow hatred; anyone can be subsumed under the concepts of: renegade, traitor or dissenter, ideological heretic, enemy or opponent of the system, regardless of ethnic or class identity. The manifestation of approval for existing systems and the condemnation of opponents are norms which are meant to assure survival in a totalitarian system.

Mobilizing hatred against an internal and external enemy is a fundamental characteristic of totalitarian systems. That hatred is mythologized and made absolute, as the positives which the new regime are to bring are also mythologized. The enemy is the embodiment of all possible evil, and the representative of the new regime – all possible good. That is supposed to justify active manifestations of hatred, aggression, physical destruction and extermination. Mobilising hatred fulfils many functions: it creates the unity of the majority against the minority, the unity of the majority ethnic group against the mythologised enemy, distracts the attention of the population from the regime’s internal difficulties, justifies difficulties, places the blame on the mythologised enemy, and guarantees full mobilisation against external aggression, which it turns out has always been a necessity for all totalitarian powers.

The political visions of the world’s future as outlined by Hitler and his followers were often deliberately vague and imprecise. This resulted from a pronounced lack of precision and a deliberate camouflaging of the actual goals. The banality and monotony of Hitler’s declarations and the propaganda character of his public appearances have discouraged many historians from studying his real image of the world. They forgot that agitators and propagandists do not on principle have to be conscious liars. The instrumentalization of many ideas in the service of the main idea – the National Socialist idea, using Hitler’s lexicon – did not rule out faith in them.

Hitler was a person of selective, unsystematic and superficial knowledge. But he turned out to be an excellent manipulator of ideas; whether writing or giving speeches, he almost never lost sight of the main goal; he never relied on chance. That is why Jerzy

Krasuski may be right to claim that even the well-known and already quoted excerpt from *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler saw only Russia and the border states subordinate to it to the east of Germany, was an expression of taking the opinions of readers who did not want to accept the rebirth of the Polish state into account.²³

Mein Kampf has from time to time been described as the world's least read bestseller. But it would be an exaggeration to claim that it was not known in the USSR, Czechoslovakia or Poland before the war. *Mein Kampf* was repeatedly referred to in the Soviet press to illustrate what the Nazi movement represented. Molotov, giving a speech about the principles of the USSR's foreign policy in January 1935 at the Sixth Congress of Soviets of the Soviet Union, quoted a statement by Hitler about Russia from *Mein Kampf*.²⁴

In 1933 the aged president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Masaryk, emphasised in a conversation with Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi that he had thoroughly read *Mein Kampf*, but added that he "stared open-mouthed at some of the chapters".²⁵ The crux of the matter was that many readers of *Mein Kampf*, in accordance with Hitler's official statements from the first years of his chancellorship, treated the book more as an indigestible historical document than as the programme of the Third Reich.

During the thirties *Mein Kampf* was discussed in Poland in many articles, brochures and books.²⁶ Sympathy was occasionally expressed for Hitler's anti-Semitism, but condemnation prevailed. Father Józef Pastuszka wrote in 1938 that "Germany, defeated in combat and morally humiliated, internally torn and its core values threatened

²³ Jerzy Krasuski, 'Das Problem der Relativität von wertenden Urteilen in der Historiographie', in: *Preussen, Deutschland, Polen im Urteil polnischer Historiker*, ed. Lothar Dralle (Berlin, 1983), p. 191.

²⁴ Cf. Philipp W. Fabry, *Die Sowjetunion und das Dritte Reich. Eine dokumentierte Geschichte der deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen von 1933 bis 1941* (Stuttgart, 1971), p. 49.

²⁵ Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Kampf um Europa. Aus meinem Leben* (Zürich, 1949), p. 179.

²⁶ As a curiosity it can be mentioned that one of the first publications against Hitler in Poland after he seized power was a brochure by the White general and Belorussian separatist Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz, *Precz z Hitlerem czy niech żyje Hitler* (Warszawa, 1933).

by socialism, found in racism a wonderful instrument of self-defence, fuel for its national pride and a determining revenge”.²⁷ He predicted that Hitler’s racism would not survive the test of time, but his achievements as the founder of the Third Reich and defender of western civilisation against Bolshevism would remain.

It was most often not noticed until after 1939 that it was only a step from fighting Bolshevism and the USSR to fighting in general in the name of racial principles against the Russians, the countries of Eastern Europe, the Slavs, anyone who would oppose the Nazi crusade to capture *Lebensraum*, and thus also against the Poles. Politicians of Central and Eastern Europe quite early interpreted in *Mein Kampf* the continuation of the ideas of German imperialism, but they did not notice at all that racist, anti-Slavic ideas were behind the push for the East. It is characteristic that at the turn of the twenty-first century attempts to relaunch and popularise *Mein Kampf* in a Polish translation encounter extremely sluggish resistance in Poland.

Hitler only considered the pact with the USSR in August and September 1939 in tactical terms and was aware that it would be treated as a considerable ideological departure. Some Gauleiters and a section of German public opinion erroneously judged the pact with the USSR signed by Ribbentrop as a return to earlier traditions of agreements and to the alliance of Prussia and the Second Reich with Russia.

Mussolini and the Italian Fascists were outraged by Hitler’s “ideological betrayal”. The Führer of the Third Reich did not even reveal all his plans to Il Duce, fearing Italian indiscretion. He was faithful to his tactic of keeping issues of the highest import totally secret. Therefore Mussolini, unaware of the matter, severely admonished him for being unable, for tactical reasons, of being permanently committed to the principles of “his revolution”.²⁸ Hitler remained

²⁷ Józef Pastuszka, *Filozoficzne i społeczne idee A. Hitlera (rasizm)* (Lublin, 1938), p. 8.

