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COLIN CLARKE

Racist Regimes, Forced Labour and Death: British
Slavery in the Caribbean and the Holocaust in
Germany and the Occupied Territories

Max Planck Institute for the Study of
Religious and Ethnic Diversity

*Max-Planck-Institut zur Erforschung multireligiöser
und multiethnischer Gesellschaften*



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Max-Planck-Institut zur Erforschung multireligiöser und multiethnischer Gesellschaften,
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Abstract

Professor Colin Clarke's book *Racist Regimes, Forced Labour and Death: British Slavery in the Caribbean and the Holocaust in Germany and Occupied Europe* was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2024. Both British and German Nazi empires used slavery and forced labour to target and persecute their racial and ethnic victims, having determined the outcome – often death – by denying them any semblance of civil liberties. Each system was introduced by an expansionist European power, through racist enslavement, transportation, dehumanisation and the destruction of human life.

However, the construction and operation of Caribbean sugar plantations by African and Creole slave labour in the 17th and 18th centuries was different from the mass murder of Jewish and Gypsy civilians in Europe (the Holocaust) and their use as forced labour to manufacture armaments during the Second World War. The contrast is expressed in the following trajectories: for the Caribbean, slave capture in Africa, forced migration across the Middle Passage, sale, seasoning, and being worked to an early death in the gang system of the sugar plantations; and for Occupied Europe, forced migration and forced labour for Jews and Gypsies, where the majority died in work ghettos, or by shooting or gassing, and the remainder were subjected to industrial forced labour in SS concentration camps engaged on Nazi 'miracle projects'.

Differentiated, as these two events are, however, there is a basis – even a moral need – for comparison. Comparison in this instance rests on four common denominators — racism, colonialism/occupation, forced labour and death. Combined, all four elements in common led inexorably to crimes against humanity and genocide. The juxtaposition of these two historical cases has deep political implications. Both British Caribbean slavery and the Holocaust have given rise to appeals for reparations. But only the Caribbean planters of the post-emancipation era and the victims of the Holocaust since the Second World War have so far received compensation.

Keywords: British Caribbean slavery, civil rights, colonialism/occupation, crimes against humanity, differential incorporation, genocide, Holocaust, mass deaths, racism, slavery/forced labour

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Introduction

Faced with circumstances of loss of liberty, and exploitation as a result of the Holocaust during the Second World War, Primo Levi, a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz, has argued for the importance of civil rights and equality:

In every part of the world, wherever you begin by denying the fundamental liberties of mankind, and equality among people, you move toward the concentration camp system, and it is a road on which it is difficult to halt (2004, 390-1);

Ruth Kluger, also a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen, has additionally urged a comparative perspective to set the Holocaust in context:

We would be condemned to be isolated [units] if we didn't compare and generalize, for comparisons are the bridges from one unique life to another. In our hearts we all know that some aspects of the [Holocaust] have been repeated elsewhere, today and yesterday, and will return in new guise tomorrow; and the camps, too, were only imitations (unique imitations, to be sure) of what had occurred the day before yesterday (2003, 69).

The scale of the tragedy involving Caribbean slavery (1650-1834) is expressed in the reduction in size of the slave population on the eve of the Abolition of the Slave trade in 1807, when a mere 28 per cent of the 2.7 million Africans shipped to the British Caribbean were still alive. About 350,000 died in the Middle Passage, and mortality during the 'seasoning' period took half of new arrivals in the Caribbean before 1700, reducing to one-fourth after 1790 (Morgan 2011). In comparison, the Jewish population of Europe was 11 million when Heydrich reported it to the Wannsee Meeting in 1942; and approximately 6 million were eliminated in 3 to 4 years during the Holocaust in its various phases – the Holocaust by bullets; the deaths associated with the General Plan for the East, the Operation Reinhardt death camps; and the labouring-to-death camps and other associated atrocities (Gilbert 1991; Roseman 2003).

The four principal common denominators that make feasible the detailed comparison of British Caribbean slavery and the Holocaust in Europe – though differentiated in time and place – are racism, colonialism/occupation, slavery/forced labour, and mass death. Racism in the British Caribbean was expressed by the colonial white English/British master race in its exploitative relations with African slaves and with an inbetween category of subordinated free coloured people created in the islands through race mixing. Racism in Germany was enjoined by the Nazi state under the dictator Hitler, the victims being Jews and Gypsies, Sinti and Roma. They were persecuted, isolated, terrorized and treated as

vermin; but the more Germany expanded through war into occupied/colonized Europe, the larger became the victim population.

