

The Origins of “Operation Reinhard”¹: The Decision-Making Process for the Mass Murder of the Jews in the *Generalgouvernement*

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The question of the decision-making process leading up to the mass murder of the European Jews during World War II remains a controversial topic in the historical research. Recent studies suggest that the decision was a complex, step-by-step process, and the most crucial decisions were made in the summer and fall of 1941.²

The contemporary debate generally posits two basic decisions, separate in time, that set the “Final Solution” in motion. The first, leading to the murder of Soviet Jewry, is assumed to have been reached in July or August 1941³; that is, only after the destruction of the Soviet Jews was underway was the decision made to annihilate all the Jews in Europe. The second decision is dated to September or October 1941.⁴

L. J. Hartog and Christian Gerlach have sought to modify this two-phase sequencing of the decision-making process for the “Final Solution.” They

¹ The plan for the murder of the Polish Jews in the *Generalgouvernement* was given the cover name “Operation Reinhard” after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in Prague in May 1942, in order to honor his memory. See Dieter Pohl, *Von der “Judenpolitik” zum Judenmord. Der Distrikt Lublin des Generalgouvernements 1939-1944* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 129.

² An overview of the most recent research can be found in Christopher R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide. Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); idem, *Der Weg zur Endlösung. Entscheidungen und Täter* (Bonn: Dietz, 1998); expanded translation of English ed.); see also Christian Gerlach, “Die Wannsee-Konferenz, das Schicksal der deutschen Juden und Hitlers politische Grundsatzentscheidung, alle Juden Europas zu ermorden,” *WerkstattGeschichte* 18 (1997), pp. 7-44; This also appeared in English, “The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler’s Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews,” *The Journal of Modern History* 70 (December 1998), pp. 759-812.

³ Ralf Ogorreck, *Die Einsatzgruppen und die “Genesis der Endlösung”* (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), chap. 7-8, pp. 176-222, is persuasive. He argues that, in August 1941, a comprehensive order was handed down to liquidate all Soviet Jews, irrespective of age or gender. Similarly, see Philippe Burrin, *Hitler und die Juden. Die Entscheidung für den Völkermord* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993); Browning, *Path*, argues against the notion that this decision was made in July 1941.

⁴ Thus, for example, Burrin, *Hitler*, pp. 133 ff. (September) and Browning, *Path* (October).

argue that Hitler did not reach the decision to murder all European Jewry until the beginning of December 1941. Gerlach adds: “At least that is when he first made it public.”⁵ While this thesis offers a plausible explanation for several previously unanswered questions, at the same time it re-introduces questions that the previous thinking had appeared to clarify. One such question concerns the purpose behind the construction of the Bełżec death camp, on which work commenced at the end of October 1941. Gerlach himself concedes: “It is still unclear what conceptions about future developments were associated with construction of the Bełżec camp.”⁶

It seems that both Hartog and Gerlach and those who argue for the commonly accepted chronology are correct. This apparent contradiction can be resolved by the addition of a third, very important, stage to the decision-making process, which enables us to answer various questions more plausibly. Moreover, adding a third phase significantly enhances the plausibility and persuasiveness of the thesis of a step-by-step decision-making process underlying the genesis of the “Final Solution.”

This third stage was the separate decision to proceed with the murder of the Jews in the *Generalgouvernement* (GG). Significantly, this affected a particularly large population, numbering some 2.5 million Jews.

The chronology I suggest frames the following decisions:

1. The first — the destruction of the Soviet Jews — was taken in July or August 1941.
2. The second — to murder the Jews in the GG — was made at the end of September or beginning of October 1941. At about the same time, it was decided to murder the Jews in the *Warthegau*.
3. Only then did Hitler take the final decision, made known in December 1941, to annihilate *all* European Jews.
4. This absolute order for destruction was apparently modified in early 1942: all able-bodied Jews capable of employment in the war economy were, for the time being, to be spared. However, in the spring of 1942, a decision was made once again to push ahead with the more radical version of the “Final Solution.”

⁵ L. J. Hartog, *Der Befehl zum Judenmord. Hitler, Amerika und die Juden* (Bodenheim: Syndikat, 1997), pp. 63-77; Gerlach, “Wannsee-Konferenz,” p. 8.

⁶ Gerlach, *ibid.*, p. 43.

This article concentrates on the question of precisely when the decision was taken to murder the entire Jewish population in the GG. It will attempt to show that the substantive order for this operation was given in the first half of October 1941. The author of this decision was Odilo Globocnik, the *SS- und Polizeiführer* (SS and Police Leader; SSPF) in the Lublin District, and his initiative was closely bound up with resettlement plans to “Germanize” the area — first the Lublin District, and then the entire GG. The final decision was then made by Hitler after Himmler had presented Globocnik’s proposal to him. This argument is based on an array of sources, conclusions from the circumstantial evidence, and a critical examination of the documentation. When examined concurrently, this evidence can convincingly piece together the puzzle of the decision-making process that led to the liquidation of the Jews in the *Generalgouvernement*.

The Discussion in Lublin, October 17, 1941

The discussion in Lublin on October 17, 1941, as recorded in Hans Frank’s official diary, is one of the most important pieces of evidence for this discussion. Previous research has evidently overlooked the significance of this conference for the preparatory stage of Operation Reinhard. Participating were Governor-General Hans Frank; Dr. Ernst Boepfle, undersecretary in the GG administration; Ernst Zörner, governor of the Lublin District; the senior administrative head (*Amtschef*) in the Lublin District, Wilhelm Engler; and Globocnik. Four items were on the agenda; the third concerned the “Jewish Question.” The participants came to the following decision:

All Jews, with the exception of indispensable craftsmen and the like, are to be *evacuated* from Lublin. Initially, 1,000 Jews will be transferred across the Bug River. Responsibility for this is placed in the hands of the SSPF. The *Stadthauptmann* will select the Jews to be evacuated.⁷

⁷ Archiwum Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciw Narodowi Polskiemu w Warszawie (Archive of the Main Commission on Investigating the Crimes Against the Polish People; AGK), *Das Diensttagebuch des deutschen Generalgouverneurs in Polen 1939-1945*, Vol. XIII/1, pp. 951 f. (hereafter, *AGK Diensttagebuch*). The German *Stadthauptmann* was the principal official in the municipal administration.

An analysis of this discourse reveals that the meaning of “evacuating of the Jews across the Bug” was clear to all the participants — it was synonymous with their murder.⁸ Thus, this “evacuation” was planned as a prelude to the state-organized mass murder. The code “evacuation over the Bug” stemmed from the autumn and winter of 1939/1940, when Jews were indeed expelled from the GG “across the Bug” into Soviet-occupied eastern Poland.⁹

A glance at the location of Lublin in the autumn of 1941, shows that a literal interpretation of the notion “across the Bug” would have meant evacuating Jews from the Lublin District either to the north-eastern corner of the Galicia District, or into the *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine. Yet a priori it was impossible to contemplate evacuating the Jews over the Bug into Galicia, thereby keeping them in the GG. Deportation into the *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine was also out of the question at this juncture. Three days earlier, on October 14, Frank had asked Rosenberg about the possibility of transferring the Jews in the GG into the occupied eastern territories. Rosenberg's reply was unambiguous: “At the moment he [Rosenberg] could see no possibility for implementing such resettlement plans.”¹⁰

It is also noteworthy that Globocnik was the official charged with carrying out this “evacuation.” Until then, the *civil administration* had ordered and implemented expulsions of Jews within the GG.¹¹ Yet if one assumes that, for the participants in this discussion, “evacuation” was synonymous with death, it seems only understandable that Globocnik was given the job of implementing this operation. As SSPF, he was the only one in the Lublin District with sufficient personnel at his disposal, namely the SS and the police, for organizing mass murder. In addition, according to the most recent findings, it

⁸ This discussion is evaluated in a similar way by the historians who prepared the edition *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/42*, edited and annotated by Peter Witte et al. (Hamburg: Hans Christians, 1999), pp. 233 f., n. 35.

⁹ Bogdan Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung im Generalgouvernement. Eine Fallstudie zum Distrikt Lublin 1939-1944* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1999), p. 127 f.

¹⁰ Werner Präg und Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, eds., *Das Diensttagebuch des deutschen Generalgouverneurs in Polen 1939-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1975), p. 413.

¹¹ Musial, *Zivilverwaltung*, pp. 157-159.

seems that, during their meeting on October 13, 1941, Himmler ordered Globocnik to begin construction of the first extermination camp in Belzec.¹²

Another piece of significant evidence is a casual remark made by Hans Frank in an address on October 17, 1941, while the government was in formal session in Lublin. In this speech, Frank noted inter alia: “*On the basis of a special assignment I've been given by the Führer, I'll be coming here quite often in the near future and so will have the good fortune to visit Lublin fairly frequently.*”¹³ It is quite plausible that Frank was referring here to the murder of the Jews and the subsequent re-populating of the Lublin District with ethnic Germans. There was no other “assignment” at this time that would have required Hitler's special approval or even his official order.

Frank's remark suggests that Hitler had decided on the destruction of the Jews and that Hans Frank regarded this decision as a direct order from the *Führer*. It also indicates that Frank proceeded from the premise that as governor-general, it was his duty to assist in the forcible “removal” of the Jewish population from the GG.

