

Holocaust Persecution

Holocaust Persecution:
Responses and Consequences

Edited by

Nancy Rupprecht and Wendy Koenig

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Holocaust Persecution: Responses and Consequences,
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To John McDaniel, who helped to make Holocaust Studies possible at Middle Tennessee State University, and to our late colleagues and dear friends, Lon R. Nuell and Thaddeus M. Smith.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

NANCY E. RUPPRECHT AND WENDY KOENIG

This volume of interdisciplinary articles, selected from the papers presented at the 8th Bi-Annual Holocaust Studies Conference at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, is an original contribution to Holocaust scholarship insofar as it focuses on the responses to and consequences of genocide, rather than the fact of it. There are no essays devoted to specific forms of persecution during the Holocaust; for the reader who needs a general introduction or a review of the events of the Holocaust, we include an “Overview of the Holocaust,” written and compiled by Nancy Rupprecht. Following that essay, the book is divided into two sections, “Responses to Holocaust Persecution” and “Consequences of Holocaust Persecution.” Each section begins with an essay or scholarly paper by internationally acclaimed scholars Gerhard L. Weinberg and Robert Satloff.

Responses to Holocaust Persecution

The Responses section includes articles concerning both collaboration with German occupiers and the rescue of Jewish victims. Robert Satloff, Executive Director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and author of *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories of the Holocaust's Long Reach Into Arab Lands*, contributes a scholarly essay on Arab rescue of Jews during the Holocaust to this volume called “Countering Holocaust Denial in the Middle East: A New Approach.” Satloff, a leading scholar in Middle Eastern Studies, based his essay on research that began with a quest to find Arabs who had saved Jews during the Holocaust. His essay argues that Holocaust denial in Arab regions may be more effectively countered if recognition is given to Arabs who helped or protected Jews during the Holocaust and if the fate of Jews in Arab lands, particularly in North Africa, during World War II is given more thorough consideration.

Although he discovered, in 2001, that not one Arab had been publicly recognized as a rescuer of Jews, within four years Satloff had uncovered numerous examples of Arabs who protected, assisted or actively saved Jews. His essay for this publication includes some of those stories. One instance involved Si Ali Sakkat, a former mayor of Tunis and a Muslim aristocrat, who opened his farm to approximately sixty Jewish workers who had escaped from a nearby Axis labor camp during the battle for Tunisia. He provided food and shelter for the Jews until the Allies captured the Zaghouan valley. Another case in point was related to Satloff by Anny Boukris, who spoke of an Arab “guardian angel” named Khaled Abdul-Wahab in her home village of Mahdia on the eastern shore of Tunisia. Following the German occupation of the region, Abdul-Wahab provided shelter for Anny’s family at his home after learning of a German officer’s intention to kidnap and rape Anny’s mother. Currently, Abdul-Wahab’s nomination for consideration as a “Righteous Among the Nations” is under review at Yad Vashem. Although sixty Muslims have been included among the Righteous, Abdul-Wahab would be the first Arab to join this group of non-Jewish heroes.

In addition, two contributions on Muslims during the Holocaust era are included in this section. “Turkey during the Holocaust” by Birsan Bulmus chronicles the mixed record of the Turkish government under İsmet İnönü concerning Jews. The government neither expelled resident Turkish Jews nor encouraged Jewish immigration. Bulmus argues that this cautious policy stemmed both from Turkey’s perilous geo-political position, less than 150 miles from the German patrolled Greek border, and the negative historical perception of Britain as a result of the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign of 1915.

“Bosnian Muslims and the Wartime Legacy” by York Norman examines the traditional historical opinion that Bosnian Muslims were sympathetic to the Nazi cause during World War II. Norman argues that collaboration with the Germans resulted primarily from desperation rather than support for the Axis powers. The article revisits the questions of collaboration between the Croatian fascist *Ustaša* and the Germans, the adoption of Nazi racist ideology, and the impact the SS *Handžar* had on Bosnian Muslims and their neighbors. Norman concludes that Bosnia’s Muslim community was forced to collaborate with a genocidal regime in order to survive. This article bridges the two sections of the volume because it also discusses the consequences of collaboration meted out by the Tito regime in the post-war era.

To the best of our knowledge, this volume is unique among Holocaust anthologies because it includes three articles concerning Arabs, Muslims

and Jews during the Holocaust era. This is especially important because Muslim heads of state currently are issuing conflicting statements concerning the very fact of the Holocaust. We believe that articles such as these serve, in a small way, to bolster public recognition of the historical events of the Holocaust, such as Morocco's King Muhammad VI's response to the vituperative Holocaust denial regularly expressed by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In a 2009 speech, King Muhammad VI described the Holocaust "as a wound to the collective memory, which we know is engraved in one of the most painful chapters in the collective history of mankind" and announced his support for the "Aladdin Project," a program of the Paris-based Foundation for the Memory of the *Shoah*, designed to spread recognition of the existence of the Holocaust among Muslims.¹ Unfortunately, King Muhammad's position has generated far less public attention than that of Muslim Holocaust deniers.

Bonnie M. Harris' article, "The *Polenaktion* of October 28, 1938: Prelude to *Kristallnacht* and Pattern for Deportation" discusses the tragic fate of approximately 50,000 Polish Jews, including entire Jewish families, who had emigrated to Germany and Austria from Eastern Europe in the years before the Great War. After Hitler's seizure of power (*Machtergreifung*) in 1933, antisemitic state policies resulted in the Nuremberg racial laws of 1935 that stripped Jews of their German citizenship.

