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The Wannsee Conference in 1942 and the National Socialist living space dystopia

GERHARD WOLF

The Wannsee Conference is still largely understood as the ‘echo’ of an earlier decision to annihilate European Jewry. This article questions this assumption on three grounds. First, it does not fully acknowledge that it did not call for a systematic and immediate mass murder of all Jews. Secondly, it mistakenly concludes that because the conference targeted only Jews, it also emerged from within the narrower confines of the regime’s anti-Jewish policies. Thirdly, and as a consequence, this assumption represents a retrospective reading of the conference that straightens the ‘twists’ that even at this late point in time still characterized the ‘road to Auschwitz’. This article offers a different interpretation. Situating the Wannsee Conference in the broader context of Nazi Germanization policies, the article will show how Heydrich’s actions at Wannsee can be better understood as a response to early failures in Germanizing annexed Poland and the settlement fantasies coming out of the SS apparatus after the invasion of the Soviet Union. While the Wannsee Conference undoubtedly was an attempt by the SS to consolidate its control over anti-Jewish policies, it was also a way for Heydrich to reclaim lost influence in the broader field of Nazi population policies by aligning the treatment of ‘enemy populations’ with the grander vision of a ‘German East’. This Nazi dystopia not only called for destroying Jewish existence in Europe, but demanded that even the way in which Jews were killed would serve the Nazi cause. For this reason, this article argues for understanding the minutes of the meeting literally. Having learned the lessons from previous failures, while at the same time under pressure to support the megalomaniacal settlement plans, Heydrich actually meant what he said when he dictated the protocol condemning Jews not to their immediate death but to annihilation through labour.

A ‘deeply mysterious document’

It is somewhat ironic that German Jews played a crucial role in bringing the Nazi elite to justice in the aftermath of the Second World War. One of them was Robert M. W. Kempner who as legal advisor to the police department in the Prussian Interior Ministry was pressing to charge Hitler with high treason and perjury, demanding his deportation and the ban of his party.¹ At the time, the advice went unheeded by a bureaucracy already riddled with Nazi sympathizers, ensuring only that Kempner ended up in a concentration camp after the Nazis had come to power. Kempner eventually found his way to the United States, returning as

assistant US chief counsel during the International Military Tribunal. It was in March 1947, while accumulating material for the Ministries Trial, that he stumbled upon the minutes of the Wannsee Conference.²

Kempner was not alone in assuming that, at last, the evidence had been found both to prove that the German government had ordered the extermination of German and European Jewry and to identify the officials responsible. Without doubt one of the ‘most shameful documents in modern history’, Mark Roseman is right to point out that it is, at the same time, a ‘deeply mysterious document’.³ Was it really possible that the decision for genocide was taken by a group of men, who, like Reinhard Heydrich as head of the SS Main Security Office (RSHA), were certainly influential but still could not have taken this decision on their own? This scepticism only grew with later research showing that at the time of the conference on 20 January 1942 systematic murder was already in full swing in places including the Soviet Union, Poland and Yugoslavia, with almost one million Jews dead at the end of 1941.⁴ Historians have long since changed their minds. Today, it is widely held that the conference was convened either to ensure the efficient and European-wide implementation of a murderous programme that had already been decided upon or—and this is more an extension of this hypothesis than an alternative—to bring the participants to accept the co-ordinating role of the SS. Both interpretations, however—and here they don’t differ from Kempner’s early view—accept that the Wannsee Conference initiated the final phase of Nazi antisemitic policies and therefore has to be analysed in this context. In this article I want to explore a slightly different reading of the conference. While it seems a well-established fact that Heydrich convened the meeting to reassert SS control in anti-Jewish policies, it is much less clear whether he did this from a position of weakness or a position of strength. In this article I will argue for the latter. Based on my previous work on Heydrich’s role in Germanizing annexed Poland, I will explain how these setbacks from late 1939 to mid 1941 when linked to the settlement fantasies coming out of the SS apparatus at around the turn of the year 1941/42 had restricted his leeway to such an extent that when the conference finally took place in January 1942 it was not immediate systematic mass murder that was under consideration.⁵

One fundamental problem troubling historians is the absolute dearth of sources, leading Eberhard Jäckel fifty years after the event to helplessly proclaim that the ‘oddest thing about the much quoted meeting . . . is that we do not know why it took place’.⁶ If interpreting historical events always depends on the context we choose them to be part of, this can hardly be truer than for the Wannsee Conference. The ongoing debate on the historical role of Wannsee is fuelled not least by the fact that contextual evidence is—necessarily—bearing the burden created by the lack of primary source material.⁷ Traditionally, this context has been rather narrowly defined as the regime’s anti-Jewish policy with the dramatic radicalization unfolding in the months to follow read back into the minutes of the conference. Seen from this perspective, it seems only too plausible, then, when the stated aim of the conference to find a ‘final solution of the European Jewish question’⁸ is meant to signify—in the words of Christopher Browning—‘killing every

last Jew in Europe from Ireland to the Urals, and from the Arctic to the Mediterranean'.⁹ Suggesting a different interpretation is made all the more difficult by the fact that this is more or less exactly what happened a few months later, from May 1942 onwards. Yet the assumption that Wannsee was—according to Peter Klein—an 'echo' of a decision taken earlier, a blueprint for the policy gradually taking shape, seems to me to contract historical time, streamlining a contradictory and ambiguous sequence of events.¹⁰

It is mainly due to studies by Michael Burleigh, Czesław Madajczyk, Götz Aly, Henry Friedländer and others that we have started to realize just how embedded anti-Jewish measures were in the broader field of German living space policies.¹¹ As they have pointed out, some of the key stimuli to radicalize anti-Jewish policy actually arose from problems the Nazis encountered in their attempt to deal with Poles, Russians, Romani or ethnic Germans. As crucial as the antisemitic drive was for Nazism as a whole, when the war broke out it became inextricably intertwined with and part of a complex, multi-layered attempt to change the demographics of German and occupied lands. So if there clearly is something to be gained from analysing the trajectory of anti-Jewish policies in the broader context of Nazi population and living space policies, how does this inform our analysis of a key event like the Wannsee Conference? As far as I can see, it is the growing body of research on the economics of occupation that provides the most intriguing clues.¹² This is not least because it suggests the need to place Wannsee in an even wider context. How would our understanding of the Wannsee Conference change if taking into account, firstly, the often sobering experiences Heydrich and his men had made during the deportation campaigns in the past and, secondly, the vast settlement plans with which Himmler thought to turn Eastern Europe into German living space in the future? It would, I argue, make us more cautious against attempts to read, for example, the notorious phrase assigning Jews to 'work their way eastwards constructing roads' as a mere cover up for mass murder.¹³ What if the reality at Wannsee had been more complicated, with Jewish slave labour not simply a front but Heydrich's attempt to balance a further radicalization of anti-Jewish policies with the need to recruit and exploit Jewish forced labour?

German policies to enlist foreign labourers can be dated back to well before the end of 1941.¹⁴ Heydrich and the RSHA had been part of this from the very beginning. The ensuing resettlement and deportation campaigns, or rather the problems and resistance they encountered, provided Heydrich with ample opportunity to appreciate the enormous difficulties involved when displacing large numbers of people and losing their labour power in the process. These difficulties only grew with the war turning into a war of attrition and Himmler commissioning fantastic Germanization plans with German settlements to be built across all of Eastern Europe up to the Ural Mountains. The Wannsee Conference, I will argue, was not least shaped by these events: the lessons learned about the paramount importance of foreign labour power and the determination to make good for past defeats by performing all the more ruthlessly in the future. Seen from this perspective, the Wannsee Conference was an opportunity for Heydrich to

reassert his position vis-à-vis rivals from inside and outside the SS and firmly place him at the centre of Himmler's living space dystopia.

