

WHY DAY FOLLOWS NIGHT

The Scholarly Way of Thinking of Daniel Goldhagen ¹

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“Comment être encore Allemand ? ... La seule réponse à faire à ce crime est d'en faire un crime de tous. De le partager. De même que l'idée d'égalité, de fraternité. Pour le supporter, pour en tolérer l'idée, partager le crime.” - DURAS, p. 60-61 ².

HITLER'S WILLING EXECUTIONERS IS A PERSUASIVE BOOK : WELL COMPOSED, RHETORICALLY STRONG, MOVINGLY WRITTEN, FULL OF STILL UNIMAGINABLE ATROCITIES, WITH INNUMERABLE SOURCE REFERENCES AND NOTES, ARGUED IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN INTELLIGENT AND SCHOLARLY WAY. IT HAS APPEALED TO AND HAS MOVED MANY PEOPLE. ANYONE WHO EXAMINES IT MORE CLOSELY, WHO KNOWS THE SOURCES AND THE RELEVANT SPECIALIST LITERATURE OR WHO FAMILIARIZES HIMSELF WITH IT, WILL QUICKLY BECOME AWARE THAT THIS CONTROVERSIAL STUDY IS ERRONEOUS FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW, EVEN IN THE FORMULATION OF ITS KEY QUESTION.

The key question

Goldhagen calls his study a radical revision of what has been written to date on the Holocaust, claiming that the revision was necessary to explain *why* the Holocaust occurred (pp. 5, 9). The interrogative adverb *why* is not without significance. This key question is preceded by the following reasoning : The *Judeocide* ³ was the defining and central feature of Germany and the Germans during the whole Nazi period, this is why so many Germans took part in it. This is what must be explained, nothing else. In comparison with it all the other problems are relatively simple : “How the Nazis came to power, how they suppressed the left, how they revived the economy, how the state was structured and functioned, how they made and waged war are all more or less ordinary, ‘normal’ events, easily enough understood” - all easy to answer ‘how ?’ questions. The Judeocide, on the other hand, an unprecedented event in modern European history, is a rupture and appears inexplicable. People have tried in vain to explain *how* the Holocaust happened. Some have accordingly concluded that it really is inexplicable ⁴. This is incorrect, the question has been wrongly put; you must explain “*why* the Holocaust occurred” (p. 4-5). Goldhagen’s revision “calls for us to acknowledge what has for so

1 Translated from the Dutch by Robert Legrève.

2 Marguerite Duras wrote this about the destruction of the European Jews in her diary on 28 April 1945, while she waited, sick with worry, for news of her husband (Jean Antelme) who had disappeared into the concentration camps (Jean Antelme survived and wrote *L'espèce humaine* about his camp experiences).

3 As the destruction of the European Jews should be called (first proposed by Arno MAYER, p. vii). *Holocaust*, *Shoah* and *Churban* are in fact biblical terms with strong religious connotations.

4 This unjustified generalization, without any reference to sources or argumentation, is typical of the rest of Goldhagen’s case. Again and again he trivializes all scholarly research prior to his own. Some scholars, in particular theologians and philosophers, have indeed suggested that the Judeocide is inexplicable but many others have given clear scholarly explanations. For a summary overview of this problem and source references, see VAN DEN BERGHE-1990, p. 149-152.

long been generally denied or obscured by academic and non-academic interpreters alike : Germans' anti-Semitic beliefs about Jews were the central causal agent of the Holocaust" (p. 9).

Goldhagen's revision is as remarkable as it is presumptuous. His point of departure is a 'why?' question, not 'how?', 'what?' or 'as a result of what?'. 'Why?' questions search for reason, purpose, aim, intention or motive. These are useful questions, certainly where people are involved, and therefore also in historiography. However, exclusive 'why?' questions, all other questions being rejected as sterile (because they lead to an 'inexplicable' Holocaust), are often misleading. 'Why?' questions are less open than is generally supposed, they are specific causal questions. Implicitly at least they look for human (or divine) causes, interventions, choices of free will. They personalize and intentionalize the phenomenon they are inquiring into. Accordingly they restrict the number of possible answers and explanations. They are incomplete questions, which do not ask about the hows and the wherefores.

Before Darwin people in the West only asked why so many different species of plants and animals existed. And so they were inevitably drawn to divine or religious causes, plans and designs, Nature for instance. This example also highlights a difference. Nature and evolutionary differentiation are without volition. But with the slaughter of the Jews there were of course human intentions at work. Many perpetrators wished to kill, did so with dedication or were unaffected by it. This of course does not mean, as the intentionalists would have it, that the Judeocide arose out of, was produced by an intention established a long time before, by a resolutely anti-Semitic will. Human intentions, aspirations and objectives change with time, as do people themselves and the situations in which they find themselves or end up in. The exclusive asking of 'why?' questions reduces reality to only one sort of causality. They inquire about a partially familiar road, mislead or lead to what cannot be answered. The question is not why bananas are bent (the equivalent in Dutch of 'Why day follows night') but 'as a result of what?', 'how does that come about?'⁵ Plants which turn towards sunlight do so without volition. In cells which receive a lot of light a certain growth regulator is shut down or moved to cells which receive less light. In this way the latter grow longer than the more strongly lit cells and so the plant 'turns' towards the sun⁶. 'Why?' questions

5 There is an Antwerp joke that bananas are bent because 'they are beaten crooked at the docks', punning on the figurative meaning 'dishonest appropriation'. A banal example perhaps, but it illustrates how 'why?' questions lead one to human causality.

6 This is broadly also the reason why bananas grow curved. It is important to realize that bananas which curve (not all sorts do) are growing upwards at that moment. The stalk (inflorescence) gradually gives way under the weight of the increasingly heavy but still upright bananas and the bunch comes to hang upside down, so that the bananas are standing on their heads and their inner sides get more light. With thanks to biologists Paul De Ley and Dirk De Waele (Laboratory for Tropical Plantbreeding, KULeuven), without whom I would never have fully disentangled all this.

are an everyday example of the fact that the way in which questions are formulated can to a great extent determine and limit the answer(s) one finds ⁷.

“No Germans, no Holocaust”

Exclusively asking ‘why?’ about a historical phenomenon reduces it to human (or divine) causes. It is assessed only with regard to purposes, intentions and choices of free will. If you also exclude, as Goldhagen does, the possibility that there may be several and changing intentions, you limit the answer to “one motivational cause, a completely independent variable” ⁸. You inquire about the familiar road and end up with what was already in the question : a sustained intention, extreme personalizing of the causation. In other words, Goldhagen begs the question.

Goldhagen’s question and answer have it that the German perpetrators did not murder under pressure or reluctantly; all Germans were at least potentially willing executioners. The Judeocide resulted from a specifically German sort of anti-Semitism that had existed long before National Socialism. It was a *sui generis* event; “the long-incubating, pervasive, virulent, racist, eliminationist anti-Semitism of German culture, which was mobilized by a criminal regime beholden to an eliminationist, genocidal ideology [elected by the German people, he slyly adds elsewhere ⁹], and which was given shape and energized by a leader, Hitler, who was adored by the vast majority of the German people, a leader who was known to be committed wholeheartedly to the unfolding, brutal eliminationist program” (p. 419) ¹⁰. The Germans “could finally unleash themselves without restraint upon the Jews” (p. 188), they were “treating the Jews according to their own inwardly held standards, which they could apply as they wished, for they clearly had been granted the autonomy to make life-and-death decisions” (p. 193) ¹¹. Goldhagen unmasks Germany and the Germans ¹². Eliminationist anti-Semitism had for centuries been at the heart of German culture and society. All Germans were inspired by it. The genocidal programme, the *Endlösung* (the Final Solution), was part of the German cultural-

7 See with regard to this VAN DEN BERGHE-1996b.

8 GOLDHAGEN, p. 416-417, 419.

9 For example on p. 87, the conclusion (third paragraph) of his laborious and tendentious reasoning about some ballot-box results of the National Socialist party.

10 I have chosen Goldhagen’s most qualified description. Elsewhere he minimizes the role of state and *Führer*, reducing them to simple instruments of the German people.

11 Goldhagen writes this (on p. 188 and 193 respectively) about the men of the Police Battalions. Since he ‘explains’ their atrocities by ascribing them to their being German, to the fact that they were ordinary Germans, representative of the German people (see for example bottom of p. 128), this may be extended in a presentation of his ‘theory’ to more or less all Germans, the Germans.

12 “The camp world taught its victims firsthand lessons and therefore teaches us secondhand lessons about the essential nature of Germany during the Nazi period. The camp system exposes not just Nazism’s but also Germany’s true face” (GOLDHAGEN, p. 460).

cognitive model of the Jew. The Judeocide was a potentiality of German culture, “a pre-existing genocidal potential that inhered in Germans’ eliminationist anti-Semitism, and therefore in Germans themselves...”¹³ Nazi Germany was just the incarnation of this eliminationist ideology. The entire regime and society were directed at the persecution and annihilation of the Jews. All Germans who got the chance to make a contribution did so enthusiastically¹⁴. Without them Hitler would never have succeeded. Had he come to power in another country, his policy vis-à-vis the Jews would not have had the ghost of a chance. The anti-Semitism of the Germans was “a necessary and sufficient cause” for mass participation in persecution, massacre and atrocity. Anyone who wishes to comprehend and explain the perpetration of this genocide “requires an explanation of the *Germans’* drive to kill Jews”. Again and again Goldhagen reiterates these drastic positions¹⁵. Only in the endnotes are they sometimes toned down a little, just to be laid on thickly again later in the text and in other notes.

Goldhagen goes a step further in the direction of what the philosopher Henri Bergson has called the illusion of ‘retrospective determinism’, the seductive conviction that what finally happened had to happen. Goldhagen extends the immutable intention, which is usually ascribed only to Hitler and/or other Nazi bosses¹⁶, to all Germans, at the time and in a more distant past. This is extreme intentionalism¹⁷.

Crucial to the tenability of Goldhagen’s position is the question whether a separate, specifically German form of anti-Semitism exists, in which genocide is inherent and which in this respect differs from all other forms. Do forms of anti-Semitism or racism exist where people do not wish to be rid of the ‘other’? Is protection against the ‘other’ not rather characteristic of, proper to racism? Does it not always potentially include the wish to eliminate the other person, ‘to get him out of the way’? Do not intolerance towards others and the requirement of total assimilation come down to much the same thing? And does it not depend on social, economic and political factors and circumstances if this drive to eliminate sometimes escalates, can be translated into

13 *Id.*, p. 126-128.

14 *Id.*, p. 377-378.

15 For example on p. 6 and p. 416-418.

16 A recent but hitherto unnoted example of sustained intentionalism is *Objectif extermination* by Miedzianagora and Jofer.

