

Adolf hitlerconclusion



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BUSTER**

The holocaust is without doubt the most infamous event of the 20th century. The responsibility for this event is one of the most hotly debated topics among historians these differences are mainly seen to be between intentionalist and structuralist interpretations and each of these two schools of thought give a very different explanation for where the responsibility for the genocide which occurred lays.

On the intentionalist side of the debate is the belief that Hitler as the head of state was the undeniable centre of power and as a result everything which happened, happened as a result of Hitler's own ideas. On the other hand the structuralist historians whether deliberately or not seek to minimise or sideline the influence of Hitler seeking to shunt the responsibility toward either the sprawling apparatus of the Nazi regime or even paint Hitler as a weak dictator without the wit or the will to know what was being done by those under his command.

In this investigation I will seek to ascertain, looking at both intentionalist and structuralist historians as well as more what level of responsibility it is fair to ascribe to Hitler and if indeed there is a case to be made that Hitler rather than an evil anti Semitic mastermind was in fact more of a figurehead unconcerned with the programs and organisation of mass killings which occurred across Eastern and Central Europe.

I will seek to answer the following questions: Is there sufficient evidence in Hitler's writings and actions before assuming power, which would suggest that the whole sale extermination of the Jews was part of long held vision of his? What influence did the Wannsee conference have and was it this

conference which sealed the European Jews fate? Viewed from a distance the idea of Hitler as a weak dictator seems far-fetched at best. “ The Fuhrer unites in himself the whole sovereign power of the Reich all public power in the state stems from the Fuhrers power.

We must not speak of state power, but of Fuhrer power it is comprehensive and total” 1 Though it would be dangerous to take quotes such as this as definitive answer to the question the wealth of material similar to this certainly supports the intensionalist argument and make it difficult to imagine that a project as large as the building of seven concentration camps and the transportation of millions of Jews is something that could have escaped Hitler’s notice.

The structuralist idea of a weak Hitler is explored by Gotz Aly who uses a letter sent by an SS officer to Adolf Eichmann as evidence to support the view that mass murder of Jews rather than being directed from the top was an idea which stemmed from the lower ranks of the regime. “ There is a danger that, in the coming winter, it will become impossible to feed all the Jews. It must seriously be considered whether the most human solution is to finish off the Jews unfit for labour through some fast acting means.

This would definitely be more pleasant then letting them starve to death. 2 Aly uses date that this letter was sent – July 16th 1941- to lend weight to his belief that the lower ranks where the ones who saw a problem in the number of Jews being held and attempted to influence those above to allow them to deal with it. As Aly puts it “ Thus it was the lowest ranks of the resettlement apparatus that thought up ‘ things’ which, it was said, ‘ sometimes sounded

fantastic’. “ 2 The Wannsee conference, held in the Berlin suburb which shares this name on 20th January 1942 was convened to inform the numerous Nazi administrative department heads that Reinhard Heydrich had been appointed to head up the Final Solution.

Over the course of this meeting Heydrich presented the plan for the deportation and, (after forced labour had accounted for all but the most hardy) later extermination of all Jews under Nazi control. The Wannsee Conference is a pivotal moment in the holocaust. Now instead of merely transporting or segregating the Jews of Europe the plan presented by Heydrich was fully implemented by the Nazis sealing the fate of all ‘undesirables’ under Nazi control. That there was no direct reference to killing the Jews is a point upon which extreme structuralist and Holocaust deniers have seized upon.

Another strand of argument used to downplay the significance of Wannsee is the determination made at the conference as to who exactly qualified as Jew as well as severely wounded veterans of World War One or Jews who held the Iron Cross first class being spared forced labour and instead being confined of an old age Ghetto. As an argument however this semantic gamesmanship does not adequately explain the intent of the plan as Heydrich himself stated “ Under proper guidance, in the course of the final solution the Jews are to be allocated for appropriate labour in the East.

Able-bodied Jews, separated according to sex, will be taken in large work columns to these areas for work on roads, in the course of which action doubtless a large portion will be eliminated by natural causes. The possible

final remnant will, since it will undoubtedly consist of the most resistant portion, have to be treated accordingly, because it is the product of natural selection and would, if released, act as the seed of a new Jewish revival". 3 ' Don't think you can fight racial tuberculosis without taking care to rid the nation of the carrier of that racial tuberculosis.