To counter German efforts to force Polish Jews to leave Germany, Poland enacted regulations, laws and policies to guard against a flood of Polish-Jewish émigrés from Germany. Most devastating for them were laws that invalidated all passports issued to Polish citizens who had lived abroad continuously for longer than five years. This effectively made the 50,000 Polish Jews living in Germany and Austria stateless as of October 31, 1938. Hitler countered this legislation by forcing a mass deportation of Polish Jews across the German-Polish border on October 28, 1938, before the Polish edict could become final. This gambit, called the *Polenaktion*, resulted in the establishment of a make-shift internment camp in the border town of Zbaszyn, Poland in the province of Poznan to

¹ Alfred de Montesquieu, "Mideast's Holocaust mind-set challenged." *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky), 26 July 2009, section A, page 19; Brad A. Greenberg, "Arab king calls Holocaust 'wound to the collective memory of mankind.'" *JewishJournal.com*, 9 June 2009.

http://www.jewishjournal.com/thegodblog/item/arab_king_calls_holocaust_wound_to_the_collective_memory_of_mankind.html. Accessed 11 December 2009

intern approximately 10,000 Jewish refugees who had been deported from Germany.

Although the Polish government hoped to negotiate their return to Germany, Hitler refused to accept them. This resulted in their abandonment: they were provided with neither shelter nor food and were forced to camp out in barns, stables and pigsties because escape attempts were punishable by death.

Hope for deliverance from Zbaszyn evaporated with the murder of Ernst vom Rath, German ambassador to Paris, by Herschel Grynszpan, whose family had been deported and confined at Zbaszyn. Harris argues that “It was the events of the *Polenaktion* and the deportation to Zbaszyn that precipitated *Kristallnacht*, an event of such huge proportions in Holocaust history that it has virtually pushed the events and the victims of the Zbaszyn Deportation into obscurity.” Her article focuses on Zbaszyn survivor, Cantor Joseph Cysner, who kept a journal of his expulsion from Hamburg, forced march to Zbaszyn and the horrendous living experiences he endured there. It, along with oral and written testimonies of a small group of other Zbaszyn survivors, provides a unique insight into this almost forgotten aspect of Jewish history.

In “‘A Pocket of Love’: Traditional Female Roles as a Mode of Resistance,” Deborah Lee Prescott draws from survivors’ autobiographies to reveal how Jewish women used female-gendered behaviors, including the formation of small familial groups and the shared recollection of recipes, as strategies for survival within concentration camps. The establishment of sisterly bonds and discussion of recipes for imagined meals among women prisoners served as private acts of revolt against the harsh conditions of the camp. Prescott elucidates some of the differences between male and female responses to the “divide and conquer” approach used by the Germans, as they attempted to pit prisoner against prisoner through meager food rations and inadequate supplies.

“Collaboration in Ukraine during the Holocaust: Aspects of Historiography and Research” is the article contributed by Anatoly Podolsky, Director of the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies in Kiev, Ukraine. He argues that the main forms of collaboration in Ukraine included open or covert assistance in the extermination of individual Jews and entire Jewish communities during the *Shoah*. He also discusses the impact of Nazi antisemitic propaganda on the nature and level of collaboration. Like Norman, Podolsky extends his study to discuss post-war attitudes toward and consequences for collaborators.

Valery Bazarov, Director of HIAS Location and Family History Services and a HIAS researcher, contributes the article “Jews Rescuing

Jews: Operation Rescue, The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) in France (1940-1944).” A largely unexplored topic, Jewish rescue by Jewish organizations is a welcome addition to Holocaust studies. Bazarov’s article covers HIAS activity in France from 1940 through the liberation of France in 1944. It discusses the personnel of the main HIAS office in Marseilles, focusing on both their day-to-day efforts to facilitate Jewish emigration, and their clandestine operations that involved smuggling Jews through the frontiers of Spain and Switzerland. Twenty-two HIAS employees involved in rescue work were arrested, deported or killed by German officials.

Even before the extermination camps were constructed, Jewish organizations attempted to intervene to help save European Jews. “Flight to South Africa: The Tale of Two Ships” by Lotta M. Stone discusses the events surrounding two ships that carried Jewish refugees to South Africa: the *Stuttgart* in September, 1936 and the *Wangoni* in August, 1939. Of particular importance to Stone’s research are the attitudes towards and assistance given to the immigrants by various South African Jewish agencies, including the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. The first ship was chartered by a Jewish group in Germany in response to tightening immigration regulations in South Africa and consisted of 537 passengers selected to suit the needs of South African society. The second ship, a German East Africa liner bound for Cape Town that included 41 Jews among the passengers, was re-routed to Vigo, Spain. Jewish agencies worked for three months to secure passage of the group to South Africa. Stone’s essay highlights the dilemma faced by such Jewish agencies: How to assist co-religionists in need without exacerbating existing antisemitic attitudes and behaviors upon their arrival.

Consequences of Holocaust Persecution

Although we interpret the term “consequences” broadly, much of the material included in this section refers to the legal, political and scholarly consequences resulting from the Holocaust. Our Keynote speaker, Gerhard L. Weinberg, Emeritus Professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and author of *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, is considered by many to be the world’s most important authority on the Second World War.² He contributes the primary article in

² Among other honors, Weinberg has been awarded the George Louis Beer Prize of the American Historical Association twice, the Distinguished Book Award of the Society for Military History, the Halverson Prize of the German Historical

this category, “The Holocaust and the Nuremberg Trials.” His discovery of Hitler’s sequel to *Mein Kampf*, *Hitler’s Zweites Buch* (*Hitler’s Second Book*) at the Archives and Records Center in Alexandria, Virginia in the late 1950s was the subject of a 2004 History Channel special called “Hitler’s Lost Plan.” Hitler’s second book provided the vital link between his racial and foreign policies that resulted in war and genocide. His article for this volume argues that the evidence presented at the Nuremberg trials, especially reports tendered from SS murderers to their superiors, provides incontrovertible evidence that they knew about the deliberate murder of Jews and others, a fact that most Nuremberg defendants and subsequent apologists attempted to deny. It also demonstrates the culpability of German Foreign Office officials whose jobs included badgering satellite governments into surrendering their Jews to the Germans for killing. The documents entered into evidence at Nuremberg help to prevent those who were perpetrators or by-standers during the Holocaust from successfully portraying themselves as victims. The trials also have continuing significance because the principles elaborated during them have become models and precedents for subsequent efforts to bring individuals to trial for war crimes, genocide and other reprehensible crimes against humanity.

