

The Final Solution

[Jews are] only and always a parasite in the body of other peoples [...] If we pass all the causes of the German collapse in review, the ultimate and most decisive remains the failure to recognise the racial problem and especially the Jewish menace.

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

Kristallnacht

Helldorf¹ has ordered for the Jews in Berlin to be completely disarmed. They will be able to brace themselves still for something completely different. [...] Big demonstrations against the Jews in Kassel and Dessau, synagogues set alight, shops wrecked. In the afternoon, the death of the German diplomat vom Rath² was announced. But everything is alright now. I went to the Party reception in the old town hall. A massive bustle. I reported on the situation to the Führer. He decided: let the demonstrations continue, pull back the police. The Jews should get to feel the anger of the populace for once. That is right. I immediately gave the corresponding order to the police and the Party. Then I spoke accordingly to the Party leadership. Rapturous applause. Everyone zoomed to the telephone. Now the people will take action.

An excerpt from Goebbels' entry in his private diary on 10th November 1938

Re: Measures against the Jews tonight.

Due to the assassination of the leg[ation] secretary vom Rath² in Paris, demonstrations against the Jews are to be expected all over the Reich in the course of tonight (from 9th to 10th November 1938). The following orders have been issued for the handling of these events:

1. The head of the state police station [...] must immediately [...] make contact with the political authority in charge of their region [...] in order to arrange a meeting to discuss the implementation of the demonstrations. [...]
 - a. Only measures that do not endanger German life or property are allowed to be carried out (e.g. synagogue fires only when there is no fire hazard for the surrounding area);
 - b. Shops and apartments of Jews may only be destroyed, not plundered. The police are ordered to monitor this order and to arrest plunderers.
 - c. On shopping streets, special care must be taken to ensure that non-Jewish shops are not damaged.
 - d. Foreign nationals, even if they are Jews, must not be harassed.
2. [...] Police are not to hinder the demonstrations; rather, they are only to check that these rules are adhered to.
3. [...] Archival material from all synagogues and offices is to be confiscated so that they are not destroyed in the course of the demonstrations. [...]
4. [...]
5. [...] In all areas, as many Jews, especially well-to-do Jews, are to be arrested as can be accommodated in the holding cells that are available. [...] After the arrests, contact with the responsible concentration camp must be immediately established to allow swift placement. Special care must be taken that, on account of this order, Jews that have been arrested are not mistreated. [...]

An order from Heydrich³ to the State Police on 10th November 1938

¹ von Helldorf, Wolf-Heinrich: NSDAP member of the Reichstag, Chief of the Berlin Police

² vom Rath, Ernst: a German diplomat based in Paris. On 7th November 1938, he was shot by Herschel Grynszpan, a young Jew upset at his family being deported from Germany to Poland. He succumbed to his wounds two days later.

All reports agree that the riots are being judged severely by the vast majority of the German people. In the first days of the pogrom, many Aryans who expressed their indignation loudly have been arrested all over the Reich. The question of 'Whose turn will it be after the Jews?' is often asked. However great the outrage generally may be, one has to be clear that the brutalities of the pogrom hoards have increased the feeling of intimidation and cemented the belief that resistance against the unfettered violence of the National Socialists is pointless in the populace.

A summary of the reports collected by Sopade⁴ concerning Kristallnacht

The Beginning of the Final Solution?

Today, I want to be a prophet again. If international financial Jewry should succeed within and outside Europe in plunging nations into a world war again, then the result will not be the bolshevisation of the world and thereby the victory of Jewry, but rather the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe.

From Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on 30th January 1939⁵

The historical guilt of world Jewry for the outbreak and the escalation of this war has been so much beyond reasonable doubt that we should not waste any more words on it. The Jews wanted their war and now they have it. But the prophecy that the Führer pronounced on 30th January 1939 in the German Reichstag, namely that if international financial Jewry should succeed in plunging the nations into another world war, the result would not be the bolshevisation of the world and thereby the victory of Jewry, but rather the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe – this prophecy is coming true for them.

We are experiencing the realisation of this prophecy and it is being fulfilled for the Jews in a fate that is indeed hard, but more than deserved. Sympathy or even sorrow is completely misguided. World Jewry has completely misjudged the powers that are available to him in instigating this war and it is now suffering a gradual destruction process that it had intended for us would have carried out on us if it had had the power to do so. [...] One of these measures is the introduction of the yellow Star of David, which every Jew has to be worn in plain view. With this measure, we want to label each Jew outwardly especially so that he will be recognised as a Jew immediately even at the smallest attempt to assault the German *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁶ [...] We cannot go back in our struggle against Jewry – quite apart from the fact that we do not want to go back.

From an article written by Goebbels entitled 'It is the Jews' fault!', published on 16th November 1941 in the newspaper *Das Reich*

Concerning the Jewish Question, the Führer is determined to sort things out. He prophesied to the Jews that if they caused another world war, they would be destroyed. That was not just an empty phrase. The world war is here, the destruction of the Jews is a necessary consequence.

