

The Spirit of the Reich Security Main Office (RSMA)

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When, on 16 September 1942, Heinrich Himmler met his senior officers (SS- und Polizeiführer) of the occupied Soviet territories, he not only informed them about the precarious course of war, and that Germany had underestimated the military strength of the Soviet army. He not only talked about his main topic, how to refresh the German national body with those children whom German soldiers had had by Russian women. Himmler also sketched his design of a new pagan religion based on the eternal laws of blood (*die ewigen Gesetze des Blutes*).

From Himmler's perspective, the threat of the extinction (*Volkstod*) of the Germans had existed because fewer children were being born.

If there is no inner moral restoration (*seelische innere Umkehr*), then we Germans will become extinct. In that case we will have defeated the vanguard of Asia, because we had Adolf Hitler on our side, but the fight which will come after, whether with a Russia renewed out of Siberia or with some other people is one we will no longer be able to win. This inner moral restoration can only mean devotion to our ancestors (*Ahnern*). In everything I do, I have to accept responsibility to my ancestors. Those ancestors have granted honour, reputation, glory, health, blood, power of body and soul to me, so I do have the duty of passing this legacy on to my descendants. I am not allowed to treat this legacy in my own individualistic way ...

This beloved Nordic blood, our own Germanic people, from which we come and to which we owe everything, which is really the best on this earth, which has given this earth meaning, form, and culture, this people rises up because of Adolf Hitler. And all of us, as SS members, as the knights of the Reich, can be proud to help fulfil this task. After thousands of years, in the course of eternal change, there will be descent and decline once again until, from the remnants of this blood, which we have implanted, there will rise another spring, another ascent in this eternal cycle of dying and being born just as Fate, the immortal forefather (*Urahn*), has preordained it. So do your duty everywhere you find yourselves and you will fulfil your fate as the law has ordered it!

Most scholars who have considered the concept of political religion in relation to Nazism have treated National Socialism *as if it was a religion*, and compared its political symbols and rituals with religious liturgy and worship.² Dealing with political religion by suggesting analogies of this kind poses problems. The first lies in the assumption underpinning conventional interpretations of secularisation in modern times. It tends to treat religion as if it had vanished and been replaced by politics.³ From this perspective, religion remained an essentially pre-modern phenomenon. Now disguised as politics, it was an irrational and anti-Enlightenment world view that had to fight back. The second misapprehension is the assumption that takes National Socialism as an ideological entity which had to make a clear decision between adopting a religious character and a secular one.⁴ The various ideas, imaginings and discourses within the Nazi regime about religion in general, and Christianity in particular, and the right way to deal with them, are necessarily neglected when this perspective is adopted.⁵

In contrast to the definition of political religion as the 'sacralisation of politics' (Emilio Gentile), Himmler had been eager to create a National Socialist pagan religion in its own right, not 'distinct from, and autonomous of traditional religious institutions',⁶ but as a renaissance of pagan cults and beliefs. It was designed to be apart from Christianity, but within a framework of traditional – or more precisely, what Himmler regarded as traditional – *völkisch* religious institutions. 'Blood' was to be the substantive and sacred centre of this Germanic religion. The eternal chain of genealogy meant more than a philosophy of history. It entailed the transcendence of all the individual links in the chain, since all individuals had to fulfil their biological destiny, otherwise the chain threatened to break. The moral choice between being a saint and a sinner, the responsibility of Everyman before the Creator, and even obedience to the law (Himmler of course did not mean the Law of the Holy Bible, but the law of blood, the law of nature) should turn every member of the Germanic people into a believer, a member of a Germanic religion.

Ever since becoming *Reichsführer SS* in 1929, Himmler had occupied himself with issuing instructions for the SS men's observation of new religious rituals. Instead of Christmas and Easter, they should celebrate the solstice – in December as well as in June. Every major SS unit was to be responsible for one archaeological site which was to serve as an exemplar of Germanic glory and history. Himmler himself had been committed to establishing the cultic status of rock monuments near Detmold, called *Externsteine*, which were regarded as a Germanic sanctuary, as well to the grave of the medieval king Heinrich I in the Quedlinburg cathedral. An old castle named Wewelsburg near Paderborn was earmarked to become the ritual centre of the SS religion, and Himmler spent a lot of money to refurbish the masonry.⁷

Himmler did not win over the Nazi elite in general, or even Hitler in particular, to his attempt to establish an anti-Christian religion of blood and genealogy. He had always held a minority position. And without doubt there were several bizarre, psychic details in Himmler's construction of history and faith. However, to regard them as the abstruse and irrelevant obsessions of one individual would be to underestimate the intention, persistence and symbolic power of his activities. They were not the mere private hobbyhorse of Heinrich Himmler, but had constituted an ambitious attempt to establish a religious system, spiritual as well as practical, for the elitist organisation of the forthcoming Great Germanic Empire. Himmler wanted to release the SS from the Christian culture of the

Occident, and to fight Christianity until its end. Himmler's understanding of ancestry was not a secular philosophy of history. His vision of eternity went beyond the existence of an individual, and turned the life of the individual into something that transcended genealogy.

In November 1937 Himmler sketched out his aims for the SS: 'We want to create an exclusive elite for the next centuries, a new nobility which will recruit the best sons and daughters of our people, a nobility which will never grow older, which reaches far back into tradition and that history which is of value, even into the most ancient of times, and simultaneously represents the eternal youth for our people'.⁸ This racist utopia formed the core of Himmler's world view. Here, his ideas on the organisation of the SS merged with his visions of SS family politics, of ideological education and of conquest of areas of settlement for Germans in Eastern Europe. This utopian vision was the basis of many of the destructive dimensions of SS policy. It led to the annihilation of all that was supposed to be of 'alien blood' (*fremdvölkisch*) because of its alleged enmity toward 'racially good blood' (*guthrassiges Blut*). Himmler stubbornly clung to this policy throughout, and to ignore this consistent world view would be to underestimate the coherence of his politics.

