LEOPOLD VON MILDENSTEIN AND THE JEWISH QUESTION

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Leopold von Mildenstein and the Jewish Question

Abstract

By

JOSEPH VERBOVSZKY

This paper examines Leopold von Mildenstein, the chief of the Judenreferat of the SD, the intelligence service of the Nazi SS and his attempt to solve the so-called Jewish Question through Zionist emigration in prewar Nazi Germany. Mildenstein’s Zionism was contingent upon the German Zionist movement’s success in effecting Jewish emigration to Palestine. When international factors such as the Arab revolt made this impossible, Mildenstein left the SD and joined the Propaganda Ministry where he worked to undermine his former policies by inciting Arabs in Palestine against British rule and Jewish colonization. Mildenstein’s story is exemplary of the broader radicalization of Nazi Jewish policy. It demonstrates the importance of international factors as well as the reluctance of the SD and its parent organization, the SS, to implement more radical measures to solve the Jewish Question.
The Holocaust did not have to happen. Prior to the Nazis' decision to pursue genocide, they considered alternative solutions to the so-called Jewish Question. Notable among those alternative solutions was an attempt, in cooperation with Zionist officials, to encourage German Jews to emigrate to Palestine. This plan originated in Abteilung 112/II, the Jewish department (Judenreferat), of the Security Service or SD (Sicherheitsdienst), the intelligence agency of the Nazi SS (Schutzstaffel). Later, Abteilung 112/II merged with a similar unit in the Gestapo, and this combined unit, led by Adolf Eichmann, had principal responsibility for coordinating and organizing the destruction of European Jewry. Before Eichmann, however, the SD Judenreferat was founded by a different man with a much different mission. Leopold von Mildenstein, SS officer and Nazi journalist, founded the Judenreferat in 1935 in order to promote Zionist emigration from Germany to Palestine as the definitive solution to the Jewish Question. However, his Zionism was contingent upon the movement’s success in removing Jews from Germany. When domestic and international factors made such emigration impossible, Mildenstein left the SD and joined the Propaganda Ministry where, as chief of the Near East division of propaganda, he worked to undermine his former policies and incited Arab violence against Jews in Palestine. This paper presents a thorough examination of Mildenstein and his relationship to the Jewish Question. It furthermore examines the factors and circumstances that led to his transformation from a Zionist to an anti-Zionist and uses this transformation as a lens to explain the broader radicalization of Nazi Jewish policy.

Part I. Introduction
Leopold Itz Edler von Mildenstein was born in Prague in 1902 to a family of the lowest rank of Austrian nobility. Growing up in the twilight of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Mildenstein was exposed to considerable diversity. At one point, he possessed Austrian, Czech, Hungarian, and German citizenships. ¹ Formerly trained as an engineer, he was also a journalist and avid traveler. In 1929, Mildenstein joined the Nazi party and in 1932, the SS.² Although a Nazi, he took a profound interest in Zionism and frequently attended Zionist conferences. He began to see Zionism as the answer to the Nazis’ desire to force Jews out of Germany.

From September 27 to October 9, 1934, Der Angriff, the major Nazi newspaper in Berlin, published a series of articles written by Mildenstein entitled “A Nazi Travels to Palestine.” The articles described Mildenstein’s trip to Palestine in 1933 and his observations of Jewish settlement activity. The article series was not just a travelogue meant to entertain the Angriff’s readership but also a position paper in which Mildenstein laid out a forceful argument for the use of Zionist emigration to Palestine as a solution to the Jewish Question. The position outlined by Mildenstein’s articles resonated with Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of the SD, who sought to make his organization the only security/intelligence apparatus in Hitler’s new Germany. In Mildenstein, he saw a man who could help him accomplish this goal by giving the SD the solution to the Jewish Question. In the summer of 1935, Heydrich put Mildenstein in charge of the Judenreferat, where he worked energetically for the next year to increase Jewish emigration from Germany. He based his tactics upon his earlier experience, and he continued to attend

¹ Personality File Request, July 2, 1956, Box 35, Loc. 230:86/23/06, CIA Name File (First Release), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
Zionist conferences. He advocated policies that favored Zionist activities while severely inhibiting those of assimilationist organizations. He also proved to be an efficient administrator, making the Judenreferat one of the most important components of the SD security apparatus. Nevertheless, on July 27, 1936, he resigned from the SD.³ 

Mildenstein’s resignation is important to understanding his transformation into an anti-Zionist. Current scholarship has so far failed to determine the reason for Mildenstein’s departure. This has led to a misrepresentation of Mildenstein, both in his position as head of the Judenreferat and in his relationship to the Jewish Question itself. He is portrayed as an anomaly in the SD, a freethinker whose policies were rejected by a more radically anti-Semitic clique.

Scholars who have written about the early history of the SD contend that Mildenstein was transferred to the Reich Propaganda Ministry (Reichspropagandaministerium) under Goebbels because he had been “too weak” in his handling of Jewish emigration, a view held by Israeli scholar Shlomo Aronson in Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von SD und Gestapo (1971) and German historian Heinz Höhne in The Order of the Death’s Head (1966).⁴ According to Aronson, Mildenstein was transferred to the Propaganda Ministry in 1936, although Aronson does not specify by whom.⁵ Aronson’s account is incorrect because Mildenstein was not transferred but requested release “by his own application,” as it states on his SD

⁵ Aronson, Frühgeschichte, 203.
Höhne’s account, while correctly stating that Mildenstein resigned, argues that it was because Mildenstein’s “unorthodox methods were disapproved of by Himmler’s staff.” However, it was Heydrich who was directly responsible for Mildenstein, not Himmler.

More recent scholarship on the early history of the SD has done some work to correct this false representation of Mildenstein. In *Die Judenpolitik des SD* (1995), Michael Wildt rightly called Höhne’s account of Mildenstein “apologetic.” Both Höhne and Aronson’s accounts rely on Mildenstein’s own testimony for corroboration. There is reason to suspect Mildenstein’s account since he gave it to Höhne not long after Adolf Eichmann’s trial and execution. During Eichmann’s interrogation, Eichmann mentioned Mildenstein as his superior at the Judenreferat. If Eichmann could be brought before an Israeli court, so could Mildenstein. Although, Mildenstein was never in charge of the trains that transported thousands of Hungarian Jews to their deaths, he had good reason to fear being connected to Eichmann. In June 1960, he was arrested in Essen and investigated by the CIA for his connection to “WWII War Crimes.” Therefore Mildenstein had a definite interest in portraying himself in a favorable light to Höhne.

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6 There is no reason to suspect that was a euphemism as Mildenstein remained an SS Officer and even worked briefly again in the SD in 1940. See SD File Card, April 5, 1943, SS Officer Files, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
7 Höhne, *Death’s Head*, 334.
9 Höhne, *Death’s Head*, 618; Aronson, *Frühgeschichte*, 203. Incidentally, Aronson relies on Höhne’s account, written in 1966. It is therefore surprising that he writes that Mildenstein was transferred and not that he resigned. Boas relied on Höhne’s *Spiegel* article.
10 According to Eichmann, Mildenstein was transferred to the Highway administration which is also incorrect. See Jochen von Lang and Claus Sibyll, eds., *Eichmann Interrogated: Transcripts from the Archives of the Israeli Police* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 26.
11 Information Request, To Director from Frankfurt, June 1, 1960, CIA Name File (First Release), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
whose book was first published as a serialized article in Der Spiegel. According to Aronson, Mildenstein issued public statements in the 1960s about his close connections to Zionist organizations during his time as SD Referent. Such statements were common fare after the war among former Nazis who sought to demonstrate their willingness to help Jews, sometimes with success. The timing and circumstances of Mildenstein’s testimony therefore call into question its reliability.

