

“Ideologies in Comparative Perspective:
Reflections on Nazi Germany and the Pro-Slavery South

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Nazi ideology in its various shadings must be understood in the context of the extreme radicalization of European politics following World War I. It is the central example of totalitarian ideology, mass politics and policy in Europe's age of extremes. It emerged in an advanced industrial society in which Nazism's future victims had become citizens of Germany and of the nations surrounding it, and pro-slavery ideology in the American South outweigh the differences. Pro-slavery ideology emerged in an agricultural, semi-feudal society and lived with the continuing contradiction between its inhumanity towards African-Americans and its bizarre claim to uphold republican values and democratic institutions. For all of American slavery's injustice, it did not match the sheer murderousness of the Nazi regime. In the following preliminary comments, I hope to avoid the polemics and competing claims of victimization have often dominated discussion. Rather by looking at these events in comparative perspective, I hope to see aspects of them that may be less apparent when considered in isolation from one another.

"Nazi ideology" was less a unitary phenomenon, than a mixture of ideas. When we examine differences between Nazi racism and anti-Semitism, on the one hand, and pro-slavery ideology in the American South, on the other, we need to be clear about which of three aspects of Nazi ideology we have in mind. The first, is the antisemitism of what Saul Friedlander aptly has called the years of persecution, a bundle of hatreds and phobias that found clearest expression in the Nuremberg race laws of 1935.¹ Second, is the Nazi racism directed against non-Jewish Europeans, especially but not only those in Eastern Europe in Poland and the Soviet Union. Implemented as part of the regime's effort to achieve *Lebensraum* or living space in Eastern Europe, it was an extreme form of ethnic cleansing. Third, we have in mind what I have called radical anti-Semitism. This distinctly twentieth century form of the ancient

hatred legitimated, helped to cause and accompanied the Holocaust. In my comments this afternoon, I argue that there are significant parallels and similarities between the first two aspects of Nazi racism while the differences between the third and the ideas and policy of American slavery far outweigh the similarities. Comparison exists in time as well as space. The radical antisemitism that accompanied the Holocaust built on but also contained novel features distinctive to modern and Nazi antisemitism in contrast to its long-standing European predecessors. Nazi ideology from the 1920s up to 1945 also included variations. Some of them had genocidal implications and others did not.

The antisemitism of the years of persecution found clearest expression in the Nuremberg race laws of 1935, especially “The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor.” This and other laws passed that year blurred the distinctions between biology, race and religion and transformed the Jews as a distinct religious group into a racial category. The law included detailed and bizarre reflections on the dangers of “mixing” German and Jewish blood and elaborate rules defining who was and was not Jewish. It forbade Germans to marry or have sexual relations with Jews as well as with persons of “alien blood,” that is, “Gypsies, Negroes, and their bastards.”¹ The Citizenship Law published on November 14, 1935 defined Jews as people with at least three full Jewish grandparents, or who had two Jewish grandparents and were married to a Jewish spouse or belonged to the Jewish religion at the time of the law’s publication, or who entered into such commitments at a later date. The consequences of the Nuremberg race laws were immediate: Jews lost their civil and political rights. In December 1935, a supplementary decree ordered the dismissal of Jewish professors, teachers, physicians, lawyers and notaries who were state employees and had been granted exemptions. The pseudo-scientific obsession with blood, race and sex does suggest comparisons with similar ideas about African-Americans and whites in American history. Just as the Nuremberg race laws led to the denial of citizenship rights and impoverishment of Jews in Germany of the 1930s so white racist attitudes towards blacks justified enslavement and then, after 1865, legally sanctioned discrimination in the South. In both cases, obsessions with racial biology

and notions about racial superiority and inferiority led to discrimination, denial of citizenship rights, impoverishment and periodic violence.

What we can call pornographic antisemitism evident in the visual caricatures and lurid stories of rape and race-mixing in Julius Streicher's *Der Sturmer* bulks large in work of such prominent scholars as George Mosse.² Mosse focused on the depiction of the Jew as physical other who presented a visual alternative to the idealized Aryan body.³ This kind of racial antisemitism with its elements of physical revulsion, sexual panic, assumption of clear, easily recognizable physical differences has obvious parallels with American racism. Like the antisemitism of the Nuremberg race laws, it presented the stereotypical Jew as a distinct biological being, not only as a member of a despised religious tradition. Like other forms of racism, including that of the American slave south, this antisemitism associated particular highly pejorative qualities of inward character with specific physiological appearances. The Jewish body implied a Jewish character associated with cowardice, sexual rapacity, crime, murderous attacks on women and children, economic exploitation, communist and capitalism, lack of patriotism and subversion of the nation. Pornographic antisemitism of this sort certainly fostered a climate of hatred and revulsion in which mass murder was a possibility. Yet like the antisemitism of the Nuremberg race laws as well as pro-slavery beliefs in the United States during and after slavery, it was a hatred that justified discrimination and impoverishment rather than mass murder. Works on the ideological roots of Nazism and the Holocaust such as Mosse's *The Crisis of German Ideology*, Fritz Stern's *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, Friedlander's analysis of "redemptive antisemitism" in his work on the 1930s, and my own *Reactionary Modernism* These works took us up to the Nuremberg race laws and the November pogrom of 1938, or in Mosse's words, "towards the Final Solution." They did not, however, take us "to" the Final Solution and to the convictions of Hitler and his associates who took the decisions and offered legitimations for murdering all of Europe's Jews.

