

Nazi Germany's Attempts at Polish Genocide

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Political situation before WWII.

After World War I, Poland emerged as a sovereign republic, symbolizing the defeat of Imperial Germany and the surrender of the Russian Empire. Poland needed to secure its existence between a turbulent Germany in the West and the reorganizing and revolutionary Soviet Union in the East beyond arming itself with the words of the Treaty of Versailles. To maintain a balance of power, the republic had to compete.

Over a decade later, in 1933, Hitler assumed power with an agenda that inspired the German people. Hitler portrayed Germany as a victim of the Entente, blaming external and internal “undesirables” for hindering the Reich. His edict aimed to annihilate Jews, Slavs (including Poles), the mentally and physically handicapped, and the rest deemed as “inferior”. This was part of his strategy to expand the German Empire to the Ural Mountains, if not beyond. His passionate rhetoric led to the downfall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of a Führer.

The most powerful empires of France and Britain were observed from afar. There were several reasons for this, including a war-weary public haunted by World War I, a rollback of the harsh rules of the Versailles Treaty toward Germany, the use of fascism as a counterbalance to Communism, and a lack of international effort in war production. The League of Nations did not credit the Mein Kampf manifesto, which Hitler widely disseminated. Despite their belief that his ambitious nature was a ruse for political gain, he asserted land claims, and they appeased his desires. This resulted in the recovery of all territories lost after the First World War, except those occupied by Poland. Additionally, it resulted in the annexation of Austria and the acquisition of Czechoslovakia's most valuable territories and defenses. The interference of France and Britain resulted in a total acquisition of the nation. Owing to the Treaty of Versailles' protection of Prussian land, Poland was now surrounded on three sides by Nazi Germany and the Soviets to the East. Poland's borders seemed to predetermine her to go to war on one of her horizons, and she was not prepared for either; nonetheless, both were simultaneous.

Due to the absence of capital, Poland deduced that the quality ratio of its soldiers against Germany was 1:3. Poland, as a new nation with an agricultural economy and war-torn territories, had a national budget smaller than that of Berlin. The Poles were not ready for the war.

With a possible German attack, Poland sought help from the British and French. The alliance's primary objective was for Poland to rely on a French attack on the Western border of the Reichland. Such a move would divert German troops from Poland to defend the Rhine. To safeguard its territory, Poland could expand its defense along wider fronts during the temporary Nazi attack. Only France did not agree to launch an offensive until the last minute. Furthermore, there were no assurances of protecting Poland's territory if it fell to Hitler or Stalin. Meanwhile, the Soviets thought that if Britain and France would not welcome their occupation of Poland, maybe Hitler would.

The European theatre of World War II was set a few months after the signing of the alliances. On 1st September 1939, 1.5 million men (about the population of West Virginia) mobilized for Nazi Germany, with 500,000 for Poland, most not yet combat-ready. Europe's largest military force fought against the fourth, but the conflict was more than a military confrontation. In a public speech delivered mere weeks before the invasion, Hitler outlined: "The object of the war is ... physically to destroy the enemy. That is why I have prepared, for the moment only in the East, my 'Death's Head' formations with orders to kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of Polish descent or language. Only in this way can we obtain the living space we need."

The Allies disregarded this warning and others, hindering Poland's ability to mobilize forces until the day off for fear of being the aggressor.

Attack on Polish civilians

Polish genocide began on Sept 1st. The German air force conducted deliberate attacks on civilians by targeting non-military zones. In a matter of weeks, certain regions faced 90% of their infrastructure obliterated. Death's Head execution squads would follow behind the main offensive with a list of Polish civilians to round up and dispatch. Targets included those most effective at forming resistance: intellectuals, institution leaders, and the wealthy. This would also have the dual effect of shutting down institutions for Poles that were deemed "unnecessary" for physical, indisputable labor before annihilation. Executioners would knock on their doors at night, shoot them in their basements, or over a ditch the victim would have dug themselves. Some would be hit with the butt of their guns, sending them to local jails as temporary concentration camps. To quell unrest, villages were burnt, "suspicious" individuals were

silenced, and refugees of the country were killed for trying to escape. Jews would be rounded up to cities and ghettos for future use if not killed on sight without prompt.