²⁸ Mussolini wrote to Hitler on 5 January 1940: “I, who was born a revolutionary and have never changed those views, tell you that you cannot ceaselessly sacrifice the principles of your revolution in favour of the tactical demands of some specific political moment. I feel you cannot abandon the anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevist standards you have been brandishing for twenty years”, see Jerzy W. Borej-sza, *Il fascism e l’Europa orientale, Laterza, Rome-Bari* (Warszawa, 1981), p. 229.

absolutely faithful to his chief principles of anti-Semitism and of capturing *Lebensraum* in the fight against “Bolshevist Russia”. The Second World War demonstrated that for Hitler, ideological assumptions dominated over political pragmatism. What is more, Mussolini was for certain never anti-Bolshevist or anti-communist like Hitler. Like the former supporters of the Strasser brothers – the left of the Nazi Party – il Duce was often inclined to see his greatest enemy not in Moscow, but in the capitalist plutocracy of the City or Wall Street. Mussolini’s anti-Semitism was fresh and opportunistic, and proclaimed under pressure from Nazi Germany.

Had it not been for ideological principles, Hitler, as Jäckel rightly stressed, would not have gone ahead with the extermination of the Jews as a prime goal at the time of the decisive battles on the Eastern Front, thus depriving his armaments industry of valuable manpower and engaging the manpower needed to fight the war for other purposes; were it not for ideological principles he would not have opposed so firmly all attempts at exploiting the religious feeling of the rural population of the USSR and the creation of military forces from Soviet POWs, he would not have used – contrary to the dictates of military strategy – the tactic of ruthlessly exterminating the civilians in the Soviet Union. Had it not been for ideological principles, Hitler would have acceded to Hans Frank’s suggestion to draw Poles into the anti-Bolshevist struggle in the years 1944–1945.

When we talk about Prussian or German political traditions regarding Poland and Russia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it is easy to observe their multiplicity in their attitude to Russia, including continuous and powerful pro-Russian tendencies, particularly from the top, and at the same time the – almost without exception – consistently anti-Polish politics of Prussian and German governments. The government circles of St. Petersburg and Moscow were never so uniformly or explicitly anti-Polish. The brief Nazi intermezzo of the years 1934–1938 seems ironic. It is actually almost the only exception in Prussian and German anti-Polish governmental policies after 1848.

Hitler, who often acted according to the principle: “too bad for reality if it doesn’t agree with my plans”, was not aware of how far the Poles were also capable in their own way of not taking account

of reality when the independence of their country, the question of Polish borders, or ancient notions of honour or offences came into play. This specificity of Poland was known and often born in mind, above all by German military commanders – members of the officer caste – who came from the eastern regions of the former Reich. From the beginning of the Second World War they feared opposition, the resistance movement and guerrilla warfare in the occupied territories. Hitler did not take those elements into consideration in his global calculations, just as, in defiance of the obvious, he did not exploit Eastern-European nationalisms for his goals, in keeping with the old plans from before the First World War.

The goals Hitler set himself and the inhuman methods to which he resorted were an enormous qualitative leap in comparison to the times before 1933.

Hitler mobilised the hostility and hatred of Germans towards the real, but above all and mainly towards the imaginary enemies of Germany and German culture on a scale which was exceptional and unprecedented in the history of modern Europe and the world. Contrary to what Martin Broszat claims, the theory of the racially inferior Poles governed by and civilised by a thin stratum of people of “German blood” began to be manipulated by Hitler not in the second half of 1939, but during the first years of the Nazi Party. Later that old theory of Prussian and German racists vanished from his repertoire, to return in 1939. But Hitler exploited it for the ideological motivation of the extermination of the Poles on a scale and in a fashion which not even the most anti-Polish Prussian Junkers had ever planned.

This was very appositely expressed by Franciszek Ryszka when he wrote that in the Nazi view the hostility was not only directed towards the Polish state, but that “Poles, by simply belonging to a specific type, were becoming the enemy [...] The hostility had to be expressed in the feelings of every German and accompany him in every relationship with the species regarded as enemy [...] It is not the craving to fight until victorious, i.e. to overpower the opponent, but a craving to destroy”.²⁹

²⁹ Ryszka, *U źródeł sukcesu*, p. 129.

Hitler exploited Prussian and German resentment and anti-Slavic traditions to begin to bring about the old, reactionary German utopia – the aim to capture living space in the East. He planned it and carried it out on a scale that exceeded the boldest fantasies about *Lebensraum* of his predecessors. Józef Beck had a moment of clairvoyance when, as I mentioned, at the turn of 1939 he declared that Hitler was aiming to achieve a shared border with Japan.

In Adolf Hitler's total vision, as in other great totalitarian systems that were manifested in external, imperialistic aggression, taking into account the traditions or character of other nations played a secondary role, was pushed very much into the background. The leaders of totalitarian states, as the experience of the twentieth century has demonstrated, are not often inclined to take the specific nature of other nations into consideration. Hitler, both when he was entering a non-aggression pact with Poland, and when he invaded it five years later, subordinated everything to his global vision. But there were traditions he often took into consideration and which, when it was convenient, necessary or simply essential to him, he tried maximally to exploit: traditions of the German nation, including Prussian traditions.

In the Third Reich, old traditions were intertwined with the new ones brought by the Nazi movement. The history of the last two hundred years shows that no movement that has achieved revolutionary transformations and negated the traditions of the past has managed to totally shut itself off from them. Those traditions returned or were consciously evoked at once after the new movements gained power. In the case of the theory and practice of the Third Reich it was necessary to recreate German traditions, but often research into the relationship between the traditions of other nations and their significance in the political calculations of Adolf Hitler and his followers turn out to be fruitless. So thus Hitler attached little importance, as it turned out, both to the traditions of German-Polish relations, opposing almost the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the years 1933–1939 and to German-Russian relations in the years 1940–1941, almost completely ignoring Ribbentrop's plans and pro-Russian orientation. Whereas he was capable of exploiting and gaining in 1939–1945 all possible German anti-Polish

sentiments, and in the years 1941–1945 anti-Russian and anti-Soviet ones, drawing on the old traditions of Prussia as a colonising state.

