

Aushwitz

: (1) INTRODUCTION The Holocaust is the most horrifying crime against humanity of all times. "Hitler, in an attempt to establish the pure Aryan race, decided that all mentally ill, gypsies, non supporters of Nazism, and Jews were to be eliminated from the German population. He proceeded to reach his goal in a systematic scheme." One of his main methods of "doing away" with these "undesirable" was through the use of concentration camps. "In January 1941, in a meeting with his top officials the 'final solution' was decided". Jews were to be eliminated from the population.

Auschwitz was the concentration camp that carried out Hitler's "final solution" in greater numbers than any other. In this paper I will discuss concentration camps with a detailed description of the most well-known one, Auschwitz. (2) CONCENTRATION CAMPS The first

concentration camps were set up in 1933. In the early days of Hitler, concentration camps were places that held people in protective custody.

Victims for protective custody included those who were both physically and mentally ill, gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah Witnesses, Jews and anyone against the Nazi regime. "Gypsies were classified as people with at least two gypsy great grandparents." By the end of 1933 there were at least fifty concentration camps throughout occupied Europe. "At first, the camps were controlled by the Gestapo (police), but by 1934 the S.S.

(Hitler's personal security force) were ordered, by Hitler, to control the camps." Camps were set up for different purposes. Some for forced labor, others for medical experiments and, later on, for death/ extermination.

Transition camps were set up as holding places for death camps. "Henrick Himmler, chief of the German police, the Gestapo, thought that the camps would provide an economic base for the soldiers." This did not happen.

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railroad lines, so that the prisoners would be conveniently close to their destination. As they were being transported, the soldiers kept telling the Jews to have hope. (3) When the camps were finally opened, most of the families who were shipped out together ended up being separated.

Often, the transports were a sampling of what went on in the camps, cruelty by the officers, near starvation of those being transported, fetid and unsanitary conditions on the trains. "On the trains, Jews were starved of

food and water for days. Many people did not survive the ride to arrive at the camp." Jews were forced to obey the guard's orders from the moment they arrived at the camps. "If they didn't, they would be beaten, put into solitary confinement or shot." The prisoners usually had marks on their clothes or numbers on their arms to identify them. The sanitary conditions of the camps were horrible. "There was only one bathroom for four hundred people. They had to stand for hours in snow, rain, heat, or cold for role-call, which was twice a day." Within the first few days of being at the camps, thousands of people died of hunger, starvation and disease.

Other people died from the cruel punishments of the guards; beatings and torture. "Typhus, a disease caused by germs carried by flies, was the main disease that spread throughout the camps. Even when people were sick, they still continued working because they did not see that sickness

meant death." In 1937, 7,000 Jews were in camps. By 1938, 10,000 more Jews were sent to camps. "Jews were taken to camps if they

expressed negative feelings about the government, if they married a non-Jew, if they were sick (mentally or physically), or if they had a police

record." (4) When someone escaped from the camp, all the prisoners in that group were shot. Nazis, who claimed that they did not necessarily