This Jewish contamination will not subside, this poisoning of the nation will not end, until the carrier himself, the Jew, has been banished from our midst. '4 Hitler, Aug 7/8 1920 ' If I am ever really in power, the destruction of the Jews will be my first and most important job. '5 Hitler, 1922 ' So it is absolutely wrong to infer any ideal sense of sacrifice in the Jews from the fact that they stand together in struggle, or, better expressed, in the plundering of their fellow men. 6 Hitler, from Mein Kampf 1925 Why does the world shed crocodile's tears over the richly merited fate of a small Jewish minority? 7 Hitler 1933 The above quotes which are without any argument Hitler's own words leave little doubt as to Hitler's feelings towards the Jews in the years before he came to power. Despite these and other quotes there are still historians who argue that there is no explicit written order from Hitler with regard the exterminating the Jews.

Some, most famously holocaust denier David Irving will even go so far as to use a partial quote from Hitler to paint a picture of the dictator which – if did not have this sincerity of belief which Irving brings to all of his work – would be almost laughable. " The Fuhrer had ordered that the Jews were not to be liquidated". 6. In this particular case Irving's apparent self deceit reaches its nadir. The quote used referred to a single transport leaving Berlin, and as the

communication 'not to liquidate' arrived too late the Jews in question numbering 2,000 were executed when they arrived at their destination Riga.

The widely respected synthesis historian and Nazi Germany expert Ian Kershaw believes that Hitler's plans for the Jews had their formations as early as 1922 going so far as to say that the anti-Semitic part of Mein Kampf: "are not the beginning of a one way track to the Final Solution" although "its inherent genocidal thrust is undeniable" and that already at this point "indistinctly the connection between the destruction of the Jews, war, and national salvation had been forged in Hitler's mind". 7. Kershaw here is clearly of the opinion that the Final Solution though it may not have been decided by Hitler in detail early in his career was certainly something that he had given much consideration to.

When looking at whether we should hold Hitler historically responsible or just a head of the state it is useful to look at his own words "every bullet that is now fired from the barrel of the police pistol is my bullet. If that is called murder, then I have committed murder, for I have ordered it all; I take the responsibility for it. 8. 1934. The only remaining question is how much and at what date did Hitler know what was happening and how direct were the orders from him which led to that point. The discovery by German historian Christian Gerlach of two previously undiscovered documents sheds new light on what is generally accepted as the time that the decision to exterminate the Jews was made. The first document is an extract from a Joseph Goebbels diary dated December 12th 1941 "With respect of the Jewish Question, the Fuhrer has decided to make a clean sweep.

He prophesied to the Jews that if they again brought about a world war, they would live to see their annihilation in it. That wasn't just a catch-word. The world war is here, and the annihilation of the Jews must be the necessary consequence. " 9. The second document is a note by Heinrich Himmler of a meeting with Hitler at Nazi headquarters on December 19th 1941 which simply reads " Jewish question forward/to be exterminated like the partisans. " 10 There is of course no written order from Hitler authorising the extermination of the

Jews if such an order ever existed it was likely one of the first documents to be destroyed once it became clear the war was lost. These two pieces of documentary evidence, being dated a month before the Wannsee Conference where the details of the Final Solution were to be decided, do serve to show that at the very least verbal authority for the final solution was likely given by Hitler before the end of 1941. Ian Kershaw is regarded as the leading authority on Nazi Germany his work has been extensively peer reviewed and apart from the most ardent deniers of the Holocaust his work is seen as the best synthesis view of the time.

The purpose of his book ' Hitler' released in 2008 was to provide a definitive edition of his previously released biographies the thoroughness of his research along with his debt of knowledge are widely known and these factors makes his work reliable source of information. The website holocaust-history. org is a site maintained by a group of historians and other academics with an interest in the subject of the Holocaust. The website is a free to access collection of photographs, recordings, essays and other documents regarding the holocaust.

<https://assignbuster.com/adolf-hitlerconclusion/>

Because a sizable portion of the material on the site is concerned with directly refuting Holocaust denial the material is generally given from an extreme intentionalist standpoint which needs to be taken into account. When considering the level of responsibility which Hitler should be apportioned for the Holocaust the weight of circumstantial evidence is almost overwhelming. Hitler's ideas and influence are clearly evident in both the planning and execution of the Final Solution.

However the problem which has been in evidence since this question was first asked remains unchanged till this day; there is no documentary evidence which directly shows Hitler ordering the extermination of the Jews. The Wannsee conference occurring as it did a scant month after both Himmler and Goebbels had received confirmation directly from the Fuhrer of his intent was in my opinion merely a logistical exercise, the intent and ambition of the Holocaust having been decided.

At this point in history I believe that none of the minds already made up on either side of the debate who are willing or even able to accept that their long held views on this subject may not be entirely correct. For this reason I believe that, for future generations the synthesis viewpoint which shows both Hitler's long held beliefs and hatreds alongside the idea of the Nazi state 'Working towards the Fuhrer' is the viewpoint that in the light of the evidence currently available is most rational.