

**STATE OF FLORIDA
RESOURCE MANUAL
ON
HOLOCAUST EDUCATION
GRADES 9-12**



A project of the Florida Commissioner's
Task Force on Holocaust Education

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**THIS
STATE OF FLORIDA
RESOURCE MANUAL ON
HOLOCAUST EDUCATION
IS DEDICATED TO THE
SURVIVORS OF THE
HOLOCAUST.**

*May their suffering
serve as a warning.*

*May their legacy
preserve mankind.*

COVER ART

Lynn Sarnow

12th Grade - Broward County Public Schools
1987 Contest Winner
Visual Arts Contest

Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

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Lawton Chiles

Governor

Buddy MacKay

Lieutenant Governor

Dear educators and students:

We present to you the 1998 *State of Florida Resource Manual on Holocaust Education*, as prepared by the Florida Commissioner of Education Task Force on Holocaust Education under the able chairmanship of Rositta E. Kenigsberg. In 1994, Senate Bill 660 was signed into law. In this bill, Holocaust education became a mandatory subject to be taught to all Florida public school students.

This tragic chapter of human history, not yet sixty years old, is a stinging rebuke to our claims of scientific and moral enlightenment. The Holocaust serves as a somber reminder to all of us that when evil is tolerated and not challenged, we pay a catastrophic price.

The Holocaust is a story of genocide on an unthinkable scale, but one also of courageous men and women who survived. To honor their powerful living witness, our generation must resolve to build trust and understanding in human relationships throughout our communities and our world. In doing so, together we will help ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust will be a Legacy of remembrance for this and future generations.

Lawton Chiles *Buddy MacKay*

LAWTON CHILES

BUDDY MacKAY



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Frank T. Brogan
Commissioner of Education

October, 1998

Dear Educator:

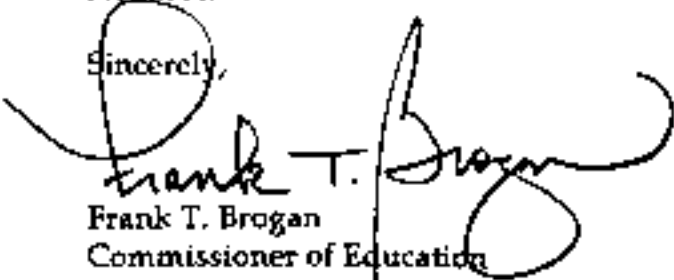
As Commissioner of the Florida Department of Education, I am pleased to offer the school children of Florida a new statewide curriculum entitled *The State of Florida Resource Manual on Holocaust Education*. I wish to thank the dedicated and devoted individuals serving on the Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education, especially its chairperson Rositta E. Kenigsberg, and the wonderful staff at the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, who contributed to this invaluable educational endeavor.

This new curriculum is a vital resource for our children to learn more about a critical period in history and will help them gain a greater understanding of events that have dramatically shaped the world in which we live today.

I encourage you to take advantage of the information contained in this body of knowledge to find answers to your questions and to generate discussions about the issues that are central in the quest of greater understanding among all people. As a teacher myself, I know the value of bringing history alive for students and making them active participants in the learning process. The Holocaust carries vital lessons that must be taught if our communities, our states and our world are to overcome barriers to greater learning.

We must communicate across generations, across ethnic boundaries and person to person to increase understanding on this issue. We have so much to gain by studying the Holocaust. I encourage teachers to take full advantage of this new resource.

Sincerely,


Frank T. Brogan
Commissioner of Education

MESSAGE FROM CHAIRPERSON



Dear Teachers,

The pursuit of the Holocaust legislation for all involved became more than a bill and more than an act of law, it became a mission of promise, a mission of hope, and a mission of responsibility. It became a legacy with a purpose -- to teach, not to repeat the Holocaust.

Although it is only four years since Governor Lawton Chiles signed the historic Holocaust Education Bill into law, the swelling interest in the subject of the Holocaust from principals, teachers, and students across the state has been significant and unprecedented.

In response to the overwhelming demand for new teaching materials, we are delighted to present this *State of Florida Resource Manual for Holocaust Education* for 9-12 grade students. This long overdue, much-anticipated high school resource manual has been developed and designed to offer you, the teacher, a resource that will help your students gain a deeper insight and a better understanding of how prejudice, hatred, apathy, and indifference led to one of the greatest human tragedies of the twentieth century: the Holocaust.

The Task Force's survey on Holocaust education, which many teachers throughout the state filled out, is presently being tabulated and analyzed to provide us with key information to better accommodate the needs of teachers on all grade levels. We are currently developing a K - 8 curriculum which is scheduled for completion Spring 2001.

Thus, as we stand on the brink of a new millennium, it is our hope that the teacher who faces the challenge of educating students to the tragedy of the Holocaust and the student who confronts this event with the personal willingness to learn will together find this Legacy of Remembrance one that can transcend the darkness to illuminate the future.

Rositta E. Kenigsberg, Chairperson

Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

This *State of Florida Holocaust Resource Manual on Holocaust Education* which has been state-commissioned and specifically designed for 9th-12th grade high school students is:

- geared for both the teacher who may be unfamiliar with the history of the Holocaust as well as for the teacher whose knowledge of the subject is substantial.
- meant to be flexible, teacher-friendly, and adaptable as a primary unit in social studies and/or language arts as well as an interdisciplinary unit encompassing a variety of subjects such as art, math, music, drama, poetry, science, etc.

REPETITION IN THIS GUIDE IS DELIBERATE AND PURPOSEFUL FOR TWO REASONS:

1. To enable the teacher to use any one unit as an independent section.
2. To enhance the importance and significance of the information and/or data by re-emphasizing it through another perspective.

This guide is arranged chronologically into ten units beginning with the antecedents of the Holocaust, followed by the history of the Holocaust, and ending with implications for today.

THE STANDARDIZED UNITS EACH INCLUDE:

- Quote
- Introduction
- Vocabulary
- Objectives
- Content material (text)
- Suggested activities
- Additional activities and readings with benchmarks

After the content review section of each unit, you will find a wide variety of activities to use in your classroom. These activities are listed on a table of contents and most of them have accompanying benchmarks which show the relationship between this guide and the Sunshine State Standards. The alignments with the Sunshine State Standards in this document represent significant correlations. These are not the only benchmarks which relate to the resources and activities. Relationships can be drawn to other social studies strands as well as other content areas.

WHERE APPROPRIATE, SOME UNITS INCLUDE TESTIMONIES, PICTURES, MAPS, ETC.

The teacher is encouraged to read through this entire resource manual and afterwards judiciously select the appropriate readings, activities, films, books, etc. applicable and suitable for your students so that a decision can be made regarding the time you will allot to teaching the Holocaust.

We recommend a minimum of three weeks. Ideally, a six week unit would make for an excellent unit of study, however, we understand your time constraints.

Suggestions for a Three Week Unit

- During week one, all students should become familiar with Units 1-6 in the manual. These units cover important, basic historical information students must have. Please note that a comprehensive but condensed version entitled "The Holocaust: A Historical Summary," produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, is found in the Introduction.
- During week two, focus on Units 7, 8, and 9.

- Week three should be spent on Unit 10 which deals with the implications of the Holocaust today.

Suggestions for a Six Week Unit

- If time permits and you choose to extend the unit of study, add one week to each of the suggestions listed above.

FEEL FREE TO REPRODUCE ANY PORTION OF EACH UNIT IN THE MANUAL.

Eyewitness Testimonies

Portions of some testimonies of survivors, liberators, and rescuers from the Oral History collection of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center have been adapted as readings. They can be found at the conclusion of several units and can be shared with the students. Please use these testimonies after the particular piece of history has been taught in the classroom.

Invite Eyewitness Classroom Speakers

Inviting a survivor or liberator to speak to the students is a powerful experience and will greatly enhance the unit by providing the class with a wonderful opportunity to have history come alive for the students. It is imperative that the teacher be aware that this must be done with a great deal of sensitivity and proper planning.

Probably the best time to have a survivor and/or liberator visit is after the introduction of the historical content in Units 1 - 6. We suggest that the teacher call one of the resource centers listed in the Appendix to secure a survivor. It is best to request a speaker at least one month in advance of the date you want the person to come to your classroom. Please note that the survivors should only be asked to speak for one classroom period in a day.

After being notified of who the survivor or liberator will be, we suggest that the teacher contact the individual directly to apprise him/her of what the students have learned, what their interests are, and what the time limitations of the presentation will be allowing for questions and answers. The teacher must plan to remain in the classroom during the entire presentation.

Holocaust Resources

Additional Holocaust resources, such as the following, can be found in the Appendix:

- A webography
- A bibliography
- A videography
- A listing of the Florida and United States Holocaust Centers
- A listing of the 67 Florida district Holocaust coordinators

Evaluation

To evaluate the students' progress, it is recommended that the teacher revisit the objectives found at the beginning of each unit and use them as a basis for evaluation.

Reminder

The Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education's website address is <http://holocaust.fiu.edu>.

Please feel free to send your comments on using this resource manual to:

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 Visit us at our web site: <http://holocaust.fiu.edu>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This comprehensive *State of Florida Resource Manual on Holocaust Education* represents the valiant and ardent efforts of many talented and devoted individuals who were responsible for this achievement.

First, I wish to extend heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to **Governor Lawton Chiles** for signing the Holocaust education bill into law mandating the teaching of the Holocaust for all Florida students from grades K through 12, thus commissioning resources such as this. Thank you to **Lt. Governor Buddy MacKay** for personally endorsing and acknowledging this effort.

I am grateful to the co-sponsors of the bill and the many Florida legislators and individuals who lobbied for the legislation and lent support, especially **Senator Ron Silver** and **Senator Ron Klein**, **Rep. Elaine Bloom**, **Rep. Fred Lippman**, **U.S. Congressman Robert Wexler**, **Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz**, **Bernie Friedman**, **Mark Freedman**, and **Judy Gilbert Gould**.

Special mention goes to the then **Commissioner of Education Doug Jamerson**, a visionary who set the stage and created the Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education primarily to assist the Department of Education in the implementation of this mandate's mission. Commendations to our present **Commissioner of Education Frank Brogan** whose tremendous support and commitment to the Legacy of the Holocaust has ensured the realization of the necessary resources, material, and professional development for Florida teachers. Special thanks to **Michael Olenick**, **Sam Dubbin** and **Dean Andrews** who continue to resolve our legal issues.

With deep affection, gratitude, and admiration to Nobel Prize Laureate **Professor Elie Wiesel** for his inspiring and challenging message to the teachers.

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A debt of gratitude to the following wonderful and devoted past and present members of the Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education for defining our mission and helping to implement it throughout and especially to **Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff** for her important corrective comments and recommendations:

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Thank you to **Daniel Blackmon** for the correct spelling of the German words in the text.

In an endeavor of this size, there are many individuals who participated by offering their expertise and knowledge. If I have omitted anyone who deserves mention, please accept my apology in advance and make sure to notify me so that I can correct this in future editions.

Rositta E. Kenigsberg, Chairperson
 Commissioner’s Task Force on Holocaust Education

REQUIRED PUBLIC SCHOOL INSTRUCTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST

FLORIDA STATUTE 233.061

- (2) Members of the instructional staff of the public schools, subject to the rules and regulations of the commissioner, the state board, and the school board, shall teach efficiently and faithfully, using the books and materials required, following the prescribed courses of study, and employing approved methods of instruction, the following:
- (f) The history of the Holocaust (1933-1945), the systematic, planned annihilation of European Jews and other groups by Nazi Germany, a watershed event in the history of humanity, to be taught in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions.

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Why Teach Holocaust History?

The history of the Holocaust represents one of the most effective, and most extensively documented, subjects for a pedagogical examination of basic moral issues. A structured inquiry into Holocaust history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behavior. A study of the Holocaust also addresses one of the central tenets of education in the United States, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen. Through a study of the Holocaust, students can come to realize that:

- democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained but need to be appreciated, nurtured, and protected;
- silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any society, can -- however unintentionally -- serve to perpetuate the problems; and
- the Holocaust was not an accident in history -- it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that not only legalized discrimination but that allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately mass murder to occur.

Questions of Rationale

Because the objective of teaching any subject is to engage the intellectual curiosity of the student in order to inspire critical thought and personal growth, it is helpful to structure your lesson plan on the Holocaust by considering throughout questions of rationale. Before addressing what and how to teach, we would recommend that you contemplate the following:

- Why should students learn this history?
- What are the most significant lessons students can learn about the Holocaust?
- Why is a particular reading, image, document, or film an appropriate medium for conveying the lessons about the Holocaust that you wish to teach?

Among the various rationales offered by educators who have incorporated a study of the Holocaust into their various courses and disciplines are these:

- The Holocaust was a watershed event, not only in the 20th century but in the entire history of humanity.
- Study of the Holocaust assists students in developing understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society. It helps students develop an awareness of the value of pluralism, and encourages tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society.
- The Holocaust provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent in the face of others' oppression.
- Holocaust history demonstrates how a modern nation can utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.
- A study of the Holocaust helps students think about the use and abuse of power, and the role and responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide.
- As students gain insight into the many historical, social, religious, political, and economic factors which cumulatively resulted in the Holocaust, they

gain a perspective on how history happens and how a convergence of factors can contribute to the disintegration of civilized values. Part of one's responsibility as a citizen in a democracy is to learn to identify the danger signals, and to know when to react.

When you, as an educator, take the time to consider the rationale for your lesson on the Holocaust, you will be more likely to select content that speaks to your students' interests and that provides them with a clearer understanding of the history. Most students demonstrate a high level of interest in studying the Holocaust precisely because the subject raises questions of fairness, justice, individual identity, peer pressure, conformity, indifference, and obedience --issues that adolescents confront in their daily lives. Students are also struck by the magnitude of the Holocaust, and by the fact that so many people acting as collaborators, perpetrators, and bystanders allowed this genocide to occur by failing to protest or resist.

Methodological Considerations

1. Define What You Mean By "Holocaust."

The Holocaust refers to a specific event in 20th-century history: the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims -- six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

2. Avoid Comparisons of Pain.

A study of the Holocaust should always highlight the different policies carried out by the Nazi regime toward various groups of people; however, these distinctions should not be presented as a basis for comparison of suffering between them. Avoid generalizations which suggest exclusivity, such as "the victims of the Holocaust suffered the most cruelty ever faced by a people in the history of humanity." One cannot presume that the horror of an individual, family, or community destroyed by the Nazis was any greater than that experienced by victims of other genocides.

3. Avoid Simple Answers To Complex History.

A study of the Holocaust raises difficult questions about human behavior, and it often involves complicated answers as to why events occurred. Be wary of oversimplifications. Allow students to contemplate the various factors that contributed to the Holocaust; do not attempt to reduce Holocaust history to one or two catalysts in isolation from the other factors that came into play. For example, the Holocaust was not simply the logical and inevitable consequence of unbridled racism. Rather, racism, combined with centuries-old bigotry, renewed by a nationalistic fervor which emerged in Europe in the latter half of the 19th century, fueled by Germany's defeat in World War I and its national humiliation following the Treaty of Versailles, exacerbated by worldwide economic hard times, the ineffectiveness of the Weimar Republic, and international indifference, and catalyzed by the political charisma, militaristic inclusiveness, and manipulative propaganda of Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime, contributed to the eventuality of the Holocaust.

4. Just Because It Happened Does Not Mean It Was Inevitable.

Too often students have the simplistic impression that the Holocaust was inevitable. Just because an historical event took place, and it was documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen. This seemingly obvious concept is often overlooked by students and teachers alike. The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act. By focusing on those decisions, we gain insight into history and human nature, and we can better help our students to become critical thinkers.

5. Strive For Precision of Language.

Any study of the Holocaust touches upon nuances of human behavior. Because of the complexity of the history, there is a temptation to overgeneralize and thus to distort the facts (e.g., "all concentration camps were killing centers" or "all Germans were collaborators.") Rather, teachers must strive to help students distinguish between categories of behavior and relevant historical references; to clarify the differences between prejudice and discrimination, collaborators and bystanders, armed and spiritual resistance, direct orders and assumed orders, concentration camps and killing centers, and guilt and responsibility.

Words that describe human behavior often have multiple meanings. Resistance, for example, usually refers to a physical act of armed revolt. During the Holocaust, it also meant partisan activism that ranged from smuggling messages, food, and weapons to actual military engagement. But resistance also embraced willful disobedience: continuing to practice religious and cultural traditions in defiance of the rules; creating fine art, music, and poetry inside ghettos and concentration camps. For many, simply maintaining the will to remain alive in the face of abject brutality was the surest act of spiritual resistance.

6. Make Careful Distinctions About Sources of Information.

Students need practice in distinguishing between fact, opinion, and fiction; between primary and secondary sources; and between types of evidence such as court testimonies, oral histories, and other written documents. Hermeneutics -- the science of interpretation -- should be called into play to help guide your students in their analysis of sources. Students should be encouraged to consider why a particular text was written, who the intended audience was, whether there were any biases inherent in the information, any gaps in discussion, whether gaps in certain passages were inadvertent or not, and how the information has been used to interpret various events.

Because scholars often base their research on different bodies of information, varying interpretations of history can emerge. Consequently, all interpretations are subject to analytical evaluation. Only by refining their own "hermeneutic of suspicion" can students mature into readers who discern the difference between legitimate scholars who present competing historical interpretations and those who distort or deny historical fact for personal or political gain.

7. Try To Avoid Stereotypical Descriptions.

Though all Jews were targeted for destruction by the Nazis, the experiences of all Jews were not the same. Simplistic views and stereotyping take place when groups of people are viewed as monolithic in attitudes and actions. How ethnic groups or social clusters are labeled and portrayed in school curricula has a direct impact on how students perceive groups in their daily lives. Remind your students that, although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them, without benefit of modifying or qualifying terms (e.g., "sometimes," "usually," "in many cases but not all") tend to stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality. Thus, all Germans cannot be characterized as Nazis, nor should any nationality be reduced to a singular or one-dimensional description.

8. Do Not Romanticize History To Engage Students' Interest.

One of the great risks of Holocaust education is the danger of fostering cynicism in our students by exposing them to the worst of human nature. Regardless, accuracy of fact must be a teacher's priority. People who risked their lives to rescue victims of Nazi oppression provide useful and important role models for students, yet an overemphasis on heroic tales in a unit on the Holocaust results in an inaccurate and unbalanced account of the history. It is important to bear in mind that only a small fraction of non-Jews under Nazi occupation helped to rescue Jews.

9. Contextualize The History You Are Teaching.

Events of the Holocaust, and particularly how individuals and organizations behaved at that time, must be placed in a historical context so that students can begin to comprehend the circumstances that encouraged or discouraged these acts. Frame your approach to specific events and acts of complicity or defiance by considering when and where an act took place; the immediate consequences to oneself and one's family of assisting victims; the impact of contemporaneous events; the degree of control the Nazis had on a country or local population; the cultural attitudes of particular native populations historically toward different victim groups; and the availability, effectiveness, and risk of potential hiding places.

Students should be reminded that individuals and groups do not always fit neatly into the same categories of behavior. The very same people did not always act consistently as "bystanders," "collaborators," "perpetrators," or "rescuers." Individuals and groups often behaved differently depending upon changing events and circumstances. The same person who in 1933 might have stood by and remained uninvolved while witnessing social discrimination of Jews might later have joined up with the SA and become a collaborator or have been moved to dissent vocally or act in defense of Jewish friends and neighbors.

Encourage your students not to categorize groups of people only on the basis of their experiences during the Holocaust: contextualization is critical so that victims are not perceived only as victims. Although Jews were the central victims of the Nazi regime, they had a vibrant culture and long history in Europe prior to the Nazi era. By exposing students to some of the cultural contributions and achievements of two thousand years of European Jewish life, you help students to balance their perception of Jews as victims and to better appreciate the traumatic disruption in Jewish history caused by the Holocaust.

Similarly, students may know very little about Gypsies except for the negative images and derogatory descriptions promulgated by the Nazis. Students would benefit from a broader viewpoint, learning something about Gypsy history and culture and understanding the diverse ways of life among different Gypsy groups.

10. Translate Statistics Into People.

In any study of the Holocaust, the sheer number of victims challenges easy comprehension. Teachers need to show that individual people are behind the statistics, comprised of families of grandparents, parents, and children. First-person accounts and memoir literature provide students with a way of making meaning out of collective numbers. Although students should be careful about overgeneralizing from first-person accounts such as those from survivors, journalists, relief workers, bystanders, and liberators, personal accounts help students get beyond statistics and make historical events of the Holocaust more immediate.

11. Be Sensitive To Appropriate Written And Audio-Visual Content.

One of the primary concerns of educators is how to introduce students to the horrors of the Holocaust. Graphic material should be used in a judicious manner and only to the extent necessary to achieve the objective of the lesson. Teachers should remind themselves that each student and each class is different, and that what seems appropriate for one may not be for all.

Students are essentially a "captive audience." When we assault them with images of horror for which they are unprepared, we violate a basic trust: the obligation of a teacher to provide a "safe" learning environment. The assumption that all students will seek to understand human behavior after being exposed to horrible images is fallacious. Some students may be so appalled by images of brutality and mass murder that they are discouraged from studying the subject further; others may become fascinated in a more voyeuristic fashion, subordinating further critical analysis of the history to the superficial titillation of looking at images of starvation, disfigurement, and death.

Many events and deeds that occurred within the context of the Holocaust do not rely for their depiction directly on the graphic horror of mass killings or other barbarisms. It is recommended that images and texts that do not exploit either the victims' memories or the students' emotional vulnerability form the centerpiece of Holocaust curricula.

12. Strive For Balance In Establishing Whose Perspective Informs Your Study of The Holocaust.

Often, too great an emphasis is placed on the victims of Nazi aggression rather than on the victimizers who forced people to make impossible choices or simply left them with no choice to make. Most students express empathy for victims of mass murder. But it is not uncommon for students to assume that the victims may have done something to justify the actions against them, and thus to place inappropriate blame on the victims themselves.

There is also a tendency among students to glorify power, even when it is used to kill innocent people. Many teachers indicate that their students are intrigued and, in some cases, intellectually seduced by the symbols of power which pervaded Nazi propaganda (e.g., the swastika; Nazi flags and regalia; Nazi slogans, rituals, and music). Rather than highlight the trappings of Nazi power, teachers should ask students to evaluate how such elements are used by governments (including our own) to build, protect, and mobilize a society. Students should be encouraged to contemplate as well how such elements can be abused and manipulated by governments to implement and legitimize acts of terror and even genocide.

In any review of the propaganda used to promote Nazi ideology, Nazi stereotypes of targeted victim groups, and the Hitler regime's justifications for persecution and murder, teachers need to remind students that just because such policies and beliefs are under discussion in class does not mean they are acceptable. It would be a terrible irony if students arrived at such a conclusion.

Furthermore, any study of the Holocaust should address both the victims and the perpetrators of violence and attempt to portray each as human beings, capable of moral judgment and independent decision-making but challenged by circumstances which made both self-defense and independent thought not merely difficult but perilous and potentially lethal.

13. Select Appropriate Learning Activities.

Just because students favor a certain learning activity does not necessarily mean that it should be used. For example, such activities as word scrambles, crossword puzzles, and other gimmicky exercises tend not to encourage critical analysis but lead instead to low level types of thinking and, in the case of Holocaust curricula, trivialize the importance of studying this history. When the effects of a particular activity run counter to the rationale for studying the history, then that activity should not be used.

Similarly, activities that encourage students to construct models of killing camps should also be reconsidered since any assignment along this line will almost inevitably end up being simplistic, time-consuming, and tangential to the educational objectives for studying the history of the Holocaust.

Thought-provoking learning activities are preferred, but even here, there are pitfalls to avoid. In studying complex human behavior, many teachers rely upon simulation exercises meant to help students "experience" unfamiliar situations. Even when teachers take great care to prepare a class for such an activity, simulating experiences from the Holocaust remains pedagogically unsound. The activity may engage students, but they often forget the purpose of the lesson and, even worse, they are left with the impression at the conclusion of the activity that they now know what it was like during the Holocaust. Holocaust survivors and eyewitnesses are among the first to indicate the grave difficulty of finding words to describe their experiences. Even more revealing, they argue the virtual impossibility of trying to simulate accurately what it was like to live on a daily basis with fear, hunger, disease, unfathomable loss, and the unrelenting threat of abject brutality and death.

The problem with trying to simulate situations from the Holocaust is that complex events and actions are oversimplified, and students are left with a skewed view of history. Since there are numerous primary source accounts, both written and visual, as well as survivors and eyewitnesses who can describe actual choices faced and made by individuals, groups, and nations during this period, teachers should draw upon these resources and refrain from simulation games that lead to a trivialization of the subject matter.

If they are not attempting to recreate situations from the Holocaust, simulation activities can be used effectively, especially when they have been designed to explore varying aspects of human behavior such as fear, scapegoating, conflict resolution, and difficult decision-making. Asking students in the course of a discussion, or as part of a writing assignment, to consider various perspectives on a particular event or historical experience is fundamentally different from involving a class in a simulation game.

14. Reinforce the Objectives of Your Lesson Plan.

As in all teaching situations, the opening and closing lessons are critically important. A strong opening should serve to dispel misinformation students may have prior to studying the Holocaust. It should set a reflective tone, move students from passive to active learners, indicate to students that their ideas and opinions matter, and establish that this history has multiple ramifications for themselves as individuals and as members of society as a whole.

A strong closing should emphasize synthesis by encouraging students to connect this history to other world events as well as the world they live in today. Students should be encouraged to reflect on what they have learned and to consider what this study means to them personally and as citizens of a democracy. Most importantly, your closing lesson should encourage further examination of Holocaust history, literature, and art.

Incorporating a Study of the Holocaust into Existing Courses

The Holocaust can be effectively integrated into various existing courses within the school curriculum. This section presents sample rationale statements and methodological approaches for incorporating a study of the Holocaust in seven different courses. Each course synopsis constitutes a mere fraction of the various rationales and approaches currently used by educators. Often, the rationales and methods listed under one course can be applied as well to other courses.

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THE HOLOCAUST: AN HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims -- six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

The concentration camp is most closely associated with the Holocaust and remains an enduring symbol of the Nazi regime. The first camps opened soon after the Nazis took power in January 1933; they continued as a basic part of Nazi rule until May 8, 1945, when the war, and the Nazi regime, ended.

The events of the Holocaust occurred in two main phases: 1933-1939 and 1939-1945.

I. 1933-1939

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was named Chancellor, the most powerful position in the German government, by the aged President Hindenburg, who hoped Hitler could lead the nation out of its grave political and economic crisis. Hitler was the leader of the right-wing National Socialist German Workers Party (called the "Nazi Party" for short); it was, by 1933, one of the strongest parties in Germany, even though -- reflecting the country's multiparty system -- the Nazis had only won a plurality of 33 percent of the votes in the 1932 elections to the German parliament (Reichstag).

Once in power, Hitler moved quickly to end German democracy. He convinced his cabinet to invoke emergency clauses of the constitution that permitted the suspension of individual freedoms of press, speech, and assembly. Special security forces -- the Special State Police (the *Gestapo*), the Storm Troopers (SA), and the Security Police (SS) -- murdered or arrested leaders of opposition political parties (Communists, socialists, and liberals). The Enabling Act of March 23, 1933, forced through a *Reichstag* already purged of many political opponents, gave dictatorial powers to Hitler.

Also in 1933, the Nazis began to put into practice their racial ideology. Echoing ideas popular in Germany as well as most other western nations well before the 1930s, the Nazis believed that the Germans were "racially superior" and that there was a struggle for survival between them and "inferior races." They saw Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and the handicapped as a serious biological threat to the purity of the "German (Aryan)(1) Race," what they called the "master race."

Jews, who numbered nearly 600,000 in Germany (less than one percent of the total population in 1933), were the principal target of Nazi hatred. The Nazis mistakenly identified Jews as a race and defined this race as "inferior." They also spewed hate-mongering propaganda that unfairly blamed Jews for Germany's economic depression and the country's defeat in World War I (1914-1918).

In 1933, new German laws forced Jews to quit their civil service jobs, university and law court positions, and other areas of public life. In April 1933, a boycott of Jewish businesses was instituted. In 1935, laws proclaimed at Nuremberg made Jews second-class citizens. These "Nuremberg Laws" defined Jews not by their religion or by how they wanted to identify themselves but by the religious affiliation of their grandparents. Between 1937 and 1939, new anti-Jewish regulations segregated Jews further and made daily life very difficult for them: Jews could not attend public schools, go to theaters, cinemas, or vacation resorts, or reside, or even walk, in certain sections of German cities.

(1) The term "Aryan" originally referred to peoples speaking Indo-European languages. The Nazis perverted its meaning to support racist ideas by viewing those of Germanic background as prime examples of Aryan stock, which they considered racially superior. For the Nazis, the typical Aryan was blond, blue-eyed, and tall.

Also between 1937 and 1939, Jews were forced from Germany's economic life: the Nazis either seized Jewish businesses and properties outright or forced Jews to sell them at bargain prices. In November 1938, this economic attack against German and Austrian(2) Jews changed into the physical destruction of synagogues and Jewish-owned stores, the arrest of Jewish men, the destruction of homes, and the murder of individuals. This centrally organized riot (pogrom) became known as *Kristallnacht* (the "Night of Broken Glass").

Although Jews were the main target of Nazi hatred, the Nazis persecuted other groups they viewed as racially or genetically "inferior." Nazi racial ideology was buttressed by scientists who advocated "selective breeding" (eugenics) to "improve" the human race. Laws passed between 1933 and 1935 aimed to reduce the future number of genetic "inferiors" through involuntary sterilization programs: about 500 children of mixed (African-German) racial backgrounds(3) and 320,000 to 350,000 individuals judged physically or mentally handicapped were subjected to surgical or radiation procedures so they could not have children. Supporters of sterilization also argued that the handicapped burdened the community with the costs of their care. Many of Germany's 30,000 Gypsies were also eventually sterilized and prohibited, along with Blacks, from intermarrying with Germans. Reflecting traditional prejudices, new laws combined traditional prejudices with the new racism of the Nazis which defined Gypsies, by "race," as "criminal and asocial."

Another consequence of Hitler's ruthless dictatorship in the 1930s was the arrest of political opponents and trade unionists and others the Nazis labeled "undesirables" and "enemies of the state." Some five to fifteen thousand homosexuals were imprisoned in concentration camps; under the 1935 Nazi-revised criminal code, the mere denunciation of a man as "homosexual" could result in arrest, trial, and conviction. Jehovah's Witnesses, who numbered 20,000 in Germany, were banned as an organization as early as April 1933, since the beliefs of this religious group prohibited them from swearing any oath to the state or serving in the German military. Their literature was confiscated, and they lost jobs, unemployment benefits, pensions, and all social welfare benefits. Many Witnesses were sent to prisons and concentration camps in Nazi Germany, and their children were sent to juvenile detention homes and orphanages.

Between 1933 and 1936, thousands of people, mostly political prisoners and Jehovah's Witnesses, were imprisoned in concentration camps, while several thousand German Gypsies were confined in special municipal camps. The first systematic round-ups of German and Austrian Jews occurred after *Kristallnacht*, when approximately 30,000 Jewish men were deported to Dachau and other concentration camps and several hundred Jewish women were sent to local jails. At the end of 1938, the waves of arrests also included several thousand German and Austrian Gypsies.

Between 1933 and 1939, about half the German Jewish population and more than two-thirds of Austrian Jews (1938-39) fled Nazi persecution. They emigrated mainly to Palestine, the United States, Latin America, Shanghai (which required no visa for entry), and eastern and western Europe (where many would be caught again in the Nazi net during the war). Jews who remained under Nazi rule were either unwilling to uproot themselves or unable to obtain visas, sponsors in host countries, or funds for emigration. Most foreign countries, including the United States, Canada, Britain, and France, were unwilling to admit very large numbers of refugees.

II. 1939-1945

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. Within days, the Polish army was defeated, and the Nazis began their campaign to destroy Polish culture and enslave the

(2) On March 11, 1938, Hitler sent his army into Austria, and on March 13 the incorporation (*Anschluss*) of Austria with the German empire (*Reich*) was proclaimed in Vienna. Most of the population welcomed the *Anschluss* and expressed their fervor in widespread riots and attacks against the Austrian Jews numbering 180,000 (90 percent of whom lived in Vienna).

(3) These children, called "the Rhineland bastards" by Germans, were the offspring of German women and African soldiers from French colonies who were stationed in the 1920s in the Rhineland, a demilitarized zone the Allies established after World War I as a buffer between Germany and western Europe.

Polish people, whom they viewed as "subhuman." Killing Polish leaders was the first step: German soldiers carried out massacres of university professors, artists, writers, politicians, and many Catholic priests. To create new living space for the "superior Germanic race," large segments of the Polish population were resettled, and German families moved into the emptied lands. Thousands of other Poles, including Jews, were imprisoned in concentration camps. The Nazis also "kidnapped" as many as 50,000 "Aryan-looking" Polish children from their parents and took them to Germany to be adopted by German families. Many of these children were later rejected as not capable of Germanization and sent to special children's camps, where some died of starvation, lethal injection, and disease.

As the war began in 1939, Hitler initiated an order to kill institutionalized, handicapped patients deemed "incurable." Special commissions of physicians reviewed questionnaires filled out by all state hospitals and then decided if a patient should be killed. The doomed were then transferred to six institutions in Germany and Austria, where specially constructed gas chambers were used to kill them. After public protests in 1941, the Nazi leadership continued this euphemistically termed "euthanasia" program in secret. Babies, small children, and other victims were thereafter killed by lethal injection and pills and by forced starvation.

The "euthanasia" program contained all the elements later required for mass murder of European Jews and Gypsies in Nazi death camps: an articulated decision to kill, specially trained personnel, the apparatus for killing by gas, and the use of euphemistic language like "euthanasia" that psychologically distanced the murderers from their victims and hid the criminal character of the killings from the public.

In 1940 German forces continued their conquest of much of Europe, easily defeating Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. On June 22, 1941, the German army invaded the Soviet Union and by September was approaching Moscow. In the meantime, Italy, Romania, and Hungary had joined the Axis powers led by Germany and opposed by the Allied Powers (British Commonwealth, Free France, the United States, and the Soviet Union).

In the months following Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, Jews, political leaders, Communists, and many Gypsies were killed in mass executions. The overwhelming majority of those killed were Jews. These murders were carried out at improvised sites throughout the Soviet Union by members of mobile killing squads (*Einsatzgruppen*) who followed in the wake of the invading German army. The most famous of these sites was Babi Yar, near Kiev, where an estimated 33,000 persons, mostly Jews, were murdered. German terror extended to institutionalized handicapped and psychiatric patients in the Soviet Union; it also resulted in the mass murder of more than three million Soviet prisoners of war.

World War II brought major changes to the concentration camp system. Large numbers of new prisoners, deported from all German-occupied countries, now flooded the camps. Often entire groups were committed to the camps, such as members of underground resistance organizations who were rounded up in a sweep across western Europe under the 1941 "Night and Fog" decree. To accommodate the massive increase in the number of prisoners, hundreds of new camps were established in occupied territories of eastern and western Europe.

During the war, ghettos, transit camps, and forced labor camps, in addition to the concentration camps, were created by the Germans and their collaborators to imprison Jews, Gypsies, and other victims of racial and ethnic hatred as well as political opponents and resistance fighters. Following the invasion of Poland, three million Polish Jews were forced into approximately 400 newly established ghettos, where they were segregated from the rest of the population. Large numbers of Jews were also deported from other cities and countries, including Germany, to ghettos in Poland and German-occupied territories further east.

In Polish cities under Nazi occupation, like Warsaw and Lodz, Jews were confined in sealed ghettos where starvation, overcrowding, exposure to cold, and contagious diseases killed tens of

thousands of people. In Warsaw and elsewhere, ghettoized Jews made every effort, often at great risk, to maintain their cultural, communal, and religious lives. The ghettos also provided a forced labor pool for the Germans, and many forced laborers (who worked on road gangs, in construction, or other hard labor related to the German war effort) died from exhaustion or maltreatment.

Between 1942 and 1944, the Germans moved to eliminate the ghettos in occupied Poland and elsewhere, deporting ghetto residents to "extermination camps" -- killing centers equipped with gassing facilities -- located in Poland. After the meeting of senior German government officials in late January 1942 at a villa in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee, the decision to implement "the final solution of the Jewish question" became formal state policy, and Jews from western Europe were also sent to killing centers in the East.

The six killing sites, chosen because of their closeness to rail lines and their location in semi-rural areas, were at Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Chelmno, Majdanek, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Chelmno was the first camp in which mass executions were carried out by gas, piped into mobile gas vans; 320,000 persons were killed there between December 1941 and March 1943 and between June to July 1944. A killing center using gas vans and later gas chambers operated at Belzec, where more than 600,000 persons were killed between May 1942 and August 1943. Sobibor opened in May 1942 and closed one day after a rebellion of the prisoners on October 14, 1943; up to 200,000 persons were killed by gassing. Treblinka opened in July 1942 and closed in November 1943; a revolt by the prisoners in early August 1943 destroyed much of the facility. At least 750,000 persons were killed at Treblinka, physically the largest of the killing centers. Almost all of the victims at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka were Jews; a few were Gypsies. Very few individuals survived these four killing centers, where most victims were murdered immediately after arrival.

Auschwitz-Birkenau, which also served as a concentration camp and slave labor camp, became the killing center where the largest numbers of European Jews and Gypsies were killed. After an experimental gassing there in September 1941 of 250 malnourished and ill Polish prisoners and 600 Russian POWs, mass murder became a daily routine; more than 1.25 million people were killed at Auschwitz-Birkenau, 9 out of 10 of them Jews. In addition, Gypsies, Soviet POWs, and ill prisoners of all nationalities died in the gas chambers. Between May 14 and July 8, 1944, 437,402 Hungarian Jews were deported to Auschwitz in 48 trains. This was probably the largest single mass deportation during the Holocaust. A similar system was implemented at Majdanek, which also doubled as a concentration camp and where at least 275,000 persons were killed in the gas chambers or died from malnutrition, brutality, and disease.

The methods of murder were the same in all the killing centers, which were operated by the SS. The victims arrived in railroad freight cars and passenger trains, mostly from ghettos and camps in occupied Poland, but also from almost every other eastern and western European country. On arrival, men were separated from women and children. Prisoners were forced to undress and hand over all valuables. They were then driven naked into the gas chambers, which were disguised as shower rooms, and either carbon monoxide or Zyklon B (a form of crystalline prussic acid, also used as an insecticide in some camps) was used to asphyxiate them. The minority selected for forced labor were, after initial quarantine, vulnerable to malnutrition, exposure, epidemics, medical experiments, and brutality; many perished as a result.

The Germans carried out their systematic murderous activities with the active help of local collaborators in many countries and the acquiescence or indifference of millions of bystanders. However, there were instances of organized resistance. For example, in the fall of 1943, the Danish resistance, with the support of the local population, rescued nearly the entire Jewish community in Denmark from the threat of deportation to the east by smuggling them via a dramatic boat lift to safety in neutral Sweden. Individuals in many other countries also risked their lives to save Jews and other individuals subject to Nazi persecution. One of the most famous was Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who led the rescue effort that saved the lives of tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews in 1944.

Resistance movements existed in almost every concentration camp and ghetto of Europe. In addition to the armed revolts at Sobibor and Treblinka, Jewish resistance in the Warsaw ghetto led to a courageous uprising in April-May 1943, despite a predictable doomed outcome because of superior German force. In general, rescue or aid to Holocaust victims was not a priority of resistance organizations whose principal goal was to fight the war against the Germans. Nonetheless, such groups and Jewish partisans (resistance fighters) sometimes cooperated with each other to save Jews. On April 19, 1943, for instance, members of the National Committee for the Defense of Jews, in cooperation with Christian railroad workers and the general underground in Belgium, attacked a train leaving the Belgian transit camp of Malines headed for Auschwitz and succeeded in assisting several hundred Jewish deportees to escape.

After the war turned against Germany and the Allied armies approached German soil in late 1944, the SS decided to evacuate outlying concentration camps. The Germans tried to cover up the evidence of genocide and deported prisoners to camps inside Germany to prevent their liberation. Many inmates died during the long journeys on foot known as "death marches." During the final days, in the spring of 1945, conditions in the remaining concentration camps exacted a terrible toll in human lives. Even concentration camps never intended for extermination, such as Bergen-Belsen, became death traps for thousands, including Anne Frank, who died there of typhus in March 1945.

In May 1945, Nazi Germany collapsed, the SS guards fled, and the camps ceased to exist as extermination, forced labor, or concentration camps. Some of the concentration camps, including Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, and Landsberg, all in Allied occupied Germany, were turned into camps for displaced persons (DPs), which included former Holocaust victims unable to be repatriated.

The Nazi legacy was a vast empire of murder, pillage, and exploitation that had affected every country of occupied Europe. The toll in lives was enormous. The full magnitude and the moral and ethical implications of this tragic era are only now beginning to be understood more fully.

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CHILDREN AND THE HOLOCAUST

Up to one-and-a-half million children were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945. The overwhelming majority of them were Jewish. Thousands of Roma (Gypsy) children, disabled children, and Polish children were also among the victims.

The deaths of these children were not accidental: they were the deliberate result of actions taken by the German government under the leadership of Chancellor Adolf Hitler. The children were killed in various ways. Many were shot; many more were asphyxiated with poisonous gas in concentration camps or subjected to lethal injections. Others perished from disease, starvation, exposure, torture, and/or severe physical exhaustion from slave labor. Still others died as a result of medical experiments conducted on them by German doctors in the camps.

During the Holocaust, children -- ranging in age from infants to older teens -- were, like their parents, persecuted and killed not for anything they had done. Rather, Hitler and the Nazi government believed that so-called "Aryan" Germans were a superior race. The Nazis labeled other people they considered inferior as "non-Aryans." People belonging to non-Aryan groups, including children, were targeted by the Nazis for elimination from German society. The Nazis killed children to create a biologically pure society.

Even children who fit the Aryan stereotype suffered at the hands of the Nazis during World War II. Non-Jewish children in occupied countries whose physical appearance fit the Nazi notion of a "master race" (fair skin, blond-haired, blue-eyed) were at times kidnapped from their homes and taken to Germany to be adopted by German families. As many as 50,000 Polish children alone may have been separated from their families in this manner. Some of these children were later rejected and sent to special children's camps where they died of starvation or as a result of the terrible living conditions within the camps. Others were killed by lethal injections at the concentration camps of Majdanek and Auschwitz.

The experiences of children who were victims of Nazi hatred varied widely. Factors such as age, gender, family wealth, and where a child lived affected their experiences under German domination. Generally, babies and younger children deported to ghettos and camps had almost no chance of surviving. Children in their teens, or younger children who looked more mature than their years, had a better chance of survival since they might be selected for slave labor rather than for death. Some teens participated in resistance activities as well.

Children who were victims of the Holocaust came from all over Europe. They had different languages, customs, and religious beliefs. Some came from wealthy families; others from poor homes. Many ended their schooling early to work in a craft or trade; others looked forward to continuing their education at the university level. Still, whatever their differences, they shared one commonality: by the 1930s, with the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany, they all became potential victims and their lives were forever changed.

Nazi Germany, 1933-39

Soon after the Nazis gained power in Germany, Jewish children found life increasingly difficult. Due to legislation prohibiting Jews from engaging in various professions, their parents lost jobs and businesses. As a result, many families were left with little money. Jewish children were not allowed to participate in sports and social activities with their "Aryan" classmates and neighbors. They could not go to museums, movies, public playgrounds, or even swimming pools. Even when they were permitted to go to school, teachers often treated them with scorn and encouraged their

humiliation by other students. Frequently, Jewish students were subject to being taunted and teased, picked upon and beaten up. Eventually, Jewish and Gypsy children were expelled from German schools.

Gypsy children, like Jewish children, faced many hardships in Nazi Germany. Along with their parents, they were rounded up and forced to live behind barbed wire in special municipal internment camps under police guard. Beginning in 1938, Gypsy teenagers were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

Murder Under Cover of War

With the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, life became much harder for children all over Europe. European children of all backgrounds suffered because of the war, experiencing displacement, inadequate diets, the absence of fathers and brothers, loss of family members, trauma, and confusion. However, only certain groups of children were singled out for "extinction."

Wartime, Hitler suggested, "was the best time for the elimination of the incurably ill." Among the first victims of the Nazis were disabled persons, and children were not exempt. Many Germans, influenced by Nazi ideas, did not want to be reminded of individuals who did not measure up to their idealized concept of a "master race." The physically and mentally handicapped were viewed by the Nazis as unproductive to society, a threat to Aryan genetic purity, and ultimately unworthy of life. Beginning almost simultaneously with the start of World War II, a "euthanasia" program was authorized personally by Adolf Hitler to systematically murder disabled Germans. Like disabled adults, children with disabilities were either injected with lethal drugs or asphyxiated by inhaling carbon monoxide fumes pumped into sealed mobile vans and gas chambers. Medical doctors cooperated in these so-called "mercy killings" in six institutions, and secretly at other centers, in Germany. Though some were Jewish, most of the children murdered in this fashion were non-Jewish Germans.

With the onset of war, Jewish children in Germany suffered increasing deprivations. Nazi government officials confiscated many items of value from Jewish homes, including radios, telephones, cameras, and cars. Even more importantly, food rations were curtailed for Jews as were clothing ration cards. Jewish children felt more and more isolated. Similarly, as Germany conquered various European countries in their war effort -- from Poland and parts of the Soviet Union in the east, to Denmark, Norway, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands in the west -- more and more Jewish children came under German control and, with their parents, experienced persecution, forced separations, and very often, murder.

Throughout eastern Europe, Jewish families were forced to give up their homes and relocate into ghettos -- restricted areas set up by the Nazis as "Jewish residential districts." Most of the ghettos were located in German-occupied Poland; most were established in the poorer, more dilapidated sections of towns and cities. Ghettos were fenced in, typically with barbed wire or brick walls. Entry and exit were by permit or pass only; like a prison, armed guards stood at gates. Families inside the ghettos lived under horrid conditions. Typically, many families would be crowded into a few rooms where there was little if any heat, food, or privacy. It was difficult to keep clean. Many people in the ghettos perished from malnutrition, starvation, exposure, and epidemics. Typhus, a contagious disease spread by body lice, was common, as was typhoid, spread through contaminated drinking water.

Some children managed to escape deportation to ghettos by going into hiding with their families or by hiding alone, aided by non-Jewish friends and neighbors. Children in hiding often took on a secret life, sometimes remaining in one room for months or even years. Some hid in woodpiles, attics, or barns; others were locked in cupboards or concealed closets, coming out infrequently and only at night. Boys had it more difficult, because they were circumcised and could therefore be identified.

Children were often forced to live lives independent of their families. Many children who found refuge with others outside the ghettos had to assume new identities and conform to local religious customs that were different from their own in order to survive. Some Jewish children managed to pass as Catholics and were hidden in Catholic schools, orphanages, and convents in countries across Europe.

Everyday, children became orphaned and many had to take care of even younger children. In the ghettos of Warsaw and other cities, many orphans lived on the streets, begging for bread and food from others in the ghetto who likewise had little or none to spare. Exposed to severe weather, frostbite, disease, and starvation, these children did not survive for long. Many froze to death.

In order to survive, children had to be resourceful and make themselves useful. In Lodz, healthy children could survive by working. Small children in the largest ghetto in occupied Poland, Warsaw, sometimes helped smuggle food to their families and friends by crawling through narrow openings in the ghetto wall. They did so at considerable risk, as smugglers who were caught were severely punished.

Deportation To Concentration Camps

The Nazis started emptying the ghettos in 1942 and deporting the victims to concentration camps. Children were often the target of special round-ups for deportation to the camps. The victims were told they were being resettled in the "East." The journey to the camps was difficult for everyone. Jammed into rail cars until there was no room for anyone to move, young children were often thrown on top of other people. Suffocating heat in the summer and freezing cold in the winter made the deportation journey even more brutal. During the trip, which often lasted several days, there was no food except for what people managed to bring along. There were also no water or bathroom facilities and parents were powerless to defend their children.

Two concentration camps (Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek) and four other camps (Chelmno, Sobibor, Belzec, and Treblinka) functioned as "killing centers." All were located near railroad lines in occupied Poland, and poison gas -- either carbon monoxide or Zyklon B -- was the primary weapon of murder. At Chelmno, Sobibor, Belzec, and Treblinka, nearly everyone was killed soon after arrival. At Auschwitz and Majdanek, individuals were "selected" to live or to die. Stronger, healthier people -- including many teenagers -- were often selected for slave labor, forced to work eleven-hour shifts with minimum provisions for clothing, food, and shelter. Some who survived the camp "selection" process were used for medical experiments by German physicians.

The great majority of people deported to killing centers did not survive. For those who did survive the selection process, children and adults alike, life in the camps presented new challenges, humiliations, and deprivations. One became a prisoner: clothing and all possessions were removed. Hair was shaved off. Ill-fitting prison uniforms were distributed. One's name was replaced with a number often tattooed on the arm. Many people scarcely recognized their own family members after they had been processed in the camps.

Camp "inmates" were crowded into barracks fitted with wooden bunk beds stacked three or four on top of each other, and several people had to fit per level on the plank beds that had neither mattresses nor blankets. Lice were everywhere and contributed to the spread of disease, which was an ever-present enemy. Standing in roll calls for extended periods in all kinds of weather and working long hours took its toll on everyone. Daily rations of food consisted of a small piece of bread and coffee or soup. As a result of these brutal living conditions, many people died. Few lasted more than a month or two. Even among those that survived, one's vulnerability to "selection" had not ended at the point of arrival. The sick, the feeble, and those too exhausted to work were periodically identified and selected for gassing.

Liberation

Near the end of the war in 1945, the German concentration camps were liberated by Allied soldiers. By this time, many of the children who had entered camps as teenagers were now young adults. For most, the food and gestures of kindness offered by liberating soldiers were the links to life itself. Children who had survived in hiding now searched the camps trying to locate family members who might also have survived. Returning to hometowns, they had hopes that a former neighbor might know of other survivors.

It was rare for an entire family to survive the Holocaust. One or both parents were likely to have been killed; brothers and sisters had been lost; grandparents were dead. Anticipated reunions with family members gave surviving children some hope, but for many, the terrible reality was that they were now alone. Many found themselves sole survivors of once large extended families. A few were eventually able to locate missing family members.

Life as it had been before the Holocaust was forever altered. Though some individual survivors attempted to return to their former places of residence, Jewish and Gypsy communities no longer existed in most of Europe. Family homes had, in many instances, been taken over by others; personal possessions had been plundered. Because returning to one's home in hopes of reclaiming what had been lost was fraught with extreme danger, many young survivors eventually ended up instead in children's centers or displaced persons camps.

The future was as uncertain as the present was unstable. Many young people had had their schooling interrupted and could not easily resume their studies. Merely surviving took precedence over other concerns. Owning nothing and belonging nowhere, many children left Europe and, with assistance provided by immigrant aid societies or sponsorship from relatives abroad, they emigrated, usually to the United States, South Africa, and/or Palestine which, after 1948, became the State of Israel. There, in these newly adopted countries, they slowly developed new lives.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE MANUAL

UNITS:

- 1 — Genocide and the Holocaust**
- 2 — Twentieth Century Antecedents to the Holocaust**
- 3 — Adolf Hitler and the Rise of the Nazi Party**
- 4 — The Refugee Crisis and the Persecution Years**
- 5 — The Ghettos**
- 6 — The Final Solution**
- 7 — Resistance: Courageous Acts in Desperate Times**
- 8 — The Rescuers**
- 9 — Liberation: Aftermath and the Pursuit of Justice**
- 10 — Reflection, Remembrance, and Responsibility**

APPENDIX

UNIT 1

GENOCIDE AND THE HOLOCAUST

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for the Additional Activities and Readings 18**

UNIT 1

GENOCIDE AND THE HOLOCAUST

By Dr. Michael Berenbaum

*“ . . . when we deny humanity in others,
we destroy humanity within ourselves.”*

*Benediction by Chaplain Arnold E. Resnicoff
U. S. Navy in Days of Remembrance.*

INTRODUCTION

As this curriculum goes to press, we stand at a distance of 53 years from the events of the Holocaust. Yet, if one were to judge from the headlines of contemporary newspaper, the story of the Holocaust is still very much with us. In fact, it is gaining more prominence in today's newspapers and television accounts than it did when the Holocaust was still occurring in the summer of 1942 when the mass killing centers opened, or in the spring of 1944 when more than 400,000 Hungarian Jews were sent to the gas chambers of Auschwitz between the 15th of May and the 8th of July.

It seems that before the last of the survivors leaves the earth, some amends will be made. And the subject of the Holocaust, the absoluteness of its evil, is forcing a confrontation with the national myths that comforted previous generations and obscured their true complicity. The neutrality of the Swiss is being reexamined; so too, the complicity of the French, the antisemitism of the Church, and the pervasiveness of German participation.

One cannot overestimate the importance of the apologies that have been forthcoming. The third generation is asking questions that their parents were too polite to ask of the perpetrators. Pope John Paul II seems intent on taking definitive and irreversible steps to combat Christian theological antisemitism before his papacy comes to an end. Despite the many valid criticisms of the Vatican statement on the *Shoah*, we will long be the beneficiaries of the Roman Catholic Church's determination to end antisemitism and to remember the *Shoah*.

In Germany, the debate triggered by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, which became a best seller in English even before its publication in a German translation, has pitted the third generation of Germans, Goldhagen's peers, against their parents and grandparents. That generation has not bought the line that Chancellor Kohl advanced, namely that the SS was dishonorable, but that stain need not taint the German army, nor the German people who seemingly were Hitler's victims as well. One observes the same phenomena in the debate over the size, content, and shape of the proposed German memorial to the Holocaust in Berlin and in the genuine reluctance of Germany to build a Holocaust Museum in Berlin.

Different events have given birth to renewed national self-examination and to revising perceptions of national histories. Switzerland and France come to mind, but so, too, Austria and Poland, where a new national Sunday for a discussion of Judaism within the Church has been proclaimed for January. Grandchildren often remember what their parents chose to forget, and the public debate in Europe has been generational and of considerable significance.

Of greater importance, the issue of genocide cannot be confined to past history. Today's students have been raised with images of mass murder in Bosnia and Rwanda, of killing in Kosovo, and unlike students of earlier years, they can not rest content with the excuse, "If only our leaders had known" or "If only we had known, something would have been done." We live in a generation of CNN, of instant access to events throughout the world, of powerful visual images of mass murder, and still, so little is done.

Thus, genocide is all too timely a subject of learning. We who have brought you this work are committed not only to teaching the past but to transforming the future. We hope that as you study this subject matter, as you sense the magnitude of its evil and terrible destruction unleashed by racism, antisemitism, ethnic prejudice, and hatred, there will grow within you a determination not to permit such evil to occur again. Yehuda Bauer, contemporary Israel's most influential teacher of the Holocaust, once wrote that there are three commandments that emerge from its ashes:

Thou shalt not be a victim.

Thou shalt not be a perpetrator.

And above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the VOCABULARY.
2. Examine the results of human rights violations.
3. Define and understand the concept of genocide.
4. Obtain knowledge about the history of genocidal societies.

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Aryan: Originally a term for peoples speaking the languages of Europe and India; in Nazi ideology, a Nordic-type, Caucasian Christian.

Bystander: One who is present at some event without participating in it; also a spectator or passerby.

Death Camps: Historians usually reserve the term "death camps" for those Nazi concentration camps set up for killing: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Included in this classification, because of the massive scope of the killing which took place, are two labor/killing complexes: Auschwitz/Birkenau and Majdanek. There was systematic murder by gassing at each of these six camps.

Final Solution: The term used as a coverword for the extermination of the Jews. The first official record of this decision is a *Führer* order which was transmitted to the High Command (from Hitler to Göring) on March 31, 1941: "TO KILL JEWS AND SOVIET COMMISSARS." Göring then notified Heydrich on July 31, 1941 "to make all necessary preparations...for bringing about a complete solution to the Jewish problem." The use of the word "problem" served as a reminder to use code words, an idea which was quickly adopted to refer to all stages of the Final Solution. The plan was expanded and logistics were finalized at the Wannsee Conference in 1942.

Führer (leader): Adolf Hitler's title in Nazi Germany.

Genocide: The destruction of a religious, racial, or national group; also the destruction of an ethnic culture, usually implemented under the guise of "political necessity."

Ghettoization: The process of the creation of a compulsory closed "Jewish Quarter" established by the Germans where the Jewish population of the city and Jews from the surrounding areas were forced to live under inhumane and desperate conditions.

Holocaust: The systematic, bureaucratic annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and their collaborators as a central act of state. Although Jews were the primary victims, hundreds of thousands of Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) and many thousands of mentally or physically disabled persons were also victims of Nazi genocide. As Nazi tyranny spread across Europe from 1933 to 1945, millions of other innocent people were persecuted and murdered. More than three million Soviet prisoners of war were killed because of their nationality. Poles as well as other Slavs were targeted for slave labor, and as a result, tens of thousands perished. Homosexuals and others deemed "anti-social" were also persecuted and often murdered. In addition, thousands of political and religious dissidents such as communists, socialists, trade unionists, and Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs and behavior, and many of these individuals died as a result of maltreatment.

Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass): During November 9 and 10, 1938, a pogrom and riot was staged in which mobs of Nazis attacked, looted, vandalized, and set fires to Jewish shops, homes, businesses, and synagogues in Germany and Austria. The name *Kristallnacht* comes from the fact that so many shop windows were smashed, but the term is also an attempt to minimize what actually took place during the pogrom. More than 26,000 male German Jews between the ages of 16 and 60 were deported to concentration camps after this pogrom and riot.

Lebensraum (living space): Principle of Nazi ideology and foreign policy, expressed in the drive for the conquest of territories, mainly in the east.

Nazi: A member of the German fascist party controlling Germany from 1933 -1945 under the dictatorial leadership of Adolf Hitler.

Ottoman Empire: The Turkish Empire (1299-1919) in southwestern Asia, northeastern Africa, and southeastern Europe, whose capital was Constantinople. Also called "Turkish Empire."

Perpetrator: One who deliberately carries out an injurious act against an individual or a group.

Reichstag: Formerly, the legislative assembly of Germany from 1871 to 1945.

Shoah: Hebrew term for Holocaust. See Holocaust.

SS (Schutzstaffel or Protection Squad): Originally, guard detachments formed in 1925 as Hitler's personal guard. In 1929, under Himmler, the SS developed into the elite units of the Nazi party. These Nazi paramilitary, black-shirted storm troops used two symbols copied from Teutonic runes, a parallel jagged double S usually used as a symbol warning for high-tension wires or lightning. The SS was built into a giant organization and provided staff for the police, concentration camp guards, and the fighting units of the *Waffen SS*.

Victim: One who is subjected to oppression, hardship, or mistreatment.

NAMES AND PLACES

Bormann, Martin: Chief of the Chancery of the Nazi Party.

Eichmann, Adolf: Coordinated the deportation of Jews from their homes in German-occupied Europe to ghettos, concentration, and death camps in Eastern Europe. He headed Department IVB4 of *REICHSSICHERHEITSHAUPTAMT (Referat Juden)* and as such was the engineer of the "Final Solution." Eichmann was captured by Israeli agents on May 11, 1959 in Argentina where he had been living. After a lengthy trial in Israel, he was convicted and executed on May 31, 1962.

Heydrich, Reinhard: As Chief of RSHA, Heydrich was entrusted in 1941 with implementing the "Final Solution" of the Jewish question. He presided over the conference at Wannsee in Berlin in January 20, 1942. Czech partisans assassinated Heydrich in Prague in 1942. As a result, the entire village of Lidice was destroyed, and nearly all of its citizens were killed.

Himmler, Heinrich: Head of the SS and secret police.

Hitler, Adolf: *Führer* (leader) of the Third *Reich* from 1933 until his suicide in 1945; he built a German regime unparalleled as an instrument of tyranny, oppression, and ruin. His conquests in Europe extended from the Pyrenees Mountains on the border of France and Spain to the Ural Mountains on the border between Europe and Asia. Hitler's tyranny and the German campaign to annihilate the Jewish people brought Western civilization to the brink of destruction.

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund, founded in 1946.

CONTENT OVERVIEW GENOCIDE AND THE HOLOCAUST

Genocide

The term genocide, the systematic, planned annihilation of a racial, religious, or cultural group, was first introduced by Raphael Lemkin in 1933 when he submitted a draft proposal to the League of Nations for an international convention on barbaric crimes and vandalism. Lemkin was responding in part to the Turkish massacre of Armenians during World War I, but was unsuccessful in having the convention passed.

Nevertheless, he persisted. He made combating genocide his life's work. It took another war and the systematic, planned murder of the Jews by the Germans and their collaborators to gain worldwide support for the Convention for the Prevention of the Crimes of Genocide, which was adopted by the United Nations on December 9, 1948.

The Genocide convention was designed to overcome the claims of Nazi war criminals that they had violated no law. By understanding what the Convention prohibits, we can outline the definition of genocide: The Convention forbids:

- the killing of persons belonging to a group;
- causing grievous bodily or spiritual harm to members of a group;
- deliberately enforcing upon the group living conditions which could lead to complete or partial extermination;
- enforcing measures to prevent births among the group;
- forcibly removing children from the group and transferring them to another group.

Each of these provisions applies to a different stage or deed associated with the Holocaust. The killing of persons clearly refers to the Final Solution, the plan to murder all Jews. It also refers to the killing of Gypsies -- Roma and Sinti -- by the Nazis during World War II.

Deliberately enforcing living conditions leading to extermination refers to ghettoization. Enforcing measures to prevent births outlines sterilization as a tool of group murder and forcibly removing children refers to the Nazi policy of kidnapping Polish children and removing them to Germany to be raised as "Aryans."

Although the United States had a major hand in drafting the Genocide Convention and signed the treaty, pressures during the McCarthy era did not allow the Senate to get the two-thirds majority required by the Constitution for ratification. Conservatives argued that by ratifying the Convention, the United States would be limiting its national sovereignty. Every day the Senate was in session, gadfly Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin reminded his colleagues of the unfinished business of ratification. He gave thousands of speeches on behalf of the treaty. With the exception of President Dwight David Eisenhower, every American president from Harry Truman to Jimmy Carter advocated its ratification. None could muster the two-thirds vote needed for ratification.

When he first assumed office, President Ronald Reagan was non-committal. In 1987, the conservative president was persuaded to put his personal prestige behind the drive to ratify the treaty. On November 4, 1988, President Reagan signed the ratifying legislation, thus making the United States the 98th nation to ratify the Convention.

Genocide is not a crime restricted to the twentieth century. There have been many genocides in the past, but none of the ferocity, complexity or totality of the Holocaust. During World War I, the Armenians were subject to systematic slaughter by the Turks. Fearful of an Armenian-Russian alliance on their eastern border, the Turks deported many Armenians from their homeland, subjecting them to conditions of starvation and disease as well as attacks and massacres. They targeted Armenians in the East, but unlike the Nazis, they did not target all Armenians everywhere. Those living in the capital of Turkey and away from the battlefield were not murdered. Nevertheless, there are links between the slaughter of the Armenians in World War I and the annihilation of the Jews a quarter century later.

Like the Jews who were a non-Christian element in the heart of Western Christian Europe, Armenians were a non-Muslim element in Muslim Turkey. The Armenians were peasants, craftsmen, and middlemen, whose economic status and social position resembled the Jews of Poland and Russia. They were subject to attack by a declining empire. The Ottoman Empire had experienced the emancipation of Greece, the independence of Romania and Serbia, and self-rule of the Bulgarians. In a period of loss, the Turks were forced out of all of Europe with the minor exception of Salonika in contemporary Greece and Albania. The assault against the Armenians occurred during World War I, at a time in the war when the tide of early victories had turned against the Germans and their Turkish allies. During World War II, the major slaughter of Jews took place after German setbacks in the war. Unlike the Holocaust, where the assault against Jews was total and the goal of the Nazis was the annihilation of all Jewish men, women, and children everywhere, the slaughter of the Armenians was limited to the provinces. Those Armenians at a distance from the border with Russia and in major cities were not subject to killing. Nor was the murder of the Armenians considered essential to Turkish national salvation, as the murder of the Jews had been for the Germans.

A recent work, *Century of Genocide*, published in 1997, listed fourteen events of genocide in the twentieth century. Some were so-called "passive genocides," such as in the Ukraine during the 1930s, where deliberate state-sponsored acts led to mass starvation and massive death among the native population. Several million peasants, most of them Ukrainians living in the Ukraine and the traditionally Cossack territories of the North Caucasus, were starved to death when the government of the Soviet Union seized their crops and agricultural goods. For more than half a century this crime was denied, until the post-communist period, when the Ukrainian communist party admitted the "passive" slaughter and blamed Josef Stalin and his associates.

Other genocides or genocide-like events were the results of colonialism and imperialism, and the displacement of one population by another. After Indonesia invaded the Portuguese colony of East Timor in 1975, the forced integration reached genocidal proportions and resulted in a substantial decline in the native population. In the war for Bangladesh independence from Pakistan in 1971, thirty million Bengalis were displaced by the army, ten million Bengalis were forced to seek refuge in India, and perhaps as many as three million natives were murdered. Women and girls were raped and villages plundered.

Some genocides involved long simmering inter-ethnic conflict, such as the Tutsi assault against the Hutu in Rwanda and Burundi, and the decades -- even centuries -- long struggle between Serbs, Croats and Bosnians in the former Yugoslavia.

Some genocidal policies are political. During six months from October 1965 to March 1966, one million people, who had largely been members of the Indonesian Communist Party, were killed in a series of massacres in Indonesia. This was followed by an attempted coup d'état in the

Indonesian capital of Jakarta, in which the PKI was implicated. An intense military propaganda program targeted this political party. This was also true in Cambodia, where in 1975, as the Khmer Rouge took control of the country, schools were closed, factories deserted, money and wages abolished, monasteries emptied, and libraries scattered. Everything disappeared for four years as eight million Cambodians were imprisoned by their own leaders. Perhaps as many as one in five were murdered.

In contrast to our perception of earlier ages of civilization as violent and inhumane and our own as moderate, temperate and civilized, genocide has characterized twentieth century existence. And unless we heed its lessons, it could not only define our past, but our collective future.

Rwanda

Between April and July of 1994, there was a slaughter of massive numbers of Tutsi by Hutu. The precipitating event for the genocide was the shooting down of the Air Force airplane carrying the president of Rwanda and Burundi. Before his death, the president of Rwanda had long exercised an authoritarian rule. The plane was hit by a surface-to-air missile, a sophisticated weapon that requires advanced training to operate. Someone knew that the two leaders were together, that they were flying that route on that specific plane. The Hutu used the interim period even before the next president was sworn in to have their way and to settle old scores.

The moment the president was shot down, there were radio appeals to initiate the killings. They indicated a systematic organization. Radio propaganda played a very important role in calling for and organizing the genocide. A systematic replaying of these broadcasts, monitored and recorded by Western intelligence will be required if we are to comprehend fully the role of propaganda in the genocide.

Rwandan officials speak of 500,000 to 1,000,000 dead. The figures themselves indicate the magnitude of the deaths. They may not, however, be accurate. The bulk of the slaughters were done by machete. One must better understand the killing process to come up with an accurate understanding of numbers.

Students of the Holocaust once had the naïve belief that if only the world had known of the Holocaust, something would have been done to stop it. Experiences in both Bosnia and Rwanda challenge such a simple notion. In Rwanda, when the killing began, military forces from Belgium and France evacuated their troops, and only non-governmental organizations engaged in humanitarian relief efforts -- unarmed volunteers -- remained. The leaders of the Non-Governmental Organizations [NGO] were often young people, college students and post-graduates. Care, UNICEF, Save the Children, and Doctors without Borders remained to rescue, to relieve, and to alleviate pain and suffering. Meanwhile, soldiers, who were trained for combat, were called home by their governments, which were fearful of the political repercussions that would result if some harm befell them.

There is a price to be paid for not combating genocide, but the West was unwilling to pay it. Western countries feared losing the lives of heavily-armed volunteer soldiers and thus, turned and ran when the first signs of massive murders were perceived. Even the United States AID program was staffed by a contract employee, a Canadian, who if taken hostage, would have been less politically embarrassing to the administration than an American hostage. American soldiers came in but only to get Americans out. They did not come in to restore order.

In the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda as well as the civil war and inter-ethnic slaughter in Bosnia, the world borrowed heavily from the experience of the Holocaust. A judicial response is being attempted by the international community, which is holding International War Crimes Trials, with differing degrees of success. And the survivors are seeking to learn from the Holocaust.

The Holocaust and Genocide -- The Holocaust As Genocide

Why study the Holocaust, the student may ask? Why not study all genocides, other instances of mass inhumanity? Why concentrate so intensely on this specific tragedy? Why not study evil that happened in our own country, such as the American policy toward Native Americans or slavery? All of these events are worthy of study, and there is no hierarchy of suffering. All suffering is personal. It offers no consolation to a person in pain or to people victimized in history to suggest that others have suffered more or suffered differently. Pain is pain and must be recognized.

Still, there are many answers to this question as to why we should study the Holocaust, perhaps almost as many as there are scholars who study the subject. Yet, the best answer is the simplest: the Holocaust was a paradigmatic event. We can see that this history echoes of other genocides, thereby enabling us to understand all manifestations of genocide. The Holocaust occurred in a modern, culturally-advanced industrial society that was somewhat like our own. It was initiated in the heart of Western Europe, in lands from which many Americans came to these shores. The Holocaust was the most extreme and intense manifestation of genocide.

There are many scholars who argue that the Holocaust was unique, an event unlike any other event in history. Some even go so far as to contend that the Holocaust can not be compared to any other event in history; it must be understood on its own terms apart from any other historical occurrence and thus, its singularity is affirmed. We share a different perspective. While the Holocaust was a unique event, singular in its manifestation, it can only be understood in the context of other genocides and other instances of massive inhumanity when we understand what it shared in common with other genocides and where it was singular.

Although there have been many instances of mass murder in human history, the Holocaust was unique for several reasons:

- The Holocaust was intentional and premeditated. Unlike other state policies in modern history which resulted in the death of entire populations -- such as the Australian treatment of the Aborigines and the British treatment of Irish peasants, which led to mass death from famine -- the murder of the Jews was the goal of Nazi policy from at least 1941 onward.
- The Holocaust served no political or territorial purpose. Unlike the native Americans who were crushed and then forced onto reservations because they stood in the way of the North American movement of Western expansion, the Jews posed no territorial threat to the Nazis. Their murder led to no geographical or political benefit; it yielded no territorial gain. The killing of Jews was not the means to an end but a fundamental goal in and of itself.
- The Holocaust was total and all-encompassing. Unlike the Turkish campaign against the Armenians, when Armenians living in Constantinople and

other cities were safe, while those living in the Eastern regions were victims, every Jew in Europe was targeted by the Nazis. At the Wannsee Conference, Reinhard Heydrich noted that the Final Solution would have to deal with eleven million Jews, including those in Britain and Ireland. The goal of exterminating all Jews was nothing less than a major realignment of the human species.

Jews sometimes mistakenly believe that the Holocaust is but another instance in the long history of antisemitism. The Holocaust was different from all previous anti-Jewish violence. In the past, attacks on Jews were episodic, confined to isolated geographic areas, and illegal in that the antisemitic outbursts that took place were most often not formally sanctioned by law. Throughout history, anti-Jewish violence was based on religion, not biology. Jews were killed for what they believed and practiced. Conversion and emigration were possible.

In contrast, Nazism was unrelenting. For twelve years, the persecution and then the destruction of the Jewish people was a national priority, even at the cost of rational policy. Jewish workers were killed in spite of an acute labor shortage, and railroad trains were made available to carry Jews to death camps even when every piece of rolling stock was needed to supply German troops on the Eastern front. Jews were hunted down throughout Europe, from central Russia to the Spanish border. Above all, the policy of extermination was sanctioned by law, decrees and official directives. The legal system itself served as the instrument of oppression and death. For example, in September 1942, Justice Minister Hierack turned over jurisdiction for Jews, Gypsies, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Czechs and asocial Germans to Heinrich Himmler. He explained his decision in a letter to Martin Bormann: "In doing so, I stand on the principle that the administration of justice can make only a small contribution to the extermination of these peoples."

In 1933, the Parliament gave over to Adolf Hitler emergency power to enact legislation. Thus over the next twelve years the Führer's decrees had the force of laws. They were enforced by judges who took an oath of allegiance directly to Hitler, not to the constitution or even the state. Fifteen years after the defeat of Nazi Germany, under police interrogation in Israel, Adolf Eichmann cloaked himself in the mantle of legality: "I wouldn't have considered any of those actions illegal... The government was elected by a majority." As to his role, he reported, "Who is a little man like me to trouble his head about it? I get orders from my superiors. My job is to obey and comply."

Nazi Germany became a genocidal state. The goal of annihilation called for participation by every arm of the government. The policy of extermination involved every level of German society and marshaled the entire apparatus of the German bureaucracy. Parish churches and the Interior Ministry supplied the birth records that defined and isolated Jews. The post office delivered the notifications of definition, expropriation, denaturalization and deportation. The Finance Ministry confiscated Jewish wealth and property; the universities refused to admit Jewish students, denied degrees to those already enrolled, and dismissed Jewish faculty. German industrial and commercial firms fired Jewish workers, officers and board members, even disenfranchising Jewish stockholders. Government transportation bureaus handled the billing arrangements with the railroads for the trains that carried Jews to their death. German doctors enforced the so-called euthanasia program, participating in the murder of handicapped Germans. They signed false death certificates. They supervised the selection process, choosing who should live and who should die. In the concentration camps, they exploited the victims for vicious medical experimentation that served little scientific purpose and were administered without the consent of the patient; without even considering the patient as a person and thus, minimizing needless pain and suffering.

The location and operation of the camps were based on calculations of accessibility and cost-effectiveness: the hallmarks of modern business and administrative practice. The killing was done coolly and systematically under the supervision of bureaucrats. German corporations profited handsomely from the industry of death. Pharmaceutical firms tested drugs on camp inmates without any regard for toxic side effects. Companies bid for contracts to build ovens and supply the gas used for extermination. German engineers working for Topf and Sons supplied one camp alone with 46 ovens capable of burning 500 bodies an hour.

From the crude violence of the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in 1938, the murder process escalated to ever more sophisticated levels of bureaucratic management. Murder by mass shooting carried out by the mobile killing units, which was seen as having a dangerously unsettling effect on the perpetrators, gave way to death centers where a small staff could efficiently murder tens of thousands daily without coming directly in contact with the victims. The kind of ingenuity and control of inventory and cost that is prized in modern industrial practice was rationally brought to bear on the process of destruction.

In the eyes of the perpetrators, the Final Solution to the Jewish Problem was Germany's great achievement. In a speech to SS and police leaders in Posen, in western Poland, Himmler goaded them to greater self-sacrifice. He said:

"I also want to talk to you quite frankly on a very grave matter. Among ourselves it should be mentioned quite frankly and yet we will never speak of it publicly. I mean the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish race... Most of you know what it means when a hundred corpses are lying side by side or five hundred or a thousand. To have stuck it out and at the same time -- apart from exceptions caused by human weakness -- to have remained decent men, that is what has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history, which has never been written and is never to be written."

In 1942, Hitler boasted:

"In my Reichstag speech of September 1, 1939, I have spoken ... that if Jewry should plot another world war in order to exterminate the Aryan peoples of Europe, it would not be the Aryan peoples which would be exterminated, but Jewry."

At one time, the Jews of Germany laughed about my prophecies. I do not know whether they are still laughing or whether they have already lost all desire to laugh. But right now, I can only repeat: they will stop laughing everywhere, and I shall be right also in that prophecy."

In addition to mass murder, the Holocaust was the perverse perfection of slavery. Next to the extermination camp at Auschwitz/Birkenau, the SS ran a slave labor camp called Monowitz, or Auschwitz III, which housed profitable industrial operations, most notably I.G. Auschwitz, a division of the giant conglomerate, I.G. Farben. In combination with Birkenau, this vast petrochemical complex brought human slavery to its ultimate "perfection" by reducing human beings to consumable raw materials from which all mineral resources were systematically extracted. They were worked without adequate food or shelter, without rest or medical treatment until they died or until they were so worn out that they had no energy for life, and then they were selected or chosen to die in the gas chambers of Birkenau. Every part of the body was recycled to serve the Nazi war economy: gold teeth went to the treasury, hair was used to stuff mattresses, and ashes from the incinerated corpses became fertilizer.

Unlike the practitioners of slavery in both the ancient and modern world, the Nazis did not regard the slave as a capital investment, but as a commodity to be discarded and easily replaced. As one survivor put it: "They oiled the machines; they did not feed the workers."

The Final Solution was a managerial triumph. There was no budget for the program. With the cooperation of German industry and the ingenuity of the Nazi bureaucrats who harvested material from the dead, the entire killing operation was run in the black.

The Holocaust also represented a quasi-apocalyptic triumph for Nazi ideology. Its motivating sources of fear and hatred were transformed into the fervor of religion and took on the power of a religious crusade. In the Nazi world view, the annihilation of the Jews was essential to the survival and salvation of the German state.

As you will read in this curriculum, while the Holocaust was a unique event, unlike other events, it was so total, so complete that we can understand other genocides and even other manifestations of inhumanity by seeing the themes they share in common. Our purpose is not to pose one event alone as worthy of study, but to suggest that this one event, when understood on its own terms, can shed light on the other genocides and sensitize us anew to all manifestations of dehumanization. We will read about some of the worst that people have done to people, but we will also read about a few people who behaved differently. They may provide models for us as to how to respond to others, how to behave and how not to behave. We want you to learn many facts, but there is much more than facts in this resource manual. "Understand evil, but choose good." It may indeed be the hope of this generation.

The Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933. They came to power legally and then proceeded to use the power of that law to undermine democracy and to facilitate the dictatorship of one man, Adolf Hitler. Violence and terror, which had paved the way for his rise, intensified when Hitler became Chancellor. Increasingly, Hitler and the Nazis used terror as an instrument of their rule, at first at home and later with greater intensity abroad. They came to power with an ideology that was racist, believing in a hierarchy of race, the innate inequality of peoples, the superiority of their own race, which they called the "Aryan race," the inferiority of many races, and the "demonic" role of one people, whom they called the Jewish race.

In the pages that follow, you will learn the details of the Holocaust, event by event, detail by detail. You will also learn to understand what it shares in common with other genocides and where it is unique. A word of advice: the intellectual journey you are about to undertake is one filled with pain and anguish. It probes the depth of evil, but you will also discover all-too-rare moments of courage and compassion, moments that restore your faith in human decency. Almost all that you will learn will point in another direction, to a reality of evil and anguish.

Why commence this journey?

Permit me a story from the inferno. A survivor of the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen told new arrivals of the fate that awaited them. He told them the truth, directly, fully. He did not sugarcoat reality for them. When he finished he said the following:

"I have told you this story not to weaken you but to strengthen you. Now it is up to you!"

*Michael Berenbaum, Ph.D., is the president and CEO of Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Prior to his appointment there, he was the director of the United States Holocaust Research Institute of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. From 1988 to 1993, he served as project director of the museum. Dr. Berenbaum was the Hyman Goldman Adjunct Professor of Theology at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He is the author of nine books and scores of scholarly articles and journalistic pieces. His book about the contents of the United States Holocaust Museum, **The World Must Know**, is a profoundly moving history of the Holocaust.*

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Students should follow the newspaper for current events articles about the following topics:
 - a) Manifestations of racial, ethnic, and religious hatred in the United States and the world
 - b) Discrimination, persecution, and oppression in the United States and the world
 - c) Human rights violations in the world

After students have collected a number of articles over a few weeks, they can discuss the commonalities they are able to find in the stories. The class can then create a display of the various articles.

The following activity comes from Gary Grobman. *The Holocaust: A Guide for Pennsylvania Teachers*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1990. Reprinted by permission.

2. Obtain a report from Amnesty International on human rights violations around the world.

Amnesty International - USA
322 8th Avenue
New York, NY 10001
(212) 807-8400
www.amnesty-usa.org

As you examine the information from Amnesty International, consider how the following factors influence the incidents of human rights violations: age of government, type of government, geographical location of the country, and size of the country.

CORRELATIONS TO THE SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS FOR THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS

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The Declaration of Independence

July 4, 1776

“...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Questions:

1. What do you think the Founding Fathers meant when they wrote this statement?

2. How do you interpret this statement today?

3. How does this statement apply to the study of genocide and the Holocaust?

Genocide

*The atrocities committed by the Germans in attempting to exterminate the Jews of Europe led to the development of a new vocabulary to describe the horrors they perpetrated. One of the most important such words, "genocide," was coined by Professor Raphael Lemkin in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, published in 1944. Lemkin examined German occupation policies in relation to existing international law and explored possible means of adjudicating the crimes associated with those policies, particularly the attempt to exterminate Europe's Jews in the "**Final Solution**." The term quickly gained wide usage in the English Language.*

Raphael Lemkin was a prominent Polish Jewish lawyer who supported international penalties for crimes of genocide. He escaped from Poland in 1941, where most of his family had been killed, after serving with the Polish RESISTANCE, and eventually reached the United States where he taught at Duke and Yale Universities. After the war he was instrumental in the passage of a United Nations resolution on the prevention and punishment of genocide.

New Word 'Genocide' Used In War Crime Indictment

By The Associated Press.

LONDON, Oct. 21—An article in The Sunday Times said today that last week's United Nations indictment against German war criminals had brought a new word into the English language—genocide—and that it has been coined by a Duke University professor.

The word occurs in count 3 in which it is stated that all twenty-four defendants "conducted deliberate and systematic genocide, viz., the extermination of racial and national groups, against the civilian populations of certain occupied territories."

The article said that it had been coined by Prof. Raphael Lemkin of Duke, who is now in London, from the ancient Greek word "genos," meaning race or tribe, and the Latin "cidere," meaning to kill.

*Reproduced from the New York Times, October 22, 1945.
Reprinted by permission of the Associated Press.*

United Nations

Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore, The General Assembly proclaims

This Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
2. No one shall be guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purpose and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free full consent of the intending spouses.
3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association

Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1. In small groups, have students generate a list of essential human rights.
2. Have the groups share their ideas and create a class list of essential human rights.
3. As a class, read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and discuss its history and passage in 1948 by the United Nations.
4. Compare and contrast the class's list of essential human rights with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
5. As a follow-up activity, students should answer the following questions:
 - a. Is there anything in the Universal Declaration that surprises you?
 - b. If so, which part? If not, why not?
 - c. In your opinion, should any part be removed?
 - d. If so, which part and why?
 - e. In your opinion, what should be added and why?

**Source: Carol LaMont, Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory School, Hollywood, Florida.
Adapted for use in this curriculum.**

Human Rights: An Activity Using Quotations

1. Using books of quotations in the media center or local library, students should create a collection of quotations relating to the theme of human rights. Each student should be assigned to find a specific number of quotations.
2. Once students have gathered their quotations, discuss with the class the common themes that run through the quotations.
3. Capturing the essence of the themes generated during the class discussion, have students write and edit their own quotations. (A variation of this activity could be to have students edit each other's quotations.)
4. Generate a class list of quotations and create a display.
5. Follow-up activity: Have students write a personal action plan for making the world a better place. Encourage them to write concrete, realistic, but challenging actions on a personal and global level. Provide students with resources for volunteer opportunities and organizations which may be of interest to them.

**Source: Carol LaMont, Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory School, Hollywood, Florida.
Adapted for use in this curriculum.**

A Partial Listing of Acts of Genocide During the Twentieth Century*

* **1904—Botswana** The German government massacred 65,000 (out of a population of 80,000) people known as the Hereros in southern Africa.

* **1915–1922—Turkey** The Ottoman Empire killed at least 1,500,000 Armenians in an attempt to “destroy all of the Armenians living in Turkey.”

* **1918–1921—Ukraine** The Ukrainians slaughtered between 100,000 and 250,000 Jews in 2,000 different pogroms.

1932–1933—Soviet Union The Soviet Union purposely induced a famine in the Ukraine which resulted in 3 million to 8 million deaths.

1936–1939—Soviet Union At least 400,000–500,000 people were shot and killed in the Soviet Union for political reasons. In 1937–1938 there were days when up to 1,000 people were shot in Moscow alone.

* **1939–1945—Europe** 6,000,000 Jews in Europe were killed by the German Nazi government. This accounted for between 75 to 85 percent of all European Jews. The Nazis also murdered up to 6,000,000 other people which included Gypsies, handicapped individuals, homosexuals, political opponents, and huge numbers of Slavic peoples.

1940–1951—Soviet Union During this time Russia, under the dictatorship of Stalin, deported whole nations of people from their native lands which resulted in massive numbers of deaths. These included Germans, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingushes, Meskhetians, Karachai, Balkarians, and Greeks.

1965—Indonesia The government of Indonesia slaughtered up to 600,000 people it accused of being “Communists.” Many of these people were simply opponents of the government.

* **1965–1972—Burundi** The Tutsi killed between 100,000 and 300,000 Hutus in the African nation of Burundi.

1965–1990s—Guatemala More than 100,000 Indians in Guatemala have been killed by the military.

1966—Nigeria Genocidal massacre of Ibo people in northern Nigeria by government troops.

1971—Bangladesh The Pakistani government killed between 1,000,000 and 3,000,000 Bengalis in East Pakistan (now called Bangladesh).

* **1972–1990s—Paraguay** The Paraguayan government has enslaved, tortured, and killed thousands of Ache Indians in Paraguay.

* **1975–1979—Cambodia** Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians were killed in a series of purges by Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge government. Even more people died on forced marches from the cities to the countryside, during forced labor, and from starvation. Altogether, between 1,000,000 and 3,000,000 people were killed.

1975–1990s—East Timor An estimated 100,000 citizens (out of a population of 600,000) of East Timor have been slain by Indonesian troops.

1991–1995—Bosnia “Ethnic cleansing” practiced in Bosnia and other newly formed republics of former Yugoslavia.

1994—Rwanda Between 100,000 and 500,000, primarily Tutsi, were massacred in a civil war between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes.

* From the National Council for the Social Studies. Used by permission. An asterisk appears by those dates and incidents that the United Nations Report on Genocide (2 July 1985) notes as examples of genocide in the twentieth century. The other mass killings were not identified as genocide in the UN Report either because they had not yet occurred or because the UN Genocide Convention and Treaty does not include mass killings of political, class, or gender groups within its definition. Nevertheless, many scholars have argued that the exclusion of political, class, and gender groups is arbitrary at best and unconscionable at worst.

The Armenian Genocide

During 1915 and 1916, one and a half million of the two million Armenians living under the “Young Turk” government of the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey) were killed. This event has become known as the Armenian Genocide. It was planned by the Central Committee of the Young Turk Party, and the systematic fashion in which the genocide occurred proves that it was directed by the Turkish government.

First, under the pretext that an armed rebellion was about to occur, Armenians in the army of the Ottoman Empire were disarmed, placed into labor battalions, and killed. Then, on April 24, 1915, 600 Armenian leaders and intelligentsia (e.g. writers, thinkers, and professionals) were rounded up and killed in Constantinople (the nation’s capital, now Istanbul). On that same day, 5,000 of the poorest Armenians were killed in their homes or on the streets of the capital. This activity was conducted by special “butcher battalions” made up of violent criminals released from prison.

Finally, the remaining Armenians were rounded up and told they would be relocated. They were marched off to concentration camps in the desert where they starved and thirsted to death in the burning sun. Many Armenians were brutalized by guards. Some Armenians were loaded on barges which were intentionally sunk at sea causing the victims to drown.

The Turkish government still denies that there was an Armenian Genocide, despite ample evidence that it occurred throughout many areas of what is now Turkey.

At the time, the Armenian Genocide was condemned by the then-major powers on both sides of World War I: its allies of Germany and Austria as well as Britain, France, and Russia on the other side of the conflict. The United States also condemned the Armenian Genocide and spoke out on behalf of the Armenians.

The Permanent People’s Tribunal recognized the Armenian Genocide in 1984, and in 1987, it was also recognized by the European Parliament.

Most Armenian-Americans are children or grandchildren of the survivors of the genocide. In 1990, United States President George Bush called on all Americans to join with Armenians in commemorating the Armenian Genocide on April 24.

Questions:

Do you see any similar patterns in both the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust? If so, what are they?

What, if anything, could have been done to prevent this tragedy?

What can we learn from the Armenian Genocide?

Source: <http://www-scf.usc.edu/~khachato/genocide/info.html>

For suggested readings about the Armenian Genocide, see <http://www.cilicia.com/armo10d.html>

SOPHAL LENG STAGG
Cambodian Survivor

In 1975, at the age of nine, Sophal Leng Stagg endured unspeakable physical and emotional trauma at the hands of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime. As the youngest of the Leng family, she still, to this day, cannot fully explain her need to be heard except as a testimony to those whose lives were lost and who can no longer speak for themselves to prevent any atrocities against mankind from recurring.

As painful as it may be to tell my story to others, I believe it needs to be passed, whole and without softening, from generation to generation. I cannot be satisfied with survival alone -- I must do more. Was the reason I survived the "killing fields" to tell my story? Could telling my story help prevent genocide from repeating itself? I have thought of this many, many times during the last seventeen years. And still I cannot answer these questions.

At the age of nine, I began a journey which not only changed my life and the lives of my family members but traumatized a civilization forever. The atrocities committed by the brutal Khmer Rouge Regime from 1975-1979 against the Cambodian people cannot be altered or forgotten. We can only look to the future and never permit genocide to be part of our world -- never again! In April of 1975 Pol Pot and his fanatical Khmer Rouge regime succeeded in decimating not only the people of my former country but a culture as well.

I remember the beauty of my home and the happiness my family enjoyed during the early years of my life. We were a middle class family living in the capital city of Phnom Penh. Imagine, one afternoon you are sitting in your house. The door is suddenly pushed open. Angry men dressed in black barge in and order you at gunpoint to pack a few belongings and follow them into the street -- and that is the abrupt end of life as you know it. Everything you owned was left behind. Your precious personal possessions would become only memories. You were stripped of everything. Your money had no value. My family and I were not alone. The Khmer Rouge forced the entire population of Phnom Penh, almost two million people, into the countryside.

At this point, my fear had begun. The date was April 17, 1975. All of a sudden, freedom of any kind was not part of my life. Comfort and kindness were not part of my life. Mercy did not exist. Pain was a constant companion. Starvation was commonplace. Death was everywhere.

Cambodia would become a cemetery. The young -- the old -- the sick -- the educated -- the innocent had suffered in ways which words cannot completely describe. We had become a part of the exodus.

Why were they doing this? Where were we going? We didn't know!

To this day, I can still hear the screams of the children who were separated from their parents. The suffocating heat choked us as we tried to obey the Khmer Rouge. They kept screaming at us, "Faster, faster, no time to rest. Go faster." Their anger grew as they began to shoot at us. Death was everywhere. I couldn't breathe as my heart pounded inside of me. I was so weak. I shook with terror.

We walked for five weeks deep into the countryside. We were then assigned to a work and re-education camp far from our home. As we were led into this camp, we faced the hatred of the Khmer Rouge. We were considered their enemies.

I recall the Khmer Rouge speeches during re-education. They said to me, "You have no parents. They are evil. Turn against them. Kill them. They hate you. You are a worthless being. You must work and sacrifice everything for Angka.(Angka is the Cambodian word for leading group or organization.) You will be hated until you prove yourself. You only have Angka. Angka will provide for you."

Soon I began to shut out all words and all sounds. I was mute to their teachings. Regardless of how many times they said these things to me, they could not and would not make me turn against my loved ones. Our work assignments began as early as 3:00 or 4:00 each morning and lasted well into the darkness. We were forced to work every day without food or rest. We were being starved.

During the first few months in this camp, I could still see my mom from a distance which gave me a sense of security. I was soon to find out how cruel Angka was. I would soon be alone. Before I was 11 years old, Angka took me away from my mother by force and sent me far away to another work camp.

Once again, I became silent. I would only speak to the moon during this time. I would ask it for help and answers as to why this madness existed. I knew the moon would not be cruel to me. It became my trusted friend. My spirit was broken as was my heart. My body was sick as starvation ripped its way through me. I did not want to die without my mom. I would not die without her. I waited another day.

During the worst time of starvation in 1978, I was yellow with hepatitis and lost my vision. I choked on worms as parasites infected my insides. My hair was gone leaving only infections in my scalp. I was unable to keep the leaches from attaching themselves to my body and sucking out the little life I had left. I begged for food. Angka just laughed at me.

I recall looking into the eyes of a killer. I begged him to have mercy on my older brother who attempted to escape the killing fields. I can still see the killer's face contorted with rage and the sharpness in his eyes as he beat me looking for answers as to my brother's whereabouts. The killer wanted only to kill. This killer was no more than fifteen years old.

A curious thing happened at that time. I began to feel intense anger as I had never before felt. I found strength from this anger. As powerful as Angka was, I was determined to live and tell my story. I would not die this way. One day I would tell my story. I would be heard and would speak for the millions of innocent Cambodians that can no longer speak.

In 1979 and after four years of Angka's unspeakable abuse, the North Vietnamese army invaded Cambodia attempting to drive out the Khmer Rouge. Our chance for escape had come. At this time, with mass confusion, my family had indeed experienced a miracle. One by one, we found each other and made the decision to run for our lives. To this day, my family is the only family I know of that survived Pol Pot's madness.

After months of living in the jungle and surviving on only what we could find growing wild, my family and I found freedom at the Thailand border. After we endured the unspeakable for so long, we experienced profound kindness at a refugee camp on the Thailand border called Khoa I Dang. At this camp, agencies from all over the world gave us the ultimate gift -- this gift was life. The kindness and help given to us can never be repaid. After ten months we were offered the chance to start a new life in a far away country -- America. My dream had come true.

Today I am an American, a wife and the mother of four beautiful sons. My dreams have come true for me and my family. I have only one more dream....to see a peaceful and non-violent world without senseless suffering: a world that offers kindness, hope and understanding for everyone regardless of color, race or where they come from...to give all people a chance at life.

I know the millions of people that perished in Cambodia would have understood why I struggle to tell my story.

For them, I say, "Never again." We must give the young people of our world the opportunity to learn from our mistakes and never permit a repeat of what happened in my former country. We must kill the concept of genocide. I believe this is our responsibility.

When I was in captivity, I often thought of these words. Today it is my poem.

My world, sometimes harsh and cruel
Will my life end this day?

Sometimes kind and gentle
Sometimes changing by the day

Which way will it end?
Dream on -- dream on -- wait another day

My dreams are there but not known where
Find them and live another day

My cries not heard, not heard this day
No, I will not die this way

Stop the pain for now, and then
Let me live in peace one more day

My world is hurt as am I
The joy long gone -- must I say goodbye?

Not today, it's not my time
Dream on, dream on, wait another day.

Source: Taken from the presentation of Cambodian survivor, Sophal Leng Stagg, Student Awareness Day, Miami-Dade Community College, March 26, 1998.

The New Tribalism

As the twentieth century draws to a close, so does the era of superpowers, iron curtains, and arms races. Governments no longer insist that national defense requires a nuclear arsenal that can destroy the world six times over. Instead of entering an era of peace, however, we seem to be facing a new kind of war, a war of people rather than governments—an ethnic war.

In 1993, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees cited twenty-five ethnic conflicts that involved "the regular use of violence, including mass killings and ethnic warfare. Including older groups of displaced people, the commissioner lists 261 minority groups that have left their homelands because of political, religious, or ethnic violence in 38 countries around the world."¹

The Culture of "Us Versus Them"

When does this violence cross the line into genocide as it is defined by the United Nations? Even the experts cannot agree, especially where contemporary events are concerned. In the 1990s, a glance at any newspaper on any given day reveals ethnic clashes in places like Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda. World leaders argue back and forth, trying to understand what is happening and to decide what to do about it. Amid the doubts and discussions, there is one certainty: Too many people all over the world are suffering and dying because they belong to the "wrong" racial, ethnic, or religious group.

By its very nature, ethnic warfare tends to be particularly savage; it is a war of civilians, not soldiers, fought over issues that are more emotional than political. Every human being is a potential warrior for his or her own group and therefore is a legitimate target for the enemy.

The breakdown of old political systems has left many people adrift, unsatisfied by a mechanized mass culture that belongs to nobody because it tries so hard to belong to everybody. In seeking something better and more meaningful, people are looking to their roots, to the ethnic identities and religious traditions that give them a sense of belonging and pride. By itself, this is not a bad thing; it is healthy for people to be part of something larger than themselves, an *us* that defines the boundaries of each individual life. The problem occurs when that *us* squares off against a world full of *thems*.

In an article on what some observers call "the new tribalism," journalist Robin Wright asserts her beliefs:

Indeed, xenophobia [hatred or distrust of foreigners or strangers], religious rivalry and general intolerance of anything different are often more anguishing and cruel—not to mention costly in human lives and material destruction—than the ideological differences that until recently divided the world.²

Ethnic Warfare in Bosnia

The former Yugoslavia was a patchwork nation, created after World War I from the remains of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. Many different ethnic groups formed an uneasy alliance held together by the Communist regime of Marshal Tito (Josip Broz). When the Communist system failed, the nation fell apart as one province after another declared independence.

Bosnia's secession immediately plunged the new nation into a civil war that locked three major ethnic groups—Serbs, Croats, and Muslims—into a struggle for dominance. Bosnian Muslims are descended from Slavs who converted to Islam during the long Turkish occupation; Serbs are Eastern Orthodox Christians; Croats are Roman Catholics. Though all are Slavs, speaking different but related languages, each has been accused of committing “ethnic cleansing” against the other two.

In April 1992, Serb forces surrounded the city of Sarajevo and began shelling the civilian population. Schools and public services shut down, and a shaken population learned to conduct the business of living under constant threat of death. After five hundred days of shelling, Bosnia's health ministry reported 9,284 people killed or missing in Sarajevo and 54,398 wounded.

In the midst of this insanity, eleven-year-old Zlata Filipovic recorded in her diary, which she called Mimmy, her feelings about the hatreds dividing her world.

Thursday, November 19, 1992

Dear Mimmy,

Nothing new on the political front . . . we are dying, freezing, starving, crying, parting with our friends, leaving our loved ones. . . . Among my girlfriends, among our friends, in our family, there are Serbs and Croats and Muslims. It's a mixed group and I never knew who was a Serb, a Croat or a Muslim. . . . Now politics has started meddling around. It has put an “S” on Serbs, an “M” on Muslims and a “C” on Croats, it wants to separate them. . . . I simply don't understand it. Of course I'm “young,” and politics are conducted by “grown-ups.” But I think we “young” would do it better. We certainly wouldn't have chosen war.³

Zlata's family escaped Sarajevo just before Christmas, in 1993, but millions of others—Serbs, Croats, and Muslims—remain behind, trapped in an endless round of “ethnic cleansing” that no one seems able to stop. “What we are hoping for,” said the Reverend Dobrivoje Milunovic, a Serbian priest who now lives in the United States, “is that peace will come and that it is peace that all sides can believe in. When children are dying, it doesn't matter whose they are.”⁴

Clan Warfare In Somalia

On January 27, 1991, a group called the United Somali Congress toppled the government of Mohamed Siad Barre. For twenty-one years Siad had ruled the country with an iron hand, calling himself *Guulwaadde* (Victorious Leader) and building a government based upon his own blend of Marxist ideology and Muslim faith. When he was gone, that government collapsed, and Somalia fell into anarchy.

Somali society once was dominated by six clan-families, each composed of several individual clans, which were themselves composed of numerous lineages. In the post-Barre era, these clans reasserted their ancient claims and revived their ancient hatreds. Under the leadership of self-proclaimed warlords, clan fought clan, each trying to destroy the others. The genocidal conflict left thousands dead and one fourth of the population starving. The entire infrastructure of the country broke down. “There was no government, no administration, no electricity, no running water,” wrote Dr. Rony Brauman, president of the humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders.

There were no schools, no telephones. Looters had emptied former government buildings, stripped parts from trucks and tractors, dug up electric cables for the copper in them, stolen the very pumps that brought water from the ground. The only thing Somalia had in abundance was death.⁵

The nightly news brought horrifying images of starving children, refugees, and burned buildings, and warlords locked in power struggles that threatened to wipe out an entire population. For the first time in history, United States and United Nations troops went into a country to prevent the collapse of an entire culture. They saved some lives by making sure that food and medical supplies got through to the people who needed them, but they were not able to eliminate the tribalism at the root of Somalia’s national agony.

The United States experience in Somalia taught a grim lesson about military intervention: It can’t solve the underlying problem. Guns can protect supplies for starving refugees, keep an uneasy peace in the streets, guard leaders while they negotiate

with one another, but guns cannot change minds. That requires people of goodwill who can look beyond their “us versus them” mentality to the fundamental humanity that everyone shares.

Slaughter In Rwanda

On April 6, 1994, Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana died in a plane crash while trying to land in the Rwandan capital of Kigali. The cause of that crash was shrouded in mystery, but the effect was all too clear. In the following weeks, the tiny, jewel-like country of Rwanda was the scene of a slaughter so terrible that even battle-hardened soldiers and seasoned war correspondents were horrified.

Within two weeks, more than one hundred thousand people had been shot or hacked to death. By May 1, the estimated death toll was two hundred thousand. Newspapers around the world showed pictures of starving, terrified refugees, and children with machete wounds in the backs of their necks. Whole towns became wastelands, with unburied corpses lying in the streets.

The two major tribes of Rwanda—Hutu and Tutsi—share the same race, religion, culture, and language. They have been a single people within a national state longer than the United States has been a nation, yet from time to time peaceful relations have been broken by outbreaks of ethnic hatred.

In 1973, the coup that brought President Habyarimana to power resulted in a brutal attack upon Tutsis by the majority Hutus. Mathilde Mukantabana, who teaches American History at Consumnes River College, near Sacramento, California, was a seventeen-year-old schoolgirl in 1973. She remembers in vivid detail the night soldiers came to her dormitory at a Catholic

boarding school. They roused everyone out of bed and announced that all Tutsi students had to be out of the country before daybreak. In a desperate midnight march, Mukantabana and her schoolmates made it through the hills of western Rwanda and across the border into Zaire. Most of them never saw their families again.

After twenty years, Mukantabana still cannot understand how or why it happened. "We had all lived together ever since there were people in Rwanda," she told *Sacramento Bee* columnist Fahizah Alim. "We speak the same Bantu language, and practice the same religions and culture. Hutus and Tutsis had established a closeness and there was a lot of inter-marriage. Often you can't even tell by looking at a person what tribe he belongs to."⁶

The plane crash that killed President Habyarimana triggered old hatreds, igniting "a murderous spree by extremists from the majority Hutus against rival Tutsis and those Hutus who had opposed the government," according to Associated Press correspondent Mark Fritz.⁷

Rampaging Hutus left a trail of slaughter that included the grammar school in Gikongoro, where 88 Tutsi students were hacked to death; the town of Kibongo, where 2,800 people were massacred with grenades, knives, and submachine guns; the yellow brick church in Karubamba where Hutu soldiers violated the traditional safe haven of a religious sanctuary to execute everyone inside. Rwanda, Somalia, and Bosnia are only a few of the ethnic hot spots where massive human rights violations are ripping apart the fabric of society. They demonstrate that ethnic hatreds can gnaw at people until something triggers an explosion: a plane crash that kills a president, a coup that topples a government, a political philosophy that fails.

According to Kurt Jonassohn's "early warning system" for identifying beginning genocides, these conflicts, which involve ethnic hatreds and massive human rights violations, merit close attention from the world community of nations, human rights organizations, and people of goodwill everywhere.

1. Jim Anderson, "Ranks of Ethnic Refugees Swelling," *Sacramento Bee* (December 21, 1993).
2. Robin Wright, "The New Tribalism All Over the World," *Sacramento Bee* (June 13, 1993).
3. Zlata Filipovic, *Zlata's Diary.. A Child's Life in Sarajevo* (New York Viking Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 102-103.
4. Diana Greigo Erwin, "For Serbs, Strife in Bosnia is Centuries Old," *Sacramento Bee* (April 12, 1994).
5. "A Continent's Slow Suicide," *Reader's Digest* (May 1993), pp. 110-111.
6. Mathilde Mukantabana, "Hope Falls Victim to Ancient Hatreds," *Sacramento Bee* (April 18, 1993).
7. Mark Fritz, "Rwanda Fighting Leaves a Town Dead," *Sacramento Bee* (May 14, 1994).

Source: Aftman, Linda Jacobs. *Genocide: The Systematic Killing of a People*, Springfield, NJ: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1995. Reprinted by permission of Enslow Publishers.

ACTIVITY USING ARTICLES ON ETHNIC CONFLICTS AND GENOCIDE

1 Collect newspaper articles about genocide/ethnic conflicts in various parts of the world. Once a collection of articles has been gathered, divide the class into groups and distribute a copy of this instruction sheet to each group member.

2 Distribute one photocopied newspaper clipping to each group member.

[Options for any "extra" clippings in the group packet]

- Individuals may volunteer to read and report on extra articles.
- Individuals may exchange an unused article for one of the extras.
- Extras may go unused.

3 Each group member will silently read his or her assigned article. Feel free to underline or write on the page(s) that you have received.

4 Each photocopied clipping deals with some aspect of a twentieth century ethnic conflict. After all group members have indicated readiness, individuals will report to the rest of the group about the articles which they have read, supplying answers to the following questions:

- What (if anything) did you know about this particular conflict before you read the article?
- When and where did the events reported in this article occur?
- What groups and issues were involved?
- What causes or outcomes of the conflict are identified in this particular clipping?
- What unanswered questions do you now have about this conflict?

5 Using scissors, gluesticks, and magic markers, the group will create a collage with these clippings.

Options:

- The group may discuss ideas for more than one possible arrangement.
- Headlines may be composed and added to individual clippings.
- The shapes of the articles may be changed.
- A unifying graphic design may be added.
- The shape of the background poster may be changed.

6 Collages will be posted later for other groups to view.

ADAPTING ARTICLES ACTIVITY FOR CLASSROOM USE

PREPARATION

- 1 List KEY TERMS and CONCEPTS with which students should be familiar **BEFORE** attempting this activity. For example: _____

- 2 Consider the following substitutions or modifications.

To accommodate students with limited reading ability, the instructor may either choose shorter articles or define group roles to include readers and listeners. Longer articles may be subdivided into more manageable sections.

The reading selections may be deliberately focused in reference to emphasize a course-related theme such as American involvement, refugee experiences, etc.

FACILITATION

- 3 List KEY TERMS and CONCEPTS which students will encounter **AS** they complete this activity. For example: _____

- 4 Consider the following variations or added steps.

Students themselves may conduct a media watch to compile articles for this activity.

Students may be asked to complete further research on the content of their assigned readings, supplying such extra information as maps or a glossary of significant dates, persons, places, and issues.

EVALUATION AND EXTENSION:

5. Consider the following applications:

Return to selected conflicts for updates as further news becomes available.

Identify recurring themes and patterns to use as focus topics for future explorations and discussions.

Use these suggestions to critique and re-shape this activity for specific audiences and purposes.

QUESTIONS ON GENOCIDE

Questions for Class Discussion

In our experience, discussions of genocide motivate students to view history from a serious perspective and to see the importance of thinking analytically. They emerge from a consideration of the subject with a healthy respect for the importance of terminological precision and a new respect for the research skills of serious scholars.

Among the salient issues that teachers might want to consider with their students are the following:

1. How have the motives of the perpetrators of genocide changed over the centuries? In particular, what has been the influence of empire-building and of beliefs, theories, and ideologies on governments that resorted to genocide?
2. Is there a relationship between genocide and war? Why have so many of the great genocides occurred during wartime? Have there been occasions when perpetrators used genocide in order to create terror among their potential enemies? Why is it that some perpetrators have organized genocides despite the fact that they undermined their war efforts (e.g., Turkey and Germany)?
3. Another set of questions about war and genocide concerns the characterization of the civilian casualties of warfare. When unarmed civilians are annihilated after their surrender, are they to be regarded as casualties of war or as victims of genocide? What about civilians killed in aerial bombardments or artillery shells? Should they be considered victims of war or of genocide?
4. What changes can we observe over time in the identities of the groups that have become victims of genocide? Are there important differences between genocides directed against foreigners and those aimed at the perpetrator's fellow citizens? Does it make any difference for our efforts to understand the processes leading to genocide if some of the victim groups were not collectivities at all, but "pseudo-groups" invented by the perpetrators? Does the campaign by Stalin to annihilate "kulaks," "wreckers," and "enemies of the people" have any importance for our efforts to prevent future genocides?
5. What have been the contributions of racism, nationalism, and political ideologies to the genocides of the twentieth century? If these ideologies have been important factors in genocide, how do we explain the fact that genocides have not occurred in all communist and fascist states?
6. How does genocide differ from other violations of human rights such as slavery, ethnocide, and apartheid? Are states that commit such gross violations of human rights more prone to resort to genocide than states with a better record of respecting human rights?
7. We all agree that we want to protect societies from genocidal political movements. In this effort, what are the roles of the rule of law, an independent judiciary, free elections, and a free press?
8. Have refugee flows been a reliable indicator that massive human rights violations, possibly including genocides, are imminent or under way? Why are the governments and the media so suspicious of the testimony given by the refugees?
9. What are the factors that determine the behavior of bystanders in a state that is committing genocide? What have governments that have perpetrated genocides done to convince their citizens to accept a coming genocide? Are propaganda campaigns aimed at indoctrinating the

bystanders an essential part of all genocides or just of certain types of genocide? Is dehumanization and demonization of the victims a necessary prelude of all genocides?

10. What are the motives of the perpetrators of genocide in contemporary Asia or Africa? Consider such cases as the mass killings of 1965 in Indonesia, the slaughter of the Hutus of Burundi in 1972, and the annihilation of the urban population of Cambodia from 1975 to 1979.

UNIT 2

**TWENTIETH CENTURY ANTECEDENTS TO
THE HOLOCAUST**

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UNIT 2

TWENTIETH CENTURY ANTECEDENTS TO THE HOLOCAUST

“While not all victims were Jews, all Jews were victims.”

Elie Wiesel
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1986)
and Holocaust Survivor

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Holocaust did not begin with World War II or even with Adolf Hitler. The historical roots of the Holocaust are deeply embedded in the history of world civilization. To a great extent, the Holocaust was the result of two major forces. First and foremost was the culmination of centuries of old prejudices, resurrected and magnified by the massive shifts in political, social, and economic factors throughout Europe. The second factor grew from industrialization and the advent of modern technology. Without the technology to implement mass murder, the possibility to obliterate whole populations, within short periods of time, would have been difficult to accomplish. It is for this reason that this unit concentrates on the twentieth century and specifically on those events in the twentieth century which culminated in the Holocaust.

In reviewing the information in this unit, the reader is cautioned to remember that each condition discussed cannot be isolated from the long history which preceded it. The Holocaust was not the spontaneous result of a new political ideology. It was the result of centuries of apathy, frustration, ignorance, and aggression which have too often targeted an innocent minority as the cause of problems. To blame others, however illogical and unreasonable, has always served to shift the guilt from the perpetrators and deny their role in unfavorable events. This human tendency has often had tragic consequences in the past and has reached new extremes of horror in the twentieth century. As the world looked on, indifferent or even supportive, millions were murdered in the unprecedented development and calculated implementation of one political party's twisted ideology.

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the VOCABULARY.
2. Recognize that religious divisions can be a cause of animosity and hatred.
3. Cite examples of government actions directed at Jews as a target group.
4. Identify some of the twentieth century precursors to the Holocaust.

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Antisemitism: Modified from the term "Anti-Semitism" which was coined in 1879 to designate the then-current anti-Jewish ideology in Europe. Antisemitism is the preferred spelling today denoting all forms of hostility, opposition, or hatred toward the Jews throughout history.

Aryan: Originally a term for peoples speaking the languages of Europe and India; in Nazi ideology, a Nordic-type, Caucasian Christian.

Communism: System by which the means of production and distribution are owned and managed by the government, and the goods produced are shared by all citizens.

Euphemism: An inoffensive term substituted for one considered offensively explicit.

Fascism: A political philosophy, movement, or regime that exalts nation, corporate state structures, and race above the individual, and that stands for a centralized, autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation and forcible suppression of any political opposition.

Fifth Column: A clandestine subversive organization working within a given country to further an invading enemy's military and political aims.

Holocaust: The systematic, bureaucratic annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and their collaborators as a central act of state. Although Jews were the primary victims, hundreds of thousands of Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) and many thousands of mentally or physically disabled persons were also victims of Nazi genocide. As Nazi tyranny spread across Europe from 1933 to 1945, millions of other innocent people were persecuted and murdered. More than three million Soviet prisoners of war were killed because of their nationality. Poles as well as other Slavs were targeted for slave labor, and as a result, tens of thousands perished. Homosexuals and others deemed "anti-social" were also persecuted and often murdered. In addition, thousands of political and religious dissidents such as communists, socialists, trade unionists, and Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs and behavior, and many of these individuals died as a result of maltreatment.

Imperialism: The policy of extending a nation's territory or power by establishing dominance over other nations; also the repressive use of force to acquire colonies in other continents, as British Imperialism in 19th century India.

Intelligentsia: The intellectual class within a society.

Mein Kampf (My Battle or My Struggle): A book written by Adolf Hitler in 1924-26 setting forth the doctrine and precepts of the Nazi party.

Nationalism: Devotion to one's nation; excessive patriotism; doctrine that national interests are more important than international or individual considerations.

Pan-German movement : Sought to unite all Germans linguistically, culturally, and politically with the feeling that all things German were superior.

Pogroms: Attacks on Jews by mobs of non-Jews. Instigated by authorities who then stood by, these attacks led to injury, murder, rape, looting, and destruction of Jewish property.

Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A fraudulent pamphlet (exposed as a forgery) written to prove the existence of an international Jewish conspiracy, originally published in 1864.

Racism: Program or practice of discrimination, persecution, and domination on the basis of race.

Reparations: Payments made to make amends; a compensation.

Rhineland bastards: The derogatory term used by the Nazis to describe the children born to French North African soldiers and German mothers during World War I. This curriculum will use the term "African-German" to describe these children, although some scholars argue that only the term "Rhineland bastards" should be used. Such scholars fear that the term "African-German" is too neutral a term to describe the offspring who were never accepted as Germans, despite being born to German mothers on German soil.

Romanticism: A movement that stressed strong emotion, imagination, freedom from accepted standards, and rebellion against social conventions.

Socialism: A system or theory of social organization in which the producers possess both political power as well as the means of production and distribution.

Third Reich (Third Empire): The Nazis called their government the Third Empire (1933-1945). The first Empire was the Holy Roman Empire (ninth century to 1806), the second was the German Empire (1871-1919), and the Third *Reich* followed the democratic Weimar Republic (1919-1933).

Untermensch: A German word for subhuman; a term used by the Nazis to describe "non-Aryans" such as Jews, Slavs, or non-Caucasians.

Versailles Treaty: The peace treaty signed at the end of World War I which stripped Germany of her colonies, treasury, and pride. This treaty forced Germany to pay significant reparations as a punishment for starting the war.

NAMES AND PLACES

Darwin, Charles Robert (1809-1882): A British naturalist; expounded the theory of evolution by natural selection in *On the Origin of the Species*, published in 1859.

Hitler, Adolf : *Führer* (leader) of the Third *Reich* from 1933 until his suicide in 1945; he built a German regime unparalleled as an instrument of tyranny, oppression, and ruin. His conquests in Europe extended from the Pyrenees Mountains on the border of France and Spain to the Ural Mountains on the border between Europe and Asia. Hitler's tyranny and the German campaign to annihilate the Jewish people brought Western civilization to the brink of destruction.

Rothschild: One of the oldest, Jewish, banking families in Europe.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

TWENTIETH CENTURY ANTECEDENTS TO THE HOLOCAUST

The elements which led to the Holocaust are not unique. What is unique is the fact that it was the result of an official government policy which legalized genocide. This murderous policy targeted numerous groups but ultimately singled out one for complete destruction – the Jews. Once declared a Jew by ancestry, there was seldom any escape even if the individual did not practice this faith. In addition to the direct attack on the Jews, virtually all Gypsies, homosexuals, the mentally handicapped, the Polish intelligentsia, members of other religious or racial groups, as well as other minorities were slated for destruction or enslavement. The people in these groups were to be isolated, tortured, or killed only because they did not fit the Nazi “Aryan ideal.” On the eve of World War II and the invasion of Poland, a distinguished American journalist Louis Paul Lochner, chief of the Associated Press Bureau in Berlin (1928-1941), claimed to have heard that Adolf Hitler, the leader of Germany, announced at a meeting of his generals on August 22, 1939 that he had ordered his Death Units to “exterminate without pity” every Polish man, woman and child. Hitler reportedly said at this same meeting, “Who today remembers the extermination of the Armenians?”¹ This document was later delivered by Lochner to the British Embassy in Berlin and forwarded to London and was introduced into evidence at the Nuremberg Trials.

Germany: The First Official Policy of Mass Murder

Societies, from ancient through modern, have frequently abused or even killed the mentally or physically infirm. As early as 725 B.C.E. in Sparta, for example, “Babies were examined at birth to see if they were healthy. If not, they were left in the hills to die.”² However, modern western civilization with its advanced, liberal thinkers supposedly recognizes the worth of each and every individual. It is neither acceptable nor permissible to destroy another human being because he or she is perceived to have different mental or physical characteristics, even if these characteristics are considered inferior. A drastic change in this position came early in 1920 when a German professor of law and a German professor of medicine argued for putting to death those who were considered “feebleminded” and “unworthy of life” in their work, *The Permission to Destroy Life Unworthy of Life*.

These German professors, Dr. Karl Binding and Dr. Alfred Hoche, believed that the following categories of people, although mentally sound, should also be destroyed: those with physical deformities, those considered terminally ill, and those with serious injuries or in an extended unconscious state due to illness or accident. Their death was supposedly to be painless and administered by a member of the medical profession. The professors asserted that only those who could save a life under other conditions could be granted the right to take it. Thus, the doctors and the medical profession as a whole became the experts of death.

The professors basically used the argument that the terminally ill deserved the right to a relatively painless death in order to justify the murder of those considered by society to be inferior. The discussion of this topic was consciously obscured by its supporters who pointed to the suicide rights of terminally ill cancer patients who faced a certain and painful death; however, the intent was actually to destroy the “unworthy” life of individuals who were healthy but considered to be degenerate. The rationale behind this argument was that those individuals who suffered from incurable feeblemindedness or whose lives were so “unworthy” of living were without any purpose and that these individuals imposed a terribly difficult burden on both relatives and society. In his book *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, Robert Jay Lifton explains in detail the origins and evolution of this killing process eventually used by the Nazis. In his words, “Binding and Hoche turned out to be the prophets of direct medical killing” that was adopted and utilized by the Nazis only a decade later.³

One of the most frightening aspects of the professors' presentation, even today, more than 70 years after it was given, is the cool, logical appeal to reason and objectivity with which the arguments were developed. Rather than show the evil intent and perverted nature of such a design, the argument used new words to define murder in ways that would be acceptable. Phrased as "empty shells," or "the irretrievably lost," or "a blessing for the suffering," the two professors anticipated the use of euphemisms which would later become imbedded in Nazi propaganda, official orders, and political policies. Their publication could not be implemented into governmental policy in the democratic political context of Weimar Germany, but these ideas legitimized the racial ideology of the Nazi movement, and thus provided the "scientific" basis for radical policies of exclusion and later of mass murder.

Accepted by few when this work was published, these ideas eventually gained widespread acceptance within the German eugenics movement which had been developing in tandem with these ideas. In the fall of 1939, the killing of those with mental or physical handicaps was authorized by Hitler. Included in the groups destined for death were those with severe handicaps in mental capacity, those with mental disorders, and those with a variety of illnesses and physical disorders including tuberculosis, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and even blindness. Most of these individuals would have lived for many productive years and were not suffering from terminal illnesses. With the early success of the program, definitions of the groups quickly broadened to include those who were less afflicted, physically different but not impaired (e.g., dwarfs), those suspected of "impure" racial taints and those devalued due to their social identity (e.g., Gypsies and sometimes even the healthy children of partly Jewish parentage). In time, these categories were again broadened to serve as a useful excuse to destroy anyone not acceptable to the Nazi state.

Due to weak but mounting protests, this killing program "officially" ended in 1941. In fact, however, the murders continued until the end of the war in 1945 and, in at least one institution, for a few days beyond Germany's surrender. By the middle of the war, however, the program was no longer publicized, and some historians believe that in 1941 the focus shifted from the killing of adults to the killing of children and the killing of concentration camp prisoners unable to perform hard labor, known as "14f13."

Although the program to kill those considered unfit was extraordinarily complex and required extensive planning, organizational assistance, personnel and financial resources, the program progressed smoothly and successfully. Killed by carbon monoxide gas, injected with poison or air, given fatal overdoses of drugs, or starved to death, the exact number of people has never been documented but has been estimated at 250,000. In many cases, critical medical care was withheld and institutionalized patients died from exposure and starvation. The family was typically belatedly informed that their relative had ostensibly died of pneumonia or another possibly fatal illness. These mass murders have often been referred to as an "euthanasia" program, but this term is not correct since these killings were done without mercy nor the consent of the victim or the knowledge of their families.

[Ferment in Germany Between the Two World Wars](#)

Prior to initiating the policy to destroy those mentally or physically "imperfect," other forces were taking shape in Germany. After World War I, Germany was in shambles. The war had resulted in terrible losses. Hundreds of thousands had been killed or maimed for life. Although Germany stood accused of starting the war, they were not prepared to accept the consequences. Defeated, the government was forced to sign a peace agreement (the Versailles Treaty) which stated that Germany must accept full responsibility for the war. The treaty also restricted Germany's army to 100,000 volunteers, reduced the Navy to a token force and forbade heavy arms. Germany was further ordered to give up some of its territory and to pay enormous sums to the countries whose lands it had damaged. These terms were unacceptable to a nation which believed in its own myth of superiority. Many Germans convinced themselves that there was no way they could have lost had

they not been “stabbed in the back” by traitors in their midst. The “traitors” were the Jews and communists.

The payments demanded, referred to as reparations, caused economic disaster for Germany. Inflation and unemployment skyrocketed. By the end of 1923, the German mark stood at 4.25 billion to the dollar. In addition to the economic situation, massive social and political changes were taking place. In a country which had considered itself the most cultured and civilized of Europe, many were now hungry, out of work, humiliated, and worried about their future. Soon, new movements emerged which sought to ease these sufferings. Each of these movements promised solutions, but they also contained the seeds of an old and cruel fiction. In their effort to find others to blame, an ideology took hold in which the German people would ultimately target minority groups, and specifically the Jews, as the source of all their misery.

One of these movements was nationalism. The freedom of the individual, which had once been the cornerstone of nationalism, was now submerged in the triumph of state power. This trend no longer advocated democracy. Nationalists preached complete acceptance of the state and rigorous adherence to its aims. Nationalism demanded that the citizens prove their absolute loyalty through patriotism. According to some nationalists, Jews who had only recently received equal rights in Germany could not be patriots. In this new nationalism, feelings of racial unity, instead of simply being shared and relished, became something to defend vehemently. To justify the growing violence of the era, Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection was cited and twisted to fit a new context. Darwin’s theories were misconstrued to lend scientific support to the social doctrine of Survival of the Fittest -- the idea that some nations were naturally stronger and better qualified to dominate than others. This sort of reasoning contributed to an aggressive national fanaticism that was the exact opposite of the original concept of national spirit.

Another development continued from the previous century was the rise of imperialism. Imperialism advocated expansion of the power of a nation, especially through acquisition of territory. By the 1920's, Germany was ready to extend its domination abroad. Many other countries shared Germany’s desire for further expansion. This European imperialism grew out of many factors. Economically, expanding industries and improved transportation stimulated the search for new markets, new sources of raw materials, and new fields for investments. But the roots of imperialism were largely nationalistic -- a drive for increased national power and prestige through the extension of the empire. A number of European countries, such as England, France, and Portugal had taken colonies from which they extracted natural resources, including cheap labor, in order to strengthen their respective empires. For Germany, the demand to regain territories lost after World War I intensified. Also sought were agriculturally rich lands, a “bread basket,” to support a nation now largely industrialized. Moreover, Germany wanted to claim for the empire territories which had never been part of Germany but were viewed as essentially Germanic in character. National patriotism became more frenzied and more aggressive. The quest for territorial dominion led increasingly to the brink of war.

Another movement was romanticism. In spite of this poetic-sounding name, romanticism was not a notion to be taken lightly. Romanticism stressed intuition and emotion and rejected the positive value of reason. Romantics held old traditions in high regard, claiming that the true German is bound to his or her own people through a common language, similar customs, and a common historical past. In spite of the celebrated Jewish artists, writers, musicians, composers, educators, and scientists whose contributions to German culture were significant, followers of this movement began to consider Jews, many of whom had lived in Germany for centuries, as inherently different from the German people. The question arose in the minds of some romantics as to whether or not Jews were capable of the same emotions or could possess the same creative talents as the German people. This ideological trend was reinforced by the legal definition of citizenship in Germany, that it was based on “blood” and genealogical descent rather than on birth, thereby separating “aliens” and “immigrants” from true Germans. This definition of citizenship in Germany had a crucial bearing on the basic opportunities that shaped individual lives and rights.

Socialism also emerged as a movement with its own share of anti-Jewish feelings and sentiments. The socialists were intent on replacing the old order with a new and harmonious society. While the themes of socialism appeared to benefit all peoples, they were revised to suit the German National Socialist Party, many of whose most outspoken adherents disputed the basic ideas of socialism by voicing strong anti-Jewish feeling. The socialists opposed capitalism in all forms, and the Jews were depicted as financial parasites. Even though many Jews of Europe were socialists, the Rothschilds, a Jewish family and one of the oldest banking families in Europe, was used to illustrate the logic behind the attacks on all Jews as capitalists. When the socialist arguments used to support prejudice against Jews did not work, they drew upon a pseudo-racial science to explain the link between Jews and capitalism. (Ironically, when it suited them, the Jews were also accused of being communists. The contradiction in seeing Jews as members of completely opposing ideologies appears to have been readily ignored.)

The idea of stressing differences among humankind on the basis of “blood” was not new but after World War I in Germany, it became a critical part of national conscience and political ideology. The idea of superiority of race led to so-called “pan” movements. Pan-German movement expounded the superiority of all things German and sought to unite Germans everywhere linguistically, culturally, and politically. Its followers advocated expansion overseas of the German “Master Race,” and pledged to combat all forces that stood in the way of German national development. Racism provided the justification to exclude the Jewish “race” for they were infecting the purity of the German people. But the racist attacks were by no means limited to the Jews. In the Nazi quest for a biologically “pure blood” society, the Nazis developed a series of regulations which would serve to justify the persecution of all minority groups they considered racially “inferior.”

By the beginning of the twentieth century, scientists and universities had legitimized the concept of racism, and proponents argued that racial categories held keys to understanding human development and behavior. It was assumed that once a person’s race was established, his character and abilities could be identified. Some races were thought to be superior to others and, finally, racists began to talk of an inevitable conflict which would only be resolved when the superior race destroyed the inferior one. Among those considered “inferior” were the mentally and physically disadvantaged, African-Germans, and Gypsies. In this way, the Jews were also identified, not as a religion, but as a race. Because hatred of Jews was not a religious prejudice (which could be “cured” through baptism) the solution could only be expulsion or worse. Similar fates awaited all those excluded from the Germanic notion of a pure or “Aryan” race.

Eventually, the categories of inferior or “expendable” people gradually broadened to include political dissidents (those opposed to Nazi policies), certain religious minorities such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals. Even slight disfigurements, unusual physical characteristics or life styles became dangerous in this atmosphere of suspicion and the frenzy for racial “purity” and physical perfection. Initially, social and political exclusion did not include the decision to kill those whose beliefs and life styles were different.

Numerous laws and regulations based on the imagined fantasies and pseudo-science of “racial” blood differences were issued in the years prior to World War II. The consequences were devastating. For example, Gypsies living in Germany and Austria were discriminated against, terrorized, arrested, banned from itinerant trades, and forced into municipal concentration camps behind barbed wire that later became the assembly centers for deportation and death. Finally, many were sterilized against their will to prevent the possibility that they might pass on their genetic “impurities.” African-German children were secretly registered, and 500 were “illegally” sterilized in German university hospitals in 1937.

Racial Victims

The Nazis killed multitudes, including political opponents, members of the resistance, elites of conquered nations, but always based these murders on the beliefs, actions, and status of those

victims. Different criteria applied only to the murder of the handicapped, Jews, and Gypsies. Members of these groups could not escape their fate by changing their behavior or belief. They were selected because they existed, and neither loyalty to the German state, adherence to fascist ideology, nor contribution to the war effort could alter the determination of the Nazi regime to eliminate them.

One cannot disagree with the generally accepted fact that Hitler and his circle were preoccupied with the so-called Jewish question. They feared the supposed power of the Jews and believed in the myth of an international Jewish conspiracy. In contrast, they did not fear the political power of Gypsies or the handicapped. Obviously, the Nazis could recognize differences between Jews and Gypsies. The European Jews, more numerous than the European Gypsies, were relatively assimilated into bourgeois and working class society, often had a relatively high social status, and included prominent individuals with international connections. In contrast, the Gypsies had an extremely low social status and existed on the margins of European society. The status of the victim group determined rhetoric and tactics, but did not alter policy objectives. The Nazis killed the handicapped, Jews, and Gypsies because they considered these groups a threat to German racial purity. Although the Nazi regime pursued the murder of the Jews with greater determination, because they saw them as a more powerful adversary, they had sufficient resources also to murder Gypsies and the handicapped, which they did not consider an equal political threat. In the final analysis, all three groups were condemned for racial -- not political -- reasons, and, in fact, the murder of the handicapped chronologically preceded that of Jews and Gypsies.

While the Nazis shared core beliefs, there was no defined corpus of Nazi ideology. Instead, Nazi ideology was reflected by the writings of large numbers of people, including party functionaries, government bureaucrats, and racial scientists. In fact, policy is reflected less in ideological statements by leaders than in the day-to-day activities of middle level management. Hitler set policy goals, but middle level management delineated and implemented policy. Hitler was preoccupied with racial purity and was determined to cleanse the gene pool of the German nation. He demanded the exclusion of the unfit and the alien. In cooperation with racial scientists, party and government bureaucrats defined the groups to be excluded. From the beginning in 1933, these bureaucrats focused on the handicapped, Jews, and Gypsies, advancing solutions for exclusion that became progressively more radical.

The handicapped were thus sterilized before they were killed, and this also applied to many Gypsies. And even during the war, Nazi functionaries continued to search for an easy method that would make mass sterilization of Jews possible. When emigration was no longer feasible but before killings commenced, the Nazis instituted the deportation of Jews and Gypsies as a means of exclusion. Sterilization, deportation, and killings thus reflected the evolving policy of exclusion and was applied to the handicapped, Jews, and Gypsies.

The German racial theories that served as the basis for murder were never rational or consistent. Thus, in Germany "pure" Jews were killed, but those of mixed ancestry were usually not included in killing operations, because the bureaucracy chose not to alienate Germans related to Jews. In contrast, Gypsies of mixed ancestry were the first victims, because their German relatives, usually holding low social status, posed no bureaucratic problems. And while the bureaucracy worked hard to limit the number of exempted Jews of mixed ancestry, 90 percent of all Gypsies were classified as having mixed origins. The delineation of Gypsy policy largely devolved on Dr. Robert Ritter, a psychiatrist whose research in racial science centered on Gypsies, and who headed the Eugenic and Criminal Biological Research Station of the *Reich* Health Office and later the Criminal Biological Institute of the Security Police at the *Kripo* (detective forces) headquarters.

Other Minorities

According to the Nazi view, sexual relations were directly tied to the nation's strength. As a

result, one of the first injunctions against those considered racially inferior was intermarriage and sexual relations with "Aryans." This policy was particularly abusive towards homosexuals. The Nazi position towards homosexuality, however, was less consistent than their policies implied; the criminalization of homosexuality was intended to result in changed behavior. While officially sharply denounced with many arrested and thrown into concentration camps, in certain Nazi circles, homosexuality was tolerated or even ignored.

Homosexuals, seen as having made a lifestyle choice, were linked to those persecuted for their beliefs and behavior such as political and religious dissidents. In addition to the Jews, there were two other religious groups singled out for persecution: Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. While the Adventists were small and relatively inconspicuous, Jehovah's Witnesses received considerable public attention when they refused to use the "Heil Hitler" salute, perform forced labor, or serve in the army. There followed from this a wave of arrests after 1933 and especially after 1935 which led to imprisonment in concentration camps. In reaction, an international convention of Jehovah's Witnesses issued a resolution publicly condemning the Nazi regime. From this point forward, they were continually harassed, arrested, and imprisoned.

A variety of other groups came under attack because of their differences with the Nazis. Chief among these groups were the communists who were the primary foe to the Nazis' claim to power. The communists were particularly suspect because many of their members were Jews and their record of clandestine activities made the possibility of them interfering with Nazi policies a real threat. As a result, communists were continually hunted and arrested and many of the cells (groups of communist members) were forced "underground." Other groups responsible for opposition to the Nazi regime were socialists, trade union members, democrats, liberals, and pacifists.

Nazi Anti-Slavic Considerations

Before 1939, anti-Slavic prejudices were widespread in German society as were discriminatory policies toward *Ostjuden* (Eastern European Jews) residing in Germany at this time. For many decades before 1939, the Germans looking for *Lebensraum* (living space) emigrated, many of them to the Slavic countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland. The majority came as technicians and skilled workers with machinery imported for the weaving mills and associated industries. These *Volksdeutsche*, (ethnic Germans), even though they were born outside of Germany and citizens of the host countries for generations, still considered themselves German, remained loyal to Germany, and embraced Nazism. They often became a "fifth column," spying, giving vital information to the Nazis both before and during the war. It was this large population of *Volksdeutsche* in the Sudetenland, the region of Czechoslovakia partially inhabited by Germans, that resulted in the annexation of this area by Germany in September 1938.

The ethnic Germans in these other countries were to be rewarded by receiving confiscated businesses, choice jobs, and other incentives. With the outbreak of war and a quick German victory in Poland, Polish, Russian, and other Slavic soldiers were to be put into prisoner-of-war camps. The intelligentsia were to be arrested at random, especially the outspoken ones, and since Germany would need food for their army and population at home, heavy quotas of all farm products and livestock would be established. One region of Poland that was especially useful to the Germans was the so-called "bread basket," the area of Eastern Poland which had very fertile land. Any farmer who did not fulfill these quotas would be harshly punished. Experienced agricultural labor were to be deported to Germany for compulsory forced labor on farms. Because the Polish and Russian roads were often not suitable for heavy trucks and armaments, horses used by the farmers to work fields and carry products to market would be requisitioned as well. Any Slavic village which did not conform would be burned, however slight the infraction, and the population would be either killed or evacuated.

The Nazis used the term *Untermenschen* to describe people they considered racially inferior. The Slavic peoples without German ancestry were included in this category. Hitler had alluded to the possibility of using these people as slave labors for the Third *Reich*. Before the war began, however, on August 22, 1939, Hitler authorized his army “to kill all men, women and children of Polish descent. Those spared were to be turned into slaves with no rights at all.”⁴ Those considered racially “valuable” would be brought to Germany and assimilated within the population. For the Slavic peoples (except for the Ukrainians who were promised a homeland in return for their cooperation), any sense of national unity or solidarity was to be obliterated.

In 1936, the *Lebensborn* (Fountain of Life), an SS founding hospital and adoption agency, was established. Here German women would “sacrifice” themselves, usually to complete strangers, men considered physically suitable to provide children for the Greater *Reich*. The *Lebensborn* agencies were expanded throughout Germany and its acquired territories (and later throughout occupied countries). Slavic children considered to be of “good blood” with Nordic features were to be kidnapped, taken to *Lebensborn* homes, have their names changed, and be incorporated into German life. (By the end of the war, thousands of Polish children had been forcibly taken from their parents and sent to Germany. Only about 15 percent of these kidnapped children were eventually located and returned to Poland.)

Slavs who did not have German ancestry and who did not possess Nordic features or were considered “unredeemable” for any reason would be reduced to absolute subjugation. Education would only be allowed up to the fourth grade. Children would be taught to count up to 500, write their names, learn only those trades which would replace the menial labors of Germans or those of Germanic heritage and, in sum, become the obedient servants of their German masters. The intent was clear: the Slavs would be useful only as slaves and for exploited labor.⁵ Even in this jaundiced plan for the Slavs, there was a hierarchy. At the bottom were the Poles for whom Hitler announced that they were “to finish the Poles at all costs.”⁶

Policies Regarding the Jews

For two-thousand years, Jews had suffered persecution. Throughout history the Christian view of the Jew had formed the basis of anti-Jewish propaganda which resulted in pogroms and forcible expulsions. German attitudes toward Jews were similar to that of Christian Europe, but reached new extremes when the reason for attacking Jews shifted from religious differences to fabricated racial ones. The racial theories were built on a foundation of anthropology twisted to meet the needs of the racists. Hitler is often incorrectly identified as having invented the portrait of the Jew as *Untermenschen* (subhuman). Although, in page after page of his personal manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler does depict the Jew in grotesque terms, he was only expressing superstitions and hatreds that were deeply imbedded in western civilization. In fact, the destruction of European Jews could not have been attempted, nor succeeded so well, without this long historic preparation. What Hitler did use creatively were the mass communication tools of propaganda to spread his language of racism and lies. Although centuries of antisemitism created latent and active prejudices in German society, it is clear that the Holocaust required the application of systematic bureaucratic measures of a modern technological and industrial state and differed in this way from earlier, more limited antisemitic pogroms. Moreover, the development of the Holocaust also required the loss of democratic freedoms in the Nazi dictatorship after 1933.

In the previous century, Germany had won a decisive victory over the French, acquiring some of their most valuable territory. Flush with victory and national unification, economic and political nationalism thrived. In this new age, it was argued, Germans must be the “master race.” The idea gripped the fancy of many Germans. Then, according to the theories of “racial anthropology,” if Germans were indeed the “master race” then it followed that they had certain superior physical characteristics. Since the typical German type was tall, blond, and blue-eyed, this must be the portrait of the perfect “Aryan.” (“Aryan,” Nordic and German were terms used interchangeably. Actually the use of the term “Aryan” resulted from a confused meaning of the word which meant a family of related languages.)

By the early twentieth century, the feverish outpouring of racist literature had given traditional antisemitism new momentum and popularity. Political parties were formed using their hatred for Jews as a weapon for purely political ends. Even among those who privately knew how absurd this racist propaganda was, many publicly endorsed it for their own opportunistic advancement and careerism.

In this atmosphere, old religious accusations surfaced. Most serious of these were the charges of "ritual" murders. While there were different types of accusations (based on every possible pretext), one of the most common accused Jews of killing Christian children in order to use their blood to make their traditional unleavened bread called *matzos*. Throughout the centuries, these accusations had persisted and many Jews had been brutally tortured into "confessing" and then burned alive for their "crime." The possibility of this type of witch hunt returning hung like a dark shadow over the Jews of Germany and, indeed, all of Europe.

Conspiracies to target the Jews reached world prominence when a booklet was circulated titled the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Exposed as a complete fraud, the *Protocols* reported a supposed meeting in which Jewish elders had gathered in a cemetery and developed a plan for world domination. The truth was that the world Jewish community was far from organized and no central organization existed to render aid, much less provide the power needed to execute such a plan. In fact, had such an organization existed, the attempt to destroy all the Jews of Europe in the Holocaust could not have had such dire consequences. Even today, however, with the forgery of the *Protocols* well established, haters of Jews still use the *Protocols* to support their position.

It was in this atmosphere of propaganda and power, based on pseudo-racial theories, that many innocent people were harassed, persecuted, beaten, imprisoned, sterilized, castrated, and killed. In these assaults against Jews, Gypsies, blacks, the handicapped, homosexuals, political dissidents ... the list is endless, few people protested. Each minority group had different vulnerabilities and was exposed to different degrees of threat. Nevertheless they all shared the common feature of being seen as an impediment to the purity of the German "race." All of the actions against them were either kept secret or, worse, camouflaged behind the authority of a racial "science" which served those in power. And supreme power now lay in the hands of one man whose political party, the Nazis, had become a powerful force during the depression. As leader of the government, Adolf Hitler, like many before him, continued to remind the German people that the Jews were responsible for their defeat in World War I and all the problems which had followed. He promised to make sweeping changes. He kept his word.

ENDNOTES

¹ E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, eds., *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939* (London: 1954), Third Series, vol. 7, 258-260.

² Steven L. Jantzen, Larry S. Krieger, and Kenneth Neill, *World History: Perspectives on the Past* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990), 103.

³ Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986), 43-51.

⁴ Jack Wertheimer, *Understanding the Holocaust* (Woman Zionist Organization of America, 1981), 7.

⁵ California State Board of Education, *Model Curriculum for Human Rights and Genocide* (California: 1988), 54.

⁶ California State Board of Education, 54.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Have students use sources from libraries and the media center to develop a timeline of antisemitic policies, laws, and events in Europe during the twentieth century. As a variation, each student can find five examples to contribute to class timeline.

2. Discuss with students the definitions of democracy, fascism, communism, and socialism. Have students list a few countries in which each of these ideologies existed during the Holocaust. As an additional activity, students can list countries in which each of these ideologies exists today.

3. Over the centuries there have been mass expulsions of Jews from various countries. Students should research these expulsions and briefly explain the reasons behind them. Students can then create a chart in which the following information is depicted: COUNTRY, PERIOD OF TIME, EVENTS.

4. Have students briefly summarize the events that took place between World War I and World War II. Students then should create a list of what they consider to be the major causes of World War II.

The following activity comes from *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances (Second Edition)*. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense. Produced by the International Center for Holocaust Studies of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Reprinted by permission of the Department of Defense and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

5. The Nazis systematically rounded up homosexuals and other “undesirables,” who did not belong to a specific ethnic group. In fact, the first legalized killings were directed against Germans who were handicapped and mentally infirm. Ask students to consider the following questions:

- a) Do you think that America could ever likewise declare “life unworthy of life?” Explain your answers.
- b) What insurance does a democracy like the one in the United States have against such practices?

The following activity comes from *A GUIDE TO THE HOLOCAUST*. Copyright 1997 by Grolier Educational. Authored by Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff and Dr. Anita Meyer Meinbach. Reprinted by permission.

6. As individuals or in groups, students should research the end of World War I and the Versailles Treaty. They should gather enough information to describe the economic, social, and political conditions in Germany from this time through 1933. With this information, students can create a list that reflects how Germany was ripe for the National Socialist Worker’s Party (Nazi Party).

The following activity comes from *Globe Fearon Historical Case Studies. The Holocaust*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Globe Fearon Educational Publisher, division of Simon and Schuster, 1997.

7. Either as individuals or in groups, students can create a poster or bulletin board display of Jewish life in Europe before the Holocaust. The display may include written work, maps, drawn pictures, or copies of pictures from magazines and books.

**CORRELATIONS TO THE SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS
FOR THE FOLLOWING
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS**

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS UNIT 2	BENCHMARKS	PAGE
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TIME-LINE OF MAJOR JEWISH EXPERIENCES IN EUROPE

100B.C.	Palestine conquered by the Romans. (Pre-European)	3100	Jews seen as "infidels at home" and slaughtered throughout Western Europe. Jews settled in Poland.		Jews reappeared in England, Holland, and France.
to		to			
1 A.D.		1200	Statute of Kalisz (1264) granted Polish Jews the fundamental guarantee of personal safety, protection of places of worship and freedom of trade.	1700	Partition of Poland by Russia, Prussia, and Austria.
1 A.D.	First Jewish Revolt against Rome. (Pre-European)		First recorded "blood libel" accusation in Norwich, England.	to	
to	Titus destroyed Jerusalem.		Fourth Church Council required Jews to wear distinctive badge.	1800	Maria Theresa launches pogrom in Bohemia and Moravia (1744)
100	2nd and 3rd Jewish Revolts against Rome. (Pre-European)		Jews expelled from England.		Austrian Emperor, Joseph II establishment of Patent of Toleration.
to	Jerusalem placed off limits to Jews.		Massacre of Jews in town of York, England.		French Revolution bestowed French citizenship on Jews.
200	Jews dispersed throughout Roman Empire. Jews became Roman citizens.		Statute of Wislica granted Polish Jews equal protection under the law in 1347.		Pale of Settlement established in Russia.
to	Jews permitted to resettle in Palestine.		Jews blamed for spreading the Black Death (1348).	1800	Edict of Emancipation made Jews citizens in Prussia.
300	Jews denied citizenship and rights by the Roman Empire.	1300	Jews expelled from France (1306).	to	
to		to	Jews expelled from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1496).	1900	Emancipation of British Jews (1810)
400	Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity.	1600	Jews expelled from Lithuania.		De Gobineau wrote essay "Hierarchy of the Human Race."
400	Christians fought barbarians and heresies within the Church.		Jewish commercial activities shifted to Eastern Europe, mainly Poland.		Wilhelm Marr founded League of Anti-Semitism.
to			Golden Age in Poland. Many Jews resettled in Poland during this time period. Extensive privileges under Casimir III.		Swiss Jews gain full citizenship
600	Period of relative peace for Jews in an age of violence and injustice. Jews protected by Theoderic the Great.				Swiss ghetto life ended (1877).
600	Many Jews forced to convert to Christianity in Spain.				Russian pogroms began widespread anti-Semitic rioting in Russian Empire.
to					Hitler born in Austria.
800	Jews invited to settle in Italy, France, and Germany.				Dreyfuss Affair took place in France (1894-1898).
800	Charlemagne welcomed Jews into his Carolingian Empire				First Zionist Congress at Basel (1897).
to				1900	<i>Protocols of the Elders of Zion</i> published in Russia.
900		1500	Between 2,000-4,000 Jews slaughtered in Lisbon (1506).	to	
900	Jews entered England at time of conquest. Jews enjoy wide toleration in Moslem Spain.	to	Venetian Republic ordered the segregation of Jews into an area of Venice known as ghetto Nuovo.	1933	Hitler organized Nazi Party Program.
to		1700	Jews forced into ghettos in Italy, Germany, and Central Europe.		Beer Hall Putsch took place
1100	Crusades began. Anti-Semitic outbreaks in France.				Hitler wrote <i>Mein Kampf</i> .
1095	First ghettos established				Hitler became German Chancellor. anti-Jewish legislation passed

Source: University of the State of New York. *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide: The Human Rights Series*. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1985. Reprinted by permission.

Questions on “Time-Line of Major Jewish Experiences in Europe”

Most students will be aware of the anti-Jewish philosophy of the Nazis. They need to understand that in antisemitism the Nazis were simply using an age-old concept. They did not have to create scapegoats; they were already there.

Through this activity, students will:

- investigate the extensive history of the Jews;
- identify some pre-Nazi sources of antisemitism;
- explain the traditional (religious) and racial aspects of antisemitism.

Using the handout, “Time-Line of Major Jewish Experiences in Europe,” have students complete the following exercises:

- 1) Draw several conclusions regarding the nature and extent of anti-Jewish sentiment and actions.
- 2) Summarize the major episodes for each century listed.
- 3) Develop a definition for the term antisemitism.
- 4) Consider why the antisemitic sentiments in this time-line were damaging both to the Jews and the countries in which the antisemitism occurred.

Source: These questions were adapted from the University of the State of New York. *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide: The Human Rights Series*. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1985. Reprinted by permission.

THE VERSAILLES TREATY

Below are excerpts (in quotation marks) from the draft of the Versailles Treaty presented to officials of the Weimar Republic by the Allies on May 7, 1919. The treaty was signed on June 28, 1919.

Articles 27-41: The western boundaries of Germany are redefined.

Article 42: "Germany is forbidden to maintain or construct any fortifications on the left bank of the Rhine or on the right bank to the west of a line drawn fifty kilometers to the East of the Rhine."

Article 45: "As compensation for the destruction of the coal mines in the north of France and as partial payment towards the total reparation [war damages] due from Germany.... Germany cedes to France ... the coal mines situated in the Saar Basin." After fifteen years, the inhabitants of this region may vote to return to German control.

Article 51: "The territories [Alsace and Lorraine] which were ceded to Germany [at the end of the Franco Prussian War of 1870] ... are restored to French sovereignty."

Article 80: "Germany acknowledges and will respect strictly the independence of Austria This independence shall be inalienable."

Article 81: "Germany ... recognizes the complete independence of the Czecho-Slovak State."

Article 87: "Germany .. recognizes the complete independence of Poland." Poland's boundaries are to include large sections of what was eastern Germany.

Article 116: "Germany acknowledges and agrees to respect as permanent and inalienable the independence of all the territories which were part of the former Russian Empire.... Germany accepts definitely the abrogation [cancellation] of the Brest-Litovsk Treaties."

Article 119: "Germany renounces in favour of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers all her rights and titles over her overseas possessions."

Article 160: "The German Army [by March 31, 1920] ... must not exceed 100,000 men, including officers ... [and] shall be devoted exclusively to the maintenance of order within the territory and to the control of the frontiers."

Article 181: "The German naval forces in commission must not exceed: six battleships, six light cruisers, twelve destroyers, twelve torpedo boats.... No submarines are to be included." All other warships are to be surrendered to the Allies.

Article 198: "The armed forces of Germany must not include any military or naval air forces."

Article 231: "Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies."

Article 232: "[Germany] will make compensation for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated Powers and to their property." A commission will be established to determine the amount of reparations [war damages] Germany must pay.

Article 428: "As a guarantee for the execution of the present Treaty by Germany, the German territory situated to the west of the Rhine, together with the bridgeheads, will be occupied by Allied and Associated troops for a period of fifteen years."

Questions on The Versailles Treaty

1. What articles of the treaty pose the greatest obstacles to the economic development and financial stability of postwar Germany?
2. According to the treaty, how do the Allies plan to ensure that Germany meets the terms of the agreement?
3. In your opinion, which article of the treaty is the most "vindictive" and why?

Source: *Teacher's Resource Book for Crisis, Conscience, and Choices: Weimar Germany and the Rise of Hitler*. Choices for the 21st Century Education Project, Watson Institute, Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912. Phone: (401) 863-3155. Fax: (401) 863-1247. Email: <http://www.choices.edu>. Reprinted by permission of Choices for the 21st Century Education Project.

East Central Europe Prior to World War II



Source: *Memories of the Night: A Study of the Holocaust*. By Dr. Anita Meyer Meinbach and Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff. Copyright © 1994. Frank Schaffer Publications, 23740 Hawthorne Boulevard. Torrance, CA 90505. Reprinted by permission of Frank Schaffer Publications.

DEFINITION OF THE TERM: HOLOCAUST

It is critical that a study of the Holocaust begin with an understanding of definitions. In *Teaching About the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators*, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum provides the following explanation:

Define What You Mean by “Holocaust”

The Holocaust refers to a specific event in 20th-century history: the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims -- six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

The term holocaust, without a capital “h,” has a different meaning than the word Holocaust. While the “Holocaust” refers to the state-sponsored persecution and annihilation of European Jews by Nazi Germany, the definition of the term “holocaust” is complete destruction by fire or burning, or any widespread destruction. In the *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances (Second Edition)*, the Department of Defense and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum explain further the significance of using specific terminology:

Define Terms With Precision

To learn from history, we must record its events as accurately and as specifically as possible. We must use words with precision.

With the passage of time, the word, “holocaust,” has been used in many contexts, and has been given many meanings. For the purpose of recalling *the* Holocaust ... we must remember what this event was, within the context of history. To do that, it is equally important to identify what it was not.

The Holocaust is *not* a term for:

- all the evils of the world;
- any tragedy of great magnitude, or widespread death and destruction;
- all war or all world wars;
- all the terrors of World War II -- or all the many civilian deaths associated with that war, in cities throughout Europe.

