

“the holocaust at auschwitz”

People, Adolf Hitler



“ The Holocaust at Auschwitz" Introduction Auschwitz functioned throughout its existence as a concentration camp, and over time became the largest such Nazi camp. In the first period of the existence of the camp, it was primarily Poles who were sent here by the German occupation authorities. These were people regarded as particularly dangerous: the elite of the Polish people, their political, civic, and spiritual leaders, members of the intelligentsia, cultural and scientific figures, and also members of the resistance movement, officers, and so on. Over time, the Nazis also began to send groups of prisoners from other occupied countries to Auschwitz. Beginning in 1942, Jews whom the SS physicians classified as fit for labor were also registered in the camp. From among all the people deported to Auschwitz, approximately 400, 000 people were registered and placed in the camp and its sub-camps (200, 000 Jews, more than 140, 000 Poles, about 20, 000 Gypsies from various countries, more than 10, 000 Soviet prisoners of war, and more than 10, 000 prisoners of other nationalities). Over 50% of the registered prisoners died as a result of starvation, labor that exceeded their physical capacity, the terror that raged in the camp, executions, the inhuman living conditions, disease and epidemics, punishment, torture, and criminal medical experiments. Through this, Auschwitz has become a symbol of terror, genocide, and the Holocaust. It was established by the Nazis in 1940, in the suburbs of the city of Oswiecim which, like other parts of Poland, was occupied by the Germans during the Second World War. The name of the city of Oswiecim was changed to Auschwitz, which became the name of the camp as well. Over the years, the camp was expanded and consisted of three main parts: Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, and

Auschwitz III-Monowitz. It also had over 40 sub-camps. At first, Poles were imprisoned and died in the camp. Afterwards, Soviet prisoners of war, Gypsies, and people of other nationalities were also incarcerated there. Beginning in 1942, the camp became the site of the greatest mass murder in the history of humanity, which was committed against the European Jews as part of Hitler's plan for the complete destruction of that people. During the 19th century, nearly six million Jews were killed and murdered in what the historians have called “ The Holocaust. ” In the years between 1933 and 1945, the Jews of Europe were marked for total annihilation. Moreover, anti-Semitism was given legal sanction. It was directed by Adolf Hitler and managed by Heine Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich and Adolf Eichmann. There were many other great crimes and murders, such as the killing of the Armenians by the Turks, but the Holocaust stood out as the “ only systematic and organized effort by a modern government to destroy a whole race of people”. This paper is to explain what happened during the Holocaust, why it was rated to be the darkest time in the history of the 20th century, and why, of all the people to be exterminated, it is the Jews who had to experience this horrible act. Auschwitz, as was said earlier, has become a symbol of terror, genocide, and the Holocaust. What could possibly be learned out of this?

Body A. Auschwitz Auschwitz-Birkenau became the killing centre where the largest numbers of European Jews were killed during the Holocaust. After an experimental gassing there in September 1941 of malnourished and ill prisoners, mass murder became a daily routine. By mid 1942, mass gassing of Jews using Zyklon-B began at Auschwitz, where extermination was conducted on an industrial scale with some estimates running as high as

three million persons eventually killed through gassing, starvation, disease, shooting, and burning. Auschwitz-Birkenau, Nazi Germany's largest concentration and extermination camp facility, was located nearby the provincial Polish town of Oshwiecim in Galacia, and was established by order of Reichsfuhrer SS Heinrich Himmler on 27 April 1940. Private diaries of Goebbels and Himmler unearthed from the secret Soviet archives show that Adolf Hitler personally ordered the mass extermination of the Jews during a meeting of Nazi German regional governors in the chancellery. As Goebbels wrote " With regards to the Jewish question, the Fuhrer decided to make a clean sweep ..." At Auschwitz, children were often killed upon arrival. Children born in the camp were generally killed on the spot. Near the end of the war, in order to cut expenses and save gas, cost-accountant considerations led to an order to place living children directly into the ovens or throw them into open burning pits. So called camp doctors, especially the notorious Josef Mengele, would torture and inflict incredible suffering on Jewish children, Gypsy children and many others. Patients were put into pressure chambers, tested with drugs, castrated, frozen to death, and exposed to various other traumas. These terrors occurred in Block 10 of Auschwitz I. Josef Mengele was nicknamed the Angel of Death for the inhuman experiments he conducted. In December 1942, Professor Carl Clauberg came to the deathcamp Auschwitz and started his medical experimental activities. He injected chemical substances into wombs during his experiments. Thousands of Jewish and Gypsy women were subjected to this treatment. They were sterilized by the injections, producing horrible pain, inflamed ovaries, bursting spasms in the stomach, and bleeding. The

