



VI : *The Final Solution: Killing*

On June 22, 1941, Hitler launched his attack on the Soviet Union, and six or eight weeks later Eichmann was summoned to Heydrich's office in Berlin. On July 31, Heydrich had received a letter from Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, Prime Minister of Prussia, Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year-Plan, and, last but not least, Hitler's Deputy in the State (as distinguished from the Party) hierarchy. The letter commissioned Heydrich to prepare "the general solution [*Gesamtlösung*] of the Jewish question within the area of German influence in Europe," and to submit "a general proposal . . . for the implementation of the desired final solution [*Endlösung*] of the Jewish question." At the time Heydrich received these instructions, he had already been—as he was to explain to the High Command of the Army in a letter dated November 6, 1941—"entrusted for years with the task of preparing the final solution of the Jewish problem" (Reitlinger), and since the beginning of the war with Russia, he had been in charge of the mass killings by the *Einsatzgruppen* in the East.

Heydrich opened his interview with Eichmann with "a little speech about emigration" (which had practically ceased, though Himmler's formal order prohibiting all Jewish emigration except in special cases, to be passed upon by him personally, was not issued until a few months later), and then said: "*The Führer has ordered the physical extermination of the Jews.*" After which, "very much against his habits, he remained silent for a long while, as though he wanted to test the impact of his words. I remember it even today. In the first moment, I was unable to grasp the significance of what he had said, because he was so careful in choosing his words, and then I understood, and didn't say anything, because there was nothing to say any more. For I

had never thought of such a thing, such a solution through violence. I now lost everything, all joy in my work, all initiative, all interest; I was, so to speak, blown out. And then he told me: Eichmann, you go and see Globocnik [one of Himmler's Higher S.S. and Police Leaders in the General Government] in Lublin, the Reichsführer [Himmler] has already given him the necessary orders, have a look at what he has accomplished in the meantime. I think he uses the Russian tank trenches for the liquidation of the Jews.' I still remember that, for I'll never forget it no matter how long I live, those sentences he said during that interview, which was already at an end." Actually—as Eichmann still remembered in Argentina but had forgotten in Jerusalem, much to his disadvantage, since it had bearing on the question of his own authority in the actual killing process—Heydrich had said a little more: he had told Eichmann that the whole enterprise had been "put under the authority of the S.S. Head Office for Economy and Administration"—that is, not of his own R.S.H.A.—and also that the official code name for extermination was to be "Final Solution."

Eichmann was by no means among the first to be informed of Hitler's intention. We have seen that Heydrich had been working in this direction for years, presumably since the beginning of the war, and Himmler claimed to have been told (and to have protested against) this "solution" immediately after the defeat of France in the summer of 1940. By March, 1941, about six months before Eichmann had his interview with Heydrich, "it was no secret in higher Party circles that the Jews were to be exterminated," as Viktor Brack, of the Führer's Chancellery, testified at Nuremberg. But Eichmann, as he vainly tried to explain in Jerusalem, had never belonged to the higher Party circles; he had never been told more than he needed to know in order to do a specific, limited job. It is true that he was one of the first men in the lower echelons to be informed of this "top secret" matter, which remained top secret even after the news had spread throughout all the Party and State offices, all business enterprises connected with slave labor, and the entire officer corps (at the very least) of the Armed Forces. Still, the secrecy did have a practical purpose. Those who were told explicitly of the Führer's order were no longer mere "bearers of orders," but were

advanced to "bearers of secrets," and a special oath was administered to them. (The members of the Security Service, to which Eichmann had belonged since 1934, had in any case taken an oath of secrecy.)

Furthermore, all correspondence referring to the matter was subject to rigid "language rules," and, except in the reports from the *Einsatzgruppen*, it is rare to find documents in which such bald words as "extermination," "liquidation," or "killing" occur. The prescribed code names for killing were "final solution," "evacuation" (*Aussiedlung*), and "special treatment" (*Sonderbehandlung*); deportation—unless it involved Jews directed to Theresienstadt, the "old people's ghetto" for privileged Jews, in which case it was called "change of residence"—"received the names of "resettlement" (*Umsiedlung*) and "labor in the East" (*Arbeitsinsatz im Osten*), the point of these latter names being that Jews were indeed often temporarily resettled in ghettos and that a certain percentage of them were temporarily used for labor. Under special circumstances, slight changes in the language rules became necessary. Thus, for instance, a high official in the Foreign Office once proposed that in all correspondence with the Vatican the killing of Jews be called the "radical solution"; this was ingenious, because the Catholic puppet government of Slovakia, with which the Vatican had intervened, had not been, in the view of the Nazis, "radical enough" in its anti-Jewish legislation, having committed the "basic error" of excluding baptized Jews. Only among themselves could the "bearers of secrets" talk in uncoded language, and it is very unlikely that they did so in the ordinary pursuit of their murderous duties—certainly not in the presence of their stenographers and other office personnel. For whatever other reasons the language rules may have been devised, they proved of enormous help in the maintenance of order and sanity in the various widely diversified services whose cooperation was essential in this matter. Moreover, the very term "language rule" (*Sprachregelung*) was itself a code name; it meant what in ordinary language would be called a lie. For when a "bearer of secrets" was sent to meet someone from the outside world—as when Eichmann was sent to show the Theresienstadt ghetto to International Red Cross representatives from Switzerland—he received, together with his

orders, his "language rule," which in this instance consisted of a lie about a nonexistent typhus epidemic in the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen, which the gentlemen also wished to visit. The net effect of this language system was not to keep these people ignorant of what they were doing, but to prevent them from equating it with their old, "normal" knowledge of murder and lies. Eichmann's great susceptibility to catch words and stock phrases, combined with his incapacity for ordinary speech, made him, of course, an ideal subject for "language rules."

