

The Nazi Name Decrees of the Nineteen Thirties*

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I. *Introduction*

NUMEROUS ATTEMPTS have been made by European countries in the past 150 years to ban the assumption by minority group members of names which would suggest their identity with the dominant national group. By far the most ambitious endeavor of this kind was undertaken by the Nazi government in Germany in its deliberate efforts to restrict the Jews of that country to Old Testament given names. This paper will consider the Nazi name decrees of the nineteen thirties as one of the measures by which certain aliens and national "undesirables" were to be distinguished from "true Aryans" in order to facilitate the discriminatory treatment to which the former were soon to be subjected.

To appreciate the full implications of the Nazi name decrees with respect to German Jewry in the nineteen thirties, it is necessary to recall that the Jews of Europe (including Germany) since the Enlightenment were inclined to embrace the names, languages, and behavior characteristics of the countries in which they resided. Indeed, a frequent requirement for acceptance in a number of places in the nineteenth century was the assumption by aliens – Jews and others – of the appropriate names of their adopted countries. Thus, by the time of Hitler's rise to power, discounting the occasional overt discriminatory acts against them which paralleled those against their Gentile compatriots in the aftermath of the several revolutions of the first half of the nineteenth century,

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European Jews enjoyed a large degree of acceptance. In most of the nations of Western Europe, at least, they were so well assimilated by the turn of the present century that it was often quite difficult, on the surface, to distinguish them from their Gentile neighbors.

So widespread and unhindered was their assimilation in Prussia, for example, particularly as evidenced in the ease with which they had succeeded in assuming Prussian identities, that Leopold Zunz, in his famous *Namen der Juden* (1837),¹ was able with little difficulty to influence the repeal of an obscure Prussian bill to force Jews to restrict themselves to Biblical names (an antecedent to the Nazi name decrees) by showing how they had always been free of interference in their efforts to adopt the names of their surroundings.

As elsewhere in Central Europe, the Jews of Prussia shared with their Gentile neighbors a loyalty to the state and almost everything it stood for. Indeed, some of the architects of German unification were Jews, highly respected in this capacity by their colleagues. The emancipation of the German Jews went hand-in-hand with the unification of Germany. They were welcomed openly in nearly all areas of German national life for the contributions which they, by their "peculiar historical talents," were expected to be able to make.² They were generally recognized as a "creative and stimulating force [which] gained impetus with growing freedom [and] wove itself intimately into the pattern of German life."³ Though accounting for only one per cent of the German population, they were "inseparably bound with the growth of Germany and with the fusion of the petty German states into an economic, political, and cultural whole."⁴ By von Schierbrand it could "be truthfully said that the [Jews were] absolutely necessary to Germany's welfare, and . . . without them the empire would not have attained so quickly, if at all, that eminence in trade and industry which is the just pride of the nation as a whole."⁵

It is necessary, however, that the above characterization be qualified. The accord of Jew and Gentile in late nineteenth century

¹ Leopold Zunz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1875-76), pp. 1-82.

² Apt quotation from *Hitler's Ten-Year War on the Jews* (New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs of the American Jewish Congress, 1943), p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Wolf von Schierbrand, *Germany: The Welding of a World Power* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1903), p. 72.

Europe was a merely superficial one. Outwardly there were few distinctions; at least a stranger into an urban community would see none. Yet, full assimilation into the very marrow of German life was largely denied the nineteenth century Jew. The last barrier to full participation in German society could not be overcome, whatever the accomplishments of individual Jews in specific fields of endeavor. The Jew who retained his ethnic (if not religious) identity would never be able to realize 100 per cent integration into German society. And even the converted German Jew, of which there were quite a few – anxious to overcome the occasional disabilities attendant on incomplete assimilation – was never completely accepted. (Hitler, of course, was to put an end to even the limited advantages of conversion when, through his decrees, he identified as a Jew any person with at least one grandparent who was Jewish. A converted Jew was still a Jew, according to Nazi race doctrine.) Full integration eluded the German Jew even before Hitler, for there were always those unwritten restrictions which hung over him, including at least the tacit fear that times would change and even the superficial equality he enjoyed with the larger Gentile population would be denied him.

What it all boiled down to, it seemed to sensitive intellectuals like Jacob Wassermann, was the German's conviction that full identification of the Jew as a German could never occur as long as the Jews thought of themselves as "a people apart." They had made themselves objectionable by their persistent pride in their tradition and their efforts to preserve their identity as "the chosen people." Be it derived from revelation or historic destiny, this attitude had become the "basis of their historic experience – paralyzing their moral development and supplanting it with moral quietism which leads to arrogance and self-righteousness."⁶ Although they may outwardly embrace and identify with the dominant culture, accept the political, economic, and cultural traits of German life, even make significant contributions to the common culture, they, except for some individuals, could never become "unconditionally" German, could never give themselves up entirely to the German *folksggeist*.^{6a}

⁶ Jacob Wassermann, *My Life as a German and a Jew*, tr. S. N. Brainin (New York: Coward-McCann, 1933), ch. 9.

^{6a} *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, the Jews of Germany and the rest of Western Europe, by the time of the Weimar Republic, had generally been lulled into a false sense of security about their status as citizens in the countries in which they lived. They occupied positions of prominence in nearly every area of endeavor – the arts and sciences, trade and commerce and industry, the professions, and even, to some degree, in politics. In spite of the frequent warnings of writers like Wassermann that they be not too complacent about their acceptance by their Gentile neighbors, most Jewish business and professional persons were convinced that nothing serious could impair their security. They felt like Germans (albeit of the Jewish faith) and were sure that their neighbors no longer made any invidious references to them as “a people apart.” They were, in short, (many of them, at least) little prepared for the arrival on the German scene of the Nazi party in the early twenties with its charges of Jewish complicity and treachery in the closing months of the Great War and its accusations that Jews had sold out their “fellow-countrymen” to the Allies for financial gain.

