Apocalyptic Identities and the Other in Nazi-Occupied Poland

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Abstract
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The Apocalyptic identity binary was used by the Nazis to transform the identities of Germans and Jews into those of the Elect and the Apocalyptic Other. This was achieved through propaganda which was shaped by the Nazi apocalyptic worldview. The intent behind the construction of these identities being to elevate that of the Elect as the chosen ones and to otherize and dehumanize the Other with the eventual goal of destroying them.

This propaganda proved successful in a German context. In occupied Poland, their apocalyptic worldview and identity binary remained intact. However, it was complicated by the introduction of a third variant: Polish identity. The Nazis could not reconcile this identity with those of the Elect and the Apocalyptic Other. Consequently, the case study of Poland demonstrated the flaws inherent within Nazi rhetoric and its worldview.

Despite a lengthy and brutal occupation, the Poles were perceived as anti-Semitic and closer to perpetrators than to victims. This is partly due to Nazi propaganda. This view of Poles conflicted with their self-perceptions. Poles occupied multiple roles during and after the occupations: victims, collaborators, perpetrators. Due to their own suffering at the hand of the Nazis, Poles were unable to reconcile their victimhood with their perpetratorship. Consequently, Poles occupy a conflicting embodiment of identities. It is as a result of this that the Polish-Jewish relationships have suffered. In order to improve these relations, Polish suffering, as well as their allyship of Jews during the occupation, must be acknowledged. Concurrently to this, Poles must take accountability in their victimization of Jews.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1.   Thesis overview

My thesis will focus on answering the following question: What techniques did the Nazi regime use in Occupied Poland in the attempt to define and exclude the "other", i.e., a targeted group or groups, with the specific goal of exterminating them? Relying on the work of psychologist David Moshman who views genocide as a crime of identity rather than of hate (Moshman, 2007), I intend to investigate some of the techniques used by perpetrators to create an imagined identity of the othered group and exclude it from the realm of humanity and consequently moral obligations and laws. Furthermore, I will examine how the "other" is viewed and defined in apocalyptic terms and how apocalypticism, as a worldview, has shaped the processes of identity construction in Nazi-Occupied Poland. For this, I will rely on religion scholar Lorenzo DiTommaso's work on apocalypticism and his concept of the apocalyptic other (DiTommaso, 2011). In an apocalyptic worldview, identities operate within a strict binary, one is either with or against us, there is no room for ambiguity or nuance. Therefore, in a genocidal context, apocalypticism sharpens the "us vs them" divide to the point where the two identities are reduced to stereotypical depictions. To achieve this, the regime relied heavily on propaganda.

1.2.   Why Poland?

The case study of Nazi-Occupied Poland was chosen due to its unique position in regard to defining identities, especially when it comes to the concept of the 'other'. Poland had the highest Jewish population in Europe, approximately 3,000,000 in 1933 (Beorn 2018, 13). Polish Jews were well integrated in Polish society prior to the Occupation. This meant the required shift in identity was more severe than Germany's. Poles were also never considered by the Germans as potential members of the Elect, and consequently they were not targeted by a propaganda campaign which would have been the equivalent of the pro-Aryan one in Germany. This meant that they could never truly be rallied to the Nazi cause. For the Germans, this was done through propaganda pieces eliciting a strong sense of belonging or the belief that they were taking part in a cause larger than themselves. The role in this greater cause was that of saviour.

In other words, the Poles were not subjected to propaganda that would positively reinforce their Polish identity, certainly not one which would identify them as belonging to the Aryan race. This meant that the Nazis relied more on anti-Semitic propaganda rather than a Polish equivalent of pro-Aryan propaganda. This was used to divide Poles and Jews. This division, it was thought, would result in the breakdown of Polish-Jewish relationships and the alienation of Jews in Poland, facilitating their otherization and later their destruction. Through this societal fracture, the Germans would have been able to coerce the Poles into collaborating with them against the Jews. The Germans did not want the Poles as true allies, but they wanted to use them against the groups they perceived as their enemies. Consequently, Poles were targeted with anti-Semitic and anti-Soviet propaganda. In an attempt to convince the Poles that they were better under a German occupation than a Soviet one, the Nazis distributed "thirty-two million copies of different brochures and pamphlets…to convince the Poles to side with them against the Soviets." (Paldiel 2022, 78). This propaganda failed to elicit the desired shift in Polish attitudes towards the Germans (Paldiel 2022, 78). In other occupied countries, such as Denmark or Norway, the Nazis

viewed the population as racially superior. As a result, they attempted to ally with them more closely than they did with Poles: "they tried to preserve what they considered their valuable "Nordic blood" and to co-opt them into their system of world domination, but they had no such intentions for the Poles whose lives they regarded as worthless." (Bergen 2016, 123) Poles were considered subhuman by the Nazis because they were classified as belonging to the Slavic race. For Nazis, Poles could be allies only in the fight against Jews, whether as informants, perpetrators or slave labour. Poles were to be used as a means to an end, never as a people with which to form an alliance.

The German refusal to ally with the Poles was simple: they did not intend for both groups to live together. Rather they intended to have Poles worked to death and used as "slaves of the Greater German Reich" (Kochanski 2012, 98); as a result, no integration was required. Furthermore, Poles did not fit in the apocalyptic identity binary of the Nazi worldview. Consequently, their existence proved to be a challenge when it came to making them fit within this limited outlook. What makes Poland especially worth studying is that despite being occupied for the longest period, and suffering the most brutal occupation by the Nazis, they were perceived, during and mostly after the war, as being more closely associated with perpetrators than with victims. Poles both persecuted and saved Jews during the occupation. The genocide happened on their territory, in front of their eyes but not by their hand. Because most of the destruction took place in Poland, a connection was established, in the mind of the international audience, between Poland and Poles and the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis on Polish soil. The Poles were guilty by association. The Poles were witness to this genocide, not its instigator. It is this association with active collaboration that Poles have been unable to overcome. The results of this are still felt in contemporary Poland. Although Jewish suffering is not at the centre of this study, their fate is intertwined with that of Poles's. Furthermore, I believe that a better understanding of Polish suffering can provide insight into Jewish-Polish relationships, both past and present. It should be noted that amongst all Nazi occupied countries, Poland had the strongest resistance movement. Furthermore, the complicity of Poles in the persecution of Polish Jews was not a uniquely Polish phenomenon. Rather, the persecution of local Jews is something which took place in every single occupied country. The extent of the persecution was dictated by a multitude of factors such as how large the Jewish population was, the length and brutality of the occupation, the consequences for helping Jews or incentives for persecuting them etc.

Poles under occupation were faced with two options when it came to their Jewish co-citizens: helping them, which was considered an act of resistance and illegal according to the newly imposed colonial legal system or not offering any support. This lack of support could range from inaction to active persecution and collaboration with the Nazis. Collaboration, like support, was expressed through a broad spectrum of actions. Help towards Jews took many forms: some were sheltered inside the houses of gentiles, others were offered assistance as they escaped their regions or specific acts of destructions by the Nazis, "Other Poles saved Jewish lives by warning them about forthcoming disasters" (Tec 1987, 74) etc. For Poles who assisted Jews, the risk was high. Not only were the penalties from the Nazis drastic, often leading to the death of the individual or a collective punishment of the community, but they had to concern themselves about other Poles as well as Germans. This is especially true of *Volksdeutschen*.[1] Collaboration

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[1] *Volksdeutschen* is a term used to refer to ethnic Germans living outside the German territory, in this case, Poland. The *Volksdeutschen* in Poland were a group who proved eager to collaborate with the Nazi regime.

with the occupiers could be achieved in a variety of ways: denouncing Jews who were hiding on the Aryan side, if they were being sheltered by Poles, this included their denunciation as well, identifying Poles who were part of the resistance or who were helping Jews, or helping Nazis design propaganda: "The Germans could not have adapted Nazi Propaganda to the local audience without the active assistance of Polish co-workers." (Grabowski 2009, 398)[2] The motivations for persecuting as well as for helping Jews varied greatly. In short, the case of Poland:

> shows the danger of assuming clear-cut categories when studying a situation as complicated as that in Poland during the war…the same person could be a resistance figure, a perpetrator of brutality, a hero, and a victim of Nazi aggression…even the line between "Christian" and "Jew" could be blurred. There is little that is simple about Polish-Jewish relations during the Nazi era. (Bergen 2016, 127)

There are also a few complications to the study of Poland. Nazi propaganda in Western Europe has received extensive scholarly attention, however, this is not the case for Eastern Europe (Grabowski 2009, 381). A major factor contributing to this is the comparatively small amount of actual propaganda material which has survived the war compared to other countries such as France (Grabowski 2009, 400-1). This is notably the case for Poland, where most of the propaganda produced was in a visual format. Furthermore, there have been different waves in the study of Poland and the Holocaust. Although the situation has improved, for a long time, the debate was framed in either one of two ways: all Poles were anti-Semitic and perpetrated acts of violence towards Jews, or Poles were the ones who suffered the most under Nazi occupation. This resulted in the production of materials with often contradictory or conflicting sources and information. This depended mostly on who was providing the information or on the limited amount of reliable information available on specific topics. We also must take into consideration that a significant amount of the information on Jewish realities, both previous to and during the occupation was destroyed during the war. This can be seen by the destruction of records held in religious institutions like historical and community records. This is especially true of sources produced by Jewish authors. A notable exception to this are the writings of Emanuel Ringelblum,[3] who succeeded in documenting as much as possible of the Jewish culture and the occupation and hid it in the Warsaw Ghetto. What are now known as Ringelblum's *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, were a collection of testimonies and viewpoints from a variety of residents of the ghetto. Although they include Ringelblum's own words and observations, and were mostly assembled by him and his colleagues (under the codename *Oyneg Shabbos*), he is not the sole author of the documents found in the *Notes*. These documents, numbering at around 6,000, were placed in metal crates and milk jugs and buried in the Warsaw ghetto. All but a third of the buried material survived, although Ringelblum did not.

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[2] Grabowski adds that although some propaganda posters in Poland were simply translated versions of the German ones, "most of the propaganda posters displayed in the GG were produced locally by Polish artists working for the Nazi propaganda office." (Grabowski 2009, 398) GG stands for the General Government, a part of occupied Poland administered by the Nazis but not incorporated into the Reich as the *Warthegau* was.

[3] Emanuel (sometimes spelled with two "m") Ringelblum was a historian and leader of the resistance who is better known for his role as "the archivist of the Warsaw ghetto" He and his family got out of the ghetto prior to the uprising and found shelter with Mieczysław Wolski and his nephew Janusz Wysocki, who hid a total of 33 Jews. They were eventually betrayed by another Pole to the Gestapo. All were murdered in the ruins of the ghetto by the Gestapo in March 1944 (Winstone 2021, 183).

1.3.   Historical context

A few key historical elements are important to understand the Polish reactions to the occupation, the Holocaust and its aftermath. In 1385 Poland and Lithuania united to form the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was "multi-ethnic: Polish, Lithuanian, Belorussian, German, Armenian, Kashub, Jewish, Tartar, and many other minorities. it was also multi-religious: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Uniate Catholic, Eastern Orthodox Jewish and Muslim." (Kochanski 2012, 1) This diversity contributed to the image Poles have of themselves as tolerant, an identity which has deep historical roots. This is one factor which contributed to their refusal to view themselves as anti-Semitic.

Second, the occupation of Poland during World War II was the fourth time Poland was partitioned. The first was in 1772, the second only a year later, and the third in 1795 which "wiped Poland from the map." (Kochanski 2012, 2) The major forces involved in these partitioning were Prussia and Russia. Every partitioning was met with uprisings from the Poles, a factor which contributed to their view of themselves as a people who would resist any occupying forces on their territory. This became a point of contention during the occupation when they started to believe the myth of passivity, that Jews did not resist their destruction by the Nazis. Because of the long legacy of resistance in Polish culture, this perceived passivity was understood by Poles as something utterly un-Polish, something no Poles would do. Consequently, Poles felt a deep sense of persecution when Poland came to be occupied again and targeted for destruction: "Nazi ideology demanded the total subjugation of Poland and erasure of all evidence of its statehood. Heinrich Himmler advocated that 'all Poles will disappear from the world'" (Kochanski 2012, 98). Poles under occupation were well aware that their existence was under threat. This was seen through the brutality of the occupation as well as in the early acts of destruction perpetrated by the Germans. After the invasion, the destruction of Poland's institutions and its elite, the brutal repression of Poles, as well as the general attitudes of the Germans towards them left little doubt as to the intent Germans had towards Poles as a people.

Once France and England joined the war, the Poles believed their nationhood would be reinstated when the war ended. However, when the USSR joined the Allies, the situation shifted. We must keep in mind that tensions between Russia and Poland were present before the war. This is developed further in Chapter Four. During this "alliance", half of Poland was still occupied and persecuted by Soviet forces, yet Britain and France wanted to keep the USSR as an ally more than they wanted to reinstate Polish independence. This was due to the strength of the Soviet military which the Allies needed in order to have a chance to defeat the Axis powers in Europe. This conflicting view of the Soviets led to "the crux of the Polish belief that Poland was betrayed." (Kochanski 2012, xxv) This betrayal of Poland by its allies came when "Churchill and Roosevelt effectively gave away half of pre-war Poland to Stalin and did little to prevent him from imposing communism." (Kochanski 2012, xxv) Although some Polish communist and socialist movements existed prior to Soviet occupation, the differences between Polish and Soviet forms of communism diverged greatly. Most striking is the totalitarian aspect of the Soviet flavour of communism: "What totalitarianism shared with imperialism was a desire for conquest, not only through colonial exploitation but, above all, ideological transfer." (Cała 2018, 51) This was not something found in Polish communist doctrine. Communism was considered by most Poles as a foreign system, irreconcilable with Polishness. This was mostly due to

communism's atheistic system which clashed with the strong Catholicism of Poles. This betrayal was further aggravated with the discovery of the Katyń massacre.

All of these events shaped Polish identity. They were victims and saw their victimhood being denied or dismissed over and over again. When the war ended and their victimhood was once more not acknowledged but they were rather grouped in with Nazi perpetrators, a large wound was inflicted on Polish identity and Polish society. These events have had a strong influence in shaping Polish-Jewish relationships.

1.4. Jews in Poland

The Jewish presence in Poland is longstanding, "dating back before 963 CE" (Paldiel 2022, vii-1). Furthermore, Jews were granted, as of 1264, some rights and civil liberties in Poland which they were not afforded in other European countries (Beorn 2018, 10). The arrival of Jews in Poland tended to be motivated by two main factors: a search for economic opportunities or to flee the persecution they were subjected to in other countries (Paldiel 2022, 1). Not only were Jewish immigrants well received in Poland but "subsequent kings [to Bolesław III] of Poland eagerly sought Jewish immigrants from the west and afforded them assistance to settle in villages and towns." (Paldiel 2022, 2) A large percentage of these refugees came from Germany, hence the prevalence of Yiddish as a mother tongue for Polish Jews. Because of the relative lack of persecution Jews faced in Poland, it became a hub of Jewish culture, both secular and religious. When it came to faith, Poland had a larger portion of Jews who were members of the Hasidic branch of Judaism compared to Western Europe (Beorn 2018, 15). This meant both Poles and Jews in Poland had religion at the core of their identity.

Prior to the nineteenth century, there was little effort to assimilate to Polish society and Jews tended to live in their own closely knit communities both in rural and urban areas, although the majority of Jews concentrated in cities. This is truer for Jewish Poles who were very religious, which is estimated to be about a third of the Jewish population in Poland (Paldiel 2022, 43)[4]. Jews for whom religiosity occupied a smaller part of their lives, or none at all would tend to integrate in Polish society more fully. The overall relationship between Poles and Jews, although sometimes troubled, was peaceful, especially compared to the rest of Europe.

It is worth including a very brief overview of two popular

> systems of thought in Polish history, the pluralist and the exclusivist…The first offered a conception of Polish identity reminiscent of what it had been in the old pre-partitioned Poland where a person might describe himself as a member of the Polish greater Commonwealth, and at the same time of the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) people, or of Jewish origin. This was presently upheld for a time by the non-dogmatic Polish Socialist Party (PPS), founded in 1897 by the same Jósef Piłsudski, the creator of modern Poland. The exclusivist opinion found its political focus in the National Democratic Party (*Narodowa*

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[4] This was the Jewish population which was the most visible to Poles as "many of them stood out clearly in their public appearance, as they dressed differently form Christian Poles. The dress alone, in the case of males, singled unmistakably that they were Jews, on top of the fact that the more orthodox men did not shave and wore beards (as well as sidelocks, *peyes*) at a time when Poles rarely did." (Paldiel 2022, 43)

Democracja, ND or Endecja), founded by Roman Dmowski and his associates in the late 1890s…The Endecja (singular member "Endek") advocated a narrowly defined nationalism, based on ethnic Polish descent and the profession of Roman Catholicism; in other words, excluding primarily the Jews. (Paldiel 2022, 40)

An interesting incident would be that of the bubonic plague. This incident both foreshadows some of the thematic elements which would later be used during the Nazi occupation but also illustrates the uniqueness of the Polish-Jewish relationships. "the Black Death plague, during the 14th century ravaging all of Europe, outbreaks against Jews, who were held guilty for this plague…However, Jews continued to be generally well treated, such as not compelled to wear ignominious badges as in many other places in western Europe." (Paldiel 2022, 2) Lacking from Paldiel's account is that the plague became one of the first times where Jews were scapegoated in Poland, where they were accused of, among other things, "bringing the disease" (Cała 2018, 34). The Nazis would later make use of anti-Semitic propaganda associating Jewishness with disease. Thus establishing a link between historical themes in Polish anti-Semitism and the contemporary version propagated by the regime. These themes tended to resonate more strongly with Poles than other themes found in Nazi propaganda.

1.5. Anti-Semitism

Even though Polish-Jewish relationships were for the most part amicable, anti-Semitism was still present in Poland. Tensions peaked around the Warsaw pogrom of 1881. The violence of the events, expressed in both property destruction and loss of human life,[5] prompted a response from Poles which is similar to some expressed during the Holocaust. This response being that "Poles had previously prided themselves on their civilized and tolerant behaviour towards Jews, even as they held on to certain stereotyped negative opinions about the cultural and economic role of Jews." (Paldiel 2022, 31) This is rather telling when it comes to how Poles viewed themselves to be tolerant rather than anti-Semitic, even after engaging in acts of anti-Semitism. The violence was sparked as "the result of the devastating panic that fired during mass at the Holy Cross Church. The rumour that a Jewish pickpocket triggered the hysteria by shouting "Fire!" incited the locals to direct their anger at the Jews." (Cała 2018, 144) This event was somewhat of a turning point in the rise of anti-Semitism in Poland. However, most of it remained rhetorical rather than violent. Polish anti-Semitism was also influenced both by German and Russian forms of anti-Semitism.[6] A critical import of German anti-Semitism was dehumanization:

> It was the German culture that formed the imagine of a dehumanized "Jew" with beastly characteristics…Iconography often presented them since with large noses, which referred to an old and widespread tradition of associating the size of the nose with male fertility. Christianity associated big noses with perversion, obscenity, and devilishness; and thus nose became a symbol of sinners, witches, and infidels….only to return at the end of the nineteenth cent and become an indispensable distinguishing feature of Antisemitic caricature in Germany and later wherever spread the ideology. (Cała 2018, 35)

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[5] Only two people died but 24 others were injured. This does not include the victims of robbery and plundering (Cała 2018, 144).

[6] This topic, however, is too large to be developed here. An extremely thorough examination of anti-Semitism in Poland can be found in Aline Cała's *Jew. The Eternal Enemy? The History of Antisemitism in Poland* (2018).

We can draw some observations. First, in Germany, the theme of a threatening Jewish male sexuality has deeply established roots. Second, in Poland, symbols or attributes which in Christianity were associated with "perversion, obscenity, and devilishness" were transferred to stereotypical depictions of Jewishness. Through the lens of Catholicism, these associations would have been deeply influential on Poles, due to the importance religion had for their identity. Combined with modern techniques of propaganda and the apocalyptic worldview of the occupying regime, we can see how the Nazis have used these depictions to otherize and dehumanize Jews and separate them from gentile Poles.

As will explored in Chapter Three, the main difference between Polish and German anti-Semitism was race.[7] Racial anti-Semitism, a product of the nineteenth century which can be traced back to Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), proved to be the deadliest form of anti-Semitism (Beorn 2018, 25). Racial anti-Semitism is where racists, including Nazi eugenicists and ideologues, concluded that if

> natural selection (often misidentified as "survival of the fittest") applied to animals it also applied to humans. Thus, the scientific community began to assign characteristics to ethnic groups and to identify their origins as genetic. In this way, scientists constructed races among humans and began to rank them, they argued that, just as in the animal kingdom, there must be groups within the human species that were superior and destined to prosper while others were doomed to eventual extinction. (Beorn 2018, 25)

This ties race/identity with destiny. One group will survive and prosper, the other will surrender and die. For the Nazis, "Jews and Germans were locked in a racial death struggle which could only result in the victory ozone and the defeat of the other" (Beorn 2018, 25). This is a classic example of Othering:

> The first expression [of Apocalyptic Otherness] is the traditional *Other*—the opposite, the negative, the enemy… Time and again the prophets[8] of old identifies their adversaries in blanket fashion, usually along national-ethnic lines…It is one thing for the prophets to identify these nations qua nations, subject to anticipated woe and catastrophe. But they were also asserting that Ethiopians qua Ethiopians were destined to suffer because of the circumstances of their birth. "Can Ethiopians change their skin, or leopards their spots?" asks the prophet Jeremiah (13:23). His rhetorical question, posed over 2,500 years ago, still encapsulates for many people today what common sense suggests, experience verifies, and tradition confirms: destiny and design are two sides of the same coin. (DiTommaso 2011, 231)

In Nazi Germany, the Ethiopians were replaced with the Jews. In the Nazi apocalyptic understanding of the world, they were destined to rule based on their race and Jews were destined to die for the same reason. This was seen as the natural order of things. Race and racial

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[7] It should be noted that race being axiomatic to the Nazi worldview, matters which the regime viewed as a threat to racial purity were pursued with a level of increased fanaticism. All of which, of course, has no scientific founding.
[8] Hitler understood himself as a prophet and portrayed himself as such, this is addressed in Chapter Two.

anti-Semitism were of such importance for the Nazis because it tied their identity as the Elect to their destiny and did the same for the Other.

1.6. Conspiracy

Conspiracies played an important role in anti-Semitic propaganda. Conspiracies imply that a secret is being kept by a certain group, from another. This secrecy is tied to the importance the revelation of this secret would have, conspiracies always have a reason, a purpose as to why something is being hidden. The real questions are why the secrecy and who is behind it. Conspiracies can become more dangerous when they are blaming specific groups, perpetrating dangerous stereotypes or delegitimizing scientific, educational or other socially important institutions.

The appeal of conspiracies is that by believing in them, a certain group can make sense of the problems plaguing their realities, especially groups who have paranoid style mentalities. This is applicable to Hitler and the Nazi regime where the state is characterized by "heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy." (Hofstadter 1964, 77) In these scenarios, the group is the victim of an elaborately nefarious conspiracy which threatens its way of life and belief system. Historically, this focus was more preventive, "they were still in possession of their country- that they were fending off threats to a still established way of life." (Hofstadter 1964, 81) However, some groups share a feeling of dispossession: they have lost what was rightfully theirs and are attempting to regain it and ward off the imminent final blow destined to destroy their group (Hofstadter 1964, 81). This conflict is framed in terms of absolutes and is apocalyptic in nature. This is evident in the type of conspiracies espoused by the Nazi worldview.

> Hitler himself: HE speaks for three quarters of an hour. It was the first time that I had heard one of his speeches from beginning to end, and my impression was essentially the same as before. For the most part an excessively agitated, hectoring, often rasping voice. The only difference was that on this occasion many passages were declaimed in the whining tone of an evangelizing sectarian. HE advocates peace, HE proclaims peace, he wants the unanimous support of Germany not out of personal ambition, but only in order to be able to defend peace against the attacks of a rootless international clique of profiteers, who for the sake of their own profit unscrupulously set populations of countless millions against each other…all this, together with the well-rehearsed heckling ('The Jews!') (Klemperer 2000, 38-9).

Conspiracies undermine societal social cohesion because they create an "us vs them" dichotomization. The size of the group excluded can vary, resulting in a different level of social fracturing. Conspiracies are often put in place by powerful groups, are meant to be kept secret and are intentionally hiding a truth which is portrayed as behind beneficial to those it is hidden from. Being part of a conspiracy group means you are now part of a select few who can see through these traps and get to the "real" truth. This is what Hitler claimed to be for the Germans: he removed the wool from their eyes and revealed the Jewish conspiracies for the world to see. Being privy to these revelations means that one outsmarted this powerful group and leads to a sense of shared knowledge with others. Conspiracy groups tend to foster a sense of community, of being able to relate with like-minded people, of not being alone, of being one of "us".

Conspiracies tend to rise in popularity when there is increased radicalization in society. The society becomes more polarized than before, with more extreme political beliefs. Among these are conspiracy theories, which are adopted by members of society who are typically conceived of as normal or average. When conspiracies are no longer reserved for the margins of society, it renders the political centre smaller and smaller, therefore rendering one's encounter with conspiracy theories and theorists more regular which limits one's ability to resist extremism.

1.7.   Morality, Normalization and the Problem of Evil

This thesis concerns itself with how a group can be rendered Other and how this Other can be destroyed. The main focus is on the techniques used to achieve this result. However, a note on the changing norms of morality is of relevance. To render a group Other, and to them destroy it, the societal view of what is moral must change. Societal moral norms are typically deeply engrained and rather resistant to change, for bad or for good. Ergo, something big needs to happen for a drastic change to happen in a rather limited timespan. In this case the change came through the espousal of the Nazi worldview. Klemperer wrote about the shift which occurred around what one understands justice to mean:

> the focus and goal of this system was *Rechtsempfinden* (the sense of justice); there was never any mention of *Rechtsdenken* (the concept of justice), and also never of a sense of justice on its own, rather always of 'a healthy sense of justice'. And healthy meant whatever accorded with the will and interest of the Party." (Klemperer 2000, 245)

Multiple factors influenced the normalization of the dehumanization and destruction of Jews and others considered undesirables. Anti-Semitic propaganda played a role in this process but so did factors such as surveillance and conformity. Propaganda's "purpose was to enrage Germans against Jews, to justify measures taken and to be taken against them, and to subdue any doubts which might arise as to the justice of measures of racial persecution to which the Jews were to be subjected." (Herf 2006, 273) However, apathy was just as effective as anger. One did not need to be actively involved in the dehumanization or destruction of Jews, simply being apathetic towards it allowed it to happen. By being indifferent to it and not protesting it, ordinary Germans were seen as consenting to the actions of their government. This is one of the reasons the regime worked so hard to alienate Germans and Jews. This separation operated on a "basic premise: if a German did not know any Jews well or intimately, then presumably the same German would not care what was happening to Jews. The Volksgemeinschaft was growing stronger in its identity as discrimination and persecution of Jews was largely accepted and continued." (Griech-Solelle 2023, 81)

This break between Jews and Germans is referred to as a "social death". Beth A. Griech-Solelle gives the example of Marta Appel from Dortmund to illustrate the phenomenon. Much like Klemperer, Appel noticed the change in relationships with her non-Jewish friends. They had the habit of meeting weekly, however, in the "growing atmosphere of fear" she had ceased attending these events. At the bequest of her friend, she decided to join again only to observe the shift in attitudes which had happened:

It was not necessary for me to read their eyes or listen to the change in their voices. The empty table in the little alcove which always had been reserved for us spoke the clearest language…I could not blame them. Why should they have risked losing a position only to prove to me that we still had friends in Germany? (Griech-Solelle 2023, 81)

This testifies to the climate of fear and risk (real or perceived) which reigned in Germany at the time. Being seen in the presence of a Jewish person could have concrete consequences on one's life and future. The pressures needed to be strong enough that people's beliefs would justify abandoning those they had previously considered friends. Klemperer echoed the same sentiment saying that "when "Hitler was at the height of his power…[it] demanded a degree of courage to visit us at all." (Klemperer 2000, 66) These pressures did not need to be enforced through violence by state agents. Often, propaganda, surveillance, or the fear of it, were strong enough deterrents: "you are never alone with yourself, never alone with your nearest and dearest, you are always being watched by your own people." (Klemperer 2000, 23) The popular image of children reporting their parents to their teachers is also true. Klemperer wrote in his diaries about an interaction he had with a department manager, Steffens: "I [Steffens] do not see much of my children anymore, they are always with their organization; I also have to be careful talking in from of them; mistrust has been sown in the heart of the family." (Klemperer 1999, 70)

Every small action could be interpreted as being non-conformist: "the entire propaganda is truly such consummate humbug-people wear little badges on their coat lapels bearing the word 'Yes',[9] you can't say no to the people selling these emblems without appearing suspicious" (Klemperer 2000, 37). The reality is that Nazi Germany was a totalitarian regime which tolerated no diverging point of view. Therefore, the pressure to conform was immense. This, combined with a state of surveillance where denunciations were high and could come from people who were considered friends or family further enforced passivity and conformity. No one wanted to stand out and risk being ostracized or worse. This can be seen notably in how Germans detached themselves from their Jewish friends once anti-Semitism became the norm. By not visibly opposing the regime, it reinforced the view and the belief that everyone around you was a true believer. In order to keep up appearances, the average citizen would espouse the mainstream discourse in public regardless of whether they sincerely believed in it or not. this in turn gave the impression to everyone around them that they did believe in the system, which encouraged people to emulate this behaviour. It became a vicious circle of performative behaviour, surveillance and profound distrust. Most citizens were not evil, they were apathetic or preoccupied with their own personal problems. However, their apathy cannot be detached from the regime successfully otherizing German Jews.

These examples of why Germans ceased to associate with Jews can be blamed only partially on anti-Semitism even though there was of course an increase of anti-Semitic attitudes in Nazi society. Germans who were true believers in the Führer had to accept anti-Semitism as one of their core beliefs as "sympathy for the Jews would have meant some distrust of the rightness of Hitler's way." (Friedländer 1997, 116) Saul Friedländer wrote the following on the topic of perpetrators and the normalization of anti-Semitism:

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[9] The "Yes" refers to the intent of the wearer to vote in favour of the plebiscite.

Nazi persecutions and exterminations were perpetrated by ordinary people who lived and acted within a modern society not unlike our own, a society that had produced them as well as the methods and instruments for the implementation of their actions; the goals of these actions, however, were formulated by a regime, an ideology, and a political culture that were anything but commonplace. It is the relationship between the uncommon and the ordinary, the fusion of the widely shared murderous potentialities of the world that is also ours and the peculiar frenzy of the Nazi apocalyptic drive against the mortal enemy, the Jew, that give both universal significance and historical distinctiveness to the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question." (Friedländer 1997, 6)

Another complementary explanation can be found in the dichotomization of identity, "us vs them". The divide being sharper, Germans did not want to risk being ostracized by associating with the Other. These examples attest to the pressures exercised on Germans to stay away from Jews but also to constantly police each other. Consequently, if we apply these individual examples to a societal level, we have a society in which one group turns a blind eye to the existence of another. Ignoring former Jewish friends and acquaintances became normalized. Once Jews were physically segregated, Germans did not have to make an effort to avoid them: the regime had already taken care of that for them. This made it easier to further otherize and dehumanize them and consequently justify their treatment or at least to not oppose it publicly.

Fred E. Katz, a Holocaust survivor and sociologist addressed this topic in his book *Ordinary People and Extraordinary Evil*[10] by asking the question: "how can one explain the extraordinary level of evil that seemingly ordinary individuals may perpetrate? (Katz 1993, 31) Katz offers three options. The first: "Evil can be… *developed into a culture of cruelty*, a distinctive culture in its own right…here cruelty can be a macabre art form: one's creative at inventing new forms of cruelty is socially recognized and rewarded." (Katz 1993, 31) This can be found in the history of the Holocaust, but not in the average perpetrator. This was normally the exclusivity of elite death squads such as the SS or particularly cruel individuals. The second: "Evil can be… *produced routinely as an integral part of the operation of modern bureaucracy*…here, merely being a bureaucratic functionary engaged the bureaucrat in routinely doing evil." (Katz 1993, 31-2) Finally:

Evil can be, and sometimes has been *produced in separate social context*. Evil is produced in the confines of a package of number of items of valued behavior, which is organized under an all-embracing theme, that theme integrates and gives focus to behavior; it becomes a rider to all activities within the package, coloring all activities within that package; and it facilitates the outlook that everything outside the package can be ignored. Such a rider helped produce a context for evil in Nazi Germany. Hitler offered the German people a package that consisted of plans for revitalizing the German economy, recapturing German political glory…and racially "purifying" Germany. Hitler offered these items as separate issues under a unifying theme: the revived grandeur of Germany. (Katz 1993, 31-2, italics original)

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[10] I am indebted to Professor Marc Lalonde for this recommendation and the insights he has generously shared on his own perspective of evil in genocidal contexts during my time as his teaching assistant.

