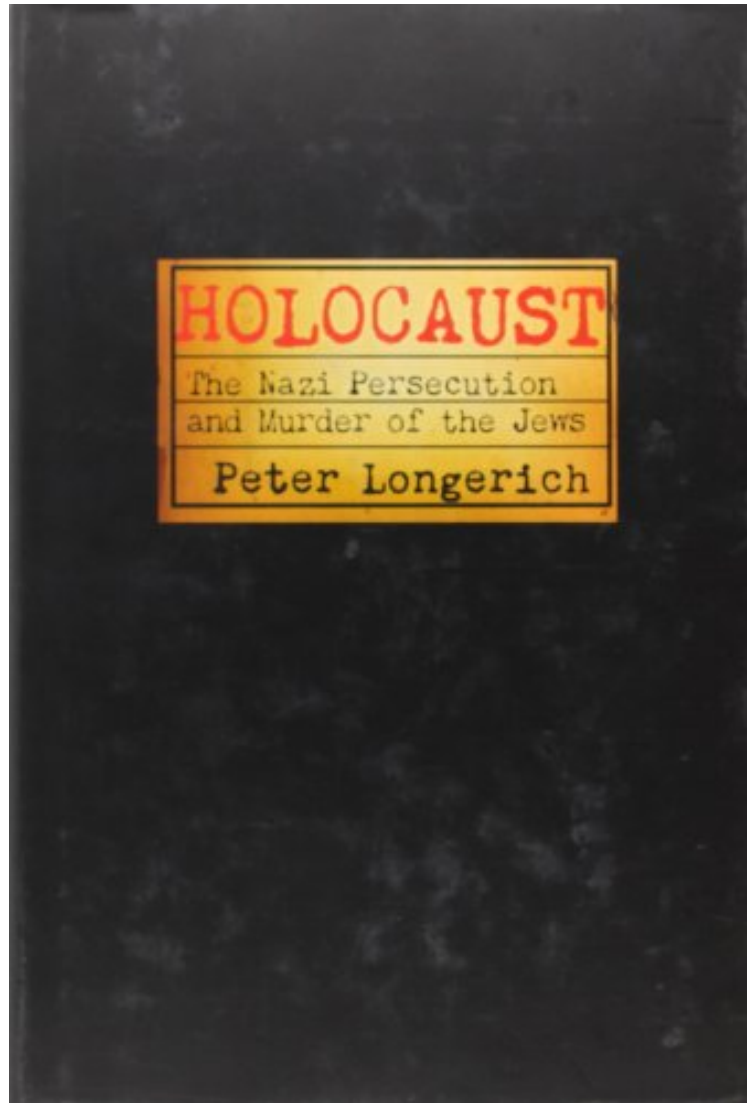


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Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews

Peter Longerich

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Peter Longerich : Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Exceptional academic account By Paul This book is a detailed, scholarly synthesis of the evolutionary process by which the Nazis progressed from persecution to mass murder to complete genocide. It is not meant to be an introduction to the Holocaust or an overview of the topic -- and if some have read or rated this book expecting a more "accessible" overview of the Holocaust have probably chosen the wrong book. I can say, however, that to get a more detailed and compelling account of how the Nazis actually created and

