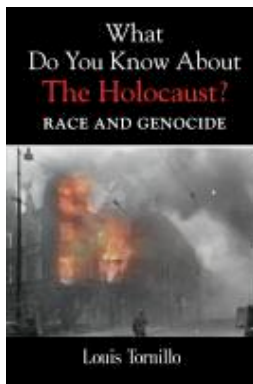


What
Do You Know About
The Holocaust?
RACE AND GENOCIDE



Louis Tornillo



Among thousands of books on the Holocaust, this one is unique in structure and focus. It is organized around an interactive quiz that tests the reader's knowledge, followed by short essays which deeply explore key events and issues with rich historical detail. It focuses on the racial ideology that drove the Holocaust, and links it to the racism that is still a potent force in our own society. "What Do You Know About The Holocaust? Race and Genocide" will surprise and provoke readers.

What Do You Know About the Holocaust?

Race and Genocide

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What Do You Know About The Holocaust ? Race and Genocide



Louis Tornillo

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Introduction and Quiz

Before you read further, I would like to present a fictional scenario which may help to put the Holocaust into a clearer perspective, especially as regards its “uniqueness”. Try to imagine the following situation: It is the year 2019. The U.S. has lost most of its economic and military hegemony over the rest of the world, and has waged a continent-wide conventional war with Canada and Mexico to increase its *Lebensraum*, or living space. The following is a (fictional) report from BBC World News:

The BBC has received unconfirmed reports that the U.S. government, in line with its new racial ideology, has been waging a secret war of extermination against its African-American citizens. As our readers will recall, already in the past five years, a series of racial laws were enacted gradually restricting the rights of blacks in the U.S., including their banning from the professions of law, medicine, education and politics, as well as bans on blacks owning businesses or property, and on inter-marriage or intimate relations between blacks and other ethnic groups. Again, these are unconfirmed reports which we cannot verify due to the ongoing fighting which has made large areas of North America off-limits to our reporters.

We realize that these reports strain credulity; many are from supposed eyewitnesses in a traumatized, often hysterical state and may be exaggerated or less than reliable. Nevertheless, it appears that blacks are being removed en masse from U.S. towns and cities to secret “camps” where they are systematically murdered or selected for slave labor. These removals have allegedly been accompanied by wanton, random brutality on a horrific scale. Many families have been shot in their apartments or homes, some in the streets or on stairwells. Hospitals and orphanages have been invaded and black patients killed in their beds. According to eyewitness reports, black children have been thrown out of apartment windows to the street below to save ammunition.

Survivors are claiming that those remaining alive are put on trains, in unheated cattle cars which then travel across the continent to remote areas of Western Canada to be killed in industrial fashion by poison gas. As our readers know, the current government is in the grip of a racial ideology and policy which states that African-Americans are ‘useless eaters’, or ‘life unworthy of life’, inferior sub-humans who must be cleansed from the society in order to achieve an untainted, racially pure America free from the corruption of inter-marriage with dark-skinned peoples. This has apparently been carried to the extreme of actual annihilation, including old people as well as black women and children wherever they are found.

It seems that in many small towns and rural locations, the black families have been taken to nearby woods, forced to dig their own graves, and then shot. We have survivor reports from the ghetto of Harlem that this quarter of New York City has been destroyed by military forces and is now burning uncontrollably, following a futile revolt by the remaining inhabitants after a series of deportations. Supposedly crowds of whites from the surrounding city gathered to watch the scene of destruction, and even brought their children to see the spectacle. We are trying to ascertain the credibility of these testimonies, and will update these reports as soon as we can confirm them. Please see our editorial page for comments on what, if anything, the European powers can do to stop this racial war, which apparently is being extended south of the U.S. border to include all dark-skinned, racially inferior peoples in the Americas. As incredible as it seems, the apparent goal is to completely annihilate the black race for all time, thus solving ‘the African question in the Americas.’

In a related development, the BBC has learned that the EU High Command has had knowledge of this genocidal project for the past year, but has decided not to bomb the so called “death camps”, for fear that thousands of innocent prisoners might be killed. An unnamed source within EU military headquarters has intimated that fear of increased racism in European countries with large populations of dark-skinned immigrants was also a factor.

What Do You Know About the Holocaust?

This, in another time and another place, among people who spoke a different language and had different customs, was the Holocaust. A highly visible minority, powerless and non-violent, was demonized into the ultimate “Other”, persecuted, degraded, starved, imprisoned and finally murdered, under cover of war, in a frenzy of racial purification, far beyond the borders of one country, across an entire *continent*, with the intent to make this group of people completely disappear from the earth forever.

