Hitler's Final Reflections on Race and International Relations (1945)

Abstract

During the final months of the Second World War and in the last weeks before he committed suicide, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), with the help of his private secretary, Martin Bormann (1900-1945), prepared his final written thoughts and testaments. These excerpts from those final writings reveal Hitler's reflections on race and international relations at a time when it was clear Germany could not win the war it started six years earlier.
After the war, the Swiss banker and right-wing extremist François Genoud came into possession of the Bormann documents in an unexplained manner and published them initially in English and French. The German text was published in 1981 with an essay by British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper and an afterword by former French High Commissioner for Germany André François-Poncet. Some historians question the authenticity of these documents.

In the first excerpt, Hitler takes stock of Europe's imperial projects over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He argues that Britain and France should have focused on their own states, rather than have embarked on financially burdensome projects of colonial expansion. Hitler had always looked beyond Germany to study examples of "race." He declares in the second excerpt that Germany's failures are easy to identify: the German people lacked commitment to maintaining a "pure race"; and, they had failed to eliminate the so-called Jewish problem, which meant the problems of antisemitism would persist. The third excerpt reveals Hitler's final frustration: his fascist ally and partner, Mussolini and Italy. The failures of the Italians during the war were Hitler's greatest nuisance. Without the Italians, Hitler argues, the National Socialists could have incited revolutions across Africa and the Mediterranean.
These excerpts point to an important and understudied factor that informed Hitler's and the Nazis' worldview: Hitler frequently looked beyond Europe to inform his racial thinking, to understand the place of Germany in a longer history of the world, and to conceive of Germany's future as a global power.

Source

[…]

A glance at history, both ancient and modern, will show that overseas enterprises have always in the long run impoverished those who undertook them. They have all, in the end, been exhausted by their efforts; and, in the inevitable nature of things, they have all succumbed to forces to which either they have themselves given birth or which they have themselves re-awakened. What better example of this than the Greeks?

What was true for the ancient Greeks remains equally true for all Europeans in modern times. To prosper, a people must concentrate its efforts on its own country. A scrutiny of any reasonably long period of history will reveal facts which confirm the truth of this contention.

Spain, France and Britain have all enfeebled, devitalized and drained themselves in these vain colonial enterprises. The continents to which Spain and Britain gave birth, which they created piece by piece, have today acquired a completely independent way of life and a completely egoistical outlook. Even so, they are but artificial worlds, with neither a soul, a culture nor a civilization of their own; and, judged from that point of view, they are nothing more than excrescences.

It is, of course, possible to make out a case for the success achieved in peopling continents which before had been empty. The United States and Australia afford good examples. Success, certainly – but only on the material side. They are artificial edifices, bodies without age, of which it is impossible to say whether they are still in a state of infancy or whether they have already been touched by senility. In those continents which were inhabited, failure has been even more marked. In them, the white races have imposed their will by force, and the influence they have had on the native inhabitants has been negligible; the Hindus have remained Hindus, the Chinese have remained Chinese, and the Moslems are still Moslems. There have been no profound transformations, and such changes as have occurred are less marked in the religious field, notwithstanding the tremendous efforts of the Christian missionaries, than in any other. There have been a few odd conversions the sincerity of which are open to considerable doubt – except, perhaps, in the case of a few simpletons and mentally deficients. The white races did, of course, give some things to the natives, and they were the worst gifts that they could possibly have made, those plagues of our own modern world – materialism, fanaticism, alcoholism and syphilis.

[…]

There is, then, no danger in the circumstances that anti-semitism will disappear, for it is the Jews themselves who add fuel to its flames and see that it is kept well stoked. Before the opposition to it can disappear, the malady itself must disappear. And from that point of view, you can rely on the Jews: as long as they survive, anti-semitism will never fade.

In saying this, I promise you I am quite free of all racial hatred. It is, in any case, undesirable that one race should mix with other races. Except for a few gratuitous successes, which I am prepared to admit, systematic cross-breeding has never produced good results. Its desire to remain racially pure is a proof of the vitality and good health of a race. Pride in one's own race – and that does not imply contempt for other races – is also a normal and healthy sentiment. I have never regarded the Chinese or the Japanese as being inferior to ourselves. They belong to ancient civilizations, and I admit freely that their past history is superior to our own. They have the right to be proud of their past, just as we have the right to be proud of the civilization to which we belong. Indeed, I believe the more steadfast the Chinese and Japanese remain in their pride of race, the easier I shall find it to get on with them.

This pride of race is a quality which the German, fundamentally, does not possess.

[…]

Our Italian ally has been a source of embarrassment to us everywhere. It was this alliance, for instance, which prevented us from pursuing a revolutionary policy in North Africa. In the nature of things, this territory was becoming an Italian preserve and it was as such that the Duce laid claim to it. Has we been on our own, we could have emancipated the Moslem countries dominated by France; and that would have had enormous repercussions in the Near East, dominated by Britain, and in Egypt. But with our fortunes linked with those of the Italians, the pursuit of such a policy was not possible. All Islam vibrated at the news of our victories. The Egyptians, the Irakis and the whole of the Near East were all ready to rise in revolt. Just think what we could have done to help them, even to incite them as would have been both our duty and in our own interest! But the presence of the Italians at our side paralysed us; it created a feeling of *malaise* among our Islamic friends, who inevitably saw in us accomplices, willing or unwilling, of their oppressors. For the Italians in these parts of the world are more bitterly hated, of course, than either the British or the French. The memories of the barbarous reprisals taken against the Senussi are still vivid. Then again the ridiculous pretensions of the Duce to be regarded as The Sword of Islam evokes the same sneering chuckle now as it did before the war. This title, which is fitting for Mahomed and a great conqueror like Omar, Mussolini caused to be conferred on himself by a few wretched brutes whom he had either bribed or terrorized into doing so. We had a great chance of pursuing a splendid policy with regard to Islam. But we missed the bus, as we missed it on several other occasions, thanks to our loyalty

to the Italian alliance!

Source: *The Testament of Adolf Hitler: The Hitler-Bormann Documents February-April 1945*, ed. Francois Genoud. London: Icon Books, 1962 pp. 43-44, 52-53, and 70-71.

Recommended Citation: Hitler's Final Reflections on Race and International Relations (1945), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/nazi-germany-1933-1945/ghdi:document-5190> [November 19, 2026].