However, in order to reconstruct the path of the decision-making with regard to the murder of the Jews in the Lublin District, and throughout the GG, it is necessary to examine more closely the personality and activities of Odilo Globocnik. We may assume that Globocnik was, in fact, the man who initiated this mass murder. Previous research has viewed him as Himmler's close associate and subordinate and, most particularly, as the official in charge of Operation Reinhard. That approach tends to overlook the considerable impact of his enormous activism on behalf of *volk*-ethnic policy and his racial ideas on occupation policy and the decision to murder the Jews in the GG. Moreover, there is still no comprehensive biography of Globocnik.¹⁴

¹² *Dienstkalender Himmlers*, p. 233, fn. 35; Peter Witte, “Zwei Entscheidungen in der ‘Endlösung der Judenfrage’: Deportationen nach Lodz und Vernichtung in Chelmno,” *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* (1995), p. 61, fn. 16; also Dieter Pohl, *Judenpolitik*, p. 101; Peter Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung. Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung* (Munich: Piper, 1998), pp. 452-456.

¹³ *AGK Dienstagebuch*, vol. XVIII/1, p. 30 (emphasis added).

¹⁴ In 1997, Siegfried Pucher published a short biography of Globocnik: “... *in der Bewegung führend tätig - Kämpfer für den ‘Anschluss’ und Vollstrecker des Holocaust*” (Klagenfurt: Drava, 1997). However, the book treats Globocnik's life in Lublin without evaluating the decisive West German trials against former associates and the archival materials stored in Poland. In contrast, the period before 1939 appears to be relatively well researched.

For Globocnik and his bureaucratic apparatus, as for other SSPFs in the *Generalgouvernement*, the “Jewish Question” had, since the summer of 1940, come to represent a major security and racial-political problem. This resulted once the civil administration had, for all practical purposes, assumed authority over the Jews in regard to areas of residence, food supply, and forced labour.¹⁵ This constellation changed, from Globocnik's perspective, once he and his highest commander Himmler had decided to implement the ambitious plans for settling the Lublin District with ethnic Germans as part of the “General Plan for the East.” Götz Aly has convincingly demonstrated the close link between settlement plans in general and the destruction of the Jews.¹⁶ Contemporary documents indicate that it was Odilo Globocnik who displayed extraordinary initiative in drafting plans for the Germanization of the East. In the period of July 20-31, 1941, Himmler put him in charge of “*SS und Polizei Stützpunkte*” in all the occupied Eastern territories, i.e., the GG and the USSR.¹⁷ This fact is also corroborated by later accounts by contemporaries, such as Jakob Sporrenberg, Globocnik’s successor as Lublin SSPF,¹⁸ Dr. Boepple,¹⁹ and Globocnik's adjutant.²⁰ In his Krakow jail cell, Rudolf Höss, commandant of Auschwitz, wrote that Globocnik had drafted

fantastic plans of bases stretching all the way to the Urals He didn't see any difficulties here and rejected all criticism with a superior sweep of the hand. Insofar as he did not need them for labour at “his” bases, he wanted to liquidate the Jews in these areas on the spot.²¹

The large number of such post war statements pointing to Globocnik's unusual level of activism regarding questions of racial policy in the Lublin District is striking. Yet both directly and indirectly, the extant contemporary

¹⁵ Musial, *Zivilverwaltung*, pp. 110-122.

¹⁶ Götz Aly, “*Endlösung*”. *Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995).

¹⁷ *Dienstkalender Himmlers*, pp. 185-186, 189, and notes.

¹⁸ Interrogation of Jakob Sporrenberg, December 16/17, 1949, AGK SAL 193/4, fol. 996. See also the December 15, 1960, interrogation of Konrad G., who directed Whermacht counterintelligence in Warsaw, Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen in Ludwigsburg (ZStL) 208 AR-Z 74/60, fol. 447, and the 1960 statement of a former Wehrmacht intelligence officer, Hans W., October 21, 1960, Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Hannover (HStA), Nds, 721 Hild, Acc 39/91, no. 28/55, fols. 141 f.

¹⁹ Interrogation of Boepple, May 11, 1946, Zuffenhausen, AGK SAKr 1, fol. 18.

²⁰ Interrogation of Max R., January 28, 1963, HStA, Nds, 721 Hild, Acc 39/91, No. 28/188 (no pagination).

²¹ Rudolf Höss on Globocnik, January 1947, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich (IfZ) F 13/6.

sources also confirm Globocnik's involvement in such activities in the Lublin District and throughout the GG.

Already in August 1940, Globocnik presented Himmler with a project to set up fortified rural farmsteads (so-called *Wehrbauernhöfe*) in the Lublin District. However, Himmler at that time wished to concentrate only on SS and police camps. In the fall of 1940, these were then actually constructed on six large estates; the following spring, they were manned by SS men. Their task, inter alia, was to “make a significant contribution to the creation of a new order of land and settlement throughout the GG. They will become vital German centers on the plains.”²²

In the spring of 1942, Globocnik had a SS-*Mannschaftshaus* in Lublin, where plans and projects for future settlements could be developed. As a result of his intense activism on these questions, he was far ahead of the relevant plans stemming from the SS Race and Settlement Office in Berlin, the authority actually responsible for this project.²³ Yet Globocnik did not limit himself to devising projects and setting up SS and police bases. In the spring of 1941, he began with the “Germanization” of the first settlements in the Lublin District. These comprised five villages near the city of Zamość, where German farmers had indeed settled in the eighteenth century, only to be Polonized in the course of the next.²⁴ In the spring of 1941, the so-called anthropological commissions set up by Globocnik began work in the Lublin District.²⁵ This was within the framework of the *volk*-political operation “*Fahndung nach deutschem Blut*” (“In Search of German Blood”).²⁶

²² Gerhard Eisenblätter, *Grundlinien der Politik des Reiches gegenüber dem Generalgouvernement 1939-1945* (diss.), Frankfurt am Main, 1969, pp. 202 f.; “Bericht über den Aufbau der SS- und Polizeistützpunkte” (n.d.), Bundesarchiv, Berlin (BA) BDC (Globocnik).

²³ Helmut Müller, “Bericht über die Verhältnisse in Lublin,” October 15, 1941, BA BDC (Globocnik); Józef Marszatek, *Majdanek, obóz koncentracyjny w Lublinie* (Warsaw: Interpress: 1981), pp. 17 f. The SS-*Mannschaftshaus* was a kind of think tank sponsored by the SS in major German universities in the 1930s. It attracted young academics, mostly doctoral candidates. Such institutions were also established in occupied countries during the war. See, Michael G. Esch, “Die ‘Forschungsstelle für Ostuntarkünfte’ in Lublin,” *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1999), pp. 67-96.

²⁴ “Lagebericht des Kreishauptmannes Weihenmaier,” February 4, 1941, AGK NTN 280, fol. 185.

²⁵ *Krakauer Zeitung*, July 15, 1941; Czesław Madajczyk, *Generalna Gubernia w planach hitlerowskich* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1961), p. 116.

²⁶ Under the code name “*Fahndung nach deutschem Blut*,” Globocnik began, in the fall of 1940, to seek out “submerged” German folk culture. The focus was on German settlers who

Heinrich Himmler was very interested in Globocnik's projects and plans and put his trust in him to help Himmler fulfil his dream to resettle Germans in the East. Himmler paid numerous visits to the Lublin District, and, during such a visit on July 20, 1941, one month after the attack on the Soviet Union, Himmler reached several fateful decisions: (1) "The ancient German city centre [in Lublin] should be included as part of the overall construction plan envisioned for the SS and police quarter." (2) "The operation 'In Search of German Blood' will be expanded to include the entire *Generalgouvernement*; a major settlement area will be created in the German colonies near Zamość."²⁷

Yet from the perspective of those involved, an absolute prerequisite for realizing these plans was the "cleansing" of this area of the Jews and Poles living there. This was pointed out in a report by SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Helmut Müller, dated October 15, 1941:

[Globocnik] considers the ... gradual cleansing of the entire *Generalgouvernement* of Jews and Poles necessary in order to secure the eastern territories, etc.... He is full of excellent and far-reaching plans on this. The only thing that prevents him from realizing them is the limited power of his present position.... It is SS-*Brigadeführer* Globocnik's idea to push ahead with the German settlement of the entire district by concentrating first on a small section of it. Moreover, building on this (longer-term aim) and in conjunction with the Nordic or German-settled Baltic lands, Globocnik wishes to forge a link via Lublin District with the German-settled areas in Transylvania. He thus intends to "encircle" the remaining Poles in the western intervening area by a noose of new settlement, gradually throttling them both economically and biologically.²⁸

The shift in Globocnik's planning perspective in the summer of 1941 is noteworthy. Until then he had evidently been concentrating mainly on preparations for Germanizing the Lublin District. In the summer of 1941, after the attack on the Soviet Union, Himmler had him expand his plans to

had settled in the area of the later GG in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and had been Polonized over the course of time; they were to be "re-Germanized." Cf. Bruno Wasser, *Hitlers Raumplanung im Osten. Der Generalplan Ost in Polen 1940-1944* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1993), p. 11; see also *Himmlers Kalender*, pp. 65 f.

²⁷ Memorandum, Himmler, July 21, 1941, BA BDC (Globocnik); Czesław Madajczyk, *Zamojszczyzna - Sonderlaboratorium SS* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1977), vol. 1, pp. 26 f.

²⁸ Müller, "Bericht über die Verhältnisse in Lublin."

encompass the entire GG and the USSR. This expanded portfolio is reflected in the fact that, in late summer of 1941, Globocnik set up the *Planungs-und Forschungsstelle im Genralgouvernement* (Office for Planning and Research). This office was to provide him the “scientific-technical foundation for his plans and ideas and their preparation.”²⁹ Up until that time, these matters had been dealt with by staff in the *SS-Mannschaftshaus* in Lublin.