implemented the Holocaust, one probably has to look at very topic-specific scholarly articles or at primary source material. For the topics and themes covered in the book this is probably the best (and most balanced) single volume accounting in existence. The book shows quite convincingly a few main themes: 1) The Nazis did not finally decide upon complete extermination, without any sort of caveats or pretexts, until at least the Spring of 1942. By this point there were gas chambers in operation at Auschwitz, Belzec, and Sobibor, and more than half a million had been killed by shooting in the Soviet Union. In other words, the practical fact of genocide actually came into being before the Nazis actually decided that genocide was their "final" solution. Longerich even makes a case that the Wannsee Conference cannot be definitively argued as a fundamental decision to exterminate 100% of the Jews, because there was still argument and pretext at the time about extermination as a way to select out those fit for forced labor. 2) Hitler was without question the driver of the Holocaust, as many fundamental changes in policy happened after key meetings between him and Himmler (or other functionaries). 3) Goering was much more complicit in the Holocaust, at least up through 1941-1942, than is widely recognized. My only critiques of this book are the following: 1) For all the effort (and evidence) that refutes there having been a single "decision" or "order" that initiated the genocide, Longerich does not address in historiographic terms whether this is even an important question or not. Whether Hitler envisioned a complete extermination program in 1919, 1933, 1939, or not until 1942 is sort of moot. Given enough time, enough power, and an ideology-driven regime that rewarded "audacity" and radicalization, it's sort of inevitable that the butchery and mass murder of 1941 would coalesce with the ideal of a "final solution". In other words, even if in 1941 a complete genocide wasn't envisioned, it was certainly predictable. 2) The Nazi ambitions for deporting all the Jews to Siberia or Madagascar or whatever was fundamentally a genocidal strategy. Longerich softly alludes to this, but the fact is the Nazis had a goal of extermination (albeit more "passive") anyway, even before they invaded the Soviet Union. They had already, especially with the institution of ghettos and even earlier the deprivation of social services, essentially doomed the Jews to attrition by disease and starvation anyway. The plan to deport them in millions to hostile environments, guard them against escape by the SS, and deprive them of any sort of sustenance or livelihood, has to be seen as an exterminatory policy. So the moral commitment to genocide had existed among the Nazis for years. 3) Longerich emphasizes early in the book that the Nazis were never able to really have a positive "pro-Aryan" programme -- so they substituted a negative antisemitic program instead, and this was the cornerstone of their purportedly pro-Aryan policies. But this is no surprise -- the Nazis were antisemites and xenophobes (dating back to pre-WWI in Hitler's case) long before they had articulated a pro-Aryan vision. So it seems to me that pro-Aryan rhetoric was a ruse to effect an antisemitic campaign, not the other way around.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An essential look at the institutionalization and industrialization of murder. By Hans Castorp Phenomenal. A meticulous, succinct analysis of the origins of the Holocaust and its development. It's a solidly academic book, and its catalogue of murders is all the more horrifying for that. 36 of 39 people found the following review helpful. Phenomenal Analysis of the Nazi March to Genocide By S. Heminger Throughout the historiography of Nazi Germany there have been tumultuous and fractious divisions between scholars ascribing to a number of differing views on the development of government sponsored antisemitism, culminating in the Holocaust itself. For the most part those views have been mutually exclusive, hence the fractious nature. These mutually exclusive views and debates initially and most familiarly consisted of those between the 'intentionalist (Hitler's intentions and objectives are the primary focus) vs functionalist (the bureaucratic jumble in the regime led to an erratically radicalization in anti Jewish policy)' schools of thought. More recently the debate has developed into one of whether the periphery (those at the enforcement level of government) or center (the highest echelons of Nazi officials) were most crucial in driving the radicalization of policy. In Peter Longerich's new history, the Holocaust, he answers most emphatically that it was all of the above. His analysis, supported throughout with the kind of primary documents critical to a work of this nature, is full of insight and a fresh manner of reporting the march to genocide perpetrated by Nazi Germany and those within her sphere of influence. In short, he argues that rather than either the functionalist or intentionalist, periphery or center arguments being correct, they all have merit. None of them exist in exclusion of opposing ideas but rather the periphery and center fed each other and Hitler's intentions and the bureaucratic confusion all contributed to the Holocaust occurring as it did. Longerich's analysis, going back as far as the early days of the Nazi regime, is superb and adds fresh insight to initial methods used to marginalize and remove Jews from all manners of social and professional life in Germany. Through a methodical and exhaustive use of the extant contemporary documents he convincingly argues that from the beginning those on the periphery and center worked in parallel, using differing methods aimed towards achieving the same goal and both taking encouragement and feeding off of the other's cues. The center gave general directives and those at the periphery increasingly adjusted their rough intimidation and violent methods in an intuitive manner that usually preceded official legal measures. This he recounts with repeated examples in both economic and social life in Germany up to Kristallnacht and its attendant legal restrictions on Jews shortly thereafter. After this action, which represents the last of three periods identified of pre-war intensification of harassment and legal Entjudung (de-Jewification), the author writes that Nazi antisemitic public policy was at a temporary stand-still as the enfeebled position of the Jews in Germany made it nearly impossible to effectively evoke the image of the terrifying and dangerous threat they had been portrayed as, to that point. Furthermore, Longerich's

narrative, explaining the box which the regime had painted itself into through its removal of Jews from the national economy and the now impossibility of pursuing the voluntary emigration of a people bankrupted by the regime's own actions is thoroughly convincing. Longerich's analysis of the intensification of antisemitic measures of the war-time period, beginning with the invasion of Poland, is equally fascinating. This covers the early attempts at population transfers as embodied by the Nisko plan as well as later forced emigration schemes which are described in comprehensive detail. In general, this section alone is a masterpiece within the field of Holocaust studies and could easily fill a 500 page volume of its own. With his in-depth analysis and unrivaled command of the contemporary sources he clearly demonstrates that, once again, those on the periphery and those at the center were not working against each other and neither did one or the other take the lead. Rather he argues for an interpretation that envisions a type of give and take in which radicalization by those in the field, such as members of the SS, Police battalions or even technical experts from the T4 program took cues from those above and interpreted them into concrete actions. Against this backdrop of increasingly larger scale assaults against Jewish communities in Poland and ever-more-grandiose 'reservation' plans for occupied Poland, Longerich traces the story of how massacres moved from a short-term plan for specific regions of the USSR to a Europe wide extermination plan by mid 1942. Unlike most of his contemporaries in the field of Holocaust studies however, the author eschews the typical search for a date by which a concrete decision to exterminate all the Jews in Europe and perhaps beyond was made. In fact he argues with a great deal of documentation to support it, that the Wannsee conference itself was not the watershed that it has later been made to appear. Longerich's assertion is that although there was a definite agreement that a 'Final Solution' would be implemented, there was no certain plan for implementing it and in fact this only came about gradually throughout the course of the spring and summer of 1942. Painstakingly, he recreates the decisions and events and provides a narrative of the highest quality. Indeed, Dr. Longerich's narrative suffers from only one drawback and that is readability. This is most certainly not a generalist book meant for the a reader with a moderate level of interest in the subject of the Nazi persecution and attempted extermination of European Jewry. This is a work of analysis however, and was never intended to have the emotional impact of a general narrative or memoir. Those looking for the latter would be well served with something along the lines of Dr Saul Friedlander's excellent two volume history. In any case, for those searching for the comprehensive history of the Nazi march to genocide, 'Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews' will likely be that history for years to come. It is truly a phenomenal work of history.

