

# Foreword

*The Nazi Census*, by Götz Aly and Karl Heinz Roth, taught me to think beyond the bullet and the boxcar in dissecting the anatomy of Hitler's war against the Jews and others in Europe.

My involvement with the topic began one day in 1993, when I took my first tour of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. There, in the very first exhibit, an IBM Hollerith D11 card-sorting machine—riddled with circuits, slots, and wires—was prominently displayed. Clearly affixed to the machine's front panel was a glistening IBM nameplate. (The Hollerith D11 has since been replaced with a smaller machine, bearing a faint IBM logo at the rear; so many people had congregated around the older device that it created a bottleneck.) The exhibit explained little more than that IBM was responsible for organizing the census of 1933 that first identified the Jews. IBM had been tight-lipped about its involvement with Nazi Germany. Although 15 million people, including most major Holocaust experts, had seen the display, and in spite of the best efforts of leading museum historians, little more was understood about this provocative display other than the brief curator's description at the exhibit and a few pages of supportive research.

I still remember the moment: I was frozen, staring at the machine for an hour. What was the connection of this gleaming black, beige, and silver machine, squatting silently in this dimly lit museum, to the millions of Jews and other Europeans who were murdered—and murdered not just in a chaotic split second as casualties of war but in a grotesque and protracted twelve-year campaign of highly organized humiliation, dehumanization, and then ultimately extermination?

For years I promised myself I would one day answer the question, how many solutions did IBM provide to Nazi Germany? I knew about the initial solution, the census. Just how far did the solutions go? Dots were everywhere. The dots needed to be connected.

In 1998, I began an obsessive quest for answers. I began recruiting a team of researchers, interns, translators, and assistants. Soon a network developed throughout the United States, as well as in Germany, Israel, England, Holland, Poland, and France. This network continued to grow as time went on. Holocaust survivors, children of survivors, retirees, and students with no connection to the Holocaust, as well as professional researchers, distinguished archivists and historians, and even former Nuremberg trial investigators, all began a search for documentation. Ultimately, more than one hundred people participated, working in seven countries at more than fifty archives, producing some 20,000 documents to prove IBM's conscious complicity. All of the above is known.

What is not known is that before I embarked upon my international research quest, I contacted former United States Holocaust Memorial Museum senior historian Sybil Milton, who told me she was encountering stone walls in her attempts to obtain information about IBM. Milton added that I could not begin my research until I had read *The Nazi Census*, by Götz Aly and Karl Heinz Roth, originally published in 1984 as *Die restlose Erfassung* by the small German publisher Rotbuch. Later it was republished by Fischer Verlag and introduced to a larger German public. Knowing that I would be unable to get a copy of the book in the United States, Milton lent me her personal photocopy. I commissioned a private translation, and studied it and its documentation.

*The Nazi Census* was an eye-opener. It began almost as a contemporary polemic protesting modern-day plans for registration in Germany. But the book tied its objections to Germany's Nazi history, which saw total registration of all sectors of society as the precursor to Hitler's organized and efficient persecu-

tion and extermination. Although the book did not delve into the question of American corporate involvement or focus on IBM punch cards alone, Aly and Roth correctly comprehended and documented that registration in all its forms—from primitive paper-and-pencil records to the use of high-speed Hollerith machines—was the first step in Hitler’s war against the Jews and other enemies. The types of registration covered all modalities, from massive censuses to ongoing population registrations, labor pools, and human numbering systems.