Killing of Polish elites

The killing of elites and citizens occurred simultaneously during Action A and Operation Tannenberg. The warfare did not end when the frontline passed over you. A storm front would precede a five-year hurricane, and no help was coming.

Weakness of Western allies

It was not until three days later that Britain and France declared war on Germany. Britain's contributions began with the aerial bombarding of scolding pamphlets among unsuspecting Germans. Meanwhile, they organized their army and engaged in minor naval conflicts. France postponed the deployment of 4.5 million motivated soldiers until the British Army joined the war effort.

Seven days after the German invasion began with no British, France would begin a limited attack the Poles depended on. The offensive tiptoed minefields, sat out artillery shells, and bombarded more leaflets with the French air force. The French harbored fears that the same destruction they inflicted on Germany would be inflicted upon them. Haunted by World War I, France sought a form of warfare with limited scope. Their aim was not to start the most catastrophic war in history. However, they were deprived of that choice, as were the Poles.

Because of concerns about the repeating of history involving an invasion through Belgium, the French halted their offensive despite possessing a significantly larger force of over a million troops than 30,000 German soldiers. Consequently, the Polish government withdraws from Warsaw. Later, the Germans remarked how an invasion could have reached the Rhine in a fortnight, taking valuable war production land.

Despite constant bombings severely damaging 40% of buildings, 100,000 civilians and soldiers defended Warsaw. The territories of Poland were gradually lost, with the Soviet Union's participation speeding up the pace. The soldiers who were organized endured in the besieged areas until October 6th, resulting in a total of one million Polish casualties (equivalent to the population of Delaware). Germans suffered 40,000 casualties (about twice the seating capacity of Madison Square Garden). At this stage, the elites have been killed or imprisoned and are joined by hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war in either death or detention. Poland was divided approximately in half between the Soviet Union and the Fascist Reich. The

prospect of sovereignty admits a Thousand Year Reich and the red giant U.S.S.R. appeared bleak for the world, yet the Poles persisted in between them both.

The President of the Polish Exile Government reconvened in France with a message: "It is not the first time in our history that the head of state and the national government has had to take refuge from the motherland which an enemy has overrun. In the course of a thousand years, we have defended more than once our existence and Christian civilization against the thirst for conquest and oppression by Germany and against her barbarous oriental ally. I profoundly believe that the heroic contribution of Poland to the Anglo-French Coalition war will not be in vain... it will result in final victory."

German occupation of Poland

During mid-October 1939, there were 35 million Polish citizens alive who rejected the Mein Kampf vision through their existence. After the release of all criminals before the war, Germans filled former Polish prisons with Polish intellectuals and Jews. A significant part of the remaining Polish population was forced to move to an eastern territory, being expelled from their original homes. A new system needed to be built on top of forced ghettos to annihilate entire races—concentration camps imported from mainland Germany.

Concentration camps aimed to organize political enemies and make them suffer. The classification of political enemies increased as the Reich expanded, based on the hierarchy in Mein Kampf. The ghettos organized everyone, making sure no one escaped, and the camps made them suffer for staying and existing. Camp workers had to perform inefficient tasks without tools or enough food, like mining stones with hammers or moving snow across a field. The allocation of food enforced an emaciated state as they worked. Some would try to change the focus of suffering on production, especially later in the war, but the guard never loosened the whip. Work served as a distraction, a last hope that the prisoner's punishment was not predetermined by their race and that "Work [will] set [them] free."

All the camps shaved the prisoners' heads when they entered. Inmates wore black and white-lined clothing. Each inmate wore a badge on their skin or clothes that showed their place in the hierarchy. All the camps unpredictably murdered and beat their prisoners, and as the war effort of the Nazi Germans appeared more and more futile, the more the German guards beat the flesh out of helpless convicts in the camps. Most camps tried to prolong the suffering and control beyond the camp through last-ditch death marches away from the swarming allies. This lets them remain in the fantasy of a "controlling race" for just a little longer.

