

# Introduction

## The Holocaust as educational theme

### Prologue

This book addresses head-on one of the most harrowing, perplexing and—for many—incomprehensible of educational themes; a subject that is frankly difficult to reconcile with much of what we are generally prepared to associate with the human condition and the realm of human possibilities.

Yet human history can be looked at in many different ways. To take two opposing approaches, we can see it, on the one hand, as essentially a grim record of the big and the strong attempting to dominate those who are smaller and weaker. Or, on the other hand, taking a more positive view, we may see it as broadly the story of individuals and groups trying to solve problems—be they ethical, political, social or scientific.

Of all animals, only humans control both their environment and their development, and only we can be held morally accountable for our actions. The staggering speed of our technological advance contrasts depressingly with the slow, halting pace of our ethical ‘progress’: we may travel in space, cruise the information superhighway and watch the Olympic Games beamed by satellite—simultaneously and instantaneously—to every part of the globe; yet still we have widespread slavery, racial discrimination, starvation and injustice. (Indeed, space travel and satellite technology are themselves byproducts of the nuclear arms race.) These contradictions and ambiguities are inherent in our existence on this planet and no single historical event has, I believe, the power to draw them into sharper focus than the subject of this book.

The unparalleled catastrophe that overwhelmed the Jews of Europe during the period 1941–45 can now be said to constitute not only one of the most horrendous but arguably one of the most significant events of modern world history. The Holocaust or, as it is known much more satisfyingly in Hebrew, the ‘Shoah’, is no longer reduced to the status of footnote to the Second World War—its ‘explanation’ lying merely in the barbarity to which humankind had been reduced by the extremities of international warfare—nor is it explained away by a variety of simple, one-dimensional theories, for example ‘the Holocaust was just an extreme example of human prejudice’ or ‘it was essentially the product of “scapegoating”’ or—most crass of all—of something peculiarly ‘German’. Rather it is now seen as a complex subject with its own distinctive history and internal ‘logic’. Above all, it is an historical event that seems to issue the most terrifying warnings to us all about the darker side of our own nature and of the societies we have created and, in particular, the dangers inherent in our modern political systems, our technological inventiveness and our bureaucratic processes.

The Holocaust has, in effect, become a central reference point for humanity as we look forwards with hope into the new millennium, while at the same time throwing a backwards glance—in fear, guilt and

shame—at the blood-drenched century we are leaving behind; a twentieth century from which we should like, perhaps, to learn some lessons. If we are to have a future, the Holocaust seems to tell us, we must surely remember our past.

But it was not always so. For almost twenty years after the war, historians, educationalists and philosophers maintained an eerie, if reverential, silence on the subject, especially its moral and historical significance. It was the trial in 1961 of former SS bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann, one of the principal architects of the ‘Final Solution’—a trial held controversially in Israel and very much a ‘show’ trial designed to educate the Israeli public—that represented a watershed in our consciousness of the educational importance of this event. This was followed soon afterwards by the Cuban missile crisis, during which the world seemed to be teetering on the brink of nuclear catastrophe, and then by the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy, another epoch-marking event which struck such a chord of emotion and insecurity.

It was these events, coming so close together, that seemed to awaken a serious and hitherto—for the most part—repressed interest in the subject of the Holocaust, a trend that has grown appreciably in the ensuing decades. For since the mid-1960s, it has been the immediate present, with all its unsettled problems, that has contributed to the burgeoning interest in the Nazi onslaught: Vietnam, Biafra, various Middle East wars, Cambodia, Lebanon, unresolved economic crises, ‘Third World’ starvation, growing alarm about the planet’s future, threatened by the twin dangers of ecological and inter-continental ballistic nuclear annihilation (the MAD weapons of Mutually Assured Destruction) and an increasing awareness throughout the 1970s and 1980s of the curse of powerlessness that afflicts so many groups and individuals in today’s society. All of these concerns can be related, and have been related, to the Holocaust, which has become to some almost a frame of reference, conscious or unconscious, and at times, it must be said, a somewhat misunderstood, overused and superficial one at that.

In short, more than fifty years after the defeat of Nazi Germany, one can say with assurance that the sense of awe that surrounds the Holocaust may still be there—well, generally so—but no longer the silence.

And yet there seems no other topic so emotive, so bursting at the seams with contradictory and disturbed passions, with political and spiritual conflicts, with guilt, accusations and the perhaps inevitable descent into defensiveness, apologetics and self-obsession.