Weinberg also maintains that the trial testimony, together with the masses of documents accumulated by the prosecution at Nuremberg, makes it possible for scholars to refute the irrational fiction spread by Holocaust deniers that the *Shoah* did not happen. As he explains, “perhaps they [deniers] should be provided with a copy of [Otto] Ohlendorf’s testimony at the major Nuremberg trial or his explanation at his own trial of why all Jewish children had to be killed.” The evidence collected for and presented at the Nuremberg trials should convince all those who are not beyond rational argument of the horrifying reality of the Holocaust. The Nuremberg trials, therefore, serve as a scholarly bulwark against the

Association and the Hoover Book Award of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. In October of 2009, he was honored with the prestigious Pritzker Military Library Literature Award. In addition, he has been awarded honorary doctorates in the United States and Europe, and has won a number of fellowships, from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. He has been a Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies, a Fulbright professor at the University of Bonn, and a Shapiro Senior Scholar-in-Residence at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, among other academic appointments. He has served as President of the German Studies Association and the European History Section of the Southern Historical Association.

spread of Holocaust denial as well as a rich source for historical and other academic inquiry.

Moving into the legal aspects of the European response to Holocaust denial, Joachim Neander, in his paper “The ‘Auschwitz Lie’ as a Crime In Central European Law,” analyzes the political offense known as *Auschwitzlüge* (Auschwitz Lie), an umbrella term that covers acts of denying, approving of, justifying, downplaying or qualifying the Holocaust. Neander limits his discussion to Germany and her neighboring states and provides the historical-political backgrounds upon which the “Auschwitz Lie” laws originated. He also includes a summary of relevant articles concerning national law. He concludes with a survey of the criticism of such laws and their enforcement in the post-war era. For example, liberals and leftists regret that societies have delegated the task of fighting against antisemitism to the courts; libertarians stress the conflict between such laws and rights of free speech; and Islamic critics suggest that Europeans have “double moral standards,” as in the case of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in Danish newspapers. Neander’s essay asks the difficult question of whether making Holocaust denial a crime was the wrong conclusion to be drawn from the principles established at Nuremberg.

Ruth G. Biro, in her article “Lessons in Resiliency in Overcoming the Consequences of Persecution: Hungarian Women Remember the Holocaust in their Literature” discusses works written in English by Hungarian Jewish women who survived the Holocaust and immigrated to the United States following World War II. During the Holocaust, some of these women were shielded by protective passes or papers documenting religious conversion, while others were hidden, relocated to ghettos or transported to concentration camps. Several of them became displaced persons in the American zone following the war. By including descriptions of their wartime experiences along with their later efforts to rebuild their lives, mentor others and educate members of their communities, the authors’ literary contributions provide examples of endurance in the face of persecution as well as the courage required to restore self-actualization. Although their stories document the visible and invisible scars the Holocaust left on these women, they also reveal that some victims of Nazi persecution were able to use their artistic endeavors to bear lasting witness to the horrors of the Holocaust.

Donald Berry contributes the article “Missing Motivations: Reticence of the United States and Other Nations to Intervene to Stop Genocide in Light of the Holocaust.” With his investigation of specific responses to various genocidal campaigns of the 20th century, including the catastrophes in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and

Darfur, Berry brings the Holocaust into a more general socio-political conversation about genocide prevention and seeks explanations for the inaction on the part of the United States and other progressive Western governments in such situations. Efforts to understand governmental inertia, whether it results from economic interests, concerns for public opinion, cultural characteristics or particular historical factors, should provide educators and concerned citizens with more effective strategies for political activism.

In “Holocaust *or* Genocide/Holocaust *and* Genocide: The Controversy Continues,” Steven Leonard Jacobs reconsiders the question posed by Henry Huttenbach over a decade ago: “Why study the Holocaust if not to prevent genocide in the future?” Certainly the Holocaust is the most studied and documented of past genocides. Jacobs argues that the study of the Holocaust has led to an increasing awareness of other examples of genocide. He also maintains that both Holocaust and genocide scholars must formulate suggestions to help end present genocides and prevent those that might occur in the future. He concludes that the internecine warfare within the academic community concerning the uniqueness of the Holocaust must abate and that the curriculum must be expanded to include both Holocaust and genocide studies. The important lessons of the Holocaust, unique in themselves, shed light on and provide cautionary evidence with which to examine other genocides. Perhaps the most important of these lessons is that we must focus on the victims—both those who lost their lives and those who survived.

CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HOLOCAUST

NANCY E. RUPPRECHT

“ . . . So then, to tell my story, here I stand. . .
You hear me speak. But do you hear me feel?”¹

When Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party seized power on January 30, 1933, there were approximately 525,000 people of Jewish faith living in Germany, less than one percent of the population. Using a combination of force and terror, Hitler quickly destroyed the Weimar Republic and created a totalitarian state based on racial ideology in theory, in law and in practice.

The Holocaust or *Shoah*,² the genocide directed primarily against the Jews of Europe, developed gradually and inexorably with small

¹ Written by German/Jewish poet Gertrud Kolmar who was murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943. These lines are from the poem *Die Dichterin* (“The Woman Poet”) from *Dark Soliloquy*, a book of selected poems by Kolmar. This overview was composed from a variety of sources written, primarily but not exclusively, by historians. I want to acknowledge my intellectual debt to those upon whom I relied primarily in writing this essay. They include Marion Kaplan, Gerhard L. Weinberg, Raul Hilberg, Martin Gilbert, Christopher Browning, Michael Marrus, Deborah Dwork, and the website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Current and updated versions of the Overview also may be found on the website of the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. The on-line version of this essay includes a bibliography that is updated bi-annually.