Table 1-1 CANONICAL AND NAZI ANTI-JEWISH MEASURES

Canonical Law	Nazi Measure	Canonical Law	Nazi Measure
Prohibition of Inter-marriage and of sexual intercourse between Christians and Jews, Synod of Elvira, 306	Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, September 15, 1935 (RGBI I, 1145.)	The marking of Jewish clothes with a badge, 4th Lateran Council, 1215, Canon 68 (Copied from the legislation by Caliph Omar II [634-644], who had decreed that Christians wear blue belts and Jews, yellow belts.)	Decree of September 1, 1941 (RGBI I, 547.)
Jews and Christians not permitted to eat together, Synod of Elvira, 306	Jews barred from dining cars (Transport Minister to Interior Minister, December 30, 1939, Document NG-3995.)	Construction of new synagogues prohibited, Council of Oxford, 1222	Destruction of synagogues in entire Reich, November 10, 1938 (Heydrich to Göring, November 11, 1938, PS-3058.)
Jews not allowed to hold public office, Synod of Clermont, 535	Law for the Re-establishment of the Professional Civil Service, April 7, 1933 (RGBI I, 175.)	Christians not permitted to attend Jewish ceremonies, Synod of Vienna, 1267	Friendly relations with Jews prohibited, October 24, 1941 (Gestapo directive, E-15.)
Jews not allowed to employ Christian servants or possess Christian slaves, 3d Synod of Orléans, 538	Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, September 15, 1935 (RGBI I, 1146.)	Jews not permitted to dispute with simple Christian people about the tenets of the Catholic religion, Synod of Vienna, 1267	
Jews not permitted to show themselves in the streets during Passion Week, 3d Synod of Orléans, 538	Decree authorizing local authorities to bar Jews from the streets on certain days (i.e., Nazi holidays), December 3, 1938 (RGBI I, 1676.)	Compulsory ghettos, Synod of Breslau, 1267	Order by Heydrich, September 21, 1939 (PS-3263.)
Burning of the Talmud and other books, 12th Synod of Toledo, 681	Book burnings in Nazi Germany	Christians not permitted to sell or rent real estate to Jews, Synod of Ofen, 1279	Decree providing for compulsory sale of Jewish real estate, December 1, 1939 (RGBI I, 1709.)
Christians not permitted to patronize Jewish doctors, Trullanis Synod, 692	Decree of July 25, 1938 (RGBI I, 969.)	Adoption by a Christian of the Jewish religion or return by a baptized Jew to the Jewish religion defined as a heresy, Synod of Mainz, 1310	Adoption of the Jewish religion by a Christian places him in jeopardy of being treated as a Jew. (Decision by Oberlandesgericht Königsberg, 4th Zivilsenat, June 26, 1942.) (Die Judenfrage [Vermautliche Beiträge], November 1, 1942, pp. 82-83.)
Christians not permitted to live in Jewish homes, Synod of Narbonne, 1050	Directive by Göring providing for concentration of Jews in houses, December 28, 1938 (Bormann to Rosenberg, January 17, 1939, PS-69.)		
Jews obliged to pay taxes for support of the Church to the same extent as Christians, Synod of Gerona, 1078	The "Sozialausgleichsabgabe" which provided that Jews pay a special income tax in lieu of donations for Party purposes imposed on Nazis, December 24, 1940 (RGBI I, 1666.)	Sale or transfer of Church articles to Jews prohibited, Synod of Lavour, 1368	Decree of July 6, 1938, providing for liquidation of Jewish real estate agencies, brokerage agencies, and marriage agencies catering to non-Jews (RGBI I, 523.)
Prohibition of Sunday work, Synod of Szabolcs, 1092	Proposal by the Party Chancellery that Jews not be permitted to institute civil suits, September 9, 1942 (Bormann to Justice Ministry, September 9, 1942, NG-151.)	Jews not permitted to obtain academic degrees, Council of Basel, 1434, Sessio XIX	Law against Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities, April 25, 1933 (RGBI I, 225.)
Jews not permitted to be plaintiffs, or witnesses against Christians in the Courts, 3d Lateran Council, 1179, Canon 26	Decree empowering the Justice Ministry to void wills offending the "sound judgment of the people," July 31, 1938 (RGBI I, 937.)	Jews not permitted to obtain academic degrees, Council of Basel, 1434, Sessio XIX	
Jews not permitted to withhold inheritance from descendants who had accepted Christianity, 3d Lateran Council, 1179, Canon 26			

Source: *Destruction of the European Jews*, revised and definitive edition, by Raul Hilberg (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985). Copyright © 1985 by Raul Hilberg. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Questions on “Canonical and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures”

1. What does the comparison between “Canonical (Church) Law” and “Nazi Measures” help us to understand?
2. Which laws do you think were the most damaging to the Jews and why?
3. Examine the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution. Which items in the Bill of Rights protect us from such “Measures?”

The above questions were adapted from the March of the Living, Central Agency for Jewish Education, Miami, Florida. Reprinted by permission of the March of the Living.

THE OTHER VICTIMS OF THE NAZIS

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

Fifty years after the end of World War II, few people are aware that Jews were not the only victims of the Nazis. In addition to six million Jews, more than five million non-Jews were murdered under the Nazi regime. Among them were Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, blacks, the physically and mentally disabled, political opponents of the Nazis, including Communists and Social Democrats, dissenting clergy, resistance fighters, prisoners of war, Slavic peoples, and many individuals from the artistic communities whose opinions and works Hitler condemned.¹

The Nazis' justification for genocide was the ancient claim, passed down through Nordic legends, that Germans were superior to all other groups and constituted a "master race."

Who constituted this "master race?" Blue-eyed, blond-haired people of Nordic stock, or "Aryans." As such, they had the right to declare who was worthy of life and who was not, who was to be maimed by sterilization or experimented upon in the interest of attaining racial purity, and who was to be used as slave labor to further the Nazi empire.

In the world the Nazis wished to create, Jews and Gypsies were to be eliminated as racially, socially, and physically defective. The deaf, the blind, the physically disabled, homosexuals, the mentally ill, and alcoholics were either to be sterilized or killed simply because they were viewed as "genetically defective." Slavic people, though labeled racially inferior by the Germans, would be allowed to exist as slaves in order to supply the Nazis with free labor. Criminals, political ene-

gies of the state, and homosexuals were pronounced socially undesirable and subject to the will of the Nazis.

Barely two months after attaining power, the Nazis laid the constitutional foundation for Hitler's dictatorship with the passage of the Enabling Act on March 24, 1933. This legislation was subtitled "The Law to Remove Stress from the People and State." It gave Hitler the right to pass any law without the approval of the Reichstag. In effect, the implementation of this law allowed the Nazis to completely ignore the civil and human rights previously guaranteed by the German constitution.

In addition to passing laws legitimizing their denial of human rights, the Nazis began a press and radio propaganda campaign to portray their intended victims as rats, vermin, and *Untermenschen* (subhumans). Inmates of concentration camps were listed as *Nummern* (pieces), with assigned numbers, rather than being permitted the dignity of a name. If a German gave these victims a thought, he was to think of them as animals.

Although belief in the theory that one race was superior to others was not unique to Hitler and the Nazis, the enthusiastic support given to Nazis by all facets of German society, particularly the scientific community, was unique.² Geneticists, scientists, doctors, and anthropologists from the internationally acclaimed Kaiser Wilhelm Institute cooperated in the process of experimenting on human beings to prove the theory of a master race. Spurious experiments to "show" the inferiority of non-Nordic groups such as blacks, Jews, Gypsies, Poles, and others were conducted.³ Teachers embarrassed Jewish and Gypsy children by directing



All those who were not of the Aryan race signed a document in 1939 that obligated to September 1, 1941, to Philip Sutter and Ernest Paul Brand are charged with responsibility for the authority of the law to the extent that persons suffering from a hereditary disease to be incurable may also a human individual, at violation of the conditions of the quoted article, both signed, Adolf Hitler.

so-called scientific efforts that included measuring the sizes of their heads in order to prove so-called "mental deficiencies." Other efforts by the scientific community included certifying that sterilization or annihilation was necessary for "undesirable groups."

In 1943, Professor Eugen Fischer, director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics, and Eugenics, wrote to a German newspaper, "It is a rare and special good fortune for a theoretical scientist to flourish at a time when the prevailing ideology welcomes it, and its findings immediately serve the policy of the state."⁴ Professor Fischer's "good fortune" included creating an environment that allowed Dr. Mengele and others who took the Hippocratic oath the right to experiment on human beings and to murder them in the "interest" of science. This included the experiments Mengele performed on Jewish and Gypsy twins in Auschwitz, injecting

them with chemicals and germs. If one twin died, the other twin was murdered to compare their physiognomy.

In efforts to breed a master race, more than 300,000 German Aryans were sterilized and countless numbers were gassed, under a law passed on July 14, 1933, the "Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring." In his book *Murderous Science*, Dr. Benno Mueller-Hill notes that the aforementioned statute provided for compulsory sterilization in cases of "congenital mental defects, schizophrenia, manic depressive psychosis, hereditary epilepsy . . . and severe alcoholism."¹ This included the blind and the deaf, even those who became deaf or blind from illnesses such as scarlet fever or from accidents.

A few years ago, on a trip to Germany, I interviewed deaf people who had been sterilized by the Nazis. In one case, a nine year old girl had been removed from her school and taken to a hospital by the principal for sterilization. "When I came to," she said, "I heard my parents by my best weeping." To prevent them from protesting, the state had not notified them beforehand.

The Nazis also had a significant impact on the lives of black children, who were the offspring of German women and African soldiers stationed in the Rhineland after World War I. Many of these so-called "Rhineland Bastards" were picked up from the streets or from classrooms and sterilized, often without anesthesia. Due to the application of the "Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Defects," which was passed in 1933, approximately 400 of these children were deprived of their right to reproduce.

Homosexuals were often given the choice of sterilization, castration, or incarceration in a concentration camp. This treatment was "legal" because of a law passed in 1871 under paragraph 175 of the German penal code, making homosexuality a criminal offense.² Under the Nazis, thousands of persons were persecuted and punished on the charge of homosexuality. Many were sent to concentration camps, where they had to wear a pink triangle (*rosa Winkel*).

When the war broke out in 1939, Hitler ordered the elimination of the severely retarded because they were "useless eaters."³ Operating from headquarters at Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin, the "T-4" program took the retarded to extermination centers and gassed them with carbon monoxide. In two years, from 1939 to 1941, more than 50,000 persons were killed in this program. In 1941, the Bishop of Muenster protested these gassings, and they were stopped. However, the victims had served their purpose as guinea pigs in the refinement of the use of gas for the mass killing of Jews and Gypsies. The lessons learned in these earlier executions were used in the death camps.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had made known his antipathy toward Christianity. Reverence would be shown to Hitler and not to the traditional symbols of Christianity. Statues of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary would be banished and, in their place, the Fuehrer's physiognomy would be displayed. The Old Testament was to be discarded as "a Jew book full of lies," and *Mein Kampf* would supersede the New Testament. In place of the banished cross would stand the swastika.

Both the priests and ministers who spoke out against the Nazis were labeled "political opponents," and "enemies of the state." Many of these dissenters were sent to Dachau concentration camp, where a special barracks was set aside for religious leaders. This isolation was to keep the clergy from giving solace or rites to the rest of the prisoners. In the camps, the clergy, like other inmates, were used as slave laborers and in medical experiments.⁴ Of the 2,270 priests and ministers from nineteen occupied countries who were interned in Dachau, 1,034 perished.

The handful of Catholic priests in Germany who protested the actions of the Nazis was also punished. For example, Provost Bernard Lichtenberg of St. Hedwig's Cathedral in Berlin was arrested, imprisoned for two years, re-arrested at the end of his sentence, and shipped to Dachau. He died en route.

In 1938, when Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber of Munich, a leader of the Catholic hierarchy, protested the perse-

cution of Jews, the Nazis attempted to burn down his house.

Most clergymen either did not read *Mein Kampf* or ignored its foreboding warning of things to come, and thus the majority of Germany's religious leaders supported Hitler's nationalistic ambitions. Yet there were those among the religious community who did challenge the Nazis. Out of 17,000 Protestant clergy, three thousand were Evangelical Lutherans who opposed the Nazis. Some of the members of the group were arrested and sent to concentration camps—never to return. Others worked quietly in their opposition. Some spoke out because of Hitler's attacks on the church, and a few because of his actions against the Jews.

Jehovah's Witnesses, though few in number, also were seen as a threat to the Nazis. Not only did they oppose war and refuse to fight, but they also urged others not to serve. In addition, Witnesses refused to salute the flag in to say "Heil Hitler." To a Jehovah's Witness, saluting the flag or any authority other than Jehovah God is the same as worshipping idols.

Along these lines, my book *The Other Victims: First Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis* relates the story of the Kussierow family. Not only the parents, but also their eleven children, were punished for being Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1936, when the father, Franz Kussierow, refused to renounce his religion, he was put in jail until the end of the war. Two sons were executed because they refused induction into the army. Another son was incarcerated in Dachau, where he contracted tuberculosis and died shortly after the war. The three youngest children were sent to reform school for "re-education." Mrs. Kussierow and the older girls were taken either to prison or to concentration camps.

The Gypsies, like the Jews, were condemned by the Nazis to complete annihilation for being racially impure, socially undesirable, and "mentally defective."⁵ The persecution of Gypsies was not new in Germany. A "Central Office for the Fighting of the Gypsy Menace" had been established in 1899. In 1933, a plan to put thirty thousand

Gypsies aboard ships and sink the ships in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean was abandoned, but many Gypsies were sterilized under a law that permitted the sterilization of "mental defectives." In Dachau, Gypsies were used in experiments to test the amount of salt water an individual could drink before death occurred. At least a half million Gypsies were murdered by the Germans in the gas chambers, in experiments, or in general round-ups.

Although the Nazis declared Polish people *Untermenschen*, or subhumans, thousands of Polish children who were blond haired and blue eyed were separated from their families and sent to Germany to be raised in German homes as Aryans. The dark-haired, dark-eyed sisters and brothers remaining in Poland were to be taught only simple arithmetic, to sign their names, and to offer obedience to their German masters. Their purpose in life was to serve as slaves for the German empire. Anyone caught trying to give further instruction to Polish children was to be punished. Despite the ban on education, secret schools flourished in attics and basements.

Because of the ideological and racial antipathy toward Russian Communism, between two and three million Russian prisoners of war were purposely starved to death by the Nazi. Others were shipped in cattle cars to concentration or extermination camps. Most died of disease, exhaustion, or starvation.

No article on the non-Jewish victims would be complete without mentioning the first opponents of the Nazis: Germans who happened to be Communists or Social Democrats, judges and lawyers, or editors and journalists who had opposed the Nazis. They were the first to be arrested.

As soon as the Nazis came to power, the goal of eliminating all opposition took primacy. Trucks and police vans raced up and down the streets arresting any threat to Nazi rule, including those members of the artistic community who demanded cultural freedom. Books were burned. Authors and artists were either imprisoned or purposely denied the ability to earn a livelihood.

Even telling a joke about Hitler could lead to a death sentence. The evening before he was to give a concert, pianist Robert Kreitin remarked to the woman with whom he was staying, "You won't have to keep Hitler's picture over your mantle much longer. Germany's losing the war." The woman reported him to the Gestapo. The day of the concert, he was arrested and executed.

A few years ago, I conducted interviews in Germany for a biography, *Flying Against the Wind: The Story of a Young Woman Who Defied the Nazis*. The young woman, Cato Bontjes van Beek, was one of the few Germans to resist the Nazis. While she opposed the regime, her favorite cousin, Ulrich, supported Hitler and joined the Storm Troopers. Everyone I talked to described her blond-haired, blue-eyed cousin as "a sweet and sensitive person, an artist and a poet."

"How was it possible," I asked Cato's mother, "that Ulrich was so fanatical about Hitler? He came from the same background as Cato."

"When Ulrich looked in the mirror," she said, "he saw the Master Race."

It was people like Ulrich, along with the scientists and the judges who administered Nazi "justice," who gave Hitler the manpower and the consent to murder six million Jews and five million non-Jews.

Although Hitler is dead, the theories that he espoused remain alive. With the modern tools being developed by biologists and other scientists, it is important for young people to be made aware that knowledge can be manipulated and turned into tools of destruction.

In every generation, educating the young is an awesome task. Today, with new scientific advances, the rapid spread of knowledge through computer networks, and the ability to alter the material being transmitted, it is more important than ever that students learn to think for themselves. Part of that learning process should include the devastating effects of prejudice. A true understanding of the history of the Holocaust would make that lesson clear.

Notes

- 1 Susan Bachrach, *Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust* (Boston: Little Brown, 1995), 20.
- 2 Nora Levin, *The Holocaust*. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), 11 - 15.
- 3 Eugen Fischer, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany) Mach 28, 1943.
- 4 Benno Mueller-Hill *Murderous Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 28.
- 5 Richard Plant. *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals* (New York: Holt, 1986), 211-19.
- 6 Robert Jay Lifton. *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York, Basic Books, 1986), 46.
- 7 Barbara Distel, *Dachau* (Bruxelles: Comite International de Dachau, 1985), 11.
- 8 Ian Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Karoma Publishers, 1987), 63-69.

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 Ina R. Friedman is the author of *The Other Victims: First Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), which was cited in 1991 as one of the "Best Books" of the American Library Association-Young Adult Division. Her latest book, *Flying Against the Wind: The Story of a Young Woman Who Defied the Nazis, is a biography of a German Christian who resisted the Nazis* (Brookline, Massachusetts: Lodgepole Press, 1995).

Question: Summarize the groups of non-Jews who were victims of the Nazis. Explain the different reasons why each group was persecuted.

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UNIT 3

ADOLF HITLER AND THE RISE OF THE NAZI PARTY

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UNIT 3

ADOLF HITLER AND THE RISE OF THE NAZI PARTY

“...many people chose to remain neutral. As a result, the killers killed, the victims died, and the world remained neutral.”

Elie Wiesel

*Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1986)
and Holocaust Survivor
Letter to President Carter from the
President's Commission on the
Holocaust, September 27, 1979*

INTRODUCTION

Adolf Hitler launched a campaign of terror and horror that resulted in the deaths of innocent millions. His policies soon infiltrated every strata of the German government and perverted the legal system which discarded ethical standards of justice. Under the administration of his strong elite guard, the SS, literally thousands of prison camps were established where enemies of his realm would be incarcerated, worked to death, or murdered without fear of recrimination.

Officially sanctioned by the government and without interference from a single major country, Hitler and his political group, the Nazis, attempted to annihilate an entire spectrum of people and anyone else that did not fit the Nazi ideal. Chief among his targets of hatred were the Jews. Claiming they were inferior to his pure Master Race of “Aryans,” he and thousands of others collaborated initially to force Jews to emigrate and later to murder every Jew alive. He envisioned an empire that would live a thousand years. In twelve years and four months, the “Thousand Year Reich” came to an end as the Allied forces, led by Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States, finally forced Germany and its Axis partners to surrender. As the German army retreated in the face of the Allied forces, Hitler ordered his chiefs to destroy everything in their path, including Paris and other major cities of Europe. In his last hours, he committed suicide rather than face capture.

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the VOCABULARY.
2. Describe the biographical background of Adolf Hitler.
3. Analyze the various reasons for the rise of the Nazi party.
4. Examine reasons for the broad appeal to the German people of Nazi philosophy and government.
5. Describe the techniques Hitler used to organize a large majority of German people to accept and promote Nazi ideology.

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Allied Powers (Allies): During World War II, the Allies were over twenty nations led by Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union that fought against the Axis powers, mainly Nazi Germany, Italy, Japan, and their allies.

Aryan: Originally a term for peoples speaking the languages of Europe and India; in Nazi ideology, a Nordic-type, Caucasian Christian.

Axis Powers: The tripartite alliance among Germany, Italy, and Japan during World War II; also known as the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis; the term Axis countries is also applied to other states allied with Germany, such as Hungary, Rumania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria.

Beer Hall Putsch (also called the Hitler Putsch or the Munich Putsch): A failed attempt by Hitler and the Nazis to take over the Bavarian government on November 9, 1923.

Deutsche Arbeitsfront: The official monolithic labor organization allied to the Nazi party, replacing the labor unions.

Einsatzgruppen (Task Forces or Action Groups): Task force of mobile killing units operating in German-occupied territories; responsible for the majority of people annihilated outside concentration camps in Eastern Europe.

Enabling Act: The name given to the "Law for Removing the Distress of People and Reich" passed on March 23, 1933. This law removed the power of legislation from the *Reichstag* (German parliament) and gave it to the Nazi-controlled government, thereby providing the constitutional and legal foundation for Hitler's dictatorship.

Führer (leader): Adolf Hitler's title in Nazi Germany.

Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth): Youth service for males between 10 and 18 years of age.

Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass): During November 9 and 10, 1938, a pogrom and riot was staged in which mobs of Nazis attacked, looted, vandalized, and set fires to Jewish shops, homes, businesses, and synagogues in Germany and Austria. The name *Kristallnacht* comes from the fact that so many shop windows were smashed, but the term is also an attempt to minimize what actually took place during the pogrom. More than 26,000 male German Jews between the ages of 16 and 60 were deported to concentration camps after this pogrom and riot.

League of German Maidens: The female counterpart of the Hitler Youth for girls between 10 and 18 years of age.

Lebensraum (living space): Principle of Nazi ideology and foreign policy, expressed in the drive for the conquest of territories, mainly in the east.

Mein Kampf (My Battle or My Struggle): A book written by Adolf Hitler in 1924-26 setting forth the doctrine and programs of the Nazi party.

Munich Conference: In an effort to negotiate with Hitler regarding the fate of the Czechoslovak region of the Sudetenland, the leaders of Great Britain, France, and Italy met with Hitler in Munich, Germany. Czechoslovakian leaders were not invited to attend the conference. Fearing that Hitler would invade the region, the leaders agreed to let Hitler annex the Sudetenland. Britain's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain triumphantly told his people that he was responsible for "peace in our time." Germany invaded Czechoslovakia six months after the Munich Conference.

National Socialist German Workers Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei): The Nazi party.

Nazi: A member of the German fascist party controlling Germany from 1933 -1945 under the dictatorial leadership of Adolf Hitler.

Nuremberg Laws: Two laws issued on September 15, 1935, followed by a series of regulations, providing a precise definition of "Jew" by origin, religion, and family ties. These laws reduced the rights of German Jews, since they could no longer vote or hold office, although they retained the right to German passports and did not lose their German citizenship until the 11th Citizenship decree in 1941. The concept of "non-Aryan" was first used in these regulations; marriage or sexual relations between a Jew and an "Aryan" were considered criminal offenses. Employment of "Aryan" household help under age 45 was forbidden. These laws were extended to apply to Christians whose parents or grandparents were Jews. In 1938, the letter "J" was ordered to be printed on all identity cards belonging to Jews. These regulations were the beginning of cruel repression sanctioned by law, designed to isolate the Jews socially as well as politically.

Reichstag: Formerly, the legislative assembly of Germany from 1871 to 1945.

Reparations: Payments made to make amends; a compensation.

Rhineland bastards: The derogatory term used by the Nazis to describe the children born to French North African soldiers and German mothers during World War I. This curriculum will use the term "African-German" to describe these children, although some scholars argue that only the term "Rhineland bastards" should be used. Such scholars fear that the term "African-German" is too neutral a term to describe the offspring who were never accepted as Germans, despite being born to German mothers on German soil.

SA (Sturmabteilung or Storm Troopers): Organized in 1922; comprised of an army of 15,000 toughs.

SS (Schutzstaffel or Protection Squad): Originally, guard detachments formed in 1925 as Hitler's personal guard. In 1929, under Himmler, the SS developed into the elite units of the Nazi party. These Nazi paramilitary, black-shirted storm troops used two symbols copied from Teutonic runes, a parallel jagged double S usually used as a symbol warning for high-tension wires or lightning. The SS was built into a giant organization and provided staff for the police, concentration camp guards, and the fighting units of the *Waffen SS*.

Third Reich (Third Empire): The Nazis called their government the Third Empire (1933-1945). The first Empire was the Holy Roman Empire (ninth century to 1806), the second was the German Empire (1871-1919), and the Third *Reich* followed the democratic Weimar Republic (1919-1933).

Thousand Year Reich: Hitler's vision that the Nazi government would live for 1000 years; it came to an end after twelve years and four months.

Versailles Treaty: The peace treaty signed at the end of World War I which stripped Germany of her colonies, treasury, and pride. This treaty forced Germany to pay significant reparations as a punishment for starting the war.

Wehrmacht: The German Armed Forces.

Weimar Republic: The German Republic from 1919 to 1933; its constitutional assembly had met in the city of Weimar in 1919.

NAMES AND PLACES

Braun, Eva: Longtime mistress of Hitler whom he eventually married in April 1945. They died together in a suicide pact on April 30, 1945.

Chamberlain, A. Neville: The Prime Minister of England during the Munich Conference in September 1938.

Dachau: A concentration camp located near Munich, Germany; it was the first major concentration camp opened in March 1933.

Goebbels, Joseph: Chief of Propaganda in the Nazi party who controlled all the newspapers and radio broadcasts to solidify support for Hitler.

von Hindenburg, Paul: President of Germany prior to Hitler's reign.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

ADOLF HITLER AND THE RISE OF THE NAZI PARTY

The Early Years

Adolf Hitler was born in a small town in Austria on April 20, 1889. He was born to a 52 year-old man who had, as his third wife, a woman more than 20 years his junior. Adolf was successful in elementary school, but he dropped out of high school two years after his father died.

In 1907, Hitler moved to Vienna where he hoped to become a student at the Academy of Fine Arts. He submitted drawings to the Academy, but they were rejected as unsatisfactory. When he reapplied to the academy a year later, he was not even allowed to take the entrance examination. Meanwhile, his mother had become ill with cancer. When she died, Hitler went home for the funeral but a few weeks later, he returned to Vienna where he spent the next four years.

Vienna was an important influence on Hitler's way of thinking. On the surface a sophisticated city with Strauss waltzes and gatherings of friends sharing pastries, it was also a hotbed of antisemitic politics.

During this period of time, Hitler read a great deal and was strongly influenced by German nationalistic and racist sentiments. He rejected all ideas of equality and democracy and thoroughly opposed socialism. He did admire, however, how the socialists organized themselves. He also rejected Christianity, although he recognized the importance of using pageantry and ritual to gain the loyalty of followers. Hitler found little in the world to like; he was a bitter man who felt no one recognized his genius.

In 1913 Hitler moved from Vienna, Austria, to Munich, Germany. In 1914 the "Great War," as World War I was called, began and Hitler volunteered for an infantry regiment. He served as a messenger on the western front for most of the war, was wounded in the leg, and suffered from temporary blindness caused by a poison gas attack. Although decorated twice for bravery, he never rose above the rank of corporal. By the time he recovered from the gas attack, the war was over. As a result of his war experiences, Hitler grew even more intensely nationalistic.

Germany lost the war, and the nation was left bankrupt. Millions of Germans were unemployed. A weak government, called the Weimar Republic, replaced the empire.

The Rise of the Nazi Party

Hitler joined a small political group which later became known as the National Socialist German Workers' (Nazi) party. He became the leader of the party and surrounded himself with people who shared his antisemitic views. He increased membership of the Nazi party by giving speeches in beerhalls in which he blamed the Jews for the loss of the war, hyperinflation, high unemployment, and the despair of the German people.

From a small, initial group of just a few hundred, which could have easily been stopped in the beginning, Hitler eventually organized a private army of 15,000 toughs who became known as Storm Troopers or SA. They were dressed in brownshirted uniforms bearing the swastika emblem which gave them a feeling of unity. They were armed and trained by active duty German Army officers. The Versailles Treaty had restricted the size of the German Army. The leading officers wanted the Stormtroopers available in case of a renewed war, a communist uprising, or to assist in a right-wing military takeover of the government.

When the Army refused to act to overthrow the government of the Weimar Republic, Hitler acted on his own. In November 1923, Hitler staged an ill-fated attempt to take over the Munich government. This attempt became known as the *Beer Hall Putsch*. When the plot failed, Hitler was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison for treason. He served only nine months of his sentence.

While in prison, he dictated his book, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), to Rudolf Hess, in which he outlined his Master Plan. Hitler's racist intentions, as they evolved over his lifetime, included the following elements: Non-Jewish Germans were the "Aryan master race" with the right to rule over the "lower races." Other non-Jewish Western Europeans were to be divided into those of Nordic and non-Nordic backgrounds with the Nordic people to have privileges in ruling similar to but not as influential as the Non-Jewish Germans. Those considered among the "lower races" were the Slavs of Eastern Europe. These inferior peoples were to be deprived of their elites, including their priests, political leaders, and those who had been well educated. The "lower races" were to be turned into slaves of the Germans and to carry out manual labor. The "enemy races," especially the Jews, but also the Gypsies, were to be killed. The "enemy races" did not have homelands of their own and had traditional occupations which made them difficult to exploit as laborers. The Jews were traditionally either professionals or involved in mercantile occupations, such as trade, while the Gypsies pursued itinerant occupations such as selling horses, telling fortunes, serving as circus entertainers and musicians and were also beginning to develop a small middle class with merchants and civil servants (usually postal officials).

In order to make the Germans stronger as a "master race," Hitler favored sterilizing the mentally retarded, the physically handicapped, and people with hereditary diseases so they could not have children. He also wanted to kill Germans who were not "socially productive," including people with terminal illnesses, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, and the severely deformed.

In late 1924, Hitler was released from jail. After leaving prison, he reorganized the Nazi party. He created an elite unit of guards called the SS. This would later displace the Storm Troopers as the most important Nazi paramilitary unit. The SS became the party's internal police force and intelligence service. After the Nazis took power, SS men also served as concentration camp guards and large SS military units fought during the Second World War.

From 1924 to 1928, the Nazis were weak. But a farm crisis in 1928 allowed them to expand among peasants who were losing their land. In 1929 a depression hit Germany. Hitler blamed the reparation payments, which Germany was supposed to pay as a consequence of damages caused in World War I, as the cause of the depression. Hitler's opposition to the payments made him popular with many nationalistic Germans. When reparations were abandoned because of the depression, Hitler cleverly took full credit for ending them.

Hitler Becomes Dictator

The Nazis were still a minority when in November 1932, they won 33.1 percent of the vote and 33.5 seats in the *Reichstag* (Parliament).¹ As compared with previous elections, the Nazi party had lost two million votes. Thus, ironically, Hitler came to power just as the strength of the Nazi party was beginning to wane in Germany.² President von Hindenburg reluctantly offered Hitler a subordinate position in the cabinet. However, Hitler pressured the elderly president for more power. On a promise that Hitler would act lawfully if he were named to head the government, President von Hindenburg made him chancellor in January, 1933. As chancellor, Hitler immediately broke his pledge to the President and began to set up a government with himself as dictator.

On February 27, 1933 the *Reichstag* burned down. The circumstances of the fire were mysterious, and some said that the Nazis had done it themselves to create a crisis. In any event, the Nazis persuaded President von Hindenburg to issue a decree suspending constitutional

guarantees. Shortly thereafter, the so-called "Enabling Act" was passed granting the Nazi party emergency powers.

The following year the elderly President von Hindenburg died, and Hitler proclaimed himself both president and chancellor of the *Reich* (realm), immediately creating a government with himself as the *Führer* (leader).

With his power now consolidated, the Nazis could beat and jail opponents. No political parties other than the Nazis were allowed. Hitler outlawed freedom of the press and all individual rights, and the Nazis were allowed to imprison anyone without a trial. The secret police, the *Gestapo*, hunted down enemies who were beaten, shot, or jailed. Within months after Hitler came to power, the first permanent concentration camp, Dachau, was opened outside Munich. During the next several years, similar camps opened throughout Germany and political and religious opponents of the Nazi party, especially the socialists, communists, and Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned there. All courts were controlled by the Nazis, and judges were expected to decide on the basis of the new system rather than justice.

By the time the Nazis came to power, the economy was already recovering, but they received full credit. Once in power, the Nazis pushed the recovery faster with an enormous public works program. Unemployment continued to drop, and prices of agricultural commodities paid to farmers rose providing greater security to farm owners. Each of the work projects received publicity linking it with the triumph of Hitler. All radio broadcasts and newspapers were effectively controlled by a little man, Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi party's chief of the Department of Propaganda. Those who disliked Goebbels referred to him as the "poisonous dwarf." His cunning was both feared and respected. Unsuccessful in finding work, Goebbels had found a home for himself in the Nazi party. As Chief of Propaganda, Goebbels discovered his true talent -- organized lying. He used the media to publicize gross falsehoods and repeated them again and again. The idea behind this deception was, as he said, "A little lie may not be believed by all, but a big lie, if repeated with sufficient frequency, will eventually take deep root in the minds of the uninformed masses."

What the papers and broadcasts did not report was the fact that these economic gains were often temporary and came at the expense of freedom and democracy. Particularly vicious were the broadcasts in which Hitler spoke himself. He promised sweeping reforms and raged against the Jews as enemies and corruptor of the purity of Germany. The Nazis accused the Jews of wanting to do what they were out to do for themselves: control the world and annihilate their enemies.³ In his book, *Harvest of Hate*, Leon Poliakov noted: "But while Adolf Hitler...had nothing new to offer in the way of ideas and concepts (concerning anti-Semitism)...he immediately produced some revolutionary innovations... the *Führer's* main task was to transform 'static hate' into 'dynamic hate'."

All labor unions were outlawed, wages were not allowed to increase and workers were forcibly enrolled in the German Labor Front. Independent organizations for farmers were squashed and farmers had to join the Nazi farmers' group. Farm prices could not be raised in later years, even though the prices farmers had to pay for industrial goods went up and up. However, many farmers applied for and received slave labor. The "community" was fostered. In a society always class-conscious, the banker was encouraged to eat with the farmer and the factory boss with his assembly workers. Although the wealth was to be shared, the industrialists stayed rich. They had financed the Nazis when it became likely Hitler would win.

Children were taught to pray to Hitler instead of to God, and Nazi organizations were set up for boys and girls to assure the loyalty of future generations. The organization for boys was called the "Hitler Youth" and for the girls, the "League of German Maidens." They were required to drill, become physically fit, swear allegiance to Nazi beliefs, and learn the Nazi party songs. They were taught to spy on anyone who opposed Hitler's beliefs, even their own parents.

Discrimination Against the Jews

Initially many Germans dismissed Hitler's ravings against the Jews as a mere campaign strategy to gain attention. But as early as the spring of 1933, right after the Nazi seizure of power, Stormtroopers attacked Jewish businesses. They smeared graffiti with Stars of David on store windows and stood outside requesting the boycott of Jewish merchants, threatening potential customers. But an international boycott of German goods forced the Nazis to drop this tactic; it was also initially unsuccessful in Germany, where consumers tended to shop by habit or the availability of products at good prices.

In 1933, a systematic campaign against political opponents, some of whom were Jews, began to take place. "On March 21, 1933, the first prisoners were brought under guard to the Oranienburg concentration camp. In the next ten days, some 15,000 persons were taken into 'Protective Custody.'" In September of 1935, the Nuremberg Laws were adopted in which Jewish status was defined and segregated them from the non-Jewish population, called "Aryans" by the Nazis. People were defined as Jews according to the religious practices of their grandparents, not according to their own religion. Many Jewish converts to Christianity were thus considered to be Jews. Under these laws, Jews were removed from civil service, courts and commerce, schools and universities. Marriage between Jews and non-Jews was banned, as was the employment of female non-Jewish servants by Jews. By late 1935, these laws were also applied to other "non-Aryan" groups, including the Gypsies and African-Germans.

As the Germans moved toward war, the Nazis intensified the persecution of the Jews in Germany, including the expropriation and forced sale of their property at artificially low prices. On November 9, 1938, Storm Troopers attacked Jewish homes and businesses and burned synagogues throughout Germany and Austria. The Nazis looted thousands of Jewish businesses, and about 26,000 Jews were arrested. The streets were littered with glass from the many shop windows the Nazis had smashed. The evening of destruction became known as *Kristallnacht* (the Night of Broken Glass). To add to their misery, the Jews were forced to pay for the damage that the Nazis had done.

The War Years

As supreme commander or *Führer*, Hitler started a policy of rearmament soon after coming to power and made plans to seize other territories in order to provide *Lebensraum* (living space) for Germans. Hitler was able to make several military and territorial gains without conflict. He reincorporated the Saar (1935), occupied the Rhineland (March 1936), and incorporated Austria with Germany (March 1938). When Hitler claimed the necessity to take over the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia partially inhabited by Germans, an indecisive Britain and France sanctioned this partition in a pact signed in Munich, Germany, in September 1938. The Prime Minister of England, Neville Chamberlain, excused this act of betrayal by claiming that by appeasing Hitler, he had brought "Peace in Our Time." A year later, Hitler took control of the rest of Czechoslovakia.

The Germans signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in August 1939 which freed Germany to attack Poland. Britain and France finally saw that they would have to go to war to stop Hitler from further aggression. Germany attacked Poland in September 1939 and Britain and France, who had guaranteed Polish independence, declared war on Germany. The Second World War had begun.

As they invaded Poland, many German soldiers, particularly the SS troops, deliberately killed any Jews they found. Once the country was conquered, its large Jewish population was forced to move to ghettos, slum neighborhoods in the larger cities where thousands of people were forced to live in a severely cramped space. These ghettos were deprived of adequate supplies of food and medicine, and their populations were condemned to a slow death.

The "non-aggression pact" Hitler had made with the Soviet Union allowed Germany to conquer much of Western Europe without interference. In return, the Soviets received some of the spoils of the war, including large territories of land in Eastern Poland and the Baltic countries. Then, after conquering much of Western Europe, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. In less than a month, the *Wehrmacht* (German army) had advanced 450 miles into Russia. Moscow, the capitol of Russia, was only 200 miles away. As great land masses were swallowed up, so, too, were entire Soviet armies. During the first weeks of the invasion, tens of thousands of prisoners were taken, sustaining Hitler's faith in Germany's invincibility.

A murderous phase of the Holocaust now began. SS military units, known as *Einsatzgruppen* (Mobile Killing Units), followed the advancing German Army and systematically shot and killed any Jews, Gypsies, or communists whom they captured. Trucks were set up so that the carbon monoxide fumes from the exhaust went directly into the rear compartment. As the trucks moved, Jews who had been forced into the rear compartments were killed by the exhaust fumes. Mass executions were conducted such as at Babi Yar or Ponary. And, finally, killing centers were established where millions of Jews and others could be killed by poison gas and other methods.

It is difficult to comprehend why a state would carry out the killing of millions of innocent men, women, and children. However, the Germans put resources into the effort of killing Jews which they might more rationally have put into winning the war. Railroad trains were used to transport Jews to their deaths, instead of taking supplies to the troops at the front. Jews were killed who could have supplied vital labor for German war industries. The Nazis were fanatical about their idea of killing the Jews. Some aspects which formed the motivation of Hitler and the Nazis are the following:

1. Some Nazis, including Hitler, seriously believed their own propaganda. They thought the Germans were involved in a war to the death with the Jews. They thought that either the Jews would control the world or they would. Other Nazis knew this propaganda was false, but they saw it as being politically useful.

2. The Nazis wanted to win the support of the people in Germany by uniting them against a common enemy. Businessmen and professionals could benefit by taking over formerly Jewish businesses and professional practices. Ordinary Germans could be told that the Nazis were pushing aside the "wealthy Jews." Most Jews were not wealthy, but the average Jew was in the middle class, and few Jews in Germany were workers or peasants.

3. The Nazis also wanted to use antisemitism to win support from people in the countries that they conquered. This was not always difficult, especially in Eastern Europe, even though the Nazis intended to turn the Slavic peoples into their slaves. By attacking the Jews, the Nazis could make some of the people in Eastern Europe believe that things would be better for them. The Nazis gave the homes and small businesses of Jews who were killed to Eastern Europeans who collaborated with them. Large Jewish-owned businesses were given to Germans.

4. Peer pressure and careerism also resulted in murderous behavior.

The Holocaust resulted in the deaths of six million Jews. Millions of non-Jewish civilians were also deliberately killed by the Nazis during the war as Germany conquered country after country in Western and Eastern Europe.

On March 11, 1941, The Lend-Lease Act was passed by the United States Congress in spite of objections by isolationists that it would draw America into the war. This act gave the president the authority to ship armaments to any country whose defense was in the interest of the United States. Britain was a major beneficiary of weaponry under this law. When Hitler's forces invaded the USSR on June 22, 1941 -- despite the non-aggression pact between the two nations

– the Lend-Lease Act made it possible for the United States to provide a huge amount of assistance to the Soviet effort to defeat the Germans in the east by supplying them with war materials and goods. The enormous shipments of materials were sent by Merchant Marine ships which became targets of German U-boat attacks. The Merchant Marines were truly heroic, risking their lives to ensure that the shipments made it across the Atlantic Ocean, thereby making an invaluable contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

On December 7, 1941, Japan, an Axis partner of Germany, bombed the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. That evening, President Roosevelt told the American people of the disaster in a special broadcast adding that this was a day that "will live in infamy!" The United States, shocked by the horrible damage and killings by the Japanese bombers, immediately entered the war. In 1944, a giant Allied force invaded Europe. Hitler became frantic and ordered death for any German soldier who retreated.

In the end, Germany was defeated by the armies of Allied forces. Underground resistance movements by the conquered peoples of Europe helped to defeat the Germans. And, in spite of their harrowing conditions, many Jewish people participated valiantly in fighting the Germans. Resistance organizations by Jews and non-Jews organized revolts even in the ghettos, concentration camps, and killing centers.

ENDNOTES

¹Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1982), 87.

² Bauer, 88.

³ Bauer, 91.

⁴ Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1975), 67.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Have students research the factors which contributed the most to Hitler's rise to power. Divide students in groups so that each group can discuss one of the factors and then explain it to the rest of the class. Students can use poster board to outline the main points of their presentation, and students can take notes on each presentation.
2. The Nazi party attempted to burn all books that did not promote their cause. Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, became the state "bible" for the German "Master Race." Although most people did not read *Mein Kampf*, in it Hitler gave full warning of his intentions to conquer Europe and create a German "Master Race." Have students consider what might have happened if more people had read Hitler's book. Have them discuss the cultural importance of books in societies. Should *Mein Kampf* have been burned? What would that have accomplished? Should any book be burned? Why or why not?
3. Have students explore possible answers to the following question: How did Hitler exploit the existing anger and alienation of a large majority of Germans into a hatred of the Jews?
4. Students should investigate Joseph Goebbels' position in the Nazi party and the role that Goebbels had in Hitler's plan for a "Master Race."
5. The Treaty of Versailles ended World War I. Have students examine the terms of this treaty and how it influenced the rise of Nazism in Germany in the years following World War I.
6. When German President von Hindenburg died in 1934, Hitler combined the positions of president and chancellor of Germany to become the new *Führer* (leader). Have students describe some of the initial actions Hitler took to gain control when he became the leader of Germany.
7. Have students define Nazism and briefly outline the rise of the Nazi party in Germany.

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8. Ask students how they could learn to differentiate between truth and propaganda. Over a week's time, have them list examples of propaganda that they either read, hear, or see in the media. Students can share these examples with the class and brainstorm a list of strategies that would help others separate fact from opinion and/or fiction.
9. After World War I, the government of Germany changed and the Weimar Republic was born. Have students research the Weimar Republic and describe its political, social, and economic features as well as the problems it faced. In their research they should include a description of how the Weimar Republic ultimately ended.
10. Have students create a large map of Europe before the outbreak of World War II. They should identify and label countries and sites as well as cities of important events.
11. Have students research the common factors that can be found in the economic, political, and social environments of Italy, the Soviet Union, and Germany that would bind them together in preparation for World War II. As an added activity, students can look at the economic, political, and social environment of Japan at this time to see why the Japanese also joined forces with the Axis powers.

12. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were the leaders of America and England, respectively, during the World War II years. Have students research these two men and their policies. They should list five significant facts about each man, including their foreign and domestic policies. In addition, have them give their impressions of each based on what they have read.

The following activity comes from Rossel, Seymour. *The Holocaust: The World and the Jews, 1933-1945*. West Orange, N.J.: Behrman House, Inc., 1992.

13. Have students look up the word “swastika” in an encyclopedia. What is the origin of this symbol? How has it been used throughout history? What different cultures have used it? As a follow-up activity, students can write an essay on the power of symbols.

The following activity comes from Globe Fearon Historical Case Studies. *The Holocaust*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Globe Fearon Educational Publisher, division of Simon and Schuster, 1997.

14. English writer Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) wrote, “All the people like us are we, and everyone else is they.” Ask students to consider the following questions:

- a) What did Kipling mean by this statement?
- b) Do you think the Nazis would have agreed with Kipling? Why or why not?
- c) Do you think that many people in the United States share Kipling’s attitude? Explain your answer.

The following activities come from Gary Grobman. *The Holocaust: A Guide for Pennsylvania Teachers*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1990. Reprinted by permission.

15. Ask students to give examples of how propaganda is used in the United States by:

- a) TV advertisers
- b) the U.S. government
- c) foreign government
- d) political parties
- e) parents
- f) teachers and school administrators
- g) neo-Nazi groups

16. Discuss with students the difficulties of refuting propaganda. Have them consider the following questions:

- a) What is a rumor?
- b) How does it start?
- c) Why is it believed?
- d) Why does this belief often persist?

The following activity was created by Robert Hood, Miami Killian Senior High School, Miami, Florida.

17. Locate and play the song “Tomorrow Belongs to Me” from the movie soundtrack *Cabaret* (1972). Ask students to describe the kind of song it is. (It is a very emotional and patriotic song -- kind of like a German “America the Beautiful.”) Then play the video clip of the scene in the movie

when the song is performed. Students are usually shocked to see that it is sung by a group of Nazi youths in a public beer garden. Civilians are moved to join in the singing; all join in but one old man who shakes his head in worry. After the lesson, have students share what their thoughts and feelings were while they listened to the song and then watched the scene.

CORRELATIONS TO THE SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS FOR THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS

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HOLOCAUST CHRONOLOGY

1920

February 24: The Nazi party issues a platform.

1923

November 9: In Munich, the Nazis, headed by Adolf Hitler, try to take over the Bavarian government, in what becomes known as the Beer-Hall *Putsch*. Hitler begins a jail term for his role in the plot. During his time in jail, he writes *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*, an autobiography which outlines his racist theories. A sympathetic judge releases Hitler before his jail sentence is over.

1933

January 30: President Hindenburg appoints Adolf Hitler as *Reich* Chancellor after an election in which the Nazis receive approximately 33 percent of the vote.*

February 27: *Reichstag* building destroyed by arson, and the next day a national emergency is declared. The German constitution is suspended; the government takes away freedom of speech, assembly, press, freedom from invasion of privacy, and from house search without warrant.

March 4: Franklin D. Roosevelt is inaugurated as President of the United States.

March 20: Dachau concentration camp, the first in a system which came to include thousands of camps and sub-camps by 1944, is established near Munich, Germany. Its first prisoners are those arrested for political opposition to the regime.

March 24: "Enabling Act" is passed by the German *Reichstag* (parliament). The Act is used by Hitler to establish his Nazi dictatorship and makes suspension of civil liberties legal.

April 1: An official, nationwide, one-day boycott of Jewish-owned businesses in Germany is called by the Nazi party leadership.

April 7: The German "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" excludes "non-Aryans" from government employment. Jewish civil servants, including university professors and school teachers, are fired in Germany.

April 26: Official formation of the Gestapo, the Nazi Secret State Police. The Gestapo was given powers to arrest and interrogate without reference to any other authority of the state.

May 10: Books written by Jews and political opponents of Nazism are burned during public rallies throughout Germany.

July 14: Nazi Party proclaimed by law to be the only legal political party in Germany. Any individuals holding non-Nazi political meetings are subject to arrest and imprisonment.

Law passed in Germany permitting the forced sterilization of Gypsies, the mentally and physically disabled, African-Germans, and others considered "inferior" or "unfit."

July 20: Concordat signed in Rome between the Vatican and the Third Reich.

Fall: Placards declaring "Jews Not Wanted" appear on cafes, stadiums, shops, and roads leading to German towns and villages.

October 14: Germany withdraws from the League of Nations.

December 1: Hitler declares legal unity of the German State and Nazi party.

1934

January 26: Germany and Poland sign a ten-year non-aggression pact.

June 30: Hitler orders the SS, under Heinrich Himmler, to purge the SA leadership. Approximately seventy Nazi leaders and civilians are murdered during the "Night of the Long Knives." Ernst Röhm, former head of the SA and member of Hitler's cabinet, is killed in the purge.

August 2: German President Paul von Hindenburg dies, leaving the way open for Hitler to establish a dictatorship. Hitler declares himself Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Members of the armed forces are now required to swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler.

October: First major wave of arrests of homosexuals occurs throughout Germany, continuing into November.

1935

March 16: In violation of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany resumes military conscription. World powers do not respond.

April: Jehovah's Witnesses are prohibited from religious activity and publication, banned from civil service jobs, and arrested throughout Germany.

June 28: German officials strengthen Paragraph 175 of the German legal code to introduce more stringent punishment for homosexual behavior; the paragraph is widened to punish all "indecent" acts between men, even those not sexual in nature.

Summer: *Juden Verboten* (Jews Forbidden) signs increase in number outside towns, villages, restaurants and stores. More than seventy-five thousand Jews emigrate or flee Germany by the end of August.

September 15: *Reichstag* passes antisemitic citizenship and racial laws at Nazi party rally in Nuremberg. The “*Reich* Citizenship Law” and its corollaries exclude Jews and other “non-Aryans” from full *Reich* citizenship. The “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor” forbids marriage or sexual relations between German “Aryans” and Jews.

November 14: Following the passage of the “Regulation to the *Reich* Citizenship Law,” categories are established which define a Jew according to the number of Jewish grandparents a person has.

1936

March 3: Jewish doctors are no longer allowed to practice in government institutions in Germany.

March 7: German army enters the area of the Rhineland, violating the Treaty of Versailles. World powers do not respond.

July: First German Gypsies are arrested and deported to Dachau concentration camp.

August 1-16: Olympic Games are held in Berlin, Germany. Antisemitic signs are removed from most public places until the Games are over.

October 25: Hitler and Mussolini form Rome-Berlin Axis pact.

November 25: Germany and Japan sign military and political pact.

1937

January 30: Hitler addresses the *Reichstag* and proclaims “the withdrawal of the German signature” from the Treaty of Versailles.

July 16: Buchenwald concentration camp opens.

November 16: Jewish passports are declared invalid for foreign travel.

1938

March 13: Germany incorporates Austria into the Third *Reich* (*Anschluss*). Nazis apply all antisemitic laws to Austria.

June 25: German Jewish physicians are permitted to treat only Jewish patients.

July 6-15: Representatives from 32 countries meet at Evian, France to discuss refugee policies. Most of the countries refuse to let in more German Jews.

August 17: A decree to be effective January 1, 1939 makes it mandatory for Jews to insert the middle names “Israel” and “Sarah” into all official documents. Jews are thus always identifiable.

- September 29:** Munich Agreement is signed. Britain, France and Italy accept German incorporation of Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia. Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, is the architect of the policy of "appeasement." No Czech representative is present at the conference.
- October 5:** At the request of the Swiss government, passports of German Jews are marked with the letter "J" for *Jude* (Jew).
- November 7:** Herschel Grynszpan, whose parents were deported from Germany to Poland, assassinates Ernst vom Rath, third undersecretary of the German Embassy in Paris.
- November 9:** A pogrom (attack on Jews) begins in Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland. Over one thousand synagogues are burned, seven thousand shops are looted, Jewish cemeteries, hospitals and homes are destroyed, and more than 90 Jews are killed. Thirty thousand Jewish men are arrested and sent to concentration camps. Many Jewish women are jailed. This is followed by a fine of one billion *Reichmarks* (\$400 million) imposed on the Jewish community. This event becomes known as *Kristallnacht*, the Night of the Broken Glass.
- November 15:** All Jewish children are expelled from German public schools. Jews must attend segregated Jewish schools.
- December 2-3:** All Gypsies in the *Reich* are required to register with the police.
- December 8:** Jews are no longer permitted to attend universities as teachers and/or students.
- December 13:** Decree on "Aryanization" (compulsory expropriation of Jewish industries, businesses and shops) is enacted.
- 1939**
- January 30:** Hitler predicts the "annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe" in the event of war in a speech to the German *Reichstag* (parliament).
- March 15:** Following the annexation of the Sudetenland in October 1938, German troops occupy Prague and the remainder of Czechoslovakia. No response from world powers.
- June:** Jewish refugees aboard the S.S. *St. Louis* are denied entry to Cuba and the United States and are forced to return to Europe.
- August 23:** Hitler and Stalin sign the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union (Nazi-Soviet Pact).
- September 1:** The German army invades Poland, and World War II begins. A curfew is imposed on Jews in Germany, forbidding them to be outdoors after 8:00 PM.
- September 3:** Britain and France declare war on Germany.

- September 17:** The Soviet Union invades and occupies parts of Eastern Poland.
- September 28:** Partition of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union. German forces occupy Warsaw.
- October:** Hitler extends the power of doctors to kill institutionalized mentally and physically disabled persons in the T-4 program. This secret decree is dated September 1, 1939, to make it appear as if the euthanasia program were associated with the war effort.
- October 8:** First Polish ghetto established in Piotrków Trybunalski.
- November 23:** Jews in Poland are forced to wear a yellow *Judenstern* (Jewish six-pointed Star of David) on their chests or a blue-and-white Star of David armband.

1940

- April 9:** German forces invade Denmark and Norway.
- May 10:** Germany offensive begins in Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and France.
- Neville Chamberlain resigns as British Prime Minister, and Winston Churchill assumes the post.*
- April 30:** Ghetto at Łódź, Poland, is sealed off, enclosing 165,000 people in 1.6 square miles.
- June 10:** Italy enters the war on Germany's side, declaring war on Great Britain and France, and invading France.
- July 19:** Telephones are confiscated from Jews in Germany.
- September 27:** Germany, Italy, and Japan sign the ten-year Tripartite Pact. The Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis is established.
- November 15:** Warsaw ghetto is sealed off; it ultimately contains 500,000 people.
- November 20-25:** Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia become members of the Tripartite Pact.

1941

- March:** Adolf Eichmann appointed head of *Gestapo* (Secret State Police) section for Jewish affairs.
- March 1:** Himmler orders the construction of a camp at Birkenau (Auschwitz II). Construction begins in October 1941 and continues until March 1942.
- March 3-20:** A ghetto in Krakow is decreed, established, and sealed.
- March 11:** The United States government approves the Lend-Lease Act (the principal means for providing U.S. military aid to foreign nations during World War II. Britain, the Soviet Union, China, Brazil, and many other countries received weapons under this law).

- March 22: Gypsy and African-German children are expelled from public schools in the *Reich*.
- March-April: Germany, joined by Bulgaria and Italy, invades North Africa, Yugoslavia, and Greece.
- June 22: German invasion of the Soviet Union begins, known as Operation "Barbarossa." *Einsatzgruppen* follow closely behind the combat groups, beginning the wholesale murder of Jews, Gypsies, and Soviet political functionaries.
- July 8: Wearing of the Jewish star is decreed in the German-occupied Baltic states.
- July 21: A memorandum signed by Hermann Göring requests Reinhard Heydrich to prepare a "total solution to the Jewish Question." Historians believe that this directive led directly to the establishment of killing centers and the efforts to murder the Jews of Europe.
- August 24: Hitler orders an end to Operation T-4 as public protest concerning the "secret" program grows. Hereafter, the euthanasia program continues in a more discreet and decentralized manner.
- September 1: German Jews above the age of six are required to wear a Yellow Star of David sewed on the left side of the chest with the word "*Jude*" printed on it in black.
- September 23: Soviet prisoners of war and Polish prisoners are killed in Nazi test of gas chambers at Auschwitz.
- September 29-30: Nearly 34,000 Jews are killed by mobile killing squads at Babi Yar, near Kiev (Ukraine).
- October: Construction begins on Birkenau, an addition to the Auschwitz camp. Birkenau includes a killing center which begins operations in early 1942. Construction also of Majdanek-Lublin killing center.
- October: The systematic deportation of Jews to ghettos begins in Eastern Europe.
- October 10: Theresienstadt ghetto is established in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.
- November 1: In Nazi-occupied Poland, the construction of a killing center at Belzec begins.
- December 7: Japan attacks the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. United States joins the Allies and enters World War II.
- Hitler issues the Night and Fog decree for the suppression of anti-Nazi resistance in occupied western Europe.
- Chelmno, the first killing center in Nazi-occupied Poland, is opened.
- December 11: Germany and Italy declare war on the United States.

1942

- January 20:** Fifteen Nazi and German government leaders meet at a villa in Wannsee, on the outskirts of Berlin, to discuss the “Final Solution of the Jewish question.” Reinhard Heydrich presides over the meeting.
- February 1:** The SS Central Office for Economy and Administration (WVHA) is established under the leadership of Oswald Pohl to manage slave labor in German industry and concentration camps.
- February-March:** The “evacuation” of the major Jewish ghettos in the General Government in Poland begins. This marks the launching of the systematic deportation and murder of the Jews in occupied central Poland.
- March:** The killing centers located in Nazi-occupied Poland at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Belzec, and Majdanek-Lublin begin mass murders of Jews in gas chambers.
- May:** In Poland, Jews are first killed at Sobibor killing center.
- April-June:** Jews in the Netherlands, Belgium, and France are required to wear yellow stars.
- June 9:** The Czech town of Lidice is razed, and the population either killed or deported in retaliation for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich by agents of the Czech exile government in England several days earlier.
- November 24:** Knowledge of the mass killing of the Jews in Europe is publicly announced in the United States by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise.
- December 16:** Heinrich Himmler issues a decree for the deportation of “all Roma Gypsies, all part Gypsies, and all non-German Gypsies of Balkan origin” to Auschwitz.
- December 17:** Allied nations pledge to punish Germans for its policy of genocide.

1943

- February 2:** German Sixth Army surrenders at Stalingrad, marking the turning point in the war.
- April 19:** The Warsaw ghetto Uprising begins as Jewish fighters fiercely resist the German attempt to liquidate the ghetto; resistance continues for nearly one month.
- April 19-30:** British and American representatives meet in Bermuda about rescue options and fail to come up with significant rescue proposals.
- May 16:** Liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto.
- June 11:** Himmler orders liquidation of all remaining Jewish ghettos in Nazi-occupied Poland and the Occupied Eastern Territories and the deportation of their inhabitants to killing centers.

- July 5: Heinrich Himmler orders the closing of the Operation Reinhard camps, as most of the Jews in the General Government have already been killed.
- August 2: Jewish prisoners revolt at the Treblinka killing center; although more than 150 prisoners escape, most are caught and killed.
- October 1: Deportations of Danish Jews begin; however, most escape to Sweden with the help of the Danes.
- October 14: Inmates at Sobibor begin armed revolt.
- October 20: United Nations War Crimes Commission is established.
- November 3: Operation "Harvest Festival" begins as the Germans liquidate the last Jews in the Lublin region of occupied Poland. In this single largest German killing operation, 42,000 Jews are shot to death.

1944

- May 15-July 19: The deportation of Jews from recently occupied Hungary is carried out; most are sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center where they are immediately gassed.
- June 4: Allied troops arrive in Rome.
- June 6: Known as D-Day, the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Western Europe begins on the beaches of Normandy, France.
- June 23: Soviet summer offensive begins.
- July 20: German officers fail in an attempt to assassinate Hitler.
- July 24: Soviet troops liberate the Majdanek killing center; it is the first killing center entered by Allied troops.
- August 2-3: The Gypsy family camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau is liquidated.
- October 6-7: In the *Sonderkommando* uprising at Auschwitz, the prisoners destroy one of the crematoria.
- October 23: Paris is liberated by Allied armies.
- November 24: Himmler orders destruction of Auschwitz crematoria as Nazis try to hide evidence of the death camps.
- November 26: "The Auschwitz Report," detailing the killings at the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center, is released to the public by the War Refugee Board.

1945

- January 17: Massive forced evacuations ("Death Marches") from the Auschwitz complex begin as Soviet forces draw near. The Death Marches continue from other camps for the next few months.

- January 27: The Auschwitz camp complex is liberated by Soviet troops.
- February 4-11: Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin meet at the Yalta Conference in the Crimea.
- April 11: Buchenwald is liberated by American troops as prisoners start a revolt to forestall the evacuation of the camp.
- April 28: Mussolini is killed by Italian partisans as he tries to escape to Switzerland.
- April 29: American troops liberate Dachau.
- April 30: Adolf Hitler commits suicide in Berlin.
- May 3: Three German ships carrying prisoners evacuated from Neuengamme concentration camp are attacked by Allied aircraft in the bay of Lübeck, Germany. Two ships are sunk; approximately 7,300 prisoners are killed.
- May 5: American troops liberate Mauthausen.
- May 7: Germany surrenders to the Allies.
- May 8: VE-Day (Victory in Europe); the war in Europe is officially over.
- June 26: The United Nations charter is signed; it goes into effect on October 24, 1945.
- August 6: The United States drops the first nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.
- August 9: The United States drops the second nuclear bomb on Nagasaki, Japan.
- August 14: Japan accepts the Allied terms of surrender. World War II is over.
- November 22: Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal commences. The Nuremberg Trials conclude on October 1, 1946, which happened to be the Jewish Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), with a judgment in which twelve defendants are sentenced to death, three to life imprisonment, four to various prison terms and three acquitted.

1948

- May 14: State of Israel is established.

Chronology Sources:

Bachrach, Susan. *Tell Them We Remember*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994.

Bolkosky, Dr. Sidney M., Betty Rotberg Ellias, and Dr. David Harris. *A Holocaust Curriculum: Life Unworthy of Life*. Farmington Hills, MI: The Center for the Study of the Child, 1987.

Feinberg, Stephen. "Holocaust Chronology." *Social Education*, Volume 59, Number 6 (October 1995): C7-C8.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Daniel's Story Videotape Teacher Guide*. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1993.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *In Pursuit of Justice: Examining the Evidence of the Holocaust*. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum © United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

University of the State of New York. *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide: The Human Rights Series*. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1985.

Timeline

Grade Levels: Middle and high school

Goals:

- To examine the Holocaust from a chronological perspective.
- To make connections between Holocaust events and contemporaneous events in the world.
- To enable students to acquire a frame of reference for comparing their reading with actual events during the time of the Holocaust.

Materials: Poster board, markers, yarn, printouts of photos from this *Teacher's Guide*, paper, pencils, rulers.

Procedure: As a continuing project during the course of a Holocaust unit, students construct a timeline of major events. Events could be added to the timeline as they are discussed in class. Photographs printed out from this *Teacher's Guide* may also be added. Some students may wish to add quotations from persons responding to the events which took place around them.

Variation: Students create parallel timelines on the same poster. The timeline across the top of the poster should record Holocaust events as above. Underneath, the student constructs parallel timelines on one or more of the following:

- The War and major political events
- Inventions and discoveries
- People, arts, theater, music, film, and sports
- The student's family history of that period

Students should look for and attempt to explain events from the various timelines that coincide.

Assessment: This assignment may be assessed on the accuracy and relevancy of the information included on the timeline. The teacher may set guidelines for the quantity of events, photos, etc. to be included. Alternatively, you may wish to have students write their own evaluations of what they have learned by examining the order and contemporaneity of events on their timelines.

Source: *A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust*. Produced by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology, College of Education, University of South Florida © 1997. Adapted from curriculum developed for use with students at the Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum and Education Center. Reprinted by permission.

TIMELINE ACTIVITY

1. Place one large sheet of paper and several magic markers (different sizes and colors) in the center of each table.
2. Distribute copies of (a) this instruction sheet and (b) INDIVIDUAL TIMELINES to each group member.
3. Select one or more group members to draw the outline form of a master timeline on the large sheet.

Options:

The timeline's orientation may be either vertical or horizontal, but there must be room to write on either side of the line itself.

Although each end of the timeline may extend as far as the group wishes, be sure to draw clear demarcations for the years 1933 to 1945.

4. Divide each group into two subgroups.
5. Subgroup A will select ten events to post ABOVE (or to one side of) the timeline. These events will illustrate either key developments or turning points in Nazi party history (e.g., international politics and military action).

Subgroup B will select ten events to post BELOW (or to the other side of) the timeline. These events will illustrate significant stages and crises in Holocaust history (focusing on the experiences of victims: from progressive discrimination to extermination).

6. Timelines will be posted later for other groups to view.

ADAPTING TIMELINE ACTIVITY FOR CLASSROOM USE

PREPARATION

1. List KEY TERMS and CONCEPTS with which students should be familiar **BEFORE** attempting this activity. For example: _____

2. Consider the following substitutions or modifications:

A fuller (or more concise) timeline may be used.

Students may be asked to individually mark—or color-code—their timelines according to category before proceeding as a group to select events for the master timeline.

FACILITATION

3. List KEY TERMS and CONCEPTS which students will encounter **AS** they complete this activity. For example:

4. Consider the following variations or added steps:

Additional categories may be added to reinforce course-related content (i.e., events in Eastern or Western Europe, incidents of resistance, etc.)

Illustrations may be added to the timeline.

EVALUATION AND EXTENSION

5. Consider the following applications:

Students may expand the timeline as they learn more about the Holocaust AND/OR

Students may be asked to re-evaluate their selections as a final activity in a unit of Holocaust-related studies.

Use these suggestions to critique and re-shape this activity for specific audiences and purposes.

Source: Activity created by Donald Peet, Seminole High school, St. Petersburg Florida. Used by permission.

THE WEIMAR CONSTITUTION

Below are excerpts from the constitution drafted by German officials meeting in the town of Weimar from February to July 1919. The constitution was formally approved in August 1919.

Article 1: The German Reich [national government] is a republic. The state power is derived from the people.

Article 13: Reich [national] law takes precedence over Lands [comparable to individual states in the United States] law.

Article 17: Each Land must have a republican government.

Article 20: The Reichstag [national legislature] is composed of the delegates of the German people.

Article 22: The delegates are elected by universal, equal, direct and secret ballot by men and women over twenty years of age, according to the principles of proportional representation.

Article 25: The President of the Reich may dissolve the Reichstag. . . . The new election takes place not later than the sixtieth day after dissolution.

Article 41: The Reich President is elected by the whole German people.

Article 43: The Reich President's term of office shall last seven years.

Article 48: The Reich President may, if the public safety and order in the German Reich are considerably disturbed or endangered, take such measures as are necessary to restore public safety and order. If necessary he may intervene with the help of the armed forces. For this purpose he may suspend, either partially or wholly, the Fundamental Rights [personal freedom from arrest, sanctity of the home, secrecy of telephone and postal communications, free speech, and free press, freedom of assembly and association, and protection of private property]. . . . On demand of the Reichstag these measures shall be repealed.

Article 52: The government of the Reich shall consist of the Chancellor and the Reich Ministers.

Article 53: The Reich Chancellor and at his proposal the Reich Ministers shall be appointed and dismissed by the Reich President.

Article 109: All Germans are equal before the law. In principle men and women have the same civil rights and duties.

Article 135: All inhabitants of the Reich enjoy full religious freedom.

Questions on The Weimar Constitution

1. Under Article 22, political parties in the Weimar Republic were awarded seats in the *Reichstag* in proportion to the percentage of votes they received in national elections. Do you believe that this approach is fairer than the American system, in which congressional representatives are elected in winner-take-all contests? Should a political party that wins ten percent of the vote in congressional elections be entitled to ten percent of the seats in Congress? Explain your answers. What problems might arise if there were five or more parties in Congress, each supported by fewer than twenty percent of American voters?

2. Under the Weimar Constitution, the president served as head of state in Germany's dealings with other countries, while the chancellor, who was appointed by the president, ran the government on a day-to-day basis. How was the Weimar Republic different in this respect from the American system?

3. Why do you think Article 48 has been called the "fatal virus" of the Weimar system?

Source: *Teacher's Resource Book for Crisis, Conscience, and Choices: Weimar Germany and the Rise of Hitler*. Choices for the 21st Century Education Project, Watson Institute, Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912. Phone: (401) 863-3155. Fax: (401) 863-1247. Email: <http://www.choices.edu>. Reprinted by permission of Choices for the 21st Century Education Project.

A Changing Germany



1. European Boundaries Before World War I (1914)



2. European Boundaries After World War I



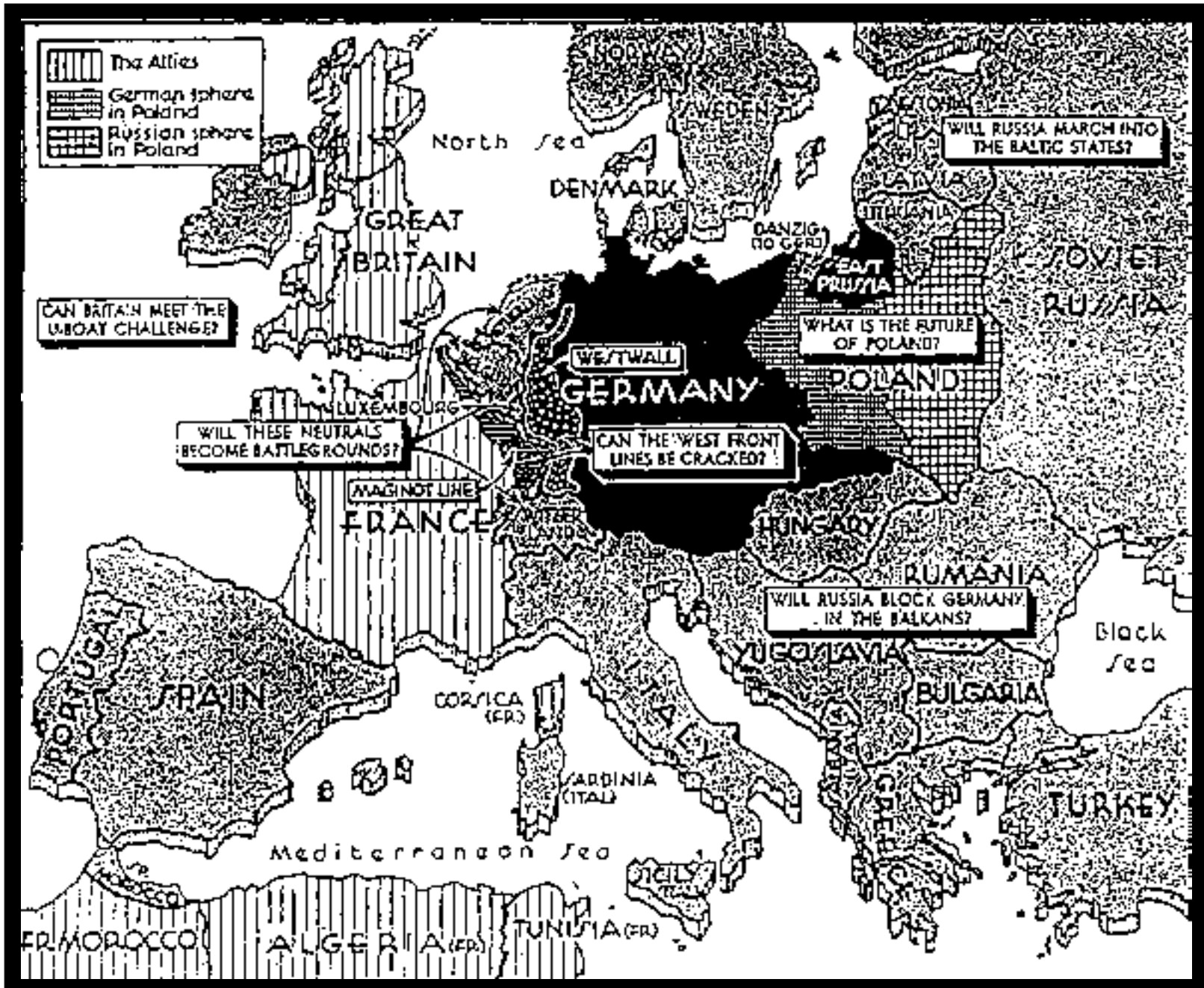
3. European Borders after World War II

Questions:

1. Using an historical atlas, encyclopedias, and/or history textbooks, label the countries in each of these maps.
2. What similarities / differences do you notice in each of the three maps?

©1994 Teacher Created Materials, Inc.

Source: Strathman, Julie R. *Thematic Unit: World War II*. Westminster, CA: Teacher Created Materials, Inc., 1994. Reprinted by permission of Teacher Created Materials Inc., 6421 Industry Way, Westminster, CA 92683. Phone: (714) 891-2273. Fax: (714) 892-0283



Source: *New York Times*, September 24, 1939

Associated Press, Interphoto and British Press Combine

SIX BIG QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK

Man of the Hour . . .

A Comparison of Leadership

The year 1933 was one of great change in Germany and the United States. As the year opened, President von Hindenburg named Adolf Hitler chancellor of Germany and Franklin Roosevelt succeeded Herbert Hoover as President of the United States. On opposite sides of the Atlantic, two journeys to world power began almost simultaneously:

Let's compare the first 100 days of Roosevelt's leadership with Hitler's first 100 days of leadership to see how each sought to handle the severe economic and political distress in his nation. Keep in mind that Hitler came to power over a 14-year-old republic with little democratic tradition, while Roosevelt assumed the reins of a government with 150 years of democratic experience. Nevertheless, we shall proceed as if the two leaders started from the same place at approximately the same time, and that both faced the same problems in approximately the same context — an economic depression within a democratic republic.

As you can see, both leaders moved quickly and dramatically to fulfill their goals — Hitler in the political arena and Roosevelt in the economic realm. Both used extraordinary measures not seen in their countries before. You will notice that Hitler used his position to solidify his own control and subsequently to stifle all political opposition. Roosevelt, on the other hand, set out to tackle the nation's economic troubles, borrowing ideas and assistance from many quarters. Their first 100

days of governing set the tone for their subsequent years of rule, which in both cases ended with death in April 1945.

The document reproduced is a telegram from U.S. Ambassador Frederic M. Sackett to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. The telegram reports on Hitler's actions to consolidate his power on March 23, 1933. (See time line.) On the basis of the Enabling Act, referred to in the telegram, Hitler and the cabinet assumed all powers of government, rendering the actions of the Reichstag without authority. With the subsequent abolition of the political parties except the National Socialists in July, the Reichstag lost its representative function entirely and served only as a conduit for *der Fuehrer's* decrees. In August 1934, after the death of President von Hindenburg, Chancellor Hitler further consolidated his power by assuming the presidency himself.

The document is No. 862.00/2930, in the Decimal File, 1930-39, Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59.

Teaching Activities

Before you begin to discuss the telegram with students, be sure that they understand the following terms used in the document.

Reichstag — The lower house of the German legislature created by the 1919 Constitution. The Reichstag was popularly elected and possessed the power to make law.

Reichsrath — The upper house of the legislature, which was a council of state government representatives (from Prussia,

Bavaria, etc.) and could, according to the Constitution, veto laws passed by the Reichstag.

Chancellor – Leader of the *cabinet* of ministers, which made policy and executed laws for the federal government. The chancellor and cabinet were appointed by the *president*.

President – The popularly elected leader of the republic with four main powers: the appointment of governmental officials (including chancellor and cabinet), the conduct of foreign affairs, the leadership of the military, and the authority to declare a state of emergency for the nation

indefinite – Latin term meaning “without fixing a day for future action or meeting.”

Sackett – Frederic M. Sackett, U.S. Ambassador to Germany, appointed by Herbert Hoover; sender of the telegram to Cordell Hull.

During the 1920s and 1930s, seven major political parties held seats in the Reichstag: the National People's Party, the People's Party, the Democratic Party, the Catholic Center Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party, and the National Socialist (Nazi) Party. The rise of popularity of the Nazi Party was dramatic. It captured only 2.6 percent of the popular vote in the Reichstag elections in 1928, but by the 1932 elections, Nazi Party members had gained 33.1 percent of the vote. However, a coalition of parties still maintained a ruling majority in the Reichstag. The March 1933 elections gave the Nazis 43.9 percent of the vote, for the first time overcoming the strength of the coalition.

You may wish to reproduce or post the time lines for handy reference for your students.

1. Consider one or more of the following questions raised by the telegram with students.

a. How did the new law described in the telegram increase Adolf Hitler's power?

b. Why is it significant that the new law allowed the cabinet rather than the legisla-

ture to change the constitution?

c. What is the meaning of the sentence beginning: “The two Catholic parties swallowed the bitter pill . . .”?

2. Consider the following ideas for class discussion and further inquiry.

a. It has been said that extraordinary circumstances sometimes demand extraordinary measures by governments. Discuss the meaning of this concept with students and develop a list of circumstances that would require a government to assume extraordinary powers: e.g., war, civil disruptions, natural disasters. Once students have developed a list, review it and discuss the limitations on government authority that might be appropriate for each situation.

b. Both Hitler and Roosevelt assumed extraordinary governing powers in their respective countries. Discuss the uses of extraordinary powers by each and how they were alike and different.

c. Develop a list of possible reactions to the German situation that the U.S. Secretary of State might have recommended to the President. As a writing assignment, direct students to draft a reply to Sackett's telegram outlining the U.S. position.

d. President von Hindenburg had the position and authority to resist Adolf Hitler's power plays and yet he did not. Direct students to investigate von Hindenburg— his background, selection as president of the Weimar Republic, and relationship to Adolf Hitler. In a short writing assignment, ask students to describe von Hindenburg's role in Hitler's rise to power.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FROM

NYT

GRAY

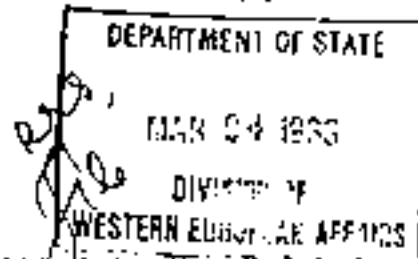
Berlin

Dated March 24, 1933

Rec'd 11:05 a. m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

44, March 24, 10 a. m.



The empowering law submitted to the Reichstag by the parties represented in the government and passed last night gives the Hitler Cabinet practically unlimited powers. It transfers certain presidential prerogatives to the Chancellor while the legislative powers of the Reichstag and Reichsrath are to be assumed by the Cabinet as a whole. It gives the Cabinet the right to enact legislation modificative of the constitution which normally requires a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag, with the sole limitations that the President's powers are to remain unaffected and that the Cabinet may not enact laws abolishing the Reichstag and the Reichsrath as such. The prerogatives of these two bodies, however, are quite thoroughly emasculated by the very next article of the law.

FP

882.00 / 2930

MAR 25 1933

FILED

On

MET

2-#44 from Berlin, Mar. 24, 10 a. m.

On the basis of this law the Hitler Cabinet can reconstruct the entire system of government as it eliminates practically all constitutional restraints. The law remains in effect till April 1, 1937 unless the present Reich Government is sooner replaced by another in which event it becomes void.

Law was passed by 441 votes against 94 belonging entirely to the Social Democrat party. The two Catholic parties swallowed the bitter pill, the spokesman of the Center saying that his party would vote for the law in spite of many misgivings "which in normal times could scarcely have been overcome".

Upon the announcement of the result of the vote the Reichstag was adjourned sine die.

Text and translation of the law being forwarded by mail.

DEB-038

SACKETT

1933 — United States

- March 4 Franklin D. and Roosevelt inaugurated President
- March 6 President Roosevelt declares four-day national banking holiday to prevent further bank closings
- March 9 Roosevelt convenes Congress in special session. Congress introduces and passes Emergency Banking Relief Act, granting broad discretionary powers to the President to meet the economic crisis
- March 10 Roosevelt requests passage of Economy Act to cut government salaries and veterans' pensions to ease strain on government budget. Bill passes March 20.
- March 12 Roosevelt broadcasts first radio "fires on chat" to reassure populace of government's ability to solve economic crisis
- March 22 Roosevelt requests amendment to Volstead Act to legalize and tax the sale of wine and beer, thus increasing federal revenues. Passes April 1
- March 31 Congress creates Civilian Conservation Corps to put to work thousands of unemployed young men
- April 19 United States abandons gold standard
- May 12 Congress enacts Federal Emergency Relief Act to provide states with matching grants for relief for the unemployed
- May 12 Congress passes Agricultural Adjustment Act to relieve farmers through subsidizing for all during acreage in production and other financial support. (The Supreme Court would declare the AAA unconstitutional three years later.)
- May 18 Congress authorizes Tennessee Valley Authority, first giant federal public utility project, to harness the power of the Tennessee River in Alabama for the production of electricity, to serve the region's energy needs, to create jobs, and to develop area's natural resources
- June 6 Congress establishes Employment Service to coordinate and streamline state employment efforts
- June 13 Congress passes Home Owners Refinancing Act, establishing the Home Owners Loan Corporation to refinance long-term home mortgages at lower interest rates
- June 16 Congress establishes Federal Bank Deposit Insurance Corporation to federally insure bank deposits to restore depositor confidence.
- June 16 Congress passes Farm Credit Act to refinance long-term, low interest mortgages for farms, providing same support for farmers that the HOLC offers home owners
- June 16 Congress authorizes National Industrial Recovery Act to revive business and to de-

crease unemployment through increased business cooperation. Creates Public Works Administration to provide jobs through public works projects. (The Supreme Court would declare the NIRA unconstitutional in 1936)

- June 16 Special session of Congress adjourns

1933 — Germany

- January 30 President von Hindenburg appoints National Socialist (Nazi) party leader Adolf Hitler chancellor of German Federal Republic. Hitler tops a cabinet of three National Socialist ministers and eight ministers from other parties
- February 1 Hitler pressures von Hindenburg to dissolve Reichstag and to call for new elections in an effort to strengthen Nazi representation in that body
- February 4 Under pressure from Hitler, von Hindenburg issues a decree limiting freedom of the press and prohibiting free assembly
- February 6 In an effort to centralize political control, Hitler pressures von Hindenburg to disband Prussia's representative legislature. Similar actions in other states across Germany would follow
- February 27 Reichstag building in Berlin is destroyed by fire. Hitler blames incident on Communist Party.
- February 28 President von Hindenburg declares a state of emergency, suspending habeas corpus and other civil liberties. (The state of emergency would remain in effect until Hitler's death.)
- March 5 In the national election of a new Reichstag, 89% of the German voters cast their votes. The National Socialists win 43.9% of the votes. The traditional coalition of four moderate parties, long the basis of majority actions in the Reichstag, can no longer outvote the Nazi members
- March 8 Concentration camps established for internment of political "undesirables"
- March 13 Hitler names Joseph Goebbels to newly created position of minister of propaganda
- March 23 Reichstag passes Empowering Act, surrendering its own constitutional authority to make law to Chancellor Hitler and the cabinet
- April 1 First government-sponsored boycott of Jewish businesses fails. German people refuse to cooperate and pressure is brought to bear on the German government by the international business community
- April 7 National Socialist Civil Service Act establishes new standard for government service, including removal of all non-Aryans and opponents of Nazi rule from the service

NAZI PROPAGANDA

In a period of a few months Hitler had established a one-party state. The next step was to win the allegiance of the German people and unite them behind his rule. Hitler had more than an intuitive understanding of the power of propaganda. Two chapters of *Mein Kampf* deal with the subject. To be successful, propaganda had to present a simple message to a mass audience. The German people had to believe they were involved in an urgent struggle with an evil enemy, a struggle of apocalyptic drama.

Dr. Joseph Goebbels (he had a Ph.D. in literature and philosophy from the University of Heidelberg) became the Nazis' master propagandist. As head of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, he controlled the flow of public information through the press, radio, and film.

All newspapers in the Reich were licensed. Those that refused to endorse the Nazi line were shut down. Editors had to be racially acceptable -- of Aryan descent and not married to a Jew. Some of the most venerable newspapers in Germany were closed because they were owned by Jews, or were forced to get rid of their Jewish publishers and editors.

Twice a day, Goebbels's ministry held a press briefing where reporters were told which events were to be covered. Editors were informed how a story was to be treated. Ministry officials read and censored all papers. Everyone understood the ground rules: failure to please the ministry by printing anything "to weaken the strength of the German Reich ... or offend the honor and dignity of Germany" could result in heavy fines, even imprisonment in a concentration camp.

Goebbels also turned the state-owned broadcasting system into a propaganda vehicle. The Nazi government was the first to exploit the new technology of radio. (President Roosevelt also used the radio to successfully further his own political goals. Fireside chats brought him into the living rooms of the ordinary citizens and were effective in establishing an intimate rapport between the president and the American people.) The Nazis marketed a cheap wireless set -- the *Volksempfänger*. Local radio wardens encouraged neighbors to buy radios. Later, they reported on those who listened to foreign broadcasts, who were then subject to arrest. Radio reached a mass audience and became the most pervasive source of Nazi propaganda. German radio devoted most of its air time to playing martial music, telling human-interest stories about good deeds done by the noble young Aryan men of the Hitler Youth organization, and carrying Hitler's speeches.

Hitler was a powerful and spellbinding orator. In photographs, he does not appear to be a prepossessing person. But in the flesh he was able to exert a magnetism that persuaded even sophisticated Germans that he was not to be underestimated. Albert Speer, who later served as minister of armaments, recalled his first encounter with Hitler:

Three hours later I left that beer garden a changed person. I saw the same posters on the dirty advertising columns, but looked at them with different eyes. A blown-up picture of Adolf Hitler in a martial pose that I had regarded with a touch of amusement on my way there had suddenly lost all its ridiculousness.

The Nazis systematically created the cult of the Führer, the great charismatic leader. To veterans, Hitler was portrayed as the heroic corporal who had fought valiantly for the fatherland; to artisans, as an artist who had torn himself from his studio to answer the call to serve his nation. At public rallies, Hitler worked himself up to a pitch of near hysteria, and carried his audience with him. His experience as a street-corner speaker paid off. Hitler knew how to touch his audience, how to gain their sympathy and play on their fears.

Demonstrations were held at night in a sports stadium. Thousands of men carried banners. Torchlights illuminated the stadium, making it seem like a cathedral of light, or a tribal ceremony. The audience was held in breathless tension. Hitler's speech was punctuated again and again by

shouts of "*Sieg Heil*" from the frenzied crowd. William L. Shirer, the American journalist who reported from Berlin for CBS News, wrote that Hitler's audiences were caught up in emotion that took on the quality of a religious experience:

They reminded me of the crazed expressions I saw once in the back country of Louisiana on the faces of some Holy Rollers who were about to hit the trail. They looked upon him as if he were a Messiah, their faces transformed into something positively inhuman.

Nazi propaganda was designed to shape a folk community bonded to its leader. Allegiance to Hitler was direct, personal, and absolute; it superseded all other loyalties.

Hitler's frequent companion Leni Riefenstahl, the beautiful film star and pioneering director, glorified the Führer in *The Triumph of the Will*, a film that is still studied and shown as a prime example of brilliantly effective propaganda and suasion. Even the opening narrative frames the film as an epic:

September 5, 1934. Twenty years after the outbreak of the World War, 16 years after Germany's crucifixion, 19 months after the commencement of the German renaissance, Adolf Hitler flew to Nuremberg again to review a column of his faithful adherents.

The hour-and-a-half-long film is devoted to the 1934 Nazi party rally at Nuremberg. No effort was spared to accommodate Riefenstahl. Pits were dug in front of the speakers' platform so she could get the camera angles she wanted. Tracks were laid so that her cameraman could take traveling shots of the crowd. Aerial views of Hitler's arrival were shot from planes, and a blimp high above the stadium captured the massive crowd. More than 170 people were on the production staff. When the rough cuts were not quite right, major party leaders and high-ranking public officials were forced to reenact their speeches in a studio. All this was in order to set the scene perfectly before Hitler began his oration, which was the centerpiece of the film.

While Riefenstahl's work was a masterpiece of elegant technique, propaganda in the popular press was intended to be crude. Julius Streicher's tabloid, *Der Stürmer*, featured antisemitic cartoons and fanciful stories in which Jews were shown constantly engaged in international conspiracy, as ruthless businessmen whose god was money cheating honest Germans, and as sex-crazed monsters violating German women and children. Riefenstahl's epic works might appeal to cultured sophisticates, but coarse movies such as *The Eternal Jew* were featured in theaters and schools.

Perhaps the most impressive achievement of Nazi propaganda was the international public relations effort that surrounded the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Germany hosted athletes from fifty-two countries at an event staged on a colossal scale. It was an occasion to showcase the new Germany that had risen from the ashes of the Weimar Republic and the humiliating defeat of World War I. The Olympics gave the Nazis the opportunity to convince the international community that the new regime had been unfairly treated by the press and that stories of antisemitism and the suspension of political freedom had been overstated by journalists and diplomats alike.

In the United States and other countries, participation in the 1936 Berlin Olympics was a matter of controversy. Those who believed that American participation would be taken as tacit approval of the Nazi regime urged a boycott. Others made the case for the purity of a sports competition, arguing that sports and politics should not mix. They warned that a boycott could trigger antisemitism throughout the United States and would threaten the future of amateur sports. Despite the setting, the Olympics were an international, not a German event, they insisted.

The American Olympic Committee received assurances that all German athletes had a chance to participate on the German teams. In fact, Protestant and Catholic sports clubs had been closed down. Only Nazi sports clubs continued to operate. Jews were expelled from gymnastics

clubs and dropped from the Davis Cup team. Jewish athletes were totally excluded from participation. Avery Brundage, the president of the American Olympic Committee, publicly stated that he had witnessed no antisemitism in Germany, and that his impression of tolerance was confirmed in private meetings he had held with the Jewish community in Germany. He neglected to say that these meetings had been held in the presence of Nazi officials.

In anticipation of the Olympics, Berlin was cleaned up. Antisemitic billboards and posters were taken down, the pace of persecution slowed, and even the rhetoric of Nazi leaders toned down. Hitler was a constant presence throughout the games. His arrivals and departures were dramatically staged, and he made a point of personally congratulating the German medal winners.

American schoolchildren learn that Jesse Owens, the superb African-American sprinter who won an unprecedented four gold medals in 1936, spoiled Hitler's plans for an Aryan triumph. Exhausted after his track feats as both a sprinter and broad jumper, and more than content with his victories, Owens had not planned to run in the 400-meter relay. Two Jewish runners, Marty Glickman and Sam Stoller, had competed and qualified for the event, and Owens felt that they had earned the right to compete. Mack Robinson, whose brother Jackie was to break the color line in major league baseball a decade later, was the third member of the relay team. Afraid that a victory by Jewish athletes would further offend the German hosts, a solicitous Avery Brundage excluded the two Jewish runners and ordered Owens to take the baton. In those days, athletes did as they were told. Glickman described the emotion that came back to him as he revisited Berlin some fifty years later:

I stopped and looked across at the stands, and saw where Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, Streicher and Himmler had sat. And suddenly a wave of anger swept over me so that I thought I was going to pass out. . . .

President Roosevelt, who had remained silent throughout the Olympic debate, reassured his friend Rabbi Stephen Wise, president of the American Jewish Congress. Tourists returned from Berlin had reported to Roosevelt that "The synagogues were crowded and apparently there is nothing very wrong."

Source: Berenbaum, Michael. *The World Must Know: the History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Dr. Michael Berenbaum, and Little, Brown and Company.

NAZI EDUCATION

The following trial transcript was taken from the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, Germany on January 10, 1946. The defendant, Julius Streicher, was the publisher and author of a number of Nazi anti-Jewish books and a newspaper entitled, *Der Sturmer*. Streicher was also the Gauleiter or Nazi regional chief in the province of Franconia. This transcript begins with an introduction by Lt. Col. Griffith-Jones, an attorney for the prosecution.

LT. COL. GRIFFITH-JONES: Der Sturmer also published some children's books, although I make it quite clear that I am not alleging that the defendant himself wrote the books. But they were published from his publishing business; and they are, of course, on the same line as everything else that was published and issued from that business.

The first of them to which I would call attention was entitled in English – or the English translation is – as follows: Don't Trust the Fox in the Green Meadow Nor the Jew on His Oath. It is a picture book for children. There are pictures, all of them offensive pictures depicting Jews, of which a variety of selections appears in the Tribunal's book. And opposite each picture there is a little story.

The writing opposite the first picture, which depicts a very unpleasant looking Jewish butcher cutting up meat, is as follows:

“The Jewish butcher: He sells half-refuse instead of meat. A piece of meat lies on the floor, the cat claws another. This doesn't worry the Jewish butcher since the meat increases in weight. Besides, one mustn't forget, he won't have to eat it himself.”

Again in the interest of time, it is not worth quoting the contents of that book any further. The Tribunal can see the type of book it is, the type of teaching it was instilling into the minds of the children. The pictures speak for themselves.

The second picture is a rather beastly picture of a girl being led away by a Jew. On the next page we see the defendant smiling benignly at a children's party, greeting the little children. The next picture depicts copies of Der Sturmer posted on a wall with children looking at them.

The next picture perhaps requires a little explanation. It is a picture of Jewish children being taken away from an Aryan school, led away by an unpleasant looking father; and all the Aryan children shouting and dancing and enjoying the fun very much.

That book, Document M-32, becomes Exhibit GB- 181.

THE PRESIDENT: You won't be able, will you, to finish in a short time? Perhaps we'd better adjourn now.

LT. COL. GRIFFITH-JONES: I have about an-other 20 minutes.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yes; we will adjourn now.

(A recess was taken.)

LT. COL. GRIFFITH-JONES: My Lord, I had finished describing that one children's book. There is a similar book called The Poisonous Fungus, which has, in fact, been put in evidence already as Exhibit USA-257, but it was not read to the Tribunal; and I would like to read one of the short stories from that book because it

shows, perhaps more strikingly I think, than any other extract to which we have referred, the revolting way in which this man poisoned the minds of his listeners and readers.

It is a book of pictures again with short stories, and Page 69 of the document book shows one of the pictures, a girl sitting in a Jewish doctor's waiting room.

My Lord, it is not a very pleasant story, but he is not a very pleasant man; and it is only by reading these things that it becomes possible to believe the kind of education that the German children have been receiving during these years, led by this man.

I quote from the story:

“Inge” – that is the girl – “Inge sits in the reception room of the Jew doctor. She has to wait a long time. She looks through the journals which are on the table. But she is much too ner-vous to read even a few sentences. Again and again she remember the talk with her mother. And again and again her mind reflects on the warnings of her leader of the League of German Girls. A German must not consult a Jew doctor. And particularly not a German girl. Many a girl that went to a Jew doctor to be cured met with disease and disgrace.

“When Inge had entered the waiting room, she experienced an extraordinary incident. From the doctor's consulting room she could hear the sound of crying. She heard the voice of a young girl, ‘Doctor, doctor, leave me alone.’ “Then she heard the scornful laughter of a man. And then, all of a sudden it became absolutely silent. Ingrid had listened breathlessly.

“‘What can be the meaning of all this?’ she asked herself, and her heart was pounding. And again she thought of the warning of her leader in the League of German Girls.

“Inge had already been waiting for an hour. Again she takes the journals in an endeavor to read. Then the door opens. Ingle looks up. The Jew appears. She screams. In terror she drops the paper. Horrified she jumps up. Her eyes stare into the face of the Jewish doctor. And this face is the face of the Devil. In the

middle of this devil's face is a huge crooked nose. Behind the spectacles gleam two criminal eyes. Around the thick lips plays a grin, a grin that means, 'Now I have you at last, you little German girl!'
 "And then the Jew approaches her. His fat fingers snatch at her. But now Inge has got hold of herself. Before the Jew can grab hold of her,

she smacks the fat face of the Jew doctor with her hand. One jump to the door. Breathlessly Inge runs down the stairs. Breathlessly she escapes from the Jew house."

Comment is almost unnecessary on a story like that, read by children of the age of those who are going to read the books you have seen. Another picture which I have included in the

book is a picture, of course of the defendant, and the script opposite that picture, which appears on Page 70 of the document book, includes the words – and I quote them from the last but one paragraph: "Without a solution of the Jewish question there will be no salvation for mankind."

Background and Questions:

"Whoever has the Youth has the Future" – Adolf Hitler

The Nazis used the German educational system to inculcate values which reflected Hitler's and other leading Nazis' philosophies on race, religion, parenting, employment and most other aspects of German life. By controlling the goals for education, the Nazis planned to produce a society of automatons who would follow all of the *Fuehrer's* orders without question. Obedience to Nazi authority was a critical goal for the Nazi-controlled German schools.

This handout focuses on Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda aimed at the very young. The antisemitic children's reader, "Don't Trust the Fox in the Green Meadow Nor the Jew on His Oath," was written by Elvira Bauer and sold more than seventy thousand copies.

After you read the Nuremberg trial transcript about this book, answer the following questions:

1. Identify the anti-Jewish stereotypes inculcated by the Nazi educators.
2. How do materials and lessons such as the one described in this reading promote prejudicial thinking in German youth during the Nazi period?

Source: University of the State of New York. *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide: The Human Rights Series*. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1985. Reprinted by permission.

EDUCATION FOR DEATH:
NAZI YOUTH MOVEMENTS

Gregor Ziemer

State of New York)
) SS
County of New York)

GREGOR ZIEMER being duly sworn deposes and says that:

The following are true and correct extracts from the book entitled "Education for Death," of which I am the author, and which was published by the Oxford University Press in the year 1941; and that the statements made in these extracts are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief:

"I knew enough about Nazi red tape to realize that if I wrote a letter it would get buried under the huge piles of decrees and counter-decrees which Herr Rust was always pouring into Germany. I would never see the inside of a German School. But I prepared my request, stating that I was an American in charge of the American School, grateful for German hospitality; that I was eager to understand the new Nazi methods and the efficient administration in his department; that I would soon return to America, would be asked Nazi pedagogy, and would be able to talk with much more authority if I had actually visited some of the Nazi schools that were producing such unprecedented results.

"The interview was one I shall not forget. Nor have I forgotten much of the exact phraseology used by Herr Rust (Minister of Education). My notes were written out very completely in the

lobby of Adlon Hotel, two minutes from the Ministry.

"Rust was a huge man, overflowing his mahog-any chair and lolling over his polished desk. He was pasty-faced, his eyes shifted from object to object, his mustache twitched. He seemed in-describably sad and appeared to find concentration difficult.

"Heil Hitler! he greeted me without rising. He glanced at my letter lying on the desk. 'You are an Amerikaner?'

'Yes, Herr Minister.'

'What do you Americans teach about us Nazis in your schools in America?'

I regretted again. Our school had only one purpose, I declared: to keep American children in touch with American education. We avoided all politics. We taught only arithmetic, geography, writing, French, science. Of course, we availed ourselves humbly of the cultural opportunities Germany offered; we visited German museums, attended operas, and studied historic spots....

"'And you have Jews in your school', he thundered, interrupting me.

I was on thin ice. He knew that I realized it.

'Herr Minister,' I said, 'those Jewish students are boys and girls who are going to America shortly. And you don't want them in your schools, do you?'

"I can still hear his answer. his half-shut eyes suddenly blazed hatred. 'America,' he said, 'America is foolish, furchtbar foolish, to absorb so many Jews. But then, America always has been foolish, Americans always knew everything better. You will see. I believe some day Germany will have to teach America a good lesson. And now what do you want of me?'

I repeated in substance what I had already written.

He leaned back again, seemed to consider, toyed with the Iron Cross on the left pocket of his brown Hitler shirt.

'You want to inspect our institutions. Why?'

I told him his system had been remarkably successful for its purpose. I wanted to confirm that personally.

"He peered at me as if trying to discover any lurking thoughts I might have. Impatiently he punched a button.

'Bring me the official teachers' manual,' he ordered.

A paper-covered book, as thick as a high school algebra text, was reverently laid on this desk.

Rust became very official. In the book, he said, I would find the complete outline of all work done in Nazi schools. In the introduction, he added with self-satisfaction, I would discover what the Minister for Culture and Education had personally decreed. In those pages he had made his own views perfectly clear. I was advised to study the manual and tell American teachers about it. It would reveal that Young Germany was in deadly earnest.

"I have another direct quotation in my notes: 'Germany always has been and by rights ought to be the focal point of culture in the world,' Rust informed me, pounding the table. 'Your demo-cracies have temporarily degraded us with the cursed Treaty of Versailles. Those days are gone, never to return. German Nordic culture will cover the world, will sweep all before it wird alles vor sich her fegen. We will give your request due consideration. Meanwhile, you have the manual, the official basis for our education. Study it. Heil Hitler, Sieg Heil!'

Taken from: *Trials of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal*. Nuremberg, Germany, 1948. Document 2441-PS, Vol. XXX, pp. 502-541.

. . .

“When does the Nazi Party become interested in the German child?” I asked a high official in the imposing office of Baldur von Schirach, Marshal of Militant Young Germany, Kronzprinzen Ufer 10m Berlin.

‘Before it is conceived,’ was the quick answer.”

“The tall young official glowed with arrogant enthusiasm. He saw my astonishment and explained in detail that there would be little use in driving out the impure Jew if Germany did not make a scientific effort to prevent undesirables from being born. Hitler wanted a superrace; this could only result from mating of healthy individuals.

His desk was littered with pamphlets; the wall was colored with statistical graphs and curves, all indicating the low birthrate during the German republic, but revealing an astonishing rise since 1933.

He lectured me on the efficiency of the Nazi Gesundheitsamt (health office) and the examinations which young mating couples cheerfully undergo before they obtain the Party sanction to mate.

He intimated that soon the Nazi health certificate would replace marriage documents. He explained the Erbesundheitsgesetz, the Nazi law for hereditary good health.

‘Is there no slip-up?’ I inquired. ‘Are there not undesirables who have children anyway, in spite of laws? Can you control the biological urge of a nation?’

‘But we do not wish to control or stifle the bio-logical urge,’ he exclaimed briskly. ‘On the con-trary, we are fostering it wherever we can. But soon there will be no puny, feeble-minded dis-eased children in Germany.’”

“I needed more information. He was very patient, but peered at me as if my naivete was appalling to him.

The undesirables, the feeble-minded, those afflicted with incurable diseases, even the antagonistic in spirit would not have any more children, he explained. That was the wish of the Fuehrer, and Young Germany carried out his decrees.

. . .

“The most typical one (home for unmarried mothers) was near a small village in Harz Hills, among the pines and lakes Bad Sachsa. The large wooden structure, four stories high, had formerly been a luxury hotel managed by a Jew who is now is Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. The swastika over it fluttered gaily. The spacious reception room was airy, comfortably supplied with wicker furniture, white curtains, and flowers.

“My arrival was expected. The middle-aged matron in charge greeted me with the usual Heil Hitler. I told her I was especially interested in what the Party did for women who were going to have State children (formerly known as illegitimate children).

“I was informed that the home was especially anxious to have such girls. They deserved a special credit and special care for contributing a child to the State. According to matron some of these girls still found silly, narrow-minded disapproval among relatives. As a result they occasionally developed Hemmungen (spiritual inhibitions). Thus handicapped, they would not produce good superchildren. But they found peace and quiet in the NSV (1) homes; the Party paid the bill.

(1) National Socialist Welfare Organization

“When I asked if I could talk to one of the prospective mothers, she looked at me speculatively, trying to discover my motive in asking. Her sharp blue eyes betrayed distrust for a moment, but that passed.

“Some of them, she told me, would not wish to talk to me, for they were in the advanced stages of pregnancy. But there was one – a very intelligent girl that might. She hurried to her row of files and looked at her records. Each girl had signed a statement that the father of her coming child was Aryan and in good health. That was all the registration required.

“The girl’s name was Magda. She was outside on the Wiese, the meadow. We found her. She was not beautiful, but definitely not unattractive. She was what the Germans call eine intelligente Frau, with sharp intelligent features, high forehead, delicate nose and brows. She was wearing a German Turnanzug, a blue jacket with long sleeves, open at the neck, and slacks to match. She was lying in the grass on her back, her legs up, reading a book.

“She rose carefully. The matron introduced us in the formal German manner. Magda, whose last name I never learned, was self-possessed and just a trifle sharp in her manner, obviously wondering what the stranger wanted.

“I explained that I was an American educator interested in the study of Nazi institutions. Her face broke into a very feminine smile. Wasn’t I a bit early in coming to her with educational mat-ters?”

“Not too early,’ interrupted the matron. ‘I am sure Magda’s child is going to be a very good Nazi.’

“It was then I was allowed to peep behind the mask of this prospective young mother carrying an illegitimate child. Her eyes glowed with a fanaticism that was intense, devouring. Her answer was one of those I did not have to write

down to remember:

“My child will belong to the State. I am bringing it into the world because he has asked me to.’ She was referring to Hitler, of course.

“Every morning the women listened to an hour’s lecture on what Nazism really meant. After they returned home they became the staunchest workers in their communities. And the Party kept complete record of the children too. Infants of women who had been in the NSV home were NSV wards. Representatives were sent out regularly to contact them.

“We keep the children safe for Hitler until the schools take them over at the age of six,’ the ma-tron summarized this phase of her work.”

. . .

“This is the story of the Pimpf, the Little Fellow. The Nazi Party takes him from the NSV at the age of six, and keeps him until he is ten. He wears a dignified uniform: heavy black shoes, short black stockings, black shorts, a brown shirt with a swastika armband, and a trench cap.

“The Pimpf organization lays the groundwork for Party activities in the Jungvolk and the Hitler Youth. The boy receives a number, and is given a Leistungsbuch, an efficiency record book. Throughout the years it records not only his physical development, and his advancement in military prowess, but also his ideological growth. His school, home, and Party activities are minutely supervised, controlled, inspected, and indelibly registered.

“At the age of ten the Pimpf must pass a rigid examination as outlined in the Pimpf manual, be-fore he can be promoted to the Jungvolk.

“If he fails to be promoted, he is made to feel that he would be better off dead; if he does pass, he is told that he must be ready to die for Hitler in the Jungvolk, even as he was ready to die for him in the Pimpf stage.

. . .

Until the girls in Nazi Germany are fourteen, they are classified as Jungmaedel, young girls. During this time they acquire those rudiments of education that the Party considers essential. But, above all, they are made conscious of their mission in the Third Reich to be bearers of healthy children. Hence the subject of sex is broached early and realistically.

Their uniforms, called Kluffen, include heavy marching shoes, stockings which emphasize durability rather than beauty, full blue skirts, white blouses, cotton neckerchiefs with wooden rings bearing the group insignia. For bad weather the girls have heavy blue ‘training suits,’ slacks, and capes. They usually go bareheaded.

The State is interested especially in their physical health. Jungmaedel are expected to be healthy of body, stoic of mind, and unyielding in their convictions that the savior of Germany is Adolf Hitler.

. . .

Jungvolk are the Nazi boys from ten to fourteen. This stage precedes the Hitler Youth and follows the Pimpf. The rigid system of recording physical achievements as prescribed for the Pimpf is continued, but on a more comprehensive scale.

The Jungvolk is divided into approximately six hundred smaller units, the Jungbanne. These go through a series of Spartan tests. The marches are

longer, the hunger periods come more often, the privileges granted are fewer than those for the Pimpf.

The boys of ten begin their lives in the Jungvolk with an initiation ceremony at which they again swear to give up their lives for Hitler. They conclude their Jungvolk activities with a similar ceremony, more devout, more intense in nature.

. . .

Three letters are sacred to every German girl from fourteen to twenty-one years of age: BDM, the abbreviation for Bund Deutscher Maedel – League of German Girls.

The oath that the girls swear when they are initiated on the eve of Hitler’s birthday includes the clause of self-sacrifice.

From the minute they don the BDM uniforms, elaborate with emblems, letters, triangles, and swastikas, one thought governs their lives; a mature thought, nourished by biological eagerness and restlessness: What can we do, what can we learn, how can we live to prepare ourselves for our great mission – to be the mothers of Hitler’s future soldiers?

. . .

“German boys from fourteen to eighteen belong to the Hitler Youth. They are Hitler’s secondary army ready to die for him, but ready to fight first. And they consider themselves well equipped, mentally and physically.

“On their ideological foundation, laid when they were Pimpfs and Jungvolk, the Hitler Youth erect a superstructure of knowledge useful to soldiers: Deutschekunde, including a study of Germanic culture, Party history, military geography; natural science, chemistry, mathematics; and a foreign language. There is,

naturally, further education in Hitler doctrines. “The Hitler Jugend, HJ, as it is known, has its own system of ranks and promotions. It maintains its own leadership schools and camps. The uniforms resemble those of the regular Storm Troopers.

“The outstanding characteristic of the HJ is their conviction that they are the most powerful

youth organization in the world. To outsiders they seem impatient to prove it.

“They realize their own importance, for has not the Fuehrer, in a speech addressed to his boys in the Lustgarten, Berlin, 1929, told them, ‘Youth has its own state’?

“Dr. Joseph Goebbels has given them another slogan. In HJ Marschiert (“Hitler Youth Marches”) he informs German boys: ‘The older generation says, ‘He who has the Youth, has the

Future.’ We say, ‘He who has the Future, has the Youth.’ That is why Youth follows Hitler and his ideology which is the embodiment of the dreams and hopes of Youth. Don’t let the older generation influence you. We will win. For Youth Is Always Right!’

. . .

Background and Questions:

This reading focuses on the Nazi educational system established after the party took power. Ziemer’s testimony before the Nuremberg Tribunal includes testimony from his Book, *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi*.

As you read Ziemer’s testimony, answer the following questions:

1. List the goals for each component of the Nazi educational system (e.g., the NSV homes for unmarried mothers; the Pimpf; the Jungmaedel, the Jungvolk, the BDM; and the Hitler Youth).
2. How did these youth groups teach and reinforce the value of conformity and blind obedience to authority?
3. How did these organizations teach prejudicial attitudes toward “non-Aryan” peoples?
4. How did the Nazi educational system contribute to the Party’s growth and strength?

Source: University of the State of New York. *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide: The Human Rights Series*. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1985. Reprinted by permission.

PHOTOGRAPHS

An SA picket stands in front of the Jewish-owned Tietz department store in April 1933 with a boycott sign that reads 'Germans defend yourselves! Don't buy from Jews!' (*National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives*)



SA pickets distribute boycott pamphlets to German pedestrians in April 1933. The sign held by one of them reads: 'Attention Germans! These Jewish owners of [five and dime] stores are the parasites and gravediggers of German craftsmen! They pay starvation wages to German workers! The chief owner is the Jew, Nathan Schmidt.' (*National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives*)



A woman reads a boycott sign posted in the window of a Jewish-owned department store in Berlin in April, 1933. The sign reads, 'Germans defend yourselves against Jewish atrocity propaganda, buy only at German shops!' (*National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives*)



Page from the antisemitic German children's book, 'Trau Keinem Fuchs...' [Trust No Fox in the Green Meadow and No Jew on his Oath]. (Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)

UNIT 4

THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE PERSECUTION YEARS

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UNIT 4

THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE PERSECUTION YEARS

*"The world is too dangerous to live in,
Not because of the people who do evil,
But because of the people who sit and let it happen."*

Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955)
Physicist and Refugee from Nazi Germany
Nobel Prize Recipient

INTRODUCTION

Between the years 1933-1939, a series of shocks were dealt to the Jews within Germany which systematically excluded them from German life. A similar pattern was to follow in Austria. Jews in government career positions were removed from their jobs; Jewish lawyers were barred from practicing law; Jewish doctors were allowed to practice only on Jewish patients; university professors and school teachers were dismissed; and scores of regulations restricting livelihood and social activities prevailed. This was an era marked by open persecution against Jews and harassment of those considered "imperfect" and, overall, an expanding disregard for basic human rights.

At the request of the American President, Franklin Roosevelt, an international conference was convened in July 1938 in Evian, France. The purpose of this conference was ostensibly to find a way to help the mass of German Jews desperate to escape from the increasing tyranny. The conference was a fiasco and convinced Hitler of the world's total indifference to the fate of the Jewish people. Without possible places of refuge, the Jews were literally left stranded to face an increasingly uncertain fate.

On November 9 and 10, 1938, the Nazi regime's maltreatment against German Jewry climaxed with two days of terror known as *Kristallnacht*, the "Night of the Broken Glass." For Jews in Hitler's Germany, life was tenuous as they struggled to exist in an inhospitable land.

During this time, harassment against other vulnerable groups also escalated. Political opponents were presumed to be everywhere, and children were encouraged to spy on their parents. The Gypsies, African-Germans, the mentally and physically disadvantaged and homosexuals, together with other "undesirables," were imprisoned and sometimes killed. Homosexuals were sometimes castrated. All those who did not fit the Nazi "ideal" faced the urgent necessity of finding a safe haven while also trying to survive the mounting threats to life. With most of their businesses and bank accounts confiscated, the Jews were quickly becoming impoverished. In spite of their desperate conditions, some of the Jews of Germany were able to find refuge because in this country the Nazi vice closed gradually. In other countries, however, the Germans took over so rapidly that there never was any chance to escape to safety.

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the VOCABULARY.
2. Explain the systematic persecution of Jews in Germany from 1933-1939.
3. Discuss the implications of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 in the scheme of Hitler's Master Plan.
4. Describe the purpose and outcome of the Evian Conference in 1938.
5. Explain the process of "Aryanization."
6. Recognize the danger signals that took place in Germany which led to the genocide of the Jewish people.
7. Explore possible motives for the western world's reluctance in accepting Eastern Europe's Jews.

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Aryanization: The expropriation of Jewish businesses by German authorities.

Blitzkrieg (lightning war): The name given to the extremely rapid advance by German troops and tanks as they invaded western and eastern European nations during World War II.

Concentration camps: The notorious prisons designed for labor, torture, and murder, set up by the Nazis throughout the German *Reich*, Europe, and North Africa. At first used for political prisoners, many later held large numbers of different groups of prisoners (Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, the political resisters, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) from numerous countries. The camps were centers of death where prisoners died by murder, gassing, torture, "medical" experimentation, overwork, disease, and hunger. The largest and possibly most infamous was Auschwitz where more people were interned than at any other prison site. While there were thousands of concentration camps, some of the better known ones were: Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, Flossenbürg, Neuengamme, Gross-Rosen, Majdanek, Natzweiler, Mauthausen, Stutthof, Dora/Nordhausen, and Bergen-Belsen. Six concentration camps were developed and organized specifically and solely as killing centers: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz/Birkenau, and Majdanek. The last two also served as slave labor camps. A wide variety of prisoners were interned and killed in the Nazi camps, the largest groups being the Jews, Gypsies, Soviet prisoners of war, and Slavs. In addition to these, an untold number of other Nazi "undesirables" were held in these camps and killed. However, the Jews were by far the largest single group to be imprisoned in these camps and murdered there. All of the concentration camps were centers of forced labor and death.

Evian Conference: Conference on refugee problems held at Evian-Les-Bains in France, in July 1938 with delegates from 32 countries and representatives from 39 private relief agencies. Only the Dominican Republic offered to receive 100,000 Jews, but in the end, only a few were actually able to come.

Gestapo (Secret State Police): Founded in 1933 in Nazi Germany; the German non-uniformed political police. In 1939, the *Gestapo* became Office IV of the Central Office for *Reich* Security. All political opponents were crushed by the *Gestapo* which used terror, arbitrary arrest, and torture.

Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass): During November 9 and 10, 1938, a pogrom and riot was staged in which mobs of Nazis attacked, looted, vandalized, and set fires to Jewish shops, homes, businesses, and synagogues in Germany and Austria. The name *Kristallnacht* comes from the fact that so many shop windows were smashed, but the term is also an attempt to minimize what actually took place during the pogrom. More than 26,000 male German Jews between the ages of 16 and 60 were deported to concentration camps after this pogrom and riot.

Luftwaffe: The German Air Force.

Nuremberg Laws: Two laws issued on September 15, 1935, followed by a series of regulations, providing a precise definition of "Jew" by origin, religion, and family ties. These laws reduced the rights of German Jews, since they could no longer vote or hold office, although they retained the right to German passports and did not lose their German citizenship until the 11th Citizenship decree in 1941. The concept of "non-Aryan" was first used in these regulations; marriage or sexual relations between a Jew and an "Aryan" were considered criminal offenses. Employment of

"Aryan" household help under age 45 was forbidden. These laws were extended to apply to Christians whose parents or grandparents were Jews. In 1938, the letter "J" was ordered to be printed on all identity cards belonging to Jews. These regulations were the beginning of cruel repression sanctioned by law, designed to isolate the Jews socially as well as politically.

S.S. St. Louis: German luxury liner that left Hamburg in May 1939 with 937 Jewish refugees seeking asylum first in Cuba and then in the United States. Entry was refused and most were returned to Europe to be murdered in the camps. Several hundred were admitted to Great Britain, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

NAMES AND PLACES

Grynszpan, Herschel: A 17 year old Jewish youth who shot and killed the third undersecretary of the German embassy in Paris when his Polish Jewish family was expelled as "stateless" from Germany into Poland at the end of October 1938. This act was used by the Nazis as a pretext for the beginning of *Kristallnacht*.

vom Rath, Ernst: Third undersecretary of the German embassy in Paris who was killed by Hershel Grynszpan; his death touched off *Kristallnacht*.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE PERSECUTION YEARS

In 1933, less than one percent of the total population of Germany was Jewish. Although a small minority, they had contributed significantly to the advancement of German culture and science through hundreds of years. Many of them had served in World War I, and most of them thought of themselves as Germans first, Jews second. They had passionate, long-standing ties to their country and a blind loyalty to Germany. In a land they considered very much their home, the harsh reality of anti-Jewish measures dawned slowly.

Persecution By Law and Decree

In the years prior to the war, Hitler was able to use the law even more effectively than violence to remove the Jews from public life. Under the guise of ensuring racial "purity," numerous decrees were issued, permitting harassment, imprisonment, and murder. These decrees were aimed at Jews, those considered physically or mentally unfit, and other "non-Aryans" such as Gypsies and African-Germans. Eventually, some 400 laws and decrees were enacted.

On April 1st, the Nazi regime called for a national boycott of all Jewish businesses. When the world press picked up the story and criticized Germany, Nazi propaganda spread the word that this reaction was the result of a Jewish "conspiracy." Jews soon began to feel the stigma of isolation. Nevertheless, most of the Jewish leaders believed that the Nazi regime would be short-lived. However, one man, Dr. Leo Baeck, noted teacher, scholar, and the spiritual leader of the Jews of Berlin, prophesied that the thousand-year-old history of German Jewry had come to an end.

To make things worse, the German Jews had no central organization as their spokesmen; no organized representation to protest. On April 4, 1933, the first law was passed that specifically dealt with Jews. By decree, Jews were barred from civil service and all other government employment. Jewish lawyers were barred from practicing law, Jewish doctors were discharged from municipal hospitals and allowed to practice only on Jewish patients. No more than five percent of a school's population could consist of "non-Aryans." "Non-Aryan" teachers were forcibly retired and forbidden to teach or lecture in any but Jewish schools.

Within the same month, regulations were delivered based on a definition of "non-Aryan" descent. According to these regulations, a "non-Aryan" was someone who had one Jewish parent or Jewish grandparent. Even more important was the fact that this law provided a precedent for the concept of racial inequality. Differences between non-Jewish Germans and Jewish Germans therefore, became a matter of legal interpretation. Thus, the foundation had been laid for a method of legalizing persecution.

This order also set a precedent for all other professional areas as Jewish teachers lost jobs in schools and universities, actors were not allowed to perform, musicians were expelled from orchestras, and artists were barred from galleries and museums. With diminishing opportunities, the Jews rallied to create a Jewish cultural organization which continued to provide employment for many of the Jewish artists who would otherwise not be allowed to perform.

On April 26, the State police came under the control of the Nazi government. The *Gestapo*, as it was known, had unlimited police powers. *Gestapo* members could shadow, arrest, interrogate, and detain without outside state authority. Hitler's power machine was now in full operation. Concentration camps were opened to hold any who might dare to disagree with what was happening in Germany.

Still innocent of the reality that surrounded them and strengthened by the hope that the Nazi regime would collapse, Jews went to their local police for help. They appealed to the courts for protection or payment for damage done to their property by roving thugs of Nazi gangs. In these early years, most could not believe that civil rights, due process under the law, and the right to a defense and appeal had all become things of the past.

The next attack was against enlightenment and culture. On May 10, 1933, a burning of books was ordered by the Nazi party in an effort to erase literary and scientific contributions of all intellectuals, the political left, and the avant-garde in general and Jewish scholars in particular. The remaining months of 1933 witnessed new laws against the Jews. Non-German Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe were harassed and their rights of residence were frequently revoked, although most of them never had German citizenship. Jewish farmers, or even those with Jewish ancestors, were denied all rights of family property inheritance.

As violence increased, German Jews reacted to each wave of renewed persecution either by giving into despair, suicide, or flight. However, many Jews chose to remain in the hope that this latest episode of terror would pass. Although there are different estimates, 37,000¹ or more Jews left Germany in 1933. Many of them, however, went to other countries in Europe.

The year 1934 was marked by increased antisemitic actions and crushing all sources of opposition. Protestant and Catholic churches came under attack. However, outraged Christian leaders protested the Nazi attack upon the church. In return for being allowed to keep their religious ceremonies and institutions, the churches gave into state policies. As a result, Hitler stopped the party propaganda which placed the church in a bad light. However, while the church had power to wield, the German Jews had none. Few church leaders (except for the Lutheran/Protestant Confessing Church) spoke out against Hitler's tactics and, for persecuted peoples without a country, it was hopeless to compete against the might of Nazi Germany. Now, clearly deserted by the majority of Christian clergy who disavowed their basic humanitarian principles, another 50,000 Jews fled Germany. In spite of the mass exodus of Jews since 1933, by the end of 1934 some 450,000 Jews had been left behind to face additional hardships and terrors.

Although there were sporadic outbursts which resulted in the deaths of individual Jews and persecution of a score of others, the year 1935 seemed to show a slow down of Nazi inspired activities. One target of the Nazi propaganda machine during 1935 was personal relations between Jews and non-Jews. Stories carried in Nazi controlled and censored papers blasted Jews as race defilers and so the concept of "pure blood" gained momentum not only within party ranks, but also within the public mind as well. State controlled newspapers printed articles denouncing sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews. By the end of 1935, more than 75,000 German Jews had fled their homeland.

Overall, the period of time between 1933 and 1935 was marked with inconsistent policies. For example, the Nazi attitude toward Jewish schools shifted repeatedly. While gradually expelling Jewish children from the public school system, financial support was given to Jewish elementary schools, since education was compulsory. Days of physical violence would be followed by weeks of relative calm which allowed the Nazis to purposefully gauge world reaction. When there was none, subsequent persecutions followed and even intensified. The overall confusion made it impossible for the Jewish community to grasp the intentions of the government. The tendency to attack and then withdraw fostered a false optimism during a period when German Jews might have saved themselves. Yet, underneath these apparently contradictory policies was a common thread: Jews were steadily being deprived of their livelihood and legal status. Even converted Jews and Jews in mixed marriages with non-Jews were targets of Nazi persecution and harassment. Most important, each of these regulations had the full support of the non-Jewish public and the legal establishment.

The Nuremberg Laws

The first laws to be clearly directed at the Jews were passed in Nuremberg, Germany, on September 15, 1935. However, from the beginning of Hitler's reign, law after law, order after order had already been passed restricting Jews in the areas of education, law, economics, and social interaction. What the Nuremberg Laws accomplished was to eliminate random discrimination and introduce a comprehensive body of laws aimed at excluding Jews from mainstream German life. Two laws defined who received full rights as a citizen and how German blood was to be protected.

Assuredly, of the major regulations included in the Nuremberg Laws, the one entitled the "*Reich* Citizenship Law" was most serious. By this law, race was made the determining factor in excluding Jews from the right to vote and hold office. Within a few short years, decisions regarding race would make the difference between life and death.

From the time the Nuremberg Laws were passed, up until 1938, sporadic legislation resulted in further severities against Jews. In February of that year, the *Reich* Supreme Court held that being a Jew was automatic justification for dismissal from a job.

In July, a law was passed saying that Jews could no longer be brokers, office managers, tourist guides, or real estate agents. In September, 1938, Jewish doctors, by law, could be called only "medical assistants." Street names that sounded Jewish were changed, and Jews whose first names did not sound "Jewish" had to add "Israel" or "Sarah" to them. Passports and identity cards were marked with a red stamp "J" that stood for *Jude* -- the German word for Jew. To enforce these laws, the SS and police increasingly began to implement these measures against the Jews.

Using the process of registration and early tabulating (computer) technology, the Nazis not only located Jews but also knew where to round them up at homes and offices. This process was the same for Gypsies and the institutionalized handicapped.²

After Austria was incorporated, in March of 1938, regulations against the Jews in Germany were immediately implemented for the Jews in Austria. It had taken five years for the Nazi regime to develop a system of abuse and exclusion towards the Jews inside Germany. However, in Austria, discrimination was immediate. Overnight, the Jews of Vienna, one sixth of the city's population, were deprived of all civil rights: the right to own property, the right to be employed or to give employment, the right to exercise a profession, the right to enter restaurants or cafes, public baths or public parks. They were denied protection as tenants and were often expelled from their homes. Public brutality was common. Jews were beaten in the streets and their shops were looted. Within one month, more than 500 Jews in Austria committed suicide.

The result of the Nuremberg Laws and the regulations which followed was to bring together the various policies towards the Jews which had previously been sporadic, inconsistent, and sometimes contradictory. However, this also meant that anti-Jewish measures would no longer be at the whim of party members. As "legal" regulations, anti-Jewish measures now fell to the discretion of the courts. The more extreme antisemites, frustrated by what they perceived as a certain loss of power, were soon to be amply rewarded by an event which allowed them to unleash all their venomous hatred.

In the interim, the press of people trying to leave both Germany and Austria was now well known. Their situation was clearly desperate. Hope centered on the United States and a president who many believed was sympathetic to their plight.

Evian Conference

As 1938 wore on into summer, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt called for a conference to decide upon a plan for refugee resettlement. This conference was called at Evian-Les-Bains, a French resort. On the surface, this conference seemed to offer the hope that civilized countries cared about the plight of the Jews and would not tolerate Nazi excesses. Underneath the surface, however, was a very different reality. Countries were told in advance that they were not expected to increase their immigration quotas nor introduce any new legislation which would alter their position on immigrants. With these parameters set, it is small wonder that conference participants said no to Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria, and western Czechoslovakia. What then was the purpose of such a plan? There was a two-fold purpose. One, the United States, under pressure from Jewish groups would have the benefit of appearing interested and in charge of taking the lead. Secondly, all countries could explore ideas about colonization for Germany's Jews and then perhaps render a collective opinion, thus taking the responsibility off of any one country. In any event, for those desperate to find refuge from the Nazis, the Evian Conference was a failure. In light of what came later, what is even more disturbing is that the Evian Conference gave the German propagandists an opportunity to proclaim that the world held a meeting and "no one wanted the Jews."

Kristallnacht

From 1933 to November 9, 1938, tens of thousands of refugees had fled their homeland. So far, German Jews had been allowed to leave. Approximately 200 had been killed and hundreds (if not thousands) had been beaten and abused. The number of opponents held in concentration camps was on the decline, and there was even talk of negotiations for Jews still held at Dachau. Considering five hate-filled years of propaganda against the Jews, the situation was not yet catastrophic. Then, on the eve of November 9th, with Evian Conference a recent memory, the Nazi government decided to stage a pogrom against Jews throughout the Reich.

In order to carry out their plans, a pretext was needed. Their excuse came when a 17 year-old youth living in Paris, Herschel Grynszpan, shot and killed the third undersecretary of the German embassy in Paris, Ernst vom Rath. Grynszpan had received a distressing letter regarding his parents who had been forcibly expelled from Germany. Grynszpan's parents were Polish Jews living in Germany who, together with 17,000 other stateless Jews, had been gathered together and forced over the German border to a no-man's-land between Poland and Germany. Grynszpan, depressed about his parents' plight, and in an attempt to raise world-wide attention, intended to murder the German ambassador to France but inadvertently killed the undersecretary.

This act was used as an excuse to touch off riots all across the breadth of the German *Reich*. Storm Troops (SA) encouraged crowds to roam the streets smashing and looting Jewish owned businesses, destroying Jewish homes, desecrating Jewish houses of worship and once again making bonfires of books by Jewish authors, religious articles, and sheet music of Jewish composers. By the end of the rampage, an official report indicated that 844 shops and stores and 171 homes had been destroyed, 267 synagogues set ablaze or completely demolished and 72 Jews killed or injured. Later estimates, however, corrected these figures to correspond with the much greater degree of damage than the first report had estimated. One aspect not immediately reported were the 30,000 Jews who had been arrested and thrown into concentration camps where hundreds were later to perish. In Austria, a similar rampage was staged. As reports filtered out from foreign journalists and American diplomats, with descriptions of the pavements littered with the smashed glass from Jewish storefronts, the events during November 9 and 10, 1938, quickly became known as *Kristallnacht* (Crystal Night) or the "Night of the Broken Glass." In the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, the Jews were fined for the damage that had been inflicted on them.

One result of *Kristallnacht* was the public outrage that was finally expressed. Although this did not affect the Nazis, it did persuade some of the Western European countries to admit more refugees, especially children. A few hundred Jewish children arrived in England on December 2, 1938, each with a handful of belongings. On December 14, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain decided to allow 10,000 German Jewish children to enter England. This offer was conditional on finding organizations in Britain which would guarantee the full care of the children.

Some of the refugees were able to flee to countries surrounding Germany (especially Belgium and Holland) but most of them realized that such close proximity to Germany was perilous. Yet, obtaining visas outside Western Europe was almost impossible. A few thousand Jews found refuge in Shanghai, China, which was practically the only place in the world that required no visas or other documentation for entry. A few hundred also reached the Dominican Republic, the only country which had offered refuge to the Jews at the Evian Conference. With rapidly increasing restrictions against leaving and no public offers for refuge from other countries, the only way out now often depended on illegal bribes. Thousands of schemes sprang up to take advantage of those Jews who still had some money with which to bargain, however, another blow was about to fall making even the possibility of "buying" freedom a hope of the past.

The Process of "Aryanization"

In addition to the massive funds Jews had to raise in order to pay for the damages incurred during *Kristallnacht*, funds were desperately needed to assist those trying to get out of Germany. *Kristallnacht* was followed by legal regulations which ordered that the "Aryanization" of all Jewish properties be completed. If not seized or confiscated outright, Jews were forced to sell to Germans at ridiculously low prices, all property, including shops, industries, and all other businesses. Through forced "Aryanization," Germany became richer and pauperized those trying to flee. (By the end of the war, nearly nine billion dollars of Jewish money, goods, and property had been collected and given to non-Jews through this legalized theft.) In spite of these conditions, an estimated 315,000 Jews had managed to emigrate from Germany during the period from 1933 to 1939.³ Any assets left behind were generally confiscated for "escape taxes" and other "legal" fines. As for the remaining Jews, their personal funds were kept in blocked accounts in special banks from which the owners could only withdraw restricted amounts. The enforcement of "Aryanization" was to drain the Jewish communities of their last remaining financial resources.

Trapped and Abandoned

As persecutions in Germany and Austria increased, more havens were needed. Yet, with rapidly increasing restrictions against leaving, heavy emigration taxes, strict limitations on incomes from Germany, and dwindling financial resources, only one-fourth of German Jewry had managed to emigrate. Although the Nazis frankly wanted to get rid of the Jews, the incorporation of Austria had added 200,000 Austrian Jews into the *Reich*. The Nazis realized that expansion brought in more Jews than were being removed. And most important, still at this late date, no major western power offered refuge. With the mass of German and Austrian Jews pressing to escape, most of the countries who could offer asylum claimed, as justification for their closed door policy, that by offering a home, they would be exposed to a flood of destitute, unwanted refugees. Yet, even after *Kristallnacht* about 150,000 Jews managed to flee Germany. Many more would certainly have followed if there had been a place to go and a means to get there. Getting the necessary documents to emigrate and visas to enter became an exceedingly difficult and costly proposition. Palestine, the one country in the world that openly welcomed Jewish refugees, was officially closed to Jewish immigrants by the British. Panic-stricken, the Jews seized any opportunity to leave with their families. Space on ships was at a premium and many unfortunates were sold tickets for steamers that never existed or were totally unseaworthy. Corrupt consular officials sold fake or useless visas to Latin American countries that refused to honor them. Other countries refused admittance, even to valid visa holders. One such case that received extensive publicity, particularly in the United States, involved the ship the *S.S. St. Louis*.

S.S. St. Louis

The German liner, the S.S. St. Louis, left Hamburg, Germany on May 13, 1939 bound for Havana, Cuba. On board were 937 Jewish passengers, all of whom had special permits to stay temporarily in Cuba until American visas were processed. On May 30, a few people were allowed to disembark at Havana. The rest were refused based on a new immigration restriction decreed by the Cuban president, Frederico Laredo Bru. On June 2, the St. Louis was ordered to leave Havana. Several passengers attempted to commit suicide, but the Cuban president still refused to honor the passengers' landing permits which had been declared worthless. With families already in Cuba screaming from the docks and passengers pleading from the ship's deck, the St. Louis was escorted out of the harbor by Cuban police boats. The St. Louis moved up and down the Florida coast for three days as rumors spread that the United States would surely admit the refugees rather than allow them to return to an uncertain fate. Appeals were made by telegram to President Roosevelt. Even Mrs. Roosevelt was asked to persuade her husband to admit, at the very least, the children who were on board the ship. All these appeals went unanswered. On June 5, Cuban president Frederico Bru then began a cat and mouse game offering to provide temporary refuge if relief organizations would give \$500 for each passenger. One American Jewish organization immediately began to try to bargain with the Cuban president, but he did not agree and told the ship to move out.

After 35 days of aimless wandering, England, France, Holland, and Belgium finally agreed to take an equal share of the human cargo. (Sadly, most went to countries that would soon be overrun by Germany.) When this plan was announced, a spokesman for the League of Nations issued a statement to the world press warning that this type of offer from the governments providing refuge to the St. Louis passengers would not constitute a precedent.

The story of the St. Louis is not unique. The British liner, *Orduna*, was also turned away from Cuba. Three other ships were ordered back to Germany after Paraguay and Argentina refused entry to the passengers. Mexico turned away the French steamer *Flandre*. With the refugees pressing to get out, it was now evident that there simply was no place to go.

By 1939, the bulk of German Jews found themselves trapped in their inhospitable homeland. Several thousand Jewish children were safe in Britain, more Jews had found safety in British-controlled Shanghai, and others had been able to get to Palestine before the British closed it down. But in spite of the increasing publicity about the situation facing the Jews in the Greater *Reich*, none of the major countries which could provide refuge, offered to change their immigration policy.⁴ In fact, in some areas, the annual quotas for Germans and Austrians, which could have been supplied by Jews from those countries attempting to escape, remained unfilled. No attempt was made to rectify the situation even though it was, by now, quite clear that the Jews of the Nazi *Reich* were in extreme peril. What little concern there was for the Jews was rapidly shifting toward new concerns as the world braced itself for war. For the Jews, the situation was about to get unbearably worse. There were even fewer possibilities of emigration or refuge for Gypsies and the institutionalized handicapped, who were seldom able to meet the financial requirements for escape and entry into a new homeland.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France finally realized that Hitler could not be appeased and, honoring their pact with Poland, declared war. Within weeks, a million German soldiers covered the Polish landscape from below and planes from the German Air Force, the *Luftwaffe*, dotted the skies above. The movement of German troops was so fast that it was referred to as a "*Blitzkrieg*," lightning warfare.

As the Nazis came to power, those Jews of Germany and Austria who could afford to, had not gotten out when they could because they had believed themselves fully accepted by their countrymen. In addition, each wave of persecution was thought to be the last. This belief had

further hindered opportunities to escape. By the time of the "*Blitzkrieg*" in Poland, no further opportunities existed. The world had turned deaf ears to the pleas from those seeking asylum. Through several years, the Jews of Germany and Austria had clung to their hopes for change. The Jews of Poland had no such illusions. Their only escape, which was available for a short time during the initial upheaval, was to cross over to Russia or to Eastern Poland which was occupied by the Soviet Union. Once the occupation lines were drawn, however, even this option was closed. Here, as Poland braced to face the German assault, three million Polish Jews, the largest single mass of Jewry in Europe, were trapped.

ENDNOTES

¹Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1982), 109.

²Sybil Milton, "The Racial Context of the Holocaust," *Social Education* 55, no. 2 (Feb. 1991): 106-110; Sybil Milton and David Luebke, "Locating the Victim: An Overview of Census-taking, Tabulation Technology, and Persecution in Nazi Germany," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 16, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 25-39; and *Artifact Poster Set Teacher Guide*, 3d rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Nov. 1993), 18-22.

³*Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House), 491.

⁴Except for Britain in 1938-39, no entry visas were issued outside the scope of existing immigration laws. *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 7, 491.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. After studying the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 and *Kristallnacht* in 1938, have students explain the relationship between these two events.
2. Students should describe the events that led to *Kristallnacht* and what actually took place on November 9 and 10, 1938.
3. Arrange students in groups and have them identify and research one refugee group in the United States today. Students should consider the following questions:
 - a) What are some of the reasons this group had for leaving their country?
 - b) What are some of the issues that this group faced after coming into the United States?

After completing this research, students can create a display or a chart of the various refugee groups in the United States today.

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4. Have students research the Olympic Games of 1936. As they do their research, students should consider the following questions:
 - a) How did Germans go about preparing to host the Berlin Olympics?
 - b) Should America have taken part in these games? Why or why not?
 - c) How did Jesse Owen's victory in the Olympics symbolize a victory over Nazi racism?
5. Go over with students the significance of the word *Kristallnacht*. Ask them to explain how this event marked the beginning of the end of European Jewry.
6. Have students compare the Bermuda Conference, held in April 1942, with the Evian Conference, held in July 1938. They should be able to explain the factors that indicated that the Bermuda Conference was not really expected to address the problem of the Jewish refugees. Students should also consider what message this conference sent to the rest of the world about the importance of saving the Jewish people.
7. Students should examine the efforts of Roosevelt and Churchill to save the Jewish people in Europe during World War II. How would students rate these efforts? Be sure to have them explain their answers.
8. Students should imagine that they are members of the Evian Conference, representing a specific country. They should write and deliver a speech to persuade other countries to change their immigration laws or quotas. After the speeches have been given, discuss with your class factors that should be considered in our country's immigration policy today.

9. Using the political cartoon about the Evian Conference in this unit as an example, have students create an editorial cartoon to reflect their reaction to the fate of the S.S. *Saint Louis* and its passengers.

The following activity comes from Gary Grobman, *The Holocaust: A Guide for Pennsylvania Teachers*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1990. Reprinted by permission.

10. U.S. immigration policy, both toward political refugees and immigrants who are not threatened with persecution, is a perennial topic in national domestic policy. Have the students research what legislation is pending in the U.S. congress on immigration policy, and have the students comment on what values are consistent with each bill.

CORRELATIONS TO THE SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS FOR THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS UNIT 4	BENCHMARKS	PAGE
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PREFACE TO THE <i>ABANDONMENT OF THE JEWS: AMERICA AND THE HOLOCAUST 1941-1945</i>	A.1.4.1 A.1.4.2 A.1.4.3 A.3.4.9 A.5.4.5 A.5.4.6 C.1.4.1 C.1.4.4 C.2.4.1 C.2.4.7	38

The New Colossus

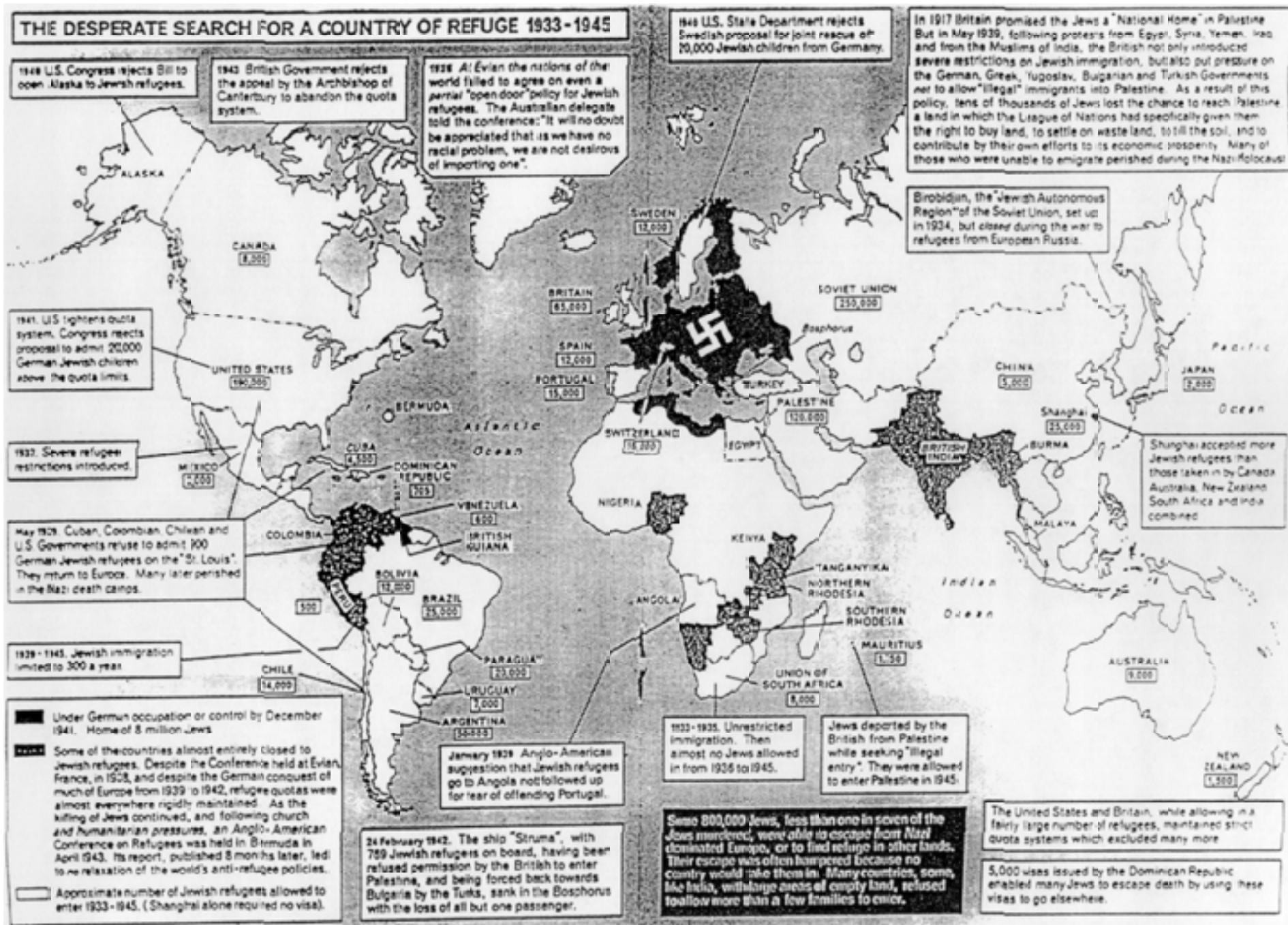
Emma Lazarus

1886

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to be free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shores,
Bring these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

This stanza from Emma Lazarus's poem is inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty.

1. Rewrite the five lines in your own words, explaining what you think the words mean.
2. How does this poem relate to the issues in Unit 4 of this curriculum, "The Refugee Crisis and the Persecution Years?"
3. Extended Research Assignment: Examine U.S. immigration policy during the years before, during, and after World War II. Summarize your findings. How did U.S. policy reflect the sentiment in the inscription in Emma Lazarus's poem?



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Questions on "The Desperate Search for a Country of Refuge, 1933-1945"

1. Which countries seemed to have policies that were more favorable toward the refugees?
2. Which countries seemed to have policies that were less favorable toward the refugees?
3. What does this map tell you about Shanghai?
4. What was the *Struma*?
5. What was the *St. Louis*?
6. This map contains a great deal of facts and information. What information surprises you? Explain your answers.
7. Additional assignment: Research one of the locations on this map to find out more about the process of admitting the Jewish refugees.

What Did the World Know?

The permanent exhibit of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has a display of the front pages of various newspapers during the years 1933-1938. The headlines prove that the world was, in fact, receiving information about what was happening in Europe in the Holocaust years.

The following activities could be used in conjunction with these or other newspaper articles:

1. Using microfilm or other archival sources, locate the articles from one or more of the sources listed below.
2. Using the list below as a guideline, locate articles in other newspapers around the country or the world from this time period.
3. This list is only from 1933-1938. Extend this project through the early 1940s to discover what information continued to be available throughout the Holocaust period.
4. Create a display of headlines or articles answering the question, "What Did the World Know?"

NEWSPAPER

DATE

Herald Tribune (New York)

March 1, 1933

New York Times

May 11, 1933

The Sun (Baltimore)

September 16, 1935

New York Times

December 9, 1935

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

November 11, 1938

Dallas Morning News

November 11, 1938

Philadelphia Inquirer

November 14, 1938

The Sun (Baltimore)

November 16, 1938

Los Angeles Examiner

November 23, 1938

Headlines

Grade Levels: Middle and high school

Goals:

- To analyze how news is reported in newspapers
- To enable students to be critical readers of newspapers.
- To compare what they know now with what was known as events were unfolding in WWII
- To compare topics and themes that were reported during WWII to what is in the paper today.

Materials: *New York Times* front pages from 1933 on, recent newspapers.

Procedure:

- Using the N.Y. Times pages, have students research the information that was on the front pages of that paper for each year as the Holocaust was unfolding. Analyze what stories were featured. How much information was the American public getting?
- Pick one event such as Kristallnacht, the Berlin Olympics, or the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Research how that event was reported in the American press. Did the Nazis engineer world opinion? Allow students to discover for themselves and then ask critical questions about the newspaper coverage of the Holocaust. Did the stories appear on the front page or were they buried on subsequent pages? Where on the page were the articles placed? What size were the headlines of these articles? Why were those editorial decisions made?
- Have students bring in articles from the daily newspaper that relate to Holocaust themes such as prejudice, hatred, antisemitism as well as heroism, resistance, rescue, etc. Are there noticeable trends? How are difficult subjects treated? Find an article that annoys or inspires you.
- Have students respond in a letter to the editor about a particular article they feel strongly about.

Assessment: This sort of activity lends itself to a "portfolio" type of assessment, including having students keep a journal of their reactions to what they discover as they uncover newspaper coverage of these events. Requiring all students to bring in and respond to newspaper articles for the bulletin board and encouraging further exploration of the role of newspapers in shaping public opinion, disseminating information, and encouraging change can be assessed as well.

Resource: *Page One: The Front Page History of World War II* by the New York Times. Budget Book Services, 1996

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THE NUREMBERG LAWS

NUREMBERG LAWS ON REICH CITIZENSHIP

SEPTEMBER 15, 1935

Reich Citizenship Law September 15, 1935

The Reichstag has unanimously enacted the following law, which is promulgated herewith:

Sec. 1

- 1) A subject of the State is a person who enjoys the protection of the German Reich and who in consequence has specific obligations towards it.
- 2) The status of subject of the State is acquired in accordance with the provisions of the Reich and State Citizenship Law.

Sec. 2

- 1) A Reich citizen is a subject of the State who is of German or related blood, who proves by his conduct that he is willing and fit faithfully to serve the German people and Reich.
- 2) Reich citizenship is acquired through the granting of a Reich Citizenship Certificate.
- 3) The Reich citizen is the sole bearer of full political rights in accordance with the Law.

Sec. 3

The Reich Minister of the Interior, in coordination with the Deputy of the Führer, will issue the Legal and Administrative orders required to implement and complete this Law.

Nuremberg, September 15, 1935
at the Reich Party Congress of Freedom

The Führer and Reich Chancellor
Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of the Interior
Frick

33

**NUREMBERG LAW FOR THE PROTECTION OF
GERMAN BLOOD AND GERMAN HONOR**

SEPTEMBER 15, 1935

**Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor
September 15, 1935**

Moved by the understanding that purity of the German Blood is the essential condition for the continued existence of the German people, and inspired by the inflexible determination to ensure the existence of the German Nation for all time, the Reichstag has unanimously adopted the following Law, which is promulgated herewith:

Sec. 1

- 1) Marriages between Jews and subjects of the state of Germany or related blood are forbidden. Marriages nevertheless concluded are invalid, even if concluded abroad to circumvent this law.
- 2) Annulment proceedings can be initiated only by the State Prosecutor.

Sec. 2

Extramarital intercourse between Jews and subjects of the state of Germany or related blood is forbidden.

Sec. 3

Jews may not employ in their households female subjects of the state of Germany or related blood who are under 45 years old.

Sec. 4

- 1) Jews are forbidden to fly the Reich or National flag or to display the Reich colors.
- 2) They are, on the other hand, permitted to display the Jewish colors. The exercise of this right is protected by the State.

Sec. 5

- 1) Any person who violates the prohibition under Sec. 1 will be punished by a prison sentence with hard labor.
- 2) A male who violates the prohibition under Sec. 2 will be punished with a prison sentence with or without hard labor.
- 3) Any person violating the provisions under Secs. 3 or 4 will be punished with a prison sentence of up to one year and a fine, or with one or the other of these penalties.

Sec. 6

The Reich Minister of the Interior, in coordination with the Deputy of the Führer and the Reich Minister of Justice, will issue the Legal and Administrative regulations required to implement and complete this Law.

Sec. 7

The Law takes effect on the day following promulgations except for Sec. 3, which goes into force on January 1, 1936.

Nuremberg, September 15, 1935
at the Reich Party Congress of Freedom

The Führer and Reich Chancellor
Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of the Interior
Frick
The Reich Minister of Justice
Dr. Gurtner
The Deputy of the Führer
R. Hess

Reichsgesetzblatt, I, 1935, pp. 1146-1147.

FIRST REGULATION TO THE REICH CITIZENSHIP LAW

NOVEMBER 14, 1935

Sec. 4

- 1) A Jew cannot be a Reich citizen. He has no voting rights in political matters; he cannot occupy a public office.
- 2) Jewish officials will retire as of December 31, 1935.

Sec. 5

- 1) A Jew is a person descended from at least three grandparents who are full Jews by race.
- 2) A Mischling who is a subject of the state is also considered a Jew if he is descended from two full Jewish grandparents.
 - a) who was a member of the Jewish Religious Community at the time of the promulgation of this Law, or was admitted to it subsequently;
 - b) who was married to a Jew at the time of the promulgation of this Law, or subsequently married to a Jew;
 - c) who was born from a marriage with a Jew in accordance with paragraph 1, contracted subsequently to the promulgation of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor of September 15, 1935 (Reichsgesetzblatt, I. p. 1146);
 - d) who was born as the result of extramarital intercourse with a Jew in accordance with Paragraph 1, and was born illegitimately after July 31, 1936.

**REGULATION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF THE JEWS
FROM THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF GERMANY**

NOVEMBER 12, 1938

On the basis of the regulation for the implementation of the Four Year Plan of October 18, 1936 (Reichsgesetzblatt, I, p. 887), the following is decreed:

Sec. 1

- 1) From January 1, 1939, Jews (Sec. 5 of the First Regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law of November 14, 1935, Reichsgesetzblatt, I, p. 1333) are forbidden to operate retail stores, mail-order houses, or sales agencies, or to carry on a trade [craft] independently.
- 2) They are further forbidden, from the same day on, to offer for sale goods or services, to advertise these, or to accept orders at markets of all sorts, fairs or exhibitions.
- 3) Jewish trade enterprises (Third Regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law of June 14, 1938 -- Reichsgesetzblatt, I, p. 627) which violate this decree will be closed by police.

Sec. 2

- 1) From January 1, 1939, a Jew can no longer be the head of an enterprise within the meaning of the Law of January 20, 1934, for the Regulation of National Work (Reichsgesetzblatt, I, p. 45).
- 2) Where a Jew is employed in an executive position in a commercial enterprise he may be given notice to leave in six weeks. At the expiration of the term of the notice all claims of the employee based on his contract, especially those concerning pension and compensation rights, become invalid.

Sec. 3.

- 1) A Jew cannot be a member of a cooperative.
- 2) The membership of Jews in cooperatives expires on December 31, 1938. No special notice is required.

Sec. 4

The Reich Minister of Economy, in coordination with the Ministers concerned, is empowered to publish regulations for the implementation of this decree. He may permit exceptions under the Law if these are required as the result of the transfer of a Jewish enterprise to non-Jewish ownership, for the liquidation of a Jewish enterprise or, in special cases, to ensure essential supplies.

Berlin, November 12, 1938
Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan
Goring
Field Marshal General

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ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REICH CENTRAL OFFICE FOR JEWISH EMIGRATION

JANUARY 1939

Berlin, January 24, 1939

Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan

To
The Reich Minister of the Interior
Berlin

The emigration of the Jews from Germany is to be furthered by all possible means.

A Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration is being established in the Reich Ministry of the Interior from among representatives of the agencies concerned. The Reich Central Office will have the task to devise uniform policies as follows:

1. Measures for the preparation of increased emigration of Jews. This will include the creation of a Jewish organization that can prepare uniform applications for emigration; the taking of all steps for the provision and efficient use of local and foreign funds; and a decision on suitable target countries for emigration, to be selected in coordination with the Reich Center for Emigration.
2. The direction of emigration, including for instance, preference for the emigration of the poorer Jews.
3. The speeding up of emigration in individual cases, by means of speedy and smooth provision of the State documents and permits required by the individual emigrant, through central processing of applications for emigration.

The Reich Center for Emigration will be headed by the Chief of the Security Police. He will appoint a Responsible Manager and make rules for the operation of the Reich Center.

Regular reports on the work of the Reich Center will be forwarded to me. I will be consulted continuously on measures requiring decisions of principle.

In addition to representatives of other agencies involved, the Committee will include Ambassador Eisenlohr, who is responsible for official inter-state negotiations, and Ministerial Director Wohlthat, who is responsible for the negotiations in connection with the Rublee Plan.

