

**The Phenomenon of D.J. Goldhagen's
*Hitler's Willing Executioners***

Kenneth Todd Montgomery
Department of History
McGill University, Montreal

July, 1999

“A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.).”

© Copyright by K. Todd Montgomery, 1999

ABSTRACT

A survey of the phenomenon surrounding Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. Goldhagen describes how "ordinary German" perpetrators, allegedly motivated primarily by a specifically German form of "eliminationist antisemitism," were responsible for the Holocaust. The book's contribution to the field of study has come not from its questionable scholarly merits, but from its ability to strike a resonating chord among public readership. Offering moralistic judgements, it has sought less to explain than to warn; in this sense it is more a work of Ethics than of History. An examination is offered of the arguments of the book, the course of the controversy surrounding it, and its impact on the historiography of modern Germany, including the role of professional historians in society.

RÉSUMÉ

Une étude du phénomène entourant *Hitler's Willing Executioners* de Daniel Goldhagen. Goldhagen soutient que les Allemands ordinaires ("*ordinary Germans*"), qui ont participé aux atrocités nazies, motivés principalement par un concept spécifiquement allemand de "*eliminationist antisemitism*," sont responsables de l'Holocauste. La contribution de ce livre au champ d'études ne vient pas de ses mérites d'érudition discutables, mais plutôt de son habilité à faire vibrer une corde sensible chez le lecteur. Présentant un jugement moral, il cherche moins à expliquer qu'à mettre en garde; dans ce sens, ce livre relève plus du domaine de l'Éthique que de celui de l'Histoire. Une analyse des arguments du livre est présentée, suivi d'une rétrospective de la controverse qui l'entoure et de son impact sur l'historiographie de l'Allemagne moderne, incluant le rôle des historiens professionnels dans la société.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Introduction	1
1. The Context: The Historiography of Modern Germany and the Holocaust	3
2. Hitler's Willing Executioners: Goldhagen's Thesis and Arguments	14
3. Assessing the Arguments	23
(i) <i>The Scholarly Reaction</i>	26
(ii) <i>Goldhagen's Explanatory Model</i>	28
(iii) <i>A Lack of Rigor in Historical Research</i>	34
4. Popular Reaction: The German Translation and Book Tour	47
5. The Historiographical Impact	52
(i) <i>Monocausal Antisemitism and the Holocaust</i>	56
(ii) <i>Right Questions, Wrong Answers</i>	61
6. Legitimacy Gained...and Lost	63
7. Goldhagen, History and Germany	66
Conclusion	70
Bibliography	73

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the staff at the McClennan-Redpath Library of McGill University, (especially the Interlibrary Loans department and reference desk staff), at the Webster Library on Sir George Williams campus of Concordia University, and at the Stauffer Library at Queen's University at Kingston for all of their capable assistance.

I am further indebted to my thesis supervisor, Professor Peter Hoffmann, for the unerring guidance and advice he has provided me over the course of this project. *Vielen Dank, Herr Professor, für Ihre fortdauernde Geduld und Ihren Glaube, daß ich es doch schaffen würde.* And to Mary McDaid, Graduate Secretary in the Department of History at McGill, for her unflagging encouragement and her famous skill in helping me to negotiate the bureaucratic requirements of the thesis process. *Erin go bragh!*, Mary.

Ruth Bettina Birn (Chief Historian, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity Section, Canadian Department of Justice, Ottawa) provided invaluable assistance in a telephone interview, updating me personally on the most recent developments in her unfortunate legal predicament and providing me with two key articles that were otherwise too difficult for me to access here in Montreal. For this she also receives many thanks.

I am very grateful for the assistance of Kate Owens, Adel Giaid, Dave Molino, and Niketh Pareek, good friends in time of need who offered me considerable moral support. *Merci beaucoup à Alex Fretier pour son traduction de mon résumé et à PIRA Communications pour l'utilisation de leurs bureau et imprimeur.*

It should be said that without the influence of certain people this project would never have come to fruition. It is my pleasure to acknowledge a few of the remarkable educators who have mentored me in the past and whose acquaintance I am thankful to have made: Mssrs. Tom Sherry and Robin Lerpinère, Professors William McCuaig, Harold Mah, Wil Verhoeven, and Albert P. Fell. I owe a debt of gratitude to Christine Allen and Nicola Dourambeis for continuing support and to J.R. (you know better than anyone why). And to Max, for always being there.

Despite the capable assistance of all the above-mentioned (and others too numerous to mention), I wish to make it clear that the sole responsibility for any errors which might remain in this M.A. thesis rests with the author.

This work is dedicated to my parents, Ken and Sarah Montgomery, in the year of their 40th wedding anniversary, for their understanding and constancy over the many years of my education. I also want especially to dedicate it to my grandmother Aaltje van der Heide, who in her life has endured events about which I can only read and humbly offer opinions, but scarcely imagine. Her tireless perseverance in the face of adversity has been a constant source of inspiration to me. *Ik hou van jullie alle.*

K. Todd Montgomery, (Montreal, July 1999)

INTRODUCTION

In March of 1996, Knopf published the reworked Harvard doctoral dissertation of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. A young man relatively unknown in the scholarly field to which he was now adding his opinion, his *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* would within a few short weeks create an unprecedented furore among lay readers and scholars alike in both Germany and his native United States.¹ This phenomenon was to last practically unabated for well over a year and has made a lasting impression on the field of Holocaust studies and modern German history generally.

Assessing the value of the work as a piece of historical scholarship, it is hard not to concur with the overwhelmingly negative judgements rendered by academics. Yet the deliberately provocative book has been a great commercial success in its English and German language incarnations. It has enjoyed bestseller status far exceeding what one would expect from the publication of a doctoral thesis on such a tragic and gruesome subject. Goldhagen's popular success has been doubly problematic for his scholarly critics, on the one hand because a book containing such specious methodological assumptions supported by unprofessional and deterministic research has become an overnight success, and on the other because his attitude toward the decades of research and theorising on the Holocaust by senior historians has been one of dismissal, when not disdain. Criticising the "misleading narratives" of the "conventional explanations," Goldhagen boldly exclaimed that he was the only one who had found *the* answer, the key for which everyone else had until then been searching in vain, and that the matter was now settled—and, to the shock and horror of academics, people in their thousands were agreeing with his opinions.

In Germany the community of academic historians had been caught rather unprepared for a phenomenon such as this one, but after some uncharacteristically sharp assessments, recovered quickly. Beginning to realise the implications for both the state of Holocaust research and for contemporary German national identity of this latest and most polemical

¹ Page references in this paper are to the paperback English language edition and are made parenthetically within the text, or in the footnotes under *HWE*.

challenge, leading figures and opinion-makers girded themselves up for another *Historikerstreit*.²

They need not have done. Although the latter half of 1996 in Germany witnessed a series of encounters in the press and in public debates between critics of all camps and the controversial author, the latter's previously strident (when not arrogant) tone had vanished, replaced by charm and deferential courtesy. Yet the fallout of the successful book tour has had further ramifications for Goldhagen. Never one to mince words, and emboldened by his widespread popular support, the author's replies to his critics continued to be as uncompromising as the tone of his book, and were most vitriolic toward those who pointed out the inconsistencies in his use of historical evidence.

The matter seemed to be finally concluded when in March 1997 Goldhagen was awarded the Democracy Prize of the Journal for German and International Politics.³ While a somewhat bizarre ending to this rollercoaster ride, it nonetheless lends hope to those who seek understanding of the human condition, since the academic community and its theoretical models for comprehending the crime of the Holocaust were able to ride out even such a bumpy ride as this. By extension, it also fosters a similar sense of optimism regarding the ongoing process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) in an increasingly powerful and influential Germany.

Yet this was not to be the final chapter in the Goldhagen saga. When the controversy finally resulted in the application of influence by public figures, personal smear campaigns, legal action, and allegations of bias based on a strongly contemporary political agenda, the state of affairs reached a new low. Thus, when posterity renders its verdict on the value of the book's contribution to the field of scholarly endeavour, one can only wonder whether that judgement will be as charitable in assessing the comportment of the young scholar who started it all.

The book has enjoyed as much or more commercial success as it has received scholarly criticism, and by the very fact of its public acceptance has constituted a challenge to the traditional way of doing things in the field of academic history. What follows in these

² The "Historians' Debate" in Germany of the latter 1980s; *vide infra*, Section 1.

³ *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*.

pages is therefore an examination of the controversy that has raged over Goldhagen's work. Beginning with a survey of the existing literature in the field of study, followed by a discussion of the book's arguments and the academic criticism that ensued (including both the popular reaction and public debates) this discussion will be rounded out by an exploration of some of the implications of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* for German historiography, for historians, and for Germans.

1. THE CONTEXT: THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MODERN GERMANY AND THE HOLOCAUST

Within the broad range of modern German history, the development of the "subject" of Holocaust "commentary" into a "field" of specifically Holocaust "research" in its own right was a long process.⁴ It began with the military defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 and the macabre scenes that were revealed to an incredulous world. In just over a decade, the "Thousand Year Reich" had bestially murdered over twelve million non-combatants. Five to six million Jews died in a racial campaign of genocidal Nazi fury. Millions of Slavic "*Untermenschen*" ("subhumans") were killed on similarly racial grounds. Comprehensive efforts were made to eliminate, the physically infirm and the aged, people with hereditary diseases, the mentally ill, Jehovah's witnesses, "Gypsies", homosexuals, Communists, and opponents of the Nazi regime in brutal programs of "Euthanasia," eugenics, sterilisation and cold-blooded murder.

In the immediate post-war years, the enormity of these crimes had a direct impact on the efforts made to understand them. The most direct and urgent desire was for determining the guilt of the figures who were responsible, prosecution of their war crimes, and documenting the extent and nature of the horrors. Parallel to this effort was the project of understanding the political reasons for the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of fascism.

⁴ Jeremiah M. Riemer, "Burdens of Proof," in Robert R. Shandley (ed.), *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate* (Minneapolis, London, 1998), p 180.

During this period less emphasis was therefore placed on actively researching either the victims of Nazi crimes, or, significantly, the “ordinary” perpetrators who had carried out the killings of the so-called “Euthanasia” and *Endlösung* (“Final Solution” of the “Jewish Problem”) programs, as well as the systematic murder of Russian and Slavic prisoners of war.⁵ As the following survey will show, the early neglect of these fields has been replaced by more thorough treatment over the course of decades of ongoing efforts.⁶ Among these topics, however, a close examination of the role of the individual perpetrators and their motives has been to date one of the least well addressed issues of all, and has for the most part received its most comprehensive treatment only in the past decade.⁷

In the English language the topic of the “Final Solution” was examined in the immediate post-war era in two major works, one in 1953 by Gerald Reitlinger and the other by Joseph Tenenbaum in 1956.⁸ Both used the Nuremberg Trial documents, though of the two, Reitlinger’s study was more a reconstruction of the processes which enabled the Holocaust to be carried out. This effort at understanding the institutional framework underlying the crimes found its most comprehensive early treatment in Raul Hilberg’s landmark work.⁹ Hilberg’s access to the vast documentation captured by the American troops enabled him to engage in a deeper analysis of the role of German bureaucracy in the

⁵ Peter Steinbach, “‘Unbesungene Helden’: Ihre Bedeutung für die allgemeine Widerstandsgeschichte,” in Günther B. Ginzler, *Mut zur Menschlichkeit: Hilfe für Verfolgte während der NS-Zeit* (Köln, 1993), p 192.

⁶ Much of this survey relies on the following historiographical essays: Saul Friedländer, “From Anti-Semitism to Extermination: A Historiographical Study of Nazi Policies Toward the Jews and an Essay in Interpretation,” *Yad Vashem Studies*. XVI (1984), pp 1-50; Otto D. Kulka, “Die deutsche Geschichtsschreibung über den Nationalsozialismus und die ‘Endlösung’,” *Historische Zeitschrift*. 240 (1985), pp 599-640; Tim Mason, “Intention and Explanation: A Current Controversy about the Interpretation of National Socialism,” in Gerhard Hirschfeld und Lothar Kettenacker (Hrsg.) *Der “Führerstaat”: Mythos und Realität. Studien zur Struktur und Politik des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart, 1981), pp 24-42; Dieter Pohl, “Die Holocaust-Forschung und Goldhagens Thesen,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 45, 1 (1997), pp 1-48; Wolfgang Wippermann, “The Jewish Hanging Judge? Goldhagen and the ‘Self-Confident Nation’,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 229-253.

⁷ In the highly-praised study by Christopher Browning (*Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (HarperPerennial, 1992).

⁸ Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945* (London, 1953); Joseph Tenenbaum, *Race and Reich: The Story of an Epoch* (New York, 1956); the French-language volume by Léon Poliakov predated both of these works: *Bréviaire de la haine. Le IIIe Reich et les Juifs* (Paris, 1951).

⁹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago, 1961). Hilberg later acknowledged that he had paid insufficient attention to the ideological underpinnings of the Holocaust, which he corrected with the volume *Täter, Opfer, Zuschauer: Die Vernichtung der Juden 1933-1945* (Frankfurt a.M., 1992).

Holocaust and made *The Destruction of the European Jews* a standard work in the field. A few years later the essence of the bureaucratic aspect would be captured in the phrase “banality of evil” in Hannah Arendt’s book on Eichmann.¹⁰ Also in 1961 a work by Artur Eisenbach¹¹ on the crimes that took place specifically in Poland located the source of Jewish persecution in generalised ethnic racism. Identifying this racism as coming not just from Hitler, but as a characteristic of the German elites generally, this book was one of the earliest attempts at understanding the motivation behind the genocide.

In Germany the subject of the persecution of the Jews was addressed in passing in early post-war works by eminent historians Gerhard Ritter and Friedrich Meinecke.¹² Non-academic contributions by Eugen Kogon and H.G. Adler (survivors of Nazi persecutions) were complemented by the systematic presentations of documentation of the “Final Solution” by Swiss historian Walther Hofer and by Léon Poliakov and Joseph Wulf.¹³ Apart from these works, the topic was long addressed only in the German translation of Reitlinger, until in 1960 Wolfgang Scheffler wrote one of the first general overviews of the subject.¹⁴

The 1960s brought considerable contributions supported by the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte*, which was pivotal in encouraging study in the field of the “current history” of the Nazi era and of the *Judenverfolgung* (persecution of the Jews). Helmut Krausnick’s notable 1965 study on the latter subject and Karl-Dietrich Bracher’s analysis of the central

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: The Banality of Evil* (New York, 1964).

¹¹ This original Polish work (*Hitlerowska polityka zagłady Żydów*) was published in 1961; a portion of that work was first made available in the West as “Operation Reinhard. Mass Extermination of the Jewish Population in Poland,” in *Polish Western Affairs* 3 (1962), pp 80-124.

¹² Gerhard Ritter was particularly energetic in his shoring up of Germany and of German history before the tides of outraged Western opinion in the 1940s. See his *Geschichte als Bildungsmacht: Ein Beitrag zur historisch-politischen Neubestimmung* (Stuttgart, 1946), *Europa und die deutsche Frage: Betrachtungen über das geschichtliche Eigenart des deutschen Staatsdenkens* (1948, later *Das deutsche Problem: Grundfragen deutschen Staatslebens gestern und heute*), and *Vom sittlichen Problem der Macht: Fünf Essays* (Bern, 1948). Meinecke’s *Die deutsche Katastrophe* has been called a bad book by a great man, largely because of its inability to transcend late nineteenth-century conceptions of “the Jewish Problem”.

¹³ Eugen Kogon, *Der SS-Staat: Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager* (Frankfurt a.M., 1946); H.G. Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* (Tübingen 1955) and later *Die Verheimlichte Wahrheit: Theresienstädter Dokumente* (Tübingen, 1958); Walther Hofer (Hrsg.) *Der Nationalsozialismus: Dokumentee 1933-1945* (Frankfurt a.M., 1957); Léon Poliakov/Josef Wulf, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden* (Berlin, 1955).

¹⁴ Gerald Reitlinger, *Die Endlösung: Hitlers Versuch der Ausrottung der Juden Europas 1939-1945* (Berlin, 1956); Wolfgang Scheffler, *Die nationalsozialistische Judenpolitik* (Berlin, 1960).

role of antisemitism in the development of the dictatorship were among the earliest specific contributions to the subject.¹⁵ They were followed by groundbreaking dissertations by Uwe-Dietrich Adam (1972), which for the first time placed in question the presumed coherent and inexorable unfolding of the events leading to mass murder, and by Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm (1974), whose study of *Einsatzgruppe A* brought him to the opposite conclusion, that there was a strong element of intention in the planning and implementation of the Holocaust.¹⁶

During the 1970s historiography in West Germany became decidedly isolated, taking notice neither of publications from Communist Eastern Europe nor from Israel. In the latter, the research centre at *Yad Vashem* had been engaging since 1957 in the process of capturing the accounts of Holocaust survivors and piecing together the monstrous history of the event. The pattern for Israeli research was established in this time, and was based on a consensus view of the continuity of antisemitism in Germany since the nineteenth century and of the central role of that antisemitism in the mass murder.¹⁷

By the 1970s a number of books on Hitler had appeared and differences of opinion were forming about his intentions as leader and the role of antisemitism in his dictatorship.¹⁸ At the height of these debates the German historical guild, united in its rejection of David Irving's allegation that Hitler had only learned of the murder of the Jews in 1943, found itself confronted by Martin Broszat's revelation that the long-presumed

¹⁵ Helmut Krausnick, "Judenverfolgung," in Hans Buchheim/Martin Broszat/Hans-Adolf Jacobsen/Helmut Krausnick *Anatomie des SS-Staates* (Freiburg i.B., 1965); Karl-Dietrich Bracher, *Die deutsche Diktatur: Entstehung, Struktur und Folgen des Nationalsozialismus* (Köln/Berlin, 1969)

¹⁶ Uwe-Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf, 1972); Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Einsatzgruppe A der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1941/42* (Frankfurt a.M., u.a. 1996, weitgehend unveränderte Fassung der Dissertation von 1974).

¹⁷ Pohl, *loc. cit.*, pp 4-5. This was a view reflected as well in the writings of German émigrés in the West: Eva Reichmann *Hostages of Civilisation: The Social Sources of National Socialist Anti-Semitism* (London, 1950); Hannah Arendt *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951); Paul Massing, *Rehearsal for Destruction* (New York, 1949), about antisemitism in the *Kaiserreich*; Waldemar Gurian, "Antisemitism in Modern Germany," in Kopel S. Pinson (ed.) *Essays on Antisemitism* (New York, 1946), pp 218-265; Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (London, 1961); George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964).

¹⁸ Among which: Martin Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers: Grundlegungen und Entwicklung seiner inneren Verfassung* (München, 1969); Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (London, 1952); Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitlers Weltanschauung* (Tübingen, 1969); Andreas Hillgruber's *Hitlers Strategie, Politik und Kriegführung 1940-1941* (Frankfurt a.M., 1965) and *Deutschlands Rolle in der Vorgeschichte der beiden Weltkriege* (Göttingen, 1967); Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Hitlers letzte Tage* (Frankfurt a.M., 1973).

existence of the “*Führerbefehl*” (direct order from Hitler to effect the “Final Solution”) was in fact not substantiated by the evidence uncovered thus far.¹⁹

This moment of crisis sparked an historical controversy which quickly adopted the form of the long-standing “intentionalist/functionalist” debate.²⁰ The debate, still predominant in Germany today, is worth taking the time to examine not only because it has largely determined the scholarly reception of Goldhagen’s book, but because it will help to locate where exactly Goldhagen’s contribution stands in relation to the existing literature.

As mentioned, studies the immediate post-war period focused for the most part on Nazi crimes and the rise of fascism. The birth of the intentionalist approach was in this context influenced by the stark contrast that appeared to exist between a defeated Nazi Germany and the Western nations of the victorious Allied powers. This approach conceived of the Nazi state in monolithic terms, and sought out ideological motivations for crimes with a pointed emphasis on the questions of intention and of responsibility for those crimes. For intentionalist adherents the decisive precondition for the Holocaust was Hitler’s antisemitism, which was itself understood to be deeply rooted in the German past. It was a strongly particularist approach, therefore, seeking the sources of Germany’s twentieth-century catastrophe specifically in the course of German history.

The other central tenets of intentionalism may be loosely grouped into six characteristics: the first is to invest *ideology*, especially antisemitism, with great causal significance (emphasising thereby intentions that pre-date the Nazi era); second, to stress the question of *agency* in the creation of a totalitarian state and in the perpetration of the Holocaust; third, to posit an alleged *pathology* of German exceptionalism that supposedly represented a divergence from the West, along a path from the refusal of liberal democracy in the late nineteenth century to the totalitarian catastrophe of the twentieth (the “*Sonderweg*” thesis); fourth, to use explicitly *moralistic rhetoric*; fifth, to see the Jews as

¹⁹ Martin Broszat, “Hitler und die Genesis der ‘Endlösung’,” in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25 (1977), pp 739-775.

²⁰ “Structuralist” is sometimes substituted for “functionalist” in the discussions of this dynamic; “intentionalist” normally remains the same, though some attach the prefix “ideological-” to it. The terms are relatively fluid and are essentially a useful form of shorthand for denoting the two approaches rather than a description of a definitive methodological school. For the purposes of clarity this thesis adheres to the terms provided: “intentionalist/functionalist”.

the *primary victims* of persecution; and sixth, to define the *uniqueness* of the Holocaust in absolutist terms.

On this intentionalist interpretation, Germany's central task in the post-war era was to adhere strictly to the normalcy offered by Western-style democracy. The break with the past represented by 1945 and the establishment of the Federal Republic were the necessary conditions for Germany maintaining her position among the family of nations. Only in such a manner would the recurrence of such a monstrous event as the Holocaust be prevented.²¹

In the 1960s this approach was challenged from the political Left by those who rejected the pieties of totalitarianism theory. Some of the works already cited were movements in what was to be labelled the "functionalist" direction (*e.g.* Adam, Broszat, and the work of the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte*²²) but the first effort came from the figure who remains the most staunch defender of the functionalist approach: historian Hans Mommsen.²³ Based on thorough archival analysis, he undertook the systematic reconstruction of the developments leading to the "Final Solution". The results were surprising: instead of the monolithic Nazi state ruled absolutely by the *Führer*, a picture of a "polycratic" Third Reich organised in a state of "authoritarian anarchy" began to emerge. The interaction of competing administrative institutions, and not the work of a deliberate dictatorial will, resulted in a "cumulative radicalisation" of Nazi policies which ended in total war and mass murder. Each process set in motion along that path developed its own dynamic, all the result of the way in which the Nazi leadership conceived of political power and how that power was organised in the Nazi state.²⁴

²¹ A. D. Moses, "Structure and Agency in the Holocaust: Daniel J. Goldhagen and his Critics," *History and Theory* 37, 2 (1998), pp 199-201.