The system, however, was not a foolproof shield against reality, as Eichmann was soon to find out. He went to Lublin to see Brigadeführer Odilo Globocnik, former Gauleiter of Vienna—though not, of course, despite what the prosecution maintained, "to convey to him personally the secret order for the physical extermination of the Jews," which Globocnik certainly knew before Eichmann did—and he used the phrase "Final Solution" as a kind of password by which to identify himself. (A similar assertion by the prosecution, which showed to what degree it had got lost in the bureaucratic labyrinth of the Third Reich, referred to Rudolf Höss, Commander of Auschwitz, who it believed had also received the Führer's order through Eichmann. This error was at least mentioned by the defense as being "without corroborative evidence." Actually, Höss himself testified at his own trial that he had received his orders directly from Himmler, in June, 1941, and added that Himmler had told him Eichmann would discuss with him certain "details." These details, Höss claimed in his memoirs, concerned the use of gas—something Eichmann strenuously denied. And he was probably right, for all other sources contradict Höss's story and maintain that written or oral extermination orders in the camps always went through the W.V.H.A. and were given either by its chief, Obergruppenführer lieutenant general Oswald Pohl, or by Brigadeführer Richard Glücks, who was Höss's direct superior. (Concerning the doubtful reliability of Höss's testimony see also R. Pendorf, *Mörder und Ermordete*, 1961.) And with the use of gas Eichmann had nothing whatever to do. The "details" that he went to discuss with Höss at regular intervals concerned the killing capacity of the camp—how many shipments per week it could absorb—and also, perhaps, plans for expansion.) Globocnik, when Eichmann

arrived at Lublin, was very obliging, and showed him around a right of which there was an ordinary house where workers lived. A captain of the Order Police (perhaps Kriminalkommissar Christian Wirth himself, who had been in charge of the technical side of the gassing of "incurably sick people" in Germany, under the auspices of the Führer's Chancellery) came to greet them, led them to a few small wooden bungalows, and began, "in a vulgar uneducated harsh voice," his explanations: "how he had everything nicely insulated, for the engine of a Russian submarine will be set to work and the gases will enter this building and the Jews will be poisoned. For me, too, this was monstrous. I am not so tough as to be able to endure something of this sort without any reaction. . . . If today I am shown a gaping wound, I can't possibly look at it. I am that type of person, so that very often I was told that I couldn't have become a doctor. I still remember how I pictured the thing to myself, and then I became physically weak, as though I had lived through some great agitation. Such things happen to everybody, and it left behind a certain inner trembling."

Well, he had been lucky, for he had still seen only the preparations for the future carbon-monoxide chambers at Treblinka, one of the six death camps in the East, in which several hundred thousand people were to die. Shortly after this, in the autumn of the same year, he was sent by his direct superior Müller to inspect the killing center in the Western Regions of Poland that had been incorporated into the Reich, called the Warthegau. The death camp was at Kulm (or, in Polish, Chelmo), where, in 1944, over three hundred thousand Jews from all over Europe, who had first been "resetled" in the Łódź ghetto, were killed. Here things were already in full swing, but the method was different; instead of gas chambers, mobile gas vans were used. This is what Eichmann saw: The Jews were in a large room; they were told to strip; then a truck arrived, stopping directly before the entrance to the room, and the naked Jews were told to enter it. The doors were closed and the truck started off. "I cannot tell how many Jews entered, I hardly looked. I could not; I could not; I had had enough. The shrieking, and . . . I was much too upset, and so on, as I later told Müller when I reported to

him; he did not get much profit out of my report. I then drove along after the van, and then I saw the most horrible sight I had thus far seen in my life. The truck was making for an open ditch, the doors were opened, and the corpses were thrown out, as though they were still alive, so smooth were their limbs. They were hurled into the ditch, and I can still see a civilian extracting the teeth with tooth pliers. And then I was off—jumped into my car and did not open my mouth any more. After that time, I could sit for hours beside my driver without exchanging a word with him. There I got enough. I was finished. I only remember that a physician in white overalls told me to look through a hole into the truck while they were still in it. I refused to do that. I could not. I had to disappear."

Very soon after that, he was to see something more horrible. This happened when he was sent to Minsk, in White Russia, again by Müller, who told him: "In Minsk, they are killing Jews by shooting. I want you to report on how it is being done." So he went, and at first it seemed as though he would be lucky, for by the time he arrived, as it happened, "the affair had almost been finished," which pleased him very much. "There were only a few young marksmen who took aim at the skulls of dead people in a large ditch." Still, he saw, "and that was quite enough for me, a woman with her arms stretched backward, and then my knees went weak and off I went." While driving back, he had the notion of stopping at Lwów; this seemed a good idea, for Lwów (or Lemberg) had been an Austrian city, and when he arrived there he "saw the first friendly picture after the horrors. That was the railway station built in honor of the sixtieth year of Franz Josef's reign"—a period Eichmann had always "adored," since he had heard so many nice things about it in his parents' home, and had also been told how the relatives of his stepmother (we are made to understand that he meant the Jewish ones) had enjoyed a comfortable social status and had made good money. This sight of the railway station drove away all the horrible thoughts, and he remembered it down to its last detail—the engraved year of the anniversary, for instance. But then, right there in lovely Lwów, he made a big mistake. He went to see the local S.S. commander, and told him: "Well, it is horrible what is being done around here; I said young people are being made into sadists.

How can one do that? Simply bang away at women and children? That is impossible. Our people will go mad or become insane, our own people." The trouble was that at Lwów they were doing the same thing they had been doing in Minsk, and his host was delighted to show him the sights, although Eichmann tried politely to excuse himself. Thus, he saw another "horrible sight. A ditch had been there, which was already filled in. And there was, gushing from the earth, a spring of blood like a fountain. Such a thing I had never seen before. I had had enough of my commission, and I went back to Berlin and reported to Gruppenführer Müller."

This was not yet the end. Although Eichmann told him that he was not "tough enough" for these sights, that he had never been a soldier, had never been to the front, had never seen action, that he could not sleep and had nightmares, Müller, some nine months later, sent him back to the Lublin region, where the very enthusiastic Globocnik had meanwhile finished his preparations. Eichmann said that this now was the most horrible thing he had ever seen in his life. When he first arrived, he could not recognize the place, with its few wooden bungalows. Instead, guided by the same man with the vulgar voice, he came to a railway station, with the sign "Treblinka" on it, that looked exactly like an ordinary station anywhere in Germany—the same buildings, signs, clocks, installations; it was a perfect imitation. "I kept myself back, as far as I could, I did not draw near to see all that. Still, I saw how a column of naked Jews filed into a large hall to be gassed. There they were killed, as I was told, by something called cyanic acid."

The fact is that Eichmann did not see much. It is true, he repeatedly visited Auschwitz, the largest and most famous of the death camps, but Auschwitz, covering an area of eighteen square miles, in Upper Silesia, was by no means only an extermination camp; it was a huge enterprise with up to a hundred thousand inmates, and all kinds of prisoners were held there, including non-Jews and slave laborers, who were not subject to gassing. It was easy to avoid the killing installations, and Höss, with whom he had a very friendly relationship, spared him the gruesome sights. He never actually attended a mass execution by shooting, he never actually watched the gassing process, or the selection

of those fit for work—about twenty-five per cent of each shipment, on the average—that preceded it at Auschwitz. He saw just enough to be fully informed of how the destruction machinery worked: that there were two different methods of killing, shooting and gassing; that the shooting was done by the *Einsatzgruppen* and the gassing at the camps, either in chambers or in mobile vans; and in the camps elaborate precautions were taken to fool the victims right up to the end.