Signed
NG-2586-A
Goring

QUESTIONS ON THE NUREMBERG LAWS

1. In a few sentences, summarize each of the following laws:

- a) *Reich* Citizenship Law: September 15, 1935
- b) Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor: September 15, 1935
- c) First Regulation to the *Reich* Citizenship Law: November 14, 1935
- d) Regulation for the Elimination of the Jews from the Economic Life of Germany:
November 12, 1938
- e) Establishment of the *Reich* Central Office for Jewish Emigration: January 1939

2. Which section of each of the five laws disturbs you the most? Explain your answers.

- a) *Reich* Citizenship Law: September 15, 1935
- b) Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor: September 15, 1935
- c) First Regulation to the *Reich* Citizenship Law: November 14, 1935
- d) Regulation for the Elimination of the Jews from the Economic Life of Germany:
November 12, 1938
- e) Establishment of the *Reich* Central Office for Jewish Emigration: January 1939

An Olympic Athlete's Dilemma What Would You Do?

There are few situations in life that do not have as a component the necessity to make a decision based on moral and political values.

Anthony Peterson is 21 years old and a sprinter at the University of Pennsylvania. Anthony has been in training -- for over two years -- for the day he will participate in the 1936 Olympics in Munich, Germany. He is very excited about representing his country and about the glory that may be his.

However, much controversy surrounds this Olympics. Adolf Hitler has become Chancellor of Germany, and the Nazis have been persecuting Jews and all sorts of leftist political groups. Hitler has been gearing up for the Olympics where he intends to prove that the Germans are the most physically perfect "race" in the world. The Olympics will be a great propaganda event for the new German government.

Anthony has been approached by a group of athletes who have been reevaluating the situation. They tell Anthony that they should not participate in the Olympics in Germany because to do so is to legitimize Hitler's policies. After all, America's participation in the world Olympics is not as important as taking a moral stand against the Nazi policies.

Anthony must decide what to do. Should he participate in the 1936 Olympics?

Questions for Discussion:

1. What alternative courses of action are available to Anthony? What are the consequences of each alternative?
2. Does Anthony have a responsibility to his teammates? To himself? Explain your answers.
3. Relate this dilemma to the decision faced by American Olympic athletes who were asked by their government to boycott the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow. If you are not familiar with the events of the 1980 Olympics, research the background of the boycott. What are the similarities? Contrasts? What should American athletes have done?
4. Some critics argue that "sports boycotts" are symbolic, meaningless substitutes for real action that can be taken by governments. Such people believe that a boycott of the 1936 or 1980 Olympics would not have accomplished anything. How do you react to this argument?
5. At the 1972 Olympics held in Berlin, Palestinian terrorists attacked the Israeli pavilion and murdered many members of their Olympic team. In response to this event, Olympic officials held a ceremony in the stadium in which there were two minutes of silence in memory of the slain Israeli athletes. How do you react to this response?

Source: Furman, Harry, ed. *Holocaust and Genocide: A Search for Conscience*. New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1983, pages 78-79. Developed under the auspices of the State of New Jersey Department of Education. Reprinted by permission.

EXCERPTS ON KRISTALLNACHT

On the night of November 9-10, 1938, years of Nazi antisemitism climaxed in Kristallnacht, “the night of broken glass.”

In the words of Harry Furman, teacher, Holocaust historian:

On November 7, 1938, Ernst Vom Rath, a member of the German Embassy in Paris, was assassinated by Herschel Grynszpan, a young Polish Jew. Grynszpan had received a letter from his sister in which she stated that the Grynszpan family, together with all Polish Jews living in Germany, had been arrested and deported to Poland. Seeking revenge for the suffering of his family, Grynszpan, who was 17 years old, bought a hand gun, went to the German Embassy, and shot Vom Rath, who later died.

Supposedly in retaliation, the Nazis determined that all places of Jewish worship in Germany and Austria were to be destroyed. In reality, plans for such a riot had been made long before, and only awaited the appropriate moment for execution. Thus, on November 9, 1938, a “spontaneous” demonstration of anger was carried out. In fifteen hours, 101 synagogues were destroyed. The streets were filled with broken glass; thus the name given to this event was Kristallnacht, or “The Night of Broken Glass.” Then the government decided that the Jews would have to pay an “atonement payment” for having caused the damage. Millions of dollars had to be paid by the Jews and their insurance companies to the Nazi government. A new stage in the process of death had begun.

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In the words of Dennis B. Klein, author and Director, International Center for Holocaust Studies:

In retrospect the scale of destruction was modest in contrast to the events that immediately followed. (Close to 100 Jews were killed that night.) But for those who saw or learned about the riots, *Kristallnacht* revealed for the first time the real horror of the Nazi regime, the inhuman face of National Socialism ... the shock of Kristallnacht forever shattered the world’s innocence. No longer could anyone pretend that the German state stood for law and order. With Kristallnacht, state-organized violence became, if not normal, at least permissible, even acceptable political practice.

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In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, the Nazi government implemented a policy of mandatory Aryanization that compelled Jews to surrender their property to Germans without compensation. Capital gained from these transactions was placed in blocked accounts which the state eventually confiscated. The intensification of antisemitic measures in Germany and Austria forced Jews in those countries to consider fleeing. But escape was no longer easy. Not only did Aryanization rob Jews of the financial means to relocate elsewhere, but foreign nations expressed little willingness to admit Jewish refugees. The same obstacles confronted any persecuted minority wishing to emigrate from Nazi Germany. The implications of Kristallnacht were clear to the Nazis.

The November 24, 1938 edition of **Das Schwarze Korps**, the newspaper of the SS, featured the following article:

So, we are now going to have a total solution to the Jewish question. The programme is clear. It reads: total separation, total segregation! What does this mean? It does not only mean the total exclusion of the Jews from the German economic system ... It means much more! No German can be expected to live under the same roof as Jews. The Jews must be chased out of our houses and our residential districts and made to live in rows or blocks of houses where they can keep to themselves and come into contact with Germans as little as possible. They must be clearly identified ... And when we compel the rich Jews to provide for the "poor" of their race, which will certainly be necessary, they will all sink together into a pit of criminality. As this happens, we will be faced with the harsh necessity of eradicating the Jewish underworld, just as we root out criminals from our own orderly state: with fire and sword. The result will be the certain and absolute end of Jewry in Germany: its complete annihilation!

Source: *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances* (Second Edition). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, pages 56-57.

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Preface to *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*

By David Wyman

This book has been difficult to research and to write. One does not wish to believe the facts revealed by the documents on which it is based. America, the land of refuge, offered little succor. American Christians forgot about the Good Samaritan. Even American Jews lacked the unquenchable sense of urgency the crisis demanded. The Nazis were the murderers, but we were the all too passive accomplices.

Between June 1941 and May 1945, five to six million Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators. Germany's control over most of Europe meant that even a determined Allied rescue campaign probably could not have saved as many as a third of those who died. But a substantial commitment to rescue almost certainly could have saved several hundred thousand of them, and done so without compromising the war effort. The record clearly shows, though, that such a campaign would have taken place only if the United States had seized the initiative for it. But America did not act at all until late in the war, and even then, though it had some success, the effort was a very limited one.

This book is a report on America's response to the Nazi assault on the European Jews. It is not a new subject; others have written on it already, as have I, in my earlier book *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941*. What is new about the present volume is that it brings out much information not previously published; and it offers several new answers to the key question: Why did America fail to carry out the kind of rescue effort that it could have?

In summary form, these are the findings that I regard as most significant:

1. The American State Department and the British Foreign Office had no intention of rescuing large numbers of European Jews. On the contrary, they continually feared that Germany or other Axis nations might release tens of thousands of Jews into Allied hands. Any such exodus would have placed intense pressure on Britain to open Palestine and on the United States to take in more Jewish refugees, a situation the two great powers did not want to face. Consequently, their policies aimed at obstructing rescue possibilities and dampening public pressures for government action.
2. Authenticated information that the Nazis were systematically exterminating European Jewry was made public in the United States in November 1942. President Roosevelt did nothing about the mass murder for fourteen months, then moved only because he was confronted with political pressures he could not avoid and because his administration stood on the brink of a nasty scandal over its rescue policies.
3. The War Refugee Board, which the President then established to save Jews and other victims of the Nazis, received little power, almost no cooperation from Roosevelt or his administration, and grossly inadequate government funding. (Contributions from Jewish organizations, which were necessarily limited, covered 90 percent of the WRB's costs.) Through dedicated work by a relatively small number of people, the WRB managed to help save approximately 200,000 Jews and at least 20,000 non-Jews.

4. Because of State Department administrative policies, only 21,000 refugees were allowed to enter the United States during the three and one-half years the nation was at war with Germany. That amounted to 10 percent of the number who could have been legally admitted under the immigration quotas during that period.

5. Strong popular pressure for action would have brought a much fuller government commitment to rescue and would have produced it sooner. Several factors hampered the growth of public pressure. Among them were anti-Semitism and anti-immigration attitudes, both widespread in American society in that era and both entrenched in Congress; the mass media's failure to publicize Holocaust news, even though the wire services and other news sources made most of the information available to them; the near silence of the Christian churches and almost all of their leadership; the indifference of most of the nation's political and intellectual leaders; and the President's failure to speak out on the issue.

6. American Jewish leaders worked to publicize the European Jewish situation and pressed for government rescue steps. But their effectiveness was importantly diminished by their inability to mount a sustained or unified drive for government action, by diversion of energies into fighting among the several organizations, and by failure to assign top priority to the rescue issue.

7. In 1944 the United States War Department rejected several appeals to bomb the Auschwitz gas chambers and the railroads leading to Auschwitz, claiming that such actions would divert essential airpower from decisive operations elsewhere. Yet in the very months that it was turning down the pleas, numerous massive American bombing raids were taking place within fifty miles of Auschwitz. Twice during that time large fleets of American heavy bombers struck industrial targets in the Auschwitz complex itself, not five miles from the gas chambers.

8. Analysis of the main rescue proposals put forward at the time, but brushed aside by government officials, yields convincing evidence that much more could have been done to rescue Jews, if a real effort had been made. The record also reveals that the reasons repeatedly invoked by government officials for not being able to rescue Jews could be put aside when it came to other Europeans who needed help.

9. Franklin Roosevelt's indifference to so momentous an historical event as the systematic annihilation of European Jewry emerges as the worst failure of his presidency.

10. Poor though it was, the American rescue record was better than that of Great Britain, Russia, or the other Allied nations. This was the case because of the work of the War Refugee Board, the fact that American Jewish organizations were willing to provide most of the WRB's funding, and the overseas rescue operations of several Jewish organizations.

Parts of this book are critical of the American Jewish leadership in the Holocaust era. The policies of Zionist leaders are particularly questioned, in part because their movement held the greatest potential for effective Jewish action. This criticism is made reluctantly. Yet it must be included if the report is to be honest and objective. Several of those leaders have since criticized their own failures in the face of the catastrophe.(1)

I have written not as an insider. I am a Christian, a Protestant of Yankee and Swedish descent. But I have advocated a Jewish state for a very long time, and I would undoubtedly have backed the Zionist movement during the World War II era had I been old enough to be involved in political affairs. Today I remain strongly pro-Zionist and I am a resolute supporter of the state of Israel. My

commitment to Zionism and to Israel has been confirmed and increased by years of study of the Holocaust. I look upon Israel as the most important line of defense against anti-Semitism in the world. Had there been a Jewish state in the 1933 to 1945 era, it would be much less painful today for all of us to confront the history of European Jewry during World War II.

A final comment; then a question. The Holocaust was certainly a Jewish tragedy. But it was not *only* a Jewish tragedy. It was also a Christian tragedy, a tragedy for Western civilization, and a tragedy for all humankind. The killing was done by people, to other people, while still other people stood by. The perpetrators, where they were not actually Christians, arose from a Christian culture. The bystanders most capable of helping were Christians. The point should have been obvious. Yet comparatively few American non-Jews recognized that the plight of the European Jews was their plight too. Most were either unaware, did not care, or saw the European Jewish catastrophe as a Jewish problem, one for Jews to deal with. That explains, in part, why the United States did so little to help.

Would the reaction be different today? Would Americans be more sensitive, less self-centered, more willing to make sacrifices, less afraid of differences now than they were then?

Notes

1. Eg, *In The Dispersion*, Winter 1963-64, 6-7 (Nahum Goldman); *Martyrdom & Resistance*, 11/83, 11 (Israel Goldstein); *Reconstructionist*, Summer 1983, 4 (Ira Eisenstein).

Questions:

1. In what ways were Americans accomplices to the Holocaust?
2. How do you feel when you read that the U.S. only admitted 10% of the number who could have been legally admitted from 1941-1945?
3. How could a state of Israel or a Jewish country have prevented or lessened the Holocaust?
4. What does the writer mean when he says, it was "a tragedy for all humankind?"

Source: Wyman, David S. *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. Reprinted by permission of David S. Wyman.

PHOTOGRAPHS



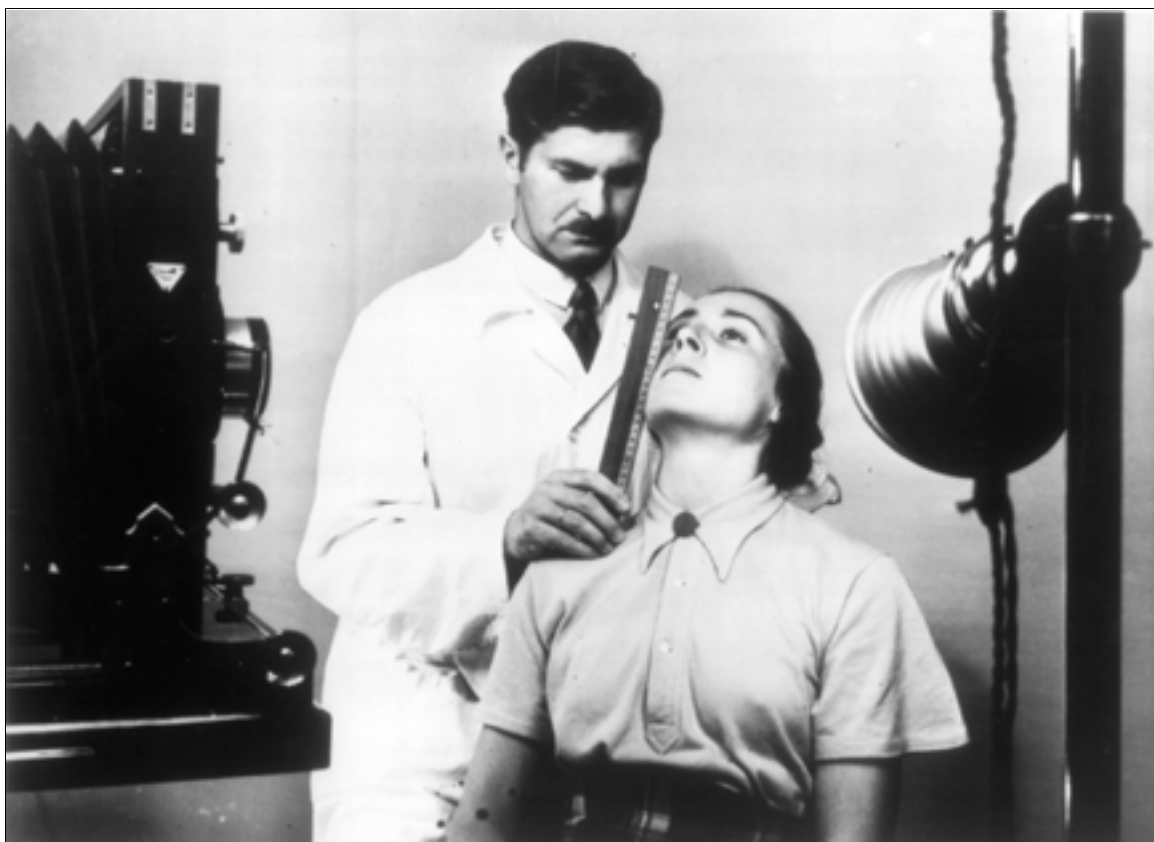
An identification card issued to Ellen 'Sara' Wertheimer that bears the letter 'J' for 'Jude.' The ID card has been stamped with the word 'evakuiert' indicating that the bearer of the document was deported on September 15, 1942. Miss Wertheimer was deported to Theresienstadt but survived the war. (Ellen Wertheimer Wall, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)



Adolf Hitler rides in a motorcade through the Brandenburg Gate to the opening ceremonies of the 11th Olympiad in Berlin, August 1936. *(National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)*



German citizens saluting Adolf Hitler at the opening of the 11th Olympiad in Berlin, August 1936. *(National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)*



The facial features of a young German woman are measured during a racial examination.
(National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)



Destroyed Jewish prayer books and other religious texts.
(Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)



Children's celebration on the refugee ship SS St. Louis, May - June 1939.
(Henry Gallant, Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)

TESTIMONIES

Ernie Michel, née Wurzinger, was born on April 1, 1909 in Nuremberg, Germany. Two months after *Kristallnacht*, she left Germany -- at first to go to France -- and subsequently the United States.

Q. Why don't you tell me about the circumstances that led up to *Kristallnacht*, and then your experience there?

A. Ah, the circumstances leading up to the *Kristallnacht*, the Nazis used the excuse that one of their smaller employees of the Embassy in Paris was killed, allegedly by Jewish people. That was their excuse to break into all the homes on November 9th, 1938. All the Nazis who executed the breaking-in were well-trained, had fantastic tools to destroy everything, to break into homes which were not easily opened like ours.

We didn't open the door. They had to break in. They had heavy tools to open and push open anything. This is one example of how well they were trained. We had a big black piano. They knew exactly what to do. With the heavy hammers, they cut all the ivory keys and then with other instruments, they cut the wires in the back, so they made the grand piano completely useless. But the frame was still standing there, as it wasn't touched at all. We had a huge radio with a loudspeaker built in. They knew exactly where to hit the apparatus. The frame wasn't touched. They cut all the tubes in the back and then took their knife or whatever and cut the loudspeaker.

Q. So you feel that they had been trained beforehand for this?

A. Oh, they were trained marvelously before. They knew exactly what to do. They came with their lists. They had all the addresses. They knew how to break into the buildings. They were well-prepared. No, that was not a spur of the moment thing.

Q. How do you remember the whole thing starting?

A. Hitler was talking in the newspaper and in his speeches of destroying the Jewish population. In Nuremberg, there was also one of the greatest antisemites, Julius Streicher, and he had a very antisemitic newspaper [Ed. note: *Der Stürmer*, or The Attacker]. He was talking all the time about our bad influence and what terrible people we are and also that we have to be destroyed because we are not worth being on this earth.

The question was raised so often, over here particularly, why did you stay that long? I have two answers to that question. The most important one is that it was not a question of leaving your native country, it was a question of the other countries -- any other country who would let you in permanently, not with a three- or four-week visa, because you could never go back to Germany. So that was the most important thing to us, to find a country willing to take us in. Secondly, we lived a comfortable, normal lifestyle, just like American Jews living here. None of us were anxious to leave the country to start over with nothing and with mediocre jobs. When I finally saw after Hitler took over Austria and Sudetenland -- that was the first part of Czechoslovakia -- I knew that it looked bad, and I started to look around to leave the country.

Q. Was that before *Kristallnacht*?

- A. Yes, I started to try to get to America in January 1938.
- Q. That's when you wanted to start looking around?
- A. I wanted to leave.
- Q. Okay, let's get back a little to the *Kristallnacht*.
- A. It was a terrible experience for anybody who was there, of course for a Jew, but I would have to say it also was a terrible experience for all the gentile people living in the same buildings where Jewish people lived. The Nazis came in our place around one, one thirty in the night. We had no inkling, none whatsoever.
- Q. That this was going to happen that night?
- A. Right. Our entrance door had a glass portion and all of a sudden, we saw a lot of shadows.
- Q. Were you up . . . just happened to be up at that time?
- A. No, they rang the bell and made a lot of commotion and noise out there in front of the door, yelling, "Open up!" but we would not.

My father at that time was not home and that was a lucky break for him. He was visiting one of his friends from the first World War, from the army. He had been an officer. It was only my mother and I who were home.

The Nazis finally broke into our apartment, and there was a lot of noise right away. They stormed in, asked for my father, and we told them that he wasn't here. They spread out in every room. We were in a corner. We saw their big axe, and a very heavy instrument which you use on a construction site, I would say, and they started immediately with breaking things apart. Then they took their knives out, opened the wardrobe, cut the clothes, cut triangles in the fur coats and the Persian rugs, making everything absolutely worthless. It was for about an hour and a half. They totally destroyed our apartment. They dumped the crystal and the silver.

My mother was from a very fine family. Her father was a jeweler in Silesia for the court there. So when she got married, she had in her dowry beautiful silver and stuff. And they dumped the silver on the floor and stamped on it with their boots and just flattened it. Everything was a total destruction. The fine porcelain, they took the hammer and broke with all their might, through a stack of twenty-four plates or so.

The noise was unbelievable. The noise was damaging to our ears and, of course, for our nerves. I still cannot stand any noise. If I go to an assembly with a lot of people, I have to be extremely careful. They were well-prepared. In the corner were my skis standing, because it was wintertime. You know November in Germany is wintertime. They just broke off the tips. At the very end, they took glass pots and threw them in the open cut bedding, in the down comforters and everything, so that we couldn't use our beds. Once they left, there was nothing, not a chair, nothing. Everything was demolished, even the big furniture.

Q. Did they say anything to you during all of this?

A. No, I do not remember. Their faces were red and full of hate. I would assume that they had plenty of alcohol in them or something which made them strong and full of hate -- unbelievable -- and ready to fight. They did some stealing, but obviously they were told not to touch the women. So nobody touched my mother or me. They threatened us, but they would not hit us or touch us.

Q. What did they threaten you?

A. With their looks, with their behavior, and with their tools.

Q. How old were you at this time?

A. I was already twenty-eight years old. When they left, the very last thing they cut were the crystal chandeliers, so we were in total darkness more or less. Maybe they overlooked one of the other ones.

Q. And no other apartment in your building was touched?

A. No, they were all gentiles and after they had left, the other people in the building saw them out there on the street and out of our neighborhood. They sneaked up quietly to our apartment and when they came, they put their finger in front of their mouths, not to speak to us, because they were afraid that maybe another party in the building was listening and would know that they came up and wanted to look at what had happened here. So slowly, most of them came up, tip-toeing to see what happened. All they could do is to shake their head with the most misbelieving eyes and touch our shoulders.

Q. Were the Germans clearly dressed as soldiers? They were in uniform?

A. They were not dressed as soldiers. They were dressed as Nazis. They came in their brown uniforms with the Nazi sign, with their hats, and their big, black boots. They were not soldiers. They were Nazis.

Q. What happened after they left? You just stood there in shock?

A. Yes. We couldn't believe our own eyes. They tore all the books. There was nothing left. Were standing there and the people in our back apartment were very nice and supportive. We had only one thought the next morning, how to find a workman who could fix the damage on our entrance door, so we could close the apartment again. And I was walking around completely dazed. I had to say, there were people around us and the people who knew us in our neighborhood. I went to the butcher who knew us also for fifteen years. When he saw me, he just silently shook his head and with his eyes let me know he felt sorry for me. Nobody would dare to say anything, but in the stores you saw the eyes and the unbelievable thinking of the people who knew you.

Q. So there was a lot of fear in everyone?

A. Oh, hundred percent fear in everybody.

Q. Was there more antisemitism after that?

A. That is a question which I cannot really answer. Maybe amongst the people who had no contact with Jewish people before, after they saw the synagogues all on fire, everything destroyed in the Jewish homes. The men had been picked up and put on trucks and brought into special halls. After they saw that and they announced over the loudspeakers and the radio, maybe some uneducated people then became future followers. They may have developed more antisemitism. They probably thought Hitler was right that we are a bad people and that we deserve it. But I do not think that people who knew other Jewish people would have been influenced. I think they felt more sorry for us, and, of course, it showed very clearly that there was no more time for Jewish people left in Germany.

Louis Scott was born on January 9, 1926 in Berlin, Germany. Baron Edward de Rothschild of Paris, France attempted to rescue Jewish youths, including Louis. He was brought to Paris and was sent to a children's home in Southern France until 1942. Because he turned 16 years of age, he was turned over to the Nazis and deported to several concentration camps in Germany.

Q. Louis, tell me a little bit about your early years.

A. Well, I had a very good life. I went to German public school the first four years, and later on I went to a Jewish middle school in Berlin. I had an enjoyable youth. I had everything that I wanted. I played a lot of soccer with the neighbors, and I belonged to a team. But then I had to stop playing with the team, and I couldn't understand why. I did not feel any persecution until November 9, 1938 on the infamous *Kristallnacht*. Then I first really found out what it is to be a Jew.

Q. Tell me about *Kristallnacht*. What was your actual experience?

A. I can vividly recall the police of the town where we lived telling my father to disappear. They took the men to the camp of Buchenwald at that time. My father disappeared for about ten days, and then he came back. I still did not understand what it was all about. The next day when I went to school, I saw a lot of destroyed windows. Being that we lived on the outskirts, we were the only Jewish family living in that small village.

Q. What was the name of the village?

A. Mardsdorf. At that time, I did not realize what the *Kristallnacht* was. But then the next day I went to Berlin to go to school which, naturally, was closed. The guard outside said, "Go home." He was mad at me, I recall, that I even came there. I didn't realize what had happened.

Q. Did you see any evidence of *Kristallnacht* on your way into school?

A. Oh, definitely. I saw a lot of goods laying in the street.

Q. Let's go back a little bit, Lou, and talk about how you first knew of your Jewish identity and the fact that you were different than your neighbors; the first incident of antisemitism that you can recall.

A. We knew in 1933 when Hitler came to power. We had a notion store where we lived, and big signs were outside, big placards that said, "Germans fight. Don't buy in Jewish stores."

Q. What about your young friends? What experiences did you have with them?

A. With my young friends until after *Kristallnacht*, I did not feel Jewish in any way. We played together. There were no remarks made. However, then after *Kristallnacht*, two boys that were a couple of years older than I am said, "You dirty Jew." I picked up my fist and fought them both. And I recall vividly that their mothers came to my mother in the evening saying that I shouldn't beat up their kids.

Q. Did you ever see Adolf Hitler?

A. Yes.

Q. When was that?

A. At the Olympic Games in 1936, I saw Adolf Hitler walk out of the Olympia Stadium in Berlin when Jesse Owens won the fourth gold medal. I didn't know at the time what it meant, but I saw him walk out.

Q. In the early years of Hitler's regime, from 1933 on, did your father and mother ever discuss leaving Germany?

A. My father, definitely. I know my father brought home at that time a visa for Uganda.

Q. What happened to these discussions about Uganda?

A. I do not believe my mother wanted to leave.

Q. When did you know for the first time that things were really bad in Germany, and that you might have to leave?

A. When I couldn't go to school anymore.

Q. When was that?

A. In early 1939. I went to school until March 1939. But I know it was already tough in the Jewish middle school. The studies that we got were different. I would say, without purpose.

Q. When did you first become aware that you would be leaving Germany?

A. Well, in the beginning of 1939, they had something where a lot of young Jewish children were leaving to go to Israel -- Palestine at that time -- but there was no room open for me.

Q. And who was making the effort to do this? Was this done through an organization in Berlin?

A. Yes. What you would call the Greater Jewish Community, something like that, was organizing these efforts to get the children out, if possible.

Q. What age children are we talking about?

A. Early teens.

Q. So then what happened next as far as your leaving the country?

A. I was prepared to go to France with the children's transport which was a whole group of children put into a train for transportation and sent to a children's home.

Q. Who was organizing these efforts?

- A. I do believe it had to do with the HIAS [Ed. note: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society]. And other Jewish organizations, such as *Ha Sharah*. They also tried to take these children to France. I believe it was all sponsored by the Rothschild family, Baron Edward de Rothschild at the time, under the orders of HIAS. Not only that, but if I recall, he paid for all the train tickets and whatever it took.
- Q. Obviously your parents were making these arrangements. When was the first time that you found out that you were going to be leaving Germany?
- A. About a week before.
- Q. And what were your feelings at that time?
- A. I was sad to leave my parents. It was explained that we could not go to school here anymore, that we won't have an education, and that we must go there for a while. They said, "We'll see each other in a short while."
- Q. And that's the way it was explained to you?
- A. I met some of the children a few days before we left. I met some nice kids, which made it a little bit easier then to go.
- Q. This was March 1939?
- A. On March 28, 1939.
- Q. And you left your parents. Before we talk about the camp, let me get a little background about your parents. What happened to your parents from this time on?
- A. A short while after, my parents had to move to a ghetto in Berlin where they assembled the Jewish community. Most of them went to Riga, in Latvia.
- Q. And your parents went there together?
- A. Yes, my parents went there together.
- Q. And then what happened to your parents subsequent to that?
- A. My father was gassed in Stutthof about a year after that. My mother survived and was liberated by the Swedish Red Cross under the auspices of Count Bernadotte.
- Q. And taken to Sweden?
- A. Taken to Sweden.
- Q. Okay. We're now in March of 1939, and you are leaving Berlin. Tell me about it, the actual leaving itself and where you were going.
- A. After the paperwork on the frontier, we went to the Rothschild Hospital and got a complete examination.

Q. Where was that located?

A. In Paris. We got a complete examination, and I think everybody was well.

Q. You left with what size group?

A. Close to a hundred people.

Q. What were the ages?

A. I think from nine to fourteen. Or nine to fifteen.

Q. All German Jewish boys and girls?

A. Yes.

Q. And then what happened?

A. They separated the religious children. They went to a religious children's home run by rabbis and dedicated Jewish people. The others went to the hunting castle of Baron Rothschild.

Q. Where was that located?

A. About an hour's ride from Paris. It was called Chateau de la Guette, in Sandonné.

Q. And how many children arrived there?

A. We were mixed with some children from Austria, and we were about 130 all together.

Q. And how long did you stay there?

A. Until the Germans were close to coming to Paris.

Q. Do you remember finding out about the war beginning?

A. Oh, yes, we found out. We had brilliant educators, most of whom had to leave Germany. They showed us what comradeship is. They had to leave earlier than we left, because they could not be caught, and they went underground.

Q. What was the change that was brought about because the war had begun?

A. The Germans came closer to the Maginot Line, which was supposed to be so great, and it didn't do anything. They just walked around it.

Q. You were still in this facility going to school?

A. Right.

Q. And when did you find out you were going to leave there?

- A. I would say at least three weeks before the German troops reached the outskirts of Paris, in May 1940.
- Q. And where did you go from there?
- A. It was a beautiful place called La Bulbul. We stayed in a hotel, all the children together.
- Q. Where was this located?
- A. It was close to a big town called Clermont-Ferrand, in the southern part of France, which afterwards became the unoccupied zone in France.
- Q. How long did you stay in this temporary setup?
- A. Oh, about five or six months. The children were placed in different schools. I was placed in an industrial preparation school by the OSE [*Organisation de Secours aux Enfants*, or Children's Aid Organization], which functioned with ORT [Organization for Rehabilitation and Training] in France.
- Q. Who financed this organization? Do you recall?
- A. If I am not mistaken, the money also came from the Rothschild family, plus money from HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] in the United States. All for the welfare of children. The organizations still exist today.
- Q. Were you following the progress of the war?
- A. Oh, yes, definitely. It was my deep opinion that the whole French government and most of the people were very antisemitic. I felt that more in France than I felt it in Germany.
- Q. Now somewhere along the way France had capitulated, had surrendered to the Germans. And they divided France into an occupied and unoccupied zone. You were in the unoccupied zone?
- A. Correct.
- Q. What did that mean? Did it mean that there were no German soldiers there, that it was like France before the war?
- A. Not at all. The French police were just as bad as the German troops, I would say. They didn't help you. They knew you were Jewish and not a French Jew. They had it against you right then and there.
- Q. Did you have any special identity cards, or did you have to wear any special identification?
- A. No.
- Q. You were in this industrial school, and then what happened?

- A. On August 26, 1942, they collected all the young children who were sixteen or older. Just the Jewish children. Not French, Jewish children. They knew so well where we were, we had no time to even hide or run away or anything. In this particular school, there were twelve boys of German or Austrian origin. And they took six of us who were over sixteen years old. For the six of us, there were over twenty French policemen who just came and collected us. I remember I wanted to go to the bathroom. I went to the bathroom, and inside were three policemen. They didn't wait outside. I had no warning whatsoever. None.
- Q. And what happened?
- A. We were put into a collection center. It was a camp called Maxonne. It was my first experience with cattle trains. The cattle trains took us from there to Drancy [transit camp in a northeastern suburb of Paris, from which detainees were sent to labor or death camps].

Anne Meyer, née Heineman, was born in Mainz, Germany on May 31, 1925. She witnessed *Kristallnacht* in 1938, before leaving Germany on a *Kindertransport* [Children's Transport] to England, where she arrived on February 22, 1939. In May 1940, she moved to the United States.

A. When the Nuremberg laws were passed, all of a sudden we could no longer go to public school, which I had never gone to anyway. Classes were being held, but they were clandestine classes, in effect. At the synagogue, they used the Sunday school rooms to have a regular school. Jewish teachers were not allowed to teach in the public school system, so they came and taught us. So we were very fortunate. We got an excellent education.

The part that bothered me was that we could no longer go to the movies. That about killed me, because I loved to go to the movies. We could not go to restaurants, and we couldn't ride public transportation. This was really a problem to me, because every day I had to plot a different route to walk to school. I learned early on that it could be very dangerous if you didn't change your route each day. This got worse as we got closer to November '38. If you took the same route every day, they'd lie in wait for you.

Q. And do what?

A. Beat you up, if they could catch you. Now you have to understand something. One of the great ironies of this whole stupidity was that I was such a typical Aryan, blonde hair, blue-eyed. I mean you talk about your basic German kid, here I was. There was no way anybody was going to look at me and say, "Aha, that's a Jew." So I was safer than a lot of people. It was very unfair, but that's the way that was. So it wasn't, I guess, as bad for me, as it was for some of the children, but that's how we learned first.

Then I think what brought it home to me more than everything else was that children, whom I had been playing with all my life, all of a sudden weren't playing with me anymore. I thought I had done something wrong, and my mother had to try and explain to me that they couldn't anymore, because it wasn't safe for their families. It is very hard to explain to a ten-year-old, "You know, you haven't done anything, darling, but . . . and from now on, just cross the street and don't say hello, because it would be dangerous for them." That's hard to understand because you think you have done something wrong. It's difficult to assimilate.

Early in 1938, my parents had started making contacts in England to get my sister and me out. At that point, the Joint Distribution Committee and the Friends' Service Committee were arranging what were called Children's Transports. What that meant was that from all over Germany, the trains would pick up children and would take the children to Holland or Belgium or England. Arrangements were being made for me to get on the next possible Children's Transport. I was then told I that I was leaving the 2nd of February [1939].

I was busy running back and forth and saying goodbye to my friends, some of whom were also leaving, but not on the same train that I was. I was only 12 years old. By this time, it was very dangerous to go outside the house. School had been disbanded completely, because the synagogue was blown up. So, there went the classrooms and what we did then was to go to other people's houses.

The teacher and the children in groups of five or six would meet at somebody's apartment and go into the bedroom and close the door. That would be a class. We would be there all day, and by this time, since it was obvious if we stayed in Germany, nobody was going to survive, we were being taught what they felt we needed to learn. The class was according to where you were going to emigrate. So, I had intensive English lessons and also, in the meantime, my grandfather always had me listening to shortwave radio. He said, "I want you to get in the habit of doing that and learn the language." It was illegal to do that. Nevertheless, I listened to Radio Luxemburg all the time. Luxemburg was not that far from Mainz, so the reception was very clear.

The day I got on the train, I had kissed my grandfather goodbye the night before. He said "Don't worry. We'll see each other." They really didn't want me to say goodbye to my grandmother. They were afraid she would understand that she was never going to see me again, and that it was going to be too hard on her, and so the farewell with her was much too short. I regret that bitterly.

I said goodbye to my mother at home. She was not going to go to the station with me, because if there were two parents, then it immediately called attention, and my sister was supposed to come up the next month. So my father and I drove to Frankfurt.

While we were driving, he said to me, "You are going to be on the train with a bunch of other children. You'll have a wonderful trip. When you get to the German border, be very quiet. Do exactly what you are told. When you get to England, they will put you on the train and when you get to Manchester, you will be met by the Benzingers," whom, of course, I had never seen. He said, "Now this is family. They are not close family, but they are distant family. Just be a very good child and do what they tell you. You'll be their family, so just make us proud of you." And I said, "When will you come?" He said, "As soon as we can."

And I said, "How do I let you know I'm in England?" and he said, "I think the best thing to do is to arrange a code. When you get across the German border, just send us a postcard with your name on it and that's all. Don't say anything else. We'll know." I said, "How will you let me know that you're coming?" and he said, "Well, we won't put our names on it," and then he said, "No, don't put your name on the card, just say hello and that's all." And I said "OK, what is your code going to be?" And he said, "We'll try and send you a telegram and it'll say "*Endlich*" [ending, in German] and that'll mean we are leaving. So that was the code. I was to say "hello" and they were to say "*Endlich*."

The platform at the train station in Frankfurt was very familiar to me. So just about then, the train pulled in, and there really wasn't time for a big, emotional goodbye. He just kissed me and put me on the train. Somebody met me on the train and took me to my compartment. There were already seven other children in it who were from different cities. The doors clanged shut and the train rolled out. I really didn't know where the train was going. Where the train was going was to the hook of Holland, then we were going to get on a channel steamer, land in Harridge, England, go to London and then to the Albert Hall. We were going to be taken care of from that point on.

- Q. Was this all by Joint Distribution?
- A. This was the American Joint Distribution Committee, which is now Federation, and the Friends' Service Committee. The Quakers were doing these things all along and they were

really the auspices under which we got out of Germany. The Joint Distribution Committee came in for the funding of both the train and then for the children once they got to where they were going.

When we got on the train, somebody came into our compartment after a few minutes. "How old are you? Where are you going?" It was like going to camp. You were having to meet new people and deal with them, but you weren't going to be with them very long, because once the train got to England, everybody was going to go where they were supposed to go.

A little, red-haired girl came into the compartment after about a half hour or so, and she said, "My name is Rushie. I am the counselor from this train, and I will tell you now what you are to do. You'll do exactly as I tell you, and then everybody will get out. If you don't do what I tell you, everybody will be ordered back on the train, and you'll have to go back where you came from and you'll never get out." So she said, "Don't argue and just do what I tell you." She was firm and gentle at the same time, but there was no nonsense about it. We were just going to do what Rushie told us.

She asked, "Has anybody given you anything to smuggle out, like a ring or gold coin that's sewn in your coat bottom or whatever? I want you to get rid of it now. Throw it out the window, because when we get to the border, the Germans are going to arbitrarily pick ten boys and ten girls to be stripped and searched, and if, God forbid, they have anything on them, everybody is going to be back on that train, and it will go back into Germany and not across the border. So, if you have anything with you, get rid of it now.

When we get to the border, you'll be ordered off the train. You'll be told to leave your luggage behind. Leave it. Don't worry about it. If we get back on the train, the luggage will still be here. You'll come back to the same compartment that you are in now. If there is anything in your luggage, throw it out now, because it is not going to be safe to have it in there. Anything you are told to do, once we get to the border, do it and say, 'yes, sir' and do it immediately. Don't open your mouth, except when you are spoken to and then be very polite and do exactly as you are told." And she said, "Once the train rolls across the border, then you'll be safe, but not 'til we actually see the Dutch flag are we safe." So she said, "I want nothing untoward happening. I don't want anybody making any gestures or getting smart. Be absolutely still and do what you're told, and God willing, we will get everybody out."

Well, that changed the atmosphere considerably, as you can imagine, particularly since there was one boy in our compartment who had been showing everybody the family signet ring that he had on. We about beat that kid up, trying to convince him to throw it out the window, and he wouldn't do it. He finally said, "I'll take care of it." I think he secreted it in one of his orifices and thank God, he was not one of the kids who was sent up to be stripped and searched, but that was really stupid of him.

Anyway, there was no food on the train. It was a long ride and when we got to the German border, everybody was subdued, quiet and scared, as you can imagine. It had really sunk in by that time.

Q. Were all the kids your age?

- A. I think they ranged from about ages eight to sixteen. If you were over sixteen, you were no longer a child in German eyes, and you weren't eligible to go on a Children's Transport, which is why my sister had to go out the way she did. The youngest was about eight. I think the sponsors of the train felt that those any younger would not be able to say goodbye to their parents or would be terribly homesick and would just create problems for everybody. There was a whole lot of crying going on, on the train anyway.

Children were beginning to get very frightened, and in my compartment the atmosphere was fairly good, because we were all so angry at Bernie. We were ready to throw him out the window. But anyway, by the time we got to the German border, everybody was very quiet, because the closer we got, the more we saw uniforms, guns and trucks. The uniforms were enough with swastikas all over the place.

The train pulled into this enormous shed, and the troops came aboard, guns drawn. Now this is a train full of children. What are the kids going to do? They ordered everybody off. "Leave your suitcase and get off the train." What we were allowed to have was the little suitcases, and we were also supposed to have an identification tag around our necks. I had a tag around my neck with my name, hometown, age, and a star. On another tag was my name, my destination, which was Manchester and the name of the family Benzinger, and the town I was ultimately supposed to go to, which was Altringham. I also had around my neck a little miniature German-English, English-German Langenscheid dictionary. So that's what I had and this little bitty suitcase. So, the suitcase stayed on the train and with all this junk around my neck, I joined the rest of the children.

We were herded out of each compartment and down the aisle, off that particular car and into a line, into the shed, with more drawn guns all around us. There were about 300 to 400 children standing there at attention. Then the same guy with the swagger stick marched down and counted off again. Then they said, "Okay, all the number eights, boys this side and girls this side." They were taken off to be stripped and searched. Well, thank God, Bernie wasn't an eight.

The rest of the time, while they were being put through that, the rest of us stood there with the guns aimed at us. When the children who had been led off came back, they were put back in line where they came from and then the same officer, walking up and down the line and hitting himself on his leather chaps with the swagger stick said, "Do any of you live . . ." -- and then he used a very nasty word -- ". . . have anything to declare?" Well, I knew from being on trips with my parents when I was very little that you were supposed to declare binoculars and cameras and things like that. My grandmother had given me a miniature children's camera that cost maybe ten dollars and was called a Sida. I was so afraid they would send us all back if I didn't tell him I had this dumb camera. I raised my hand, and I said, "Sir, I have a Sida," and he laughed, and said, "Well, if that's all you *Judenkinder* [Jewish children] have, we might as well get rid of you. Everybody on the train." Thank God, it struck him as funny. I never knew why that triggered anything. You know, why he finally decided it was time to let us go.

We got on the train, and the train started up, and we pulled across the border. We knew it was the border because there were swastikas, and we saw the Dutch flag. The minute the train pulled across the border, everybody was leaning out the window, spitting and making other very rude, stupid gestures that expressed something of what we felt.

The train pulled into another shed on the Dutch side, and the women of the Dutch Red Cross and the Quaker Friend's Service Committee came aboard. They brought us oranges, bananas and ham sandwiches and other kind of sandwiches and postcards. The postcard, of course, was the key. I wrote my parents' name and their address and "Hello," and the women promised to mail that, so our parents would know immediately that we had made it out. We hadn't seen an orange or a banana in a long time, because those were luxury items the Germans weren't importing. We were all just starving and very excited. So, that stop I remember clearly.

Herb Karliner was born on September 3, 1926 in Peiskretscham, Oberschlesien [Upper Silesia], in Germany. He and his family, along with other Jews attempting to flee from the Nazis, left Hamburg, Germany on the ship *St. Louis* in May 1939. They were destined for Cuba, only to be refused entrance first to Cuba and then to the United States, despite entreaties made to President Roosevelt. The ship was forced to return to Germany. Great Britain, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands took in the refugees. Very few of the passengers ultimately survived the Final Solution, because Great Britain was the only nation of the four not to be occupied by Nazi Germany.

A. It took us about ten days to get to Cuba. It must have been the end of May, the 26th or the 28th [1939]. I don't remember the exact date now.

Q. So everybody saw Cuba?

A. Everybody saw Cuba. I even have a picture here which we took on arriving in Havana. Some relatives and some friends came to welcome us in Havana.

Q. What was the first intimation that you got that there was trouble, and that you were not going to be able to land?

A. Well, as soon we arrived in Havana, they told us that it will take a little time for debarkation. After a few hours, the ship went to the docks, and then there started to be some problem. I was too young to understand those things. They said we had to pull off the docks because some other ships were supposed to come in there. So I figured, if not today, a little bit later. Actually, that was my first word I learned in Spanish, *mañana* [tomorrow], because that day they said, "*Mañana.*" People came close to us and they said, "*Mañana. Mañana* you will come off the ship." Nobody was allowed to come on that ship at that time, and we figured there was some problem, that we would get off tomorrow. One day, two days, three days, and we started to get a little bit worried about it.

Q. Did they move the ship away from the dock?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Where?

A. In the middle of the harbor.

Q. And they just dropped anchor?

A. Yes. Relatives came with small boats and talked to us, but we never actually could reach them. After about five days, we knew something was wrong. We noticed that people from the Jewish organizations sent telegrams from the ship, and they formed a committee. There was something going on, and we found out that they had some complications. We understood afterward that the captain told us that he cannot stay in the harbor any longer, and he has to move the ship out. He promised us he would stay just outside. Well, naturally, our morale went way down, and people started to worry. One day we were playing, myself and some other friends on the main deck, and I heard some screaming

going on. I saw somebody jumping overboard. The small boats afterward came over and dragged him out. And he was actually one of the only grown persons who was let off in Havana.

Well, after a while, we started to move a little further away from Havana. Meantime we got telegrams every day. Some new rumors came out that we were going to land on Island of Pines, which is an island off Cuba, and that they would let us off there. Then I heard another rumor that came in that there was a very rich Texan Jew who wanted to give us an island. He would take care of us somewhere off the United States. Then we heard rumors that we were going to go to the Dominican Republic.

I mean, every day was a different rumor, but nothing came through. We were cruising close to the Florida coast, and I saw Miami Beach from not too far away. I was so impressed because I saw the palm trees, I saw the skyscrapers and, truthfully speaking, at that time when I was in my twelfth year, I hoped that someday I would come back to Miami. Well, thank goodness, I made it, but some people didn't.

- Q. What do you know of any attempts that were made to land the passengers in the United States through Miami?
- A. Well, I heard a rumor at that time. In the afternoon, all of a sudden, we saw an American Coast Guard cutter coming by, and they told us to move away. We were too close to the coast of Florida. The captain had to obey the order, and we had to move out from there.
- Q. You had mentioned something about efforts being made with the United States government to let the people on the ship, who numbered, I think, 936.
- A. Something around there, yes.
- Q. What did you know of these efforts?
- A. Well, we sent telegrams to all the countries in the world . . . to Mr. Roosevelt . . . to Mrs. Roosevelt. Actually, to Mrs. Roosevelt we had made a special request to let only the children off the *St. Louis*. To let them into the United States because, naturally, the parents would worry about the children. As far as I know, we never had an answer. We never got a response. We sent telegrams and also the Joint Distribution Committee, which was working with the American government asked to let us in here, but to no avail.
- Q. When did you first find out that you weren't going to be allowed to land anywhere?
- A. The captain told us that we had to go back to Europe slowly, because he didn't have enough fuel or food. Naturally, we felt very depressed. Already, people were wondering what's going to happen to them because they had the experience in Buchenwald [concentration camp] earlier.
- Q. When you finally found out that your destination was then Europe again, was there any explanation as to where you would go in Europe at that time?
- A. The announced destination was Germany. We had to go back to Hamburg where there was this home port. We heard that they were working with other countries.

- Q. When is the first time that you actually knew where you were going, or what was going to happen to you and your family?
- A. Well, the situation got worse and worse. People wanted to do something about it. They didn't want to go back to Germany. They didn't know what would happen to them.
- Q. How was the mood aboard the ship?
- A. It was terrible. It was no longer a festive ship. Finally, I would say about two days before we arrived back at Hamburg, we heard some rumors that some countries might take us in. One day, the rumors were flying like the day before, we got a telegram telling us that three or four countries would take us in. That means Holland, Belgium, France and England would divide us and bring us in. This was just before we landed in Hamburg. So, naturally the hope went up again, and we made port in Antwerp, Belgium. We were on that ship for almost five weeks. In Antwerp, we were transferred to another ship which took us to Boulogne, France.
- Q. Was your whole family still together at this time?
- A. The whole family. When we were on the ship, the *St. Louis*, about two, two hundred fifty people went to each country.
- Q. How did they make the allocations? Do you recall?
- A. Some of my relatives were supposed to go to Belgium. But, then, afterwards, an uncle of mine, who was a dentist and was single, came with us to France. Then our friends who were from our hometown went to England, which was very lucky, because they were safe.

Aron Fainman was born on February 10, 1923 in Zabłudow, Poland. The Germans occupied the town in September 1939. His family hid in a cellar for three days, while the town was ransacked. By the end of September, the town was under Russian rule.

- A. We stayed as a family together. It was on a Thursday that the Germans walked in. Whoever was on the street, they just grabbed them and took them to a place. They made them dig holes then shot them. And they had the few people whom they left, close the hole up . . . and that was the first of a series. And then Saturday, they took all the Jews that they could catch or find in homes or those who dared to go out on the street, and they put them in the synagogue, and they put the synagogue on fire. You'll have to excuse me, if I get a little bit tense, because it's hard when you remember things like that. They burned them alive. I'm sorry to say it. [Ed. note: crying]

This excerpt is adapted from the original testimony of Aron Fainman which is part of the Oral History Collection of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

Frieda Jaffe is one of the very few children to have survived Hitler's inferno. Born in Piotrków, Poland on June 16, 1937 as Fredzia Gelcman, Frieda was forced to witness her father's hanging, because he refused to divulge a chemical formula to German authorities.

- A. I remember too well the day that they came, that they broke into the house. My father was in bed. He was not feeling well. I remember my mother saying, "But you have to get up and go to work! Go to the plant!" And he kept saying, "But I can't!" and about that time, just as she was combing and brushing my hair, and he was in bed, the house was literally broken into. Soldiers, policemen, broke in, and they told my father that he had to go to the office, to the factory, and he kept saying, "But I can't!" And then I remember vaguely, but I remember, someone in a different kind of uniform who came and said, "Well then, give us the formula." And all I remember was my father saying, "Never!" At that point, they literally just dragged him out of bed, and then we didn't see him again until the public execution.

We were all made to stand in this town square, and I very clearly remember the gallows, which to me as a very small child, seemed as though they were going to the top of the sky. First we watched the three men brought out. Their hands were tied behind their backs. The most vivid recollection before the actual hanging is that somehow the Germans had rigged up some sort of a walkway that was stone, and there were very sharp edges. The men were made to crawl on their knees over this. Well, between the beatings and the punctured knees and the bleeding that was going on, by the time they actually hanged them, we were glad. I remember some of the adults saying, "Oh my God, how much longer?" We really could not imagine how they could continue this. So, it was actually a thankfulness that the agony would soon be over. And I remember one Nazi very clearly saying to the population standing there, "This is what happens when you don't do what we want you to do."

And I remember my mother trying to shield my eyes so that I wouldn't watch. There was a German standing right next to her, and he jerked her hand away, and he said, "Let her see." So, it's hardly something I'm ever going to forget.

This excerpt is adapted from the original testimony of Frieda Jaffe which is part of the Oral History Collection of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

Jadwiga Kroupnoff, née Gorączko was born on August 8, 1926 in Bielsko Biała, Poland to a Catholic family. As a young girl, Jadwiga was taken away by the Nazis and was forced to labor on a farm in Bavaria, Germany.

A. After the Germans came into the city, they started to mobilize against the Jews and take them to the center of the markets where we always bought all kinds of food and vegetables at the flea market. First they beat them up. Then they hanged them.

Q. Did you see any of this?

A. Yes, I was witness to this once in my life. They put, maybe two hundred Jews together, men, elderly and others who probably were sick or crippled. They took us from the houses and said, "You have to look at it. We want you to remember. If you help them somehow to survive or hide them, then you are going to be in the same place where they are." That's what I remember. We were very sad about it, because to see them hang people was a horrible thing. As a thirteen-year-old child, and even younger, we couldn't understand why. Why did this person have to be hanged? What did he do that was wrong? I couldn't watch the scene. I tried to escape. They grabbed me back, but then somehow I snuck between people and I got away, because I couldn't look at the scene anymore.

Q. Do you remember if they did anything to Polish people in addition?

A. I remember they took in first Polish priests, Polish professors, Polish directors of the schools, directors of the factories or like . . . if my father would have been alive, they would have probably taken him also from his job. I believe they first destroyed the people who were intelligent, who were educated. Then it would be easier for them with the others later. I believe that was the reason.

Q. Do you know if any of these Polish officers or any of these people tried to resist, if they did anything like sabotage?

A. Yes, that is what happened in 1940 before we were taken to Germany. It happened with us when we tried to go to the city. From our place to the center of the city, we had to take a train. We were sitting there, and the train already was starting to go. Somebody ran to us. He said, "Please get off train, all of you, because they are shooting everybody in the center of the city." The German got mad, and my mother asked him, "Why did they get mad, and why are they shooting everybody?"

In revenge for the execution of twelve Polish people by the Nazis, a group of partisans got dressed like Germans. They spoke German very well. They came to the city hall in a jeep, and they killed the main Nazi officer there.

Before the Nazis realized what happened, the partisans returned to their jeep and disappeared. Later, the Nazis, high officers or Gestapo, had some kind of meeting in the city hall to organize a search for the partisans. The Nazis couldn't find them anywhere. They ran from house to house and asked, "Did anybody see them?" Nobody even knew where they were. So whoever was on the street, the Nazis dragged out and especially when they knew the Jews were there. They took them out, and there was a shooting massacre.

Then some person told us that blood was running in the street from the dead people. So we had no choice, we just disappeared.

Elvira Showstark, née Sonnino, was born on June 18, 1925 in Rome, Italy. She hid in Rome throughout the war.

A. It was about 5 o'clock in the morning, and we heard a lady screaming. I lived near the Roman Forum, and all Jewish people lived in my building. We looked out the window and wondered why the lady was screaming. She said, "Run, run. I just came back from the Jewish section, and they're taking all the Jews in the trucks. They're taking them away. Hurry up, hurry up. Leave."

Q. This was a Jewish woman?

A. No. A gentile woman. She warned us. Everybody from our building gathered our things. We ran and the first stop we made was near the Roman Forum. We stopped at a building, and we sat inside in a hallway. A very nice lady came out and saw my little nephew crying. He was only an infant, and she offered some water. But we couldn't tell her who we were. She perhaps thought that we were just refugees from other cities that were afraid of the bombs.

My father said, "You stay here, and I'll come back and see if we can find a place." He came back and said, "I couldn't find any place to hide, so the best thing is to go across the street to the Roman Forum." And so we went there.

There were caves, dark and muddy. When we arrived there, we found the other Jewish people who lived in our building. We had all run. We hadn't been in contact with one another. We didn't know where they went, but we found them there. Someone had to go out to get some food, but it was very difficult.

Q. Where would you get food from?

A. I don't remember ever seeing any good food, any clothing, anything that I could warm myself with.

Q. When you ran, you didn't have time to take anything with you?

A. No.

Q. What was your food like before this happened?

A. My father was making a living, so he would come home at night, and whatever he earned, we would use to buy us food.

Q. So it was really on a day-to-day basis.

A. Yes. That's the way it was. You never knew what the next day would bring or if you were going to eat or not. We stayed in this Roman Forum for about two, three nights and then we had to leave because from where we were hiding in the caves, we saw the Germans sightseeing. We felt that if they ever found out who we were, what we're doing there, then they would report us. So we all left, not knowing where the others were going. We just separated from each other.

Q. Your family separated?

A. No. The other people from my building. And then from there my father found out that a friend of his found an apartment near the Coliseum. We went there, and again we found another family that we knew from our building also living in there. My mother used to go every afternoon to make sure my father would be okay at work.

But then one day, my mother came home, and she was crying terribly. I asked, "What happened, where's Daddy?" And she said, "It's all over." I asked, "What do you mean, it's all over?" She said, "The Germans took him. He and his friend were working. They took him, and they beat him up terribly, unmercifully. There was a lot of blood on his shirt." He said to her, "I'm sorry I'm crying. Go home, run." He didn't want her to be taken.

Q. He didn't want her to be identified with him?

A. And he said, "Run as fast as you can." So she ran home, but she was quite upset. What happened was that we couldn't stay there anymore in this apartment. This man who worked in a hospital kind of felt sorry for me because I was so young. He talked to my mother and said, "Why don't you let me have her, where I work? She can stay there. It is a big ward." The ward was empty because during the war the patients, no matter how sick they were, were afraid of the bombs. They wouldn't go to the hospital.

Q. They were afraid they would be bombed in a hospital?

A. Bombed in a hospital, too. And so it was empty, and I was there all alone and afraid. My mother finally came to get me, and I went home with her. Another lady that knew my mother and us for many years offered to take me and one of my sisters to her home. She lived near the Vatican. We stayed there about a week. Then one early morning when it was still dark, she said, "Please go. Leave." She never gave us a reason. And we left, and I found the reason when I went back with my husband in 1960.

Q. You found her?

A. I saw her.

Q. You made a point of looking her up?

A. No. I didn't. I met her by accident because she was in a kiosk. She said, "For years I wanted to tell you why I sent you and your sister away." She told me that her brother-in-law wanted to sell us to the Fascists, to the Nazis.

Q. To sell you?

A. Sell. Because for each man they used to get paid 5,000 lira.

Q. If they would turn in a Jewish man?

A. A Jewish man, or for a woman, it was 4,000 lira. For a child or a young person, it would be 3,000 lira. They used to get paid to round up the Jewish people and give them to the Nazis.

Q. The Germans paid this money?

A. Yes, this is how I found out what happened.

Q. So where did you go when this woman had thrown you out?

A. I went back to my mother, not knowing if I would find her because nobody knew. Then my mother had to sell every single thing in the house. When she went to a certain street to collect the money from the sale of our things, she was rounded up by the Fascists. The Italian Fascists had picked up my mother, my sister with the baby, my other sister, and my brother, who was with my mother. And they would round them up and put them in a restaurant until they would gather more Jews. They could make more money and take them on the trucks to ship to concentration camps.

My brother wanted to run away before he was taken in, and the Fascists wanted to shoot him. So my mother went like this with her hand and hit the Fascist's hand, and my brother was able to escape. My sister ran home to me with the baby. She was crying and said, "They took Mama and Sylvana and, I don't know what's going to happen."

Q. Were you aware of concentration camps?

A. No. We were not aware of the atrocity that took place or of what was going to happen. We wanted to know what happened to my mother, so a lady downstairs in my building who was not Jewish, said, "Come on. Let's go find out together." We went near the Tiber, and we could see where the restaurant was. The lady said, "Now you stay here. Let me go check." Before she went there, we waited about an hour. When she came back, she said, "I think they are letting the women and children go."

UNIT 5

THE GHETTOS

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UNIT 5

THE GHETTOS

The Butterfly

*The last, the very last,
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
against a white stone...*

*Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it wished to
kiss the world goodbye.*

*For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto
But I have found my people here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut candles in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.*

*That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
In the ghetto.*

Pavel Friedman

Born January 7, 1921

Deported to Terezín (Theresienstadt) April 26, 1942

Wrote poem on June 6, 1943

Died in Oswiecim (Auschwitz) Sept. 29, 1944

Poem reprinted by permission of the Jewish Museum of Prague.

INTRODUCTION

The term ghetto, as it is used today, generally refers to an area within a city where people live who share a common ethnic background. Often the modern-day ghetto is further distinguished by the poor economic level of the majority of its residents. While many may feel they have no choice but to live there, all share the same basic freedoms as citizens of the country and all have the freedom, if not the financial means, to move should they choose to do so. Even the impoverished residents of our modern city ghettos can still participate freely in all areas of public life. The term ghetto, as it was used during the Holocaust also referred to an area where residents were united by common circumstances, but they were drastically different from those of the ghetto today.

During the Holocaust, the ghetto served as a collection point and assembly center where the Nazis imprisoned their victims. Technically, the ghetto was a way-station to death in the concentration camps and, in fact, was not very different from them. Conditions within the ghetto and the concentration camp were often so similar that in some cases, the terms were used interchangeably. For example, Theresienstadt has been referred to as both a ghetto and a concentration camp. Technically, under the Nazi German administrative structure, Theresienstadt was a ghetto, as it was not under the jurisdiction of the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps in the SS Central Office for Economy and Administration.

The Germans did not develop ghettos in Western Europe¹ since the plan was to push all those intended for elimination or slave labor into Eastern Europe. A vast section of central Poland, called the General Government, was carved out for this purpose. Additionally, this area was to serve as a buffer zone for the uneasy alliance between Germany and Russia and as the "dumping ground" for all Poles. The very concept of Polish nationhood was to be eradicated.

The Jews in Western Europe often were held for months under dreadful conditions in internment centers which had been designated as "transit camps." In the East, the Jews lived for years in the deplorable conditions of the ghettos. Food rations were reduced below human survival causing mass starvation. Sanitary conditions were almost non-existent as were medical supplies. Crowding was insufferable. Often two or three families had to share one small room. In every ghetto, death was a daily reality from epidemics, starvation, exposure, and being forced to labor beyond physical endurance. Children with stomachs swollen from starvation begged for food. Corpses littered the streets, and epidemics were routine.

As a tactic for compliance or to flush out wanted persons in the ghetto, the Nazis took hostages and killed them publicly as a warning to others. Periodically, Jews would also be rounded up and deported by train or truck to the concentration camps and killing centers. As the war progressed, deportations increasingly included everyone as the ghettos were "liquidated." Gypsies who had earlier been transferred from the West to the ghettos in the East were now rounded up throughout Europe and deported to the camps with the Jews.²

Some of those imprisoned in the ghettos in Eastern Europe were put into the position of carrying out the Nazi orders. This council, the *Judenrat*, was ordered by the Germans to fill a quota for the various deportations. However, in a few courageous cases, the leaders of the *Judenrat* committed suicide rather than fulfill the Nazis' demands, although this never stopped the implementation of deportations.

Thus, in the East, the ghettos served the Nazi "Master Plan" by providing controlled prisons within which its wretched inhabitants could be slowly starved to death or die "of natural causes" from sickness, exposure, or the daily brutalities. Confined and isolated within the ghettos, the

Germans had effectively collected and contained the largest mass of Jews in Europe. For those who remained in the ghetto, there was the fervent hope that they would live to see the Nazis overthrown and Germany defeated. Few could realize the priority that would be given to the "Jewish question." No matter how urgent Germany's military needs, nothing would outweigh the Nazi determination for a "Final Solution."

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the VOCABULARY.
2. Explain the purpose of the ghettos.
3. Describe the living conditions in the ghettos.
4. Describe the community life within the ghettos.
5. Analyze the dilemma of the bystander when neighbors were forced to move to the ghetto.
6. Analyze to what degree the *Judenrat* was forced to assist the Nazi plans for liquidation of the ghettos.
7. Describe the extent of the *Judenrat's* power.
8. Explain that resistance in the ghettos took many forms (e.g. armed resistance, unarmed resistance and spiritual resistance).

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Aktion: Operation involving the assembling of Jews for transport to the concentration camps and killing centers; also the taking of hostages.

Concentration camps: The notorious prisons designed for labor, torture, and murder, set up by the Nazis throughout the German *Reich*, Europe, and North Africa. At first used for political prisoners, many later held large numbers of different groups of prisoners (Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, the political resisters, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) from numerous countries. The camps were centers of death where prisoners died by murder, gassing, torture, "medical" experimentation, overwork, disease and hunger. The largest and possibly most infamous was Auschwitz where more people were interned than at any other prison site. While there were thousands of concentration camps, some of the better-known ones were: Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, Flossenbürg, Neuengamme, Gross-Rosen, Majdanek, Natzweiler, Mauthausen, Stutthof, Dora/Nordhausen, and Bergen-Belsen. Six concentration camps were developed and organized specifically and solely as killing centers: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz/Birkenau, and Majdanek. The last two also served as slave labor camps. A wide variety of prisoners were interned and killed in the Nazi camps, the largest groups being the Jews, Gypsies, Soviet prisoners of war, and Slavs. In addition to these, an untold number of other Nazi "undesirables" were held in these camps and killed. However, the Jews were overwhelmingly the largest single group to be imprisoned in these camps and murdered there. All of the concentration camps were centers of forced labor and death.

Deportation: Forcible transfer of Jews to Nazi concentration camps.

General Government: The administrative unit comprising those parts of occupied central Poland that were not incorporated into the German *Reich*. It included five districts: Galicia, Kraków, Lublin, Radom, and Warsaw.

Ghetto: A compulsory closed "Jewish Quarter" established by the Germans where the Jewish population of the city and Jews from the surrounding areas were forced to live under inhumane and desperate conditions.

Judenrat: The official Jewish leadership body in the ghetto consisting of a community council with jurisdiction confined to secular affairs. The Germans took control of these Jewish councils and forced them to accept German orders to facilitate the establishment of the ghettos and, ultimately the destruction of the Jews of Europe.

Molotov Cocktail: A makeshift bomb made of a breakable container filled with flammable liquid and provided with a rag wick.

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: Jews in the Warsaw ghetto rose in revolt against the German occupation forces from April 19 to May 16, 1943.

NAMES AND PLACES

Anielewicz, Mordechai: Led Jewish fighters in revolt in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Czerniakow, Adam: Head of the Warsaw ghetto *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) who committed suicide rather than obey the German orders.

Eichmann, Adolf: Coordinated the deportation of Jews from their homes in German-occupied Europe to ghettos, concentration, and death camps in Eastern Europe. He headed Department IVB4 of *REICHSSICHERHEITSHAUPTAMT (Referat Juden)* and as such was the engineer of the "Final Solution." Eichmann was captured by Israeli agents on May 11, 1959 in Argentina where he had been living. After a lengthy trial in Israel, he was convicted and executed on May 31, 1962.

Heydrich, Reinhard: As chief of RSHA, Heydrich was entrusted in 1941 with implementing the "Final Solution" of the "Jewish question." He presided over the conference at Wannsee in Berlin on January 20, 1942. Czech partisans assassinated Heydrich in Prague in 1942. As a result, the entire village of Lidice was destroyed, and nearly all of its citizens were killed.

Korczak, Janusz: [Real name - Henryk Goldszmit] A physician, educator, writer of children's stories, and the director of an orphanage. On August 6, 1942, Korczak, known as "Father of Orphans," accompanied his children on a three-mile march to the deportation train which led to Treblinka where they were all killed.

Ringelblum, Emmanuel: (1900-1944) A resident of the Warsaw ghetto who closely documented his life in the ghetto; these documents were discovered after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising hidden in milk cans buried under the rubble of the destroyed ghetto.

RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt): Central Office for *Reich* Security; coordinated administration of security and police agencies including the *Gestapo* and Security Service.

Rumkowski, Chaim: Head of the Łódź ghetto *Judenrat* (Jewish Council).

CONTENT OVERVIEW

THE GHETTOS

In 1939 Hitler expressed his wish to concentrate the Jews in ghettos: "Out with them from all the professions and into the ghetto with them; fence them in somewhere where they can perish as they deserve..."³ In spite of this statement, however, he never gave orders to establish ghettos, possibly because he saw them as an unnecessary delay in the plans for total physical annihilation. Yet, the suggestion to develop ghettos persisted and was soon enacted.

In Western Europe, the Nazis periodically moved targeted groups into specific areas of the cities in order to isolate and contain them. In Eastern Europe, this effort to concentrate persecuted minorities was far more intense in design. Massive groups of people were moved, first in one direction, then another. These round-ups were made easy because of the European registration system which required everyone to register his/her address with the police.

Due to the extremely complex nature of the ghetto situation and the other types of forcible movements of people practiced in all of the countries under German rule, only one country is described in this chapter: the case of Poland. Similarities with Poland existed in many other occupied countries, especially in the Nazis' treatment of the Jews and other persecuted groups, but the vast numbers moved to and within Poland provide a razor-sharp image of Nazi policies and procedures.

The Development of Ghettos in Poland

The ghettos were never developed as an answer to the "racial problem" and so were not established as permanent living quarters for the mass of people forced into them. The ghetto was conceived as an aid to the control and supervision of Jews (and the Gypsies who were to share their fate) by concentrating them within certain areas.

The ghetto, whether initially intended or not, also served two additional purposes. First, with the demands for hard labor, the insufficient food allotted, and overcrowded and substandard sanitary conditions, a large number of the Jews perished. This resolved at least part of the "Jewish question." Second, the ghettos provided a large concentration of cheap labor which the Nazis and their collaborators eagerly exploited.

In general, as soon as the German forces entered a city, a series of anti-Jewish measures would be introduced. These included assignments to forced labor, confiscation of Jewish businesses, real estate and other properties held outside of the ghetto, and a ban on using public transportation. It was also ordered that every Jew must be readily identifiable. In Poland this took the form of having to wear a white armband with a blue Star of David on it or yellow patches cut in the shape of the six pointed star. Armbands were used in the General Government; stars in the German incorporated areas of the Wartheland, including Łódź and Poznan. The patches had to be attached to both the front and back of all outer garments. These identification markers had to be worn at all times and were blatant measures introduced to isolate and identify the groups of intended victims from the general population.

Orders to move into the ghettos were given by large signs which were posted throughout the town and through loud speakers blaring announcements that the death penalty would be dealt to anyone who disobeyed. Movement into the ghettos was also facilitated by the victims' belief that this was the final measure of persecution against them and that the war would soon end. Unaware of the Nazis' plans to completely destroy them, they resigned themselves to the move. Furthermore, many of the Jews hoped that living together in mutual cooperation and self-rule

would make it a little easier to withstand the Nazi brutality they had so often been exposed to as individuals. The assumption was (and the Germans encouraged this belief) that if they carried out the Nazis' orders and were beneficial to the Nazis by being productive, they would be left alone. However, it was not long before it was discovered that these were false hopes.

With the ghetto population now living isolated from any assistance whatsoever, and without resources to help themselves, the Nazis were free to be as cruel as they wished. Furthermore, repeated *Aktions* (round-ups) in which large numbers of the ghetto residents were arrested and transported to places from which no one returned, destroyed any illusion of a peaceful existence.

Ghetto Features and Conditions

In most cases, ghettos were established in the poorest sections of the cities in Poland. Before the war, these areas had frequently been crowded Jewish neighborhoods. When the ghetto was established, the non-Jews had to leave (although many went to better apartments vacated by Jews who had been forced to abandon them), and Jews from other neighborhoods were ordered to move there. In order to concentrate Jews scattered throughout the countryside, those who lived in the rural areas were brought to the cities and also moved into the ghettos.

Conditions in almost all of the ghettos in Poland were inhuman. There was rationing of food to starvation levels. Since there were many ghettos, and conditions were different from the East to the West, it is impossible to provide an exact daily calorie count. However, this information is available for some specific locations. For example, in Warsaw, the largest of the ghettos in Poland, food allocation amounted to 183 calories per day; the Poles received 934, foreigners 1,790, and the Germans 2,310.⁴ The average ration per person each month was four pounds of bread. The bread dough was mixed with sand, sawdust, and chestnuts. Periodically jam, made from beets and saccharine, was distributed. The Germans also were quite willing to bring in potatoes and *brukiew* (a large squash) -- provided it had frozen and turned rotten. Hunger was never-ending. One survivor, who was 13 years old when she was in the Warsaw ghetto, related her memory of the evening her mother put before her a sort of brown meat which looked like liver. Half-starved she could not believe her good fortune. The liver was exceptional, without any veins or coarseness. The young girl asked, "How were you so lucky to get the meat?" Her mother confessed that the "liver" was actually blood that had been taken from a dead horse and boiled until it had jelled. The young girl was nauseous but held herself back from vomiting.⁵

In the larger ghettos which were not near rural, agricultural areas, ghetto residents purchased food on the black market at exorbitant prices when they were able to find it and pay for it, while others slowly starved to death. There were soup kitchens which, for money, distributed some cooked oats with the chaff still on them. Hand-pulled carts rolled through ghetto streets every morning collecting the hundreds who had died in the night from starvation or exposure. Bands of children roamed the streets in search of food. Sometimes they would slip under the walls and return to the ghetto with their jackets and pants laden with vegetables which they had bought, stolen, or bartered. If patrols guarding the wall caught these children, they would be searched, thus exposing the life-giving food. In most cases, these children would be shot, at other times beaten, in any case, their food would be taken. For many parents, little brothers and sisters, this food meant the difference between life and certain death.

In some cases, food was thrown over the walls, often by those Jews on the "Aryan" side who were living on false papers. In other instances, food was thrown over by Poles who were being paid for their help. In other dangerous cases, young Jewish men and women who looked "Aryan" sneaked out of the ghetto, bought food, and smuggled themselves and their precious foodstuffs back in. By the end of 1941, the penalty for leaving the ghetto without permission was death.

There were little or no heating materials. Rooms were heated by a single stove providing there was wood or coal to burn in it. But such fuels were a luxury and were rarely available. During the bitter cold winter months, everyone had to wear, at all times, whatever clothes or blankets they could find in order to keep from freezing. Water froze in the pipes and the sanitary conditions were so poor that epidemics, especially typhoid and tuberculosis, raged throughout the ghetto. Electricity was provided only for one hour and usually it went on in the middle of the night such as at 3 a.m. The only light available was from carbide lamps which gave off an unpleasant odor and fumes that affected the eyes. There were little or no medical supplies and these were generally available only at the hospital. But going to the ghetto hospital was dangerous since it was frequently the target of German round-ups. All of this was added to insufferable overcrowding, where it was not at all unusual for eight to thirteen people to have to share one small room. As the Germans steadily reduced the size of many of the ghettos yet increased the numbers of Jews who had been sent there, thousands of families were left without shelter.

The Nazis imposed harsh rules. Curfews were enacted, and people were forbidden assembly. Attending or teaching school was largely forbidden and in many ghettos all cultural and religious activities were banned or, at best, permitted only occasionally and under severe restrictions. However, in the Warsaw ghetto, there was an open church for those who converted to Catholicism as they, too, were confined to the ghetto and treated as Jews because they were considered racially impure. There were no legal means to communicate with the outside world. All radios were to have been turned in after Poland was occupied, and all internal publications in the ghetto were forbidden. If caught for the slightest infraction of the rules, the death sentence was carried out publicly before the ghetto population. Frequently, a single individual's offense resulted in severe reprisals where hundreds would be randomly selected as hostages and killed as an example and warning to others.

There were, initially, two types of ghettos: open and closed. The open ghettos were marked by signs and the perimeters patrolled. Closed ghettos, as the name implies, were surrounded by fences or walls. Some of the closed ghettos were further reinforced by cementing broken glass onto the tops of the walls then extending the height of the wall another two feet with barbed wire. Gates to the ghettos were guarded by German soldiers, Polish and Jewish police. The distinction between closed or open ghettos lost all significance, however, when it came time to "liquidate" the population. In the open ghettos, all access roads would be blocked by the German police and their aides, and the ghetto surrounded just as completely as the walls of the closed ghettos. A more important distinction is that the Germans regarded the closed ghettos as virtual concentration camps.⁶

Forced Labor in the Ghettos

The ghettos provided a captive population to exploit for forced labor. The wages paid were so low that the recipients could barely pay for rations let alone extra food on the black market. In areas where "minimum wages" were paid, the Nazis got around this by taking substantial deductions. Fifty to 80 percent of the wages were thus "legally" confiscated, reducing the amount rendered to a starvation income. In many cases, work was not paid at all and forced labor was, in reality, slave labor.

And yet, many people in the ghetto willingly volunteered for labor, even though the working conditions were brutal. The workers labored seven days a week, working in twelve-hour shifts, under strict supervision of the SS and later the Ministry of Labor.

Payment, although a pittance, depended on each worker producing massive amounts of piece-work to fill unreasonable and ever-expanding quotas for the German war economy. Yet, there were always more laborers willing to work than jobs available for them. The secret to this seeming paradox lay in the Nazis' effective threat of deportations for anyone who did not have proper

working papers. Even if such papers were obtained, they were never a guarantee of protection from deportation. Whole factories would, periodically, be emptied and all the workers deported. Overnight, a type of work could be declared nonessential and the work papers declared worthless.

After the majority of the ghetto residents had been deported, those remaining had to keep working. They emptied out the vacated apartments and labored in sweat shops, sorting out the possessions of the deported Jews which would then be sent to Germany. They worked in various capacities, always under appalling conditions, serving the needs of the *Reich*. They made military uniforms, shoes, boots, brushes, ammunition and worked as furriers, jewelers, and engravers. They worked in airless factories, in the fields, and in quarries. In all cases, the degree of need for such services decided the survival of these slave laborers in the ghetto. Nevertheless, however horrible the conditions and the quality of their life, the people hung on with their last bit of strength to avoid the dreaded deportations.

Administration of the Ghetto

In the ghettos in Poland, the German authorities appointed a council of Jewish leaders to carry out their orders. These councils were called the *Judenrat*. Although their powers were extremely limited, these councils, under strict German supervision, were faced with the impossible task of trying to organize ghetto life under ceaseless pressure and threats. Certain Jewish activities, such as religious services, were either closely monitored or forbidden outright. All political activity was prohibited. The main task of the *Judenrat* was to carry out the orders of their German overseers. In addition, they had to develop and provide health and welfare services and a police system. In the chaotic mass of frightened, impoverished, starving residents, the task of meeting basic human needs was impossible and developing a police system from within their own ranks -- something completely foreign to the Jewish community -- was filled with problems and corruption. From the Nazi point of view, these councils served the darker purpose of having to collect and provide ransom money on demand, goods and services, and most important of all, people for deportations. The Germans savagely exerted their power over the *Judenrat* and Jewish police. For example, in the Warsaw ghetto, when deportations were stepped up towards the end of the ghetto's existence, Jewish police were ordered to deliver seven people per day. If they did not, their own families were taken.

The Nazis shrewdly recognized the potential of using Jewish leaders to coerce the population into their scheme of "resettlement." Initially, this deception was encouraged by the inducement of food which brought out many of the starving ghetto residents. However, if the Jewish leaders could convince their people that they were going to better living conditions, the task of evacuating the ghetto residents to the concentration camps would be substantially easier. Until the councils recognized the true fate of the deportations, some of them complied with the Nazi orders.

Members of the *Judenrat* were not accorded equal status, and usually one person carried the weight of responsibility for the *Judenrat's* decisions. This individual was charged with the moral dilemma of giving into the Nazi demands now (with the hope or expectation of saving the rest) or resisting these demands completely (with the expectation of severe reprisals). Particularly noteworthy was the reaction of the head of the Warsaw ghetto *Judenrat*, Adam Czerniakow. He interceded with the German authorities in every way possible to alleviate the suffering of the people in the ghetto. Tirelessly, he worked to overcome the German regulations imposed and to organize relief. Mass deportations from the Warsaw ghetto to the killing center Treblinka began on July 21, 1942. Three days later, following the Nazis' demand that Czerniakow cooperate with them in rounding up Jews destined for the deportations, he committed suicide. His diary, most of which was recovered, tells of the anguish and the hopelessness of his situation as increasingly stringent orders were issued, and he was forced to stand by and see his people die. Although exempted from the deportations (at least until the ghetto was liquidated -- a fact unknown to the council members), he chose death rather than to turn against his people.

The story of the Jewish councils has generated considerable controversy. Many of them have been condemned for willingly complying with Nazi demands. Yet, there were extreme differences among the councils. Some appear to have been corrupted by their status, using their position to escape their own impending death or to reap benefits not accorded to those in their care; others acted in ways that can only be called heroic. Two examples illustrate these differences.

In the Łódź ghetto, Chaim Rumkowski, the head of the council, knew about the gassing very early on. He kept this information to himself, and he continued to participate in the deportations of Jews from Łódź to the death camp of Chelmno, knowing quite well that those who left the ghetto were gassed at Chelmno. His reasoning was that all could not be saved; therefore, some had to be sacrificed in order to preserve others. He allowed no food to be smuggled into the ghetto and suppressed any discussion or efforts of resistance. He forced Jews into slave labor and made impassioned pleas for those who could not be "productive" to be given up for the Nazi deportation quotas. In many testimonies gathered today, he is cast as a villain. He has even been called the Jewish *Führer*. He tried to justify his actions on the basis of providing essential labor to the Germans which, he claimed, would save some of them. His strategy was "salvation through labor." He reasoned that if the ghetto became a productive force serving essential German needs and enriching his German handlers, it would be in the self interest of both the army and the local leadership not to liquidate the ghetto.

Because of Rumkowski's compliance, approximately 60,000 Jews were alive in Łódź in August 1944, when they were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. No excuse could justify his orders to take the children. In order to "save" the mothers, their children were ripped from their arms. But what he saved were only the shells of the humanity entrusted in his care, for he had torn out their very hearts. Yet Rumkowski nearly succeeded with his warped rationalization. With the Soviet army only 60 miles away, plans to liquidate the ghetto were postponed so that the Łódź ghetto could make needed German army uniforms.

Unfortunately, the Soviets did not advance, and the ghetto was liquidated several months later. One account of Rumkowski's end described his deportation with his family to Auschwitz where he was recognized by some of the former Jewish slaves from Łódź, who strangled him. Another account claims that when he arrived at the concentration camp, he arrogantly approached an SS officer and announced his expectation of preferential treatment. His answer was a bullet, after which his body was thrown into a ditch.

In Kovno, the picture was a very different one. Here, a courageous and caring council led the people. The Jewish officials and Jewish police led dangerous double lives, going through the motions of maintaining order yet, actively working with the resistance in the ghetto. Children about to be deported were hidden. Young men and women were smuggled out to join the partisans. Then, one day, without warning, members of the Jewish police were arrested and horribly tortured for information. The Nazis wanted to know the location of the hiding places the police had helped to build; they wanted to know the routes that the young men and women had taken out of the ghetto and how the partisan units in the area were operating. The chief of the Jewish police was singled out for particularly brutal tortures. Yet, he never revealed anything. He was killed along with 39 others.

Resistance in the Ghettos

Unarmed Resistance

Resistance took many forms. Since all large gatherings were forbidden, few cultural events were allowed. Yet, there was a strong effort to maintain morale. Many sought the spiritual comfort of religious services, and religious events and holidays were observed, although illegally. Educational lectures, literature readings, and musical evenings were given in secret when they

could no longer be held in public. Although most schools were forbidden, many continued from rooms in various apartments. To give some protection against the continual danger of German raids, typhus quarantine signs were posted on the entrance to the building. While not a foolproof method, it was well known that the Germans were afraid of catching this highly contagious disease and usually avoided the contaminated areas. Similarly, medical, technical, and scientific instruction was hidden under the guise of trade school courses which, up to a point, were officially allowed. However, if a child was caught attending an illegal school (which almost all of them were), or a teacher was caught teaching in one, these were grounds for summary execution.

Another form of resistance was the reaction to the demands on ghetto residents to give up material goods, such as furs, gold, metal, and money. When, for example, fur coats, collars, and fur accessories were demanded by the Germans, word leaked out that the furs were to be re sewn for German soldiers fighting at the Russian front. Under pain of death should they be caught, most people burned the furs rather than turn them in.

Television did not yet exist and radios had been confiscated in the beginning of the war. Shut off from the outside world, the Jews in the ghetto were anxious to have news of the war, and so there were underground newspapers. These papers, printed on old fashioned hand presses, kept ghetto residents informed of German and Allied movements and general news of the world both inside and outside of the ghetto. Passed surreptitiously from hand to hand, these papers gave their secret readers hope for survival and for an end to the war.

Others, and particularly those trained in history, kept scrupulous records of what the Nazis were doing. Knowing full well that the penalty was death for keeping such accounts, notes were often recorded at night, using only a candle, and hidden in various places throughout the ghetto. It was hoped that after the writers' deaths, these records might survive as an indictment of the Nazis for all the world to know. Among the most treasured records to be discovered after the war were the archives of the Jewish historian, Emmanuel Ringelblum, who established a secret society which understood the gravity of their mission to keep a documented record of what was happening.

In terms of unarmed resistance, possibly no ghetto resident more deserves the accolade of "hero" than Janusz Korczak (his real name was Henryk Goldschmit), the director of the Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. A respected physician and educator, and a famous Polish writer, he had numerous opportunities to be given safe passage out of the ghetto. Instead, he chose to stay with his beloved children. Many recall the day when the orphanage was liquidated. Dr. Korczak led his group of children, who walked in neat groups of four, and the medical assistants who had chosen to stay with him, to the *Umschlagplatz* (the transfer point to deportation trains). He carried an ill child in his arms. It is known that he, the hospital children who joined him, and all the children, were killed at Treblinka. However, the actual details during their deportation and arrival at the killing center are unknown. It was rumored that Korczak had carried poison with him which he distributed on the train so that all of them died before arriving at the camp. Another account claims that Korczak and his charges arrived at the camp alive. Although in a state of terrible exhaustion, and knowing full well the fate that soon awaited them, he nevertheless spent his remaining hours going among the children assuring them of his continued presence and comforting them in their fear.

The constant changes in the composition of the ghetto population (due to *Aktions* which took people out of the ghettos as well as the continual transfers of others into the ghetto) made it extremely difficult to formulate any planned uprising. The absolute isolation from the outside world also cut them off from acquiring arms with which to defend themselves. Even more important were the conditions of the ghetto itself which spiritually and physically weakened the inhabitants. These factors, plus the forced labor, unending anxiety, threat of round-ups, severe malnutrition, terrible crowding, epidemics, and general filth from lack of sanitary conditions, all worked against the possibility of establishing any form of combat-ready resistance. Counterbalanced against these conditions were the massive manpower and heavy arms of the Germans which predestined to failure any attempt to resist. And yet, there were revolts of stunning strength and defiance.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

By the end of 1942, there were between 30,000 and 35,000 Jews living in the Warsaw ghetto. In addition, there were between 20,000 and 30,000 Jews who had somehow escaped the round-ups and deportations and were living there illegally.⁷ At this time, Jews were also moved into the ghetto from the surrounding labor camps which had been closed down. The Nazis now stepped up their search for Jews in hiding or living on false papers, and many were now seized and returned to the ghetto. Thus, added to these numbers were Jews who had been living on the "Aryan" side. At this time, resistance in the ghetto intensified. A small number of arms were negotiated for with the Polish underground armies Molotov cocktails, and other Polish underground organizations. Several secret workshops manufactured homemade hand grenades and bombs, and some additional arms were bought on the black market.

Another wave of deportations began on January 18, 1943. The Nazis broke into the ghetto, cordoned off blocks, deported their inhabitants, liquidated the hospital, shot the patients, and deported the personnel. Nearby factories which used ghetto workers were likewise surrounded and their workers deported. The ghetto underground organizations, ill-prepared, nevertheless offered armed resistance which turned into four days of street fighting. This was the first case of street fighting in occupied Poland.⁸

On April 19, 1943, a full German force, equipped with heavy artillery, moved into the Warsaw ghetto to resume the deportations. Yet, in spite of their superior numbers and armaments, they were unprepared for the resistance they were to confront. The revolt was led by a young man named Mordechai Anielewicz and a core of 700 - 750 young, Jewish fighters who rose on behalf of the 40,000 or so ghetto residents, all that remained out of the approximately half-million or more who had been transferred into and out of the ghetto or had already died or been deported. With many of the ghetto inhabitants helping as best they could and armed only with make-shift bombs, Molotov cocktails, pistols, and a small number of rifles and grenades which had been manufactured in the ghetto, the small band of fighters held out against a massive, heavy-armored, battle trained, German military assault. A dozen or more Germans were killed and many more injured. Unwilling to suffer further losses, the Germans changed their tactics. To avoid further street clashes, they began to systematically burn the ghetto down, building by building. When the end finally came and the ghetto was destroyed, the Warsaw ghetto resistance fighters had held out against the German army from April 19 to May 16, 1943, 27 days -- longer than had France, Belgium, or Poland. The Warsaw ghetto uprising marked the first instance in occupied Europe when any urban population had risen in revolt, but it was not the last. In 24 ghettos, groups of young Jewish fighters rose up against the Nazis in western and central Poland. Armed resistance soon developed in over 160 ghettos or places where Jews were concentrated.⁹ However, as in Warsaw, the end was inevitable. The courage of these ghetto revolts will always serve to distinguish the valor of the human spirit even in the face of unconquerable odds.

ENDNOTES

¹Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1982), 229.

² Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Steimatsky's Agency, Ltd., 1982), 141.

³ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House), 543.

⁴ Gilbert, 53.

⁵ Rita Glikzman, taken from a presentation given for the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Miami, FL.

⁶ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 7, 545.

⁷ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 16, 350.

⁸ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 16, 351.

⁹ Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1982), 270.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. After teaching the “Content Overview” in this unit, have students write about the following topics:
 - a) What was life in the ghetto like?
 - b) Describe the purpose of the ghettos, the living conditions, the governing body, and the community life within the ghettos.
2. Invite a survivor who was in a ghetto during the Holocaust to come speak to the class about his/her experiences. Before the speaker comes to class, students should think about and write down questions they would like to ask.
3. Assign groups of students to research the various forms of resistance that occurred in the ghettos and discuss the findings with the class.
4. Discuss the poem “The Butterfly” found at the beginning of this unit. How do the students interpret the poem? Have students illustrate Pavel Friedman’s poem.
5. After reading about Mordechai Anielewicz and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and Janusz Korczak and his commitment to the children, have students discuss the characteristics of a hero and who their hero is. Students can then write an essay entitled “Why _____ is a Hero.”
6. After examining the details of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, students should write a summary of what took place during this time.

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7. Ask students to find out what the largest ghetto was and where in Poland it was located. They should then list five significant facts about this ghetto that reflect their knowledge of ghetto life.
8. As students, it is important that your class know that the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was led by young adults in their twenties. Have them research information about the young commander of the resistance, Mordechai Anielewicz. Be sure they read his note to unit commander Yitzak Zuckerman. Have them create a tribute to Anielewicz and the fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

“What really matters is that the dream of my life has become true. Jewish self defense in the Warsaw ghetto has become a fact. Jewish armed resistance and retaliation have become a reality. I have been witness to the magnificent heroic struggle of the Jewish fighters.” (*Note from Mordechai Anielewicz to Yitzak Zuckerman.*)

9. Locate and read the following book to your class: *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (Hana Volavkova, Ed., New York: Schocken Books, 1978), a compilation of poems, prose, and pictures created by children who were interned in the Theresienstadt ghetto between 1942 and 1944. After reading the book, have students create essays, pictures, or poems to express their feelings about the courage and spiritual resistance of the children.

**CORRELATIONS TO THE SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS
FOR THE FOLLOWING
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS**

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I Have Not Seen a Butterfly Around Here: Children's Poems from Terezin

Designed as a model camp which could be shown to foreigners, Terezin was actually a "ghetto" and was about 60 kilometers from Prague. Terezin had the characteristics of a transit camp, a place where people stayed only temporarily, until they continued on to the death camps. Among the people who passed through Terezin were between 11,000 and 15,000 children, only 100 of whom survived the war, as most of the children were transported from Terezin to Auschwitz.

The following poems were written by some of the children in Terezin and were secretly published in magazines. The poems reflect the children's hopes and fears as they wrote about the ghetto that surrounded them and their dreams of someday being free.

HOMESICK

I've lived in the ghetto here more than a year,
In Terezin, in the black town now,
And when I remember my old home so dear,
I can love it more than I did, somehow.

Ah, home, home,
Why did they tear me away?
Here the weak die easy as a feather
And when they die, they die forever.

I'd like to go back home again,
It makes me think of sweet spring flowers.
Before, when I used to live at home,
It never seemed so dear and fair.

I remember now those golden days . . .
But maybe I'll be going there soon again.

People walk along the street,
You see at once on each you meet
That there's a ghetto here,
A place of evil and of fear.

There's little to eat and much to want,
Where bit by bit, it's horror to live.
But no one must give up!
The world turns and times change.

Yet we all hope the time will come
When we'll go home again.
Now I know how dear it is
And often I remember it.

UNKNOWN AUTHOR

FEAR

Today the ghetto knows a different fear,
Close in its grip, Death wields an icy scythe.
An evil sickness spreads a terror in its wake,
The victims of its shadow weep and writhe.

Today a father's heartbeat tells his fright
And mothers bend their heads into their hands.
Now children choke and die with typhus here,
A bitter tax is taken from their bands.

My heart still beats inside my breast
While friends depart for other worlds.
Perhaps it's better – who can say?
Than watching this, to die today?

No, no, my God, we want to live!
Not watch our numbers melt away.
We want to have a better world,
We want to Work - we must not die!

EVA PICKOVA, 15.5.1929 - 18.12.1943

NIGHT IN THE GHETTO

Another day has gone for keeps
into the bottomless pit of time.
Again it has wounded a man, held captive
by his brethren.
He longs for bandages of dusk,
For soft hands to shield the eyes
From all the horrors that stare by day.
But in the ghetto, darkness too is kind
To weary eyes which all day long
Have had to watch.

Dawn crawls again along the ghetto streets
Embracing all who walk this way.
Only a car like a greeting from a long-gone world
Boggles up the dark with fiery eyes –
That sweet darkness that fails upon the soul
And heals those wounds illumined by the day
Along the streets come light ranks of people
Like a long black ribbon, loomed with gold.

UNKNOWN AUTHOR

AT TEREZIN

When a new child comes
Everything seems strange to him.
What, on the ground I have to lie?
Eat black potatoes? No! Not !!
I've got to stay? It's dirty here!
The floor-why, look, it's dirt, I fear!
And I'm supposed to sleep on it?
I'll get all dirty!

Here the sound of shouting, cries,
And oh, so many flies.
Everyone knows flies carry disease.
Oooh, something bit me! Wasn't that a bedbug
Here in Terezin, life is hell.
And when I'll go home again, I can't yet tell.

"TEDDY"

Source: Volavková, Hana, ed. *I Have Not Seen a Butterfly Around Here: Children's Drawings and Poems From Terezin*. Prague: The Jewish Museum of Prague, 1993. Reprinted by permission of the Jewish Museum of Prague.

“Varshe” (“Warsaw”)

The night does not end and the leaden hours drag,
The earth is like bloody coals.
The Jew arises like a storm-tossed flag,
A flag in the valley of dead souls.

The ghetto is in shambles – oh, the Jews all fight
Through flame and smoke they stride.
Revenge! Revenge! They storm through the night,
For parents, for children, for pride!

The snow falls and falls, yet the earth is not white.
The red seething blood still shows through.
It calls for revenge on this icy night –
For the blood of the heroic Jew.

No day there will be, shouts the Jew, and no night.
The world we can never forgive!
Every man and woman who fell in the fight
In our hearts forever will live.

We shall always remember their courage and pain,
Our feverish souls will avenge.
Three words etched in blood in our hearts will remain:
Revenge! Revenge! Revenge!

Poem to commemorate the first anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising by partisan Shmerke Kaczerginski, 1944.

Source: *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances* (Second Edition). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, page 93.

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Map of the Warsaw Ghetto (according to M. Neustadt, Vol I, p. 321.)

The heavy line-- The ghetto borders before June, 1952. (sic 1942)
The dotted lines-- The four ghetto areas prior September, 1942.

- A. Area of the brushmakers' shop
- B. Toebbens-Schutz shops.
- C. The "small ghetto," the Toebbens factories and the living blocks for the workers.
- 1). The "central ghetto" area
- () The ghetto gates.

In between are the so-called wild areas.

- 1. The Umschlagplatz

- 2. Site of the first armed clash, January 18, 1943.
- 3. Another center of fighting, January 18, 1943.
- 4. Scene of the first German attack on April 19, 1943, passing through Zamenhofs and Mita Streets to Muranowski Square.
- 5. Headquarters of the Jewish Fighting Organization, 18 Mita Street.
- 6. Sewer manhole on Prosta Street
- 7. Bunker on Franciszkanska Street, where the fighters entered the sewage system.
- 8. Entrance to the sewage system from the Toebbens area.
- 9. Manhole on Ogrodowa Street
- 10. Pawiak prison.

- 11. The place where a rescue squad from the "Aryan" side was supposed to find a group of ghetto fighters.
- 12. The "Polish corridor" and the bridge connecting the two ghetto areas.

The -- dotted lines:

- 6-7 Bird's eye view of the approximate route of the fighters from Franciszkanska Street through the sewage system to the manhole at Prosta Street
- 8-9 The exit route of another group of fighters, through the sewage system.
- 6-11 Another way through the sewage system from the "Aryan" side to the ghetto.

The Occupation of Warsaw

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and on September 3 France and Britain, allies of Poland, declared war on Germany. But they did not extend military aid to their ally, and Poland alone was no match for the well-equipped German army.

On September 17, the Soviet army invaded Poland from the east. The Polish government fled into Romania and, in effect, dissolved.

All of Warsaw suffered from the effects of the war. But from the beginning it became clear that Jews were special targets of hatred and violence; the Nazis and their Polish sympathizers were expanding the war against the Jews that had been waged in Germany since Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

On September 21, 1939, Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the German Security Police, sent a letter to the leaders of the special SS murder squads, the Einsatzgruppen. The letter, excerpted below, reflects the discussions held by the Nazis with regard to their aims of rounding up, isolating, and interning Jews in ghettos, apparently for the purpose of eventually expelling them from the occupied territories.

(Documents)

Instructions by Heydrich on Policy and Operations Concerning Jews in the Occupied Territories, September 21, 1939

To: Chiefs of all Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police

Subject: Jewish Question in Occupied Territory

I refer to the conference held in Berlin today, and again point out that the planned total measures (i.e., the final aim) are to be kept strictly secret.

Distinction must be made between:

1. the final aim (which will require extended periods of time) and
 2. the stages leading to the fulfillment of this final aim (which will be carried out in short periods.)
- The planned measures require the most thorough preparation with regard to technical as well as economic aspects.

I

For the time being, the first prerequisite for the final aim is for the concentration of the Jews from the countryside into the larger cities.

This is to be carried out speedily. In doing so, distinction must be made:

- 1) between the zones of Danzig and West Prussia, Poznan, Eastern Upper Silesia,
- 2) the other occupied zones.

As far as possible, the areas referred to under 1) are to be cleared of Jews; at least the aim should be to establish only few cities of concentration.

In the areas under 2), as few concentration centers as possible are to be set up, so as to facilitate subsequent measures. In this connection it should be borne in mind that only cities which are rail junctions, or are at least located on railroad lines, should be selected as concentration points.

On principle, Jewish communities of less than 500 persons are to be dissolved and transferred to the nearest concentration center.

II

Councils of Jewish Elders

1) In each Jewish community a Council of Jewish Elders is to be set up which, as far as possible, is to be composed of the remaining authoritative personalities and rabbis. The Council is to be composed of up to 24 male Jews (depending on the size of the Jewish community.)

The Council is to be made fully responsible, in the literal sense of the word, for the exact and prompt implementation of directives already issued or to be issued in the future ...

7) Jews who fail to comply with the order to move into cities are to be given a short additional period of grace where there was sufficient reason for the delay. They are to be warned of the most severe penalties if they fail to move by the later date set.

On September 27, the Poles of Warsaw, lacking military equipment and food, and suffering the results of widespread destruction of the city, particularly in the German-targeted Jewish sections, surrendered the city.

The next day, the USSR and Nazi Germany divided Poland for the second time in this century. Western and central Poland, with a population of some 22 million, including almost 2 million Jews, came under German rule. The German army entered Warsaw, changing the lives of the Jews there immediately and forever.

The plan outlined in Heydrich's letter was swiftly put into effect. On October 4, 1939, a 24-member Council of Elders was formed in Warsaw. It was headed by Adam Czerniakow, and its function was not to represent the Jews, as some in the community hoped, but to carry out Gestapo orders regarding the Jews. Jewish property was registered; Jewish businesses were "Aryanized," that is, taken over by Germans; bank assets of Jews were frozen; there was no way for Warsaw's Jews to make a living. The city's Jewish quarter was cordoned off, and Jews were forced to wear an armband with the Jewish star, measures designed to segregate and isolate the Jews from the general population.

Questions on "The Occupation of Warsaw"

1. Why do you think the first prerequisite in the document "is for the concentration of the Jews from the countryside into the larger cities?"
2. Review Section 1 of the document. What is the significance of the proximity of the concentration points to railway lines?
3. Why do you think the Nazis included the following directive for the Councils of Jewish Elders? "The Council is to be made fully responsible, in the literal sense of the word, for the exact and prompt implementation of directives already issued or to be issued in the future."
4. What became of the Jewish property and businesses after the Nazis occupied the city of Warsaw?

Source: Shawn, Karen. "The Warsaw Ghetto: A Documentary Discussion Guide to Jewish Resistance in Occupied Warsaw, 1939-1943." Dimensions: A Journal of Holocaust Studies, Volume 7, Number 2. Copyright @ 1993. Reprinted by permission of the Anti-Defamation League.

EXCERPTS ABOUT GHETTOS

Like individual bystanders, the Allied governments - and other international organizations -- moved with caution and often fatal reluctance to assist Jews as the evidence of mass extermination became indisputably known in the West.

In the words of Jan Karski, recalling the request by the leaders of the Warsaw ghetto that he take word of the plight of the Jews to the outside world:

We will not survive this war. The Allied governments cannot take such a stand. We contributed to humanity -- we gave scientists for thousands of years. We originated great religions. We are humans. Do you understand it? Do you understand it? Never happened before in history, what is happening to our people now. Perhaps it will shake the conscience of the world.

Will you do it? Will you approach them? Will you fulfill your mission? Approach the Allied leaders? We want an official declaration of the Allied nations that in addition to the military strategy which aims at securing victory, military victory in this war, extermination of the Jews forms a separate chapter, and we want the Allied nations formally, publicly, to announce that they will deal with this problem, it must become a part of their overall strategy in this war.

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Jan Karski's report on the Warsaw ghetto and the extermination camps in Poland was presented to the British Cabinet, which in turn brought it to the attention of Parliament and the House of Lords.

In the words of Lord Samuel, December 17, 1942:

This is not an occasion on which we are expressing sorrow and sympathy to sufferers from some terrible catastrophe due unavoidably to flood or earthquake, or some other convulsion of nature. These dreadful events are an outcome of quite deliberate, planned, conscious cruelty of human beings.

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The most famous revolt against the Nazis occurred in the Warsaw ghetto of Poland between Passover morning, April 19, and May 8, 1943. Some 60,000 Jews, who had survived the previous two years of starvation, torture, and deportations, fought their German oppressors. The revolt was carefully planned by a group of young people in their twenties, led by Mordechai Anielewicz. The heavily armed Germans burned the ghetto to the ground with flame throwers and explosives. Nearly every Jew in the ghetto perished.

The first report of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising sent over a clandestine radio station, April 19, 1943:

The survivors of the Warsaw ghetto have begun an armed resistance against the murders of the Jewish people ... The ghetto is aflame ... We shall attack the enemy with whatever weapons are available -- with knives, axes, clubs, acid -- to prevent further deportations to death camps ... We shall not surrender; this is a struggle for our freedom, human dignity, and honor ... We shall avenge the crimes committed in Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belsen, Majdanek ... Through the flames and smoke of the burning ghetto and the blood of our brothers and sisters, we, the besieged in the Warsaw ghetto, send you brotherly greetings ... Long live freedom! ... Long live liberty! ...

In the words of Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, historian, co-founder and active leader of the Council for Aid to Jews (1942-1944) and deputy chief of the Jewish Section of the Office of the Delegate of the Polish Government-in-exile in London (1943-1944):

The Germans burned down one building after another and conquered the fortified bunkers. They killed thousands of people immediately, and brought those they took prisoners to the death camps. Black clouds of smoke covered the city in the daytime, and at night the burning building illuminated the sky above Warsaw, similar to the days of the siege of Warsaw in September 1939. The joyful emotion of the population of Warsaw gave way to dull depression and hopelessness.

A few days after Easter, we received the last report from the Jewish ghetto fighters in which Anielewicz stated: "Our last days are near, but as long as we have weapons in our hands, we shall fight and resist."

And really, they did resist until the very end -- until May 8, 1943, the 20th day of the battle, when the Germans discovered the central bunker of the Jewish ghetto fighters. The officers of the Jewish fighting organization did not surrender alive. [Mordechai] Anielewicz and his closest co-fighters committed suicide in the bunker in Mila St. which was surrounded by SS. Ten participants of the battle succeeded, with the help of Poles, in reaching the "Aryan side" through sewers. Among them were a few members of the Jewish High Command of ghetto fighters.

Source: *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances* (Second Edition). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, pages 81, 92, 93.

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The Issue of Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto

Why didn't the Jews fight back? is a question you may well be asking yourselves at this time. Why didn't they resist during the Holocaust?

The first step toward understanding resistance is to comprehend how Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe perceived what was happening to them. For these individuals, there was no such event as "the Holocaust." Holocaust is our term. The Jews of Europe were not reacting to what we now know was the Holocaust, but to a certain reality as they saw it at that time, with information that they had at that time, and within the framework of their historical experience. So when the Jews of Warsaw became victims of humiliation, brutalization, and atrocities, they saw these experiences as manifestations of traditional anti-Semitism, because that is what these experiences had signified for two thousand years. Their thoughts and actions were different from what they would have been if they had known that Hitler planned to annihilate every single Jew in Europe. But they did not know. They could not have known, because the concept of the Holocaust was then unfathomable.

We cannot view historical events through the prism of what occurred afterward. We must instead explore the Holocaust as if we are looking at a series of photographs, with each one illustrating the increasingly difficult situation in which the Jews of Warsaw found themselves.

When people talk of resistance, they usually mean armed struggle. But such resistance was not realistic for most Jews during the Holocaust.

First, arms were not available to the Jews. Second, when Jews tried to defy the Germans, they faced "collective punishment," the German policy of killing many Jews for the actions of a few. Third, the Jews were still suffering from the shock of the German victory and the catastrophe it had brought.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Jewish goal was survival, at least in the beginning, when everyone was hopeful and looked for a quick ending to the war. "How can we see to it that as many of us as are alive today will still be alive at the end of the war?" If the answer was to endure hunger, beatings, and torment, to do what the Germans ordered to avoid collective punishment, then that was a form of resistance.

In view of the Jewish religious tradition underscoring the sanctity of life and the importance of hope, such accommodation to the environment was completely appropriate. Each Jewish survivor, a revered rabbi is said to have declared, "is a hero resisting the Nazis because he refuses to extinguish his precious life."

Another form of resistance embraced by Polish Jews was to record the events of the day to ensure that the outside world, and posterity, would know of the events happening in Poland. Emanuel Ringelblum, a social historian, chronicled, in a secret archive called *Oneg Shabbat* (Joys of the Sabbath), the day-by-day life and death of the Jews of Warsaw. Chaim Kaplan was one of the hundreds who kept diaries; Yitzhak Katzenelson and Wladyslaw Szlengel were just two of the ghetto poets who recorded the anguish of the times.

Others resisted by helping to improve the quality of their violently disrupted lives. For example, when the Germans invaded Poland, they closed all Jewish schools and made education punishable by death. Yet within six months of the invasion, religious and secular schools, retraining programs for adults, and classes and laboratories for medical students secretly flourished.

Resistance also took root in Jewish self-help groups. The Germans intended to destroy masses of Jews in Warsaw through economic and social ruin, but they did not count on the widespread system of public assistance that spread throughout the ghetto.

Religious resistance was yet another means of fighting back. Kaplan's diary entry of October 2, 1940, reads:

Everything is forbidden to us, and yet we do everything! We make our "living" in ways that are forbidden, and not by permission.

It is the same with community prayers: secret minyanim (group of ten adult males who make a quorum for communal prayers) in their hundreds all over Warsaw hold prayers together and do not leave out even the most difficult hymns. Neither preachers nor sermons are missing; everything is in accordance with the ancient traditions of Israel.

Questions on "The Issue of Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto"

1. Explain what is meant by the following statement:

"The Jews of Europe were not reacting to what we now know was the Holocaust, but to a reality as they saw it at that time, with information that they had at that time, and within the framework of their historical experience."

2. Explain the various kinds of Jewish resistance that occurred during the Holocaust.

3. Explain the Nazi policy of "collective punishment."

4. Emanuel Ringelblum notes that, "Everyone used to write in the ghetto, journalists, writers, social workers, teachers, young people, and even children." Why do you think this was so?

The Last March: August 6, 1942

What matters is that all of this did happen.
-Ghetto Diary

Korczak was up early, as usual, on August 6. As he leaned over the windowsill to water the parched soil of "the poor Jewish orphanage plants," he noticed that he was again being watched by the German guard posted by the wall that bisected Sienna Street. He wondered if the guard was annoyed or moved by the domestic scene, or if he was thinking that Korczak's bald head made a splendid target. The soldier had a rifle, so why did he just stand there, legs wide apart, watching calmly? He might not have orders to shoot, but that hadn't deterred any SS so far from emptying his ammunition into someone on a whim.

Korczak began speculating about the young soldier in what was to be the last entry of his diary: "Perhaps he was a village teacher in civilian life, or a notary, a street sweeper in Leipzig, a waiter in Cologne. What would he do if I nodded to him? Waved my hand in a friendly gesture? Perhaps he doesn't even know that things are as they are? He may have arrived only yesterday, from far away. . ."

In another part of the compound, Misha Wroblewski and three of the older boys were getting ready to leave for the jobs Korczak had been able to arrange for them at the German railway depot on the other side of the wall. Every morning they were marched out under guard and counted, and marched back again every night. It was hard work, but it gave them a chance to barter what few possessions they had for food. They left the orphanage quietly without communicating with anyone. It seemed like just another day they had to get through.

Promptly at seven Korczak joined Stefa, the teachers, and the children for breakfast at the wooden tables, which had been pushed together once the bedding was removed from the center of the room. Perhaps they had some potato peels or an old crust of bread, perhaps there was some carefully measured ersatz coffee in each little mug. Korczak was just getting up to clear the table when two blasts of a whistle and that dread call, "*Alle Juden raus!*" ("All Jews out!"), rang through the house.

Part of the German strategy was not to announce anything in advance, but to take each area by surprise: the plan that morning was to evacuate most of the children's institutions in the Small Ghetto. The lower end of Sliska Street had already been blockaded by the SS, squads of Ukrainian militiamen, and the Jewish police.

Korczak rose quickly, as did Stefa, to still the children's fears. Now, as always, they worked intuitively together, knowing what each had to do. She signaled the teachers to help the children gather their things. He walked into the courtyard to ask one of the Jewish policemen for time to allow the children to pack up, after which they would line up outside in an orderly fashion. He was given fifteen minutes.

Korczak would have had no thought of trying to hide any children now. During the past weeks, he had seen people who had been discovered hiding in cupboards, behind false walls, under beds, flung from their windows or forced at gunpoint down to the street. There was nothing to do but lead the children and teachers straight into the unknown, and, if he was lucky, out of it. Who was to say that, if anyone had a chance of surviving out there in the East, it might not be them?

As he encouraged the children to line up quietly in rows of four, Korczak must have hoped that no matter how terrible the situation in which they found themselves, he would be able to use his charm and powers of persuasion to wheedle some bread and potatoes and perhaps even some medicine for his young charges. He would, above all, be there to keep their spirits up-to be their guide through whatever lay ahead.

He had to try to reassure the children as they lined up fearfully, clutching their little flasks of water, their favorite books, their diaries and toys. But what could he tell them, he whose credo it was that one should never spring surprises on a child-that "a long and dangerous journey requires preparation." What could he say without taking away their hope, and his own? Some have speculated that he told them they were going to their summer camp, Little Rose, but it seems probable that Korczak would not have lied to his children. Perhaps he suggested that the place where they were going might have pine and birch trees like the ones in their camp; and, surely, if there were trees, there would be birds and rabbits and squirrels.

But even a man of Korczak's vivid fantasy could not have imagined what lay in wait for him and the children. No one had yet escaped from Treblinka to reveal the truth: they were not going East, but sixty miles northeast of Warsaw to immediate extermination in gas chambers. Treblinka was not even an overnight stay.

The Germans had taken a roll call: one hundred and ninety-two children and ten adults. Korczak was at the head of this little army, the tattered remnants of the generations of moral soldiers he had raised in his children's republic. He held five-year-old Romcia in one arm, and perhaps Szymonek Jakubowicz, to whom he had dedicated the story of Planet Ro, by the other.

Stefa followed a little way back with the nine-to twelve-year-olds. There were Giena, with sad, dark eyes like her mother's; Eva Mandelblatt, whose brother had been in the orphanage before her; Halinka Pinchonson, who chose to go with Korczak rather than stay behind with her mother. There were Jakub, who wrote the poem about Moses; Leon with his polished box; Mietek with his dead brother's prayer book; and Abus, who had stayed too long on the toilet.

There were Zygmus, Sami, Hanka, and Aronek, who had signed the petition to play in the church garden; Hella, who was always restless; big Hanna, who had asthma; and little Hanna with her pale, tubercular smile; Mendelek, who had the bad dream; and the agitated boy who had not wanted to leave his dying mother. There were Abrasha, who had played Amal, with his violin; Jerzyk, the fakir; Chaimek, the doctor; Adek, the lord mayor; and the rest of the cast of *The Post Office*, all following their own Pan Doctor on their way to meet the Messiah King.

One of the older boys carried the green flag of King Matt, the blue Star of David set against a field of white on one side. The older children took turns carrying the flag during the course of their two-mile walk, perhaps remembering how King Matt had held his head high that day he was forced to march through the streets of his city to what he thought was to be his execution.

Among the teachers were many who had grown up in the orphanage: Roza Sztokman, Romcia's mother, with her blond hair parted in the middle and plaited into two thick braids like her daughter's; Roza's brother Henryk, who typed the diary, blond like her, a good athlete, popular with the girls. (He could have escaped to Russia before the fall of Warsaw, but he had stayed behind to be with their father, the old tailor.) There were Balbina Grzyb, whose husband Feliks (away at work that day) had been voted king of the orphanage as a boy; Henryk Asterblum, the accountant for thirty years; Dora Solnicka, the treasurer; Sabina Lejzerowicz, the popular sewing

teacher who was also a gymnast; Roza Lipiec Jakubowska, who grew up in the orphanage; and Natalia Poz, who worked in the office for twenty years, limping as a result of polio contracted as a child just before she came under Korczak's care.

The sidewalks were packed with people from neighboring houses, who were required to stand in front of their homes when an *Aktion* was taking place. As the children followed Korczak away from the orphanage, one of the teachers started singing a marching song, and everyone joined in: "Though the storm howls around us, let us keep our heads high."

They walked past the Children's Hospital, a few blocks down on Sliska Street, where Korczak had spent seven years as a young doctor, past Panska, and Twarda, where he had gone at night to see his poor Jewish patients. The streets here were empty, but many people watched from behind closed curtains. When Jozef Balcerak, who had moved into the ghetto the year before to be with his parents, caught sight of the little procession from his window, he gasped, "My God, they've got Korczak!"

The orphans marched half a mile to the All Saints Church on Grzybowska Square (where they had once asked to play in the garden), joining up with thousands of others, many of them children from institutions that had also been evacuated that morning. They continued on together through the Small Ghetto to the Chlodna Street bridge that crossed over to the Large Ghetto. Witnesses say that the youngest children stumbled on the uneven cobblestones and were shoved up the steps of the bridge; many fell or were pushed down to the other side. Below the bridge some Poles were shouting: "Goodbye, good riddance, Jews!"

Korczak led his children down Karmelicka Street, past Nowolipki, home of the *Little Review*, and past the sausage shop where he used to take his reporters on Thursday nights. Michael Zylberberg and his wife Henrietta, living in the basement of a house on the corner of Nowolipki and Smocza, happened to look out as the orphans passed by. He was relieved to see that the police were not beating and shoving them as they did with other groups.

The little procession walked past Dzielna Street, past the Pawiak prison, and up Zamenhofa toward the northernmost wall of the ghetto. The younger ones were wilting by now in the intense heat; they dragged their feet; they moaned that they wanted to rest, that they were thirsty, that they were hot, that they had to go to the bathroom. But the Jewish police, who were escorting them, kept the group moving forward.

Joanna Swadosh, a nurse, saw the orphans as they were approaching their destination. She was helping her mother set up a small infirmary in the evacuated hospital next to the Umschlagplatz. It was no use asking why the Germans, so intent on killing, were bothering to open such a unit. There was no apparent logic in anything they did. She no longer dwelled on such questions, but went numbly about her routine. Not until later would she understand that the infirmary was just a cover to allay any suspicion about resettlement.

She was unpacking a crate when someone glanced through a window and called, "Dr. Korczak is coming!" It could mean only one thing, she thought—they had Korczak. If Korczak had to go, so would they all.

The Jewish police were walking on both sides, cordoning them off from the rest of the street. She saw that Korczak was carrying one child, and had another by the hand. He seemed to be talking to them quietly, occasionally turning his head to encourage the children behind.

Editor's Note: It is known that Janusz Korczak, the hospital children who joined him, and all the children were killed at Treblinka.

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Questions: After reading about Janusz Korczak in the “Content Overview” for Unit 5 and in this excerpt, answer the following questions:

1) Who was Janusz Korczak?

2) Why is he considered a hero of the Holocaust?

3) How does his “Last Walk” exemplify a man who showed “courage in the face of adversity?”

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JEWISH RESISTANCE IN THE WARSAW GHETTO

By Vladka Meed

Fifty years have gone by, and I can still see before my eyes the flames from the burning Jewish houses leaping over the ghetto walls, and through the clouds of thick smoke, I can still hear the sound of explosions and the firing of Jewish guns. In their glare, I see the Jews of Warsaw. I see their life, their struggle, their resistance during all the years of Nazi occupation. For it was the Jews' daily struggle, their vibrant drive for survival, their endurance, their spirit and belief, which the Nazis failed to crush, even with their most dreadful atrocities. This was the foundation from which resistance in all its forms was derived.

For Jewish armed resistance in the Warsaw ghetto, when it came, did not spring from a sudden impulse; it was not an act of personal courage on the part of a few individuals or organized groups: it was the culmination of Jewish defiance, defiance that had existed from the advent of the ghetto; and its significance is diminished if it is remembered only to glorify the honor of those who perished.

Today, many efforts are being made to learn more about the Holocaust, to understand it, to introduce Holocaust studies into the schools. Scholars are searching through documents in the newly opened archives of Moscow, Riga, and Kiev. Teachers are being trained, seminars and exhibits are being organized. Well-known photographs of life in the ghettos and concentration camps, of emaciated Jews near barbed wire fences, of half-naked beggars in the ghetto streets, are being displayed. Most of these pictures were taken by the murderers themselves, whose very purpose it was to demonstrate the helpless, spineless inadequacy of those whom they were planning to destroy. Of course, we survivors know that the pictures are real. They are seared into our memories and into our hearts. But we also know that they present only one part of what occurred under the German occupation, that beyond the murder and destruction, there was life. Yes, life, filled with meaning, with loyalty, even with holiness, of which hardly any photographs remain and all too little is known. The life of the individual Jew, who, in his day-to-day painful struggle, created a universe for himself, and sought to survive with his self-respect. He was overshadowed by the dreadful events around him. He was, most likely, ground to dust in the gigantic murder machine. He is still waiting to be extracted from the abyss of darkness.

I recall the streets of my ghetto, Warsaw, crowded with starving people. I remember the corpses covered with papers, lying unclaimed on the sidewalks, the carts loaded with books, and children, swollen from hunger, begging for a crumb of bread. The typhus epidemic reached into almost every house. I see my own home, my mother, with eyes puffed from hunger, hiding a slice of bread from us hungry children for my little brother's teacher, the melamed. I can see our neighbor, Mrs. Ziferman, hurrying with her little girl to a secret class. I recall the sounds of a sewing machine, amidst the hushed voices from a nearby hidden "*shul*" (synagogue), and, suddenly, the piercing voice of our ghetto clown, Rubinstein, calling aloud "Yingl halt sich" (translated freely, "Hang on, boy!"). Names come to mind, faces of friends, young and old people. There are the teachers: Virowski, Lindner, Rosa Synchroner, Emanuel Ringelblum, and so many others, whom I met at secret ghetto meetings. They were the ones who, together with the youth from various political groups, organized the extensive relief and cultural activities in the ghetto. Over 2,000 house committees came into existence, together with hundreds of public kitchens, in order to fight starvation. At the same time, a Jewish cultural organization, "Zkor," promoted a broad, clandestine program.

There were secret schools which thousands of children attended, a nursing school, courses on agriculture, heders, yeshivas, synagogues, hidden libraries, and choral groups. In addition, various political organizations in the ghetto conducted a vigorous traffic in underground publications. Let me recall a lecture, held on a cold winter's evening in 1941 in one of the soup kitchens. We were a group of youngsters, 15-16 years old, huddled together for warmth, and despite the hunger that gnawed at each of us, we listened to the leader speak about the writer Y. L. Peretz. Later, we had to spread out to various houses, to talk on the same subject. My assignment was on No. 30 Pawia Street. I managed to get there before the curfew. I remember the large room, in which 40 occupants of the house had gathered. The windows were blacked out. A guard had been stationed outside the room, in case of a surprise "visit" by the Germans. My talk was on the Peretz story, "Bontshe Shveig." I do not recall the discussion, but I can never forget the wonderful atmosphere, the feeling of being able, even for a short time, to get away from the bitter ghetto reality.

I see the twin sisters, Pola and Zosia Lipshyc, happy, dancing girls, full of life and enthusiasm. They became the souls of the so-called "children's corners" in the ghetto houses. Together with other youngsters, the two girls worked diligently, teaching children to write and to sing. They staged performances of operas -- which they themselves had learned before the war. They brought a bit of joy, of spirit, to the starving youngsters until they were caught in the Nazi vise.

The historian Emanuel Ringelblum, one of the cultural leaders of the Warsaw ghetto, formed the so-called "Oneg Shabbat Group" of writers and scholars; they did research on, and documented what was happening to the Jews.

Acts of violence against the Germans -- prior to the uprising -- were not committed because we in the ghetto did not believe that such acts would serve our purpose. The Germans enforced a diabolical method of collective responsibility: for every German killed by a Jew, hundreds of Jews would be killed. Our aim was to survive, to live, to outwit the enemy and witness his destruction. Every effort that lent strength to this goal, I see as an act of resistance. Our determination to resist derived from our desire to survive as a people: we refused to allow our spirit to be crushed.

But the Germans weren't satisfied with the slow pace of Jewish deaths from starvation, typhoid, casual persecution. They had different plans. The carefully coordinated Nazi machinery of mass murder eventually went into operation.

Blitz deportations: Suddenly, streets and houses were surrounded by soldiers and police and fast, fast, with the sounds of blows and shots, we were forced to line up. I can still remember the thousands and thousands in those lines. The German officers standing at the head of the lines, pointed with sticks -- left, right, left, right. I can still feel the fear as I stood in that line, left to the trains, right to a few more days of ghetto life. I still see them -- our ghetto Jews -- among them my dearest ones, walking on their last march, to the trains, in silence. As their footsteps echo in my mind, I can hear their unuttered outcry to God, and to the world that allowed this to happen.

Yet even then, many of those remaining in the ghetto still nourished the hope that those who were deported would somehow survive. Even I, who learned from my work in the underground the actual destination of the trains, could not believe, when my mother, brother, and sister were taken away, that they would be killed. I found myself hoping that maybe, after all, they had been sent, as the Germans claimed, to another city for resettlement. How could our people, who believed in human values, imagine such utter madness as an enemy who planned our total annihilation? How could we grasp, the scope of such a huge killing apparatus -- installed by

German scientists, operated by trained military and civilian squads, supported by German industry and the German people?

The deportations from the Warsaw ghetto began on July 22, 1942; soon after, a clandestine meeting of representatives of all the illegal ghetto organizations took place. Although reports of the killing of Jews in other ghettos had already been received, the majority attending that first meeting opposed an immediate Jewish counteraction in Warsaw, arguing that it would serve as an excuse for the Nazis to kill all the Jews. Painful as it is, some argued, "It is wiser to sacrifice 70,000 Jews for deportation, as the Germans demanded, than to endanger the whole ghetto, the lives of half a million. The Germans will not dare to do the same to the Jews of Warsaw, the capital of Poland, as they have done to the Jews of smaller towns."

Months passed before the ghetto residents started to recognize and believe the terrible truth of the gas chambers — a truth brought back by individuals who had somehow escaped the death camps. These reports, plus the sight of hundreds of thousands of Jews being deported, hammered into the minds of those who remained the brutal fact that the Nazis would spare no one.

Then, only then, did the idea of armed struggle -- the determination to go down fighting -- come into its own.

In October 1942, the coordinated Jewish Fighting Organization of Warsaw, ZOB, was formed. I, a member of the Jewish Labor Bund underground, was ordered to live among the Poles outside the ghetto in order to obtain arms for our fighters' organization. More than 500 fighters were organized into 22 units. Other armed groups were also formed by other Jews. The core of the armed resistance was made up of the various illegal youth organizations: Zionists, Socialists, Bundists, Communists, remnants of the pre-war political youth movements. Most of the fighters were in their teens or early twenties and they were imbued with a spirit of idealism and a determination to act.

Those who say that organized Jewish armed resistance came too late in the ghetto would do well to remember that it was the earliest uprising of its kind in Europe. The other underground movements launched similar uprisings only when the Allied armies were practically at the gates of their major cities, so as to insure their success. This was true of the French in Paris and, later on, of the Poles in Warsaw. But the Jews, the most persecuted group in Europe, in the most hopeless position, were the first to revolt. On January 18, 1943, as soon as we got hold of a few revolvers, the first German soldiers fell in the Warsaw ghetto. The surprise act forced the Germans to halt the deportations. January 18th marked a turning point, for on that day, the ghetto dared to strike back in an organized fashion.

By setting fire to German factories, by carrying out death sentences against informers and collaborators, the Jewish Fighting Organization won the support of the remaining Warsaw ghetto Jews.

Through bulletins placed on the walls of ghetto buildings, the ZOB informed noncombatant Jews of the aims and work of the underground. The ZOB imposed a tax on the wealthy and on the remaining ghetto institutions. Money and jewelry were collected. Bakers and merchants secretly supplied bread and food to the Jewish fighting units. Those who still had possessions of value had to contribute them for armaments. "RESIST! Don't let yourself be taken away" -- was the call.

"I no longer have any authority in the ghetto," Mark Lichtenbaum, the head of the German-appointed Jewish Council, admitted to the Nazis when he was ordered to supervise further deportations. It was the Jewish Fighting Organization that expressed the will and the feelings of the remaining 60,000 Warsaw ghetto Jews.

Our biggest problem was obtaining arms. We sent out desperate pleas to the outside world, begging for guns, but in vain.

I can still recall when, as a courier, I came to one of the ghetto's fighting units in Swietojerska 32 and my young friends would repeatedly ask me about our relations with the Poles, with the outside world. "When will they send us help?" they would ask. "When will we receive arms; hiding places for our ghetto children?" And I would stand there, forlorn, unable to give them the answers they so desperately sought. Pitiful was the response from the Polish underground.

And so, our own Jewish resistance organization had to find its own way. I will never forget when Michael Klepfish, our armament engineer and I, together tested our first homemade Molotov cocktail in a big factory furnace outside of the ghetto walls. It worked!

With mounting excitement, some of us smuggled chemicals and some dynamite into the ghetto. I remember one incident. After a long search outside the ghetto, we were able to secure 10 pounds of dynamite, and I was entrusted to smuggle it to the Jewish fighters. Through a secret telephone, the ghetto underground was informed and arranged for some of my friends to wait for the dynamite at a location near a part of the ghetto wall where Polish smugglers sometimes bribed the guards to allow them to bring food into the ghetto. Against the ghetto wall, on the non-Jewish side, stood a ladder; we paid the Polish ringleader and waited our turn. It was necessary to climb quickly, cross over the top of the wall and descend to the ghetto side. As I reached the top, shots rang out from the street. A German patrol was approaching. In an instant, the smugglers snatched the ladder away and took cover. There I was, sitting on top of the wall, holding my parcel. The ghetto wall was over 3 meters high. I was afraid to jump because the explosives might go off. The shooting came closer and I was sure that my time had come. Just then, I heard shouts from the Jewish side of the wall: "Wait, we'll help you." Three of my ghetto friends came running to the wall. They had watched me from their hiding place. In a moment they had formed a human ladder, snatched my bundle, and helped me descend. In no time we ran away from the wall. Other colleagues were not so lucky.

On my missions, I could hear the sounds of hammering: Jews were secretly building bunkers and hiding places. Shots rang out; young people were learning to handle firearms. The whole ghetto was preparing to face a new deportation. The historic role of the young at that time has to become better known. None of them expected to survive a Nazi attack. Nor did we expect to influence, in the smallest way, the outcome of the war. But we were fueled by the conviction that the enemy must be fought.

On April 19, 1943, Passover, the German soldiers marched, in full gear, into the Warsaw ghetto, to make it "Judenrein." Suddenly, they came under fire. From buildings, from windows, from the rooftops of houses, Jews were shooting. The enemy withdrew. They set up artillery around the ghetto walls and systematically bombarded our positions. We were so poorly equipped; only a small number of grenades and revolvers and primitive Molotov cocktails against the combined might of the Wehrmacht. In the first days, the Jewish combatants tried to fight from fixed positions. Then they shifted to partisan methods. Groups would emerge from the bunkers to seek out the enemy. In these encounters, whoever saw the other first and was the quickest with a weapon, was the victor of the moment. Inexperienced, untrained civilians fought against a well-trained army. A primitive Molotov cocktail against a tank, a gun against a flamethrower, a revolver against a

machine gun. One side of the street against the other. The Germans set fire to block after block, street after street. The fires that swept through the ghetto turned night into day. The flames, the heat, and the suffocating smoke drove the Jews from their houses and bunkers. Men, women, and children jumped out of windows and ran through the burning ruins, looking for places where they could breathe. But where could they go when *everything* around them was burning?

At that time I was on a mission outside the ghetto. I can still see the towers of fire. I can still smell the stench of burning houses and hear the agonizing screams for help. In this flaming hell our Jews fought until the entire ghetto was charred rubble.

General Jürgen Stroop, who was in charge of destroying the Warsaw ghetto, stated in an official report that the Jewish uprising came to an end on May 16th, after four weeks of struggle. We know, of course, that after that date the ghetto was unable to continue organized resistance, since most members of our military organization had been killed. Many others were burned to death. But for long weeks after May 16th, Jews remained hidden in the still-smoldering ruins and bunkers and would not give themselves up. For weeks after the "official" end of the uprising, shots were still heard in the ghetto.

General Stroop, in another report, informed his superiors that he blew up or gassed 631 Jewish bunkers. This means that there were at least 631 bastions of Jewish resistance. No one knows exactly the number of Jews who perished in the bunkers. No one can describe their last hours and their death. Those final days united them all, those who had fallen with arms in hand, those who were gassed, those who suffocated in the smoking ruins, and those who were burned to death. They were all united in one great chain of resistance against their enemy.

During the days of the uprising, members of the Jewish underground stationed outside the ghetto radioed information to our representatives in the Polish government-in-exile in England. We pleaded for ammunition, for help. But the world sat silently by. During the final days of the uprising, outside the ghetto, not far from the ghetto wall in Krasinski Square, a carousel was turning, music was playing, children frolicked, and the joyous atmosphere of Easter was in the air. None of the visitors to the square seemed to pay attention to what was going on behind the ghetto walls. Our people were entirely alone, abandoned. Those of us who survived can never forget the feeling of desertion we experienced. We shall never be able to find justification for having been forsaken in our last hours of struggle. Only one year later, after the ghetto rebellion, I was in the Polish uprising in Warsaw. I remember at that time, the planes flying over the city, dropping arms and medical supplies for the Polish fighters. But when our ghetto fought, the skies over the ghetto were empty.

In the months after the ghetto rebellion, we learned that other Jewish uprisings were taking place. The news of the battle of the Warsaw ghetto had spread over the wall and through the barbed wire to other ghettos and camps.

What must be remembered is that, throughout the Holocaust, every Jew in his or her own way resisted the Nazis; each act of resistance was shaped by its unique time and place. The soup kitchens, the secret schools, the cultural events in the ghettos and camps, constituted forms of resistance, the goals of which were survival with dignity, with "menschlichkeit."

The Warsaw ghetto uprising erupted when we knew that the Nazis would spare no one. Our objective then became to choose how we would die, and the choice was to die with weapons in our hands. For other Jews, dying with dignity meant going to the crematoria wrapped in talismans and reciting a prayer. Their self assertion and our armed resistance intertwined in the chain of Jewish resistance, a chain that grew, link by link, through the long years of the Holocaust.

Yes, we now stand at a distance from the events which shaped our lives and which reshaped history; and, standing at a distance, we look back and remember. For our memory is the ringing warning to all people in all times.

Source: Meed, Vladka. "Jewish Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto." *Dimensions: A Journal of Holocaust Studies*, Volume 7, Number 2: 11-15. Reprinted by permission of the Anti-Defamation League and Vladka Meed.

Vladka Meed became a courier for the Jewish Fighting Organization of Warsaw (the ZOB) and the Jewish underground during the Nazi occupation of Poland. She is the author of **On Both Sides of the Wall**, which has been published in five languages, most recently in Japanese. Mrs. Meed is the director of the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Summer Fellowship Program. She chairs the Education Committee of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, is vice president of the Jewish Labor Committee, and is the director of J.L.C.'s Yiddish Culture and Holocaust Programs.

LEAVING THE GHETTO

Excerpt from *On Both Sides of the Wall* By Vladka Meed

One evening several weeks later, I heard a knock on my door. In the dim light of the corridor, I did not recognize the tall man asking for me, but I invited him in. It was Michal Klepfisz, an engineer active for many years in the Bund and in *Morgenstern*, a Jewish sports organization.

"Michal, what a pleasant surprise!" I exclaimed. "What brings you here? You've been away from the ghetto for quite a while. How are your wife and child?"

"I've come to take you away, Feigel, " he answered. "Get ready; you'll be leaving the ghetto within two days. Meanwhile I'll prepare forged documents for you and try to notify some people in the Polish sector."

My heart seemed to leap into my mouth.

"Get ready," he repeated. "I'll wait for you by the ghetto gate at eight in the morning. You'll have to walk out with a labor battalion on the way to an outside work assignment; that's the best way."

"In case we should miss each other, leave me an address where I can find you," I suggested.

He hesitated. "I have no such address yet. I'm still living in someone's cellar. But I'll give you a temporary address, Gornoszlonska 3. Just memorize it; no written notes of any sort."

He could stay no longer, but hurried off to confer with Abrasha. I saw him out into the street, where he joined the last returning labor battalion and disappeared into the night.

I'd be leaving the ghetto in two days! I was aflame with excitement. My co-workers also had an air of secrecy; the first group of resistance fighters had been organized at Toebbens' shop. My head was spinning. Now and then, beyond the ghetto wall running along Zelazna Street, I could make out the movement of adults and children, women carrying baskets, the rushing tempo of life. But here in the ghetto the streets were dead, life was at a standstill. Except for an occasional German patrol, there was seldom a soul in sight.

The thought of escaping from the ghetto kindled new hope among the workers. It seemed the only way to survive. But escape was easier said than done. For one thing, in order to slip across the wall one had to pay an exorbitant sum to the Gentile smugglers. Moreover, while one might bribe the German sentinel, one could never be certain that he might not decide to shoot his victim after all. To walk out with a Jewish labor brigade on the way to an outside work assignment was the only available alternative -- but a most dangerous one.

A number of Jews with Aryan features -- and well-lined purses -- had already attempted to leave the ghetto. Some had been apprehended and either killed on the spot or deported. This did not deter others, and some succeeded in escaping.

Outside the ghetto lay an alien world where one had to seek refuge and contact Gentile friends who might help one obtain forged documents, prepare living quarters, and find a job. Above all, there had to be money -- a great deal of money -- to pay for every little service. Desperate Jews endeavored to contact Gentile acquaintances on the "other side of the wall," but most of the appeals fell on deaf ears.

Some of those who had succeeded in crossing into the "Aryan sector" returned to the ghetto a few weeks later. They had not been able to cope with the blackmail rampant there.

My way out would be by posing as a member of a labor brigade. No other means of escape was possible. The foremen of the labor gangs employed outside the ghetto were occasionally able to make substitutions for absentees. Such opportunities were rare and expensive. I paid.

I was to take with me the latest issue of the underground bulletin, which carried a detailed description and map of the Treblinka extermination camp. My roommates, aware of my

preparations, advised me to hide the bulletin in my shoes. Our leavetaking was tearful. With sad smiles meant to be reassuring, we promised not to forget one another. We parted with handclasps. Would I ever see them again?

December 5, 1942. At 7:00 a.m. the street was astir with people streaming to work. Brisk bartering went on as Jews traded their last pitiful belongings -- a coat, a skirt, an old pair of shoes -- to those working on the "Aryan side" for chunks of black bread. Later, the commodities would be smuggled out of the ghetto and sold to Gentile vendors.

After some searching, I found a Jewish leader of a forty-man labor battalion who for 500 zlotys allowed me to join his group. I was the only female in the unit. We marched in column formation to the ghetto gate, where we joined thousands of other laborers, men and women.

The morning guard, heavily reinforced, was busy inspecting the throng. People pushed and jostled wherever they could, hoping to elude the Gestapo scrutiny -- to escape to the "Aryan side," to smuggle a few belongings out of the ghetto. The inspection had just started. We waited apprehensively, shivering in the morning frost. One never knew what the Germans might do next.

Some who had just been inspected were retreating, clutching bruised faces. They had been beaten up for carrying items the Germans considered contraband. One was hopping barefoot in the snow; the German had taken a liking to his shoes. Several others, half-undressed, stood trembling in the biting cold, as a warmly-clad German took his time searching them. An old man pleaded with a German trooper that he did not want to be separated from his thirteen-year-old daughter. "She's a regular worker, just like me! Here is her factory card!" he argued heatedly. The soldier rebuffed him brutally. In his despair, the old man looked about with pleading eyes, but no one dared to help him. His daughter was directed aside to a wooden shack from which she gazed forlornly at her father.

My detachment was the next to be inspected. Everything was going smoothly.

"How did you get this woman in here?" the German barked.

"She's employed in the factory kitchen," the group leader explained.

The trooper eyed me with disdain. "I don't like your face," he snapped. "Get in there!" He pointed in the direction of the wooden shack.

"I don't envy her," someone remarked. My blood ran cold at the thought that the underground bulletin might be found on me. In that event the entire labor battalion -- not just I -- would be detained. Consternation suffused the faces of those around me. A Jewish policeman appeared. The place was swarming with troopers and police; there was no chance of escape.

"Please let me slip out while the German is away," I whispered to the policeman.

"Do you expect me to risk my life for you?" the policeman snapped. "The German will be right back!" At the entrance to the wooden shack lay a man, bruised and bleeding. Off to one side was the young girl. I stood a moment, stunned. The policeman shoved me inside.

I found myself in a dimly lit room, its blood-spattered walls papered with maps, charts, and photographs of half-naked women. Tattered clothing and shoes were strewn about the floor. The only furnishings were a small table and a chair, in the midst of the tangle of discarded apparel -- except for the knout that dangled beneath the little window. I stood by the wall and waited. A guard entered and began the interrogation. I fought for control over the terror that seemed about to engulf me.

"Full name."

I answered.

"Place of work."

I named the place for which the battalion was headed.

"I see! Now show me what you are carrying on your person." He pulled off my coat and dress and examined them closely under a light, searching the hems and pockets. My shoes! If he asked about them, I was lost.

"All right, now the shoes!" he demanded.

A chill passed through me. My mind was racing. I started unlacing my shoes slowly, stalling for time. Staring angrily, my interrogator ordered: "Hurry up -- stop fiddling around! Let's have those shoes! Do you see this whip?"

As I continued to fumble with the laces, the Nazi seized the whip and started to advance on me.

At that moment, as if miraculously, the door flew open, and someone shouted, "*Herr Leutnant*, please come at once! A Jew has just escaped!"

The officer dashed out, slamming the door behind him. Left alone, I dressed hurriedly and walked through the door.

"Where are you going?" a guard stopped me.

"To the labor battalion," I replied, trying to sound casual. "I have already passed inspection."

The guard eyed me suspiciously for a moment, then waved me on. I was soon swallowed up by the throng on the "Aryan side," about to march out.

Michal Klepfisz was to have been waiting for me at the ghetto gate, but he was nowhere to be seen and I could not linger here, lest my German catch up with me. At last I located the group of laborers with whom I had marched out. They were delighted to see me.

"You're lucky," the group leader told me. "Hardly anyone ever gets out of there unhurt."

Soon we were in a wagon, rolling through the Polish streets. Our white armbands identified us as being Jews. The streets were familiar to me; very little had changed during the past few years. Several Poles chased our wagon, anxious to buy something; but none of us had anything to sell. We were nearing the work project. I racked my brains for a way to break away quickly.

The others, aware that I was on some sort of mission, urged me to discard my armband and jump off the vehicle. Acting on that counsel, I chose a moment when no passersby were in sight and leaped from the slow-moving wagon. I walked away briskly, then turned off into another street and slackened my pace.

Far from the ghetto now, I was free -- but my sense of freedom was marred by a strange feeling of restlessness. I was in my own city, but seeing not a single familiar face. Here it was as if nothing had happened in the last two years. Trolleys, automobiles, bicycles raced along; businesses were open; children headed for school; women carried fresh bread and other provisions. The contrast with the ghetto was startling. It was another world, a world teeming with life.

Could the life that I had left behind have been only an illusion? I wondered as I walked the Warsaw streets. How strange and new everything around me was!

At last I arrived at Gornoszlonska 3 -- the address Michal had given me. I made my way to the cellar, and banged on the door. A blonde woman let me in. Michal was there, to welcome me, relief and joy evident in the warmth of his greeting.

"You're here at last! I was waiting at the gate for hours!"

Michal, along with his landlord, Stephan Machai, had waited at the gate for me since early that morning, and had just gotten back.

"I didn't expect you to venture out today; the guards were very strict," Michal said, after we had regained some composure and were sharing a cup of tea.

I took note of our surroundings: two small, low-ceilinged rooms inhabited by a family of four. Stephan Machai, a Gentile, seemed to like Michal. Before the war they had worked together, he as an unskilled laborer, Michal as an engineer. Now a *ricksha* pusher, the stocky Gentile considered it an honor to have the former engineer as his guest. An old, narrow bunk that Michal used took up half of the kitchen space.

Michal seemed depressed. I asked him what was wrong.

"My sister Gina died in the hospital," he told me quietly. "We're burying her today. If you wish, you can come with me to the cemetery."

I refrained from telling him of the ordeal I had undergone while leaving the ghetto. My experience paled in the presence of death. I had known Gina Klepfisz before the war, having worked with her in the *Zukunft* in a suburb of Praga, where she had organized a children's group. She had been both serious and kindhearted; children adored her. More recently, she had worked as a nurse in the ghetto. Her warm, sympathetic approach to her fellow men and the unique calm with which she met difficult situations had fitted her admirably for such tasks.

Now I had hardly stepped into the Aryan sector, only to hear that she was dead. Michal and I walked silently to the hospital, where he was to meet his wife, Ruzska Perczykow.

Ruzska was all in black, head bowed as she fought back her tears. A nurse led us wordlessly into the morgue. Gina's body was clothed all in white. My eyes were riveted upon this lifeless body -- all that remained of the woman whom I remembered as vivacious and energetic, and who, as a hospital employee, had been instrumental in smuggling Jews out of the *Umschlagplatz*. She would steer doomed men and women across the barbed wire, under cover of darkness, at the risk of her own life. On one occasion she had been caught by a Jewish policeman. Her courageous stand had dampened his ire somewhat, but she was dismissed from her job. Thereupon, together with her brother, sister-in-law, and year-old child, she had crossed over to the "Aryan side."

The nurse signaled to us that someone was approaching. We made the sign of the cross, lest anyone suspect that Gina had been Jewish. As a patient, Gina had been registered as a Gentile, under the name Kazimiera Juzwiak; the record had to remain intact. She was to be buried as a Christian.

A small funeral party awaited us at the cemetery. Among them were Yankel Celemenski and Hanka Alexandrowicz. Celemenski had been passing as a Gentile in Cracow -- on the Aryan side. He had rescued the thirteen-year-old Hanka from the Cracow ghetto only a few days before. Zygmunt (Zalman Friedrich) was also present. A strange funeral indeed: of the ten mourners following the hearse, only Anna Wonchalska and her sister Marysia Sawicka, were Christians. The funeral was carried out in accordance with Roman Catholic rites. The grave was marked with a cross.

We took our leave of Gina Klepfisz, one of the few Warsaw Jews to be buried in a cemetery at a time when thousands of Jews were being gassed and cremated.

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In the Lead

Grade Level: High school

Goals:

- Reflect upon questions of guilt and hatred in the context of the Holocaust
- Compare/contrast the meaning of loyalty or patriotism during the Holocaust and today.

Background: *Veledm* ("In the Lead") was the secret magazine published by a group of boys held captive in the Terezin ghetto. The weekly issues from December 18, 1942, to July 30, 1944 are collections of articles, reviews, poetry, plays and other writings by the boys. Many of the pieces reflect the attitudes and thoughts of their 13- to 15-year-old authors and lend themselves to class discussion.

One article by Valtr Eisinger, the boys' teacher, raises questions also suitable for discussion. The article was written before the Jewish New Year, a time for contemplation of one's actions of the past year. Eisinger found himself instead contemplating the actions of those around him. He did this not because he thought he was free from sin, but because he felt his own sins were minuscule compared to what was going on around him at the moment.

Valtr Eisinger was a teacher/mentor whose qualities included an uncommon tolerance, inner strength, tremendous altruism, and the ability to touch and inspire those with whom he came in contact. As a teacher, his greatest talent lay in his use of the Socratic method. In his article he says that he does not want to give the boys ready answers. His goal was for the students to construct their own knowledge. He forced his young charges to think and draw their own conclusions. In light of the sea of war crimes swirling around them, Eisinger posed these questions to his young readers:

- How should one behave toward the perpetrators of that war?
- Is the German nation as a whole guilty?
- Should our hatred, our just rage and our judgment come down on them all, without distinction?
- Do we want to reciprocate with the same unjust hatred that we are suffering under at the moment?

Eisinger concluded his article with a quotation from Goethe.

I often think of my novel *Wilhelm Meister*, where the idea is expressed that all people make up the sum total of mankind, and that we are worthy of respect only insofar as we respect mankind as a whole.

I like observing foreign peoples, and I would advise everyone to do the same. National literature has nothing to say. The epoch of world literature has begun and everyone must try to advance it.

The poet loves his country as a man and a citizen, but the land of his poetic power and his poetic acts is goodness, nobility and beauty, which are bound to no particular region and to no particular country. In this he is like the eagle who, with vision free, soars above all countries. What then do love of one's country and patriotism mean? They mean fighting against all harmful prejudices, eliminating narrow-minded views, enlightening the spirit of one's own nation, purifying its taste and ennobling its thoughts and sentiments. Can anyone do better than that? Does acting patriotically mean anything else?

Procedure:

- Have students discuss their own answers to Fisinger's four questions. Then share with your students the fact that only 15 of the 100 boys who went through Fisinger's class survived the Holocaust. Ask the students if their answers would be the same if they were among the 15 survivors.
- Discuss Goethe's definition of love of country and patriotism. How does it compare with Nazi ideology?
- In light of the above discussion, have students answer the question: What does it mean to act patriotically as an American?

Resource: Marie Růt Krizková, Kurt Jiri Kotovic, and Zdenek Ornest (eds.), *We Are Children Just the Same. Vedom, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezin*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995

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Inside the Warsaw Ghetto

Grade Level: Middle school

Goals:

- To describe the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
- To identify Jewish fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
- To describe other forms of resistance during the Holocaust.
- To evaluate the significance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Materials: *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, by Emmanuel Ringelblum; Round Table worksheet packet; pens.

Background: On April 19, 1943, the Warsaw Ghetto, the largest ghetto in Europe, was to be liquidated. All inhabitants would be taken to extermination camps to be murdered. Among the residents were women, children and men—all weak, starving and exhausted from the extreme conditions they were already enduring in the ghetto. Knowing what was to come, the remaining people in the ghetto organized a group of fighters. Although these fighters realized their small army and home-made ammunition could not fight the Nazis, they chose to die fighting rather than go willingly to their deaths.

Procedure: Begin this lesson by discussing the Warsaw Ghetto. As a class, discuss how the Germans established the ghetto for Jews and segregated them from the rest of Polish society. Discuss the harsh living conditions of the ghetto. You may wish to read excerpts from Emmanuel Ringelblum's *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*. How was Ringelblum resisting the Nazis? Read the letter written by Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. You may also read excerpts from *The Man from the Other Side*. Children of the Warsaw Ghetto often risked their lives to smuggle food, and sometimes even ammunition, into the ghetto. Many were caught by the Nazis and shot immediately.

Prior to the activity, create a Round Table worksheet packet. This packet will contain questions with room for five students to respond to each question. Students will pass each question sheet around the table and respond to each question.

Questions for Round Table Worksheet:

- Why were Jews forced to live in the ghetto?
- In your own words, describe the conditions of the Warsaw Ghetto. What noises might you hear in the ghetto? What would you see? What would you smell?
- Write your own definition for "resistance."
- How did Emmanuel Ringelblum resist?
- List some other forms of resistance.
- Name something you are willing to fight for.
- In your opinion, did the Jewish fighters win or lose?
- Do you think the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is important to your generation? Why or why not?

Place each question on a separate sheet and number the responses 1-5. Have groups of five sit in a circle. Assign each student a response number to correspond with the responses on the sheet. On the worksheet, have students identify their name and corresponding number at the top of the first page.

Students are to begin with the first question. The first person may read the question to the group, write a response, then pass the paper around. Discussions about the questions are to be saved until the paper has gone around the circle. For each question, have students read and discuss their responses.

Allow students to work through all the questions and discuss their answers. Then, as a class, have groups share an overall statement on each response.

Assessment: Evaluate students based on group participation and student-generated responses.

Resources:

- Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*. New York: Schocken Books, 1974.
- Uri Orlev, *The Man from the Other Side*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1991.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

MONUMENTS TO JANUSZ KORCZAK



Warsaw Cemetery

Warsaw, Poland



Yad Vashem

Jerusalem, Israel

TESTIMONIES

LIFE IN THE GHETTO

I was born in Łódź, Poland, an only child from a large and loving family, who was completely unprepared for the extraordinary, tragic and deadly five and a half years which started when I was twelve years old. I think that if we had suspected that the war would last that long, we would all have committed suicide.

The first inkling of war came to me during the summer of 1939 when I was in a summer camp. Unexpectedly, my mother appeared to take me home. I remember being very excited by the electricity in the air, by the parades, speeches, soldiers marching, the famous Polish cavalry riding their horses waving flags. But horses cannot win against tanks and airplanes, and the Germans overran Poland in less than a week. Within three to four days Łódź, the city I was born in, was occupied by the Germans. They came during the night and we woke to the sound of rumbling tanks, heavy artillery and marching soldiers. Immediately martial law was instituted. Our city was declared a part of the Third *Reich*. We were forced to wear the yellow Star of David patch on the front and back of our outer clothing. Radios had to be turned in and most of our possessions were taken away. We were constantly brutalized by Germans and my grandparents were killed when they tried to prevent the desecration of religious articles in their home. Despite all that we saw around us, we believed that the Allies would come into the war soon and it would be all over in a matter of months. So all the planing that my parents did was for the short range, and when in December of 1939 the ghetto was being formed in Łódź, my father decided to move the family to Warsaw, which was not included in the Third *Reich*, but had become a protectorate and had none of these sanctions -- yet.

We traveled to Warsaw, taking only what we could carry, on Christmas eve of 1939. In order to travel by train -- the only transportation available, but forbidden to Jews -- we had to risk a death sentence by removing the yellow patches from our clothes and trying to pass for gentiles. We counted on Germans celebrating Christmas and not checking too carefully and it worked.

I first saw the old and dilapidated part of Warsaw which was to become a ghetto the following year, when we, along with the multitude of other refugees pouring into Warsaw -- a city already reeling from defense, bombing, destruction, shortages and new occupation -- settled in that old and predominantly Jewish area, because the local Jews were the only ones who offered to share their homes.

The overcrowding was unbelievable and still strange to us. We were living thirteen persons to a room, then when things settled a bit, two families to a single room, sharing the kitchen and bathroom facilities with people who occupied the other rooms in the apartment.

The buildings were old, mostly three floors, built around two or three courtyards with the front and first yard having better apartments and poorer accommodations as you went to second and third yard with stables and garages in the back. Every apartment had an assigned space in the attic to hang laundry to dry, and a little cubicle in a dirt floor basement for coal and food storage, except that there was no coal and no food to store. Each building had a heavy entrance door which was locked in the evening. The roofs were very steep, the streets cobblestoned and the side streets quite narrow. The winter that year was extremely cold.

