



Was World War II the Result of Hitler's Master Plan?

YES: **Andreas Hillgruber**, from *Germany and the Two World Wars*, trans. William C. Kirby (Harvard University Press, 1981)

NO: **Ian Kershaw**, from *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Edward Arnold, 1993)

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: German scholar and history professor Andreas Hillgruber states that Hitler systematically pursued his foreign policy goals once he came to power in Germany and that World War II was the inevitable result.

NO: Ian Kershaw, a professor of history at the University of Sheffield, argues that Hitler was responsible for the execution of German foreign policy that led to World War II but was not free from forces both within and outside Germany that influenced his decisions.

Adolf Hitler and World War II have become inseparable in the minds of most people; any discussion of one ultimately leads to the other. Due to the diabolical nature of Hitler's actions and the resulting horrors, historical analyses of the war were slow to surface after the war. World War II was simply viewed as Hitler's war, and all responsibility for it began and ended with him.

This all changed in 1961 with the publication of A. J. P. Taylor's *The Origins of the Second World War* (Atheneum, 1985). Taylor extended the scope of World War II beyond Hitler and found British and French actions culpable. Furthermore, he stated that Hitler was more of an opportunist than an ideologue and that war was the result of misconceptions and blunders on both sides. His work was both praised for its openmindedness and condemned for its perceived apologetic attitude toward Hitler. Regardless of its mixed reception, it opened the origins of the war and Hitler's role to historical scrutiny.

Nowhere was this move more welcome than in Germany, where scholars and citizens had been forced to live with the Hitler legacy. Scholars began investigating the Nazi era and Hitler's role in it more openly, letting the chips fall where they would. In the 1980s this developed into a national debate known

as the *Historikerstreit* (historical quarrel or debate), and the result was a flood of new works raising several interesting and provocative questions. Were Hitler and Nazism an aberration, or did they reflect a tradition well established in German history? Can Hitler be held solely responsible for the war and its horrors, or were others culpable as well? Was Hitler master of the Third Reich or a fragmented reflection of it?

German historians were not the only ones to participate in this process. They were joined by historians from other countries, many of them British. Scholars such as Ian Kershaw, Tim Mason, and others began to reevaluate the origins of the war and the concomitant responsibility for it. Eventually, most of this scholarship was divided into two schools of thought: the intentionalists, who believed that the Third Reich and all that resulted from it emanated from Hitler's will; and the functionalists or structuralists, who saw Hitler as a product of the environment he helped to create and could not ignore when it was time to make major policy decisions. The intentionalists are represented by the scholarship of Ebbhard Jackel, Klaus Hildebrand, and Andreas Hillgruber; the functionalists by Tim Mason, Hans Mommsen, and Martin Broszat.

According to the intentionalists, despite international and national pressures on Hitler after his accession to power in 1933, the course of events that led to World War II was primarily planned and implemented by him. Surely there were times when things didn't work out according to his master plan. But in the words of eminent diplomatic historian Donald Cameron Watt in *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938-1939* (Pantheon Books, 1989, p. 619), "Always one returns to Hitler: Hitler exultant, Hitler vehement, Hitler indolent, Hitler playing the great commander... threatening, cajoling, and appealing to German destiny."

The structuralist response is more complex. Some, such as Mason, emphasize how socioeconomic pressures within 1930s German society influenced Hitler's decision-making process. Others, such as Mommsen, highlight the decentralized leadership system preferred by Hitler as a reason for the seemingly unplanned nature of his regime. Still others emphasize the lack of a coherent plan in much of the Third Reich, seeing Hitler an opportunist rather than a master planner.

Here we have chosen Hillgruber to represent the intentionalist side of the question, arguing that World War II was part of Hitler's grand scheme. Ian Kershaw offers a clear statement of the structuralist side of the debate in a work that synthesizes the two schools.

Germany and the Two World Wars

Hitler's Program

Hitler's conception of his future foreign policy developed in many stages between 1919 and 1928 before solidifying into a firm program, to which he then single-mindedly adhered until his suicide in the Reich Chancellery on April 30, 1945. What was at once decisive and totally novel in the formation of his program—and this must be stressed—was the complete permeation of originally crude Machiavellian objectives by the most radical variety of anti-Semitism. Although he drew on the theory of the worldwide Jewish conspiracy as propagated in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," widely distributed by White Russian immigrants in *völkisch* circles in Germany in 1919–1920, there were, in Hitler's case, crucial psychological factors. The wide-ranging political aims of Hitler's foreign policy were subordinated to a central goal: the eradication of the Jewish "archenemy."

The full scope and thrust of the foreign policy which Hitler had already set as his life's mission in the 1920s became clear only some time after the Second World War with the enrichment of our source materials, especially through the publication of Hitler's early speeches and his "Second Book" of 1928. This documentation made it possible to place the programmatic utterances of *Mein Kampf*, which previously had appeared fragmentary and unrelated to the actual practice of the Third Reich (at least in the years of peace) in the context of their origin and elaboration. In time it became clear how systematically Hitler had pursued his aims after the mid-1920s without, however, forfeiting any of his tactical flexibility. It emerged that the sentence printed in bold-face letters in *Mein Kampf*, "Germany will either be a world power or there will be no Germany," was, quite literally, the crux of Hitler's program.

In brief, his aim was this. After gaining power in Germany and consolidating his rule in Central Europe, he would lead the Reich to a position of world power in two main stages. First, he would set up a continental empire that would control all Europe with a solid economic and strategic power base in vast stretches of Eastern Europe. Then, by adding a colonial realm in Africa and by building a strong Atlantic-based navy, he would make Germany one of the four remaining world powers (after forcing out France and Russia), beside the British

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Empire, the Japanese sphere in East Asia, and (most important to Hitler's mind) the United States. He anticipated for the generation after his death a decisive struggle between the two leading world powers, Germany and America, for a sort of world dominion. For this violent confrontation in the future, a battle of continents, he wanted to create in his own time the necessary geopolitical basis (the "sphere of control") for the anticipated "Germanic Empire of the German Nation." Failing this, as Hitler saw the alternative, Germany would inevitably be condemned to insignificance in world politics.

