

Anthony Higuera

Professor Percy

SED 405: Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Schools

Media Project: The Holocaust and Nazi Propaganda

I. Introduction

The rise of the Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany gave rise to one of the most brutal, and horrific genocides in human history. Hitler and the Nazi regime rose to power on a wave of anti-semitism that saw Jewish citizens demonized and scapegoated for all the ills and economic crises the country was suffering from. Hitler utilized pre-existing prejudices and anti-semitism both inside Germany and throughout Europe in order to exploit a vulnerable minority and seize power in the German parliament. What is crucial to understand about the Nazi Party's rise to power is that it did not happen overnight. Rather, the Nazi Party slowly gained power in the country and the more power the Nazi's gained the more brutal and difficult life became for Jews.

As the Nazi regime rose to power in Germany more rights were gradually stripped away from Jewish citizens. Soon Jews were not permitted to marry Germans, fired from government service and eventually moved into ghettos and later deported to concentration camps. It is the purpose of this project to have students examine different forms of Nazi propaganda, as well as examine first hand accounts of Jewish victims of Nazi brutality. In examining the different forms of propaganda used by Hitler and the Nazi regime the student will gain a better understanding of how they were able to demonize Jews and the dangers of what can result from bigotry, stereotyping and otherizing different groups of people. In addition to examining Nazi propaganda, students will also examine first hand accounts of Jewish victims of Nazi violence in order to gain a deeper understanding of the horrors of life under Hitler's regime.

II. Primary Source Documents

Document A: Hitler Speech To justify the annexation of Austria, Hitler called for a public vote on whether the unification should stand. This is an excerpt from a speech he gave on April 9, 1938, the day before the vote. As Hitler points out in his speech, he himself was born, and grew up, in Austria.

When one day we shall be no more, then the coming generations shall be able to look back with pride upon this day, the day on which a great Volk affirmed the German community. In the past, millions of German men shed their blood for this Reich. How merciful a fate to be allowed to create this Reich today without a suffering.

Now, rise, German Volk, subscribe to it, hold it tightly in your hands! I wish to thank Him who allowed me to return to my homeland so that I could return it to my German Reich! May every German realize the importance of the hour tomorrow, assess it and then bow his head in reverence before the will of the Almighty who has wrought this miracle in all of us within these past few weeks.

Document B: Ballot

Below is a voting ballot from April 10, 1938. The ballot text reads "Do you agree with the reunification of Austria with the German Reich that was enacted on March 13, 1938, and do you vote for the party of our leader Adolf Hitler?" The large circle is labeled "Yes," the smaller "No".



Document C: Poster Below, is a poster encouraging Germans to vote in favor of annexing Austria. The caption reads “Greater Germany: Yes on April 10th.”



Document D: Account of Shlomo Venezia

“Every time a new convoy arrived, people went in through the big door of the Crematorium and were directed towards the underground staircase that led to the undressing room. There were so many of them that we saw the queue stretching out like a long snake.

As the first of them were entering, the last were still a hundred yards or so behind. After the selection on the ramp, the women, children and old men were sent in first, then, the other men arrived.

In the undressing room, there were coat hooks with numbers all along the wall, as well as little wooden planks on which people could sit to get undressed. To deceive them more effectively the

Germans told people to pay particular attention to the numbers, so that they'd be able to find their things more easily when they came out of the "shower."

After a time, they also added an instruction to use the laces to tie shoes in pairs. In fact, this was to facilitate the process of sorting out when the things arrived at the Kanadakommando. These instructions were generally given by the SS standing guard, but it sometimes happened that a man in the Sonderkommando could speak the language of the deportees and transmit these instructions to them directly.

To calm people down and ensure they'd go through more quickly, without making any fuss, the Germans also promised them they'd have a meal just after "disinfection." Many of the women hurried up so as to be first in line and get it all over with as quickly as possible - especially as the children were terrified and clung to their mothers. For them, even more than for the others, everything must have been strange, eerie, dark and cold."

