

Holocaust college essay



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The responsibility of the Holocaust can always be argued. It is not as simple as blaming Adolf Hitler himself who began the Holocaust. The responsibility of the Holocaust lies with the many different reasons.

To decide which reason is ultimately responsible for the Holocaust all the sources must be examined. Surprisingly The Christian Legacy itself could be blamed for influencing the society in the wrong way against the Jews. Martin Luther quoted, ' What then shall we Christians do with this damned, rejected race of Jews? ' Martin Luther also perceived the Jews as unsolvable. The hatred of the Jews was also encouraged by these words; ' Gods rage is so great against them that they only become worse and worse through mild mercy...

Therefore away with them'. The fact that Jesus Christ was persecuted and murdered by the Jews, though he was a Jew himself, fuelled anger in leaders like Martin Luther against them. In those days many nations were based on Christianity and believed strongly in God so they listened to the powerful preaching from their church leaders. This probably led to the first anti-Semitic crusade in 1096.

Soon armies were made to massacre Jews in Germany and France. They used the name of God as their representation. They believed God's wish was to annihilate the Jews because they had murdered Jesus Christ himself even though he was a Jew. So misinterpretation of Christ's teachings could be ultimately responsible for the Holocaust. Other facts though deter this theory.

Germany was not the only anti-Semitic country. It was a European phenomenon. For many thousands of years Jews have been persecuted or killed in any part of Europe. In the 1930's, laws were legislated in Eastern European countries that permitted Jews from immigrating into their countries.

This was worldwide spread anti-Semitism though too. So during the Evian Conference 1938, worldwide views came together. USA refused to lift their 1924 quota system that had remained in place even after President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This quota system limited the number of immigrants and discriminated against groups considered racially and ethnically undesirable.

In the midst of the Great Depression, many Americans believed that refugees would compete with them for jobs and overburden social programs set up to assist the needy. The voyage of the SS St. Louis, a German ocean liner, dramatically highlights the difficulties faced by many people trying to escape Nazi terror. In May 1939, 937 passengers, most Jewish refugees, left Hamburg, Germany, en route to Cuba. Most of them planned eventually to immigrate to the United States and were on the waiting list for admission. All passengers held landing certificates permitting them entry to Cuba, but when the St.

Louis reached the port of Havana, the President of Cuba refused to honour the documents. After the ship left the Havana harbour, it sailed so close to the Florida coast that the passengers could see the lights of Miami. The captain appealed for help, but in vain. U. S. Coast Guard ships patrolled the

waters to make sure that no one jumped to freedom and did not allow the ship to dock in the U.

S. The St. Louis turned back to Europe. Belgium, the Netherlands, England, and France admitted the passengers.

But within months, the Germans overran Western Europe. Hundreds of passengers who disembarked in Belgium, the Netherlands, and France eventually fell victim to the Nazi "Final Solution." New Zealand however absolutely refused not to lift their restrictions. While the British Empire said itself, "We have no territory suitable to the large-scale settlement of Jewish refugees". They had evidently just told everyone that they did not want any more Jews on their unsuitable island. Responding to the Evian Conference, the German government was able to state with great pleasure how "astounding" it was that foreign countries criticized Germany for their treatment of the Jews, but none of them wanted to open the doors to them when "the opportunity offer[ed].

"They could have achieved better results if they had made the Jewish 'problem' their own problem. During the war they were as aware of the horrific acts that were being carried out in Poland, Germany, and Russia. Maybe many lives could have been saved? The Nazi Party are also considered as responsible for the Holocaust as any other factor. The Holocaust depended on many low-level bureaucratic decisions from members of the Nazi party.

The Party was highly authoritarian. The appointment of Nazi party members to government positions increased Hitler's authority over state officials.

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According to the Nazi party's leadership principle, authority flowed down from above and absolute obedience towards one's superior was expected at each level of the Nazi hierarchy. Hitler was master of the Third Reich.

