Nazi policy toward the Jews of occupied western Europe evolved in three phases, determined by far-flung strategic concerns of the Third Reich. In the first, from the outbreak of war in the west in April 1940 until the autumn of 1941, all was provisional: Nazi leaders looked forward to a "final solution of the Jewish question in Europe," but that final solution was to await the cessation of hostilities and an ultimate peace settlement. No one defined the final solution with precision, but all signs pointed toward some vast and as yet unspecified project of mass emigration. When the war was over, the Jews would leave Europe and the question would be resolved. Until that time, the various German occupation authorities would pursue anti-Jewish objectives by controlling the movements and organizations of Jews, confiscating their property, enumerating them, and sometimes concentrating them in certain regions. Throughout this phase, the circumstances of Jews varied importantly according to various occupation arrangements worked out by Germany following the spectacular Blitzkrieg of 1940.

In the second phase, from the autumn of 1941 until the summer of 1942, Hitler drew implications from a gradually faltering campaign in Russia: the war was to last longer than he had planned, and the increasingly desperate struggle against the Bolsheviks prompted a revision of the previous timetable and general approach to the Jewish problem. Now Nazi leaders were told to prepare for the final solution itself, which could not be postponed. The Jewish question had to be solved quickly, before the end of the war. Nazi Jewish experts soon adopted the new rhythm, and began urgent preparations. Henceforth, mass resettlement was taken to be impractical, and Jewish emigration was indeed forbidden. By the end of 1941, in a dramatic reversal of policy, Jews were no longer permitted to leave German-controlled Europe. With the exception of Norway and

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1 Western Europe is taken to include France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Italy.

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Denmark, where the number of Jews was unimportant, the Jews were subjected to a concerted series of new harassments, beginning with segregation by means of a yellow star. More Jews were interned in camps, made ready for deportation to the east.

The third phase began in the summer of 1942, and continued to the end of the war in the west. Following a conference of experts in Berlin in June 1942, deportation trains to Auschwitz began to roll from the west, and the facilities for mass murder in that camp began to function. Jews were first systematically deported from France, Belgium, and Holland in the summer of 1942. Norwegian Jews left at the end of the year. Some Italian Jews followed, sent from areas controlled by the Germans after the surrender of the Italian forces to the Allies in September 1943. Only the Jews of Denmark, against whom the Nazis did not move until the latter part of 1943, entirely escaped deportation to the east and murder in the Polish camps. Roundups and deportations continued to the very end of the war, and the death factory of Auschwitz, to which most deportees were sent, continued its work. In the end between 220,000 and 230,000 west European Jews perished, close to 40 percent of those alive in 1939.

The toll varied significantly from country to country, ranging from the Netherlands, where about 75 percent of the Jews were lost, to Denmark, where virtually the entire Jewish community was saved. What governed the scale of killing was, for the most part, the degree to which the Nazis were willing and able to apply themselves to their task. But the occupied people themselves could affect the outcome, as we shall see. Generally, the Nazis were well on the way to accomplishing their goal in the west by mid-1944, and had the war continued for a few more years the remainder of the Jewish population would, in all likelihood, have been destroyed. Railway timetables set the pace for the massacre, and few trains left without their quota of about a thousand Jews. The Danish case stands out, for in that country the government, administration, and public opinion obstructed the German plan. In Italy too Hitler met with frustration, until the fortunes of war brought down the Fascist structure and the Nazis took over. Elsewhere, collaborationist regimes and civil servants did much to clear the way for deportations. In what follows, we attempt to sort out what happened, assessing the forces at work in individual countries.

**THE FIRST PHASE: PROVISIONAL MEASURES, 1940–41**

The war in the west began with the German attack upon Denmark and Norway on April 9, 1940, a campaign which widened a month later,

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2 We have accepted the statistical estimates for Jewish population losses conveniently found in Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1939–45* (New
with an undeclared war against the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Nazi success was spectacular. Within hours, the Danish government surrendered, practically without firing a shot. By the end of April, the Wehrmacht eliminated Norwegian resistance. The Dutch surrendered on May 15, by which time German troops had broken through Belgium, traversed the supposedly impregnable French defenses of the Maginot Line, and at several points crossed the river Meuse. By May 21 German armored units reached the English Channel near Abbeville. A week later the Belgian army surrendered, and the British began evacuating their forces, together with masses of French and Belgian soldiers, from Dunkirk. Following a renewed German offensive into southern and eastern France in early June, the French government abandoned Paris to the invaders, and soon conceded defeat. On June 22, French representatives signed an armistice at Compiègne. For west Europeans, it seemed at the time, the war was over.

Hitler’s planning for a settlement in the west seems to have been extremely vague or nonexistent. On a global scale, as he explained many years before in Mein Kampf, the great objective for the German Reich was the conquest of “living space” in the east. National Socialists, he said, “stop the endless German movement to the south and west, and turn our gaze toward the land in the east.” The purpose of the campaign of 1940 had been to assure a steady flow of raw materials from Scandinavia, to forestall British attacks from the sea and from the north, and also to secure Germany’s western flank by eliminating the military strength of her old enemy, France. Eventually, the decisive battle would be fought against the Soviets, temporarily aligned with Nazi Germany. By the end of 1940, when the Luftwaffe failed to clear the way for an invasion of England, the strategic energies of the Reich turned toward Russia. Hitler issued the secret order to prepare for “Barbarossa,” the attack upon the Soviet Union which would be launched on June 22, 1941.

In view of this priority, the determination of German occupation structures in the newly conquered western territories flowed pragmatically, with a view to an ultimate resolution when the main objective of the Reich had been won. For the moment, ideological priorities jostled for attention with military considerations; various branches of the Nazi hierarchy tried to impose their visions of things, hoping to influence long-range settlement. Hitler resolved the issue, establishing a variety of administrations. Economy was the rule, for the great strategic vocation

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of the Hitlerian regime lay elsewhere. Not much was incorporated into
the Reich—Luxembourg, and Alsace and Lorraine. Not many German
troops, police, or bureaucrats were available for the control of the con-
quered countries—fewer than 3,000 civilians for occupied France in
August 1941, for example, and just over 3,000 for the Netherlands.4
Everywhere in the west the Nazis preferred to see indigenous civil servants
and police remain at their posts and carry on with their jobs, except of
course for a few deemed unreliable who would be weeded out.

Hitler considered the peoples of Norway and Denmark to be racially
akin to the Germans, and he appears to have envisioned their ultimate
independence, albeit under the shadow of an all-powerful Third Reich.
In both countries German civilians represented the interests of the vic-
torius power. Denmark posed few problems. The Danish government
and monarch remained in place, and were permitted a substantial degree
of autonomy, supervised by a diplomatic official, the long-time German
ambassador to Copenhagen, Cecil von Renthe-Fink. Norway, which had
offered a brief but stout resistance, was controlled by a civil governor
or Reichskommissar, the former Gauleiter of Essen and Oberpräsident of
the Rhine province, Josef Terboven. Indicative of the lack of German
planning, however, both the army, the Foreign Office, and even Alfred
Rosenberg’s Foreign Political Office of the Nazi Party attempted to impose
their own models for control of the Norwegian state. After several months
of intrigue and conflict among the various German agencies, internal
affairs in the country were turned over to a Norwegian government ef-
fectively dominated by Rosenberg’s protégé, Vidkun Quisling, a Nor-
wegian politician and leader of a party of the extreme right. Ultimate
control, however, remained in the hands of the Germans, unlike the
situation in Denmark.

