

“Nazi Germany and its collaborators killed about 1.5 million Jewish children” (“Children During the Holocaust”). Many children were lost and many others endured horrible conditions. The Nazis did not even spare infants. A child during the Holocaust had to go through many hardships such as hiding for long periods of time, starvation, and concentration camps.

Children during the Holocaust had to constantly hide. Hiding meant risking severe punishment, leaving behind relatives, and finding families that will provide refuge (“Life In Shadows”). It was especially hard to find families to provide Jewish people with refuge because the Nazis would severely punish people that helped them. If Jewish families found someone to help them, they often had to hide in cellars or attics. In these attics and cellars Jewish children had to be quiet and motionless for hours (“Jewish Victims”). Children in hiding had a hard time getting an education because they could not go out and get a formal education. Instead they had to try to educate themselves through reading and writing (“Jewish Victims”). When I visited Anne Frank’s museum in Amsterdam, I witnessed the harsh living conditions she had to endure during the Holocaust. She was only one of many children that had to endure these conditions. By using her diary, we can understand the harsh conditions she and other children had to go through during this devastating time. Jewish children often had to hide under different religions. Some Catholic convents hid Jewish children to help keep them safe from the Nazis, but they were also sometimes baptized without the consent of their parents (“Jewish Victims”). Hiding made Jewish children’s life difficult and often provoked fear from the constant threat of being discovered.

Starvation commonly occurred for Jewish families during the Holocaust. In concentration camps access to food was tightly controlled. The Nazis developed a general food plan for the concentration camps, but they rarely actually followed them (Bruaas). The camps did not distribute milk or enough food rations for infants, so many starved to death (“The Fate of the

Children”). The combination of brutal physical labor and poor food led to many children falling ill from starvation. In places of German occupation, the Nazis took food supplies from the Slavs, Poles, and Jews because they thought that the German race was superior (Bruaas). Many civilians died of starvation when the Nazis took away their food supplies. Jewish children in hiding also faced starvation. It was hard for them to obtain food while staying in hiding. This starvation killed many kids throughout the Holocaust.

Concentration camps were extremely brutal, especially towards children. “They suffered from hunger and cold, were used as laborers, and were punished, put to death, and used as subjects in criminal experiments by SS doctors” (“The Fate of the Children”). Children were also at higher risk of getting chosen for the gas chambers because they could not work as much. Most children under the age of fifteen years old were selected to be put to death immediately upon arrival to concentration camps (“Children and the Holocaust”). “Only 6 to 11% of Europe’s prewar Jewish population of children survived as compared with 33% of the adults” (“Plight of Jewish Children”). I have personally seen one of these horrible concentration camps in Lithuania. The concentration camp called the Ninth Fort, was used by the Nazis. This camp murdered Jews through mass shootings. There were many shoes left over from these killings. Many of these shoes are children’s shoes. These shoes represent the amount of people killed not only by gas chambers but also by mass shootings. Children had to endure and try to survive all of these difficult conditions put in place by the Nazis.

Children during the Holocaust suffered many hardships. They had to go through hiding, starvation, and concentration camps. Many children were killed because of these hardships. This was a time of struggle and fear for Jewish children. They struggled physically and mentally throughout this time. Even once they were liberated they had physical and mental trauma from

this time and many did not have family to go back to. Instead of forgetting this devastating time, we need to learn from it, so that it never happens again.

Works Cited

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