It is for this reason that, in the first part of this article, I will focus on the first deportation campaigns to show how quickly the Reich Security Main Office expanded its reach towards the occupied territories, starting with the Germanization of annexed Western Poland. According to the ideologically informed planning at the RSHA, the deportations were to start by targeting Jews. Soon, compromises had to be made, however, with Poles very quickly making up for the vast majority of the deportees. Jews were concentrated in ghettos still within the annexed territories instead, fuelling the frustration of antisemitic planners not only in the SS. The decision to invade the Soviet Union finally subordinated Heydrich's deportation campaigns to the logic of war. Primarily, this meant a contribution to replenishing the diminishing labour pool—labourers needed not only to keep the German war economy afloat, but also to realize Himmler's ever more megalomaniacal living space fantasies in Eastern Europe. It is in this context that I will explore the Wannsee Conference in the second part of this article.

Anti-Jewish policy before the outbreak of war

In Nazi fantastic thinking, Jews were the principal enemy against which the German *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) had to be fused together, from which Germany itself had to be reclaimed as German *Lebensraum* (living space). While subjecting Jewish Germans to an ever more radical set of antisemitic measures to force them abroad, the German government became increasingly impatient with the results. To revive declining emigration numbers, state and party officials unleashed a hitherto unparalleled wave of violence and, for the first time, moved from enforced emigration to expulsion and deportation.

The first victims of this new turn in anti-Jewish policy were the 500 to 1,000 Russian Jews who had found safety in Imperial Germany decades ago without acquiring German citizenship. After being ordered in early 1938 to leave within six weeks, Himmler ordered the deportation of those still in the country to concentration camps while others were forced across the border.¹⁵ This procedure was adopted vis-à-vis other Jews of foreign nationality after the annexation of Austria with Heydrich instructing the police to deport 18,000 Polish Jews into the no-man's land between the Polish–German border.¹⁶

Pressure on Jews with German citizenship grew too, especially after the Évian conference in June 1938 produced few immediate results. While successive talks aiming at establishing an international regime for Jewish emigration from Germany continued well into the summer of 1939, the German government yet again increased pressure at home. In the summer of 1938, Adolf Eichmann of the Gestapo started to build his reputation establishing and running the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna. Regarded as a significant step forward in forcing Jews out of the country, Heydrich suggested that this model be adopted for the entire German Reich during a meeting convened by Göring a few days after the November pogrom.¹⁷ Named the Reich Central Office for

Jewish Emigration, it started its operation under Heydrich's control in February 1939 helping to promote the head of the SS Security Service and the Security Police to become 'the leading figure in Nazi Germany's anti-Jewish policies'.¹⁸

The outbreak of war and the two deportation campaigns

When the Germans started the Second World War, not everything had gone according to plan. Originally, German plans had focused on territorial gains in the Soviet Union with Poland as junior partner in a war of aggression. When the Polish government finally rejected Hitler's offer in January 1939, Hitler struck a deal with Stalin instead, performing 'the U-turn of all time' in the process, as Kershaw observes, transferring the German living space fantasies hitherto projected onto the Soviet Union onto Poland.¹⁹ They serve, I would argue, as a major contributing factor in explaining the explosion of violence against Poles even before the alleged attack by Polish partisans in Bromberg was used to further intensify anti-Polish propaganda.²⁰ SS as well as regular army units were quick to violate all obligations imposed by the laws of war by taking aim at the civilian population. The unfolding politicide paired with random acts of violence against everybody else was intended to ease the German take-over of power. Significantly, it also marked the first step towards the radical remaking of the demographic order, the first step in turning the annexed land into German living space.

On the agenda was a 're-settlement written large', as Hitler informed the Army High Command three weeks into the war.²¹ By that time Heydrich's *Einsatzgruppen* had already left a trail of blood in their wake, having killed many Jews and driving even more across the river San into Soviet-held territory. Much has been made of the Wehrmacht protesting against SS brutality.²² Procedural differences must not obscure the mutual aim, however, given that the Wehrmacht followed suit in pushing Jews over the demarcation line and soon even ordering returnees to be shot at.²³ When the leaders of the *SS-Einsatzgruppen* were summoned to Berlin on 21 September 1939, German deliberations had reached a conclusion.²⁴ As Heydrich told his men, new tasks awaited them: Poles and Jews were to be systematically expelled from the annexed lands and replaced by ethnic German settlers from further east, thereby acting out a fantasy that while having emerged already amongst radical *völkisch* thinkers in Imperial Germany needed the Nazis to move to the centre of state policy: Germanizing the soil.²⁵ Planning and implementation fell to the SS with Himmler becoming Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germanism (RKF) on 7 October 1939.²⁶ If Heydrich's appointment by Göring in February 1939 had put the SS in charge of the deportation of Jews from the German Reich, Himmler's appointment by Hitler was even more far-reaching, extending his remit geographically and placing the entire non-German population under his control.²⁷

The Nisko Campaign needs to be analysed in this context. It was not simply an—albeit radicalized—continuation of previous policies of cleansing Germany of its Jewish population now even affecting Jews with German citizenship. No

doubt, up to 1,500 deportees were Jews with German citizenship. They accounted for only one third of the overall number, however, with most of the remaining 3,000 being Jews from those Polish territories that had just been annexed to the Reich. Placing Polish and not Viennese Jews at the centre of the Nisko Campaign significantly alters the interpretation of this event. With the turn towards conquered land, the Nisko Campaign signals, I would argue, a significant shift in Nazi population policies: the focus on Germanizing conquered land.

This interpretation is supported by the little evidence we have on the genesis of the Nisko Campaign. The initial order by Heinrich Müller, the head of the Gestapo, does not even mention Vienna. Instead, Eichmann was instructed to prepare the deportation of '70–80,000 Jews from the Katowice region' now annexed to the Reich. True, Müller also mentioned Ostrawa, a city just across the border in the Protectorate and linked by a direct train line to Katowice, but only to include 'Jewish immigrants from Poland, who in connection with recent events have looked for a hideout there'.²⁸ The same, incidentally, is true for the Jews from Prague and Brno. Here, too, the target was Polish Jews who had fled their country after the German invasion.²⁹ Seen from this perspective, it is the inclusion of Viennese Jews that stands out as an anomaly. One possible answer is rather simple: by that time there were no Polish Jews left in Vienna. Not because Polish Jews fleeing the German advance had not also ended up in the city; some did. After all, the wave of arrests targeting Polish Jews after the German invasion was not restricted to cities in the Protectorate but had included Austria, with 1,000 Polish Jews rounded up in Vienna. The only reason they did not also fall into Eichmann's hands was that they had already been deported to Buchenwald when the Nisko Campaign commenced.³⁰ Miroslav Kárný has suggested another answer, pointing to the possibility of a direct intervention by Hitler.³¹ If, then, Nisko was not primarily about expulsion of German but of Polish Jews, it would cast the entire operation in a different light. Less a manifestation of the next radicalization step towards German Jews foreshadowing their deportation that would commence in the autumn of 1941, Nisko would instead signal the advent of Nazi living space policies. This campaign, again, primarily targeted the especially reviled *Ostjuden*, and can therefore be seen as a continuation of the deportation of Soviet and Polish Jews in 1938. This time, however, they were not to be evicted from Germany proper but, in line with Nazi expansionist policies, from territories conquered in war and destined to be transformed into German living space.

