

Week 1

Why the Germans? Why the Jews?

- Pre-meditated mass murder of Jewish people between roughly 1941-1945
- Soviets were both victims and allies of Hitler
- So many cases of genocide throughout time, not the largest of its kind, so why study the Holocaust?

- ***Explicability* and *Comparability***
- Often said to be inexplicable and incomprehensible, mysterious
- We can't grasp the sheer horror of the event as we were not present
- The actions of the perpetrators were comprehensible as they matched their motives and viewpoint
- Genocide can and has occurred again since the Holocaust, meaning humanity is capable of doing inhumane acts
- Nazis are humans, meaning their motivations were human

- To understand the Holocaust, you must understand how other genocides have occurred
- “The Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilization and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason it is a problem...” –**Zygmunt Bauman**
- We think of modernity as progressive, getting better
- But this period is when the Holocaust happened
- The Germans used the tools of modernity (use of technology for equality) for evil in the Holocaust
- 1948 UN Convention on Genocide
- Genocide “does not necessarily mean mass killings of all members of a nation, but the destruction of a central foundation of the life of national groups” –**Raphael Lemkin**
- Intention?
- This quote formed the basis of the creation of the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide
- 70,000 disabled Germans were killed by gas

- No hierarchy of suffering
- The racial ideology towards Jews, global character and totality of the genocide
- The word ‘*holocaust*’ means sacrificial offering
- **Yehuda Bauer**- Ideology is at the centre of the Holocaust, unprecedented and unique
- A new type of Utopia that would arise once the Jews were eradicated
- Racial anti-Semitism is what identifies the Holocaust of Jews and makes it different from other genocides
- Motivations were irrational, non-pragmatic and practical
- Totality- the Germans wanted to eradicate every last Jew
- Historians like Bauer discuss motive, intent and scale
- Nazis sought to purify the German state
- **Friedlander et al**- The Racial State
- If the Nazi regime had not collapsed, they would've turned their eyes to other outside groups

- European Jewry
- Roma and Sinti- gypsies
- Third Reich- Nazi Germany

Reading notes:

- Aly shows a very human side through the article
- Jews felt safe and welcome in pre-Nazi Germany
- Siegfried Lichtenstaedter, a dual German Jew who was an author
- Whilst German Jews were very similar to the majority population in terms of their behaviour, appearance, and religion, they still possessed a distinguishing “collective ego”
- On average, Jews in Central and Western Europe occupied relatively high social positions
- Anti-Semitism owes its aggressive force to competition and the desire for social betterment
- Nazism was propelled by envy → Envy dissolves social cohesion
- It destroys trust, creates aggression, promotes suspicion over proof, and leads people to bolster their sense of self-worth by denigrating others
- Jealousy leads to dissatisfaction and bitterness
- The sources of envy include weakness, timidity, lack of self-confidence, self-perceived inferiority and excessive ambition
- The innate insecurity of the German national identity
- A nation that feels the need to boast like this lacks inner equilibrium
- Jewish German citizens are still Jews, despite seeing themselves as German- their dual identity
- Equality, fraternity and freedom ideology
- Collective sense of freedom
- Material equality- welfare state
- Aly asserts blame on everyday Germans with regards to envy
- Economy fuels envy and resentment
- Fear of social cohesion

Week 2

Jewish Life in Pre-war Germany

- Can't see Jewish history through the lens of genocide and murder
- Jews in 1871, 1914 1933 and 1939 could not have visioned Auschwitz, it was unimaginable
- Anti-Semitism coexisted with social mobility and social integration

+ France:

Emancipation → Integration

+ Germany:

Integration → Emancipation

Pre-Emancipation

- Jews were not citizens of any nation state, they could not vote
- They were traditional, observant in their religious practices- they dressed differently
- Their days and calendar were governed by the Jewish calendar
- Fridays and Saturdays were observed by the Sabbath
- Many days were set aside for religious observance and synagogue attendance
- Maintained religious dietary laws- Kosher
- Had to live in the same neighbourhood to buy Kosher meat and walk to Synagogue
- Jewish neighbourhoods were created
- Jewish children (especially the men) only went to Jewish schools
- Restricted- couldn't enter the army, couldn't become a lawyer or government administrator
- Dealt in traditional Jewish fields- merchants, cattle fielders, etc.
- They were, to a large degree, very poor

1789-1871 Age of Emancipation

- Male Jews got the right to vote in the aftermath of the French revolution- 1791
- French Jews were emancipated
- Expectation was that Jews would assimilate into French life if given opportunities to do so
- In France, emancipation was never in question after the French revolution
- Germany didn't become a unified nation until 1871
- German Jews were told first you integrate, then we will emancipate you
- Had to prove themselves worthy of emancipation
- Emancipation was a constant topic of debate in Germany- were Jews worthy of citizenship?
- Jews sought to prove themselves worthy of emancipation
- Jews aspired to integrate into the middle class- not the upper or working peasantry classes
- The home of liberalism and mobility
- Visions of enlightenment in the middle class
- Dressed and furnished their homes like other Germans
- Educated their children as German, read German books

- Began a religious movement- Reform Judaism
- They sought to modify the laws of Judaism to accommodate modern life
- Suspended the laws of Kosher, nullified some religious holidays
- Made the Sabbath observant- more like Church
- Used German increasingly more than Hebrew in prayers
- Sought to bring law and order to the Synagogue
- Agreed that religious observance should not hinder integration
- 'Germans of the Jewish faith'
- The Germans didn't want the Jews to be linguistically, socially or educationally distinct
- The Jews hoped for integration but did not want to lose their Jewishness or Jewish faith- *cultural pluralism*

Neue Synagogue- 1866 primary source

- Leader of Germany at the time was present at the synagogue inauguration
- Conspicuous, gold dome, grand-looking
- Moorish style architecture- Islamic
- Goes back to Spain under Arabic rule in the 15th century
- Golden Age of Spain
- Not shy, very expensive looking
- Taking pride of their lives- don't feel a need to hide it, not scared

1871-1914 Anti-Semitism and Integration

- German states are unified and Germany becomes a modern nation-state (what we now know it to be)
- Male Jews of Germany are emancipated
- Rise of Anti-Semitism and further integration of Jews into German life
- Also referred to as the Imperial Era
- Sweeping forces saw the urbanisation of Jews into the upper classes as well as the adoption of German values and culture
- Change of residential patterns and astronomical population growth
- Moved into the cities for greater economical and cultural pull factors
- More progressive, easier to hide from anti-Semitism, whereas in small towns, everyone knows who's Jewish
- Change in economic patterns is seen- occupational restrictions to the expansion of professions
- Jews went into respected and secure forms of commerce
- Became white-collar clerks
- Worked their way up the economical ladder
- From peddlers, to store keepers, to large scale merchants- economic mobility
- Alfred Dreyfus- Dreyfus Affair
- Jews both participated and benefited from the 19th century advancements- industrial revolution, the rise of capitalism, etc.
- Traditionally a literate population and had business skills
- This meant they had a secure positions and guaranteed income during hard economical periods
- See a rise in status- their lives are getting better
- Their entries into these jobs reveal their successful integration