

When studying the Holocaust, it is always important to look at the main reasons as to why it happened. As with most historical debates, there are two sides to this argument. The first side to the argument is the intentionalism side. Intentionalist historians believe that Hitler and the Nazi Party always had the plan to carry out the mass genocide during the Holocaust, and that the camps were all engineered. The other side of the debate are the functionalists. Extreme functionalists, such as Gotz Aly, believe that the Nazi Party had nothing to do with the Holocaust, and that it all originated from an outside source, with some believing that it was in fact the German government that engineered the whole thing. Average functionalists, such as Timothy Mason, believe that there was no direct plan to carry out the Holocaust, and that the Holocaust was simply a side effect from World War 2. However, it can be said that there is a "middle ground" to these arguments, although not exactly a valued one. There are of course the Holocaust deniers. This group of people, such as David Irving, believe that the Holocaust never actually happened, and they use fake evidence, such as the Leuchter report, which was published in 1988. This view, however, is not regarded as sound by historians, as there is no actual proven evidence that supports the belief that the Holocaust was simply made up. In this essay, I aim to look at first the most common and accepted view, Intentionalist, followed by the Functionalist, and then a brief look at the viewpoint of a denier. Whilst looking at each point, I will assess the usefulness of each viewpoint in relation to the development of the Holocaust, and hopefully arrive at some decision at the end as to which would be the most valuable from an academic perspective.

The most popular viewpoint on the Holocaust and its development, is that of the intentionalist. A notable historian that supports this view is Andreas Hillgruber. Hillgruber believes that the actions of the Nazis in relation to the Jewish people, onwards from Operation Barbarossa, was all part of Hitler's grand plan. Hillgruber states "The conquest of European Russia, that Russia's defeat and the extermination of the Jews were – in theory as later in practice – inseparable for him. To the aim of expansion *per se*, however, Hitler gave not racial, but political, strategic, economic and demographic underpinnings" (Andreas Hillgruber, "Germany and the Two World Wars" Harvard University Press 1981). We can clearly see that Hillgruber has the view of an intentionalist historian here, as at the beginning of the extract, he states that "Russia's defeat and the extermination of the Jews were inseparable for him" (Hillgruber p51). This would suggest that the mass extermination of the Jews was always one of the end goals for Hitler and the Nazi party, supporting the intentionalist idea. Another Historian that supports the intentionalist idea in relation to the Holocaust is Daniel Goldhagen. Goldhagen states that "Germany during the Nazi period was a country in which government policies, public acts of other sorts, and the public conversation were thoroughly, almost obsessively antisemitic" (Daniel Goldhagen, "Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust" London Abacus, 1997). This implies that through the Nazi Party, Hitler was able to enforce his views on Anti-Semitism and was able to manipulate the German Public to think in such a way about it. This reveals to us how Hitler felt about the Jewish People right from the beginning, further enforcing the view of an intentionalist historian. The fact that Hitler felt so strongly about the Jews and was openly Anti-Semitic almost disproves the theory of Functionalism, as it is almost improbable that The Holocaust came around by chance and had nothing to do with him. The view of the intentionalist gives a better insight into the explanation of the development of the Holocaust, as there is a single key document that almost certainly proves that it was the doing of Hitler: The Final Solution. This was a document that was started in 1941. The final solution reveals that the Nazi party was planning the murder of as many Jewish people as possible. One of the early phases of the final solution was the "Einsatzgruppen", the mobile killing squads. Raul Hilberg states that "in the first phase of the mass murder of Jews, the mobile killing units began to pursue their victims across occupied eastern territories; in the second phase, stretching across all German-occupied Europe, the Jewish victims were sent on death trains to centralized extermination camps built for the purpose of systematic implementation of the Final Solution" (Raul Hilberg, "The destruction of the European Jews: The revised and definitive editions (1985) (New York: Holmes & Meier). The Einsatzgruppen mobile death squads were used across German-occupied Europe from 1939-1945, and began what is now commonly known as the Holocaust, as when they went around Europe they shot millions of innocent Jews on sight, as part of the first phase of the Final Solution. As the Final solution was a document created by the Nazi Party, Hitler would have almost certainly been involved in the creation, meaning that it would have been his plan all along. Also, there is the fact that Hitler issued the command for the Einsatzgruppen squads to carry out their mass murder of the

innocent Jewish people, confirming his involvement in the development of the Holocaust. As the intentionalist view believes that it was always Hitler's idea to go ahead with the mass murder of millions of Jewish people, we can assume that it is a more valid and believable view, as there is more evidence that supports it, and it is the more popular of the views on the development of the Holocaust.