In his "Second Book," Hitler rated American strength extremely high, albeit assuming that it would reach its apogee only around 1980. He therefore saw the unification of all Europe under his rule as imperative, and an alliance between this super-Germany and the British Empire as desirable in order to challenge America later. By contrast, he held Russian power in extraordinarily low esteem. He believed that a Germany shaped by racial principles need not fear a potential Russian world power, as they should fear the racially "high-grade" Americans. "These people," he wrote of the Russians at a crucial juncture in his "Second Book,"

live in a state structure whose value, judged traditionally, would have to be even higher than that of the United States. Despite this, however, it would never occur to anybody to fear Russian world hegemony for this reason. No such inner value is attached to the number of Russian people that this number could endanger the freedom of the world. At least never [like the United States] in the sense of an economic and political mastery of other parts of the globe, but at most in the sense of an inundation by disease bacilli which at the moment have their breeding ground in Russia.

The conquest of European Russia, the cornerstone of the continental European phase of his program, was thus for Hitler inextricably linked with the extermination of these "bacilli," the Jews. In his conception they had gained dominance over Russia with the Bolshevik Revolution. Russia thereby became the center from which a global danger radiated, particularly threatening to the Aryan race and its German core. To Hitler, Bolshevism meant the consummate rule of Jewry, while democracy—as it had developed in Western Europe and Weimer Germany—represented a preliminary stage of Bolshevism, since the Jews had there won a leading, if not yet a dominant influence. This racist component of Hitler's thought was so closely interwoven with the central political element of his program, the conquest of European Russia, that Russia's defeat and the extermination of the Jews were—in theory as later in practice—inseparable for him. To the aim of expansion per se, however, Hitler gave not racial but political, strategic, economic, and demographic underpinnings.

By what method was he to reach this goal, so fantastic from the standpoint of 1928, but brought so close to realization in the turbulent years from the beginning of 1938 to the end of 1941? To understand Hitler's method one must assume that in the development of his schemes, as later in their execution, he had already come to terms, in a complex manner, with the real and prewar Vienna period and postwar Munich years, the war provided the politician (and later commander-in-chief) Hitler with his formative experiences. It made him

recognize the impossibility of a German victory in a war where Germany was pitted against both the continental power, Russia, and the British Empire, let alone the two Anglo-Saxon sea powers. His memory was alive with the hopelessness of Germany's predicament surrounded by enemies in a Central European bastion—even one somewhat expanded by larger perimeters in east and west—in a world war in which the superior economic and armaments potential of the hostile coalition would ultimately tell. While holding firmly to Ludendorff's expansive principles of the latter phase of the First World War, Hitler linked these to considerations of power politics and geopolitical perspectives and drew his own unique conclusions.

In following a systematic foreign policy whose final prize was to be reached in several stages, the immediate objectives had always to be limited to a single direction of expansion. The net gain of these intermediate goals (seen in both military-economic and strategic terms, with an eye to the great war expected in the future) was to bring Germany into such a favorable situation that a repetition of the Reich's predicament in the First World War would be forever excluded. The basic hypothesis of the politically and ideologically decisive phase of this program, Germany's "break out" to the east, was that Germany would defer colonial and overseas ambitions in return for British recognition of German hegemony over continental Europe (including European Russia), with the United States standing aside. With his typical equation of political with territorial interests in all great power politics (which he understood in terms of "spheres of influence"), Hitler was incapable of foreseeing any conflict with British and American interests in this phase of his program for expansion. "England does not want Germany to be a world power; but France wants no power that is named Germany," he had maintained in *Mein Kampf*. "Today, however"—that is, the period of the Weimar Republic in the mid-1920s—"we are not fighting for a world power position." Thus, for this period of struggle "for the survival of the Fatherland" (as also for the following period of German expansion on the continent) he deemed an alliance with Great Britain possible and desirable. Furthermore—and this is crucial to an understanding of Hitler's practice of foreign policy from 1933 to 1941—the alliance was to take the form of a "grand solution" involving German dominance over the whole of continental Europe.

Hitler's ultimate aspiration in power politics, however, went well beyond this. To his mind, the achievement of German rule over continental Europe would itself provide the basis for a German position of world power. This position would then, in a new phase of imperialist expansion—with a view toward an ultimate war with America—be built by a strong German navy and a large colonial empire in Africa. If possible, this would be accomplished with England's acquiescence and at the expense of France, which was to be defeated before the conquest of the East.

The preliminary stage of the program, the winning of a broader base in Central Europe, was to be reached by gradual expansion of German territory and initially by peaceful means. Here the slogan "struggle against Versailles" and the exploitation of pan-German agitation in German Austria and the Habsburg successor-states provided the best opportunities to conceal the real, far

more extensive aims. When these means had been exhausted, further partial objectives would be won through localized wars, using a qualitatively superior army against one enemy at a time. In addition to the political gains, Germany's meager military-economic base would thus be broadened to such an extent that the German-ruled sphere could withstand a new world war even with a comprehensive economic blockade by the sea powers. But until that time Germany's position would be vulnerable and a great, long war was to be avoided at all costs.

Only when all of these steps had been taken would Germany no longer need fear the quantitative arms and economic superiority of the established world powers, including American potential. Germany's military-economic and geographical base area, an armaments program geared to superior quality, not quantity, and Hitler's conception of "lightning war" (*Blitzkrieg*) were all closely related central components of his method. If despite such obviously difficult preconditions all the premises proved valid, Hitler believed that he would succeed in creating an autarkic, blockade-proof, and defensible sphere that would grant Germany real autonomy (and not just formal sovereignty) for all time. In short, he would create a German world power to stand beside the other world powers.

In comparison with the German war goals developed during the First World War, Hitler's aims were radically simplified; moreover, the racial-ideological conclusions drawn in his program, which were directed to a complete transformation of Europe along racial principles, represented something entirely different. True, purely in terms of power politics and territory, the war goals of the latter part of the war were not so different from Nazi expansionist aims. But to Hitler, the prerequisite for the establishment and maintenance of German rule over Europe was the physical extermination of the Russian ruling stratum and its putative basis, the millions of Eastern European Jews. In National Socialist ideology, this prerequisite was grounded in the mythical link between Bolshevik rule and Jewry. It was to be following by the destruction of all Jews in the rest of continental Europe, subjugated, directly or indirectly, to German control. The diverse territories of the former Russian state were not merely, like the rest of continental Europe, to be brought into close dependence on Germany, but reduced to the level of colonies, to be exploited economically and settled by members of the ruling race. Colonialism, which in the imperialist era had been limited to overseas regions and suggestions of which had marked Germany's eastern policy in 1918 (and to a lesser extent the later Allied intervention in the Soviet Union), was now fully transferred to Europe.