²² Under which the volume by Buchheim/Broszat/Jacobsen/Krausnick (though Krausnick and Buchheim were less influenced by this methodology).

²³ Hans Mommsen, "Der nationalsozialistische Polizeistaat und die Judenverfolgung vor 1938" in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 10 (1962), pp 68-87; Karl A. Schleunes' *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews 1933-39* (London, 1972) is also an exemplary work.

²⁴ Further representative publications by Hans Mommsen: "National Socialism—Continuity and Change," in Walter Laqueur (ed.), *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (London, 1976), pp 179-210; "Hitlers Stellung im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem," in Hirschfeld/Kettenacker (Hrsg.), *Der "Führerstaat,"* (*op. cit.*), pp 43-72; "The Realization of the Unthinkable: the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' in the Third Reich," in Hirschfeld (ed.), *Policies of Genocide,* (*op. cit.*), pp 97-144; "The Thin Patina of Civilization:

Under the functionalist view, a critique was made of the intentionalists' location of the causes for the Nazi regime's rise to power exclusively within Germany's historical "special development" or *Sonderweg*. Such narrowly national, specifically German terms of reference were rejected by the functionalists for two reasons: first, a focus such as this took insufficient account of the problems inherent in Western modernity generally; second, that same narrow focus prevented Germans from coming to terms with their past. It was felt by the functionalists that so long as the intentionalists were insisting on the centrality of Hitler and Nazi ideology, the past would be kept remote and apart from the present day, so that Germans could apologetically disavow any connection to the era. Only a universalist approach such as that offered by the functionalists, which in detached and sober terms examined the dynamics of a system at work (rather than the central role of a leader) would help to explain how any group in the modern era could progress, step by step, into the most criminal of behaviours; this would in turn, it was hoped, foster greater comprehension (and responsible acceptance) of the Nazi past by contemporary Germans.

The functionalist project was thus driven by a *critical* intention. Rather than centring the focus (as the intentionalists did) on German causes for German actions, it sought to understand the opaque and complex processes that produced the Holocaust, the better to comprehend the sources of oppression and genocide in contemporary modern society.²⁵

The countering reaction of the intentionalists over time has been to attack the functionalist position for offering an unwitting apologia, seemingly assigning historical and moral responsibility for Nazi policies to blind forces and the pressures of bureaucratic competition. To counter this apparent "trivialising" of Nazism, intentionalists most often combine their strictly *scholarly* objections with overtones of strongly *moral* indignation (*tenet four*) when an emphatic sense of authorship of the Holocaust is downplayed by the functionalist perspective.

Antisemitism was a necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for the Holocaust," in Shandley, (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 183-195.

²⁵ Moses, *loc. cit.*, *passim*; Saul Friedländer, "From Antisemitism to Extermination: A Historiographical Study of Nazi Policies Toward the Jews and an Essay in Interpretation," *Yad Vashem Studies* XVI (1984), pp 17ff.

And the latter, in turn, criticise the particularist intentionalist narrative for its two main failings: the unwillingness to engage the universal modern processes at work which make an otherwise inexplicable horror more comprehensible; and the tendency to view in retrospect (and without consideration of decision-making processes at work) Nazi state policies as unfolding over the course of years with a coherence which was, above all, necessary and intentional. The result, as this brief description already indicates, is that the two sides tend to a great degree to talk past one another, which results in the debate becoming in actuality an endless cycle of back-and-forth.²⁶

But perhaps the strongest criticism of the intentionalist approach is the one that centres on that fourth tenet of the intentionalist view (as outlined above)—its strongly moralistic tone. While it is impossible to imagine any observer not having strong moral opinions about the Holocaust (which is perhaps the single most morally explosive issue of the twentieth century), the question is whether the moral judgements offered by such an approach can be substantiated by the sources. As both intentionalists and functionalists freely admit, they are confronted by a paucity of documentation regarding the specific *intentions* of key figures regarding the Holocaust.

This is why the “*Führerbefehl*” issue touched off so much heated controversy. But when Irving (some would say irresponsibly) saw in the poverty of sources a convincing argument for Hitler’s ignorance of the “Final Solution,” he misunderstood the way the Nazi system operated. The inadequacy of sources in this sphere is a “direct consequence of the fragmented and informal character of the decision-making procedures” as well as “Hitler’s personal aversion to the written word,” which meant “motives were rarely formulated, reasons rarely given, policy options rarely recorded as such, the origins of policy initiatives rarely disclosed.”²⁷

²⁶ Typified by the ongoing debate of each field’s most prominent practitioners, Hans Mommsen (functionalist) and Klaus Hildebrand (intentionalist): see their contributions, both entitled, “Nationalsozialismus oder Hitlerismus,” in Michael Bosch (Hrsg.), *Persönlichkeit und Struktur in der Geschichte* (Düsseldorf, 1977); and again, Hans Mommsen, “Hitlers Stellung im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem,” (pp 43-72) “versus” Hildebrand’s “Monokratie oder Polykratie? Hitlers Herrschaft und das Dritte Reich,” (pp 73-97) both in Hirschfeld/Kettenacker (Hrsg.), *Der “Führerstaat”*, (*op. cit.*)

²⁷ Mason in Hirschfeld/Kettenacker (Hrsg.), *op. cit.*, p 31.

The criticism therefore levelled against the intentionalist response to this problem of sources centres on the view that “Hitler’s ideas, intentions and actions were decisive,” a view that is not presented as an explanatory argument so much as “something which is both a premise and a conclusion.” Such a position represents a “retreat by the historical profession to the methods and stance of Burckhardt,” who “saw the historian’s task as to investigate, to classify and to order, to hate and to love and to warn—but *not*, except upon the smallest of scales, to explain.” Taken to its extreme, this approach has no explanatory power at all, nor is one seriously sought after.²⁸ It is a moral argument of right and wrong, good and evil, love and hate—an ethical argument which does not depend on historical sources as proof of its internal moral validity—and is the one to which, as will be shown, the extreme intentionalist approach in Goldhagen’s book subscribes.²⁹

After the late 1970s works in the field of Holocaust research multiplied, and the current tally of articles, books and collections of documents runs easily into the thousands.³⁰ Further mention of notable works from this period will therefore be made in thematic groupings in Section 5. The last key point to be made here is that studies of the motives of individual perpetrators of Nazi crimes and of the “brutalisation” of individual soldiers on the Eastern front had already been published even before the works both on the perpetrators and (with Christopher Browning’s breakthrough work) specifically on the motives of the perpetrators came out.³¹

²⁸ Mason, *Ibid.*, p 29 (emphasis in original).

²⁹ It must be said that most intentionalist works do not tend to this extreme position, and are in fact very much concerned with explaining (though with a characteristically moral overtone) the Nazi era. Representative works are numerous and varied, among which should be mentioned: Karl Dietrich Bracher/Wolfgang Sauer/Gerhard Schulz *Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung: Studien zur Errichtung des totalitären Herrschaftssystems in Deutschland 1933/34* (Köln, ²1962); Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die deutsche Diktatur: Entstehung, Struktur, Folgen des Nationalsozialismus* (Köln, ⁵1976); Klaus Hildebrand’s “Monokratie oder Polykratie?...” *loc. cit.* and *Das Dritte Reich*, (München/Wien, 1979); Helmut Krausnick/Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges: Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1938-1942* (Stuttgart, 1981).

³⁰ Geoff Eley, “Holocaust History,” in *London Review of Books* 3 (March 16, 1982), cited in Norman G. Finkelstein and Ruth Bettina Birn, *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth* (New York, 1998), p 93, n 85; Pohl terms it “eine Flut von Untersuchungen zur Judenverfolgung”, *loc. cit.*, p 6.

³¹ Herbert Jäger, *Verbrechen unter totalitärer Herrschaft: Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Gewaltkriminalität* (Freiburg, 1967); Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front 1941-1945: German Troops and the Barbarization of Warfare* (London, 1985); Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen and Volker Riess (eds.) *“The Good Old Days”: The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders* (New York, 1988); Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*, *op. cit.*

This concludes the survey of literature for the moment, but the situational context in which Goldhagen's work was received in Germany had another dimension, *viz.* the after-effects of two preceding major historical controversies. While observers of the Goldhagen debate can therefore be forgiven for feeling a sense of *déjà vu*, it is nonetheless true that this most recent controversy was not a simple rehashing of the same issues.

The Fischer controversy of the 1960s had been another occasion on which vitriol was poured on a new work of history, with similar comments about how the "entire work" had basically "missed the mark" and offered "essentially nothing new". While the tone is the same as that which would be typical of the Goldhagen debate, in this instance the liberal book was eventually accepted by, and helped thereby to liberalise, a mostly conservative historical guild. The work did not fundamentally undermine or overthrow the corpus of existing literature but found its own place and contributed to the greater understanding sought by scholars.³²

From the 1960s up until the 1980s, an uneasy *modus vivendi* reigned on the German historical scene. While functionalism became the predominant interpretive school of thought in Germany, events such as the ongoing *Sonderweg* debate about the alleged historical "German divergence from the West"³³ (an intentionalist tenet) served notice that the opposing camp was still very much alive and well. In 1986 the outbreak of the *Historikerstreit* not only heightened the tensions, but was a political challenge as well.

Ernst Nolte and Michael Stürmer were two of the leading figures participating in the debate, holding forth what were at the time rather radical views. Both men, arguing from a politically conservative viewpoint, wished to place what Nolte called a *Schlußstrich* (dividing line) between the contemporary, healthy *Bundesrepublik* and the Nazi past that was the albatross around its neck.³⁴ What ensued was a long, public and often

³² The book was Fischer's *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (1961), cited in Volker Ullrich, "Familiar Tones," in Shandley (ed.), p 117.

³³ Jürgen Kocka, "German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German *Sonderweg*," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23 (1988), p 11. Kocka prefers this expression to that normally given in this context, of "Germany's special path to democracy". While the latter is a more direct translation, he points out that it absents certain usable features of German political development not, strictly speaking, related to democracy *per se*.

³⁴ Ernst Nolte, "Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will: Eine Rede die geschrieben, aber nicht gehalten werden konnte," in "*Historikerstreit*": *Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (München, Zürich, 1987), p 41. This volume presents a

acrimonious debate about the morality of “historicism” and of “relativising” not only the absolute uniqueness of the Holocaust, but the burden of German guilt attached thereto.

Against the liberal consensus of the “intentionalist” and “functionalist” approaches was now extolled a conservative “revisionist” position. In terms of the interpretive continuum represented by the former two, the latter conservative viewpoint therefore represented a new offshoot. Rejecting large parts of the intentionalist position these (conservative) “revisionists” found themselves not alongside the functionalists at the opposite end of the same spectrum, but indeed in their own no-man’s land.³⁵

These “revisionists” were not so much concerned with how best to understand the past, but simply wished that it would (in Nolte’s formulation) “pass away”. Or if not pass away, at least make way for a what Stürmer called a more “usable” form of historical interpretation, creating a more positive national identity for Germany than the one which saw Germans constantly tarred with the Nazi brush.³⁶ It is important to note in this context that at least as many of the strongest opponents of the revisionists during the debate came from the functionalist camp as from the intentionalist, if not more. Conservative extremism of this sort was clearly ideologically driven and anathema to the liberal methodologies employed by mainstream historians in understanding the past.

Taken in sum, the significance of these two previous debates is that shocking and novel works of history can, when based on extensive research like Fischer’s, contribute to the

comprehensive description of the competing positions in original German. Some of the most important pieces are available in English translation in *Yad Vashem Studies* XIX (1988). Though this pairing follows Jürgen Habermas in his placement of Stürmer’s and Nolte’s arguments in the same interpretive category (in his article that really sparked off the debate, “Eine Art Schadensabwicklung,” in “*Historikerstreit*”, pp 62-76) it is not meant to lend credence to Habermas’ questionable overall position or especially his attack on the late historian Andreas Hillgruber.

³⁵ This was a rejection, however, that sought to revise and thereby regain usage of the *Sonderweg* thesis. Proposing an positive concept of Germany’s “*Eigenweg*,” this geopolitically-based argument of the desirability of having a stable Germany in the centre of Europe sought out that stability by identifying and actively promoting the same conservative traditions of nineteenth-century Germany from which liberals drew their ominous foreshadowings of Nazism (Kocka, *loc. cit.*, pp 9-10). The *Eigenweg* took issue not only with tenet number three of the intentionalist approach (*viz.* German *pathology* in diverging from the West), but also tenets number five and six, since comparisons with other genocides and with Stalin’s Soviet Union relativized the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the specificity of Jewish victimization by the Nazis. It is for the latter two issues that it was most roundly criticized, and the revisionist project as a whole was rejected.

³⁶ Nolte, “Vergangenheit...”, pp 39ff; Michael Stürmer, “Geschichte in geschichtslosem Land,” pp 36-28 *passim*, both in “*Historikerstreit*,” *op.cit.*

recasting of interpretive paradigms and advancing the state of historical knowledge. But the *Historikerstreit* showed with equal clarity that historians are capable of identifying those interpretive approaches that contain a strong agenda (in this case an ideologically conservative one) and of rejecting arguments made for the sake of political expediency.

After the *Historikerstreit*, historians soberly weighed the positive effects of such spirited debate, calm returned and historical study continued. But it was a calm that belied the repressed uncertainty that many Germans still felt about just exactly how long “Germans” *would* have to bear the unique and apparently endless guilt of their past. Younger and younger generations no longer felt any direct contact with the events of their history, even as they dutifully adopted a suitable respect for the enormity of the deeds that had been committed. The echo of the *Schlußstrich* remained, long after the terms under which the revisionists would have had it drawn had been publicly and academically discredited.

As with classic cases of repression, however, the feelings came back multiplied when provoked by similar circumstances. This explains in part the vociferously negative initial reaction in Germany to the release of Goldhagen’s book. The book’s provocative title and even more shocking thesis exploded the uneasy peace that had existed in the decade since the *Historikerstreit*. And exactly as with the 1980s debate which had raged in op-ed pages of prominent newspapers throughout Germany, this one provoked responses not only from the community of academic historians but also other shapers of public opinion, not least because of the splashy marketing surrounding the book’s release and its immediate and widespread public success.

Before detailing the book’s public reception, however, Goldhagen’s arguments and the evaluation of their scholarly merit await description.

2. HITLER’S WILLING EXECUTIONERS: GOLDHAGEN’S THESIS AND ARGUMENTS

Goldhagen’s intention is to broaden the scope of accountability beyond the fanatical ideological warriors of the SS who are typically depicted as being primarily responsible for

the Holocaust. The book's central thesis is that "ordinary Germans," in numbers greater than hitherto suspected, were the willing perpetrators of the morally outrageous crimes committed by the Nazi regime. These "ordinary Germans," alleges Goldhagen, were motivated by a specifically German form of "eliminationist antisemitism," which prompted them to engage in wholesale mass murder, even though the option was available for them to have refused to do so without fear of punishment.

Goldhagen begins by outlining the complicated social science model that is to be employed. This methodological model purports to explain how individual actions and preferences can be generalised to understand the political culture of an entire society. Three case studies of those individual actions are then offered as empirical proof: the first and longest section deals with the members of Police Battalions active in Poland, to whom fell the initial task of mass shootings of Jews; the second concerns the system of Jewish work camps; and the third addresses the "death marches" of 1945. In all three cases, what Goldhagen tries to show is that the wilful cruelty and zealously anti-Jewish behaviour exhibited by "ordinary Germans" are demonstrative of the extent to which antisemitism had become a cultural norm in German society. He concludes,

The inescapable truth is that, regarding Jews, German political culture had evolved to the point where an enormous number of ordinary, *representative* Germans became—and most of the rest of their fellow Germans were fit to be—Hitler's willing executioners. (454, emphasis added)

After Goldhagen vividly and gruesomely describes the actions of the perpetrators, he reads from these actions the generalised "cultural norms" of which he claims they are (in the key term) "representative". The overarching assumption is thus that Germans of the 1930s and 1940s stood at the head of a deeply-rooted antisemitic tradition that stretched far back through the national history. This uniquely German taint was ubiquitous in the contemporary political culture and had produced a population which was ripe for the murder of Jews. Hitler and the Nazis merely acted as the catalyst that mobilised this mass of willing bloodthirsty murderers at the appropriate time; since all "ordinary Germans" were equally ready to kill Jews, it mattered little which specific persons were sent to the

banks of the killing trenches. "Eliminationist" antisemitism had become in the twentieth century "exterminationist" antisemitism, and is presented as the sole sufficient cause for the Holocaust and as the monocausal explanation of the perpetrators' deeds.

From the start of his 622-page book Goldhagen boldly assails the state of Holocaust studies. His description is of a body of research that has to date been in "grave error," and "marred by a poor understanding and an under-theorising of antisemitism". Existing scholarship exhibits a "deficient" approach that "denied or obscured" what is to him *the* central explanatory fact: "Germans' antisemitic beliefs about Jews were the central causal agent of the Holocaust." What is therefore required is a "new and substantially different view," a "radical revision of what has until now been written," the reconceiving of "the perpetrators [of the Holocaust], of German antisemitism and of German society during the Nazi period." (6-9,12)

"This book," asserts Goldhagen, "is that revision." (9)

Indeed, a general revision is what the publisher's aggressive marketing campaign promises the reader: "a monumental work," which "overthrows decades of conventional wisdom by eminent scholars," with "the only plausible explanation".³⁷

Goldhagen's book strikes a resounding blow against the hitherto prevailing functionalist positions that have been more concerned with contextual elements, bureaucratic intricacies and convoluted systemic interactions. And yet, in spite of the fact that his book is an epitome of the intentionalist viewpoint, containing classic examples of all six tenets of the intentionalist school as outlined in the preceding section,³⁸ Goldhagen himself is critical of the debate, calling the "intentionalist-functionalist" label a "misnomer". (11)

There can be little wonder over this, for Goldhagen's contribution represents (as did the "revisionist" positions of Nolte and Stürmer in the *Historikerstreit*) a process of arguing from a specific ideological viewpoint that is *outside* the intentionalist/functionalist continuum. For the revisionists the politically expedient end that was sought was a

³⁷ Raul Hilberg, "The Goldhagen Phenomenon," *Critical Inquiry*. 23, 4 (1997), p 725.

³⁸ These tenets will be identified parenthetically in the text as they are described in Goldhagen's arguments. The numbering sequence will match that presented in Section 1.

“usable” history for the purposes of defining a national self-identity. For Goldhagen the politically expedient (or desirable, or even necessary) end is a moral judgement of Nazi crimes that provokes a sense of outrage.

In seeking to bring home to the reader the maximum impact of the evil deeds committed, Goldhagen goes beyond the intentionalist view. Whereas the traditional approach had Hitler as the chief “intentionalist,” pressing for genocide from the start, Goldhagen’s book alleges “the Germans” as the great intentionalists who were just waiting for war because it would finally provided “the opportunity for them to carry out what they wanted anyway: the extermination of the Jews.”³⁹ By dealing specifically with the experiences of the individual perpetrators, Goldhagen presents the agents on which the Holocaust can be blamed: the “ordinary Germans” who became “willing executioners”.

Because his position is separate and apart from the interpretive continuum predominant in the field, Goldhagen mistakes his approach for being not only novel, but indeed supplanting all pre-existing studies. Thus he openly implies the sterility of the intentionalist/functionalist debate and intimates that it has actually become superfluous. In this context and to back up his own claim to novelty, Goldhagen makes the further claim that only one other historian⁴⁰ ever “saw fit” to question the assumption made by “all the [other] participants in the debate” that executing genocidal orders was “unproblematic for the actors.” (*Ibid.*) The reader is thus presented with the “Brand New!” and definitive explanation of the why and how of the Holocaust, a *sui generis* occurrence for which there is “no comparable event in the twentieth century, indeed in modern European history,” (419, 5) (*tenet six*), took place.

³⁹ Götz Aly, “The Universe of Death and Torment,” in Shandley, *op. cit.*, p 173.

⁴⁰ The 1983 essay, “Realisation of the Unthinkable” (in Hirschfeld (ed.), *op. cit.*) by Hans Mommsen is cited in this instance (*HWE* p 478, n22). Goldhagen’s claims to novelty (*inter alia*: “My explanation—which is new to the scholarly literature on the perpetrators...” [*HWE* p 14]) are true inasmuch as his particular take on the matter is unprecedented (to say the least), but he often acts as though no one had ever looked at the perpetrators or the events in the East, a position undermined by the existence of works by Eisenbach, Jäger and Bartov, as well as numerous Holocaust studies that take into account some aspects of individual responsibility and motive, albeit not as the central focus (cited in Pohl, *loc. cit.*, pp 12-13). Goldhagen does cite the book by Klee/Dressen/Riess (eds.) but only in reference to “the Nazis’ bizarre attitudes towards animals” (*HWE* p 554 n22). And the reason for Goldhagen’s lack of acknowledgement of the contribution made by Christopher Browning’s *Ordinary Men* is made clear in the multiple and unfair allegations of bias and substandard scholarship made in over twenty-five endnote references to Browning in *HWE*. *Vide infra*, Section 5(i).

In keeping with the book's provocative title, the author focuses with prosecutorial passion on the motives of the perpetrators (*tenet two*).⁴¹ He offers several central observations about the Holocaust: there was no pressure on the perpetrators to do their grisly deeds, which many did voluntaristically, zealously and cruelly, often beyond the scope dictated by orders; they did so, even when given the option not to, because they were "ordinary Germans" who were "animated by a particular *type* of antisemitism that led them to conclude that the Jews *ought to die*" (19-20, 14 emphasis in original); this form of what he terms "exterminationist antisemitism" had its roots in the "eliminationist" variety that formed the "predominant German cultural cognitive model of Jews" (71, 46, 170), extending through the nineteenth century, and indeed farther still, to the early Christian prejudices most directly embodied in Germany by Martin Luther.

So thoroughgoing was this "eliminationist" antisemitism among all Germans—and only Germans⁴²—that Hitler's virulent "hallucinatory" version found immediate kinship with it. Thanks in large part to this shared "great hatred for the Jews," the Nazis were "elected to power," in a peaceful, consensual Nazi German revolution. (425, 419, 456) Together Hitler's Nazis and the "ordinary Germans" of the Third Reich set out to effect the genocide of the Jewish—and only Jewish⁴³—people (*tenet five*). Thus these "contented members of an assenting genocidal community [...] celebrated" the killing of Jews, about which they were well informed and to which they gave their full support as what they understood to be the "German national project". (406, 11) "It is incontestable," Goldhagen confidently informs his readers, "that this racial antisemitism" was "pregnant with murder." (75)

⁴¹ Josef Joffe, "Goldhagen in Germany," *The New York Review of Books* 43, 19 (November 28, 1996), p 19.