What Do You Know About the Holocaust? Test Yourself

1. The Nazi Party assumed power in Germany in _____.
 - A. 1939
 - B. 1936
 - C. 1933
 - D. None of these.

2. WWII began on September 1, 1939 with the German invasion of _____.
 - A. France
 - B. Austria
 - C. Poland
 - D. Finland

3. Auschwitz was a ____.

A. Labor camp

B. Death camp

C. Concentration camp.

D. All of the above.

4. All prisoners in German camps were tattooed with an identification number. True or False? ____

5. Of the estimated 1.3-1.6 million people murdered at Auschwitz, ____ were Jews.

A. 50%

B. 70%

C. 90%

D. 40%

6. The Nazi state built six “death camps”. Name two of them: Auschwitz, Treblinka, Chelmno, Sobibor, Belzec, and Majdanek.

7. During WWII, the Swiss government maintained strict neutrality and had no relations with Nazi Germany. True or False? ____

What Do You Know About the Holocaust?

8. The Holocaust was unique because for the first (and only) time modern technology was used to kill large numbers of human beings in factories of death. True or False? _____

9. The Holocaust was unique because it was the Nazis' intent to murder every person of Jewish descent in Europe, ending their existence and thus changing humanity forever. True or False? _____

10. A relatively small number of people were directly involved in the actual murder of Jews and other ethnic groups. True or False? _____

11. Warsaw, where one-third of the pre-WWII population was Jewish, is a city in _____.

A. Rumania

B. Russia

C. Germany

D. Poland

12. Nearly all the Jewish victims of the Holocaust died in death camps. True or False? _____

13. The leaders of the Christian churches in Europe spoke out against the murder of the Jews of Europe. True or False? _____

14. Most of the key perpetrators of the Holocaust were captured, tried and punished. True or False? _____

15. The person who oversaw the destruction of the Jews of Europe was ____.

- A. Adolf Eichmann
- B. Joseph Goebbels
- C. Heinrich Himmler
- D. Josef Stalin

16. The Nazis' criteria for identifying a person as a Jew was whether they had at least three Jewish grand-parents. If yes, this was their sentence of death, with no exceptions. True or False? ____

17. The mass murder of the Jews of Europe was carried out almost exclusively by Hitler's SS., with local populations of German-occupied nations as bystanders. True or False? ____

18. 98% of the Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust lived outside of Germany, across the length and breadth of the continent of Europe. True or False? ____

19. Hitler's National Socialist party was more extreme in its anti-Semitism and beliefs about Jews than any group up until that time. True or False? ____

20. Anne Frank died of typhus in ____.

- A. France
- B. Holland

C. Belsen camp

D. Auschwitz

21. The only group whose persecution and mass murder approached that of the Jews was the ____.

A. Resistance fighters

B. Jehovah Witnesses

C. Gypsies

D. Homosexuals

22. Nearly all the Jewish children of Europe (93-94%) were murdered in the Holocaust. True or False? ____

23. The Christian anti-Semitism which laid the foundation for the Holocaust began in ____.

A. 19th Century

B. 1933

C. 15th Century Germany

D. 1st Century A.D.

Quiz Answer Key

1. The Nazi Party assumed power in Germany in: Answer: C. 1933.
2. WWII began on September 1, 1939 with the German invasion of: Answer: C. Poland.
3. Auschwitz was a: D. All of the above. (concentration camp, labor camp, death camp)
4. All prisoners in German camps were tattooed with an identification number. True or False? Answer: False. This only happened at Auschwitz camp.
5. Of the estimated 1.3-1.6 million people murdered at Auschwitz, (C. 90%) were Jews.
6. The Nazi state built six “death camps.” Name two of them: Answer: Auschwitz, Treblinka, Chelmno, Sobibor, Belzec, and Majdanek.
7. During WWII, the Swiss government maintained strict neutrality and had no relations with Nazi Germany. True or False? Answer: False.
8. The Holocaust was unique because for the first (and only) time modern technology was used to kill large numbers of human beings in factories of death. True or False? Answer: True.
9. The Holocaust was unique because it was the Nazis’ intent to murder every person of Jewish descent in Europe, ending their existence and thus changing humanity forever. True or False? Answer: True.

10. A relatively small number of people were directly involved in the actual murder of Jews and other ethnic groups. True or False? Answer: False.
11. Warsaw, where one-third of the pre-WWII population was Jewish, is a city in: Answer: D. Poland.
12. Nearly all the Jewish victims of the Holocaust died in death camps. True or False? Answer: False.
13. The leaders of the Christian churches in Europe spoke out against the murder of the Jews of Europe. True or False? Answer: False. Not one Protestant or Catholic Church leader spoke out.
14. Most of the key perpetrators of the Holocaust were captured, tried and punished. True or False? Answer: False.
15. The person who oversaw the destruction of the Jews of Europe was : Answer: C. Heinrich Himmler
16. The Nazis' criterion for identifying a person as a Jew was whether they had at least three Jewish grand-parents. If yes, this was their sentence of death, with no exceptions. True or False? Answer: True.
17. The mass murder of the Jews of Europe was carried out almost exclusively by Hitler's SS., with local populations of German-occupied nations as bystanders. True or False? Answer: False.
18. 98% of the Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust lived outside of Germany, across the length and breadth of the continent of Europe. True or False? Answer: True
19. Hitler's National Socialist party was more extreme in its anti-Semitism and beliefs about Jews than any group up until that time. True or False? Answer: False.