In this connection, it should be noted that, already in March 1941, Hitler had reached a decision that the entire GG should be Germanized in the near future. In a GG government session on March 25, 1941, Governor-General Frank proclaimed:

The *Generalgouvernement* as an expedient structure is now coming to an end.³⁰ ... The GG will now be given greater assistance and in particular will be emptied of its Jewish population.... The Poles will also accompany the Jews in their exodus from this area. The *Führer* is determined to make this region, over the course of the next 15 to 20 years, into an area that is purely German.³¹

However, there were apparently still no concrete plans for this endeavor. In any event, it was evident to Hans Frank that such plans could be realized only after the victorious end of the war. In the speech cited above, he stated in no uncertain terms: “Yet at the moment, it is inappropriate to embark upon longer-term experiments in *volk* policy. *Reichsmarschall* Göring commented recently: ‘It is more important for us to win the war than to push ahead with racial policies.’”³²

Still, even with the absence of operative plans in the summer of 1941, the above does indicate that ideas about Germanizing the GG were nothing new. Globocnik was the man who wished to forge ahead immediately, translating these plans into action, at least in part. In Himmler he found a ready ear for his ideas — and probably, via Himmler, with the *Führer*.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Originally the GG was meant to serve as a kind of reservation for Poles living there and for “undesirable elements” (Poles, Jews, Gypsies) from the Reich. For a more detailed account, see Eisenblätter, “Grundlinien,” pp. 66-109.

³¹ Präg and Jacobmeyer, *Diensttagebuch*, p. 335.

³² Ibid., p. 336.

Summer-Fall 1941: Plans for Settlement in the Lublin District and the Military Situation

A review of the military situation and the prevailing mood of Hitler and his closest associates in the summer and fall of 1941 are important prerequisites to an understanding of Himmler's decision of July 20, 1941 (regarding the settlement of ethnic Germans in the Lublin District) and subsequent developments.

The assumption both in the GG and the Reich in the summer of 1941 was that the opportunity would soon be created for deporting the Jews to the East. On June 19, 1941, three days before launching Operation Barbarossa, Hitler promised Hans Frank that “the Jews would be removed from the *Generalgouvernement* in the near future.”³³ In other words, there would soon be enormous areas available in the East for moving ahead with population transfers on a huge scale. In the Lublin District alone, hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, would have to be “displaced” in order to settle Germans in their stead.

In the first weeks of the eastern campaign, victory seemed to be in the offing. On July 9, 1941, Hitler said to Goebbels: “the war in the East has basically been won. We still have to fight a series of difficult battles, but Bolshevism will not be able to recover from the defeats it has suffered.”³⁴ This suggests that Himmler's decision on July 20, 1941, to Germanize the Lublin District was taken in an atmosphere of premature euphoria over victory and a sense of omnipotence. Clearly Hitler was at least informed about such a historic resolution. On July 27, one week after Himmler's decision, Hitler reportedly was musing about future settlement plans and the settlement of armed German “militia farmers” as a defensive wall in the East.³⁵

During the end of July and the beginning of August 1941, the mood in the *Führer's* headquarters shifted regarding the military situation in the East. On August 1, 1941, a diary entry by Goebbels noted: “People are openly admitting they were a bit mistaken in their assessment of Soviet fighting

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

³⁴ Elke Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels. Teil II. Diktate 1941-1945* (Munich: Saur, 1995), vol. 1, p. 35.

³⁵ Werner Jochmann, ed., *Adolf Hitler. Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941-1944. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims* (Hamburg: Knaus, 1980), p. 48.

power.” Nine days later, on August 10, 1941, Goebbels wrote: “We’re going to have to face some very tough and bloody confrontations until we’ve smashed the Soviet Union.”³⁶ During August, the initial euphoria over imminent victory finally evaporated. Hitler was suffering from an attack of prolonged diarrhoea, terribly disconcerted, as Goebbels noted, by the military developments in the East. No longer did they anticipate a quick victory on the eastern front. In the meantime, Hitler was even hoping to come to some peace accord with Stalin, as long as he could retain the bulk of the conquered territory in the East, something that was “absolutely out of the question” one month earlier. On September 10, Goebbels wrote: “I believe that we gradually have to prepare the people to accept the notion of a prolonged war.... It’s time to finish with all these illusions.”³⁷

In September 1941, Hitler gradually recovered from his initial shock and rallied to a new optimism. His hope was to win important battles before winter descended on the troops, and he was contemplating winter encampments for the Wehrmacht in the East.³⁸ At the beginning of October 1941, Hitler was once more completely certain of ultimate victory, though unable to say exactly when. In a discussion on October 4, Goebbels asked Hitler whether he thought “that Stalin at some point would capitulate.... The *Führer* thinks it possible, though improbable given the present state of affairs.” Hitler went on: “It’s impossible as yet to say what the coming winter may bring. We have to be prepared for any eventuality.” Yet Hitler “came to the clear conclusion that victory would be ours.”³⁹

Expostulating at one of his table talks in the early hours of October 27, Hitler noted: “In order to exploit Europe’s India, the Ukraine, all I need is peace on the western front, not in the East too.... As far as the East is concerned, I have no interest whatsoever in arranging some sort of negotiated end to the war.”⁴⁰ Two weeks later, on November 10, Hitler told Goebbels: “No one can say how long the war against the Soviet Union will last. Whether we’ll ever arrive at

³⁶ Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, vol. 1, pp. 160, 208.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 257-265, 392.

³⁸ Entry for September 24, 1941, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 480-483.

³⁹ Entry for October 4, 1941, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 49-56.

⁴⁰ Jochmann, *Monologe*, p. 110.

some sort of peace is uncertain.... It's conceivable the struggle there will drag on *for years to come*.⁴¹

Though the triumphant euphoria in the *Führer's* headquarters was gone in September and October 1941, the shock of late July and August 1941 had meanwhile been overcome. There was a new optimism that the war could be won after all, even if it would be protracted.

In the meantime, Globocnik was busy at work finalizing preparations for the settlement of ethnic Germans in the Lublin District. In September 1941, the time appeared ripe to put the plans drafted by him and his staff into practice.⁴² Initially, however, the area had to be “cleansed” both of Jews and Poles. The imminent “deportation” of Jews to the East anticipated in the early phase of the war against the Soviet Union had not materialized.

This military situation ruled out any option of deporting hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews to the territory behind the lines of the eastern front. It is virtually inconceivable that the military top echelon would have permitted the deportation of hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of persons into these areas. They would then have been uprooted, homeless, destitute, and with no assured source of food for survival. Deportation to the East was possible only after “resolving the military questions,” as Hitler expressly stated to Goebbels in September.⁴³ Yet even after months and years, no such “resolution” was on the horizon.

Hypothetically, there was another alternative; namely, to carry out a “resettlement” operation within the GG. However, that option was just as impracticable, since the *Generalgouvernement* was saddled with an acute housing shortage. The area was so overcrowded that, in the spring of 1941, for example, the civilian administration had tried unsuccessfully to ghettoise the Jews in the Lublin District.⁴⁴ This was also the reason behind the failure, in 1939-1941, of all the attempts to totally “cleanse” the eastern territories that had been incorporated into the Reich, especially the *Warthegau*, of

⁴¹ Entry for November 10, 1941, Goebbels, *Tagebücher* vol. 2, p. 263 (emphasis added).

⁴² In a letter to Himmler on October 1, 1941, Globocnik stated: “Since preparations have been completed for concentrating [the population], implementation could start immediately.” BA BDC (Globocnik).

⁴³ Entry for September 24, 1941, Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, vol. 1, p. 480.

⁴⁴ Musial, *Zivilverwaltung*, pp. 141-145.

“undesirable elements,” such as Poles or Jews.⁴⁵ The cities and villages in the GG were overcrowded with displaced persons, refugees, and expellees (Poles and Jews). This precluded implementing a “resettlement” inside the GG.

This territorial bottleneck, blocking any “larger-scale” mass resettlement, is confirmed by the following exchange. Franz Rademacher from the Foreign Office asked Eichmann whether there was any option for shipping Serbian Jews to Poland or Russia. On September 13, 1941, he received an unambiguous reply, which he noted in a memorandum: “Residence in Russia and GG impossible. Not even the Jews of Germany can be lodged there. Eichmann proposes shooting.”⁴⁶ It should be stressed here that the Jewish population within the Lublin District, a small area of about 24,000 sq. km, was twice the size of the Jewish population in all of Germany in its 1937 borders. In September 1941, there were some 160,000 Jews in Germany; the number in the Lublin District was some 320,000.⁴⁷

Moreover, a “deportation” of the Jews to the East did not constitute a lasting, long-term solution, because these territories, as envisioned in *Generalplan Ost*, were to be dominated by Germans and gradually colonized and Germanized. Yet for fundamental ideological reasons, there was likewise no room for the Jews in the Greater German Reich. Hitler confirmed this in a remark during his table conversation on October 17, 1941, in connection with the future settlement of the East by German settlers. “The indigenous population? Well, we’ll proceed to sift through them. We’ll completely kick out the destructive Jew.”⁴⁸ Thus, over the short term, continuing hostilities — and, over the longer term, the ideological considerations — ruled out the “deportation” of the Polish and other European Jews to the East.

It was now logical and consistent, from the perspective of Himmler, Globocnik and their ilk, to ponder the prospect of murdering the Polish Jews instead of waiting until they could be deported to the East, since such a removal was, in

⁴⁵ Eisenblätter, *Grundlinien*, pp. 178-194.

⁴⁶ Memorandum, Rademacher, quoted in Browning, *Path*, p. 134; idem, *Der Weg*, p. 114.