It is, however, not just the genesis of the Nisko Campaign that firmly situates it in the wider attempt to Germanize the annexed Polish territories. It is also its abrupt stop. When the very first train left for Nisko from Kattowitz in the south of the annexed territories, it was shadowed by a second train from Gotenhafen in Danzig-West Prussia in the north, also heading into the General Government. On board were 925 Poles making way for the first ethnic Germans arriving at Gotenhafen from the Baltics, which had been handed over to the Soviet Union in the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement.³² As it became clear that logistics would not allow for two parallel operations, the deportation of Jews from the south

was stopped to allow the deportation of Poles in the north to continue.³³ After all, it was their removal that enabled the SS to house the incoming ethnic Germans, thus truly ‘Germanizing the soil’. The deportations from Danzig-West Prussia did not represent a different, unrelated or even competing operation to the Nisko Campaign. Instead, they were both aiming at the same goal: Germanizing the annexed territories.³⁴

The Nisko Campaign represented a further radicalization of Nazi population policies. At the same time it does also signal a fundamental shift. On the one hand, the exclusive targeting of Jews for deportation to Nisko clearly radicalized pre-war anti-Jewish policies. On the other hand, the majority of the Jews targeted here were expelled not from the German Reich proper but from lands conquered in war. To grasp what drove these deportations, one has to grasp the historical sense of rupture the war meant for the Nazis: the final battle to secure the allegedly threatened existence of the German *Volk* by acquiring new living space. It was no longer just about reshaping the ethnographic composition of Germany as it was during their first six years in power, but—as Hitler made clear in his speech on 6 October 1939—about reshaping the ethnographic composition of Europe.³⁵

The first conference, 30 January 1940

Gotenhafen was a crucial test case establishing for the first time a circular flow of (enforced) migration with the deportation of the native population adjusted to the needs of the incoming ethnic Germans and thus synchronizing the two policy fields falling into Himmler’s remit as Reich Commissioner. It also highlighted, however, how reliant the SS was on a compliant civil administration. After clashing with Albert Forster, who eventually vetoed any further attempts to settle ethnic Germans in his province, Danzig-West Prussia,³⁶ Himmler had to turn further south where Arthur Greiser, head of the new province of the Wartheland, assured Himmler that he ‘would extremely welcome . . . a continuous inflow of Baltic Germans’.³⁷ This agreement allowed Himmler to press ahead, unveiling a grandiose deportation scheme on 30 October 1939 and for the first time targeting all of annexed Western Poland. According to Himmler, the first deportations were to focus on Jews, Congress-Poles and those who were seen to be politically dangerous.³⁸

The RSHA quickly became the key agency responsible for these deportations. The experiences gained and lessons learned over the following two years were to profoundly shape Heydrich’s actions in the future. On the ground, Heydrich established regional SS commandos, the Central Migration Office (UWZ), to oversee the deportation process. They were run by two new departments created within the RSHA towards the end of the year: Eichmann became Heydrich’s special representative for the ‘central administration of security matters arising during the evacuation in the east’ and Dr Hans Ehlich the head of the new department for emigration and settlement.³⁹ At the end of November, Ehlich submitted a first long-term plan exposing the constraints Nazi population policies faced in

times of war. If the SS was to assert its newly won predominance in this field, Ehlich realized, then Germanization policies must not contradict the German war effort. For Ehlich this came down to one question: could Germany afford to expel hundreds of thousands of potential labourers across the border when suffering labour shortage at home? It could not, Ehlich conceded, particularly after it had become clear that even deploying all 300,000 Polish prisoners of war had provided only a temporary relief.⁴⁰ How serious the situation had become is shown by the instruction Göring gave in mid November ordering the labour offices to speed up the recruitment of Polish workers to the 'largest extent possible' and the demand of the minister for labour for two million additional Polish farm hands.⁴¹ The solution Ehlich found was simple: the deportations would simply exclude those fit for work. While the majority would still be expelled eastwards, those fit for work could be deported westwards, providing the German economy with much needed labour power. It did raise serious concerns for racists like Ehlich, however. After all, the Nazi project was about purifying the German *Volk* and thus calling for the removal of aliens from Germany and not their deportation into the German heartland. It is testament to the strategic ingenuity of the SS that they tried to turn these wartime exigencies into a bid for power: Ehlich demanded that only those forced labourers be brought into the Reich who were found racially not unsuitable as corroborated by the SS. For the SS, the advantages of this procedure were all too clear: it would further advance the remaking of German society according to a racial logic and at the same time hand control over the supply of Polish labour to the SS.⁴²

Logistical details of future deportations, Ehlich announced, would be worked out in individual short-term plans, the first of which would commence in early December 1939. In the biggest deportation campaign so far, Heydrich's men deported 90,000 Poles in the course of only two weeks to accommodate 40,000 incoming Baltic Germans.⁴³ For two reasons this was not seen as an unmitigated success story. Contrary to Himmler's decree of 30 October prioritizing the deportation of Jews and Congress Poles, exactly the opposite had happened. Apart from 5,000 Jews, the remaining deportees were autochthonous Poles seen to be politically dangerous and/or living in spacious flats needed for ethnic Germans.⁴⁴ There were also concerns about the lacklustre co-operation by other agencies. With the next short-term plans involving deportations not just from the Wartheland but from all provinces in the annexed territories, and set to dramatically increase the number of deportees, better co-ordination was needed.

In a move that became a signature of Heydrich's politics, he convened a conference in Berlin to plan for the coming year. In one of the most high-profile meetings to discuss population policies during the war, he invited those whose co-operation was indispensable in the future, particularly if it had been found lacking in the past. This certainly applied to the authorities of the General Government, who were very reluctant to take in deportees. It is testament to the importance of this question that Hans Frank, the head of the General Government, dispatched a delegation under the head of the occupation administration, Reich Minister Arthur Seyß-Inquart. But even within the SS apparatus there was

resistance centred primarily around the regional heads of the SS administration, the Higher SS and Police Leader (HSSPF) from Danzig-West Prussia, the Wartheland and Silesia who were afraid that the RSHA's power gains would come at their expense and obstruct their own policies. During the deliberations, Heydrich was forced to make two concessions. Firstly, he had to accept that the selection of deportees would continue to be informed not only by ideological reasons. Instead, the police and local SS offices started to compile their deportation lists by focusing on owners of large homes to enable the HSSPF to settle the growing number of incoming ethnic Germans. As most Jews were already evicted from their houses and often deported to the nearest ghetto, it is hardly surprising that the following two short-term plans would target 200,000 Poles exclusively. Jews were only to be included in the third deportation wave. They were to be used as forced labourers in the construction of the *Ostwall* at the demarcation line with the Soviet Union.⁴⁵ It is worth noting that all of them would be from annexed Poland, with no attempt made to resume the deportations of Viennese or any other Jews with German citizenship.⁴⁶ Secondly, and more dramatically, Heydrich announced the deportation of up to one million Poles to the Reich to ease Germany's labour shortage. Postponing the deportation of Jews was all the easier to accept when it benefitted the settlement of ethnic Germans and thus fully in line with the primary objective of Germanizing the conquered land. The deportation of such a large number of Poles not eastwards to the periphery but into the heart of the German living space was another matter. This all the more so as the racial screenings brought into play by Eichmann just a few weeks earlier and designed to prevent the fear of racial contamination had to be pushed back for lack of 'qualified' personnel. Instead, the RSHA was left to contain the alleged danger by issuing a set of discriminatory decrees in March 1940 that, amongst other policies, introduced the death penalty for sexual relations with German women and forced them to wear a visible badge marking them out as Poles—more than one year before Jews were forced to do the same.⁴⁷

The second conference, 8 January 1941

It did not take long until Heydrich's plan unravelled again, with Frank stepping up his protest against the continuous inflow of deportees. He could count on powerful allies. During a meeting at Göring's residence Karinhall in February 1940, Himmler and the heads of the German occupation administration in Poland were told in no uncertain terms that deportation policies would have to be subordinated to 'strengthening the Reich's war potential'.⁴⁸ Not that Göring was against deportations, but only if it would not affect economic performance in the annexed territories and the Reich.