Members of the Party had no choice but to obey these rules assigned by the Nazi Party or they would face high penalties for dissent.

The members were taught that Jews were a "poisonous race," which "lived off" the other races and weakened them. They were also shown the stereotypical Jew. Even churches preached the persecution of Jews. At the age of ten children were made to join the Jungvolk (Young People). From then the boys would join the Hitler Youth and girls the League of German Maidens.

They were taught to support Hitler, even informing their parents if necessary. The Jews were the enemies, which was drilled into their heads to help make an Aryan Germany. Without the Bureaucracy Germany would not have been able to collect the sufficient information about the Jews and decide what to do with them. Many citizens supported this so much through fear of their lives and the influence of the very charismatic speakers that the German Nazi Party possessed. Joseph Goebbels was very successful in propaganda, which resulted in little resistance to Hitler's plans as they were brainwashed with his words and images. But their main charismatic speaker was the Fuhrer himself, Adolf Hitler, who had a personal hatred for the Jews, which he called 'problems'.

With his 'intentionalist' viewpoint Hitler set the Holocaust as a bomb waiting to explode. What Hitler said would be carried out into action. Many people

and nations accepted this view. It was just a matter of time before the Holocaust would be sparked since Hitler came into power as chancellor in 1933.

Next to come was the 'structuralist' viewpoint that put into practice Hitler's beliefs and opinions. For example Hitler was aware that Germany served him with whatever they had so he manipulated the German citizens. He influenced them to destroy any Jewish businesses and racially abuse the considered inferiors. Laws were passed defining Jews and stripping their Human Rights. Jews could no longer walk along the streets of Germany with dignity and peace. The prisoners captured from Poland, 1939, were not killed until 1942 when Germany had created a successful process of dealing with the Jewish problem.

Hitler was indirectly connected with these "final solutions" like Einsatzgruppen, killing centres and Auschwitz. Many of Hitler's ideas had already been exposed in Mein Kampf, some aggressive even before Hitler was appointed Chancellor. People knew what to expect. There was no clear evidence though that Hitler ordered the Holocaust though he is blamed solely for the Holocaust. Apparently Hitler tried to conceal his own personal involvement in the Holocaust. He told people in public and in private that the Jews were being 'resettled' or being mobilised for 'appropriate labour duties' There was no serious evidence in the form of papers signed by Hitler containing precise commands to slaughter the Jews.

Hitler did not operate candidly. Though he could have just have spoken to Heinrich Himmler and ordered the killings through him, Hitler still evidently

commanded the Holocaust. He would have had to be aware of such a large-scale killing even if it was not his idea. His assistance of the SS could be responsible instead.

It's questionable that Himmler, Heydrich and Eichmann were just simply following orders received from the Fuhrer. Himmler carried out all Hitler's orders to the extremes. He was extremely racist. The Fuhrer was considered political author of the Holocaust while the SS converted his dreams to reality. Most of the SS however were not directly involved in the mass killings. The SS could not take sole responsibility for the Holocaust as other power centres like the Wehrmacht and the administrators participated directly in the butchery.

The SS still played a crucial role. Himmler directly used the available SS resources to construct Death camps and create the annihilation squad, Einsatzgruppen, which committed most of the murders in the USSR. The SS were not affected by the brutality of the killings driven by the belief that they were performing their duties. As a result of this hardly any of them were sadists or psychopaths. The ' architect of genocide', Himmler, himself expressed the liquidation of the Jews as making them tough.

Reinhard Heydrich set up the Wannsee Conference, which resulted in the formulation of the Final solution, which was the potential extinction of the Jewish nation. Their role however is not determined. With an undetermined role maybe the Army itself could be responsible because they supported the Einsatzgruppen who killed the Jews in there thousands. The German forces

(the Wehrmacht) were just as racist as Hitler himself. They claimed they knew nothing about the situation of the Jews.