injections seriously damaged the ovaries of the victims, which were then removed and sent to Berlin. Likewise at Auschwitz, Claubergs's colleague, Dr. Herta Oberhauser, killed children with oil and evipan injections, removed their limbs and vital organs, rubbed ground glass and sawdust into wounds. After WW2, in October of 1946, the Nuremberg Medical Trial began, lasting until August of 1947. Twenty-three German physicians and scientists were accused of performing vile and potentially lethal medical experiments on concentration camps inmates and other living human subjects between 1933 and 1945. Josef Mengele was not amongst the accused. During WW2 only one man managed to get prisoners out of Auschwitz - Oscar Schindler, one remarkable man who outwitted Adolf Hitler and the Nazis to save more Jews from the gas chambers than any other during WWII. By a mistake 300 Schindler-women were routed on a train to Auschwitz. Certain death awaited. A Schindler survivor, Anna Duklauer Perl, later recalled: " I knew something had gone terribly wrong .. they cut our hair real short and sent us to the shower. Our only hope was Schindler would find us .." Anna and the other Schindler-women were being herded off toward the showers. They did not know whether this was going to be water or gas. Then they heard a voice: " What are you doing with these people ? These are my people." Schindler! He had come to rescue them, bribing the Nazis to retrieve the women on his list and bring them back. The women were released - the only shipment out of Auschwitz during WW2. Thomas Keneally tells in his famous book Schindler's Ark how the women were marched naked to a quartermaster's hut where they were handed the clothes of the dead. Half dead themselves, dressed in rags, they were packed tight into the darkness

of freight cars. But the Schindler-women with their heads cropped, many too ill, too hollowed out, to be easily recognised - the Schindler-women giggled like schoolgirls. One of the women, Clara Sternberg, heard an SS guard ask a colleague: 'What's Schindler going to do with all the old women?' 'It's no one's business,' the colleague said. 'Let him open an old people's home if he wants.' The train rolled out of Auschwitz. A Schindler survivor, Abraham Zuckerman, later recalled: 'Can you imagine what power it took for him to pull out from Auschwitz 300 people? At Auschwitz, there was only one way you got out, we used to say. Through the chimney! Understand? Nobody ever got out of Auschwitz. But Schindler got out 300 ...!' When the women arrived to the factory in Brunnlitz, weak, hungry, frostbitten, less than human, Oskar Schindler met them in the courtyard. They never forgot the sight of Schindler standing in the doorway. And they never forgot his raspy voice when he - surrounded by SS guards - gave them an unforgettable guarantee: 'Now you are finally with me, you are safe now. Don't be afraid of anything. You don't have to worry anymore.' One of the Schindler-women later recalled that on seeing him that morning she felt that 'he was our father, he was our mother, he was our only faith. He never let us down.'

Steven Spielberg's famous film Schindler's List focused attention on people like Oscar Schindler and his wife Emilie Schindler, who - at great risk to themselves and their families - helped Jews escape the Nazi genocide. In those years, millions of Jews died in Nazi death camps like Auschwitz, but Oscar Schindler's Jews miraculously survived. Schindler spent millions to protect and save his Jews, everything he possessed. He died penniless. But he earned the everlasting gratitude of his Jews.

B. The Jews in Auschwitz

Many of the 'theories' about Hitler's hatred of the Jews, especially those claiming to be based on a single experience early in his life, are no more than fanciful guesswork. The reasons given by Hitler in 'Mein Kampf' should be treated with caution. In the last 30 years or so historians have generally distinguished between the ordinary prejudices of his background and time (Roman Catholic, Upper Austria, lower middle class, around 1880-1910) and the obsessive hatred that later became one of his hallmarks. It appears that, contrary to what he says in 'Mein Kampf', Hitler's extreme anti-Semitism only arose towards the end of World War 1 or even later. There had been anti-Jewish prejudice of varying degrees of intensity in many parts of Europe and elsewhere for a long time. A distinctive feature of Hitler's anti-Semitism was that it was formulated as conspiracy theory. For many, especially in Bavaria, this went hand in hand with the 'stab-in-the-back' theory, that is, with the view that Germany had not been defeated on the battlefield but had been brought down by liberal, socialist and Communist subversives on the home front. In other words it was claimed that 'the Jews had caused Germany's defeat in World War 1'. Potentially, this made anti-Semitism explosive in Germany. In much of Europe, it was assumed that Jews were Communists. In many hard-line right wing circles there was talk about a supposed 'Judeo-Bolshevist conspiracy'. This was highly inflammatory. Despite his ranting against Jewish businessmen Hitler saw the Jews as the 'biological root' of Bolshevism. In Bavaria but not in other most parts of Germany a number of Marxists of Jewish origin had been prominent in the upheavals of 1918-1919. Most, like Ernst Toller and Erich MÃ¼hsam, for example, were idealistic utopians. They were not conspirators or traitors or anything of that sort.