These enormous schemes, and particularly their connection with racist ideology, were, to be sure, the program of a single individual. But in the case of such prominent provisions as the revision of the Versailles Treaty and the creation of a "Greater Germany," they overlapped with the aims of the old German leadership and the fantasies of a large part of the German public that had never assimilated the loss of the war. To this one must add, however, that the essence of Hitler's program "violated all traditions of German foreign policy and foresook all established standards and concepts to such a radical degree that it... did not penetrate the consciousness of the German public," despite its continual proclamation in his speeches from 1926 to 1930.

The experiences of the First World War had proved the impossibility of a German victory over a coalition of other great powers that, according to elementary rules of power politics, was almost certain to be formed in response to a German "break-out" to the east or west. Thus, only in an uncommonly narrow ideological perspective was it imaginable to achieve the ultimate objective of Hitler's program by taking on isolated enemies one by one and exploiting current and sometimes serious differences among the other European powers. This was unlikely to occur without the planned "duels" in the form of "lightning wars" provoking premature counter-actions on the part of other states and thus endangering an undesired, unwinnable general war.

Hitler's utterly unrealistic image of Russia can only be called mythical. It was devoid of any comprehension of the actual foundations of the Soviet system. He matched it with a one-sided idealized conception of England, in which only certain elements of British reality—the colonial and maritime traditions—were included. That component of British policy most important in respect to his program—Britain's interest in the continental European balance of power—was ignored. Any German foreign policy based upon such misconceptions was likely to fail fast unless uncommonly favorable conditions in international relations provided a lengthy period for illusory successes. This was precisely the case in the 1930s as, in contrast to the period before 1914, deep antagonisms between Britain and Russia granted Germany a relatively large space for maneuver.

Hitler's Foreign Policy and the Alignment of the Powers, 1933–1939

... While the other powers were uncertain in their attitudes toward the Third Reich, and despite several risks (the sudden withdrawal from the League [of Nations] on October 14, 1933, and the subversive activity of Austrian Nazis), Hitler was able, through unscrupulous and shifting tactics, to overcome the diplomatic isolation that threatened three times: in the autumn of 1933; in the summer of 1934, after the abortive Nazi coup in Vienna; and in the spring of 1935, following the declaration of German military sovereignty. With the conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of July 18, 1935, he finally won greater freedom of action in foreign policy. His room for maneuver abroad was considerably broadened thereafter by Italy's Abyssinian war of October 1935 to the summer of 1936 and by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936. The sanctions imposed against Italy by the League of Nations pushed Mussolini into Hitler's arms, while the course of the Spanish Civil War showed that England still perceived her conflict with the Soviet Union, which intervened in Spain, to be of greater consequence than her tensions with the German and Italian "Axis powers" also militarily engaged in Spain. France, however, no longer possessed the strength to realize her own divergent objectives. With the acceptance of Hitler's occupation of the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland on March 7, 1936, France was essentially reduced to following England's lead in foreign policy. ...

The year 1936 saw the transition from domestic German reconstruction to the actualization of Hitler's foreign program. Noteworthy in this process was how the floodlights of propaganda were directed at certain distant goals, while the immediate objectives remained in the dark. Before Hitler actually entered upon the first phase of his policy of open expansion in continental Europe, German propaganda already forecast the phase of winning world power. On March 7, 1936, Hitler, for the first time as Reich Chancellor, officially demanded the return of Germany's former African colonies. From then on, this was a recurrent theme in his speeches. Yet he drew back when the British government sought to start concrete colonial negotiations in 1937-1938; the hour for the African land-grab was supposed to strike only after continental hegemony had been won. On March 16, 1939, a day after the occupation of Prague and the creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Goebbels' instructions to the press hinted vaguely at the long-range aim: "Use of the term 'Greater German World Empire' is undesirable. The term 'World Empire' is reserved for later eventualities." Such a dominion, Himmler told S.S. group leaders on November 8, 1938, would be "the greatest empire that man ever established and the world ever saw."

The most important measure anticipating this last stage of Hitlerian foreign policy, taken on January 27, 1939, was the decision to build a powerful German high seas fleet. By 1944-1946, 10 capital ships, 3 battle cruisers, 8 heavy cruisers, 44 light cruisers, 4 aircraft carriers, 68 destroyers, 90 torpedo boats, and 249 submarines were to be built. With this decision, Hitler broke the 1935 Anglo-German Naval Agreement even before denouncing it officially on April 28, 1939, following England's March 31 guarantee of Polish independence. The decision to build a fleet over a long period had a political implication that Hitler acknowledged to the naval commander-in-chief, Admiral Erich Raeder: until the fleet was completed around 1945, risk of war with Britain had to be avoided at all costs.

The naval construction fit in with the planned sequence of Hitler's program as it had meanwhile been roughly fixed. In his secret memorandum of August 1936 on the Four Year Plan, Hitler reckoned that peaceful means for German expansion would be exhausted by 1940 at the latest. He therefore demanded that in four years' time "the German army be ready for action" and "the German economy capable of waging war." But these pronouncements should not be understood as Hitler's intention to unleash a general war in Europe in 1940. (The main stage of the continental European phase of his program, the conquest of European Russia, was planned for 1943-1945.) Rather, the military and economic measures taken in 1936 were designed to enable Hitler to exert "political pressure up to the threat of war" and pursue an "audacious policy of risk" in accomplishing the intermediate aims of the years 1938-1939. Consequently, a significant, if steadily diminishing, discrepancy always existed between German readiness for war as described in propaganda and the real level of armament achieved. On the basis of the general economic mobilization begun with the Four Year Plan of 1936, which represented a stage between a peacetime and a "total war" economy, Hitler meant to wage distinct, separately timed

"lightning wars" against one enemy at a time without bringing on a world war....

The phase of open expansion began in 1938-1939. Austria was incorporated into the Reich on March 13, 1938, followed by the Sudetenland after the Munich pact of September 29; the remainder of Czechoslovakia was dismantled on March 15, 1939. From the beginning of this phase, Hitler's basic problem was whether England would accept his step-by-step conquest of the entire continent or, from a certain point on, would intervene to oppose the unfolding of his program. Beginning in late 1937, warnings and misgivings about England's position came from a variety of sources. Some issued from those conservative forces of the German upper stratum (chiefly leading military figures) who, despite criticism of certain aspects of Nazi policy, had promoted Germany's resurgence under Hitler. These leaders supported a foreign policy of moderate territorial revisions in Europe that seemed to coincide with Hitler's aims, at least as represented in his public speeches after 1933. Their opposition was awakened when Hitler (with only a hint at the ultimate goals) revealed his program of expansion to the commanders of the armed forces and Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath on November 5, 1937....