hate Jews, but wanted to preserve the Aryan race, seemed to enjoy making the

Jews suffer. They also felt that slavery was better than killing their prisoners. "Gold fillings, wedding bands, jewelry, shoes and clothing were taken from the prisoners when they first entered the camps and were sold." Surrounding some of the camps in Poland was a forest, that the Jews who planned to escape would flee into. Before the escaped prisoners got very far, they were killed. "When the Germans caught a Jew planning a rebellion, and the Jew refused to name his/her associates, the Germans would bring everyone from his/her barracks out and force him/her to watch the Germans mutilate the others." The people who could not run away from the camps dreamt about revolt. Special areas of a camp were set aside for medical experiments. One doctor in a medical unit performed an experiment in sterilization. "He injected a substance into women's ovaries to sterilize them. The injection resulted in temperature and inflammation of the ovaries." Joseph Mengels, one of the most notorious Nazi doctors, hummed opera tunes when selecting among the new arrivals the victims for the gas chambers or medical experiments. His women victims for sterilization were usually 20-30 years of age. "Other experiments included putting inmates into high pressure chambers to test the effects of altitude on pilots. Some inmates were frozen to (5) determine the best way to revive frozen German soldiers." (6) DEATH CAMPS "The first death camp, Chelmno, was set up in Poland on December 8, 1941. This was five weeks before the Wannsee Conference at which time the 'final solution' was planned out." Usually, the death camps were part of existing camps, but some new ones were just set up for this purpose. When the prisoners first arrived at the camps, those sent to the left were transferred to death camps. When Jews entered the death camps, their suitcases, baby bottles, shawls, and eyeglasses were taken and were sold. Once in the death camps the prisoners were again divided. Women were sent to one side to have their hair shaven and the men to the other. "They were all sent to the showers, naked with a bar of soap, so as to deceive them into believing that they were truly going into a shower. Most people smelled the burning bodies and knew the truth. " There were six death camps; Chelmno, Treblinka, Auschwitz (Birkenau), Sobibor, Maidanek, and Belzec. These camps used gas from the shower heads to murder their victims. A seventh death camp, Mauthausen, used a method called "extermination through labor". (7) AUSCHWITZ Auschwitz, located in Poland, was Nazi Germany's largest concentration camp. It was established by order of Himmler on April 27, 1940. At first, it was small because it was a work camp for Polish and Soviet prisoners of war. It became a death camp in 1941. "Auschwitz was divided into three areas: Auschwitz 1 was the camp commander's headquarters and administrative offices. Auschwitz 2 was called Birkenau and it was the death camp with forty gas chambers. Auschwitz 3 was a slave labor camp." "On the gate of Auschwitz was a sign in German which read, 'Arbeit macht frei', which means work makes you free." Auschwitz included camp sites a few miles away from the main complex. At these sites, slave labor was used to kill the people. The working conditions were so poor that death was a sure result. " In March 26, 1942, Auschwitz took women prisoners, but after August 16, 1942 the women were housed in Birkenau." When the Jews arrived at Auschwitz, they were met with threats and promises. "If they didn't do exactly as they were told, they would be beaten, deprived of food, or shot. From time to time, they would be assured that things would get better." The daily meals in Auschwitz consisted of watery soup, distributed once a day, with a small piece of bread. In addition, they got extra allowance consisting of 3/4 ounce of margarine, a little piece of cheese or a spoonful of watered jam. Everyone in the camp was so malnourished that if a drop of soup spilled (8) prisoners would rush from all sides to see if they could get some of the soup. "Because of the bad sanitary conditions, the inadequate diet, the hard labor and other torturous conditions in Auschwitz, most people

died after a few months of their arrival." The few people who managed to stay alive for longer were the ones who were assigned better jobs. "The prisoners slept on three shelves of wooden slabs with six of these units to each tier. They had to stand for hours in the wet and mud during roll call, which was twice a day. Some people thought the reason hundreds of people died, daily, was because when it rained they lay with wet clothes in their bunks." In place of toilets, there were wooden boards with round holes and underneath them concrete troughs. Two or three hundred people could sit on them at once. While they were on these troughs they were watched in order to assure that they did not stay too long. "There was no toilet paper, so the prisoners used linings of jackets. If they didn't have they might steal from someone else." The smells were horrible because there wasn't enough water to clean the Latrine, the so called bathrooms. When people were loaded onto trains to be taken to the gas chambers, they were told that they were being "resettled" in labor camps. This was one of the many lies told. It was impossible for the Jews to make out which building was the gas chambers because they looked presentable from the outside, just like any other building. Over the gas chambers were well kept lawns with flowers bordering them. When the Jews were being taken to the gas chambers, (9) they thought they were being taken to the baths. "While people were waiting for them 'baths', a group of women prisoners, dressed in navy skirts and white shirts, played very delightful music." "In Auschwitz, Jews were killed by something called Zyklon B. It was hydrogen cyanide which was poured through the ceiling of the gas chambers and turned into gas. The S.S. commanders of Auschwitz preferred Zyklon B. because it worked fast." At first, there were five gas chambers in Auschwitz, the procedure for gassing was as follows : "About 900 people were gassed at a time. First they undressed in a nearby room. Then, they were told to go into another room to be deloused, They filled the gas chambers like packed like sardines. After a few minutes of horrible suffering, the victims died. The bodies were then transported to ovens where they were burned." The gas chambers were not large enough to execute great numbers at a time, so crematoria were built. The crematoria would burn 2,000 bodies in less than 24 hours. An elevator would take them from the dressing room to the crematoria. "It took 30 minutes to kill 2,500 victims, but close to 24 hours to burn the bodies." Many Jews and non - Jews tried to escape from Auschwitz. Some succeeded. Of course they wanted to inform the world of what was going on. Those who escaped wrote descriptions of the horrors they suffered. Information spread to many countries, yet no countries seemed to do anything to help the situation. In fact, as the war progressed, the number of prisoners increased. "In total, between 1.5 and 3.5 million Jews were murdered at Auschwitz between the (10) years 1940 and 1945." Where were our brothers in America when millions of Jews died? (11)