Essentially, in Nazi Germany, evil[11] was presented under the guise of renewal, of something positive. This aligns more closely with an apocalyptic framework, where the intent was not destruction for destruction's sake, it was destruction in order to attain utopia, to reach something they considered the ultimate good. The problem with this being that their very survival as a people was presented as being tied to the accomplishment of this goal. Being inherently binary, apocalypticism meant that if you bought into Hitler's package, you automatically bought into what it implied for those not included in it. Even if one supported Hitler for other policies than his racial ones, those were included in the package. This meant that the otherization of Jews was not reason enough to refuse to engage with the Nazi worldview. The problem here is one addressed by Moshman.

Moshman argues that genocides and genocidal acts must not be viewed as a pure and incomprehensible form of evil. Although recognizing the horrors that are involved in genocides is crucial, it is important not to see genocidal acts and perpetrators through such a narrow lens. This can become problematic as perpetrators become embodiments of evil, which allows people to believe a genocide could never take place within their own society, or within their own community, as they see themselves as essentially good and moral compared to individuals who partake in genocides, who are regarded as inherently evil. Although hate is not excluded from the motivations which leads to genocide or incites perpetrators to partake in genocidal acts, Moshman believes hatred to play a comparatively minor role with respect to genocidal motivations (Moshman 2007, 117). This does not mean that one condones such actions or behaviours, but rather that Moshman argues that equating such crimes with evilness is unproductive if one wishes to explain and understand genocide, and eventually work towards its prevention (Moshman 2007, 117). In much the same way, viewing Poles through a one-dimensional lens is not only unproductive but inaccurate. Polish perpetrators, collaborators and allies show us that

> individuals involved were motivated not by one particular factor, be it ideology, personal gain, antisemitism, or situational and environmental factors. Rather, these men and women chose to behave as they did due to the complex interplay of these factors, with some being more influential at different times and places. Perhaps more importantly, we learn that most perpetrators were not insane and more ordinary than not. Likewise, rescuers show us that it was possible, even in the face of incredible danger and overwhelming difficulty to retain one's humanity and help others in need. In both cases, the actors may well have much more in common with us than not. (Beorn 2018, 271)

In short, if one must take account of evil in the study of genocide, one must not understand it as a concept so foreign it would be inapplicable in a reality closer to ours. It is by believing that we are incapable of evil and by wanting to keep our identity as moral agents intact at all costs that we are pushed towards denial or to a refusal to recognize the evil perpetrated around us. This is especially true when our governments commit, fund or support genocidal actions in our names, for the preservation of our values or way of life. If we fail to recognize it, we shall fail to oppose it.

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[11] A note on language: although the word "evil" has deep ties with Christianity, it is used here because it is the word most often employed, outside of academia, when discussing both the Nazis of crimes of a genocidal scale.

1.8.   Methodology

To answer my questions, I have relied on the following methodological approaches. First, I surveyed relevant propaganda pieces such as posters, pamphlets, and films, as well as examined the language used to refer to the 'othered 'group by the regime, both within these documents and in speeches. In Germany, these allowed me to see how the regime shaped group identities into the Elect and the Other as well as how propaganda used apocalyptic rhetoric to achieve this. In Poland, it allowed for insight into how propaganda shaped Polish identity for a German audience and Jewish identity for a Polish audience. This analysis allows us to see which propaganda topics and techniques were successful and which were not. Second, I have conducted a brief examination of the colonial legal system implemented in occupied Poland. Because the legal apparatus can embody societal justice and morality as well as being a source of systemic oppression it provides a means of evaluating a society's progress in its perception of otherness and yields insights in German-Polish, German-Jewish and Polish-Jewish relationships. Because the otherizing measures put in place by the Nazi regime were applied legally, through the colonial legal system, they attempted to create a tangible link between morality and legality. Here, the legal system was used as a means to legitimize the otherization and violent persecution and destruction of those considered to be Other. In this case, these were mainly Jews and other targeted minorities, but the law was also used as a means of inflicting violence on the occupied population. It also dictated how Germans should act towards and Poles. This legitimization extends to the acts of perpetrators, absolving them of any wrongdoing as their actions were legally and socially sanctioned, as well as being framed as necessary for Germany's survival. Most importantly, their actions and the results of these were in alignment with Hitler's wishes.

Finally, I rely on relevant theoretical frameworks, mostly Moshman's and DiTommaso's. Moshman's theory is applied to the work of historians such as Jan Gross, Philippe Burrin, Jan Grabowski and Doris Bergen, amongst others, to see how Poles conceived of their own identity as well as of Jewish identity throughout different stages of the Holocaust. Scholarly works in combination with first-hand accounts of survivors, witnesses and persecutors, provide insight into how these identities were being constructed and perceived at a local level. DiTommaso's work proves most relevant when applied to the role of propaganda in shaping identities as binary opposites. An investigation into how apocalypticism informs the genocidal worldview will help answer questions such as: how is framing the conflict as an imminent and inevitable battle for the survival of perpetrators who view themselves as the Elect, influence the likelihood of violence? How are apocalyptic outlooks furthering the identity dichotomization taking place between both groups resulting in an us vs them scenario which is at the base of the decision to carry out extermination?

Chapter Two: Genocide, Identity and Apocalypticism

2.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the subject of genocide and explains why it differs from other categories of large-scale violence. It also explains how genocide presupposes the identification of an enemy "Other," and locates the roots of this radical alterity in apocalyptic thinking.

Two theoretical models inform this thesis. The first is Moshman's notion that genocide is more a crime of identity than it is a crime of hate. Moshman identifies four stages of the crime: dichotomization, dehumanization, destruction and denial (Moshman, 2007). The second theoretical model is DiTommaso's notion of the "apocalyptic other." DiTommaso defines apocalypticism as a worldview, which

> asserts that a transcendent reality, concealed from casual observation yet operative on a grand scale, defines and informs existence beyond human understanding and the normal pale of worldly experience. It reveals a cosmos that is structured by two forces, good and evil, which have been in conflict since the dawn of history. It discloses the necessity and imminence of the final resolution of the conflict at the end of time, and the truth about human destiny. (DiTommaso 2011, 221)

Both theories refer, in their own way, to distinct groups as the "Elect" and the "Other." While both terms are subject to nuance, I generally define them as follows. The Elect is a term used for group self-identification to indicate their unique qualities and special status. In an apocalyptic context, members of the Elect regard themselves as "the chosen ones," individuals who will carry out a mission which is framed as having life or death repercussions (DiTommaso). In a genocidal context, the Elect operate as the perpetrators. The Other is a group which, although they could have had minority status (through their ethnicity, religion, gender identity etc.) within the community, were not always socially excluded from the community they once formed with the Elect. However, through a process of dichotomization, dehumanization, and denial (Moshman), they were rendered subhuman and regarded by the Elect, especially within an apocalyptic worldview, as a threat to their survival.

2.2. Genocide

In any study on genocide, it is important to understand what differentiates genocide from mass violence and thus to identify what renders genocidal violence unique. Historian Ronald Grigor Suny argues that genocidal violence is different from other large-scale violence: "While other forms of mass killing - war, massacres, induced famines, the Great Purges - involve death on a horrendous scale, the motivations and intentions of the perpetrators are different enough from those of ethnocides that they require distinct explanations. *Genocide is not the murder of people but the murder of a people.*" (Suny 2017, 351, my italics)

Suny makes the important distinction that "the genocidal elimination need not be total, but it should render 'the people' impotent, politically and possibly culturally." (Suny 2017, 351) This implies the cultural as well as physical destruction of a people, or, in other words*, the erasure*

from society of a specific identity and everything associated with it. Consider, by means of example, the Nazi Ministry of the Interior of the Reich decree, passed on July 27, 1938: "All streets named after Jews…are to be immediately renamed. The old street signs are to be removed forthwith and exchanged with new signs." (Beorn 2018, 39)[12] The markers of one identity are destroyed and replaced with markers of the Elect's identity, thereby producing a forced homogenization of the population as well as the physical spaces which they inhabit.

To obtain a more complete definition of genocide, we can supplement Suny's definition with Moshman's. He points out that genocidal acts must be:

> aimed at an abstractly defined group of people. There may be many perpetrators but their actions must be sufficiently coordinated to constitute a singular act or process…The acts of destruction may be aimed at individuals, but the individuals are targeted on the basis of their actual or perceived association with a national, ethnic, racial, religious, political, socioeconomic, or other abstractly defined group. The group must be deliberately targeted, but the process may be deemed genocidal even if the motives of the perpetrators are complex and multifaceted, even if their perceptions of the victim group are wildly inaccurate (Moshman 2007, 116).

For Moshman, destruction is not the only key element to understanding genocidal violence. Intent and group identity must be part of the equation if one hopes to obtain a more complete understanding of such events. Intent does not imply that every single perpetrator believed their individual actions would amount to genocide. Rather, that their collective actions could produce no alternative result than genocide. As Moshman states, genocides are never accidental (Moshman 2011b, 919). Likewise,

> Genocides are perpetrated by individuals acting collectively on behalf of what they perceive to be their own group against what they perceive to be a different group. At the heard of any genocide, then, are individuals who see themselves in ways that *enable them to act collectively on behalf of their own group* against another. At the heart of any genocide, in other words, is identity. (Moshman 2007, 116, my italics)

2.3. Identity

According to Moshman, identity is a central concept to the dynamics of genocide: "genocide is an extreme result of normal identity processes." (Moshman 2007, 115) He distinguishes between personal identity, more closely aligned with a developmental psychology understanding of identity, and social identity as conceived by social sciences (Moshman 2011b, 918). Personal identity is understood as

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[12] The same forced homogenization took place in Poland: "Their names were changed—Gdynia became Gotenhafen, Łódź was now Litzmannstadt, Rzeszów was renamed Reichshof—along with street names." (Lukas 1990, 12) This strategy was emulated by the Soviets as well who "aimed to create Soviet citizens. This meant removing any vestiges of the former regimes…In Poland, Soviet authorities "took medallions with images of saints off children's necks and gave them ones with Stalin's picture instead." Steet names were changed."(Beorn 2022, 79)

an explicit theory of yourself as a person – that is, as a singular and continuous rational agent, extending from the past through the future, and acting on the basis of beliefs and values that you see as defining who you are. Identity in this view is intrinsically subjective but constrained by objective realities. (Moshman 2011b, 918, italics original)

Social identity, on the other hand,

> refers to those aspects of identity that involve relations to others…and especially to groups…To the extent that such groups are abstract social entities such as nations, cultures, or religions, rather than just collections of people, they have the potential to outlast the individuals who compose them at any given time. Affiliation with such groups thus provides our identities with a deepened sense of continuity, permanence and meaning. As a result, we are highly motivated to act on behalf of groups central to our social identities (Moshman 2011b, 918).

Moshman warns us that we must "maintain a more dialectical conception of social identity that connects the sociological reality of human groups to the psychological reality of personal identities." (Moshman 2011b, 919) Viewing social identity as a manifestation of pre-existing groups can lead one to the erroneous conclusion that an individual is without agency in this process and is reduced to a passive rather than active subject/agent. Social identity is not merely a part of personal identity, but neither is it shaped solely by pre-existing groups (Moshman 2011b, 918). Although social identity is reliant on external groups for its formation, the process is not deterministic, and individuals retain their free will and agency.

This is exemplified in historian Christopher's Browning's *Ordinary Men* (1992) in which soldiers who opposed the task assigned to them asked for an alternative assignment. They were reassigned without any negative consequences from their superiors. Some were even offered to opt out of violent events before these began (Browning 1992, 57). There is a popular narrative which states that it was impossible to refuse orders under the Nazis as it would get one killed or some other equally final punishment. This common denial of responsibility uttered through the following justificatory sentence: "I, had no choice, I was simply following orders." is thus inaccurate. It is true that the regime enforced conformity with colossal pressure. However, as demonstrated by Browning, not one single example can be found of a member of the armed forces refusing orders which resulted in drastic consequences from the regime. There were consequences, however these tended to be more social in nature. Such consequences could be feeling like an outsider from the rest of the platoon, being ridiculed for lack of manliness or cowardice and other social pressures and punishments.[13] Free will was not obliterated under the Nazis, however, it did call for a larger amount of courage and moral fortitude.[14]

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[13] "Most of the policemen, however, seem to have made no effort to avoid shooting. At Łomazy following orders reinforced the natural tendency to conform to the behavior of one's comrades. This was much easier to bear than the situation at Józefów, where the policemen were allowed to make personal decisions concerning their participation but the "cost" of not shooting was to separate themselves from their comrades and to expose themselves as "weak."" (Browning 1992, 86-7)

[14] Some examples can be found in pages 56: "he [Bachmann] "would in no case participate in such an action, in which defenseless women and children are shot." He asked for another assignment…his company captain…was informed of Bachmann's assignment but not the reason for it." As well as in pages 62, 86, 170-5 (Browning 1992).

Identities, whether personal or social, are formed through interactions with others as "to see oneself as a person is to see oneself in relation to others and in relation to various groups." (Moshman 2007, 118) This posits human identity as operating, to some extent, within a binary. When it comes to social identity, membership in a group brings solidarity from fellow group members but is also inherently divisive as others are excluded from this group (Moshman 2011a, 141). Then the characteristics required to be part of the in-group become seen as more "fundamental" than other characteristics for membership/identity. "Dividing the multifaceted social universe into discrete categories of "us" and "them" often generates stereotypes, suspicion, fear, discrimination, harassment, exclusion, antagonism, and violence…In its most extreme manifestations, social identity is central to group violence such as genocide" (Moshman 2011a, 141). People "define themselves as much by the negation or the absence of qualities as by the presence of them." (DiTommaso 2011, 232)

Furthermore, just as genocidal acts are based on a real or perceived understanding of the Other, perpetrators understand themselves as members of the Elect based on "perceptions, justified or not, [which] have real psychological consequences." (Moshman 2011a, 143) In a genocidal context, these psychological consequences, such as one's belief that they have been chosen to save the nation, translate to physical actions which are often violent.

There are multiple theories when it comes to identity formation. Nativist theorists argue that one's identity is innate and natural, that it is not influenced by societal or experiential factors but is rather "determined by our genetic programming." (Moshman 2011a, 158) This understanding aligns itself with the Nazi view of identity: it is inherent. However, Moshman espouses instead the model of rational constructivism. According to this model, the self is influenced by external factors while simultaneously including aspects of conscious creation; "Identity, then, is a construction, but it is a construction constrained by realities without and realities within." (Moshman, 2011a, 159)

Furthermore, the self is neither intrinsic nor static, changes in what one believes to be central aspects of one's identity will dictate how one processes and integrates information into their own identity and worldview and how this is enacted outwardly through behaviour. Information that alters one's self-perception is therefore likely to affect how one behaves.[15] Our behaviour is consequently influenced by our identity, but also by our view of ourselves as rational and moral agents. Hence identity can be reinforced by rationality, but it can also prove to be a threat to rationality:

> self-serving biases incline us uncritically to accept and accumulate evidence and arguments consistent with our beliefs, especially those beliefs central to our identities, while critically scrutinizing and dismissing evidence and arguments threatening to our beliefs and identities. Identity commitments may thus undermine

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[15] See in Chapter Three how the shaping of German identity, through propaganda, into the Elect changed their perception of themselves and how they acted towards the other identity propaganda created: the Other, in this case, mostly Jews. This is particularly the case when it came to the identity of Germans troops who viewed themselves not only as members of the Elect but as the enforcers of the New Order and as Germany's saviours. This shift in identity is directly responsible for the genocidal acts of perpetrators. This is an example of how a shift in self-perception directly affects one's actions.

rationality, and the strongest identities may pose the most serious problem…Individuals whose identities are strong but for whom rationality is not a self-conscious commitment may fail to engage in good reasoning because they identify too strongly with their present beliefs…This inclines me to reject a belief that conflicts with my own, even when I have good reason to accept it. (Moshman 2011a, 175)

Cognitive biases are another element which influence people's relationship with their sense of self and consequently how their emotions and rationality interact to dictate their behaviour. The exploitation of biases was commonly used by Nazi propagandists in order to shape the identities of the Elect and of the Other. This was mostly done through the exploitation of people's emotions, eliciting strong emotional reactions to the detriment of their rationality. Karthik Narayanaswami discusses three types of cognitive biases used in Nazi propaganda:

Social & Attributional Biases: These are biases that affect our social perception and the means through which we determine who or what was responsible for a particular action or situation. Memory Biases: These are biases that can either enhance or impair the recollection of a memory, either near-term or long-term. Decision-making Biases: These are biases that impair our ability to make rational decisions despite evidence to the contrary. This includes biases in probability and belief that impact decision making. (Narayanaswami 2011, 1)

Some of the most relevant biases include: the Halo Effect, the Herd Instinct, the Self-Service Behavioural Confirmation Bias, the Ingroup Bias as well as the Projection Bias, the Authority Bias, the Bandwagon Effect and the Semmelweis Reflex. The first five belonging in the social and attributional bias category while the latter three can be grouped under the decision-making biases (Narayanaswami 2011, 9). The Halo Effect is described as "The tendency for a person's positive or negative traits to "spill over" from one area of their personality to another in other's perception of them." (Narayanaswami 2011, 9) This can be seen most clearly in the depictions of Hitler. Found both in the language used by himself and others in reference to his person, as well as to his visual depictions in propaganda. In these, he was often portrayed as Germany's saviour, a prophet or Messiah figure.[16] This was mostly achieved through associations with religious symbols. In the "*Es lebe Deutschland!*" poster, we can find the application of multiple of the biases described above such as the Halo effect. Hitler is intentionally portrayed as having "the authoritative stance and the determined shepherd-like portrayal of someone leading the people" as well as embodying "the Authority Bias" (Narayanaswami 2011, 2-3).

This had a strong effect on the German people and their willingness to trust and follow their leader. This type of propaganda proved to be quite effective when it came to portraying Hitler as "the chosen one":

Hitler claimed that he, personally, was uniquely qualified to help restore Germany's grandeur. He was singularly attuned to Germany's destiny, its historic call to greatness. He…was to be the instrument for the nation's reaching its destiny. In this kind of myth

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[16] This can be see through the popular slogan "*Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer*" which had been adapted, by Robert Ley, from the slogan "*Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Gott*" (Griech-Solelle 2023, 148).

great men, believed to be uniquely in touch with destiny, are held to be far above the level of ordinary humans…Hitler, like the legendary German hero Sigfried, "came to reawaken Germany to greatness…Hitler was the implementor of the German people's destiny of greatness, and "anyone opposing them was flying in the face of the laws of Nature and Fate. (Katz 1993, 32)

The Herd Instinct is a "Common tendency to adopt the opinions and follow the behaviours of the majority to feel safer and avoid conflict." (Narayanaswami 2011, 9) The Bandwagon Effect is "The tendency to do (or believe) things because many other people do (or believe) the same." (Narayanaswami 2011, 9) The use of both biases is best illustrated by the behaviour of average Germans who conformed, internally, externally or both to the attitudes espoused by the Nazi regime and the societal discourses of the time. The Ingroup Bias which is "The tendency for people to give preferential treatment to others they perceive to be members of their own groups." (Narayanaswami 2011, 9) was crucial to the dichotomization of identities and the establishment

Braunau am Inn

Braunau, du alte Stadt am Inn,
Dein Name strahlt der Sonne gleich
Durch Zeiten und Geschlechter hin,
Du bist das Bethlehem im Deutschen Reich!

Zum Wallfahrtsort der deutschen Herzen
Seh' ich im Geiste werden dich.
Drei Tage frischer Wind im Märzen,
Ein Volk vereint sich ewiglich!

Und dieses Volkes größter Sohn,
Braunau, er ist in dir geboren!
Laßt beten uns zum Himmelsthron:
Beschütz ihn, Herr, den du erkoren!

Otto Eichhorn, Nürnberg.

Figure 1: Poem "*Braunau am Inn*"[17]

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[17] This poem about Hitler's birth town could not be more indicative when it comes to his portrayal as the Messiah.

Braunau, du alte Stadt am Inn,	Braunau, ancient town on the Inn,
Dein Name strahlt der Sonne gleich,	Your name shines like the sun
Durch Zeiten und Geschlechter hin,	Through times and generations,
Du bist das Bethlehem im Deutschen Reich!	You are the Bethlehem of the German Empire!
Zum Wallfahrtsort der deutschen Herzen	A place of pilgrimage for German hearts
Seh' ich im Geiste werden dich.	I see you in spirit.
Drei Tage frischer Wind im Märzen,	Three days of fresh wind in March,
Ein Volk vereint sich ewiglich!	A people united forever!
Und dieses Volkes größter Sohn,	And this people's greatest son,
Braunau, er ist in dir geboren!	Braunau, he was born in you!
Laßt beten uns zum Himmelsthron:	Let us pray to the throne of heaven:
Beschütz ihn, Herr, den du erkoren!	Protect him, Lord, whom you have chosen!

Image retrieved from http://braunau-history.at/w/index.php?title=Kulturelles#cite_note-4

of the "us vs them" narrative. The Authority Bias is "The tendency to value an ambiguous stimulus according to the opinion of someone who is seen as an authority on the topic." (Narayanaswami 2011, 9) and went hand in hand with the Halo Effect, imbuing Hitler with even more authority, consequently exercising more pressure on citizens to believe in the righteousness of his cause and act in ways they thought would align with his wishes.[18] The view that Hitler was seen as a Messiah is made quite clear in the poem featured in Figure 1 where his place of birth is described as the "Bethlehem of the German Empire".

Figure 2: *"Es lebe Deutschland!" (Long live Germany!)*[19]

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[18] This is a contributing factor to what Ian Kershaw has called "Working towards the Führer". On 21 February 1934, Werner Willikens made the following utterance in a speech in Berlin: "It is the duty of every single person to attempt, in the spirit of the Führer, to work towards him." (Kershaw 1998, 527-8) "These three tendencies - erosion of collective government, emergence of clearer ideological goals, and Führer absolutism - were closely interrelated. Hitler's personal actions, particularly in the real of foreign policy, were certainly vital to the development, but the decisive component was that unwittingly singled out in his speech by Werner Willikens. Hitler's personalized form of rule invited radical initiatives from below and offered such initiatives backing, so long as they were in line with his broadly defined goals. This promoted ferocious competition at all levels of the regime, among competing agencies, and among individuals within those agencies. In the Darwinist jungle of the Third Reich, the way to power and advancement was through anticipating the 'Führer will', and, without waiting for directives, taking initiatives to promote what were presumed to be Hitler's aims and wishes. For party functionaries and ideologues and for SS 'technocrats of power', 'working towards the Führer' could have a literal meaning. But, metaphorically, ordinary citizens denouncing neighbours to the Gestapo, often turning personal animosity or resentment to their advantage through political slur, businessmen happy to exploit anti-Jewish legislation to rid themselves of competitors, and the many others whose daily forms of minor cooperation with the regime took place at the cost of others, were - whatever their motives - indirectly 'working towards the Führer'. They were as a consequence helping drive on an unstoppable radicalization which saw the gradual emergence in concrete shape of policy objectives embodied in the 'mission' of the Führer." (Kershaw 1998, 530) It is this very same principle of "working towards the Führer" that enabled the Holocaust to take place without any evidence of written instructions. Perpetrators anticipated the desires of their leader, and Hitler had made his wish for the destruction of Jews so clear as to be translucent. The same applies to the destruction of Poles, consequently the actions of the German troops towards Polish combatants as well as civilians which worked toward the goal of land acquisition, of *lebensraum*.
[19] 1935 poster by K. Stauber, image retrieved from Narayanaswami 2011, 2.
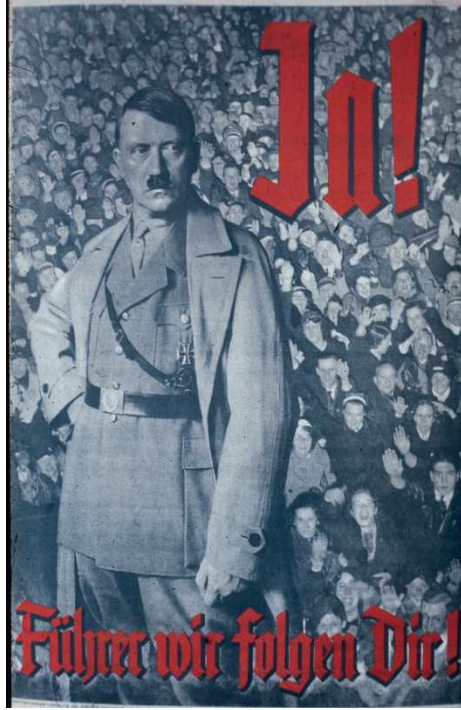
Figure 3: "*Ja! Führer wir folgen Dir!*" (Yes! Führer we will follow you!)[20]

The Semmelweis Reflex is "The tendency to reject new evidence that contradicts an established paradigm." (Narayanaswami 2011, 9) This reflex is the one which comes in play most strongly when our identities or our worldview are threatened.[21] We can see how emotions are also involved in constructing and upholding identities, especially the ones we see as forming the core of who we are. The ways in which rationality and emotions interact is crucial in maintaining our identities. This is one reason why actions which would objectively be interpreted as evil or negative by one group, can be rationalized as good, justified or even necessary by another. This can be seen in the Night of the Long Knives "*Nacht der langen Messer*", where Hitler had multiple political rivals murdered, as well as earlier allies who were now seen as potential competition. Yet, this event was not viewed as tragic or unlawful by all: "*Reichswehr* minister Blomberg, praised 'the soldierly determination and exemplary courage' shown by Hitler in destroying the 'traitors and mutineers'." (Beorn 2018, 38)

Evidently, this understanding of the events is the product of rationalizations. Murder tends to be viewed by most as condemnable, therefore, to accept the murder of certain people, we must resort to some cognitive biases in order to preserve our identity, our belief system and our worldview intact. The murders were not considered evidence that Hitler and his government were willing to resort to any means to achieve their goals. Rather, they were seen as necessary and the victims were portrayed as a threat, consequently justifying the violent actions undertaken from June 30 to July 2, 1934. In short, the new evidence challenged an established identity, to

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[20] A 1934 referendum poster. Courtesy of Dr. Robert D. Brooks, image retrieved from Calvin University's German Propaganda Archives, credit to Randall Bytwerk.
[21] See Moshman on emotions vs rationality above.

protect the integrity of this identity, the evidence must be rejected or reframed to make sense according to one's worldview.

2.4.   Genocide and Identity

2.4.1. Dichotomization

Moshman describes four phases leading to genocide: dichotomization, dehumanization, destruction, and denial. Dichotomization privileges one aspect of an identity over all others, creating an "us versus them" outlook (Moshman 2007, 115).

> People can define themselves with respect to many dimensions…Not every possible dimension of identity is relevant to everyone, but people generally define themselves on the basis of multiple affiliations and commitments, some of which are deemed more central than others. As a result, everyone has a unique identity but every identity potentially overlaps with virtually every other in one or more ways. Dichotomization involves the construction of social and cultural understandings that render some potential dimensions of identity so salient or even mandatory that others become peripheral. Increasing numbers of people see themselves and others as defined on the basis of a small number of dimensions. At the limit, one dimension is highlighted over all others as what does or should define who everybody is, and that dimension is reduced to two categories…There are always some who resist dichotomization by continuing to classify themselves and others along multiple dimensions, thus allowing more diverse interconnections and lines of communication. To the extent that dichotomization prevails, however, alternative identities are increasingly marginalized or disparaged. In the end, those who are not us are them. (Moshman 2007, 118)

When this occurs, the remainders of the peripheral identities, whether shared or not, are rendered insignificant. When it comes to identities, then, the ways in which one group differs from another can seem more relevant to their sense of identity than their commonalities. While comparing oneself to another is a part of the natural process of identity building, it can lend itself to discriminatory purposes. Therefore, one could argue that during Germany's Third Reich, the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans, although often far fewer than their similarities, became disproportionately visible and important. Jews during the Nazi regime were no longer seen as Jewish Germans but as 'Other'. Prior to the Third Reich, Jews were not perceived as mostly Jewish but as "Germans with Jewish beliefs and/or ancestry" (Moshman 2007, 120). In this case, their dominant identity was not determined by their religion or racial lineage but by their nationality, more precisely a German nationality. The more prevalent Nazi rhetoric became, however, the more that German Jews were reduced to their Jewishness and denied individual or multifaceted identities. They were absorbed into a homogenous group identity which aligned with the Nazi racial discourse (Moshman 2007, 120). Jewishness then became the dominant identity of German Jews, regardless of how strongly they personally identified with it, or how well assimilated in German society they might have been, resulting in self-identification becoming meaningless in contrast to the identity being imposed on them.

Moshman emphasizes that the multiplicity of characteristics which typically constitute an identity ensure that dichotomization is not a regular occurrence and is often the result of "forces" in society (Moshman 2011b, 920). Dichotomization can remain stable, not necessarily evolving into something more nefarious. However, with a specific confluence of factors, this can lead to Moshman's second phase: dehumanization. In this context, some of these influential factors derived from Germany's defeat in World War I, most importantly the Treaty of Versailles. These factors led the Germans to feel a sense of victimhood which resulted in a shift in their identity: they went from being victors to being vanquished. The difficulty in accepting this shift created an atmosphere which made scapegoating easier to accept. The myth that Germany was "stabbed in the back" and betrayed by an "enemy within" became attractive to citizens. Acceptance of these conspiracies allowed Germans to absolve themselves of the responsibility for the defeat and attribute it to another group, in this case: Jews. This also meant they could retain their identity as victors intact. According to this view, they would have won, had they not fallen victim to the enemy's internal sabotage. This further reinforced their sense of victimhood and persecution.

2.4.2. Dehumanization

Dehumanization is when the 'Other' is seen as "outside the human universe of moral obligation." (Moshman 2007, 115) When combining dehumanization and dichotomization, it turns the identity which had previously been elevated through dichotomization, to one which is seen as superior to all other identities, in turn further bolstering the preexisting dichotomization. Once a group is perceived as less than human, they are not seen as worthy of any moral obligations, which now become the exclusive domain of the "in" group; "[w]e cannot share a common moral ground with heretics, heathens, or infidels who deny (what we see as) the very basis for morality." (Moshman 2007, 123)

Like dichotomization, dehumanization can remain stable and not escalate into organized acts of violence. However, it can also lead to persecution. "What makes genocidal massacres possible...is a dichotomization of identities and a conception of the other as less than human." (Moshman 2007, 124) The Nazi regime made use of dehumanizing techniques to be able to carry out the Holocaust. The dehumanization of Jews, and other undesirables, was a prerequisite for the Final Solution. Consequently, Hitler had to create a narrative which would dehumanize them. Illustrations of this process can be found in the language and imagery used by the regime's propaganda in reference to Jews. The nativist discourse spewed out by the regime focused obsessively on racial and blood purity, eugenics, and racial hygiene.

Drawing on theories of racial superiority and on the Social Darwinism prevalent at the time, Hitler made heavy use of "biological metaphors" (Moshman 2007, 121) when referring to Jewish people with the purpose of diminishing their humanity in the eyes of the average ethnic German. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writes:

> Jews were maggots feeding on a rotting corpse, the parasites that had to be surgically removed, the sexual predators preying on German women, a spider that sucks people's blood, a plague worse than the Black Death, the sponger who spreads like a noxious bacillus and then kills his host (Moshman 2007, 121).

Here Jews were removed from the realm of humanity inhabited by Germans, and in so doing were defined as a threat to German identity and survival. Through Hitler's mention of sexuality, he indicates his concern for what he sees as one of the main causes of Germany's fall from grace: "crossbreeding" (Burrin 1994, 26). Jews were made to be associated with "a wildly disproportionate malignancy" (Burrin 1994, 18), legitimizing and normalizing fearing Jews throughout German society.