British Caribbean slavery and the Holocaust – an overview

The means adopted for examining Caribbean slavery and the Holocaust which I set out in the in the first chapter of my book argues for case studies of each, followed by a conclusion which compares them. This strategy – sequential comparison backed up by detailed comparative analysis of the two events – is further explored in the concluding Chapter 9.

British Caribbean slavery is treated in detail in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Chapter 2 explains the originality involved in the endeavour to colonise distant and unknown tropical islands; and the decision, after other experiments, to select the sugar plantation and slavery as the mode of production for the cultivation and export of sugar and sugar products for the British market (Fig 1.1). Slaves on sugar plantations were victims of the gang system, known as the machine, whose discipline and hard driving made it a ferocious system of labour organization, designed to make every element work as hard as possible. Terror pervaded the whole enterprise, and flogging of male and female slaves was routine. Jamaican slaves worked on average about 16 hours per day, and 18 hours (including factory work) during the five months of the crop season from January to June.

Although sugar plantation slavery was exploitative to a high degree, the urban slave community, examined in Chapter 3, was spread thinly across the British Caribbean and lacked the killing mechanism of the slave gang system peculiar to the rural sugar plantations. The two largest towns – Kingston, Jamaica and Bridgetown, Barbados – were highly anomalous, and characterised by free majorities of whites and coloureds taken together. Nevertheless, the port-towns were vital to the sugar economy, articulating the Caribbean colonies politico-economically with Britain.

Chapter 4 describes the social structure of British Caribbean colonial society as a pyramid of legal estates – white planters from Britain who were free (many of whom had the vote), free people of mixed race who were manumitted but lacked the vote, and enslaved blacks originally from Africa. The chapter concludes with the abolition of the slave trade, and the movement for civil rights among the free coloureds, free blacks and Jews. It explores the role of the various social agents who set emancipation in motion – free people of colour, British missionaries to Jamaica, British abolitionists (Non-Conformists), British Whig politicians – and rebel slaves.