There was no heating material, the water was constantly freezing in the pipes, and food was very hard to get -- exchanged for gold and worth its weight in gold. Life was very harsh, especially after my father was arrested for exchanging some foreign coins from his collection, which is all we had left after the German rampage. My father's gold coin collection was what saved us from immediate hunger, but it was -- under the new laws -- illegal. Luckily, he was put in a Polish criminal prison and not German political one, so we were able to have him released after a few months. We were constantly hounded by the secret police and were finally lucky to move into a better, less crowded, but predominantly gentile area. Despite having to wear the white arm band with a blue Star of David on it, life was easier for a while and our spirits lifted, especially because my mother's twin sister and her family and one of her brothers and his family were able to smuggle themselves to Warsaw. But it only lasted through the summer and early fall and it proved to be a mistake, as the ghetto was formed in November 1940, and orders were issued that, under penalty of death, all Jews, including those Catholics who had a Jewish ancestor as far back as the fourth generation, must move into the ghetto area. So we were without a place to live once more, and this time the competition for space was frantic.

We were finally able to find a room in a two room apartment, where the owners moved into the kitchen and we occupied the only room -- the advantage being that only two families shared the kitchen and bath, although the frozen pipes often rendered these facilities useless.

Things were moving very fast. Helplessly we watched the walls surrounding the two ghettos -- called large and small -- and connected by an overhead bridge, grow brick by brick. Then broken glass was placed on top and finally rows of barbed wire stretched over that, with a few gates placed at strategic thoroughfares. It seemed that the walls were throwing a shadow over the ghetto and blocked what little sun there was.

And then one day, in the middle of November, the gates were closed with three guards posted on each one: a Jewish militiaman, a Polish policeman and a German soldier. We were locked in.

Please let me explain at this point that "ghetto" as you know it is not the same as ghetto under the German rule. That ghetto was in fact a camp, a labor and transfer camp, where people were performing slave labor and were temporarily sent from smaller ghettos to be shipped to concentration and death camps. The only difference in the beginning was that families were permitted to live together. Later on, in 1942-1943, that too changed and the ghetto was separated by barbed wire and watchful guards into many small ghettos, so that each person lived where they were forced to work and families were separated as in other camps.

As the ghetto closed, it was not only organized by the Germans, but it began to organize itself. The *Judenrat* was chosen by the Germans from elders in the community and headed by an engineer, Adam Czerniakow (who later committed suicide rather than obey German orders). He was forced to carry out German orders -- and did so -- assigning living quarters, guards, collecting blackmail, jewelry, metals, furs, running soup kitchens, overseeing rations, and so forth. The Jewish militia, recruited from sports clubs and fairly harmless in the beginning, later became hardened and began acting more violently towards their fellowmen. Working establishments -- such as uniform and shoe factories, brush factories and other equipment for the German army, kitchens and transport of goods in and out of the ghetto, hospital -- which although desperately needed was avoided at all cost, because the Germans regularly emptied it by deporting the patients to certain death. Edicts and orders were posted, most of them announcing death penalties for disobeying orders, including an order forbidding teaching or attending school. Can you imagine -- death penalty for teaching or attending school, for wanting to learn? Nevertheless, illegal and secret schoolrooms opened and were widely attended and taught on all levels including college. The classes were often moved to new locations and evading measures taken such as placing typhus signs on doors, because the Germans were known to be very much afraid of catching typhus, and would seldom enter a building with a quarantine sign on it.

An important lesson -- not taught in school -- was to learn to live by two sets of laws. One for the authorities -- our enemies, where anything was possible and it was morally proper and smart to lie, steal and cheat in order to survive, and the other in dealing with our own society, where we observed standards of decency and morality and helped one another sometimes to the point of sacrifice.

Theatre flourished in the beginning, but the Germans used it as a propaganda tool, catching people in the streets and filming the scene, so the theatre closed in order not to cooperate. Radios were forbidden and had to be turned into the Germans about a month after the war started. The few that were hidden were used first privately and then by the underground to listen to the Allied news and first by word of mouth and later on by illegal newspaper printed on an old fashioned hand press in a basement, and often moved as well and passed from hand to hand, spread to people to bolster their spirits. Electric power was given one hour a day -- usually late at night, so a carbide lamp was developed. It gave out fumes but it was the only way to get some light and therefore was used widely. Also a horse-pulled trolley was inaugurated. The sanitation department using wheelbarrows picked up garbage and dead bodies, which lined the streets each morning, covered with old newspapers and without identification so that the surviving members of the families could collect their food rations for a while longer.

All of this was expected to last only a short time and plans were made accordingly, when planning was even possible, as we all believed that the war would end soon. We lived on that hope from season to season and avidly sought news of the front and Allied involvement. We heard that emissaries were sent from the underground to London with reports on the conditions in ghettos and camps. We also heard that a Jewish member of "Sejm" (Polish parliament) appealed to the world to protest the treatment of Jews in occupied Europe and when the Allied governments refused to speak out, he committed suicide as a protest of his own. In the meantime, conditions and the quality of life grew worse with each passing week. The Germans, seeing that there were no complaints or threats of retribution from the outside, continued to take new and terrible steps towards genocide.

The Warsaw ghetto which originally had a population of 500,000 people -- locals and the first wave of refugees from lands included in the Third *Reich* -- was swelling by an influx of people from the smaller ghettos, which were being liquidated. To our sorrow and terror, people were disappearing and evacuated in large numbers to make temporary room for new arrivals. It was a constant movement of masses of decimated families.

The underground began forming itself -- secretly and cautiously at first -- with many factions and organizations from left to right politically, disagreeing on policy and course of action. The younger of us, and there were many youngsters such as myself, were for arming ourselves and fighting then and there against the deportations and killings, while the older groups wanted to adapt the wait and see, don't "rock the boat" attitude to avoid repercussions. Because you see, our biggest problem was the mass responsibility policy practiced by the Germans. Individual, open acts of defiance were discouraged, because for an act of one person, hundreds were punished and swiftly killed. We never knew what group would be affected. For instance, a baker once committed a minor act which displeased the Germans. The following night, all the bakers in the Warsaw ghetto were taken from their homes, gathered into the street and shot. This accomplished two purposes. It caused fear and compliance to avoid repetition and the whole population of ghetto, starved as it was, was denied bread for days. Another time, it would happen to all the occupants of an apartment house or all the people walking on a certain street or people waiting on line for food or working in a shop and so on.

We never knew where the next attack was coming from -- what to expect next. We only knew that it would be brutal and deadly. Few of us, even the young, could live with the knowledge that we

caused the death of our people. And so, we waited and hoped and started to prepare by collecting money for buying guns and ammunition and paying a king's ransom for them. We were under a constant strain for, in addition to the danger of underground work, when we left home in the morning for work or other chores, we didn't know if we would see our families or friends again. Our main objective was to save as many lives as possible because that was becoming the hardest defiance of all. There were many orphans miraculously left alive when their parents died or were deported. They needed caring and feeding, and many of the young groups made that their responsibility, for the children were the saddest sight of all. They never laughed, they did not even cry. They were silent and only their eyes asked why? We collected food going from door to door and in groups to avoid temptation and suspicion, because we were hungry too -- a hard task to say the least -- food being precious both as nourishment and barter currency -- and we cooked it, serving it to the children daily. The children were also provided with any warm clothing we could collect or spare. Naturally, it was never enough. There were so many hungry children and so little food to go around, and so you could see those little street urchins, running in the street, looking in garbage cans or ripping food packages or pots with cooked oats from the community kitchen, out of passersby's hands. Many of them took up food smuggling. Most were caught, beaten and killed for it.

As for the majority, we lived on the slave wages and sale of whatever possessions we still had including the clothes on our back. As time went by, conditions continued to get worse. The cultural life, except for schooling, ground to a stop. Gatherings of any kind were dangerous. Total effort was needed just to survive another day and we were getting sick, weak and desperate. We all received food cards, which in the beginning entitled us to rations of 300 calories a day and were reduced gradually to only 150. It was mostly bread, black, full of sand and chestnuts and other fillers and very little flour. Jam was made with saccharin and God knows what else, probably beets and squash, because there was no fruit in it. We also received some squash and potatoes only when and if it had frozen and was rotting. As carefully as they were peeled, those hungrier yet than we, picked the peelings out of the garbage and ate them. I don't remember ever having any fruit, milk or meat products in the ghetto. We did have some private and illegal vegetable and grocery stores, but there was hardly any foodstuff in them. What was there was very expensive, because it was smuggled in or thrown over the wall -- both quite difficult and dangerous. There were soup kitchens throughout the ghetto, but all they prepared and sold were cooked oats sent by the American Joint Distribution Committee. I don't know what the Joint sent, but all we received were oats with the chaff still on it. Since there was no way to process it, this is how it was cooked and eaten, causing us bleeding of the gums and scratching the throat. But hunger was such that even this was desirable. Many times our whole meal consisted of a few glasses of hot water with a half spoon of jam. In order to be able to fall asleep, we'd save a bit of bread to stop the hunger pains. Reading cookbooks gave us an almost sensual pleasure. Food became a matter of survival and there were many who were worse off than we.

To bring the ghetto life a bit closer to you, let me tell you about my life there, as I remember it. We rose at dawn -- in darkness and cold -- the Polish winters being very long and cold and when I think of the ghetto I remember always being cold. By the light of carbide lamp, we had our breakfast consisting of hot water and small slice of black bread. I then went to the brush factory where I worked from 7 a.m. till late evening. The walk to and from work was quite traumatic, because each day I had to pass by scenes of arrests, beatings, beard pulling, dead bodies covered with newspapers being picked up by wheelbarrows, live skeletons sitting supported by building walls waiting for death, desperate mothers holding children, begging food to save them from starvation, groups being led to the *Umschlagplatz* for deportation, hostages shot on the street as an example and, quite often, a suicide, with jumping out of windows the most common and accessible way. I never knew whether I would not be caught in a round-up. Once I was hit with the butt of a rifle by a German soldier when I failed to see him coming up behind me and did not step down into the gutter in time. In addition, we had to be careful not to brush against people, fearful of picking up lice, which aside from revulsion also carried spotted typhus. Avoiding contact was not an easy thing considering the mass of humanity on the narrow streets.

Piece work at the factory was hard and dirty -- spools of wire fastened to wood tables, with handfuls of bristle in my covered lap -- the bristle alive with parasites. By the end of the day my hands usually bled. Lunch was eaten at work, a carrot if I was lucky to get one, as I developed a tremendous yen for them. When I got home in the evening, relieved to see my parents still there and to be able to close the doors in the comparative safety of our room, we had the main meal of the day consisting either of the cooked oats full of chaff or, if we were lucky to get some ingredients, soup. After that I met with my group to help with the orphans and then went to classes, studying well into the night. There was hardly any time to sleep, yet I was always full of restless energy despite all the hardships. Time, as needed, was also devoted to underground meetings, printing and distributing illegal newspapers, trips to the outside of ghetto walls as a courier, bringing news, guns and ammunition.

That life was interrupted when I had to leave my parents and the ghetto for the first time. My new working papers, without which I was a prime subject for deportation, were lost by my boss, a friend of the family, who was bringing them to me as a favor. He was arrested and deported on the way, because, as we found out later, he left his own papers at home by mistake.

In all, I left the ghetto three times and returned twice, not counting the many short forays for the underground, once through cellars and tunnel, once through a courthouse which had an entrance on both sides of the wall but was heavily guarded, and once through sewers. If it sounds easy, don't you believe it for a moment. It was extremely frightening, dangerous and difficult. Aside from Germans, there were many agents and people who made a living denouncing Jews and the underground to the *Gestapo* and they were everywhere. On the other hand, there were very few who could be trusted and were willing to help. It took tremendous planning, appearance, luck, self control and an available safe house to go to in order to succeed.

One of my uncles and his wife and son, did not move into the ghetto, risking capture and death, remaining on the "Aryan" side, after buying false identity papers. And this was probably the single, most important factor of my own survival, as through my family's courage and willingness, their home gave me a trusted outside base when I needed it -- it became a sort of halfway house, permitting me time to get used to and being at ease in the deception I had to live, when the time came. My uncle also got false papers for me.

I was there a short time when I found out that both my parents were very sick; my father with typhus and my mother with pneumonia. There were no medicines and it was out of the question to send them to hospital, because we knew that would mean instant death, so I came back to care for them. After they got well I was sent out again and my uncle started to make arrangements to place me in a convent. He was being blackmailed and we were all in immediate danger. As a matter of fact, a few days after I left his home he was arrested and put in Majdanek concentration camp where he was soon killed. His wife and son escaped and were on the run.

In the meantime I was sent to a cabin in the woods near a village. It was the end of summer of 1942. I was 15 years old and all alone there, without food, except some rotten potatoes. It was getting cold but I couldn't make a fire, because the smoke would be a dead giveaway. There were wild animals in the woods and they came close at night howling. For a city girl like me, it was a frightening and lonely existence. At times Germans or locals ventured into the woods and I had to hide. Finally the woman who was placing me in the convent came to escort me there. We went by train and during the ride she told me that there was a big action in the ghetto and my mother and her twin sister were taken away. I couldn't even cry out in my grief. In the convent, the nuns who didn't know I was Jewish tested my knowledge of catechism and assigned me to a dorm with other girls. I became ill with yellow jaundice due to sorrow of my mother's deportation and was talking in my sleep, so I was taking pills to knock myself out. But soon I was so sick that I was placed in the infirmary. I finally got better and under the pretext of going to confession to my priest in Warsaw, I was able to travel there and meet my father at a prearranged place, when he came with a wagon for supplies as a part of his job.

We were able to meet a couple of times but then one day he did not come. His co-worker told me that he fell off the wagon and broke his arm. There were no Jewish doctors since and the hospital was still out of question so, in pain, since he could not report for work, he went into hiding. I ran away from the convent and arranged to get back to the ghetto in the double bottom of a wagon, not a very desirable way since the Germans used to poke bayonets in searches for all manner of contraband. But luck was with me and I was back in the ghetto in January of 1943.

A few days after my return, the Germans started another action. There was an armed resistance lasting four days. Then we were forced to go into hiding to avoid mop up operations. My father and some of his friends had a hiding place ready. It was a line of little alcoves, well masked from the outside, with an entrance from the attic. The alcoves were the size of a walk-in closet, with a hole in floor and ceiling, with a rope ladder connecting the floors. There were no bathroom facilities nor food or water. We spent a few days in that dark and airless tomb -- many people passing out, packed like sardines and in total silence, for any sound could betray us.

After the action was over, only about 40,000 people were left out of approximately 750,000 and those left were on their last leg. We were separated from the bulk of the underground, because by that time the ghetto was re-organized into small enclosed areas, with families separated by barbed wire and guards and individuals living where they worked. Communication was difficult and life was in a chaos. My father's arm was re-broken and set by a nurse we found. As we started once again making preparations to leave the ghetto, the uprising started when the Germans surrounded the ghetto at Easter time and started a final round-up.

How can I -- how can anyone -- describe to you the feeling of that moment? The moment we waited for almost four years -- that so many of us did not live to see.

The elation of striking the enemy, of hitting back, the bittersweet taste of it. But also the terrible sadness of knowing that we shall all perish in the end. We looked at our comrades and friends and they were walking dead -- but they were smiling and willing to die, if they took some Germans with them. My father had long talks with me -- from a man's point of view, trying to prepare me for a future alone, should I survive -- which neither one of us believed.

Although we were prepared -- as prepared as we could ever be under the circumstances -- for final resistance, the beginning of the uprising came unexpectedly on the eve of Passover. This time a total attack was launched. Their fire was returned, hand to hand combat took place, with our fighters finding super human strength and unbelievable heroism. Although the Germans came in wave after wave of well armed, clothed and fed troops -- our weak, desperate, hungry and bedraggled resistance fighters along with anybody who could stand up, fought them sending truck after truck and bus after bus of wounded and dead Germans away. Those who couldn't fight were making "Molotov" cocktails, filling bottles with gasoline and stuffing rags into them -- our most effective and available weapon. There was a shortage of everything -- weapons, ammo, food, water, medicines, bandages. The Germans were encircling us every day a bit more, using heavy artillery, tanks, setting fire to the buildings, creating a circle of fire around us. The scenes we were a part of and witnessed were that of hell. People were leaping out of burning buildings, screaming, children being tossed out of windows by Germans or grabbed by the feet, swung, their heads smashed against walls, mothers going mad with grief attacking their murderers with bare hands, bunkers discovered and dynamited, with all inside killed, corpses and body parts laying all over. Still, the Germans were coming and coming -- street after street, building after building. We pushed them back in fierce fighting and, of course, they came back again with fresh troops. Our losses were tremendous. We had no effective way of treating our wounded, the choking smoke and smell of burning flesh always with us, along with cries of pain. After about two weeks, when conditions got worse yet -- if that's possible -- an order went out from the leadership that whoever had a way to get out of the ghetto and a place to go, should do so in order to leave whatever supplies were left for those who had no place to go and to continue the fight from outside.

A group of us left the ghetto for the final time in the beginning of May 1943 by sewers -- led by a guide. The sewers of Warsaw were old and filled with slime -- sometimes quite deep and slippery. They were also the home of many, many rats who were big and hungry. I'll never forget this trip -- it lasted about three hours, but it seemed a lifetime. The rats were bold, staring at us with those beady eyes, ready to jump, and I remember thinking -- I expected to die, made my peace with death, but not here, not this way. It took a tremendous effort not to cry out, not to make a sound, which would be reverberated by the metal plates over manholes, and would give us away. Also the Germans, aware that some sewers were used for escape, gassed them often at random so that we never knew which breath was our last. Finally, we surfaced, made contact with a man we knew and were told to spend the night in a coal cellar. In the morning after cleaning up as best we could, we went to a safe apartment separately.

I was back on the "Aryan" side and this time there was no going back. Gone were my people and all they were and represented and all the future generations to come, that would never be.

I kept going back to the walls of the ghetto as it was burning and burning and kept vigil. I just couldn't stay away. The Polish people too, were standing there, but they were laughing and saying to one another -- well, at least the Germans got rid of the Jews for us. And soon it was all over. It was deadly quiet and all that remained were burned out ruins and ashes.

I was arrested by the *Gestapo* soon after, when I went to the house of a Polish woman -- the same one who placed me in the convent -- to pick up my father's false papers. I spent three days in the *Gestapo* headquarters, the infamous Aleje Szucha, undergoing constant interrogation, but somehow convinced them that I was pure "Aryan" and finally walked out of there free. I believe that I am one of very few if any, who lived to tell the tale.

For the next two years I lived among the Polish people as a Christian, on false identity papers, working as a governess and mother's helper. My father wanted and was able to, through contacts in the underground, join a partisan unit in the Wyzków forest. I became involved again in the resistance movement in Warsaw. I was doing much the same work as in the ghetto, working as a runner delivering orders and responses, ammunition and guns to and from command posts and various units in the city, villages, and partisans. I received a cyanide pill in case of my capture, which gave me great peace of mind. I had to live in silence. Isolate myself from people as soon as they got closer and started to ask questions. It would be too easy to get caught on contradiction or give myself or others away. Logically, I was fortunate not to be in a concentration camp, but I was so lonely that I truly envied the people in camps, because they were together.

When it seemed that the war would never end, we heard the heavy artillery of the approaching Russian army, and the Polish underground National Army wanting credit for liberating Warsaw, started an uprising. Some of the remaining Jews hidden in Warsaw surfaced then and when the city was again laid to ruin and the uprising failed, most of them were denounced or caught and killed, as the Germans evacuated the population. We were marched to freight trains, taken to a transfer camp and from there, after a few days and selection, I was able to get on a cattle transport of old and sick, pretending to be pregnant, and we landed temporarily in Bochnia -- a town not far from Auschwitz. The town was near the front and many German troops were stationed there. Since I spoke German, I was asked by the underground to get a job as a translator and report to them what I overheard as to German movement and positions. That I was able to do until liberation.

A few days later the Germans ordered all Warsaw refugees to report, but distrusting them as always, I did not obey and remained in town until the Russian army liberated us in January of 1945. Yet even the liberation so long wished and prayed for was a bitter and heartbreaking time as we realized the extent of our losses.

It took me two months to board a freight train and return to Warsaw and then Łódź to search for my family. My mother died in Treblinka, my father was lost without a trace in partisans and out of close family of about 150 people I found five alive, two of them in Russia. All the rest perished.

And so, when there was a pogrom after the end of war, and when I was standing on the street talking to a male Jewish friend and a Pole passing by, spit on the ground and said to me, "Shame on you -- a decent Polish girl associating with a Jew," I decided then and there to leave the country soon and for good, even though I was still searching for the remnants of my family. Within a month, I entered a kibbutz and left Poland with them, crossing into the U. S. Zone on my 19th birthday, to start a new life.

Matilda de Mayo was born on September 28, 1921 in Podhajce, Poland. She remained in the Podhajce ghetto from 1941 to 1943 and was then hidden by non-Jews.

A. The first *Aktion* was on Yom Kippur. All the *Aktions* were on Jewish holidays. Unexpectedly, people were gathered in the middle of the city, still wearing their prayer shawls, and they were taken away. Then they declared that the rest of us must leave our homes and move into a ghetto. But before they did that, they made us work in the fields. Then they brought us into the ghetto.

Q. Could you please describe the day that you and your parents had to leave, to move to the ghetto? Did you have any warning?

A. They gave us very short notice. I remember one time, a short time before, when a German soldier was in our house. He told us horrible things were going to happen, but he didn't speak of ghettos. He spoke of total elimination. So we knew that each day, each step, was a step towards death.

People walked and just took whatever they could carry in their hands, like bundles or a suitcase. We were gathered, as many as six people in a room measuring maybe eight by ten feet, in the poorest part of town. They surrounded the area with barbed wire and with German and Ukrainian militia. They told us that we could only go out for an hour to do our shopping and later, they didn't even give us that privilege.

There were three families living in that house, a house of three or four rooms. The sanitary conditions were indescribable, because there was only one cistern for water, hand pumped water. The toilet facilities, there was only one outhouse for all those people. The living conditions were unbelievable! Typhoid broke out right away. We had lice. Maybe not my family, but there were lice in the ghetto, because there were no bathrooms to take baths in.

Q. Was there any electricity?

A. No, there was no electricity.

Q. Was there any heat?

A. Only the heat from a little coal stove.

Q. And how did you get food?

A. My cousin was a very strong man, so they gave him a working permit. He was allowed to go out of the ghetto to do menial work, cleaning streets and sewers, so he was able to smuggle some food and also the newspaper into the house. Otherwise, we had no news. We were totally cut off from the world. If a Jew had been caught by a German carrying food or a newspaper, he would have been shot to death.

Q. Since if Jews were caught carrying food, they were shot, how did you get the food?

A. Well, we bribed the Ukrainian watching the ghetto and gave him something, so they wouldn't search us. I found a place to bring in food. I was roaming through the ghetto and at one side, facing the main street, instead of having barbed wire, they had like a wooden gate. So I would sit there with a knife, and slowly I pried a couple of boards loose, and everyday I made it a little bit bigger. Finally, I declared to my parents that I would go out of the ghetto to look for food. Of course, the populace, even the Polish and Ukrainian people, did not have much food, but they were not starving. We were starving. Every morning, you could see people on the street dead from hunger.

Q. So you sneaked in and out of the ghetto.

A. I sneaked. I put a kerchief on my head and wore a long skirt, dressing like a farmer's wife, and I went outside the ghetto, where every step I made meant death, not only from the Germans, but also from the Ukrainians or the Polish population.

Q. Where did you get the food?

A. I went to the farmers, who knew me, who knew my parents, and I bartered.

Q. With what?

A. With whatever I had left. A nightgown today, a coat tomorrow and things like that.

Q. What other rules did the ghetto have, made by the Nazis?

A. Every week, they wanted a certain amount of young people to be taken to work, and, of course, there was no work. They took them to Bergen-Belsen [concentration camp].

Q. What do you mean they wanted a group of people?

A. They had a quota.

Q. Were there any Jewish or non-Jewish organizations outside the ghetto at this time that were offering any kind of help?

A. None that I know of.

Q. Was there some type of religious activity in the ghetto?

A. Nothing. In the ghetto, there was one great, depressing, devastated bunch of humiliated humanity that no human words can ever describe. People were dying from hunger and typhoid. Every day there were dead bodies on the street and in the doorways of the ghetto, and the children were hungry, tattered and begging orphans.

Nobody who has ever seen the ghetto children can forget their eyes. You have seen hungry children on television in the Sudan or from Biafra. Nothing compares to the expression of the ghetto children, their eyes, their eyes.

There is something about the horror of the war, the horror of the Jewish misery. The whole tragedy of the Jewish life at that time was expressed in the eyes of the children. Nobody who has seen those eyes can ever forget them.

This excerpt is adapted from the original testimony of Matilda de Mayo which is part of the Oral History Collection of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

Miriam Fridman, née Dudkiewicz, was born on December 5, 1925 in Łódź, Poland. She was in the Łódź ghetto from 1940 to 1944. From there, she was sent to Auschwitz and Freudenthal concentration camps and was liberated in May 1945.

A. At that time when I came into the Łódź ghetto, I was fourteen. The Jews were condensed in a small area, and they were living there. They enclosed the whole ghetto areas with barbed wire.

Q. As people came into the ghetto, where or how did they find housing?

A. The Polish people had to leave the ghetto, because it was only for the Jews. As soon as they left, there were some shacks and some rooms that were in very poor condition. And they divided those places among the Jewish population that was sent into the ghetto. That's how we got little places to stay, and they were in terrible condition.

Q. Was there furniture?

A. There was whatever we were able to salvage, whatever we were able to take with us. And even if we did have something, it didn't last very long. We had the coldest winter ever recorded at that time. Nature even went against us, not only the world. Whatever piece of wood we had, we broke into pieces and tried to keep warm.

I had beautiful long hair to my waist. I washed my hair and went to sleep, and my hair froze to the headboard of the bed. Unfortunately, my mother had to cut it. With terrible sorrow in her heart, she cried, "My dear Miriam, I have to cut your hair." The rest of the hair remained on the headboard until spring came and melted the ice away. It was a terrible experience for me and would have been for any little girl.

Q. You went into the ghetto with nothing but your personal belongings?

A. Personal belongings, some little things, some dishes, and if it was a smaller piece of furniture, we were able to take it. There were not many things. We had a yellow star, the star of David, it was the *Judenschande lateh* [patch of Jewish shame] on us. We walked like dead people in that cold snow, from one place to the other to bring the little things that we were able to bring.

Q. Once the ghetto was closed, how did you live as far as food was concerned? Where did food come from? How did you get it?

A. I was a chubby little girl, and in a very short time, I lost thirty-five pounds. They gave us a small ration which most people had for one day but was supposed to last us for a week. The last six days we were starving. No food, and if we had a little soup and a little water, that was it most of the time. That was the war of nutrition, in which we died like flies. There were times they were collecting the dead by the wagons just from malnutrition and starvation. And the Łódź ghetto was one of the worst as far as malnutrition and starvation was concerned.

My father took very sick from malnutrition. At the deportation, they took him. I don't know where, what, when. I never heard from him. I am sure they took him to a death camp.

Q. And your mother?

A. My mother died at the age of thirty-nine from malnutrition. She swelled up, and she died in my arms, and her last words I will never forget until I die. She said, "My dear child, will you ever have enough bread in your life?" Those were her last words.

Q. The Łódź ghetto was known as a labor ghetto. Did most people work?

A. Yes. Most people worked for the German army, making things like gas masks, uniforms, etc. After going to school for a while, I worked in a place, a factory called a *resort* [sarcastic nickname for a factory]. There, I worked as a finisher for uniforms for the German army. And at that time, I got one soup a day. That was a little bit, a drop in the ocean for survival, with little water, and in the soup was one piece of potato.

Q. And your sister, what did she do then?

A. My little sister worked a little bit in a place where they had jobs for children at that age. We did not have many children anymore, because we had a selection. People had to come out into the streets and if there were children a certain age, they took them away, because they said that those children disturbed the people who worked. They took away the children and killed them.

Q. You referred to having gone to school. Who organized the schools, and what were the Jewish organizations within the ghetto? You had a *Judenrat* [Jewish council selected by and under the total control of the Nazis]?

A. Yes.

Q. Who was head of the *Judenrat*?

A. The head of the *Judenrat* was Rumkowski, and he had people with him. He organized the *Judenrat*.

Q. And what was the *Judenrat's* responsibility, and how did they carry it out as far as the ghetto was concerned?

A. They were running it like their own country. They were the leaders.

Q. What do you mean by that?

A. Like any other leader, he was the leader of the ghetto. I mean, all the leaders had it good. We had our own police and fireman in the ghetto. We had our own printed money, not as much we could get for the money, but we had papers, and we obeyed the laws.

Q. Whose laws were they?

A. The laws were the leaders', like Rumkowski. They would give out laws, rules, and regulations such as when to walk in the streets, when not. Maybe those were the laws from higher echelons, from the Germans. Those were the rules given to him, and he had to obey it. I didn't see many German police in the ghetto. I saw them on the borderline. They were on the border outside, near the wiring, where they protected so that nobody would be able to get out.

Q. But the Jewish police were within the ghetto.

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any organization of underground in your ghetto?

A. I presume there must have been, because we always heard some news, and they had underground radios which were forbidden. If anybody was found with a radio, they were taken out of the ghetto and were killed. There were always people who risked their lives.

We were locked in with no means of survival, with no ammunition, without anything. We had no help or anything from the world. We couldn't protect ourselves with what we didn't have. Not that we were stupid or ignorant or sheep. No. We didn't have with what to do anything. I know about myself. I knew quite a bit for my age, but I couldn't help myself because I was sick taking care of my family, what little family I had. I was trying to find a piece of wood so that I should have a little water to boil and keep my house a little warm. Then people came and asked, "How come you didn't uprising or didn't do this, didn't do that?" It's very easy to say for the person who didn't go through it and was not hungry.

Q. Where there any efforts, do you think, to escape?

A. I presume, that would have been on individual basis. Because when they closed the ghetto, we had 160,000 people from Łódź. Maybe some individuals tried to escape on their own. But I don't know of any mass escape, because we were in barbed wire and there were people guarding with ammunition. There were people that had armies. We had nothing. And beside that, we were sick, hungry, and starved.

Q. And yet, you tried to survive?

A. We tried to survive.

Q. Who made the selections for the deportations? Do you know?

A. As much as I understand and knew at that time, the *Judenrat* got notes from the Germans, "We want a certain amount of people from the ghetto." Then they got notice to every factory to pick X amount of people. And from each factory, X amount of people were picked, and that was it.

Q. There was no category basis?

A. No basis.

- Q. In 1943, when the end of the ghetto was slowly approaching, were there any changes in the ghetto, the life in the ghetto itself?
- A. It was getting worse and worse.
- Q. It what sense?
- A. We were getting less food. The only thing on our mind was survival, and the survival was the food. No food and we died. Now if somebody was dying, he got a ticket from the doctor, we called it a *talon* [voucher]. So, he went to the kitchen where they made the soups for the people that worked in the factory. You had to be dying already in order to get a pound of potato peels. And then presumably, they were giving something like coffee. The coffee was literally burnt straw. It made holes in our stomach. And after we brewed the coffee, we didn't throw away that burnt straw. We tried to chop it up and put a little salt and make like patties, and we tried to eat that. They sometimes gave us the leaves from fresh beets. If we got a few leaves, it was a holiday.
- Q. When did you first become aware that there was going to be a deportation, that your ghetto was going to be closed?
- A. One of the ghetto leaders said, "I want to get you out in the best way possible. The Russians are coming." I remember vividly, one of his speeches. "The Russians are getting close, and we want to get you out of here. Take everything along that you can carry. Take all your belongings." Anybody who has a sewing machine take it along, because we're going to open another factory. Take your pots, take your pans, take everything you can." We were all sewing little sacks and little things to fill up. People who had machines put them on their shoulders, because we thought we were going to continue and have it much nicer and much better. This is how he blindfolded us. We did not know that we were going to Auschwitz. Maybe if we would have known, maybe something would have been done about it.
- Q. Okay, tell us about the day you were getting ready to leave the ghetto.
- A. A tragic day.
- Q. How large a group was there in the transport that you were in?
- A. Let me give you a few last days of my terrible experience before the transport, if I may. As you know, I was left with a little girl when she was fragile, because she was young and had suffered torture and malnutrition. I tried to hide in a closet. I was hidden for a few days with this little girl, but we didn't have anything to eat, and we were starving. So I made a decision just to go out around August 20th or the 21st. We decided to leave as we both said it would be much better there. Not that I believed everything exactly, but those were the words and we figured maybe. And we were holding onto any last straw, and I left. At that time, when we came to our designated place where we all left from, there were hundreds and hundreds of people. The sight was unforgettable. They put us in cattle trains. We were crushed like sardines in a box.
- Q. How many were there?

- A. A countless amount. It's unbelievable, because we couldn't even turn around. That's how crowded we were. No food, of course, no toilet facilities. Nothing. And that took many hours. I think it was the whole night until we arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Ruth Desperak, née Infeld, was born on December 14, 1922 in Breslau, Germany. She was forced to live in the Łódź ghetto in May 1940, and remained there until August 1944, when she was sent to Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, and Salzwedel concentration camps.

Q. Did you have to wear yellow stars when the ghetto started?

A. We already wore them before.

Q. When did you have to start wearing them?

A. I think it came right away. You had to show that you are Jewish, but people took chances, you know. Some people still wanted to conduct business or felt that they could make it maybe easier for themselves, whatever.

Q. So they took it off?

A. So they took it off.

Q. Did you ever?

A. No. Somehow I never did. I didn't even look Jewish. Even though I was in the ghetto, some of our neighbors later on said, "You could have passed as a German." But I never had that feeling, because I wanted to be with my parents. I was maybe too young. You know, if I would've been maybe seventeen, eighteen, maybe it would have been different.

Leo Shniderman was born in Łódź, Poland on August 18, 1922. He was forced to live in the Łódź ghetto from May 1940 to August 1944. He was then sent to Auschwitz, Lerchien labor camp, Kaltwasser, Wolfsburg, and Ebenzee, where he was liberated in May 1945.

Q. Can you describe the day that you first saw the Nazis come into town?

A. Yes. They marched through the town in columns, and we all stood, wondering. They seemed to be normal people marching through our town. Here and there, we heard different rumors that they grabbed Jews from the street. Jews with beards, the pious Jews, rabbis, were pulled aside, pulled by the beards and just for fun, the Nazis cut their beards and their earlocks [which were worn for religious reasons]. They desecrated religious articles, like prayer shawls and religious books and were having a good time doing these things.

Q. Did you witness any of these incidents?

A. Yes, I did. A Jewish man was going to synagogue in the morning and was carrying his prayer shawl in a bag. They opened it up and told him to put it on and dance with it. He took it out, and the German took out a large pair of tailor scissors and held the rabbi by the beard and cut his beard and his earlocks. A crowd of Poles was standing around and laughing their heads off. Just having fun. As the war broke out, Jews were forbidden to ride streetcars, to use any public transportation. We weren't even allowed after sundown to walk on the streets.

Q. How were you able or your family able to make a living?

A. Well, if we can call it a living. Everybody spent the last penny they had. Some resorted to some black marketeer, buying a bread by trading a ring, buying some potatoes. There was no outlook for the future. We didn't know how we were going to live in a week from today or in two weeks. We just took it day by day. We managed somehow.

It was illegal under the threat of death to take out some of the merchandise which, by decree, did not belong to us already. It belonged to the German authorities. My father had some relatives in a very small town, so he managed to go and bring some merchandise that we had left, because we thought that the war was not going to last too long. Maybe a month, two months, because, after all, the whole world was against Hitler. We never saw or heard from him again after he left, because Jews were not allowed to use the mail or write letters. We were cut off completely. Actually, we never knew what happened to him.

Q. How did you first learn that you had to live in a ghetto?

A. In September, the Nazis came into our hometown, and there was one decree after another stripping the Jews of all their rights. And then, we heard that a Jewish ghetto was to be established in a section called Bałuty. It was a slum section of Łódź. And those Jews who lived there were at home. The gentiles were ordered to move out, to find different places. And the Jews, we knew, would have to be moved in there. The gentiles took over the Jewish homes in the town, and the Jews had to move and take over the places in that slum area where the gentiles had lived.

Q. Did you live in that area before the ghetto?

A. Two weeks before the ghetto closed, the janitor and one German soldier came into our apartment. The janitor said in Polish that by order of the authority, we have to move out. So my mother said, "Where should we go?" And they said, "You know where you're supposed to go. The ghetto." And then my mother asked, "When should we leave?" And he said, "Right now." So, she said, "We have to start to pack. It will take us a little while." He said, "You don't pack anything. You go right now." He start screaming and hollering. He had a club in his hand, and he banged it on the table, so we were really scared. And again, he start screaming, "*Raus!*" That means out. "Out from here!" So we grabbed a few belongings, a few shirts. My mother even had a half a loaf of bread she packed. We went out into the street and walked towards the ghetto.

We came to the ghetto and, in a way, we were lucky because a distant cousin of my mother lived there all her life. So, we just went to her place. There was no way she could refuse. We were there, and we had no other place to go.

Q. Could you describe the living conditions there, the food, did you have electricity, water?

A. Water was not running water. There was a pump in every yard. We had to pump the water. And yes, there was electricity.

Q. About how many people were living in that area with you?

A. The first count that we heard was 175,000 Jews in one square mile.

Q. And in your apartment, how many people were living in there, and how many rooms did you have?

A. There was one room, but when we moved in, we took a curtain and divided that room. For our family, for example, I was sleeping with my brother in one bed, and my kid brother was sleeping on the floor on a mattress on that half of the room. And my mother and my sister also slept in one bed.

Q. Were you or your family able to go in and out of the ghetto at any time?

A. Up until May the first. That day, the ghetto was closed, surrounded by guards. Signs were posted all around the barbed wire, stating that anyone just coming near that wire will be shot.

Q. What rules or laws were established by the Nazis for the operation of the ghetto?

A. There was a Jewish council. The Nazis asked who was the oldest. So, a man by the name of Chaim Rumkowski said, "I am the oldest." The Nazis said, "From now on, you, the oldest of the Jews, will follow all the orders that we are going to issue for the Jewish people. Make sure they are followed to the letter. Otherwise, you are responsible." Chaim Rumkowski established like a mini-state. He had a Jewish police, a Jewish council, all kinds of departments. They started functioning like a state. They set up housing. They even printed money that was in circulation in the ghetto.

Q. Is that what you call the *Judenrat*?

A. The *Judenrat*, the Jewish council.

Q. Do you feel that the *Judenrat* helped the people?

A. Some have blamed the people in the *Judenrat*. But they don't actually understand. There was not much they could do to help, but some of them did abuse their power for their own advantage. I don't know if anybody in that position could have been different. If they had an order, for example, to send 2,000 men to labor outside the ghetto, they made sure that their families stayed behind. So they sent others. Who can blame them for that?

Q. Rumkowski was in charge of the Jewish police, also.

A. He was in charge of everything. Life in the ghetto.

Q. What did the Jewish police do?

A. The Jewish police were supposed to keep order. This was a situation where we lived next to starving. Portions of bread were stolen, sometimes even from one's own family. Then, it was a system of labor, to work. Factories were established in the ghetto, tailoring factories, shoemaking factories, carpentry, even components for metal -- God knows, probably for guns -- were manufactured in the ghetto.

Q. Did you or any members of your family work in these factories?

A. Of course. I worked in the tailor factory making uniforms for the German army. My sister worked in a factory where they made straw shoes. They were used by the German guards, standing guard in Eastern Europe. My mother worked at a place where they brought in coal and wood they distributed for fuel. My brother also had to work.

Q. How old was he at that time?

A. At that time, he was ten and a half years old. But if he wouldn't work, he could not get a card, so he worked as a courier in an office, just running errands.

Q. Were there any Jewish or non-Jewish organizations outside the ghetto that offered help?

A. In the case of the Łódź ghetto, there was no contact with the outside world. Other ghettos, I heard later on, did have contact. For example, if we knew that somebody was very sick and dying, we tried to do something for him. We got a collection together and from our meager portion of sugar, for example, everybody gave one spoon just to help that person.

There was an underground school for the few youngsters in the ghetto. We provided education. It was not allowed. There was a Zionist organization, also, underground. At one time, there was even a theater in the ghetto. Later on, it was closed.

Q. If anyone was caught participating in any of these activities, what happened to them?

A. The punishment at the time was to be sent away to a labor camp. We did not know at that early time about extermination camps. But the people who were sent away for any little thing -- and everything was considered a crime -- were never heard from again, ever.

- Q. Did you know of any resistance or underground organizations in the ghetto?
- A. I'm ashamed to say that in our town there were no resistance organizations. Not like in Warsaw or Vilna or Kraków or any other ghettos, or Lublin. The Łódź ghetto was clearly non-resisting.
- Q. There were no individual acts of resistance?
- A. Individual acts. That depends what one calls resistance. If one clung to his faith, I call it resistance. If one tried to help a sick person and helped him to survive, this is also resisting the Nazi pogrom. Armed resistance, I cannot recall.
- Q. How long was your family able to remain together in the ghetto?
- A. For four years. In 1944, in August, the larger ghetto was liquidated.
- Q. Were there any suicide attempts in the ghetto that you know of?
- A. Yes, there were a few. People who did that could not take it anymore, because hunger pains are the most horrible pains a human mind can imagine. It's very bad when you're hungry for a few hours and then, maybe, you're hungry for a day or two days, but when it gets longer, you feel like all the insides are coming to your head and are walking on your brain. We could not think about anything else day and night, no matter what the conversation was. You can talk about politics and all of a sudden you start talking about bread and potatoes. All your feelings, all your thinking is occupied with hunger, with your stomach.
- Q. What is your most powerful memory that you have of the ghetto experience?
- A. During the ghetto -- before the liquidation -- there was in 1942 what the Germans called an *Aktion*. Chaim Rumkowski held a speech. Everybody who could went to a huge place to hear what he had to say. He said, the most difficult, the most horrible thing he ever had to do in his whole life was to tell us to give up the children under a certain age and the older people above a certain age, to be sent away.
- Q. What age was that?
- A. Children under the age of twelve and the older over the age of 50 to be sent away to be resettled in a different place. Rumkowski said, "As you know, the fate of the rest of us depends on following that order from the German authorities." I'm telling you -- I wasn't a father at the time -- I was thinking about committing suicide at that time. I heard people say, "Where is God? How can he let such atrocities be committed? Such crimes? We remember, in Egypt, they took away our children but now? This is the twentieth century. We have to give up our children?" It didn't take long. The Jewish police started collecting people, and they started resisting. It looked like an open revolt against the Jewish police. People fought with them. They didn't want to give up their children. The German authorities saw it was going too slowly, so they took over the *Aktion* and started going from block to block, from house to house. They ordered us to come down to the yard, and they inspected us. People able to work, who were young and fairly good-looking were left. The other ones were taken away and thrown into coal wagons drawn by horses, and just taken away.

Q. Did you lose any of your family or friends during that *Aktion*?

A. Friends? Many of them. Neighbors. I hid my mother. A mother had a choice. She could give up her child and stay behind, or she could go with the child if she wanted to. The same thing with children. One of my cousins gave up a child, and they took it away. The next day, the family didn't watch her, she went back to that center where her child was waiting for transport, and she joined the baby. She went away with them. This was the most horrible time. We called that *Aktion, a Sperre*. It means confinement, like a curfew. We couldn't go out of the house. We had to stay under house arrest. There was no food. We had to eat whatever we had prepared in the house. And this took seven days. After seven days, it was over.

Q. Did you have any actual knowledge of what happened to those people who were taken? The children, the older people?

A. Well, you didn't have to be a wizard to figure out what will happen to those children, who were thrown into a wagon and taken away. Sick people. If they treated working people the way they treated us, how could we expect that they will treat children, or the sick, old, crippled, disabled any better? The mortality rate was tremendously high. Whole families used to die, especially in the winter months when there was very little fuel. People used to chop up all the furniture because, after all, we needed something to make a fire. Parts of buildings disappeared. And anybody caught taking a board of a house was a candidate to be sent away, because when the Germans sent in an order, five, six hundred, those people sitting in jail for any little thing were the first ones to be sent away. And this how the system worked in the ghetto.

Q. Let's talk now about your deportation from the ghetto.

A. We saw that this was the end because nobody was exempt. Even the police, fire department, all the big shots, they were also ordered to report. It came even the time when the oldest of the *Judenrat* was ordered also to leave and to report to the train depots for resettlement.

Q. Tell me about the day that you left the ghetto.

A. Well, it was, at that time, when my mother said, "I can not run anymore." Actually, there was no more strength for anybody to run, and there were no more places to hide. They knew every hiding place. So, we said we have no other choice. After all, if the Germans wanted to kill us, they would kill us right there. Why would they bring trains? Maybe there is hope, maybe there is a place where Jews live in a different part, farther away. So we went, under guard, of course, to the train depots.

Gertrude Waichman was born on November 14, 1916 in Czestochowa, Poland and was forced to live in the Czestochowa ghetto from 1940 to 1941. She was then sent to Blizin concentration camp, to Auschwitz, and to Bergen-Belsen, where she was liberated in April, 1945.

Q. How did you learn that you had to live in a ghetto?

A. First of all, we had two ghettos, the large ghetto and the small ghetto. A lot of people lived in the large ghetto from 1939 until about 1942. In 1942, they started to send people out to different camps.

Q. What was the name of this ghetto?

A. Czestochowa, my hometown. In Poland.

Q. What were your feelings when you entered that first ghetto?

A. We were scared all the time. They used to come in the houses every few days, and they checked this and that. They took out the men from the apartments to work.

Q. How long did you stay in the first ghetto?

A. Until September '42, on Yom Kippur evening. The police were around our big ghetto, and then they took us out. Everybody had to go to the marketplace. The SS, the police, and everybody were there. There was one commander who looked over everything. They checked the houses, and if people were too sick to leave, or if children couldn't go out, or if somebody didn't want to go out, they killed them right away. And then they segregated people.

They sent them left, right, left, right. When I passed by, I had a little baby, six months old. Before we went out from the house, I said to my husband, "Remember, you go and fight, fight for your life, do whatever you can. I will go with my baby." My mother-in-law was with us. My husband said, "I am going where you are going, where the baby's going. We are a family, we're supposed to go together." So, as we went down and we were close to the police. My mother-in-law said to me, "Gutka, give me the baby." [crying]

She said, "Let me hold her and kiss her one last time." So, she took the baby [sobbing], and she didn't want to give the baby back to me. She wanted to save the life of her son, because he had said that he was going with the baby and me. They sent me right away, "You go right," and my husband also went to the right. And my mother-in-law with the baby [sobbing] went to the left, and I never saw them again.

Q. But that's how you were saved.

A. Yes. After that, they sent us to the small ghetto, wherever there was room.

Q. What were the conditions there? Food, water, electricity, and sanitation?

- A. Oh, they were terrible, worse than the large ghetto. We had ten, twelve people in one room, strangers. There were no more children, because they had been sent out with the older people. Just young people were left. We went to work for the Germans, and we had rations. They gave us only so much bread. That's all. It was very bad.
- Q. And was there a lot of illness?
- A. Yes, the conditions were very bad.
- Q. Were you able to get in and out of the ghetto?
- A. No. We were not allowed to cross over to the outside. People weren't allowed to have any business. They just went to work. The small ghetto was very bad. We still could move around from one street to another. But there were very few streets all together, and people were crowded together.
- Q. How did the Jewish community organize to help itself in the ghetto?
- A. The Nazis ordered the Jews to form a Jewish committee, the *Judenrat*.
- Q. Well, what did the *Judenrat* actually do for you in the ghetto?
- A. They served the Germans, who told the Jews that they need to deliver so many people to go to work at certain places. They were in charge. When we were in the small ghetto and went to work, we walked with police. The Poles came and sold us bread. One time, we bought the bread. The SS commander saw us buying the bread. Right away, they took the whole bunch of us, and they sent us out to a camp, to Blizin.
- Q. Before you went to Blizin, did you hear about the liquidation of the ghetto?
- A. Only after I left. A few months later, they liquidated the ghetto. The main thing was that they wanted all the educated people, doctors and the engineers and lawyers. First of all, they concentrated them, and then they killed them.

Esther Gastwirth, née Dykman, was born on December 27, 1923 in Vilna, Poland. Starting in 1941, she spent one and a half years in the Vilna ghetto and was sent to a concentration camp near Riga, Latvia, in 1943.

Q. In 1941, when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, you were still living in Vilna, and you were still living in your own home. Is that correct?

A. Right.

Q. What happened? Can you tell me the experience of the Nazis coming into Vilna?

A. Right away when they came in, naturally, we were very frightened. And the streets were flooded with tanks and soldiers. The Polish people right away picked up their heads, everybody was against the Jews. And right away, came all kinds of restrictions. We couldn't walk anymore on the sidewalk. We had to put on the yellow *lattes*, [patches, yellow stars] in back and in front. We had to walk together with the horses, not with the people. We were restricted when we could walk and where we could walk. We couldn't walk in certain places or on certain streets. Just about a week or two after they came in, they came into our house. Three young, blue-eyed Germans.

Q. SS [elite guard of the Nazi party] or soldiers?

A. SS, I think. And they were looking around, and they were knocking on walls, I remember. They started taking our silverware and a very large radio. It looked to me like they were going out already. Then they turned around and asked my father to pick up the radio. "You're not allowed to have the big radio. Come to the police station. Didn't you hear that you had to bring the radio to the police station?" So my father took the radio. And I remember I ran out on the step, and I started yelling, "When are you coming back?" And the soldiers said, "Well, maybe he'll go to work for a couple of days." We never saw him again.

We went to the police station, and the Polish people said, "You'd better go home, because they don't bring the Jewish people here. We don't know what they are doing with them. If you stay here, you'll have to be arrested, too, so you'd better go home." Then I found out that they took 90 prominent Jewish people from Vilna. I had no idea. All I thought was that they were taking people to work. They were working mostly on the station near trains, unloading things, or they were taking them somewhere else to work.

One morning, it must have been around five o'clock, a young Christian boy came to our door. He had fish in his hands. He said, "I brought you some fish. And I want to tell you that I saw Mr. Dykman, and my mother sent me. We saw Mr. Dykman walking towards Ponar." This was where they were shooting all the Jewish people. He told me, "We followed, and we hid ourselves, and we were watching. They shot your father." When I heard this, I banged the door in front of him. I couldn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it. And I thought that maybe the Polish people were coming to torture us, and we really didn't believe it. It seemed impossible to us that a thing like this should happen, that they should just take people and shoot for nothing? They didn't do anything. So, this is the way they started taking people out.

They were building walls around us. They made this certain little street the ghetto. As a matter of fact, they had two ghettos. They made a little ghetto and a big ghetto. So, after, they pushed us into the streets with our bundles. My house was full of people, but we managed to go into that little room. It was mine and my sister's room which had a hiding place. We managed to occupy this room.

And as a youngster, I remember I was fifteen years old when I started going out in the street. You know, at that time we felt quite safe, because there were only Jews in the streets. I walked the streets to see where the walls were. I wanted to acquaint myself with the ghetto. We found out very fast that we were not safe at all.

At that time, they formed the *Judenrat*, and by us the head of the *Judenrat* was a Lithuanian major who was Jewish himself but married to a Christian woman. The *Judenrat* already had formed some kind of a government. And we had our police, and my friends from school were policemen. They were seventeen years, eighteen.

In the beginning, every week, the Nazis used to come to the ghetto in the middle of the night. They came in with dogs, and we used to hear shouting, lamenting. They used to call it an *Aktion*. And they used to pull out people. People in the ghetto were, like in the beginning, like 50 families, maybe, in one apartment.

There were groups of people taken out to work who were given rations. And we had our own bakeries. The people who didn't go to work were standing on lines to get their rations of bread.

Q. Did you work?

A. I worked. We were always surrounded with soldiers with guns. And we marched for miles and miles until we were brought to where we worked. So I used to wash clothes, the Germans' underwear, their clothes. We used to go in a barn and do this kind of work, or clean the barracks or carry stones, or carry things out from the wagons. And later on, they had organized electricians. They needed electricians, so they made their own house for the electricians outside the ghetto. And they wanted furriers. The Germans wanted fur coats for their wives. They took these workers outside the ghetto, but they were guarded. And after this, they were killed mercilessly.

Q. Did you understand the value of the work permit? And working with the Germans?

A. That meant life.

Q. You understood that at the time?

A. Certainly.

Q. That you wouldn't be taken away?

A. There was no guarantee. Because after a while, we had a night of yelling and screaming, and they took everybody out from the little ghetto. So, there was no more little ghetto.

In the evening after work, I used to gather on steps somewhere high up. There was a spot

where teenagers always liked to go, in one place, and we would sit and look up at the moon and talk about it. Sometimes, someone from the underground, or someone from a different ghetto, or someone with information about what was going on would come. And the young boys were making guns, and they used to bring in pieces of things, metal, and they used to dream only about how to go to the underground.

And I want to tell you also that when we used to work, we were able to bring in some food into the ghetto. We used to hide the food, sometimes under our arms. Our overcoats were always bigger.

There were thieves in the ghetto. People from the underground told us about a doctor whose family made a deal for themselves with the *shtarker* [the strong ones] to be smuggled out of the ghetto for gold or jewelry or something by digging a tunnel. They were murdered. Now these people, these murderers, were from the police. They were judged, and they were hanged.

Q. By the Jewish police?

A. By the Jewish police. That was our own court, our own punishment, our own way.

Q. But these thieves were Jewish?

A. Jewish, yes. And they were hanged, I remember. Naturally, there were all kinds of people.

At one point, we had to go into the *Judenrat*, which had a little gate like a little garden. In this little place we were packed in, and I was standing there with my little sister and my stepmother. The Germans were riding in and pulling people out of the garden. I saw it, and I was covering my little sister's eyes. I tried to protect her, so she shouldn't see what was going on.

People were shot in the streets. The Germans enjoyed themselves in the most brutal ways. They took the Jewish police once, and my friends told me that they went to Ponar where they had killed people. They had to clean up the place and undress the dead people, because they wanted their clothes and their gold.

In the ghetto, the garbage was taken out along with the dead people. Among the dead people and under the garbage, the young people tried to leave the ghetto to run to the underground. We had gotten information that there were big jungles, the Polish forests. And over there, we had to have guns. So, the people were building guns. The Jewish young people, all my friends.

Q. Were there any Jewish or non-Jewish organizations outside the ghetto that ever offered help?

A. I didn't know anything about it. The only time I remember any contact is when we heard about what happened in the Warsaw ghetto. Somebody came from the outside. We were called into a small room -- all the young people -- and we said that we were going to fight. And he was telling us what happened actually in the Warsaw ghetto, and he said, "You know, this is your last hour. You should consider that. Before this, we are going to revenge." That was toward the end already. So we were preparing ourselves. But nothing came from

our efforts. We wanted to fight, but the eldest of the *Judenrat* or maybe the rabbis didn't want to have all the Jews in Vilna slaughtered. Maybe this way we'd have a better chance. So, they spoke to the soldiers who were outside, and they told them, "Look. We are going to fight. We have weapons. And you are going to be the first ones to die. And you have one chance to survive. We have a group of people with guns. You have to let them out." A group of young people went into the underground, just before they liquidated the ghetto.

- Q. Were you in contact with some underground organizations within the ghetto?
- A. Very loosely. I knew the people. The only time I was at a meeting was maybe a week before they liquidated the ghetto. There were rumors already that they were going to liquidate the ghetto.
- Q. Were you aware of any individual acts of resistance or defiance? I know survival itself is defiance and resistance, but did you experience or participate in or see any of those kinds of instances?
- A. If I would have participated, I would not be sitting here and talking to you. Whenever I saw people running away or doing things, they were shot after that. If they tried to run away, they were caught. I personally did not see anybody get away with anything.

Julius Eisenstein was born on August 15, 1921 in Miechów, Poland. He was sent to the Kraków ghetto in 1941 and to the Płaszów concentration camp in 1942, where he remained until May 1944. He was then sent to Flossenburg, Schachwitz munition factory, and Theresienstadt.

Q. Let's talk about when the Nazis, when Hitler, invaded Poland.

A. September 1, 1939. They came into Kraków. Kraków was declared an open city, because it was a very historical city.

Q. Who declared it an open city?

A. I suppose the Polish government.

Q. What did that mean that it was an open city?

A. That they shouldn't bomb it. They gave in. They surrendered. The Germans just came in one day, the first of September 1939, and from that time on, for us Jews it was a terrible thing. If we walked out of the house, we were grabbed, and they used to take us to all kinds of work.

Q. When did they establish a ghetto in Kraków?

A. They started the first ghetto in 1941.

Q. When they invaded Kraków, what happened? How did that change your life?

A. About a month or two later, we had to wear those armbands, the Jewish star.

Q. What color was the armband?

A. It was white with the black thing or a yellow star.

Q. Were there any specific laws or rules that were set up for the Jews at that time, before you were moved into the ghetto, about what you could do and couldn't do?

A. There were places where we couldn't go. There were places that we had to report to go to work, and if we didn't go and if they found us, we were beaten and thrown in jail or whatever.

Q. Did your father still run his delicatessen after the Germans came in?

A. Right after they came in, he couldn't go to work anymore. There were some Polish people who took over the business.

Q. Were they people who had worked for him before?

A. They didn't work for him, but they knew us. They saw that my father didn't open up the store, so they opened it up, and they just took it away. They didn't pay anything for it. He

was afraid to go out, because he had a beard. They were grabbing any Jew they saw with a beard. They used to take a match, put it to the beard, and light the beard. So he stayed home. He stayed like this for a few months, and then he decided to move back to Miechów, where I was born.

Q. Now the whole family moved back to Miechów?

A. The whole family, except my oldest sister. She was married, and she had a little baby, about a year old.

Q. So she remained in Kraków?

A. She remained in Kraków in the ghetto.

Q. Were you were living in a ghetto when your father decided to move?

A. It was just before the ghetto started, so we hadn't yet moved in. We just left, and we moved to Miechów.

Q. So you never lived in the Kraków ghetto?

A. But I used to come to see my sister. So I used to know a lot about it.

Q. Were you able to come back, visit her, go into the ghetto, and leave?

A. Yes, at the beginning we used to go in. We used to be able to go in and say hello, and just spend a day or two, and then we used to go back. I used to take off the armband and pretend I was a gentile. That's how I used to do it.

Q. And you were able to enter the ghetto that way?

A. That's right, otherwise as a Jew, you couldn't go in. They wouldn't let you out. They wouldn't let you in.

Q. Now when did you move back to Miechów? Do you remember approximately when that was?

A. That must have been by the end of 1940 or so.

Q. Was there a ghetto in Miechów?

A. They made a ghetto in Miechów. It was after we came there. They closed it up, and they made it like a ghetto.

Q. Can you tell me what the living conditions were like in the ghetto? Did things begin to change right away?

A. Of course, we were restricted. We couldn't go anyplace. There was no work for us. The Germans used to come in, and they used to make an appeal. We used to go out, and they would take twenty or thirty young Jews out on a truck. They took us to a field somewhere

to dig ditches, and for a while this was like our job. In the evening, they used to bring us back to the ghetto. The next day in the morning, we were afraid they knew where we lived. So, we had to report everyday to go to work with them.

Q. Tell me about living conditions in the ghetto. Was there food? Was there a good supply of food?

A. It wasn't that bad yet, compared to what we had later. So it wasn't too much, but we had enough food.

Q. Were your father and your uncle able to keep their business open?

A. They were doing business with the ghetto people, not outside.

Q. And the Jews, did the Jewish people have money to buy food from them?

A. They had different businesses, and between themselves, they used to make business [barter]. That's how they were, all the Jews together like this, and some of them were going out also. They used to take us out to dig ditches.

Q. When did things in the ghetto begin to change?

A. They began to change towards the end when they started to take the people out and made selections and sent them out to concentrations camps. That's the time in 1942, when they started to set up concentration camps. Up to that point, where we used to live in our section, Kraków, Miechów, and all these other small cities, there were no concentration camps yet, except labor camps. They used to take us out to go to work. So instead of going to work in Miechów, they took us to Kraków, which was only 40 kilometers away. They used to take us to a brick factory.

Q. Near Kraków?

A. It was a suburb of Kraków. They took about 50 boys my age, about 18, 19, 20 years old. They took us to that place, and we stayed there for a whole week. We used to work over there, but then something happened. I don't know what. They decided that maybe they didn't have enough supervision for us or something. They took us back to Miechów, but they used to take people out to work, and that's how we could bring in some money from the outside.

Q. What about the women? Were they taken out to work, too?

A. Some women were taken out to work, too, but mostly they were confined to the houses.

Q. Were there any Poles, non-Jewish people, who tried to help any of you that you can recall?

A. None.

Q. Let's talk about the activities that went on inside the ghetto. Were there any religious activities?

- A. There was no problem in the ghetto, but every once in a while, Saturday morning, some German soldiers came into the synagogue, and they took everybody out to do work.
- Q. Were there any educational activities in the ghetto? Were there any schools? Did the Jewish people try to establish any schools?
- A. In the beginning, there were some Jewish girls who used to teach the younger kids.
- Q. Were these just held in someone's apartment or was there an actual school?
- A. Well, sometimes they met in the synagogue, or there was a special place that they used to congregate.
- Q. Do you know of any resistance or underground activities in the ghetto?
- A. We heard that some were trying to resist. Like I remember when I used to visit my sister, some of my friends went to a nightclub, and the nightclub blew up over there in Kraków. The next day, it was in the papers that the Jews planted a bomb over there.
- Q. Was that true or was that propaganda?
- A. I don't know if it was true. After that, we followed it up. If they arrested somebody or something, they used to come into the ghetto to find out about it, but eventually it quieted down.
- Q. Were you aware of any individual acts of resistance or defiance within your ghetto?
- A. Well it was like a silent defiance.
- Q. How long was your family able to remain together?
- A. My sisters, my brother, my father, and my mother were all together until about the middle of 1942.
- Q. And then what happened?
- A. Then they came in and they said, "We are liquidating the ghetto." All the people who were living in the ghetto had to go out to a big field. There were a few thousand people there together from different small cities.

They separated us, the young people, especially the men on one side, and the women and the older people on the other side. And then we stayed there in this field maybe for two days, maybe more. We had no health facilities. We didn't have anywhere to go to the bathroom, nothing, just standing there. We were standing still together and then the last day, they started to separate us. One or two days later, we saw a lot of trains coming in. When the trains came in, they asked us to get on the train. One side was for the older people, and the other side was for the young ones. There were two types of trains, one open and one closed. The open one was for the young men. There were maybe 100 in a wagon. There were, I would say, maybe 20 wagons or so for the young people. And the older people and the women, they chased into these closed boxes. That's the last time I saw my father, my mother, and three of my sisters. One sister was still in Kraków.

Q. Did you have any idea what was happening?

A. No, not yet.

Q. When did you find out where your parents had gone, where your family had gone?

A. I didn't, I never found out. They were killed. Nobody survived.

Q. Did they take you to the ghetto in Kraków?

A. No, they took us right away to a concentration camp. It was called Kraków-Plaszów. It was a suburb of Kraków and when we came in, at least 10,000 people were there already with barbed wire all around, electric wire. Each 100 or 150 feet, there was a guard tower with a machine gun on top.

Q. Like a tower of some sort?

A. A tower, a machine gun on top, with a soldier shooting over there and watching the concentration camp.

Q. You said there were already 10,000 people in the camp.

A. Right.

Q. Were they all Jews or were there other people, too?

A. There were no gentile people, only Jews in that concentration camp.

Q. What did you see when you first got off the train?

A. They took us down from these wagons, and we marched up. We saw a lot of people who were very skinny. We had just come in from the ghetto, so we still weren't suffering from hunger as much as they were, and that was the first thing that we saw there. It was very bad. People were looking at us and crying and telling us how bad it was.

Q. Were you numbered?

A. Not yet. They didn't make numbers in that concentration camp. They tattooed a "KL," *Konzentrationslager* [concentration camp] on our arms. With the tattoos, there was a story. Naturally, I met a lot of people who had come together with me from Miechów. So, we saw already that the situation wasn't good. We didn't have our parents anymore. We were all by ourselves, me and my brother, and a few of my friends. So we said, "Let's try and run away." There was a forest. "Maybe we can meet partisans over there. Let's go." We saw that we couldn't last long there in the camp. When they made the tattoos, they let us out. So, we walked over, and we sucked out the ink from the tattoo, so it shouldn't be there in case we ran away.

Q. How did you get the ink out?

A. We put our mouth to it. We sucked out the ink.

Q. And you were able to suck it out?

A. We were able to do it, yes, right away. My brother and a few other people did the same thing. We decided that we were going to try to run away. One fellow, my friend, went out and, he did run away. He hid. The guards had been watching the prisoners, but while he was going in and out of the building, he remained over there, and then he slipped away.

Q. Did they find him?

A. No. He was able to escape. Fifty people came in, and they counted them up. There were supposed to be 50, but there were only 49. They took all these 49 people up on the hill, and they shot them with a machine gun.

Q. All of them?

A. Every one of them. And we found out what happened. So we decided not to run away, because if we did run away, other people would be killed. And when they liquidated the Kraków ghetto, they shot all the old people, whoever remained there. The young men were brought to this concentration camp.

Q. No young women?

A. No. They liquidated the ghetto and they just shot most of the people.

Q. They didn't deport them to other camps?

A. No. They just shot them in the ghetto, and they told us to dig graves. So we dug a grave about 20 feet wide and about maybe 80 or 100 long and about maybe 10 feet deep. We didn't know what it was. We thought that they were going to kill us all from the concentration camp. Then about a few hours later, after we already had dug this, trucks started to come up there. The trucks had dead bodies in them, and the blood was coming out from the trucks. Even with horses and buggies, they were coming in with the bodies. We used to take them down and throw them in the grave. One of the bodies I picked up was my grandmother. I felt like she was still alive. They always shot these people in the head. She just was thrown into the grave and then one layer was laying down already. So we put a little earth on top and then put the other people, because there were a lot of dead people, dead bodies. And that was the finish of the Kraków ghetto.

This excerpt is adapted from the original testimony of Julius Eisenstein which is part of the Oral History Collection of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

Arno Erban was born on March 20, 1922 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Forced into the fortress of Terezín, or Theresienstadt ghetto in January 1942, he was a teacher of boys under the age of 15 there. In 1944, he was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and on to Gleiwitz I and Jaworzno, where he was liberated by the Russians.

During World War II, the Nazis expelled about 140,000 Jews, mostly from the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, but also from central and western Europe, to the ghetto of Terezín. The idea of building a ghetto within the walls of Terezín was made effective in November 1941. At that time, Czechoslovakia was already in the hands of Germany, and there were no longer Czech soldiers in Terezín. So, the first transports of Jews started soon after the German decision to convert Terezín into a ghetto. In the first few months, the Jews were installed in barracks. Men and boys together, and women, girls, and little children in different barracks. There was no possibility of any kind of communication between the barracks. Later, the Germans evacuated the civil population to make a place for new transports of Jews. After that, they sealed the ghetto completely, without any possibility for the prisoners to escape.

Following the first transport of Jews from Prague on November 24, 1941, the Council of Elders was formed. This council ran the internal affairs of the ghetto and was responsible to the SS Commando, which gave them the orders and established the rules. The Jewish Council had the terrible task of compiling the lists of those to be deported to “the east.” Nobody really knew what the meaning of the “the east” was. The only thing we did know was that it was something really bad. The Jewish government was also responsible for all the activities in the ghetto, like maintaining order, distribution of food, employment of the people, sanitation, and the child care. Shortly before the end of the war, all members of the Council were sent to Auschwitz and murdered.

Of all the big lies conceived by the Nazi propaganda, the qualification of the Terezín ghetto as a paradise ranks as one of the greatest. It said in effect, “While the German soldiers are dying in the battlefields, the Jews in Terezín are sitting in cafes and eating cakes.” The truth could not have been more different. From November 1941 until May 1945, it was “the anteroom of hell.” From approximately 150,000 people who were deported to Terezín, 35,000 died there from starvation and almost 90,000 were shipped out to the death camps. Through Terezín passed 74,000 Czech Jews, 43,000 from Germany, 15,000 from Austria, 5,000 from Holland, and some 500 from Denmark. In the last period of the war, the camp received 1,500 Slovaks and 1,000 Hungarian Jews. Of the 15,000 children under the age of 15 who passed through Terezín, only 100 survived.

In a place with a garrison of about 3,500 soldiers and about the same number of civil inhabitants, the Germans established a ghetto with 50,000 people. Prisoners lived in large barracks and houses in town including cellars and backyards. Men and women continued to live separately in large buildings. Children under the age of 15 had their so-called “homes.” There were about 10 to 20 people squeezed in one room, most of the time sleeping on the floor. Prisoners at Terezín had to observe a number of various prohibitions which affected them very much. There was a ban on the possession of cigarettes, medicines, money, matches, or lighters, prohibition to any kind of communication with the outside world, and also a curfew was imposed. Punishment for violation of these regulations was severe. For instance, early in 1942, the Nazis hanged 16

men who had secretly sent letters from the camp. The objective of these executions was to intimidate the other prisoners. After that, the offenders were sent to Little Fortress, where they were killed.

Yet, among the hunger, cruelty, and death, the inhabitants of the ghetto preserved their essential humanity, and artists continued to paint, singers to sing, and poets to write, while a cruel fate struck all who died or were deported. The deportation to Auschwitz was an everyday possibility, and we never knew when it would be our turn.

The children in Terezín were quite creative. They wrote poems, and they produced a lot of good drawings and paintings. Some of these artifacts survived the war and are shown around the world. The Terezín motto to survive and to demonstrate that the Germans could beat us but they could not subdue us was "I live as long as I create and I am able to absorb culture." That was our cultural resistance. As a member of the Czech resistance movement, I was practicing with the boys some paramilitary exercises for an armed revolution in the ghetto. Unfortunately, the transports to Auschwitz made our plans impossible.

UNIT 6

THE FINAL SOLUTION

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UNIT 6

THE FINAL SOLUTION

*"I do not know how many Einsteins, how many Freuds,
have been destroyed in the furnaces of Auschwitz and Majdanek.
But there is one thing I know: if we can prevent it,
it will never happen again."*

Chaim Weizmann (1874 - 1952)
First President of the State of Israel

INTRODUCTION

From early in Hitler's political career, he openly stated that the only answer to the "Jewish question" must be their removal. In later speeches and writings, he expressed the idea of removal in terms of exclusion or expulsion. Exclusion was generally described as methods which would legally deprive the Jews of all privileges including that of citizenship. The idea of expulsion was considered in a variety of plans, including the possibility of sending all Jews to Madagascar, an island colony off the coast of Africa. Periodically, however, between discussions for exclusion and expulsion, direct references were given to the idea of destroying them for the sake of Germany's health.

In the wake of *Kristallnacht* (November 9th and 10th, 1938), Hitler demanded that a coordinated effort be made to solve the Jewish question "one way or another."¹ When no countries intervened on behalf of those being persecuted, Nazi policies became more threatening, and Hitler openly vowed that if war broke out, it would mean the "annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."

After Poland was invaded, the "Jewish question" took on a new urgency as *Lebensraum* (living space) was needed for the expanding *Reich*. With the prospect of Russia defeated and all of Europe under the German boot, plans evolved for a massive reorganization of Polish territory. Accordingly, it was determined that all Poles and Jews be expelled and their land given over to ethnic Germans. However, the idea of moving out all Poles was eventually discarded and plans to relocate the Jews to other territories never materialized.

At some indeterminate date, but at least by 1941, mass murder had become the goal of Nazi Jewish policy. Prior killings of whole groups of people had included Germans who were considered mentally or physically expendable. By 1941 it was already decided that Poland, as a nation, would be obliterated through the killing of all her intelligentsia. Mass murder, as a way to solve problems, had become routine. By the time Germany invaded Russia, a special murder corps had been trained and developed. But this murder corps, the *Einsatzgruppen*, which followed the army and slaughtered tens of thousands of Jews and other "racial" or ideological enemies, did not prove

satisfactory. Using *Einsatzgruppen* depended on consent of the army they followed and strong collaboration from the locals. Neither was always cooperative.

When, exactly, specific instructions were given to bring about the "Final Solution" is not known. What is known is that with the lethal methods devised from patterns of previous killings, the way was now clear to develop something entirely new. Specially trained SS, like those in the *Einsatzgruppen* would be used; gas, like that used in the trucks to kill those murdered in Eastern Europe, would be employed; railway lines already in place from earlier deportations would be the vehicles of transportation, and all of this would be centered on places especially developed to murder the Jews of Europe and all other "undesirables."

The final vision was for the enslavement of the Slavic peoples and a world *Judenfrei* (free of Jews) and a world free of all others considered unfit to live. Those who had not already been killed previously would be annihilated in the concentration camps.

To serve the "Final Solution," a network of camps, which had begun as soon as Hitler had taken power, spread during the war like a web of horror and desecration across the mutilated face of Europe. Although initially designed as prison sites for enemies of the *Reich*, the role of the camps now changed for the darker purpose of hiding the most barbaric crime Western Civilization would ever know -- mass annihilation. Moreover, a special force of trained killers had also been developed at the German "euthanasia" institutions, and they took their expertise with them when they were transferred to serve in the newly created killing centers in Poland (Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka). The Nazi concentration camp would forever be burned into the human conscience as the eternal monument to hell on earth.

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the VOCABULARY.
2. Explain how the Nazi "killing center" was different from all other types of concentration camps.
3. Identify and locate on a map of Poland the six major death camps (the four killing centers and the two labor/killing complexes) operated by the Nazis.
4. Describe the basic conditions of the concentration camps including how people were processed into the camp system.
5. Discuss the extent to which modern science and technology have developed more effective means of mass extermination since 1945.

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Appell: Daily roll call and head count in the camps; grueling punishment.

"Arbeit Macht Frei" ("Work will set you free"): This phrase was posted over the entrances to many concentration camps, notably Auschwitz. It was intended to mislead incoming prisoners and was in reality a cruel hoax.

Concentration camps: The notorious prisons designed for labor, torture, and murder, set up by the Nazis throughout the German *Reich*, Europe, and North Africa. At first used for political prisoners, many later held large numbers of different groups of prisoners (Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, the political resisters, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) from numerous countries. The camps were centers of death where prisoners died by murder, gassing, torture, "medical" experimentation, overwork, disease, and hunger. The largest and possibly most infamous was Auschwitz where more people were interned than at any other prison site. While there were thousands of concentration camps, some of the better known ones were: Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, Flossenbürg, Neuengamme, Gross-Rosen, Majdanek, Natzweiler, Mauthausen, Stutthof, Dora/Nordhausen, and Bergen-Belsen. Six concentration camps were developed and organized specifically and solely as killing centers: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz/Birkenau, and Majdanek. The last two also served as slave labor camps. A wide variety of prisoners were interned and killed in the Nazi camps, the largest groups being the Jews, Gypsies, Soviet prisoners of war, and Slavs. In addition to these, an untold number of other Nazi "undesirables" were held in these camps and killed. However, the Jews were overwhelmingly the largest single group to be imprisoned in these camps and murdered there. All of the concentration camps were centers of forced labor and death.

Crematorium: A furnace used to dispose of bodies.

Death Camps: Historians usually reserve the term "death camps" for those Nazi concentration camps set up for killing: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Included in this classification, because of the massive scope of the killing which took place, are two labor/killing complexes: Auschwitz/Birkenau and Majdanek. There was systematic murder by gassing at each of these six camps.

Death Marches: Forced marches of concentration camp inmates (usually Jews). Although these marches began as early as 1941, the greatest number occurred during the winter of 1944-1945. At this time, the Allied forces were closing in on the Nazi concentration camps from both the eastern and western fronts, and the SS officials forced the inmates to march from the camps westward toward the heartland of Germany. The Nazi officials did not want eyewitnesses remaining in the camps when they were liberated, and attempts were made to conceal the crimes by destroying the evidence.

Einsatzgruppen (Task Forces or Action Groups): Task force of mobile killing units operating in German-occupied territories; responsible for the majority of people annihilated outside concentration camps in Eastern Europe.

Final Solution: The term used as a coverword for the extermination of the Jews. The first official record of this decision is a *Führer* order which was transmitted to the High Command (from Hitler to Göring) on March 31, 1941: "TO KILL JEWS AND SOVIET COMMISSARS." Göring then notified Heydrich on July 31, 1941 "to make all necessary preparations...for bringing about a complete

solution to the Jewish problem." The use of the word "problem" served as a reminder to use code words, an idea which was quickly adopted to refer to all stages of the Final Solution. The plan was expanded and logistics were finalized at the Wannsee Conference in 1942.

Intelligentsia: The intellectual class within a society.

Judenfrei (free of Jews): Nazi term for the absence of Jews in a given area as a result of deportation and extermination operations.

Kapos: Concentration camp prisoners in charge of supervising a group of prisoners or a work detail.

Labor camps: Prisoner labor was used to build and maintain the camps themselves. Prisoners also worked on a mass scale in the construction materials industry as well as light industry such as uniform factories. Through an arrangement made by the SS with Minister of Armaments, Albert Speer, in 1942, concentration camp prisoners were forced to work in various factories and companies in need of power, primarily in the armaments industry. Those prisoners most often lived and worked under the harshest conditions. Many were housed in concentration camps but went to work in the satellite camps surrounding them.

Lebensraum (living space): Principle of Nazi ideology and foreign policy expressed in the drive for the conquest of territories, mainly in the east.

Musulman (also: Muselmann): Concentration camp term for an inmate on the verge of death from starvation and exhaustion and who had given up the will to live.

Non-Aggression Pact (also called the Nazi-Soviet Pact): Poland was divided between Germany and the Soviet Union on September 28, 1939 after Germany had invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.

"Protective Custody": A Nazi euphemism to designate the reason for an arrest; "protective custody" particularly was used to apply to those opposed to the Nazis who did not meet the generally accepted "legal" grounds for arrest.

Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA): Central Office of *Reich* Security.

"Selection": Nazi euphemism for choosing ghetto residents and concentration camp inmates for life or death; "selections" were also made periodically throughout the camp.

Sonderkommando (Special Squad): SS or *Einsatzgruppe* detachment; also refers to special units in the death camps who removed bodies of those gassed and transported them to the ovens where they were burned. *Sonderkommandos* also had to extract gold teeth and remove rings from the bodies; possessions of the dead were sorted in the "Canada" area. Gold, jewelry, and possessions of the deceased (including glasses, artificial limbs, hair, and other body parts deemed "useful") were sent to Germany. The *Sonderkommandos* were replaced every few months and killed.

Transit camp: This type of camp contained people who had been rounded up to be transferred to forced labor camps and death camps. Individuals from western and southern Europe were concentrated mainly in camps such as Drancy in France, Westerbork in Holland, Breendonck in Belgium, and Fossoli and Bolzano in northern Italy. Poles were concentrated in a total of thirteen transit camps, the largest being Pruszków, near Warsaw.

Umschlagplatz: A point of reshipment in Warsaw where freight trains were loaded and unloaded; during the deportations from the Warsaw ghetto, it was used as an assembly point where Jews were loaded onto cattle cars to be taken to Treblinka.

Untermensch: A German word for subhuman; a term used by the Nazis to describe "non-Aryans" such as Jews, Slavs, or non-Caucasians.

Wannsee Conference: Nazi conference held January 20, 1942 where the logistics of mass deportation were decided to implement the Final Solution.

Zyklon B: A deadly, poisonous gas produced from acid crystals used in the gas chambers to kill inmates in the camps.

NAMES AND PLACES

Auschwitz: A Nazi labor/killing complex located in southwestern Poland which incorporated 40 smaller camps in the region. The Auschwitz complex included three camps. Auschwitz I -- known as the "mother camp" -- was a concentration camp mainly for prisoners. Auschwitz II/Birkenau -- near the village of Brzezinka -- was a killing center where between 1.1 and 1.3 million Jews were murdered. Auschwitz III/Buna was a slave labor camp assigned to the I.G. Farben-Werke chemical factories in the neighboring town of Monowitz.

Babi Yar: The site of mass executions of Jews located outside Kiev, Soviet Union.

Eichmann, Adolf: Coordinated the deportation of Jews from their homes in German-occupied Europe to ghettos, concentration, and death camps in Eastern Europe. He headed Department IVB4 of *REICHSSICHERHEITSHAUPTAMT (Referat Juden)* and as such was the engineer of the "Final Solution." Eichmann was captured by Israeli agents on May 11, 1959 in Argentina where he had been living. After a lengthy trial in Israel, he was convicted and executed on May 31, 1962.

Heydrich, Reinhard: As Chief of RSHA, Heydrich was entrusted in 1941 with implementing the "Final Solution" of the Jewish question. He presided over the conference at Wannsee in Berlin in January 20, 1942. Czech partisans assassinated Heydrich in Prague in 1942. As a result, the entire village of Lidice was destroyed, and nearly all of its citizens were killed.

Mengele, Dr. Josef: SS physician at Auschwitz who selected prisoners for death and conducted perverse medical experiments on concentration camp inmates.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

THE FINAL SOLUTION

From the inception of the war in 1939, Hitler intended to elevate Germany to the dominant power in Europe. In his book *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) written while in prison in 1923, he envisioned an army of slave laborers who would be recruited from the Slavic nations. However, even more insidious was his plan for completely eliminating the Jewish "race" from Europe, together with other "undesirables." Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, African-Germans, Gypsies, homosexuals, political opponents, selected members of the Christian clergy, communists, socialists, union leaders and the mentally or physically infirm were among those slated for destruction. In sum, this was a plan to develop a "master race" which would rule Europe, then the United States, and eventually the world from a seat in Germany for a thousand years.

It has often been asked how it was possible for the Nazis to murder millions of innocent men, women, and children without world intervention. In the early years of the war, killing every single Jewish person in Europe did not seem possible. Yet, as the Nazis gained power in Europe and acts of brutality increased, the only major western power, the United States, had not, nor would they later, officially protest the treatment of the Jews. The spiritual center of Europe, the Vatican, also remained strangely silent to public pressure for response and assistance. However, if the precedent can be identified for the unequivocal venting of Nazi hatred for the Jews, then what happened in the Soviet Union may have been the turning point in the annals of the Holocaust.

Mobile Killing Units in the Soviet Union

Despite a previous non-aggression pact signed with the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, Germany invaded the USSR (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or Soviet Union). Totally unprepared, the Soviets were incapable of halting the German army. As the Soviet military rapidly withdrew to the interior, the German army steadily advanced until it was within 200 miles of the capitol of the Soviet Union, Moscow. As the German forces marched steadily forward, Hitler ordered that Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), the cultural center of Russia, be "wiped from the face of the earth." For the next 900 days under relentless air and ground fire, the citizens of Leningrad held the Germans off. Three quarters of a million lives were lost -- most from starvation -- until the city lake froze, and Soviet convoys could take supplies across the ice.

The German army was finally forced to halt their advance when stalled by the brutal Soviet winter. Nevertheless, their forces seemed invincible until they tried to take Stalingrad (now called Volgograd) in August 1942. The assault cost three million Soviet lives and left 90 percent of the city in rubble. However, for the first time, the legend of German mastery was dispelled.

With two-thirds of the German forces now directed against the Soviets, casualties were appalling. According to Soviet archives, one in three Russians died during the war. While the winters allowed the Soviet troops time to prepare and defend themselves, warfare continued unabated for nearly four years. For the duration of the war, the Soviet Union remained partially occupied by the Germans.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the plans for the Jews, communists and other "expendable groups" shifted from expulsion to mass murder. It was now possible to hide mass murder behind the natural barrier of the Soviet Front. The initial areas which were conquered had dense Jewish settlements. With the speed of the German advance, most of the Jews were trapped between Soviet orders which barred evacuation east, the German killing machine, and non-Jews living in the USSR who welcomed the Germans as liberators from the totalitarian Soviet

controls. Here in the western section of the Soviet Union, the Nazis were able to carry out massive slaughter campaigns due to the active collaboration of the local population. For example, in the Ukraine, the Germans were able to obtain particularly strong assistance in locating Jews in return for a promise that after the war they would be granted independence from the Soviet Union.

At the time Germany invaded the Soviet Union, there were two large groups of Jews living there. The first group of approximately two and a half to three million were citizens of the Soviet Union proper or one of her republics. A second group consisted of Polish refugees who had fled there when Germany had invaded Western Poland. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, a third group came into the Soviet Union from Eastern Poland. This group had been living under Soviet occupation as a result of Hitler's "Non-Aggression Pact" in which Poland had been divided between Germany and the Soviet Union. With the German invasion of the Soviet Union, this pact was now void. The Jews living in Eastern Poland had to leave further east into the Soviet Union or find themselves under German control.

Once Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the Nazi effort to murder every Jew was unharnessed in a sweeping wave of devastation. In every area under their control, Jews were rounded up and forced into temporary ghettos where they were used as slave labor and then shot. Others were immediately forced to dig deep pits to serve as their graves, in front of which they had to undress and then were shot. In one place alone near Kiev, the capitol of the Ukraine, 33,771 Jews, Gypsies, and Soviet prisoners of war, were murdered within two days. Their bodies were pushed into a huge ravine called Babi Yar. In the months that followed, so zealous were the Ukrainians to inform on Jews that many more thousands were shot and their bodies left in the ravine. Today we can only estimate the loss as being near 100,000 people.

Later, when it became obvious that some of the killers were experiencing mental difficulties (which was attributed to their direct contact with the victims and particularly with having to shoot women and children) an alternative method of execution was employed. Instead of shooting, sealed vans were used into which the trucks' exhaust fumes were piped. As the trucks traveled, the carbon dioxide would be released, and those shut up inside would be asphyxiated. This savage sweep of murders was primarily conducted by four groups called the *Einsatzgruppen* (action-groups).

The first *Einsatzgruppen* appeared when Austria was incorporated into the German *Reich*. They were the intelligence units of the police and accompanied the invading army. Their initial purpose was to secure the political government of the area. To accomplish this purpose, their task was to expose "enemies of the State." On the eve of the German invasion in Poland, six *Einsatzgruppen* were organized. Charged with "combating hostile elements," they conducted terror operations murdering thousands of Jews as well as Polish leaders and intellectuals. When plans were developed for the invasion of the Soviet Union, four *Einsatzgruppen* were established. They were trained to carry out a specific order: to kill Soviet political activists, opponents of the German forces, Gypsies (except for those in one area who could prove a two-year residence), and all Jews. Most of the commanders of these groups were highly trained and educated. Three of the commanders of one such group held doctorates and a number of the lesser officers had university educations; one was a pastor.²

Due possibly to the mass destruction of their documents as the tides of war turned against Germany, there are no detailed records which completely document the full scope of the atrocities which swept across the western part of the Soviet Union, the Ukraine, and the Crimea. The Nazi crimes were further obscured by Soviet government reports of the killings, since these reports did not specifically describe the murder of Jews. Their losses were hidden within the statistics of "Soviet citizens."³

Historical estimates indicate that by the end of 1942, at least 1.4 million Jews⁴ and hundreds of thousands of Soviet nationals were murdered by the *Einsatzgruppen*. From within the barrier of the eastern front, no news of the massacre reached the western press. However, such a cloak of

secrecy was not possible in the cosmopolitan cities of West Europe. At this point, the character of the deportations became clear. Deportations would not be an end in themselves but the means by which people could be brought to the killing centers in the east.

The intended victims were scattered throughout Europe. Some were in countries directly under German control; others were in independent countries or areas only indirectly under German control. For the Jews in Poland, the system of previously deporting and relocating Jews into ghettos had already concentrated them. In other parts of Europe, they would have to be gathered together and moved east.

Wannsee Conference

While shooting by the *Einsatzgruppen* and carbon monoxide poisoning were the general modes of execution during the early years of the war, it soon became apparent that these methods were an inefficient and ineffective long-term "solution." Other complications included the need for slave labor to help the German war effort and massive facilities to hold prisoners.

In spite of the fact that there had been few protests against the massacres of the Jews conducted by the *Einsatzgruppen*, there was considerable dissension among the Nazi party ministers as to how best to effect the "Final Solution." Some of the ministers were concerned that in the quest to kill all Jews, military needs were being given second priority; others had requested that those Jews who could work should be saved and employed as slave laborers. With these conflicts in mind, Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Central Office of *Reich* Security (RSHA), was asked to call a meeting to discuss and coordinate the implementation of the "Final Solution."

On January 20, 1942, at a villa in the Wannsee suburb of Berlin, the state secretaries of the most important German government ministries met with Heydrich and his expert on Jewish affairs, Adolf Eichmann. While the mass murders were, by now, well known to the conference participants, open references had usually been cloaked in modest sounding terms. For the first time, these euphemisms were pushed aside and discussion was direct and unequivocal. As Adolf Eichmann was to testify years later at his trial, "They spoke about methods of killing, about liquidation, about extermination."

At this time, the actual method for the program of annihilation was still questionable. Clearly, the *Einsatzgruppen* could not shoot every Jew or even gas them all in trucks. However, Heydrich was more worried about gaining a consensus of approval for an annihilation program rather than determining exactly how it was to be accomplished. Surprisingly, except for prolonged discussions about the fate of Jews in mixed marriages and their part-Jewish offspring, not a single minister voiced any objection to the overall plan. In fact, it was accepted enthusiastically.

The actual methods to be used to kill the Jews had not been the prime target of discussion at the Wannsee Conference, in part because these methods were becoming quickly available. By this time, a vast network of prison camps had been established and more were being built. They were based on every conceivable rationale for a prison and ranged from killing centers to resettlement complexes, from penal colonies to POW prisons, from forced labor camps to transit camps and holding centers. Regardless of designation, all of them were prisons where people could be concentrated. For those who had not already been killed, the Nazi concentration camp was to be the "Final Solution."

Concentration camps and the killing centers to receive the deportees were readied for full operation. Adolf Eichmann, a petty bureaucrat who had risen in the ranks due to his considerable experience in "Jewish Affairs," became the architect of the evacuations department called "Section IV B 4" in the RSHA.

As the world was to learn, the deportations to murder were extremely well-coordinated by thousands of individuals. Eichmann's department was small. His work was facilitated by the vital support of thousands. His network of assistants ranged from those who helped to ease bureaucratic barriers to those who rounded up the victims. Chief among his agency supporters was the transport industry which provided the essential link in the deportation plans.

Deportations and Deceptions

From all over Western and Eastern Europe, trains destined for the German war effort were diverted to carry the Jews to their death. They were deported by train directly to the concentration camps and killing centers. Often tacked onto the final car, almost as an afterthought, were additional train cars specifically for Gypsies.

The railroad transportation system was critical to the execution of the "Final Solution." Location for a camp was often determined according to whether or not the site was near rail lines. The killing centers were remarkably close to major population centers, and each of these urban areas had a large Jewish population. Other concentration camps were built in rural areas where they would not be so easy to detect. Those which were to serve as slave labor compounds were built near the particular industrial supplies or commercial materials needed.

The transports were camouflaged under the term "special convoy." The SS had to pay the railroad for the use of the trains, and so they devised various schemes. In some cases, the victims themselves paid the rate of regular passengers: full price for adults, half-fare for children. Groups of more than 1,000 were charged half-price. So intense was the desire to kill every Jew that even towards the end of the war when the trains were desperately needed to move Germany military personnel, arms and materials, not a single train assigned for the "special convoy" was relinquished for this purpose.

Under the guise of "resettlement," the railways carried approximately three million people to places from which almost none returned. Rounding up people in Western Europe, although at times somewhat difficult, had been greatly facilitated by the possibility of being able to quickly remove them to the east. Those in Eastern Europe, not killed by the mobile killing squads, were now concentrated into ghettos. With promises of improved living conditions and extra food, the ghetto residents were called upon to present themselves voluntarily. When the real purpose of these deportations became obvious, the Nazis resorted to force. Deportation to the ghettos now became deportations to the concentration camps and killing centers, the last essential step in a process coded by the words "Final Solution."

It was understood by all ranking Nazis that the true nature of the concentration camps and their purpose in the "Final Solution" was to be kept absolutely secret. When large scale deportations began, whole villages or ghettos were targeted for "relocation in the East." Relocation, another euphemism, meant transportation to the death camps. Once the Jews were pushed East into ghettos, the Nazis would periodically cordon off various sections or buildings in the ghetto. The Jews were then ordered to pack a single suitcase and appear within minutes. They were then marched under guard to central transit points. Already harassed by the Germans who occupied their country, people were told they would "work" for the *Reich* or be "resettled" where circumstances would be better.

Deportees were told all kinds of stories to encourage them to board the trains. This ruse was supported by numerous deceitful acts as when the Nazis had postcards sent back to relatives from those who were in the concentration camps. In reality, these postcards had been collected from prisoners forced to write that they were doing fine and were "resettled." Often these postcards were received long after the persons who had written them were dead. This gave the impression that survival was possible. "Resettlement" held the promise of jobs, adequate food, and housing and

for a people being steadily starved to death, this chance at survival was like an answered prayer. Life in the ghetto or out of the ghetto was so tenuous that some Jews were willing to believe in the "resettlement" program, at least in the beginning.

An advertised scheme of exchanging Jews for German prisoners of war led people in hiding to reveal themselves. Instead of the promised exchange, they were taken by passenger train to the death camps. The camouflage regarding the true intent of the deportations extended even to telling adults to pack the one allowed suitcase with any equipment needed to conduct their profession, giving the false idea of future work. In Western Europe, where people were evacuated earlier than in Eastern Europe, people often arrived at the concentration camps in their good clothes, riding in plush passenger cars for which they had bought first class tickets.

Eventually, however, word began to leak back about the true nature of the deportations. When the victims would not present themselves voluntarily, stronger action was taken. People were arrested on sight or removed forcibly from their homes. In Eastern Europe they were taken to a predetermined area called the *Umschlagplatz* (deportation point). From the *Umschlagplatz*, they were surrounded by soldiers with machine guns who forced them to board cattle cars on freight trains. Often more than two hundred people were pushed into a freight car that was originally designed to hold no more than eight cattle.

Once the people were inside the cattle cars, the heavy doors were slammed shut, locked and sealed from the outside. If food was given at all, it was usually one loaf of bread for everyone in an entire freight car. One small bucket was put in as a toilet. This small receptacle had to accommodate the 200 or more passengers and was quickly filled and overflowing. Perishing from the heat, the crush of bodies or, if in winter, the numbing cold, the terrified passengers rode in darkness without food or water to sustain them, choking on the fetid smells of their own wastes. The cars were so crowded that people were forced to stand shoulder to shoulder. If someone died, the person died where he or she stood. Few of the train cars had any windows. Many of the people who did have access to a window or some small opening, threw their babies out hoping to save them. Tragically, most of these infants died as they hit the telephone poles alongside the railway tracks.

After hours, days, or sometimes weeks, the cattle cars arrived at the camp. As the doors were opened, the passengers were confronted with vicious barking guard dogs, blaring orders from loudspeakers, and a mass of people from the other train cars all struggling to find loved ones from whom they may have been separated during the journey. The noise and commotion was terrifying. In an effort to control the mass of people, strict order was maintained by the guards and dogs.

Upon arrival, the true purpose of and conditions in the camp were concealed. Bizarre practices were used to deceive the prisoners and keep them calm. Some of the camps' entrance gates carried the standard slogan: "*Arbeit Macht Frei*" (Work Makes Freedom). At one concentration camp, Auschwitz, the train platform was decorated as a little village train station, and a camp orchestra played for the passengers as they were forced from the train.

At the death camps, there was still an effort made to deceive the doomed passengers. On some occasions, to continue the deception, the prisoners were told they were to be "disinfected" in showers. Before disrobing, they were told to remember the number of the hook where they put their clothes so that they could be reclaimed later. Slivers of soap were handed out as they entered the gas chamber which was variously named "bathhouse," "sauna" or "shower." However, at places like Sobibor and Chelmno, the people were immediately rushed into sheds where they were ordered to disrobe and were then chased with clubs from the disrobing barracks directly into the gas chambers.

At the concentration camp, the general procedure was to hurry the passengers from the train and have them line up for inspection. In many of the larger camps, this "selection" process was conducted by medical doctors. The men and women were separated. Pregnant women and those with young children, those deemed too young, too old or too ill for work were sometimes deceitfully invited to board trucks to the "living quarters" or "labor sites." These trucks followed a procedure similar to that of the killing centers where the passengers went directly to the gas chambers.

After those for immediate death had been selected, the rest were sent to showers where they were disinfected. The prisoners' clothes were taken from them, and they were completely shaved by prison barbers. To add to their humiliation, Nazi guards usually stood around as the young girls were completely stripped and shaved. At a few of the larger camps, the inmates were then lined up and tattooed with numbers to permanently identify them. They were then forced to grab from piles of old clothes and rags or striped pajamas which served as their prison uniforms. Shoes were often heavy wooden clogs that continually abraded the skin. During each phase of the selection process, the guards screamed and beat the inmates with thick rubber or wooden sticks, often cracking open skulls or breaking the arms or legs of someone who was not, in their opinion, running fast enough. Few of the new prisoners could comprehend that the nightmare of being in a Nazi concentration camp had only begun.

The Nazi Concentration Camp System

Within months after Hitler came into power, the first concentration camps, Dachau, Oranienburg (later renamed and expanded as Sachsenhausen) and Buchenwald were set into operation in Germany. Under the law of "protective custody" which abolished constitutional guarantees, real or imagined opponents of the Nazi party which included intellectuals from all spheres, vanished mysteriously. The camps proved to be a formidable threat where thousands could be contained, starved, tortured, exploited as slave labor, and brutalized in ways impossible to imagine. In the early years, the camps were set up as prisons, primarily for political opponents of the Nazis, but as the war progressed they took on the ominous role as a place where hundreds, then hundreds of thousands, and finally, millions would be killed.

The Nazi concentration camps, which spread throughout Europe, could be counted in the thousands. Most of them were set up along railroad lines in Eastern Europe where the SS had absolute and direct control and where secrecy could be more easily maintained than in the rest of Europe.

Although initially classified by the Nazis as substantially different in terms of hardship, many concentration camps were very much alike in practice. They were often indistinguishable even as to differences in such basic necessities as sanitation facilities and food allotments.

The most notable difference, however, were those concentration camps set up specifically as "killing centers." These camps functioned strictly for the sole purpose of extermination. There was no chance to work or use any other means to continue life, however brief or torturous that life might be. A sober statistic makes this point more compelling than words can convey. At the killing center, Belzec, where it is estimated that 600,000 prisoners entered, only five were known to have escaped, and only two of the escapees survived the war.⁵

The other concentration camps, which included the possibility of labor (or some other form of productivity before death), were initially categorized by the Nazis according to the function they were intended to serve.

According to Konnilyn Feig, author of *Hitler's Death Camps*, nineteen camps (including the killing centers and concentration camps) were listed by the Nazis in their official categorization as "primary centers" and these names are among those best known today:

The Killing Centers: Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka

The Official Concentration Camps:

(Labor/Extermination Complexes) - Auschwitz/Birkenau and Majdanek
(Concentration Camps): Buchenwald, Dachau, Dora/Nordhausen, Flossenbürg,
Gross-Rosen, Mauthausen, Natzweiler, Neuengamme, Ravensbrück,
Sachsenhausen, Stutthof

The Holding Center: Bergen-Belsen
Ghetto/"Model Camp": Theresienstadt (Terezín)

In spite of this formal classification, as the war progressed these camp categories were rarely considered and even the mild sounding "holding centers" also became scenes of mass murder. In fact, all of the concentration camps (which include the killing centers), shared a common goal: to murder their victims, either immediately upon arrival or slowly through starvation, slave labor, disease, beatings, sadistic "medical" experiments, and other forms of brutality. In the killing centers, everyone was slated for death immediately and, with few exceptions, this is exactly what happened. In the concentration camps, only the end of the war prevented all of the inmates from being killed or worked to death. Nevertheless, by the time the war did end, the tragic concentration camp statistics showed that only one person in 600 had managed to survive.⁶ Thus, most of the concentration camps, regardless of their official designation, became known as death camps.

Categories of Prisoners

The Category I - Killing Centers were reserved almost exclusively for Jews. While many of the people taken to the camps were incarcerated either as individuals (such as the Soviet prisoners of war and the French resistance fighters) or members of non-conforming groups (such as Jehovah's Witnesses and homosexuals), all Jews and Gypsies were targeted for extinction. Hitler could feel assured that the annihilation of the Jews would not cause consternation in a world which was, with few exceptions, at best indifferent and at worst intolerant of this group of people. The other types of camps generally held, in addition to Jews, large contingents of prisoners of war, Gypsies, criminals transferred from German prisons, political opponents, and others who did not fit the Nazi "ideal."

There were considerable differences in the treatment that was accorded to the various types of prisoners. The Germans carefully classified their prisoners among four major groups: political opponents, members of "inferior races," criminals, and "asocials," each of whom received a unique marking on his/her prison uniform to identify the group or groups to which the prisoner belonged. These groups were further subdivided and while there was not a single camp with but one category, the largest proportion to receive the worst treatment was unquestionably the Jews.

The category in which the prisoners were classified affected their chance of survival. Political prisoners who wore a red triangle and the criminals who wore the green triangle generally were able to be put into positions where they could supervise other inmates. These were prized positions of influence which sometimes allowed the prisoner in this position a small, private area in the barracks and extra food rations.

Generally, the German criminal prisoners were given the top positions within the camp. Many of those who were in charge of the other prisoners became as brutal as their SS overseers and exploited their position for their own benefit. Those in charge of work gangs, who were called *Kapos*, were particularly notorious for their brutality. However, not all those in a supervisory role took advantage of their status. There are notable accounts where prisoners were protected or otherwise cared for by their prisoner-supervisor. There was a wide variety of nationals who

comprised the prisoner population but the Soviet prisoners, Gypsies, and Jews usually had very little chance of obtaining any supervisory appointment outside of their own circle of prisoners.

Among the categories slated for destruction or slave labor, the following were prominent either by the sheer numbers incarcerated or by the role they played within the general prisoner population:

[Jews](#) - The Jews were identified by large yellow stars, patches, or painted yellow stripes. Those not sent directly to the killing centers made up the majority of the prison population in most ghettos and in many other types of forced labor camps and concentration camps. It has been estimated that four and a half to five million Jews died in the concentration camps. Before being killed, Jews were subjected to a wide variety of sadistic tortures, including forced medical experimentation. Jewish children who were twins were particularly susceptible at Auschwitz where a Nazi physician, Dr. Josef Mengele, performed infamous, medical experiments on them without anesthesia.

[Gypsies](#) - While no definite figures exist, scholars estimate that between 220,000 and 500,000 Gypsies were interned and killed in the concentration camps. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, approximately 30,000 from the Greater *Reich* and most other occupied European countries were gassed. Like the Jews, the Gypsies were transported in groups where, in a few camps, special sections were set aside for them. The Gypsies were used in numerous medical experiments in which they were dissected, supposedly as a means to examine their racial background. Castrations were performed on an unknown number of Gypsy men and many of the women were sterilized. Most died from the experiments or were killed when these experiments were completed.

[Homosexuals](#) - Those imprisoned as homosexuals were treated horribly, and many became the private instruments of torture by the sadistic guards. However, very little information is available regarding the numbers of homosexuals incarcerated. In part, this may be due to the stigma which was attached to their lifestyle and to write of their experiences could conceivably expose them to further harassment. It is estimated that tens of thousands of homosexuals perished in the concentration camps and prisons of Nazi Germany.

[Russian Prisoners of War](#) - Russian prisoners captured by the Germans were usually slaughtered outright, worked, or purposefully starved to death. In the fall of 1941, at the Auschwitz concentration camp, 600 Soviet prisoners of war (and 300 Jews) were first used to test the effectiveness of killing prisoners in the gas chambers using Zyklon B, a deadly form of cyanide prussic acid. Two and a half to three million Russian soldiers were killed in the concentration camps.

[Spanish Republicans](#) - These Spaniards, who had fled Spain after Franco established control, had been interned in France in September 1939 and deported to Mauthausen and Ravensbrück in 1940. There they were systematically worked to death in the stone quarry or shot. Less than 3,000 Spanish Republicans incarcerated at Mauthausen survived out of tens of thousands.

[Jehovah's Witnesses](#) - The Witnesses generally numbered a few hundred in each of the major concentration camps. Most of them were of German nationality who had been imprisoned because of refusing to renounce their convictions. They were highly supportive of each other and enforced stringent discipline on themselves. Due to their religious beliefs, they refused to join any resistance efforts or try to escape. When the Nazi guards discovered they could not break the bonds of strength between, or spiritual strength within the Witnesses, they became a subject of bemused attention. Since they would not try to escape, Witnesses were often employed in tasks within special, unguarded areas inside or outside the camp. About 10,000 Witnesses were imprisoned in the concentration camps and of these, about 2,500-3,000 died in Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and other concentration camps.

German Criminals - When the concentration camps system extended throughout Eastern Europe, a number of criminals were released from German prisons and even when they had already served their full prison sentence, were often automatically remanded to further detention through incarceration in the camps. There they generally held positions of power over the other inmates. Marked by a green triangle or patch, accounts from survivors of the camps are almost universal in observing that the German criminal prisoner-supervisors were savage in their brutality. The criminals were known to frequently play horrifying, sadistic "games" of torture and death with the inmates (who were usually Jews) under their supervision.

The Slavic Peoples - Hundreds of thousand of Slavs, primarily Czechs, Russians, and Poles (other than prisoners-of-war) were killed in the concentration camps. The largest percentage of Slav camp inmates were the Poles of which 3,000 were Catholic nuns and priests. Poles were also subjected to forced medical "experiments" without anesthesia, and many young women were sterilized. Treatment for the Slavs largely depended on the reason for their arrest, whether they were members of the underground, political or intellectual leaders, prisoners-of-war, taken as hostage in reprisal for killed Germans, or caught dealing on the black market. (Many Slavs were also sent to German farms as forced labor.)

Others - The remaining categories of prisoners in the camps included, among others, political dissidents, West European resistance fighters and captured Allied soldiers. No figures exist which provide reasonable estimates of the numbers among these various groups who died within the Nazi concentration camp system.

Conditions Within the Camps

Physically the camps were "seas" of mud surrounded with electrified barbed wire supported every few meters by large gun towers. Some camps had special barracks reserved for barbarous medical "experiments" or other specialized torture chambers for interrogation.

Sleeping sometimes up to eight on a wooden shelf that could hardly accommodate one, the prisoners suffered terribly on their lice-infested pallets in the freezing barracks. Most agonizing was the effort to live with the continual contradictions of the Nazi orders. Without proper facilities to wash or to contain bowels weakened by the rotted gruel that passed for food and coffee, they were threatened with death if they did not keep themselves clean. Labor squads were appointed which often used prison inmates to direct them.

Of all the atrocities they suffered, many of the camp survivors recall the *Appells* as the most punishing. Each morning the prisoners had to rush from their barracks and line up to be counted. With the flimsiest of clothing, the prisoners were often made to stand in the searing sun or sub-zero temperatures hour upon hour as the guards slowly and repeatedly counted the prisoners from each barrack. Usually the same dreaded roll calls took place at night. In fact, the *Appells* could be ordered at any moment. Among the most fearful were the ones called for in the middle of the night -- especially if there had been an attempted escape. For prisoners who had tried to escape, their fellow inmates were forced to watch as they were beaten mercilessly and hung. Then, once again, the prisoners would be counted off and in reprisal for the escape attempt, every fifth prisoner or so would be called out and executed. Exhausted, ill with typhoid, dysentery or a host of other life-threatening diseases, continually terrorized by the sadistic guards, these roll-calls, or *Appells*, epitomized the numbing reality of the prisoners horrifying "life."

Slave Labor

Concentration camp prisoners were forced to work in various factories and companies in need of man power, primarily the armaments industry. Originally, forced labor in the camps had been "an instrument of terror used for intimidation rather than for wholesale murder. During the war,

however... the purpose became twofold: murder, and exploitation of the victims' labor prior to death." ⁷ Labor in some camps (e.g., in Mauthausen at the quarry) was done under the harshest conditions with primitive equipment and methods where prisoners seldom lived longer than three months. Of the various major concentration camps, two were developed and combined to use slave labor specifically for the German war effort: Dora and Nordhausen. Inside the depths of mountains, the prisoners worked to build V-1 and V-2 rockets. All the prisoners lived in dark, damp tunnels chained to their machines, never seeing daylight. There was no hospital or gas chamber -- they were not needed. Packed together, enduring impossible conditions, thousands of prisoners died and were quickly replaced. Because of small spaces, labor transports to the camps usually included a number of children. They rarely survived more than several days or a few weeks.

An extensive number of major German industrial organizations paid the Nazis for use of slave labor and several companies built plants near the concentration camps specifically to facilitate the process of using the prisoners. Of the various industrial concerns which exploited the prisoners, the best known is I.G. Farben which built a camp near the town of Monowitz (about six kilometers from Auschwitz) to exploit inmate labor.

Sonderkommandos

The *Sonderkommandos* (Special Commandos or Special Teams) at the concentration camps were made up of prisoners whose main function was to work in the gas chambers and crematorium. They removed the bodies of those gassed for cremation or burial. Every few months they were removed from their hellish job and murdered only to be replaced by a new unit of prisoners. On October 7, 1944 at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, an uprising was staged by Jewish prisoners of the *Sonderkommando*. One of the crematoria was dynamited and destroyed.

Medical Experiments

In the isolation wards of the concentration camps, so-called "scientists" developed barbarous experiments with the cooperation of the German armed services and major industrial and chemical companies such as I. G. Farben, Siemens, and Behring Works.

Concentration camp inmates were used for grotesque "medical" experiments. Doctors removed sex organs from men and women and sterilized them by various methods. Women inmates had foreign substances injected into their ovaries. The result, as in most other such "experiments," was agonizing pain. At the Auschwitz concentration camp, one of the doctors, Josef Mengele, "whistled operatic arias while 'selecting' new arrivals for either the gas chambers, or the camp, including 'medical' experiments. His experiments concerned twins and dwarfs."⁸ Also added to Mengele's list of "medical" interests were hunchbacks. Sections of the twins, dwarfs, and hunchbacks were sent to provide the Berlin Institute of Anthropology with human organs.⁹

Other experiments were performed which were theoretically designed to help the military as, for example, tests which measured the effects of high altitude for the German Air Force. In these experiments, which primarily used Jewish and Gypsy inmates, the prisoner was put into a high pressure chamber. The effect was massive decompression or death through loss of oxygen. Similarly, low pressure tests were also conducted. Wounds were purposefully created and filled with dust and glass to examine the results of tetanus and gangrene. Other prisoners were chilled until frozen, supposedly to determine the best way to revive frozen German soldiers. Numerous foreign substances were injected including viruses (typhus, yellow fever, smallpox, cholera, diphtheria) and chemical warfare agents, to test new drugs. At the Buchenwald concentration camp, inmates were burned to the bone to test the effects of various pharmaceutical preparations on phosphorus burns.¹⁰ The bones of living Polish women in the concentration camp, Ravensbrück, were removed from their bodies, usually without anesthetic, to see if they could be successfully transplanted.

As part of a prurient "sideline," the "medical" researchers collected and prepared human skins, heads, and skulls for the SS. A particularly prized possession for the SS was the shrunken head of a camp prisoner, through a process which a number of the SS doctors aspired to learn. Prisoners with interesting tattoos were immediately catalogued on entering the camp, usually killed by injection and the skin removed. The skin made "excellent" lampshades.

Death Marches

Towards the end of the war, the concentration camps were evacuated and masses of prisoners were driven out in "Death Marches." In long columns under heavy guard, in freezing weather, the prisoners were marched on foot or partially transported by train into territory still under German control. In the bitter cold, amid further beatings and with their physical health destroyed, many of the prisoners died during the march.

The Death Marches were not only conducted at the end of the war. Periodically prisoners were moved, on foot, hundreds of miles from one camp to another. Tens of thousands had also been moved in this way when the ghettos of Eastern Europe were liquidated.

The final marches began in the summer of 1944 when Majdanek was liberated, and their pace escalated as more camps were closed in the face of the advancing Allied armies. During the march, anyone too weak to continue was shot by the Nazis. Rarely were the prisoners given food or water or allowed to stop and rest. As an example, in one march, 76,000 Jewish men women and children were forced to walk from Budapest, Hungary to the border of Austria. Thousands were shot, starved to death or died from exposure. In another instance, 6,000 Jewish women and 1,000 Jewish men were driven for ten days, during the month of January 1945 to the Baltic Sea. When they arrived, the Germans drove all prisoners into the freezing water and machine gunned them. Only thirteen people are known to have survived this massacre. In January 1945, thousands were also marched from Auschwitz to camps in Germany and other points west.

To ensure that there would be no prisoners left in the camps, barracks were set on fire. As prisoners who were hiding tried to flee, they were shot. Others perished in the flames. Fortunately, some prisoners considered so ill that they were expected to die within hours or days were left in the camps. These constituted many of those who eventually were found when the camps were liberated.

Thousands of people who might otherwise have survived the war when the Soviet army liberated the cities and camps in the East, perished on the five and six-week journey through the snow back to camps in the German *Reich*, such as Bergen-Belsen. Today, in many pictorial history texts one can find photographs of railroad cars which were found standing abandoned on a railway siding, filled with the frozen bodies of Jews who were part of the long journey. There were about 28 such cars found at Dachau. The guards had run away leaving the box cars locked and sealed from the outside, so that no one could get out.

The evacuations and death marches were kept up until the very end of the war. Approximately a quarter of a million prisoners, who had somehow managed to survive the daily misery and brutality of the concentration camps, nevertheless died on the death marches. Most of these marches took place only months before Germany was defeated and the war ended.

Survival Against All Odds

However remarkable the circumstances under which someone survived the concentration camps, it is not, as one might initially assume, because certain individuals were more clever, younger, older, skillful, more or less intelligent. Many factors outside the control of the person determined his or her fate (e.g., age, sex, race, religion, food supply, camp and work assignment,

physical strength, and health) but even so, the odds were overwhelmingly against survival. In a situation where only one out of 600 survived, to link survival to some special characteristics would be unreasonable. Survivors had a strong, stubborn will to live. The one overriding element that determined survival was luck. This is essential to understanding the repercussions of the "Final Solution," because overall it is the one fact that enabled any individual to survive the horrors of internment in a Nazi concentration camp. In addition to luck, extraordinary individual conditions had to prevail. Hence, it took rather extraordinary persons to survive through such generally lethal experiences as typhoid epidemics, beatings, starvation, back-breaking work, witnessing the deaths of loved ones, and other torments.

The concentration camp was a world unto itself whose boundaries literally could not be penetrated. Time in both a real and abstract sense was meaningless since death could be imminent or confinement permanent. There was little, if any, respite from the daily hardships. The camps were organized to systematically destroy the humans they contained. But first, for the prisoners, there was often a long, agonizing process of death by degrees. The ultimate aim of the Nazis, if extermination was not intended immediately, was to force the prison inmates into a state of absolute helplessness both physically and mentally. To effect their purpose, the camp masters implemented a massive number of sadistic techniques. The opportunity for resistance against the pervasive forces was pathetically limited. Nevertheless, such resistance did occur, often as a heroic act of spiritual resistance. A mother who could have survived, might stay with her child, who was scheduled for death, so that the child would not be left to face death alone. Resistance was sometimes subtle and personal as in clinging to internal attitudes (e.g., They can strip me of my clothes but not my self-respect). There were also extraordinary group actions where prison inmates sabotaged war materials which the Germans needed at the front. Some inmates hid their fellow prisoners who had fallen ill. Others created art or kept diaries which they hid for future documentation. Because the Germans wanted all their prisoners to die, for many the most effective resistance was just to go on living, no matter how agonizing the life.

For many prisoners the hardest thing was to find some meaning within the senseless tragedy they were experiencing. There were, of course, many who simply could not go on under such conditions. They gave up, both mentally and physically. They wandered the camps, totally lost, without hope or awareness. For those who reached this stage of resignation, death was almost certain. Such people in the camps were so prevalent that the inmates gave them the name *musulmen*, an erroneous translation of the word "Moslem." Rarely did one return "to life" from the *musulman* stage without the active intervention of another.

The highly lethal conditions of the camp generally meant the death of all close friends and relatives. The most vulnerable were the children, almost all of whom, were killed immediately or succumbed to conditions in the camp soon after their arrival. Other children and particularly twins were killed or deformed in barbarous "medical" experiments. Eighty to 90% of the adult survivors lost the majority of close relatives during the Holocaust and 75 to 80% were totally isolated by the end of the war. Yet, of those few who did survive the camps, or survived by other means, almost all of them relate critical incidents where the intervention of a friend, or in some cases a stranger, turned the tides of fate in their direction.

Millions of men, women, and children were killed in the Nazi concentration camps. In the Auschwitz camp alone, it has been estimated that between 1.1 and 1.5 million persons were put to death by methods such as torture, starvation, shooting, hanging, and gas poisoning. At Auschwitz and the other camps, the liberating armies found abundant evidence of mass executions and famine. Many of the concentration camps were equipped with crematoria for the disposal of bodies. At Buchenwald, where some of the German personnel made a hobby of collecting and tanning human skin for book covers and lamp shades, the crematoria had a capacity of 400 bodies daily. At many camps, most notably Bergen-Belsen, scientists conducted monstrous experiments, using inmates as human guinea pigs.

The creation and operation of the Nazi concentration camp epitomized the absolute depths of depravity to which human beings could sink. No book, film, or photo can realistically express to someone who was not there the dreadful conditions contained within the electrified barbed wire fences. The Nazi concentration camps were centers of mass torture and mass execution. The extent of the atrocities and brutalities committed against helpless inmates defy understanding. Yet, for those survivors who managed to escape deportations to these hells, another kind of agony awaited them.

Alternative Experiences

Not all those hunted and persecuted by the Nazis were deported to the concentration camps. In the early years (1933-39) many German Jewish parents, desperate to save their children, sent them out of the country on various rescue transports or tried to hide them with neighbors and strangers. In other countries where no such rescue transports existed, Jewish parents left their children at the gates of Catholic orphanages hoping against hope that the nuns would take them in. Some Catholic Orders knowingly accepted Jewish children. Other children were given up in the hope that their true identity would not be discovered. Some Jewish adults who could pass as "Aryans" procured false papers. The papers often cost a fortune and were rarely a guarantee of safety. Most often, the hastily forged documents could not pass close inspection. Individuals living on false papers were continually threatened by exposure and had to survive a marginal existence for years. Adding to this threat was the fact that persons with "legal" papers had to register their place of residence with the police.

Those without papers or legal ration cards, some of whom had escaped from transports and the German *Aktionen* (round-ups), tried to survive by hiding in woods, cellars, attics, barns, outdoor privies, closets, holes in the ground, or other decrepit shelters. They foraged for food at night and were continually threatened by exposure to the freezing elements, the Nazis, hostile locals or blackmailers. In constant fear of discovery, those in hiding often lived without any human contact in total isolation.

A person on the run could never trust anyone, no matter how friendly the offered overtures of help. If hidden, some of the "rescuers" demanded money. Initially, those who did not request money in exchange for protection often had to do so as the German occupation lengthened and food and supplies for those under their protection became exceedingly costly. When the money was gone, those in hiding were sometimes thrown out and denounced to the Germans for a reward. For those generous enough to provide protection, life was dangerous. The Nazis had made it clear that any individual helping a Jew or another person wanted by the Nazis would, if caught, suffer the same fate as the intended victims.

The "Final Solution" was not devised by madmen nor implemented by a few sadists. It developed and almost succeeded because normal people were willing to follow the dictates of a few national leaders rather than their own conscience. Historians have often portrayed the ordinary Germans who participated in the killing process as merely following orders, as being more obedient to their leaders' wishes than responsive to the demands of conscience or the values of human rights or decency. But in truth, more than obedience was required. The bureaucracy was motivated; it had to initiate many new projects in order to accomplish tasks that were unprecedented. Many participated willingly; many offered all that they could do in order to further the killing process. Only a few -- very few -- refused. Ironically, they seldom faced punishment, but they did lose their position and their influence. At the War Crimes Trials held in Nuremberg, Germany after the war, one of the *Einsatzgruppen* commanders said, "I followed the *Führer's* orders. The unit under my command killed 90,000 Jews and if I would not have done it, someone else would. And I at least did it in a humane and military manner."

In addition to the estimated six million Jews who were murdered, more than ten million other non-combatants were killed by the Germans.¹¹ If the Nazi's "master plan" had succeeded, all the Slavic peoples, including the Poles, Czechs, Serbs, and Russians would have become slaves for the Greater *Reich* and the Jews would all be dead. Eventually, even the United States would have been conquered, and Germany would reign supreme in the world.

We cannot dismiss the Nazi concentration camps as an aberration in human history of torture never to be conceived or realized again. One man alone did not create the Nazi camps or murder millions of innocent people. Millions collaborated with him, and all of this was ignored by a world indifferent to the plight of others. When Hitler implemented his evil intentions, he almost succeeded, not because evil won out, but because good people everywhere chose not to interfere.

ENDNOTES

¹ Israel Gutman, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 490.

² Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1982), 195.

³ Bauer, 198.

⁴ Bauer, 200.

⁵ Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 264-265.

⁶ P. Benner, E. Roskies, and R. Lazarus, "Stress and Coping Under Extreme Conditions," in *Survivors, Victims and Perpetrators*, ed. J.E. Dimsdale (Washington, D.C.: Hemisphere, 1980), 221.

⁷ Bauer, 221.

⁸ Bauer, 219.

⁹ Konnilyn G. Feig, *Hitler's Death Camps* (New York: Holmes & Meler, 1979), 348.

¹⁰ Feig, 102.

¹¹ Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1985), 824.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Using the readings from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's pamphlets in this unit, students should describe the various groups which the Nazis seized and placed in the concentration camps and the reasons why each group was persecuted.
2. Students should research and describe the methods the Nazis used to disguise the true purpose of the death camps and the concentration camps.
3. As a class, have students list some of the major officials who were involved in the "Final Solution" and their positions.
4. After reading the excerpts and testimonies in this unit, have students examine what evidence, if any, shows that the German civilian population and German army:
 - a) knew of the mass murders in the camps,
 - b) participated in the killing,
 - c) protested against the killing when they became aware of it.

Students should then discuss the significance of this information.

5. Using microfiche or other available resources, students can research newspaper articles from the early 1940s to investigate what information the world had at this time. In addition to researching newspaper articles, students can examine the editorial pages of newspapers during this time. What do the articles and editorials suggest about what the public knew and the public opinion during this time period?

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6. Have students research the Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942. They should consider the following questions:
 - a) What was the purpose of the conference?
 - b) What euphemisms did Heydrich use in his explanation of these purposes?
 - c) Who attended this conference?
 - d) What were the results?
7. As you study the Holocaust with your class, make sure that students keep in mind how the Nazis used euphemisms. As a class, create a dictionary defining all the euphemisms the Nazis used throughout the Holocaust and especially those related to the "Final Solution."

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Excerpt from *All But My Life*

By Gerda Weissmann Klein

That was a day full of tension. Allied planes were constantly overhead, strafing the woods and our marching column. Obviously the pilots did not know who was marching, they saw only the green-gray uniforms of the guards.

In the evening when we got to a barn, I saw Liesel. She had been wounded in the leg.

"It's nothing," she said, "it does not even hurt."

The barn doors were closed, but the boards did not fit tightly so that light from the outside streamed in. We had stopped marching earlier than usual, probably because the guards were afraid of the planes.

I tried to talk to Liesel and Suse, but somehow the tie between us was broken. Our group was not the same. With Ilse gone, it seemed that they felt that the three of us who remained couldn't last long. Suse planned to ride in the wagon next day. She declared herself unable to walk any more. Liesel, whose legs were covered with pus-filled scabs, agreed to join her.

When morning came I started to follow Suse and Liesel into the wagon. Hanka pulled me back. "You can walk," she said firmly. "Don't ride again."

Meekly I obeyed, though it seemed to make little difference to me. At first my legs hurt so that I thought I could not continue, but as I marched on they felt better. Again and again I found myself turning to my left for Ilse, to my right for Suse. Girls I did not know were marching on either side of me.

We spent another night in a barn. In the morning at least fifty more girls were dead.

When we filed by to get some soup I heard a group of guards speaking excitedly.

"*Ist es möglich?*" one of them asked, and an SS woman answered hysterically: "*Ja, der Führer ist tot!*"

I felt myself tremble with joy.

"Suse, Suse, did you hear?" I whispered.

"Yes," she answered, "but I am sure that now they will kill us for revenge."

I wanted to say no, but something prevented me. Perhaps, I thought, Suse was right.

We marched on, waiting for something to happen. With Hitler dead, things had to change.

"It is happening now," I kept saying to myself. "This is the end. One or two more days, and it will be over."

But somehow it did not matter so much any more. With Ilse gone I did not care, even though I had promised her that I would not give in.

The third evening after Ilse's death we approached a little town in Czechoslovakia: Volary. It was a Friday, I learned later. My legs were hurting terribly; I felt that I could not go on. The SS woman now in charge told us to stand in a row in a meadow. Those who were no longer fit she ordered stand apart. I was swaying.

"You cannot walk any more," she barked, pointing at me. "Take off her shoes," she commanded Hanka, who stood beside me.

My shoes -- the ski boots that Papa insisted that I wear! The order gave me new determination.

Hanka pushed me behind another girl. "Don't let her see you," she whispered.

In the fading light the SS woman ordered our group into a truck.

"Shall I help you up?" Hanka asked.

There were few seats; the rest of the girls would have to stand jammed together. Girls were begging to get on.

"Not yet, Hanka," I said.

"Then you will have to go in the wagon," she said. "It will be here shortly."

"I am in no hurry now," I replied.

The truck rushed away with one SS man and one SS women and perhaps thirty shoeless girls. The rest of us sat in the meadow, waiting for the wagon or for the truck to come back.

I looked at the sky. The first stars were out. Occasionally a plane or the sound of artillery broke the silence of the spring evening. An hour passed. Neither the wagon nor truck appeared.

I did not feel cold or hungry, only lonely and sad. I allowed myself the rare luxury of thinking of home -- of Papa and Mama and Arthur strolling on a spring night in the garden under the darkening sky. I felt strangely consoled. It grew darker.

When the truck failed to return we were led across the meadow to some barracks adjoining a factory. There were a hundred and twenty of us left. After we were marched in, the doors and windows were barricaded. Soon afterward, from the silence outside, we gathered that our guards had abandoned us.

Much later I learned from one of the girls who survived that an American plane had strafed the truck that did not return. The woman guard was killed. The SS man on the truck shot a number of the girls. The rest jumped off the truck and ran away.

In the silence of our barracks we could hear a ticking. So the Germans were going to destroy us after all! We had waited so many years for the end of the war. How many times, years ago at home, in the ghetto, in Bolkenhain, in Märzdorf, in Landeshut and Grünberg, and while marching all those months, had I dreamed of this moment. And now we were not to survive....

Then it began to rain. It was a spring rain accompanied by loud thunder. The planes stopped roaring, the artillery fire ceased. And still the bomb outside continued to tick.

Then some Czechs came and broke the door open. They urged us to run -- the SS men were coming back to shoot us because their bomb had not gone off.

Later we heard many stories about that bomb, but we never learned why it failed to go off. We did not pause to look at it. Those who could, ran. Some of us headed toward the factory and hid there. Two other girls and I crawled into a long, metal cylinder lying on the floor. There we waited.

A couple of hours passed. There was shooting in the distance, and then close by, and again the planes roared overhead; we did not dare to move.

Perhaps, I thought, perhaps we will survive, but what then? I will go home, of course. . . . And for the first time in all those years, the thought of going home did not ring right. No, I could not think of it. Not yet.

There was a loud commotion at the factory door, and we heard heavy boots pound along the concrete floor. A voice shouted in German, "Get out, out, you beasts, out!"

We did not stir.

Shots were fired in our direction. One bullet went through the cylinder, creasing my shoulder and one of the other girls' legs. There was more commotion, and then the Germans departed.

We waited again. There was more firing in the distance.

Much later we heard shouting in Czech. A man and two women entered the factory calling: "If someone is inside, come out. The war is over!"

We crawled out of the cylinder, stiff and numb.

"Look!" said the man, pointing to a window. One of the women took my arm to steady me.

From the window, in the early-morning light, I saw a church on a hill. The white flag of peace waved gently from its steeple. My throat tightened with emotion, and my tears fell on the dusty window sill. I watched how they did not soak into the dust, but remained like round clear crystals, and that was all I could think of in that great hour of my life!

We went back to the barracks where most of the rest of the girls had gathered. We found chaos: crying, and shouts of joy. The hour had struck at last. Somehow I couldn't grasp it. There

were no golden trumpets to proclaim our freedom. There were no liberators in sight.

Liesel was lying on the littered floor. She knew we were free but did not seem elated.

"Where is Suse?" I asked her.

"She went out to get water and hasn't returned. She has been gone a long time."

I went out to look for Suse. She was not at the pump. I found her off a way lying in the mud. Her eyes were glassy, unseeing, but for a moment I did not realize she was dead.

"Suse, we are free!" I called to her. "We are free, the war is over!"

When I touched her, I knew the truth.

I did not tell Liesel. It was too sad for Liberation Day.

As I look back now, trying to recall my feelings during those first hours, I actually think that there were none. My mind was so dull, my nerves so worn from waiting, that only an emotionless vacuum remained. Like many of the other girls I just sat and waited for whatever would happen next.

In the afternoon a strange vehicle drove up. In it were two soldiers in strange uniforms, one of whom spoke German.

The German mayor of the town was with them. He was trying to tell the two soldiers that he really was not antisemitic. The soldiers were Americans; I knew as soon as I heard them speak to one another. Arthur had spoken their language a little.

Tears welled from my eyes as they approached us. The German-speaking soldier patted me with his clean hand. "Don't cry, my child," he said with compassion, "it is all over now."

CHILDREN OF THE HOLOCAUST: THEIR MEMORIES, OUR LEGACY

Nearly 1.5 million children perished in the Holocaust. Jewish children were murdered as part of a deliberate policy by the Nazis to systematically exterminate a whole people. Gypsy and mentally handicapped youngsters were also targeted for death. Yet children's voices are among some of the most powerful to survive the Holocaust. Captured in diaries, in poetry, in art, in oral histories, they reach across memory to instruct us.

The campaign against children began with laws prohibiting Jewish children from participating in organized sports and social activities with "Aryans." They were required to wear yellow Stars of David and were banned from museums, movies, playgrounds, and swimming pools. They were finally expelled from public schools. Yacov Langer, a Jewish teenager from Essen, Germany, wrote of the restrictions: "...what more will this day bring? Shrieks, terror, blows, abductions, imprisonment, messengers, humiliation and disgrace, posters with laws -- a sea of posters, white, green, yellow, new ones each day, but always with the same message: Jews are forbidden ... to buy, sell, study, pray, gather, eat, etc., etc., a string of prohibitions with no end!"

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the plight of Europe's children became truly desperate. The safe, predictable world they had known, anchored by their parents and other loved ones, shattered in the face of the Nazi advance. Dawid Sierakowiak, a 14-year-old Jew from Lodz, Poland, wrote in his diary, "...Panic, mass exodus, defeatism ... A neighbor telling us to leave. Where, go where, why? Nobody knows. To flee, flee farther and farther, trek, wade, cry, forget, run away ... just run as far as possible from danger. Father loses his head -- doesn't know what to do ... A moment of deliberation and finally the decision: stay put. Whatever will be, will be."

Some fled into hiding. Young Otto Wolf and his family hid in the fields and woods outside the town of Olomouc, Czechoslovakia: "At 4:30 in the morning, we start looking for a permanent hiding place; we found it in the nearby bushes, so dense it is impossible to sit ... In the afternoon, dad shaved my head, cut his beard for the first time in his adult life and is unrecognizable."

Most were forced into ghettos. There, hunger, disease, and exposure stalked those children who survived German "actions." Older children and teenagers had a better chance of surviving because they might be selected for labor details. Children without parents or protection had little hope. Chaim Kaplan, a Warsaw Ghetto inmate, reported on the plight of the young: "These are children who were orphaned when both their parents died, either in wanderings or in the typhus epidemic. Every morning you see their little bodies frozen to death in the ghetto streets. It has become a customary sight."

Yet many children demonstrated enormous resilience and courage, sometimes becoming "breadwinners" for their families. In the Warsaw Ghetto, young Mary Berg recorded smuggling by children to keep others from starving: "Whole gangs of little children are organized, boys and girls from five to ten years of age. The smallest and most emaciated of them wrap burlap bags around their bony little bodies. Then they slink across to the Aryan side through the streets that are fenced off only by barbed wire ... A few hours later they return laden with potatoes and flour ... When the children return safe and sound with their trophies to their starving parents, there is boundless joy in the household."

In 1942, the Nazis began emptying the ghettos, transporting victims to concentration camps and killing centers. Among the most vulnerable themselves, many youngsters looked on helplessly as parents, grandparents, brothers, and sisters were taken from them. Eva Ginzova, a girl in Czechoslovakia's Terezin Ghetto, had already lost her parents when she watched as her older brother and a friend were transported to Auschwitz. "The train is here and both boys have gotten on already. Petr [her brother] is number 2392 and Pavel is 2626. They are together in one carriage. Petr is amazingly calm ... It was a terrible sight ... Now the boys have gone. All that is left are their empty beds."

Like Eva, but not her brother Petr, a handful of children survived the Holocaust. A lucky few escaped on *kindertransports*, sent by desperate parents to safety in England, Switzerland, and North America. Others survived in hiding -- in attics, cellars, forests, and convents, or precariously sheltered under new identities. But like many of their older counterparts, few achieved their dearest wish -- to return home.

Like their adult counterparts, many child survivors began their post-war lives in displaced persons camps, hoping to be reunited with loved ones and waiting to immigrate to places like the United States, Palestine, and South Africa. Even as they built new lives in their adopted countries, many have also dedicated themselves to the cause of remembrance, especially remembrance through the education of future generations. Linking the children of the past with the children of the future, they ensure the continuation of that sacred task.

Source: Taken from the program of the National Civic Commemoration of the Days of Remembrance. *Children of the Holocaust. Their Memories, Our Legacy.* Washington, DC: April 23, 1998. Produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

CHILDREN

The ultimate crime in the Holocaust was the murder of children. A poet has said that the death of a child is the loss of infinite possibility. What then can be said of the murder of more than a million children?

Approximately one million Jewish children under fifteen were murdered by the Nazis in their attempt to achieve the "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem." Although the murder of the children was a deliberate attempt to destroy the Jewish future, children were not a direct target of Nazi anti-Jewish policies. Caught up in the web of incomprehensible events, they were the most vulnerable of all the victims of Nazism.

The experience of children in the Holocaust varied from country to country, city to city, and year by year, week by week. The first sting of persecution often came in the classroom or schoolyard, when children were singled out by their classmates, stigmatized and isolated. Later, they were expelled from public schools. Wherever possible, the Jewish community established separate schools. There, Jewish children felt safe, if only for a while, from the torments of antisemitic classmates and teachers.

At first, some children were shielded. Even on a train to Auschwitz, a seven-year-old French child asked his father, "What is a Jew?" He had never heard the word. "All my life I tried to protect you from the reality," the father answered. Other children had no one to protect them. In the French transit camp of Drancy, Azriel Eisenberg reported:

There were two --, three --, and four-year-olds, little ones, who did not know their names. . . . We improvised names for those who were nameless and prepared wooden disks which we suspended by strings around their necks. Later we found girls wearing boys' disks and vice-versa. Evidently, they played with these disks and often exchanged them.

In Poland and Eastern Europe, children went into the ghettos with their families. Many became smugglers and beggars. The children were always hungry. Some continued to study and live with their parents but others roamed the streets. In Vilna and Warsaw, the Jewish Council went to great efforts to provide for the children, but in Łódź, Rumkowski allowed them to be deported in order to transform the ghetto into a work camp.

Young children could sense their parents' anguish, even though they could not grasp their predicament. Doriane Kurz, who survived Bergen-Belsen at the age of nine along with her seven-year-old brother, Freddie, recalls going into hiding:

One evening we were sitting in our living room. My brother was sitting on the bay window sill and looking out. He said: "Look at the fire engine out there." My parents rushed to the window and it wasn't a fire engine. It was a truck with men sitting on the outside. They all ran off and my parents grabbed us and we ran out of the house.

They ran to a storage room two floors above and escaped arrest for another eighteen months. "I remember the sound of boots coming up," she said of that night. She was only six at the time.

Children in Western Europe were sent with their families to the transit camps. In camps such as Theresienstadt and Gurs, adults made valiant efforts to create the semblance of a normal environment for the children. There were classes, games, even cultural activities. The children of Theresienstadt painted pictures and wrote poems that have survived and serve as memorials to their brief lives. The paintings of the children were a form of therapy -- a means of expressing their deepest fears. Older children at Theresienstadt took an active part as actors in plays, as recruiters for poetry contests and recitations held in the evening.

Teddy -- we don't know his last name or his fate -- wrote of the arrival at Terezin:

At Terezin

*When a new child comes
Everything seems strange to him.
What, on the ground I have to lie?
Eat black potatoes? No! Not !!
I've got to stay? It's dirty here!
The floor -- why, look, it's dirt, I fear!
And I'm supposed to sleep on it?
I'll get all dirty!*

*Here the sound of shouting, cries,
And oh, so many flies.
Everyone knows flies carry disease.
Oooh, something bit me! Wasn't that a bedbug?
Here in Terezin, life is hell
And when I'll go home again, I can't yet tell.*

Another child, Mif, wrote of the frustration:

Terezin

*A fourth year of waiting, like standing above a swamp
From which any moment might gush forth a spring.
Meanwhile, the rivers flow another way,
Another way,
Not letting you die, not letting you live.
And the cannons don't scream and the guns don't bark
And you don't see blood here.
Nothing, only silent hunger.
Children steal the bread here and ask and ask and ask.
And all would wish to sleep, keep silent and just go to sleep again . . .
The heaviest wheel rolls across our foreheads.
To bury itself deep somewhere inside our memories.*

But in the end, children were deported along with their parents to concentration camps. Mothers and fathers could no longer protect their young. Parents who refused to be separated from their children were sent at once to the gas chambers. Pregnant women were also selected for immediate death. Only the able-bodied and the unencumbered could hope to survive. At the ramp in Birkenau a first *Selektion* was held. Arriving Jews were divided by sex. Fathers parted from their daughters and mothers from their sons -- often forever. The young children, and the parents who insisted on staying with them, went to their death.

Gypsy children and twins were subject to medical experimentation by Dr. Josef Mengele, who in his zeal to breed the master race was fascinated by twins. According to one observer, Mengele was rather fond of Gypsy children. He would bring them sweets and toys. The children trusted him. They called him "Onkle Mengele." The physician would often take them to the gas chambers himself, speaking tenderly until the end.

Vera Alexander, a Jewish woman who supervised fifty sets of Gypsy twins at Auschwitz, recalled:

I remember one set of twins in particular: Guido and Ina, aged about four. One day Mengele took them away. When they returned they were in a terrible state: they had been sewn together,

back to back, like Siamese twins. Their wounds were infected and oozing pus. They screamed day and night. Then their parents -- I remember the mother's name was Stella -- managed to get some morphine and they killed the children in order to end their suffering.

The presence of children forced their parents to make impossible choices, what the literary critic Lawrence Langer has called "choiceless choices." Throughout Europe parents had to decide if the family should stay together and face the future, or go into hiding either together or individually. Parents did not know, could not know until it was too late, that "resettlement in the East" was an almost certain death sentence. In Amsterdam, Otto Frank took his whole family, including Anne, into hiding in Amsterdam in 1942. He alone survived. In 1944, Shlomo Wiesel advised his son Elie to stay with the family rather than hide on his own with a former family maid in Hungarian-controlled Sighet. Elie Wiesel survived Auschwitz and Birkenau, as did his older sisters. His father, mother, and little sister Tzipora were killed.

Should a young child be given to non-Jewish friends, or turned over to strangers in one of the organizations in Poland, the Netherlands, and France that tried to hide Jewish children? The dilemma was difficult. Parents who knew they could not protect their children were also unwilling to part with them, and for good reason. Andrew Griffel was less than a year old when his parents gave him to a Polish couple for safekeeping. When they returned three years later, he did not recognize and at first refused to go with them. The Polish couple had become his parents.

Even when a child was sent to safety, separation was agonizing. One eyewitness to the rescue of seventy children reports:

The young children, who could not understand the reasons for separation, clung to their parents and cried. The older ones, who knew how great their parents' anguish was, tried to control their own pain and clenched their teeth. The women clung to the doors of the buses as they left. The guards and even the police themselves could hardly control their emotions.

Young children often endangered their parents. A crying child could give away a clandestine hideout and endanger the lives of an entire group. In the concentration camp, an infant would spell doom for both mother and child. Judith Sternberg Newman, a nurse deported to Auschwitz, reported the following incident:

Two days after Christmas, a Jewish child was born on our block. How happy I was when I saw this tiny baby. It was a boy, and the mother had been told that he would be taken care of. Three hours later, I saw a small package wrapped in cheese cloth lying on a wooden bench. Suddenly it moved. A Jewish girl employed as a clerk came over, carrying a pan of cold water. She whispered to me, "Hush! Quiet! Go away!" But I remained, for I could not understand what she had in mind. She picked up the little package -- it was the baby, of course -- and it started to cry with a thin little voice. She took the infant and submerged its little body in the cold water. My heart beat wildly in agitation. I wanted to shout "Murderess!" but I had to keep quiet and could not tell anyone. The baby swallowed and gurgled, its little voice shuttering like a small bird, until its breath became shorter and shorter. The woman held its head in the water. After about eight minutes the breathing stopped. The woman picked it up, wrapped it up again, and put it with the other corpses. Then she said to me, "We had to save the mother; otherwise she would have gone to the gas chamber."

Should a child be hidden in a convent or monastery where she or he might be protected, but cease to be a Jew? It was easier to hide a Jewish girl than a Jewish boy. A circumcised boy could be identified as a Jew at any moment. Boys soon learned to go to the bathroom alone. Solomon Perels, whose childhood and adolescence were the subject of the film *Europa, Europa*, went to great lengths to avoid urinating or taking a shower in the presence of other boys. He could not consummate his wartime romance for fear of betrayal.

Some children spent the war years hiding in basements or attics, passed from family to family. They could not go outside or be seen in public. Others, because of the color of their hair and the

absence of an accent, could pass as non-Jews. Frima Laub described her experience in the streets of Woloshisk:

Well, at that time I was infested already with lice because nobody gave me a bath and I slept in the same clothes and I lived in the same clothes and I lived in that pantry with the mice. And so I walked out of the house. And the first thing I did was go into a toy store, a religious articles store, and I bought a big cross and I spent my hundred rubles. And then I was so infested with the lice that my head, my skin was all rashes and bloody from scratching it so much.

I felt that I really needed help and I remembered this lady whom my parents were friendly with and I remembered that we used to visit them every so often. That it's quite a bit outside the city. I didn't remember the address and I didn't remember the name. But I just remembered how we used to walk. And I . . . that's how I walked. And I made it to the house. And it was winter and cold and there was maybe five or six inches of snow. And I made it to her house and as I got to her gate, her dog started barking so she came out to see who was at the gate and she sees me and she says, "My God, come in quick. Come in quick." And she takes me to her barn because obviously she must have noticed that I have lice crawling all over me. So she wouldn't take me into her house but she took me into the barn and she . . . quickly she took off my clothes and put on other clothes and she said to me, "Where are your parents?" I said, "Everybody is killed. Everybody is dead."

Because I wanted her to have pity on me. And so she did. She took me to her bathroom. She shaved off my head. She gave me a bath. She gave me a glass of hot milk and a piece of black bread.

Children like Frima hid their true identity while leading a facsimile of a normal childhood: going to school and church, playing, taking part in family life. The very young even forgot their true identities and became who they were supposed to be. The writer Saul Friedlander, who later became a distinguished historian of the Holocaust, was about to begin training for the priesthood when a friendly priest asked him if he had heard of Auschwitz. His parents had perished there. Friedlander had been adopted by a French Catholic family.

Jana Levi reports her deepest fear:

I didn't remember anymore what my real name was. I only dreamt about it at night. When I woke up in the morning, I wouldn't remember again. I knew I had a different name, but it was so important for me to forget it that I actually did completely forget. I knew that if my parents didn't know my name they couldn't find me.... Nobody would know who I was. I had completely become someone else and the real person, no one would know who it was, and they didn't know who I was either.

Children living in hiding were often confused about their religion, their identity, even their gender. At a 1991 conference on the hidden child, a fifty-three-year-old man rose to tell his story. He had spent the years from age four to seven as a girl. His hair had grown out. He wore dresses. He sat on the toilet to urinate even when alone. As he told his story, the audience grew quiet. He asked if others in the room had similar experiences. Several men raised their hands. It was easier to pretend to be a girl.

Source: Berenbaum, Michael. *The World Must Know: the History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Dr. Michael Berenbaum, and Little, Brown and Company.

WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

By Miriam Klein Kassenoff

The shoes
All those shoes
I've never seen so many shoes

Who were they?
Where are they?
Why are they so little?
Where are the children?

Who would kill so many little children?
Who would take such innocents?
Who were in these shoes?
Who was Julika? Her name is engraved on her shoes --
For me to know her.

Where is that little ballerina now?
Does she cry for her lost dancing shoe?

I can see the laces and the buckles
And the bows --

But

I can't see the children . . .

Where are they?
Who are they?
Where are the children?

I Saw a Mountain

By Moishe Shulstein

Translated into English by Mindelle Wajsman, Professor of Yiddish

I saw a mountain higher than Mt. Blanc
And more holy than the Mountain of Sinai
Not in a dream. It was real.
On this world this mountain stood,
Such a mountain I saw -- of Jewish shoes in Majdanek.
Such a mountain -- such a mountain I saw.
And suddenly, a strange thing happened ...
The mountain moved ...
And the thousands of shoes arranged themselves
By size -- by pairs -- and in rows -- and moved.

Hear! Hear the march.
Hear the shuffle of shoes left behind -- that which
Remained
From small, from large, from each and every one.
Make way for the rows -- for the pairs --
For the generations -- for the years.
The shoe army -- it moves and moves.

"We are the shoes, we are the last witnesses.
We are shoes from grandchildren and grandfathers,
From Prague, Paris and Amsterdam,
And because we are only made of stuff and leather
And not of blood and flesh, each one of us avoided
the hellfire.
We shoes -- that used to go strolling in the market
Or with the bride and groom to the chuppah
We shoes from simple Jews, from butchers and
Carpenters
From crocheted booties of babies just beginning to walk
and go
On happy occasions, weddings and even until the time
Of giving birth, to a dance, to exciting places to life ...
Or quietly -- to a funeral.
Unceasingly we go. We tramp.
The hangman never had the chance to snatch us into his
Sack of loot -- now we go to him.
Let everyone hear the steps, which flow as tears,
The steps that measure out the judgment."

I saw a mountain
Higher than Mt. Blanc
And more Holy than the Mountain of Sinai.

Questions on Shoes, I Saw a Mountain and Where are the Children?

1. Examine the poster “Shoes” from the United States Memorial Museum before reading the poems “Where are the Children?” and “I Saw a Mountain.” The shoes in this photo were confiscated from prisoners at Majdanek. What are your thoughts and feelings as you study this photograph? Jot down words, phrases, or sentences that describe what you are thinking or how you feel.
2. Now read the poem “Where are the Children?” The poet wrote this poem after seeing the pile of shoes at Majdanek. How do the thoughts and feelings you wrote down in question #1 compare to those of the poet?
3. Next read the poem “I Saw a Mountain.” How do your thoughts and feelings compare to those of the poet?
4. In “I Saw a Mountain,” the poet describes “the shoe army.” What does the shoe army represent?
5. In “Where are the Children?” what do you think the poet meant when she wrote the lines:

“Who was Julika? Her name is engraved on her shoes --
For me to know her.”
6. Both poems describe the pile of shoes in Majdanek. How does a pile of empty shoes serve as a symbol of the Holocaust?

Additional activity: After studying the poster of the “Shoes” and discussing the two poems, write a poem of your own. Draw or paint a picture to accompany your poem.

Some of the above questions were based on the suggestions of Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff.

ONLY A NUMBER

SIX MILLION is only a number.
 But each was somebody's mother, somebody's child,
 somebody's lover, somebody's bride.
 Potyo was just thirteen: she was my sister.
 She had the wisdom of a child of war.
 She was full of fear, yet tiptoed with tenderness,
 laughter, and love in a world of madmen.
 She was a weeping willow, a song of sorrow,
 a poem of infinite beauty.
 "Why does Hitler hate me? Why does he love hate,
 Mama?
 I am only thirteen, I have songs yet to learn,
 games yet to play.
 Give me time to live, give me time to die.
 Mama, how can I do all the living in just an inch of
 time?"
 On a wretched piece of earth,
 an alien land of terror and chaos,
 on another planet called Auschwitz,
 Mengele points at Potyo—
 Ring-around-a-rosy,
 pocket full of posies,
 ashes, ashes, etc.

By Isabella Leitner

Nazi Leadership

The Reverend Harry Cargas, in his book, *A Christian Response to the Holocaust*, asks:

“Who were the architects who designed the ovens into which people were delivered for cremation? Who meticulously executed the plans for the efficient gas chambers into which naked men, women and children were herded to die? Who originated the design for the camps, those models of economical, technological destruction? Which firms bid on the contracts to build the camps, the gas chambers, the ovens? Who bribed whom to win the coveted contracts, to gain the chance to make a profit and serve the Führer by erecting houses of death and torture? Which doctors performed experiments on Jewish victims? Who shaved their heads, and all bodily hairs, to gain materials for cloth and rugs? We’ve heard of lampshades made from Jewish skins, of “enforcers” throwing Jewish victims - most of them dead, but not all - into huge pits, of brutal guards crushing Jewish babies’ skulls with rifle butts, and shooting aged and unhealthy Jews who couldn’t keep up on forced marches, and forcing naked Jews to stand for hours in freezing weather for either convenience or amusement. Who were these tormentors? What of the train engineers who guided the cattle cars packed with starving, dying, dead Jews to their locales of interment? And what of the ordinary citizens of many European nations who, as the death trains passed through their communities, would throw bits of bread into the cattle cars to be entertained by watching famished Jews fight over the food in an agonizing display of attempt at survival?” (pgs.3-4)

The following is a short list of the occupational backgrounds of some leading Nazis. An operation as immense as the efficient process of murder demanded the services of many educated people.