After Mildenstein left the SD in 1936, he completely reversed his position on Zionism. The choice of the Propaganda Ministry as his destination was indicative of a shift in Mildenstein’s thinking. Goebbels’ Propaganda Ministry was known for its heavily pro-Arab stance. Mildenstein became the Chief of Near East Propaganda. While working at the ministry, Mildenstein wrote two travel books, Rings um das brennende Land am Jordan (1938) and Naher Osten-vom Strassenrand erlebt (1941), about subsequent visits to Palestine that he made in those years. Both of these books present an overwhelmingly pro-Arab and anti-Zionist stance. Furthermore, the books fit the specific model of propaganda from Goebbels’ ministry which was violently anti-Semitic toward Jews in Palestine. Mildenstein’s work at the Propaganda Ministry undermined the very policies which he had initiated earlier while working at the SD.

13 Aronson, Frühgeschichte, 203.
16 Dispatch, February 20, 1961, CIA Name File (First Release), U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
17 See Jeffrey Herf, Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
Therefore, this paper argues that Mildenstein’s reversal on the Jewish Question can be explained through the failure of his policies and his subsequent resignation from the Judenreferat. I will examine the policies initiated by Mildenstein during his time working there and show how they failed. In particular, the Arab revolt of 1936 was a decisive blow to Mildenstein’s plans for Zionist emigration. It made immigration to Palestine from Germany undesirable and even caused some émigrés to return from Palestine to Germany. This came on top of other significant problems Mildenstein faced, such as a highly assimilationist Jewish population in Germany as well as a Zionist leadership that was dwindling as a result of Mildenstein’s emigration measures. When Mildenstein left the SD for the Propaganda Ministry, it would have been obvious to him that the Zionist option had no future in SD policy. His successors at the SD failed to realize this and still sought to increase emigration to Palestine when Mildenstein was already writing books viciously deriding the very Zionists with whom he once worked.

The story of Mildenstein and the Jewish Question fits into three broader historical narratives regarding the Third Reich. The first is the history of SD policy regarding the Jewish Question. As the officer responsible for building up the Judenreferat, Mildenstein was critical in the early history of the SD. It is therefore not surprising that most of the information on him is found in this narrative. Höhne, Aronson, and Wildt all recognize Mildenstein’s importance in setting up the Judenreferat. Mildenstein also appears in Gunter Deschner’s biography of Reinhard Heydrich for his role in implementing Heydrich’s Jewish policy.18

The second historical narrative that contains references to Mildenstein is the history of interaction between Nazism and Zionism. The Nazi-Zionist relationship is a

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topic that does not fit very well into the overarching teleological narrative of the Holocaust. This makes it not only an inconvenient topic but also a controversial one.

Another problem, often faced when studying the Nazi-Zionist relationship, is the moral implications of such research. Zionists who were somehow connected with the Nazis were ostracized and persecuted for their willingness to negotiate “with the devil,” to quote Israeli judge Benjamin Halevi. Some authors, such as Lenni Brenner, a self-proclaimed Marxist and anti-Zionist, have taken the existence of collaboration between Nazis and Zionists as proof of their equivalence. Brenner cited Mildenstein as an example of Nazi-Zionist collaboration but unfortunately, the analysis is polemical and misses the nuance of Mildenstein’s interactions with his Zionist counterparts. It also fails to examine adequately Mildenstein’s views on Jews.

Fortunately, not all scholarship on the Nazi-Zionist relationship is polemical. Recently, Francis Nicosia wrote a book entitled *Zionism and Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany* (2008) expanding on his earlier work, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question* (1985), which explored the relationship between the Third Reich and Zionism through the Haavara Agreement that transferred Jews and capital to Palestine in the form of German merchandise. Although there are a few other works on the history of the Nazi-

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19 Akiva Orr, *Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 1994), 90–91. A good example of this is the case of Rudolf Kasztner. Kasztner was a Hungarian Jew who negotiated with Eichmann for a train car of Jews to escape the Holocaust at the price of $1,000 per head. Later in Israel, he brought a libel suit against Malchiel Gruenwald who accused him of collaboration with the Nazis. The court ruled in favor of Gruenwald, arguing that Kasztner had “sold his soul to the devil.” Although the court ruling was later overturned, Kasztner was assassinated by a right-wing group for his collaborations with Eichmann. For more on Kasztner and his negotiations, trial etc. see Yehuda Bauer, *Jews for Sale?: Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).


Zionist relationship, Nicosia’s remains the most comprehensive. However, Nicosia mentioned Mildenstein only briefly. Nicosia, like Höhne and Aronson, recognized Mildenstein’s importance as head of the Judenreferat. However, Mildenstein’s importance extends beyond his early work at the SD and sheds light on the issue of Jewish policy in the Third Reich.

Lastly, Mildenstein fits into the history of Nazi-Arab relations. Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers’ recent book *Nazi Palestine* (2010) detailed plans for the extermination of Jews in Palestine. Not surprisingly, Mildenstein does not appear in Mallman and Cüppers’ work because he wrote propaganda and did not engage in military policy while working at the Propaganda Ministry. Similarly, Mildenstein is not mentioned in Jeffrey Herf’s *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (2009). This is surprising since Mildenstein was the chief of the Near East Section in the Propaganda Ministry. This would make him responsible for the violent anti-Zionist and pro-Arab rhetoric that came out of the Ministry from 1938 onward. His two travel books fit this model perfectly, but, unfortunately, they are the only extant works of Mildenstein’s that this author has found from the time period.

Mildenstein’s life and work crosses these three historiographies and connects them. His later work provides a case study of Nazi characterizations of Arabs and an

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example of the shift in Nazi self-perception to that of an anti-Western power. Most importantly, his work provides a reexamination of Mildenstein’s earlier policies of promoting Zionism. It is significant that the officer who created the first guiding policy of the SD on the Jewish Question completely reversed his stance and advocated just as vehemently against his former policies as he did for them. Mildenstein’s change of position therefore provides insight into the broader shift in the Jewish policy of the Third Reich from emigration to murder.

Part II. Mildenstein the Zionist

When Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933, the situation of Jews in Germany worsened significantly. However, the arrival of an actively anti-Semitic government provided potential positives for some of the country’s Jewish organizations. The Zionists in particular stood to benefit. The Zionist mission of building a national home in Palestine could be compatible with the Nazi interest in forcing the Jews out of Germany. In fact, as conceived by Theodor Herzl, Zionism was meant to work with anti-Semitic governments. He considered antisemitism a “propelling force” which, “if properly harnessed, is powerful enough to propel a large engine and to move passengers and goods, let the engine have whatever form it may.” In 1933, the Zionists, specifically the Zionist Federation of Germany or ZVfD (Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland), hoped that Hitler’s regime might be a viable partner for the ZVfD’s goals. On April 7, 1933, the ZVfD sent out feelers through the Jüdische Rundschau, its official newspaper, in an article entitled “Fundamental to Legal Provisions: The Jewish Question

The article explained that “if [the new regime] wants to tackle the legal provisions pertaining to the Jewish Question, it must hear the voice of the Jews. When it assumes the fact of Jewish peculiarity, it must select such a negotiating partner which wants to represent this peculiarity and stands by it with honor.” The article implied that the ZVfD would be the negotiating partner of choice since, as Zionists, they adhered to the notion of Jewish separateness. Indeed, two months later, the ZVfD sent a memorandum to Hitler reiterating its position on Jewish national identity and distinctiveness, as well as its desire to build a Jewish home in Palestine. By August, the ZVfD concluded the Haavara agreement with the German government to transfer Jews, along with capital in the form of German goods, to Palestine.

