

Hitler's Error of Memory: Symptom or Propaganda Ploy?

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to use the psychoanalytic understanding of parapraxes to explore the meaning of apparent errors of memory made by Adolf Hitler in speeches 'prophesying' the destruction of European Jews. Because historians have suggested the likelihood that these errors were deliberate, the concept of intentional parapraxes is explored and utilized. Whether deliberate or not Hitler's errors, it is argued, were a product of a psychological conflict between the wish to take public credit for the mass murder of Jews and the need to keep these crimes secret.

Keywords: Genocide; Hitler; Intentional parapraxis; Parapraxis; Propaganda; Secrets

Introduction

Errors of memory and history

Slips of the tongue, forgetting, errors and other manifestations of psychological conflict occur in the speeches of politicians and historical figures with some regularity. The meaning of these parapraxes is often immediately understood by the speechmaker and by the audience, is often funny, and is rarely of historical significance. An exception to this is an apparent error of memory that Adolf Hitler made in a speech to the Reichstag on January 30, 1941. He misdated another speech he gave to the Reichstag as occurring on September 1, 1939, instead of January 30, 1939. September 1, 1939, was the date of Germany's invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War II. The speech that he misdated 'prophesied' the destruction of the Jews of Europe. It is not clear whether Hitler deliberately made this error or whether it was a true error of memory, a Freudian slip. In addition, Hitler repeated the same error in another speech to the Reichstag on January 30, 1942, and yet again at the Berlin Sportpalast on September 30, 1942. In these instances, he again referred to his 'prophecy' that the Jews of Europe would be exterminated if they (the Jews) started World War II.

It is the purpose of this essay to analyze Hitler's errors as a product of psychological conflict within the historical context of what is known about German policy toward the Jews at the times the errors took place. I will first briefly review Freud's original views about parapraxes and then supplement this with a more contemporary view from cognitive psychology. Intentional parapraxes will also be reviewed as some historians have suggested that these errors were intentional. Then I will discuss Hitler's original 'prophecy' in detail

before presenting the three speeches in which the 'prophecy' was repeated and in which the errors of memory occurred.

Hypothesis

The assertion of this essay is that the errors represent a conflict on Hitler's part in taking responsibility for the extermination of European Jewry on the one hand and keeping the mass murders secret on the other. However, the error and its repetitions are best understood as deliberate and consciously motivated.

Freud's theory of errors of memory

Freud's initial theory of the occurrence of errors of memory appears in Chapter Ten of his monograph *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* [1]. He was seeking an explanation of what he termed *Fehlleistungen*, literally 'faulty actions' or 'faulty functions' and translated by Strachey into English as parapraxes. Freud begins his explanation by distinguishing between motivated errors (*Irrtümer*) and ignorance. He offers three examples of errors of historical and geographical facts which appeared in his *Interpretation of Dreams* [2] and analyzes them utilizing his method of free association. Freud concluded that errors were the result of repressed (or suppressed) thoughts. In the instances of his own parapraxes, he concluded that the repressed thoughts had to do with his dead father.

He writes: My memory of the facts was incorrect only where I had purposely distorted or concealed something in the analysis. Here once again we find an un-observed error taking the place of an intentional concealment or repression [2].

It is important to note that Freud's theory of errors posits a mental conflict over a thought that must be banished from conscious

expression. The thought itself may be either conscious in which case it would now be termed suppressed or unconscious in which case it would be termed repressed. At this point in his work, the term repression denoted defense in general. It is likewise significant that Freud distinguished between intentional concealment and defense. Freud indicated that both a conscious intention to conceal and an unconscious defensive need to do so could cause unnoticed errors. This distinction becomes important in the case of the historical example cited in this essay.

Freud continued his exploration of parapraxes in Part One of his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* [3]. He adds in this work the idea that parapraxes are compromises, half-success and half-failure, for two competing intentions. One of these intentions is manifest and the other may not be. In the parapraxis, an unacceptable intention is both affirmed and denied. Further, on he concludes that the motive for an error of memory is self-protective:

The reason for objecting to remembering a name, we come across a principle...: the memory's disinclination to remembering anything which is connected with feelings of unpleasure and the reproduction of which would renew the unpleasure. This intention to avoid unpleasure arising from a recollection or from other psychical acts, this psychical flight from unpleasure, may be recognized as the ultimate operative motive not only for the forgetting of names but for many other parapraxes, such as omissions, errors, and so on [3].