But was there a definite link between Himmler's political religion and the beliefs of the executors of his policy, in particular the 'core group of genocide' (Ulrich Herbert)? That core group comprised the leading men of the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA), which was constructed in September 1939 as a top-level fusion of the *Gestapo*, the Criminal Police (*Kripo*), and the intelligence service of the SS (the *Sicherheitsdienst*, SD). Below, in Section I, I discuss the different scholarly views and changes of perspectives on Nazi perpetrators during the last decades; in Section II, I outline the characteristic features of the RSHA leadership corps, in particular their world view (*Weltanschauung*). In Section III, I analyse the RSHA as a new type of National Socialist institution; and then, in Section IV, the Second World War as a necessary condition for the radicalisation of mentality and practices of this group. In my conclusion, I attempt to answer the question of whether these RSHA men had been driven by a political religion.⁹

I. Perspectives on SS Perpetrators

Testifying on 3 January 1946 at the Nuremberg trial of the principal war criminals, Otto Ohlendorf – at the time still in his late thirties – shocked his listeners with the frank admission that he, as the leader of *Einsatzgruppe D*, had been responsible for the murder of 90,000 people in the Soviet Union during 1941–42. Even 50 years on, US prosecutor Telford Taylor remembered Ohlendorf as a handsome young man, who had spoken softly and with great precision and apparent intelligence. Taylor recalled the paralysing silence in the courtroom which had followed Ohlendorf's detached and emotionless testimony only too clearly.¹⁰ It was also 50 years later that Daniel Goldhagen, in his book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, raised a key question. Most reflections on Nazi perpetrators or explanations of their deeds had sought – and continue to seek – possible motives that might have induced 'ordinary' Germans to commit genocide. There must have been factors that had eroded moral barriers or cultural boundaries in such a way as to have rendered ordinary people capable of perpetrating monstrous crimes. What Goldhagen asked was: were the perpetrators indeed forced to commit these crimes, or were they willing,

even eager, to persecute and exterminate the Jews? Did these men murder because they had to, or because they were allowed to do so?²¹¹

Of course, one cannot answer this question simply by supporting one side or the other. Obviously, there is no simple or unambiguous answer. The significance, however, lies in the asking. There are, in fact, numerous images of Nazi perpetrators. First, there is the image of the SS men as sketched by Eugen Kogon, a former inmate of the Buchenwald camp, in the immediate post-war period. He portrayed them as brutal, poorly educated, primitive and socially deprived individuals, unable to hold down normal jobs in civil society.¹² Even when the Nuremberg Trials revealed that the German elite – lawyers, physicians, officers and entrepreneurs – were deeply involved in the mass murder and genocide, a majority of post-1945 Germans were still eager to believe that these men were exceptions, a misled criminal minority. Furthermore, in the atmosphere of the beginning of the Cold War, it was not long before former war criminals were viewed as unjustly sentenced warriors against communism, who now should be released from prison.

The second image of the perpetrators of Nazi crimes is the picture of Adolf Eichmann in his glass booth in the Jerusalem District Court. Hannah Arendt's book, and her dictum about the banality of evil, shaped the image of Nazi perpetrators in the decades that followed.¹³ This was due not only to the impact of her reasoning and her brilliant prose style, but was also the result of a concurrent shift within the social sciences. This is confirmed by the fact that Raul Hilberg, who published his famous book on the Holocaust in the same period, also portrayed the perpetrators as part of the normal, smoothly functioning modern bureaucracy that was responsible for genocide.¹⁴ Hilberg was interested not so much in individuals as in administration, bureaucracies, procedures and structures. He was a student of Franz Neumann, who had close ties to the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, which particularly emphasised the aspects of overarching and somewhat anonymous social structures.

During the 1950s and 1960s, social scientists in the Western world increasingly favoured structuralist theories and concepts, and this shift affected historiography as well. In Germany, a substantial number of historians supported the concept of a historical social science and shifted the focus of their work from historical actors as the subjects of history to research on impersonal social structures, large-scale social phenomena – such as class, social status or interest groups – and to the analysis of enormous quantities of data on economic development. This modern approach to the social sciences also influenced the historiography of National Socialism and the Holocaust, and promoted a structuralist perspective on the Nazi regime and National Socialist society.

For many years, the bureaucrat, the technocrat, the armchair culprit was (and continues to be) the dominant image of the perpetrators of Nazi crimes. These perpetrators focused on their own duties, accepted the administrative tasks assigned them, and carried them out correctly and conscientiously without feeling responsible for the overall consequences. In short, they perceived themselves not as small cogs in a huge machine that was beyond their control. This image not only corresponded to the defence formulated by numerous perpetrators, but also matched the daily experience of many individuals in a modern, bureaucratic social production-line form of killing. The bureaucrat became an 'unsentimental technocrat of power' (an expression used by Hans-Ulrich Thamer), a technician of death,

who maintained and optimised his part in the huge machinery of annihilation without wasting a thought on the murderous meaning of the entirety, much less bothering himself about moral scruples.¹⁵

If historians considered questions of ideology or intent at all, they focused only on Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler – that is, on the very top level of Nazi leadership. Thus, the longstanding debate between 'intentionalists' and 'functionalists' has been an unequal one: while structuralists were part of the powerful, hegemonic mainstream within the social sciences, intentionalists were forced to defend an old-fashioned view of the Nazi regime. Rooted in political science, the latter concept of the Third Reich was one of a traditional dictatorship, in which one furious anti-Semite on the top could induce an entire society to commit genocide.¹⁶

The breakthrough which occurred in the 1980s and 1990s has been related on the one hand, to the shift of interest within the social sciences toward a focus on topics such as everyday life, gender, culture and ethnic differences. Research in these areas has indeed seriously challenged structuralist theories. On the other hand, recent empirical research, based on documents from East European archives opened after 1989, has yielded new information about the large number of middle-ranking SS officers, the officials in the occupation administrations, the army officers responsible for mass murder, the disastrous conditions in the ghettos, and the deportation of Jewish victims to the extermination camps. This more recent research on Nazi perpetrators has brought to light individuals who were able to decide what to do, who were able to choose to act in one way or another. Studies by Götz Aly, Susanne Heim and especially Ulrich Herbert's excellent study of Werner Best have shown that many of these individuals were university-educated – not part of a marginal or excluded minority, but members of the mainstream elite of the very heart of German society.¹⁷