Polish clergy under German occupation

While new camps were imported from the Greater Reich, the Nazi Germans forced 1,780 of the Polish Clergy elite out of Poland to the Dachau Concentration Camp in April 1940. Dachau was the initial concentration camp that was established seven years prior to the Clergy's arrival in West Germany. The camp was originally made for communists, socialists, and political rivals. Priests were now characterized as such because of nationality alone. The camp established a precedent for all others, employing severe punishments for even the slightest offenses.

The Clergy occupied a shared barracks, which was segregated from the others. Priests were required to register as German citizens to engage in prayer. None of the priests registered but engaged in prayer—quietly, attempting to inspire hope in fellow prisoners and themselves.

Intensification of the death rate on the territories occupied by Germans at the end of WWII

One facility was originally intended to accommodate 6,000 detainees; however, by 1944, the population had ballooned to approximately 30,000 prisoners suffering in the camp. The consequence was a drastic reduction in rations, leading to bloated stomachs caused by protein deficiency. All the prisoners probably endured a bottomless pit in their stomachs, progressively deepening as the hours went on. Two years in, the guards allowed them to trade rations with one another. The incarcerated shared the food with the ones who needed it.

When the Allies were approaching close to the end of the war, the guards escorted a group of 20,000 individuals out of the camp into a death march. The Germans shot anyone who stopped. 30 Freight trains of naked bodies sat outside the camp. 830 Polish priests survived after the U.S. liberated Dachau on the 29 of April 1945, surviving 5 years of torture.

The deportation of civilians to the Greater Reich was also a component of Ravensbrück, with 36% of its inmates originating from Poland. The women's camp, originally designed for 6,000 inmates, accommodated 50,000 by the war's end. Wounds were treated with untested substances, infecting them or disabling parts of the body. Forced amputations tried to examine how the body would naturally heal itself. This left women on the operation table for hours, blood and puss coming out of their studied flesh. Many of these women would die. At least 100 women were forced into sex work on the camp or encouraged by rewards of release. Leaving was never permitted. All this while, like a summer job, 3,500 German women in their 20s read a poster: "Healthy, female workers between the ages of 20 and 40

wanted for a military site..." with promises of high wages. These ladies would take the job and board a house that overlooked a lake in one direction and a chain gang in the other.

In April 1945, the camp was left behind, and the 24,500 prisoners were forced on the death march. A mere 3,500 would survive. 50,000 women died in total at Ravensbrück.

Stutthof, located in northern Poland, aimed to address the "Polish Question" within Polish territory. The Polish elite were the first ones to suffer with the answer on the 2nd of September 1939. Upon arrival, they were greeted by an officer: "From now on, you are no longer a person, just a number. All your rights have been left outside the gate- you are left with only one, and you are free to do it – leave through that chimney."

The weak would be stripped and shot immediately. The ones who survived were used to building the camp further for more inhabitants, even in the middle of winter. Fleas, lice, or ticks plagued their skin. The inmates would scratch their bites, allowing bacteria to infect the wound with Typhus. Rashes, muscle pain, and sometimes death accompanied the infection. Those chronically infected but not killed by the disease died from the forced injection. Regardless, barracks were built under the muzzle of a machine gun surrounded by electric barbed wire. 250 prisoners grew to 52,000 prisoners.

The standard workday comprised waking up at six or seven in the morning and finishing between five and seven in the evening. There was a one-hour break for a 1,000-calorie meal, equivalent to 80 minutes of running. The work may involve handling toxic chemicals because of cost-effectiveness and, primarily, the owner's lack of care. Afterward, they retired to their three-story bunks or were assigned to a dormitory without food. There, they would be locked inside and starve to death if they did not die from starvation through the physical work.

With the Soviet offensive approaching, a death march was in order. In January, 25,000 individuals were compelled to embark on a 10-day walk, surviving on only two days' worth of food. A survivor recalled the experience: "How many fell on the road? They were marching for so long until their legs could be pulled

forward. When they fell, a blow with the rifle butt tried to lift them. They were too weak to continue the march; some of these falls were their last falls. An SS man's kick removed the body to the side of the road. Sometimes one kick was enough, or one knock with a rifle butt in the face to finish the life."

When the Soviets arrived on May 9, 1945, 100 hungry, emaciated survivors remained at the camp. 115,000 prisoners in total entered Stutthof. 65,000 died. Stutthof was the last camp shutdown on Polish soil.