Milton and I agreed that major historians had failed to take the next step in explaining Hitler’s persecution. Raul Hilberg, who in *The Destruction of European Jewry* brilliantly outlined the bloodshed and violence mandated by bureaucrats, missed it completely. IBM’s Hollerith punch cards are not even mentioned in Hilberg’s book. In fact, the crucial minutiae of registration are barely mentioned in any of thousands of books on the Third Reich. Aly and Roth were the first. Their pioneering work opened up a new landscape that went far beyond the murders and persecution, and indeed beyond the pivotal enablers—the registrars who preceded the killers. *The Nazi Census* vividly explains how bureaucrats depended on a separate corps of “scientific soldiers” who counted, quantified, measured, tabulated, recorded, carbon copied, and distilled the social and individual details of Germany, and then most of Europe. Statisticians, bookkeepers, analysts, demographers, form takers, and pencil pushers of all types laid the foundation for much of what followed.

Thanks to *The Nazi Census*, an indispensable enzyme of Nazi evil has been revealed. Entire new vistas of research have been opened up, both for the past and for the future.

Edwin Black  
 Author, *IBM and the Holocaust*  
 Washington, D.C., 2003

# Foreword to the 2000 Edition

This book was written in 1983 in connection with the political and legal conflict surrounding the planned census, which was later called off by the German Federal Constitutional Court. We researched and completed the study in six months. Despite the tight deadlines and practical considerations we had to contend with, our study has proved to be accurate. All of our subsequent investigations into the Nazi era, no matter how diverse in scope, have supported our conclusions. We consider this new edition, which has been only slightly abridged, as still merely a rough sketch rather than an exhaustive account, one that will hopefully spur further research on the bureaucratic, rational structure of National Socialism in Germany. Even the political question posed by the study—namely, what should the state, what should statisticians, be permitted to know about the individual?—remains relevant today.

In 1939, German Jews and “Jewish half-breeds” were registered by name during the course of the census and with the cooperation of the Reich Main Office for Security (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*). Information about the religion of all four grandparents, which was mandatory under penalty of law and ostensibly protected as “secret” by the state, was immediately transferred to police files under the category of “descent” if even one grandparent was listed as Jewish. German archivists at the Secret Prussian State Archives created a *Reichskartei* (“Reich registry”) for German Jews from the original census data. In occupied Poland, data from earlier censuses were used to determine the “religion and language” of individual Jews. In May of

1939, the Reich Office of Statistics registered all “Aryan” adults according to their profession. This material was immediately passed on to the Wehrmacht’s headquarters. It was processed expressly on a case-by-case basis in order to assign every man and woman their respective roles in the approaching war before they had the opportunity to determine their own fate by describing their qualifications.

Other examples abound, yet this is only one side of the issue. Even the Nazis did not, for the most part, exploit statistical data; they merely utilized the data in the common, anonymous fashion. If the dangers of statistics are understood correctly, the Information Protection Act, as interpreted by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1983, comes into play not only when statistical data are individualized—that is, when they are matched up with an individual person—but also when specific data are analyzed for statistical purposes. It is first through the anonymizing statistical process that individuals are reduced to pieces in a conceptual puzzle, with a so-called “probability-of-fertility rate,” “probability-of-divorce rate,” “individual social behavior,” and so on. In this way, people are categorized according to character profiles—traits that can be multiplied into almost infinitely precise components and grouped arbitrarily. It is also through statistics that people can be divided into increasingly smaller groups by means of social and demographic policies. In this way it is possible to enact laws, regulations, and guidelines targeting ever smaller groups of people, laws and regulations that to the individual subject are ever more opaque.

Götz Aly  
Karl Heinz Roth  
Berlin/Bremen, January 2000

# Introduction

“Count! . . . Faster! Once more from the top! . . . Count!” These orders, spoken in German by a Nazi sergeant, dominate the score of Arnold Schoenberg’s “A Survivor from Warsaw.” The melodrama for “one narrator, a men’s choir, and an orchestra” premiered in 1948 in the United States, where Schoenberg was living in exile. The audience sat stunned after the last note was played. After a few minutes of silence, the perplexed ensemble began to repeat the 99-measure Opus 46. Whenever politically engaged postwar conductors placed the opus at the end of the *St. Matthew Passion* or the “Ode to Joy” chorus of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, German audiences responded by whistling it down. “Count!” Schoenberg had thematized the peculiar exactness that lurked beneath the monstrous Nazi atrocities. But hardly anyone has ever picked up on his interpretation of Nazi social policies and questioned how people were reduced to an entry in a *registration*, or how bureaucratic abstraction dehumanized individuals and transported them to a new reality—namely, death.