Despite the Republic’s underlying policy to assimilate all German elements into the national life of the country, some Jews began, as early as 1922 with the assassination of Walter Rathenau, to have a most uneasy feeling about their future. With Hitler’s accession to the chancellorship in 1933 the Jews of Germany and everywhere else in Europe had come to realize that good times for them were coming to an end. The Nazis succeeded in convincing most of the German people that the Jews in their midst were mainly responsible for the economic depression which had befallen them and that, for the peace and prosperity of the new Reich, these people had to be put in their place.

The name laws were but one means of dealing with the Jews. It was part of the elaborate yet often seemingly play-by-ear plan of making an invidious distinction between them and Gentiles in the country, partly for the purpose of degrading them in the eyes of their fellow Germans,⁷ but mostly for the purpose of identifying them and singling them out from the mass of Germans with whom they shared the same language, customs, occupations, and, of course, nomenclature.⁸

⁷ William Ebenstein, *The Nazi State* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1943), p. 100.

(Footnote 8, see next page)

II.

The name decrees against the Jews must also be seen in the perspective of a broader set of policies affecting the names of all German nationals. Hitler's Ministry of the Interior in January, 1938 issued a set of decrees which limited the names that could be used by residents of the Reich and set up the provisions by which name-changing could be accomplished. The principle underlying the decrees was the same one which underlay the significance of names in general – that by a person's name his identity could be known. It was necessary for the stability of the country to insure that the name one bore gave evidence of his true racial (i.e., ethnic), national, sexual, and family identity. Thus, non-Aryans were to rid themselves of any suggestion of Germanic identity by replacing their German names with those of their proper racial (read "ethnic") group. Jews were to adopt peculiarly "Jewish"-sounding names (from the Old Testament). True Aryans were to confine themselves to true Germanic names. Others were enjoined by implication, to avoid the names restricted to either the Aryans or the Jews. "Foreign" names, even those borne by loyal German citizens, were to be avoided or, if already possessed, to be changed. Not *all* "foreign" names, though; many of the favorite German given names were, indeed, Hebrew in origin. (*David, Joseph, Daniel, Gabriel, Joachim, Matthias, Adam, Michael, Anna, Deborah, Susanna, Ruth, Eva*, etc. were to continue being used because, "in the popular mind," they were no longer alien but had come to be typically "German names" in their own right.)⁹

⁸ Peter Deeg, in the introduction to the section on the Jewish name codes in the compilation of *The Jew Laws of Greater Germany*, claimed that before their emancipation the Jews were continually striving to adopt and bear Jewish surnames in an effort to promote group unity but that, with emancipation, they began to seek "external anonymity" in order to "find easier access to the life-canal of the German people." Before, one could always identify a Jew by his name, even without seeing him; by the twentieth century, it had become necessary to see him in person to know that he was a Jew. To end this name (and thus identity) concealment by the Jews, the name laws were enacted. (*Die Judengesetze Großdeutschlands*, compiled by Dr. Peter Deeg and edited by Julius Streicher, Nürnberg: Verlag der Stürmer, 1939, pp. 87–88.)

⁹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), p. 120.

The Ministry was also concerned that the true sex of an individual be signified by his name. Thus Aryan boys were to bear only masculine names, and girls were to be given only feminine names. The name Maria, for example, long in common use as a male appellation in some Catholic sections of the country, was now forbidden.¹⁰

The number of names an individual could be known by was also restricted. Only one was preferable; but if the person bore two names, only one could be used and it was to be used consistently.¹¹

The changing of names was also to be rigidly controlled. Before Hitler's assumption of power, name-changing in Germany had been a common and accepted practice even though citizens did not enjoy the inalienable right of change (i.e., there was no common law opportunity to change as the spirit moved an individual).¹² Despite the fact that all changes had to be duly authorized, petitions were more or less freely granted when accompanied by plausible reasons for the change. Objectionable names were considered reason enough, and among the Jews there were many who sought to rid themselves of the names which had been bestowed upon them by acquisitive officials over a century before.¹³ In the late twenties an estimated 4,000 citizens a year appealed to the courts for a change-of-name, and 98 per cent of the petitions were approved. Permission was automatically granted to naturalized foreigners who wished to adopt German names. The two per cent rejections included persons for whom the change-of-name would be a way of avoiding the payment of a debt or those whose financial resources – including credit – had already been used up, or those who wished to assume the name of some member of the nobility.¹⁴

Under the new decrees, however, a would-be changer would have a much harder time convincing the authorities of the legitimacy of his reasons for the change. No longer would a personal dislike of the name be acceptable; nor would its perceived disadvantage in

¹⁰ Wallace R. Deuel, *People Under Hitler* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1942), p. 143. (This and subsequent references to Deuel's book refer to items which appeared in contemporary German newspapers and derived ultimately from official and quasi-official documents. To Deuel, who was the Berlin correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News*, the writer is indebted for translations of materials from those German newspapers cited later in this article.)

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Gustav Otto Warburg, *Six Years of Hitler (The Jews Under the Nazi Regime)* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1939), p. 196.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Associated Press* news release from Berlin, August 24, 1929.

business or social life be an adequate motive.¹⁵ Changes would be allowed only if the name itself was offensive or ridiculous in sound or if the person was a true "Aryan" and sought to rid himself of a "foreign" name. Immediate approval would also be given to all Gentile ("Aryan" or other) applications to change "Jewish names." A number of cases of this sort are on record.

