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*Introduction*

According to Adolf Hitler, Jews were responsible for everything he did not like including modern art, pornography, and prostitution. Hitler also alleged that the Jews had been responsible for losing the First World War. Jews also controlled many of Germanys leading companies and several of the countries larger newspapers. He also believed that Jews were ultimately responsible for the economic situation in Germany. These situations eventually lead to the holocaust, which may have been one of the worst crimes of mankind.

*Anti Semitism*

Before his release from prison in 1924, Hitler wrote a book called “Mein Kampf”. He argued that the German race, which was far superior to all other races and ultimately responsible for every good thing in Germany, was being threatened by the Jewish population. At this time, the Jewish population made up around 1% of the German population. He also believed that the pure white “Aryan” race was being threatened by intermarriage with the Jews. He also said, “On this planet of ours human culture and civilization are indissolubly bound up with the presence of the Aryan. If he should be exterminated or subjugated then the dark shroud of a new barbarian era would enfold the earth.” Hitler believed that the Jews were involved with Communists in a joint conspiracy to take over the world. He claimed that three quarters of all Communists were Jews. He also argued that the combination of Jews and Marxists had already been successful in Russia and now threatened the rest of Europe. He believed that the Jewish race were lazy and had contributed little to world civilization. He was also quoted saying, “Jewish youths lies in wait for hours on end satanically glaring at and spying on the unconscious girl whom he plans to seduce, adulterating her blood with the ultimate idea of bastardizing the white race which they hate and thus lowering its cultural and political level so that the Jews might dominate.” Hitler’s anti-Semitism did cause difficulties for Hitler, when he was trying to gain power in Germany. Jewish businessmen, in Germany and the rest of the world, were occasionally able to use their influence to prevent anti-Semitic ideas from being promoted (Simkin, 1997b). At the beginning of the 19th century, there was a considerable amount of anti-Semitism in Europe. This was reflected in the speeches and writing of Hitler. He stated that “Citizenship is to be determined by race; no Jew to be a German.” Once in power, Hitler was quick to express his anti-Semitic ideas. Based on his readings of how blacks were denied civil rights in the Southern States in America, Hitler attempted to make life so unpleasant for Jews in Germany that they would emigrate. The campaign started on April 1st, 1933, when a one day boycott of Jewish owned shops took place. Members of the Sturm Abteilung (SA) picketed the shops to ensure the boycott was successful. The hostility towards Jews increased in Germany. This was reflected in the decision by many shops and restaurants not to serve the Jewish population. Placards saying, “Jews not admitted,” and” Jews enter this place at their own risk” began to appear all over Germany. In some parts of the country, Jews were even banned from public parks, swimming pools, and public transportation. Germans were also encouraged not to use Jewish doctors and lawyers. Jewish civil servants, teachers, and those employed by the mass media were sacked. Members of the (SA) put pressure on people not to buy goods produced by Jewish companies. For example the Ullstein Press, the largest publisher of newspapers, books, and magazines in Germany, was forced to sell the company to the National Socialist German Workers Party in 1934. After the action of the (SA), it was made impossible for them to make a profit. As a direct result of this many Jewish people left the country. This included a large number of scientists including Albert Einstein, Edward Teller, Otto Frisch, Felix Bloch, Eugene Wigner, Leo Szilard, Lise Meitner, Otto Meyerhof, and Fritz Haber. Most of these scientists went to live in Britain and the United States. They later played an important role in developing technology that was used against Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Millions of Jews were not so lucky. Hitler repeatedly thought of ways to make life on the Jews harder, and eventually, the Nuremberg Laws on Citizenship and Race passed in 1935. This new law prevented Jews from becoming citizens of Germany and even marring Aryans. Still, Hitler was not satisfied. He, Reinhard Heydrich, along with Joseph Goebbels organized a new plan to help influence Jews to move from Germany (Simkin, 1997a). It was referred to as Crystal Night, and it took place on the 9th and 10th of November 1938. As what would later be only more anti-Semitism, the German people were told that a German diplomat had been murdered at the hands of a young Jewish refugee in Paris. During Crystal Night, over 7,500 Jewish shops were destroyed and 400 synagogues were burnt down. An estimated 20,000 Jews were sent to concentration camps, and 91 were killed during the two day riot. Up until these times, these camps had been for political prisoners. The only people that were punished for the crimes that took place on crystal night were the members of the (SA), which had raped Jewish women because they had broken the Nuremberg Laws on sexual intercourse between Aryans and Jews. After Crystal Night, the number of Jews wanting to leave Germany increased dramatically. It has been calculated that between 1933 and 1939 approximately half the Jewish population of Germany (250,000) fled the country. It is believed that more would have left, but because anti-Semitism was not only in Germany, there was no other place for them to go. By the end of 1941, over 500,000 Jews in Poland and Russia had been killed by the (SS). At the Wannsee Conference held in January 1942, Reinhard Heydrich, Heinrich Muller, Adolf Eichmann, and Roland Friesler discussed what became known as the ‘Final Solution.” It was then decided to make the extermination of the Jews a systematically organized operation (Simkin, 1997c).

