

Abstract and Specific Aims

During this project, I will be conducting research on perpetrators of Genocide, specifically the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide. In order for genocide to occur, there must be a great number of people involved in the killing process. For this reason, the leadership must recruit support, and even help from ordinary people. I wish to understand why the perpetrators of the Holocaust and the Rwandan Genocide, who were ordinary people, committed the atrocities that they did. There is little agreement between historians on this subject. Some believe it is impossible to understand why genocide happens and that we should not try to understand it. Other historians argue that if we do not understand why genocide happens, we will not be able to prevent it. Personally, I agree with the latter group; by attempting to understand the mindset of people involved in these atrocities we can begin to predict when these types of things might happen again from certain signs. If we know when it might happen, then we can stop genocide before it occurs. My research project, for this reason, aims to understand why those ordinary people become genocidal killers.

This semester, my research will be focused on perpetrators of the Holocaust for my History 477: Senior Seminar class. I hope to go to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum January 22-28 in order to conduct more extensive research into perpetrators of the Holocaust, and also perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide. I will then finish my Honors Thesis during the Spring Semester of this year. I need to go to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in order to access a greater amount of quality and primary sources than I have here in Anchorage. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has the largest selection of primary source documents on the Holocaust in the United States, many of which are translated into English and available in the archives at the Museum. The Museum does not participate in Interlibrary Loan programs, so these resources would be unavailable to me if I were unable to go to the

museum. They also have an extensive library collection on the Holocaust, and other genocides that have occurred around the world.

Introduction

Since the Holocaust, historians have understood the need to study the atrocities of Genocide. This first began as an attempt to understand the victims' struggle. More recently, scholars have started to explore the reasons behind the atrocities. This began with an attempt to understand the Third Reich. Attempting to understand how not just the leadership, but all the people of a nation can be bent on destroying entire populations is an even more recent phenomenon. Perhaps the two most famous works on this question are Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, and Christopher Browning's, *Ordinary Men*. These two scholars researched the same police battalion and came up with completely opposite conclusions. Goldhagen argued in his book that "the perpetrators, 'ordinary Germans,' were animated by antisemitism, by a particular type of antisemitism that led them to conclude that the Jews *ought to die*."¹ He calls this anti-Semitism "Eliminationist Antisemitism." Browning, on the other hand, concluded that men who perpetrated the Holocaust had to conform to their peers. He said,

Coping with the contradictions imposed by the demands of conscience on the one hand and the norms of the battalion on the other led to many tortured attempts at compromise: not shooting infants on the spot but taking them to the assembly point; not shooting on patrol in no 'go-getter' was along who might report such squeamishness; bringing Jews to the shooting site and firing but intentionally missing. Only the very exceptional remained indifferent to the taunts of 'weakling' from their comrades and could live with the fact that they were considered to be 'no man.'"²

¹ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) p. 14.

² Christopher Browning. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998). p. 185-86.

He argued that any nation could have committed the Holocaust because soldiers will not step out of the group. These men had to complete the task, whether one man or all of them carried out the shooting and nobody wanted to be looked down upon as a weakling or someone who leaves the dirty work to everyone else. These represent two different approaches to the Holocaust: situational and dispositional. Goldhagen argued that the Germans had a disposition to commit genocide. He believes that their ideas about anti-Semitism caused them to have this disposition. Browning on the other hand, believes genocide is situational; anyone put in the same position would do the same thing. I will take the situational approach, though my opinion differs from Browning's in that I believe that it was the situation of war which made the Germans, and people from occupied countries, able to commit these atrocities.

Though there have been others who have written about why the Germans committed the Holocaust, these two explanations are the most prevalent among historians. Neither of these works discusses other genocides which have occurred. The Holocaust has always been considered a unique event, and many historians argue that comparing it to other genocides diminishes the importance of the Holocaust. However, more recently historians have begun to compare genocides. Holocaust and Genocide Studies has become one of the fastest growing areas of study in History; some schools even have Holocaust and Genocide Studies programs. Allen S. Rosenbaum wrote:

It now appears that inquiries by many "genocide" scholars may be in the direction of identifying the key elements constitutive of all modern genocides (but always mindful of the apparent dissimilarities in a given instance). Perhaps the most defensible rationale for this change is to develop a metric or sensor of sorts to indicate when a certain confluence of social forces exists and so signals a turn toward genocide.³

He, like other prominent genocide scholars understands that we compare genocides to find what universal elements can be found to indicate when genocide might occur. One of the missions of the

³ Alan S. Rosenbaum, ed., *Is the Holocaust Unique?: Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*. (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2008), p. 21.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is to end genocide and this is one way we can move towards doing so.

For this reason, I have chosen to compare the Holocaust with the Rwandan Genocide. Since the Rwandan genocide occurred only seventeen years ago, there is not nearly as much scholarly work written on the Rwandan genocide yet, and even less of it is readily available in Anchorage. It is important to begin doing research on the perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide so that we can understand and help prevent other current day genocides.

