

Eight stages of genocide



The term genocide was first introduced by Raphael Lemkin to first describe the Holocaust (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). He stated that by genocide, we mean the destruction of a nation of an ethnic group (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). There are eight stages of genocide which are predictable but not inevitable (Stanton).

During each of these eight stages, preventative measures could be taken to end it (Stanton). This is a non-linear process and logically the later stages of genocide have to be preceded by previous stages, however, all stages will continue to operate throughout the entire process of genocide (Stanton).

These eight stages of genocide are classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, extermination, and denial (Stanton). All of these stages can be applied to the study of the Jewish Holocaust and the first six stages are the early warning signs. The Holocaust took place in between 1933 and 1945 (Paulsson, 2017). It resulted in the murder of six million Jewish people which was called the Final Solution (Paulsson, 2017). It began with the first stage of classification. In classification, you have an us versus them mentality (Stanton).

A society will begin to distinguish by nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion (Stanton). Classification is the main way to divided society and it creates a power struggle between groups (Stanton). In Germany, they divided the German and the Jew (Stanton). The racist part of Nazi ideology was rooted in 19th-century theories of human differences based on race and was connected to imperialism and social Darwinism (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 247). In the Nazi ideology, these theories of race became mixed with traditional European antisemitism to produce a doctrine against the Jewish people

(Dekmejian, 2007, p. 248). Jews were classified as Untermenschen, meaning subhuman people in German (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 248). They were blamed for Germany's defeat in World War I, for communism, and were viewed as a threat to Germans (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 248). Films were used to spread anti-semitism, to depict Jewish people as subhuman (My Jewish Learning). For Example, The Eternal Jew in 1940 depicted them as wandering parasites who chase sex and money and destroy others cultures (My Jewish Learning).

German newspapers regularly printed anti-semitic caricatures of Jews and after the German invasion of Poland, they depicted Jews as not only subhuman but enemies of the German Reich (My Jewish Learning). Stage two which is symbolization is where people are given names or other symbols to go with the classifications (Stanton). However, the first two stages of classification and symbolization will not result in genocide unless dehumanization the next stage of dehumanization also occurs according to the Eight Stages of Genocide (Stanton). However, the dehumanization was happening in these first two stages as well. Jews as unwilling members of the pariah group during this time had the yellow star imposed on them as a symbol to (Stanton). This yellow star was inscribed with the word jude meaning Jew in German (Rosenburg, 2018). Before it was imposed on all as a symbol, the star was used as vandalism when it was painted on the windows of Jewish owned businesses (Rosenburg, 2018). This was after the Nazi's declared a boycott against them, however, it was before top leaders had discussed imposing as a symbol to wear (Rosenburg, 2018).

After the Kristallnacht in 1938, it was first suggested as a badge and after the beginning of the Second World War in 1939 that it was to be imposed on

all Jews over ten years of age in Germany as well as occupied territories (Rosenburg, 2018). However, it was not until 1941 that this was finally implemented (Rosenburg, 2018). This yellow star badge helped the Nazi's to visually label Jewish people (Rosenburg, 2018). Now all Jews could be seen, not just the stereotypical and religious ones who already dressed a certain way (Rosenburg, 2018). This would leave them all vulnerable to future attacks (Rosenburg, 2018). This was very humiliating to Jews and a step back to before the Middle Ages, before they were emancipated (Rosenburg, 2018). Not only did this badge represent humiliation for the Jews, but it also now represented a real fear (Rosenburg, 2018). The third stage is dehumanization which is where one group denies the humanity of another group (Stanton). Members of the dehumanized group are compared to animals, vermin, insects, disease (Stanton).

With dehumanization, the perpetrators of a genocide, in this case, the Nazi's will overcome the natural human revulsion against murder (Stanton). In this stage, hate speech and incitement against the targeted group increases over the radio, in print, and so on and it did during the Holocaust too (Stanton). Examples are from earlier with the films mentioned, the printed caricatures and the list goes on. The fourth stage is organization. Genocide is always organized and it is usually done so by the state (Stanton). Special army units or militias are often trained and united for this purpose and armed (Stanton). During this time, plans are made to carry out genocidal killings (Stanton). While the Nazi's debated how to solve the Jewish question, it began to impose a totalitarian system in order to establish the legal and organizational framework necessary to victimize the Jewish people

(Dekmejian, 2007, p. 248). Soon after Hitler took power and after the dehumanization, Hitler went into the third phase with calling for war against the Jews (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 249).

During this time, the complex task of Aktionen, the coordination, and implementation of genocide was entrusted to Heydrich's Schutzstaffel (defense echelons) and its ancillary elements (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 248). These consisted of the Einsatzgruppen (Mobile killing squads) and the Totenkopfverbände (Death head units), there was also the Gestapo (the secret police), and the Order Police (Ordnungspolizei) which all would participate in what came to be known as the Final Solution (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 251). During this time, a structure of ghettos and concentration camps was also put in place, with Eichmann pushing the Madagascar Plan in mid-1940, and this was followed by attempts to expatriate limited numbers of Jews (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 251). The fifth stage is polarization. During this time, extremists will drive the groups apart and hate groups or governments will ramp up the broadcasting of propaganda against the targeted group (Stanton). Laws may forbid marriage or social interaction of those who have been othered, in the case of the Holocaust, the Jews (Stanton).