Yet it was neither through the ideology of blood and soil nor through the principle of guns and butter, upheld until the end of 1944, that the National Socialists secured their might or carried out their destructive activities. It was the use of raw numbers, punch cards, statistical expertise, and identification cards that made all that possible. Every military and labor column existed first as a column of numbers. Every act of extermination was preceded by an act of registration; selection on paper ended with selection on the ramps. Historically central figures such as Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich were to be known and represented not simply as bloodthirsty leaders but also as rational men who acted on the basis of precise deliberations.

Friedrich Zahn, president of the German Statistical Society, remarked at the time, "In its very essence, statistics is closely related to the National Socialist movement." He continued, "The State holds population policy in especially high regard. It is no longer a mere quantitative population policy, but has developed into a qualitative and psychological one. This requires a thorough knowledge of statistics in order to aid our Führer in his work."<sup>1</sup> Individualism and subversive behavior were impediments to the "work of building Germany"—work that was to be carried out with the help of statistics. In order to eliminate this type of behavior, it was necessary to penetrate into the private and public lives of the people, to record them, to categorize them by traits, and to segregate individuals on the basis of particular traits.

Under the direction of the police, the Health and Social Administration, and the Reich Office of Statistics, a bizarre but highly efficient system was developed after 1933 that included various records, censuses, registration laws, and identification cards. This system subserved the total registration and classification of the population. In 1940, there existed four categories for those classified as being of German blood: superior or high quality, average, acceptable, and inferior or low quality.

The censuses of 1933 and 1939 were not the only registrations undertaken by the regime. "The Labor Book" (1935), the "Health Pedigree Book" (1936), the "Duty to Register" (1938), the "*Volkskartei*" ("registry of the populace") (1939), and finally the "Personal Identification Number" (1944) provided a bureaucratic foundation for a graded system of rewards and punishment, for "selection" and "eradication." The *Volkskartei* in Berlin-Dahlem, a file of all non-Aryans in the German Reich, was compiled using the original material of the 1939 census and included the name, date and place of birth, home address, occupation, and the percentage of mixed blood of each individual. Some regional branches of the Office of Race Politics of the NSDAP sprang up in 1934–35 with the introduction of the "Files on Antisocials," followed in 1935–36 by the special reg-

istration of Jews, Gypsies, and other persons of non-Germanic origin. Starting in 1934, those with hereditary illnesses were registered by the ministries of health. The Reich Office for Family Research, along with its predecessors, became the central clearinghouse for proof of “German blood” and “hereditary health,” evidence of which was required more and more frequently. Beginning in 1936, both the Gestapo and the Criminal Police became increasingly active in the registration process. A pilot project was begun with the registration of Gypsies, which was supposed to complement the registration of the Jews. All of these individual initiatives served and enhanced central operations.

Even before the advent of World War II, National Socialist statistics extended beyond the borders of the Reich. In 1938, German statisticians estimated the raw materials and workforces in all of the eastern countries that were later to be occu-



Index-card file managers at the SS Records Center. In 1938 there were 3,198 “Registration Centers” under the umbrella of the SS Records Office, 160 “Regional Registration Centers,” and 18 “Main Registration Offices.”





Unidentified Jewish girl  
with the Star of David and  
her evacuation number,  
ready for transport.

pied. In the summer of 1939, the Reich Ministry for Military-Economic Planning completed a study on ethnic minorities in Poland. This office became temporarily independent of the Reich Office of Statistics beginning in 1938. Analysis of social tensions between the various ethnic groups in Poland and their ongoing feuds later provided a foundation for the occupation, which was characterized by extermination as well as by the systematic recruitment of “willing” collaborators.