17 It is certainly not original, rather a step backwards. During and directly after the war, many people were convinced, in Allied circles at any rate, that everything had long been planned beforehand. In the indictment formulated at the Nuremberg trial there was an explicit mention of a gigantic plot, designed by the Nazi Party. Analogous in form, this is in content the opposite of Goldhagen’s thesis. The German people were exonerated, as it were, at Nuremberg. In the mid-seventies Lucy Dawidowicz defended a position which broadly corresponds with that of Goldhagen. According to Dawidowicz, a Jewish historian, the German people thirsted after a war against the Jews: “National Socialism was the consummation towards which the omnifarious anti-Semitic movements had striven for 150 years” (DAWIDOWICZ, p. 77). “Generations of anti-Semitism had prepared the Germans to accept Hitler as their redeemer” (*Id.*, p. 209).

atrocities, particularly in a dictatorial regime? Goldhagen does not at all ask himself the question. One time only does he call the Nazi regime criminal and dictatorial, only immediately to stress that the German people chose it, that anyway the will of the people was carried out. For the rest it appears largely to escape this political scientist that Nazi Germany was a dictatorship. Implicitly he even treats the German dictatorship and the German democracy (Weimar) as equals¹⁸.

As well as in his formulation of the question (the 'why?' question), Goldhagen's prejudiced paradigm is also reflected in his conceptual template, thinking and choice of words. Take the concept 'eliminationist anti-Semitism'. To eliminate is to remove, get rid of, expel¹⁹. In English (and in other languages) it also means to murder. So intentionalism is already present in his terminology. The inaccuracy and ambivalence of this key concept, devised by him, suits Goldhagen well. He can call all Germans, both earlier and in the first half of the twentieth century, eliminationist anti-Semites without saying if he means hatred or extermination of the Jews²⁰. Anyway, as far as the Germans are concerned they are each others corollaries. Intentionalism also finds expression in the continual personalizing and moralizing. Goldhagen never talks about German deeds, attitudes or beliefs, i.e. deeds (and so on) by particular Germans; no, he always talks about Germans' deeds and beliefs ('the Germans' genocide' for example).

One looks in vain in his book for anything other than psychological explanations. No questions about possible economic, social or political causes, about the specific historic state of affairs which preceded and accompanied this German genocide, about the role of Hitler or the dictatorship. In Goldhagen's eyes they simply executed the will of the German people, the Nazi regime "tapped a German potentiality"²¹. The destruction of the Jews is purely the consequence of specific German cognitions, values and convictions. Goldhagen's epilogue begins with the contention that he "reverses the Marxian dictum, in holding that consciousness determined [sic] being"²².

18 "Regarding Germany during the Nazi period and its crimes, the argument is made, often reflexively as though it were an axiomatic truth, that Germans are particularly obedient to state authority. This argument cannot be sustained. The very people, Germans, who supposedly were slavishly devoted to the cult of the state and to obedience for obedience's sake, were the same people, Germans, who battled in the streets of Weimar in defiance of existing state authority and often in order to overthrow it [Note 14]. In light of this, it can hardly be maintained that Nazis or Germans regarded all state orders as sacred commands and believed that they were to be carried out unconditionally, regardless of their content" (GOLDHAGEN, p. 381-382). In Note 14 Goldhagen refers to a study about the Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany, 1918-1923, "a movement that was later to supply many shock troops who would serve Hitler" ! (p. 579).

19 It is derived from the Latin *eliminare*, 'over the threshold': to show one the door.

20 For example on p. 510n173.

21 GOLDHAGEN, p. 15.

22 *Id.*, p. 455.

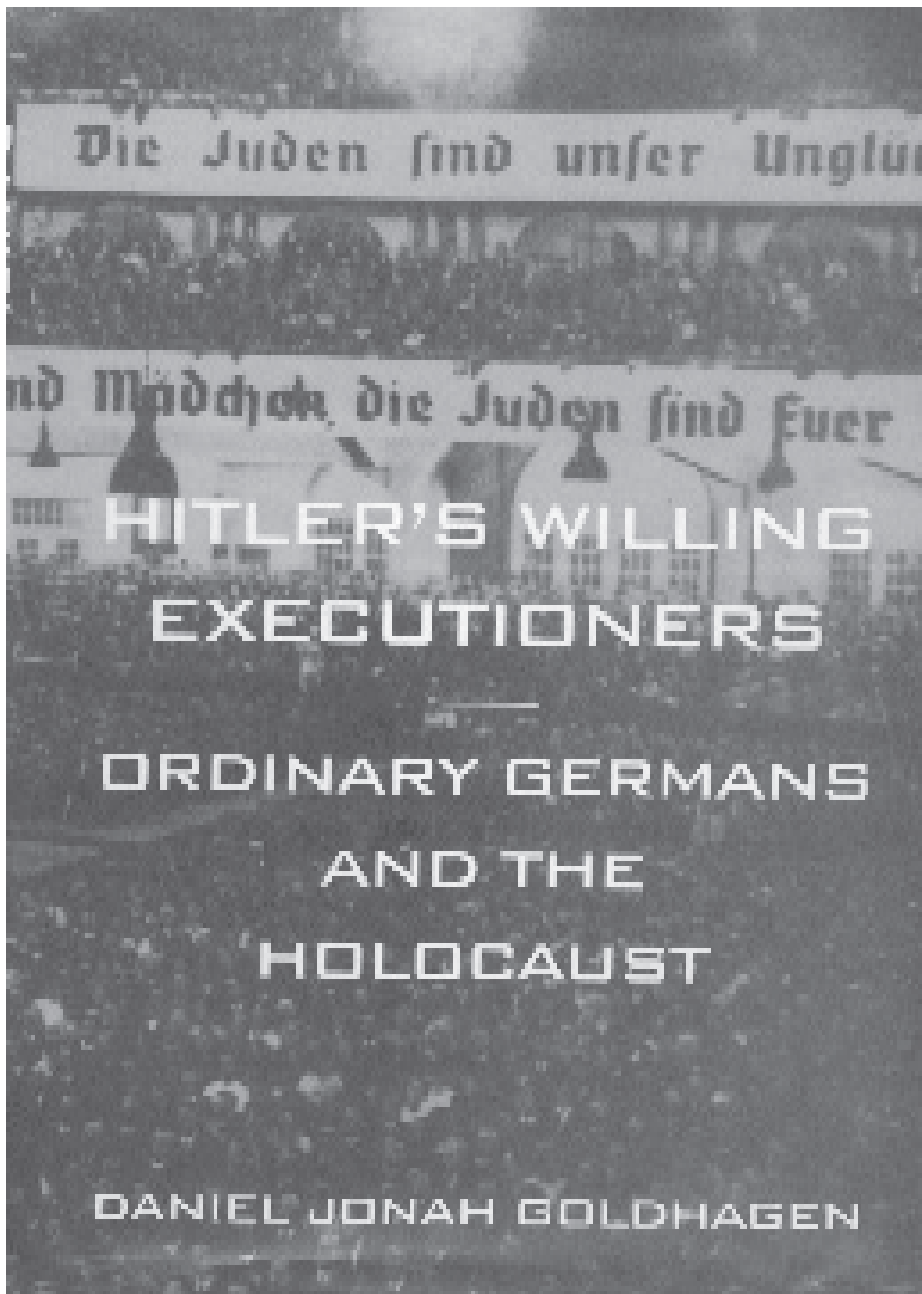
Goldhagen moralizes more than he analyses. This is also evinced in his expressly voluntaristic interpretation of human freedom and free will. A human being is free or he is not, wills something or does not will it; whoever does something wills it, whoever wills something does it. From a view wherein all deeds are seen as rational volitions Goldhagen argues that 'the Germans', of their own free will, zealously and with dedication, gave themselves over to atrocities against Jews. It came out of themselves, they wanted to persecute, maltreat and slaughter Jews. That was their motivation²³. This is also why Goldhagen minimizes and trivializes Nazi indoctrination, terror and intimidation (of others than Jews). As far as the Germans are concerned, he knows no gradations : liberalization or discrimination, democracy or dictatorship; apathy, indifference, accommodation, collaboration, opposition... for Goldhagen it is all six of one and half a dozen of the other.

Voluntarism is contained in the very title of this book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. In the Dutch translation, *Hitlers gewillige beulen*, the voluntaristic aspect is some-what less evident. In this way Goldhagen's main position is toned down a little, *gewillig* is something other than 'to will'. Admittedly, the denotation and connotations of the English word 'willing' are not easily translatable. *Bereidwillig* and *gewillig* mainly give the idea of compliance or obedience, something less than what Goldhagen intends : Germans wanted to kill Jews. *Vrijwillige moordenaars* (voluntary murderers) or *willende beulen* (willing henchmen or... executioners) would have been a closer approximation. Moreover in the Dutch version the important subtitle, *Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, has also been omitted : it was ordinary Germans who wanted the Holocaust. The different photographs on the covers point in the same direction. On the American and English edition we see an anti-Semitic mass meeting from 1935, with banners on which one can read that Jews are our misfortune. The Dutch edition limits itself to a photo of an accompanying crowd greeting Hitler enthusiastically as he rides past.

Anno Goldhagen

Goldhagen's intentionalistic and voluntaristic revision (an approach which is as limited as it is limiting) is based on the conviction, repeated *ad nauseam* and probably sincerely held, that with the exception of his father until now nobody has understood the Judeocide. His revision also obliges him over and over again to redefine historic and scientific concepts and interpretations. Goldhagen cuts history to the measure of his hypothesis, reduces it to his intentionalistic approach, reduces it to his answer, bends reality to suit the curve of his thought. These are grave charges but not indictments. I

²³ Id., p. 14, 19-20, 277, 280, 378, 399.



• Jacket of the American and English edition of Goldhagen's book.

do not suspect Goldhagen of intentional, wilful falsification or manipulation of history. On the contrary, I am convinced that it all results from a genuine blindness or obsession which hides a good part of the reality, facts and sources from him.²⁴

The perpetrators, says Goldhagen, have been insufficiently and badly studied. Their lives must be fathomed and unearthed²⁵. We must focus our attention on them, imagine ourselves performing their deeds, see what they beheld²⁶. Many have already drawn attention to the necessity of looking through the eyes of the perpetrators²⁷. In order to understand how frightful it was and fully to comprehend that it may never happen again, you must consult the victims. But if you want to understand how things got this far, the deeds must be reconstructed from the perspective of the perpetrators. But this is not at all Goldhagen's intention. He does not study the perpetrators, does not describe or analyse the pattern of a single life. At no moment does he try to explain how they, any of them, came to be in the position of perpetrator, how they finally perpetrated their abominable deeds. The characteristics of the perpetrators interest him only in so far as they can be used to emphasize their representativeness of the German people. Without any sociological or psychological examination, mostly even without any source or basing himself on legal testimony given twenty years after the facts (which he himself calls untrustworthy), he projects his explanation onto his material : Germans wanted to kill Jews. Goldhagen deduces the motive from the deed, nothing more. Through detailed description of appalling atrocities the reader is com-pelled to identify with the victims. This victim's perspective, so necessary as a motivation to prevent any repetition, impedes and prevents analysis of the motives of the perpetrators, makes it almost impossible to comprehend the different phases of the escalation to genocide. Diametrically the opposite therefore of what Goldhagen so triumphantly announces.

Goldhagen claims that the Judeocide has hitherto been misunderstood because of the fact that everybody has wrongly assumed that Germans are ordinary people, similar to ourselves. That is incorrect, Germans must be approached as an anthropologist would

24 That it is a question of blindness, selective perception and tendentious representation of things will be demonstrated below. An article is obviously not a counter-book. It is not possible here to expose all the aggravating distorted reasoning and omissions. I limit myself to logical errors which affect the essence of his formulation of the problem, as well as some concrete examples. In so doing I limit myself as far as possible to sources to which Goldhagen himself refers. In other articles I hope to develop further other topics and examples.

