

The Holocaust in History

By Kathy Warnes

The Longest Hatred - Origins of the Holocaust

Anti-Semitism Continues From Haman to Martin Luther to Hitler

Decades after it took place its victims, perpetrators, bystanders and heirs are still debating the nature of the Jewish Shoah, more commonly known as the Holocaust.

Historians Lucy Dawidowicz and Albert S. Lindemann, analyze anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.

In an overview article titled *How They Teach the Holocaust* in which she examines the curriculae of twenty five different school districts across America, historian [Lucy S. Dawidowicz](#) makes some pointed observations about the importance of exact definitions and specific terms in debating and teaching the Holocaust. She says that 15 of the 25 curriculae “never even suggest that Anti-Semitism had a history before Hitler. Of those that do, barely a handful present coherent historical accounts, however brief.”

Dawidowicz Argues That Anti-Semitism Dates to Antiquity

Dawidowicz argues that one of the obvious and dangerous misconceptions about the Anti-Semitic origins of the Holocaust is that it is a 20th century German phenomena when, in fact, Anti-Semitism dates to Biblical times.

In her earlier book, *The Holocaust and the Historians*, Dawidowicz expands her analysis of historic Anti-Semitism and explains her view of how the Holocaust is trivialized and misinterpreted when it is analyzed on any basis besides on an analytical foundation of underlying contempt for the Jews.

She argues that denying the distinctiveness of the Jewish experience under the Nazis and the six million Jews murdered or equating them with the genocide of other peoples including Native Americans, African Slaves, and Armenians, obstructs the role of Anti-Semitism in premeditating and carrying out the Holocaust.

The Holocaust Must Be Studied in a Historic and Human Context

She believe that this moral “leveling” of catastrophic events also conceals the historic roots of Anti-Semitism and distorts the moral impact of events. Dawidowicz contends that many historians do not balance the antiquity of Anti-Semitism against the more recent Nazi regime and part of the reason for this lack of balance is ignorance about the antecedents of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust must first be studied from a historical context, but it must be understood from both a historic and human context. Human prejudices like Anti-Semitism and hatreds are not rational, concrete elements that can be scientifically studied under an electron microscope. In fact, it can be argued that science in the form of Eugenics, Social Darwinism, and scientific racism is partially to blame for producing the Holocaust.

Humanistic disciplines like psychology, literature, and theology, as well as history, must be used to scrutinize the elements in the human soul that can be called upon to rationalize genocidal behavior toward other human beings. The human character or nature must be unflinchingly studied under the scientific and historical electron microscope and the results honestly evaluated if history is not to continue to produce genocide.

Lindemann Examines Anti-Semitism From Several Viewpoints

[Albert S. Lindemann](#) is another Holocaust historian who attempts to define and trace the roots of Anti-Semitism in his book, *Anti-Semitism before the Holocaust*. He examines the impact of Jews on Gentile communities and psyches from several viewpoints. T.S. Eliot asserted that “too many freethinking Jews’ are undesirable in any well ordered society.” American hero Charles Lindbergh said, “A few Jews add strength and character to a country, but too any create chaos.”

Adolph Hitler declared that Jews of any kind and in any numbers were disastrous to non-Jewish peoples. Lindemann supplements these remarks with a quote from Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, who says that “Jews would inevitably be hated by non-Jews, once Jewish numbers and influence began to grow too much.”

Many People Throughout History Have Been Indifferent to Jews

To counter balance these quotes, Lindemann points out that many people throughout history have felt no particular love or hatred for the Jews because of lack of contact or significance in their lives – in short, he points to a sizeable amount of indifference to the Jewish presence in history.

He argues that his evidence indicates that Anti-Semitism in multidimensional and throughout the centuries has changed in quality and intensity from region to region and that pre-Christian hatred of Jews is vastly different than Christian-era Anti-Semitism. The Christian conception of the Jew has changed, especially in modern times, with the advent of secular universalism and scientific racism.

According to Lindemann, general charges against Jews such as arrogance, contempt for others, and being the “outsider” have remained the same, but the similarities are only nebulous and do not much affect hostilities against Jews. He conceptualizes and defines Anti-Semitism as a hatred/fear of Jews that includes “a key element of irrationality or emotionally fraught fantasy,” but he points out that the fantasy is intertwined with elements of concrete perceptions.

Lindemann uses the example of Jewish denial of Christianity as the means of universal redemption as evidence of concrete perception of the differences between the two faiths, but he

says that evidence does not warrant additional perceptions that all Jews hate Christians or vice versa. The ultimate fantasy is to say that Jews killed Christian children for their blood to use in matzos at Passover or the “blood libel” doctrine, an accusation against the Jews that the Catholic Church helped perpetuate for centuries.

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Jews, Christianity, and the Early Church

Anti-Semitism From the Greeks to St. Augustine

There are different words to describe the Holocaust. Jews used the word Shoah, which means catastrophe. Gentiles use Holocaust, which is the Greek word for burnt offering.

Hatred of the Jews is amply documented in the Hellenistic period of history and it especially flourished in Alexandria, Egypt, a major trade and learning center of the Mediterranean world. Greeks culturally and politically dominated Alexandria, but Jews made up as much as 40 percent of the population, including a disproportionate number of wealthy and educated people.

Jews and Christianity

A disproportionate number of wealthy and educated people in a hostile population has been the classic situation of Jews all through history. Jewish and Egyptian peoples often clashed bitterly and the Biblical Book of Esther narrates the story of Haman, the highest minister of the Persian king, Ahasuerus or Xerxes, who provided the impetus for the mass destruction of the Jewish people. Jehovah does not directly intervene in this story, but indirectly through the person of Queen Esther, and in this story, the Jews are victorious.

Legacies from the Christian New Testament are not as positive for the Jews. Jewish religious leaders dismissed Christ and his followers as illiterate dissenters who believed doctrines that clashed dramatically with Jewish tradition. According to Talmudic traditions, the rabbinical

court for idolatry appropriately condemned Jesus to death. The Romans, who ruled Palestine at this time, played a subdued but pivotal role in the Crucifixion drama, the efforts of Pontius Pilate to “wash his hands” of the matter notwithstanding.

Crucifixion was a Roman, not Jewish punishment, but the Gospel accounts imply that the Jews initiated and endorsed the Crucifixion. With the aid of the apostle Paul, himself at one time a zealous Jewish persecutor of the Christians, the Gospel writers helped transform Christianity from a deviant Jewish sect to a powerfully anti-Jewish religion with an increasingly non-Jewish following.

For several centuries after the death of Jesus, Christianity struggled to establish itself as a bona fide religion. Roman authorities and other people often confused it with Judaism and many tried to eradicate it. As the centuries passed, Christianity grew further and further away from its first century origins. Against all odds, Christian missionaries persistently preached their gospel and in the fourth century their religion enjoyed a break through when the Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity.

Jews and Christians Clash

As Christianity gained ascendancy so did its war of words against Judaism. At first, Jewish leaders were not convinced of the threat of the new religion, but as Christianity’s power and attacks grew, Jewish writers responded in kind to the assault of their Christian counterparts. During the first thousand years of Christianity, Christians burgeoned in numbers and political power while Jewish populations and political influence declined, although physical attacks on the Jews remained the exception rather than the rule. Eventually, their enemies drove the Jews from their homeland and demolished their temple Christians took these events as a sign of God’s wrath against the Jews for rejecting Christ.

As the centuries passed, Jewish populations, reputation and power continued to decline, altering the nature of Jewish-Christian and later Jewish-Moslem relationships. Gradually, Jews assumed the role of defenseless victims or accommodationists, less and less able to offensively answer the Christian challenge and falling back into survival mode. The Christian Church struggled to define the Jewish position. Some Christians argued that Jews who did not accept Christian truth should be put to death, but most leading Christians felt that Jews should not be put to death or forced to convert to Christianity.

St. Augustine and St. John Chrysostom

[St. Augustine](#), one of the church fathers who lived in the fourth century, played a significant role in working out the stance of the Christian church toward the Jews. He described Jews as carnal, blind to spirituality, and corrupted by hatred of non-Jews and he argued that Jews deserved death, but that the church should preserve them as “witnesses to the superiority of Christianity.” Special laws to control Jews because of their degraded status were necessary, but they never would escape the charge of deicide or killing God.

[St. John Chrysostom](#) who lived in Antioch in Asia Minor in the Fourth Century, helped to perpetuate the deicide charge against the Jews that the New Testament and St. Augustine had developed and he earned a reputation for eloquence in his tirades against the Jews. Like St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom railed against what he considered the insolence of the Jews who dared to insult the Son of God, ridicule the Cross, and reject the grace of the Spirit. In one of his sermons he summarized the struggle between the Christians and Jews. "If you admire the Jewish way of life, what do you have in common with us? If the Jewish rites are holy and venerable, our way of life must be false."

St. John Chrysostom never urged his parishioners to personally attack Jews, but he fed the Christian hatred of Judaism. Had not the Jews contributed to the murder of Christ and continued to rejoice in His death? Did not Jews torture and kill Christians and use the blood of Christians for matzos at Passover? Did not Jews defile Communion wafers?

Beginning with the Eleventh Century, the idea that Jews plotted to physically harm Christians became firmly rooted in northern France, southern Germany and England. Some historians contend that this doctrine formed foundation stones of Anti-Semitism in Europe and the physical violence and demonization of the Jews paved the way for the Holocaust. Many Jews became merchants and moneylenders. A few Jews enjoyed great wealth and the protection and privileges granted to them by kings and nobles. Christians accepting St. Augustine's doctrine of the degradation of the Jews had difficulty correlating the good fortune of the Jews with church doctrines.

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The 500 Year Demonization of the Jews

The Crusades, Martin Luther, and the Thirty Years' War

The First Crusade in 1096 began a history of physical attacks on Jews and during the next 500 years of European history, Jews were demonized and expelled.

The First Crusade in 1096 marked the beginning of violent physical attacks on Jews. Although Christian religious and civil authorities condemned the Crusader's attacks and in some cases effectively protected the Jews, armed and often lawless Crusaders violently attacked Jews and stripped them of their resources. During the next 500 years of European history, the doctrines of the demonization of the Jews became part of European culture and violent outbreaks against Jewish settlements and expulsions from major areas of Western Europe occurred.