Name	Age in 1933 (Beginning of Third Reich)	Profession	Position in Reich
Hans Frank	33	lawyer	Governor General of Poland; in Einsatzgruppe
Franz Six	24	professor of political science	Antisemitic expert; in Einsatzgruppe
Helmut Knochen	23	professor of literature	Colonel, SS; Commander of Security Police, Paris, 1940-44
Otto Ohlendorf	26	economist; doctorate in jurisprudence	In Einsatzgruppe
Roland Freisler	40	lawyer; summa cum laude at Jena	President of the People’s Court of Berlin, 1942-45; the “hanging judge”; at Wannsee Conference
Joachim Mugrowski	28	professor of bacteriology	Head of SS Health Dept.
Paul Blobel	--	architect	In Einsatzgruppe

Ernst Biberstein	34	Protestant pastor	In Einsatzgruppe; Blobel's colleague
Richard Korheer	30	statistician	Himmler's Institute for Statistics; devout Catholic
Karl Brandt	29	physician	Hitler's private surgeon; conducted medical experiments in camps
Karl Clauberg	35	physician	Sterilized women at Auschwitz and Ravensbruck
Leonard Conti	33	physician	Reich "Health" leader; wrote books on racist medicine; interested in artificial insemination; director of German Red Cross
Franz Gurtner	52	lawyer	Reich Minister of Justice; originator of "Night and Fog Decree" of Dec. 7, 1941 allowing Nazis to seize persons "endangering German security"
Johan von Leers	31	lawyer	Nazi propagandist
Walter Schellenberg	33	lawyer	Number 2 man in Gestapo after Himmler
Kurt Becher	24	grain salesman	SS Colonel; assistant to Himmler; head of SS horse purchasing commission; later directed to conduct negotiations to exchange Jews for money.
Robert Mulka	--	businessman	Death camp commandant at Auschwitz
Robert Ley	43	chemist	Head of German Labor Front
Victor Bracke	28	student of economics	Helped set up camps in Poland

Ludwig Muller	50	Evangelical theologian	Reich Bishop 1933-35; confidante on church-state problems
Josef Mengele	22	physician; degrees in philosophy and medicine	"medical experiments" at Auschwitz; responsible for "selection" in the death camp
Karl Gebhardt	35	physician	Conducted "medical experiments" at Ravensbruck
Victor Capesius	26	physician	Headed camp pharmacy at Auschwitz
Werner Best	30	lawyer	First legal advisor to SD and Gestapo
Hans Globke	35	lawyer	Helped frame Nuremberg laws of 1935; high official in Minister of Interior
Kurt Lischka	23	law student at Breslau	Ran Compiegne, a concentration camp in France; head of Secret Police in Paris
Otto Ambros	--	chemist	Top I.G. Farben executive; expert on Buna and poison gas at I.G. Farben at Auschwitz
Albert Speer	28	architect	Minister of Armaments and War Production
August Hirt	35	anthropologist and surgeon	SS Director of Anatomical Research; studied skulls
Gregor Ebner	--	physician	Head of Lebensborn program
Herta Oberhauser	--	physician	She gave lethal injections to women at Ravensbruck
Willi Frank	30	physician	Chief of Dental Station at Auschwitz

Bernhart Rost	40	secondary school teacher	Reich Minister of Science, Education and Culture
Waldemar Klingelhofer	--	professional opera singer	In Einsatzgruppe
Alfred Rosenberg	40	educated as engineer	Hon. General, SS; writer of numerous books
Fritz Todt	42	construction engineer	Reich Minister of Armaments and Munitions; chief engineer in charge of construction at I.G. Farben Works at Auschwitz
Ernst Grawitz	34	physician	Chief of SS medical service; head of German Red Cross
Gerhart Wagner	45	physician	One of the originators of the Euthanasia program
Sigmund Rascher	24	physician	Did "freezing" experiments at Dachau
Wilhelm Frick	56	lawyer	Reich Minister of the Interior; close friend of Hitler
Ernst Kaltenbrunner	30	lawyer	Chief of the SD
Otto Thierach	44	lawyer	Reich Minister of Justice 1942-45
Heinz Kammler	--	construction engineer	Head of SS Works Dept.; built gas chambers at Auschwitz
Fritz Reinhardt	38	schoolmaster	Leader of Nazi party school for orators
Arthur Seyss-Inquart	41	lawyer	Reich Commissioner for the Netherlands
Hermann Behrends	26	lawyer	First leader of Berlin SD; major general in SS
Richard Gluecks	44	businessman	Head of Concentration Camp Inspectorate

Herbert Linden	--	physician	Member of Health Dept.; commissioner of all insane asylums in Germany
Erwin Weimann	--	physician	Under Blobel in Einsatzgruppen; former commander of Security Police and SD in Prague
Alfred Baeumler	46	professor, University of Berlin	Academic philosopher of the Reich
Dieter Allers	--	lawyer	Appointed chief administrative of T4 (Euthanasia Program)
Albert Hartl	--	Roman Catholic Priest	Member SS; appointed Chief of Church Information at the Reich Security Office
Hans Lammers	54	lawyer; jurist	Reich Minister and State Secretary of the Chancellory; expert on constitutional law; served during the Weimar Republic
Oswald Pohl	41	economist	Head of Economic Administration of the SS (WVHA)
Fritz Ter Meet	--	scientist, held doctorate	Chief executive of I.G. Farben
Walter Duerrfeld	--	engineer	Chief engineer of construction at I.G. Farben at Auschwitz

Questions for Discussion

1. What kinds of occupations are listed? What preliminary conclusions might be drawn about the average age of many Nazi leaders? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
2. As indicated here, what occupations were represented in the *Einsatzgruppen*?
3. Does an "educated" professional like a medical doctor or a lawyer have any special responsibility to people or to society? Explain your answer.
4. How do you think the professional skills of these people were used to carry out Nazi policy?

Definitions

SS - Political police, later also assigned the duty of administering the concentration and death camps

SD - the intelligence branch of the SS

Source: Furman, Harry, ed. *Holocaust and Genocide: A Search for Conscience*. New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1983, pages 100-103. Developed under the auspices of the State of New Jersey Department of Education. Reprinted by permission.

NAZI LANGUAGE

During the twentieth century, we have learned that words need not serve the purpose of honest communication. In fact, words are often used to hide truth and become a means of deceiving people. During the Holocaust, Nazi language not only shielded reality from their victims but also softened the truth of the Nazi involvement in mass murder. This manipulation of language is still practiced in the modern world.

<u>German Word</u>	<u>Literal Meaning</u>	<u>Real Meaning</u>
Augemerzt	exterminated (insects)	murdered
Liquidiert	liquidated	murdered
Erledigt	finished (off)	murdered
Aktionen	actions	mission to seek out Jews and kill them
Sonderaktionen	special actions	special mission to kill Jews
Sonderbehandlung	special treatment	Jews taken through death process in camp
Sonderbehandelt	specially treated	sent through the death process
Sauberung	cleansing	sent through the death process
Ausschaltung	elimination	murder of Jews
Aussiedlung	evacuation	murder of Jews
Umsiedlung	resettlement	murder of Jews
Exekutivemassnahme	executive measure	order for murder
Entsprechend behandelt	treated appropriately	murdered
Der Sondermassnahme zugeführt	conveyed to special measure	killed
Sicherheitspolizeilich durchgearbeitet	worked over in security	murdered police measure
Lösung der Judenfrage	solution of the Jewish question	murder of Jewish people
Bereinigung der Judenfrage	cleaning up the Jewish question	murder
Judenfrei gemacht	made free of Jews	all Jews in an area killed
Spezialeinrichtungen	special installations	gas chambers and crematorium
Badeanstalten	bath houses	gas chambers
Leichenkeller	corpse cellars	crematorium
Hechenholt Foundation	diesel engine located in shack	at Belzec used to gas Jews
Durekgeschleusst	dragged through	sent through killing process in camp
Endlösung	the Final Solution	the decision to murder all Jews
Hilfsmittel	auxiliary equipment	gas vans for murder

Questions:

1. Are you aware of any use of language in American culture that also serves to hide real meaning? Give examples.

2. How do advertisers often use words deceptively? Give examples.

3. How do politicians sometimes use language to mask their real values? Give examples.

Source: Furman, Harry, ed. *Holocaust and Genocide: A Search for Conscience*. New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1983, pages 109-110. Developed under the auspices of the State of New Jersey Department of Education. Reprinted by permission.

MODERN DAY EUPHEMISMS

REPORT CARD COMMENT

EUPHEMISM

awkward	appears to have difficulty with motor control
too free with fists	resorts to physical means of winning his/her point of attracting attention
is truant	needs to develop sense of responsibility in regard to attendance
lies	shows difficulty in distinguishing between imaginary and factual material
cheats	needs help in learning to adhere to rules and standards of fair play
lazy	needs ample supervision in order to work well
rude	needs to develop a respectful attitude toward others
steals	needs help in learning to respect the property of others
noisy	needs to develop quieter habits of communication
is a bully	has qualities of leadership but needs help in learning to use them democratically
associates with "gang"	seems to feel secure only in group situation; needs to develop a sense of independence

Questions:

1. What is a euphemism? Look it up if you do not know.
2. List three justifiable examples of the use of euphemisms and list three non-justifiable examples. What is the difference?
3. How do euphemisms affect our lives and our relationships?
4. How does this activity relate to the study of the Holocaust?

Source: This activity was adapted from the March of the Living, Central Agency for Jewish Education, Miami, Florida. Used by permission



1. Study this map and list ten facts that you have learned.
2. After completing question #1, make a list of five questions that you now have about the map. Discuss your questions with the class and try to answer each other's questions.

Source: Copyright © by Sir Martin Gilbert. Reprinted by permission.

Between 1939 and 1945, six million unarmed and innocent Jewish civilians - men, women, children and babies - were murdered in Nazi-controlled Europe, as part of a deliberate policy to destroy all traces of Jewish life and culture. As many as two million of these were killed in their own towns and villages, some confined in ghettos where death by slow starvation was a deliberate Nazi policy, others taken to be shot at mass-murdersites near where they lived. The remaining four million Jews were forced from their homes and taken by train to distant concentration camps, where they were murdered by being worked to death, starved to death, beaten to death, shot, or gassed.

THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS



Auschwitz concentration camp in which more than 2 million people were murdered between 1941 and 1944, including Jews, Gypsies, and Soviet prisoners-of-war

■ Camps set up solely for the murder of Jews

☘ Other camps in which Jews and non-Jews were put to forced labour, starved, tortured, and murdered in conditions of the worst imaginable cruelty. Most of these camps had "satellite" labour camps nearby

Among the hundreds of thousands of non-Jews sent by the Nazis to concentration camps were anti-Nazis, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, the mentally ill, and the chronically sick. In addition, more than 250,000 Gypsies were murdered, in a Nazi attempt to eliminate Gypsies as well as Jews from the map of Europe

In many of the camps shown here so-called "medical" experiments were carried out, without anaesthetics, solely to satisfy the curiosity and sadism of the doctors. Hundreds of otherwise healthy "patients" were tortured and murdered during these experiments.

Questions on Map of the Concentration Camps

As the map key explains, not all concentration camps were the same. By the end of the War, there were over 1,000 camps located in Germany and in Nazi-occupied Poland, as well as in other countries in Europe and North Africa. The camps created in the mid-1930s were mainly internment camps designed to hold various individuals: Communists, the handicapped, homosexuals, clergymen, Jews, and political dissidents whom the Nazi regime regarded as undesirable. After 1939, camps were used mainly for forced labor where thousands of Jews and other prisoners died of starvation, exposure, slave labor, etc. After 1941, when the Nazis adopted their "Final Solution to the Jewish Question," six camps were designed as extermination or death camps.

1. Identify the six death camps:

- a) Where were these camps located?
- b) Which camp was the largest?
- c) What groups were murdered in these camps?

2. Using an atlas, add the following cities to the map:

Munich
Warsaw
Hanover

Poznan
Krakow

Chelmo
Dresden

3. How many people must have been involved in transporting victims to the various camps? Explain your answers.

4. Considering the location of these camps, how secret do you think they were? Explain your answers.

5. To what extent do you feel the Nazis themselves were the only ones involved with the camps and their intent? Explain your answers.

7. What other information have you learned from this map?

Source: University of the State of New York. *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide: The Human Rights Series*. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1985. Reprinted by permission.

DIRECTORY OF MAJOR ADMINISTRATIVE CENTERS AND CONCENTRATION CAMPS

CONCENTRATION CAMP	LOCATION	TYPE OF CAMP	OPERATION	CLOSURE	PRESENT STATUS
AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU	Poland	Annihilation; Forced Labor	April 1940 - January 1945by	Liberated USSR	Camp Preserved
BELZEC	Poland	Annihilation	March 1942 - June 1943	Liquidated by Germany	Monument
BERGEN-BELSEN	Germany	Holding Center	April 1943 - April 1945b	Liberated y UK	Graveyard
BUCHENWALD	Germany	Forced Labor	July 1937 - April 1945b	Liberated y USA	Camp preserved; Museum
CHELMNO	Poland	Annihilation	December 1944 - April 1943; April 1944 - January 1945	Liquidated by Germany	Monument
DACHAU	Germany	Forced Labor	March 1933 - April 1945b	Liberated y USA	Camp preserved; Museum
DORA/ MITTELBAU	Germany	Forced Labor	September 1943 - April 1945b	Liberated y USA	Memorial Sculpture Plaza
FLOSSENBÜRG	Germany	Forced Labor	May 1938 - April 1945b	Liberated y USA	Buildings; Monument

CONCENTRATION CAMP	LOCATION	TYPE OF CAMP	OPERATION	CLOSURE	PRESENT STATUS
GROSS-ROSEN	Poland	Forced Labor	August 1940 - February 1945	Liberated by USSR	Camp Preserved; Museum
JANÓWSKA	Ukraine	Forced Labor; Annihilation	September 1941 - November 1943	Liquidated by Germany	Not Maintained
KAISERWALD	Latvia	Forced Labor	March 1943 - September 1944	Liquidated by Germany	Not Maintained
MAJDANEK	Poland	Annihilation	July 1941 - July 1944	Liberated by USSR	Camp Preserved; Monument
MAUTHAUSEN	Austria	Forced Labor	August 1938 - May 1945	Liberated by USA	Buildings; Monument
NATZWEILER/STRUTHOF	France	Forced Labor	May 1941 - September 1944	Liquidated by Germany	Camp Preserved
NEUENGAMME	Germany	Forced Labor	June 1940 - May 1945	Liberated by UK	Used as Prison; Monument
ORANIENBURG	Germany	Holding Center	March 1933 - March 1935	Liquidated by Germany	Not Maintained
PLASZOW	Poland	Forced Labor	December 1942 - January 1945	Liquidated by Germany	Not Maintained

CONCENTRATION CAMP	LOCATION	TYPE OF CAMP	OPERATION	CLOSURE	PRESENT STATUS
RAVENSBRÜCK	Germany	Forced Labor	May 1939 - April 1945	Liberated by USSR	Buildings; Monument
SACHSENHAUSEN	Germany	Forced Labor	July 1936 - April 1945	Liberated by USSR	Museum; Buildings
SOBIBOR	Poland	Annihilation	May 1942 - October 1943	Liquidated by Germany	Monument
STUTTHOF	Poland	Forced Labor	September 1939 - May 1945	Liberated by USSR	Buildings; Museum
TEREZIN (THERESIENSTADT)	Czech Republic	Holding Center Transit Ghetto	November 1941 - May 1945	Liberated by USSR	Buildings; Monument
TREBLINKA	Poland	Annihilation	July 1942 - November 1943	Liquidated by Germany	Monument
WESTERBORK	Netherlands	Transit Camp	October 1939 - April 1945	Liberated by Canada	Monument

Simon Wiesenthal Center Library & Archives

**Important Sub-Camps
And Their Main Camps**

Sub-Camp	Main Camp	Sub-Camp	Main Camp
1. Berga	Buchenwald	13. Kaufering	Dachau
2. Birkenau	Auschwitz	14. Landsberg	Dachau
3. Blechhammer	Auschwitz	15. Mielec	Plaszow
4. Ebensee	Mauthausen	16. Monowitz	Auschwitz
5. Gelsenkirchen	Buchenwald	17. Nordhausen	Dora-Mittelbau
6. Gleiwitz I	Auschwitz	18. Ohrdruf	Buchenwald
7. Görlitz	Gross Rosen	19. Quedlinburg	Buchenwald
8. Gunskirchen	Mauthausen	20. Salzwedel	Neuengamme
9. Gusen	Mauthausen	21. St. Georgen	Mauthausen
10. Janinagrube	Auschwitz	22. Trawniki	Lublin-Majdanek
11. Jaworzno	Auschwitz	23. Vaihingen	Natzweiler
12. Kattowitz	Auschwitz	24. Weisswasser	Gross Rosen
		25. Wöbbelin	Neuengamme

**Concentration Camps
Operated by German Collaborators**

Camp	Location	Camp	Location
1. Bor	Podolia (now Ukraine)	8. Lagedi	Estonia
2. Djakovo	Croatia	9. Lobargrad	Croatia
3. Danica	Croatia	10. Malines	Belgium
4. Gradiska	Croatia	11. Noe	France
5. Gurs	France	12. Salaspils	Latvia
6. Jadovno	Croatia	13. Tartu	Estonia
7. Jasenovac	Croatia	14. Transnistria	Romania
		(complex of many camps)	(now Ukraine)

rev. 7198

Source: Courtesy of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles, C.A.

Source: Courtesy of the Shnon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles. CA.

Estimated Jewish Losses in the Holocaust

COUNTRY	INITIAL JEWISH POPULATION	KILLED
Austria	185,000	50,000
Belgium	65,700	28,900
Bohemia and Moravia	118,310	78,150
Bulgaria	50,000	0
Denmark	7,800	60
Estonia	4,500	2,000
Finland	2,000	7
France	350,000	77,320
Germany	566,000	141,500
Greece	77,380	67,000
Hungary	825,000	569,000
Italy	44,500	7,680
Latvia	91,500	71,500
Lithuania	168,000	143,000
Luxembourg	3,500	1,950
Netherlands	140,000	100,000
Norway	1,700	762
Poland	3,300,000	3,000,000
Romania	609,000	287,000
Slovakia	88,950	71,000
Soviet Union	3,020,000	1,100,000
Yugoslavia	78,000	63,300
Total	9,796,840	5,860,129

1. Study the statistics above. List eight observations you have made based on the information in the chart.

2. Using an outline map of Europe, match the statistics on this chart to the appropriate countries on the map.

BABI YAR

The commander of the Sonderkommando (special command unit) 4-a reached the city of Kiev on the 21st of September, 1941. A proclamation was posted on the walls all over Kiev ordering the Jews to report to a place near the Jewish Cemetery on the 29th of September at 8:00 in the morning. They had to bring their valuables, jewelry and some warm clothing with them for the purpose of resettling. Believing this notice of "resettlement" some of the Jews came as early as daybreak in order to get a good seat on the train.

In groups of about 20, the people were led away from the mass who had gathered. Each group, in turn, was ordered to undress and deliver their properties. They were then marched to the edge of the ravine of Babi Yar and shot.

German records indicate that they expected 5,000--6,000 Jews to report. However, 33,771 Jews were shot on the 29th and 30th of September.

The following is the observation of the Engineer Friedrich Graebe who happened to be in the area and later described what he saw.

Moenikes and I went directly to the pits. Nobody bothered us. Now I heard rifle shots in quick succession, from behind one of the earth mounds. The people who had got off the truck - men, women and children of all ages - had to undress upon the orders of an SS man, who carried a riding or dog whip.

They had to put down their clothes in fixed places, sorted according to shoes, top clothing and underclothing. It was a heap of shoes of about 800 to 1,000 pairs, great piles of underlinen and clothing. Without screaming or weeping, these people undressed, stood around in family groups, kissed each other, said farewells and waited for a sign from another SS man, who stood near the pit, also with a whip in his hand.

During the 15 minutes that I stood near the pit, I heard no complaint or plea for mercy. I watched a family of about 8 persons, a man and woman, both about 50 with their children of about 1, 8 and 10 and two grown-up daughters of about 20 - 24. An old woman with snow white hair was holding the one year old child in her arms and singing to it, and tickling it. The child was cooing with delight. The couple were looking on with tears in their eyes. The father was holding the hand of a boy about 10 years old and speaking to him softly; the boy was fighting his tears. The father pointed toward the sky, stroking his head, and seemed to explain something to him. At that moment the SS man at the pit shouted something to his comrade. The latter counted off about 20 persons and instructed them to go behind the earth mound. Among them was the family which I have mentioned.

I well remember a girl, slim and with black hair, who, as she passed close to me, pointed to herself and said "23." I walked around the mound and found myself confronted by a tremendous grave. People were closely wedged together and lying on top of each other so that only their heads were visible. Nearly all had blood running over their shoulders from their heads. Some of the people shot were still moving. Some were lifting their arms and turning their heads to show that they were still alive. The pit was already two-thirds full. I estimated that it already contained about 1,000 people. I looked for the man who did the shooting. He was an SS man who sat at the edge of the narrow end of the pit, his feet dangling into the pit. He had a tommy gun on his knees and

was smoking a cigarette. The people, completely naked, went down some steps which were cut into the clay wall of the pit and clambered over the heads of the people lying there, to the place to which the SS man directed them. They lay down in front of the dead or injured people; some caressed those who were still alive and spoke to them in a low voice. Then I heard a series of shots.

I looked into the pit and saw that the bodies were twitching or the heads lying already motionless on top of bodies that lay before them. Blood was running down their necks. I was surprised that I was not ordered away, but I saw that there were two or three postmen in uniform nearby. The next batch was approaching already. They went down into the pit, lined themselves up against the previous victims and were shot. When I walked back, round the mound, I noticed another truckload of people which had just arrived. This time it included sick and infirm persons. An old, very thin woman with terribly thin legs was undressed by others who were already naked, while two people held her up. The woman appeared to be paralyzed. The naked people carried the woman around the mound. I left with Moenikes and drove in my car back to Dubno.

On the morning of the next day, when I again visited the site, I saw about 30 naked people lying near the pit - about 30 to 50 meters away from it. Some of them were still alive; they looked straight in front of them with a fixed stare and seemed to notice neither the chilliness of the morning nor the workers of my firm who stood around. A girl of about 20, spoke to me and asked me to give her clothes and help her escape. At that moment we heard a fast car approach, and I noticed that it was an SS detail. I moved away from my site. Ten minutes later we heard shots from the vicinity of the pit. The Jews still alive had been ordered to throw the corpses into the pit; then they had themselves to lie down in this to be shot in the neck.

Source: Testimony of Friedrich Graebe, a German civilian engineer, from the court records (*Judgment*, pages 6695-6697) of Case No. 9 Einsatzgruppen, tried at Nuremberg in 1947-48.

BABI YAR

*The wild grasses rustle over Babi Yar.
The trees look ominous,
 like judges.
Here all things scream silently,
 and, baring my head,
Slowly I feel myself
 turning gray.
And I myself
 am one massive, soundless scream
above the thousand thousand buried here.*

Yevgeny Yevtushenko (B. 1933)
Russian Poet

Questions:

1. Why is it appropriate for the poet to use the word “judges” to describe the trees at Babi Yar?
2. Why do you think “all things scream silently” at Babi Yar?
3. Create an original title for this poem.
4. Draw or paint an appropriate picture to accompany this poem.

Source: This poem appears on the wall of the permanent exhibit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

STARS, TRIANGLES, AND MARKINGS

The stars, triangles, and markings in this poster are symbols used by the Nazis to isolate and identify their victims. Almost everywhere under Nazi rule Jews were forced to purchase and wear a six-pointed star of David whenever they appeared in public. The yellow or blue star was worn on an armband or pinned on a shirt or coat. All concentration camp prisoners wore triangular badges that identified them by their arrest category; many badges also identified the bearer's race or nationality. Yellow triangles were for Jews; red triangles for political prisoners; purple for Jehovah's Witnesses; pink for homosexuals; green for criminals; black for Gypsies and "asocials"; and blue for emigrants. Letters printed on badges usually indicated nationality.



- (1) Star of David with the French word *Juif* (Jew). France, 1942. (1989.045.01)
- (2) Star of David armband. General Government, ca. November 1939 - May 1943 (1990.051.08)
- (3) Star of David with the German word *Jude* (Jew), Czechoslovakia. (1989.205.01)
- (4) Star of David button. Bulgaria, 1942. (1991.135.01)
- (5) Red triangle embroidered with black initial "T" for *Tschechoslowakei* (to indicate wearer was Czech) (1989.303.27)
- (6) Star of David with the Dutch word *Jood* (Jew), The Netherlands, 1942 (1990.145.01)
- (7) Identification tag issued at Radom, Poland to Polish forced laborer Bronia Eiger-Sitner at a munitions factory, ca. 1944. Attached to identification tag with blue string are a red plastic heart and a mezuzah (a Jewish ritual scroll). Gray paper background is used for photographic purposes. (1989.173.01)
- (8) Yellow triangle with "U" (*Ungarn* or Hungary), Buchenwald, April-May, 1945. (1989.295.01)
- (9) Purple triangle with prisoner number 46436 issued in Sachsenhausen to Albert Jahndorf. (1989.240.02)
- (10) Star of David used in Hungary, March 1944. (1988.064)
- (11) Patch used to identify a Pole in the German Reich, ca. 1940-1945. (1990.259.02)
- (12) Purple triangle with prisoner number 1989 issued in Ravensbrück to Luise Jahndorf. (1989.240.01)
- (13) Pink triangle with the letter "B" (Belgium) from Langenstein-Zwieberge, also known as "Malachit," a subcamp of Buchenwald, ca. 1940s. (1991.198.08)
- (14) Yellow strip of cloth placed above inverted triangle marking Jews in Monowitz, November 1944. (1991.198.04)
- (15) Red triangle with "F" (France), Buchenwald, April-May, 1945. (1989.295.03)
- (16) Black triangle with "T" (Czechoslovakia) from Langenstein-Zwieberge, also known as "Malachit," a subcamp of Buchenwald, 1940s. Gray paper background is used for photographic purposes. (1991.198.12)
- (17) Green triangle with "S." Buchenwald, April-May, 1945. "S" probably means *Sicherheitsverwahrter* or preventive arrest prisoner, 1940s. (1989.295.10)
- (18) Red triangle with "I" (Italy), Buchenwald, April-May, 1945. (1989.295.04)
- (19) Armband embroidered with "L.P." (*Lagerpolizei*) from Malchow, a labor subcamp of Ravensbrück concentration camp producing ammunition and explosives, February - May 1945. (1988.082.03)

Excerpts: Groups Targeted by the Nazis

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum publishes pamphlets for educators and visitors to the Museum. These pamphlets provide information about groups of people who were persecuted by the Nazis, but not for being Jews. The titles of the pamphlets refer to the specific groups targeted by the Nazis: *Handicapped*, *Homosexuals*, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, *Roma and Sinti*, and *Poles*. The following excerpts describe the Nazi persecution of individuals in these groups.

Helene Lebel, T- 4 Victim

Helene Lebel, raised as a Catholic in Vienna, Austria, first showed signs of mental illness when she was nineteen. Her condition worsened until she had to give up her law studies and her job as a legal secretary. In 1936 she was diagnosed as a schizophrenic and was placed in Vienna's Steinhof Psychiatric Hospital. Two years later, Germany annexed Austria. Helene's condition had improved at Steinhof, and her parents were led to believe that she would soon be moved to a hospital in a nearby town. In fact, Helene was transferred to a former prison in Brandenburg, Germany. There she was undressed, subjected to a physical examination, and then led into a "shower room," where she was killed with a deadly gas.

Breaking the Silence: Friedrich-Paul Von Groszheim

Friedrich-Paul von Groszheim was arrested for the first time in 1937 with 230 other men, in a mass arrest of homosexuals in Lübeck, a German port on the Baltic Sea. In 1938 von Groszheim was again arrested, tortured, and given the choice between castration and concentration camp. He submitted to the operation and survived, but only told his story in 1992.

Von Groszheim was never acknowledged as a victim of the Nazi regime, and due to on-going persecution of homosexuals in Germany, it took nearly half a century before he broke his silence. Recently he explained why he began to speak out: "I'm living proof that Hitler didn't win. I'm aware of that every day. If I don't tell my story, who will know the truth?"

Daily Life for Poles Under German Occupation

We were...survivors of a period in which every able-bodied person aged 14 and up had to work ten hours a day, six days a week. Otherwise, we would be shipped to Germany, to forced labor camps, or to work in factories of the German war machine. We were given rations of food so most of us went -- often -- hungry. We were decimated by disease -- typhus and typhoid fever were prevalent....We were terrorized by continuous dragnets -- *lapanka* we called it in Polish. You walk on a street from your house to your aunt's house and suddenly the street is closed by the gendarmes on both sides and all the people are surrounded and asked to show their papers. "Are you working somewhere? Who are you? What's your occupation? What are you doing now?" Whoever appeared not employed in a meaningful way that involved supporting the German war effort was being singled out, put on a truck, and shipped to the railroad station and put on a train and shipped to Germany. There were hardly any families that did not feel the tragedy of war.

A Polish Deportee Recalls Her Ordeal

Account by a Mrs. J.K. of her expulsion to the General Government from the port city of Gdynia, part of the Polish lands annexed directly to Germany in 1939. This deposition appeared in the Black Book of Poland, a publication that chronicled Polish suffering under German occupation.

On 17 October 1939, at 8 A.M. I heard someone knocking at the door of my flat. As my maid was afraid to open it, I went to the door myself. I found there two German gendarmes, who roughly told me that in a few hours I had to be ready to travel with my children and everybody in the house. When I said that I had small children, that my husband was a prisoner of war, and that I could not get ready to travel in so short a time, the gendarmes answered that not only must I be ready, but that the flat must be swept, the plates and dishes washed and the keys left in the cupboards, so that the Germans who were to live in my house should have no trouble. In so many words, they further declared that I was entitled to take with me only one suitcase of not more than fifty kilograms in weight and a small hand-bag with food for a few days.

At 12 noon they came again and ordered us to go out in front of the house. Similar groups of people were standing in front of all the houses. After some hours' waiting, military lorries drove up and they packed us in one after the other, shouting at us rudely and also striking us. Then they took us to the railway station, but only in the evening did they pack us into filthy goods trucks, the doors of which were then bolted and sealed. In these trucks, most of which were packed with forty people, we spent three days, without any possibility of getting out. I hereby affirm that in my truck there were six children of under ten years of age and two old men, and that we were not given any straw, or any drinking utensils, that we had to satisfy our natural needs in the tightly packed truck, and that if there were no deaths in our transport it was only because it was still comparatively warm and we spent only three days on the journey. We were unloaded, half dead at Czestochowa, where the local population gave us immediate help, but the German soldiers who opened the truck exclaimed "What! Are these Polish swine still alive?"

From Polish Ministry of Information, *The Black Book of Poland*. (New York, 1942), p.184.

Source: The above excerpts come from the following pamphlets published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: *Handicapped, Homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Poles*. Used by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Hilda Kusserow

The community of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany was small and peaceful. But the Nazi state considered members of that group to be enemies. Thus, the Nazis tried to coerce the Witnesses into signing a declaration recanting their faith (see page 172). Witnesses who refused were imprisoned. One who suffered such a fate was Hilda Kusserow, a devout member of the community, who, at the age of fifty-five, was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. She remained incarcerated there from 4 April 1943 to September 1945. She returned to her home in Eschborn, near Frankfurt am Main, where she died in 1979. This is the text of a letter Hilda wrote to her daughter Annemarie from Ravensbrück in August 1943. The letter was handwritten on preprinted forms that indicated the strict regulations for correspondence between prisoners in concentration camps and their families.

Reprinted from the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The Kusserow documents were made available through Robert Buckley.

(printed at the top of the letter)

Obscure and illegible letters cannot be censored and will be destroyed.

Concentration Camp
Ravensbrück
Fürstenberg in Mecklenburg

Every prisoner may receive or send one letter or card per month. It must be written in ink and be clearly legible. Letters may be no longer than four normal pages

of 15 lines per page, cards no longer than 10 lines. Each letter may contain only one 12-Pfenning stamp; additional stamps will be confiscated and forfeited to less fortunate inmates. Photographs may not be sent. All mail must be addressed with prisoner's identification or barrack number. Packages, regardless of contents, will not be received by prisoners. All necessities can be bought within the camp. Money may be sent; however this must be through postal draft. National Socialist newspapers are permitted; these, however, must be ordered by the prisoner himself through the office of postal censorship in the concentration camp. Petitions to the camp leadership for release from imprisonment are in vain.

The Camp Leadership
Ravensbrück, August, 1943

Dear Annemarie,

Many thanks for the letter and for the package from July 31. You put a lot of effort into it. I'm very glad that you visited your father, he had it the worst. Hopefully Karl is doing better. Were the little ones and Elis with you? We think about all of you very often, especially Hildegard and Waltraud. Best wishes to all the relatives and friends. Your loyal mother and (unreadable)

(printed on back of letter)

The prisoner is as before a determined Jehovah's Witness and refuses to relinquish its false doctrine. For this reason she has been refused the usual correspondence granted to prisoners.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Fifty Years Ago: Revolt Amid the Darkness* (1993 Days of Remembrance). Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1993, pages 171-172. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Concentration Camp _____
 Department II _____

Declaration

I, (Mr - Mrs - Miss) _____

born on _____

in _____

Herewith make the following declaration:

1. I acknowledge that the International Jehovah's Witness Association is disseminating erroneous teachings and using religion as a disguise merely to pursue subversive goals against the interests of the State.
2. I have therefore completely left that organization and have also spiritually freed myself from the teachings of that sect.
3. I herewith pledge that I will never again participate in the International Jehovah's Witness Association. I will immediately denounce any individual who solicits me with the hearsay of the Witnesses or who in any manner reveals his affiliation with the Witnesses. Should Jehovah's Witness publications be sent to me, I will immediately deliver them to the nearest police department.
4. In the future, I will obey the laws of the State, and particularly in the event of war, I will defend the Fatherland with weapon in hand and totally become part of the national community.
5. I have been informed that should I violate today's declaration, I will again be arrested.

_____ (place), _____ (date)

_____ (signature)

Konzentrationslager
 Abteilung II

Erklärung.

Ich, der, die

geboren am: _____ in _____

gebe hiermit folgende Erklärung ab:

1. Ich habe erkannt, dass die Internationale Bibelforschervereinigung eine Lehre verbreitet und unter dem Deckmantel religiöser Betätigung lediglich staatsfeindliche Ziele verfolgt.
2. Ich habe mich deshalb voll und ganz von dieser Organisation abgewandt, und mich auch innerlich von dieser Sekte freigeschieden.
3. Ich versichere hiermit, dass ich mich nie wieder für die Internationale Bibelforschervereinigung betätigen werde. Personen, die für die Irrlehre der Bibelforscher an mich werbend herantraten oder in anderer Weise ihre Einstellung als Bibelforscher bekunden, werde ich unverzüglich zur Anzeige bringen. Sollten mir Bibelforscherchriften zugesandt werden, so werde ich diese umgehend bei der nächsten Polizeidienststelle abgeben.
4. Ich will künftig die Gesetze des Staates achten, insbesondere im Falle eines Krieges mein Vaterland mit der Waffe in der Hand verteidigen und mich voll und ganz in die Volksgemeinschaft einfügen.
5. Mir ist eröffnet worden, dass ich mit meiner erneuten Einschutthaltung zu rechnen habe, wenn ich meiner heute abgegebenen Erklärung zuwiderhandle.

_____ den _____

Unterschrift

The Sufferings of a Gypsy Family

The Gypsies, like the Jews, were major targets of Nazi persecution. They were considered "asocials," and they were despised and hounded. As with the Jews, their victimization began before the war. First, their economic activities were limited. Then their physical movements were restricted. Later, they were sent to ghettos and concentration camps in the east, and finally they were killed. By war's end, some 500,000 Gypsies had died at Nazi hands.

This report focuses on Karl Stojka and his family of Romani Gypsies living in Austria. After Austria was absorbed into the Greater Reich in 1938, Austrian Gypsies were compelled to abandon their tradition of itinerant trading and came under increasing persecution. Many were sent to Dachau and Buchenwald. With the outbreak of war, other Austrian Gypsies were confined in internment camps. As the tempo of persecution quickened, Austrian Gypsies were shipped to ghettos in Lublin and Lodz, and in the end to the Auschwitz concentration camp and the Chelmo killing center. The majority of Austrian Gypsies died during the years of the Holocaust.

Karl Stojka, one of six children, was born in 1931. The Stojkas were members of the Lowara group of Romani and, like many other Lowara, made their living as itinerant horsetraders. In October 1939 the family lost their permits to work in that skilled occupation as a result of *Reichsführer SS* Himmler's forcible-residence order prohibiting all full or part-Gypsies—that is, all those not already interned—from changing their residence. The family felt compelled to move from the province of Burgenland to Vienna and convert their Gypsy caravan into a fixed residence. Karl's father and an older sister took jobs in a factory.

The Nazi fetish about racial purity, meanwhile, led to the creation of the Racial Hygiene and Demographic Biology Research Unit in the Reich Department of Health. Working in close cooperation with the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA), this unit carried out systematic genealogical and genetic registration of thirty thousand Gypsies and part-Gypsies in Germany and annexed Austria. The Stojka family members were photographed and registered in September 1940 in an internment camp in Vienna. Later, when the family was deported to Auschwitz, the prisoner number Z 5742 was tattooed on Karl's arm. The letter Z stood for *Zigeuner*, or Gypsy, and the tattoo also contained two dots after the letter, indicating that Karl was a full Roma and had been registered by the Racial Hygiene Unit.

In 1941 or early 1942, as Karl remembers, his father was arrested and deported to Dachau. Subsequently transferred to the brutally strict concentration camp at Mauthausen, Karl Stojka, Sr., was killed while trying to escape. The urn with his ashes was sent to his widow in Vienna—without explanation of any kind.

In March 1943, when Karl was approaching his twelfth birthday, the surviving Stojkas were arrested and held briefly in a Vienna police station while a transport for Auschwitz was assembled. They arrived in the Birkenau subcamp of Auschwitz on 31 March and were assigned to Block 10 in the Gypsy camp within Birkenau. There, in late 1943, Karl's younger brother, Ossi, seven years old, prisoner number Z 5743, died of typhus and malnutrition. To survive, Karl pretended to be seventeen years old and simply short for his age. He was assigned initially to work in the stone quarry and later in the prisoner canteen. There he was accused of stealing six bars of soap and, as punishment, was severely beaten.

In August 1944 Karl was transferred to Buchenwald, where he worked in a stone quarry, and in early 1945 he was sent to the concentration camp of Flossenbürg. In April, as Allied armies closed in on Germany, the Germans organized a death march of Flossenbürg inmates toward Regensburg. But after a week of the death trek, the U.S. Third Army arrived, and Karl was promptly hospitalized; he underwent several operations for the orthopedic injuries he had sustained at Nazi hands. The Stojkas were more fortunate than many other Gypsy families in that, although Karl's father and younger brother died in the Holocaust years, his mother, his three sisters, and one brother also survived their ordeals in other camps. However, more than thirty-five of their relatives had been sent to concentration camps, and very few of them survived.

After the war the Stojkas returned to Vienna, where Karl transformed an itinerant carpet business into a store specializing in the repair of Oriental rugs. His work with these objects of beauty inspired him to take up painting. He has developed a reputation as a gifted amateur artist and has had two major exhibitions of his works in Vienna under official auspices. His paintings focus on the tragedy of Jews and Gypsies during the Holocaust, and particularly at Auschwitz. At a recent exhibition of his autobiographical art, he said:

“Since 1948, I have worked with carpets and their beautiful colors still fascinate me. Brown like the earth, blue like the sky, and green like the trees. I felt compelled to paint. I have traveled through the forests and fields and the beauty of nature made me paint. I am the artist who emerged from these colors.

I was born for a short stay on this earth. I brought nothing with me and will also take nothing with me. God determined that I was born a Gypsy and I thank God for that. I am always proud to be a Gypsy.”

HITLER'S IMPRINT

From time to time it dawns on us that we have been detached from the rest of humankind. We will have to relearn how to live, how to hold a fork, how to live with the family of man. Too great a task. The resources within us will have to stand up to a nearly impossible struggle.

We have reverence for life, or no reverence at all. We have flare-ups of hope, or are dead within. We know almost everything about life or death. Still, we have to relearn how to walk, step by painfully fragile step. What will, what can, prop us up through these delicate inner negotiations?

A warring land is not without its share of decomposing bodies. They are strewn all around us. We step over them, devoid of any emotion. We no longer can locate the mourning niche for the dead in our shriveled souls.

We perk up only if some rags on the dead can be stolen, if something on the bodies is better than what we, the "living," are wearing.

Our training ground was Auschwitz. It is easy to step over the bodies on the roads of murder country. It is even easier when the bodies are clad in Nazi uniforms. Yet, whatever a body wears, parts of us are dead, and for moments we hurt from our inability to retrieve the heart or hurt of yesteryear. We want to cry not for the dead but for what is dead in us.

Will what we were return? A silent prayer is etched into our footsteps as we heartlessly step over a decomposing arm, a hip, or a head. Hitler's imprint is on the roads, in the sky, everywhere. He tore our insides into unbearable memories. He also set us up for hopes we should not have.

We try not to remember. We try not to think. Hitler, Hitler, why didn't you let us have normal deaths? Funerals? Tears? Why did you set us apart? Just graves, Hitler -- we have survived into an age where a grave is a mark of humanity.

When we were growing up, our mothers and teachers taught us other values. The inspirations we were nurtured on were examples of humaneness. We read and wrote poetry of heroism, learned of a common goal for common man, of justice, of being in the service of common good, of becoming healers -- doctors, nurses.

Our songs were love songs. We knew and felt tenderness. Were we misled by all who had a share in shaping us into young women and men? Is this the age of mockery, or were the years that sculpted us the mockery?

Hitler, we will forgive nothing you wrought. Even before you murdered us you tried to cripple our minds. We, the people of the Book, had to endure your book burnings. Knowledge in flames.

Some of us will forever weep for the books and schooling you denied us. The broken wings of our minds will always curse you for that. I curse you. So do Sally, Philip, Berta, Sam, Morris, Helen, Edith, Harry, Jacob, Nathan . . .

There is no peace on the roads, no peace in our hearts. Marchers, where are you marching? Step out of this age. Step off this planet. Life is tainted too much. Auschwitz is even bigger and more than whatever transpired before.

How will the world heal itself of Auschwitz? Is there a large pill for a large virus called hate? Is the world terminal? Can it get well? Can shattered lives ever be mended? Will saving the fragments be an impossible task?

All these unanswerable pondering are floating about within our exhausted minds. They are not questions properly formed. They just take up chaotic residence within our souls.

Source: Leitner, Isabella and Irving A. Leitner. *Isabella: From Auschwitz to Freedom*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1994. Copyright © 1994 by Isabella Leitner and Irving A. Leitner. Used by permission of Isabella Leitner.

EXCERPTS ABOUT THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

In the words of Judith Kestenberg, psychiatrist who has worked extensively with survivors:

She and two other women in camp Palamon were put in charge of 30 children, all under 13 years of age, some quite small. They could give the children only little food, but they tried to cheer them up and give them hope that a better future awaited them. One day the camp was surrounded by German troops, armed with guns. A horde of SS men rushed in and screamed that the children were to be dressed quickly and taken out. To hurry the children, the soldiers beat them. In the middle of the yard they made a fire. When a mother tried to drag her child away, they threw her with her child into the fire. The rest of the children screamed in terror. Reassurance was no longer possible. In the middle of this turmoil our informant fell unconscious, perhaps from the beating administered to her. When she awoke, she was lying on a cement floor with other adults. The children were gone. They had been herded into cattle wagons and taken to Treblinka, one of the extermination camps the Nazis erected in Poland.

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In the words of Germaine Tillion, historian, survivor of Ravensbrück:

Claire, a sweet and shy young woman was held in great affection by her comrades, partly because of her knowledge of poetry; I think she was a professor of literature. My mother liked her and often spoke to me about her. In March 1947 I sent an account of what I had learned about her death to the others who had known her: Do you remember Claire? First of all she was cruelly bitten and mangled by a dog. Who set the dog on her? We do not know, but he was Claire's first assassin. She went then to the *Revier* [hospital barrack] where she was denied treatment. Who refused her? We don't know for sure, probably [chief nurse] Marschall. The second murderer. Her wounds did not heal and she was sent to the *Jugendlager* [youth prison]. Who sent her? We don't know - probably [chief of Ravensbrück labor force] Hans Pflaumn or [camp physician] Winkelman. The third murderer. Now that she was among the ranks of the condemned who kept her from fleeing? An *Aufseherin* [supervisor] or one of the police? Possibly both, possibly [supervisor] von Skine or Boesel. The fourth murderer. At *Jugendlager*, Claire refused to swallow the poison [prisoner] Salveguart had [been ordered to] give her, and Salveguart, with the help of [military medics] Rapp and Kohler, beat her senseless with a club and finally killed her.

Claire was only one woman among 123,000 -- one solitary agony. For this one victim, five banks of murderers. And for all the others there were the same assassins, or some like them; every victim was killed and re-killed. We were all caught in a terrifying cycle with an assassin waiting at every turn.

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Ravensbrück, constructed in 1938-39, was designed specifically as a women's concentration camp. Originally intended to hold 15,000 prisoners, it eventually housed over 42,000 women from 23 nations. Over 130,000 women passed through Ravensbrück between 1939-45.

In the words of Berta Froehlich, Gypsy survivor:

I was 17 years old, when I was arrested in June 1939. We were brought to a labor camp; the SS claimed it was only for six weeks. We were not guilty of anything as far as we knew; in the summer we traveled in caravans and in the winter, we lived here in Bruckhausen. My father was taken to Dachau; my stepmother and young siblings (brothers and sisters) were sent to Poland. Arriving in Ravensbrück, we were told to remove all clothing; I was then assigned to

work at carrying sand and unloading bricks from 6 a.m. until evening roll call (*Abendappell*). At first, we were housed together with Jehovah's Witnesses. I was then reassigned to labor in the tailor's workshop, where we sewed military uniforms. Only because I worked very hard, did I have slightly better conditions. I was punished three times: once I was forced to stand at roll call for many additional hours. Why? Because my scarf was not in the proper box in the barracks. Once I was whipped, because I had slept next to my aunt during sub-zero weather for additional warmth. The third time I was placed in solitary confinement without food in a dark room for three weeks because I had belted my prisoner's uniform; this was after 4 years in the camps. When a large number of prisoners arrived from Auschwitz in the summer of 1944, we ran outside and tried to find our families. I wanted to see my stepmother and brothers and sisters. I saw many families that I knew, also many children, but not my own family. I was told that they had perished in Litzmannstadt (Łódź).

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The Germans soon began to move Jews from the ghettos into concentration camps. These transports by rail of Jews and other "undesirables" from all over Europe were the next step in the process of annihilation.

In the words of Jan Karski in his report to the Polish Government in Exile, 1942:

The Jews, when caught, are driven to a square. Old people and cripples are then singled out, taken to the cemetery and there shot. The remaining people are loaded into good cars, at the rate of 150 people to a car with space for 40. The floor of the train is covered with a thick layer of lime and chlorine and sprinkled with water. The doors of the cars are locked. Sometimes the train starts immediately on being loaded. Sometimes it remains on a siding for a day, two days or even longer. The people are packed so tightly that those who die of suffocation remain in the crowd side by side with the still living and with those slowly dying from the fumes of lime and chlorine, from lack of air, water and food...

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In the words of Robert Schneeberger, Austrian Gypsy survivor:

We traveled from the collection center (*Sammellager*) at Bruckhausen [a Gypsy internment camp in the 21st district of Vienna] via Fischamend, spending two nights sleeping in straw. For the first time, we realized how dangerous our situation was. In Dachau, we were assigned to labor in the stone quarry; we were also frequently whipped, resulting in the first deaths. We were housed in two gypsy barracks, approximately 200-300 people. After three months, we were herded into trucks with many blows and transported to Buchenwald. It was a rainy day. Several of us died immediately on arrival, when SS men rode their motorcycles into the arriving column of Gypsies, Jews and Poles. In one instance, a half-naked Jew was forced to climb a tree, and we Gypsies were forced to chop this tree down. This was Buchenwald.

My family had five brothers. Two of us were in Barracks (*Block*) 13; the other three were housed in several barracks. On several occasions, we were able to save each others' lives. We learned very quickly, never to report as "sick." Otherwise, one might be murdered by injection at the infirmary. My nephew had been forced to do calisthenics and gymnastics until he collapsed and died; he was only 17 years old. The corpse haulers were kept fully employed.

My brother and I were assigned to the shoemaking and tailor workshops. We were both musicians, not skilled laborers. But we tried to work there, since the Kapo assigned to these workshops behaved somewhat better towards us Gypsies.

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In the words of Richard Glazar, Treblinka survivor:

Then, on the second day, I saw a sign for Malkinia. We went on a little farther. Then, very slowly, the train turned off of the main track and rolled at a walking pace through a wood...we'd been able to open a window and an old man in our compartment looked out and saw a boy...cows were grazing...and he asked the boy in signs, "Where are we?" And the kid made a funny gesture. This: (draws finger across throat).

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In the words of Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister, September 8, 1942:

...the most bestial, the most squalid and the most senseless of all [the German] offences [is] the mass deportation of Jews from France, with the pitiful horrors attendant upon the calculated and final scattering of families.

This tragedy fills me with astonishment as well as with indignation, and it illustrates as nothing else can the utter degradation of the Nazi nature and theme, and the degradation of all who lend themselves to its unnatural and perverted passions.

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In the words of Nahum Goldmann, American Jewish leader:

General Dill took from the start a completely negative attitude. His argument was that bombing the camps would result in the death of thousands of prisoners.

I replied to him that they were destined to being gassed anyhow and explained that the idea to bomb the death camps had been suggested to us by the Jewish underground in Poland, with whom we were in a certain contact through the Polish government in exile in London, which regularly conveyed messages from the Jewish Nazi victims to us -- mainly Rabbi Stephen Wise and myself -- via the American State Department.

General Dill thereupon revealed his real motivation, by declaring that the British had to save bombs for military targets and that the only salvation for the Jews would be for the Allies to win the war.

I answered that the few dozen bombs needed to strike the death camps would not influence the outcome of the war and pointed out that the Royal Air Force was regularly bombing the I.G. Farben factories, a few miles distant from Auschwitz.

At the end of our talk, which lasted over an hour, I accused General Dill and his colleagues of lack of human understanding for the terrible tragedy of the extermination camps. He regarded it as discourteous for me to be so outspoken in my criticism.

Source: *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances* (Second Edition). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, pages 46, 47, 50, 58, 59, 64, 65, 77, 81, 88.

Produced by the International Center for Holocaust Studies of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Reprinted with permission by the Department of Defense and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Questions on Primary Source Documents

1. Read the following primary source documents:

- "A Letter to President Roosevelt"
- "A Yellow Stripe to Designate Jews"
- "Hull Telegram, 25 August 1944"
- "The Hell of Bergen-Belsen"

2. Make a list of questions you have about the information in these documents.

3. Share your questions with your classmates and discuss possible answers to your questions.

A Letter to President Roosevelt

December 8, 1942.

Dear Mr. President,

No name to you as representatives of all sections of the Jewish community of the United States.

Within recent months all Americans have been horrified by the verification of reports concerning the barbarities against the inhabitants of countries over-run by Hitler's forces. To these horrors has now been added the news of Hitler's edict calling for the extermination of all Jews in the subjugated lands.

Already almost two million Jews, men, women and children, have been cruelly done to death, and five million more Jews live under the threat of a similar doom.

Doc. 20

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The record of these heinous crimes against the Jews in Nazi Europe is detailed in the attached memorandum. Every device of a perverted and malignant ingenuity is being employed to hasten the process of their destruction. The result is a crime so monstrous as to be without parallel in history.

The victims of this brutality are guilty of no crime save that they are the children of the people through whose divine law and through whose prophets the world was given the ideas which constitute a basic part of the civilization that the Nazis seek to destroy. Through the bodies of these innocent and defenseless victims the Nazis strike at civilization itself. Death and destruction follow everywhere in the wake of the Nazi armies. Lands have been laid waste and their peoples destroyed or enslaved.

In the midst of their suffering, however, the peoples of Europe are sustained by a hope that the victory of the Democracies will destroy the Nazi scourge and restore freedom to the world. European Jews share that hope. But will they live to see the dawn of this day of freedom? Unless action is taken immediately, the Jews of Hitler Europe are doomed.

In this hour of deepest anguish and despair we turn to you, Mr. President.

You are the symbol of humanity's will to fight for freedom. Your voice awakened

the conscience of the world to the great crime of Lidice. When hundreds of innocent French hostages were led to execution, yours was the prophetic voice of democracy and human decency.

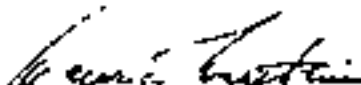
We ask you now once again to raise your voice - in behalf of the Jews of Europe. We ask you once again to warn the Nazis that they will be held to strict accountability for their crimes. We ask you to employ every available means to bring solemn protest and warning to the peoples of the Axis countries so that they may be deterred from acting as the instruments of the monstrous designs of their mad leaders.

We urge that an American Commission be appointed ~~at once~~ to receive and examine all evidence of Nazi barbarities against civilian populations, and to submit that evidence to the bar of public opinion and to the conscience of the world.


It is our earnest hope that such action as you may initiate will be joined with similar action by all the United Nations.

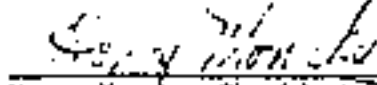
We are of the belief that you can speak the word and take such action as will strike fear into the hearts of the enemies of civilization and at the same time bring hope and faith to their victims.

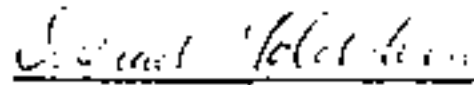
In this spirit we appeal to you, Mr. President.

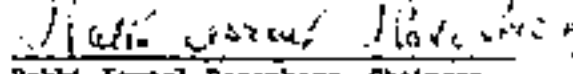

 Maurice Wertheim, President
 American Jewish Committee


 Dr. Stephen S. Wise, President
 American Jewish Congress


 Adolph Held, President
 American Jewish Labor Committee


 Henry Moskowitz, President
 B'nai B'rith


 Israel Goldstein, President
 Synagogue Council of America


 Rabbi Israel Rosenberg, Chairman
 Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the
 United States

A Yellow Stripe to Designate Jews

Markings were used by the Germans to isolate their intended victims from the surrounding population. These included Stars of David, triangles, and prisoner numbers. Even as late as November 1944, when the Allied armies were approaching Germany from both east and west, the Germans introduced new cloth symbols for Jews in concentration camps. A decree dated 20 November 1944, issued by Office D—the Inspectorate of the Concentration Camps—in the SS Central Office for Economy and Administration (WVHA), required that Jewish prisoners at Monowitz (Auschwitz III) wear a narrow yellow stripe above their designated prisoner triangles. (This order is reproduced below.) The last sentence of the edict stipulated that the yellow Jewish star was not to be used in the future. It is probable that yellow cloth was not available at Auschwitz in November 1944, two months before liberation of this concentration camp and killing center. A similar narrow yellow cloth bar was also used to designate Jewish prisoners in the west at the Breendonck concentration camp in occupied Belgium.

The signatory to the document, Richard Glücks, was born in Odenkirchen in 1889. A veteran of World War I and a businessman in Düsseldorf, Glücks joined the Nazi Party in 1933. A member of the SS, he was promoted to SS Major General (Gruppenführer) in 1943. He succeeded Theodor Eicke as Inspector of the Concentration Camps and Com-

mander of the Death Head Units in 1939 and became chief of Office D in the SS Central Office for Economy and Administration in 1942. Glücks was last seen in May 1945.

The original document is located in Suitland, Md., National Archives, Record Group 338, War Crimes Case Files ("Cases Tried") 1945-1959, Case 000: 50-9 Translation by Sybil Milton.

Secret (stamp)

From the SS Central Office for Economy and Administration, Office D—the Inspectorate of the Concentration Camps, Oranienburg, 20 November 1944

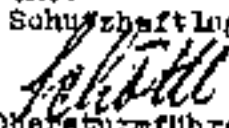
To the Commandant of concentration camp Auschwitz III (Monowitz)

Re: The marking of Jewish prisoners

In the future Jewish prisoners are to be marked with a narrow yellow bar placed above their triangular prisoner designations. The yellow Star of David is not to be used any more.

Signed: Glücks, SS Lieutenant General and Major General of the Waffen SS

The document is countersigned Schödl, SS First Lieutenant and Senior Commander of the Protective Custody Camp (Schutzhaftlagerführer)

<u>A b s c h r i f t</u>		<u>Tgb.Nr. 289/44-Geh.</u>
Wirtschfts-Verwaltungshauptamt Oranienburg, den 20. November 1944 Amtsruppenchef D-Konzentrationslager D.I/1 Az. 114 o 9/U./We, Geh. Tgb. Nr. 1367/44.		
<u>Betrifft:</u> Kenntlichmachung jüdischer Häftlinge. <u>Heruq:</u> ohne. <u>Anlagen:</u> - / -		Geheim.
<u>An Kommandanten KL, Au, III</u>		
Die Kenntlichmachung jüdischer Häftlinge ist in Zukunft in der Weise vorzunehmen, daß über dem dreieckigen Kennzeichen der Häftlingsart ein schmaler gelber Streifen aufgenäht wird. Der gelbe Judenstern ist nicht mehr zu verwenden.		
		gez. G l ü c k e
F.d.R.d.A.: Der 1. Schutzhaftlagerführer		Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-
 W-Obersturmführer.		
28. Nov. 1944		

HULL TELEGRAM, 25 AUGUST 1944

This telegram from Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Roswell McClelland of the War Refugee Board addresses reports "regarded as authentic" about the participation of Hungarian police in the arrest and deportation of Hungarian Jews.

Reprinted from documents in Washington, D.C., National Archives, Record Group 84, Foreign Service Posts, American Legation Bern, American Interest Section, General Records 1942-1947, Box 74. 840.1 Jews-Hungary.

Ack. A.I. No. 9356 to DF1, Aug. 31
(with copy to Mr. McClelland)

**LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA**
1819 AUG 25 1944

TELEGRAM RECEIVED (for action)
(Copy sent to Mr. & Room)

From: Bern Department Date: August 25, 10 p.m., 1944

No. 7933

Received August 26, 10 p.m.

Code: 30722

PARAPHRASE

OL

FRS No. 142.

Legation Stockholm has been informed substantially as follows by a person who is considered to be thoroughly reliable:

"There had been in open-air concentration for four or five days some 20,000 Jews of both sexes and of all ages, with nothing to sit on but the ground. They were later crammed into box cars which were nailed shut and dispatched to destinations outside of Hungary. With 60 persons to a car, they were so packed that no one could sit down or even move, and many must have died during the journey. The personnel which handled this movement were not Germans, but Hungarian gendarmes."

This report confirms statements from various sources that Hungarian police have been principally instrumental in the arrest and deportation of Jews from Hungary under tragically cruel conditions.

You are requested to transmit this information to the Swiss authorities for forwarding to the Government of Hungary, which should be informed that its consent is attentively awaited with respect to these reports, which are regarded as authentic.

HULL

In quadruplicate
copy to FA
-6

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Fifty Years Ago: Darkness Before Dawn*. (1994 Days of Remembrance). Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994, pages 114-115. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

THE HELL OF BERGEN-BELSEN

The BERGEN-BELSEN concentration camp was first established in spring 1943 on the site of a former prisoner-of-war camp. Originally constructed as an internment camp to hold candidates for prisoner exchanges, by mid-1944 prisoners from other CONCENTRATION CAMPS began to be transferred to Bergen-Belsen; the camp eventually became a full-fledged concentration camp by the end of the year. In early 1945, thousands of prisoners had arrived from other camps; conditions deteriorated quickly and life became a living hell for the prisoners.

Dora Sazfran, a Polish Jew arrested in May 1943, was first imprisoned in the MAJDANEK and later in the AUSCHWITZ concentration camps. During the evacuation of Auschwitz in January 1945, she was part of a FORCED EVACUATION on which hundreds died. She arrived at Bergen-Belsen later in the month, where she remained until its liberation by British troops in April 1945. She gave the following testimony about conditions in the camp just before its liberation at the BELSEN TRIAL in 1945.

Subsequently did you go to Belsen?—On 18th January I arrived at Belsen and was put into Block 28 [a barrack]. The conditions were so bad that it is impossible to find words in this world. In half a barracks there were 600 to 700 people. We were lying on the floor covered with lice and every other kind of vermin one could imagine. Our food depended very largely on the efforts of the senior of the block. If she was energetic we might get a quarter basin of soup at mid-day, if not, we might get it at three o'clock. There was no bread for four weeks before the arrival of the British troops. During the whole time I was at Belsen, people were not taken for baths nor were their clothes changed. Towards morning there were several hundred corpses in the blocks and around the blocks. When the Lager Kommandant or [defendant Irma] Grese came along to inspect people, the corpses were cleared away from the front of the blocks, but inside they were full of corpses.

What employment had you in Belsen?—I worked in the kitchen from three o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock at night in order to have a bed and a little more soup.

You have already pointed out No. 16 (Karl Francioh) [another defendant] as the man in charge of your particular kitchen. Do you remember what happened the day before the British arrived?—When the S.S. ran away on that day and when they returned, the man I pointed out [Francioh] fired from the kitchen, through the window, killing several women.

Was he the only person firing?—From the other half of the kitchen there was another cook firing. About 50 people were killed altogether. . . .

When did you go to Belsen?—At the beginning of January we were evacuated from Auschwitz to Belsen and quite a lot of people met their death on the way, for anybody who could not keep up was shot. We marched on foot day and night without receiving food and we were beaten at every step by the S.S. After eight days we were loaded on to open trucks, and, as the weather was cold and frosty, a large number of women died. At Belsen we were chased into the frost with just a nightdress on and had to parade for the shower-baths. We stood about outside lightly dressed for a very long time before we received any soup, and then we were sent to an empty hut. We should have received three-quarters of a litre of soup each day, but actually we only got half a litre, which was normally issued towards evening, and a crumb of bread. At the beginning we got this bread daily, but later on not at all.

Did you see any persons beaten at Belsen?—One evening I saw how a young woman was being beaten, Kramer, Volkenrath and another female being present. She was kicked and beaten with a wooden stick. In the bath-house I remember how a woman officer beat the naked bodies of the women there with a rubber truncheon. I also saw Volkenrath and two others—one of whom I recognize as No. 8 (Herta Ehlert) [a defendant]—undress and severely beat a girl in a small hut where two Blockführerinnen [women barracks leaders] slept. . . .

When you were at Belsen did the conditions in the camp with regard to food and accommodation get worse gradually or suddenly?—They deteriorated gradually. By the beginning of March things had got into a very critical state.

Is it true that many of the people were very ill, and that many arrived dead with the transports?—No, when they arrived at Belsen they were alive, but after a short time many of them died.

— Reprinted from Raymond Phillips, Trial of Josef Kramer and Forty-four Others (The Belsen Trial) (London, 1949), 85,91-93.

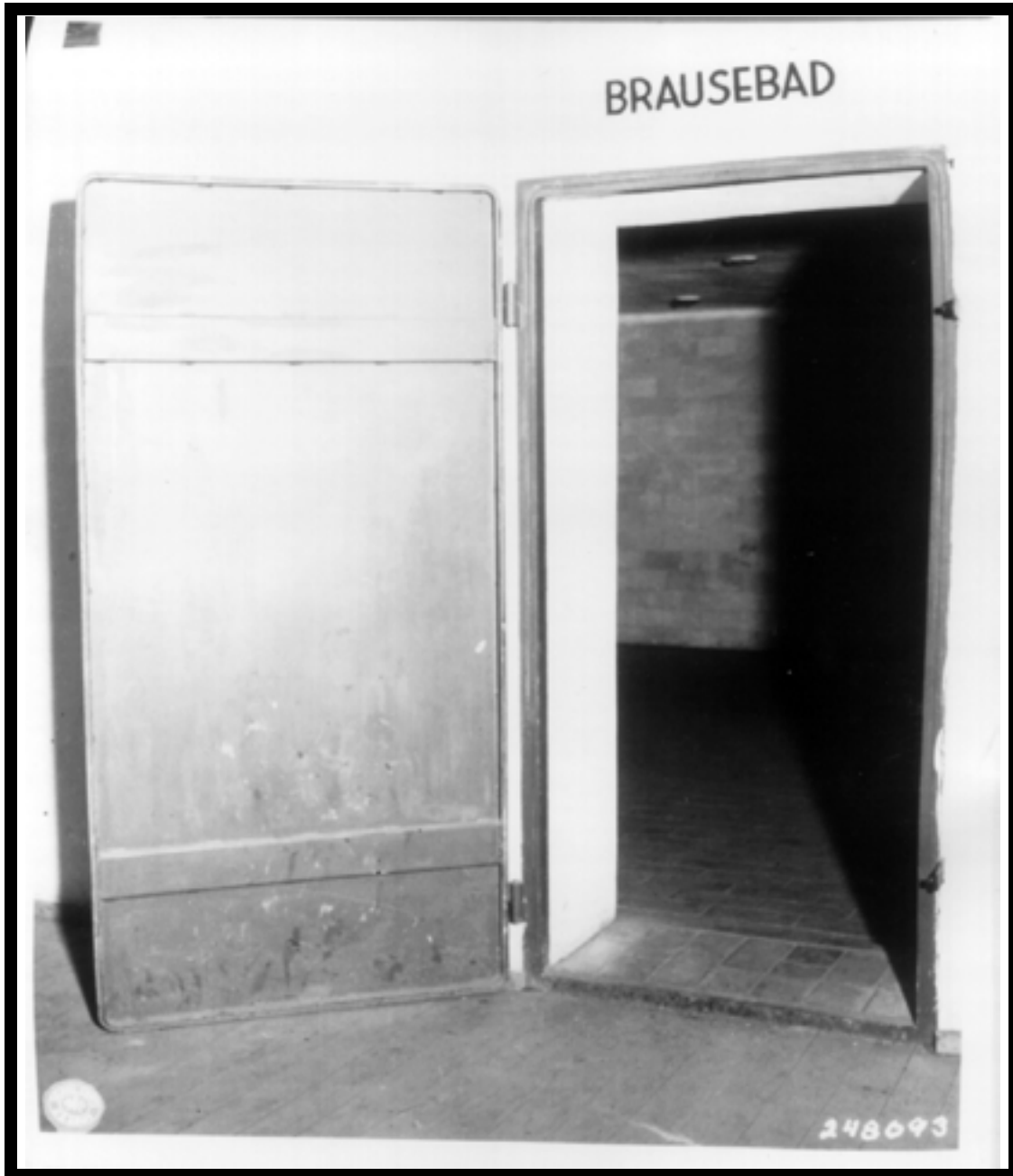
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PHOTOGRAPHS



German police 'pacify' a village in the Lublin region as part of Operation Werwolf (*Lydia Chagoll, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives*)

German authorities initiated a massive resettlement action in the Lublin district of Poland in autumn 1942 that was intended to relocate 108,000 people by the following summer. The fear that spread through the population as a result of these actions forced large numbers of civilians into the region's forests, significantly strengthening resistance groups like the "Armia Krajowa" [Polish Home Army]. In response to the resettlements, the AK launched a number of attacks on German forces and settlers, killing many of the latter. The strength and frequency of the attacks led Himmler, in turn, to authorize Operation Werwolf I, a pacification action in the region intended to destroy the resistance using Order Police, SS, Ukrainian, and 10,000 Wehrmacht [regular German army] troops. Werwolf I began on June 27, 1943 and then was extended as Werwolf II, lasting until roughly July 15, 1943. As a result of the operations, the entire region was depopulated. Villages were destroyed, their inhabitants either shot or forcibly moved to concentration camps, Germany for forced labor, or elsewhere in the General Government.



The door to the gas chamber in Dachau. "Brausebad" means shower-bath.
(National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)



Polish children in Auschwitz look out from behind the barbed wire fence. Approximately 40,000 Polish children were imprisoned in the camp before being transferred to Germany during the "Heuaktion" [Hay Action].

(Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi War Crimes in Poland, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)

TESTIMONIES

Father John Januszewski was born on December 20, 1911 in Kolsadki, Poland. He was a Catholic priest who refused to cooperate with the Nazis, and consequently was sent to the concentration camps of Sachsenhausen and Dachau.

A. One evening, in February 1940, the chief of police and the manager of the district came to talk with me. "Now the church authority is closed. And the only thing for you to do is to work with us." I said, "Gentlemen, you took an oath, and you are faithful to your oath. I am in the same position. I took an oath, and I will remain faithful to it." "Oh," he said, "then we have concentration camps, and you will be sorry." I said, "The decision is in your hands."

Q. Was this the first time you had heard about concentration camps or had you heard about them from other sources?

A. I heard. There was one priest who wrote to his family, but naturally it was very little. And the way he presented it, it didn't look too bad.

Q. So you knew that the letters were sent under duress?

A. Yes. I wrote to my family, too, from Dachau and Sachsenhausen.

Q. Can you describe the day when you were sent to the concentration camp?

A. On the 26th of August, 1940, in the morning, I went to church with two altar boys. I had just started the liturgy when I heard some heavy motorcycles starting. I told one of the boys to go quietly and see what was going on. He said, "There are some policemen speaking with your assistant." So, I took the key and opened up the door. The chief of police told me I was being transferred to Germany. He said a German priest would be sent here. First, they brought me to a jail, and then some SS men came and brought me to a transfer camp for three days, where they assembled about 180 priests and seminarians. They took us to a train, and we went to Berlin. Some of us had been very optimistic that maybe we were being sent to a monastery. From the train, they put us on trucks and closed the trucks up, and after a while, we arrived at Sachsenhausen.

Q. Nobody told you where you were going?

A. Nobody.

Q. And you didn't know what Sachsenhausen was?

A. No. I understood German, but some of the priests did not. There was an older priest with a walking stick who didn't understand the orders. A guard took his stick and hit him over the head with it. He started to bleed. We saw right away what kind of place this was.

They put us in a big shower, took our clothing off, examined us, and cut off all our hair. They gave us different clothing, shirts, and wooden slippers. And then camp life began.

We had to learn how to make our straw beds. All the covers had to be in line. We had to stand outside to be counted. Then they started to use us to work, for example, to carry bricks from one place to another.

Q. Were the priests kept together?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you share the same barracks?

A. Yes. These were buildings made for 45 people, but by the end, we had 300 people in them. There was a time when they had ten men sleeping, pushed together on five small beds. One with a head here, one with feet there, like sardines.

Q. Was there any religious activity conducted in the camp?

A. Yes. For some time, we could attend mass with one priest early in the morning. The priest even got up early. That was for a short time. We had a chapel in Sachsenhausen.

Q. Do you know if there were any religious activities for the non-priest inmates of Sachsenhausen?

A. No, there were not, and we had to be very careful even to speak with someone. If some of the lay people knew we had the sacrament and the confession, I had to know who that person was. Otherwise, the spies wanted to catch us.

Q. Were you able to give the sacrament at confession as an individual priest?

A. Yes, we priests heard our confessions between ourselves. But if a lay person wanted to come, we would speak with them, and we would pray with them, but we had to be very careful.

Q. How long were you in Sachsenhausen?

A. From August 29, 1940 to December 13, 1940. Then we were put on a train. Again, the optimists thought maybe we were going to a monastery with better conditions. The next morning when we looked, we were in Dachau.

Q. Did you know what Dachau was?

A. Yes, we heard about it in Sachsenhausen.

Q. Were you in a special compound for priests in Dachau?

A. Yes. Special blocks. Blocks 28 and 30.

Q. Just priests? How many priests were there?

A. I don't know. But I have a book with the statistics. From 1940 to 1945, about 1,700 Polish priests were in Dachau. Of those, 857 died there, and 830 were liberated.

Q. What was different about the routine in Dachau than in Sachsenhausen?

A. In Dachau, sometimes a lot of snow fell overnight, and we had to clean the snow off the streets. We priests had to carry the coffee in the morning, the soup at mealtime, and the tea at night. That was our duty. And then we started to work in the fields.

Q. In the camp?

A. No. Outside the camp, they had a plantation where they planted different plants, herbs, and so on. We worked there.

Q. When you worked outside in these fields, were you working with other prisoners or were these just the fields where the priests were supposed to work?

A. Other prisoners.

Q. And were you able to talk with them and discuss what was going on?

A. It was very dangerous to talk. I was once almost punished for that, but it didn't happen.

Q. Were you aware of any extermination activities going on at Dachau that involved any of the prisoners?

A. No. There was a crematorium.

Q. You knew about the crematorium?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. And you knew what it was for?

A. Yes. I even worked as a bricklayer building the new crematorium. Oh yes, I knew. I saw how they put the bodies in the oven, and they got the bones out. When I worked around the crematorium, I saw a few executions. They shot people.

Q. Basically, what you saw in the crematorium were people who had died from overwork and hunger?

A. Malnutrition and beating and whatever.

Q. Did you ever think about giving up?

A. No. I knew that I was not guilty of anything. I didn't do anything wrong. My only guilt was that I was Polish, and I was a priest. That was the reason. Many times I even felt sorry for the SS. If they would just know what they were doing.

Q. Father, let's discuss for a moment your views on the reasons for the arrests of the priests throughout occupied Europe. What do you attribute that to?

- A. I think generally, as Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, he wanted to exterminate all organized religions. And so, there should be the only one religion, his own religion.
- Q. Do you think he viewed the priests as a threat to his domination of Europe?
- A. Not exactly, but I think he knew that the priests in Poland had great influence on the people. The people were very close to the priests. And so long as we would have been with the people, there still would be some resistance, some spiritual resistance, some strength which he wanted to break.

Abraham Bomba was born in Częstochowa, Poland on June 9, 1913. He was forced to live in the Częstochowa ghetto for one and a half years, during 1941 and 1942. He worked as a barber in the gas chamber at the Treblinka death camp, from which he escaped.

- A. For me, the time which was the worst in my life was the evening before the holiday of Succoth, in September. That was when, in 1942, the second transport from the city of Częstochowa was sent to Treblinka. I was selected along with my wife, my baby, my mother, my brother, and other members of my family.

At seven o'clock in the morning, we were transferred to the trains, pushed into the wagons with rifles. They packed between 150 and 180 people into each car — one right on top of the other. You couldn't take a step or even turn around.

I was near the window. Early the next morning, I saw a sign, "Treblinka." I had never heard of it. It wasn't on the map. We came into Treblinka. They opened the doors, and we went out, those who could go out. We had over 300 dead people who choked to death inside the train. It was hot, very, very hot.

We went in, and right away they separated women and children to the left side, into the barracks, and men to a huge, open place. The women went in, and we never saw them again. I would say we were about 2,000 men. An order was given to take off our clothing. We undressed ourselves and were waiting. Then another order came to go into the extermination gate. I spotted a cousin of mine there. He said, "Look, I have an order to take out a few people. I am taking you out. Is there anybody with you?" So, he said he had two cousins, myself and another one. He called them to stay on the side. We got dressed, and we stood on the other side. After the people went into the gas chamber, all these packages were outside. They took us, about 10 or 15 of us, and we had to clean the place spotless.

Q. How did you know it was the gas chambers?

- A. The minute you came in — not only there, but several kilometers away — you could feel the smell of it.

Q. You mean the crematoria?

- A. Yes, that is the gas chamber. You shouldn't have to know about it or see it, but just the smell. . . . And when we cleaned up that place, we had to bring all those clothes from this undressing place to another, a very big place. It was the first time I saw a place like that in my life. I would say it was at least eight to ten stories high with the items separated: clothing, shoes, money, everything. I couldn't imagine what a thing this was. Some of us, about twenty-five people, thought maybe this isn't the gas chamber, but most of us knew this was the last way, that there was no way out from that.

Q. Did you see the other people moved into the gas chamber?

- A. Yes. We saw them going in through the gate to the extermination camp. What was going on inside, no, at that time, we didn't see it.

Q. Did the Nazi guards tell these people anything at all?

- A. No. They didn't talk to the people. The only thing they did was take out the kids and the old people, and they took them to an open place. They called it the hospital, but there was no hospital. There as a big ditch, I would say, 50 meters by 50 meters. At the end of that ditch, there were Ukrainians with their guns.They killed the children and the old people who couldn't walk to the gas chamber, and threw them into the ditch. And we had to clean that place up. Everyone started doing all kinds of jobs. My job was to look for pants, jackets, shirts, and other materials, and everything had to be separated according to what kind of material it was, wool, and so on. That was my job for a couple of hours until we finished. Then we got some coffee and a slice of bread and went into the barracks. That was our first night in Treblinka.

The barracks was made of wood. There was no floor, only sand, and at night it was pretty cold. At five o'clock in the morning, everybody had to get up, and they counted us. Each one of us got a number. Mine was 88. From my group of 25 whom they had taken out the day before, about 20 or 21 of them were taken to the gas chamber, and they gassed them. I don't know why me and two or three others were allowed to live longer. I will never know. Just a matter of luck, I don't know what to call it.

- Q. In time, your whole family had been taken?

- A. In fifteen minutes, there wasn't anyone left from my family, and this I knew from the first night on. I talked to people that first night. I couldn't sleep at all. Most of us were crying because in one minute you lost a family, which — I don't know how to describe it — it was more than life alone. And that was going on day by day, like that. Hundreds and hundreds of people were killed before they could even go into the gas chamber. One time there came an order, "Who is a barber?" I was a barber, so I met some people over there, who came with the first transport, and they knew people from my town. There were two or three of them, and they knew I was a barber, and they took me and about twelve or thirteen other barbers.

What was the job? To cut women's hair. Where? In the gas chamber. It was the first time I went through the gate. The wires were camouflaged with trees, so you couldn't look through and see what was going on on the other side of the camp. The camp where I had been working was called the first camp. The other side, where it was barbed wire with trees and grass around the wire, so it shouldn't be visible, they called the death camp or the number two camp. That was the first time I went through that gate and went into the gas chamber. The commandant said, "You have to do the job in a nice way and make the women feel like they are not going to die. They should just feel they're getting their hair cut and then going to take a shower."

And they transported every day, I don't know how many sacks and sacks of women's hair, and that was the job I did in the gas chamber. The minute we got through, we went out, and they closed the door from one side and from the other side, and about ten minutes after, from the other side where we couldn't see it, they took out the bodies. The new transport of women came in, and the same thing was going on until the transport was finished. Then we went back to the first camp for our usual work.

John Gregussen was born on January 16, 1925 in Trondhjem, Norway to non-Jewish parents. Active in the Norwegian resistance movement, his underground activities included helping to smuggle people hunted by the Nazis into Sweden. He was arrested by the *Gestapo* in 1943, and was sent to prison, and then to the Sachsenhausen and Neuengamme concentration camps. He was rescued by the Swedish Red Cross in April 1945.

- A. I was arrested in the fall of 1943. Luckily enough, I wasn't carrying a gun at the time, so I was clean. But I was chained and brought to the fifth floor of the *Gestapo* office. I found that four of my friends were already there.

In the beginning, they took us to the toilet when need be, but later on, they couldn't care less. Our human needs, so to speak, were not taken care of. From those cells, we were taken from time to time to interrogation and in the beginning, they were nice to me. They gave me a cigarette and took my chains off and made me feel, "My God, this is not too bad after all." But when they started asking questions I felt I couldn't answer, that's when they started putting the squeeze on. They broke a couple of fingernails and put salt underneath them. They gave me a good hiding; they woke me with a bucket of water. Then they put me back in the chair and started all over again.

And everything we said or didn't say or didn't want to say was taken down in testimony. They didn't leave us for a moment in peace, to emphasize that if we did not confess to this and that, according to a list they had, we would be shot tomorrow, and that was it. They had a list of charges against me about half a mile long for things I'd never heard of before, things I only knew about, and some things I actually did do. So I kept quiet until they nearly knocked my brains out. I thought, "Okay, I'd better tell them I set fire to that building," so I did. That kept them off for a while.

In the meantime, we had been in these heating cells for eleven days and eleven nights. Believe me, that's quite an experience. Sitting in these cells with chains on my feet and with my hands chained underneath me, I had no way of committing suicide. They didn't give me anything to drink, and that bothered me more than anything else.

After eleven days, we were taken up to a German prison where we were put up on the top cells. I later learned that all the death cell prisoners were kept there. We were placed one in each cell, with steel chains and no mattress to sleep on, and no blanket. They gave us a pillow to put on the floor. I was kept there like that for about two months, chained up the whole time. From time to time, I was called down for interrogations.

One morning, three senior *Gestapo* officers came along. One of them read a paper that my case had been reviewed by a German military court. On the basis of what I'd confessed to, I was doomed to die by shooting. They also informed me that my friends had received the same sentence, and then they left. I thought, "My God, I'm going to die." At that time, I was sixteen or seventeen years old. I didn't fancy the idea of dying. But I couldn't see any way of escape either. On the 7th of January 1944, the same senior officer came back and informed me that my case had been reviewed together with the four others, and I had been sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor to be served in German prisons.

At the end of January, I was told to be ready to come downstairs the next morning to be transferred over to a concentration camp outside of Trondhjem, which was called Salstad. Salstad had a bad name, because people who went in never got out. The next morning, I was piled into a bus with a few others but kept separate. We were taken up to the cells up on the top and kept in solitary confinement. I was there for about six weeks.

During that six-week period, they tried to use every method known under the sun to break our morale, our resistance. They took us down in the morning and gave us exercise between 9:00 and 11:30, because we were supposed to have meal at 12:00. Then they took us down again from 2:30 to 4:00 in the afternoon. During these exercise periods, it was a miracle that we survived at all, because if we couldn't do what they commanded us to do, they would either kick us or shoot us. Or they would give us a good hiding and send us back up, and we weren't allowed down again.

One day, we were again loaded into buses and driven down to the railroad stations and loaded into boxcars. The boxcars were then transferred over to a ferry. We finally ended up in Kiel, Germany. We were put in a penitentiary, run by the *Gestapo*, which was one of the most severe institutions you could find. If they found an excuse, they would behead us, chop our heads off. If a prisoner started shouting, they just took him aside and shot him. Simple as that. We came there for the final event, that was it. Outside the window, we could see a gallows with five ropes. They didn't bother with one at a time, it took too long. So now and then, they had a hanging, and everybody was called out to witness the hanging. Eventually we got used to it.

We did some work on the roads after the bombings. But later on, they found out that we had a red triangle beside our prison number, and we were no longer sent outside to do any work. We were kept inside the prison and thereby also denied any kind of possibility of organizing with one another, to steal bread or potatoes, or whatever we could steal to survive. The only way we could survive was by using our fellow prisoners. When one prisoner became ill and died, we kept him for as long as we could until his corpse started to smell. In the meantime, every day we collected his rations which we divided between us. That way, we survived the best we could.

In the camp, there was a man in charge of each barracks called the *Blockältester*. He was a block sergeant and was usually a criminal prisoner. He couldn't care less about our survival or anybody else's except his own. He was the man that divided the ration of soup. He had a great big soup ladle which was quite heavy. If it suited him, he would knock us over the head with that ladle, and we'd lose our ration of soup that day, just like that. So that meant, at times, when they had made a deal with somebody else to give away, for example, twenty rations of soup, somebody had to pay for it. So, quite a few people got a good hiding and no soup that day. At that time, we received no mail from home. I wasn't aware of whether my mother knew of my whereabouts, or if I was still alive.

From there, we were sent further east to Sachsenhausen. At one side of the camp, there were six barracks, totally isolated, which were inhabited by Jewish people. In the beginning, I didn't know what they were doing, what they were there for, or why they were being kept in isolation. There was a wall around these barracks with a guard outside.

We later found out that Hitler had a counterfeit operation in that camp, working in these barracks. The Nazis distributed counterfeit money, and these Jewish people produced it.

They were never intended to come out of there alive, and they didn't, to the best of my knowledge. But that's where he printed a great amount of his counterfeit money, millions of marks, dollars, francs, you name it. They were printed right there in the German concentration camp.

Q. How did they punish you in Sachsenhausen?

A. If, for example, someone was hungry and stole a loaf of bread and was caught, or even if it was only two slices of bread, they made the person bend over a table, and they would give that person 25 lashes on his back with a rubber hose with lead in it. That meant he couldn't walk for about fourteen days afterwards. We had a Russian fellow, he stole a leather bag from a motorcycle in order to make soles for his shoes. It was wintertime, snowy and wet and cold, and he was walking in his bare feet, practically. He would have died. He stole that, so he died anyway, because he got 50 lashes on his back. It happened at the place he was working, while we watched. And then we dragged him into the camp where they took him and hung him on top of that. We had to stand and watch every hanging until the man was declared dead. Only then would they release us to go back to the barracks. Sometimes, the gallows failed, and the rope broke. Either that or the man's neck didn't break, and it took quite some time before he was declared dead. Other times they didn't bother, and they shot him.

While passing through the main gate of Sachsenhausen to go to work, we were always subject to a kick in the back or a kick in the pants from the guards standing alongside us who counted us as we passed by. What we carefully did was to take our aluminum plate and hang it on the side we passed them on, so they would only kick the plate. We'd take a stone to knock out the dent, once we got in the woods, in order to make room for our soup.

In the fall of 1944, the camp capacity came to a bursting point. The crematorium was, at that time, working day and night. And people were standing, lined up between the outside and inside walls on the way to the crematorium. You could smell it, because there was no way of avoiding it. There were fellow prisoners working in there, so we knew what was burning.

One morning, 300 children, the youngest one was about eight months old, were brought into the prison. These children were given a whole barracks for themselves with two special guards to look after them. The youngest children were not assigned prison numbers, only the older ones. We were told they'd been picked up in Warsaw and the surrounding area and were transferred over to us. Nobody knew what was going to happen to them. Well, one morning, the barracks was empty. They were gone, and we all knew where they went.

In February 1945, early in the morning one day, about 800 of the Luxembourg police were called out to attention in the middle of the area and were moved on to the crematorium. Time went by and most of the members of the Hamburg police that had been in opposition for one reason or another were taken out early one morning. They went the same way, up the chimney.

In April 1945, in the middle of the night, the guards came and called out everybody up to the last name of X, which also included me, to scramble to attention outside, bringing every belonging we had. We saw the *Kommandant* of the camp coming in with his staff and a

funny-looking fellow. He turned out to be Count Bernadotte of Sweden. We still didn't know what was going on. He came forward, and he spoke to us. He told us that he'd gotten permission from Himmler to transport us to Sweden and liberty. The buses were driven to the main gates. We thought it was a fake, but they started loading us onto Red Cross buses. I was taken to Sweden and nourished back to health there. Then I made my way back to Norway. I learned that my father had died, and my mother didn't think I was alive, because I'd been listed as missing.

Judy Freeman, née Beitscher, is a child survivor who was born on March 2, 1929 in Uzhorod, Czechoslovakia. This area became part of Hungary in 1940. Persecution by the Nazis did not begin until 1944, when Judy was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Guben, and Bergen-Belsen.

Q. Tell me about the day that you left the ghetto.

A. It was a terrifying day when the order came that everyone must leave. We gathered up our belongings, and we were ordered under guard to march to the railroad station. Cattle cars stood on the railroad siding. And, at that point, there were brutal orders given, or counting off a certain number of people and shouts of "Get in, get in. Hurry up." And when I looked around to see how many people they were jamming into the cattle cars, it was horrifying. It was an enormous number of people. Eighty people, a hundred people, it was hard to count. All I knew was that it was very, very crowded, and we didn't really have any space to sit down or lay down or be comfortable. As soon as the allotted number of people were jammed in, they locked it from the outside. It was like a sliding iron lock and if I live to be 100, I will hear that click from the lock. That was the most terrifying sound that one can imagine, because it made me feel like we're locked in, and we cannot get out.

Q. Did anyone attempt to hide or escape?

A. People were too frightened to try to hide or escape because when the orders came, they always ended with, "Anyone disobeying will be shot." And, so nobody wanted to take that chance. I don't think anyone imagined that they were transporting us from what was Hungary to Poland only to be exterminated upon arrival. Who would have imagined anything like that?

Q. Tell me about your trip to the camp. Did you have any food?

A. We took food with us, but we didn't know how long the journey would last, so the food was gone maybe after a day or so. But more than the hunger, the lack of sanitation was a nightmare. There was a bucket, one bucket, in the cattle car. That was the toilet. And the agony of having to go publicly, number one, was a horror and, second, after the bucket filled, there was no place to go. It spilled out, and the stench was unbearable. Periodically, when the train stopped, an SS man opened the door, the latch, and boarded each cattle car and ordered someone to take the bucket out and empty it. This happened either two or three times during the entire journey. But, in the meantime, for the rest of the time, it was horrible.

Q. Were there any escape attempts?

A. No. I don't know of any.

Q. What was the condition of the people during the transport?

A. Their condition was deteriorating with every hour. Everyone was frightened. They were moaning, and the children were crying, and people were saying, "Give me a little more space. I can't breathe." There were no windows. There was just barely a little bit of an opening in these cattle cars, covered with barbed wire. So it was terrible. We couldn't

breathe, we couldn't sit, we couldn't lie down. There was not enough food, no water, no bathrooms. So you can imagine.

We finally stopped at Auschwitz. At the moment of arrival, we were ordered off the train.

Q. When did you arrive at Auschwitz?

A. It was early May 1944. The order was given that men and women stand in separate groups. I was immediately separated from my father, and I never saw him again. I was standing with my mother and my sister and my female relatives. Then we had to file past Dr. Joseph Mengele who was always there to sort the new arrivals. With a wave of his hand, he decided who will live and who will die. He would send people to the right or to the left. Those to the right were allowed to try to live. Those to the left were marched to the gas chamber upon arrival. And if I tell this story a thousand times, it doesn't make any sense to me ever, ever, how they devised a system for transporting people long distances only to be killed upon arrival. But the whole thing was based on secrecy and deception. So, this was the gigantic deception.

My mother, my sister and I filed by Dr. Mengele and his assistants. He looked at me and waved me to the right. My sister was twelve. No child under the age of fifteen or sixteen had a chance to survive. All the children under the age of fifteen or so were sent to the left with their mothers, grandmothers, and younger siblings. When I saw that happening, I took some steps to follow my mother and my sister, because I wanted to be together with them. A man in a striped uniform who worked there, who was a prisoner there for a long time, saw me do this. He came, he like bounded up to me, quickly, grabbed my arm and very firmly and very sternly shoved me back to the right side where the young people were. And he said to me, "You were ordered to go in this side." Had he not intervened, Dr. Mengele would certainly not have stopped another Jewish kid from dying in the gas chambers.

Q. What was your first impression of what you saw when you got to the camp?

A. Oh, terror. Total terror.

Q. What did you see or smell or hear or think?

A. I saw armed SS men, rifles on their shoulders, guns in their holsters, dogs on leashes at their sides, milling about, barking orders, shouting, shoving people. I smelled a horrible odor. I had no idea what that was. Everybody was scared. We didn't know what was awaiting us. Conditions were horrifying.

There were thirty-two barracks in the sub-camp where I was sent. We were told to go outside and line up. Eventually the sun came out. We were standing there cold and shivering in the morning in rows of five. I remember holding onto the people in my row until the SS men or SS women or the guards came to our row and then, of course, we had to stand completely still and straight. But we would hold each other and try to get warm from each other's body heat.

After roll call, we were permitted to go to the washroom which was a large building with spigots of cold water trickling out of faucets, slow warm water. And you had to be quick about it if you wanted to get a few drops on your fingers and, perhaps, wash your eyes or

face. That's all the bathing there was. After that, we were permitted to go to the latrine, which was again a large building with wooden benches and holes in the benches. And everyone was given, I think, a minute. Then we went back into the barracks where breakfast was served. A bowl of lukewarm, sweetish tasting, ersatz coffee -- imitation coffee -- was served in one bowl for ten people. And it went around from person to person with a pre-arranged number of sips everyone was allotted to take.

Q. That was all you had for breakfast?

A. That was it. The rest of the day was spent doing absolutely nothing. We were not taken to work. In the afternoon, there was another roll call for a couple of hours. Again, we were allowed to go to the latrine at that point. Twice a day. If you had to go in-between, you were just out of luck, and it was a horror. And after latrine, we were again ordered back into the bunks. There was no space to stand. A thousand people cannot stand in this space. So we had to be shelved, with three on our shelves, stacked on the shelves, literally. And we received a bowl, in the same bowl that we had the morning ersatz coffee, a bowl of vile-tasting, horrible soup that had no identifiable ingredients in it. It looked green most of the time, and it smelled horrible and tasted worse. And, again, we passed it from person to person.

Our food ration or so-called dinner was the few sips of soup that tasted so awful that I remember holding my nose and saying to myself, "Swallow, swallow. It means life. If you don't swallow, you'll die." And I did not want to die. A little piece of black bread, sometimes with a small pat of margarine, was also given to us at the end of the day. Once in a great while they gave us a little slice of salami or *wurst*, but most of the time we got only bread. And I tried to be very thrifty and save a little piece of it for the morning, which I didn't always succeed, because I was so hungry after just a little bit of time in Auschwitz that it was very difficult to resist eating the little piece of bread that we received.

And as the days and weeks wore on, there were selections among us frequently. Those people who have lost weight or developed any kind of illness or problem or became mentally deranged were taken away. We found out about the gas chambers and knew where the people were taken to. If they selected people who were fairly able-bodied still, we were hoping that they were taken for some sort of work detail, to another section or to another camp. If they looked like they were sick, had blemishes on their bodies, had some scabs or scars or anything, then we were pretty sure that they were taken to the gas chambers. At each selection, we had to remove our dress and march by the selectors, the Nazi overseers, stark naked. Many times we were ordered to hold our arms up in the air so they could see whether the ribs showed, and what condition people were in. And you can well imagine, as time went by, people were getting to be in worse and worse condition. Not only did I lose weight, but I felt hungry constantly -- and it is not the kind of hunger that we feel when we skip a meal -- it is a total, all-pervading hunger that makes every muscle, every cell in your body hurt. It was more than hunger. It was starvation.

While in the camp, I was on my own and tried to help others whenever possible.

Q. How did you do that?

A. I'll tell you how I did that, and that was sort of a unique skill that I came upon accidentally.

I was always hungry, as I told you, and the odor was unbelievable -- the unwashed bodies, pressed together like sardines in a can. You cannot describe what it was like. But more than anything, I wanted to remember what was going on there. The horrible pain when one had to go to the bathroom and couldn't go; the gnawing pain of the hunger; the dirt; the smell; the crowding; the dehumanization when there were selections; the beatings. I kept thinking to myself, "I must remember everything, everything. I have to remember, because the world out there doesn't know what's happening. And I have to live so that I can tell people about it."

So I sort of made mental notes of everything that was going on around me. It was very brutal conditions. Then I noticed that some of the people around me were staring ahead with a blank stare, and they no longer laughed, no longer talked. That was the end of the line for those who gave up and simply did not respond. And I said to myself, "You can't do that. If you're going to remember, you can't become a zombie." So my survival skills evolved from that, and I started to give book reviews to my ten people around me. And I started telling them about movies I had seen and books that I had read. That kept me occupied, kept them interested, and kept my mind going. I did not lose my mind. I was very proud of that.

Q. And you never felt like giving up?

A. No. What helped me to survive was the strong will to live, the strong desire to remember, and the survival skill that I just described, plus, I noticed that whenever there were selections or whenever we were herded outside for roll call, those on the edges of the crowd got hit by either the *Kapo* who supervised us or the SS women who could reach somebody on the edge of the line or the edge of the crowd. So I would mingle into the middle as much as I could. This was another survival skill.

Q. Were there any religious practices that were ever attempted in the camp?

A. Yes, those girls who were very religiously oriented tried to fast on Yom Kippur, for instance. But there were no services or anything like that. There was no way but I remember having an argument with them, where I remember saying that even God doesn't want you to miss that miserable few sips of soup.

Q. Could you tell the functions of the following personnel? The *Kapo*?

A. The *Kapo* usually was the overseer of the work detail. Since my camp mates, my bunk mates and I did not work, we did not deal with a *Kapo*. We had what was called a *Blockältester* [block supervisor or elder].

Q. And what were their functions?

A. They were supposed to keep order. But she was the one who told us at the very beginning, when we first arrived at Auschwitz, about the gas chambers. Since I was with young girls, as the days wore on, we were expecting to see our mothers. We were all expecting to see our family. So, there was crying and moaning and wondering whether we'll ever see our parents or how we get to where our parents are. She got tired of this scene. There was like a brick stove-like contraption in the middle of the building, but it didn't give us any heat or anything, it was just there. She got up on this height and said, "I want you all to shut up. I

don't want to hear any crying, any moans, and any calls for your mothers. You are never going to see your mothers. Your mothers went out the chimney." And we didn't know what she was talking about. She said, "Well, I'm not supposed to tell you this, but since none of you will survive anyway, it doesn't matter. So you might as well know that when you first arrived, your mothers and grandmothers were taken to a place where they were gassed and burned." I thought she was trying to frighten us.

Q. You didn't believe her?

A. No. Not at first. But, then, the evidence pointed to her telling the truth, such as ashes floating in the air, the horrible stench that smelled like burning feathers, and the skies lit up red if ever I looked back at night.

As time went by, there were constant selections. They would take people away even if they didn't look emaciated. And we were terrified of the selections because, at that point, we had the sense of them wanting to vacate the camp by eliminating those who were still alive. And we really were beginning to feel the sense that there was no chance and no hope. And as much as I tried to dodge selections at times when I could, I found myself in a selection.

This was now November of 1944. By then, I was quite skinny, too. I still was on my feet, I didn't have to be carried or anything. I still marched along myself with a large group of people who were selected. I was taken to where I could smell the odors, those horrible, burning flesh odors, prominently. At that point, I knew that as much as I wanted to live, I was not destined to. We were taken into the anteroom of the gas chamber and told to undress. By then, the undressing process was sort of routine, and I didn't feel quite as horrified as the first time. Then we were told to sit on wooden benches stark naked, shivering, terrified, fully realizing that our turn has come. At that point, in front of me were the large, iron gate-like doors, very large doors. A couple of SS men and women came up and down the rows and counted to about half of the room. All those people were told to go through the doors, and the doors closed. That was the actual anteroom to the gas chamber, and those who went through went into the gas chamber.

I kept thinking to myself, as much as I want to live, it's not meant to be. Some of the girls around me were saying prayers. I wasn't particularly religious, I wasn't praying, but I said to myself, "I hope I have been as good a human being as I know how to be. This is the end of the road even though you wanted to come out of this alive." And a miracle happened. An air raid siren sounded. There were a lot of bombings and air raid sirens in those days at that point in the area. The lights went out, and the whole proceeding was interrupted. Those who were remaining in the room and were still alive, me among them, were herded out and sent back into the barracks where we came from. That was the closest I came. That was truly miraculous to me, that the others who went to the doors were gone, and the rest of us came out of it alive.

I was in Auschwitz for seven months. After that, I was taken to a labor camp near Berlin, called Guben. It was a small, little-known camp. Very soon after the arrival of some new prisoners, an order was given that our camp has to be evacuated because the Russians were advancing on Berlin. We were told that we had to leave and, naturally, under guard, in rows of five, we were given a piece of bread. We had no luggage. We had no possessions. We were taken on the road. And this was one of the most harrowing, horrible episodes in the entire system of the Holocaust -- the death march -- where we were forced

to march through the roads of Germany for about eight to ten days in the winter of 1945, through forests and fields.

Q. Who was marching with you? The German soldiers?

A. Yes. But some of them came on horseback, and some were marching with us.

Q. You weren't clothed properly?

A. I had a coat at that point, but many of the people didn't.

Q. And how about shoes?

A. By then, my shoes wore out. I'm glad you asked me that. I had wooden clogs but no stockings. They rubbed blisters, bleeding sores on my feet. The road was snowy. It was very cold. It was wintertime. The snow accumulated on the bottom of these wooden clogs. It felt like I was walking on stilts. It was very difficult to walk, the little piece of bread was gone quickly, and there was no food the rest of the time.

Q. How long did you march?

A. About a week or so.

Q. And no food. Water?

A. No water. It was snowing. I reached up to the person's shoulder in front of me, and I scooped up the snow in my hand.

Q. How about resting? Any resting, any sleeping?

A. Every so often, they would let us, by permission, sit on the side of the road. Or every so often, we were permitted to move over to the empty side where there was no humanity sitting and use it for a toilet. But no food, not on a regular basis, anyway. All these guards sat down, encircling us. Try to picture this, while we were starving, they unpacked their sandwiches and their thermoses of hot coffee, and they were eating right in front of us. It was torture to watch it. At that point, I encountered the one and only kindness from a German soldier that I've ever encountered personally. He was not an SS man. He was a *Wehrmacht* [regular German army] member, an older man. And he saw me staring in his face as he was eating this big, thick sandwich. So, when he came to the end of the sandwich, about towards the crust of the bread, he put it down on the ground, and he motioned with his head to come and get the crust. And I thought to myself that's what we used to do when we threw something for a dog, but I was so thrilled. I blessed him even for a little crust of bread.

Q. Of the number of people that marched, how many do you think survived the march? Half?

A. I don't know. Less.

Q. Less than that.

- A. Much less. Then we were put into cattle cars and went on to our next destination which was Bergen-Belsen.

Dora Roth, née Goldstein, is a child survivor who was born on February 1, 1932 in Warsaw, Poland. She was forced into the Warsaw ghetto with her family in 1940. In 1941, they ran away from Warsaw to Vilna, but when the Germans re-occupied Vilna in 1941, they were forced to move to the ghetto there. In 1942, she was sent to the camps of Riga-Kaiserwald and Dünaberg, Latvia. Finally, she was sent to Stutthof concentration camp, where she was liberated by the Russians in April 1945.

Q. What concentration camp did you go to and how were you sent there?

A. They took us to Riga and then to Dünaberg, where we were working. I remember that when they undressed us, I already knew that there were gas chambers where they put people in a room, opened the faucets, and gas came in. I got hysterical. I said, "I'm not going in." My mother didn't know what to do. I said to her, "Look, you lived enough. You're old enough. I want to live, I don't want to go in." But we had to go in. Everybody was so sure that this was the last time that they would be alive. They said the words *Shema Yisroel* [Hear O Israel] which is the last prayer which the Jewish people have. But it was just a shower. When we came out, we got our clothes.

We had to work in Dünaberg. I had to carry stones and bags of cement. One day, I couldn't pick up the stones because my hands were too small, so the German put me over his knee and spanked me ten times. He said, "You have to work exactly as all the others."

Q. Do you remember how you got from one camp to the other?

A. Yes. We were transported by trains which were all closed, with no windows. I had only a two-inch place to stand, and I was pushed out of my place. I became a living bug, because nobody wanted me to stay or step on them. So, from one end of the wagon to the other, I was pushed around and all bruised. I sat down on someone and started to talk to that person, saying how grateful I was to have a place to sit, because I was so tired. When they opened the doors after three days, I turned around to say thank you, and the person didn't answer. She was dead.

Q. What happened when you got off the train?

A. We were pushed by Nazis with boots. We were dirty and smelling and stinking. We went to this camp, and they had to shower us. They cut our hair. Twice before this in other camps, they didn't cut my hair, because I was good-looking. So, they had pity on me, but this time they cut my hair. We got numbers. We did not have numbers on our arms. We got numbers with a chain instead. We were always called by our number, not by our name. We lost our names.

In the camp, they came twice a week with trucks to take away the people that were about to die, or had infections, or were children. My mother always managed to hide me. One day, she didn't hear the noise of the truck, and she didn't know what to do with me. Now, we didn't have bathrooms. We had pits, as big as this room. She threw me in there, not knowing how deep it was, because they may or may not have emptied it. They covered it with earth, but she was so desperate. She hadn't heard them coming. They were already in the camp, and they went into the barracks. I was standing in whatever . . . you know, and she took me out, once they left. I stank for many weeks. There was no hot water, and nobody wanted to stand

near me. Everybody said, "Take away the stinking little girl." But my mother saved my life. That I can never forget.

Q. Did you live in the same barracks with your mom and your sister at this point?

A. Yes, until my mother died. That is also something I will never forget. I will never forget when someone came to me and said, "Look, your mother died now. Come, little girl, and say goodbye to her." And I said, "This is not my mother." It was a skeleton with big eyes that they threw by the legs into a mountain of skeletons. I just didn't want to say goodbye. There was no goodbye to a skeleton. I think now that I wanted to remember her as a mother and not as a skeleton or as a dead person.

Q. What happened with your sister?

A. We were taken to the gas chambers. We were taken by numbers, this and this person has to get out. So they put us together from all the barracks. We were standing there in front of a gas chamber. You undressed and then you entered the second room. Then they opened the faucets, and you suffocated. So, we were standing in front of that room where you had to undress. I was taken out. My sister went in. If I would have gone in, I wouldn't be sitting here. Two Germans told me I had beautiful eyes, and they told me to get out. "Save yourself." My sister motioned with her hand that I shouldn't follow her. She understood that she was not going out from there anymore, and she waved me away. So I went out.

From then on, my life became a life of loneliness. I was afraid that they would come and pick me up. It was a life which was not life anymore. The lice were eating me up. I was hungry. My stomach turned. I had infections and typhoid. I was lying there, and it was cold. It was not a life one can describe. It was the end. That was the end of humanity.

Q. How did you survive by yourself back in the barracks? Did you talk to anybody?

A. Who talked to a seven or eight year old child? What was there to say? Once my mother died and my sister was sent to the gas chamber, nobody talked to me. So, I pretty much stopped talking. I was hungry. No one could give me food because everybody was hungry. I didn't see any other children there.

My world was the barracks. It was very grey. Every woman looked the same, because they all had cut hair. When people are hungry, with thin faces, you see only eyes. We were wearing the same clothes, so there was no identity. Everyone looked the same, except for me, because I was smaller. I stayed in this concentration camp until the day of the liberation.

Q. Was that in 1945?

A. Yes. They took the prisoners on a death march, but I had typhoid. I couldn't walk anymore. So, they let me stay in the barracks. In the morning, two Germans came with machine guns and sprayed the bullets all over the people that couldn't walk. Because even on the march, if you couldn't walk, they killed you. They were in a hurry, because the war was coming to an end.

A few hours later, the first Russians came into the barracks. I was told that even the tough Russians fainted at the bloody picture that they found in there. Every Russian army unit came with a field hospital with nurses and doctors who were used to seeing blood. I don't know how much blood there was, because I lost consciousness. I woke up in a hospital. I really didn't have the pleasure of being liberated.

Q. Did you get hit by any bullets?

A. Two bullets in my back. I fainted, probably from the loss of blood. When the Germans had stormed the camp, they entered the barracks and fired the machine guns blindly. They were in such a hurry to kill everyone and escape, because the Russians were coming. Whoever had been sitting got it in the head. I was lying on my tummy. So, I got it in my back. Some people probably died, and some people didn't. A few hours later when the Russians came, they found me. I was still breathing. So, they took me into the field hospital, and there I was operated on for the first time. I woke up three or four days later, when I regained consciousness. They had to give me blood because I'd lost a lot. I eventually had four major operations, because they couldn't find the second bullet.

Later, in a refugee camp in Feldafing, Germany, I got a high fever. I was burning and nothing hurt me. So they took me to the hospital and they found out that I had double tuberculosis, which was very contagious. So I was sent to Italy, to a sanatorium, and there I stayed for three years with the nuns, recuperating from tuberculosis.

The story I tell is one of a Jewish child who still does not understand why she had to go through all this. The other day, my grandchild called me up and said, "Grandma, bring me a pair of sunglasses with birds on them." What a different life! She wants glasses with birds, and I just wanted a bigger piece of bread at her age. That's all I dreamed about, a bigger piece of bread. So, it is a very different story to hear it from a child. There were 1,500,000 stories like mine that you could have had, but they died. The real memorial for them is the story that we are leaving to the generations to come. I don't know if they will learn from me. I hope so. I do hope so.

Erwin Herling was born on April 22, 1920 in Bad Ischl, Austria (near Salzburg). He was interned in the ghetto of Clausenberg, Hungary from 1939 to 1941. In 1944, he was sent to Auschwitz along with his family. When Auschwitz was evacuated in January 1945, he was sent to Ebensee, a satellite camp of Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. He managed to keep his father alive and with him the entire time. They were liberated at the end of April 1945 by American forces. He became a director of the Bad Ischl displaced persons' camp in Bad Ischl, Austria.

Q. What were the first sights you saw when you got to Auschwitz?

A. When they opened the door and they yelled, "*Raus, raus!*" [Out, out] We had to go out. In the background were the crematoria. I saw the flames from the big chimney. I thought that they were burning all the belongings that people brought, because then when I got out, I saw the people in the striped uniforms. So I understood that there is no such thing as a private place to be. The first thing they did was to separate the men on one side and the women on the other side. It was normal to think after the trip on the train, that we would go to a shower we clean ourselves. It was also normal to think that the women and the men will not go together.

Q. So you and your father remained together?

A. Yes.

Q. And your mother and sister remained together.

A. Right. There was a selection. They selected people to work by professions, and they yelled for carpenters and tailors and shoemakers and home builders. I noticed that the group of people remaining looked like intellectuals, and the physical workers were out by then. So I told my father that we have to adopt some kind of a trade to get out of this, because if we are left here without a profession, they are going to destroy us one way or another. But my father wasn't willing to lie and to say he was anything which he was not.

So they asked for those with the trade of painter. I told him, "We are going to be painters. What is the big deal, a better painter, a lesser painter? We don't have to paint like Leonardo da Vinci." My father didn't even want to do that. I went to an SS officer who was standing right there in a group with Mengele. I said, "There is a man here I know from my place. He is a very good painter but he doesn't want to work." It was a big risk denouncing my father because they could have shot him on the spot. The SS asked me, "Who is the man?" and I showed him. So, he grabbed my father and he gave him a beating. My heart broke right away in pieces. He was down on the ground. But the SS man pushed him into the working group. That was actually the last or maybe one before the last. The rest of the men were taken away straight into the so-called showers. They looked like showers, but they were gas. They gassed the people in the crematorium. They selected my sister to work because she was young. She was sent away to work, and my mother remained there. They killed her.

They put us to work in an armament factory outside of the camp. I worked in the office, and my father also worked in the office as an accountant. During the daytime, while we were working there, we were treated like humans. As soon as we got out from work, it was very

different right away. When we came in the evening, for instance, and an SS didn't like you or you had something on you, they beat you up. Every day, they killed a few Jewish prisoners with their hands. I told myself that I will have to survive this and tell the world as a witness.

In the morning, we got up at three o'clock, because if we wanted to wash and to be clean, it was essential. We had to go before four o'clock when everybody else went.

We were in a selection in December 1944. Selection meant that there came a new transport of two thousand people, and they didn't have space. If someone was in bad condition physically, they were selected for the gas chamber. Two thousand people were sent to their deaths. At that time, which was the end of '44, my father was still in very good condition, but he was about fifty-three years old. So, I searched for a man I had seen whose arm had been injured in an accident. That made him a candidate for the gas chamber right away. Everybody knew that. I tried to maneuver to put my father right behind him and me after. So when the SS grabbed the man's hand and read his number, my father and I slipped through. I told my father to put on his clothes. There were about twenty inches of snow outside. He ran for maybe a mile. I don't know where he got the strength from, but out of fear that they would call him back, he ran in the snow. I couldn't keep up with him. That's why I'm explaining this, because this fear and the will to live give you the strength to do things which normally you would not be able to do.

Q. Now how long did you remain in Auschwitz?

A. Till 1945, the 18th of January. At that time, the Russians were very close to occupying the camp. The Germans ran away. They made everybody go on what was called a death march, and we had to march from the camp. We could hear the artillery, shooting, cannons which meant that the Russians were getting close. I went on this march with my father. We walked for about two days. There were many guards with us, and if you couldn't walk, they shot you to death.

Q. About how many people were on this march with you?

A. I would say 20,000. It was in January, and it was very cold.

Q. What kind of clothing did you have on during this march?

A. Rags.

Q. And what did you wear on your feet?

A. We had some sandals of wood [clogs], nothing else.

Q. And were you fed at all during this march?

A. No, there was no food. There was only snow to eat. My father was on the march with me. They had periods where they said, "Sit down," but if you sat down in the snow, you were frozen in five minutes and that would be the end of you. So I did not sit down. I held my father, because he couldn't stay on his feet. We made it to the train for Mauthausen.

Q. How many people, would you estimate, died on that march?

A. We had about 1,200 left alive out of 20,000 people. When the people were dying on the march, they were just left there, and we went on.

Q. What happened to you at the train?

A. These were not cattle cars. We were on coal cars which were open. The trip lasted five days. We had one stop in a little town in Czechoslovakia that was called Drehrau in German. We looked like living dead people. The population took pity on us and threw little paper bags to the train with a little food: a piece of bread, a piece of cheese, a piece of salami. The SS was shooting at them from the train, but I managed to grab one of these packages. It was difficult because I had been holding my father at the corner of the car. There were 100 people on this car. I had to hold him with my back from the pressure of all the people. If someone couldn't hold on, they would be trampled to death. I told my father he had to eat some of this food. We ate snow and survived, and we got to Mauthausen. When I brought him to Mauthausen, he was a bundle of bones in a bag of skin.

Q. What did they do with you when you first arrived?

A. They said we were going to the showers. But only 24 men could take a shower at a time. We were maybe eight hundred to a thousand, so you can imagine, how long it would take to get there. I had with me a piece of gold which I'd stolen in Auschwitz, from Canada, which was the place where they collected and sorted the victims' belongings. I took it with me on the march and I held it in my hand the whole time. When we arrived at Mauthausen, I talked to an SS guard. I told him, "I have here a piece of gold. I'll give it to you, if you let us go to the showers now." I didn't say it was my father, but another man, an old man. It was torture to have to wait in the cold, until we'd get in. So, he said, "Give it to me." I said, "No, first you take me and then I'll give it to you. If I don't give it to you, you can shoot me. But I won't give it to you in advance, no way." He took me in with my father. We took the shower. We cleaned up. We felt much better, and then I went there to this little corner where I hid the piece of gold and I gave it to the guard. My father wouldn't have survived out there in the cold, if we hadn't been moved to the front of the line.

Then we were sent to a satellite camp called Ebensee. We were there for three months. There was very little to eat. We got potato peels that were rotten. We were eating grass, sawdust, everything that was possible.

Q. And during the time that you were in Ebensee, did they have you working?

A. Very hard. In Ebensee, there was a stone quarry. My father was so weak that if he would have gone to work one day, he would have never come back. I managed to keep him hidden in the back of the barracks for three whole months. I brought him food. He was sleeping there in the cold and in the misery. After about two weeks, I took him out to straighten himself out a little bit. That was the only time that he was out during the time I hid him there.

One day about a month before the end of the war, a prisoner came over to me. I'd never seen him before. His face was pale and his eyes like glass. He said to me, "I observed you, how you watch over your father." I got worried because if the Nazis knew that there were

a father and a son or two brothers, that was immediately the end. They did not let people in families stay together. I said, "Who are you?" He answered, "Never mind who I am. I'm going to die tonight. I observed you, and I'm going to bring you tonight to replace me on the night shift at the stone breaker machine. Don't ask me anything. Just come with me." He took me to the SS and said, "This man is going to work for me." And the SS said, "Okay." This was a private company from Hamburg. He got me that work and that saved my life. And I never found this man again, never knew who he was, what his name was, or where he came from. Nothing.

The war was coming to an end at the end of April and beginning of May 1945. My birthday was the 22nd of April. They forced us to dig mass graves where they shot the prisoners in the last days, because the American troops were very close by then. People fell in and then came the next group. They put a little earth on top. They were shot. That went on two or three times, until they filled up the graves. I was walking and next to me was an SS. I told him in German, "Today is my birthday. Just on my birthday, I have to be shot." We knew where we were going and what was going to happen to us. He said to me, "Your birthday is today. My birthday was yesterday and the *Führer's* was the day before." Hitler's birthday was on April 20. So I told him, "You know, what is the difference? Let me go so that I will not be shot on my birthday. I promise that by the weekend I will volunteer and come myself." This was a Thursday. He looked at me, and I felt some communication between us. He kicked me and called me a dirty Jew, but he took me out of the row of people about to be killed. By the end of the week, the war was over, and we were liberated.

Q. Where was your father during this time?

A. I still had him hidden in the barracks. Nobody found him. I hid him in the back of a toilet. He wouldn't have survived, even to go to be shot. When the war was over, I put him in a little push cart and walked eighteen kilometers from Ebensee to Bad Ischl, where I was born. I always say that I was born for the second time in 1945 on the same day as my birthday. You have to understand that we came out of hell. It was an incredible feeling.

When we got to Bad Ischl, we found an American field hospital. They treated my father, and they treated me too. He remained in the hospital for about three or four weeks.

UNIT 7

RESISTANCE: COURAGEOUS ACTS IN DESPERATE TIMES

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UNIT 7

RESISTANCE: COURAGEOUS ACTS IN DESPERATE TIMES

*“The question is not why all the Jews did not fight, but how so many of them did.
Tormented, beaten, starved, where did they find
the strength - spiritual and physical - to resist?”*

*Elie Wiesel
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1986)
and Holocaust Survivor*

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of World War II, there has been a deluge of documentation dealing with the horrors of the suffering and annihilation of six million European Jews during the Holocaust. Less well known is the account of the Gypsies who, like the Jews, were targeted for death on the basis of racial prejudice. Other groups and individuals who were persecuted by the Nazis were attacked for their political views or evaluated as unfit to live according to some distorted Nazi standard.

In light of the fact that only the Jews were singled out for complete destruction and because of the vast numbers murdered, the plight of their tragedy has received particular attention. Understanding what happened to the Jews also provides insight into understanding some of the experiences which other persecuted groups endured. For that reason, the assumption that the Jews went like "sheep to the slaughter" is particularly troubling. The answer to the question: "Why didn't the Jews resist?" has significance far beyond the events of the Holocaust itself.

The reality is that the Jews did resist, and their efforts may have been singular among all of the Nazis' intended victims. Jewish resistance took many forms, beginning in the 1930's while Hitler was rising to power, until the end of the war in 1945. No other persecuted group, with so few resources and so many forces against them, were able to resist their murderers so effectively. Nevertheless, their losses were great and the appalling numbers of people destroyed has tended to overshadow this important chapter of Holocaust history.

Another reason that little has been known until recently about the role of Jewish resistance rests on the fact that history must rely on evidence, narratives, or other accounts that are preserved through time. And these records must be both understandable and available. Yet, much of the documentation concerning the Jewish resistance was not collected and translated into English until years after the war. Also, some respected world historians relied upon German documentation for information on Jewish resistance, much of which was inaccurate and favored the German point of view.

We now know, through objective scholarship, that there were many dimensions to the Jewish resistance which required courage, self-sacrifice, and torturous choices. There were Jewish underground organizations in Western Europe and partisan movements in Eastern Europe that conducted persistent anti-Nazi activities. Resistance emanated from the forests, the ghettos, the concentration camps, and even the killing centers. There were Jewish underground organizations that worked to maintain prisoner morale and reduce the physical sufferings of the prisoners. They committed sabotage, organized escapes, collected weapons, planned and carried out revolts. Resistance was carried out by men, women and children, and protected and supported those who were forced to hide.

In addition to Jewish resistance, there were many Gentiles who, at great risk to themselves and their families, joined the Jews in the resistance movement. Conversely, many Jews also joined forces with Gentile resistance movements.

Much new evidence has become available in the last decade concerning armed revolts, which is now being carefully examined. No less important were the numerous instances of unarmed resistance. Perhaps, even more significant than any armed rebellion, the efforts to defy the Nazis by living a meaningful existence in spite of the torment endured -- quiet acts of defiance and courage in the face of the most miserable odds -- reveal the true face of resistance during the Holocaust.

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the VOCABULARY.
2. Distinguish between the various forms of resistance: spiritual, armed, and unarmed.
3. Identify examples of resistance problems in the ghettos.
4. Explain who the partisans were and examine their activities.
5. Cite examples of resistance that took place in the concentration camps, ghettos, labor camps, and death camps.

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Aktion: Operation involving the assembling of Jews for transport to the concentration and killing centers.

Armed and unarmed resistance: According to the historian Yehuda Bauer, resistance is any group or individual action consciously taken in opposition to known or surmised laws, actions, or intentions directed against the Jews by the Germans and their supporters. Thus, it encompasses armed and unarmed resistance, acts of defiance and spiritual resistance.

Concentration camps: The notorious prisons designed for labor, torture, and murder, set up by the Nazis throughout the German *Reich*, Europe, and North Africa. At first used for political prisoners, many later held large numbers of different groups of prisoners (Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, the political resistance, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) from numerous countries. The camps were centers of death where prisoners died by murder, gassing, torture, "medical" experimentation, overwork, disease, and hunger. The largest and possibly most infamous was Auschwitz where more people were interned than at any other prison site. While there were thousands of concentration camps, some of the better known ones were: Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, Flossenbürg, Neuengamme, Gross-Rosen, Majdanek, Natzweiler, Mauthausen, Stutthof, Dora/Nordhausen, and Bergen-Belsen. Six concentration camps were developed and organized specifically and solely as killing centers: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz/Birkenau, and Majdanek. The last two also served as slave labor camps. A wide variety of prisoners were interned and killed in the Nazi camps, the largest groups being the Jews, Gypsies, Soviet prisoners-of-war, and Slavs. In addition to these, an untold number of other Nazi "undesirables" were held in these camps and killed. However, the Jews were overwhelmingly the largest single group to be imprisoned in these camps and murdered there. All of the concentration camps were centers of forced labor and death.

Death Camp: Historians usually reserve the term "death camps" for those Nazi concentration camps set up for killing: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Included in this classification, because of the massive scope of the killing which took place, are two labor/killing complexes: Auschwitz/Birkenau and Majdanek. There was systematic murder by gassing at each of these six camps.

Espionage: The act of spying on others to obtain secret military information.

Einsatzgruppen (Task Forces or Action Groups): Task force of mobile killing units operating in German-occupied territories; responsible for the majority of people annihilated outside concentration camps in Eastern Europe.

Home Army (Armia Krajowa): National Polish underground military organization which generally did not allow Jews to join. It was active from the fall of 1939 to January 1945.

Jewish Fighting Organization: Organization of Jewish resistance which organized and led ghetto revolts.

Judenrat: The official Jewish leadership body in the ghetto consisting of a community council with jurisdiction confined to secular affairs. The Germans took control of these Jewish councils and forced them to accept German orders to facilitate the establishment of the ghettos and, ultimately, the destruction of the Jews of Europe.

Liberators: Those soldiers who were members of the divisions that liberated the Nazi concentration camps at the end of World War II.

Melina: A place of hiding usually in an enclosure or structure.

Molotov Cocktail: A makeshift bomb made of a breakable container filled with flammable liquid and provided with a rag wick.

Partisans: Groups of armed resisters operating out of forests, swamps, mountains, etc., from where they could stage operations to organize revolts, plan and implement sabotage and attack German occupation troops.

Peasant Army: Underground movement which consisted mostly of farmers and particularly those wanted by the Nazis for some infraction; the members were armed mostly with farm implements.

People's Army (Armia Ludowa): Mainly socialist-communist underground military organization which accepted limited number of Jews into their ranks.

Sabotage: To damage property or procedure to prevent normal functioning.

Sonderkommando (Special Squad): SS or *Einsatzgruppe* detachment; also refers to special units in the concentration camps who removed bodies of those gassed and transported them to the ovens where they were burned. *Sonderkommandos* also had to extract gold teeth and remove rings from the bodies; possessions of the dead were sorted in the "Canada" area. Gold, jewelry, and possessions of the deceased (including glasses, artificial limbs, hair, and other body parts deemed "useful") were sent to Germany. The *Sonderkommandos* were replaced every few months and killed.

Spiritual resistance: Reaffirmation of faith and beliefs despite dangers and hardships; included illegal education and teaching, creating and hiding secret archives recording German persecution and murder.

Zionist: Someone who believed in setting up a Jewish national state in Palestine.

NAMES AND PLACES

Holland: Also known as the Netherlands; the people are called Dutch.

Krupp Industries: A major industrial conglomerate manufacturing, among other goods, armaments using slave labor from the camps. In the East, workers from the camps for Krupp Industries were drawn primarily from Polish, Russian, French, German, Gypsy, and Jewish prisoners of whom 70-80 percent perished as a result of brutal working conditions.

Pechersky, Alexander: A Soviet Army officer and prisoner at Sobibor who led the Sobibor revolt.

Ringelblum, Emmanuel: A resident of the Warsaw ghetto who closely documented his life in the ghetto; these documents were discovered after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising hidden in milk cans buried under the rubble of the destroyed ghetto.

Sobibor: One of the six killing centers set up in Poland by the Nazis.

Tito, Josip: Leader of the Yugoslavian underground resistance and later became the president of Yugoslavia.

Von Stroop, Jürgen: *Waffen* SS General and police chief who crushed the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and destroyed the Warsaw ghetto.

Warsaw ghetto: The enclosed section of the city of Warsaw, Poland, to which Jews were restricted by the Germans.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

RESISTANCE: COURAGEOUS ACTS IN DESPERATE TIMES

Resistance to the Nazi process of annihilation is, to a great extent, difficult to separate from the general acts of resistance in World War II. In some cases, fighting the Germans had the same effect for either the general war cause or the Holocaust. That is, success in one arena meant success in the other. Unfortunately, in other instances, resistance (particularly acts directly concerned with the "Final Solution") had no effect on the war effort. In fact, some of the Jewish resistance efforts were sabotaged by others also fighting the Germans but whose personal prejudice against the Jews outweighed their national need to win the war.

In spite of the conflicting motivations behind various acts or movements of resistance, one thing is clear. As the Jewish people were singled out for complete destruction, any examples of resistance within their ranks (even if such acts were within military units and a part of overall military war strategy) may be correctly considered as resistance to the Holocaust.

In light of the above, this chapter focuses particularly on Jewish resistance. These numerous examples contradict, unconditionally, any assumption that the Jews went "like sheep to the slaughter." In fact, as increasing numbers of documents are unearthed over time, especially since the break-up of the former Soviet Union, it has been confirmed that Jewish resistance -- whether armed or unarmed -- was continual, in Eastern as well as Western Europe. In countless ways, the Jews resisted which allowed them to retain their dignity at the very moment the Germans were trying to disavow their status as human beings. In other instances, resistance took the form of carefully planned and executed rebellions with firearms and other weapons, always played out against overwhelming odds.

Resistance in West Europe

Between April and June of 1940, German armies overran six nations of Western Europe: Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Holland (the Netherlands), Belgium, and France. Stunned by the incredible speed with which the Germans took over, most of the citizens of these countries appeared, at least in the beginning, to be paralyzed. Nevertheless, resistance began almost at once and escalated throughout the war as individuals joined small groups of fighters who eventually merged with other groups to form organized movements. Amateur resistance leaders became professional strategists. The contribution made by many resistance fighters to winning the war can only be guessed at; their remarkable efforts, for which many sacrificed themselves, substantially impeded Germany's advance.

Not everyone in the occupied countries tried to resist their invaders. In fact, the Germans were sometimes welcomed as "liberators." Others, believing Germany's propaganda, collaborated for reasons which were to prove dubious later when it was too late to undo the damage they had created.

For the Jews in the Western European countries, who had no idea of the fate that awaited them at the end of the deportations, illusions in the beginning of "resettlement" for better working and living conditions prevailed. Yet when the truth was revealed, Jewish resistance became intense. Marked for death, they fought fiercely. Many Jews who joined the resistance had been members of the communist party or extremist organizations in their own countries and were experienced in clandestine work. Others who joined these groups were apolitical yet, also wanted to fight the Germans. Among the resistance movements in Western Europe that were comprised mainly of Jews, the best known are the Jewish Army units in France and the Jewish communists,

many of whose members had originally come from Eastern Europe. Resistance organizations took part in the full range of underground activities. They maintained radio contact with other resistance groups and Allied leadership, made explosives, sabotaged German installations, assassinated Germans and their collaborators, forged identity papers and food ration cards, and gathered intelligence.

Jewish women and men played an active role in the resistance movements. The women were less likely to incur suspicion and also were less detectable than Jewish men who could be identified by their circumcision. Women smuggled in guns, diverted attention during acts of sabotage, flirted with officials for information, and acted as couriers for false documents and funds. At one university in France, where false documents were being made, so many female agents came to collect the forged papers that the chief of the operation, who was a student, was reprimanded by his professors for womanizing instead of working!

Early in 1941, in Holland, Jewish longshoremen repelled an attack from the Dutch Nazis who had entered the area where they were working. This may have been the first group to actively resist the Nazis in that country, and their action aroused the passion of their fellow citizens. For the first time, the civilian population took part in something that had never dared be done to the German invaders. There was a citywide general strike.

As in the *Reich* and the other conquered territories, anti-Jewish measures were quickly instigated in Holland. At the suggestion of Swiss government, the letter "J" was added to identification cards; travel restrictions were imposed, and ghetto sections cordoned off. After May 1942, Jews had to wear the yellow Jewish star. Unlike other conquered territories however, many Dutch people rose in opposition to this decree. (The Netherlands did have a large number of collaborators and Nazi sympathizers as well.) To express their sympathy with the wearers of the yellow stars, many Dutch citizens wore yellow flowers on their coat lapels. In Rotterdam, signs were plastered throughout the city reminding the Dutch to show respect to Jews on the street. Intellectuals were outspoken, and in clearest contrast to the *Reich* realm in Germany, Austria and Poland, both the Protestant and Catholic churches strongly voiced opposition to and urged active resistance of the anti-Jewish decrees.

The Nazi oppression was too powerful, as reflected in the sad result. Not only were the Jews mercilessly hounded and rounded up, but 20,000 Dutch Christians were deported to the concentration camps, because they opposed Nazi racial decrees or because they tried to protect Jews.

In Belgium, as in Holland and the other conquered countries, the definition of "Jew" was formulated, Jewish-owned enterprises "Aryanized" or liquidated, accounts confiscated, curfews established, and the wearing of the Jewish star mandated. But there was one snag after another. The Belgians were averse to buying former Jewish property, the Brussels stock exchange refused to accept securities in the absence of their Jewish owners, and the wearing of the Jewish star became a *cause célèbre* (an issue arousing heated public debate) among Belgians -- young and old alike. Teachers told their students that the star was a mark of distinction. Antwerp sold Jewish stars in the Belgian national colors. In Brussels, on the first Sunday after the decree was issued, the streets were filled with throngs of Belgians wearing Jewish stars. Even the German military units refused to implement the decree to force Jews to wear the star and when identification had to be made to round up Jews for deportation, the *Gestapo* had to rely on its own, albeit, powerful resources and connections.

The Belgian police were largely uncooperative, losing and misplacing files on Jews, an effort that would be refined to new heights of noble inaction by the Italians. The Ministry of Justice gave substantial sums of money to the Jewish Defense Committee enabling thousands to buy false documents or to survive in hiding. On April 19, 1943, the Jewish resistance in Belgium,

started by communists, derailed a train which was carrying Jews being deported to Auschwitz. This was the only time during the Holocaust when the deportation trains were interfered with. And, in no other country did the clergy take such an active stance in leading their congregants to pursue resistance to the Nazis and the saving of the Jews, particularly Jewish children.

Even in Germany, there was Jewish resistance. One example was made famous because all were caught and executed. A Nazi exhibition was set on fire by some Jewish communists.

When the news of the application of the Nuremberg Laws in Western Europe reached Denmark, it was reported in the American Press that King Christian threatened to abdicate if the laws were applied to Denmark. On the day the Germans decreed that all Jews must be identified by wearing a yellow star, a legend sprang up that King Christian appeared on the palace balcony wearing the required badge and stoutly urged all of his countrymen to do likewise and wear the Jewish star as a badge of honor. Like most legends, the story is not completely true, but it took hold because it did accurately reflect national sentiment and policy. When the Danes found out that deportation of the Jews was imminent, they arranged to ferry them to safety in Sweden.

In spite of an internal Nazi movement, Norway offered strong resistance, particularly in sabotaging German efforts to manufacture "heavy water" which was a necessary component in developing nuclear warheads. Another mode of resistance developed in Norway when, in a move to promote antisemitism, the public school curriculum in history was changed to reflect the Nazi antisemitic view. All the history teachers in Norway refused to accept this change and, as a result, 1,300 teachers were arrested. Of those arrested, 500 were sent to work on docks near the Finnish border. The teachers refused to change their minds and were later released by the Nazi-sympathetic Norwegian political leader, Vidkun Quisling. (The term "quisling" has since entered the English language, defined as someone who becomes a puppet leader of the enemy occupying his country.)

In France, during June of 1942, the Jews were ordered to wear the Jewish star as they had done in the area of pre-war Poland since 1939 and in the rest of the Greater *Reich* since 1941. The decree went into effect in both the northern (occupied) and southern (unoccupied) zones. But the reaction to this decree was unexpected. Some Jews, for example, would not wear the star. On the day the decree was announced, Jewish war veterans pinned the stars next to their military decorations and paraded along Paris boulevards to the applause and cheers of large crowds.¹

Unfortunately, for the Jews in Western Europe, life was already dangerous and in the resistance doubly so. In order to join the national resistance groups, one had to live above reproach as a citizen of the country and be able to pass as a non-Jew as well as someone without interest or connections to the resistance. A few of the smaller or splinter groups from the national resistance refused Jews, but those that accepted them usually did so wholeheartedly. However, as time passed and German controls became tighter, fewer and fewer Jews were able to stay active in these groups for fear of further endangering their resistance colleagues.

Resistance in East Europe

The Underground and Uprisings in the Ghettos

In most of the ghettos of Eastern Europe, the armed underground movements evolved out of political youth movements whose members actually included a cross section of ages, political, and religious orientations. Already well-organized, these groups were among the first to be able to undertake the difficult task of armed resistance. Thus, they constituted the first cells (organized groups of resisters) of the ghetto underground movements. Generally, in the smaller ghettos, the underground movements were not organized on the basis of youth movements or ideological lines, but rather on the basis of social and sports groups which took on resistance activities.

The following are some of the problems encountered in resistance and ghetto uprisings:

1. The Nazis' mass or collective responsibility policy.
2. The difficulties and danger in obtaining weapons and maintaining communications.
3. The difficulties of organizing an armed underground movement inside isolated and enclosed ghettos which were under constant surveillance.
4. The surrounding of densely-inhabited ghetto areas by enemy troops.
5. The Jewish populations in the ghettos were largely untrained in military armaments or strategy.
6. The absence of any real chance of victory.
7. The improbability of the survival of the fighters and the ghetto population.

Given such circumstances, ghetto uprisings were not so much a fight for survival, as they were a fervent wish not to die without resisting (although hope was never completely abandoned). When the ghetto population rebelled, most of the people did not have arms. Nevertheless, resistance was given through any means possible: furniture was broken down to make clubs; kitchen knives served as bayonets; boiling water was thrown, and small, home-made bombs called Molotov cocktails were made and used against the German tanks and their heavy artillery. For the very young, the old, the ill, and others unable to fight, deep bunkers were built to protect them.

The characteristic mood predominant inside many of the ghettos and the attitude of the those who had escaped previous waves of deportations was that as long as the ghetto existed, the people living within its confines had a chance of remaining alive. The inhabitants of the ghettos believed that Germany could not win the war. Following the defeats of the German Army on the Eastern Front during the winter, and the failure of the Germans to capture the Soviet cities of Leningrad and Stalingrad, the ghetto inhabitants lived in the hope that the Nazi regime would finally collapse. They believed that the opening of a second front by the Western Allies or a successful attack by the Soviet Army would liberate the Jews in the ghetto before the Germans succeeded in massacring them. Possibly the most enduring, yet rarely mentioned, hope was that a successful attempt on Hitler's life would put an end to the murders which were decimating European Jewry. Throughout the entire period of the war, various rumors spread through the ghettos which raised and strengthened the hopes of the ghetto inhabitants.

As a general rule, the remnants of the Jewish population in the ghettos were sustained by a strong desire to survive the war. Under the conditions prevalent in the ghettos and in trying to endanger as few lives as possible, revolt was a last step taken only when no way for survival was open and when the ghetto inmates were on the verge of annihilation.

[Underground Couriers](#)

Some Jewish people resisted by living illegally outside the ghettos and joining underground movements in cities, towns, and villages. Very often, women became couriers because they could travel from place to place, arousing less suspicion of the Nazis than men could. They facilitated communication between the ghettos, and between the underground movements and partisan units. They often carried illegal documents, underground newspapers, and money. Underground couriers helped to smuggle weapons into ghettos.² They helped locate gentile families who would be willing to hide Jewish people, especially children, often in exchange for payment. They would engage in delivering the funds on a regular basis. They continued to look after those who were

hidden by trying to ensure that they were not mistreated or in immediate danger. If necessary, they would arrange to move them to a safer hiding place.

[Controversy over the Jewish Underground Movement's Policy](#)

Heated debates flared up among the members of the Jewish underground movement in some of the ghettos. In ghettos located near large forests, the debate centered on the issue of whether they should go into the forests and fight as partisans or rise up in revolt within the ghettos. (In other ghettos, such an alternative did not exist because there were no large forests nearby.) Some argued that warfare inside the ghetto was doomed to failure. They advocated sending into the forests groups of fighters to make contact with the partisans. In this way, they believed, it would be possible to save a large number of youths from the ghetto.

In order to gain an understanding of the background to these discussions, certain additional problems must be pointed out. All of the ghetto residents understood the tremendous odds against them. As a result, some of the ghetto residents felt that they must stay until the Germans were defeated and they could be liberated by the Allies. However, even among those who believed it was better or safer to stay in the ghetto, it was understood that this argument would hold true only until all other options to survive were exhausted, after which they, too, would support a revolt.

Others who wished to remain favored the argument that the fighters constituted an integral part of the ghetto population and by leaving for the forests, they were abandoning their fellow Jews. The young man who fled the ghetto usually left a family behind. More often than not, he was their main provider, and it was due to his work that they received whatever food they did. He was often the person who held the work permit which was, in some cases, the family's permit for life. By leaving the ghetto for the forests, he would be endangering the family's very existence, as in all likelihood, they would be the victims of any subsequent *Aktion*.

On the other side, those persons escaping to the forests had to take into consideration the possibility of being killed while escaping. An additional and serious factor which also deterred resistance or escape to the forest was the Nazi policy of collective responsibility. If the flight was discovered, the Germans would arrest the families of those who had escaped to the forests and often their colleagues at work as well and put them to death. These acts of reprisals strongly influenced the decisions taken by many of the ghetto inhabitants.

All of the above considerations were of little significance, however, when the ghetto was on the verge of liquidation.

[A Schematic Outline of a Ghetto Uprising](#)

The basic plan of an uprising in a ghetto included the following phases:

When it became apparent that the Germans were massing for the expected attack to liquidate the ghetto, the underground fighters would assemble, bring out their weapons from their hiding places, and organize themselves according to a prearranged defense plan.

The fighters would refuse to obey the orders issued by the Nazis to go to the assembly point from which they were to be sent to the death camps. The fighters were joined by those inmates of the ghetto able to take an active role in the struggle. All the other inhabitants took shelter in cellars, bunkers, and other hiding places.

The defenders of the ghetto repulsed the Germans as they tried to invade.

In some of the ghettos, the fighters, followed by other inhabitants, broke out of the ghetto in an attempt to find refuge outside. Part of the ghetto population remained in their hiding places within the boundaries of the ghetto. In other ghettos, including the Warsaw ghetto, the fighters remained to lead the population in armed resistance.

Those who survived the uprising and were able to reach the forests would try to join or organize guerrilla groups. Others remained in the cities and joined the underground while living under false identification papers.

The implementation of a ghetto uprising, according to the schematic plan outlined above, was dependent upon the existence of certain basic preconditions: that an organized fighting force had been developed; knowledge that an *Aktion* was imminent; a reliable relay system to inform the fighters that the Germans were amassing at the ghetto walls; a readiness of the majority of the population to refuse to obey the Germans' orders of deportation; and a willingness of the population to both go into hiding and help the fighters.

Although there were uprisings in 23 other ghettos, these conditions were realized in only one instance -- in the Warsaw ghetto on April 19, 1943.

[Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#)

In the course of this uprising, 22 units of Jewish fighters, supported passively or actively by the majority of the ghetto population, inflicted heavy losses on the Germans until they were forced to bring up reinforcements. Recognizing that the Jews were going to fight back, regardless of the cost and the hopelessness of their situation, the Germans soon brought in heavy artillery including tanks. After several days of street fighting, the Germans changed their tactics. They cordoned off the ghetto and set fire to the buildings in systematic house-by-house military operations. As they moved forward, the ghetto residents were soon trapped in an ever-shrinking circle of flames which engulfed the resisters and choked them with the constant smoke and smell of burning flesh. Yet, they continued to resist.

Those who had been fighting from the rooftops continued from behind the rubble of the burned buildings. The battle continued over a period of four weeks, from April 19 to May 16, 1943. As supplies and food rapidly dwindled, the leaders of the uprising asked those who had a possible place outside of the ghetto to leave. Through smoke-filled, rat-infested sewers filled with fetid slime, those who thought they could find someplace to hide or reach the partisans tried to get out. Unfortunately, as the same tunnels were repeatedly used, it was not long before the Germans discovered these escape routes and threw poisonous gas and creosote (a malodorous liquid made from coal tar used as a preservative and disinfectant) down them. Others coming through were met on the outside by German guards who surrounded the sewer covers. More often than not, those who had come through the sewers were lined up and executed on the spot. Others were sent to the concentration camps.

Even after the uprising was put down, small groups of fighters continued to hold out in bunkers in the ruins of the ghetto for several more months. In the end, there was only a handful of survivors from among the fighters and population of the ghetto.

In other ghettos as well, Jews organized themselves in readiness for uprising but the Germans, who had learned their lesson from the ghetto revolt in Warsaw, increased their use of diversionary and surprise tactics in order to prevent the Jews from learning the date of the planned *Aktion*, thus reducing the possibility of an uprising.

Examples of Resistance Problems in Other Ghettos

In the Czestochowa ghetto, information was received on the morning of June 25, 1943, of the Germans' intention to begin the liquidation of the ghetto. The Jewish fighting force began to organize their defense. However, in the afternoon of that day, word was received that this had been a false alarm. The members of the fighting organization hid their weapons once more and returned to their homes and jobs. One hour later, the Germans stormed the ghetto and took control of it after a short lived attempt at resistance by some stalwart fighters. All the signs point to the fact that this was a deliberate diversionary tactic on the part of the Germans who apparently had their sources of information within the ghetto.

Two months later on August 15, in the Bialystok ghetto, the Germans announced that the ghetto inmates would be sent to labor camps. In compliance with the Germans' orders, the population presented itself for deportation. The Jewish underground, about 100 persons armed with rifles and pistols, succeeded in organizing themselves and mounted an attack. However, they remained isolated and were not joined by the other inhabitants of the ghetto who believed that they were being sent to labor camps. Most of the fighters fell in battle or were caught within the course of the next few days. Only a handful succeeded in escaping to the forests.

The Vilna ghetto was targeted to be liquidated in September of 1943, and all of the residents deported. The ghetto population did not rally to the call of revolt issued by the Jewish underground and followed the instructions of the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) to continue their daily routine and to act in accordance with the expulsion orders issued by the Germans. In light of this situation, the members of the underground left for the forests after a skirmish with a small German unit and joined the partisan units.

In spite of the foregoing examples and the conditions of imprisonment and daily misery which were inflicted on those trapped inside the ghetto, there were still many accounts of strong Jewish resistance in other places, among them the ghettos of Brody, Będzin, and Kraków.

Partisan Resistance

The partisans were composed of various sized fighting units which operated throughout Europe using guerrilla tactics. Their purpose was to agitate and disrupt enemy lines through assault and sabotage. Partisan warfare differed from other forms of fighting in two important aspects: partisan units offered a means of revenge on the murderous enemy and for the Jewish partisans, an attempt to save themselves and other Jews from the onslaught which was decimating their people with each passing day.

Partisan warfare was possible only in areas with special topographical conditions such as forests, mountains, and swampland, where small easily mobile units familiar with the terrain had a tactical advantage over regular army units with heavy equipment. These basic preconditions restricted the warfare of the partisans to certain main areas. Nevertheless, Jews participated in partisan movements throughout all of occupied Europe, from Russia in the East, to France in the West, Greece in the South, and Norway in the North. The Jewish population which survived the first waves of extermination took an active part in the fighting, for example, in the Slovakian uprising in 1944 and in Yugoslavia where they joined Tito's partisan movement.

Another necessary precondition for partisan warfare was the support of the local population. This support was required for intelligence purposes, for the provision of food, supplies and shelter and to enable hiding when necessary. Without such support, a strong partisan movement was seriously hindered. Nevertheless, many partisan groups did manage without support, forcibly taking the supplies they needed when they could.

In the regions under Nazi domination in Eastern Europe where the topographical conditions were conducive to the development of a partisan movement, this second precondition was seriously lacking -- some of the local population was hostile to the Jewish partisans and even cooperated with the Nazis against them. Thousands of armed as well as unarmed Jews met their death through betrayal by the local population who, in some cases, were also the direct cause for the annihilation of Jewish partisans. Nevertheless, these people were often prepared to "tolerate" individual Jews in the ranks of the non-Jewish partisan units.

Partisans in Poland

Partisan movements were active in almost every area of Poland which could be used for guerrilla warfare. However, the question which remains is to what extent were these movements prepared to accept Jews into their ranks. In Poland, the Home Army (*A.K.* - *Armia Krajowa*), was considered to be the national Polish Partisan Movement, but it would not allow Jews to join. Moreover, groups of Polish rightist guerrillas within the *A.K.* took an active role in the killing of many Jewish families and partisans in the forests. Among their victims was also a group of Jewish fighters who had succeeded in breaking out of the Warsaw ghetto at the time of the uprising, had reached the forests, and launched guerrilla warfare against the Germans.

Another Polish partisan movement, the People's Army (*A.L.* - *Armia Ludowa*), which was mainly a socialist and communist organization, accepted a limited number of Jews into its ranks. This movement, however, was organized in Poland rather late in the war and set up its partisan movement only after the larger Jewish communities had been wiped out or were going through the last phases of the "Final Solution."

The smallest of the Polish partisan movements was the Peasant Army (*Armia Chłopska*). This movement consisted mostly of farmers and particularly those who were wanted by the Nazis for some infraction. They generally formed groups in the woods near their own village and received support from the locals. With few arms in their possession, they fought with farm tools such as sickles and scythes.

Partisans in the Soviet Region

Two distinct phases can be defined in the attitude of the Soviet partisan movement towards Jewish partisans and other Jews. In the first phase, from the beginning of the Soviet-German war in June 1941 to the end of 1942, the Soviet partisan movement was in the western areas of Russia. Here the initial stages of the organization were established without links to the command staffs of the Soviet partisan movement. These partisan bands consisted primarily of two groups: Soviet army deserters and Soviet prisoners of war who had escaped from the Germans.

During this first period, there were among these partisan groups those who posed as partisans but were in fact more like armed bandits. They saw no contradiction between posing as partisans and murdering Jews and, on more than one occasion, they killed Jewish partisans and took away their weapons. There were, in addition, considerable numbers of local groups who had no intention whatsoever of fighting the Germans but whose purpose was to exploit the situation for acts of robbery and violence. Many Jews were among their victims.

In the second phase, from the end of 1942, the Soviet partisan movement was organized within a more disciplined military framework. They maintained regular contact with the Soviet authorities, receiving supplies, weapons, and financing them from behind enemy lines. During this phase, battalions and brigades of partisans were set up which controlled entire regions. As a result of the authority vested in the organized Soviet partisan movement, the activities of the bands diminished but did not cease entirely. Even during this period, many Jews in the forests were robbed and humiliated by the partisan bands.

Following the great waves of extermination of 1941 -1942, thousands of the survivors from the ghettos of Lithuania, Byelorussia, and the Western Ukraine sought refuge in the forests. By 1943 when the organized Soviet partisan movement was established, the vast majority of Jews in the areas where the movement was active had already been annihilated. The remaining groups and individuals often found their way to the Soviet partisans. However, not all of them were accepted into the partisan units. Only those Jews who had weapons were accepted into the ranks of the Soviet partisans, while non-Jews were accepted even without arms. Many of those who were not accepted by the partisans were forced to go into hiding, only to be later caught and killed.

There was further discrimination against Jews. The prevailing opinion was that Jews were bad fighters. Non-Jews were never required to prove themselves and were immediately accepted as equals. A Jew, on the other hand, was required to struggle constantly until he proved himself as a true comrade-in-arms. On many occasions, weapons belonging to Jewish partisans were confiscated by partisan commands and given to non-Jews.

Almost no independent Jewish partisan units existed within the Soviet partisan movement. The official policy was that partisan units were to be set up on a national territorial basis. In the Ukraine, it was the Ukrainian partisan movement; in Byelorussia, the Byelorussian movement; in Lithuania, the Lithuanian movement; etc. On the basis of the official Soviet line, the Jews, who did not have a territory of their own, were expected to join the national partisans units in their locale. The Jewish partisans, on the other hand, many of whom were members of the Zionist youth movements, saw the organization of Jewish partisan units as an expression of their national aspirations. In certain areas, such as the Vilna region, Jewish partisans units were successful in maintaining their identity within the framework of non-Jewish partisan brigades for a time, but in the long run, they were forced to merge with the non-Jewish units. The percentage of Jews who joined the partisans was proportionally much higher than that of the local non-Jewish population who did so. It must be stressed, however, that we are referring to those Jews who survived the mass annihilation perpetrated by the Germans in the first year of the war between Germany and the U.S.S.R.

There are no exact figures on the number of Jewish partisans active in Eastern Europe. An estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Jews fought in partisan groups in the forests of Eastern Europe. There were about 30 Jewish partisan detachments and approximately 21 additional non-Jewish partisan groups in which Jews fought.³ Many Jews fought and died under false non-Jewish names because of the adverse conditions for Jews among the partisans. Also, there are no official Soviet figures which specifically mention Jews as Jews. Nevertheless, the activities of the partisans, both Jewish and non-Jewish, succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the enemy, in life and property, causing the Germans logistic confusion and disruption of their lines of supplies, including ammunition and troops. The actions of the partisans forced the Germans to keep strong forces in the rear which were needed at the front.

Family Camps

The threat of annihilation faced by all Jews and the fact that in much of Eastern Europe it was impossible to find refuge among the general population, gave rise to a unique phenomenon. Special communities came into existence inhabited by Jewish families who had fled to the forests. These settlements included men, women, and children and were called "family camps."

Some of the family camps were quite large, comprising 800 - 1,200 persons, but the majority were smaller. Some of the men had weapons in their possession and were thus able to defend the settlement as well as obtain food from the surrounding villages. Fighting units from the family camps also engaged in guerrilla activities, such as sabotaging trains or setting ambushes. These family camps, where the members often lived in "dug outs" to protect themselves from the elements, were concentrated in areas in which Jewish and non-Jewish partisans operated, and

this provided some sort of security. They also fulfilled certain needed functions for all the partisans of the area. In these camps, there were Jewish artisans (tailors, shoemakers, etc.) who provided essential services for the partisan units, serving as a sort of logistic and maintenance company in exchange for which they received food.

Among the dangers which the family camps faced, one of the greatest was their immobility. Whenever the Germans concentrated their forces in preparation for a massive action designed to clear out the partisans from the area, the family camps, which contained women and children, were in greater danger than the mobile partisan units which could move more readily. As a result, the inhabitants of these family camps tried to prepare well-camouflaged hiding places, and in times of danger, they took refuge in them. But despite these precautions, many family camps were discovered and their inhabitants murdered when the Germans carried out their anti-guerrilla operations. There were even partisan units who attacked the family camps, taking away whatever weapons they possessed and killing quite a few of their inhabitants. At times, the Soviet partisans claimed that these family camps were a nuisance and a hindrance to their mobility. These partisans also claimed that large concentrations of the non-fighting population in the forests attracted the Germans' attention and thus constituted a security risk for them. Regardless of the validity of these claims, the family camps provided a way of survival and resistance for thousands of Jews in the forest areas.

Concentration Camp Resistance

Uprisings in the Concentration Camps

The nature of the uprisings in the death camps differed from that of the ghetto revolts. These uprisings proceeded along the following general pattern:

1. The persons who revolted were among the prisoners who worked in the camp.
2. Weapons were forcibly taken from the camp guards during the uprising and improvised weapons were made in secret.
3. The uprising took the form of a mass surge towards the barbed wire fences and the mine-fields surrounding the camps.
4. The great majority of those involved in the uprisings were killed during the battle.

The uprisings in the death camps were not carried out by the thousands of victims who were brought into the camp daily by train and immediately sent to the gas chambers. These people were not aware of the fate that awaited them and unsuspectingly went to the "showers" which, in reality, were gas chambers. The uprisings were carried out by the camp prisoners, several hundred of whom had been kept alive for various purposes. These inmates were engaged in various tasks connected with the gas chambers and the ovens, were occupied in sorting the possessions of those who were murdered, and worked in other capacities for the camp guards and administrators. Those people who were employed for a period of months were aware that their turn to die would also come. Sickened by the horrors they had witnessed, they were the ones who revolted.

There was no possibility of smuggling weapons into the death camps, and thus the sources of weapons were the camp guards and their stores of arms and explosive materials. The planners of the uprising prepared metal weapons of various types, but they obtained the firearms at the onset of the revolt by raiding the storehouses of weapons or by attacking the nearest guards.

The main leaders of the uprisings in the death camps were the Jewish inmates and the soldiers and officers among the prisoners of war. The timing of the uprising and the form it took

were determined by the conditions prevailing in the particular death camp. In most cases, the outbreak of the revolt was set either after information was received that the Germans were about to put to death groups of workers or if there was a possibility that the underground group was about to be discovered. At a fixed time and according to an agreed signal, the rebels attacked the guards who were inside the camp at that time. They raided the stores of arms, cut off the electricity to any fences that were electrified, broke through and ran across the minefields towards the forest. All of this was done while under fire by the guards in the guard turrets who turned their machine guns on the inmates as soon as they had detected the prisoners' revolt.

Those who succeeded in scaling the fences, passing through the minefields and escaping the guards' hail of bullets were still not free. The Germans sent out large forces with attack dogs in pursuit to catch the escapees. The majority of those who succeeded in breaking out of the camps were caught and killed in the course of the pursuit or were brought back to the camp where they were publicly hanged as an example to others. In two camps, Treblinka and Sobibor, uprisings took place on a large scale. Although very few people survived the escape attempts, the results of the uprisings in these two camps caused the Germans to close them down. Treblinka and Sobibor were killing centers and what happened there, as well as the attempts at revolt in the Auschwitz concentration camp are indicative of the minimal chance of success that existed for uprisings in all of the death camps.

Treblinka

Treblinka had initially operated as a forced labor camp in which 10,000 Poles were condemned to work. During this period, it is estimated that 75 percent of the slave laborers died. In July of 1942, Treblinka became a killing center where, in just over a year of its existence, between 750,000 and 900,000 Jews were murdered. Unlike the regular concentration camps, there was little need for housing of the prisoners since most were killed on the day of their arrival. Approximately 700-1,000 of the Jewish inmates were kept alive for the task of maintaining the camp, handling the arriving prisoners, removing the dead bodies, sorting their possessions, and maintaining the thirteen gas chambers. The revolt broke out on August 2, 1943. The rebels had in their possession firearms and hand grenades either stolen from the arms depot or seized at the time of the uprising. The arms' depot was blown up, and a fire broke out. The camp, apart from the "showers," was destroyed. Accounts vary widely, but between 200 and 600 inmates succeeded in escaping, and the rest were killed during the fighting. The others were caught by the Germans shortly thereafter. Of all those involved in the revolt, only twenty are known to have survived the war. After the revolt, small transports continued to arrive but it finally appeared that the Germans did not want to risk more revolts. In November 1943, the Germans blew up the remains of the camps, cleared and leveled the area of the mass graves and planted it over with pine trees.