⁴² German antisemitism is dealt with exclusively and non-comparatively by the author. Under the formulation, "no Germans, no Holocaust," (*HWE* p 6) and because "the Germans were the prime movers, and the central and only indispensable perpetrators of the Holocaust," (*HWE* p 409) Goldhagen avers that he is exempted from any comparison with other forms of antisemitism contemporary to the Nazi era or in European history. Comment on this is made in Section 3 (iii), (*vide infra*).

⁴³ The author's monocausal explanation of "ordinary Germans'" motives for perpetrating the Holocaust being located exclusively in deep-seated German antisemitism means of necessity that he wishes to (and, in the internal logic of his theoretical model, must) deal only with cases of Jewish mass-murder. This is one of several major flaws in his argument, and is dealt with in a later section (*vide infra*).

This monocausal explanation of the motive that caused “ordinary Germans” to shoot millions of Jews at close proximity thus becomes a highly specific version of the *Sonderweg* thesis, in this case of Germany’s “special path” to its own divergent and specifically German antisemitism (*tenets one and three*).⁴⁴ As proof of this deeply-rooted and specifically German antisemitic tendency, Goldhagen offers three examples: the Police Battalions that participated in mass executions in Poland, the Jewish work camps, and the “death marches” of 1945. But first he offers a description of what constitutes a “perpetrator” for the purposes of his study.

A reasonable first definition is given as “men and women who in some intimate way *knowingly* contributed to the slaughter of Jews”. Expanding on this, Goldhagen writes that these were “overwhelmingly and most importantly Germans, [...] pursuing German national political goals” and must be understood as “Germans first, and SS men, policemen or camp guards second.” (6-7) Further definition is offered later in the book:

...anyone who worked in an institution that was part of the system of brutal, lethal domination, a system that had at its apogee the institutions of direct mass slaughter [was] a perpetrator, for he *knew* that by his actions he was sustaining institutions of genocidal killing. (165, emphasis added)

Goldhagen bases the first case of empirical evidence offered in support of his thesis on his “extensive, though not exhaustive” research⁴⁵ on the Police Battalions which operated in Poland, bodies he describes as the agents of genocide and “organisational homes” of the “ordinary Germans” who were to become willing killers. (179-82) Goldhagen’s stated intent is to make use of the “unusually clear window” offered by these Battalions onto some of the central issues of the Holocaust. Dispensing with the history of the institutional

⁴⁴ The *Sonderweg*, as previously noted (*vide supra*, Footnote 33) denotes a specifically German form of socio-political development. Originally intended as a positive description of basic German political specifics consistent with the German historical pattern, it was recast post-1945 in a critical variant. This latter *Sonderweg* approach took the question of why it was in Germany and not in other highly developed industrial nations of Europe that Nazism emerged and answered it by first emphasizing the Nazi period as endpoint, then tracing the threads that led to it back through the course of German history. In shorthand, it is often referred to as the “Luther to Hitler” school and is present, in more or less obvious forms, in all intentionalist theories. (Kocka, *loc. cit.*, *passim*)

⁴⁵ Conducted in the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen* in Ludwigsburg, Germany (HWE p 519 n72).

development of the *Ordnungspolizei* (Order Police) that comprised the Battalions in question⁴⁶, the author proceeds to narrow the focus to only those aspects that “prove” the perpetrators of the Holocaust were “representative of German society—that is, ordinary Germans”. (181, 207)

Goldhagen further elucidates that although the biographical data on the members of the Battalions available in the sources are “scanty, so only a partial portrait of the battalion can be drawn,” this is minimised as “not a crucial problem, because enough of the relevant data do exist to suffice for the primary task of drawing this portrait.” (205) He asserts that the “scanty” evidence *is* in fact sufficient for the primary task, but *assumes* that it is sufficient for the wider secondary task of determining “whether or not the conclusions drawn about [the policemen] might also apply to their countrymen”? (*Ibid.*)

Undaunted, Goldhagen concludes from his six page analysis that the conduct he subsequently outlines in over seventy pages of gruesome detail (replete with photos) does indeed provide “insight into the likely conduct of other ordinary Germans.” (208) In the end the claim is made that the “men of these nine Battalions form a sample sufficient to generalise with confidence about the other police Battalions,” who are in turn described as “broadly representative of German society,” foremost of all in that “they wanted to be genocidal executioners”; “they wanted to do it,” Goldhagen emphasises, killing “willingly, zealously, and with extraordinary brutality”. (277-280) The reader is thus led down a narrow interpretive path supported by tenuous “proof” to Goldhagen’s sweeping and seemingly inevitable conclusion. Any “ordinary German,” in the same position and in the grips of the same hallucinatory German antisemitism, would have done the same thing. This is expressed most vehemently in the following passage:

the conclusions drawn about the overall character of the [Police Battalion] members’ actions can, indeed must be, generalised to *the German people in*

⁴⁶ Goldhagen not only ignores the institutional development of the *Ordnungspolizei* but chooses to focus only on those mobile Battalions that sporadically moved into regions to participate in mass killings because including the stationary police would necessitate including the “factual, social and historical context” of their actions which would be lethal to his central monocausality thesis (Ruth Bettina Birn, “Revising the Holocaust,” *Historiographical Review* 40, 1 (1997), pp 202-3.)

general. What these *ordinary* Germans did could also have been expected of other *ordinary* Germans. (402, emphasis in original)⁴⁷

The second evidentiary example presented in support of Goldhagen's argument is a shorter section on the use of Jewish labour in work camps. Proof of the existence of German "eliminationist antisemitism" is offered in the fact that Jews were worked to death and murdered outright even when the prevailing labour shortages in Nazi Germany made it economically irrational to do so. Crucial to proving his monocausal antisemitism argument in this section are the repeated assertions that senseless work and demeaning tasks were given "almost exclusively" to Jews, that this behaviour "occurred for Jews—and only for Jews." (313) He deals with the presence of non-Jewish camp inmates by describing conditions⁴⁸ for these other prisoners as "a life of comparative luxury" (343) under which they enjoyed "shocking longevity" in comparison with Jewish inmates. (340) In keeping with his monocausal thesis, even the "generally brutal and murderous [...] use of other [non-Jewish] peoples," is downplayed against the fact that "Germans were murderous and cruel towards Jewish workers, and murderous and cruel in ways that they reserved especially for Jews." (315)

The same position is maintained in the third empirical example of the 1945 "death marches": "The Helmbrechts march turned out to be a *death* march for Jews and only for Jews." (346, emphasis in original) Further, "the Germans' [...] cruelty and lust to kill was victim specific, reserved and centred upon the Jews. They chose to torture and kill only when they had *Jewish* victims." (357, emphasis in original) Goldhagen's overall conclusion to this section on equally vividly described cruelty and some of the most explicit photographs in the volume: "To the very end, the ordinary Germans who perpetrated the Holocaust wilfully, faithfully, and zealously slaughtered Jews." (371)

Support for these statements comes most often in the form of descriptions that are both plentiful and macabre:

⁴⁷ Pohl, *loc. cit.*, p 15.

⁴⁸ This description occurs in a later section, but still in the context of the Jews in the camp system.

A member of Third [Police] Company describes the handiwork: “[...] as I walked through the Jewish district during the evacuation, I saw dead old people and infants. I also know that during the evacuation all patients of a Jewish hospital were shot by the troops combing the district.”

It is easy to read these two sentences, shudder for a moment, and continue on. But consider [...] they chose to walk into a hospital, a house of healing, and to shoot the sick, who must have been cowering, begging and screaming for mercy. They killed babies. [...] In all probability, a killer either shot a baby in its mother’s arms, and perhaps the mother too for good measure, or, as was sometimes the habit during these years, held it at arm’s length by the leg, shooting it with a pistol. Perhaps the mother looked on in horror. The tiny corpse was then dropped like so much trash and left to rot. A life extinguished. (215-216)⁴⁹

This latter half of this account, though a fictional embellishment⁵⁰, clearly meets the requirements for the last of the tenets (*tenet four*).

In the book’s long treatment of such shocking details, a harrowing and morally indignant tone prevails which browbeats the reader with horror scenes and (uncharacteristically for the vast majority of serious, objective and scholarly historical works) vivid descriptions of gore. What Goldhagen presents, in the end, is an instruction in evil, and an invitation to hate. Naturally it is not difficult to inspire this reaction when talking of the Nazi role in the Holocaust, particularly when the details are presented as graphically as they are in *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*. And in so doing, Goldhagen goes to the extreme intentionalist position already described above. But as with the weakness already noted in this position, his downfall comes in trying to “prove” what he wants to say. For his is a thesis of ethics rather than of historical fact. Although he continuously hammers home the same theory of antisemitism as the catch-all explanation for the evil deeds in questions, what is most notable are the contortions to which he is driven in trying to “prove” a moral judgement.

Goldhagen hopes that with his incessant reiteration of the key points and his insistence on the “Brand New!” nature of his explanation, the numerous examples of misuse of evidence and of circular argumentation will be overlooked. Among an adoring public, they

⁴⁹ Beyond the offerings in this section (*HWE*, pp 215-238) are the vivid and almost sadistically voyeuristic depictions of suffering in “Part V–Death Marches: To the Final Days”.

⁵⁰ Neither reports nor hearings are available among the sources consulted by Goldhagen for this event. It is pure fiction (Wippermann in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 243 n 2). Cf. Footnote 109 (*infra*).

were; among historical scholars, the work was to provoke the serious question of whether morally desirable politics should be supported by questionable and substandard scholarship.⁵¹

3. ASSESSING THE ARGUMENTS

The contradictions inherent in Goldhagen's book are numerous; trying to deal with a single line of thought is to risk becoming ensnared in the whole unravelling mass of circular and self-referential assertions presented as arguments. A piece of "scholarship" that requires the kind of repeated elucidation and tweaking which has accompanied Goldhagen's work suggests that perhaps the argument ought to have been reworked and clarified *before* the publicists at Knopf were given their head to begin the pomp and circumstance that surrounded its release. But then such a simplistic work as this could not really have been meant for the consideration of Goldhagen's academic peers, else why neglect to include one of the most fundamental instruments of scholarship: the bibliography or (at least) a comprehensive listing of archival and primary sources?

No effort will here be made at the comprehensive deconstruction of Goldhagen's arguments. This task has been done, admirably and often, by the leading minds of the field. Rather, a general examination of some of the anomalies presented in this work of "History" will precede a description of the initial (and, especially in Germany, vehemently negative) scholarly reaction to the book, and of the type of criticisms levelled against the work. Reviewing Goldhagen's responses to such critiques will reveal not only the internal logical and structural flaws of his work, but the author's recalcitrance, arrogance and casuistry in dealing with other academics' legitimate comments and objections—the sort of attitude that comes from feeling oneself to be holding the absolute high ground of moral judgement, and therefore to be impervious to mere argumentation. For one who can be so censorious of others, both in the footnotes of his book and in the multiple replies to his

⁵¹ Mitchell G. Ash, "American and German Perspectives on the Goldhagen Debate: History, Identity and the Media," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 11, 3 (1997), p 407.

supposedly wrongheaded critics, Goldhagen has exhibited a surprisingly thin skin. In the end, however, he states: “The correctness of [the book’s] characterisation stands or falls on the evidence and the quality of my manner of interpreting it.”⁵² Which is precisely the source of his, and his book’s, downfall.

An historian reading the book is struck by the many peculiar and unscholarly aspects of its presentation. Meant as a work of “History/Political Science,”⁵³ it fits into neither camp comfortably or accurately; its history consists of poorly researched conclusions, themselves offered as empirical “proof” of an overwrought political/social science model that is at the very least defective, when not outright ideological, in focus.

From the outset, where “conventional approaches” to Holocaust scholarship are caricatured into the straw men against which is set Goldhagen’s “Brand New!”⁵⁴ source of “the truth” about what *really* happened (11-13), one is left reeling by the young scholar’s startling audacity and lack of respect for the established work of senior peers. In fact, according to Goldhagen, historical sense seems to be the very thing that has held others back from reaching the novel and all-encompassing conclusions that he now provides; this sense is little more than a misguided force for pernicious obfuscation and the production of misleading narratives about the past.⁵⁵

This stands in sharp contrast to the historical approach as understood and widely employed by professional historians, one which is “intellectually humble” and seeks to comprehend situations, study trends and discover how things work—the crowning

⁵² Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis: A Reply to my Critics,” located on Goldhagen’s website <www.goldhagen.com>. Citation is on page 18 of 20 in hard copy format.

⁵³ According to the subject code accompanying the book’s ISBN on the jacket.

⁵⁴ The subsequent claims for which become quickly irksome in their repetition: “My book acknowledges the humanity [that] others do not,” “I have been for the first time [and] against the existing accounts,” “My assertion [...] is foundational,” “Mine is a rare study,” “my complex book,” “I am the first to discuss the numbers,” “In my book I show for the first time,” *etc.* (Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...” pp 2-5, 9, 16).

⁵⁵ Herbert Hirsch, “Daniel Goldhagen and the ‘Straw Man’: A Contemporary Tale of Selective Interpretation,” in Littell (*op.cit.*), *passim*; Michael T. Allen, “A Very Qualified Defence of Goldhagen,” posted to H-German website 17 May 1996; Christopher Browning states: “Es gibt nichts, was man als ‘konventionelle Holocaust-Geschichte’ bezeichnen könnte, aber so zu reden ist ein rhetorisches Mittel für einen Angriff auf die Gelehrtenwelt.” in “Böse Menschen, böse Taten: Der Historiker Christopher Browning über Goldhagen und Genozid,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (06 Februar 1997), p F4.

achievement of which is a historical sense, an intuitive understanding of how things *do not* happen.”⁵⁶

Goldhagen’s use of language, insofar as it lacks this sense, is therefore “unhistorical”. It clangs on the ear of the scholarly reader like an ill-tuned instrument: for Goldhagen, “conclusions drawn...can, indeed must be, generalised,” theories are “indisputable,” alternative explanations, when mentioned at all, “misinterpret” the facts, are “hardly believable,” and “could not possibly” have the same explanatory force as his version⁵⁷; moreover, the author’s evidence “suggests overwhelmingly,” is “unequivocal,” and “cannot be doubted,” and the conclusions drawn from them are “incontestable, [...] incontestable, [...] incontestable”.⁵⁸

These excesses are coupled with subtle shifts in diction which accompany Goldhagen’s generalisations. He undifferentially refers in the same context first to the ideologues of the SS and then to “the Germans”. (141) A later reference to “Himmler, the Nazi leadership and the SS,” thus to the Nazi leadership and those charged with organising the genocide, similarly becomes within a few lines once again, “the Germans”. (156)⁵⁹ Finally, in a reversal of semantic tactics when describing the “death marches”, distinction is made between German “townspeople” who offer succour to the prisoners and “the Germans” who bludgeon the same prisoners viciously.⁶⁰ (351) Which ones are meant to be the “ordinary Germans”? This catch-all term proves to be an empty label, a fundamental imprecision which leaves a gaping hole in the middle of a supposedly rigorous and “social scientific” methodology.

This practice, which any historian seeking a balanced and objective interpretation would not normally dream of using, is not limited to the book but is present in Goldhagen’s early public statements as well. In an interview just two days after the book’s initial release, perhaps swept up in all the media excitement promoted by his publisher,

⁵⁶ Cited in Fritz Stern, “The Goldhagen Controversy: One nation, one people, one theory?” *Foreign Affairs* 75, 6 (Nov/Dec 1996), pp 129-30 (emphasis added).

⁵⁷ *HWE* pp 402, 390, 509 n162, 540-41 n68, 390.

⁵⁸ *HWE* pp 383, 221, 322, 75.

⁵⁹ Roger W. Smith, “‘Ordinary Germans’, the Holocaust and Responsibility: *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* in Moral Perspective,” in Littell (*op. cit.*), p 51.

⁶⁰ Birn, *loc. cit.*, p 206.

Goldhagen explained: "This book is a challenge. I put forward all the conventional explanations. And I say they're all wrong."⁶¹

In the same spirit of defending how his claim "stands in contradiction to the existing literature," Goldhagen cites his "many conversations" with his father.⁶² Unusual as this is in an academic work of history, it appears to be of no great moment, since the author has made quite clear that the onus is on the community of academic historians to prove his "Brand New!" thesis wrong. (30-31)

With this statement the nature of Goldhagen's project becomes clear. Many (especially neophyte) scholars would be content to produce a work of history that could be judged on its own merits, based on a transparent and comprehensible explanatory theory and substantial research into the archival evidence and sources. Instead, the author has written a provocatively moralistic work rejecting the supposed *status quo* and shifting the responsibility of proof onto his critics, which is as much a challenge to their ethical, as to their historical, positions. Coupled with the slick P.R. and marketing powers of his publishing house, it is a move as clever as it is intellectually bankrupt. The challenge would not go unanswered, however, and the question remained whether this strident book had the evidentiary basis to back up the author's moralistic judgements.

3(I). THE SCHOLARLY REACTION

The overwhelming moral judgement presented in Goldhagen's book provoked even among scholars an overtly emotional rather than rational response. The author's angry tone produced equally angry rebukes, resulting in the not just criticism but the wholesale and widespread condemnation of the work.

⁶¹ Dinitia Smith, "Challenging a View of the Holocaust," *The New York Times* (April 1, 1996), p 11.

⁶² *HWE* pp 479-80 n 33. His father, Erich Goldhagen is also a professor at Harvard, a Holocaust survivor, and has published in the field of Holocaust studies. This citation, along with a reference to Goldhagen junior's own Harvard undergraduate thesis (*HWE* p 583 n45), are also highly uncharacteristic of works of scholarship, and must give serious readers pause for thought (Henryk M. Broder, "'Ich bin sehr stolz': Henryk M. Broder über Goldhagen Vater und Sohn," *Der Spiegel* 21 (20 Mai 1996), p 59).

From the moment of its North American release, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was widely denounced in no uncertain terms by the academic community.⁶³ Well into 1997 scholars were still describing how this book was marked by an “angry, polemical style; the endless repetition of its key points; [a] tone of scarcely concealed self-congratulation and pointlessly disparaging remarks about previous Holocaust scholarship,” by “reiterative verbiage,” and which read “like a sermon with all its trappings: a sense of self-righteousness, disdain for differing opinions and constant repetitions.”⁶⁴

In Germany, the initial reaction by “professional historians and pundits” in the weeks and months after the book’s first (English language) release was “so hostile that it was almost bizarre.”⁶⁵ In contrast to the adulation with which it was received in the U.S. press, German *Feuilleton* writers’ “indignant reaction” was characterised by repeated references to Goldhagen’s 600-plus page work as “this pamphlet”.⁶⁶ On April 15, 1986 both Frank Schirrmacher (editor of the influential conservative newspaper, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) and Rudolf Augstein (publisher of the venerable newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*) would weigh in with their acerbic reactions. Schirrmacher would advise the readers of his paper to hold in question the “intellectual condition” of a society like the United States which would accept Goldhagen’s pandering to public market through the pursuit of a “remythologising of the Holocaust”. Augstein for his part would state that Goldhagen’s assertions were “pure nonsense,” produced by a “handicapped historian” who wrote well but thought “ahistorically” and the value of whose book was “close to zero”.⁶⁷

⁶³ Yehuda Bauer: “I have yet to read of a single historian who has publicly expressed agreement [with Goldhagen’s book]. Not one, and that is a very rare unanimity.” Cited in Mordecai Briemberg, “Holocaust Scholarship: Zionism and political orthodoxy,” *Canadian Dimension* (May-June 1998), p 39.

⁶⁴ Richard V. Pierard, “Goldhagen’s Book and the Right Wing in America,” p 136 and Peter Hoffmann, “The German Resistance, The Jews, and Daniel Goldhagen,” p 75, both in: Franklin H. Littell (ed.) *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen* (Merion Station, PA, 1997); István Deák, “Holocaust Views: The Goldhagen Controversy in Retrospect,” *Central European History* 30, 2 (1997), p 299.

⁶⁵ Josef Joffe, “‘The Killers were Ordinary Germans, ergo the Ordinary Germans were Killers’: The Logic, the Language, and the Meaning of a Book the Conquered Germany,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 218.

⁶⁶ The *New York Times* has been singular in its uncritical support of Goldhagen’s positions (Norman Finkelstein, “Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s ‘Crazy’ Thesis,” in Finkelstein/Birn, *op. cit.*, p 4 n 2). Quotation is from Kurt Pätzold, “On the Broad Trail of the German Perpetrators,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 163.

⁶⁷ Frank Schirrmacher, “Hitler’s Code: Holocaust from Faustian Aspirations?” p 45 and Rudolf Augstein, “The Sociologist as Hanging Judge,” pp 47, 49, both in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*

Among historians, Eberhard Jäckel was most scathing. In describing “a failure of a dissertation” as “simply bad” and “a relapse to the most primitive of all stereotypes,” his was a rejection out of hand, an effort to get people to not even pick up the book, let alone form their own opinion about it.⁶⁸ In surveying this uniformly negative reaction, fellow historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler would identify how with “dismaying rapidity, and with a spectacular self-confidence that [had] frequently masked an ignorance of the facts, a counterconsensus [had] emerged,” one that sought to “choke off all further discussion of the facts” and to “simply sweep the book aside.” But even Wehler would be prompted to counter the P.R. claim of the book’s “utmost originality and importance” by saying, “with Goldhagen we have reached a new low [...in] quality control in the academic world.”⁶⁹ In this climate of hostility, even those observers who sought to take the positive away from their reading of the book felt it necessary to preface their comments by stating that *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* was “not a good book,” had an untenable thesis and was “full of errors and exaggerations.”⁷⁰

This account is provided not to suggest that no serious and measured analyses were produced, but rather to highlight the emotional extremes to which Goldhagen’s provocative thesis was capable of carrying even intellectuals and learned members of the academic community. In what follows, some of the assessments of Goldhagen’s work that came from a more sober second view are touched upon.

3(II). GOLDHAGEN’S EXPLANATORY MODEL

In trying to assess the book on its own terms, historians would run up against another challenge. Goldhagen claims that his approach is firmly rooted in social science methodology. He posits an explanatory model for investigating the motives of the perpetrators as a means of determining to what extent their actions may be generalised to

⁶⁸ Eberhard Jäckel, “Simply a Bad Book,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 87, 90.

⁶⁹ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, “Like a Thorn in the Flesh,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 93, 94, 102-3.

⁷⁰ Wehler, *Ibid.*, pp 93-4; Ulrich Herbert, “The Right Question,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 109.

German society as a whole, in order to measure the causative influence of antisemitism. This model is described in various points in the book, and is worth mention in particular because Goldhagen repeatedly claims that his critics have misunderstood his approach.⁷¹ And yet many astute historians, even lacking the sophisticated social science methodological approach, have seen quite clearly that the model as conceived cannot succeed in its explanatory task.