Here Freud has identified a key motive in making slips and errors to be the avoidance of an unpleasant affect such as anxiety, guilt, and shame.

The understanding of parapraxes is an aspect of psychoanalytic theory which has not been strongly challenged either by newer models of psychoanalysis or by non-analytic critics. Brenner C, et al. [4] summarized the theory of parapraxes in a way consistent with Freud's structural model and consistent with contemporary conflict theory. Brenner describes a parapraxis as a compromise formation and includes in the compromise elements of wish, defense, unpleasant affect, and moral considerations.

Gerber AJ, et al. [5] has further updated the psychological theory of parapraxes by reviewing some current experimental research in cognitive psychology and concluding that there is convergence between this research and Freud's original ideas. He cites the work of social psychologist Wegner DM, et al. [6]. Wegner has studied what he terms "counter intentional errors" and has offered a theoretical framework to explain them. He concludes that when we are consciously trying to suppress a thought or action a part of our cognitive apparatus checks for the thought we wish to exclude. He calls this "ironic monitoring". But under "mental load" we are likely to make exactly the error we were trying to guard against by activating the suppressed thoughts [5]. While this research does not acknowledge either what psychoanalysts would consider the dynamic unconscious or the idea of defense, it does include evidence for mental processes that are descriptively unconscious and operate due to mental conflicts that eventuate in mental errors. While Wegner's studies have generally concerned suppression rather than unconscious defenses, Freud's ideas about parapraxes also included motives associated with suppression. Freud, like Wegner, found that the more we wish to consciously suppress something the more likely it is to come out, in the form of errors, particularly under conditions of mental stress.

Deliberate parapraxes

There is a small but interesting literature on the concept of intentional parapraxes. Freud S, et al. [1] mentioned that both Schiller

and Shakespeare utilized slips artistically and were thus familiar with the psychological meaning of such mistakes. Mahon E, et al. [7] extended Freud's work by carefully examining several contrived parapraxes in Shakespeare's plays. Mahon argued that the slips were used by Shakespeare to give the audience a glimpse into the complex mental lives of some of Western literature's most compelling characters. Mahon EJ, et al. [8] observed the same mechanism in parapraxes in dreams. Here the dreamer disguises a more concealed matter by means of a contrived error.

Berman D, et al. [9] noted that a deliberate parapraxis would seem to be a contradiction in terms because a true slip must be accidental and occasioned by something unconscious. Berman offered examples from George Ensor's biblical commentary, *Janus on Sion* and Edward Gibbon's *Decline and fall of the Roman Empire* to illustrate his ideas about deliberate parapraxes in written work. He concluded that a deliberate parapraxis was "an apparent slip of the pen contrived by an author to activate, or foster, an unconscious intention, fear or attitude". For example, in his Ensor example, using the word 'stupefying' instead of 'stupendous' may be understood as deliberately contrived by the author to ridicule Christianity, not extol it. The conflict the author experienced, according to Berman, was between two conscious intentions: the desire to express the truth and the fear of the Inquisition. The contrived slip is a conscious compromise. Berman argued that the author's motive in a contrived parapraxis is to convey an intention to another without that person or persons necessarily being consciously aware of it. In his example, Ensor is trying to evoke in his readership an anti-Christian bias without having the audience know it is deliberately happening. Berman goes on to support his argument with examples from Gibbon's *Rise and fall of the Roman Empire*. He argued that through a series of intentional parapraxes Gibbon "activated the deep, latent unbelief of his age".

Freud S, et al. [2] offered a similar example in his attempt to illustrate how dream censorship operates [1]. He compared the operation of censorship in the dream process to a political writer who has "disagreeable truths to tell":

If he presents them [disagreeable truths] undisguised, the authorities will suppress his words. A writer must beware of the censorship, and on its account he must soften and distort the expression of his opinion. According to the strength and sensitiveness of the censorship he finds himself compelled either merely to refrain from certain forms of attack, or so to speak in allusions in place of direct references, or he must conceal his objectionable pronouncement beneath some apparently innocent disguise. The stricter the censorship, the more far-reaching will be the disguise and the more ingenious too may be the means employed for putting the reader on the scent of the true meaning [2].

