

Darwinism and the Nazi race Holocaust

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Leading Nazis, and early 1900 influential German biologists, revealed in their writings that Darwin's theory and publications had a major influence upon Nazi race policies. Hitler believed that the human gene pool could be improved by using selective breeding similar to how farmers breed superior cattle strains. In the formulation of their racial policies, Hitler's government relied heavily upon Darwinism, especially the elaborations by Spencer and Haeckel. As a result, a central policy of Hitler's administration was the development and implementation of policies designed to protect the 'superior race'. This required at the very least preventing the 'inferior races' from mixing with those judged superior, in order to reduce contamination of the latter's gene pool. The 'superior race' belief was based on the theory of group inequality within each species, a major presumption and requirement of Darwin's original 'survival of the fittest' theory. This philosophy culminated in the 'final solution', the extermination of approximately six million Jews and four million other people who belonged to what German scientists judged as 'inferior races'.

Introduction

Of the many factors that produced the Nazi holocaust and World War II, one of the most important was Darwin's notion that evolutionary progress occurs mainly as a result of the elimination of the weak in the struggle for survival. Although it is no easy task to assess the conflicting motives of Hitler and his supporters, Darwinism-inspired eugenics clearly played a critical role. Darwinism justified and encouraged the Nazi views on both race and war. If the Nazi party had fully embraced and consistently acted on the belief that all humans were descendants of Adam and Eve and equal before the creator God, as taught in both the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures, the holocaust would never have occurred.

Expunging of the Judeo-Christian doctrine of the divine origin of humans from mainline German (liberal) theology and its schools, and replacing it with

Darwinism, openly contributed to the acceptance of Social Darwinism that culminated in the tragedy of the holocaust.¹ Darwin's theory, as modified by Haeckel,²⁻⁶ Chamberlain⁷ and others, clearly contributed to the death of over nine million people in concentration camps, and about 40 million other humans in a war that cost about six trillion dollars. Furthermore, the primary reason that Nazism reached to the *extent* of the holocaust was the widespread acceptance of Social Darwinism by the scientific and academic community.^{1,8-10}

The very heart of Darwinism is the belief that evolution proceeds by the differential survival of the fittest or superior individuals. This requires differences among a species, which in time become great enough so that those individuals that possess advantageous features — the fittest — are more apt to survive. Although the process of riation may begin with slight differences, differential survival rates in time produce distinct races by a process called *speciation*, meaning the development of a new species.

The egalitarian ideal that 'all people are created equal', which now dominates Western ideology, has not been universal among nations and cultures.¹¹ A major force that has argued against this view was the Social Darwinian eugenics movement, especially its crude 'survival of the fittest' worldview.^{10,12} As Ludmerer noted, the idea that the hereditary quality of the race can be improved by selective breeding is as old as Plato's *Republic* but:

*'... modern eugenics thought arose only in the nineteenth century. The emergence of interest in eugenics during that century had multiple roots. The most important was the theory of evolution, for Francis Galton's ideas on eugenics — and it was he who created the term "eugenics" — were a direct logical outgrowth of the scientific doctrine elaborated by his cousin, Charles Darwin.'*¹³

Nazi governmental policy was openly influenced by Darwinism, the Zeitgeist of both science and educated society of the time.¹⁰ This can be evaluated by an examination of extant documents, writings, and artefacts produced by Germany's twentieth century Nazi movement and its many scientist supporters. Keith concluded the Nazi treatment of Jews and other 'races', then believed 'inferior', was largely a result of their belief that Darwinism provided profound insight that could be used to significantly improve humankind.¹⁴ Tenenbaum noted that the political philosophy of Germany was built on the belief that critical for evolutionary progress were:

'... struggle, selection, and survival of the fittest, all notions and observations arrived at... by Darwin ... but already in luxuriant bud in the German social philosophy of the nineteenth century. ... Thus developed the doctrine of Germany's inherent right to rule the world on the basis of superior strength ... [of a] "hammer and

*anvil" relationship between the Reich and the weaker nations.'*¹⁴

The importance of race in Darwinism

The theory of evolution is based on individuals acquiring unique traits that enable those possessing the new traits to better survive adverse conditions compared to those who don't possess them. Superior individuals will be more likely to survive and pass on these traits to their offspring so such traits will increase in number, while the 'weaker' individuals will eventually die off. If every member of a species were fully equal, natural selection would have nothing to select from, and evolution would cease for that species.