In Holland and Belgium, despite the racial affinity which was held to
effect among the German, Dutch, and Flemish peoples, there were concerns
which did not exist in the north. The area was of great military sensitivity,
because of the imminent possibility of an attack upon Britain. Following
the determined resistance to the Wehrmacht in the Low Countries, both
the Dutch government and royal family and the Belgian government fled
to England. In both countries local matters were left to the top civil
servants, but the arrangements for Nazi control differed substantially.
Holland became a “protectorate” (Schutzstaat) presided over by a
Reichskommissar responsible directly to the Führer, the one-time Viennese
lawyer Arthur Seyss-Inquart, previously a deputy of Hans Frank in the
Generalgouvernement of Poland. Belgium, closer to the likely war zone

4 Study prepared by Werner Best, August–September 1941, microfilm series,
and with a mixed population including French-speaking Walloons, came under direct German military control, which extended to the departments of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais in northeastern France. Authority there went to the Wehrmacht commander General Alexander von Falkenhausen and his administrative chief Brigadier General Eggert Reeder.

France was unique, for in that country the Germans established both a military occupation and permitted an autonomous government with a wide degree of independence. A demarcation line separated the northern three-fifths of France, the richest and strategically most important part of the country, where the military governor, General Otto von Stülpnagel, had principal authority, as the Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich (MBF). But the French government, now established in the sleepy provincial resort town of Vichy, was theoretically responsible for the whole of France, even the occupied zone, so long as its decisions did not contradict those of the Germans.

Nowhere in the west were these diverse and hastily improvised arrangements supposed to be permanent. Nazi theorists had not suggested important German designs upon Scandinavia, and racial considerations there projected that local people would eventually prove reliable neighbors without much geopolitical manipulation from Berlin. The Dutch and the Flemish, also considered Nordics, could be expected to rise to preferred status in the new Germanic order, possibly to be incorporated into the Reich itself. With the Latins, however, it was difficult to articulate clear racial guidelines in view of the Nazi alliance with Italy and an entente with Spain. Clearly the French, a despised and hereditary enemy, were a corrupt and degenerate people who could never again be permitted to threaten the Reich. But the means by which they were to be tamed, and the territorial adjustments best suited to do this, were left for the future. Faced with the perplexing issues of peacemaking, made even more murky by racialist nonsense, Hitler preferred to concentrate upon other problems, specifically the renewal of the war in the east.

Jewish policy in the occupied west flowed from these considerations. At issue were some half a million Jews, who had come under German domination after the victories of 1940. Plans for these Jews, together with the final settlement in the west, could wait. The Nazis had other Jews on their minds. The great field for the implementation of racial policy in the first flood of Nazi success was eastern Europe, in Poland, where for the first time Nazism found itself face-to-face with millions

5 The Jewish populations of the various countries occupied in 1940 were approximately as follows: France—350,000 (including Jewish refugees from Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg); Belgium—58,000; Holland—140,000; Denmark—8,000; and Norway—1,800.
of Slavs, in Nazi eyes among the lowest of racial groups, and Jews, the great enemy of Germandom and the Nazi Reich. Here, not in the west, Germany would undertake great movements of population, carve out zones for colonization by Aryan people, and begin the elimination of Jews from European life. Here the SS, and not the Wehrmacht, the Nazi Party, or the Foreign Office, would be given preponderant authority to effect these changes. Here there was to be no peace treaty, as eventually in the west, but rather a progressive building of new living space for the Reich.

This is not to say that there was no long-range goal for west European Jews. Hitler considered them at least as destructive as other Jews, but they constituted less of an immediate obstacle to Nazi goals. In the Hitlerian vision eastern and western Jews were fundamentally the same. Jews were a tremendously powerful parasitic force, eating away at the foundations of state and society, utterly lacking in allegiance to any nation, spreading corruption, demoralization, and degeneration. Their ultimate goal was to subdue the world. Western Jews had assumed the language and culture of the societies in which they lived, but this only helped them mask their unshakeable and biologically conditioned program:

When he speaks French [the Jew] thinks Jewish, and while he turns out German verses, in his life he only expresses the nature of his nationality. As long as the Jew has not become the master of other peoples, he must speak their languages whether he likes it or not, but as soon as they become his slaves, they would all have to learn a universal language . . . so that by this additional means the Jews could more easily dominate them!6

Hitler’s goal, expressed on many occasions, was to rid European society of this plague by whatever means necessary.

In practical terms, Nazi policy for western Jews involved emigration. This was the declared objective of the Reich since the mid-1930s, co-ordinated by a Central Office for that purpose directed by Reinhard Heydrich, head of Himmler’s vast security apparatus, the Reichsicherheitshauptamt (RSHA). Whether through encouraging Jews to leave for Palestine, expelling Jews across German frontiers to other countries, or hounding them out of the confines of the Reich, the objective was that they should depart, leaving their property behind. Nazi leaders even hoped that through forced emigration of Jews anti-Semitism would spread to other western countries, which would come to recognize the correctness

of the German approach. By the outbreak of war, according to contemporary estimates, some 329,000 Jews had emigrated from the Greater German Reich—215,000 from pre-1938 Germany itself, 97,000 from what had been Austria, and 17,000 from Czechoslovakia. More would certainly have left had visas been available for other states, especially America; more would continue to leave, however, despite enormous difficulties, even after war had begun. For Nazi policy continued to favor Jewish emigration even after September 1939.

Considering the new difficulties which war conditions posed for refugees, with limited shipping space and with new barriers to immigration, the Nazi hierarchy set its priorities: Jews from the Reich itself should be the first to go, then Jews from occupied Europe, who should take precedence over Jews from unoccupied areas. On more than one occasion, notably with the dumping of 6,500 hapless Jews from Baden and the Palatinate upon an unwilling Vichy France in October 1940, the Germans sent Jews out of their own hands, deporting them from occupied or incorporated territory. Throughout 1940, the Nazis viewed unoccupied France as a dumping ground for German Jews. In the German Foreign Office Martin Luther later explained that until mid-1941 the Reich had promoted Jewish departures by all possible means. The Foreign Office cooperated with Adolf Eichmann of the RSHA, the man in charge of Jewish emigration, to help clear the bureaucratic path for Jews travelling overland to the Far East. One year after the defeat of the west European countries, when shipping space was extremely limited, Heydrich even halted Jewish emigration from Belgium and occupied France in order to hasten Jewish exits from the Reich.