Document E: Account of Alan Zimm

"Beginning of March of '45, somebody sabotaged a part in the factory there. Not in our group. In another group. They destroyed a part of the... of a machine. Without the machine they couldn't finish the rocket. So they... without the part the rocket was unfinished. There was no way they could finish it.

What they did, they took 2,000 people from that compartment, from that group. And... put gallows in the middle of the factory, in the tunnel and hanged every one of them. They hanged them in pairs, the two. And everybody working in that factory, had to go into the tunnel, line up, and walk through underneath the gallows where the... those 200 people were hanging and come back to our work. They say, "See what's going to happen if you do the same thing what they did? You will hang."

Document F: Account of Maria Ossowski

"Eventually we were herded into what was to be our washing room. It was a huge barrack, with the water running, cold water I must add, from the top, there were men in already prison garb, which we never seen before. We were made to strip, we were made to go in front - each one of us - in front of that man, that man or the other one, they were all standing in the line, and we were shaven - we were shaven - our heads were shaven, our private parts were shaven and we were pushed then under that water. And after a while we were pushed out of it into another part of that big block, where the huge amount of terrible-looking - and already smelling terrible - clothes were prepared for us.

What we actually got was one dress which you had to put over your head. The dress had sleeves, but not long, like three-quarter sleeves, and when we have had this on, we were marched again to another part, where the girls this time - prisoners obviously - were sitting by the little tables, and that, and then where we were getting our numbers tattooed on our arms. It was done with simply - [ballpoint pens] were not invented then - so it was just implement with which you write letters in those days, and it was put into the ink and the point was made on your arm 'til it had the shape of the number."

Document G: Quotes from Hitler

The virtues of the Germans:

All the human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology . . . are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan. . . . He is the Prometheus of mankind from whose bright forehead the divine spark of genius has sprung at all times, forever kindling anew the fire of knowledge which illumined the night of silent mysteries and thus caused man to climb the path to mastery over the other beings of this earth. (*Mein Kampf*, 290)

Never a consistent doctrine, race theory revealed traces of begrudging, perverse admiration of Jews, who had supposedly maintained their racial purity over the generations of diaspora.

The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew. In hardly any people in the world is the instinct of self-preservation developed more strongly than in the so-called "chosen". . . . Where is the people which in the last two thousand years has been exposed to so slight changes of inner disposition, character, etc., as the Jewish people? What people, finally, has gone through greater upheavals than this one -- and nevertheless issued from the mightiest catastrophes of mankind unchanged? What an infinitely tough will to live and preserve the species speaks from these facts!
(*Mein Kampf*, 300)

The struggle against Jews was, then, an existential one in the most basic sense of the word, the conflict of two irreconcilable world views, one culture-creating, the other life-destroying. Hitler said to Himmler in 1942:

. . . the discovery of the Jewish virus is one of the greatest revolutions that has taken place in the world. The battle in which we are engaged today is of the same sort as the battle waged, during the last century, by Pasteur and Koch. How many diseases have their origin in the Jewish virus! . . . We shall regain our health only by eliminating the Jew.
(Quoted in Burleigh and Wippermann, *Racial State*, 107)

The threats to the Aryan race:

[History] shows with terrifying clarity that in every mingling of the Aryan blood with that of lower peoples the result was the end of the cultured people. . . . To bring about such a development is, then, nothing else but to sin against the will of the eternal creator. (*Mein Kampf*, 286)

All great cultures of the past perished only because the originally creative race died out from blood poisoning.
(*Mein Kampf*, 289)

Document H: Account of Jacob Blankitny

“It was winter and the cold burned us; all the camp was flooded and muddy. They took our winter clothes and in exchange, gave us light clothes that looked like striped pajamas. With time you could see through these clothes, the extreme state of malnutrition and weakness of our bodies. They placed us in different barracks, with three-story bunks, placing four people per bed; totaling twelve humans per bunk.

