

World War II -- the Holocaust targets

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NAZI Holocaust: The Targets

The initial target of the NAZI Holocaust was the Jews of Europe. And it was the Jews that were killed in horrifying numbers where ever the NAZI armies invaded their countries. The generally accepted estimate is that the NAZIs killed about 6 million Jews. The NAZI penchant for racial killing, however, did not stop here. The Jews were not the only targets. The NAZIs killed many other groups in addition to Jews. These included about 5.5 million other 'enemies of the German State' or were considered a drag on the German economy. These included criminals and anti-socials, the handicapped (physical and mental), homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, political 'criminals' (communists and socialists), and Gypsies. The NAZIs begin arresting German gypsies and confining them to the Dachau concentration camp (July 12, 1936). Eventually Jews throughout occupied Europe were killed in large numbers. While Blacks were not an immediate target, perhaps because of their small numbers, NAZI attitudes toward Blacks suggest that they would have become so or at least reduced to slavery. The same is true of the Slavs who populated large areas in the East which the NAZIs coveted Lebensraum. The evolving NAZI plans for the Slavs (Generalplan Ost) would have far overshadowed the Jewish Holocaust in terms of the numbers to be killed. Unlike the Jews, however, some were to be spared for a Helot slave existence.

Jews

The initial target of the NAZI Holocaust was the Jews. Other racial groups were attacked because they were deemed inferior. The Jews were, however, singled out by the NAZIs. Not only were they deemed to be inferior, but they were accused of carrying diseases and of polluting Aryan racial stock. They were also accused of cultural pollution and degenerate art. Jews were depicted as avoiding physical labor and living off the work of others. The first Jews to be victimized by the NAZIs were the German Jews. Hitler and the NAZI's first approach to what they termed "the Jewish question" was to drive them out of Germany, first stealing their possessions. A steady stream of harsh, discriminatory laws, assaults by SA Stormtroopers, random arrests and murders were designed to isolate German Jews, steal their property, and hound them out of the country. Many Jews did leave. Many more would have, but had trouble finding countries willing to accept impoverished immigrants. The NAZIs had planned forced expulsions, but this was complicated again by the unwillingness of other countries to accept German Jews. Large numbers of German Jews managed to escape Germany. The advance of the German Wehrmacht, however, brought even larger numbers of Jews under NAZI control. NAZI authorities debated for a while what to do with these Jews. There is no evidence that this debate had any affect on Hitler's thinking. There is considerable evidence that Hitler consistently chose the most radical approach when presented with alternatives, a predilection that career minded men like Himmler and Heydrich played upon. Ultimately the NAZI goal was to destroy Jews, Jews of all ages. Other racial groups like the Slavs could be used for slave labor once they were reduced in numbers. The Jews, however, had to be destroyed. Even during the War when they represented a useful labor source to support the war effort, the decision was made to kill them. Here there was difference of opinion within the NAZI establishment. Some wanted to exploit their labor. The decision was ultimately made by Hitler, presumably in discussions with Heydrich and Himmler that the Jews were to be killed, regardless of potential value as slave labor to the war effort. The killing began in large numbers as part of Barbarossa (June 1941). Then as specially designed death camps came on line, the killing process began on an industrial basis. NAZI occupation authorities and cooperative national authorities like Vichy pursued policies in 1940 and 41 was to strip Jews of their property and concentrate them so they were readily available for transport to the death camps. Jews were thus killed in horrifying numbers where ever the German Wehrmacht advanced. Only a few occupied countries resisted the Germans. While it was European Jews who were killed, the Holocaust was a template for the fate of Jews wherever the Wehrmacht advanced. Had the NAZIs won

the War, Jews all over the world would have ultimately been added to the Holocaust. This may have also been extended to part Jews--Mischling.