The police tapes from which I have quoted were played in court during the tenth of the trial's hundred and twenty-one sessions, on the ninth day of the almost nine months it lasted. Nothing the accused said, in the curiously disembodied voice that came out of the tape-recorder—doubly disembodied, because the body that owned the voice was present but itself also appeared strangely disembodied through the thick glass walls surrounding it—was denied either by him or by the defense. Dr. Servatius did not object, he only mentioned that "later, when the defense will rise to speak," he, too, would submit to the court some of the evidence given by the accused to the police; he never did. The defense, one felt, could rise right away, for the criminal proceedings against the accused in this "historic trial" seemed complete, the case for the prosecution established. The facts of the case, of what Eichmann had done—though not of everything the prosecution wished he had done—were never in dispute; they had been established long before the trial started, and had been confessed to by him over and over again. There was more than enough, as he occasionally pointed out, to hang him. ("Don't you have enough on me?" he objected, when the police examiner tried to ascribe to him powers he never possessed.) But since he had been employed in transportation and not in killing, the question remained, legally, formally, at least, of whether he had known what he was doing; and there was the additional question of whether he had been in a position to judge the enormity of his deeds—whether he was legally responsible, apart from the fact that he was medically sane. Both questions now were answered in the affirmative: he had seen the places to which the shipments were directed, and he had been shocked out of his wits. One last question, the most disturbing of all, was asked by the judges,

and especially by the presiding judge, over and over again: Had the killing of Jews gone against his conscience? But this was a moral question, and the answer to it may not have been legally relevant.

But if the facts of the case were now established, two more legal questions arose. First, could he be released from criminal responsibility, as Section 10 of the law under which he was tried provided, because he had done his acts "in order to save himself from the danger of immediate death"? And, second, could he plead extenuating circumstances, as Section 11 of the same law enumerated them: had he done "his best to reduce the gravity of the consequences of the offense" or "to avert consequences more serious than those which resulted"? Clearly, Sections 10 and 11 of the Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law of 1950 had been drawn up with Jewish "collaborators" in mind. Jewish *Sonderkommandos* (special units) had everywhere been employed in the actual killing process, they had committed criminal acts "in order to save themselves from the danger of immediate death," and the Jewish Councils and Elders had cooperated because they thought they could "avert consequences more serious than those which resulted." In Eichmann's case, his own testimony supplied the answer to both questions, and it was clearly negative. It is true, he once said his only alternative would have been suicide, but this was a lie, since we know how surprisingly easy it was for members of the extermination squads to quit their jobs without serious consequences for themselves; but he did not insist on this point, he did not mean to be taken literally. In the Nuremberg documents "not a single case could be traced in which an S.S. member had suffered the death penalty because of a refusal to take part in an execution" [Herbert Jäger, "Betrachtungen zum Eichmann-Prozess," in *Kriminalogie und Strafrechtsreform*, 1962]. And in the trial itself there was the testimony of a witness for the defense, von dem Bach-Zelewski, who declared: "It was possible to evade a commission by an application for transfer. To be sure, in individual cases, one had to be prepared for a certain disciplinary punishment. A danger to one's life, however, was not at all involved." Eichmann knew quite well that he was by no means in the classical "difficult position" of a soldier who may "be liable to be

shot by a court-martial if he disobeys an order, and to be hanged by a judge and jury if he obeys it"—as Dicey once put it in his famous *Law of the Constitution*—if only because as a member of the S.S. he had never been subject to a military court but could only have been brought before a Police and S.S. Tribunal. In his last statement to the court, Eichmann admitted that he could have backed out on one pretext or another, and that others had done so. He had always thought such a step was "inadmissible," and even now did not think it was "admirable"; it would have meant no more than a switch to another well-paying job. The postwar notion of open disobedience was a fairy tale: "Under the circumstances such behavior was impossible. Nobody acted that way." It was "unthinkable." Had he been made commander of a death camp, like his good friend Höss, he would have had to commit suicide, since he was incapable of killing. (Höss, incidentally, had committed a murder in his youth. He had assassinated a certain Walter Kadow, the man who had betrayed Leo Schlageter—a nationalist terrorist in the Rhineland whom the Nazis later made into a national hero—to the French Occupation authorities, and a German court had put him in jail for five years. In Auschwitz, of course, Höss did not have to kill.) But it was very unlikely that Eichmann would have been offered this kind of a job, since those who issued the orders "knew full well the limits to which a person can be driven." No, he had not been in "danger of immediate death," and since he claimed with great pride that he had always "done his duty," obeyed all orders as his oath demanded, he had, of course, always done his best to aggravate "the consequences of the offense," rather than to reduce them. The only "extenuating circumstance" he cited was that he had tried to "avoid unnecessary hardships as much as possible" in carrying out his work, and, quite apart from the fact question of whether this was true, and also apart from the fact that if it was, it would hardly have been enough to constitute extenuating circumstances in this particular case, the claim was not valid, because "to avoid unnecessary hardships" was among the standard directives he had been given.

Hence, after the tape-recorder had addressed the court, the death sentence was a foregone conclusion, even legally, except for the possibility that the punishment might be mitigated for

acts done under superior orders—also provided for in Section 11 of the Israeli law, but this was a very remote possibility in view of the enormity of the crime. (It is important to remember that counsel for the defense pleaded not superior orders but "acts of state," and asked for acquittal on that ground—a strategy Dr. Servatius had already tried unsuccessfully at Nuremberg, where he defended Fritz Sauckel, Plenipotentiary for Labor Allocation in Göring's Office of the Four-Year Plan, who had been responsible for the extermination of tens of thousands of Jewish workers in Poland and who was duly hanged in 1946. "Acts of state," which German jurisprudence even more tellingly calls *gerichtsfreie* or *justizlose Hoheitsakte*, rest on "an exercise of sovereign power" [E. C. S. Wade in the *British Year Book for International Law*, 1934] and hence are altogether outside the legal realm, whereas all orders and commands, at least in theory, are still under judicial control. If what Eichmann did had been acts of state, then none of his superiors, least of all Hitler, the head of state, could be judged by any court. The "act of state" theory agreed so well with Dr. Servatius' general philosophy that it was perhaps not surprising that he should have tried it out again; what was surprising was that he did not fall back on the argument of superior orders as an extenuating circumstance after the judgment had been read and before the sentence was pronounced.) At this point, one was perhaps entitled to be glad that this was no ordinary trial, where statements without bearing on the criminal proceedings must be thrown out as irrelevant and immaterial. For, obviously, things were not so simple as the framers of the laws had imagined them to be, and if it was of small legal relevance, it was of great political interest to know how long it takes an average person to overcome his innate repugnance toward crime, and what exactly happens to him once he has reached that point. To this question, the case of Adolf Eichmann supplied an answer that could not have been clearer and more precise.