One crucial consideration, therefore, that informs my approach to the subject is this: to teach the Holocaust responsibly involves a whole series of delicate balancing acts. (See [Appendix G](#) ‘Teaching the Holocaust’ for a considerations/dilemmas chart originally designed for teachers as an accompaniment to training seminars.) So appalling and highly charged a subject as this has, perhaps inescapably, generated a powerful and at times extremist literature, requiring the reader to pick his or her way through a minefield of different views and often emotional perspectives.

The Holocaust has at times been hijacked by various groups, each with their own ideological, political or educational preference. It is, indeed, difficult to conceive of any subject that has been quite so regularly misunderstood, misused and misrepresented by those who may be historians, educators, politicians, philosophers and communal leaders. At times, both teacher and student will have to tread a path between polar opposite views, recognizing that both positions may contain merit but that neither conveys a wholly accurate truth.

This situation places a special responsibility on the shoulders of those charged with the task of transmitting memory of this event from generation to generation, and of conveying its impact and most compellingly relevant lessons—in their classrooms, lecture theatres, conferences and tutorials. It will often

take the form of encouraging students to ask—rather than necessarily answer—the most important questions raised by this subject.

### **The continuing relevance of the Holocaust**

The Holocaust occurred long before many of us were born, and perhaps when contemplating this event we have been tempted to pass judgement on the ‘passive’ behaviour of our parents’ and grandparents’ generations. It was, and is, of course, easy and eminently satisfying for us to adopt this morally superior stance, for it allows us to put a distance between ourselves and this gruesome historical tale. We can imagine—as if we were watching a ‘western’—that gripping and fascinating though the storyline is, it has precious little to do with us. The good guys and bad guys are clearly discernible; it is surely a black-and-white story and quite, quite, remote—thank goodness—from our own lives.

Yet, within the past few years, while most of *us* sat idly by, many hundreds of thousands of civilians in the former Yugoslavia—in a *European* country where many of us booked our vacations only a few short summers ago—have had their civil, national and human rights trampled underfoot, have been forcibly displaced and, in countless cases, raped, tortured and murdered. Our governments and other agencies failed utterly to make an effective intervention until it was too late. What was essentially a savage war of national aggression and ‘genocide’ was dignified and softened by the term ‘civil war’, a curious juxtaposition of words (war is never ‘civil’) intended to excuse our inaction—to the everlasting shame of our political leaders and of those of us old enough to vote or write letters to our newspapers and politicians.

That an international war crimes tribunal has been established to investigate and bring to justice those held responsible for ‘war crimes’ and ‘crimes against humanity’ in the former Yugoslavia is certainly a welcome development. It may even prove to have far-reaching implications for the future, especially the future safety, of minority groups. But if it is to do more than merely make *us* feel better—a kind of happy Hollywood ending to the grimmest of stories—and have the desired preventive and educational effect, it would be as well to examine the mistakes of the past fifty plus years, in particular the consistent unwillingness and apparent inability of the member-states of the United Nations to intervene in the ‘sovereign affairs’ of one of their own number, and their consequent failure to invoke the United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948. For *despite* the previous experience of the Nazi Holocaust, man-made catastrophes since the Second World War have by no means been limited to horrendous events in Bosnia.

### **The Holocaust as ‘human’ event (as a tale of humanity)**

We are living out the last years of a century of unspeakable genocide. Though it has recently been fashionable to term it ‘ethnic cleansing’, whichever word is used it is the same crime—that of genocide—which is continuing to disfigure the planet, and it should be the duty of any teacher, and arguably student, of the Holocaust to attempt to understand why it occurs and how it can, in the future, be prevented. Serious educational courses on the Holocaust, therefore, as well as investigating the specific historical event, should aim to help students comprehend the carnage in Bosnia and Rwanda. This can and, I would argue, should be done without in any way diluting the significance, integrity and unique qualities of the Holocaust.

Nothing is less likely to facilitate such a grasp than the tendency to dehumanize Hitler, Nazism and the crime itself as evils which somehow lie beyond the range of our human perception and our understanding. Such ‘demonization’, as it has been called, is, of course, reminiscent of the medieval, often Christian, view

of the Devil as the source of all evil—a remote and extraneous entity over which we humans exercise no control. This demonization leads to an obsession with evil as a purely external force, preventing us from searching for it inside ourselves and, most significantly, within the societies, technological systems and bureaucratic structures we have created.