25 GOLDHAGEN, p. 5-7.

26 "Explaining the perpetrators' actions demands, therefore, that the perpetrators' phenomenological reality be taken seriously. We must attempt the difficult enterprise of imagining ourselves in their places, performing their deeds, acting as they did, viewing what they beheld ... For us to comprehend the perpetrators' phenomenological world, we should describe for ourselves every gruesome image that they beheld, and every cry of anguish and pain that they heard" (p. 21-22).

27 ARNONI, HILBERG & SÖLLNER (p. 197), LEVI, VAN DEN BERGHE-1995.

a preliterate people still enmeshed in “magical thinking”. German anti-Semitism is “the product of the collective scribes of an insane asylum”²⁸, with its “palpably absurd beliefs about Jews”, “the sort of beliefs that ordinarily only madmen have of others”²⁹. The temptation is great, as has appeared from some reactions to Goldhagen’s book, to turn these emotional, denigratory and manifestly unjustified generalizations against their author. The Germans of the first half of the twentieth century were far from primitive. They were one of the most advanced civilizations of the time, whether culturally, scientifically or technologically. So much so that some have interpreted the Judeocide as a typical product of modernity³⁰. This is what needs to be explained, the combination of a high level of civilization and a barbaric genocide.

Goldhagen’s scientific perspective is erroneous, he mistakes his discipline. The Judeocide, without any doubt a man-made disaster, is a historical event, not an anthropological phenomenon. He jumps from the historical to the psychological, cultural or ethnic level. Furthermore, he limits the phenomenon *a priori* to the German ‘subspecies’. An amateur anthropologist, Goldhagen is also constantly guilty of decontextualizing and psychologizing. He draws the people under study out of history and out of humanity. Worse, instead of analyzing and explaining the deviant convictions and behaviour of the people under study (as would become an anthropologist), Goldhagen dismisses them as crazy talk and sheer madness.

The only appropriate name for the perpetrators is, Goldhagen maintains, Germans. After all we refer to the citizens of the United States who fought in Vietnam as ‘Americans’³¹. It apparently escapes him that, unlike for the Germans, he does not deduce from this that all Americans are racists. The fact that some Germans were opposed to the persecution of the Jews, does not change, according to this scholar, the identity of the perpetrators. We must and should call them Germans. This implies that he can no longer call these other Germans ‘Germans’ or that his ‘German identity’ has lost its explanatory value, he has no inkling of an idea. Their chief common denominator remains that they were all Germans³², not that they were... people. This dehumanization was already clear to insiders in Goldhagen’s subtitle. This includes a reference to the title, point of departure and conclusion of Christopher Browning’s exemplary study, ‘*Ordinary Men*’. Unlike Goldhagen, Browning assumed that Germans were men, and that it had to be explained how ordinary men came to commit unimaginable atrocities.

28 GOLDHAGEN, p. 15, 21, 27-28, 45.

29 ID., p. 455, 412.

30 Zygmunt Bauman, nowhere referred to by Goldhagen.

31 GOLDHAGEN, p. 6 and Note 5 (p. 475).

32 ID., p. 7.

False arguments

Goldhagen's theory is no clarification but an obfuscation. He reduces a historical, social and political phenomenon to an ideological-psychiatric aberration of the German people. The problem is resolved by blaming it on the 'other'. Anti-Semitism, stresses Goldhagen, has nothing to do with any Jewish way of living or acting. Nor is it in any way a reaction or result of interaction, it is purely an expression of the non-Jewish culture³³. Goldhagen reduces complex, plural social phenomena and processes (which are more than reprehensible and to a great extent have their roots in the intolerance of non-Jews) to a one-sided and single cause. Anti-Semites who dismiss problems created by (multicultural) coexistence as an exclusive Jewish problem, who blame it all on the 'other', do the same.

The kernel and point of departure of Goldhagen's thesis is the kind of reasoning that lies at the bottom of negative stereotyping and stigmatizing of others. The 'others' are set apart, pathologized, demonized. Comparative study is a superfluous luxury. Deviant behaviour is ascribed to the deviant perpetrator, to that in which he differs superficially, at first sight from the observer³⁴. Setting apart and decontextualizing, the kind of thinking to which prejudices owe their existence.

Goldhagen's stigmatizing explanation is in all respects unsound. This is evident even on a superficial examination. What became of this all-explaining cause, the eliminationist anti-Semitism of the Germans, after the Second World War? In a note he says that the Germans have changed dramatically, "especially since the loss of the Second World War"³⁵. But many notes later he again qualifies this (between brackets), saying "Germany continues to this day to remain infected by anti-Semitism"³⁶. But OK, it has decreased. He gives strained explanations for this. They were reeducated; anti-Semitic expression became illegal; the Germans' image of Jews deviated so strongly from the reality that it no longer appeared tenable when institutional support was removed. While at the same time Goldhagen constantly trivializes the effect of politico-ideological indoctrination, calling it "at times laughably perfunctory and ineffective"³⁷. Without any intrinsic analysis or comparison with indoctrination elsewhere, he dismisses this "considerable ideological inundation" as superficial, saying that it "likely had little effect on the men"³⁸. In an endnote he maintains that Browning is also of the opinion that indoctrination

33 *Id.*, p. 39-41.

34 Comparable reasonings are : Jews are by nature greedy for money and power; women are less gifted intellectually and artistically; young people and migrants are more strongly inclined to commit offences.

35 GOLDHAGEN, p. 582n38.

36 *Id.*, p. 593-594n53.

37 *Id.*, p. 181-182.

38 *Id.*, p. 184.

did not play any important role³⁹. But Browning emphasizes on the contrary that it often played a major role⁴⁰, adding that it obviously is not a sufficient explanation⁴¹.

That the eliminationist anti-Semitism of the Germans could so quickly disappear with the majority of Germans can only mean that, contrary to what Goldhagen maintains, it was not fundamental or deep-rooted. But if it is not an intrinsic factor in the Germans or their culture, it can no longer be advanced as the only or the most important cause of the Judeocide⁴².

That the murderers were ordinary Germans obviously does not justify the conclusion that all ordinary Germans were murderers. It must be explained how ordinary people, who did not in any way seem predestined to commit atrocities, nonetheless came to do so. Goldhagen replaces 'people' with 'Germans'. It must be explained how, without any great problems of conscience, they slaughtered their fellow men. Goldhagen replaces 'fellow men' with 'Jews' and pretends that virtually everybody took part voluntarily and enthusiastically. This rewritten history allows of only one conclusion : a distinct sort of anti-Semitism proper to Germans. But it must then be explained how, as a result of what, this German eliminationist anti-Semitism, which from the very beginning carried all the abomination in it, could come into being, in Germany alone, only by Germans and all Germans. How is it that Germans, even centuries ago, so drastically deviated from human nature and humanity ? If you do not explain this, then you are not far removed from a biologicistic 'explanation', that it is due to a people, to a 'race'. Fortunately this is no longer possible. Goldhagen, a respectable man, knows this. This is why he says at the end of his study, in a subordinate clause, that this must be studied⁴³.

At the end of his book⁴⁴, in a summary chapter about his method, Goldhagen says that he was convinced from the beginning of German 'otherness', and that he chose the theme of his study and his sources in accordance with the conviction that the whole Judeocide might and must be derived from German anti-Semitism. He needed ordinary perpetrators in order to be able to generalize to the German people⁴⁵, and not to... people, human beings in general ! By deciding in advance that the explanation should be searched for in a specific German anti-Semitism, the more general human

39 *Id.*, p. 528-529.

40 *BROWNING*, p. 25-26, 27, 29. Many others have made this clear, even for the Police Battalions (*KWIET*, p. 77-79, 89; *Klee, Mason*).

41 *BROWNING*, p. 232-242.

42 See also *JOFFE*, p. 19.

43 "...the eliminationist antisemitic German political culture, the genesis of which must be and is explicable historically..." (p. 455).

44 *Id.*, p. 463.

45 "Two different target populations are the object of this study : the population of perpetrators and the German people themselves. ... Thus, the [killing] institutions treated here are intended to do double analytical

perspective is left out. This narrowed perspective limits what can be seen, reduces the number of possible causes, determinants and explanations. The Germans did it, Goldhagen repeats in every possible way, using all kinds of sophistries, and that, he says, relieves him from the obligation of comparison. Anyone who does not wish to take account of non-German anti-Semitism, racism and heterophobia, can be expected to end up with a 'German' explanation.

The independence of a variable, the distinctness or uniqueness of a phenomenon, can logically only be established through comparison with analogous phenomena. Science is based on comparison. Comparative study is a minimum requirement. Comparison between German perpetrators, other Germans and other perpetrators; between the Judeocide and other genocides, German and other anti-Semitism, German anti-Semitism and racism; between religious, racial and political anti-Semitism. Goldhagen knows this : at the end of his book he says that this must be done, only to dispose of all of this comparison in scarcely eight pages, not infrequently with frankly outrageous arguments. Almost all other genocides, he maintains, were preceded by a real conflict. But the Jews had done no wrong to the Germans ⁴⁶.