⁴⁷ Musial, *Zivilverwaltung*, p. 102; Ino Arndt and Heinz Boberach, “Deutsches Reich,” in Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Dimension des Völkermordes. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1991), p. 36.

⁴⁸ “Den destruktiven Juden setzen wir ganz hinaus.” Jochmann, *Monologe*, p. 90.

any case, ideologically misconceived. One example of this view is Eichmann's September 13, 1941 suggestion to execute the Jews in Serbia on the spot since there was “no room for them” in the GG or Russia. In the late summer of 1941, thinking among the Nazi leadership began to look to a “solution of the Jewish Question” by means of mass murder.

If one considers Globocnik's untiring activism — his adjutant confirms he worked at a phenomenal pace⁴⁹ — it is quite possible that he arrived independently at the idea of killing Jews on the spot. The post war statement by Rudolf Höss cited earlier also suggests this. Since the mass murder of the Soviet Jews was in high gear at this time, the idea to murder the Jews was not new. Moreover, Globocnik was notorious for his brutality and absolute hatred of Jews, which will be referred to below.

Yet in his capacity as Lublin District SSPF, Globocnik could not himself decide on a question of such historic magnitude. As Browning asserts, “there is not the slightest evidence that any major change in Nazi Jewish policy took place without the knowledge and approval of Adolf Hitler.”⁵⁰ In his October 15, 1941 report, Helmut Müller likewise referred to Globocnik's dilemma in realizing his far-reaching plans to Germanize the Lublin District within the confines of his limited power.⁵¹

Yet it was possible for Globocnik to present such a proposal to Himmler, who, as *Reichsführer*-SS and Chief of German Police, was the responsible official. Globocnik's October 1 letter to Himmler should be interpreted as just such a proposal.⁵²

Reichsführer! In line with implementation of your aims regarding the Germanizing of the district, I passed on the *detailed prepared documents* to *Obergruppenführer* Krüger yesterday. SS-*Obergruppenführer* Krüger wished to present them immediately to you. He regarded this as urgent in the light of the emergency in which the ethnic Germans in the *Generalgouvernement* now find themselves. This has taken on such serious proportions that one can easily claim their situation in Polish times was better ... Since preparations for concentrating them are now complete, implementation could

⁴⁹ Interrogation of Max R., May 29, 1968, ZStL 208 AR-Z 74/60, fol. 8685.

⁵⁰ Browning, *Path*, p. 120:

⁵¹ Müller, “Bericht über die Verhältnisse in Lublin.”

⁵² Similar in Witte, “Zwei Entscheidungen,” p. 61, fn. 16; *Dienstkalender Himmlers*, p. 233, n. 35.

commence immediately.... In this connection, I would also like to point out that by bringing them together in concentrated settlements and by a radical and thorough *forced removal of alien ethnic elements* here in the Lublin District, we can achieve a substantial political pacification. Because both the political activism among the Poles and Ukrainians and the influence of the Jews, augmented by the influx of thousands of escaped POWs, have taken on a form that here, too, simply in regard to implications for security policy, necessitates a rapid response.... SS-*Obergruppenführer* Krüger has ordered me to request you, *Reichsführer*, for the possibility of an audience with you in the near future.⁵³

The following points are clear from the letter:

1. Preparations for “Germanizing” the Lublin District personally ordered by Himmler had been completed, except for the “forced removal.” But the “forced removal of alien ethnic elements” was an absolute precondition for the “ingathering” (*Zusammensiedlung*) of ethnic Germans in the district.
2. Plans for “forced removal” and “ingathering” were drafted in Lublin.
3. Globocnik was pressing for a quick decision so as to be able to commence with the “forced removal” and “ingathering” operations. He asked Himmler for an appointment in order to discuss the matter personally. He was granted that appointment, and the questions were indeed discussed, since there is a handwritten note on the document: “disc. orally.”
4. It is not absolutely clear from the document that there were plans to murder Jews. Yet it would be mistaken to expect this to be *explicitly* stated in such an official document that later was placed in Globocnik's personal file. Such matters were strictly confidential.

Himmler probably received Globocnik's letter shortly after October 1. Yet the decision was of such fundamental political importance that Himmler must have presented Globocnik's proposal — doubtless seconding it — to Hitler. From the perspective of the protagonists, this involved a decision of the greatest historical significance, one that could only be taken by the *Führer*. Moreover, the planned measures constituted such a serious encroachment on the ambit of Hans Frank's authority that Himmler had to seek a way either to

⁵³ Globocnik to Himmler, October 1, 1941; BA BDC (Globocnik) (emphasis added).

gain Frank's agreement or to neutralize him.⁵⁴ There is no evidence that Himmler sought consensus with Frank on this question. Yet there are some indications to suggest that, by having Hitler take the decision, Himmler in effect neutralized Frank to some extent.

Other circumstantial evidence also points to a personal decision by Hitler. Hans Frank's comment on October 17, 1941, about a "special assignment" he had been given by Hitler in the Lublin District, probably entailed the murder of the Jews and repopulating the district with Germans. Likewise, it is probably not coincidental that, on that very same day, Hitler mused about the settlement of the East by German settlers, "sifting" the indigenous population, and "completely kicking out" the Jews. He then went on:

There is only one task: to carry out Germanization by bringing in German settlers and to regard the indigenous population as Indians ... My approach to this matter is cold and calculating. I feel I'm acting here only as the agent of a historical will. I'm only sad I'm not a lot younger. Todt, you've also got to expand your program! You'll get the workers.⁵⁵

These remarks indicate that Hitler had been confronted with this question shortly before, and that decisions already had been reached. The phrase "completely kick out the Jews," just like "evacuation across the Bug," indicates the intent for their destruction — which, indeed, then did occur.

Minister Todt evidently took Hitler's instruction to expand his construction program seriously, as was to be expected. Globocnik's adjutant later remarked: "It is noteworthy that *Reichsleiter* Todt, Speer's predecessor, was in constant contact with Globocnik consulting with him about the situation in the East regarding construction schemes in the pipeline."⁵⁶ However, such contacts can only have taken place prior to the end of January 1942, because Todt was killed in an airplane accident on February 2, 1942.⁵⁷ This is an additional indication pointing to Globocnik's bellwether role in plans to Germanize the East.

⁵⁴ On Hans Frank's position as Governor-General, see Musial, *Zivilverwaltung*, pp. 13-20.

⁵⁵ Jochmann, *Monologe*, pp. 90 f. Fritz Todt was the munitions minister and head of the semi-military construction company Organisation Todt.

⁵⁶ Interrogation of Max R., May 29, 1968; ZStL 208 AR-Z 74/60, fol. 8686.

⁵⁷ *Dienstkalender Himmlers*, p. 341.

It should also be stressed that, in Hitler's eyes, a primary war aim against the Soviet Union was to conquer new *Lebensraum* for the German people. As early as 1923, he had written:

...we National Socialists must hold unflinchingly to our aim in foreign policy, namely, *to secure for the German people the land and soil to which they are entitled on this earth*. And this action is the only one which, before God and our German posterity, would make any sacrifice of blood seem justified....

If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only *Russia* and her vassal border states. Here Fate itself seems desirous of giving us a sign. By handing Russia to Bolshevism, it robbed the Russian nation of that intelligentsia which previously brought about and guaranteed its existence as a state.⁵⁸

In a discussion on July 16, 1941, with his closest associates, Hitler stated that a final solution in the war against the Soviet Union was now in the works: "We have to create a Garden of Eden from the newly won eastern territories; they are absolutely vital for us."⁵⁹

What role was set aside for "the destructive Jew" to play in this "Garden of Eden"?⁶⁰ On October 17, 1941, within his fanciful visions for the future in the East, Hitler commented "several times that he would like to be 10 or 15 years younger in order to watch this development unfold."⁶¹ Thus, Globocnik's concrete plans for settlement in the Lublin District amounted to a first attempt to realize Hitler's vision of the future — at least in part.

It is my thesis that, after Hitler took what he believed was a historic decision, Himmler informed Globocnik. On October 13, 1941, there was indeed a two-hour conference in which Himmler, Krüger, and Globocnik participated.⁶² We have no record of what was discussed, but we can assume that the

⁵⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. by Ralph Mannheim (London: Hutchinson & CO, 1969), pp. 596-598 (emphasis added).

⁵⁹ "Aufzeichnungen Bormanns über die Besprechung Hitlers mit seinen Mitarbeitern über die Ziele im Krieg gegen die UdSSR, 16.Juli.1941," in *Internationaler Militärgerichtshof. Der Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher (Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal: Official Text)*, 42 vols. (Nuremberg, 1947-49) (hereafter, *IMT*), vol. XXXVIII, p. 88; Czesław Madajczyk, ed., *Vom Generalplan Ost zum Generalsiedlungsplan* (Munich: Saur, 1994), pp. 61-64.

⁶⁰ Browning, *Path*, p. 105.

⁶¹ "Notiz des persönlichen Referenten von Alfred Rosenberg, Dr. Koeppen, über das Gespräch mit Hitler am 17. Oktober 1941," in Madajczyk, *Generalplan Ost*, pp. 22 f.

⁶² Entry for October 13, 1941, *Dienstkalender Himmlers*, p. 233.

resettlement of the Germans and the murder of the Jews were both broached and given some sort of approval. The Higher SS and Police Leader (HSSPF) Krüger took part in the consultation both because he was Globocnik's direct superior and because the nature of the measures discussed involved the entire GG, for which Krüger was responsible.

