

Dr. Gerhard L. Weinberg

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Summary

Dr. Gerhard L. Weinberg has written and edited ten books and was interviewed to address his work as a Holocaust scholar regarding Nazi Germany. He was born in 1928 in Hannover, Germany and had an older sister and an older brother. His father served in World War I but had some difficulty being promoted to officer as he was Jewish. After the war, his father switched from the law to finance as he could not serve as a Judge unless he converted. In 1934 he was kicked out of his job and worked at home as a foreign exchange advisor. The family observed the Jewish holidays. Gerhard experienced anti-Semitism as he could not use the swimming pool because he was Jewish. He received nasty comments by students and later beatings after he started school in 1934. His brother found the situation impossible so attended school in Berlin. His parents felt there was no future for the children in Germany and applied for quota numbers and soon realized they must also leave. His brother returned from Berlin in November 1938 and their father was locked up by the local police on Kristallnacht and returned after three days upon request of his former boss. His father's twin brother was sent to Buchenwald for several months and then went to England. Gerhard's family was sponsored by a great uncle and left after Kristallnacht for Great Britain where they waited until their quota number came up for the United States. They had sent some of their belongings in a lift to NY where the uncle paid for it in storage. Gerhard and his siblings were placed in boarding schools which he enjoyed as he learned English and met students from other countries. Meanwhile his father was interned on the Isle of Man as he was a German citizen. The family's quota number came up summer '40 and in September 1940 the family sailed to NY which was surprisingly lit up (previously only saw darkened cities). They settled in Albany, NY in December '40 and Gerhard attended school there. He had to adjust to the food (corn on the cob) and customs (trick or treat on Halloween). First his older brother was drafted and then he was drafted and was sent to Camp Stone near Oakland, CA before being shipped to Honshu, Japan. He had completed three years at Teachers College so nearby Yokohama College accepted him, with the Army's permission, to teach GIs at the Yokohama Peace Corps. Gerhard was discharged in 1947 and returned to college and received his diploma in June 1948. He married Janet. Using the GI Bill, he started working towards a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. He was interested in the diplomatic history of late 19th century to learn what led to war. Gerhard was recruited to work on a captured German documents project at GMDC (German Military Document Center) in Alexandria, Virginia so completed his dissertation on that topic. He wrote "The Guide to Captured German Documents" which had information on Soviet Partisans of World War II and files of German military leaders who expected to be given estates in Eastern Europe. He found differences in the way each local area handled operations. In 1956 Gerhard was hired to microfilm all captured German records for the American Historical Association. As the records were declassified, he microfilmed them and returned them to the Federal Republic. Instead of making a selection, he decided to

microfilm everything as Holocaust survivors are dying and the poor paper used in World War II is disintegrating so getting inaccessible. He taught at the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, the University of Kentucky and the University of North Carolina. In late 50s and 60s he read references to Hitler's dictating another book beside "Mein Kampf." The British had this information on microfilm and he obtained a copy. He published the 300-page draft of Hitler's second book in German in 1961 and in English in 2003. In 1962 he visited Hannover and saw his house was the only one on the street that was not bombed. Gerhard believes that books are frequently published on the origin of World War I but not on World War II which may be due to the problems of both the winners and losers of the First World War. They felt that was the war that ended all wars. Actually, Hitler was the one person thinking of a worldwide war, that of killing the Jews worldwide. Cambridge University published Gerhard's "World at Arms" in 1994, the history of World War II which was translated into German, Spanish, Polish and Italian. He wrote this for two reasons: 1) the war in Europe was simultaneously with the war in the Pacific so officials had to make worldwide decisions instead of separating the two war theatres, and 2) World War II was a war of demographics as Hitler wanted to kill Jews not just in Europe but also in North Africa and Asia so was worldwide. The importance of killing all Jews was shown when Germany had no trains for winter uniforms for their soldiers but trains to send the Jews to the killing camps. Gerhard had research and travel allocation as a professor so had the time and opportunity to undertake the time-consuming work of reviewing the documents of World War II. He feels that Holocaust studies the last 30 years have been about minor Nazi officials which should have been about Hitler who was the leader. Nothing was written about the Japanese who planned to kill all their POWs and expected 20 million casualties. He taught the Holocaust as part of European and German history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill starting 20 years ago and the courses were always filled. He believes that one should differentiate between the Holocaust which was worldwide and other genocides (Ruanda) which are geographical. Gerhard would like monuments be placed for Austrian horses that were drafted and killed and for Mrs. Simpson as thanks to her, George VI was King instead of Edward VIII.