With able-bodied Poles now off limits, Heydrich attempted to make up for the numbers by pushing for the expulsion of Jews. It was again Frank who put an end to this. While Eichmann was already preparing for the deportation of the Jews from the Litzmannstadt ghetto in mid May 1940 to be included in the third deportation wave, Hitler informed Frank that the General Government was to be

Germanized too. If the German *Lebensraum* was to be extended into the General Government, however, it could no longer be used as a 'dumping ground'.⁴⁹ It is this cumulative frustration that made the RSHA enthusiastically welcome the truly fantastic 'solution' concocted in the foreign office: the deportation of all Jews in occupied Europe to Madagascar. When this option also proved impossible by late summer due to Germany's inability to knock Britain out of the war, Heydrich's men were back where they had started months earlier. In the annexed territories, they were confronted with an administration that was increasingly worried about the effect the deportations had on the local labour market while Frank, in the General Government, now even threatened to turn trains back at the border if the SS exceeded the agreed numbers of deportees.⁵⁰

Towards the end of the year the situation was sobering. Although the deportations of a further 160,000 Poles had boosted the settlement of ethnic Germans to almost 180,000 this was but a marginal success when compared to the eight million non-Germans still living in the annexed territories. In addition, the RSHA was unhappy with the large number of Poles deported westwards into the German Reich as forced labourers because only a small minority of them had been subjected to a racial screening. And, of course, the third deportation wave agreed upon at the conference on 30 January 1940 targeting Jews had not materialized either.⁵¹ If Heydrich did not want to see his plans fall apart and the RSHA marginalized, a concerted effort was necessary. As in the year before, Heydrich opted for convening a conference in Berlin to plan for the year. On 8 January 1941 he presented his plans to an audience bringing together those who wanted to see the deportations expanded further and those whose co-operation for making this possible was as vital as it was precarious. Characteristic for the RSHA as a truly National Socialist institution, Heydrich did not opt for scaling down the grandiose deportation schemes. In fact, planned deportation numbers shot up, with now more than one million people to be evicted from their homes. To secure support from the Wehrmacht, 237,000 of them were to make room for new military training areas. The majority, however, was to be replaced by the ethnic Germans waiting in makeshift camps to be resettled permanently.⁵² Given that by that time almost all Jews in the annexed territories were already forced into ghettos, the tens of thousands of houses and farms needed could only be provided by the deportation of Poles, pushing the eviction of Jews from these areas into the ever distant future. The only reason Jews did not disappear altogether from Heydrich's deportation list was, again, a direct intervention by Hitler. As had happened before, Hitler instructed his subordinates to evict 60,000 Jews from Vienna. As with the Nisko Campaign, the renewed inclusion of Viennese Jews had not been part of the initial deportation planning but came about because it was—as one participant stated—'ordered by the *Führer*'.⁵³

The third conference, 20 January 1942

In 1940, it had taken five months for Heydrich's deportation plans to fall apart. The following year, Heydrich lost control even faster. On 21 February, less

than two months after the conference, Müller had to inform his men in the annexed territories that ‘for reasons well known’ all deportations must be stopped immediately.⁵⁴ Germany was preparing for the invasion of the Soviet Union. There was another reason, however: the serious shortages in the labour market. The situation in the Reich had become so desperate that Göring in January 1941 explicitly prohibited German authorities from letting ‘racial concerns’ get in the way of recruiting labourers.⁵⁵ In the annexed territories the situation was worse still, with demands from Berlin to quickly provide the German Reich with a large number of Polish forced labourers—250,000 from the Wartheland alone.⁵⁶ Faced with the imminent collapse of the domestic labour market, Greiser responded by barring the SS from further expelling Jewish Poles. They should instead be put to work in the Litzmannstadt ghetto.⁵⁷ Only two months later he also blocked the deportation of Christian Poles. The SS was still allowed to drive them from their homes if those were found suitable for ethnic Germans, but they had to remain within the province, relocated to so-called Polish reservations and preserved as a mobile labour force.⁵⁸ For Heydrich this was yet another disaster, with his men reporting 35,096 persons deported at the end of the year—and not the one million envisaged in January. This was a problem not just because it meant slowing down the Germanization process. By now, the constant setbacks also threatened to seriously affect the position of the RSHA in the polycratic power matrix of National Socialist Germany. Establishing control over the deportation process had been won in a power struggle; maintaining it depended on delivering results. The first to experience this were the UWZ offices that alone were authorized to carry out deportations from the annexed territories. Soon, they were bypassed by both the HSSPF and employment bureaus’ organization of their own deportation campaigns; the former to create space for ethnic Germans and the latter to replace German workers drafted to the Wehrmacht. This also put an end to the racial screenings that the UWZ had trialled in the Wartheland to exclude Poles from being deported to the German Reich as forced labourers when they were found to be ‘racially unsuitable’. The need for labour power swept all this aside and with it the RSHA’s attempt to establish itself as a powerful intermediary on the labour market.⁵⁹

To fully grasp the impact of these developments on the position of the RSHA vis-à-vis other power centres in the Reich, one has to link them to the murderous events unfolding further east in the Soviet Union. While increasingly hampered in his efforts to play a major role in the Germanization of the annexed territories, Heydrich was all the keener to refocus his attention back to a policy field where it seemed that gridlock could be overcome by extreme force on a scale never seen before: anti-Jewish policies. After the invasion, the RSHA was at the centre of one radicalization process: the mass shootings of the *Einsatzgruppen*. But, of course, Heydrich had no monopoly on anti-Jewish violence. In September 1941, Hitler had finally agreed to the expulsion of all German Jews. When Greiser learned that 60,000 of them were to be deported to the Litzmannstadt ghetto, he called for the murder of 100,000 Polish Jews—Jews, and this is important, who were no longer fit for work. The killing started in November 1941 in Kulmhof,

the first Nazi extermination camp.⁶⁰ Further to the east, the Police and SS Leader in Lublin, Odilo Globocnik, ordered the construction of the second extermination camp at Bełżec at around the same time.⁶¹ And then, of course, there were the mass shootings of Jews in the district of Galicia and finally Serbia where the Wehrmacht was to murder the male Jewish population until the end of 1941.⁶² For the first time, mass murder had become one possible answer to what the Germans perceived to be the 'Jewish problem'. Heydrich might have achieved an important goal by convincing Göring on 31 July 1941 to put him in charge of the 'complete solution of the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe'.⁶³ In practice, however, this authorization was worth little if not backed up by action on the ground. It is here where others seemed to bypass Heydrich given that with the exception of the *Einsatzgruppen* killings all other regional genocides were not under his control but had emerged independently of each other and were fuelled by dynamics peculiar and confined to the region of origin.⁶⁴ After having been increasingly marginalized in the Germanization of the annexed territories, Heydrich feared now also being overtaken by more radical Nazi leaders in the field of anti-Jewish policies—a field that, after all, had always been at the core of the self-conception of the RSHA.

This is the background I would suggest for analysing a third conference that Heydrich convened for 20 January 1942, better known as the Wannsee Conference. Placing the Wannsee Conference in this context might be perplexing at first. Let me raise two possible objections. Firstly, Wannsee seemed to have been about a very different relationship between geographical space and victim groups. Whereas during the first two conferences the aim was cleansing *one* particular region of *all* racial and *völkisch* alien elements, i.e. deporting Jews and Poles from the annexed territories, the Wannsee Conference targeted only *one* alleged enemy people, this time, however, expanding its scope to include *all* of Europe. The problem with this perspective is that it constructs as (synchronic) difference what should better be understood in terms of a (diachronic) development. After all, it is not as if the Germans had given up on Germanizing the annexed territories. It is just that Heydrich's deportation planning had run into serious problems very early on and then had to be put on hold when the preparations for war against the Soviet Union started. If expelling Poles eastwards had been difficult before, it had now become impossible. Not only did the Wehrmacht object to a further destabilization of the General Government that was to be used as staging point for the invasion. More importantly, the German economy in the Reich as well as in the annexed territories had simply become too dependent on foreign labour, demanding more Poles to be made available, not less. Heydrich's final turn on European Jewry was, obviously, also due to the increasing German leverage over its vassals and allies and certainly facilitated by ideological hatred.⁶⁵ The timing, however, can hardly be understood without the series of setbacks in the annexed territories. When in the second half of 1941 Heydrich moved towards the deportation and murder of Jews, he did so *after* deporting millions of Poles was no longer in his power.

