

**Matt Williams**

## **THE HOLOCAUST**

The word Holocaust means “widespread destruction.” It took place during World War II as Adolf Hitler’s plan of conquering the world. Hitler, the Nazi Dictator, planned to carry out his plan by destroying the Jewish population.

The Holocaust first came into perspective when Adolf Hitler took power in 1933. At first Hitler has harsh laws put on the Jewish religion to minimize their power and freedom. Such laws included not being allowed in public stores. The actual start of the Holocaust has been traced by historians to November 9, 1938. It started by the Nazis forcing the Jewish cultural to go to concentration camps. After the Nazis cleared out a Jewish neighborhoods, they would burn them down leaving no trace. Jews who did not go to concentration camps went to ghettos to work as slaves.

No matter how many Jews the Nazis had, they always went after more. In 1939 Germany took over Poland and took control over its three million Jews. In 1940, Germany took over Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, and the Netherlands gaining many more Jews.

At the concentration camps the Jews were badly mistreated. The Nazis showed no signs of pity towards them. In 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union and began the mass murder of Jews. The Nazis saw it all as a game. They wanted to see how much they could put the Jews through until they finally died. The Nazis also participated in horrifying practices and treatment of the Jews. According to the magazine Social Education October 1995 such activities were:

A- Human skin from the dead corps was made into lampshades, bags, and brief cases. Human fat was made into soap, and shrunken skulls were used as paper weights.

B- Jews were fed the bears housed in private zoos.

C- Husbands were forced to have sex with other’s wives in front of their children.

D- Women were forced to have sexual relations with animals.

E- Soldiers practiced there gunsmanship by shooting the Jew’s finger tips and noses.

F- Jewish babies were launched into the air and skewered by bayonets in front of their mothers.

G- Prisoners were used as guinea pigs to test how long a human could go without oxygen, how long one could tolerate in cold water, and to observe the effect of injected deadly germs.

I- Women’s ovaries were burned with x-rays and then the effects were observed.

No matter what the lack of supplies the Nazis had, they just kept on hauling in the Jews. They were starved, beaten, crammed into small housing area with many other Jews, and forced to sleep in freezing weather without blankets. When a Jew would die, which happened very often, they would just throw the bodies on the side of the streets. When there was a severe lack of food, the cooks would use the corps as food for the living Jews.

In 1945 the Nazis started what was known as the “death marches” toward Germany. The “death marches” were when all of the Jews were forced to run to new concentration camps away from the moving in allied powers. They would have to run in freezing conditions non-stop. If they were to slow down, the Nazis would start shooting them. If someone was to trip, they would be trampled to death by the many thousands of other Jews also running. The only hope for the Jews was that the running would soon come to a stop. Those who could not keep on going died. They did not even get to take a break to go to the bathroom, nor did they get to eat while running. They ended up running many hours before being able to stop. The Jew ended up staying at these new camps for a short while.

On May 7, 1945, Nazi Germany surrendered ending the World War II in Europe. Shortly after this occurred, the Jews that remained were set free and rescued by the allied powers. On October 1, 1946, another major event that involved the Holocaust took place, the conclusion of the first major Nuremberg trials. The Nuremberg trials were where Nazi leaders, such as the death camp leaders, were

brought to trial by the International Military Tribunal, composed of one judge and one alternate judge from each of the signatory nations. The conclusion of the trials were as followed. Twelve Nazi leaders were executed. Three were sentenced to life in prison, and four others received various prison terms. On October 16, the twelve Nazi leaders sentenced to death, were executed.

The number of people killed in the Holocaust has been to be known around 11,000,000. Not all of them were Jewish though. The total number of Jews killed in the Holocaust has been estimated to be around 5,820,960. This was two thirds of the entire Jewish population. The countries that lost the most were Polish Soviet Area with 4,666,000, Hungary with 402,000, and Czechoslovakia with 277,000. The remaining Holocaust victims that were killed belonged to such ethnic groups such as Gypsies, Poles, and Slavs.

I conclude this essay by stating that the Holocaust was a very tragic and devastating time. Most of the books that survivors have written only touch what actually went on there. Those who carried out these horrible crimes should be put through the same pain that they caused millions of others. Anyone who has survived it has gone through more than any of us could ever imagine, and those that did not make it possibly went through more than those who did.