However, the fact that this discussion took place on October 13, also means that Hitler must have reached his decision several days after October 1, but before October 13. If we can believe Goebbels, who met with him on October 4, Hitler was in excellent spirits during this period: "He looks superb and his mood is exuberantly optimistic. He simply radiates optimism." At the same time though, Hitler did not want to pin himself down as to a date for the final victory over the Soviet Union.⁶³ He thus was in a mood that could certainly tempt him to decisions aimed at the practical realization of his visions for the future.

Hans Frank, who was in the Reich October 1-14, must also have learned during this time of the decision Hitler seems to have taken.⁶⁴ After all, he was Governor-General and thus personally responsible to the *Führer* for everything that occurred in the territory of the GG. This fits well with the discussion on October 17 in Lublin and Frank's casual mention that day of his "special assignment" from the *Führer*.

Yet the discussion between Frank and Rosenberg can be read as contradicting the above supposition. If Frank knew that the Jews were slated to be murdered on the spot, then why did he ask Rosenberg whether it might be possible to deport the Jews from the GG to the East? Perhaps Frank felt in a sense "uneasy" about the prospect of murdering "his" Jews directly on the spot, in the GG, leading him to attempt to have them "deported" to the East, and even contacting Rosenberg personally with this in mind. In his notorious speech on December 16, 1941, Frank alluded to Rosenberg's refusal: "We were told in Berlin: why all this trouble? We can't do anything with them in the *Ostland* or the *Reichskommissariat* either. So liquidate them yourselves!"⁶⁵ Under these circumstances, Frank evidently could see no other alternative

⁶³ Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, vol. 2, pp. 49, 52, 55 f.

⁶⁴ Präg and Jacobmeyer, *Diensttagebuch*, pp. 410-413.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

except to bow to the *Führer's* order. For example, in a speech on March 4, 1944, to his closest associates, he stated: “Just call to mind what a horribly difficult task we had to take upon ourselves in order to solve the Jewish problem.”⁶⁶

It appears that the principal motive for Hitler, Himmler, and Globocnik to “remove” the Jews from the Lublin District and the entire GG at that point in time was bound up with the visions for future settlement. In order to “Germanize” Lublin and other areas, these first had to be “cleansed” of Jews and then of Poles. What were decisive here were the race-political factor and the paranoid hatred of the Jews, which completely ruled out any option for the continued existence of the Jews in areas under German control.

Other factors also infused the October 1941 decision with added dynamism. The mass murder of the Soviet Jews was in high gear at this point, making a decision in favour of the mass liquidation of the Jews no novelty. The threshold to mass murder had already been crossed. A compounding factor was the resettlement of the Volga Germans and the imminent catastrophe with regard to the food supply, as the signs were now clearly visible.

At the beginning of September 1941, the Soviet leadership announced it was resettling approximately 400,000 Volga Germans to Siberia and Kazakhstan, “since the possibility cannot be excluded that there are fifth columnists in their ranks.”⁶⁷ Hypocritically, Goebbels branded this measure “indeed one of the greatest national dramas history has ever witnessed.”⁶⁸ However, in the paranoid worldview of the Nazis, the Bolsheviks, now busy deporting the Volga Germans to Siberia, were scum to be equated with the Jews. They thus accused the Jews of some complicity in this measure.

At the same time, there were ever-more evident signs, especially in the eastern territories under German control, of the threat of starvation. On October 9, 1941, Goebbels noted in his diary: “the food supply situation in the occupied territories is taking such a catastrophic turn that it increasingly threatens to overshadow all other considerations.” On October 17, he wrote: “Over a large part of Europe, there looms for the coming winter the terrible

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 810.

⁶⁷ *Völkischer Beobachter*, September 11, 1941.

⁶⁸ Entry for September 9, 1941, *Goebbels Tagebücher*, vol. 1, p. 384.

cloud of famine.”⁶⁹ At that day’s GG government session in Lublin, Frank said that “provision of food” was the major problem in all districts of the *Generalgouvernement*.⁷⁰ Yet most of the approximately 2.5 million Jews in the GG were, from the German standpoint, “useless mouths to feed,” since they were not deployed in the German war economy. In his December 16 speech, Frank even accused the Jews in the GG of being “noxious gluttons.”⁷¹

The spiralling death rate among the hundreds of thousands of Soviet POWs who had been left to die a miserable death by starvation and its associated illnesses in the prisoner camps of the Wehrmacht was also a factor. On October 17, Goebbels wrote: “There are catastrophes of starvation there that simply defy description.”⁷² It is a short leap from there to the murder of hundreds of thousands of hated and despised Jewish women, children, and men who were “unfit for labour.” After all, the Soviet soldiers who were basically able-bodied and fit to work had also been left to die of starvation. An unambiguous statement by Hitler on January 25, 1942 also points in this direction: “Why should I look at a Jew differently from the way I see a Russian POW? Many are dying in the prisoner camps because we’ve been forced into this situation by the Jews.”⁷³

Whereas, in September and October 1941, there was a coalescence of circumstances and events that, compounded with the paranoid hatred of the Jews, provided a justification from the viewpoint of Hitler and his minions for the murder of Polish Jews, initially it was necessary to “limit” operations to Polish Jews. The time was not yet ripe for murdering German Jews, because there were apprehensions about possible resistance within certain strata of the German population, such as intellectual circles or the church.⁷⁴ In any case, it was imperative to avoid any unnecessary unrest. Goebbels, doubtless one of the best-informed men in the entire Reich in this regard, angrily wrote in his diary on October 28, 1941:

⁶⁹ Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 82, 133.

⁷⁰ AGK *Diensttagebuch*, vol. XVII/1, p. 29.

⁷¹ Präg and Jacobmeyer, *Diensttagebuch*, p. 458.

⁷² Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, vol. 2, p. 132.

⁷³ Jochmann, *Monologe*, p. 229.

⁷⁴ Hans Mommsen, “What Did the Germans Know about the Genocide of the Jews?,” in Walter H. Pehle, ed., *November 1938. From “Kristallnacht” to Genocide* (New York: Berg, 1991), p. 205.

Our intellectual and social strata have suddenly rediscovered their sentiments of humanity for the poor Jews. ... The Jews just need to send a little old lady with the Star of David badge hobbling down the Kurfürstendamm and the plain honest German [*der deutsche Michel*] is already inclined to forget everything the Jews have inflicted on us over the past years and decades. But not us, we cannot forget! ... Before the year is over, we have to try to remove the last remaining Jews from Berlin. ... Whether I'll succeed I don't yet know because the Jews can still find powerful protectors in the highest offices of the Reich. It is curious what a lack of good healthy instinct still exists in our social and intellectual circles when it comes to the Jewish Question.⁷⁵

It was thus anticipated that opposition to the murder of German Jews would be far greater than opposition “just” against the law for the obligatory Star of David badge introduced in September 1941, or against an expulsion. It was precisely in August 1941 that the government had been constrained to call a halt to the Euthanasia Program (Operation T-4) in order to placate the outraged German population. Here was an evident gap between aims to liquidate the Jews and options for translating that into practical reality. Hitler and his intimates were aware that the murder of German Jews had to be carried out “unobtrusively.” An example of that perspective is the indirectly attested remark by Himmler to Viktor Brack regarding the murder of the Jews (probably on December 14, 1941): “For purposes of concealment alone, it ought to be done as quickly as possible.”⁷⁶

But in September 1941, it was still unclear in Berlin how that could be effected. By contrast, the East, with the GG included, was an area unencumbered by the rule of law. With its indigenous population paralysed by permanent terror, there the Nazis could manage things as they saw fit.

Extermination Camps with Stationary Gas Chambers –

A Prerequisite for Implementing the Murder of the Jews in the GG

One of the primary prerequisites that initially facilitated the concrete decision regarding the mass murder of the Jews in the GG was a new and efficient

⁷⁵ Goebbels, *Tagebücher*, vol. 2, pp. 194 f.

⁷⁶ Brack to Himmler, June 23, 1942, BA BDC (Globocnik); see also Nuremberg doc. NO-205. On the dating of Himmler's statement, cf. *Dienstkalender Himmlers*, p. 290, fn. 48.

technology for murder, the stationary gas chambers. Utilizing previously employed mass-murder methods — i.e., shooting — it would have proved difficult to implement the mass liquidation in the GG. After all, the task involved the murder of millions of persons, as inconspicuously as possible, with the use of limited personnel. The *technical* problem as to how to implement the mass murder was extremely significant.

In the occupied Soviet territories, Jews were slaughtered en masse under the pretext of combating partisans, and large numbers of personnel were necessary for the executions. Such numbers were not available in the GG, nor was there any war going on against partisans. When Stalin, on July 3, 1941, publicly called for a partisan war to be waged behind the German front lines, Hitler also could find some “positive” sides to that call to arms. Thus, on July 16, 1941, he remarked: “This war against partisans has some advantages too; it gives us a convenient possibility to liquidate those who are against us.”⁷⁷ From the Nazi perspective, the Soviet Jews were enemies in a double sense — racially as Jews and ideologically as putative Bolsheviks.