In his essay, “Some Thoughts on the Treatment of Foreign Peoples in the East,” which was expressly endorsed by Hitler, Himmler wrote, “We have to recognize the differences among the various peoples of the east and we have to nurture these differences. Next to the Poles are the Jews, the Ukrainians, the Byelorussians, the Gorals, the Lemkens and the Kaschubs. If

splinter groups can be found, then those too must be noted.” The populations in the east, he noted, had to be separated into “as many splinter groups” as possible, and even the individual groups had to be “separated into splinters and particles.”<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, beginning in the fall of 1939, the population of the east was counted with great care and intensity, as, for instance, in the census of December 17, 1939, in Upper Silesia and the Warthe region. Also in 1939, the Office of Statistics for the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was established in Prague, and one year later the Office of Statistics in Krakow was created to serve the “General Government” territories of occupied Poland. The Publication Office in Berlin-Dahlem, which closely cooperated with the SD and, beginning in 1942, was directly under the SS, provided ongoing statistical information concerning all newly subjugated groups—for official use only.

A cable sent to Poland, Gdansk, and Königsberg by the chief of the Security Police and the SD, Reinhard Heydrich, documents the connection between registration and violent oppression:

Re: Evacuation of new eastern provinces

By principal order of the Reichsführer-SS, the evacuation of Poles and Jews in the new eastern provinces will be conducted by the Security Police. . . . The census documents provide the basis for the evacuation. All persons in the new provinces possess a copy of the form. The census form is the temporary identification card, which certifies residency. Therefore, all persons must relinquish their cards prior to deportation. By order of the Reichsführer-SS, residency without possession of an identification card is punishable by death. As an efficient border control for the General Government is in effect not possible, these measures will prevent the return of expatriated persons. The prospective date of the census is December 17, 1939. Thus, large-scale evacuation may begin no sooner than approximately January 1, 1940.<sup>3</sup>

According to this long-range plan, which was to replace the preliminary plans from the fall of 1939, the Warthe region alone was to deport over a half-million people into the General Gov-

ernment. But not just any people. “Ethnic and political composition and socioeconomic structure are important for the accounting of the evacuation numbers in the various counties. Statistical information (census lists, etc.) from German and Polish sources, investigative results of the Security Police and the Security Service, and surveys of provincial counsels will provide the foundation.” SS-Sturmbannführer Rapp concluded his report with the following remarks: “It is important to point out that this is not an arbitrary mass deportation, but a deportation of a certain group of people.”<sup>4</sup> Every evacuation card was individually checked against the Ethnic German file, the Deferment file, the Ukrainian and Russian file, and the Transport file. Finally, the card was presented to an Ethnic German examination commission. Only then was a decision made concerning deportation.

At the conference that we attended in Warsaw, “Nazi Crimes Against Humanity in Poland and Europe,” Martin Hirsch, an acting Supreme Court judge at the time, proudly reported that the German Federal Constitutional Court had postponed the census. That same evening, we decided that we would use this court-ordered postponement to research and write this historical contribution to an extremely relevant topic. At the Warsaw conference, it was quite apparent that much was said about the murderous deeds but little about the various efficient methods of the oppressors.

We focus upon what are, in our opinion, two decisive areas: first, the methods used for the registration of the entire population, and second, a number of special operations that paved the way for the selection of stigmatized minorities. Not only is the abuse of data significant for everyday administrative activities, it is also significant for legal affairs. This seems to be the most important finding that our research into National Socialism has yielded. Is not the simple abstraction of humans into mere numbers a fundamental assault on their dignity? By profiling individuals, does the temptation not arise to regulate and, as statisticians like to put it, clean them up? Even when they are

not expressly misused, censuses facilitate the power of the objective, the rationality of arbitrariness. Existing registration techniques were taken up and further perfected by the National Socialists. Only in rare cases were they “perverted.” It is impossible to eliminate the abuses without giving up the methodological foundation.