Since there were few countries willing to receive Jews, Nazi officials speculated with colonization schemes. In the autumn of 1939, immediately after the German defeat of Poland, Heydrich approved a plan to force

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10 Schellenberg to Foreign Office, May 20, 1941, ND: NG–3104.
Jews into a temporary reservation south of the Polish city of Radom, near the river Nisko. The idea seems to have been eventually to push the Jews further east, deep into the Soviet Union, a long-range objective which would require either the diplomatic agreement of the Russians (a most unlikely prospect), or their military defeat. In July 1940, following the victory in the west and after consultations with the Reich Ministry of Interior as well as Party agencies, a Jewish expert in the Foreign Office, Franz Rademacher, revived another idea—to send the Jews to the French colony of Madagascar. Final details could only await a peace settlement. The Foreign Office, Rademacher explained, would play a key role in solving the Jewish problem by building into a peace treaty all necessary arrangements for the Madagascar settlement with the defeated states. Among other considerations, France would have to transfer the island to Germany as a mandate, so that it could be used for this purpose. Simultaneously with the Foreign Office, Heydrich's RSHA was preparing its own version of the Madagascar plan, which typically assigned the SS a predominant role. But both versions depended upon an ultimate peace agreement.

Until these schemes could mature, until the various German agencies could be assigned their respective roles by the Führer, and until hostilities ended, no final decisions could be made. But the general directions seemed plain. Carltheo Zeitschel, for example, the Jewish expert in the German embassy in Paris, referred vaguely in January 1941 to Hitler’s postwar version of “a colonial action . . . in a territory which remains to be determined.” Werner Best, of the military occupation authority in France, explained in April of that year that “the Germans must progressively rid all the European countries of Judaism,” and invited the French to consider “preliminary measures” for the future deportations.

These “preliminary measures” provided the substance of German policy during the first year of occupation in the west. Notably, however, the

12 Rademacher memorandum, July 3, 1940, ND: NG–2586–B.
13 Browning, pp. 35–43.
Germans moved slowly and hesitantly, anxious not to disturb local sensibilities and unable to invest men or resources in preparing an as yet ill-defined operation. Indeed, high-level Nazi strategists were concerned to restrain some of their more zealous representatives in the defeated states. Otto Abetz, the newly appointed German ambassador in Paris, made urgent proposals for a series of anti-Semitic measures: refusal to readmit to the occupied zone Jews who had fled south; the registration of Jews in the occupied zone; marking of Jewish enterprises with a special placard; and the appointment of trustees over Jewish enterprises whose owners had fled. In Berlin, Göering’s and Himmler’s staffs pored over these relatively modest suggestions for weeks, and finally issued a cautious reply: there was no objection to the proposed measures, but they should be carried out by French services as Abetz had recommended, and it was “indispensable” that the German police should watch the French closely. Should any of these moves backfire, the French and not the Germans would bear the odium of failure. The first German ordinance explicitly concerned with Jews in France thus did not appear until September 27, almost two months after occupation began.

Elsewhere, it was the same—caution and delay. The first such ordinance in the Netherlands—forbidding the employment of Jews in the Dutch civil service—was announced on September 30, but this was understood not to be retroactive. The first in Belgium—prohibiting the ritual slaughter of animals—came only on October 23. In Denmark, where there were only about 8,000 Jews, the Germans did not even attempt seriously to pressure the local government, which objected in principle to anti-Jewish measures.

The only west European countries where there appeared a determined and energetic anti-Jewish drive from the very beginning were Vichy France and Norway, where collaborationist governments forged ahead on their own, eager to set their national stamp upon a new political and ideological order. But the situation in the two countries was very different. As part of its widely acclaimed Révolution nationale, capitalizing on a popular disposition to seek scapegoats for a humiliating defeat, Vichy France energetically issued a series of new laws which defined Jews, excluded them from the army and civil service, interned many of them, and set the stage for their elimination from economic life. In Norway,

16 Auswärtiges Amt (AA): Inland IIe 189, passim.
18 Monneray, p. 205.
19 Marrus and Paxton, Vichy France, chapter 1.
the Quisling-dominated government—Nazi-imposed and extremely unpopular—punished the tiny Jewish community of under 2,000 by various measures: removal of Jews from the state bureaucracy, as well as university and high school teaching; removal of books by Jewish authors from the library of Oslo University; and so on. Unlike the situation on Vichy France, these were not the actions of an independent government, acting with widespread popular support. Yet in both countries the Germans were able to let someone else take the public initiative in anti-Jewish policy.

Eventually, the Germans realized some rough similarity in these "preliminary measures" in all west European states under their control with the exception of Denmark. Eichmann's representatives were dispatched from the RSHA to the three countries with the largest Jewish populations to help direct anti-Jewish moves and to be ready to implement the great Jewish evacuation to come—SS officers Theodor Dannecker to Paris, Kurt Asche to Brussels, and Wilhelm Zöpf to The Hague. Significantly, however, the measures in various countries were not closely coordinated with each other, and there was constant care in introducing them to address local conditions and to work with indigenous agencies.

By the end of 1941 the Jews of France, Belgium, and Holland had been defined and counted—the essential preconditions for the prospective deportations. Important Jewish property had been taken away in a process referred to as aryanization. In France, where the Vichy government was eager to take a hand in this spoilation, partly in order to forestall a transfer of Jewish wealth from France to the Reich, the Germans do not seem to have taken much for themselves; in both zones of the country the complex and time-consuming task of aryanization fell largely to a French agency, the Commissariat général aux questions juives, set up by Vichy in March 1941 to coordinate anti-Jewish measures throughout the country. At its head was a militant French nationalist anti-German, the anti-Semitic war veterans leader Xavier Vallat. In Belgium and Holland, on the other hand, where no indigenous political leadership existed to assume responsibility, agents of the German government, banks, and business swarmed through the occupied territories, robbing the Jews even more quickly than did French officials in France. Two-thirds of all Jewish property in the Netherlands, according to one estimate, went directly into German hands.


21 See Marrus and Paxton, chapters 3 and 4.

In all three countries the Nazis saw to the establishment of a local council of Jews, exercising some of the functions of the Judenräte of eastern Europe—taking charge of the dwindling assets of the Jewish community, providing for the increasing number of Jewish indigents, serving the Germans in levying special taxes and other burdens upon Jews, and standing ready to assist the authorities in their ultimate anti-Jewish plans. First to be established, in February 1941, was the Dutch Joodse Raad, set up by German order in the wake of the anti-Nazi disturbances in Amsterdam earlier that month. The Belgian Association des Juifs de Belgique and the French Union générale des Israélites de France both dated from November of that year, the latter decreed by the Vichy regime, again in order to forestall the Germans’ acting on their own.

THE SECOND PHASE: TOWARD THE FINAL SOLUTION, 1941–42

The clearest indication of a new direction in Nazi policy toward the Jews in the west was the ending of Jewish emigration throughout all Europe in the Germans’ grasp. On October 23, 1941 Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller, Eichmann’s superior at the RSHA, passed along an order from Himmler: apart from a few exceptions, no more Jews were to emigrate from Germany or anywhere in occupied Europe.23 Previously, as we have seen, the Nazis took the opposite line, favoring a Jewish exodus from both central and western Europe so long as the Jews’ property was left behind. In the spring of 1941 the Nazi leadership may even have wanted to accelerate departures. In May, for example, Göring ordered Jewish emigration from Bohemia and Moravia speeded up.24 By the autumn, however, Nazi Jewish policy had assumed an entirely new orientation, and a far more drastic solution was envisaged for Jews wherever they were to be found. Final preparations for the solution of the Jewish question had begun.