Jews Were Often Caught in the Crossfire of Religious Wars

These hatreds and instances of mutually provoked conflict between Jews and Christians were not the pivotal issues, according to historians of Anti-Semitism. According to historian Robert Chazan, the heart of the matter was the myths and fantasies about Jews that were developing and being nurtured in the psyches of European Christians. "Prejudice and persecution are ultimately grounded far more in the circumstance of the persecuting majority than in the behavior of the persecuted minority," he concluded.

Jews were often caught in the crossfire of the Protestant Reformation and European and religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Since the Protestant Reformation Christians and Jews have been debating the Anti-Semitism of Martin Luther, the lightning rod of the Reformation. Early in his career, Luther felt sympathetic toward the Jewish resistance to the Catholic Church. He wrote:

"The Jews are blood relations of our Lord; if it were proper to boast of flesh and blood, the Jews belong more to Christ than we. I beg, therefore, my dear Papist, if you become tired of abusing me as a heretic, that you begin to revile me as a Jew."

Martin Luther and the Reformation

In the early years of the Reformation, Martin Luther expected the ultimate gift from the Jews: conversion to his purified and correct version of Christianity. When throngs of them did not convert, he turned violently against Jews. In one of his most noted works, "[Of the Jews and Their Lies](#), 1543", Luther gives full vent to his hatred of Jews. There is a chilling parallel between this document and Christians and Nazi doctrines and actions of the mid-Twentieth Century,

"What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming. First to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians, and do not condone or knowingly tolerate such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of His Son and of His Christians.."

The Thirty Years' War

The Thirty Years' War, lasting from 1618 to 1648, flared up between Catholic and Protestant princedoms and drew in armies from Germany, Spain, England, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, France and Italy. It began in 1618, when Protestant leaders threw two Catholic messengers in Prague out of a window into a dung heap and ended thirty years later with the largest religious death toll of all time. This death toll included thousands of Jews who were massacred indiscriminately, including most of the German Jewish community.

The conclusion of the Thirty Years' War did not end the carnage for the Jews of Europe. In a telling foreshadowing of Holocaust events, many Polish Jews had served the landowners as tax

collectors during the Thirty Years' War, convincing Polish peasants that the Jews were the reason for their poverty and misery. Polish serfs, the Russian Cossacks and the Jews clashed, but the landowners protected the Jews. Then in 1648, as the Thirty Years' War ended, Bogdan Chmielnitzky organized the Ukrainian peasants to eradicate who they believed to be the source of their taxes and poverty, the Jews.

Ukrainian Peasants War Against Jewish People

There are conflicting historic interpretations of the events of this uprising, but it seems that Chmielnitzky wanted to establish an independent Poland with the Cossacks in charge. Chmielnitzky and the Cossacks fought against the Polish nobles in 1654, and the Jews of Poland were caught in the murderous crossfire. Between May and November of 1648, [Chmielnitzky](#) and the Cossacks massacred Jews. Some managed to escape and join the Polish army to fight Chmielnitzky and the Cossacks. Other converted to Christianity to save their lives, and many were sold into slavery.

By the middle of June 1648, no more Jews existed in the villages and in the open cities. Many Jews took refuge in fortified cities occupied by Polish garrisons, but when the peasant hordes captured these cities, they butchered their Jewish captives. In his account of the Chmielnitzky massacres of 1648-1649, historian Albert S. Lindemann terms them the "greatest massacre of Jews in Europe before the Holocaust."

According to Lindemann, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, marked the major tragedy for Jews at the end of the Middle Ages. Jews had prospered in Spain, assimilated with the population, and held political office and other influential positions in Spanish society. After Spain expelled the Jews, many of them immigrated to Mediterranean lands ruled by Islam and some made their way to Europe and the Americas.

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Ideological Components of the Holocaust

Nineteenth Century Scientific Racism

Enlightenment ideals of religious toleration and intellectual freedom did not rule. Rather, scientific racism contributed strong ideological components to the Holocaust.

The philosophes or trailblazing intellectuals of the Enlightenment of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries called for religious toleration and liberation of the intellect, but the Enlightenment did not bring about acceptance of the Jews. In fact, many ordinary Christians nourished and bequeathed an “unenlightened” suspicion of the Jews throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries.

The Ideal of Cultural Superiority is Universal

The scientific racism of the nineteenth century Europe and the United States contributed strong ideological components to the Holocaust. Many, if not most, civilizations have articulated ideas of cultural superiority. Ancient Grecian Aristotle believed that the later name English, French, and German peoples were intellectually inferior to the Greeks and other civilized peoples. To the ancient Chinese way of thinking Europeans were descendants of monkeys and accurately resembled their forebears. Arabs of the eleventh and twelfth centuries considered Europeans spiritually cold and intellectually slow.

Nineteenth century European racism forged an evil marriage with the idea that body type and intellectual ability were coupled with an inherent ‘racial’ unity. In other words, the ‘superior’ Anglo Saxon race was born and bred with certain racial characteristics that made it superior, just as the Negro and Slavic and Semitic races were born and bred with certain racial characteristics that made them inferior. The science of Eugenics based itself on racial theories of selective breeding to weed out inferior characteristics and pass on superior characteristics to succeeding generations.

Disraeli Says the Jews Are One of the "Superior Races

Historian Alfred Lindemann points out a telling paradox of scientific racism when he notes that the most scientific and racial theorists of the nineteenth century tended to evaluate the Jewish race in a positive light. Some agreed with English Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and others when they argued that the Jews were one of the superior races – the very fact that they had survived over the centuries was striking proof of their racial fitness.

[Social Darwinism](#), based on Charles Darwin’s theories about animal species surviving in the natural world, provided the logic to argue that the Jews were, indeed, a superior race. The theorists and scientists who found the Jewish race inferior were usually the more mystical thinkers or the more flexible in their application of scientific principles.

Holocaust scholars debate the antecedents of anti-Semitism in antiquity and the Middle Ages, but generally they agree that the late nineteenth century provided a solid foundation for the Holocaust. Adolf Hitler was born on April 20, 1889, into a mix of Anti-Semitic ideas. Racist words like Aryan, Superman, and Anti-Semitic were either born or came of age in the late nineteenth century. Nations like Germany, France, and the United States transformed extreme nationalism into modern forms, resulting in a new xenophobic, hate filled species of racism, one of the key ingredients of National Socialism.

Founding Fathers and Philosophical Brothers and Sisters

The list of founding fathers and philosophical brothers and sisters of the Holocaust is long and features the intellectual, literary, and politically famous. Count Arthur de Gobineau extended racist thinking to its logical conclusion when he argued that inherent racial genius, not environment, explained the rise of civilizations, and that the decline of civilizations came about as a dilution of that genius through race mixing.

The threads of the idea of a Jewish conspiracy to rule the world are securely woven into the fabric of Holocaust origins. *Biarritz*, a German novel of 1868, by Herman Goedesche, described how the heroes hid in the Jewish cemetery in Prague where they stumbled onto a secret meeting of the devil and the Elders of the twelve Jewish tribes. The conspirators described how the Jews would use their money and influence to make themselves rulers of the world. This is just one example in a crowded field of a writer who drew on Jewish conspiracy theory for a plot and although the novel was fiction, the racial prejudices of its readers eagerly and readily converted it into nonfiction.

Biarritz illustrated that by the mid nineteenth century rural forces of reaction and clericalism identified Jews, urban and recently attaining civil liberties, as the archenemy. Anti-Semitism is based partially on the conception of the Jew as Satan's ally. The idea that evil Jews worked in an evil secret society to manipulate political events continued to permeate all areas of European and Asian life.

Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion

Tsarist Russia translated localized and nebulous Anti-Semitism into concrete political policy when it officially encouraged pogroms and Anti-Semitic propaganda. The most pervasive and still effective weapon that Tsarist Russia used against the Jews was a document called [*The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*](#), which was a forgery by the Russian secret police.

Publisher Sergei Nilus, a landowner who lost his fortune and turned religious fanatic, alleged that this book was the secret minutes of a meeting of Jewish leaders planning world domination. Components of the plan included Jewish encouragement of vice and atheism to depolarize Europe, and Jews using revolutionary movements and financial chicanery to collapse national governments and replace them with a Jewish world empire. Even though the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* was a forgery, the Tsar took it seriously and eventually the book proved to be a malevolent influence all over the world. In the United States, Henry Ford effectively used it as a vehicle to spread his anti Jewish views.

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Historians Interpret the Holocaust

Did Global Depression and Anti-Semitism Produce the Shoah?

The history of Anti-Semitism and its role in the Holocaust is filled with ambiguities and contradictions and so are the historical interpretations of the Holocaust.

World wide social, political and economic upheavals in the early part of the twentieth century brought about renewed blame for the Jews. Europe suffered the ravages of World War I, and the world-wide Depression and economic hopelessness of the 1930s Depression in Germany, especially, produced a receptive climate for Adolf Hitler. The charisma and personal politics and agenda of Hitler served as a catalyst for the Holocaust, but its foundations had existed in the world for centuries before Hitler's birth on April 20, 1889.

Functionalist and Intentionalist Interpretations of the Holocaust

The history of Anti-Semitism and its role in producing the Holocaust is filled with ambiguities and contradictions, and so are the historical interpretations of the Holocaust. Analyzing the view of Holocaust historians and comparing them raises more questions instead of definitively answering many. The interpretations of scholars regarding the development of the Holocaust can roughly be divided into "functionalist" and "intentionalist."

Intentionalists believe that Hitler's unwavering motivation or intention was the slaughter of the Jews. Functionalists on the other hand, argue that the evidence does not support the idea that Hitler had a premeditated plan for the Holocaust. They argue that a series of random anti-Jewish measures, functionally related to each other, caused the Holocaust instead of a Hitler master plan. According to historian Donald Niewyk, these two interpretative schools raise "serious questions about how much of the Holocaust can be explained purely in terms of Hitler's hatred for the Jews."

Niewyk's Objection Broadens the Scope of Holocaust Interpretation

Niewyk's objection to the artificial division of Holocaust scholarship broadens the scope of Holocaust studies to include other crucial factors in efforts to understand and explain the Holocaust. Perhaps the impact of the Holocaust would not have been so devastating to European Jews – Hitler succeeded in destroying 2/3 of Europe's Jewish population – if Hitler had not hated them and sanctioned and legalized the Holocaust.

Perhaps Hitler was the catalyst for the modern Holocaust, but there have been Holocausts and pogroms against the Jews throughout history. Possibly the modern Holocaust was the formal, bureaucratic expression of the hatred and Anti-Semitism in the hearts of many ordinary people. The Holocaust provided them legal and socially acceptable expression of this hatred.