The racism of the Nazi regime was not only directed against Jews. The second aspect of the

regime's racial ideology which has some comparable features to pro-slavery ideology in the U.S. lay in ideas about Aryan racial superiority over other non-Jewish Europeans regarded as inferior, especially those in Eastern Europe. The Nazis were particularly brutal towards those they called Slavic "subhumans" (*Untermenschen*) in Eastern Europe. Establishing *Lebensraum* in Eastern Europe called for a combination of expulsions and murder of the native population and its reduction to the level of minimally educated manual laborers fit only for menial tasks. During the German occupation of Poland, the SS murdered an estimated 60,000 Polish nobles, clergy and members of the professional middle classes.⁴ Nazi Germany also wrote a large chapter in the history of slave labor as it imported foreign labor from around the continent into Germany during the war.⁵ By the end of 1942, there were 1.7 million Soviet civilians or prisoners of war at work in Germany.⁶ By 1944, foreign conscript labor in Germany accounted for 20.8% of the work force with a far higher percentage in agriculture.⁷

An adequate discussion of this issue is beyond the bounds of these comments, I would like to note Ulrich Herbert's important history of forced foreign labor in Germany, as well as to Christian Gerlach's detailed examination of Nazi occupation policy in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union. Gerlach's examination of the intersection of *Lebensraum* racial ideology and wartime economics offers a grim account of how and why policies of forced labor and enslavement evolved into plans for mass starvation and murder. The enormous scale of death on the Eastern Front included three million non-Jewish Poles, seventeen million Soviet civilians and eight million Red Army soldiers (almost three million of whom died in German captivity). These huge totals took place in an astonishingly brief period of time. The rate of death far exceeded those that afflicted African-American slaves. Southern slave owners viewed slaves as vital for their economy. Nazi occupying authorities, as Gerlach has documented, actively planned the mass starvation and deaths of millions of "excess eaters." Although the Nazi case remains distinctive in its barbarism, the issue of enslavement and forced labor offers more promising avenues of comparison. Like pro-slavery ideas, Nazi attitudes towards the peoples of Eastern Europe, Poland and Russia in

particular, rested on notions of racial superiority and inferiority. This kind of racism associated particular, allegedly inferior, contents of character with particular presumed national, ethnic and alleged racial physical features. In this sense, Nazi racial prejudices towards Poles and the peoples of Eastern Europe bore similarities with pro-slavery and then segregationist views in the United States. In the Nazi racial imagination, the “Asiatic hordes” and “Slavic subhumans” were frightening due to sheer numbers and the destructive outcomes said to result from “race-mixing.” Yet the mark of inferiority lain on these people extended to assertions about limited mental capacity. For the Nazis, Poles and other Eastern Europeans were fit to be enslaved because they were lesser human beings. Yet the ultimate goal of *Lebensraum* in the East was territory cleansed and cleared of its native inhabitants and repopulated by German settlers. Had the Nazis won the Second World War, many millions more of the citizens of Eastern Europe would have been classified as “excess eaters.”

The third aspect of Nazi racial ideology, which I am called *radical antisemitism* bears no comparison to American pro-slavery ideology. It is one of the key arguments of my book *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* that the ideological rationale of the Holocaust represented a radicalization and to some extent departure from the antisemitism of the years of persecution.⁸ It’s key component was prefigured in the famous forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This was a text which depicted an international Jewish conspiracy seeking to control the world in the wake of wars and economic catastrophes. The Nazis brought this lurid tale up to date and peopled it with living personalities in public life in the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States. An extensive investigation of Nazi wartime propaganda offers abundant evidence that the narrative of a murderous, international Jewish conspiracy, far more than the biological obsessions about blood, race and sex of the Nuremberg race laws, constituted the distinctively genocidal component of Nazi ideology. It was this blend of hatred and interpretation that in the minds of Hitler and his associates justified and legitimated the leap from persecution to genocide. While Southern slave holders lived in fear of slave revolts, real and

imagined, American pro-slavery ideology did not present African-Americans as members of a global conspiracy who were willing and able to wage war against the United States as step on the path to black world domination. Rather, they viewed slaves as the Germans viewed the Poles and Slavs, as intellectual inferiors incapable of organizing anything so massive as an international political conspiracy. Just as enslavement for purposes of labor was the logical consequence of pro-slavery ideology, so the Holocaust was the logical consequence of radical antisemitism.