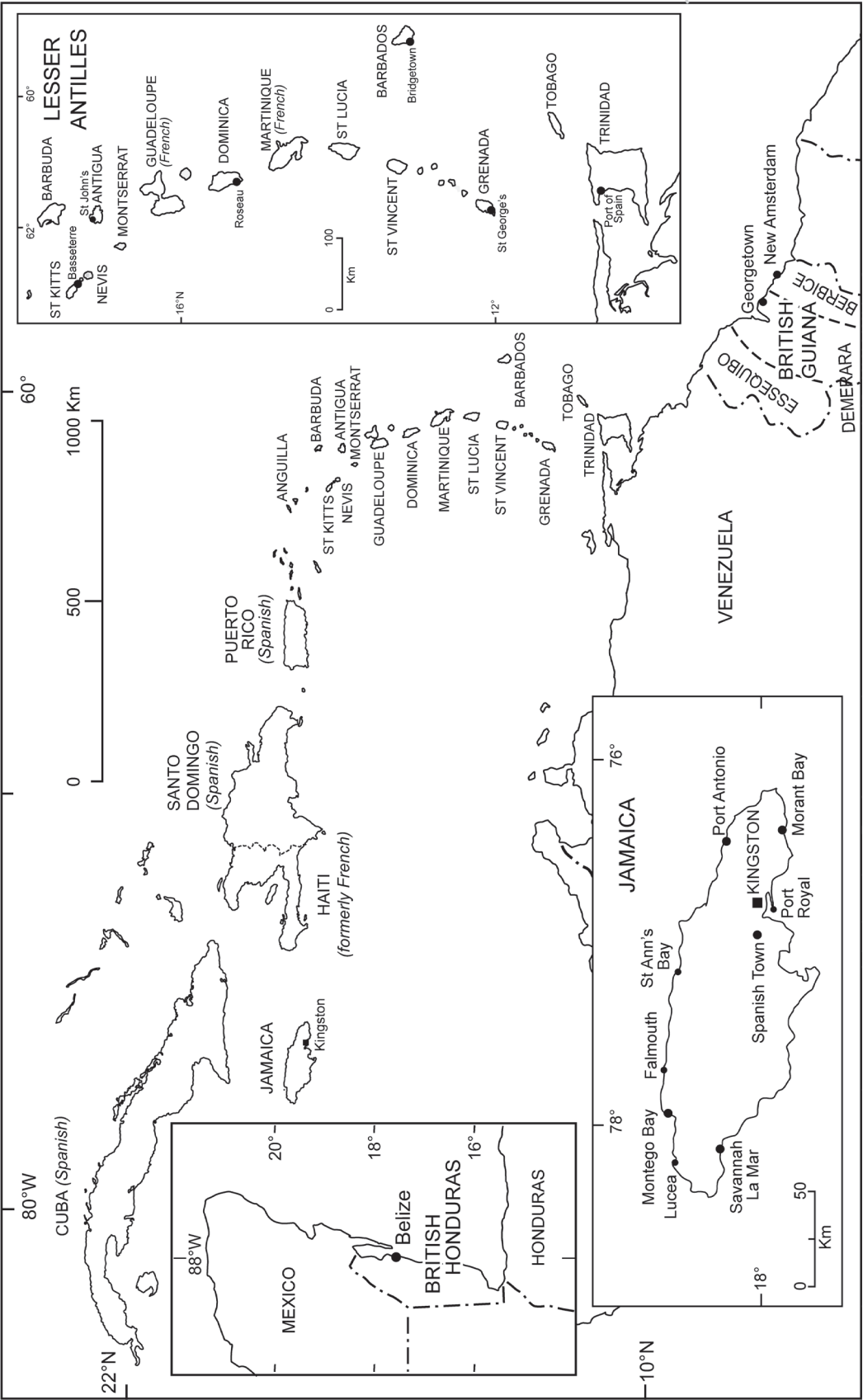


Fig. 1.1 The British Caribbean in the early Nineteenth Century: Colonies and Towns