Under the influence of [his chief foreign policy adviser Jaachim von] Ribbentrop, whom he made foreign minister on February 4, 1938, Hitler's political attitude toward Britain grew ambivalent. Although he never truly embraced Ribbentrop's foreign policy—it was, after all, the very opposite of his own—after mid-1938 Hitler no longer excluded the possibility of a conflict with England in an early phase of his program. Still, he continued to aspire to his "grand solution" of global Anglo-German compromise and to consider English neutrality attainable during the phase of German continental expansion. On Hitler's orders, the navy and air force began to plan in mid-1938 for a potential war with England, a contingency previously ignored. As, however, German rearmament had been geared solely to continental Europe, the military could only conclude that the technical prerequisites for victory over England would be lacking for several years.

At the end of March 1939, following the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the inclusion of Slovakia as a satellite in the German sphere, Hitler realized that he had exhausted his potential for peaceful expansion, particularly since his attempt to include Poland as a junior partner in the German-led continental bloc for the later drive to the East had now completely failed. Britain's guarantee of Polish independence on March 31, 1939, made this perfectly clear. With often divergent aims in mind, Hitler and Ribbentrop then turned all their efforts to the political isolation of Poland, now designated an enemy, and to her defeat in the localized war that was being prepared for September 1939....

Hitler, Stalin, and The British Government: August 1939

Even as the tactical shift toward an arrangement with the Soviet Union was in full swing, Hitler gave expression to the constancy of his aims in a conversa-

tion of August 11, 1939, with Carl J. Burckhardt, the High Commissioner of the League of Nations in the free city of Danzig: "Everything that I undertake is directed against Russia; if the West is too stupid and too blind to understand this, then I will be forced to reach an understanding with the Russians, smash the West, and then turn all my concentrated strength against the Soviet Union. I need the Ukraine, so that no one can starve us out again as in the last war." Poland, which Hitler had resolved since the spring to remove as an independent power, was no longer even an issue. By "smashing the West," Hitler meant the defeat of France and the elimination of all British influence on the continent; both aims were to be accomplished during the period of détente with Stalin, before the German march to the East. Hitler's argument that Germany had to rule a blockage-proof area hinted at the more distant future: the expected confrontation with the sea powers following the winning of the Ukraine.

The continuity of Hitler's far-reaching strategy is also visible in his hint of a "generous offer" to England of August 25, 1939, an offer to come in the period after Poland's fall. Apart from the tactical motive of having England stand aside during the Polish campaign, the initiative showed Hitler's continued desire for a "grand solution" whereby England would let Germany control the continent in return for a German guarantee of the British Empire. His rejection of the British proposals for compromise transmitted through [Helmuth] Wohlthat and [Hermann] Göring must be seen in the light of this announcement of his own "generosity" toward England.

On August 25, two days after the conclusion of the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, which Hitler expected to have a powerful effect on England, he told the British ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, that after the Polish question had been resolved, he would "approach England once more with a large and comprehensive offer." He was "ready to conclude agreements with England which... would not only guarantee the existence of the British Empire in all circumstances as far as Germany is concerned, but would also if necessary assure the British Empire of German assistance regardless of where such assistance should be necessary...."

Forced after September 3, 1939, to deal with the Western coalition, Hitler found himself hard pressed at an early stage of his program, not the least because the build-up of the German forces, particularly the navy, was by no means completed. He could escape his predicament only by rapid and risky military action. Far more than before, he now had to relate each step of his program to the political and strategic strengths of his present and potential enemies (above all the United States) if he were not to fall into ever greater difficulties.

Hitler's broad program of future expansion by stages had excluded any and all contingency planning for a European war against the Western powers before that war in fact broke out. Indeed, apart from the plan for the Polish campaign, there existed no general staff guidelines for future operations. Even in the summer of 1939, Hitler expressly ordered that the German High Command give no consideration to overall strategy in the event of war with the West. Rejecting the possibility that the situation of September 3 would result from his attack on Poland, Hitler had simply not given it the attention it required.

Only in one particular did Hitler gain from the European war having been ignited by the conflict with Poland. The German-Polish borders, as drawn by the Versailles Treaty of 1919 and the division of Upper Silesia in 1921, were felt to be intolerable by all political forces in Germany and indeed by the German people as a whole during the period of the Weimar Republic. There was a general demand for the revision of these frontiers, especially the return of Danzig and the elimination of the corridor separating East Prussia from the rest of the Reich. Hitler's 1934 pact with Poland was among the least acclaimed of his foreign policy successes in Germany. When he sought the "small solution" of revised boundaries with Poland, however, he gained the broadest consensus, and not just within his party. Even those leading military figures of the old conservative elite who had planned a coup against Hitler in the autumn of 1938, when the Sudeten crisis threatened to ignite a European war, saw his demands against Poland as justified. In addition, conservative diplomats and army leaders mistook the Hitler-Stalin pact for a renewal of Bismarck's Russian policy; from their historical standpoint, too, the defeat of the Polish state formed at Germany's and Russia's expense in 1919-1920, and the reestablishment of a German-Russian border in Poland, seemed desirable. Warsaw's strict refusal to negotiate revisions with Hitler was not understood in Germany. "We believe we will make quick work of the Poles, and, in truth, we are delighted at the prospect. That business *must* be cleared up." So wrote General Eduard Wagner, staff chief to the Army Quartermaster-General, to his wife on August 31, 1939. Wagner was anything but an uncritical supporter of Hitler; he was, on the contrary, one of the leaders of the officers' *fronde*.

With his tactic of making seemingly liberal offers to Poland, Hitler sought to arouse the impression that he was striving for "reasonable" border revisions so that the public would blame Polish intransigence for the war. The result was an enormous propaganda success within Germany and, to a certain degree, even abroad in the West—in France, for example, under the slogan, "*Mourir pour Danzig?*" Resonances of such a short-sighted view of the war's origins may be discerned today in the so-called revisionist historiography of David L. Hoggan, A. J. P. Taylor, and their German imitators in radical right circles. On August 29, however, Hitler had already decided the sequence of events of the next few days, in case a Polish negotiator should yet appear in Berlin. Army Chief of Staff General Franz Halder noted tersely and unequivocally in his diary: "August 30, Poles in Berlin. August 31, collapse of negotiations. September 1, use of force."

