

A-LEVEL HISTORY: P3 (9489)

EUROPEAN OPTION, TOPIC 2: THE HOLOCAUST

0. Introduction

- 'Holocaust'
 - Composite of 2 Greek words
 - Suggests offering of a sacrifice by burning
 - Can mistakenly imply mass murder of Jews was a form of martyrdom rather than genocide
 - Other word: Hebrew word 'Shoah' (meaning 'catastrophe')

1. Hitler's Responsibility

→ Introduction to the Debate

- Main debate (Functionalism/Structuralism vs Intentionalism)
 - Was there a master plan on the part of Adolf Hitler to launch the Holocaust?
 - Did the initiative for the Holocaust come from above, with orders from Hitler, or from below, within the ranks of the German bureaucracy?
 - Functionalist/Intentionalist terms coined in 1981 essay by British Marxist historian Timothy Mason
- Intentionalism: interpretations assuming that Hitler/the Nazis planned to exterminate the Jews from the start
- Structuralism: interpretations arguing that it was the nature of the Nazi state that produced genocide
 - No coherent plan; chaotic competition for Hitler's approval between different elements of the leadership produced a situation in which genocide could occur
- Functionalism: sees the Holocaust as an unplanned, ad hoc response to wartime developments in E. EU when Germany conquered areas with large Jewish populations
 - Closely related to structuralism
- Synthesis interpretations: interpretations which show characteristics of more than one of the above
- Intentionalist & Functionalist Thoughts

| Intentionalists | Functionalists |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Hitler was an all-powerful dictator who made most decisions & controlled what went on in Nazi Germany● Domestic/foreign policy determined by determination to purify/strengthen the Aryan race<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Internal: eliminating Jews, Gypsies, & disabled○ External: lebensraum○ Operation Barbarossa (USSR invasion June 1941) was deliberate attempt to win lebensraum, destroy communism & eliminate Jews | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Question whether Hitler was a strong dictator<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Hitler exerted considerable influence over course of events, but not always the prime mover● In theory: was an all powerful dictator<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reality: did not initiate every major development in Third Reich● Hitler was weak, lazy dictator, frequently indecisive<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ An opportunist; responding to events rather than taking initiative○ Spontaneous, haphazard & unpredictable<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Eg. 1935 Nuremberg Laws was done to appease hardcore anti-Semites in NSDAP |

- Areas of Debate
 - Hitler's responsibility?
 - What personal role did Hitler play?
 - Was it a long term plan to exterminate EU's Jewish population?
 - Was it a centralised or decentralised event?
 - Himmler & SS role?

- Combined sentimental & romantic patriotic interest in German folklore, local history & a "back-to-the-land" desire
- Movement was a revolt against modern German life
 - Combined old fashioned & unusual aspects of folklore occultism alongside "racial adoration" (a type of anti-Semitism linked to ethnic nationalism)
- Ideas also included anti-communist, anti-immigration, anti-capitalist & anti-Parliamentarian
- Ideas of "national community" (Volksgemeinschaft) increasingly exclude Jews in Germany
- Connection with Nazism
 - Goebbels at 1927 Nuremberg Rally: Völkisch movement had understood power & how to bring thousands out in support in the streets, it would have gained political power on 9 November 1918
 - Mein Kampf: "the basic ideas of the National-Socialist movement are völkisch and the völkisch ideas are National-Socialist."
- Volksgemeinschaft
 - Idea of community based on a racially pure Germany
 - Appealed to workers, capitalists, peasants, politicians, ex soldiers, landowners, artisans, blue/white collar workers & intellectuals
 - Encourage voters to support them & the concept of all Germans working together for the well being of the Fatherland
 - Central issue of the Nazi Party
 - Linked to ideologies of racial purity & anti-semitism
 - Used it to blame Jews for everything wrong in Germany
 - Jewish weapons manufacturers had profited from WWI
 - November Criminals were Jewish (stabbed Germany in the back)
 - Jews had actively encouraged the signing of TOV
 - Jews were benefiting from the huge reparations being paid to the allies
 - Jewish financiers who were causing inflation in Germany (1923)
 - Jewish people were automatically Communists & would organise a Bolshevik Revolution in Germany if given the opportunity
- Lebensraum
 - 1921-25: Hitler developed the belief that Germany required Lebensraum to survive
 - Living space could only be gained in E. EU (taken by force from Russia)
 - Used Lebensraum to legitimately support his foreign/domestic policies towards USSR & Jews
 - Term first coined by Friedrich Ratzel
 - Theory: development of all species is primarily determined by their adaptation to geographic circumstances
 - To remain healthy, species must continually expand the amount of space they occupy
 - Migration is a natural feature of all species; expression of need for living space
 - Could only be successful if the conquering nation 'colonised' the new territory
 - 'Colonisation' = establishment of peasant farms by new occupiers