20. Anne Frank died of typhus in Answer: C. Belsen camp.
21. The only group whose persecution and mass murder approached that of the Jews was the: Answer: C. Gypsies.
22. Nearly all the Jewish children of Europe (93-94%) were murdered in the Holocaust. True or False? Answer: True.
23. The Christian anti-Semitism which laid the foundation for the Holocaust began in: Answer: D. 1st century A.D.

2. World War II began on September 1, 1939, with the German invasion of: C. Poland.

In many ways the Nazi Blitzkrieg against Poland was a dress rehearsal and experimental laboratory for the much more genocidal war of extermination against the Soviet Union. Hitler and the Nazi elite had planned from the outset for this to be far more than a simple military operation. It was to be an utter conquest and enslavement, a “decapitation” of Polish society, destroying it as a nation and moving millions of Poles to make room for ethnic German settlers. The decapitation would be accomplished by simply murdering Poland’s political and intellectual elites: teachers, professors, clergy, lawyers and doctors, writers, political and labor leaders, and Jews. The Security Police in Berlin had compiled “Wanted Persons Lists”, [*Sonderfahndunglisten*] of over 60,000 Jews and Polish Christians, which each *Einsatzgruppen* unit carried with it into Poland. These were the names of “anti-German elements”, the leadership class of Polish society.

A key objective of the invasion, beyond the military conquest itself, was neutralizing centers of potential resistance and “to destroy the classes of society thought to be carriers of Polish nationalism.”¹ It appears that Heydrich and Best told the *Einsatzgruppen* units of the killing order at Gestapo headquarters in Berlin in mid-August, 1939. The army also had a key role in identifying the individuals and groups to be targeted, and there was sharing of information between the *Abwehr* (Military Intelligence) and the Gestapo. But most German officers knew nothing of the plan to liquidate Polish elites before 22 August, 1939.

Hitler’s intent was that this be a new kind of war, a racial war against a lower and more primitive form of humanity. He stated that “Our strength lies in our speed and our brutality...the aim of the war lies not in reaching particular lines but in the physical annihilation of the enemy.”² There would be no attempt to stabilize the area after victory; this would not be a normal occupation. “The standard of

living in the country is to remain low; it is of use to us only as a reservoir of labor.” By the last quarter of 1939, 65,000 Poles and Jews had been murdered, many by militias of ethnic Germans. The first *Einsatzgruppen* teams were traveling from town to town, killing local priests, Polish aristocrats, political leaders, and anyone who could be a threat to lead a resistance. Their goal was to destroy Poland as a nation, not merely to conquer it, and they were aided by local militias of ethnic Germans in their attempt to eradicate Polish nationalism.

In the thinking of Hitler and the Nazi elite, the war for *Lebensraum* in the East would begin in Poland, resolving once and for all the long-lived ethnic struggle between Germans and Poles. This history of conflict had become more bitter between 1918-1921, when German soldiers engaged in fierce battles with Polish insurgent groups in border provinces, with numerous atrocities committed by both sides. The attack on Poland would not only avenge the injustices of the Versailles treaty, but eliminate Poland forever as a threat to German expansion. To prepare for this radically different kind of war, Nazi propaganda relentlessly broadcast anti-Polish and anti-Jewish racial stereotypes. In a report of 25 August, 1939, the *Wehrmacht* Propaganda Office described the Poles as “volatile, disorganized, and illogical.” The typical Pole in the countryside was “arbitrary and merciless...cruelty, brutality, treachery, and lies are [their] methods of fighting.”³

From the first days of the war, Jews were singled out for especially brutal treatment. Though they were 10% of the population, in many large cities they comprised 30% or more of the citizens. There were 200,000 Jews in Lodz alone. Only a small minority spoke Polish, and their dress and customs also made them highly visible. During a Hitler visit to Kielce, his press chief Otto Dietrich commented, “The appearance of these people [Jews] is unimaginable...They live in inconceivable filth, in huts in which not even a tramp would pass the night in Germany.”⁴ There was widespread theft and looting of Jewish homes and businesses by German soldiers, often joined by local Poles. After years of anti-

Jewish indoctrination by Polish Catholic church leaders, it took little prompting for many to help themselves to the property of “the foreigner within.”

There were also theatrical displays of sadism, humiliation and degradation of local Jews, as had happened in Vienna. In some towns, the beards of old Jews were cut or set on fire, Jewish women had their hair pulled and were forced to clean public latrines. Jews were forced to wear the yellow star, and soldiers sometimes shot randomly into houses in the Jewish quarter. Other common activities were forcing Jewish men to smear each other with excrement and burning synagogues. Just two days after the invasion began, “the company of soldiers in Wieruszow,” recounted a Jewish eyewitness later, “led twenty Jews into the market place and shot them... Liebe Lewi, the daughter of Israel Lewi, ran over to her father to bid him farewell. The German brutes ordered her to open her mouth for this impudence, fired a bullet into it, and she fell dead on the spot.”⁵

Despite the massive pre-war anti-Jewish persecutions and violence in Germany, Jews had not been publicly executed; a moral barrier had been crossed. There were also numerous incidents of rape of both Polish and Jewish women. Yet this policy of eliminating Poland’s political and cultural leadership, though planned in Berlin at the highest level, was not always known by officers in the field. It did not meet with universal approval by *Wehrmacht* officers. General Blaskowitz, among others, protested to Berlin that the murder of Jews and the Polish elite was morally reprehensible and counter-productive.