For all the new insights, however, Goldhagen's question remains unanswered. Were these university graduates *forced* to plan, to design and even to execute genocide, or were they *allowed* to do so? In recent years, we have broadened our image of Nazi perpetrators to include the many radicals and high degree of radicalism among them, but we still know very little about the process of radicalisation. If we reject the notion that the perpetration of genocide is the result of a genetic defect, and also mistrust the narrative of the cultured classes that underpins many biographies about Nazis (especially those dealing with Hitler's life), according to which Nazi perpetrators planned genocide from an early point and simply waited for an opportunity to realise their intentions, then we are forced to develop new hypotheses and methodological approaches to explain the radicalisation of ordinary university-educated people to the point that they would commit genocide. None of the young men who were later to play a leading role in the RSHA had envisioned the systematic annihilation of the European Jews as students. Even thereafter, when they joined the Security Service of the SS (*Sicherheitsdienst*, SD) and the *Gestapo*, there were no indications of plans for genocide being generated among them. Nonetheless, they were the ones who ultimately not only took part in the planning of genocide, but also executed the actual plans as leaders of the *Einsatzkommandos* and *Einsatzgruppen*. Future research will not be able to rest not on assumptions about a specific, dominant type of perpetrator. Instead, it will have to analyse the links between various protagonists and institutions, and the connections between intentions and structural conditions, between ideology and function, between individual intent and the situative dynamics of violence.

II. Characteristic Features of the RSHA Leadership Corps

A total of about 3,000 people, including secretaries and lower officials, were employed in the RSHA in Berlin. About 400 men (and one woman) had positions at the highest level, as *Referenten* (departmental officials), *Gruppenleiter* or *Amtsleiter* (heads of office). Of these, I have chosen a sample of 221 individuals who constituted the leadership corps that worked in the RSHA more or less continuously. When one examines the biographies of these RSHA leaders, one finds a strikingly homogeneous generational group: 77 per cent were born after 1900; most were from lower-middle-class families and were the first in their families to attend university, with two thirds of this group actually completing their university degrees, and one third (or 50 per cent of those who studied at university in the first place) gaining a doctoral degree.

The generation of those who were children or youngsters during the First World War and, from their perspective, were therefore denied the opportunity of 'proving themselves' on the front lines, formed the reservoir from which the RSHA recruited its leadership corps. For this young generation, the lack of opportunity to prove themselves as brave warriors represented an enduring blow to their self-confidence. It infused them with a feeling that they would have to prove themselves in the future. And the fact that these young men became such merciless, cruel officers during the Second World War may be related to the circumstance that they had never seen a battlefield before, that they had not been soldiers like their fathers or older brothers, that they lacked the image of martial masculinity.

During the First World War, the far-off battles were brought close to home especially by newspapers, which were published as often as three times a day and portrayed the war as a game on a drawing-board, as manoeuvres with armies of tin soldiers. Those soldiers triumphantly marched on, held strategically important hills, or temporarily withdrew for tactical purposes to 'straighten' the front lines. For these men, war was – in the words of the renowned German journalist Sebastian Haffner, born in 1907 – a great game, which they played every day – seriously, but not physically. War was a playground, not a battlefield, an arena for competition where nations intermingled and were destroyed without blood, death and pain. This was a generation of young gamblers – and of non-believers in bourgeois society.¹⁸ What these youngsters experienced first-hand was not so much the so-called home front during the First World War as post-war shortages, political upheaval, revolution, violence and hatred. They lived through the post-war economic disaster leading to the hyperinflation of 1923, which turned bourgeois society upside down. This last point was of major importance, as bourgeois values such as hard work, diligence and thrift – and attendant adages asserting that one would enjoy a peaceful old age if one only worked hard and saved one's money – became worthless. Living in such times meant that one came to despise bourgeois values: the promises of bourgeois society seemed to be a deception.

Discontinuity, a break with the past and a focus on the future became the hallmarks of this generation. This generation also made youth its programme to a degree unequalled by any other generation in twentieth-century Germany. But this was not 'youth' in the usual sense of the word, implying a normal generational generation conflict. Rather, 'youth' heralded the design of a new world, basing its appeal and its uncompromising demands on the collapse of the old. Parading

one's youthfulness was equivalent to turning one's back on the old, the traditional, the decayed, in order to face a brighter future. That 'future', however, was not so much envisioned in terms of favourable material conditions or of the rational and dispassionate appraisal of resources, as imagined to depend on one's will and mental strength.

For the young men who would later take up leadership positions in the RSHA, the years spent at university would prove to be among the most decisive in their lives. Only about one quarter of the RSHA leadership came from families with a university background; 60 per cent were from the lower middle class, with fathers who were small businessmen, technicians, engineers, craftsmen and, above all, civil servants in intermediate or higher positions. The Reich Security Main Office was an institution for social climbers. Significantly, more than three quarters of those in the top ranks of the RSHA had passed their *Abitur*, and, as mentioned above, two thirds had attended the university while nearly one third also held doctorates. Thus, the leadership corps of the RSHA was by no means a collection of human failures: it was not recruited from the margins of society, but was part of the academically educated bourgeois elite.

More than half of those who held a university degree had studied law or political science, but a significant proportion, about 22 per cent, had majored in the humanities – in subjects such as German literature, history, theology, journalism and philology. The highest positions within the RSHA were taken up by lawyers, historians, philologists and journalists. Those who held degrees in fields other than law were, for the most part, to be found in positions in the SD.

Numerous members of the RSHA leadership had been activists in the National Socialist Student Association (*Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, NSDStB). All those who, in their later SS biographies, mentioned membership of the NSDStB before 1933, also listed the political offices they had held in the organisation. Merely membership was not enough: what really counted was one's activism. On 8 March 1933, Martin Sandberger and Erich Ehlinger raised the swastika flag in front of the main auditorium of the University of Tübingen. In the weeks that followed, what might be termed a cultural revolution ensued. These student activists, supported by the well-known philosopher Martin Heidegger, saw themselves as the revolutionary core of a movement aiming fundamentally to revamp the university according to *völkisch* principles. They called for the dismissal of all politically liberal or leftist, and especially of all Jewish professors.