The Army however were considered as hugely implicated in the Final Solution. Some historians believe that Wehrmacht officers were very anti-Semitic and regarded the war in the USSR as a fight to the death so they were content in supporting the brutality of the SS as far as necessary. Evidence has been found revealing the enthusiasm of some troops in the Jewish massacres. The 707th infantry division alone shot 10, 431 Jewish captives in one month. This proves the Wehrmacht was very actively a participant in the Holocaust.

Surely the responsibility of the Holocaust should rest with them? They were not the most active participants in the Holocaust though. The people of Germany themselves played a big role to a certain extent. They also claimed that they were unaware of the horrendous activities happening to the Jews in the East. Hitler, Himmler and the Nazi elite were probably very discreet about the Holocaust. This however was not an excuse.

Many years ago Raul Hilberg suggested that large numbers of Germans - civil servants, railway workers, policemen - were involved in what he termed the 'machinery of destruction'. Most Germans supported the policy of mass murder and between 100, 000 and 500, 000 Germans were directly implicated in it. An example of the implication to the discrimination of the Jews was the kristallnacht. The German people fuelled by the words of Joseph Goebbals went on a riot through the streets destroying all Jewish shops and burning synagogues. They dynamically supported anti-Semitism but were

probably unaware of the effects it would have on the Jews in the long run and of the disastrous plan, which lay in path of the Jews.

The Holocaust depended on many low level workers. They were forced to work under extreme conditions. There were not many who tried to defy the Bureaucrats who forced them to work in for of their jobs. The people were used to build some of the Death camps and make shells, which later found themselves implanted in Jewish bodies and organs. The German people were also keenly recruited.

Many felt fighting in the war was a great honour for Germany and Hitler himself. This however is not enough to take full responsibility of the Holocaust, as they did not attempt to kill of a race. The most unexpected factor of which could take full responsibility of the Holocaust was the Jewish Collaborators themselves who brought their own destruction. A significant number of resistances took place from 1942, when Jewish resistance groups were organised in ghettos of Vilna and Kovno, Lithuania, to 1944, in France where Jews formed 1% of the population and over 15% of the resistant forces. This probably inflamed the Nazi powers so much that they were probably even more ruthless than intended.

So probably would have the people who had tried to help the Jews. People like Oskar Schlinder, 1908-1974. He dedicated his life to rescuing Jews but unfortunately a train was redirected, by a Nazi official with Schindler's workers on board, to Auschwitz and murdered. Due to some of these heroic people many extra Jews were killed. In 1963 the Jewish scholar Hannah Arednt claimed that: ' if the Jewish people had really been unorganised and

leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people'. Jewish leaders were charged by a few historians for submitting the names of Jews relentlessly to the Nazi for transportation to the Death camps.

Others argue that these same Jewish leaders faced no option in the situation they faced. They had to obey the Nazis or be exterminated. They did not really have justified option. This still is not enough in my mind to be able to acknowledge the blame to the Jewish Collaborators. The Holocaust was extremely horrific due to the fact that the Jewish race was almost completely annihilated. The aspect of the Holocaust that deserved the blame would be the division that controlled these killings.

That is what brings me to the conclusion that Hitler himself was solely responsible for the Holocaust and should carry all the blame. If Hitler were so much feared and respected then surely nobody would have acted without his content or approval. He influenced this racist approach to people around him through his charisma backed with his highly racist perception of Jews. Hitler resented the Jewish race so much that killing them would have seemed the ultimate response to the 'problem' they were causing. The Fuhrer had the power to achieve any of his dreams within his reach so he organised the Holocaust and used the resources available to him, SS and the Army, to create this dream.

This was to give him a dignified outlook. Wise it might seem this did not prevent him from being responsible for the Holocaust. He collaborated it with

all his power so he was responsible. The responsibility for the Holocaust ultimately lies with Adolph Hitler, Dictator of Germany, a.

k. a The Fuhrer.