In a memo to superiors of February, 1940, he wrote, “...in view of the huge population, neither the concept of a Polish state nor the Jews” could be eliminated in this way, and further that “the worst damage which will accrue to the German nation...is the brutalization and moral abasement which, in a very short time, will spread like a plague among valuable German manpower... People with warped characters will very soon come together so that, as is now the case in Poland, they can give full expression to their animal and pathological

instincts.”⁶ Blaskowitz and other appalled officers did not yet realize that the massacres of Jews and the annihilation of Poland’s elite had been planned from the beginning at the highest levels. They soon learned that silence was a wiser policy, as Blaskowitz was relieved of his command for his moral scruples.

In their rage against sabotage by Polish snipers, the Germans carried out savage and sometimes random acts of reprisal. In the village of Wawer, a Warsaw physician reported that a drunken Polish peasant picked a fight with a German soldier, wounding him with a knife. One hundred and twenty-two Poles were killed in reprisal. The Germans then stopped a train, dragged out and hanged three passengers, who were completely innocent and had no knowledge of the incident. They were left hanging for four days.⁷ The Germans also began deporting young, able-bodied Poles in great numbers to slave labor camps in Germany, accompanied by a massive assault on Polish culture: libraries, museums, schools, and universities were shut down. In Governor-General Frank’s words, “The Poles do not need universities or secondary schools: the Polish lands are to be changed into an intellectual desert.”⁸ His idea of suitable cultural pursuits for Poles was sex shows, light opera and drink.

A telling illustration of how casually German soldiers acted out their contempt for individual Poles is this incident from 1943: “One afternoon...we saw an SS man on a bicycle...his dog running alongside. Because there was so little variety in our bleak schedules, some of us decided to run after him. We saw him suddenly stop and order his German Shepherd to jump at a very pregnant Polish woman...the dog obeyed. The woman, probably a maid who worked for some of the German farmers, was very large and already somewhat awkward; with a scream she fell on her back and stared up at the growling dog in great fear. The SS man got off his bicycle and stomped on the woman’s belly until she died from internal injuries.”⁹

The Nazi long-range plan for the Poles was to drastically reduce their numbers. An early strategy was to lower the Polish birthrate and

increase infant mortality. The legal age for marriage was raised to 28 for men and 25 for women; naturally, illegitimate births increased, so abortions were approved. The occupation regime provided almost no resources for pregnant mothers. Tuberculosis and rickets went untreated, and there was no prenatal care or access to pediatric clinics. Soon the death rate rose while the birth rate was falling. But by 1942, it was clear that mass deportation would be necessary to clear out millions of Poles. In the racial pyramid envisioned by the Nazi planners, only a primitive agricultural class would remain; they would attend school only up to age ten. “Outstanding native female teachers...representative of Polish chauvinism”, were to be replaced by retired policemen.¹⁰ In Himmler’s thinking, there was no need for Polish children to be taught to read, that could lead to independent thinking and rebellion. They should only be taught to write their names.

At the same time, the search began for Polish children of German blood: “Nordic-looking” families with blond hair and blue eyes. The “sifting” of families to locate valuable blood for the Reich was soon underway, although the chosen children, in fact, usually had no German “blood” whatsoever.¹¹ The first group to be sifted were the children living in Polish orphanages—children “whose appearance indicates Nordic parents” would undergo racial and psychological testing by the Nazi Youth Department; those between age two and six who were considered acceptable were placed with foster families, those from six to twelve in German boarding schools. Teams of SS doctors gave the children physical exams, and only perfect bodies were acceptable. The parents or guardians had no rights whatever.

In one foster mother’s account: “I received the summons to report together with my child to the German Youth Department in Lodz...When I called I was told that I had to leave the child there and that I myself had to go to work [i.e., forced labor]; thereupon the official immediately called a German woman, who, disregarding my screams, snatched the child from my arms and walked out.”¹²

There was a shocking and unprecedented level of violence against civilians in the Polish campaign, including: routine strafing and bombing of fleeing refugees; widespread looting and destruction of property; the merciless artillery shelling of large cities; and the murder of targeted groups.