The deliberate parapraxis may indeed be one of those ingenious means to avoid censorship or reprisal and to affirm and deny a disagreeable truth. While the differences between an unconsciously motivated and a deliberate parapraxis are significant, the similarity is that both can be produced by conflicting conscious intentions. In addition, an intention unacceptable to the "censorship" is both affirmed and denied. Hitler's apparent error will be considered in the light of these psychological considerations.

Methodology

The methodology chosen for this paper borrows from that employed in arriving at interpretations in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Arlow JA, et al. [10] described context, contiguity, configuration, repetition, and common theme as the basis of a methodology for the generating of interpretations of the patient's associations. In adapting

this methodology to the concerns of this paper, the mis-dating is considered a symptom. The misdating is considered in the context of what actual events were occurring near, before and after, the timing of the ‘prophecy’ speeches. The repetition of the misdating is considered as well. The contextual and contiguous data come from the historical record as described by the leading historians writing in English on Hitler and World War II. A survey of any mention of the misdating by historians was attempted.

Hitler’s ‘Prophecy’

On January 30, 1939, the sixth anniversary of his accession to power, Hitler gave a two-hour speech to the Reichstag [11]. He spent the first part of this speech listing the accomplishments of his regime that was at the height of its power. Then, halfway through the speech, he turned to the subject of the “Jewish world enemy”. He asserted that the Jews had been defeated within Germany, but that world Jewry confronted Germany from the outside with a desire for revenge and profit. He ran through the familiar accusations that the Jews were responsible for Germany’s defeat in World War I and for the poverty, hunger, and economic crisis that followed the peace treaty. He accused international Jewry of a plot to exterminate all the German People. He then turned to an ominous threat:

I have very often in my lifetime been a prophet and have been mostly derided. At the time of my struggle for power it was in the first instance the Jewish people who only greeted with laughter my prophecies that I would someday take over the leadership of the state and of the entire people of Germany and then, among other things, also bring the Jewish problem to a solution. I believe this hollow laughter of Jewry in Germany has already stuck in its throat. I want today to be a prophet again: if international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, the result will be not the Bolshevization of the earth and thereby the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation [Vernichtung] of the Jewish race in Europe! (Domarus M, et al. [11] quoted in and translated by Herf J, et al. [12].

Hitler was to repeat this prophecy in four speeches carried on radio, and it was read to Nazi officials by aides on two other occasions. Historians are not of one mind about the significance of the ‘prophecy’ at the time it was delivered. Mommsen H, et al. [13] emphasized the propaganda aspect of the speech in the context of ongoing negotiations with the United States over the emigration of German Jews. He saw Hitler’s threat as a rhetorical gesture to facilitate Germany’s demands through a kind of blackmail. Kershaw I, et al. [14] found Mommsen’s argument unconvincing. He places the speech in the context of the evolution of Hitler’s “genocidal mentality” [14], as he moved from rhetoric to action. Kershaw argued that after the anti-Jewish *Reichskristallnacht* pogrom Hitler connected the war he knew was coming with the destruction of the Jews. Herf J, et al. [12] regarded the ‘prophecy’ as providing the “core Nazi narrative” for the war. He argued that Hitler’s ideological basis for the war was self-defense against international Jewry’s desire to exterminate Germany. The late Danish historian Stig Hornshøj-Møller attributed great significance to the fact that a film clip of the ‘prophecy’ was included in the notorious anti-Semitic propaganda film *Der ewige Jude* (Møller SH, et al. [15,16]. He argued that this film and the film *Jud Suss* were designed to prepare bystanders and perpetrators for the extermination of the Jews. The film was first shown to a national German audience on November 28, 1940, two months before the first speech with the mis-dating. The further significance of this date is that plans for the invasion of what Hitler termed the ‘Judeo-Bolshevik’ Soviet Union were being made at this time.

The mistaken dates

On January 30, 1941, Hitler gave a speech in the Sportpalast in which he misdated his original ‘prophecy’ regarding the Jews. In the first part of the speech, he attacked Britain, which he had not been able to defeat quickly, but then turned to the subject of ‘the Jews’ for the first time since the war began. He reiterated his ‘prophecy’ that if international Jewry began a World War they would be exterminated:

Not to be forgotten [sic] is the comment I’ve already made in the Reichstag on September 1, 1939 [actually January 30, 1939], that if the world were to be pushed by Jewry into a general war, the whole of Jewry in Europe would be finished. (Domarus M, et al. [11], quoted in and translated by Herf J, et al. [12].