If, however, one may – with all reservations – talk about the permanent traditions, superiority and inferiority complexes, sentiments and resentments of the German nation towards other nationalities, then in Hitler's changeable attitude, such elements, apart from a sense of affinity and possibly admiration for the English, absolute hatred of the Jews and racial superiority regarding the Slavs, were few. It is enough to examine his contemptuous opinions about Romance peoples, his sarcastic remarks about Austrians, or, finally, his arguments from the last years of the war about the German nation not being worthy of him, to understand that the Reichsführer, with the passage of time, was more and more governed by hatred of people – individuals and nations – regardless of their origins or ethnicity. It is a field of research much more for the psychologist than the historian. There is no way of measuring Hitler with the yardstick of human normalcy or traditional political systems.

It would, though, be very risky to draw conclusions about national predispositions towards totalitarianism. Wherever it is possible to introduce a complete totalitarian system its helmsmen are capable of destroying previous national traditions and impose new forms of interpersonal relationships even at the cost of destroying millions of their fellow citizens. A completely totalitarian system means the breaking with and liquidation of traditions in very many dimensions, including above all the destruction of former moral norms.

In September 1939 Hitler referred to Prussian and German traditions in the case of Poland, not to earlier Saxon or later Austrian ones from the period after 1867. The support he encountered and the motivation he lent it, referring emphatically to German stereotypes about *polnische Wirtschaft* and *polnische Organisation*, recalling the Teutonic Knights, *Drang nach Osten*, the activities of German settlers and colonisers on Polish territory since medieval times, were completely intentional.

In the years of the Second World War, Hitler believed utterly in his arguments about Slavs, the ancient racially inferior enemy of the German race. He saw the continuity of those struggles down

ten centuries both in ideological and realpolitik terms.³⁰ That continuity functioned and continued to function both in the Polish and German shared consciousness almost uninterruptedly from the times of Bismarck to the period right after the last war. Historians can only lament, recalling that the timelessness of the notion *Drang nach Osten*, which reduced various actions, operations and political methods to the lowest common denominator does not correspond to historical truth that it began to function halfway through the last century.

I completely agree with Wolfgang Wippermann that “the claim that one can talk about almost identical structures of expansion towards the East both in the eras of feudalism and capitalism is ahistorical, because in this way history is seen as more or less static, and class structures as unchanging. The finding remains: the ‘German *Drang nach Osten*’ was and is an ideology”.³¹ But those ahistorical myths exist beside truths in the mass imagination and control it. Hitler was capable of exploiting that superbly by mobilizing German opinion against the Russians, Poles and Ukrainians.

That fight for Lebensraum against the sub-human Slavs drew directly on the tradition of German historiography and journalism for the period from 1848 until after the Weimar Republic inclusively. Hitler and Himmler were the continuators – whether we like it or not, regrettably it is historical truth – of important currents of German political thought. Wherever there was the necessity of conquering the European East they justified it by referring to the lower level of the culture of *Ostvölker*, and to their civilizational dependence on the Germans – the “bearers of culture”. The publication expounding Himmler’s views on those issues and published in a print-run of almost four million in almost all Slavic languages is entitled *Der Untermensch*?³² I deliberately mention the names of Hitler and Himmler in one breath. Their views are most often identical in matters of colonisation, displacement and the destruction of the Slavs during the Second World War. A distinct sequential order

³⁰ Wippermann, *Der “deutsche Drang nach Osten”*, p. 80.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Josef Ackermann, *Heinrich Himmler als Ideologe* (Göttingen, 1970), p. 212.

regarding extermination was created in the hierarchy of Slavs in Hitler's eyes after 1939. Russians, Ukrainians and Poles occupied the first places, followed by Czechs. During the war, the execution of those plans for extermination was also dependent on the attitude of the Reich Protectors of Ukraine, Poland and Czechoslovakia: Koch, Hans Frank, Neurath and Heydrich. But Hitler's principles formed the basis of them. His press chief expressed it succinctly, writing about the occupational system on Polish territory. "Hitler's clenched fist was the fist over Poland".³³

The change in Hitler's approach to the Poles in 1939 had a multifaceted foundation. He thought that the Poles did not appreciate that he was the only German politician after 1918 capable of deciding, contrary to the will of his own nation, to enter an agreement with Poland, that they did not conceive how limited and minimal, in his opinion, were the postulates of territorial compensation he had put forward. Minimal compared to the claims of revisionism following the Treaty of Versailles and to the demands of most Germans. Secondly, the Poles utterly dashed his hopes as allies in the fight against Bolshevism and the USSR. In his view it turned out that they did not want any real collaboration during the Second War. And contrary to what he believed, but according to Rosenberg's warnings, they were totally anti-German and duplicitous. For Hitler, the proposals of collaboration with authoritarian Poland possibly contained the vague conviction that the Polish government and Polish opinion were at least partly anti-Semitic.³⁴ September 1939 was to convince him, from personal experience, that Poland was full of Jews, that, as he expressed to Rosenberg, the Polish nation consisted of "dreadful material", and Polish Jews were the "most ghastly thing that could ever be imagined".³⁵ That "undermining" of Poland by the Jews was an additional argument to him in autumn

³³ Otto Dietrich, *12 Jahre mit Hitler* (München, 1955), p. 70.

³⁴ Wilfried Fest, 'Thesen zur Kontinuität der deutschen Polenpolitik', in: *Das deutsch-polnische Verhältnis. Referate zu Problemen der deutsch-polnischen Schulbuchempfehlungen*, ed. Hans-Jochen Markmann, Jürgen Vietig (Berlin, 1981: hectograph), p. 107.

³⁵ Martin Broszat, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), p. 271.

1939 that the thought of creating any kind of satellite state from the remains of Poland was senseless.

From September 1939, Hitler's dislike of the Poles, his hatred for them, were repeatedly intensified by the fact that in his opinion they were to blame for the outbreak of the Second World War, by putting up, in his opinion, pointless resistance and letting Great Britain dictate to them. As the war developed he also unambiguously ascribed some of the blame to the people who "started the Second World War" – the Poles.

