

BEYOND ANNE FRANK

by

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Too many teachers believe they have taught the Holocaust by assigning a reading and discussion of Anne Frank. Her story covers one inch long and one inch deep of the genocide of Jews. Much of the work deals with the complaints of a young teenager. The image of the Shoah that the diary leaves the reader is that of a helpless girl hiding from doom. However, the Holocaust was so much more. The students are ignorant of the murderous Nazi worldview, the ghettos, deportation, concentration camps, and Jewish resistance as well as the failure to rescue. However, it is not the purpose of the paper to broaden the scope to just the above, but to raise the question as whether Holocaust education should also include other victims of Nazi barbarism, particularly the handicapped, the Gypsies, the homosexuals, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Slavic peoples. These violations of human rights and crimes against humanity must be taught. If students are only exposed to the Jewish genocide it will seem to parents as special pleading by one ethnic group. Holocaust advocates want the subject taught from grade five on. This writer's thesis is that teaching the Jewish genocide is too limited in scope. The Twentieth Century has been the century of genocide and ethnic mass murder. If teaching the Holocaust continues in the present manner students will say, "We have heard that already." Parents will ask, "When are children going to learn about our group's pain?"

Handicapped

It is very important to recognize the gentile victims of Nazi terror. One of the first groups eliminated was the handicapped. The murder of this group developed the idea of "selection," those worthy to live and those who should die. To the Nazis those who they thought could not be productive or would in some way diminish the health of the Aryan racist state were "useless eaters" or degenerate who should be destroyed. At first, sterilization took place of those who suffered from diseases considered hereditary, such as mental illness, retardation, physical deformity, epilepsy, blindness, deafness, and severe alcoholism. The forced sterilization started in January 1934. An estimated 300,000 to 400,000 people were sterilized. In October 1939, Hitler initialed a decree that empowered physicians to grant a "mercy death," really murder, to patients considered incurable. The code name for this was Operation T4. The doomed, marked by physicians on medical forms, were bused to killing centers in Germany and Austria. There, gas chambers, disguised as showers murdered the victims who were wheeled to crematoria-prototypes of what was built in concentration camps in Poland. Between January 1940 and August 1941,

70, 273 deaths were recorded. In response to widespread religious objection, the program formally was stopped, however, informally continued at hospitals and asylums. Between 1941 and 1945, a program, called 14f13, authorized euthanasia centers which murdered concentration camp inmates in Germany and Austria, Jews and Gentiles, who no longer could work. About 20,000 died under this program. SS units in Poland and the Soviet Union simply shot mentally and physically handicapped people in Nazi occupied conquered territory. In all, about 250,000 mentally and physically handicapped people met their death under this false "euthanasia" program.

For younger teenagers, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's Handicapped pamphlet is available. Inna R. Friedman's *Other Victims* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990) is readable for middle schoolers and includes information on sterilization and murders of the disabled also a discussion of the fate of German mullatos, a subject rarely treated. For high school students, *By Trust Betrayed* by Hugh Gregory (New York: Henry Holt, 1990) is a study of the systematic murder of the handicapped based on captured Nazi documents and testimonies. Part 1 of *The Nazi Doctors, Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* by Robert Lifton (New York: Basic Books, 1986) is still available. What is particularly valuable is the Nazi biogenetic, eugenic worldview. Gita Sereny's, *Into That Darkness* (New York: Vintage, 1983) Part 1 is still in print and shows the carry over of personnel and technique from the T4 killing centers into the concentration camps.

Two excellent sources for purchase of books and videos are Social Studies School Service (800) 421-4246 and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Teachers Catalog (800) 259-9998.