Many German Gentiles in the early thirties possessed what by then had come to be considered "typically Jewish" names. These they sought to change with all deliberate speed. In May of 1935, for example, one *David Wise*, a Württemberg resident, born at a time when Old Testament names were popular among German parents, petitioned a court to be allowed to take the name of *Rudolph Fritsch* who had been the "father of German anti-Semitism." This he was permitted to do when it was made clear to the court that, by the possession of a "Jewish name," he was open to all manner of insults and had been the object of numerous aspersions cast at his background and character. With the assumption of his new name, however, his difficulties were far from over. It was only an official release to the press which rescued him from the anger and excitement of what was believed to be a "Jew's impudence in adopting the name of a patron saint of the Nazis."¹⁶

Not all persons or families with such identifiably Jewish names sought to relinquish them, however. *Morgenstern*, in spite of its having become "typically Jewish" over the years, was still borne by some 15,000 non-Jews who were very sensitive about their identities and the indignities of anti-Semitism to which they were frequently subjected. To defend their name and their clan they organized a *Reichverein der Morgensterne* (German union of the Morgensterns) to establish proof that the Jews had "robbed" them of their name. Of course, some *Morgensterns* knuckled under to the

¹⁵ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, January 12, 1938. It may also be noted, that, in a ruling laid down by the *Reich Music Chamber* (a division of the *Ministry for Popular Enlightenment*) in the fall of 1934, German musicians and their organizations were barred from the use of foreign names. The ruling read, in part: "The inclination of many Germans to consider whatever is foreign as good, and especially as better than the German equivalent, must be fought with all means. In this battle, the German musicians must stand in the front ranks." Violators faced expulsion from the Chamber which was tantamount to professional extinction. (*The New York Times*, October 28, 1934, IX, p. 6:8).

¹⁶ *World News Service* release from Berlin, May 10, 1935.

pressures and changed their name. The business manager of the Union himself became *Uhlig*. He lived in a Jewish district of his city and was especially vulnerable. The police found out about him and branded him a "White Jew." He threatened to sue for libel and was backed by the Union which, on the occasion of an attack upon Uhlig by a local magazine, deluged the publication with letters in his defense. The magazine retracted its critical statement and called upon the *Morgensterns* to bear up under their burden as other Aryans with Jewish names had to do.¹⁷

The name decrees also placed restrictions on the sources of the new names. A changer would be free to take the name of an ancestor; but special consent from the Ministry of the Interior, not easily given, would have to be obtained for the adoption of a name belonging to the nobility.¹⁸ As with given names, Jews were limited to typically Jewish family names, Aryans to Germanic appellations. Translations of "foreign" names into German (e.g., *von Orłowski* into *Adler*) would be forbidden, as would abbreviations of names to Germanicize them (*Borkowski* to *Bork*) and any Germanicized spellings (*Leszczyński* to *Leschinsky*).¹⁹ Some persons would be allowed to add a middle name, preferably their mother's maiden name, if their given name and surname were too common (e.g., *Braun, Becker, Fischer, Lehmann, Mayer, Müller, Schultz*, etc.) in order to facilitate identification. Similarly, hyphenated names would be acceptable if a second family name should be added to an overly common surname.²⁰

In addition to providing the machinery to effect the change of names voluntarily sought by German residents (as is the custom in most countries), the Nazi government made provision for compulsory name-changes or for the cancellation of a previous change. It is in this context that the name decrees affecting the Jewish population of Germany will be considered.

¹⁷ *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* release from Zürich, April 7, 1942. It may be noted, as an aside, that an American *Morgenstern*, Richard Gustav of Philadelphia, was arrested in late March of 1942 for violating the draft law. Arraigned before the U.S. Commissioner in Philadelphia and held for Federal Grand Jury action, he "showed his true colors" by admitting his German heritage and his pride in it and predicting that the Americans would soon be defeated.

¹⁸ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, January 12, 1938.

¹⁹ *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 12, 1938.

²⁰ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, January 12, 1938.

III.

Thus, the name decrees of the late nineteen thirties were designed to identify Jewish individuals and families (i.e., to set them apart from others) in order to facilitate the effectiveness of other acts making invidious distinctions between them and the rest of the population, i.e., special markings like the Star of David affixed to their clothing, the red "J" on German passports, the "Jude" marked obliquely on ration books, the limiting of vehicle license numbers over 350,000 to Jews, etc. The purpose of these restrictions, as well as those relating specifically to names, was to enable all Germans to avoid business and social dealings with Jews with the goal of ultimately easing them out of the mainstream of German life and into a world of their own. They would eventually be excluded from businesses and professions except among their own number. They would then be forced to leave the country for simple economic survival unless they could live off the receipt of the sales of their business or from charity from relatives abroad.²¹ Perhaps as early as 1938 visions of the "final solution" were already influencing the Jewish policy to some extent; the exclusive possession of so-called "Jewish names" would indeed facilitate the rounding up of Jews preparatory to their mass extermination in the gas chambers. But this may be simple conjecture.

The first official suggestion of a coercive name policy directed specifically at the Jews came with a directive (MdI I Z 47/32) issued by Regierungsrat Dr. Hans Globke of the Interior Ministry to Regierungspräsidenten and other regional offices prohibiting the granting of name-changes to Jewish persons for the purposes of securing economic advantages, avoiding anti-Semitism, or conversion to Christianity. This order, which was signed on December 23, 1932,²² a few weeks before Hitler's formal accession to power, pointed out that it was not dishonorable for a Jew to bear a Jewish name and that one should not be permitted to conceal his

²¹ *The New York Times*, August 24, 1938, pp. 1:6, 2:5.

²² Two days earlier, however, Globke had issued the *Ordinance Concerning the Jurisdiction Over the Change of Family and First Names* (Pr. G. S. 1932, p. 361) whose purpose, in part, was to take decisions on name-change applications from the jurisdiction of the courts (i.e., away from "public control") and place them in the administrative realm.

identity by changing his name. The only legitimate reason for a Jewish change-of-name should be to get rid of the by-then still common offensive and ridiculous names which had been arbitrarily bestowed upon Jewish families in the early nineteenth century. These could be replaced, however, only by similar-sounding names (e.g., Issen for Itzig), or those of relatives, or fictitious names, but not to "otherwise existing names."²³

Globke was to reaffirm and toughen his name policies on numerous occasions over the next few years culminating in quite specific directives issued in 1938. Soon after Hitler became chancellor, Globke, in a letter to the Prussian Minister of Justice (April 7, 1933 – I Z allg. 17/33), stated that only persons who could prove they were not of Jewish ancestry would be permitted to replace a Jewish name with a Christian name. Then, in a directive sent to administrative officials on May 15 of that year, he repeated that any change to conceal non-Aryan descent would be disallowed.

