

War as catalyst: moving World War II to the center of Holocaust scholarship

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Today I will once more be a prophet: if the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevizing of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe! (Adolf Hitler, January 30, 1939¹)

Scholarship on the Holocaust too often treats the subject as if it occurred in a vacuum, as an event to be reckoned with and analyzed on its own. World War II, when mentioned at all, often seems to be treated as background noise instead of as the single necessary condition for the worst genocide of the past century. Yet the two events cannot be separated, for *the war triggered the Holocaust*—without it, the Final Solution to the Jewish problem would not have been implemented. This article intends both to rescue the war from the periphery of the discourse about the Holocaust, placing it back in the center of one's understanding of the event, and indeed of genocide itself. World War II and the Holocaust must be understood *together*, because for the victims, the perpetrators and the bystanders, they were never separate.

Atrocities occur during war. Rules regarding civility in warfare wax and wane, making civilian populations acceptable targets for attacking armies at many times throughout history. Should one be surprised that the most destructive war in history was accompanied by one of the most dramatic instances of violence against civilians? The Final Solution was but the most incomprehensible portion of a greater tragedy—if one brings the war to the center of the discourse on the Holocaust, then perhaps the actions of the German leaders, soldiers, and people become somewhat easier to grasp. The irreconcilable question of the Holocaust is not how the Germans slaughtered the Jewish people, because for that there is an answer: *there was a war on*. Rather, one ought to be asking how the Germans, a post-enlightenment rational European people, could have come to the conclusion that the Jews were their enemy.

The stages of genocide

If the German Reich should in any foreseeable future get involved in a foreign conflict, it

goes without question that we in Germany also will in the first place think of carrying out a great reckoning with the Jews. (Reinhard Heydrich, 1938)²

This article does not intend to suggest that the Holocaust was an accidental outgrowth of the war, or an excusable excess of wartime passion, or an understandable side effect of a society under great stress. The Nazi leadership had, of course, been planning the war since Versailles, and Hitler probably planned a domestic offensive against the Jews as surely as he did foreign offensives to the east and west. But he knew that in order to execute the second part of his master plan, the war needed to come first. The elimination of European Jewry was not spontaneous, passionate, or accidental. Hitler would have probably preferred to put the Final Solution into motion the day he took power, but he realized that his plan would create implacable opposition in many sectors unless it was done underneath the shroud of war. At the very least, he knew that war would make the process of killing the Jews much easier. The gradual build-up of anti-Semitic furor in Germany reflected the notion that Germany was being skillfully prepared for both war and *simultaneous* revenge it was to take on the Jews.

The necessary connection between the Holocaust and the war becomes evident as one walks through the stages of genocide.

The pre-war stages

Before the war began, anti-Semitism and violence had occurred throughout Germany. But even though antebellum anti-Jewish violence was conceived at the upper levels, it was brief and passionate, not extended, systematic and bureaucratic. As Zygmunt Bauman pointed out, *Kristallnacht* “did not differ much from past pogroms; it hardly stood out from the long line of crowd violence stretching from ancient time, through the Middle Ages and up to the almost contemporary, but still largely pre-modern, Russia Poland or Rumania.”³ Significantly, the anti-Jewish measures in Nazi Germany before the war stopped well short of mass murder on a genocidal scale. The German populace reacted negatively to these peacetime incidents, objecting to the “wanton brutality in the streets of their neighborhoods, which many Germans recoiled against instinctively as something unlawful, unseemly, unnecessary, and, in its naked, atavistic savagery, unworthy of civilized society.”⁴ No such objections were raised after the war inured the German people to violence.

The few instances of pre-war mass murder ran into large-scale objections from many segments of German society. The “euthanasia” program, for instance, was little more than small-scale mass murder, and a precursor for the Holocaust. These first Nazi victims were being killed before the war had a chance to make genocide acceptable to the German people, and as a result the programs met with resistance, largely from religious groups.