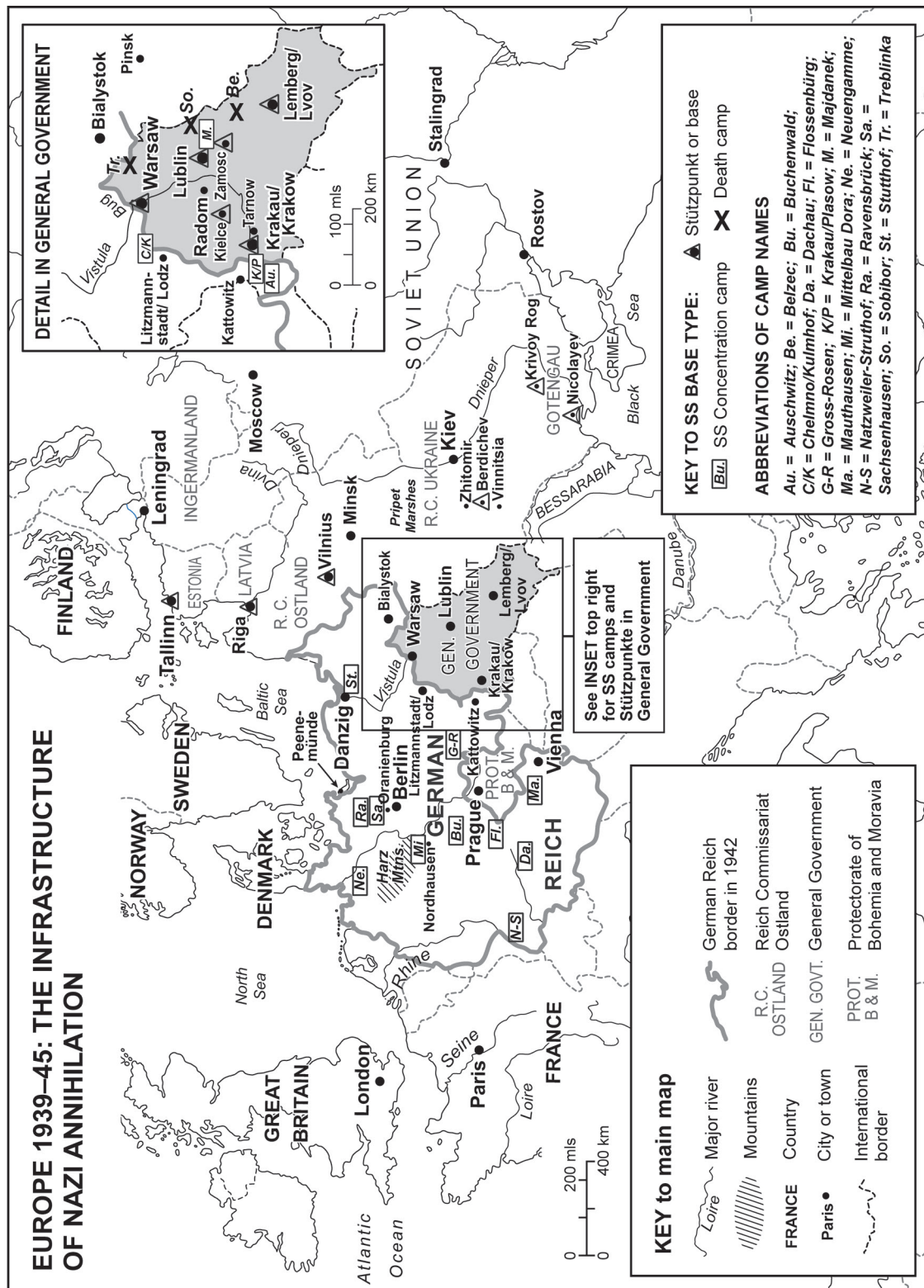


Fig. 1.2 Europe 1939-45: The Infrastructure of Nazi Annihilation

Part Two of the book begins a century later, and deals with Germany and the Holocaust. Chapter 5 treats national and international politics in the first phase of Nazism, following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany in 1933. Covering the period 1933-1942, it involves the persecution of the German Jews; the attack on and evisceration of Poland; the creation of a pseudo-colony – the General Government (covering much of Poland); the settlement in the Warthegau of ethnic Germans from former Poland and the USSR. It concludes with the murderous exploitation of forced immigrant German and Polish Jews in ghetto industries, especially in Warsaw and Lodz, both of which produced clothing for the German armed forces in the East (Fig 1.2).

Chapter 6 shows that Germany's intention in 1941 was to appropriate the land of the USSR, eradicate the victim populations, notably Jews and Roma and Sinti, and repopulate the area with ethnic Germans from the East. This programme of ethnic cleansing, known as the 'Holocaust by bullets', was set in motion by Operation Barbarossa in June 1941. But Moscow and Leningrad did not fall, as the Germans assumed they would, and the war dragged on until 1942-3 when the German 6th Army was encircled at Stalingrad, and the retreat back to the west began. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to the General Plan for the East, and the settlement of ethnic Germans (as well as selected groups of Slavs) as the would-be spearhead of SS colonization, though harried by Soviet and Jewish partisans, and finally overtaken by the Red Army on its march to the west.

Chapter 7 is devoted to the victims of forced labour, both Jews and Sinti and Roma, plus the ethnic Slavs who found themselves trapped as forced foreign labourers in Germany or the occupied territories. These initial forced labourers were overtaken in number and significance after 1942 by the phenomenal expansion of the SS system of concentration camps, and by the reinvigorated persecution and increased selection of European Jews and ethnic Slavs as forced labour.

Chapter 8, which shows that death was the hallmark of the camps, opens with a discussion of the three Operation Reinhardt Death Camps, located in the General Government – Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. The two enormous labouring-to-death camps discussed here operated very differently. In the case of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the transported victims were selected at the ramp, with 80 percent sent for immediate death, while the remainder were employed in the manufacture of synthetic rubber (Buna) at Monowitz or in comparable projects. In the case of Mittelbau Dora, selections of prisoners were forced into the subterranean caverns of the Harz Mountains, and were soon engaged as slave labour in the heavily reinforced underground factories related to key aviation and rocket industries.

Differential incorporation: making the structural comparison between British Caribbean slavery and the Holocaust

Key to this book's comparative approach, as set out in Chapter 9, is the distinction made between groups in society protected by the full panoply of civil rights including adult suffrage, and those who were denied them. This denial, in the case of British Caribbean societies, took place from the establishment of each colony in the seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth century. It came at a later time in history in the case of the Nazi persecution of the German Jews in 1933, plus those Jews located in the adjacent occupied territories, as their numbers expanded by annexations after 1938.

By denying British Caribbean slaves their liberty and humanity, and ensuring that the free people of colour were only rarely awarded the vote because they were not white, the white planter elite created a system of differential incorporation that underpinned the structure of the three socio-legal tiers of colonial society. Only twenty-five years after the slave trade was abolished in 1807 did the free people of colour achieve the vote, and a further two years elapsed before the slaves obtained emancipation – but without the suffrage (Smith 1969 and 1974). In the case of the German Jews, they were refused the vote once Hitler had come to power in 1933, and their civil rights were eroded further in the following six years, including in 1936 their right to marry “out of group” with Germans.

Study of differential incorporation remains a key to unlocking the comparison made here, since it structured or restructured both societies on the basis of winners and losers. The atrocities associated with British colonial slavery and with forced labour in the Second World War and the Holocaust stem directly from different forms of persecution, made possible by targeting selected populations, and stripping them of their civil rights – slaves, free people of colour, Jews, Sinti and Roma. Once denied equality and protection before the law as accorded by citizenship and the suffrage, virtually any abuse could be inflicted on the victims with impunity.