Jacob Katz and the Christian Churches

Jacob Katz leans the cross of blame for the hatred of the Jews and the Holocaust against the doors of Christian churches, which in his opinion had fostered prejudice and hatred against the Jews for centuries. According to Christian tradition, Jehovah had transferred his covenant from the Jews to the Christians, leaving them a people without hope of redemption unless they became Christians.

Katz argues that modern secular ideologies absorbed the idea of the Jew as an evil parasite and the influence of this idea survived the influence of the churches. Even though Hitler and his cohorts privately scorned Christianity, they knew how to use Christian images for their own purposes and at basic levels of their psyches had absorbed the Anti-Semitic ideas so inherent in their culture.

Holocaust historian Donald L. Niewyk in the second and third editions of his book, *The Holocaust*, raises questions about the past and present historical interpretations of the Holocaust. His question about the Katz interpretation is: "But if it is true that Christianity declined, is Katz justified in stressing the continuing influence of traditional, theologically sanctioned Anti-Semitism and linking it so closely to the Holocaust?"

Niewyk is correct in raising this question, but perhaps he is discounting the impact of cultural milieu and early training on the human intellect. It is possible to violently disagree with something intellectually, but the emotional visages of early training survive the logic of intellect. In fact, the emotions of prejudice and hatred have a chilling logic of their own. The Holocaust perpetrators seemed to be acting on the logic of their Anti-Semitic heritage.

Ian Kershaw's Interpretation

According to historian Ian Kershaw, the principal cause of the Holocaust emanates from Adolf Hitler's pathological racial hatred of the Jews coupled with his dictatorship of Germany. Kershaw argues that without Hitler, German Anti-Semitism undoubtedly would have ended in legal discrimination, not genocide.

In answer to the countering arguments of other scholars that in some ways Hitler was a weak dictator who left racial matters to party and state officials by default, Kershaw replies that although party officials staged lower level pogroms, Hitler himself designed and approved the policies designed to eliminate the [Jews](#). He argues that Hitler may not have consistently planned genocide, but the mass murder of the Jews always nudged the edge of his consciousness.

Wartime conditions brought Hitler's plan to the forefront of his thinking and Kershaw sees Hitler's annihilation plan emerging from October 1941 to 1942 because Hitler began to realize that his conquest of the Soviet Union was not inevitable. Someone must be blamed for defeat and the Jews were the perfect scapegoat.

Kershaw understands the pervasiveness of Hitler's attitudes about the Jews, but he does not touch on the scope or duration of Hitler's Anti-Semitism. A reading of [Mein Kampf](#) or other early writings of Hitler's reveals that his attitude and expressions about the Jews date to his Vienna days and perhaps earlier.

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Did Hitler and the Nazis Cause the Holocaust? - *Wikimedia Commons*

Two Historians Study the Early Holocaust Victims

The Nazis Used Biological Selection and Murder to Get Racial Purity

Henry Friedlander and Hugh Gregory Gallagher document the Nazi biological selection and murders of Gypsies, and “racially undesirable” and mentally defective people.

Historian Henry Friedlander in his book, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide from Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, points out that physically and mentally handicapped Germans and the Gypsies were the first victims of Nazi genocide, not Jews, and with this contention, he broadens the definition of the Holocaust. The Nazi actions toward physically and mentally handicapped Germans and gypsies foreshadow their Aktionen on the Jews.

The Nazis Targeted Mentally Defective People, Gypsies, and Jews

First, the Nazis systematically isolated their targets from the German community and with the help of collaborating individuals and bureaucracy, gassed them. The Nazi reasons for the extermination of physically and mentally handicapped Germans, [Gypsies](#), and Jews were the same – heredity.

The Nazis believed that physically and mentally handicapped people carried defective genes and had to be prevented from passing them on to succeeding generations to prevent the “mongrelizing” of the Aryan race. The Nazis considered the Gypsies racially degenerate, but not as dangerous as the Jews.

In the beginning the Nazis persecuted the Gypsies selectively, but Friedlander says that by 1943, the Nazis biologically selected all three groups for extermination.

Friedlander Argues that the Nazis Wanted to Achieve Racial Purity

Friedlander attributes the Holocaust to scientific racism and the belief that eliminating all undesirable people from the gene pool is essential to improving the human population and society. He concludes that the goal of Nazism was the total racial purification of the Third Reich. His views comport with Hitler when he wrote *Mein Kampf*. "If there is no power to fight for their own health, the right to live comes to an end.

Friedlander's interpretation also examines the fate of the other "racially undesirable" groups like Soviet prisoners of war and Eastern European civilians that the Nazis put to death during World War II. He argues that if scholars just focus on Anti-Semitism and the fate of the Jews when studying the Holocaust, it is impossible to fully understand it. His critics counter that the Nazis chose only the Jews for total annihilation, and if Friedlander expands the definition of the Holocaust that expansion could detract from the dimensions of the Jewish tragedy.

The Impact of Friedlander's Interpretation

Friedlander's broadening of the definition of the Holocaust to include other groups that the Nazis considered undesirable is both positive and negative in its impact on scholarly and non-scholarly assessments of the Holocaust. A study of the scope of the Holocaust renders ridiculous the Holocaust denier argument that it never happened and that thousands of people died from the privations of war. Understanding the scope of the Holocaust also demonstrates the catastrophic impact of centuries of hatred and prejudice in the warp and woof of the national psyche and at the center of a nation's culture.

Conversely, Holocaust deniers have used Friedlander's argument that the focus of the Holocaust has to be widened to include victims besides the Jews to downplay what happened to the Jews. Indeed, in an argument redolent of Anti-Semitism, they contend that the Jews use the Holocaust to exploit their victim status for economic advantage.

Hugh Gregory Gallagher's Study

Hugh Gregory Gallagher's book, *By Trust Betrayed*, is an example of Friedlander's expansion of the Holocaust to include other than Jewish victims. Gallagher explores the [Aktion T-4](#) program in Germany, which allowed the systematic killing of disabled, mentally retarded and mentally ill Germans in the Third Reich between 1939 and 1945. The program was set in motion by a signed order written on Hitler's personal stationery and signed "A Hitler."

Influenced by the widespread principles of the science of Eugenics, the German officials quickly embraced the program and implemented it with typical German efficiency. Numerous German doctors endorsed the Aktion T-4 program as scientifically sound and the best method of mercifully ridding society of "undesirable" members. Administrators established a special transportation network to transport victims from their homes to the killing centers without fuss or

publicity. They quickly set in place a bureaucracy of intricate detail that included killing facilities across Germany and Austria. The T-4 victims were murdered in gas chambers disguised as shower baths.

The killing bureaucracy issued a steady flow of bogus government death certificates and condolence letters to families of the victims. The bureaucrats of killing told the families and friends of the victims that they had died of illness such as heart failure. As a final seal of the Nazi bargain with the devil, the relatives got an urn from an euthanasia center filled with mixed ashes from various victims. These trailblazing procedures were models for later killings at Belze, Sobibor and Treblinka.

Inevitably, word of the “mercy killings” spread throughout the communities surrounding the killing centers and the groundswell of protest resounded loudly enough for Hitler to officially halt the Aktion T-4 program on August 24, 1941. But the second phase of killing, decentralized and expanded to concentration camps and mental home inmates in the occupied countries, continued until 1945. Approximately 275,000 innocent people were killed as a result of the Aktion programs.

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The Holocaust as a Watershed Event in History

Scholar Yehuda Bauer's Interpretation Stresses Historical Context

In his books, Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer argues that the Holocaust be must understood historically before it is viewed from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Holocaust scholar [Yehuda Bauer](#) defines the Holocaust as a “watershed” event in history and addresses Holocaust questions in two of his books, *A History of the Holocaust, Revised Edition*, and *Rethinking the Holocaust*. He argues that the Holocaust can be understood from various disciplinary points of view, but first it must be understood historically – one must know what actually happened and the history has to be placed in the proper context. The historian has to look backward to the history of the Jewish people and Anti-Semitism in ancient, medieval, and modern times.

Yehuda Bauer Summarizes Jewish History

[Yehuda Bauer](#) summarizes his view of some of this history. During the Middle Ages in western, central, and southern Europe, Jews were identified by a yellow sign and they had to wear distinctive clothing. In Italy, they were segregated in certain town areas which later were called ghettos and they were forced to pursue certain occupations like money lending. Jews were periodically deprived of their property by taxation or confiscation.

The Muslim conquerors of the Seventh Century world considered Jews and Christians to be “People of the Book,” and they waged a war of destruction against them and forced many to convert to Islam. Under Muslim rule in 1010, 1013, and 1066, Muslims massacred Jews in Cordoba, Spain.

Yemen, a southern Arabian state, subjected Jews to discrimination and mass killings in 1627 and 1629, and held them in abject humiliation until their mass exodus to Israel in 1949. The ascendancy of the Shi’ites in Iran and Turkish rule in Damascus in the nineteenth century were times of persecution for Jews. The Jews were expelled from England in 1290, from France in 1306, and from Spain in 1492.

Jews Become Mediators

In the Middle Ages in twelfth century Germany, only Jews could loan money for interest because the church did not allow Christians to practice usury. Jews became mediators between aristocracy and the peasantry, creating enmity from both sides. Religious animosity added to the situation brewed a volatile mixture that provoked attacks and local massacres, especially in Germany and France. In 1347-1350 when the Black Death decimated European countries, the Jews were blamed, and they were murdered across the face of Europe.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Christians continued to seek the conversion of the Jews. The sixteenth century split in the Christian Church and the later developments in Protestantism and the Catholic Church did not help the Jews. The Jews refused to accept the new Protestantism and Lutheran Protestantism turned on them in virulent hostility.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Poland in Eastern Europe had welcomed the Jews and in the following centuries, despite occasional attempts by the Catholic priesthood to make life difficult for them, the Jews played an important role in urban settlement and developed crafts and commerce throughout Poland and Lithuania. The great upheavals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe negatively affected Polish Jewry.

Intervals of Interaction Between Christians and Jews

By the eve of the French Revolution, Jews were spread thinly over the Middle East, Europe, England, and the New World, and numbered about 2.5 million. Jews functioned as middlemen in Gentile society. They were neither extremely poor nor extremely rich, but extremely visible. Their religious and cultural patterns set them apart in communities governed by civic leaders who observed the traditional moral and religious precepts and emphasis on study and learning.