Yet the campaign against Poland that began on September 1 was a mere preliminary. In no sense was it *the* war that Hitler sought as the crucial stage in the realization of his program. To his mind, the European war that came on September 3 was as incomprehensible as it was contrary to his aims. The interests of France and England, he thought, were unaffected by the "clearing up" of a regional problem. Instead, they intervened to stop him.

Hitler's responsibility for the war would be quite insufficiently revealed by focusing exclusively on his role in unleashing the European war in August and September 1939. His decision for a second war, totally different in character, must be brought into the picture. This war began with the attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Only then did the Second World War truly begin.

Nazi Foreign Policy: Hitler's 'Programme' or 'Expansion Without Object'?

Several important aspects of German foreign policy in the Third Reich are still unresolved issues of scholarly debate. In this sphere too, however, interpretations—especially among West German scholars—have come to be divided in recent years around the polarized concepts of 'intention' and 'structure', which we have encountered in other contexts. Research in the GDR [German Democratic Republic] before the revolution of 1989–90 showed no interest in this division of interpretation, and proceeded on the basis of predictably different premises, concentrating on documenting and analysing the expansionist aims of Germany's industrial giants—a task which was accomplished with no small degree of success. Nevertheless, with all recognition of the imperialist aspirations of German capitalism, explanations which limit the role of Hitler and other leading Nazis to little more than that of executants of big business aims have never carried much conviction among western scholars. Conventional orthodoxy in the West, resting in good measure upon West German scholarship, has... tended to turn such explanations in their heads in advocating an uncompromising 'primacy of politics' in the Third Reich. And whatever the nuances of interpretations, Hitler's own steerage of the course of German aggression in accordance with the 'programme' he had outlined (for those with eyes to see) in *Mein Kampf* and the *Second Book* is generally and strongly emphasized. Parallel to explanations of the Holocaust, outright primacy is accorded to Hitler's ideological goals in shaping a consistent foreign policy whose broad outlines and objectives were 'programmed' long in advance.

Such an interpretation has in recent years been subjected to challenge by historians seeking to apply a 'structuralist' approach to foreign policy as to other aspects of Nazi rule—even if the 'structuralist' argument appears in this area to be on its least firm ground. Exponents of a 'structuralist' approach reject the notion of a foreign policy which has clear contours unfolding in line with a Hitlerian ideological 'programme' in favour of an emphasis upon expansion whose format and aims were unclear and unspecific, and which took shape in no small measure as a result of the uncontrollable dynamism and radicalizing momentum of the Nazi movement and governmental system. In this gradual

and somewhat confused process of development—as in the 'Jewish Question'—terms such as '*Lebensraum*' served for long as propaganda slogans and 'ideological metaphors' before appearing as attainable and concrete goals. Again, the *function* of Hitler's foreign-policy image and ideological fixations rather than his direct personal intervention and initiative is stressed. And rather than picturing Hitler as a man of unshakeable will and crystal-clear vision, moulding events to his liking in accordance with his ideological aims, he is portrayed as 'a man of improvisation, of experiment, and the spur-of-the-moment bright idea'. Any 'logic' or inner 'rationality' of the course of German foreign policy gains its appearance, it is argued, only teleologically—by looking at the end results and interpreting these in the light of Hitler's apparently prophetic statements of the 1920s....

Serious attempts to challenge this dominant orthodoxy which emphasizes the autonomy of Hitler's programmatic aims in determining foreign policy have come from a number of different directions. They might conveniently be fitted into three interlocking categories:

(i) Rejection of any notion of a 'programme' or 'plan in stages', denial of concrete and specific long-range foreign policy aims, and portrayal of Hitler as a man of spontaneous response to circumstances—not far removed from the image of the 'unprincipled opportunist'—with a central concern in propaganda exploitation and the protection of his own prestige.

(ii) The claim that Hitler was not a 'free agent' in determining foreign policy, but was subjected to pressures from significant élite groups (*Wehrmacht* leadership, industry etc.), from a variety of agencies involved in making foreign policy, from the demands of the Party faithful for action consonant with his wild promises and propaganda statements (with the corresponding need to act to maintain his Führer image), from the international constellation of forces, and from mounting economic crisis.

(iii) The view that foreign policy has to be seen as a form of 'social imperialism' an outward conveyance of domestic problems, a release from or compensation for internal discontent with the function of preserving the domestic order.

The most radical 'structuralist' approach, that of Hans Mommsen, returns in part, in its emphasis on Hitler's improvised, spontaneous responses to developments which he did little directly to shape, to the early view of the German Dictator as little more than a gifted opportunist. In Mommsen's view, 'it is questionable, too whether National Socialist foreign policy can be considered as an unchanging pursuit of established priorities. Hitler's foreign policy aims, purely dynamic in nature, knew no bounds: Joseph Schumpeter's reference to "expansion without object" is entirely justified. For this very reason, to interpret their implementation as in any way consistent or logical is highly problematic... In reality, the regime's foreign policy ambitions were many and varied, without clear aims, and only linked by the ultimate goal: hindsight alone gives them some air of consistency'—a danger implicit in such concepts as 'programme' or 'stage-by-stage plan'. According to Mommsen, Hitler's behaviour in foreign as in domestic and anti-Jewish policy was shaped largely—apart, that is, from the demands of the international situation—by considerations of prestige

and propaganda. Seen in this light, then, Nazi foreign policy was 'in its form domestic policy projected outwards, which was able to conceal (*überspielen*) the increasing loss of reality only by maintaining political dynamism through incessant action. As such it became ever more distant from the chance of political stabilization'.

A not dissimilar interpretation was advanced by Martin Broszat, who also saw little evidence of a design or plan behind Hitler's foreign policy. Rather, the pursuit of *Lebensraum* in the East—parallel to the case of anti-semitism—has, he argued, to be regarded as reflecting Hitler's fanatical adherence to the need to sustain the dynamic momentum he had helped unleash. In foreign policy this meant above all breaking all shackles of restraint, formal bonds, pacts or alliances, and the attainment of complete freedom of action, unrestricted by international law or treaty, in German power-political considerations. The image of unlimited land in the East, according with traditional mythology of German colonization, with utopian ideals of economic autarky, re-agrarianization, and the creation of a master-race, meant that *Lebensraum* (matching as it did also expansionist aims of the First World War) was perfectly placed to serve as a metaphor and touchstone for German power-politics in which, as in the 'Jewish Question' and by equally circuitous route, the distant symbolic vision gradually emerged as imminent and attainable reality. The absence of any clear thinking by Hitler before 1939 on the position of Poland, despite the fact that its geographical situation ought to have made it a central component of any concrete notions of an attack on the Soviet Union, is seen by Broszat as one example of the nebulous, unspecific, and essentially 'utopian' nature of Hitler's foreign policy goals. He reached the conclusion, therefore, that 'the aim of winning *Lebensraum* in the east had until 1939 largely the function of an ideological metaphor, a symbol to account for ever new foreign political activity'. Ultimately, for Broszat, the plebiscitary social dynamic of the 'Movement', which in the sphere of foreign policy pushed Hitler and the regime inexorably in the direction of turning the *Lebensraum* metaphor into reality, was, in its demand for ceaseless action, the only guarantee of any form of integration and diversion of 'the antagonist forces' in the Third Reich. As a consequence, it was bound to veer further and further from rational control, and to end in 'self-destructive madness'. And though Hitler remains indispensable to the explanation of developments, he ought not to be envisaged as an autonomous personality, whose arbitrary whim and ideological fixations operated independently of the social motivation and political pressures of his mass following.