Occupation of East Poland by Germany

Outside of the concentration camps, on 11 April 1942, the relocated Poles in ghetto homes in East Poland were again deported in the name of living space for the German people. "when the Germans came into the house, they gave us only 5 minutes to prepare and take some things and immediately pushed us out of the house, regardless of the children's crying and my parents' pleas."

110,000 Polish peasants are uprooted, including many Jews. 10,000 died in the transaction alone, those deemed useless by the authorities, such as the old and ill. They would be lined up in a firing line and shot outside their homes. Individuals who did not have Polish ancestry moved to factories nearer to the German borders. Those not in these categories would be killed or slaved in the likes of Auschwitz.

The situation of children in Polish territory under German occupation

30,000 children were kidnapped by the Nazis German for separation and indoctrination in Operation Zamość alone. The Germans took the children, and if there was any resistance, even very little resistance, they beat the mothers and children until they bled. Then there was squealing and crying. Often, mothers turned to the Germans for food for hungry and frozen children. They could only get a blow with a stick or a whip. I saw the Germans kill small children."

Those children who resisted indoctrination or were deemed insufficiently pure were not shown leniency. A children's concentration camp for those between the ages of twelve and sixteen was established on the 11th of December 1942 on Przemysłowa Street in Łódź. Officials declared a "need to isolate minor-age Polish citizens and to educate them through work so that they will not demoralize German children." Most of these children had parents working for the Resistance, but some included work avoiders and even turnstile jumpers. Children who possessed mild physical or mental impairments were killed at discovery. The camp had a peak registration of 1,100 inmates, which included children as young as 10.

For work, they normally sewed for the front lines more than a dozen hours per day. If they failed, they were forced into a locked, cold room, giving them hypothermia or deepening their starvation, sometimes

to death. Beatings were faster, easier, and more gratifying torture for the guards to give. When they turned sixteen, they were sent to other concentration camps. Children were liberated earlier if their parents clarified their racial status on the Mein Kampf Hierarchy.

On the 18th of January 1945, the camp was deserted. When the Soviets arrived, more than a hundred emaciated, shivering children were found. For several years, a nearby community housed two hundred orphaned children. Housing development led to the demolition of the camp in the early 1960s. There are now few physical remains for public memory.

Work for death, not for money, in the concentration camps

It was a common occurrence for officials to eradicate evidence of the camps. In August 1938, Gusen opened with German/Austrian prisoners, but after the outbreak of war, 60% were Polish citizens. By February 1945, the camp had reached its highest occupancy level of 26,000, supervised by approximately 10,000 guards. Some prisoners would have to share beds and fleas. If they refused to, they threw themselves at the electric fence.

The camp was established near granite quarries. Prisoners were mined for their use in city infrastructure renovations and metropolis expansions. Others worked in armament factories. All of them worked 9-12 hours under a baton. They could never relax, not even during showers, as cold water was poured over them, especially in the winter. This seemed to have worked as one German public entity invested \$20,886,122.45 in today's money on forced labor.

The SS guards estimated that the ones chosen to work in the quarry had 3-6 months to live. They enforced this duration with guards sent to roam with a baton and seek someone to beat. The guards profited from the work of the inmates with a bloodied baton in hand. They always sought to maximize "efficiency," but not at the cost of maximized suffering. Work would be halted because a prisoner had a missing button on his jacket, but more likely, a guard wanted to flog someone to death. They could be subjected to the standing post, where their hands were tied to the roof, and their bodies were left hanging limp off the ground. Their wrists would hold their entire body weight. They would be helplessly flogged from below. "I was hung only once and only for five minutes. It is difficult to describe the pain; I felt as if my arms were ripped out of their joints." "Whoever took a smaller stone was made to return to the quarry, being hit constantly. Then, the person was given a 60kg stone, and he had no chance of bringing it back. So, he died."

As a killing blow for the prisoners entering the pit of Hell, they had to climb a 30.8m (101ft) staircase carrying rocks eight to ten times per day, followed by a kilometer (5/8 of a mile) long road. "When we returned to the barracks, no one started eating, and everyone went to bed because we were exhausted. Many of us slept in the corner."