The German perpetrators of the Holocaust (and their non-German accomplices) *were* human beings operating in human society and, to that extent, there must be a universal and humanly graspable explanation, however improbable and repellent, of their sentiments and of their behaviour. Such an approach would be none the worse for operating across cultural and national boundaries. If there are any lessons to be derived from the Holocaust there is no sense whatever in attributing its execution to Satanic monsters, for then it becomes irrelevant to what is humanly intelligible. What is more, such an interpretation of Nazism would involve an abstract dehumanization of Nazis—and often indiscriminately of all Germans—which was precisely the Nazi attitude towards Jews. An excellent example of how to avoid this pitfall and how to achieve something that is of genuine educational value is Gitta Sereny's recent book, *Albert Speer, His Battle With Truth* (Macmillan, 1995). This work succeeds in making the Nazi leadership come alive as human beings, inviting not sympathy and identity (as one critic wrote) but a rare glimpse into, and the beginning of an understanding of, the *human* face of 'evil'.

The attempt to describe the Holocaust and, by extension, much of the history of antisemitism as the product of something quintessentially and demonically 'German' is not only alarmingly wide of the mark in terms of its grasp of European and Jewish history but, more to the point, educationally self-defeating. As a corollary to this, those of us who are Jewish should, when contemplating the Holocaust, resist our inclination—understandable, perhaps, in the face of the enormity of the trauma suffered—to see only 'Jewish' lessons and implications, and to enter some sort of exclusive Jewish claim to the event (and by extension to all 'real' genocide). What has sometimes followed—and this is deeply regrettable and invariably has the unhelpful effect of alienating and, of course, exempting those outside the victim group—is a grotesque competition in suffering. ('Look!' some victims seem to say, 'Mine [my suffering, that is] is bigger than yours! Only *my* genocide is therefore real [*sic*] genocide.')

### **The unique and the universal**

Without losing sight of the incomparable uniqueness of the Holocaust *as an entire event*, it is educationally essential and, therefore, legitimate to break it down into a range of more limited human experiences, motives, crises and responses, with which it might be easier to identify and which can even stand limited comparison with other predicaments and historical episodes. For, like all good education, understanding the Holocaust is ultimately about the making of *connections*.

By way of example, the legal assault launched by the Nazi state against the Jews of Germany during the period 1933–39, which foreshadowed and paved the way for the annihilation that followed, can be related to attempts by some other societies to marginalize and exclude whole groups by *process of law*, for instance the operation of apartheid in South Africa (which did not, as we now know, lead historically to genocide but always had the potential to do so).

The utter *senselessness* of the annihilation of Jews, provoked by the imagined threat they posed to German civilization, evokes memories of the Armenian genocide at the hands of the Turks in 1915, a tragedy that was also enacted against the camouflage of a world war. This set a horrifying precedent of genocide and world indifference that seemed to convince Hitler, for one, that the international community

would always be prepared to turn the other way and consign even the worst atrocities to oblivion (see Hitler's speech to his army chiefs quoted on p.91).

The sheer *powerlessness*, *lack of choice* and *isolation* of the Jewish victims of Nazi terror anticipates, to some degree, the similar condition of the cowed and bemused victims of the systematic massacre of the Cambodian people in the mid-1970s.

The *self-righteousness* of many of the Nazi perpetrators—the prevalent belief in the correctness and 'holiness' of their bloodthirsty undertaking—can be related to almost every massacre in human history that has been carried out in the name of a religious or imperial mission, for example the murderous behaviour, over many centuries, of the Christian Spanish and their descendants in parts of South America and the racist attitude, under an anti-communist banner, of some Americans towards the Vietnamese people—both civilians and their 'legitimate' enemy—during the 1960s and 1970s.

Most critically, the *indifference* of the silent majority to the misery and suffering of others can be related to that indifference, of which most of us are guilty most of the time, to the misery and suffering of others, not merely in distant parts of the globe but also in our own countries, towns, neighbourhoods and schools.

And, finally, staying within the Nazi period itself, while Nazi attitudes and intentions towards literally millions of representatives of other victim groups—Gypsies, socialists, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, prisoners of war, Slavs—were, without question, rather different from their manic, no-exceptions view of their 'Satanic' Jewish 'enemy', if we were merely to compare the level of *individual suffering* it would be difficult to sustain the argument that there was a real difference.

These partial analogies are not, of course, exact but they may be explored; superficial comparisons are undesirable but so is the refusal to allow any comparison. To compare two events does not imply that one causes the other; it does not assert that they are identical; it does not deny unique components.

