

Heinrich Himmler's Racial Agenda for the Captured East and the Complexity of Nazi Terminology

SOURCE: Reichskommissar für die Festigung Deutschen Volkstums. *Menscheneinsatz, Grundsätze, Anordnungen und Richtlinien*. [Berlin: Gedruckt in der Reichsdruckerei, 1940], (Centre for Research Libraries: Global Resources network).

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The following piece will explore the book *Der Menscheneinsatz, Grundsätze, Anordnungen und Richtlinien*. The source was published in December of 1940, a confidential publication printed by the “Reich” printing office and edited by the Office of the “Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums”- meaning the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood. The publication is a series of documents written by different members of the Nazi Party, the most prominent of whom was Heinrich Himmler. The publication can be found in the University of California Libraries of UC Berkeley, UCLA, and the Center for Research Libraries. The latter has an online version.¹ The publication clearly outlines Himmler and the Nazi Party's racial agenda in the East which explains its subsequent use as evidence in the Nuremberg Trials, catalogued as Document 2916-PS.² Through the Library of Congress's archive of documents used during the Nuremberg trials an English translation of the excerpts used can be found. The translated excerpts, originally written by Himmler himself, have since been used as evidence by various historians.

The translated excerpts of *Der Menscheneinsatz* contain a document written by Himmler in September 1940 that became the foundation of the racial register used to classify inhabitants of the invaded Eastern territory. This racial register would become the basis of a series of decrees that permitted the extraction of people identified as being German and their incorporation into the Reich. The SS as well as local police carried out these orders

¹ Reichskommissar für die Festigung Deutschen Volkstums. *Menscheneinsatz, Grundsätze, Anordnungen und Richtlinien*. [Berlin: Gedruckt in der Reichsdruckerei, 1940], (Centre for Research Libraries: Global Resources network).

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² “Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal” Nuremberg 14th November 1945 – 1 October 1946. (Nuremberg, Germany, 1949), 123.

https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/NT_Vol-XXIV.pdf

vigorously, and those who refused to submit to being “Germanised” were sent to concentration camps alongside those deemed as having “inferior hereditary quality” and those with bad political records.³

The editor of *Der Menscheneinsatz* was the “Baubtabteilung I des Reichskommissars für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums,” which is the office of Himmler’s Reich Commissioner position. It is important to note that “Festigung deutschen Volkstums” has been interpreted in a multitude of different ways by translators and thus the name of the office in English is variable. The variations of this include [Office of the Reich Commissioner for the]: “preservation of German Nationality,”⁴ “strengthening of the National character,”⁵ “preservation of German folkdom,”⁶ “enhancement of Germanism,”⁷ and “strengthening of German Ethnic Stock.”⁸ Finally, Wikipedia uses the translation “consolidation of German nationhood.”⁹ This range demonstrates how the unique nature of Nazi terminology makes it very difficult to translate accurately.

Himmler was the Reichsführer of the SS whose power in the Nazi-Party was second only to Hitler.¹⁰ Integral in shaping Nazi racial policy,¹¹ his authority expanded quickly during the war as he was appointed as the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of

³ “Twentieth Day: Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Tribunal”, *Nuremberg Trial Proceedings*, (Nurnberg, Germany, 1945). *Yale: Avalon Project*. 585-7. <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/12-14-45.asp>

⁴ “Twentieth Day,” *Yale: Avalon Project*, (1945), 583.

⁵ Roger W. Barrett and William E. Jackson (eds.), “Germanization and Spoilation,” in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol 1 Chapter 13, (Nuremberg, Germany) 1946. *Yale: The Avalon Project*.

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/chap_13.asp

⁶ William Frischauer, *Himmler: The Evil Genius of the Third Reich*, (The Beacon Press: Boston, 1953), 135.

⁷ Uriel Tal, “On the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide,” in Uriel Tal (In Memoriam by Saul Friedländer), *Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Third Reich: Selected Essays*, (Routledge: New York, 2004), 84.

⁸ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Heinrich Himmler,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, (<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/heinrich-himmler>).

⁹ Wikipedia contributors, "Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Reich_Commissioner_for_the_Consolidation_of_German_Nationhood&oldid=844269762.

¹⁰ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Himmler.”

¹¹ Wikipedia contributors, "Heinrich Himmler," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Heinrich_Himmler&oldid=884331443.

German Nationhood soon after the invasion of Poland in 1939 and thus led the projects for Germanisation in the East, first with Poland and then in the Soviet Union from 1941.¹²

Published in December 1940 the source therefore acts as a narrative of the various decrees and agendas of the Nazi Party towards the conquered East during the first year of World War Two.

Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

- “Twentieth Day: Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Tribunal”, *Nuremberg Trial Proceedings*, (Nurnberg, Germany, 1945). *Yale: Avalon Project*. 583-5. <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/12-14-45.asp>
This is a transcript of the morning session of the 14th December 1945, which saw the trial of Wilhelm Frick and Rudolf Hess – the only two defendants in the Nuremberg trials to refuse to testify on their own behalf. Frick was convicted for waging wars of aggression, crimes against humanity and war crimes, while Hess was charged with crimes against peace and conspiracy to commit other crimes, cleared of charges for crimes against humanity and war crimes. The transcript identifies *Der Menscheneinsatz* as Document 2916-PS (“Twentieth Day, 583), which helped with tracing the source. The trial introduces the excerpt from *Der Menscheneinsatz* (which can be found in *Menscheneinsatz* on pages 91-93) as a decree that formed a racial register for the classification of people in the Eastern territory. The source is explained as forming the basis of a racial register that was later incorporated into a decree signed by Hess and Frick in March 1941.
- “Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression” Volume V. Office of United States Chief Counsel For Prosecution of Axis Criminality (United States Government Printing Office: 1946), 581-587. https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/NT_Nazi_Vol-V.pdf
This is a collection of documents that were used as evidence in the Military Tribunals held in Nuremberg. It includes the English translation of a few different excerpts from *Der Menscheneinsatz* (namely from pages 51-52, 91-93, 103, 117.) The source is documented as Nuremberg Trial Document 2916-PS. The translated excerpts were originally written by Himmler and outline Nazi plans for the re-Germanization of German blood in Poland, including the outline of a racial register and ways that German blood was to be identified in Polish citizens.
- Roger W. Barrett and William E. Jackson (eds.), “Germanization and Spoilation,” in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol 1 Chapter 13, (Nuremberg, Germany, 1946). *Yale: The Avalon Project*. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/chap_13.asp
This source explores various decrees and orders that outlined the Nazi plans for Germanisation and spoliation of the Eastern territories that were conquered. Excerpts from *Der Menscheneinsatz* were used to show the Nazis’ plans for Germanisation in the

¹² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Himmler.”

East, and that they had planned to incorporate Polish citizens deemed to have German blood into the Reich and exclude those deemed not to, by force.

- “Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal” Nuremberg 14th November 1945 – 1 October 1946. (Nuremberg, Germany, 1949), 123.
https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/NT_Vol-XXIV.pdf
This is a document index of the various sources used in the Nuremberg Trials. Interestingly, it states Himmler’s position as “Reich Commissioner for the Enhancement of Germanism” despite the full translation that it is referencing stating it as being “for the Strengthening of the German Character.”
- William Frischauer, *Himmler: The Evil Genius of the Third Reich*, (The Beacon Press: Boston, 1953).
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015012209873;view=1up;seq=9>
This monograph on Himmler was written in 1953 – very soon after the end of the Second World War. It traces Himmler’s life with an overarching emphasis on his role in the racial agenda of the Nazi Party. Frischauer’s writing sets readers up for certain biases, for example during his use of *Der Menscheneinsatz* he adds an exclamation mark that does not appear in the original document, to a quote:
“The removal of foreign races from the incorporated eastern territories is one of the most essential goals to be accomplished in the German East...!” (135).
Considering how soon after the Second World War this was written, it can be understood within the context of the period.
- Robert L Koehl, *German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945*. 1959
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015002251521;view=1up;seq=99>
Koehl primarily uses Nuremberg Trial documents and captured German papers to investigate how the Nazis’ German resettlement programme was implemented. Koehl sheds light on how Himmler’s decree on pages 91-93 of *Der Menscheneinsatz* was used within the party, and what happened to the “German National List” after its creation. He found that in March 1941, six months after the creation of the decree in September 1940, its implementation was taken over by the Ministry of Interior, a transfer that he states only “half-worked” (81). He also states that the decree forced Greifelt’s office, and the party as a whole, to “bring out a unified schedule of nationality criteria in the spring of 1941” (120).
- Uriel Tal, “On the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide,” in Uriel Tal (In Memoriam by Saul Friedländer), *Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Third Reich: Selected Essays*, (Routledge: New York, 2004), 55-86.
Uriel Tal (1928-1984) was a Vienna born Israeli scholar of German politics and ideology. Tal explains how Himmler’s decree (*Der Menscheneinsatz*, 91-93) was carried out by local police who were instructed to identify citizens that they deemed to have German Blood and register them on the *deutsche Volkliste*. He also stresses that those who were chosen and refused to be listed were sent to concentration camps. Tal correctly states the date of the decree, issued on September 12th 1940, not the date that *Der Menscheneinsatz* was published as a whole (December 1940).

- Lynn Nicholas, *Cruel World: The Children of Europe in the Nazi Web*, (New York: Vintage, 2006).

Nicholas brings a narrative on the inclusion of children into the racial policies of the Third Reich, from eugenics to “Germanization,” as well as their lives after the war. Nicholas references the document directly as evidence for the number of Poles being resettled and the conditions experienced during the resettlement project (215).

- Robert G. Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society: A Brief History with Documents*, (Bedford/St Martin’s: New York, 2010), 112-113.

Moeller uses a series of primary sources in an attempt to portray the history of National Socialism through the voices of those who lived through it. Moeller uses the English translation of Himmler’s “On the Re-Germanisation of German Blood,” which he has cited from the Library of Congress archives of the documents used in the Nuremberg trials. The original and untranslated version of the excerpt used is on pages 51-52 of *Der Menscheneinsatz*. Moeller has made a couple of mistakes when using the source. In regards to citation, the document reference reads 2915-PS when it should read 2916-PS. Furthermore, he gives the date that *Der Menscheneinsatz* the book was published, December 1940, instead of the documents original date of creation. The excerpt that he has quoted was in fact written and signed off by Himmler in Berlin on May 9th 1940. It is probable that Moeller found the document in the Library of Congress archives and did not refer back to the original and untranslated version in *Der Menscheneinsatz* as he also did not state the author, which is also omitted in the Congress archives. In *Der Menscheneinsatz* the document is signed by Himmler.

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