The early concentration camps had more in common with harsh prisons than with the death camps that were instituted later in the war. “They remained

insignificant in size (less than twenty-five thousand were in the camp system in 1939) and overall effect,” wrote Goldhagen, “except to instill fear into the opponents of the regimes and the Jews.”⁵ He argued that the evolution to death camps was a natural progression that mirrored the growing anti-Semitism in German society, but seemed to ignore the impact of the war on the transformation from a system of incarceration to a system of elimination. Without the conditions provided by the war, such a transformation would not have been possible, for history does not seem to support the notion that there is a “natural progression” from ghettos to concentration camps to death camps. Goldhagen painstakingly demonstrates how anti-Semitism was always present in German society, but does not explain very well how this “growing” anti-Semitism naturally developed into the death camp archipelago. Any lingering hatred needed a trigger to unleash it, and the war provided that trigger. There was indeed a progression to the madness, but that progression mirrored that of the war.

War stages, and Endlösung

Is it a coincidence that the Final Solution began in earnest in 1942, just as the war was reaching its climax? Not only was the war necessary for its execution, but perhaps *the peak of the war* was necessary as well, because as the war picked up steam, so did the murders. After overrunning Western Europe, the Germans launched not one but *two* major offensives against their most hated enemies—the Russians and the Jews. The war intensified on the home front within a year of the day that it widened in the east.

The implementation of the Final Solution was an outgrowth of the widening war, in part for “practical” reasons. Lifton pointed out that

The actual invasion of the Soviet Union in June has extreme importance. It enormously strained all German resources, including those necessary to maintain large numbers of Soviet prisoners ... it brought about the increasing concentration in ghettos of very large numbers of Jews, with attendant problems of not only starvation but epidemics that could spread to German personnel ...⁶

Eichmann spoke about how the other ideas that had been attempted or merely suggested to deal with the Jewish problem (including deportation, concentration, and his idea to ship the Jews to Madagascar) had become impractical as the war progressed.⁷ The enormous camp system that would have been necessary to guard millions of Jewish prisoners would have put an unacceptable drain on manpower needed for the Russian front. Killing them was cheaper, easier, and diverted fewer resources away from the war. It was simply impractical to keep the Jewish enemy alive while the war sapped German strength.

War and the participants

The Holocaust would have run into much greater resistance from a number of sectors if it had occurred in peacetime. Ordinary German people would have

been much more likely to protest; the killers themselves, from soldiers to doctors to camp commandants, would have been less likely to carry out their orders; religious groups, both domestic and international, may not have been so passive; and finally, Germany may have had a tougher time hiding its crimes from the rest of the international community.

Ordinary Germans. War creates a type of mass psychosis to which societies at peace cannot relate. After over five decades of peace between the great powers, it is difficult to grasp how fully the war dominated life for those who were near the battlefields. For Europeans in the early 40s, the war was *the* primary fact of life, day after day, for six years. To the Germans, who harbored fresh memories of a devastating defeat at the hands of the same enemies that destroyed an entire generation of men, as well as their economy and entire society, the thought of another, even more devastating loss must have been unbearable. War changes a people in two ways: on a collective level, war produces zealous patriotism, groupthink, and squashes popular dissent in society; and secondly, on an individual level, war hardens the soul to senseless violence and suffering of others, and activates the most basic instincts of survival.

The German people have been called cowards, accomplices and even “willing executioners” for their failure to protest against the barbaric actions taken by their government. Yet in many ways they were displaying the same type of groupthink and mindless obedience to authority that is common to many societies at war. Such “rally ‘round the flag” patriotic zeal is evident nearly everywhere, inspiring the Soviet masses to save Stalin’s brutal regime and Americans to “support the troops” during the Gulf War. Popular wars decrease public dissent, making alternative opinions akin to treason and national blasphemy. During the Great War for the Fatherland, people whose consciences cried out against the treatment of their Jewish neighbors remained silent not only out of fear and complicity, but also because they did not want to be seen as unpatriotic abettors of the enemy. The war created an unreal, extraordinary, unpredictable atmosphere that allowed the German people to stand aside as their neighbors were dragged off to their deaths, because silence supported the troops..