Arabs (Other Semites)

Here we are unsure about NAZI racial doctrine. We know that the NAZIs defined Jews in racial terms. We also know that the NAZIs made other Semites, the Arabs, allies in World War II. I do not know at this time, the racial theory they must have developed explaining why Jews were dangerous and Arabs acceptable. We suspect that had the NAZI won the War that the Arabs would have been very surprised at what the New Order meant for them. Arab and Jewish ethnic backgrounds are very similar. Most Arabs and many Jews are of the same ethnic family--the Semites. Hebrew and Arabic are related Semitic languages. Many Arab Palestinians and Israeli Jews have common ethnic origins. Some Arab Palestinians are related to Israeli Jews because some Jews converted to Islam after the Arab conquest. In the same sense some ancient Canaanites (an Arab people) had earlier converted to Judaism. Jews and Arabs are thus closely related ethnically. Interestingly the persecution of the Jews is traditionally defined as anti-Semitism or policies targeting Semitic peoples. This actually is a flawed term. Because of the various Diasporas, the Jewish people were spread out throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. While Jewish communities were successful in maintaining their religious identity for three millennia, there was always some degree of assimilation and inter-marriage with the larger population in which they lived. Thus Jews are much less ethnically Semitic than Arabs. This mixing of course made NAZI anti-Semitism particularly nonsensical. While they attacked European Jews, NAZI propaganda appealed to Arab nationalism and the Arabs were much more ethnically pure Semites than the Jews. The varied ethnicity of Jews is one reason the NAZIs decreed laws requiring Jews to wear yellow stars. Many Jews had varied ethnicity and did not look like the NAZIs though Jews should look. The Arabs on the other hand did have the Semitic features the NAZIs so despised. I do not know if DNA studies have addressed this subject. Notice that while the NAZI anti-Jewish propaganda (films, book and newspaper illustrations, and posters) often had distorted images of Jewish 'racial' features. The Arab anti-Jewish propaganda does not feature these images because they are also Arab facial features.

Blacks

Colonial authorities dealt severely with the black populations in their African colonies. The Germans were particularly brutal. Germany lost its African colonies in World War I. The French used colonial troops in the occupation of the Rhineland, giving rise to considerable resentment. When the NAZIs seized power, blacks were not an immediate target of the Holocaust. Several groups were classified by the NAZIs as inferior people and **blacks** in particular were singled out in NAZI hate propaganda. NAZI attitudes toward Blacks suggest that they would have become so eventually had they won World War II. Hitler viewed blacks as half apes and humans. There was considerable animosity toward Blacks used by the French as occupation troops in the Rhineland after World War I. The NAZIs called them the "Rhineland bastards" When the NAZIs seized power, many of the children of black French soldiers and German women were sterilized. Here my information is still very limited. The NAZIs made propaganda films showing Blacks in the same vicious ways as their propaganda films about Jews. Special targets were Black French soldiers and American Blacks. In this regard it should be noted that many early NAZI actions against the Jews were based in part on American segregation laws aimed at Blacks. Blacks seemed to have survived the NAZI era because there were so few of them. One notable black child growing up in NAZI Germany was the son of a former Liberian diplomat. He grew up and went to school during the NAZI era. He was not allowed, however, to join the Hitler Youth--a great disappointment. Nor was he allowed to pursue his education. He became a machinist apprentice. After the War he emigrated to America and became the Managing Editor of *Ebony Magazine*. [Massaquoi] He believes he avoided the fate of the Jews primarily because there were so few blacks in Germany that they were a low priority and not seen as a racial threat.

Criminals

I am not familiar with NAZI penology. I am unsure what happened to prisons when the NAZIs began developing their concentration camp system. We do know that criminals were often used as kapos in concentration camps and were extremely brutal. We also do not have details on how juvenile delinquents were handled.