While the debt to Clifford Geertz's conception of "thick descriptions" of the lives of the perpetrators is acknowledged by Goldhagen, the specific schools of thought upon which *Hitler's Willing Executioners* relies are passed over in curious silence. A. D. Moses has thus performed a valuable service in making explicit the social scientific methodological apparatus that underpins Goldhagen's model. According to him, it is a blend of three sources: rational choice theory, behaviouralism and cultural anthropology.⁷²

Rational choice theory deals with the preferences of subjects, the choices they make in satisfying these preferences, and the constraints placed upon their choices. It therefore "reinvests the individual with the agency and autonomy that the concern with bureaucratic structures and social psychology [typically shown in the functionalist approach] plays down."⁷³ In support of this theory, Goldhagen's text informs the reader that "conventional explanations [*sic...*] do not conceive of the actors as human agents, as people with wills [and the] capacity to know and to judge, [...] to understand and to have views about the significance and morality of their actions". (13) Thus, the actors must be understood to be capable of making rational choices based on their own preferences.

Behaviouralism and cultural anthropology, meanwhile, are utilised to

link the individual [actor] to the collective [nation] by grounding individual preferences in the national culture that conditions the individual: not "structures" but "cognition and values" move people to commit mass murder, [Goldhagen] writes (21). Because "cognition and values" are historically specific, it is possible to infer the relevant content of German culture by working backwards from the

⁷¹ Goldhagen complains of critics' (and other interpreters') "fundamental misunderstanding of social science methodology," stating that his conclusions are "mandated" by such methodology and berating the critics' ignorance of such matters (Goldhagen, "Motives, Causes, Alibis...", pp 14, 19-20 n9).

⁷² Moses, *loc. cit.*, pp 210-219.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p 210.

behaviour of Germans, which, according to the inductive approach of behaviouralism, reflects the choices they made, which in turn are expressions of preferences. Behaviour is explained preferentially, and preferences are explained culturally. By limiting his analysis to national terms of reference, he situates the Holocaust back in the [intentionalist] particularism narrative, and he is able to conjure the first limb of the external model of intention: the collective consciousness able to possess an intention and bear guilt, namely, “the Germans.”⁷⁴

Goldhagen thus links the individual actors’ preferences to the German national culture that conditioned these individuals in a sort of cultural determinism that has the prevailing “cognitive models of culture” (21, 33-34, 46) directing the manner in which the actors understand their actions.⁷⁵ And, alleges the author, not only “eliminationist antisemitism” but “[g]enocide was immanent in the conversation of German society. It was immanent in its language and emotion. It was immanent in the structure of cognition.” (449)

In a final application, the model of cultural anthropology is taken further still as Goldhagen questions why interpreters assume “that Germany was more or less a ‘normal’ society, operating according to the rules of ‘common sense’ similar to our own.” Instead of this assumption, an approach guides his inquiry which rejects the “anthropologically and social-scientifically primitive notion of the universality of [...] ‘common sense’”. (15) Employing the critical eye of the anthropologist, the author ultimately places “the Germans” beyond the pale of a shared human condition, and makes strong claims for their collective separation from the family of civilised nations. Once again the Holocaust is removed from the universalist (functionalist) narrative, under which the point is to see Germany as exemplary of the extremes to which modern Western industrial society in general can tend, and placed in the particularist (intentionalist) one.⁷⁶

With this methodological model Goldhagen lays out his hypothesis of monocausal antisemitism to be tested empirically. While the theoretical assumptions underlying these three interpretive schools are framed in familiar social scientific terms that are explicable and transparent to political scientists, the terminology does not lend itself to ready

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 210-11.

⁷⁵ Roger W. Smith in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 53.

⁷⁶ Moses, *loc. cit.*, p 212.

accessibility for historians.⁷⁷ And yet many astute historians, even lacking the sophisticated social science methodological approach, have seen quite clearly that the model as conceived cannot succeed in its explanatory task.

Under this arrangement, Goldhagen intermingles incommensurable types of social science. Rational choice theory evidently focuses on the conscious choices of individual actors, while behaviouralism and cultural anthropology (on which the book's central argument depends in its generalising from small representative samples of policemen and other actors to German society generally) highlight the formation by the dominant culture of *unconscious* choice preferences. The grounding suppositions of the latter two approaches therefore undermine the possibility of individual agency required for rational choice theory to be operative. By investing "eliminationist antisemitism" with "ontological status," (*i.e.* that of antisemitism as "prime mover") Goldhagen undermines the agency and responsibility of his "ordinary Germans" that he has taken such pains to establish.⁷⁸

The result in practice is a model that runs as follows: German actors exhibit preferences that are dictated by their "extraordinary, lethal German political culture," (456) the norms of which, according to Goldhagen, "can, indeed must be" inferred from the preferences of these selfsame German citizen/actors—an argument of immaculate circularity producing such tortured prose as the following passage:

The autonomous power of the eliminationist antisemitism, once given free reign, to shape the Germans' actions, to induce Germans voluntarily on their own initiative to act barbarously towards Jews, was such that Germans who were not even formally engaged in the persecution and extermination of the Jews routinely assaulted Jews physically, not to mention verbally. (449)

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p 211. Whatever opinion historians may hold generally of social scientists and the pretension of predicting human actions and explaining human society with various models, such models only occasionally make inroads into the traditional "guild" of historical professionalism, usually as the specific applications to given areas of specialization. In those cases, historical norms of empirical proof and of only making claims that are well supported by the evidence still reign. Historians still accept the limits imposed on them by their sources—at least, good ones do.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p 217.

Here Goldhagen falls into the “oldest social-science trap of them all: the confusion of different levels of analysis.”⁷⁹ But he cannot have it both ways. Either German society’s overwhelming antisemitism leaves its individuals with no choice but to kill Jews (which exonerates the “ordinary Germans” and is surely not Goldhagen’s intention) or else the argument must be made that individual voluntaristic actions are indeed representative of some larger cultural tendency. If the latter position is to be maintained, it would require a large and comprehensive sample to demonstrably prove the hypothesis, but one doubts whether such a sample could ever be large enough to support a thesis of monocausal antisemitism as cultural norm. Certainly, as will be shown in the following section, Goldhagen’s attempts at proving such a thesis through the slipshod use of empirical sources do not come close to supporting such a sweeping assertion. But in the strained effort to do so, Goldhagen’s highly-touted model thus begins instead to resemble something that historians are quite adept at identifying: a writer’s interpretive bias in approaching the sources.

Even on a social scientific basis the empirical proof provided is of poor quality. The paucity of the representative sample is glaring. In the first and most lengthy example, on the basis of “scanty” data (age, occupation, marital status, Nazi Party and SS membership) Goldhagen feels confident not only in drawing a social profile of the Police Battalion he examines, but in projecting that profile onto the entire German populace. Yet nothing at all is known about these men’s educational level, religious affiliation⁸⁰, their social club memberships, previous political affiliations or any of dozens of other pieces of biographical data that might permit a better judgement of just how representative of “the Germans” they really are.⁸¹ And they are all men—an obvious statement, but their equally obvious inability to be representative of the half of the German population made up of women was completely lost on Goldhagen.⁸²

⁷⁹ Joffe, “Goldhagen in Germany,” *loc. cit.*, p 19.

⁸⁰ Except the statement that “[s]ince the Hamburg region of Germany was overwhelmingly Evangelical Protestant, so too most of [the men] must have been” (*HWE* p 209)—Goldhagen’s version of a rigorous approach to evidence.

⁸¹ Hubert G. Locke, “The Goldhagen Fallacy,” in Littell (ed.), *op.cit.*, p 25.

⁸² Pohl, *loc. cit.*, p 39.

For the subsequent work camp and “death march” examples, this blurring of the distinction between individual agents and German society as a whole is blithely assumed, as indicated by the semantic renderings already cited, and the sweeping ignorance of contextual elements as complementary (or indeed competing) explanatory factors.⁸³

All of this suggests the central issue when the empirical proof of this problematic model is examined. The terms under which Goldhagen’s efforts at generalising to “the Germans” are made give the reader serious pause for thought. Throughout the text, the author erases distinctions and equates the dissimilar. This is pronounced not only in his constant, mantra-like invocation of “the Germans,”⁸⁴ but in the extremes to which he must tend to force his monocausal antisemitism thesis⁸⁵ onto what the sources have to say. Yet cruelty in mass-shootings in Poland is not equivalent to cruelty by Germans everywhere. As an example, clear cases of prejudice such as verbal abuse on the streets of Munich cannot in any reasonable sense be the “rough functional equivalents” (70) of genocide. Such ill-defined parameters of who exactly “the Germans” are meant to be, and especially the moral equivalency of “exterminationist antisemitism” with lesser, reprehensible but by no means murderous, forms of prejudice, cast the explanatory model’s net far too wide.⁸⁶

How wide? The estimate of the number of perpetrators similarly fluctuates: from “tens of thousands,” to “hundreds of thousands of Germans,” to “certainly over one hundred thousand, [...] five hundred thousand or more, [...] might run into the millions,” and also the admission that “the number of people who were perpetrators is unknown”. (4, 8, 167, 11)⁸⁷ For a factor that is meant to be the source of Goldhagen’s novelty and the cornerstone of this interpretive project, such laxity is astounding. Based on these factors it is little wonder that critics have drawn the conclusion that in the end the numbers do not really matter, even the number of the perpetrators, since what is sought is not explanation

⁸³ *Vide infra*, section 3 (iii) for further development of the question of context.

⁸⁴ Roger W. Smith in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 51; Eberhard Jäckel notes that mention of “the Germans,” “German” or “Germany” is made on every page of the book, sometimes as many as eight times (“Simply a Bad Book,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 89).

⁸⁵ *Vide infra*, section 5(i) for a detailed treatment of the monocausal antisemitism thesis.

⁸⁶ Roger W. Smith in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 49; Ash, *loc. cit.*, pp 405-6.

⁸⁷ Locke in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 24.

but indictment—the sweeping moral indictment of a people’s national character in what would appear to be a thesis of collective guilt.

Goldhagen responds most vehemently to the charge that he subscribes to a collective guilt thesis, most likely because he knows that his argument tends in a line dangerously close to this long-since discarded interpretive canard. Close enough, in fact, that it is reasonable to think that he would have taken greater pains in the pages of the book itself to specifically state that this was not a thesis of collective guilt. Instead, he would later write that his critics can cite “no textual evidence” in support of such a claim and that the charge that he indicts an entire culture is false because the purpose of his book is to “describe, analyse, and explain, not to render moral judgement.”⁸⁸

Yet simply because no specific mention is made of collective guilt does not belittle the fact that Goldhagen’s is a thesis concerning “the character of *the German people* in general”. (439, emphasis added) Add to that thesis an overwhelmingly moralistic tone and the judgement rendered of that general German character could easily be taken to be one of “collectively guilty” for the Holocaust, just one example of how his moral judgement lands him in an interpretive dilemma. Though Goldhagen continues: “All I do is argue that German culture before and during the Nazi period was broadly and deeply antisemitic,”⁸⁹ this is an extreme understatement of the project as presented in the book. In point of fact, his own writings disprove him and reveal a startling disingenuousness.

3(III). A LACK OF RIGOR IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Historian Gordon Craig puts the matter succinctly: “Goldhagen argues a case that requires historical proof if it is to be accepted with almost no reference to historical evidence.”⁹⁰ To this most withering and damning assessment, Goldhagen responds with classic casuistry. He makes no acknowledgement of the validity of any comment or

⁸⁸ Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes and Alibis...”, p 18.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ “Hitler’s Willing Executioners: An Exchange,” *The New York Review of Books* 43, 9 (May 23, 1996), p 52. (Cf. Finkelstein/Birn, *op. cit.*)

criticism that is made, and gives no ground on any matter of interpretation. Critics have simply (and wilfully) “misread” the book, choosing to focus on “false issues” and “avoiding the central issues” on which the author has placed his narrow focus.⁹¹

Goldhagen speaks of a widespread “failure [...] to engage the contents of my book,” falling back on the novelty argument to declare that the positions from which the critics argue have *a priori* been invalidated by his own work—hardly the usual interaction found in scholarly discussions intended to seek out the meaning of the past.⁹² Implicit in his form of response is also the charge that critics who dare to offer alternate explanations based on contexts and circumstances not mentioned by Goldhagen are flirting with moral relativism and practically wish to excuse the heinous deeds of the Nazis.

As much as Goldhagen disparages the critics’ acting as “Vatican cardinals” in charge of an Index of banned books, it is he who finds himself in the role of Jesuit casuist, impatiently explaining to the errant flock members how their addle-pated efforts at finding fault with “the *truth*” are mistaken, while deftly massaging and tweaking his approach to handle any commentary, however eviscerating.⁹³ In the execution of this task the foremost weapon in Goldhagen’s arsenal is his supposedly overwhelming explanatory social science model, of which he is so enamoured that all of his critics too must frame their opinions within the structure of “the central issues” (naturally as defined by him) in “the contents of the book”. The onus is placed squarely on the critics to comment on Goldhagen’s account only if they can put forward a “better interpretation [...] *with overwhelming evidence*” that accounts for and accords with “the facts,” but, significantly, *only* the facts whose validity has been authorised by Goldhagen in his self-appointed role as doyen of the field.⁹⁴ Would that every author could have all of his critics see the world exactly as he does, under the (exceedingly narrow) terms he has defined. But that is fundamentally *not* how the project

⁹¹ Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...”, pp 12, 2; Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, “Germans vs. the Critics,” *Foreign Affairs* 76, 1 (Jan/Feb 1997), p 163.

⁹² Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...”, p 3; Goldhagen, “Germans vs. the Critics,” p 163.

⁹³ The “cardinals” reference is in both Goldhagen articles (*Ibid.*). Examples of his disingenuity are plentiful; a few have been mentioned here, the rest have been pasted onto his website <www.goldhagen.com>.

⁹⁴ Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...”, pp 3, 19 (emphasis in original), *Cf.* p 5.

of understanding the past is best served. A model is not a smoking gun, and Goldhagen still needs to gather concrete evidence.⁹⁵

In this task the author does not effectively marshal the available sources to support his hypothesis. His is a selective usage of (mostly) secondary and also primary sources, ignoring evidence that does not fit his thesis and engaging in spurious and partial readings of many sources which, under this type of treatment, could just as easily be employed to prove the opposite of what Goldhagen asserts.⁹⁶ Examples of this practice are offered in three brief examples that follow: the first of insufficient research and contextualization; the second of his problematic interaction with the existing secondary works of other scholars; and the third of his one-sided and deterministic approach to the source materials.

In one of Goldhagen's most sweeping accusations he alleges that the "fabled resistance to Hitler" was tainted by the "ubiquity of antisemitism in Germany" which caused even these "bitter opponents of Nazism" to have "fundamentally shared the [Nazi] regime's conception of the Jews," and to "concur and applaud the elimination, even the extermination, of the Jews." (114-116) According to Goldhagen,

[t]he pre-genocidal eliminationist measures of the 1930s, the stripping of Jews' citizenship and rights, their immiseration, the violence that Germans perpetrated against them, the regime's incarceration of them in concentration camps, and the hounding of them to emigrate from Germany—the sum of these radical measures did not incense, or produce substantial opposition among, those who would eventually form the major resistance groups. (114)

Unselfconsciously and with no apparent sense of irony, Goldhagen cites in support of this most contentious assertion "the foremost expert on the subject," (114) a scholar whose total input to Goldhagen's book consists of a paper that the "expert" himself says "cannot—and should not—be more than a first effort at reviewing the controversial viewpoints

⁹⁵ Moses, *loc. cit.*, p 215.

⁹⁶ Deák, *loc. cit.*, p 296; Stern (*loc. cit.*, p 130 n1) gives an excellent example of one-sided reporting of a source; R. B. Birn, an authority on the archives used by Goldhagen, states: "Using Goldhagen's method of handling evidence, one could easily find enough citations from the Ludwigsburg material to prove the exact opposite of what Goldhagen maintains." (*loc. cit.*, p 200) The exact proportion of primary to secondary sources must be discerned by the reader from Goldhagen's notes since, as previously mentioned, there is no bibliography or listing of archival references.

cited.”⁹⁷ Yet the “expert” testimony on offer has subsequently been demonstrated not only to pander to the same popular misconceptions that non-specialists have about the subject, but has been thoroughly and convincingly refuted by reference to the same documents and writings pertaining to the resistance groups’ key figures that are mentioned by the “expert” and parroted by Goldhagen.⁹⁸ If the author had taken the time to delve into what the sources actually say, he would have found the opposite of what he opines to be the more accurate statement. As with this and many other instances, however, he instead deterministically ignores the evidence that does not support his thesis and “demonstrates his own ignorance of the subject on which he pronounces his judgements.”⁹⁹

During discussions of his book Goldhagen would further declare that his assertions are supported “by the works of some of the most distinguished scholars of antisemitism”.¹⁰⁰ Who exactly these scholars could be, aside from the literally dozens who have gutted his arguments in writing and in person, is unclear.¹⁰¹ What is clear is Goldhagen’s tendency in *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* to cite one-sidedly from the existing corpus of literature in the field, an egregious act of scholarly bias. One occasion when he was criticised for this practice, the author categorically declared it false to suggest that he cites other scholars as supporters of his interpretation while concealing that those scholars actually held different views. Here Goldhagen excuses himself by saying that he follows standard scholarly practice by citing not the *interpreter*, but the materials compiled by that interpreter, in support of Goldhagen’s own thesis.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Christof Dipper, “The German Resistance and the Jews,” *Yad Vashem Studies* XVI (1984), p 52; Hoffmann, “The German Resistance, the Jews and Daniel Goldhagen,” in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 76, 85 and *passim*.

⁹⁸ Hoffmann, *Ibid.*, and Peter Hoffmann, “The Persecution of the Jews as a Motive for Resistance Against National Socialism,” in Andrew Chandler (ed.), *The Moral Imperative* (Boulder CO and Oxford, 1998), pp 73-104, esp. pp 74-5 and p 94 n 5, p 93 and p 104 n 118.

⁹⁹ Hoffmann, “The German Resistance, The Jews and Daniel Goldhagen”, in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 76.

¹⁰⁰ Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...”, p 8.

¹⁰¹ One week after the book’s American release during a colloquium held at the U.S. Holocaust Museum and Memorial (Washington, D.C.) the publisher invited two historians who would presumably have a critical commentary on the book (Christopher Browning and Konrad Kwiet) and two who would be more sympathetic (Yehuda Bauer and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm). In fact every one of the scholars spoke in negative terms about the book’s shortcomings, (Hilberg, *loc. cit.*, p 725) which Goldhagen’s father attributed to “envy” over his son’s success (Broder, *loc. cit.*, p 58). Cf. H-net posting by Maria Mitchell and Peter Caldwell (“Symposium on Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*,”).

¹⁰² Goldhagen, “The New Discourse of Avoidance,” located on Goldhagen’s website <www.goldhagen.com>, p 3 of 7 in hard copy format.

While it is true that Goldhagen does not have to cite (or agree with) another scholar's entire argument to use a part of the research that went into making that argument, it is equally true that when that part of research (or partial argument) is employed in a manner *contrary* to or even *opposed* to the original conclusions of the work cited, it cannot be said that the "distinguished scholar" who first offered the opinion is supportive of the partial or even distorted end to which the research is put by Goldhagen. This once again leaves Goldhagen on the horns of a dilemma: if he is only citing the materials compiled, he can hardly substantiate the claim that the compiler (who in most cases interpreted them completely differently from Goldhagen) is a supporter of Goldhagen's conclusions; on the other hand, if he expects the reader to accept at face value the "Brand New" character of the book's startling theses, then it is not at all evident why Goldhagen would want to count the authors of flawed "conventional explanations" as supporters of his book. The author is caught in the contradictions of his own deterministic use of the very sources which he elsewhere dismisses.

As he invariably does with reference to his sources and evidence, Goldhagen cites his "extensive" use of them, in one case of "the voices of the dead Jews speaking to us through their surviving diaries". Does this laudable and "extensive" coverage include those diaries and other documents that give a balanced view of the realities inside Hitler's *Reich*, of the confusion that reigned and the acts of kindness that were also exhibited by "ordinary Germans"?¹⁰³ No. Nor does Goldhagen seek out the accounts of Jews who were aided by any of the nearly 350 Germans duly recognised for their assistance to Jews as "Righteous Among the Nations" by Israel's Yad Vashem centre, or any of the many

¹⁰³ Goldhagen, "Motives, Causes, Alibis...", p 17. An excellent example of a balanced, detailed and nuanced account are the diaries of Victor Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1933-1941* (London, 1998). The diaries were first published in original German in 1995, so it is anachronistic to expect Goldhagen to have consulted them. Yet their survival strongly argues for the existence of other such documents that an aggressive researcher such as Goldhagen could have found. Strangely, Goldhagen never makes reference even to the German edition of Klemperer's diaries, although ironically they in fact shared prominent space in German bookstores with the German translation, *Hitlers willige Vollstrecker*. Cf. Frank Wesley, *The Holocaust and Anti-Semitism: The Goldhagen Argument and its Effects* (San Francisco, London, Bethesda, 1999), *passim*.

others who have not (as yet) been so honoured.¹⁰⁴ Yet a survey of those Germans already recognised in this way by Yad Vashem indicated that in 81 per cent of cases the assistance offered consisted of hiding (at great personal risk¹⁰⁵) Jews from the public eye.

Considering that some of these hidden Jews were known to have moved thirty to forty times to escape detection, there must surely be some record of the many Germans who helped them.¹⁰⁶ There is no indication that Goldhagen attempted to find these or other such counterbalancing documents to assist him in making his final judgements. The few diaries to which he does refer are instead treated in the same way as the Ludwigsburg archives: deterministically mined for material supportive of an ideological viewpoint.¹⁰⁷

Leading among Goldhagen's problems is thus that his is not a balanced interaction with sources to discover what conclusions they will support, but an incomplete or, worse, deterministic approach that simply ignores those which disagree.¹⁰⁸ The shortcomings of his study are equally apparent in three further areas: in his depictions of graphically violent actions, his ignorance of other contextual factors, and in his intentional absencing of comparative analysis.

¹⁰⁴ List current as of 1997, cited in Herbert Straeten, *Andere Deutsche unter Hitler: Zeitberichte über Retter vor dem Holocaust*, (Mainz, 1997), pp 181-187. See also Eric Silver, *The Book of the Just: The Unsung Heroes Who Rescued Jews from Hitler* (New York, 1992).

¹⁰⁵ See for example Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1990), pp 179-184 and documents and accounts in Günther B. Ginzler (Hrsg.) "...das durfte keiner wissen!": *Hilfe für Verfolgte im Rheinland von 1933 bis 1945, Gespräche, Dokumente Texte* (Köln, 1995), p 275 and *passim*.

