<Holocaust Essay>

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The word “Holocaust,” from the Greek words “holos” (whole) and “kaustos” (burned), was historically used to describe a sacrificial offering burned on an altar. Since 1945, the word has taken on a new and horrible meaning: the mass murder of some 6 million European Jews (as well as members of some other persecuted groups, such as Gypsies and homosexuals) by the German Nazi regime during the Second World War. To the anti-Semitic Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, Jews were an inferior race, an alien threat to German racial purity and community. After years of Nazi rule in Germany, during which Jews were consistently persecuted, Hitler’s “final solution”–now known as the Holocaust–came to fruition under the cover of world war, with mass killing centers constructed in the concentration camps of occupied Poland. About six million Jews were among the dead, roughly two-thirds of the 9 million Jews in Europe at that time. Approximately one million Jewish children have been killed, and about two million women and three million men have died. Jews and other victims were grouped, detained, and died in about 40,000 facilities across Germany and in German occupied territories. These persecutions and massacres proceeded step by step. First, the Nuremberg Act of 1935, and other laws that excluded Jews from society were enacted before the outbreak of World War II. In addition, after the establishment of the concentration camps, the prisoners were mobilized to various labor positions, and most of them were overworked or soldiered. In the case of the Eastern European occupation, an illegal militant group called Special Action Force was reported to have shot more than one million Jews and political criminals. The Germans accepted the Jews and Gypsies in the ghetto, then carried them on a freight train and transported them to concentration camps. Many people died in freight trains, and survivors died in gas chambers in turn. This massacre was known to involve the entire bureaucracy of Germany, and a Holocaust scholar attributed it to the German Third Reich as a "massacre nation".