If, on the other hand, the Holocaust is cordoned off entirely from all other subjects, from the rest of human experience and even from other people's experiences during the Second World War, it will become inaccessible—an impossibly grim and remote area of study enacted in an educationally meaningless vacuum.

Unlike those historians who make a case for the exclusiveness and uniqueness of the Holocaust only by playing down the suffering of other groups throughout history—Steven Katz is perhaps the most extreme of such historians (see select bibliography on p.129)—educators might wish to approach the lessons of the subject in more universal, humanistic terms. We should start—and for some this is a painful process—to see the Holocaust as more than a symbol of Jewish fate, Jewish unity and the need for Jewish survival. It is all of these but it is also a major challenge to assumptions about 'progress' and 'civilization'. The Holocaust shattered Europe-centred, liberal dreams of western reason and culture as forces that necessarily sensitize and humanize us and which promote genuine tolerance of difference. It also destroyed, once and for all, the tottering belief that science and technology were securely harnessed for the good of humanity, as scientists, politicians, bureaucrats and generals found the means progressively to give destructive expression to their beliefs and fantasies.

Shortly after the First World War, Albert Einstein, alarmed by humankind's misuse of science, had written:

In the hands of our generation these hard-won instruments are like a razor wielded by a child of three. The possession of marvellous means of production has brought misery and hunger instead of freedom.

In this regard it is worth reflecting for a moment on the whole history of how human beings have dealt death to one another: the progressive ‘bureaucratization’ of killing has placed a steadily increasing distance between the perpetrators and the consequences of their decisions and actions.

As several educationalists and philosophers have pointed out, the Holocaust can also be interpreted as a metaphor for the darker side of modernity. It was, in part, the outcome of problems of identity—the alienation and isolation of the individual in our modern mass societies, which have become so depersonalized and conformist. Nazism appealed to people’s need for a sense of belonging, loyalty and community left dangerously unfulfilled by modern, vast, centralized society. It encouraged a psychological state whereby people could easily be sucked into the entire bureaucratic process. Bureaucracy is a human invention that can subjugate its inventor, undermine human conscience and allow individuals to abdicate personal moral responsibility. ‘It’s the system’s fault, not mine!’

The Holocaust also raises profound and disturbing questions about the ease with which people can fall into a pattern of conformity and obedience to orders, particularly if those orders emanate from a source that is deemed to possess ‘authority’.

When you look at the long and gloomy history of man you will find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have ever been committed in the name of rebellion.

(C.P.Snow)

The unique and important lessons of the Holocaust should not be sought in the specific and horrific details of its execution—sadly mass brutality and slaughter are far from new in human history—nor in the behaviour, psychology, religion or ethics of the Jews who were its victims. As has already been implied earlier in this chapter, its uniqueness has remarkably little to do with the harrowing experiences of individual victims. Instead, it lies in the *intentions* of its perpetrators and in the fact that these intentions were, for the most part, translated into reality—for the Jews were the only group marked out for total European annihilation (with the possible exception of those Gypsies defined by the Nazis as ‘non-Aryan’), even in neutral countries and those not yet conquered. And this can, and must, be stated without diminishing in any way the suffering of any other group.

The uniqueness of the Holocaust also lies in the unprecedented way that the full might of a twentieth-century, industrially advanced state could be perverted, subordinated to a philosophy of destruction and then directed against a vulnerable, conspicuous, powerless and largely unresisting target.

The Holocaust was a totality—a global event. It was, to be sure, made up of the sum of countless individual stories, attitudes, reactions and dilemmas, but it is also much more than the sum of those parts and cannot be adequately perceived through the prism of any one component. The Holocaust had no precedent and, as an entire event, is a unique phenomenon that resists satisfactory explanation. It was, of course, a Jewish tragedy, but it was not only a Jewish tragedy; it also belongs to world history and to the realm of general humanities and moral studies. Jews, as the special victims of this unique event, are not the only possible victims of such man-made catastrophes, and their wretched experience has implications that go way beyond the Jewish world—implications of concern to the general historian, psychologist, theologian and educationalist.

### The central role of questions

The attempt to come to terms with this historical event and to grapple, whether as student or as teacher, with its most important messages is an extremely difficult, not to say intimidating task. Despite the growth of a virtual Holocaust literary industry—at times it seems we have reached ‘information overload’ (allegedly producing a kind of ‘Holocaust fatigue’)—there is still no consensus, even on centrally important issues, among historians, psychologists, educationalists, theologians and philosophers. On many of the open-ended questions this topic throws up, no adequate or simple explanation is possible or, indeed, desirable. I would, therefore, emphasize the central need in Holocaust education for the formulation of questions rather than the provision of hard-and-fast answers. There are occasions, arguably many occasions, when we should merely try to identify the right *questions* and then work towards the possible answers and lessons to be inferred.