² Although some scholars prefer the Hebrew word *Shoah* (catastrophe) to the term Holocaust, this overview will use Holocaust. For many years scholarship on the Holocaust focused on the German perpetrators rather than their victims, primarily because the Germans created most of the written official records. However, in the recent past more emphasis has been placed on Holocaust victims; new methodologies and categories of analysis, such as questions of gender and class, have been developed, and projects to videotape the testimony of Holocaust survivors have broadened the scope of Holocaust scholarship.

discriminatory measures such as university quota limits for Jews and the prohibition of Jewish ownership of German land (both in 1933) and escalated with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 that defined what it meant to be a Jew,³ deprived Jews of German citizenship and legally prohibited them from a variety of occupations. At this time laws also were passed making sexual relations between Germans and those of unacceptable race into a new crime called *Rassenschande* (racial defilement or racial pollution) that was punishable by a variety of sanctions up to and including the death penalty for both participants.⁴

Antisemitism was not a new experience for German Jews or, for that matter, for Jews anywhere in Europe, North America or the rest of the world in the early twentieth century. However, before Hitler turned antisemitism into state policy, the hatred directed toward Jews was primarily religious. The major justification for this type of antisemitism was the Christian tenet that the Jews killed Christ, a viewpoint that the Roman Catholic Church did not officially repudiate until the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962-1965).⁵

Hitler's antisemitism was different. He justified his discriminatory legislation by incorrectly declaring that Jews were a separate race rather than a religious and ethnic group and arguing that Jews use their religion as a shield to mask their supposedly nefarious racial, political and

³ The Nuremberg laws defined "full Jews" as having three or four Jewish grandparents or those with two Jewish grandparents who were married to Jews and/or belonged to a Jewish community. All other people who had two Jewish grandparents were defined as First Degree *Mischlinge*, people of mixed racial ancestry. Second Degree *Mischlinge* were defined as people with one Jewish grandparent and Aryans were defined as people with no Jewish grandparents. The term *Mischling*, in many instances, carried a more pejorative connotation than my translation implies. In some contexts it is more accurately translated into English as "half-breed," with all the negative implication that term connotes.

⁴ *Rassenschande* prosecutions for sexual intercourse between Jews and German gentiles were much more common than prosecutions for sexual relations between gentiles and Afro-German *Mischlinge* or gentiles and Gypsies (Sinti and Roma). Although there were a relatively small number of Afro-Germans in the Third Reich, approximately 385 of them were sterilized to preclude their further procreation and, during the war, some were conscripted for forced labor. On the other hand, some black German *Mischlinge* joined the Hitler Youth and/or fought in the German army during WW II.

⁵ The Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* stated that the Jews during Christ's lifetime as well as all contemporary Jews are no more responsible for the death of Christ than Christians.

economic goals. As Hitler explained in *Mein Kampf* (1924), Jews adopt this tactic in order to assure them:

...of the tolerance that the Aryan is always ready to accord a religious creed. For actually, the Mosaic religion [Judaism] is nothing other than a doctrine for the preservation of the Jewish race.... A Jew is and remains a typical parasite, a sponger who like a noxious bacillus keeps spreading as soon as a favorable medium invites him. And the effect of his existence is also like that of spongers: wherever he appears, the host people die out. The Jew today is the great agitator for the complete destruction of Germany.

From 1933 on there was slow, steady progress toward the destruction of Europe's Jews from discrimination, to expropriation, to degradation, to persecution, to pogrom, to mass deportations, to forced or slave labor and finally to genocide.⁶ Also in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had predicted that a general European war would result "in the extermination of the Jewish race in Europe," a prediction he repeated in a Reichstag speech in January 1939 and three times during World War II. It was, of course, a self-fulfilling prophecy despite the fact that few people interpreted his warnings literally.

Frequently it has been argued that Germany's Jews should have anticipated what the German state had in store for them and emigrated abroad long before the exterminations began. However, in the years immediately after Hitler's seizure of power the most virulent forms of persecution were levied against non-Jewish Germans whom he considered to be enemies of the new German state, such as Communists, Social Democrats and other political opponents. Intent is much easier to assess in hindsight.

In July 1933 eugenic laws were enacted permitting the involuntary sterilization of those Germans who physicians thought might transmit serious physical or mental diseases to the next generation. In October, 1939, physicians sorted out patients at hospitals and nursing homes to send those believed to be suffering from specified incurable conditions, handicaps, injuries and diseases to special facilities to be put to death. This so-called euthanasia program, often referred to by its code name T-4,⁷

⁶ An extensive, though not complete, list of these discriminatory measures—such as the loss of the right to use public telephones, swim in public pools or own dogs and cats—is included in the Appendix to this chapter.

