

## THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust was the capture, imprisonment, and mass murder of eleven million Jews, Gypsies, Poles, communists, homosexuals, Soviet POWs, and mentally and physically disabled persons by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany. Hitler and the Nazis were not the only ones responsible for the Holocaust. There were many factors that led to the genocide of the Jewish people and other minority groups. The effects of the Holocaust still affect us today.

The Holocaust first began with the rise of Adolf Hitler to power in Germany in the early 1930s. “After President Paul von Hindenburg’s death in 1934, Hitler anointed himself as “Führer,” becoming Germany’s supreme ruler.”<sup>1</sup> At first the Nazi party started persecuting communists. They sent communists prisoners to “the first concentration camp which opened in March of 1933 at Dachau near Munich.”<sup>2</sup> Several more concentration camps opened shortly after



Dachau. They were filled with communists and non-communists alike. Adolf and the Nazi party targeted Jews more than other races because he blamed them for Germany’s loss of World War 1. Once imprisoned in the concentration camps the healthy would be put to work while the very young, the old, the sick, and disabled were executed. “Since

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<sup>1</sup> “The Holocaust,” <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/the-holocaust>, 02/10/15, page 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, page 3.

June 1941, experiments with mass killing methods had been ongoing at the concentration camp of Auschwitz, near Krakow.”<sup>3</sup> Mass killing of Jews and others imprisoned in concentration camps continued until the end of the war in 1945.

Adolf Hitler had very specific reasons for singling out those people of the Holocaust. Hitler imprisoned in concentration camps those who were non-Aryan. He



thought the Aryans were the perfect race. “For Hitler, the ideal "Aryan" was blond, blue-eyed, and tall.”<sup>4</sup> Adolf Hitler thought of them as the master race and greater than all others. He targeted those who were non-Aryan because he believed they tainted the pure Aryan blood line. The Jews were his main focus due to his belief of them being the cause of Germany’s loss of World War 1. However Hitler targeted the

others because he believed they would taint the bloodlines. He did not believe in intermarriages between German Aryan and non-Aryans. “The offspring of these marriages were said to dilute the superior characteristics reflected in German blood, thus weakening the race in its struggle against other races for survival.”<sup>5</sup> He thought of the offspring as half-breeds. They were also put into the concentration camps along with Jews, gypsies, Russian POWs, and many others.

The Holocaust was devastating for many including the German people themselves. However they never tried to prevent it. When Hitler rose to power they thought of him as a very good leader. He fought for the German people. He was a very

<sup>3</sup> “The Holocaust,” <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/the-holocaust>, 02/11/15, page 5.

<sup>4</sup> “Nazi Racism,” <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007679>, 02/11/15, page 1.

<sup>5</sup> “Victims of the Nazi Era: Nazi Racial Ideology,” <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007457>, 02/11/2015, page 5.

powerful man and he had a way of speaking that made people believe and trust him.

“First it’s because Hitler had all the power. Speaking against Hitler meant you also were sent to the concentration camps. Your property was taken. Families were torn apart. Life as you knew it ended. Also Hitler made everyday life better for the average German. He also instilled a sense of pride in the German fatherland. Furthermore he brought German’s who had immigrated to other countries back into the German fold. The biggest thing of all was that he was a very charismatic speaker. In essence Hitler was the Christ speaker for Germany, or the German *volk*.”<sup>6</sup>

The victims of the Holocaust attempted to flee from Germany and the Nazis however it was very difficult for them to escape. Many fled to the United States however it was very difficult to get in. US State Department policies made it very difficult for refugees to obtain entry visas.”<sup>7</sup> The United States made no effort to help. They actually made it harder for Jews to enter the United States. Although the U.S. didn’t support the Holocaust they made no move to prevent or stop it. They made it easier in fact for the Nazis to keep the Jews and other victims of the Holocaust contained. With no where to run to, the Jews and other victims of the Holocaust were left alone in Nazi occupied countries. All they could do was hide in which case most of the time they were found. The U.S. never cared about stopping the Holocaust too much. The people of the United States held prejudice against Jews also. “Despite the ongoing persecution of Jews in Germany, the State Department's attitude was influenced by the economic hardships of the Depression, which intensified grassroots antisemitism, isolationism, and

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Herr Professor Edmund James on February 11, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> “The United States and The Holocaust,” <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005182>, 2/12/15, page 1.

xenophobia.”<sup>8</sup> Due to their own racial prejudice the U.S. never considered rescuing the Jews as a main priority even during the middle of their persecution and genocide.

“During World War II, rescue of Jews and others targeted by Nazi Germany was not a priority for the United States government.”<sup>9</sup>

The Holocaust left a never ending pain and suffering on even the survivors. “Viennese-born Ruth Kluger and Gerda Lerner were both nurtured in prosperous but unhappy families. Kluger's youth led to a maternal dependence in the camps and afterwards. A few years senior, Lerner masterminded her escape to America. Both faced poverty in the new land, but Kluger's adjustment has been more problematic. A disastrous psychiatric encounter damaged her self-esteem and heightened maternal resentment. She married unhappily but successfully reared sons. In contrast Lerner married happily and underwent a successful psychoanalysis after her husband's premature death. In their memoirs Kluger remains emotionally entangled with the memory of her difficult mother, whereas Lerner has discovered new affection for her deceased parents. We must take account of whole lives.”<sup>10</sup>

The Holocaust was damaging for everyone during that era. It was damaging economically, personally, mentally physically, geologically, and in many other ways. The nightmare of the Holocaust still haunts the world today. The Holocaust was one of the worst experiences in human History.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>10</sup> “Psychoanalytic Outcomes for Holocaust Survivors: Two Case Studies,”  
<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/ipsa/2003/03-ipsa%20psychoanalytic%20outcomes.html>, 2/12/15, page 1.