Bereaved Polish girl and sister killed by Luftwaffe bombing

Julien Bryan [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons,
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In this new kind of war, the intent was to terrorize the entire population, to “destroy the physical and psychological distance between the front and rear”, because the enemy was defined not only in military-political terms, but in racial-biological terms. This was the same sort of racial ideology employed in the attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. But for the Jews, there was an important difference: In Poland, terror against the Jews was designed to force them out of German-occupied territory, not to annihilate them. In the Soviet Union, a scant five weeks after the invasion began; whole communities of Russian Jews were being murdered en masse. Thus the events on the ground in Poland are the clearest evidence that the Final Solution had not yet been planned as of 1939-40.

Yet for Poland’s Jewish population, the German occupation merely accelerated and radicalized the anti-Jewish persecution that had been underway throughout the 1920’s and 1930’s. As in Hungary, Romania, Serbia and other parts of Eastern Europe, a fierce ethnic nationalism had come to dominate Polish society. A national narrative was created—of honest, hard-working peasants and heroic Christian warriors—which left no room for ethnic or religious minorities. Already in 1936, Cardinal Hlond, head of the Polish Catholic Church, had a pastoral letter read in all the churches of Poland, attacking Jews as atheistic Bolsheviks, white slavers, pornographers, and swindlers. He stated flatly that “There will be a Jewish problem as long as the Jews remain.”

By the mid-1930’s, the Jewish minority in Poland had become a weakened, impoverished people, restricted from many professions and subjected to constant verbal and physical abuse. The effect on daily life was severe; in 1932, for instance, reports to the AJDC (American Joint Distribution Committee) showed over 400,000 Jews on the verge of starvation. This amounted to nearly one-third of Polish Jews.¹³ A social worker visiting a Jewish household in a poor neighborhood of Warsaw filed this report: “The family consists of 8 people: the parents, the grandmother, and five children. All live in a kitchen which they rent from another family. The window faces a wall and the room is therefore dark all day.

“Two little children aged 10-11 look like children 6-7—pale, weak and sickly. The father had a stand with second-hand clothes which, due to his frequent illnesses, was sold at auction. At present, when he is well, he peddles in the street but that is very rare because he is sick in bed most of the time. His wife, a small wizened and shrunk woman, has learned to sew and is now a ‘seamstress’—she mends old underwear—she mends old underwear in a Warsaw marketplace. However, her earnings are so small that they are not even sufficient for bread alone: she earns 25 groschen a day (five cents).”¹⁴

By 1937, Polish bishops were demanding that Jewish schoolchildren be segregated. The Polish government placed schools, the civil service, and public transport off limits to Jews, and made work on Saturday mandatory. Placards appeared in stores all across Poland, encouraged by the government, reading “This is a Christian store”, and “A Poland Free from Jews Is a Free Poland.”¹⁵ Photographs of Poles patronizing Jewish stores were circulated to reveal ‘traitors’. Also in 1937, the government made ritual slaughter illegal, and in the 1938 elections this same government captured 77% of the deputies, a far higher mandate than the Nazi Party ever received. In September, 1938, Hitler met with Jan Lipski, the Polish ambassador to Germany, telling him that he planned to drive the Jews out of Europe. Lipski replied that if he succeeded, the Poles would erect a statue to him in Warsaw. It is safe to say that while most Poles did not approve of the Nazis’ brutal solution to “the Jewish problem”, the feeling was widespread across Polish society that one way or another, the Jews must go.

In response to the relentless anti-Jewish campaign, over 400,000 Jews left Poland. But there were few countries to which they could emigrate. When the Soviet Union invaded the Eastern half of the country in September, 1939, most Poles chose to believe that the Jews welcomed the Soviets. No doubt many did, but only because of how difficult their daily lives had become. After the German army occupied Poland and the Polish resistance became organized, only a few small groups in the Polish Home Army would accept Jews even

as fighters, as most considered them weak and cowardly. In the course of the war, about 1,000 rescuers saved 2,600 Jews, and nuns saved 1,500 Jewish children. Though these numbers seem tiny, we have to honor their great courage in the face of both German and Polish hatred for those who aided Jews in any way.

What was the daily reality for Jews in the towns and villages of Poland during the Holocaust? We are fortunate to have the diary of Zygmunt Klukowski, a Polish doctor and hospital administrator who recorded the daily hardships and brutalities of life under German occupation. He witnessed the progression of the Holocaust as it unfolded in a small Polish town, and described the events with a clear and dispassionate eye. As a primary source testimony, it gives an unparalleled ground level view, a microcosm of the Holocaust in action.

In 1939, as the occupation began, Klukowski wrote:

“October 23: In town, things are fairly normal; only the Jews are under constant pressure. I was told that yesterday at the marketplace the Germans whipped a great number of male Jews, even a rabbi. Today his wife came to me crying. She heard that tonight the Germans would start killing Jews. She asked me for help.

December 20: This afternoon the Germans posted new regulations. From Friday, December 22, all Jews ten years old or older, when walking outside, had to display a white band with the Star of David on the right sleeve. All stores must display signs stating that they are either Aryan or Jewish. The bands and signs can be purchased at city hall.

