

# A comparative review of the intentionalists' and functionalists' point of view du...

[History](#)



## **Intentionalisms vs. Functionalists Views of the Holocaust**

The Holocaust was certainly a horrific tragedy to say the least. However, the causation of it is still highly debated by historians and politicians even in today's times. On one hand the intentionalism's perspective includes a top-down approach to the Holocaust, whereas Functionalists believe it to be more of a bottom-down approach. Despite the vast amount of information regarding this debate, the truth is still questionable. Although, both sides do, however, make valid points regarding the topic at hand, we may never know what really caused the Holocaust. Although unknown, my best guess towards which view is right would be more geared towards the Intentionalism's point of view.

It was not until after the end of World War 2 that individuals started to question the origins of the Holocaust. During the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials which lasted from 1945-1946, the "Final Solutions to the Jewish Question in Europe" was spoken to by the arraignment as a component of long haul anticipate the piece of the Nazi initiative returning to the establishments of the Nazi Party in 1919. In this manner, most historians bought in to what might be today thought to be the outrageous intentionalism translation. Beginning in the late 1960s with the distribution of such work as Martin Broszat's *The Hitler State* in 1969 and Karl A. Schleunes' *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz* in 1970, various students of history tested the overall understanding and recommended there was no end-all strategy for the Holocaust. In the 1970s, however, promoters of the intentionalism school of thought were known as "the straight street to

Auschwitz” camp or as the programmeists since they demanded that Hitler was executing a preconceived plan (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2018).

It was then that this debate seemed to flourish in the minds of individuals from all countries. However, as stated previously, the answer is still left unsettled. Although, I feel there are numerous reasons as to why Intentionalism’s debate is more plausible for the explanation of the causation of the Holocaust. Amongst the various Intentionalism key facts on such events, was the idea of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism which means hostility and extreme prejudice against Jews. Such ideas began way before the Holocaust even began. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum : “ Before World War I, radical, racist antisemitism was confined to the fringe of right-wing politics throughout most of Europe and in the United States. Nevertheless, enduring stereotypes of Jews and Jewish “ behavior” continued to exist among non-Jews. Three trends that developed during and immediately after the World War I brought antisemitism, including its racist variant, into the mainstream of European politics” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, page 1, 2018). This quote showcases that anti-Semitism existed prior to the Holocaust, while also indicating that Hitler had quite a bit of fuel to ignite his master plan of mass murdering many Jews. Not only was anti-Semitism live and well, but most of Europe already had actively indulged in such ideas, meaning that support would be easily obtained from Germans by Hitler.

As discussed earlier, “ The Final Solution” is one of the key factors that played a part in the Intentionalism’s idea of the Holocaust. This “ Final Solution” was basically the overall plan to extract the Jews from Germany. It was quite evident that this genocide was inevitably the culmination of various decades of Nazi policy. Such policy that was in deed ruled and enforced by no one other than Hitler. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2018): “ The “ Final Solution” was implemented in stages. After the Nazi party rise to power, state-enforced racism resulted in anti-Jewish legislation, boycotts, “ Aryanization,” and finally the “ Night of Broken Glass” pogrom, all of which aimed to remove the Jews from German society. After the beginning of World War II, anti-Jewish policy evolved into a comprehensive plan to concentrate and eventually annihilate European Jewry” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, page 1, 2018). As we can assume from this quote, although anti-Semitism was live and well prior to Hitlers rules, not much was done in the physical sense. However, under his command, genocide and prejudice had surfaced more than ever.

Several Functionalists argue that the Holocaust was the fault of lower ranked individuals. And in essence, that is somewhat true. But when looking at the larger picture, without Hitler such actions would not have been executed. I mean rationally thinking, there were millions of Germans and only one Hitler, if these individuals wanted to oppose they certainly could. Although, as the functionalists claims these lower ranks did execute the plan, however, Hitler was the mastermind behind it. Even prior to Hitler reigning over the land, he had joined numerous political parties and from there he stated his ideas.

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Some of which included that Jews were the blame of losing the war. During this time, he gained much approval for his ideas by others in the organizations. Hitler certainly, to some degree knew what he was doing and although he was evil, we must give him merit for his intelligence. He spoke in such a way that influenced and persuaded individuals. If it wasn't for Hitler, the execution of the Holocaust would still be a dreadful nightmare rather than reality.

I most agree with the Internationalist's ideas on the Holocaust. I very much think that Hitler had these preconceived ideas on annihilating the Jewish race. After all is said and done, we can never determine the reality to such questions, rather make practical assumptions on such cases. Nonetheless, I think Hitler knew what he wanted and how to obtain the popularization and acceptance of his ideas.