In the spring of 1933, around the same time the ZVfD was beginning to negotiate with the Nazi government, a member of ZVfD, Kurt Tuchler, made an unlikely friend in Leopold von Mildenstein. Mildenstein was an SS officer and journalist who had been frequenting some of the Zionist conventions. He was an avid traveler and a correspondent for the *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, a financial newspaper in Berlin. According to Heinz Höhne, Mildenstein was friendly with a number of Zionist leaders and, at one of their conferences, became convinced that the solution to the Jewish Question lay in emigration. Jacob Boas claims that Tuchler, tasked with seeking out

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27 “Grundsätzliches zur Gesetzlichen Regelung: Die Judenfrage als Politikum,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, April 7, 1933. Unless otherwise noted, all issues of the *Jüdische Rundschau* were accessed through compactmemory.de. The rest of the issue contains a number of articles which stress the separateness of Jews and the failure of assimilation, including one by Hannah Arendt.
28 Ibid.
29 Nicosia, *Palestine Question*, 42.
30 For more on the Haavara agreement see: Nicosia, *Palestine Question*.
31 For more on Tuchler and Mildenstein’s personal relationship, see *The Flat* (2012) directed by Arnon Goldfinger, Tuchler’s grandson.
33 Höhne, *Death’s Head*, 329.
sympathizers in the Nazi Party, approached Mildenstein, likely because of his journalistic background, to write something positive about Zionist efforts in Palestine in one of the major Nazi presses.\textsuperscript{34} While he did not attribute it specifically to Tuchler, Saul Friedländer mentioned that Mildenstein was “invited along with his wife to tour Palestine.”\textsuperscript{35} In \textit{Becoming Eichmann}, David Cesarani attributed the invitation to Berlin branch of the World Zionist Organization.\textsuperscript{36} It remains unclear if it was Tuchler who personally invited Mildenstein, but it seems to be the consensus that Mildenstein was invited by a Zionist organization. Mildenstein accepted the invitation and spent six months from late 1933 to early 1934 in Palestine, after which he submitted his observations to Joseph Goebbels, who published them in his propaganda paper \textit{Der Angriff}.

Historians have hitherto only given cursory glances to Mildenstein’s articles, but they provide a considerable amount of knowledge regarding the policies Mildenstein initiated at the SD. From his articles, readers could glimpse nuanced picture of Mildenstein and his relationship to Nazi antisemitism. In some cases, Mildenstein attempted to counter and outright challenge Nazi conceptions of Jews, while at other times, his views were clearly in line with those of the established order. Furthermore, the articles demonstrated the tenuousness of the relationship between the ZVfD and the Nazi apparatus through Mildenstein’s omission of his Zionist traveling companions and the cool reception the articles received in the Zionist press.

\textsuperscript{34} Boas, “A Nazi Travels to Palestine.”
\textsuperscript{35} Friedländer, \textit{Nazi Germany and the Jews}, 63.
Many of the instances where Mildenstein described individual Jews revealed a perspective that challenged the conventional Nazi view. In one section, he described his first trip to Tel Aviv, during which his car fell into a hole in the road.³⁷ A Jewish settler transport happened to be traveling in the same direction and offered to assist him. Mildenstein explained that he “could not move the Jew to accept money for the help.” This may not have surprised the average German audience, but Nazi readers would no doubt have been astonished that a member of a “race” they considered inherently usurious would do something out of sympathy or kindness. Even more surprising to his Nazi audience would have been Mildenstein’s description of his encounter with a “Jewish Fascist.”³⁸ While waiting for transportation, Mildenstein met a “Trumpeldor man.” The “Trumpeldor man” was a member of Betar, a revisionist Zionist youth group founded by Vladimir Jabotinsky that adopted uniforms and salutes based on the fascist model.³⁹ This episode drew an interesting comparison to the Nazis, who frequently referred to themselves as “Hitler-men” and who had their own set of martyrs, the most famous being Horst Wessel.⁴⁰ This comparison would not have been lost on a Nazi audience, particularly when Mildenstein described how the British “against their own promises, had disarmed the Jewish Legion” after the war, something which must have rung eerily similar to the Germans’ perception of their own treatment by the British at Versailles.

Mildenstein was trying to elicit sympathy from his fellow Nazis and hint that they might

³⁸ Ibid.
³⁹ Charles D. Smith, Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: a History with Documents (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009), 115. Joseph Trumpeldor was a Jewish settler who died from a stomach wound in a gunfight with Arabs over the settlement Tel Hai in 1920. He was viewed as a martyr in some circles. He is reported to have uttered as last words, “Never mind, it is good to die for our country.” Betar was named after him. For more on Trumpeldor, see Tom Segev, One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate, (New York: Picador, 2001).
⁴⁰ Horst Wessel was an SA member who was killed by Communists. He wrote a song which, as result of his death, became the official Nazi Anthem, known as the Horst Wessel Lied.
have common cause with the Zionists when he wrote, “The interests of the English are not always the interests of the Jews.”

Another myth that Mildenstein challenged was the Jews’ inability to build or work the land. While traveling near Jezreel, Mildenstein visited a Jewish settlement named Ein Harod. There he met Gurion, the leader of the settlers, whom Mildenstein described as a “blonde Russian Jew.” This Jewish settler likely appealed to Mildenstein because of his Spartan attitude and belief that, “We know we must build up our fatherland, and that it can only be done when everyone is satisfied with the bare minimum. Our new homeland was not gifted to us; we must work hard for it.” The area Gurion and his companions settled had been a swamp for centuries. Mildenstein noted that malaria was prevalent there until the end of the First World War and the only farms existed on the edges of the swamp. However, the Jewish settlers had moved right into the middle of the swamp, and, Mildenstein noted, “within ten years, they ha[d] turned a swampy steppe-land into culture-land once more.” For the Nazis, as part of their “Blood and Soil” philosophy, cultivation of the land was considered a necessary component for the creation of high culture. By cultivating the land and making it fertile, the Jewish settlers had begun the process of turning the country of Palestine into a land of high culture and civilization.

Mildenstein did not bestow praise on all the Jews in Palestine, and often his criticisms contained classic antisemitic clichés. Regarding Tel Aviv he wrote,

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43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
“Everything scampers; it’s a Little America.” He then continued with a story about an immigrant who “knowing his indigenous racial partners” tried to avoid being swindled but ended up being duped anyway. He also criticized the Orthodox. In one particular instance, he described how the Arabs of Jerusalem liked to disturb the Jews praying at the Wailing Wall. Mildenstein did not sympathize with the Jews and described the Orthodox as “old Jews who whine about the lost past.” This description fit well with classic antisemitic views of Jews forced to live in ghettos. By contrast, in the next sentence, Mildenstein mentioned the Zionists, who were “outside the gates, working,” thereby drawing a distinction between the old, enervated Jews of Europe, who hold onto a lost and forgotten culture, and the Zionists, who were heroically fighting to redeem their ancient fatherland.

In general, Mildenstein had nothing positive to say about anyone who was not a Zionist, including Arabs. He considered them lazy, dirty, and backward. Shortly after he arrived in Palestine, he remarked that if an autobus was modern, like those in Europe, it “must” belong to a Jew. But if it came “like the devil incarnate, flying around the curb, the curtains flapping in the wind, piled full to the roof with people and packages, then you can bet from ten miles away that it belongs to an Arab.” Later on, in a chapter entitled “Arab-Omnibus Fragrances,” Mildenstein described how unbearable it was to sit with the “dirty” Arab children and their mothers. Thus, in addition to general antisemitism, Mildenstein viewed Palestine through a decidedly Orientalist lens.

