

### **GENOCIDE:** *The Holocaust and other stories*

This essay will focus on the economic and labour losses to the war effort, as a direct result of the Holocaust. This essay will look at robberies, confiscations, Kristallnacht, numerous laws that were used to destroy and isolate the Jews physically and economically, labour problems that occurred in Germany as a result of the losses of manpower that was diverted to exterminating the Jews, and Jewish resistance. These issues will combine to linking the Germany war effort to the Holocaust to provide evidence that the Germans may have lost the war because of their concentrated efforts to kill the Jews. 15 pages long.

## **GENOCIDE**

This essay will focus on the economic and labour losses of the war effort caused by the Holocaust. This essay will first look at robberies, confiscations and Kristallnacht as well as the numerous laws that were used to destroy and isolate the Jews physically and economically. Kristallnacht and the surrounding issues will be debated as being beneficial economically, for a hand full of Germans, but a loss for the German economy as a whole. Then there will be considerable discussion on the labour problems that occurred in Germany when efforts were being concentrated on slaughtering millions of Jews. There will also be a limited discussion on the role that Jewish resistance and its role in forcing Germans to divert troops from it's front. There will be constant reference to the German war effort linking it to the Holocaust to provide evidence that the Germans may have lost the war because of their insistence to kill the Jews rather then concentrating on the war they were fighting.

### **Introduction**

The economic aspects of the Holocaust were linked with Germany's war effort because both required the same manpower resources, transportation and an organised bureaucracy. Therefore, any economic gains made from the Holocaust by confiscating, robbing, and exploitation, would have to be long term individual gains, because Germany as a whole lost it all when they lost the war. The massive effort that was mobilised to exterminate the Jews interfered with the German war effort. By exploiting, deporting, and exterminating an entire people, individual Germans may have gained minor economic prosperity but lost the services of 6 million people who could have been put to work to produce military output for the war effort.

My thesis will centre on what the Germans had to lose by carrying out the Holocaust. My arguments will focus on the Holocausts costs in terms of the war effort. The essay will begin with some discussion on the robberies, confiscation's, and expropriations of businesses. Then its focus will shift to labour and transportation problems that occurred as a direct result of the Holocaust. Finally the discussion will with a brief description of Jewish resistance and it's effect on labour.

### **Economic Gains**

The economic gains made by the Germans in the persecution of the Jews are minimal when compared to what the Germans had to lose. The economic gains made by the Germans before and during the early stages of the war consisted of isolating

the Jews, limiting their economic capacity with the help of laws, confiscating everything the Jews owned, and robbing the Jews. These economic persecutions were considered gains because the goods and businesses that were confiscated produced wealth for individual Germans.

One form of economic gain was the destruction of the Jewish community inside Germany where Germans simply inherited the businesses. Despite short-term economic gains for the Germans, Night of the Broken Glass disturbed Himmler, who believed that the orgy of destruction damaged Germany's image abroad and Germany's economy, which could not afford such wide spread destruction of property. Goring as well admitted that Kristallnacht (November 1938) damaged Germany's economic position and foreign trade. Germans benefited from Night Of The Broken Glass because they inherited the Jewish properties, or what was left of them, and benefited from a host of new jobs which the Jews had been ousted from. But ultimately as individuals got richer Germany as a whole lost its economic prosperity because not only were they destroying the Jewish community but they were also destroying their economy as well.

The economic gains that were made after the invasion of Poland were minor and consisted of petty crimes. Individuals in the Gestapo, Secret Police, and the Army committed the petty crimes, as they took advantage of their position, while they occupied foreign lands and raided homes. David Wdowinski, Chief of a Psychiatric Department in a Warsaw Hospital, recounts how he witnessed German officials pull up in trucks, select the furniture they wanted and then beat the Jews as the Jews carried their furniture out to the truck.

By destroying the Polish economy the Germans in effect destroyed the economy of the Jews because they controlled the highest proportion. Therefore by overthrowing the Jewish economic rule in Poland, Germany took over all the raw materials, including 4 million acres of potential timber and industrial products and transported them to Germany. This was another form in which the Germans benefited because they robbed the Jewish communities of Poland of their natural resources. Apart from raw materials the Polish territory was also a reservoir for slave labour of which 1 million Poles were sent to Germany to work to death.

Furthermore extensive damage was caused to Warsaw monuments which also assaulted Jewish culture and history. 50.4 per cent of the houses in Warsaw were destroyed or partly destroyed. There was extensive damage to The Great Theatre, Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall, and the Royal Castle at Warsaw. Universities and schools were also subject to destruction and looting, among them The University of Warsaw and the University of Cracow. Kristallnacht, for its part, consisted of the destruction 195 synagogues, 800 destroyed shops, and 7000 looted.