⁷ The euphemism T-4 was chosen because the program's headquarters were located at Tiergartenstrasse 4, Berlin.

offered a practical opportunity for the Third Reich to experiment with the quickest, cheapest, and most professional way to kill large numbers of people using a variety of lethal gasses and poisons. It also gave them experience in recruiting people who were willing to kill other people for a living and enabled them to find efficient methods of disposing of huge numbers of corpses. By August 1941 there had been approximately 70,000 victims of the euthanasia program. Word of this program leaked out and an outcry of public indignation managed to reduce it in the Reich. However, it was replaced by a decentralized program that continued until 1945.⁸

The first steps on the path to genocide were designed to subject the German-Jewish population to what historian Marion Kaplan has described as “social death”. By examining the everyday lives of German Jews using methodologies developed to investigate women’s history, Kaplan explains how state policies designed to isolate, disenfranchise, denigrate and demean them led to what she calls “secular excommunication,” a form of social ostracism that separated them from non-Jewish Germans. This enabled the Nazi state to define Jews as an alien race living among Germans and encouraged non-Jewish Germans to become desensitized to what was happening to them. Kaplan argues that the “Social death of Jews and German indifference were prerequisites for the ‘final solution.’”⁹

The turning point from social death to active persecution in the pre-war Third Reich was *Reichskristallnacht* (“the Night of Broken Glass”), the horrendous pogrom of November 9, 1938 that resulted in the murder of approximately 100 Jews and the destruction of 101 synagogues and 7,500 Jewish-owned businesses. An additional 75 synagogues and countless Jewish stores and shops were damaged. About thirty thousand Jewish men were taken to concentration camps. After *Kristallnacht*, it was clear to almost every German Jew that the best way to survive was to emigrate. Undoubtedly many more would have left if they had found any country in the world willing to accept them. Nevertheless, some Jews with financial resources and/or connections abroad were able to obtain passports that permitted them to emigrate until emigration was forbidden in the fall of 1941.

⁸ This decentralized program, in which hospital personnel continued to kill patients, existed until the end of the war and, in some places, these murders were not ended until allied occupation forces discontinued them. Approximately 100,000 people were put to death after August 1941.

⁹ Kaplan’s term should not be interpreted to exclude the visceral forms of antisemitism that existed in Germany, most of Europe, the United States and much of the world.

At the instigation of American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, an international conference was convened at Evian-sur-Bains, France, July 6-15, 1938 to discuss the problem of Jewish refugees. Not only did the 32 countries' representatives in attendance refuse to amend immigration laws to permit more immigration, they failed even to pass a resolution condemning National Socialist Germany's brutal treatment of the Jews. Historian Martin Gilbert observed, "[I]t was a neutral stance, not a hostile one, but this neutral stance was to cost a multitude of lives." Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden did eventually accept some transports of Jewish children. Groups such as the Quakers and dedicated individuals organized efforts to transport children to safety on the so-called *Kindertransports*. British stockbroker Nicholas Winton, for example, is credited with saving 669 Czechoslovak Jewish children in less than a year.

Once systematic genocide had become state policy and the possibility of escape was almost impossible, Jews who were married to Aryans had the best chance to survive. Kaplan estimates that of the Jewish German survivors who did not emigrate, only 1% were not in mixed marriages. Jews remaining in Germany who went into hiding were called "submarines" (*U-Boote*) because they had to live below the surface of life. Only about 25% of the Jews who went into hiding survived and the majority of them were women.¹⁰ There are many ways in which the Holocaust experiences of male and female Jews differed. These differences are now being addressed by researchers because, as Myrna Goldenberg explains, "the hell may have been the same for women and men during the Holocaust but the horrors were different." After *Kristallnacht*, the Nazi persecution of Jews escalated dramatically, but it was only after the Second World War began that genocide became state policy.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939 the persecution of German and European Jews escalated, at least partially because military exigencies permit governments to employ more ruthless measures than normally are considered permissible. Moreover, during the war, tighter secrecy could be employed to shield the details of the exterminations under the guise of national security. The euthanasia program taught Hitler

¹⁰ Jews who lived underground in German society, called *U-Boote* or submarines, not only had to avoid the Gestapo (secret police) and other state functionaries, they also had to elude the *Greifer* (snatchers, catchers.) These were Jews, such as the notorious Stella Goldschlag, who were used by the Gestapo to locate and help entrap underground Jews. Nearly all those Jews who went underground lived in mid-sized to large cities because in rural areas where everyone knew one another it was not possible to survive in hiding.

the necessity for absolute secrecy when carrying out programs that he knew many Germans would consider immoral. He was determined not to be stopped or slowed down by people he considered to be misguided idealists.

Until 1940 most Germans, even high-ranking National Socialist officials, thought the forced emigration of the Jews was the final goal of the German state. In 1939, racial theorist Alfred Rosenberg developed a plan to send European Jews to Madagascar and put them on reservations much like those Native Americans had been confined to in the United States. Official state papers dated as late as June 1940 in the bureau of Franz Rademacher, Under Secretary in the German Foreign Office, document that the Madagascar Plan was considered to be state policy. However, Germany's failure to defeat Great Britain and gain control of the seas made the Madagascar Plan unworkable.

The Second World War made the Holocaust possible in two ways: first, it was much more difficult for Jews and other victims to flee from Hitler's persecution and, second, German military victories brought millions of non-German Jews, over 90% of those who would be murdered, under National Socialist control. As historian Gerhard L. Weinberg explains, "The war provided a framework within which the Germans initiated and developed systematic killing programs; it also provided them with the overwhelming majority of their victims."

Shortly after the war began in 1939, special units of the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) rounded up Jews in Poland and shot them in ditches in outbreaks of largely random and sometimes spontaneous violence.¹¹ By 1940, techniques of mass murder had become much more sophisticated with the introduction of mobile killing vans that were developed and tested in the East. The death vans were simply trucks that had been rigged to feed carbon monoxide from the engine back into the cargo area. These vehicles were far too inefficient to handle the millions of murders envisioned by Hitler and Himmler because they took too long to kill and because they wasted valuable gasoline due to the fact that they had to be driven until all of the victims inside died. Moreover, Himmler considered these forms of killing too emotionally taxing for the Germans who carried them out.

¹¹ At least one notable example of racial annihilation occurred on the Western front between May-June 1940 when German forces massacred approximately 3,000 black West African troops fighting in the French army. According to historian Raffael Scheck, most of these soldiers were executed immediately after they surrendered, but some also were murdered after they had become prisoners of war.

