

Chapter 30

World War II and the Holocaust, 1939-1945

THE STORY MATTERS...

World War I slowed the push toward independence among colonies in many parts of the world, but the end of the war gave a new strength to these efforts. Mohandas Gandhi was the charismatic leader of the Indian nationalist movement against British rule. He was committed to nonviolent action as a method for political and social change. Using peaceful methods, he eventually led India to independence. His actions inspired people to seek the end of colonialism, racism, and violence.

Lesson 30-4

The New Order and the Holocaust

READING HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

ethnic occupation

Content Vocabulary

genocide collaborator

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why do political actions often lead to war?
- How does war impact society and the environment?

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Japan exploited the resources of the nations it conquered. In Germany, the Nazis began a terrifying genocide, carried out by death squads and death camps. Nearly two out of every three European Jews died in the Holocaust.

The New Order in Europe

GUIDING QUESTION *How did Germany establish a New Order in Europe?*

In 1942 the Nazi regime stretched across continental Europe from the English Channel in the west to the outskirts of Moscow in the east. Nazi – occupied Europe was largely organized in one of two ways. Nazi Germany directly annexed some areas, such as western Poland, and made them into German provinces. Most of occupied Europe, however, was run by German military or civilian officials with help from local people who collaborated with the Nazis.

Nazi administration in the conquered lands to the east was especially ruthless. Seen as the “living space” for German expansion, these lands were populated, Nazis thought, by racially inferior Slavic peoples. Hitler’s plans for an Aryan racial empire were so important to him that the Nazis began to put their racial program into effect soon after the conquest of Poland.

Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the SS, was in charge of German resettlement plans in the east. Himmler’s task was to move the Slavic peoples out and to replace them with Germans. Slavic peoples included Czech, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Slovene, and Ukrainian people. One million Poles were uprooted and moved to southern

Poland. Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans were brought in to colonize the German provinces in Poland.

The invasion of the Soviet Union made the Nazis even more excited about German colonization. Hitler planned a colossal project of social engineering after the war. Poles, Ukrainians, and Russians would be removed and become slave labor. German peasants would settle on the abandoned lands and “Germanize” them.

Analyzing PRIMARY SOURCES

Nazi Death Squads

“The unit selected for this task would enter a village or city and order the prominent Jewish citizens to call together all Jews for the purpose of resettlement. They were requested to hand over their valuables to the leaders of the unit, and shortly before the execution to surrender their outer clothing. The men, women, and children were led to a place of execution which in most cases was located next to a more deeply excavated anti-tank ditch. Then they were shot, kneeling or standing, and the corpses thrown into the ditch.”

– from *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. 5, 1946

CLASSIFYING

How do the actions described above exemplify genocide?

By the summer of 1944, more than 7 million European workers labored in Germany. They made up approximately 20 percent of Germany’s labor force. Another 7 million workers were forced to labor for the Nazis in their own countries on farms, in industries, and in military camps.

The use of forced labor caused many problems for Germany. Sending so many workers to Germany disrupted industrial production in the occupied countries. Then, too, the brutal way in which Germany recruited foreign workers led more and more people to resist the Nazi occupation forces.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Analyzing How did resettlement contribute to the goals of Hitler’s New Order?

The Holocaust

GUIDING QUESTION How did Adolf Hitler's views on race influence the New Order?

No aspect of the Nazi New Order was more terrifying than the deliberate attempt to exterminate the Jews. Racial struggle was a key element in Hitler's world of ideas. He saw it as a clearly defined conflict of opposites. On one side were the Aryans, who were the creators of human cultural development, according to Hitler. On the other side were the Jews, whom Hitler blamed for Germany's defeat in World War I and the Depression.

Himmler and the SS closely shared Hitler's racial ideas. The SS was given responsibility for what the Nazis called their Final Solution to the Jewish problem. The Final Solution was genocide of the Jewish people.

The *Einsatzgruppen*

Reinhard Heydrich, head of the SS's Security Service, had the task of administering the Final Solution. Heydrich created special strike forces, called *Einsatzgruppen*, to carry out Nazi plans. After the defeat of Poland, these forces rounded up all Polish Jews and put them in ghettos set up in many Polish cities. Conditions in the ghettos were horrible. Families were crowded together in unsanitary housing. The Nazis tried to starve residents by allowing only minimal amounts of food. In spite of their suffering, residents carried on, and some organized resistance against the Nazis.

In June 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* were given the new job acting as mobile killing units. These SS death squads followed the regular army's advance into the Soviet Union. Their job was to round up Jews in their villages, execute them, and to bury them in mass graves.

The Death Camps

The *Einsatzgruppen* probably killed more than 1 million Jews. As appalling as that sounds, it was too slow by Nazi standards. They decided to kill the European Jews in specially built death camps.