Jewish relationships with the Christian world in Europe were often difficult and contradictory, but between periods of persecution stretched long years of relative peace and socioeconomic interaction between Jews and their neighbors. For the most part, Jews were uneasily and superficially assimilated into European society.

By the nineteenth century, the Jews had achieved civic equality in many Christian European states, but many were still impoverished and discriminated against. Many escaped from adverse conditions in Russia and Poland by emigrating to the United States. Between 1900 and 1924, a total of 1,080,752 Jews from Eastern Europe resettled in the United States.

Bauer Says Modern Anti-Semitism Has Several Components

In *A History of the Holocaust*, Bauer examines the nature of Anti-Semitism. He defines traditional Anti-Semitism as based on Christian Anti-Judaism. Christians blame the Jews for killing Christ, for rejecting him as the Messiah, for supposed economic misbehavior, and in extreme cases for the supposed desire to control the world.

Modern Anti-Semitism derives from several components, according to Bauer. The Romantic Movement in the first half of the nineteenth century excluded the Jews. It emphasized the purity of national traditions, the image of a mythical golden age, and the idealization of the Middle Ages with legends of knights, chivalry, and endless wars. Jews did not easily fit into this indigenous nationalism.

Another element of modern Anti-Semitism that Bauer identifies is modern capitalism's creation of antagonism to the Jewish people. Socialistic and anarchist thinkers like Charles Fourier, Pierre Proudhon, Michael Bakunin, and Karl Marx were extremely anti-Jewish. Marx believed that with the defeat of capitalism Judaism and Jews would vanish. Communists accused Jews of initiating capitalism and exaggerated the impact of Jewish traders and industrialists on the growth of industry and commerce. The Rothschilds, a Jewish banking family, served as a stereotype to attack all Jews. Bauer also identifies Social Darwinism as contributing heavily to modern Anti-Semitism.

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Yehuda Bauer: Rethinking the Holocaust

He Says that the Impact of the Genocide is Growing, not Diminishing

In his book, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, Holocaust scholar [Yehuda Bauer](#) defines the book as not being “another history of the Holocaust but rather an attempt to rethink categories and issues that arise out of contemplation of that watershed event in human history.”

Bauer Defines the Holocaust as Special and Unprecedented

Defining the Holocaust as a genocide of a special and unprecedented type, Bauer contends that it says something terribly important about humanity. He says that the Holocaust is, on one hand, a genocide and must be compared with other genocides and that universal dimensions of comparison should concern everyone from Kamchatka to Tasmania and from Patagonia to the Hudson Bay. On the other hand, the Holocaust is a unique genocide with unprecedented and so far, unrepeated, characteristics. The Holocaust concerns one of the core groups in what used to be the Christian-Muslim area of civilization, namely the Jews, whose culture, influenced by the context of their original Middle Eastern habitat, was in fact, crucial in the development of Western civilization.

Bauer argues that: “The Holocaust has, therefore, become the symbol for genocide, for racism, for hatred of foreigners, and of course, for Anti-Semitism; yet, the existence of rescuers on the margins provides a hope that these evils are not inevitable, that they can be fought. The result is the beginning of international cooperation to educate as many people as possible – to warn them and at the same time provide a realistic hope for a possible change of direction in human affairs. That the impact of the Holocaust is growing, not diminishing, is a major motive for the writing of this book.”

Bauer Defines and Distinguishes Genocide and Holocaust

Investigating the origins of the word genocide, Bauer reveals that Raphael Lemkin, a refugee Polish Jewish lawyer in the United States, coined the word genocide in late 1942 or early 1943. Bauer draws an important distinction between genocide and holocaust. He says that genocide is the planned attempt to destroy a national, ethnic, or racial group using measures that accompany the selective mass murder of members of the targeted group. These methods include implementing a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, national economic structures, religious institutions, moral fiber, educational systems, and selective mass killings of parts of the targeted population.

According to Bauer, Holocaust is a radicalization of genocide – a planned attempt to physically annihilate every single member of a targeted ethnic, national, or racial group. It is a continuum of human mass destruction. One major difference between the Holocaust and other genocides is that pragmatic considerations were central of all other genocides, abstract ideological considerations less so.

Bauer Argues that the Holocaust is Unprecedented

According to Yehuda Bauer the basic motivation of the Holocaust was purely ideological, rooted in the illusionary world of Nazi imagination where an international Jewish conspiracy to control the world was opposed by a matching Aryan quest to control it. He says that no genocide to date has been based so completely on myths, on hallucinations, on abstract, non-pragmatic ideology – which was then executed by very rational, pragmatic means.

A second reason why the Holocaust is unprecedented is its universal character. All other genocides were geographically limited. In the case of the Jews, persecution started in Germany, but spread all over what the Germans called the German sphere of influence in Europe, and then became a policy of total murder. The Germans fully intended to control the world, directly or through its allies and this meant that Jews ultimately would be hunted down all over the world. Hitler said that in fighting the Jew he was doing the work of the Lord. This had a clear universalistic implication. This Anti-Semitism was exported from Nazi Germany to other countries. This global character of the intended murder of all Jews is unprecedented in human history.

The third element setting the Holocaust apart from other genocides is its intended totality. The Nazis were looking for all Jews. According to Nazi policy, all persons with three or four Jewish grandparents were sentenced to death for the crime of having been born. Such a policy has never before been applied in human history and would likely have been applied universally if Germany had won the war.

The fourth element that sets the Holocaust apart from all other genocides is the dehumanization of the perpetrators and the [total humiliation](#) of the victims.

The fifth element that sets the Holocaust apart is the reorganization of humanity. The reshuffling of society and making one real or imagined or ethnic or national group or religious belief dominate while abolishing or subordinating others is a major social revolution.

The Nazis Effectively Combined Theory and Practice

Bauer identifies the unique nature of the Holocaust when he discusses its ideological and pragmatic natures, but he seems to reverse their importance when he designates the ideological considerations as more important than the Nazi killing machine. The chilling and unprecedented aspects of the Nazi Holocaust also lie in the fact that they so effectively combined the ideological and pragmatic components of their pogrom and that they used modern technology to carry it out. Perhaps that combination with Hitler as the catalyst is what made the Nazis able to exterminate 2/3 of European Jewry and millions of Slavic and other peoples.

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The Motivation of the Nazi Doctors

How Could They Rationalize Being Both Healers and Killers?

The reasons that Nazi doctors who like all medical professionals, took the Hippocratic Oath to “do no harm,” did harm to the Jews are both simple and complex.

Robert Jay Lifton in his [study](#) titled *The Nazi Doctors, Medical Killing and the Psychology of Geocide* explores the motivation of the Nazi doctors through a psychological lens and offers an analysis of how Nazi doctors could function as both healers and killers. He argued that the medicalization of killing or the concept of killing in the name of healing, crossed the boundary between violent imagery and periodic killing of victims – the method in pogroms against the Jews and systemic genocide. Lifton theorized that the medicalization of killing was essential to crossing the boundary and explored the reasons for that crossing.

Lifton Describes Nazi Germany as a "Biocracy"

Lifton described Nazi Germany as a “biocracy,” the idea that the divine prerogative called for cure of the diseased Aryan race through purification and revitalization and the extermination of the infectious agent, the Jews. He said that medical metaphor combined with solid biomedical ideology in the Nazi mind.

According to Lifton, in a logical progression of the purification ideal, the Nazis began with the systematic killing of physically and mentally disabled people between 1939 and 1941, as described in Hugh Gregory Gallagher’s *By Trust Betrayed*. These state killings and forcible sterilization or “undesirables” were the ideological underpinnings of the biomedical ideology behind the mass extermination of the Jews. The Aryan race was sick and the cure was the killing of the Jews.

This part of Lifton’s argument is a metaphor to conceptualize medical motivations, but the everyday practicalities of killing do not seem conducive to medical metaphor rationalization. Perhaps that is why after the [Nazi doctors](#) conducted the experiments that killed the subjects and provided the medical means of killing they at least emotionally absented themselves and left the political and physical disposing of the bodies to others.

Lifton Describes Psychic Numbing

Nazi doctors could disassociate themselves this way, according to Lifton because of a state that he called “psychic numbing” which makes it possible for people like doctors and ordinary people to commit violent, brutal acts. It is a state of radically diminishing feeling, of not psychologically

experiencing certain actions. Psychic numbing involves interruption in psychic action – in the continuous creation and recreation of images and forms that make up the fabric of human mental life. An interruption or relocation of this process can result in psychic numbing. He implied that “psychic numbing” is an unconscious process but once it is understood, can be studied and utilized.

Lifton Defines Doubling

Lifton’s analysis of why and how the Nazi doctors could function both as healers and killers is centered around another a psychological principle that he calls doubling. He stated that “the key to understanding how Nazi doctors came to do the work of Auschwitz is the psychological principles I call “doubling.” He defined doubling as the metaphorical dividing of the self into two functioning wholes so that a part self acts as an entire self. Through doubling, an Auschwitz doctor could not only kill and contribute to killing but also construct for himself an entire edifice to rationalize all aspects of his behavior.

Doubling is more than a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde split personality, it is the integration by rationalization of the two warring natures of humankind – good and evil- so that they can function harmoniously in the same person. Lifton sees doubling as the psychological means of allowing Nazi doctors to reap psychological and material benefits for adapting to the diabolical killing environment of Nazi Germany. In the larger and deeply ironic sense, the German doctors became the theorists and implementers of a cosmic scheme of racial cure by victimization and mass murder.

Lifton Says Doubling is Present in All Lives to Some Degree

Acknowledging that doubling is present in all lives to some degree, Lifton argued that the Nazis, in personifying victimizer’s doubling, came to epitomize the process not because they were inherently more evil than other people, but because they were successful in using this form of doubling to mobilize evil on a vast scale and channeling it into systematic killing.

Lifton said that doubling can occur in any group of people, but various professionals such as doctors, biologists, clergy, generals, statesmen, writers and artists have a special capacity for doubling. In them, he said, the original humane self can be joined by a “professional self,” agreeing to join a destructive project or harming or killing others.

Lifton concluded his study with some questions: Was the twentieth century the century of doubling? Or, given the greater potential for professionalization of genocide, will that distinction belong to the twenty first century?

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Why Did Ordinary People Help the Nazis?