The "Final Solution"

Adding up all the deaths of the previous camps together does not compare to the "Final Solution" extermination camp of Auschwitz, one of the first camps on Polish soil and the largest camp of the Reich. First arriving on the 14th of June 1940, many Poles escaping the war were captured and sent to Auschwitz. They were crammed into a cattle wagon made for horses or pigs. Later, the Nazis would organize railroads, herding 3,000 victims a week with 147 trains. The railway would make Auschwitz the hub of death. 700,000 prisoners would be housed in 1945.

On arrival, the ones who could not work were stripped and ordered a "cleaning." A vent would open on the ceiling, and a pellet would be dropped. Sealing the vent sealed the room for the gas to expand and stay. The prisoners would fight through each other to the door, but it was locked. They could only wait 5-20 minutes to seal their fate with screams. All things on their corpses that would not burn, including teeth, had to be taken off by the prisoners who could work. All the suffering would turn to ash. Over five buildings for gassing (killing by using gas) and cremation were built on the camp.

Liberation of the concentration camps

In May 1945, Gusen was liberated by the U.S. 190,000 arrived. 90,000 died. Austrian officials tried to sell all remnants of the camp not burned to the ground, but the former prisoners appealed for prevention.

Allied forces found escapee informants with camp blueprints. They could have strategically bombed the gas chambers. Still, Allied command rejected it, stating: "such an operation could be executed only by the diversion of considerable air support essential to the success of our forces now engaged in decisive operations elsewhere and would in any case be of such doubtful efficacy that it would not warrant the use of our resources." The Poles learned you had to save yourself.

The last Poles indentured to Auschwitz were the remnants of the Warsaw Uprising. 13,000 men, women, and children were deported for the Nazis to raze the entire city to the ground. This group and others totaling 100 prisoners in Crematorium IV, after learning they would be killed, brought Warsaw to the camp.

They killed three guards and smuggled explosives that blew up a crematorium and gas chamber. The Germans regained control over the rebellion and killed all the prisoners involved in public display.

In January 1945, guards destroyed the gas rooms, killed inmates who worked in them and burned records. The Soviets were coming. In mid-January 1945, a death march evacuation comprised 60,000, mostly Jews, headed West for 30-35 miles (60 kilometers) by rail and on foot, but with no food or water and too much snow. 15,000 could have died. On January 27, 1945, the Soviets liberated Auschwitz, finding seven thousand prisoners on the edge of death, including over 200 children. Overall, 300,000 deportations came from Poland. 74,000 died. They were the second group most targeted. Close to 1.3 million people (about the population of New Hampshire) total were deported to Auschwitz. 1.1 million of them died, 1 million including Jews.

Burst of Warsaw Uprising on Aug 1, 1944

These 5 years of nationwide torture anywhere east of the German borderline did not stop resistance, and it fermented it. All the victims' vindictive suppressed rage culminated in the Warsaw Uprising. The Nazis responded by bombing city buildings, not distinguishing citizens from soldiers. Orders from Hitler and the highest death squad official ordered to "kill every citizen, do not take prisoners." Door-to-door death squads massacred women and children for days in the Wola District. Rape was committed before the houses were set on fire. Those not massacred were forced to walk in front of panzers as human shields against the rebels. 50,000 died in less than a week. 85% of Warsaw became ruins.

The Reich most likely justified all murders under fascism in the name of deepening the trench of fear. But fear can only be engraved if mercy is the stone of life, for if you value life and fear death more than living in occupation and suffering, you will not resist. But concentration camps equaled the worst of suffering, and you did not have any control over how you got there. You just needed to be born a Jew or a Pole, and eventually, you would die in the gas chambers. Living as a Pole in Nazi Germany was worse than death by a bullet, and that led to the fall of the Third Reich's occupation in Europe. This did not end the occupation of Poland and all of Eastern Europe; it only gave it a new flag. Only 45 years later would Poland and various others find sovereignty between the now Federal Republic of Germany and the Russian Federation. By expanding and enforcing sovereign guaranteeing entities like NATO alongside the remembrance of the horrors of occupation, sovereignty shall exist admits the Rhine and Moscow and the entire world no matter the imperial efforts.

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