Gypsies

The Jews were the best known, but not the only NAZI targets. There were also the Gypsies. The NAZI antipathy toward the Jews was less intense than that toward the Gypsies. It was also less racially based. NAZI pseudo science claimed that Jews were disease carriers and polluters of the Aryan races. The attitude toward the Gypsies was more that they were useless people, much like the handicapped people targeted by the T-34 program. The NAZIs were probably influenced by complaints by civic officials of gypsies, especially petty crime. I believe the arrest of the gypsies began before NAZI officials had really decided what to do with them. We are not sure when the decision was taken to begin killing. The NAZIs begin arresting German gypsies and confining them to the Dachau concentration camp (July 12, 1936). Confinement conditions were not as punitive as they would later be for Jews. The SS sent German gypsies and gypsies from German-occupied countries to Auschwitz-Birkenau, to the so-called gypsy camp (March 1942). The SS liquidated the gypsy camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau (August 1, 1944). All 6,000 gypsies at Auschwitz were gassed. This was one of the last actions at Auschwitz before the SS began destroying it as the Red Army approached.

Handicapped People

The NAZIs targeted the handicapped for elimination several years before they began killing Jews in large numbers. This was all part of the [NAZI eugenics program](#) and desire to eliminate useless eaters. The handicapped people targeted were the mentally ill and retarded as well as the severely physically handicapped. The retarded were a special target. In many cases these people were sterilized, even though limited information was available on the hereditary nature of their impairment. The NAZIs before the war developed the T4 Euthanasia Program. Although public criticism forced the NAZIs to abandon the T4 killing program, it was revived again under cover of the War. Children here were a special target. In many cases they were forcibly taken from their families under the advise of family doctors to be secretly killed in sanatoriums.

Homosexuals

Homosexuals were another NAZI target. Paragraph 175 was a 19th-century German law making sexual relations between members of the same sex a punishable offense. This repressive law stayed on the books in Germany until 1969 when it was finally repealed. The law, however, was not strictly enforced, especially during the weimar era. Tolerance of homosexuals during the Weimar Republic era (1919-33) was widespread and quite general, especially in cosmopolitan cities such as Berlin. This changed when the NAZIs seized power (1933). German homosexual-rights activists became interational leaders in efforts to change societal attitudes that so strongly condemned homosexuality. This did not go over well among mny in still conservtive German society. They saw Weimar toleration of homosexuals as one of the many aspects of Germany's increasing decadence. The Nazis on this issue set themselves up as moral crusaders who promised to stamp out the 'vice' of homosexuality. For the NAZIS, morality was an issue, but homosexulaity also beled over into the all-important racial struggle. Home sedxuality mean that they were part of the reason for Germany's low birthrate. Upon seizing power, the NAZUs began an energetic persecution of male homosexuals. Males were the target bcause they were more visible. Persecution ranged from the dissolution of homosexual organizations, attacks by SA Storm Troopers, work place dismissals, and arrest and internment in one of the many concentration camps spring up around the country. The NAZIs ultimately rounded up thousands of homosexual men and a smaller number of women and interned them in to concentration camps where most perished under the most terrible circumstances. They were often treated worse than the Jews and forced to wear the pink triangle as a mark of their 'abnormal' criminality.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Hitler saw religion as an impediment to building the New Order. As with other aspects of the regime, he had to disguise his true goals as most Germans were Christians and religion was an important aspect of family life for many Germans, including part members. Most religious groups accepted the NAZI state and compromised with it to varying degrees. Individuals were arrested but whole Christian sects were not overtly suppressed. This would have come eventually had the NAZIs won the War. One exception was the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Witnesses drew the ire of the NAZIs. Hitler's central tenants were nationalism, racism, and military expansionism. The Witnesses objected to all three and unlike the other Christian sects refused to compromise with the NAZIs. The Witnesses were not only an international church, but they objected to nationalism--especially the xenophobic nationalism preached by the NAZIs. They opposed racism, including the race-based suppression of Germany's Jews. The Witnesses also objected to the absolutist state Hitler was building, especially certain manifestations of it such as military conscription and services. [Dunn] And they not only objected, but they refused observable aspects of allegiance to Hitler and the NAZIs such as the "Heil Hitler" salute. These beliefs were all scripture based based on Exodus 20:4, 5; Isaiah 2:4; John 17:16; and other Biblical passages. The Witnesses because of their beliefs experienced a terrible repression. Many adults were arrested and sent to concentration camps. The children since they were considered 'Aryan' were taken away from their parents for 're-education' and, depending on the age, adoption by reliable NAZI families.