Occupation officers knew about a change. As early as July 1, 1941 Eichmann’s delegate in France, Theodor Dannecker, had heard about an order from Hitler to Heydrich “to prepare the solution of the Jewish question in Europe.” Even for unoccupied France, the solution was due, “if not today, then in the immediate future.”25 Zeitschel, at the German

23 Müller to SS headquarters in Belgium and France, October 23, 1941, CDJC: XXVb—7.


embassy in Paris, told his superior Otto Abetz in August that the Madagascar plan, while a good idea, was impractical; it would be better to deport all the Jews to the newly conquered territory in the east. Elmar Michel, heading the economic section of the Militärbefehlshaber in France, was informed in December that, following a recent speech by Hitler, the Jewish question was acquiring a new political significance, whereas previously the focus had been on eliminating the Jews from economic life.

Behind these hints of change lay a chilling new definition of the ‘final solution,’ which emerged during the early part of the Nazi campaign in Russia: henceforth a small group of officials began to consider the physical destruction of all European Jews. It is impossible to determine precisely when Hitler decided on this new approach, but it is virtually certain that he set the new course himself. Killing came easily to the Nazis, and a murderous intention may well have slumbered in their anti-Semitic ideology from the beginning. What roused it now to European-wide proportions was the war in the Soviet Union. With this campaign the possibilities for emigration finally appeared unrealistic. Indeed, as the German advance slowed and Soviet resistance hardened, the Reich faced the unwelcome prospect of absorbing millions more unwanted and unexpiable Jews. Moreover, the Russian campaign transformed the character of the Nazi conflict, in which all moral restraint was abandoned. In the Hitlarian world view Russia always represented an especially dark and demonic force—an implacable rival, the home alike of Bolshevism and the Jews, confused in one insane vision. Faced with such a foe, Hitler declared, everything was permitted. War with Russia was not to be an ordinary conflict; describing it as a clash of civilizations against inferior peoples, the Führer gave the Germans license to commit the most savage atrocities, to destroy and lay waste.

New vistas opened in the east for the most grandiose schemes, including the long-postponed final solution of the Jewish question. Orders to murder

26 Zeitschel to Abetz, August 22, 1941, CDJC: V–15.
The Nazis and the Jews

Jews and Communist party leaders in the occupied east were prepared in the spring of 1941. Throughout the second half of that year, as the fighting raged, they were carried out by the Einsatzgruppen, special action squads following the advances of the Wehrmacht. At first the victims were shot. Then, in the autumn, as that proved inefficient, the Nazis experimented with gas, using specially constructed motorized vans using carbon monoxide. Within four months some 300,000 Jews perished by such hurried and sometimes chaotic means. Before the end of the summer it became evident that victory over the Soviets would not be had in six weeks as originally hoped. Killing developed a momentum of its own. Simultaneously, the administrative wheels began to turn in the direction of something wider and more organized: Göring wrote to Heydrich on July 31, commissioning him "to carry out all necessary preparations with regard to the organizational and financial matters for bringing about a final solution to the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe."

Experiments in murder continued. Methods were refined and practical experience accumulated. Improvisation diminished as the Germans began to centralize and coordinate their murderous operations. At the very end of 1941, secret killings using gas took place at Chelmno, north of Lodz, in reconquered East Prussia, and at Birkenau, part of the vast Auschwitz complex in Upper Silesia, former Polish territory now incorporated into the Reich. In the months which followed, Belzec, Sobibor, Majdanek, and Treblinka joined the list. Once in place, the death factories needed people to kill; European-wide coordination was now essential, and the entire continent had to disgorge its Jews.

To achieve this, Heydrich convoked a meeting of interested officials from the SS and from various Reich ministries in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee on January 20, 1942. Heydrich reviewed previous anti-Jewish efforts which had centered upon the emigration of Jews from Reich territory—"the only possible provisional solution." In view of the problems associated with this approach, he explained, Himmler had forbidden more emigration, considering also dangerous wartime conditions and "in view of possibilities in the east." Following Hitler's authorization (Genehmigung), it was said, Jews were now to be evacuated to the eastern territories as a further solution possibility. Heydrich went on to explain

what would happen next—a grisly prospect of huge labor columns, the "natural decline" of the majority, and some undefined special treatment for the tenacious hard core of Jewry which had survived this process of natural selection. Something new was afoot, evident despite the fact that the minutes (kept by Eichmann) fell silent on details. Even now, it was indicated, practical experience was being accumulated which would be of major significance in "the final solution of the Jewish question."  

Western Europe received considerable attention during this meeting, and if one can believe the minutes, it was even to be given top priority in the deportations after the Reich itself and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia: Europe was "to be combed from west to east." The Foreign Office representative Martin Luther recommended postponement of deportation from the "Nordic States," where there were few Jews and where he envisioned difficulties, but saw no such problems for the west. No timetable was proposed, but the tenor of the meeting demonstrated that a period of drift was finished.

East and west posed very different problems. In the former, where Jewry was concentrated, the Nazis were unchallenged and did not foresee difficulties for some time. There was a rich indigenous current of anti-Semitism, which the Nazi invasion had done nothing to arrest.

But in the west, as occupation officials scurried to prepare the deportations, considerable care and diplomacy were necessary. Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Italy all had strong traditions of liberalism and independence, each setting its own particular obstacles in the way of the drastic measures now planned. Here there were local opinion to consider, bureaucracies to manage, and sensitive relationships among various German agencies which required attention. The relatively small numbers of Jews in the west only made matters worse, for the Jews tended to be well integrated in the societies in which they lived and the idea of Jewry posing a mortal threat was sometimes difficult to sustain—especially in Scandinavia, where the Jewish population was minuscule. Apart from Italy, an ally and hence for years able to pursue its own path, France had the only authentic government with which the Germans had to deal. However, France had by far the largest western concentration of Jews—about 350,000 in 1941—and the majority of these lived in the southern zone, out of the Nazis' reach until the German armies moved across the demarcation line in November 1942. More than ever caution was essential in the west, despite the fact that the goal was now clear.