Sobibor

As in the case of Treblinka, Sobibor was an annihilation center with approximately 1,000 prisoners generally kept alive for short periods of time to maintain the camp. During its operation, it is estimated that at least 250,000 Russian, Polish, Jewish, and Gypsy prisoners were murdered there. Sobibor commenced its deadly operations on May 8, 1942, and was closed down in October 1943. On October 14, 1943, 600 of the camp prisoners revolted but the attack on the arms' warehouse did not succeed. Insurgents killed eleven of the Nazis in the camp, including the camp commander and several Ukrainian guards. Four hundred persons managed to break out, but about half of them were killed in the minefields. Others were caught and killed by the Germans. Some 60 persons led by a Russian officer, Alexander Pechersky, joined the Soviet partisans. Two days after the revolt, Himmler ordered the camp destroyed. By the end of 1943, workers had plowed the camp under and planted crops to cover the place where, during its eighteen months of operation, the Nazis had murdered more than 250,000 Jews and many others.⁴

Auschwitz

Auschwitz was a massive extermination center which covered 40 square kilometers. The base camp was Auschwitz I. Three kilometers away stood Birkenau or Auschwitz II, several times larger than Auschwitz I. Like all of the Nazi concentration camps, Auschwitz had its own resistance movement. The movement was led by a Polish socialist lawyer, Josef Cyrankiewicz, the future prime minister of the Polish People's Republic. Two Auschwitz inmates managed to escape, and they brought with them a full report of the activities at the camp. The report reached government leaders of the major Allied nations. The report pleaded for the widest possible publicity to be given to it, knowing full well that this was the only hope of stopping the exterminations. It also asked that the Pope issue a strong condemnation of the crimes presented in the report. Should Allied warnings of reprisals still not stop the exterminations, then the report appealed for the gas chambers and crematoria to be bombed from the air, along with the railroad lines leading to the camp complex. Both the gas chambers and crematoria were easily recognizable from the air by their high chimneys. Only the British Broadcasting Corporation reported the atrocities. Without further collaboration from other broadcast networks in the other Allied countries, the report, so hideous in its barbaric details, was considered mere propaganda by most people. No country bombed the camp or the railroad lines.

The only bombing that did take place at Auschwitz during the war was done on October 7, 1944, when some desperate members of the *Sonderkommando* (special squad of prisoners who worked in the extermination area and were themselves destined for ultimate execution), with the help of some Soviet prisoners of war, blew up one of the four crematoria at Birkenau. The leader of the revolt was a French Jew by the name of David. Four brave Jewish women, who were slave laborers at the Krupp works factory, smuggled in the explosives. Those planning the revolt learned that they were to be killed before the chosen time set for the general outbreak and, therefore, decided not to wait but to act immediately. They blew up the crematorium and broke out through the fences, killing some of the camp guards on the way. All the escapees were killed, either while breaking out or while being pursued. The four Jewish girls who smuggled the explosives were caught and tortured, but they betrayed no one. They were hanged.

Before the Gypsy camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau was liquidated on August 2, 1944, there had been organized resistance by the Gypsy prisoners there. Of the 18,736 Sinti and Roma interned in the camp in 1943, most of these men, women, and children died in the gas chambers. By 1944, only 6,000 of the Gypsies remained. On May 16, 1944, an SS attempt to obliterate the Birkenau Gypsy camp Bille failed because of armed resistance. When the guards moved 2,897 of them to gas chambers in the middle of the night, the prisoners fought the SS with improvised knives, shovels, wooden sticks, and stones. The abortive attempt to prevent mass gassing failed.⁵

Resistance in the Labor Camps

Many of the camps used slave labor to work in factories making ammunition, airplane parts, and other needed military goods. The prisoners systematically sabotaged their work, making "duds" (ammunition without powder), and faulty parts. For example, they sabotaged airplane parts, bombs, heavy artillery equipment and did anything they could in order to hinder the German war effort. Even in the clothing factories, the women making German uniforms purposely sewed the button holes together or made the clothing seams so poorly that the uniforms fell apart when worn. The engravers making counterfeit currency plates, which the Germans wanted to use to destroy the Allied economy, secretly marked them so that they were easily detected. Anyone caught sabotaging their work was tortured for the names of their accomplices, then shot or hanged.

Unarmed Resistance

In the early years of the war, the death camps were kept so secret that few people knew of them. Since arms were unavailable and cooperation from the non-Jewish population either did not exist or was uncertain, taking a stand against the German oppressors meant certain death. Yet, the absence of revolt did not mean that the persecuted quietly accepted their fate. Thus, when counseled to struggle to give life meaning, it was a strategy that seemed reasonable. Later, when it was fully recognized that the scope of the persecution was far beyond anything that had happened before and well beyond anything suspected, these same strategies continued to mark the spirit of resistance in a sea of despair and death.

In the ghettos in Poland, with the official food ration reduced to as few as 184 calories a day, a few of the starving ghetto residents were able to arrange for food from the outside to be thrown over the walls.⁶ Those who threw the food packages, either because they were living in hiding but had families and friends inside or because they were being paid, still threw the food into the ghetto at great risk to themselves and those waiting. Most families, however, knew no one on the outside and many depended for their lives on the smuggling activities of children. Slipping through holes in the guarded perimeters or walls, countless children left the ghetto, foraged for food, and returned with their life-giving goods. Yet, these brave children paid a high price. They were hunted mercilessly by the Germans and often their non-Jewish countrymen as well. Many of the children were caught as they smuggled themselves into or out of the ghetto and shot on the spot. In one heart-wrenching instance, a child climbing back through a hole in the wall of the ghetto became stuck. When discovered, the Germans beat his buttocks and back so severely that his spine was broken. He was left to die in agony.

Besides starving the ghetto dwellers, the Nazis also tried to cut off the basic community functions which gave life some semblance of normality. Religious services and study were usually forbidden. Yet, upon pain of death if discovered, services and religious studies in most ghettos continued. Until their strength was exhausted, cultural events, although officially reduced and closely monitored, were aggressively maintained. Clever plays about the plight of their condition provided humor in an otherwise dark and horrible landscape. Political life, although wholly illegal, continued to function, as did newspapers and a variety of other communication networks. Under seemingly impossible conditions, many ghettos in the east maintained libraries, poetry readings, mutual aid groups, concerts, and plays.

Of all the efforts of unarmed resistance, perhaps none is more poignant than the clandestine activities for children's education. In 1940, the Nazis passed a law disallowing school for Jews after the fourth grade. Usually, in fact, the effort to organize a school for these primary classes was met with so much red tape that such schools could only be set up after long delays. Meantime, however, most Jewish communities were maintaining complete educational systems. With teachers paid in food -- or not at all -- underground classes were set up, from grammar to graduate school. Most of these school systems continued to operate until the truth of the death camps became known or until the ghetto was liquidated. It should be recalled that the penalty for giving or receiving formal instruction was death.

In the west, small acts of defiance demonstrated a people imbued with hope and a strong will to live. Yet, unlike the east, the Jews were not concentrated into ghettos, and many of them lived isolated from the collective support of their fellow Jews, dependent completely on the response of their neighbors and, often, the official or unofficial government attitude. Some forged travel papers and made illegal documents and stamps for documents for those in hiding. Such stamps and documents were also needed by resistance fighters who had to gain entry into German compounds and installations to carry out their missions. Those Jews who could also gave aid to other resistance fighters, hiding them as well as hiding downed Allied flyers and escaped prisoners of war. Some formed networks which were used to smuggle those endangered out of the area, and many risked their own lives to take children to safety.

In both the ghettos and the concentration camps, some of the people strived to leave a written record of the atrocities they both witnessed and endured. Of course, such writings were composed with full knowledge that the penalty, if discovered, was instant death. Among the most precious documents are those that were kept by Emmanuel Ringelblum in the Warsaw ghetto. When the war began, Ringelblum had been safely in Geneva, Switzerland but returned to Poland to carry on his work. Eventually he, his wife, and twelve-year-old son were caught and killed, but much of the diary and notes he had carefully hidden were eventually found in the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto after the war. This journal, composed by a trained historian, is an invaluable account of the destruction of Polish Jewry. Together with historians and other writers, artists, some of whom might have had a chance to survive and use their skills for the Germans, risked everything by making and hiding pictorial representations of scenes which they wanted to preserve before the Nazis erased all record of them.

Almost all of the survivors report that in spite of everything, whether hiding in cramped, airless spaces underground, terrified of discovery or enduring the horrific hardships within a death camp, they knew the greatest defiance was to live one more day. As Saul Nitzberg, medical doctor and survivor of Auschwitz, stated: "Not to die when they wanted you to die, that was truly courage and resistance."

ENDNOTES

¹ Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933-1945* (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1968), 443.

² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Resistance During the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), 12.

³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Resistance During the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), 31.

⁴ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Resistance During the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), 27.

⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Resistance During the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), 28.

⁶ Israel Gutman, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 583.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Organize the class into groups of students. Have each group choose a topic to research and present to the class. Students can pick from the following topics:

- a) Resistance in a ghetto (e.g. Vilna, Warsaw, Białystok)
- b) Resistance in France or another western European country
- c) Resistance in a Scandinavian country
- d) Resistance (armed and unarmed) in the concentration camps

2. Have students consider and discuss several reasons why Jewish armed resistance in the ghettos and concentration camps was difficult and, in some cases, impossible. Students should also examine and discuss other types of resistance that took place during the Holocaust (in addition to armed resistance).

3. Students should brainstorm and then write an essay about "Survival as the Ultimate Resistance."

4. At the end of the unit on resistance, ask students to write a poem, compose lyrics for a song, or draw a picture dealing with the concept of resistance during the Holocaust.

5. There is evidence to support the fact that uprisings against the Nazis took place in the following ghettos:

Niewicz	Białystok	Kobryń	Tarnów
Lachwa	Minsk	Warsaw	Kopyl
Tuchin	Lwów	Krynki	Częstochowa
Lida	Kraków	Będzin	Słonim
Braslaw	Sosnowiec	Vilna	Adamów

Students should examine some of the different types of resistance that took place in the ghettos listed above. The class could then create a chart which shows the ghetto, its location, and the type of resistance that occurred there.

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6. Ask students to research and answer the following questions:

- a) Who were the partisans?
- b) What were their main objectives during the Holocaust?
- c) Compare the reasons of both Jews and non-Jews for joining the partisans.
- d) In which countries did Jewish partisans fight?
- e) What is the difference between partisans and underground fighters/resisters?
- f) How did topographical conditions contribute to the locations and operations of partisans?

7. Have students research the facts behind the proposed Auschwitz bombing. What were the reasons given for bombing the area? What makes the War Department memo of February 1944 (see below) so ironic? Hold a debate to discuss whether or not Auschwitz should have been bombed by the Allies. Have them discover who finally did destroy a crematorium in Auschwitz.

War Department memo of February 1944: "We must constantly bear in mind that the most effective relief which can be given the victims of enemy persecution is to ensure the speedy defeat of the Axis."

8. Have students investigate the resistance group, the White Rose. Then discuss the following questions:

- a) What was the White Rose?
- b) Who were its leaders and what happened to them?
- c) Kurt Huber was the philosophy professor who guided the members of the White Rose movement. At his trial, Huber concluded his defense with a quotation by philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte: "And thou shalt act as if on thee and on thy deed depended the fate of all Germany and thou alone must answer for it." What is the meaning behind this statement? Why do you think Huber chose to use those words?

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FOR THE FOLLOWING
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Chronology of Resistance

1938

November 7

Herschel Grynszpan, a Polish Jew living in France, assassinates Ernst von Rath, a minor German embassy official in Paris, France, to protest the deportation of his parents to Poland. This act was used as a pretext for "*Kristallnacht*," the state-organized attacks against Jews and Jewish property carried out throughout the *Reich* on November 9-10.

1939

November 8

An attempt on Hitler's life in Munich fails as a bomb explodes but leaves him uninjured.

1940

May

Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum founds the *Oneg Shabbat* ("Joy of the Sabbath") secret archives in the Warsaw ghetto to document the plight of Polish Jews.

1941

February 25

A strike protesting the deportation of Jews from the Netherlands begins in the Amsterdam shipyards and soon spreads throughout the city.

August 21

The first German soldier is killed in Paris, France, by a member of the French resistance.

December 31

Abba Kovner calls for armed resistance of Jewish youth groups in the Vilna ghetto.

1942

May 1

A successful one-day general strike of ghetto workers in the Białystok ghetto in eastern Poland is organized by the ghetto resistance.

May 18

Members of the Herbert Baum resistance group set fire to an anti-Soviet propaganda exhibition in Berlin.

July

Members of the "White Rose" movement begin to distribute anti-Nazi leaflets in Munich.

July 22

Residents of the Nieświec ghetto in eastern Poland resist a German deportation with knives, axes, clubs, and a handful of firearms. A few Jews manage to escape to join the partisans.

August 30

Leaders of the *Rote Kapelle* (Red Orchestra), a German Communist resistance group working with Soviet intelligence from 1939, are arrested. They are executed in December.

September 2-3

The residents of Lachva, Byelorussia, stubbornly resist German attempts to massacre them. Up to 700 Jews are killed in the struggle, enabling some to flee into the forests to join partisan groups.

September 10-11

Meir Berliner, a Jewish prisoner at Treblinka, kills SS officer Max Bialis. In retaliation, Ukrainian guards massacre many Jews awaiting death in the camp's gas chambers.

September 23

Following a German order to assemble for deportation, Jews in the Tuczyn ghetto in western Ukraine set fire to the ghetto's houses, offering strong resistance. Up to 2,000 people escape into the forests.

1943

January 18

Several combat groups of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) fight German units attempting to deport Jews from the Warsaw ghetto.

February

Some 200 to 300 Christian women in mixed marriages protest for nearly one week outside several Berlin assembly centers after their Jewish husbands are arrested.

February 18

Hans and Sophie Scholl and other leaders of the "White Rose" are arrested for distributing anti-Nazi leaflets in Munich. On February 22, they are executed.

April 19

Members of the Committee for the Defense of Jews in Belgium cooperate with the Belgian resistance to attack a deportation train leaving the transit camp of Malines headed for Auschwitz.

Warsaw ghetto revolt begins. Fighting continues for nearly one month.

May 16

Warsaw ghetto uprising ends.

August 2

Armed revolt begins in the Treblinka killing center.

August 16

Fighting begins in the Białystok ghetto as the Germans prepare to deport the residents to death camps. Resistance fighters hold out against German tanks and artillery until August 26. Several groups manage to escape into the surrounding forests. Some 40,000 Jews left in the ghetto are deported in the coming weeks.

September 1

Armed resistance is ordered by Vilna ghetto resistance leaders as the liquidation of the ghetto begins. Lacking arms, only a few fighters manage to fight to the death over the next few days. Others escape to join partisan bands outside the city.

October 14

Armed revolt begins at the Sobibor killing center.

December 22

Kraków's underground Jewish Fighting Organization carries out a daring attack on German officers sitting in the city's Cyganeria cafe. Eleven Germans are killed and thirteen wounded.

1944

March 7

Emmanuel Ringelblum and his family are executed by the Germans. After the war, his *Oneg Shabbat* histories are discovered and published.

May 16

Gypsies at Auschwitz resist the destruction of the Gypsy family camp.

July 20

A group of dissident German officers and politicians attempt to assassinate Hitler. The attempt fails, and a number of those implicated are either summarily shot or executed after sentencing by a "People's Court" within a few days.

August 1

The Warsaw uprising begins as Polish resistance forces (AK) occupy important parts of the city. The fighting continues until October 2, when remnants of the Polish forces surrender. Tens of thousands of Polish citizens and fighters are killed and the rest are evacuated.

August 19

An insurrection begins in Paris, France, to prevent the Germans from destroying the city as the western allies approach. The city is liberated on August 25.

September 1

The Slovakian uprising begins. Partisan units battle the Germans until October 27, when surviving partisans flee into the mountains.

September 8

Italian partisans seize the Val d'Ossoloa near the Swiss border. They proclaim a republic, which lasts for five weeks, until the Germans recapture the area.

October 6-7

Prisoners blow up Crematorium IV at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

October 20

Belgrade is liberated by Yugoslav partisan units and Soviet troops.

1945

January 6

Four women prisoners -- Róża Robota, Ella Gaertner, Esther Wajcblum, and Regina Safirsztain -- are hanged in the women's camp at Auschwitz. They had smuggled the explosives that were used during the *Sonderkommando* revolt of October 7, 1944.

February 2

During the night, more than 570 prisoners, many of them Soviet prisoners of war under death sentences, revolt and escape from a barrack in the Mauthausen concentration camp. All but seventeen are later caught and killed.

April 9

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is hanged at Flossenbürg concentration camp.

April 11

Prisoners at Buchenwald revolt to forestall the planned evacuation of the camp as the Allies draw near. Some 150 Germans are taken prisoner a few hours before units of the American forces enter and liberate the camp.

Activity: Using this chronology as a guide, students can choose a specific event to research in more detail. Given the number of events listed, no two students should have to investigate the same incident.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Derived from *Resistance During the Holocaust*. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Used by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.



Question: Using the information on this map, create five questions and answers about what the map is showing you.

**Did Jews Go Like Sheep to the Slaughter?
by Miles Lerman, Chairman
United States Holocaust Memorial Council**

There is a prevailing myth that Jews offered no resistance to their annihilation by the Nazi murderers.

Did they? Let us look at the facts.

It is not easy to reverse a misconception that has embedded itself in history and has gone unchallenged for so many years. The misrepresentation that Jews accepted their annihilation in a passive manner is an historic fallacy, which must be challenged and done away with.

This task will not be accomplished with emotional arguments nor with oratory. Instead, we aim to challenge it by presenting undeniable facts substantiated by eyewitness accounts of those who took part in the uprisings or were close observers of these dramatic events. To accomplish this, the Holocaust Memorial Museum has created a Center for the Study of Jewish Resistance.

The question that our critics such as Hannah Arendt and a few others who observed this tragedy from a safe distance across the ocean kept posing is "Why was there so little resistance to so much murder?" Our reply is -- look and marvel at how much was accomplished with so little help from the outside world, a world that was indifferent and stood by idly with their hands folded while the Jewish communities of Europe, one after the other, were gradually disappearing from the surface of the earth.

What the critics of Jewish behavior during the Nazi occupation fail to understand is that the efforts to organize armed resistance took place under terribly difficult conditions. Let me cite for you just a few of the major obstacles:

1. Jews were immediately ghettoized and isolated from the outside world.
2. Most of the young Jews had no military training and had practically no weapons to defend themselves.
3. The diabolical method of holding entire communities responsible for the acts of a few prevented many young men and women from risking the lives of their families.

Yet in spite of all these obstacles, we know of active resistance in many ghettos. Not only in Warsaw but also Vilno, Bialystok, Kovno, Krakow, and many other communities.

Let me share with you a personal incident that may give you an insight to the complexity of the dilemma. In 1941, I was arrested and deported to a slave labor camp not far from the city of Lvov. When we came to realize the true purpose of the camp, we began to prepare for an escape. Our camp consisted of 450 men of different ages. When the news spread among the prisoners that a small group was preparing for a breakout, the Jewish elders of the camp summoned the leadership of our group to a secret meeting and asked us the following question:

"Who gives you -- the young and the healthy -- the moral right to buy your freedom at the price of the lives of those who will not be able to escape with you?" After pondering this question, we simply couldn't bring ourselves to carry out our plans.

Looking at this incident in retrospect I ask you, "Had we disregarded the pleas of our elders, would this have been bravery or recklessness on our part for jeopardizing the safety of others?"

As you will learn, even in the death camps, Jews rose in successful rebellion. To be blind to all of these facts, of extraordinary bravery and to accuse Jews of passivity is sheer intellectual callousness.

Another concern is the issue of Jewish partisans. For some unexplainable reason, the Holocaust literature has failed to espouse sufficiently the heroic deeds of Jewish partisans. The facts are that Jewish partisans fought bravely in all the territories occupied by Nazi Germany.

To further dispel the inaccuracies of those accusations, we must look at some broader statistics taken from the history of World War II. The Soviet military archives reveal that 500,000 Jews fought in the ranks of the Red Army. Two hundred thousand of them lost their lives in the battles from Leningrad to Berlin. Three hundred five Jews earned the rank of general or admiral of the Red Army. Forty-five Jews received the highest military medal, "The Hero of the Soviet Union" which is equivalent to the Congressional Medal of Honor. This represents thirty-five percent of all recipients of this outstanding award.

These heroic achievement medals were carefully evaluated and checked by the military command of the Red Army who were never known to be Jew lovers. The general records of military history of the Second World War show that about 1,200,000 Jewish men and women fought in military units of all allied armies, many of them volunteers. It is estimated that 20,000 to 30,000 Jews fought as partisans in underground units in all occupied territories.

A special page of glory in the history of Jewish resistance belongs to Jewish women. They came from the ranks of various youth organizations. Their daring missions stand out in a very special way. Those young girls were the most effective couriers who, at great personal risk, organized the contacts between the ghettos and the outside world.

These facts of heroism are undeniable and will stand for time immemorial as irrefutable evidence that Jews fought and died courageously to defend the honor of their people. A people who stood all alone, isolated and abandoned, while the entire world stood idly by and did pitifully little to stop it.

History will recognize and applaud the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Center for the Study of Jewish Resistance for the steadfast gathering of facts and the debunking of the myth that Jews went to their deaths without offering any resistance.

Let me leave you with a thought. The young men and women who fought and died in defense of the honor of their people, demand of us that we set this record straight, once and for all. They have earned their spot in the annals of history, and we must see to it that justice is done to their glorious memory.

***Miles Lerman** has served as Chairperson of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council since 1993. A member of the Advisory Board of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, he was appointed to the first United States Holocaust Memorial Council in 1980 by President Carter. Prior to his appointment to lead the Council, Mr. Lerman directed its International Relations Committee and served as National Chairman of the Campaign to Remember. During the Holocaust, he fought as a partisan in the forests of southern Poland.*

Underground Couriers

In occupied Poland and the Soviet Union, young couriers who were usually members of underground political organizations created an extensive communication network that helped connect the isolated ghettos. Traveling under false names and false papers, couriers carried illegal documents, underground newspapers, and money. Couriers also bought and smuggled arms into ghettos, ran illegal presses, and arranged escapes.

Women were active in the underground political organizations and played a particularly important role as couriers. They could move around more freely without arousing the suspicions that men of combat age would. Moreover, police could more readily establish the identity of Jewish men because most were circumcised.

The couriers undertook enormous risks to bring news and information into and out of the various ghettos to their underground groups. Everywhere outside the ghettos, police, blackmailers, collaborators, informers, and spies were looking for victims and prize rewards. Many couriers were caught. The sisters Sarah and Rozhca Silva and Shlomo Antin were arrested and killed on a mission from Vilna to Warsaw. The messenger Lonka Kozhivrozha was captured and sent to her death in Auschwitz.

Irena Adamowicz, a Polish Catholic, also courageously served as a courier for the Jewish underground in Warsaw. Irena, one of many Polish scouts who had developed close ties to members of Jewish youth movements with a tradition of scouting before the war, stands out as a moral example in her steadfast loyalty to her Jewish friends after the German invasion. Poles, like most other non-Jewish populations across Europe, generally remained indifferent to the plight of Jews or were too frightened to help.

In 1941, as mass shootings by German units commenced in occupied Soviet territories, and in 1942, as deportations and mass murders in Chelmno, Treblinka, and other extermination camps began, the couriers spread the incredible news of disaster, in the beginning to mostly unbelieving listeners.

Source: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM: *Resistance During the Holocaust*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

"Little Wanda with Braids" **By Yuri Suhl**

[EDITOR'S NOTE In his Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto, Emmanuel Ringelblum pays high tribute to the women couriers of the Warsaw Ghetto underground, who knew no fear and knew no rest. "Every day they are exposed to the greatest of hazards.... They take upon themselves the most dangerous missions and carry them out without a whimper or moment's hesitation." Niuta Teitelboim (Wanda) belongs to this category of brave women. Her story is drawn from sources listed at the end of this reading.]

One day a young woman walked up to the German guards in front of a Gestapo building in Warsaw and, lowering her large blue eyes demurely, whispered the name of an important Gestapo officer and added, "I have to see him about a personal matter."

She was twenty-four, but her slight figure, her long, blonde braids, and the flowered kerchief she wore on her head gave her the appearance of a sixteen-year-old girl. She was very attractive. The guards smiled at her knowingly, ushered her into the building and gave her the officer's room number.

She entered and remained standing hesitantly at the door. A tall, elegant-looking German rose from behind his desk. He stared at the girl for a long moment and then called out in wonderment, "*Gibt es bei euch auch Lorelei?*" (Do you, here, also have a Lorelei?)

The girl did not reply. Instead, she quickly drew a revolver from her handbag and shot the German dead. Then she left the office and calmly walked toward the exit. As she passed the guards she smiled bashfully and lowered her eyes again. A moment later she was out of their sight.

That was Niuta Teitelboim, a Jewish girl from the Warsaw Ghetto, whose underground name was "Wanda." This was not the only death sentence she had carried out for the underground. On another day she surprised a Gestapo officer in his own house when he was still in bed. When the startled German saw the girl with a revolver in her hand, pointed directly at him, he ducked under the eiderdown quilt. Wanda shot him through the quilt and disappeared.

Though she operated mainly in the Warsaw area, Wanda became a legendary name throughout Poland, a symbol of fearless resistance to the German occupation forces. In Gestapo circles she was known as "*Die kleine Wanda mit die Zöpfen*" (Little Wanda with the braids) and she was high on the list of wanted "bandits," their term for underground fighters. They placed a price on her head of 150,000 zlotys.

Wanda was born in 1918, in Lodz, of a Hassidic family, but she did not follow in the footsteps of her Orthodox ancestry. She sought a place for herself in the secular world. She became a student in a Polish Gymnasium, joined the left-wing student movement, and soon became one of its most active members. Despite her excellent scholastic record, she was expelled from school for her radical activities.

But Wanda gained entrance into other institutions of learning, for in 1939 she was a major in history and psychology. That year Hitler's Wehrmacht marched into Poland. Wanda's studies came to an abrupt end. A year later she was one of half a million Polish Jews who were herded into the Warsaw Ghetto.

She joined the ghetto underground and became one of its most fearless members. An underground leader who worked closely with Wanda in those days remembers her telling him: "I am a Jew ... my place is among the most active fighters against fascism, in the struggle for the honor of my people, for an independent Poland, and for the freedom of humanity." To the very last minute of her life she tried to live up to this credo.

In the ghetto she organized a woman's detachment which later produced heroic figures in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The underground was divided into cells of five, and Wanda was an instructor of one such cell in the use of weapons. One of her surviving students recalls: "Everyone who saw her giving instructions did not believe that until recently she had no knowledge of weapons.... Her innocent, jovial smile could fool the most suspicious German.... No one could lead Jews out of the ghetto or smuggle hand grenades and weapons into the ghetto past the vigilant guards as did Niuta."

On July 22, 1942, when the Germans began the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto with mass deportations to Treblinka, the ghetto was completely cut off from the outside world. The Germans threw a heavy police cordon around the ghetto wall and cut the telephone wires linking the ghetto with the Aryan side of Warsaw. For the ghetto underground it was imperative to establish contact with the Peoples Guard and apprise them of the new situation in the ghetto. Wanda volunteered to hazard the risk and sneak out of the ghetto. A few days later she returned with new instructions from the Peoples Guard.

At the request of the Peoples Guard, Wanda left the ghetto to become deputy commander of the special task force in Warsaw that carried out the most daring acts of sabotage against the Germans. On the nights of October 7 and 8, 1942, they blew up the railway lines at several points in Warsaw, paralyzing for many hours vital communication lines to the German eastern front.

The Germans reacted with bloody reprisals. On October 16 they publicly hanged fifty Poles, active members of the PPR (Polish Workers Party), let their bodies swing from the gallows all day long, and then ordered them buried in the Jewish cemetery. In addition, they imposed a levy of a million zlotys on the Warsaw population.

Eight days later came the reply from the Peoples Guard. One group of the special task force, with Wanda participating, bombed the exclusive Café-Club on Aleje Jerozolimskie, which was a gathering place for Wehrmacht and Gestapo elite. Simultaneously another group attacked the German coffee house in Warsaw's main railway station, and a third group tossed a few grenades into the editorial offices of the collaborationist *Nowy Kurier Warszawski* (New Warsaw Courier). It was estimated that about thirty German officers were killed in these attacks. Later the Peoples Guard distributed leaflets, informing the Warsaw population that with these acts they avenged the hanging of the fifty Poles.

On November 30, Wanda, together with other members of the special task force, staged a spectacular raid on the KKO, the Communal Bank, in broad daylight, and retrieved the million zlotys the Germans had confiscated from the people of Warsaw.

In the fall of 1943 Wanda was sent, at her own request, to the forest to join the partisans, but was later recalled to Warsaw to resume her duties with the special task force of the Peoples Guard.

In the early hours of April 19, 1943, the Germans marched into the Warsaw Ghetto to liquidate the last remnants of Warsaw Jewry. In the evening of that same day, in a secret room in Praga, a suburb of Warsaw, the leadership of the Peoples Guard met to discuss how best to express its solidarity with the embattled Warsaw Ghetto fighters. It was decided to attack a German artillery emplacement on Nowiniarska Street from which the Germans bombarded the ghetto. A special group was selected to carry out the attack. Wanda was one of the group.

Twenty-four hours after the decision was taken, around seven o'clock in the evening of April 20, the artillery gun was silenced, and the crew, consisting of two Germans and two Polish policemen, was killed.

The Gestapo intensified its hunt for "Little Wanda with the braids." Her comrades in the underground pleaded with her to cease her activities and go into hiding because the Gestapo was on her trail. Wanda did not heed their advice.

One day in July, 1943, Wanda came home and found Gestapo agents waiting in her room. She tried poisoning herself to avoid falling into their hands alive, but did not succeed. She was arrested and taken to the torture cellars of the Gestapo. Before she was killed she managed to smuggle out a note to her comrades in the underground, assuring them that she would not betray them.

In the spring of 1945, on the second anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the Polish Government posthumously awarded Niuta Teitelboim (Wanda) the Grunwald Cross, the highest battle decoration in Poland.

The story of "Wanda" was drawn from the following sources:

Ber Mark, *The Book of Heroes* (Lodz: 1947, 1, 112-113).

Ber Mark, *The Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Warsaw: 1955, pp. 135, 137-138, 153). Dos Neie Leben (Lodz: August 9, 1946).

Colonel G. Alef (Bolek), *Three Fighters for a Free Socialist Poland* (Warsaw: 1953, pp. 13-14).

Meilech Neustadt, *Destruction and Rising, the Epic of the Jews in Warsaw* (Tel Aviv: 1948, 1, 37-38, 11, 328).

Source: Suhl, Yuri. *They Fought Back*. New York: Paperback Library, 1967. Reprinted by permission of Mrs. Beverly Spector, Literary Executor.

GERMAN REPORT ON WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

19 April 1943. Ghetto sealed off from 3:00 hours. At 6:00 hours deployment of the Waffen SS for the combing of the remainder of the ghetto. Immediately upon entry strong concerted fire by the Jews and bandits.

We succeeded in forcing the enemy to withdraw from the roof-tops and strong-points situated in high positions to the cellars or bunkers and sewers. Shock patrols were then deployed against known bunkers with the task of clearing out the occupants and destroying the bunkers. The presence of Jews in the sewers was established. Total flooding was carried out, rendering presence impossible.

22 April 1943. It is unfortunately impossible to prevent a proportion of the bandits and Jews from hiding in the sewers under the ghetto where they have evaded capture by preventing the flooding. The city administration is not in a position to remove this inconvenience. Smoke-bombs and mixing creosote with the water have also failed to achieve the desired result.

23 April 1943. The whole Aktion [operation] is made more difficult by the cunning tricks employed by the Jews and bandits, e.g., it was discovered that live Jews were being taken to the Jewish cemetery in the corps cars that collect the dead bodies lying around, and were thus escaping from the ghetto.

24 April 1943. At 18:15 hours the search party entered the buildings after they had been cordoned off and established the presence of a large number of Jews. As most of these Jews resisted I gave the order to burn them out. Not until the whole street and all the courtyards on both sides were in flames did the Jews, some of them on fire, come out from the blocks of buildings or try to save themselves by jumping from the windows and balconies into the street onto which they had thrown beds, blankets, and other things. Time and time again it could be observed that Jews and bandits preferred to return into the flames rather than fall into our hands.

8 May 1943. There must still be about 3,000 to 4,000 Jews in the underground cavities, sewers, and bunkers. The undersigned is determined not to terminate this Aktion until the very last Jew is destroyed.

10 May 1943. The resistance put up by the Jews today was unabated. In contrast to previous days, the members of the Jewish main fighter groups still in existence and not destroyed have apparently retreated to the highest ruins accessible to them in order to inflict casualties on the raiding parties by firing on them.

13 May 1943. For two days the few Jews and criminals still in the ghetto have been making use of the hiding places still provided by the ruins to return at night to the bunkers known to them, eating there and supplying themselves with food for the next day.

16 May 1943. The former Jewish quarter of Warsaw is no longer in existence. With the blowing up of the Warsaw Synagogue, the Aktion was terminated at 20:15 hours.

Total number of Jews caught or verifiable exterminated: 56,065.

From the reports of SS General Jurgen Stroop, in charge of the German forces

Mordechai Anielewicz's Last Letter

The Warsaw ghetto uprising assumed a significance beyond the revolt itself. As news of the heroic Warsaw ghetto fighters spread through the underground network, Jews in other ghettos were inspired to resist deportation to their deaths. The Warsaw ghetto uprising would become a defining moment in Jewish history, as ZOB leader Mordechai Anielewicz seemed to recognize when he wrote his last letter two weeks before his death on May 8, 1943:

It is now clear to me that what took place exceeded all expectations. In our opposition to the Germans we did more than our strength allowed -- but now our forces are waning. We are on the brink of extinction. We forced the Germans to retreat twice -- but they returned stronger than before.

One of our groups held out for forty minutes; and another fought for about six hours. The mine which was laid in the area of the brush factory exploded as planned. Then we attacked the Germans and they suffered heavy casualties. Our losses were generally low. That is an accomplishment too. Z. fell, next to his machine gun.

I feel that great things are happening and that this action which we have dared to take is of enormous value.

We have no choice but to go over to partisan methods of fighting as of today. Today, six fighting groups are going out. They have two tasks -- to reconnoiter the area and to capture weapons. Remember, 'short-range weapons' are of no use to us. We employ them very rarely. We need many rifles, hand-grenades, machine guns and explosives.

I cannot describe the conditions in which the Jews of the ghetto are now 'living.' Only a few exceptional individuals will be able to survive such suffering. The others will sooner or later die. Their fate is certain, even though thousands are trying to hide in cracks and rat holes. It is impossible to light a candle, for lack of air. Greetings to you who are outside. Perhaps a miracle will occur and we shall see each other again one of these days. It is extremely doubtful.

The last wish of my life has been fulfilled Jewish self-defense has become a fact. Jewish resistance and revenge have become actualities. I am happy to have been one of the first Jewish fighters in the ghetto.

Where will rescue come from?

Source: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM: *Resistance During the Holocaust*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

VILNA GHETTO FIGHTERS, 1942-43

The first Jewish fighting organization was formed in Vilna. It was called the United Partisan Organization (FPO was the acronym for the name in Yiddish). Mass killings, including mass shootings in Ponar, a wooded area six miles away, had decimated the Vilna ghetto population, which had fallen from 60,000 to 20,000 by the end of 1941.

On January 1, 1942, 23-year-old Abba Kovner, a Zionist youth activist, spoke at a clandestine meeting held in a public kitchen in the ghetto. About 150 young people heard Kovner's fiery speech summoning them to resistance. Recognizing the human tendency to deny the worst, Kovner tried to dispel the glimmer of hope that remaining ghetto residents clung to, that somehow they would survive.

Earlier than most, he grasped that the Nazi plan was to destroy all Jews in Europe, including the Jews remaining in Vilna. Defenseless against superior German force, they could not expect to triumph in battle, but they could choose to die honorably, as "free" fighters. Three weeks later, on January 21, 1942, the FPO was formed by youth activists, including Kovner, and members of political parties ranging from the Communists on the left to Betar on the right.

On July 5, 1943, Itzak Witenberg, the Communist commander of the FPO, was arrested. In a daring rescue, his comrades freed him as he was being led away. But Witenberg gave himself up to the Germans the following day after a German ultimatum threatened the destruction of the ghetto if he did not surrender. Realizing that he would not survive German torture and that under duress he would risk identifying fellow underground members, Witenberg committed suicide in his prison cell by taking a cyanide capsule. Before his death, he named Kovner the FPO commander in his place.

Two months later, in late August and early September 1943, the Germans began liquidating Vilna. The Vilna FPO issued a manifesto to the ghetto imploring the remaining 14,000 Jews to resist deportation to their deaths. In doing so, the Vilna FPO took encouragement from the Warsaw ghetto uprising three months earlier.

In Vilna, the majority of people remaining in the ghetto did not heed the ghetto fighters' summons. Most believed the Germans would send them to work camps and not to Ponar. In each ghetto German authorities had created a Jewish council (*Judenrat*), which they forced to carry out their orders and administer ghetto affairs. The leader of the Jewish council in Vilna, Jacob Gens, opposed storing smuggled arms in the ghetto because he believed there was still hope for saving part of the ghetto through work. In his view, armed resistance could only lead to the destruction of the entire ghetto due to the German tactic of collective responsibility. Many in the general ghetto population followed Gens's lead.

On September 23-24, 1943, the Germans liquidated the Vilna ghetto. Nearly 4,000 residents were in fact deported to work camps in Estonia, where the Nazis would eventually kill them. Nazis and their collaborators deported more than 4,000 children, women, and old men to their deaths at the Sobibor extermination camp, and took several hundred other children and old people to Ponar and slaughtered them. A few hundred members of the FPO, including Kovner, escaped to join partisan groups in the Rudniki and Naroch forests.

THE VILNA PARTISAN MANIFESTO

Offer armed resistance! Jews, defend yourselves with arms!

The German and Lithuanian executioners are at the gates of the ghetto. They have come to murder us! Soon they will lead you forth in groups through the ghetto door.

In the same way they carried away hundreds of us on the day of Yom Kippur [the holiest day in the Jewish calendar]. In the same way those with white, yellow and pink Schein [safe-conduct passes] were deported during the night. In this way our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and sons were taken away.

Tens of thousands of us were dispatched. But we shall not go! We will not offer our heads to the butcher like sheep.

Jews defend yourselves with arms!

Do not believe the false promises of the assassins or believe the words of the traitors.

Anyone who passes through the ghetto gate will go to Ponar!

And Ponar means death!

Jews, we have nothing to lose. Death will overtake us in any event. And who can still believe in survival when the murderer exterminates us with so much determination? The hand of the executioner will reach each man and woman. Fight and acts of cowardice will not save our lives.

Active resistance alone can save our lives and our honor.

Brothers! It is better to die in battle in the ghetto than to be carried away to Ponar like sheep. And know this: Within the walls of the ghetto there are organized Jewish forces who will resist with weapons.

Support the revolt!

Do not take refuge or hide in the bunkers, for then you will fall into the hands of the murderers like rats.

Jewish people, go out into the squares. Anyone who has no weapons should take an ax, and he who has no ax should take a crowbar or a bludgeon!

For our ancestors!

For our murdered children!

Avenge Ponar!

Attack the murderers!

In every street, in every courtyard, in every house within and without this ghetto, attack these dogs!

Jews, we have nothing to lose! We shall save our lives only if we exterminate our assassins.

Long live liberty! Long live armed resistance! Death to the assassins!

Activity: In your own words, describe the tone of this Manifesto. Choose one or two sentences from the Manifesto that you think captures the sentiment of the young Jews who issued it.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Resistance During the Holocaust*. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, pages 13-16. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Questions on the Vilna Ghetto Fighters and the Vilna Manifesto

1. Abba Kovner's "fiery speech" is described in the section on the Vilna ghetto fighters. What did Kovner recognize and try to do with his speech? What did most people believe?
2. The section on the Vilna ghetto fighters mentions that the Germans gave Itzak Witenberg an "ultimatum." What is an ultimatum and what was the one given to Witenberg?
3. In the fall of 1943, the Vilna FPO issued a Manifesto to the Jews of the Vilna ghetto. The Manifesto urged the remaining Jews to fight rather than be deported. Give two specific examples of actions encouraged by the Manifesto.
4. The section on the Vilna ghetto fighters mentions the location of Ponar. What was Ponar and what did the Vilna Partisan Manifesto say about Ponar?
5. Many people who do not fully understand the Nazi treatment of the Jews ask why more Jews did not resist. What these people do not realize is that there were not many opportunities to be a hero or heroine. For example, the Nazi technique of collective responsibility explains, in part, that if a Jew attacked an SS guard and injured or killed him, hundreds of Jews could be killed because of this one action. Furthermore, hunger and thirst, separation from loved ones, and the SS selection process also made it nearly impossible to resist and hold on to the will to live.

Yet, despite everything that was against them, Jews did resist and organized others to do the same. Copy the line from the Manifesto that urges the Jews to challenge the stereotype that they do not have the will to resist.
6. The line from question #5 and one other line in the Manifesto contain similes in which the resisters compare themselves to animals. Comparisons to which animals are used in the Manifesto and why?
7. In your own words, describe the tone of the Manifesto. Choose one sentence from the Manifesto that you think captures the sentiment of the young Jews who issued it.
8. What happened to the Jews in the Vilna ghetto on September 23-24, 1943?

On the Agenda: Death

A Document of the Jewish Resistance

In February 1943, Mordecai Tannenbaum, an "inmate" of the Vilna Ghetto, was sent, with a few others, to organize the resistance in the ghetto of Bialystok. The reprint that follows is the record of a meeting held at the time by the executive committee of the Hehalutz, organization of Palestinian pioneers, Bialystok branch. Six months later, Nazi troops entered the ghetto; they met with fierce resistance, which continued until the middle of September, when the Nazis "won" the battle of Bialystok. Among the estimated forty thousand Jews who fell in the battle was Mordecai Tannenbaum. The record of the meeting, originally in Yiddish, was preserved by a Polish peasant.

MORDECAI: I'm glad that at least we're in a good mood. Unfortunately, the meeting won't be very gay; this meeting is historic or tragic, as you prefer, but certainly sad. The few people sitting here are the last *Halutzim* in Poland. We are entirely surrounded by the dead. You know what has happened in Warsaw: no one is left. The same is true of Bendin and Czestochowa, and probably everywhere else. We are the last. It's not a particularly pleasant feeling to be the last; on the contrary, it imposes a special responsibility on us. We have to decide what to do tomorrow. There is no point in sitting together in the warmth of our memories, and there is no point in waiting for death together, collectively. What shall we do?

We can do two things: decide that with the first Jew to be deported now from Bialystok, we start our counterattack, that from tomorrow on nobody is allowed to hide during the action. Everybody will be mobilized. We can see to it that not one German leaves the ghetto alive, that not one factory is left standing.

It is not out of the question that after we have finished our task some of us may even be still alive. But it must be a fight to the finish, till we fall.

Or we could decide to escape to the woods. We must consider the possibilities realistically. Two of our comrades were sent today to make a place ready; in any event, as soon as the meeting is over a military alert will be instituted. We must decide now, because our fathers can't do our worrying for us. This is an orphanage.

There is one condition: our approach must be based on an idea, and our thinking must be related to the movement. Whoever imagines or thinks that he has a real chance to stay alive, and wants to use his chance -- fine, we'll help him in whatever way we can. Each one of us will have to decide for himself about his own life or death. But together we have to find a collective answer to the common question. I don't want to impose my opinion on anybody, so for the time being I won't express myself on the question.

ISAAC: What we're really debating is two different kinds of death. Attack means certain death. The other way means death two or three days later.

We ought to analyze both ways; perhaps something can be done. I don't have enough precise information, and I should like to hear the opinions of better informed comrades.

If comrades think that they could remain living, we ought to think about it.

HERSHL: It's still too early to strike a balance on everything we've lived through in the past year and a half. Nevertheless, in the light of the fateful decision confronting us, we must form a clear idea of what we have lived through.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews have perished in the last year; with great subtlety the enemy has succeeded in demoralizing us and leading us like cattle to the slaughterhouses of Ponar, Chelmno, Belzec, and Treblinka. The extermination of the Jewish communities of Poland will be not only the most tragic but also the ugliest chapter in Jewish history, a chapter of Jewish

impotence and cowardice. Even our movement has not always stood on the required high level. Instead of giving the signal for desperate resistance, we have everywhere put off making a decision. Even in Warsaw the resistance would have had a different result if it had been started not at the end but at the beginning of the liquidation.

Here in Bialystok it is our fate to live through the last act of the bloody tragedy. What can we do, what ought we do? The way I see it, this is the objective situation. The great majority of the ghetto, of our own family, have been sentenced to death. We are condemned. We have never looked on the woods as a hiding place; we have seen the woods as a base for combat and revenge. But the tens of young people now escaping to the woods are not seeking a battlefield; most of them are living a beggar's life and will doubtless find a beggar's death. In the conditions in which we now find ourselves, our fate would be to lead the same beggar's and vagrant's life.

Only one thing remains for us: to organize collective resistance in the ghetto, at any cost; to consider the ghetto our *Musa Dagh*, to write a proud chapter of Jewish Bialystok and our movement into history.

I can imagine how others would have reacted if their families had been subjected to what ours have been. The lowest gentile peasant would have spat on his own life, and stuck a knife into the guilty one. The only emotion dominating him would have been the thirst for revenge.

Our duty is clear: with the first Jew to be deported, we must begin our counteraction. If anyone succeeds in taking arms from the murderer and going into the woods -- fine. A young person with weapons can find his place in the woods. We still have time to prepare the woods as a place for combat and revenge.

I have lost everything, all those near to me; still, there persists the desire to live. But there is no choice. If I thought that not only individuals could save themselves, but fifty or sixty per cent of the ghetto Jews, I would say that our decision should be to remain alive at any cost. But we are condemned to death.

SARAH: Comrades! If we are concerned about honor, we have long since lost it. In most of the Jewish communities the extermination activities were carried out smoothly, without counteraction. It is better to remain living than to kill five Germans. In a counteraction we will all die, without any possible doubt. On the other hand, in the woods forty or fifty per cent of our people can be saved. That will be our honor and that will be our history. We are still needed; we shall yet be of use. Since in any event we do no longer have honor, let it be our duty to remain alive.

ENOCH: No illusions! We have nothing to expect but liquidation to the last Jew. We have a choice of two kinds of death. The woods won't save us, and certainly rebellion in the ghetto won't. There remains for us only to die honorably.

The prospects for our resistance are not good. I don't know whether we have adequate means for combat. It's the fault of all of us that our means are so small, but that's water over the dam -- we'll have to use what we have. Bialystok will be liquidated completely, like all the other Jewish cities.

In the first operation the factories were spared, but no one can believe that the Nazis will let them go this time.

It is obvious that the woods offer greater opportunities, for revenge, but we must not go there to live on the mercy of peasants, to buy our food and lives for money. Going to the woods should mean going to become active partisans, but that requires arms.

The weapons we have aren't suited to the woods. If we do have enough time left, we should acquire arms and go to the woods.

But if the Nazi action intervenes, we must answer as soon as they touch the first Jew.

CHAIM: There are no Jews left, there are only remnants. There is no point in talking about honor; if we can, we must try to save ourselves, and not worry how we'll be judged. We must hide in the woods, and maintain systematic communication among the comrades.

MORDECAI: If we wanted to hard enough, and made up our minds that it was our duty, we could make sure our people were safe to the very end, as long as there were any Jews left in Bialystok. I ask an extreme question: do the comrades who are for the woods propose that we should hide and not react at the next Nazi action, so that we can escape into the woods later?

(VOICES FROM ALL SIDES: NO, NO!)

There are two opinions, one represented by Sarah and Chaim, and the other by Hershl and Enoch. Make your choice. One thing is sure -- we won't go to the factories and pray to God that the Nazis catch the people who have hidden, so that we can be saved. And we won't watch passively from our factory windows when comrades from another factory are led away.

We can have a vote: Hershl or Chaim.

FANYA (of the Branch): I agree with Enoch. We have to choose between one big action here, or a series of much smaller actions, which in the end will have a much greater significance -- I mean escaping into the woods. Because we aren't sufficiently well equipped and don't have the opportunity to go to the woods, and because the situation is very tense, we must emphasize counteraction right here; as soon as the first Jew is seized for deportation, we must attack with all our strength.

But if nothing happens for a few more weeks, we must make every effort to leave.

ELIEZER SUCHANITZKY (of the Branch): Comrades! I think it would be wrong for us to try to work in two directions at the same time. Taking to the woods is a good idea; it gives us some chance to remain alive. But at the present moment, when action is so imminent, going to the woods is an illusion. Even if we have another three or four weeks, we won't be able to assemble all the necessary material and take it with us.

I think there is only one thing for us to do: to answer a Nazi action with our counteraction. I think we should work only this line, so that we can give the most forceful possible answer with the limited means at our disposal.

JOCHEBED: Why is there all this talk about death? It isn't natural. Even a soldier at the front, or a partisan in the woods, in the greatest danger, keeps on thinking about life.

We know what the situation is, but why frighten everybody with all this talk about death? If that's what we should do, let's take to the woods, or remain here and fight it out. That doesn't mean that we must necessarily be killed. Everything we've been saying here is opposed to our most basic instincts.

CHAIM: I don't agree with Jochebed. We must be consistent, we dare not give anyone the moral dispensation to run away. This will be for keeps, not for fun. When we fight, it will have to be to the last. And to fight means to be killed. I think we would be accomplishing more if we remained alive, by taking to the woods.

[He suggests setting up a base outside the ghetto, so that sabotage can be carried on inside the city even after the Nazis act.]

MOSES: In the order of importance, the counteraction comes first; then, if possible, organization

of partisan activity in the woods. Everyone here, without exception, should speak his mind, because the lives of all the comrades depend on the decisions made at this meeting. If necessary, let the meeting last until morning.

CHAIM: You want everybody to speak so the meeting should decide against counteraction in the ghetto. (*PROTEST*)

DORKE (of the Branch): I think our position must be the position of people in a movement, of people with full consciousness of what they're doing, who know what has happened to our nearest relatives and friends.

We will die a worthy death. The chances for revenge are greater in the woods, but we cannot go there as vagrants, only as active partisans. Since the necessary preparation for the woods is impossible now, we must devote all our energy to the counteraction.

ZIPPORAH: It's hard to say anything, it's hard to choose the manner of your own death. There's a kind of argument going on inside me between life and death. It's not important for me whether I or somebody else will remain alive. After what we have lived through and seen with our own eyes, we shouldn't have too high a notion of the value of our lives. I am trying to think a little more deeply of the question of our movement.

We're proud of the fact that our movement lived through the most difficult period in the history of the Jewish community in Poland. I was brought here from Vilna, and so were many others. There were certainly more important people to save. It wasn't I who was brought here, and it wasn't you; it was the movement. Now the question has been posed: will the movement be destroyed entirely? Does the movement have the right to be destroyed? We are a movement of the Jewish people; we must, and we do in fact, undergo all the sorrows and persecutions of the people.

When we consider the right to stay alive, I say yes, we have every right. Perhaps our movement may have to be the only one to speak up, when that is needed. Take the example of Warsaw. That was certainly a proud and manly death, but it wasn't the kind of thing a movement should do.

The decision of a movement should be to remain alive.

I don't mean we should hold on to life for its own sake, but for continued work, for extending the chain that was not broken even in the darkest days.

Our chances are as small as they can be, but if we put everything we have into our effort, we can succeed.

SHMULIK: This is the first time we have had to hold a meeting about death. We are going to undertake our counteraction not to write history, but to die an honorable death, as young Jews in our times should. And if our history is ever written, it will be different from the history of the Spanish Jews, who leaped into the flames with "Hear, O Israel!" on their lips.

Now, as to the action. All our experience teaches us that we can't trust the Germans, in spite of their assurances that the artisans will be protected, that only those who don't work will be deported, and so on. They have succeeded in driving thousands of Jews to the slaughter only by deception and demoralization.

And yet we have a chance to come out of the impending action safely. Everyone is playing for time, and so should we. In the short time that remains, we can work to improve our small and impoverished store of weapons.

We should also do what we can about the woods, where we can fulfill two functions.

I don't want to be misunderstood. We shouldn't interpret our hiding while the action is taking place as cowardice.

No! Man's instinct for life is so great, and here we must be selfish. I don't care if others are deported in our place. We have a greater claim on life than others, rightly.

We have set an aim in life for ourselves -- to remain living at any cost! We were brought here from Vilna because there was a smell of liquidation there, and living witnesses had to remain. We must therefore do everything we can, if there is no liquidation immediately, to wait and gain time.

But if the liquidation starts now, then let it be all of us together in the counteraction, and "let me die with the Philistines."

SARAH: I want the comrades to know that I will do whatever is decided. But I'm amazed by the calmness with which we're talking about all this.

When I see a German, I begin to tremble all over. I don't know whether the comrades, and especially the girls, will have enough strength and courage. I said what I said before because I don't have any faith in my own strength.

EZEKIEL: I don't agree with Sarah. In the face of death you can become weak and powerless, or you can become very strong, since there is nothing to lose. I agree with Shmulik that we should begin our counteraction only in the event of a definite liquidation.

ETHEL: Concretely -- if an action is started in the next few days, then our only choice can be a counteraction; but if we are granted more time, we should work along the lines of taking to the woods.

I hope I can be equal to the duties that will be imposed on us. It may be that in the course of events I shall be strengthened. In any case, I am resolved to do everything that needs to be done. Hershl spoke rightly. We are going to perform a desperate act, whether we want to or not. Our fate is sealed, and there remains for us only the choice between one kind of death and another. I am calm.

MORDECAI: The position of the comrades is clear. We will do everything we can to help as many people as possible escape into the woods for partisan combat. Every one of us who is in the ghetto when the Nazis start their action must react as soon as the first Jew is seized for deportation. We are not going to haggle about our lives; we must understand objective conditions.

The most important thing is this: to maintain until the very end the pride and dignity of the movement.

Questions on “On the Agenda: Death”

This reading can be read aloud as a play in the classroom. After you have completed the reading, answer the following questions:

1. According to MORDECAI, what are their two options?
2. What does ISAAC feel will happen to all of them no matter what they decide to do?
3. What does HERSHL believe is their clear duty?
4. How do the opinions of SARAH and CHAIM differ from those of HERSHL and ENOCH?
5. What is JOCHEBED'S opinion about death?
6. What are ZIPPORAH'S thoughts about life and death?
7. At the end of the debate, how does MORDECAI summarize what the group has decided to do?

Rosa Robota-Heroine of the Auschwitz Underground **By Yuri Suhl**

[EDITOR'S NOTE: "The truth about Auschwitz? There is no person who could tell the whole truth about Auschwitz." These words were spoken by Jozef Cyrankiewicz, Premier of Poland, who was one of the top leaders of the Auschwitz underground.

With each new memoir about that camp a little more of the truth is brought to light, as in the case of Rosa Robota who helped make possible the only revolt there. Yet it was only recently that her role in this uprising became known in many of its details.]

On Saturday, October 7, 1944, a tremendous explosion shook the barracks of Birkenau (Auschwitz II), and its thousands of startled prisoners beheld a sight they could hardly believe. One of the four crematoriums¹ was in flames! They were happy to see at least part of the German killing-apparatus destroyed; but none was happier than young Rosa Robota, who was directly involved in the explosion. For months she had been passing on small pieces of dynamite to certain people in the Sonderkommando. Daily she had risked her life to make this moment possible. Now the flames lighting up the Auschwitz sky proclaimed to the whole world that even the most isolated of Auschwitz prisoners, the Sonderkommando Jews, would rise up in revolt when given leadership and arms.

Rosa was eighteen when the Germans occupied her hometown, Ciechanow, in September, 1939 three days after they had invaded Poland. She was a member of Hashomer Hatzair and, together with other members, was deeply interested in the organization of an underground resistance movement in the ghetto.

In November, 1942, the Germans liquidated the ghetto of Ciechanow, deporting some Jews to Treblinka and some to Auschwitz. Rosa and her family were in the Auschwitz transport. Most of the arrivals were sent straight to the gas chambers from the railway platform. Some of the younger people, Rosa among them, were marched off in another direction and later assigned to various work details. Rosa was sent to work in the *Bekleidungstelle* (clothing supply section). Some Ciechanow girls were sent to the munitions factory, "Union," one of the Krupp slave-labor plants in Auschwitz, which operated round the clock on a three-shift basis. Rosa, as well as all the women who worked in the munitions factory, lived in the Birkenau barracks.

One day Rosa had a visitor -- a townsman named Noah Zabladowicz who was a member of the Jewish section of the Auschwitz underground.² As soon as they managed to be alone he told her the purpose of his visit. The underground was planning a general uprising in camp, which included the blowing up of the gas chamber and crematorium installations. For this it was necessary to have explosives and explosive charges. Israel Gutman and Joshua Leifer, two members of the underground who worked on the day shift in "Union," had been given the task of establishing contact with the Jewish girls in the *Pulver-Pavilion*, the explosives section of "Union." But all their efforts were in vain because the girls were under constant surveillance and any contact between them and other workers, especially men was strictly forbidden. It was decided, therefore, to try to contact them through some intermediary in Birkenau. Since several of the girls who worked in the *Pulver-Pavilion* came from Ciechanow and Rosa knew them and was in touch with them, she seemed to be the ideal person to act as intermediary between them and the underground.

Rosa was only too glad to accept the assignment. Ever since that day of November, 1942, when she saw her own family, together with the rest of the Ciechanow Jews, taken to the gas chambers, the strongest emotion that suffused her being was a burning hatred of the Nazis, coupled with a deep yearning to avenge the murder of her people. Now the underground gave her the opportunity to express these feelings in the form of concrete deeds.

Rosa set to work and in a short time twenty girls were smuggling dynamite and explosive charges out of the munitions factory for the underground. They carried out the little wheels of dynamite, which looked like buttons, in small matchboxes which they hid in their bosoms or in special pockets they had sewn into the hems of their dresses. These "buttons" would then pass from hand to hand through an elaborate underground transmission belt that led to the Russian prisoner Borodin, an expert at constructing bombs. For bomb casings he used empty sardine cans. The finished bombs then started moving again on the transmission belt to various strategic hiding places in the sprawling camp. The Sonderkommando had its cache close to the crematorium compound.

Israel Gutman and Joshua Leifer concealed their "buttons" in the false bottom of a canister which they had made especially for that purpose. They always made sure to have some tea or leftover soup in the canister at the time of the SS inspection after work. Since it was customary for prisoners to save a little of their food rations for later, a canister containing some liquid would usually get no more than a perfunctory glance from the inspecting SS man.

One day after work as they were standing in line during the SS inspection, Leifer whispered to Gutman: "I had no time to hide the stuff in the canister. I have it in a matchbox in my pocket." Gutman grew pale and began to shake all over. The SS had been known to look into matchboxes also. He could not stop thinking that they were at the brink of disaster, and the more he thought of it the more nervous he became. So much so that the SS man became suspicious and gave him a very close and thorough inspection. Behind him stood Leifer, appearing very calm. Frustrated at having spent so much time on Gutman and finding nothing, the SS man gave Leifer a superficial inspection and passed on to the next man. This was one time, Gutman writes in his account of the incident, when nervousness paid off well.³

Moishe Kulka, another member, recalls that "the entire work was carried on during the night-shift when control was not so strict. In the morning, when the night-shift left the plant, I waited around. A Hungarian Jew I knew handed me half a loaf of bread. Concealed in the bread was a small package of explosives. I kept it near my workbench and later passed it on to a German Jew who worked on the railway."⁴

Rosa was the direct link with the Sonderkommando. The explosives she received were hidden in the handcarts on which the corpses of those who had died overnight in the barracks were taken to the crematorium.

The Sonderkommando, which according to plan was supposed to synchronize its revolt with the general uprising, one day learned through underground sources that it was about to be liquidated. For them it was a matter of acting now or never. Not having any other choice they acted. They blew up Crematorium III, tossed a sadistic German overseer into the oven, killed four SS men, and wounded a number of others. Then they cut the barbed wire fence and about six hundred escaped. They were hunted down by a large contingent of pursuing SS men and shot.⁵ (As it turned out the general uprising never took place and the Sonderkommando action was the only armed revolt in Auschwitz.)

The political arm of the SS immediately launched a thorough investigation of the revolt. They wanted to know where the explosives came from and how they got into the hands of the Sonderkommando. With the aid of planted agents, the SS in a matter of two weeks came upon the trail of the explosives. They arrested several girls from the munitions factory, and after two days of interrogation and torture released them. The investigation continued and soon other arrests were made. Four girls were taken to the dread Block 11 for questioning. Three were from "Union"; the fourth was Rosa Robota.

Gutman, Leifer, Noah, and others whom Rosa knew now expected to be arrested at any moment. They had full faith in her trustworthiness, but they also knew something about the torture methods the SS employed in Block 11. At one point they considered suicide. They feared that what might happen to Rosa under questioning could happen to them too.

In the meantime they watched from a distance how Rosa was being led daily to Block 11 for questioning. Her hair was matted, her face puffed up and bruised beyond recognition, her clothes torn. She could not walk and had to be dragged by two women attendants.

One day the underground decided on a daring step. Moishe Kulka was acquainted with Jacob, the Jewish kapo of Block 11. He asked him if he would be willing to let someone see Rosa Robota in her death cell. Jacob agreed and asked that the visitor bring along a bottle of whiskey and a salami. Her townsman Noah was chosen to see her. The kapo introduced him to the SS guard as a friend of his. The two plied the SS man with drinks until he fell to the floor unconscious. Then Jacob quickly removed the keys from the guard and motioned to Noah to follow him. Noah describes the incident as follows:

I had the privilege to see Rosa for the last time several days before her execution. At night, when all the prisoners were asleep and all movement in Camp was forbidden, I descended into a bunker of Block 11 and saw the cells and the dark corridors. I heard the moaning of the condemned and was shaken to the core of my being. Jacob led me through the stairs to Rosa's cell. He opened the door and let me in. Then he closed the door behind me and disappeared.

When I became accustomed to the dark I noticed a figure, wrapped in torn clothing, lying on the cold cement floor. She turned her head toward me. I hardly recognized her. After several minutes of silence she began to speak. She told me of the sadistic methods the Germans employ during interrogations. It is impossible for a human being to endure them. She told me that she took all the blame upon herself and that she would be the last to go. She had betrayed no one.

I tried to console her but she would not listen. I know what I have done, and what I am to expect, she said. She asked that the comrades continue with their work. It is easier to die when one knows that the work is being carried on.

I heard the door squeak. Jacob ordered me to come out. We took leave of each other. It was the last time that I saw her.⁶

Before Noah left Rosa's death cell, she scribbled a farewell message to her underground comrades. She assured them that the only name she mentioned during the interrogations was that of a man in the Sonderkommando who she knew was dead. He, she had told the interrogators, was her only contact with the underground. She concluded her message with the Hebrew greeting of Hashomer Hatzair, "Khazak V' Hamatz" -- Be strong and brave.

Several days later all the Jewish prisoners were ordered to the Appel-Platz to witness the hanging of the four young women -- Esther, Ella, Regina, and Rosa.

Endnotes:

¹.Crematorium III

².Every nationality in Auschwitz was represented in the camp's underground. The Jewish section numbered about 300.

³.ISRAEL GUTMAN, *Auschwitz Zeugnisse und Berichte* (Frankfurt am Main: 1962), pp. 273-79.

⁴.MOISHE KULKA, *Memorial-Book of the Ciechanow Jewish Community* (Tel Aviv: 1962), pp. 386-90. See also Noah Zabladowicz, *ibid.*, pp. 338-39.

⁵.One survivor of the Sonderkommando revolt, Filip Muller, now lives in Prague. Recently he appeared as a witness for the prosecution at the trial of twenty SS men held in Frankfurt.

⁶.MOISHE KULKA, *Memorial-Book of the Ciechanow Jewish Community*, see above.

Source: Suhl, Yuri. *They Fought Back*. New York: Paperback Library, 1967. Reprinted by permission of Mrs. Beverly Spector, Literary Executor.

TESTIMONY

On April 7, 1944, two Jewish prisoners escaped from AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU concentration camp. During their escape preparations, Alfred Wetzler and Walter Rosenberg (who later changed his name to Rudolf Vrba) gathered clandestine notes describing the camp and the extermination operation. These notes, hastily scribbled on dirty scraps of paper, had been prepared by inmates working in the Auschwitz camp offices, on construction crews, and in the SONDERKOMMANDOS. Along with this data, Wetzler and Rosenberg also took with them a label from an empty canister of ZYKLON B. After their escape, the men wrote a fifty-page report describing the layout and operation of the Auschwitz complex and listed, by country of origin, the number of victims gassed prior to their escape. Later passed on to the ALLIES, it was one of several reports of NAZI atrocities to be received by the West. It was released to the American press by the WAR REFUGEE BOARD in November 1944.

In his testimony at the AUSCHWITZ TRIAL reproduced below, Rudolf Vrba describes how he and Wetzler escaped from the KILLING CENTER. In German courts, the trial judge may take an active role in questioning witnesses.

Dr. Vrba: I fled from Auschwitz on 7 April 1944 with my friend Wetzler. We had made up our minds to warn the world of what was happening in Auschwitz and especially to prevent the Hungarian Jews from letting themselves be transported to Auschwitz without offering any resistance. At this time we in Auschwitz already knew that large Hungarian transports were already planned. Along with Wetzler I put together complete statistics of the death actions. When we came upon Jewish organizations in Slovakia, we were questioned separately because they did not want to believe our accounts. What we said independently of each other was exactly the same and was recorded in a protocol. I can present the court with a copy of this protocol. I found it in the White House Library.

Presiding judge: How did you prepare the statistics?

Dr. Vrba: As soon as I was assigned to the clean up commando in the ramp service, I thought about escaping. I have a good head for numbers and tried to remember the number of survivors of every transport. I can still to this day remember the telephone numbers of my friends. I continuously tallied these numbers whenever I talked with acquaintances who came from these transports. So by the end of April 1944, we determined the number of killed inmates to be 1.75 million [historians now estimate the number killed to be 1.2 million.

Prosecuting Attorney Vogel: Is this number of 1.75 million gassed inmates based on your own observations, or is the number of those gassed before your arrival at Auschwitz and your assignment to the clean up commando on the train ramps also included?

Dr. Vrba: The number during the time before mid-1942 was relatively small. I knew that from conversations. But so far as we are able to determine, that is also taken into account.

Representative of the Co-Plaintiff Ormond: When did you consciously start recording these figures? Because you were preparing to escape?

Dr. Vrba: Looking back now it is hard to say. I systematically observed the transports and the numbers.

Ormond: While you were preparing to escape, did you continue to tally the numbers, up until 7 April 1944, or were you so busy with escape preparations that you could no longer do so?

Dr. Vrba: The liquidation of the family camp in March was for me such a monstrous thing. It made a deeper impression on me than all of the others. The number of these victims is certainly there, as well as the victims of the Greek transports that came to Auschwitz in March 1944. The notes go up to this time.

Alternate Judge Hummerich: How did you and Wetzler organize your escape together, and how did you meet with him?

Dr. Vrba: We met in Sector III, the so-called Mexico camp. A bunker was built near the block leader's room. We waited there three days and three nights until the evening of 11 April, because the sentries stood guard in chain fashion for three days whenever an escape was noticed. Four prisoners who had escaped before us had used this hiding place. They were caught but did not divulge the place despite torture. At 6:00 P.M., after our escape, the alarm was sounded. They looked for us for three days. We left the following night, when we heard that the sentry chain had been removed.

Ormond: Where did you find refuge after you managed to escape?

Dr. Vrba: We crossed the Polish-Slovakian border on 21 April. A farmer on the other side of the border hid us. We got in contact with the Jewish Community in Zilina, and there we went to Dr. Pollak, a physician. He arranged a meeting for us with the leaders of the Jewish Community in Bratislava. This took place either on 24 or 25 April.

Ormond: What was these people's first reaction?

Dr. Vrba: At first our report seemed unbelievable to them. These were people who had grown up in a civilized world and could not image such atrocities. But when we gave details on the transports that arrived at Auschwitz from Slovakia, they looked at the lists that they had of these transports. Wetzler and I were separated for cross-examination. They soon determined that our information corroborated with their records on the departures of the transports. Finally we were taken to a monastery and introduced to the papal nuncio residing in Bratislava. He had already read the protocol beforehand. He gave us his word of honor that he would pass our report on to the Vatican and the western governments.

- Reprinted from Hermann Langbein, *Der Auschwitz-Prozess: eine Dokumentation* (Frankfurt am Main, 1995), 122-124. Translated from the German by Ned Guthrie.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *In Pursuit of Justice: Examining the Evidence of the Holocaust*. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, pages 207-208. © United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Underground Assignment in Auschwitz By Yuri Suhl

On the afternoon of October 7, 1944, an explosion rocked the crematorium compound. The Sonderkommando staged their long-planned revolt. It was to include the destruction of all the crematorium installations, but something had gone wrong and only crematorium III was blown up and its chimney enveloped in flames.

By the end of 1944, with the Red Army steadily advancing in the direction of Auschwitz, the Nazis themselves ordered the dismantling of the remaining crematoriums to remove the evidence of the mass murders. They did not wholly succeed. When the Red Army liberated Auschwitz on January 25, 1945, the remains of a partly demolished crematorium were still there. They are now part of the Auschwitz Museum.

In January, 1960, when all of Poland observed the fifteenth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, David Szmulewski was awarded the *Virtuti Militari*, Poland's highest military decoration. The medal was pinned on him by Premier Jozef Cyrankiewicz, Szmulewski's former comrade in the Auschwitz underground.

He arrived in Auschwitz in March, 1942, when the camp was still being built and expanded to accommodate the unending flow of new prisoners. One evening, soon after his arrival, an SS man came storming into his barracks looking for roofers. "I'm a roofer," Szmulewski volunteered, though he had never been one. "You better be good," the SS man warned him, as he scrutinized him from head to foot. Szmulewski's nerve did not desert him and he somehow bluffed himself into a roofer's classification.

The first and most important benefit of his new occupation was life itself. As a prisoner with special skills needed by the administration he was no longer among the immediately expendable. There were other advantages as well. He now had a *Passierschein* (permit) which enabled him to move about the camp unguarded, including Auschwitz II (Birkenau), where the gas chambers and crematoriums were located. He was thus a valuable link between the various underground groups scattered in the vast Auschwitz complex. His skill as a roofer and his mobility made him the ideal man for carrying out the photography assignment.

Obtaining a camera was the least of the problems. With the daily transports that Eichmann dispatched to Auschwitz from all parts of Europe came whatever valuables the victims were able to salvage and take with them. Some brought cameras too. As soon as the new arrivals stepped out of their freight cars, their possessions were taken away and carted off to the *Effectenkammer* for sorting, storing, and eventual shipping to Germany. There were thirty-five warehouses in Auschwitz bulging with these confiscated articles, all destined for the Third Reich. The underground had its people in every branch of camp activity, including the *Effectenkammer*. With a little skill and caution it was not too difficult to filch a small, concealable article like a camera. The real problem was how to get it into the crematorium compound.

This dread enclosure, whose smoke-belching chimneys were visible to thousands of prisoners in the Birkenau barracks, was under the separate administration of Oberscharführer Moll, a one-eyed sadist who boasted that his Nazi membership card numbered below 1,000. The several hundred Jewish prisoners compelled to operate the crematoriums, who were called the Sonderkommando, had to live on the premises, and every two or three months they were themselves marched off to the gas chambers and replaced by a new Sonderkommando. This was, after all, the scene of the Nazis' most heinous crime and so its witnesses had to be disposed of.

But the brotherly hand of the underground extended even into the ranks of the Sonderkommando. Though cut off from the rest of the prisoners and condemned by the Nazis to spend the last months of their agonized lives burning the bodies of fellow Jews, the underground kept alive within them the spirit of revenge and revolt. When the underground high command decided on the photography assignment, strategy for carrying it out was planned together with members of the Sonderkommando underground. It was decided that one of them should damage the roof of a crematorium chamber. This would provide the necessary pretext for bringing a roofer into the compound. Szmulewski would be that roofer. But it was clear that the camera had to precede him. The rigid inspection the guards would subject him to at the entrance could lead to the discovery of the camera, doom the plan, and cost Szmulewski his life.

The scheme for smuggling in the camera was an elaborate one. The crematorium compound was not equipped with kitchen facilities. The Sonderkommandos were fed from the central camp kitchen. To prevent their contact with other prisoners even during mealtime, the black ersatz coffee and the thin, tasteless liquid that passed for soup, were brought into the compound in huge kettles. It was decided that the camera should be transported in one of these kettles.

The underground tinsmiths immediately set to work making a false bottom for one of the kettles. When it was completed it was kept for twenty-five hours filled with water to see if the bottom was leakproof. The test was successful. The camera was then slipped into the false bottom and the kettle taken to the kitchen (the underground had its people in the kitchen too). The next time the Sonderkommando detail came to the kitchen for its rations there was a quick exchange of kettles. The one containing the camera was filled with the liquid and taken into the compound.

It was now Szmulewski's turn to enter the compound. Having been officially requested to do the roof repairs he showed the guards his tools and tar and was passed without difficulty. Once inside the compound he had to report to Oberscharführer Moll.

"*Du verfluchte Judensau,*" Moll growled at him. "Do you know where you are?"

"*Jawohl,* Herr Kommandant."

"I want you to stay at your job like a dog chained to his post. If you move away from there for one minute you will not come out of here alive. You hear me, you *Schweinhund?*"

"*Jawohl,* Herr Kommandant."

Moll left the compound several times a day to meet the new transports that arrived at the special railway siding in Birkenau. Szmulewski was waiting for that moment. As soon as Moll had gone one of the Sonderkommando men slipped him the camera. He enlarged the middle button of his prisoner's jacket wide enough to push through the lens while keeping the rest of the camera concealed beneath the jacket. Then he climbed to the top of the roof and set to work.

He was able to snap three shots unobserved. One was of a group of naked women on the way to the gas chamber. The other two were of gassed bodies being burned in the open pits within the enclosure. The four crematoriums working around the clock could not accommodate the ever-growing number of bodies to be burned during the stepped-up executions. And so the Nazis hit upon the scheme of supplementing the crematoriums with open pits, reaching a combined high of more than 20,000 bodies daily.

As soon as he had finished taking the pictures Szmulewski removed the film from the camera, wrapped it in a piece of rag and stuck it into the tar he had brought for the roof repair. The camera,

already an unnecessary hazard, was quickly buried in the compound grounds. The roof repaired, Szmulewski left the compound with the film safely hidden in the remaining tar. He then passed on the film to Cyrankiewicz, who in turn passed it on by secret courier to the Cracow underground for developing.

The underground has thus provided the outside world with the first photographs of Nazi atrocities inside Auschwitz, giving visual support to the word-picture painted by Cyrankiewicz in his secret report to the P.P.S. (Polish Socialist Party).

In his *Widerstand in Auschwitz* (VVN-Verlag, Berlin-Potsdam, 1949, p. 32), Bruno Baum makes the following significant observation about the underground's activities: "Our most important task was to inform [the outside world], by letters or reports, what was happening in Auschwitz. The enormous gassings, as well as this form of killing, generally, were not believed even by those who, for many years, had fought in illegal movements against Hitler and were familiar with the endless cruelties of the Nazis."

Treblinka

I Lived to Tell the Horrors of Treblinka

The Treblinka killing center had few survivors, a fact that makes this anonymous account published in Answer on 12 February 1944 all the more remarkable.

I left Warsaw on July 27, 1942, and wandered through many towns to escape deportation. We did not know then what "deportation" implied, but we had a foreboding that it was synonymous with death. Thousands had already been deported and nothing had been heard from them.

In the town of —, I was detained by Polish police and kept in a cell for four weeks.

I failed to convince my fellow-prisoners that we should attempt to escape. They thought it was impossible. Our guards forewarned us that ten hostages would be shot for each Jew who escaped. We were 110 Jews, guarded by 48 gendarmes. One day we were led to the railroad station where the tracks were blocked by cars packed with Jews. A sixtieth car was awaiting our arrival. I was one of 84 people, men and women, crowded into this car, which had a single window near the roof. When comrade Z and I attempted to use the window for escape, we were prevented forcibly by the others, who feared they would be shot if we succeeded.

Arrival at Treblinka

At 7 in the morning, the train arrived at Malkina, where it was divided into six sections, each containing ten cars. My car was shunted with nine others to a branch line. Some 15 minutes later, we arrived at the Treblinka station; the train continued for another five minutes, entered a forest and passed through a big gate. The doors opened suddenly. At each side stood guards armed with sticks and whips, shouting in Polish, Ukrainian and German: "Quick, get out!" To evade the beatings, we desperately scrambled to get ahead of one another. Twelve Ukrainians, with rifles aimed at us, reinforced the guards who, in turn, were reinforced by other men, guns in hand, holding ferocious dogs by their leashes.

We were ordered to stand in formation. An S.S. official, watch in hand, shouted an order: "I give you one minute to take your shoes and stockings off, tie them together and hold them in your hands. One minute— or you'll be shot."

We were ordered to run . . . and to return through the "corridor." The guards lashed us furiously. Some of us crumbled and died. We were barefooted and as the ground was rubble-spattered, our soles bled. We were ordered to throw our shoes into a pile of clothes, some three stories high, and to return through the "corridor."

Whippers and Whipped

Finally we were ordered to halt and the women were marched off to a square covered by a thatched roof. Later we saw them marched past, nude, toward a fenced-off area. They vanished behind a gate.

We were ordered to undress and run back and forth between the clothing pile and the spot where we had undressed — all the time through the "corridor" of madly yelling guards.

From the direction of the high fence there came a horrible moaning which lasted for a minute or two. I observed that the men with whips and sticks forming the outer wall of the "corridor," were Jews themselves — derelict, half-mad individuals, prodded by Ukrainians who pressed guns into their backs.

When we again reached the clothes-pile, I jumped onto it, grabbed a pair of pants and a jacket, picked up a cane and forced my way among the guards forming the "corridor."

With all the others. I shouted hysterically and waved my cane, S.S. men, standing to the side, watching the sadistic orgy with satisfaction, pulled out all well-built Jews.

"Hospital"— Nazi Style

At the sound of a sharp whistle, we were rushed to the train, where we formed two rows at the doors of each car. Ten more cars had arrived from one of which an old Jew tumbled. An S.S. man ordered one of the guards to take him to "the hospital." Then I, too, was ordered to take an old man to "the hospital."

I did not know what was meant by "the hospital," but I followed the first guard. We walked toward an area from which thick smoke rose, and stopped at a pit ten meters in width and ten meters in depth. I could see smoldering human bodies at the bottom. I followed the motions of the "veterans." We undressed the old Jews and seated them at the edge of the pit, their feet dangling. Some more were brought here. When ten of them were thus seated with their feet dangling, Ukrainian guards whipped them once and immediately they dropped into the smoldering pit.

I learned that the veterans had been here for some three weeks, others for no more than three or four days. Every morning, one or two of the beaters' group were led away, never to be seen again.

The fenced-off enclosure from which came the frequent horrifying moans, followed by a dreadful silence, was known as "the court of death." Two Jewish youths, employed as gravediggers, escaped from there and sought to lose themselves among us. They told us that there were eight barracks with room for 7,000.

All who arrived on the trains, excepting those who were assigned as "beaters," were led into the barracks and told they would receive baths and showers. The barracks were sealed and gas let in. Those outside waiting their turn soon grasped what was happening and sought to stampede. But then S.S. men and

Ukrainians with ferocious dogs appeared and kept them back. The doors were sealed for 15 minutes at a time, and when they were opened, all who had been locked in were dead.

Five hundred men were assigned to the one task of removing the corpses and throwing them into the burning pit. Five hundred Jews—mental derelicts, servants of death, half-dead themselves. There were at least ten suicides daily among them. All bore the stench of carrion, because of their work.

In the far corner of our yard there was a hut in which lived the essential laborers—carpenters, locksmiths, electricians, tailors—and 12 musicians. Brought here from Warsaw some months before the official deportations began they had constructed the camp and were still employed at such labors. They wore yellow patches on their clothing and were kept separate from us. The musicians were assigned to play for the Nazis at their orgies.

I was at Treblinka for four days, during which Jews arrived from Holland, France, Vienna and all parts of Poland, only to disappear behind the fence of “the court death.”

Blueprint for Escape

Escape during the day was impossible, for we were under constant guard from the moment we were marched out at 6 A.M. until 7 P.M., when we were locked in again.

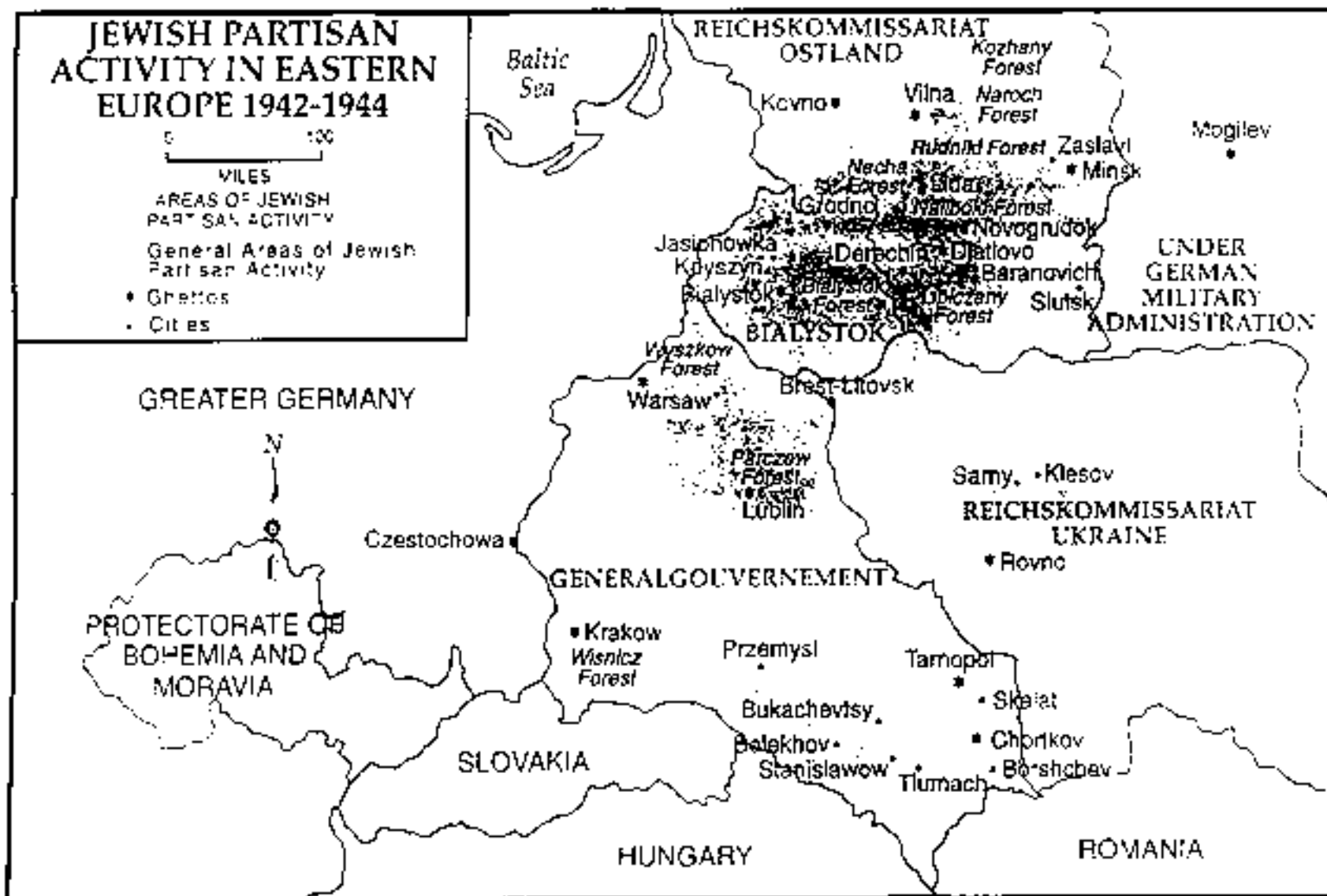
We decided that we must find some way to remain outside the barracks at night. One evening, at 6 P.M., I tied my comrades into a bundles of clothing and placed them on the pile. One who had refused to escape himself tied me into a bundle, as I had done with my comrades, and placed me on the hill. After 6 P.M. silence settled on the camp. We disentangled ourselves and with the pressure of our bodies, we dug a big pit in the clothes-pile in order to be able to see without being seen. Every half hour the guard passed the clothing hill, and frequently the spotlight was turned on it. We were able to tell the time by the change of the watch.

Evading the spotlight, we crept slowly toward the pit, using its vapors, rising thicker at night than during the day, as a smoke-screen. We faced the first barbed-wire fence. The soil was soft under it and we dug with our hands and knives and finally passed through. We found ourselves in a forest, walked straight ahead and soon faced another barbed-wire fence. As the soil here was hard, we could not dig, and were compelled to climb the barbed wire.

Bruised and cut, we got across. Soon we faced a third barbed-wire barrier. We climbed this one, too.

We reached Warsaw on the morning after Succoth. I obtained the necessary “aryan” documents and struck out for the border of a neighboring country. I made two attempts to cross the border. The first attempt failed. After obtaining from me 20,000 zlotas, approximately \$400, the first group of smugglers left me stranded in a forest. But I tried again. In February, 1943, I was finally taken across to___ (name of a neighboring country).

___Independent Jewish Press Service



Source: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM: *Resistance During the Holocaust*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

FAMILY CAMPS

The family camps came into being during the extermination operation the Nazis carried out in 1942, before the partisans had established themselves in the forest. When the Soviet command began organizing partisan camps in the forest, they found the family camps already there. Even though the Soviets did not encourage massive flight of Jews to the forest, they did not interfere with them, and there were even Soviet commanders who, out of sympathy, helped the residents of these camps. Jewish partisans did all they could to make the conditions of life for the family camps easier...

In the summer of 1942, the Jews of the group ceased to speak to each other in whispers. They stood tall. They attacked a German company and obtained all they needed. There were wagons for hauling and travel, and horses to ride. Their armed cavalry crossed the surrounding territory by its length and breadth. There were those who entered Village in force, called out the farmers and explained their mission. They were partisans, fighting the Germans, not simple Jews. Everyone was obligated to help them with information, food, and everything else they needed. "Don't believe that Stalin fled and that the Germans will win. The Germans will never win. The Red Army will return, and in the meantime, the partisans will do their job. The Germans may have control, but the partisans reign." In such a speech in a Vilnage they would first announce: "The Vilnage is surrounded, machine guns on all sides." The first such speech was in the Vilnage of Kaminka.

There was already a sort of government of the unit. Tuvia Bielski was chosen commander. It was given a name: the Marshal Zhukov Regiment. It was Tuvia's suggestion. He had heard that Marshal Zhukov was the commander of the Byelorussian front. The unit was part of the Soviet partisan movement, even though it had still not met up with any real Soviet authority. Discipline was imposed. It was forbidden to take more than ordered. Orders covered food, transport vehicles, and work tools. It was forbidden to take clothing without permission, including from prisoners. When the commander learned that an order had been violated, he would force the offender to return what he had stolen. Sometimes there was punishment. Once a mother came and complained that her son had taken something illegally from a Vilnage. The old people understood the importance of good relations with the non-Jewish Village...

This is the story of the young Jewish man Pinhas Zajonc, who with his family hid in a bunker in the forest:

The next day, February 24, we woke as usual in the morning. It was a pale, pleasant day.

The sun shined and warmed our bodies a little, snow did not fall, and the footprints we left five days previously remained uncovered.

We made ready to prepare something to eat. Yehuda suggested: "Maybe we could make potato pancakes?"

The idea was accepted by everyone. While we had no oil, we still had some firewood left, and we had a grater (father had managed to make one from a sheet of metal in which he made holes with a nail, before he was killed). We began to peel the potatoes and Mother went out to bring water from the spring. She soon returned with a full pail.

We suddenly heard the sound of heavy steps, coming closer. We all began to tremble. We felt that disaster was approaching. It is important to know that in a bunker you hear the steps sooner, and can tell whether they are familiar or not. These footsteps were not known to us at all. They sounded very heavy, like the steps of German soldiers.

We were not mistaken. They were Germans who had come across our footprints in the snow.

At this point, everything happened with dizzying speed.

My mother was the first to approach the door and open it. She made out two Germans at a distance of a few paces from the bunker. At that same moment there was a shot. A bullet hit her hand and wounded her. She screamed in Yiddish: "Save yourselves, the Germans have come!"

She began running. The Germans retreated. They were apparently afraid that we might be armed. They called for help and the bunker was soon surrounded by dozens of Germans.

We managed to get out of the bunker before the reinforcements arrived. The first were Zanko Yehuda and his son, then my little brother and my Aunt Rachel, then my other aunt, and I was last.

As I left the bunker I threw my heavy coat on myself and I began running swiftly. I heard the sounds of rifle and machine gunshots behind me. The bullets whistled around me. I turned my head and saw dozens of Germans and Ukrainians running after me. I made out Mother, also running among the trees, blood streaming from her hand, calling and crying: "Where is my son?"

I kept running until I came to a little clearing. I speeded up in order to cross the bare patch quickly. I knew I was exposed to scores of death bullets, flying in all directions. The Germans ran after me and called out to encourage one another, and it sounded like thousands of Germans had conquered the forest. I heard grenades exploding and I ran and ran. I was already close to the end of the clearing and I suddenly fell. My right foot had slipped. I did not know at that moment that it had been hit by a bullet. I felt no pain, it only seemed as if my leg had become heavier, as if someone had tied a heavy stone to it.

The distance between the place I fell and the first trees was less than five meters.

I had fallen on my stomach, and when I turned over there were already many Germans standing over me, pistols drawn, and I lay in the snow and cried.

"Get up, you damn pig!"

I shouted in Polish, without reason or logic: "Help, I'm wounded!"

Sadness overcame me. I counted the last seconds of my young life. I was sure that they would soon shoot me and would thus conclude my life, I cried bitterly. I cried quietly. It was sort of eulogy to myself.

One of the Germans, apparently the commander, ordered: "He'll die anyway. Hurry up and catch the rest of the Jewish dogs!"...

Only a few minutes passed and the Germans returned, shouting and cursing. They searched around them. I saw them through the leaves of the bush. They passed me, at a distance of a meter, but did not discover me. I was afraid they would search the area carefully and then find and kill me.

I sat and cried quietly. Shots and grenades echoed in the air. I thought of my bitter fate, of my father who had fallen and the rest of my family, and suddenly I heard voices, words in Yiddish. I peeked through the leaves and saw her crying, her hand dripping blood...

At that moment, I heard a dull thump very close to the bush in which I sat, as if someone had hit it with a blunt instrument. Immediately after the thump I heard a shot in the air. I glanced through the leaves of the bush and I saw Mother sprawled on the snow, in a pool of her blood.

The German walked away after "winning" his battle with this poor, defenseless woman. It was a waste to kill her with a bullet. That was too easy a death for a Jew. He had murdered her with the butt of his rifle and afterwards shot in the air as a sign of victory...

My foot began to hurt me more and more. I was hungry and frozen. I cried the whole way. After about half an hour I arrived at the bunker. Many farmers stood around it. I knew many of them and they knew me, because the year before I had worked as a cowherd for them. Only a handful knew I was Jewish. Now everyone knew.

Heavy smoke spiraled up out of the bunker. Everything was on fire from the grenades the Germans had thrown inside. A few of our cooking utensils were scattered about. I saw the farmers surround the forest guard who told them, among other things, about my father, how he had been

caught by the Germans. He related that the Germans brought my father back to the forest in which he had been captured, two weeks ago, and put him in the forest guard's hut. They tortured him and dealt him heavy blows, and tried to get out of him where the rest of the Jews were who were hiding in the forest. The guard saw all this with his own eyes. After the Germans failed to get anything out of him, they took a dagger and cut a deep gash in his chest. They asked the guard for salt and sprinkled it into the open wound. Even after this, my father did not let a word cross his lips. So then the Germans decided to take Father to the place where he had been captured, and there they discovered the footprints that led to the bunker.

Source: Gutman, Yisrael. *Fighters Among the Ruins: The Story of Jewish Heroism During World War II*. Washington, DC: International Quiz on Jewish Heroism During World War II and B'nai B'rith Books, 1988. Reprinted by permission of B'nai B'rith Books.

JEWISH PARTISANS

Excerpt from *On Both Sides of the Wall* By Vladka Meed

A small group of escaped ghetto insurgents had organized themselves in the Wyszkw Forests as partisans. In time, we established a regular communication with them. Every other week, a peasant woman delivered a letter to Anna Wonchalska from the partisans, and carried back money, clothing and messages; she then returned to her home near the forest hideout of the partisans. There, under cover of darkness, they collected the deliveries, learned whatever the woman knew of the happenings in the village nearby, and gave her money to buy food for them. The elderly woman was their confidante, who alerted them upon learning of an imminent German raid.

Together with Celek, Marja Sawicka and Vladek Wojciechowski, I once visited the Jewish partisans in the forest. We arrived in Tluszcz at eight in the morning and with Celek, who had been there once before, as our guide, we passed quickly through the town and continued along a broad highway at the edge of the forest. The sun glinted through the trees; a spring breeze rustled the leaves. As we walked, we were on the constant lookout for the partisan who was to meet us. The silhouette of a man appeared in the distance.

The figure signaled to us to continue, which we did until we reached a crossroad. There we waited for further directions but our guide was nowhere to be seen.

"Good morning!" We turned to see the broad, smiling face of Janek Bilak -- who before the ghetto uprising, had received the explosives we smuggled into the ghetto. I had not seen him in over a year. Tall, sunburned, wearing black top boots and green trousers, with a carbine slung over his shoulder, he was the very image of a partisan fighter.

He urged us on, into the woods where we would not be observed. Following him, we penetrated the dense undergrowth. The air was fresh with the smell of pines, birds chirped; a squirrel darted past. The ground was dappled with sunlight, its rays playing hide and seek with us, dazzling us one moment, gone the next. So much brightness and freshness, so many colors! This was a totally different world!

"Don't make so much noise when you walk," Bilak cautioned us.

We tried stepping as carefully as possible; but boughs and branches snapped as they cracked beneath our tread. Bilak moved lightly and almost soundlessly, already an accomplished woodsman.

"One could easily get lost here," one of us remarked after a while. Bilak reassured us with a smile, "Don't worry; if you live in the woods long enough, you gain a sense of direction. I can find my way around here even at night." He stopped short and gave a bird-call, repeating it several times. A similar call echoed from some distance off.

Within a few minutes, the branches separated and two men emerged. One of them, short, with black hair and dark eyes, was known as "Black Janek." The other, somewhat taller, with dark blond hair, blue eyes, and a round, sunburnt face, was Maciek.

"Is the way clear?" asked Bilak.

"Yes, we can go on."

We continued now along a wide forest path. Suddenly we were startled by a voice hailing us from a distance. Looking, we saw a man clearly signaling us to halt. The partisans did not recognize him and we all darted into the dense forest, his voice continuing to call out.

"I'm going to check," Bilak decided. Drawing his revolver and motioning to Janek and Maciek to remain with us, he strode off toward the beckoning stranger.

In a few minutes, he was back. The man was a Jew, one of three who had escaped from a concentration camp and was hiding some distance away. They had neither food nor arms. They had been prowling the woods for several days in the hope of joining a group of partisans. Taking us for partisans the man asked permission to join us.

"Will you let them join us now?" one of us asked Bilak.

"No, not now. We'll meet them this afternoon and talk things over," Bilak replied.

We walked on through the woods. Gradually, the growth became thinner and the ground grew softer, and, after a while, swampy. The partisans took off their shoes and socks and we followed suit. Hopping from hassock to hassock, now and again sinking knee-deep in mud, we traversed the swamp and emerged upon firmer ground.

"The swamps are our allies," one of the partisans said. "It is harder for the Germans to reach us."

At last we came upon the first partisan outpost: a Jewish sentry with a rifle. We bade him good morning, and he let us pass. Within a few minutes we came to the edge of a small meadow, an island in a sea of trees. This was the stronghold of the partisans. A group of Jews came forward to welcome us warmly. City had met forest; an exchange of the latest news ensued.

The partisans were sunburned and disheveled, and clad in odds and ends of old clothing. Some wore jackets without shirts; others, shirts without jackets. Not one of the men was fully dressed. Most wore leather belts; some were armed with revolvers, others with carbines. The three women in the group differed little in appearance or armaments from the men.

They all bombarded us with questions about the progress of the war, the state of affairs in the city, our mutual friends -- a torrent no one tried to halt.

I received an especially hearty greeting from Gabriel Frishdorf and his wife Hannah, two of my former classmates. We had grown up in the *Skif* and later in the *Zukunft*. Both had belonged to the Fighting Organization and had participated in the ghetto revolt. Gabriel's face still reflected the same determined calm for which he was known in the ghetto, where he had distinguished himself by his heroism.

Once, during a roundup, the German *Werkschutz* at the Hallmann shop had captured three members of the Fighting Organization. At night a group of the Fighting Organization from the Roerich workshop, led by Frishdorf, had attacked the German headquarters, disarmed the guards and freed the three prisoners. Every mission he had carried out had shown the same planning and attention to detail and the same valor and heroism. The partisans in the woods had come to admire and respect him.

There were fifteen in the partisan group, including two physicians, a fugitive from Treblinka, and several Jews from small towns, as well as the insurgents from the Warsaw Ghetto. Originally, it had been much larger, but it had been reduced by the intermittent German patrols.

We were shown to a shanty of woven branches and leaves standing solitary amidst the trees. Inside were some planks, an ax, a hammer, and a few other tools. "This is where we store food against the rains," one of our guides explained.

In another nearby hut was the kitchen, a dugout containing the crudest of fireplaces, with a hole in the roof for the smoke to escape. Next to this structure was a water hole, a square pit filled with water, yellow with sediment.

"Is this all your housekeeping?" I asked in astonishment.

"We purposely keep our comforts to a minimum, so that in case of trouble we can destroy everything quickly without leaving traces," was the reply.

"And where do you sleep?"

"Here, on the ground."

"And when it rains?"

"Then we get drenched to the bone and wait for the sun to dry us."

Our conversation was interrupted; it was time to eat. We sat on the ground in a circle, in the center of which a steaming pot of soup was set down. Bowls were supplied. The partisans drew spoons from their boots and pitched in with gusto.

"Don't assume, you city folk, that we never have anything but soup," one of the partisans said solemnly. "Most of the time we thrive on a varied diet. One day we eat; the next day we don't."

The cheerfulness of the talk and the natural beauty of the surroundings were entirely at odds with the perilous lives of these men and women. Death lurked behind every tree. The meadow was constantly guarded, with sentries changing every few hours. The partisans were ready to fend off the Germans no matter when they came, in broad daylight or pitch darkness. On several occasions it had been necessary to change their encampment, but whenever things were quiet, they always returned to the meadow. Here they were on familiar ground, had contacts with friendly peasants in the neighborhood as well as with the forest rangers, and also their liaison to the Polish underground.

However, those relations had deteriorated of late. A wild Polish-Ukrainian partisan detachment had appeared in the neighboring woods, plundering the houses and raping the women of the villages. As a result, the peasants lumped all the partisans together as common criminals. Thus their attitude towards the Jewish partisans also changed, and this made the lot of the Jewish fighters even worse than it had been before.

The partisans had spent the previous winter here. As soon as the cold weather had set in, they had put up several clay huts in which they slept and stored their belongings. These huts offered shelter, warmth and protection from frostbite. But the Germans had suddenly swooped down upon them, killing twelve of their comrades. The rest fled. There was no place to find shelter from the bitter cold. They could not wash or change their clothes; everything froze immediately. Lice became a veritable plague. The fighters flitted through the woods like shadows among the trees, searching for whatever scant protection the trees could offer from the cutting winds. The winter had seemed endless to them.

But the worst of their plagues were the German raids. They knew no season and were completely unpredictable. If they were warned in time, the partisans could usually escape to another position. But if their little encampment were to be surprised and surrounded, they would be in dire peril. To join battle with a superior force could only mean death. The only alternative was to break out of the German trap and escape once again.

Between encounters with the Germans, the group carried out various acts of sabotage: setting fire to occupied estates, cutting telephone lines, raiding German outposts and, in general, harassing the enemy wherever possible.

Now it was our turn to report on the state of affairs in the city. We gave a brief account of our activities, our difficulties, our accomplishments and our failures.

"You're not to be envied; neither are we, for that matter," one of the partisans observed grimly.

The sun was setting now, and the air grew chillier. Our conversation gradually trailed off, and we all became pensive. Then someone started to hum a tune, and the others broke into a sad song:

I miss my little home town,
How I miss my home,
Where life was always quiet
And free from grief and war ...

Here we sat in a God-forsaken corner of swamp, huddled on the ground, with no shelter against the elements. Old, familiar songs, images of warmth and light -- how long had it been since those dear dimly remembered days? How far had we come from home?

When it had become dark enough, the partisans prepared for sleep. Each chose a piece of ground for himself, found some covering, and lay down on the bare earth fully dressed. They only loosened their shoes. They were soon sound asleep, their weapons at their sides. I lay

there on the ground, unable to fall asleep. The rustling of the leaves, the croaking of the frogs, and the occasional twitter of a bird assailed my ears like wild screeching. How would the guard be able to recognize strange footsteps amid such a noisy tumult? But the sentry seemed calm and confident as he paced regularly in front of the camp, and this eased my fears somewhat. The ears of the partisans were probably better attuned to the sounds of the forest than were mine.

Dawn broke at last. We, the visitors, had to hurry. But before we were ready, everyone was on his feet. As we took leave of one another, our warm handclasps spoke silently. "Who knows if we will ever meet again?" Together with Black Janek, we set out for the city.

A few days later I learned that Gabriel Frishdorf had been killed in a German raid. How could this have happened? We had only had a reunion in the woods, and now he was no longer among the living.

I could still see his tall figure, his handsome face, his eyes mirroring deep concern. He radiated calm and fortitude, and nothing escaped his clever eye. He knew almost all there was to be known about life in the woods, and his advice and decisions were usually considered authoritative. He had talked to me about the conduct of comrades and the minor incidents and bickerings that occasionally took place.

"We need not worry too much about all these things," he had remarked. "They are the result of this wretched life. Let us only survive, and everything will straighten out by itself."

He had always tried to see the overall picture, to cut through to the root of any quarrel. He was never petty, but always concerned about the other's thoughts, feelings, and actions, even at the most trying moments.

The news from the Wyszkwow woods grew continually more discouraging. The German raids had intensified, completely disrupting the life of the local partisans. Many of them had died, especially at the hands of the Polish-Ukrainian partisan group who apparently found killing Jews a more agreeable and satisfying exercise than joining them in the struggle against the common enemy. Thereafter, the Coordinating Committee tried to place as many Jewish partisans as possible in *melinas* in the city. Nevertheless, some members of that group lingered on in the forest until the time of liberation.

Source: *On Both Sides of the Wall*, pages 219-225. Copyright © 1993. New Edition. By Vladka Meed. Translated by Dr. Steven Meed. Holocaust Library. Published in conjunction with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reprinted by permission of Vladka Meed.

Jewish Partisan Units in the Forests of Eastern Europe

An estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Jews fought in partisan groups based in the forests of eastern Europe. There were about 30 Jewish partisan detachments and some 21 additional non-Jewish partisan groups in which Jews fought.

Non-Jewish partisan groups did not always welcome Jews because of both antisemitic and anti-Communist attitudes. In such countries as Poland and Lithuania, where anti-Soviet feelings often ran as strong as anti-Nazi ones, Jews were frequently identified in the popular imagination with Bolshevism. The Polish Home Army usually refused to accept any Jews. Sometimes right-wing AK detachments as well as Ukrainian nationalist partisans even hunted down and murdered Jewish partisans.

Soviet partisan units tended to be more receptive to Jewish fighters. This was true especially after the Red army and Communist party established control over Soviet partisans who previously, in their search for weapons, had sometimes engaged in violent raids on Jewish camps. However, the timing was not beneficial for Jews overall, as the Soviet partisan movement, like the Polish resistance, did not gain significant strength as fighting forces until 1943 – that is, until after the Nazis had already killed the majority of Jews in eastern Europe in mass shootings or gassings. Some Jews in Soviet partisan units concealed their Jewish identity because Jews were not always welcome.

In 1944 more than 150 Jewish partisans were fighting in the Parczew forest north of the Polish city of Lublin; of these only 40 survived until liberation. Notable partisan leaders included Ephraim (Frank) Bleichman and Shmuel (Mieczyslaw) Gruber. Gruber became second-in-command to Yechiel Greenshpan who led Jewish forces in the Parczew forest, and Bleichman was one of Greenshpan's two partisan detachment.) The Bielski *otriad* took on the dual roles of rescuers and fighters. Headed by the charismatic leader Tuvia Bielski and aided by his two brothers, Asael and Zus, the group at first numbered fewer than 40.

A one-time Jewish peasant, Tuvia Bielski, a man with little formal education, initiated the group's open-door policy. According to the policy, the Bielski partisans accepted into their group all Jews regardless of sex, age, or any other characteristic. Not only did the Bielski partisans take in all Jews who reached them, they also sent special guides into the ghettos to rescue Jews who were then incorporated into their *otriad*. Special Bielski scouts also would collect Jews who roamed the forest and bring them to their unit. The Bielski partisans distinguished themselves as the largest armed rescuers of Jews by Jews. In summer 1944, when the Soviet army liberated western Belorussia, the Bielski *otriad* numbered more than 1,200 individuals, most of whom were older people, women, and children, precisely those whom most non-Jewish partisan units refused to take in.

Another family camp was formed under the leadership of Shalom Zorin, a Soviet Jewish prisoner of war who had escaped German Captivity in Minsk. Zorin's so called 106th Division fought and survived until liberation in 1944. Both the Zorin and Bielski camps were in the densest parts of the Naliboki forest.

Source: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM: *Resistance During the Holocaust*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Partisan Activities in Western and Central Europe

Many individuals from the comparatively small, non-ghettoized Jewish population in western Europe joined national partisan groups rather than forming exclusively Jewish resistance organizations. Jews who escaped deportation were usually welcomed into and many became prominent in the partisan movements in Italy and France. In Italy the resistance was concentrated in the mountainous north and in the center, with its base in Rome.

Most members of the *Maquis*, as the French resistance movement was called, were concentrated in the mountainous areas of unoccupied Vichy France in the south, but the resistance also operated underground in cities, including occupied Paris. Although Jews made up less than one percent of the French population, an estimated 15 to 20 percent of the French underground were Jews.

In some cases, Jews also organized small Jewish underground organizations. In France, the Jewish resistance movement formed several organizations. The *Organisation Juive de Combat* (Jewish Fighting Organization) united nearly 2,000 members from several small groups in 1944 after a number of Jewish partisans had been deported. The group was responsible for hundreds of armed actions, including attacks on railway lines and the demolition of German factories.

The *Eclaireurs Israéliens*, a French Jewish scouting organization, was active in the French resistance. Members helped find non-Jewish homes for several thousand Jewish children, forged bogus identity papers, and smuggled children to safety across the borders of France. The *Eclaireurs* also participated in the liberation of southwestern France, fighting with General de Gaulle's underground units and the Jewish Fighting Organization.

In Belgium, Jewish resistance fighters operated as an independent underground organization that worked with and received support from the general Belgian resistance movement. In 1941, a Committee for the Defense of Jews was organized. On April 19, 1943, members of the Committee, in cooperation with Christian railroad workers and the general underground in Belgium, attacked a train leaving the transit camp of Malines (where Jews were temporarily held) for Auschwitz. This was the only known deportation train to Auschwitz to be stopped anywhere in Europe. Between 600 and 700 Jews jumped from the cars; approximately half of them escaped. The Committee also engaged in acts of sabotage and the rescue of some 3,000 Jewish children.

Members of Zionist youth movements joined Slovak partisan units in a national uprising against the German occupation that broke out in August 1944, when the Soviet army was approaching the Slovakian border. The Jewish fighters had been imprisoned in the Sered and Novaky labor camps, where they planned the uprising with members of the Communist underground. The revolt was suppressed, and the rebel fort of Banska-Bystrica fell in October 1944. About 15,000 rebels, including 2,000 Jews, refused to surrender and retreated to the mountains to wage partisan warfare.

The Jewish community of Palestine contributed volunteers to the British army, and sent parachute teams and commandos behind German lines to organize resistance efforts. The death of one parachutist, the 23-year-old poet Hannah Senesh, has become an emblem of martyrdom. Senesh, a Hungarian Jew who emigrated to Palestine in 1939, aimed in late spring 1944 to warn Hungarian Jews about the extermination camps. She was captured on June 8, 1944, and executed as a traitor to Hungary. The day before she crossed into occupied Hungary, knowing of the risk she was taking, she had handed a poem to one of her companions. It ended with these lines:

*Blessed is the heart with the strength to stop its beating for honor's sake.
Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.*

In Yugoslavia, more than 4,000 Jews fought against German occupation with Communist partisans under the command of Josip Broz Tito, despite the obstacles Jews faced in reaching the remote areas where the fighting occurred. Among the Jewish partisans was Mocha Pijade, Tito's deputy in charge of political activities, who was later credited with helping Yugoslav patriots see the nationalist character of Tito's resistance movement. Dr. Roza Papo was the first woman given the rank of general, and General Voja Todorovic commanded Tito's land forces after the war.

Some Gypsies who eluded deportation also participated in partisan activities. The Flemish artist Jan Yoors, who lived in France during the war with a Roma family, recalled in his memoirs how his Roma friends used their wagons to transport refugees and smuggle small arms and explosives. The frequent movement of those Gypsies also allowed them to accrue ration cards under different names in a variety of places. Those ration cards were important in supplying food to resistance fighters. When German authorities began tighter scrutiny of rations, the Yoors group joined French partisans in raiding ration distribution posts. They also brought the partisans news heard on BBC radio broadcasts.

Source: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM: *Resistance During the Holocaust*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

JEWISH PARTISAN SONG

By Hersh Glick

The "Jewish Partisan Song" became the unofficial song of Jewish partisans across occupied Europe. Hersh Glick (1922-44), a poet in the ghetto of Vilna, Lithuania, wrote the song in Yiddish in 1943, after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It was set to music by two Soviet-Jewish composers, the brothers Dimitri and Daniel Pokras. The song gained instant popularity. Jews sang it in attics, cellars, and in underground hideouts. Some even hummed it in the presence of their German guards in concentration camps. Glick was killed after he and other partisans tried to escape from a concentration camp in Estonia in the summer of 1944.

Never say there is only death for you.
Though leaden skies may be concealing days of blue --
Because the hour we have hungered for is near;
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble: We are here!

From land of palm-tree to the far-off land of snow,
We shall be coming with our torment and our woe.
And everywhere our blood has sunk into the earth.
Shall our bravery, our vigor blossom forth!

We'll have the morning sun to set our day aglow,
And all our yesterdays shall vanish with the foe,
And if the time is long before the sun appears,
Then let this song go like a signal through the years.

This song was written with our blood and not with lead;
It's not a song that birds sing overhead,
It was a people, among toppling barricades,
That sang this song of ours with pistols and grenades.

So never say that there is only death for you.
Leaden skies may be concealing days of blue --
Yet the hour we have hungered for is near;
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble: We are here!

Questions on “Jewish Partisan Song”

1. What do you think motivated Glick to write this song?
2. Analyze the choice of words in this song. What words are used to reflect the partisans’ hopes for the future?
3. Inspirational songs written by oppressed people have been common in history. What does this tell us about the will of the oppressed?
4. What other songs have been written throughout history that have a significant message of resistance?
5. Can you think of any contemporary songs with messages which might have been motivated by similar thoughts? If so, bring one to class and explain to a listener how you think they are similar. If the song is one of resistance, what is it resisting?
6. How do you respond to revenge as a motive for survival?
7. The first and last verses of this song are similar and provide the song with a clear beginning and end. Create another verse for the middle of this song.

Source of poem: Glatstein, Jacob, Israel Knox, and Samuel Margoshes. *Anthology of Holocaust Literature*. New York: Atheneum, 1980. Copyright © 1968 by the Jewish Publication Society of America. Reprinted by permission of the Jewish Publication Society of America.

Source: Furman, Harry, ed. *Holocaust and Genocide: A Search for Conscience*. New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1983, page 151. Developed under the auspices of the State of New Jersey Department of Education. Reprinted by permission.

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Questions adapted from the March of the Living, Central Agency for Jewish Education, Miami, Florida. Reprinted by permission.

“The Quiet Night is Full of Stars”

Quiet night so full of stars,
Bitter frost bites at your hand.
Do you remember when I showed you how
To hold a gun like a man.

A girl in sheepskin and felt beret,
In her hand she held a gun so tight.
A girl with velvet face fresh as the day
Kept back the enemy's trucks all night.

She aimed at the target, shot and hit!
Her little gun seemed never to tire.
An enemy truck loaded with weapons
Was held by her unceasing fire.

At dawn she crawled from the woods,
Garlands of snow on her hair.
Her brave spirit gives all courage
To fight for our freedom everywhere.

There were many Jewish resistance and partisan groups actively opposing the Nazis. Vitke Kempner, for example, took part in the first successful sabotage act of the Jewish partisans of Vilna. These partisans blew up a train carrying two hundred German soldiers. Wandering through the night, alone and cold, Vitke determined the best spot to place the homemade explosives her unit had prepared. She continued to carry out guerrilla actions against the Germans, including the rescue of many inmates of Kailis, a concentration camp near Vilna. Vitke's heroic resistance inspired Hirsh Glick to compose the well-known song, "The Quiet Night is Full of Stars."

Source: *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances* (Second Edition). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, page 94.

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*We will not be silent. We are your bad conscience.
The White Rose will not leave you in peace.*

"WHITE ROSE LETTERS"

THE WHITE ROSE

There was scattered resistance to the Nazi regime even in Germany. Some opposition to Hitler came from members of aristocratic families who viewed Hitler as a crude upstart and were appalled by his policies and the transformation of Germany into a police state. The small group of active opponents put their lives on the line. Virtually all of them were killed. Men like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a distinguished Lutheran minister, and Hans von Dohnanyi, a jurist who served in the army, were part of a conspiracy to oust Hitler. For years, a group within the German officer corps gingerly plotted Hitler's overthrow, gaining adherents as the military tide turned against Germany. These army officers planned to assassinate Hitler, seize power, and negotiate peace with the Allies. After a series of abortive plans, a serious assassination attempt was finally made in July 1944, when it no longer took any special insight to see that Hitler's continued rule was leading to Germany's inevitable defeat. Hitler escaped the bomb blast with only minor injuries. All those who were involved in the conspiracy were killed.

The White Rose movement, which culminated in a remarkable public demonstration by students against the regime, was organized and led by young people. At its head were a medical student at the University of Munich, Hans Scholl, his sister Sophie, and Christoph Probst, who were outraged by the acquiescence of educated men and women in the Nazi treatment of Jews and Poles. Their anti-Nazi campaign was guided by a philosophy professor, Kurt Huber, a disciple of Immanuel Kant, the eighteenth-century moral philosopher who taught that human beings must never be used as a means to an end.

In 1942, the group set out to break the cycle in which "each waits for the other to begin." Their first leaflet was a call for spiritual resistance against an immoral government. "Nothing is so unworthy of a civilized people as allowing itself to be governed without opposition by an irresponsible clique that has yielded to base instinct," they wrote. "Every people deserves the government it is willing to endure."

In correspondence that became known as the "White Rose Letters," the group established a network of students in Hamburg, Freiburg, Berlin, and Vienna. "We will not be silent," they wrote to their fellow students. "We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace." After mounting an anti-Nazi demonstration in Munich, in February 1943, the Scholls distributed pamphlets urging students to rebel. They were turned in by a university janitor. Hans and Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst were executed on February 18, 1943. Just before his death, Hans Scholl repeated the words of Goethe: "Hold out in defiance of all despotism."

Professor Huber was also arrested. To the end, he remained loyal to Kant's ethical teaching that one must act as though legislating for the world. Huber's defense, his "Final Statement of the Accused," concluded with the words of Kant's immediate disciple, Johann Gottlieb Fichte:

*And thou shall act as if
On thee and on thy deed
Depended the fate of all Germany
And thou alone must answer for it.*

Huber and other students of the White Rose were executed a few days after the Scholls.

Source: Berenbaum, Michael. *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Dr. Michael Berenbaum, and Little, Brown and Company.

TESTIMONIES

Abraham Resnick was born in Rokishki, Lithuania on February 27, 1924. He was sent to the Kovno ghetto in 1941 and remained there until the time of its liquidation by the Nazis in 1944. He managed to escape and joined a group of partisans in a forest outside of Kovno. At the end of the war, he joined the Russian army and liberated Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

- A. We used to work for the distribution of food. It was actually outside the master camp where there were a few houses which were abandoned. We had focused our eyes on one of the houses that was close to the fence, and little by little, we started stealing, some food products, like bread, some sugar, and some water in bottles. We tried to smuggle it out and bring it into this abandoned house. And then one evening, we decided not to go back to the camp but to stay there. We sneaked into the house.

We were fortunate because, at that time, the guards in the camp were already under the impression that they knew much more than what we knew. They were under the impression that they didn't have too much time left for themselves, since the camp was going to be liquidated. It was a good possibility they were going to be sent to the front. And SS [*Schutzstaffel*, elite guard organization of the Nazi party] people were brave people when it came to children, women, and people that were unarmed. But when it came to fighting, when it was for them — especially when they were not behaving properly — their own commanders threatened to send them to the eastern front, which was in Russia. They knew what was going on there and what happened to their comrades.

- Q. You were able to get into this house during the day?

- A. We were able to get into the house, and we happened to be in this house for about four days and four nights. In the plaza, we saw them starting to take people away, transporting them to the depot. They put them in the trucks.

After the fourth night, we had wire cutters, and we decided to try to escape. At nighttime, we watched very closely. We saw two guards that were walking back and forth. They had to cover quite a big portion of the fence, because this part was not guarded so much, as it was outside the camp. It was quite fortunate for us. So, we cut through the wire and we sneaked out. We couldn't walk too much because we were afraid that we were going to be stopped. We walked about a mile, a mile and a half, and then we hid in some shops.

- Q. Did you meet up with any partisans?

- A. No. In the morning, the four of us decided to go. One of the fellow-escapees was very familiar with that region. He figured as long as we were going to go north, not on any highways, we were not going to be in jeopardy. Because of our clothes and faces, anybody could see that we were actually prisoners, escapees.

But fortunately, the front was coming closer and closer. The army was a completely different picture than three years before when the Germans marched into Lithuania. Now we saw them in complete disarray, we saw them running, we saw them with their dusty clothes, we saw them march. Their faces didn't look too good, also we looked bad, but they didn't look too good. And we were not concerned with the Germans, because we knew the Germans wouldn't be too aware, because they were too occupied with their own fate.

But we were very concerned about the Lithuanians at that time, because they were the ones who actually helped the Germans in the beginning. They were the ones who were discovering Jews. The secret police were as bad as the Germans. They were also heading all the massacres. The bloody hands were mostly from the Lithuanians. Because of that, we kept getting away from the city, as far as possible. We knew that about twenty miles from there was a city by the name of Yanova. This one city, Yanova, was between Kovno and a forest. We knew if we could reach the forest, we might be able to get in contact with the partisans, because they were already operating from there. The Germans were allergic to forests. They used to go up close to the forest, but inside the forest they knew was not a good place for them to be in and to operate. In the morning, we tried at one time to cross the highway.

My friend, the one who knew the region, made a slight mistake. He didn't realize that to cross the highway, it was better to do it at a time when you have much more movement, when it's very early in the morning. It happened to be that we started crossing the highway, and suddenly, a man with a rifle stopped us and asked us for our papers. Of course, we didn't have anything, so we just started running. He took off his rifle, and he started shooting at us. He hit one of our friends in the leg. One man that was riding a bicycle followed us, but the three of us dispersed in three different directions. I remember I was really running for my life. It was incredible how we ran that day through a potato field and near some sort of shops. We ran tremendously, and after a while, I was exhausted. I threw myself inside the shops, and I didn't know what happened to the others.

Q. Did you ever find them?

A. No, I never saw them again.

Q. Where did you go?

A. This is something that I can remember like it was yesterday. After a while, after I came to myself after this long run, I heard voices. Apparently, they were looking for us. After a while, they gave up. I was just laying without movement. Then when the night came, it was still in March and in Lithuania, it was very cold at that time. I felt cold. I started walking towards the woods, and there was a little pond, so I headed towards it. I got some water to drink, and then I remember the next two days, I was just living on berries and leaves. What I did was I took some grass and piled it up during the day. It dried out, and during the night, I used to cover myself with that because it was freezing.

There I was, and I figured I'd give it a couple more days, because apparently they were looking for us again. This time they went around with horses. This place where I was happened to be next to a little camp of Russian prisoners and some civilians. At this little pond I saw a lady who came to wash clothes. When I saw her I knew she was Russian, because she was communicating in Russian. Since I spoke Russian, I called upon her.

Apparently, I looked terrible. She got scared. I told her I was an escapee and asked her to help me. She was very gracious, very nice, told me I should just wait there for a little while. I figured one of the two: she's going to turn me in, or she's going to help me. She brought me a bottle of milk and some meat. She told me she also has one of the prisoners.

She informed me that the partisans were not too far away. From there, it was about like three to four miles in the woods to where they were. They communicated with them. So,

the next day, she told me that one of the Russian prisoners was also at large. And he was going to join us and lead me toward the woods. The next day, she brought him over, and she told me we should stay until nighttime and then move around. As best as I remember, we moved towards the woods that night. In the woods, we could move around easily because we knew that the Germans wouldn't look for us there.

Now, on the second day, my friend, the Russian, told me that he's going to go farther; I should wait a little while. About an hour later, he came with two armed men with civilian clothes who spoke Russian. They introduced themselves. They said that they were partisans. They also mentioned that the part of the front which was in Lithuania had been taken. There was a river Nemenis, which ran across Kovno. He told us that they had very severe battles on the other side of the Nemenis, and that they felt that very shortly, the Russians were going to come. But he told us we were going to get some arms, and he gave us certain instructions. He told us that the next day, there were going to be some people coming down. Their assignment was to harass the Germans as much as they could and also to watch for them. As soon as their army would come closer, they had to give certain signs to the army that the first troops were coming. We started getting better food, because they had supplies. We were there for about fourteen or fifteen days with them.

Q. Did you actually do any fighting?

A. We didn't do any fighting. What we did mostly was to check certain places. There were a few people wounded. We took care of them also. We heard a tremendous amount of fighting that was happening between tanks. After it quieted down, it was very quiet. We put our ears toward the ground, and we could hear some tanks approaching. We didn't know whose tanks, or who won the battle or anything. But in only a few hours, we heard speaking. First of all, we saw two tanks which were damaged coming by very fast. We knew they were German tanks. Then afterwards, we saw a few Russian tanks approaching, and we saw some people. It was sundown, and we heard people singing and dancing, and we knew that it was the liberators.

David S. Cwei was born in Vilno, Poland on August 25, 1916. Joining the partisans in 1943, he fought with them in the Narocz Forest outside of Vilno. After being liberated by the Russians, he joined the Russian army and was wounded in fighting near Berlin.

A. I asked my father, "Listen, can I talk to you alone?" So everybody walked out, and I told him that I was in contact with the partisans. "I will stay a little while, and then I have to go away." And I took out my gun and, my God, my mother got very scared. She said, "My *kind* [child], what are they doing? Take away the gun!" So I put the gun away in a cellar there. I stayed in Vilno for a couple months, and then I asked my sisters to go with me. They said, "How can we leave our parents?"

But we had a group already organized. They brought in the young people to Vilno. And there, between them, was my friend whom I had been with in Soly. We organized a group, and we left to join the partisans.

Q. How did you get out?

A. Parties were going out to work, and I was working in a party that was working on a field. We walked out like a party, with shovels, with everything. It was out of the city a little, and that's when we left. We went to the partisans, and we stayed there with them.

Q. What was the partisan party comprised of? Was it mostly non-Jews?

A. Mostly non-Jews. And then the Jews started to come in. Most were from the little towns where they could escape, because they lived near the forest, so they had more chances to run away to find the partisans. When the Jews came to the partisans, they wanted them to bring weapons. Without a weapon, they wouldn't take us.

Q. Did you still have your revolver?

A. Yeah. They took it away from me.

Q. But they let you in?

A. Yes, they let me in.

Q. How did you originally get the revolver?

A. In Soly. A Polish man had given it to me.

Q. Why did he give it to you?

A. We'd been very good friends.

Q. Were any of the partisans antisemitic?

A. What happened was, after the destruction of Stalingrad by the German army, a lot of the Russians who had been in the so-called Vlasov army [army formed by a Soviet army officer who collaborated with the Germans] started to run away, and they came into the partisans.

- Q. So the partisans were getting larger and larger?
- A. Yes, but they were already big antisemites, because they learned from the Germans. The German propaganda was there.
- Q. And where were you, geographically?
- A. Geographically, we were operating between the Noroch Lake, which is in the northeast part of Poland. We were operating from there to Minsk.
- Q. How long were you with the partisans?
- A. I started to get in touch with them in 1942. And then I joined them in 1943. I was in a partisan brigade. We were in a platoon, two Jewish people, me and my friend. I think I can tell his name. He was Femar Robanowich. In my opinion, he was a big hero, may he rest in peace. We decided to show them that we were good fighters, and we weren't afraid, because they always said that if we were ever afraid, then we were not fighters we don't know how to fight, we don't want to fight. So every time there was a dangerous mission, we were always the first to volunteer.

Once we had to blow up a bridge. It was very important. We had been told over and over to try to blow up the bridge. If we could blow up the bridge, the offensive would stop at least for three days. That gave the Russians a chance to consolidate on their side. We went to a small village and went up on a little hill. There was the bridge. But there were about thirty German soldiers guarding it.

And then we came to a house on a farm. We stopped there, and we said, "Here we will stop," because it was winter, and we have been in sleds with horses. We had just two English mines, and the rest was what we made ourselves from dynamite. As we approached a house, we said, "Two people will stay here, and we three will go to the bridge."

Usually, when we knocked on someone's door, they opened it right away. They knew we were partisans, because it was nighttime; we operated only at night. We knew that when we went in the village in the second house, there was a locksmith who could be trusted. He would give us information. And we walked in, accidentally, not in the second house; we walked to the first house, because it was dark. And we knocked on the door. All the people inside were dressed, with packages, and they wanted to leave the house. We said, "Where are you going?" They said, "We don't know. We have to go out." And then when we walked in the other house, the locksmith said, "The Germans know that you are here." We said, "How could they know?"

So, in a case like that, we had to run away. And we heard already that the lights were on where the Germans' sleeping quarters were. There was a river there which was frozen. I started to run away. Then my friend told me, "No. We are not running away. We are going to the other side of the river." We went to the other side, and we did it. We put in the mines and made everything ready to blow up. Then we ran back to the other side to go to the house where we left the others. And what happened, in the meantime, was that they started shooting at us. We'd been surrounded already in a half-circle, so we had a chance

to get out. And when we started to run to my horse and sled, my horse was already dead. So I had to run. Someone was behind me, too. I was running, and it was snowing, and we were running very hard. And we had a machine gun and grenades, but we could not shoot back in a case like that, because we couldn't show them where we were. We ran to the forest.

I was running and running and couldn't breathe anymore. And then I saw behind me my friend and the third one. We saw that something was going on there. So we came in, and we walked into a house. We said, "We need a horse and a sled in one minute." And we got a horse with a sled, and we ran away.

Q. And you made it back?

A. We made it back. And we blew up the bridge. Without my friend, we never would have blown up the bridge. He was a specialist. He knew exactly what to do.

Q. How large was the Jewish population in the partisans?

A. As time went on, more and more came in.

Q. How did you get and prepare food?

A. We went to the richer areas at night and asked the people to give us something. They always said they didn't have anything. They had cows, and we had to take them. We took a cow, a pig, bread, whatever we could. One time, on the way -- I was with my friend -- we met some Jewish people who survived, but they didn't get in the partisans because they didn't have weapons, so we helped them out with food.

Another time, we had to blow up a train. And that was a very hard job, because we had to go over a river with no boat. The Germans had taken away all the small boats. But we found out that two young boys had stashed away a small boat someplace, and we got it. With two people who were not partisans, we had to be very careful. If the Germans caught them, they'd force them to tell. So we had to take the boys with us. Also, the boys knew their way around because they lived there. They knew how to go. When we got there, our commander told us, "We will stay here." That was approximately a half a mile from the railroad. I went with my friends, and we blew up the train. It was winter, and it was hard to do.

We came back to the river. So we had to whistle three times for them to come back for us. We whistled. And we said, "Oh, we are in big trouble now. We can't cross the river." We thought we heard boats coming. They took us another way, and we ran away.

It was winter. It was so cold, and we were living in the snow for the first time. We were sleeping in the snow. And then we made some bunkers. We'd been fighting for a while. Sometimes, we cut telephone and electric poles, and sometimes we attacked small garrisons.

Q. And how long were you with the partisans?

A. Until the end of 1943.

Q. And what happened at that time?

A. The Russians came already. The army came in, and they selected people. They sent me and a few others to a military academy in Jarceva, in Russia. They trained me for about five months, and then they sent me out. I was all ready. In the partisans, I had learned a lot about military things. So, I went there for about five months, and they sent me to the front. For four months, I was on the front, and then I got wounded.

Saul I. Nitzberg, M.D. was born on January 16, 1923 in Prużany, Poland. He was forced to live in the Prużany ghetto from 1941 to 1943, when he was sent to Auschwitz. From there he was sent to Sachsenhausen, Dachau, and Oranienburg and was liberated in May 1945.

- A. I remember that we were miserable. We were hungry. We had pains in our stomachs. We hesitated to relieve ourselves in front of a group of people, yet we had to do it. The stench was terrible, even though it was very cold outside. It was very hot inside, because the steam of the bodies was building up along with the unwashed and unkempt bodies around us. Nobody could really envision what was ahead of us. We wanted just to arrive somewhere, get out of this terrible, cramped box. When they say cattle car, they mean cattle car, because it was never meant for humans.

There was no way of escaping from the train, because we were continuously locked up and were guarded by soldiers, who were sitting on top of the train with machine guns. You see, some of the movies such as the "Great Escape" etc., showed prisoners planning and finally escaping by getting underneath the trains. Those things sound great in the movies, but even if it did happen, those were soldiers that were trained in resistance. We were here with children and old women and old men. The sense of community responsibility – if they catch one, they shoot a hundred – always prevented us from doing such so-called heroic deeds.

- Q. In other words, you were putting everybody else's life in danger too, if you were tempted and tried any heroic acts of resistance.

- A. That was obvious. Unless you were there on the spot, you could not really imagine the actual situation that presented itself. Theoretically, yes, you could run, except where to? Here you were, demoralized, hungry, cold, beaten down to the ground emotionally and physically; you were being pushed by armed soldiers with vicious dogs barking at you. Everybody was screaming. There were thousands of people coming out and thousands of people around, uniformed people who were prisoners. The area was walled off and if you made an attempt to run, you would be shot down immediately. There could be no heroes. If you would escape into the woods, you were faced with the hostile environment of the Polish population. Sure, we could have tried to run, but that would have been the end of us.

The idea to resist in a form of survival, not of being a hero. I would have gone ten feet, and I would have been dead. What would that have done? Anybody could have committed suicide. I don't think anybody felt the odds were such that it was worth taking a chance.

Dr. Harry LaFontaine was a native of Denmark, a country that refused to surrender its Jewish citizens to the Nazis. He was a group commander in the Danish underground, and he worked actively to rescue Danish Jews by helping them flee to Sweden.

Q. Was there passive resistance?

A. Yes. Then you find out as far as the enemy is concerned, there is no passive resistance.

Q. Right.

A. Because if you're caught, you have absolutely no protection. There's a point I'd like to bring up. Lots of people don't understand that if you fight against any government, you are a criminal. You are not protected by the Geneva Convention. You are not under protection of even the people you like to work with for some of the Allied Headquarters can do nothing for you. You are absolutely and completely on your own. And one day you find out that just because you write a paper and are dissatisfied with the situation, you can get shot. So, then you decide, "Well, if I have to die anyway, let's do something in the meantime." So we slowly built up an underground organization in Denmark.

It was very tough in the beginning. England had nothing to spare; America was not in the war yet; and we were, more or less, on our own in regard to what could be done in the center. And there was a black cloud hanging over Denmark which was, "What would happen to our Danish neighbors who were of the Jewish faith?"

As we saw the problems in Europe were coming to Denmark, too, our thought was, "What can be done?" This was the difference between Denmark and the rest of Europe. We did have two and a half years to prepare something, whereas the other countries more or less got hit from the first day the Germans came in. And the reason the Germans didn't move against us was that as long as the Danish government was operating, Denmark produced war material, food, clothing, and many other things the Germans needed.

I think the people in Denmark realized that you have to stick together and have to forget what is different and look at what is the same. The most important thing is human rights, the right to live as you want to live and to have respect for other people. You are one type of people, you all belong to the same country, and you can't just let somebody step on some of you and look the other way.

At any one time, I don't think there were more than 4,000 to 4,500 people who were active in the Danish underground. We lost, of course, approximately 30 percent of our people, who had to be replaced.

Q. Thirty percent were caught by the Nazis?

A. Yes. And then we had to send a lot of them to Sweden if there was a chance they could be found out. We had a system that if anybody got caught, we asked them to hold for fifteen minutes. We knew that everybody talked. This is movie stuff when you hear all this about people who don't talk. We had a central system which would know when a person was picked up. We could then contact the other people whom this person had contact with

and try to keep as many people from being taken as possible. We learned the hard way how to keep the groups separated as well as how to limit exactly what was necessary to say and what these people must know to throw off the Nazi guards.

I got trained pretty early in the underground on how to protect myself; how never to trust anybody; how never to take a chance on anybody; how to be a good fox; to have at least eight or ten different places; and give them different stories to run with. I was caught on a fishing boat going over with some people, and they took the people to a concentration camp. They took me to the *Gestapo* because they figured I might have something to tell them.

They put my hand between two bars, and they broke all five bones and from then on, all they had to do was pinch, so then I would tell them anything. So I told them everything. I used the theory that if I kept on telling them things and the guard sat there and wrote everything down, then they had to go slowly. They'd say it was not true, so I'd tell them another story. So, this was one thing that made the underground a possibility.

And the next thing was to try to understand the psychology of what we were dealing with. You could do nearly anything to people. The only thing holding them back from acting was the fear that they might not get away with it.

Like everybody in Denmark, the king spoke German fluently, but from the first day the Germans arrived, he refused to understand German. He was pretty smart because when somebody from the German military or *Gestapo* came up and said something, he could hear it first in German and then they had to translate it into Danish. This gave him the time to think about the answer.

But he showed his disregard for the Germans. For example, fourteen days after Denmark was occupied, they took the king's flag, the Danish flag, down from the king's castle and put up the German flag. So he called the commandant over and said, "What is this thing up there?" He replied, "That's the flag of the German *Reich*." The king said, "Well, what is it doing here?" The commandant said, "We have occupied Denmark." The king said, "Well, this is my house. Will you please move it?" He said, "No, sir, this is going to be here as long as we are here in Denmark." The king replied, "Well, in that case, I'll send one of my soldiers to take it down and put my flag up." The commandant said, "Your majesty, if you do that, we'll have to shoot that soldier." The king said, "Oh, is that so? Well then, I'd better go myself." So he went down, cut the thing, tore the flag down, put his flag up. Since the Germans needed the Danish war production, they took an insult like this without doing anything more about it.

Everything I've said has been documented or I would not even mention it. In 1943, the king of Denmark became seventy-five years old. He was now, more or less, limited to the castle. Hitler sent him a personal birthday greeting which was brought to him by the German military commander of Denmark. And the king did what he always did when something came from the Germans. He had a pair of tweezers, and he took and dropped it in the wastepaper basket. The German general got furious, and he went back to Hitler and told him about it. Hitler became completely furious. He sent three Field Marshals to demand an apology.

What I say here really happened. These three gentlemen came into an audience with the king and demanded he apologize for treating a message from the *Führer* in that manner.

So again, the king listened to them in German, and then he listened to the Danish translation. He looked at the three gentlemen and said in Danish to his translator, "Tell these gentlemen that I'm an old man. I don't want to offend anybody. If you can find out who this Mr. Hitler is and where I can find him, I will send him an apology. I don't want to be unfriendly with anybody." And again, I guess the Germans took it because they needed the production that Denmark could provide.

In 1942, the *Gestapo* demanded that all people who were listed as Jewish had to wear the Star of David with a big DA. The underground picked that up and put out in our papers, "Let everybody have a DA. Let everybody be Bernstein #1, 2, 3, 4, 5." And the day this thing went into effect as a protest against the Germans, at least 50,000 people marched on Copenhagen with a big Star of David and a DA. The only ones who didn't go out were the Jews because they were warned to stay behind and not rock the boat. The result was, of course, that the *Gestapo* gave up the idea because they were being ridiculed. Wearing the Star of David spread. They couldn't arrest everybody that was on the street because of this thing. When they asked for someone's name, people said, "Bernstein, 3,444."

What we did in the underground was to make a system whereby a central office knew where the Jewish people were. We had a plan that if the Nazis moved against the Jewish people, we would notify them right away. But we really didn't know how we would handle 8,400 Jewish people in the middle of a small country. We eventually learned which hospitals we could depend on.

In 1943, twelve days before the Jewish New Year, we got the idea that something was going to happen. We contacted London and got a radio message back that we could expect something in Denmark. Four tramp steamers came into Copenhagen harbor and just laid there. We had, at that time, taps on nearly all the *Gestapo* telephones. We had the postal department intercept all telegrams. The Germans figured the Jewish people would either be home or in synagogue, where they could find them.

Q. How did you manage all the taps?

A. Very simple. Everybody that worked at the phone company was Danish. And if they weren't directly with us in the underground organization, they would at least help. If someone worked for the postal department and we asked them, "Could you give us a copy of this or do that?" he'd do it. The whole people of Denmark were against the German War effort.

Twenty-four hours before, we got absolute security that the Germans would have an action on the Jewish New Year at six o'clock in the morning. So we had only twenty-four hours to hide 8,400 people.

We gave some of the Jews false I.D. cards. We made some beautiful ones, false ones that were better than the ones the Germans made! In Copenhagen, most people lived in apartment buildings. We figured that if we could get the Jews off the streets and into the apartment buildings, the Germans wouldn't be able to raid every apartment. So we rang doorbells. We used all our contacts. People who were in the limelight, like the rabbi, we had to move at all costs. We had a system with the hospitals to take many of the Jewish people in under all kinds of excuses, like having the German measles.

Another thing that helped us was that the Germans occupying Denmark and guarding military installations tended to be older men, as the younger people were either in the Eastern front or somewhere else. These older ones could be bribed to look the other way, or we slowly found out what we could do to get them on the hook, so that we could say, "Either you play ball or the *Gestapo* is going to know about it."

We used ambulances, and at least the Germans had the decency to think that with the siren on, there must be something wrong. We would pack eight or ten people into an ambulance. We found that a very good disguise was black ladies' dresses. A funeral home helped us with those. We had the people put these things on with a big hat and veil and when we gave them a rosary, even the Germans would look the other way.

So, every little trick in the book was used, because it was not just a question of saving our Danish neighbors. It was also about how to show the Germans and the whole people of Denmark what we felt. Here was a chance to show the Germans up and to make complete fools out of them. And we did!

The result was out of a little under 9,000, they caught only around 200 Jewish people, either at home because they didn't believe anything would happen, or some Jewish people, I'm ashamed to say, were working with the Germans and thought they were safe. We left them alone. We didn't tell them it was time to leave, and the Germans didn't know better.

It was a little chaotic. Some of the places we got mixed up, and two or three groups would bring people to the same place, so instead of 100 people, we now had 600 in one place. We had problems getting food and accommodations and so forth.

We had a nice printing company. We made false ration cards, and that's how we supplied them with food. Again, people stepped in. I must say that during this time, right after the Jewish New Year, we never knocked on one door without getting help. The Danes simply had the feeling that here was a chance to do something against the Germans.

The best thing was, of course, to find a way to get them out of Denmark. There are only six or seven miles of water between Denmark and Sweden. Sweden was a neutral country, and anybody that came within three miles was under Swedish protection.

The next thing that happened was a real credit to the Danish people. We knew from other experiences in Europe that as soon as a Jewish family was taken away, the Nazis raided their home. In two hours, everything would be taken away. In Denmark, that was a big question. Some of these people's families had lived there for hundreds of years. They had art work, they had paintings, they had all kinds of things and they all said, "Please help us to get these things to Sweden." We said, "No. That's something we can't do. It's tough enough what we do here, but we'll try to preserve your belongings." And the first thing we did was, we guaranteed the landlord that the rent would be paid every month.

Q. Really!

A. Yes. The underground organization figured we could raise the money. We then assigned a neighbor to look after the apartment. We gave them a special number to call so that if anybody tried to break in, our people would be there. And, I think they tried a couple of times, but they found out about us. They weren't dealing with the police or with the Germans, they had to deal with us. So it, more or less, became a hands-off situation.

And then the people took it up themselves. They formed a little committee to run the businesses of the Jews while they were gone. They closed up the apartments and kept them clean. The day the war was over and our Jewish neighbors came home, there were fresh flowers in all the windows and there was money in the bank. Everybody went right back into their homes.

This is the part that I remember with the most pleasure, because it shows how people could get together. Even if we didn't agree about everything, we could still say, "Enough is enough. Here's where we stop it." I think the whole thing can be summed up in one thing. The Jewish population in Denmark had earned the respect of their fellow citizens and they belonged to the society. They were part of it.

After the war, we found that the most harm to the German war machine was done by a little old man on a bicycle. He never had a gun; he never blew up any factory; he never did anything which you'd think would mean anything. But he was a retired railroad worker and in the nighttime, he would go down to the railyard and he would change the address on the railroad cars. He said, "They had such lousy glue. With a wet sponge, I could change any address." So, the cars that were going to Norway, he sent to Russia. The ones that were going to Hungary, he sent to France, and he just changed them any way he wanted to.

And after the war, we got a hold of the *Gestapo* archives. They had spent thousands and thousands of man-hours, and they had letters in there from a Commander in Russia, way in deep Russia, who got a railroad cars full of torpedoes that were supposed to go to Norway. And letters from a sub commander, marine commander, sitting in the coast of France, who had been waiting six weeks for torpedoes, and he got some land mines.

So that little man, we found out later, had done more harm to the whole war machinery than all the explosions and all the damage we did to the Danish industry. Maybe, some innocent people got killed this way. War is a very funny business.

And this little man just with his bicycle and a wet sponge, when he sent the war material to all different places just on his own, was never caught. They had an idea about it. They thought there was a special commander from England who was traveling in Germany doing this thing. They never found out where it happened or why it happened because during the night bombing in northern Germany, they rolled all these railroad cars into Denmark where the English didn't bomb. And then the next morning, they would send them back. So it never dawned on them that they had been in Denmark for maybe a few hours, and that's where it happened. And looking at the *Gestapo*'s file, they were looking for a big solution to this problem, and they were wrong. They never thought about this little man on his bicycle and a wet sponge.

UNIT 8

THE RESCUERS

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UNIT 8

THE RESCUERS

“There are stars whose radiance is visible on earth though they have long been extinct. There are people whose brilliance continues to light the world though they are no longer among the living. These lights are particularly bright when the night is dark. They light the way for mankind.”¹

*Hannah Senesh
A parachutist with the Haganah*

INTRODUCTION

From early in the Nazis' ascendance to power, numerous groups became targeted for expulsion or death. For some of these groups, no public efforts for rescue were ever taken (e.g., the Gypsies and homosexuals). For others, there were intermittent proclamations of condemnation against killings (e.g., the mentally and physically handicapped in Germany), but such protests usually were too few or too late to achieve substantial rescue. With immigration almost everywhere hardened into firm, restrictive policies, the fate of those being persecuted by the Nazis was perilous.

As the largest targeted group, the Jews of Europe tried in vain to seek asylum. Two international conferences were called to deal with the problem of rescue, one before the war and one during it, but neither was effective. As country after country fell under German occupation and became allies or collaborators with Germany, the situation for the Jews became increasingly desperate. As the war progressed, so did the Nazi murders. Yet, within every country under German domination, there were often pockets of protection. Most curious is the fact that help sometimes existed even in those countries which had joined Germany. Often, this assistance took unusual forms since "officially" it could not be condoned.

The largest number of those rescued were not saved due to any international or even national rescue efforts. The great majority of those who survived through rescue owe their lives to acts of daring performed by a single courageous individual or a small community of involved citizens. Very often the rescuers did not know the people being helped. That is, more often than not, the person in need was a complete stranger.

During times of great moral and spiritual crises, some people perform heroic acts motivated by nothing more than a sense of human decency. In all the German occupied countries, anyone who tried to help the Jews, even in the slightest ways, put their own lives in extreme danger. In

addition, all non-Jews who had the conviction and the courage to protect, help, or rescue a Jew were risking, not only their own lives, but the lives of their families as well. Yet, confronted with this violent attack on humanity, an undetermined number of remarkable people were their brothers' and sisters' keepers and acted to protect and rescue their Jewish friends and neighbors from certain death at the hands of the Germans. These rescuers' heroic efforts truly made a difference by saving lives. A few of these remarkable individuals are profiled in this lesson.

Those non-Jewish heroes who helped save Jews during the years of the Holocaust have come to be called "Righteous Among the Nations." These are individuals who acted in accordance with their conscience; who could not remain indifferent and stand idly by while innocent persons were persecuted for the "crime" of being Jewish. In 1962, a commission was formed at Yad Vashem, the Israeli national Holocaust museum and memorial, to identify and recognize the "Righteous Among the Nations" with the purpose of honoring them as heroes.

The commission, headed by an Israeli Supreme Court Justice takes into consideration all the circumstances relevant to the rescue story, including how the original contact was made between the rescuer and the rescued, a description of the aid, whether any compensation was paid in return for the aid, the dangers and risks faced by the rescuer, the rescuer's motivations (e.g. friendship, altruism, religious beliefs, humanitarian considerations, or others), the evidence available from rescued persons, and other documentation that authenticates the story.

A person who receives the title "Righteous Among the Nations" is awarded a medal bearing his or her name, a certificate of honor, and the addition of his or her name to the "Righteous Among the Nations" Wall of Honor at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. (In the past, trees were planted in honor of those recognized.) The inscription on the medal says, "Whoever saves a single soul, it is as if he had saved the whole world."²

The deeds of these courageous individuals took many forms, such as protecting the hunted within the rescuer's home; smuggling Jewish children to homes of safety or across borders to neutral countries; aiding resisters; making falsified documents; and providing food, clothing, and transportation for escaping Jews.

Common among almost all of the rescuers was their feeling that they were not heroes. In reflecting upon their reasons for helping others, most of them state that they only did "what had to be done." Bystanders questioned after the war as to their reasons for remaining uninvolved excused their behavior by claiming that, with the stringent German penalty, they had no choice; the rescuers, however, often remark that they had no choice but to help.

However, it should be mentioned that not all rescuers, however, protected others out of a purely altruistic sense of duty or compassion. Some took advantage of the situation and helped others only insofar as it would benefit themselves. For the most part, these are the people who provided assistance in exchange for payment. However, even those who requested payment were appreciated for at least they offered hope and a safe place for a little while longer. Those Jewish people who still had the means to do so, voluntarily contributed money to a rescuer's household to pay for food and other necessities.

Governments of the allied nations learned about Nazi atrocities as early as 1942 and did little or nothing to stop the violence. This served the Nazis and not the victims. The Vatican was well-informed about the fate of the Jews through its churches all over Europe and sadly, remained silent. "The decision of whether to agree to those [Hitler's racist] policies or to defy them was left to the individual. On the one hand lay authority, safety, and institutional neutrality, if not approval. On the other hand lay human decency. Each person made his or her choice."³

In general, when the data available to the commission at Yad Vashem shows that a non-Jewish person risked his or her life, freedom, and safety in order to rescue one or several Jews from the threat of death or deportation to concentration or death camps, not having asked first to be paid for offering the aid, the person in question is eligible to be awarded, whether or not that person is still living. To date, over 13,000 men and women have been recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations." In the pages that follow, you will become familiar with some of these heroes and heroines.

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the VOCABULARY.
2. Explain the meaning of the term “rescuers.”
3. Recognize key individuals who became rescuers during the Holocaust.
4. Describe examples of rescue attempts in countries that saved thousands of Jews from the Nazi terror.
5. Examine the motivation and deeds of some individuals who, at enormous personal risk, sheltered or otherwise rescued Jews during the Holocaust. Confront the question: How do we transmit the values of altruism and moral courage exhibited by the rescuers?

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Altruism: Unselfish regard or devotion to the welfare of others.

Attaché: A person officially assigned to the staff of a diplomatic mission.

Diplomatic Immunity: Exemption from ordinary processes of law afforded to diplomatic personnel in a foreign country.

Martial Law: Temporary rule by military authorities imposed upon a civilian population in time of war or when civil authority has ceased to function.

Neutral country: A country that takes no side in a dispute.

Rescuers: Non-Jews, who at enormous personal risk, sheltered or otherwise helped Jews during the Holocaust; these individuals exhibited values of altruism and moral courage.

Righteous Among the Nations: Award given by Yad Vashem, the Israeli national museum for remembrance of the Holocaust, to those non-Jewish people who saved the lives of Jews during the Holocaust, risking their lives and/or those of their families.

Yellow star: A symbol required by the Nazis to be worn by Jews for identification and demoralization purposes.

NAMES AND PLACES

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee: An organization which raised funds to aid in the rescue of European Jews.

Boom, Corrie Ten: A religious Christian woman who took the responsibility of caring for Jews in need.

Bogaard, Johannes: A non-Jewish farmer who arranged refuge for 300 Dutch Jews on his farm.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich: A German Protestant theologian who took a public stand against the Nazi racial definition of Jews. He protested the treatment of persons who were practicing Christians because either they or their parents had converted, but were defined by German laws as Jews because they were descendants of Jewish grandparents.

Brand, Joel: Head of Zionist Aid and Rescue Committee, known by its Hebrew title *Va'adah* (Committee).

Christian Friendship: A rescue organization founded in France by Father Pierre Chaillet in 1942; rescued Jews from internment and hid them.

De Sousa Mendes, Aristides: Portuguese consul general to Bordeaux, France, issued visas for 30,000 refugees against the instructions from the fascist dictator of Portugal.

Emergency Rescue Committee: A group of American citizens and European expatriates who joined together in June 1940 to raise money and send a representative (Varian Fry) to Marseilles, France to help desperately-threatened refugees leave France before the *Gestapo* arrested them.

Fry, Varian: Representative of the Emergency Rescue Committee who rescued over 2,000 people, among them politicians, artists, writers, scientists, and musicians from France between 1940 and 1941.

Garel Circuit: A rescue network for Jews in France operated under the protection of Archbishop Saliège of Toulouse.

Haganah: An underground military organization from the Jewish community in Palestine.

The Home Front: A Norwegian resistance organization.

Karski, Jan: A Catholic who served as a courier on dangerous missions between the Polish underground movement and the Polish government-in-exile and who reported the destruction of Jews to American and British leaders early on.

King Christian X: King of Denmark who supported the Jews of his country by refusing to acquiesce to Nazi demands.

King Victor Emmanuel: The royal head of Italy.

Lospinoso, Guido: Italian police inspector in charge of the *Commissariat* for Jewish Questions.

Mussolini, Benito: The fascist leader of Italy.

Pehle, John: Executive Director of the War Refugee Board.

Quisling, Vidkun: A Norwegian Nazi sympathizer and political leader.

Saliège, Archbishop Jules-Gerard: Archbishop of Toulouse, France and protector of the Garel Circuit, a rescue network for Jews in France.

Schindler, Oskar: A businessman whose efforts to rescue Jews were brought to the attention of the world in Steven Spielberg's award-winning movie, *Schindler's List*. Through bribery and connections, Schindler was able to employ over one thousand Jewish workers in his factory, thereby saving them from the fate of the concentration camps.

Senesh, Hannah: She volunteered to work with the *Haganah* in a dangerous parachute mission. She was captured and executed by the Nazis and is known today for the poetry she wrote.

