

Karl Plagge

A German Engineer



Karl Plagge was born on July 10, 1897, in the city of Darmstadt, Germany. After injuring himself in World War 1, Karl studied engineering and officially joined the Nazi Party in 1931. He wanted to be a part of rebuilding the German economy after the devastation it faced after the first World War. Plagge was unwilling to participate in the racist, anti-semitic, policies of the Nazi party, and when World War 2 broke out, he officially left the Nazi Party. Even though Plagge left the Nazi party, he remained a high ranking officer of the German military during World War 2.

During the war, Plagge used his position of power to employ and protect Jewish people living in the ghetto that he was in charge of. In 1943, the ghetto, Vilna, was set to be “liquidated”. In other words, the Jews living there were to be taken to concentration and death camps. Plagge set up a camp that worked on German military vehicles and took many male Jews from the ghetto to work in the camp. He issued them work permits and told the German military that their skills in repairing vehicles were necessary to the German war effort. Plagge also managed to bring along the wives and children of these working men claiming that they would work better if their loved ones were still alive.

Many of the Jews living in Vilna were killed by the end of the war, but Plagge was responsible for saving a large number of them. At one time Plagge was a member of the Nazi Party that was responsible for the death of so many people, but he used his position of power to save the lives of Jews suffering under the Nazi Party.

What should happen to him?



Oscar Schindler

Born a Czech Citizen. Joined Nazi party in Czechoslovakia in mid-1930s prior to German annexation. Germany invaded Poland in 1939. Schindler begins taking over Jewish owned businesses in Poland, profiting from war. By the early 40s, Schindler used forced Jewish labor from the Krakow ghetto. Served as a spy to rescuer groups. Became a rescuer, intervened in deportation actions; went on to rescue over 1,000 Jews, reasoning he needed them to work in his factories.

Topf and Sons



Family company founded in Germany in 1878. Company produced many

things, including incinerators for animal remains, and, as human cremation became more acceptable, crematory ovens as well. By 1933, senior Topf employees joined Nazi Party. In

1939, the company went into business with Hitler, and delivered incinerators to the first of several concentration camps. By 1941, T & S had ovens in at least 5 camps, and by the end of the Holocaust, at least 25 T&S ovens were being used across Europe and Soviet Union.

Alfons Heck



Born in the Rhineland in 1928, raised by grandparents in Germany. Indoctrinated into Nazi propaganda in elementary school, and joined Hitler youth by around age 10. He became a leader of around 10 boys, and was great at taking and following orders. Later, he joined the Flying Hitler Youth, to eventually become a pilot in the Luftwaffe. Eventually became an officer in the Luftwaffe, and defended the German position in France. He was later captured by the French, and served six months before being released. Awarded the Iron Cross. Couldn't believe what the Germans were being accused of. Documented his experiences as a cog in the Nazi machine.

Adolf Hitler
Führer of Germany



Adolf Hitler was dictator of Germany. His rise to popularity was based on his appeal to the poor working class of Germany who were negatively impacted by the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. He promised to fix Germany's social and economic issues by rebuilding Germany's military and creating jobs to do so. Hitler's military goals were expressed in his book *Mein Kampf* released in 1919. He wrote, "the soil on which we now live was not a gift bestowed by Heaven on our forefathers. They had to conquer it by risking their lives. So also in the future, our people will not obtain territory, and therewith the means of existence, as a favour from any other people, but will have to win it by the power of a triumphant sword." The rise of militarism in Germany in the interwar period encouraged by Hitler directly contributed to the outbreak of WWII.

Hitler also rose to popularity because of his promotion of the Aryan race and outspoken Anti-Semitism. In 1919 Hitler wrote, "But antisemitism based on reason must lead to the systematic legal combating and removal of the rights of the Jew....Its final aim, however, must be the uncompromising removal of the Jews altogether." Once the Nazis took power, the Nuremberg Laws were passed to take away legal rights from Jews in Germany. These laws removed the right to citizenship from Jews and strictly limited their possibilities in German society. They impacted social, political, and economic aspects of Jewish people's lives. The Nazis then built concentration camps to use enslaved labor for production and persecute minority groups. In these camps, millions of people were starved, tortured, and killed because of their race. In addition to camps the Nazis used mobile extermination squads, *Einsatzgruppen*, to murder a large number of oppressed people.

Hitler defied multiple international treaties to expand German territory. According to the Treaty of Versailles, Germany could not build up a military or engage in warfare. Hitler invaded Poland in 1939 with the help of the Soviet Union. He then defied the Nazi-Soviet Pact by invading the Soviet Union to gain resources. Hitler broke multiple international treaties as dictator of Germany.

Under the leadership of Hitler, the German military committed war crimes during WWII. On the Eastern Front, Soviet POWs were subject to starvation, death marches, lack of medical treatment, and forced marches. Resistance movements throughout occupied territories were brutally repressed by the Nazis. For example, the Nazis committed the Lidice Massacre in Czechoslovakia in which up to 10,000 inhabitants of the town were killed. When conquering new territories, the Nazis often plundered

resources and destroyed property. Hitler also planned the London Blitz, which targeted British civilians in aerial bombings.

Mauthausen

A small Austrian Village



On March 12, 1938, Hitler's home country of Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany. As Nazi propaganda spread throughout the country, it was obvious that they wanted to demonize the Jewish people and political opponents. Soon after annexing Austria, the Nazi party began building and expanding their reach throughout the country. In Mauthausen, the Nazi's quickly converted an old castle into a camp for enemies of the Nazi's.

The Nazi's tried hard to keep what was going on in these camps a secret, but some things were too difficult to hide from the villagers in Mauthausen. Villagers in Mauthausen report buses filled with people arriving at the castle. Only to be followed by thick, dark clouds of smoke pouring from the chimneys and a stench that spread throughout the whole town. The people who lived in Mauthausen were worried about what was secretly going on in their town. When the townspeople questioned the Nazi officials, the Nazis assured them that they were only burning shoes and personal belongings that would be converted to a type of oil to fuel German submarines. The Nazi's also threatened the townspeople saying they would send anyone who spread these "absurd rumors of burning bodies" to a concentration camp.



The people of Mauthausen were bystanders. They did not ask the Nazis to take over their town. They knew something sketchy was going on in these Nazi buildings, but they didn't do anything. Many of them were scared for their lives. If they spoke up, they would be next. Others were just focused on getting food on the table for their families and turned a blind eye to the evil that was taking place in their town.

Should the people in Mauthausen be considered guilty of any crime?

Wernher von Braun
A German Aerospace Engineer

Wernher von Braun was born on March 23, 1912. From a young age, Wernher developed a passion for astronomy. That passion developed into a devotion to physics and mathematics. Space travel interested him and he graduated from colleges in Berlin with degrees in mechanical engineering and physics. In 1931, Von Braun began focusing his research on developing rockets. Von Braun joined the Nazi Party in 1937 under the promise of easing the economic devastation of Germany after World War 1. By the time World War 2 started, Wernher Von Braun was a key figure in the Nazi party's scientific research and weapon development.



Von Braun eventually developed the V-2 rockets which were later used in the bombings of London civilian centers. Throughout the war, Von Braun continued his missile research and development. He met with Adolf Hitler several times and was formally decorated by Hitler twice. When later questioned about his V-2 rocket, Von Braun stated, "I have very deep and sincere regret for the victims of the V-2 rockets, but there were victims on both sides...A war is a war, and when my country is at war, my duty is to help win that war."

Wernher von Braun remains one of the most celebrated and decorated rocket scientists in history. His research and work directly led to major developments at NASA and in the Apollo missions to the moon.

What should happen to him?