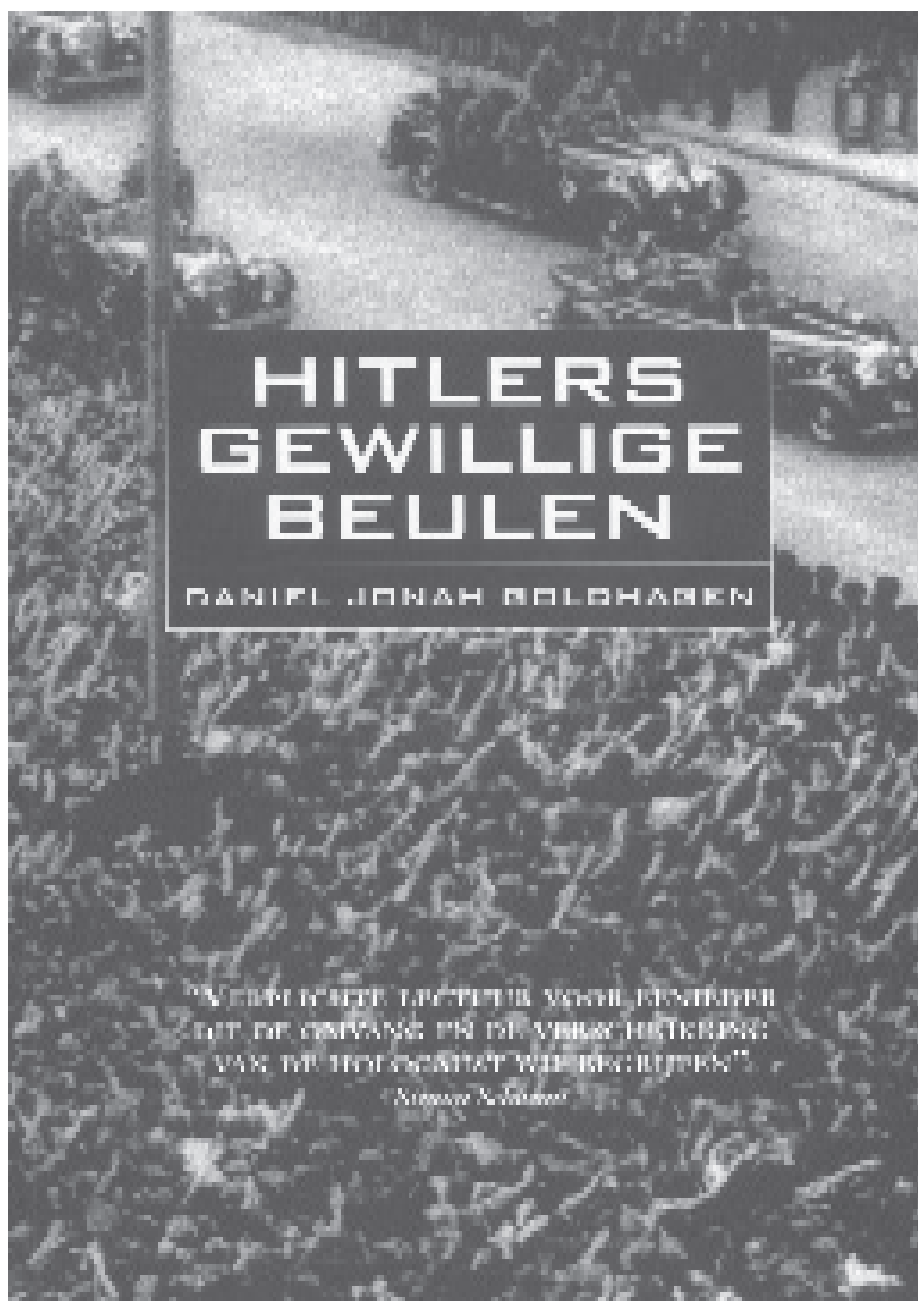
By not comparing, by removing the phenomenon from its historic and human context and only discussing it in terms of the known outcome, Goldhagen 'redefines' the elements of his problem to fit his solution. His theory is an extreme consequence of the so-called uniqueness of the Holocaust. From this point of view the Judeocide is seen as so unparalleled, so unique, that it cannot, must not, may not be compared with any other genocide. Pushed to the extreme, this leads to a unique explanation, a distinct, unique kind of anti-Semitism, a different sort of people. The postulated uniqueness of the Holocaust is the reason for and consequence of the lack of comparison. And intentionalism, of which Goldhagen is an extreme exponent, is the kernel of the so-called uniqueness of the Judeocide ⁴⁷.

Goldhagen's explanation is little more than an enormous, intelligently advanced circular argument. Cause and effect are mixed up, even treated as being the same. Anything he needs to explain in order to justify his theory is first redefined in terms of his theory and then presented as the explanation. In this way the problem solves itself. "No Germans, no Holocaust"; it is that simple. What has to be proved is taken for granted in a premiss, a *petitio principii* therefore. First he reasons forwards, from the attitude of the Germans

duty. They should permit the motivations of the perpetrators in those particular institutions to be uncovered, and also allow for generalizing both to the perpetrators as a group and to the second target group of this study, the German people" (p. 463-464).

⁴⁶ Id., p. 412.

⁴⁷ See with regard to this : VAN DEN BERGHE-1990, p. 166-170.



HITLERS GEWILLIGE BEULEN

DANIEL JONAH GOLDHAGEN

"Waarom heeft de Duitse volk genocidio
dat de andere in de wereld hebben
van de mensheid niet begrepen?"

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

- Jacket of the Dutch edition.

to their behaviour; then the reasons in the reverse direction, from the behaviour of the Germans to their culture. He confuses different levels of analysis⁴⁸. Heuristically his position is worthless, nor is it of any assistance to us in other ways, on the contrary. As it was all due to the Germans, as non-German forms of racism are much less dangerous⁴⁹ and as the Germans of today, even in Goldhagen's eyes, have improved, we no longer need to be on our guard.

Miscalculation

In order to make history compatible with his revision, Goldhagen is obliged to redefine quite a number of things : anti-Semitism, deed, perpetrator, Nazi camp, awareness, indifference, emigration, death march, etc. Goldhagen interprets everything anew. Everybody who was in any way whatever involved in the slaughter of the Jews, even if he did not himself kill, is called a perpetrator. He exaggerates what was known in Germany about the genocide, assumes without the slightest proof that everybody had a direct overall view and understanding of the full extent of deportations and camps, refuses to distinguish between suspicion, knowledge and awareness, between being able and being willing to know, between knowing what the right thing is and (also) doing it. In this way the concept of perpetrator can be extended almost without limit. Every German was informed and thus a perpetrator⁵⁰. The advantage is, he adds in a note, "that it captures an essential element of Germany and the Holocaust - to wit, that so many people were involved, connected to, and knowledgeable about the mass slaughter [sic !]. A more narrow definition of 'perpetrator' would create too great a distinction ... after all, Germans moved easily from one role to the next. For the vast majority, chance, not acts of volition, determined who among a group of socially indistinguishable Germans would or would not find himself in an institution of killing". In other words, those Germans who did not kill any Jews have only chance to thank for it⁵¹.

Five hundred thousand, even up to a million Germans were active perpetrators; the Holocaust was a German national project⁵². Any institution where 'the Germans' deprived people of their freedom Goldhagen calls an institution of killing (or killing institution), whether this be a ghetto, re-education camp, work camp, concentration camp, *Aussenkommando*, prisoner-of-war camp, extermination camp, police battalion, death march or the *Wehrmacht*⁵³. Basing himself on a doubtful interpretation (Gudrun

48 JOFFE, p. 19.

49 GOLDHAGEN, p. 37.

50 *Id.*, p. 165.

51 He rounds off his circular redefinition of the perpetrators with : "Definitions are inevitably 'persuasive', so care must be taken that the manner of a definition's persuasion is desirable and defensible" (p. 523).

52 For example GOLDHAGEN, p. 11. See also below.

53 *Id.*, p. 166.

SCHWARZ)⁵⁴, Goldhagen reckons that there were more than 10,000 killing institutions. He does not take into account that some of these terrible places did not exist throughout the whole of the Nazi regime (some not more than a few weeks or months), or that others changed name - these he generally counts twice. Over-low figures are adjusted. He counts 52 main concentration camps⁵⁵, giving Schwarz as a reference. But the latter gives the correct number, 22⁵⁶. A typing error? Perhaps, but it fits in wonderfully well with the many other errors and exaggerations.

From the number of killing institutions, which he has thus inflated, Goldhagen deduces in the same improper way that there were far more perpetrators. If you include the *Wehrmacht*, you end up with millions. He reluctantly admits that not all of them killed, but concludes that in any case it was a huge operation⁵⁷. In the notes he ventures to juggle further with figures. By also counting in the Germans who profited from slave laborers (over 7.6 million in the German Reich in August 1944) he again comes to the conclusion that “the number of Germans who perpetrated grievous crimes might run into the millions”⁵⁸. He rounds this off by saying that he would not be surprised if there were 500,000 or more German perpetrators.

To estimate the total number of camp guards he bases himself on the number of guards and administrators in place in April 1945 in Dachau and Mauthausen, 4100 and 5700 respectively⁵⁹. He conceals to his readers that these high figures were the result of the stream of guards (and prisoners) flowing back from the camps and commandos (*Außenkommandos*, subcamps) already liberated by the Allies⁶⁰. As his source for these figures, Goldhagen refers to Wolfgang Sofsky’s study. But the latter also gives other figures, 1250 men for Mauthausen in 1940, for example⁶¹. Goldhagen also suppresses the fact that the majority of the guards were deployed in the numerous, often small, subcamps and that they were finally driven back to the base camp. He then suggests extrapolating the enormous number of guards in the final stage of the war in Dachau and Mauthausen to the ten thousand camps that he purports to find (1200 commandos, double counts and closed down places included). Extrapolating from his suggestive “4100 guards and administrators in Dachau alone” you arrive at a figure of forty million German guards, half the German population of the time. Goldhagen also ‘forgets’ to mention that

54 Scholars should not limit themselves to one secondary source. There are scores of interpretations and figures for the world of the camps. The only official, reliable and well annotated lists are those of the International Tracing Service in Arolsen (ITS, Weinmann).

55 GOLDHAGEN, p. 167.

56 SCHWARZ, p. 221.

57 GOLDHAGEN, p. 166.

58 ID., p. 167.

59 ID., p. 167.

60 He mentions it many pages later, in a different context (p. 329).

61 SOFSKY, p. 342.

Sofsky, his only source, puts the total number of guards that ever served in the camps (*Totenkopf*, *Waffen-SS* and *Wehrmacht* soldiers together) for the whole duration of the Nazi regime at 55,000, of whom many were in the commandos ⁶².

The remaining Germans, those who cannot by means of numerical and conceptual exaggeration be redefined as active perpetrators, are potential perpetrators in Goldhagen's eyes. They simply did not get the chance. "The conclusion of this book is that anti-Semitism moved many thousands of 'ordinary' Germans - and would have moved millions more, had they been appropriately positioned - to slaughter Jews" (p. 9). That some became involved and others not was a question of chance ⁶³. The exceptional Germans who openly opposed anti-Jewish measures are only mentioned when, and because, they testify to the guilt of their fellow countrymen, or as a 'proof' that it was possible to resist, and that therefore 'the Germans' chose not to do so ⁶⁴. Goldhagen uses the exception to confirm the rule. But exceptions do this only seldom and when they do it is immediately clear, without *ad hoc* hypotheses ⁶⁵.

Goldhagen extends the concepts of deed and perpetrator to such an extent that there is no longer any difference between bystander, accomplice and perpetrator; between responsibility, complicity and culpability. If this is extended logically then the Allies were also perpetrators. But of this world which looked on and away, Goldhagen remains silent. And right he is, for that would undermine his main thesis. In order to maintain his ultra-intentionalist position, he even claims, without the slightest proof, that Hitler postponed the extermination of the Jews for a long time for fear that the world would intervene ⁶⁶.

The Procrustean bed of intentionalism

That the Germans waited so long to plan the Judeocide and in the meantime made all possible efforts to drive them out of Germany and Austria, is not compatible with extreme intentionalism. If, as Goldhagen emphatically maintains, the Germans wanted to exterminate all Jews, it is remarkable to say the least that they forced two thirds of all German Jews to emigrate, before proclaiming a ban on emigration in October 1941. And that while, according to Goldhagen, they were very much afraid of the vengeance of world Jewry. To get round this problem he produces yet another revision.

62 *Id.*, p. 121.

63 GOLDHAGEN, p. 271.

64 For example on p. 109, 119, 123 and 510.

65 A good example is the rule that in a world where the light comes from above, animals' bellies are normally lighter coloured than their backs. Animals that swim are therefore less visible from below. The exception which confirms this rule is a water beetle which swims on its back and has a dark belly and light back (MAYNARD SMITH, p. 28).