¹⁰⁶ Mordecai Paldiel, "The 'Righteous Among the Nations,' A New Dimension in the Annals of Humanitarianism," in Günther B. Ginzler (Hrsg.) *Mut zur Menschlichkeit: Hilfe für Verfolgte während der NS-Zeit* (Köln, 1993), pp 157-8.

¹⁰⁷ Exemplary of this use of sources is Goldhagen's handling of the testimonies at the archive. Stating that the testimony represents "a problematic source," he nonetheless blithely asserts that "the only methodological position that makes sense is to discount *all* self-exculpating testimony that finds no corroboration from other sources." (*HWE* p 467) Though "some truthful self-exonerations will be dismissed because of this methodological position," he asserts "such bias is negligible". (*HWE* p 601 n11) For a study of complex motivational aspects of murder, this approach is "too mechanistic and inadequate for dealing with the complexities of the issue [...] evaluating [the sources] is not as easy" as Goldhagen thinks (Birn, *loc. cit.*, p 196). Equally simplistic is Goldhagen's claim that his assertions about "the Germans" as a group based on the small sample of allegedly "representative ordinary Germans" is unassailable, since it is identical to the methodology of survey research used, among other forms, in "public opinion polling." Yet the difference between the latter (asking average citizens specific yes/no questions to determine a representative percentage, always including a reported margin of error) and the former (an effort at interpreting the beliefs of historical actors who cannot personally answer the specific questions that the historian wishes to put to them) is not so easily glossed over as Goldhagen would have his critics and readers believe (Goldhagen, "Motive, Causes, Alibis...", p 15).

¹⁰⁸ Moses, *loc. cit.*, p 215.

When dealing with Goldhagen's harrowing depictions (of the sort that closed out section two of this thesis), one assumes that they have been included in the work in order to increase the reader's understanding of events. However useful and to the point of the thesis such descriptions may be (and that is definitely open to debate) it must be borne in mind that they are strongly embellished with a conjectural element marked by the repetitive use of "perhaps" that seems calculated to affect the reader's basest "gut reactions" in a decidedly sensationalistic and unscholarly way.¹⁰⁹ Similar criticism must be made of the use of photographs, which are scattered liberally and at random throughout the work, with little effort made at contextualising or drawing out their historical significance as contemporary documents offering a view into the past.¹¹⁰ They are presented (particularly those in "Part V" of the "death march" victims) solely for shock value. Goldhagen would no doubt differ, saying that they are an integral part of his "overwhelming" evidence, supportive of his "incontestable" conclusions. But one must seriously ask oneself where, in a work given the imprimatur of Harvard University scholarship, such a fictional narrative as the following belongs:

The Germans made love in the barracks next to enormous privation and incessant cruelty. What did they talk about when their heads rested quietly on their pillows, when they were smoking their cigarettes in those relaxing moments after their physical needs had been met? Did one relate to another accounts of a particularly amusing beating that she or he had administered or observed, of the rush of power that engulfed her [*sic*] when the righteous adrenaline of Jew-beating caused her [*sic*] body to pulse with energy? It appears unlikely that these Germans lamented their vicious assaults on the Jews. (339)

When Goldhagen does deal with contextual elements, it is to affirm that since they are "well known," he "does not dwell on them"¹¹¹ While he insists that he "takes seriously the

¹⁰⁹ Birn refers to this tendency as writing "in the 'if' style used in bad historical novels," (*loc. cit.*, p 212).

¹¹⁰ "[Goldhagen] is proud of being one of the first researchers to use photography as a source—contemporary snapshots are to be found in the files of the Hamburg district attorney—but he knows little about the difficulty of determining the documentary relevance, dating, and origins of photographs, which, as a rule, come down to us in isolated fashion. Characteristically, he has not undertaken the certification of origins that a historian is expected to show for photographs reproduced in a book." (Hans Mommsen, "The Thin Patina of Civilization...", in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 193.)

¹¹¹ Goldhagen, "Motives, Causes, Alibis...", p 13; *HWE*, "Introduction".

real historical context,” he summarily dismisses other historians’ efforts at situating events in a differing context as a “laundry list of factors” that predate his own study and are therefore now “irrelevant”.¹¹² Among the factors ignored in the book are,

the social and economic traumas that afflicted German society in the wake of WWI, [...] the destruction of the social fabric [...] with the attendant loss of personal, economic and psychological security and identity, [...] the defeat [adding] to the general feeling of despair and [...] a burning, chauvinistic desire for revenge. [...] The Great Depression hit a Germany that had already had its fill of such disasters, and it hit particularly hard. All this does not exist in Goldhagen’s description. After the discussion of the book in Germany [...Goldhagen] admitted he should have considered these aspects more than he did. But it is not the case that he has to improve his statements on these issues: quite simply, the book almost does not deal with them at all.¹¹³

As a result,

Goldhagen is driven by the determination to deny every mixture of ideological fanaticism, of psychopathological aberration, of moral indifference and bureaucratic perfectionism, even of the ‘banality of evil,’ as an occasion for the Holocaust....¹¹⁴

Furthermore, it is nowhere seriously mentioned that “ordinary Germans” were making their choices in a time of extraordinary violence. In the Nazi dictatorship, under a series of permanent “emergency” decrees suspending a wide range of civil rights and liberties, the German population was faced with “Hermann Göring’s ‘shooting decree’; concentration camps; insidiousness law; special courts with extraordinary jurisdiction and no appeals; death penalty for damaging the reputation of the government and the NSDAP,” so that

¹¹² Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...”, pp 2, 3; on page 5 is the statement: “if the perpetrators were antisemites...then all the situational [*i.e.* contextual] factors so commonly asserted...are irrelevant.” Yet in practically the same breath Goldhagen excuses himself from dealing with competing contextual explanations because they are “well known,” and then when they are mentioned by critics of his book, they are dismissed as “irrelevant”. The proof for this assertion? His book. Another argument of circularity.

¹¹³ Yehuda Bauer, “Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s View of the Holocaust,” in Littell (ed.), *op.cit.*, p 64.

¹¹⁴ Hans Mommsen, “The Conditions for Carrying out the Holocaust: Comments on Daniel Goldhagen’s Book,” in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 36.

“only muted reactions to the anti-Jewish measures could be expected.”¹¹⁵ Repression was real and under such circumstances historians must remain mindful of the “epidemic of hypocrisy in virtually all public discourse and the corruption of sincerity in public behaviour that it engenders” in a dictatorship. In the Nazi state, which “strived to produce and orchestrate visible popular acclamations, silence did not mean support,” and could in fact be a powerful means of passive resistance in the face of outrages that Nazis expected the members of their *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) to support enthusiastically.¹¹⁶

It is also significant to recall the prevailing political situation, particularly in the years immediately preceding the invasion of Russia and the beginning of the mass murders in the East. The Nazis had reached a high point in their military and political successes. Unemployment had been eradicated, the *Anschluß* had brought Austria “*heim ins Reich*,” the Saarland was returned to Germany and the Sudetenland handed over by Western appeasement policies, and arch-rival (and symbolic location of the hated Versailles treaty) France had fallen before the onslaught of *Blitzkrieg* warfare. Under these circumstances, and in light of the Nazi regime’s power of violent coercion, the opportunities for countering the tide of events were slim indeed.¹¹⁷

Goldhagen’s contentious claim that silence in the face of outrages committed against the Jews in Germany really constituted political support for virulent Nazi antisemitism is part of his “prove me wrong” mentality, under which the absence of evidence becomes evidence for *his* interpretation. Indifference towards the fate of Jews, a damning enough indictment, is insufficient for Goldhagen. (Cf. 439ff) He would have the entire nation in the grips of his theorised “eliminationist antisemitism,” a position that denies there was a totalitarian terror system in place in Nazi Germany, save the one against the Jews, and

¹¹⁵ Hoffmann, “The German Resistance, The Jews and Daniel Goldhagen,” in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 77; Cf. Hoffmann, “The Persecution of the Jews...” in Chandler (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 76 for an expanded description of these decrees.

¹¹⁶ Christopher Browning, “Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 65-6; Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat: Der Kampf der Opposition gegen Hitler* (München, 1985) p 37.

¹¹⁷ Straeten, *op. cit.*, p 14.

ignores the Nazi view of the necessity of extensive propaganda measures to win the population over to their antisemitic views.¹¹⁸

Most surprising for a work of social science, Goldhagen's book is intentionally devoid of a comparative framework of analysis.¹¹⁹ In explaining this absence, he describes how the history of German antisemitism that is presented is sufficient for his analysis, since "the extent and nature of antisemitism in other countries is not at issue". (77) Such a closed and self-referential system might well suffice for a project of more limited scope. But the strong claims Goldhagen makes for a unique and "ubiquitous" form of specifically *German* antisemitism and his use of the superlative in describing "the most committed, virulent antisemites in human history" immediately beg the question: compared to whom?¹²⁰ *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*: "the Germans" committed the Holocaust, so they must be absolutely the most antisemitic people in the world, indeed of all time.¹²¹

Goldhagen seems belatedly to realise this logical error in his thinking, and in his final chapter again hedges his position:

It is precisely because antisemitism alone did not produce the Holocaust that it is not essential to establish the differences between antisemitism in Germany and elsewhere [...]; only in Germany [was] an openly and rabidly antisemitic movement [...] elected to power. [*sic*...] This alone [...] substantiates the *Sonderweg* thesis, [...] so whatever the extent and intensity of antisemitism was among, say, the Poles or the French, their antisemitism is not important for *explaining* the Germans' genocide of the Jews. (419, emphasis in original)¹²²

But then, in the second to last chapter of his book under the section title, "The Germans' Slaughter of the Jews in Comparative Perspective," Goldhagen had already described in greater detail the rationale for his lack of comparative focus. Here he had taken as an example of "non-Germans' treatment of Jews," not the Poles and the French that he later mentions, but "ordinary Danes" and "ordinary Italians". (408) He emphasises that "[t]he

¹¹⁸ Robert Gellately, Book Review, *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997), p 189.

¹¹⁹ Surprising not least because it won at least one major award on that basis: the American Political Science Association's Gabriel A. Almond Award for best dissertation in the field of *comparative politics*.

¹²⁰ Goldhagen, "Motives, Causes, Alibis..." p 13 (emphasis added).

¹²¹ Hans Mommsen, in Littell (ed.) *op. cit.*, p 41.

¹²² *Cf. Ibid.*, pp 13-14.

notion that ordinary Danes or Italians would have acted as the ordinary Germans did strains credulity beyond the breaking point," (*Ibid.*) a conclusion with which the reader must concur. So why make such a spurious "comparison" of nations not particularly known for their antisemitism, when Goldhagen is obviously aware that these feelings were more prevalent elsewhere such as in France and Poland (as they were also, notably, in Austria¹²³, as well as Lithuania, Ukraine, Latvia, *vide infra*) and would therefore offer better means for comparison? The answer is that the author is not concerned with valid comparisons, but with the isolation of the "ordinary Germans" and the "demonising" of "their" behaviour as a specifically national trait.¹²⁴

His incredible and inaccurate statement that the Nazis were "elected" to power is paired with his simplistic assumption that the Nazis came to power largely thanks to, and not despite, their antisemitic views. An exploration of voting patterns, and of the quantitative wax and wane of antisemitic statements in Hitler's own speeches during the critical period of the early 1930s would have demonstrated (had they been employed) that this was not the case.¹²⁵ In a continuation of this passage Goldhagen provides unsubstantiated statements of the qualitatively different nature of Germany's "culturally axiomatic" antisemitism from that present in other countries. (*Ibid.*) Again, such statements beg the comparative question, but are supported by no evidence. They are simply asserted on the author's *ipse dixit*.

When later pressed on this issue, Goldhagen does admit that historians must of necessity make comparisons, though he does so in a decidedly prevaricating manner by warning of the ominous possibility of "relativising" the Holocaust with such comparisons.¹²⁶ He still does not seem to have grasped the point. In his own "extensive"

¹²³ A considerable omission, as Austrians made up "a third of the extermination units in the SS and commanded four of the most important death camps" (cited in Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, "Why Goldhagen's Book is Misleading," in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 204.). See also Walter Manoschek, "The Murder of the Jews as a Societal Project," in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 83-86; Günther Bischof, "Die normalen Deutschen als Täter," *Die Furche* 18 (02 Mai 1996), p 2.

¹²⁴ Wehler in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 98-100.

¹²⁵ Stern, *loc. cit.*, p 131.

¹²⁶ Rudolf Augstein, "Was dachten die Mörder? Der US-Politologe Daniel Jonah Goldhagen über den Streit um sein Holocaust-Buch und das Bild der Täter," *Der Spiegel* 33 (12 August 1996), p 55–Goldhagen: "Historiker müssen natürlich vergleichen—aber nicht, um den Holocaust zu relativieren, sondern um ihn besser zu verstehen."

use of sources on the Police Battalions, he makes assertions about “the Germans,” mentioning in passing that about a dozen Luxembourgers were also in Battalion 101, though their presence is dismissed as “marginal”. It would have to be. For if they were added to Goldhagen’s supposedly pure representative sample, it might taint his far-flung conclusions. In fact, these Luxembourgers were volunteers who partook in the genocidal actions, their “absence of singular German antisemitism notwithstanding.”¹²⁷

Further, if his assertion that the slaughter of Jews says something about Germans that cannot be said of any other people, then reporting on the “frenzied orgy of bludgeoning, slashing, and shooting” (191) of 6 800 Jews in Kovno by Lithuanian *Hilfswillige* (“willing helpers”) would not seem to buttress Goldhagen’s point.¹²⁸ Nor would the willingness of Ukrainians to commit antisemitic murder. (224-230) Nor would the actions of a group he does not cite, but which exhibited the same “rage, lust for vengeance, that unleashed the *unprecedented cruelty*” that Goldhagen opines was solely characteristic of “demonising German racial antisemitism” (414, emphasis original): the Arajs Commando which was made up of volunteer Latvians, free to leave at any time, but who committed outrageous acts of torture, degradation and rape.¹²⁹

Goldhagen attempts to bring those groups of non-German willing helpers that he does mention under the umbrella of uniquely *German* moral culpability by claiming that the German defeat and repression of eastern European peoples, combined with the victors’ “generally draconian” treatment, put them under unusual pressure to do things they would not otherwise have chosen to. In fact, this is a standard Holocaust revisionist position; in contrast to his own warning concerning the need to avoid relativising the Holocaust when making comparisons (cited above), his narrow definitions of uniquely German guilt for the Holocaust has already had deeply disturbing effects beyond the world of academic debate.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Browning, “Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 61.

¹²⁸ Locke in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 24-25.

¹²⁹ Birn, *loc. cit.*, pp 207-8.

¹³⁰ Birn, *Ibid.*; “The implications of this line of thought are staggering. Already at two deportation hearings this year in Montreal and Toronto, Canadian attorneys defended their clients, two alleged Ukrainian war criminals, on the grounds that certain documents alleged to prove that the defendants volunteered to kill Jews was doctored by Nazis to disguise their own genocidal activities. The source for their claims?: *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, where Goldhagen dismisses such German documents as

Finally, when Goldhagen is cornered on the issue of the apparent historical weakness of his argument, he shifts the dynamic by saying that his “argument focuses on the *beliefs and values* that existed in Germany, which were part of German political culture” shared by “most, though not all Germans”.¹³¹ But especially as a view of German political culture the study is thoroughly unconvincing in its simplicity, consisting primarily of “summary judgement and indifference to nuance”¹³² of a staggering degree.

Thus in a badly handled attempt at conflating kindred, yet differing, interpretive worldviews, Goldhagen awkwardly tries to combine social science methodology with the substantiation of historical evidence. The end result: his confusing and confused *mélange* of contradictory social science theories is paired with a tendentious approach to the historical sources which leaves him with insufficient empirical “proof” of his sweeping allegations. The examples presented above are but a few among the cases in which Goldhagen practices “key-hole” history, viewing events “through a single narrow vantage point that blocks out context and perspective.”¹³³ It was this practice above all that caused the community of academic historians fundamentally to reject Goldhagen’s answers, even while acknowledging the value of some of his questions.¹³⁴ For the public, however, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* had a rather different significance.

‘fiction’.” (Tibor Krausz, “The Goldhagen Wars,” *The Jerusalem Report* (August 3, 1998), p 26.) In the same vein, Birn describes Goldhagen’s uncritical acceptance of the defence strategy used by SS General Otto Ohlendorf (“this complex figure” described in Goldhagen’s undergraduate thesis[HWE p 583 n45]) at the war crimes trials in Nuremberg. The thrust of the strategy was to exculpate commanders of *Einsatzkommandos* by alleging the existence of a *Führerbefehl*. In this instance Goldhagen is not averse to using such exculpatory statements if they suit his line of argument—which, as the preceding example of the legal and judicial implications of such skewed handling shows, is highly irresponsible and dangerous. (Birn, *Ibid.*, pp 201-2.) Mitchell Ash also writes of the possible danger in Goldhagen’s work becoming fodder for the extreme Right’s long campaign against German national self-hatred (*loc. cit.*, p 408); this is what Marion Gräfin Dönhoff is likely referring to when she warns of a possible revival of antisemitism in Germany (“Why Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s book is misleading,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 203).

¹³¹ Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...”, p 14.

¹³² Stern, *loc. cit.*, pp 134, 131.

¹³³ Browning, “Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 62.

¹³⁴ This will be addressed in greater detail in Section 5 “The Historiographical Impact” (*vide infra*).

4. POPULAR REACTION: THE GERMAN TRANSLATION AND BOOK TOUR

In the United States popular sales of Goldhagen's book quickly reached bestseller levels. The work has since become a book club feature and has sold over half a million copies in more than ten languages. Meanwhile, the reaction in Germany to the translation was greatly influenced by a series of preceding events. These events, without in any conscious way meaning to do so, prepared the public such that it was more receptive to Goldhagen's work than many academics would have thought possible. During Goldhagen's book tour of Germany the public would in the end side with the young author *against* these academics, in large part because of the latter's unbalanced and prohibitive initial reaction to the book's arguments. In the battle for the hearts and minds of the people, Goldhagen came out the clear winner.

The ongoing process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in Germany had seen a number of pivotal events in the preceding decades. In 1979 the television series *Holocaust* brought the horrors into the living rooms of the German nation. In the mid-1980s the *Historikerstreit* broke out amid the controversies of U.S. President Reagan's visit at Bitberg war cemetery and the prevailing political *Tendenzwende*. Added to these emotionally-charged factors were the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and subsequent 1990 Reunification, both of which created a sense of triumph but also a strangely hollow feeling as two people were reunited, neither of whom having an identity, and who collectively did not know what to make of themselves as a nation. The year 1994 brought *Schindler's List*, the following year Jan Philipp Reemtsma's *Wehrmachtausstellung* (an exhibition on the cruelties committed by the wartime German army) and the issue of motives and perpetration was writ large for widespread debate. Then in 1996 Goldhagen entered the scene. All of these factors, and in particular those dealing directly with the Holocaust, represented the slow forward movement of Germans toward understanding and away from distancing and denial. *Holocaust* and *Schindler's List* had begun in earnest the process of putting names and faces on the victims and perpetrators, a process that Goldhagen was to take to the limit.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Joffe, "Goldhagen in Germany," *loc. cit.*, p 21.

Thus while the community of historical scholars did not quite know what to make of the “superintentionalist”¹³⁶ approach in Goldhagen’s book, the public had been primed by preceding events and was in a better position to incorporate this latest addition.

Facilitating this process was the fact that it was an explanation that was particularly attractive in its simplicity and apparent accessibility. For a public that wanted answers to the big questions, Goldhagen’s moral judgements were ideal in that they could be readily appended to whatever knowledge about the Holocaust that the reader already possessed—even (or perhaps especially) if that knowledge base was unsophisticated or consisted only of prejudices.

In this respect Christopher Browning hits on it best when he states that the very thing that horrified history scholars who were accustomed to working in variegated shades of grey was the very thing that the public found most reassuring: Goldhagen’s apparent shifting of the paradigm back to a circa 1950s interpretive approach. Instead of functionalist-style questions about complex bureaucracies and systemic requirements, Goldhagen addressed the public better, with simple answers (in black and white terms) particularly to the most troublesome question of all—individual culpability.¹³⁷

This reassurance, among other things (such as the book’s sensationalistic title, the publisher’s extensive marketing blitz and the shocking and almost voyeuristic nature of Goldhagen’s depictions of “sadistic and brutal force”¹³⁸) ensured immediate public success. But this symphony of commercial approval could not disguise the fact that Goldhagen’s one-note requiem remained for many historians the single sour note in an otherwise multifaceted and varied harmony of interpretations. Historians and researchers had laboured for long years to compose such an approach, that humanity might better

¹³⁶ An interpretation so extreme that other intentionalists felt compelled to back away from it, distancing themselves from Goldhagen’s arguments to save the intentionalist school’s integrity. Joffe, (*Ibid.*, p 18) mentions in particular the refusal of intentionalist Eberhard Jäckel to engage in the debate *at all* after having dismissed the work as “Simply a Bad Book” (in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*), strong argument for the case that Goldhagen had indeed proposed an extreme intentionalist position that was no longer even part of the intentionalist/functionalist continuum.

¹³⁷ Browning cited in “Böse Menschen, böse Taten,” p F4; Volker Ullrich, “A Triumphal Procession: Goldhagen and the Germans,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 199.

¹³⁸ Hans Mommsen, in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 42.

understand, and thereby avoid the repetition of, the tragic events of the Holocaust. A showdown was inevitable.

Josef Joffe expressed the historians' consensus on Goldhagen's work: the latter "collapses a great many possible explanations of human history into one huge explanation that falls flat even when examined by an intelligent layman."¹³⁹ But confidence in the ability of intelligent laymen among the public to make up their own minds was distinctly absent in the initial reaction of scholars and opinion makers in Germany. These intellectuals and publishers seem to have felt it necessary to make their comments in order to avoid the book's message finding fertile ground in an appeal to the existing prejudices at work in the public mind. It was observed during the period when the book was enjoying such great success in the U.S. that it was especially those readers who had "less familiarity" with the "nuances and qualifications of research" that exhibited the most "impassioned approbation".¹⁴⁰ Heavy-handed and acerbic attacks were thus launched not at the book's theses, but against the very existence of such a work. But these tactics of demonising Goldhagen served only to ensure that his arguments got a wider hearing than would otherwise have been the case, and were, for some, an embarrassing example of German self-pity mixed with German-national cries of horror.¹⁴¹

Here Goldhagen's irritation was certainly justified, as the "inexorably negative reactions" from the community of thoughtful commentary in Germany urged the nation to shut its ears and eyes to the opinions voiced by this young upstart American outsider.¹⁴² But Goldhagen was less justified (and did himself no favours) in replying in kind to the frequently *ad hominem* attacks. The gist of these replies has already been presented throughout the preceding argument, but this inability to remain *ad rem* in the face of what ought to have been predictably widespread criticism is another defining feature of the phenomenon of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. The fiery prose of his book's rejection of existing scholarship met its equal in Goldhagen's dismissive and blatantly disrespectful

¹³⁹ Joffe, "Goldhagen in Germany," *loc. cit.*, p 19.

