THE HOLOCAUST: CONFRONTING THE PERPETRATORS

A CHRISTOPHER WREN ASSOCIATION COURSE

June 4, 11, & 18

INSTRUCTOR: DON SCHILLING
INTRODUCTIONS, CONTEXTS & LEADING PERPETRATORS

- The Instructor
- The Course
- Defining Key Terms
  - Holocaust: “The systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived “racial inferiority” and on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds.” (USHMM)
  - Shoah: from the Hebrew sho’ah, meaning catastrophe
  - Final Solution: a Nazi term (Endloesung) referencing the ‘final solution’ to the Jewish Question.
  - Genocide: term coined by Raphael Lemkin (1944) and defined as the planned annihilation of a national, religious, or racial group.
  - Perpetrators: the people who played a specific role in the formulation and/or implementation of Nazi racial policies, especially of anti-Jewish measures culminating in mass murder.
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

• Who were the perpetrators?
• Were there significant differences among perpetrators?
• Were perpetrators identifiably different from persons in the general population?
• What functions did perpetrators perform and within what primary institutional contexts?
• How and why did perpetrators become active agents in the processes of genocide?
• How did perpetrators justify their actions?
• What can we learn about ourselves and human behavior from the study of perpetrators?
WHO WERE THE PERPETRATORS?  
A BRIEF ANSWER

- Adolf Hitler
- Members of the SS/Police empire under Heinrich Himmler
- German government civil servants at many levels including those in the ministries of the interior, foreign affairs, justice, finance, armaments, health, railroads
- Members of the German Army (Wehrmacht)
- German physicians
- German businesses and their personnel
- Non-German government officials and volunteers
CONTEXTS: MODERN GERMANY

KEY PERIODS AND TERMS

• Imperial Germany 1871-1918

• Weimar (Republican) Germany 1919-1932
  • 1919-1923: A period of great instability; the Republic barely survives political, economic, and social challenges
  • 1924-1928: Stabilization of the Republic economically and politically
  • 1929-1932: A period in acute crisis on all levels

• Germany 1933-1945
  • National Socialist or Nazi Germany
  • The Third Reich
• How did the Nazis, initially an insignificant local party, become the most powerful movement opposing the Weimar Republic?
1. 1919-1923: from a small right wing discussion group in Munich to a major political force in Bavaria committed to the revolutionary overthrow of the Republic; phase culminated in the failed Beer Hall Putsch, Nov. 9-10, 1923.

2. 1925-1929: Party refounded, committed to national organization with sophisticated structure, to using electoral politics to undermine the Republic, but limited political pay-off.

3. 1930-1933: Party broke through to national prominence in 1930; built strength in the following two years as the Republic slipped into crisis; Hitler appointed German Chancellor, January 30, 1933.
HOW/WHY HITLER?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alois Hitler</th>
<th>Klara Hitler</th>
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<td>(1837-1903)</td>
<td>(1860-1907)</td>
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His Parents

Alois Hitler

Klara Hitler
WAS THE CHILD FATHER TO THE MAN?

Focal Point website
www.fpp.co.uk
HITLER’S VIENNA YEARS (1907-1913) & WW I BEGINS

Hitler’s paintings (prewar Vienna)

Hitler in the crowd in Munich learns war has broken out, enlists in German army
HITLER IN THE GREAT WAR

• Served 4 years as runner carrying orders from command post to front lines; wounded several times and earned the Iron Cross 1st Class

• Reached rank of corporal; a loner but also celebrated the comradeship of the trenches

• Germany’s surrender a bitter blow, determined to dedicate himself to politics and Germany’s rebirth
HITLER AS SPEAKER/ORGANIZER FOR THE NSDAP--EARLY 1920S IN MUNICH
FAILED REVOLUTION: THE BEER HALL PUTSCH, NOV. 9, 1923
TRIAL FOR TREASON AND PRISON

Hitler and co-conspirators on trial for treason; Hitler gains national attention

Hitler sentenced to 5 years, served a year
REFOUNDING THE MOVEMENT (1925)

Hitler, Maurice, Kriebel, Hess, Weber

Joseph Goebbels

Herman Goering
WHY THE NAZIS SUCCESS?
NATURE OF THE MOVEMENT

• The appeal of National Socialist ideology
• Strong, flexible organization headed by a charismatic leader
• Effectiveness of propaganda including projecting an image of youth, dynamism, and masculine power
• Tactics of violence and legality
• As a catchall party of protest, it created a mass base
Hitler, Frank, and Goering—the only Nazis in the cabinet. Conservatives expect to dominate him.
THE NAZI CONSOLIDATION OF POWER (GLEICHESCHALTUNG)

- Political: Centralization of state power; elimination of other parties/groups
- Social: coordination of all organizations at all levels
- Economic: abolish unions, work projects, reararmament
- Cultural: censoring/destroying the cultural production of “enemies”
- Containing the church & the army
THE COURSE OF NAZI ANTI-JEWISH POLICY 1933-1942
PERSECUTION OF GERMAN JEWS, 1933-39