The objective at this point in the argument is to make the comparison between British Caribbean slavery and the Holocaust, which could not be carried out effectively without a separate and thorough investigation of each case. Anyone reading the two parts of the book consecutively cannot but be impressed by the similarities between them, bearing in mind that they are separated by an entire century, by latitude and by the Atlantic Ocean. Moreover, the resemblances are entirely due to the similarity in the structures framed in the two parts of the book with their focus on racist regimes (both white and European) and the consequent common ingredients of legalised or tolerated racism, colonialism/occupation, forced labour and death. Slavery was legal in the British Caribbean from

1650 to 1838, while in Germany and the Occupied Territories forced labour was deemed permissible from 1939 to 1945, though outlawed at other periods.

In the Caribbean, race and colour were used to select discrete segments of labour, whether forced or free, to create a socio-legal hierarchy of white over brown, over black. But in Europe under the Nazis, the target populations for work or elimination were principally Jews, since Poland and the Ukraine were also to be Germanized territorially, plus both German and Slav Roma and Sinti. Comparing the Caribbean and Europe over the long term with regard to slavery and forced labour, the major difference was the use of perpetual slavery in the Caribbean over a period of almost 200 years, compared with forced labour in Europe for 6 years starting in 1939. Slavery and forced labour achieved their commonality in the dehumanising of the individual victim, whose life was of little value except as labour, and potentially forfeit. But the Caribbean version of slavery, because of its heritability and longevity over the period 1650 to 1838, had an enduring impact on education, religion and the family; this was mediated by differential incorporation into a triad of social strata involving slave culture, freedman culture and free white culture (Chapter 4).

Unlike Caribbean black slavery which was heritable and codified (though rules were frequently ignored in preference to terror), European forced labour under the Nazis was regarded as unavoidable for Jews. Though forced labour was neither codified nor transmissible across the generations for Jews or Gypsies, it was applied in practice to many Slavs. Moreover, the essence of the contrast between British Caribbean colonial slavery and forced labour in Europe was that slavery persisted through the whole of British Caribbean history from 1650 until 1838, touching every aspect of work and life. In contrast, forced labour was unknown in modern Western Europe (after the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861) until it emerged briefly in Germany before the end of the First World War, when the Germans refused to send back Polish foreign workers. Forced labour was reintroduced by the Nazis to Germany after they went to war against Poland in 1939, and they extended it to the Jewish ghettos and concentration camps of the General Government (Herbert 1997) (Chapter 5).

War, more importantly the setback of war, was comparatively unimportant as a leitmotif during the long period of Caribbean slavery. This was because Britain was on the front foot against its main rivals, the Spanish, French and Dutch for much of the early colonial period; and the hegemony of British sea power eventually facilitated British colonial expansion into the south-eastern Caribbean in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Chapter 2). In marked contrast, the threat of war, or more precisely the Second World War itself, dominated the European preoccupation with military land power during

the period 1933-1945. When war broke out in 1939, it was exceedingly violent and highly mechanized; it provided the context for forced labour, racism and above all anti-Semitism, and gave rise to industrialised mass murder through death camps and working-to-death camps (Chapters 7 and 8).

White colonial supremacy and racism provided the framework for black slavery and the slave laws in the Caribbean, accompanied by extreme violence meted out to slaves on the sugar plantations, often involving casual murder, especially in the first century of settlement (Chapter 2). This contrasted with the shorter duration of forced labour and the absence of heritable slavery in Europe under Nazism, which was coupled to lethal German antisemitism and an overweening sense of German racist superiority over Slavs. Forced labour across the economies of the Occupied Territories – themselves forming a bloc of de facto colonies – overlapped with the quest for *Lebensraum* and the terrain of the Second World War. This was to produce the horrors of Jewish, Sinti, and Roma and Slav forced labour, and Jewish mass murder, in ghettos, death camps and working-to-death camps, a concatenation of persecution expressed as the Holocaust (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8).

Slavery in the Caribbean and racial persecution in the context of the Holocaust in Europe moved in opposite directions over time: slavery towards the incorporation of freedmen and slaves in the 1830s; and the Holocaust towards forced labour and elimination. A similar pattern of incorporation and exclusion affected sexual relations in the two systems; Germans were warned by the Nazis against race defilement – especially mixed racial (German-Jewish) sexual relations – which were banned in accordance with the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1936. Moreover, in order to reduce the opportunity for undesirable sexual contact to a minimum, Jews were forbidden to employ German maids aged under 45. In contrast, white male and black female slave sexual relationships in the Caribbean were notoriously common – as with heterosexual male Jews and slaves – and were treated by whites as normal and compelling.