Gypsies

We have to go beyond Anne Frank and learn about the genocide of Europe's Gypsies (also called Romani). Dora Yates, secretary of the Gypsy Lore Society noted:

It is more than time that civilized men and women were aware of the Nazi crimes against the Gypsies as well as the Jews. Both bear witness to the fantastic dynamic of the 20th Century racial fanaticism, for these two people share the horror of martyrdom at the hands of the Nazis for no other reason than that they were - they existed. The Gypsies, like the Jews stand alone.*

There is parity between Judeophobia and anti-Gypsy ideology in Nazi rhetoric and practice. Many of the laws and decrees applied to both groups. The 1933 Law for Protection of German Blood and German Honor applied to Jews, Romani and Blacks - mullatos descended from American and French soldiers of Rhineland occupation (1919-1929). To the racists these peoples were of "alien blood" and criminal genetically. The 1935 Nuremberg Laws excluding Aryan intermarriage with non-Aryans included

Romani. Like the Jewish children, Gypsy children were excluded from public schools and public places. In 1938, Himmler ordered Gypsy children sterilized. In 1939, Gypsies in Germany and newly conquered Poland were registered and forbidden to leave their homes (as were

* Commentary 1949: 455

Jews.) In 1941, the Einsatzgruppen, the murderous mobile killing units in the Soviet Union murdered Romani as well as Jews.

Gypsies as well as Jews were deported to ghettos such as Lodz, Lublin, Bialystok, and Warsaw. Jews and Gypsies were deported to Treblinka and Auschwitz in large numbers in 1943. At Auschwitz, a special section of Birkenau (built largely for Jews) was set aside for Romani. The Zigeunerlager (Gypsy camp) of 20,000 lasted 16 months; then all members, men, women, and children were gassed. The infamous Dr. Josef Mengele served as medical officer at this camp, and as he did with Jewish twins, he performed horrible experiments on Gypsy twins. He also used them for vaccines after inducing typhus. In Europe, estimates of mortality of Sinti and Roma (major Gypsy tribes) range from 220,000 to 500,000, about one third of their population. The loss of two thirds of Europe's Jewish population is better documented because of the knowledge of pre-Holocaust population figures.

High school students could handle chapter five of *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* by Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann (Cambridge University Press, 1992); United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *The Story of Karl Sojka: A Childhood in Birkenau* (Washington, DC: 1992) could be read by eighth graders as could the museum's booklet *Sinti and Roma*.

Homosexuals

The Nazis in their attempt to racially "purify" German society and promote what they considered the "Aryan master race" attacked homosexuals as weakening the "generative powers of the nation." For the SS house journal *Das Schwarze Korps*, "Unnatural indecency deserves death." In 1929, there were an estimated 1.2 million homosexuals. The Nazis reasoned that since 2 million healthy German soldiers lost their lives in World War I, added to this, the unproductive homosexuals would lead to a vastly diminished German population, a condition that would eliminate its chances of Germany being a world power.

While homosexuality was a crime under previous law, it was not enforced under the Weimar Republic (1919-1933). Upon the Nazi ascent to power, this law called paragraph 175 was enforced. The Gestapo terrorized homosexuals. However, lesbians were not subject to systematic persecution, although a few were arrested as "asocials" or prostitutes. During the period 1933-1945 over 100,000 men were arrested; over 50,000 were officially defined as homosexuals, sentenced, and most incarcerated in regular prisons. Some 10 to 15,000 were sent to concentration camps where an estimated 60% died. About half of the convictions took place from 1937 to 1939, (about 50,000

convictions) mainly inside Greater Germany. The drive against homosexuals did not take place in German occupied countries. As far as the Nazis were concerned, the less conquered people reproduced the better. There was no deportation to ghettos or death camps.

The SS, that private army under Himmler, was rife with homosexuals, as was Hitler Youth. However, those homosexuals who were politically unconnected were prosecuted. To placate the German Army, Ernst Roehm, head of the Stormtroopers (SA) and his homosexual lieutenants were executed under the pretext they were homosexuals and threatening the state. Roman Catholic priests and army officers critical of National Socialism were arrested under the charge of being homosexuals.

While many Nazi doctors believed that homosexuality was hereditary and genetic, others thought they could "cure" the homosexual. Dr. Carl Vaernet, a concentration camp physician, injected the male hormone, testosterone, into test persons. There were no records of any great success. The homosexuals who wore a pink triangle in the concentration camp were treated miserably.

After World War II, until 1969, laws against homosexuals continued and they continued to fear arrest and incarceration. There have been neither reparations nor restitution for homosexual victims of Nazi persecution.