There are many examples. After Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, he began to polarize with prohibiting Jews from owning land (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 250). In 1934, Jews were banned from the German Labor Front, the same year they were also denied national health insurance (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 250). In 1935, Jews were banned from military service and this polarization only slowed down in 1936 when the Olympic Games were held in Berlin (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 250). In 1937, Jews were banned from professional

occupations and denied tax reductions and in 1938, they were forced to register their wealth and property and businesses (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 250). In July of 1938, Jews were forced to apply for identity cards and their passports were stamped with large J's as Jews to prevent them from seeking asylum in other countries (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 250). Violent attacks will increase against a group during this time and the Kristallnacht or the Night of Broken Glass is an example in this stage of polarization (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 250). The next stage of genocide is preparation.

During this stage, the victims are identified and separated because of their ethnic or religious identity (Stanton). Death lists can be drawn up during this time, members are again forced to wear identifying symbols like the yellow star badge the Jews had to wear during the Holocaust (Stanton). Their property and businesses can be expropriated and they can often be segregated into ghettos during this phase and after that deported to concentration camps (Stanton). They can also be confined to famine-affected regions during this time and starved to death (Stanton). This is when a genocide emergency must be declared if it were to happen again today (Stanton). In 1939, Goring ordered Heydrich to speed up the emigration of Jews as Hitler threatened Jews in the Reichstag speech and in the same year, a Decree regarding employment of Jews allowed the Nazi regime to take them as forced labor (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 250). After Germany invaded Poland in September of 1939, Heydrich issued instructions to the Einsatzgruppen there to begin ghettoization and it was followed by the forced labor of Polish Jews (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 250). In 1940, the Auschwitz

concentration camp was established in Poland as others were being established (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 250).

The next or seventh stage is extermination. This is when the mass killing quickly begins and legally can be called genocide (Stanton). The killers call it extermination rather than killing because to them, their victims are not real humans (Stanton). When a genocide is officially sponsored by a state, the armed forces often work closely with militias in order to carry out these killings (Stanton). At this stage of genocide, only rapid and overwhelming military intervention can put an end to the genocide (Stanton). In this case, the Final Solution or the Nazi plan for the Jews of Europe, now called the Holocaust now took place without any intervention to prevent it. This took place from 1942 to 1945 (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 252). There were previous pogroms and mass killings in Europe in 1941 in Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Latvia, and they were precursors to it (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 252). They were successful to test the Third Reich plans for mass murder and the seminal event to enable the Final Solution was the Wannsee Conference in January of 1942 (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 252). This is where they concerned themselves and worked out the details over the administration and the coordination that would be needed in order to carry out the mass killing (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 252). Heyrich in the role of chief executioner controlled the millions of Jews who were to be forced into over a dozen ghettos and fifteen concentration camps (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 253).

In December 1941, Chelmno concentration camp began to process Jews with carbon monoxide and after that Zyklon B gas and similar operations began to be carried out in the other concentration camps (Dekmejian, 2007, p.

253). This continued and the fear of defeat during the second world war made the Nazi's panic and speed up their exterminations (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 253). After Germany surrendered, it was discovered throughout a span of twelve years, it had exterminated over six million Jews or three-fourths of European Jewry (Dekmejian, 2007, p. 253). The eighth and final stage is denial and it always follows a genocide (Stanton). It is one of the indicators that further genocides could happen (Stanton). Those who perpetrated the genocide will dig up mass graves, burn bodies, and attempt to hide the evidence of their crimes in other ways and even go to intimidate witnesses and survivors into silence (Stanton). Not only will they attempt to deny their crimes, but they will often blame the victims for what they did to them (Stanton). If they can, they will attempt to block the investigation of their crimes or if they can, they will flee if they cannot hold power (Stanton).

In the case of the Holocaust, there was coded language as it was going on and most of the orders were verbal rather than written down to keep it a secret (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). This would make it easier for those to deny it later. On top of that, Himmler attempted to hide the truth of the Holocaust from the advancing allied armies through burning bodies and to attempt to destroy forensic evidence (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). The SS forced the prisoners of camps to dig up mass graves and to burn more bodies to rid themselves of evidence of their mass murders (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). The Nazis also sent Jews from ghettos away in an attempt to make them seem less crowded, planted flowers, remodeled them, and allowed the Red Cross to visit them for only six hours in a hoax to hide the horrors (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). Despite all of this, some

perpetrators, victims, and witnesses talked about it and more and more information began to leak out and the Nazi's continued a misinformation campaign to confuse the international community (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). During the war, the allies made up many stories about the Nazi's to gain support for the war efforts, therefore when truth about the Holocaust came out, many were skeptical because of previous lies (US Holocaust Memorial Museum).

Today there are deniers who still exist. Some do so out of ignorance, however, many still do so out of hateful, political, anti-semitic reasons (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). Others claim that it is a hoax perpetuated by Jews to advance their interests today which is very concerning and sounds like the anti-semitic propaganda before the Holocaust (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). Others claim it is a hoax created to advance Israel's goals and others deny it because they again want to advance their own modern day Nazi movements (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). Holocaust denial is a very serious problem that unites far right radical groups who want to promote new Naziism and Islamist groups who seek to destroy Israel (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). This cannot go ignored or unchallenged because this is how hate can rise and get out of control which is what can lead to a genocide if the world ignores it.