Secondly, it could be argued that the Wannsee Conference was not really about deporting but about killing Jews. As recent research, particularly on SS economic policies, has shown, however, there is reason to take the ambiguity of some of the minutes' key passages, such as the following, more seriously:⁶⁶

In the course of the Final Solution and under appropriate leadership, the Jews should be put to work in the east. In large, single-sex labour columns Jews fit to work will work their way eastwards constructing roads. Doubtless the large majority will be eliminated by natural causes. Any final remnant that survives . . . will have to be treated appropriately.⁶⁷

It is not hard to see why most interpretations have read this as a rather badly veiled reference to an extermination policy. There can be no doubt that by January 1942 Heydrich aimed at a final deportation wave leading to the violent annihilation of European Jewry—that much is clear from the last sentence quoted above. Ignoring those sentences preceding it, however, would also ignore the fact that if Heydrich had learned anything from organizing the previous deportations it was that the economic implications of relocating large numbers of people must be taken seriously. Seen from this perspective, Heydrich's allusions at Wannsee to using Jews as forced labourers, therefore, were probably not only a cover-up for a mass murder programme—although they were this too. Most likely, they also represent a lesson learned from past failures.

Heydrich's intention to use Jewish labour might also have been a reaction to more recent demands for Jewish forced labour now coming from inside the SS itself. The new appreciation for Jewish forced labour was mainly driven by the dystopian visions that emerged in various SS offices about the future 'German East', quickly escalating with the speed of the German advance into the Soviet Union. To grasp their magnitude one just has to look through the various iterations of the General Plan East (GPO) which from as early as 1942 projecting that all the territory as far as Leningrad and the Crimea was to be Germanized within the next twenty-five years.⁶⁸ To remake this vast land in a German image, hardly a stone was to be left unturned, hardly a person unharmed. Representing by far the largest building project ever devised by Nazi Germany, many cities in the east were to be razed to the ground and replaced with new ones, German in character. This obviously required a huge labour army, which, not least for financial reasons, as the planners explained, had to be recruited from the defeated peoples in the east. Professor Konrad Meyer, the head of the planning staff in the Reich Commissioner's office, presented to Himmler on 15 July 1941 the first version of the General Plan East to come out after the invasion of the Soviet Union.⁶⁹ This seems to have sparked a flurry of activity. Only two days later, Himmler appointed the SS and Police leader in Lublin, Odilo Globocnik, as his Representative for the Construction of SS and Police Bases in the new Eastern Territories. These bases were conceived as power centres from where the population in the vicinity could be controlled, suppressed, exploited and those identified who were deemed to be Germanizable. One week later, Himmler travelled to Lublin, which was to become the staging point for these attempts to expand Germanization policies beyond the annexed territories. In Lublin, he instructed Globocnik to establish a

huge concentration camp for up to 50,000 inmates to turn these plans into reality.⁷⁰ Hardly back in Berlin and apparently full of confidence in what the SS could achieve, he sent for Meyer and instructed him to go back to the drawing board and further expand his settlement fantasies.⁷¹

Himmler seemed to have worried less about practical questions. Where were all the workers to come from, for example, given that the numbers envisaged were close to the number of inmates in all concentration camps combined?⁷² Even if, initially, Himmler did not have Jews in mind, some others certainly did, with Göring's Office of the Four Year Plan and the Wehrmacht's Defence Economy and Armament Office discussing the option of using Jews for the construction of roads.⁷³ After the first big victories against the Red Army, attention was then quickly focused on the huge number of Soviet prisoners of war. Himmler persuaded the Wehrmacht to hand over 100,000, with the expectation of even more to follow.⁷⁴ The capacity of the concentration camp in Lublin was to be expanded to 150,000 and new camps for Soviet prisoners of war were to be built. One of them was Auschwitz-Birkenau, again housing 150,000 persons.⁷⁵

The imagination of the Soviet prisoner of war as a panacea for the labour-starved German economy removed existing constraints that had protected at least those Jews working for the Germans and allowed for a further radicalization of anti-Jewish policies. It did not take long, however, for these hopes to prove delusional. As mentioned already, in the first extermination camps of Kulmhof and Bełżec, Jews were generally not killed indiscriminately. Instead, the worsening labour crisis forced the Germans initially to spare those fit to work. Further to the east, the situation was very similar when it became clear that only a few Soviet prisoners of war had survived systematic maltreatment by the Wehrmacht, while the turn of events at the frontline made it unlikely that numbers would increase in the near future. While the notorious instructions by the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories that in the future 'economic consideration should generally be ignored' in dealing with the 'Jewish question' is widely seen as yet another indication of the final radicalization of anti-Jewish policies at the turn of the year 1941/42, local practices were much more ambiguous.⁷⁶ In the Reich Commissariat Ukraine, for example, authorities did the opposite, with employment centres starting to register Jewish workers in December 1941.⁷⁷

The construction of the so-called *Durchgangsstraße IV* (Transit Road IV) is a crucial case in point. As the main supply line for the Army Group South, the Wehrmacht pushed very hard for speeding up the construction process as early as the summer of 1941. Initially, the work was to be done by Jewish labourers until—this at least was the plan—enough Soviet prisoners of war were at hand to take over. Making sure they were available was one of the main tasks Himmler set for the new SS and Police Leader in Galicia, Friedrich Katzmann. While starting the mass murder of the Jews in Galicia, he spared those living in a corridor along the road because, as he explained to his functionaries in October 1941, 'no other labourers were available'.⁷⁸ This would not save their lives, however, but rather specified the way they were killed: 'Jews must be dealt with harshly ... It is of no concern if on each kilometre ... one thousand

or ten thousand Jews die'.⁷⁹ Caught up in the contradictions between expanding the murder of the Jewish population while at the same time confronted with a critical shortage in labour power, Katzmann did both by killing Jews through work.

The Wannsee Conference was about extending this programme of annihilation through work to include all of European Jewry. Himmler certainly said as much only a few days later when he informed the inspector of the concentration camps, Richard Glücks:

As Russian prisoners of war cannot be expected in the near future, I will send a larger number of the Jews and Jewesses who will be emigrated from Germany into the camps. Arrange for 100,000 Jews and 50,000 Jewesses to be admitted to the camps over the next four weeks. Big economic tasks will be approaching the concentration camps.⁸⁰

These big economic tasks were not least the gigantic construction programmes set out in the General Plan East and requiring a vast army of forced labourers consisting mainly, Himmler thought, of Jews. The new challenges confronting the SS were in fact so 'big' that Himmler felt it necessary to restructure the entire SS apparatus, uniting all relevant activities in the new Economy and Administration Main Office (WVHA) under Oswald Pohl. Initially, Pohl had difficulties keeping pace with Himmler's megalomaniacal visions. After his first plans had been rejected for being too timid, with Himmler encouraging Pohl to think big, Himmler finally agreed to an even more fantastic revision in early February 1942. This new plan was calling for, amongst other things, the immediate allocation of 175,000 'inmates, prisoners of war, Jews etc.', a figure many times higher than the inmates in all camps combined.⁸¹ They were needed, as Himmler explained to Pohl, for the 'huge settlements with which we will make the east German'.⁸² In Southern Russia, the *Durchgangsstraße IV* was to link these prospected settlements and SS fortifications to—as Hitler called it only a few days later after a presentation by Himmler—a 'string of pearls'.⁸³ It was to enable the Germans to subjugate and strangulate the local population up to and including the Crimea, replacing them with German settlers.

Looking at these developments, it is hard not to ask a question. Given that turning the occupied east into German living space was arguably the most important goal of the Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom, how could Himmler make the gigantic construction programme this entailed partly dependent on a labour force that he had already slated for annihilation? I believe this question can only be answered when taking more seriously what Heydrich had actually said at Wannsee about using Jews as forced labourers in the east. We might then be able to recognize that the 'large labour columns... work[ing] their way eastwards' mentioned in the protocol were the very same as the 'construction brigades' of forced labourers which should be 'strictly mobile' that appeared in the revised plans Pohl had presented to Himmler.⁸⁴ Seen from this perspective, we would miss something vital if we see Heydrich's explicit foregrounding of road construction as simply a ploy to elicit consent to genocide.