Post-war issues: Nuremberg Trials, reparations, and their implications for the evaluation of Caribbean slavery and the Holocaust as crimes against humanity and genocide.

To understand and evaluate the Second World War more generally it is necessary to examine the Nuremberg War Trial and how it handled Crimes against Humanity and genocide. Then it is necessary to look at the issue of reparations, and the groups to whom they are

to be addressed. The next phase turns to subsequent decisions made at the UN and in the International Courts of Justice. It leads on to a discussion of the institution of reparations by the German Government in the face of Nazi atrocities against the Jews in Europe in the early 1950s, and the struggle to launch a comparable programme of indemnification for slavery by CARICOM – the Caribbean Community – in the early twenty-first century.

Crimes against humanity and genocide

Two civil rights lawyers, Hersch Lauterpacht and Raphael Lemkin, both of them Poles and Jewish, and both sometime residents of Lemberg (Lviv, now in the Ukraine), rose to prominence during the Second World War (Sands 2016). Lemkin's *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Lemkin 1944) had dealt with German treatment of the Slavs as a group genocide – a term he coined. Sir Hersch Lauterpacht, a Cambridge Professor, focusing on the individual, advanced the idea that the German attacks on Poland and the Soviet Union were not only war crimes but also crimes against humanity (Lauterpacht 1945, 2013). At Nuremberg, the US and UK were collaborating with the French and Soviets in the prosecution of the war crimes of the Germans; Lemkin held a back-room position as a temporary member of the US delegation, and Lauterpacht was in the British legal team (Sands 2016).

Crimes against humanity were given prominence at the principal Nuremberg Trial which concluded the Second World War in 1945, but genocide was only briefly mentioned in the third charge of war crimes, which focused on issues of mass murder associated with what is now called the Holocaust. As the Nuremberg Trial concluded, its findings regarding the Second World War and the accompanying Holocaust – death camps, working to death camps and forced labour in high tech factories – were deemed crimes against humanity. But much of it was in reality genocidal – as Raphael Lemkin had argued in his book. Lemkin's view was endorsed at the UN in New York in December 1948, when the General Assembly adopted the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment for the Crime of Genocide, which Lemkin had been working on for almost two years.

On the following day, Lauterpacht's *An International Bill for the Rights of Man* was adopted by the UN General Assembly, but it did not become legally binding. However, in 1950 Lauterpacht's *Bill* was adopted by the European Convention on Human Rights and it did become legally binding. Intentionality to destroy life has become the yardstick for distinguishing between the two adjudications, crimes against humanity or genocide, and all this has been backed up by the decisions reached in the more recently established international criminal court at the Hague in 1998, as they related genocide in Rwanda and

Kosovo. In 2015 the UN International Law Commission started to work on the subject of crimes against humanity with a view to establishing a possible companion to the Genocide Convention (Sands 2016). This has not yet been concluded.

Reparations for the Holocaust

Consideration is now given to the quest for reparations for the Holocaust and British Caribbean slavery which are dealt with sequentially. In 1951, six years after the ending of the Second World War, Chancellor Adenauer acknowledged that unspeakable crimes had been committed in the name of the German people: West Germany (not the GDR) undertook to pay reparations to Jewish organizations and the state of Israel to cover the costs of resettling 500,000 Jewish refugees from the Nazis. In addition, it agreed to pay the survivors an indemnification for their pain, suffering and ill health as slave labourers, which was later extended to cover those in Communist countries in Eastern Europe. West Germany's agreement to reparations, included the payment of the sum of \$3 billion over the next fourteen years to the state of Israel, as the heir to those Jewish victims of the Holocaust with no surviving family. The Jewish community in Germany of 525,000 in 1933 had been reduced to 15,000 in 1945 – mostly people in mixed religious marriages. Although restitution of property was feasible, there were no obvious means of returning schools, synagogues, community centres and cemeteries to defunct communities (Zweig 2001a and b).

The payment of reparations was subject to disagreement between German citizens, many of whom believed they had nothing to apologise for, and Israeli Jews, some of whom refused to accept what they interpreted as blood money. Until the early 2000s, by which time Germany was reunified, \$110 billion was paid by Germany in reparations, indemnification and restitution. While it is agreed that restitution in relationship to the Holocaust can never be commensurate with the human loss, it has been a successful symbolic gesture of benefit to the surviving European Jews of the Holocaust generation, including those who emigrated to the USA and Israel (Zweig 2001a and b). This situation contrasts markedly with slavery where reparation has barely begun.