Secondly, on a more individual level, war reawakens the survival instinct in its participants. Loss of life or loved ones suddenly become daily possibilities, forcing people to be very cognizant of their own fragility and mortality. In war, survival is an obsession second only (perhaps) to victory. The Nazi Doctor Hans F. noted at the time that “people feared that through the events of the war they themselves would be killed,” and “they did not have much concern left for the sufferings of other people.”⁸ And they had less concern left for the sufferings of their enemies, chief amongst them the Jews. The war was causing the deaths of millions of Germans, which inspired some of the Nazi doctors to feel that, “if the enemy is killing our healthy youth, then this is not such a crime.”⁹ If there were no enemy killing their youth, then would such crimes have been permissible?

The logic of German anti-Semitism, Goldhagen argues, “was to promote the ‘elimination’ of Jews by whatever means necessary and possible, *given the prevailing ethical constraints*”¹⁰ (emphasis added). The war lowered those prevailing ethical constraints, allowing the German people to sink to depths unimaginable in times of peace. Hitler may well have anticipated this group-think, relaxation of “ethical constraints,” and psychological numbing to violence and death that his long-planned war would bring about, and scheduled his mass murder accordingly. Lifton has pointed out that, “the generally diminished sense of the value of human life during war made it ‘the best time for the elimination’.”¹¹

Besides, Germany was no ordinary state at war. The Nazis had created a nation designed for total, permanent war, where all German economic, political, and spiritual effort was focused upon the conflict and all citizens were warriors—or enemies. The Wehrmacht showed little remorse in killing women and children anytime they got in the way, and anytime they were perceived as a potential threat. Their attitude of the German leadership, and therefore the Wehrmacht as a whole, toward enemy populations had been the same since Moltke’s time, when the high command, encouraged by Clausewitz, ordered harsh repression of enemy populations to discourage revolt.¹² The enemies of the German state were to be shown no mercy, and the main ideological and biological enemy of the German state was perceived to be, of course, the Jewish people.

The perpetrators. Perhaps even more importantly, the war provided the *perpetrators* of the killings with a complex system of psychological justification for their actions. Not only were the men operating the killing centers cognizant of the “facts” that Jews were the enemy, the architects of this war, and the reason for Germany’s economic hardships, but they were also aware that during this war there were many other men performing duties that were far worse. This kept them at their gruesome posts, and inspired them to do a thorough job, for two reasons.

First, *cowardice* played an important role. These men and women were well aware that to request a transfer might mean a trip to the Russian front, from which few people returned. The Jew-killing duties, while perhaps unpleasant, were relatively safe and provided a solid chance to survive the war. The Russian front must have provided quite an effective incentive to perform for those assigned to guard the trains, or to man the towers, or to work in the rear in the *Einsatzgruppen*. The doctors in Auschwitz that Lifton described spoke of this: “This ‘good life’ gave them additional incentive to participate in selections, especially since the alternative, should they have strongly requested a transfer, would have probably been the Russian front, where their lives would have been in extreme danger.”¹³ Another Nazi doctor, a “euthanasia” specialist, was haunted by

his strong personal conflict about whether to leave work in a mental hospital in order to

rejoin the military at a time of war, a conflict that could lead to profound fear and guilt either way—over what he was doing and avoiding if he stayed with the mental hospital, and what he was leaving and what he was facing if he rejoined the military ... for a time, he had been protected from military duty because his work in “euthanasia” placed him in the category of “indispensable.”¹⁴

No doubt the desire to remain “indispensable” helped the Nazi doctors get out of bed every morning and perform their duties.