In 1998, Peter Longerich published *Politik der Vernichtung* (Politics of Destruction), a stunning re-examination of the Holocaust. The book received universal acclaim, and is now generally recognized by historians as the standard account of this horrific chapter in human history. Now finally available in English, this masterful history uses an unrivalled range of sources to lay out in clear detail the steps taken by the Nazis that would lead ultimately to the Final Solution. Focusing closely on the perpetrators and exploring the process of decision making, Longerich convincingly shows that anti-Semitism was not a mere by-product of the Nazis' political mobilization or an attempt to deflect the attention of the masses. Rather, from 1933 anti-Jewish policy was a central tenet of the Nazi movement's attempts to implement, disseminate, and secure National Socialist rule--and one which crucially shaped Nazi policy decisions. Holocaust is perhaps most remarkable for its extensive use of the 1930s archives of the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, which re-emerged in the 1990s after years languishing in Moscow. The letters and reports from this archive document in detail the attacks suffered by ordinary Jewish people from their German neighbors. They show how, contrary to what has been believed in the past, the German populace responded relatively enthusiastically to Nazi anti-Semitism. This long-awaited English edition has been fully updated by Longerich himself. It features revised appendices with notes and further reading, as well as a new preface by the author. In addition, Longerich has added new material on the Jewish victims and on the camps and the ghettos, and has extended the story from the end of the war right up to the present day. In all, it is the most complete treatment ever published on the history of this monumental tragedy.

From Booklist*Starred * Skeptics who maintain there is little of value left to learn about the Holocaust should read this superb and provocative work originally published in German in 1998. Now revised and published in English for the first time, it offers relatively new data as well as a convincing thesis regarding the genesis and execution of systematic genocide. Longerich rejects the assertions of so-called structuralists who view the Final Solution as a byproduct of the war, which implies that anti-Jewish policies simply got out of control under wartime stress. Rather, extermination of Jews was the logical result of the virulent race hatred of the Nazis. Furthermore, Longerich shows that this hatred of Jews was prevalent in Germany well before the Nazi ascension to power in 1933. As expected, it permeated parties of the Right, but it infected all aspects of German society. This is a scholarly work relying heavily on letters, reports, and statistics, but it does not neglect the shattering anguish of individual humans. This is a vital addition to the field of Holocaust studies. --Jay Freeman "This wide-ranging, comprehensive analysis of the Holocaust from origins to consequences promises to set a new standard for Holocaust studies."--Shofar "A milestone in holocaust scholarship."--Christopher Browning, author of *Origins of the Final Solution* "Superb, perhaps the best overview there

is." --Mark Roseman, author of *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting*"A formidable work of scholarship...the most authoritative account of the Holocaust that we have."--Jeremy Noakes, editor of *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 4 The German Home Front in World War II*"Skeptics who maintain that there is little left of value to learn about the Holocaust should read this superb and provocative work originally published in German in 1998. Now revised and published in English for the first time, it offers relatively new data as well as a convincing thesis regarding the genesis and execution of systematic genocide. Longerich rejects the assertions of so-called 'structuralists' who view the 'Final Solution' as a byproduct of war, which implies that anti-Jewish policies simply "got out of control" under wartime stress. Rather, extermination of Jews was the logical result of the virulent race hatred of the Nazis. This is a vital addition to the field of Holocaust studies."--Booklist Starred About the AuthorPeter Longerich is Professor of Modern German History and Director of the Research Centre for the Holocaust and Twentieth-Century History at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has published widely on the subject, in English and German, including *The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution*, and *The Systematic Character of the National Socialist Policy for the Extermination of the Jews*. The latter formed part of his Expert Opinion in the notorious David Irving v. Penguin/Lipstadt trial. He is currently working on a biography of SS leader Heinrich Himmler.