The Jewish Enemy is a history of the translation of radical anti-Semitic ideology into the Nazi narrative present in the daily and weekly news about the Second World War. Radical anti-Semitism was not only a bundle of hatreds and prejudices. It was an interpretive framework through which the Nazi leadership understood and misunderstood ongoing events. From the beginning to the end of the war which he and his government had launched, Hitler and his associates concluded that their paranoid fantasy of an international Jewish conspiracy was the key to contemporary history. The interpretation of the actual events of the Second World War through the distorted and paranoid prism of radical anti-Semitism pushed German anti-Semitism beyond its past eras of persecution to one of genocide.

In the jargon of historians of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany, I'll call this approach one of *modified intentionalism*. I do so for three reasons.⁹ First, it places place great causal weight on Nazi ideology yet situates ideas in the conjunctures of events and circumstances created by Hitler's decisions to start the World War II; second, it focuses on the radicalization and changes in Nazi anti-Semitism between 1939 and 1941 and how and why the resulting outlook was distinguished from its long-standing precedents; and third and consequently it asserts that the connection between the war and the Holocaust in the minds of the Nazi leaders was inherent in their radical anti-Semitism and was not a contingent result of timing, geography and opportunity, even though all of those factors were present. Christopher Browning, Richard Breitman, Phillip Burrin and Gerhard Weinberg have all connected Holocaust decision making to Hitler's wartime policies. Their work makes it possible and essential that we

intentionalists respond to our critics who have taken us to task for offering a negative, teleological determinism in the realm of ideas which presents German and European history as the pre-history of the Holocaust.

I reached these and following conclusions after examining everything the Nazi leadership said in public and private about the Jews during the war and Holocaust. I read all of Hitler's speeches that included comments about the Jews; essays and speeches by Joseph Goebbels; the thirty volumes of Goebbels diaries; thousands of daily and weekly orders given to journalists by Otto Dietrich's Reich Press Office and the Propaganda Ministry; dozens of propaganda posters printed in editions of 125,000 on a weekly basis and distributed in eye-catching public places in Germany and Nazi occupied Europe between 1937 and 1943; the most important books and essays dealing with the Jews published by the Propaganda Ministry and Nazi Party; and the headlines and lead articles of the government's official newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter* before and during the years of World War II and the Holocaust; and essays in *Die Judenfrage* and other periodicals by and for the anti-Semitic intellectuals of the Nazi regime. The result is the most extensive study to date on the Nazi interpretation of the role of the Jews in World War II and on the role that explanation played in justifying a publicly declared intention to "exterminate" and "annihilate" Europe's Jews.

In this vast outpouring of words and images, the Nazi leadership interpreted the Second World War as a war begun and waged by "international Jewry" the purpose of which was to exterminate the German people. It described "Jewry" as a political subject, no less real than the governments of the Allied powers. According to the Nazis, "Jewry" was the power behind the scenes in "London, Moscow and Washington" and the "glue" that held together this unlikely coalition of "Jewish Bolsheviks" and "plutocrats." On many occasions, Hitler and his associates said publicly that the Nazi regime would respond to this alleged prior act of Jewish aggression and attempted mass murder by "exterminating" and "annihilating" the "Jewish race" in Europe. From the perspective of the Nazi leadership, "the war against

the Jews” was not only the Holocaust.¹⁰ It was also the war against Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and their allies. The Final Solution was, in their view, an act of fully justified retaliation.

Throughout World War II and the Holocaust, paranoia and projection remained handmaidens of Nazi aggression and mass murder.

Therefore, we need to revise our understanding of what the Nazis meant by the phrase “the war against the Jews.” Since the publication of Lucy Dawidowicz’ now classic work with that title, the phrase has come to be synonymous with the Holocaust.¹¹ Dawidowicz work succeeded in drawing attention to the then (1975) less examined event, the Holocaust, which then still stood in the shadows of the main event, the Second World War. Yet when the Nazi leaders spoke of the war against the Jews, they were not referring only to the Final Solution. Rather in their public statements, and the evidence suggests in their deepest convictions as well, the war against the Jews meant the Second World War itself, that is, the war against the Allies and against European Jewry as two parts of one battle to the death between Germany and international Jewry. In their public and private assertions, the war against the Jews was Nazi Germany’s war against the anti-Hitler coalition, Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and other Allies. To be sure, the Nazis viewed Jews as a race but it was not disdain for their alleged physiological features that led to a policy of mass murder. Rather it was the alleged activities of *an imagined political subject said to be bound together by race* which they placed at the center of their propaganda.