Therefore, before the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, these special units (*Einsatzgruppen*) were supplemented with police battalions that were instructed to kill all Hitler's racial and political enemies—Jews, Gypsies, officials of the Soviet state and the Communist Party and thousands of patients in facilities for the mentally and physically disabled. The *Einsatzgruppen* and Police Battalions murdered several hundred thousand Jews and others, primarily by shooting them, in the second half of 1941. The German army provided logistical support to these units and, on occasion, soldiers to guard the prisoners.

In June 1941, a directive was sent from Hermann Göring to Reinhard Heydrich instructing him "to prepare a solution to the Jewish question in the form of emigration or evacuation which favorably fits existing conditions." As the head of the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt* or RSHA), Heydrich was charged with implementing this directive to "purify" Europe by eliminating the Jews in what would become the most horrific example of ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century. He began to deport Jews from Germany, Austria, and Bohemia to the ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz as well as the Opole Ghetto and Bochnia near Krakow in Poland. All World War II ghettos established by the Germans were extremely brutal urban prisons, not sub-standard neighborhoods in the American sense of the word "ghetto."

From 1940-1942 the Jewish "deportees" were permitted to take along 50 kilos (ca 110 lbs.) of luggage and 100 German Marks. The remainder of their property was confiscated by the state or taken by neighbors. Until early 1942 most Jews were sent to the ghettos; after 1941-42 they no longer were destined for eastern ghettos, but for the extermination or death camps (*Vernichtungslager*) created specifically to murder Jews and other enemies of National Socialism: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor, or Treblinka.¹²

These extermination or death camps (*Vernichtungslager*) were kept as secret as possible. The existence of the concentration camps (*Konzentrationslager* or *KZ*) that first were established in 1933 to incarcerate Hitler's political enemies, such as Dachau in Bavaria, was common knowledge in the Third Reich. The German government hoped that knowledge of their existence, combined with rumors about what was happening in them, would act as a

¹² Some sources classify Majdanek as a sixth extermination camp, but that was not its major function. Despite their relatively small numbers, during WW II Gypsies were defined as a race by Hitler and relentlessly persecuted. Memoir literature, such as Olga Lengyel's *Five Chimneys*, indicates that after mid-1943 the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau were reserved almost exclusively for Jews and Gypsies.

deterrent to resistance. Although many people were murdered in these camps, they were not established specifically for that purpose.¹³

The Jews were not the only ones to be targeted. In January 1941, SS Commandant Heinrich Himmler told a gathering of SS officials that the "destruction of 30 million Slavs was prerequisite for German planning in the East." Special SS task forces (*Einsatzkommando*) were instructed to round up European Jews and Gypsies as well as some communists, Slavs, Soviet officials, homosexuals, socialists, political opponents and Jehovah's Witnesses for extermination.

The invasion of the U.S.S.R. in June 1941, and the increased power that devolved on the ideologically fanatical wing of the National Socialist Party was complemented by Alfred Rosenberg's grandiose dream of colonizing the East with ethnic Germans. As a bonus, eliminating the Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs would provide more and better living space (*Lebensraum*) for Germans to settle in the East.

In July 1941 Heydrich was commissioned to work out a plan for a "Final Solution" (*Endlösung*) for the Jewish problem. There is no doubt that it was Hitler's decision to implement genocide as a state policy. In the fall of 1941, the final mass deportation of German Jews began. On the pretext that they were being resettled in the East, they were transported in cattle and boxcars to the death camps.

In January 1942 at Wannsee, a suburb of Berlin, a conference of top party, state and SS leaders took place to coordinate the policy and practice of mass murder, a policy that had been decided previously. Although historians disagree about the exact date that the decision to eliminate the Jews of Europe was reached irrevocably, most agree that it was decided no later than mid-1941 and probably before that. At the Wannsee meeting the European portion of the Final Solution was discussed thoroughly, including methods of implementing it. Thereafter, orders for and regarding the Final Solution almost always were transmitted verbally from Hitler and Himmler through Heydrich and his successor, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, to Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei* or state secret police) chiefs Heinrich Müller and Adolf Eichmann, who were in tactical charge of executing these directives. Eichmann and Müller refined and transmitted the orders for genocide through the bureaucratic apparatus of the Third Reich to the local officials in charge of implementing genocide.

After the Wannsee Conference, the job of organizing and enacting plans for cost-efficient genocide began in earnest. The first task was to

¹³ Most camps were intended for both genders, but one KZ, Ravensbrück, was established inside Germany for female prisoners.

comb through Europe from west to east picking up Jews and transporting them to eastern ghettos and then moving them by stages to the death camps to be killed. The quasi-aborted German euthanasia program served as a pilot program for the Holocaust. It provided SS extermination camp functionaries with valuable information about effective methods of mass murder, models for the efficient implementation of genocide and a cadre of personnel experienced in murdering large numbers of people.

Jews, Gypsies, and others considered to be “life unworthy of life” (*Lebensunwertes Leben*) were transported to the death camps where they were sorted and classified—usually by a camp physician. The young and the old were murdered immediately while healthy adults were worked nearly to death and fed less than enough to survive.¹⁴ Eventually even strong men and women grew weak and then were gassed. Only those with special talents—such as accountants, musicians, tailors, cobblers and physicians—had even a small chance to survive. Wherever possible, the Germans used prisoners called *Sonderkommando* who soon were scheduled to die to work in the crematoria and to collect the victims' hair, eyeglasses, shoes, and other possessions. The lifespan of *Sonderkommando* teams was short in order to keep the extermination process as secret as possible.

The Germans employed the latest in European and especially in modern American business technology and techniques in order to increase the efficiency of murder. Adolf Hitler did not invent genocide, but he did industrialize the process of mass murder.