Tim Mason's interpretation, ... can be regarded as a third variant of 'structural' approaches to Nazi foreign policy. In Mason's view, the domestic-economic crisis of the later 1930s greatly restricted Hitler's room for manoeuvre in foreign affairs and war preparation, and an inability to come to terms with the growing economic crisis forced him back on the one area where he could take 'clear, world-historical decisions': foreign policy. More recently, Mason again argued that the later 1930s bore more the hallmarks of confusion than of a programmatic line of development in Hitler's foreign policy. Mason's own emphasis on the 'legacy of 1918' and the compulsion this brought to bear on German foreign as well as domestic policy meant that for him—as in somewhat

different ways for Mommsen and Broszat—Nazi foreign policy and the war itself could be seen under the rubric of the 'primacy of domestic politics', as a barbarous variant of social imperialism....

Evaluation

There seems little disagreement among historians that Hitler did personally take the 'big' decisions in foreign policy after 1933. Even the most forceful 'structuralist' analyses accept that Hitler's 'leadership monopoly' was far more in evidence in the foreign-policy decision-making process than in the realm of domestic policy. There is less agreement, however, about the extent to which Hitler stamped a peculiarly personal mark on the development of German foreign affairs and whether 1933 can be seen to indicate a break in German foreign policy deriving from Hitler's own ideological pre-possessions and 'programme'. The question of the continuity or discontinuity of German foreign policy after 1933 lies, therefore, at the centre of the first part of our enquiry.

Whatever the differences in interpretation, there has been a general readiness since the publication of Fritz Fischer's work in the early 1960s to accept that Germany's expansionist aims form one of the continuous threads linking the Bismarckian and especially the Wilhelmine era with the Third Reich. The clamour for massive expansion and subjection of much of central and eastern Europe, as well as overseas territories, to German dominance was by the early years of the twentieth century not confined to a few extremists, but featured in the aspirations and propaganda of heavily supported and influential pressure groups. It was reflected during the war itself in the aims of the German High Command—aims which can certainly be seen as a bridge to Nazi *Lebensraum* policy. Defeat and the loss of territory in the Versailles settlement kept alive expansionist demands on the Right, and encouraged revisionist intentions and claims, which seemed legitimate to the majority of Germans. The popular success of Hitler in the foreign policy arena after 1933 was based squarely upon this continuity of a consensus about the need for German expansion which extended from the power élite to extensive sections of society (with the general exception of the bulk of the now outcast and outlawed adherents of the left-wing parties). This is the context in which the role of Hitler in the formulation of German foreign policy after 1933 has to be assessed.

The most significant steps in German foreign policy during the first year of Nazi rule were the withdrawal from the League of Nations in October 1933, and the reversals in relations with Russia and Poland which had taken place by the beginning of 1934. Obviously, these developments were not unconnected with each other. Together they represented a break with past policy which conceivably could have taken place under a different Reich Chancellor—say Papen or Schleicher—but which, at the same time, in the manner, timing, and speed it came about owed not a little to Hitler's own direction and initiatives.

In the decision to leave the Geneva disarmament conference and the League of Nations, not much more than the timing was Hitler's. The withdrawal was inevitable given the generally accepted commitment to rearmament (which would have been high on the agenda of any nationalist—revisionist

government in Germany at that time), and Hitler acted in almost total concert with leading diplomats, the army leadership, and the other dominant revisionist forces in the country.

In the case of Poland, Hitler played a greater role personally—initially in the teeth of the traditional foreign ministry line, against revisionists instincts, and against the wishes of Party activists in Danzig—in steering a new course of *rapprochement*. While Foreign Minister von Neurath, representing the traditional approach, argued at a Cabinet meeting in April 1933 that ‘an understanding with Poland is neither possible nor desirable’, Hitler was prepared to explore the possibilities of a new relationship with Poland, especially following initial feelers put out by the Polish government in April. The withdrawal from the League of Nations made a *rapprochement* more urgently desirable from the point of view of both sides. Again it was a Polish initiative, in November 1933, which accelerated negotiations. Agreement to end the long-standing trade war with Poland—a move which satisfied many leading German industrialists—was followed by a decision, taking up an original suggestion of Hitler himself, to embody the new relationship in a non-aggression treaty, which came to be signed on 26 January 1934. The Polish minister in Berlin wrote to his superiors in December that ‘as if by orders from the top, a change of front toward us is taking place all along the line’. While Hitler was by no means isolated in his new policy on Poland, and while he was able to exploit an obvious desire on Poland’s part for a *rapprochement*, the indications are that he personally played a dominant role in developments and that he was not thinking *purely* opportunistically but had long-term possibilities in mind. In a mixture of admiration and scepticism, the German ambassador in Bern, von Weizsäcker, wrote shortly afterwards that ‘no parliamentary minister between 1920 and 1933 could have gone so far’.

The mirror image of the changing relations with Poland in 1933 were those with the Soviet Union. After the maintenance during the first few months of Nazi rule of the mutually advantageous reasonably good relations which had existed since the treaties of Rapallo (1922) and Berlin (1926)—despite some deterioration even before 1933 and the anti-communist propaganda barrage which followed the Nazi takeover—Hitler did nothing to discourage a new basis of ‘natural antagonism’ towards the Soviet Union from the summer of 1933 onwards. This development, naturally conducive ideologically to Hitler and matching the expectations of his mass following, took place against the wishes both of the German foreign ministry and—despite growing fears and suspicions—of Soviet diplomats, too. When, however, suggestions came from the German foreign ministry in September 1933 for a renewed *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union, Hitler himself rejected it out of hand, stating categorically that ‘a restoration of the German-Russian relationship would be impossible’. In like fashion, and now supported by the opportunistic foreign minister von Neurath, he personally rejected new overtures by the Soviet Union in March 1934—a move which prompted the resignation of the German ambassador to the Soviet Union. In this case, too, Hitler had not acted autonomously, in isolation from the pressures within the Nazi Party and the ranks of its Nationalist partners for a strong anti-Russian line. But he had certainly been more than a cypher or a pure op-

portunist in shaping the major shift in German alignment, here as in relations with Poland.