66 GOLDHAGEN, p. 140, 142-144.

Anyone who thinks that the aim of the Jewish policy, the Judeocide, could be followed in a linear way is in Goldhagen's opinion immensely naive. By means of a cocktail of speculations, he then tries to explain the many inconsistencies in this "extermination programme", in doing which he makes avid use of the findings of functionalists, without however mentioning this. He jumps this way and that, not allowing himself to be bothered with anything so superfluous as demonstration. He redefines emigration as flight, only then - playing with words, meanings, intentions and causes - alternately to speak of emigration and flight⁶⁷. Hitler temporarily reduced the German ideal, the elimination of the Jews, to that of making Germany *Judenrein* (purified from Jews) because for the time being nothing more was feasible. "The encircled, weak Germany of this period could not have undertaken more radical measures without risking a war which it could not yet hope to win." The Germans "were firmly in the grip of a hallucinatory ideology, but they were not madmen"⁶⁸. Goldhagen mentions the fact that Hitler flouted the Treaty of Versailles, marched into the Rhineland in March 1936, annexed Austria in 1938 and dismantled Czechoslovakia; but it apparently escapes him that these were risky and bellicose deeds.

The supposition that the Western powers, which allowed Hitler to have his own way quite undisturbed because they were incapable and unwilling to answer the threat, would have gone to war if Hitler had got the Judeocide under way is not just naive, it is ahistorical. Nothing, not a single fact, indicates that even one state would have rushed to the rescue of the German Jews. All countries looked on quite passively while innumerable illegal and legal anti-Jewish measures were taken. When, as a result of the *Anschluss* in March 1938, the discrimination was extended to Austrian Jews and the world press was full of outrage, the U.S. planned an international conference on the emigration of the Jews. The conference took months to come about. In the meantime the borders remained sealed and the queues before the embassies in Germany and Austria grew longer and longer. Backstage, there was plenty of scheming to reduce the quota of one's own country. Many were very worried that too many Jews would be let in, that their own interests would be harmed. When the conference started in the fashionable Evian-les-Bains on 6 July 1938, it turned out that all thirty countries participating in it had a valid excuse not to open their borders any further⁶⁹.

That Nazi bosses made plans in the period from 1939-1941 to deport the Jews massively to far-removed Jewish reservations (the NISKO-Lublin project and the Madagascar plan) is something that Goldhagen does not deny; the assertion of earlier intentionalists

67 *Id.*, p. 139.

68 *Id.*, p. 139-140.

69 For an overview and references : VAN DEN BERGHE-1995, p. 106-109.

that these plans were never seriously considered has in the meantime been conclusively refuted. Now the story is that the Germans wished to be rid of the Jews whom they could not yet exterminate (an unsubstantiated speculation)⁷⁰. Anyone who might wonder why the Nazis, who according to Goldhagen were so adept in waiting for the right moment to strike, did not now do this, is informed that this planned deportation was “a form of bloodless genocide”. And who knows, asks this scholar, again without the slightest evidence, that the Jewish reservations would have been anything more than intermediate stops on the way towards final elimination⁷¹? Nor does he explain how they would get the Jews who had been deported to Madagascar into their power again. Goldhagen is also utterly silent about non-German eliminationist anti-Semitism; about the fact that the Madagascar plan had already been considered, from 1926 certainly, and also in 1937 and 1938 by Polish and French governments, and was even discussed in Evian⁷². Shortly after the outbreak of the war the slogan “Jews go to Madagascar!” still resounded in Poland⁷³.

Goldhagen is of the opinion that his ‘revision’ releases him from the obligation of detailed demonstration or refutation of contrary interpretations, “or even arguments (and the data) that could be adduced against my line of interpretation. They are well known in the literature. ... minimal references to the works that contain information on the events discussed here - even if these works’ interpretations often conflict with my own” (p. 512n1)⁷⁴.

Comparative politics

Where it is to his advantage Goldhagen does indeed compare, even fervently. “Elucidative comparisons with other groups are periodically presented” (p. 523), but you can only gather that there were also non-Jews in the camps by reading between the lines⁷⁵, and only when Goldhagen can’t avoid it⁷⁶. And he continually emphasizes and overstates

70 GOLDHAGEN, p. 145-146.

71 Id., p. 146, p. 589n15.

72 EDELHEIT, p. 52-53; WIEVIORKA-1989, p. 50-51.

73 ORENSTEIN, p. 27; POLONSKY, p. 138. In Drancy, the transit camp from which the Nazis deported the Jews from France, some Jews discussed the possibility of setting up their own state in Madagascar (Georges Wellers in WIEVIORKA-1992, p. 290).

74 He asserts this also about his interpretation of the atrocities of Police Battalion 101 which completely departs from, is even contrary to the conclusions of Browning’s exemplary study. According to Goldhagen “it lifts the obligation of presenting here every last item of material which might be construed (even if erroneously) to cast doubt on my understanding of the battalion, for such material can easily be found in Browning’s book” (p. 534n1). Apart from that, all the tenacious reader will find in the notes is some discussion of Browning’s interpretations and explanations, which furthermore are represented in an incomplete and tendentious way. Elsewhere Goldhagen repeatedly uses lack of space as an excuse for not even having to prove his copiously illustrated theory and all that he derives from it (e.g. p. 476).

75 GOLDHAGEN, p. 158, 160.

76 Id., p. 173-175.

that they were much better treated than the Jews⁷⁷, he minimalizes their unhappy fate⁷⁸. That as early as March 1933 approximately 25,000 communists, social democrats and trade unionists were locked up in the concentration camps is hardly discussed, after Goldhagen has argued for over a hundred pages that all Germans were anti-Semitic and applauded the persecution of the Jews⁷⁹. The fate of the gypsies is only mentioned in passing⁸⁰ and dealt with in a footnote, in a few lines⁸¹. Anyway, what befell the Jews was incomparably worse⁸².

In order to prove that the much more barbaric fate of the Jews must be attributed to the Germans' eliminationist anti-Semitism, Goldhagen exaggerates the already dreadful Jewish death rates. They everywhere "far exceeded the mortality rates of other groups of prisoners living side by side with them"⁸³. Goldhagen takes the horrifying Jewish death rate in Mauthausen at the end of 1942 and 1943, one hundred per cent, and compares it with that of the non-Jews in the same place and at the same time - less than two per cent. He refers to a page in Falk Pingel's comparative examination of the evolution of the death rates in various camps from 1942-1944⁸⁴. But the percentages which Goldhagen borrows from Pingel are properly interpreted and explained by him. Pingel emphasizes that the Jewish death rate in Mauthausen deviated strongly from that in other camps, for example Buchenwald. On the page before that to which Goldhagen refers, Pingel makes it clear that in Buchenwald in 1943 the death rate for all categories of prisoners was more or less the same, about one per cent. He illustrates this on the basis of a table that is difficult to ignore. Pingel also explains this striking difference. In Buchenwald political prisoners were in charge of the (SS-impelled) self-government, while Mauthausen from start to finish was 'governed' by criminal prisoners. This is why in Mauthausen the death rate was in general higher, except of course for the criminals. And Pingel adds that the higher the death rate the greater the difference between the categories of prisoners with regard to survival⁸⁵.

The 'fact' that the Germans treated other peoples whom they deemed to be inferior, even 'subhuman', such as Poles, far differently and better than Jews, is according to Goldhagen "most revealing". It mirrors the value pattern of the German civilian population⁸⁶. To

77 *Id.*, p. 116, 340, 342.

78 *Id.*, p. 173.

79 *Id.*, p. 170.

80 *Id.*, p. 175, 286, 313.

81 *Id.*, p. 565n83.

82 "The Germans' treatment of the Jews - who were seen as the secular incarnation of the Devil - was so horrific that it can hardly be compared to that of other peoples" (p. 175).

83 *Id.*, p. 173-174.

84 PINGEL, p. 181-187.

85 *Id.*, p. 185-187.

86 GOLDHAGEN, p. 116.

prove his point he once again uses only one source, Robert Gellately's study. The latter showed that the Gestapo could not have properly fulfilled its task without the help of many German civilians. Goldhagen interprets this to mean that the ordinary Germans helped the Gestapo very selectively and informed on Jews much more enthusiastically⁸⁷. It must have escaped Goldhagen's notice that Gellately from the very beginning emphasizes the fact that the motives for informing were very diverse and complex, certainly not reducible to a single cause⁸⁸, such as anti-Semitism. The page to which Goldhagen refers and the following one⁸⁹ contain Gellately's conclusions for the chapter concerning 'Racial policy and Polish workers'. The Gestapo did not treat the Poles any differently to the Jews and were as eagerly helped, certainly initially. This changed with the fortunes of war. As the war was literally brought home to Germany, civilians were becoming less inclined to inform on Poles or Germans; "in 1945 Gestapo files which pertain to the racial persecution of the Poles disappear completely"⁹⁰. On the face of it, writes Gellately, it looks as if cooperation in reporting on Jews was greater than in betraying Poles. But subsequently he makes it more than clear that this difference must not be exaggerated and he provides numerous explanatory factors. Anti-Slavism was not so widespread as anti-Semitism, all Poles were Christians, they were economically useful and their low social status awakened no jealousy. The Poles were farm workers and their help was more than welcome on the farms, particularly when from 1944 increasingly more German men were called up. Most of the Jews, on the contrary, belonged to the middle classes; informing against them produced economic advantages and satisfied envy. Jews who formed no economic threat or who were useful were informed upon to a much lesser extent. Furthermore, the persecution of the Jews took place at the peak of the Nazi regime, when many Germans still could and would go along with the new rules. One could add that when the fortunes of war changed and the population became more critical and cautious, the majority of German and Austrian Jews had already been deported or had gone into hiding.

Dubious practices

Another method that Goldhagen frequently uses in making his revision hold up consists of a wayward or distorted representation of other people's research. A caricatural account, of course, makes refutation and belittling easy. He does this repeatedly with Raul Hilberg's masterpiece⁹¹.

Another interesting example is the way in which he makes use of Ian Kershaw's study and prestige. Goldhagen refers to "the words of one student [Kershaw] of German

87 *Id.*, p. 117.

88 GELLATELY, p. 8.

89 *Id.*, p. 251-252.

90 *Id.*, p. 226 and following, p. 261.

91 For example on p. 385.



- The photograph on the jacket of the American edition was taken on August 15, 1935 in a sports palace in Berlin where Adolf Hitler and Julius Streicher, Germany's most rabid anti-Semites, delivered their speeches. Not exactly a representative image of the German people. (Photo RIOD, Amsterdam)

attitudes during the Nazi period” to emphasize that “to be an anti-Semite in Hitler’s Germany was so commonplace as to go practically unnoticed” (p. 32). The omission of Kershaw’s actual conclusion creates the impression that this statement may be taken for it. The sentence in question is to be found in Kershaw’s last chapter, concerning popular opinion and the extermination of the Jews. A flaw in the transcription of this sentence is not without significance : in Kershaw (p. 370) we find “to be anti-Semitic” and not “to be an anti-Semite”. In the chapter referred to, Kershaw discusses the year 1944 when hardly a single Jew was left in Germany. The younger generation, who had no more opportunity to see a living Jew, was crammed with anti-Jewish slogans. It was becoming ever more difficult to keep the hatred for an abstraction alive. After this comes the sentence quoted by Goldhagen with, in a footnote, a suggestion to compare with a passage in Albert Speer’s *Erinnerungen* (Memoirs). In the section indicated by Kershaw, Speer tries to explain how it was that he did not know, did not wish to know, about the extermination of the Jews⁹². By this reference Kershaw must have meant that in Nazi Germany even a minister could walk around with his eyes closed.