Dehumanization effectively excludes the targeted group from the larger moral universe (Moshman 2007, 123). This lack of moral obligation, which denies them the same rights and privileges as the majority group, is inherently tied to their lack of humanity. This perceived lack of humanity, however, is itself tied to the act of dispossession, which if reversed would grant them their humanity back in the eyes of those who took it. This can be seen in the treatment of Jews "passing" as Germans or Poles, who were treated as equals, yet once their Jewishness was uncovered, they were quickly expelled from the realm of humanity. For example, in Poland, it was common for Polish passing Jews to move to a different city in order to avoid denunciation from Poles who were aware of their Jewish ancestry. However, this was not always successful as demonstrated by events witnessed by Moses Lederman (himself hiding as a Pole):

> As Moses was boarding the train for Warsaw, he stumbled over the body of a young Jew. No one could have taken this young man for a Jew. Lederman later learned that the man had tried to leave for Warsaw but had the misfortune of being recognized by a Polish high school friend, who immediately denounced him. Without any questions a German shot him on the spot. (Tec 1987, 48)[22]

This is why local Poles were so indispensable as collaborators to Germans: "Unfamiliar with Polish culture, the Germans enlisted the aid of some Poles who were willing to help them ferret out passing Jews." (Tec 1987, 40) This meant it was dangerous for Poles to help Jews: "The danger was usually brought on by prying neighbors– indiscreet or eager to denounce. Germans could not distinguish Jews as the locals did: via subtle differences in appearance, expression of the eyes,[23] gestures, and forms of articulation even of those who spoke fluent Polish." (Cała 2018, 449) Local populations of ethnic Germans also played similar roles but at a much higher rate, turning in both Poles and Jews.

In everyday life, in interactions between citizens, this expulsion from moral obligations did not necessarily mean violence. It more often translated to indifference, apathy and the removal of Jewish friends and acquaintances from one's life and direct environment. In short expelling them from their inner circle. This can be best exemplified by Victor Klemperer's[24] diaries, two excerpts from which shall be presented here:

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[22] This also contradicts the Nazi rhetoric regarding the appearance of Jews, how they could be told apart due to their inherent physical characteristics. These contradictions are explored further in Chapter Four.

[23] "The constant fear of denunciation and blackmail led to tragedy. Tragedy and fear, so much part of Jewish life, gave rise to depression, which was often reflected in the sadness of the eyes. In the lives of passing Jews the possibility of having sad eyes became an ever-present threat, a threat most Jews were aware of. Jews were known for their sad eyes. They could be recognized just by the sadness of their eyes. Many were." (Tec 1987, 47)

[24] Victor Klemperer, a German Jew, was a professor at the University of Dresden, until his Jewishness was deemed cause enough for dismissal. He kept extensive diaries during the Nazi regime. A keen observer, his writings are

We know from before that he is certainly no Nazi, that his sister is in difficulties, because her husband, a gardener, has a grandmother who is not Aryan. But then the next day, when I was up there, he happened to come through the room; he stared ahead as he went past, as much a stranger as possible. In his behaviour the man probably represents 79 million Germans (Klemperer 1999, 283).

Yesterday a characteristic scene: Traffic jam on Prager Strasse. Crowd of people, cars. A young man, pale, rigid, mad in appearance, shouts without stopping at someone else whom I could not see: 'Whoever buys from the Jew, is a traitor to the nation!…I said…' and so on and so an ad infinitum. Everyone is disturbed, embarrassed, no one interferes. No police in sight, the traffic is building up and the man keeps on shouting: 'I said…I can say that: Whoever buys from the Jew, is a traitor to the nation, a traitor to the nation, I said…' After a while I walked on" (Klemperer 1999, 133) …"People are apathetic and indifferent. In addition Vogel said: 'it all seems like cinema to me.' People simply regard it all as a theatrical sham, take nothing seriously and will be very surprised when the theatre turns into bloody reality one day. (Klemperer 1999, 259)

Since both groups are not physically separated from each other but rather coexist within society, they begin to perceive each other as threatening; as a threat to one's identity and culture as well as a more immediate physical threat. Whether the threats are real or imagined, the consequences of acting upon this fear of being attacked by the 'Other' can lead to massacres (Moshman 2007, 123). Often, these massacres are framed as acts of self-defence and consequently justified as necessary steps for survival.

It is important to note that, prior to dichotomization, both groups intermingled and were not always so easily identifiable as a member of one group or of another. Once dichotomization had taken place, the Other had to be made visible in order for dehumanization and destruction to be effectively carried out. Even with the creation of ghettos, unless they were closed, it was not always easy to identify who was considered Other. This is further complicated by the need for a clear identification of who this Other is, hence the need for visibility. In the case of Nazi

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replete with insightful remarks about German society at the time. Because he was married to an Aryan woman, Eva Schlemmer, he was able to remain in Germany longer than most and consequently able to continue observing the happenings within Nazi Germany. After the war, he wrote *LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii: Language of the Third Reich*, an in depth analysis of Nazi language and how it infiltrated and contaminated everyday communication. His diaries, amounting to around 1000 pages, carry observations about day-to-day life, the initial enthusiasm for the regime, the change in interactions between Germans and Jews, the Dresden bombings, the downfall of the regime and more.

Germany, Jews were made visibly Other through the imposition[25] of the Yellow Star.[26] "Now that the Jewish star had been introduced, it made no difference whether the Jew's Houses were scattered or gathered together into their own district, because every star-bearing Jew carried his own Ghetto with him like a snail with its shell." (Klemperer 2000,174) By this, Klemperer is saying that the wearing of the star rendered one so "visibly Jewish" and consequently, so "visibly other" that he could be identified as Jewish as easily with the Star than he would if he were enclosed by the walls of the ghetto.

This measure was easily applicable to what the regime considered "full Jews", individuals who had two Jewish parents. However, the regime encountered problems when it came to deciding whether individuals having only one Jewish parent or grandparent should be made to wear the Yellow Star. This issue illustrates the problem of categorization. This meant there existed a need for the creation of different racial categories, such as *Mischlinge*, people who were of mixed racial heritage into which the Nazis could fit people based on their "degree of Jewishness". This decision was based on blood percentage. This ambiguity created the need for a clear definition of who was, and consequently was not, Jewish, in short what percentage of Jewish blood made one Jewish. This classification and categorization "created an automatic procedure for social exclusion." (Aly 2006, 19) This also testify to the fact that the system was malleable to a certain extent and contradicts the claims that it rested upon the facts that different races produced inherent and natural characteristics within humans. In Nazi racial science, race was an immutable element of one's identity and nature.

2.4.3. Destruction

Destruction is Moshman's third phase. Destruction is often framed in a way where conflict seems necessary or inevitable, it is phrased as an act of self-defence, rather than gratuitous

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[25] It should be noted that Jews had to pay in order to acquire the Stars which had to be sewn onto their clothing. Beyond the dehumanizing aspect of the practice, a certain irony should not be lost here as the Nazis tried to extract every possible cent they could from the Jews, including selling a mandatory patch, while portraying the Jews as inherently greedy (Kluger 2001, 48). Another means of identification was the introduction of an identity card for Jews (Klemperer 1999, 264-5). Klemperer writes the following on Jewish otherization and visibility: "However, since the idea is not only to protect the German national comrades from Jewish names, but also more importantly, to safeguard them form any contact with the Jews themselves, the latter are most carefully segregated. And one of the principal means of this kind of segregation is to point to their names. Anyone who does not have an unmistakably Hebraic name, one which has not established itself in German, such as Baruch or Recha, has to add 'Israel' or 'Sara' to his forename. He has to inform his local registry office and his bank, he must not forget to include it in every signature…The word 'Jew' on the star, the letters of which resemble Hebraic script, serves as a forename worn on the chest. Our name appeared twice on the door in the corridor, above my name there is a Star of David, below my wife's the word 'Aryan'. Initially my food ration-cards bore a single J, later the word 'Jew' was printed diagonally across the card and in the end every tiny section bore the full word 'Jew', around sixty times on one and the same card. When I am referred to officially it is always 'the Jew Klemperer'" (Klemperer 2000, 80-1).

[26] A practice which would later be imposed in occupied countries. It should be noted that the identification of Jews through a distinctive patch or armband has historical precedents. The type of identification also varied based on location, some had Stars stitched on their clothes, others armbands, most of the time yellow, although sometimes white and blue. In the General Government it was more common for Jews above ten years old to wear a white armband with a blue Star while in the Warthegau their star was yellow (Kochanski 2012, 108). (see the "white armband with a Star of David embroiled in blue thread, worn by Dina Offman from 1939 until 1941 while in the ghetto in Stopnica, Poland." US Holocaust Memorial Museum - Collections https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/artifact/white-armband-with-blue-star-of-david-1

violence. Hitler found in the Jewish people culprits to blame for the evil in the world and the calamities which befell Germany (Burrin 1994, 27). The Empire's inexplicable defeat in the First World War was the catalyst for *Mein Kampf* and a source of trauma for Hitler[27] and many Germans, as well as the conspiratorial view that Germany had been "stabbed in the back" by the Jews.

> Cette défaite, Hitler l'interpréta comme l'aboutissement d'une guerre menée impitoyablement par les Juifs, une guerre intérieure comme extérieure. À l'étranger, les Juifs avaient attisé la haine contre l'Allemagne et poussé le monde entier dans le conflit. Pendant ce temps, à l'intérieur du pays, leurs frères s'étaient emparé des commandes de l'économie et avaient appelé les ouvriers à la révolution; ils purent, le moment venu, frapper l'Allemagne dans le dos. Ils étaient donc les responsables de la défaite et de l'« esclavage » imposé par le traité de Versailles. La lutte contre eux ne trouverait de fin que par la victoire totale de l'un des adversaires. (Burrin 1998, 25-6)[28]

The defeat influenced his entire apocalyptic worldview and belief system regarding Jews (Burrin 1994, 28). Hitler's solutions were never moderate; moderation was irreconcilable with his apocalyptic worldview. The first of the implemented solutions were, among others: forced sterilization and removal of those he deemed undesirable, including addicts, criminals, people with disabilities and communists. His motto was "[t]he preservation of the nation is more important than the preservation of these unfortunates." (Burrin 1994, 26) This is axiomatic for Hitler. One must preserve the nation and the German people, at all costs; no sacrifice is too great for the Fatherland. In short, for Hitler, the end justified the means.

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[27] Regarding the impact of WWI's loss on Hitler, Burrin writes that "C'est la défaite qui donna à l'entreprise hitlérienne son impulsion fondamentale. Dans *Mein Kampf*, Hitler évoqua l'enthousiasme avec lequel il accueillit l'éclatement de la guerre en 1914. Le contraste ne saurait être plus fort avec la colère extrême dont il fut saisi au moment de la capitulation, qui lui apparut comme le produit d'une trahison de l'arrière. Expérience proprement traumatisante: tout au long de sa carrière, il reviendrait comme à une référence centrale aux événements de novembre 1918, les évoquant toujours avec une intense charge émotionnelle. C'est aux « affreuses journées » de la révolution allemande qu'il faisait remonter son entrée en politique. Ce sont elles qui le lancèrent à « la recherche des causes de l'écroulement allemand » et lui firent voir la nécessité d'un mouvement politique dont le but devait être de « vaincre la défaite »…On ne soulignera jamais assez combien la guerre et la défaite le marquèrent." (Burrin 1989, 23) (It is the defeat which provided the hitlerian enterprise its fundamental impetus. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler recalled the enthusiasm with which he received the outbreak of the war in 1914. The contrast with the extreme anger which seized him at the moment of capitulation, which to him, appeared to be the result of a backstabbing, could not be stronger. A properly traumatizing experience: throughout his career, he would come back to the events of November 1918 as if they had become a central reference to him, always invoking them with an intense emotional charge. It is to those "horrible days" of the German revolution that he traces back his entry into politics. It is those days which propelled him in a quest to find out the cause of the German defeat and made him see the necessity of a political movement with the goal of vanquishing the defeat. We can never emphasize enough the impact the war and its defeat left on him.)

[28] (Hitler interpreted this defeat as the end result of a war ruthlessly led by the Jews, a war which had been both internal and external. Abroad, Jews had stirred up hatred against Germany and had drawn the entire world into the conflict. Meanwhile, inside the country, their brothers seized control of the economy and called for revolution amongst the working class; they could, when the time came, stab Germany in the back. They were therefore responsible for the defeat and for the "slavery" imposed by the Treaty of Versailles". The war against them would find an end only through the total victory of one of the two enemies.)

Therefore, to reach his goal of a Germany inhabited solely by racially pure Aryans, Hitler had to address the issue of reproduction. On one hand, he tried to stop those he considered "undesirable" from having children, thereby preventing future generations from coming into existence. Although forced sterilization does not constitute murder in itself, it is important to remember this was nonetheless a genocidal act as it eliminates the future of the group from ever existing. On the other hand, those considered racially superior and possessed high blood purity were encouraged to procreate.[29] Women could help the nation through reproduction as "Every child she brings into the world is a battle, a battle she wages for the existence of her people" (Lower 2013, 22). This was accomplished through specific measures such as public recognition; "'In my state the mother is the most important citizen.'" Hitler proclaimed." (Lower 2013, 29) Other incentives included the 'Mother's Cross of Honor', a medal created by the Nazi state in order to incentivize higher birthrates by awarding medals to women who had four children (bronze), six (silver) and eight or more (gold) (Rabinbach & Gilman 2013, 307).[30] This medal came with a certain elevation in social standing: "Women who had been awarded the cross were given priority seating on the trams and could demand a 'Heil Hitler' from passing Hitler Youth." (Rabinbach & Gilman 2013, 307) The regime also passed the "Law for Encouragement of Marriage" (*Ehestandsdarlehen*)[31] in 1933 where a married couple could secure a loan of 1000 Reichsmarks. This loan was conditional to the women staying at home, furthermore, the couple were allowed to keep 25% of the loan for every child they had, incentivizing couples to procreate more (Somcutean 2022, 268). It is policies like this which contributed to the "cult of motherhood" in Nazi Germany. Although these were advertised as positive elements it meant that "the notion that having many children was not a private matter, but a duty to the nation" (Somcutean 2022, 288). An example of the pervasiveness of Nazi propaganda and how it infected both the public and the private sphere of German citizens.

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[29] All these measures were either propaganda themselves or accompanied with intense campaigns of propaganda in order to make them seem like they were worth adopting.

[30] The medals were reserved for mothers who gave birth to "children of Aryan pedigree…there could be no trace of inherited diseases, criminality, or asocial tendencies (such as alcoholism)." (Rabinbach & Gilman 2013, 307)

[31] The success of the policy has been the subject of debate. Some scholars attribute the rise of births earlier in the regime to "abortion laws and difficulty of obtaining contraceptives", although the policy proved successful when it came to the birth of a family's fourth and fifth children, however economic factors seemed to prove a stronger influential factor than the policy was (Somcutean 2022, 269 & 286). It should be noted that abortions were persecuted by the regime but not in cases deemed "acceptable": when done on the basis of eugenics, in short: Aryan women could not have access to abortions as easily (Somcutean 2022, 288-9). The Nazis also believed that Jews were at the centre of a conspiracy to destroy the German race through their liberal attitudes towards abortion and contraception, that this was done to lower the birth rate and eventually destroy the German race (Stanley 2020, 43-4). Consequently, abortions weren't morally reprehensible per se, but aborting an Aryan baby was, this was no doubt related to the immense pressure on women to have more babies. Despite an extensive propaganda campaign, the loan "likely attracted and benefitted only a small portion of newlyweds." (Somcutean 2022, 276) In terms of numbers, between "1933-1939, around 1,500,000 marriage loans were paid in Germany, while authorities granted 1,300,000 credit deductions. On average, 28 percent of newlyweds received a loan during this time, while 13 percent of live births granted the parents a credit deduction." (Somcutean 2022, 268) The policy was also aimed both at fertility but also at replacing women by men on the job market and reinforcing traditional gender roles within the household and society (Somcutean 2022, 268-72). Furthermore, the policy aligned with their ideological outlook. Newlyweds who wanted to apply for the load had to meet a list a criteria, notably racial ones. This meant there were risks in applying: "Following the required medical examination, applicants, if deemed *racially invaluable*, were at risk to be banned from marriage at best or to be forcedly sterilized at worst." (Somcutean 2022, 285, italics original)

Motherhood became the "most celebrated form" (Lower 2013, 26) of German femininity. Consequently, motherhood became a coveted role and identity by German women who wanted to show their patriotism. This can be seen through an increased birthrate but also through the higher rate of women entering midwifery as a profession (Lower 2013, 23). His ideal of a eugenically created race (Burrin 1994, 26) could not be achieved without Aryan women providing the country with more children thus guaranteeing the future of Hitler's racially pure utopia. In this regard, Jews, especially Jewish men, were increasingly viewed as a threat. Propaganda depicted them as preying on German women and consequently thwarting the project of a pure Aryan race. Furthermore, due to their claimed racial superiority, Germans were always presented as conquerors, a key facet of their identity. Hitler had no intention to limit his political and racial programs to Germany's boundaries. *Lebensraum*[32] was needed to support a growing Reich. Therefore, Hitler's racial ideology goes hand in hand with his colonial ambitions.
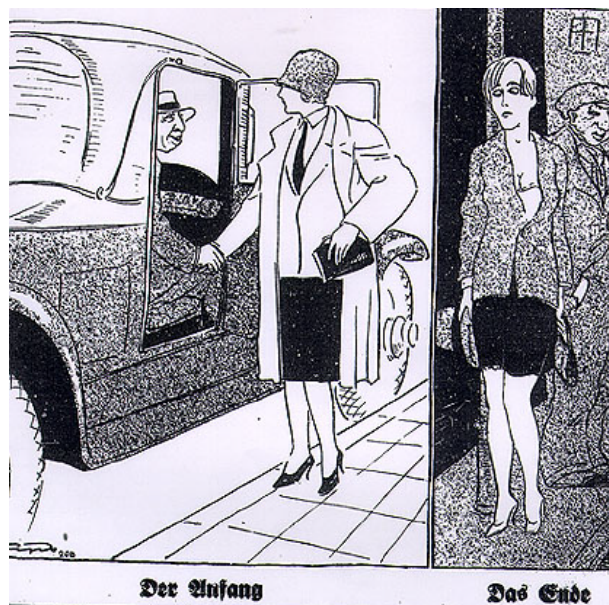

Figure 4: "*Der Anfang und das Ende*" (The beginning and the end)[33]

As the ultimate Other, Jews posed two main problems in Hitler's worldview. First, he viewed, and consequently portrayed them, as parasitizing the German nation and its people. Second, they were, according to him, also aiming for world domination, something that should, and could, only be achieved by a superior race. It is important to note that Hitler had no issue with world domination as a concept, but was rather concerned with which race would be dominant (Debney

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[32] *Lebensraum* translates to "living space" and is a form of settler colonialism. "A central concept after 1919 in German ultra-nationalist writing, including the propaganda literature of the Nazis, it looked in particular to an expansion of Germany into eastern Europe, justifying this by the need for agricultural land to maintain the favorable balance between peasant and city-dweller on which the moral health of the German nation was supposed to rest. This was the ideological justification for Hitler's attack on Russia in 1941" (Bullock & Trombley 1999, 473). *Lebensraum* also played a large part in the invasion of Poland.

[33] Published in *Der Stürmer* in July 1930. Randall Bytwerk provides the following explanation: "Streicher claimed that Jews were about a massive campaign to seduce and destroy German womanhood." Image retrieved from Calvin University's German Propaganda Archive, credit to Randall Bytwerk.

4). "We all feel that in the distant future many may be faced with problems which can be solved only by a superior race of human beings, a race destined to become master of all the other peoples and which will have at its disposal the means and resources of the whole world." (Hitler 1939, 216) Hitler believed it was the destiny and the duty of the superior race i.e. the Aryans, to achieve world domination. Conspiracies about Jewish world domination, their control of global finances and "their Marxist agitation" (Burrin 1994, 27) were fueling Hitler and his propaganda. These conspiracies were seen as a threat to Germany's very survival as well as the need to react to this threat urgently. The danger was presented as being imminent.

Taking this into consideration, Hitler's regime was unequivocally moving towards destruction. When the regime in power presented these "Jewish conspiracies" as a menace and Jews as parasites, it facilitated the belief amongst the citizenry that their way of life was under a tangible and immediate threat. This in turn increased the acceptance of arrests, deportations, and eventually the massacre of thousands of individuals without major upheaval from society. Here, these measures were accepted because they were seen as justified and necessary.

2.4.4. Denial

Denial is Moshman's final stage. Denying the atrocities committed during the genocide enables perpetrators to keep viewing themselves in a favourable light. "In many cases, it is precisely our own identity as moral agents that forces us to deny the identities of those we destroy." (Moshman 2007, 127) This is why seeing the genocidal acts as self-defence is crucial, since it helps to provide a sensible justification for the events in which they participated. This denial can range from a complete negation that the events took place to denying selective events, redefining genocide, underreporting the number of casualties, or highlighting romanticized versions of history that show the actions taken in a better light (Moshman 2007, 127). Some of the murders can be framed as disappearances or simply as a denial of the existence of the deceased (Moshman 2007, 128). Because "our national identities intertwine with our moral identities, and no one wants to identify with a nation founded on genocide" (Moshman 2007, 130), it is crucial for the population who has committed the genocide to forget.[34] In Nazi Germany, the denial was also implemented through the destruction of any evidence that mass murder took place, notably through the burning of their victims. This was done both when the Nazis believed they would win the war as well as when they realized the war was lost. In the earlier stages of the war, this destruction of evidence was accomplished through the burning of bodies, the burying of bodies

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[34] Remembrance is a key element in accountability as well as preventing future massacres. The establishment of numerous memorials to the victim of the Holocaust are one way this is achieved.Remembrance might constitute one of the reasons why the German government now feels obligated to highlight the Holocaust so strongly in their academic curriculum. This can also be seen in the way they restrict access to Nazi imagery and propaganda. For example, the screening of *Der Ewige Jude*, one of Goebbels' most infamous propaganda pieces, is not allowed in Germany except within strict academic settings, and its distribution is subject to a control process (Hornshøj-Møller & Culbert 1992, 41). The display of symbols associated with Nazism is also so strictly controlled it led to some problems in the publication of Art Spiegelman's groundbreaking graphic novel *Maus*. The author recounts the problems he encountered when publishing his book in Germany: "it's against the law to show a swastika, except in works of serious historical research. He [his German editor] got permission from the German government to use my cover! But in the wacky world of unintended consequences, a few years later I saw a documentary about skinheads in Germany and one of them had a *Maus* bookstore poster in his bedroom—it was the only swastika he could get, poor fella!" (Spiegelman 2011, 155-9) *Maus* recounts the story of Spiegelman's father, Vladek, a survivor of Auschwitz as well as their current relationship.

in mass graves, the erasure of the presence of Jewish communities, notably through the burning of synagogues and Jewish identity markers throughout Germany and later in occupied countries. This also included the destruction of some camps, most notably in Sobibor, atop of which trees were planted in a further attempt to cover their traces as well as to hide their culpability (Beorn 2018, 219-223).

Once victory was no longer an option, the Nazis set out to erase all evidence of the Holocaust. The camp inmates who were still alive were murdered, mass graves were dug up[35] and the bodies inside were burned, documents in concentration camp offices were destroyed, this included files, photographs etc. Although some survivors were able to rescue some of these documents from the crematoria (Brasse 2012, 123). This final act of destruction was met with resistance from the Jewish inmates (Beorn 2018, 220). Survivors attest to the ongoing cruelty of the Nazis even at this final stage. One survivor recalls what "while the bodies burned, an orchestra played.", another that "The SS men even dressed up a prisoner in a hat with horns, called him "the Devil," and placed him in charge of keeping the fires burning." (Beorn 2018, 222)

Although denial is the final step of this model, it is important to keep in mind that it is also a prerequisite during the destruction phase in order to allow for it to happen. This form of denial would concern itself mostly with denying the humanity of the genocide's victims (dehumanization) or denying the scale of destruction taking place rather than denying destruction as it occurs.

2.5.   Us or Them: Apocalyptic Identities

Apocalyptic thinking envisions the destruction of the current world in order to reach salvation through the establishment of a new world. This implies that the current reality is flawed beyond redemption. For the new world order to be established, destruction is inevitable. It is a required step towards salvation, this is an apocalyptic worldview. In a genocidal context, this destruction concerns itself with the eradication of a specific people, a specific identity, which is seen as the root cause of the current reality's degradation: the Apocalyptic Other.

DiTommaso argues that the apocalyptic system is inherently toxic (DiTommaso 2011, 240). This toxicity is partly due to concepts such as pre-determinism and otherization to the extent of dehumanization but also because the system is essentially "an adolescent worldview" (DiTommaso 2011, 240). This statement is twofold. First, the apocalyptic worldview is totalizing. The world is viewed as black and white; no nuance is allowed. When it comes to apocalyptic identities, dichotomization and radical alterity are baked into the system. Second, apocalypticism implies that the Elect "establish a framework of transferred responsibility" (DiTommaso 2011, 240), which can be connected to denial as conceptualized by Moshman. The solution to the problem (or salvation, using religious terminology), will come not from the Elect's action themselves but from a transcendent source guiding their actions, or an agent of this

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[35] One of the influential reasons behind this decision was the discovery of the mass graves at Katyń. "Himmler realized that the graves of the Jews could also be discovered one day and the extent of the German crimes made public. He ordered the mass graves in the extermination camps should be dug up and the bodies burnt." (Kochanski 2012, 301)

source – a messianic figure. During the Third Reich, Hitler was often portrayed as such a figure: Germany's saviour; his prophecies regarding the Jewish question were critical in shaping the Holocaust. "In all cases, the abrogation of responsibility to the degree obliged by the worldview's logic and function leads to *moral hazard*." (DiTommaso 2011, 240 italics original)

DiTommaso makes the point that because of apocalypticism's "singular amalgam of dualism, extremism, and determinism, [its] radical Otherness permits no ambiguity as to the destiny and design of adversaries." (DiTommaso 2011, 240) It is precisely this amalgam which can result in the dehumanization of the members of the Other and in their subsequent destruction. The determinism here applies not only to the Other but to the Elect as well:

> The worldview's radical dualism demands that the focus of the historiography remain on its special object, the One (also: the elect, chosen, or saved) and its relationship with the Other (also: the enemy or the damned). History thus becomes a series of milestones marking the long road of the conflict between good and evil. Any salvation-history tends to streamline the past. Apocalyptic dualism simplifies it an additional degree, to the point where there are two kinds of everything – now and until the end of time. (DiTommaso 2011, 226)

Apocalypticism, therefore, presents one group as a threat to another, both in terms of identity and survival. The Other is needed for the Elect to define itself and find unity as a group. This group, like the Other, is bound together by narrowly defined characteristics which are exclusive, inherent, and tied to their humanity, or lack thereof. The Elect is worthy of salvation but just as the current world has been corrupted by the Other, they must destroy them to establish a new world order. The Other, consequently, is the cause of their downfall and a threat to their future. They destroyed their past and by their mere existence, threatened their future. Violence in these cases is seen both as revenge and as a preventive measure.

Seeing genocidal identities through the lens of apocalypticism can yield important insights. DiTommaso argues that the Other is fundamental to an apocalyptic worldview and to the construction of apocalyptic identities. Here, both the identity of the Elect/good and of the Other/evil are intertwined and cannot exist independently of each other. DiTommaso uses the example of quantum entanglements to illustrate just how closely the Elect and the Other depend on each other to make sense of themselves and their place in the world:

> Quantum theory proposes that certain objects in the universe are so intimately linked that they cannot be described without reference to their complements. The textbook example of the phenomenon, known as quantum entanglement, involves a subatomic property called "spin." Consider a pair of identical elementary particles, spins unknown. If an observer measures the spin of one particle to be "up," the spin of the other particle immediately resolves itself as its opposite value, or "down." Neither particle exists independently. The spin of one particle automatically determines that of the other, while the spins of both particles ultimately depend on external measurement. (DiTommaso 2011, 230)

To continue with this metaphor, during the Third Reich, the spins of these particles would be German and Jewish identities and the external measurement the socio-political climate in which they were operating. In apocalyptic settings, the Other serves as more than the Elect's opposite. It fuels the Elect's belief that they are being persecuted by the Other. This persecution, like the Other's identity, can be real or perceived, but the fear and actions taken as a result of this fear have concrete and immediate repercussions. This fear is what sparks the Elect to rally behind their core identity resulting in stronger group cohesion and solidarity (DiTommaso 2011, 228). This also incentivizes members to define the boundaries of their identity more sharply, and consequently who does, and does not, belong to this group, the membership of which becomes dependent on the possession of a narrowly defined set of characteristics; a specific identity. Furthermore, believing their identity is threatened by the Other, the Elect cling to it and to its exclusivity with renewed ferocity. By narrowing the characteristics which allows individuals to claim membership, they automatically define which characteristics are seen as the opposite, these will prevent someone from being a member, from belonging to the in-group. One identity spins one way, the other by default spins the other way. This further accentuates the divide between "us and them."

The Elect is also bound together by common suffering and trauma, again real or perceived (DiTommaso 2011, 228). The Other is not only excluded from this common suffering but is often seen as the cause of it, whether from an internal or external threat. Often this is seen through some type of conspiracy or hidden hand machination like the Protocols of the Elders of Zion or the "stabbed in the back" myth of post-WWI (DiTommaso 2011, 237). These elements help fuel the Elect's feelings of persecution.

As noted, Hitler believed one of the reasons for the defeat Germany endured in WWI was due to the "enemy within" (Burrin 1994, 29). Moshman argues that "However a nation is defined, there will be those who are identified with other nations, and who may come to be perceived as a threat to the nation in question. Under the right circumstances, nationalism of any sort can lead to genocide." (Moshman 2004, 204) Blaming the Jews for the defeat, Hitler believed Germany to be involved in an ongoing internal war, as well as an external one, and concluded that "before conquering the enemies without, one must have exterminated the enemy within" (Burrin 1994, 29-30). To him, this betrayal from within was unacceptable and he was willing to kill thousands for order to be reestablished. The defeat further enhanced his anti-Semitism, making it his "central obsession" (Burrin 1994, 30). Historian Philippe Burrin underlines the fact that Hitler was exceptionally anti-Semitic. He also states that Hitler reflected a way of thinking shared by the majority of the German population, who due to the defeat and suffering from the First World War, were also yearning for a scapegoat.

Consequently, as enemies within the ranks of Germany, Jews were seen as undermining the nation's safety and survival, they were responsible for the present state of the nation and its problems. Hitler believed himself to have been chosen as the one who must lead the inevitable war against the Jews. His campaign was infused with religious symbolism, including presenting himself as Germany's saviour. For Hitler, the threat posed by the Jews was international as well as national. According to this scenario, Hitler took on the role of the Messiah, the success of his quest; the destruction of world Jewry, would save both Germany and the world from the apocalypse he thought the Jews would inevitably bring (Burrin 1994, 31). Furthermore, in a

classic case of role reversal, he held firm beliefs that he was not the one declaring war on the Jews, he was *reacting* to a threat; Hitler believed that it was really the German population who were being threatened with extermination, not the other way around (Burrin 1994, 31).

> The fact that this inversion of reality was plausible to so many people reveals that they were more than willing to accept anti-Semitic justifications and to see or even make the innocent suffer than to question their own worldview. The willingness to make Jews the scapegoat for tensions had been building to a fevered pitching in the summer of 1938 continued unabated into the fall. The push, according to the SD report, was to achieve "the final exclusion of Jewry from all areas of life, with the ultimate goal of their removal from the territory of the Reich, by all means necessary, and in the shortest amount of time." (Griech-Polelle 2023, 108)

This led Hitler to begin the implementation of discriminatory policies. First came social and legal measures. However, these quickly escalated to pogroms and the physical removal of Jewish people from specific areas. This removal further isolated German Jews from ethnic Germans, facilitating their otherization. He entertained some solutions that did not necessarily conclude with extermination, yet due to his belief system, his view of the situation as "us or them", it could not have ended otherwise. His fight was one for salvation, and it was led against the Jews. In this apocalyptic mindset, "salvation comes through membership in a well-defined group. One is either part of the Elect or is not: infidel or heretic." (DiTommaso 2020, 318) For Hitler, this was a zero-sum game. He could only win if the Jews lost. Nazi propaganda would also emphasize the view that there was only one option, to win the war or to die; "There are not two possibilities! There is only one! We must win the war, and we can win it! (...) Then our future and the future of our children will be assured and the German people will be saved from a descent into Bolshevist chaos!" (Rüstzeug für die Propaganda in der Ortsgruppe 1945, 31)[36] The dehumanizing way in which Hitler and his regime spoke and wrote about as well as its depictions of Jewish people, and his claims that the Manichean war against the Jews would be violent, could only lead to the destruction of Germany's Jewish population (Burrin 1994, 36-37).