Sugihara, (Sempo) Chiune: Japanese consul in Kovno, Lithuania, who issued entry visas to Japan to about 3,000 Jews at the beginning of the war, against the orders of his government.

Trocme, Pastor André and Magda: Protestant Pastor and wife in Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon, France who inspired the inhabitants of the village to rescue over 5,000 Jewish people.

von Roey, Cardinal Joseph-Ernest: Belgium's Chief Prelate who ordered all Catholic institutions in Belgium to hide Jews whenever possible.

Wallenberg, Raoul: A Swedish diplomat who went to Hungary and saved thousands of Jews by issuing them Swedish passports and working closely with local Jewish movements in Budapest.

War Refugee Board (WRB): A special agency created in the United States in 1944 which was empowered to negotiate and spend money on rescue efforts without interference or approval from the State Department.

Yad Vashem: A museum and memorial in Israel to honor the dead of the Holocaust.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

THE RESCUERS

Non-Jews in the German-occupied countries knew that the Jewish people had been singled out for special persecution. They could not help but know. Every day Jews were arrested and transported to unknown destinations, from which they did not return. Jews were forced to wear yellow patches in the shape of a Jewish star or white and blue armbands with Stars of David which immediately identified them. They were forced to give up their careers, livelihoods, educations, and their homes. Their possessions were confiscated. Jews were subjected to total degradation throughout the German-occupied countries. This unit will focus on the fact that a few courageous men and women actually made a difference.

International Inaction

Before the war, both in America and in Europe, there were large groups with some degree of power who could offer assistance to the mass of people struggling to find refuge. A number of historians cite the failure of America to act as the cornerstone in policy throughout the world which rejected plans for rescue.⁴ This policy was made clear in 1938 when the President of the United States called a conference at Evian, France to consider the refugee crisis. A few countries pledged aid, but overall, the conference was a complete failure. It is thought that had the United States expanded its immigration quota at that time, other countries might have followed their example. Throughout the war, any rescue efforts from the United States were further hampered by a State Department that imposed lengthy and illogical requirements for immigrant admission.

Through the multitude of churches in cities, towns, and villages throughout Europe, the Catholic Church had detailed information about the atrocities committed by the Nazis. During all this time, the spiritual leaders of Catholics throughout the world, Popes Pius XI and Pius XII, sadly, were silent. Neither ever publicly denounced the Nazi government for its attacks against the Jews. Only once, in his Christmas message of 1942, did Pope Pius XII briefly mention that he deplored the killing of people on the basis of their nationality or race. None of the specific groups endangered were identified although, by now, the Pope certainly knew about the systematic killing of the Jews. Notable exceptions were individual priests and nuns, particularly in France and Belgium, who even in the absence of support from the church protected Jewish people and Jewish children especially.

In 1942, eight governments-in-exile and the French National Committee met in London and while they publicly denounced the German reign of terror, they did not single out the atrocities befalling the Jews. This type of evasiveness was a dangerous parallel to the tactics also being used by the Nazis to disguise what they were doing.

In 1943, another conference was convened by the United States and Great Britain on the island of Bermuda. Unfortunately, both sides set such severe limitations on the program to be discussed that this conference, too, proved disappointingly ineffective in formulating any definite plans for rescue.

From the various meetings and conferences, not a single plan of action to rescue the Jews or any others being persecuted by the Nazis, was approved or enacted. Only in 1944 was a special agency, the War Refugee Board (WRB), created in the United States. By this time, millions of Jews had already perished. The accomplishments of John Pehle, Executive Director of the WRB, are highlighted later in this chapter.

Profile of Rescuers

Who were the rescuers? What moved them to risk the lives of their loved ones and themselves in order to save people who were often strangers to them? Recent research has shed light on the characters and motivations of these human beings whose stories are an incredible inspiration.

Rescuers were people who shared the understanding that every person is a human being, and that all human beings are connected to one another. Capable of individual thought and reason, they were able to see the Nazi propaganda for what it really was: distortion, manipulation, and lies. They had a great deal of compassion as they empathized with the sufferings of others. They also understood, as few others did, how deadly the Nazis' policies actually were. Very often, a specific incident or several incidents served to "awaken" them to the peril of the Jews and other victims of Nazi persecution, such as witnessing antisemitic violence. They became keenly aware of the urgent need to help.⁵

Those who realized that help was needed did not necessarily become rescuers. The opportunity to help also had to present itself. At that moment, a person's core values determined whether he or she would act. The motivations to rescue others were very complex, and often evolved over time. Five categories of rescuers have been identified:

1. Moral rescuers were those rescuers with a strong sense of right and wrong. Possessing a great amount of integrity and conscience, they were people who knew exactly who they were and what matters most in life. They rarely initiated rescue of others, but when they perceived that lives would be lost if they failed to act, they responded because it was the right thing to do.⁶ The motivations of moral rescuers can be divided into three types, *ideological*, *religious-moral*, and *emotional-moral*.

Ideological rescuers had strong ideas about justice and ethics. Often politically active, they were people who found it natural to stand up for what they believed. *Religious-moral* rescuers saw the issue of right and wrong in religious terms. They lived by the 'golden rule,' i.e. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," and they were taught from childhood to have tolerance for people who were different than they were. Their faith helped them to overcome the challenges and crises of rescue. *Emotional-moral* rescuers felt a deep compassion for the victims of Nazi terror and felt obliged to help. More than any other category, these rescuers saved the lives of children.⁷

2. Judeophiles were non-Jewish rescuers whose emotional attachment to a specific Jewish person or Jewish family served as an initial motivation to act. This aroused a need to do even more. Most Judeophiles saved the lives of more than one Jew. It was an enormous accomplishment to rescue Jewish people when one considers the degree of antisemitism which had endured in Europe, especially Eastern Europe, for hundreds of years. Oskar Schindler, whose story is given later in this chapter, is an example of a Judeophilic rescuer.⁸

3. Concerned professionals were not necessarily people who felt an emotional bond with Jewish people. Rather, they were diplomats, doctors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists who, because of their occupations, became involved in the saving of Jewish lives. Their professions exposed them to people who were in trouble. They tended to be ideologically opposed to the Nazi regime, and when they had a chance to help the Jews and thwart the Nazis, they felt compelled to do something to help.⁹

4. Network rescuers shared in common their hatred of the Nazis. Frequently university students, their resistance activities began as they disobeyed the Nazi racial laws. They passed out anti-Nazi literature, organized protest strikes, and engaged in sabotage activities against the Nazis. Their primary motivation, at least initially, was to defeat Hitler. Only later did they rescue Jewish lives as part of their general resistance efforts.¹⁰

[5. Children of rescuers](#) often did not choose to become rescuers; their parents chose for them by deciding to hide Jews in their homes, for example. These children's lives were deeply affected by their parents' rescue activities. Secrecy became all-important. They couldn't become too friendly with other children or allow them to visit their homes, lest they endanger the lives of their families, as well as those hidden. Without giving themselves away, they had to avoid the racial slurs of children who had already learned antisemitism.¹¹

At first, they became rescuers because of their parents' involving them in rescue activities, and because they wanted to please them. Only later, did these children develop their own awareness about what they were doing and why. Rescuing others made a permanent impression on their lives, which though mostly positive, had a negative side as well. Many grew up to join the helping professions such as doctor, psychologist, etc. Most eventually learned to respect and admire their parents' decision to endanger their lives in order to save the lives of other human beings. But these children were also haunted by nightmares, often for the remainder of their lives. Speech impediments among these children frequently developed.¹²

[Characteristics of rescuers and their families of origin](#)

The overriding characteristic of rescuers was their ability to think and act for themselves, regardless of what other people around them did. They were able to resist the tremendous pressures imposed by the government, the law, society, church, and even their own families to conform. Children who were raised in authoritarian families were less likely to become rescuers. They were not taught to think independently or question what others told them.

The families in which they grew up were very accepting of the differences between human beings, and tolerance for others was very much at the center of their motivation to help. They understood that a thread of humanity and decency ties human lives to one another. They were taught that no group of human beings is either superior or inferior to another, and that all human life is precious, important, and irreplaceable.¹³

[Post-war experiences of rescuers](#)

After years of taking care of others, rescuers suddenly had to let them go when the war ended. Strong emotional bonds often developed between rescuers and those they saved, and these were difficult losses for many. Very often the children who had been adopted had to be turned over — not to Jewish relatives — but to organizations such as orphanages, and this was very painful for the rescuers. Adjusting to a life of peace after years of disruption from curfews, blackouts, bombs, and arrest was not easy to do. Some rescuers had to recover from having been sent to concentration camps and never got over the brutality they had experienced. There were huge losses to deal with, both personal and financial. Many families and friends were lost. Death and horrendous, violent memories spilled over into post-war lives.

For so many years, the central purpose of rescuers' lives was to protect the lives of others and help to defeat Hitler. The end of the war created a vacuum in their existence. Many survivors understandably chose to attempt to forget the horrible past and did not keep in touch with those who rescued them. Rescuers, like the survivors, tried to push away the painful memories from their consciousness. They experienced what is called post-traumatic stress disorder. They had nightmares and experienced a great deal of anxiety, both waking and sleeping. They suffered from insomnia and were easily startled. Things that reminded them of the time of rescue brought back fear and anxiety which was as real to them as what they had originally experienced. "Whether or not they were threatened, raided, interrogated, beaten, or incarcerated for aiding the victims of Nazi persecution, rescuers were nevertheless victims of Nazi terror."¹⁴

The tales of rescuers told below are not only about the struggle between good and evil. They also “involve real concerns: dealing with conflicting responsibilities, coping with peer pressures, handling social ostracism, and making choices and living with the consequences of them.”¹⁵ All of these have a great deal of relevance to the lives of young people, past as well as present. Rescuers did not preach or lecture about helping others; they simply acted in accordance with their consciences. These stories contain valuable lessons for us all.

Unexpected Sources of Rescue

A most ironic comment on Hitler's policy is the fact that possibly the city with the largest concentration of individual Jews hidden or otherwise protected was right in Berlin, the capital of Germany, where almost 1,000 Jews were hidden by such diverse elements as communists, socialists, and aristocrats. Many of the Jews hidden in Berlin were people in mixed marriages to non-Jewish Germans, called *Mischlinge*. Similarly in other countries, none of the efforts to protect and hide Jews is more curious than in those which were, technically, Germany's allies. Each of the countries allied with Germany were expected to embrace their pseudo-racial theories and policies. Yet, in three notable instances, these policies were rejected or evaded, and most of their Jews were protected and survived the war. In the most extraordinary cases, there were small pockets of safety, at least for brief periods of time, in Germany-controlled areas or territories under the domain of one of Germany's collaborators.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria also protected its Jews, but the motives for doing so were complex and not always exemplary. An ally of Germany, Bulgaria joined the Axis powers in order to recover and possibly add to the considerable land that was lost through previous wars. In fact, Bulgaria gained the territories of Macedonia and Thrace after participating in the attack on Yugoslavia and Greece.

Bulgaria did not share the same social attitudes toward Jews as were found in other central or southeastern European countries, and there was not much antisemitism found in Bulgaria before the war. As the Nazis began to enforce anti-Jewish legislation, public protests ensued. These protests came from “writers, doctors, lawyers, political leaders, and even the Holy Synod, the leadership of the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church.”¹⁶ This does not mean that the Jews did not suffer, for laws of segregation and disenfranchisement were as quickly introduced here as in all the other German allied countries. However, just as deportation seemed imminent, public opposition and official procrastination snagged the German orders.

In 1943, the Germans began to put pressure on the government to deport the Bulgarian Jews, but instead an agreement was reached which said that the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia would be the first to be deported. As a result of this agreement, twelve thousand Jews from these territories and eastern Serbia were sent to Treblinka.¹⁷

While public demonstrations were staged to protest the attempts to deport Bulgarian Jews, persecution of the Jews continued. “The Jews of Sofia [capital of Bulgaria] were expelled to the provinces, and Jewish men between the ages of twenty and sixty were sent to slave-labor camps.”¹⁸ However, with the exception of the Jews in the Bulgarian-occupied territories, the Jews of Bulgaria were not deported to death camps, and fifty thousand of them were alive by the war's end.

Finland

Less well known are the heroic efforts of the Finns. But here again, the number of Jews was small and the Finns were in a relatively negotiable position since they supplied crucial nickel and timber as well as military positions to Germany. On the other hand, Finland was Germany's

ally in the war against Russia and wholly dependent on the Germans for arms and food.¹⁹ The move to introduce anti-Jewish legislation was met with a wave of protests.

When the *Gestapo*, after a long campaign, demanded the surrender of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria, they were hastily spirited off to neutral Sweden. Himmler then demanded action from the Finns. "The Finns," he said, "will have to choose between hunger and delivering up their Jews."²⁰ Dr. Kersten, a Finnish citizen and personal physician to Himmler, used his position to relay information back to the Finnish government. He noted in his diary a quote from his close friend, the Finnish Foreign Minister, in which his friend is reported to have said: "Finland is a decent nation. We would rather perish together with the Jews... We will not surrender the Jews!"²¹ In an emergency meeting, the Finnish Cabinet agonized over its choice, but when the first vote was called a unanimous decision had been reached. The Cabinet had decided not to surrender a single Jew.

Police action was instituted, and four Jews were seized on trumped-up crimes and deported. The news rocked the country and from that point on, the Finnish police and people absolutely refused to cooperate. In the end, although faced with continual threats of starvation, not another Jew was surrendered by the Finns.

Italy

Unlike many other countries, Italy did not have a history of antisemitism. In public pronouncements, Benito Mussolini, the fascist leader of Italy, was inconsistent in his regard and intentions towards the Jews. "It is clear," he said, "that there are substantial differences between Fascism and Nazism. We are Catholics, proud of our religion and respectful to it. We do not accept the Nazi racial theories..."²²

Nevertheless, the Jewish situation in Italy began to deteriorate when Hitler came into power in 1933. Italy joined Germany as its "Axis" partner on October 24, 1936. After this, the Italian government began a double-track policy. On the one hand, it condemned Hitler's racism; on the other, it unleashed an antisemitic campaign in the press -- the first in the history of modern Italy.²³

As Mussolini became increasingly antagonistic towards the Jews, it was inevitable that anti-Jewish legislation would take hold. Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano relates his account of the talks between Mussolini and King Victor Emmanuel, the royal head of Italy. According to Ciano [son-in-law of Mussolini], "Three times in the course of their conversation...the King said to [Mussolini] that he feels an 'infinite pity for the Jews'... [and Mussolini] said that there are 20,000 spineless people in Italy who are moved by the fate of the Jews. The King replied that he is one of them."²⁴

The anti-Jewish legislation was not mild, and many Jews suffered terribly. By October 1941, 7,000 of Italy's 50,000 Jews had left, including 6,000 citizens.²⁵ Enforcement of the decrees was slow, yet no government official was ever reprimanded.

Realistically, while the bulk of the Italian Jews felt painful changes in their lives, compared with other countries, their plight was bearable. "They had not been totally deprived of their property; many could still work; socially they were not ostracized and, most significantly, they were not ghettoized."²⁶

However, foreign Jews who did not leave the country were interned. Meanwhile, outside of Italy, in Italian-occupied Europe (parts of France, Croatia, and Yugoslavia) a lenient policy toward Jews was pursued by Italian Army officers.

By January 1943, the SS was growing impatient. Italian Jews in German-controlled areas were conspicuously immune from the waves of deportations. Pressure was brought to bear to bring Italian measures up to the German level, but the Italians hedged and the Germans were too uncertain about their ally's loyalty to press too hard. But by now, Mussolini was ill, disillusioned, and frightened, and the Italians were sick of war.

In July, 1943, the Allies landed in Sicily and Italian fascism collapsed. The Germans reacted quickly disarming the Italian army and occupying the northern and central areas of the country. With two-thirds of Italy now under strict German control, deportations started immediately.

The first major action was against the Jews in Rome which resulted in the seizure of 1,000. The remaining 6,000 had been warned in time and had gone into hiding. Yet, for the rest of the Jews in German-controlled Italy, the situation was now exceedingly dangerous. In spite of Italian appeals to stop the deportations, the Germans were relentless. Between 8,000 - 10,000 Italian Jews perished in German concentration camps in northern Italy, in Auschwitz, or in Mauthausen.

But if the story of the Italian Jews is anywhere most unique, it is surely in those areas occupied by the Italians, particularly the Italian zone on the French Riviera. In fact, the Italian occupied portion of the French Riviera remained a sanctuary for Jews up to the surrender of Italy in September, 1943.

Each act by the Germans to arrest Jews in the Italian zone was met with frustration. When two German officers were attacked in Paris, the French police were ordered to round up 2,000 Jews for a "penance" transfer to the East. In compliance with this order, the French police tried to arrest Jews in the Italian zone, but Italian soldiers surrounded the imprisoned Jews to prevent their departure. In another area in which the French police had taken Jews, Italian troops encircled the French police barracks and refused to leave until the Jews were released.²⁷

When the Italian police were instructed to transfer all Jews from the coastal areas into the interior (which was more closely controlled by the German SS), an Italian police inspector, Guido Lospinoso, was charged with supervising the task. The Germans estimated that the transfer could be completed within a month.

After several weeks had gone by without any evidence of the Jews being transferred, the German ambassador demanded to know what action was being taken. The ambassador then requested a meeting with police inspector Guido Lospinoso. But Guido kept sending lesser officials to confer with the Germans. When at last he could delay no further, he finally met with them. After the Germans were utterly exhausted from long hours of consultation, Guido told them that he had insufficient authority to deal with Jewish policy matters!

A game of cat and mouse then ensued. A *Gestapo* chief was sent to straighten out matters. But the *Gestapo* chief, schooled in lines of authority, tried only to find the police chief who appeared and disappeared elusively. Meanwhile, the Italian army was transporting Jews -- but in the wrong direction. Pleading that something must have been lost in the German-Italian translation of orders, the army was taking the Jews into the centers of the Italian zone, further and further away from the long arm of the *Gestapo*. The Italians, the German concluded, were not really serious about the Jewish problem.

It is perhaps thanks to the Italians that ultimately many French Jews did survive, for when the Italian police at last had to leave the Riviera, the French police had a role model to emulate and finally refused to help the Germans. The Germans were forced to conclude that the French also "no longer wished to follow them on the Jewish question."²⁸

In Italy, records now confirm what the Italians have boasted for years--that their fine country, although allied with Germany for more than half of the war, defied in unique and laudatory ways many of the orders which could have meant total annihilation of the Italian Jewish population. The result was that 80 percent of Italian Jewry survived the Nazi death mills. This percentage of Jewish losses in Italy totaled between 8,500 to 9,500. However, it cannot be forgotten that life for all the Jews of Italy was perilous; there were concentration camps here as in all other occupied countries. Still, until the camps were taken out of Italian control and turned over to the Germans, they were relatively mild, especially when compared to the concentration camps in other areas of occupied Europe. Although military allies of Germany for much of the war, it is to the everlasting credit of the Italian nationals that they were not their allies in mass murder.

Spain

Under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, Spain stayed out of the war and officially declared neutrality in October 1943. However, ideologically, Spain's totalitarian government identified more closely with the fascist nations of Germany and Italy, who supported Franco during the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s. Spain secretly allowed German ships to refuel at its ports of Cadiz and Vigo until strong protests by the Allies forced them to stop.²⁹ "Portugal and Spain together provided Germany with almost 100 percent of Germany's wartime supply of vitally-needed wolfram ... used in machine tools and armaments, especially armor-piercing shells." ³⁰

Nonetheless, Jewish refugees were not singled out for persecution. "An estimated 100,000 refugees, mostly Jews, fled through or into the Iberian [Spanish] peninsula. Spain allowed 20,000 to 30,000 refugees to cross the French border from the fall of France until the summer of 1942, and another 7,500 refugees entered Spain by the end of 1944. Spain also gave protection to 4,000 Jews of Spanish descent living in occupied Europe." ³¹

Large Scale Rescue Efforts

France

In 1939, there were approximately 300,000 Jews in France, half of whom were refugees or foreign born. Of these, more than half were "stateless." When the Germans invaded, France was divided into two zones, the northern one under German military control, and the southern so-called Free Zone, which was allowed to supervise itself as long as it collaborated with Germany. The capitol of the Free Zone was at Vichy, and the area was usually referred to as the Vichy government.

The early Vichy collaboration exceeded the hopes of the Nazis.³² The French adopted strong anti-Jewish measures without any prodding, and the usual Nuremberg Laws type of legislation was quickly enacted. No greater proof of the Nazi victory can be given than that the concentration camps in France were operated by French personnel.³³ But here the veneer of success abruptly halted. The French, ever nationalistic and not opposed to ridding their country of foreign-born Jews absolutely refused to even consider turning in their native countrymen. Even the amenable Vichy government refused to turn over French Jewish nationals.

The Nazis could not understand this French perspective of French Jews versus foreign Jews, but forced to rely on French police assistance, they agreed to deport only the stateless Jews. In clear contrast to France's humanitarian concerns for Jews of French nationality was the betrayal of those Jews who could not claim French citizenship. More often than not, these stateless Jews were handed over to the Germans. However, the deportation of about 4,000 screaming, parentless children altered the attitude of many Frenchmen.

Three major groups, a child care society (OSE), the French Scouts and the Jewish resistance group in France "smuggled older children across the wild terrain of the Pyrenées." ³⁴ The

guides for many of these groups came from the Basque people who lived in the border areas between Spain and France. They knew that with German patrols circling the mountains, it was essential to bring the children across through the dangerous peaks. Many individual Basques risked their life to guide the children to safety.

For the French Jews, there were various rescue efforts in both zones of France. One was a well organized effort conducted by the Garel Circuit, a rescue network which operated under the protection of Archbishop Saliège of Toulouse. The Circuit received Jewish children who were delivered by their parents just prior to their arrest by the Nazis. The Circuit located Catholic homes for the children and hid others in convents. Sometimes the children or entire families were smuggled from convent to convent en route to neutral Switzerland. There was a unique method for smuggling the children across the border. Using a holiday camp near the Swiss border for the children of railway employees, Jewish children representing campers were sent there. There was a football field just on the border. After each match, the number of players was smaller. The games on the playing field were repeated until each child had been passed to Switzerland.

Another rescue effort was guided by members of The Christian Friendship, an organization founded in France in 1942. One of its founders was a Jesuit priest, Father Pierre Chaillet. One of the organization's purposes was to rescue Jewish families from internment and hide them until escape was possible. Father Chaillet was arrested for refusing to surrender fifty Jewish children to the Nazis. He escaped from prison within four months and continued his work. By the end of the German occupation, Father Chaillet had saved hundreds of Jewish children.

While the higher ranks of the Catholic hierarchy supported the antisemitic stance of the Vichy government, at the same time there were many instances of the lower clergy saving Jews and their proportionate number in the deportations attest to their efforts. And while the French resistance was fairly strong, it was not particularly dedicated to helping Jews survive. Its efforts were primarily concerned with ensuring Allied communications and sabotaging the German military.

Ultimately 80,000 Jews from France perished. For France and for Jews, these were irreplaceable losses. Yet, due to the resistance and the lower clergy's compassionate assistance, almost two-thirds or approximately 200,000 of the 300,000 French Jews managed to survive the war.³⁵

[The Low Countries](#)

[Belgium](#)

On the eve of the German invasion, the Jewish population in Belgium was 66,000 (out of 8.3 million), but only 10% of the Jews were Belgian citizens.³⁶ Included in this number were about 30,000 refugees from Germany. The Belgian Jews were concentrated primarily in two major cities: Antwerp and Brussels. As the German forces began to cross the border, there was a mass flight to France where, unfortunately, they were soon caught when Germany invaded that country.

The usual grind of the Nazi German killing machine ran into one obstacle after another. The Germans tried to set up Jewish councils, but most of the prominent Belgian Jews had fled. Those who remained refused to yield to the demand of the SS deportation agents and except in Brussels, no amount of threat or torture could persuade them otherwise. Even in Brussels, although the Belgian Jewish Association was ultimately made to pass out the deportation summons, the round-ups had to be made by the German police.

Cardinal Joseph-Ernest von Roey, Belgium's Chief Prelate, ordered all Catholic institutions in Belgium to hide Jews whenever possible. Convents, Catholic churches, church schools, welfare agencies, and hospitals were all involved in hiding Jewish families. And in sharp contrast to Eastern Europe, the Catholic protectors were strongly admonished against any motives of conversion.

Ironically and tragically, however, this meant that the Germans were able to locate almost all these children. Since there had been no pretense either overtly or covertly from their protectors to convert them, the children innocently identified themselves. Nevertheless, this Catholic commitment to the Belgian Jews helped to save some 25,000 of the 66,000 Belgian Jews.

Postal workers intercepted lists of Jews addressed to Germans, and the Belgian railway workers "accidentally" left the doors of deportation trains open. In spite of this national effort to resist the killing of their fellow Belgians, the Jewish losses were high because the Nazis reacted with more camouflage. The round-ups became ever more secret, Jews were shipped out in furniture vans, and solemn pledges given to the Queen and the Cardinal one day were readily reversed the next.

Holland (The Netherlands)

The plans for West European Jews were identical with those for East European Jews but were not always as easily enacted due to differences in German control. The apparatus of destruction was most powerful in Holland, where German control was absolute. It was less successful in France and Belgium where German control was incomplete. In Holland, as a result, the Jewish losses were, proportionately, as great as any in the East.

At the time of the German conquest of Holland in 1940, approximately 140,000³⁷ Jews resided in the country. Many of them were old families that had lived in Holland for centuries.

In addition to the power of the Nazi destruction, the geography of the country conspired against the Jews. Holland is flat and apart from marshlands in the coastal regions, there are no woods or hiding places in this very small country, making it almost impossible for anyone to be concealed. Moreover, during the war, there were no exits. On the east was the German *Reich*; to the south was occupied Belgium; and on the west and north, the open sea. The landscape coupled with the small trim houses of the Dutch did not lend themselves to hiding places.

The Nazis began organized antisemitic measures in Holland to identify the Jews and isolate them from the Dutch gentiles. There were mass strikes and protests among the Dutch, but the Nazis began the deportations and non-Jews were informed that any attempt to help Jews escape would be punished by deportation or death. Furthermore, the Dutch police were known to have cooperated extensively in the deportation efforts.

Yet, in the face of these immense difficulties, many Dutch gentiles risked their lives to save Jews, hiding them in attics, ceiling spaces and cellars, in private homes, cloisters and orphanages. The concealment of Anne Frank and her family described in the young girl's diary is only one of many similar experiences; but it must be remembered that Anne Frank was not only given a hiding place but denounced and betrayed by other Dutch citizens. In spite of their efforts, however, mass deportation of the Jews from Holland started in July 1942.

Approximately 8,600 Jews in mixed marriages were given the choice of voluntary sterilization or deportation. Over 2,500 Jews submitted to the operations in a vain attempt to at least stay the net of deportation and care for their children. But in the end, more than half were deported. The deportations continued until September 1944 when Allied patrols had already reached the Dutch border. It has been estimated that 120,000 Jews were deported from Holland and at least 105,000 perished. About 7,000 survived miraculously in hiding and another 8,000 in mixed marriages or through other means. "In Holland, the Germans almost achieved their goal in entirety."³⁸ About 500 Dutch Gypsies were also deported from the camp at Westerbork in May 1944, and virtually the entire transport was later killed at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Scandinavian Countries

Before Hitler came to power, the Jews in Scandinavia lived in peace and tranquility. Their numbers were not large: about 20,000 in all (8,000 in Sweden plus 2,000 refugees; 8,000 in Denmark; and 1,800 in Norway).

Until the invasion of Denmark and Norway, government policy in all three countries had been shaped by an economic depression in which it was feared that Jewish immigrants would increase unemployment or become public charges. It was also feared that public expressions of sympathy toward the Jewish plight would serve to provoke Hitler. In addition, the German culture was highly respected and considerable pro-Nazi sentiment prevailed in the upper classes.

Any reluctance to aid the Jews or take a stand against Germany changed when Denmark and Norway were invaded in April, 1940. Sweden immediately moved to a more liberal attitude toward the refugees even to the point, much to the anger of the German Foreign Ministry, of inviting arrested Jews to apply for Swedish nationality. And for the duration of the war neutral Sweden, even though faced with imminent occupation herself, was dedicated to the rescue of Norwegian, Danish, and later, Hungarian Jews, as well as others who reached their shores.

Denmark

The story of Denmark has captured the hearts and imagination of the world. During the early occupation, the Germans found it to their advantage to stall their antisemitic policies until they could manipulate Danish political support. The Germans felt confident of Danish support since they considered the Danes their fellow Nordic brothers. As their "ethnic cousins," the Danes were granted a degree of autonomy that resulted in an indulgent German policy. Yet, the Nazis seriously underestimated Denmark's allegiance to its fellow countrymen. And not only were the Danes protective of their Danish Jews, but they extended their feeling in actions which were almost unparalleled by any other country. In an extraordinary gesture, they also decided to protect refugee Jews making no distinction between foreign and native born.

Until the tides of the war began to turn badly for the Germans, the Jewish refugees, the Danish Jews and the Danes lived in relative safety. The Germans were politely draining the country and their courteous interaction with the Danes began to disintegrate. As one might expect, the first group to feel the rebuke of the German anger were the Jews. Their previous tolerance of the Jewish situation rapidly disintegrated into brutalities. The Danes reacted at once. The "...Danish people resisted the destruction of its Jews and succeeded in saving most of them."³⁹ Chaos erupted. Riots broke out in the shipyards. Danish workers refused to repair German ships. The Danes were threatened with severe reprisals if the situation was not corrected.

The time had now come to enforce the "Final Solution" for Denmark's Jews. But two things happened that the Nazis were not expecting. First, they encountered an extraordinary obstacle. Openly sanctioned by the Danish government, the local population resolved to save its Jews. Second, German officials who had been staying in Denmark and who were expected to enforce the orders of the *Reich* failed to cooperate and indeed helped to sabotage efforts to round up the Jews. The "ruthless toughness" necessary to carry out the Nazi plan of annihilation had either not developed or had been worn away by the continued contact with the good-natured, civilized, peace-loving Danes.

Undeterred, the SS set out to do the work themselves. Deportations were scheduled for October 1, 1943. One Dane, who later became Prime Minister, was privy to the information, and he set about quickly and methodically to spread the news. And the news spread like wildfire scorching the conscience of the Danes and fueling their resolve to help their fellow man. Throughout the day, Christian policemen, mail carriers, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, and students passed the word. An

ambulance driver who could not think of a single Jewish acquaintance entered a telephone booth, ripped out the directory and with a pencil circled what seemed to be Jewish names. He called on many of these people, total strangers, to spread the alarm. Some Jews, who became frantic because they had no place to go, were piled into his ambulance and taken to a hospital where they were sheltered.

By September 30th, most of the Danish Jews had been hidden in the homes of non-Jewish friends and neighbors. On the night of the round-up, 284 Jews were caught and later, 200 more were arrested and 7,200 escaped into hiding. On the following day, the Swedish government offered refuge to all Danish Jews. Those who had escaped were smuggled to Sweden in fishing boats. The Danish police, in a heroic gesture, openly declared that they had disassociated themselves completely from the brutal treatment of the Jews and would offer their assistance in any way possible. When the Nazis tried to bribe the army by offering to release interned Danish soldiers in exchange for Danish Jews, the commander-in-chief wired back: "The personnel of the Danish Army will not accept favors at the expense of other citizens."

There are many wonderful stories about how the tiny country of Denmark singlehandedly dampened the encroaching fires of the "Final Solution." Great personalities like physicist Niels Bohr used their public prominence to push for effective assistance, and almost every Dane in the midst of raids and reprisals carried on an enormous rescue effort with coolness of purpose and quiet aplomb.

For the Danes who were arrested, yet another chapter unfolded. Although intended for deportation to Auschwitz, intervention of the King and the Danish officials had the deportation diverted to Theresienstadt. And thanks to the Danes, loud and continual concern for the deportees throughout the Danish Jews internment, most of them survived the war.

The story of Denmark is unique in the annals of the Holocaust. "Nowhere in Europe did any people respond to the Jewish disaster as did the Danes, and after the war, their spirit of simple human decency did not flag."⁴⁰ Every Danish Jew who returned was given some money with which to start anew. And unlike Poland and Romania, they were welcomed home with flowers and keys to former homes where, during their absence, their rents had been paid, their pets taken care of, their possessions looked after; everything had remained absolutely untouched, except for the flowers which had been carefully watered and cultivated by their neighbors.

"Scandinavia, admittedly had few Jews for the Nazi death mills. In Holland, Belgium, and France, their numbers were much greater, and the Nazi attack on them was commensurately ruthless."⁴¹

[Norway](#)

In Norway, the Jewish population totaled 1,800 at the beginning of the German occupation. The Germans issued an order that no Jews could leave Norway and all Jewish businesses were confiscated. Hundreds of Norwegian Jews were arrested. The Norwegians formed a resistance organization called the Home Front and it arranged for Jews to escape to neutral Sweden.

After the first deportations from Norway, 1,000 Norwegian Jews managed to escape to Sweden thanks to the assistance of its citizens and warnings from the Norwegian police who were, technically, involved in the round-ups. The flight to Sweden was perilous, walking days through thick forests and wild country, but the Swedes in the sparsely settled border districts were so receptive to the frightened Jewish travelers who came to their door that most of them survived the Nazi scythe and crossed the borders safely. Once in Sweden, they were looked after by the office for refugees under the Norwegian Embassy and by Jewish refugee committees. Of those who had not been able to get to Sweden or hide, seven hundred were arrested and deported to Auschwitz; at the end of the war, only 24 had survived.

Poland

Poland had the largest concentration of Jews in Europe, and their losses were staggering. Unlike Western Europe, the Jews of Poland were generally not assimilated within the Polish culture. Many of them dressed in traditional religious garb and spoke Yiddish rather than Polish. In some circles within Polish society, there were deep feelings of antisemitism and little social interaction. After the war, one Polish Jewish woman reflecting on her experiences during the Holocaust discussed the Polish people this way: "A good Pole wasn't necessarily one who helped you. A good Pole was just someone who wouldn't turn you in."

In the terror which reigned on all of Poland and which was aimed at the entire population, it was extremely dangerous to help the Jews. In terms of basic numbers, more individuals risked their lives to protect Jews in Poland than in any other country. Still, by proportion, the number who offered protection was pathetically small: only 1 to 2.5% of the total population. From a pre-war population of approximately three million Polish Jews, only about 15,000 were saved through the active intervention of another.

By the end of the war, 90-95 percent of the Polish Jews had perished and with them the heart of Eastern European Jewish culture.

Help was generally provided from two potential sources: individuals who offered refuge within their homes and organizations which acted out of political and ideological considerations. Some of the Poles who provided refuge did so in return for payment. Yet, given that the protectors' lives were in grave danger and that food was needed above the ration level to support those in hiding, even this form of aid was gratefully appreciated. Additional danger to the Jews trying to survive on false papers or in hiding, and their rescuers, were the blackmailers who roamed the streets and countryside looking for prey. They extracted ransom from their victims often informing on them and the underground to the Germans. Only after the underground executed a few of the traitors was the situation eased somewhat.

Within the records of the memorial at Yad Vashem, more citizens of Poland have been honored for their rescue efforts than any other nationality. Although millions of Jews had died, thousands more would certainly have been killed were it not for the assistance of their Polish rescuers.

Soviet Union

Perhaps the strangest case of any country to assume the mantle of protector is that of the Soviet Union, which saved about 100,000 Jews. During the early stages of the war, the Soviets occupied the eastern section of Poland. Those who lived in that area or those who fled there from the German occupied area were relatively safe until Germany invaded Russia and Soviet control was withdrawn. While the borders were still open during this chaotic period, some of the people who had formerly been under the Soviet occupation escaped again going deeper into Soviet territory. The Soviet Union had no "Jewish" policy for rescue and their inadvertent role in this regard reflects more their complete indifference to the fate of Jews. In fact, Jews were accepted initially in part because of Russia's desperate war effort which blinded itself to any nationality so long as the individual concerned worked for Russia. As foreigners, many of the refugees were politically distrusted and sent to forced labor camps. Yet even here, they received the same treatment, however harsh, and food rations, however meager, as their Russian counterparts.

Community Action

Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon, France

Another known case of collective action concerned the village of Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon in France. The area of Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon had long been populated by Huguenots, or French Protestants. There was a very long history of religious persecution of the Huguenots by the French Catholics. Catholicism has long been the predominant religion in France. Tolerance of and respect for other religions was a key part of the religious beliefs of the Chambonais people. With a strict, austere pastor named André Trocmé, leading the venture, hundreds of Jews were saved.

Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon was in Southern France inside the Vichy zone. A division of SS was stationed nearby. The struggle in Le Chambon was conducted in the privacy of people's homes. No one knew precisely what was going on next door. When Magda Trocmé, the wife of the pastor, was asked why they took in Jewish strangers, she could only reply that "... I tried to open my door. I tried to tell people, 'Come in, come in!'" Phillip Hallie, wrote of Le Chambon and spoke of it as a "kitchen struggle." The kitchen struggles differed greatly from the battles of the French resistance movement, the Maquis, who were fighting to liberate their country. In Le Chambon, the people felt little loyalty to their government, and their actions put the village in grave danger. Under the guidance of their spiritual leader, they tried to act in accord with their consciences which meant refusing to hate or kill any human being.

After Phillip Hallie wrote of Le Chambon, he discussed his own philosophy: "I, who share Trocmé's and the Chambonais' belief in the preciousness of human life, may never have the moral strength to be much like the Chambonais or like Trocmé; but I know what I want to have the power to be. I know that I want to have a door in the depths of my being, a door that is not locked against the faces of all other human beings. I know that I want to be able to say from those depths, 'Naturally, come in, come in.'" ⁴² After the war was over, it was discovered that more Jews had been rescued in Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon than the pre-war population of the entire village.

Nieuwlande, Netherlands

In the Dutch village of Nieuwlande, the possibility of hiding at least one Jew, or more if possible, within each household was discussed. Every one of the 117 village inhabitants participated in the rescue effort.

Desperate Missions

The Brand Mission

On May 15, 1944 with the end of the war less than one year away, the massive deportations of the Hungarian Jews began and with them the failure of one of the strangest and saddest stories in the small book of efforts to rescue the Jews.

Adolf Eichmann, an SS Lieutenant Colonel, was responsible for organizing the deportations to the concentration camps of all the Jews in Europe. He was headquartered in Vienna when he offered a ransom proposal to Joel Brand, a young man who was the head of the Zionist Aid and Rescue Committee, called by a Hebrew name, *Va'adah*. The *Va'adah* or Council for Assistance and Rescue was a genuine underground movement, illegal and conspiratorial; in contrast with the Jewish Council, it had no illusions about Nazi plans and no second thoughts about their innocent sounding phrases.

It was clear to the *Va'adah* that it was possible to bribe certain Nazi officials. Such a plan had been attempted previously in Slovakia, and even though it did not meet with success, a

glimmer of hope had been opened. After various meetings and sudden alarming changes, Eichmann entered the picture. His statement both flabbergasted and thrilled Joel Brand.

Since the *Va'adah* knew what was really happening to the Jews, Eichmann had no need for further subterfuge. He came immediately to the point. Eichmann wanted ten thousand trucks equipped with spare parts to be used exclusively on the Eastern Front. In exchange, Eichmann offered one million Jews from any country, wherever they could be found including the concentration camps.

Brand decided to go to Istanbul where Jewish leaders had direct links with the Allies in Jerusalem and Cairo. Before he left, Brand asked Eichmann for a guarantee to show good faith. Eichmann replied: "If you return from Istanbul and tell me that the offer has been accepted, I will close Auschwitz and bring 10% of the promised million to the frontier. You can take one hundred thousand Jews away, and afterward bring me 1,000 trucks. We'll go on like that. A thousand trucks for every hundred thousand Jews."

The sincerity of Eichmann's request will never be known because the Brand Mission failed miserably -- not because the Jewish organizations were unwilling to help, but Nazi propaganda notwithstanding, these organizations were helpless and all but powerless. Eventually, the British took Brand into custody. To prevent him from continuing his activities, they forced him to go to Palestine. With each forced mile in his journey, the last light of salvation for any remaining Jews dimmed and then, finally, was gone.

[Hannah Senesh](#)

One of the most daring rescue attempts was made by a group of *Haganah* parachutists. The *Haganah* was an underground military organization from the Jewish community in Palestine. Among the Jews in Palestine were individuals who came from countries in Europe and therefore knew the terrain and spoke the language. As a result of discussions with the British intelligence services, the *Haganah* planned "Operation Parachute." The intelligence department of the British Foreign Office agreed to transport individual Palestinian Jews to Southeast Europe where they would serve as contacts, sending and receiving information. The British were particularly anxious to have these parachutists develop escape routes for pilots and crews whose planes had been shot down and who had parachuted over enemy territory.

About 170 young men and women volunteered for this dangerous mission. Included in this group was a young woman, originally from Hungary, named Hannah Senesh. Twelve of the parachutists, including Hannah, were captured by the Germans. Tortured for days, she refused to divulge what she knew. Even when her mother, who was still living in Hungary, was brought in and threatened, Hannah remained adamant in her silence. In the end, she was shot. Her poems survive as do the details from many of the exploits of "Operation Parachute." Those not captured established contact with underground Jewish forces and fought actively against the Germans. They helped prepare escape routes and, most important, gave hope and encouragement to Jews in the occupied countries.

[Jan Karski](#)

Today Jan Karski is a noted author, lecturer, and a professor of government at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. As a young man, Karski, a Catholic living in Łódź, Poland, was chosen to serve as a courier on dangerous missions between the Polish underground movement and the Polish government-in-exile which was operating out of London. The Jewish resistance smuggled him into the Warsaw ghetto and the Belzec killing center so that he could see for himself the conditions there and report them. In this way, he traveled throughout the German occupied territories. On one of his missions, he was caught and tortured by the Nazis, but he managed to escape.

As an eyewitness to the persecution and murder of the Jews, Karski made it his personal mission to inform the leaders of the West. He reported the atrocities to the highest leaders of government and pleaded for help for the Jewish community in Poland. In the speeches he gives today, he painfully recalls those moments. He relates how the president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, listened intently to his report and request for assistance. The president then replied: "You will tell your leaders that we shall win this war and the guilty ones shall be punished for their crimes. Freedom shall prevail."

Although awestruck in the presence of the powerful president, Karski realized that, like all the other leaders with whom he had spoken, not a word or promise had been given to aid the Jews. The only thing that he was assured of was that winning the war was the priority. Yet, within this objective, it was apparent that no efforts, including the possibility of bombing the railway lines to Auschwitz (which were directly under the bombing runs of several Allied missions), would be expended elsewhere. No one with whom he spoke seemed interested that rescue, or even some measures to obstruct the murders, could easily be incorporated within the military strategy for victory.

[John Pehle and the War Refugee Board](#)

The War Refugee Board (WRB) was created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in January 1944, under pressure from Congress and within his own administration (especially from Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury). On paper, the WRB had impressive powers to rescue the victims of Nazi oppression in imminent danger of death. The WRB was empowered to negotiate and spend money on rescue efforts without interference or approval from the State Department. But in reality, the WRB was severely handicapped by lack of cooperation from other government agencies (except the Treasury Department), Roosevelt's lack of support, and grossly inadequate funding.

Despite these obstacles, John Pehle, Executive Director of the WRB and his staff of 30, primarily with funds raised from the private contributions of American Jews, managed to evacuate Jews from Nazi-occupied territories, found safe havens to which the Jews could be sent, prevented some deportations and atrocities by using threats of war crimes trials, and sent relief supplies into concentration camps. Raoul Wallenberg was sent to Budapest and his work was funded by the WRB. Although hampered by inadequate funds, and without a major government commitment for rescue, the WRB managed to be the decisive factor in the rescue of thousands of Jews. The most heralded case was the creation of a safe haven in an old army camp in Oswego, New York, to which the WRB sent 982 Jewish refugees from Italy.

By the end of the war, the board saved approximately 200,000 Jewish lives that can be counted, plus untold numbers of others, thanks to the shipments of thousands of parcels of food into concentration camps in the last months of the war. Unfortunately though, many more people could have been rescued if only the WRB had the full backing of the American government.

[One Person Can Make A Difference](#)

There are hundreds of dramatic stories of individual rescuers and their heroic acts to save Jews during the Holocaust. Many of them have been acknowledged. The whereabouts of others are still being sought, but there are some who will never be known. Some Jews who were initially aided nevertheless died during the war, and no one remains to give testimony. Some rescuers lost their lives along with the Jews they hid, and others wish to remain anonymous. Fortunately, because of their individual efforts, many survived who would otherwise have been killed in the Nazi machinery of death. Almost all of those who survived through rescue have tried to locate the person or persons who helped them, to give thanks, to offer support, and to bring their name to light as

an example to the rest of the world. The following are the stories of but a few of these courageous individuals.

[Chiune \(Sempo\) Sugihara](#)

One of the best known cases of individual rescue is by Chiune (Sempo) Sugihara the Japanese consul in Kovno, Lithuania. In the early years of the war, despite the refusal of his government to grant Jewish refugees entry visas to Japan, he assisted at least 1,500 and perhaps as many as 3,000 Jewish refugees. These visas enabled the refugees to escape the Nazi fate. Upon his return to Tokyo, Sugihara was requested to resign for his insubordination.

[Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#)

A German Protestant theologian, Bonhoeffer was one of the first clerics to take a public stand against the Nazis' racial definition of Jews. He protested the treatment of persons who were practicing Christians because either they or their parents had converted, but were defined by German laws as Jews because they were descendants of Jewish grandparents. He became involved in efforts to assist the Jews and in one of these plans, where he helped to successfully smuggle a group of fifteen Jews into Switzerland, he was caught. He was sent to the Flossenbürg concentration camp where he was executed on April 9, 1945, only one month before the surrender of Germany. Bonhoeffer's fearless condemnation of the Nazi policies before the war was a source of inspiration for the German resistance movement. Although, after the war started, his clandestine activities prevented him from publishing any attacks against the Nazis, he continued to write of his thoughts and encourage action. Several members of his immediate family were also involved in Bonhoeffer's rescue activities. They were also caught and executed.

[Corrie Ten Boom](#)

Corrie Ten Boom lived in Holland with her older sister and aged father. They ran a little watch repair shop and when Corrie first learned that her older sister was helping Jews, she was angry and frightened. Her sister, a deeply religious woman, felt that she had to help her fellow human beings out of a sense of Christian duty. When her sister became ill, Corrie took over the responsibility of helping the Jews who came to their shop. The family was eventually caught and sent to the concentration camps where both the older sister and father died. In the camps, Corrie was amazed at the fortitude of her older sister who, although extremely ill, held to her religious beliefs and worked to help and comfort others. After her sister died, Corrie felt, for the first time, a deep sense of religious fidelity and, once again, took over the care for others which her sister had so nobly demonstrated. Until she died, Corrie Ten Boom spent her life touring to give comfort to those in need and bringing her message of love and compassion to others.

[Johannes Bogaard](#)

A non-Jewish farmer, Johannes Bogaard was among the thousands of Dutch citizens willing to defy the Nazis. He arranged refuge for 300 Dutch Jews on his farm and the farms of his family. Many of these fugitives were later smuggled to other safe locations in Holland. Bogaard and his family paid a high price for their protection of the Jews. Bogaard was forced to escape into hiding, and members of his family were sent to a concentration camp where they perished.

[Stefania Podgórska](#)

Stefania Podgórska was sixteen years old when Germany invaded Poland. As reports of hunger, disease, and death filtered out of the ghetto, Stefania, a Catholic girl also known as Fusia, became deeply concerned about her Jewish friends. Before long, she was making secret visits to

the ghetto with gifts of food, clothing, and medicine, putting her life in jeopardy each time she approached the people behind the walls.

One of Fusia's Jewish friends in the ghetto was Max, a medical student and the son of her former landlord and employer. When the Nazis began to deport the Jews from the ghetto, Max made a daring escape in the middle of the night. Max knocked on the doors of many friends but was refused shelter. When he came to Fusia, she agreed to hide him in her apartment.

Fusia and her sister built a false wall and ceiling in the attic of their small apartment with wood from abandoned apartments. Designed to hold seven people, the space eventually served as a hideaway for eighteen Jews. For two and a half years, the eighteen people hid there, able to speak only in whispers and surviving on bread and onions. When one of the Jewish women contracted typhus, Fusia secretly obtained life-saving medicine for her.

The most dangerous time came in 1944 when the Germans demanded that she house two nurses in the apartment. The nurses and their boyfriends, who were German soldiers, lived in the apartment with Fusia until the Soviets liberated the town seven months later. They never learned of the people in the attic.

[Varian Fry](#)

After Germany defeated France in June 1940, Fry, a young editor from New York, went to Marseilles, France as the representative of the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC), a newly-formed private organization consisting of American citizens and European expatriates. The idea for the ERC actually came from Albert Einstein in 1933. The plan was to attempt to help those refugees whose situations were most perilous because of their fame to escape from France before they could be deported by the *Gestapo* under the terms of the Franco-German Armistice. Among those rescued were artists, writers, scientists, political activists, and musicians.

Working day and night, often despite the opposition of the French, and even American authorities, he and a few associates created a network which rescued approximately 2,000 Jewish and non-Jewish people from France. They forged passports and visas and helped refugees escape over the Pyrenées, the mountain chain separating France and Spain. More than once, he was detained and questioned by the Vichy French government, until finally, he was expelled by the chief of police in Marseilles in September 1941.

When Fry returned to New York, he tried to warn Americans about the disastrous situation of Jews in Hitler's Europe, but few listened.⁴³

[The Protectors of Anne Frank](#)

In 1933, after the Nazis came to power, the Frank family who were living in Frankfurt, Germany, moved to Amsterdam, Holland to escape the persecutions. The father, Otto Frank, had several good friends there from previous business trips and was able to establish two small companies. When the Germans invaded, Mr. Frank immediately made preparations to hide his family in the annex of one of his businesses. Four employees were drawn into his plan and agreed to help. They were Victor Kugler, Johannes Kleiman, Elli Voskuijl, and Miep Gies. Miep was originally from Austria and was one of many children who had been sent to a Dutch foster home after World War I to improve her health. Together with the van Daan family and Dr. Dussel, a dentist from Berlin, the Franks spent two years in the small quarters of the annex.

During their time in hiding, Mr. Frank's former employees were their sole source of support. On her 13th birthday, Anne Frank received a diary from her father in which she wrote to her imaginary friend, "Kitty." Her stirring thoughts, accounts of frightening news, and most of all, her personal

feelings are one of the most memorable and moving commentaries on the war that has ever been published.

On August 4, 1944, an anonymous phone call betrayed the hiding place of Anne Frank and the others. Kugler and Kleiman were also arrested but both managed to survive the war. After they were taken away, Miep Gies and Elli Voskuijl went back to the annex, and it is there that Miep found Anne's diary. She collected it, together with other personal possessions, which she saved in the hopes of returning them to the family. A few days later, as was customary after an arrest, the annex was completely cleared of all furniture and clothing.

Anne was eventually sent to the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen where she died shortly before the end of the war. Of all those who had been in hiding in the annex, only Otto Frank, Anne's father, survived.

[Raoul Wallenberg](#)

As the war came to a close, the tempo of the Hungarian transports increased to a furious pace. Within the first nine days of the deportations, 116,000 Jews were transported to Auschwitz. The Hungarian Arrow Cross elements out-performed the SS murder squads in barbarity. Even as late as the last weeks before the Russians took Budapest, the Arrow Cross murder gangs roamed through the streets dragging Jews to the banks of the Danube and shooting them. In the middle of this slaughter, a Swedish diplomat appeared passing out Swedish passports, providing protected buildings to shelter Jews, and dispensing tangible aid and comfort.

He was Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish aristocrat. In July 1944, he was sent to Budapest to serve as an attaché of the Swedish Embassy. His true goal, however, was to work with the War Refugee Board and Jewish institutions for the rescue of Hungarian Jewry. Many thousands of Jews were rescued, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of this singular human being. Initially, he printed Swedish certificates of protection for anyone who was in any way connected to Sweden. When he found that the local authorities were honoring the certificates, he expanded his operation by purchasing houses and apartments which he converted into a "ghetto" of safety.

His exploits and nerve in the face of danger are legendary. When tens of thousands of Jews were expelled from Budapest, the capitol of Hungary, and sent on a "death march" in the freezing cold to the Austrian border which was 200 kilometers away, Wallenberg followed the Jews with trucks and distributed food, warm clothing, and shoes. He appeared at deportation sites giving out precious Swedish certificates to anyone he could reach, without regard for their nationality or any connection with Sweden.

According to most accounts, Wallenberg was cruelly rewarded for his heroic efforts by being kidnapped and imprisoned as a spy by the Soviets when they entered Budapest. He had gone to meet the Soviets to plead with them to release desperately needed funds which they had blocked from the Joint Distribution Committee -- funds which would feed the remnant of Hungarian Jewry, now starving to death. He also wanted the Soviets to rescind their order which had forced the Red Cross representatives to leave Hungary. He wanted them to return so that they might administer to the Jews, many of whom were desperately ill. He entered a Soviet official's car and was never seen again.

Some months later the Swedish Foreign Office was notified that Wallenberg was "in good health under Russian protection." In response to later inquiries, Stalin said that there had been an error and that Wallenberg had never reached the Soviet headquarters. He must have been killed by either the SS or the Arrow Cross. In 1952, several former Axis officials released from Russian prisons claimed that they had seen or spoken to him in a Moscow prison. Then, in 1957, a news dispatch from the U.S.S.R. noted that Wallenberg had died, allegedly of a heart attack, in the

dreaded Lubyanka Prison in Moscow in 1947 -- two years after his imprisonment. His exact whereabouts and whether he is alive or dead are still unknown today. Wallenberg was made an honorary U.S. citizen in 1981 by an act of Congress.

Sousa Mendes

Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes was the Portuguese consul general to Bordeaux, France from 1938 to 1940. When the German troops entered France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, thousands fled to Southwestern France seeking Portuguese transit visas. These visas would allow the refugees safe passage through Spain into Portugal, a neutral country, from where many hoped to leave Europe by ship. Against instructions from the fascist dictator of Portugal, Sousa Mendes issued visas for 30,000 refugees. For this act, he was recalled to Lisbon (the capital of Portugal). Even as he was leaving, escorted by Portuguese authorities, he continued handing out visas. Realizing that most of the borders would now be closed to those carrying his visas, he assembled a caravan of men, women and children and had them follow his car to an isolated border. At this remote outpost, he correctly calculated that the guards had not yet received Lisbon's orders and through his foresight, 1,000 refugees were able to cross the border into safety. Once in Lisbon, Mendes was removed from his official post and stripped of benefits accumulated from his 30 years of service. Publicly disgraced, he was unable to find work and died, impoverished, in 1954.

Oskar Schindler

The remarkable success of the movie *Schindler's List* has undoubtedly generated a heightened awareness of the rescue efforts of Oskar Schindler. As a businessman, Schindler took advantage of the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and moved to Kraków where he took over a failing enamelware factory. Many of the workers in Schindler's factory were Jews who came from the Kraków ghetto. By 1944, there were approximately one thousand Jewish laborers working in Schindler's factory. When the Germans liquidated the Kraków ghetto in March 1943, many of the Jews were being sent to the Płaszów forced labor camp, under the command of the brutal Amon Goeth. Using his official German connections, Schindler was able to convert his factory into a subdivision of the Płaszów camp, and his workers were permitted to continue to work and now live on the factory's grounds. Many of the Jewish workers were old, young, or weak, and would have been killed had they been sent to Płaszów.

In the summer of 1944, the Soviet army was advancing towards Kraków, and Schindler was commanded to disband his factory. Again through the use of bribes and favors, Schindler was granted permission to relocate his factory, now used in the production of armaments, to Brunnlitz, near his hometown in the Sudetenland, and he was able to transport over a thousand workers to the relocated factory. The names of these workers were put on a list -- "Schindler's list." Schindler managed to intervene in the transport of seven to eight hundred Jewish men and three hundred Jewish women who were bound for the Gross-Rosen and Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps, and he was able to have those prisoners transferred to his factory. In actuality, the armaments factory produced improperly calibrated shells and rocket casings as a deliberate act of sabotage on the part of Schindler. Schindler and his wife Emilie also rescued about one hundred Jewish prisoners who were trapped in two sealed train cars, and he brought their partially frozen bodies to his factory where they were given treatment and care. Recognized for his humane acts of rescue, Schindler was named "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem in 1962. In accordance with his wishes, after his death on October 9, 1974, he was buried in Israel.

Some gentiles helped the Nazis in the hunt for Jews, because they were antisemitic, conformists, or just plain opportunists. Other gentiles, although they were compassionate and appalled by the Nazi atrocities, were afraid to assist the Jews in their plight because they feared for their own lives. There were also those gentiles who were moved by their religious and moral convictions to do whatever they could to help. While experiencing potential danger to themselves

and their families, they hid Jews, smuggled them to neutral countries, such as Sweden, forged documents to give them new identities, and protected Jewish children. The estimate is that at least 250,000 Jews were saved by these rescuers. The rescuers were from all walks of life. They were business people, professionals, poor peasants, priests, nuns, Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, young, and old. They had one thing in common. They endangered their own lives and the lives of their families to save the lives of others.

On August 19, 1953, Israel passed the Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Act. This act established a national memorial in honor of the Jewish victims who perished in, what later became known as, the Holocaust. From this act, a memorial, museum, documentation and research center was created, called Yad Vashem. To honor those who risked their lives to help the Jews, there are almost 1000 trees now planted in a lush grove at Yad Vashem. However, as Peter Hellman noted in his book *Avenue of the Righteous* "...before we blush with pride at this victory of human decency over human desecration, I am reminded of that anonymous voice which asked, after viewing the grove of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, 'Why not a forest?'"

"Yet," Mr. Hellman continues, "if the 'forest' is small, it resounds with big themes -- decency in the face of evil, courage in the face of indifference or cowardliness, unrelenting, often fearless, love."

Note: Much of this chapter has been influenced by the research of social psychologist Dr. Eva Fogelman.

ENDNOTES

¹ Hannah Senesh, "Hannah Senesh: Her life and diary" quoted in Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1994), 312.

² Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1994), 23.

³ Fogelman, 23.

⁴ See David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); and Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth About Hitler's Final Solution* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1980).

⁵ Fogelman, 41-42.

⁶ Fogelman, 161-162.

⁷ Fogelman, 163-164.

⁸ Fogelman, 186-187.

⁹ Fogelman, 193.

¹⁰ Fogelman, 204.

¹¹ Fogelman, 226.

¹² Fogelman, 235; 294-295.

¹³ Fogelman, 259.

¹⁴ Fogelman, 279-283.

¹⁵ Fogelman, 305.

¹⁶ Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1993), 166.

¹⁷ Berenbaum, 166.

¹⁸ Berenbaum, 166.

¹⁹ Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933-1945* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 401.

²⁰ Levin, 401.

²¹ Levin, 401.

²² Levin, 460.

²³ Levin, 460.

²⁴ Levin, 463.

²⁵ Levin, 463.

²⁶ Levin, 464.

²⁷ Levin, 451.

²⁸ Levin, 455.

²⁹ Stuart E. Eizenstat, Undersecretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs and William Slany, The Historian, Department of State, *U.S. Allied and Wartime and Postwar Relations and Negotiations With Argentina, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey on Looted Gold and German External Assets and U.S. Concerns About the Fate of the Wartime Ustasha Treasury* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State With the Participation of Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Department of the Treasury, Federal Reserve System, National Archives and Records Administration, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, June 1998), vii.

³⁰ Eizenstat, xiii.

³¹ Eizenstat, xi.

³² Levin, 429.

³³ Levin, 431.

³⁴ Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1982), 293.

³⁵ Russel Miller, *The Resistance* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1979), 129.

³⁶ Levin, 419.

³⁷ Levin, 406.

³⁸ Israel Gutman, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 982.

³⁹ Levin, 392.

⁴⁰ Miller, 129.

⁴¹ Levin, 401.

⁴² Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Days of Remembrance, A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances*, 2nd ed. ([Washington, D.C.]: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1989), 101.

⁴³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Assignment: Rescue, The Story of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1997), 1-13.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Have students read the Content Overview section for this unit. Students should then create a list of ten concepts or ideals that come to mind after reading about rescuers during the Holocaust and write an essay on rescuers in which they incorporate these concepts.

2. Students should compare the rescue attempts by the various countries referred to in the Content Overview section of this unit. Students can be arranged in groups to compare and discuss the various countries.

3. Have students read the excerpts and testimonies of rescuers in this unit. Arrange students in groups and have them consider what motivated the rescuers to take the risks necessary to save Jews from the Nazi terror. Have groups share their ideas with the rest of the class. To facilitate this assignment, each group could discuss one or two rescuers so that no two groups are describing the motives of the same rescuers.

The following activities come from *A GUIDE TO THE HOLOCAUST*. Copyright 1997 by Grolier Educational. Authored by Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff and Dr. Anita Meyer Meinbach. Reprinted by permission.

4. Have students react to the following questions:

- a) What responsibility do the United States and other countries have to protect groups of people from mass annihilation?
- b) Explain why the United States did/did not live up to this responsibility during the Holocaust.

5. Ask students to consider the following questions:

- a) When the topic 'rescue' is discussed in terms of the Holocaust, why is the country of Denmark almost always the first mentioned?
- b) Explain the attitude of the Danish people toward the Jews of Denmark.
- c) How do their attitudes and actions differ from most of Europe's?

6. Arrange students in groups to discuss the topic of rescuers. Consider the following questions:

- a) Psychologists have been studying the rescuers to learn what led them to make the difficult choice of risking their lives to help others. What reasons do these rescuers seem to have in common?
- b) What can we learn from these rescuers and others like them?

7. Have students research the Righteous Among the Nations. Read about these individuals to learn why each has been recognized with this special honor. Create a class tree to honor them. On each of the branches put the name of one of the Righteous Among the Nations that you have studied and describe the efforts of this individual.

8. Have a tree planting ceremony at your school in memory of Oskar Schindler and the many other rescuers who risked their lives to save another. Have students volunteer to create brief speeches and deliver them at the ceremony.

The following activities come from Rossel, Seymour. *The Holocaust: The World and the Jews, 1933-1945*. West Orange, N.J.: Behrman House, Inc., 1992.

9. The Jewish sage Hillel asked three simple questions: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" The British statesman Edmund Burke (1729-1797) added, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

- a) What do these two quotations mean?
- b) What does each of them have to do with the people of the free world during the Holocaust?

10. Students can either write about or discuss the following questions:

- a) What responsibility do we have when it comes to helping someone in trouble? For example, what could we do when we see someone on the side of the road whose car has broken down?
- b) What should we do in a situation when helping someone else will put us at risk?
- c) What might happen to society if people did not help one another?

**CORRELATIONS TO THE SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS
FOR THE FOLLOWING
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS**

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Place names that figure in Oskar Schindler's story.
(International boundaries are for Europe, 1933)

CHRONOLOGY

- September 1, 1939** Germany invades Poland; World War II begins.
- October 28, 1939** Krakow becomes capital of German-occupied Poland.
- December 1939** Schindler takes over enamelware factory in Krakow.
- 1940-early 1941** Germans expel many Jews in Krakow to other towns.
- March 1941** Germans establish ghetto in Krakow.
- June 1942** Germans construct Płaszów forced labor camp.
- June-October 1942** Krakow ghetto population is reduced through deportations and mass shootings.
- February 1943** SSU takes over command of Płaszów.
- March 1943** Germans liquidate Krakow ghetto. Soon after, Schindler sets up branch camp at his factory.
- August 1944** Schindler's factory is closed; his Jewish workers are taken back to Płaszów.
- October 1944** Schindler's list of Jews to be protected as "essential workers" in Brinnitz is drafted, and workers are transferred from Płaszów to Gross Rosen and Auschwitz.
- January 1945** Płaszów camp is closed; remaining prisoners are deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- May 8, 1945** World War II ends in Europe.
- May 9, 1945** Brinnitz subcamp is liberated by Soviet army.
- April 28, 1962** Schindler is awarded "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem, Israel.
- October 4, 1974** Schindler dies in Brno, Czech Republic.

Source: Map and chronology of Oskar Schindler's story. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Oskar Schindler

Excerpted from the introduction to *Schindler's Legacy: True Stories of the List Survivors*, by Elinor J. Brecher.

The Nazis invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. They took Kraków on the sixth, then home to 60,000 Jews, 26 percent of the city's population. By year's end, Jews lost the right to attend school, keep bank accounts, own businesses, or walk on the sidewalks. They were tagged by a yellow Star of David. By the following April, evacuation orders would pare Kraków's Jewish community to 35,000.

All this transformed Poland into the land of economic opportunity for German entrepreneurs. They swarmed the cities, snapping up forfeited Jewish firms as their Treuhänders, or trustees. One of them was a young salesman named Oskar Schindler, born April 28, 1908, in the Sudetenland. He applied for Nazi Party membership on February 10, 1939. By then, he was an agent of the German Abwehr, the intelligence. In fact, he had been jailed in 1938 as a spy by the Czechs (he was released when Germany annexed the Sudetenland). Oskar Schindler provided Polish Army uniforms to the German provocateurs who attacked a German border radio station the night before the invasion.

Schindler took over an idled enamelware plant at 4 Lipowa Street in Kraków, capital of the occupation government. A Jew named Abraham Bankier had owned the plant. Schindler renamed it Deutsche Emailwaren Fabrik, and began turning out pots, pans, and mess kits for the German military. He had come to seek his fortune, and with Jewish slave labor, he made one.

By the end of 1942, Schindler employed 370 Jewish workers, all from the Kraków ghetto. He paid their wages directly to the Nazi general government. Word quickly spread that his factory, outside the ghetto, in the Zablocie district, was a safe haven. With copious bribes, Schindler kept the SS at bay, so nobody was beaten on the job. He winked at the flurry of illegal "business" between the factory's Jewish and Polish workers. He lied for people so they could bring in friends and relatives. Most of his "skilled" workers had no skills at all. Eventually one thousand Jews would gain sanctuary at the DEF (called Emalia by its workers).

Hans Frank, the Nazi governor of the Kraków district, established the Kraków ghetto in March 1941; there were 320 residential buildings for 15,000 Jews (the rest had been driven off into the suburbs). Transports and massacres decimated the ghetto population over the next two years. Between June and October 1942, 11,000 ghetto dwellers were sent to the Belzec death camp. Then, on March 13, 1943, *Untersturmführer* Amon Goeth liquidated the ghetto. Those who lived through it became inmates at the Kraków-Płaszów labor camp — later a concentration camp — on the outskirts of the city, under Goeth's bloodthirsty command.

For a few months, Schindler's workers lived in the camp barracks and marched every day to the factory at 4 Lipowa Street. At the end of their shifts, they would return to Amon Goeth's hell, and the very real possibility of ending up dead on Chujowa Górka, the camp's notorious execution hill.

Daily life at Płaszów proved unbearable for some people: They lost the will to live and so they died. Conditions were so bad that only internal fortitude kept people going. "You knew when people stopped washing themselves, stopped pushing themselves in the line, they were giving up," says Cleveland survivor Jack Mintz. "They didn't answer or ask questions. They became like zombies. If they got torn shoes, they didn't try to find something else to put on."

Schindler's Emalia subcamp extracted his workers from that hell, but in August of 1944 he was ordered to reduce his workforce by about seven hundred. In September, the Emalia subcamp shut down and its remaining workers were sent to Płaszów. In October, Schindler moved his operation to a new plant at Brinnlitz, Czechoslovakia, near his hometown. A second list was drawn up, providing the nucleus of the one in circulation today. The October list consisted of three hundred original Emalia workers and seven hundred replacements for those shipped out in August.

Before Schindler's workers got to Brinnlitz, they made intermediate stops: the women at Auschwitz, the men at a transit camp called Gröss-Rosen. Memories vary, but most survivors think the men stayed about a week at Gröss-Rosen. It was nightmarish, even by Płaszów standards. Chaskel Schlesinger of Chicago remembers the humiliating body searches when they arrived: "You had to open your mouth and spread the fingers and bend over and lift up your feet because you could have [something taped] on the bottom."

The men were run through delousing showers, and then, soaking wet and naked, they were made to stand outside in frigid temperatures. Brooklynite Moses Goldberg remembers a German officer on a white horse approaching the group and yelling to the guards, "Those are *Schindlerjuden!* Put them in a barracks and give them nightshirts, otherwise our hospital will be full of them tomorrow."

Schindler's three hundred women left Płaszów two days after his men and spent about three weeks at Auschwitz. It's clear that he knew they would have to stop there, and that a few of the women knew it, too. However, neither he nor they realized they would languish there so long. He had to bribe their way out. In one of the most dramatic scenes in the film *Schindler's List*, the women — stripped and shaved — are shoved into a locked, windowless room. Shower heads stud the ceiling. The Auschwitz gas chambers are no longer a secret. Suddenly, the lights go out, as someone throws a heavy switch. The women are hysterical. Then water blasts from the jets. The women survivors confirm that it actually happened.

"There were old prisoners who were quite rough," remembers Betty Schagrin, a Florida survivor. "They were saying, 'You go in through the big doors and you go out through the chimney.' In the shower, they waited ten minutes to panic people. We started to go crazy."

As awful as they looked, the women were a welcome sight to the worried men at Brinnlitz, where the copy of Schindler's list currently circulating was drawn up on April 18, 1945. The April 18 list is a jumble of inaccuracies: phony birth dates — some off by decades — and altered identities. Some mistakes are intentional; others resulted from confusion or disinformation, or simple typos.

Canadian journalist Herbert Steinhouse, who interviewed Schindler at length in 1949, estimates that about eighty names were added from the "frozen transport": men from Golezów, an Auschwitz subcamp, who had been locked in two sidetracked freight cars without food or water for ten days in subzero temperatures. Abraham Bankier, the enamelware plant's original owner, appears twice, and some people who unquestionably were at Brinnlitz don't appear at all. According to Steinhouse, Schindler also gathered in Jewish fugitives who escaped transports leaving Auschwitz, including Belgians, Dutch, and Hungarians.

All in all, the composition of the list is as much of a puzzle as Oskar Schindler's motives, a topic of endless debate among the *Schindlerjuden*. Was he an angel masquerading as an opportunist? An opportunist masquerading as an angel? Did he intend to save eleven hundred Jews, or was their survival simply one result of his self-serving game plan? Did he build the Emalia subcamp to protect Jews or to keep Amon Goeth from interfering in his lucrative black marketeering?

“I think he was a gambler and loved to outwit the SS,” says Rena Finder of Massachusetts. “In the beginning, it was a game. It was fun at first. He joined the [Nazi party] to make money. But he had no stomach for the killing. He enjoyed the wheeling and dealing and doing outrageous things — living on the edge. But then he realized if he didn’t save us, nobody would.”

Did he have a sudden change of heart, or undergo a gradual metamorphosis? It's hard to say. Henry Rosner of Queens, New York, claims that there was a definitive moment: “Two girls ran away to Kraków. Goeth sent two Jewish policemen and said, ‘If you don’t find them, ten OD men will be hanged.’ They found those girls. All women [were ordered] to *Appell* for hanging. Schindler came and saw Goeth shoot them two seconds before they died hanging. Schindler vomited in front of everybody. He would never be working for the Germans again, he said to me.”

In 1964, a decade before Schindler's demise from alcoholic complications, a German television news crew caught up with him on the streets of Frankfurt and asked him the question directly. He replied “The persecution of the Jews under the General Government of Poland meant that we could see the horror emerging gradually in many ways. In 1939 the Jews were forced to wear the Star of David and people were herded and shut up into ghettos. Then in the years 1941 and 1942, there was plenty of public evidence of pure sadism. With people behaving like pigs, I felt the Jews were being destroyed. I had to help them.”

The bottom line for most is this: “If I hadn’t been with Schindler, I'd be dead.” And that's all that matters. (It's thought that nearly four hundred *Schindlerjuden* are still alive; about half live in Israel.)

[Schindler] permitted the Jews to observe holidays (secretly) and, at Brinnlitz, to bury their dead traditionally. He got them extra food and rudimentary medical care. He accepted the frozen transport when no one else would, and, with his wife, Emilie, lavished personal attention and resources on the half-dead survivors.

According to Steinhouse, the Schindlers “never spent a single night” in their comfortable “villa” at Brinnlitz, sleeping instead in a small room at the factory, because Oskar understood how deeply the Jews feared late-night visits by the SS.

It's hard to say what was in that sort of thing for him, except the creation of goodwill, which in itself was a valuable commodity. Were his humane actions really planned to ensure that the grateful Jews would protect him after the Germans lost and support him for the rest of his life? Some people think so.

Sol Urbach of New Jersey has one theory:

“Oskar Schindler, on April eighteenth, recognized that everything was over, so he told somebody in Brinnlitz, ‘Make me a list of all the people who are here.’ That's when Oskar Schindler hatched his plan of escape. There is no question in my mind that that was going through his mind. He needed this list of who survived in his camp because he was going to go to Germany and take this list into some agency.”

When Oskar left Brinnlitz, he was accompanied by Emilie, a mistress, and eight Jewish inmates assigned to safeguard him. The group left the factory on May 8, 1945, in Oskar's Mercedes. A truck pulling two trailers followed. The interior of the Benz — the seats and door panels — had been stuffed with valuables. The Schindlers also carried a letter, signed by some of his workers, explaining his role in saving their lives.

The entourage headed southwest, first getting stuck in a Wehrmacht convoy, then halted by Czech partisans. They stopped over for the night in a town called Havlickuv Brod. They spent the night at the town jail — not as prisoners, but for the accommodations — then awoke to find their vehicles stripped, inside and out. They proceeded by train, then on foot.

In the spring of 1945, Kurt Klein, an intelligence officer in the US. Army—a German-born Jew — encountered Oskar's traveling party near the Czech village of Eleanorenhain, on its way from Brinnlitz to the Swiss border. Klein got permits for the group to remain in the American Zone of Occupation until it could find transportation for the rest of the trip.

“Nobody knew who he was at the time,” Klein has said. “They were all dressed in prison uniforms and presented themselves as refugees from a German labor camp. They didn’t let on that Schindler, their Nazi labor camp director, was in their midst, probably because they were afraid I would arrest him as a POW. They were correct, because my assignment was to interrogate and segregate Germans caught fleeing from Russian and Czech guns.” Klein (now retired in Arizona) enlisted the aid of other Jewish American servicemen to ensure the group’s safe passage to the Swiss border town of Konstanz.

When Steinhouse met Oskar, he found that the forty-year-old Schindler was “a man of convincing honesty and outstanding charm. Tall and erect, with broad shoulders and a powerful trunk, he usually has a cheerful smile on his strong face. His frank, gray-blue eyes smile too, except when they tighten in distress as he talks of the past. Then his whole jaw juts out belligerently and his great fists are clutched and pounded in slow anger. When he laughs, it is a boyish and hearty laugh, one that all his listeners enjoy to the full.”

According to Steinhouse, Schindler helped American investigators gather evidence against Nazi war criminals by “presenting the occupying power with the most detailed documentation on all his old drinking companions, on the vicious owners of the other slave factories . . . on all the rotten group he had wined and flattered while inwardly loathing, in order to save the lives of helpless people.”

But in 1949, Oskar Schindler was “a lost soul.” Everyday life became more difficult and unsettled. A Sudeten German, he had no future in Czechoslovakia and at the time could no longer stand the Germany he had once loved. For a time, he tried living in Regensburg. Later he moved to Munich depending heavily on Care parcels sent to him from America by some of the *Schindlerjuden*, but too proud to plead for more help.

“Polish Jewish welfare organizations traced him, discovered him in want, and tried to bring some assistance even in the midst of their own bitter postwar troubles.”

A New York woman and Płaszów survivor who had relatives on the list recalls that in the summer of 1945, Schindler told her that he'd been warned to stay out of Poland, “because he'd meet the same fate as had Dr. Gross and Kerner, the OD men [Jews killed for their war crimes]. He'd meet it at the hands of those who got knocked off the list.”

The Jewish Joint Distribution Committee gave Oskar money and set up the Schindlers in Argentina on a nutria ranch, where they tried raising the minklike animals. He failed. Survivors bought him an apartment in Buenos Aires, but he left Emilie in 1957 and went back to Germany. He tried running a cement plant but failed at that, too. He just couldn’t seem to adjust to the banality of life in peacetime.

He visited Israel in 1962. The *Schindlerjuden* there received him like a potentate. From then on, he never lacked for support from his “children.” Before he died in 1974, he asked that the *Schindlerjuden* take his remains to Israel and bury him there. He lies in the Catholic cemetery on Mount Zion.

Whatever he was between 1939 and 1945, he has come to represent so much more than a mere flesh-and-blood mortal. He has become, in legend, what most people want to believe they themselves would become in situations of moral extremis. “Each one of us at any time, faced with the particular circumstances, has the power to stand on the side of right,” a California survivor named Leon Leyson told me. “Ninety-nine percent of the time, we simply don’t. This is an ordinary man, not a special hero with super powers, and yet he did it.”

He also has allowed hundreds of men and women to answer at least part of the imponderable question: *Why did I survive and six million perish?* Answer: Because of Oskar Schindler.

S T E V E N S P I E L B E R G

On movies and memory

Editor's Note:

Steven Spielberg is not only one of the most respected film makers in the world, he is also, arguably, the most successful. Two of his films -*E.T.* and *Jurassic Park* - are the highest grossing movies ever made. But Spielberg is more than a commercial success. *Schindler's List*, his 1993 film of the Holocaust, has become a modern classic. The film won seven Academy Awards, including those for best picture and best director. Here, Mr. Spielberg talks about the making of the movie and what it means to him.

LC *Were you surprised that Schindler's List was seen by so many people all over the world?*

Spielberg Yes. I never expected it to attract such large audiences in theaters. I thought it could eventually reach some audience on videotape, in schools and television. Its theatrical success was an unexpected vindication of a difficult subject.

LC *You were first offered this film in 1982. Why did you wait until 1992 to make it?*

Spielberg This is the most realistic movie I've ever made. I wasn't mature enough, wasn't emotionally resolved with my life, and I hadn't had children. Yet, without knowing it, I had been preparing for it, I guess, all my life, back to the time I was a little kid in Cincinnati. My grandma would teach English to German, Polish, and Russian Jews, and I remember quite well a man who I thought was a fantastic magician because he rolled up his sleeve and there were all these numbers stamped on his arm. He taught me my numbers. Then one day, he said, "I'll show you some magic," and he pointed out a nine and then he turned his arm and said, "now it's a six." I learned what a nine and six was on somebody's tattoo -that never left me.

LC *The film is so different from anything you've ever done. Why did you make it?*

Spielberg I made it for the millions who had never heard the word *holocaust*, and for the shocking numbers of Americans who had the barest knowledge of its existence, and for those in denial that the 6 million murders ever took place. I had been looking at schoolbooks where there was either a loud absence of information or a simple footnote. A footnote! For younger people -and they were the ones I thought about most -it had the potential for a plague of ignorance.

I can't do much to fix the past, but a film like this can make a strong statement about what must never happen again.

If people don't know about the Holocaust, how much do they really know about slavery and segregation? Wounded Knee and the Cherokee Nation, the Ku Klux Klan, the internment of the Japanese in World War II, or even the death threats to Hank Aaron when he was being considered for the Hall of Fame?

When I made *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* in 1977, I was obsessed with the theme that we are not alone in the universe. I am still obsessed with that theme -that we are not alone with our pain. People all over the world who are oppressed share the same history. The common link between slavery and the Holocaust is the pain of racial hatred. That's why I can say to my kids, and to the audience, "This didn't happen a long time ago. It happened as recently as yesterday in Bosnia, in Rwanda, in our own neighborhoods. You saw it on the news."

We cannot forget the lessons of the past. To deny and forget the hate crimes will guarantee their recurrence.

LC *What was your most memorable experience during the making of the movie?*

Spielberg It was frightening for me every day. I never had a day where I didn't think that where I was standing, being a Jew, 50 years ago, was an automatic death sentence. I felt I was working on the most notorious killing field in recorded human history; all of us felt that way.

LC *After you made the film, could you define what made Schindler do what he did to save the lives of 1,100 men, women, and children?*

Spielberg The witnesses that I've met are not able to tell me with any great clarity, in terms of agreement, why he did what he did. I think the film continues to pose more questions than the survivors can give answers. He did come to know his workers as people, and he was a man who enjoyed acts of kindness which made him feel pretty good about himself at a time when there was no kindness in the world. Oskar Schindler was a shining star in an otherwise stormy sky. He was a party giver. He loved women, and he loved to drink all sorts of spirits. He was a German, a Catholic, a war profiteer who was in the Oskar Schindler business for most of his career, but something happened along the way that made him risk it all to rescue 1,100 human lives from the incinerators at Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

LC *What do you want people to talk to each other about the day after they see the film?*

Spielberg About the need to acknowledge that such events happened, must never be forgotten, and must never happen again, and the need to understand each other and our differences. And I hope they recognize that one person can make a difference. Oskar Schindler made a difference and so can all of us, each in our own way.

Questions:

1. If you had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Spielberg, what other questions would you like to ask him?
2. In your opinion, is it important for film makers to create movies like *Schindler's List*? Why or why not?

Source: "Steven Spielberg: On Movies and Memory." *Literary Cavalcade*, February 1997, page 25. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic, Inc.

How the Unthinkable Happens

SCHINDLER'S LIST, directed by Steven Spielberg, is a powerful film set against the backdrop of the Holocaust, that dark time, less than 50 years ago, when the Nazis systematically murdered 6 million Jews. It tells the true story of Oskar Schindler, a German businessman who used his Nazi connections and daring ingenuity to save more than 1,100 Jews from the death camps of Poland. A story of hope and humanity, **SCHINDLER'S LIST** shows us how the Holocaust happened and how one man chose to fight against it.

Part I

The Holocaust began in 1933, when Adolph Hitler's Nazi party gained control of the German government. Hitler had promised German voters a solution to the "Jewish problem," and his supporters quickly passed laws to begin this process. Listed below are some of the 400 anti-Jewish laws and policies enacted by the Nazis over the next decade. After reading through the list, how would you respond to the four perspectives on the Holocaust presented below?

1933

- Government-decreed boycott of Jewish businesses
- Concentration camp for "undesirables" established at Dachau
- Jews banned from courts and government agencies
- Jewish quota established for schools and colleges
- Jews banned from college teaching posts
- Jews banned from cultural enterprises (music, film theater, etc.)
- Jews banned from journalism
- Jewish food preparation rituals prohibited

1935

- Marriage and extramarital relations between Jews and non-Jews prohibited
- Jewish citizenship and civil rights revoked
- Jews forbidden to display the German flag

1938

- Jews required to report all financial interests and property
- Jews forbidden to practice law or medicine
- Jews required to carry identification cards at all times
- Jews required to assume the names "Israel" if male, "Sarah" if female
- Jews required to turn in passports so they can be stamped to identify them as Jews
- Jewish religious institutions placed under government control
- Thousands of Jewish men arrested and sent to forced-labor camps
- **Kristallnacht** (Nov.9): Government-sanctioned night of anti-Jewish riots -- synagogues burned, homes looted and businesses destroyed, Jews beaten, tortured, arrested, or killed
- Jewish newspapers and journals outlawed
- Jewish children expelled from schools
- Jews prohibited from public places -- theaters, concerts, museums, etc.
- Jewish businesses closed and Jewish business activity prohibited
- Jews taxed to pay for **Kristallnacht** property damage

1939

- Administration of Jewish affairs placed under Gestapo control
- Detailed procedures established for government re-sale and reuse of confiscated Jewish property
- **Conquest of Poland**: Jews systematically rounded-up and relocated to urban ghettos; Jewish businesses, homes and property confiscated; Jews required to wear the Star of David; many Jews moved from ghettos to forced labor camps

1941

- **Invasion of Russia:** Jews systematically executed as villages come under German control
- Gas chambers for mass execution constructed near Polish ghettos -- Auschwitz, Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Majdanek and Treblinka

1942-1945

- Wannsee Conference completes planning for the "Final Solution"
- Jews remaining in Germany and German-controlled countries -- France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Italy, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania -- rounded up for mass execution in Nazi gas chambers

How would you respond to:

1. A German citizen of the time who claims he did not realize what the Nazis were up to until it was too late.

2. A modern-day historian who says the Holocaust should be understood as a 20th-century recurrence of centuries-old patterns of antisemitic persecution.

3. An American who explains that Germany secrecy and the inevitable news blackouts of wartime made it impossible to know what the Nazis were doing to the Jews.

4. A sociologist who argues that the Jews submitted to the Nazis at every step in this terrible process and therefore played a part in the Holocaust themselves.

Part II

A difficulty in studying the Holocaust is the need to make sense of the sheer magnitude of the destruction -- how do we comprehend a number like six million Jewish victims? The following mathematics exercises should help student and discussion group members gain a more vivid sense of the enormity of the Nazi crime.

To say the 6 million Jews died in the Holocaust is to speak of a number we cannot really comprehend. To gauge the magnitude of this mass murder, complete the following simple calculations.

1. Suppose you decide to observe a minute of silence for each of the 6 million Jews who died in the Holocaust. If you start your silence now, when will you speak again? _____

2. Suppose you were asked to type out a list of the names of all the 6 million Jews who died in the Holocaust. You can put 250 names on each page. How many pages long will your list be? _____ Use books to make a stack this many pages high.

3. There were slightly more than 1,100 names on Oskar Schindler's list, a list of Jews who had worked for him in Poland and whom he managed to take with him to a new factory in Czechoslovakia, where they would be safe. Compare Schindler's list to the list of 6 million Jews who died. If you were Schindler, looking at the two lists, what would you feel?

Answers to Part II

1. One minute of silence for each Jewish victim would mean that you would not speak for about 11 years and 5 months. (60 victims per hour = 1,440 per day = 4,166 days).
2. A list of victims' names would contain 24,000 pages; a pile of books containing that many pages would be approximately 8 feet high.
3. Schindler's list, at 250 names per page, would have been less than five pages long.

Follow-up Activities:

To provide historical context for the impact of the Holocaust, have students research and report on the economic and social status of European Jews prior to 1933. Focus attention on the lifestyle as well as the accomplishments of such figures as Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Kurt Weill and Franz Kafka.

Perhaps the key to Schindler's character lies outside his story, in our own time. He was a man, well-adjusted to a world of corruption, who felt impelled to perform an act of virtue. Despite his own nature, it seems, and against impossible odds, he carried out a plan that required daring, determination and sacrifice, a plan to save others that brought him to financial ruin. Fighting against hate with hope, he found a way to rescue more than 1,100 people from certain death.

It sounds incredible, yet we hear stories of similar heroism today, stories that prove, as Schindler did, that one person really can make a difference. Find some of these stories and describe three people of our own time who belong on "Schindler's List," individuals who have made a difference (1) in the world, (2) in our nation and (3) in your own community.

Encourage students and group members to keep notebooks or journals in which they record their feelings about, and reflections on, disturbing events in the news or in their own experience. To help them gain some sense of empowerment, encourage them to bear witness to a particular situation by speaking about it in class or with the group, by writing letters to their congressional representatives, and by contacting any organizations attempting to deal with the situation to ask how they can help.

Interestingly, Oskar Schindler's life after the war was largely "unexceptional," as his widow has put it. His wartime accomplishments a thing of the past, he went on to fail in various business ventures and eventually settled into a solitary, somewhat aimless existence in what was then West Germany. Particularly in his later years, he seemed to come to life only on his annual visits to Israel, where he was honored as one of the "Righteous Among the Nations," and through his contacts with the ever-growing family of *Schindlerjuden* and their offspring. Ask students and group members to speculate on whether Schindler felt his later life was a "letdown" or a source of constant reward. In view of these closing chapters, what does Schindler's story tell us about the relationship between heroism and history -- does history make heroes, or do heroes make history?



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JACK VALENTE
PRESIDENT
AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

April 4, 1994

I come to you about the movie rating system, and its connection to one of the most morally and educationally important movies of this century, SCHINDLER'S LIST.

I know something about movie ratings. I invented the movie rating system and was present at its birth, November 1, 1968. Since that time I have, each day, strenuously and passionately, nourished the ratings' fidelity to an enduring integrity.

Which is why I come to you to suggest that it would be an omission of the most serious kind if SCHINDLER'S LIST was barred from being viewed by young people because it is rated "R". What must be understood is that the "R" rating is advisory. The "R" rating says to parents that there is adult material in the film, but a youngster can view the film if accompanied by a parent or adult guardian.

In constructing the ratings, I was specific in placing this advisory authority with the parent because there are a number of "R" films which may be worthily viewed by young people. These are films which parents can discuss with their children to instruct them in whatever thematic morality inhabits that movie.

Such a film is SCHINDLER'S LIST. Every young person in America should watch this film, needs to watch this film. It conveys to young minds, soon to expand into maturity, the story of an evil that must never be allowed entry to their future world as it once intruded on ours. Within SCHINDLER'S LIST is an ethical commandment which if unlearned becomes a spiritual vacancy.

There is in this movie no sensual enticements. To the contrary this film is knit and held together by a religious ethic which proclaims that beyond evil there is goodness, that the momentary triumph of immoral transgressions must inevitably be worn down by an unshatterable moral code which only a Higher Being can convey.

SCHINDLER'S LIST is a movie of profound faithfulness to the value of the human spirit. There is not a young student viewing SCHINDLER'S LIST in any school who will not enlarge his or her sense that what is morally right will always prevail against Godless wrong.

I beseech you, most sincerely, to make it possible for one of the greatest films ever created to be viewed by those who will most benefit from its enduring message: young students who are the future of this free and loving land.

Generalgouvernement
Distrikt Krakau
Der Kreishauptmann in Krakau

Bekanntmachung.

Zur rechtlichen Durchführung der vom SS- und Polizeiführer im Distrikt Krakau angeordneten Judenausiedlung gebe ich nochmals folgendes bekannt:

- 1) Jeder Pole oder Ukrainer, der einen Juden bei sich aufnimmt oder im Unterstand versteckt, bestrafte oder verhehrt wird.
 - 2) Jeder Pole oder Ukrainer, der einem verurteilten Juden Lebensmittel und/oder Geld in irgendeiner Weise überlässt, bestrafte wird.
 - 3) Jeder Pole oder Ukrainer, der nach der Verhaftung eines Juden die Verhaftung zu verhindern sucht, bestrafte wird.
 - 4) Jeder Pole oder Ukrainer, der durch seine Handlungen dazu beiträgt, dass ein Jude sich versteckt, bestrafte wird. Insbesondere sind dies die Fälle, in denen ein Pole oder Ukrainer Lebensmittel, Geld oder andere Gegenstände an einen Juden überlässt.
 - 5) Ich bin bereit, auf die Verhaftung eines Juden gegen eine Belohnung oder Vergütung zu arbeiten, wenn die Verhaftung zu einem anderen Zweck führt.
- Zusätzliche Angaben über diese Verbot werden durch die Polizei bekannt gegeben.

ОПОВІСТКА.

Для швидкого переведення виключеної еміграції його зарядом Керівник СС і Поліції в Дистрикті Краків, подає до відома слідує:

- 1) Кожен поляк або українець, який приймає у себе єврея або іншого переслідуваного, буде кримінально переслідуваний.
 - 2) Кожен поляк або українець, який надає їжі, одягу, грошей або інших предметів переслідуваному єврею, буде кримінально переслідуваний.
 - 3) Кожен поляк або українець, який намагається уникнути арешту єврея, буде кримінально переслідуваний.
 - 4) Будь-який поляк або українець, який допомагає єврею сховатися, буде кримінально переслідуваний.
 - 5) Я готовий прийняти за винагороду арешту єврея будь-яку суму грошей, якщо це допоможе йому втекти.
- Додаткові дані про це заборону будуть надані поліцією.

Obwieszczenie.

Celem całkowitego przeprowadzenia zarządzonego przez Dowódcę SS i Policji w Dystrykcie Krakau wysiedlenia żydów podaje nar jeszcze do wiadomości:

- 1) Każdy Polak lub Ukraińca, który przyjęcie do siebie żyda, ukrywanie, pomoc w ukryciu, dostarczenie żywności, ubrań, pieniędzy, lekarstw, pomocy w przebiegu choroby, będzie karnie ścigany.
 - 2) Każdy Polak lub Ukraińca, który dostarcza żywność, ubrania, pieniądze, lekarstwa, pomoc w przebiegu choroby, będzie karnie ścigany.
 - 3) Każdy Polak lub Ukraińca, który próbuje uniknąć aresztowania żyda, będzie karnie ścigany.
 - 4) Każdy Polak lub Ukraińca, który pomaga żydowi ukryć się, będzie karnie ścigany.
 - 5) Jestem gotów przyjąć za wynagrodzenie aresztowanie żyda dowolną sumę pieniędzy, jeżeli to pomoże mu uciec.
- Dodatkowe dane dotyczące tej zakazy będą podane przez policję.

Kraków, dn. 2. II. 1941

PROCLAMATION

Regarding
Aiding/keeping hidden Jews.

Be warned that in regard to Decree 3 regarding physical restrictions within the Generalgouvernement of 15 October, 1941 (Ordinance for G.G. (Gen. Government page 595) Jews leaving the Jewish zone without permission are subject to the penalty of death.

According to this decree individuals who knowingly provide shelter to such Jews, deliver food to them, or sell them food products, are likewise subject to the penalty of death.

The local non-Jewish population is hereby warned against:

- 1) providing Jews with shelter,
- 2) delivering them food,
- 3) selling them food products.

The City Chief
Dr. Franke

Czestochowa, [Poland] 24 9 42

Translated from Polish by Adelle Chabetski

The following excerpts are taken from interviews in the book, *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust*. The italicized introductions were written by the interviewers themselves and help to create the setting for the interviews that follow.

Louisa Steenstra

When we ring the doorbell to Louisa Steenstra's apartment in Niagara Falls, Canada, a cuckoo clock confirms the hour of our appointment. The clock is one of the few possessions she brought with her from her native Holland. The first thing she tells us, before the recording equipment is set up, is that her daughter hadn't wanted her to talk with us. Dredging up the horrible memories of the war invariably requires several days of recovery. As she tells the particularly cruel story of how her husband was killed in the last months of the war, her voice and face seem ageless, as though part of her were still in the past.

I had been a kindergarten teacher, but when jobs got scarce I took a secretarial course and became a secretary and bookkeeper for a business owned by Jews. Albert and I were married in 1938. When the Nazi occupation came, the Germans took over all the Jewish businesses and got rid of the Jews, but the other workers had to stay on. I told my husband, "I'll kill myself before I work for Germans." So I lied and told them I was having a baby so I could quit my job. I had had Jewish friends in school. We didn't hate Jews; you never thought about those things in Holland.

Albert worked as a supervisor in a wine factory and he got involved in the Resistance at work. He became a commander of twenty-one men, and since we had a big house, we rented some rooms to Jews. The first one we took in was the nephew of my boss. Then Emmanuel Marcus rented a room. He had been taken to a camp near Groningen but he escaped and came straight to our house.

One evening I was visiting Emmanuel's sister-in-law, Anna Marie Marcus. Her husband, Karel, had already been taken to Westerbork. She had five-year-old twin boys and I often did baby-sitting for her. While I was there, she talked about going into hiding, and all of a sudden there was a pounding on the door and two men, an SS officer and a Dutch collaborator, stormed into the room. It was frightening. I felt so sorry for those Jews. The Nazis would come in the middle of the night and take them out of their houses with nothing. I hated those Germans. When Anna Marie leaned over to kiss me goodbye, she put a key to her house in my hand and asked me to come back later and pack some suitcases of the children's clothes and bring them to her.

They sent Anna Marie and the boys to Westerbork and took me to the police. Luckily a friend of my husband's worked at the police station and got me out. After that, I wanted only to live a quiet life, but a few days later I had to try to go into Westerbork and take the warm clothes for the children. I thought that if I didn't, the winter would take them before the Nazis could. I went back to the police station and got a friend to get me a pass into Westerbork signed by the commanding SS officer in Groningen. I was afraid, but I knew it was something I had to do. As I got near the gate, a woman from that neighborhood asked me what I was doing. When I told her she shook her head and warned me, "No piece of paper will save you. No one goes into Westerbork and walks out again."

I'll never forget what I saw there. Thousands of people crying and grabbing at me. After two hours I found the Marcuses. They took the clothes and told me to leave right away. I was pregnant, and she was afraid for me. I was afraid enough for myself. And I did have a hard time getting out. I was lucky that a man I knew was there, a friend from my office, and he told the Germans, "I know this lady. She doesn't belong in here; you have to let her out." After that I had a new fear of the Nazis. That day I had seen what they could do.

My husband and I then began hiding more Jews. Other young men came; we had a good hiding place in the attic. But because the house was so large, the Dutch government insisted that we take in an elderly Dutch couple whose house had been destroyed by the war. We told this couple that the boys were Dutch Christians who were hiding to avoid being sent to Germany to work. That's what the Germans were doing to all young Dutch boys. But I think they were always suspicious, and they were especially afraid for themselves.

One day the old woman peeked into a pot of soup I was making on the stove, and Emmanuel Marcus said, "It isn't nice manners to open someone else's pot." He was absolutely wrong to say this. She stormed out of the kitchen and right away I knew we were in trouble. This old couple we had taken in, they were so scared but you know what happened? They told that we had Jewish people in hiding to a friend of theirs. But he was not really a friend; he was a traitor. She said to him, "Nothing should happen to this couple" -- that was me and my husband -- "because they're nice people, but you'll have to take the Jews away." Stupid, because you knew what would happen. She should have known this. So it's Sunday afternoon, you know, and five German soldiers came with a German shepherd. God, oh, God! Barking! They told my husband to sit in a chair and they asked him, "Where are those Jews?" He said, "I don't know what you're talking about." So they sent the dog to him and it bit his ear off. "Oh, my God," I said to Albert, "tell them, because you're lost anyway!" But they didn't ask me nothing.

So my little daughter -- she was three years old -- she was screaming for Daddy, and he still didn't say anything. And then the German shepherd walked upstairs and was barking. So the Nazis -- one sat with me and the other four went upstairs -- they found the hiding place. So this man who was sitting with me, I was lucky, boy, and he was stupid. When they were shooting upstairs, he ran up there, and I grabbed my little daughter. I didn't have shoes on, not a coat. I grabbed my daughter and went out of the house. I ran across the street. It was the twenty-first of January 1945, snow and ice and I had not even a coat on! I ran across the street -- my mother-in-law was living there. And I said, "Oh, my God! Take care of Trixie, they killed Albert!" And I went right away to the underground, and I stayed there for two days. I didn't even know what happened in my house.

Then I sent for my daughter, and the underground took us somewhere outside Groningen, where we stayed until the end of the war. When the Canadians came I went to the commandant and told my story and he gave me a jeep to go back to my town to see what happened to my husband. I went into my house. It was empty, no furniture or anything. The wall of the hiding place was broken open and the room was full of blood; they had killed my husband and the Jews. Then we went to the house of the traitor -- I knew who did it -- and he didn't answer the door. The police broke the lock and arrested him. I couldn't live in my house anymore, so they gave me the house of the traitor, but I couldn't live there either. There was a shortage of houses because everything had been bombed. It was a terrible time in Holland. We were so poor that I made a dress from curtains. Food was still short. Most people didn't have anything.

I don't think I would do it a second time, knowing what I know now. I lost too much. But we felt so sorry for those Jewish people with their kids screaming when the Nazis came in the night to pick them up. We had to do what we did. We knew it was dangerous, so many people did it. And we hated those Germans, when we heard how badly they bombed Rotterdam. That's why we helped. And don't forget, I worked so many years for Jewish people, and my husband did, too ...

Karel and Anna Marie Marcus came back from Bergen Belsen, and the boys survived, too. They went right back to their old house. I got my medal from Yad Vashem in 1985. The Marcuses gave the testimony. You know, it wasn't so important for me, but for my daughter I think it's important. She never had a father, so the medal is like having something of him she can hold onto.

Semmy Riekerk

When Semmy Riekerk ushers us into her modest, book-lined, sunny apartment in Amsterdam, she is friendly and direct, but she doesn't know where to begin her story, or rather on what level of meaning to speak of it. Intelligent, philosophic, and spiritual, midway through the interview she stops worrying about chronology and detail and begins to relive the war with unusual intensity and depth, experiencing once again the horror of the arrest of her first husband, the great Nazi resister Joop Woortman, in 1944. She never saw him again. The three-hour interview flies by, and in conclusion she tells us, "I told you things that I have never told anyone before."

... As a child I knew many Jewish children but not as Jews. I went to a Lutheran school, and we didn't think of people as Jewish or not ...

In 1937 I worked for a Jew from Germany who operated a tobacco shop. His name was Hiller, and since he didn't speak Dutch, I was in charge of dealing with all the customers. Hiller had many other German Jewish refugees living in his apartment.

I met my husband, Joop [Johannes Theodore] Woortman, at about this time. He was eleven years older than I, divorced. We married in 1938, and he was drafted into the army before the occupation. He was a P.O.W. for a while, and then he got a job in the theater. His first attempt to rescue a Jew involved a Jewish musician who also worked in the theater. Joop arranged for false papers for him. Then he asked me to pick them up. That was early in 1942, two years after the Occupation began. The Germans unveiled their face very slowly in Holland.

In 1941 something called the "February Strike" took place. I was working in a factory then, and a Communist came in to say, "We're not going to let them take our Jews," and we in the factory agreed. So did our boss, who was a Russian Jew. That day there was a big demonstration, and the Germans shot people for no reason. We saw a Nazi shoot a boy on his bike who probably had no connection with the strike. I saw his brains hit a tree. That was the first time we realized we really had to do something; words weren't enough anymore.

Joop was a real organizer. He was older than the rest of our group, and he knew a lot about the world. We needed him, because he could guide these young people who really didn't know what to do. In 1942, he started providing false papers for Jews. He got into the underworld and asked pickpockets to steal papers from people. He'd describe the type of person he needed papers for, and they would steal them. In the beginning only the rich Jews could get this kind of help, because Joop had to pay for the papers. I was the one he sent to pay for and pick up the papers. Sometimes it was very frightening because I was carrying a lot of money and dealing with shady characters. After I paid for the papers, someone else took the photos and a Jewish woman who hid in my house for a while painted the German seals on them.

Joop often went to the train station to look for Jews to take into hiding. He didn't tell me everything, because he didn't want to get me mixed up in all of it. But he used me as he used the other people in the group, to do anything that needed doing. Then Joop found out what was happening in the day-care center for young children. He knew politicians who told him that all the Jewish children were being put in the center and transported to camps from there. So he decided to concentrate all his work on saving children. He needed to find people who were willing to hide the children in their homes. Then he had to take them from the center to the new address.

My sister helped, too, but I didn't know it at the time. You never told anyone anything they didn't have to know. My husband used anyone he could trust. One day he brought me a nine-month-old baby. We had no children, but Joop's eleven year-old daughter was living with us so she and I took care of the baby.

Joop found three religious men who wanted to do something, so they agreed to find hiding places for children. This was really the beginning of the organization. That was the moment we

knew we had put a stripe on our lives, that our lives had ended, and any more days we had would be profit. We had to put the baby in another place because our activities would be putting her life in danger. This was very hard for me because I had come to love the baby.

In July 1943 there was a big raid. The Germans closed all the streets, and Joop went from house to house picking up children to take to the day-care center. By then, Walter Suskind, a German Jew, was the director of the center, and he would take any child Joop sent there until my husband could place them. The children we sent there weren't registered, so they weren't in danger of being sent to a camp. My husband would pick them up and tell them to go to the center and say, "Theo DeBrun sent me." That was Joop's code name, and the nurse who answered the door knew to let them in without papers.

I have a foster daughter I adopted during the war. This is how she came to me. She and her sister had been placed in hiding by their father before he was taken. Rachel was twelve and Leah was nine when they were thrown out of their hiding place. They walked around Amsterdam and didn't know where to go, and then they remembered a maid who had worked for their parents. They went to her, and she gave them something to eat but couldn't keep them. She looked out of the window and saw Joop standing on the street. She told them, "You see that man in the raincoat? That is Mr. DeBrun. Go to him and tell him your story and he will help you." He sent them to the center. Then, two days later they were sent to Limburg to be hidden. During the winter, when no one had any food, Rachel came to my house because I was the head of the operation. Instead of finding her a place to live, I kept her myself. I had had a maid for sixteen years and she had just left, so I told everyone Rachel was my new maid.

My mother lived in another neighborhood, on the first floor of an apartment building. A Jewish family with a twelve-year-old son lived on the second floor, and Joop had asked them if he could take the boy. They thought they were safe because they had a spare card provided by Germans to important people that could get them released if they were arrested. On the day of the big raid I was at my mother's house, the streets were closed, and the Germans were shouting, "All Jews out."

Suddenly the doorbell rang, and when my mother opened it, she saw the boy standing there. He said, "Aunt Marie, I don't want to die." My mother let him in, but then we had to hide him. We put him in a large cupboard in the kitchen. The Germans were going from house to house, searching for Jews. Soon they rang our bell and asked, "Are you hiding any Jews?" My mother said, "Me? Those dirty Jews! You can take them all as far as I'm concerned." And then she said, "What awful work you have to do. You must be very tired. Do you want a cup of coffee?" My mother was very clever.

So the *Gestapo* man walked through and looked and opened one closet and one cupboard. Then he said to the Dutch Nazi who was with him, "There's no Jew here. Let's go!" But the Dutch Nazi said, "You didn't look in this cupboard." The said, "Can't you see there's no one here? Let's go." How did this happen? Was it God? The boy lived the rest of the war in a hiding place in Limburg. I just saw him last week. He lives in Amsterdam with his wife.

In July 1944 Joop was arrested. We had known it wasn't safe for him anymore, so we had moved to another house. That day I was at my mother's, and when I returned, he was gone ... I never heard from him again. A year after the war, the Red Cross told me he had died in Bergen Belsen ...

I had to carry on his work until the end of the war. They gave me the book that listed 300 names and said, "These are the people who are hiding children. You have to take them ration cards and money every month." The banks provided money from the Dutch government-in-exile, and our organization provided the ration cards ... I never had the idea of stopping the rescue work, even after he was arrested. It never occurred to me. Being more careful, yes, but never to stop.

The night I heard we were liberated, I had some children with me, and we all danced in the house. You didn't just resist in that war; you lived, too ...

There's no day that goes by that I don't think about the war. When I go to talk to schoolchildren, they ask me, "Why was this war so much more important than other wars?" I tell them, "It's because it was the intention to wipe out a whole race. That has never happened. It has happened by accident, or in part, but never had it been the intention." When they ask why I rescued Jews, I tell them it's because they were persecuted not because of what they did but because of the way they were born, and that was something they couldn't help. And I relate this to apartheid. I think the children need to realize that all that was bad in the war, that was done by the Germans, could have been done by themselves. This possibility lives inside of them, too.

Jan Karski

To be in the presence of Jan Karski, Polish spy for the underground, a major figure in Claude Lanzmann's Shoah, and professor of Eastern European political science at Georgetown University, is a daunting experience. We approach the interview somewhat in awe of this handsome man, with his regal bearing and remarkable eloquence. Our insecurity probably stems from the fact that he had asked for a list of questions before he would make the appointment. He ushers us solemnly into his house with an accent akin to Bela Lugosi's and sits expectantly for our questions. Our fears are unfounded. Karski is brilliant and severe, but we quickly discover that he is also playful, boyish, and charming. His students are fortunate to have a professor who is not only knowledgeable but profoundly concerned about people. Since our meeting, we have corresponded, and he remains a helpful, caring friend.

... As a child I was taught an individual has human dignity, responsibility to society and to our Lord. Everyone has a soul, a human conscience. We have an infinite capacity to choose between evil and good, and God gave us free will. What I did not realize is that only individuals have souls; governments, nations, societies, have no souls. There is no such thing as a collective soul.

What happened to me is this. Two Jewish men from the underground came to me to ask me to help the Jews. They asked me to take the information about the systematic killing of the Jews to the leaders of the Allied governments. "Tell Churchill and Roosevelt that we know the Allies will win the war, but by then it will be too late for the Jews. Tell them we need two things: tell them we can buy Jewish lives, that the Germans can be bribed, so we need money to get Jews out of the country. And we think that the general population in Germany does not know what is happening to the Jews. We want the Allies to drop millions of leaflets all over Germany, informing the population and warning them that if they do not pressure their government to stop, you will bomb their cities." These were the requests they asked me to make on their behalf. But first, they asked me to go into the Warsaw Ghetto and the Belzec death camp, to see for myself. I thought perhaps they were exaggerating, so I agreed. The ghetto was macabre. It was not a world. It was not a part of humanity. I did not belong there. I vomited blood that night. I saw horrible, horrible things I will never forget. So I agreed to do what they asked of me.

In February 1943, I reported to Anthony Eden in London, who said that Great Britain had already done enough by accepting 100,000 refugees. In July I arrived in the United States. Almost every individual was sympathetic to my reports concerning the Jews. But when I reported to the leaders of governments they discarded their conscience, their personal feeling. They provided a rationale which seemed valid. What was the situation? The Jews were totally helpless. The war strategy was the military defeat of Germany and the defeat of Germany's war potential for all eternity. Nothing could interfere with the military crushing of the Third Reich. The Jews had no country, no government. They were fighting but they had no identity. One of my partners in the underground was Jewish. I found out only after the war. It was too dangerous to reveal their

identity, even to fellow resistance workers. They had no identity. Helping Jews was no advantage to the Allied war strategy. The highest officials, including Lord Selborne in London, argued that if hard currency were exchanged for Jews, the Allies would be criticized after the war for subsidizing Hitler with gold and silver. They said, "Mr. Karski, this is impossible, we will not do it." Roosevelt gave the underground \$12 million, but this was for the army, for fighting, "not charity to save your children," he said. When I hear people say "the Jews were passive," and that "they didn't fight" -- this is nonsense. In many concentration camps there were uprisings, escapes, and in the forests they fought with Partisan groups. But they had no identity. The Jews were helpless. If a Jew escaped from the ghetto, where could he go? Abandoned absolutely by all societies, governments, church hierarchies, societal organizations. Only individuals might help and were helping. The help had to come from the powerful Allied leaders, and this help did not come ...

At the end of August 1943 I tried to return to Poland, but it was decided it was too dangerous. The Germans believed I was working for "American Bolshevik Jews." So I stayed in the United States, but no longer in secret. Now I was attached to the Polish Embassy; I earned \$500 per month, and I wrote articles to every magazine of any importance -- *Life*, *The New York Times*, *The Jewish Forward*, *La France Libre* -- about what was happening to the Jews. I traveled all over the United States, delivering over two hundred lectures, and by the end of 1944 my book appeared, *Story of a Secret State*. It was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, and two key chapters were about the Warsaw Ghetto and the Belzec death camp. Nothing seemed to matter ...

After the war I wanted to run away from all my memories. I felt contempt for the hypocrisy of the leaders, great leaders, military men, ministers who went to Germany to see for themselves. They saw, and all of them were shocked. All of them, without exception. They didn't know such things were possible. They were taken by surprise. Hypocrisy. They knew. And if some didn't know, it was because they didn't want to know. Human beings have this capacity to disregard.

And then in 1977, I received a letter from Claude Lanzmann, who made the film *Shoah*. He asked if he could interview me. I didn't answer his letter. I thought nothing would come of it. Then Lanzmann called me and said, "Mr. Karski, look in the mirror. You are an old man. You don't know when you are going to die. It is your duty to appear in my film." I told him, "I saw terrible things in Poland concerning the Jews which I don't want to remember." He replied, "That is why we should not let humanity forget."

... I teach courses today in the government and politics of Eastern Europe. One of them begins with the Versailles Peace Treaty and goes to the present time. My impression is that many of the students, even Jewish students, listen to my lecture about the war and are shocked. They are impressed, but they consider what I tell them as a sort of frightening story, terrible, but still a sort of ancient myth, rather unreal. The point is that it is difficult to visualize what actually happened to the Jews during the war. Their minds cannot absorb that it was real. I have had this feeling often.

I was asked to teach a course on the Holocaust, but I refused. I have no stomach for it. And besides, it's not my specialty. But what teachers of the Holocaust must remember, what must be emphasized, and many Jews do not do it enough, particularly those who teach the Holocaust, particularly to the children -- we must be very careful. If the teacher is not qualified, he or she will run a risk of corrupting the young minds. First, that such things were possible, such horrors happened. Corrupting the minds of the young people will cause them to lose faith in humanity, particularly the Jewish children. "Everybody hated us ... everybody was against us, so I must be only for myself. So I must distrust everybody. Because I am a Jewish girl or a Jewish boy." This is unhealthy. We don't want them to lose faith in humanity.

We should also emphasize that after the war over one-half million Jews survived in Europe. Now, some of them don't owe anything to anybody. They survived in the camps; the Nazis had no time to finish them off. There were others, they don't owe anything to anybody. They survived in the mountains, in the forests, fighting, as Partisans. But most of them were helped, by individuals, by priests, nuns, peasants, some workers, some intelligentsia, whatever they were. In France, in Belgium, in Holland, in Poland, in Romania, in Bulgaria, in Serbia, in Greece. Now, to help a Jew

during the war was very dangerous. In France or Belgium you might go to jail if they caught you, in some cases you would be punished or receive a penalty, pay some money. But in Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, instantaneous death! Execution! Sometimes if the family was involved, the entire family shot! There were a few cases, not many, but a few cases where the *Gestapo* found out that the peasants in the village knew that there was some Jewish family in hiding, they burned the village, the entire village! And still there were people who were helping the Jews!

So children must understand this: do not lose faith in humanity. This is the message to Jewish children. For non-Jews they should understand, "Yesterday Jews, tomorrow maybe Catholics, yellows, or blacks." And secondly, they should know what obedience to our second commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself," can do. It can save people in such circumstances as this.

Source: Block, Gay and Malka Drucker. *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1992. Copyright © 1992 by Gay Block and Malka Drucker. Reproduced with the permission of the publisher.

SEMPO SUGIHARA, WHO DARED TO SAVE LIVES

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In recent years, a full half century after World War II, a growing number of people in Japan have become interested in, indeed almost hypnotized by, the story of Sempo Sugihara, the only Japanese to be honored with Yad Vashem's title "Righteous Among the Nations." Who was he and why this sudden delayed interest in him by the men and women of his own country?

A diplomat by profession, Sugihara was assigned by his Foreign Ministry in the fall of 1939 to open a Japanese consulate (office) in Kaunas, the then capital of independent Lithuania. Upon arrival at his new post, Sugihara learned the true purpose of his placement in that distant city, to report on German troop movements across the border in anticipation of an expected German invasion of the Soviet Union.

Knowing the approximate invasion date would help military planning in Japan and allow troops to be shuffled to areas considered favorable by the military, especially in the southern Pacific region, which was Japan's main sphere of interest.

One year later, in summer 1940, Sugihara and all other foreign representatives in Kaunas were ordered to close their legations (offices) on orders of the new Soviet masters who had taken control of the country in the summer of that year. Obeying these instructions, Sugihara left Kaunas for Germany on the August 31 deadline and was reassigned, first to the Japanese legation in Koenigsberg, then to Romania, where he remained for the duration of the war. But before he left Kaunas, an unexpected incident changed the lives of several thousand stranded Jews and strongly affected Sugihara's self-assessment as a goodwill messenger.

It happened one morning in the early part of August 1940. As he was busy packing and winding up operations in Kaunas, Sugihara was surprised by an unexpected commotion outside the Japanese legation. He sent his Polish-speaking secretary to find out what the people outside wanted. He returned with the following message, orally presented to him: "We are Jews. We have lived in

Poland, but we will be killed if we are caught by Nazi Germany. However, we don't have any visas [travel permits] in escape. We want you to issue Japanese visas.'

Until that moment, Sugihara had been unaware of the dangerous position of the Jews in the unfolding European conflict and did not pay much attention to the frenzied antisemitism which gripped Germany, the country allied to his. His interest was limited to the conduct of the war and his concern that Japan gain the most advantage from this new global contest as it had done during the First World War. Yet a human cord awakened in him at this confrontation with these helpless people. Something deep inside him told him he could not dismiss their plea out of hand. To get a clearer picture of their demands, he agreed to meet a delegation. As he described it later, he was moved by the pleas of these people who, with tears in their eyes, begged for Japanese transit visas in order to be able to proceed to other destinations via Japan. Most hoped eventually to reach Latin American countries, the United States (Japan was then not yet at war) and perhaps the Promised Land of Israel.

As later told by Dr. Zerach Warhaftig, who eventually served as a Minister in the Israeli government, seeing the Japanese consul-general was an important and fateful event for thousands of Jews. Many were rabbinical students who had fled Poland during the German invasion of September 1939 and were now stranded in Lithuania. Uncomfortably boxed in between two super-powers bracing their armies for an eventual confrontation with each other, Lithuania seemed at best only a brief asylum for these people. They were concerned that the host country would soon be overrun in a war between Germany and Russia. The country's independence was at best uncertain and by the summer of 1940 had come under the full sway of the Soviets. The Germans, most suspected, had designs on that Baltic country, and the rise of pro-German and antisemitic sentiments among large segments of the population was not a good sign for the Jewish community. It was high time to look for a way out before the storm broke.

Quite by chance, two rabbinical students from Holland, who had come to Poland to complete their studies and were now stranded in Lithuania, learned during a visit to the Dutch consulate, that no visa was required for entry to Curaçao, one of the Dutch-controlled Caribbean islands. They were told that the Dutch island governor had the authority to decide when a person landed whether to allow the person to stay on or not. In other words, an individual could seek asylum on that distant island, without having an entry visa beforehand, an unheard-of privilege in those days, since a decision on a person's stay would be decided *ex post facto*—after the person's arrival. Moreover, the Dutch consul in Kaunas was prepared to confirm this procedure by writing it in the form of an official statement with the Dutch seal added, which could serve as a substitute visa.

When Warhaftig and his friends (ever on the lookout for exit loopholes) learned of this opportunity, they decided to study it further by exploring the possibility of getting transit visas through countries lying along the route to that faraway island no one knew much about. German

control of most of Europe in August 1940 ruled out any travel in that direction. The only possible way was through the Soviet Union by heading either south to Turkey or eastward toward Japan and China.

The Soviet authorities in Lithuania, however, declined to grant transit visas through their territory unless the refugees could produce additional visas for countries bordering the USSR. This added Soviet condition and another glance at the map led Warhaftig and his friends to the Japanese consulate. They gambled on being able to sway the Japanese consul general to grant them a Japanese transit visa, as a means of getting a similar Soviet one- thanks to which they would be able to get away from Lithuania.

As Warhaftig matter-of-factly relates, he spread out a map and told the surprised Sugihara: "You see, we have a visa to Curaçao. We must reach Curaçao via Japan and sail on a Japanese boat. Give us a transit visa to travel through Japan."

The career diplomat Sugihara was frankly upset by this highly irregular request, but a hidden humanitarian streak in his soul mysteriously drew him to these defenseless people. At the end of the meeting, he asked them to return in a few days to give him time to check the matter with his superiors in Tokyo. Leaving, Warhaftig had no idea whether Curaçao scheme would pay off.

Sugihara immediately set to work. A brief check with the local Soviet authorities confirmed what Warhaftig said about the additional transit visa requirement for travel through Soviet territory. Sugihara then cabled Tokyo a brief message: "Is it all right to issue visas to Jews?" After receiving a negative response, he sent another cable but received no answer. When a third cable remained unanswered, Sugihara decided to wait no longer. There were only a few days left until his forced departure from Kaunas, and Sugihara felt he had to act quickly if he were to be of help to the stranded refugees.

Recalling these dramatic August days years later, Sugihara reveals something of the extremely painful sleepless nights which tormented his mind:

I really had a hard time, being unable to sleep for two nights. I thought as follows: I can issue transit visas—by virtue of my authority as consul. I cannot allow these people to die, people who have come to me for help with death staring them in the eyes. Whatever punishment may be imposed upon me (for disobeying government instructions), I know I should follow my conscience.

Sugihara then decided to act

Approximately on August 10th, I decided there was no further point to continue negotiating with Tokyo. The following day I began, on my own accord and with full responsibility on my part, to issue Japanese transit visas to the refugees without regard whether so-and-so had the necessary documents or not.

When the Japanese Foreign Ministry learned that Sugihara had not followed orders, they cabled him new instructions to stop issuing visas, "but I fully disregarded these cables," Sugihara proudly recalls, adding that he was acting out of purely humanitarian considerations. "I had no doubt that one day I would be fired from my work in the Foreign Ministry. I continued to issue Japanese transit visas to Polish(Jewish) refugees until I left Kaunas on August 31st."

Sugihara estimates he issued some 3,500 transit visas(Warhaftig believes it was closer to the 1,600 mark). In order to achieve this (with time running out), he worked without letup for 12 straight days and even enlisted the help of several rabbinical students to put the Japanese seal on many passports and documents. According to one source, Sugihara even issued visas from the compartment of the train which was about to take him out of the country.

Those who accepted Sugihara's aid were spared the savage destruction of the Holocaust which came upon Lithuania like a thunderstorm in June 1941, with the German invasion of Russia. Curiously, none of them ever reached Curaçao. After a brief stay in Japan, most were able to continue to Shanghai and then to the United States, Canada, and Palestine.¹

Two years after the war's end, Sugihara returned to Tokyo, to be handed a dismissal notice by the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. Foreign Ministry officials referred to Sugihara's "neglect of instructions" in the Jewish refugees affairs seven years previously as the underlying reason for his dismissal. The armchair officials in Tokyo, still at their jobs in spite of Japan's defeat, had not forgotten, nor forgiven.

After his dismissal, Sugihara found odd jobs. Moving from job to job, he managed to eke out a living to support his family. For a time, he worked as a purchasing agent for the United States Army, then, as a translator for the Japanese Broadcasting Authority and for private companies. In 1961, he established himself in Moscow as a sales representative for a Japanese exporting firm. As the years wore on, the story of his courageous war time deed gained wider audiences, but mostly outside his own country.

In 1985, while he was bedridden, his wife represented him in a ceremony hosted by the Israeli ambassador in Tokyo and widely reported in the Japanese press, in which he was awarded Yad Vashem's Righteous medal and a certificate of honor bearing his name. Several months later a

tree in Sugihara's name was added to those in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. He died peacefully that same year.

More recently, a memorial bearing Sugihara's name was erected in his home town Yaotsu, on a cliff renamed "Hill of Humanity." In Israel, the Jewish National Fund named a forest after him near Bet Shemesh. A growing number of Japanese have taken a belated interest in the man. Books and articles have appeared hailing the sole Japanese humanitarian honored by Israel, and educators, using Sugihara's example, are now pondering the difficult question of a civil servant's disobedience to his government when its action runs counter to human rules of conduct and morality. It seems that Sugihara's story has touched a sensitive chord in a country where society's rules and norms (not the individual's) are still considered the final authority in questions of moral conduct. Time will tell what effect this man will have on his country. In the meantime, his popularity is on the rise in Japan.²

ENDNOTES

¹ In a 1965 meeting between the former Dutch governor of Curaçao and Minister Warhaftig, the governor provided an interesting, if somewhat chilling insight of the insensitivity of Western leaders to the plight of the Jews. To Warhaftig's inquiry whether he would have allowed the refugees to remain on the island, the former governor replied "Not at all! I would have expelled the boat out to the sea as the U.S.A. and Cuba did to the ship St. Louis."

² File 2861, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Department for the Righteous

Source: *Those Who Dared: Rescuers and Rescued*, a publication of the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust. Reprinted by permission of the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust and by Dr. Mordecai Paldiel.

A Letter of Appeal on Behalf of Raoul Wallenberg

On January 17, 1985, bells at the Church of Saint John the Divine in New York City tolled 40 times for Raoul Wallenberg, a man whose disappearance has diminished all of humankind.

Back in the spring of 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had broadcast a radio appeal to Hungarian Christians and antifascists to help the Jews of Hungary survive the Nazi occupation. The U.S. War Refugee Board was authorized to raise funds for rescue efforts in Hungary through a group called the Joint Distribution Committee. Because Hungary and the United States were at war with each other, it was necessary to find a neutral nation to distribute these American funds. Sweden agreed to cooperate with the United States in this humanitarian action.

The Swedish national who took charge of the mission in Hungary was Raoul Gustav Wallenberg. Born in Sweden on August 4, 1912, Wallenberg was a 1935 graduate of the Architectural School of the University of Michigan. He accepted the post of special attaché and second secretary to the Swedish Legation in Hungary, and reported to Budapest in July 1944. As a result of his unremitting efforts and ingenuity, the War Refugee Board credited him with protecting from Nazi persecution at least 20,000 Hungarian Jews.

At extreme risk to himself, Wallenberg used both conventional and unconventional methods to buy time for the Jews of

Hungary until the advancing Russian army could liberate the country. His main tactic was to issue Swedish "protective" citizenship documents, technically removing anyone holding them from Hungarian jurisdiction. The Nazi collaborator heading the wartime Hungarian regime, Premier Szalasi, decreed in October 1944 that Swedish protective citizenship would not be recognized. But Wallenberg continued to issue the documents and pursue other means, even bribing fascist officials as opportunity presented itself.

In January 1945 the Red Army began to occupy Budapest, starting with the eastern section of the city, Pest. On January 17, Wallenberg went to meet the Soviet commander, Marshal Malinovsky, to transfer his charges from Swedish to Russian protection. He wanted to continue traveling eastward by car to Debreczen in an effort to contact the returning Hungarian government in exile so that his mission would not be interrupted by the fighting that would accompany the Russian occupation of Budapest. Raoul Wallenberg has not been seen since that day, 40 years ago. Ironically, this dauntless crusader for human rights has himself become the object of repeated investigations concerning the violation of his own human rights.

In January 1945, the Soviet Foreign Office announced that Wallenberg was under Russian protection. On May 24, 1945, the Swedish Legation in Moscow confirmed to the Swedish Foreign Ministry that Russian

troops indeed had found Wallenberg. The wartime Soviet Minister to Stockholm, Mme. Kollantai, thereupon assured Wallenberg's family that he was alive and well. Shortly thereafter, the Swedish Minister to Moscow asked for an investigation of his countryman's disappearance, and Stalin assured him that he would personally press the matter. The Russians argue that this commitment was fulfilled the next year when the government of Hungary tried, convicted, and executed a Hungarian fascist sympathizer for killing Wallenberg during fighting in Buda, the western sector of Budapest, at the time of the Red Army's occupation of the city. The Soviets have since changed their account and claim that Wallenberg died of a heart attack in 1947 in a Soviet prison.

Yet a large body of evidence suggests that Raoul Wallenberg was arrested by the NKVD, the Soviet secret police, in January 1945, and has been held in internment camps in the Communist bloc ever since. Frustration with the failure of any investigation to resolve the question of Wallenberg's whereabouts prompted Guy von Dardel, Wallenberg's stepbrother, to write an appeal to President Harry S. Truman.

Another strategy to obtain answers about Wallenberg's circumstances was to bring his name before the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. In 1948 an international effort was launched to propose Wallenberg as a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize to draw attention to his contributions to human rights — and to his plight. In 1984 he was once again actively suggested for the award, in recognition of his gift of life to the Jews of Hungary at the cost of his own freedom.

Although the Swedish Foreign Ministry has pursued the case quietly since Wallenberg's disappearance, and prominent humanitarians — from Albert Einstein to Eleanor Roosevelt — have endeavored to determine his whereabouts, world awareness was not drawn to the case until the early 1980s, after Soviet dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel

Prize. During his visit to Stockholm to receive his award, Solzhenitsyn met with Wallenberg's mother and urged her to insist that the Swedish government take a more public, insistent approach to pressure the Kremlin to account for her son.

In 1985, in the midst of many 40th anniversary remembrances of the close of World War II, commemorative meetings have recalled the unanswered questions about Wallenberg's fate.

The document reproduced here, Guy von Dardel's letter to President Truman, is located in Decimal File 701.5864, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59.

Teaching Activities

The following three activities vary according to ability level and interests. Each anticipates a higher level of skills than the preceding activity. They should be presented sequentially, although you may terminate the lesson after any one.

1. *Interpreting the Document* Present the letter to students and ask them to determine the facts of the situation and then share their answers in class discussion.

a. Why does Guy von Dardel believe that the U.S. government has a responsibility to assist in locating Raoul Wallenberg?

b. According to the letter, what did Raoul Wallenberg accomplish from July 1944 to January 1945? What specific actions did he take in order to accomplish his humanitarian mission?

c. According to von Dardel, what is the position of the Russian government on the Wallenberg case? What major discrepancies between the initial and the final Russian position does he point out?

d. What information does von Dardel have that makes him believe his stepbrother is alive? At the time of his letter, where does von Dardel believe Raoul is located?

e. After examining Wallenberg's background and activities, can you explain why the NKVD might have suspected him of

espionage?

f. Von Dardel charges that the Soviet military authorities named a street and held memorial services for Raoul so that “the curtain of oblivion” would be dropped on his actual fate. Does memorializing persons or declaring them dead seem to close cases or defuse public concern? Explain.

g. How reliable is von Dardel’s letter as a source of accurate information? Consider the circumstances surrounding it, von Dardel’s bias, the absence or presence of



Raoul Wallenberg

other information, and your own biases as you evaluate this document’s reliability. Pay close attention to von Dardel’s chronology of events.

2. Related Topics and Questions for Research and Reports. For further study of the issues surrounding this letter, ask students to conduct independent research and make reports on the following topics.

a. Quiet Diplomacy: Ask students to investigate cooperative efforts between the U.S. and foreign governments to resolve human rights violations, for example:

- The Algerian-U.S. effort to release hostages in Iran
- The Laotian-U.S. effort to determine the fate of Vietnam-era POWs/MIA
- The Colombian-U.S. effort to fight drug trafficking (addiction)

b. Landmark Documents of International Human Rights in the 20th Century: Ask students to write personal definitions of human rights. Recommend that they familiarize themselves with major documents of 20th century human rights including:

- The Covenant of the League of Nations
- The Geneva Conventions
- Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Second Bill of Rights
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations
- The Helsinki Accords

As a class, develop a definition of what constitutes human rights and what constitutes violations of those rights. Discuss why actions that today are considered violations of human rights were regarded as acceptable behavior by government or society in the past. Focus on U.S. examples, such as slavery, dispossession of the Native Americans, and incarceration of the mentally ill or incompetent.

c. Human Rights Violations: (1) In 1983, the play *Wallenberg: Five Days*, written by Carl Levine, premiered in Denver. If you wish to obtain copies for students to do a dramatic reading, write for further information to Dr. Carl Levine, 817 Balsam Lane, Fort Collins, Colorado 80526. (2) Students may wish to read accounts of violations of human rights in other countries. There are excellent accounts of Russian violations by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, for example: *The Gulag Archipelago* (nonfiction), *The Lazy Girl and the Innocent* (play), and *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (novel). It might be illuminating to compare the ideals expressed in articles 125, 127 and 128 of the Soviet Constitution with Solzhenitsyn’s testimony. Accounts of violations in other nations include Alan Paton’s novel *Cry the Beloved Country*, set in the Union of South Africa, and Jacobo Timerman’s *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* (nonfiction), set in Argentina.

3. *Action Strategies.* Students as a group or as individuals may wish to write letters or circulate petitions to aid victims of human rights violations.

a. The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Human Relations has produced a number of committee reports that might indicate areas of current U.S. concern and strategies of the government and private citizens to promote international human rights.

b. Amnesty International USA has a free packet of materials available to teachers and will send monthly "Urgent Action Appeals" to aid unjustly incarcerated individuals anywhere in the world. Teachers may call 303-440-0913 or send for "the High School Urgent Action File" from:

Urgent Action Network
Box 1270
Nederland, CO 80466

Guy von Harstel
& Onderdonk
215 North Tiooga Avenue
Ithaca, New York

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U.S. House of Representatives
and District Offices

MAR 21 1947

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OFFICE OF THE CLERK

President Harry S. Truman
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I write to you concerning the whereabouts of my brother, Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish citizen who went to Hungary in July, 1944 as the representative of President Roosevelt's War Refugee Board and who has been missing since the Soviet Foreign Office early in 1946 declared him to be under Russian protection.

I appeal to you because I believe that his fate, apart from being a source of continual anguish to his family, also touches the conscience of this great democracy. I ask your aid because my brother's heroic mission -- which included the rescue of 20,000 Hungarian Jews -- was carried out under American auspices, and because two years of effort through regular diplomatic channels have failed.

The success of Raoul Wallenberg's humanitarian mission from July, 1944 until his disappearance on January 17, 1945 is a matter of public record. The War Refugee Board officially credits him with saving 20,000 lives; his former American associates in Stockholm as well as the people of Budapest estimate that perhaps 100,000 men, women and children owe their survival to him.

The manner in which he carried out his singular assignment has been described as unparalleled in both courage and resourcefulness. In the midst of furious battle and barbarous persecution, he literally snatched thousands of human beings from freight trains bound for Hitler's extermination camps. He furnished many thousands of otherwise doomed Hungarian Jews and anti-Nazis with documents of Swedish protective citizenship. He established an extraterritorial compound in the heart of Nazi-occupied Budapest and fought off German and Hungarian fascist marauders who tried to violate this sanctuary.

He set up hospitals, nurseries, schools and public soup kitchens to care for the hunted and the fear-ridden of Budapest. And when Fascist Premier Salari decreed in October 1945 that Swedish protective channels would no longer be honored -- an edict which spelled death to the surviving Jews of Budapest -- Raoul Wallenberg still found a way. With ingenuity and daring, he managed to forestall this cruel decree long enough to save many thousands from the final fires of Auschwitz, Oswiecim and Treblinka.

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When the Germans were being driven from Budapest, Raoul remained at his post. On January 17, 1945 he went out to meet Marshal Malinovsky, the Soviet commander, in order to place his charges — thousands of men, women and children — under the protection of the Red Army.

Since leaving Budapest under Russian escort for Soviet headquarters, my brother has been missing. Rumors were circulated more than two years ago that he had been killed by Hungarian fascists. But while these rumors have never been supported by a shred of proof, a large body of evidence has come to the attention of the Swedish government which indicates that Raoul Wallenberg has been a Soviet prisoner since January, 1945.

The Soviet government has never retracted the admission by the Russian Foreign Office that Wallenberg was taken under Soviet protection more than two years ago. Nor has Moscow submitted any evidence to support the inspired rumors of his death at fascist hands.

Quite the contrary, the evidence that my brother established contact with the Russian command just before his disappearance has recently been corroborated by Ivar Olsen, the former War Refugee Board representative in Stockholm who sent Raoul on his mission to Budapest, and by other reputable witnesses, including members of the Swedish Legation in Budapest. Some of the latter, who were interrogated by Soviet NKVD officers nearly a month after Raoul's disappearance, are firmly convinced that my brother was arrested on the preposterous charge of espionage. This belief is shared by officials of the U.S. State Department and the Swedish Foreign Office.

It is significant, however, that the Soviet government has never admitted holding Wallenberg as a prisoner. On the contrary, Mrs. Lolkental, wartime Soviet Minister to Stockholm, gave our family assurance that Raoul was alive and safe. Later, the Soviet military authorities permitted the city of Budapest to hold memorial services for Raoul and to name a street in his honor. With this convenient ceremony, the curtain of oblivion was to be dropped on the actual fate of my brother.

Since that time, however, an ever-larger body of evidence has reached the Swedish government to indicate that Raoul was arrested by the Soviet secret police in January 1945 and is still alive in a Soviet internment camp. The latest report, transmitted to Stockholm only a few weeks ago, places him in Estonia. Earlier testimony by neutral diplomats and journalists as well as other persons held for some time in Soviet custody, indicates that Raoul was sent to a Soviet internment camp in Czechoslovakia in April 1945; that he was later transferred to Bessarabia and was subsequently sent to a camp in the Ukraine.

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The Swedish government has, on a number of occasions, requested the Soviet government for definite information regarding my brother's whereabouts. But since the Soviet Foreign Office announced in January, 1945 that Wallenberg was under Russian protection, Moscow has remained noncommittal.

In view of the manifest inability of ordinary diplomacy to cut through the tangle of red tape and misunderstanding that may still be holding my brother a prisoner — more than two years after the completion of his American-inspired humanitarian mission — I ask your assistance, Mr. President, in obtaining the true facts.

Respectfully yours,

Jugoslav Dardel
Guy von Dardel

EXCERPTS FROM *THE COURAGE TO CARE*

The following excerpts are taken from the remarkable stories in *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*. This book and these testimonies feature first person accounts of rescuers during the Holocaust.

In the words of Elie Wiesel, “Let us not forget, after all, that there is always a moment when the moral choice is made. Often because of one story or one book or one person, we are able to make a different choice, a choice for humanity, for life. And so we must know these good people who helped Jews during the Holocaust. We must learn from them, and in gratitude and hope, we must remember them.”

Leo Eitinger

We don't know precisely how many Norwegians spent the night of October 25, 1942, warning the Jewish families and trying to find hiding places for them. They were fighting an uphill battle. They had little time, and they had to convince persons who did not understand the seriousness of the situation to agree to admit unknown visitors or lodgers in the middle of the night. Those Norwegians who were trying to help Jews also were working against the fact that they were asking non-Jewish people to risk their lives for the Jews, some of whom they probably did not know. In addition, they were faced with many Jews who needed to flee but who did not want to believe that they were really in danger of losing their lives.

Leo Eitinger, M.D., a scholar and author, was a professor of psychiatry at the University of Oslo. He was a survivor of the Holocaust.

Marion Pritchard

We located hiding places, helped people move there, provided food, clothing, and ration cards, and sometimes moral support and relief for the host families. We registered newborn Jewish babies as gentiles (of course there were very few births during these years) and provided medical care when possible...

People often ask, Why did I decide to do what I did? Let me digress for a moment. Some have explored this question, why did some gentiles act, while others stood by. I have been troubled by the tendency to divide the general population during the war into the few “good guys” and the large majority of “bad guys.” That seems to me a dangerous oversimplification...

I had reached the point where I did not care what happened, threw all caution to the winds, and vented the accumulated rage of the previous four years. In spite of attempts of the other people to stop me (they were concerned for my safety), I told the soldiers what I thought of the war, the Germans in general, Hitler in particular, and the concentration camps...

The point I want to make is that there were indeed some people who behaved criminally by betraying their Jewish neighbors and thereby sentencing them to death. There were some people who dedicated themselves to actively rescuing as many people as possible. Somewhere in between was the majority, whose actions varied from the minimum decency of at least keeping quiet if they knew where Jews were hidden to finding a way to help them when they were asked...

I believe that courage, integrity, and a capacity for love are neither virtues, nor moral categories, but a consequence of a benign fate, in my own case, parents who listened to me, let me talk, and encouraged in every way the development of my own authentic self. It may be redundant to add that they never used corporal punishment in any form. Being brought up in the Anglican church was a positive experience for me and imbued me early on with a strong conviction that we are our brothers' keepers. When you truly believe that, you have to behave that way in order to be able to live with yourself.

Marion P. Van Binsbergen Pritchard was honored by Yad Vashem in 1983 for helping Jews during the occupation of Holland. After the war, she moved to the United States and now lives in Vermont. She is a psychoanalyst, and is in the film, "The Courage to Care."

Magda Trocmé

Those of us who received the first Jews did what we thought had to be done -- nothing more complicated. It was not decided from one day to the next what we would have to do. There were many people in the village who needed help. How could we refuse them? A person doesn't sit down and say I'm going to do this and this and that. We had no time to think. When a problem came, we had to solve it immediately. Sometimes people ask me, "How did you make a decision?" There was no decision to make. The issue was: Do you think we are all brothers or not? Do you think it is unjust to turn in the Jews or not? Then let us try to help!"

It was not something extraordinary. Now that the years have gone by, perhaps we exaggerate things a little, although I can tell you that things did get complicated later. But in the beginning, when the first Jew came to my house, I just opened the door and took her in without knowing what would happen later. It was even simpler than one might suppose.

In the beginning, we did not realize the danger was so big. Later, we became accustomed to it, but you must remember that the danger was all over. The people who were in the cities had bombs coming down and houses coming in on their heads, and they were killed. Others were dying in the war, in battles. Other people were being persecuted, like those in Germany. It was a general danger, and we did not feel we were in much more danger than the others. And, you see, the danger was not what you might imagine...

The lesson is very simple, I think. The first thing is that we must not think that we were the only ones who helped during those times. Little by little, now that we speak of these things, we realize that other people did lots of things too. Also, we must not be afraid to be discussed in books or in articles and reviews, because it may help people in the future to try to do something, even if it is dangerous. Perhaps there is also a message for young people and for children, a message of hope, of love, of understanding, a message that could give them the courage to go against all that they believe is wrong, all that they believe is unjust.

Maybe later on in their lives, young people will be able to go through experiences of this kind -- seeing people murdered, killed, or accused improperly; racial problems; the problem of the elimination of people, of destroying perhaps not their bodies but their energy, their existence. They will be able to think that there always have been some people in the world who tried -- who will try -- to give hope, to give love, to give help to those who are in need, whatever the need is.

It is important, too, to know that we were a bunch of people together. This is not a handicap, but a help. If you have to fight it alone, it is more difficult. But we had the support of people we knew, of people who understood without knowing precisely all that they were doing or would be called to do. None of us thought that we were heroes. We were just people trying to do our best.

When people read this story, I want them to know that I tried to open my door. I tried to tell people, "Come in, come in." In the end, I would like to say to people, "Remember that in your life there will be lots of circumstances that will need a kind of courage, a kind of decision of your own, not about other people but about yourself." I would not say more.

Magda Trocmé, who with her daughter, Nelly Trocmé-Hewett, is in the movie, "The Courage to Care," lives in Paris, France. During the German occupation of France, she and her husband, Pastor André Trocmé, helped Jews hide in and around the village of Le Chambon. Madame Trocmé and her husband have been honored by Yad Vashem.

Robert McAfee Brown

As a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, I was privileged to visit Europe in 1979 with other members of the Council, to get ideas for an appropriate Holocaust memorial in the United States. We visited Warsaw and Treblinka, Auschwitz and Birkenau, Kiev and Babi-Yar, and Moscow. Our final destination was Israel.

During the early part of the trip, in both Poland and Russia, we saw monuments, but they were all monuments of dead stone, reminding us of human degradation. In Denmark, however, we encountered monuments of living flesh that testified to the power of human goodness. These were the Danes themselves, those members of the Resistance who, by extraordinary and selfless heroism, reversed the normal experience of Jews in countries occupied by the Nazis. Thanks to these living monuments, 95 percent of Denmark's Jews survived the war.

Why did the Danes side with and shelter Jews, at great risk to themselves, when most of Europe did not? We met with some of them, heroes and heroines now in their seventies and eighties, and asked them why they behaved so nobly. And every time, the reaction was the same: not only did they refuse to be labeled heroes and heroines, they discounted the notion that they had done anything exceptional. Their answer to our question was always to ask another question: "Wouldn't you have helped your neighbors if they had been in trouble?"

...[We] need to reflect further on considerations that may lead to righteous behavior. Let me suggest five:

1. It is important to take the disclaiming of heroic deeds seriously. Such statements may be less an instance of false humility than true indications about those who make them. For some people, it may be that the ingrained habits of a lifetime do make it "easy" for them to do what others will not. We need to reflect on the biographies of those who, for whatever reasons, did rise to heights of selflessness to a degree that most did not.
2. Does not involvement in the life of a community of like-minded people render exceptional actions more likely? It is hard as an individual to initiate and maintain actions that go against the accepted mores of one's society. If there are others involved, taking similar stands, it may sometimes be easier for individuals or minority groups to defy the prevailing wisdom of the majority. This communal support surely helped both the Danes and those in Le Chambon.

3. Those who took risks were, by and large, ordinary people. The comment is not made demeaningly, but as a source of encouragement. The evidence is that the instinct for love ran deep in unexpected places, and was present not only among leaders or highly gifted people. We need to reflect on the fact that there may be more potential for disinterested action on behalf of others than we usually assume.

4. In addition, however, we may find a further clue to selfless action in the presence of role models for the initially timid. The people of Le Chambon had André Trocmé, providing an example they could not ignore, Trocmé himself had Kindler, the German soldier he met during World War I who was a conscientious objector, as well as Jesus of Nazareth. Martin Luther King had Gandhi. And who knows how many black children, whose names we will never know, had the courage to suffer in the civil rights struggles of the sixties because King himself was their model.

5. These questions deserve fuller treatment than is possible here, but even in this brief presentation it is clear that they posed another question for all of us: Is it not a part of our own obligation today to anticipate crises, to try to determine ahead of time how we wish to act in an emergency?

We should at least be clear that certain attitudes and actions are to be ruled out, come what may -- informing on innocent people or being craven before the perpetrators of injustice in the hope of salvaging something for ourselves.

Robert McAfee Brown is a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. He is an author, teacher, and theologian who has written many articles and books, including Elie Wiesel: Messenger to All Humanity (University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

Moshe Bejski

There is a Talmudic saying that whoever saves one life, it is as if he saved the entire world. These are the words engraved on the medal that Yad Vashem presents to those found deserving of the title, "Righteous Among the Nations." For 30 years we at Yad Vashem have been searching out these selfless people who, on their own initiative and following the dictates of their consciences, came to the aid of their fellow human beings. By their actions they saved not only the tormented Jews whom they took under their protection, but also the honor of all humankind. Those noble individuals living in occupied Europe who refused to countenance the fate that the Nazis had pronounced upon the Jews overrode their fears about the personal risk involved and, without anticipation of remuneration or personal gain, put their lives on the line to save others.

The truth is that it is not easy to find them all. They acted in secrecy, and even after the war was over, some of them chose to remain anonymous. In a number of instances the Jews they saved perished later in the war, leaving no one to recount the story of the things they did. There are other cases in which the rescuers perished together with the Jews they were hiding when their deeds were discovered.

After carefully examining the evidence for every individual case brought to our attention, we on Yad Vashem's Committee for the Designation of the Righteous Among the Nations have found so far about 4,700 individuals who, in the spirit of the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law (1953), are worthy of the title "Righteous Among the Nations." We have been able to draw two principal conclusions from the cases we have examined.

First, the ways in which people from various parts of the population helped or saved others were truly remarkable and widely varied, whether it was by sharing a meager portion of food -- like the 16-year-old girl who, day after day, brought a slice of bread to the Jewish woman prisoner with whom she worked in a weapons factory -- or by supplying forged papers that would enable a Jew to pass as a non-Jew, and thereby be exempted from the transport to Auschwitz and Treblinka. Some benefactors went so far as to build hiding places and bunkers in their apartments and places of business -- as did the people who hid Anne Frank and her family -- and kept a Jewish family for weeks, months, even years -- thereby placing themselves and their own families in constant peril.

Many cases have come to our attention. Behind every one of them is an extraordinary tale of unsung valor. One of these is the story of an impoverished farmer who lived on the edge of a forest in which a unit of Jewish partisans was hiding. He served as their contact with the outside world and their sole source of food. When an informer made this action known to the S.S., the farmer was ordered to lead them to the forest hideout. He refused and was subsequently shot and killed in front of his wife. Threatened with a similar fate if she did not reveal the partisans' hiding place, she, too, refused -- and was similarly murdered. It is difficult to appreciate fully the heroism of this act of honor, for its significance lay not only in the rescue of a unit of partisans, but in the supreme humanity of the act.

Jewish legend has it that the world reposes upon 36 Just Men, the *Lamed Vov*, who are indistinguishable from simple mortals and whose identity is never revealed. During the Holocaust, they had helpers. Alongside acts of unprecedented cruelty were the deeds of a few thousand such righteous souls who for their time salvaged the honor of all humankind. The regrettable thing is that there were only a few thousand, while millions of courageous men and women were needed to save the millions of Jews whom the Germans were determined to destroy. Unfortunately, when the time came, millions were not to be found.

Second, from the thousands of files we have handled at Yad Vashem, we have learned that it was possible to aid and to rescue Jews in every known circumstance -- even within the death camps themselves. In Auschwitz, for example, there was an extraordinary, selfless physician, Dr. Adelaide Hautval, who was sent to the camp because she had protested so adamantly to the *Gestapo* in France about their cruel treatment of the Jews.

Dr. Hautval found herself in the famous experimental Block 10, and later in the death factory in Birkenau. Not only did she refuse to cooperate with the infamous Dr. Mengele and Drs. Agrad and Wirths in their experiments on Jewish women, but she cared for the Jewish prisoners with her loving hands. When an epidemic of typhoid broke out and all the patients would probably have been sent to the gas chambers, Dr. Hautval hid them in bunks and nursed them with maternal devotion. She truly earned for herself the sobriquets "The White Angel" and "The Saint." In 1984, I visited Dr. Hautval in France, and throughout the years of my association with her -- ever since she was honored as one of the "Righteous Among the Nations" -- I have repeatedly concluded that she is to be counted among the 36 Just for whom the world is sustained.

There was no limit to the ways in which it was possible to help and save people, nor was there any end to the forms of initiative taken by the stouthearted men and women of conscience who are credited with saving one or many souls. Each acted according to the circumstances, the extent of his or her ability, and the risk he or she was prepared to take.

Raoul Wallenberg's work in saving 30 thousand Jews in Budapest is well known. He took on the special mission of extending aid to the Jews of Hungary at the very time when transports were

leaving Budapest for Auschwitz every day -- ten thousand deportees a day. On his own initiative, when he reached Budapest, he began to print up Swedish certificates of protection and distributed them among the Jews slated for deportation. When he saw that the authorities were honoring these documents, he went on to establish the so-called international ghetto. At a certain stage, this colony absorbed 33 thousand people who were cared for and protected from deportation to Auschwitz.

Recently, I met with a close aide of Wallenberg's from that period, Per Anger of Sweden, and heard additional details about their work, which included drawing people out of the death marches that were headed toward the Austrian border. Wallenberg drove up to the columns with truckloads of food and medical supplies, distributing them among the marchers to ease their suffering, and he continued to release from the transport any person he could possibly liberate on the basis of any slip of paper imaginable. This truly dazzling display of resourcefulness was the work of a single man. He saved tens of thousands of Jews by exploiting every opportunity to aid, ease, and rescue. Arrested by the Soviets on the day they entered Budapest, he never returned from the Soviet Union. The Kremlin's protestations that he succumbed to a heart attack in Lubyanka prison have been shown to be false, and we may never know the real truth about this episode.

At a certain stage the Swiss, Spanish, and Portuguese embassies took a number of Hungarian Jews under their protection. But for the most part, the Righteous Gentiles acted as individuals, sometimes for purely humanitarian reasons, sometimes from profound religious conviction. In some places, such as Norway and Holland, they operated in the framework of the anti-Nazi underground.

It was not easy to swim against the current in an atmosphere of fear and hostility -- especially in light of the enormous risk that a person and his family took in aiding a Jew. During this era of darkness, in the climate of incitement against the Jews and widespread inhumanity, the actions of those isolated individuals are all the more outstanding.

Unfortunately, anyone who extended a hand to aid a Jew could not expect any help, either from the outside world or from his immediate environment. To the contrary, from the viewpoint of the Nazi regime, if such a deed became known, the rescuer stood to suffer the same fate as the Jew who had been taken under his protection.

These fine, principled people did not even receive any consideration from their own countrymen. Take, for example, the case of the Swiss police officer Paul Gruening. After the annexation of Austria, he turned a blind eye to the passage of a certain number of persecuted refugees over the Swiss border -- which the authorities had closed. Tried and convicted of a dereliction of his formal duty for this humanitarian act, he was dismissed from his position and denied his pension. It took 30 years for him to get his due. It was only after he was recognized by Yad Vashem as one of the "Righteous Among the Nations" that a public outcry arose against the injustice done to him, and he was rehabilitated.

Similarly, the Portuguese minister in Bordeaux found that he could not follow his government's orders forbidding entry to Jewish refugees who, fleeing the Nazis, had reached southern France in 1940. Thousands of such refugees were crowding the streets of the city, and Aristides de Souza Mendes could not be on the side of terror. Following his conscience, absolutely contrary to orders, he granted entry visas to homeless and defenseless Jews and paid for his humanity with his position and his career. Stripped of all his prerogatives by the Portuguese government, he remained faithful to his principles and sense of humanity to the day he died, in exile, here in the United States.

Yad Vashem has recently completed a thorough study of the quite extraordinary case in which the whole populace of a village acted as rescuers. In fact, we have seen only one such case for the entire period -- that of the Dutch village of Niuvelande. (I have not forgotten the French village of Le Chambon, but it is somewhat different.)

In 1942-43 the residents of Niuvelande decided that every household would take and hide one Jewish family or, at least, an individual Jew. And that is precisely what they did. It was only in such a collective action that the risk was diminished. No one feared being informed upon by his neighbor, because all were equally implicated in the "crime" of concealing a Jew.