Yet cowardice cannot completely explain genocide. One can easily imagine that the knowledge that thousands of Germans were dying every day at the front would cause a tremendous degree of guilt and shame for those in the rear, who were performing comparatively cushy, safe jobs fighting the unarmed enemy. Those operating the gas chambers must have felt that they had no right to complain about their assigned tasks while others were risking much more for the Fatherland. To shirk from their duties, however unpleasant they might have been, would have been an insult to those who were dying at the front. The men in Stalingrad would have immediately traded places with anyone in Police Battalion 101, and the policemen must have known that. One Nazi doctor spoke of this feeling, remarking that he felt ashamed as he watched a parade of “boys” singing as they marched off to the front. “These boys risked their lives,” he thought, “and I don’t do anything.”¹⁵

There is an incident in the history of the infamous Police Battalion 101 that has become somewhat controversial in this regard. As Major Trapp, the company commander, first explained the details of what was to be done in these villages, he asked his men to remember the bombs that were falling on Berlin.¹⁶ Goldhagen argues that since the battalion must have known that the Jews in Polish villages could not have had anything to do with bombings, this cannot be a realistic rationale for their actions.

How could such a statement make sense to him and to all those who heard and understood it? It is not clear what the exact logic of the comparison was, yet it suggested that the slaughter of the Jews was either just retribution for the bombing of German cities or perhaps a retaliatory act that would have some salutary effect on the bombing, or both ... the men of the police battalion do not comment upon the ludicrousness of Trapp’s central justification, spoken to them at their baptismal moment as executioners.¹⁷

Goldhagen seems to be missing the point. Trapp did not intend to make a direct parallel between the two situations; rather, he was attempting to remind the battalion that there was a war on, and that hard times were upon them but that they could not fail in their duties because the folks at home were counting on them. Bombs were falling on Berlin, German people were dying, the war was horrible all over, so the men of Police Battalion 101 should have had no feelings of guilt in doing their duty against the enemies of Fatherland. Trapp inspired the “ordinary men” in the Order Police to kill innocent people by appealing to patriotism, duty, and honor. These men were warriors, and “believed themselves to be performing heroic deeds”¹⁸ in the midst of Germany’s struggle for survival.

Everyone who was taking part in the Final Solution was a warrior, as pointed out when Lifton noted that even “performing selections was constantly compared to being in combat. The message from Himmler, from the camp commandant, and from the medical hierarchy was that this difficult assignment had to be understood as wartime duty.”¹⁹ The very fact that Trapp could inspire his men by referring to the bombs falling back home demonstrates how the Holocaust was abetted by the backdrop of war.

Religious leaders. The power of Germany’s religious community must have concerned the Nazi leadership, because it had already been wielded to stop the euthanasia program in the late 1930s. Yet Hitler seemed to have faith in the patriotic pull the churches—and their members—would feel. He was telling his colleagues as early as 1935 that “the demands and upheaval of war would mute expected religious opposition and enable such a project to be implemented smoothly.”²⁰ He was to be proved correct, for once the war started, the protests from the churches grew quieter and stopped. Had there been no tension between patriotism and religion, Germany’s religious leaders might not have been so quiet.

International religious pressure might also have been more forthcoming if the Holocaust was attempted during peacetime. Pope Pius XII, for instance, was infamously mute throughout the Holocaust, and gave little guidance to the 22 million German Roman Catholics. Recently released documents suggest that Pius believed the reports reaching him about the Holocaust to be typical wartime exaggerations.²¹ Several other factors have been suggested to explain the Papal reticence:²² predictable anti-Semitism; cowardice; an ill-advised attempt at neutrality; secret deals with Hitler exchanging silence for Nazi promises not to confiscate Church lands in Germany; and a misguided belief that any anti-German pronouncements would aid Bolshevism, which constituted at least as great a threat to Christendom.

Of course, if there had been no war on, none of these factors (except anti-Semitism) would have been applied. Cowardice would not have been an option; secret deals would have been unnecessary; Bolshevik domination would not have appeared imminent. Appeals from Rome to end the Holocaust that were part of a general call for peace may not have been so vague if the war had not been going on. The unforgivable silence of Pius XII would have been less likely (though admittedly not impossible) without the confusion, horror, and disbelief created by World War II.

Other nations. The Americans and the rest of the Allies are often criticized for their inaction in affecting the machinations of the Holocaust, if indeed they were aware of its existence.²³ But attribution of atrocities to the enemy is as old as war itself, and anyone with a knowledge of history must have met initial reports of the Holocaust with great skepticism. The then incomprehensible nature of the Holocaust made it that much more attributable to exaggeration and propaganda.