Christopher Browning Says Propaganda, Peer Pressure Are Two Reasons

Christopher Browning examines the motivation and role in the Holocaust in Poland of Reserve Police Battalion 101, composed of middle aged family men from Hamburg.

In a study titled [*Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*](#), Christopher R. Browning examined the motivation and role of a Reserve Police Battalion in Poland. The men of the battalion were middle aged family men from working and lower middle class backgrounds in Hamburg, Germany.

The Men of Battalion 101 Receive Their Orders

The German Army had considered the men in [*Reserve Police Battalion 101*](#) too old to be of any use, so they were drafted into the Order Police and arrived in Poland about three weeks later. Traveling by truck to the village of Jozefow, they received their orders from their commander, Major Wilhelm Trapp. Their orders were to round up the 1,800 Jews of the village so that men could be sent to a work camp. They were to shoot the women, children, and elderly people. Trapp told his men that if any of them did not feel up to the task before them, they could decline to participate without any fear of retribution.

In examining the role of the men of Battalion 101 in murdering the Jews and speculating about their motivation, Browning discounted the idea that the men had been hardened by prior combat and pointed out that most of the men had not ever fired a shot in anger or ever been fired on or lost a comrade fighting alongside them. But Browning said that once the killing began:

“The men became increasingly brutalized. As in combat, the horrors of the initial encounter eventually became routine, and the killing became progressively easier. In this sense, brutalization was not the cause but the effect of the men’s behavior.”

Browning Examines the Act of Killing Versus the Ideology of Killing

Even though there was no official retribution for not participating in the killing, some of the men who did not were taunted and others made to feel like lesser men than those who had participated in the killing, according to Browning. He examined the act of killing versus the ideology of killing and how the two combine into a motivator for reluctant killers.

He compared the effects of war and racism with the insidious effects of constant propaganda and indoctrination. He said that pervasive racism and removal of any common ground of their group and their society at large and commit acts of brutality.

Browning argued that the policemen neither understood nor accepted the theories of Nazi ideology, but on the other hand they did not operate in an ideological vacuum. They, too, had to be influenced by the incessant proclamations of German superiority and the diatribes of hatred and contempt against the Jewish enemy.

Primo Levi's Argument in 'The Gray Zone'

Quoting an essay called "The Gray Zone," in Primo Levi's book *The Drowned and the Saved*, Browning agreed with Levi's argument in "The Gray Zone," that the history of the camps can not be understood in terms of victims and perpetrators. Levi argued passionately that:

"It is naïve, absurd, and historically false to believe that an infernal system such as National Socialism sanctifies its victims; on the contrary, it degrades them, it makes them resemble itself."

Levi argued that there was a gray zone of collaboration and corruption that flourished in the camps among victims as well as the perpetrators, citing the Kapos and Sonderkommandos as examples. Although he focused on the range of victim behavior in the gray zone, Levi suggested that this zone encompassed perpetrators as well.

Browning Points Out that Perpetrators Didn't Become Victims

Endorsing Levi's gray zone theory with one qualification, Browning pointed out that the perpetrators and victims in the gray zone were not mirror images of each other. Perpetrators did not become victims, although some of them later claimed to be, in the same way some victims became accomplices of the perpetrators.

The relationship between the perpetrator and victim was not equal, and they each faced totally different choices. But in the end, Browning agreed that the idea of the gray zone applied to Reserve Police Battalion 101. The battalion had a number of men near the extreme boundary of the gray zone – feeling pity but not acting upon it and it had some men at the other boundary of the gray zone – men who expressed their pity and abhorrence of the killing but in the actual event, wavered in their convictions and went along with what was happening.

Browning Concludes that Human Responsibility is an Individual Matter

In his study, Browning concluded that human responsibility is ultimately an individual matter and the men of Battalion 101 acted through individual choices, whether or not they were at either ends of the gray zone or in the middle. However, he found that the collective behavior of Battalion 101 had deeply disturbing implications.

He enumerated the the commonalities that people in diverse societies had with Nazi Germany. He pointed out that many modern societies have a tradition of racism and teach people to defer to authority, and encourage people to advance in their careers. His most telling point was when he said that in every modern society, the complexity of life and bureaucratization and specialization disengage the people responsible for carrying out official policy from sense of personal responsibility.

Browning Asks a Question

Browning pointed out that peer pressure radically affects behavior and sets moral norms. His final question was: "If the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 could kill under certain circumstances, what group of men could not?"

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Edwin Black - IBM, Eugenics, and the Holocaust

Science and Technology Create a Devastating Duet of Destruction

Journalist Edwin Black argues that American scientists used Eugenics for social engineering and that IBM technology provided the practical underpinnings for tracking Jews.

Edwin Black, whose parents were Holocaust survivors, has written two controversial books about the Holocaust. In *IBM and the Holocaust: the Strategic Alliance between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation*, and *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race*, he traces the foundation evidence for his interpretation of the scientific and technological development of the Holocaust.

Eugenics and Scientific Engineering

In *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race*, Black reinforces Lifton's theory of doubling. He argues that scientists, doctors, industrialists, government officials and academics are the professional people most likely to commit crimes as well as humane acts and service to humanity.

Black points out that the new, so-called science of [Eugenics](#), seemed to be a proving ground for the Holocaust. The thesis of his book can be found in the second chapter when he says that "mankind's quest for perfection has always turned dark."

According to Black, throughout the first sixty years of the 20th Century, thousands of Americans and countless numbers of people around the world were forcibly sterilized, wrongly committed to mental institutions where they died in great numbers, and prohibited from marrying by state bureaucrats.

A Superior Nordic Race was the goal of Eugenics

In America, this battle to wipe out entire ethnic groups was fought by esteemed professors, elite universities, wealthy industrialists, scientists and government officials – all under a racist, pseudoscientific movement called eugenics. The purpose of eugenics was to create a superior Nordic race.

American eugenicists did not stretch their doctrine as far as killing and gassing lesser races, but they provided the intellectual foundations to others, such as the Nazis, for doing so. Black

pointed out that after the Nazis perverted Eugenics with the help of American scientists, it was reinvented and renamed Genetics.

Black Spotlights Technology

In *IBM and the Holocaust*, Black tells the story of IBM's deliberate involvement in the Holocaust, directly and through subsidiaries, as well as in the Nazi war machine that murdered millions of other people throughout Europe.,

Black pointed out that the intellectual turning point of the twentieth century occurred when the concept of massively organized information quietly emerged to become a means of social control, a weapon of war, and a roadmap for group destruction. The company behind this historic turning point was International Business Machines, and its autocratic chairman, Thomas J. Watson. Ironically, this turning point occurred on January 30, 1933, the same day that Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany.

Hitler Mobilizes Technology

In *IBM and the Holocaust*, Black exposes the impact of the [IBM Corporation](#), IBM wasn't Anti-Semitic or Pro-Nazi, but perhaps something worse. IBM was a normal corporation with the normal desire to make a profit and preserve markets. These corporate goals motivated IBM to make a deal with the Nazis that has proven to be problematic even in the 21st century.

IBM technology and statisticians used their little-known discipline to identify the victims, organize their persecution, and audit the efficiency of genocide. They did this with an IBM machine called the Dehomag Hollerith. IBM executives and engineers of the 1930s were the first generation of technocrats, intoxicated with their own technology and blinded by the corporate profits to be made with it. In 1933, no computer existed to track, collate and sort the Jews, but Dehomag, the German subsidiary of IBM, had invented a punch card and card sorting system and it made Hitler's program of Jewish destruction a technological mission that the company, led by its American component, pursued with diabolical success. More than 2,000 multi machine sets were distributed throughout Germany and thousands more throughout German-occupied Europe.

Card Sorting Operations to Catalog People and Their Lives and Deaths

Card sorting operations were established in every major concentration camp to catalog the movement of people and their lives and deaths with impersonal automation. Dehomag, with the knowledge and eager cooperation of the New York headquarters, custom designed the complex devices and specialized applications of mass murder. IBM technicians sent mock ups of punch cards back and forth to the Reich offices until the data columns were acceptable. The machines were not sold, they were leased, and IBM maintained and upgraded them.

According to Black, IBM technology made it possible for the Nazis to create and maintain their lists of Jews for deportation and extermination. The Holocaust most certainly would have occurred and progressed without the aid of IBM machines, but the Nazis would never have

achieved the efficiency and numbers of extermination that they did without the Hollerith machine. Black expressed the consequences of unthinking technological imperialism when he wrote:

“Many of us have become enraptured in the age of Computerization and the Age of Information. I know I have. But now I am consumed with a new awareness that for me, as the son of Holocaust survivors, brings me to a whole new consciousness. I call it the Age of Realization, as we look back and examine technology’s wake. Unless we understand how the Nazis acquired the names, more lists will be compiled against more people.”

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Did the Jews Resist the Nazi Whirlwind?

Holocaust Historians Debate the Nature of Resistance

The Jews did resist the Nazi whirlwind in many different ways according to their perceptions and definitions of resistance and their capabilities to resist.

One of the most pervasive images of the Jews in the Holocaust is that of passive victims, making little or no effort to defend themselves against the Nazis. The fact is however, that Jews and other victims of the Nazis in Germany and throughout Europe did resist the Nazis in many and varied forms, and they inspired other people like Oskar Schindler, Father Bruno, Father Jacques and Jan Karski to help them.

Some Jews Revolted, Some Were Partisans, and Others Escaped

The Jews participated in revolts. Some like the Bielskis excelled in partisan activity, and others escaped from the ghettos and camps. Some Jews resisted spiritually in secret religious observances or through artistic and creative activities, or in simply refusing to abandon hope.

Etty Hillesum Chooses Her Death

Some Jews, knowing that they were slated for death, chose the way they died. [Etty Hillesum](#) whose story is told in *Etty Hillesum, An Interrupted Life: The Story of Etty Hillesum 1941-1943*, refused to go into hiding, insisting that she did not feel that she was in the clutches of the Nazis, but instead safe in God's arms. She said:

“They may well succeed in breaking me physically, but no more than that. I may face cruelty and deprivations the likes of which I cannot imagine even in my wildest fantasies. Yet all this is as nothing to the immeasurable expanse of my faith in God and my inner receptiveness.”

Choosing to resist without going into hiding as her friends had urged her to do, Etty Hillesum died in Auschwitz on November 30, 1943.