Because this destruction needed to be total, it included groups which were often viewed as more vulnerable and for whom perpetrators might, by default, feel more empathy towards. This empathy could result in a decreased willingness to kill these groups, notably women and children. This issue was addressed more intensely in the type of propaganda fed to soldiers in order to remedy this. Beyond the general dehumanization of Jewish people, children were depicted as a future threat, and women, due to their ability to give birth were associated with this threat as well. Propaganda pieces such as the one below demonstrate clearly the threat posed by future generations. This was also placed in conjunction with the need to secure a future for German children. Destruction was necessary to reach this utopian society. The death of one group of children guaranteed the survival of the other. There is also an interesting role reversal here. Jewish children and women were portrayed as a threat rather than as defenceless victims. In the anti-Polish propaganda, which concerns itself with the conspiracy of Poles persecuting the German minority in Poland, the victimization of women and children was put at the forefront. This is further developed in the following chapter. The reality of course, being that Jewish

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[36] The stereotype linking Jews and Bolshevism will be further developed in the following chapter.

children posed no real threat and German children and women were not persecuted to the extent depicted by the Nazi press. Jewish children were seen as such a threat that their destruction was "a basic Nazi policy" (Tec 1987 140). Poles involved in the rescue of children, often hidden in "convents, monasteries, and orphanages." (Tec 1987, 140) mention that the "Nazi determination to eliminate the young, together with the stringent requirements for passing, made it hard to save them." (Tec 1987, 140) The level of difficulty varied greatly depending on the age of the child and what they were able to understand regarding the threat they were facing. Passing offered an additional layer of difficulty to rescuing both children and adults and reduced the chances of rescue of those who looked "too Jewish".

Figure 5: "*Legion der Schande*" (Legion of Shame)[37]

2.6.   Conclusion

The role played by emotions, by the fear that the Other was plotting to eliminate the Elect, and consequently fear for the Elect's very survival described here, cannot be underestimated as a component in identity politics, especially under genocidal circumstances. It is fear rather than logic or rationality which drives the Elect to cling so tightly to their identity. It is fear which motivates them to take measures which they believe will ensure their survival, no matter how drastic these might be, as this is seen as the one and only path to survival. The Elect fears not only for their immediate destruction but sees the Other as the cause of the corruption of their

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[37] The bottom text reads: "Ignorant, lured by gold, They stand disgraced in Judah's fold. Souls poisoned, blood infected, Disaster broods in their wombs." (*Der Stürmer,* August 1935 (Issue #37)) Image retrieved from Calvin University's German Propaganda Archives, credit to Randall Bytwerk.

contemporary society. Therefore, if they are not annihilated *once and for all*, they would surely come back to avenge their kind and threaten the Elect once again. This fear of revenge is often given as a reasoning for the murder of women and children during genocides. If they are not killed, they will come back to corrupt the world again and destroy the Elect and the utopic future they have built. In this scenario, salvation is only possible with the *total* destruction of the Other. Destruction is a way to assure survival for the current as well as the future generations.

In order for this to take place, the Other needs to be clearly identifiable, well-defined and categorizable as such. In short, its otherness needs to be made visible. In the Third Reich, especially with the passing of the Nuremberg laws, this meant defining who was a Jew. The laws could not be applied without a precise definition. Furthermore, a clear definition of the Other, combined with heightened visibility, facilitated the categorization of people: they were either members of the Elect or the Other, a duality sharpened by apocalypticism. The Other's visibility is especially relevant when it came to their persecution and extermination. The obligation for Jews to wear the Yellow Star facilitated these purposes. The visibility provided by the Star made it easier for Nazis as well as ordinary citizens to identify who was 'Other' and treat them accordingly, whether this meant cruelty, violence, humiliation, or indifference to the treatment they endured.

Superimposed with Moshman's theory, DiTommaso's conception of the apocalyptic Other reveals why identity is such a key concept in understanding genocide. The Elect and the Other are not simply groups that differ from each other; they have (or are seen to have) two radically different ontologies. They share two opposed identities, and these are framed in relation to their belief systems and understanding of the world, which are regarded as irreconcilable. It is precisely because their worldly conceptions are drastically opposed to one another that these groups cannot conceive of a world order where the other group continues to exist alongside them. These worldviews are uncompromising, there is no possibility for a middle ground; "what cannot be assimilated must be smashed. It is either conversion or annihilation - the little death or the great death - nothing in between." (DiTommaso 2011, 229) Just as the traits of the Elect and the Other are seen as immutable and in opposition to each other, the same is true of their fate. This means that for the Elect to be saved, the Other must perish. Their destiny is seen as unavoidable, it is tied to their design, "destiny and design are two sides of the same coin", no matter how violent this fate might be, the Other is deserving of it (DiTommaso 2011, 233). This also implies that the Elect can absolve themselves of any wrongdoing in the participation of violent actions towards the Other. Consequently, they are able to maintain their perception of themselves as not only as morally good agents but as morally superior. This intersects with Moshman's concept of denial. In this case, it is tied to dehumanization as well as to the concepts of free will and of predestination: "there is no real choice when there are only two options. The worldview preselects the choices: either One or the Other, neither ambiguous, nothing in between. Apocalyptic free will is nothing more than an extension of the binary minimalism of apocalyptic otherness." (DiTommaso 2011, 240)

Because the two identities, like their destinies, are fixed, there are no other outcomes possible. The Elect is destined to prevail, and the Other is destined for damnation: the saved and the drowned. Whether the destruction is brought on by God or an "idealized or divinized" secular

leader, such as Hitler, it frees members of the Elect to commit acts which would be condemnable within a healthy worldview (DiTommaso 2011, 240). These theories allow us to gain a better understanding of the role played by identity in the Holocaust. However, we must examine how these processes have been carried out by the Nazi regime to enact these apocalyptic identities into reality. In the following chapter, I will examine how propaganda shaped German, Polish, and Jewish identities and attempted to make them fit within an apocalyptic identity binary.

Chapter Three: The Influence of Propaganda in Shaping Identities

3.1.   Introduction

As established in the previous chapter, the apocalyptic identity categories of the Elect and the Other were a prerequisite for the Holocaust. Furthermore, they were necessary as this identity binary is the only possible identity configuration which reconciles itself with an apocalyptic worldview. Since Hitler espoused such a worldview and aimed to make society conform to it, no other options existed than reducing the diversity of identities present in Germany at the time to the apocalyptic identity binary. This will be applicable to one extent or another, to any other country occupied by the Nazis. Therefore, it was not sufficient for the people to be divided between Germans and Jews, these groups had to be the exact opposite of one another as well as the mortal enemy of one another. The question is: how were these groups transformed into the Elect and the Apocalyptic Other?

This chapter will cover the role of propaganda in shaping these identity categories. More precisely how it relied on apocalyptic rhetoric to do so. First, I will provide a brief description of the workings of propaganda. Second, will follow an analysis of German-Jewish relationships in Germany and what type of propaganda was applied in order to get the desired shift in identity. Third, I will present the challenges encountered by the Nazi regime when they invaded Poland and how they attempted to obtain the same dichotomization of identities, taking into consideration the introduction of a third variant: Polish identity. Fourth, I will compare the similarities in propaganda themes and tropes in Poland and Germany. A close analysis of specific pieces of propaganda will be used throughout these sections in order to better illustrate what the target audience was subjected to.

3.2.   Propaganda under the Nazis

Given its centrality to the Nazi regime and its vision of a new world order, a brief definition of propaganda is needed. Sociologist Jacques Ellul provides the following definition: "Propaganda is a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its action of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulation and incorporated in and organization." (Bytwerk 2004, 3) To this we can add Jason Stanley[38]'s definition that:

> the role of propaganda is to conceal…clearly problematic goals by masking them with ideals that are widely accepted. A dangerous, destabilizing war for power becomes a war whose aim is stability, or a war whose aim is freedom. Political propaganda uses the language of virtuous ideals to unite people behind otherwise objectionable ends. (Stanley 2020, 24)

This was clearly the case when Hitler framed his political platform as one which aimed to revitalize Germany. Left out of this platform was how these goals would be achieved.

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[38] Jason Stanley is a philosopher and expert on the workings of fascism and propaganda. In March 2025, he left his position at Yale for Canada due to his beliefs that America is rapidly moving towards fascism.

In *Mein Kampf*,[39] Hitler dedicated two chapters to the importance, the role and aims of propaganda;

> the aims of a propagandist in indoctrinating a population and the importance of ensuring the continued propagation of the propaganda: "The first duty of the propagandist is to win over people who can subsequently be taken into the organization. And the first duty of the organization is to select and train men who will be capable of carrying on the propaganda. The second duty of the organization is to *disrupt the existing order of things and thus make room for the penetration of the new teaching which it represents*, while the duty of the organizer must be to fight for the purpose of securing power, so that the doctrine may finally triumph." (Narayanaswami 2011, 1, my italics)

Propaganda is so important he states that recruiting propagandists is the "first duty of the organization". This testifies to the centrality of propaganda in achieving victory, this is how he planned to win over the support of the population, how he planned to convert them to his worldview. For this to become reality, he must first "disrupt the existing order" to be able to create a new reality, a new order. The implications of this affected almost every aspect of society, especially the social norms dictating German-Jewish relationships. Furthermore, we can see that" continued propagation of the propaganda" implies a constant flow of it. Considering the totalizing outlook of the regime, propaganda affected every sphere of life, every aspect of society, from public spaces to the intimacy of one's home.[40]

This is one reason Nazi propaganda was so effective: its pervasiveness. On the streets one could see posters commonly referred to as wall newspapers which were plastered everywhere as early as 1937 (Herf 2006, 28). Considering the majority of citizens walked or used public transport, they were exposed to propaganda on a daily basis and in a repeated fashion. Film reels at the cinema were another major way to diffuse bite-sized, but influential, Nazi rhetoric to the citizens as were radio broadcasts. Ellul describes how propaganda overtook the totality of the citizens' realities under the regime:

> Propaganda must be continuous and lasting — continuous in that it must not leave any gaps, but must fill the citizen's whole day and all his days; lasting in that it must function over a very long period of time. Propaganda tends to make the individual live in a separate world: he must not have outside points of reference. He must not be allowed a moment of meditation or reflection in which to see himself vis-à-vis the propagandist, as happens when the propaganda is not continuous…successful propaganda will occupy every moment of the individual's life…the individual must not be allowed to recover, to collect himself, to remain untouched by propaganda during any relatively long period (Ellul 1965, 17)

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[39] Even if Hitler expands on his ideas of propaganda in *Mein Kampf*, the book itself should be considered a piece of propaganda in itself.

[40] An example of this is how many Germans had portraits of Hitler in their houses along with *Mein Kampf* (a copy of which was given to all newlyweds) and Nazi flags on their houses.

This means not only that propaganda was everywhere but that no alternate worldview were to be made available. This totality was achieved through a combination of propaganda and censorship. Radio was one of the ways propaganda was used to reach the citizenry. Its intent was to help in "creating a common enemy and was successful in bringing a sense of *Volksgemeinschaft*, people's community." (Crosby 2014, 1)

Seeing the potential radio could have as a means of diffusing propaganda, affordable radios "known as *Volksempfanger*, people's receiver" (Crosby 2014, 3) were manufactured and distributed as of 1933. This was to ensure the propaganda reached as many people as possible, for those who did not have their own personal received, "over 3,000 listening rooms were created, so that the Nazis could indoctrinate the public with their idea of *Volk*, which would be reinforced nay the existence of a communal environment." (Crosby 2014, 3) Loudspeakers were also installed in communal spaces such as cafes and streets (Crosby 2014, 3). Furthermore, the act of listening to the Führer's voice in the intimacy of one's own home meant the people felt closer to their leader, reinforcing Hitler's already present cult of personality. Radio by its very design would reach the masses.

> Goebbels' one time deputy, Eugen Hadamovsky…said: For the first time in history we now have in radio a medium which enables us to mold nations of many millions by daily and hourly influence…radio can have the same impact as newspapers, but…is more up-to-date, more versatile, more profound, and more uplifting by virtue of its inherent artistic element." (Crosby 2014, 2)

Radio as propaganda was both a success and a failure in its intended goal. The regime was successful in its reach but had to adjust when it came to content. At the start, the broadcasts were uninteresting to the listeners and the regime had to adapt. This initial failure meant that citizens turned to foreign broadcasts instead (Crosby 2014, 4). In 1939, in an attempt to control the content consumed by its citizens (i.e. to make sure they did not have access to alternate versions of ongoing events) the regime banned foreign broadcast. However, this led to a wave of denunciations between neighbours, mostly over personal quarrels, hence creating a break in the societal fabric radio aimed to create (Crosby 2014). This wave of denunciations, contributed to the creation of a climate in which every citizen felt he could be under surveillance at any given time, whether from neighbours or from the Gestapo. The trust within the community was fractured. Rather than uniting the people as a group, denunciations, motivated by personal vendettas, undermined the fabric of the community. "In a paradoxical fashion, Nazi laws [regarding the illegality of listening to foreign broadcasts] intended to solidify the national community had in fact began to rip the seams apart, as they offered fuel for individualism and self-interests to flourish." (Crosby 2014, 10)

Even popular Jazz[41] songs were rewritten to incorporate racist and anti-Semitic messages. Although Jazz music was considered part of the "degenerate art" banned by the Nazis, they knew these tunes were popular both domestically and abroad. As one can tell by the fact that the lyrics were in English rather than in German; this type of propaganda was mostly directed towards foreigners. The example of Jazz illustrates a tactic often used by the Nazis. They considered "modern dancing as harmful to its ideal of womanhood for its rhythms were thought to be an

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[41] A special thank you to Khalid Alguima for directing my attention to Jazz as a source of propaganda.

open incitement to sexual promiscuity. Such dancing amounted to an Asiatic orgy—typified by the "Negro music" of Jazz" (Mosse 1966, 22). Although the Nazis viewed African Americans, whom they associated with Jazz music, to be racially inferior, they felt the need to further combine it with Jewishness by depicting the musician in the poster below with a Star of David in order to accentuate the "degenerate art" angle (Narayanaswami 2011, 5). The point of this was to associate everything considered lesser, with Jewishness, whether directly or indirectly.

Figure 6: "*Entartete Musik eine Abrechnung von Staatsrat Dr. H.S. Ziegler*" (Degenerate music:an account by State Council Dr. H.S. Ziegler)[42]

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler is quite clear about the purpose of propaganda. He believed it was:

> not the personal instruction of the individual, but rather to attract public attention to certain things, the importance of which can be brought home to the masses only by this means. Here the art of propaganda consists in putting a matter so clearly and forcibly before the minds of the people as to create a general conviction regarding the reality of a certain fact, the necessity of certain things and the just character of something that is essential. But as this art is not an end in itself and because its purpose must be exactly that of the advertisement poster, to attract the attention of the masses and not by any means to dispense individual instructions to those who already have an educated opinion on things or who wish to form such an opinion on grounds of objective study—because that is not the purpose of propaganda, it must appeal to the feelings of the public rather than to their reasoning powers…The art of

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[42] Image retrieved from Narayanaswami 2011, 5.

propaganda consists precisely in being able to awaken the imagination of the public through an appeal to their feelings, in finding the appropriate psychological form that will arrest the attention and appeal to the hearts of the national masses. (Hitler 1939, 108)

When he writes: "so clearly and forcibly", this means reducing the concept, or identity, targeted by the propaganda to a few basic elements. It includes no nuance; the portrayal is black and white. Through "forcibly" we can see another reminder of the pervasiveness of propaganda, one could not opt-out, it was everywhere you looked. We can also argue that the propaganda had to be made memorable. Practically, this meant the use of specific bold colours,[43] symbols which would resonate with the intended audience as well as depictions which would elicit strong emotions as the mass is more likely to remember how they felt than a long logical argument, regardless of its pertinence to the cause. These emotions are then used to "create a conviction regarding the reality of a certain fact, the necessity of certain things and the just character of something that is essential". This means that propaganda is to be used to manipulate what seems like a necessity and the justness of that cause. For example, the invasion of Poland or the destruction of the Other. The necessity and the cause would be specified at a later stage, through new waves of propaganda. This as well as: "must appeal to the feelings of the public rather than to their reasoning powers" are both indicative that Hitler clearly was not interested in the critical thinking skills or deep reflections on the part of Germans. Rather, he sought quite the opposite; he needed them to believe his words wholeheartedly, to be completely and utterly devoted to him and his cause. No criticism, no opposition, us or them. For that, and for effective propaganda, Hitler needed to give rise to strong emotions in the audience.

This ties in with Moshman's argument on how "self-serving biases" incite us to accept new information which reinforces our beliefs, even more so if these beliefs are core to our identity (Moshman 2011a, 175). These emotions are created in reaction to an element of propaganda, and it was always accompanied with a specific intent. The point of good propaganda is to convince people that because they feel a specific emotion in reaction to a specific element, it means this element is truthful. So, if one feels strong sentiments of betrayal because the Jews are portrayed as having stabbed the Germans in the back during WWI and caused them to lose the war, and that this loss is the root cause of all of their problems, then the sentiments validates the point, and the point validates the sentiments, mutually reinforcing one another. "Propaganda is repackaged as reality, sensation is confused with meaning." (*The Meaning of Hitler*, 2020, 10 mins 41 seconds) In short, Hitler used propaganda as a tool to manipulate the crowds by circumventing their logical thinking through the evocation of powerful emotions. He then channeled these emotions to support whichever element was at the forefront of his platform at that moment. One must keep in mind that these emotions can be positive or negative. Positive emotions can be used to build the group's sense of belonging to a cause greater than themselves, to take pride in their

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[43] In order to create associations between Jewishness and specific themes or characteristics, the Nazis associated specific colours with specific identities in propaganda material. "'Form and color must correspond to the primitive emotions of the masses.' No refined or modulated use of color was called for. Rather, clear colours were preferred that would have a simple emotional impact (red and white, red and black, yellow and black, and so forth)." (Herf 2006, 34) Yellow specifically was "a color associated in Nazi propaganda with the Jews." (Herf 2006, 128) This colour association can be seen in anti-Semitic propaganda as well as the yellow Star of David Jews were forced to wear. We can see here, in the lack of nuance and desire to elicit emotions how the use of colour is similar strategically to other propaganda tactics.

identity as Germans, as mothers providing new blood for the development of the Fatherland etc. Negative emotions such as anger and disgust can be used to create a tighter sense of unity and a distrust of the Other.

3.3.   Identities depicted through propaganda

It is through a combination of pro-Aryan and anti-Semitic propaganda that the Nazis were able to dichotomize identities. However, they first had to create specific identities. The German/Jewish identities present in society at the time were not conductive to dichotomization, hence the need to transform them first. Due to a high degree of assimilation, Jews often considered themselves, and were considered by fellow citizens, as Germans. As covered in Chapter Two, Germans might have been aware that they, or a neighbour, were of Jewish ancestry but did not think of themselves or of each other primarily in racial terms. The Nazis had to create identities which aligned with the depictions found in propaganda about these respective identities. This construction was achieved, in large part, through propaganda campaigns. Furthermore, although stereotypes and anti-Semitism were both present in Germany, and beyond, at the time, they were not imbued with the intense savagery and toxicity which would come to characterize them in Nazi propaganda. Through the lens of anti-Semitic propaganda, Jews would be transformed: from fellow citizens to a subhuman group constituting a threat to Germany's very survival.

The idea of race being a central and "basic element of National Socialist outlook and the Nazi socio-political doctrine" (Szarota 1978, 241) it was logical that the core identities of the Elect and the Other would be defined in racial terms. Consequently, a person's Jewishness was then primarily characterized through race rather than faith. "He [Hitler] emphasizes that the Jews are a race and not a religion" (Plöckinger in Michalczyk, Bryant & Michalczyk 2022, 21). Therefore, early on, propaganda was to have Germans identify themselves, as well as perceive others, primarily through their racial ancestry. Since the Nazis understood Aryans to be the superior race, it follows suit that the traits of members of this race were to be positive. They were depicted as racially superior, physically strong, blond haired, blue eyed, morally upright and fair-minded, intellectually sharp, held family and Christian values and were kind to animals.[44]

It is easy then to see how people wanted to identify with the image propaganda was telling them was theirs. The Germans needed to understand their identity primarily as Aryan Germans. This went hand in hand with viewing Jews as non-Aryan as well as non-Germans. Because Jews were portrayed as the opposite of Aryans, they were said to possess all of the opposite characteristics

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[44] This was to be contrasted with what the Nazis claimed was the innate cruelty of Jews, they would use kosher slaughtering as an example of this. Propaganda pieces, notably the film *Der ewige Jude*, contained a graphic scene of a cow being slaughtered to depict this supposed cruelty. Kosher slaughtering's inclusion in *DeJ* had the goal of shocking the German audience while revealing "the cruel face of Judaism" (Hornshøj-Møller & Culbert 1992, 48). It is worth mentioning that the scenes were seen as so shocking a version without them was made for children and women (Hornshøj-Møller & Culbert 1992, 51). Like most propaganda, these were meant to appeal to the emotions of German, they tapped into "existing myths about the Jews as ritual murderers and particularly as the murderers of God by crucifixion" (Hartman 2000, 341). The butchering practices were placed outside the context of spirituality and culture and presented as concerns regarding morality and animal welfare. The studies demonstrating kosher slaughtering was humane were said to be false and published by the Jewish controlled media (Hornshøj-Møller & Culbert 2000, 65-66). The slaughter is described as the "torture of innocent and defenseless animals." (Hornshøj-Møller & Culbert 2000, 66) which is foreign to Germans because of their well-known "love of animals" (Hornshøj-Møller & Culbert 2000, 66). Jews were later banned from owning pets altogether.

of Aryans. Once Germans identified strongly with their racial identity, "Aryanity" was to be equated with being a member of the Elect, and in conjunction, Jews had to be understood as embodying the Other. Once these opposite identities were in place, the Other could be portrayed as, and this through a constant barrage of propaganda, not only the source of all problems plaguing the Elect's current society but as the obstacle in the way of the Elect reaching their utopia. They had to be perceived not merely as the Other but as an imminent threat to both the integrity of German society and culture as well as a threat to their survival as a people and race.
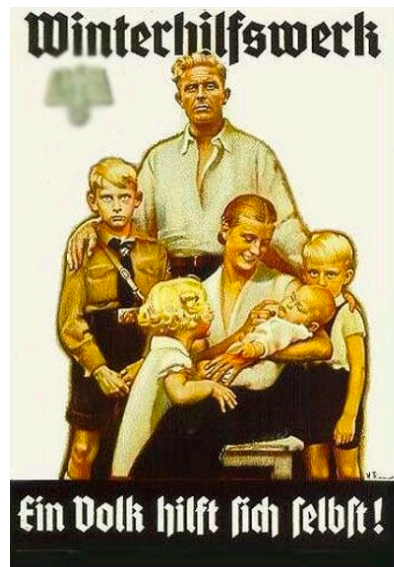

Figure 7: "*Winterhilfswerk: ein Volk hilft sich selbst*" (winter relief organization: a people helps itself)
Figure 8: "*Die NSDAP sichert die Volksgemeinschaft: Volksgenossen braucht ihr Rat unf hilft so wendet euch an die Ortsgruppe*" (The NSDAP secures the national community: if you need advice and help from your fellow citizens, please contact the local group)[45]

This image of integrity and strength in pro-Aryan propaganda was particularly effective as it came on the heels of Germany's defeat in WWI. This defeat created an image which equated the identity of Germans as well as that of Germany with weakness. Following the signature of the Treaty of Versailles, Germans felt humiliated. Previously seen as a powerful and militarily strong nation, they lost a war they believed they should have won, were blamed for it, made to pay reparations and lost territory. Some of this lost territory was ceded to Poland. The country, as well as its image, was tarnished, and in the eyes of many Germans, unjustly so. Nazi propaganda not only offered a new image, one which contrasted with this post-defeat identity but also provided an explanation for their downfall, a group to scapegoat for their hardships and humiliation: the Jews.

Polish identity did not fit neatly in this binary, neither was it relevant until Hitler judged the invasion of Poland to be imminent. As a result, Polishness was perceived differently before, during and after the invasion. The next section will cover this shift and the reasons behind it.

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[45] Images retrieved from Narayanaswami 2011, 4-6.

Figures 9: a poster for the Hitler Youth

Figure 10: "*Sieg oder Bolschewismus*" (Victory or Bolshevism)[46]

We can see through these posters the stereotyped identities. Figures seven and eight show happy German families, including multiple children, a reminder to German mothers of their duty, one being metaphorically protected by Germany, represented here through the eagle. These are supposed to represent the familial, patriotic and community-oriented values of the members of the Aryan race. Figure nine shows a patriotic youth with rosy cheeks, the epitome of Aryan health. The tenth figure indicates clearly that there are only two options: Hitler or the Bolshevik Jew, no third alternative. These can be compared to the depictions of Jews found on posters for the propaganda movie *Der ewige Jude (DeJ)*.[47] The Jews depicted here are intended to be scary,

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[46] Figure 9: Image retrieved from Narayanaswami 2011, 4-6. Figure 10 is a poster dating from 1943, image retrieved from https://germanhistorydocs.org/de/deutschland-nationalsozialismus-1933-1945/ghdi:image-5198

[47] Some relevant information regarding the intended goal of the movie; it is often stated that *DeJ* was produced with the intention of preparing the German population to accept the destruction of Europe's Jews. Although this is the mainstream discourse, there is some evidence to the contrary, found most notably in Hornshøj-Møller and Culbert's work. They argue that the Final Solution (as genocide) was not part of the original agenda (their line of argumentation seems to rely mostly on Joseph Geobbels 'diary entries at the time of production) nor was the Final Solution, as annihilation, part of societal discourse at the time (deportation is what was understood as the Final Solution then). Even if this is correct it still poses some problems. First, whether or not the film was produced with this intention does not offer the guarantee that it will be successful in meeting its goal. In short, propaganda does not always have the intended effect. The movie is a good example of this. Second, even if the movie did not have the explicit intent of having Germans accept a Jewish genocide, it did purposefully equate Jews with vermin. The goal of dehumanization through metaphor is recognized as a major factor in accepting the violence done to Jewish people. Furthermore, accepting this dehumanizing metaphor of Jews is a step towards seeing genocide as the extermination of vermin rather than of a people. Considering the notoriety of this movie, its actual reception (both

disgusting, ominous, Other. In Nazi propaganda they most often are depicted alone or with other Jews but never with their spouse or children. If they are portrayed with Gentiles they are trying to corrupt them or do them harm. Another common portrayal was showing Jews simply as not human, the image of rats was a recurrent one.
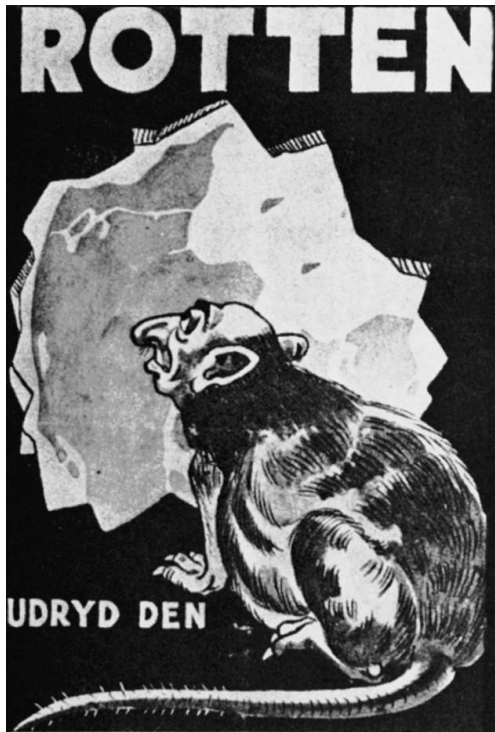

Figure 11: Poster for the German release of *Der Ewige Jude*.

Figure 12: Poster for the Dutch Release.[48]

Figures 13: "*Rotten udryd den*" (Rats destroy them)

Figure 14: "żydzi *powracaja wraz z bolszewizmem!*" (The Jews Return with Bolshevism!")[49]

This angle was extended to Poland in an attempt to rally the Poles to the German side; to make Poles view Jews as their real enemy rather than the occupying Nazis. The propaganda angle equating Jews with disease was particularly salient in Poland. It ties in with the vermin angle as rats were portrayed as being infected with lice which were carriers of typhus. Consequently, this view of them as vermin was meant to paint them as a threat, especially of infectious diseases. Anti-Semitic propaganda equated Jews to rats,[50] transferring the association with disease from rodents to humans.

Whether explicitly or implicitly, *DeJ* and similar propaganda, posits German/Aryan identity as the very opposite of Jewishness and its presented attributes. Through its portrayal of Jews as Germany's main enemy, *DeJ* and Nazi propaganda in general, provides an element behind which Germans can unite. In Poland, the showings of *DeJ* were used less to shape the identity binary than as a means to dehumanize and otherize Jews. Although *DeJ* targets Jews as the main Other, it was not lost on Polish audiences that the German occupiers viewed themselves as the Elect. Consequently, the Poles were quite aware that they were not on a similar footing as their invaders. Showings of the film in Poland reinforced this racial hierarchy. This is also found in posters which were plastered in public spaces in Poland:

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[49] Figure 12: a 1940s poster from occupied Denmark, image retrieved from Spiegelman 2011, 115. Figure 13: a poster from occupied Poland, image retrieved from Grabowski 2009, 399.
[50] It is useful to keep in mind the association rats already had with disease, especially regarding the plague.

Figures 15: "*żydzi wszy tyfys plamisty*" (Jews, lice, typhus)

Figure 16: "*Strzeź się tyfusu plamistego unikaj Żydów*" (Beware of Typhus. Avoid Jews")[51]

"The association of Jews with rats had been firmly established in the minds of European audiences by the film *DeJ*, which was widely distributed in Germany and in the occupied countries beginning in November 1940." [52](Grabowski 2009, 399) The aim of this dehumanizing type of propaganda is to create feelings of disgust and repulsion at Jews the same way one would at other disease infected vermin, as well as to legitimize and normalized those feelings.

Furthermore, we can see, notably in the "Jews, lice, typhus" poster the association with death on the figure on the background of the poster. The face is meant to look stereotypically Jewish, the

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[51] Figure 14: poster from occupied Poland, image retrieved from Grabowski 2009, 396. Figure 15: a 1941 occupied Poland poster, image retrieved from German History in Documents and Images, https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/nazi-germany-1933-1945/ghdi:image-5187.

[52] Grabowski's statement here lacks some nuance. The Nazi propaganda surrounding *DeJ* endows the film with more power and influence than it actually had. The association of Jewishness and vermin was a long standing one in Nazi propaganda. So much so that when Art Spiegelman was working on *Maus*, he purposefully selected mice as it played into the propaganda put out by the Nazi regime; "this kind of imagery of Jews as vermin was built into the Nazi project itself. The image of Jews as defenceless scurrying creatures was in there somewhere…The idea of Jews as toxic, disease carriers, as dangerous subhuman creatures, was a necessary prerequisite for killing my family." (Spiegelman 2011, 113-115) Furthermore, for Spiegelman, it illustrated just how ridiculous the Nazi conceptions of race were. Hitler viewed Jews, and Poles, as being so inherently different from Germans, and other humans that they were viewed as completely different species, making "crossbreeding" a literal impossibility.

left side, with its gaping eye socket and the generally angular contours of the face are meant to evoke a skull. The association with death could not be clearer. The foreground of the poster presents a louse which one can safely assume is a carrier of typhus. The association between Jews and disease is not ambiguously portrayed. This is an example of what Hitler meant when he wrote in *Mein Kampf* that the content of propaganda had to be stated "clearly and forcibly".

This association with death would further facilitate the division being created by the Nazis between Poles and Polish Jews. Furthermore, it is through dehumanizing depictions like the ones found in these posters and films like *DeJ* that their destruction was rendered possible. If you kill lice or rats in order not to catch typhus or to prevent an epidemic, you are not committing murder. This is the logic inherent to the Nazi discourse of dehumanization and destruction. One is not killing a human being, someone similar to oneself but rather a parasite, a threat. Additionally, the metaphor with typhus and the fear of an epidemic aligns itself with the discourse on self-defence. If a patient is contaminated by an infectious disease, he will be quarantined and provided adequate treatment until the danger of contagion is no longer present. In Nazi propaganda, which is a reflection of Nazi ideology and worldview, the Jews were the contaminated patients, they had to be quarantined so the Germans and the Poles did not become contaminated. The treatment here however, would be nonexistent. For the Nazis, the danger of contagion remained as long as Jews were alive because they were "the immune carriers of the bacteria of epidemics." (Beorn 2018, 154)

The reality that Jews, outside of ghettos, were not infected by typhus, or any other disease, at a higher rate than other group was irrelevant. Nazi logic and propaganda existed to place Jews in ghettos as a designated preventive measure. The conditions in ghettos were so poor they could only lead to disease followed by death. The Nazis then used this as evidence that they were indeed correct. The Jews were diseased, the Poles had been saved by the Germans's actions, and the artificiality of the situation was never to be demonstrated. For Nazis, those who died from illness were used as evidence to confirm their anti-Semitic rhetoric rather than being part of the Nazi's intentional destruction of Europe's Jews. Furthermore, the Nazis made sure to cover the exterior walls of the Warsaw ghetto, literally separating Jews and Poles, with the posters seen above, or similar variations (Steinlauf 1997, 31). This regular exposure to the propaganda as well as its close proximity to Jews, further reinforced not only that Jews were a threat to the health of Poles but that they had been placed safely behind walls by the Germans. This strategic placement of the posters aimed to reinforced anti-Semitic beliefs, the dehumanization of Jews, the division between Poles and Jews and the performative role of Germans as saviours.