We would overlook how the wording of the Wannsee Protocol did in fact echo and was most probably inspired by SS policies already implemented on the

ground, most notably Katzmann's forced labour camps along *Durchgangsstraße IV*.⁸⁵ We would also overlook that both the utilization of Jewish forced labourers on the *Durchgangsstraße IV* as well as Heydrich's course at Wannsee might have marked a particular stage in a radicalization process that was not yet aiming at an indiscriminate and immediate murder of all Jews but at forcing them to build this new German dystopia in the east: annihilation through labour. It would also allow us to better understand at least a few inconsistencies that have puzzled historians so far. I wish to mention just two, which seem of particular importance for my argument. Firstly, it allows us to make sense of a version of the General Plan East produced by Ehlich at the RSHA completed most probably at around the time of the Wannsee Conference.⁸⁶ While the plan itself has not survived, what did survive is a very detailed analysis by a high-level functionary in the Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories, Dr Erhard Wetzel. Particularly interested in what was to happen with the native population, he reports that the RSHA wanted to deport 31 out of 45 million to Siberia, a figure that, interestingly, included five to six million Jews.⁸⁷ Why should they be deported to Siberia when the Wannsee Conference had just outlined the murder of all Jews in all of Europe, one might wonder. Barbara Schwindt, for example, suggests that the RSHA had simply 'forgotten to adjust the numbers', i.e. to drop the Jews as later versions of the GPO would do after the systematic and European-wide genocide had commenced.⁸⁸ There is a more realistic interpretation, however. Rather than assuming that the RSHA had just forgotten about five to six million Jews, their deportation to Siberia and exploitation as forced labourers reflected the current state of discussion at the RSHA. In early 1942, this was still the basis for Ehlich calculating the deportation numbers in the General Plan East and for Heydrich's argumentation at Wannsee.

Seen from this perspective, we might also better understand a very outspoken speech by Heydrich only two weeks after the Wannsee Conference. Addressing his subordinates in his capacity as acting head of the German occupation administration in Prague, Heydrich argued that to put the Protectorate 'in order . . . , i.e. in the process of Germanization', only 40 to 60 per cent of the Czech population could be assimilated into the German *Volksgemeinschaft* with the rest to be deported to Northern Russia. There, he continued, they would oversee Jewish labourers, also deported to 'the future ideal homeland for the 11 million Jews from Europe'.⁸⁹ As this makes little sense when assuming that by the time Heydrich had convened the Wannsee Conference the decision for genocide had already been taken, the speech is routinely ignored. In the rare case the speech is mentioned, it is often demoted to a footnote with its importance played down as, for example, by Browning who does 'not think this statement should be taken literally'.⁹⁰ Why we should not do so remains unclear, apart from the fact that it does not fit into the traditional chronology of the Holocaust. If, however, the Wannsee Conference did not fall into the post-decision period but rather reflects a certain stage within this still ongoing process of anti-Jewish radicalization, with not all Jews to be killed immediately but some to be spared and killed by

putting them to work in the east, then Heydrich's speech seems much less puzzling.

There are few events in the history of the Holocaust that have provoked quite as many different and divergent interpretations as the Wannsee Conference. It is not hard to see why, given the little information we have on the genesis of the conference and the quickly radicalizing dynamic in anti-Jewish policies after the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Heydrich intended to use it to strengthen his grip on the field of anti-Jewish policy. That much seems clear. There is good reason to assume that the future treatment of German Jews, so-called German-Jewish 'Mischlinge', and more generally the attempt to push through a rather expansive definition of who should be affected by the 'projected final solution of the Jewish question' had been high up on the agenda right from the start. And it is probably equally obvious that what the German elite in party and state understood this to be dramatically radicalized after Heydrich had to postpone the conference just one day before it was scheduled to take place on 9 December 1941.⁹¹ Whether Hitler in December 1941 did in fact call for the eventual physical annihilation of European Jewry or whether the events of December 1941 are rather to be understood as another step towards further radicalizing anti-Jewish policies while still a few months away from the systematic mass murder of all Jews in all of German-held territory is still hard to ascertain on the basis of the sources available.⁹² What seems clear, however, is that Heydrich's objectives had hardened when he sent out the second round of invitations on 8 January 1942. Given the explosion of violence in Eastern Europe, Heydrich was eager to regain the initiative lost to other Nazi génocidaires in the Soviet Union, Poland and Serbia by pushing for a new framework within which—as Longerich puts it very convincingly—'ever more stages of the "Final Solution"' could be implemented before the war came to an end. This murderous radicalization needed to be reconciled, however, both with the economic imperatives of a country at war and Himmler's fantastic settlement projects.⁹³ Heydrich's solution was informed as much by the problems his own men had encountered during the deportation campaigns in Poland as by developments pioneered by other SS leaders like Katzmann at *Durchgangsstraße IV*. The wording Heydrich used at Wannsee and later repeated in Prague should, therefore, be taken literally because it formulated a 'solution': while Jews unfit to work deserved no mercy, the others should be spared and exhausted as labourers before they, too, were killed.

Conclusion

It would be too easy to point to the abject failure in transforming the camps into economically efficient and productive units and, specifically, in utilizing Jewish labour.⁹⁴ True, Jewish inmates continued to die in high numbers and by mid 1942 fell victim to German attempts to annihilate all Jews in their sphere of influence. However, this should neither blind us to efforts made until the end of the war to exploit Jewish labour by organizing torture in a way that made economic sense,

nor prevent us from analysing anti-Jewish policies in a wider framework of National Socialist living space policies.⁹⁵

In the pre-history of the Wannsee Conference, the Nisko Campaign deserves a place as an important chapter. Not primarily because it saw the deportation of German Jews for the first time, but because it was an early marker of the fundamental changes brought about by this war. Like the other deportations of Jewish and Christian Poles from the annexed territories that followed, they signalled the German determination to radically alter not just the German but also the European demographic landscape. Nazi dystopian planning might have started with the invasion of Poland. However, it soon expanded in lock-step with the German advance into the Soviet Union with the General Plan East envisaging a European order unscrupulously based on subjecting tens of millions to deportation and mass murder. One central feature running through and decisively determining both the various mutations the General Plan East underwent before it was retired after Stalingrad as well as the previous deportation planning in the annexed territories was the need to synchronize population policy with the economic exigencies of a country at war. Here, the Germans were in a quandary: how and when to dispose of enemy people standing in the way of expanding German living space when its expansion rested not least on the labour power of these very people? If it took Heydrich some time to fully appreciate this nexus, by the time he convened the Wannsee Conference he certainly did. The minutes of the Wannsee Conference reflect the lessons Heydrich and his men at the RSHA had learned. In true National Socialist spirit, the 'solution' formulated here was steeped in violence and in line with the ongoing radicalization in anti-Jewish policies: annihilation by labour.

The RSHA was an institution founded in and feeding on the opportunities arising through war. The three conferences mentioned were all landmark events in Nazi population and Germanization policies providing insight into Heydrich's attempts to strengthen the role of the RSHA and to further the progress of Nazi Germanization policies or overcome the lack thereof. In light of the radicalization of German population policies, it is hardly surprising that the last one was also the most murderous one: the Wannsee Conference. Due to the halt of the deportation of Poles, the RSHA was back where it had started with the Nisko Campaign: targeting Jews. This time, however, it was in an attempt to regain the initiative where others seemed to have taken the lead in places like Kulmhof or Lublin, as a lesson learned from the collapse of the deportation plans, and not least in response to the emerging 'Pharaonic construction plans of the Generalplan Ost'.⁹⁶ I would certainly agree that the Wannsee Conference was an attempt to claim ownership of anti-Jewish policies for the SS. From Heydrich's point of view, however, it was also an attempt to recover lost ground, a move determined as much by the setbacks in the past as the violent and fantastic projections for the future.⁹⁷ The Wannsee Conference does not stand out in its aim, however. Whether deporting Poles from the annexed territories or subjecting Jews to murderous working conditions on construction sites in the east, both contributed to the overall aim of creating German *Lebensraum*.