Reparations for slavery

At emancipation in 1834 compensation was paid by the British Government to owners of British Caribbean slaves, and accounted for 83 percent of the total £20 million committed, or £16,357,660. Not a penny went to the emancipated slaves, since they were considered

the property for whom recompense was sought (Draper 2010). In the context of reparations for the Holocaust, it is interesting to reflect that the British government raised £15 million of the £20 million compensation for the slave owners through a syndicate of London financiers led by Nathan Mayer Rothschild and Moses Montefiore (Anson and Bennett 2022). Both of these, as Jews, then lacked the capacity to vote in elections in England – unlike their brethren in Jamaica, who acquired the suffrage in 1826. The debt to slave owners' descendants was paid off by the British government as recently as 2015.

Since the early 21st century, a movement has developed in the British Caribbean in favour of reparations, championed by two of the specialists on slavery at the University of the West Indies – Professor Hilary Beckles, the Vice-Chancellor, and Professor Verene Shepherd in the History Department. The National Commission on Reparations was set up in Jamaica in 2007, but there was no groundswell of public support more generally in the British Caribbean until several countries, with encouragement from the University of the West Indies, began to cooperate (Shepherd 2014). In 2013 the Heads of Caribbean Government were instrumental in setting up a Caribbean Reparations Commission (CRC) within the framework of CARICOM. Each of the eight member countries of this Commission, including Jamaica, Barbados and Suriname, set up its own national reparations commission (Caribbean Reparations Commission 2013; Emmer and Engerman 2017).

The CRC's mandate was to prepare the case for reparatory justice for the British Caribbean's indigenous and African-descended communities who were believed to be the victims of Crimes Against Humanity (CAH) – genocide, slavery, slave trading and racial apartheid (the socio-spatial separation of races). The crimes are specified as: genocidal actions against the indigenous peoples and Africans; the enslavement of Africans who were refused compensation at emancipation, while the owners were paid instead; the “imposition of 100 years of apartheid” on the emancipated; and the refusal to acknowledge these crimes and compensate the victims and their descendants. Recently, CARICOM has combined with the African Union to persuade European nations more generally to pay reparations for the “historical mass crimes” associated with slavery. One purpose is to explore litigation options in collaboration with the UN, but the full implications of the African Union-CARICOM partnership are yet to be spelled out (Gentleman 2023).

The CARICOM Reparations Justice Programme (CRJP) records that it is committed to international reconciliation, but identifies racial victimization among the descendants of slavery and genocide as the root cause of their suffering today. It recognises that the persistent harm, experienced today by the victims, is the primary cause of the failure of the Caribbean to develop. Further, it calls upon the European governments to participate and prepare the Caribbean victims and sufferers for full admission, with dignity, into the

citizenry of the global community – and thus set them on the path to reconciliation, truth and justice. There seems, however, to be more willingness to comply on the part of white British Caribbean planter families (such as the Trevelyans in Grenada, the Draxes in Barbados, and the Gladstones in Guyana) than shown by the UK government, which fears that an apology, together with the offer of compensation, would open the flood gates to demands (Smith and Lashmar 2023).

Judge Patrick Robinson of the International Court of Justice has recently stated that: “transatlantic chattel slavery is the greatest atrocity in the history of humankind without parallel for its brutality, without parallel for its length..., without parallel for its profitability” (Mohdin 2023, 14). Judge Robinson intuited that the political tide, internationally, is moving in favour of reparations, perhaps to the tune of £19 trillion (Mohdin 2023).

Comparative Conclusion

Key to this book’s comparative approach is the distinction made between groups in society protected by the full range of civil rights including adult suffrage, and those who were denied them. This denial, in the case of British Caribbean societies, took place from the initiation of each colony in the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. It came at a later time in history in the case of the Nazi persecution of the German Jews in 1933, plus those Jews located in the adjacent occupied territories as their numbers expanded through German annexations after 1938. Not surprisingly, there was also a high degree of correlation between the inferior status of slave/forced labourers and crimes against humanity and genocide committed by both exploitative regimes. They were similar in kind as racist regimes, but different in scale and intensity because of differences in timing and technology – in short, the Holocaust had more brutal methods of exploitation and, when required, instant extermination.

