

# **Lecture six**

**Ethnic cleansing during the Second World War: The Nazi attack on the Jews**

# Naimark on the Holocaust

*'The Holocaust has become the dominant historical metaphor of our time. The way we talk about issues as diverse as free speech, intermarriage, abortion, or intervention in the Balkans is framed in terms of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust. Especially since the early 1960s, the Holocaust has been ubiquitous in our intellectual, moral and spiritual universe.'*

*'The task is to apply its lessons – when appropriate – to our understanding of the past and future'*

# The Pianist (2002)



# Lecture rundown

## **1) Ethnic Cleansing in the Second World War, numbers**

## **2) The Nazi attack on the Jews**

a) Ideology

b) Eugenics

c) The 'Destruction' of the Jews and emigration

d) The war and the Jews, 1939-41

e) Barbarossa, Einsatzgruppen and 'Final Solution'

f) Comparison with the Armenian Genocide

## **3) Genocidal Careers, 'Modernity and the Holocaust' and the 'Banality of Evil'**

a) Path one: Desk killers

b) Path two: The main camps

c) Path three: From T-4 to the camps

# Lecture rundown

d) Path four: From the Police to the Einsatzgruppen

e) Conclusions

**4) Ethnic 'reordering in the Reich' – The example of the Warthegau**

**5) Conclusions**

# 1) Ethnic cleansing in the Second World War: Numbers and Figures

## 1) Nazi holocaust of European Jews

Approximately 5.9 million die (3 million from Poland, 900,000 from Ukraine, 450,000 from Hungary and 300,000 from Romania and others)

Approximately 67% of pre-war European Jewish population

## 2) Porajmos of Europe's gypsies

Approximately 300,000 – or 25% of Europe's population killed during the war – by Nazis and client states

## 3) Serb and Croat ethnic cleansing

Approximately 350,000 Serbs and 200,000 Croats killed in ethnic cleansing

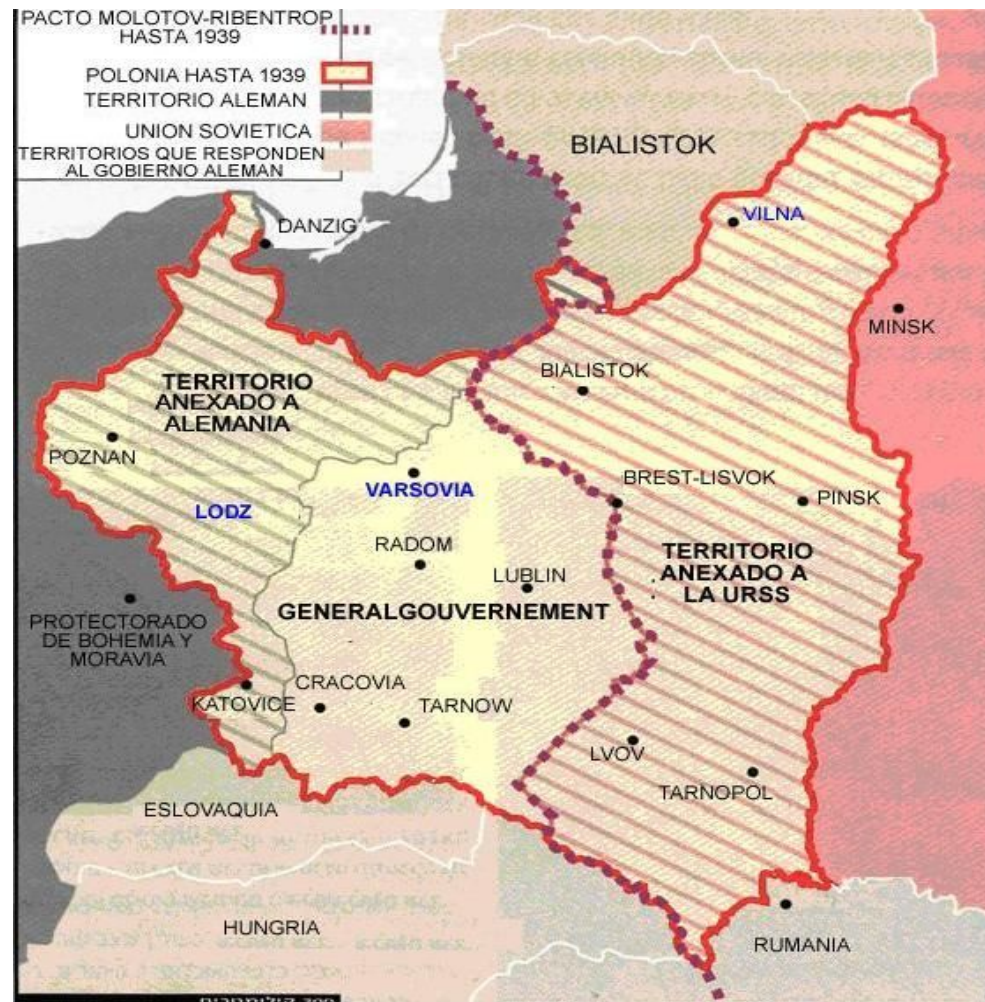
## 4) Poles and Ukrainians during the war