On March 6, 1933, at Hitler's request, a proposal was sent by Paul Bang, the Staatssekretär in the Ministry for Economy to Hans Heinrich Lammers, Chief of the Reich Chancellery, recommending the revocation of all changes-of-name granted to Jews since November, 1918.²⁴ To Globke fell the task of determining the extent to which such changes had occurred and recommending ways of getting around the legal requirement that only by the application of the bearer himself could his name be changed. Legislation had to be enacted whereby a name-change could be cancelled by fiat and Jews who had adopted German names would have to return to their original names. However, nearly five years were to pass before this recommendation materialized in the *Law* (of January 5, 1938) *Concerning Changes of Name*.

In the meantime, Globke was also troubled by the growing practice of many non-Aryans being adopted by Aryans or marrying

²³ This decree was Globke's ideological frame-of-reference for his subsequent rules and decisions regarding Jewish names. Globke was to become, in time, the authority in all matters relating to names and name-changing for the Interior Ministry. Most of the data on Globke's contributions herein presented is derived from affidavits accompanying the judgment of the East German Supreme Court against Globke (1963), specifically, a document entitled, "The Participation of the Defendant in the Identification of the Jews by the Amended Regulation of Procedure concerning change of Names" which was made available to me by Professor Hilberg.

²⁴ Hilberg, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

into Aryan families in order to “disguise their descent.” His efforts here led to the *Law* (of November 23, 1933) *Against Abuses in Contracting Marriage and Adopting Children* (RGBl. I P 979 and 1064) which, among other things, decreed that a marriage was invalid if its sole purpose was to allow the wife to take her husband’s family name in order to get rid of her own; and that any adoption occurring after November, 1918, would be nullified if it did not lead to a “family tie corresponding to a parents-child relationship.”

The culmination of Globke’s efforts was the *Law Concerning the Change of Family and First Names* (RGBl I P. 9) which was passed on January 5, 1938 and its *Second Enforcement Decree* enacted on the following August 17 (RGBl I P. 1044).²⁵ The Law provided that family names could be changed on application but only if the reasons were justified, that a hearing would be given to persons directly concerned – including, and especially, the local police authorities and “those whose rights are affected by the change” – to help determine the legitimacy of the change, that a permitted change would include children under the parental authority of the changer and any natural minor children of a female applicant (unless the decision stipulated otherwise)

The most significant section of the Law (Sec. 7) was that which authorized the revocation of any name-change granted before January 30, 1933 if that change could, in any way, be considered inimical to the best interests of the German people. Involving not only the changer himself but any others who had come by the new name through him, this provision would, in effect, make it possible for the first time to prevent Jewish identity concealment by name-change.²⁶ The only name that one could now legitimately bear

²⁵ The following discussion of the 1938 Laws is derived from the Globke trial affidavits cited above, and *The Legislation of Adolf Hitler*, edited by Dr. Werner Hoche, vol. 26 (1938), pp. 95–98; vol. 27 (1938), p. 229; and vol 28 (1938), pp. 86–92.

²⁶ Not quite, however, for there was still the problem of what to do with Jews who had inherited their Germanic names, for revocation could occur only if the name had been changed by the bearer himself. Globke’s solution, at least in the *Deutsch* case, was most direct. When a Jew named *Deutsch*, living in or near Cologne, had refused the request of local authorities to change his name, realizing he could not legally be compelled to do so, Globke, to whom the matter was referred, simply dumped it into the hands of the secret police who had their own ways of encouraging voluntary compliance (v. Globke trial affidavits, *supra*).

would be that which he was "entitled to bear" before the change. The revocation, in any individual case, would be effective on the "delivery of the decree . . . to the person affected."

Similar authorization for the revocation of given name changes was contained in Sec. 12 of the Law which also permitted the Interior Ministry to decree regulations on the naming of children. Such rules were to be laid down in the *Second Enforcement Decree* of August 17 and the relevant instructions which were issued on the following day.²⁷

According to the *Second Decree for the Enforcement of the Name Law* (RGBl I P. 1044), if the Jewish identity of a person was not already self-evident, Jewish males were required to add "Israel" to their given name and Jewish females were to add "Sarah" by the first of January, 1939. This additional name (in the conventional middle name position) was thenceforth to be used with every signature on all official documents and in all official communications.²⁸ Excepted from this order were those comparatively few Jews who already possessed a Hebrew name²⁹ — more specifically a name included on a list prepared by Globke, issued on the following day,³⁰ and published for the German people on August 23.³¹ This

²⁷ The *First Enforcement Decree* (RGBl I P. 12), enacted on January 7, identified the several administrative authorities charged with the enforcement of the Law, permitted the publication of the application of name-change, the revocation of a "non-legitimate" change, and fixed the fee for a change or ascertainment. The *First Decree* also voided any marriage entered into for the purpose of allowing a woman to bear the family name of a man in order "to acquire his citizenship and without the intention of establishing a conjugal life with him." Excepted would be those unions which had lasted at least five years or which had been terminated by the death of a spouse after three years of marriage. Other sections of the *First Decree* have little direct relevancy to the subject of this article and are thus omitted from consideration.

²⁸ A slight difference in the spelling of a typically Jewish name would not require the bearer to include the additive.

²⁹ Of the estimated half million Jews in greater Germany in August of 1938, only a small proportion had distinctly "Jewish" names. Most bore typically German names as did nearly everybody else in the country: *Siegfried, Alfred, Eugene, Lieselotte, Hannelore, Elsa*, etc.

³⁰ *The Circular* I d 42 X/38—5501 b (special edition No. 63 MBlV. 1938 p. 1345ff.). The instructions referred to in the text were officially called the "*Circular Decree of the Reich Minister of the Interior* of August 18, 1938.