Isolating Jews from Poles was crucial for the occupying forces. Polish-Jewish relationships during occupation will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter. However, a brief overview will be provided here for clarity. First "during the war and the occupation the Nazi authorities [were] applying the Rule of *divide et impera* tried to break the Polish nation's unity by underlining ethnographic differences." (Szarota 1978, 235) By alienating Poles and Jews,[53] the Germans limited the chances of a united resistance. Second, if Polish-Jewish solidarity no longer existed, it lowered the chances of Poles helping Jews, hence facilitating the destruction of

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[53] The Germans also used and amplified pre-existing tensions between Poles and other ethnic minorities. This strategy was used by the Soviets in their half of partitioned Poland as well, notably distributing propaganda "leaflets encouraging Ukrainians and Byelorussians to rob and murder Poles." (Beorn 2018, 76)

both groups. Third, the solution to the "Jewish question" would be more easily carried out if the Jewish population was concentrated in a restricted area (Rutherford 2007, 47). Placing the Jews in a ghetto also contributed to their otherization.

In short, the threat became contained. One crucial component of this physical isolation was the creation of ghettos, especially closed ones. This facilitated the destruction of Jews not only in future actions and transports to concentration camps but through the forced unhygienic conditions created in the ghetto. The concentration of such a high number of individuals in such a restricted physical space combined with "poor sanitation and hygiene" (Beorn 2018, 172) had the intentional consequence of causing a high fatality rate resulting from famine and disease, not to mention the murders perpetrated by German soldiers or police. The Germans also exercised drastic control over which, and how much, foodstuffs (see note 83 for the distribution of calories depending on race) were allocated to Jews. The higher rate of mortality from diseases such as typhus etc. was then used by the Germans as facts confirming their propaganda: that Jews were indeed the carriers and spreaders of epidemic diseases, a threat to the people of Poland and Europe. "Ironically, therefore, Nazi authorities created precisely the conditions in the ghetto for the epidemics they used as an excuse for ghettoization in the first place." (Beorn 2018, 172) This is an example of the Nazis creating artificial situations to confirm their worldview. These dreadfully filthy living conditions were presented as proof of the racial traits of Jews, just as shown in *DeJ* and other pieces of propaganda rather than artificial conditions created by the occupying regime.

As seen above, one propaganda method was framing the information presented in order to make it align itself with the Nazi worldview. Another example is found in film. Because *DeJ* was presented as a documentary "describing the history and "true nature" of the Jewish people, the film is sprinkled with newsreels, charts, graphs, and photographs purporting to give an objective, even scientific, picture of the Jews." (Hartman 2000, 32) The argument can be made that this was supposed to make it easier for the audience to accept the content of the film as truthful. This use of the documentary as a propaganda device can also be seen in *Feldzug in Polen* and *Feuertaufe*, so-called documentaries about the September campaign. The latter showed "Polish snipers shooting at German soldiers and Polish officers taken prisoner waiting on their knees for a ration of biscuits. The aim of both films was to show the contrast between the cunning, cowardly and brutal enemy and the brave, noble German soldier." (Szarota 1978, 246) These films were meant to negatively influence the German perception of Poles. As for *DeJ*, even with the claims of objectivity, it is evidently clear through its imagery, as well as its narration, that its main goal was the dehumanization of Jews.

One of *DeJ*'s narrator's earliest quotes is reporting Richard Wagner's words: "The Jew is the evil force behind mankind's corruption!" only to add "These pictures prove it" (Hornshøj-Møller & Culbert 1992, 8). It is evident then that not only is the movie lacking objectivity, which is not surprising of a propaganda film, but that it portrays evil as firmly rooted within Jewishness. What is not as explicitly stated, although firmly implied (as it is implied in the films on Poland), is who then would be cast as the personification of good? The obvious intent is for the German audience to recognize themselves as the complete opposite of what is depicted on screen, as the embodiment of good, aiming to free itself from the corrupting influence of the Jews. "Nazi propagandists learned how to translate fundamental ideological postulates into a continuous

narrative of events, a heavily slanted story of good and evil, easily accessible to mass audiences." (Herf 2006, 17) Another example can be found in the anti-Polish propaganda fed to Germans, notably when it came to stereotypes. Historian Tomasz Szarota gives examples of how the Nazis "tried to make the stereotype appear real" and conform with Nazi racial views (Szarota 1978, 242). When it comes to the stereotype of the Poles as barbarian or primitive, the Germans would use war and the occupation to prove it right:

> In the future the Polish nation was to be reduced to the level of barbarian, uneducated slaves devoid of any traditions. In order to achieve this aim it was necessary to destroy the entire heritage of national culture and also to prevent the enrichment of that heritage and the reproduction of the intelligentsia…The methods used to complement this task…:physical extermination of the Polish intelligentsia, the plunder of works of art, destruction of historical monuments, elimination of Polish literature, the closing down of secondary and higher schools, a ban on scientific activity, deliberate lowering of the level of cultural life." (Szarota 1978, 242)

We can see here how they shaped Poland, through destruction, so that it would conform to their view of it. As with any destruction brought by the Nazis, it had to be total. Only Nazi culture, identity and worldview, could survive. "The fight against Polishness was not confined to the annihilation of the nation. It was a total campaign against everything that represented and symbolized that Polishness. This is how we must view the destruction of monuments, the changing of street names or the issuing of lists of prohibited Polish books." (Szarota 1978, 242)

We can see here the similarities in the destruction of Polishness and of Jewishness. Both were considered Other, both had to be annihilated and replaced by Aryanity. Another example can be found in the stereotype of the drunk Pole: "Was not the rationing of fixed vodka to Polish peasants intended to drive them into drunkenness? The result was to prove that the generalization was correct. It is noteworthy that at the same time there was a campaign against alcoholism among Germans." (Szarota 1978, 243)[54] This was meant not only as a confirmation of the Polish stereotype but to further separate the identity of the Poles in contrast to that of Germans. Poles were drunks, they lacked control over their alcohol consumption, while Germans were sober and in control of themselves. It is worth mentioning that vodka was often given to Poles as a reward for their collaboration in turning in Jews, further encouraging their consumption of alcohol and with it, the negative stereotype.

Another similarity between anti-Semitic and anti-Polish propaganda is their depictions as being filthy and without culture, insinuating they contributed nothing to society. The Poles were often presented as lacking order, "the myth that the Polish nation was devoid of any culture-forming

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[54] It is worth noting that alcohol consumption was often used as a numbing mechanism to cope with the trauma of WWII. This is true of both Poles and Germans. Germans who participated in mass murders resorted to consuming large quantities of alcohol in an attempt to achieve momentary peace, this in conjunction with the negative effects killing at close range had on the morale of soldiers, is one of the reasons the murder of Jews became so heavily industrialized. By becoming more impersonal, the perpetrators were able to detach themselves more easily from the acts they were committing. This was desirable for the regime as destruction could proceed unimpeded and at a higher pace, sparring troop morale. Furthermore, the regime did not want their soldiers to drink as they did not want them to appear disorderly and have improper conduct, they had to remain in control of themselves or at least appear to be in control(Browning 1992, 49) & (Beorn 2022, 257).

abilities." (Szarota 1978, 234) "a nation whose disappearance would do no harm to European culture." (Szarota 1978, 235) This was said to be because Poles had no culture of their own worthy of contributing to European culture. Every significant cultural element found in Poland had been the result of "persons of foreign origin, especially Germans." (Szarota 1978, 234) The same arguments were made regarding Jewish culture. *DeJ* has a scene depicting the homes of Jews and describing them as an example of their "lack of civilization…dirty and neglected." (Hornshøj-Møller & Culbert 1992, 58) This reinforces the notion that the filthy conditions of the ghettos were normal for Jewish people. It is also meant to contrast with the cleanliness of Aryans who valued order and were to be understood as the epitome of civilization. This is only a few minutes into the movie, and we can already see how Jewish and German identities are depicted as opposites. Furthermore, we can see the dehumanization of Jewishness which in turn further bolsters the status of Germans as a 'superior race'. The further down one goes, the higher up its opposite rises. Cleanliness was also used in pro-collaboration propaganda in Poland where they "spread the stereotype of German order and tidiness and, on the other hand, the stereotype of Poles pleased with the occupation and loyally collaborating with the occupier." (Szarota 1978, 247) Again, when similarities are established between Polish and Jewish stereotypes and identities, these depictions were always negative. These similarities also always find their opposites in Aryan identity, which was consequently portrayed positively.

Some types of propaganda failed in a Polish setting. Such as when the Germans tried to rally the Poles to their side by presenting them as victims of the Allied powers (Szarota 1978, 236).[55] The intention here was to present the Allies as being controlled, through conspiracy, by their real enemy: the Jews (Grabowski 2009, 384). This did not work as there was not a high enough level of animosity for the Allies in Poland. It did not resonate emotionally with the target audience. This angle was successful in Germany where they had felt victimized by the Allies during WWI, as this was not the case for Poland, it failed. Other tactics, such as the association of Jews with disease proved more successful. The success of the propaganda campaigns depended on many factors, including the local realities (customs, superstitions, prejudices etc.), how intensely the propaganda was displayed and whether it created any incentive for the local population to believe in the elements put forth by the propaganda. Nazi propaganda in Poland was most successful when it had themes which were used in Germany but resonated with a Polish audience, such as the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism. In order to reinforce this myth, "The Germans had deliberately flooded Poland with virulent anti-semitic materials which played on existing Polish anti-semitism and encouraged the existing belief in the danger of the żydo-komuna." (Kochanski 2012, 316) The Poles had their own version of this stereotype:

> *Żydokomuna* which can be described as "A superstition used in a highly charged and inflated form that Jews generally favor communism and maintain close links with the worldwide communist movement. Even before the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland, in September 1939, the so-called *Żydokomuna*, or Judeo-communism conspiracy falsehood, occupied a prominent place in the nationalist diatribe, and was added to the fear that it would lead to a 'Judeo-Polonia.' (Paldiel 2022, 50)

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[55] This tactic was used early in the war, when Poland still trusted the Allies and before they were betrayed by them. This is addressed in the following chapter.

The similarity in themes between Poland and Germany are evident. Both have the worldwide conspiracy aspect to them, making the Jews a threat both domestically and internationally. More importantly, there is the element of fear that Jews would take control over their country. This could be achieved by controlling national institutions as well as a cultural takeover, insinuating that the national and cultural identity of the country would be erased and replaced by a Jewish one. A rather on the nose role reversal on the part of the Nazis. Most importantly, during the occupation, this was reinforced by the impression Poles under the Soviet occupation had; that Jews were denouncing them to the regime and were willingly collaborating with the Soviets. The Nazis used Polish fear and hatred of communism and associated it with Jewishness, as depicted in the poster in Figure 14. Another insinuation here is that the Poles were better off under Nazi rule than under Soviet rule.

It is true that some Jews fled to the Soviet occupied part of Poland in the hopes of saving their lives. The reactions of Jews to the Soviets were "complex." (Beorn 2018, 76) Some felt they had been persecuted in Poland and would no longer have to experience Polish anti-Semitism, others had genuine communist[56] beliefs, those tended to see their enthusiasm vanish rapidly (Beorn 2018, 76). Historian Waitman Wade Beorn adds that we must

> Recall that most Jews…had no more reason to welcome an atheistic, socially disruptive state than their devout Polish or Lithuanian counterparts had. A society devoid of religion and lacking traditional Jewish communal leadership did not appeal to observant Jews. Regardless, from the beginning, the popular image in the minds of non-Jews was of Jews welcoming and supporting the oppressive Soviet regime" (Beorn 2018, 76)

3.4. The Invasion of Poland

In Germany, propaganda was first used to dichotomize the identities of Germans and Jews and have them associated with the apocalyptic binary identities of the Elect and the Other. Once this was achieved, Hitler could move forward with the beginning of his colonial project: the invasion of Poland. The invasion of Poland was crucial for Hitler, not only was it the beginning of his colonial conquest but it "marked the onset of a war of annihilation." (Bergen 2008, 448) Then, propaganda had to be used to convince the German citizens that ethnic Germans in Poland were being persecuted by Poles purely on account of their German identity.

For this campaign to work, a two-pronged propaganda approach was used. First, propaganda presenting *Volksdeutschen* as victims through the use of material which brought forth "detailed descriptions of rape, dismemberment, and mass slaughter." (Bergen 2008, 447) These served to justify the invasion as a defensive excursion rather than an offensive attack. Second, anti-Polish propaganda had to be disseminated throughout Germany, accentuating Polish cruelty: "Poles were presented as a people devoid of human feelings, maltreating and persecuting innocent Germans who were anxiously waiting to be rescued by the victorious German army." (Szarota 1978, 246-7) Reinforcing Poles as subhuman and persecutors and Germans as victims and saviours. Without this successful campaign of propaganda, the regime could not have secured the population's support for the war and could not have indoctrinated the soldiers to the extent

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[56] "in Poland, for example, only between five and seven percent of the Jewish population supported communism before the war." (Beorn 2018, 76)

required to brutally crush Poland. Once the average German believed this, the time was ripe for Hitler to stage the conspiracy leading to the invasion: a faked attack, by Poles, on German soil. The creation of a conspiracy was necessary as it allowed the Nazis to portray the invasion as an act of self-defence.

3.4.1. *Volksdeutschen as Victims*

The persecution of *Volksdeutschen* was the corner stone in justifying the invasion of Poland. While this type of propaganda preceded the invasion, it also continued for some time afterwards. This was mostly as a further reinforcement of the necessity of the invasion and to justify the level of violence inflicted on Poles. For the invasion to materialize, propaganda had to spin a story which would rally the citizenry behind the military. The type of propaganda used to convince Germans of the need for a mobilization of troops in Poland made use of previously used themes such as conspiracy, urgency, victimhood and role reversal. All of which centre around German identity. Considering that

> Propaganda is most effective when it resonates with something that its audience believes and wants to be true. Evidence—-real or inflated—of ethnic German victimization lent credibility at home and abroad to a fabricated account of an encirclement of Germany and conspiracy against Germanness, and it allowed Germans to take the moral and legal high ground. (Bergen 2008, 449)

The Nazis had propagated a conspiracy theory that Jews had betrayed the Germans during WWI and cost them the victory. Consequently, all the ills the German society had to endure after the war was the fault of the Jews. This bred a sense of victimhood in the Germans, of having been betrayed, attacked from within and finding themselves, yet again, in a position of having to defend themselves. Therefore, framing the conflict between Poles and *Volksdeutschen* in such a way that the themes of self-defence and victimhood would be at the forefront again, proved to be successful. This conspiratorial framing was crucial to taking the first step in accomplishing Hitler's new utopia. In this instance, there were two conspiratorial elements at play. The first being the persecution of ethnic Germans. The second, the staged attack on German soil which justified the opening of military hostilities towards Poland. The first aspect laid the groundwork for the second. Historian Doris Bergen identified three tactics used by propaganda to frame ethnic Germans as victims:

> The first involved feminization and infantilization of ethnic Germans, that is, a pronounced emphasis on women and children and corresponding de-emphasis of men. A second tactic might be called sacralization: deployment of familiar Christian imagery and a Christian vocabulary of suffering and sacrifice to describe the *Volksdeutschen*. Third was the appropriation of experiences of the Germans 'own victims, complete with Nazi vocabulary and conventions used to talk about those victims, to depict ethnic Germans. That is, propaganda described the *Volksdeutchen* as if they were Poles or Jews, and less often, but still apparent at times, as if they were disabled-not reflecting the usual negative, murderous Nazi view of those categories. But rather employing them as embodiments of suffering. (Bergen 2008, 449-50)

The emphasis on women and children can be seen in the events which were reported on and on the pictures published as propaganda materials. When men were present in photographs, it was often to emphasize an element which would stimulate a stronger emotional response from Germans such as a WWI veteran, a priest or a dead husband and his grieving widow.

Figure 17: "German woman in Bromberg—and the body of her murdered husband"

Figure 18: "The German Catholic priest of the Herz-Jesu Church in Bromberg, praying silently for the souls of murdered Bromberg minority Germans.[57]

The Nazis also spread this propaganda internationally photographs shown included: "a woman weeps next to her husband's corpse; mangled bodies, some described as belonging to children"

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[57] Both photographs were retrieved from Bergen 2008, 452 & 455. They have been sourced from The Foreign Office's 1940 publication: *Dokumente polnischer Grausamkeiten*, Figure 17 "is one of the few photos in the collection whose focus is performative."

(Bergen 2008, 451). However, the content diffused on a domestic level, although it claimed to be "censored…move[d] into another realm of horror: close-up shots of body parts including smashed faces and battered skulls, arms with fingers and hands hacked off…decomposed fetuses in coffins next to their mothers." (Bergen 2008, 451) Claims of sexual and gendered violence were also omnipresent. In anti-Semitic propaganda, the threat of the Other, when it came to sexuality and gender, was framed, for the most part, as deadly through contamination. In the case of Poles, the violence was not only deadly but the acts so brutal they heightened the victimizations of German women while reinforcing the depravity of Poles.

Accounts and photographs depicting the rape of young women were common. A photograph included in the *Dokumente polnischer Grausamkeiten*[58] including "a series of close-up photographs of a decomposing, unclothed female corpse and a dead fetus, with a caption explaining that, "Here is a woman in the late stages of pregnancy. The child can be seen mostly emerged from her body. Evidently this is not a case of the so-called 'coffin birth,'…but rather labor obviously began during the mother's fight for her life." (Bergen 2008, 452) There is no doubt that these would succeed in viscerally shaking German citizens and enlisting their support for a military intervention. The key element to this was convincing Germans[59] that *Volksdeutschen* in Poland were not only being persecuted by Poles but were being specifically targeted for destruction because of their German identity. Essentially, the regime claimed that the Poles were brutally murdering every German man, woman and child living in Poland and that without military intervention, they would all soon perish. With the examples described above, it is easy to understand how convinced Germans were of this.

It is important to acknowledge that although there was violence between Poles and *Volksdeutschen* in Poland at the time, the scale and brutality depicted by the Nazis was grossly exaggerated. Nazi propaganda regularly claimed that over 58,000 *Volksdeutschen* had been murdered when in fact officials were able to compile a list of only 450 names (Bergen 2008, 456). This colossal inflation of numbers served multiple purposes. First and foremost, it created a strong emotional response from the citizenry, it justified the need for an intervention on the part of Germany, created a state of urgency for that action and secured the support of the people. It also helped reinforce the identities of Germans as good and Poles as evil. The reason this was successful is that on top of the absurdly high casualty number, the propaganda framed the killings as especially cruel and brutal. They described:

> a Polish mob, "in a wild fury," "destroyed nearly all German private property. The Germans, who were hunted like beasts, fled to the open country." The police , he added, "joined in the demonstrators' procession and did nothing to protect the life and property

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[58] This 456-page document included 100 pages of photographs depicting the German victims of Polish brutality. It was published by the Foreign Office and was distributed abroad (Bergen 2008, 451). The document, in English and German is easily accessible online, although the reader should be made aware of the intense graphic photographic material included it in. Even in the censored versions.

[59] It is important to keep in mind that although Hitler needed the support of the local population, it was also crucial that the international community not view this war as one of aggression. Therefore, the propaganda campaign which depicted the Poles persecuting ethnic Germans also had to be convincing to an international audience. This is why documentation of Polish brutality towards *Volksdeutschen* was translated early into English. Furthermore, the German Foreign Office was in charge of some of the propaganda campaigns which speaks to the intent the Nazi regime had regarding these publications (Bergen 2008, 450).

of the Germans" As a result, the consul continued, the Germans …consider their livelihood in Poland endangered. (Bergen 2008, 450)

The mention that the police did not protect ethnic Germans but rather contributed to their persecution reinforced the stereotype that Poles were lawless. The "appropriation of the German's own victims" can be seen by how the conflict was framed:

> In the National Socialist version of events the *Volksdeutschen* served to replace evidence of German violence against Poles, Jews…with images of German suffering. By presenting the *Volksdeutschen* as victims only and as the only victims, German propaganda implied that all Germans had been attacked, and the real aggressors were the Czechs, Poles, Jews, and their allies and backers. (Bergen 2008, 447-8)

This role reversal is also evident when discussing the murder of a German girl: "This brat would otherwise only give birth some day to more German swine." (Bergen 2008, 251) Considering the German policy of annihilation towards Jewish children, covered in the previous chapter, the role reversal is particularly salient here. Another interesting note is the language used. The word swine (s*chwein*) to was often used in German propaganda to refer to Poles, yet here the language is inverted (Spiegelman 2011, 125). Furthermore, the propagandists putting out this material were well aware of the inflation of victims and that the purpose was to justify the invasion and destruction of Poland.

> Hitler framed the beginning of the war with Poland in such a way that it not only seemed defensive but it made the Germans feel as if they were righteous heroes on a mission to save their fellow Germans from the horrors inflicted upon them by the brutish Poles. Reinforcing their identity as both saviours and victims. The regime relied on a few key steps in order to have the German people, most of whom were rather averse to engaging in a war, support the war with Poland (Bergen 2008, 447).

The role of saviour the Germans would claim for themselves went further than the rescue of *Volksdeutschen*. They launched a propaganda campaign, aimed at Poles as well as Germans in the Reich, depicting themselves as the saviours of Poland. One facet of this type of propaganda was the campaign attempting to recruit Polish workers to voluntarily leave for Germany.[60]

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[60] It should be noted that this campaign was somewhat successful, about 200,000 Polish workers had left for Germany by June 1940 (Grabowski 2009, 384). Their motivations for leaving varied but often included a strong economic component. However, the conditions were, unsurprisingly, considerably worse than the Germans had advertised. This is unsurprising considering the way Germans viewed Poles, as instruments of labour rather than humans. The interactions between Polish workers in Germany and German civilians also shows that some of the regime's anti-Polish propaganda campaign had failed in its objective of instilling hostility. "In spite of the danger of these consequences there were some people of German nationality in the Third Reich who treated Polish slave workers in a human way, supplied them with food and clothing, helped them to buy railway tickets, send letters to their families…Such conduct was motived by various reasons, by class, religious, humanitarian reasons, sometimes by pity and as the war was nearing an end also by simple calculation to ensure oneself protection and a recommendation to Allied authorities." (Szarota 1978, 252) The author includes here in his description of "Polish slave workers" the Poles who were forcibly sent to the Reich for work, a much higher number than those who volunteered. An estimated 1.6 million Poles were forcibly deported as labour to Germany by 1943, not including the 300,000 Polish POWs (Lukas 1990, 33). This number of course does not reflect the forced labour Poles endured in the Soviet occupied part of Poland.

Another was how the Eastern campaign was framed as one of "liberation". This can be seen in the language used in Germany to describe the invasion of Poland, the "'liberating march to the East'" to introduce 'a new order' there." (Szarota 1978, 247) This further reinforced the colonial mission of the Nazis and their goal of securing *lebensraum*. By framing the invasion as an act of self-defence, the regime also hoped to "avoid [the] international repercussions always accompanying acts of terror." (Szarota 1978, 249) To which end the propaganda denied the brutalization of Poles and put a show of the "'humanitarian' side of the occupation, hence the films and photographs showing the distribution of food" (Szarota 1978, 249). These films and photographs were propaganda directed mostly towards an international audience and to a lesser extent a domestic one.

This propaganda was able to unite Germans through a shared sense of victimhood. It also reinforced their identities both as victims and saviours and the identity of Poles as brutish perpetrators. Most crucially, it provided a justified cause for military intervention under the guise of self-defence. This type of propaganda however, had to be combined with a simultaneous campaign of anti-Polish rhetoric.

3.4.2. Anti-Polish Propaganda

Before the invasion could take place, a certain shift in the German-Polish relation was required. On January 26, 1934 the Germans had signed a non-aggression pact with Poland. With Hitler's plan to invade Poland, the "sudden change in Polish-German relations had to be explained to German public opinion and the blame had to be put on the Polish side; this necessitated a change in the stereotype of Poland and the Poles" (Szarota 1978, 230). By placing the blame on the Poles, not only did it reinforce the stereotypes associated with Polish and German identities but it fortified the narrative that this war was one of self-defence. It also placed Germany as the victim and Poland as the aggressor, a role reversal which was common in propaganda, as well as in the Nazi worldview, especially when it came to conspiracy theories. It can be seen here as well as when the Nazis portrayed themselves as victims in anti-Semitic conspiracies, notably in the "stabbed in the back" myth.

Nazi propaganda targeted both Poland and the Poles. When it came to Poland as a nation, the intent was to make it seem like it was "an artificial creation of the odious Versailles Treaty." (Szarota 1978, 231) The fact that some previously German territory had been annexed into contemporary Poland was also highlighted as it was a considerable source of resentment for a number of Germans. This fed the sentiment that they had been unfairly treated at the end of WWI. An element found in both anti-Polish and anti-Semitic propaganda is the idea that these groups had always been the eternal enemies of Germany: "Poland had to be presented not only as a present-day adversary but also as an eternal enemy." (Szarota 1978, 231) This as well as the portrayal of "Poland as a state which did not respect international treaties and agreements and violated the principles of international law." (Szarota 1978, 231) were used in the conspiratorial propaganda that Poles persecuted ethnic Germans. Additionally, this lack of respect for the law was used to further separate Germans and Poles as Germans were depicted as righteous, civilized and law abiding. The lack of respect for international laws and agreements also insinuated that Poles would conduct themselves dishonourably in combat: they would employ unconventional and unethical means of warfare, in other words, they would be unfair. When it came to

depictions of Poles as a people, propaganda often emphasized their perceived "backwardness." Efforts were made to present them as a group who did not observe human laws and violated the ethic norms accepted by the civilized world. In this case too, use was made of the alleged persecutions of *Volksdeutschen* in Poland.

> The plight of the German minority in Poland was to serve as example of the Pole's barbarity. The average German was to associate the word 'Pole' with violence, murder and robbery and was to feel anger and hatred when hearing this word. It is worth pointing here to the systematic escalation of these feelings and the intensification of the propaganda campaign as the date of the implementation of the *Fall Weiss* plan was drawing near. The press was given directives [on] how to choose information, when to publish it and what place to assign to it. From August 11, 1939 on news concerning the alleged persecutions of Germans in Poland and acts of terror were to be given front-page prominence in the German press. (Szarota 1978, 232)

The exact directives given on that day being: "As of now the first page should contain news and comments on Polish offences against *Volksdeutschen* and all kinds of incidents showing the Poles' hatred of everything that is German." (Szarota 1978, 232) Both of these excerpts contain some key themes found in anti-Polish propaganda. First, the depiction of Poles as violent, unruly and barbaric helped to justify the brutality exercised by the Germans during the invasion and throughout the occupation. This is partly due to the fact that they anticipated a higher degree of violence from Poles and responded by preemptively escalating their own aggression. Second, the Nazis wanted the average German civilian to feel anger and hatred for Poles as it facilitated the justification for the invasion, its brutality and guaranteed their continued support for the deployment of German troops. It also helped to otherize Poles, differentiating them from Germans, therefore limiting the empathy one could feel for them while at the same time channeling the negative emotions to rally Germans against a common enemy: Poland.

This can be seen through the account of a German soldier who wrote that "during lecture time German officers tell soldiers dreadful stories about Poland and Poles and try to arouse in them rancour and hatred against everything that is Polish." (Szarota 1978, 233) It should be mentioned that although this type of propaganda was mostly aimed at the civilian population, it

> was accompanied by an intensive indoctrination of German troops. The German army was being prepared for a confrontation with a cruel enemy. This stereotyped picture of the enemy was to justify the planned methods of the war, methods that were made clear by Hitler when on August 22, 1939, he appealed to the generals in Obersalzberg: 'Be merciless, be brutal. (Szarota 1978, 232)

While the propaganda targeting civilian and military audiences had similar goals; negatively stereotyping the Poles, creating strong sentiments of hatred and disgust, there had to be a rise in intensity when it came to the troops. The reasoning behind this is simple. The troops were the ones who would be perpetrating the acts of brutality towards the Poles. If they feared more intensely for their lives fighting Poles than they did fighting any other enemy, they would be less likely to view that enemy as human, to have empathy. They would be more violent. This was reinforced by propaganda showing *Volksdeutschen* as victims. Fear and hatred were motivating

factors fed to future perpetrators by the propaganda arm of the regime. German soldiers had been told that "since the adversary, being a barbarian, would not follow the rules of the game there was no point in having any excessive scruples in dealing with him." (Szarota 1978, 233) In short, since Poles won't abide by the rules of warfare, why should we?

> In order to discredit Poles in the eyes of its own and international public opinion Nazi propaganda consistently used packs of lies and slanders and deliberately endeavoured to create automatic symbolic connotations. The best known among them was the myth about the 'bloody Sunday' in Bydgoszcz, i.e., the alleged bestial murder by the Poles on September 3, 1939, of hundreds of innocent and helpless Germans living in that town. The directives issued to the press on September 8 read: 'The term 'bloody Sunday' must be included in the dictionary as a permanent concept and be spread all over the world, that is why this expression should be constantly repeated.' In November 1939 a new myth was spread, namely that in the period preceding the war and after its outbreak the Poles had murdered 5,800 *Volksdeutsche* living in Poland. In February 1940 this figure, which far exceeded the real German losses, was multiplied tenfold for propaganda purposes. (Szarota 1978, 233)

This testifies to the intentionality of the discredit to Polish character and the means used to achieve it. The deliberate inflation of *Volksdeutschen* victims for propaganda purposes further attest that they were simply a pretext used by Hitler to initiate his conquest for *lebensraum* and not due to a genuine concern for their lives. Although, ethnic Germans were useful as means to initiate war, they also proved useful during the occupation as "many ethnic German men served in the Wehrmacht and SS, where their knowledge of languages and certain territories made them effective translators, intermediaries, and informants." (Bergen 2008, 447) This pretext was ideal as it allowed Hitler to preserve his image, and that of Germany, as peaceful, reacting in self-defence in an attempt to rescue innocent fellow Germans. The image he painted of himself as a peaceful man was a politically useful tool. It served the purpose of deflecting any political critique, both domestic and international, that he was trying to initiate conflicts. He even stated in his September 26, 1938 address regarding his demand for the absorption of the Sudetenland into German territory that "the German people only desired peace." (Griech-Polelle, 2023,107) This image was an attempt to preemptively shield himself when war would eventually break out. This would make his claims that he was acting in self-defence more believable. However, he was also insistent on the fact that if a group (i.e. the Jews) would initiate a war towards Germany, then he would not only respond in kind, but he would completely annihilate his opponent, his war would be a total war. Hitler proclaimed:

> I have very often in my lifetime been a prophet and have been mostly derided. At the time of my struggle for power it was in the first instance the Jewish people who only greeted with laughter my prophecies that I would someday take over the leadership of the state and of the entire people of Germany and then, among other things, also bring the Jewish problem to its solution. I believe that this hollow laughter of Jewry in Germany has already stuck in its throat. I want today to be a prophet again: if international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, the result will not be the Bolshevization of the

earth and thereby the victory or Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe! (Herf 2006, 52)[61]

Pieces of propaganda such as the figures found below continued to propagate the myth that Jews were warmongering, and that Hitler was a peaceful man. Figure 19's cover depicts "a memorial to the ten million dead of World War I. Two Jews stand beneath. One says: "Why shouldn't we risk a war? We won't have to fight in it."" (Bytwerk) This furthers the myth that Jews did not participate as combatants in WWI and that they benefitted from the world conflict. This is contrasted with Figure 20's caption which reads "Hitler visits Italy to make peace, while an unhappy France, accompanied by the God of War, watches." (Bytwerk) On this cover, we can see a composed looking Hitler, walking with an angelic like woman embodying Italy with the word "Pax" written across what one can assume are intended to be angel wings passing by a cross looking woman embodying France. The insinuations are evident, Hitler is attempting to reach a peaceful compromise while France looks back resentfully while clutching Mars's arm.