This argument addresses a seemingly obvious yet infrequently posed question: Why did antisemitism which had been a component of European and German cultural and intellectual history since the Middle Ages lead *for the first time* to a genocidal outcome after centuries of persecution.¹² What Francois Furet asserted about that search for origins of the French Revolution applies as well to explaining the Holocaust: the search for origins, social or ideological, while necessary, could not account for the novelty of the event itself.¹³ As noted above, historical comparison is not only a matter of contrasting events in different places but of also exploring continuity and change over time within

particular traditions. In contrast to the negative teleology that has at times characterized cultural prehistories of the Holocaust, this understanding of its existence as novel and unprecedented event reminds us that it was not only, or even primarily the culmination of pre-existing anti-Semitic. Rather, it was due to the explosive mixture of a modern conspiracy theory of unprecedented radicalism added to centuries of hatreds.

The Nazi focus on “international Jewry” as a supposed *political actor* (or *subject* in European discourse) has received far too little attention. It has taken a back seat to the lurid but politically less consequential dimensions of biological racism. In the summer of 1941, Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Propaganda Minister, published “*Mimicry*,” in the weekly journal *Das Reich*. The Jews, he wrote were experts at “mimicry,” that is, at camouflaging their actual identity and passing as non-Jews.¹⁴ Goebbels’ statement amounted to saying that he did not really know how to distinguish Jews from other Europeans as a result of their physical features. In part to ward off the nightmare of a Jew with blond hair and blue eyes, the Nazi regime everywhere compelled Jews identified by religious affiliation to wear a yellow star. Goebbels directly connected the alleged Jewish ability to appear as non-Jews to his belief that they had become the driving force of the Allied war against the Third Reich. Many thought “the Jewish Bolsheviks in Moscow and the Jewish plutocrats in London and Washington were deep enemies. In fact, they [the Soviet Union, England and the United States, JH] moved ever closer together to make the encircling grasp with which they wished to crush us ever stronger. Above all it is the same Jews, on both sides, whether open or camouflaged, who establish the tone and establish the line. When they pray in Moscow and go to London to sing the International, they are doing what they have done for ages. They practice mimicry. They adapt to the respective conditions and situation and slowly, naturally, and step for step so that the peoples will not be suspicious and alert. They are naturally so furious with us because we unmask them.”¹⁵ For Goebbels, “enlightenment” meant this unmasking endeavor, one that rested on the assumption that racial biology on its own was insufficient to distinguish Jew from non-Jew. It was the

Jews's alleged actions, not their bodies, that led him to paroxysms of hatred and rage.

Radical anti-Semitism was not merely a prejudice against Jews based on their alleged physical appearance or even religious affiliation though both nourished the longest hatred. In resting on a political accusation linked to a paranoid view of world history, it was a strikingly different form of hatred than was the white racism of pro-slavery arguments or of the racism that accompanied European imperialism.

An important part of this difference lay in the *scope* of the ideology. Pro-slavery ideology was a set of ideas about whites and blacks and their proper places in slave system in the South. It did not present itself as a general theory of history or as an interpretive framework through which American history could be understood. Radical antisemitism was a *world view* in the sense in which liberalism, Marxism or conservatism were. It was a far more total ideology in Karl Mannheim's terms. The radical anti-Semitic narrative of Nazi propaganda seemed to solve key riddles of history. Why did Britain ally with the Soviet Union after Germany attacked in June 1941? Why did Roosevelt help the English and do all he could to prevent an early Nazi victory? Why did an alliance emerge between the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and the arch capitalist societies, England and the United States, on the other? Why did the anti-Hitler coalition persist even after 1943 as the Red Army began to move towards and then into Europe and Germany? Radical antisemitism seemed to provide an explanation of the central paradox of the Second World War in Europe, namely the emergence, deepening and persistence of what Churchill called "the unnatural alliance" between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies. In the eyes of common sense, Franklin Roosevelt and Churchill had decided to make a pact with a lesser evil Stalin, in order to defeat a greater evil, Hitler.¹⁶ From the perspective of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda, the anti-Hitler coalition along with the entry into the war by the United States were the two most powerful pieces of evidence that international Jewry had created and sustained "the unnatural alliance."