By denying British Caribbean slaves their liberty and humanity, and ensuring that the free people of colour were only rarely awarded the vote because they were not white, the white planter elite created a system of differential incorporation which underpinned the structure of the three socio-legal tiers of colonial society. Only twenty-five years after the slave trade was abolished in 1807 did the free people of colour achieve the suffrage, and a further two years elapsed before the slaves obtained emancipation – but without the vote in most instances (Smith 1969 and 1974). In the case of the German Jews, they were refused the vote once Hitler had come to power in 1933, and their civil rights were eroded

further in the following six years, including their right to marry “out of group” with Germans in 1936. Differential incorporation is shown to be a universal socio-legal process of persecution and discrimination by race and religion with regard to both events – with deadly outcomes for the victims in relation to crimes against humanity and to genocide, which are evidenced in both British Caribbean slavery and the Holocaust. Lack of civil rights goes hand in hand with mass murder.

Caribbean slavery touches on the circumstances of the Holocaust most closely in the 150 years when the sugar planters, dependent on slave imports, were anti-natal (in relationship to slave births), dismissive of pro-natalism (encouraging births), and the slaves were subject to short lives (32 years was the expectation of life for Jamaican slaves in the early 1820s), premature mass deaths and *de facto* genocide. By the same token, forced labour was the *leitmotif* of the General Government and the General Plan for the East in the second part of the book dealing with the Holocaust, with the persecution of the Jews, quest for *Lebensraum*, colonial intentions, forced migration and lethal initial premises carried out both in the field and in the concentration camps – the Final Solution. And the evidence for working to death of Jews and Slavs in high tech industries in Auschwitz and Mittelbau Dora is even more clear cut in its depiction of genocide.

The elaborate construction of the three tiers of slave society undoubtedly, in my view, constituted a crime against humanity in the round – with the consequences of which the Caribbean is still living. Moreover, delving further into the sexual economy that exploited and raped enslaved women, a case can be made to designate it a crime against humanity, while slave recruitment and the gang labour system perpetrated on slave men and women in the cane fields and factories of the Caribbean, prior to 1807, was clearly genocidal through its impact on mortality.

Higman expresses the view that British Caribbean ‘slaves were not subject to genocide nor were they killed for sport’ (Higman 1984, 396). Nevertheless, he admits that the daily demands on endurance associated with sugar cultivation were extreme and created ‘non-viable slave populations in most places’ (Higman 1984, 397). Higman notes that had conditions continued after 1807, with the abolition of the slave trade and pressure to ameliorate disregarded, ‘the prospect of extinction would have been even more real and imminent’ (Higman 1984, 397). He states further ‘the fact that mere survival remained a central issue for so long highlights the extremity of the [Caribbean] slaves’ position.’ In addition, slavery had profound long-term implications for social behaviour, the development of slave culture and the fabric of slave society – as the list of claims for present-day reparations for slavery make clear.

A claim to pro-natalism cannot be made for British Caribbean slavery prior to 1807, since slave masters were oblivious to their own need for slave reproduction. Their refusal of a pro-natalist policy trapped them for 150 years on a genocidal trajectory that was truly anti-natal. The Germans under Hitler were led via forced labour and the mass murder of the Holocaust into genocide – though Burzlaff in his important 2020 paper was critical of the need to use intentionality (for example among the Nazis) as genocide’s defining characteristic (Burzlaff 2020). Were the British Caribbean planters spared from genocidal motives because they thoughtlessly omitted to weigh them in the balance, whereas the Nazis were genocidal because they did and still went ahead? Surely, both were equally guilty.

It is appropriate to return to the beginning of this blog and recall my quotations from the two distinguished Holocaust survivors, Primo Levi and Ruth Kluger. There are no such British Caribbean slave testimonies to which one may turn for similar reflection because of slave illiteracy and high slave mortality. In their absence, Primo Levi and Ruth Kluger’s observations have not only guided the overall structure of my book but deserve further reflection in the context of the absence of civil liberties in the British Caribbean during slavery, and the loss of civil liberties in Germany in 1933 – and later during the occupation of Europe and the onset of the Holocaust. Additionally, Kluger explains the utility of using a framework of comparison.

Without civil rights underpinned by democracy, those targeted for persecution are liable to dehumanization, loss of liberty, exploitation and death – crimes against humanity or genocide, depending on the adjudication; and the reason for their selection will be race or ethnicity or some other fatal designation yet to be chosen.

Referencing for this paper is both by citation of authors referred to in *Racist Regimes, Forced Labour and Death* (Palgrave Macmillan 2024), and by mention of the specific chapters in which are set out key historic events associated with British Caribbean slavery and the Holocaust.

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