Although Berlin had signalled the necessity for a coordinated effort, this was not immediately achieved, and Nazis on the spot still exercised

local initiative. On his own, the headstrong twenty-eight-year-old Theodor Dannecker broke in front of his colleagues in Brussels and The Hague, urging an exemplary deportation from France in order to nudge the French government into a more aggressive posture. Meeting with Eichmann in March, he secured permission to dispatch a few deportation trains east even before regular schedules from the west had been worked out.32 One transport left later that month, sending the first group of west European Jews to Auschwitz. Hans Rauter, the top SS man in the Netherlands, moved boldly in another direction—the concentration of Dutch Jews prior to deportation. During the second half of 1941 Jewish identity papers in the Netherlands were stamped with the letter "J"; those holding such documents were partially excluded from public life, cleared from the provinces, and, early in 1942, forced into three ghetto districts of Amsterdam.33

Recognizing the need for common action in the west, Nazi officials in Berlin hoped to bring their colleagues in France, Belgium, and Holland together to impose upon all Jews in those countries a distinguishing sign—the yellow star.34 Marking Jews in this way had proven useful in the east, where since 1939 a white armband was made mandatory for Jews in the Generalgouvernement and stars had to be sewn on the front and back of outer garments in parts of Poland incorporated into the Reich. In Germany itself a yellow star was ordered in September 1941. Eichmann’s representatives in Paris, Brussels, and The Hague were summoned to meet together in March 1942, and hope was expressed that authorities would publish the star ordinance in all three countries simultaneously, in a matter of weeks. But the star decree demonstrated how difficult it was to synchronize persecution in countries with different occupation structures and where public opinion did not support anti-Jewish moves of this kind. Unwilling to stir up local opposition, the military authorities in Belgium, notably Brigadier General Reeder, opposed the idea, and refused to accept a low-level SS decision to proceed with its imposition. On the other hand, SS representatives in the Netherlands, after having failed to attend a planning meeting in mid-March, went ahead without further consultation and issued their star decree in April. Delays occurred in France, as some of the Nazis there attempted, in

34 On the imposition of the star, see Adam, pp. 334–8; Léon Poliakov, L’Étoile jaune (Paris, 1949); and Philip Friedman, “The Jewish Badge and the Yellow Star in the Nazi Era,” Historia Judaica 27 (1955): 41–70.
vain, to persuade Vichy to take responsibility for the decree, or at least to see its application in the unoccupied zone. Diplomatic questions also had to be answered, for it turned out that there were in France large numbers of Jews from countries which were allied with Germany, or neutral, or other belligerents. In the end, only the star decrees for Belgium and France appeared together, early in June.

With the marking of the Jews, planning could proceed for the deportations themselves. On June 11 Eichmann assembled his representatives from France, Belgium, and Holland, together with the Jewish expert in the Foreign Office, Franz Rademacher, to consider technical arrangements. Discussions continued to the end of the month. In the first round of shipments, Dannecker agreed to come up with 100,000 Jews from France, equally divided between the two zones. SS officials in Holland would send 40,000, and those in Belgium, 10,000.35 Logistical problems loomed large in all these conversations. The war in Russia proved a tremendous drain upon railway resources, and General Kohl of the Railway Transport Division reported in mid-June that preparations for a spring offensive required a sudden redirection to the Reich of rolling stock which would otherwise have been earmarked for deporting Jews.36 Railway schedules were extremely rigid, and dictated the eventual pace of the final solution in the west. Everything depended on careful planning and close cooperation among the respective occupation authorities.

To assure the smooth functioning of the final solution, it was essential to clear away any obstacles which lay in the path of the SS, to which full operational responsibility had been assigned. In this regard, the military chiefs in Belgium had long given cause for concern. As we have seen, Brigadier General Reeder dragged his feet on the matter of the yellow star, and had to be overruled by superior officers, possibly Himmler himself.37 Although an honorary SS commander (like many high Nazi officials), Reeder was a military administrator of the old school, keen on the Prussian bureaucratic style which found the rounding up and murder of large numbers of civilians extremely uncongenial. Reeder’s staff officer, Franz Thedieck, was a right-wing Catholic and anti-Nazi who scandalized SS purists by attending church in full uniform. For men

35 Dannecker’s account of the meeting is in ND: RF–1217, in Monneray, pp. 126–7.
such as these the final solution was a vexatious scheme of the SS and an
unwarranted challenge to the German military. They disliked the needless
expenditure of effort involved in the project, were reluctant to stir up
opposition locally, and some may even have found the deportations dis-
tasteful from a humanitarian point of view. Fortunately for Reeder, the
two successive Gestapo leaders in Belgium, Karl Canaris and Ernst Ehlers,
were closer to the viewpoint of the military than to that of the RSHA in
the struggle among German agencies for power in Belgium, and they did
not force a confrontation with him over the issue. The practical effect
of such opposition, supported by the anti-Nazi Wehrmacht commander
General Alexander von Falkenhausen, was in the long run probably slight,
in view of the priority given to the Jewish question in Berlin. But it
certainly made planning awkward during the second phase, and led to
subsequent difficulties as we shall see. 38

Himmler managed to circumvent the possibility of such trouble in
France, where the relatively large number of Jews and the existence of
a French government would have made military opposition disastrous.
There had been more than a hint of conflict in the latter part of 1941,
notably in October when the local SS, together with a splinter group of
French extreme rightists, bombed several Paris synagogues (including
that of the rue Copernic, where another bomb exploded exactly thirty-
nine years later). This outraged Militärbefehlshaber General Otto von
Stülpnagel, and although he immediately asserted his preeminence in
matters relating to the maintenance of order, he failed in his effort to
remove the SS-Obersturmbannführer Helmut Knochen, who commanded
the Gestapo in France. 39 In preparation for the final solution, Himmler
eliminated the capacity of Stülpnagel’s military command to direct Jewish
matters. In April 1942 he managed to remove from the Militärbefehlshaber
control over police matters and in the following month dispatched to
Paris as his personal emissary a top SS general, the Höhere SS- und
Polizeiführer Karl Albrecht Oberg. To signal the SS victory, Heydrich
himself inaugurated the new police boss in a ceremony at the Hotel Ritz.
Oberg now entered directly into negotiations with the French police and
helped organize the operations to come. Circumvented in this as well as
other spheres, Otto von Stülpnagel left his post in July, to be replaced
by his cousin, Karl Heinrich von Stülpnagel. Werner Best, head of the

38 De Jonghe, passim; Heinze Hähne, The Order of the Death’s Head: The
Poliakov, “A Conflict between the German Army and Secret Police over Bombings
military administration civil staff in France, who had also been considered too soft by the RSHA, similarly found himself eased out of his job.40

Fewer problems arose for the SS in the Netherlands. It will be recalled that occupation authority there had been turned over to a Reichskommissar, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, who was directly responsible to Hitler. Seyss was a loyal Nazi and a faithful anti-Semite, who took his honorary SS rank seriously and was not looking for trouble. Unlike his military colleagues in France and Belgium, Seyss did not quarrel importantly with the local SS representative and fellow Austrian, Hans Rauter. The Reichskommissar did not pretend to direct police matters. The Wehrmacht chief in Holland was General of the Air Force Friedrich Christian Christiansen, son of a Protestant pastor, whose principal administrative experience before the war was in aviation schools. A rather weak personality, Christiansen also labored under the disability of being the protégé of Göring, which did not count for much after the abysmal failure of the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain. Christiansen’s job was akin to a garrison commander, and he was hardly in a position to interfere with high-level policy.41

Freed from a good deal of military interference, the SS could indulge its inclinations to hound and harass the doomed Jews of the west. In the spring and early summer of 1942, Himmler’s agents in France, Belgium, and Holland issued scores of regulations dealing with Jews—excluding them from public places, confiscating their possessions, and controlling their every movement. The SS may also have prompted the move by Quisling’s government in Norway to register all Jews in June. Thousands were interned, sent to work camps, or otherwise held ready for deportation. The three Jewish councils in the west received ever more humiliating and ominous instructions which they were forced to execute, draining their energies and beginning to undermine their credibility among increasingly bewildered and frightened Jewish communities.