Political "Criminals"

The NAZIs also targeted political "criminals". Here the primary targets were Communists. Also targeted were socialists and others who criticized Hitler and the NAZIs. The Communists in Germany were the first group targeted when Hitler seized power. When occupying other countries, the NAZI security forces immediately began arresting Communists and other prominent NAZI critics. When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, the Commissar Order was given to the Wehrmacht ordering them to summarily execute Red Army political commissars upon capture.

The Slavs

The NAZI aversion toward the Slavs was a continuation of the historic *Drang nach Ost*. Well before the NAZI, Chancellor Bismarck and other Germans were becoming concerned about the increasing dominance of Poles (a Slavic people) in Prussia. At the time of World War I, the Slavs populated large areas in the East which the NAZIs wanted to use for *lebensraum*. NAZI plans for the [occupied East](#) involved in killing and deporting Slavs in larger numbers than the Jewish Holocaust and enslaving those Slavs who remained. The NAZIs plans for the East involved killing Slavs in much larger numbers than the killing of Jews because there were so many more Slavs. Hitler planned, for example, to destroy major Soviet cities (like Leningrad, Moscow, and Stalingrad). They would not be needed in the new NAZI East. Plans for killing the Slavs, however, did not develop along the lines of killing Jews because the Red Army offensive before Moscow (December 1941) derailed NAZI plans of a quick military victory. The full dimensions of what the NAZIs planned was outlined by the SS in [Generalplan Ost](#). In many ways the Holocaust killing of the Jews can be seen as a dry run for what was planned for the Slavs after the Germans had won the war. The only difference was that some of the Slavs would be allowed to live as Helot-like slaves to the German colonists that were to be settled in the East.

Asians

Germany had little contact with Asians at the time of World War II. And the greatest antipathy toward other groups were the groups that the Germans had contact with, especially the Jews and Slavs. Hitler made it very clear, however, how he viewed Asians, although he did not give them great attention. He wrote, "If we were to divide mankind into three groups, the founders of culture, the bearers of culture, the destroyers of culture, only the Aryan could be considered as the representative of the first group. From him originate the foundations and walls of all human

creation, and only the outward form and color are determined by the changing traits of character of the various peoples. He provides the mightiest building stones and plans for all human progress and only the execution corresponds to the nature of the varying men and races. In a few decades, for example, the entire east of Asia will possess a culture whose ultimate foundation will be Hellenic spirit and Germanic technology, just as much as in Europe. Only the outward form-in part at least-will bear the features of Asiatic character. It is not true, as some people think, that Japan adds European technology to its culture; no, European science and technology are trimmed with Japanese characteristics. The foundation of actual life is no longer the special Japanese culture, although it determines the color of life-because outwardly, in consequence of its inner difference, it is more conspicuous to the European-but the gigantic scientific-technical achievements of Europe and America; that is, of Aryan peoples. Only on the basis of these achievements can the Orient follow general human progress. They furnish the basis of the struggle for daily bread, create weapons and implements for it, and only the outward form is gradually adapted to Japanese character." [Hitler] Some assume that he must have viewed the Japanese differently because of the Tripartite Axis Pact. This is simply not the case. He was impressed with Japanese martial culture, but that did not change his racial assessment. He continues, "If today all further Aryan influence on Japan should stop, assuming that Europe and America should perish, Japan's present rise in science and technology might continue for a short time; but even in a few years the well would dry up, the Japanese special character would gain, but the present culture would freeze and sink back into the slumber from which it was awakened seven decades ago by the wave of Aryan culture." [Hitler] The Tripartite Pact was a marriage of convenience, as was the Rome-Berlin Axis and the NAZI-Soviet Non-Agression Pact. The Japanese were simply made 'honorary Aryans'. About 10,000 Japanese nationals (mostly diplomats and military officials) residing in the Reich were given this Honorary Aryan status. This allowed them to have more privileges than any other non-Aryans. Asia of course is a geographic term. What the Germans were talking about are the East and Southeast Asian people with the Epicanthic fold, a skin fold of the upper eyelid, covering the inner corner of the eye. Indians were a little different. The Indo-Aryan and Indo-Iranian people of British India and Iran were classified by many Nazi anthropologists to be Aryan. This did not affect the decision to target the Roma (Gypsy) people, who while recognized as of Indian origins deemed a threat because of racial mingling. Of course most Indians would have been classified in low racial categories because of their dark skin. These were differences the Indians themselves were conscious of, especially the light-skinned Brahmins. The NAZI attitude toward Asians can be seen in NAZI propaganda after Hitler launched Barbarossa. We see posters about the barbaric Red Army. And often they depict monstrous Asian soldiers with blood stained fangs in Red Army uniforms.