Kershaw I, et al. [14] saw this speech as directed to Britain and the United States as a blackmail attempt like the original ‘prophecy’. Do what we want, or I will kill the Jews. Herf J, et al. [12] saw the speech as a continuation of Hitler’s serious threat to destroy the Jews. But what is the meaning of the mistaken date? Herf J, et al. [12] saw the mistake as underscoring “the link in his own mind between the war and his policies toward the Jews”. Herf regarded the mistaken dating as unconscious and as providing evidence for Herf’s thesis about the fusion of the war against the allies with that against the Jews. The speech was reprinted in Germany and abroad with the mistake intact. Kershaw I, et al. [14] assessment is similar, but he regarded the mistake as likely intentional:

It was an indication, subconscious or more probably intentional, that he directly associated the war with the destruction of the Jews.

Kershaw also raised the question of why Hitler used his ‘prophecy’ at this particular time. He cited the inclusion of the ‘prophecy’ in Goebbels propaganda film, *Der ewige Jude*, as well as the fact that Hitler had decided to attack the Soviet Union which he did just about 5 months after the January 1941, speech. As mentioned earlier historian Møller SH, et al. [16] argued that the making of *Der ewige Jude* was influential in Hitler’s taking the decision to destroy European Jewry.

The next time Hitler referred to the ‘prophecy’ in a public speech was January 30, 1942, at the Sportpalast. This was the ninth anniversary of his coming to power. This speech began with a diatribe against Churchill and the English. In the familiar logic of Hitler’s view of the war, he declared: “They hate us, and so therefore we must hate them”. He soon turned to the Jews:

On September 1, 1939 [actually January 30, 1939], in the German Reichstag I already asserted-I do not engage in premature prophecies-that this war will not develop as the Jews imagined-namely that the European-Aryan peoples will be exterminated. Rather the result of the war will be the annihilation [Vernichtung] of Jewry. Domarus M, et al. [11] quoted in and translated by Herf J, et al. [12].

The year between the ‘prophecy’ speeches saw an increased radicalization of anti-Jewish policy and the beginning of the ‘Final Solution.’ The most important event had been the invasion of the Soviet Union and the deployment of four mobile killing units called *Einsatzgruppen* (task forces). The *Einsatzgruppen* are thought to be responsible for the deaths of as many as 2.7 million Jews in the Soviet Union [14]. While the initial wave of Jewish killings after the June 22, 1941, invasion targeted Jewish men; a “second sweep” in August involved the killing of men, women, and children. In November of 1941, the death camp at Belzec was established, and in December of the same year gas vans at Chelmno was used to kill Jews from the Lodz ghetto. On January 20, 1942, the conference at Wannsee that was chaired by Reinhard Heydrich of the SS laid out the logistical tasks for

the 'Final Solution.' This suggests that the decision to kill all the Jews of Europe may have been made within the January 30, 1941, and January 30, 1942, time frame.

There was another instance of Hitler's misdating the 'prophecy' and this took place in a speech at the Sportpalast on September 30, 1942. The Allied bombing campaign was underway, and this speech made it seem as if the threat of murdering the Jews was now in retaliation for the bombing of Germany. Hitler referred to his now familiar 'prophecy' and once again misdated it in the same way he had done previously. By this time of this speech the Holocaust was well underway in the death camps in Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. The 'prophecy' was indeed being fulfilled.

The 'prophecy' and its message were so important to Hitler that it appears in slightly different form in his last political testament that was written just before his suicide. He wrote:

It is untrue that I or anyone else in Germany wanted war in 1939. It was desired and instigated exclusively by those international statesmen who were either of Jewish descent or worked for Jewish interest. I have also made it quite plain, if the nations of Europe are again to be regarded as mere shares to be bought and sold by these international conspirators in money, then that race, Jewry, which is the real criminal of this murderous struggle, will be held responsible [17].

Let us now turn back to the main purpose of this essay - to investigate whether the psychoanalytic theory of parapraxes can add to our understanding of Hitler's misdating of his 'prophecy' in public and published speeches on three separate occasions.