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum has a readable pamphlet on homosexuals, entitled just that, for grades 8-12. Richard Plant, a homosexual survivor himself, has written *The Pink Triangle. The Nazi War Against Homosexuals* (New York: Henry Holt, 1989) is suitable for advanced students. Michael Birenbaum's anthology *A Mosaic of Victims* (New York: New York University, 1990) has a chapter. The twelfth grade might be the proper place to study this topic.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses endured intense persecution under the Nazi regime. Action against the religious group spanned the Nazi rule, 1933 through 1945. Jehovah's Witnesses, considered Aryan, had the opportunity to escape persecution and personal harm by merely renouncing their religious beliefs. The vast majority refused to do so in the face of torture, maltreatment, and concentration camp experiences. To the Nazis, the 20,000 Jehovah's Witnesses were a rival ideology, a rival center of loyalty. The Witnesses refused to fight in World War I, refused to raise their arms in the Heil Hitler salute, did not vote in elections and did not join the German Labor Front. Their offices were occupied, their literature confiscated. For defying the ban on their activities, Witnesses were arrested. They lost jobs as civil servants and lost unemployment, social welfare, and pension benefits. For refusing to be drafted in 1936, some 400 were imprisoned at Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. By 1939, an estimated 6,000 Witnesses from Greater Germany (Austria and Czechoslovakia) were jailed.

International Witnesses conferences condemned the Nazi regime and denounced the persecution on Jews as "savagery." Families were broken up and Nazi authorities took children away from their parents and sent them to reform schools, orphanages or private homes to "Nazify" them. Some were put into the T4* program.

As the war progressed, Witnesses were placed in concentration camps. Even in the camps, they continued to pray, meet, and make converts. At Buchenwald they had an underground press. Witnesses were considered very trustworthy because they refused to escape or physically resist their guards. Witnesses were often used as gardeners and domestic servants by Nazi camp officers.

About 10,000 Witnesses were incarcerated in concentration camps, most of who were of German nationality. Small numbers came from Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, and Poland. From 2,500 to 5,000 died. More than 200 men were tried and executed for refusing military service.

For high school students there are the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's pamphlet Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian King's Jehovah's Witnesses Under Nazism, Michael Birenbaum, ed., A Mosaic of Victims: Non Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis (New York: New York University, 1990). For younger readers Inna Friedman's The Other Victims: First Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990) is appropriate. A video, "Purple Triangle" is available, as are two Watchtower publications by the Watchtower Bible and Truce Society of New York, Avenue 25, Columbus Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201. These materials are available through Social Studies School Services

*See section on handicapped.

Slavs

Hitler's New Order in Europe envisioned a Nazi ruled empire where the conquered states' resources would be used basically for Germany's profit with very little regard for the welfare of the conquered people. The Slavic peoples, particularly the Poles, Czechs, Russians, and Ukrainians would be slaves to the German "master race." The leadership and intelligentsia - the professional people and those of arts and letters and other well-educated classes - would be murdered. Slavs would do the lowly and dirty work of society. Great cities such as Moscow, Leningrad, and Warsaw were to be destroyed. The culture of the Russians, Poles, Czechs, Ukrainians, and Serbs was to be stamped out. These peoples were to be squeezed out of their food and valuables and allowed just enough to live on.

After the defeat of Poland in the fall of 1939, Dr. Hans Frank, Nazi Governor General, decreed that all Polish owned property be subject to seizure without payment. Hundreds of thousands of Polish farms were confiscated and handed over to German settlers. Four large parts of Poland were annexed and made part of Greater Germany.

Polish priests were hounded by the Gestapo. Over 3,000 were killed, 2,000 of them perished in concentration camps. Martin Bormann, Hitler's deputy, said, "Polish priests will preach what we want them to preach. If any priest acts differently, we shall make short work of him. The task of the priest is to keep the Poles quiet, stupid and dull-witted."

Polish professors were sent to concentration camps. Colleges, technical schools, and schools of higher education were closed. The goal was to hold education to a fourth grade level. One high Nazi official summed it up, "Education is dangerous. It is enough if they can count up to 100...Every educated person is a future enemy."