From September 1939 Hitler clearly seemed the continuator of the long anti-Polish tradition of Prussia and Germany. In spite of the pact with Poland, in spite of the great changes that occurred after Hitler's seizure of power, Michalka writes: "1933 should not be treated under any circumstance as a fracture in modern German history either. Therefore Hitler was not – irrespective of his indisputable omnipotence as commander – ever solely competent or responsible for German foreign policy".³⁶ Even that break with conventional anti-Polish policies may also find its ideological motivation, as Wippermann pointed out, among others in Arthur Moeller van den Bruck's *Das Recht der jungen Völker*, published in 1932 in Breslau (Wrocław).³⁷ Poland, which had not closed itself off to German culture and had allowed the settlement of ethnic Germans on its territory, deserved its role of "junior partner" and satellite, according to that schema. "Thus Hitler and conservatism were no strangers to each other".³⁸

Wolfgang Wippermann writes a great deal in the context of the European East about the continuity of tradition and the link between German nationalist ideologies before 1918 and after. Here are his words: "After 1918, those nationalist, organic *Völkisch* and racist ideologies received a distinctive aggressive-expansionist significance and function. Particularly in the Weimar Republic and later especially in

³⁶ Wolfgang Michalka, *Ribbentrop und die Deutsche Weltpolitik 1933–1940. Aussenpolitische Konzeptionen und Entscheidungsprozesse im Dritten Reich* (München, 1980), p. 306.

³⁷ Wippermann, *Der "deutsche Drang nach Osten"*, p. 111.

³⁸ Joachim Petzold, *Wegbreiter des deutschen Faschismus. Die Jungkonservativen in der Weimarer Republik* (Köln, 1978), p. 363; cf., *ibid.*, pp. 149–168.

the Third Reich, there were appeals to take up the ‘march’ or ‘drive’ towards the East which was interrupted in the Middle Ages”.³⁹ At the same time, however, Wippermann points out that the Nazi vision of that *Drang nach Osten*, its racial-biological motivation and the consequences resulting from it went far beyond the notion of continuity. He expresses it as *Kontinuitätsbruch* (interruption of continuity).⁴⁰ The theme of that continuity or lack of it in German foreign policy has for years been the subject of discussions with supporters of the theory of continuity in German historiography clearly in the ascendant today. The continuity of principles often coincided with the personal continuity of the ruling elite. It would appear that several of our deliberations about Hitler’s anti-Polish prejudice and anti-Slavism confirm that thesis.

It is no accident that not only Poles, but also West-German historians as distinguished as Martin Broszat and Hans Ulrich Wehler emphasise this continuous line in the case of the *deutsche Polenpolitik*. It is characteristic that many leaders of the anti-Hitler opposition, the organisers of the assassination attempt of 20 July 1944, lived in traditions of “anti-Polish politics”, demanding the borders from before 1914 or acknowledging some of the border changes executed by the Third Reich. It is difficult to forget that in August 1934 Carl Goerdeler himself sent Hitler a memorandum opposing his new Polish policy.

As Hans Mommsen writes: “The thought about the German cultural mission in the East was the joint property of German imperialism before 1914 and found its especially acute expression in the pan-Germanic movement. The plans of the great space that East-European territories were meant to be subordinated to German control were not limited under any circumstances to the Nazi movement and were discussed at length in the nationalist-conservative circles

³⁹ Wippermann, *Der “deutsche Drang nach Osten”*, p. 139; see Wolfgang Wippermann, *Der Ordenstaat als Ideologie. Das Bild des Deutschen Ordens in der Geschichtsschreibung und Publizistik* (Berlin, 1979), pp. 222–223.

⁴⁰ See, mainly, Andreas Hillgruber, *Kontinuität oder Diskontinuität in der deutschen Aussenpolitik von Bismarck bis Hitler*, Düsseldorf 1969; also: id., ‘Revisionismus – Kontinuität und Wandel in der Aussenpolitik der Weimarer Republik’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 237 (1983), pp. 597–628.

which on 20 July 1944 openly spoke out as absolute opponents of the Nazi movement".⁴¹ It was not far from a "German cultural mission" to a "German racial mission" in the East.

Hitler drew on much deeper-rooted values in the German tradition than people are generally accustomed to think. However, the "novelty" and "originality" of his methods were astonishing and shocking. Average Germans often identified totally or partly with Hitler's slogans, unable to predict how far approval of his programme would force them to accept the methods of its realisation. Whoever looked through *Mein Kampf* knew what importance Hitler attached to the use of gases, and whoever was in his entourage must have heard that he was personally interested in the use of gas chambers for genocide.⁴²

Hitler was a representative figure for part of the German nation. When he was developing his anti-Semitic and racist theories he did not create a new programme, and he drew on concepts which already existed in the broad masses. He did not try to complicate, but consciously simplified. In an interview for Bertrand de Jouvenel on 21 February 1936 he said: "Our problems seem complicated. The German nation does not know how to deal with them [...] But I have simplified those problems and reduced them to the most simple formula".⁴³

Hitler was not a foreign Austrian body in German history. As the exponent of popular stereotypes and feelings, he was no coincidence or accident in German history. It is another matter that he exploited them on a scale unforeseen by the German right wing, and even by many of his comrades ruling the Nazi Party. Just as he exploited cults which were deep-rooted in Germany, such as "our nation, army and state". The notion of nation was replaced by the notion of race, he merged German nationalism and racism together, and he turned the army into an instrument of unlimited mass crimes. The Third Reich might have come into being and existed

⁴¹ Hans Mommsen, 'Fritz-Dietlof Graf von der Schulenburg und die preussische Tradition', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 32 (1984), no. 2, p. 221.

⁴² Cf. *Das Buch Hitler*, ed. Henrik Eberle, Matthias Uhl (Regensburg, 2005).

⁴³ Max Domarus, *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen* (Wiesbaden, 1973), vol. 1, part 2, p. 580.

without the Austrian Adolf Hitler. For example with the German Goebbels, Göring, Himmler and Heydrich. With another Führer it would have been a state of similar character, perhaps with a different intensity of expansion and genocide. Perhaps resembling Fascist Italy a little more. But it would certainly have been an anti-Semitic, anti-Bolshevist state, directing its expansion towards the East against the culturally and racially inferior Slavs, against the culturally and racially inferior “eastern nations”. I repeat, Hitler was no coincidence or accident in German history. Neither he, nor his anti-Slavism.