But even students like the Leipzig group led by Heinz Gräfe – a group that expressly defined itself as being non-National Socialist and which was attacked by the NSDStB in Leipzig – were characterised by the ideological tension peculiar to this generation. At conferences and colloquia on wide-ranging themes, these young men did not discuss democracy as a constitutional problem or a problem of the practical politics of a parliamentary republic. They debated fundamental problems such as the relationship between state and nation, or between the people and the state. Here, the *Volk*, the people, was not defined as the people who make up a nation, but rather as a 'community of blood or fate' (*Bluts- oder Schicksalsgemeinschaft*), which was still in search of an appropriate form of political organisation: 'The people must become a state' (*'Volk will Staat werden'*) was the motto of a conference in 1929.¹⁹

These men already perceived themselves as members of a future leadership elite. Their goal was to become leaders, not citizens – not the elected, but the chosen, natural elite of the people. These young law and political science students

designed a model of law and of the state that had little in common with either the Weimar constitution or the theories of the Prussian philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Their concept of leadership was not based on laws or legal principles, but rather on history and actions.

Leadership, action, ideas – these were the dominant elements in the political thinking of these young men. Leadership, they maintained, was based on knowledge of the organic development of nature and people and was confirmed by deeds. A leader proved himself through the superiority of his deeds and their success. Success alone counted and legitimated both actions and ideas. Deeds legitimated themselves. The world view (*Weltanschauung*) of this generation was characterised by a specific structure of political thought rather than by specific political content. Politics was always understood as a dramatic, absolute, unlimited expression of the will, which was not to be subordinated to regulatory norms or moral laws.

What is significant in the academic debates of this generation about state, *Volk* and *Weltanschauung* is the connection between theory and practice, between ideology and politics. None of these young academically educated men who imagined that they were the future elite of a New German Reich regarded themselves as intellectuals, as disinterested scholars. Scholarship had to be political; *Weltanschauung* had to prove itself in practice; ideas could prove their worth only through deeds. Those who were to become the leaders of the RSHA did not want to be bookworms or scholars, but aimed instead to become a kind of spiritual leadership (*‘eine geistige Elite’*), which would not only outline new plans and concepts, but realise them.

Cultural anti-Semitism was, of course, also a characteristic shared by these young students; in this respect, they did not differ from the bulk of the rest of the German educated middle class of the period. Even the attitudes of the Leipzig group mentioned above were, in several respects, identical to those embedded in National Socialist ideology. My purpose, however, is to retrace the specific structure of this *Weltanschauung*. It was an ideology that always sought to realise the total goal, the whole utopian enterprise: it was incapable of compromise and proved itself through acting, not through arguing. Success or failure alone determined whether one was right or wrong. This unlimited, radical ideology, this unbound connection between ideology and politics had already proved to be a threat to all liberal, democratic and, of course, Jewish professors and students at Germany's universities before the Nazi rise to power. It became a greater menace to them thereafter. However, once this specific ideology had fused with an institution intentionally designed to have no limits, these two radical elements would initiate a process of dynamic radicalisation.

III. The RSHA as a New Type of National Socialist Institution

If one examines the professional life of the later RSHA leaders, one repeatedly encounters the biographical option of a career in politics. Even to those who, like Hans Ehlisch or Erwin Weinmann for example, were respected physicians, with substantial incomes, families, homes and so on, there came a time in their lives when they decided to realise their political vision, to leave their jobs and join the SS. Politics, in the sense of policy making, of creating a new political order in Europe, had always been a serious option in their lives. But National Socialism's political victory offered them an opportunity to join one of the Nazi regime's most powerful institutions: the political police.

What was special about this historical situation had little to do with the observation that, in times of political upheaval, young political activists can be expected eagerly to await an opportunity to intervene in events, rather than watch from the sidelines. What was unique in this case was the character of the institutions they joined. As a result of Himmler's and Heydrich's success in the intra-Nazi struggle for control of the police in 1936, both the police and the (formerly relatively insignificant) SS Intelligence (SD) developed into institutions charged with much more than their original functions, namely terrorising the opponents of the Nazi regime. In keeping with the SS's racist perspective, the police and the SD were destined to take on a much larger task: 'to protect', as Himmler put it in 1937, 'the German people as a total organic being, its life force, and its institutions, from destruction and decay'. And Himmler added that the authority of a police charged with such duties 'cannot be interpreted in a restrictive manner'.²⁰

It was not the state that was at the centre of National Socialist political thought, but the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the German ethnic community and the Aryan race. Hitler himself had repeatedly pointed out in *Mein Kampf* that the state was only a tool for race and *Volk*. The new political order the National Socialists intended to establish was the racist *Volksgemeinschaft*: a revolutionary, utopian and destructive order, not an old-fashioned dictatorship. In the 'struggle to the death' against those labelled as the Nazis' ideological opponents – that is, above all against the Jews as the embodiment of the 'anti-race' or 'anti-*Volk*' – the police had to be completely free to resort to any conceivable means to win the war of worldviews. 'Were we to fail to fulfil our historical duty', Heydrich asserted in an article published in *Das Schwarze Korps* in the autumn of 1935 and reprinted in 1936 in his *Die Wandlungen unseres Kampfes*, 'through being too objective and too humane, then no one will make allowances for mitigating circumstances. They will merely say: they did not fulfil their duty to history'.²¹

There is an important distinction here. Even where a repressive, authoritarian understanding of the state holds sway, one finds rules, regulations and a legal order – albeit not a democratic order, but one which state institutions respect. These rules may be repressive, but even people subjected to individual suppression or persecution in such a dictatorship can rely on them. The existence of a state order implies a legal order. When the political order is based on race and *Volk*, no one can define the limits or fix a system of rules and regulations, because race and *Volk* are fluid terms defined politically, rather than by a legal order. The creation of the racist *Volksgemeinschaft* as a political order in Germany meant not only that the bourgeois state was destroyed but, in particular, that limits could be ignored and that political action was no longer limited. Policy making was transformed into 'policing'.

The Reich Security Main Office, a mixture of state institutions and Nazi Party organisations, was not a police authority in the sense of the Prussian administration. It was a new type of uniquely National Socialist institution, linked directly to the Nazi concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* and to the organisation of the Nazi state. The RSHA was a creation of the police authority in the sense that it was a supervisory body, an organisation that defined its task as the implementation of overall racist control. Here, the police was not an instrument for preventing crimes or persecuting criminals, but aimed to establish a total racist order and to exterminate the regime's enemies.

This concept of a police authority, which was political in an all-encompassing sense, corresponded to the ideological will to create a new political order, set

apart from all that was old and conventional. Consequently, active involvement in the RSHA was also perfectly possible for those who did not view themselves explicitly as National Socialists, since it offered a link between *Weltnachauung* and institution, between the will to participate in designing a new political order and a structure through which this order might be created. Those who saw themselves as the elite of a New German Reich believed that they had found the tool, the institution through which to realise their utopia. Allowing *Weltnachauung* to move beyond previous boundaries, rather than drawing up such limits, was the trademark of a new and radical institution like the Reich Security Main Office.