### **The German Laws**

German economic restraint of the Jews was justified in the eyes of German citizens because laws, which supported German actions, were passed, even though propaganda had done a good job at shaping the Jewish image as subhuman and subjected Jews to daily attacks. The first attack on the Jews began with the Anti-Jewish Laws passed on April 7, 1933, which restricted Jews from joining the civil service. Then on April 25, 1933 Jewish children were restricted from attending school. More importantly, The Nuremberg Laws on September 15, 1935, which

stated that Jews, were ineligible for citizenship.

More laws were passed after the invasion of Poland, which restricted Jews on the amount of money they were allowed to own. A decree was written in November of 1940 to the Jews of Poland to the effect that no Jews could hold no more than 2000 zlotys, receive more than 250 zlotys from the bank a week, and debtors could repay no more than 500 zlotys to Jews. Another law stated that "all Jewish property in the Polish areas, which was incorporated into the Greater Reich, was ordered to be sequestered by the decree of September 17, 1940. The same decree provided that sequestered property could be confiscated if the public welfare, particularly Reich defence of the strengthening of Germanism, so required". Once the law was passed the Germans confiscated 90 per cent of Jewish property, 35,000 Polish industries, and Official German statistics show that in February of 1941 the German government was in control of 206,384 Polish firms and enterprises a large number of which were owned by Jews.

In essence these laws helped the Germans persecute the Jews in times of peace until the war could provide a cover for the persecutions as author Gerhard Weinberg states, "the systematic killing was disguised under the cover of the war". Until Germany was involved in an all out war, it was essential that the persecutions of the Jews be hidden to keep foreign trade open. It was also essential that German keep the Allies from forming a united front over an issue like the Holocaust.

### **The Loss of the Right to Live**

The invasion of Poland was the turning point for Jews because it was the prelude to the beginning of the ghettoization and the start of the final solution. The invasion of Poland spelled the beginning of mass murder as between September and December a quarter of a million Jews had already been killed from starvation, forced labour, shooting and disease. Jews were then Ghettoized and forced to wear the Star of David (November 23, 1939). The physical isolation was then complete and the Germans proceeded to further deprive the Jews within the Ghettos. Once the Jewish economy was destroyed, Jews were rounded up and put into ghettos. The Germans then went on another campaign by making demands for unreasonable amounts of supplies, goods and money to bankrupt Jewish community. These demands were unnecessary at the time because the Germans were at the height of their wartime success and did not need these supplies in 1941. Similarly, on Feb 6, 1942, Himmler demanded forty thousand pieces of children's clothing that the Jews of Auschwitz were to supply, which would then be redistributed among the Hitler youth. These actions seem to indicate motives whose intention was to humiliate the Jews rather than enrich Germans. The deprivation of basic needs was what the Germans called the "Third Solution" which revived the Medieval Ghetto whose basic purpose in the twentieth century was that of, a centre of isolation and deprivation. The idea was to let the Jews die from starvation and was succeeding at a rate of 2,000 a month by June 1941.

Nora Levin, Director of Holocaust Studies, describes Hans Frank's, administrator of the Governor General, policy which aimed at using Jewish labour and squeezing them into concentrated areas where the lack of food and all economic means would somehow bring about their annihilation. But through this method the destruction of the Jews would take twenty years to achieve so the mass killing of Jews was selected speed up the process. However the final solution was quicker and more efficient but

cost Germany the war. The labour of six million Jews could have helped them overcome their labour crisis and could have possibly added 1-2 million men to the front.

### **Labour**

Throughout the war the Germans had serious manpower and labour shortages, and misused transportation facilities for deportations rather than focusing on carrying troops and supplies. The Germans essentially chose to execute the Jews at any cost even the war. The losses to the Germans in carrying out the Final Solution could not be measured when compared to what little they had to gain. Weinberg argues that the Jews were given priority when it came to transportation regardless of whether troops were in danger. He states: "What reinforcements could be found would be rushed forward on whatever trains could be spared from the higher priority assigned to carting Jews to be slaughtered in the occupied territory. But with no prepared lines to fall back on and no way to salvage the heavy equipment, the German units at the front had to fight where they stood, even if the lines were broken".

As of July 1940, Germany was short of 560,000 work hands of which an extra 110,000 were needed in the aircraft industry, 50,000 in the naval building, 300,000 in the heavy armaments industry and 100,000 for various other industries. Even with this information at their disposal the Germans were going ahead with the mass execution of Jews.

Germany's problem, as their armed forces grew to seven and a half million, was that only 3.8 million foreigners were absorbed into forced labour to replace the seven and a half million at war which created a deficit in manpower. At the height of the Holocaust the net in flow of foreign workers dropped from 1 million in 1942-43 to 900,000 between May 1943-May 1944. The deterioration of labour was parallel to Germany's losses on the field and the waste of good working men that were put to death in the Holocaust. Alan S. Willard argues: "it can be said that of equal importance with the results of bombing were the chronic labour shortage, and the decline in vital raw material supplies as the allies physically reoccupied territories on which Germany had depended".