This is easier said than done, particularly in a scholastic environment where clear answers are commonly expected from those entrusted with the task of education. At an early stage, the student of the Holocaust must try to rise above the need to stick explanatory labels on everything, and to resist the compulsion to reach precise, unequivocal conclusions in answer to the ‘big’ questions. Such key questions would include the following:

- 1 How, why and when did the Nazis determine a policy of total annihilation of the Jews of Europe?
- 2 To what extent was the ferocity of the Nazi onslaught rooted in the peculiar social, economic and psychological circumstances prevailing in Germany in the years following her traumatic defeat in the First World War and the humiliating Treaty of Versailles?
- 3 Can Germany’s descent to barbarism be attributed, to any degree, to a fear of Bolshevism?
- 4 Is it true that full-blooded Nazi anti-Jewishness had only a very marginal appeal to ordinary Germans, even among those who voted for Hitler?
- 5 Why did a higher proportion of Jews survive in Fascist Italy and in countries allied to Germany, such as Rumania and Hungary, than in anti-Nazi Holland with its democratic tradition and long history of toleration towards Jews? Why did so many Jews die in Poland? Does the explanation lie in the religious antisemitism of the indigenous population? Or is the answer much more complex?
- 6 How on earth was it possible for such a supposedly ‘civilized’ society, which had given us Goethe, Beethoven and Brahms, to produce such barbarity, albeit of a largely dispassionate and coolly executed kind?
- 7 How are we to assess the role of the Reich railway officials who drew up rail schedules and even charged ‘package tour’ fares to unwitting passengers who were then transported in cattle trucks to extermination camps in the east?
- 8 How was it possible for certain individuals, whose role would prove indispensable to the carrying out of the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish Question’, to be subtly conditioned into believing that to kill Jews was morally no worse than to brush dandruff off their jackets—and, on the contrary, was a morally good thing?
- 9 Why do the Jews *appear* to have offered so little resistance everywhere? (Is that even the right question?)
- 10 How can we begin to evaluate the degree of moral responsibility of the Jewish leaders and the specially established Jewish police force in the ghettos of Poland?
- 11 How are we to judge the behaviour and responsibility of numerous other groups: ordinary Germans; the citizens of defeated and occupied countries; Germany’s allies, such as Italy and Hungary; the various

- Churches throughout Europe; the anti-Nazi Allies, in particular Great Britain, the USA and the Soviet Union; neutral governments, like those of Sweden, Switzerland, Spain and Eire; and, finally, the Jews themselves?
- 12 How big a factor is the astonishing human capacity for indifference to the plight of others (present in all societies and arguably on the increase) in explaining the path to Auschwitz and Treblinka?
- 13 What does the methodical slaughter of 1.5 million Jewish children say about the presence or interest of (a) God in human affairs? (This book will not even attempt to wrestle with such theological problems—it is beyond its scope—though other works which address such issues are cited in the bibliographies in [Part IV](#).)
- 14 What is the relationship between Nazi anti-Jewish ideology and earlier expressions of anti-Judaism and antisemitism in European history?
- 15 What was the difference between the Jewish experience of Nazism and that of the 5.5 million other civilians—Gypsies, Poles, Russians, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, communists, socialists and others—who were also murdered in cold blood? In other words, why does the term ‘Holocaust’ strictly refer to the Jewish experience alone?
- 16 And, finally, a question that dominates Holocaust literature: is this catastrophe that overwhelmed the Jews of Europe an incomparably unique historical phenomenon, or is it a case within the category of ‘genocide’?

Our emotional and intellectual helplessness in the face of the enormity of the Holocaust has led many of the ‘victim group’—understandably perhaps—to seek to monopolize the event and to be disinclined to ‘share’ it with others. This tendency has expressed itself, at times, as a stubborn insistence that the Holocaust cannot be related to other human events and historical occurrences.

On the contrary, we must understand that the Holocaust, for all its freakishness, *was* a human event—all too human—which shows that humanity is eminently capable of doing anything that our technology makes possible, horrifyingly ready to perform unimagined acts of wholesale destruction and self-destruction. The Holocaust, to paraphrase Samuel Pizar, a survivor of Auschwitz, was not, as he thought at the time, the end of the world, but possibly, if we ignore its universal implications, the *beginning* of the end of the world.