The RSHA was a flexible organisation. This was precisely the kind of political 'fighting administration' (*kämpfende Verwaltung*) Heydrich had called for. It was capable of expanding or shrinking, building new departments and dissolving old ones, shifting priorities or establishing new ones, and initiating intra-agency task forces. For all the slow-moving administrative procedures that were also typical of an entity like the RSHA, it could enter into new dynamic phases in order to realise its political goals. Both the political police and the SD were subject to numerous changes and reorganisations: they were institutions that underwent constant change at the hands both of their own respective policy makers and of the leaders of the Nazi regime, depending on the political framework and definition of their tasks.

For example, new 'groups' responsible for the occupied areas were created. Even Heinrich Müller, the head of the *Gestapo*, did not have such a group in mind when he planned the various groups and departments in the autumn of 1939. Eichmann's Office IV B 4 – the equivalent of a department in size and importance – became a central office for deportation in all of Europe. Such new core sections, both in Eichmann's apparatus and in the important group IV D, no longer employed the kind of criminal police commissar who had been trained as a policeman in the Weimar Republic and had then become a *Gestapo* officer because of his anti-Bolshevist verve. Now there were significantly younger men, some of them administrative lawyers, some SD people, most of whom had been 'on active duty' before or after they took up administrative positions in the RSHA.

The RSHA was also a mobile organisation. It did not limit itself to operating from Berlin, with a staff of officials sitting behind their desks doing paperwork and writing orders that someone else had to carry out. One illuminating example is the case of Dr Walter Blume. Born in 1906 in Dortmund, he was the son of a teacher. Walter Blume grew up in a Protestant family, studied law and, as a student, was a member of night-wing groups. In 1933 – Blume was 27 years old at the time – he became head of the political police in Dortmund. One year later, he was ordered to Berlin as a member of the central *Gestapo* board; a few months later he became the head of the *Gestapo* in Halle and then held the same position in Hannover. In 1939, he became head of the *Gestapo* in Berlin. From there he moved to the RSHA, where he was responsible for all personnel matters of the *Gestapo* and the Criminal Police. In 1941 Blume became the leader of *Einsatzkommando 7a*, which killed thousands of Jewish people in the Soviet Union. He returned to the RSHA in the autumn of 1941, was sent to Austria a year later and given the charge of combating partisan groups. Next he was ordered to Düsseldorf in the capacity of chief of the regional police. In 1943 Blume was appointed chief of the police forces in occupied Greece. He returned to the RSHA in late 1944. Blume is an example of a man suited to all assignments, who functioned

equally well behind a desk in Berlin, at sites of execution in the Soviet Union, and as the chief of the German police forces in occupied Greece.²²

The RSHA was run by men just like him: flexible, mobile, eager, able to perform their duties everywhere. They were not bureaucrats or technocrats. They understood that their task was ideological, that they were part of a project that had to be realised in Berlin alone, but wherever they happened to be assigned. They linked their work in the central office in Berlin to practical operations elsewhere; they participated in the actual practice of terror, rather than creating the horrors of the occupation regime simply through regulations and decrees. The RSHA as an institution was mobile and flexible. Its central office was in Berlin, but it realised its full power and potential at local level. Ideally, the plan of those who constructed the RSHA was to unite under one institution political initiative, problem analysis and operational organisation and implementation. No administrative or legal norms were to limit that institution: it was to be allowed to act everywhere and with all available means 'for the coordination of all the political business of the SS', as Himmler's written order of 25 June 1942 stipulated.

IV. The World War as an Enabling Factor

War created the necessary context for the further development of the RSHA. War made it easier to kill, and made murder an everyday practice. The entire legal framework of a bourgeois society – insurance, property rights, financial agreements, and all the other rules and regulations with the potential to hinder RSHA operations – vanished in the occupied areas. There were no troublesome clerks and bureaucrats insisting on laws and agreements, no civil rights or criminal code. The RSHA could act as it saw fit without restraints or political reservations.

The war against Poland was undoubtedly a watershed. The operations of the *Einsatzgruppen*, most of whose leaders became part of the RSHA leadership a short time later, were far more horrible than the acts of terror that had been committed by the same men in their earlier positions as *Gestapo* or SD leaders. In autumn 1939 the *Einsatzkommandos* carried out executions that were similar – in respect of the number of people killed and the methods used – to the mass executions later practiced in the occupied Soviet territories. During the operations in Poland, numerous SS leaders who were later, within the RSHA, to be responsible for the Final Solution learned to think on a 'large scale' and to cross all the limits of civilisation. In a sense, the practice of genocide in Poland in the autumn of 1939 marked the actual establishment of the Reich Security Main Office.²³

After occupying Poland, the Nazi regime planned to annex western Poland and to 'Germanise' it. '*Völkische Flurbereinigung*' (or 'ethnic cleansing') was the term Hitler coined for this task. What institution could be better suited to the task than the RSHA? In late October 1939 Himmler ordered that one million people – Jews and Poles – be forcibly removed from western Poland to the so-called *Generalgouvernement* (the Nazis' term for occupied central Poland). Besides dedicated personnel, this large-scale expulsion required trains, deportation areas, barracks and food for the deportees (even if the actual intention was to allow them to starve). There was a shortage of trains because the German army needed them for the French campaign. And the German occupation administration in the *Generalgouvernement* refused to allow the tens of thousands of deportees to enter because there was a shortage of accommodation, food and other

necessities. As a result, the number of people scheduled for deportation was first reduced and the deportations postponed. In the end, the entire plan was abandoned. The ideological vision of the world as an arena of the will – in which reality was an object to be shaped in whatever way one desired – had been put to a difficult test by the many obstacles which the RSHA faced. Yet all these very real obstacles did not cause the leaders of the RSHA to lose any degree of confidence in their ability to achieve the goal of Germanising the annexed regions and making the Reich 'Jew-free' (*Judenrein*).