For various reasons historiography too easily waved aside the anti-Slavism of Adolf Hitler and his Third Reich. It very often simply remains silent about it, since it is a complex problem concerning not only the Führer’s – but the nation’s – attitudes. In the last months of the Third Reich Hitler repeatedly returned to the rightness of his programme principles: anti-Semitism, anti-Bolshevism and anti-Slavism. When hundreds of thousands of Germans – civilians – were fleeing westwards before the Red Army, abandoning the territories of Pomerania and Silesia, Hitler alluded to his great plans to conquer and settle the European East with Germans. He expressed hope that new generations of Germans would come who would continue to carry out “his work”. This was not a pose, as it is with many other defeated politicians. Hitler stood by several of his principles with maniacal doggedness. He returned to his plans to wipe out a “ridiculous hundred million Slavs”.⁴⁴ He stated that “if we are not totally prepared in the East, each new generation will have to start from scratch”.⁴⁵ And finally, in his last appeal to Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, who was known for his numerous personally issued orders to murder Soviet citizens and Poles, Hitler wrote on 29 April 1945: “Our goal must still be the capture of living space in the East for the German nation”.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Hitler, *Monologe*, p. 331.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁴⁶ Domarus, *Hitler*, vol. 2, part 2, p. 2242.

AFTERWORD

Does the concept of anti-Slavism deserve to be singled out in Hitler's racism, or did I exaggerate by drawing attention to it in the title of this slim volume, published many years ago? Wolfgang Wippermann, who used the notion of anti-Slavism himself on numerous occasions, emphasises in the article devoted to ideology opening *The Encyclopaedia of Nazism* that in *Mein Kampf* Hitler heralds a war against the Soviet Union, which is controlled by racially inferior Jews and inhabited by equally inferior Slavs.¹ And nothing more. He refers the reader to the entry "anti-Bolshevism". There is no entry for "anti-Slavism" in the encyclopaedia.

In the same place, the long encyclopaedic article by Konrad Kwiet devoted to the racial policy and "murders carried out on nations" is limited to anti-Semitism, the crimes of the Holocaust, and references to the Romani Holocaust of the Sinti and Roma people. It is puzzling that the encyclopaedia passes over the whole gradation of the races and gallery of enemies in the world-view of Hitler and the National Socialists. In that encyclopaedia, which has recently often been made use of, the enormity of the Holocaust's crimes even seems to obscure the ideological motivations of crimes carried out on other nations. The encyclopaedia provides known facts that "Almost 6 million Polish citizens fell victim to the German occupation [...], of which 2.7 million were Jews and exactly 50% were non-Jewish intelligentsia".²

The authors, however, do not offer a more complete answer to what the motivation behind exterminating millions of non-Jews was.

¹ *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Wolfgang Benz et al. (München, 1997), pp. 11–21.

² *Ibid.*, p. 646.

The encyclopaedia contains the entries “anti-Semitism” and “anti-Bolshevism” (“anti-communism”). Under the entry *Lebensraum*, it mentions the “inferiority” of Slavic nations, as a motivational reason for the planned conquests. But there is an absence of entries such as *Ostvölker* or *Slawen*, and an absence of reference to the stereotype *Drang nach Osten* – which was fundamental in Hitler’s thinking.

The well-known historian Hans Lemberg in his encyclopaedic dictionary *The Poles and the Germans. 100 Key Concepts* – which has been reissued several times – claims that the notion *Drang nach Osten* above all contains a myth. “One of the most important stereotypes – writes Lemberg – quoted widely regarding the mutual relations between Germans and Poles, and in general Germany’s eastern neighbours, is the thesis about the German *Drang nach Osten* (the drive towards the East). The phenomenon was and is still relentlessly used, not only in aggressive political brochures, but also in publications with academic pretensions”.³

I am not a supporter of making a connection between various phenomena, and reducing them to the lowest common denominator of the German push towards the East from the Middle Ages (missionary activities, settlement campaigns) right up until the twentieth century. There is no doubt, though, that Hitler and Himmler emphasised that propaganda vision as a truth in Germany’s history, which I have demonstrated on many pages of this book. They exploited it, but did not invent it. One of the first people to use it in the nineteenth century was the renowned Polish columnist, Julian Klaczko, who wrote a great deal in French. The notion of *Drang nach Osten* was active on the eve of the First World War and later in the Weimar Republic. It was promoted openly or smuggled in under various other guises and terms. A German historian writes: “The period of intensified nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, when that slogan – as I have shown – originated, was indeed marked, however, by aggressive, anti-Polish Prussian-German politics, directed against the Slavonization of the German East, which was feared there. The phrase

³ *Polacy i Niemcy. 100 kluczowych pojęć*, ed. Ewa Kobylińska, Andreas Lawaty and Rüdiger Stephan (Warszawa, 1996), p. 17.

about the German ‘drive towards the East’ coined at that time entered the circulation not only among Poles, but also in the whole of Europe among distrustful and critical observers of Germany’s then expansionist politics”.⁴ What kind of Slavonicization of the German East at the turn of the twentieth century is Hans Lemberg writing about? It is difficult to conceive of it, when looking through the statistics from the times of the Second Reich, recalling the times of the *Kulturkampf* and Hakata (the German Eastern Marches Society – *Deutscher Ostmarkenverein*), Germanization and not Slavization.

Lemberg adds: “During the First World War defence against the German ‘drive towards the East’ became a slogan to which the members of the future young states of Central-Eastern Europe *skilfully* [emphasis mine – JWB] guaranteed the rank of one of the principles of order in the ‘new Europe’ (T.G. Masaryk). That statement became widespread at that time. It thus comes as no surprise that it entered into circulation once more, when at the end of the thirties the aggression of Nazi Germany became directed again against Eastern Europe”.⁵ It did not “enter into circulation”, but was legitimised at government level by the Third Reich. And it was Russia that was the main goal of that *Drang nach Osten*.