If Germany would have used the Jewish labour, it would have produced more supplies and, therefore, it would have freed more Germans to draft into the army and more of an army to defend the territories which Germany depended on for raw materials. In 1942, industrial output rose slightly and consumption decreased while military output increased 75% into 1943. This was all due to the increase in the use of prisoners of war for forced labour in 1943. This occurred under the leadership of Albert Speer and demonstrates that with proper organisation and effective use of labour military, output could be greatly increased. Imagine how much more production the Germans could have produced had they used the six million Jews.

Germany passed a law in the Government General of Poland on December 12, 1939 that stated "all Jewish inhabitants from fourteen to sixty years of age are subject to forced labour." The reality is that Jews were never used. In fact, Jews were, at first employed in munition factories and were then replaced by Poles. After replacing the Jews, Germany put the Jewish labour to work on completely useless tasks such as getting down on their fours and scrubbing streets rather than producing arms. Furthermore concentration camp labour was increased from 30,000 to 300,000 for the construction of underground aircraft facilities in 1944 but most of them were

Polish. Not only was German labour wasted but German hands were also wasted in energy and time to beat Jews. Some of the methods used were as follows: (1) lashing to death while cold water was constantly poured on the victim; (2) hanging on gallows by the feet; (3) tearing to pieces by dogs (Franze's favourite amusement); (4) the mildest form of death, yearned for by everyone-shooting. However between May and mid July 1942 Germany was forced to put some of the Jewish labour in the Lodz Ghetto to work when 800,000 kilograms of clothing, 70,000 kilograms of shoes and 12 kilograms of old ties were sent to be repaired. By 1942 the manpower shortage was in fact so great that 1942 gave second thoughts to the slaughter of Jews as author Benjamin B. Ferencz points out. Ferencz further mentions that Himmler himself presented Hitler in February 1942 with a new proposal that would enable Albert Speer to build munitions plants inside the concentration camps. But this attempt also failed.

### **The Scramble for labour**

The labour shortages in 1942 became the chief concerns to industrialist, generals, and even Hitler himself as each group used slave labour for their own interests. Weinberg describes the crisis on the eastern front in regards to Jewish labour as follows: "the crisis on the eastern front had effected the struggle between the SS and on the other German armed forces over the utilisation of Jewish labour. On the one hand, the desperate need for equipment suggested that every worker was needed. This view was reinforced by the desire of the SS to expand its own-armed units within Germany's military, an expansion that required greatly increased production and repair of equipment. On the other hand, the ideological fanaticism of Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, and of the other SS leaders, always urged forward by Himmler himself, called for the killing of all remaining Jews regardless of the impact on war production".

I.G. Farben was amongst the industrial leaders who were anxious to lay their hands on cheap concentration camp labour so that they could meet their war production goals. Fritz Todt had suggested that the armed forces create their own corporations to build roads and clothing in which 10 percent of the inmates in the camps would be needed. The German SS police was at odds with the army and civilian officials who thought that the destruction of the Jews was a waste of good skilful labour. In February 1944 Goring offered Himmler a squadron of planes in exchange for as many inmates for his aircraft industry as possible. In fact when Himmler turned Goring down Hitler stepped in, in April of 1944 and ordered Himmler to hand over a hundred thousand inmates to build underground aircraft factories. As the evidence clearly shows the Germans were flooded with labour and manpower shortages, which could have been avoided, had they put the Jews to work. The overall economic challenges facing the Germans were apparent from the start of the war. Their economy was not fully mobilised for war and was only equipped for lightning warfare. The German economy's single most important problem throughout World War II was its mismanagement of labour. The problem was not raw materials because from the fall of France to about 1942 Germany had conquered Europe and had at its disposal raw materials from other countries. Therefore Germany's failure was its inability to use foreign labour to its advantage, especially that of Jews.

### **Resistance' Role**

The Germans were not only conducting genocide but also had to deal with resistance

from the Jews, which varied, in degree. Resistance began as a limited amount of Jewish women began to sabotage munitions that they were producing. Examples include women that learned that unless the shells were tightly screwed the anti aircraft shells would not blow up. Or if someone poured sand and water into the cauldrons of TNT, the TNT melted and 75% of the sticks were made useless. This form of resistance was short lived because most Jewish workers never made it to the munitions factories even though the thoughts of using them for munitions building had crossed Himmler's mind. The form of resistance that did take its toll on the Germany's efficiency to wage war was the so-called "active resistance". This Jewish resistance occurred in collaboration with the Russians because most of the resistance movements involving Jews were formed behind enemy lines with Russian partisans. One resistance movement was led by Kovpak, a Russian, who commanded a force of 1,800 men armed with machine guns etc.... His force by the end of 1944, when his brigade was disbanded, grew to 5,200 men including 200 hundred Jews. Another resistance movement lead by Saburov was able to arm his soldiers with abandoned weapons left behind by the Red Army and captured Ovruch and Yelsk and killed 1095 Germans.