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47 Ibid.
50 Orientalism comprises a patronizing view of the Middle East by Western (Occidental) Powers. Generally, the Orient is characterized as exotic, lazy, backward, corrupt, and “out of time,” while the
This attitude made Mildenstein similar to the British ministers who were behind the creation of the Palestine Mandate in 1917, namely Arthur Balfour, David Lloyd George, and Winston Churchill.\textsuperscript{51} Like them, Mildenstein saw the arrival of the Zionists as the advent of industry and modernization in the backwards Orient. In fact, much of Mildenstein’s narrative centered on the industrial achievements of the Zionists. He saw value of Palestine for German exports, and, more importantly, he noted that the Zionists were the only Jews who ignored the boycott against German goods.\textsuperscript{52} Like his British counterparts, Mildenstein deluded himself about the potential for a peaceful solution to the Arab-Jewish conflict, asserting that “the feeling of togetherness marches and not only among the Jews.”\textsuperscript{53} This unwarranted optimism is surprising considering Mildenstein spent entire chapters discussing violent Arab riots against Jewish settlement that broke out during his trip to Palestine from 1933 to 1934.

In contrast to the British Orientalists who were concerned with bringing the benefits of Western culture to the uncivilized Orient, Mildenstein was more appreciative, from an ideological standpoint, of the agricultural work done by the Zionists. Mildenstein’s remarks on his farewell to Gurion were indicative of the influence of the Nazi “Blood and Soil” philosophy. He wrote, “The stout form of Gurion stands before us in the moonlight. He suits this soil. The soil has remolded him and his companions in a

\textsuperscript{51} For more on how antisemitism and Orientalism were integral to the British involvement in Palestine, see James Renton, \textit{The Zionist Masquerade: The Birth of the Anglo-Zionist Alliance 1914-1918} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and Tom Segev, \textit{One Palestine, Complete}.

\textsuperscript{52} Mildenstein, “Ein Nazi fährt nach Palästina,” September 29, 1934. Because of the Nazis’ anti-Jewish policies in early 1933, Jewish organizations around the world tried to organize a boycott of German goods by foreign countries.

decade. These new Jews will be a new race.”\textsuperscript{54} While Mildenstein may have sincerely believed that the Zionists would regenerate the Jewish “race,” this positive view of Jewish settlement was also couched in his desire to persuade Nazi leaders of the attractiveness of Zionism as the solution to the “Jewish Problem.” In the conclusion of his last article, he outlined the number of Jews who immigrated to Palestine each year. Of the 50,000 who immigrated in 1933, he complained that only 12,000 came from Germany.\textsuperscript{55} This complaint was in the same article where he mentioned the Arab-Jewish “feeling of togetherness” and may explain why he chose to overlook the significance of the Arab violence. Likewise, he tried to allay Nazi fears that a Jewish state might emerge by explaining that a “state is not necessary” for the creation of a homeland. He further noted that many peoples had been without a state for centuries and still thrived. Ultimately, Mildenstein finished his travel report with confidence in the success of the Zionist mission. He stated triumphantly that what was occurring in Palestine “shows the way to heal an age-old wound on the body of the world: the Jewish Problem.”\textsuperscript{56}

On September 27, 1934, Goebbels published Mildenstein’s articles with substantial fanfare.\textsuperscript{57} The ZVfD newspaper, the \textit{Jüdische Rundschau} responded, “We can hardly remember a precedent when a publication by a German newspaper was propagated in such manifold way.”\textsuperscript{58} Goebbels had the article published not only in the \textit{Angriff} but also in the national propaganda paper \textit{Der völkische Beobachter}. In the latter, the articles were published with numerous large-scale picture inserts of Palestine. It is strange that

\textsuperscript{54} Mildenstein, “Ein Nazi fährt nach Palästina,” October 5, 1934.
\textsuperscript{55} Mildenstein, “Ein Nazi fährt nach Palästina,” October 9, 1934.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Goebbels issued a commemorative medallion for the articles that had the Star of David on one side and the Swastika on the other.
\textsuperscript{58} “Ein Nazi fährt nach Palästina,” \textit{Jüdische Rundschau}, September 28, 1934.
Goebbels published the article in such an ostentatious way, particularly considering Der Angriff’s history of virulent antisemitism.\(^5^9\) Likewise, Goebbels made no mention in his diaries of Mildenstein’s articles having any political significance. On the other hand, Russell Lemmons, in Goebbels and Der Angriff, pointed out that the Angriff “did not play a major role in Hitler’s Germany.”\(^6^0\) As a result, it is possible that Goebbels used the opportunity to bring his newspaper back to the forefront by publishing a sensational article that would catch the attention of the paper’s readership. There is evidence for such sensationalism in both the title of the article and Mildenstein’s style of writing.

Mildenstein never mentioned his traveling companions, his wife or Kurt and Gerda Tuchler, members of the ZVfD.\(^6^1\) Instead, the articles read like an adventure story with Mildenstein, the Teutonic hero, traveling in the dangerous and foreign land of the Jews, an impression underscored by the singular “Nazi” in the title.

Just as Mildenstein neglected to mention the Zionist Tuchler as his traveling companion and guide, the Zionist press neglected to mention it was aware of Mildenstein’s journey before the articles came out. Instead, the Rundschau used the opportunity to promote its Zionist mission. The rest of the article, which ignored most of Mildenstein’s content, stressed the developing nature of the Zionist project and its importance to the renewing of the Jewish people.\(^6^2\) The Rundschau’s use of Nazi proclamations and policies as means to spur Jews to join the Zionist effort would become

\(^{59}\) Russel Lemmons, Goebbels and Der Angriff (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 126.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 129. Lemmons argues that Der Angriff was vital to the survival of the Berlin branch of the Nazi part in the years before Hitler came to power but that its overall importance declined after the Nazi takeover and Goebbels became head of the Propaganda Ministry.

\(^{61}\) In his later works, which have a more relaxed tone, he frequently mentions his wife who travels with him. See Leopold von Mildenstein, Rings um das brennende Land am Jordan. Eine Fahrt bis zu den Quellen des flüssigen Goldes (Berlin: Stollberg, 1938); Leopold von Mildenstein, Naher Osten-vom Strassenrand erlebt (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsansellschaft, 1942).

characteristic of Zionist interaction with the SD during Mildenstein’s time at the head of the Judenreferat.

Part III. Mildenstein and the SD

When Mildenstein joined the SD in July 1935, the organization was in a state of rapid development. According to David Cesarani, the Judenreferat had only two full-time personnel in comparison to the fifteen who were working to combat the Freemasons.63 Yet, Nicosia indicated that “by the end of 1938… the SS had become the dominant authority in both the formulation and implementation of Jewish policy” because of the role the SD under the leadership of Reinhard Heydrich.64 He transformed the organization into the epicenter of police power in the Third Reich. Heydrich was able to do this because of the nature of power in Nazi Germany. The dynamics of power created by Hitler’s charismatic rule resulted in what Ian Kershaw describes as “feudal fiefdoms.”65 Any semblance of the rule of law was replaced with a desire of the polycratic agencies to carry out their interpretations of the Führer’s will. This led to competition between the various departments to curry Hitler’s favor, the only means to real power in Nazi Germany. Heydrich’s method of obtaining this power lay in his desire to address one of the fundamental problems of the Third Reich, the Jewish Question.