These differences gradually produce new groups, some of which have an advantage in terms of survival. These new groups became the superior, or the more evolved races. When a trait eventually spreads throughout the entire race because of the survival advantage it confers on those that possess it, a higher, more evolved form of animal will result. Hitler and the Nazi party claimed that one of their major goals was to apply this accepted 'science' to society. And *'the core idea of Darwinism was not evolution, but selection. Evolution ... describes the results of selection.'*¹⁶ Hitler stressed that to produce a better society *'we [the Nazis] must understand, and cooperate with science.'*

As the one race above all others, Aryans believed that their evolutionary superiority gave them not only the right, but the *duty* to subjugate all other peoples. Race was a major plank of the Nazi philosophy; Tenenbaum concluded that they incorporated Darwinism:

*'... in their political system, with nothing left out.... Their political dictionary was replete with words like space, struggle, selection, and extinction (Ausmerzen). The syllogism of their logic was clearly stated: The world is a jungle in which different nations struggle for space. The stronger win, the weaker die or are killed'*¹⁷

In the 1933 Nuremberg party rally, Hitler proclaimed that *'higher race subjects to itself a lower race ... a right which we see in nature and which can be regarded as the sole conceivable right,'* because it was founded on science.¹⁵

Hitler believed humans were animals to whom the genetics laws, learned from livestock breeding, could be applied. The Nazis believed that instead of permitting natural forces and chance to control evolution, they must direct the process to advance the human race. The first step to achieve this goal was to isolate the 'inferior races' in order to prevent them from further contaminating the 'Aryan' gene pool. The widespread public support for this policy was a result of the belief, common in the educated classes, in the conclusion that certain races were



Estate Bachelder Collection, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives

Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler review SS troops during Reich Party Day ceremonies in Nuremberg, Germany, 1938.

genetically inferior as was scientifically 'proven' by Darwinism. The Nazis believed that they were simply applying facts, proven by science, to produce a superior race of humans as part of their plan for a better world: *The business of the corporate state was eugenics or artificial selection — politics as applied biology.'*^{18,19}

As early as 1925, Hitler outlined his conclusion in Chapter 4 of *Mein Kampf* 'that Darwinism was the *only* basis for a successful Germany and which the title of his most famous work — in English *My Struggle* — alluded to. As Clark concluded, Adolf Hitler:

*... was captivated by evolutionary teaching — probably since the time he was a boy. Evolutionary ideas — quite undisguised — lie at the basis of all that is worst in Mein Kampf — and in his public speeches Hitler reasoned ... that a higher race would always conquer a lower.'*²⁰

And Hickman adds that it is no coincidence that Hitler:

*' ... was a firm believer and preacher of evolution. Whatever the deeper, profound, complexities of his psychosis, it is certain that [the concept of struggle was important because] ... his book, Mein Kampf, clearly set forth a number of evolutionary ideas, particularly those emphasizing struggle, survival of the fittest and the extermination of the weak to produce a better society.'*²¹

Furthermore, the belief that evolution can be directed by scientists to produce a 'superior race' was the *central leitmotif* of Nazism and many other sources existed from which Nazism drew:

' ... its ideological fire-water. But in that concatenation of ideas and nightmares which made up the ... social policies of the Nazi state, and to a considerable extent its military and diplomatic policies as well, can be most clearly

*comprehended in the light of its vast racial program.*²²

The Nazi view on Darwinian evolution and race was consequently a major part of the fatal combination of ideas and events which produced the holocaust and World War II:

*'One of the central planks in Nazi theory and doctrine was ... evolutionary theory [and] ... that all biology had evolved ... upward, and that ... less evolved types ... should be actively eradicated [and] ... that natural selection could and should be actively aided, and therefore [the Nazis] instituted political measures to eradicate ... Jews, and ... blacks, whom they considered as "underdeveloped".*²³

Terms such as 'superior race', 'lower human types', 'pollution of the race', and the word *evolution* itself (*entwicklung*) were often used by Hitler and other Nazi leaders. His race views were not from fringe science as often claimed but rather Hitler's views were:

*'... straightforward German social Darwinism of a type widely known and accepted throughout Germany and which, more importantly, was considered by most Germans, scientists included, to be scientifically true. More recent scholarship on national socialism and Hitler has begun to realize that ... [their application of Darwin's theory] was the specific characteristic of Nazism. National socialist "biopolicy," ... [was] a policy based on a mystical-biological belief in radical inequality, a monistic, antitranscendent moral nihilism based on the eternal struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest as the law of nature, and the consequent use of state power for a public policy of natural selection....'*²⁴

The philosophy that humans can control and even use Darwinism to produce a 'higher level' of human is repeatedly mentioned in the writings and speeches of prominent Nazis.²⁵ Accomplishing the Darwinian goal for the world required ruthlessly eliminating the less fit by open barbarian behavior:

*'The basic outline of German social Darwinism [was] ... man was merely a part of nature with no special transcendent qualities or special humanness. On the other hand, the Germans were members of a biologically superior community ... politics was merely the straightforward application of the laws of biology. In essence, Haeckel and his fellow social Darwinists advanced the ideas that were to become the core assumptions of national socialism The business of the corporate state was eugenics or artificial selection'*¹⁸