Precisely in the light of historical experience, censuses, with their seemingly objective data and usefulness for policymaking, constitute an assault on the social imagination. Humanity is in danger of being run over by a steamroller of data. What is at stake, however, is not only information about consumption, but also information about desires. A basic need that we have encountered throughout our research is the need for equality among all people. The continuous counting and singling out of the weakest and those who are isolated by sociopolitical constellations only serves to deepen inequality and break up social existence, rendering it into splinters and particles.

# Soldiers of Science in the New Reich

## The Rise of Statistics

By the end of January 1933, it was clear to the majority of statisticians in Weimar Germany that their time had come. They could no longer work behind the scenes as social engineers for the existing political powers. They felt the need to take matters into their own hands. It was time to determine the social and demographic make-up of the population using the newest techniques, and to use that data to transform society as prescribed by their new masters and according to the latest scientific findings and theories of hereditary and racial hygiene.

“The Role of Statistics in the New Reich” is the title of a 1934 essay by Johannes Müller, who was then president of the State Office of Statistics for Thuringia and worked directly under the Nazi Wilhelm Frick from 1928 on. In his essay, Müller expresses his appreciation for the “strengthening of statistics compared to earlier times,” noting that the number of requests and orders had dramatically increased since the Nazis had come to power. “Statisticians are no longer first and foremost scientists,” Müller claims. They no longer simply provided “general numerical data” but instead found themselves at the “center of a political arena characterized by unrest and uncertainty,” according to Müller. He goes on to note, “It seems unnecessary to explain this in further detail. A few catchwords shall suffice: work programs, agriculture, family planning, land inheritances, racial politics, etc. These are all questions that administrators could only tackle with the aid of statistical information.”<sup>1</sup>

If we are to believe the statisticians, National Socialism was quintessentially a statistical science and a mode of social engineering. One author, who was already concerned with racial statistics in 1934, even insisted that only with the advent of advanced statistical techniques was it possible for racial biology to rid itself of its murky provincialism and gain a National Socialist profile.<sup>2</sup> And in 1941 Friedrich Zahn, president of the German Statistical Society, went into raptures about those early beginnings:

The Führer established as a goal for National Socialism the rigorous use of scientific knowledge. Besides physical fitness, a firm character, and a rigorous approach to science, he demands soldiers of politics, economics, and also of science. His regime demands clear results in a wide range of areas and great flexibility, which for the most part can only be provided by statistics. In using statistics, the government has the road map to move from knowledge to deeds, from advice to action, in order to succeed in its enormous task of building society.<sup>3</sup>

Statisticians saw themselves as the “scientific soldiers” of National Socialism. To return to Friedrich Zahn:

It [the National Socialist regime] has moved man into the foreground, not man as free individual, but man as biologically, socially, economically, and culturally connected with the community.

Therefore, important demographic and medical statistical studies have been undertaken in the areas of family, tribe, race, hereditary sciences, homeland studies, and national characteristics (affiliation, dialect, language, family names).

Thus, the census of 1933 provided a basis for statistical studies of the family that correspond to the existing family policies. Population analysts and demographic statisticians have been pushing for such a program for decades, but it was not actually implemented until the rise of the Third Reich. The census of 1939 developed this program even further by determining the biological make-up of the family through a series of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Additional data for these studies were drawn from physical examinations of soldiers in the German military, the results of

studies of boys and girls in the youth brigades, and from special examinations conducted by health departments, university institutes, and company physicians. The statistical evaluation of the Reich's occupation competitions should also be noted. Over time, all of these sources illuminate the society's overall state of health and quality of life. It ranges from hereditary health to hereditary illness, promoting the growth of a healthy hereditary core of the German *Volk* and preventing the proliferation of the weak.