 Everywhere in the west Nazi leaders worried about what would happen when deportations eventually turned to local Jews—those who were long-standing citizens of the countries in which they lived. Occupation authorities were all aware that civil servants and police in western states often distinguished between well-assimilated, fully integrated Jews, and outsiders. German officials frequently reported, as did Werner von Bargen, the Foreign Office man in Brussels, that because of this distinction the locals showed that they had no real ‘‘understanding’’ of the Jewish ques-

tion. To relieve the injured sensibilities of many bureaucrats, the Germans issued a sweeping decree in November 1941 denationalizing every Reich Jew living abroad. This automatically made most Jewish refugees stateless, putting them in the lowest possible category of administered persons—a perception and a legal reality which had evolved throughout Europe since the early 1930s. Continuing to address this problem, Nazi experts and SS officers now enticed local authorities with the attractive proposition: stateless Jews would go first. Bargaining and discussions along these lines continued with indigenous police and civil servants throughout the spring and summer, before the trains started to roll. At the same time, the Foreign Office pondered the endless complications arising with Jews holding passports from countries allied with the Reich.

But following the Wannsee meeting, everyone in authority knew that these were temporary difficulties, soon to be resolved. Before long, all the Jews would go. Eichmann himself went to Paris on June 30 to oversee preparations and apparently stressed this point. Time was short. Franz Rademacher called for a new assistant at the Jewish desk in the Foreign Office in March 1942, because of the press of work: "The stronger the German victory looms, the greater and more urgent becomes the task of the Referat, because the Jewish question must be solved in the course of the war, for only so can it be solved without worldwide outcry."  

THE THIRD PHASE: THE FINAL SOLUTION, 1942–44

The final solution was launched in the west in the summer of 1942, at a high point in the history of Hitler’s Continental empire. But one should not assume from the fact of German hegemony from the Atlantic to the outskirts of Moscow and Stalingrad that the Nazis had unlimited power everywhere in Europe. On the contrary, German forces were stretched thinly, and nowhere was this more true than in western Europe. There were enormous new demands upon German manpower. After the Blitzkrieg stalled in Russia at the end of 1941, Hitler ordered a transformation of the wartime economy of the Reich, building for a longer war which would require a vastly greater production of arms and equipment. Together with increasing calls for men by the armed forces, this meant a growing reliance upon foreign workers in Germany. By the end of 1941 there

42 Von Bargen to Foreign Office, July 9, 1942, ND: NG–5209, quoted in Hilberg, Destruction, p. 387.
44 On Eichmann’s visit see note of Eichmann and Dannecker, CDJC: XXVb–45; Marrus and Paxton, pp. 220, 233–4.
45 Quoted in Browning, Foreign Office, p. 83.
were close to four million of these, eventually to reach more than seven million by mid-1944—20 percent of the German work force—when seven million more were working at home for the German war effort. Despite this heavy reliance on foreign labor there were few Nazi police and troops available in the west to handle the deportations of Jews. Without the extensive cooperation of indigenous police forces and other officials, the Germans were therefore incapable of realizing their plans for the murder of west European Jews.

Help came easily to the Nazis during the early stages of deportation. Although the involvement of the Belgian police seems to have been very limited, the French and Dutch police both rounded up Jews, held them in camps, and saw the convoys off to the east. Frequently, the mere presence of the local gendarmerie helped lull the Jews who were taken away; certainly their participation reduced apprehensions among the surrounding population by making the arrests seem as normal as possible. In addition to the police, who were the most directly involved, there were countless others—prefects and their subordinates, judicial officials, mayors, railwaymen, concierges—who had a part to play. The French government at Vichy authorized their involvement, and indeed welcomed a situation in which French and not German personnel exercised authority in the country. In Belgium and Holland the captive administrations, with each ministry headed by a secretary general, carried on in a similar fashion, although municipal officials in Brussels took a clear stand against persecution after the star was imposed in June. In all west European states there were home-grown fascists to join domestic or German police from the beginning in rounding up Jews—Jacques Doriot’s Parti populaire français in France, Rexist and Flemish bands in Belgium, Anton Mussert’s National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands, and Quisling’s Nasjonal Samling in Norway.

Such collaboration, especially that of ordinary officials who were not particularly sympathetic to Nazism, reflected in part the momentum generated by two years of working with the Germans. During these two years officials had acquired the habits of a new chain of command, sometimes involving unpleasant tasks. Many could not see deporting Jews in any other context. Collaboration also reflected the disposition on the part of local authorities to view refugees harshly, particularly Jewish refugees. Since the Germans encouraged the rounding up of foreign Jews at the start, many bureaucrats lent a hand to what might simply be considered a long-standing national effort to rid their countries of unwanted outsiders. The proportion of foreign Jews was by far the highest in Belgium, where only 6.5 percent of the over 57,000 Jews enumerated by the Gestapo had
Belgian citizenship. About half of the 350,000 Jews in France were noncitizens, as were nineteen percent of Denmark's 8,000 Jews, and almost sixteen percent of Holland's 140,000 Jews. In this regard, French authorities outdid any in Europe except the Bulgarians and possibly the Slovaks, by actually volunteering to hand over such unwanted Jews from unoccupied territory.

Collaboration was never complete, and in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands various officials showed signs of reluctance by the beginning of 1943. Only in Norway did this not pose a serious problem. There were almost twice as many German police in that country (3,300) than there were Jews, and so even when some of Quisling's men turned unreliable for the deportations it was possible to send more than a quarter of the Jews from the port of Bergen to Auschwitz by the end of 1942. Proportionately, deportations went furthest in Belgium during the first three months of convoys, when close to 30 percent of the Jews were taken from that country. Yet many Jews fled successfully from Belgium into France or Switzerland, found hiding places provided by non-Jews, or procured false identity papers with which they could evade capture. Already in December 1942 Martin Luther was pressing for the inclusion of Belgian citizens, a sign that all was not quite going in Belgium as he had hoped. Thanks to the intervention of von Falkenhausen, responding to local appeals, Belgian citizens were not deported for about a year. In September 1943, when the first and only mass roundup of Jews with Belgian nationality occurred, there was once again a loud protest, and General Reeder ordered their release from the assembly camp of Malines. Once native French Jews were included in the shipments, the police in France proved less and less reliable; much the same was true in the Netherlands. Of course, the Germans were able to continue their work despite these problems with local authorities. Yet the job required more

48 Hilberg, Destruction, p. 356.
49 Browning, Foreign Office, p. 145. See Maxime Steinberg, Extermination, sauvetage et résistance des Juifs de Belgique (Brussels, [1979]).
German effort than at the beginning, and the momentum of the first months of the final solution in the west could not be sustained.