Hitler once even stated that we Nazis *'... are barbarians! We want to be barbarians. It is an*

*honorable title [for, by it,] we shall rejuvenate the world ,...'*²⁶ Hitler, as an evolutionist, *'consciously sought to make the practice of Germany conform to the theory of evolution.'*²⁷ Keith adds that:

*If war be the progeny of evolution — and I am convinced that it is — then evolution has "gone mad", reaching such a height of ferocity as must frustrate its proper role in the world of life — which is the advancement of her competing "units", these being tribes, nations, or races of mankind. There is no way of getting rid of war save one, and that is to rid human nature of the sanctions imposed on it by the law of evolution. Can man ... render the law of evolution null and void? ... I have discovered no way that is at once possible and practicable. "There is no escape from human nature." Because Germany has drunk the vat of evolution to its last dregs, and in her evolutionary debauch has plunged Europe into a bath of blood, that is no proof that the law of evolution is evil. A law which brought man out of the jungle and made him king of beasts cannot be altogether bad.*²⁸

Jews in Germany and Darwinism

The German eugenic leadership was originally less anti-Semitic than even the British leadership. Most early German eugenicists believed that German Jews were Aryans, and consequently the eugenicist movement was supported by many Jewish professors and doctors both in Germany and abroad. The Jews were only slowly incorporated into the German eugenic theory and then laws.

The Darwinian racists' views also slowly entered into many spheres of German society which they had previously not affected.⁹ The Pan German League, dedicated to 'maintaining German Racial Purity', was originally not overtly anti-Semitic and assimilated Jews were allowed full membership. Many German eugenicists believed that although blacks or gypsies were racially inferior, their racial theories did not fit Jews since many Jews had achieved significant success in Germany. Schleunes adds that by 1903, the influence of race ideas permeated the League's program to the degree that by 1912, the League declared itself based upon 'racial principles' and soon excluded Jews from membership.²⁹

In spite of the scientific prominence of these racial views, they had a limited effect upon most Jews until the 1930s. Most German Jews were proud of being Germans and considered themselves Germans first and Jews second. Many Jews modified the German intelligentsia's racial views by including themselves in it. Their assimilation into German life was to the extent that most felt its anti-Semitism did not represent a serious

threat to their security. Most Jews also were convinced that Germany was now a safe harbor for them.³⁰ Many still firmly held to the Genesis creation model and rejected the views upon which racism was based, including Darwinism. What happened in Germany later was obviously not well received by Jewish geneticists, even Jewish eugenicists and certain other groups:

*The eugenics movement felt a mixture of apprehension and admiration at the progress of eugenics in Germany ... but the actual details of the eugenics measures which emerged after Hitler's rise to power were not unequivocally welcomed. Eugenicists pointed to the USA as a place where strict laws controlled marriage but where a strong tradition of political freedom existed.*³¹

Hitler's eugenic goals

Nazi policies resulted less from a 'hatred' toward Jewish or other peoples than from the idealistic goal of preventing 'pollution' of the superior race. Hitler elaborated his Darwinian views by comparing the strong killing the weak to a cat devouring a mouse, concluding that ultimately the Jews must be eliminated because they cause:

*'... peoples to decay In the long run nature eliminates the noxious elements. One may be repelled by this law of nature which demands that all living things should mutually devour one another. The fly is snapped up by a dragon-fly, which itself is swallowed by a bird, which itself falls victim to a larger bird ...to know the laws of nature ... enables us to obey them.'*³²

Hitler then argued that for this reason,

governments must understand and apply the 'laws of Nature', especially the '*survival of the fittest*' law which '*originally produced the human races and is the source of their improvement*'. The government must therefore aid in the elimination, or at least quarantine, of the inferior races. Hitler argued:

*If I can accept a divine Commandment, it's this one: "Thou shalt preserve the species." The life of the individual must not be set at too high a price. If the individual were important in the eyes of nature, nature would take care to preserve him. Amongst the millions of eggs a fly lays, very few are hatched out — and yet the race of flies thrives.*³³

Hitler was especially determined to prevent Aryans from breeding with non-Aryans, a concern that eventually resulted in the 'final solution'. Once the inferior races were exterminated, Hitler believed that future generations would be eternally grateful for the improvement that his programs brought to humanity:

*'The Germans were the higher race, destined for a glorious evolutionary future. For this reason it was essential that the Jews should be segregated, otherwise mixed marriages would take place. Were this to happen, all nature's efforts "to establish an evolutionary higher stage of being may thus be rendered futile" (Mein Kampf).'*²⁰

Individuals are not *only* far less important than the race, but the Nazis concluded that certain races were not human, but were animals:

'The Jews, labeled subhumans, became nonbeings. It was both legal and right to exterminate them in the collectivist and evolutionist viewpoint. They were not considered



Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi War Crimes, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives

Polish children imprisoned in Auschwitz, Poland, July 1944.