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 - 23 See order Army High Command, 12 September 1939, in Jochen Böhler, *Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg: Die Wehrmacht in Polen 1939* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2006), p. 215, and order Army 10, 26 September 1939, in Böhler, *Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg*, p. 217.
 - 24 Minutes of the meeting on 21 September 1939 under Heydrich, Bundesarchiv Berlin [hereafter: BArch] R 58/825, pp. 26–30.
 - 25 See for example Ernst Hasse, *Das Deutsche Reich als Nationalstaat* (Munich: J. F. Lehmann, 1905), pp. 56–58.
 - 26 For Himmler’s powers as RKF see Hitler’s Decree on the Strengthening of Germanism, 7 October 1939, BArch R43 II/1412, pp. 575–577.
 - 27 Minutes of the meeting on 21 September 1939 under Heydrich, BArch R 58/825, pp. 26–30.
 - 28 As quoted in Miroslav Kárný, ‘Nisko in der Geschichte der “Endlösung”’, *Judaica Bohemiae*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1987, p. 74.
 - 29 On the deportations from Brno see Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, p. 134; on those from Prague and Brno see Lukáš Pribyl, ‘Das Schicksal des dritten Transports aus dem Protektorat nach Nisko’, *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente*, Vol. 7, 2000, pp. 299–305.
 - 30 Doron Rabinovici, *Instanzen der Ohnmacht. Wien 1938–1945: Der Weg zum Judenrat* (Frankfurt/Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000), p. 196. Rabinovici reports the arrest of the Polish Jews without addressing this question. Neither does anybody else as far as I can oversee the historiography.
 - 31 Kárný, ‘Nisko’, p. 75.
 - 32 The train went to Kielce in the General Government. In the following week, the SS deported another 13,171 Poles, also to towns in the General Government. See overview collated by permanent secretary Dr Wilhelm Kleinmann in the Reich Transport Ministry for Himmler, 1 March 1940, BArch R 49/2791.
 - 33 The RSHA had ordered the stop of the Nisko Campaign on 21 October 1939. See the note of Rolf Günther, Eichmann’s man in Ostrau, from the same day as quoted in Hans Safrian, *Eichmann und seine Gehilfen* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1997), p. 79. It was only Eichmann’s determination and protest in Berlin that postponed this decision for a few more days.
 - 34 On how the need to house the incoming ethnic Germans radicalized anti-Jewish policies, see Aly, ‘Endlösung’.
 - 35 Hitler on 6 October 1939 in the Reichstag, quoted in *Verhandlungen des Reichstages*, Vol. 460, pp. 51–63.
 - 36 Forster pointed to the comparatively high average age of the Baltic Germans—a pretext that worked even better as it was grounded in reality. See the report of the Deutsches Auslandsinstitut, 21 April 1940, Archiv des Bundesbeauftragten für die Stasi-Unterlagen [hereafter: BStU] MfS-HA IX/11/143,69, pp. 4–18.

- 37 Sandberger to Central Immigration Office (EWZ), 26 October 1939, BArch R 69/490, pp. 17–19; Streckenbach to the HSSPF in Danzig-West Prussia, Hildebrandt, 26 October 1939, Archiwum Państwowe w Bydgoszczy [hereafter: APB] 9/2, p. 2. It is no coincidence that Greiser established the German People's Register (Deutsche Volksliste) to begin selecting the ethnic German population in his province only two days later. See Greiser's decree 28 October 1939, Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu [hereafter: APP] 406/1105, p. 1.
- 38 Himmler's decree I/II, 30 October 1939, BArch R 58/825, pp. 26–30. After a series of killings, alleged political opponents were already dead in Danzig-West Prussia. See Christian Jansen and Arno Weckbecker, *Der 'Volksdeutsche Selbstschutz' in Polen 1939/40* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992).
- 39 Heydrich to BdS Krakau und IdS in Danzig, Posen, Breslau, Königsberg, 21 December 1939, Special Archive in the Soviet Military Archive [hereafter: SMR] 500-1/4, p. 67.
- 40 Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, pp. 68–69.
- 41 Göring's instruction from 16 November 1939, as quoted in Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, p. 79.
- 42 Undated long-term plan on the resettlement in the eastern provinces, probably from the end of November 1939, BArch R 69/1146, pp. 1–13.
- 43 Heydrich to HSSPF and IdS in Breslau, Posen, Danzig, Königsberg and Krakau, 28 November 1939, published in Szymon Datner, 'Wysiedlanie ludności z ziem polskich wcielonych do Rzeszy: Wybór dokumentów', *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce*, Vol. 13, 1960, pp. 15–17. See also Czesław Madajczyk, *Die Okkupationspolitik Nazideutschlands in Polen, 1939–1945* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1987), pp. 406–407.
- 44 Most of them came from Litzmannstadt where the Gestapo had misplaced the list of politically dangerous Poles it had compiled. In order to quickly load the trains, they were replaced by Jews. See UWZ report, 16 December 1939, Archiwum Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej Warsaw [hereafter AGK] 68/218, pp. 27–35. See also Philip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution: the Nazi program for deporting ethnic Poles, 1939–1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), p. 97. For a different assessment, see Michael Alberti, *Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung der Juden im Reichsgau Wartheland 1939–1945* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2006), pp. 134–135, and Czesław Łuczak, *Pod niemieckim jarzmem. Kraj Warty 1939–1945* (Poznań: PSO, 1996), p. 56.
- 45 Note Heydrich, 21 December 1939, AGK 68/97, pp. 1–7.
- 46 Unsigned minutes of the meeting on 30 January 1940, NO-5322, *Trials of war criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals*, Vol. 4 (Washington: Office of Military Government for Germany, 1950), pp. 855–861.
- 47 Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, pp. 74–82.
- 48 Minutes of the meeting on 12 February 1940, Minutes of the meeting on 12 February 1940, EC-305, in IMT, *Trial of the major war criminals*, Vol. 36, pp. 299–307.
- 49 Entry on 30 May 1940, Werner Präg and Wolfgang Jacobmeyer (eds.), *Das Diensttagebuch des deutscher Generalgouverneurs in Polen 1939–1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1975), p. 210.
- 50 Undated final report on the second short-term plan by the head of the UWZ Litzmannstadt, BArch R 75/6, pp. 1–13; Frank to Greiser, 2 November 1940, published in Datner, 'Wysiedlanie ludności', p. 113.
- 51 Unsigned overview by the office of the Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germanism, 13 February 1941, BArch R 49/303.
- 52 Markus Leniger, *Nationalsozialistische 'Volkstumsarbeit' und Umsiedlungspolitik 1933–1945: Von der Minderheitenbetreuung zur Siedlerauslese* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2006), pp. 91–147.
- 53 Notes taken by Alexander Dolezalek, 10 January 1941, BArch R 49 Anh. I/34, pp. 7–8. On figures mentioned by another participant as reported to Frank, see Aly, 'Endlösung', p. 215. On the conference itself see also Madajczyk, *Die Okkupationspolitik Nazideutschlands*, pp. 415–416 and Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, pp. 286–287.
- 54 RSHA IV D 4 to all Central Migration Offices in the annexed territories, 21 February 1941, AGK 68/122, pp. 35–36 and Müller to the Central Migration Offices and the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna, BArch R 49/26, pp. 78–81.
- 55 Göring according to a letter by the Interior Ministry to the RSHA, 29 January 1941, Landesarchiv Berlin [hereafter: LAB] B Rep. 057–01/ 448, A 26 (2).
- 56 As reported by the head of the UWZ Litzmannstadt quoting the head of the employment bureau in Litzmannstadt, Krumej to Ehlich, 25 February 1942, AGK 68/146, p. 23.
- 57 Note Höppner after the meeting with the head of the department for economy and labour on 4 March 1941, AGK 68/146, pp. 26–27.
- 58 Greiser's personal adjutant to the HSSPF in Posen, 10 May 1941, APP 834/2, p. 36. On the instructions to establish a Polish reservation see the letter by Greiser's office to the SS, 2 May 1941, APP 834/2, p. 25. On the same topic see also Łuczak, *Pod niemieckim jarzmem*, p. 57.