The goal for Eichmann, Müller and their subordinates was to do their jobs in the most economical way possible. Treblinka and some of the other death camps used carbon monoxide gas, but it was far less efficient than the Zyklon-B (prussic acid) used at Auschwitz-Birkenau because it could kill large numbers of people in three to fifteen minutes, thereby substantially increasing the daily death totals.

Eichmann and lower-level officials tried to cover the cost of transporting and gassing their victims by getting a significant amount of free labor from the condemned prisoners before exterminating them. They obtained additional revenue by extracting whatever profit could be

¹⁴ Some prisoners literally were worked to death. The extermination of “useless mouths” (i.e. those people who were unable to work or whose labor was not profitable for the state) was the major reason for dispatching children and the elderly to the gas chambers as soon as they arrived at the death camps. However, it also is true that by murdering Jewish women and children, the Third Reich was taking proactive measures to preclude a Jewish future in Europe in the event of military reversals.

obtained from the prisoners' possessions, bodies, teeth, and hair. Gerhard L. Weinberg's research has revealed that German submarine crews who contributed greatly to the Axis war effort by sinking Allied shipping, were issued felt slippers made from human hair shorn from the victims of the extermination camps and were rewarded with gifts of watches that had been confiscated from them.

In the summer of 1942, when it looked as if Field Marshal Erwin Rommel might conquer the Middle East, a special murder commando was attached to his headquarters to kill the Jews in Palestine and elsewhere in the vicinity. Eventually the commando unit was turned over to the Italians.¹⁵

A secret meeting between Himmler and the SS generals took place on October 4, 1943, in order to increase killing efficiency by updating extermination procedures. Here Himmler observed, "This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written. . . . It shall be said on this occasion, openly, here among ourselves, but we shall never speak of it publicly. . . . But we have fulfilled this most difficult task out of love for our people." In line with directives issued after this meeting, in 1943-44 most death camps switched to Zyklon-B gas for greater efficiency.

During the war the German Army sometimes tried to stop the liquidation of some Jews primarily because they could be used as slave labor and/or to produce materials necessary for the military. Those prisoners who remained alive within the conquered areas of Europe owed their survival almost entirely to their continued usefulness to the German war machine. Toward the end of the war there was active competition between the military and the SS for them. At first decisions about whether

¹⁵ Ironically, this German military defeat enabled the United Nations to create the state of Israel in 1948, the homeland for Jews in Palestine, Eretz Yisra'el, that had been the political dream of European Zionists since 1896 when that goal was articulated by Theodor Herzl in *The Jewish State*. Although the British had promised to support the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine in the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, they also promised Palestine to the Arabs as an incentive for them to rebel against the Ottoman Empire. As Gerhard L. Weinberg explains, the defeat of the Axis forces in North Africa in 1942 was a necessary prerequisite for the creation of the state of Israel because it precluded Hitler's army from occupying the British Mandate of Palestine. Before the German defeat at El-Alamein, Hitler had promised the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem (Haj Amin el-Husseini) that he would slaughter the entire Jewish population of Palestine. Because the British had no plans to evacuate the Jews from their Mandate, there would have been no core Jewish population in Palestine on which to build the foundations of the state of Israel.

prisoners should be given to the military or exterminated were split almost equally between these two alternatives. However, by late 1943 when it must have been clear to Hitler that it was possible that Germany might lose the war, he became convinced that his great legacy to the world was to be the elimination of the Jews of Europe. Therefore, as the war wound down, more and more Jews and other categories of people were included in the transports to the death camps despite their usefulness to the remnants of the German military machine. It is probable that if Hitler had won the war and exterminated all of the Jews and Gypsies of Europe, Slavs and people of mixed ancestry (*Mischlinge*) would have been the next categories of people to be murdered.

One myth about the Holocaust that shows little sign of disappearing is the idea that “the Jews of Europe went without protest like lambs to the slaughter.” While the overwhelming presence of the Nazi death machine made Jewish resistance very difficult, it did occur: Jews were active in resistance and partisan groups throughout occupied Europe. Both successful and unsuccessful resistance activity usually resulted in massive reprisals by the Germans in the form of murdering disproportionately large numbers of innocent civilians, but there are many examples of resistance operations that were undertaken with the knowledge that retribution for these acts would be swift and terrible. The most important of these actions was an uprising in the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw that began in January of 1943 and was not completely subdued until July of that year.¹⁶ It is no coincidence that other major rebellions of European Jews took place after this time when they had an actual example to show them that resistance was possible. German women also staged a successful protest against the decision made by their state to round up their Jewish husbands and deport them to the death camps. For several days beginning on February 28, 1943 these women marched to the prison in the *Rosenstrasse* in Berlin where their husbands were being held and staged a public demonstration that resulted in their release.¹⁷

¹⁶ These dates represent the day that the Germans first entered the ghetto after the summer deportations of 1942 until the ghetto lay in rubble. The dates usually given for the active phase of the uprising are April 23-May 16, 1943.

¹⁷ There also were a few men who stood outside with these women and some women who were being held inside the prison. For example, both Gad Beck and his twin sister Miriam were incarcerated in the *Rosenstrasse* prison. Beck's memoir, *An Underground Life: Memoirs of a Gay Jew in Nazi Berlin*, discusses seeing a number of men in the crowd outside protesting their imprisonment. If Hitler had won the war this reprieve would have been temporary.

While the work of partisan units and resistance groups was, in the final analysis, militarily insignificant in the conduct of the war, it was extremely important for the morale and self-esteem for both those who resisted and those who did not.¹⁸ Although there were uprisings in many of the ghettos and killing centers of Europe after the Warsaw ghetto rebellion, perhaps the two most spectacular examples of these are the temporary escape of approximately 150 prisoners from Sobibor in 1943 and the explosion that destroyed one of the crematory ovens at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944.¹⁹

Also in 1944, Adolf Eichmann boasted that if he were called upon to die for what he had done, he would "leap laughing into my grave" because of the great satisfaction he had derived from the 5,000,000 Jews he had helped to exterminate. The final total of all Holocaust victims numbered well over 6,000,000 lives. It was only with the liberation of the death and concentration camps by Allied troops during the final days of the war that the gruesome German genocide machine finally was dismantled. The military defeat of the Third Reich precluded Hitler from achieving his objective of murdering all of the Jews and "racially unworthy" peoples whom he considered to be "life unworthy of life."