The Resistance Blows Up the Crematorium

Holocaust survivor [Judy Cohen](#) talks about how the Jews in the concentration camps resisted and acknowledges many years after the war that she and her fellow prisoners owed their lives to a number of courageous women and men. Women members of the resistance in Auschwitz-Birkenau smuggled out explosives from the factory where they worked and gave them to the men working in the gas chambers. The men made a primitive bomb in a sardine can. They blew up crematorium IV and adjoining gas chamber, killing many German SS guards. After the bomb explosion, the gassing of prisoners slowed down for a time.

Holocaust Historian Raul Hilberg's Definition of Resistance

Perhaps some of the confusion about Jewish resistance during the Holocaust stems from the definition of Resistance. Raul Hilberg, one of the premier Holocaust historians, sets forth his thesis about Jewish non-resistance in the Holocaust in his classic book, *The Destruction of the European Jews, 2nd Edition*.

According to Hilberg, a group can react in five ways when confronted by force. It can resist, attempt to alleviate or nullify the threat, evade the threat, react with paralysis, or do nothing by compliance. Hilberg contends that “the reaction pattern of the Jews is characterized by almost complete lack of resistance.” He argues that the Jews were not oriented toward resistance and even those who briefly took up arms or resisted in other ways were hampered by the thought that the multitude of Jews would suffer for the limited success of a handful of resistant Jews.

Hilberg says that the Jews tried to avoid disaster by anticipating German wishes, divining German orders and serving German needs by working hard for them and attempting to be useful. Arguing that the Jewish Councils illustrated the importance of institutional compliance, Hilberg cited one German official who emphatically urged that “the authority of the Jewish Council be upheld and strengthened under all circumstances,” as proof that the Germans understood the value of Jewish submissiveness.

Hilberg Admits that Jewish Resistance is Difficult to Measure

Admitting that Jewish resistance was difficult to measure, Hilberg says that only a few thousand Jews escaped from the ghettos of Poland and Russia, only a few hundred hid out in big cities like Berlin or Warsaw, and that only a handful of Jews escaped from the camps.

Hilberg concludes by arguing that the Jews attempted to tame the Germans as one would attempt to tame a wild beast. They reacted to the latest annihilation threat in their history by using time worn methods like placating or appeasing their enemies and refraining from resistance. Up until the Holocaust the old coping methods had worked, the Jews had not been annihilated.

Hilberg argues that from 1941-1944 the Jewish leadership realized that the modern bureaucratic destruction process would engulf European Jews. “But the realization came too late. A 2,000 year old lesson could not be unlearned; the Jews could not make the switch. They were helpless.”

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Two Holocaust Scholars Debate Jewish Resistance

Yehuda Bauer and Raul Hilberg Discuss Fundamentals of Fighting Back

Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer counters the Hilberg thesis that the Jews did not actively resist by arguing that the Jews did resist, but in unconventional ways.

Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer, in a section from his book, *The Jewish Emergence From Powerlessness*, that he calls “Forms of Jewish Resistance,” counters Raul Hilberg thesis that the Jews did not actively resist the Holocaust by suggesting that the Jews did indeed, resist, if in unconventional ways.

Yehuda Bauer Redefines Resistance

Bauer asks, “What do we mean by resistance, especially resistance in the context of World War II?” He says that Hilberg seems to regard armed resistance as the only legitimate form of real resistance. In *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Hilberg states that the Jews did not stage any armed resistance because they had never been schooled in the art of self-defense. Bauer disagrees with this thesis and defines Jewish resistance as any group action opposing the Germans and their supporters.

Bauer also disagrees with Hilberg’s thesis by arguing that Jews did defend themselves by force of arms when they could and when they had no other choice. His second, and what he considers most important point, is that armed resistance during the Holocaust was possible only if arms were available, and for the most part, Jews did not have access to arms.

Bauer says that Jewish armed resistance was more complicated than it appeared. He says that 15,000 armed Jews came out of the forests of eastern Poland at liberation. During the time Jews were organizing to fight in 1942-1943, they counted for one half of all the partisans in the Polish forests. The other half, about 2,500, was Poles.

Bauer Examines Three Basic Scenes of Armed Resistance

In *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness*, Bauer examines the three basic scenes of armed resistance in the east- the ghettos, the forest, and the camps, Bauer speculates that as applied to the ghettos, Hilberg's thesis seems correct. Jews locked in the ghettos usually were not able to get firearms and as long as the Jews thought they could survive, they generally resisted passively in the ghettos. However, there were armed underground organizations in the ghettos, but not armed rebellions until the hopes of survival were low.

Bauer says that between 6,000 and 10,000 Jews were smuggled into the forests from Minsk and about 5,000 survived the war in the forest. He makes the point that only Jews determined to escape and capable of bearing arms would have survived.

Bauer addresses the problem of collective responsibility – the Nazis murdering a great many people in retribution for the rebellious acts of a few, but he says that the problem for the Jews was not so much collective responsibility as much as the problem of family responsibility. To belong to a resistance group, Jews had to abandon their families to death – not just risk, but death.

Jewish Armed Resistance and Partisans

In the face of these facts, Bauer assesses the armed resistance of the Jews in the East. He lists the armed rebellions in the ghettos, including three at [Warsaw](#) and Tarnow, and seventeen places where armed groups left for the forests. There were rebellions in six concentration and death camps. There were thirty Jewish partisan detachments in the General-government, and a further list of 21 detachments in which Jews formed over 30 percent of the partisans.

According to Bauer, the situation in Lithuania, eastern Poland and Byelorussia was much more complicated and he could not draw a complete picture. There also was a problem in defining Jewish partisans – what categories to include or exclude. He found at least sixty ghettos had armed rebellions or armed underground movements that sent people into the forests. There was also the problem of Anti-Semitism and the fatal impact it could have on Jewish partisans.

Summarizing his armed resistance arguments, Bauer explains that he dealt with armed resistance first because unarmed active resistance is best explained against the background of armed struggle. He argues that Jewish armed resistance was more widespread than had been previously thought.

Resistance without Weapons

Resistance without weapons is a more ambiguous area. Bauer considers the fact that many Jews managed to survive terrible physical conditions – starvation, deprivation, and emotional deprivation such as losing family and friends – as meeting the definition of unarmed resistance. He also documents that after the first deportations from Holland in July 1942, the Jews stopped appearing at the appointed times and places for deportation.

He classifies the range of Jewish resistance as broad, organized, semi-organized or semi-spontaneous. He considers the most poignant form of resistance the kind that illustrated that despite Nazi propaganda the Jews were human. They had traditions, history, and values that survived and had meaning in the face of places like Auschwitz and those they wanted to assert their humanity in a Jewish way.

The Example of the Kosow Judenrat

Bauer concludes with this example that he considers vividly illustrates the refusal of so many Jewish victims to yield their humanity in the face of impending murder.

“[Kosow](#) is a small town in eastern Galicia, and it had a Judenrat which was not very different from others. On Passover 1942, the Gestapo announced it would come into the ghetto. The Judenrat believed that this was the signal for the liquidation of the ghetto, and told all the Jews to hide or flee. Of the 24 Judenrat members, four decided to meet the Germans and offer themselves as sacrificial victims – to deflect the wrath of the enemy. With the ghetto empty and silent, the four men sat and waited for their executioners. While they were waiting, one of them faltered. The others told him to go and hide. The three men of Kosow prepared to meet the Nazis on Passover of 1942. Was their act less than firing a gun?”

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David Wyman, William Rubinstein Debate Rescue

Possibilities of Haven: Could the European Jews Have Been Saved?

Historians still hotly debate the world's reaction to the Holocaust. David Wyman and William Rubinstein debate radically different views about saving the European Jews.

The harsh fact about the Holocaust that challenges the core humanity and self images of individuals and nations is that by early 1942, the world knew about the mass murder of the Jews within months after they began. Ominous reports leaked out from Germany and Poland and the rest of occupied Europe, and the besieged Jews looked to the rest of the world for rescue. [Rescue](#) came slowly, or not at all. Why didn't more countries move to help the European Jews?

David S. Wyman Cites America's Indifference

Historians still hotly debate the world's reaction to the Holocaust. In *The Abandonment of the Jews, America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*, David S. Wyman documents the inaction of the American churches and the indifference of American newspapers in printing stories about the death factories. According to Wyman, only a limited amount of news about the murder of European Jews reached the American public. American newspapers reported it only sporadically and did not emphasize it. "Newspapers printed comparatively little of the available knowledge and commonly buried it in inner pages."

Wyman Says America Should Have Taken These Steps

He charges President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration with indifference to the Holocaust victims. He examines documents that suggest that the United States and British governments rejected numerous proposals to accept European Jews. He writes that a combination of Anti-Semitism and inaction on any except strategic proposals, thousands of Jews died who otherwise could have been saved.

Wyman argues that thousands of Holocaust victims could have been saved if the United States had taken these twelve steps:

- Created a War Refugee Board in 1942 instead of waiting until January 1944
- Pressured or negotiated with the Germans to release Jews
- Pressed the Axis satellites to release Jews
- Provided European havens and aid to released Jews
- Located [havens outside of Europe](#) for the Jews
- Provided shipping to transfer Jews to havens
- Encouraged and assisted Jews to escape
- Provided large sums of money to help Jews
- Provided medical supplies and food to victims of the camps
- Pressured allied and neutral countries to assist Jews
- Bombed Auschwitz and the rail lines leading to it
- Disseminated publicity about the Holocaust, threatening the German leaders and warning the victims

William D. Rubinstein Says Democracies Did All They Could

In his book, *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis* William D. Rubinstein takes point-by-point issue with historian David S. Wyman. He states that the Western powers had an acceptable record of accepting immigrants and that effective allied action against the Extermination Camps was not possible. He doesn't think that much more could have been done to rescue the Jews, and he criticizes historians who have outlined plans of action that would have saved some Jewish lives.

Rubinstein Argues That No Rescue Plan Would Have Saved a Significant Number of Jews

Rubinstein contends that all Germans had implacable determination to kill as many Jews as possible and they would not have listened to outside pressure from any country. He feels that historians who make proposals after the fact instead of suggesting solutions at the time of the event itself are historiographically illegitimate. After dismissing all of Wyman's points as impractical or impossible Rubinstein says:

“In my opinion, given what was either possible or actually proposed at the time, this moral obligation was being fulfilled every day the war continued and brought Europe closer to liberation.