¹⁴⁰ Wehler in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 103.

¹⁴¹ Wippermann in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 237, 239.

¹⁴² Andrei S. Markovits, "Discomposure in History's Final Resting Place," in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 119.

manner of referring to his critics. Moreover, his arguments consisted most frequently of the reiteration of his book's central tenets, while treating the complexity of the critics' myriad points with a blatantly reductionist method.¹⁴³

With the announcement of a German book tour scheduled for the fall of 1996 in support of the new German translation, it became clear that such flights of rhetoric and written tit-for-tat would be replaced by public debate with some of the leading figures of the predominant functionalist school of thought. A sign of the gravity of this event came early, as Goldhagen cancelled a debate with German scholars that was to have been held at the *Deutsches Haus* in New York, citing the impending release of the German version as the reason.¹⁴⁴

The translation released in August 1986 by Siedler Verlag as *Hitlers willige Vollstrecker* had been subtly changed, most likely in response to the initially negative reception of the English version in Germany.¹⁴⁵ Spectators of the book tour itself were struck as well by the change in Goldhagen's tone, from arrogant and intemperate to courteous and deferential. The vociferous attacks launched by the critics in the spring and summer became an autumnal crop of public sympathy harvested by Goldhagen as he made his way through a succession of sold-out venues in Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt and Munich. The debaters themselves seemed to realise this fact only too well, and were markedly reticent to begin any controversial or "impolitely direct" line of questioning. The

¹⁴³ In "Germans vs. the Critics," Goldhagen confines his remarks to "two of Stern's charges, which reveal the heart of his project and the quality of his entire critique." (p 163) Dealing with a representative sample of an argument is a case of mistaking the part for the whole, and is hardly convincing. Stern gets off comparatively lightly, however, in contrast to Norman Finkelstein. In "The New Discourse of Avoidance," Goldhagen launches a tirade of *ad hominem* comments denigrating Finkelstein's scholarship and expertise, pointing out that none of the latter's "previous published works and articles are on German history or the Holocaust (neither, for that matter, were those of the three Harvard professors before whom Goldhagen defended the dissertation on which *HWE* is based, but this is apparently not such a crucial issue, since they agreed with Goldhagen). In further seeking to deny Finkelstein's very right to dare offer comment, Goldhagen deals with but a "sufficient" handful of Finkelstein's numerous criticisms "to reveal the general character of his work" (p 1 hard copy format). And Goldhagen's ongoing rhetorical battle with Ruth Bettina Birn has been as bitter as it is embarrassingly unprofessional on his part, culminating in the unprecedented threat of legal action to censor her devastating scholarly exposé of his use of archival sources.

¹⁴⁴ Arthur Spiegelman, "Holocaust expert cancels talk," *Reuters North America Wire Ltd.* (May 7, 1996; dateline New York).

¹⁴⁵ Pohl writes that the translation was "leicht geglättet und enthält zahlreiche Fehler, bzw. Ungenauigkeiten" (*loc. cit.*, p 14); see also Ash, *loc. cit.*, p 400.

effect was like a minuet, in which the participants went through the motions without ever touching. And yet every point that the critics won, the public scored for Goldhagen, whose supple defence strategy soothed his audiences with assurances that his critics had simply misunderstood his message.¹⁴⁶

Goldhagen could hardly have expected “so much friendly attention, so much open sympathy, and he was not the only one surprised and impressed.” Overall the tour was a stunning success for Goldhagen and his German publisher both commercially and in terms of public relations.¹⁴⁷ The author’s being widely and warmly welcomed throughout Germany had much to do with his serving as interlocutor in a massive public *mea culpa*. The key enabling aspect of this interaction was that the culpability which was being so liberally strewn about in Goldhagen’s book *ends* at the *Stunde Null* in 1945 and the subsequent foundation of the *Bundesrepublik*. The bad “ordinary Germans” become the good “re-educated democratic Germans” who, as Goldhagen would have it, “are just like us”.¹⁴⁸

In the end, however, Goldhagen would mistake the acclaim of the collective confessional for the scholarly approval of his German academic peers, a confusion that was to have telling consequences for his reputation and the community of academic historians. In the period after the book tour Goldhagen would seize upon this public acclaim and begin to employ it as if it were an intellectually compelling argument in favour of his work. This acclaim added fuel to the flame of the author’s moral crusade and made his responses

¹⁴⁶ Deák, *loc. cit.*, p 298; Joffe, “Goldhagen in Germany,” *loc. cit.*, pp 20-21; Evelyn Roll, “Goldhagens Diskussionsreise: Der schwierige Streit um die Deutschen und der Holocaust. Eine These und drei gebrochene Tabus. Je mehr ihn seine Kritiker bedrängen, um so näher rückt der Wissenschaftler seinem Publikum—da ist einer, der die richtige Frage nach den Tätern stellt,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (09 September 1996), p 3.; Tom Heneghan, “U.S. Holocaust writer admits faults to Germans,” *Reuters North America Wire Ltd.* (September 5, 1996; dateline Hamburg); Clive Freeman, “Daniel Goldhagen says some German critics have misread his book,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (06 September 1996; dateline Berlin); Ullrich, “A Triumphant Procession...”, in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 198.

¹⁴⁷ Quotation from Ullrich, *Ibid.*, p 210. The phrase public relations is deliberately chosen here, as Goldhagen’s demeanour was not so evenly deferential as the book tour’s public appearances would seem to indicate. In public debate he often responded to critics with phrases such as, “Wenn Sie das so verstanden haben, entschuldige ich mich dafür,” or “Das hätte ich anders formulieren sollen.” (Evelyn Roll, *Ibid.*) Yet in his *tête-à-tête* just before the tour with *Der Spiegel* publisher Rudolf Augstein, his more consistent replies were: “Mit dieser Interpretation bin ich nicht einverstanden,” “Ihrem Eindruck [...] kann ich nicht folgen,” “Ihre Deutung [...] kann ich genauso wenig teilen,” “Die weitverbreitete Meinung [...] ist falsch” (Augstein, “Was dachten die Mörder?..”, *loc. cit.*, pp 50-52).

¹⁴⁸ Joffe, “Goldhagen in Germany,” *loc. cit.*, p 21; *HWE* pp 593-4 n 53.

to criticism increasingly bellicose and intolerant.¹⁴⁹ In the end Goldhagen's irritation and his belligerent attitude would become most acute when serious faults were found in the substantive aspects of his empirical methodology—faults that threatened to undermine the “proof” he was offering for the project of passing moral judgement on the “ordinary Germans”.

5. THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL IMPACT

The very positive popular reactions in the United States and especially on the sold-out German book tour gave the scholarly community pause for thought. In many cases historians only began to give serious consideration to the book once their own initial angry reaction had subsided and it was clear that, substandard historical quality notwithstanding, Goldhagen's work had tapped into a rich vein of public interest in the specifically moral dimensions of the Holocaust. The historiographical impact of the book therefore works on two levels, that of its value as a piece of scholarship, and that of its undeniable resonance in the public domain. These two elements will be woven into the analysis that runs through this section.

In his pursuit of a comprehensive enough explanation for the undeniably strong moral tone of his book, Goldhagen settled upon the most sweeping description of the greatest number of actors: the thesis of “eliminationist antisemitism” as the monocausal motivation for “ordinary Germans” to kill Jews. Since Goldhagen had correctly assessed that people seem to want to hate the Nazis first, and understand them second (if at all), his model would go one better, and pass a moral judgement on not only Nazis but Germans in general. The first part of the ensuing analysis therefore concerns itself with the central issue of the shortcomings of this monocausal antisemitism and what these faults mean for the book's argument as a whole.

Despite Goldhagen's claims concerning the inadequacy of the “conventional explanations” (13) of the Holocaust, his work did not fundamentally undermine or displace

¹⁴⁹ See Goldhagen, “Germans vs. the Critics,” p 3; Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...,” p 12.

the existing body of research and interpretive approaches built up during the over fifty years since the end of the Second World War. The prophecy that “the cloud that Goldhagen created will hover over the academic landscape [and] will not soon disperse” proved to be a little overstated.¹⁵⁰ Goldhagen’s book came to a field of modern German history that had already been characterised by decades of lively debate, and in the end his contribution too was absorbed and utilised. The specific character of that use is detailed in the second part of this section’s analysis, and forms the base for discussion of the phenomenon of *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* that closes out this thesis. But first, an initial assessment of the work’s impact is offered as prefatory comment to that analysis, in continuation of the partial historiographical survey offered in section 1.

Goldhagen’s longest section on the Police Battalions in Poland had for the most part already been covered in Browning’s work. On the other hand, although not much original scholarship had previously been produced on the work camps and the “death marches” (subjects of the two shorter sections of Goldhagen’s book) the research techniques employed by Goldhagen were of the same calibre as in the rest of his book, making these accounts too narrow and tendentious to be considered a valuable addition. In sum, as a result of having undertaken to produce a work of moral judgement, the book’s influence on state of Holocaust scholarship has been negligible in terms of actually adding to the store of knowledge. And indeed it would have been surprising to be able to count Goldhagen as an *addition* to the field, because of his own insistence that his explanation in fact *replaced* the existing literature. In response to this claim one can only point out the existence of the relevant works in the field which Goldhagen failed to consult, but in the end also failed to replace.¹⁵¹

On the thesis that antisemitism in Germany stretches in a long continuity through German history, he is preceded by dozens of scholars, *inter alia* Alex Bein, Hermann Greive, Jacob Katz and Herbert Strauss.¹⁵² And from a contrasting perspective are the

¹⁵⁰ Hilberg, *loc. cit.*, p 728.

¹⁵¹ For the ensuing section I am particularly indebted to the information provided by Wippermann in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 229-253.

¹⁵² In fact there was no great controversy over Goldhagen’s book in Israel, since (as noted in Section 1) this represents the consensus view of Israeli historiography of the Holocaust (Moshe Zimmerman, “Die Fußnote als Alibi: Daniel Jonah Goldhagens Studie *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*

many works which highlight the emancipation of the Jews and the long phases in German history where antisemitism was profoundly weakened, including those by Werner Jochmann, Donald Niewyk, Reinhard Rürup, Shulamit Volkov and others.¹⁵³ Overall it should be noted (in contradiction to Goldhagen's assertion of "ubiquitous" antisemitism) that specialised scholarship is not at all unanimous about how high the percentage of convinced antisemites in German society really was.¹⁵⁴

The intentionality of the Final Solution being directed by a murderous hatred of the Jews in particular is also countered in the numerous studies¹⁵⁵ of the Nazi (so-called) "Euthanasia" program, which indicate unambiguously that this far-reaching and not specifically antisemitic action was the immediate predecessor and necessary prerequisite for the Holocaust. In fact the "Euthanasia" campaign is addressed only peripherally by Goldhagen, and then only for portraying the murder of the infirm and aged as being less

(26 April 1996), p 24). Alex Bein, *Die Judenfrage: Biographie eines Weltproblems* vols. 1,2 (Stuttgart, 1980); Hermann Grieve, *Geschichte des modernen Antisemitismus in Deutschland* (Darmstadt, 1983); Jacob Katz, (to whom Goldhagen does make brief reference), *Vom Vorurteil zur Vernichtung: Der Antisemitismus 1700-1933* (München, 1989); Herbert A. Strauss und Norbert Kampe (Hrsg.) *Antisemitismus: Von der Judenfeindschaft zum Holocaust* (Bonn, 1984).

¹⁵³ Werner Jochmann *Gesellschaftskrise und Judenfeindschaft in Deutschland, 1870-1945* (Hamburg, 1988); Donald L. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (Baton Rouge and London, 1980); Reinhard Rürup, *Emancipation und Antisemitismus: Studien zur "Judenfrage" in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Göttingen, 1975); Shulamit Volkov, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München, 1991); Wolfgang Wippermann, *Geschichte der deutschen Juden: Darstellung und Dokumente* (Berlin, 1997).

¹⁵⁴ A handful of studies on this controversy include Martin Broszat, u.a. (Hrsg.) *Bayern in der NS-Zeit: Herrschaft und Gesellschaft im Konflikt* (6 Bde.) (München, Wien, 1977-1983); Marlis Steinert, *Hitlers Krieg und die Deutschen: Stimmen und Haltung der deutschen Bevölkerung im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf, 1970); Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1983); Otto Dov Kolka and Aron Rodrigue, "The German Population and the Jews in the Third Reich: Recent Publications and Trends in Research on German Society and the 'Jewish Question'," *Yad Vashem Studies* XVI (1984), pp 421-443; Hans Mommsen, "Was haben die Deutschen vom Völkermord gewußt?" in Walther H. Pehle, *Der Judenpogrom: Von der "Reichskristallnacht" zum Völkermord* (Frankfurt a.M., 1988), pp 176-200; Ursula Büttner, *Die deutsche Gesellschaft und die Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich* (Hamburg, 1992); David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford and Cambridge MA, 1992).

¹⁵⁵ Ernst Klee, "Euthanasia" im NS-Staat: Die "Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens," (Frankfurt a.M., 1983); Hans-Walter Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasia: Von der Verhütung zur Vernichtung "lebensunwerten Lebens,"* (Göttingen, 1987); Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, (Chapel Hill NC, 1995); Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance: Euthanasia in Germany 1900-1945*, (Cambridge, 1994); Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, (New York, 1986).

cruel than the murder to the Jews in the Holocaust, leading to the following tasteless bit of rhetoric:

Why did ordinary Germans not act as modern hangmen do, who administer death in a prescribed quasi-clinical manner, swiftly, without torment and with minimum pain—indeed in the manner in which the ordinary Germans who killed the mentally ill and others in the so-called Euthanasia program made efforts to kill?¹⁵⁶

Finally in the same vein, there is a significant body of work showing that antisemitism was innately tied up with racism against Slavs, “Gypsies” and other non-European races at the time, something for which the monocausal antisemitism thesis does not even begin to account. Goldhagen imputes only “utilitarian” (410) principles at work in the Nazi policies towards Slavs, but in assuming the Nazis were pursuing a purely antisemitic, and not global racial, policy, Goldhagen is by far “not radical enough.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Cited in Wippermann, (p 231), the quotation is from Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, “The Failure of the Critics,” (p 135), both in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.* Wippermann points out: “No, the murder of helpless persons in mobile gas chambers, which took up to thirty minutes, was just as little painless as was the practice [...] of starving infirm patients, including among them many small children, slowly and agonizingly.” (p 232) Note that the ending of the cited paragraph was altered to read “...sometimes made efforts to kill?” in the version later posted to Goldhagen’s website as “Motives, Causes, Alibis: A Reply to my Critics”, (p 4).

¹⁵⁷ Wippermann, in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 231-2. No mention is made of the Nazi intent to establish a “racially empire” in the East, which called for the “elimination” of a further 20 to 30 million Slavs beyond the organised murder of millions of Russian prisoners of war already underway. (Cf. Gellately, Book Review, *loc. cit.*, p 190.) Goldhagen’s misconception of the equal severity of the racial dimension is most evident in his forecasting of the future that “The Nazi German Revolution” would have held out for Eastern Europe (*HWE*, p 458) and in the contentious hierarchy of victimhood offered as “Appendix 2: Schematization of the Dominant Beliefs in Germany about Jews, the Mentally Ill, and Slavs” (*HWE* pp 467-471). See Wolfgang Wippermann, “*Wie die Zigeuner*”: *Antisemitismus und Antiziganismus im Vergleich* (Berlin, 1997); Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge, 1992); Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische “Lösung der Zigeunerfrage”* (Hamburg, 1996); Krausnick/Wilhelm, *op. cit.*; Alfred Streim *Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im “Fall Barbarossa”* (Heidelberg/Karlsruhe, 1981); Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941-1945* (Stuttgart, 1978).

5(1). MONOCAUSAL ANTISEMITISM AND THE HOLOCAUST

The works cited above give a good idea of the difficulties faced by Goldhagen in putting forth an argument for monocausal antisemitism, and it must be said that it is with relation to the *monocausality* of his approach *per se* that Goldhagen is at his most disingenuous. He has called it an “outright falsehood” that he puts forward such an explanation, stating elsewhere that “no adequate explanation of the Holocaust can be monocausal” and citing pages 9 and 416 of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in support.¹⁵⁸ Yet even these references are confusing. Goldhagen does indeed lay out the various “developments” for which any “comprehensive explanation” of the Holocaust would have to account, having just said in the preceding paragraph that “Germans’ antisemitic beliefs about Jews were the central causal agent of the Holocaust.”(9) Then he hedges, saying this “particular brand of antisemitism” was, “*though obviously not the sole source*, [...] a most significant and indispensable source of the perpetrators’ actions and must be at the centre of any explanation of them.” (14, emphasis added) Finally and most tellingly, though he does cite the appropriate passage on page 416 that describes the “many factors necessary” for the Holocaust to have been carried out (adding, “Most of these elements are well understood.”) he does not mention the balance of *the same paragraph*: “With regard to the *motivational* cause of the Holocaust, for the vast majority of the perpetrators, a monocausal explanation does suffice.” (416, emphasis original, underscore added).

Tracing the roots of this antisemitism, Goldhagen writes,

my understanding of nineteenth-century antisemitism, because it is informed by my theoretical and methodological positions, emphasizes the underlying continuity of German antisemitism, and asserts its ubiquity more than any other accounts that I know. (488 n 17)

As part of his search for the intentionalist motives of the “ordinary Germans,” this statement is an blatant confession of a blinkered approach to the sources. In fact his

¹⁵⁸ Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...”, pp 2, 12-13.

inspiration for the antisemitism model proves to be an obscure and unpublished 1963 German doctoral dissertation. (*Ibid.*) Yet if his not very comprehensive line of argumentation providing for a prolific nineteenth-century undercurrent of “eliminationist antisemitism” were true, “it would be utterly inexplicable why there was Jewish emancipation in Germany at all.”¹⁵⁹ And so on this contradictory basis, Goldhagen sets out to “prove” his thesis of monocausality.

The book’s first example of the Police Battalions has already been addressed in some detail. The major failing of this section is that it cites virulent antisemitism as the cause and motive for the murders that were committed, but does not describe whence it came. Owing to the fundamentally circular nature of his explanatory social science model, Goldhagen can do little more than assert the existence of this “eliminationist” urge, and cannot clearly explain how this urge to kill got from a supposedly ubiquitously antisemitic society into the minds of these “ordinary Germans”. The most pressing question, of why “the normal German man” became “a willing killer” is left unanswered.¹⁶⁰

To test Goldhagen’s assertion that “the Germans” all wanted to zealously take part in the murders because of their inherently antisemitic nature, there is a hypothetical proof to which this assertion can be subjected. Suppose that one of the members of the Police Battalions had not been sent to Poland, but instead stayed in his native Hamburg. And suppose he had discovered that someone known to him was hiding Jews. How would he react? He could go to the *Gestapo* and denounce the protector. Or he could look the other way. Or, if he thought the authorities were onto him, he could try to tip off the protector. Under Goldhagen’s conception, his antisemitic soul would immediately prompt him to take the first option. Yet the more likely possibility (based on what is known of the way the majority of merely “indifferent” Germans reacted to the “Jewish Problem”) is the second one, which has nothing to do with “proof” of the test subject’s dark antisemitic

¹⁵⁹ Hans Mommsen in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 37.

¹⁶⁰ Mechtild Blum and Wolfgang Storz, “Killing for Desire: Interview with Klaus Theweleit,” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 212.

nature, and everything to do with the norms prevailing in Hamburg at the time, as opposed to the norms prevailing in Poland during the “Final Solution”.¹⁶¹

Placing the decisions taken by individual perpetrators into an explanatory context such as this is anathema to Goldhagen and his theory, as are studies that offer competing explanations by doing so. The author faults Raul Hilberg (385) for departing from the presumption of rampant antisemitism and makes a cutting reference as well (albeit obliquely) to Karl Schleunes (425) for much the same reason. But it is Christopher Browning who far and away comes in for the worst treatment from Goldhagen.

Browning’s study *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* was researched in the same archives and deals with the same Police Battalion as does Goldhagen. This means it represents the greatest threat to Goldhagen’s skewed interpretation, and is the reason why Goldhagen makes over twenty-five individual and largely critical endnote references to Browning’s work. A typical example of the contradictory relationship Goldhagen has with the secondary works he employs, these citations begin by noting that the existence of Browning’s book lifts the obligation from Goldhagen to have to present “every last item of material which might be construed (even if erroneously) to cast doubt on [Goldhagen’s] understanding of the battalion, for such material can easily be found in Browning’s book.” (534 n 1) Yet Goldhagen in the same endnote shows plain disagreement with Browning over the latter’s “uncritical” acceptance of some source materials that serve to “impair his understanding of the battalion”. Browning, it is alleged, “constantly plays up” the supportive information that he “manages to read into the material” in order to assert “psychologically implausible” interpretations. (551 n 65, 580 n 22) And finally, in a typically Goldhagen-esque move of taking an opposing view to the point of absurdity in order to make his own seem reasonable, he criticises Browning’s “understanding of the cynicism of people” by asking whether the professor’s colleagues would be willing to kill people for the advancement of their career. (581 n 25)

¹⁶¹ Peter Pulzer, “Psychopaths and Conformists, Adventurers and Moral Cowards,” *London Review of Books* 19, 2 (January 23, 1997), p 21.

Such simplistic either/or thinking is easy to fall into when one is dealing with moral absolutes with the luxury of hindsight. But just as Hamburg was not Poland, neither is the university campus the killing fields of the East. Goldhagen wilfully ignores the many credible explanations offered by Browning, and in modern psychology, for the actions of perpetrators in given contexts.¹⁶² It is crucial (and morally incumbent in particular on the would-be interpreter of these tragic events), to remain aware that explaining is by no means excusing, and seeking to understand is not to be confused with seeking to exonerate. By missing this distinction, Goldhagen chooses to leave the realm where explanations are possible, and makes his a work of Ethics rather than a History. The basic problem, and the main difference between the two works of Goldhagen and Browning, is that the latter wrote an academic treatise which had no “explicitly moral voice [and an] implicit message that practically *anybody* could have done” the grim deeds described under the contextual explanations that are presented.¹⁶³ Browning’s message is more accessible to readers living in modern society and makes the events in question more intuitively understandable by attempting to analyse and describe, not just to pass moral judgement from the remote separation of a pseudo-anthropological approach on “the Germans” who committed these deeds.