... persons in the sight of the German government.³⁴

As a result, the Darwinist movement was 'one of the most powerful forces in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries German intellectual history [and] may be fully understood as a prelude to the doctrine of national socialism [Nazism]'.³⁵ Why did evolution catch hold in Germany faster, and take a firmer hold there than any other place in the world?

Evolution used to justify existing German racism

Schleunes noted, rather poignantly, that the reason the publication of Darwin's 1859 work had an immediate impact in Germany, and their Jewish policy, was because:

*'Darwin's notion of struggle for survival ... legitimized by the latest scientific views, justified the racists' conception of superior and inferior peoples and nations and validated the conflict between them.'*³⁶

The Darwinian revolution and the works of its chief German spokesman and most eminent scientist, Professor Haeckel, gave the racists something that they were confident was powerful verification of their race beliefs.³⁷ The support of the science establishment resulted in racist thought having a much wider circulation than otherwise possible, and enormous satisfaction *'that one's prejudices were actually expressions of scientific truth'*.³⁶

And what greater authority than science could racists have for their views? Konrad Lorenz, one of the most eminent animal-behavior scientists then, and often credited as being the founder of his field, stated that:

*'Just as in cancer the best treatment is to eradicate the parasitic growth as quickly as possible, the eugenic defense against the dysgenic social effects of afflicted subpopulations is of necessity limited to equally drastic measures When these inferior elements are not effectively eliminated from a [healthy] population, then — just as when the cells of a malignant tumor are allowed to proliferate throughout the human body — they destroy the host body as well as themselves.'*³⁸

Lorenz's works were important in developing the Nazi program designed to eradicate the 'parasitic growth' of inferior races. The government's programs to insure the 'German Volk' maintained their superiority made racism almost unassailable. Although King claimed that *'the holocaust ... pretended to have a scientific genetic basis'*,³⁹ the position of the government and university elite of the time was so entrenched that few contemporary scientists seriously questioned it. The anti-Semitic attitudes of the German people were only partly to blame in causing the holocaust — only when

Darwinism was added to the preexisting attitudes did a lethal combination result.

Eugenics becomes more extreme

The first step in an eugenic program was to determine which groups were genetically superior; a judgment that was heavily influenced by culture. The ideal traits were:

'... a human type whose appearance had been described by the race theorist Hans F. K. Günther as "blond, tall, long-skulled, with narrow faces, pronounced chins, narrow noses with a high bridge, soft hair, widely spaced pale-coloured eyes, pinky-white skin colour"'.⁴⁰

Although superficial observations enable most people to make a broad classification of race, when explored in depth, race status is by no means easy to determine, as the Nazis soon found out. Many of the groups that they felt were inferior, such as the Slovaks, Jews, Gypsies, and others, were not easily distinguishable from the pure 'Aryan' race. In grouping persons into races to select the 'best', the Nazis measured a wide variety of physical traits including brain case sizes. The Nazis relied heavily upon the work of Hans F.K. Günther, professor of 'racial science' at the University of Jena. Although Günther's *'personal relationships with the party were stormy at times, his racial ideas were accepted'*. They received wide support throughout the German government, and were an important influence in German policy.⁴¹ Günther recognized that, although *'a race may not be pure, its members share certain dominant characteristics'*, thus paving the way for stereotyping.⁴¹

Günther concluded that all Aryans share an ideal Nordic type which contrasted with the Jews, whom he concluded were a mixture of races. Günther stressed a person's genealogical lineage, anthropological measurement of skulls and evaluations of physical appearance, were all used to determine their race. Even though physical appearance was stressed, *'the body is the showplace of the soul'* and *'the soul is primary'*.⁴² Select females with the necessary superior race traits were even placed in special homes and kept pregnant as long as they remained in the program. Nonetheless, research on the offspring of the experiment concluded that, as is now known, IQ regressed toward the population mean and the IQs of the offspring were generally lower than that of the parents.

The bad blood theory

Darwinism not only influenced the Nazi attitude toward Jews, but other cultural and ethnic groups as well. Even mental patients were included later, in part because it was then believed that heredity had a major influence on mental illness (or they possibly had some Jewish or

other non-Aryan blood in them), and consequently had to be destroyed. Poliakov notes that many intellectuals in the early 1900s accepted *telegony*, the idea that 'bad blood' would *contaminate a race line forever*, or that '*bad blood drives out good, just as bad money displaces good money*'.⁴³ Only extermination would permanently eliminate inferior genetic lines, and thereby further evolution.