As mentioned the majority of these resistance movements were heavily armed with abandoned weapons and caused considerable damage to the German establishments. The combat achievements of the resistance which involved a minority of Jews but is still worth mentioning because it shows that given the opportunity Jews can also rebel. The damage involves 127 derailed trains, 13 bridges blown up, 8 aircraft, 132 motor vehicles, 36 railway stations and some 700 administrative buildings, post-offices, mills, saw mills, food collection centres, dairies, vodka distilleries, and other objectives serving the Germans completely destroyed. The fatalities added up to 1,406 dead enemies including four generals along with the destruction of 51 police and wehrmacht posts and the liberation of 1,500 prisoners by the end of 1942. This means that Jewish resistance fighters were able to use their hard labour and were able to fight back against Germans. The importance of the Jewish resistance was that it forced the Germans to divert troops from the fronts to put down resistance and uprisings which, the Germans could not afford.

### **Executing a Holocaust and war simultaneously**

Himmler's plans for the Jews were always bottled up because the economic means to eliminate or deport six million people was not available. Author Richard Breitman argued that Himmler's plan to ship the Jews to Africa depended on shipping and financing as well as an end to the war in the West. Furthermore, Breitman argues that the Wannsee Conference was necessary for logistical reasons because the seizure and deportation of millions of Jews was no simple police measure. Rail lines and rail cars were needed across Europe and many resources would be required. The Germans could not use these rail lines and rail cars because they would need those modes of transportation to conduct their war. The operators and mechanisms of mass killings were constantly restricted especially when the Germans in the war lost a battle. Hans Frank, President of the Academy of German law, mentions that Himmler's plan was inconsistent with immediate economic and military objectives and his plans for the Jews would have to wait. Despite these warnings by high Nazi officials Weinberg states that "the increase in the human apparatus for killing Jews meant involvement by large portions of the German bureaucracy in a program that had the highest priority in the eyes of German leaders". Himmler, himself admitted

that the concentration camp program had taken on important economic considerations, which limited his activities in March 1942. Weinberg further explains: "From 1942 on, the massive increases in forced labour by the surviving Soviet prisoners of war and enslaved Russian and Polish civilians made it possible for the German government to draft additional numbers of German men into the armed services. This was done primarily to replace casualties of the fighting on the Eastern Front".

Furthermore Proof Seraphim, in a letter addressed to the Industrial Armament Department, stated those economic considerations and armament needs were neglected or ignored in the single-minded obsession to destroy Jews. Gerhard Weinberg described the task of the Holocaust as being more than the Germans originally planned. "The mass killing soon proved to be beyond the capacity of the people and organizations first established to carry it out, and at a meeting of representatives of the major segments of the German government in January, 1942, the bureaucratic apparatus of the Third Reich was drawn far more closely and directly into it". One of the direct consequences of the war on the Holocaust was the African campaign after the fall of the Africa corps in 1942. The defeats in Africa saved the Jews in Palestine but put Italian Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece under German control which exposed a new, formally, safe haven for Jews, to the Germans.

The above literature clearly defines the perception of many German officers and intellectuals that the persecution of the Jews was a waste of labour. Furthermore statistics showed that threw Sphere's reorganisation and proper utilisation of labour the German economy was much more efficient and increased its productivity by 75%. Had they used the extra 6 million hands perhaps they could have doubled their production as well as have added possibly a few million men on the front. Statistics show that the Allies were over extended in the West and suffered from chronic thin supply lines because the Germans were able to retreat faster than the Allies could advance. Had the Germans have had a larger force to attack at the Battle of the Bulge it may have been catastrophic for the Allied armies in the West. I believe that Germany's main problem was labor. Had Germany had the available labour for both production and manpower, I believe that Germany could have won the war. Germany did not have to worry about its equipment because on the whole, it was far superior than anything the Allies could through into battle. Furthermore Germany's supply lines were shorter than that of the Allies in the West and therefore could be refitted and supplied much quicker. As far as organisation is concerned, I also believe that no army at equal strength during WWII had any chance at all against the organisation of the German army. It's a good thing that they too were capable of mistakes!

In conclusion this research leaves me to believe that the Holocaust is the single most important reason why Germany lost World War II. It's fanaticism with transporting and killing Jews rather than assuring victories during the war led to it's downfall. As far as the destruction of the Jews economy is concerned, if Germany would have poured it's efforts into research rather than bureaucratic mazes, to destroy the Jewish economic stability, Germany could have easily produced the bomb before the U.S. did. Again it's a good thing that Germany made mistakes in that era!

by Pierre Hobson