92 SPEER, p. 126.

That Goldhagen does not go into this reference to Speer is remarkable. His father, Erich Goldhagen, wrote an article in 1971 in which he claims to demonstrate that Speer - who alone of the 21 accused in Nuremberg admitted to be jointly responsible, but continued to deny having known anything about the Judeocide - was indeed so informed. Speer lied and was a hypocrite⁹³. To prove that, Erich Goldhagen quotes (in a footnote at the end of his article) from the notorious speech that Himmler delivered on 6 October 1943 in Posen. On that occasion all the *Reichsleiter* and *Gauleiter* were informed in the most forthright way of the Final Solution. In Erich Goldhagen's quotation Himmler addresses himself specifically to Speer. Now Speer had never concealed that he was in Posen on that day, but about Himmler's speech he had never breathed a word⁹⁴. In all known versions of Himmler's speech there is no concrete reference to Speer. Gitta Sereny inquired from Goldhagen himself. He told her that the quotation was based on an unfortunate misunderstanding, he had only wanted to clarify what Himmler meant but the editor of *Midstream* had put it accidentally in quotation marks. He advised Sereny to read Himmler's speech again carefully and then she would see that it was indeed the drift of the story⁹⁵. Sereny did not agree, described Goldhagen's interpretation as quite dramatic and also told Speer this⁹⁶. Speer was very grateful to her. Following the publication of Goldhagen's incriminating article, he had for two years sifted through archives to prove that he could not have heard the speech. It was, he said, the worst thing that had happened to him since Nuremberg⁹⁷.

It is more than likely that Speer had left Posen before Himmler's speech began. Not that this makes any difference, his colleagues heard everything and certainly spoke to him about it afterwards⁹⁸. Erich Goldhagen's "unfortunate blunder" according to Sereny did indeed contain a grain of truth⁹⁹ but of a less dramatic and more complicated kind. Georges Casalis, the prison chaplain in Spandau with whom Speer had strong ties, once said that "if Speer admitted to himself that he had known everything, he would not have survived it"¹⁰⁰. Sereny calls Speer's 'ignorance' his *Lebenslüge*¹⁰¹; he had persuaded himself that he knew nothing. In 1977, some years before his death, he once admitted that he was informed but had always looked the other way¹⁰².

93 "Albert Speer, Himmler, and the secrecy of the Final Solution", in *Midstream. A monthly Jewish review*, October 1971.

94 SERENY, p. 470-475, 868-870.

95 *Id.*, p. 476.

96 *Id.*, p. 476. Goldhagen's allegation is untrue, with or without quotation marks. Speer does not appear in Himmler's Posen speech. Goldhagen's blunder meanwhile continued to live a life of its own. In a recent BBC programme (DAVIDSON) the "quotation" was presented as truth.

97 SERENY, p. 866.

98 *Id.*, p. 479, 487.

99 *Id.*, p. 480, 866.

100 Evidence of Casalis's wife in DAVIDSON.

101 SERENY, p. 868.

102 *Id.*, p. 873-874.

Kershaw's authoritative study is drawn on eagerly by Goldhagen once only and otherwise ignored. For example Kershaw's analysis of the reaction of German civilians to the anti-Jewish boycott organized on 1 April 1933. It met with no opposition to speak of but the rallying call did not catch on anywhere, the response of the public was markedly cool. The experiment was never repeated. The Nazis learned from this that such anti-Jewish agitation "tended in fact to alienate rather than win support for the Nazi Party"¹⁰³. Goldhagen first quotes one Jew who "recounts that a few Germans defiantly expressed their solidarity with the beleaguered Jews". He then directly presents a second conflicting testimony; the story of a woman who, accompanied by two uniformed Nazis, brought back some goods to a Jewish chemist, saying that she had not realized that he was a Jew. From this Goldhagen concludes that this gives the true picture, "the sight of the German *Volk* organized by the German state, collectively boycotting an entire group of German citizens"¹⁰⁴. According to Goldhagen this boycott "was devastating to the social position of Jews"¹⁰⁵. In a note he refers, among others, to Hilberg. But in the pages mentioned by Goldhagen, Hilberg makes it clear that the compulsory boycott was organized by the Nazi Party to remind the bureaucrats and the ministries of the 'popular' hostility against Jewry, that the people wanted action against the Jews. The boycott failed, the population did not support it and it met quite soon with opposition in ministerial and economic circles¹⁰⁶. Barely thirty pages further on, in a completely different context, it becomes evident that Goldhagen does not believe his own interpretation of the boycott, he mentions in passing that it was a general failure¹⁰⁷. The context in which this takes place is the trivialization of German disapproval of anti-Jewish measures. According to Goldhagen their condemnation was inspired only by self-interest, for example because Jewish goods were cheaper. It may just be chance, but here the word 'boycott' is not used and, unlike the first mention of the boycott, this passage is not to be found under 'boycott' in the index.

According to Goldhagen there was also an enthusiastic reaction to *Reichskristallnacht* (Crystal Night) : "ordinary Germans spontaneously, without provocation or encou-

103 KERSHAW-1983, p. 234-235. "The outcome was hostility towards the Party rather than sympathy for the Jews or rejection of the anti-Jewish policies of the regime. Even so, it seems clear from such reactions that the aggressive, dynamic hatred of the Jews which the Nazi formations were trying to foster was not easy to instil in a population whose feelings towards the Jews went little further for the most part than traditional antipathy" (Id., p. 235).

104 GOLDHAGEN, p. 90.

105 Id., p. 90.

106 Goldhagen refers to p. 60-105, but a better reference would be : p. 19-20, 60-63; repeated in Hilberg-1988, p. 88-89. "As is well known, the boycott was a notable failure, and in the light of the negative echo abroad, the lack of enthusiasm among important sectors of the conservative power-élite ... and the cool indifference of the German people, it was called off after a single day, and a co-ordinated national boycott was never again attempted" (KERSHAW-1989, p. 93).

107 "The general failure of the regime's call for Germans not to frequent Jewish businesses" (GOLDHAGEN, p. 120).

agement, participated in the brutalities. Even youths and children contributed to the attacks, some undoubtedly with their parents' blessings" (p. 101). Only by reading between the lines does one understand that this pogrom too was controlled from above. That there was indeed criticism of the violence, Goldhagen is aware, but according to him this was because the licentious violence upset many Germans. It was not the result of principled disapproval of the sufferings inflicted on the Jews, of a belief that an injustice had been done them - these they felt only to be justified. For the first time some non-Jewish and non-leftist Germans began to wonder whether this violence might not also turn against them. Many interpreted the events in terms of their hallucinatory idea of an omnipotent Jewry: the Jews could well one day revenge themselves on Germany. This was what alarmed the Germans. As proof Goldhagen puts forward an excerpt from the memoirs of such a German. On the day after *Kristallnacht* he was greeted by his aunt with the "solemn words: 'We Germans will pay dearly for what was done to the Jews last night. Our churches, our houses, and our stores will be destroyed. You can be sure of that.'" This memory was recorded by Bernt Engelmann, a young German who ended up in Dachau in 1944 for assisting Jews. In his memoirs he pays a lot of attention to Germans who helped Jews. Among these was 'Aunt' Annie, Annie Ney, the wife of a baker. That she was not fond of the regime was an open secret, she even dared to express criticism in public. Englemann called her 'Aunt' probably because she was a friend of his father's¹⁰⁸. She was closely involved in the setting up of escape routes for Jews. Engelmann describes in detail how 'Aunt' Annie and other Germans, who at first sight might not have appeared particularly heroic, exerted themselves to bring as many Jews as possible to safety. In his two chapters about the *Kristallnacht* he gives many examples of Germans who were indignant, dismayed, distressed, ashamed and ready to help¹⁰⁹. The following day Engelmann went to see how his sick 'aunt' was and she received him with the words quoted by Goldhagen and called solemn by Engelmann. She added that "she was feeling better, and besides she had so much to do ... They [the Jews] all have to get out of the country. They're no longer safe in Germany" (p. 125). Engelmann's testimony obviously reflects only one side of a historical reality - not all Germans, far from it, were morally outraged or full of shame. Goldhagen could briefly have mentioned this had he wished, instead of suppressing all the information on helping Germans and detaching Aunt Annie's words from her sustained commitment to rescue Jews. From Engelmann's book it never appears that she, or anybody else, gave any credence to the myth of the omnipotent Jewry. To prove this Goldhagen has to tap other sources.

Another reason for the disapproval of some Germans Goldhagen considers to be their abhorrence of the wasteful destruction of so much German national property¹¹⁰.

108 ENGELMANN, p. 64.

109 ID., p. 114-125.

110 GOLDHAGEN, p. 101-102.

Goldhagen refers to Kershaw's study. But in the place indicated, Kershaw, in addition to the condemnation of the futile destruction of property, also discusses the marks of sympathy and spontaneous expressions of abhorrence, shame and moral aversion, among all sections of the German people, which were also extensively reported in contemporary Jewish eyewitness accounts. Kershaw even emphasizes that the condemnation can in no way be reduced to the material damage ¹¹¹.

According to Goldhagen, more or less all criticism of the *Kristallnacht* on the part of Germans was no more than superficial ("epiphenomenal"). Worse still, "those misgivings that Germans did express typically betray their authors' acceptance of the essence of the Nazified view of Jews" (p. 123). These bold assertions are not substantiated by anything. In a note he says that because of lack of space he cannot analyze this in greater detail ¹¹². In Goldhagen's opinion the *Kristallnacht* was "perhaps the most revealing day of the entire Nazi era, the day on which an opportunity presented itself for the German people to rise up in solidarity with fellow citizens ... the day on which the German people sealed the fate of the Jews by letting the authorities know that they concurred in the unfolding eliminationist enterprise..." ¹¹³; the *Kristallnacht* was the psychological equivalent of the genocide ¹¹⁴. Kershaw, however, makes it clear that this November pogrom, the culminating point of a hate campaign which had been methodically whipped up since the beginning of 1938 and which had already accelerated Jewish emigration, the only occasion in the twelve years of the Third Reich when the German people were directly confronted with the full savagery of the anti-Jewish terror, was received very unfavourably "even if open protest was in the circumstances hardly conceivable" (Kershaw-1983, p. 257, 259, 260). Notwithstanding the widespread hostility towards Jews after almost six years of Nazi rule, and the uncritical agreement with innumerable legal anti-Jewish measures, open and illegal violence was condemned. Most people were too afraid to express their disapproval publicly, but many turned away from the barbarity, abhorred it, were ashamed of being German and called it a 'cultural disgrace' (*Kulturschande*) ¹¹⁵. These reactions "gave way remarkably quickly to the sullen apathy and resigned acceptance which characterized the day-to-day existence of most Germans in the Third Reich" (Kershaw-1983, p. 273). It didn't concern them

111 KERSHAW-1983, p. 266-272, 277. "There were few occasions, if any, in the Third Reich which produced such a widespread wave of revulsion - much of it on moral grounds - as the 'Crystal Night' pogrom" (ID., p. 270-271).