As the *Wehrmacht's* victory over France in 1940 became obvious, an old anti-Semitic plan to expel the European Jews to Madagascar was revived. It could only be realised if Germany gained control of the seas. Without a victory over Britain, the plan would remain a phantom. Nevertheless, the German Foreign Office and the RSHA created detailed plans for deporting the Jews to Madagascar. Within the Nazi leadership, the 'Madagascar plan' was earnestly discussed – until it became apparent that Hitler preferred attacking the Soviet Union to attacking Britain. Notwithstanding the scholarly debate about the seriousness of the 'Madagascar plan', the fact of the matter is that this alternative was pursued eagerly within the RSHA, and the number of Jews slated to be deported to Madagascar reached more than three million.²⁴

After its failure only a few months earlier in western Poland, where the RSHA had been unable to expel the targeted number of one million Jews and Poles, it nevertheless proceeded to plan a deportation operation three times larger than the first. Moreover, within a period of only a few months, the RSHA had broadened the scope of its plans to include not only the Jews from Germany and western Poland, but those from all over Western Europe.

Another aspect of this plan is also significant. The RSHA operatives were, of course, aware of the fact that the island of Madagascar had neither enough space, nor the agricultural land, food and water resources to sustain an additional three million people. It was clear that tens of thousands of people at least would die of starvation or as a result of epidemics. Although the 'Madagascar plan' as outlined in the summer of 1940 was not explicitly a plan for genocide and mass murder, it still clearly bore the stamp of genocide. The failure of this plan, therefore, did not mean the end of the intentions it harboured.

Hitler complained that the 'solution to the Jewish question' was hampered only by territorial problems: there was no place to which he could deport the Jews. Therefore, the war against the Soviet Union raised the hopes and expectations of the racial planners within the RSHA. All their problems now seemed to disappear. The Jews could be expelled to the East.

Once again, these new expectations made the plans more monstrous. In December 1940 Himmler spoke of nearly six million Jews who were to be deported – a number derived from plans prepared by Eichmann's department within the RSHA. This total included West European Jews and the Jews from south-eastern Europe as well, even though this region had not yet been occupied by the Nazis. In the space of a single year, the number of potential deportees had increased from one to six million, and the area from which they were to be driven out had been extended from western Poland to all of Europe.²⁵

Despite all obstacles – and, in late 1940, none of these monstrous plans had been realised – the RSHA did not give up the project of making Germany and occupied Europe '*Judenrein*' and establishing a new racist order across the continent. Although all these plans had failed, the RSHA had been unwilling to

rethink the plan itself, or even to revise it. The project had to be realised at all costs and despite all obstacles; if the difficulties increased, then the 'solution' simply had to be designed more radically than before. These men could not turn back, but could only become more radical. Therefore, if there were no place to which the Jews could be deported, then other means of reducing the number of those people had to be considered.

The war against the Soviet Union opened up an apparent and, again, radicalised solution to this dilemma. After the expected rapid victory, the European Jews were to be deported to the East. At the same time, the *Einsatzgruppen* of the RSHA were to be charged with the radical task in this war of *Weltnschanung* of liquidating 'Judeo-Bolshevism' by murdering the Soviet party and state functionaries and the Soviet intelligentsia. In March 1941 Hitler conveyed his orders regarding 'Special Tasks Commissioned by the Führer' (*Sonderaufgaben im Auftrag des Führers*) to Himmler. These were to form the political basis for the *Einsatzgruppen* to act with far-reaching executive powers, and with the greatest possible degree of freedom with respect to the *Wehrmacht*. The SS and police leaders were to decide completely independently who was to be considered part of the 'Judeo-Bolshevist' intelligentsia and not part of the military.²⁶

The various orders pertaining to the *Einsatzgruppen*, as they marched into the Soviet Union in the wake of the army, were not unambiguous and have led to a variety of interpretations in the historiographical discussion. What is often overlooked is that Heydrich expressly left it up to the local *Einsatzkommando* leaders to decide who was to be executed. The description of the groups of people who were to be murdered was only a kind of general guideline. The academic debate about the differences in the practice of the various *Einsatzgruppen* fails to recognise the practical character of an order that was first and foremost an authorization. Only in the rarest of cases, when the persons giving and receiving an order were in the same place at the same time, were orders unequivocally defined instructions for action. In most other situations, orders had to be modified and adapted to fit the specific situation. The leaders of the *Einsatzkommandos* had been selected by the RSHA in particular, because they were expected to be able to reach an appropriate decision that matched the intentions of Heydrich's order, even under conditions that might be difficult to determine completely and precisely beforehand.

The RSHA under Heydrich had gained the political upper hand with respect to the 'solution of the problem of the European Jews' in 1941, and it proved to be a constantly forward thrusting, radical element in the Nazi regime's decisions regarding deportation. Heydrich did not even hesitate to stage attacks, such as the one in Paris in October 1941, as a means of legitimating even harsher forms of persecuting the Jews in specific regions and their deportation to the East. With the September 1941 decision to deport the German and Austrian Jews to the occupied Polish and Soviet areas while the war was still going on, the last barrier to all-out genocide fell. Self-made constraints, such as disease and epidemics in the overcrowded ghettos, where people were forced to live in disastrously unhygienic conditions and with insufficient food, or the definition of 'Jews who were unable to work' as '*Ballastexistenzen*' ('creatures whose very existence is a burden', 'worthless people') offered the perpetrators the legitimacy for realising genocide as a 'solution to a problem'. Again, the failure of the National Socialist deportation plans did not motivate a change in the established goals, but, instead, the desire to realise those goals at all costs through ever-more radical means.

At the beginning of the Nazi regime, the protagonists who were later to join the RSHA did not think in terms of genocide. But genocide as a possibility was inherent in their thinking. The war in the East provided the geographical space in which the process of radicalisation could lead to genocide. Whereas there were numerous legal and administrative obstacles for the RSHA to overcome within the territory of the Reich, such limits, characteristic of a legalistic bourgeois society, did not exist in the East. Concepts of modernisation as a process of bureaucratisation, and of the increasing regulation of social interaction, lost their applicability in the face of the actual practices of the Nazi regime in the East. The dismantling of limits there also meant the dismantling of bureaucracy, as well as the deregulation and the personalisation of decision-making processes. In Estonia, Lithuania, the Ukraine and the Crimea, neither the German legal code nor the handbook for German administrative officials was valid. The young university educated men serving as *Einsatzkommando* leaders were on their own there. They were local rulers, far removed from the central office in Berlin, who made life-and-death decisions. These men had never been little wheels in a huge machine of destruction, never mere functionaries who only looked at their narrow task, never bureaucrats obeying only the orders that came from above; these men had designed the concepts, and constructed and operated the apparatus that led to mass murder and genocide.