Moreover, shootings were an exhausting, physical burden for the shooters. When Himmler witnessed an execution in Minsk in mid-August of 1941, he is reported to have said: “That’s not how it’s done.” Then he is reported to have ordered Arthur Nebe, head of Einsatzgruppe B, to search for more “humane” methods of killing that would place less of a burden on the personnel pulling the trigger.⁷⁸

Yet the use of gassing vans was no substantial relief as far as the perpetrators were concerned. Due to the relatively low killing capacity of such facilities, the procedure would have taken too long. This means that, in the late summer of 1941, none of the customary murder techniques previously used was practicable under the given circumstances as an effective means for disposing of approximately 2.5 million Jews in the GG. That “dilemma” was

⁷⁷ “Aufzeichnungen Bormanns über die Besprechung Hitlers mit seinen Mitarbeitern über die Ziele des Krieges gegen die Sowjetunion, 16. Juli. 1941” in *IMT*, vol. XXXVIII, p. 88.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Ogorreck, *Einsatzgruppen*, p. 182; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, p. 442; Breitmann, *Architect*, pp. 191-194; Eichmann described to Rudolf Höss the mass executions of Soviet prisoners by Einsatzkommandos: “There were reported to have been horrific scenes; the wounded trying to run away, the killing of the wounded, especially women and children.... Most members of these mobile killing units took a bit of alcohol to help get over this gruesome work.” Notes of Rudolf Höss: “*Meine Psyche. Werden, Leben und Erleben* (1946-1947),” AGK Archivum Jana Sehná 22, fol. 127.

reflected in Frank's December 16, 1941, remark to a session of the GG government: "We cannot shoot these 3.5 million [sic] Jews, we cannot poison them. Yet we'll be able to take measures to destroy them that will somehow result in success."⁷⁹

The idea of building stationary gas chambers, which, in sheer efficiency and capacity, exceeded by far anything previously available, thus emerged as "the" solution. Death camps with stationary gas chambers were the technical prerequisite for the "Final Solution." As Browning writes: "The extermination camps equipped with gassing facilities were not, after all, an obvious invention, immediately self-evident the moment Hitler decided to kill the Jews."⁸⁰

In other words, the development of stationary gas chambers preceded the *concrete decision* for the mass murder of Polish and European Jewry — not vice versa. On the other hand, the *will* for mass murder was a precondition for the development of the gas chambers. This is no contradiction, as there is a clear distinction between intentions (or the resolve) and the practical possibilities for their realization. Situational and cognitive factors in the decision-making process leading up to the "Final Solution" were mutually contingent. Far too much importance is attached to the historiographical controversy between the "intentionalists" and "functionalists," and I am in basic agreement with Browning, who deals in detail with this question in his book *The Path to Genocide*.⁸¹

The idea of employing stationary gas chambers for the mass murder of the Jews must have arisen in September 1941, at the latest, because, by the end of October 1941, construction had begun on such installations at the Bełżec death camp. It is also possible that this idea was developed in Lublin. There is circumstantial evidence and other considerations to support that hypothesis.

Dieter Wisliceny, a close associate of Eichmann, commented in 1946: "According to Eichmann's own statements to me, Globocnik was the first to employ gas chambers for mass extermination."⁸² Eichmann himself stated for

⁷⁹ Präg and Jacobmeyer, *Dienstagebuch*, p. 458.

⁸⁰ Browning, *Path*, p. 117; idem, *Der Weg*, p. 100.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.86-121.

⁸² Dieter Wisliceny, "Bericht: Die Bearbeitung der jüdischen Probleme durch die Sicherheitspolizei und den SD bis 1939," November 18, 1946, IfZ Fa 164 (Wisliceny), p. 8.

the record in Jerusalem that Heydrich had informed him two to three months after the attack on the Soviet Union: “the *Führer* has ordered the physical destruction of the Jews.” He also said that Heydrich had given him the following order: “Go to Globocnik. The *Reichsführer* SS has already given him appropriate instructions. See how far he's gotten with the project.”⁸³

I believe Eichmann was mistaken in dating the order for the murder of all Jews to the summer of 1941 - an error explicable by the distance in time from the event. But it is improbable that he was wrong about the event's “core”; namely, that he should inspect the technology of murder by gas chamber being set up by Globocnik - which he did after Hitler had given the order for all Jews to be murdered.

Rudolf Höss also reports that annihilation camps were already in existence in the GG when Himmler ordered him to build extermination facilities in Auschwitz.⁸⁴ Work on the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp was not started until May 1942.⁸⁵ At that juncture the death camps Belżec and Sobibór were already operational.

It should be recalled in this connection that, at about the same time, though independently of each other, the decision was taken for the systematic murder of the Jews in the *Warthegau* and in the GG. The fact that different murder methods were developed in each place indicates that the idea for death camps with stationary gas chambers had been developed locally in Lublin. Of the five death camps with stationary gas chambers - Belżec, Sobibór, Treblinka, Majdanek, and Auschwitz - four were under Globocnik's overall command.

In addition, it is difficult to imagine that when, on October 1, 1941, Globocnik requested permission for “forced removal” of the population, he had no concrete idea as to how he might carry it out. Deportation to the East at this

⁸³ Jochen von Lang, ed., *Das Eichmann-Protokoll. Tonbandaufzeichnungen der israelischen Verhöre* (Berlin: Severin und Siedler, 1982), pp. 82 f.

⁸⁴ Jean-Claude Pressac, *Die Krematorien von Auschwitz. Die Technik des Massenmordes* (Munich: Piper, 1994), pp. 51-55, fn. 132; Karin Orth, “Rudolf Höss und die ‘Endlösung der Judenfrage’. Drei Argumente gegen deren Datierung auf den Sommer 1941,” *WerkstattGeschichte* 18 (1997), pp. 52 f.

⁸⁵ Pressac, *Die Krematorien von Auschwitz*, pp. 48-50; the first murders by poison gas took place in December 1941; *ibid.*, pp. 41 f.; *idem*, with Robert-Jan van Pelt, “The Machinery of Mass Murder at Auschwitz,” in Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum, eds., *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 183-245.

junction, as we already described, was impracticable for military reasons and misconceived for ideological ones. Resettlement within the GG was likewise out of the question, since there was no expendable territory available there. Moreover, when Globocnik received the desired “authorization” to push ahead with “forced removal” on October 13, 1941, there were evidently already detailed draft plans in Lublin for construction of the extermination camp. Globocnik's October 1 letter to Himmler mentioned “*ausgearbeitete Unterlagen*” — detailed prepared documents. At the end of that month, construction commenced on the Belżec facility.⁸⁶

A post-war statement by Ferdinand Hahnzog, then commandant of the gendarmerie (rural police) in the Lublin District, supports the argument that the mass-murder method of using stationary gas chambers was developed in Lublin. He reported on “a primitive facility near Belżec hidden deep in the forest bordering on Galicia ... consisting of a sealed shed into which the Security Police and the SD from Zamość pumped exhaust fumes from the vehicles used to bring the ‘*morituri*’ there!” These experiments had been carried out already “in the spring of 1941, if not earlier, in the fall of 1940.”⁸⁷ Experiments with new techniques of murder were certainly nothing unusual at the time. Similar “experiments” went on in Minsk or Mogilev in the summer of 1941.⁸⁸

Thus, Globocnik's staff of experts from various fields at work on individual “projects” were already pondering this method of mass murder by the summer of 1941 at the latest. In addition, he himself had the requisite background. In the 1920s, he had graduated from the Higher State Institute for Mechanical Engineering and had worked as a site engineer and supervisor on various construction sites.⁸⁹ Since 1939, in his capacity as SSPF in Lublin, he had been occupied with systematic murder. This means that he brought both theoretical knowledge and practical experience to this new project. His

⁸⁶ Witte, “Zwei Entscheidungen,” p. 61, fn. 16; Pohl, *Judenpolitik*, p. 100; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, p. 455.

⁸⁷ “Zustände und Begebenheiten im Distrikt Lublin des Generalgouvernements von Januar 1940 bis April 1942 aufgrund persönlicher Erinnerungen von Ferdinand Hahnzog, Juli 1962,” HStA, Nds, 721 Hild, Acc 39/91, no. 28/113, fol. 245. Hahnzog remained in Lublin from January 1940 to April 1942. Data in his other statements is generally reliable and correct.

⁸⁸ Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, pp. 442-445 (Minsk); Ogorreck, *Einsatzgruppen*, pp. 211-214 (Minsk and Mogilev); Breitman, *Architect*, pp. 196 f.
⁸⁹ Pucher, *In der Bewegung*, p. 22.

adjutant Max R. was strongly impressed by Globocnik's abilities: "I was quite astonished about his knowledge in the most diverse fields, whether political, technical or geographical."⁹⁰

Gerlach believes that the construction of Bełżec was an attempt "to experiment with methods for mass extermination of Jews by poison gas in stationary gas chambers then carry out the first efforts."⁹¹ However, several considerations speak against the experimental character of the Bełżec facility. If it indeed had been experimental, then less time and energy would have been invested in it. Dr. Janusz Peter, a member of the Polish resistance movement from Tomaszów Lubelski, 7 kilometers from Bełżec, reported as an eyewitness regarding the origins of the death camp in Bełżec. Initially, so-called *Askaris*⁹² arrived in Bełżec, along with Germans dressed in the uniform of regular police. Then

...the camp commandant's office hired local workers whose job was to cut down the trees in a wooded area at the end of a dead track, build a sidetrack and replace the rotted sleepers. After a square had been cleared in the wooded area and fenced in with barbed wire, the hired carpenters and bricklayers went to work ... At the end of January 1942, all civilian workers were let go and the *Askaris* took over completion of the work.⁹³

This description seems to contradict the argument that Bełżec was experimental. The area fenced in during the autumn of 1941 was not expanded later on; only the gas chambers were dismantled and replaced by larger ones, as will be discussed below. A simple building would have been sufficient for an experimental facility, which could have been guarded and concealed with far less expenditure on manpower. If so much effort were invested, then they must have already had concrete conceptions that this method of killing was practicable and, in particular, efficient.

⁹⁰ Interrogation of Max R., ZStL; 208 AR-Z 74/60, fol. 8686.

⁹¹ Gerlach, "Wannsee-Konferenz," p. 43.

⁹² These were former Soviet POWs that had been trained in the Trawniki camp near Lublin and had later been deployed for action in the framework of Operation Reinhard. That is why they are also termed Trawniki men.