Another aspect of Holocaust history that needs to be stated explicitly is that the governments of the world, including the United States and Great Britain, knew about what was happening in the killing centers of Europe. Although many political leaders expressed sympathy for European Jews, almost nothing was done to help them. The same is true of Pope Pius XII. As Gerhard L. Weinberg explained, the Pope, "having declined to denounce publicly the mass killing of Catholic priests in Poland in the winter of 1939-40. . . was not about to voice any explicit public disapproval of the mass killing of non-Catholics." While more active support from governments and religious leaders would not have deterred

¹⁸ Although many books and films emphasize the resistance and partisan movements in France, small pockets of resistance flourished throughout German occupied Europe, such as the Jewish partisan unit led by the Bielski brothers in Poland.

¹⁹ Some people have argued that violent resistance was morally questionable given the certainty of reprisals against innocent civilians. French philosopher and novelist Simone de Beauvoir, a member of a French resistance network, stated the moral dilemma clearly when she asked the metaphorical question: does one ever have the right to pay with "the blood of others?" Although she argued that in the case of German-occupied Europe such resistance was both moral and justified, some people, such as Holocaust survivor and forensic psychiatrist Dr. Emanuel Tanay, disagree.

the Nazis, it might have given courage to good people all over Europe to join a resistance group or to take active steps to hide or otherwise aid victims of genocide.

Perhaps the most difficult fact to accept about the Holocaust is that it was carried out not by monsters but by those who historian Christopher Browning describes as “ordinary men.” The chilling realities and calculating nature of the Holocaust document what philosopher Hannah Arendt brilliantly characterized as the “banality of evil.”

Most Germans claimed they knew nothing about the Final Solution and some of them were telling the truth. However, nearly all German adults knew that Jews were being deported and most of them must at least have suspected that they were being murdered. Some Germans admitted hearing reports about genocide while listening illegally to the BBC or hearing about what was going on in the East from returning soldiers and civilian workers. Nonetheless, many of them claimed they discounted this information because they had heard equally scandalous rumors during World War I, many of which had turned out to be propaganda that was manufactured or embellished by the Allied powers.

Moreover, in order to help maintain the fiction that nothing more insidious than deportation was happening to the Jews, the German government was careful to locate most of the extermination camps outside the Reich itself. This enabled many Germans to rationalize what they could not ignore and to ignore much of what they saw and heard. Some of what they saw and heard came directly from the mouths of eyewitnesses because the German army, unlike other WW II armies, permitted home leave from the front for German soldiers. Since some of those soldiers had cameras, many Germans on the home front heard stories of the killings and even saw photographs of atrocities during the war. Nonetheless, wishful thinking, rationalization and convenient historical memory have made it possible for countless Germans to maintain that they were “apolitical” during the Third Reich.

Although great efforts were made to hide the fact of genocide from the general public, there is little doubt that many leaders of German business and industry not only knew about the genocide, but were actively involved with subsidiary aspects of it. German railroads transported Jews from collection sites to the death camps.²⁰ German industry co-operated with the SS in running the camps in order to utilize slave labor, to collect the

²⁰ Stella Goldschlag’s biographer Peter Wyden, observed that in the post-WW II world not a single German railroad executive was tried for genocide-related crimes, a fact that he ascribes to shameful motives of expediency on the part of the Allied powers.

clothing, possessions and hair of the victims, and to use their bones for fertilizer. German bankers received the jewelry and gold fillings of victims and deposited them in vaults of the *Reichsbank*. German scientists and physicians carried out gruesome medical experiments upon the helpless victims of genocide and, toward the end of the war, Himmler and Eichmann actually offered to barter Jewish lives for war material.

There were some people in Germany and throughout Europe who risked their lives to try to shelter or otherwise aid and protect Jews as well as some individual Jews who saved other Jews. However, the most significant rescue work was undertaken by organizations such as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS or HICEM). It conducted many dangerous operations in German occupied Europe that saved thousands of Jews at great risk to the HIAS agents who carried them out. Twenty-two HIAS employees in France alone were arrested, deported and/or killed by the Germans.

Also significant in saving European Jews was the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JOINT or JDC). Founded at the urging of Henry Morgenthau Sr. in 1914 to save Palestinian Jews from starvation, JOINT helped thousands of German and Austrian Jews emigrate from the Third Reich in the 1930s. During the Holocaust, JOINT, like HIAS, enabled many European Jews to escape with their lives and it also aided others attempting to survive underground.

In addition, more than a year after he received incontrovertible evidence that the Jews of Europe were being systematically murdered, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board (WRB) on January 22, 1944 at the urging of Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. The WRB may have been instrumental in saving as many as 200,000 Jewish lives, despite the late date of its creation. Most notably, the WRB and the World Jewish Congress (WJC) worked with Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg to rescue over 100,000 Hungarian Jews. In the final days of the war, the War Refugee Board was active in saving large numbers of European Jews, primarily by threatening to have Nazi and Axis officials tried for war crimes after the war.²¹

After the defeat of the Axis forces, the Allied governments decided that the crimes perpetrated by the German government were so heinous that an International Military Tribunal would be established at Nuremberg to try those individuals suspected of such unpardonable conduct. It established important precedents in international jurisprudence that stated clearly and firmly that there are moral and legal boundaries that may not

²¹ JOINT, HIAS, and the WJC still exist as Jewish aid and advocacy organizations.