Conclusion

Returning to the question raised at the beginning of this article, we have to admit that there is no clue, whether in practice or in ideology, which could justify the assumption that these RSHA leaders acted as missionaries of a new pagan religion. What is clear, however, is that they did not see themselves as ivory-tower scholars or mere thinkers. On the contrary, the success of a theory had to be demonstrated in practice. Racism and anti-Semitism could be found all over Europe, but in Germany they entered into a unique union with a *Weltschauung* fomented by the human utopias and historical myths of the nineteenth century. Always dramatic, ruthless, unbound and oriented toward the whole, this *Weltschauung* feared neither setting the world on fire in purgatory flames of destruction, nor breeding a 'New Man'. This project – not only of recreating Germany with a new 'race' but of creating a new racial order for all of Europe; not merely of designing a braver new world, but turning it into a horrific reality – led droves of intellectuals, academics and scientists to become ready supporters of the Nazi regime. At last, philosophers could believe that they were in power; physicians could see themselves in the role of uncontrolled designers of human life; historians could think themselves in a position to shape world history.

The participation of these members of the intellectual elite in the National Socialist crimes and their role as perpetrators were not exclusively functional, rational and technical, as they tried to convince the world after the war. If one fails to see the passion behind the mask of rationality, one will fail to recognise the energy or the fire of these perpetrators.

This fire is, I think, akin to the passion of believers. The mercilessness with which Christians fought against Jews, pagans and not least each other, the intransigence with which the Christian doctrines were debated, the eagerness with which Christian missionaries delivered the 'true religion' all over the world, may

have been declined in modern times after the Enlightenment. But the passion did not vanish. Much like the famous Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, Eric Voegelin regarded religion as the emotion of a man who 'experiences his existence as being natural [*kräftiglich*] and, therefore, questionable ... The Beyond surrounding us can be searched for and found in all the directions in which human existence is open toward the world: in the body and in the spirit, in man and in community, in nature [*Natur*] and in God'. What Voegelin called the '*realissimum*' was, from Heinrich Himmler's own and this RSHA generation's perspective, the racist community, the 'blood'.

When the inner-worldly collective existence takes the place of God, the person becomes the link serving the sacred contents of the world, i.e., an instrument, as Kant already – and still – noted with, astonishment. The problem of the person's conduct of life, its physical and spiritual existence, is only important in connection with the existence of the overall community as its *realissimum*. When an individual has assumed the attitude of inner-worldly religiosity, he accepts this position; he views himself as a tool, as a 'Hegelian' machine part working in the overall whole, and voluntarily submits himself to the technical means with which he is integrated into the collective organisation. The knowledge of the contents of the world and the techniques based on such knowledge are not the temporally subordinated means for attaining the eternal goal of life in the other-worldly God; they are rather the life-blood of the inner-worldly God himself. They build the *corpus mysticum* of the collectivity and bind the members to form the oneness of the body.

Taking political religion in Voegelin's sense, the political passion of the RSHA leaders could be described as religious, although they would not have described themselves in this way. Obviously, most would also not have believed in the kind of pagan religion Heinrich Himmler had outlined. And of course nearly all of them would have refused to understand their task as a Christian apocalyptic or messianic mission.

Nevertheless, asked what the core of their *Weltschauung* was, most of them would probably have answered as Himmler did: 'blood' and 'genealogy'. To put it in Voegelin's words, blood was the '*realissimum*' of a 'worldly religion' ('*Diesseitig-Religion*') and genealogy was the '*corpus mysticum*' of a new racist elite. The 'unboundedness' of these men, the passion and energy they committed to the creation of a '*novum saeculum*', cannot be understood exclusively in the terms of modern political theory. It must also be analysed with the aid of the theoretical framework of political religion. The passion and the *Weltschauung* of this SS elite raise the conceptual question as to whether political religion can be appraised by religious criteria alone. It might be time to rethink the relationship of the political to the religious.

Notes

1. Federal Archives Berlin, NS 19/4009, fol.123, 126f.
2. Cf., for example, Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (London: Macmillan, 2000). For overviews of the scholarly debate on political religion, see Hans Maier (ed.), *Totalitarismus und Politische Religionen*, 3 vols. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996, 1997, 2003); and now also Emilio Gentile,