Rubinstein concludes with ‘great and genuine regret,’ that any rescue proposal was impractical, irrelevant, or not proposed by anyone at the time. He did not know of any plan of rescue action that would have successfully saved a significant number of Jews who perished. He places the responsibility for the Holocaust entirely with Hitler, the SS and their accomplices, and nowhere else. He argues that in searching for a rational explanation of modern history's greatest crime, it is important not to assign guilt to the innocent.

The Important Rescue Question

The debate over the degree of response to the Holocaust poses another question: When Holocaust survivors tell their painful stories as a lesson to humankind and conclude with a fervent prayer of 'never again', will the answer ever be, no, it didn't happen again?

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Nechama Tec - Christians in the Holocaust

She Contends that Many People and Some Countries Did Rescue Jews

Holocaust survivor and historian Nechama Tec says that individuals and a few countries like Denmark, saved as many Jews as possible.

Nechama Tec, in her book *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of the Jews in Nazi Occupied Europe*, advocates a more systematic study of righteous Christians, arguing that such studies would fill a significant gap in Holocaust knowledge.

Nechama Tec Advocates Systematic Studies of Righteous Christians

According to Tec, the bulk of the Holocaust literature about righteous Christians consists of scattered case histories and personal accounts. While offering occasional theoretic insights, such publications contain no overall systematic and comprehensive explanations. Such studies would have additional broader implications because persecution, discrimination, and prejudice are part of everyday human life.

Tec says that more often than not, the victims of such negative forces cannot effectively fight back. Knowing who would stand up for the persecuted and helpless, knowing what factors are involved in the protection of the poor, the dependent and the downtrodden, creates an opportunity for cultivating such positive forces.

Common Characteristics of Rescuers

Tec divides her book into three parts. The first four chapters describe what it was like to pass as a Christian, what it was like to hide among them, and what it was like to rescue Jews. Chapters five and six describe two exceptional cases of help – that of the paid helper and that of the Anti-Semitic helper. The remaining chapters explore the righteous helpers by examining their characteristics, their motivations, and the conditions associated with such rescues.

In each section of her book, Tec relies on the literature of her own research and tries to find common denominators among the rescuers. She contends that lower class people showed no special propensity for Jewish rescue. Fewer peasants became rescuers than their numbers in the general population should have warranted. Even though proportionately peasants were less inclined toward Jewish rescue than other groups, a substantial number of them did participate in selfless protection of Jews.

Intellectuals, according to Tec, were more prone to Jewish rescue than any other segment of the population. She found that there were as many middle class persons among rescuers as in the population at large. Class affiliation, then, was only weakly related to Jewish protection. Tec also found that a majority of the rescuers were politically inactive, and that religious beliefs and values played an important part in rescuer motivation for saving Jews, although none of the rescuers were devout or blind followers of official doctrines.

Tec Contends that Denmark is a Special Case

According to Tec, [Denmark](#) was a special case. Conditions for the collective rescue of the Jews were favorable and the Danish took advantage of them. Danish Jews numbered about 8,000- about 2 percent of Denmark's population – and were highly assimilated. Since the Nazis defined the Danes as a superior "Aryan" race, they were left in charge of their own political destiny for a time, retaining their prewar government. Denmark enjoyed the status of the Nazi's model protectorate until 1943, when the Nazis decided to deport Denmark's Jews. Instead of cooperating the Danes moved their Jewish population safely to Sweden.

The Story of Anne Frank Illustrates Courageous Christianity

Assessing the Dutch rescue efforts, Tec concludes that the Dutch did not save many Jews. Of the Jewish population in Holland, she estimated that more than three-quarters perished. She uses the story of Anne Frank and her family, who hid in Amsterdam for two years before being betrayed, to illustrate that some people were willing to risk their lives for others in the midst of ultimate human degradation. She says that this altruism denies the inevitable supremacy of evil, and that with this denial comes hope.

Tec Argues that Poland is a Case Study

Arguing that since it was the center of Jewish annihilation, Poland provides the key to the understanding of the Holocaust in general, Tec says that Poland illuminates the understanding of the Christian rescue of Jews in particular. She says:

As a country in which the Holocaust was played out in the most gruesome and ruthless ways, Poland can teach us about similar but less extreme cases.

For these reasons and for personal reasons, Tec focuses most of her study on Poland. She says that the obstacles and barriers to the rescue of Jews in Poland were especially difficult because [Poland](#) was extreme and special. Quite early, the Nazis had designated Poland as the center for Jewish extermination.

Tec says that the reasons they picked Poland are not entirely clear. Was it because of Poland's concentration of Jews? Did they count on the absolute subjugation of the Poles? The Germans left no records of their explanation, but they did leave records of unprecedented human destruction. The massive extermination camps such as Auschwitz were located in Poland. The estimates for Jewish survivors in Poland range from 50,000-100,000, compared to the prewar population of 3.5 million.

Oskar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg, Righteous Rescuers

As well as symbolizing Anne Frank as an example of hope in the Holocaust, Tec names Oskar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg as righteous Christian rescuers and examples of altruistic people. Tec demonstrates that rescue was possible, but the rescuers had to have the imagination and courage and humanity to want to rescue the victims of the worse sides of human nature.

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Rescuers Defy the Logic of the Holocaust

Oskar Schindler, Raoul Wallenberg, and Righteous Gentiles

Oskar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg acted to rescue Jews, each in a radically different way, but in marked contrast to the inaction of many individuals and governments.

Thomas Keneally tells the story of Oskar Schindler in his book entitled *Schindler's List*. Oskar Schindler did not fit the definition of the traditionally virtuous person. He kept house with his German mistress in an old and elegant quarter of Cracow, Poland, and maintained a long affair with his Polish secretary. His wife, Emilie, lived most of the time at home in Moravia, although she sometimes came to Poland to visit Oskar.

Oskar Schindler, the Nazi Businessman

Oskar drank – sometimes for the warmth of it; sometimes with associates, bureaucrats, SS men, for the politics of it. Schindler operated his business in the midst of a system that devalued the lives of Jews and other ethnic “undesirables.” Every day he rubbed shoulders with “decent”, bureaucratic murderers. Earlier than most, he learned of the pyramids of corpses in Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka and in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

On the other hand, he was a businessman, a manipulator of the system, and he did not openly challenge it. He foresaw that the system had a voracious appetite for Jewish labor and that Jewish labor could reduce the pile of Jewish corpses. Eventually, he broke enough Reich laws to be hanged, shot, and beheaded countless times. He spent thousands of dollars to keep his factories humming and he saved a thousand Jewish lives in the spending.

Oskar Schindler, the Humanitarian

Oskar Schindler didn't live happily ever after at the end of World War II. He lost his German nationality, former Nazis threatened him, and the United States refused to grant him entry because he had been a member of the Nazi party. He finally fled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, with his wife Emilie, his mistress and a dozen Jews that he had saved. A Jewish organization and some of the Jews he had saved supported him and he settled down in 1949 to be a farmer. He may not have been a "virtuous" man in the narrow, moral sense, but his reaction to the Holocaust taking place around him revealed his humanitarian virtue.

Thomas Keneally stumbled upon Oskar Schindler's story in 1980 when he visited a baggage store in Beverly Hills, California, to purchase a briefcase. The store belonged to Leopold Pfefferberg, a Schindler survivor who told Keneally the story of Oskar Schindler. In the next two years, Keneally interviewed 50 Schindler survivors from seven countries and revisited the sites in Poland where much of the story took place. Director, screen writer, and movie producer Steven Spielberg created the film "Schindler's List" from Keneally's book.

Raoul Wallenberg Rescued Thousands of Jews

Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg did not fare as well as Oskar Schindler. Frederick E. Werbell, a Swedish rabbi and one of the world's authorities on Raoul Wallenberg, and author Thurston Clarke tell the story of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg in *Lost Hero: The Mystery of Raoul Wallenberg*. Werbell and Clarke contend that Raoul Wallenberg was one of World War Two's most heroic figures, "and one of the Cold War's most mysterious victims."

In 1944, acting on the behest of the United States government and the World Jewish Congress, the Swedish government sent Raoul Wallenberg to Budapest as an accredited diplomat to rescue as many Jews as possible from Hitler's Final Solution. During the five months he stayed in Budapest, he saved about thirty thousand Jews, using innovative and standard methods. He bribed and intimidated leading German and Hungarian fascists, created a special passport that placed thousands of Jews under Swedish protection, and literally snatched people from trains taking them to Nazi death camps.

The Russians Arrest Wallenberg and His Fate is Still Unknown

The Russians arrested Raoul Wallenberg in January 1945, as soon as they had liberated Budapest from the Nazis. They never articulated the reasons for his arrest, but intimated that he was considered an American spy and a threat to the Soviet plans to install a communist government in Hungary after the war. He was never released and his fate is still uncertain. Russian officials claimed that Wallenberg had died of a heart attack in prison in 1947.

In the year 2000, Alexander Nikolaevich Yakovlev claimed that Wallenberg had been executed in Lubyanka Prison in Moscow in 1947. Several former prisoners claimed to have seen Wallenberg after he supposedly died in 1947. Renowned Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal

searched for Wallenberg and collected several testimonies of Wallenberg sightings in the 1960s. The last reported sighting of Wallenberg occurred in 1987.

"Righteous Gentiles"

Oskar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg are just two of the most famous people who refused to be indifferent bystanders and risked their lives to save Jewish lives. Many other rescuers, some identified, some unknown, also risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. [Yad Vashem Museum](#) in Jerusalem honors over 11,000 "Righteous Gentiles", the non-Jews who saved Gentiles. Almost 5,000 of these "Righteous Gentiles" are Polish.

Humanity Lost and Recovered

The Holocaust has infinite stories and perspectives that will continue to be analyzed and studied by generations of historians. Tragically, the fervent wish of the survivors that genocide would not happen again has not come true. One of the most fundamental lessons to be learned from the Holocaust is that when technology, science, and racial hatred combine in an unholy trinity, humanity is lost. An equally important lesson is that when people have the imagination, courage, and will to rescue victims of hatred and injustice, humanity is recovered.

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Using History to Answer to the Holocaust Deniers

The Institute for Historical Review, according to its director Mark Weber, was founded in 1978 as a public interest research, educational and publishing center that is dedicated to promoting greater public awareness of key chapters of history, especially twentieth century history. The IHR purports to be non-political, non-sectarian and non-ideological.

With offices located in Orange County, southern California, its work is funded from sales of books and cassette tapes, subscriptions to its *Journal of Historical Review*, and donations from supporters world-wide.