Before the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, there was no single central policy regarding the Jewish Question.66 Each agency followed its own path in solving the problem,

63 Cesarani, Becoming Eichmann, 45.
64 Nicosia, Zionism and Anti-Semitism, 144. The SD, as the intelligence organization of the SS, was in charge of monitoring “enemies of the Reich, such as Jews and Freemasons. When Nicosia refers to the SS becoming the dominant force in Jewish policy, it was because of the work done at the SD.
66 Höhne, Death’s Head, 331.
according to the objectives of its leaders and the nature of its antisemitism. The Foreign Office worked with the ZVfd through the Haavara Agreement and was the least violent in its approach. In contrast, some members of the Nazi Party tended to be the most virulent. These party members were part of the “Stürmer Group,” named after Der Stürmer, a Nazi newspaper run by Julius Streicher, the Gauleiter of Franconia. Deschner characterized this group as having a propensity for “blind hatred, political pornography and coarse vituperation.”

Group members frequently harassed Jews in the street. In the early stages, SD policies regarding Jews were more closely aligned with those of the Foreign Office.

The SD generally rejected the “Stürmer” methods. On June 5, 1935, the SS newspaper Das Schwarze Korps, printed an article entitled “Antisemitism which harms us.” In it, the author, Gunter d’Alquen, editor of Das Schwarze Korps, decried the damage of property and physical attacks on Jews as shameful to Germany, to the Party, and to all efforts to rid Germany of Jews. Likewise, when Der Stürmer published the anti-Semitic children’s book The Poisonous Mushroom, the SD-Hauptamt responded to the book’s accolades by Party members by saying that it, “cannot agree with the view of most commentators; quite apart from its contents, the style of the book is by no means impeccable; in my view it is therefore unsuitable for children’s education.” Instead of violence, the SD preferred a political solution. As the article in Das Schwarze Korps points out, Jews were to be dealt with “systematically,” which is where Heydrich fit in.

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67 Deschner, Reinhard Heydrich, 149.
68 “Antisemitismus, der uns schadet,” Das Schwarze Korps, June 5, 1935, quoted in Deschner, Reinhard Heydrich, 149.
69 Höhne, Death’s Head, 329.
On May 24, 1934, the Judenreferat, run at that time by Walter Ilges, issued a memorandum to Heydrich declaring that the Jewish Question could only be solved through the complete emigration of Jews from Germany. Although the document did not specifically make an argument for Palestine, it recommended examining the various homeland possibilities and working to bring about their realization. It also mentioned the Zionists as a possible means to a solution. This memorandum, coupled with Mildenstein’s article that forcefully advocated for Zionism as the solution to the Jewish Question, persuaded Heydrich to hire Mildenstein and to adopt emigration as official policy. In its May 15 issue, Das Schwarze Korps heralded this new policy direction writing, “The time cannot be far distant when Palestine will again be able to accept its sons who have been lost to it for over a thousand years. Our good wishes together with our official goodwill go with them.”

When Mildensetin arrived at the SD, Deschner considered it to be the “hour of birth of the SD’s independent Jewish policy.” Mildenstein immediately began an energetic policy that worked to promote Jewish emigration from Germany. In August 1935, Mildenstein’s Judenreferat issued a memorandum detailing its new approach to the Jewish Question. It reported that in the last half-year, there had not been a significant increase in emigration. All terror acts as means of encouraging emigration were still “condemned by all positions of significance.” The report also indicated the high expectations Mildenstein placed on the ZVfD. It mentioned that if more training schools

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71 Höhne, Death’s Head, 329.
72 Das Schwarze Korps, May 15, 1935, quoted in Höhne, Death’s Head, 333.
73 Deschner, Reinhard Heydrich, 150.
Although no author is mentioned, it is safe to presume that Mildenstein wrote both this Lagebericht as well as the one from 1936. As chief of the department, it would have been his responsibility either to write these memos himself or dictate them to a secretary such as Eichmann.
for agricultural work (*Umschulungslager*) were built, it would make “an almost doubled” rate of emigration possible. The main argument of the report stated that “a solution is hardly possible if governmental regulation is missing.”75 Such proposed government regulations included legislation that deprived Jews of their citizenship and restricted their ability to move or work for non-Jews.76 In short, Mildenstein supported polices which would become the Nuremberg Laws. Finally, the report expressed a need to force assimilationist Jews into the Zionist camp.77 Based on Mildenstein’s observations both in Palestine and at the nineteenth Zionist Conference, held in Lucerne in 1935, he believed that not only could emigration be increased but the anti-German boycott could successfully also be countered through support of the Zionists.78

Mildenstein’s policies were not completely original. In fact, most of them had been previously discussed by the department. The policies that the 1935 memo outlined regarding the training camps and the anti-Jewish legislation had already formed the basis of “Restriction” (*Einschränkung*), a strategy that was outlined in Ilges’ memorandum more than a year earlier.79 However, Mildenstein brought an intense belief that the Zionist mission would be the preferred solution. This enthusiasm was not limited to policy decisions alone and Mildenstein actively pursued leads on Zionist activities. He conducted what was known as “fieldwork” where he would attend Zionist conferences and maintain contact with individual Zionists. Mildenstein also inculcated his

75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 70; At the Lucerne conference the Zionists argued against the anti-German boycott and in favor the Haavara Agreement. See Nicosia, *Zionism and Anti-Semitism*, 123.
subordinates with his methodology as Eichmann continued this tactic through his attendance at the twentieth Zionist congress, held in Zurich in 1937.\textsuperscript{80}

Adolf Eichmann, whom Mildenstein recruited in 1935, looked upon his boss as his mentor. In his post-war interrogation, Eichmann mentioned that Mildenstein “was different from most superior officers. He didn’t have that brusque, clipped way of speaking that overawed you so much that you didn’t dare say a word. I was soon on friendly terms with him.”\textsuperscript{81} The first thing that Mildenstein did after hiring Eichmann was to give him a copy of \textit{The Jewish State} by Theodor Herzl and to order him to familiarize himself with it. Later, Eichmann co-authored a SS orientation pamphlet with Mildenstein that described the goals and organization of the Zionist movement and advocated the need promote it as the solution for emigration.\textsuperscript{82} Mildenstein’s study of and engagement with Zionism inspired Eichmann’s respect: “He was the only man at Central SD Headquarters capable of providing me with information about Jews.”\textsuperscript{83}

Eichmann’s testimony regarding Mildenstein’s expertise on Jews demonstrates how woefully ill-informed the SD was about Jews. Robert Gerwarth, in his recent biography of Heydrich, mentioned that “it was remarkable how little expertise individual members of Heydrich’s staff required to act as ‘experts’ in certain policy areas.”\textsuperscript{84}

Eichmann was a former salesman, and Walter Schellenberg, the head of espionage, shared Heydrich’s passion for crime novels. This lack of expertise inhibited their effectiveness in devising and executing policy. It also made Mildenstein a valuable asset

\textsuperscript{80} Nicosia, \textit{Zionism and Anti-Semitism}, 123.
\textsuperscript{81} Lang and Sibyll, \textit{Eichmann Interrogated}, 24.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 25.
to the SD. Gerwarth wrote that “Heydrich was certainly aware of suitable personnel and actively sought to alleviate the problem.”\(^8^5\) From March 9 to 14, 1936, the SD held a seminar for all departments working with Jews. Mildenstein was the first speaker and gave lectures on the “Problem of Jewry,” “Zionism,” and “Operations of the SD.”\(^8^6\) This evidence reveals that during his brief tenure, Mildenstein’s active support of Zionism went beyond his own individual initiatives. He was the primary expert on Jewish affairs in the SD and left his mark on its policy through his inculcation of his methodology.