February 18: I met a woman, wife of an official of the Zamoyski estate. She had just arrived from Chelmno. For some time I’ve been receiving alarming information about the execution of the mentally ill patients of the psychiatric ward at Chelmno hospital. I asked her if this really happened. She verified that it was true. All the mentally ill were shot with machine guns, but under penalty of death the hospital

personnel are forbidden to talk about this crime. It is hard to believe anything as terrible as this.”

By early 1942, Klukowski begins to report ominous changes which are not yet clear in their meaning.

“March 26: The Jews are very disturbed about the forced movement of their population. From different areas we received information about actions against the Jews. Entire railroad trains loaded with Jews from Czechoslovakia, Germany, and lately, Belgium passed through, possibly to Belzec, where a new large camp was just organized. I heard about what the Germans did to the Jews in Lublin. It is difficult to believe that it is true. Today the evacuation of Jews from Izbica began. Many Jews were shot for no reason at all.

April 8: In town we expect more arrests. The Jews are upset. We know for sure that every day two trains, consisting of twenty cars each, come to Belzec, one from Lublin, the other from Lwow. After being unloaded on separate tracks, all Jews are forced behind the barbed-wire enclosure. Some are killed with electricity, some with poison gases, and the bodies are burned.

On the way to Belzec the Jews experience many terrible things. They are aware of what will happen to them. Some try to fight back. At the railway station in Szczepieszyn a young woman gave away a gold ring in exchange for a glass of water for her dying child. In Lublin people witnessed small children being thrown through the windows of speeding trains.”

By May of 1942, the Holocaust had reached Klukowski’s town in full force, as the Jewish population was rounded up, shot or deported to Belzec.

“May 8: Today we survived a terrible day. I still have not come to myself after this ordeal...Around 3 P.M. a real hell started in town. From Zamosc there arrived a group of Gestapo. They ordered the *Judenrat* to provide 100 Jews for forced labor, giving only one hour for this to happen. After one hour passed the Gestapo, with help

from the gendarmes, started catching the Jews, but they really began a mass shooting. The shooting could be heard throughout the city. They shot people like ducks, killing them not only on the streets but also in their own houses—men, women and children, indiscriminately. The number killed and wounded is hard to estimate. I will say that the number killed is over 100...

Around 5 P.M. the Gestapo left Szczecbrzeszyn. The Jews are terrified. Women are crying and tearing their clothes. Men with shovels went to dig graves in the cemetery, and the dead were transported there by horse-drawn wagon. Dr. Bolotny, the only Jewish physician in town, came to me begging for help. He could not do the work alone with so many wounded, some critically.

I am saddened that I had to refuse to give any help at all. I did this only because of strict orders by the Germans. This was against my own feeling and against a physician's duties. With my eyes I can still see the wagons filled with the dead, one Jewish woman walking along with her dead child in her arms, and many wounded lying on the sidewalks across from my hospital, where I was forbidden to give them any help.

May 9: The way that some Poles behave is completely out of line. During the massacre some even laughed. Some went sneaking into Jewish houses from the back, searching for what could be stolen.

August 8: All Jews must report at 8 A.M. across from the *Judenrat*. They are allowed to take 15 lbs of luggage, food for five days, and 1,500 zloty per person. The mayor informed me the 2,000 Jews will be deported east to the Ukraine. Railroad workers said that a large train with fifty-five cars is ready at the station. So far there are no volunteers, so the Germans began mass arrests. I asked a gendarme what would happen if the Jews did not show up. His answer was, 'We will kill them here.'

August 8, 9 P.M.: Around 8 P.M. the Germans began moving the Jews from the marketplace. Some Jews attempted to escape, but the

German police stopped them by shooting them. The shooting started a panic among the people standing near the streets, so everyone began running. Several hundred Jews were taken to the railroad station. Some older men and women who were unable to walk quickly were beaten by the gendarmes. I was able to observe this by standing on top of the hospital wall. It was so terrifying that I do not have the strength to describe it...No one believes that the Jews will be moved to the Ukraine. They will all be killed. After today's events it is difficult to gain control of myself, but I feel that this is not yet the end.

October 22: The action against the Jews continues. The only difference is that the SS has moved out and the job is now in the hands of our own local gendarmes and the 'blue police' [Polish police force]. They received orders to kill all the Jews, and they are obeying them. At the Jewish cemetery huge trenches are being dug and Jews are being shot while lying in them...

Today around noon all were loaded into railroad cars, but by 4 P.M. the train had not moved. It is very cold and rainy. After the Jews were loaded into the cars, factory workers collected and brought to an assembly area money, gold, jewelry and pearls. In town some of the Jewish houses were sealed by the gendarmes, but others were left completely open, so robberies took place. It is a shame to say it but some Polish people took part in that crime. Some people even helped the gendarmes look for hidden Jews. The Germans even killed small Jewish children. It is hard to describe.

It is so terrible that it is almost impossible to comprehend. Legally the Jews don't exist in Szczepieszyn anymore, but still many Jews are in hiding. All will be killed sooner or later.