Goldhagen’s second example of the conditions for Jews in the work camps is similarly untenable as a convincing example of antisemitic monomania among “ordinary Germans”. His detailed descriptions fail to account for the fact that in the camp system of Nazi

¹⁶² By Milgram, Zimbardo and LeBon. Browning mentions the Milgram experiments which suggested that “men are led to kill with little difficulty,” based on peer pressure and “deeply ingrained behaviour tendencies” (*Ordinary Men*, *op. cit.*, pp 171-5) to which Goldhagen replies by dismissing the study out of hand on the basis of one journal article (580 n19). Zimbardo randomly assigned roles of guard and prisoner to subjects, discovering that for many, “what we do is what we gradually become.” (Cited in Eric A. Zillmer/Molly Harrower/Barry A. Ritzler/Robert P. Archer, *The Quest for the Nazi Personality: A Psychological Investigation of Nazi War Criminals* (Hillsdale NJ/Hove UK, 1995), pp 5-6.) Gustave LeBon’s work showed that “groups tend to obey their own rules. Groups in extreme situations act in extreme ways,” which makes Goldhagen’s method of reasoning backward from the behaviour of members of a sample (of Policemen in the extreme situation of Poland) to the culture as a whole (the German home front) impossible. This helps explain the differences between Hamburg and Poland, and is a lethal argument against the simplifications of the “eliminationist antisemitism” model (Cited in Joffe, *loc. cit.*, p 19.)

¹⁶³ Joffe, *loc. cit.*, p 21 (emphasis original).

Germany “the Germans may well have murdered more Russians in cold blood than Jews” without there being any description of a long history of “eliminationist anti-Slavism”.¹⁶⁴ The further fact that the system of concentration camps for all manner of “opponents” of the regime had been in place since 1933, long before the active persecution of the Jews became a coherent Nazi policy seems no obstacle for the author.¹⁶⁵ And exemplary of the treatment of sources in this section is the description in Chapter 11, “Life in the ‘Work’ Camps,” of guards as an “unextraordinary lot” of “the camp’s ordinary Germans,” (299, 307) even though three quarters of the personnel in question were members of the SS.¹⁶⁶

The use of sources for the “death marches” is equally deterministic, as the makeup of the prisoners at different time during the march has been subject to dispute. The equal cruelty of the guards whether or not there was a majority of Jews in the marching columns is the central focus of this debate, and it is one which Goldhagen seems only to be able to find support for in partial readings of the documents and the outright ignorance of the facts.¹⁶⁷

Inconsistencies, shortcomings and outright errors are manifold in Goldhagen’s efforts to have his readers peer with him through the key-hole of monocausal antisemitism. The author’s efforts to justify his moral conclusions with a simplistic answer, based on a problematic model, and supported with insufficient proof, do nothing in the end to address the underlying universal aspects.

¹⁶⁴ Gellately, Book Review, *loc. cit.*, p 190; Cf. Birn, *loc. cit.*, p 204.

¹⁶⁵ Wehler in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 95.

¹⁶⁶ Birn, *loc. cit.*, p 205.

¹⁶⁷ Birn cites the varying makeup of the column over time, as well as the horrible end met by a Russian doctor who fell out of the column and was murdered with a savagery that Goldhagen would have his readers believe was reserved “only for Jews”. (Birn, “Revising the Holocaust,” in Finkelstein/Birn, *op. cit.*, p 129 footnote.) See also Pohl, *loc. cit.*, pp 33-35; Browning, “Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans?” in Shandley, *op. cit.*, pp 59-60.

5(II). RIGHT QUESTIONS, WRONG ANSWERS

Goldhagen's book, with its myriad failings and deeply flawed character, its "deficiencies and overstatements" that practically invite serious readers to "disqualify the entire inquiry as absurd and dubious", is nonetheless redeemed in small part by the value of some of the questions that it poses.¹⁶⁸

Chief among its merits is the change in perspective that it offers to a field that has lately been marked by a predominantly functionalist approach, of "a literally dehumanised murder machine [...] an industry of death, ordered by Hitler, designed by Himmler, and executed by Eichmann with the help of a conspiratorial band of SS fanatics".¹⁶⁹ The question of agency does therefore refocus the issue in terms of individual motive and responsibility. A key point to bear in mind in this context is that the reason virtually no one (553 n10) has attempted "thick" descriptions of the perpetrators' lives could well be that the evidence is too scanty and has been judged by professional historians *not* to be sufficient to draw such conclusions—though to the extent that it is merely a matter of recasting the questions and exploring sources further, it remains a valuable interpretive focus.

To Goldhagen's further credit, he has drawn attention (though not for the first time, as he might claim) to the fact that the implementation of the Holocaust was the work of an alarmingly large number of persons beyond the institutional *Schreibtischtäter* (banal bureaucrats) and *Einsatzgruppen* of the functionalist approach, and that keeping the crime secret was not to be done.

This suggests the difficult question of "who knew what when". It has already been mentioned that Goldhagen's definition of the perpetrators is dependent on knowledge of the genocidal actions having been widespread in Nazi Germany and under which the perpetrator "*knew*" that his actions acted to sustain "institutions of genocidal killing." (165, emphasis added) Saying that nothing was known about the "Final Solution" obviously cuts the matter too short.¹⁷⁰ But the fact remains that the "mass killings were

¹⁶⁸ Herbert in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 110.

¹⁶⁹ Joffe, "Goldhagen in Germany," *loc. cit.*, p 18.

¹⁷⁰ In this respect Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm's "The Holocaust in National-Socialist Rhetoric and Writings: Some Evidence against the Thesis that before 1945 Nothing Was Known about the 'Final Solution'," (*Yad*

conducted in the greatest possible secrecy,” and considerable efforts were made to keep such actions under the veil of “Night and Fog”.¹⁷¹ The Nazis’ “*Endlösung*” was itself after all a “*Geheime Reichssache*,” a top secret state matter the revelation of which was punishable by death sentence—convincing evidence of at least the possibility that the full extent of the horror was not comprehended by the majority of the populace, or not in its totality.¹⁷² A question, therefore, worthy of greater attention than simply asserting that the “vast majority of Germans” (however many that might be) unequivocally supported the extermination of the Jews.¹⁷³

The antisemitism (particularly of *inter bellum* Germany) as a specifically enabling factor of the Holocaust has obviously come in for increased attention as a result of Goldhagen’s book. While many scholars rightly take issue with his monocausal approach, this is clearly an area which demands further inquiry. Criticism of the author’s book may well have stimulated this, albeit it in a rather backhanded way: the central question is now how better to understand the antisemitism of a Germany that *was not* widely and deeply affected by “eliminationist” and lethal antisemitism, but nonetheless carried out the Holocaust.¹⁷⁴ A longer look at the institutions of the *Ordnungspolizei*, the “death marches”, and specifically Jewish experiences in the camp system are also suggested by the empirical treatments on offer from Goldhagen and would be valuable additions to the existing literature.

These issues constitute the consensus view among scholars of what limited value may be derived from Goldhagen’s otherwise problematic book. Another notable aspect of

Vashem Studies XVI (1984) pp 95-127) argues against a straw man. His survey of antisemitic writings gives little systematic determination of their impact. The assumption seems to be that since they were published, they enjoyed a widespread audience, which does not necessarily follow on issues of propaganda. For a more balanced treatment, see the collection of essays in Jörg Wollenberg (Hrsg.), “*Niemand war dabei und keiner hat’s gewußt*”: *Die deutsche Öffentlichkeit und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945* (München, Zürich, 1989) and Wolfgang Benz, “The Persecution and the Extermination of the Jews in the German Consciousness,” in John Milfull (ed.) *Why Germany?: National Socialist Anti-Semitism and the European Context*. (Providence, Oxford, 1993) pp 91-104.

¹⁷¹ Hans Mommsen, in Littell (ed.) *op. cit.*, p 34; Hoffmann, “The Persecution of the Jews...”, in Chandler (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 77; Stern, *loc. cit.*, p 134.

¹⁷² “Ein Volk von Dämonen?” *Der Spiegel* 21 (20 Mai 1996), p 52; Hans Mommsen, *Ibid.*; Hoffmann, *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...”, p 13.

¹⁷⁴ Pohl, *loc. cit.*, pp 43-44; Bauer, “Daniel J. Goldhagen’s View of the Holocaust,” in Littell (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 68.

Goldhagen's book is that hitherto, many historians had been hesitant to pose the really big questions, for fear of not being able to provide morally satisfactory answers to them. Goldhagen chose to take on one of the biggest questions of all: why did the Holocaust happen? But his answer of monocausal antisemitism poses a danger far greater than offending modern Germans. By positing the isolation of the Nazi example, perhaps the most notorious case of mass murder there is, and then giving a simplistic answer, the author sets a disturbing precedent that works against developing a better understanding of why these events take place. It seems that Goldhagen too should have been more hesitant about broaching such questions, given the answers he provides. It will be interesting to see how well Germans handle them in future.

6. LEGITIMACY GAINED...AND LOST

In March of 1997 Goldhagen was awarded the Democracy Prize. As the laudatory speeches given at the ceremony intimated, the granting of the Prize was representative of Goldhagen's having "made it" in the eyes of his adoring public. By putting forth a version of history that brought morality back into the realm of objective explanation, Goldhagen made Germans think carefully once again about the proper public uses of history, *their* history.¹⁷⁵ The key factor in this carefully mediated symbiosis between the public and Goldhagen was largely dependent on the latter's careful drawing of a distinction—a *Schlußstrich*, so to speak—between "the Germans" of the past and the German members of the *Bundesrepublik*.

In spite of his strongly-worded and moralistic judgement passed on "the Germans," Goldhagen maintains that there is not a "*timeless* German character," (582 n38) as indeed he must in order for his theory of the reeducation of bad Nazis into model democrats to be

¹⁷⁵ The Prize was accompanied by speeches from Jan Philipp Reemtsma and Jürgen Habermas whose titles make clear the reason for the Prize being awarded: "Turning away from denial: *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as a counterforce to 'Historical Explanation'," (pp 255-262) and "Goldhagen and the Public Use of History: Why a Democracy Prize for Daniel Goldhagen?" (pp 263-273) both in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*

tenable. The *deus ex machina* of the post-war *Entnazifizierung* (Allied “Denazification”) process is highlighted by Goldhagen’s study as the eleventh-hour salvation of an otherwise incorrigibly antisemitic and martial people. And during the book tour he had reiterated time and again that his “indictment of German [political] culture did not extend to the post-war period,” which made it “safe” for present-day Germans to “relive to dread and the terror; and that is one reason the Germans of 1996 yielded willingly to curiosity and fascination.”¹⁷⁶

One aspect that would prove threatening this harmonious interaction was the generational divide that stretched across Goldhagen’s *Schlußstrich*. The generation, which was in the position to tell Goldhagen from first-hand how living in the era of “eliminationist antisemitism” really was, was the very one that seem to have something to hide, something that *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* made it its task to draw out into the light of day. It is noteworthy in this context that practically all the participants in the *Historikerstreit* had been born in the 1930 or mid- to late-1940s, whereas the newer Goldhagen debate included younger Germans with no ties at all to the *Nazizeit*. The debate was thus one of the first large-scale revisions of the field of history in Germany that incorporated younger historians (who had no direct contact with the events and treat the period as history) and senior scholars (for whom strong elements of both memory and personal experience existed). Ironically, then, Goldhagen’s Prize was really about his being credited for a renaissance of the “historical sense” in Germany, even though his book actually contained precious little of that commodity.

This would seem to have been Goldhagen’s moment of glory, with the final acceptance of a book that had been so broadly panned and the public (though, to be sure, not unanimous) acknowledgement from his academic peers of his contribution to the field. At this zenith, Daniel Goldhagen was the man of the hour in Germany, which only made what happened next all the more disappointing to those seeking earnestly to overlook his more extreme tendencies and maintain his presence in the fold of academic history.

Goldhagen’s descent towards the nadir of his reputation began later in 1997. During much of that year, apart from the exchanges of opinions in articles, all had been quiet on

¹⁷⁶ Joffe, *loc. cit.*, p 19.

the Goldhagen front. Then began a concerted campaign of the application of influence by public figures and a personal smear campaigns to try to quash the publication in book form of two articles strongly critical of Goldhagen's use of sources (in spite of the fact that both articles had already been published previously in scholarly journals).¹⁷⁷ Allegations of bias ensued, based on the strongly contemporary political agenda of those figures working with Goldhagen to try to censor these views. These allegations were combined with speculation about the author's motives, ranging from careerism, angling for the newly-established Holocaust Chair at Harvard University, family involvement in the form of Goldhagen senior's influence over the nature of the book, and a host of other comments of varying unfairness.¹⁷⁸ But the state of affairs was to sink lower still.

In November of 1997 Goldhagen brought notice of intention to file suit in England against Ruth Bettina Birn, over her critical article of his use of sources in the Ludwigsburg archives. One could perhaps have seen something like this coming from rash and intemperate scholar who would broach no criticism and give no ground: he had, after all, characterised one critic's "contribution" (in ironic quotation marks) as consisting of

¹⁷⁷ The book that would eventually be published as Finkelstein/Birn, *A Nation on Trial*, *op. cit.* During the aggressive campaign to prevent the book's release, the Anti-Defamation League's Abraham Foxman brought pressure to bear on the book's editor Sara Bershtel to drop the project because Finkelstein's "anti-Zionist" bias "disqualified" him from commenting on the Holocaust. This was followed by pressure on the publisher at Holt by literary editor of the *New Republic* Leon Wieseltier, calling the two authors "ersatz scholars," despite their eminent credentials. The chorus of censorious pressure would be joined by Elan Steinberg of the World Jewish Congress and Bernie G. Farber of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Because Birn is a German-born Canadian civil servant with the Justice Department's War Crimes Division, Farber targeted her in particular when he wrote a letter to the Department complaining of private opinions supportive of "anti-Israel outbursts" by public servants, especially a "member of the perpetrator race". This outlandish accusation prompted an investigation of the Chief Historian of the War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity Section for alleged antisemitism by the very Department of Justice for which she worked. On the Canadian scene, agitation continued by Irving Abella (former chair of the CJC, current head of the Canadian Historical Association), who was critical of Birn's comments that the Jewish Congress had "exerted political influence" over "its concerns" in a campaign of pressure tactics, also labelled her co-author Finkelstein "an enemy of the Jewish people". (Briemberg, *loc. cit.*; Krausz, *loc. cit.*; Ellie Tescher, "War Crimes scholar treading turbulent water," *Toronto Star* (January 30, 1998), p 12).

¹⁷⁸ Richard Chacon, "Holocaust Studies Chair shelved at Harvard," *Boston Globe* (March 25, 1998), p A1; Broder, *loc. cit.*, p 59. One wonders that Goldhagen, normally so ready to gore the sacred cows of "conventional" points of view, sees Zionism as practically sacrosanct. It would seem that since he is unable to label Finkelstein with his favourite appellation (antisemitic), he instead labels him a vicious anti-Zionist in an appeal to (in his eyes) an equivalently low moral level. Yet as Allan Brownfeld has pointed out, the history of Zionism itself in relation to the Holocaust is very spotty, which would make Goldhagen's accusation yet another example of the "use [of] the *Shoah* as a political weapon ("The Politicization of the Holocaust: Examining the Uses and Abuse of its Legacy," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (Oct/Nov 1998), p 48; Cf. Briemberg, *loc. cit.*, p 40).

“slandorous charges” against himself.¹⁷⁹ The irresponsible scoundrel in question? None other than eminent historian Fritz Stern, author of standard works in the field of political theory of fascism and long-time commentator on the Holocaust. Strangely enough, Goldhagen himself used on occasion the sort of unbalanced language for which Birn was now being threatened with legal action; in a review of another scholar’s work Goldhagen would write, “it is itself an artful construction of half-truths, itself in the service of an ideology. And it is riddled with extraordinary factual errors which amount to a pattern of falsification and distortion.”¹⁸⁰

In a sad ending to an otherwise promising recovery, Goldhagen reveals his true understanding of the free interplay of ideas in an open society. Like no one else, he so mistakes the purpose of scholarly review as to resort to unprecedented step of legal means to silence and censor criticism. The legitimacy which was in his hands slipped away.

7. GOLDHAGEN, HISTORY AND GERMANY

Goldhagen, when questioned during and interview in Germany about the central thesis of his book, admitted, “Ich hätte es auch ganz anders sagen können,” or, in English, “I could have put it quite differently.”¹⁸¹ Such an understatement strikes the reader as surprising, coming from an author whose writings demonstrate that he is not often given to measured judgements or statements. But one is left wondering what the sense of this statement is meant to be. Was Goldhagen ruing the absence of “historical sense,” of a better idea of how things *do not* happen, in his wildly successful work of Ethics? From the current vantage point, the judgement rendered of his work must be that while scholars have been able to draw from it several useful and important questions, Goldhagen’s

¹⁷⁹ Goldhagen, “Motives, Causes, Alibis...”, p 10.

¹⁸⁰ Stern, *loc. cit.*, p 132 n2.

¹⁸¹ Original reference is to Augstein, “Was dachten die Mörder?...”, *loc. cit.*, p 50. An English translation is available in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 151: this translation is rendered simply as “I could have put it differently,” which does not capture the feeling of the German original since it fails to incorporate the “ganz”.

politically expedient answers to those questions give the book less the character of a serious investigation than of Goldhagen's own "*j'accuse*" against "the Germans".

That Goldhagen did not "put it differently" also begs the following questions. Is it now necessary for new scholars to make sensational claims and have a "thesis with a bang" in order reach a broad popular audience in the "tough, competitive media market of the 1990s"?¹⁸² And does his treatment of Browning, the seemingly calculated move of choosing an already-researched subject, but reaching drastically different (moralistically-based) judgements, in order apparently to score points off of a senior scholar with the repetitive and vituperative denigration of a book that has already received widespread acclaim, foretell the way of things to come? Perhaps this is merely an aspect of Goldhagen's belief that his startling new book tells "long neglected truths that many desperately wish not to hear," while nowhere acknowledging the immense, courageous labours of the many historians and writers in the field of modern German historiography who have presented the German people with as stark and honest a portrait of their past as is possible, and have done so "to the irritation of many 'ordinary Germans' who would prefer not to be reminded of the uniqueness of that past."¹⁸³

What was thus sought here was not a contribution to the corpus of existing literature, but the wholesale rejection and replacement of "conventional explanations" with Goldhagen's "Brand New!" contribution. The author chose to publish his work not with a traditional university or academic press, risking thereby that his work would receive only the attention of scholars and specialists. He instead opted to have his findings (such as they were) published by a commercial press, which had the ample resources to widely publicise the author's claims to insight. Is history thus to be driven by scholarship and balanced interpretations, subject to peer review and criticism, or by P.R. campaigns, powerful marketing and commercial considerations? Perhaps Goldhagen's "manipulated, public-relations-orchestrated success" does indeed say more about "the culture of the present than the book's substance tells us about the horrors of the past."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Norbert Frei, "Ein Volk von Endlösern? Daniel Goldhagen bringt eine alte These in neuem Gewand," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (13 April 1996).

¹⁸³ Goldhagen, "The New Discourse of Avoidance," p 1; Stern, *loc. cit.*, p 136.

¹⁸⁴ Riemer in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 175; Stern, *Ibid.*, p 138.

But surely it is not sensible to make such a splash by providing easy solutions to problems, engaging in a tendentious use of the archival material to provide a “quasi-scientific confirmation of deep-seated resentments and prejudices,” and placing almost exclusive emphasis on the interaction with the public market at the expense of ignoring the important process of peer review.¹⁸⁵ Or is this reaction itself merely prompted by a combination of rage over the public ignorance of the intricacies and subtleties of the “current state of research” and of the “injured vanity” of scholars who publish “books of the highest calibre on German history, and hardly anyone pays them any notice”?¹⁸⁶

The overall service to the field of history of Goldhagen’s ambitious undertaking has been to serve as the lightning rod that has attracted the (not infrequently ire-laden) commentary of the best minds and, in the brilliant illumination of these multiple and powerful opinions, the issues have been thrown into newer, starker view. Put simply, while it is a “provocation with an eye to outrage,” the “book demands that one take sides,” and prompts serious thought on weighty matters.¹⁸⁷

Moreover, as Habermas reminded the audience in March 1997, Goldhagen provides “new stimulus to a reflection about the proper public use of history,” and the troublesome question that Germans seem mature enough now to be able to handle: “Can the responsibility for mass political criminality ever be laid as a burden on individual persons or groups of persons? If so, who were the responsible actors, and what were their reasons for acting as they did? And insofar as normative justifications were of decisive importance for the actors, were these rooted in the culture and in particular ways of thinking?” It now seems that the “fear of the study of the average man and the possibility of recognising in him one’s own grandfather, father or uncle (or aunt or mother) has finally been replaced by the willingness to take the risk of such a recognition.”¹⁸⁸

Enough time has perhaps now passed that Germans can indeed face the most ugly aspect of the Holocaust: the fact that it was people just like themselves, in extraordinary

¹⁸⁵ Wehler, in Shandley (ed.), p 103.

¹⁸⁶ Pätzold, p 163, Hans Mommsen, p 183, Jäckel, p 87, all in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁷ Austein’s favourite quote from the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, p 47 and Pätzold, p 164, both in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁸ Habermas, (pp 264-5), Reemtsma, (p 257), both in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*

times, who had to make the hard decisions and, not infrequently, chose poorly.¹⁸⁹ As this period passes from living memory to written history, it is particularly important to get the questions right, but to be responsible in providing well-documented and researched answers. Whatever the value of *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in suggesting the questions that may guide future directions in this endeavour, Goldhagen's answers fall woefully short of the standard historians expect from a serious scholar. This fact has not much harmed his sales, but one wonders what his further reputation in the field will look like. The lesson that German historians, and historians generally, can take away from this is of the need to reach out to the public to make responsible versions more accessible, or else ideologues arguing for politically expedient histories and backed up by powerful marketing and P.R. campaigns will.

And yet it is a good time for German history, as the end result of this latest debate shows. Archives are opening, explanatory theories expanding, and the passage of time dulls the sharp pangs of conscience, making the Nazi legacy more approachable and comprehensible. Without wanting to argue for a "useful" form of history, it is nonetheless true that the political is intricately tied to the historical in modern Germany. In this area one can therefore even imagine a movement from *mea culpa* to *know thyself* as Germans learn to stop beating up on themselves and come to understand themselves. Understanding in this manner, not in an artificial and sterile "constitutional patriotism" sense, but as members of a modern society that accepts the burden of having committed a horrific crime, will better allow Germany to assuage its neighbours' historic fears of a strong Germany and to responsibly play its current (and foreseeable) pivotal role in the European Union. Certainly the vigorous public nature of the debates in this area points to the fact that historical issues do not remain, in Germany, mere abstractions. Which makes it all the more important to be on guard against simplifications such as those produced by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Michael Zimmermann, "Verfolgung und Widerstand im Nationalsozialismus: Ergebnisse und Aufgaben der Geschichtsschreibung," in Anselm Faust (Hrsg.), *Verfolgung und Widerstand im Rheinland und in Westfalen 1933-1945* (Köln, 1992), p 11.