The Germans encountered a very serious obstacle in 1943 owing to the position of the Italian government. Anti-Semitism had never struck deep roots among the Italian people, or even in the Fascist party, which had considerable Jewish support and membership during the 1920s and early 1930s. Mussolini himself did not particularly like Jews, but shared the indifference of most of his countrymen to a "problem" that did not exist in their society. In 1938, to bring Italy into ideological tune with the Reich, Mussolini opportunistically adopted a racist posture, and issued laws against the 50,000 Italian Jews. But persecution was mild in comparison with the Hitlerian version, involved many exceptions, and did not have the enthusiastic support of the Italian population.51 When, in November 1942, in response to the Allied landings in North Africa, the Germans swept south across the demarcation line in France, the Italians moved west to the Rhône river and occupied eight French départements. To the Nazis, it was bad enough that the Duce had seemed unwilling to contribute his Jews to the contingents deported from western Europe since the summer of 1942; by the beginning of 1943 it became apparent that the Italians were also shielding French Jews as well. The Italian troops shared much of the anti-German sentiment of the increasingly war-weary Italian population, and in this climate the idea of a racialist crusade on behalf of Aryan civilization seemed even more alien and absurd than before. Italian occupation officers not only refused to turn Jews over to Vichy or the Germans, they also blocked the application of French anti-Semitic legislation. As with their occupation policy for Croatia and part of Greece, the Italians held firm, and by one means or other resisted every effort to bring them into line. Ribbentrop failed to convince Mussolini to change his policy when he visited Rome in March 1943, and the SS ground their teeth over the obstruction they encountered. The Italian zone of France became a haven for some 50,000 Jews, protected by carabinieri against both the Germans and the French police.52

Unfortunately, this protection was not to last. It continued after the fall of Mussolini in July 1943, but could not survive the surrender of Italy to the Allies early in the autumn. The Italians evacuated their zone of France suddenly when the armistice was announced prematurely on September 8, too quickly to implement an evacuation scheme which had been negotiated by an Italian Jew, Angelo Donati. As the Italians left,

the Germans moved in, and the Jews were caught. Very few escaped, and most were sent to Auschwitz in a matter of days.

Only now did the deportation of Italian Jews begin. Despite Hitler’s restoration of an Italian Fascist regime, the phantom Republic of Salò, the renewed persecution and the deportation of Jews from the parts of Italy outside Allied hands was entirely a German operation. Himmler pressed for the application of the final solution, and neither the severe difficulties associated with the worsening war situation in the peninsula nor the widespread opposition to the deportations among Italians and even some Germans on the spot prevented the dispatch of more than 8,000 Jews to the east.53

As in Italy, the Germans knew that the final solution could be extended to Denmark only through their own efforts. Anti-Semitism had flared briefly in Denmark in the wake of surrender, as elsewhere in western Europe, but the Danish political leadership, continuing in place from before the war, remained adamantly opposed to all manifestations of anti-Jewish feeling. Danish Nazis were hopelessly divided among themselves, and politically incompetent. Nazism and anti-Semitism remained unpopular. For three years the Danes collaborated economically with the Reich, in exchange for which the Germans did not interfere in internal Danish affairs. When the German representative in Copenhagen, the traditionalist Cecil von Renthe-Fink, was replaced by the former police and military administrator Werner Best in November 1942, the latter searched imaginatively for some means to move against the Jews without unduly disturbing relations with a cooperative Danish government. No real opportunities appeared, however. Even the ambitious Martin Luther at the Foreign Office, never one to neglect an opportunity for pressing forward with Jewish persecution, felt unable to recommend a change in policy.54

Until the summer of 1943, therefore, the Germans left the Danes alone with their Jews. The Jewish issue suddenly came to a head, however, with the general crisis in Danish-German relations that arose in August 1943. As political and social conditions worsened dramatically throughout the country, due largely to Danish protests against mounting German exactions, the occupation imposed a state of emergency. The government of Erik Scavenius resigned, leaving internal control of Denmark in the hands of its civil service. Taking advantage of the upheaval, Ministerialdirigent Werner Best triggered the persecution of local Jews, with the object of deporting them by sea, from Copenhagen.55

53 See Michaelis, Mussolini and the Jews, chapter 10.
55 Yahil, Rescue, pp. 138–46.
This operation failed utterly, as is well known, and in the end the Nazis were able to lay their hands on only 475 of the close to 8,000 Jews in Denmark. During the first week of October 1943, within a matter of days, thousands of Danes organized a rescue expedition unprecedented in the history of the final solution, which transferred almost the entire community of Jews across the Sund to Sweden in small boats. In part the impotence of the Germans flowed from internal divisions among the occupation authorities. Best failed to obtain the cooperation of the Wehrmacht in Denmark because of his rivalry with its commander, General Hermann von Hannecken, who opposed the deportations, and he failed also to win full authority to seize control of the Danish civil service because he was so distrusted in Berlin, particularly by Himmler, who seems for the moment to have had other priorities in mind than the deportation of a small number of Danish Jews.56 But most importantly, Best failed to get the support of the Danish administration and public opinion, without which the deportation could not succeed.

The source of this failure has often been pondered by those concerned with drawing some moral lesson from the terrible events we have been considering. The most important study of the rescue, by the Israeli historian Leni Yahil, discusses several explanations, but judges the decisive factor to have been “the special character and moral stature of the Danish people and their love of democracy and freedom.”57 Hannah Arendt saw in the Danish response an exemplary demonstration of the efficacy of nonviolent resistance to tyranny. The Nazis, she wrote in Eichmann in Jerusalem, changed their entire posture when faced with open native opposition. “They had met resistance based on principle, and their ‘toughness’ had melted like butter in the sun. . . .”58 While not wishing to depreciate the significance and moral import of the rescue or strategies of nonviolence, it is well to remember that the community of Jews in that country was small, that the haven of Sweden was close (between five and fifteen miles across open water), that the Swedes were willing to accept all the Jews, and that the persecutions occurred in a country already seething with opposition to Nazism. These conditions greatly facilitated the rescue operation, which would, indeed, have been impossible without them.

56 Ibid., chapter 5.
It is also worth considering how the timing of the Nazi attempt to implement the final solution in Denmark differed so sharply from the other cases in western Europe we have been discussing. The attack upon the Danish Jews coincided with a sharp reversal of occupation policy which, after three years of encouraging a model protectorate, suddenly subjected the entire state to humiliating subservience and oppression. The contrast is obvious with other west European countries, where deportations of Jews followed two years of habituation to anti-Jewish laws and policies, introduced at a time of national prostration and soul-searching following an overwhelming military collapse. Defenders of Jews everywhere in Europe claimed that the Jewish fate was part of the general fate of people conquered by Nazism. Unfortunately, it was not always easy to demonstrate how this was so, when the Jews were so sharply singled out. But in Denmark, as Yahil suggests, the victimization of Jews coincided exactly with a sudden political assault upon the entire Danish people.\textsuperscript{59}

Notably, all this happened when the Reich was in retreat, following the German defeats of El Alamein, Stalingrad, and Kursk, and the Allied landings in Italy. By the autumn of 1943, as the British and American air offensive against the Reich reached spectacular proportions, Hitler no longer seemed invincible—a sharp contrast with the beginning of the occupation in 1940, or the launching of the final solution in the summer of 1942. The implication is clear: because of the delay in preparing deportations in Denmark, it was easier for Danes to perceive the attack on Jews as an attack upon themselves and hence to rally to their defense; it was also morally easier to challenge the power of the Reich, which by late 1943 showed signs of its eventual collapse.