- Over 400 laws, decrees, regulations restricting all aspects of the public and private lives of Jews
- Isolated socially; restricted access to public amenities
- Removed from the political life of the nation, lost citizenship
- Purged from civil service, military, educational institutions, normal professional practice
- Aryanization of Jewish business
- Removed from participation in German culture; erasure of past contributions
BOYCOTTS AND ISOLATION

Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses, 4/1/1933

Anti-Jewish propaganda in rural areas in Germany. “The Devil is the father of the Jews.”
THE REICH CITIZENSHIP LAW, 9/15/1935

• The Reichstag has unanimously adopted the following law, which is herewith promulgated.

• 2. (1) A citizen of the Reich is only that subject, who is of German- or kindred blood and who, through his conduct, shows that he is both desirous and fit to serve faithfully the German people and Reich. (2) The right to citizenship is acquired by the granting of Reich citizenship papers. (3) Only the citizen of the Reich enjoys full political rights in accordance with the provision of the laws.

• 4. (1) A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He has no right to vote in political affairs, he cannot occupy a public office.
NUREMBERG LAW FOR THE PROTECTION OF GERMAN BLOOD AND GERMAN HONOR
9/15/35

• Moved by the understanding that purity of the German Blood is the essential condition for the continued existence of the German people, and inspired by the inflexible determination to ensure the existence of the German Nation for all time, the Reichstag has unanimously adopted the following Law, which is promulgated herewith:

• Marriages between Jews and subjects of the state of German or related blood are forbidden. Marriages nevertheless concluded are invalid, even if concluded abroad to circumvent this law. Extramarital intercourse between Jews and subjects of the state of German or related blood is forbidden.

• Jews may not employ in their households female subjects of the state of German or related blood who are under 45 years old.
KRISTALLNACHT, 11/9-10/1938

- Vom Rath shot by H. Grynszpan, 11/7 d. 11/9
- 267 synagogues destroyed
- 7,500 shops looted, windows shattered
- 91 Jews killed, many others beaten, raped
- c. 30,000 males imprisoned in camps
- Jewish community fined $400 million; insurance coverage denied

Destruction of Jewish property and synagogues: the “Night of Broken Glass”.
ANTISEMITIC PROPAGANDA

From Julius Streicher’s *Der Stürmer*
“LIFE UNWORTHY OF LIFE”
THE T4 “EUTHANASIA” PROGRAM

• Nature of and rational for the program

• Under administration of Hitler’s private chancellery office at Tiergartenstrasse 4, Berlin

• Process at six killing sites

• Duration: October 1939 to August 1941

• Significance

Hartheim Castle T4 Site
Philipp Bouhler
Heads Hitler’s Chancellery

Karl Brandt
Hitler’s Personal Physician

By Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1983-094-01 / CC-BY-SA 3.0, CC BY-SA 3.0 de,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5483174
THE SS AND THE HOLOCAUST

CWA-The Holocaust: Confronting the Perpetrators
June 11, 2018
Don Schilling
WW II AND HOLOCAUST: AN OVERVIEW

Overview Map

ASSESSING HITLER AS A PERPETRATOR

• Is there a case against judging Hitler as the leading perpetrator?

• What is the case for judging Hitler as the leading perpetrator?
HITLER’S PROPHECY
January 30, 1939*

“...In the course of my life I have very often been a prophet, and have usually been ridiculed for it.... Today I will once more be a prophet: if the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevising of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.” [*Hitler often deliberately misdated this statement to September 1, 1939.]

This prophecy was consistently referenced by Hitler and his subordinates at key moments of radicalization of anti-Jewish actions leading to mass extermination between 1939-1945.
THE PRIMARY INSTRUMENT OF DESTRUCTION: THE SS (SCHUTZSTAFFEL)

- Himmler’s background and personality
- The origins of SS
- The development of the SS/Police empire
- Its functions

Heinrich Himmler
1900-1945
RECRUITING THE RACIAL ELITE
THE CAMP (LAGER) SYSTEM: ORIGINS

DACHAU-THE MODEL CAMP
AUSCHWITZ I

Animated Map

I.G. Farben Complex: Auschwitz III-Monowitz

Himmler’s Visit
July 17-18, 1942

The Buna
TYPES OF CAMPS

• Concentration Camps (Dachau, Buchenwald, Ravensbrueck, Belsen)
• Extermination Camps (Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Chelmno, Operation Reinhard Camps)
• Labor Camps (Monowitz, Plaszow, Mittelbau-Dora)
• Transit Camps (Westerbork, Drancy)
• Multipurpose Camps (Auschwitz, Majdanek)
• Ghetto Camp-Theresienstadt (Terezin)
• Sub-camps
ASSESSING HIMMLER AS A PERPETRATOR