Psychology of the misdating

Historians have noted the significance of the appearance of the 'prophecy' in the development of the decision to kill all the Jews of Europe but have not fully explained the significance of Hitler's misdating of the original Reichstag speech. The psychoanalytic understanding of unobserved errors outlined above is that they represent a conflicted compromise involving an intentional concealment or repressed wish due to the unpleasure of guilt, anxiety, or depressive affect. The psychoanalytic view also seems consistent with new findings by Wegner DM, et al. [7] in the field of cognitive social psychology. It is important to note that Freud indicated that errors could occur because of a conflict between two conscious intentions, and Wegner's work indicates the same thing. This is important for our historical example because it eliminates the need for speculation about unconscious motives and relies on evidence from the historical record concerning possible conflicting conscious intentions.

If Hitler's misdating was due to conscious conflict, do we know what that conflict might have been? My assertion is that Hitler's conflict may have involved the wish to reveal to the world that he was responsible for a program to exterminate all the Jews of Europe and the need for secrecy and obfuscation to allay fears of foreign and domestic objections and possible retribution that this intention would bring [2].

(This assertion ignores the issue of possible unconscious intrapsychic conflict in the generation of Hitler's parapraxis whether it was deliberate or not. It seems plausible that Hitler experienced such intrapsychic conflict, but the nature of such conflict requires evidence that is not convincingly available outside the clinical situation. I have chosen to restrict my discussion of Hitler's conflict as involving plausible competing conscious intentions for this reason [2]).

Kershaw I, et al. [14] biography of Hitler spells out the evolution of what he terms Hitler's 'genocidal mentality'. Hitler had a deep and

abiding hatred and fear of Jews, and the original 'prophecy' speech can be read as an exterminationist declaration. It is, however, not clear from the historical record when Hitler took the decision in his mind to exterminate all the Jews of Europe, and it is a matter of historical debate as to when he made the policy decision to do so. There is no written documentation of an order coming from Hitler to exterminate the Jews. We do know, however, that Hitler regarded his hatred of Jews as a boon to mankind:

I feel like the Robert Koch of politics. He discovered the bacillus of tuberculosis. I discovered the Jew as the bacillus and fermenting agent of social decomposition. And I have proved one thing: that a state can live without Jews quoted in Kershaw I, et al. [14].

This statement was made informally on July 10, 1941, shortly after the invasion of the Soviet Union and the deployment of the Einsatzgruppen. Hitler's comparison is grandiose and reflects a wish to be admired and rewarded in the same fashion as the Nobel laureate Koch, the founder of modern microbiology. The other comparison is that Jews are like an infectious disease that must be eradicated. So, one side of Hitler's conflict may be seen as the wish to be admired as the destroyer of a dangerous Jewish enemy.

The other side of the conflict I am suggesting was the need to keep any specific plans to kill civilian Jews secret. We do know that Hitler and the Nazis made significant efforts to keep the murder of Jews secret from the German public and the world at large. Hitler distanced himself personally from the actual decisions leading to the implementation of genocide (Kershaw I, et al. [14]), and he left no paper trail. Kershaw wrote:

For all of his dark hints that his 'prophecy' was being fulfilled. He was consistently keen to conceal the traces of his involvement in the murder of the Jews. Perhaps even at the height of his own power he feared theirs, and the possibility one day of their 'revenge'. Perhaps, sensing that the German people were not ready to learn the deadly secret, he was determined. not to speak of it other than in horrific, but imprecise terms. Even in his inner circle Hitler could never bring himself to speak with outright frankness about the killing of the Jews (Kershaw I, et al. [14].

It is my assertion that Hitler very much wanted to let the world know that he was responsible for the destruction of Europe's Jews and to take credit for what he regarded as an achievement. He was prevented from doing so by political considerations as well as by his own possible fears of retaliation. In making speeches about the conduct of the war his impulse to tell the world exactly what he was doing to rid the world of Jews had to be suppressed. The suppression was only partial resulting in a compromise in which the truth was both affirmed and denied in the form of a 'prophecy'. What is concealed in Hitler's case would be the fact that he had led an effort to murder large numbers of Jews in Poland as well as was making imminent plans to murder even more.

(Again, Hitler's psychological vulnerabilities and personal conflicts likely played a role in his need to suppress his direct role in mass murder. For example, the 'prophecy' speeches are constructed in a descriptively paranoid manner. The responsibility for starting the war and for the destruction of the Jews is blamed on the victims themselves. The Nazi narrative for the war was that 'the Jews are out to destroy us, so we have to destroy them first.' However, Hitler's unconscious motives and psychopathology remain beyond the scope of this paper).