During Mildenstein’s term as head of the Judenreferat, the ZVfD redoubled its efforts to increase emigration. The ZVfD therefore enjoyed, relative to assimilationist organizations, a privileged position. Nicosia notes,

> Zionists, like other Jews in Nazi Germany during the 1930s, were disenfranchised, steadily impoverished, publicly vilified, and deprived of their civil and human rights. But in small ways meant to facilitate Zionist work in Germany and the process of Jewish emigration in general, the police made certain minor exceptions to the rules that helped the Zionists without in any way relieving their plight as Jews.\(^8^7\)

These exceptions included the ability to wear uniforms, but more importantly the ability to keep the agricultural retraining camps open and obtain entry for Zionist instructors and other personnel from the Jewish Agency to assist in preparing the Jews for settlement in Palestine. During this time impediments to Zionism, in the form of assimilationist organizations, were dealt heavy blows. Nicosia explained that by the end of 1935, the Nazis placed severe restrictions on the activities of the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (*Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*, CV), the Reich Federation of Jewish Front Soldiers was completely neutralized, and the

\(^8^5\) Ibid.
\(^8^7\) Nicosia, *Zionism and Anti-Semitism*, 122.
fiercely anti-Zionist Association of National German Jews was dissolved. In return for small privileges and the ability to evade the crushing force of the Nazi police apparatus, the ZVfD increased its propaganda efforts to attract Jews to its cause. As with Mildenstein’s article, Nazi policies were often cited or reprinted in the *Jüdische Rundschau* in order to create support for the Zionist mission both on utilitarian and ideological grounds. Perhaps the most poignant example is the *Rundschau*’s response to the Nuremberg Laws on September 17, 1935. The author of the article agreed with Nazi beliefs that there was a fundamental difference between Germans and Jews. He also mentioned that he found the ruling regime did not have a completely negative picture of the Jewish situation but a “positive completion of Jewish separate-life.” The article ended with a call to emigration.

Although both Mildenstein and the ZVfD vigorously promoted Zionist emigration, an Arab revolt broke out in 1936 which dealt a significant blow to Jewish emigration. The events of the 1930s had brought Arab-Jewish tensions in the Middle East to a boiling point. Between 1933 and 1935, the Jewish population of Palestine had doubled as a result of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Germany. Although German immigration was not more than one-fifth of the total, it brought significant capital with it, resulting in an economic boom in Jewish urban centers during the mid-1930s. While the Zionists enjoyed success during this period, the Arabs’ efforts to counter both Jewish immigration and land sales failed. These land sales, made necessary by the hard economic situation, severely affected the peasants who formed the majority

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88 Ibid., 119.
90 Ibid.
91 Though it still remained much smaller than the Arab population. See Smith, *Palestine Conflict*, 131.
92 Ibid., 132.
of the Arab population and explain why they formed the basis of support for the revolt of 1936. The first outbreak of violence occurred in April 1936, when the divided Arab factions joined to form the Arab Higher Committee. The Committee called for a general strike; boycott of Jewish goods; and attacks on Jews, Jewish settlements, and British forces.

Although it failed, the Arab revolt lasted from April to November 1936 and had significant repercussions for Jewish immigration. From October 1936 to March 1937, the British Colonial Office only approved 1,800 Jewish entry permits, about 17 percent of the total requested by the Jewish Agency. In Germany, the Arab revolt caused significant problems for Mildenstein and the ZVfD. Despite a Rundschau article which described a “calm weekend” on April 28, 1936, emigration to Palestine became increasingly unpopular. According to Höhne, out of the total number of Jewish emigrants, the percentage of those traveling to Palestine was 36 in 1935 and 34 in 1936. By 1937, however, the percentage dropped to 16, lower than it had been in 1933. Likewise, assimilationist organizations made use of the unrest in Palestine as propaganda against the Zionists. The C.V. Zeitung published an article on April 23, 1936, entitled “Shadows over Palestine.” In it, the author described “disturbing” reports coming out of Palestine as “the sad, bloody, smoking harvest of the week.” Mildenstein’s final “Situation Report” in June 1936 confirmed the deteriorating situation of Zionist emigration. It noted, “Even though the agitation [of the Zionists to counteract anxiety over the Arab Revolt] did not

93 Ibid., 134.
94 Ibid., 137.
95 Ibid. Only 10,500 were requested in total.
96 “Ruhiges Wochenende,” Jüdische Rundschau, April 28, 1936.
97 Jewish emigration to Palestine was 19 percent of the total in 1933. See Höhne, Death’s Head, 331.
fail in its goal, there were reported movements to return Jews to Germany and restrictions of emigration to Palestine.”99 At the time of writing, the report could not take into account the long term effects of the Arab Revolt, which Höhne’s statistics show had a negative impact on emigration to Palestine.

The Arab revolt came at a time when emigration to Palestine when Mildenstein’s efforts were already facing considerable obstacles. There was certainly not an open door for Jews to emigrate from Germany to Palestine. As Nicosia pointed out, the German Jewish community had a deeply-rooted assimilationist character.100 This made it difficult for the Zionists to convince other Jews that they were not members of the German society they believed they were. Likewise, assuming the ZVfD’s propaganda was successful in swaying Jews to its cause, leaving Germany was not easy. In 1931, the German government imposed the “Reich Flight Tax,” a ban on the removal of capital from Germany which was continued by the Nazi regime.101 Through the Haavara Agreement, Jewish emigrants could transfer a portion of their assets to Palestine at the price of 1000 Palestine pounds.102 This eliminated the poor, a population which was growing considerably as anti-Semitic laws removed Jews from the economy. Even if the emigrants could get out of Germany, entry to the British Mandate of Palestine could only be gained through a quota system which the British used to control the number of immigrants. Finally, not all Jewish emigrants went to Palestine. A majority of them actually went to the United States and other Western European nations.103

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100 Nicosia, Zionism and Anti-Semitism, 118.
101 Ibid., 158.
102 Nicosia, Palestine Question, 45.
103 See Footnote 107.
Nicosia also made the point that the Zionist movement suffered from the little success it had under the Nazi regime. He cited a ZVfD circular from 1934 that stated:

The danger of this sudden progress in many areas should not be missed. As a result of emigration, the core of German Zionism has dwindled considerably. Against this there is a very strong periphery that is not Zionist enough… The organization, as large as it has become, nevertheless finds itself today in an amorphous condition. Our main task will continue to be to recruit new people for the leadership of our local branches. Only if we are successful in building a new elite can a thorough Zionist education and a recasting of our organization meet with success.\textsuperscript{104}

However, rather than inspiring new Zionist leaders, the situation continued to deteriorate. By December 1935, Robert Weltsch, editor of the \textit{Jüdische Rundschau}, doubted the future of the organization.\textsuperscript{105}  Mildenstein’s policies had been effective, but not in the way he intended. He succeeded in encouraging Zionists to emigrate, but these Zionists had been the emigration movement’s active leaders, resulting in a situation where German demand for emigration was increasing while Zionist ability to encourage it was decreasing. Finally, the numbers reflected the minimal success of Jewish emigration during Mildenstein’s time in office. Between 1933 and 1937 about 24,000 Jews left for Palestine.\textsuperscript{106}  If one takes Mildenstein’s estimate of about 12,000 for the years 1933-1934, then another 12,000 left during 1935 to 1936, which was not an increase in emigration.\textsuperscript{107}  This indicated that either the policies had failed, meaning Jews were leaving on their

\textsuperscript{104}“Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland und die zionistischen Ortsgruppen und Vertrauensleute, 8. Februar 1934,” L13/138, Central Zionist Archive, Jerusalem, quoted in Nicosia, \textit{Zionism and Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany}, 175.


\textsuperscript{106}Höhne, \textit{Death’s Head}, 333.