Darwin even compiled a long list of cases where he concluded bad blood polluted a whole gene line, causing it to bear impure progeny forever. Numerous respected biologists, including Ernst Ruedin of the University of Munich and many of his colleagues such as Herbert Spencer, Francis Galton, and Eugene Kahn, later a professor of psychiatry at Yale, actively advocated this hereditary argument. These scientists were also the chief architects of the German compulsory sterilization laws designed to prevent those with defective or 'inferior' genes from contaminating the Aryan gene pool. Later, when the 'genetically inferior' were also judged as 'useless dredges', massive killings became justified. The groups judged inferior were gradually expanded to include a wide variety of races and national groups. Later, it even included less healthy older people, epileptics, both severe and mild mental defectives, deaf-mutes, and even some persons with certain terminal illnesses.¹⁴⁴

The groups judged 'inferior' were later expanded to include persons who had negroid or *mongoloid features*, gypsies, and those who did not pass a set of ingeniously designed overtly racist phrenology tests now known to be worthless.⁴⁵ After Jesse Owen won four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, Hitler chastised the Americans for even permitting blacks to enter the contests.⁴⁶

Some evolutionists even advocated the view that women were evolutionarily inferior to men. Dr Robert Wartenberg, later a prominent neurology professor in California, tried to prove women's inferiority by arguing that they could not survive unless they were 'protected by men'. He concluded that because the weaker women were not eliminated as rapidly due to this protection, a slower rate of evolution resulted and for this reason natural selection was less operative on women than men. How the weak were to be 'selected' for elimination was not clear, nor were the criteria used to determine 'weak'. Women in Nazi Germany were openly prohibited from entering certain professions and were required by law to conform to a traditional female role.⁴⁷

Evolution and war in Nazi Germany

Darwinism not only offered the Germans a meaningful interpretation of their recent military past, but also a justification for future aggression: '*German*

military success in the Bismarkian wars fit neatly into Darwin categories ... in the struggle for survival, [demonstrating] the fitness of Germany.'⁴⁸ War was a positive force not only because it eliminated 'weaker' races, but also because it weeded out the weaker members of the 'superior' races. Hitler not only unabashedly intended to produce a superior race, but he openly relied heavily upon Darwinian thought in both his extermination and war policies.²⁵ Nazi Germany, partly for this reason, openly glorified war because it was an important means of eliminating the less fit of the highest race, a step necessary to 'upgrade the race'. Clark concludes, quoting extensively from *Mein Kampf* that:

'Hitler's attitude to the League of Nations and to peace and war were based upon the same principles. "A world court... would be a joke ... the whole world of Nature is a mighty struggle between strength and weakness — an eternal victory of the strong over the weak. There would be nothing but decay in the whole of nature if this were not so. States which [violate] ... this elementary law would fall into decay. ...He who would live must fight. He who does not wish to fight in this world where permanent struggle is the law of life, has not the right to exist." To think otherwise is to "insult" nature. "Distress, misery and disease are her rejoinders ".'⁴⁹

German greatness, Hitler stressed, came about primarily because they were jingoists, and thereby had been eliminating their weaker members for centuries.⁵⁰ Although Germans were no stranger to war, this new justification gave powerful support to their policies. The view that eradication of the weaker races was a major source of evolution was well expressed by Wiggam:

'... at one time man had scarcely more brains than his anthropoid cousins, the apes. But, by kicking, biting, fighting ... and outwitting his enemies and by the fact that the ones who had not sense and strength enough to do this were killed off, man's brain became enormous and he waxed both in wisdom and agility if not in size'⁵¹

In other words, war is positive in the long run because only by lethal conflicts can humans evolve. Hitler even claimed as truth the contradiction that human civilization as we know it would not exist if it were not for constant war. And many of the leading scientists of his day openly advocated this view: Haeckel was especially fond of praising the ancient Spartans, whom he saw as a successful and superior people as a consequence of their socially approved biological selection. By killing all but the '*perfectly healthy and strong children*' the Spartans were '*continually in excellent strength and vigor*'.⁵² Germany should follow this Spartan custom, as infanticide of the deformed and sickly was '*a practice of advantage to both the infants*

destroyed and to the community'. It was, after all, only 'traditional dogma' and hardly scientific truth that all lives were of equal worth or should be preserved.¹⁸⁵³

However, the common assumption that European civilization evolved far more than others, primarily because of its constant warmongering in contrast to other nations, is false. War is actually typical of virtually all peoples, except certain small island groups who have abundant food, or peoples in very cold areas.⁵⁴ Historically, many tribes in Africa were continually involved in wars, as were most countries in Asia and America.