The particular timing

As noted, in the speech of January 30, 1941, he misdated the 'prophecy' speech to the beginning of the war for the first time. Why

do the 'prophecy' and the misdating occur at this particular time? How do they fit with the psychological explanations offered? What specific secrets did Hitler need to suppress?

September 1, 1939, the date of the German invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War II, was also the date that the Germans began killing Polish civilians in large numbers. Operation Tannenberg was a secret ethnic cleansing effort that targeted influential Christian and Jewish Polish citizens. At least 20,000 Christians and Jews were killed in a period of six weeks (see Breitman R, et al. [18] and Rossino AB, et al. [19]). The perpetrators were members of Einsatzgruppen that followed the regular German army into Poland and targeted priests, rabbis, intellectuals, and prominent businessmen. These forces were under the command of Heinrich Himmler of the SS. In some cities these forces had special rosters (Sonderfahndunglisten) of prominent men they wished to kill. The Einsatzgruppe z.b.V under Udo von Woyrsch, for example, entered Poland at Gleiwitz and began terrorizing the Jewish population on its way to the East. Jews were killed in towns along the way to the city of Przemysl on the San River where 600 Jewish men were killed on September 18th and 19th. These murders brought the SS into conflict with the regular army, some of whose members regarded these killings as unprofessional and illegal [19]. 20,000 is a staggering number of civilians killed, and this operation had to be kept secret from the world at large. In Przemysl, for example, the Jewish men who were killed were buried in unmarked mass graves in several rural areas around the city [19].

January 30, 1941, was about 5 months before the Germans broke their diplomatic agreement with Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union. Once again, Einsatzgruppen under the leadership of the SS followed the regular army into the Soviet Union and began killing Jews. This was part of Operation Barbarossa, and unlike in the Poland invasion, the regular army offered no opposition to the mass killing of Jewish civilians. This is often regarded as the beginning of the Holocaust. It is estimated that the Einsatzgruppen killed 2.7 million people by gunfire, most of them Jews [14]. The planning for the invasion of the Soviet Union was approved by Hitler on December 18, 1940, about a month before his "prophecy" speech. This means that the green light was undoubtedly given to Himmler and Heydrich of the SS to put the plans for the mobile killing units in place based on what they had done in Poland in 1939. What is known from the historical record was that by January 30, 1941, Hitler knew about the mass killings in Poland in 1939 and knew of the plans to kill Jews, "partisans", and communist functionaries in large numbers in the Soviet Union under cover of the coming invasion.

This does not mean, however, that by January of 1941 Hitler had given the order to kill every Jewish man, woman, and child in Europe. As mentioned, historians disagree about the date of such an order or even if such an order was ever given. Those historians who believe that Hitler did give an order and that there was an overall coordinated plan for the 'Final Solution' are known as intentionalists. Those historians who believe that the 'Final Solution' developed over time and without central coordination are known as structuralists or functionalists. Kershaw I, et al. [14] reviewed the intentionalist-structuralist controversy and has paid special attention to the timing of a Hitler order for the 'Final Solution.' Kershaw's conclusion is that the 'Final Solution' evolved in stages that included local initiatives but eventually coalesced into a centrally directed program under the direction of Himmler and Heydrich. He believes that there was likely an order from Hitler, but he is unsure about the timing. He carefully reviews the work of various historians who date the likelihood of a Hitler order any time from January of 1941 to January of 1942 when the Wannsee Conference was held [20].