October 24: The hunt for Jews is still on. Additional Gestapo agents came from Bilgoraj. With the help of gendarmes, 'blue police' and some citizens they looked everywhere for Jews. All cellars, attics and barns were searched. Most Jews were killed on the spot, but some were taken to the Jewish cemetery for public execution. I

witnessed a group of Jews being forced to march to the cemetery. On both sides of the prisoners marched gendarmes, 'blue police' and so-called Polish guards dressed in black uniforms. To speed things up Jews were beaten on their heads and backs with wooden sticks. This was a terrible picture.

November 26: There are several Jews active with the bandits. The villages have turned against the Jews because of this and try to find them in the fields and forests. It is hard to believe but the attitude toward Jews is changing. There are many people who see the Jews not as human beings but as animals to be destroyed.”¹⁶

The organization Zegota, largely funded from the West, was set up to rescue Polish Jews. It made payments to Jewish families and provided false papers for 50,000 Jews. Zofia Kossak, one of the founders, spoke out against the silence of Poles; she wrote that Catholics must in good conscience condemn the murder of the Jews. “But she added that the Jews were Poland’s political, economic, and ideological enemies...Her voice was that of an otherwise humane Polish Catholic; one can only imagine what the majority thought.”¹⁷

It is also impossible to avoid confronting the fact that a huge number of Poles took possession of Jewish homes, businesses, land and goods. They saw it as only fair and just to loot those whom they viewed as their former exploiters. Many political groups in Poland, both during and after the war, expressed deep anti-Jewish feelings. In 1941, the Christian Democratic Party made an assessment of the death camps as “Ruthless cunning [the Jews] falls victim to ruthless brutal power [the Nazis].” To the National Radical Camp, the Jews were degenerate revolutionaries who should be cleansed by fire. And the movement Falanga commented that “Now we know Poland can survive without Jews.”¹⁸ As the conservative writer Jozef Mackiewicz commented in 2007, “During the occupation one literally could not find a *single person* [author’s emphasis] who hasn’t heard: ‘Hitler did one good thing by liquidating the Jews. But one shouldn’t speak about it.’...Almost the entire nation was in agreement with this statement.”¹⁹

Another indicator of the depth of Polish anti-Jewish attitudes was an article published in the Polish underground paper *Narod*, edited by liberal intellectuals, titled “The Slaughter of the Jews”, on 15 August, 1942, in the middle of the great Deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka. It blamed the Jews for their ingratitude over many generations, and accused them of hating Poland. The author wrote: “If this [the deportation] will continue, within a short period, Warsaw will say goodbye to the last Jew. If it would be possible to conduct a funeral, the reaction would be interesting. Would sorrow or tears accompany the coffins, or perhaps joy? Let us not show false feelings, unlike at funerals [where there are] professional mourners, let us be earnest and honest...For the individual Jew human being, we are sorry, and, if possible, let’s extend help to the stray or hiding...But let us not strive for an artificial sorrow for the dying nation that was not close to our hearts. In face of the execution of the verdict of history, let us be serious and honest.”²⁰ And these were liberal intellectuals, probably the least anti-Semitic segment of Polish society.

It is very difficult to determine to what extent the massacres of Poles and Jews were due to a breakdown in “discipline”, or to other factors such as the influence of Nazi propaganda demonizing these two groups. We know that German troops in the field felt deep bitterness over civilian sniper attacks, so that a “Guerilla-Psychosis” took hold; all civilians were seen as hostile. The troops also received mixed messages from the contradictory attitudes of German officers. Many expressed concern over excessive brutality toward Polish civilians, yet they were constantly urging troops to be ruthless, to show no mercy to the Polish people. General Brauchitsch stated that “The German soldier should never forget that the civilian population...is inwardly hostile despite outward friendliness. [Furthermore] the bearing of soldiers of the National Socialist Reich toward the Jews requires no special comment.”²¹

According to Rossino, whose detailed study of 2003 is the most recent, “The evidence suggests simply that many German troops killed Poles and Jews in cold blood and without provocation. Acts

such as the murder of women and children, the machine-gunning of refugees, the beating and cruel treatment of civilians, the torture of Jews, and the random firing into homes...often cannot be contributed to revenge for casualties inflicted by insurgents or to reprisals ordered by German officers.”²² Yet when officers chose to intervene, they could prevent atrocities. “Helena Stefanek of Wojcik...witnessed the shooting of several of her family members, including three children under the age of ten, by German panzer troops. These shootings took place before a German officer arrived in a car bearing a Red Cross symbol on it. The officer angrily told the panzer troops to disperse and then tended to the wounds of an injured child.”²³

During the five weeks of combat operations, the German army captured nearly 700,000 Polish soldiers. These prisoners of war were treated with callous brutality, and many were murdered on the battlefield. On the morning of 16 September, 1941, “...when the wounded Tadeusz Starynski noticed a dozen German tanks rolling toward the aid station where he was receiving medical attention. Although the barn in which the aid station had been established was clearly marked by Red Cross signs on its sides and roof, the tanks turned off the road toward the barn and opened fire at a distance of about eighty yards. Starynski watched in horror as Polish doctors and comrades were killed around him and the barn caught fire. Not severely wounded, Starynski...observed how the tanks advanced toward the barn while firing at the wounded and screaming men crawling and hobbling out of the flaming structure.”²⁴ It is fair to say that on every day of the war in Poland, Polish POWs were shot, beaten, starved and abused.