More than any other sphere of foreign policy, Hitler's hand was visible in shaping the new approach towards Britain. As is well known, this was also the area of the most unmitigated failure of German foreign policy during the 1930s. The first major (and successful) initiative led to the bilateral naval treaty with Britain concluded in 1935. Hitler's personal role was decisive both in the formation of the idea for the treaty, and in its execution. Von Neurath thought the idea 'dilettante' and correspondingly found himself excluded from all negotiations and not even in receipt of the minutes. Hitler's insistence also carried the day on the nature of German demands, which were lower than those desired by the German navy. In the light of criticism to be heard in the foreign ministry and in the navy, signs of growing coolness towards the idea in Britain, and the absence of any notable influence from economic interest groups, an armaments lobby, or the *Wehrmacht*, Hitler's own part—and to a lesser extent that of Ribbentrop—was the critical factor. Hitler himself, of course, attached great importance to the treaty as a step on the way towards the British alliance he was so keen to establish.

The remilitarization of the Rhineland—and with it the breaking of the provisions of Versailles and Locarno—was again an issue which would have been on the agenda of any revisionist German government. The question was already under abstract discussion between the army and foreign ministry by late 1934, and before that Hitler had played with the idea of introducing a demand for the abolition of the demilitarized zone into the disarmament negotiations that year. The issue was revived by the foreign ministry following the ratification of the French-Soviet pact in May 1935, and Hitler mentioned it as a future German demand to the English and French ambassadors towards the end of the year. A solution through negotiation was by no means without prospect of success, and corresponded to the traditional revisionist expectations of Germany's conservative élites. Hitler's main contribution in this case was timing—he claimed he had been originally thinking in terms of a reoccupation in early 1937—and a decision for the theatrical coup of immediate military reoccupation rather than a lengthier and less dramatic process of negotiation. The opportunist exploitation of the diplomatic upheaval—which Hitler feared would be shortlived—arising from Mussolini's Abyssinian adventure was coupled with internal considerations: the need to lift popular morale, revitalize the sinking élan of the Party, and to reconsolidate the support for the regime which various indicators suggested had seriously waned by early 1936. Though a surprisingly large body of diplomatic and military 'advisers', along with leading Nazis, shared the secret planning for the reoccupation, the decision was Hitler's alone, and was taken after much worried deliberation and again in the face of coolness from the foreign ministry and nervousness on the part of the military. Jose Dülffer's conclusion, that 'Hitler was the actual driving force' in the affair, seems undeniable.

In the case of Austria, which along with Czechoslovakia had an intrinsic economic and military-strategic significance according with Nazi ideological expansionist ideas, early Nazi policy of supporting the undermining of the State from within was shown to be a disastrous failure, and was promptly ended, fol-

lowing the assassination of the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss in July 1934. The Austrian question thereafter took a subordinate place to the improvement of relations with Italy in foreign-policy thinking until the latter part of 1937. In the actual *Anschluss* crisis which unfolded in March 1938, it was Göring rather than Hitler who pushed the pace along—probably because of his interest in seizing Austrian economic assets and avoiding the flight of capital which a prolonged crisis would have provoked. Before the events of February and March 1938, the indications are that Hitler was thinking in terms of subordination rather than the outright annexation of Austria. In fact, he appears to have taken the decision for annexation only *after* the military invasion had occurred—characteristically, under the impact of the delirious reception he had encountered in his home town of Linz. While this points to Hitler's spontaneous, *reactive* decisions even in vitally important matters, and though the chain of developments in the crisis weeks again shows his opportunistic and *ad hoc* exploitation of favourable circumstances, it would be insufficient to leave it at that. The evidence suggests that Göring and Wilhelm Keppler, whom Hitler had placed in charge of Party affairs in Austria in 1937, both believed that Hitler was determined to move on the Austrian question in spring or summer 1938. Goebbels' diary entries also record Hitler speaking about imposing a solution by force 'sometime' on a number of occasions in August and September 1937, and of course Austria formed an important part of Hitler's thinking in November 1937, according to the notes which Colonel Hossbach made of the meeting with top military leaders. In this case too, therefore, Hitler had played a prominent personal role in determining the contours for action, even if his part in the actual events—which could not have been exactly planned or foreseen—was opportunistic, even impulsive.

The remaining events of 1938 and 1939 are sufficiently well known to be summarized briefly. The Sudeten crisis of summer 1938 again illustrates Hitler's direct influence on the course of events. Although traditional power politics and military-strategic considerations would have made the neutralization of Czechoslovakia a high priority for any revisionist government of Germany, it was Hitler's personal determination that he would 'smash Czechoslovakia by military action'—thereby embarking on a high-risk policy in which everything indicates he was not bluffing—that, because of the speed and danger rather than the intrinsic nature of the enterprise, seriously alienated sections of the regime's conservative support, not least in the army. Only the concessions made to Hitler at the Munich Conference deflected him from what can justifiably be regarded as *his* policy to wage war *then* against Czechoslovakia. As is well known, it was Hitler—learning the lessons of Munich—who rejected any alternative to war in 1939, whereas Göring, the second man in the Reich, attempted belatedly to defer any outbreak of hostilities.

Our first set of questions about Hitler's influence on the making of decisions in foreign policy has met with a fairly clear response—and one which would be further bolstered if we were to continue the survey to embrace foreign, strategic, and military affairs during the war years. Whereas in domestic matters Hitler only sporadically intervened in decision-making, and in anti-Jewish policy, which was ideologically highly conducive to him, felt unwilling

for prestige reasons to become openly involved, he showed no reluctance to unfold new initiatives or to take vital decisions in the field of foreign policy. In some important areas, as we have seen, he not only set the tone for policy, but pushed through a new or an unorthodox line despite suspicion and objections, particularly of the foreign ministry. There is no sign of any foreign-policy initiative from any of the numerous agencies with an interest in foreign affairs which could not be reconciled with—let alone flatly opposed—Hitler's own thinking and intentions. Evidence of a 'weak dictator' is, therefore, difficult to come by in Hitler's actions in the foreign-policy arena.