\textsuperscript{107}Höhne, \textit{Death’s Head}, 654. Emigration to Palestine made up 50,000 out of the 207,000 total emigrants, about 25 percent. Palestine appears to have been the second most popular destination, following the United States with 90,000. Alternatively, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum places the total number of émigrés at 282,000 with 95,000 destined for America followed by Palestine with 60,000 and Great Britain with 40,000. “German Jewish Refugees, 1933–1939,” accessed February 28, 2013, http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleID=10005468. According to Yoav Gelber, the total number of Jews who emigrated from Germany to Palestine from 1933 to 1945 is about 90,000. From 1933
own, or that the policies had been effective, but were encountering a demographic that was more assimilationist and thus harder to uproot.

Mildenstein, a diligent and attentive administrator who “maintained large-scale maps in his office, showing the progress of Zionism among European Jewry,” noticed that the policies were not working as planned.\(^\text{108}\) In the final “Situation Report” from Mildenstein’s time at the Judenreferat, he wrote, “The inner-political situation of Jewry in the Reich has achieved hardly any change.”\(^\text{109}\) One month later, on July 27, 1936, Mildenstein transferred, by his own application, to the Reich Propaganda Ministry.\(^\text{110}\) Even though Mildenstein had left the SD, his successors continued to follow his policies.

In the short span from 1936 to 1938, the Judenreferat changed directors four times. Mildenstein’s first successor was Kuno Schroeder. He was succeeded by Dieter Wisliceny, then Herbert Hagen, and finally by Adolf Eichmann, Mildenstein’s protégé. In the immediate aftermath of Mildenstein’s departure, departmental perception of his performance was positive. In a memo from August 1936, Schroeder wrote that “Actual positive work in the department began around the end of last year.”\(^\text{111}\) It likewise encouraged a continuation of Mildenstein’s policy of observing Zionist conferences.

At the end of his article on Mildenstein, Boas made the argument that Mildenstein’s supervisors were dissatisfied with his policies. Boas cited a shift in policy heralded by a 1936 pamphlet warning of a strong Jewish state as evidence.\(^\text{112}\) However,
despite individual voices in the SS which may have expressed concern at the prospect of a Jewish state in the Near East, official policy continued to bear the stamp of Mildenstein until at least 1938. In 1937, Wisliceny commented, “Since the removal of Jews from Germany can only be successfully accomplished in the form of Zionist emigration… there is a necessity to demand Zionist emigration.”\textsuperscript{113} A few weeks later, both Wisliceny and Hagen reiterated this position, noting that only Zionist emigration is thinkable because the emigrated Jews set up “boycott-centers” in all the other locations to which they emigrated.\textsuperscript{114} Nicosia also noted that in March 1938, Hitler himself placed his official stamp on the Palestine option when, in a conversation with German diplomat Otto von Hentig, he stated that he “desired further migration of German Jews to Palestine.”\textsuperscript{115} Instead of changing the direction of policy after Mildenstein’s departure, the SD continued to operate according to his principals through his successors.

Part IV: Mildenstein the Arab-nationalist

Although the SD did not change Mildenstein’s policies after he left, Mildenstein completely reversed his stance on Zionism. In fact, after Mildenstein left the SD, he worked effectively at the Propaganda Ministry to undermine support for the Zionist organizations he once worked with as well as his own SD policies. The choice alone to transfer to the Propaganda Ministry is indicative of a change of heart on Mildenstein’s

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 112.
part. Goebbels was considered one of the most violent anti-Semites in Nazi Germany and was associated with the “Stürmer Group.” Moreover, Goebbels’ ministry was known for its pro-Arab stance. Thus, Mildenstein would have known exactly what kind of organization he was joining and what would be expected of him. While working there, he was chief of the Near East Division which concentrated its propaganda efforts in Turkey and Palestine as well as in Japan. In 1938 and again in 1941, Mildenstein made two additional trips to Palestine. He detailed these in two travel books published in those same years, *Rings um das brennende Land am Jordan* and *Naher Osten: Vom Strassenrand erlebt*. Although they are written for a German audience, the writings from these two books fit perfectly into a broader model of German propaganda aimed at Arabs and Muslims throughout the Middle East and indicate that Mildenstein was part of these efforts.

Jeffrey Herf detailed the nature of such German propaganda in both his recent book, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* and in an article for *Central European History*, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims during World War II and the Holocaust: Old Themes, New Archival Findings.” German propaganda sought to demonstrate its respect and affinity for Arab culture. Herf noted that German radio broadcasts attempted to express “love and sympathy” with the Arabs. This was also evident in Mildenstein’s work. In 1938, as during his first journey in 1933 to 1934, Mildenstein experienced an auto accident while en route to Tel Aviv. This time,

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116 Höhne, *Death’s Head*, 330.
117 Herf, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims,” 710.
118 Dispatch, February 20, 1961, CIA Name File (First Release), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
119 Herf, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims,” 720.
120 Mildenstein, *Rings*, 46.
however, instead of a Jewish transport, it was an Arab cargo truck which stopped to help. The Arabs quickly lifted his car out of the ditch and, as a sign of goodwill, traveled with him until they reached the city. When Mildenstein arrived, he found a line of cars waiting before a railroad barrier. No trains passed in the twenty minutes that they were forced to wait but the drivers became impatient and began honking. Mildenstein derided them as “Jewish, impatient Westerners,” while praising the patience of the “Oriental” Arabs who simply said “Inshallah” (God-willing) and continued waiting.\footnote{121} In contrast to Mildenstein’s earlier characterization of the Arabs as lazy and backward, his new characterization highlighted their Germanic values. In \textit{Naher Osten}, Mildenstein described his encounter with an Arab engineer who had studied in Germany. The engineer explained the Arab Revolt to Mildenstein in the following terms:

\begin{quote}
It is true, we are not united, unsure and not outfitted for this battle. Hence the reason for our martyrs. But on them our will-to-freedom has steeled itself. The British believe they have stamped out the fire. They are deluding themselves for it glimmers on and will flame up again when the time comes.\footnote{122}
\end{quote}

Herf noted that it was not uncommon for the Germans to stress the values they shared with the Arabs such as “courage in war… heroism, and manly character.”\footnote{123}

Frequently, to further enhance Arab identification with Germany, propaganda would equate German experiences with those of the Arabs. Herf explained that one common trope was the suffering inflicted by the First World War.\footnote{124} In \textit{Rings}, Mildenstein chastised the British for creating “small rival states” as part of a divide and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[121] Ibid., 48.
\item[123] Herf, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims,” 720.
\item[124] Herf, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims,” 720–721.
\end{footnotes}
rule strategy rather than one “Great Arab Empire” (grossarabisches Reich). Just like Germany, the Arabs felt they had been betrayed at Versailles by the Western Allies, particularly Britain. Also like the Germans, the Arabs would have their rebirth in the form of a strong leader. Mildenstein noted how the English feared the Mufti of Jerusalem, “the fanatical representative of Arab-nationalist demands.” This was a clear connection to the Nazis, who often referred positively to their own “fanaticism.”

The extensive cultivation of Arab identification with Germany was part of Nazi Germany’s goal to portray itself as an anti-Western and anti-colonial power. In the foreword to Rings, Mildenstein wrote that despite the Western powers’ belief that they had created “powerless appearances of states” which would ensure the dominance of the West, the young powers would rise up and herald the rebirth of Islam and the Orient. The colonial powers, against which Germany and its Arab allies were fighting, included Great Britain and the Jews. Mildenstein characterized the Jews and the British as collaborators and Western imperialists. He explained that, for its assistance against the Central Powers, “Jewry” was given a “national home.”