112 GOLDHAGEN, p. 510n173.

113 ID., p. 103.

114 ID., p. 140-141.

115 KERSHAW-1983, p. 265-267. "Most people were too afraid to speak openly, but muttered invectives and words of disgust at the barbarity of the action and shame and horror at what had taken place could be observed in Munich as in other major German cities" (ID., p. 262-263). "The clumsy alienation of German popular opinion through the pogrom seems to have persuaded the Nazi leadership that such a tactic should never again be tried, and that anti-Jewish measures should take a more 'rational' course" (ID., p. 271).

directly, and it had been perpetrated on a tiny and basically unloved social minority. Indifference, which had been momentarily disturbed, again gained the upper hand ¹¹⁶. “Popular opinion”, concludes Kershaw, “largely indifferent and infused with a latent anti-Jewish feeling further bolstered by propaganda, provided the climate within which spiralling Nazi aggression towards Jews could take place unchallenged. But it did not provoke the radicalization in the first place. The road to Auschwitz was built by hate, but paved with indifference” (p. 277). Some hold that the notion of indifference may be more confusing than helpful and therefore prefer to it that of ‘passive complicity’ ¹¹⁷. Goldhagen discusses and redefines the notion of indifference in a way which would make any self-respecting psychologist or sociologist blush with shame ¹¹⁸. In his opinion the Germans were not indifferent, they were pitiless ¹¹⁹.

So-called case studies

Goldhagen illustrates his revision on the strength of three case studies of ‘killing institutions’: Police Battalion 101, work camps and death marches. He calls this the empirical heart of his study, talks about thorough investigation and evaluation, and persuades himself that his voluntaristic theory is proved by it ¹²⁰. His interpretation of the atrocities committed by the police is almost diametrically opposed to that of Browning and he does not go to the trouble of discussing or refuting the latter’s study adequately. That Goldhagen comes to a contrary conclusion is due in the first place to his *a priori* claim that it is a specific German problem. And, secondly, to his sources and the way in which he deals with them. He only uses legal testimonies given twenty years after the facts and explicitly excludes anything that might plead in favour of the perpetrators ¹²¹. Goldhagen does not apparently realise that this is no more than an extension of his selective and distorted perception, that he is locking up his sources in the straightjacket of his hypothesis: not men but demons. In addition he ignores sources that are both contemporary and more trustworthy, such as the war journal of Police Battalion 322 which has remained preserved ¹²².

Goldhagen’s other case studies are far from new and were not investigated in depth. He once more redefines down to his *idée fixe* and his argumentation. He passes by reliable sources and ignores definitions in his scholarly sources, which he uses when it works

116 *Id.*, p. 273-274.

117 KULKA, p. 430, 434-435; MARRUS, p. 93.

118 GOLDHAGEN, p. 439-441 and Note 46.

119 *Id.*, p. 440.

120 *Id.*, p. 375.

121 GOLDHAGEN, p. 467-468, 600-601.

122 KWIEF & KLEE.



- This photograph was found by members of the Polish Home Army enclosed in a letter written by a German soldier. Members of the Home Army monitored mail from the East that passed through the central post office in Warsaw. Letters and photographs of interest were copied and sent on to the Polish government-in-exile. It is reported that on the back of the original photograph the following inscription was written : "Ukraine 1942, Judenaktion, Ivangorod" (the Holocaust Memorial Museum and all subsequent sources, including Goldhagen, transcribe 'Jewish Aktion'). (Photo Jerzy Tomaszewski, courtesy of the USHMM Photo Archives)

out for him ¹²³. Goldhagen's account is here again tendentious, incomplete, superficial and patently incorrect, full of inconsistencies and false assertions. An example is his thesis that these "marches of extermination" were the continuation of eliminationist anti-Semitism, that Jews above all were the targets and that their death rate was significantly higher than that of non-Jews ¹²⁴. He 'forgets' that "over half of the victims of the marches were non-Jews, so that anti-Semitism is no explanation at all" (Bauer,

123 For example the clear definition of a death march which Yehuda Bauer gives on the second page. "We will not deal here with any of the other foot and deportation marches that took place before January 1945, such as the foot march of Budapest Jews to the Austrian border in November 1944 and very many similar events. The basic difference between them and the death marches of January to May 1945 is that the latter were caused by the approaching defeat of Germany and the desire of the Nazis to evacuate camp inmates into Germany for reasons relating to the impending conquest of the existing camps by the Allied forces" (BAUER, p. 1-2).

124 GOLDHAGEN, p. 328, 346, 354, 357.

p. 19)¹²⁵. Goldhagen even uses the ‘Himmler order’ to suit his line of thought. The content of this mythical order¹²⁶ was that all prisoners, Jews and non-Jews alike, had absolutely to be exterminated. Goldhagen does not know or does not mention this. He uses one of the other orders that Himmler gave in the final stages of the war to demonstrate that the Germans flew in the face of this order and, driven by their eliminationist anti-Semitism, overzealously continued slaughtering Jews¹²⁷. So blind is he that it escapes him that this is not once to be found in his sole source. The order cited by him says that Himmler had ordered the prisoners to be treated henceforth humanely¹²⁸, and not at all that “the Germans were *forbidden* from killing any more Jews”¹²⁹.

A most remarkable translation

Hitlers gewillige beulen, the Dutch version, is a rushed job, full of ragged sentences, incorrectly translated historical concepts and omissions. After a few pages I abandoned it, certain passages simply could not be followed. No wonder when you realize that, for example, ‘identity of the victims’ (p. 13) is translated as ‘identity of the perpetrators’ (p. 17) and ‘torturer’ (p. 20) as ‘martyr’ (p. 25).

While reading the English version, I encountered various difficult, sometimes impenetrable passages and wondered how the translators had managed to render them. In this way I came across even more incorrect and, more importantly, remarkable translations. The rendering of ‘Hitler and his compatriots’ (p. 139) as ‘Hitler and his henchmen’ (p. 152) certainly does not appear to me to be an ordinary translation error. The divergent translations which by chance I found in this way mostly point, moreover, in the opposite direction of this example : crass and denigratory assertions about ‘the Germans’ are toned down or omitted (cf. also the toning down of the title, subtitle and cover photo in the Dutch version). The assertion that the ideological indoctrination of the German police was “at times laughably perfunctory and ineffective” (p. 181-182) is missing in the Dutch (p. 189). Elsewhere Goldhagen contends that “the perversity of the Nazified German mind was such that thinking of their own children was not intended to, calculated to, and evidently did not ... arouse sympathy for other children who happened to be Jewish. Instead, thinking of their children spurred the Germans to

125 Bauer writes this in another context, searching for an answer to the question whether the Western Allies could have helped these unfortunate people. But the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish victims calculated by him shows that Goldhagen’s explanation - antisemitism as German motivation - is not compatible with reality.

126 See VAN DEN BERGHE-1994a and 1994b, ZÁMEČNIK and the many source references in these articles.

127 GOLDHAGEN, p. 357, 371.

128 Id., p. 356.

129 Id., p. 356, 574.

kill Jewish children” (p. 213). In the translation ‘perversity’ becomes “the Nazi poison went so far as...” and the vile line of thought which follows becomes the weakened “the opposite was apparently the case” (p. 215). Elsewhere Goldhagen writes disparagingly about “the small minority of Germans who would have been active opponents of Nazi German domination” (p. 174); “small minority” is repeated once more on this page and emphasized in italics. In the Dutch version this becomes : “Germans who offered resistance to the Nazis and wanted to pursue this” (p. 183). Where Goldhagen talks about “the evidence that so many ordinary people did maintain at the center of their worldview palpably absurd beliefs about Jews like those that Hitler articulated in *Mein Kampf* is overwhelming” (p. 455), we read in the Dutch that many ordinary people followed Hitler in his obviously absurd opinion about the Jews, articulated in *Mein Kampf* (p. 445). “The disinclination to kill that the Germans did have and occasionally acted upon was a visceral, and not an ethical, one. The reason that some would and did opt out of the killing was because the duty was at times unpleasant. Not everyone always ‘felt up to it’. As such, the decision to kill or not to kill was a matter of taste and not of principle” (p. 250). In the Dutch edition this has been transformed into : “If the Germans refused, this was not because of ethical considerations. Killing became too much for one sometimes. The decision to kill or not to kill was therefore not at all a question of principle” (p. 247). Where Goldhagen calls abominable camp guards “these progeny of the German nation” (p. 339), the translators tone ‘progeny’ down to ‘products’ (p. 326).

Little by little it appeared increasingly improbable to me that all of this ¹³⁰ could be reduced to a question of *traduttore traditore*. The suspicion grew that Goldhagen had seriously doctored his English version and that the Dutch translation was based on an earlier one. When I ran into a (logically fallacious) line of reasoning about individual freedom (p. 251) that only made sense by adding a key sentence which altered the content ¹³¹, and when I actually found the missing sentence in the Dutch version, where another one was omitted (p. 247), I telephoned the Standaard publishing company in Antwerp ¹³². Raf Willems, who had seen the translation through, confirmed that the author had indeed worked over his English text to the end and that an earlier version had been used for the translation.

Because I came upon even more utterances hostile to Germans that had been omitted in the translation, I began to wonder if they were in fact to be found at all in the manuscript which had served for the translation. Could it be that the crass pronouncements had

130 And probably much more, as I only compared the two versions in a sporadic way.

131 A sentence which refers to group pressure, a phenomenon which Goldhagen continually minimizes or ignores.

132 At the end of October 1996.

been added by Goldhagen after he was awarded a doctorate and a prize for comparative politics (Oh irony !) for his study ¹³³ ? I called upon the assistance of the director of the Standaard publishing company. In his reply he assured me that the two concrete examples which I had given ¹³⁴ were indeed to be found in their typescript, that “in translation, the style of the translation can sometimes deviate”, that the translators had added the above-mentioned sentence and that the translation had been made “on the basis of the definitive typescript supplied to us, which to our knowledge does not differ from the American version published in the meantime” ¹³⁵. That continues to appear to me, bearing in mind the above-mentioned examples (certainly that of the added sentence), particularly improbable. Whatever the case, this is certainly a most remarkable translation ¹³⁶.

Dehumanizing dehumanization

I study the Nazi camps not because I or those dear to me suffered in them. It became my specialization because, fifteen years ago, fascinated by science and research, I found no sponsor interested in the three other subjects that I wished to research for my Master’s degree. This occurred as a result of and not for that reason. But people continue to look for simple and human causes, clear and unambiguous motives and intentions. These sometimes do exist, but not always. Strong personal motivation is patently obvious in Goldhagen’s book. He is the son and pupil of someone who narrowly escaped the massacre and who has devoted a great part of his life to the attempt to understand what happened to him. This is not a secret, Daniel Goldhagen says it expressly, dedicates his book for this reason to his father and teacher, and mentions it at some length in his expression of thanks and in the notes.

The greater the personal involvement, the greater the likelihood of personalizing, the greater the likelihood of ‘why ?’ questions, intentions and intentionalism. This is neither inescapable nor wrong, but it does involve a greater risk of bias. This is not at all an *ad-hominem* argument. There is so much lacking in Goldhagen’s study that there is no need whatsoever for that kind of inappropriate arguments. The reference to his

133 The above-mentioned transformation of ‘henchmen’ into ‘compatriots’ may at first sight seem to be a toning down on the part of Goldhagen. If one bears his main thesis in mind (not Nazis but ordinary Germans wanted the murder of the Jews), then the opposite becomes clear.