In September, 1941, shortly after his first official visits to the killing centers in the East, Eichmann organized his first mass deportations from Germany and the Protectorate, in accordance with a "wish" of Hitler, who had told Himmler to make the

Reich *judenrein* as quickly as possible. The first shipment contained twenty thousand Jews from the Rhineland and five thousand Gypsies, and in connection with this first transport a strange thing happened. Eichmann, who never made a decision on his own, who was extremely careful always to be "covered" by orders, who—as freely given testimony from practically all the people who had worked with him confirmed—did not even like to volunteer suggestions and always required "directives," now, "for the first and last time," took an initiative contrary to orders: instead of sending these people to Russian territory, Riga or Minsk, where they would have immediately been shot by the *Einsatzgruppen*, he directed the transport to the ghetto of Łódź, where he knew that no preparations for extermination had yet been made—if only because the man in charge of the ghetto, a certain Regierungspräsident Uebelhör, had found ways and means of deriving considerable profit from "his" Jews. (Łódź, in fact, was the first ghetto to be established and the last to be liquidated; those of its inmates who did not succumb to disease or starvation survived until the summer of 1944.) This decision was to get Eichmann into considerable trouble. The ghetto was overcrowded, and Mr. Uebelhör was in no mood to receive newcomers and in no position to accommodate them. He was angry enough to complain to Himmler that Eichmann had deceived him and his men with "horsetrading tricks learned from the Gypsies." Himmler, as well as Heydrich, protected Eichmann and the incident was soon forgiven and forgotten.

Forgotten, first of all, by Eichmann himself, who did not once mention it either in the police examination or in his various memoirs. When he had taken the stand and was being examined by his lawyer, who showed him the documents, he insisted he had a "choice": "Here for the first and last time I had a choice. . . . One was Łódź. . . . If there are difficulties in Łódź, these people must be sent onward to the East. And since I had seen the preparations, I was determined to do all I could to send these people to Łódź by any means at my disposal." Counsel for the defense tried to conclude from this incident that Eichmann had saved Jews whenever he could—which was patently untrue. The prosecutor, who cross-examined him later with respect to the same incident, wished to establish that Eichmann himself had

determined the final destination of all shipments and hence had decided whether or not a particular transport was to be exterminated—which was also untrue. Eichmann's own explanation, that he had not disobeyed an order but only taken advantage of a "choice," finally, was not true either, for there had been difficulties in Łódź, as he knew full well, so that his order read, in so many words: Final destination, Minsk or Riga. Although Eichmann had forgotten all about it, this was clearly the only instance in which he actually had tried to save Jews. Three weeks later, however, there was a meeting in Prague, called by Heydrich, during which Eichmann stated that "the camps used for the detention of [Russian] Communists [a category to be liquidated on the spot by the *Einsatzgruppen*] can also include Jews" and that he had "reached an agreement" to this effect with the local commanders; there was also some discussion about the trouble at Łódź, and it was finally resolved to send fifty thousand Jews from the Reich (that is, including Austria, and Bohemia and Moravia) to the centers of the *Einsatzgruppen* operations at Riga and Minsk. Thus, we are perhaps in a position to answer Judge Landau's question—the question uppermost in the minds of nearly everyone who followed the trial—of whether the accused had a conscience: yes, he had a conscience, and his conscience functioned in the expected way for about four weeks, whereupon it began to function the other way around.

Even during those weeks when his conscience functioned normally, it did its work within rather odd limits. We must remember that weeks and months before he was informed of the Führer's order, Eichmann knew of the murderous activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the East; he knew that right behind the front lines all Russian functionaries ("Communists"), all Polish members of the professional classes, and all native Jews were being killed in mass shootings. Moreover, in July of the same year, a few weeks before he was called to Heydrich, he had received a memorandum from an S.S. man stationed in the Warthegau, telling him that "Jews in the coming winter could no longer be fed," and submitting for his consideration a proposal as to "whether it would not be the most humane solution to kill those Jews who were incapable of work through some quicker means. This, at any rate, would be more agreeable than

to let them die of starvation." In an accompanying letter, addressed to "Dear Comrade Eichmann," the writer admitted that "these things sound sometimes fantastic, but they are quite feasible." The admission shows that the much more "fantastic" order of the Führer was not yet known to the writer, but the letter also shows to what extent this order was in the air. Eichmann never mentioned this letter and probably had not been in the least shocked by it. For this proposal concerned only native Jews, not Jews from the Reich or any of the Western countries. His conscience rebelled not at the idea of murder but at the idea of German Jews being murdered. ("I never denied that I knew that the *Einsatzgruppen* had orders to kill, but I did not know that Jews from the Reich evacuated to the East were subject to the same treatment. That is what I did not know.") It was the same with the conscience of a certain Wilhelm Kube, an old Party member and *Generalkommissar* in Occupied Russia, who was outraged when German Jews with the Iron Cross arrived in Minsk for "special treatment." Since Kube was more articulate than Eichmann, his words may give us an idea of what went on in Eichmann's head during the time he was plagued by his conscience: "I am certainly tough and I am ready to help solve the Jewish question," Kube wrote to his superior in December, 1941, "but people who come from our own cultural milieu are certainly something else than the native animalized hordes." This sort of conscience, which, if it rebelled at all, rebelled at murder of the Hitler regime; among Germans today, "milieu," has survived the Hitler regime; among Germans today, there exists a stubborn "misinformation" to the effect that "only" *Ostjuden*, Eastern European Jews, were massacred.

Nor is this way of thinking that distinguishes between the murder of "primitive" and of "cultured" people a monopoly of the German people. Harry Mulisch relates how, in connection with the testimony given by Professor Salo W. Baron about the cultural and spiritual achievements of the Jewish people, the following questions suddenly occurred to him: "Would the death of the Jews have been less of an evil if they were a people without a culture, such as the Gypsies who were also exterminated? Is Eichmann on trial as a destroyer of human beings or as an annihilator of culture? Is a murderer of human beings

more guilty when a culture is also destroyed in the process?" And when he put these questions to the Attorney General, it turned out—"He [Hausner] thinks yes, I think no." How ill we can afford to dismiss this matter, bury the troublesome question along with the past, came to light in the recent film *Dr. Strangelove*, where the strange lover of the bomb—characterized, it is true, as a Nazi type—proposes to select in the coming disaster some hundred thousand persons to survive in underground shelters. And who are to be the happy survivors? Those with the highest I.Q.!