Latin Americans

Virtually unknown to Latin Americans is Hitler's racial assessment of them and the consequences had the Germans won the war. Most Latin Americans I have discussed this with are under the impression that Hitler's animus was directed against the Jews and not them. Hitler had very definite ideas about them, "No more than Nature desires the mating of weaker with stronger individuals, even less does she desire the blending of a higher with a lower race, since, if she did, her whole work of higher breeding, over perhaps hundreds of thousands of years, might be ruined with one blow. Historical experience offers countless proofs of this. It shows with terrifying clarity that in every mingling of Aryan blood with that of lower peoples the result was the end of the cultured people. North America, whose population consists in by far the largest part of Germanic elements who mixed but little with the lower colored peoples, shows a different humanity and culture from Central and South America, where the predominantly Latin immigrants often mixed with the aborigines on a large scale. By this one example, we can clearly and distinctly recognize the effect of racial mixture." [Hitler] For Hitler, Latin Americans were doubly condemned, not only were they largely of Latin (southern European) origins, but they inter-married with the pre-Colombian Native American people. Thus they were people of a lower order who committed the racial crime of inter-mingling.

Native Americans

NAZI attitudes toward Native Americans are more complicated than towards other groups. Given that Native

Americans were of Asian origins, one might think that racial policy must then follow the attitude toward Asians, at least East Asians. But here culture and history complicated the issue which of course was never really scientific to begin with. NAZI racial science was based on 19th century 'scientific' racism that developed out of Darwin's theories. (This was not something Darwin postulated, but was postulated by others drawing on Darwin's work.) An Hitler had written admiringly about the Americans, mostly from northern Europe, who seized the continent from the backward Native American tribes. In his mind, this was the model for his own policy of German national expansion. Hitler writes, "The Germanic inhabitant of the American continent, who has remained racially pure and unmixed, rose to be master of the continent; he will remain the master as long as he does not fall a victim to defilement of the blood." At the same time the Enlightenment concept of the Noble Savage was influential throughout Europe, including Germany. One of the most popular German authors at the time was Karl May. He wrote the action-packed pulp fiction Old Shatterhand novels. Hitler himself was a fan. [Wilson] American cowboy and Indian films were popular in Germany. (The box office earnings discouraged Hollywood from taking in Hitler and the Nazis during most of the 1930s.) We see quite a number of German boys playing cowboys and Indians and the Indians seem to have been very popular. (As a boy in America I recall we mostly wanted to cowboys with our six-guns.) One source claims that the Nazis eventually classified Native Americans as Aryans. We can not yet confirm that and am not sure just what NAZI body made that determination. Nor are we sure about the attitudes of German minorities in Latin America who were actually in contact with Native Americans.

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