134 The above-mentioned ‘perversity’ and the missing sentence about group pressure.

135 Letter of Rudy Vanschoonbeek, dated 5.12.1996.

136 It cannot be excluded that Goldhagen, owing to the pressure following the publication of his book, has weakened down some expressions that were pitched too strongly for the foreign-language versions. However, this does not apply to the Dutch-language version which was published almost simultaneously with the original. It is remarkable that the subtitle (so significant to insiders) was left out, most probably with the approval of the author.

personal background as, at the least, an additional motivation only serves to explain the enormous passion and emotiveness that can be felt in almost every line of his study and which, where Germans are concerned, is frankly obsessional. It blinds him, distorts his thought, cripples his study. The reference is to be understood in the framework of a functionalistic explanation, not as an intentionalistic, person-directed interpretation. Goldhagen's fierce emotional involvement, his understandable and, from a human point of view, laudable identification with the victims, can in my opinion explain some of his at first sight incomprehensible but essential standpoints.

Goldhagen asserts repeatedly that he will plumb the depths of the perpetrators, refute the misapprehensions and myths which circulate about them, reveal the backgrounds of these ordinary Germans, study the details of their actions and lives, investigate how they came to commit their crimes¹³⁷. Promises which he nowhere keeps, quite on the contrary. He looks away from the perpetrators, concentrates all attention on their atrocities and therefrom deduces their motives as a unique cause. That deed, motive and intention do not always coincide; that intentions and motives may be subject to evolution; that some perpetrators even deduce them from their deeds, start hating the victims because they must kill them, so as to 'be able' to kill them; that hatred of Jews, in other words, can even arise from the deed, as an *a posteriori* justification. All of this, and much more, a scholar ought to know. Not so Goldhagen. Furthermore he deduces the unique motive of the perpetrators from the testimonies of the men of Police Battalion 101, given twenty years after the facts in a juridical context in which they risked punishment. These witnesses therefore had every reason, as Browning (unlike Goldhagen) pertinently remarks¹³⁸, not to breathe a word about their anti-Semitism. Even the interrogators were not interested in it, they did not even inquire about it! This implicit anti-Semitism, clear to everyone, something almost obvious at the time, Goldhagen deduces it decades later from the deeds described by the perpetrators. Moreover, he does this by removing from their testimony anything that might be to their advantage. He taps Browning on the fingers because the latter is of the opinion that "the comments of [some] policemen reflected a different sensibility that recognized the Jews as victimized human beings" (which from a standpoint other than that of Goldhagen is more an aggravating fact than a mitigating circumstance). Totally wrong, fulminates Goldhagen, this does not appear from any of the thousands of pages of evidence about the Police Battalion¹³⁹. The passage he stumbles over is the concluding sentence of Browning's interesting methodological considerations of the scholarly use of late juridical evidence¹⁴⁰. In the disputed phrase Browning is discussing attitudes (to Jews) which can be deduced indirectly and which

137 Among others, p. 5-7, 21-22.

138 BROWNING, p. 199.

139 GOLDHAGEN, p. 556n41.

140 BROWNING, p. 201.

are therefore somewhat more reliable. Having exhaustively discussed the negative attitude of the majority of the men, Browning adds by way of conclusion that there were also others. They do not say themselves that they saw human beings in the Jews, Browning deduces this from the fact that they had noticed that the Jews were starving and were dressed in rags.

Goldhagen pretends to reveal the true motive, which remained hidden from everyone. He calls it a necessary and sufficient cause, reduces the murder of Jews and the Judeocide to dehumanizing hatred of Jews, diminishes everything to a German idiosyncrasy. Actually he states the obvious. Of course many, perhaps even the majority, of the Germans of the time were anti-Semitic. This had already been reported on by the majority of the researchers to whom Goldhagen refers¹⁴¹. Of course this anti-Semitism was stirred up by National-Socialist propaganda and the racial dictatorship. Of course hatred of Jews, ideological and scientific rationalizations (e.g. eugenics and *Rassenhygiene*) played an important role in justifying and legitimizing indifference, murder and looking the other way¹⁴². But anti-Semitism was not a necessary, or a sufficient, or a specifically German cause. There were anti-Semites, including Germans, who did not kill, who even helped Jews. There were murderers of Jews, certainly also among the Germans, who, reluctantly or enthusiastically, harmed or killed Jews without being anti-Semitic, for example because they had an interest in it or because they were ordered to do it. And there were and are many non-Germans who persecute Jews and other discriminated-against minority groups and, where it is legitimized and ordered, kill them.

That 'the Germans' did not see the Jews as human beings is a more than essential point for Goldhagen. He does not see dehumanization as a part of the explanation for the appalling phenomenon that ordinary people commit crimes against humanity. With him dehumanization becomes the kernel of a fierce indictment of 'the Germans'. Goldhagen sees no further than the horror that dehumanization indeed is. He makes it into cause, motive and crime. He overlooks the fact that it is part of the explanation. He rages at Browning but it escapes him that Browning, like others, does not doubt for a moment that the majority of the perpetrators did not see their victims as fellow human beings, that they were for them beyond the sphere of human responsibility and obligation. A polarization between 'them' and 'us', between 'our people' and 'the enemy', that is regrettably common in time of war¹⁴³.

141 For example KERSHAW-1983, p. 239, 273, 277, 370, 378, 384; KERSHAW-1991, p. 157-158; HILBERG-1961, p. 1-17 and *passim*.

142 See HILBERG, WEINDLING, VAN DEN BERGHE-1995 (p. 91-145).

143 BROWNING, p. 101-102.



In front of a photographer, a German soldier takes aim at a Jewish mother and child during the slaughter of the Jews of Ivangorod, Ukraine, in 1942.

- The photograph taken at Ivangorod in 1942 is better known in a reduced frame. Generally only the left half of the photograph is printed. The complete picture is only rarely reproduced (Herzstein, Rutherford, Van Eck...). Most decide deliberately to do otherwise. Goldhagen persisted in this choice (for reprints and translations of his book) after the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum had informed him of the existence of the complete photograph. The effect of the reduced photograph is a more pronounced individualization of the atrocity.
(Reproduction of page 407 of the American and English edition of Goldhagen's book)

Goldhagen has only retained some of the explanations which have to date been given for atrocities committed by ordinary people. In his selection and 'refutation'¹⁴⁴ of the conventional explanations, dictatorship, escalation, war, anti-Semitism and dehumanization of victims (and perpetrators) are missing. He pays no attention to the mountain of studies, so great that it almost defies review, that have been carried out on this subject¹⁴⁵. Even Browning's explanatory chapter¹⁴⁶ has apparently escaped his attention. In addition he detaches from each other the five conventional explanations he has selected, in order then to 'prove' that no single one can explain the atrocities. He next presents anti-Semitism and dehumanization (which he excluded from his selection) as the true motives and only causes. "Dehumanizing beliefs about people, or the attribution of extreme malevolence to them", these are for Goldhagen the necessary and in part sufficient causes for practically spontaneous participation in genocidal slaughter. If people are only "given proper opportunity and coordination, typically by a state". Normally there are inhibiting factors, "such as an ethical code and a moral sensibility which prohibit killing of this sort"¹⁴⁷, but these were missing in ordinary Germans when they were confronted with Jews.

That dehumanization is an inhibition-reducing ideological factor, a facilitating mechanism by means of which from time immemorial 'others' have been placed outside the ethical code and moral sensitivity, is something Goldhagen does not see when Jewish victims are involved¹⁴⁸. Atrocities made possible by dehumanizing anti-Semitism become with him a kind of denouement. He appears to believe this to be a new insight. But this dehumanizing anti-Semitism has already been denounced in innumerable words and pictures¹⁴⁹. One can of course never do so enough, not even the thousands of eyewitness accounts from camp survivors, in which many insist on the cruelty of ordinary Germans, all Germans¹⁵⁰. And that Nazis and their followers saw Jews and others as non-humans was something they did not hide from anyone, on the contrary. Germans, certainly those who were directly involved in the killing, were overwhelmed with the message that Jews were inferior people, *Untermenschen*, non-human.

144 GOLDHAGEN, p. 11-13, 373-393.

145 The list of human sufferings caused by other human beings is virtually endless. Wars are only one example. A random selection out of the abundant research, coming from the most varied disciplines, on *homo furens*: EIBESFELDT, FREUD, FROMM, GRAY, KUPER, LORENZ, MILGRAM, MITSCHERLICH, MOORE, RAUTER, RUSSELL, STORR, ZIMBARDO.

146 BROWNING, p. 208-248.

147 GOLDHAGEN, p. 418-419.

148 See for example, p. 412-418.

149 A few examples of compilations with photos of atrocities committed by ordinary Germans and their henchmen: DAILY MAIL; LEAGUE OF FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY; SCHOENBERNER; VAN ECK; YAD VASHEM.

150 For example Bernard KLIEMER.

What is new is that a scholar, more than fifty years after the events, after decades of scholarly research and many conclusive explanations, succeeds in seeing no further than the atrocity itself. Then dehumanizing anti-Semitism becomes the only, necessary and almost sufficient cause. This has to do with Goldhagen's great involvement and solidarity, his emotional identification with Jewish victims, and with them only. They determine his point of view, presentation of the problem and the kind of questions he asks. It is the victim's perspective ¹⁵¹, characterized by 'why ?'-questions. This humanizing, intentionalizing point of view and interrogation is an expression of the incomprehensible suffering which, without well defined human causes and clearly provable culprits, seems completely meaningless and without reason; and which, because of this irrationality, becomes even more unacceptable and unintelligible. It is this perspective which caused Goldhagen to make elements of the explanation into a unique cause, to redefine what according to him was a unique evil (the Judeocide) as the execution of the will of a people (the Germans).

Empathy and radical identification with victims are almost antipodes of dehumanization. They therefore hamper objective analysis of the causation of evil, prevent understanding or explanation of the fact that the perpetrators saw their Jewish victims not as subjects but as objects - non-humans. For the victims this empathy, putting oneself in the place of the 'other', the perpetrator, is psychologically, morally and humanly an almost impossible task. Some have nonetheless tried to do so, M.A. Arnoni and Primo Levi for example. They came to the painful conclusion that evil in all its forms is human, not German, and that it would be a good thing for us to realize this, every day anew. Goldhagen, looking through the eyes of other victims, says of Levi's attempt that it was "not entirely successful" ¹⁵².

Goldhagen describes in a penetrating way what unimaginable abominations ordinary people are capable of committing. To have drawn the attention of the general public to that once again, is meritorious. But that he 'explains' these atrocities by blaming them exclusively on 'the Germans' is for a scholar a gross fault. Because he can only indict but not understand the dehumanization of the Jews, he has eliminated the Germans in their turn from humanity. That this psychologistic and moralistic reduction of 'human' history has received so much attention is regrettable. It is to be feared that because of it

151 This was also evident at a scientific conference in Jerusalem at the end of November 1996, where Israeli historians found Goldhagen's position ridiculous. Only a survivor of Majdanek gave it a hearing : "I have seen it all and can tell you that Goldhagen is the first historian who has put forward the victims' point of view. Millions of Germans enjoyed killing us..." (*De Volkskrant*, November, 30, 1996, p. 6).

152 GOLDHAGEN, p. 480n39.

many people will be comforted in the delusion that they themselves are different, not ordinary, better¹⁵³.

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