³¹ Globke justified his preference for the addition of "Israel" and "Sarah" over the wholesale change of given names by pointing out that the former method

was to be the definitive list of acceptable "Jewish" names – the final answer for all Germans as to what would constitute a "Jewish name." By no means a complete inventory of Old Testament or Hebrew names, it omitted those which were traditionally popular among the Gentiles, especially the Nazi leaders and members of their families (*Maria, Joseph, Anna, Ruth, Jacob*, etc.). No longer would an individual (Jew or Gentile) be in doubt as to the acceptability of his name. By reference to this list, Jews would know whether they already possessed an approved name or if they would have to add the "Israel" or "Sarah." These names, 185 of which were male and 91 were female, were to be spelled in the characteristic "Yiddish" fashion so there would be no mistaking their "foreignness." The guidelines (RMBI iv. P. 1345) also specified that the names of all Jewish children born after January 1, 1939 were to be derived only from Globke's list. The list follows:

(Males)

Abel	Bachja	Efraim	Gdaleo
Abieser	Barak	Ehud	Gedalja
Abimelech	Baruch	Eisig	Gerson
Abner	Benaja	Eli	Gideon
Absalom	Berek	Elias	Habakuk
Ahab	Berl	Elihu	Hagai
Ahasja	Boas	Eliser	Hemor
Ahasver	Bud	Eljakim	Henoch
Akiba	Chaggai	Elkan	Herodes
Amon	Chai	Enoch	Hezekiel
Anschel	Chajin	Esau	Hillel
Aron	Chamor	Esra	Hiob
Asahel	Chananja	Ezechiel	Hosea
Asaria	Chanoch	Faleg	Isaac
Ascher	Chaskel	Feibisch	Isachar
Asriel	Chawa	Feirel	Isai
Assur	Chiel	Feitel	Isboseth
Athalja	Dan	Feiwei	Isidor
Awigdor	Denny	Feleg	Ismael
Awrum	Efim	Gad	Israel

minimized the possibility of difficulty in identifying persons and the necessity of costly and time-consuming corrections on existing official lists and registers. Moreover, Section 12 gave to the Interior Ministry the right to revoke given names "ex-officio" (without the necessity of application-by-bearer), while the only legitimate source of names for succeeding generations of Jewish children was to be the official "Jewish list."

Itzig	Korach	Naum	Sandel
Jachiel	Laban	Nazary	Saudik
Jaffe	Lazarus	Nehab	Saul
Jakar	Leew	Nehemia	Schalom
Jakusiel	Leiser	Nissim	Schaul
Jecheskel	Levi	Noa	Schinul
Jechiel	Lewek	Nochem	Schmul
Jehu	Lot	Obadja	Schneur
Jehuda	Lupu	Orew	Schoachana
Jehusiel	Machol	Oscher	Scholem
Jeremia	Maim	Osias	Sebulon
Jerobeam	Malchisua	Peisach	Semi
Jesaja	Maleachi	Pinchas	Sered
Jethro	Manasse	Pinkus	Sichem
Jiftach	Mardochai	Rachmiel	Sirach
Jizchak	Mechel	Ruben	Simson
Joab	Menachem	Sabbatai	Teit
Jochanan	Moab	Sacher	Tewele
Joel	Mochain	Sallum	Uri
Jomteb	Mordeschaj	Sally	Uria
Jona	Mosche	Salo	Uriel
Jonathan	Moses	Salomon	Zadek
Josia	Nachschon	Saluscha	Zedekia
Juda	Nachum	Samaja	Zephanja
Kainan	Naftali	Sami	Zeruja
Kaiphas	Nathan	Samuel	Zewil
Kaleb			

(Females)

Abigail	Egele	Jedidja	Nachme
Baschewa	Faugel	Jente	Peirche
Beile	Feigle	Jezebel	Pesschen
Bela	Feile	Judis	Pesse
Bescha	Fradchen	Jyske	Pessel
Bihri	Fradel	Jyttel	Pirle
Bilha	Frommet	Keile	Rachel
Breine	Geilchen	Kreindel	Rause
Briewe	Gelea	Lane	Rebekka
Brocha	Ginendel	Leie	Rechel
Chana	Gittel	Libsche	Reha
Chawa	Gole	Libe	Reichel
Cheiche	Hadasse	Liwie	Reisel
Cheile	Hale	Machle	Reitzge
Chinke	Hannacha	Mathel	Reitzsche
Deiche	Hitzel	Milkela	Riwki
Dewaara	Jachet	Mindel	Sara
Driesel	Jachewad	Nacha	Scharne

Scheindel	Simche	Tirze	Zine
Scheine	Slowe	Treibel	Zipora
Schewa	Sprinze	Zerel	Zirel
Schlaemche	Tana	Zilla	Zorthel
Semche	Telze	Zimle	

Globke's instructions also proscribed as given names, ostensibly for any German citizen, those names which, "according to their nature," are not really given names; i.e., family names and "indecent or senseless names." Abbreviations of known given names and the creation of single given names from several such names, however, were acceptable. In general, Aryans were to be given only German first names,³² preferably those already in the family "to promote blood consciousness." Non-German (presumably non-Jewish) children could receive non-German (presumably non-Jewish) first names that had some family significance or characterized the appropriate non-German ethnic group. Germanicized "foreign" names (i.e., those of foreign derivation) "which have been used in Germany for centuries and are no longer (popularly) regarded as foreign" would be acceptable names for Aryan children (e.g., *Hans, Joachim, Julius, Elizabeth, Sofie, Charlotte*). Non-German names (e.g., *Björn, Sven, Knut, and Ragnhild*) which are common in other Nordic countries, but not in Germany, were not to be given to Aryan children along with, of course, names on the "Jewish list."³³

³² One of the justifications for this decree may have been contained in a commentary on a court decision made by Amtsgerichtsrat Massfeller of the Reich Ministry of Justice (in the spring of 1937) that "a satisfactory solution of the question as to what first names may be given a child under present law has not yet been found. Nor has it been possible to bring about a unified legal interpretation." The issue in question was whether a man could change his son's name from *Karl Joachim Ignaz* to *Karl Joachim Ignatius*. When the Registry office refused to allow such a change on the grounds that Latin names were not appropriate for German children, the father appealed to a higher court which ruled that he had the right to select that name for his child; that foreign names may be given and must be registered. This decision was published soon after March 3, 1937 in *Zeitschrift der Akademie für Deutsches Recht*. (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, June 16, 1937).