⁹³ Janusz Peter, *Tomaszowskie za okupacji* (Tomaszów Lubelski: Tomaszowskie Towarzystwo Regionalne, 1991), pp. 188 f.

It is clear that Globocnik, who was a fierce antisemite, had no qualms about mass murder. In April 1941, his direct superior in the GG, HSSPF Krüger, gave the following assessment: Globocnik “grasped intellectually the magnitude and greatness of the tasks facing us” and possessed “the resolute mercilessness” necessary to *commence with* these tasks and *carry them out*.⁹⁴ SS-Gruppenführer von Herff had an analogous evaluation:

Little concerned about external appearance, *fanatically obsessed with the task*.... One of the best and most vigorous pioneers in the GG. Responsible, courageous, a man of action. His daredevil character often leads him to overstep the given limits and to forget the boundaries laid down within the [SS] Order, although not for reasons of personal ambition, but rather due to his *obsession* with the cause.⁹⁵

Himmler also praised Globocnik for his “enormous energy and dynamism ... a man made like no other for the tasks of colonization in the East.”⁹⁶

There is no doubt that, by the fall of 1941, Globocnik and his henchmen had long since crossed the psychological threshold to mass murder. We might wonder whether he had any threshold of inhibition. An obsessed fanatic, ready to risk his own freedom and life for a delusive idea, he most likely had even fewer scruples when it came to sacrificing the freedom and lives of persons he despised and hated for the sake of his ideology.⁹⁷ From his perspective, these individuals were a hindrance blocking the path to the realization of his “visions.”

The question arises: did the decision of early October 1941 to murder the Jews apply only to the Lublin District, or to the entire area of the GG? Gerlach assumes that the decision to construct the annihilation camp in Belzec cannot be equated with the decision to murder all the Jews in the GG, since the original “killing capacity” of this death camp was insufficient. He agrees in this assessment with Dieter Pohl, who hypothesizes that Globocnik’s task was increasingly expanded later on.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Krüger to Himmler, April 2, 1941. BA BDC (Globocnik).

⁹⁵ Note of assessment in connection with the official trip by SS-Gruppenführer von Herff through the *Generalgouvernement* in May 1943; *ibid.* (emphasis added).

⁹⁶ Himmler to Wendler, August 4, 1943, *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Before the incorporation of Austria (*Anschluss*) into the Reich, Globocnik served eleven months in jail for political activity in the NSDAP; see Pucher, *In der Bewegung*, pp. 22-30.

⁹⁸ Gerlach, “Wannsee-Konferenz,” p. 9; Pohl, *Judenpolitik*, p. 101.

In contrast, my argument is that there was an expectation already in October 1941 that the destruction of the Jews throughout the entire GG would soon commence. On October 21, 1941, the construction of new ghettos in the Galicia District was forbidden, “since there are hopes the Jews can be deported from the *Generalgouvernement* in the near future.”⁹⁹ Yet an actual “deportation” of Jews to the East at this time was, for military considerations, out of the question.

In October 1941, Globocnik probably also assumed that the Jews were to be murdered throughout the GG and not just in the Lublin District. The earlier cited report by Helmut Müller on October 15, 1941 points in that direction. Müller reported that Globocnik “considered it necessary gradually to empty all of the GG of Jews and Poles in order to bolster the security of the eastern territories.”¹⁰⁰ In Globocnik's view, the entire GG was to be best regarded as an “internal German area” that “consequently would soon be populated 100 percent by Germans...Inside the GG, population policy is thus closed.”¹⁰¹ So Globocnik was at least contemplating the future prospect of “removing” all Jews from the GG in order to be able to Germanize the area.

The argument that the “killing capacity” of the Belżec camp was insufficient for murdering all Jews from the GG over a brief span is not persuasive. According to figures arrived at by Janina Kielboń, a total of nearly 58,000 Jews were gassed there between March 15 and 31, 1942.¹⁰² Höfle, one of Globocnik's close associates, stated, on March 16, 1942, that he could “handle 4-5 transports a day of 1,000 Jews each for the final destination Belżec.”¹⁰³ At the opening of the extermination facilities at Belżec, the perpetrators thus expected to be able to murder 4-5,000 Jews per day. This

⁹⁹ Präg and Jacobmeyer, *Das Diensttagebuch*, p. 436; the ban on the construction of new ghettos in the GG was issued in July 1941; in September 1941, the Galicia District evidently was granted a special permit. Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996), p. 141.

¹⁰⁰ Helmut Müller, “Bericht über die Verhältnisse in Lublin,” October 15, 1941.

¹⁰¹ “Globocniks Stellungnahme zur der Frage: ‘Behandlung Fremdvölkischer.’” March 15, 1943; AGK NTN 255, fols. 210 f.

¹⁰² Janina Kielboń, *Migracje ludności w dystryktie lubelskim w latach 1939 – 1944* (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 1995), pp. 149, 170.

¹⁰³ Memorandum, Reuter, March 17, 1942, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie (APL), GDL 270, fol. 34.

was quite adequate for the planned “gradual emptying of all of the GG of Jews.”

Before Operation Reinhard was launched, the murderers could assume that, within the course of two years, the roughly 2.5 million Jews in the GG could be put to death at Bełżec. In mid-June 1942, the original gas chambers were torn down, and new, large ones were erected in their place.¹⁰⁴ This suggests that the perpetrators did not determine the actual, limited “killing capacity” of the Bełżec facility until it had become operational.

In addition, it cannot be ruled out that first preparations for constructing the death camp at Sobibór were made simultaneous with the building of the Bełżec extermination camp. Several historians, such as Jules Schelvis, now accept this view: “Roughly at the same time as the construction of Bełżec, the first activities in Sobibór that outsiders could note commenced in the fall of 1941.”¹⁰⁵

This is corroborated by Ferdinand Hahnzog, who reported that first there were “experiments” with gas chambers in Bełżec. Then, in October 1941, an unprecedented auditing of his office was undertaken by SS-*Standartenführer* Walther Griphan, the new commandant of the regular police in the Lublin District and a colonel in the municipal police (Schupo). After the audit, Griphan took Hahnzog aside

...to explain quite plainly that the moment had now arrived for settling accounts with all enemies of the Reich — Poles, Jews and even Germans! ... This first shock was soon followed by a second: probably in November 1941, once again completely unprecedented, I was ordered, just as suddenly and unexpectedly, to report to Globocnik himself. He introduced me to a young SS leader who had been given the job of setting up the Sobibór camp and wanted the support of the gendarmerie office in Włodawa for that purpose.¹⁰⁶

Hahnzog's report is unambiguous — provided he is describing events that actually took place. The report seems credible, since all other data given by Hahnzog are reliable and correct insofar as can be ascertained based on a

¹⁰⁴ Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 73.

¹⁰⁵ Jules Schelvis, *Vernichtungslager Sobibór* (Berlin: Metropol, 1998), pp. 37 f.; similar in Witte, “Zwei Entscheidungen,” p. 61, fn. 16; Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, p. 455.

¹⁰⁶ Hahnzog, “Zustände und Begebenheiten,” pp. 245 f.

comparison with contemporary documentation and other witnesses' testimony. Another striking aspect of this report is its relatively exact reconstruction of the chronology of events, which Hahnzog was able to recall in connection with the associated incidents. Finally, in his capacity as commandant of the gendarmerie in the Lublin District, Hahnzog was doubtlessly well informed about the events transpiring there. After all, he was a member of SSPF Odilo Globocnik's staff.

If two annihilation camps were under simultaneous construction in the Lublin District in the fall of 1941, the intended aim was not only to liquidate Jews from the Lublin District. It can also be argued — although this may sound more macabre — that, if necessary, it would have been possible to carry out the murder of the Jews in the Lublin District by using the methods of killing that had been employed until then. This was done, for example, in the *Warthegau*, and the number of Jews in the *Warthegau* and in the Lublin District was roughly the same.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the decisions to murder them were reached at about the same time. But for the millions of Jews living in the GG, it was necessary to come up with something “special.”

In addition, if one assumes that the concrete decision to murder the Jews in the Lublin District directly triggered the settlement measures planned there, then the physical destruction of these Jews would not have constituted a definitive final solution. The Jews represented only one segment of those in the Lublin District who were now slated for “forcible removal.” In addition to the 40,000 Jews in the city of Lublin, there were some 100,000 Poles who also had to disappear. In the entire district, there were more than 300,000 Jews; yet there were also some 1.8 million Poles and 300,000 Ukrainians.¹⁰⁸ Murdering only the Jews in the district would not have opened the necessary territorial space in order to be able to displace hundreds of thousands of persons in the Lublin District (or even throughout the entire GG) in a short time and thus effect a successful “forced removal” of the population. As in the

¹⁰⁷ According to estimates by Frank Golczewski, there were some 260,000 Jews in the *Warthegau* and 250,000 in the Lublin District; see Frank Golczewski, “Polen,” in Benz, ed., *Dimension des Völkermordes*, p. 457. However, my estimate is that there were some 320,000 Jews living in the Lublin District. I was unable to check the figures given for the *Warthegau*; Musial, *Zivilverwaltung*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁸ “Konfessionelle Gliederung der Bevölkerung des Distrikts Lublin nach dem Stande 9.12.1931 (Schätzung)”; APL, GDL 728, fol. 8.

case of the Jews, a quick deportation of Poles to the East on short notice was likewise out of the question. There can be no doubt that Globocnik and Himmler were well aware of these problems.