¹⁹⁰ Goldhagen's affinity for simplistic answers that do not accord with reality but have a nice moral ring is further demonstrated in his most recent dispensation. In an ignorance of context that is breathtaking coming from a professor of politics, Goldhagen states that "the defeat and occupation of [...] Serbia are

CONCLUSION

For someone who professes to adopt an “anthropological” perspective, Goldhagen’s account is surprisingly silent on the fact that the history of humankind has all too frequently been written in blood. Modern scholars forget at their peril the numerous examples of man’s inhumanity to man that litter the past. Lest anyone should forget, the mute testimony of mass graves in Kosovo and the difficulties of bringing the hundreds of willing executioners to justice in Rwanda vie for one’s attention alongside anthropologists’ new discoveries of mass killings, torture, cannibalism and head-hunting among prehistoric (*ca.* 1325) North American societies.¹⁹¹

The Holocaust differed therefore in scale, not in nature, from the genocidal actions of other times and places. It represented the addition of specifically twentieth-century ideological and technological means to achieving the end of the darkest of murderous urges. Under this sobering view, the voyeuristic depictions in Goldhagen’s book having found such a wide and fascinated readership demonstrates an ongoing and rather morbid

morally and, in the long run, practically necessary.” Envisioning a post-WWII style occupation force that would engage in the Serbian equivalent of *Entnazifizierung*, he naïvely overlooks the role of an ailing Russia (whose very real protests in fact subsequently had a large impact on the course of actual operations) as well as the fact that there had been no declared war, let alone terms of unconditional surrender. For him, the “bad” Serbians have “damaged faculties of moral judgement” that require reeducation by the “good” forces of the West, in a dichotomy not outdone in its oversimplification since Francis Fukuyama prematurely declared that the The End of History was nigh. The historian and longtime observer of ethnic conflicts Michael Ignatieff, who sees the situation with the eye of a keen political observer rather than through the lenses of a moralist, has argued instead for the Serbs to be allowed to do their own housecleaning and prosecute their own criminals, a tactic which in post-war Germany was in fact far more effective than the futile *Fragebogen* and other such tactics of the Denazification campaign. (Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, “A New Serbia,” *The New Republic* (May 17, 1999), pp 16-18; Michael Ignatieff, “The hour of truth for Serbia,” *National Post* (June 9, 1999), p A12. I am indebted to Frau Ruth Bettina Birn for pointing out the existence of this Goldhagen article to me during a phone interview on June 8, 1999.)

¹⁹¹ As detailed, for example, in Brian Bailey, *Massacres: An Account of Crimes Against Humanity* (London, 1984). On Kosovo (*inter alia*): Caroline Davies, “The Words of a Killer—For the first time, a member of the Serbian paramilitary forces talks—both frankly and proudly—about taking part in the bloody conflict of Kosovo,” *The National Post* (June 18, 1999), pp B6-7; on Rwanda: Nigel Ryan, “Why man massacres: In Rwanda, the smell of death permeates the air,” *The National Post* (June 16, 1999), p A16; on prehistoric North America: Jeff White, “Genocide’s prehistoric roots: Traces of massacres, cannibalism, torture, slavery, abuse of women and human sacrifice are being found on Stone Age skeletons from around the world,” *The National Post* (June 26, 1999), p B7.

curiosity about how thin the patina of Western civilisation really is. Yet there is something infinitely more disturbing than the titillation to be gained from acting as vicarious spectators of the crimes of “the Germans,” under the assumption that they are somehow different and apart from “us”; it is that “they,” in the final analysis, are just like “us”.

When Goldhagen begins talking about collectivities like “the Germans,” arguing in a pseudo-anthropological sense for their collective separation from the family of civilised nations, and, stronger still, placing them beyond the pale of a shared human condition, it denies the universal element of specifically human capabilities. It also echoes the same kinds of statements that the Nazis made about “the Jews” or any of a host of other dehumanising labels.¹⁹² It is an invitation to extremism and contributes nothing to understanding why human beings do unspeakably inhumane things.

As Christopher Browning states, “that murky world of mixed motives, conflicting emotions and priorities, reluctant choices, and self-serving opportunism and accommodation wedded to self-deception and denial—a world that is all too human and all too universal,” is “absent from Daniel Goldhagen’s Manichean tale.”¹⁹³ In fact, one need only look back

twenty years at the ordinary Americans in Vietnam, or 200 years at the extermination by ordinary Americans of the American Indians, and at the exterminations by ordinary people of the last twenty years in all the corners of the world. There ordinary men exterminate without being anti-Semites, or particularly anti-Indian, or anti-Moslem.

The German police battalions that Goldhagen portrays are, notwithstanding the unique nature of the genocide of the Jews, exactly comparable to these universal murderers in their actions.¹⁹⁴

This is not a call for the fatalistic surrender to animalistic instincts or the baser aspects of a universal “human nature,” any more than the quest for explaining and trying to understand the Holocaust may be seen as a project for morally relativising it. As much as

¹⁹² Browning, “Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans?” in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, p 73.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p 67.

¹⁹⁴ Blum/Storz in Shandley (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp 213-4.

the ability to speak and write and think is the characteristic aspect of higher beings, the belief that humanity can be more than slaves to baser actions should be combined with the application of the historical sense to understand and thereby (as far as is possible) avoid the repetition of such horrors. To the extent that this task is successful, modern society has the right to call itself civilised. But heavy-handed treatments of the sort represented by *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, while perhaps prompted by a forgivable inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the scope of the evil that men can do, do "us" no favours by taking the easy way out, oversimplifying the actions of a particularistic "them" and undermining a balanced understanding of this most horrible moral travesty. *Vielleicht wäre es doch am besten, wenn Goldhagen es "auch ganz anders" gesagt hätte*, but such is the nature of historical inquiry that it is sometimes served even by the unlikeliest of contributions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MONOGRAPHS:

- Bailey, Brian. *Massacres: An Account of Crimes Against Humanity*. London: Orion, 1994.
- Bankier, David. *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism*. Oxford UK, Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1992.
- Browning, Christopher R. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1993.
- Craig, Gordon A. *The Germans*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1982.
- Dülffer, Jost. *Deutsche Geschichte 1933-1945: Führerglaube und Vernichtungskrieg*. Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1992.
- Gellately, Robert. *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933-1945*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996.
- Hoffmann, Peter. *Widerstand gegen Hitler und das Attentat vom 20. Juli 1944*. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1994.
- , *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat: Der Kampf der Opposition gegen Hitler*. (4. Ausgabe) München: R. Piper Verlag, 1985.
- Kershaw, Ian. *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- Klemperer, Victor. *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1933-1941*. (Abridged and translated by Martin Chalmers) London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998.
- Niewyk, Donald L. *The Jews in Weimar Germany*. Baton Rouge, London: Louisiana State UP, 1980.
- Nipperdy, Thomas. *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991.
- Scholl, Inge. *Students Against Tyranny: The Resistance of the White Rose, Munich, 1942-1943*. (trans. by Arthur R. Schultz) Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1970.

Silver, Eric. *The Book of the Just: The Unsung Heroes Who Rescued Jews from Hitler*. New York: Grove Press, 1992.

Straeten, Herbert. *Andere Deutsche unter Hitler: Zeitberichte über Retter vor dem Holocaust*. Mainz: v.Hase & Koehler Verlag, 1997.

Wesley, Frank. *The Holocaust and Anti-Semitism: The Goldhagen Argument and its Effects*. San Francisco, London, Bethesda: International Scholars Press, 1999.

Wolffsohn, Michael. *Ewige Schuld? 40 Jahre Deutsch-Jüdisch-Israelische Beziehungen*. (4. Auflage) München, Zürich: R. Piper Verlag, 1991.

Zillmer, Eric A./Harrower, Molly/Ritzler, Barry A./Archer, Robert P. *The Quest for the Nazi Personality: A Psychological Investigation of Nazi War Criminals*. Hillsdale NJ, Hove UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995.

COLLECTIONS OF ESSAYS AND DOCUMENTS:

Bessel, Richard (ed.). *Life in the Third Reich*. Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

Chalk, Frank and Jonassohn, Kurt. *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*. New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1990.

Chandler, Andrew (ed.). *The Moral Imperative: New Essays on the Ethics of Resistance in National Socialist Germany 1933-1945*. Boulder CO, Oxford: Westview Press, 1998.

Diner, Dan (Hrsg.) *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988.

Faust, Anselm (Hrsg.). *Verfolgung und Widerstand im Rheinland und in Westfalen 1933-1945*. Köln: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1992.

Finkelstein, Norman G. and Birn, Ruth Bettina. *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company, 1998.

Ginzel, Günther B. (Hrsg.) *"...das durfte keiner wissen!": Hilfe für Verfolgte im Rheinland von 1933 bis 1945-Gespräche, Dokumente, Texte*. (zusammen mit Hans-Joachim Henke, Stefan Kirschgens, Winfried Kranz) Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1995.

----- (Hrsg.) *Mut zur Menschlichkeit: Hilfe für Verfolgte während der NS-Zeit*. Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1993.

- Graml, Hermann/Mommsen, Hans/Reichardt, Hans-Joachim/Wolf, Ernst. *The German Resistance to Hitler*. (Introduction by Professor F. L. Carsten) Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970.
- Hirschfeld, Gerhard und Kettenacker, Lothar (Hrsg.) *“Der Führerstaat”: Mythos und Realität: Studien zur Struktur und Politik des Dritten Reiches*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta/Deutsches Historisches Institut (London), 1981.
- Hirschfeld, Gerhard (ed.). *The Policies of Genocide: Jews and Soviet Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany*. London, Boston, Sydney: The German Historical Institute/Allen & Unwin, 1986.
- “Historikerstreit”: Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*. München, Zürich: R. Piper Verlag, 1987.
- Kißener, Michael (Hrsg.) *Widerstand gegen die Judenverfolgung*. (mit Unterstützung der Karlsruher Hochschulvereinigung e.V.) Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1996.
- Large, David Clay (ed.). *Contending with Hitler: Varieties of German Resistance in the Third Reich*. New York, Cambridge UK, Victoria AUS, 1991.
- Lill, Rudolf (Hrsg.) *Hochverrat? Die “Weiße Rose” und ihr Umfeld*. (unter Mitarbeit von Michael Kißener) Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1993.
- Littell, Franklin H. (ed.) *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*. Merion Station, Pennsylvania: Merion Westfield Press International, 1997.
- Milfull, John (ed.) *Why Germany? National Socialist Anti-Semitism and the European Context*. Providence, Oxford: Berg Publishers, Inc., 1993.
- Nicosia, Francis R. and Stokes, Lawrence D. (eds.). *Germans Against Nazism: Nonconformity, Opposition and Resistance in the Third Reich*. New York, Oxford: Berg, 1990.
- Rosenbaum, Alan S. (ed.). *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*. (with a foreword by Israel W. Charney) Boulder CO, Oxford: Westview Press, 1996.
- Scheurig, Bodo (Hrsg.) *Deutscher Widerstand 1938-1944: Fortschritt oder Reaktion?* München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1969.

Shandley, Robert R. (ed.) *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*. (with essays translated by Jeremiah Riemer) Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Wollenberg, Jörg (Hrsg.) *"Niemand war dabei und keiner hat's gewußt": Die deutsche Öffentlichkeit und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945*. München, Zürich: R. Piper Verlag, 1989.

JOURNAL ARTICLES:

Ash, Mitchell G. "American and German Perspectives on the Goldhagen Debate: History, Identity and the Media," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. 11, 3 (1997), 396-411.

Birn, Ruth Bettina (in collaboration with Dr. Volker Reiss). "Revising the Holocaust," *The Historical Journal*. 40, 1 (1997), 195-215.

Birn, Ruth Bettina. "Ruth Bettina Birn Answers Goldhagen," *German Politics and Society*. 16, 2 (1998), 69-87.

Deák, István. "Holocaust Views: The Goldhagen Controversy in Retrospect," *Central European History*. 30, 2 (1997), 295-307.

Dipper, Christof. "The German Resistance and the Jews," *Yad Vashem Studies*. XVI (1984), 51-93.

Friedländer, Saul. "From Anti-Semitism to Extermination: A Historiographical Study of Nazi Policies Toward the Jews and an Essay in Interpretation," *Yad Vashem Studies*. XVI (1984), 1-50.

Gellately, Robert. Book Review, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. *Journal of Modern History*. 69 (1997), 187-191.

Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. "Germans vs. the Critics," *Foreign Affairs*. 76, 1 (Jan/Feb 1997), 163-166.

-----, "Daniel Jonah Goldhagen Comments on Birn," *German Politics and Society*. 16, 2 (1998), 88-93.

Hilberg, Raul. "The Goldhagen Phenomenon," *Critical Inquiry*. 23, 4 (1997), 721-28.

Kater, Michael H. "Everyday Anti-Semitism in Prewar Nazi Germany: The Popular Bases," *Yad Vashem Studies*. XVI (1984), 129-159.

- Kocka, Jürgen. "German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German *Sonderweg*," *Journal of Contemporary History*. 23 (1988), 3-16.
- Kulka, Otto D. "Die deutsche Geschichtsschreibung über den Nationalsozialismus und die 'Endlösung'," *Historische Zeitschrift*. 240 (1985), 599-640.
- Kulka, Otto Dov and Rodrigue, Aron. "The German Population and the Jews in the Third Reich: Recent Publications and Trends in Research on German Society and the 'Jewish Question'," *Yad Vashem Studies*. XVI (1984), 421-443.
- Meier, Christian. "To Condemn and to Understand: A Turning Point in German Historical Remembrance," *Yad Vashem Studies* XIX (1988), 93-106.
- Moses, A.D. "Structure and Agency in the Holocaust: Daniel J. Goldhagen and his Critics," *History and Theory*. 37, 2 (1998), 194-219.
- Pinto-Duschinsky, Michael. "Wehler on *Hitler's Willing Executioners*: A Comment," *German History*. 16, 3 (1998), 397-411.
- Pohl, Dieter. "Die Holocaust-Forschung und Goldhagens Thesen," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*. 45, 1 (1997), 1-48.
- Stern, Fritz. "The Goldhagen controversy: One nation, one people, one theory?" *Foreign Affairs*. 75, 6 (Nov/Dec 1996), 128-138.
- Wehler, Hans-Ulrich. "The Goldhagen Controversy: Agonizing Problems, Scholarly Failure and the Political Dimension," *German History*. 15, 1 (1997), 80-91.
- Wilhelm, Hans-Heinrich. "The Holocaust in National-Socialist Rhetoric and Writings Some Evidence against the Thesis that before 1945 Nothing Was Known about the 'Final Solution'," *Yad Vashem Studies*. XVI (1984), 95-127.
- NEWSPAPER, MAGAZINE AND PRESS ARTICLES:**
- "Academics criticize Harvard man's view of Holocaust," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*. (17 April 1996) International News.
- "Eine Art Paranoia: Wie die Alliierten die deutsche Kollektivschuld begründeten," *Der Spiegel*. 21 (20 Mai 1996), 72.
- Augstein, Rudolf. "Was dachten die Mörder? Der US-Politologe Daniel Jonah Goldhagen über den Streit um sein Holocaust-Buch und das Bild der Täter," *Der Spiegel*. 33 (12 August 1996), 50-55.
- Bischof, Günther. "Die normalen Deutschen als Täter," *Die Furche*. 18 (02 Mai 1996), 2.

“Böse Menschen, böse Taten: Der Historiker Christopher Browning über Goldhagen und Genozid,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. (06 Februar 1997), F4.

Briemberg, Mordecai, “Holocaust Scholarship: Zionism and Political Orthodoxy,” *Canadian Dimension*. (May-June 1998), 39-40.

Broder, Henryk M. “‘Ich bin sehr stolz’: Henryk M. Broder über Goldhagen, Vater und Sohn,” *Der Spiegel*. 21 (20 Mai 1996), 58-59.

Brownfeld, Allan C. “The Politicization of the Holocaust: Examining the Uses and Abuse of its Legacy,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. (Oct/Nov 1998), 47-49, 100.

Buruma, Ian. “History and Hollywood: The rush to rally for recognition of just how much everybody’s ancestors suffered means we’re losing sight of the real tragedies,” *The Toronto Star* (May 2, 1999), D15-17.

Chacon, Richard. “Holocaust Studies chair shelved at Harvard,” *The Boston Globe*. (March 25, 1998), A1.

Craig, Gordon A. “How Hell Worked,” *The New York Review of Books*. 43, 7 (April 18, 1996), 4-8.

Croitoru, Joseph. “Gegen Kitsch und Kommerz,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. (09 August 1996), 30.

Davies, Caroline. “The Words of a Killer—For the first time, a member of the Serbian paramilitary forces talks—both frankly and proudly—about taking part in the bloody conflict of Kosovo,” *The National Post* (June 18, 1999), B6-7.

Freeman, Clive. “Daniel Goldhagen says some German critics have misread his book,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*. (06 September 1996; dateline Berlin).

Frei, Norbert. “Ein Volk von Endlösern? Daniel Goldhagen bringt eine alte These in neuem Gewand,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. (13 April, 1996).

Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. “A New Serbia,” *The New Republic*. 220, 20 (May 17, 1999), 16-18.

Griffiths, Lyndsay. “The thrill of the kill is put back into war stories: Most soldiers find a way to enjoy being in the front lines,” *The National Post*. (June 29, 1999), A17.

Heneghan, Tom. “U.S. Holocaust writer admits faults to Germans,” *Reuters North America Wire Ltd*. (September 5, 1996; dateline Hamburg).

- "Hitler's Willing Executioners: An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books*. 43, 09 (May 23, 1996), 52.
- "Holocaust als Andachtsbild," *Der Spiegel*. 46 (10 November 1997), 266-67.
- "If all were guilty, none were," *The Economist*. (April 27, 1996), 91-92.
- Ignatieff, Michael. "The hour of truth for Serbia," *National Post*. (June 9, 1999), A12.
- Joffe, Josef. "Goldhagen in Germany," *The New York Review of Books*. 43, 19 (November 28, 1996), 18-21.
- Krausz, Tibor. "The Goldhagen Wars," *The Jerusalem Report*. (August 3, 1998), 26-28.
- Lizza, Ryan. "A Final Solution," *The New Republic*. 220, 19 (May 10, 1999), 28-29.
- Mangasarian, Leon. "German Jewish leader differs with Goldhagen," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*. (25 September 1996; dateline Bonn).
- Meier, Barry. "Holocaust-related lawsuits kindle demand for historians," *National Post*. (February 19, 1999), C14.
- Pulzer, Peter. "Psychopaths and Conformists, Adventurers and Moral Cowards," *London Review of Books*. 19, 2 (23 January 1997), 20-21.
- Roll, Evelyn. "Goldhagens Diskussionsreise: Der schwierige Streit um die Deutschen und der Holocaust. Eine These und drei gebrochene Tabus. Je mehr ihn seine Kritiker bedrängen, um so näher rückt der Wissenschaftler seinem Publikum—da ist einer, der die richtige Frage nach den Tätern stellt," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. (09 September 1996), 3.
- Ryan, Nigel. "Why man massacres: In Rwanda, the smell of death permeates the air," *The National Post* (June 16, 1999), A16.
- "Der Schutz des allmächtigen Autors: Wie Daniel Goldhagen mit seinen Kritikern verfährt," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. (04 November 1997), 41.
- Smith, Dinitia. "Challenging a View of the Holocaust," *The New York Times*. (April 01, 1996), 11.
- Spiegelman, Arthur. "Author defends controversial book on Germany," *Reuters North America Wire Ltd*. (June 13 1996; dateline New York).

----- "Holocaust Expert Cancels Talk," *Reuters North America Wire Ltd.* (May 7, 1996; dateline New York).

Stoffman, Judy. "'Ordinary Germans' get blame for Holocaust: A new book insists on an end to pussyfooting about who did the killing," *Toronto Star*. (January 25, 1997), F1.

Sullivan, Stacy. "Milosevic's Willing Executioners," *The New Republic*. 220, 19 (May 10, 1999), 26-35.

Tescher, Ellie. "War Crimes scholar treading turbulent water," *Toronto Star*. (30 January, 1997), 12.

"Ein Volk von Dämonen?" *Der Spiegel*. 21 (20 Mai 1996), 48-77.

White, Jeff. "Genocide's prehistoric roots: Traces of massacres, cannibalism, torture, slavery, abuse of women and human sacrifice are being found on Stone Age skeletons from around the world," *The National Post* (June 26, 1999), B7.

Zimmerman, Moshe. "Die Fußnote als Alibi, Daniel Jonah Goldhagens Studie *Hitlers Willing Executions*" *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. (29 April 1996), 24.

SOURCES FROM INTERNET WEBSITES:

Allen, Michael T. "A Very Qualified Defense of Goldhagen," (posted 17 May 1996) located at H-German site address <<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~german/discuss/goldhagen/gold13.html>>.

Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. "A Comment by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen on: *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*," located at <<http://www.goldhagen.com/csiz2.html>>; original posting.

----- "The Fictions of Ruth Bettina Birn," located at <<http://www.goldhagen.com/frbb2.html>>; A reworked version of the article that originally appeared in *German Politics and Society* 15, 3 (Fall 1997).

----- "Motives, Causes, Alibis: A Reply to my Critics," located at <http://www.goldhagen.com/mca2.html>>; Expanded version of reply to critics originally published in *The New Republic* 215, 26 (December 23, 1996), incorporating content of author's letter to *The New York Review of Books* 44,2 (February 6, 1997).

----- "The New Discourse of Avoidance," located at <<http://www.goldhagen.com/nda2.html>>; Expanded and revised version of an article that appeared in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (August 18, 1997).

Levy, Richard S. "Levy on 19th-C. Antisemitism," (posted 15 May 1996) located at H-German site address <<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~german/discuss/goldhagen/gold12.html>>.

Mitchell, Maria and Caldwell, Peter. "Symposium on Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*," (posted 11 April 1996) located at H-German site address <<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~german/discuss/goldhagen/gold5.html>>.

Schommer, Peter. "Goldhagen Debate & Role of Historians," (posted 30 April 1996) located at H-German site address <<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~german/discuss/goldhagen/gold11.html>>.

Wagner, Roland W. "Understanding Goldhagen: his moral agenda," (23 June 1996) located at H-German site address <<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~german/discuss/goldhagen/wagner.html>>.