*Holocaust*

After this date, extermination camps were established in the east that had the capacity to kill large numbers of Jews, including Belez (15,000 a day), Sobibor (20,000), Treblinka (25,000) and Majdanek (25,000). On September 21, 1939, it was decided that the Jews would be rounded up and confined to special areas in cites and towns. These ‘ghettos” were to be surrounded by barbed wire, brick walls, and armed guards. The first of many ghettos was set up in Piotrkow on October 28, 1939. Jews living in rural areas had their land taken, and they were forced to live in the ghettos in town. The largest ghettos were established in Warsaw and Lodz. In late October 1939, the SS began deporting Jews, living in Austria and Czechoslovakia, to the ghettos in Poland. They were transported in locked passenger trains, and large numbers died on the journey. Those that were lucky enough to survive the train were told, by the head of Jewish affairs, that there were no houses or apartments to stay in, and if they wanted shelter they would have to build it. In Warsaw, the capital of Poland, 22 entrances to the ghetto were sealed. The German authorities allowed a Jewish Council (Judenrat) of 24 men to form its own police to maintain order in the ghetto. Conditions in the Warsaw ghetto were so bad that between 1940 and 1942 an estimated 100,000 Jews died from starvation and disease. On January 20, 1942, there was a meeting held to decide what was going to be done with the Jews under their control. Shortly after this meeting in October, Jews started being deported to the extermination camps. Information soon got back to the ghettos what was happening to the Jews that were leaving the ghetto by train. The Jews decided to resist certain death and refused deportation. But in January 1943, Heinrich Himmler gave strict instructions for Warsaw to be “Jew free” by Hitler’s birthday on the 20th of April (Simkin, 1997e). Before long, not only Jews were being arrested and placed in these concentration camps. Hitler was having beggars, prostitutes, homosexuals, alcoholics, and anyone who was incapable of working placed in his death camps. Although some inmates were tortured, the only people killed during this period were prisoners who tried to escape and those classified as “incurably insane”. Inmates were required to wear serial numbers and colored patches to identify their categories. Red for political prisoners, blue for foreigners, violet for religious fundamentalists, green for criminals, black for those considered to be anti social, and pink for homosexuals (Simkin, 1997f). The SS came up with two ideas for mass execution. One was to put prisoners in a building and simply blow it up, but this was too messy. Another way was to put them in a building and let it fill up with car fumes, but this took too long. It was a subordinate, at Auschwitz, who came up with the idea to delouse the prisoner’s clothes in prussic acid. They used men held in block 11. Sometime between late August and early September1941, the order was given to close block 11 up, and they were gassed to death (Trueman, 2000a). By 1944 there were 13 main concentration camps and over 500 satellite camps. Some were capable of murdering as many as 25,000 people a day (Simkin, 1997g). It has been estimated that between 1942 and 1945 around 18 million were sent to extermination camps, of these historians have estimated that between five and eleven million were murdered (Simkin, 1997g).

*War trials*

As the war reached its end in 1945, the Allies had become aware of appalling war crimes. It was decided to hold a judicial trial and to punish participants’ of these war crimes. It was held in the city of Nuremburg. These trials would later be known as the Nuremberg war trials and were held from November 1945 to October 1946 (Simkin, 1997h). The first trails in Nuremburg were for 24 senior Nazis. The International Military Tribunal formatted four indictments, all or some of which were made against all 24 men. The four indictments were: 1. participating in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of crime against peace. 2. Planning, initiating, and waging wars of aggression, and other crime against peace. 3. War crimes 4. Crimes against humanity. Bormann Martin, Hitler’s Nazi party Secretary, was not at the trial, but was sentenced to death in his absence. Hitler's U-boat fleet commander, Donitz Karl, received 10 years in prison. Frank Hans, who ruled occupied Poland, also received the death penalty. Frick Wilhelm, Hitler's personal Minister of the Interior, received the death penalty. Funk Walter, who was Hitler's radio commentator, was acquitted of all charges (Trueman, 2000b). The rest of Hitler's command was either put to death or life in prison. As for Hitler himself, there are still many unanswered questions concerning his death and the where about of his body.

*Conclusion*

The end of the war should have been the start of a better life, but for some Jewish families it did not get any better. They returned home to find they had nothing left. Even though they have been persecuted for their beliefs and murdered by the millions, there were many SS guards that were never prosecuted. Even though anti Semitism still exists, today, hopefully, we will learn from our mistakes. Despite their persecution, they continue to be a hard working and successful race.

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