However, their origins were shamelessly exploited for propaganda purposes. Many extreme German Nationalists (not only the Nazis) called the new German republic a 'Jewish republic' (though almost none of its leaders were Jews). There was a widespread tendency, not only in Germany, to equate the Jews with subversion and Communism. In many of his speeches Hitler often used the words Jews and Bolshevists almost interchangeably. He merged rabid anti-communism with equally fanatical antisemitism. To this he later added the claim that Jews were homosexuals, allegedly undermining the manliness and fighting spirit of the German people. This combination was potentially a 'witches' brew'. Against this background, there are also many contributing factors and possible theories. Here is some further input: *

- * Jealousy. Some Jews were successful and held " visible" positions in Austria and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. In the Great Depression. Germany was hit the hardest by the worldwide economic depression, and successful Jews were envied.
- * Some Germans believed that " Jewish bankers" were responsible for the Treaty of Versailles.
- * Jews became a scapegoat for Germany's economic problems. (According to this racist sentiment, " international Jewish financiers had plunged the world into a war and the Depression for their business profit.")
- * Hitler and many Nazis were influenced by the notorious anti-Semitic book called " Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion."
- * Hitler lived in Vienna from 1907 to 1913 and those were the most difficult years of his life. Hitler was trying to become an artist or to make himself a name in field of arts. He was twice rejected from the Vienna Academy of Fine Art. He claimed that the professors that rejected him were Jewish ... [However, none of the members of the selection panel

was Jewish]. * The Nazis had a vision of an Aryan German race that specifically excluded Jews and many other groups of people. * Here is an example of Hitler's anti-Semitic racism from a speech given in Munich in July 1922: " His is no master people; he is an exploiter: the Jews are a people of robbers. He has never founded any civilization, though he has destroyed civilizations by the hundred... everything he has stolen. Foreign people, foreign workmen build him his temples, it is foreigners who create and work for him, it is foreigners who shed their blood for him." * Some say Hitler and the Nazis were opportunistic demagogues. Inciting hatred of the Jews was the means to an end. The Nazis used hatred of the Jews to unify the German people and create a new German empire. Nothing unites a people more than when they believe they are constantly under attack and fighting a common enemy. The Jews were convenient enemies. Christianity had traditionally blamed the death of Christ on the Jews. One can see in the Bible the statement that the Jews demanded the death of Jesus, and said, " let it be upon our heads and that of our children." This became an excuse to abuse the Jews for more than a thousand years. It was not until the 1960s that the Catholic Church stated that the Jews were NOT to blame for the death of Jesus. Anti-Semitism was deeply embedded in European and American culture. * In the 1930s there was a lot of anti-Jewish feeling and resentment in the Western world. Many Jews who tried to escape the persecution in Germany were refused entry into the US and other European countries and also many countries further afield. * Antisemitism has been rife throughout European history, largely because the Jews were a distinct, identifiable group, who did not integrate. (Those who really wanted to integrate

converted.) Of course, many now see pluralism as a virtue, and a variety of ethnicities and religions as a positive thing. However, in the inter war period diversity was often regarded as divisive and " disloyal". * Another key element of a dictatorship is fear, and a visible scapegoat experiencing the wrath of the state is a good way to keep people from stepping out of line. * Hitler stated: " The war is to be a war of annihilation". His henchman Heinrich Himmler declared: " All Poles will disappear from the world. . . . It is essential that the great German people should consider it as a major task to destroy all Poles." * The Jews did absolutely nothing to deserve the treatment they got. Like the Africans and the Indians the Jews were just picked for hatred and unjust things but again they did absolutely nothing! * Since the 1870s the Jews had been the object of a new wave of demonization and conspiracy theories. On the whole this wasn't taken too seriously in Germany, but in Austria anti-Jewish conspiracy theories were spread by extreme right-wing politicians and also by the Roman Catholic Church, which knew perfectly well that these theories were rubbish. Young Adolf was a server (altar-boy) and may have been influenced by this. * Well, there were more " sub-humans", as Hitler called those poor people, than he could handle. He had to find ways to kill them without making it too obvious. That's when the real Holocaust started [1941]! He built extermination camps, where he could kill many thousands of people at a time. * Hitler blamed Germany's defeat in WWI on the Jews, and he hated them. When he took power he started rounding them up. He did the same when he started taking over other countries. He used the Jews, Poles, gays, gypsies, Russians and mentally challenged people as slave labor and then started to annihilate them in gas chambers. His reason -

hatred. He classed the above mentioned people as sub human and basically in his Nazi world there was no place for the " sub human", only the 'Aryans'.