Approximately 100,000 Poles and 40,000 Ukrainians die in civil war in Volhynia, Eastern Galicia and Eastern Poland

## 5) Ethnic reordering by the Nazis - 12 million abducted for forced work – 65% from Eastern Europe – deportation of ethnic groups, resettlement of ethnic Germans

**Warthegau** – 1939-44 – 1 million ethnic Germans to the area, 700,000 Poles displaced, 450,000 Jews murdered (42% of the pre-war population affected)

# The Warthegau



## **2) The Nazi attack on the Jews**

- 1) Intent can almost certainly be proved
- 2) However, like many cases we look at, final actions decided by circumstance – not simply one long-term plan being carried out



## 2) The Nazi attack on the Jews- a) Nazi Ideology

- i) Ethnic purity of Aryans vs ethnic depravity of the Jews
- ii) Jews seen as an infectious disease

*'The Jews were disease-carrying lice, vermin, bedbugs, or fleas that had to be exterminated lest they infect the healthy body of German society'*

- iii) Nazi racial ideology linked to political anti-semitism – 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'
- iv) And religious anti-semitism – Jewish blood libel

Potent mixture of different forms of anti-semitism/racist ideology

## **b) Eugenics**

- i) Influence of late 19th century scientific racism
- ii) Moves to forcibly sterilise approx. 400,000 'unproductive' members of society from 1933 onwards
- lii) 1938-9 euthanasia for badly handicapped infants
- iv) 1939 – T-4 program – State-sponsored euthanasia for mentally and physically ill patients – first gassings in mobile gas vans – 70,000 approx. victims
- Forerunner for the 'Final Solution' – zyklon B gas used, Carbon Monoxide

## c) The 'destruction' of the Jews and emigration

- i) Nazi eliminationist language in the 1930s – didn't necessarily mean the murder of the Jews
- ii) Plans to force Jews to emigrate from Germany – Palestine/Madagascar?
- iii) Racial restrictions of the Nuremberg Laws 1935
- iv) 1933-9 – 60,000 emigrate to Palestine which was under British mandate
- v) Krystalnacht – November 9 1938
- vi) Nazi expansionism and the Jewish 'problem' – The Evian conference – July 1938- plans from Hitler about displacing the Jews become more urgent – increasing radicalisation due to expansion

# Map of Germany March 1939



## d) The war and its effects on the Jews - 1939-41

- i) War gives Nazis opportunity to carry out their ethnic reordering plans
- ii) Very difficult situation for the 3 million Jews in Poland
- iii) Deportations of Poles from the new territories of the German Reich, immigration of ethnic Germans
- iv) Jews temporarily squeezed into ghettos – terrible living conditions – although different conditions in different ghettos – Warsaw/Łódź
- v) 'Demographic bottleneck' -further discussions about the emigration of Jews to Madagascar – Autumn 1940

# Ribbentrop-Molotov Poland (1939-41)



# Ghettos: Nazi occupied Poland 1939-41



## **e) Operation Barbarossa and the Final Solution 1941-3**

- i) Possible invasion of the Soviet Union provides solutions to the Jewish 'problem' - Jews to be moved to Siberia?
- ii) Nazis prepare for a war of extermination against the Bolsheviks and the Jews – March 1941 order
- iii) Invasion of the Soviet Union – murders of 1 million Jews and others by Einsatzgruppen between 1941-2
- iv) Institutional acceptance of Jewish murders but no direct 'final' order – 'working towards the führer'
- v) Discussions of what to do with the Jews – January 1942 – Wannsee conference – decision to murder European Jewry
- vi) Building of a network of death camps
- vi) Naimark – murder of Jews about circumstances rather than over-arching plan



# Einsatzgruppen 1941-2



# Map of death camps in Poland



# f) Comparison with the Armenian Genocide

- **i) Similarities:**
- a) State-planned murders
- b) Attempts to conceal crimes
- c) No unambiguous documents to prove intent
- d) Relatively cold efficient processes – at the higher level at least
- e) Ethnic cleansing leads to radicalisation
- f) Dehumanising of victims
- **Differences**
- a) Far greater racism on the part of the Nazis
- b) Greater technological might of the Nazis
- c) Nazis aim to destroy Jews outside of state borders
- d) State much stronger in the Nazi case and less under threat