Project Design

This semester I am taking History 477: Senior Seminar. During this class I have been researching and writing the first half of my thesis which is centered on the Holocaust. I am beginning my research by using primary sources, such as: some letters written by German perpetrators during the Holocaust, the Einsatzgruppen reports, and testimonies from the Nuremberg Trials. I have also undertaken active research in secondary sources on the Holocaust and genocide perpetrators.

At the end of the semester I will have a final paper for the class, but what I consider a rough draft of the first half of my thesis. I hope to go to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and do more research on perpetrators of the Holocaust, and research on perpetrators of Rwanda. Here at UAA I have access to many of the reports from the Einsatzgruppen, an organization which carried out many of the killings, and Nuremberg trial testimony from the perpetrators here, but the Holocaust Memorial Museum has a large collection of documents relating to trials and testimonies of perpetrators of the Holocaust. I hope to be able to study these documents to gain a better understanding of the reasoning behind perpetrators' actions. The Holocaust Memorial Museum also has a library which has many books

written about Rwanda. They also have newspaper and periodical articles about Rwanda in their archives. I have been looking through the archive lists online to find which specific documents I will be looking at while at the Holocaust Memorial Museum, but I will continue to do so leading up to my departure. I can then let the Museum know ahead of time which documents I would like to see so that these sources will definitely be in the library while I am there. I will be able to look through these books while I am at the Holocaust Memorial Museum and scan any of the information I would like to use. The archives are open to all researchers, including students, Monday through Friday from 10:00am to 5:00pm so I will be able to conduct much of my research during my time at the Museum.

Upon returning from my trip, I will sort through the information collected during my trip. Once I have a good understanding of all of the information I have collected, I will write the rest of my paper. I plan on finishing this by the beginning of April so that I will have a month just to revise my paper.

My final project will be about 50 pages long. The first eight pages will introduce the topic, including the historiography of the study of perpetrators of the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide, as well as set up my argument and introduce my thesis statement. I will also explain why this research is necessary in this first section. The next section of the paper will deal with the German Army and will be five pages. This will explain the role of the German Army in the perpetration of the Holocaust as well as explain why the men in the German Army committed the atrocities they did. Following this will be nine pages on the Einsatzgruppen with the same information as that covered in the section on the Einsatzgruppen. This section needs to be longer because the Einsatzgruppen was the main body which perpetrated the Holocaust, and therefore needs more evidence and explanation. The final groups which were involved in the Holocaust were the German Police Battalions, and I will dedicate five pages to them. This will conclude the section on the Holocaust.

Following this, I will provide a brief, three page at the most, introduction to the Rwandan Genocide. This genocide is less well known and will therefore need more explanation than the Holocaust. I will then spend about twelve pages explaining who the perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide were and why they did what they did. Finally, I will have a five page conclusion which will tie the two together and wrap everything up.

I do plan on attempting to publish my final project. The best place to do this would be in Phi Alpha Theta's publication, *The Historian*. This is a quarterly journal which all Phi Alpha Theta, a National Historical Honor Society, members receive which publishes articles written by undergraduate students as well as book reviews. If this does not work out, there are other historical publications published by various colleges and universities around the country including Columbia's *Undergraduate Journal of History* and *History Matters* published by Appalachian State University.

Anticipated Results

My anticipated thesis statement is: war creates conditions under which ordinary people can become genocidal killers because in order to fight war, the enemy must be dehumanized and the conditions of war create the conditions in which people can become genocidal killers. These conditions include the desensitization of the perpetrators to killing, the propaganda used during war to dehumanize the enemy, and the relationships formed by soldiers during times of war. The state then must condone and even encourage the genocidal killing. In the case of the Holocaust, it is easy to see that the Nazi state was the state that the perpetrators were looking to. This is harder to define for the Rwandan genocide; however, the perpetrators of the genocide saw the rebel group as the state, whether it actually was or was not, and therefore took orders from the rebel leaders. This combines the ideas of Daniel Goldhagen and Christopher Browning. Goldhagen argued that the Germans believed in a

particular type of anti-Semitism. I believe that the Germans were highly anti-Semitic, but it was only different from the anti-Semitism of other countries because it was perpetuated by the state. Any country had the ability to carry out the Holocaust if the state had argued that the Jews had created world war and were destroying the culture of the country. During war, the enemy must be dehumanized so that the soldiers and ordinary citizens are able to stomach the idea of killing so many people. In Genocide, the state takes this dehumanization farther and says that all of the people of a certain race or religion must die in order to stop the attacks on their own culture or society.

Browning argued that the soldiers felt that they had to conform to fit in with their comrades. This is something which commonly occurs in war. War crimes happen in every war, but do not evolve into genocide unless the state encourages these war crimes. The conformity involved in being a soldier is important, as Browning said, but it is not the only reason that the Holocaust happened. The conditions of dehumanization were a more important part of the reasoning of the perpetrators. These types of war crimes occur because soldiers must fit in with their comrades and follow orders. At the Holocaust Memorial Museum I believe I will find examples of the dehumanization of the Jews in letters written by soldiers during the war with this notion that what they were doing was not wrong because they were protecting their family, friends, and society.