I have examined the details of the persons and institutions who conveyed this narrative to the German public, its transmission on a daily and weekly basis via radio and print media, ubiquitous mass

produced color posters but these matters are beyond the scope of this discussion. Suffice it to say that Nazi propaganda was an obvious example of what I have elsewhere called “reactionary modernism,” that is the use of modern technology to implement anti-modern and illiberal political goals. The fact that such barbarism exploded in the midst of an otherwise modern society has constituted part of the enduring fascination of Nazism. The contrast between the mass media of the Nazi regime and the small circulation of the books and pamphlets of pro-slavery thinkers illustrates an obvious contrast between politics in mid-twentieth century in an advanced industrial society and those in the technologically rudimentary and agrarian American South.

From his famous prophecy about the war and Jews on January 30, 1939 to his last will written in the Berlin bunker in April 1945, Hitler himself was key to elaboration of the anti-Semitic narrative. In the years following World War I, Hitler denounced the Jews as alien to the German nation, and the cause of Germany’s problems from defeat to depression. Between 1920 and 1939, often in the most vicious terms, and he called for the “removal of the Jews from the midst of our people.”¹⁷ Before 1939 Hitler made no secret of his violent hatred of the Jews and of his determination to drive them out of public life, the professions and the economy, deprive them of German citizenship and then, with force if need be, drive them out of Germany. Yet from January 1933 to January 1939, through six years of escalating anti-Semitic persecution, he did not declare his intention to exterminate the Jews of Europe.¹⁸ He did so on January 30, 1939 when in a speech to the Reichstag, war, he publicly threatened to “exterminate” all the Jews of Europe in the event that “international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe,” would provoke a world war, in fact, the very same war which he at that moment was planning to unleash.¹⁹

Hitler publicly repeated the genocidal prophecy on at least seven different occasions between January 30, 1939 and February 24, 1943.²⁰ He was clear and blunt, not euphemistic or vague, regarding this threat. As if to underscore the link in his own mind between the war and his policies toward the Jews, he erroneously dated the first utterance of the prophecy as September 1, 1939, the day he ordered

the invasion of Poland. On January 30, 1941 he said, “Not to be forgotten is the comment I’ve already made on September 1, 1939 in the Reichstag that if the world were to be pushed by Jewry into a general war, the role of the whole of Jewry in Europe would be finished...Today, they [the Jews] may still be laughing about [that statement] just as they laughed earlier about my prophecies. Now our racial knowledge is spreading from people to people. I hope that those who still are our antagonists will one day recognize the greater domestic enemy and will then make common front with us: against the international Jewish exploitation and corruption of nations!”²¹

Responding to Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels’ pleas to address a nation that yearned to see and hear him, Hitler spoke for an hour and ten minutes to a sympathetic audience in the Berlin Sportpalast on September 30, 1942. The speech was broadcast on national radio and to the armed forces, and prominently reported in the German press.²² He spoke of the need for retaliation against the Allied bombing campaign against Germany. The following passage evoked great enthusiasm from the assembled. “On September 1, 1939 in the meeting of the Reichstag I said two things. First, after we were forced into this war, neither the power of weapons nor the factor of time would defeat us; second, if Jewry unleashes an international world war in order to bring about the extermination (*Ausrottung*) of the Aryan peoples of Europe, then it will not be the Aryan peoples, but rather Jewry who will be exterminated (long applause). The wirepullers of the lunatic in the White House have dragged one people after another into the war. To the same extent however an anti-Semitic wave has flooded over the peoples. It will move further and seize one state after another which enters this war. Each will emerge from it one day as an anti-Semitic state. The Jews in Germany once laughed about my prophecies. I don’t know if they are laughing today or if the laughter has already gone out of them. I can only promise one thing. They will stop laughing everywhere. And with this prophecy as well I will be proven right.” (vocal expressions of audience agreement).²³ The audience reaction in the *Sportpalast* suggests that the Nazi faithful understood that Hitler was telling them in language by then familiar that the Nazi regime was at that

moment murdering the Jews. Moreover, the clear meaning of the noun extermination and its verb “exterminate,” and the political and temporal context in which Hitler repeated them, as well as his assertion that he was a prophet all indicated that he had ordered and was then implementing the destruction of the Jews. Despite his refusal to use the first person pronoun, his reference to his own prophecy indicated that Hitler was then engaged in the mass murder of the Jews. A benign interpretation of references to Jews not “laughing any more” strained credulity.