- Fascism, 'Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections of an Interpretation', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5/3 (Winter 2004), pp. 326–75.
3. For a vehement and lucid critique of this thesis, see the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*, rev. edn. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988).
 4. Richard Steigmann-Gall has recently pointed out that most of the Nazi elite, and in particular Hitler himself, explicitly did not regard National Socialism as a religion. See Richard Steigmann-Gall, 'Nazism and the Revival of Political Religion Theory', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5/3 (Winter 2004), pp. 376–96. Nevertheless, there is still an important distinction between the several self-descriptions of the subjects themselves and an analytical attempt to characterise the movements and their symbolic expressions. So the debate about politics and secularisation, religion and emotion in the modern world has not come to an end.
 5. The extreme position is held by Claus-Ekkehard Bärtsch and Michael Ley, who identify National Socialism with Christianity. See Claus-Ekkehard Bärtsch, *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus: Die religiöse Dimension der NS-Ideologie in den Schriften von Dietrich Eckart, Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg und Adolf Hitler* (München: W. Fink, 1998); Michael Ley, *Der Nationalsozialismus als politische Religion* (Bodenheim: Philo Verlagsgesellschaft, 1997).
 6. Cf. Emilio Gentile, 'The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religions and Totalitarianism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1/1 (Summer 2000), pp. 18–55.
 7. Cf. Michael H. Kater, *Das 'Ahnenerbe' der SS 1935–1945: Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1997).
 8. Himmler's speech to senior SS officers in Munich, 8 Nov. 1937, Federal Archives Berlin, NS 19/4004, fols. 278–351, at 342.
 9. The passages which follow are based substantially on my study, *Generation des Unbedingten: Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitsapparates* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002; an English edition, under the working title *Generation of the Unbound*, is forthcoming, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).
 10. Telford Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials: A Personal Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 1992).
 11. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996).
 12. Eugen Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1950).
 13. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Faber, 1963).
 14. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (London: W.H. Allen, 1961).
 15. Cf., for example, Robert L. Koehl, 'Toward an SS Typology: Social Engineers', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 18/2 (1959), pp. 113–26. Jeffrey Herf, who considered engineers as ideologues, adopted a much more subtle approach: Jeffrey Herf, *Ractionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 152–88.
 16. The best overview of the controversy is still Eberhard Jäckel and Jürgen Rohwer (eds.), *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1985).
 17. Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung: Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg: Fischer, 1991); Ulrich Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903–1989* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nacht, 1996); on recent developments in research on Nazi perpetrators, see Gerhard Paul (ed.), *Die Täter der Shoah: Fanatische Nationalsozialisten und ganz normale Deutsche* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002).
 18. Sebastian Haffner, *Degging Hitler: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 2000).
 19. Cf. Wildt (note 9), pp. 115–25.
 20. Heinrich Himmler, 'Aufgaben und Aufbau der Polizei des Dritten Reiches', in Hans Pfundner (ed.), *Dr. Wilhelm Frick und sein Ministerium* (München: 1937), ss. 125–30.
 21. Reinhard Heydrich, *Wandlungen unseres Kampfes*, (München: Berlin: 1936), p. 18f.
 22. Cf. Wildt (note 9), pp. 180–5.
 23. Cf. also Alexander B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology and Atrocity* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Klaus-Michael Mallmann (ed.), *Genesis des Genozids: Polen 1939–1941* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004).
 24. Cf. Magnus Brechtken, *Madagaskar für die Juden: Antisemitische Idee und politische Praxis 1885–1945* (München: Oldenbourg, 1997); Hans Jansen, *Der Madagaskar-Plan: Die beabsichtigte Deportation der europäischen Juden nach Madagaskar* (München: Langen/Müller, 1997); Lenti Yahl, 'Madagascar – Phantom of a Solution for the Jewish Question', in Bela Vago and George L. Mosse (eds.), *Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe* (New York: Wiley, 1974), ss. 315–34.
 25. Cf. Götz Aly, 'Final Solution: Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews' (London: Arnold, 1999), pp. 195–200.
 26. Studies of the Nazi war of extermination against the Soviet Union are too numerous to be listed comprehensively here, but see Jürgen Matthäus's well-informed chapter, 'Operation Barbarossa and the Onset of the Holocaust: June–December 1941', in Christopher Browning (ed.), *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (London: Heinemann, 2004), pp. 244–308 and notes pp. 488–515.

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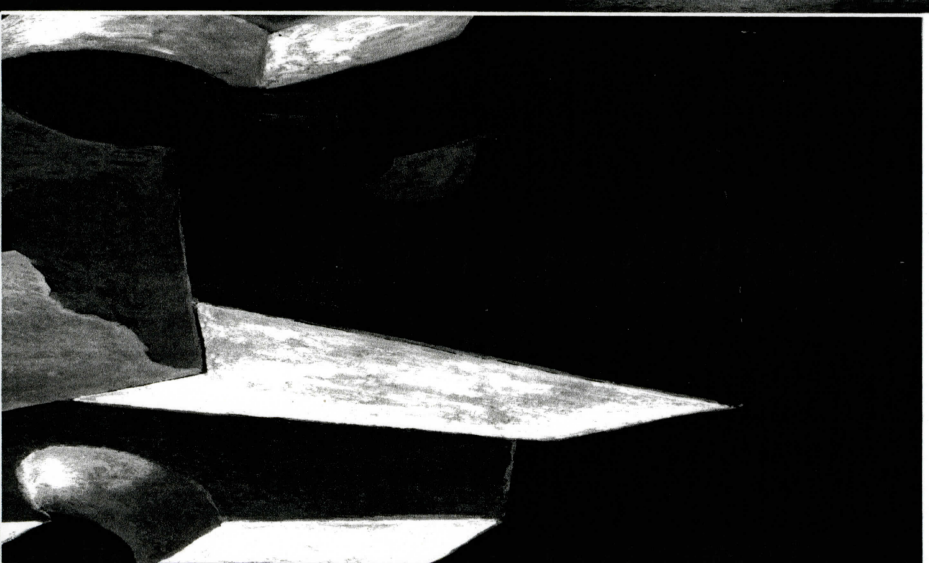
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Historiographical Perspectives on 'Mass Dictatorship'

JIE-HYUN LIM

Hanyang University

'Mass dictatorship' as a working hypothesis starts from a simple question: what is the difference between pre-modern despotism and modern dictatorship? My tentative answer is that despotism does not need massive backing from below, but modern dictatorship presupposes the support of the masses. Even in so condensed a form, the question and answer already suffice to free us from demagogical discourses, be they right- or left-wing. They put a question mark behind the usefulness of both the totalitarian and Marxist paradigms, obsessed as they are with a dualist approach which asserts that there were few perpetrators (the dictator and his cronies) and many victims (the people). Originating in the political rectitude each of its 'own camp', both dualist paradigms suffered from the same inability to capture the key dynamics of modern dictatorships with their rootedness in diverse forms of popular support. The diabolic presentism of the Cold War made them blind to the broad popular support for the dictatorships to which they were politically opposed. It set 'us', the innocent victims, against 'them', the vicious perpetrators, and so produced nothing but ideological clichés. A historicisation suspended temporarily from political commitment casts serious doubt on that moralist, ideologically cliché-ridden saga common to totalitarian and Marxist paradigms.¹ I will return to the post-totalitarian presentism of mass dictatorship below.

The term 'mass dictatorship' implies the mobilisation of the masses by dictatorships and frequently voluntary mass participation in and support for dictatorial regimes. Its historical appearance coincided with the replacement of the dominance of a liberal '*Bürgertum*' of property and cultivation by mass participatory politics and societies in the early twentieth century. Increasing urbanisation and labour organisation opened the door to mass society. Once mass movements had appeared on the scene, voices of ordinary people could no longer be silenced or disregarded by any regime, whether democratic or dictatorial. Rather, the socio-political engineers of the modern state system were desperate to recruit and mobilise the masses for the nation-state project, and thus demanded their enthusiasm and voluntary participation. The historical experience of total war systematically demonstrated the vital importance to the modern state project of the voluntary mobilisation and participation of the masses. The liberal-constitutional state was to be replaced by an emergent interventionist state, whether parliamentary-democratic or dictatorial