Figure 19: Cover from *Kladderadatsch* issue #31/1934

Figure 20: Cover from *Kladderadatsch* issue #27/1934[62]

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[61] This speech reinforces key aspects of Nazi rhetoric: a Jewish worldwide conspiracy, the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, Hitler's role as Germany's saviour, the imminence of a Jewish attack and Germany's need to react in self-defence.

[62] Images retrieved from Calvin University's German Propaganda Archives, credit to Randall Bytwerk.

Although Hitler framed his discourse regarding war as one of peace, his language indicates rather clearly that this would be a war of total destruction and that his true intentions, these were evident as early as 1925 in *Mein Kampf*, were never compatible with peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, he maintained that he would only *react* to a war and never initiate a conflict, hence the need to fake a conspiracy to trigger the war. This allowed him to appear to maintain his promise to not initiate the war, the illusion that he was a peaceful man, a fatherly figure to Germany as well as the larger illusion that the war with Poland was not a carefully planned event but rather a spontaneous one. "My [Hitler's]proposals for peace and my endless patience must not be mistaken for weakness, much less for cowardice!" (Stackelbern & Winkle 2013, 255) Due to the alleged savagery of the attacks, the Poles were demonized and this contributed to their exclusion from the realm of moral obligations. They did not obey the 'normal' rules of warfare, this was claimed to be due to their nature, reemphasizing the inherent difference between Germans and Poles and allowing for the brutal treatment of Poles while at the same time reinforcing Nazi racial rhetoric.

It is for this reason that the *élément déclencheur* of the Second World War needed to be staged, in other words, a conspiracy.

> Hitler initiated World War II with an act of unprovoked aggression bolstered by projection and lies concerning a border incident the regime had fabricated. It followed months of propaganda blaming Poland for the war Hitler was planning to start. Hitler claimed that Polish troops had enfaced in an unprovoked armed assault on a German radio station…the "faked attack" was carried out by SS troops; the bodies of Polish concentration camp prisoners who had been killed by lethal injection and then shot were eft lying at the site. (Herf 2006, 57)

This conspiracy gave him complete control over the war narrative, it gave him the military advantage as well as the "moral" advantage by reinforcing German identity with that of saviour and Polish identity with that of brutish perpetrator. This conspiracy went hand in hand with the propaganda depicting Poles persecuting *Volksdeutschen* as the defence of these ethnic Germans was the stated cause for Germany to invade Poland[63] and the main reason why German citizens supported the deployment of their troops.

Regarding the faked attack, "Hitler declared, "Last night Poland fired on our territory with regular soldiers. Since 5:15 the fire has been returned. And from now on bomb will be met with bomb." (Herf 2006, 57) Statements like these, coming from the Germans' leader, one who was viewed as a Messiah figure, legitimized the claims of self-defence and further bolstered their sense of victimhood and the righteousness of Germany's response in Poland. When it came to the language used to describe what was in fact a war of invasion, the press had been directed not to use the word "war" but rather to say that "there had been a German 'response to the Polish attack." (Herf 2006, 57) Once again, Germany presented itself as blameless. This is a lesson Hitler had learned from his time serving in WWI:

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[63] It is interesting that the Soviets used a similar justification for their own invasion of Poland, as the "Soviet official claim that it was intervening in Poland to protect so-called "national minorities."" (Beorn 2018, 77)

It was a fundamental mistake to discuss the question of who was responsible for the outbreak of the war and declare that the sole responsibility could not be attributed to Germany. The sole responsibility should have been laid on the shoulders of the enemy, without any discussion whatsoever…As soon as our own propaganda made the slightest suggestion that the enemy had a certain amount of justice on his side, then we laid down the basis on which the justice of our own cause could be questioned. (Hitler 1939, 109)

This way of thinking aligns itself with the binary worldview of Hitler's regime. It is a totalizing worldview, where no nuances are possible, this applies to identity as well.

The presentation of Poles as a nation of murderers was an important argument which was to justify their treatment by the law of the Reich. The following is a very characteristic interpretation made by the notorious R. Freisler of the special criminal law concerning Poles, introduced in 1941: "The guilt of the Polish nation is burdened with is terrible, the only one of its kind; it cannot be washed away…It has shown beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is not worthy of Europe…This Polish nature which has been revealed in the mass crimes committed by the entire Polish nation, this nature which is dangerous to nicety, and which is not social but anti-social, is the starting point for the German criminal law." (Szarota 1978, 234)

Evidently, Hitler's aims in invading Poland were the acquirement of *lebensraum*, the destruction of Poland and the enslavement of Poles. However, this could not be accomplished without propaganda shaping the narrative as one of self-defence. Presenting *Volksdeutschen* as victims united Germans behind the regime and the military. It reinforced their own identities and that of their enemy as well as preserving their "intent" for peace in the eyes of a global audience. Propaganda depicting the brutality endured by ethnic Germans would in turn stimulate and justify the brutality of German troops towards Poles. Anti-Polish propaganda further reinforced Polish cruelty and the need to use excessive force as well as highlighting the lawlessness of Poles and Poland and by contrast the need for Germans to bring order.

3.5.   Conclusion

It was clear for Hitler that propaganda would be a key tactic in achieving his goals, both for Germany and for Europe. He saw propaganda as the means through which he could manipulate the emotions of Germans to rally them to his cause, to convert them to his worldview. For this to be successful, propaganda had to encapsulate every aspect of German society. This included the creation of propaganda materials as well as the destruction or censorship of what was deemed degenerate or was not in accordance with the Nazi worldview. In Nazi Germany propaganda proved to be successful in transforming German and Jewish identities into that of the Elect and of the Other. Propaganda drastically shifted these identities, and the rapport both groups had to each other. Through posters, films, exhibits, radio, speeches and much more, the regime portrayed one group as essentially good and the other as evil. Through this, the Nazis were able to otherize and dehumanize Jews. Propaganda successfully fractured German-Jewish relationships. It also targeted Polish-Jewish relationships and achieved dehumanization of Polish Jews in Poland as well. This was mostly done through association with diseases such as typhus

and the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism. Once Jews were portrayed as a threat, it was easier for the Nazis to divide the population.

Propaganda also managed to change, in a very short time, the perception Germans held of Poles, from ally to enemy. Poles were depicted as indiscriminately and without cause persecuting *Volksdeutsche*. The shift was so effective, it provided Hitler with enough support from the citizenry to justify a military "response" to Poland. The anti-Polish propaganda also demonstrated a key tactic of the regime: manipulating reality to make it fit within their worldview. Poland's brutal invasion was the direct result of this propaganda. Were it not for the perception of Poles as treacherous and violent, the force used by the Germans troops would not have been as severe. Furthermore, the framing of the war as a conspiracy not only aligned itself with the Nazi worldview but served the regime when it came to their national imagine as well as their identity.

The regime then faced the challenge of adapting its propaganda to a Polish setting. Some aspects failed but others proved successful in alienating Poles and Jews. However, it is important to remember that in Poland, propaganda was accompanied with a system enforced through high levels of physical and psychological violence which was not comparable to that of Germany. Fear was certainly a reality for the average German, but Hitler did not intend on destroying the German people the way he did the Poles. This combination of propaganda and brutality was key to dominating Poland. Through this, he would be able to acquire his *lebensraum*, free labour all while maintaining the identities of Germans as both saviours and victims. In the final chapter, I will examine how the apocalyptic identity binary fared in a Polish context, the impact it had on Polish-Jewish relationships and the different roles Poles embodied throughout the occupation.

Chapter Four: Apocalyptic Identities: Polish and Jewish Relationships During The Occupation

4.1.   Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have seen how propaganda shaped German and Jewish identities into the Elect and the Other. The success of these propaganda campaigns was due to their themes being tailored to specific identities in a German context. When it came to Poland, some propaganda proved more successful than other. We have also seen how Germans had to be subjected to anti-Polish propaganda in order for the invasion of Poland to take place.

This chapter has two purposes. First, to highlight the peculiarities of occupied Poland, notably regarding the apocalyptic identity binary. Second, to better understand Polish-Jewish relationships, which were influenced by the first aspect. This will start by establishing a baseline of what pre-WWII dynamics looked like in order to be better able to see the shift which occurred as a result of the Nazi occupation. I will then examine how Polish and Jewish identities were influenced and shaped by the apocalyptic categories of the Elect/us and the Apocalyptic Other/them in order to fit within the worldview of the occupying forces. Then I will move on to the roles Poles occupied during the occupation, as perpetrators, collaborators and as victims. However, I will first make note of some unique challenges brought by the study of Poland during and after the occupation.

The research on that time period is complicated by a stereotype which emerged during and immediately after the war; the stereotype of Poles, and Poland as a nation, as being very anti-Semitic. This stereotype originated partly due to Nazi propaganda which during the liquidation of "the Jewish ghettos, this Nazi-controlled press was telling the world that the Poles were responsible, an often-repeated lie that unfortunately, after fifty years, still finds an echo in the world today." (Piotrowski 2007, 22)[64] This point of view is inherently problematic as it tends to be combined with a certain responsibility[65] for the fate suffered by Europe's Jewish population during the Holocaust. This narrative portrays the Poles as collaborators and perpetrators but rarely as victims. This lacks nuance as it fails to take into consideration the brutality of the Nazi occupation and consequently the suffering Poles fell victim to. In Poland, especially with the increase in nationalism associated with the rise of right-wing politics, there was a shift happening in the discourse surrounding the Holocaust. More precisely about who the main targets of the Holocaust were[66] and who suffered the most: a competition for victimhood. Although the narrative has somewhat evolved, the core issues for the Polish government can be summarized

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[64] This is related to the fact that the Germans wanted to share blame with the Poles in order to avoid carrying a heavier burden, see the section on Polish collaboration below.

[65] A note on responsibility. There is no debate that Poles participated and benefitted from the destruction of Polish Jews. However, this was done in conjunction, or through the influence of the occupants, whether Nazis or Soviets. This does not absolve Polish perpetrators of guilt, nor does it mean the Poles should not be held accountable for these acts. Yet, it is important to distinguish that the core of the responsibility lies with the Nazis and Soviets. More nuance on this can be found throughout the remainder of this chapter.

[66] There should be no need to mention that Jews were the main intended victims of the Holocaust. However, due to the rise of right-wing extremism, Holocaust denial, partial or total, is on the rise again. Consequently, one must do their due diligence. This is especially the case for right-wing Polish extremists who are attempting to highjack this victimhood and centre their own instead.

with the following three elements: the unrecognized suffering of Poles at the hand of the Nazis (and Soviets), the large number of Poles who rescued Jews and the undeserved reputation of Poles as anti-Semitic.

A note on contemporary Poland can attest to the legacy of the above-mentioned elements. Newly elected president Karol Nawrocki,[67] backed by the Law and Justice, a right-wing party who were in power from 2015 to 2023, defended the 2018 *Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance.* The amendment, amongst other controversial elements attempted to criminalize any remarks about Polish responsibility in Nazi crimes. The focus of the current government might no longer be as intent on proving that Poles suffered more than the Jews did, but it certainly is not centred around Jewish suffering or how to better integrate the suffering of Jewish Poles in the discourse, rather the focus seems to be on gentile Poles. The inability of Poles to focus on Jewish suffering does not necessarily means it is motivated by anti-Semitic feelings, rather, I would argue that they are unable to do so because they believe this erases their own victimhood. They cannot reconcile both elements as two parts of a whole, rather they see them as clashing with one another. This is the result of a decades long neglect of their victimhood and the neglect of their solidarity towards Polish Jews during the occupation, by the international community, and an amplification of the collaboration or persecution of some Poles towards Jews. Considering Nawrocki's very recent election, it would be both foolish and unfair to issue a complete condemnation, or even to claim a complete awareness of his attitudes towards Jewish-Polish relationships. However, his political leanings seem to favour the right-wing rather than the left. Whether he is able to improve Polish-Jewish relationships is still to be demonstrated.

Polish suffering during the occupation was never a major topic of concern during or after the war. Rather than being regarded as a nation who suffered under the Nazis, who had death camps built on their territory[68] and who witnessed the destruction of the Jews firsthand (including three million Polish Jews), they were seen as a nation with deeply anti-Semitic sentiments. They were depicted as people who actively participated in the persecution of Jews and collaborated with the Germans or at least were satisfied with the disappearance of the Jews. The fact that "The Germans created a system of segregation and later, mass murder, which Poles could not remedy." (Cała 2018, 248) and the impact this had on the psyche of the Poles is too often brushed aside. There is no denying that some portion of Polish society persecuted Jews, yet this cannot be made as an overall generalization.

> How did Poles, themselves the object of murderous repression, respond to the mass
> slaughter of their Jewish neighbours? Polish response, it should be emphasized, was

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[67] Elected in 2025, Nawrocki previously headed the Institute of National Remembrance (although not during the *Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance* which happened in 2018) who's stated mission, according to their website, is: "the preservation of remembrance about the enormity of the number of victims, losses and damages suffered by the Polish Nation during the Second World War and after it ended, the patriotic traditions of the Polish Nation's struggles with its occupants, Nazis and communists…" This is not the entirety of their mission statement, however what is clear from it is that Poles and not Jews are placed at the core of the institute's endeavours. The words "Jew" or "Jewish" do not appear once in their statement. https://eng.ipn.gov.pl/en/about-the-institute/mission/2,Institute-of-National-Remembrance-Commission-for-the-Prosecution-of-Crimes-again.html

[68] That the majority of camps were located in Eastern Europe is not a reflection of their being more anti-Semitic but rather that it was in the East that the majority of victims lived (Beorn 2018, 223).

immensely varied; it ran the gamut from acts of altruism that risked (and sometimes required) one's own and one's family's life, through indifference, all the way to active participation in the killing. The responses of individuals, moreover, were not the same as collective responses, most importantly, those of the government-in-exile and the Polish underground. Polish response to the Holocaust, furthermore, was conditioned by a tangle of political, social, and psychological factors; present and past, reality and fantasy interacted to create immense barriers not just to helping Jews but to wanting to help them. (Steinlauf 1997, 30)

We can see here that the study of Poland requires further nuancing. Poland's case is ripe with contradictions; however, these complications can be used not only to better understand the events which took place on Polish soil but to highlight the discrepancies inherent to the Nazi worldview. Poland is interesting precisely because it clashes with Nazi rhetoric even as the Nazis tried to forcibly mold Polish society to their worldview. The realities of Polish life, Polish identity and Polish-Jewish relationships were irreconcilable with Nazi apocalypticism. Considering the inflexibility of this worldview, the Nazis then had no choice but to enforce a certain conformity, or at least the appearance of such a conformity. No alternative was possible, us or them, assimilation or death. They used different methods in an attempt to reach this goal, most notably combining propaganda with extreme acts of violence, often enforced through the colonial legal system they had established. However, we cannot obtain an authentic understanding of the facts if we do not take into account this "tangle of factors", in other words, the subtleties and nuances. Furthermore, viewing Poles one-dimensionally as anti-Semitic erases not only their suffering at the hand of Nazis but the help Poles offered Jews during the occupation. Additionally, reducing one group to only one facet of identity was precisely the goal of the Nazi regime, therefore, a certain dismantling of these precepts is required to yield insight into the complex realities of Polish-Jewish relationships during the occupation.

4.2.   Pre-occupation Relationships

In the period between WWI and WW2, Poles and Jews cohabited rather peacefully, although the relationship declined as the war grew closer. The deterioration of their relationships was due in large part to the rise of nationalist and right-wing movements. The views and beliefs of these political movements were strongly influenced by the Nazis. The demographics of interwar Poland included large communities of ethnic minorities, most notably Ukrainians, Germans, Byelorussians and Jews.[69] This meant that Poland was not equally ethnically homogenous throughout its territory, especially compared to Germany. Some tensions existed between these groups but overall, Poles and Jews cohabited somewhat separately but peacefully, they "lived together for centuries in the same country, the same city, the same village but maintained, for the most part, separate existences, lifestyles, and value systems." (Lukas 1990, 123) This statement should be slightly nuanced by specifying that this separation applies more to religious Jews than secular or converted ones. This is in part due to faith but also to language. Religious Jews tended to speak Yiddish more than Polish; "In the census of 1931, almost 80 percent of the Jews declared Yiddish to be their mother tongue…Few Jews understood, let alone spoke, Polish."

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[69] A large part of this was due to the partitioning of Poland, pre-WWII, which meant Polish territory, and its inhabitants changed. The large Jewish population was due to emigration, not territorial shifts.

(Lukas 1990, 123) [70]Again, this applies more readily to religious Jews. One factor influencing the language component is the large number of schools where Jewish pupils could be educated primarily in Yiddish rather than Polish.[71] Less religious Jews would often speak Polish, Yiddish and Hebrew, attended secular Polish schools, often complemented with Hebrew school afterwards, making the Jewish youth "exceptionally literate for most time periods." (Beorn 2018, 14-5)

Most religious Polish Jews were not assimilated in Poland but rather were well integrated, keeping their own customs but having long established commercial relationships with their neighbours. A major difference between Jewish populations in Germany, and other Western Europe countries, and Poland was the degree of assimilation. Assimilation in Poland, a deeply religious country, would have meant conversion for Jews, which was a more common occurrence in other countries than it was in Poland (Paldiel 2022, 34). Although more secular, or converted Jews often reached a higher degree of assimilation. However, because Poland has historically been ethnically heterogenous, being a part of a different ethnic or religious group did not automatically condemn them to Otherness. In comparison, German Jews tended to be better assimilated in Germany culturally, they spoke German, went to German speaking schools and identified as Germans, regardless of their religious affiliation.[72] In Poland, they were more integrated than assimilated consequently, one could argue that they were more visibly Other than they were in Germany. Between WW1 and WW2, it is estimated that around 80 percent of Polish Jews were "unassimilated and so looked different from the Poles: 'the dark, motley crowd, Jews in their traditional garb, with beards and side-locks, in "kaftans", in skull-caps, in black hats.'" (Kochanski 2012, 30) Although Kochanski states that 80% of Jews were unassimilated, through the description he provides afterwards, he seems to equate unassimilated to Orthodoxy. Orthodox Jews in Poland made up about 30% of the population not 80%. Yet their persecution never reached the scale it did in Germany. Part of this is due to the long-standing Polish-Jewish cohabitation and the intricacies of their relationships. Yet, another interesting reason is the type of anti-Semitism present in each country.[73]

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[70] Although 80% claimed Yiddish rather than Polish as a mother tongue, it does not mean they could not speak Polish fluently.

[71] The sheer number of Jewish cultural and educational resources available in Poland testifies to the flourishing Jewish culture which existed in Poland prior to the occupation. "Many religious and secular schools…journals, periodicals, and books, published in both Yiddish and Hebrew; the network of Jewish libraries and cultural clubs - all these were at that time unmatched anywhere else among Jewish communities outside Poland. During the school year of 1937-1938, there were 226 elementary schools and twelve high schools as well as fourteen vocational schools with either Yiddish or Hebrew as the instructional language…founded the Beth Jacob schools for girls (numbering 250 schools in 1937 with 38,000 students)." (Paldiel 2022, 57) To these we can add "the "grand yeshivot" for more intense Talmudic studies; many of them world famous" (Paldiel 2022, 58).

[72] Victor Klemperer on his Germanness: "Kaufmann said of someone or other in Jerusalem: he feels at home and yet previously "had been as assimilated as you *were*, Herr Professor," I replied: "Were? I am German forever, German 'nationalist,'"—"The Nazis would not concede that."—"The Nazis are un-German."" (Klemperer 1999, 129, italics original). This entry is dated July 21, 1935 although Klemperer mentioned it happened on the 17th. It is worth noting Klemperer was a WWI veteran and a protestant but quite aware of his Jewish ancestry prior to the rise of the Nazis. Neither his service in the war nor his religion shielded him from Hitlerism.

[73] The question of "why Germany?" is beyond the scope of this thesis and has been the subject of much scholarly analysis. Some key factors include the political and socio-economic climate Germany found itself after WWI, in which the country was left yearning for someone to blame for the loss of the war. This would both channel their energy and remove the blame from their own shoulders.

The main difference in how anti-Semitism presented itself in Germany versus in Poland is the racial aspect. In Germany, race was axiomatic to anti-Semitism, and to the Nazi worldview. This can be seen in the fact that if Jews converted to Christianity, they were still considered Jewish.[74] In Poland, race was not as important as faith, an exception to this can be found in the right-wing nationalist movement of the time, but it is not representative of the beliefs of average Polish citizens. Polish anti-Semitism centred mostly on religion and economics. The focus here will be on the religious aspect. Catholicism was a central facet of identity for most Poles for whom "patriotism and Catholicism went hand in hand" (Paldiel 2022, 51). Therefore, the question of whether someone could truly be Polish if they had not converted to Catholicism was a controversial issue in Poland, especially after Piłsudski's death. Religion was at the core of Polish-Jewish relationship, this was especially true during the occupation. This was particularly salient for Jews who were Christians.

"The Catholic Church was such a strong institution in Poland that it was often thought to be the only force in Poland that might have contained the spread of antisemitism, but it did just the opposite." (Paldiel 2022, 51) With the considerable power and influence it yielded, the Catholic Church in Poland did not do enough to help save Jews.[75] Even when they did not call actively for the destruction of the Jews, we can see, for example, in figures such as Cardinal August Hlond,[76] that they could not be counted on to encourage Poles to offer support to Jews but rather they drove the two groups further apart. This is best exemplified through a 1936 letter written by the Cardinal, which is filled with anti-Semitic clichés and stereotypes which were typical of the sentiments expressed by the Catholic Church and the clergy:

> A Jewish question exists and there will be one so long as Jews remain Jews. It is an actual fact that the Jews fight against the Catholic Church, they are freethinkers, and constitute the vanguard of atheism, bolshevism and revolution. The Jewish influence upon morals is fatal, and the publishers spread pornographic literature. It is also true that the Jews are committing frauds, practicing usury, and dealing in white slavery. It is true that in the schools, the Jewish youth is having an evil influence... on the Catholic youth. (Paldiel 2022, 52)

We can see here how Jewish and Polish identities were posited as inherently different; Jews even being depicted as something to fear. This fear was a more recent development in Polish anti-Semitism, and we can see similarities between the anti-Semitic content of that letter and Nazi

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[74] This can be seen in the case of many converted Jews, notably Victor Klemperer who was a Protestant, yet was still sent, with his Aryan wife, to live in a Jew House in Dresden. Although they were given the "privilege" of an extra room because of his wife's "superior" racial heritage.

[75] This is not unique to Poland as it was the case in the majority of occupied countries. The difference here lies in the extent to which the church in Poland could have made a difference compared to other countries, due to the considerable influence it yielded.

[76] Hlond was in exile during the occupation, he used radio broadcast to become "le défenseur infatigable de son pays" (the tireless defender of his country) (Zahorski 2004, 364). He is also a large contributor to the image of Poland as a nation of martyrs (Zahorski 2004, 369). Although Hlond brought worldwide attention to the suffering of the clergy under the Nazis, he only briefly mentioned Jewish persecution. Furthermore, following the Kielce pogrom, Hlond "blamed the Jews for the deterioration in Polish Jewish relations. He blamed the Jews for occupying important positions in the new government and for imposing a form of government that was alien to the Polish nation." (Libionka 2000, 6) The form of government Hlond refers to is communism, again reinforcing the stereotypical association of communism/bolshevism with Jewishness.

anti-Semitism. While it is true that anti-Semitism was on the rise in the late 1930s and although some agree with Paldiel, I believe some nuance is lacking from this discourse. As much as religion was used to exclude Jews from Polish society, it also proved to be a strong motive for Christian Poles who helped save Jewish lives. Before diving deeper into the topic, some additional context is required. It should be noted that many Jewish communities who placed their children in Christian institutions or with Christian families, expressed concern over the faith of their children; mostly as to whether they would be baptized without consent and converted to Christianity.

> finding a convent or orphanage for a Jewish child was no problem, but in taking Jewish children the Church was not interested in getting converts. While admitting that children accepted into a Catholic institution were baptized, Dunski [Marek Dunski, a Catholic writer] said that this was done for safety. By becoming baptized Jewish children saw themselves as Christian and therefore could more easily adjust to their new identity. Elaborating on this point he described a meeting with a Jewish official from the Warsaw ghetto, who questioned him about the ultimate fate of these baptized youngsters: *I tried to explain that this was the only way these children could be saved. But this did not satisfy him, for he kept insisting that they would grow up as Catholics.*" (Tec 1987, 141 italics original)

For Jewish parents, if the children were alive but Catholic it nonetheless destroyed their Jewish identity. This is one of the reasons it became a point of contention. It is easy to make the argument that, of Christian or Jewish faith at least the child would be alive, but one must keep in mind that there were risks in placing a child in a convent or with a Christian family. Survival was not guaranteed. Furthermore, this decision was being made while the Jewish community was actively undergoing a genocide targeting their Jewish identity, in this context, Christianity was also sometimes viewed as a threat to Jewish identity.

There was also the belief that Christians who were interested in rescuing Jewish children were doing so with ulterior motives in mind. In an entry dated December 14, 1942, Emanuel Ringelblum provides an excellent overview of the situation, namely of the three chief motivations the clergy had in saving Jewish children:

> first, soul-snatching. The Catholic religious leaders have always exploited such difficult moments in Jewish life as pogroms, deportations, etc., to convert adults and children. This is perhaps the most important factor motivating the proposal, although the clergy assure us they will not attempt to convert the Jewish children entrusted to the care of their institutions. There is the second, economic factor. Every Jewish child will have to pay 600 zlotys a month, and for a year in advance, too. This is a very good stroke of business for the monastic orders; since they have their own fields and gardens, their food costs are very low. For the children who are unable to meet this fee, costs are to be covered by the children of the rich, who will be taxed double. The third factor is that of prestige. Until now, the Polish Christian spiritual leaders have done very little to save Jews from massacre and "resettlement," to use Their euphemism. In view of the world-wide protest against the mass murder of Polish Jews, rescuing several hundred Jewish children may be offered as evidence that the

Polish clergy did not sit with hands folded in these difficult times, that they did everything they could to help the Jews, particularly their children." (Ringelblum 1974, 336)

Ringelblum follows this entry with a discussion the community had about whether to send or not the children to the priests. Some agreed only older children, who would be able to maintain their Jewish identity, should be sent, others that as many children as possible should be sent in order to guarantee a Jewish future (Ringelblum 1974, 337-8). What we can gather from these discussions is that the trust between Jews and the clergy was limited; that a possible motivating factor for the Polish clergy was their concern about how they would look if they had no evidence that they helped saved Jews This indicates their concerns centred around themselves and their image more than they did humanitarian motives. It also reveals their awareness of the destruction and how they viewed it to be immoral and their own inaction to be, to some extent, condemnable.[77] The fear that Jewish children would be forcibly baptized proved to be founded in several cases, as demonstrated by Duski's remarks, although it was not the case for the majority of Jewish children hidden in convents or other religious institutions. Nonetheless, many Christians helped shelter Jews, especially children. Nunneries[78] and convents helped shelter thousands[79] of Jewish children, at great risk to themselves and their other wards (Bogner 1988). Although help was found most often in women-run organizations "many priests supplied Jewish fugitives with false documents, indispensable for survival." (Tec 1987, 139), especially to those living on the "Aryan side". However, other members of the clergy condemned such practices

The rescuer Genia Parska, a devout Catholic, recalled her disappointment: *When I talked about my protection of Jews, I had bad experiences…I spoke about it to a prominent priest, a Jesuit. He told me: You should not have done it, it was wrong to save Jews…you should have remained neutral. But to help was wrong.* (Tec 1987, 140, italics original)[80]

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[77] When it comes to rescuing Jewish people because one had ulterior motives, whether conversion of faith, financial gain, prestige etc., there tends to be two sides. One, that these people should not be considered true allies because they did not do so for purely humanitarian motives. The second, that regardless of the motivations of the rescuers, Jewish lives were saved and that is the most important element. It should be added that some Poles took money to shelter Jews for practical reasons, such as having to feed the extra members of the household or simply because the risk of helping Jews was so severe they felt the payments made the risk more worth it or might help other struggling family members. Yet, the monetary aspect is often reduced to Poles wanting to make a profit. This is inaccurate. Poles risked their lives and those of their families to shelter and help Jews. Very few Jews were in a position to offer a sum of money so important it would be worth it for Poles to take such a risk.

[78] It is worth noting that members of the clergy, especially nuns, worked in conjunctions with the Polish resistance in their rescue of Jews, especially Jewish children. The nuns would not be the ones to enter the ghetto, this was done through their intermediaries in the resistance. This was the case for Irena Sendler who is credited with saving more than 2,500 children (Kochanski 2012, 320). I would like to thank Professor Norman Ravvin for bringing this, and so much more, to my attention.

[79] There exists no official record of the number of children saved. Some sources cite thousands while other sources tend to claim the numbers to be in the hundreds. The true number is closer to thousands of lives saves than it is to hundreds, as evidenced by the above footnote. The topic of Jewish children being saved by Christians is a sensitive and controversial one, especially because some parents had to have recourse to legal means to get their children back (the subject is explored in some depth by Nahum Bogner in an article he wrote in 1988). Tec estimates that around six to eight percent of people who helped rescue Jews were clergy members (Tec 1987, 140).

[80] Irene Gut, who worked as a housekeeper for a German officer, hid 11 Jews in the basement of the house after witnessing the liquidation of the Radom ghetto. The following conversation took place during Gut's confession in

This "neutrality" can be better described as indifference or inaction, which tended to represent the majority of the clergy's attitude, or at least of their outward attitude. Some Christians or Christian organizations came to the rescue of Jews, but they did so as individuals. The Catholic Church as an institution, with the inclusion of Pope Pius XII (Bergen 2016, 109), remained silent and idle in the face of Jewish destruction. We can see here, through the discourse held by the Catholic Church regarding Jews, how one could use their faith to justify their own inaction, especially when acting could result in death. For others, faith did just the opposite: it justified the necessity of helping Jews, it was precisely because of their religious beliefs that they felt the need to help so keenly.

Despite the rescues of Jews by members of the church, some Catholic teachings reinforced anti-Semitic tropes and stereotypes. "Among the first lessons, indeed, that children learned in school [including Jewish children attending Polish schools] from the priests was that the Jews had killed Christ. Large portions of the Polish population, moreover, still believed that Jews practiced ritual murder of defenseless Christians, especially children." (Paldiel 2022, 51) These accusations of ritual murder would be one of the accusations brought up against Jews post-liberation, in some instances leading to pogroms.[81] We can see just how deeply ingrained these sentiments were, even impacting the post-occupation actions of Poles. Despite the fact that anti-Semitism had long been present in Poland, its expressions rarely tended to be as physically violent as they were in Germany; "Although individual relations varied greatly, on the whole, relations between Jews and Poles were free of violence." (Steinlauf 1997, 5) Their interactions were characterized by a group of "powerfully rooted stereotypes." (Steinlauf 1997, 5)

> Jews were also associated with craftiness, deceit, and miserliness. He was also an object of mystery, the possessor of secret lore, and alien being who, as the Church never let the peasant forget, had rejected the true faith and was implicated in the murder of God. Yet counterbalancing such fears was the Jew's role as an object of laughter: perceived as sober, chaste, non violent and therefore unmanly…little was fearful about the Jew. (Steinlauf 1997, 5)[82]

We can see here how the stereotypes are opposites of the ones espoused in Nazi propaganda where the Jew is portrayed not as chaste but as a threat to German femininity and sexuality. Consequently, as a threat to Germany's racially pure future. He is depicted as an object of fear. In Nazi rhetoric this fear is mostly translated as a threat. The contrast found in both types of

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church: "Father, I have become the mistress of a German officer in order to preserve the lives of my Jewish friends.' 'My child, this is a mortal sin,' he said without hesitation. I frowned and leaned closer to the screen. 'But father, if I don't do this, eleven people will lose their lives.' 'If you do this, it is your immortal soul that you will lose. They are Jews." (Kochanski 2012, 316-7)

[81] Some examples include the events of August 11, 1945 in Krakow and July 1, 1946 in Kielce (Gross 2007, 81-2-3). In his memoirs, Michal Głowiński, who was a child during the occupation, and was for some time hidden in a nunnery, describes the bullying he endured, post liberation in 1947, by a Polish classmate: "Szymański wanted to dispense justice for a great crime: the Jews had murdered Jesus. All of them bore responsibility for deicide. I, too, had taken part in this, I, too, had killed Jesus—and I had done this personally, with my own hands." (Głowiński 2005, 148-9) We can see just how deeply ingrained this myth was in Polish culture, even at such a young age and even after witnessing the mass destruction of Jews.

