

Burrin, Philippe. 1989. *Hitler & the Jews: The Genesis of the Holocaust*. London: Edward Arnold.

28—To understand the specificity of H's anti-Semitism, one must consider the existential source that inspired it: the experience of the First World War and of Germany's defeat.

It was this defeat that gave Hitler's undertaking its fundamental impetus. In *Mein Kampf*, he recorded the enthusiasm with which he greeted the outbreak of war in August 1914. In total contrast was the extreme rage that seized him at the time of the surrender, a surrender which seemed to him the product of betrayal from the rear.

A clearly traumatic experience: throughout his career he would return to the events of November 1918 as a central reference point, always evoking them with an emotionally charged intensity. He dated his entry into politics back to the 'frightful days' of the German revolution. They were what launched him on 'the search for the causes of the German collapse,' and made him see the necessity of a political movement whose goal would be 'to triumph over the defeat'.

29-30—He would have severely punished saboteurs of the war effort and inflicted the harshest penalties on the 'sinister gangs' of 'criminals', 'pimps', and 'deserters' who, according to him, later controlled the events of November 1918. Finally, he would have ruthlessly suppressed the revolution itself, even if it meant executing thousands of people.

From which he concluded:

Before conquering the enemies without, one must have exterminated the enemy within; or else, woe to the people whose efforts are not crowned with victory from the first day. It is enough that the shadow of defeat pass over a people which has harboured enemy elements in its breast; its powers of resistance will be broken, and the enemy without will carry the day.

(RK: *The enemy within is one's own internal desire to abandon the nation*).

He drew another conclusion from the experience of 1918. He was convinced that the armistice had been a major mistake; that the war could have been won if a man determined to fight to the end had been at the head of the country, a man capable of galvanizing and stiffening the

nation's morale. Even if it was hopeless, the fight should have been carried on. Victory or death was a motto he cherished. After 1939, as we shall see, he repeated *ad nauseum* that a surrender would not happen again.

RK: The sacrifice had to be TOTAL.

34—Hitler viewed his war against the Jews as a battle for the salvation of the world, a fight to the death that could only end with the extinction of one of the two adversaries.

35—We have already stressed the intense hate Hitler breathed into his statements whenever he referred to 1918. It is precisely in these passages evoking the November revolution that he expressed most concretely, and with the greatest emotional force, his desire for a bloody settling of accounts with the Jews. Thus, after having mentioned the enthusiasm of the German workers in the summer of 1914, and their detachment from the Marxist leaders, he wrote:

That would have been the moment to take action against the whole two-faced conspiracy of Jewish corrupters of the people. That is when, unhesitatingly, we should have moved against them, without the slightest regard for whatever cries and lamentations they might have raised....**While the best of us were dying at the front, at least we should have disposed of the vermin in the rear.**

Rk: If the German soldiers were dying, why shouldn't the Jew be dying?

36—Writing after the defeat, he retrospectively attributes a twofold value to the expedient step he wishes had been taken. A propitiatory value, for a step of this kind, expressing a desire to fight to the death, might 'perhaps' have brought victory, thus saving the lives of many German soldiers. A vengeance value, and this is the most striking: **the deaths of thousands of Jews, even if they had not changed the outcome of the war, would have been fully**

justified, in that they would have avenged the Germans fallen at the front.

By making such an association, between a long war, which spilled German blood and threatened to end in defeat, and the murder of a certain number of Jews, was Hitler in his rage simply reinterpreting the past, or was he also finding solutions for the future?

121—Identification must be imposed on (the Jews), which would keep them from spreading defeatist rumors and lowering morale.

Rk: Jews would have been the “unpatriotic” ones, who would have stopped the fighting and dying and sacrifice. They are the “anti-Christ,” who do not believe in the value of sacrifice (= crucifixion and resurrection).

Goebbels submitted his proposal received by Hitler on August 18, which was accepted. The wearing of an insignia would eliminate the danger of Jewish ‘bellyachers & defeatists’ going unrecognized.

The measure was basically linked to the state of the war, to the difficult struggle unfolding on the eastern front, and to its possible repercussions on the morale of the German population. Goebbels knew that he would strike a sympathetic chord in Hitler. During the First World War, had not the danger within come from the demoralizing activity Jews were freely able to exercise on the home front?

137-8—On July 17, 1941 Goebbels (in his diaries) noted with mounting concern ‘the enemy’s extraordinary strong resistance on all fronts’. Two days later he described the war as a struggle for survival between Bolshevism & Nazism. On July 26, 1941 he decided to issue new instructions regarding propaganda: ‘The people must know that Germany now is fighting for her life and that we must choose

between the total annihilation of the German nation & the domination of the world.

139—On July 22, 1941 Hitler received a Croatian leader, Marshall Kvaternik. When the discussion moved on to Croatia's internal problems, Hitler urged his visitor to use the most brutal measures to achieve purification. 'Asocials' and criminals must be exterminated; when a country sends its best to risk their lives at the front, it need not spare the scum.

Significantly, Hitler justified his obsessive desire for extermination (of the Jews) by invoking the blood of soldiers killed in combat.

143—August 18, 1941, conversation with Goebbels: 'In the east, the Jews are being forced to foot the bill for the damage; in Germany they have already paid in part and will have to pay even more in the future.'...The Jews had to 'foot the bill'; indeed, vengeance was being wreaked on them because of spilled German blood.

Hitler brooded about the memory of 1918...During the event of 9/14/41, he raised the subject of the 1918 revolution and its leaders who had emerged, according to him, from prison lowlife. This was something that would not happen again: he had ordered Himmler, in the event of internal troubles, to kill all concentration camp prisoners; thus no leader would appear to incite masses.

145—On October 25, 1941 in the presence of he recalled his prophecy (about 'exterminating the plague'), adding that the Jews already had the two million Germans killed in the First World War on their conscience and now some hundred thousand more. 'No one had better say: "but we still can't drive them into the swamp!" Does no one care about our men?

Here again, the link between spilled German blood and the death of the Jews is clearly established.

146—Operation Barbarossa had failed decisively. On November 29, 1941, the Minister of Armaments and Munitions, Todt, told Hitler that the war could only be concluded favorably for the Reich through negotiations; militarily and economically, it had already been lost.

147—The extermination of the Jews, then, was at once a propitiatory act and an act of vengeance. By putting to death those he thought of as his archetypal enemies—little did it matter to his obsessed mind that these were powerless civilian populations—he was demonstrating his will to fight to the end.

By means of the somehow sacrificial death of the Jews, he was fanatically steeling himself to achieve victory, or fight on to destruction. At the same time, and above all, he was expiating spilled German blood, and avenging beforehand a possible defeat. He would conduct this exercise of vengeance, as it turned out, with mounting determination as the situation worsened, and he advanced toward an apocalyptic end.

152—Germans were going to spill their blood in the war; the Jews, however, threatened to survive it and emerge its victors. This image, as we have seen, was at the heart of Hitler’s nightmare; it spurred him to revenge. Thus he said in a speech delivered in Berlin on 30 January 1942, right after alluding to his prophecy: ‘for the first time, other people will not be the only ones to spill their blood; this time, for the first time, the old Jewish law will be in effect: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.’

152—If the Jews survived the war while Germans sacrificed their ‘best blood’, then the war would only be a partial success. Here Frank visualized a German final victory; how much more urgent a massacre would seem if the prospect were defeat. Several ranks below, Eichmann’s assistant, Frank Novak, testified during his trial that the justification for the murder of the Jews had been the fact that countless Germans would die in the war, while the Jews would emerge unscathed