# 3) The Nazi attack on the Jews: Genocidal careers

- i) Two important concepts:
- a) **Modernity and the Holocaust** – Zygmunt Baumann
- Feingold, Auschwitz:

*'mundane extension of the modern factory system. Rather than producing goods, the raw material was human beings and the end product was death, so many units per day marked carefully on the manager's production charts'*

- Mann states that the technology of the Holocaust not so modern and that murders not really bureaucratic – actually very brutal and messy

*'Then began the shooting of Jews and Slavs by the Einsatzgruppen – point blank, blood-spattered butchery by soldiers of over a million defenceless victims. The handguns, trucks, trains, and radios were indeed modern, but this was not dispassionate, scientific, banal, or bueraucratic killing.'*

-Ideology modern, technology less so

b) **Banality of Evil** – Hannah Arendt – regarding Adolf Eichmann – detached nature of evil

Mann, Cesarini – Nazis know exactly what they are doing

# Banality of Evil



*'Eichmann's evil was neither unthinking or banal, but innovative, ruthless and even ideological.'*

Mann, *Dark Side of Democracy*

## a) Path one – Desk killers

- i) Mann – Desk killers know what they were doing – ideologically motivated – Nazi party members
- ii) Elite desk killers don't have to actually kill but in general support it
- lii) Governors more involved on the ground as well as police commanders
- iv) Civil Service (especially those that joined after 1933) and people in industry closer to Arendt's 'Banality of Evil'
- Most of the elite ideologically motivated according to Mann

# Banality of Evil – Industrial leaders

*'Among German capitalists we come closest to genuine banality – mass killings as the by-product of something routinized and legitimate in modern society: the extraction of maximum profit from minimum costs. Since free labour was in short and costly supply, capitalists gladly used slaves.'*

*'They did not have to kill. They handed the slaves over to the SS and then tried to forget about them. They were mainly materialist accomplices to killing.'*

Mann, *Dark Side of Democracy*

## **b) Path two: The Main camps**

- i) Killers here mostly moderate rank, lower middle/working class – decently paid
- ii) Driven by bigotry, comradeship
- iii) Many had had careers in political camps in the Reich – Dachau – used this experience in the death camps, commandants and lower officers
- iv) Violence of camp officers – Jozef Klehr – 475 individual murders
- v) Ideology of camp doctors – Joseph Mengele



## **c) Path three: From T-4 to the Death camps**

- i) Link between killing of mentally ill patients in Germany to the gassing of the Jews
- ii) Close-knit community of those working on T-4
- iii) Main doctors as well as SS supervisors committed to the Nazi cause – Karl Brandt
- iv) Lower down – good career options
- v) Medical science excuse initially used – but soon this pretext goes – people become inured to killing
- vi) Closing of T-4 in 1941– people move on to the death camps
- vii) Teach new recruits how to operate there

## d) Path four – Police to Einsatzgruppen

- i) 6,000 core units, 15,000 police battalions, 25,000 Waffen SS – kill 1 million people
- ii) Officers Nazi educated men who wanted to see some 'action' – mixture of reactions to killing
- iii) Lower officers and recruits – some have problems killing
- iv) **'Ordinary men?'** Police Battalion 101 - July 1942 – November 1943 – 550 men kill 38,000 Jews, plus many Poles and Russians, forcibly deport 50,000 Jews to Treblinka
  - a) Mostly policeman before the war – 37% Nazi members
  - b) Browning - kill due to conformism and fear – use alcohol to dull the pain
  - c) Einsatzgruppen emotionally drained by killing

# Ordinary men?



# Ordinary Men?

*'Browning believes these ordinary men murdered, primarily because they were fearful and conformist killers, Goldhagen believes these ordinary Germans killed because they were anti-semitic bigots'*

**Mann, Dark Side of Democracy**

## e) Conclusions

Mann says this was not really a bureaucratic genocide:

*'There were few banal, bureaucratic killers. Capitalist pursued profit as a routine, and killed people incidentally and indirectly; so presumably did many lower-level desk killers – though higher level desk-killers had ideological motives. But the vast majority of those involved in actual killing knew what they were doing. Most thought there was a good reason for it.'*