Edmund Dmitrów, summarising his comprehensive study into the portrayal of Russia and the Russians in the Nazi propaganda of 1933–1945 begins with the sentence: “Hitler found, both in German tradition and the consciousness of contemporary people, the components to construct an image of Russia and the Russians”.⁶

Anti-Slavism had its roots in the German past. How deeply, far-reaching and diverse were those roots (Prussia is not Bavaria or the Rhineland) and with what terminology anti-Slavism functioned is a topic for many discussions.

And contrary to the habits of many outstanding and innovative historians of various nationalities over several decades, an appeal

⁴ Ibid., pp. 19–20.

⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

⁶ Edmund Dmitrów, *Obraz Rosji i Rosjan w propagandzie narodowych socjalistów* (Warszawa, 1997), p. 431.

for a thorough examination and attempt to connect together the more or less long tradition of anti-Slavic (particularly anti-Russian and anti-Polish) prejudices that Adolf Hitler gathered together and exploited would not be an expression of anti-Germanness.

Hitler, Himmler and Rosenberg called on Germans to march on the East in the name of their cultural superiority and historical tradition. I have quoted in the text utterances in which they drew on centuries of fighting against the Slavs, the duty to avenge the first Battle of Tannenberg (Grunwald), or the ancient right of the Germans to Russia as its former stewards and colonisers from the time of the tsars.

The British historian, Michael Burleigh, summarised the “self-evident nature” of German ethnic policies during the Second World War with an extreme example:

In contrast to the lawless conditions in eastern Europe, bourgeois restraints were observed in western Europe and Scandinavia, where cultural and ethnic affinity and similar levels of socio-economic development prevailed. In Denmark, General Falkenhorst warned his troops to say nothing that would offend the Danes’ national honour, with more to be gained by a friendly, humorous tone than by a Prussian gruffness [...] A Luftwaffe general concisely put the matter succinctly when he remarked to a colleague. “The Dane is not a Pole, but rather a Teuton”.⁷

Burleigh used that statement as the title of a chapter about occupation and collaboration in Europe in the years 1939–1943.

Apart from the first years after the Second World War, European historiography has avoided equating the notions of Hitler and the Nazi Party and Nazism with the German nation, or proving the unbroken link between the German Empire, the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. But if such connections did not exist as regards the nation as a whole, they did in the context of specific traditions, political elites and social groups.

It was no accident that Bertold Brecht wrote in a sarcastic verse before the German invasion of the USSR:

⁷ Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich. A New History* (London, 2001), p. 457.

My brother is a conqueror.
Our people is short of space,
And to conquer more territory is
An ancient dream of the race.

The concept of the European East as land to be conquered was the “ancient dream”.

Hitler still only gave it the rank of a state ideology. And the rank of motivation for a racial battle against Slavic nations.

Hitler used the concepts of “Slavs”, “Eastern nations”, “Russia”, “Soviet Union” (sometimes: “Comintern”), “Asians”, “barbarians”, and “beasts” interchangeably. Hitler’s Germans did not fight for Romanian or Hungarian territories. And they should, according to him, have continued that fight, whatever was to happen to Hitler himself. Lebensraum – living space for Germany – meant above all Russia, Ukraine and Poland. But also various adjoining territories. After seizing the territory of the Soviet Union all the way to the Urals, Hitler planned further expansion towards Siberia, and on other continents. He was aware that he would one day end up confronting the military and economic might of the USA. But for him that was a matter of the vague future. He envisioned a German empire beyond the Volga and the Urals with Crimea and the Caucasus colonised more clearly.

To him those territories meant Slavs: Russians, Ukrainians and also Poles and Czechs – inferior races that were supposed to become “slaves”, “white negroes”, or Indians deprived of their intelligentsia in his great Reich. In his visions Hitler carried out projections of his fragmentary knowledge and his own phantasmagorias about what the British Empire was before 1914 regarding the future structures of the Third Reich. He wanted to create a German colonial empire from Eastern Europe, a “German India”. The models of that empire planned a thoroughgoing civilizational regress of the Slavic countries east of Germany. Colonised nations according to Hitler: Indians or Chinese, Russians or Poles only had the right to be a huge agricultural and labour resource for the metropolises. As Edmund Dmitrów wrote: Hitler’s “insane notions of a new ‘march of the Germans’ to the East thus built on the one hand a genocidal climax in the long

procession of German tradition, while on the other his coming to power was a *sine qua non* for directing the activity of the German state and nation towards carrying out deranged ideas”.⁸

The Third Reich proved by its mass crimes that behind the theories functioned within it the practices of the Nazi Party, the Gestapo, the SS, the SA, the Wehrmacht, and a significant section of society, people who murdered and looted and who in numbers of many millions benefited from wartime plunder inside Hitler’s state. As a result of his defeat, Hitler’s promises to exterminate and displace a “ridiculous hundred million Slavs” were not carried out. But his statements should – in spite of all their incoherence and changeability – be examined with due thoroughness. Too often before 1939 the plans to exterminate the Jews – which he did not conceal after all – were disregarded.

A striking phenomenon in the more recent discussions of the last twenty years, in the conflicts of German historians, are deliberations regarding to what extent the war against the USSR was forced on Germany, to what extent it had a preventative character. Not only German historians, but some Russian and Polish ones became embroiled in that discussion, presenting evidence that Stalin was aware of the need to invade the Third Reich and was preparing to do so. Those who write that Hitler was only forestalling it do not want to remember that he had been planning a war against the USSR and the conquest of the European East since midway through the 1920s. For him it was an ideological war. He clearly incorporated anti-Russian and anti-Slavic elements in the war against the USSR when it turned out there would not be a *Blitzkrieg*, when he was stopped outside Moscow.

But in disputes over the preventative character of the war in 1941 they too easily come to terms with or completely pass over the armed invasion of Poland in September 1939, where the initiative and main role fell indisputably on Hitler, and not Stalin. As far as Hitler is concerned it was not prevention, but capturing *Lebensraum* and moving towards the prime goal: boundless space and the reservoir of slaves that the Soviet Union was meant to supply.