Nazism and religion

Much of the opposition to the eugenic movement came from German Christians. Although Hitler was baptized a Catholic, he was never excommunicated, and evidently 'considered himself a good Roman Catholic' as a young man, and at times used religious language. He clearly had strong, even vociferous, anti-Christian feelings as an adult, as did probably most Nazi party leaders. As a consummate politician, though, he openly tried to exploit the church.⁵⁵ Hitler once revealed his attitude toward Christianity when he bluntly stated that religion is an:

'... organized lie [that] must be smashed. The State must remain the absolute master. When I was younger, I thought it was necessary to set about [destroying religion] ... with dynamite. I've since realized there's room for a little subtlety The final state must be ... in St. Peter's Chair, a senile officiant; facing him a few sinister old women ...



The Jewish Cemetery in Prague. An all-too-chilling reminder of the racist ideals of the Nazi movement.

*The young and healthy are on our side ... it's impossible to eternally hold humanity in bondage and lies [It] was only between the sixth and eighth centuries that Christianity was imposed upon our peoples Our peoples had previously succeeded in living all right without this religion. I have six divisions of SS men absolutely indifferent in matters of religion. It doesn't prevent them from going to their death with serenity in their souls.*⁵⁶

His beliefs as revealed in this quote are abundantly clear: the younger people who were the hope of Germany were 'absolutely indifferent in matters of religion'. As Keith noted, the Nazi party viewed Darwinism and Christianity as polar opposites. Milner said of Germany's father of evolution, Ernst Haeckel, that in his *Natural History of Creation* he argued that 'the church with its morality of love and charity is an effete fraud, a perversion of the natural order'.⁵⁷ A major reason why Haeckel concluded this was because Christianity:

*'... makes no distinction of race or of color; it seeks to break down all racial barriers. In this respect the hand of Christianity is against that of Nature, for are not the races of mankind the evolutionary harvest which Nature has toiled through long ages to produce? May we not say, then, that Christianity is anti-evolutionary in its aim?'*⁵⁸

The opposition to religion was a prominent feature of German science, and thus later German political theory, from its very beginning. As Stein summarized Haeckel in a lecture titled *On evolution: Darwin's Theory*:

*'... [Haeckel] argued that Darwin was correct ... humankind had unquestionably evolved from the animal kingdom. Thus, and here the fatal step was taken in Haeckel's first major exposition of Darwinism in Germany, humankind's social and political existence is governed by the laws of evolution, natural selection, and biology, as clearly shown by Darwin. To argue otherwise was backward superstition. And, of course, it was organized religion which did this and thus stood in the way of scientific and social progress.'*⁵⁹

Martin Bormann, Hitler's closest associate for years and one of the most powerful men in Nazi Germany, was equally blunt: the church was opposed to

evolution and for this reason must be condemned, but the Nazis were on the side of science and evolution. Furthermore, Nazi and Christian concepts are incompatible because Christianity is built:

*... upon the ignorance of men and strive[s] to keep large portions of the people in ignorance On the other hand, National Socialism is based on scientific foundations. Christianity's immutable principles, which were laid down almost two thousands years ago, have increasingly stiffened into life-alien dogmas. National Socialism, however, if it wants to fulfill its task further, must always guide itself according to the newest data of scientific researches.'*⁶⁰

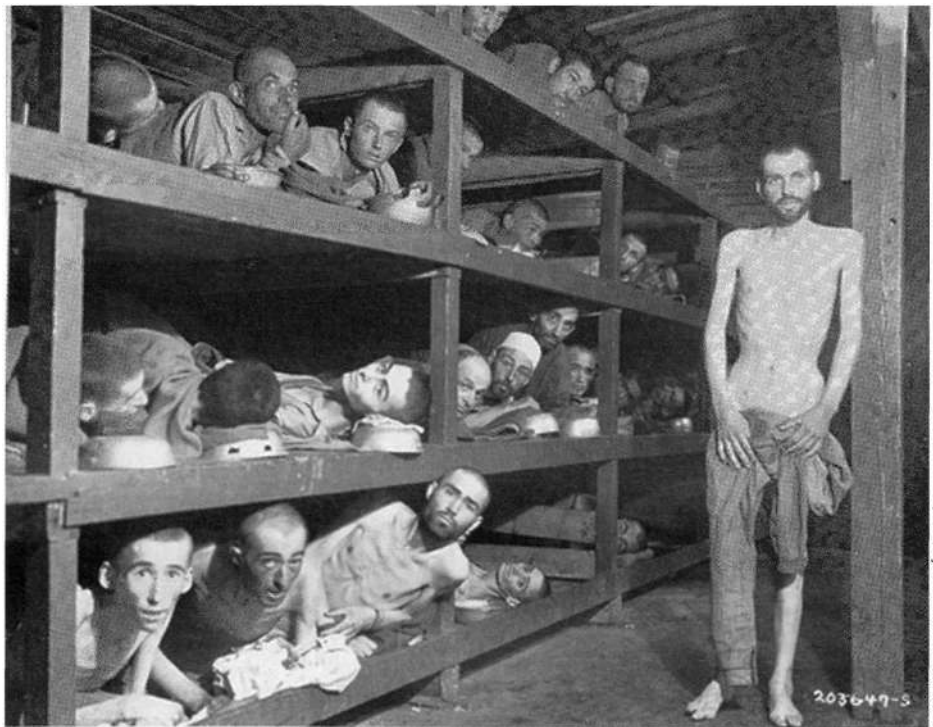
Bormann also claimed that the Christian churches have long been aware that:

*'... scientific knowledge poses a threat to their existence. Therefore, by means of such pseudo-sciences as theology, they take great pains to suppress or falsify scientific research. Our National Socialist world view stands on a much higher level than the concepts of Christianity, which in their essentials were taken over from Judaism. For this reason, too, we can do without Christianity.'*⁶⁰

As Humber notes, Hitler believed that Blacks were 'monstrosities halfway between man and ape' and therefore he disapproved of German Christians:

*'... going to " Central Africa " to set up 'Negro missions, " resulting in the turning of "healthy ... human beings into a rotten brood of bastards. " In his chapter entitled "Nation and Race, " he said, "The stronger must dominate and not blend with the weaker, thus sacrificing his own greatness. Only the born weakling can view this as cruel, but he, after all, is only a weak and limited man; for if this law did not prevail, any conceivable higher development (Hoherentwicklung) of organic living beings would be unthinkable. " A few pages later, he said, "Those who want to live, let them fight, and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live ".'*⁶¹

A literature review shows that German racism would have had a difficult time existing if the historical creation position, void of race curse theories, had been widely accepted. One of these biblical theories was the



Former prisoners of the 'little camp' in Buchenwald, Germany, stare out from the wooden bunks in which they slept three to a 'bed'.

National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives

claim that Genesis teaches that 'two types of men' were originally created; Adam and Eve, the superior race line, and the 'beasts of the earth', the inferior black race line.^{62,63} Few people, though, accepted this idea.

Relatively few scientific studies exist which directly deal with Darwinism and Nazism — and many evolutionists avoid the subject because evolution is inescapably selectionist. One of the best reviews of Darwinism and Nazism documents clearly that Nazism felt confident that their programs of extermination was firmly based on evolution science.⁶⁴ Recently, a number of popular articles have covered this topic in a surprisingly candid and honest way.⁶⁵ The source of the worst of Nazism was in Darwinism and we must first understand history to prevent its repeat. Paraphrasing the words of Hitler, those who ignore the lessons of history are condemned to repeat it.⁶⁶ Admittedly, some persons who did not accept evolution espoused non-evolution theories which accommodated or even espoused racism. Nonetheless, these persons were few and the theories that were developed seem to be mostly in response to preconceived ideas or to justify existing social systems.

Nazism-applied evolution

From our modern perspective, many persons have concluded that World War II and its results ensued from the ideology of an evil madman and his equally evil administration. Hitler, though, did not see himself as evil, but as humanity's benefactor. He felt that many

years hence, the world would be extremely grateful to him and his programs which lifted the human race to genetically higher levels of evolution by stopping race pollution by preventing mixed marriages with inferior races.

*'Hitler was influenced above all by the theories of the nineteenth-century social Darwinist school, whose conception of man as biological material was bound up with impulses towards a planned society. He was convinced that the race was disintegrating, deteriorating through faulty breeding as a result of a liberally tinged promiscuity that was vitiating the nation's blood. And this led to the establishment of a catalogue of 'positive' curative measures: racial hygiene, eugenic choice of marriage partners, the breeding of human beings by the methods of selection on the one hand and extirpation on the other.'*⁶⁷

Hitler's efforts to put members of these inferior races in concentration camps was not so much an effort to punish but, as his apologists repeatedly stated, was a protective safeguard similar to quarantining sick people to prevent contamination of the rest of the community. In Haas's words, the Nazis believed that *'killing Jews and others was in fact a scientific and rational way of serving an objectively greater good'*.⁶⁸ Or, as Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz, adds, *'such a struggle, legitimized by the latest scientific views, justifies the racists' conceptions of superior and inferior people and nations and validated the conflict between them'*.⁶⁹ Many in Germany recognized the harm of Darwinism, and Nordenskiöld claimed the Prussian Minister of Education, even for a time in 1875 banned, its teaching:

*'... the Prussian Minister of Education sent round a circular strictly forbidding the schoolmasters in the country to have anything to do with Darwinism ... with a view to protecting schoolchildren from the dangers of the new doctrines.'*⁷⁰

An interesting question is, would the Nazi holocaust have occurred if this ban had remained in effect? Haeckel was at the center of this fight and garnered much support from:

'... free-thinkers and it is easy to realize the eagerness with which the friends of the freedom of thought and word must have gathered around him in spite of his many delusions, when such measures as the school regulations mentioned above were adopted ... All the more so as the outcome proved Haeckel's justification; Darwinism might be prohibited in the schools, but the idea of evolution and its method penetrated everywhere ... And to this result Haeckel has undeniably contributed more than most;

*everything of value in his utterances has become permanent, while his blunders have been forgotten, as they deserve.'*⁷⁰

A biologist writing the above today would certainly drop 'as they deserve' because Haeckel is today acknowledged as an unscrupulous forger who played no small role in the horrible events that occurred in the 1930s and 1940s.