CONCLUSION The Nazis, under Hitler, organized the destruction of the Jews. Why they did it is unknown. Perhaps it was because of a history of tension between the Christians and Jews, or perhaps, because Hitler needed a scapegoat for Germany's problems. People throughout history have been murdered; but never as many people as during the Holocaust in such a short period of time. 1/3 of all the Jews in the world were eliminated. "The estimated total is somewhere around six million. This number included Jews from all over Europe. There were also 500,000 non-Jews murdered." Hitler's method of killing the Jews and other undesirable people was first by torture and then by plain murder. In the early days of his leadership, he took away their rights as citizens and then as people. They were treated like slaves and lived like animals. After 1942, his goal was to exterminate all Jewish and "unpure" people. Many Jews were killed before that date, but they were a small number compared to the mass murdering of the Holocaust. " We Must Never Forget " are the words that

every Jew must remember. By not forgetting, we are preventing another holocaust from occurring. We are also letting the entire world know and remember the millions of loved ones lost in the horrible killing that we call the holocaust. (12) BIBLIOGRAPHY Bauer, Yehuda. A History of the Holocaust. New York: Franklin Watts, 1982. Chartock, Roselle. The Holocaust Years: Society on Trial. New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1978. Gilbert, Martin. The Holocaust - A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War. New York: Holt, Reinhardt & Winston, 1985. Meltzer, Milton. Never to Forget the Jews of the Holocaust. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. Rossel, Seymour. The Holocaust. New York: Franklin Watts, 1981. "Concentration Camps", Encyclopedia Judaica. 1972 ed., Keter Publishers. "Concentration Camp Conditions Reported Worse", New York Times, (March 7, 1940), page 8. "It Happened to Me", Sassy, (May 1991), page 24. TABLE OF CONTENTS Introduction page 1 Concentration Camps pages 2-5 Death Camps page 6 Auschwitz pages 7-10 Conclusion page 11 Bibliography page 12 Endnotes pages 13-14 AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMP / DEATH CAMP CLASS 8-J . Milton Meltzer. Never to Forget the Jew of the Holocaust. (New York; Harper & Row, 1976) page 3 . Meltzer, page 5 . Yehuda Bauer. A History of the Holocaust. (New York; Franklin Watts, 1982) page 205 . Meltzer, page 28 . Bauer, page 208 . Seymour Rossel. The Holocaust. (New York; Franklin Watts, 1981) page 76 . Rossel, page 77 . Rossel, page 77 . Rossel, page 78 . Martin Gilbert. The Holocaust - A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War. (New York; Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1985) page 127 . Rossel, page 86 . Rossel, page 101 . Bauer, page 219 . Bauer, page 219 . Bauer, page 208 . Rossel, page 79 . Gilbert, page 210 . Bauer, page 214 . " It Happened to Me ". Sassy, New York. May, 1991, page 24 . "Auschwitz". Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 1, page 854 . Gilbert, page 376 . Roselle Chartock, The Holocaust Year; Society on Trial. (New York; Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1978) page 5 . Chartock, page 4 . Chartock, page 7 . Chartock, page 3 . Meltzer, page 130 . "Concentration Camp Conditions Reported Worse".The New York Times, New York, March 7, 1940, page 8 . Baker, page 215 . Baker , page 215 . Rossel, page 1 (1) INTRODUCTION The Holocaust is the most horrifying crime against humanity of all times. "Hitler, in an attempt to establish the pure Aryan race, decided that all mentally ill, gypsies, non supporters of Nazism, and Jews were to be eliminated from the German population. He proceeded to reach his goal in a systematic scheme." One of his main methods of "doing away" with these "undesirable" was through the use of concentration camps. "In January 1941, in a meeting with his top officials the 'final solution' was decided". Jews were to be eliminated from the population. Auschwitz was the concentration camp that carried out Hitler's "final solution" in greater numbers than any other. In this paper I will discuss concentration camps with a detailed description of the most well- known one, Auschwitz. (2) CONCENTRATION CAMPS The first concentration camps were set up in 1933. In the early days of Hitler, concentration camps were places that held people in protective custody. Victims for protective custody included those who were both physically and mentally ill, gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah Witnesses, Jews and anyone against the Nazi regime. "Gypsies were classified as people with atleast two gypsy great grandparents." By the end of 1933 there were atleast fifty concentration camps throughout occupied Europe. "At first, the camps were controlled by the Gestapo (police), but by 1934 the S.S. (Hitler's personal security force) were ordered, by Hitler, to control the camps." Camps were set up for different purposes. Some for forced labor, others for medical experiments and, later on, for death/ extermination. Transition camps were set up as holding places for death camps. "Henrick

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Word Count: 4719