Proper timing was obviously crucial to the success of opposition to Nazi Jewish policy. On one rare occasion in western Europe public protest came too soon—the Dutch workers’ strike of February 1941, in solidarity with persecuted Jews. This was the first massive, open opposition anywhere in occupied Europe to Nazi anti-Semitism. The strike was crushed by overwhelming force, and to an important degree the courageous Dutch opposition continued for years to be demoralized by the brutally effective display of German power so early in the occupation. And the strike had no effect whatever on the substance of Nazi anti-Jewish activity in Holland, except perhaps to worsen the plight of native Jews. This resistance therefore seems to have come prematurely; on the other hand, resistance more often came too late to help at all. By the latter part of 1943 the unpopularity of the deportations of Jews caused problems for the Nazis in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, precisely at the moment when protests against the conscription of the indigenous labor force to work in the Reich made local police less reliable. But by that time it was not possible

\textsuperscript{59} Yahil, "Methods of Persecution," p. 299.
to do more than slow the deportation machinery and even then the rescue of Jews does not seem to have ranked high for resistance strategists in selecting targets. In any event, by late 1943 the great majority of Jewish deportees were already dead.

Assessment: The Holocaust in Western Europe

The final solution did not succeed in western Europe because the war ended too soon and the Nazis did not have time to complete their task. Nevertheless, the scale of destruction was staggering—some 40 percent of west European Jews were killed. With 105,000 deported, or 75 percent of its Jews, the Netherlands suffered the greatest losses, both in absolute and relative terms. Belgium came next, with the murder of over 24,000, more than 40 percent of its Jewish population of late May 1940. Norway lost about the same proportion—760 Jews. About 75,000, or 20 percent of the Jews in France were murdered. Italy lost about 8,000, or sixteen percent.60

What accounts for these variations? Let it be clear at the outset that these figures do not reflect any absolute measure of Nazi capability, but rather the results of a program interrupted prematurely by the military reverses suffered by the Reich in the latter part of 1944. For the Nazis' will to destroy the Jews weakened only at the end of that year, among certain top leaders, in the face of impending defeat. So what we are really considering is the relative pace of deportations from west European countries.

We hope that enough has been said to caution against relying on any single factor to explain this. A recent effort by a sociologist to isolate, quantify, and assess the significance of variables which would account for the incidence of genocide in European countries failed notably to produce a clear answer because the work ignored the evolution of German strategy and certain basic problems associated with comparison.61 None of these variables makes sense outside of the particular experiences of individual states. The availability of havens to which Jews could flee, for example, was unquestionably crucial in the rescue of Danish Jews, but did not prevent the proportionately high level of destruction in Norway,

despite the existence of a thousand miles of frontier with Sweden. Concentration of Jews in one place clearly could be dangerous, as in the cases of both Amsterdam and Oslo, where the Jews could easily be identified and rounded up. But concentration in the port of Copenhagen, only a few miles from freedom, helped save the Danish Jews. Without it, the rescue could not have succeeded. Sheer numbers could be important. Clearly the Nazis felt that Denmark, with a mere 8,000 Jews, could wait for the implementation of the final solution, whereas France, with the largest concentration in the west, received a high priority. But in France, owing to the circumstances of the military defeat in 1940 and the peculiar armistice arrangement with the Germans, the Jews remained scattered across a large and, relatively speaking, sparsely settled country. In view of the thin screen of German troops and police available for the job, it is not surprising that the proportion of deported Jews from France was relatively low, despite the valuable aid given the Germans by the Vichy government.

Generalizations break apart on the stubborn particularity of each of our countries. Nowhere is this more obvious than in considering the dominant religious traditions in western European states. Catholic Italy and Protestant Denmark provide the two outstanding cases of consistent popular resistance to the persecution of the Jews. Lutheran theologians made the earliest and most forceful denunciation of anti-Semitism in Denmark, which was decidedly not the case among their coreligionists in Germany. The notable lack of public protest against Jewish deportations from the Vatican, about which there has been so much discussion, does not seem to have affected the deep antipathy toward anti-Semitism among the Italian population, including the Catholic clergy. In the Netherlands, the Catholics and the Protestant Dutch Reformed Church were about equally divided in their numbers of adherents. When they were about to issue a joint public denunciation of the deportations in the summer of 1942, the Germans threatened reprisals unless they desisted. The Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church complied, but the Catholics did not, immediately resulting in the inclusion of Catholic Jews in shipments to the gas chambers.62 There has been anguished discussion about this episode ever since it occurred, but it seems unlikely that one can draw from it any useful generalization about how the behavior of particular denominations might have influenced the final solution.

Each case was different. It makes little sense to attempt to deduce laws about victimization from an examination of so few cases, in which the

degree of particularity was so high. Our conclusion is more modest. It seems plain that German policy, and also the ability of the Nazis to apply their power, were decisive in determining how far the destruction process went by the time of liberation. Nazi policy in the first phase, when the European war was going well for the Germans, was governed by pragmatic considerations. During this period some groundwork was laid for a final solution, the outlines of which remained unclear and the timing obscure. Because conditions for occupation differed, and because of the lack of urgency, the degree to which the Jews were isolated from the surrounding population differed considerably, and remained incomplete. Then, in response to the changed war situation in the east, policy changed: the final solution was defined, and declared a compelling necessity. The second phase involved adjustment to these new circumstances, by sometimes feverish planning and preparations. In the third phase, from the summer of 1942, the plans were implemented. For a time all went according to projection. But by 1943 serious military setbacks suffered elsewhere by the Reich took their toll: the Germans were unable to bring sufficient men and railway transport to keep up the pace of the first deportations and to finish the job quickly. Geography, administrative difficulties, conflicts among German agencies, Jewish resistance, and the actions of some west Europeans all helped to slow the process of deportation at various points. But only the outcome of the military conflict itself could have a decisive effect upon the final solution.

Only the defeat of the Reich brought the trains to a halt. This is especially clear when one observes how long the shipments of Jews continued. The last regular deportation from Drancy, outside Paris, left France for Auschwitz on July 31, 1944, almost two months after the Allied landings in Normandy; two more smaller convoys followed from France, the last departing on August 17, only a week before the first tanks of General Leclerc arrived to liberate Paris. The last convoy from Belgium left Malines for Auschwitz on July 31, with 554 Jews. The last convoy from Holland went to Auschwitz on September 3, with over 1,000 Jews. Deportations from northern Italy continued the longest of all, due to the tenacious and successful German resistance against the Allies: trains went to Auschwitz until October 24, when the death factory in Poland had only days left to function, and on December 14 to Ravensbruck and Flossenburg; a final convoy of Jews went from Trieste to Bergen-Belsen on February 24, 1945.63