During the Rwandan Genocide, many of the Hutus rose up against the Tutsis. There had been civil war and conflict in the country since 1990, and the Hutus blamed this on the Tutsis, while the Tutsis blamed the Hutus for it. There had been killings on both sides; sometimes the Hutus would go after the Tutsis, while other times the Tutsis would attempt to kill as many Hutus as possible. When Hutu rebels came to power, they argued that the Tutsis must be eliminated. The assassination of the president of Rwanda provided the ability to finally eliminate the Tutsi minority by blaming them for the death of the president. This constant battle and the conditions of war created the idea that the Tutsis must die. They

were able to make the many ordinary Hutus rise up to protect themselves through this argument. Again, I believe many of these primary documents will show evidence of dehumanization and blame for the war and conflict which was so prevalent in Rwanda at the time.

In the case of both genocides, more work could be done if I were able to read German or the various languages prominent in Rwanda. Though there are many documents translated into English, many other documents, especially dealing with the German Police Battalions, have never been translated, so there are many sources which I am unable to use because I cannot understand them. I would like to eventually learn German so that I can use these documents, though this is not feasible this year. I would like to eventually expand on this paper in or after graduate school, after I have learned German.

Budget:

Travel	Airfare (Anchorage to Washington D. C.)	\$700
	Ground Transportation to Hotel	\$58
Accommodations	Hotel	\$807
	Total	\$1565

Budget Justification:

Travel: The current airfare to Washington DC from January 22, 2011 to January 28, 2011 is \$659 but this price will most likely go up a little bit before I am actually able to buy my tickets. I chose these dates because I will be able to go to the library and archives every day during this week, which I would have been unable to do anytime during Christmas break due to closures and my own schedule. It will also be cheaper for me to go during this time rather than during the Christmas holidays. I will take a shared van ride to my hotel which is why the Ground Transportation cost is \$58.

Accommodations: The Hotel I wish to stay at is the cheapest I could find within walking distance of the Museum. The hotel is the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel. By staying at this hotel, I will not have to buy a metro pass or take a taxi or rent a car in order to travel to and from the Museum every day.

There is no charge for visiting the museum, the archives, or the library. The Museum library allows researchers to scan items. I plan on doing this with any documents or information I would like to use for my research and saving it on a USB so that I will not have to pay copy charges, or waste that much paper in copying all of the documents and books. The museum does not allow researchers to bring digital cameras into the archives and library, or anything not necessary to the research being conducted.

Project References

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Des Forges, Alison. *"Leave None to Tell the Story": Genocide in Rwanda*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999.

Eltringham, Nigel. *Accounting for Horror: Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda*. London: Pluto Press, 2004.

Temple-Raston, Dina. *Justice on the Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists, Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption*. New York: Free Press, 2005.

Documents on the Holocaust from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:

I will be looking at the following sets of documents for information on the Holocaust.

RG-04.049 --- Confessions of an SS Killer ? in the camp

RG-06.024 --- Joseph Stone Collection ?

RG-06.014 --- Fredrick J. Bayer Papers

RG-14.009 --- Adolf Hitler's Political and Private Testaments

RG-02.106 --- —The Worm in the Apple by Sigurd Askevold

RG-52.007 --- Records Related to the Destruction of Jews in Szeged and in Csongrád County II

RG-52.012 --- German Records Related to the Holocaust in Hungary

RG-24.018 --- Nazzi [sic] War Criminals on Trial, November 1945–October 1946, Court of History, the Last Fashist [sic] Defense Line

RG-22.004 --- Soviet War News

RG-06.020 --- Isaac Stone Collection

RG-06.002.05 --- An Approach to the Preparation of the Prosecution Against Axis Criminality (Telford Taylor Memorandum)

RG-10.036 Reports of Einsatzgruppen, 1941–1944

RG-26.001 Sender Wajsman Papers, 1936–1991

RG-52.010 Official Publications Related to the Holocaust in Hungary, 1938–1944

Documents and books on Rwanda from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:

The Museum has a subject file which includes newspaper and periodical articles from this time period which would be useful. These are uncataloged but include many different documents in a variety of areas dealing with the Rwandan Genocide. They also have many of the books I will be using but will have to get through interlibrary loan. I will at least be able to look at them at the museum and possibly be able to scan everything I will need then.

Project Timeline:

December 8, 2011: Final draft of paper due for Senior Seminar class

Mid December to Mid January: Conduct more background research on Rwanda and prepare for research at the Holocaust Memorial Museum

January 22-28, 2012: Travel to United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and conduct research

February 2012: Sort through documents found at the Holocaust Memorial Museum and finish research

Early March 2012: Revise first half of paper

Mid-March to Early April 2012: Write second half of paper

April 2012: Revise Paper

Mid-April, 2012: Presentation at the Undergraduate Research and Discovery Symposium, Complete final draft of paper

Beginning of May 2012: Turn in final draft of paper

May 15, 2012: Expenditure Deadline

May 30, 2012: Final Written Report Deadline