This question of conscience, so troublesome in Jerusalem, had by no means been ignored by the Nazi regime. On the contrary, in view of the fact that the participants in the anti-Hitler conspiracy of July, 1944, very rarely mentioned the wholesale massacres in the East in their correspondence or in the statements they prepared for use in the event that the attempt on Hitler's life was successful, one is tempted to conclude that the Nazis greatly overestimated the practical importance of the problem. We may here disregard the early stages of the German opposition to Hitler, when it was still anti-Fascist and entirely a movement of the Left, which as a matter of principle accorded no significance to moral issues and even less to the persecution of the Jews—a mere "diversion" from the class struggle that in the opinion of the Left determined the whole political scene. Moreover, this opposition had all but disappeared during the period in question—destroyed by the horrible terror of the S.A. troops in the concentration camps and Gestapo cellars, unsettled by full employment made possible through rearmament, demoralized by the Communist Party's tactic of joining the ranks of Hitler's party in order to install itself there as a "Trojan horse." What was left of this opposition at the beginning of the war—some trade-union leaders, some intellectuals of the "homeless Left" who did not and could not know if there was anything behind them—gained its importance solely through the conspiracy which finally led to the 20th of July. (It is of course quite inadmissible to measure the strength of the German resistance by the number of those who passed through the concentration camps. Before the outbreak of the war, the inmates belonged in a great number of categories, many of which had nothing

whatsoever to do with resistance of any kind: there were the wholly "innocent" ones, such as the Jews; the "asocials," such as confirmed criminals and homosexuals; Nazis who had been found guilty of something or other; etc. During the war the camps were populated by resistance fighters from all over occupied Europe.)

Most of the July conspirators were actually former Nazis or had held high office in the Third Reich. What had sparked their opposition had been not the Jewish question but the fact that Hitler was preparing war, and the endless conflicts and crises of conscience under which they labored hinged almost exclusively on the problem of high treason and the violation of their loyalty oath to Hitler. Moreover, they found themselves on the horns of a dilemma which was indeed insoluble: in the days of Hitler's successes they felt they could do nothing because the people would not understand, and in the years of German defeats they feared nothing more than another "stab-in-the-back" legend. To the last, their greatest concern was how it would be possible to prevent chaos and to ward off the danger of civil war. And the solution was that the Allies must be "reasonable" and grant a "moratorium" until order was restored—and with it, of course, the German Army's ability to offer resistance. They possessed the most precise knowledge of what was going on in the East, but there is hardly any doubt that not one of them would have dared even to think that the best thing that could have happened to Germany under the circumstances would have been open rebellion from the Right. The active resistance in Germany came chiefly from the Right, but in view of the past record of the German Social Democrats, it may be doubted that the situation would have been very different if the Left had played a larger part among the conspirators. The question is academic in any case, for no "organized socialist resistance" existed in Germany during the war years—as the German historian, Gerhard Ritter, has rightly pointed out.

In actual fact, the situation was just as simple as it was hopeless: the overwhelming majority of the German people believed in Hitler—even after the attack on Russia and the feared war on two fronts, even after the United States entered

the war, indeed even after Stalingrad, the defection of Italy, and the landings in France. Against this solid majority, there stood an indeterminate number of isolated individuals who were completely aware of the national and of the moral catastrophe; they might occasionally know and trust one another, there were friendships among them and an exchange of opinions, but no plan or intention of revolt. Finally there was the group of those who later became known as the conspirators, but they had never been able to come to an agreement on anything, not even on the question of conspiracy. Their leader was Carl Friedrich Goerdeler, former mayor of Leipzig, who had served three years under the Nazis as price-controller but had resigned rather early—in 1936. He advocated the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, and Wilhelm Leuschner, a representative of the Left, a former trade-union leader and Socialist, assured him of "mass support"; in the Kreisau circle, under the influence of Helmuth von Moltke, there were occasional complaints raised that the rule of law was "now trampled under foot," but the chief concern of this circle was the reconciliation of the two Christian churches and their "sacred mission in the secular state," combined with an outspoken stand in favor of federalism. (On the political bankruptcy of the resistance movement as a whole since 1933 there is a well-documented, impartial study, the doctoral dissertation of George K. Romoser, soon to be published.)

As the war went on and defeat became more certain, political differences should have mattered less and political action become more urgent, but Gerhard Ritter seems right here too: "Without the determination of [Count Klaus von] Stauffenberg, the resistance movement would have bogged down in more or less helpless inactivity." What united these men was that they saw in Hitler a "swindler," a "dilettante," who "sacrificed whole armies against the counsel of his experts," a "madman" and a "demon," "the incarnation of all evil," which in the German context meant something both more and less than when they called him a "criminal and a fool," which they occasionally did. But to hold such opinions about Hitler at this late date "in no way precluded membership in the S.S. or the Party, or the holding of a government post" [Fritz Hessel, hence it did

not exclude from the circle of the conspirators quite a number of men who themselves were deeply implicated in the crimes of the regime—as for instance Count Helldorf, then Police Commissioner of Berlin, who would have become Chief of the German Police if the coup d'état had been successful (according to one of Goerdeler's lists of prospective ministers); or Arthur Nebe of the R.S.H.A., former commander of one of the mobile killing units in the East! In the summer of 1943, when the Himmler-directed extermination program had reached its climax, Goerdeler was considering Himmler and Goebbels as potential allies, "since these two men have realized that they are lost with Hitler." (Himmler indeed became a "potential ally"—though Goebbels did not—and was fully informed of their plans; he acted against the conspirators only after their failure.) I am quoting from the draft of a letter by Goerdeler to Field Marshal von Kluge; but these strange alliances cannot be explained away by "tactical considerations" necessary *vis-à-vis* the Army commanders, for it was, on the contrary, Kluge and Rommel who had given "special orders that those two monsters [Himmler and Göring] should be liquidated" [Ritter]—quite apart from the fact that Goerdeler's biographer, Ritter, insists that the above-quoted letter "represents the most passionate expression of his hatred against the Hitler regime." No doubt these men who opposed Hitler, however belatedly, paid with their lives and suffered a most terrible death; the courage of many of them was admirable, but it was not inspired by moral indignation or by what they knew other people had been made to suffer; they were motivated almost exclusively by their conviction of the coming defeat and ruin of Germany. This is not to deny that some of them, such as Count York-von Wartenburg, may have been roused to political opposition initially by "the revolting agitation against the Jews in November, 1938" [Ritter]. But that was the month when the synagogues went up in flames and the whole population seemed in the grip of some fear: houses of God had been set on fire, and believers as well as the superstitious feared the vengeance of God. To be sure, the higher officer corps was disturbed when Hitler's so-called "commissar order" was issued in May, 1941, and they learned that in the coming campaign against Russia