[82] These were the stereotypes Jews held about Poles, that "those characteristics of brutality, ignorance, and loutishness that were the antithesis of the Jewish ethos; they were, in a word, *goyim* (gentiles)." (Steinlauf 1997, 6, italics original)

Polish anti-Semitic stereotypes likely provided a balance which kept animosity and hostility at bay or at least prevented its escalation to excessive physical violence.

However, due to a confluence of factors, Polish-Jewish relationships eventually shifted and anti-Semitic violence increased in the early 1930s, mostly due to political developments[83] and the economic crisis. This manifested through the boycotts of Jewish stores and services, the segregation of university students who

> were required to occupy segregated seating in lecture halls (the so-called bench ghetto, which Jewish students protested by standing during lectures, while gangs of "gentlemen" hooligans armed with brass knuckles, canes, and razors assaulted their Jewish classmates on campuses and terrorized Jews in the streets and parks. (Steinlauf 1997, 21)

Some of these hooligans were influenced by the type of anti-Semitism promoted by the Nazis (Steinlauf 1997, 21). There were some who attempted to show solidarity with Polish Jews but "In the atmosphere that prevailed in Poland in the last years before the war, denouncing anti-Semitism was tantamount to declaring oneself "for the Jews," and took considerable political and personal courage." (Steinlauf 1997, 22) We can see here just how badly the situation had devolved and how separate Jews were considered from Poles. The division between "us and them" had already begun and would be exploited by the Nazis. It is worth keeping in mind that even pre-occupation, Polish-Jewish solidarity was considered an act of courage. One can only imagine how magnified this was during the occupation, with pressures coming from the Nazis, from Polish anti-Semites, who could now display their beliefs full heartedly, as well as from the surveillance of other Poles, as denunciations were a regular occurrence.

The stress exercised on Poles to turn over Jews hiding on the Aryan side was immense. "The many pressures to apprehend Jews created a virtual witch-hunt. Suspicion was rife. Anyone who lived alone, had no relatives, no friends, received no mail, was automatically suspect." (Tec 1987, 41) Nazis created special incentives and rewards to help increase the number of denunciations such as "rye, sugar, vodka, cigarettes, or clothing, or in some instances half the property of the apprehended Jew." (Tec 1987, 41) Collaboration was such a common problem that "Jews in hiding were primarily endangered by the informers and all those who exploited the situation to get rob or kill them." (Cała 2018, 236)

4.3.   The Brutality of The Occupation and the Victimization of Poles

Being the first country occupied by the Nazis, Poland was under occupation longer than any other country: from September 1939 to May 1945. The intensity of the brutality was also higher than in other locations and this from the earliest days of the occupation. This brutality resulted in the fact that "Polish society suffered proportionally the greatest losses of any nation. As a result of the war, one sixth of the population ceased to exist." (Gross 2007, 169) This intensity was

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[83] See the pluralist vs exclusivist point of views in the introduction. The political developments here were mostly due to the growing popularity of the Endecja. This rise was the result of Piłudski's death as he kept both anti-Semitism and the specific Endek brand of nationalism at bay (Paldiel 2022, 32-33,42). The Endecja were "inspired by what was taking place to Jew across the border, in Nazi Germany." (Paldiel 2022, 55)

informed by multiple factors. First, the intent Hitler had for the country: *lebensraum*, land to be seized, colonized and used as the agricultural backbone of the Reich.

> To acquire the necessary farmland, Eichmann's troops brutally expelled 62,000 Poles from the Warthegau, the part of Poland annexed by Germany. Those refugees were quartered west of Warsaw on General Government territory, in residences previously occupied by Polish Jews. In the winter of 1940-41, some 72,000 Jews–10,000 more than the number of Poles driven out–were forced to march on foot to the Warsaw ghetto, which was already suffering from overcrowding and widespread malnutrition. (Aly 2006, 236)

A large number of Poles were displaced so their houses could accommodate *Volksdeutchen* in order to fulfill the Nazi colonial expansionary project. Second, the relationship between the occupying Germans and the Poles, this includes everyday interactions, the newly imposed colonial legal system, namely the severity of penalties Poles exposed themselves to for any trespass, especially regarding helping Jews, as well as their intent for the Poles: a reservoir of labourers. This intent however, stemmed from their view of Poles as subhuman. A result of Nazi worldview, especially racial theories, and anti-Polish propaganda. Consequently, the Nazis had no intention of preserving either Poland as a nation or Poles as a people. The destruction of the Poles was to be achieved, only not as systematically as with Jewish destruction.

First, it must be understood that Hitler's intent for Poland was always its destruction as a nation:

> he [Hitler] was striving for more than a military defeat of Poland and intended to "annihilate Poland" ("*Vernichtung Polens*") "destruction of Poland in the foreground. Aim is to remove living forces and not reaching a certain line," he explained, according to abbreviated notes, demanding, "Hearts closed to empathy. Brutal action. 80 million (Germans) must have their rights. Their existence must be secured. The stronger is right. Extreme severity." (Matthäus, Böhler & Mallmann 2014, 6-7)[84]

Additionally, the existence of Poland as a nation was seen as "an illegitimate aberration created by the Versailles peace treaty, which had forced Germany to cede large chunks of its territory." (Matthäus, Böhler & Mallmann 2014, 7) This view of Poland furthered Hitler's belief that the land was destined to be owned and colonized by them, due to them being the "stronger" race. Furthermore, because Poland was to be used as a colony, the current population had to be destroyed in order to make space for the newcomers: Germans, whether *Volksdeutschen* or Germans coming from the Reich to settle the land. This included forced resettlement, sometimes the victims were resettled in cities, other times in "less desirable areas allowed to die of starvation and disease, or turned into slaves for the German empire." (Bergen 2016, 168)

Just as Poland should be destroyed, so should its culture; "German authorities prohibited any activities that advanced the education of Poles, fostered communal ties, or promoted national

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[84] By "rights" Hitler refers to the right of Germans to acquire *lebensraum* through conquest. It is theirs to take as the stronger race. In his worldview, their racial superiority entitles them to both the land and the justified removal of "living forces". This also included their right to do what they wished with the occupants of the land, in this case, the Poles.

feelings." (Bergen 2016, 105) The territory which used to be Poland could then be utilised by the Third Reich: the plan was known as *Generalplan Ost*. The destruction of Poles meant they were subjected to a "merciless and systematic campaign of biological destruction" (Piotrowski 2007, 23). This is one of the major differences in the occupation of Poland compared to other countries. Even if other countries were to be physically absorbed into the Reich, their population[85] and their culture were not targeted for destruction, the exception here being the case of the Soviet Union.

> The German occupation of Poland was the cornerstone of Nazi plans for a Eurasian empire stratified by race, in which German masters would rule over "racially inferior," primarily Slavic, peoples. The war offered the Nazis the opportunity to begin building this "New Order," but not to complete it—that would have to await final victory…much of their non-German population, primarily Poles and Jews, was expelled into…the Generalgovernment…As a dumping ground for all the "racial garbage" in occupied Poland, the Generalgovernment became the focus of Nazi "clean-up" attempts: the organization of slave labor and mass murder. What the Germans instituted was a regime of total exploitation. Their intention was to extract from the Poles the maximum possible labor to support the German war machine while allow them as little as possible in return.[86] All Poles fourteen years of age and older were required to work; workers were often bound to their workplace…As a result of frequent, unpredictable roundups, more than a million Poles were deported to work in Germany; such roundups as well as sentences for a host of major and minor transgressions of Nazi laws regulated in some two million more being condemned to work in the vast network of Nazi concentration camps, labor camps, and prisons established within Poland." (Steinlauf 1997, 23-4)

Considering how the Nazis viewed Poland, the brutality of the invasion is not surprising. The initial attack on Poland yielded a high casualty rate: 70,000[87] compared to Germany's 11, 000 (Bergen 2016, 103). One can imagine the impact this had on Polish society as well as the number of individual Poles who were personally affected by the loss of a family member, which also affected the general morale of the society. The stark difference in casualty numbers can be explained by the "Anti-Polish prejudices and a military culture that called for absolute destruction of the enemy fueled German brutality against the Poles. The assumption that Poles were dangerous bandits, irregular combatants who attacked from concealed positions, served the Germans as justification for a massive assault on soldiers and civilians alike." (Bergen 2016, 103) This was combined with the German blitzkrieg approached, a witness stated, "that day the sky was black with them [war planes]." (Bergen 2016, 103) This can be seen by the sheer number of casualties in 1939 alone: "over 40,000…in the annexed territories and some 5,000 in the General Government." (Piotrowski 2007, 23) Piotrowski explains that the discrepancy in losses between both territories is due to the high degree of collaboration, through denunciations, with the Nazis in the General Government: "about 90 percent of the names of those to be sent to

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[85] The exception to the rule here being the members of the population considered to be Other. The point is, their population, as a group, were not to be destroyed on a grand scale.
[86] One such element was the hoarding of agricultural produce for Germans in occupied Poland or to be sent back to the Reich. This was also used as a means of destruction through starvation by providing Poles, and especially Jews, with a caloric intake substantially below one needed for survival; "Food allowed for the imprisoned ghetto Jews were at starvation levels, down to 184 calories per day (the non-Jewish Poles were allotted 669 calories; the Germans - 2,613)." (Paldiel 2002, 88)
[87] As well as around one million Poles taken prisoner (Bergen 2016, 103).

concentration camps were provided by German nationals." (Piotrowski 2007, 23) In 1939, most of those sent to the camps were Poles, some Jews and other undesirables would also be included in the early deportation. The mass deportation and murder of Jews would follow shortly.

One of the ways Poles suffered under the occupation was through forced labour,[88] both on Polish territory and in Germany. It should be noted that Western countries' citizenry, was also affected by forced labour however "the procedures governing forced laborers from Poland and the Soviet Union were far harsher." (Aly 2006, 158) This was strongly influenced by the Nazi's racial worldview where Slavic races were considered subhuman, therefore their treatment was more brutal and they "were often worked to death in conditions of virtual slavery" (Aly 2006, 159). For Germans, forced labour served multiple goals. First, it provided manpower which Germany was desperately lacking.[89] Second, it contributed to the destruction of groups they considered inferior. Third, as they did not have to provide paycheques to these labourers, it was another way they could keep their war coffers afloat. This was often done in conjunction with the seizure of assets of those displaced for forced labour, in other words, through plunder.[90]

An early act of violence towards the Poles was the destruction of the Polish elite, this meant the nobility, the intelligentsia, "teachers, physicians, priests, officers, businessmen, landowners, and writers but also anyone who even attended secondary school." (Lukas 1990, 8) The Nazis were working with a list containing the names of 60,000 individuals considered to be part of the Polish elite, these people were to be destroyed (Paldiel 2022, 72). The destruction of the intelligentsia in Poland was colossal, although not all 60,000 individuals named on the list were destroyed.[91] This was particularly devastating as it dealt a severe blow to Polish culture as well as eliminating individuals who could have occupied leadership positions in the resistance against Germans (Paldiel 2022, 72). The purpose of these murder was to "reduce the Poles to a people of slaves, to destroy their intellectuals and their sense of tradition—anything that might give them a way to organize against Germany." (Bergen 2016, 105) Given the high religiosity of the Poles, the persecution of the clergy was particularly impactful on the population. Priests were intentionally targeted by the Nazis and in "the opening months of the war, Germans shot fifteen hundred priests and imprisoned countless others. They also humiliated, arrested, and murdered many prominent Poles, including journalists, professors and artists." (Bergen 2016, 105) Priests who were sent to prisons were often persecuted much more violently than other inmates and their survival rate was lower as a result. This targeting of the intelligentsia is another similarity between the destruction of Poles and Jews.[92]

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[88] Jews were also forced into slave labour, both inside and outside of the camp complexes.

[89] This labour shortage had been a problem since 1935-1936, mostly due to the Nazi's remilitarization effort (Somcutean 2022, 275).

[90] It should be noted that other means of financially exploiting Poles (as well as any other members of occupied countries) was the plundering of their resources (houses, businesses, objects, museums etc.) as well as the implementation of special taxes (Aly 2006,159-164). These measures were applied to the Jewish population at a much steeper rate than any other group as they were the primary target of the regime.

[91] "during the war Poland lost 45 percent of her physicians and dentists, 57 percent of her attorneys, more than 15 percent of her teachers, 40 percent of her professors, 30 percent of her technicians, and more than 18 percent of her clergy. The majority of her journalists also disappeared" (Lukas 1990, 9)

[92] This practice is common in totalitarian regimes. In many of the occupied countries, the Nazis persecuted the elite, unless they could benefit from their cooperation, for example through the establishment of a puppet government.

Poles were also murdered through the application of severe sanctions. This can be seen in the penalties the Nazis would inflict on Poles who offered assistance to Jews. This was an intentional tactic of the Nazi regime in order to break any solidarity between Poles and Jews and further divide them. This tactic of "divide and conquer" was not solely applied to Poles and Jews, Poland itself by partitioning between Germany and the USSR, effectively severing the Polish population in half, the Germans then further divided Poland by separating it in two territories (Bergen 2016, 103-4).

> For a brief period after the German invasion, particularly as Poles and Jews dug trenches side by side in embattled Warsaw, Polish-Jewish relations were transformed; Warsaw Jews, as Emmanuel Ringelblum reported, were seized with an enthusiasm reminiscent of the solidarity experienced during the insurrections of the nineteenth century. But the imposition of German Rule, specifically intended, among other things, to poison relations between news and Poles, marked an irreversible change for the worse. (Steinlauf 1997, 30-1)

This rift was essential to the German tactic of pitting one ethnic group against another, consequently aggravating preexisting tensions between Poland's minority groups. Again, this limited the possibility of inter-group solidarity and contributed to each other's destruction when inter-group violence erupted. The effects of this division caused by the Germans are still felt in contemporary Poland. One of the tactics used by the regime to divide Jews and Poles was to orchestrate pogroms where Poles were the acting perpetrators and the Germans would step in as if they were protecting the Jews, this lasted for a few months early in the occupation (Steinlauf 1997, 31). By stepping in to defend the Jews, the intentions of the Germans were not motivated by humanitarian concerns but rather used to further alienate Poles and Jews. Creating a climate where Poles would be perceived, by Jews as well as the international community, as violently anti-Semitic. Furthermore, because of the way Nazis behaved in occupied Poland, it did not always mean the persecution of the Jews was perceived, by the Poles, as worse than their own. Historian Michael C. Steinlauf explains how the early occupation might have looked to the average Pole

> Moreover, as Poles observed German policy toward the Jews during the first two years of the war, it may not have seemed entirely clear that Jews had it worse. Although it was apparent that the Nazis lavished exceptional sadism on the Jews, the overall thrust of German repression before the mobilization of the death camps may have appeared separate but equal: political in nature, including the murder of elites, against the Poles; primarily economic against the Jews. Ghettos, termed "Jewish residential quarters" by the Nazis to parallel Polish and German "quarters," removed Jews, many with Polish neighbours and friends, from the midst of Polish daily life and banished them to a realm of rumour and myth. Until the ghetto uprisings and especially during the deportations, the Polish underground press stereotyped Jewish response to the Nazis as passivity and contrast it with Polish resistance. When someone managed to escape on to an "Aryan" street from behind ghetto walls plastered with nazi posters proclaiming "Jews, Lice, Disease," it required an effort for Poles to remember how recently this Jew had been their neighbor. (Steinlauf 1997, 31)

One element we can note here is how the Nazis used language to hide the real purpose of the ghettos as well as to normalize the physical removal of Jews from Polish society: "There was said to have been an announcement over the loud-speaker yesterday that it was forbidden to speak of the "Jewish Ghetto"; the proper term was "Jewish quarter," like the German and the Polish quarters." (Ringelblum 1974, 85) This language seemed to serve the same purpose as the ghetto walls, to hide what was really going on inside: genocide. Separating Poles and Jews physically furthered the otherization of the Jews in Polish society. At the same time, the Germans put in place a propaganda campaign targeting Poles with the message that Jews were diseased and were being isolated in ghettos to protect Poles : "The *Warsaw News* published an item about a conference of doctors who declared it was a pressing need to isolate the Jews from the rest of the populace in a Ghetto for health reasons." (Ringelblum 1974, 69) This, combined with the lack of regular contact with fellow Jewish citizens and propaganda, further otherized and dehumanized Jews in the eyes of Poles. In short, by severing contacts between Poles and Jews, the Nazis made it easier to otherize and dehumanize Jews, both steps being precursory to their destruction. The Nazis hoped that this would make Poles less likely to lend a helping hand, to Jews. This was because they would have forgotten about their Jewish neighbours, because of the high risk brought on by such action and also because they would have had feelings of disgust instilled in them through continued exposure to dehumanizing anti-Semitic propaganda.

The Polish resistance also unintentionally alienated Jews and Poles by creating resentment towards Jews with the myth of passivity[93]. This portrayed another way in which Poles and Jews were inherently different: one was actively resisting the occupation, the other went passively along with it. Any image of Jews fighting alongside Poles, during the invasion or in prior insurrections, quickly disappeared from Polish collective memory. Poland viewed itself as a nation where resistance, especially when it came with great sacrifice, this was deeply entrenched in their sense of identity and their self-perception; "Poland's commitment to the ideal of freedom was unconditional, and its struggle for liberation was a selfless effort undertaken on behalf of all mankind. ""Poland," wrote Mickiewicz, "will re-arise and free all the nations of Europe from bondage."" (Gross 1979, 7)

It should be noted that the myth of Jewish passivity, that they did not resist and went "like lamb to slaughter", is still somewhat pervasive. Jews put up resistance inside and outside of ghettos, even inside concentration camps. The most famous example being the Warsaw ghetto uprising.[94]

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[93] "A Pole who was very active in saving Jews, Władysława Chomsowa, noted: 'The greatest difficulty was the passivity of the Jews themselves.' This opinion has been echoed by a major historian, Raul Hilberg: In fact, the behaviour of the population during the killing operations was characterized by a tendency toward passivity." (Kochanski 2012, 306) Kochanski, however, fails to contextualize Hilberg's sentence. The rest reads "That passivity was the product of conflicting emotions and opposing restraints." (Hilberg 2003, 201) The impressions the Poles had of Jewish passivity, described in the first part of the citation, nevertheless remains relevant.

[94] Other examples include acts of sabotage from Jewish forced labourers (Beorn 2018, 235). Meir Berliner, a prisoner in Treblinka stabbed and kill an SS guard which "aroused shock and fear amongst the SS personnel." (Beorn 2018, 241) and "carefully orchestrated revolts" in Sobibor, Treblinka and Auschwitz, indicating that even when Jews knew they were going to die, they still fought (Beorn 2018, 235). It is important to understand that resistance during the Holocaust might not always align with the common image one might have in mind. It was not always violent or led by an organized group; "actions such as smuggling, escape, hiding, sabotage, and even suicide were ways in which some Jews chose to fight back against the Nazi program…These actions constituted concrete behavior opposing Nazi policy." (Beorn 2018, 235) Beorn states that the "resistance of some kind occurred in almost

However, one must keep in mind that, especially early in the destruction process, the rumours of large ovens where people would go up in smokes seemed unbelievable.[95] Not only because of the scale of the destruction but because of the savagery notion and of the methods of destruction. It was unheard of and consequently harder for people, already going through a traumatic experience, to grasp such a reality. This, in combination with the fact that when Jews were transported to the camps, they had been weakened by months or years in ghettos, resulting in a large portion of those who had survived being undernourished or ill. Even in those circumstances "many of these ghetto liquidation operations met with fierce resistance by the remnants of the surviving Jewish populations." (Beorn 2018, 220) Whenever there was resistance, these acts were not publicized in order to dissuade similar actions in the future. Furthermore, "the allegation of passivity expressed the lack of empathy which was conducive to passive attitudes [of the Poles] towards extermination and was a convenient excuse." (Cała 2018, 239) for their lack of joined resistance or rescue of the Jewish communities. Therefore, this myth was helpful to the occupying forces as it added another layer to Polish-Jewish division.

The penalties for helping Jews were put in place early in the occupation and were always drastic. The brutality increased throughout the duration of the occupation but even the smallest act of support was punishable by law. Help was easier to provide in the early period of the occupation but as time progressed, the challenge increased (Cała 2018, 249). These penalties were enforced through the colonial legal system:

> Pursuant to paragraph 5 of the Führer's decree of October 12, 1939, Governor Hans Frank issued the ordinance of October 15 1941, and several others which imposed the death penalty for Poles who would give shelter to the Jews or otherwise assist them by transporting them, giving or selling them food, failing to report Jews in hiding, handing them a piece of bread or a glass of water, and so forth. The usual penalty was execution by firing squad or hanging. Another form of punishment was the burning of the home in which the Jews were sheltered, together with the entire family of its owners, including children and casual visitors as well as livestock. (Korbonski 1989, 64)

We can see here by the extent of what constituted "help" that the intent of the sanctions was to completely sever any and every tie between Poles and Jews. This rendered any interaction with Jews potentially deadly. Yet, even with this considerable risk, Poles continued to help and rescue Jews. A fact attesting to this is Poland ranking as the country with the highest number of Righteous Among the Nations: 7280 individuals.[96] It is also worth noting that a significant

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all places at all times during the Holocaust. One need only look." (Beorn 2018, 225), directly challenging the myth of Jewish passivity and consequently establishing another commonality between them and Poles.

[95] "A slaughter of those for whom the idea of murder by industrial methods was beyond comprehension for the simple reason that it transcended the boundaries of their technological imagination." (Głowiński 2005, 53) "Emanuel Ringelblum, wrote in December 1942: Initially people did not believe at all in Treblinka, and anyone who spoke about it was shouted down as a spreader of panic, a pessimist who enjoyed wounding Jews. It was not understood that it was simply to murder tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children…Is this possible now, in the twentieth century?" (Beorn 2018, 162-3) Later on, most Jews were quite aware of the destruction.

[96] This is a title given by Yad Vashem (an official memorial institution in Jerusalem) to people who have helped save Jews during the Holocaust. Certain criteria must be met in order to be given the title, one disqualifying element

number of Poles kept their help secret from other Poles and consequently the more accurate number of rescuers is probably much higher. The reason for this secrecy being that the Polish helpers tended to be persecuted by other Poles. This is especially the case for Poles who were hiding Jews, which was considered "the most difficult form of rescue" (Beorn 2018, 268). The high risk associated with this had practical reasons such as "the difficulty of creating hiding places, but they also had to devise clever ways to supply their Jews with food without raising the suspicions of neighbours who might well turn them in for a reward." (Beorn 2018, 268) The persecution of Polish allies, who often became the target of blackmail, by Polish collaborators occurred during the occupation as well as after liberation.[97]

There are no doubt many reasons for this persecution but I will briefly go over two motivations, beyond anti-Semitism. First, they believed Poles helped Jews in exchange for money and wanted some for themselves.[98] Second, the fact that their neighbours had the moral courage to help shelter Jews, highlighted and called into question their own lack of action. The bravery of their fellow citizens, for some, painfully highlighted their lack of action and challenged their identity as good people who would help someone in need. Although in hindsight it is easy to pass judgment, one must keep in mind the severe consequences one faced when discovered sheltering, or helping, Jews. Not everyone was willing to take that risk or had the means to provide assistance (Cała 2018, 249). One could argue that those who acted demonstrated an above average display of fortitude and courage, more-so than that those who did not act were lacking morally and were cowardly. Furthermore, "in her analysis of Polish rescuers, Nechama Tec also notes that the initial decision to help Jews was impulsive and instinctive, not the result of prolonged reflection and calculation." (Browning 1992, 305)

There exists no complete list[99] of Poles who provided help to Jews during the occupation, however we can cite a few examples of the type of help provided:

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is having received monetary payment. It is worth remarking that through her research, Tec "found that only 16 percent of the rescuers were "motivated by financial gain." In fact, many rescuers chose to help Jews out of their own moral understanding of right and wrong." (Beorn 2018, 270) In this context, it is worth noting that "Rescuers motivated by personal greed were also more likely to sexually or physically abuse their protectees." (Beorn 2018, 269-270) It is elements like these that further blur the lines between ally and perpetrator in Poland. The number cited is the one displayed on Yad Vashem's website when accessed in 2025. The list was last updated in January 2023 and can be accessed on their website: .https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/statistics.html

[97] One incident related in Jan T. Gross's influential book "Neighbors" relates the story of a family who helped save seven Jews, and the persecution they endured. They were abused physically and had to move multiple times for fear of their lives. "So the stigma of having helped Jews during the occupation stuck to the Wyrzykowski family for good, and it followed them from place to place and, as it turned out, also from generation to generation. Antonina Wyrzykowska in the end escaped across the ocean and settled in Chicago. The son of Antonina Wyrzykowska's nephew, who remained near Jedwabne, was called 'a Jew' whenever his playmates got angry." (Gross 2012, 85-6) Another example: "Local non-Jews often murdered their neighbors for hiding Jews, as was the case for Lithuanian carpenter Jonas Paulavicius. His family hid twelve Jews. His neighbors only discovered his action at the end of the war. They called him "Father of Jews" and murdered him in 1952." (Beorn 2018, 269)

[98] The stereotype of Jews being rich and hoarding money, even after being dispossessed and plundered by Germans, and Poles to a lesser extent, was no doubt a large contributing factor to this.

[99] There exist some numbers, but these tend to be vastly debated. Korbonski states that 2500 Poles perished in Auschwitz for helping Jews and that 2300 Poles who were identified by name were also killed for the help provided. There is no clarification as to whether those numbers, and others cited, overlap. However, the conclusion is clear, thousands of Poles perished trying to save Jews (Korbonski 1989, 67). To this, we must add the unknown number of anonymous helpers.

a postman named Semik, who knew German and spoke in that language in the defense of a Jewish couple; a Pole who protested against the mass execution of Jews, which he was ordered to witness; another Pole who handed a bucket of water to Jews in a locked railway carriage taking them to an extermination camp; a Pole who tried to toss a sack of bread over the ghetto wall; and the Polish policeman Klis, who helped Jews forge identity cards. (Korbonski 1989, 64)

Considering the conditions in the ghettos and especially the limited access to food Jews had, another form of help Poles provided was through the black market or through smuggling. These economic exchanges continued the long-established tradition of commerce between Poles and Jews and were another way for Poles to support Jews. It should be noted that Poles often got something out of the trade, but the risks associated with smuggling were still severe. These trades continued even when the ghettos were sealed shut (Kochanski, 2012 294-5). The smuggling of food was especially important to Jewish survival as "it has been estimated that 100,000 Jews, or about 20 per cent of the Jews in the ghettos, died before deportations even began, mostly from starvation." (Kochanski 2012, 294)

Examples of Poles hiding Jews can also be found throughout Poland:

In Vilnius, a Catholic priest and a nun hid eleven of their Jewish archive workers in the monastery. The director of the zoo in Warsaw, Jan Zabinkski, used his empty complex to hide Jews and personally hid twelve Jews in his own house, where his wife and son helped. Pavel Gerasimchik, a poor Ukrainian peasant and father of three, volunteered to hide a Jewish family he had known before the war…Gerasimchik even returned a gold watch the Jews had given him. (Beorn 2018, 269)

In most of these cases above, the Jews survived, however, if Polish allies were caught sheltering Jews, the consequences often resulted in death.

A survivor recalled that, after the liquidation of the Lwów ghetto and subsequent search for hidden Jews, "the corpses of Poles who had been discovered giving shelters to Jews and the corpses of the Jews themselves, could be seen all over the town, in the streets, in the squares and in the residential quarters." One historical study identified at least 700 Poles executed to hiding Jews. (Beorn 2018, 269)

The punishments dealt to those allies were made public in an attempt to discourage further acts of solidarity. Posters containing the names of the "perpetrators" and the acts they had committed were placed in public places as well as the means by which they were killed (hung or shot). The death sentences were often carried out publicly as well, in order to "make examples of Poles who defied them." (Bergen 2016, 106)[100] and create a deterrent

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[100] Kochanski gives the following example: "The Silesian Brothers in Warsaw hid a number of Jewish boys, and the Germans discovered them: They hanged the arrested Silesian Brothers and their young foster-children on the balcony of one of the highest burnt-out buildings, opposite the Courts of Justice. The tragic bodies were left hanging

effect on the rest of the population. The penalties were severe, especially if we compare them to the ones from other occupied countries: no recorded case of death for helping Jews in Norway, one dead in Denmark, allies in Holland were "sent to concentration camps and their estates impounded", no known arrests took place in Belgium, French citizens were sent to camps, no known punishment for Italians (Korbonski 1989, 67-8). Furthermore, there was, intentionally, never a Polish puppet government or collaborator government as was the case in Norway with the Quisling government and in Vichy France. Yet it is the Polish nation which has been labelled anti-Semitic, and it is Poles who are depicted as having agreed with the Nazi's destruction of Jews, even blamed for having participated in their own way out of hate and greed.
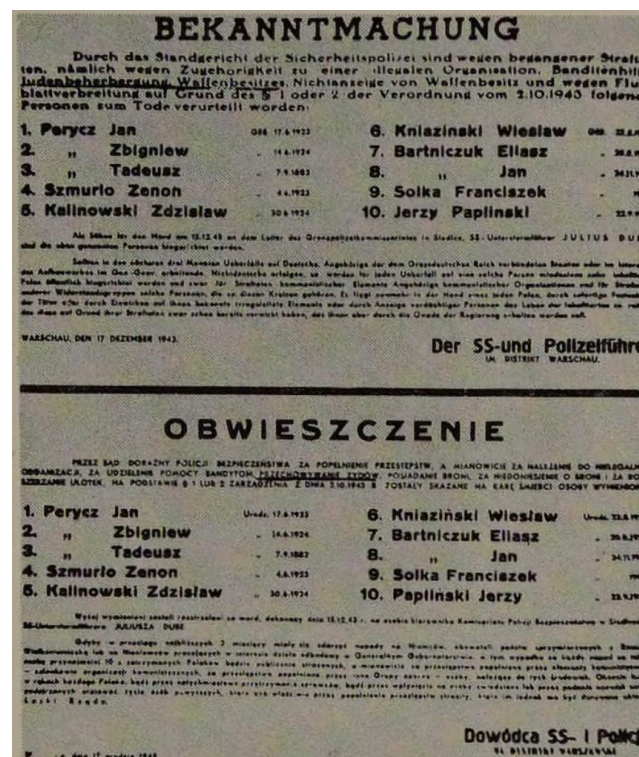

Figure 21: "*Bekanntmachung/Obwieszcenie*" (Notice)[101]

Being labeled by the international community as anti-Semitic and being so closely associated with perpetratorship after suffering under Nazi occupation for six years affected the Poles, and Polish identity, on a deep level. Their victimhood had been denied during the occupation by the

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for several days. In the business area, in a bustling, thriving street, with its trams, cars, cabs, and people hurrying in all directions, living their otherwise normal daily lives – there on the balcony, in full view of everybody, still hung the blackened corpses of the heroic priests and boys." (Kochanski 2012, 321)

[101] "Jan Percy and nine other Poles were shot in December 1943 "for helping bandits, sheltering Jews, possession of weapons, etc."" Image retrieved from (Korbonski 1989, cross-section between 72-3)

Allies, notably when the Katyń massacre came to light.[102] After the liberation, they were not perceived as victims either. This lack of acknowledgment of their suffering, combined with the blame and insinuated complicity in the crimes committed on their land led to a heightened sense of unfairness and victimhood. The fact that Jews were the intended and main victims of the Holocaust is not a debatable fact. However, ignoring the other victims does not erase or minimize the suffering of Jews. Although academia and society at large have improved in their inclusion of other victims (transgender people,[103] homosexuals, Roma and Sinti people, Jehovah's witnesses etc.) in the discussion on the Holocaust, Poles, as a group, are not as often afforded the same recognition.

One factor which could be said to have influenced their association with guilt is that the murder of Jews mostly took place on their territory. The death camps were often referred to as Polish death camps (rather than Nazi death camps in Poland), subtly knitting a link between Nazi crimes and Polishness. Poles did persecute Jews, both during and after the occupation, this is addressed in the following section, but they were not the driving force behind the Holocaust, and their persecution was never on the same scale as Nazi crimes. This is not to absolve the Poles of any culpability; however, it is important to provide relevant context and nuance if we want a realistic portrayal, and understanding, of the events as well as an improvement in contemporary Polish-Jewish relationships.