Studies conducted by the Department of the People's (*Volks*) Health at the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*\* deserve special recognition, as the questionnaires they developed serve to ensure the health and productivity of the present generation and the productivity of every individual into old age in working at the highest level of efficiency for the well-being of the ethnic German community (*Volks-gemeinschaft*)."<sup>4</sup>

## From Cards to Census Machines

At the end of the nineteenth century, the U.S. Census Bureau employed the German-American engineer Hermann Hollerith, who was charged with simplifying the evaluation procedure.† Up until then, questionnaires were provided that asked specific questions about various characteristics. Each question had one space for a response, and the data were then transferred to small cards. Major shortcomings of this process were the time involved in data transfer and the limited number of possible answers.

The idea of marking the systematized characteristics on the card with a hole instead of a line supposedly came to Hollerith on a train ride when he noticed that the conductor punched the train tickets. He then developed a machine that was capable of detecting punches electromagnetically. Electrical contact brushes swept across the cards and registered each punch using

\*The *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (DAF) was the sole labor organization in Nazi Germany. All other organizations, such as trade unions, were made illegal under the Nazi regime [*trans. note*].

†This section was written in collaboration with Helga Arp.

a counter. Already by 1890, for the 11th American census, the new machines were able to process approximately 56 million punch cards. The speed with which the results came in was astonishing. The size of the population was smaller than previously estimated: According to the count, there were only 62,622,250 instead of the estimated 75 million. Hollerith secured patents both at home and abroad, and in 1896 he started his own company, which he sold in 1911 to the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company (CTR). In 1924 the company was renamed International Business Machines (IBM). In 1910, Willy Heidinger founded the *Deutsche Hollerith Maschinen Gesellschaft* (Dehomag) in Berlin-Lichterfelde, which worked as an independent company based on Hollerith licenses.<sup>5</sup>

The amount of information on a punch card is limited by the size of the card. Therefore, it was important to formalize the information using a punch code. This code is based on the decimal system and translates terms such as persons, achievements, dates, and the like into numbers. The catalogue of possible answers is then calculated and the applicable identification number is punched in the card. At first, this card had forty-five columns. In 1928 IBM (and in 1930 Dehomag) started using a punch card with rectangular instead of round punches and sixty or eighty columns.

For the 1933 German census, Dehomag explained why it used the sixty-column punch card and not the forty-five-column card, which would have sufficed, as follows: “We cannot predict whether future political considerations will lead to an increase in information, which will necessarily be stored on punch cards. If more information were to be added, the forty-five-column punch card would be inadequate” (*Hollerith Nachrichten*, vol. 28, 1933). Indeed, such “political considerations” already existed: they involved the special counting of Jews and foreigners.

A great leap forward in terms of speed was the introduction of automated card feeders and sorting and tabulating machines.

Let us use an example that requires three punch card columns. There are 1,000 different three-figure numbers (000–



999), that is, three columns allow 1,000 different answers to the same question. It might be meaningful to sort together all cards with the same punches; for example, we might decide to collect all those that belong to the same nationality. Only three steps are needed to sort all cards in ascending order according to this characteristic, so that all cards with the same key number are in consecutive order. Accordingly, new machines were developed to automatically print out subtotals whenever some characteristic changed ("group changes") and then begin the counting anew.

In 1913, the *Hollerith-Mitteilungen* (no. 3) described the capabilities of the sorting machine:

*Isolation of the abnormal.* In the Office of Statistics in Copenhagen (under the leadership of Director Koefoed), Hollerith Department Chief Elberling made arrangements to eliminate the sorting of 4.7 million cards. There were approximately 100,000 abnormal people in Denmark. They could be considered abnormal in three different ways: according to illness, according to religion, and based on their military status. The traditional sorting method would have required sorting the cards three times to isolate the three abnormalities. Since Denmark had about 2½ million residents, 7½ million cards would have to be sent through the sorting machines.