all Soviet functionaries and naturally all Jews were simply to be massacred. In these circles, there was of course some concern about the fact that, as Goerdeler said, "in the occupied areas and against the Jews techniques of liquidating human beings and of religious persecution are practiced . . . which will always rest as a heavy burden on our history." But it seems never to have occurred to them that this signified something more, and more dreadful, than that "it will make our position [negotiating a peace treaty with the Allies] enormously difficult," that it was a "plot on Germany's good name" and was undermining the morale of the Army. "What on earth have they made of the proud army of the Wars of Liberation [against Napoleon in 1814] and of Wilhelm I [in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870]?" Goerdeler cried when he heard the report of an S.S. man who "nonchalantly related that it 'wasn't exactly pretty to spray with machine-gun fire ditches crammed with thousands of Jews and then to throw earth on the bodies that were still twitching.'" Nor did it occur to them that these atrocities might be somehow connected with the Allies' demand for unconditional surrender, which they felt free to criticize as both "nationalistic" and "unreasonable," inspired by blind hatred. In 1943, when the eventual defeat of Germany was almost a certainty, and indeed even later, they still believed that they had a right to negotiate with their enemies "as equals" for a "just peace," although they knew only too well what an unjust and totally unprovoked war Hitler had started. Even more startling are their criteria for a "just peace." Goerdeler stated them again and again in numerous memoranda: "the re-establishment of the national borders of 1914 [which meant the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine], with the addition of Austria and the Sudetenland"; furthermore, a "leading position for Germany on the Continent" and perhaps the regaining of South Tyrol!

We also know from statements they prepared how they intended to present their case to the people. There is for instance a draft proclamation to the Army by General Ludwig Beck, who was to become chief of state, in which he talks at length about the "obstinacy," the "incompetence and lack of moderation" of the Hitler regime, its "arrogance and vanity." But the

crucial point, "the most unscrupulous act" of the regime, was that the Nazis wanted to hold "the leaders of the armed forces responsible" for the calamities of the coming defeat; to which Beck added that crimes had been committed "which are a blot on the honor of the German nation and a defilement of the good reputation it had gained in the eyes of the world." And what would be the next step after Hitler had been liquidated? The German Army would go on fighting "until an honorable conclusion of the war has been assured"—which meant the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, Austria, and the Sudetenland. There is indeed every reason to agree with the bitter judgment on these men by the German novelist Friedrich P. Reck-Mallezewen, who was killed in a concentration camp on the eve of the collapse and did not participate in the anti-Hitler conspiracy. In his almost totally unknown "Diary of a Man in Despair," [*Tagebuch eines Verzweifelten*, 1947], Reck-Mallezewen wrote, after he had heard of the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life, which of course he regretted: "A little later, gentlemen, you who made this archdestroyer of Germany and ran after him, as long as everything seemed to be going well; you who . . . without hesitation swore every oath demanded of you and reduced yourselves to the despicable flunkies of this criminal who is guilty of the murder of hundreds of thousands, burdened with the lamentations and the curse of the whole world; now you have betrayed him. . . . Now, when the bankruptcy can no longer be concealed, they betray the house that went broke, in order to establish a political alibi for themselves—the same men who have betrayed everything that was in the way of their claim to power."

There is no evidence, and no likelihood, that Eichmann ever came into personal contact with the men of July 20, and we know that even in Argentina he still considered them all to have been traitors and scoundrels. Had he ever had the opportunity, though, to become acquainted with Goerdeler's "original" ideas on the Jewish question, he might have discovered some points of agreement. To be sure, Goerdeler proposed "to pay indemnity to German Jews for their losses and mistreatment"—this in 1942, at a time when it was not only a matter of German Jews, and when these were not just being mistreated

and robbed but gassed; but in addition to such technicalities, he had something more constructive in mind, namely, a "permanent solution" that would "save [all European Jews] from their unseemly position as a more or less undesirable 'guest nation' in Europe." (In Eichmann's jargon, this was called giving them "some firm ground under their feet.") For this purpose, Goerdeler claimed an "independent state in a colonial country"—Canada or South America—a sort of Madagascar, of which he certainly had heard. Still, he made some concessions; not all Jews would be expelled. Quite in line with the early stages of the Nazi regime and the privileged categories which were then current, he was prepared "not to deny German citizenship to those Jews who could produce evidence of special military sacrifice for Germany or who belonged to families with long-established traditions." Well, whatever Goerdeler's "permanent solution of the Jewish question" might have meant, it was not exactly "original"—as Professor Ritter, even in 1954 full of admiration for his hero, called it—and Goerdeler would have been able to find plenty of "potential allies" for this part of his program too within the ranks of the Party and even the S.S.

In the letter to Field Marshal von Kluge, quoted above, Goerdeler once appealed to Kluge's "voice of conscience." But all he meant was that even a general must understand that "to continue the war with no chance for victory was an obvious crime." From the accumulated evidence one can only conclude that conscience as such had apparently got lost in Germany, and this to a point where people hardly remembered it and had ceased to realize that the surprising "new set of German values" was not shared by the outside world. This, to be sure, is not the entire truth. For there were individuals in Germany who from the very beginning of the regime and without ever wavering were opposed to Hitler; no one knows how many there were of them—perhaps a hundred thousand, perhaps many more, perhaps many fewer—for their voices were never heard. They could be found everywhere, in all strata of society, among the simple people as well as among the educated, in all parties, perhaps even in the ranks of the N.S.D.A.P. Very few of them were known publicly, as were the aforementioned Reck-Malle-