³³ Another precedent for Globke's definitive instructions may have been the orders which appeared in the official journal of German Standesamt (i.e., registry office) on the issue of permissible given names. Generally speaking, it was noted, German children should be given German names and foreign children, born in Germany, should not be. Exceptions would be permitted when parents could give good reasons. It was considered preferable for German children to receive names which would remind them of their German identity and engender pride in that

In addition, the instructions stated that all applications for given name changes, like those for changes in family names, would have to be justified "by an important reason," such as adoptive parents hoping to assist an already adopted child in "dissolving his ties with the past or to bring him more closely into his new family group." Non-Jews would be allowed to replace names on the "Jewish list" and Jews would be encouraged voluntarily to replace their non-Jewish names with those appearing on that list. The instructions also decreed that given name-changes could be revoked but only if they had been applied for to conceal identity and if typically Jewish names had been replaced by non-Jewish ones.

The changes of name and new names were to be recorded on all official records – birth certificates, marriage licenses, passports, court records, and other documents. Individuals were to testify in writing not later than February 1, 1939 that they had met the provisions of the decree. Identical written statements were to be sent to (1) the office at which one's birth was registered and (2) the appropriate police official in his place of customary residence. (If the person was resident abroad, the written statement would be forwarded to the local German consul.) If a person was unable to handle either written notification, some other member of his family or a legal representative would be obliged to do it for him.

If any of the requirements of the decree were deliberately not carried out, the offender could expect to be punished by imprisonment of up to six months. Inadvertent disobedience of the order would be punishable by imprisonment of no more than one month.

identity. "To give foreign children (presumably Aryan children born abroad and then brought to sojourn in Germany) one German name will bring home to them their relationship to the German people and help them to treasure it when they go to their homeland and to other foreign countries." Names not etymologically German but which had come to be generally accepted as such would be permissible; these would include *Margot*, *Helene*, *Beate*, *Arenate*, *Henriette*, *Alice*, *Charlotte*, and *Dagmar*. *Charles* was forbidden unless it was a traditional family name, as in Huguenot families. Finally, eccentric or seemingly offensive names were proscribed for everyone. (As translated by and published in *The Times*, April 3, 1936.) This section on permissible and prohibited given names was also anticipated in an order officially issued by Interior Minister Frick in May of 1937 and published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on May 13. In addition, a month later, Frick revised an order issued in 1933 that the name "Hitler" might not be used as a given name. He made this applicable to the surnames of "other personalities in political life." (*Ibid.*, June 19, 1937.)

One month's imprisonment or a fine would be meted out to any person who, deliberately *or* by negligence, failed to issue the proper written notifications to the appropriate authorities. In the event any question arose about a name or its approvability the decision of the Interior Ministry would be final.

The name rules were to apply to all German citizens as well as stateless residents. However, foreign nationals – Jews and others – could freely choose their own given names, except for “indecent or senseless names” and, in general, would be free of the various provisions of the name law.

Through their several name decrees of the nineteen thirties, the Nazis sought to preclude the possibility of Jews (and other non-Aryans) avoiding subsequent persecution by changing their names. That they succeeded can be seen by the extent to which these measures were enforced and applications for name-changes by non-Aryans were summarily rejected.

An instance of the denial of an application for a change was in the matter of one Johan Paul *Kahn*, a traveling salesman, whose complaint of prejudice in his occupation on account of his Jewish name and his preference for the name *Koch* were dismissed on the grounds that “his Aryan descent was not sufficiently proved . . . the name *Kahn* (being) a typically Jewish name which persons of Aryan descent will hardly ever bear.”³⁴ Similarly, the application of the seventeen year old daughter of a mixed marriage was turned down “on general principles” in spite of the fact that her identifiable name had prevented her from obtaining employment of any kind, forcing her to endure the support of the local welfare office.³⁵

Even converted Jews of ten or more years standing were not free to change their names. A World War One veteran, Bernard *Kohn*, who became a Protestant in 1923 and married a non-Jew, was unable to make even the slight change to *Köhn* in 1933 and was, over the next dozen years, to suffer the persecutions of other members of his descent group: job loss; forced adoption of the additional name “Israel,” the star of David insigne, and “Jude” on ration books; expulsion from place of residence; and, finally, incarceration. Moreover, his wife was repeatedly rebuked for her refusal to divorce him.³⁶

³⁴ Cf. the Globke trial affidavits, *supra*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Numerous cases are also in evidence in which applications to permit the adoption of Jewish or half-Jewish children were rejected on the grounds that such an act would conceal the "true identity" of the individual in question.³⁷

In general, persons who did not regard themselves as Jews but who were so regarded by others, contended that they should be exempt from the name decree but, found, in fact, that such exemption was nearly always denied. Globke insisted that only with the validation of a person's contention, after an investigation by the *Reich Office for Genealogical Research*, could he be free of compliance with the decrees, meaning, in effect, that where no such proof had yet been established, persons were to consider themselves Jews and act accordingly.³⁸ Attempts to escape compliance usually resulted in fines or imprisonment. Even an act as insignificant as ostensibly forgetting to include "Israel" in one's signature on a letter to a public official could result in a fine of at least 50 marks or a week in prison.³⁹

Much consideration and several significant cases went into deciding what names would be appropriate for Aryan children and to what extent so-called "Jewish" names could be adopted by them. The question, though legally settled by the *Second Decree* and its accompanying instructions, was apparently not resolved to the complete satisfaction of the German people, as testifies the memorable case of the "Aryan" parents who sought to name their daughter *Esther*. However, the final judicial decision in this matter and a statement by the Senate (KG Ziv., Sen. i b decision of October 28, 1938, IbWx 151/38) were to clarify, for all intents, the issue of appropriate given names.⁴⁰

In this case, a clerk's refusal to register a child's name as *Esther* was appealed to a municipal court by the father on the grounds that the name was actually not Jewish but Babylonian in origin and that the name had become typically German by usage. The court's decision in favor of the father⁴¹ was later overturned by the Appeals Court to which the municipal government had protested.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ According to a news item in the German press, datelined Cologne, April 17, 1939.

⁴⁰ The following discussion is taken from the *Juristische Wochenschrift*, December 19, 1938, p. 3167.

⁴¹ On the basis of Section 45 of *The Law Regarding Citizens' Registration* of November 3, 1937.