Already in the fall of 1941 in his essay *Die Juden sind Schuld*, Goebbels had abandoned the if-then, hypothetical structure of his original prophecy and spoke of ongoing policy.²⁴ The text presents an active subject, “international Jewry” on the offensive against an innocent, victimized German object. Nazi Germany would wage war on the Jews in response to the war the Jews had launched against Germany. Goebbels put it as follows:

“By unleashing this war, world Jewry completely misjudged the forces at its disposal. Now it is suffering a gradual process of annihilation which it had intended for us and which it would have unleashed against us without hesitation if it had the power to do so. It is now perishing as a result of its [world Jewry’s, JH] own law: Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth ... In this historical dispute every Jew is our enemy, whether he vegetates in a Polish ghetto or scrapes out his parasitic existence in Berlin or Hamburg or blows the trumpets of war in New York or Washington. Due to their birth and race, all Jews belong to an international conspiracy against National Socialist Germany. They wish for its defeat and annihilation and do everything in their power to help to bring it about.”²⁵

The Jews had started the war. They were “now” suffering a “gradual process of extermination,” one which they had originally intended to inflict on Germany.

The remarkable bluntness with which the Nazi regime announced that it was in the midst of

“exterminating” European Jewry has been oddly underestimated. Goebbels published “The War and the Jews,” (*Der Krieg und die Juden*), on May 9, 1943 in the midst of the most intense anti-Semitic propaganda offensive of the war years, one which lasted from March to August 1943.²⁶ He wrote that the “Jewish race” and its “helpers” were waging war against “Aryan humanity as well as against Western culture and civilization.” The Jews “wanted this war.” They were its instigators and “agitators working behind those exponents standing in the foreground of the enemy war leadership.” They developed “programs for annihilation and extermination aimed at the axis powers. It is from their [the Jews’, JH] ranks that the bloodthirsty, enraged and revenge seeking agitators and political wild men in England and the United States and the terrorist GPU commissars in the Soviet Union are recruited. Hence, they form the glue that holds the enemy coalition together.”²⁷ Either Germany and its allies would win the war or “countless millions of people in our own and other European countries... would be delivered without defense to the hatred and will for extermination (*Vernichtungswillen*) of this devilish race if we would become weak and fail in the end in this battle.”²⁸ Hence in May 1943, he assured his thousands of readers and millions of listeners that

“we are moving ahead. The fulfillment of the Fuhrer’s prophecy, about which world Jewry laughed in 1939 when he made it stands at the end of our course of action. Even in Germany, the Jews laughed when we stood up for the first time against them. Among them laughter is now a thing of the past. They chose to wage war against us. But Jewry now understands that the war has become a war against them. When Jewry conceived of the plan of the total extermination of the German people, it thereby wrote its own death sentence. In this instance as in others, world history will also be a world court.”²⁹

“The War and the Jews” repeated the essential projection mechanism of Nazi propaganda. The

Jews launched a war to exterminate the Germans. Instead, the Germans turned the tables and were fulfilling Hitler's prophecies, that is, they were now exterminating the Jews. In these and many other texts, Goebbels combined the big lie or lies—that is, that there was something called international Jewry which was directing a conspiracy against Germany; that Germany had not started the war; and that the allies were lackeys of an unseen but all powerful international conspiracy—with the blunt and truthful assertion that Nazi Germany was at that time murdering the Jews of Europe. By making an inherent causal link between the war and the Jews, Nazi propaganda worked to deepen Jew hatred the longer the war continued. Nazi propaganda laid responsibility for every German death and injury on the Jews. These frank, blunt and unapologetic assertions about the implementation of a program of mass murder are further indications of the gap separating the genocidal fanaticism of mid-twentieth century totalitarianism from the grinding dehumanization of the institution of 19th century Southern slavery.

Hitler committed suicide with a gunshot to the head in his bunker in Berlin on May 1, 1945. On April 29th he had written his "Political Testament."³⁰ He wrote that it was "not true that I or anyone else in Germany wanted war in 1939. It was desired and launched exclusively by those international statesmen who were either of Jewish origin or who worked for Jewish interests." The "truly guilty party of this murderous battle is Jewry!"³¹ He "left no doubt that if the peoples of Europe were again [as in World War One] treated as a block of shares on the stock exchange of these international money and finance conspirators, then this people will be called to account, the ones who are the truly guilty ones for this murderous struggle: Jewry! I have left no one in doubt that this time millions of adult men would not die and hundreds of thousands of women and children burn in the cities and die under bombardment without the really guilty party having to pay for his guilt, albeit with more humane means."³² He repeated the familiar mixture of blunt assertion regarding his intent to commit mass murder with absence of factual detail about its implementation. He concluded as follows: "Above all, I command the leadership and followers of the nation to carefully uphold the racial laws and to engage in pitiless resistance against the

world poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry.”³³ To the end, he persisted in the paranoid logic of innocence, irresponsibility and projection, The logical conclusion of Hitler’s illogic was that international Jewry, in the form of the anti-Hitler coalition, had won the Second World War.