zewen or the philosopher Karl Jaspers. Some of them were truly and deeply pious, like an artisan of whom I know, who preferred having his independent existence destroyed and becoming a simple worker in a factory to taking upon himself the "little formality" of entering the Nazi Party. A few still took an oath seriously and preferred, for example, to renounce an academic career rather than swear by Hitler's name. A more numerous group were the workers, especially in Berlin, and Socialist intellectuals who tried to aid the Jews they knew. There were finally, the two peasant boys whose story is related in Günther Weisenborn's *Der lautlose Aufstand* (1953), who were drafted into the S.S. at the end of the war and refused to sign; they were sentenced to death, and on the day of their execution they wrote in their last letter to their families: "We two would rather die than burden our conscience with such terrible things. We know what the S.S. must carry out." The position of these people, who, practically speaking, did nothing, was altogether different from that of the conspirators. Their ability to tell right from wrong had remained intact, and they never suffered a "crisis of conscience." There may also have been such persons among the members of the resistance, but they were hardly more numerous in the ranks of the conspirators than among the people at large. They were neither heroes nor saints, and they remained completely silent. Only on one occasion, in a single desperate gesture, did this wholly isolated and mute element manifest itself publicly: this was when the Scholls, two students at Munich University, brother and sister, under the influence of their teacher Kurt Huber distributed the famous leaflets in which Hitler was finally called what he was—a "mass murderer." If, however, one examines the documents and prepared statements of the so-called "other Germany" that would have succeeded Hitler had the July 20 conspiracy succeeded, one can only marvel at how great a gulf separated even them from the rest of the world. How else can one explain the illusions of Goerdeler in particular or the fact that Himmler, of all people, but also Ribbentrop, should have started dreaming, during the last months of the war, of a magnificent new role as negotiators with the Allies for a defeated Germany. And if Ribbentrop

certainly was simply stupid, Himmler, whatever else he might have been, was no fool.

The member of the Nazi hierarchy most gifted at solving problems of conscience was Himmler. He coined slogans, like the famous watchword of the S.S., taken from a Hitler speech before the S.S. in 1931, "My Honor is my Loyalty"—catch phrases which Eichmann called "winged words" and the judges "empty talk"—and issued them, as Eichmann recalled, "around the turn of the year," presumably along with a Christmas bonus. Eichmann remembered only one of them and kept repeating it: "These are battles which future generations will not have to fight again," alluding to the "battles" against women, children, old people, and other "useless mouths." Other such phrases, taken from speeches Himmler made to the commanders of the *Einsatzgruppen* and the Higher S.S. and Police Leaders, were: "To have stuck it out and, apart from exceptions caused by human weakness, to have remained decent, that is what has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written." Or: "The order to solve the Jewish question, this was the most frightening order an organization could ever receive." Or: We realize that what we are expecting from you is "superhuman," to be "superhumanly inhuman." All one can say is that their expectations were not disappointed. It is noteworthy, however, that Himmler hardly ever attempted to justify in ideological terms, and if he did, it was apparently quickly forgotten. What stuck in the minds of these men who had become murderers was simply the notion of being involved in something historic, grandiose, unique ("a great task that occurs once in two thousand years"), which must therefore be difficult to bear. This was important, because the murderers were not sadists or killers by nature; on the contrary, a systematic effort was made to weed out all those who derived physical pleasure from what they did. The troops of the *Einsatzgruppen* had been drafted from the Armed S.S., a military unit with hardly more crimes in its record than any ordinary unit of the German Army, and their commanders had been chosen by Heydrich from the

S.S. élite with academic degrees. Hence the problem was how to overcome not so much their conscience as the animal pity by which all normal men are affected in the presence of physical suffering. The trick used by Himmler—who apparently was rather strongly afflicted with these instinctive reactions himself—was very simple and probably very effective; it consisted in turning these instincts around, as it were, in directing them toward the self. So that instead of saying: What horrible things I did to people, the murderers would be able to say: What horrible things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties, how heavily the task weighed upon my shoulders!

Eichmann's defective memory where Himmler's ingenious watchwords were concerned may be an indication that there existed other and more effective devices for solving the problem of conscience. Foremost among them was, as Hitler had rightly foreseen, the simple fact of war. Eichmann insisted time and again on the "different personal attitude" toward death when "dead people were seen everywhere," and when everyone looked forward to his own death with indifference: "We did not care if we died today or only tomorrow, and there were times when we cursed the morning that found us still alive." Especially effective in this atmosphere of violent death was the fact that the Final Solution, in its later stages, was not carried out by shooting, hence through violence, but in the gas factories, which, from beginning to end, were closely connected with the "euthanasia program" ordered by Hitler in the first weeks of the war and applied to the mentally sick in Germany up to the invasion of Russia. The extermination program that was started in the autumn of 1941 ran, as it were, on two altogether different tracks. One track led to the gas factories, and the other to the *Einsatzgruppen*, whose operations in the rear of the Army, especially in Russia, were justified by the pretext of partisan warfare, and whose victims were by no means only Jews. In addition to real partisans, they dealt with Russian functionaries, Gypsies, the asocial, the insane, and Jews. Jews were included as "potential enemies," and, unfortunately, it was months before the Russian Jews came to understand this, and then it was too late to scatter. (The older generation remembered the First World War, when the German Army had been greeted

as liberators; neither the young nor the old had heard anything about "how Jews were treated in Germany, or, for that matter, in Warsaw"; they were "remarkably ill-informed," as the German Intelligence service reported from White Russia [Hilberg]. More remarkable, occasionally even German Jews arrived in these regions who were under the illusion they had been sent here as "pioneers" for the Third Reich.) These mobile killing units, of which there existed just four, each of battalion size, with a total of no more than three thousand men, needed and got the close cooperation of the Armed Forces; indeed, relations between them were usually "excellent" and in some instances "affectionate" (*herzlich*). The generals showed a "surprisingly good attitude toward the Jews"; not only did they hand their Jews over to the *Einsatzgruppen*, they often lent their own men, ordinary soldiers, to assist in the massacres. The total number of their Jewish victims is estimated by Hilberg to have reached almost a million and a half, but this was not the result of the Führer's order for the physical extermination of the whole Jewish people. It was the result of an earlier order, which Hitler gave to Himmler in March, 1941, to prepare the S.S. and the police "to carry out special duties in Russia."

The Führer's order for the extermination of all, not only Russian and Polish, Jews, though issued later, can be traced much farther back. It originated not in the R.S.H.A. or in any of Heydrich's or Himmler's other offices, but in the Führer's Chancellery, Hitler's personal office. It had nothing to do with the war and never used military necessities as a pretext. It is one of the great merits of Gerald Reitlinger's *The Final Solution* to have proved, with documentary evidence that leaves no doubt, that the extermination program in the Eastern gas factories grew out of Hitler's euthanasia program, and it is deplorable that the Eichmann trial, so concerned with "historical truth," paid no attention to this factual connection. This would have thrown some light on the much debated question of whether Eichmann, of the R.S.H.A., was involved in *Gasgeschichten*. It is unlikely that he was, though one of his men, Rolf Günther, might have become interested of his own accord. Glöbocnik, for instance, who set up the gassing installations in the Lublin area, and whom Eichmann visited, did not address him-

self to Himmler or any other police or S.S. authority when he needed more personnel; he wrote to Viktor Brack, of the Führer's Chancellery, who then passed the request on to Himmler.