In terms of the assertions of this paper, we have no firm evidence that by the time of the first paraphrasis that Hitler had given the order to destroy all the Jews of Europe. After the speech, though, there was a flurry of activity related to the plans for the Einsatzgruppen to kill large numbers of Jews. Breitman R, et al. [18] carefully documented this activity in his study of Himmler's role in the Jewish genocide. In his chapter on the "Final Solution" Breitman observes, as mentioned above, that Hitler would have wanted to use the invasion of the Soviet Union as a cover for mass killing of Jews in the East. Breitman also suggests that Hitler expected a quick victory over the Soviets to bring all the continent's Jews within his reach. Breitman assembles an impressive series of documented events which all point toward a decision to exterminate Jews in large numbers. For example, in January of 1941 Himmler held a meeting with twelve SS leaders and declared that the purpose of the Russian campaign was to reduce the Soviet population by 30 million people. In the same month administrative officials in the SS headquarters in Berlin were told to prepare for a large police action in broad areas in Russia and the Baltic states. Adolph Eichmann's colleague, Theo Dannecker, declared in January of 1941 that Hitler through Goring and Himmler had given Heydrich the authority to draw up the plan for the 'Final Solution'. In March 1941 Eichmann declared to colleagues that Hitler had given Heydrich the authority for the 'Final Solution' and that it included the Jews of the General Government of Poland. On March 30, 1941, Hitler gave his infamous Commissar Order that allowed the execution of alleged Soviet commissars and "partisans" without trial in the forthcoming invasion. Breitman observed that dating back to 1935 Nazi propaganda had identified Soviet commissars and party functionaries with Jews. In the actual invasion very few commissars were found, but over two million Jews were killed without trial and without objection from the German military. Breitman R, et al. [18] concludes:

There is credible independent testimony of Hitler's formal authorization in January of 1941, of a plan said to be to make Germany Judenfrei before the end of 1942. And was it entirely coincidental that shortly before Eichmann's comments in mid-March the Reich Fuhrer SS [Himmler] had ordered a larger, second camp to be built at Auschwitz?

In addition to these developments, Breitman cited Eichmann's testimony that "whenever Hitler gave a violent speech against the Jews. Something would come down from Himmler". Kershaw has argued that the 'prophecy' was the key metaphor for the 'Final Solution' and in this case served to express the 'wish of the Führer.' Kershaw believes that those under him sought to 'work toward the Führer' once they got the green light to do so and that this is how the "Final Solution" came about. In this case, the 1941 'prophecy' speech could be viewed as both an announcement that Hitler had made the decision to exterminate Jews and was an invitation for those under him to bring his wish about, to fulfill the 'prophecy'.

The misdating

What role does the misdating have in the scenario I have described? As table 1 indicates, the first two 'prophecy' speeches that contained the misdating was shortly preceded by planning major operations (Tannenberg, Barbarossa, and Reinard) whose intent was to kill large numbers of Jews and was followed by that plan being executed. The last speech with the mis-dating was delivered when Operation Reinhard was largely concluded. The original 'prophecy' speech was also followed by plans to kill large numbers of Polish and Jewish civilians that was generally kept secret from the German public when they were carried out. The 'prophecy' speeches that do not have the mis-dating show no such pattern. Thus, as a deliberate paraphrasis the

Table 1: Significant Dates.

January 30, 1939	Original 'Prophecy' speech to the Reichstag
September 1, 1939	Invasion of Poland. Beginning of World War II Operation Tannenberg: 20,000 Jews and Poles killed
December 18, 1940	Plan for the Invasion of the Soviet Union approved by Hitler
January 30, 1941	Misdating 1: Speech at the Sportpalast
June 22, 1941	Invasion of Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa): Einsatzgruppen Deployed and 1.1 million Jews killed
October 1, 1941	Construction of death camps begun
January 20, 1942	Wannsee Conference. 'Final Solution' logistics planned
January 30, 1942	Parapraxis 2: Speech at Sportpalast
March 1942	Operation Reinhard: 1.5 million Jews killed in 100 days
February 15, 1942	'Prophecy' speech; no misdating
September 30, 1942	Misdating 3: Speech at Sportpalast
November 1943	Operation Reinhard concluded: 2.7 million Jews dead
November 8, 1942	'Prophecy' speech; no misdating
February 24, 1943	Prophecy' speech; no misdating

misdating may be understood as a deliberate cover and justification for murders of Jewish civilians in the past as well as for sizeable numbers of murders to come. By placing the 'prophecy' and the beginning of the war on the same date, Hitler may be understood as saying: (1) rhetoric and action are the same, I mean what I say, (2) the murder of Jews is justified by the exigencies of an apocalyptic war between the forces of good and evil, and (3) the Jews are responsible for their own demise because they brought about the war in the first place.