In its decision, the Appeals Court reiterated and applied the intent of the August decrees: German children should not be given any but German first names except for a "good reason" which, in this case, did not exist. Given names of "foreign" derivation which have become typical German names by long usage are not included among non-German names (v. *supra*). German Jews or stateless Jews may receive only those given names which were distributed with the *Circular Decree* (the instructions) and no other German citizens were to be given these names.

Now to cases: since the name *Esther* was not on the list of exclusively Jewish names, "the question arose as to whether it [might] be given to an Aryan child." The Appeals Court ruled that it might not on the grounds that Germans had not generally come to regard it as a typically German name. Furthermore, its significance as a name lay not so much in its use as a name in ancient times as in its identification of a certain historical personage who had no particular importance to the German people, but who, in fact, had long been regarded as a symbol of Jewish "cunning and deception." Such a person "can hardly be regarded as a person after whom German parents would call their daughters."⁴² Despite the long-term use of *Esther* by German Christians and the growth of a family tradition from this, its continued use was not justified, for its tradition rested solely on its mention in the Bible. Those who had given this name to their children had apparently not realized what kind of a person they were perpetuating in this fashion. Had they known, it was asserted, it is doubtful that they would have used this name. Yet

⁴² The Nazi version of the *Book of Esther* may illuminate this attitude: "Esther was a purely Jewish woman who originally was called by the Jewish name *Hadassa* (which is on the Jewish list). She was brought to the court of the King of Persia by her . . . foster father *Mardochai* (on the list) to be his (the King's) concubine. Her Jewish origin was purposely hidden. She succeeded in gaining the favor of the irresolute and sensual king by virtue of her physical charms and finally became queen. As a result of Mardochai's continual counsel, she persuaded the King to remove and execute the Prime Minister, the Aryan Hamann who recognized the dangerous and agitational activities of Jewry in the Persian Empire and who consequently wanted to take energetic actions against them in order to save the state. In Hamann's place the King appointed the Jew Mardochai. Esther even asked the King for Hamann's head. . . . Later Esther and Mardochai used their power and influence with the King in the murder of more than 75,000 Persians who constituted the Aryan ruling class and in this way they secured for Jewry the leading position in the state. . . ." (*Juristische Wochenschrift, oc. cit.*).

it was not simply because it was a Biblical name that its use was to be proscribed; the ban rested with the character of its first bearer (the name *Ruth*, for example, was acceptable for German girls, for its antecedent exemplified "great fidelity and unselfish love" which have always been admired traits to the German people). The name *Esther* was also considered inappropriate because of the great likelihood that its Jewish significance would cause suffering for the bearer in school and among her peers. Moreover, the use of such names as *Esther* (not to mention *Joshua*, *Saul*, *Samson*, and *Judas Maccabaeus*) by German writers and composers like Händel hardly justified its continued acceptance as a given name, for these works of art "were created in an era which had no understanding for the racial doctrine." Finally, it was thought necessary to point out that proscribing the use of such Biblical names as *Esther* was in no way intended to deny or interfere "with the contents of the Christian religion, its belief and confession. It involves only the giving up of a biblical [sic] tradition and in no way touches the major import of the Christian religion."

A similar case, reported in the German press, involved the proscription of the Biblical name *Joshua* for an Aryan child. A local registrar's refusal to record this name was upheld by the Supreme Court of Prussia over the objections of the child's parents that the name had been in the family for many generations. The court's decision was based on the notion that acceptable names for Aryan children must conform to the Nazi ideas of what would be of ultimate benefit to the German people. The insidious threat of world Jewry must be vigorously resisted. Any contact whatever with Jewry (even spiritual) must be prevented. An Aryan youth given a name like *Joshua* would be sure to be identified among his contemporaries as such an enemy of his people or at least become the object of scorn or "disagreeable questions on account of his name," for others would not understand why he should have been called that.⁴³

In still another case, in 1941, it was reported that a father's use of the name *Lazar* on birth announcements of his son had been disallowed by a local registrar and upheld by a Supreme Court as "no name for a German boy" since it was obviously an abbreviated

⁴³ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, August 7, 1938.

form of *Lazarus* which was on the "Jewish list." It was of no consequence that the father had used the name himself, the court pointed out, for the law clearly states that German children may not bear Jewish given names. Again, the boy's future was considered: what would his life be like if he were to bear so evidently Jewish a name?⁴⁴

In short, it was not so much whether a name was of Jewish origin but its usage by Jews and its popular identification as a Jewish name which made it, in fact, a Jewish name. These even included family names of German origin which had become generally accepted as Jewish names (*Hirsch*, *Morgenstern*, *Goldschmidt*, etc.) as well as some surnames denoting place of origin which had become popular among the Jews (*Krotoschiner*, *Hamburger*, *Darmstädter*, etc.).⁴⁵

IV.

Within the next few years other rulings were to be passed down by the Nazi government affecting the possession and use of names. A series of acts ordered the removal of Jewish names from business firms purchased by Gentiles, along with traditional Jewish trademarks of the products manufactured or distributed by them.⁴⁶ In another act the government condemned the Church's preference for saints' names.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Aktenzeichen*: 1a Wx 59.40.—23.2 40, according to the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, April 4, 1941.

⁴⁵ Deeg, *op. cit.* Also *Frankfurter Zeitung*, January 12, 1938.

⁴⁶ Hilberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 87—89.

⁴⁷ Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi Party's apologist and philosopher, is alleged to have written this justification of this act: "Christian churches have been responsible for the estrangement of personal German names, and the vigor of free German names weakens more and more. German names have been for the most part made into saint names whereby they take on a foreign church meaning and are thus used as tools of the church. The church almost alone produced this foreign name supply at least up to the eighteenth century. Up to the year 1000, the Bible mentions foreign names such as Abraham, David, Joseph, Isaac, Samuel, and Solomon. . . . Almost all foreign names in Germany originate from the Bible or are names of Catholic saints. . . . Under the authority of the church German names are in great ruins. It is noticeable that component name parts of men as well as women lack the notion of war and battle." (The writer can not recall where this statement first appeared. It has, however, been reproduced in English in Curtis Adler's *Better English* and reprinted in his "Where These Fancy Names Come From" in *Israel's Messenger*, July 12, 1940. Verification and further particulars on this would be most welcome.)