Hitler’s last will has sometimes been interpreted as evidence of his descent into madness under the impact of impending total defeat. While this was very likely the case, it’s most striking aspect is its reassertion of exactly what he had been saying about the Jews since he first voiced his murderous prophecy on January 1, 1939, eight months before he started the war. He and his associates gave vent to the threat following the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, as the Final Solution began in summer and fall 1941. They did so again as the extermination camps went into operation in 1942, and as the tide of war turned against Nazi Germany in winter and spring 1943, and in the two following years as the war eventually came home to Germany. The paranoid vision of an international Jewish conspiracy waging aggressive and genocidal war against an innocent Nazi Germany that flowed from Hitler’s pen on April 29, 1945 had been the core element of the text and imagery of the Nazi regime’s anti-Semitic propaganda from the beginning to the end of the Second World War and the Holocaust. So far as I know, there is no parallel to this kind of totalitarian ideology among the advocates of slavery in the American South.

Conclusion

On the basis of the preceding analysis, I draw the following conclusions regarding the comparative analysis of Nazi racial ideology and pro-slavery ideology in the United States.

First, there were parallels between the phobias and obsessions regarding race and sex among white racists, on the one hand, and German anti-Semites of the era of persecution, on the other. Jim Crow and the Nuremberg race laws offered some similar grounds for racial discrimination and, not surprisingly, they led to broadly similar kinds of outcomes. The Nuremberg race laws sought to destroy over a century

of experience of Jewish emancipation while Jim Crow was a counter-revolution against the brief flickering of freedom under the postwar Reconstruction governments. Both produced legally sanctioned segregation, discrimination, denial of citizenship rights and subjection to periodic bouts of government sanctioned or tolerated violence.

Second, enslavement in Nazi Germany rested on notions of German racial superiority over other non-Jewish Europeans. The enormous use of enslaved and forced foreign labor in Germany during the Second World War was due to a combination of racism and wartime economic necessity. This kind of slavery was not as defining an institution in Nazi Germany as slavery was of the old South. It was a byproduct of a system of inhumanity whose defining institutions were the death camps and the SS units whose sole purpose was to murder civilians.

Third, the Holocaust itself, both its ideological inspiration and its implementation was not comparable to American slavery. The millions of African-Americans who suffered under slavery did so for several centuries. The purpose of their enslavement was to unjustly exploit their ability to work in terrible conditions. American racism imputed inferiority to blacks, not, as with the Jews, a maliciously clever ability to control world events from behind the scenes. The results of the mistreatment of American slaves led to premature death and illness, and of course to the humiliation that any person endures when deprived of elementary human rights. Yet the purpose of the Southern plantation was to grow cotton or rice, not to murder all the slaves, all African-Americans or Africans. The speed of the Holocaust must also be kept in mind. While death and misery extended over centuries for African American slaves, the speed of the Holocaust is still astonishing carried out as it was from late 1941 to early 1945.

The phrase “racism and antisemitism” is a familiar one. Yet we need to think about what we mean when we associate the two terms so closely. Antisemitism was, and remains a form of racism in that it regularly imputes specific qualities of character to individuals said to have particular, stereotyped physical features. The Nazi regime used the most modern means of mass communication to purvey repugnant

stereotypes of the Jewish body. Yet the hatreds that inspired the leap from the years of persecution to those of genocide focused first of in a mendacious political accusation about what “international Jewry” was alleged to have done as a racially unified and powerful political actor in the Second World War. Radical antisemitism was and is a form of racism but it is also a distinct ideological form of conspiracy thinking that was not always based first and foremost in biological racism. Yet, the Jews were killed because of who they were rather than what they had done but the murderers claimed instead that they, the Nazis, were the innocent victims merely defending themselves against a powerful enemy. The sheer remoteness and departure from reality represented by Nazism’s radical antisemitism far exceeded the miscalculations and misjudgments of the ideologues of the Confederacy.

Finally, the radical anti-Semitism of the Holocaust was not only distinct from the racism that accompanied American slavery. It built on but also comprised a new chapter in the history of antisemitism itself.