- His October 4, 1943 speech
- His level of responsibility
- His motivations
REINHARD HEYDRICH
1904-1942

- Heydrich’s background and personality
- Road to the SS
- Becoming “Heydrich”
- His roles
  - Heads SD/RSHA
  - Einsatzgruppen
  - The Wannsee Conference
  - Acting Reich Protector of Bohemia & Moravia (9/41-5/42)
WANNSEE CONFERENCE
January 20, 1942
ASSESSING HEYDRICH AS A PERPETRATOR

- His level of responsibility
- His motivations
- Your judgments
ADOLF EICHMANN
1906-1962

- Contrasting views of Eichmann
- Eichmann's background and personality
- His road to the SS
- Becoming “Eichmann”
- Assessing Eichmann as a perpetrator
“Eichmann was dimly aware at the time that the mass murder of the Jews was a legal and moral outrage. After 1945 he certainly recognized that by the lights of the victorious Allies it was a crime. But he never fully repented. Eichmann had learned to hate and he taught himself to be a practitioner of genocide. The capacity to do what he did was not, however, inborn. Eichmann was not ‘hard-wired’ to become an accomplice to atrocities. The key to understanding Adolf Eichmann lies not in the man, but in the ideas that possessed him, the society in which they flowed freely, the political system that purveyed them, and the circumstances that made them acceptable. What Eichmann did was made possible by the dehumanization of Jews, the construction of the Jewish people as a racial-biological threat and political enemy, and the disabling of inhibitions against killing. Anyone subject to these processes might have behaved in the same way, be it in a totalitarian state or a democracy.” (pp, 367-8)
DISCUSSING ORDINARY MEN

- The Author
- The Challenges of Writing this Book
- The First Chapter
- Defining the Order Police and their Roles
- Profiling the Killers
QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?
Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans?

CWA-The Holocaust: Confronting the Perpetrators
June 18, 2018
Don Schilling
FRANZ STANGL
1908-1971

- Stangl’s background and personality
- His road to Sobibor & Treblinka
TREBLINKA TRAIN STATION
1942-43

This photo was found in an album belonging to camp commandant Kurt Franz. Poland, 1942-1943. (USHMM)
STANGL AT TREBLINKA

- His role as he understood it and its consequences
- Stangl’s self-understanding
- Assessing Stangl as a perpetrator

Photo from USHMM
FEMALE PERPETRATORS

Irma Gresse (1923-1945)
Sensationalized Prototype
FEMALE PERPETRATORS

- Her focus: German women in the East and their roles in the Holocaust as witnesses, accomplices, perpetrators

- Who went? Teachers, nurses, secretaries, & wives/consorts (especially of SS/police men)

- Why? Opportunity (better pay, positions), adventure, sense of duty, ideology

- How many? Several hundred thousand in total; killers in the thousands
WHY DID THEY KILL?

• The problem of evidence

• Nurses: care-givers; killing handicapped an act of mercy, acting under doctors orders, duty

• “One of more difficult motives to document was paradoxically the most pervasive: anti-Semitism.” Yet “[w]hen Erna Petri, Johanna Altvater, and others callously killed Jewish children, they manifested a Nazi anti-Semitism so profound that it reduced the value of even an innocent child’s life to nothing.” Petri said, “I had been so conditioned to fascism and the racial laws, which established a view toward the Jewish people. As was told to me, I had to destroy the Jews. It was from this mindset that I came to commit such a brutal act.”
Members of the SS Helferinnen (female auxiliaries) arrive in Solahuette, the SS retreat near Auschwitz with Karl Hoecker, Adjutant-7/22/44

http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1163637
"Some of the SS girls at Belsen"

http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1180773
DISCUSSING ORDINARY MEN

• Describe the Order Police and their roles

• How did the men respond to the killing action at Józefów? Did their responses change over time?

• What was the role and significance of the “Jew hunts”? Of “Harvest Festival?”
ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:
WHY DID 80% OF THE MEN RPB 101 KILL?

• Possible factors:
  • wartime brutalization (Dower)
  • segmentation and routinization of the task
  • special or self selection of the perpetrators (Adorno, Steiner, Staub)
  • situational factors (Zimbardo)
  • careerism/self-interest
  • obedience to orders
  • deference to authority (Milgram)
  • ideological indoctrination/antisemitism
  • conformity/peer pressure

• Insights from the documents from Klee, ‘The Good Old Days’
AN ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION

• The Author
• His Approach
• His Interpretation
• Comparing Browning and Goldhagen
• Your judgments?
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

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• How and why did perpetrators become active agents in the processes of genocide?

• How did perpetrators justify their actions?

• What can we learn about ourselves and human behavior from the study of perpetrators?
FINAL QUESTIONS and COMMENTS

Thank you for a very stimulating three weeks!
**CONTEXTS: MODERN GERMANY**

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