⁸ Dmistrów, *Obraz Rosji*, p. 432.

The totalitarian invasion by Germany in 1939 of dictatorially-governed Poland was not a clash of two ideologies, as Adolf Hitler proclaimed in 1941, when he crossed the border with the USSR. The Führer explained the aggression against Poland to the German nation by referring to anti-Polishness, which was very active in Germany, and had only been toned down by the years of the brief pact in 1934–1938. After occupying Poland, Hitler ordered, as I have written, “radical nationalistic German politics”, “using physical violence”. Recalling the tradition of the Teutonic Knights in the East, he temporarily refrained from the plain statement that it did not only apply to the Poles, but to his short-term Slavic allies from Moscow.

If we are to accept, following Jäckel, that beside anti-Semitism the concept of *Lebensraum* played a key role in Hitler’s view of the world, then it cannot be explained without Russophobia and anti-Slavism. But there is one more reason to invoke that term.

In the crusade against the USSR that Hitler began on 22 June 1941 three ideological indices linked the states, the movements and the military units that accompanied him. For all of them, that role was played by anti-Bolshevism (anti-communism). For the majority by anti-Semitism. For some – the Romanians, Hungarians and Finns – it was also anti-Slavism, which was variously conceived (but was not anti-Polish).

My deliberations had to focus on Adolf Hitler’s views. However, an exegesis of the views of Himmler, Darré, Rosenberg, Goebbels, Ley and Hans Frank had subordinate importance in defining decisions about the policies of the Third Reich towards the European East. The outstanding German historian Martin Broszat used the notion the “Hitler factor”. The most important decisions were Hitler’s. Hitler’s voice was more decisive regarding the direction of military activities than Stalin’s. In 1943, when in the face of defeat Goebbels advised a focus on anti-Bolshevist propaganda, but to abandon anti-Slavic slogans, Hitler did not agree. When Hans Frank and other members of the leader’s circle began to think about exploiting the Poles in the fight against the advancing Red Army, Hitler categorically rejected the idea. He remained absolutely loyal to his own imperatives of the ideological war, which meant the extermination

of Jews and *Lebensraum*, anti-Bolshevism and racism, within which anti-Slavism occupied considerable space.

The abnormality and extremism of the ideas of Hitler and his followers deserve very close attention. The irrational conviction of Hitler about his own, single, unique rightness were a fundamental part of his charisma. Owing to his oratorical and leadership gifts, Hitler communicated his ideas to millions of people. The Führer's paranoid programme became the paranoia of a significant part of the nation. But it did not suddenly drop from the height of the leader's lectern. Hitler gave the already existing ideas of anti-Semitism, anti-Bolshevism and anti-Slavism the form of a genocidal alternative: either we survive or the Jews, Bolsheviks, Slavs – the people of the East – do. Based on theories of a racial hierarchy, he built the directives for an extermination programme aimed at part of the population of Europe and Asia and the creation of a Teutonic “New Order”.

The plans and theories of this “new order” have been written about repeatedly and in many countries. It has not been my task to reconstruct them. By combining, however, dozens of Hitler's utterances and orders, I came to the conclusion once again that in certain selected issues he remained steadfastly (or rather insanely) faithful to his ideological principles.

A politician's pragmatism allowed Hitler to enter temporary alliances with “racially inferior” nations: more enthusiastically with the Poles than with the Russians. But in a broader perspective this was irreconcilable with the fundamental principles of his ideology: genocidal anti-Semitism and the theory of *Lebensraum*, that is, the genocidal conquest of the European East.

The concept of Nazi *Lebensraum* cannot be fully explained without bluntly stating an important motivational element of his conquests in the East: anti-Slavism. My book is intended to serve the reconstruction of Hitler's views without omitting such an obvious phenomenon.

Anti-Slavism is passed over, since in the view of the German lands and those of Western Europe everything is obscured by anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. But as an East-European historian I also clearly perceive aspects – beyond the Shoah – that vitally affected the people living in the lands by the Volga, the Don, the Dnieper and the Vistula.

Anti-Slavism is passed over since the phenomenon has vanished in Europe – let us hope forever. Along with the departure of the Cold War it has vanished in the German lands. And it has little chance of becoming revived in the form of anti-Slavic racism (not conflicts at the level of nations) in the omnipresent European Union. Anti-Semitism, though, in various, often new forms, is still very much alive in Europe and the world.

But the fact that anti-Slavism has died out does not mean it didn't exist.

It is worth reminding Polish and Russian anti-Semites and neo-fascists that Hitler often ordered Russians and Poles to be treated like Jews. It was only a short step from racist theories to the extermination of parts of nations, and the extermination was meant to be followed by organised mass genocide: the “destruction of a nation or an ethnic group” according to the universally accepted definition of genocide as coined by Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer and scholar active in Poland and the United States. He coined the term in 1943 and a year later published it in Washington in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation – Analysis of Government – Proposals for Redress*. It was no accident that the definition of genocide was invented by a Polish Jew who before 1939 had conducted research into the genocide committed by the Turks on the Armenians.

Racial conflicts have led and lead to wars. In the conditions of our world every war is in danger of being transformed into a total war, into an extermination of continents and life on the planet. Let us recall once more that Hitler's first defeats on the frontline outside Moscow drove him to endorse plans for the total extermination of the Jews, and almost simultaneously to openly intensify the anti-Slavic slogans of anti-Bolshevist and anti-Semitic propaganda. Then in 1943 came the call for total war.