Mildenstein’s unique contribution to Nazi propaganda was his characterization of Palestine. Like many of the propagandists, Mildenstein painted a bleak picture of the situation in Palestine. In contrast to the “feeling of togetherness” that Mildenstein described in his articles from 1934, in Rings, Mildenstein characterized Palestine as a

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125 Mildenstein, Rings, 62.
126 Mildenstein, Rings, 66. Incidentally, it had been the British who had appointed the Mufti.
127 Herf, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims,” 722.
128 Mildenstein, Rings, foreword.
129 Later, it would also include the United States.
130 Mildenstein, Naher Osten, 112.
131 Herf, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda aimed at Arabs and Muslims,” 726.
“political volcano.” Unlike the other propagandists, who attacked Zionism in the context of world Jewish conspiracy, he attacked German Zionists. He held recent immigration of German Jews responsible for the unrest by explaining that in the early years, Jewish immigration was so small that it had hardly incurred the wrath of the Arabs, but that the years 1933-1936 were a period of “tumorous growth.” These are the years during which Zionist emigration and Mildenstein’s policies had been active. Mildenstein used hyperbole here to place the responsibility for the problems in Palestine squarely on the shoulders of his former allies, the German Zionists.

That Mildenstein focused specifically on the German Zionists indicates that he had an axe to grind. He viciously derided the “January” Zionists, Jews who fled Germany after Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933. Ironically, these were the very Jews whom Mildenstein’s policies forced to emigrate. According to Mildenstein, all other Jewish groups consider these January Zionists to be “Yekkes,” and a “disruptive foreign body.” Mildenstein held that these Zionists were inauthentic. They did not come to Palestine out of “internal persuasion” but “through outside force.” According to Mildenstein, they did not come to work the land. Instead they came with baggage and their money which they would “let work for them.” Furthermore, Mildenstein referred to the emigrated Western Jews and tourists from America as “destructive poison” for Herzl’s Zionism. Mildenstein made this even clearer in 1941 in *Nahe Osten*. In it, he tied symbolic significance to Herzl Street in Tel Aviv to explain what he saw as the

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133 Herf, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda aimed at Arabs and Muslims,” 727.
134 Mildenstein, *Rings*, 62; Mildenstein, *Nahe Osten*, 117. This is a gross mischaracterization of the situation in Palestine. Ever since the Nebi Musa Riots in 1921, the Arabs had opposed Jewish settlement, sometimes violently as in the cases of 1921, 1923, 1929, and 1936.
136 Ibid., 51.
137 Ibid., 38.
changing nature of Zionism. At the beginning of the street were the houses built by the earliest Zionists, which Mildenstein described as “small and simple,” an area primarily inhabited by workers. Then there was the section of the “January Zionists,” who came not to complete Herzl’s vision but to replicate their life in Germany. They built “elegant cafes” and “modern shops.” A little further on was the section where the capitalists lived. Mildenstein characterized this area as filled with “Wall Street” and having “nothing more to do with Herzl’s idea.” Mildenstein argued that the German Zionists had betrayed Zionism, and he used it as a justification for reversing his stance. He made this clear when he referenced the opening of his articles from 1934 in *Nahe Osten*, “With the help of England and the Jew, the praised land seems to have become a cursed land.”

The outpouring of propaganda for Arab consumption that Herf described was part of Nazi Germany’s larger goal for an Arab alliance against the Western Allies in the Middle East. The propaganda was meant to stimulate Arab sentiment for a project that had a definite military component that Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers detailed in their work *Nazi Palestine*. In it, Mallmann and Cüppers described plans for an *Einsatzgruppe*, under the command of *Obersturmbahnführer* Walter Rauff, to enter Palestine and massacre the Jewish population there following Rommel’s victory in Egypt. During this time, German propaganda became increasingly violent. In a broadcast from July 7, 1942, “The Voice of Free Arabism,” an Arabic radio station

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139 Ibid.
140 Ibid., 113.
141 Mildenstein, *Nahe Osten*, 112; It is interesting to note that Mildenstein mischaracterizes the British-Jewish relationship which at this time is in a state of turmoil. For more on the conflict between the British administration and the Jews, see Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*.
142 Mallmann and Cüppers, *Nazi Palestine*.
143 Ibid., chap. 7–8.
working with the Nazis, exhorted the Arabs to “Kill the Jews before They Kill You.”\footnote{Herf, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims,” 724.} Traces of this kind of rhetoric can also be found in Mildenstein’s work. In \textit{ Naher Osten}, the Arab engineer concluded his conversation with Mildenstein by explaining that, “the thrust [to defeat the British] must come from the outside” and that the Arabs would be ready “to complete the work here.”\footnote{Mildenstein, \textit{Naher Osten}, 120.} Given the attitude of Palestinian Arabs to Jewish colonization and Mildenstein’s comments on the situation of Palestine, completion of the “work” could only mean one thing: the defeat of the British and the destruction of the Jewish national home.

\section*{Part V. Conclusion}

The story of Mildenstein reveals an alternative solution to the Jewish Question in Nazi Germany, one that did not lead to the gas chambers, and also, why it failed. The Jewish Question was one of, if not the most important issue for the Nazis. Yet, before Mildenstein, no single central policy existed to force the Jews out of Germany. Instead, the solution to the Jewish Question was a type of “Holy Grail” that the power barons in Hitler’s polycratic system coveted as a means of increasing their own influence. Therefore, the zeal with which Mildenstein advocated Zionism as a means to effect total Jewish emigration from Germany appealed to one of these barons, SD chief Reinhard Heydrich. But Mildenstein was only a Zionist as long as it solved the Jewish Question. When it became apparent that the Nuremberg Laws and other means of forcing Jews to become Zionists and, subsequently, out of Germany, had failed, Mildenstein disavowed

\footnote{Herf, “Nazi Germany’s Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims,” 724.}
Zionism and joined the propaganda ministry, where he worked to undermine the very policies he had developed.

Nazi Jewish policy did not occur in a vacuum and transnational factors were partially responsible for the failure of Mildenstein’s policies and his change to anti-Zionism. While factors in Germany, such as the assimilationist nature of German Jewry and laws preventing the flight of capital from the Reich, emigration through Zionism was contingent upon British policy in the Near East. When the British allowed Jewish immigration, Mildenstein’s plans involving Zionism were a definite possibility. However, the outbreak of the Arab revolt made Zionist immigration to Palestine all but impossible and, finally, the outbreak of war with England took the Zionist option completely out of the equation.

As the international situation closed off alternative solutions to the Jewish Question, the polyarchy of the Third Reich became increasingly radicalized. Mildenstein, while working at the Propaganda Ministry, is a perfect example of this radicalization. Realization of the failure of his policies and a worsening of Germany’s international relations brought him to Goebbels’ ministry, well-known for its rabid antisemitism, and recast his role as an Orientalist in the Third Reich. In command of the Near East department of Goebbels’ Propaganda Ministry, Mildenstein sought to incite the Arabs in the Near East, enemies of the British and Jews, and potential allies. Mildenstein’s rhetoric, exemplary of the changing Nazi position vis-à-vis Palestine, became increasingly vituperative. Mildenstein attacked the German Zionists, his former partners, denouncing them as inauthentic. As head of Near East propaganda, he was also at least aware of the
broader military dimensions of the propaganda efforts and the plan to bring the Final Solution to the Palestine.

Yet, in conclusion, the case of Mildenstein does not illustrate a clear or straight path leading to the gas chambers or the death camps, but rather continuous reluctance in prewar Nazi policy embrace the most extreme measures. The SD, following the departure of Mildenstein continued to follow his policies after he had left, resisting more radical measures, even when emigration was becoming impracticable. In the end, the polycratic nature of the Third Reich and the deteriorating international situation helped fan the flames of radicalization at an uneven pace that slowly pushed Mildenstein and the rest of the Nazis toward extermination.
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