Poles were subject to roundups and forced (really slave) labor in Germany. These eastern workers called Ostarbeiter under the direct rule of the SS were maltreated. Punishment for minor offenses resulted in incarceration in concentration camps. No socialization between foreign workers and German women was permitted. This was considered a "crime" serious enough to be punished by hanging the male offender.

Deportation of Poles was common. By the end of 1940, the SS had expelled 325,000 people and plundered their property and belongings. In 1941, 45,000 more were deported. In 1942 and 1943 over 110,000 were relocated or taken for forced labor. As many as 50,000 children were kidnapped in Poland and subjected to "Germanization," placed in German homes or orphanages, those unsuitable (not blonde or fair enough) were murdered.

Estimates are that 150,000 Poles were brought to Auschwitz between 1940 and 1945 where 75,000 died. Some 100,000 were deported to Majdanek.

In addition to the mass murder of 3 million Polish Jews, 3 million Polish Gentiles perished during the Nazi period 1939-1945.

Upon the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, a new wave of barbarism was unleashed. The High Commander dealing with Prisoners of War for the German army issued this regulation:

"The Bolshevik soldier has lost all claim to treatment as an honorable opponent in accordance with the Geneva Convention. Prisoners of war attempting to escape are to be fired upon without previous challenge - no warning shot must ever be fired."

There were close to 4 million POWs - about 2.5 million died, primarily due to maltreatment. One half million POWs were forced to build fortifications or carry ammunition to the front lines, many even to man anti-aircraft guns, all in violation of well established rules of war.

There were over seven million civilian foreign workers for Hitler's Third Reich. The slaves were rounded up by force and transported in boxcars like cattle. Often the deportees had no food, water, nor any sanitary bathroom facilities. Also about two million prisoners of war were added to the forced labor force in war related industries and construction, mostly working inside Germany. About 20% of the agricultural work was performed by foreign labor. These workers did arduous and dirty work and were often confined to camps, under terrible conditions. Wives were taken away from husbands and children were separated from their parents. American GIs were shocked at the condition of these forced laborers; they had not been briefed. Their liberation was incidental and accidental. The Allied soldiers were further horrified beyond belief upon entering the concentration camps.

World War II is too often studied from the perspective of the West. However, Nazi Germany's worst atrocities were vented against the peoples of the East. The Soviets lost 13.6 million military lives and 7 million civilians. The Yugoslavs lost 1.7, including 300,000 civilians.

There is very little in the way of literature for middle schools about the above. Perhaps this is due to the Cold War. For high schoolers, William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Crest, 1960) has an excellent chapter entitled "The New Order." Michael Birenbaum's editorship of *A Mosaic of Victims* (New York: New York University Press, 1990) is quite readable. Richard C. Lukas has two books - *Did the Children Cry: Hitler's War Against Jewish and Polish Children 1939-1945* (Hippocrene, 1994) (grades 7-12) and the adult book *Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation* (Hippocrene, 1990) (grades 10-12). For adults is the classic Alexander Dallin *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981). For grades 8-12, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum pamphlet *Poles part of its 1998 "Victims of the Nazis 1935-1945" series.*

It should be the aim of education to develop sympathy for and connections with those beyond whom one was born by chance. Of course, the student can more easily identify with one's family, ethnic group, nationality, religion and nation. However, the developing personality should have a sense of being part of the human family, with all the peoples who inhabit our planet. The optional psychological and political development should be an appreciation of the sacredness of all life and the value of commitment of opposition to the persecution, maltreatment and mass murder of any group of people, and commitment to human rights. The tragic flaw in the German educational system, the best in the world before Hitler, was the failure in this moral dimension. That is why educators have to go beyond Anne Frank and explore issues of human rights in all grades and not produce as Haim Ginott, the educator, has called the German nation 1933-45 "educated barbarians."

Teachers may want to update the topic of genocide, both past and present. Such books, for grades 9-12, as *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict* (Greenhaven Press, 1994); Linda Jacobs Altman's *Genocide: The Systematic Killing of a People* (Enslow 1995)

(grades 6-12) and Samuel Totten et. al. Century of Genocide (New York:Garland, 1997) (grades 11-12) are available.

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