- 59 RSHA, III B, to Höppner, 31 March 1941, AGK 68/146, p. 50. See also Gerhard Wolf, 'Rassistische Utopien und ökonomische Zwänge: die rassischen Selektionen polnischer Arbeitskräfte durch die SS in den Lagern der Umwandererzentralstelle', in Akim Jah, Christoph Kopke and Alexa Stiller (eds.), *Nationalsozialistische Lager: neue Beiträge zur NS-Verfolgungs- und Vernichtungspolitik und zur Gedenkstättenpädagogik* (Ulm: Klemm & Oelschläger, 2005), pp. 125–146.
- 60 Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, pp. 450–452; Alberti, *Verfolgung und Vernichtung*, pp. 373–458.
- 61 Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung*, pp. 452–456.
- 62 On Galicia, see Bogdan Musial, *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung und Judenverfolgung im Generalgouvernement: Eine Fallstudie zum Distrikt Lublin* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999); Sandkühler, *Endlösung in Galizien*; and Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien*. On Serbia, see Walter Manoschek, 'Serbien ist judenfrei': *militärische Besatzungspolitik und Judenvernichtung in Serbien 1941/42* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995).
- 63 Heydrich's authorization by Göring, 31 July 1941, available at: http://www.ghwk.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-wannsee/dokumente/goerings_beauftragung_heydrich_juli1941_barrierefrei.pdf.
- 64 And even with the Einsatzgruppen, Heydrich was forced to realize that they were increasingly requested by and acting on direct orders of the HSSPF in the Soviet Union or even Himmler himself. Andrej Angrick, 'Annihilation and labor: Jews and Thoroughfare IV in central Ukraine', in Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower (eds.), *The Shoah in Ukraine: history, testimony, memorialization* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 191.
- 65 On the deportation of Jews from Western and Central Europe, see Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. 2, *The years of extermination* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), pp. 372–382.
- 66 See for example Hermann Kaienburg, 'Vernichtung durch Arbeit'; Schulte, *Zwangsarbeit und Vernichtung*; and most explicitly Schulte, 'Wannsee Konferenz'.
- 67 As reprinted in Roseman, *The villa, the lake, the meeting*, p. 113.
- 68 Karl-Heinz Roth, "'Generalplan Ost'—'Gesamtplan Ost': Forschungsstand, Quellenprobleme, neue Ergebnisse', in Mechtild Rössler and Sabine Schleiermacher (eds.), *Der 'Generalplan Ost': Hauptlinien der nationalsozialistischen Planungs- und Vernichtungspolitik* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1993), pp. 59–60.
- 69 Meyer to Himmler, 15 July 1941, Madajczyk, *Vom Generalplan Ost zum Generalsiedlungsplan*, pp. 14–15.
- 70 Peter Witte et al. (eds.), *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/42* (Hamburg: Christians, 1999), pp. 185–186; Barbara Schwindt, *Das Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager Majdanek: Funktionswandel im Kontext der 'Endlösung'* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), p. 59. For SS Germanization plans for Lublin and the surrounding area, see Bruno Wasser, *Himmlers Raumpolitik im Osten: Der Generalplan Ost in Polen 1940–1944* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1993).
- 71 See entry for 24 July 1941 in Witte et al., *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers*, p. 179.
- 72 Schulte, 'Wannsee Konferenz', pp. 62–64.
- 73 Hermann Kaienburg, 'Jüdische Arbeitslager an der "Straße der SS"', 1999: *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1996, p. 17.
- 74 Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941–1945* (Bonn: Dietz, 1991), p. 220.
- 75 Jan Erik Schulte, 'Vom Arbeits- zum Vernichtungslager: Die Entstehungsgeschichte von Auschwitz-Birkenau', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 41–69. For the role of Auschwitz in the Germanization of Upper Silesia, see Sybille Steinbacher, 'Musterstadt' Auschwitz: *Germanisierungspolitik und Judenmord in Ostoberschlesien* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2000).
- 76 Instructions by the Ministry for the Eastern Territories, 18 December 1941, PS 3666, in IMT, *Trial of the major war criminals*, Vol. 32, pp. 437. See for example Browning, *The origins of the final solution*, p. 307; Friedländer, *The years of extermination*, p. 730.
- 77 Dieter Pohl, 'Schauplatz Ukraine: Der Massenmord an den Juden im Militärverwaltungsgebiet und im Reichskommissariat 1941–1943', in Norbert Frei (ed.), *Ausbeutung, Vernichtung, Öffentlichkeit: neue Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Lagerpolitik* (Munich: Saur, 2000), pp. 155–156; Maryna Dubyk, 'Arbeitseinsatz und Lebensbedingungen im Reichskommissariat Ukraine und im ukrainischen Gebiet unter Militärverwaltung (1941–1944)', in Dieter Pohl and Tanja Sebta (eds.), *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa: Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen* (Berlin: Metropol, 2013), pp. 195–213.
- 78 Katzmann's instructions to camp leaders, Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien*, p. 169.
- 79 As quoted at Pohl, 'Schauplatz Ukraine', p. 169.
- 80 Himmler to Glücks, 26 January 1942, quoted in Streit, *Keine Kameraden*, p. 223.
- 81 Memorandum Kammler, 10 February 1942, BArch NS 19/2065.
- 82 Hitler to Pohl, 31 January 1942, quoted in Schulte, *Zwangsarbeit und Vernichtung*, p. 344.
- 83 Entry on 26 February 1942, quoted in Henry Picker (ed.), *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942* (Stuttgart: Seewald, 1963), p. 184.

- 84 Memorandum Kammler, 10 February 1942, BArch NS 19/2065.
- 85 On the work on the *Durchgangsstraße IV* as possible inspiration for Heydrich at Wannsee see Friedländer, *Years of extermination*, pp. 342–343.
- 86 On the timing see Roth, “‘Generalplan Ost’—‘Gesamtplan Ost’”, p. 40.
- 87 Memorandum Erhard Wetzel as reprinted in Madajczyk, *Vom Generalplan Ost zum Generalsiedlungsplan*, pp. 50–81.
- 88 Schwindt, *Das Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager Majdanek*, p. 61.
- 89 Heydrich as quoted in Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotova and Margita Kárná (eds.), *Deutsche Politik im ‘Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren’ unter Reinhard Heydrich 1941–1942: Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Metropol, 1997), pp. 221–234, here p. 229.
- 90 Browning, *The origins of the final solution*, p. 541.
- 91 Heydrich to Luther, 8 December 1941, available at: http://www.ghwk.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-wannsee/engl/luther-january1942.pdf.
- 92 Christian Gerlach, ‘The Wannsee Conference, the fate of German Jews, and Hitler’s decision in principle to exterminate all European Jews’, in Omer Bartov (ed.), *The Holocaust: origins, implementations, aftermath* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 137–140; and Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: the Nazi persecution and murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 305–310.
- 93 Longerich, *Holocaust*, p. 309.
- 94 For a graphic description see Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler’s willing executioners: ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996), pp. 283–353.
- 95 This is true for Himmler’s attempts right after the Wannsee Conference to receive Slovakian Jews fit to work for Auschwitz and Lublin and continues until the end of the war. See Schulte, ‘Wannsee-Konferenz’, pp. 84–89; and Götz Aly and Christian Gerlach, *Das letzte Kapitel: Realpolitik, Ideologie und der Mord an den ungarischen Juden 1944/1945* (Stuttgart: DVA, 2002).
- 96 Tooze, *The wages of destruction*, p. 526.
- 97 Schulte, ‘Wannsee-Konferenz’, p. 89.

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