An excerpt from Goebbels' entry in his private diary on 13th December 1941

³ Heydrich, Reinhard: a high-ranking Nazi official; *SS-Obergruppenführer*, Head of the Police, Head of the Reich Main Security Office; from 1938 until his assassination in 1942, also the Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. One of the main architects of the Holocaust.

⁴ Sopade: the name of the Social Democrat Party of Germany (SPD) whilst in exile from 1933 onwards. They commissioned secret reports to gauge the mood of the populace.

⁵ Hitler later claimed repeatedly that he issued this threat on 1st September 1939.

⁶ *Volksgemeinschaft*: Roughly translated as 'national community'.

Jewish Question. | to be exterminated as partisans.

A note in Himmler's work diary concerning his discussion about the Jewish Question in a meeting with Hitler on 18th December 1941

[Heydrich told me that] The Führer has ordered the physical extermination of the Jews.

A statement made by Eichmann⁷ to an Israeli interrogator in 1960

The meeting opened with the announcement by the Head of the Security Police and the SD, SS-*Obergruppenführer* Heydrich, of his appointment by the *Reich* Marshal as Plenipotentiary for the Preparation of the Final Solution of the European Jewish Question. He noted that this Conference had been called in order to obtain clarity on questions of principle. [...] in view of the dangers of emigration in wartime, and the possibilities in the East, the *Reichsführer* SS and Head of the German Police as forbidden the emigration of Jews. [...] Emigration has now been replaced by evacuation of the Jews to the East [...] with the appropriate prior authorization by the Führer. [...] In the course of this final solution of the European Jewish question approximately 11 million Jews may be taken into consideration [...] the Jews are to be utilized for work in the East in an expedient manner in the course of the final solution [...] during which a large proportion will not doubt drop out through natural reduction. The remnant that eventually remains will require suitable treatment; because it will without doubt represent the most [physically] resistant part, it consists of a natural selection that could, on its release, become the germcell of a new Jewish revival. [...] The evacuated Jews will first be taken [...] to so-called transit ghettos, in order to be transported further east from there.

Excerpts from the minutes of the Wannsee Conference, held on 20th January 1942

The gentlemen sat together, and then in very blunt terms – not in the language that I had to use in the minutes, but in very blunt terms – they talked about the matter without any circumlocution. [...] The talk was of killing, elimination, and annihilation.

A statement made by Eichmann to an Israeli interrogator in 1960 concerning the Wannsee Conference

We are clear about the fact that this war can only end either in the extermination of the Aryan people or in the disappearance of Jewry from Europe. On 1 September 1939, I already announced in the German Reichstag – and I avoid making premature prophesies – that this war will not end as the Jews imagine, namely, in the extermination of the European-Aryan people; instead, the result of this war will be the annihilation of Jewry.

From a speech made by Hitler on 30th January 1942 in the *Sportpalast* in Berlin

⁷ Eichmann, Adolf: *SS-Obersturmbannführer*, Heydrich's 'special expert' in charge of the logistics of the Final Solution. After the Second World War, Eichmann fled to South America where he lived a life of obscurity until he was captured by Mossad (the Israeli intelligence agency) in 1960 and put on trial for war crimes in Israel. He was found guilty and executed in 1962.

I can refer to a question that you, my fellow Party members, have taken for granted but that for me has become the most difficult question of my life – the Jewish Question. [...] The statement ‘The Jews have to be exterminated’ with its few words is easy to say. For those who have to carry out what it requires, it is the hardest and most difficult of everything there is. You see, of course it is the Jews, it is clear that they are only Jews, but consider it for yourself: how many people, even Party members, have made their famous petitions to me or to other positions, in which they said that all Jews are obviously pigs, that it is just Mr So-and-so that is a decent Jew who should be done no harm. I dare to claim that according to the number of petitions and the number of opinions, in Germany, there are more decent Jews than there are Jews altogether. [...] I ask you to really only listen to and to never talk about what I am speaking to you about [...] The question of ‘What about the women and children?’ has been put to us. I decided to find a very clear solution. I did not consider it justified to exterminate the men – that is, to kill (!) or have killed – and to let revenge in the form of their children grow for our sons and grandsons. The most difficult decision of making people disappear from the Earth had to be reached. For the organisation that had to carry out the order, it was the most difficult order that we have had. I believe I can say that it has been carried out without our men and women suffering any damage to their spirits and their souls. This danger was very obvious. The path between the two possibilities established here – either becoming barbarous, becoming heartless and not respecting human life, or becoming weak and losing one’s head to the point of a mental breakdown – the path between Scylla and Charybdis⁸ is terribly narrow.

From a speech made by Himmler to the *Reichs-* and *Gauleiter*⁹ in Poznań on 6th October 1943

⁸ An idiom from Greek mythology, ‘to have to choose between two evils’.

⁹ *Reichsleiter*: second highest rank in Nazi Germany, reported only to Hitler; *Gauleiter*: leader of regional branches of the Reich, third highest rank in Nazi Germany