

Trace the treatment
of the jews by the
nazis between 1933-
45



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During the hegemony that engulfed Europe between 1939 and 1945, millions of civilians were murdered, outside of the usual battles of war. The hegemony was unprecedented in the annals of history in that the murder of these civilians had its roots not in the causes of the war, but simply in the prejudice that lay at the heart of the political system that had spawned the war, namely the Nazi ideology formed in the insane minds of Adolf Hitler and his henchmen. To that ideology, the creation of a master race of Aryans with all other "lower" races becoming servile to that master race was logical and a side product of that ambition was the ethnic cleansing of Europe. The initial plan was to move eastwards all such lower races. In due course however, as the ambitions of the Nazis were initially fulfilled, the problem increased.

The pathetic irony for Hitler and his cronies was that the very success of their armies brought under their control even more of the undesirables whom they wished to expel from Germany, so that ultimately far from making the Jewish problem disappear, they brought under their control a further 5,000,000 Jews even before the proposed invasions of Russia and Great Britain, the entire gypsy community of Europe and millions of Slavs in the eastern countries of Europe. The problem was to be solved by the "Final Solution".

Initially the attentions of the Nazis in the immediate years after their ascendancy to power was directed at a widespread cleansing of Germany. This included primarily Jews and communists, Romany (gypsy) people, homosexuals, those who were mentally and / or physically handicapped and those deemed to be "politically undesirable". The initial beatings and tirades against these sections of German society however in due course gave way to

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a more systematic and co-ordinated campaign designed to enable the authorities to rid society of these "undesirable" elements. Propaganda under the control of Josef Goebbels was employed to ostracize these elements within German society and make their removal both logical and welcome to the average German citizen.

Hitler's satanic vision of "ethnic purity" was based on the idea of levels of genetic value in people. To fulfil Hitler's dream, the Nazi's established comprehensive systems to segregate and later to execute millions of people designated to be less pure.

After the succession to power by Adolf Hitler in 1933, an internal security apparatus in the form of a secret police force was designed and continually refined to result in an iron control of the lives of the citizens within Germany. Perfected, this orderly, internal reign of terror spread, as Hitler's forces extended across national borders and with the relatively easy absorption of what had been part of Czechoslovakia, the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia by Germany in 1938.

Slovakia, another region of Czechoslovakia, became a state tightly controlled by the Nazis through the Munich Pact signed with the British Government, which naively believed that this concession would mark the end of Hitler's ambitions.

On the evening of November 7, 1938, the Nazi regime co-ordinated attacks against the Jewish communities of Germany. Nearly 180 synagogues were burned and destroyed. Hundreds of Jewish men were rounded up and imprisoned on false charges. Jewish-owned businesses throughout Germany

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were destroyed, damaged and looted. Thousands of windows in synagogues, Jewish businesses and homes were broken giving this night its name - "Kristallnacht" or the Night of the Broken Glass.

This horrific assault was reported in headlines in newspapers around the world. It was taken correctly by some as a signal of what was yet to come and many Jews, taking the warning seriously, emigrated while they still could. However only the United States of America and to a lesser degree Great Britain were prepared to admit Jews seeking sanctuary. Certain countries, notably Switzerland and France were not keen to allow the refugees to stay within their borders. The fact that no country wished to admit the Jews, seemed to validate Hitler's actions in treating them increasingly more harshly.

Visas were hard to come by, but bribery and connections still worked in limited ways. Tragically, most Jews remained, believing Germany was democratic, a country for whom many had served with honour and distinction in World War I. They refused to believe that it would turn against them and harm them. They were fatally mistaken and a massive percentage of the entire German Jewish community suffered horribly, dying in the extermination camps before the end of World War II.

By September 1, 1939, contrary to the protestations, the completely restored military force of Nazi Germany smashed across the Polish border, overrunning the weak Polish army and cavalry, still equipped for World War I. By the end of the month all of Poland had fallen. Now 3, 000, 000 Jews came under the control of the swastika, 20 per cent the Polish population in 1939.

Almost immediately, these Jews were placed into ghettos in Warsaw, Kracow, and other large Polish cities and towns, with little sanitation and access to medical facilities. Stopped from trading and effectively cut off from the rest of the world, these communities were effectively isolated, being prepared and "softened up" for further more drastic treatment.

Concentration and labour camps were initially established for punishment for those who offended Hitler or did not fit his ideal Nazi regime. As early as 1933 in Germany, Sachsenhausen and Dachau were places of dread but families were still able to "bribe" their loved ones out of the camps.

Following the invasion of Poland the Nazis were faced with resolving the "Jewish Problem". The solution was entrusted by Hitler to Heydrich and Eichmann, both virulent anti-semites, the former a soldier, the latter an administrator.

The concentration camps, now full following larger and larger transports of Jews and large numbers of Russian prisoners of war, Polish resistance fighters and others, had to be emptied. Natural wastage by death from disease, malnutrition and beatings would not result in a fast enough solution. Mass murder by bullets or lethal injection was expensive and wasteful in terms of resources, and had a morale depressing effect on the soldiers employed.

To accommodate Hitler's demonic vision, On January 20, 1942, a conference was convened under expressed orders from Nazileadership under the chairmanship of the brilliantly evil Rheinhardt Heydrich. With tea and crumpets, in fewer than two hours of deliberation at the former Jewish-

owned Wansee chateau in the outskirts of Berlin, the Nazi officers, including Adolph Eichmann, created the policy to assure the systematic destruction of Europe's Jewish population. A Final Solution had been formed which was unchangeable. The solution chosen was the creation of mass Extermination Camps, mainly in Poland to which would be transported all the Jews of Europe. Killing began in earnest on or near the homes of the populations, which the Nazis had targeted.

Within a short time, the small camp of Auschwitz was enlarged into Auschwitz-Birkenau) a massive death camp in which Jews were gassed and their bodies cremated in a nearby area known for its birch trees, (Birkenau in German). Thus, the infamous death factory at Birkenau was created with the huge crematoria nestled among the groves of once beautiful and peaceful birch trees. Five other sites were chosen for additional death camps. Auschwitz-Birkenau, as the huge complex was to become known, was by far the largest in which well over one million and a half people, nearly 90 percent of whom were Jewish, were put to death and cremated.

Notwithstanding the need to continue the huge war effort against the Allied Forces, which included the massively powerful American war machine the Nazis vigorously pursued their plan to destroy every Jew within Europe. As a result, one third of the entire world Jewish population was killed during the Holocaust. The few gates of escape to Allied countries, were systematically closed: the United States, Canada, Australia, Britain, parts of Latin America and elsewhere. The lucky few who could find a way out often survived without the rest of their family.

By 1944, the height of the extermination of the Jews, there were over 650 death, labour, concentration, camps and ghettos. Of the millions of Jewish people so imprisoned a very small percentage survived to give testimony to the unimaginable crimes which had been committed. Those who did so survive, faced the prospect of reconstructing their lives, more often than not with no money, family, possessions or state. Hitler had identified the "problem" in Mein Kampf, had thought that he had solved the problem by expelling the Jews of Germany, but ultimately had found that his success in battle multiplied his problem, from which there was to be only one route for the Nazis to take - the eradication of European Jewry by extermination.