→ Nazi-Antisemitism & Persecution, 1933-39

- Events of 1933-34
 - German Jews 1933: 503,000 (0.76% of population)
 - 16% of Germany's lawyers, 10% of its doctors, 5% of its newspaper editors
 - Revolution from below
 - Nazi mobs killing Jews & sending them to concentration camps
 - Nazi govt claimed they were the work of 'popular anger'
 - Attacks initiated by local level by rank & file Nazi activists
 - Synagogues burned down

- Actually prepared by Heydrich's office (ie. Heydrich was giving orders to himself)
 - Heydrich didn't need Goring's authorisation to continue expulsion/extermination
 - SS already had far-reaching authority
 - Document suggests that Heydrich knew he faced a new task that dwarfed even the Einsatzgruppen's massacres
 - Some historians: Goring document simply represented an extension of Heydrich's responsibility for the Jewish question beyond Germany's borders
 - Document discussed emigration/the final solution
 - But: no signs in Aug of frenzied activity to organise a genocide programme
 - Goring still spoke of Jews being confined to labour camps
 - Commented that Jews should be ignominiously hanged rather than honourably shot
- Hitler decided on total genocide out of desperation rather than elation (Burin & Kershaw)
 - Sep 1941: Operation Barbarossa was not going to plan
 - Longer USSR kept up the fight, greater the danger of guerrilla war
 - Hitler decided that Jews would have to pay for the spilling of so much German blood
 - Himmler: *"I do nothing that the Fuhrer does not know"*
- The Final Solution in the USSR
 - Jews herded into ghettos in cities like Minsk & Rovno
 - Put to work & easily identified when killing priority
 - Wehrmacht responsibility
 - Auxiliary forces (recruited from people of Baltic states/Ukraine) killed alongside Einsatzgruppen
 - Post 1945: Wehrmacht tried to hide their involvement in the Holocaust
 - Army leaders gave commands & ordinary soldiers willingly carried them out
 - Sometimes undertook brutal 'cleansing' operations on their own initiative
 - Economic concerns from Jews escaping immediate death
 - Dec 1941 orders from Berlin: "economic considerations are to be regarded as fundamentally irrelevant in the settlement of the problem"
 - In practise: compromise between SS/army & economic agencies
 - Few Jews were given a stay of execution for labour purposes
 - Numbers killed
 - First sweep (June 1941-April 1942): 750,000 Jews
 - Second sweep (1942-3): a further 1.5 million
 - Most shot by machine gun, died in special gas vans (used from Dec 1941), labour camps
 - 40 million Ukrainians killed, 10s of thousands of Ukrainians transported to Germany as slave labourers
- Fate of German Jews
 - Aug 1941: illegal for Jews still living in Germany to emigrate voluntarily (around 300,000)
 - October 1941: Eichmann began transporting German Jews eastwards
 - Allowed to take some money, a case of luggage & food for the journey
 - Lodz