This dilemma became especially clear in connection with the trial run “forced removal” of the population of six villages in the vicinity of Zamość carried out in November 1941. The 2,089 expelled Polish farmers were initially brought to Zamość. From there they were transported to villages in Hrubieszów county (*Kreis*) along the Bug River. But the German military is reported to have voiced opposition to their deportation further east because it did not wish to have the hostile Poles in the rear of the eastern front. The expellees were then left to their fate and permitted to go where they chose. Of course, a return to their home villages was out of the question, since ethnic Germans had in the meantime been settled there.¹⁰⁹ If the relocation of a mere 2,000 expellees had spawned so many difficulties, then far greater ones could be expected in connection with the planned “removal” of hundreds of thousands, indeed millions.

This means that the imminent demographic displacements associated only with the settlement schemes in the Lublin District presupposed large areas of open territory that simply did not exist in the fall of 1941. By contrast, the murder of all Jews in the GG promised to open up such territory. The plan was to deport the able-bodied Poles to the Reich as forced labourers and to house those unfit to work in the evacuated ghettos.

The events of the autumn of 1942 prove that this was no mere speculation. At that time, operations got underway to “empty” the by-now “de-Judaized” city of Lublin of its Polish population as well. The Poles marked for removal from the city of Lublin were to be placed in the emptied ghettos in Puławy county and in the northern parts of Lublin-Land county. In a memorandum dated October 15, 1942, it was noted: “In both these counties, it is not yet possible to bring in Poles immediately, since the resettlement of Jews is still underway.”¹¹⁰ At the

¹⁰⁹ Expert opinion by Dr. Zygmunt Klukowski, January 27, 1950; AGK SAL 193/3, fols. 614 f. Klukowski was a physician, historian and member of the Polish resistance movement from Szczepreszyn, near Zamość. On the difficulties with housing “expellees” in November 1941, cf. several contemporary documents published in Madajczyk, *Zamojszczyzna*, vol. 1, pp. 49-52.

¹¹⁰ Memorandum, October 15, 1942; AGK OKBZH Lublinie 257, fols. 1 f.

beginning of October 1942, Brandt, *Kreishauptmann* in Puławy, declared that Opole along with Kudl could also be filled immediately if the 8,000 Jews still located there could be removed.”¹¹¹ In the fall of 1942, however, relatively few Lublin Poles (approximately 3,000) were relocated, due to the associated economic difficulties that entailed. On November 23, 1942, Globocnik and Lublin *Stadthauptmann* Dr. Curt Engländer agreed that “in keeping with circumstances, the pace of resettlement can now be significantly reduced so as to avoid harming the Lublin economy.”¹¹²

The difference in the treatment of Poles vs. Jews is principally attributable to ideology. Poles were urgently needed as “slave labour” back in the Reich, a role attributed to them by Nazi ideology. In contrast, a permanent presence of Jews within the territories controlled by the German Reich was, for ideological reasons, out of the question. Nevertheless, there are indications that there were already ideas being broached to liquidate the “useless” Poles (i.e., those unfit for labor) from the areas designated for repopulation by Germans. That intended aim prompted Dr. Hagen, a German doctor in Warsaw, to write directly to Hitler on December 7, 1942:

In a government discussion on combating tuberculosis, the head of the Department of Population and Welfare, *Oberverwaltungsrat* Weihrauch, disclosed to us the secret state information that, in connection with the removal and resettlement of 200,000 Poles in the eastern part of the *Generalgouvernement* in order to make room for the settlement of armed farmers, there was a definite plan or the idea was being given consideration: namely to deal with about a third of the Poles, some 70,000 elderly people and children under the age of 10, as the Jews had been dealt with, i.e. to kill them. ... *The idea of such action against the Poles probably arose because there seems at the moment to be no room for the Poles slated for removal* — unless they can be deployed directly in the armaments industry.¹¹³

In October 1941, this same idea could well have played a similar role in connection with the envisaged murder of Jews in the Lublin District. In the fall of 1941, there was even less space for the Jews from Lublin or Zamość than for Poles. By the end of the autumn of 1942, ghettos in the GG either stood

¹¹¹ Memorandum, October 14, 1942; *ibid.*, fol. 3. The *Kreishauptmann* was the principal official in the county administration.

¹¹² Memorandum on the discussion of November 23, 1942; *ibid.*, fols. 35 f.

¹¹³ Hagen to Hitler, December 7, 1942 (copy); AGK NTN 412, fol. 3 (emphasis added).

empty or had been partially evacuated. However, the plan to kill the “useless” Poles probably had to be scrapped for two reasons: first, the situation on the eastern front deteriorated dramatically at the end of 1942; second, there were fears of a general revolt, and there were already first inklings of this possibility in the resettlement areas. But the entire supply and reinforcement route for the eastern front ran directly through occupied Poland and would be endangered by a revolt.

The Change in the Absolute Annihilation Order for the Murder of the European Jews, Spring 1942

Let us summarize the findings briefly once again. The concrete decision to murder the Jews in the GG was taken at the beginning of October 1941. That decision presupposed the development of annihilation camps equipped with stationary gas chambers. On the other hand, the *will* for the mass murder was a precondition for the employment of gas chambers. The mass murder of 2.5 million Jews in the GG had to be carried out swiftly, inconspicuously, and with a limited number of personnel. The destruction of Soviet Jewry, in high gear at this time, was carried out under the pretext of the so-called war against the partisans and by employing a relatively large number of personnel, which was unavailable in the GG. The development of stationary gas chambers in the extermination camps was also the prerequisite for the later decision to murder all the Jews in Europe. As Gerlach convincingly argues, Hitler announced that decision on December 13, 1941.

If Hitler's decision to murder all the Jews in Europe was an absolute order for destruction, as Hartog and Gerlach contend, then that dictate was, I believe, altered in the spring of 1942. Initially, only Jews “unfit for labour” were to be liquidated. During the deportations to the annihilation camps in the Lublin District in the period from March to the summer of 1942, not all Jews were deported to the gas chambers. Rather, initially, there was a relatively costly selection process separating between the able-bodied and those unfit for labour, where the former as a rule were permitted to remain in their places of residence. Those “unfit for labour,” by contrast, were sent to be gassed. This procedure was also in keeping with the interests of the civilian

administration there, which was pressing for the “deportation” of Jews “unfit for labour.” At the same time, the bureaucracy had repeatedly and unambiguously voiced the desire, most particularly within the labour administration, initially to retain those “fit to work.” It should be expressly underscored once more that in the Lublin District and throughout the GG, the overwhelming majority of Jews were classified as “unfit for labour” according to the Nazi criteria prevalent at the time (in the Lublin District, some 80 percent).¹¹⁴ If the intention at this time had been to murder all Jews without exception, then it is not clear why this elaborate and costly selection process was carried out, instead of just systematically evacuating all the ghettos one after the other.

This thesis is no mere speculation, jumping to questionable conclusions based on the limited perspective of a regional study. Postwar statements by Dieter Wisliceny and Rudolf Höss, who played a leading and super-regional role in the “Final Solution,” also point in this direction. In 1946, Wisliceny testified:

I am convinced that Hitler's decision ordering the biological destruction of the Jews must have fallen in the period after the beginning of the war with the United States.... Himmler, either on his own initiative or at a suggestion from [Oswald] Pohl, exempted able-bodied Jews from biological destruction; he wished to deploy them as slave labourers in the large factories in the concentration camps.¹¹⁵

Wisliceny stated that, in the summer of 1942, Eichmann showed him Himmler's spring 1942 order regarding the “exemption of able-bodied Jews.”¹¹⁶ Rudolf Höss's statement, written in prison in Krakow, is in basic agreement:

According to the order of the *Reichsführer*-SS of the summer of 1941, all Jews were to be annihilated.¹¹⁷ The RSHA expressed great misgivings when the RFSS, at Pohl's suggestion, ordered that the able-

¹¹⁴ See Musial, *Zivilverwaltung*, pp. 242-248, 262-267, 273-276, 292-300.

¹¹⁵ Wisliceny, “Bericht: Die Bearbeitung der jüdischen Probleme durch die Sicherheitspolizei und den SD bis 1939,” Bratislava, November 18, 1946; *IfZ Fa* 164, pp. 8 f.
¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ This statement by Höss that the order for the extermination of the Jews was given in the summer of 1941 has recently been questioned by Karin Orth, *Rudolf Höss*. She argues convincingly that Höss was mistaken about the dating of this order.

bodied were to be sorted out from the rest. The RSHA was always in favour of the total elimination of all Jews, and viewed every labour camp, every thousand able-bodied workers, as a germ harbouring the danger of liberation, of somehow staying alive. No office had a greater interest in seeing death statistics for Jews mount than the RSHA, the Office for Jewish Affairs. By contrast, Pohl had orders from the *Reichsführer-SS* to deploy as many prisoners as possible in the armaments industry.¹¹⁸

In July 1942, there was evidently a renewed intensification in Hitler's order, which had been modulated in the spring of 1942, for the biological destruction of the Jews in Europe. It appears that Globocnik, in turn, played an important role in this shift.¹¹⁹ However, the investigation of that problem lies beyond the scope of this paper.

Translated from the German by William Templer

Source: *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. XXVIII, Jerusalem 2000, pp. 113-153.

¹¹⁸ Rudolf Höss, *Meine Psyche. Werden, Leben und Erleben (1946-1947)*, AGK Archivum Jana Sehna 22, p. 140.

¹¹⁹ See *Dienstkalender Himmlers*, p. 483 (n. 35), p. 493 (n. 82); Brack to Himmler, June 23, 1942, BA BDC (Globocnik); Browning, *Der Weg*, pp. 151-159, who persuasively argues that this intensification occurred in July 1942.