There was also a period in which monuments with “verboten” names were destroyed. The statues of Joseph Sonnenfels, Siegfried Marcus, and Baron Rothschild were removed. Jewish works of art which could not be destroyed were to remain anonymous. “Die Lorelei” was written by “an author without a name.” Streets throughout Germany and Austria were renamed,⁴⁸ including 80 in Vienna alone.

A discussion of Germany’s name decrees should also usher in a briefer consideration of similar rulings put into effect by her then or future allies. Press releases from Vienna issued on October 28, 1935 reported that, in response to a sudden outbreak of name-changing among Jews in Austria, government officials there decreed that thenceforth Jews were not to adopt “non-Jewish sounding” names. On January 24, 1939, Globke issued the *Ordinance Concerning the Introduction of Legal Provisions about Names in Austria and the Sudeten-German Territories* (RGBl. I P. 81) which extended the provisions of the 1938 laws to these countries. Accordingly, the “Sarah” and “Israel” additions would have to be assumed by April 1, 1939 and the decree would be effective on the first of February.⁴⁹

A list of 1,605 “Jewish” names in the Rome newspaper, *Tevere*, warned Italians in the late thirties to beware of persons with such names as they might not be loyal to fascism. Yet, it was reported that one’s name alone was not positive proof of his Jewish identity. *Cohen* and *Levy* were the only safe bets. Gentiles bore Biblical names, and most Jews bore European names. The Russian and German endings of traditional Hebrew names confused a great many persons about the identity of their bearers. On August 9, 1938, Italy’s Ministry of Foreign Culture ruled that only foreign vaudeville performers could use foreign names, for the traditional practice had been for Italian music hall performers to use English and French stage names.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ In a decree dated July 27, 1938, according to Deeg, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ Hoche, *op. cit.*, vol. 31 (1939), pp. 756–57. As far as the Swiss were concerned, the German name decrees were discriminatory and therefore invalid and unenforceable outside of the Greater Germany. Cantonal officials were informed by the Federal Office in Bern (December 27, 1938) that the decrees were not to be complied with by the Swiss. (v. Basel, *Schweizerisches Zentralblatt für Staats- und Gemeindeverwaltung*, Zürich, September 15, 1939, # 18).

⁵⁰ *Associated Press* news release from Rome, August 9, 1938.

On March 27, 1942, France's Vichy Government published a decree forbidding Jews to change their family names or to use assumed names. Exceptions, however, could be made for persons in the fields of art, science, and literature by specific appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and with the approval of the Secretary of State for Justice.⁵¹

At least two cases are on record in which American name-changes were directly attributable to the official Nazi attitude toward Jews and their names. In late December, 1933 a Mrs. *Johanna Levy Zorгниotti* of Hastings-on-the-Hudson (New York) was permitted by Westchester County Judge John B. Coyle to change her middle (i.e., maiden) name to *Lappsap*. In her petition she pointed out that with the prevailing racial prejudice in Germany her Jewish name would be a distinct handicap for her on an extended business trip which she was planning to make to that country with her husband, a New York City exporter-importer. The name which she sought to adopt was actually that which her father had brought to the United States some 30 years before but had soon seen fit to change to *Levy* for business reasons.⁵²

The second case involved a 22 year old Yonkers, New York Air Force cadet, *Bernard Epstein*, whose petition to the same court in January, 1943 was granted to overcome his fear that, in the event he should ever be shot down on a bombing mission over Germany, his Jewish name would be a severe impediment to his safety. He, too, would feel more secure if he had a less identifiable name.⁵³

Surprisingly, not all Jews in America viewed the restrictive name decrees of the Nazi government with disfavor. Accompanying its publication of the authorized list of Jewish names, *Time Magazine*, on September 5, 1938, published a statement by Mrs. David B. Greenberg, the national chairman of *Youth Aliyah* (an organization dedicated to the encouragement and facilitation of immigration to Palestine), that she was proud to see the name *Hadassah* on the list. *Hadassah* is the Hebrew form of *Esther* and, according to Mrs. Greenberg, any Jewish girl would be honored to bear that name.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *The New York Times*, March 27, 1942, p. 7:5.

⁵² *The New York Times*, January 6, 1934, p. 10:4.

⁵³ *The New York Times*, February 3, 1943, p. 11:3-4.

⁵⁴ *Time*, Vol. 32, September 5, 1938, p. 20.

V.

It is difficult to write a conclusion to this kind of study and avoid making judgments on what has been or could be. For instance, how does one keep from saying that free peoples must check any efforts to divide a country's population for purposes of facilitating discriminatory treatment of a minority group; that even when divisive consequences are not intended, such measures as would prevent the free exercise of, for instance, an American's common law right to change his name and his equally valid right to select any other name he may wish,⁵⁵ could be the first step toward denying other fundamental personal rights and creating a situation which could tear a people asunder?

Eric Hoffer in his interesting albeit speculative work *The True Believer*, offers this testable hypothesis that a conquering power, desiring to keep its subjects docile and loyal, should make every effort to "encourage communal cohesion and foster equality and a feeling of brotherhood among them." Colonial powers, by breaking up viable village communities and tribes and creating autonomous individuals with the idea that this would check rebellions against the colonial establishment, actually succeeded in doing the very thing they wished to avoid.⁵⁶

The writer may be betraying his limited knowledge of contemporary German history in even suggesting this, but he would like to see research into the effect of Hitler's divisive policies (furthering which, as we have seen, the name laws were regarded as essential) on his avowed efforts at securing national (i.e., pan-Aryan) unity.

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⁵⁵ Robert M. Rennick, "Judicial Procedures for a Change-of-Name in the United States" *Names*, 13:3 (September, 1965), pp. 145-68; and "On the Right of Exclusive Possession of a Family Name," unpublished manuscript.

⁵⁶ Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (New York: New American Library, 1958), pp. 42-43.