

Death and concentration camps in the holocaust history essay



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The Holocaust was a horrifying crime against humanity. Adolf Hitler led a nation of Germans who were trying to rid “ inferior races”. Hitler had a “ final solution” to take care of anybody who he saw as inferior. “ The plans included in the Final Solution included the deportation, exploitation, and eventual extermination of European Jews”. (Grobman) His method was to kill any undesirables. He would use concentration camps and death camps. Within the years 1941-1945 over eleven million people were killed. Six million of those who died were killed simply because they were Jewish. Over one million children were also killed during the Holocaust. Nazis, Hitler’s followers, killed over two thirds of the Jewish population in Europe. Groups that were brought to concentration camps and death camps included Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, mentally or physically disabled people, and people who did not agree with the government.

The first concentration camps were established in 1933. In the beginning concentration camps were places that held people in protective custody. Victims for protective custody included those who were both physically and mentally ill, gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah Witnesses, Jews and anyone against the Nazis. By 1934 there were at least fifty concentration camps throughout

Europe. In the beginning these camps were watched over by the police, and then Hitler had his security take over. Camps were set up for different reasons. Some for forced labor, others for medical experiments and, for death. Camps were set up along railroad lines, so that the prisoners would be close to their destination. As they were being transported either to a camp or from one to another, the soldiers kept telling the Jews to have hope. The <https://assignbuster.com/death-and-concentration-camps-in-the-holocaust-history-essay/>

conditions on the train were terrible. Many people died of starvation before they arrived. Most families ended up being separated when they arrived at a camp. Jews were forced to obey the guard's orders from the moment they arrived at the camps. The prisoners usually had marks on their clothes or numbers on their arms to identify them. The conditions of the camps were terrible and inhumane. Within the first few days of being at the camps, thousands of people died of hunger, starvation and disease. Other people died from the cruel punishments of the guards' beatings and torture.

In 1937, seven thousand Jews were in camps. By 1938, ten thousand more Jews were sent to camps. Jews were taken to camps if they expressed negative feelings about the government, if they married a non-Jew, if they were sick, mentally or physically, or if they had a police record. When someone escaped from the camp, all the prisoners in that group were shot. Nazis, who claimed that they did not necessarily hate Jews, seemed to enjoy making the Jews suffer. They also felt that slavery was better than killing their prisoners. Surrounding some of the camps in Poland was a forest that the Jews who planned to escape would flee into. Before the escaped prisoners got very far, they were killed. The people who could not run away from the camps thought about revolt. Joseph Mengels, one of the most notorious Nazi doctors, selected his victims for the gas chambers or medical experiments. His women victims for sterilization were usually twenty to thirty years of age. " Other experiments included putting inmates into high pressure chambers to test the effects of altitude on pilots. Some inmates were frozen to determine the best way to revive frozen German soldiers".

(Bauer)

Auschwitz, located in Poland, was Nazi Germany's largest concentration camp. It was established by order of Hitler on April 27, 1940. At first, it was small because it was a work camp for Polish and Soviet prisoners of war. It became a death camp in 1941. Auschwitz included camp sites a few miles away from the main complex. At these sites, slave labor was used to kill the people. The working conditions were so poor that death was an almost certain result. In March 26, 1942, Auschwitz took women prisoners, but after August 16, 1942 the women were housed in Birkenau, another section of the camp. When the Jews arrived at Auschwitz, they were met with threats and promises. If they didn't do exactly as they were told, they would be beaten or deprived of food. They were assured that things would get better. The daily meals in Auschwitz consisted of soup, once a day, with a small piece of bread. Most of the prisoners were extremely malnourished and on the brink of death. The bad sanitary conditions, the inadequate diet, the hard labor and other torturous conditions in Auschwitz, most people died after a few months of their arrival. The few people who managed to stay alive for longer were the ones who were assigned better jobs. In place of toilets, there were wooden boards with round holes and underneath them concrete troughs. Two or three hundred people could sit on them at once. While they were on these troughs they were watched in order to assure that they did not stay too long. When people were loaded onto trains to be taken to the gas chambers, they were told that they were being placed in new labor camps. This was one of the many lies told. It was impossible for the Jews to make out which buildings were the gas chambers because they seemed normal from the outside, just like any other building. Over the gas chambers were well kept lawns with flowers bordering them. When the Jews were being taken to <https://assignbuster.com/death-and-concentration-camps-in-the-holocaust-history-essay/>

the gas chambers, they thought they were being taken to the baths. At first, there were five gas chambers in Auschwitz, the procedure for gassing was “ About 900 people were gassed at a time. First they undressed in a nearby room. Then, they were told to go into another room to be deloused; they filled the gas chambers like packed like sardines. After a few minutes of horrible suffering, the victims died. The bodies were then transported to ovens where they were burned.”(Weapon of War) The gas chambers were not large enough to execute great numbers at a time, so crematoriums were built. The crematoriums would burn 2, 000 bodies in less than 24 hours. Many Jews and non - Jews tried to escape from Auschwitz. Some succeeded. Of course they wanted to inform the world of what was going on. Those who escaped wrote descriptions of the horrors they suffered. Information spread to many countries, yet no countries seemed to do anything to help the situation. In fact, as the war progressed, the number of prisoners increased. In total, between one and a half and three and a half million Jews were murdered at Auschwitz between the years 1940 and 1945

Usually, the death camps were part of existing camps, but some new ones were just set up for this purpose. When the prisoners first arrived at the camps, those sent to the left were transferred to death camps.

Once in the death camps the prisoners were again divided. Women were sent to one side to have their hair shaven and the men to the other. There were six death camps; Chelmno, Treblinka, Auschwitz (Birkenau), Sobibor, Maidanek, and Belzec. These camps used gas from the shower heads to murder their victims. A seventh death camp, Mauthausen, used a method

called “ extermination through labor”. Basically they worked their prisoners until their bodies couldn’t handle it anymore and they died.

In conclusion, The Nazis, organized the destruction of the Jews. Why they did it is unknown. Perhaps it was because of a history of tension between the Christians and Jews, or perhaps, because Hitler needed a scapegoat for Germany’s problems. People throughout history have been murdered; but never as many people as during the Holocaust in such a short period of time. One third of all the Jews in the world were eliminated. Hitler’s method of killing the Jews and other undesirable people was first by torture and then by plain murder. In the early days of his leadership, he took away their rights as citizens and then as people. They were treated like slaves and lived like animals. After 1942, his goal was to exterminate all Jewish and “ impure”(Stillman) people. Many Jews were killed before that date, but they were a small number compared to the mass murdering of the Holocaust.