There is then the view of the functionalist. The Functionalist believes that it was not Hitler's original plan to go ahead with the mass murder of millions of Jewish people, but instead the plan was to remove all of the Jewish people from Germany by driving them out, and only decided on the use of Genocide when the original plan did not work. One notable Historian who follows the Functionalist view is Karl Schleunes. Karl Schleunes is an American Historian, who has one well known work; "The twisted Road to Auschwitz". This book has received mixed reviews, but caused some controversy, as it has created an even bigger divide between the Intentionalist historians and the Functionalist Historians. For example, one line from his book is "It is doubtful that Hitler was aware of how successful his Final Solution had been (The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews 1933-1939. Urbana: U of Illinois, 1970). This quote itself causes controversy, especially when put forwards to someone with the intentionalists stance on the Holocaust, as it is highly likely that Hitler was aware of the figures and stats emerging from the death camps such as Dachau and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Another notable Functionalist is Hans Mommsen. Mommsen is well known in the history circles, as he is famous for claiming that Hitler was a "Weak dictator". In "The Encyclopaedia of Historians and Historical Writing, Volume 2, London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishing, 1999, page 826 ", Mommsen wrote that Hitler was a "Weak Dictator who rather than acting decisively, reacted to various social pressures". Another argument for the Functionalists is that Hitler was actually incapable of running a dictatorship, whether it was because of the amount of medication he was taking at the time or whether it be something else is down to the functionalist. Mommsen thinks that Hitler is a pushover, and because of this he doesn't believe that such a man would be able to think up something as big as the mass Genocide of the Jewish people. As there is so much proven evidence that reveals that Hitler was issuing the majority of the statements regarding the Final solution, it is unlikely that he would not have been informed about the goings on in the death camps, and then again with the deaths from the Einsatzgruppen mobile killing squads. In terms of the interpretation being useful to look at the way the Holocaust developed, it is not as useful as the Intentionalist interpretation, as there is less evidence that supports this view, as most of it is simply guesswork based of "what-ifs". For example, the extreme Functionalists believe that the Holocaust was the work of the government at the time in Germany, and that they are solely to blame. However, the fact that the "Final Solution" was actually written by the Nazi party itself, and that Hitler approved of it, we can assume that the Functionalist view is less useful than the intentionalist view.

However, there is another view in regard to the development of the Holocaust, although it doesn't strictly believe that the Holocaust happened. The view of a Holocaust denier is one that is rejected by academics and generally people with common sense. The Holocaust denier believes that the Holocaust did not happen and will go to extreme lengths to try and prove their point. One infamous case was during the trial of Ernst Zundel, a well-known Holocaust denier who had produced pamphlets such as "The Hitler we Know and Love" and "Did Six Million Really Die?". During his trial, Zundel hired an American Execution equipment manufacturer called Fred Leuchter. Zundel sent Leuchter to retrieve samples (Without permission) from Auschwitz, to "prove" that the gassings never actually took place. The Leuchter report states, in relation to samples taken from the gas chamber, that "It is notable that almost all the samples were negative and the few that were positive were very close to the detection level" (The Leuchter Report, 1988, Fred A Leuchter). Although some might take this as fact, it was found during the trial that Leuchter did not have any relevant qualifications in that area of science, so he was dismissed as an expert witness due to his lack of experience with it. This instantly discredits his work, as if a court of law does not think that he has the right qualifications to deal with it then that disproves his credibility. This interpretation of the Holocaust is only used by a minority of individuals, as in certain countries, there are laws against Holocaust denial, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Therefore, this interpretation doesn't bear thinking about, as it is only supported by people who are usually attempting to defend the Nazi regime.

The two main views in relation to the debate both have their positives and their negatives. However, it is of my personal opinion that the Intentionalist interpretation is more useful and more reinforced with its evidence compared to the Functionalist interpretation. The main reasoning behind this is the Final Solution. While there are many things that can be said to not be entirely true on the Intentionalist side, but the one thing that cannot be changed is the fact that the Final Solution is a physical document, which essentially stems from Hitler's hatred of the Jewish people, and his ideas that he wrote in his book "Mein Kampf". However, I can see why certain Historians might use the Functionalist approach, as it was true that towards the end of his life, Hitler was on lots of different types of medications as a result of his failing health. Mommsen is justified in his views, however the evidence for this is not as substantial as that for the Intentionalist, as there is no denying that the "Final solution" was based on Hitler's own ideas, and that it was always his plan to mass murder the Jewish people of Nazi occupied Europe. The intentionalist view allows us to look at what happened before the Holocaust and provides us with a clear view as to what the Nazi party wanted to carry out. It also illustrates the development of the Holocaust, and how the method of killing changed from the Einsatzgruppen mobile death squads to mass murder in specifically made death camps, and how it went from just targeting the German Jewish people to moving across to the Eastern European Jewish, as well as Gypsies' ETC. One point of view which offers no sound argument is that of the Holocaust denier, as they have no solid proven evidence that could be used.

Andreas Hillgruber, "Germany and the Two World Wars" Harvard University Press 1981

Daniel Goldhagen, "Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust" London Abacus, 1997

Raul Hillberg, "The destruction of the European Jews: The revised and definitive editions (1985) (New York: Holmes & Meier)

Karl Schleunes "The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews 1933-1939" Urbana: U of Illinois, 1970.

"The Encyclopaedia of Historians and Historical Writing" edited by Kelly Boyd, Volume 2, London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishing, 1999, page 826

"The Hitler we Know and Love" Ernst Zundel, 1977

"Did Six Million Really Die?" Ernst Zundel, 1977

"The Leuchter Report", Fred A Leuchter, 1988