The true nature of the Final Solution was therefore harder for the Allies to believe, and easier for the Nazis to hide.

As the evidence of mass murder began to accumulate, the war complicated Allied responses. It was argued that any bombers re-routed to destroy Auschwitz would be doing the Jews more good by bombing military targets, and therefore bringing about a quicker end to the war. So even amongst those who could bring themselves to be convinced of the veracity of the reports of genocide, the necessities of war confused priorities for the use of force.

To Nazi leaders, the fact that there was already a war on erased all hesitancy to carry forth their plans. They had more to fear from an international community that was already united in seeking its unconditional surrender. Genocide under these circumstances seemed to carry little risk of further reprisal.

The final stages, and “death marches”

In the closing weeks of the war, when the outcome was clear to all but the most fanatical, concentration camp guards whose facilities were in the path of advancing allied armies marched their inmates deeper into Reich-held territory. Untold thousands died during these brutal and futile “death marches.” To some extent, they were ordered from above to hide the evidence of atrocities, but the orders were carried out with particular zeal. To many historians, these marches are particularly incomprehensible—why would those running the camps continue to torture and kill inmates, even when they must have known the war was lost?

Germans everywhere fought until the final bell. Russians fighting their way through Berlin encountered zealous units throughout, often comprised mainly of young boys and old men that continued fighting though they must have known the war was lost. The death marches out of the concentration camps occurred concomitantly on the third front, against the Jewish enemy. Many units in the Wehrmacht fought until the bitter end, and those guarding the camps (who were often among the most dedicated to the Nazi cause) were no exception. With stereotypical German thoroughness, they did their duty until forced to stop. The death marches are indeed unexplainable to those who maintain an erroneous intellectual separation between the Holocaust and the war that caused its existence.

The Jews as the enemy

The Germans were so in the grip of anti-Semitic fantasies that they conceived of the manifestly inert, unarmed Jewish population of the Lublin region, which was destitute, prostrate, and compliant in the face of German demands, as being at war with Germany.²⁴

The truly incomprehensible part of the Holocaust is therefore not the fact that it occurred. Societies caught up in the mass psychosis of war have exacted horrible revenge upon the women and children of their enemies throughout recorded

history.²⁵ In this respect, the Holocaust was neither modern nor unique. The mystery that will never be adequately solved is how the Germans, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, could have reached the conclusion that the Jews were in fact their enemy, and indeed a *threat to their very existence*, and that their elimination was a crucial part of the war. That a modern, post-enlightenment society, so dependent upon science and reason, allowed itself to be convinced despite a *complete lack of evidence* that the Jewish people were their main enemy is a testament to the power of the mass hysteria of war.

The Germans considered the slaughter of the Jews to be an act of war against their enemy, and Jewish women and children to be soldiers in the ubiquitous Jewish army. For instance, concentration camp prisoners were treated like soldiers, which helped conform the victims to this mythic Jewish army, without which the killing would not have been permissible. But because all Jews were enemies of the Fatherland, *anything* was permissible. Primo Levi wrote of the “army of prisoners” in Auschwitz, all of whom were uniformed, marched to daily inspection, and forced to make their beds impeccably every morning.²⁶ Doing this helped the Germans conform their victims to the image they held of them, of an enemy army that had to be destroyed. To the Germans running the trains and the death camps it was obvious that the Jews were part of the army of the enemy, and any dereliction of duty would have endangered the Fatherland.

But how can this be? Is it plausible that even the most fanatical German could view an eight-year-old girl as an enemy soldier who deserves no quarter? Indeed, without such a view, the actions of the Germans are truly incomprehensible. At Nuremberg, SS Officer Otto Ohlendorf testified that killing the children presented no major inconsistencies, “for the children were people who would grow up and, surely, being the children of parents who had been killed, would constitute a danger no smaller than that of their parents.”²⁷ Killing these young Jewish soldiers now was easier than it would be when they could actively fight against the Fatherland, saving a great deal of time and effort. It was grim work, to be sure, but necessary.