Director of the Institute since 1995, Mark Weber claims that the IHR books and journal articles deal with a broad range of historical topics, but its most controversial topic has been its treatment of the Holocaust issue. *The Los Angeles Times* of May 15, 1994 described the *Institute for Historical Review* as a "revisionist think tank that critics call "the spine of the international Holocaust denial movement." **1**

The Institute for Historical Review's newsletter for January 2002 features a plea for funds and subscriptions by Director Mark Weber. He begins his letter to prospective subscribers by quoting from Charles Lindbergh who spoke in Des Moines, Iowa, on September 11, 1941, sixty years before the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Among his remarks Lindbergh said of the Jews: "Their greatest danger to this country lies in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our government." Lindbergh claimed that the

three most important groups pressing America into war were the British, the Jews, and the Roosevelt administration. **2**

Weber goes on to cite Jewish conspiracy remarks from Senator William J. Fulbright, Israeli journalist Ari Shavit, Jewish author and political science professor Benjamin Ginsberg, and French ambassador to London Daniel Bernard. Weber concludes in his letter:

*In the aftermath of the shocking Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, which were an indirect consequence of our Israel-first foreign policy, and at a time of new threats against freedom and civil liberties, and of escalating Israeli brutality against Palestinians, the IHR's voice of truth and sanity is more needed than ever. For more than 20 years, the IHR-echoing the warnings of far-sighted scholars and authentic patriots such as Charles Lindbergh – has forthrightly spoken out against the dangers of America and humanity of Jewish-Zionist power. We have been especially concerned, of course, about the systematic distortion of history – perhaps most obviously manifest in the seemingly endless “Holocaust” propaganda barrage. A relentlessly Judeo-centric view of history distorts our view of the past, and even of ourselves, and makes impossible informed planning for the future. **3***

Mark Weber's own propaganda barrage illustrates the fears of German historian Leopold von Ranke who devoted his career to uplifting history from what he considered propaganda to science. At first glance, it seems to be apostasy to mention Holocaust deniers like David Irving, Noam Chomsky, Robert Furrison or Mark Weber in the same sentence with historiographical trailblazers like Leopold von Ranke, Benedetto Croce or Charles Beard. In fact, the official policy of academic historians is to not engage in debate with Holocaust deniers. Even the Nizkor Project sponsored by a group of Jewish historians, does not debate deniers directly, but refutes their allegations point by point on its website.

Disinterested scholars and those striving for objectivity contend that Holocaust deniers have the right to be heard, countering the argument of more traditional scholars that awarding them a voice awards them credibility.

Is there a historiographically sound way to counter Holocaust deniers without giving them legitimacy or stifling their free speech?

Interestingly enough, theories that Beard and Croce expressed in 1933, the same year that Hitler (and the Holocaust) came to power, provide effective counters to the Holocaust deniers of today. History as an act of faith and a deliberate expansion of the intellectual and historical consciousness are tools that historians shaping the historiography of the 21st century need to utilize.

Ranke, a German conservative, writing after the chaos of the French Revolution, felt a desperate need to change written history as revolutionary propaganda, so he endorsed the idea that it is possible to describe the past as it actually was. He believed that cold, factual, passionless written history served mankind best. This formula later fitted into the conception of natural science – cold neutrality against the forces of the physical world. Truths of nature can be discovered through severe objectivity and the truth of history surfaces through the same spirit and method.

Historian Benedetto Croce, writing in 1933, cites a general lowering of moral and spiritual values throughout the world and an increasing domination by materialistic forces, a confusion of the spiritual order, a convulsive restlessness and a dark pessimism. He identifies a relationship between historical thinking and actual life, and says that the duty of rising the standards of historiography depends on the students and writers of history.

Good history writing, like beautiful poetry, does not need to be invented because it has always existed in the world and has long history of its own. But it is necessary constantly to redirect it and to breathe into it that energy which may be equal to new demands. In its eternal essence, history is the story of the human mind and its ideals in so far as they express themselves in theories and in works of art, in practical and moral actions. . . 4

He describes an ethico-political history that derives its life germ in the moral consciousness and is distinguished from the mere history of moral ideas or mere political history. It includes politics, economics, and every other form of practical activity and it exhibits the means and effects of moral and civil growth.

As Croce describes this history:

ethico-political history is the union of the History of Civilization, arising principally in the eighteenth century, with the old Political History or History of the State, revived and restated in Germany in the nineteenth century . . . but a profound unity and not an eclectic juxtaposition such as is usually practiced in those books in which there have been casually appended to the chapters on political history, treatments of religious, scientific, economic, moral, cultural, or other types of history.” 5

Croce's vision of history frees the craft of history from two false historical schools of thought which have predominated in the last fifty years. These are the materialistic and ethnic or racial interpretations of history. Materialistic history denies spiritual and moral values and considers them as mere appendages of economic developments and struggles. The ethnic and racial interpretation denies spiritual and moral values and substitutes naturalistic stands for them, a sort of "survival of the fittest" school of history.

Croce concludes his letter by stating that these false conceptions of history must be purged from historical interpretations so that we can regain a clear understanding of human accomplishment and events because they perpetuate the evils of modern society and prevent us from producing a nobler humanity. 6

Historian Charles A. Beard expands upon Croce's ideas in his address to the American Historical Association in 1933. He pronounces the scientific method an essential tool of the human mind without which society would sink into barbarism. But he continues, when this method is elevated into a master and tyrant that historical thought must mediate.

He says that . . . “the historian is bound by his craft to recognize the nature and limitations of the scientific method and to dispel the illusion that it can produce a science of history embracing the fullness of history, or of any large phase, as past actuality.” **7**

Beard explains that he does not mean that historians or other intellectuals should abandon tireless inquiry into objective realities propelled by economics and biology and to the influence of ideas on human history. But Beard points out that any selection and arrangement of facts pertaining to local or world history are controlled by the frame of reference in the mind of the selector and arranger.

And as Croce says, “when grand philosophy is ostentatiously put out at the front door of the mind, then narrow, class, provincial, and regional prejudices come in at the back door and dominate, perhaps only half-consciously, the thinking of the historian.” **8**

According to Beard, the historian can determine his attitude to contemporary thoughts. He can deliberately evade them for personal, economic, and intellectual comfort reasons. Or he can examine his own frame of reference, clarify it, enlarge it by knowledge and give it consistency of structure by a “deliberate conjecture respecting the nature or direction of the vast movements of ideas and interests called world history.”**9**

Self-examination and regulation is uncomfortable for individual historians, but the vows of office require all of them to do it. Henry Adams warned the American Historical Association in his 1894 letter that self examination must be carried out under the scrutiny of four inquisitors for the suppression of unwelcome knowledge and opinion: the church, the state, property, and labor.

The significant question Adams asks is: Does the world move and, if so, in what direction? If the historian believes that the world is not moving he must offer “the pessimism of chaos to the inquiring spirit of mankind.” **10**

If the historian believes the world is moving he must study in which direction and why and add his own definition of that movement. Charles Beard believes that any written history involves selecting a topic and arbitrarily limiting its borders, thus cutting off connections with the universal. Within these arbitrary borders is a selection and organization of facts by thought processes.

The historian controls this selection and organization from a frame of reference composed of things that he/she feels necessary and desirable. The frame can be narrow – class, sectional, national, group conceptions of history. It can be clear and frank, confused and self-conscious, or it can be a generous conception enhanced by awareness of the great spirits of all ages. Whatever its nature – the historian’s frame of reference is there.

According to Beard, only three broad conceptions of all history as actuality are possible.

- History is chaos and every attempt to interpret it otherwise is an illusion.
- History moves around in a kind of cycle.
- History moves in a line, straight or spiral, and in some direction.

Beard says that the historian “may seek to escape these issues by silence or by a confession or avoidance or he may face them boldly, aware of the intellectual and moral perils inherent in any decision – in his act of faith.” **11**

The historiographical paradigm of Croce and Beard synthesizing the ideas of the universality of history, historical directions, and historical interpretations should be the historical standard for the Institute for Historical Review, just as it is for other historians. Historical revisionists which is what Weber and his colleagues claim to be, still work within the confines of the historical profession.

Holocaust deniers like Weber and Chomsky and Irving must subject their interpretations to the same professional scrutiny as other historians if they expect to achieve anything other than self-awarded legitimacy. If they are indeed serious historical revisionists as they claim, then they will acknowledge as Beard does that the facts they select to support their views that the Holocaust did not take place are just that – selective and controlled by their ideology.

And a step from that admission is Croce’s point which Weber and his Institute exemplify, about putting grand philosophy out of the front door of the mind and admitting “narrow, class, provincial, and regional prejudices” in the back door to dominate the thinking of the historian.”**12**

One can argue with some justification that all historians are selective, narrow, class conscious, provincial and regionally prejudiced, but the ones who keep the faith and enhance their profession and all of humanity are the ones who keep their eyes and intellects on the grand design of history most of the time, and admit it when their gaze falters or fails.

Mark Weber and his Holocaust deniers do not even pretend to have a balanced view of history. Their one-sided distortions, unsupported by any proof, are not even arguments, rather they are propaganda and their connection of Lindberg’s anti-semitic remarks in 1941 with the 2001 September 11th attacks is spurious logical at best and an evil parallel at worst.

Croce speaks of Ethio-political history as the highest type of history that a historian can aspire to write and says that this frees history from ethnic and politically based interpretations. This is a historical goal that most legitimate historians strive to reach within the limits of their human nature.

If Mark Weber and those associated with him are truly interested in being legitimate historians instead of political propagandists they will examine the basis of their Holocaust denials to see if they hold up under historiographical scrutiny- not manufactured or pseudo-evidence. They need to remove the word history from their organization unless they adjust their methods to meet established historiography. Their failure to do this is an admission in itself and using a catastrophe like the September 11th terrorist attacks to bolster their position is an indication of their hatred of real history and the weakness of their arguments.

Notes

- 1 Los Angeles Times, May 15, 1994.
- 2 Institute for Historical Review, Mark Weber, "News & Views, Keeping up the Pace in the New Year," Institute for Historical Review, January 2002.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Letter to Dr. Charles Beard from Benedetto Croce. Napoli, 24 giugno, 1933.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Charles A. Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith." Annual address of the president of the American Historical Association, delivered at Urbana, December 28, 1933. From the American Historical Review, Volume 39, Issue 2, p. 219-231.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Letter to Dr. Charles Beard from Benedetto Croce. Napoli, 24 giugno, 1933.