* To understand the Holocaust you have to understand the Darwinian biology of the time. There was a growing sense, particularly since Ernst Haeckel, that there were those in society who were 'biologically' inferior and that for a 'fit' world to survive and thrive, those who were 'unfit' should be done away with. Instead of letting nature take its course, there was a unspoken sense that humans could take matters into their own hands. I am obviously not supporting this twisted logic, but that is a key to understanding how a number of things converged to create the nightmare of the century.

[However, 'biological inferiority' is subjective. In Britain, for example, many Social Darwinists, especially those active in education, were most impressed by the achievements of Jews in schools and universities and concluded that they were a 'superior breed' ... This view was to some extent echoed in Nazi conspiracy theories, which painted a picture of diabolically cunning Jews]. *

Hitler blamed the Jews for Germany's defeat in World War I. * Not only did Hitler thank the Jewish doctor who treated his mother, apparently he allowed the doctor to escape Nazi Germany without repercussions. C. Lessons

learned from the Holocaust We all know the well-worn saying, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. We all need to monitor where our steps eventually lead us. Sometimes we can end up in a very unwanted place. The Holocaust is a horrendous example of genocide by the Nazi regime. Millions were systematically slaughtered in concentration camps built for the sole purpose of murdering large numbers of people quickly. Many marked to die were selected for destruction because of their religion;

the Jews were the largest group. Others were gassed or shot or worked to death for their sexual orientation including the homosexuals, or for their ethnic heritage including the Romanian nomads or for their handicaps, including the mentally deficient, and others for their political affiliations. The Holocaust also teaches us in today's world that everyone is equal and if there is hatred and killing of other races, then how is that "doing God's work" as Hitler said? A person should not judge a person from background, nationality, and other traits. This lesson is but the most important lesson of all these. How's it possible for any civilized place to get to such a horrendous state? Germany in the 1920s would have been considered an unlikely place for mass genocide by most locals at the time. The same can be said for many other locations of genocide. Genocide requires a government gone very wrong as happened in Rwanda, in Serbia, in North Africa and in Cambodia. Clearly genocide is very hard to end. We need to learn how to prevent it from getting started, especially in places where we think it could never happen. Unfortunately, the beginnings of genocide are in the politics of bitterness and self-interest that is all too common even in our own community. Can we learn how any community can travel the path from everyday bickering of a civilized society to the organized destruction of thousands of people each day? What signposts mark the pathway that leads to the destruction of people who were once neighbors? Perhaps most importantly, do we have the courage to see the reflection of these behaviors in our own lives and learn to avoid this well-marked path ourselves? One signpost is named intolerance. To be intolerant one must say "what I believe or do or what I am is right" and "what you (as a group of people) do or

believe or what you are is wrong". Being intolerant is a necessity if you travel on this path. Another signpost is hatred, the practice of the reducing a group to only negative characteristics. When you practice hate, the people you hate become not really people anymore. Nazi propaganda portrayed Jewish people as rats, Hutu propaganda called Tutsi people cockroaches. Reducing people to undesirable “ things" is like an extended run along the path toward genocide. Important lessons that the Holocaust can teach us in today's world is how much those people went through during it. Just in one concentration camp, Auschwitz, over one million people died, and 90% of those people were Jews. These people were innocent, and they were put to death for something that they did not do. They were tortured, beaten, worked, and killed just because of one thing: hatred. Hatred is something that people today need to overcome. Hatred is something that needs to be get rid of. Hatred is the reason why so many people died when they were innocent. Hatred. But, hatred can get rid of, if everybody just works together, so it will not create another Holocaust. Another signpost along this path is speech or actions by government officials consistent with intolerance and hatred. There's always an undercurrent of this trend to victimize in the political controversies of the time. The Holocaust was both very terrible and very educational; it teaches many painful lessons. There is no limit to the evil of which the human race is capable. Even culturally advanced nations can easily fall into extreme barbarity. Germans are very efficient. Passive resistance does not always work. Racism is extremely dangerous. Patriotism and national pride can be perverted to evil purposes. Appeasement of a dictator is a risky strategy. Sometimes it is better to disobey orders.

Conclusion: Racism must not be an issue. This should not hinder our relationship toward our community." There's very little that would do justice to the Holocaust short of preventing it from happening again. And, sadly enough, that has not happened yet ... because it has re-occurred, time and time again." To stand inside wooden barracks designed for 52 horses, but used to house over 400 female prisoners, is to be overwhelmed by the horror of Auschwitz. No amount of preliminary research or listening to Holocaust survivor testimonies can prepare one for a visit to a place that was carefully planned and constructed as a factory for killing human beings. After the liberation the hardships continue, especially through the absolute loss that people experience—think about losing not only one's own health, the members of one's family, but one's community—everything that you were tied to. Americans maybe from now a days but the hardship of forgetting the past maybe the hardest challenge. Too much of everything is bad.

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