Thus the Holocaust only makes sense in the context of the war. The Germans that were doing the killing must have thought of themselves as heroic warriors of the Fatherland, ridding the continent of the ancient enemy of their people. Judaism was the number one foe of Germany, the main object of its anger and rage, the main enemy in World War II. Hitler apparently believed that the war would destroy either the Aryan or the Jewish race. “If the war were lost,” he told Speer, “the German people too were ‘lost’ so one need not worry about their needs for survival.”²⁸ World War II became the long-awaited showdown between Aryan and Jew, after which only one group would remain. “The alternative to victory on the battlefield,” one Hitler Youth member stated, “was the endless night of Bolshevik–Jewish slavery, [which] was too horrible to contemplate.”²⁹ Therefore, *in order to win the war*, the Jewish people had to be destroyed.

Somehow German logic led to the conclusion that the Jews had actually *caused* the present and previous war. The people came to believe that the

destruction that they saw all around them, the relentless terror and loss of life, the economic chaos and societal catastrophe were all caused by the Jews. In this context, revenge became a key motivator for genocide. This passion for revenge could not have existed without the existence of these wars in the first place. Because the Jew was responsible for the suffering of the Fatherland, the German people were able to feel that “the ‘enemy’ must not only die,” as Primo Levi wrote, “he must die in torment.”³⁰

Implications and lessons to be learned

At the very least, the war made the Holocaust more likely, and easier for the Nazis to accomplish. It greased the gears of the genocide machine, creating an atmosphere where ideas that during times of peace would have been unthinkable became reasonable and acceptable. But beyond that fundamental conclusion, the idea that the war was a necessary condition for the slaughter has a few more implications for humanity.

Genocide is almost always connected with war

Genocide is a new word with an ancient meaning. The connection between World War II and the Holocaust is not unique, for genocides rarely occur in the absence of war: the Turks slaughtered the Armenians during World War I; Pol Pot and his minions initiated the killing fields in a region torn by revolution, civil and international war; the Bosnian Serbs attempted to cleanse their nation of Muslims during the war in that nation; the butchery in Rwanda was amid a civil war; and on and on and on. Genocide seems to need a background of conflict to prosper.

Therefore, we must be aware that where war is present, there is always the potential for genocide. The hatred that war creates toward “the enemy” is so powerful that often it apparently becomes impossible to differentiate between combatants and non. The Holocaust shows us not only the depths of evil to which human beings can sink, but also the power that war can exert over the heart and minds of its participants. The hypnotic effect that Hitler had upon the German people was matched and surpassed only by the greater hypnotic effect of the war. The international community must from now on remain on alert during times of war anywhere, because the potential for mass murder and genocide inevitably and dramatically rises.

States respond to the stresses of war very differently

Just as crises teach people about their true nature, wars shed light on the nature of the societies that wage them. Germany in the 1930s was a modern, industrial, post-enlightenment nation, rational and very logical, seemingly incapable of the totally irrational act of the Holocaust. The war pushed the German people over the edge, into the abyss of evil, exposing a side of their society that Germans

themselves did not realize existed. War brings the worst aspects of human nature to the surface, and anything becomes possible, including crimes unthinkable during times of peace, as the dirty underbelly of societies come the surface. Just as those who would know a person observe carefully the times of stress, those who wish to know a people should study their subjects in times of crisis and war.

Perhaps this underbelly of societies that emerges during war can be predicted by their behavior when at peace. The regime type, for example, might be a key determinant of the nature of a state at war. Democracies, for instance, seem to be far less engineered for atrocity than totalitarian states. Yet as the experience of the Japanese-Americans during World War II shows, the mass psychosis of war can override the human sympathy normal in peacetime, even in democracies. But there is an extreme danger in cases where the government has a monopoly on information, as is too often the case in times of war. For instance, when spoken of at all, the Jewish actions were referred to under a hail of euphemisms and fantastic stories of resettlement camps to the east. German actions

were not only used to deceive the victims and prevent defensive reactions on their part; they were also meant, within the limits of the possible, to prevent public opinion, and those sections of the army not directly involved, from finding out what was happening in all territories occupied by the Third Reich.³¹

Evidence of this deception was all around them, yet people will often believe whatever they choose, and what they are told (and it is especially hard to believe the seemingly incomprehensible). Revocation of the freedom of the press is the first step to hiding holocausts. That, however, is the subject for another essay.