A new sorting machine brush holder was constructed that had three instead of one brush. The brushes were placed so that they would touch the columns with the three abnormalities. From then on, the sorting machine always sorted according to the punch hole that closed first. The one-time sorting of 2½ million cards resulted in the separation of the normal from the abnormal cards. The normal cards fell into the R-hole, while the others fell into a different hole based on the abnormality.\*

During World War I, Dehomag was not able to pay licensing fees to CTR. Since inflation made it impossible to pay the licensing debts in dollars, CTR exploited the situation and cor-

\**IBM-Nachrichten* (vol. 265, no. 33, 1983) published this document under the heading "News from Yesterday."

nered the German competition. By the end of the 1930s, Dehomag was by far the most profitable subsidiary of IBM.<sup>6</sup>

Just like its parent company, Dehomag worked well with state organizations. The sale of punch cards to government institutions was very profitable. In 1937, Dehomag finalized negotiations with the Office of Mechanized Tabulation of the German military. This contract took a competitor off the field (Remington) and secured future profits.

An especially good customer was the Reich Office of Statistics. It used punch card machines not just for evaluation of the census, but also for ongoing statistical editing.

The Reich Office urged Dehomag to further develop the D11 tabulating machine. This machine featured an automatic paper feeder and a printable program. It was equipped to handle all four basic arithmetical operations. It could write down the calculation results at any stage of the computation. Finally, a card puncher entered the information onto summary cards that were available for further work steps. For the 1939 census, the D11 was re-equipped as a census tabulator. It was capable of counting up to thirteen fields in one sweep. If the machine counted only, it could process up to 12,000 cards per hour.<sup>7</sup>

In 1939 the Reich Office of Statistics hired an additional 2,000 men and women to process the raw material, which filled more than seventy freight cars. Dehomag established a branch office at the bureau for the mechanical processing of the results. By 1942, even the SS had become a Dehomag customer and had the SS race registration transferred over to Hollerith cards.

## Inventory

Individual German states introduced censuses in the wake of post-Napoleonic administrative reforms. Prussia started counting in 1816 and the German Tariff Club began in 1833, every three years and always on the third of December. The first general all-German census, conducted by the Imperial Office of



Statistics, took place on December 1, 1871, shortly after the German Reich was founded. The next census took place in 1875, and from that year until 1910 a census was taken every five years. The 1915 census, which had been planned in detail as the "Great Census," with a new form of family statistics, fell victim to the war. The counts of 1916, 1917, and 1919 were geared toward the administration of the war era and the post-war era, respectively, and focused on food rations as well as vocational and business registration. The newly appointed director of the Office of Statistics, Friedrich Burgdörfer, organized an "economic and social-statistical evaluation" in 1925.<sup>8</sup> This census was unique in that it registered the mentally and physically "fragile." In 1926, a special count was undertaken using a very detailed questionnaire.<sup>9</sup>

The next census, planned for 1930, was repeatedly postponed by the last government of the Weimar Republic due to financial objections by various states. The new Hitler government ignored those objections and ordered the taking of an "inventory" as one of its first tasks.

In the name of the Office of Statistics, Director Burgdörfer "welcomed" the fact that the "government, by implementing special laws, had ordered the census to be carried out, despite reservations and resistance on the part of individual states, based on the Reich law of 12 April 1933." The census itself was "generously" designed. It would "take place at the same time as the fundamental political censorship," which was "instituted through a national survey."<sup>10</sup> Some 500,000 census-takers were available on June 16, 1933, some of them forced into service, and were supervised by so-called head census-takers. Individual regional statistical offices were charged with carrying out the census. These offices seemed to know whom they could count on to do the job. In the Stuttgart office, the auxiliaries consisted of "members of all nationalist-minded employee associations," a "large contingent of war veterans," many of whom had been wounded in the last war or had been taken prisoner of war, war orphans, SA and SS men, retired auxiliary police, working stu-