- Clashed with Himmler arguing that concentration camp factories were inefficient
 - Preferred using paid labour in occupied countries
 - Later claimed to have saved lives because of this policy
 - End WW2: Speer was arrested & charged with using slave labour in his production programmes
 - Pleaded guilty, sentenced to 25 years in prison
 - Died in 1981
 - Rudolf Hoess
 - Early 1940: Kommandant of Auschwitz
 - Responsible for exterminating 2.5 million people
 - At peak efficiency Auschwitz killed 'ten thousand people in 24 hour'
 - May 1941: Himmler told Hoess that Hitler had given orders for the FS of the Jewish question & chose Auschwitz camp for that purpose
 - Hoess converted Auschwitz into an extermination camp
 - 1943: Hoess appointed chief inspector of all concentration camps
 - Worked hard to improve the 'efficiency' of other extermination centres
 - Hoess fled after the war & went into hiding in Germany under the name Franz Lang
 - Arrested in 1946 & tried in 1947
 - Sentenced to death & returned to Auschwitz to be hanged on the gallows outside the gas chamber
 - Role of the SS
 - Dominant in the formulation of racial policy from 1938
 - 1941 onwards: became the driving force behind the racial extermination programme
 - Boycott of Jewish shops (Apr 1933), Nuremberg Laws (1935) & Kristallnacht (1938) primarily inspired by agitation from the SS storm troopers
 - Encouraged & orchestrated by Goebbels
 - Provided the perfect instrument for the resolution of the Jewish problem
 - Bureaucracy was efficient, ethos was ruthless, its ideology ardently racist
 - Jan 1939: Goring commissioned Heydrich (SS 2nd in command) to organise emigration of all Jews from Germany
 - Heydrich established the 'Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration' in Berlin
 - Eichmann was Heydrich's assistant
 - Eichmann spoke some Hebrew; had a reputation as an expert on the 'Jewish Question' from his experience in Palestine & Vienna
 - Eichmann proposed several schemes to make Germany Jew-free
 - 1. Establishment of a Jewish reserve in the extreme eastern area of German occupied Poland
 - 2. Creation of a Jewish state in Palestine & forceful resettlement of Jews on Madagascar
 - 1942: SS started a policy of systematic extermination
 - SS were the anti-semitic policy leaders at each stage of the execution
 - Post Sep 1939: SS Einsatzgruppen attached to army units eliminated Polish communist/intellectuals
 - 1940: SS units organised gassing of Jews & political dissidents in the Baltic States
 - Waffen SS provided almost 1500 men for the Einsatzgruppen murder squads
 - June 1941: 4 Einsatzgruppen followed the Wehrmacht rounding up & massacring thousands of Jews & Bolshevik functionaries
 - July 1941: Goering commissioned Heydrich with the preparation of a FS
 - Heydrich's solution: all EU Jews should be exterminated in gas chambers in converted concentration camps

- Introduce sub-messages
 - State main message in first sentence
 - Is one side or both being blamed by the writer Why
 - One point the historian makes is (quote something from the source or write a point they make)
 - Pick out justification given by the historian to contextualise
 - Only use contextual knowledge to explain points author is making
 - Develop submessages
 - State them at beginning of new paragraph
 - Explain author's argument for each
 - Don't make any judgements/give alternative hypotheses
 - Write what the approach is, NOT criticise it
 - First argument that makes it clear why you think the historian belongs to that specific school of thought
 - Paragraph before conclusion
 - Eg. "We can tell this view is a post-revisionist approach because the historian sees both sides as bearing some responsibility. This was the view put forward by academics such as..."
 - Mention how the historian is making his arguments; whether he is critical, overly critical etc.
 - Elimination paragraph: why the historian can't belong to another school of thought
 - Conclusion
 - Summary of what you have learned about the author's Big Message
 - "To conclude, the historian demonstrates this and this by showing etc. therefore presenting this interpretation of the holocaust"
- Tips from examiner's report
 - Make the Big Message Clear
- Points to talk about
 - Evidence used by the historian
- Useful phrases
 - ...which ultimately culminated in the FS
 - ... competing with each other to win Hitler's favour which by that time had become the only source of political legitimacy
 - Top down interpretation
 - Bottom up approach

Interpretations:

- Internationalism
 - Interpretations that assume that Hitler/Nazis planned to exterminate the Jews from the start
- Structuralism
 - Interpretations that argue the nature of the Nazi state produced genocide
 - No coherent plan
 - Chaotic competition for Hitler's approval between different elements of leadership produced a situation in which genocide could occur
- Functionalism
 - Closely related to structuralism
 - Holocaust was an unplanned, ad hoc response to wartime developments in E. EU when Germany conquered areas with large Jewish populations
- Synthesis
 - Interpretations that show characteristics of more than one of the above (internationalism, structuralism, functionalism)
 - How appropriate the use of this kind of terminology is in relation to the extract