Conclusion

War is the catalyst of genocide

This crucial point, while seemingly trivial perhaps, ought to remind those who seek to understand the Holocaust to recall the context in which humanity's worst crime occurred. To the Germans, the Final Solution was as much a part of the war effort as was the invasion of France, Barbarossa and the U-Boat campaign.

Of course genocide is not an inevitable outcome of war, but neither is it uncommon. Scholars have recently been debating the extent of the uniqueness of the Holocaust,³² but targeting enemy civilians is a practice as old as war itself. In fact, total war is so common in history that the few centuries where professional warriors left civilians unharmed seem more an exception than the rule. Perhaps the Holocaust was an example of the periodic intrusions of Medieval Europe into the present, of the philosophy that civilians and even children can be considered enemies. The unenlightened medievalism that William Manchester aptly described as "impenetrably mindless"³³ still holds sway in many nations of the world, and is especially common during war. Future Holocausts are still possible, for human nature has not changed, and neither has

the nature of war. The first step in avoiding the Holocausts of the future is to avoid war itself, and the mass psychosis that it brings.

Notes and References

1. Quoted in Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (New York: Knopf, 1996), p 142. Also prominently on display in the US Holocaust Museum, Washington, DC.
2. Goldhagen, p 142.
3. Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), p 89.
4. Goldhagen, p 121.
5. Goldhagen, p 177.
6. Lifton, p 144.
7. Eichman's discussion of the initial solutions to the Jewish Problem can be found in Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), pp 56–82. The Madagascar plan can be found on pp 76–78.
8. From Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p 58.
9. Lifton, p 112.
10. Goldhagen, p 77.
11. Lifton, p 50.
12. Barbara Tuchman describes "the German theory of terror." "Clausewitz had prescribed terror as the proper method to shorten war, his whole theory of war being based on the necessity of making it short, sharp and decisive." *The Guns of August* (New York: Bantam Books, 1962), pp 350–351. The degree to which Clausewitz actually held such a theory may be open to debate, but there is little doubt that he advocated quick victory, and less doubt that a "terror theory" had become part of the German way of war by the beginning of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870.
13. Lifton, p 202.
14. Lifton, p 59.
15. Lifton, p 128.
16. This story is related by Christopher Browning in *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), pp 55–70.
17. Goldhagen, p 213
18. Goldhagen, p 248.
19. Lifton, p 173.
20. Lifton, p 50.
21. "Pius XII said to feel Nazi crimes were overstated," *New York Times*, October 21, 1999.
22. See John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York: Viking Press, 1999), and James Carroll, "The Holocaust and the Catholic Church," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1999, pp 107–112.
23. See, for instance, David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: American and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).
24. Goldhagen, p 248.
25. History is full of examples of the same sort of calculated cruelty to civilians that the Germans displayed in World War II. To pick just one out of countless examples, the Mongols were infamous for putting entire cities and nations to the sword. A census taken by the Chin emperors in 1195 found just under 50 million people living in Northern China. The first census taken after the Mongols swept through counted fewer than nine million. Robert Marshall, *Storm from the East: From Genghis Khan to Khubilai Khan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p 69.
26. Levi, p 116.
27. George Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p 14.
28. Lifton, p 487.
29. Goldhagen, p 128.
30. Levi, p 120.
31. Levi, p 31.
32. See Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "The politics of uniqueness: reflections on the recent polemical turn in Holocaust and genocide scholarship," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol 13, No 1, 1999, pp 28–61.
33. William Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire: The Medieval Mind and the Renaissance: Portrait of an Age* (Boston: Little, Brown 1992), p 1.