Beginning in 1942, Jews from countries occupied by Germany or sympathetic to Germany were rounded up, packed like cattle into freight trains, and shipped to Poland. Six extermination centers were built in Poland for this purpose. The largest was Auschwitz (OWSH • vihts).

About 30 percent of the new arrivals at Auschwitz were sent to a labor camp, where many were starved or worked to death. The remainder of the people went to the gas chambers. Some inmates were subjected to cruel and painful "medical" experiments.

By the spring of 1942, the death camps were in full operation. First priority was given to the elimination of the Polish ghettos. By the summer of 1942, Jews were also being shipped from France, Belgium, and Holland. Even as the Allies were winning the war in 1944, Jews were shipped from Greece and Hungary. In spite of Germany's desperate military needs, even late in the war when Germany was

facing utter defeat, the Final Solution often had priority in using railroad cars to ship Jews to the death camps.

The Death Toll

The Germans killed approximately 6 million Jews, more than 3 million of them in the death camps. Even in concentration camps that were not designed specifically for mass murder, large numbers of inmates were worked to death or subjected to deadly medical experiments. Virtually 90 percent of the Jewish populations of Poland, the Baltic countries, and Germany were killed. Overall, the Holocaust was responsible for the death of nearly two out of every three European Jews.

The Nazis were also responsible for the deliberate death by shooting, starvation, or overwork of as many as another 9 to 10 million non-Jewish people. The Nazis considered the Roma, who are sometimes known as Gypsies, to be an alien race. About 40 percent of Europe's Roma were killed in the death camps.

The leading citizens of the Slavic peoples were arrested and killed. Probably an additional 4 million Poles, Ukrainians, and Belorussians lost their lives as slave laborers. Finally, at least 3 to 4 million Soviet prisoners of war were killed.

This mass slaughter of European Jews is known as Shoah – a Hebrew word meaning "total destruction." Many Jews attempted to resist the Nazis. Friends and strangers aided some Jews, hiding them or smuggling them to safe areas. A few foreign diplomats saved Jews by issuing exit visas. The nation of Denmark saved almost its entire Jewish population.

Some people did not believe the accounts of death camps because, during World War I, allies had greatly exaggerated German atrocities to arouse enthusiasm for the war. Most often, people pretended not to notice what was happening. Even worse, collaborators helped the Nazis hunt down Jews. Although the Allies were aware of the concentration camps and death camps, they chose to concentrate on ending the war. Not until after the war did the full extent of the horror and inhumanity of the Holocaust impress itself upon people's consciousness.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining What was the role of the *Einsatzgruppen*?

The New Order in Asia

GUIDING QUESTION What characterized the New Order in Asia?

Japan needed its new possessions in Asia to meet its growing need for raw materials, such as tin and oil, and as markets for its manufactured goods. To organize these possessions, Japanese leaders included them in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. This economic community supposedly would provide mutual benefits to the occupied areas and to Japan.

The Japanese had conquered Southeast Asia under the slogan "Asia for the Asiatics." Japanese officials in occupied territories promised that local governments would be

established under Japanese control. In fact, real power rested with Japanese military authorities in each territory. In turn, the Army General Staff in Tokyo controlled the local Japanese military command. Japan used the economic resources of its colonies for its war machine and recruited the Southeast Asian peoples to serve in local military units or in public works projects. In some cases, these policies brought severe hardships to the Southeast Asian peoples. In Vietnam more than a million people starved in 1944 and 1945 when Japan forcibly took their rice to sell abroad.

At first, many Southeast Asian nationalists took Japanese promises at face value and agreed to cooperate. Eventually, the nature of Japanese occupation policies became clear, and sentiment turned against Japan. Japanese officials provoked such attitudes by their contempt for local

customs. Like the Germans, Japanese military forces often had little respect for the lives of their subject peoples. To help their war effort, the Japanese used labor forces composed of both prisoners of war and local peoples.

This behavior created a dilemma for many nationalists. They had no desire to see the return of the colonial powers, but they did not like what the Japanese were doing. Some turned against the Japanese. Others simply did nothing. Some nationalists tried to have it both ways. Indonesian patriots pretended to support Japan while actually sabotaging them.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Assessing As part of its New Order, how did Japan treat the peoples it conquered?

LESSON 30-4 REVIEW

Reviewing Vocabulary

- Expressing** Explain how some collaborators helped make genocide possible.

Using Your Notes

- Contrasting** Use your notes to write a paragraph contrasting the New Order of Germany with the New Order of Japan.

Answering the Guiding Questions

- Analyzing** How did Germany establish a New Order in Europe?
- Identifying Cause and Effect** How did Adolf Hitler's views on race influence the New Order?
- Summarizing** What characterized the New Order in Japan?

Writing Activity

- Informative/Explanatory** Using a variety of sources, research and analyze the causes and consequences of the Holocaust. Be careful to use only reputable sources. Be sure to include information on the role of anti-Semitism.