Humankind is also, the Holocaust shows us, alarmingly prone, especially in the twentieth century, to replacing personal ethical standards with collective ones that appear to exempt the individual from accountability. However, the Holocaust gives evidence that the best is also in us, for some, in their exercise of moral choice, chose good against the polluted stream.

### **Educational conception and approach**

Under the auspices of the British Holocaust Education Project, I consulted and interviewed many teachers and lecturers to gauge their views, experiences and preferences. This work and its underlying educational principles are to some extent, therefore, a response to a whole range of different professional opinions and perspectives on this subject. What emerged with almost audible insistence from the educators interviewed was the desire for a balanced approach that avoided, as far as possible, the extreme, subjective positions so often adopted by writers on such an emotive topic.

Many teachers expressed their anxieties about so-called ‘revisionist’ writings and political activities (outside schools, at football grounds, rock concerts, etc.). It is certainly undeniable that in the hands of a few truly malevolent individuals the subject of the Holocaust has been drawn into the spotlight purely so that its truthfulness can be manipulated and denied. Far from constituting a serious analysis of the Holocaust, such ‘revisionist’ history serves more as an example of the kind of twisted thinking that actually contributed to the Nazi horrors in the first place. With reference to such ‘historians’, Michael Marrus has written with appropriate contempt in the preface to his work *The Holocaust in History*: ‘I see no reason why such people should set the agenda for the subject, any more than flat-earth theorists should set the agenda for astronomers.’

My own approach while preparing this book and weighing the views of the teachers who responded along these lines is that the most effective ways of countering the potentially harmful influence of Holocaust deniers, down-players and other assorted categories within the ‘revisionist’ spectrum are to keep in mind the following: that care should be taken not to dignify their opinions, accusations and assertions with too many explicit acknowledgements or references (any more than Marrus’ aforementioned ‘flat-earth theorists’ are allowed to set *his* agenda). In other words, it is quite unnecessary and probably counter-productive to write a book, teach a class or deliver a lecture with the *express* purpose of refuting their work; a corollary of this is that every serious word that *is* written or uttered on this subject is *implicitly* working counter to the revisionists’ aims and desires. In short, while we should keep the problem posed by the revisionists at the forefront of our consciousness, we should guard against exaggerating its significance and thus providing the very publicity they seek, recognizing that there is usually a difference between the scholastic and the political arenas (they may overlap, but they are rarely identical).

The teachers interviewed were virtually unanimous that Jewish history in general and the Holocaust in particular must be taught in order to combat racial prejudice and the abuse of power. To fulfil this goal it was felt that, ideally, the Holocaust should not be torn from its historical and wider educational contexts—as so regularly happens—even if time is limited.

An enlightened and effective approach to understanding and transmitting awareness of the Holocaust can be built on the following philosophical and educational assumptions which can be adapted to most subjects and settings:

- 1 The Holocaust was an event that was *both* unique and universal, of far-reaching significance for the Jewish people but also with weighty, even mind-boggling, implications for us all.
- 2 The story of the Holocaust is potentially the ultimate ‘humanities’ topic; if taught skilfully and responsibly it can help socialize and even ‘civilize’ our students. But, if taught badly, it can titillate, traumatize, mythologize and encourage a purely negative view of all Jewish history, of Jewish people and, indeed, of *all* victim groups.
- 3 The Holocaust and its lessons should be approached within the following contexts:
  - (a) Jewish history and the history of antisemitism;
  - (b) modern German history;
  - (c) ‘genocide’ in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries;
  - (d) the misuse of technology and bureaucracy in the twentieth century; and
  - (e) the psychology of human prejudice and racism.

- 4 The study of the Jewish historical experience, including that of the Holocaust, can serve as a highly effective educational means for sensitizing students to the distinct problem of antisemitism; to the universal issues of minority status and minority identities; to the need most of us have for cultural and national pride; and to the dangers of racial and religious stereotyping, prejudice and hatred.
- 5 The teacher and student of the Holocaust must try to reconcile the intimidating demands of the subject content with their own changing experience, values and awareness and, inescapably, those of the society and the times in which they live.
- 6 No one incident or experience can adequately convey the totality and magnitude of the Holocaust. This catastrophe was comprised of all kinds of components, each adding a horrifying dimension to the whole. Neither Kovno nor Treblinka, neither Wannsee nor Babi Yar can alone represent the others. It is collectively that they express the very worst that human beings can do to each other and to themselves.

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