Our life in the camp started at five o'clock in the morning when they gave us coffee and a piece of bread. At the same time, we were counted like animals; making sure that nobody was missing. We were beaten and abused constantly, especially if someone unfortunately fell or moved in place because of the hard beatings. These beatings were executed at that immediate instant; making the vile SS soldiers fill with laughter to see in our faces, the horror to which we were subjected. We worked outside the camp until seven o'clock at night when we returned and they gave us a plate that contained a quarter of a liter of soup. Luckily, I was in the same barracks as my father. One of our first projects was to start digging water canals. Each evening we brought back to camp, four or five cadavers of our friends, who were taken directly to the crematoria. Constantly there were new selections; the sick were directly killed as we became increasingly more like skeletons.

In one of those fateful selections, we were asked what our professions were, and, when it was my turn to answer, I said that I was a carpenter and my father responded that he was a bricklayer. This answer would ultimately result in his demise.

One day, all those who had replied that our profession were carpenters; about ten people; were called up to transfer to another place. I was forced to say goodbye to my father and he said these last words to me: "I will not see you anymore. It may be that you are able to save yourself now that they offered you another place to go, but instead of going to another place, I prefer to stay here and pass as a sick person. Though I am abandoning you, you have an obligation to go and save yourself." This was the last conversation I ever had with my father! I never saw him again.”

III. Guiding Questions

- What does reading the first hand accounts of Jewish survivors tell you about the brutality of the Nazi regime?
- What do Hitler's quotes reveal about his views on Germans (Aryans) versus Jews?
- What does Nazi propaganda reveal about Germany's aggression towards other nations, especially in regards to the annexation of Austria?
- Are there any similarities that can be found among the accounts of the Jewish survivors?
- What stands out to you in reading the accounts of Jewish survivors of Nazi violence and concentration camps?

IV. Document Based Question Writing Prompt: Using the primary sources provided examine the ways in which Hitler's ideology affected how Jews were treated and how this treatment contributed to their dehumanization at the hands of the Nazi regime.

V. Lesson Plan

Content/Big Idea: The main content for this lesson plan will be focused on having students examine first hand accounts of Jewish survivors. This will allow them to gain a better understanding of what life was like under the Nazi regime and the brutality that Jews suffered at the hands of Hitler and the Nazi Party.

Hook: Begin the lesson by having students view the short youtube clip “Holocaust Survivor: Auschwitz was Hell” and have them reflect on the survivors story and what specifically stood out to them.

Materials: Primary source documents on survivor’s stories and experiences, “Holocaust Survivor” youtube video, chromebooks

Sequence of Instructional Activities: (1) Lesson will begin by having students view the short youtube clip and then reflect on what they saw, (2) students will be broken up into small groups of about 3-4 individuals per group, (3) each group will use the primary source documents provided in this media project about survivor’s accounts of Nazi brutality and life inside the concentration camps in order to answer the question: What was life like for a Jewish person living under the Nazi regime?, (4) each group will prepare a brief powerpoint presentation (about 5-7 minutes long) in which they examine the hardships and brutality the survivors faced and come up with solutions for how future generations can ensure that no genocide is ever repeated

Assessment: This lesson plan’s assessment will take the form of students completing a powerpoint presentation where they critically examine primary source documents and are asked to come up with their own solutions for preventing future genocides from taking place.

Reflection: At the end of the lesson have students prepare a brief exit ticket in which they write down what stood out to them the most from reading the survivor’s accounts.

VI. Additional Resources, Videos, and Articles for Teacher/Student Research

[The Holocaust, Genocides, and Mass Murder of WWII: Crash Course European History #40 - YouTube](#)

[Holocaust Survivor Returns to Auschwitz - YouTube](#)

[How did Hitler rise to power? - Alex Gendler and Anthony Hazard - YouTube](#)

[The Rise of the Nazis | History - YouTube](#)

[Diaries — United States Holocaust Memorial Museum \(ushmm.org\)](#)

[Understanding through Testimony - Jewish Holocaust Centre \(jhc.org.au\)](#)

[Tales from Auschwitz: survivor stories | Holocaust | The Guardian](#)

Night by Elie Wiesel

Maus by Art Spiegelman

Auschwitz: A New History by Laurence Rees

The Pianist (2002 Film)