At the root of the tense relationship between Poles and Jews is identity. Poles viewed themselves as victims. They were viewed by others as perpetrators. Post-occupation, and still to some extent in contemporary Poland, Poles were unable to reconcile this perpetratorship with their victimhood. Poles therefore occupy this ambiguous space of victim and perpetrator, resulting in a conflicting embodiment of identities. "they [Polish scholars] are accustomed to regard Poland as a victim nation, as a result of the harsh German occupation, and victims are extremely reluctant to admit that they have victimized others." (Paldiel 2022, 62)[104] Another element which renders this reconciliation difficult is Polish identity; "a key ingredient of modern Polish self-perception:

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[102] At the time of the discovery of the mass grave at Katyń, the USSR, who committed the massacre, were now part of the Allies. Therefore, although the Polish government in exile pushed for more information and accountability, the Allies were not keen in alienating the USSR. Consequently, the Poles were essentially forcibly silenced on speaking out about the atrocity. The cover-up and the forced cooperation with the USSR, which the Poles were pressured to view as an ally (despite half of their territory still being occupied by the Soviets) regardless of the crimes they had committed towards Poles, left a deep wound for the Polish people and in the USSR-Polish relationship. It is worth mentioning that the Nazis used the Katyń massacre in their propaganda to amplify the Polish-Soviet divide. This cover-up by the Allies, played hand in hand with that propaganda (Kochanski 2012, 338-43). In that massacre, 3000 Polish officers were found dead, considering how little was left of the Polish elite after the Nazis targeted them, this represented a further blow to Polish society and culture (Kochanski 2012, 339).
[103] It should be noted that Magnus Hirschfeld, a German physician and sexologist, who by then had to flee Germany and his "research institute was one of the first casualties of their new regime." (Bergen 2016, 23) The institute conducted research on sex and sexuality, including homosexuality and diverse gender identities. Some conservative forces in Germany, including the Nazis, believed it to "represent the decadence of a society that had abandoned its traditional values." (Bergen 2016, 23) A discourse which is eerily familiar to the one currently held in the USA by the Trump administration and their active persecution of transgender individuals. The classic image one has in mind when hearing of book burnings, was in actuality the burning of Hirschfeld's research, setting the field back decades in lost knowledge and societal acceptability. It is also worth noting that most homosexual inmates in concentration camps, were not liberated at the end of the war but sent to purge the rest of their sentence in prisons (Bergen 2016, 203).
[104] As is currently the case with the ongoing Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

the conviction that Poles are at heart a very tolerant people." (Steinlauf 1997, 2) This clashes with the image of anti-Semitic Poles who participated in the violent persecution and destruction of the Jewish members of their society. For progress to be made in Polish-Jewish relationships, their victimhood must be acknowledged, but Poles must also reconcile this with their roles as perpetrators as well as how they benefitted from the destruction of their compatriots, most often through the acquisition of goods and properties belonging to Jews.

4.4.   Poles as Perpetrators

Perpetratorship took many shapes, one of which was that of collaborator with the Nazi regime. Before discussing Polish collaboration with the Germans, we must address the fact that the firsthand information we have on Polish collaboration with the Germans can be problematic. When sourced from the Germans, Christopher Browning states two factors which we must keep in mind. First, Germans interacted more with Polish informants than with the average Polish citizen (Browning 1992, 155), the informants could have been motivated through greed, financial incentive (Tec 1987, 40) or strong sentiments of anti-Semitism.[105] Consequently "there was an inherent bias in the sympathies and behavior of the Poles with whom the German policemen had firsthand experiences." (Browning 1992, 155) The second factor ties in with Moshman's denial, the Germans then have something to gain from the narrative they are presenting.

> It is fair to speculate that a great deal of projection was involved in German comments on Polish anti-Semitism. Often unwilling to make accusatory statements about their comrades or to be truthful about themselves, these men must have found considerable psychological relief in sharing blame with the Poles. Polish misdeeds could be spoken about quite frankly, while discussion about Germans was quite guarded. *Indeed, the greater the share of Polish guilt, the less remained on the German side*. (Browning 1992, 155 my italics)

We can see in Browning's observations why the Germans had a vested interest in depicting Poles as anti-Semitic and as perpetrators, especially when it came to the image projected to the international community. This is perhaps one of the major contributing factor to the anti-Semitic label assigned to the Poles after liberation. In Poland, the most infamous cases of collaboration are those of blackmailers[106] also known as *szmalcownik*. These blackmailers were "an ever-present threat to the illegal Jew. Some Poles practiced it as an occupation." (Tec 1987, 47)[107] This means that there were enough Jews to denounce, and they were being denounced at a rate high enough that one could make a living from it. Blackmailers were especially feared because they tended to demand multiple payments and would regularly turn the Jews in to the Germans

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[105] It should be noted that "the actions of blackmailers or corrupt policemen manifested the demoralization of the times" and were therefore not always a representation of personal animosity towards the Jews (Cała 2018, 237).

[106] It is worth noting that the Polish underground often handed out death sentences for collaborators and blackmailers (Korbonski 1989, 66). There has been some debate as to the motivation of these orders, whether they were seen as condemnable because they led to the death of Jews (and often the Poles who helped them) or if it was perceived more as an act of treason for collaborating with the German enemy or a mix of both.

[107] The *szmalcownik* were considered such a threat that, in his memoir Głowiński writes the following regarding an interaction he had with one of them: "the chess match played against the *szmalcownik*–or rather, against Death, who on this occasion had assumed the form not of a skeleton with a scythe, but rather of a well-built young man with a roguishly trimmed moustache." (Głowiński 2005, 65)

even after having been paid, this meant the Jews in hiding had to find another safe haven (Tec 1987, 47). This implies that even after having secured a shelter on the "Aryan" side, most Jews had to relocate more than once, increasing their chances of getting caught each time.

One of the main ways Poles benefitted from the disappearances of their Jewish neighbours was through plunder: the acquisitions of goods (material objects, money, property: both residential and commercial). This could be achieved through force, through the seizure of "abandoned" property or through friends or acquaintances who trusted them with their belongings; "Many Jews give their things to Christians to hide for them, but frequently the people they give them to don't wish to return them." (Ringelblum 1974, 52) Leaving one's property with Polish friends was often a last attempt for Jews to keep access to some of their financial resources when German law declared they could not own anything (Gross 2012, 80). For Poles who honoured their commitment, the return of this property:

> In numerous instances this proved to be their salvation, providing financial resources on which they could draw when later hiding on the Aryan side. But frequently, Polish acquaintances broke their promises, refused to honor the agreement, kept the goods for themselves, and even denounced Jewish owners to the German police. (Gross 2012, 80)

At the end of the occupation, when Jews returned to their hometowns, the refusal to return Jewish property was a common cause of death for Jews. Poles who did not want to relinquish what they now saw as theirs, murdered the rightful owners (Gross 2007, 40). "they (Poles working with Germans) want to get you out of the way, so they can have what belongs to your family." (Tec 1987, 45) Gross states that about 95% of Jewish property was never returned to its rightful owners (Gross & Grudzinska Gross 2016, 81). Plunder was also a tool used by the Germans to promote the destruction of Jews as beneficial to Poles on a material level as well; "Dangling promises of Jewish property in front of gentile Poles gave them a stake in attacks on Jews and encouraged them to betray Jews to the Germans." (Bergen 2016, 109)

Poles also took active roles in the direct persecution of Jews. A phenomenon more common in rural Poland was that of the Jew hunt. Peasants would go in the surrounding forests, attempting to find Jews who were hiding and deliver them to the Germans: "in the Polish countryside, and peasants joined in "hunts for the Jews," *Judenjagd*, organized all over the Generalgovernment by the German authorities. Occasionally Polish "dark-blue" police set out to hunt for Jews on their own initiative." (Gross & Grudzinska Gross 2016, 82) A Polish teacher who had stopped in one of the villages where this was about to take place gave the following statement regarding the atmosphere:

> All were in a festive mood, armed with rakes, sticks, shovels and axes. As they drank, their jokes about Jews became more frequent and their laughter louder. No one objected to the forthcoming event; all seemed united in a common purpose. Shocked by these preparations, the teacher asked: *How much will you be paid per Jew?* An uneasy silence fell over those present. *Then I told them that for Christ they paid thirty silver pieces. You should demand the same payment.* No one answered him. Later shots rang out and he knew a raid was in progress. (Tec 1987, 41 italics original)

The same event is related in historians Jan T. Gross & Irina Grudzinska Gross's *Golden Harvest* with the added details that "peasants were buying scythes. The saleswoman says 'you'll need them for today's round-up,' What round-up, I ask. 'Of Jews,'" (Gross & Grudzinska Gross 2016, 84). They also add, regarding the payment the Polish peasants would get "a few pounds of sugar, some vodka, or most often, their victims' clothes." (Gross & Grudzinska Gross 2016, 85)[108] With descriptions such as these, it is easy to see how a close association between Poles and anti-Semitism was created. This is especially true for Jewish survivors of such events, people who hid in the forest and narrowly escaped one of the hunts or were simply aware that their Polish neighbours were as much of a threat as the occupying Germans. The rewards given to Poles for participating in these hunts also seem to indicate the very cheap price they attributed to Jewish lives. Granted, it was a time of scarcity, but we can see in these acts of destruction, and in the atmosphere surrounding them just how dehumanized and otherized Jews had become.

At the same time, some Jews were also persecuted by the Polish resistance[109]

> The insurgents from the Home Army's "General Sowiński' battalion, on September 11, 1944, murdered multiple Jews in hiding, including children and women (who had been raped before death). Icchak Cukierman summarized bitterly: "AK was not an aid organization; it was a military organization. And, as such, it did not need us either in the fighting ghetto or in the Aryan part of Warsaw. We were also unnecessary in guerrilla operations; as Jews we were unnecessary everywhere. (Cała 2018, 245-6)

Consequently, we can see how Jews faced threats from Poles in various settings. In urban areas, they had to survive the German patrols, Polish denunciations and the *szmalcownik.* In rural areas,

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[108] Gross includes the following description of a hunt by "the Polish underground press reported the atrocious behavior of local people benefiting from the misery of the Jews. In *Information bulletin* dated Number 13, 1942, there is one especially poignant article, entitled "Disgrace": From various localities, actually from all places where bestial murders of Jews had occurred, one hears that the Polish population participated in the plunder of victims of German killings alongside the Hitlerites…It turns out that frequently "solid" citizens, "serious" farmers, participated in these criminal displays…In some instances fights broke out between those human beasts who were awaiting their turn until miserable Jews get killed, so they could strip still warm bodies of their clothes and underwear. In a few cases, the cordon of Hitlerite murderers was broken, as people couldn't wait till the execution, and proceeded to undress Jews condemned to death while pulling from each other's hand's pieces of clothing." (Gross & Grudzinska Gross 2016, 85) An interesting element here is the description of the perpetrators as "solid" citizens and "serious" farmers. The implication here is that this behaviour is not one you would expect from these people but rather from someone who would be perceived as inherently evil or corrupt. This ties in to Moshman's views on evil (see Chapter One). There is little doubt that these people did not consider themselves perpetrators and continued to view the Germans as such instead. Here is another example of the complexities of the Polish situation. Although these Poles are no doubt perpetrators, they were also victims of the Nazis, but they cannot accept this as a reality and consequently resort to denial to preserve their image of themselves as good people. It is also noteworthy that this persecution by Poles could not have taken place without the dehumanization of Jews fed to them by Nazi propaganda, as well as the incitement of Nazis. Poles were capable of carrying out murderous acts by themselves, but in the climate of the occupation, we must take into account to what extent the Nazis influenced behaviours and beliefs.

[109] Although the Home Army (AK) could persecute Jews, they also devoted "considerable attention to learning about what was happening to the Jews in Poland. Its intelligence assumed that any methods applied to Poles would later be used against Polish gentiles." (Bergen 2016, 126) Regarding the various resistant branch in Poland, the Home Army was less likely than the communist underground to recruit Polish Jews (Bergen 2016, 126).

the Jew hunts and even the resistance could prove to be persecutors, proof that your enemy's enemy is not always your friend. There was no way for Jews to know who they could trust and who would betray or kill them. Some Poles who initially helped Jews later turned them in, this was more frequent when money was involved and at a later point ran dry. This illustrates the profound break in the relationship and trust, between Poles and Jews and the constant terror Jews lived under, whether they were inside or outside of ghettos. The Germans had succeeded in dividing them and sowing mistrust and disunity.[110] This divide has not been fully bridged over today.

4.5.   Polish Identity and Victimhood

The persecution suffered at the hand of the Nazis, as well as Poland's general history, influenced their understanding of themselves as victims; "Martyrdom became the key to understanding Polish history." (Gross 1979, 7) To understand the tension between Poles and Jews in relation to victimhood, it is important to have some historical context regarding Polish identity.

> In 1863, in an act that would symbolize Polish-Jewish cooperation for generations to come, Ber Meisels, the orthodox chief rabbi of Warsaw, preached support for the Polish uprising. This was a crucial period in the shaping of a distinctive Polish national identity. Polish romantic poets, above all the national bard Adam Mickiewicz, began to see in Polish history a mythic narrative of self-sacrifice at the vanguard of a universal struggle for freedom. Polish romantic messianism, which identified Poland as the "Christ of nations,' could hardly avoid recognizing in the Jews a parallel tradition. While ultimately, this recognition inspired a kind of competitive messianism and even a "victimization envy" that would fuel Polish anti-Semitism, for Mickiewicz, the Polish "Christ of nations" and his suffering "elder brother" were destined for a messianic alliance. Mickiewicz's epic, *Pan Tadeusz*, substantial portions of which Polish schoolchildren have memorized for generations, includes a tavernkeeper named Jankiel, the best known Jewish figure in Polish literature…. bearded Jankiel…performs a concert of Polish patriotic music that recalls his audience to their sacred national task. "For your freedom and for ours," the universalistic slogan of the Polish insurrectionists, became the watchword too of Jewish solidarity with the Poles against a common oppressor. (Steinlauf 1997, 10)

We can see here how Polish national and individual identities have religion at their core. If their own self-perception is associated with Christhood, and the prevalence of the belief that Jews murdered Christ and held collective guilt for that act, then it is easy to see how this can have been used as a dividing factor. Although Mickiewicz's poem is older, we can see that the relationship between deicide and Jews was still deeply embedded in Polish consciousness as related by Głowiński in his memoirs (see footnote 81). If Jews were the enemies of Christ, then they were the enemy of Poles. They wanted to destroy Poland, the Christ of nation, just as their forebears had murdered Christ.

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[110] There were of course exceptions to this, but in terms of general Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust, fear was the dominant theme rather than solidarity.

When it comes to the topic of the guilt or innocence of Poles and why it is still a sensitive topic today, we must acknowledge not only the uniqueness of Poland's occupation but uniqueness of the relationship between Poles and Jews. Bergen cites three common interpretations. The first being the "'Poles as arch-antisemties' theory…according to this view, Polish Christian were even more hostile to Jews than were Nazi Germans, and Polish antisemitism was an essential factor in the Holocaust." (Bergen 2016, 119) This argument is often supported by claims that Poles benefitted from the plunder of Jewish goods but completely ignores the persecution of Poles (Bergen 2016, 119-120). It is theories such as this that contributes to the defensiveness of Poles when it comes to reconciling their perpetratorship with their victimhood. This blatant denial of their suffering can only result in entrenching them deeper in a denial of any wrongdoing and a desire for their suffering to be made visible and acknowledged. The opposite view is the one in which "all Poles were victims of the Holocaust." (Bergen 2016, 120) This puts Polish suffering at the forefront of the dialogue, although often at the expense of Jewish suffering (Bergen 2016, 120). This is an improvement on the first theory, scholars of this school of thought have advanced the narrative in terms of Polish suffering and consequently offered a more accurate picture of the occupation. The danger with this view is that it can come at the expense of "Jewish victimhood or even reproducing antisemitic ideas." (Bergen 2016, 120-1)

Finally, there is the "'unequal victims' theory, according to which, "Nazi Germany attacked Polish gentiles and Polish Jews, but in different ways and to different extents." (Bergen 2016, 121) Bergen argues that this option is insightful but has as its central flaw the likelihood of leading to "a kind of competition in suffering or a numbers game in which human agony is quantified in ways that do not make moral sense." (Bergen 2016, 121) It should be noted that this competition of suffering was a debate present at the time of the occupation as well. In his *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, Ringelblum writes that "The question of who is worse off now, the Jews or the Poles, is often discussed." (Ringelblum 1974, 248) Bergen arrives at the conclusion that due to the complexity of the influential factors in occupied Poland (both by Germans and Soviets) as well as the "wide range of actions and experiences on the part of Poles during World War II" (one could add that this applies to the Jewish experience as well) we must avoid generalizations (Bergen 2016, 121). Furthermore, she adds that "The fates of Polish Christians and Polish Jews under Nazi occupation were linked in complicated ways that we cannot understand if we study those groups of people in isolation from each other." (Bergen 2016, 121)

4.6. Apocalyptic Identities and Poland

We can see from the interactions between Poles and Jews that Poles occupied a multitude of roles throughout the occupation. However, due to their racial identity, the Nazis did not view them as Aryan and consequently they could never be integrated into the Elect. Regardless, while they remained useful to the Reich, mostly as labourers, they could also not be grouped in with the Apocalyptic Other. They were in-between; destined for destruction because of their racial identity but at the same time, not the main enemy of the regime. The problem being, there is no third option in a binary system like apocalyptism. This is precisely why the case of Poland is so relevant. It exposes the flaws which are inherent to the Nazi system.

One of the core tenets of Nazi ideology is race. They saw it as immutable and inherent. This was one the of most basic arguments for the extermination of the Jewish people. However, the Nazis

constantly proved this to be wrong, especially in Poland.[111] According to the Nazi racial ideology, Poles were considered subhuman, they were racially inferior. One's racial characteristics could not be changed through education or assimilation or any other means. If they believed this to be true, then one could question why they implemented programs of "Germanization" where they took "'racially valuable' children from supposedly inferior parents in order to 'Germanize' them. In other words, they intended to transform some of the children of non-Germans into members of the 'Aryan race.'" (Bergen 2016, 169)[112] It is strikingly obvious that the logic[113] here is flawed, especially if we are to compare that with Nazis counting the percentage of Jewish blood to determine who was considered Jewish (which was influenced by the American 'one drop' rule). Yet blood percentage here did not seem to be as relevant. A child who has two racially inferior parents would, according to their racist logic, inherit 100% racially inferior blood. Considered as subhuman, one could have assumed that Poles would be excluded from this program. This was not the case. We can add to the destruction of the Polish people "approximately 200,000 Polish children kidnapped by the Germans, only between 15 and 20 per cent were returned to Poland after the war." (Kochanski 2012, 271)[114] The "artificial Nazi notions of blood and race" (Bergen 2016, 169) is further demonstrated in the case of two Polish sisters.

> Although the parents of Johanna and Danuta W. were "pure Polish," the sisters both applied for Germanization. No doubt they hoped to get the benefits that being classified German rather than Polish[115] would bring. In 1944 SS racial authorities in one city approved Johanna's application, and she became officially recognized as an ethnic German. A similar office elsewhere rejected Danuta. Meanwhile both women went to

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[111] The fact that Nazi rhetoric is incoherent is not news; however, the case study of Poland offers concrete examples to illustrates just how absurd their racist and eugenic logic was and continues to be for the neo-Nazi groups espousing such an ideology.

[112] Through this program: "Concrete steps were taken to increase numbers of Germans while weakening the peoples of the territories they occupied. Under a program codenamed Operation *Heuaktion*, they "hay action," German agencies kidnapped thousands of children and adolescents from eastern Europe and sent them to the Reich, in some cases to be raised by German families, in other cases to work in factories." (Bergen 2016, 169)

[113] Yes, this means the logic is flawed but Nazi rhetoric was full of contradictions. Like many conspiratorial or paranoid worldview, they would distort reality to align with their worldview rather than accepting their worldview could be wrong, consequently when incoherences crept up, they had an explanation ready to make sense of it. Furthermore, questioning the Nazi worldview meant questioning Hitler, which considering his role as Messiah, was not something to be done lightly. Much like their propaganda made use of emotions to convince its believers, the party members were also more motivated by feelings than by rationality. This is exemplified in the documentary The *Meaning of Hitler* (based on Sebastian Haffner's book of the same name), Professor Deborah Lipstadt (who was sued by notorious Holocaust denier David Irving) says the following: "Conspiracy theory…is something that has no basis in rational facts…when we try to figure out where Hitler's anti-Semitism came from, what we're trying to do is rationally explain an irrational sentiment… The minute you're trying to give a rational explanation for an irrational sentiment you're gonna be lost." (The Meaning of Hitler, 2002, 31 min 25 seconds) See also Moshman on emotions vs rationality.

[114] Kochanski adds that the kidnapped children were screened twice and "those who failed the tests were sent to labour camps in Germany. The records of Auschwitz show the arrival of 39 boys from Zamość in February 1943, all of whom were immediately killed by phenol injections to the heart." (Kochanski 2012, 271) The number is corroborated by Tadeusz Piotrowski (Piotrowski 2007, 22). Another example of assimilation or death.

[115] Another more subtle means of destroying the Poles: absorbing them into another ethnicity.

Germany to work as housemaids. Danuta became pregnant by an SS man.[116] When her baby was born, he received ethnic German status, but his mother was still classified as a Pole.[117] The only reason German authorities gave for rejecting Danuta was that "she did not look so good." Danuta's status caused practical problems because the sisters lived together. Under the terms of Nazi racial law, ethnic Germans such as Johanna were to have no social contact with Poles like Danuta. Nor was Danuta's own child permitted to interact with his mother. The postwar fates of Johanna, Danuta, and her son are unknown. (Bergen 2016, 169-170)

Three factors for Germanization were to be taken into consideration. First and foremost, no Jewish child could ever be taken into the Germanization program (Bergen 2016, 169) as they were the ultimate Other, one whose blood would inherently corrupt any other it was mixed with. Second, this program was put in place mostly because "German population planners realized that even a massively increased birthrate could not produce enough children to achieve the rate of population growth they wanted." (Bergen 2016, 169) Therefore, they *needed* those children (notably to populate their newly acquired *lebensraum*) and for Hitler, the end always justified the means. Finally, the racial value of the children was determined based on physical characteristics, those aligned with the ideal image of the Aryan (pale, blood hair, blue eyes). It seemed that, in the case of these children, the inner characteristics of Aryans would flow from their Aryan looks and not their blood, as their eugenicists claimed: another discrepancy. The fact that the children were found amongst other, "lesser" races, were often credited to a mixing of German or Nordic blood or attributed to some related ancestry. Therefore, the "reality" was manipulated in order to align itself with the Nazi worldview. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this is not the only area in which this manipulation happened, but it was rather a common occurrence.

4.7.   Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter examined the uniqueness of Poland as a case study and as well as the Polish-Jewish relationship. First, the complications linked to Poland, mostly deriving from the stereotype of Poles as very anti-Semitic were explored. These are important as they provide not only some context to understand the historical events but some insight into Polish identity and perception. The peculiarity of Poland also includes their brutal occupation, and the consequent damage Polish society endured throughout their lengthy occupation. Second, a portrait of Polish-Jewish relationships pre-occupation helps us understand how each group perceived themselves as well as their counterpart. We can see that Jewish presence in Poland is deeply rooted. Albeit not being assimilated to Polish culture, they were well integrated and had established a network of relations with Poles. Religion marked a point of departure when it came to Polish-Jewish identities, this is notably the case when it came to the strong impact the Catholic Church had on shaping Polish identity, Polish-Jewish relationships and Polish anti-Semitism The Church proved to be crucial to Polish identity before, during and after the occupation. It was both a source of

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[116] SS men, seen as members of the racially pure elite, were encouraged to reproduce at higher rates, even outside of wedlock, through the *Lebensborn* program "The image of a dying race haunted the Nazis. Out of this came the idea for *Lebensborn*- remote SS maternity homes for "hereditarily valuable" children sired by racially "elite" men and unmarried women. The facilities were invented by the head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler" (Rabinbach & Gilman 2013, 328)

[117] For a German to have a sexual relation with a Pole was considered a grievous violation as "All sexual relations with women or girls of an alien people…are a sin against our own blood" (Mätthaus, Böhler & Mallman 2014 ,34).

grief and assistance for Jews during the occupation. It is important to note that the assistance came from individual members of the clergy and not through the church as an institution.

Poland's brutal occupation meant that Polish people and their culture were violently repressed, they were seen by the Nazis as useful "only as a reservoir of labor." (Noakes & Pridham 2001, 320) The brutality of the occupation, combined with extensive Nazi propaganda attempted to influence Polish-Jewish relationships by creating division and hostility between both groups. Propaganda proved successful in dehumanizing and otherizing Jews from Poles. A contributing factor is to be found in the heavy penalties the colonial legal system inflicted on Poles supporting Jews regardless of the type of aid. Although the Nazis created a fracture in Polish-Jewish relationships, a high number of Poles were willing to risk their lives to help Polish Jews in need. Indicating that the ties were not completely severed. On the other hand, we have covered the roles played by Poles as perpetrators and collaborators and the influence Nazis had on this. Some Poles had taken an active role in the persecution of Jews, for examples in Jew Hunts, through denunciations or by murdering Jews for their belongings. Others were more passive and appropriated Jewish property they deemed to be abandoned. The crux of this chapter lies in the duality embodied by the Poles as victims and persecutors and how this association is still unresolved today. This is shaped in large part by the lack of recognition of their victimhood which conflicts with their understanding of themselves and their own perpetratorship. Poles see these identities as mutually exclusive. This chapter has proved this view to be erroneous.

Another unique factor of Poland was that despite the best effort from the Nazi regime to make the Polish-Jewish identities fit within the apocalyptic binary, the endeavour has failed. The Nazi apocalyptic worldview was totalizing, nuances would not be reconciled within it. Poland was and still is, full of nuances. Jews could be reconciled with the Apocalyptic Other but Poles could not, neither could they be included with the Elect. This is a major reason why Poles proved difficult to reconcile with this worldview. They could not be absorbed in the apocalyptic binary. Some portions of Poles could be considered Other and destroyed, these included Polish Jews, communists, members of the resistance and other undesirables. Other groups could be assimilated into ethnic Germans based on some far-off ancestry. But as a people, Poles do not fit the Nazi apocalyptic identity binary. This of course would not stop the Nazis, but it illustrates, especially through the Germanization efforts on children, that reality did not matter much as long as propaganda, or violence, could homogenize the society into what the Nazis needed it to be. The problem is that in contemporary society, this one-dimensional way of viewing Poland has not completely disappeared, and this leads to the erasure of among other things, Polish victimhood, Polish allyship, and Jewish resistance.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated how identity can be shaped and then weaponized for genocidal purposes. In the case of Germany, we have seen how Jews who were well assimilated were suddenly expelled from their community based on an imposed identity. This identity not only rendered them Other but made them a threat to Germany's survival and through conspiratorial propaganda transformed them from victims to persecutors. German identity on the other hand shifted to that of the Elect, the chosen ones. They were being unfairly attacked and blamed, but they were also the only people who could save Europe from the International Jewry conspiracy. Furthermore, the influence of apocalypticism in this process proved crucial as it transformed societal diversity into homogeneity. This was achieved through a combination of propaganda and violence. We have seen the power propaganda can have in overriding logic in favour of emotional impulses. These impulses can then be put to use to serve the vision of the regime.

However, Poland has also showed us the limitations of propaganda and the cracks in the Nazi apocalyptic worldview. Propaganda did not fail because the Poles were somehow immune, quite the opposite, it succeeded in more than one area. Poland, however, is the perfect case study to demonstrate the irrationality, the rigidity and the totalizing worldview of Nazi Germany. Although outwardly, the Nazis could apply their vision, the on the ground realities could never conform to it. This is why the regime resorted to propaganda campaigns which projected the image of a successful occupation: the Poles hated the Jews as much as they did and were grateful for the German presence. Yet it also revealed that the wounds left from the occupation and its anti-Semitic propaganda are still open, attesting to the long-term effect propaganda can have. This is demonstrably true in the case of Poland as new generations have now found themselves the inheritors of this tense and complicated set of relationships. This is why the study of Polish victimhood and their suffering under the brutal Nazi occupation is deserving of more study.

The complexities in Polish-Jewish relationships as well as Poland's victimhood were also influenced by Poland's relationship with the USSR as "the Poles suffered greatly at the hands of the Soviets, both during the first occupation from September 1939 to June 1941, and again when they re-entered Poland at the beginning of 1944 and in the years to follow" (Kochanski 2012, xxiv). The Polish experience with the Soviets was not covered in this thesis due to the depth of the topic and the limited range of a masters' thesis. Regardless, it is worth noting that the USSR influenced Poland's future post-WWII and consequently the type of anti-Semitism present in the country. Namely, the stereotype of the communist Jew and that Jews collaborated with the Soviet forces during their occupation or received favourable treatment.[118] "Accompanying the development of the stereotype and its fixation in popular consciousness in the postwar years was the worst anti-Jewish violence in the history of Polish-Jewish relations. In Poland from 1944 to 1947, hundreds of Jews were murdered." (Steinlauf 1997, 51) There were other factors than the Soviet's presence which influenced this violence, as covered in Chapter Four of this thesis. This

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[118] Although there is some truth to the fact that Jews often thought their odds of survival under the Soviets were better than they were under the Nazis, there is no real indication that they collaborated with the Soviets against the Poles as a higher rate than any other ethnic minority. However, rumours that Jews welcomed the Soviet troops in the streets with flowers (Cała 2018, 239) helped build Polish resentment toward Jews. This undoubtedly factored in the anti-Semitic violence which took place at the end of the war.

topic and a comparison between the different effects Soviet and Nazi propaganda had on shaping identities in Poland would certainly yield interesting insights.

This research could be expanded in multiple directions. One of which, I believe might prove productive in helping to breach the Polish-Jewish divide. Moshman argues that for genocide to happens, otherization is mandatory. This is often considered only with the victims in mind, as the Other. However, little attention has been granted to how the victims, as a result of their own dehumanization and persecution, often viewed their oppressors as beastly and Other as well. Not only would this provide us with more information on Polish, German, Jewish and Soviet identities during and after the occupation but it could potentially be a gateway to creating a dialogue regarding victimhood in Poland. One that is not focused on a competition of suffering or in a one-dimensional view of the other group. This area of research must be carefully balanced. Moshman argues one must seek to understand the perpetrator to be better able to understand the crime. This is an avenue in which we can attempt to prevent further genocidal violence. Yet, one must be wary of falling into traps where perpetrators are not held accountable. De-otherization however, can yield great insights which can then be applied with concrete results. This is particularly the case when populations of persecutors and victims must live together post-genocide. A lot of attention has been given to how persecutors had to view their victims in order for destruction to happen. But the converse is also relevant.[119] How did Jews perceive Poles, Germans and Soviets during the occupation and after liberation, and how did this influence their behaviour. We can see notably, a mass exodus of Jewish survivors to Palestine, whose population is now subjected to its own genocide. Interestingly enough, this case contains similarities with Poland's. Both Poles and Zionists, are incapable of reconciling the fact that they can be victims and perpetrators at the same time.

Furthermore, this line of research is becoming more relevant considering the current rise of right-wing politics. We can see similarities in between discourses used by the Nazis and right-wing extremists. Notably when it comes to role reversal. In the USA and in South Africa, white supremacists claim they are being victimized on account of their whiteness: there is an ongoing white genocide according to them. They believe the survival of their identity as white Christians is under threat and they must fight back. Conspiracy theories are also on the rise again, especially since COVID-19. At the core of these conspiracies is the belief that they are being persecuted, they are the victims. Even after the immediate fall of the Nazi regime, these beliefs were still held by some groups. The difference is that these groups tended to be extremists, they were on the margins of society. Now, these views are found more regularly in the mainstream discourse and increasingly held by people in power. A United States Secretary of Health and Human services is an open conspiracy theorist and anti-vaxxer. Their president has espoused white genocide and the great replacement theory. The same extremism is reflected in Europe as well.

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[119] This is best exemplified in the last chapter of Głowiński's memoir: "Germans Are People, Too?" "I was stunned by the sentence "Germans are people.".…I was extremely stunned and indignant, because it questioned my deepest convictions; I absorbed it as an internal contradiction, as if someone had said, "beasts are people.".…My image of Germans—-or rather my imagine of a German, since the whole nation was embodied in an individual and what that individual did—-was extremely straightforward: at any given moment he seeks to murder me, you, someone else." (Głowiński 2005, 169-170) We can see here how the Nazi's otherization of Jews unintentionally yielded this result. In dichotomizing identities into the Elect and the Other, the Nazis only viewed themselves as the Elect, lets not forget how one dimensional these identities were portrayed to be, yet they never considered that through the same process, they became the Apocalyptic Other to their victims.

The study of how these emotions emerge, how one group is otherized and this otherization legitimized and normalize will always be a topic for further research, especially if one considers the legal angle where legality is often equated with morality. Yet we know that legislation is always behind social realities and norms.

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