Any 'weakness' would have to be located in the presumption that Hitler was the captive of forces limiting his ability to take decisions. Certainly there were forces at work, both within and outside Germany, conditioning the framework of Hitler's actions, which, naturally, did not take place in a vacuum as a free expression of autonomous will. The pressures of foreign-policy revisionism and rearmament, for instance, which would have preoccupied any German government in the 1930s and demanded adjustments to the international order, developed in the years after 1933 a momentum which substantially restricted Germany's options and ran increasingly out of control. The arms race and diplomatic upheaval which Germany had instigated, gradually imposed, therefore, their own laws on the situation, reflected in Hitler's growing feeling and expression that time was running against Germany. Built into Germany's accelerated armaments production were additional economic pressures for German action, confirming the prognosis that war would have to come about sooner rather than later. The nature of his 'charismatic' authority and the need not to disappoint the expectations aroused in his mass following also constrained Hitler's potential scope for action. Finally, of course, and most self-evidently of all, the relative strength and actions of other powers, and strategic-diplomatic considerations imposed their own restrictions on Hitler's manoeuvrability—though these restrictions diminished sharply in the immediate pre-war years.

Hitler's foreign policy was, therefore, in no way independent of 'structural determinants' of different kinds. These, however, pushed him if anything still faster on the path he was in any case determined to tread. When all due consideration is given to the actions—and grave mistakes—of other governments in the diplomatic turmoil of the 1930s, the crucial and pivotal role of Germany as the active catalyst in the upheaval is undeniable. Many of the developments which took place were in certain respects likely if not inevitable as the unfinished business of the First World War and the post-war settlement. The continuities in German foreign policy after 1933 are manifest, and formed part of the basis of the far-reaching identity of interest—certainly until 1937–8—of the conservative élites with the Nazi leadership, rooted in the pursuit of a traditional German power policy aimed at attaining hegemony in central Europe. At the same time, important strands of discontinuity and an unquestionable new dynamism were also unmistakable hallmarks of German foreign policy after 1933—such that one can speak with justification of a 'diplomatic revolution' in Europe by 1936. Hitler's own decisions and actions, as we have seen, were central to this development. . . .

Our survey of differing interpretations of Hitler's contribution to shaping domestic, anti-Jewish, and foreign policy in the Third Reich is now completed. In each case, we have argued, Hitler's 'intentions' and impersonal 'structures' are both indispensable components of any interpretation of the course of German politics in the Nazi State. And there is no mathematical formula for deciding what weighting to attach to each factor. We have seen that Hitler shaped initiatives and personally took the major decisions in foreign policy, though this was less frequently the case in domestic affairs or even in anti-Jewish policy. In domestic matters his uneven intervention was usually prompted by varied and often conflicting requests for his authorisation for legislative or executive action; in the 'Jewish Question' his main contribution, consisted of setting the distant target, shaping the climate, and sanctioning the actions of others; in foreign policy he *both* symbolized the 'great cause' which motivated others *and* played a central role personally in the course of aggression. Hitler's ideological aims were one important factor in deciding the contours of German foreign policy. But they fused for the most part in the formulation of policy so inseparably with strategic power-political considerations, and frequently, too, with economic interest that it is usually impossible to distinguish them analytically. And alongside Hitler's personality, the *function* of his Führer role was also vital to the framing of foreign policy and determining the road to war in its legitimization of the struggle towards the ends it was presumed he wanted. It legitimized the self-interest of an army leadership only too willing to profit from unlimited rearmament, over-ready to engage in expansionist plans, and hopeful of a central role for itself in the State. It legitimized the ambitions of a foreign office only too anxious to prepare the ground diplomatically for upturning the European order, and the various 'amateur' agencies dabbling in foreign affairs with even more aggressive intentions. It also legitimized the greed and ruthlessness of industrialists only too eager to offer plans for the economic plunder of much of Europe. Finally, it provided the touchstone for the wildest chauvinist and imperialist clamour from the mass of the Party faithful for the restoration of Germany's might and glory. Each of these elements—from the élites and from the masses—bound in turn Hitler and the Nazi leadership to the course of action, gathering in pace and escalating in danger, which they had been partly instrumental in creating. The complex radicalization, also in the sphere of foreign policy, which turned Hitler's ideological dreams into living nightmares for millions can, thus, only inadequately be explained by heavy concentration on Hitler's intentions divorced from the conditions and forces—inside and outside Germany—which structured the implementation of those intentions.



POSTSCRIPT

Was World War II the Result of Hitler's Master Plan?

At first glance this debate may seem to be germane only to historians. But it is an important issue with wide ramifications, and many questions may have significance for the future. In *From Weimar to Auschwitz* (Princeton University Press, 1991), Hans Mommsen states: "The fact that Germany—a civilized and highly developed industrial society—rampaged violently out of control has political implications for us today, and it would be wrong to hide these behind a facade that isolates Hitler as the sole and root cause of it all. How Hitler could succeed in securing various degrees of support from considerable sections of the German population must be explained in this context." If Mommsen is correct, can Third Reich experiences be reproduced elsewhere without the a "madman" to make them happen?

The parameters of this debate have also entered into the world of Holocaust historiography, where scholars have developed their own intentionalist/structuralist debate. To them the major question is, "To what extent was Hitler personally responsible for the organization and implementation of the final solution?" Once again, the significance of the answer is inestimable. If the Holocaust cannot be laid solely on Hitler's doorstep, what can we anticipate about the horrors of the future? Perhaps recent events in Kosovo can give us insights into this question.

There are so many books about Hitler, the Nazi era, World War II, and all that resulted from it that any attempt to list sources is daunting. Although the following list speaks directly to the issue's question, many important works must still be omitted. For the intentionalist side, see Klaus Hildebrand's *The Third Reich* (George Allen & Unwin, 1984), Eberhard Jackel's *Hitler In History* (University Press of New England, 1984), and Geoffrey Stoakes's *Hitler and the Quest for World Domination* (St. Martin's Press, 1986). For structuralist arguments see Mommsen's *From Weimar to Auschwitz* (Princeton University Press, 1991), Martin Broszat's *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich* (Longman, 1981), and Jane Caplan, ed., *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class: Essays by Tim Mason* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Kershaw's *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (W. W. Norton, 1998) offers a fresh look at the twentieth-century's most written-about man. A second volume of the biography is expected, and it may shed new light on the subject of this issue.