The first gas chambers were constructed in 1939, to implement a Hitler decree dated September 1 of that year, which said that "incurably sick persons should be granted a mercy death." (It was probably this "medical" origin of gassing that inspired Dr. Servatius's amazing conviction that killing by gas must be regarded as "a medical matter.") The idea itself was considerably older. As early as 1935, Hitler had told his Reich Medical Leader Gerhard Wagner that "if war came, he would take up and carry out this question of euthanasia, because it was easier to do so in wartime." The decree was immediately carried out in respect to the mentally sick, and between December, 1939, and August, 1941, about fifty thousand Germans were killed with carbon-monoxide gas in institutions where the death rooms were disguised exactly as they later were in Auschwitz—as shower rooms and bathrooms. The program was a flop. It was impossible to keep the gassing a secret from the surrounding German population; there were protests on all sides from people who presumably had not yet attained the "objective" insight into the nature of medicine and the task of a physician. The gassing in the East—or, to use the language of the Nazis, "the humane way" of killing "by granting people a mercy death"—began on almost the very day when the gassing in Germany was stopped. The men who had been employed in the euthanasia program in Germany were now sent east to build the new installations for the extermination of whole peoples—and these men came either from Hitler's Chancellery or from the Reich Health Department and were only now put under the administrative authority of Himmler.

None of the various "language rules," carefully contrived to deceive and to camouflage, had a more decisive effect on the mentality of the killers than this first war decree of Hitler, in which the word for "murder" was replaced by the phrase "to grant a mercy death." Eichmann, asked by the police examiner if the directive to avoid "unnecessary hardships" was not a bit ironic, in view of the fact that the destination of these people

was certain death anyhow, did not even understand the question, so firmly was it still anchored in his mind that the unforgivable sin was not to kill people but to cause unnecessary pain. During the trial, he showed unmistakable signs of sincere outrage when witnesses told of cruelties and atrocities committed by S.S. men—though the court and much of the audience failed to see these signs, because his single-minded effort to keep his self-control had misled them into believing that he was "unmovable" and indifferent—and it was not the accusation of having sent millions of people to their death that ever caused him real agitation but only the accusation (dismissed by the court) of one witness that he had once beaten a Jewish boy to death. To be sure, he had also sent people into the area of the *Einsatzgruppen*, who did not "grant a mercy death" but killed by shooting, but he was probably relieved when, in the later stages of the operation, this became unnecessary because of the ever-growing capacity of the gas chambers. He must also have thought that the new method indicated a decisive improvement in the Nazi government's attitude toward the Jews, since at the beginning of the gassing program it had been expressly stated that the benefits of euthanasia were to be reserved for true Germans. As the war progressed, with violent and horrible death raging all around—on the front in Russia, in the deserts of Africa, in Italy, on the beaches of France, in the ruins of the German cities—the gassing centers in Auschwitz and Chelmo, in Majdanek and Belzec, in Treblinka and Sobibor, must actually have appeared the "Charitable Foundations for Institutional Care" that the experts in mercy death called them. Moreover, from January, 1942, on, there were euthanasia teams operating in the East to "help the wounded in ice and snow," and though this killing of wounded soldiers was also "top secret," it was known to many, certainly to the executors of the Final Solution.

It has frequently been pointed out that the gassing of the mentally sick had to be stopped in Germany because of protests from the population and from a few courageous dignitaries of the churches, whereas no such protests were voiced when the program switched to the gassing of Jews, though some of the killing centers were located on what was then German territory and

were surrounded by German populations. The protests, however, occurred at the beginning of the war; quite apart from the effects of "education in euthanasia," the attitude toward a "painless death through gassing" very likely changed in the course of the war. This sort of thing is difficult to prove; there are no documents to support it, because of the secrecy of the whole enterprise, and none of the war criminals ever mentioned it, not even the defendants in the Doctors' Trial at Nuremberg, who were full of quotations from the international literature on the subject. Perhaps they had forgotten the climate of public opinion in which they killed, perhaps they never cared to know it, since they felt, wrongly, that their "objective and scientific" attitude was far more advanced than the opinions held by ordinary people. However, a few truly priceless stories, to be found in the war diaries of trustworthy men who were fully aware of the fact that their own shocked reaction was no longer shared by their neighbors, have survived the moral debacle of a whole nation.

Reck-Malleczewen, whom I mentioned before, tells of a female "leader" who came to Bavaria to give the peasants a pep talk in the summer of 1944. She seems not to have wasted much time on "miracle weapons" and victory, she faced frankly the prospect of defeat, about which no good German needed to worry because the Führer "in his great goodness had prepared for the whole German people a mild death through gassing in case the war should have an unhappy end." And the writer adds: "Oh, no, I'm not imagining things, this lovely lady is not a mirage, I saw her with my own eyes: a yellow-skinned female pushing forty, with insane eyes. . . . And what happened? Did these Bavarian peasants at least put her into the local lake to cool off her enthusiastic readiness for death? They did nothing of the sort. They went home, shaking their heads."

My next story is even more to the point, since it concerns someone who was not a "leader," may not even have been a Party member. It happened in Königsberg, in East Prussia, an altogether different corner of Germany, in January, 1945, a few days before the Russians destroyed the city, occupied its ruins, and annexed the whole province. The story is told by Count Hans von Lehnsdorff, in his *Ostpreussisches Tagebuch*

(1961). He had remained in the city as a physician to take care of wounded soldiers who could not be evacuated; he was called to one of the huge centers for refugees from the countryside, which was already occupied by the Red Army. There he was accosted by a woman who showed him a varicose vein she had had for years but wanted to have treated now, because she had time. "I try to explain that it is more important for her to get away from Königsberg and to leave the treatment for some later time. Where do you want to go? I ask her. She does not know, but she knows that they will all be brought into the Reich. And then she adds, surprisingly: 'The Russians will never get us. The Führer will never permit it. Much sooner he will gas us.' I look around furtively, but no one seems to find this statement out of the ordinary." The story, one feels, like most true stories, is incomplete. There should have been one more voice, preferably a female one, which, sighing heavily, replied: And now all that good, expensive gas has been wasted on the Jews!