The well documented influence of Darwinism on the Holocaust has been greatly downplayed by the mass media. Current writers often gloss over, totally ignore, or even distort the close connection between Darwinism and the Nazi race theory and the policies it produced, but as Stein admonishes:

*'There is little doubt that the history of ethnocentrism, racism, nationalism, and xenophobia has been also a history of the use of science and the actions of scientists in support of these ideas and social movements. In many cases it is clear that science was used merely as raw material or evidence by ideologically interested political actors as proof of preconceived notions. Most contemporary sociobiologists and students of biopolitics would argue that all attempts to use science in this manner are, in fact, mere pseudoscience'*⁷¹

He adds that there is also little doubt that this contemporary self-protecting attitude is based on a:

*'... somewhat willful misreading of history. The history of ethnocentrism and the like has also been the history of many well-respected scientists of the day being quite active in using their own authority as scientists to advance and support racist and xenophobic political and social doctrines in the name of science. Thus, if the scientists of the day used the science of the day to advance racism, it is simply a form of Kuhnian amnesia or historical whitewash to dismiss concern with a possible contemporary abuse of science by a claim that the past abuse was mere pseudoscience.'*⁷¹

Darwin was not just responding to his culture as often alleged. In Hull's words *'we have all heard, time and time again, that the reason Darwin's theory was so ... sexist, and racist is that Darwin's society exhibited these same characteristics'*. Hull answers this change by noting that Darwin was not *'so callow that he simply read the characteristics of his society into nature'*.⁷²

Nazism is often used as a warning example of the danger of religious zeal, yet only occasionally is the key role of the eugenics of Francis Galton, based on the theory of natural selection espoused by his cousin, Charles Darwin, mentioned. Eugenics is still alive in the world today. As late as 1955, a Canadian professor

of zoology, notes that 'possibly the most significant fact is that he [Darwin] finally freed humanity from a great measure of... church proscription and won his fellow men a freedom of thought that had been unknown for centuries'.⁷³ He then argues that reducing the churches' influence in society allowed the discovery of, not only the means of evolution, but the knowledge that man had the means and that we can either direct evolution or let it take place on its own or, worse, stop it by counteracting the forces which propel it, causing deevolution.

Rowan argued that man has, tragically, chosen the latter 'selection is still as vital to human progress as it has ever been. The great Darwinian principle remains..'. Then he added, 'When man acquired intellect, he started on an entirely new path without precedent in the animal world, the course of which now depends, not on further physical changes, but on intellectual and equally intellectual selection.'⁷⁴ Unfortunately, he concludes, humans are 'saving' the intellectually inferior and have failed to order their affairs according to the laws of biology.⁷⁴ This discussion, although tactful, is clear: those whom evolutionists judge as less fit need to be eliminated, or at the least our efforts in saving them, should be limited and we should let nature do its work. Not to do so will result in the eventual doom of the human race.

Conclusion

Firmly convinced that Darwinian evolution was true, Hitler saw himself as the modern saviour of mankind. Society, he felt, would someday regard him as a great 'scientific socialist', the benefactor of all humankind. By breeding a superior race, the world would look upon him as the man who pulled humanity up to a higher level of evolutionary development. If Darwinism is true, Hitler was our saviour and we have crucified him. As a result, the human race will grievously suffer. If Darwinism is not true, what Hitler attempted to do must be ranked with the most heinous crimes of history and Darwin as the father of one of the most destructive philosophies of history. An assessment by Youngson concluded that the application of Darwinism to society, called eugenics, produced one of the most tragic scientific blunders of all time:

"The culmination of this darker side of eugenics was, of course, Adolf Hitler's attempt to produce a " 'master race' by encouraging mating between pure 'Aryans'" and by the murder of six million people whom he claimed to have inferior genes. It is hardly fair to Galton to blame him for the Holocaust or even for his failure to anticipate the consequences of his advocacy of the matter. But he was certainly the principal architect of eugenics, and Hitler was certainly obsessed with

*the idea. So, in terms of its consequences, this must qualify as one of the greatest scientific blunders of all time.*⁷⁵

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