Total war meant further suffering and murders inflicted on millions. Millions of people perished heirless and nameless. The name of Adolf Hitler remains as a reminder not to ignore words and calls for global hatred by apparent madmen or even small factions capable of plunging an entire world into the ravages of extermination in the name of their one truth or their one totalitarian religion.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

My text is entirely devoted to the views of Adolf Hitler regarding the Slavs. I did not intend – by following the example of dozens of historians – to focus on his Austrian youth, although Brigitte Hamann’s excellent book *Hitler’s Vienna*, which I quote in the text, could also have been given a chapter about the Poles and Italians in Hitler’s Vienna, and about their role in the life of the declining Austro-Hungarian Kingdom, which had such a significant impact on the future Führer. Dozens of important biographies about the thinkers and activists who contributed to forming the Austrian’s views exist. The gallery of his paladins from the Nazi Party and their programme has been discussed in numerous monographs. My task, though, was very distinct and narrowly defined: only to try to recreate what role Hitler’s attitudes about Slavs played in the entirety of his racism and his world-view, in his plans for the future.

I am aware of the repetitions and revisitations in the text. The unrewarding subject matter of the book, which deals with a genius of banality and not a philosopher, to some extent imposed that. I was not always equal to the task. I did not, however, intend to compile a collection of quotations: Hitler about Lenin or Hitler about Odessa and Kiev, and I tried to identify what was of prime importance and directly influenced the way he conducted the war and the extermination of Slavs, and influenced utterances of his that signalled threats not yet carried out. For example, I passed over the problems of the treatment of the Kashubs as being worthy of Germanization or the Sorbs, whom Himmler planned to treat like the Poles, while other leaders of the Nazi Party perceived those “Wends” as having links with German culture. Such trivial matters did not interest Hitler (cf. Wolfgang Wippermann, *Der konsequente*

Wahn. Ideologie und Politik Adolf Hitlers, Munich, Gütersloh: 1989, pp. 146–170).

Polish readers have at their disposal a huge bibliography of important, at times already classic, studies of the policies of occupation on Polish soil, about the stereotypes of Germans and Poles regarding each other, and about Nazi propaganda. That includes Eugeniusz Cezary Król's encyclopaedic *Polska i Polacy w propagandzie narodowego socjalizmu w Niemczech 1919–1945* (Warsaw, 2006), which is the continuation of his *Propaganda i indoktrynacja narodowego socjalizmu w Niemczech 1919–1945* (Warsaw, 1999). Lars Jockheck's *Propaganda im Generalgouvernement: die NS – Besatzungspresse für Deutsche und Polen 1939–1945* (Osnabrück, 2006) was published in Germany at the same time.

Some time earlier, Tomasz Głowiński published *O nowy porządek europejski. Ewolucja hitlerowskiej propagandy politycznej wobec Polaków w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie 1939–1945* (Wrocław, 2000). These most recent publications may become the basis of further deliberations about how far Hitler's views coincided with the stereotypes of German theory and practice and how they, in turn, shaped them. There is no doubt that Hitler's instructions – according to police reports, among others – travelled from top to bottom. It was ordered, for example, not to reduce all Slavs to a common denominator regardless of any linguistic similarities. Not to present Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, Czechs and Bulgarians together, since “it did not correspond to National Socialist racial science” (cf. *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, ed. Heinz Boberach, Berlin, 1984, vol. 5, p. 1756).

But the fact that no one wanted to create an impression of the power of the Slav world and its common interests in the outside world did not mean that Hitler did not consider the Slavs a single, racially connected group. That fact that he did not use, for understandable reasons, the concept of anti-Slavism does not mean that blatant anti-Slavism did not pervade his racial theories. (After 22 June 1941 Goebbels wrote in his journal the “expression ‘Slav’ must, as a matter of fact, act on us like poison. We must remove it from the German vocabulary”).

For the historian of Nazi ideology the now classic works of, for example, Franciszek Ryszka, Czesław Madajczyk, Karol Jońca, Tomasz Szarota, Hubert Orłowski, Bogusław Drewniak, Robert Traba and

many others within Polish historiography are extremely useful. In Stanisław Żerka's last book *Niemiecka polityka zagraniczna 1933–1939* (Poznań, 2005) the introductory deliberations (pp. 15–57), in which the author discusses Hitler's views are significant.

I regard the fruit of many years research by Edmund Dmitrów, *Obraz Rosji i Rosjan w propagandzie narodowych socjalistów 1933–1945* (Warsaw, 1997) as the most important work for my topic. That book does not have an equivalent in Russian literature. It includes, among others, a detailed exegesis of Hitler's views about Russia (pp. 117–147). Only the Polish language barrier means that its fundamental essentials have not been translated into foreign languages. Important complements to Dmitrów are: the joint publication *Das Russlandbild im Dritten Reich* edited by Hans-Erich Volkmann (Cologne, 1994) and a review of the research with an extensive bibliography *Hitlers Krieg im Osten 1941–1945*, edited by Rolf-Dieter Müller and Gerd R. Überschär (Darmstadt, 2000).

In spite of the encouraging title, Helmut Schaller's *Der Nationalsozialismus und die slawische Welt* (Regensburg, 2002) is a great disappointment. Schaller promises an examination of how *Ostforschung* was linked to *Ostpolitik*, but it remains a promise. Rather than *Ostforschung*, he focusses on selected issues of Slavonic studies – his field – from the years 1933–1945. Rather than, say, assessments and an attempt at a synthesis in that field, he puts at our disposal a selection of quotations from Berlin archives without a commentary. Especially worthless turns out to be his discussion of the war years, where we do not find out at all what role *Ostforschung* played during the development of the conception and the carrying out of the programme of resettlements and extermination. Notwithstanding, Schaller's study should not be passed over bearing in mind some vital documents that he cites.

For an assessment of *Ostforschung*, the following have fundamental importance: an older book by Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards. A study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1988), and also from the Polish point of view the joint publication edited by Jan M. Piskorski, Józef Hackmann and Rudolf Jaworski, *Deutsche Ostforschung und polnische Westforschung im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft und Politik* (Osnabrück–Poznań, 2002).

A new source publication of Hitler's speeches, letters and orders from 1925–1933 and the multi-volume Diaries of Joseph Goebbels published by the Munich Institut für Zeitgeschichte turned out be unexpectedly helpful. I have made use of both those sources repeatedly in the book.

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ADOLF HITLER

*Herzliche Glückwünsche zum Weihnachtsfest
und zum Jahreswechsel*

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