Hitler used the war as a cover once before when he authorized the extension of the T-4 Euthanasia program to include adults as well as children. He wrote an authorization on his own stationary giving Philipp Bouler, the head of Hitler's chancellery and Dr. Karl Brandt, his personal physician, authority to extend mercy killing to adults in October of 1939. However, he deliberately backdated the order to September 1, 1939. This may have been the precedent for the misdating of the prophecy speech. Historians agree that he did this to provide himself the cover of war to justify mercy killing in line with Nazi eugenic ideology (Procter R, et al. [21]; Lifton RJ, et al. [22]). The T-4 program was very unpopular with church officials and the public and was finally ordered discontinued by Hitler in August of 1940. It continued secretly, however, until the end of the war and was responsible for an estimated 275,000 deaths.

It is important to note that beginning with the invasion of the Soviet Union, the ideological justification for the war became an apocalyptic struggle with "Judeo-Bolshevism" that was masterminded by "International Jewry." Herf's [11] careful study of German propaganda attempts to make clear how much effort went into equating Bolshevism with Jews and portraying the war as a struggle against "Jewry." As the ideology behind the war developed, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin were all portrayed as "puppets" of the Jews.

The misdating of the 'prophecy' may be understood as both an affirmation and denial that Hitler was responsible for the murder of huge numbers of Jewish men, women, and children.

Conclusion

My argument supports the idea that Hitler's misdating of his original 'prophecy' speech was a deliberate parapraxis. The evidence is as follows. The fact that the mistake was repeated several times and without correction in press releases and in published versions is suggestive that Hitler wanted it left in. The deliberate backdating of Hitler's euthanasia extension order would seem to be an important precedent for a possible deliberate forward dating of the 'prophecy' speech. In addition, if we consider this speech, as several historians have suggested, to be a green light for radical action against Jews to begin, then the misdating takes on additional deliberate meaning. That is, because rhetoric and action are fused, the war brings about and serves as cover for, the extermination of large numbers of Jews accompanied by an attempt at denial of responsibility at the same time.

Berman D, et al. [9] discussion of deliberate parapraxes fits our example rather well. Berman's own examples included situations involving competing conscious intentions and the desire to unconsciously [4] convince a reader of a controversial, even dangerous point of view. From this perspective, the misdating can be seen as a propaganda ploy on Hitler's part to sway listeners to his position that the destruction of the Jews was justified and inevitable. Radical actions against Jews in Germany were not approved of by significant sections of the German population in 1941 [14]. The reaction to the Reichskrysalnacht pogrom brought significant disapproval in public opinion. Hitler had reason to think that direct knowledge of the mass killing of Jewish civilians in Poland and the Soviet Union would not meet with universal approval either. The war in general, however, was popular. By fusing the 'prophecy' with the beginning of the war, Hitler may have been trying to gain approval for radical action against Jews by appealing unconsciously to his listeners' patriotism and nationalism. He may also have been trying to re-voke the widespread notion that the Jews were to blame for Germany's defeat in World War I. This had been the subject of Nazi propaganda from the beginning of the party's activities. The beginning of the war, in Hitler's view, necessitated the destruction of the Jews to ensure Germany's success in this redemptive world war.

(Berman's use of the term unconscious is ambiguous and perhaps misleading. He may have intended to imply that this process was subtle and undetectable by the audience and thus below the level of conscious awareness [4]).

This kind of propaganda intent fits well with Berman D, et al. [9] model of deliberate parapraxes by which the writer's or speechmaker's intent is to sway his audience to a controversial point of view without taking direct responsibility for it [5]. Hitler's intentions toward the Jews are masked as patriotism and self-defense, and he takes the role of prophet rather than executioner.

(This emotional appeal of propaganda may not be in the conscious awareness of the audience and may be a mechanism by which a dangerous message may be subliminally delivered and both affirmed and denied [5]).

By the time of the second and third parapraxes, January 30, 1942, and September 30, 1942, there is less uncertainty about what Hitler knew. The Wannsee conference had taken place, the death camp at Belzec had been constructed, gas vans at Chelmno had been used to kill Jews from the Lodz ghetto, but the invasion of the Soviet Union had not yielded a quick victory. By the third misdating in the September 30, 1942, the 'Final Solution' was well underway and Jews from all over Europe were being murdered in huge numbers in the death camps of occupied Poland.

Summary

A psychoanalytic understanding of a misdating has been utilized as a contribution to understanding how rhetoric changed to radical action in the murder of millions of Jews during World War II. Hitler's 'prophecy speeches with their misdating errors serve as important markers as the 'Final Solution' evolved to its deadly conclusion.

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