Endnotes

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1. Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, vol. 1: The Years of Persecution* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), pp. 152-153.
 2. See, for example, George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York: 1965); *The Nationalization of the Masses*
 - 3.
 4. On this see Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis* (New York: Norton, 2000); and Jan Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation: The General Government, 1939-1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
 5. On slave labor in Germany, see Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Labor in Germany under the Third Reich*, trans. William Templer (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
 6. Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), p. 479.
 7. Kershaw, *Hitler*, op. cit., p. 713.
 8. Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).
 9. In a sense this is a counterpart to what Christopher Browning calls a modified functionalist approach in his recent works. See his "Beyond 'Intentionalism' and 'Functionalism': The Decision for the Final Solution Reconsidered," in *The Path to Genocide: Essays on the Launching of the Final Solution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 86-121).
 10. Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975).
 13. Saul Friedlander has implicitly stressed this distinction. See his *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Vol. 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).
 12. For example see George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964); and *Towards the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); Eberhard Jaeckel, *Hitler's World View* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,); Karl Bracher, *The German Dictatorship* (New York: Praeger, 1970); and John Weiss, *Ideology of Death: Why the Holocaust Happened in Germany* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1996).
 13. Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forstern (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 21-24.
 14. Joseph Goebbels, "Mimikry," July 20, 1941, in Goebbels, *Die Zeit ohne Beispiel: Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1939/40/41*, (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1941) , pp. 526-531.
 - 15.. Joseph Goebbels, "Mimikry," op. cit., p. 528.
 16. Jeffrey Herf, "If Hitler Invaded Hell: Distinguishing between Nazism and Communism during World War II, the Cold War and since the Fall of European Communism," in Helmut Dubiel and Gabriel Motzkin, eds. *The Lesser Evil: Moral Approaches to Genocide Practices* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 182-195.
 17. See Reginald H. Phelps, "Hitlers 'grundlegende' Rede über den Antisemitismus," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 16 (1968), p. 417; and Eberhard Jäckel and Axel Kuhn, eds. *Hitler. Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen, 1905-1924* (Stuttgart: 1980), pp. 184-204. Also see discussion of the speech in Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's World View: A Blueprint for Power*, trans. Herbert Arnold (Cambridge, MA.:

Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 50-52.

18. See Friedlander's balanced assessment of the mixture of fanaticism and calculation in Hitler's public denunciations of the Jews up to 1939 in *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 73-113.
19. Max Domarus, ed., *Hitler: Reden und Proklamation, 1932-1945*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1972), p. 1058.
20. For the text of the January 30, 1939 speech and the repetitions and variations of the prophecy on January 30, 1941, January 30, 1942, February 15, 1942, September 30, 1942, November 8, 1942 and February 24, 1943, see Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, Bd. 2*, see, pp. 1058, 1663-1664, 1843, 1920, 1937, 1992.
21. Domarus, 2, January 30, 1941, pp. 1663-64. Also see "30.1.1941 Adolf Hitler: Kundgebung im Berliner Sportpalast zum 8. Jahrestag der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung," Roller and Höschel, eds. *Judenverfolgung und jüdisches Leben...* op. cit., pp. 165-66. These paragraphs were featured on the front page of *Die Judenfrage*, then published by the office of *Antisemitischen Aktion*. See "Der Führer sprach; Aus den Rede im Sportpalast vom 30 Januar 1941," *Die Judenfrage*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (February 10, 1941), p. 1. The following day, the editors of *The New York Times*, reflecting the mid-century sophistication which Arendt criticized so effectively in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, wrote that "inside Germany or outside, no one in the world expects truth from Adolf Hitler...there is not a single precedent to prove he will either keep a promise or fulfill a threat. If there is any guarantee in his record, in fact, it is that the one thing he will not do is the thing he says he will do...Nobody expects consistency from Hitler..." "When Hitler Threatens," *The New York Times* (January 31, 1941), p. 18.
22. Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, II*, "30. September 1942," p. 1915.
23. Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, II*, "30. September 1942," p. 1920. Also see "30.9.1942 Adolf Hitler, Ansprache auf einer Kundgebung im Berliner Sportpalast zur Eröffnung des Kriegswinterwerks," in Roller, et. al., eds., *Judenverfolgung und jüdisches Leben...*, pp. 216-17. The editors of the October 1st issue of *Die Judenfrage* put this quote on the front page. See "Der Führer sprach," *Die Judenfrage*, Vol. 6, No. 19, October 1, 1943, p. 1.
- 24.. Joseph Goebbels, "Die Juden sind Schuld!" 16. November 1941, p. 85 in Joseph Goebbels, *Das Eherne Herz: Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1941/42* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1943), pp. 85-91.
- 25.. Ibid., p. 88.
- 26.. "Der Krieg und die Juden," 9. Mai. 1943, pp. 263-70, Joseph Goebbels, *Der Steile Aufstieg: Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1942/43* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher, 1944).
- 27.. Ibid, pp. 263-64.
- 28.. Ibid., pp. 269-70.
- 29.. Ibid., p. 270.
30. See the classic account in H.R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (New York: Collier, 1962), pp. 225-65; and more recently, Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936-1945, Nemesis* (New York: Norton, 2000), pp. 820-28.
31. Domarus, *Hitler; Reden und Proklamation, II. Band, Untergang (1939-1945)* , p. 2236.
32. Ibid., pp. 2236-2237.

33. Ibid., p. 2239.