The *Wehrmacht* behavior toward civilians was equally barbaric, for the most part. Just one example out of hundreds will suffice; “Janina Madrzewska also remembered the entry of German motorized units in Zlaczew. Following the arrival of motorcyclists and bicyclists, *Wehrmacht* personnel ran amok as night fell. German soldiers fired on refugees in town, and Madrzewska saw the disemboweled body of a ten-year-old girl lying in the street. She had

been shot through the back. Even more horrific, Madrzewska witnessed the murder of what she estimated to be a one-and-a-half-year-old girl by a German soldier who crushed her skull with the butt of his rifle.”²⁵

At a deeper level, though, can we make sense of the German war in “the East” as a racial war of extermination? First, in preparation for the invasion of Poland, troops participated in orientation sessions which focused on National Socialist racial-biological principles, emphasizing the treacherous nature of Eastern European Jews as well as Slavs in general. “To many German officers in 1939, therefore, Poland’s inhabitants were not ordinary adversaries; they were also racial and ethnic enemies...”²⁶ And there is also evidence of the spread of Nazi ideology among the troops in Poland, in the letters, diaries and experience reports of *Wehrmacht* units in the field. Soldiers repeatedly made assumptions about the level of “culture” in Poland from the poverty they observed, the condition of Polish homes and villages, the physical appearance of Poles and Jews.

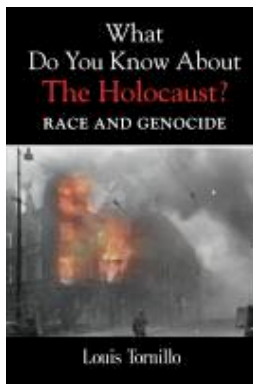
For example, “According to Private Wilhelm Jahoda, one only seldom saw inhabitants of villages, but those who did appear ‘made a frightening impression, with their unmistakably vengeful, brutal features.’ And again; “Some men, like Private Potesegger of the 137th Mountain Regiment, could not even bring themselves to recognize that Poles were human beings. Potesegger insisted instead that Poles were a herd of living things [belonging to] the genus human.”²⁷

Another soldier wrote in his diary: “Here we recognize the necessity for a radical solution to the Jewish question. Here one sees houses occupied by beasts in human form. In their beards and caftans, with their devilishly grotesque faces, they make a dreadful impression. Anyone who was not yet a radical opponent of the Jews must become one here.”²⁸

It is also important to keep in mind that *violence was venerated in the Third Reich*. Within Germany itself, the NSDAP had relied on violence for years to destroy internal opposition, communists,

socialists, organized labor, Jews. Ruthlessness toward enemies of Germany was glorified and violence exalted. Many of the soldiers in the German army had experienced ideological indoctrination in German institutions like the Hitler Youth before entering the *Wehrmacht*. By 1939, 8.7 million of the 8.8 million German boys between ages 10 and 13 were members of the Hitler Youth. In this culture, they were exposed to a world of para-military exercises as preparation for army training. And German school textbooks had for decades presented an image of the Pole as brutal, cowardly, deceitful and primitive. By the time they entered the *Wehrmacht*, millions of young German men had been subjected to and saturated with a racial ideology which relentlessly demonized Jews as cunning and evil, and Slavs as inferior, lacking in true culture. This worldview had been instilled from their earliest school experiences, all the way through their army training.

The National Socialist worldview and ideology encouraged, even demanded, elevating the German *Volk* above all other peoples, especially Slavs and Jews. The relentless violence inflicted by the German army upon Jews and Poles, as well as Russians later in the war, was not necessary or desirable from a military standpoint, but was driven by this view of Slavs as inferior human groups whose survival did not matter. These remarks by Heinrich Himmler make this clear: “The SS man is to be guided by one principle alone: honesty, decency, loyalty and friendship toward those of our blood, *and to no one else* [Author’s italics]...Whether other peoples live in plenty or starve to death interests me only insofar as we need them as slaves for our culture; for the rest, it does not interest me. Whether 10,000 Russian women keel over from exhaustion in the construction of an anti-tank ditch interests me only insofar as the ditch for Germany gets finished.”²⁹



Among thousands of books on the Holocaust, this one is unique in structure and focus. It is organized around an interactive quiz that tests the reader's knowledge, followed by short essays which deeply explore key events and issues with rich historical detail. It focuses on the racial ideology that drove the Holocaust, and links it to the racism that is still a potent force in our own society. "What Do You Know About The Holocaust? Race and Genocide" will surprise and provoke readers.

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