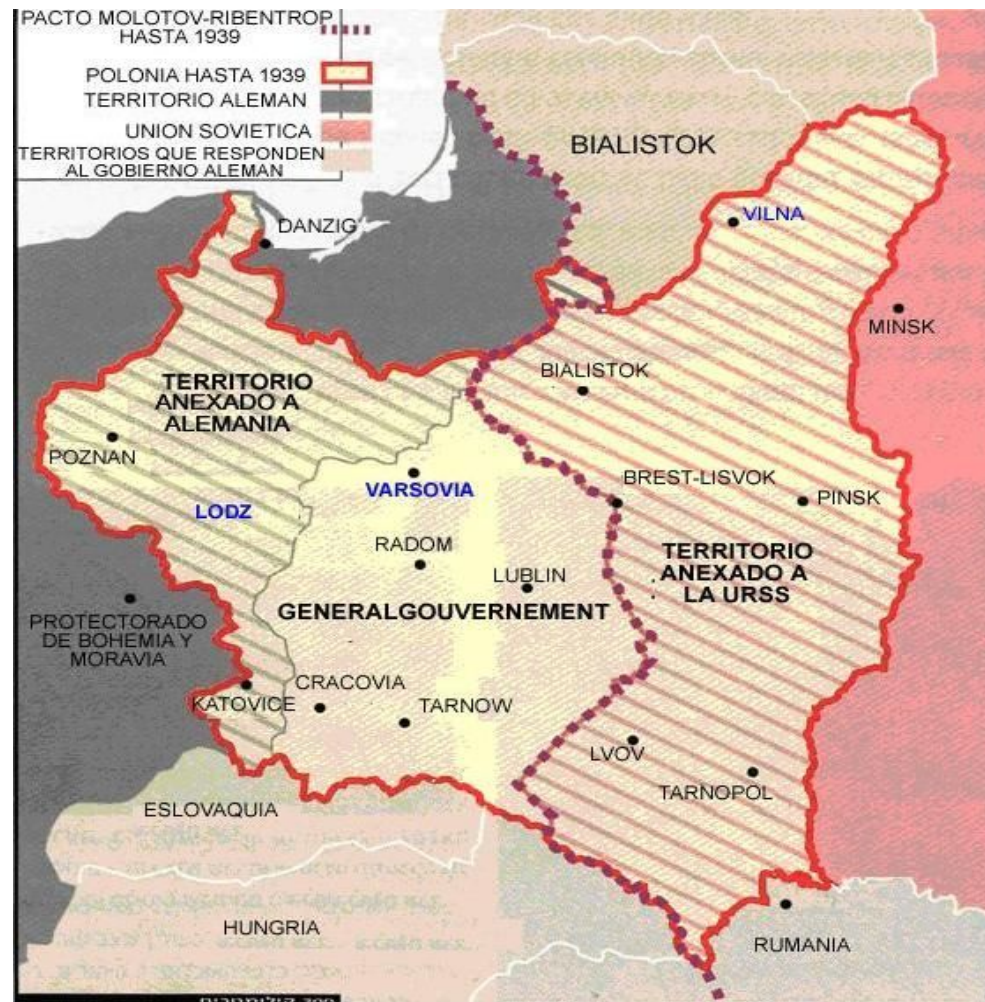
Was a messy, cruel business – not banal at all really

Mann agrees with the modernity aspect of the genocide more, highly structured Genocide – at least in terms of the death camps

## 4) Ethnic 'reordering' in the Warthegau

- i) Nazi plans to ethnically 're-order' Eastern Europe – Germanisation
- ii) Warthegau at the centre of it – Gau Arthur Greiser
- iii) Resettlement of Germans to the Warthegau from the East
- iv) 270,000 Poles resettled to the General Government
- v) Difficulties for incoming Germans in spite of Nazi Policy
- vi) 'Population bottleneck' regarding the Jews – 'pushes' Greiser to open the Chelmno death camp – December 1941
- vii) 'Success' of Greiser's policies?

# The Warthegau



# Arthur Greiser – Warthegau policies



*'To reverse the process, Greiser spearheaded one of the most dramatic and sustained Nazi demographic experiments. Nowhere else saw such bold attempts at altering the population makeup: nowhere else saw so many people resettled, deported, murdered, or otherwise uprooted'*

*'After all the resettlement, deportation, and murder – the uprooting of at least 1.5 million individuals – not even a quarter of the Gau's population was German'*

**Catherine Epstein, *Model Nazi***



# 5) Conclusions

- 1) Ethnic cleansing at the heart of the Second World war
- 2) Cover of war allows ethnic violence to be carried out just like it had done in the First World War
- 3) The Holocaust planned and carried out by a strong state, there was intent – but it could have ended up differently
- 4) Banality of evil doesn't really hold up, as most people who carried out the Nazi Genocide got their hands 'dirty'
- 5) Modernity of the Nazi Genocide – mostly regarding nationalist ideology, rather than about the weapons – although the organisation was impressive
- 6) We can see a direct link between ethnic cleansing, displacement and the Genocide in the Warthegau
- 7) The Holocaust was central to the ethnic reordering of Europe