In speaking of collective action, one must mention the rescue of about 7,200 Jews of Denmark, who were transferred to Sweden in a special operation mounted by the Danish people. The transfer was accomplished in small boats, over three nights, at a time when the port of Copenhagen was already teeming with boats sent by the Nazis to carry the Jews of Denmark to their death. Denmark is the only country in occupied Europe that succeeded, through a common effort, in saving -- virtually at the eleventh hour -- almost all of its Jews. It is hardly necessary to explain that this was possible only because of the willingness of so many who were willing to lend a hand in the rescue venture. It is a sign of the greatness of the Danish people and will never be forgotten, for it shows what might have been done throughout Europe, had a similar readiness to act been in evidence in other countries.

In referring to the rescue of Danish Jewry, it is important to mention the name of another Righteous Gentile, a German who contributed enormously to the success of the Danish rescue operation: the naval attaché at the German Embassy in Copenhagen, Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz.

Aware of what might befall the Jews of Denmark, Duckwitz did not hesitate. When the time came for their deportation in 1943, he warned Danish Resistance leaders about why the German boats were coming into port and what was about to take place. The disclosure of this plan by Duckwitz -- whose information was known to be both solid and reliable -- convinced the Jews and the Danish people of the immediate danger. They all went into frantic action to carry out the massive and perilous rescue operation that is credited with saving almost all the Jews of Denmark.

For a number of years now, Yad Vashem has been preparing a lexicon of all those who have been recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations," and the day is not far off when we will be able to publish this commemoration of the rescue actions of these men and women. The "Righteous Among the Nations" deserve to have their deeds known by all and to become a part of our common legacy.

I do not know whether anyone who has not undergone the harrowing experiences of being pursued to death by the Nazi regime can fully appreciate the terror and torment known by the Jews of occupied Europe. For more than five and a half years, when all doors were closed and all roads led to Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor, and other camps, I lived with these feelings. I shall never forget the humiliation, the hostility fairly crackling all around me, the sensation of being trapped with no hand extended in aid.

In 1942 I was able to escape the camp where I was imprisoned, and returned to my parents' village in Poland. When the final action was conducted to deport the surviving Jews for extermination in the Belzec death camp, I eluded the Germans.

But then came the searches, in which every Jew found hiding was summarily shot. I managed to flee from the S.S., and at night I walked through the snow to the house of a Polish friend in a nearby village. I hoped to stay there for a day or two, until the men of the *Sonderkommando* (Special Details in the death camps) left the vicinity and the hunt for the Jews in hiding was over.

He was a school friend with whom I had studied for seven years. All I asked was to take refuge in the pigpen during the daylight hours, so that the next night I could move on. But he wouldn't let me near that pigpen, even though the dawn was breaking and in broad daylight I was sure to be caught and killed.

Only someone who has endured such experiences, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, is able to appreciate the wonder of it all when, later on the road of my suffering, I came upon the camp established by Oskar Schindler, a successful German businessman who nevertheless treated the Jews working for him benignly and tried to make life as bearable as possible within the limitations of a concentration camp.

The deeds of Oskar Schindler, who has been recognized as one of the "Righteous Among the Nations," are described in Thomas Keneally's book, *Schindler's List*, (Penguin, 1983). It is thanks once again to the initiative of a single individual that twelve hundred Jews were saved from almost certain death. It is due to Oskar Schindler that I myself survived.

Moshe Bejski is a Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of Israel. Judge Bejski is chairman of the Committee for the Designation of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Source: Rittner, RSM, Carol and Meyers, Sondra, eds. *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*. New York: New York University Press, 1986. Reprinted by permission of Carol Rittner, RSM.

EXCERPT ON RESCUE

In the words of John Weidner who organized a rescue network in France known as “Dutch-Paris” which helped approximately 800 Jews escape the Nazis:

Sometimes we have a desire to help but we don't know how to do it. I decided, since I knew the area of the French-Swiss border around Collonges so well, that I would try to help Jews and others who were in danger by getting them across the border into Switzerland, which was a neutral country during the war. In the beginning I did it alone, then members of my family and friends began to help, but I knew that we needed more help, if we were going to be successful. Eventually, with others we became known as “Dutch-Paris” -- I organized a network and set up a route that enabled us to bring people from Holland to Belgium then to France, and on to Geneva, via the Seventh-Day Adventist school in Collonges, which was at the foot of a mountain and not too far from the Swiss border.

People often asked me what I remember most vividly about the Nazis during the occupation of France. What I particularly remember were their voices. They sounded inhuman, hard. They didn't speak like human beings, or act like human beings. They were a brutal force without brains, without thinking. I also remember their brutality: they beat me with their guns -- on my head, in my stomach, all over my body. They had no humanity. The Nazis were force and violence; they would smash and beat you without pity.

During our lives, each of us faces a choice: to think only about yourself, to get as much as you can for yourself, or to think about others, to serve, to be helpful to those who are in need. I believe that it is very important to develop your brains, your knowledge, but it is more important to develop your heart, to have a heart open to the suffering of others.

Source: *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances* (Second Edition). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, page 103.

Produced by the International Center for Holocaust Studies of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Reprinted with permission by the Department of Defense and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Anne Frank

Anne Frank has become one of the most recognized names from the Holocaust era. Together with the Van Daan family and Dr. Dussel, Anne and her family spent two years hiding in a small annex above one of her father's businesses in Amsterdam, Holland. Four employees were drawn into this plan: Victor Kugler, Johannes Kleiman, Elli Voskuijl, and Miep Gies. They agreed to help hide the families and provide them with food and supplies during the two years.

On her 13th birthday, Anne Frank received a diary from her father in which she wrote to her imaginary friend, "Kitty." Her stirring thoughts, accounts of frightening news, and most of all, her personal feelings, are one of the most memorable and moving commentaries on the war that has ever been published.

On August 4, 1944, an anonymous phone call betrayed the hiding place of Anne Frank and the others. Kugler and Kleiman were also arrested but both managed to survive the war. After the families were taken away, Miep Gies and Elli Voskuijl went back to the annex and it is there that Miep found Anne's diary. She collected it, together with other personal possessions, which she saved in the hopes of returning them to the family. A few days later, as was customary after an arrest, the annex was completely cleared of all furniture and clothing.

Anne was eventually sent to the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen where she died shortly before the end of the war. Of all those who had been in hiding in the annex, only Otto Frank, Anne's father, survived.

One of the most powerful lines in Anne's diaries is found in her entry from Saturday, July 15, 1944. After spending nearly two years hiding from the Nazis, Anne writes the following:

"... in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart."

Questions for Discussion:

1. In your opinion, how could Anne write this statement after living in hiding for two years?
2. How do Anne's thoughts compare to how you feel about people?

THE PROCESS OF COMMEMORATING DEEDS OF HEROISM

by Alex Grobman, Ph.D.

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Designating the Righteous

In 1953, the Knesset passed the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law creating Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel's national memorial to the six million Jews. As part of its mandate, Yad Vashem established a Commission for the Designation of the Righteous to honor "the high-minded Gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews." The commission is chaired by a member of the Supreme Court of Israel.(1)

To be granted the title "Righteous Among the Nations," the rescuer must have:

- a. On his own initiative been actively and directly involved in saving a Jew from being killed or sent to a concentration camp when the Jews were trapped in a country under the control of the Germans or their collaborators during the most dangerous periods of the Holocaust and totally dependent on the goodwill of non-Jews.
- b. Risked everything including his own life, freedom, and safety.
- c. Not received any form of remuneration or reward as a precondition for providing help.
- d. Offered proof from the survivor or incontrovertible archival evidence that the deeds had "caused" a rescue that would not otherwise have occurred and thus went beyond what might be regarded as ordinary assistance.(2)

Risk is the basic criterion for granting this award -- not altruism. Those who aided Jews in countries that were not under Nazi rule or who had diplomatic immunity where there was little or no risk are not eligible for consideration. Jews also cannot be proposed for this honor. The three basic criteria are thus: risk, survival, and evidence.

A candidate is nominated by those who were saved. Notarized applications are sent directly to Yad Vashem through an Israeli embassy or consulate. Data requested by Yad Vashem about the rescuer include the individual's name, approximate age at the time, present address, occupation, and marital status during the war.(3)

In addition to these questions, the witness-survivor is asked:

- a. To describe briefly his or her life before the start of the rescue story.
- b. How and when the rescuer was met.
- c. Who initiated the rescue.
- d. Dates and places of rescue.
- e. The nature of aid given and if this involved hiding, what were the conditions.
- f. If there were any financial arrangements.
- g. The rescuer's motivations.
- h. The risks involved.
- i. How the cover-up story (presence of the witness) was explained to others.
- j. The relations between the witness and rescuer at the time.

- k. The name and age of others in the rescuer household who helped and the nature of assistance provided by each individual.
- l. The nature of the departure from the rescuer.
- m. The names and addresses of others who helped the rescuer.
- n. The type of incidents that occurred during the stay at the rescuer's home.

Finally, the witness is asked to nominate the individual or individuals in the rescuer's home for the title of "Righteous Among the Nations." (4)

The commission is composed of thirty members. Practically all are survivors who come from various social strata of Israeli society. Some, for example, work in the public sector; others are professionals.⁽⁵⁾ The commission meets between twenty to twenty-five times a year, sometimes as many as thirty. They are divided into three subcommittees with ten in each. At every session they consider at least twelve cases. Each case is meticulously examined: witnesses are interviewed, testimony is heard, and documents are reviewed. Certain cases are fairly straightforward; others are complex. In a situation where there is a dispute, a plenum is convened to resolve the issue. The commission works on precedent and guidelines established over the years. In this way, they avoid codifying the criteria. Common sense plays a major role in all their decisions...

The Ceremony

Rescuers are honored at a public ceremony at Yad Vashem. Until Yad Vashem ran out of space, a carob tree was planted by the rescuer along the Avenue of the Righteous, which leads to the museum. The individual's name and nationality were inscribed on a plaque at its base. Some have wrongly ascribed religious significance to this choice because the bean pods of the tree sustained John the Baptist during his wanderings in the wilderness (Mark 1:6).⁽²⁶⁾ Yad Vashem chose the carob tree because the tree is a perennial, is sturdy and strong, but not dominating like the cypress tree, which is associated with pride.⁽²⁷⁾

Now the rescuer's name is placed on the Wall of Honor. The ceremony begins at Ohel Yizkor (the Hall of Remembrance) where a cantor recites the Kel Maleh Rachamim (God who is merciful) and the Mourner's Kaddish (prayer that glorifies God's name), and then the rescuer rekindles the eternal flame. The main prayer is said in the rescuer's native language. A wreath is then placed on the vault containing ashes of the Holocaust victims.

The ceremony continues at the Wall of Honor where the rescuer's name is unveiled. If the rescuer has not yet received a medal that bears his name and a certificate of honor from an Israeli embassy abroad, the presentation is made at this point. They are inscribed with the Talmudic adage that states, "He who saves one life is considered as having saved the whole universe." The rescuer is then invited to say a few words; those who were saved then speak.

As the survivors enter their twilight years, the number of applications have increased dramatically. The first nomination from the former Soviet Union arrived in 1989. A full-time person fluent in Russian has been added to the staff to deal with the very significant requests from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The program will come to an end within the next decade.

Not everyone awarded the title "Righteous Among the Nations" is willing to accept this honor. A number refuse to acknowledge that they are heroes. Some disapprove of Israeli

government policies. Those in Eastern Europe who admit to having saved Jews run the risk of being ostracized or worse. In the immediate post-war period, in Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania some rescuers have been murdered.(28)

What type of individual would risk his or her life to save a Jew? Nechama Tec, a professor of sociology who survived the Holocaust by passing as a Christian with the help of Christian Poles, has isolated several characteristics which shed light on this question.

Characteristics of rescuers included:

- a. A high level of individuality, independence, and self-reliance that caused them "to pursue personal goals regardless of how these goals" were perceived by others.
- b. A commitment and involvement in helping the needy that had preceded the war.
- c. A belief that their rescue activities were not heroic or extraordinary but part of their duty.
- d. An "unplanned and gradual beginning of rescue at times involving a sudden, even impulsive move."
- e. A "universalistic perception of the needy" that "overshadowed all other attributes except their dependence on aid."(29)

Pierre Sauvage, the noted film maker, asserts that religious belief was another significant characteristic of rescuers that has not been adequately addressed. His award-winning documentary, *Weapons of the Spirit*, relates the story of the Protestant village of Le Chambon in southern France that hid 5,000 Jews, including he and his family, during the Nazi occupation. As a pioneer in the field of the Righteous, he has interviewed many rescuers. He is convinced that religion has played a far greater role in motivating them than is generally recognized. If true, as I believe it is, this issue needs to be studied further.

Celestine Loen, a Hungarian housewife who saved 32 Jews in the basement of her Budapest apartment house, is a rescuer who fits this profile. A native of Yugoslavia, she and her family fled to Budapest after the Nazis annexed part of their native land in 1942. The war had radically changed her upper-class lifestyle. She no longer enjoyed the services of a chauffeur and two housekeepers nor took luxurious vacations. Rather than dwell on her own losses, she became actively involved in saving Jewish lives.

When she heard stories about the extermination camps and saw the Jewish ghetto in Budapest being established during the latter part of 1944, she regularly began visiting the ghetto to bring her friends news about the outside world and to smuggle them food and radios. On one visit, a guard questioned her reason for entering the ghetto. "Those damn Jews owe me money, and I'm here to collect!" she declared. The guard let her pass.

Jews who were able to escape the ghetto found refuge in the basement of Loen's apartment building. From the middle of 1944 through early 1945, she sheltered 32 Jews. Through contacts developed with farmers, she secured enough food -- including fresh vegetables, flour, and sometimes fat geese -- to feed her family and her charges. A local baker was bribed to bake large quantities of bread.

Sympathetic neighbors and the janitor never complained about the danger involved in hiding Jews in the building. Inexplicably, not all neighbors were aware that their apartment building had become a haven, perhaps because there were never more than eleven Jews in hiding at one time.

During air raids, when the building residents would flee to the basement, the Jews sought refuge in cars parked across the street from the building. When one neighbor became suspicious of one of the Jews, Loen had the suspect dressed up and introduced as a Presbyterian minister.

She also had to hide her activities from some members of her own family who were Nazi sympathizers. But others were more helpful. The family had lost a number of aunts, uncles, and cousins during the war, including Loen's son, who was killed while fighting with the Resistance in Yugoslavia.

Soviet troops liberated Budapest in January 1945 and shortly thereafter the Jews left the Loens. Some remained in contact with her after the war. In 1947, she emigrated to the United States. Although she never discussed her wartime rescue activities, a number of Jews informed Yad Vashem of her exploits. In May 1966, members of the Jewish Hungarian Club brought her to Israel to thank her personally for saving their lives. She also received a medal and certificate of honor from Yad Vashem. In 1985, a tree bearing her name was planted along the Avenue of the Righteous. She died at the age of 94 in Hacienda Heights, California, not knowing why the Jewish community had gone to such lengths to thank her for something she felt was simply her responsibility as a human being.(30)

For all our valiant efforts to find the rescuers, their names are "largely unrecorded and their good deeds remain anonymous and unrewarded, except in the emotions of those they saved," observed Sybil Milton, a Holocaust historian.(31) Some Jews and their rescuers were killed during the war; others died later, leaving no one to tell their stories. Still others, rescued and rescuers, were unable to locate each other after so many years of separation.

Although we will never know the precise number of rescuers who saved Jews, we can learn much from the testimonies of those we have documented. As Sholem Asch, the noted Jewish writer, acknowledged: "It is of the highest importance not only to record and recount, both for ourselves and for the future, the evidences of human degradation, but side by side with them to set forth the evidences of human elevation and nobility. Let the epic of heroic deeds of love, as opposed by those of hatred, of rescue as opposed to destruction, bear equal witness to unborn generations." (32)

ENDNOTES

1. Moshe Beiski, "The Righteous Among the Nations and Their Part in the Rescue of Jews," in *Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust*, Yisrael Gutman and Efraim Zuroff, eds. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977) p. 628.
2. Mordecai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous, Gentile Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (Hoboken: New Jersey, KTAV Publishing House, 1993), p.5.
3. Interview with Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, September 18, 1994.
4. Yad Vashem Questionnaire for Righteous Among The Nations. Yad Vashem, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.

26. Peter Hellman, *Avenue of the Righteous: Portraits in Uncommon Courage of Christians and the Jews They Saved from Hitler* (New York: Atheneum, 1980), p. ix.
27. Interview with Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, September 18, 1994.
28. Ibid.
29. Nechama Tec, op. cit., p. 180.
30. *Los Angeles Times* and an interview with Masha Loen, her daughter-in-law, September 20, 1994.
31. Sybil Milton, "The Righteous Who Helped Jews" in *Genocide: Critical Issues of the Holocaust*. Alex Grobman and Daniel Landes, eds. p. 282.
32. Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1957), pp. 13-14.

PHOTOGRAPH



A group photo of Jewish children hiding in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, France in August 1942.

(Mert Bland, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)

TESTIMONIES

David Goldberg was born in 1907 in Dubno, Ukraine. He survived the Holocaust because he was rescued by **Janina Bradel** and her family. They hid Jewish people, including David, in their apartment, saving their lives.

Q=Interviewer, D=David, J=Janina

Q. Let's talk a little bit about the actual arrangements in the attic. What were the physical arrangements?

D. The big room was twice the size of an elevator. It was approximately six feet wide and fifteen feet long. We couldn't stand up for eighteen months, because the highest point of the compartment was only five feet tall. There was no heat, no daylight, nothing at all. It was a tin roof. In the wintertime, the temperature reached 20 or 30 degrees below zero, and the summertime was impossibly hot. We were filthy, dirty. We didn't take a bath for eighteen months. We never shaved the whole time.

Q. What about food?

D. Janina delivered to us whatever they had in their home. But the worst of all that she did for us was that we had a little bucket in that house which we used for a toilet. Every one of us used it. She was the one who took it away every day, washed it, and brought it back up. If we would have been discovered, not only would we have been killed, but everyone in her family would have been killed, and the house would even have been burned. This was the penalty for keeping and hiding Jews. They weren't even supposed to give Jewish people a little water. It was certainly forbidden to help them to survive.

Q. Did you know what would have happened to you and your parents if the Jews you were hiding had been discovered?

J. I saw with my own eyes soldiers with rifles, leading a family at whose home they had discovered Jews, to be shot somewhere. This was near our apartment, right in front of the house where they were discovered. They were hidden by somebody where the ghetto used to be, and they were led right past us. I was coming from town, and this woman looked at me so pitifully, to help her or something. I saw this group, how they were led away. My mother, when she saw, ran away, because she was in shock. This meant that we would be in the same situation if we were caught.

My father said, "There's one thing. They will not take us out alive from here. Either we'll survive, or in case they find you, I'll run up with my swords to the attic, and we'll continue to use our weapons until they kill every one of us. They will not take us as they did all those people."

D. She saw with her own eyes what would happen to her if they had discovered us in her attic. Another time, a Polish family did the same thing that they did, and the Jewish people were discovered with them. They took both families, the Jewish family and the Polish family, and she saw with her own eyes as they shot them to death.

- J. There was no time to be in fear. Of course, it was dangerous, but to meet all their own daily needs and ours, we had to invest all our energy to supply the house with the minimal necessities. For instance, there was no electricity, there was no soap available, there was no firewood to cook. Our daily life was preoccupied mostly with getting those things to fill out all of our daily needs. So, there was no time to be scared.
- D. Her father brought up to us two big bags of garlic and onions. He said, "If you eat this, you'll survive. If not, everyone of you will get sick and die." We ate part of it every day. And no one ever got sick. We couldn't even talk to each other. If we had to say something, we had to say it quietly, because somebody lived right next door to this attic. So, we had to be careful.
- Q. Did you have any reading materials?
- D. Yes, we did. Her father brought us two daily newspapers, one German and one Ukrainian. I was the reader.
- Q. That's how you followed the news?
- D. Yes, that's right.
- Q. And you read by candlelight?
- D. No. In the attic, there was a small opening, less than a foot in diameter, with a piece of glass in the wall. It was built into the brick. That allowed enough light in to read.

Franciszka Olesiejuk was born on August 23, 1924 in Romanow, Poland to a family of farmers. One day in 1942, two strangers knocked at their door. They were two Jewish women who were asking for help. Her family hid them, and eventually hid and fed 12 people in their barn, risking their own lives.

Q. You mentioned that two women came to your door. When was that?

A. In October, 1942.

Q. Did you know that their lives were in danger?

A. Yes.

Q. What were the circumstances of their coming to the door? Were they strangers? Who were they?

A. Somebody knocked on the door. I answered the knock, and there stood a young woman asking if she could come in. I said, "Sure, come in the house." She then said, "But I am Jewish." I replied, "Never mind, doesn't matter, come on in." The woman was taken aback, and she said to me, "I have another person with me here. She is hiding behind the door." I told her, "That's okay, you are both welcome. Come on in."

Q. Did you know if there was any kind of penalty for hiding Jews?

A. I knew that they would kill me if they found out, that there was a death penalty.

Q. Then why did you do it?

A. I could not bring myself to refuse. We were brought up that way, it was that kind of home. In fact, one of the women asked me, "What about your father? Would he accept us? Where is he?" I told them, "He is in the fields working. Don't worry. My father is a good man. He will not turn you away. He will let you stay."

These weren't the only two women we kept, because the group kept growing. There was one Jewish man who worked for the Germans carrying water from the well. I kept seeing him, because the well was in the city. I asked my father if he could do something to get him out of there. So, he took the horse and wagon and went into town. He waited until he and another Jewish man came to the well for water. Then he told them to get on the wagon. They both got on the wagon, and they started running away from the Germans. The Germans chased them, and they had to abandon the horse and wagon. My father finally got away and came back to the house, while the two men hid in the woods. They eventually found their way to our house.

Q. Were all these people strangers to you? Did you know any of them?

A. We did know the Finkelstein family, because they had a restaurant in town. Mr. Finkelstein was one of the two men my father rescued at the well. But that was the extent of it.

- Q. Was Mr. Finkelstein a personal friend of your family?
- A. No. There was another family that suspected that we were hiding people, because my father had a reputation for being a very decent man. This neighbor, a landowner, had some dealings with the Germans. He warned us whenever there was going to be a search, as well as when they came to burn the village and search it for illegal people. At that time, we moved the people we were hiding to his house to be hidden there.
- Q. How did you feed that many people? Did it arouse suspicion that you needed extra food?
- A. It was very difficult to feed that many people, but we shared whatever we had. The suspicion was there, because we had to cook in very big pots of food. It was not in keeping with the size of our family. We eventually ended up with twelve people when two brothers of Mrs. Rodzynek, one of the women we were hiding, joined us. They had run away from a camp. My father said, "Well, if we have one or two Jews, we may as well take in all who want to come, because they'll only kill us once." So, we decided that whoever wanted to come was welcome. The word spread that our house hid Jews.
- Q. How long did you hide people?
- A. For 22 months.
- Q. That is a long time to hid people. Were you ever afraid?
- A. We never believed we would survive. We were afraid and nervous.
- Q. You didn't think that you, yourself, would survive?
- A. Yes, that's right. The whole time we kept these twelve people, every day was full of danger. We thought every minute was going to be the death of us and of the group. We paid for it with our health and with the aggravation. One thing stands out in my mind. The Germans often came to the farm, but one time they came with dogs. The people were hidden in the hiding place and near it was a doghouse, with a large dog chained to it. When the dog tried to smell out the people and was pulling to go to the place where the people were hidden, my father said, "You see, he is in heat. He wants to go to my dog, he just wants the dog. That's all. Look at him, he fell in love with my dog." The Germans believed him and retreated. That's my most vivid memory of how close we came to being discovered.
- Q. Would you do it again if you were presented with the same set of circumstances?
- A. Yes, I would do the same thing all over again. I have four sons and one daughter, all wonderful people, good Poles, and they, too, would do it again. We were very friendly with the people we saved. We love them. We are even better people now, because we are stronger. We can do more now than we ever could.

Helen Beck, née Brzeska, was born on May 10, 1925 in Proszowice, Poland. She was sent to work in the Zablocie brick factory in 1940. In the summer of 1941, she was interned in Plaszów concentration camp, where she remained until March 1943, when she was employed by Oskar Schindler in his factory. In the summer of 1944, it became necessary for Schindler to move his operation further east. Helen was sent, with her sister, back to Plaszów and from there to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Schindler arranged for her, along with other women who had worked at his factory, to be sent to Brunlitz, Czechoslovakia in the fall of 1944, where she remained until her liberation on May 10, 1945. Helen's number on Schindler's list was eight.

- Q. When it finally came time to leave Plaszów, where did you go from there?
- A. This was the time in March, right after the liquidation of Kraków ghetto. We were put on the trucks, and we were the first large group brought to Schindler's factory.
- Q. And Schindler's factory was located where?
- A. A few miles from the main camp. But then Schindler built a sub-camp, and he had the barbed wires, the watch towers, and the Nazi guard, because there were a few people already working over there who came from the ghetto.
- Q. What were the conditions like at Schindler's factory?
- A. In Schindler's factory, for us, it was like day and night. Number one, I remember when we were brought to Schindler's factory. When we came into the building, the Nazis were on both sides with guns and the boots. And among them, we noticed a very tall, good-looking man, beautifully dressed. We all noticed there was something on his lapel. But, you know, we were so scared and in fear that we did not think. We went in shock. But we noticed this tall man, always with a smile and we felt immediately the whole atmosphere was different. We were assigned to the barracks, and the next morning we were assigned to the certain jobs in his factory.
- Q. Were the barracks different from those you had just come from?
- A. Quite a bit because they were much smaller. I was very fortunate as I was one of the first who was brought to these barracks. There were only three buildings which had the bunk beds, two, two-tier barracks. Later on, when Schindler was getting more and more people, they built a large barracks. It was built on the same style like the barracks in Plaszów.
- Q. How else did the Schindler barracks differ from the ones you had just come from?
- A. They were much smaller.
- Q. How were the sanitary conditions there?
- A. A little bit better. No question because where the barracks were, there were bathrooms, latrines, and there was running water so we could wash ourselves.

Q. And what about the food?

A. The food was much better. You couldn't compare. Everything was much better in Schindler's factory. But the most important ingredient was seeing Schindler almost daily. When he was walking through the factory where we were working, we felt like we were seeing a God-like person walking by. Of course, he did not start a conversation, but when he looked at us, we felt like somebody cared.

Q. Did he ever speak to you as a group?

A. As a group? I don't recall it. Of course, we must remember that over there Schindler had his confidants who worked with him, who were close with him, and they knew almost everything that Schindler was doing, what his intention was, and how he was doing things. But the workers at large were not involved.

Q. How many hours a day did you work?

A. Twelve hours.

Q. And what were you making in the Schindler factory?

A. When the Germans occupied Poland, a whole army of Nazis came to Poland seeking fortunes, making money, and Schindler was one of them. Of course, Schindler was not like the others, and in the end we knew the difference one person can make, and he did it. He also came to Poland and took over a Jewish factory which, before the war had been producing pots and pans. This was a good item for the black market. He did have advice from some Jewish professionals, people, you know, who knew the business. He was advised that this would be a good factory to take over to make money.

Q. Did you ever have the opportunity to have any personal contact with Schindler at all?

A. I did not, except, like I said, seeing him very close, when he would stop and look at our work. Sometimes we could almost hear him, like saying, quietly, "Just keep working." And again, we had the feeling that he was a man who cared, who had compassion.

I happened to have had a very unpleasant experience in Schindler's factory, because we were constantly watched by the Nazis. They always tried to reduce us, to make us look like we were not human. One Sunday, they made an announcement that we were not going to be working that day. We had the day off. So, immediately, it aroused our attention that something horrible was going to happen that day. However, the Nazis that day brought to the factory truckloads of striped uniforms. We were ordered at the roll call to bring back everything and to give back what we wore and only have those sack uniforms. We returned whatever we possessed, and we got the uniforms. For the women, it was a one-piece dress, a one-size-fits-all.

I was still a teenager, a very petite girl. When I brought it to the barracks and looked at it, I saw that I could not wear it. So, I asked the lady who was in charge of the barracks if she, by any chance, had a pair of scissors. She didn't ask me much. She gave me a needle and a pair of scissors, and I quickly went to work on my gusset and redesigned my uniform. What I mean by redesigning, I made my sleeves fitted, I made it short, I made the waistline,

and I made a belt I worked very hard that whole afternoon, because I had to be ready for roll call in the evening. Little did I know that I resisted in some kind of a way, because I wanted to look like human, like a girl.

Well, at the roll call, the Nazi woman who was counting us noticed I was the only one among three hundred women who looked different. She called me forward and slapped my face very hard. My head felt like an empty box, ringing in the ears. Whatever orders she was giving, I didn't know, because I was brought into isolation. According to this Nazi woman, I was supposed to be brought the next morning to the main camp in Plaszów for execution. I was in a shock. I didn't know what was going on.

A few hours later, a Jewish policeman came over there where I was kept in the dark room. He told me to follow him and go to the barracks, to try to undo my new creation. Then he told me that the next morning I should come to work as usual. But this happened only when, during the roll call, this came to Schindler's attention. He accomplished the impossible. He bribed or did whatever had to be done. That's how I was brought from the dark room back to work, because he bribed the SS woman. I survived all because of Schindler. Beyond any doubt, he saved my life that time.

Q. Once you were returned to the factory to work, were conditions any different after that? Did you see other people spared in the same way that you had been singled out for death?

A. Well, in Schindler's factory, the three hundred women, the seven hundred men, definitely. We were there, because Schindler did everything possible to spare us from certain death. We all knew and are still all saying and attesting to the fact, that Schindler was a remarkable man and did remarkable things. Not only what he did. For all those things he had done, he was risking his life. Yet, in spite of everything, he was going on and trying to save people. Just to give you an example, as we know and knew at that time, there were many Nazis who came into Poland to make money, to make big fortunes, and most of them did. And those other ones who'd made the fortunes, they made the money and went back home. Schindler made a lot of money, a big fortune, but later on, what did he do with the money? He spent the whole fortune, all the monies he made saving people. Among other things, he spent his money buying food, extra food for us on the black market.

Q. Were you aware of that when you were in the factory, that this was going on? That he was, indeed, trading in the black market to get food for the people in the camp?

A. Most of the people, you know, those who were working close to him definitely knew it.

Q. How long did you remain in Schindler's factory?

A. We were over there until mid-summer of 1944 when the Russian forces were coming forward. Almost all those camps in Poland were liquidated. They were sending people to Auschwitz, to all those death camps, trying to eliminate as many as possible. Those who they couldn't, they were sending into Germany by foot, by truck, and on death marches.

I forgot to mention one thing. While we were in Schindler's factory, we were producing the pots and pans, but later on, he opened a munition department. He was very smart. He knew what was going on. When he opened the munition department, systematically he was getting more and more people. As the business grew, he kept saying he needed more

people. So we were, at that time, three hundred women, seven hundred men when they ordered us to appear in the square. We were put on trucks and brought back to Plaszów, to the main camp. A group of men had to disassemble the machines from the munitions department. The machines were sent by train to Brunlitz, Czechoslovakia. At that time, Schindler ordered the reopening of the munition factory in Brunlitz. So, that's why some of the men were left over there for this purpose, but the rest of us were sent to Plaszów. Right away, the following day, most of the men, especially, were sent from Plaszów to Mauthausen in the cattle cars.

Q. Before we leave your experiences in the Schindler factory, are there any other incidents that occurred or memories that you have of your time in the Schindler factory that you could tell us about?

A. My very sad experience -- and this stands out in my mind -- when we were brought back to Plaszów, they were shipping most of the people, as many as they could, out to different death camps. We were re-opening the mass graves because the Nazis thought that by doing this, they were going to erase the evidence of what happened in Plaszów. And I remember, I was in the group selected, carrying the remains from the mass graves, carrying them to a certain square and then pouring gasoline on those remains of the bodies and turning this into ashes. It was horrible. I was thinking maybe this is the mass grave where my parents are buried. So again, we lived in such fear. We didn't have time to think about it. We followed orders.

Q. Was your sister with you during this time?

A. Yes. And this was the time where Schindler's list was made and, again, I would say that it is only a miracle from God that my sister and I were on Schindler's list. The number on Schindler's list, my sister's seven, and I'm number eight on Schindler's list. After being in Plaszów for a few weeks, witnessing the most horrible things, we heard from somewhere the news that we were on the list and that the three hundred selected women will bypass Auschwitz. We were to be brought to Schindler's factory in Brunlitz. However, things turned out differently. When we started for Brunlitz, we arrived in Auschwitz. Auschwitz will forever remain the most horrible nightmare.

Q. Do you know where the cross-up came between your landing in the Brunlitz factory and going to Auschwitz?

A. We don't know. Later on, we heard there was some misunderstanding in the bureaucracy, whatever. But we landed in Auschwitz. When we arrived in Auschwitz, we came in with a list of names and because of Schindler, again, we never became a number in Auschwitz. We came with a name, spent a few weeks in Auschwitz which was hundred per cent a miracle because, when we arrived in Auschwitz, at first they didn't know what to do with us. So, in the meantime, they put us in front of the ovens in Birkenau. We were there for hours, standing and waiting. We didn't know what was going to happen, if this would be the end for us. I remember watching the chimneys, the heavy black smoke going in the skies and the flames and the stench of burning flesh.

Q. Were you aware of any of the things that were going on at the camp?

A. We knew something. Auschwitz was a death factory.

Q. Did they have you work at all while you were there?

A. No. We were just kept for the few weeks. The Nazis didn't know what to do with us. In the meantime, we hoped a little bit, but after the war we found out how hard Schindler worked to get his three hundred women. Schindler sent people with fortunes, with diamonds and gold to get three hundred women. The Nazis in charge of Auschwitz asked him, "Why are you hung up with these three hundred women?" They wanted to send other women, but Schindler said he wouldn't settle. He wanted his three hundred women. When the day came, and they made a decision to release Schindler's three hundred women, we got a special portion and a plate of a food. We were placed in the cattle cars and you know how horrible it was, a hundred women in a one cattle car.

Q. What time of year was this?

A. This was in the fall of 1944. It was already very cold in that time.

Q. And what was Brunlitz like when you arrived there?

A. For us it was a very special, if I'm not over using the word, "miracle." When we arrived from Auschwitz, in Brunlitz, the men, the seven hundred men went to different camps. Somehow, the Schindler's seven hundred men were already in Brunlitz setting up the machines. When we arrived, we entered the factory. Schindler greeted us at the door. He looked at us, but he quickly turned to us and I quote, the first thing we heard from him was, "You don't have to worry anymore. You are with me again." And you have no idea after this horrible experience how our faith entered, and our hope was lifted by what Schindler had said. And we felt almost, thank God, somebody cared, and maybe, we'll survive the war and tell the world what we experienced.

Ronald Guiking was born in Amsterdam, Holland on September 30, 1945. His parents hid six Jewish people in their home during the Holocaust, risking their own lives to save the lives of others.

Q. How did it come about that your parents hid Jews during the war?

A. What happened was, my father was renting some apartments to Jewish people and my parents hid about six of them. In the apartment building, a German woman lived on the second floor, and we lived on the third. Each apartment had four rooms, so there was a total of eight rooms. In one room, they built a wall in front of the door and after the door. They made a place between the floor of our apartment and the ceiling of the apartment below us by opening it with a saw. The six Jews could hide there when Nazis entered the houses.

Q. What year was that?

A. That was the beginning of 1943.

Q. Why did your parents decide to do that?

A. Well, it was not a question of a decision, it was more a question of they had to do it. They were human beings, and they had to help them. They couldn't see the Jews get deported. Of course, when they were asked for help, they gave them help immediately. It was more a question that if you know that somebody is going to be killed or treated very badly like in the camps in Germany, then they would do everything they could for them to stop this. So, they hid the Jewish people.

Q. Was it a decision they made on the spot, instantaneously? Did the people approach your parents, or did your parents find them?

A. Who found whom first, I really cannot answer. But I can tell you that my parents would do it again immediately if the situation were the same right now in Holland. These were neighbors of ours, not really next-door neighbors, but they lived in the same area. Even if they'd been living in another area, they were people who were trying to escape from others who were trying to kill them. Those people had not done any harm to anyone at all, so why let those people go and get deported to Germany? So, they had to do this -- without asking anything for it -- they had a feeling they had to do this. There was no question about it.

Q. Were your parents aware of the consequences if they had been caught?

A. Well, they knew that they would be treated like the Jews were being treated by the Nazis. At that time, they would have been killed or sent to a camp and probably killed afterwards.

Q. And they knew that?

A. They knew that.

Q. How did the Jews know they would be safe with your parents?

- A. Well, they really didn't know they would be safe with my parents. They took a risk also. But the risk of deportation was bigger at that time, because the Nazis were sending them to camps. The Jews who still remained in Holland knew what was going on with the Nazis at that time. They had to find those people whom they thought would have a favorable attitude toward them and would not tell the Nazis that they were there. It was really hard for Jews to find the right people.
- Q. There must have been some preparations that were necessary to hid these people. Maybe we can discuss them. You said they were in the crawl space. Did they have to stay there all the time?
- A. No, but they had to stay there at certain times. The situation was that the Nazis were checking the houses about once a week. They went into all those houses to check if the Dutch people were trying to hide Jewish people.
- Q. When they knew they were coming, they put them in the closet?
- A. At the moment they knew they were coming, they hid them immediately in the hiding place.
- Q. Did they have to go out and buy tools and lumber to close off the room or dig a hole?
- A. Yes, my father had to go to a place where there were rails. They had to look for wood and stones just to build the wall.
- Q. Did that raise suspicion at all?
- A. No. He just did it bit by bit. With a saw, they made a hole in the floor and between the floor and ceiling, there was already a space. They covered up the hole with a carpet and other material. It looked normal. Nobody could even see that there was a hole.
- Q. Where did the people stay when the searches weren't going on?
- A. Then they could stay in the one room that was walled off. They could also go out of that room, but only out of the back side of my parents' apartment because in the front side, it was all windows there. It would have been dangerous. Somebody could have seen them through the window.
- Q. Were any of them ever able to leave the house with false papers?
- A. No. It was not possible for those Jews who were hidden there. They would have been recognized immediately if they had gone outside. There were too many Nazis in the area controlling all the streets. It was too dangerous to go out.
- Q. So how did they get enough food?
- A. The Dutch government was ruled by the Germans. They made a rule that everybody should get food stamps. But then, of course, people had to wait in very long lines with these food stamps, because there were food shortages. It was so bad that people were even eating mice. Anything they could find to eat, they would eat. My parents were lucky, because they knew a lot of shopkeepers. They also had to wait in long lines and finally,

they did get some food for them. They also got some food from their own families, from my grandparents and from two of my mother's sisters. My father and mother tried to get as much food as possible, because they had to take care of all the people in the house then.

Q. And that didn't arouse anyone's suspicion?

A. They did it a little at a time with each person so that nobody was really suspicious.

Q. Did they share with you their feelings of how their lives changed?

A. Imagine, if you have to stay for about three years in one room all the time and not get fresh air. You cannot walk around. The way they described it, it was very hard for them because there was nothing to do. They tried to make jokes or play games, just because they felt so bad for them. It was always on their minds that there was a risk that somebody could see them or hear them, or that somebody might find out about them.

Q. So you mean they were living with a lot of tension?

A. Yes, especially for my father, I would say there was big tension. My mother was also under a big tension, because her nerves weren't as strong as my father's.

Q. Did your grandparents know what they were doing?

A. No, they didn't even share this secret with their own parents, because they were afraid they would worry and be upset.

Q. Why do you think that your parents were so dedicated to saving the Jews? What are your personal thoughts?

A. Well, I think they were the kind of people who didn't want to see anybody hurt. If they saw somebody in danger, I am sure they would do the same thing right now also.

Q. Where do you think they gained the strength to continue this? It must have been hard. You said it made your mother very nervous.

A. Yes, it made her nervous. She had a very hard time. I can tell you, even after the war, she's been very nervous as well. She did go through a lot of hard times after the war, too, because whenever she heard a plane going over Amsterdam, she thought the Nazis were coming. Whenever she heard a very firm footstep, she'd still think the Nazis were coming. Even today, she cannot sleep during the night. She wakes up during the night, she sits up a couple of hours, and my father gets up to make tea for her. She wakes up all the time, because she has terrible, terrible dreams about the war.

SAVING LIVES

Journey with me in space and time to meet a most remarkable young woman: Irene Gutuvna, born in 1922 in Poland, a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust in her own right, but more uniquely, one of the few Christian rescuers.

Irene was from a middle-class Catholic family who grew up in a small town near the German border and was accustomed to sharing with Jewish children: "We children were a United Nation. We played together regardless of nationality or religion, being more concerned about what mischief we could get into."

When the possibility of a war became the topic of conversation in Irene's house, being the oldest daughter to a family with no sons, she valiantly offered to join the Polish army. "It was my responsibility." Shortly after that, she chose a career which would change her whole life. "I developed the desire to become a nurse...maybe even a nun. So in 1938, my father enrolled me in the best nursing school which was in Radom, a town in the middle of Poland. I wanted to be another Florence Nightingale, traveling, helping others. All of a sudden, it was September 1st, 1939 and my dreams came to a halt.

It was early morning. I was going from my dormitory to the hospital when I heard a big noise. I quickly hid in a ditch...planes everywhere, explosions, fire. When the planes left, there were wounded and dead people everywhere. I was alone without my parents, so I ran to the hospital, my second home now.

It was bedlam there. They had already started to bring in the wounded, and although I was still a student nurse, I rolled up my sleeves and started to work helping to save lives.

Rumors came telling of the speed with which the Germans were pushing through my country. At that time, some of the older nurses said they were leaving to join the Polish army.

I being young and having nowhere to go, went along with them fearful, but proud that they would take me. It would have been impossible for me to try to cross Poland alone and reach my parents' home.

We joined an army unit. It was a dangerous time. We were constantly on the run, and the Germans did not respect the Red Cross on our truck, so we often had to hide in the woods during bomb raids. Three weeks later, we were near the Russian border and Poland surrendered. This was tragic to me!"

The group dispersed and Irene was picked up by some Russian soldiers who brutally raped her in the forest and left her there, badly beaten, to die in the snow. The following day, though, she woke up in a Russian hospital where she recovered and spent quite some time helping to heal people. This lasted until 1941 when Polish citizens were given the opportunity to repatriate. She chose to return.

Irene returned to a much changed Poland. In the summer of 1941 after passing a three week quarantine, she found herself in Radom, which was now under Nazi rule. For the first time, she saw the "different" treatment that the Jews were suffering.

"...I went into town. I was alone and no one was expecting me, but I remembered an older nurse from the hospital and I went to her house. She took me in and during one of our outings, I noticed a group of people that was being pushed in the street. This is when she explained to me that the Jewish people were being taken from their houses and put into special places to work.

....I went to church one day and on my way out, I found it surrounded by Nazis who plucked the young people out of the confused crowd. I was one of them. We were taken to a place with barbed wire and barracks, where we were told that we would soon be taken to Germany as workmen for their fields and factories. Just before my transport was to leave, a small group of officers came to select a few of us out of the lines. We were simply pointed out. We (the few chosen) were taken to an ammunition factory where we were to work for a German major in his sixties.

We lived in barracks as prisoners and worked every day in the factory. My job was to pack ammunition into small boxes, but soon the sulphur in the ammunition made me very sick and I fainted right in front of the major during one of his inspection rounds by my station. Next thing I knew, I was sitting on a chair in an office, having to answer to his questions in my high school German and pleading for work that wouldn't put me in direct contact with the sulphur to which I was allergic. I knew that only work would keep me from trouble. Impressed by my honesty, he offered me a different job.

My new job was in the officer's diner, serving meals to them. I was blond and blue-eyed. I looked nice and spoke a little German, so I guess he thought it could work out well. This work allowed me more freedom and I could now sleep in town at my girlfriend's house.

One day, while preparing for a big dinner party at the Officers' Club, I heard a lot of commotion, yelling, screaming, coming from the street below. I went towards the windows and drew open the heavy velvet curtains. Below I could see the Radom ghetto...

There the Nazis were beating Jews up, killing them. There was blood everywhere. My boss, Sergeant Schultz, quickly shut the drapes and told me I should never speak of this to anyone, for "they" could think I was a Jew-lover. He could see I was very shaken up. That night I could not pray...I could not believe in God."

In the winter that same year, the whole operation moved to Lvov. Irene went with them, not having been offered a choice. During one of her outings to church, she met a lady who lived in town; her name was Helen and she was a Catholic married to a Jew. He, of course, was in Nazi hands. The two women struck a friendship. Shortly after that, news came of a prisoner transport to a town nearby. In hopes of perhaps finding her husband, Helen decided to travel there, not without first asking Irene to join her. Irene managed to get the day off and so they went. What they were to witness they would never forget...

"...The SS opened a barbed wire gate and were beating, kicking, pushing the people out. Some faces I still see today: beautiful women, children, elderly, men on crutches, sick people. All being led in a march. We were crying. We could do nothing for them. Then I saw a group of children and all alone without their parents; big ones, little ones, two, three, four years old, crying and yelling "mama, mama" very scared. I saw a young woman holding an infant. All of a sudden, an SS man tore the baby from her arms and threw him to the ground head first. She screamed and was shot instantly. I watched her fall near her baby, both dead now. This all took place in March, 1942, and God was not there. We quickly left and heard shooting. We knew what was happening. The dead were the lucky ones...

When I returned to my encampment, I was so shaken up that Schultz gave me the evening off. I never spoke of what I saw.

In May that year, we moved to Tarnopol. There was the hotel which we used for the officers, a laundry building where their clothes were washed and pressed and the factories. I was assigned to sleep in a small room near the kitchen. My duties still involved serving meals, plus as of that moment, I was in charge of transferring the clothes to and from the laundry and supervising the end results before redistributing them to the different officers.

I went to the little building and there is where I met twelve people, all Jewish -- the laundry work force who was brought daily from the camp nearby.

In the beginning they did not trust me, but soon I discovered that Helen's husband was one of them: Henry Weinbaum. This quickly broke the ice and we all became friends. They were Dr. Lipschitz, Mr. Heller and his wife Aida, Morris, Mr. Steiner, Mr. Rosenbaum and a few others. I delivered the clothes daily, sometimes with a little food. They told me awful stories of their camp life.

As I served dinners for the officers, I discovered that often a guest of the major's was the Führer in charge of their camp. I picked up valuable information about raids, etc., passed it on to them, and they, in turn, alerted the other prisoners. This way sometimes at least a few were spared cruelty.

Some Jews had escaped and were living in the forest. When Helen and I found out, I started to request Schultz for food, clothes and blankets for my imaginary large family. He often complied and Helen delivered the goods to the forest in her horse and buggy. In the meantime, the major was very pleased with me. I was a hard worker and a pretty girl.

One day, I heard over dinner that the area was to be made *Judenrein*, free from Jews. Liquidation was the order and I had to tell my friends. It was a tragedy! Six chose to flee to the forest. Helen and I helped them. The other six remained.

Some four days later, the major found a beautiful villa and decided to move there, taking me in as his housekeeper. This was a miracle from God -- it had to be. All of a sudden, I had a place for my friends.

One by one, the six came in and hid in the cellar. I soon discovered however, that six more had joined them; people I had never met before. Twelve people stood there with frightened eyes like little children.

I was then instructed by the major to tidy the house and get it ready to be repainted. I panicked....what to do? Well, we found a way, and when the ground floor was being painted, I hid them in the attic and vice-versa. Miraculously, it worked. God helped us a lot...yes...God.

The major then said he was bringing in his orderly to help with the work; that would be the end of us for sure. In desperation, I pleaded with the major, promised to do the work of two people or more, if only he wouldn't bring the man in. I told him of my rape experience. He agreed...for now...

My twelve and I soon found a secret tunnel that led to a little room under the gazebo in the garden...a hiding place. We provisioned it well to last them for three days if ever need be, and we drilled often.

Helen often came to visit her husband and they would go in there alone. We called it the honeymoon hotel.

...One day, Dr. Lipschitz asked me to fill a prescription for Aida...it would make her abort. Aida? Pregnant? The baby should live, of course. After that day in Lvov when I saw so many Jewish children die, there was no choice for me. Also I believed in God's help. He had been there for us so far... I managed to convince them all and we kept her pregnancy.

One autumn day in 1943, I went into town and had to witness the hanging of two families: one Polish, one Jewish...with their babies, too. It was the punishment for harboring the Jews.

I ran home and was trembling. I was so flustered, I made unusual mistakes. The key was always to be left in its keyhole so that the major could never let himself in and surprise us. This time I put it in my pocket. The women had just come out to greet me, when all of a sudden the major walked in. He had discovered us. I will never forget his eyes, blazing with anger. He silently turned and went to the library. I followed him...I had to face him. I begged for his forgiveness, I cried, I pleaded on my knees. He was furious. He stormed out of the house saying: "When I come back, I will give you my decision. I don't know yet what I'll do with you and I need to think." I had deceived him. I had disappointed him.

I quickly went to my friends who were thinking of leaving. I encouraged them to stay and hide, for only three had been found...why imperil them all? They stayed and hid; we said good-bye and we waited for the major to return...

Hours later, he walked in drunk. I nervously followed him to his room. He pulled me on his lap and kissed me. Trembling, he said: "Irene, I'll help you; I'll keep your promise, but you have to be mine whenever I want you." He never hurt me...For me it was a small price to pay for so many lives...He kept his promise. Soon he became used to the three women, for we all waited on him during his meals now. He never knew who else was harbored in his house.

One day in February 1944, he announced that the villa had to be evacuated, for the front was closing in. I knew that the forest is all we had left. Early in March, he left for a three day trip to Lvov and Helen and I moved our little group then in her horse and buggy. We covered three at a time with blankets and things and made a few trips through countless soldiers into the forest, until all were out of the house and some provisions and valuables were gathered for all of us. Our "cover" had been Helen's husband Henry, who sat up front. He was a good fit for the major's extra uniform and spoke a beautiful German. So far, so good...

On May 15th, 1944 the Russians liberated that part of Poland. I never saw the Major again.

On May 4th, 1944 a little boy was born to Aida in the home of a forest ranger. He was named Roman Haller. My birthday is on the 5th...He was my birthday gift. I left the forest at the end of May. I joined the partisans. The war was still on and this was a way for me to inch back home.

In the summer of 1945, I reached a town with a rabbi. There I inquired about the twelve names and the Hallers he knew. They lived close by and on my way to them, I was arrested by

the Soviets for my partisan work. I was imprisoned, but luckily enough to have been able to escape ten days later.

The Hallers and I hugged and kissed. They made inquiries about my family. My father had been killed during the war and my mother and sisters arrested, then released and disappeared, whatever that meant. It was clear that I was not safe in Poland. They smuggled me out to Germany, to a Jewish repatriation camp, and gave me a notarized account of our story, which would prove I had indeed helped Jews, thus entitling me to some help and refuge.

I wanted to go to Israel, where I now felt I belonged and began to learn Hebrew. Scarlet fever infected me though, and I had to remain in the camp until late 1949 when, with the help of HIAS, I was allowed to come to America.

The Yiddish I learned with my Jewish friends helped me in New York. I worked hard, and five years later I became a U.S. citizen.

One day while sitting in a cafeteria a man recognized me from Europe. He was an American soldier who had interviewed me in the camp. He invited me to one dinner, two...six weeks later we were married. He is not Jewish, but today Mr. Opdyke is ill in California and being cared for at the Jewish Hospital free of charge. We had a daughter, Janina, who also lives there not far from me.

In 1982 I was invited by the State of Israel to receive the medal of valor. A tree was planted for me in the Avenue of the Righteous.

In 1985 I went back to Poland for the first time. There I met my sisters, all of whom survived. My mother had died in 1957. On my way back, I stopped in Munich, Germany to meet little Roman. Now married, he has two children, a girl and a boy. He told me about the major's fate...

The major had been kicked out by his family after the war. He was left a pauper living practically on the streets. Aida found him and took him to the Jewish community, where they found him shelter, and in this way, he passed his final years, becoming like an old grandfather to Roman. Schultz, I heard, was killed at the end of the war.

Irene spoke of a lesson we should apply beyond the Holocaust..."We all belong to one big human family and we must help one another, do what is right."

All twelve survived the war.

Source: Opdyke, Irene. From testimony given to the Oral History Archives of the *Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.*, Miami, Florida, February 2, 1990. Explanation notes and excerpts provided by the interviewer, Jeannette Strelitz.

Johannes H. Lemmens was born on June 25, 1923 in Heerlen, Netherlands. His father, a social activist and a writer, was put in a concentration camp. His mother was very deeply involved in the Dutch resistance. For her work saving the lives of over 250 Jews, she was honored after the war by Yad Vashem, the Queen of the Netherlands, and the Pope. Johannes helped his mother with her underground activities, helping to place Jewish people in hiding with other Dutch families.

Adapted from:

HONOR . . . WHATEVER THE PRICE

It was early in the morning, early 1941, when the German Security Police surrounded our home in the Netherlands and demanded entrance. When I opened the front door, three armed GSP's rushed in and went through the downstairs, then ran upstairs and unnecessarily screamed at my father to get up and get dressed.

As his captors were shoving my father down the stairs and disregarding my two sobbing sisters, my father stopped and told me in a tough, German-defiant manner, "They are taking away our freedom, but they will never be able to take our spirit and our future. You must believe this! Never go down on your knees for anyone, always be honorable and fight for what is right. Do you promise?" While I promised him I would do this, he was now being shoved forcibly out the front door to the truck. As he knelt on the ledge of the truck bed and attempted to crawl onto the truck, a GSP swung his rifle by holding the barrel, and with the butt-end sent my father headlong into the dark interior of the truck. I now saw a few more arrested men inside the truck.

In subsequent weeks, it became more and more clear that the arrest of my father had nothing to do with the underground activities my mother had been very involved in, which was primarily the moving of hundreds of Jews from the north to the south of Holland (where we lived) and finding safe places for them to hide and avoid deportation to, and probably death in, German concentration camps. It also became clear that virtually all who were imprisoned with my father in this mass arrest were well-known and respected Dutch men. My father was primarily known as a social activist and writer.

Six weeks after my father's arrest, we were informed by the now local Nazi-controlled police department that my father was "interned as a hostage." It was soon clear what it meant to be a hostage. When an act of sabotage was committed, the Germans publicized in the now Nazi-controlled newspapers that in reprisal, one or more hostages had been executed.

While my father's life was in serious jeopardy as a hostage, my mother accelerated her underground activities. It was still in the early part of the war. We now had small groups of Jews in our home with increased frequency. They could not walk outside, talk loudly, and their presence had to be transparent to the neighbors. They were moved only during the safest hours of the night, as well as the safest route. Their stays with us were short and only until a more permanent place of hiding was found.

We were most fortunate in having a German informer within the ranks of the local GSP. We did not know who he was. There was one contact in the Dutch underground for this informer (to minimize risk) and he, in turn, communicated as necessary with my mother and others. Once we had a much larger than normal, and therefore riskier, group of seventeen Jews in our home, which included four young children. We received an urgent message by our contact that the GSP

was probably already on their way to raid our home. We had survived two such previous raids, and the escape procedures were well-rehearsed. This included immediate pick-up of all personal items and evacuation through our back garden, through a brush-obscured hole in our back fence and into a back entrance of a tuberculosis sanitarium located in the back of our home. We had an agreement with the medical order of nuns who ran the center that they accept these Jews and hide them short-term as bedridden TB patients.

As the Jews were still exiting our back door and running through our back garden and we were rolling up blankets and pillows and checking for any evidence of their presence accidentally left, the GSP arrived. The warning appeared to have come too late. With my older sister yelling that the GSP were already running up our walk, my mother surveyed the hopeless situation and rushed out the front door to confront the GSP. In a very upset and loud voice, she demanded to know from the officer in charge, "What is this? Another raid?" as the Germans halted their approach and the officer in charge seemed confused, her voice quickly became hysterical, and she continued in her fluent German, "How can you? I have a husband in a concentration camp, and I have three children in this home and you think I'm doing something wrong in this home? You are crazy!" Realizing that precious minutes were being gained for the Jews to safely escape and to clear the house of any evidence, she concluded her tirade by forcibly holding the young GSP officer's arm and demanding, "Take me to your commanding officer right now! I will explain and ask him!" By now, we were all clear.

To our utter disbelief, and by now also to the surprise of our aroused neighbors, my mother left with the GSP officer in charge, as she had requested. It was to see his commandant to make a personal appeal to this "obviously smart man" to stop these ridiculous and nonsensical raids. When my mother came back, laughing through tears of released tension and emotion, she told us that she thought she'd convinced him how stupid and absurd these raids were and that they, in fact, were a discredit to him and his department. He, in fact, made an apology to my mother, something she had not expected, not even in her wildest imagination!

There was no need or thought of sleep, only relief and feeling very victorious. Later, my mother became reflective and said, "This was not just luck. God was with us. Someday we may not be lucky. You and I already know too much. The Germans are very experienced at how to extract our knowledge, where we have hidden the hundreds of Jews, who the persons are in our local resistance movement, as well as many other critical considerations. If we were caught and talked, hundreds of others would be caught and with near certainty would die." We knew too well. . . . We had two immediate relatives who had been caught, and who were subsequently executed.

It became evident in our ensuing discussion that my mother was clearly torn between motivations of love for her family and that of doing what was right and honorable. Then she said, "You must always maintain the capacity to love and to do so unselfishly. . . not only God, but everyone with no exceptions. You must be forgiving and instead build on the good qualities of people. Ultimately, you will never fail and your life will be worth living." Recognizing, however, the more immediate realities of life, she continued, "If you are ever caught by the Germans, you must only do what is honorable . . . this is what we are fighting for! Do you know that keeping your honor may cost you your life?" I told her I was prepared. She finally asked if anything happened to her or to my father, would I promise to take truly loving care of my two sisters. I gave her my word of honor on that.

Morris Dzieszientnik was born on July 30, 1919 in Przytyk, Poland. Shortly after the war began, he ran away from Łódź, Poland with his bride before it became a closed ghetto. They ran away to Russia, moving further and further east to escape the advancing German forces. They went as far as the Soviet republic of Kazakhstan in Asia. Morris wanted to fight against the Germans. He joined the Soviet Red Army and fought in defense of Leningrad. He was then sent to Finland, where he was transferred by the Russians to the Polish Army, and in 1944, he liberated the concentration camp of Majdanek in Poland.

Q. What happened when you returned home to Łódź?

A. My family was there. I spent a couple of weeks there, but I saw that in the center of the city, they were hanging Jews.

Q. Who was hanging them?

A. The Germans. Every day, different Jews were hung upside down with their heads down. And when I saw this, I figured to myself, how long could I live here? Sooner or later, I will die. So I talked to my girlfriend, whom I loved very much. I told her, "Look, this is the time to run away. Maybe they're going to make a ghetto for Jews and by then, it'll be too late. Make up your mind. I'm ready to go." So she said, "I'm going with you." And we left. I wanted to help my parents, but there was nothing I could do. This was the only solution. I wanted to fight. And we went. It wasn't so easy. We crossed the border at night.

Q. How far were you able to ride by train before you had to cross the border?

A. From Warsaw, a couple of hours.

Q. Could you take the train across the border?

A. No. We stopped at a certain point and waited there until it got dark. And then we saw a peasant. We gave him a couple of pieces of soap. He told us how to cross to the Russian side. So, we crossed the way he told us, and we got there.

Q. Were there any guards at this border to stop people from crossing into Russia?

A. We waited for the guard to go away. A lot of people got stopped either by the Germans or the Russians. But we were lucky to pass both guards. We went into a little village there. And we went up in a haystack. We gave the peasants whatever we had, and we went to Białystok.

Q. Why were you heading for Białystok?

A. Just because the Russians were there. We would be free from Germans there.

Q. And what happened when you got to Białystok?

A. When we came to Białystok, it was no good there either. I mean, we were free, but there was no place for us to sleep and nothing to eat. We wanted to go to a synagogue, but the

caretaker wouldn't let us in. We had to call a policeman to let us in. Then, thousands of refugees came into the synagogue and slept there. It was horrible and dirty. Typhus existed there. People were dying. The only good thing was that the Russian government supplied all the refugees in the streets with a big bowl of soup and bread.

Q. What year was this?

A. 1939. They registered those people who wanted to go further into Russia. We registered and traveled a long time by train.

Q. Were there many people who had been in Białystok with you who chose to go?

A. Yes. We couldn't live there, we could only die there.

Q. Did they tell you where in Russia they were going to be taking you?

A. Yes, to Kuragina, about 700 miles from Moscow. We didn't care where we were going. We figured we'd have a place to sleep and food to eat.

Q. Were you married at this time?

A. We were married in 1939 before we left. She was sixteen and a half years old, and I was seventeen and a half, and she was a doll.

When we came to Kuragina, there were just houses for working people and a stolova [canteen], a restaurant for them. The living was not bad. But what was a problem was that we had to fill a work quota. A certain amount of stones had to be cut and placed on the wagons. We never could make that quota. So, we only got a little money and not too much to eat in that place. There were a lot of Polish people working there, too, not only Jewish people. They were complaining, and they tried to start a riot, almost. The KGB [Soviet State Security Police] was watching everything.

Then one day, they said they were going to send us away further, to Siberia. Because of that, I said to my wife, Karola, "Listen, I'm not going there. Tonight, we'll open a window, and we'll go out and run to the station. We are going to run back. Because over there wherever they want to ship us, if it's bad here, it's going to be very bad there." We went back to the station. We didn't have any tickets, any money, nothing, so we couldn't sit in seats. We were under the seats, traveling there maybe for two weeks.

Q. How were you able to get food during that time?

A. We met Jewish people in certain cities, and they took us in and gave us something to eat.

Q. So you were on and off the train?

A. Yes, we lived worse than dogs. Finally, after a couple of weeks, we came to the city of Brest-Litovsk.

Q. Where is that located?

- A. In Byelorussia [White Russia]. We came back there. It was bad. A lot of Jewish people were standing in line who wanted to go back to Germany. They couldn't take it. They didn't realize at that time what was going to happen to the Jewish people.

We met a friend there who worked in Byelorussia in a little town. And he said to me, "Look, we are working there in a factory where they're making plywood. It was a Belgian-French factory before the war. The Russians took it over. We'll take you there. You'll get a job." We went there, and my wife worked in a restaurant. I was a tailor, but over there tailoring meant nothing. So, one of those people there -- I think he was Polish -- introduced me and said that they were going to teach me how to work with a circulation machine to cut plywood to sizes. And it was good.

We rented a little room with a Jewish family. The room had a bed and we had food. My wife worked, and I made some money. One day, we went to the toilets, and everywhere there were signs saying "Kill Jews, and free Russia!"

I was living there along the tracks, and one night I heard a noise. I said to Karola, "What happened? I'll go and take a look." I went out, and suddenly I saw the KGB with two guns pushing thousands of crying people into wagons. The next day, I heard that they took out thousands of those peasants and Jews from the factory, and they shipped them to Siberia. After that, it was quiet. No signs, no nothing, until 1941, when the Germans attacked Russia.

The naczalnik [boss] in the factory told us, "The Germans have attacked the Soviet Union. Get ready." So, we started to evacuate the factory part by part. Then the naczalnik told us, "The Germans are 200 miles ahead of where we are on the road. That means that we are already in their territory. All the Jews who want to go away, hurry up and go in the wagons, because the Germans will kill you. They will not spare one of you." But the native Jewish people who lived there in that little town didn't go. They said, "I have a home here, where will I go?" But we left. There were a lot of refugees from Central Poland who worked there, and we all left.

- Q. Now were there Germans in your area at this time?

- A. No. They were already 200 miles from the town. If they had entered our area, we would have been finished. We left with the train. It stopped at night on a bridge and didn't move. I said to my wife, "I'll open the window, and we'll go out. We're not staying here. In the morning, the Messerschmidts [German planes] will bomb everything to pieces." So, I opened the windows on the bridge, and we climbed down in the water by the edge, and we went into the woods. Then we heard bombing, and a lot of people got killed.

- Q. Do you remember any of the thoughts that were going through your mind as you were running off the train and into the woods?

- A. Only one thought was on our mind -- to survive.

- Q. Who picked you up?

- A. The police, the government. There were no private businesses or citizens there. Everything was the police. They asked us some questions, and then we were sent deep into Russia to a collective farm to work. It just so happened that the people who worked on this farm were Ukrainian.

Q. Now when you say deep into Russia, where exactly were you located?

A. It was in Panzer.

Q. And how long did it take you to get there?

A. About two weeks.

Q. As you were traveling, were you given food to eat? What were the conditions on the train?

A. Very bad. They didn't give us anything. If we were lucky, we got something to eat here and there. That was about it. But when we got to the collective farm, each refugee couple, like us, were put with a different Russian family. They were old, nice people. They treated us like their own children. During the day, my wife and I worked hard in the field. Lunch, they cooked there. Supper, we ate at home.

For a couple of months, we stayed there. But the front went forward, and the Germans went very fast. The old man said to me, "Look, Mischka." He called me Mischka. "You'd be better off if you would go away, because these are Ukrainian people. If the Germans come in, they'll kill you, because they are against the Soviet Union. Get dressed while you have time, before the trains are bombed and go."

So, we left on a train. I had some food with me, but a lot of people didn't have anything. There were women, children, Russian people, Jewish people, and there were babies who were dying. They put the dead babies on the platform outside. They figured that when they'd come to a city, they would bury them. But they flew off the platform and disappeared.

We traveled for a long time. Finally, we came to Stalinabad, which was the capital of Soviet Republic of Tajikistan. Over there, I met my brother and my sister just by coincidence. They had settled themselves in Stalinabad. We couldn't. So we went out to a collective farm again. In Asia, it was horrible on those farms, but the people were so good to us. We couldn't refuse them if they invited us over. We never had to lock the door at night. We lived in two little houses made from clay. They all lived like that.

Q. How long did you stay there?

A. We stayed there a couple of months, until it was almost 1943. We were sick there several times. In Asia, my wife and I both had dysentery. We went into the hospital. We didn't know if we were going to live.

Q. Did they take good care of you while you were in the hospital?

A. They took care of us as best they could, and we survived. This was already close to 1943. My wife was three months pregnant. I was nervous, young, and wanted to fight. I couldn't get out of mind what had happened. I was like half-crazy. So I went and registered in the Russian army in 1943. They shipped us not far from Stalinabad to a training camp, and they said to us, "We're going to train you for two weeks. We don't have any time. If you're not going to learn everything, it's going to be just too bad for you people."

Q. Where did Karola remain?

A. Karola remained in Stalinabad. We had already managed to move to the city.

- Q. How did she feel about your joining the army?
- A. She couldn't say yes, she couldn't say no. It was a time that there was no way out. If I wouldn't have gone to the army, they would have taken me to the gulag [labor camp].
- Q. So this was a decision to save yourself.
- A. To save myself or to get killed. I mean, to get killed like a human being, fighting. So I went in that camp. It was a very tough training camp. It was so crowded that at night, we slept side by side. If one wanted to move this way, we all had to move this way. Room and time, we didn't have. We hardly slept anyway. They trained us for two weeks, day and night, on how to fight and how to protect ourselves. After two weeks, they gave us fur jackets, fur hats, and warm boots, so we knew right away where we were going. Before we left, the lieutenant said to the soldiers, "You're going to Leningrad. And I want you to know, this minute, the Germans are killing Jews and burning them by the millions."
- Q. How many of the soldiers were Jewish, a good percentage?
- A. Not too many.
- Q. What were your feelings when he said that to you?
- A. My feeling was to go there and fight. That's the only feeling I had. I didn't think about getting killed. I'm telling you the truth. So they put us on trains, and it didn't take us long to get there. We didn't go into Leningrad. The fight was on the outskirts of Leningrad, near Finland.
- Q. What time of year was this?
- A. Winter, 1943, and it was cold. In that division, there were 11,000 soldiers. The name of that division was Krasna-Znamionnaja, Krasna Armia [Red Army]. Whenever people were killed, they replaced it with more soldiers. The first night they dropped us off, the Germans started bombing. Almost all soldiers got killed. Out of 11,000 maybe 50 survived, and I was one of them. I was lucky.
- Q. Describe some of the scenes to me that you saw that night.
- A. First, I was on a tank with an automatic weapon. You could shoot out 74 bullets with that weapon, cut a man in half. We ran right from the tank to the trenches. And we were there, shooting and fighting. They started bombing and killing that very night. I had a partner who was a refugee like me. We were laying in those trenches, people were killed all around us or were without legs, crying and moaning. The Red Cross came right after that, and they picked up all the people. They picked me up, too, and they patched me up. The next day, they sent me back to the front. Then I was not on a tank any longer. I had a different kind of weapon which took two people to operate. We were there operating in those trenches, day and night. There was no letup. They brought us something to eat, but we had to stay there. We could only sleep for ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes at a time, that's all. We had to be careful not to sleep too well. Otherwise, we weren't going to wake up. A lot of people died that way.

We were there fighting from 1943 until 1944. One day, the Germans advanced a few feet, the next day the Russians went forward, and it went on like that every day. Then, one day

in 1944, from the trenches, I could hear trucks coming. We looked out and saw covered trucks. They called us out and said, "You have to follow those trucks. Don't hide. You don't have to be afraid. This is it," they said. And then, we went through the German trenches near Finland, and they took off the covers. When we entered those trenches, there was nothing, not a soul living. Everything was burned to death. They told us not to eat when we saw food. We were always hungry. One time Marshal • hukow came to visit us, and he asked us if the food was good. I said, "The soup is like water." He patted me on the back. "Tomorrow, it's going to be better."

Q. So you had fought your way to the Finnish border?

A. Yes. And we went up to the capital, Helsinki. The war was over there. They took out all the Polish citizens -- even Russians, whose parents or grandparents had been born in Poland -- and shipped us to the Polish army.

Q. Now what year was this?

A. 1944, in the middle of winter. Then they formed an army, and they sent us to be trained as Polish soldiers.

Q. Why would they feel they had to train you after you had been fighting all these years?

A. Many of the soldiers were Russians who couldn't speak Polish. They needed those Russians in the Polish army to watch the Poles. There was another Polish army, Anders' army, in England, but it was an antisemitic army. Ours was the real socialist army.

They sent us to a school not far from Moscow to be trained as truck drivers. They needed us to drive to the front lines. So, we were there about two months. They taught us how to drive, but we only had a half an hour practice, because they didn't have enough gas. We learned how to fix the cars from books. You know, the Russian trucks were very simple trucks to fix.

In that school, there were a lot of young people from Poland. While the lieutenant was talking to us, they threw potatoes at us, at the Jewish soldiers. They were antisemites. The lieutenant saw that and said, "Everybody up! Get up! Do you think that you are here in a Nazi camp or something? This is Russia. In Russia, everybody is equal. Look at me. I am a Gypsy. And I am a lieutenant. Here, it doesn't matter, a Jew, a Gypsy, or a Pole, or anybody. If I see one more thing like that, you'll all go to jail."

So we finished school there, and we got our license to be a truck driver. They gave me a truck, and I was driving for the Polish army. They sent us to Tomaszów, Poland. We were already on Polish territory, and we were driving the Germans back even faster than they had driven the Russians when they started the war.

Q. What condition was the German army in at this time?

A. It was in bad condition. They didn't know what hit them. We moved that fast. But then the Russians didn't want to cross the border to Warsaw, because the Poles had something else in mind at that time. In Warsaw, the Poles staged an uprising against the Germans. They figured the Russians would come in and help, and the Poles would gain control over Warsaw. So, the Russians waited until the Germans killed them off. Then we went to Majdanek. We were among the first to arrive there in 1944.

Q. And how long had you been in Poland at this time?

A. Two months, three months, something like that.

Q. Did you know that you were coming towards this camp?

A. We knew.

Q. How did you know?

A. The Jewish people were talking among ourselves. We knew that Majdanek was a Jewish camp. We learned that from the Poles. As we were coming with the soldiers, they were talking about how they killed the Jews. Then we entered Majdanek.

Q. What was the first thing that you saw when you went in Majdanek?

A. The worst thing I saw was that the factories were still working. They didn't know that we were coming in. We went so fast that the Nazis didn't know that we were entering Majdanek.

Q. Did the German guards try to stop you as you entered?

A. No. They saw us, and they ran away. The KGB caught them.

Q. What did you see as you went in?

A. When we came into Majdanek, everybody stopped breathing. We saw the dead people. They were carrying them out of the ovens. Dead, we saw dead people. The surviving people were dying. I saw a woman laying there with her breast bitten or cut off and a man whose organs were ripped out from between his legs. A dying man was laying there. I asked him, "Tell me, who did that? What did they do?" He told me that the Germans had dogs which they specially trained to rip off a person's genital parts when they gave a signal. In an hour, that man was dead.

Q. What were your feelings at this time?

A. I didn't have any feelings. None of the soldiers had any feelings, nothing. We were all standing like we were blind. The smoke was still coming out of the oven. And I didn't feel anything. I figured to myself, what I did was right. I went to the army. I fought with dignity. I killed Germans there. The Germans were yelling, "I'm a communist." So we hit them in the head, and we killed them. The Russian lieutenant told us, "Bring some live ones." We never did. We killed them.

Q. You said you saw the smoke coming from the ovens.

A. Yeah.

Q. Did you see the ovens?

A. Yeah, sure. I don't know how to describe them to you. There were ovens, like in a bakery but bigger. I was used to ovens, we had a bakery. But these were the biggest I'd ever seen with dead people laying inside.

- Q. Do you remember about how many ovens there were?
- A. I saw two ovens.
- Q. Were you able to talk to any other people in the camp at this time?
- A. Nobody talked. Nobody could talk, for a while.
- Q. How did the other prisoners of the camp look?
- A. The other inmates couldn't walk. I never saw anything like that. Even rats have a chance to survive but not Jews. They were skinny and in bad shape. Very few of those people survived afterwards. They couldn't see. I went to them, and I patted them. I said, "What's your name?" One said, "Shlomo," the other one said this and that. I said to them, "Don't worry. You're safe."
- Q. And what was their reaction when they heard that?
- A. Nothing.
- Q. Did they believe you?
- A. They believed me, but there was no reaction at all.
- Q. Did you go into the barracks at all?
- A. Yes.
- Q. And what did you see?
- A. There were no beds, only people laying there on dirt floors. We carried them out.
- Q. How long did you remain in the camp?
- A. I remained there a couple of hours.
- Q. Was the army that came in with you able to help the people at all?
- A. Oh, they tried to help them. But the Russian army didn't have food. They could have good hearts, but we didn't have anything to eat. So, we went to the nearby peasants for food.
- Q. What were the reactions of the peasants? Did they want to help these people?
- A. We didn't give them a choice. They had to give some food. They didn't want to help.
- Q. Did anybody ask them if they knew about this camp?
- A. Oh, they knew. The neighbors. The camp was next to Lublin, a city. The smoke went on as they worked there. They went to church there, they went to New Year's celebrations, to weddings. They lived with the smoke, and they liked it. They liked to see the Jewish people burning.

- Q. Was anyone left in the camp to help the people after you liberated them? Were the prisoners aware of the fact that they could leave the camp now?
- A. Oh, yes, but they couldn't walk, so they couldn't leave on their own. We had to take them on stretchers.
- Q. Did you do that?
- A. I helped.
- Q. Where did you bring them on the stretchers?
- A. To the Red Cross.
- Q. Was the Red Cross in the camp when you went there?
- A. No, they were outside. They came in, but slowly.
- Q. What did they do when they came into the camp?
- A. They checked them out, the heart, this, and that. They brought some food, but they couldn't feed them too much at once. It was so bad, that it could not have been a worse life for those people.
- Q. When you came out of the camp was there any discussion amongst the soldiers as to what they had seen in the camp?
- A. Yeah, they talked about it.
- Q. What did they have to say?
- A. The Polish soldiers liked it. They were antisemites. They said, "They're still around, Jews." But the Russians were different. They said that never in history had they seen a thing like that.
- Q. Were you able to talk about it at all?
- A. No. I couldn't talk at all about what I saw. Nobody could talk. Not even the general could talk about it.

Leo Mirković was born in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia on January 31, 1904. He was a well-known opera singer. During World War II, he went into hiding in Italy with false papers under the name of Arturo Testa and worked for the underground. He was sent to the United States in 1944 to a camp for refugees at Fort Ontario in Oswego, N.Y. until 1945. The 1,000 refugees interned there, who had been brought over from liberated Italy, were supposed to be returned to Europe at the end of the war. Ultimately, the refugees of Fort Ontario were allowed to remain in the United States.

A. I went to Rome, because I thought that this was the nearest place to reach the Americans. There was a Jewish organization already, the Red Cross from Switzerland, and the consulate, who helped us out financially. We had an organized underground in Rome. There were, for example, many apartments holding American and English soldiers who couldn't speak Italian. We'd bring them food and bread. I was in the underground, because I spoke perfect Italian. I had false documents with Italian names.

Q. What false names did you use?

A. I used Arturo Testa. He gave me his documents in Zebello, a little Italian town. He wanted to help me out. He gave me his documents. I took his picture out and put mine in and falsified the stamp on the picture. With that document, I lived in Rome over a year, waiting for the Americans there.

Q. And how did you live?

A. Delasem, a Jewish organization in Italy helped, and we got packages from the Red Cross in Switzerland.

The life in Rome certainly became harder everyday because we heard shooting, the cannons in Anzio. The Germans were pretty nervous. They were catching people for work and sending them to Anzio to dig trenches. Life became very hazardous. They were stopping buses and picking us up like dog catchers. And we were trying to change apartments, because in lots of apartments there were spies who gave out information about where the refugees lived and they would come and pick us up.

We had in our underground, I'm sorry to say, people who were working for Gestapo also, and they were telling the hiding places of the Jews. And we had a very hard time then saving our people. One day I came to visit a friend, and I saw the German soldiers taking away my friend along with all the soldiers who were in that home. That means that somebody from the Gestapo got the address and were taken away and killed the next day as spies, because these soldiers were in private clothing, not in uniform.

After one year of this, the Americans started to move toward Rome. We were becoming very depressed about what would happen. We didn't know if the Germans would take everyone with them when they returned to the West. That troubled us, but it happened that the Germans didn't act. They didn't take anybody from Rome so that we didn't really lose too many. There were some French soldiers who made friends at the hotel where the French Jews lived, and they gave the Gestapo the hotel address. Two days before the Americans marched into Rome, all these French Jews were taken away from the hotel. But we caught these two soldiers, because they wore civilian clothing trying to hide themselves

in Rome to get free also. We found them, and the Americans knew very well what to do with them. This was in 1944.

Once the Americans came, President Roosevelt invited one thousand refugees from Italy, from all these liberated towns to be brought to America until the end of the war. And that's how I met Dr. Ruth Gruber who was sent from America, from Secretary Ickes.

Q. Harold Ickes?

A. Yes. He sent her. She was in charge on the boat. She, together with Delasem, the Jewish organization which gave her the list of Jews who were liberated, chose the people who could go. Not everyone who applied was chosen. Families with little children had preference. But, for example, my case was separate because I was in the underground and was known by Delasem. It seems to me that is why they chose me to go with that group to America.

Q. But generally speaking, they took women and children.

A. We had many little children. There was even a Turkish woman who was expecting a baby any day, and she was on the boat with me. We traveled over to New York for twenty days and twenty nights. She became hysterical. She had the baby before we arrived in New York.

Q. Do you have any idea how many applied?

A. Very many. But they couldn't take more than one thousand persons. There were not only Jews on that boat. Among these thousand people there were many White Russians who were afraid to stay in Europe, because the Russian communists were coming. We had Greeks and Poles; I think we had about twenty different nationalities. Most of them were Jews.

Q. What happened after you were chosen?

A. When I was chosen, they fixed a date on which the thousand of us had to meet in Naples. It was secret. They wouldn't tell us what kind of boat we were traveling on, because it was a military convoy. Nobody knew where the boat was. When we arrived in Naples, they put us in cars and brought us onto a big warship where there were wounded American soldiers. We had a very bad trip, because there were German airplanes and German U-boats nearby during the trip. They wouldn't tell us what was happening.

We met Dr. Gruber on the boat. She organized a school for teaching English, so we started to learn right away. That was the first thing. Then she even organized entertainment for the wounded soldiers. Unfortunately, there were fights on the boat because the people spoke different languages and didn't understand one another. But I was happy because by that time, I spoke about six languages.

I tried to help people with the food on the boat. They gave us frankfurters to eat on the boat. After so many years of not eating them, some were afraid that the children would get sick if they ate too many. The cook threw them in the ocean for the fish. He didn't want to give them to us a second time. The children were crying when we arrived in New York,

because they were afraid all they would be given to eat was frankfurters. They still didn't know where they were going or if there would be food. That was very tragic for the children.

We arrived in New York at Ellis Island in 1944. We got off the ship, and all thousand of us were put on the trains to go to Oswego, New York. Oswego had high fences and military barracks, and we were divided throughout the buildings. Everyone got their own apartment. We didn't know how much longer the war was going to last or how long we were going to be in that camp. That's the reason they started to make an immediate plan to organize the whole camp. We were told right away that we alone must do all the work in the camp, even the heating of the rooms and cooking. The women especially had to learn how to cook for so many people.

Q. There was one big kitchen for everybody?

A. We had a kosher kitchen, and we had a kitchen for anybody who wanted only Jewish-style. We were divided into all these kitchens where we had to arrive for breakfast, lunch, and dinnertime. We had services Friday night in the synagogue. Then we had entertainment also. I was brought there mostly for the entertainment of these thousand people. I was supposed to organize concert and theater performances. We gave many theater performances in Oswego, and even the public attended. They were very enthusiastic.

Q. I would like to know a little bit more about the camp itself. Who was in charge?

A. There was a woman from a Jewish organization, Mrs. Shapiro, who came and asked, "What do you need?" She was in charge of bringing us some clothing, because nobody had anything.

Q. And what about the camp management?

A. We had a director of the camp who was American. We even had police. Sometimes we got permission to go into town to shop for cigarettes or something else if we wanted. At the door, the police were there to make sure we came back exactly on time.

Q. And, who shopped for you, who provided the food?

A. The food came from Jewish organizations that brought it to the camp. I think it was organized by businessmen who knew where to get the food and how to get it into the camp.

Q. Was there any help in education?

A. We had a teacher from a city. She was a good teacher and a nice lady. And that's how we learned our English in the camp.

Q. What about the children?

A. The children, the same thing. The children had school, and some of them even started going to school in the city.

Q. Did they have to obtain special permission?

- A. Yes. Some of the girls were very talented and wanted to study. They got permission to go into town and visit the teachers' college in Oswego. From this teachers' college, people would always come to the camp. We had visitors from towns all around Oswego. Sometimes people would come to the fence and try to talk to us, asking many questions, such as where we were from, or if we knew their families.
- Q. They were able to come into camp?
- A. Not in camp, but at the fence. But there were some guests who were with organizations who came into the camp to find out what we needed.
- Q. Did you get any news from the outside world?
- A. We got news, because we all listened to the radio.
- Q. Was there an attempt made by anybody to leave the camp?
- A. Nobody ever escaped the camp. That is interesting morally, that we can say that the people were all happy that we were in a safe place awaiting the end of the war. ORT had a good organization in our camp, training women to be tailors and beauticians, for example.
- Q. So, how long did this last?
- A. It lasted until President Roosevelt died. And when President Roosevelt died, we made a big memorial service in the camp that was, I think, the only service in all Oswego during that time. We had visits from Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Morgenthau a few times in the camp. I even gave concerts for her, and she mentioned in her daily diary [which was published in newspapers around the country] a few times that she heard me in the Oswego camp.
- Q. Before you went to the camp, did you have a guarantee that you would be able to leave? What were the conditions under which you came?
- A. We all signed papers that after the war we would all go home.
- Q. In other words, these were not permanent affidavits.
- A. No. After the death of President Roosevelt, Truman immediately became president. His first duty was to allow 50,000 refugees from all over to come to America. Because we were already here, we were allowed to stay as the first of these 50,000. The camp closed, because the war was over. Anybody who wanted to go back to Europe, left. People who wanted to stay in America didn't get their affidavits immediately, so we got permission to stay and went to New York. Then we took trains to Buffalo, New York and we crossed the bridge to Canada. We then entered America officially with the affidavit.

This excerpt is adapted from the original testimony of Leo Mirković which is part of the Oral History Collection of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

UNIT 9

LIBERATION: AFTERMATH AND THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

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UNIT 9

LIBERATION: AFTERMATH AND THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

"History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived,
but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."

Maya Angelou

Noted Author, Poet, and Civil Rights Activist

INTRODUCTION

On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered. For those who had been in the German-occupied countries, the defeat of Germany was cause for celebration and jubilation. In comparison to the hard won Allied military victories, the liberation of the concentration camps had been easy. Hardly any resistance to the Allied forces had blocked them entering the camps. Although, by now, the liberating troops were battle-seasoned veterans, as they entered the Nazi camps, they were totally unprepared for the shocking discoveries that would assail them. The liberators saw before them the pathetic remnants of living skeletons moving slowly among the fetid smells of decaying corpses. As they went further into the camps, they learned the true extent of the Nazi atrocities.

The photographs and films of what they found there sent a shudder of horror throughout the world. The scenes of human deprivation and destruction confirmed beyond words what had already been suggested in brief accounts during the war; that the most civilized country in Europe had employed its "civilized" minds and methods to serve the darkest forces of barbarism and evil.

Today, so many years later, the knowledge of the Nazi concentration camp is not so shocking. It has been accepted, together with other worldwide atrocities, as the potential consequence of war in all its horrifying reality. What once seemed impossible has become a symbol of humankind's expanded capacity for evil. However, the fact that the Allied soldiers documented what they found when they liberated the Nazi camps was critical. Without the clear evidence which the Allies furnished to the world, the truth of the Holocaust might have become lost or ignored as were reports of the Soviet camps, or the Turkish slaughter of the Armenians, or the massacres of the Cambodians. If the record of the Nazi camps had not been photographed and filmed -- if testimony had not been taken from the eyewitnesses who liberated the camps as well as from those who had suffered and survived them -- the truth of places like Auschwitz might have been dismissed as propaganda and war stories which had been fabricated by the enemy as a pretended show of strength.

But the story of the liberation of the camps, the effort to trace and bring the Nazis to justice, and their collaborators, and the theft of victims' assets (such as personal property, bank accounts, insurance policies, etc.) needs to be told for yet another reason. Our reaction -- whether of initial disbelief, shame or sadness -- provides profound insight into how we, as human beings, respond to the unimaginable suffering and mistreatment of others. That response also includes the neglect and indifference which the world showed toward the Nazi victims immediately after the war. And, most importantly, the story of liberation explains why, more than 50 years later, the Holocaust must be remembered, in all its cold litany of terrible facts and brief moments of altruism, if ever we are going to live in a world free from discrimination and the peril of terror to life that it brings.

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the vocabulary.
2. Consider the necessity and significance of documenting eyewitness testimony from survivors, liberators, and rescuers.
3. Explain where the survivors went immediately after liberation.
4. Describe what the eyewitnesses experienced and saw during liberation.
5. Explain who the liberators were.
6. Consider why liberation was bittersweet for Holocaust survivors.
7. Analyze what happened and what is happening regarding the Nazi perpetrators.

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Allied Powers (Allies): During World War II, the Allies were over twenty nations led by Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union that fought against the Axis powers, mainly Nazi Germany, Italy, Japan, and their allies.

Clemency Act: Passed in January 1951 by the United States high commissioner in Germany resulted in freeing the majority of the accused German perpetrators.

Denazification: Process of the victorious Allies trying to purge Germany of its Nazi military, political, and legal policies, ideology, and practices.

Displaced Persons: Persons driven out of their countries of origin during World War II who were unable to return to their pre-war homes and resume their lives in Holocaust-haunted Europe.

Displaced Persons (DP) camps: Set up after the war to house and process refugees.

I.G. Farben Works: A conglomerate of eight major German chemical manufacturers.

International Military Tribunal: Established by the Allies to try Nazi criminals; popularly known as the Nuremberg Trials.

Liberators: Those soldiers who were members of the divisions that liberated the Nazi concentration camps at the end of World War II.

London Agreement: This declaration on August 8, 1945 established the charter of the International Military Tribunal, which came to be held at Nuremberg.

Office of Special Investigations (OSI): A bureau of Criminal Division of the Justice Department established in 1978 and specifically charged with the task of finding and prosecuting alleged Nazi war criminals residing in the United States.

Reparations: Compensation for damages; here used as money and goods paid by Germany to the victims of the Holocaust and the Allies after World War II.

Typhus: An infectious disease which infected thousands in the concentration camps.

White Paper: British statement of policy issued on May 17, 1939 restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Zyklon B: A deadly, poisonous gas produced from acid crystals used in the gas chambers to kill inmates in the camps.

NAMES AND PLACES

Auschwitz: A Nazi labor/killing complex located in Southwestern Poland which incorporated 40 smaller camps in the region. The Auschwitz complex included three camps. Auschwitz I -- known as the "mother camp" -- was a concentration camp mainly for prisoners. Auschwitz II/Birkenau --

near the village of Brzezinka -- was a killing center where between 1.1 and 1.3 million Jews were murdered. Auschwitz III/Buna was a slave labor camp assigned to the I.G. Farben-Werke chemical factories in the neighboring town of Monowitz.

Bergen-Belsen: A concentration camp near the city of Hannover, Germany, classified by the Germans as the "Official Reception and Holding Center."

Bormann, Martin: Chief of the Chancery of the Nazi Party.

Bug River: Polish river that formed the boundary between the German and Russian forces during the occupation of Poland in 1939.

Buchenwald: A concentration camp located near Weimar, Germany.

Dachau: A concentration camp located near Munich, Germany.

Der Stürmer: Inflammatory antisemitic German newspaper published by Julius Streicher in Nuremberg.

Ebensee: A satellite concentration camp of Mauthausen in Austria.

Eichmann, Adolf: Coordinated the deportation of Jews from their homes in German-occupied Europe to ghettos, concentration, and death camps in Eastern Europe. He headed Department IVB4 of REICHSSICHERHEITSHAUPTAMT (Referat Juden) and as such was the engineer of the "Final Solution." Eichmann was captured by Israeli agents on May 11, 1959 in Argentina where he had been living. After a lengthy trial in Israel, he was convicted and executed on May 31, 1962.

Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Supreme Commander of the Allied troops in Europe in 1944, commander in chief of the American Expeditionary Forces until the surrender of Germany (May 8, 1945), and President of the United States (1953-1961).

Flossenbürg: A concentration camp at the edge of the town of Flossenbürg in Germany.

Frank, Hans: Governor General of occupied Poland.

Göring, Hermann: Head of the German Luftwaffe (Air Force).

Hess, Rudolf: Hitler's deputy.

Himmler, Heinrich: Head of the SS and secret police.

Holtzman, Representative Elizabeth: A member and chair of the Immigration Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee who, while congresswoman, authorized legislation for the deportation of Nazi war criminals.

Jackson, Robert: United States Supreme Court Justice commissioned after the war to form the International Military Tribunal and to preside as head of the prosecution staff.

Keitel, Wilhelm: Field marshal and chief of staff of the German Armed Forces from 1938-1945.

Klarsfeld, Beate: A German woman who, along with her French-Jewish husband, historian and attorney Serge Klarsfeld, joined the search for Nazis after World War II. She pursued and exposed many former Nazis, including Klaus Barbie ("Butcher of Lyons"), head of the Gestapo in Lyons, France.

Landsberg: A town in Bavaria and also the place where Hitler was imprisoned in 1924.

Lublin: The city near which Majdanek is located.

Majdanek: A concentration/death camp located near Lublin, Poland.

Mauthausen: A concentration camp located near Linz, Austria.

Mengele, Dr. Josef: SS physician at Auschwitz who selected prisoners for death and conducted perverse medical experiments on concentration camp inmates.

Mueller, Heinrich: One of the heads of the Gestapo who disappeared after the war.

Ohrdruf: A town and concentration camp in Germany.

Oranienburg/Sachsenhausen: A concentration camp in the town of Oranienburg, Germany, in greater metropolitan Berlin.

Patton, George: United States Army General who commanded the U.S. Third Army in Europe. He was nicknamed "Blood and Guts."

Rhine River: A major river in Germany that separated France and German territory.

Rosenberg, Alfred: One of the principal Nazi ideologists.

Streicher, Julius: Editor of the antisemitic German newspaper Der Stürmer.

Theresienstadt: A "model" ghetto, located near Prague, Czechoslovakia. In Czech, it was called Terezín.

Vistula River: The major river in Poland.

Wiesenthal, Simon: A concentration camp survivor who has devoted his life to searching for Nazi war criminals.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

LIBERATION: AFTERMATH AND THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

For six years, Europe was the landscape for the most heinous barbarities in which the Germans and their collaborators carefully organized and implemented plans for mass murder. And during all that time, the Allies quarreled among themselves as to how best to punish the persecutors. But during all that time no one, except for small, imperiled Sweden, promoted any talk or efforts to rescue the Jews under Nazi rule.

Although reports of Nazi atrocities had been well-circulated among the Allies in the West and East from as early as 1933 and continued throughout the war, they had been largely ignored. In the last months of World War II, it became intensely clear that there had really been two wars. With a shock of horror, the advancing units of the Allied forces came upon a dark network of concentration camps, annihilation centers, slave labor camps, and massacre sites. Here corpses were piled like cordwood, and the liberators numbly walked through the rubble of buildings used for torture and murder. For the first time, they realized the extent of the evil against which the Allies had fought. As the war-hardened soldiers pressed for the collapse of the Thousand Year Reich, they learned, first-hand, of the "War Against the Jews"¹ which had netted, in addition to the Jews, millions of others who shared their fate. For most of the millions of victims, liberation had arrived too late. For the few living skeletons who miraculously had survived, the liberators arrived not a moment too soon.

Liberation of the Concentration Camps

On July 22, 1944, the Soviet Army liberated the concentration camp Majdanek situated on the edge of the Polish city of Lublin. It was the first functioning death camp to be liberated. One month later, a New York Times journalist, W.H. Lawrence, toured the camp and described the gas chambers, which had been left in operating condition by the Nazis who had hastily retreated:

As we entered the camp the first place at which we stopped obviously was the reception center and it was near here that one entered the bathhouse. Here Jews, Poles, Russians and in fact representatives of a total of twenty-two nationalities entered and removed their clothes after which they bathed at seventy-two showers and disinfectants were applied.

Sometimes they went directly into the next room, which was hermetically sealed with apparatuses in the roof, down which the Germans threw opened cans of "Zyklon B," a poison gas consisting of acid crystals, which were a light blue chalky substance. This produced death quickly. Other prisoners were kept for long periods; the average we were told was about six weeks.²

By January 1945, the Americans and British were steadily pushing into Germany. From the East, the Soviet Army was also advancing when, on January 27, 1945, they came upon Auschwitz, the largest of the labor/concentration/annihilation camps. Just a few nights before the Soviets arrived, the Germans had rounded up 60,000 prisoners and forced them to walk westward, leaving behind 6,000 who were too weak to walk. The sick, starved and half-naked prisoners trudged long distances by foot through the winter cold and snow in what was to become known as a "Death March." Anyone who was too ill from starvation and disease or too exhausted to continue on these marches was shot right there on the spot as the others were forced to continue. Some were then shipped in open railroad cars in the freezing cold or forced to march from one concentration camp

to another not yet liberated by Allied forces. The few who survived to reach Germany were cramped into the already overcrowded camps of Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, and Dachau.

During 1944 and the early part of 1945, the Germans retreated in the face of the advancing Allied forces. Partisan groups and camp underground organizations helped the Allies to liberate more concentration camps and slave labor camps. The true scope of the network of camps dawned slowly as camp after camp in Poland, Germany, Austria, Holland, France, the former Soviet Union, other German-occupied countries, and countries allied to Germany were discovered.

On April 4, 1945, the Fourth Armored Division's Combat Command A of the American Third Army liberated a camp called Ohrdruf. Ostensibly, Ohrdruf (a satellite of Buchenwald) was just one of the countless, small labor camps, and it was typical of such places. Yet, the force of such a "mild" camp was stunning on those who first entered it. The Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in the European Theater, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and General Omar Bradley visited General George Patton on April 12, and together they toured Ohrdruf. Eisenhower, in a letter to Chief of Staff George Marshall, wrote:

The things I saw beggar description... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where there were piled up twenty or thirty naked men, killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so. I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things, if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to "propaganda."³

A week later, the American army liberated Buchenwald and on April 15, the British Army with Canadian units liberated Bergen-Belsen. Approximately ten million people had passed through the Nazi concentration camp system. When these camps were liberated, hundreds of thousands were found in these centers of death as well as in forced labor sites and prisoner of war camps.⁴ Among this number were approximately 200,000 Jews.

In a concentrated effort to save the few who had survived, hospitals were immediately established in the camps. But epidemics of typhus and other diseases that had gone unchecked under the Nazis were difficult to control, and many of the recently freed prisoners died. Those who survived the Nazi torment were so weak that even where the Allies immediately set up large-scale medical facilities as the British did, they proved to be inadequate to the task. The Allies were completely unprepared for the vast scale of medical aid needed. They innocently fed the surviving prisoners from their concentrated army rations. Tragically, many who might otherwise have lived, could not tolerate being fed suddenly and generously after years of prolonged and extreme starvation. The rich food overwhelmed their weakened systems and they perished.

The liberation of Dachau on April 29, 1945 received considerable publicity when an account of the conditions in the camp was printed in an army newspaper. The headline read: "Dachau Gives Answer to Why We Fought." As the soldiers entered the gates, they came upon piles of thousands of corpses in varying degrees of decomposition. Some prisoners had been shot within hours of the liberators' arrival. In Gardelegen on the very eve of its liberation before escaping, the SS took precious time to lock prisoners in a barn and burn them alive.

The last ghetto, Theresienstadt, was not completely liberated until several days after Germany had surrendered, and the war was declared officially over.

Displaced Persons

By the time the war ended, more than 60 million Europeans had been uprooted from their

homes. Many returned to their country of origin. Two-thirds of European Jewry had been destroyed and the rest wandered helplessly, questioning how it had been possible to have survived.

Without a doubt and regardless of the particulars of their individual experience, the largest percentage of Holocaust survivors owed their lives to the simple providence of luck. Included in the random tides of fate were those who were swept into the U.S.S.R. when Poland was initially divided between the Soviet Union and Germany. During the beginning phases of the war, there were those who had escaped the Nazi net through fortuitous escape routes which were open for brief periods of time. Also there were those who lived through the war as a result of sheer bravado or through the courage of others who had risked their lives to protect them.

Some of these survivors found themselves trapped in Eastern Europe under Soviet occupation or were forced against their will to return to the Soviet Union and other communist countries. The ones who were forced to return were Soviet POW's and Soviet nationals in general.

Those who had managed to survive the Nazi onslaught in the concentration camps were in a terrible state. This mass of refugees were soon joined by those who had lived outside of the camps and could now emerge from hiding. They had lived precariously under someone or some agency's protection, on false papers, in makeshift underground shelters and outdoor privies, joined bands of roving partisan fighters in the woods or were members of organized underground armies.

Although the war was over, another kind of suffering awaited the survivors as they began to realize the extent of their losses. Europe had hundreds of thousands of homeless, impoverished refugees. They came from every country and all were searching for children and other loved ones. The Red Cross and other international relief organizations posted lists of survivors (which at best were incomplete), but too often these lists only confirmed the lost hopes that their loved ones were gone. Thunderstruck by the enormity of the task before them in rehabilitating the survivors so that they could go "home," emergency shelters were immediately established. More than 150,000 drifted into these special sites called Displaced Persons (DP) camps. Ironically, many of the DP camps had been former Nazi prisons, but now the survivors stayed in the quarters of the guards' and officers' complex.

In Western Europe, several countries sent delegations of people to the Displaced Persons camps and to the sites of concentration camps to get their survivors back. Once in their native lands, these survivors were sometimes given back their homes and possessions from before the war. Norway and Denmark were exceptional in their demonstration of assistance and sorrow for what had happened to its Jewish citizens. Having lost most of its Norwegian Jews during the war, Norway invited other Jewish survivors to settle in their country to replace those who were killed. Denmark's citizens maintained the homes of Danish Jews who had escaped to Sweden or who had been interned in concentration camps. During the absence of the Jews, even their rents were paid. After the war, the returning people were welcomed home by the Danes with flowers. Returning Gypsies, however, were not welcomed and those "who had survived the war continued to be hunted and discriminated against in postwar Germany."⁵

Eastern Europe, however, stood in stark contrast to the overtures extended by many of the Western European countries. The survivors who had come from Eastern Europe were not welcomed back to their homelands. Indeed, they were often met with violence. In Kielce, Poland, for example, the Jews who had been hiding in the forests gathered with other Jewish refugees in the basement of the former Jewish community building. On July 1, 1946 mobs surrounded the building. Fearing for their lives, the Jews called the police, but all they did was confiscate the few weapons which the Jews had. Appeals for help were sent to church leaders who answered that they would not intercede because the Jews, they said, had brought communism into Poland. On July 4, the mob attacked and massacred 42 Jews and wounded another 50.

After returning to their original homelands only to find that no members of their families were alive, most of the survivors left. The majority of survivors in Eastern Europe tried to cross illegally to the West, and many were caught and arrested. Those who were able to cross over into the American zone settled into DP camps. With no home or family to which they could return, many of the Jews remained in the DP camps. From here, the survivors waited for visas to other countries that would accept them -- countries which would be far removed from the scene of the losses and agonies they had endured and where they would no longer be exposed to the virulent antisemitism they had experienced.

The Search for a New Home and a New Life

Most of the countries which were willing to allow the displaced people to emigrate also demanded that these people be in good health. Unfortunately, after the five and a half years of deprivations during the war and the added years of persecution which had preceded it, many of the survivors were not well and were therefore rejected.

Without papers to testify to their original citizenship and without relatives to provide passage and guarantee in a new country that they would not become "wards of the state," the process of relocation moved slowly. Survivors from the camps who had endured daily agony and the others who had lived with the constant threat of discovery were often left, at the time of liberation, to languish in these DP camps for years while visas were slowly and erratically distributed.

Given the extensive assaults they had endured physically, mentally, and spiritually, it was essential to provide more sustenance than just food. Organizations within and without the ranks of the Jewish camp survivors quickly formed and were effective in their efforts to restore the survivors to a state of normal functioning. DP camps in the American zone in Germany were self-governed. Schools for youngsters were set up as well as trade schools for the adults that would give them a skill to make them self-sufficient. Other activities were inaugurated such as sports clubs, theatre, traveling concert groups, and newspapers.

With some measure of life restored, a discernable goal seized the DP's. Having been persecuted mercilessly as a race (as the Germans perceived them), they wanted to be reborn as a nation. This yearning for unity, born out of the bitter fate they had shared during the Holocaust, was focused on Palestine. At this time, Palestine was under the control of Great Britain and their "White Paper" prevented immigration there. However, throughout the world, and particularly in the United States, public opinion was aroused by the despairing situation of the surviving Jews and demands increased here as elsewhere to provide them immediate entry to Palestine.

During this time, Great Britain's wartime government, which had been led by Winston Churchill, was replaced by a new Labor government. Yet the Labor government, which had initially promised opposition to all the platforms of Churchill's Conservative party, including rescinding the "White Paper," reversed its stance. A large, illegal immigration effort was then launched. The British tried to stop the refugees by intercepting the decrepit, leaky ships that carried them and interning those aboard in detention camps on the island of Cyprus, near Greece. But although imprisoned once again, the survivors did not lose hope. They used this long period of waiting to prepare themselves for life in a Jewish homeland. Eventually, the problem was put before the United Nations and each country had an opportunity to give or withhold political support for the establishment of a state of Israel. In 1948, the surviving Jews witnessed the birth of the state of Israel and the renewal of Jewish life in a Jewish state.

For all the survivors, no matter where they were liberated nor to what country they emigrated, liberation would always be remembered as a mixture of joy in being free and the realization of the magnitude of losses. They hoped that some justice would be found for all they suffered. It was also hoped that those who committed horrendous crimes would be punished not only for the sake of justice but also as a deterrent to others in the future.

Nazi War Criminals on Trial

During the course of the war, several governments-in-exile and various Jewish groups urged retaliation against Germany for the destruction they were wreaking. However, the whole stress of the Allied response had been on post-war punishment. The Allied leaders claimed that attention must not be diverted from the war effort and that the time for retribution would come later, when the war was won. Thus, while millions were being slaughtered, no reprisals against the Nazis were threatened -- none enacted; no large scale rescue considered -- or attempted. The Jews, of course, in the Allied countries tried to help. But their pleas were ignored or stymied by bureaucrats who promised, conferred, and delayed. In the end, the emphasis shifted to the post-war trials which finally drew attention to the crimes of the Nazis.

At the end of the war, on August 8, 1945, the Allies established an International Military Tribunal. Its charter enumerated the legal principles according to which the Nazi criminals were to be punished. The crimes within the Tribunal's jurisdiction were also defined. Conspiracy, by leaders, organizers, instigators, or accomplices, would be responsible for all acts performed by any persons in the execution of the following three crimes:

- (1) Crimes Against Peace - namely, crimes involved in the planning and initiation of aggressive warfare;
- (2) War crimes - including criminal acts violating the accepted rule governing behavior toward civilian populations and prisoners, as required by international treaties and conventions to which Germany was a signatory;
- (3) Crimes against humanity - murder, slavery, theft of property, and persecution on racial and political grounds.⁶

The charter, which also became known as the London Agreement, was signed by the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union. It became the basis for the prosecution of war criminals. A United States Supreme Court Justice, Robert Jackson, was commissioned by President Harry S. Truman to form the International Military Tribunal and preside, at the same time, as Representative and Chief Counsel for war crimes.

The International Military Tribunal opened in Nuremberg, Germany in August 1946. Eight judges were to try the Nazis, two judges from each of the Allied powers. However, of all the hundreds of thousands who acted directly or conspired to murder so many millions, only 22 Nazi leaders were brought to stand trial. The most senior of these was Hermann Göring, head of the Air Force and considered by many as second in command after Hitler; Alfred Rosenberg, one of the principal Nazi ideologists; Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy; Field marshal Wilhelm Keitel, head of the Army; Hans Frank, governor general of occupied Poland and Julius Streicher, the editor of an inflammatory, violently antisemitic German newspaper *Der Stürmer*. Missing were Martin Bormann, chief of the chancery of the Nazi Party, who was tried "in absentia," and Heinrich Mueller, one of the heads of the Gestapo who had disappeared without leaving a trace. Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler and Joseph Goebbels all committed suicide during the closing days of the war. Reinhard Heydrich, who had been in charge of the "Final Solution," had been assassinated in 1942.

Also tried as criminals were six organizations: the Reich cabinet; the Leadership Corps of the Nazi Party; the SS; the SA; the Gestapo and SD (Security Service), and the General Staff and High Command of the German Armed Forces. (See War Crimes Chronology at end of chapter).

Initially, the Jews were not considered a critical element in preparing the criteria according to which the major Nazi criminals were to be judged. It was only when the prosecution began to gather materials for their cases that documents were discovered and testimony taken from survivors. The evidence created an enormous sensation. Beginning on November 20, 1945, the

trials extended over 403 public sessions until October 1, 1946. Three out of the 22 accused were found innocent and freed immediately. Twelve were given death sentences. Göring took poison before he could be executed. The rest received sentences ranging from life to ten years imprisonment. The six organizations were also found guilty. That meant that members of such organizations later had to stand "Denazification" trials.

The International Military Tribunal went into detail in exposing each facet of the criminal intentions which, in particular, decimated the Jewish population of Europe. It also did not camouflage what happened behind euphemisms such as "stateless persons" or "noncombatant victims." Due to this forthright stance, trials in almost every other country followed their precedent.

Subsequent Trials

A short time later, twelve individual trials were also held at Nuremberg. These trials were known as "Subsequent Nuremberg Proceedings." The defendants were groups of Nazi criminals who had chief responsibility for the crimes. Among the groups tried were the "Nazi Doctors" and several SS organizations, which included some members of the Einsatzgruppen (Mobile Killing Units) and some who had been in charge of the concentration camps. Other trials included the heads and management of the largest industries who had been implicated in helping to finance or otherwise promote the war or had employed slave labor, such as I.G. Farben Works, a conglomerate of eight major German chemical manufacturers, and the Krupp armament industries.

In addition to these major trials, smaller trials were held in Munich. Also, "Denazification" proceedings were held all over Germany. Germans who were members of any of the six organizations that were tried and found guilty by the International Military Tribunal were either cleared of criminal association or were referred to other courts for criminal trials. Of these twelve trials, 177 Nazis were tried and convicted. A Clemency Act, passed in January 1951 by John J. McCloy, the United States high commissioner in Germany, resulted in freeing the majority of the accused.⁷

During all these trials, acts of cruelty and the annihilation of Jews under the Nazi regime were exposed. Testimony was also provided regarding the extent and degree of persecution to which numerous other groups were also targeted for death or slave labor by the Nazis. In the last trial under the Allied courts, one of the chief U.S. prosecutors, presented to the tribunal and the entire world a critical document: A record of the minutes taken at the Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942 during which cooperation was requested and received from all party and government institutions involved in implementing the "Final Solution."

From a country of more than 80 million which had conspired and succeeded in killing six million Jews and at least five million others, for reasons unrelated to the war itself, the sum total of Nazi criminals convicted in the three Western Occupation Zones of Germany (U.S., British and French) between 1945 and 1949 was 5,025 of whom 806 were sentenced to death. In only 486 cases was the verdict carried out and the accused executed.⁸ No figures have ever been released regarding the trials of Nazis in the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany, but it is assumed that tens of thousands were tried and most of them convicted and deported to the Soviet Union to serve their sentences. In addition to the trials held by the Allied courts, almost every country that was occupied by the Germans has held trials since the end of the war. In Poland, approximately 40,000 persons accused of Nazi crimes were tried; in Czechoslovakia approximately 20,000; in Hungary, no official data is available after 1948, but until that time, proceedings were instituted against almost 40,000 persons; in Holland, between 1948 and 1952, more than 200 accused collaborators and several Germans were tried. Trials were also held in Denmark, Belgium, Norway, and France. "All in all, according to West German sources, about 80,000 Germans were convicted in all the countries (including the Soviet Union and East Germany) for committing crimes against humanity."⁹ After 1945, West German and Austrian courts were empowered to hold trials and approximately 80,000 were investigated and 10,000 indicted.

Results of Trials Held in West Germany and Austrian Courts

According to German criminal law, it must be proven that the individual committed acts of murder or was an accomplice to these acts. Most of those who could testify had been either killed during the Holocaust or emigrated to other countries. Finding accomplices who witnessed the crimes and would testify was almost impossible; finding witnesses among the ranks of the victims had other problems. In the case of the German high command officials who actually issued the orders, most the victims never met nor came into contact with them. Many of the survivors could not be located; some said that they simply could not return to Germany or Austria because of the horrors they would feel; others refused to testify because they could not withstand reliving their terrible past. Documents and records were often inconsistent and, most important, many German and Austrian jurists had themselves served the Nazi regime and yet were permitted to continue as judges!

Although Germany made somewhat of an effort to locate, try, and convict known Nazi criminals, in Austria, the situation was a complete mockery of justice. Ultimately, in both countries there was a "tendency to exonerate criminals from severe punishment or to acquit them completely on the basis that they had committed these acts out of 'an error of conscience.'"¹⁰ The puny number of convictions at the trials in Germany and Austria was dismally inadequate, and a large number of guilty Nazis escaped justice.

By the 1960s, despite the enormity of their crimes, concern for searching out and trying Nazi war criminals was rapidly diminishing. The "Cold War" made West Germany an ally of the United States and no longer were the words "Nazi" and "German" used interchangeably. Between 1963 and 1966, 22 defendants were accused of committing crimes in Auschwitz before a court in the German Federal Republic. All received prison sentences, and nine defendants received sentences of life imprisonment. But one trial took place in the 1960s which overshadowed the Auschwitz trials. It was the trial of Adolf Eichmann held in Jerusalem during 1961 and 1962.

The Eichmann Trial

Adolf Eichmann was a petty Nazi bureaucrat who rose in rank to ultimately receive and exercise monstrous powers. He was chief of operations in the execution of the Nazi plan to exterminate the whole of European Jewry. In 1934, Eichmann had been sent to Palestine for his work in the Security Service (SD). He gave a report on his trip and set about acquiring a knowledge of Judaism, even learning some Yiddish and Hebrew. By 1938, he had become the resident expert on "Jewish Affairs." In March 1938, he was sent to Austria where he devoted himself with ruthless zeal to organizing expulsion, and later the deportations of the Jews on an assembly-line basis. His organization was called the Center for Jewish Emigration. When the implementation of the "Final Solution" was ordered to mean the complete physical destruction of the Jewish people, Eichmann was placed in charge of every aspect of this operation. "He was responsible not only for ensuring the extermination of the Jews, but also for the spoliation of their property, planning the sterilization of people who were only partly Jews, and deceiving the outside world and hiding the true facts concerning the mass murders. . ."¹¹

At the end of the war, Eichmann was taken prisoner. However, his true identity was not discovered and he escaped. In 1950, he took up residence with his wife and three sons in Argentina, assumed a new name, and lived in tranquility. In May 1960, the Israelis abducted him and flew him to Israel to stand trial. The trial of Adolf Eichmann lasted from April to December, 1961. He was found guilty of all the main charges and hanged. The trial was recorded in its entirety, and television stations throughout the world carried excerpts of the proceedings. It was not long before Eichmann revealed himself and in some measure explained the Nazi mentality. In one submitted document, a colleague describes Eichmann's last address to his men before the war's end: "I shall leap into my grave laughing, because the feeling that I have the deaths of five

million people on my conscience will be for me a source of extraordinary satisfaction."¹² Eichmann remained coldly impersonal throughout his trial and totally devoid of any remorse for what he had done. In other documents introduced showing conversations with other SS, he blamed himself for not having been ruthless enough. He saw himself not just as a recipient of orders but as an idealist. "His description...about the 'magnificent way' in which the death trains rolled from Holland to Auschwitz makes spine-chilling reading."¹³

With Eichmann's trial, the full drama and the tragedy of the Holocaust unfolded. Like many of the Nazis who had been caught and tried before him, he tried to minimize the importance of his role and blame his actions on military directives. "I was just following orders," was the implication behind many of his responses. The courts determined that he had acted out of personal desire for the annihilation of European Jewry, and that he could not rely on the argument that he was merely carrying out "orders." After an appeal was dismissed and a plea for clemency by the president of Israel rejected, Eichmann was executed by hanging at the end of May 1962. "His body was cremated — like the remains of his victims — and his ashes were scattered at sea so as not to sully Israeli soil."¹⁴

The trial of Eichmann engendered widespread sympathy for Israel's actions and produced a renewed revulsion against the Nazis. There were also, of course, dissident cries for the way Eichmann was captured and concern for rendering a fair judgment in an Israeli court. Nevertheless, the bulk of public opinion felt that holding the trial in Israel was not only an act of justice but a critical form of public education, especially for the new generation who failed to grasp the immensity and implications of the Holocaust. Questions were raised as to how such horrifying crimes had been possible and why the rest of the world did not react to prevent them. For the first time, a trial of a Nazi did not center on Germany's role in the war. It centered on the Holocaust, an event which had been largely absent in all previous trials. The concern never to allow the repetition of such an event became crystallized during the Eichmann trial and provided an impetus for the rejection of hatred and prejudice, no matter to which group that reaction is directed.

[The Search for Nazis](#)

[ODESSA and the "Rat Line"](#)

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, many hundreds or possibly thousands of Nazi officials and collaborators assumed new identities in Germany and Austria. Some found refuge in the Middle East among Arab nations who became enemies of the fledgling state of Israel. Many war criminals received help from pro-Nazi sympathizers within the Vatican. An organization of former SS men called ODESSA was formed to help the Nazi criminals on their escape route, known as the "rat line." The criminals fled from Austria and Bavaria, Germany to Rome, Italy which became a safe place for the Nazis to hide. With help from the Vatican, they then left Italy for South America. Adolf Eichmann and Josef Mengele are among the Nazis who escaped justice and made their way from Italy to South America in this fashion. The Roman Catholic Germans who assisted them in their escapes knew very well the wartime histories of those whom they were helping.¹⁵

[Operation Paperclip](#)

The late 1940s and early 1950s was a period of time in American history when sentiment against communism was so pervasive, especially in the United States, that Western intelligence agencies assisted many Nazis, including war criminals, in escaping from Europe and settling into new lives so as to prevent them from going to work for communist nations. As many as 10,000 known Nazis made their way into the United States under the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 - 1951. They entered the United States legally along with legitimate displaced persons. Arranged by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, this was known as "Operation Paperclip." Alan Ryan, former director of the United States Department of Justice Office of Special Investigations (described below) has

said, "They came through the front door with their papers in order." A great majority of these war criminals were scientists and technicians who, when brought to the United States, were put to work for the military and for NASA through a joint Pentagon-State Department-Intelligence operation.¹⁶

Thus, a number of Nazis were intentionally brought to America by the United States. It required the cooperation of several governmental agencies to have the original identities of the Nazis and their collaborators deleted, their pasts expunged, and new names and histories provided. Universities and private corporations emulated the United States government, recruiting former Nazis regardless of their war histories.¹⁷ Other Nazis went to South America where they lived full lives in the midst of friends from former Nazi networks. Until the late 1980s, some Nazis were even in high government positions in Germany.

The assistance of American and other Western governments to the successful evasion of justice by Nazi war criminals has only recently come to light and is truly a shameful chapter in United States history. It is all the more offensive when one considers that during the war, only one-tenth of America's quotas of European refugees were utilized, as a result of the legal obstacles put in place by the Department of State and the indifference of most senior officials in the Roosevelt Administration.¹⁸ After the war, it took, on average, approximately five and one half years for Polish-Jewish refugees, who were forced to remain in Displaced Persons Camps, to receive visas to enter the United States after a considerable amount of red tape. They first needed a clean bill of health and guarantees that they would not be dependent on public support. Yet, those who were responsible for heinous crimes against innocent civilians breezed into this country. Even today, thousands of cold-blooded murderers continue to live free among countries such as the United States.

The Office of Special Investigations

Since its establishment within the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice in the fall of 1979, the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) has investigated and initiated prosecutions of over one hundred individuals living in the United States who assisted the Nazis in perpetrating acts of persecution. The key legislation enforced by OSI is Public Law 95-549, passed by Congress on October 30, 1978, known as the Holtzman Amendment to the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952, which stated that individuals who had persecuted any person on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or political opinion, under the direction of the Nazi government of Germany or its allies, are to be deported from the United States and barred from entering this country.

The principal sponsor of this law was Elizabeth Holtzman, a member of Congress from New York, who had worked for several years to focus attention on the fact that numerous individuals who played a role in the Nazi reign of terror had managed to immigrate to the United States after the war. In 1978, an office was established in the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to pursue these cases.

Former Nazis first came to America in the late 1940s under a program to aid the refugees and displaced persons in postwar Europe. The passage of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 ("DP Act") led to the immigration of more than 400,000 displaced persons to America, and although this legislation contained provisions excluding participants in Nazi-sponsored persecution, numerous persons implicated in the perpetration of such acts managed to conceal their true pasts and obtain U.S. visas.

The Refugee Relief Act of 1953 made available 200,000 additional visas. Enacted during the Cold War, it focused as much as those who fled communism as on those who had suffered under the Nazis. The screening process was even less effective in weeding out ex-Nazis.

Among those who took advantage of the new immigration legislation to begin a new life in the United States were at least hundreds of individuals who had assisted or participated in acts of Nazi-sponsored persecution, including genocide. After the Nuremberg and Dachau trials ended, there was little sustained Allied interest in pursuing Nazi perpetrators, and INS devoted limited resources to that search domestically. As of 1977, just two persons implicated in Nazi crimes of persecution had been removed from the United States. With growing interest on Capitol Hill, Representative Holtzman called for a “complete overhaul of the efforts against Nazi war criminals,” and the creation of a special task force. In 1977, the Special Litigation Unit was created within the INS to handle the cases. The unit did not succeed in winning any cases.

Finally, on September 4, 1979, Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti issued an order on the “Transfer of Functions of the Special Litigation Unit within the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice to the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice.” This marked the founding of OSI. The first two directors were Walter Rockler, a former Nuremberg prosecutor, and Alan A. Ryan Jr. The current director is Eli Rosenbaum.

Although OSI got a relatively late start in its pursuit of Nazi persecutors who had immigrated to the United States, it has nevertheless succeeded in investigating more than 1,400 suspects. To date, OSI has moved against 107 individuals. OSI has, at this writing, denaturalized 60 Nazi persecutors, and 48 such individuals have been removed from the United States. The unit currently has twenty cases in federal courts around the country.

OSI has been called “the most successful Nazi-hunting unit in the world” (ABC-TV News, 2/25/95) and “the most effective and aggressive Nazi-hunting outfit in the world” (Knight-Ridder News Service, 10/13/96). It has won the Founders Award of the American Association of Immigration Lawyers and similar awards from numerous organizations representing Holocaust survivors, including the 1995 Holocaust Memorial Award of the Holocaust Survivors and Friends Education Center. In 1997, the Anti-Defamation League named OSI the first recipient of its newly established annual International Human Rights Award, created to recognize those who have “contributed in a profound and exemplary manner to the cause of justice on behalf of victims of human rights violations.”

In addition to its mandate to seek out Nazi persecutors living in the United States, OSI is also responsible for preventing such persons from entering this country. The names of more than 60,000 persons suspected of being excludable from the U.S. because of involvement in acts of Nazi-sponsored persecution have been added by OSI to the interagency border control “Watchlist System.” Since 1989 (when OSI began compiling statistics on this aspect of its work), 144 persons have been blocked from entering the United States at U.S. ports of entry.

OSI continues to initiate, develop, and prosecute new cases more than five decades following the end of World War II. Even after the unit itself passes into history, the record of OSI’s work will document the rigorous efforts made to pursue those who had collaborated with the Axis governments in carrying out their inhumane policies. The courtroom record created by OSI attorneys, the scores of published court decisions in OSI’s cases, and the documentation assembled by OSI historians from sources throughout the world will likely prove invaluable to future generations as they study the history of Nazi inhumanity.¹⁹

Renowned Nazi Hunters and Prosecutors

Simon Wiesenthal

Simon Wiesenthal is a survivor who, since the end of the war, has devoted his life to the pursuit of justice and to the perpetuation of the authentic memory of the Holocaust. He has been committed to bringing Nazi perpetrators to trial.

He was born in 1908 in the town of Buczacz in the region of Galicia in what was then the Austro-Hungarian empire and is now part of the Ukraine. Before the war, Simon Wiesenthal had studied to be an architect at the Prague Technical University. When the war began, he was living in Lvów, Poland. He was arrested by Ukrainian police and spent most of the war in concentration camps, including Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald, and Mauthausen from which he was liberated by the United States Army in 1945. Most of his family died in the Holocaust.

After the war, he worked for a time in the War Crimes section of the United States Army in Austria and in 1947 opened the Jewish Historical Documentation Center in Linz, Austria. With the help of approximately 30 volunteers, Wiesenthal began to gather evidence against Nazi war criminals. His small operation faced considerable frustration since the interest in prosecuting Nazis had waned in the face of what others felt were the more immediate concerns of the United States and Soviet "Cold War." When Wiesenthal closed the office in 1954, the only dossier which he kept was that of Adolf Eichmann.

Wiesenthal then threw himself into relief and welfare work and operated a vocational training school, but he continued his vigilant pursuit of finding Adolf Eichmann. Years later, and with the cooperation of the Israeli authorities, Wiesenthal found Eichmann living in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He was taken to Israel where he was tried and found guilty of mass murder. He was executed in 1962.

Encouraged by his success with the Eichmann case, Simon Wiesenthal reopened his office and since that time, has continued to concentrate on his search for Nazi criminals. After Eichmann, among the most famous Nazis Wiesenthal was directly or indirectly involved in locating were Franz Stangl, the commandant of the Treblinka and Sobibor killing centers, Franz Mürer, commandant of the Vilna ghetto, and Karl Silberbauer, the policeman who arrested Anne Frank. He searched for the notorious Josef Mengele, who was never found and is believed since to have died. A recipient of twelve honorary degrees and many accolades, he continues his work even in his advancing age.

[Beate Klarsfeld](#)

After the war in France, the great majority of Nazi criminals were never arrested. A young, German Christian woman named Beate married Serge Klarsfeld, a French Jew whose father died in Auschwitz. It was largely through her husband that Beate learned the full scope of the Holocaust, and her husband's tragedy became the motivation of a personal mission. Inspired by Beate, Serge agreed to join in a campaign to search for these Nazis.

She came to the attention of the public in the 1960s when she slapped the face of Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, chancellor of West Germany. Kiesinger had been an active Nazi involved in propaganda during the 1930s and 1940s. Her slap was intended to draw public attention to the complacency of West Germans regarding the placement of former Nazis in respectable, let alone high offices in the country. Her desire was to ensure that a new generation of young Germans did not forget the past and would find it unacceptable to have ex-Nazis in important positions in West Germany as if their pasts did not matter. They were successful in tracking down and exposing Klaus Barbie, head of the Gestapo in Lyons, France, who lived at various times in Peru and Bolivia. The Barbie case exploded when the United States government officially admitted that they had used Barbie (the "Butcher of Lyons") and protected him from persecution.²⁰ Other criminals brought to justice by the Klarsfelds include Kurt Lischka, a high-ranking Gestapo officer, and Herbert Hagen, a high-ranking SS officer. They have attempted to obtain the extradition of war criminal Alois Brunner, one of Adolf Eichmann's assistants, who continues to find sanctuary in Syria.

Their second most famous case (after that of Klaus Barbie) related to Dr. Josef Mengele, a physician at the Auschwitz concentration camp who conducted selections and performed torturous "medical" experiments on numerous inmates. Mengele was particularly intrigued with genetics and

into his sphere of barbarity at the concentration camps were many sets of twins on whom he operated, leaving almost all of them in crippling pain, disfigured, or dead. As investigators came close to finally locating Mengele, it was announced that he had drowned while swimming off the coast of Brazil in February 1979.

The Klarsfelds have been continually active and successful in renewing trials and bringing to judgment a number of Nazi criminals who operated in France. They are persistent and have totally and permanently devoted themselves to the cause of justice on behalf of all the Nazis' victims.

During 1997 and 1998, her son Arno Klarsfeld, an attorney, participated with his father Serge in the prosecution in France of Maurice Papon, a Vichy bureaucrat whose signature was found on numerous orders to deport approximately 1,560 Jews from Bordeaux, France to Auschwitz during the war. His case aroused considerable controversy in France. His past as a collaborator in the Vichy government did not interfere with his career after the war, and for more than forty years he served as a local government official in Bordeaux. It was argued that he was merely an agent of the Vichy government, not one of the architects of the deportation and murder of France's Jews. That fact does not make him less guilty, however. He still participated in crimes against humanity. At the age of 87, he was found guilty, sentenced to ten years in prison, and ordered to pay 4.6 million francs (about \$800,000) to the families of victims.

[John J. Loftus](#)

John J. Loftus is a former United States Justice Department Nazi War Crimes Prosecutor. Author of *The Secret War Against the Jews*, he has uncovered Nazis living in Argentina, including confessed war criminal Eric Priebke. Researching U.S. archives in Maryland in the course of his work for the attorney general's Nazi-hunting unit, he has uncovered evidence that the British, American, and Canadian secret services have sneaked Nazi war criminals into western countries and interfered with numerous Israeli interests in areas of commerce and the military. He has argued that despite American and Canadian support for Israel, the desire to obtain a cheap and plentiful supply of oil from Arab nations has led to the selling out of Israel by western government bureaucrats.

[Eli Rosenbaum](#)

Eli Rosenbaum is currently the director of the Office of Special Investigations of the Justice Department. He began working for OSI as a trial attorney, serving as co-counsel on numerous major cases. Many former Nazis have been denaturalized and deported, thanks to his efforts, including Archbishop Valerian Trifa, a wartime leader of the Romanian Iron Guard, and Hans Lipschis, a former SS-Rottenführer at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp complex.

In November 1985, he was appointed General Counsel of the World Jewish Congress. At the WJC, he directed the investigation that resulted in the worldwide exposure of the Nazi past of former United Nations Secretary Kurt Waldheim. He is the author of *BETRAYAL: The Untold Story of the Kurt Waldheim Investigation and Cover-Up*.

[Telford Taylor](#)

Telford Taylor served as a U.S. Army intelligence officer during World War II and was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. After the war, he joined the American prosecution staff at the first Nuremberg trial. In 1946, he was subsequently promoted to brigadier general and made Chief Prosecutor for the ensuing Nuremberg trials. The legal and moral principles of war and peace established at the Nuremberg trials continue to forcefully influence international law today. Specifically, the trials marked the first time in history when international criminal law was extended to include domestic crimes and atrocities committed against racial or religious groups.²¹

Justice Robert H. Jackson

Robert H. Jackson was named Attorney General of the United States by President Roosevelt in 1940, and became Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court in July 1941. By executive order, President Truman on May 2, 1945 appointed Justice Jackson as Representative of the United States and Chief of Counsel to prepare and prosecute charges of war crimes and atrocities against the Axis powers' leaders, to be brought to trial before an international, military tribunal.

In his moving and eloquent opening statement at the Nuremberg trials, Justice Jackson declaimed, "The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated."

. . .

The biological clock is ticking faster than the creaking wheels of justice claiming old Nazis. Present and future generations must be made aware that no bad deed goes unpunished and that we are responsible for all our actions. We cannot afford to forget. Forgiveness is not ours to give. They know what they did.

Victims' Assets

More than fifty years since the end of World War II have passed, and issues concerning the restitution and recovery of the assets of Nazi victims are at long last coming into focus. Gold, precious gems, bank accounts, real estate, financial instruments (e.g. currency, bonds, stocks), and artworks were all confiscated from the Jewish people and other Nazi victims. Family heirlooms were stolen. Money was often paid as ransom by Jewish people to the Nazis in a futile attempt to save their lives. Gold was even extracted from the teeth of murdered camp victims. Art collections seized by the Nazis have eventually found their way back to the art market, where contemporary collectors often find that they have paid high prices for artworks that rightfully belong to victims or their heirs.

During the Holocaust, many wealthy individuals tried to protect their assets. Opening bank accounts in foreign countries and taking out life insurance policies were common ways in which persecuted Jews attempted to keep their life savings out of the hands of the Nazis. Many of these bank accounts were lost after the war, including those at Swiss banks, whose depositors thought the country's bank secrecy laws would protect their assets. (Ironically, these secrecy laws made it nearly impossible for survivors and their heirs to recover their bank accounts after the war.) Insurance companies never had to pay benefits to policy holders who could no longer pay their premiums for reasons of death or internment in camps or to claimants who no longer possessed the paperwork documenting their policies. Worse still, in some cases, entire families were murdered, and no one survived to attempt to file a claim.

Since the end of the war, banks and insurance companies have routinely requested death certificates from Holocaust survivors or their heirs who have tried to make claims for financial restitution. Concentration camps certainly did not issue death certificates. The interest earned for more than 50 years on assets such as bank accounts and life insurance added to the original investments has been estimated to be many billions of dollars.

During World War II, the Nazis conspired with the heads of major insurance companies to strip Holocaust victims of their rightful insurance benefits, including those for property damage. For example, after Kristallnacht the Nazis forbade payment to Jewish policy holders (and made the Jews pay to clean up and repair the damage). Four major European insurance companies, Allianz, Generali, Winterthur, and Zurich have over 90 subsidiaries operating throughout the United States. The legal situation in the cases of the claims against the insurance companies is complex because

many of the original policies were underwritten in what later became communist countries. The insurance companies have long argued that they are not liable for policies made by companies nationalized by Eastern European communists. However, now that communist governments have fallen, the insurance companies have steadfastly refused to open their records, even to third parties who might be objective in their evaluations of unpaid claims.

All of this places the so-called neutrality of countries such as Switzerland in a completely different light. We are now learning that neutrality meant different things for different countries. Many factors influenced the “neutrality” including the fear of invasion, profit motives, and the desire to avoid getting swept into the war. The German Reichsbank, or central bank, took the gold of survivors and the gold reserves of countries occupied by the Nazis and passed them through other national banks, especially the Swiss National Bank, and thereby raised funds to finance the German war effort. Germany otherwise would have been bankrupt in 1943 if the Swiss National Bank had not converted its ill-gotten gains into Swiss francs. Thus, Swiss financial activities were extremely damaging. They prolonged the war and thereby brought on millions of deaths. Argentina, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey were also “neutral” countries which were recipients of looted gold in exchange for materials necessary for the German war economy. Some of the victims’ gold was returned along with the monetary gold to the formerly occupied countries by the United States, Britain, and France just after the war. But much of it remained in the so-called neutral countries which offered little cooperation in returning looted assets.²²

There are several reasons why all this is coming to light now. After the war, Western countries focused on rebuilding war-torn Europe and cooperating to oppose communism. No thought was given to the homeless and stateless “displaced persons” or to their financial recovery. At that time, foremost on the minds of the survivors was searching for their families, grieving their losses, and rebuilding their lives in the new homelands to which they had emigrated.

Even today, the survivors search for justice and for an accurate history of what happened during the Holocaust, especially in terms of what happened to the assets of all the victims. With the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, files from the KGB in the former Soviet Union have been opened, as well as files from the International Red Cross. The Vatican’s files are also extensive as they had very detailed information as to what was happening to the Jews in Europe. Tens of thousands of priests in cities, towns, and villages saw houses emptied, whole villages deported, and heard confessions. It is hoped that the Vatican might finally be ready to divulge the information contained in its archives, which has remained secret for all this time.

In 1998, the average age of a Holocaust survivor is approximately 75. Sadly, many financial companies are winning a war of attrition — the longer they wait, the less people will still be around to receive something for what was taken away from them. For the survivors, the issue is not the money, but rather, one of justice. Why should these companies continue to benefit from Nazi plunder? No one chose them as heirs to the survivors’ inheritances.

Slave laborers have never been compensated for their forced labor in German industry, especially those from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. German companies often found ways to cloak the true nationality of their business operations in neutral countries in order to continue to trade with American companies who profited from these dealings. In September 1998, two lawsuits were filed in New York and New Jersey against twelve German and Austrian companies, including Volkswagen, Siemens, Krupp-Hoesch, MAN, Daimler-Benz, Audi, BMW, and Leica Camera. Damages sought in the suits exceed \$150 million. Daimler-Benz started paying out funds in the 1980s, and in July 1998, Volkswagen voluntarily announced a plan to set up a fund to compensate the thousands of slave laborers who worked for the company at its headquarters during the war.

Many survivors are living in poverty in the United States, Israel, and elsewhere, knowing their families once had assets which were confiscated by the Nazis. It is terribly sad to think of them

continuing to suffer after they experienced so much pain and grief in their early lives. The medical problems of aging Holocaust survivors are more complicated than those of a comparable senior citizen who did not have to endure the hunger, disease, malnutrition, torture, and trauma that survivors did. Hence, their medical bills are very high. It is the hope of many who have been negotiating on behalf of the survivors that efforts will be made to provide them with the long-term health care they need and deserve.

Recently, two major Swiss banks, Union Bank of Switzerland and Cr dit Suisse have agreed to pay \$1.25 billion dollars to special funds to be created for the subsequent distribution of funds to Holocaust survivors following more than three years of negotiations. Although it sounds like (and is) a lot of money, it is far less than the true present value of Holocaust victims' assets which flowed through Swiss banks during the Nazi era. Under pressure from various sources, notably from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, the insurance companies have begun to settle claims with survivors. Generali recently offered a settlement of \$125 million dollars.

It is undoubtedly painful for many countries to face their wartime history, especially on issues which damage their reputations and reopen old wounds. But by confronting past injustices and moving toward a more just disposition of victims' assets, hopefully they are making a better and more honorable future possible. As Stuart E. Eizenstat, Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade and Special Envoy of the State Department on Property Restitution in Central and Eastern Europe has said, "Ultimately, the United States, our Allies, and the neutral nations alike should be judged not so much by the actions or inactions of a previous generation, but more by our generation's willingness to face the past honestly, to help right the wrongs, and to deal with the injustices suffered by the victims of Nazi aggression."²³

Apologies and Other Restitution

The Vatican

In March 1998, the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews released a fourteen-page report entitled, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah [Holocaust]*. The church called the Holocaust "unspeakable tragedy, which can never be forgotten." It made a distinction between historical Christian anti-Judaism and the Nazis' pagan, racial antisemitism. For the first time, the Church conceded that at least in some cases, persecution of the Jews was "made easier by the anti-Jewish prejudices imbedded in some Christian hearts." For many Jewish people, the report did not go far enough to atone for the failure of the Catholic church, for the most part, and most particularly Pope Pius XII (who is up for sainthood) to speak out against the Holocaust. For others, it is a start, and it is hoped that the Vatican will soon make public its records from that time.²⁴

France

Over 76,000 Jews were deported from France during World War II. In 1997, the French Catholic Church apologized for their silence while their Jewish compatriots were rounded up, sent to concentration camps, and murdered. In October of the same year, French physicians apologized for blacklisting Jewish doctors during the war, preventing them from practicing and turning them over to the Nazis.

The Red Cross

The Red Cross recently acknowledged its "moral failure" by having kept silent as Jews were deported and killed during the Holocaust.

[The Tripartite Gold Commission \(TGC\) and the Nazi Persecutee Relief Fund](#)

The Tripartite Gold Commission was “created in 1946 as a mechanism to redistribute gold looted from national treasuries by the Nazis that had come into the possession of the Allies at the end of the war” by the United States, Great Britain, and France. It has recently been discovered that after the war, too much gold was returned to nations who made claims, because it had been mixed together by the TGC with gold looted from Nazi victims. More than 50 years later, this is still being sorted out.²⁵

The Nazi Persecutee Relief Act was signed into law by President Clinton in February 1998. It provides for the U.S. to make a contribution to the Nazi Persecutee Relief Fund, which will also be supported by eight other countries, including the wartime neutral countries of Sweden and Argentina.²⁶

[Switzerland](#)

In addition to the settlement made by the two largest Swiss banks mentioned in the section above on Victims’ Assets, the Swiss government has proposed the creation of a \$4.7 billion Solidarity Foundation which “would generate about \$200 million a year to support humanitarian causes around the world, including assistance to victims of genocide such as the Holocaust.”²⁷

[The Netherlands](#)

The Government of the Netherlands has budgeted \$400 million during 1998 for programs “assisting victims of war and persecution by providing guaranteed incomes as well as medical and psychological care ... Recipients include individuals persecuted during the German occupation of the Netherlands from 1940 to 1945 and their next of kin.” Fifty thousand Holocaust victims will receive funds from the Dutch government during the course of the year.²⁸

[Great Britain](#)

In April 1998, the British government “apologized to Holocaust victims who lost assets deposited in the country during the War and it established a special process for them to claim compensation. It will publish the names of approximately 25,000 victims whose assets were seized under a “trading with the enemy” law which applied to the assets of the citizens of nations occupied by Nazi Germany.”²⁹

[Norway](#)

At the end of April 1998, the government of Norway proposed the establishment of “a \$60 million restitution fund for Norwegian Holocaust survivors due to the fact that restitution for material resources and injustices suffered by Norwegian Jews were never made.”³⁰

[Germany](#)

For some time, the German government has been paying restitution to Holocaust survivors called Wiedergutmachung. Applying for this pension has involved filling out a considerable amount of paperwork and required much documentation. In January 1998, “the German Government and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany in Germany (CJMC) announced the outlines of an agreement to establish a fund on the basis of a \$111 million contribution by Germany over a four-year period to assist uncompensated Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This new commitment builds on the \$60 billion reparations effort over the last four decades that the German Government has undertaken to compensate victims of the Holocaust, and benefits those who were not reached behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War.”³¹

It needs to be emphasized that to date, with the exception of Wiedergutmachung, the survivors have received very little of the financial restitution enumerated above. Many survivors continue to live in poverty while these settlements are negotiated on their behalf. If and when these funds are distributed, it is hoped that priority will be given to those who are most in need.

. . .

The Holocaust was of such sweeping magnitude in its swath of destruction that it continues to occupy the consciousness of mankind. For many, the passage of time may have eased the pain and numbed the initial, pervasive grief over the loss of family and loved ones. Yet, this same passage of time has also created a perspective which has served to accentuate the historic significance of these events.

As Stuart Eizenstat has pointed out,

“It is dispiriting that it has taken the world so long to confront these long-neglected issues. At the same time, it is inspiring that so much progress is now being made to complete the historical record while the past is still a living memory and while the living survivors of the Holocaust can gain some comfort that at last, justice, however imperfect, is being done.”³²

ENDNOTES

¹ Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1975), title.

² United States Department of State, "For the Dead and the Living We Must Bear Witness" in *The Liberation of the Nazi Concentration Camps* ([Washington, D.C.] United States Department of State, October 26-28, 1981), 18-24.

³ United States Department of State, 30.

⁴ Yisrael Gutman & Chaim Schatzker, *The Holocaust and Its Significance* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 1984), 215.

⁵ Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1982), 337.

⁶ Gutman & Schatzker, 233.

⁷ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 16 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House), 294.

⁸ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 16, 294.

⁹ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 16, 296.

¹⁰ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 16, 300.

¹¹ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 6, 518-519.

¹² *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 6, 520-521.

¹³ *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 6, 520.

¹⁴ Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1993), 203.

¹⁵ Berenbaum, 201.

¹⁶ Berenbaum, 201-202.

¹⁷ Berenbaum, 202.

¹⁸ David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), x.

¹⁹ *Office of Special Investigations*, Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (Washington, DC: August 17, 1998).

²⁰ Rochelle Saidel, *The Outraged Conscience* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 6.

²¹ Telford Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1992), 4.

²² Stuart E. Eizenstat, *U.S. and Allied Wartime and Postwar Relations and Negotiations With Argentina, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey on Looted Gold and German External Assets and U.S.*

Concerns About the Fate of the Wartime Ustasha Treasury, (Washington D.C.: United States Department of State, June 1998). Coordinated by Stuart E. Eizenstat, Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade; Special Envoy of the Department of State on Property Restitution in Central And Eastern Europe. Prepared by William Z. Slany, The Historian, Department of State. With the participation of Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Department of State, Department of the Treasury, Federal Reserve Board, National Archives and Records Administration, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, iv-vi, xv.

²³ Eizenstat, xii.

²⁴ David Van Biema, "A Repentance, Sort of" in Time Magazine on the Internet, (March 30, 1998, Vol. 151, No. 12, <http://cgi.pathfinder.com/time/magazine>)

²⁵ Eizenstat, xxi.

²⁶ Eizenstat, xxi.

²⁷ Eizenstat, xxii.

²⁸ Eizenstat, xxii.

²⁹ Eizenstat, xxii.

³⁰ Eizenstat, xxii.

³¹ Eizenstat, xxii.

³² Eizenstat, xxiii.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Students should ask their family members and friends if they know of anyone who fought in World War II. Have them inquire as to whether these people liberated any of the concentration camps. If they did, have students conduct interviews and share them with the class.
2. If possible, bring a liberator into the classroom to discuss his/her experiences during liberation. Before the visit, students should think about and write down questions they would like to ask the liberator.
3. Generally when a survivor is asked what the highlight of his/her life is, most will almost always mention the day of liberation or the day of arrival in their new country. Discuss the importance of this occurrence and help the children to understand how quickly our lives can change because of one particular event. Then ask the students to name three highlights in their lives and have them ask their parents to name three highlights in their lives. After that, have the students share the responses.
4. Based on the readings and testimonies in this unit, have students describe what kinds of conditions the liberators found upon entering the concentration camps.
5. Have students consider and discuss the reasons why many survivors died shortly after liberation.
6. Have students examine and discuss why after liberation the survivors were displaced and dispossessed.
7. Students can define and discuss the following terms: displaced persons, Office of Special Investigations, reparations, denazification, International Military Tribunal.
8. Discuss with students the position and role the following individuals played during liberation and the aftermath: Robert Jackson, George Patton, Simon Wiesenthal, Elizabeth Holtzman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Beate Klarsfeld. An alternative activity is to organize groups of students and have them each discuss one individual. The groups can then share the background with the rest of the class.
9. Have students consider the importance of documenting eyewitness testimony from survivors, liberators, and rescuers.
10. Students can research the background of the Office of Special Investigations (O.S.I.) in the Justice Department. This office has the task of identifying and deporting Nazi war criminals in the United States. Students should be able to find out how and when this office was established.

The following activities come from *A GUIDE TO THE HOLOCAUST*. Copyright 1997 by Grolier Educational. Authored by Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff and Dr. Anita Meyer Meinbach. Reprinted by permission.

11. Ask students to consider why liberation was “bittersweet” to survivors for a number of reasons. Discuss the problems survivors faced in all aspects of life after the Holocaust.

12. Have students research the story of the *Exodus 1947*. They should be able to describe the events surrounding the ship and its passengers. Ask them to consider what they imagine to be the dreams of the passengers, their hopes and their goals.

13. Have students imagine that they are journalists who have entered a concentration camp that has just been liberated. As journalists, they should write articles for the American newspapers detailing what they have witnessed. Before they write their articles, they should locate and analyze photographs that depict concentration camps and liberation. They can then use the information in the photographs to help them write the articles.

The following activities come from *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances (Second Edition)*. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, page 43. Produced by the International Center for Holocaust Studies of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Reprinted by permission of the Department of Defense and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

14. Many of the American liberators say that although they had been through “the Bulge,” through “fierce fighting,” “burning tanks,” “death,” and “horror,” that the concentration camps were different. “This wasn’t war,” said one liberator, “This goes beyond...” What did this liberator mean? How were the camps different from the “horror” they had already witnessed as American soldiers in World War II?

15. General Terry Allen directed his men to stay on at Nordhausen to save human lives rather than continue their drive toward the Elbe. “Everybody dropped their guns and became medics for ... maybe six days,” recalls Sergeant Malachowsky. Why did this American general decide that helping the living, and properly burying the dead, took top priority?

16. Ask students to think about and discuss the following questions:

- a) Do you think the liberators needed a special kind of courage to confront the concentration camps? Explain your answers.
- b) How do you think the experience might have affected their lives?

CORRELATIONS TO THE SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS FOR THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS

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AN AMERICAN SOLDIER WRITES HOME

Paris, France
May 19, 1945

Dear Mother:

In just a few days I will be in an airplane on my way back to the APO to which you write me. Before I leave Europe, I must write this letter and attempt to convey to you that which I saw, felt and gasped at as I saw a war and a frightened peace stagger into a perilous existence. I have seen a dead Germany...If it is not dead, it is certainly ruptured beyond repair. I have seen the beer hall where the era of the inferno and hate began, and as I stood there in the damp moist hall where Nazism was spawned, I heard only the dripping of a bullet pierced beer barrel and the ticking of a clock which had already run out the time of the bastard who made the Munich beer hall a landmark. I saw the retching vomiting of the stone and mortar which had once been listed on maps as Burnheim, Begensberg, Munich, Frankfurt, Augsburg, Linz, and wondered how a civilization could ever again spring from cities so utterly removed from the face of the earth by weapons the enemy taught us to use at Coventry and Canterbury. I have met the Germans, have examined the Storm trooper, his wife and his heritage of hate, and I have learned to hate almost with as much fury as the G.I. who saw his buddy killed at the Bulge, almost as much as the Pole from Bridgeport who lost 100 pounds at Mauthausen, Austria. I have learned now and only now that this war had to be fought. I wish I might have done more. I envy with a bottomless and endless spirit, the American soldier who may tell his grandchildren that with his hands he killed Germans.

That which is in my heart now I want you and those dear to us to know and yet I find myself completely incapable of putting it into letter form...I think if I could sit down in our living room or the den at 11 President, I might be able to convey a portion of the dismal, horrible and yet titanic mural which is Europe today. Unfortunately, I want to be able to do that for months or maybe a year, and by then the passing of time may dim the memory. Some of the scenes will live just so long as I do -- some of the sounds, like the dripping beer, like the firing of a Russian tommy gun, will always bring back the thought of something I may try to forget, but never will be able to do.

For example, when I go to the Boston Symphony, when I hear waves of applause, no matter what the music is, I shall be traveling back to a town near Linz where I heard applause unequalled in history, and where I was allowed to see the ordeal which our fellow brothers and sisters of the human race have endured. To me Poland is no longer the place where Chopin composed, or where a radio station held out for three weeks -- to me Poland is the place from which the prisoners of Mauthausen came, when I think of the Czechs, I will think of those who were butchered here, and that goes for the Jews, the Russians, the Austrians, the people of 25 different lands -- yes, even the Germans who passed through this Willow Run of death. This was Mauthausen. I want you to remember the word . . . I want you to know, I want you to never forget or let our disbelieving friends forget, that your flesh and blood saw this. This was no movie, no printed page. Your son saw this with his own eyes and in doing this aged 10 years.

Mauthausen was built with a half-million rocks which 150,000 prisoners -- 18,000 was the capacity -- carried up on their backs from a quarry 800 feet below. They carried it up steps so steep that a Captain and I walked it once and were winded, without a load. They carried granite and made 8 trips a day . . . and if they stumbled, the S.S. men pushed them into the quarry. There are 235 steps, covered with blood. They called it the steps of death. I saw the shower room (twice or three times the size of our bathroom) a chamber lined with tile and topped with sprinklers where 150 prisoners at a time were disrobed and ordered in for a shower which never gushed forth from the sprinklers because the chemical was gas.

When they ran out of gas, they merely sucked all the air out of the room. I talked to the Jews who worked in the crematory, one room adjacent, where six and seven bodies at a time were burned. They gave these jobs to the Jews because they all died anyhow, and they didn't want the rest of the prisoners to know their own fate. The Jews knew theirs, you see. I saw their emaciated bodies in piles like cords of wood...the stench of death, the decomposition of human flesh, of uncontrolled body fluids, of burned, charred bones. I saw the living skeletons, some of whom regardless of our medical corps work, will die and be in piles like that in the next few days. Malnutrition doesn't stop the day that food is administered. Don't get the idea that these people were all derelicts, all just masses of people...some of them doctors, authors, some of them American citizens, a scattered few were G.I.'s. A Navy Lt. still lives to tell the story. I saw where they lived, I saw where the sick died, three and four in a bed, no toilets, no nothing. I saw the look in their eyes, I shall never stop seeing the expression in the eyes of the anti-Franco former prisoners who have been given the job of guarding the S.S. men who were captured.

And how does the applause fit in. Mother, I walked through countless cell blocks filled with sick dying people -- 300 in a room twice the size of our living room and as we walked in --there was a ripple of applause and then an inspiring burst of applause and cheers, and men who could not stand up sat up and whispered though they tried to shout it -- vive L'Americansky...Vive L'Americansky...the applause, the cheers, those faces of men with legs the size and shape of rope, with ulcerated bodies, weeping with a kind of joy you and I will never, I hope, know. Vive L'Americansky...I got a cousin in Milwaukee...We thought you guys would come...Vive L'Americansky...Applause -- gaunt, hopeless faces at last filled with hope. One younger man asked me something in Polish which I could not understand but I did detect the word "Yid"...I asked an interpreter what he said -- the interpreter blushed and finally said..."He wants to know if you are a Jew." When I smiled and stuck out my mitt and said "yes" ...he was unable to speak or show the feeling that was in his heart. As I walked away, I suddenly realized that this had been the first time I had shaken hands with my right hand. That, my dear, was Mauthausen. There but for the Grace of God....

I will write more letters in days to come. I want to write one on the Russians...I want to write and tell you how I sat next to Patton and Tulbukhin at a banquet at the Castle of Franz Joseph. I want to write and tell you how the Germans look in defeat, how Munich looked in death, but those things sparkle with excitement and make good reading. This is my Mauthausen letter. I hope you will see fit to let Bill Braude and the folks read it. I would like to think that all the Kacheheimers and all the Friendlys and all our good Providence friends would read it. Then I want you to put it away and every Yom Kippur I want you to take it out and make your grandchildren read it.

For, if there had been no America, we, all of us, might well have carried granite at Mauthausen.

All my love,
F.F.*

*F.F. stood for the initials of noted journalist, Fred Friendly

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Council, Washington, D.C.

REPORT ON GERMAN MURDER MILLS

Joseph Pulitzer, the editor of the St. Louis Post Dispatch, was one of a number of journalists who traveled to several liberated concentration camps in Germany after Allied troops had arrived. His report on Buchenwald and Dachau -- like stories by other prominent civilian journalists -- was featured in Army Talks, the weekly publication from the Education Division of the European Theater of Operations, United States Army, that informed American soldiers in Europe in depth about important issues.

- From Joseph Pulitzer, "Report on German Murder Mills," Army Talks 4 (July 10, 1945): 7-11.

Report on German Murder Mills

by Joseph Pulitzer

I was dismayed within an hour after getting home from my European trip to learn that there are still Americans who are saying, in effect, "This talk of atrocities is all propaganda. There may have been something wrong here and there but the German people would not stand for such things. It is outrageous to have these atrocity pictures forced upon us by the newspapers and the movie houses."

All I can say in reply is that persons who talk this way are tragically mistaken. They should visit their family doctors and have their heads and perhaps their hearts examined. I should say that 99 percent of what has appeared in the American press has been understatement. I urge the skeptics who because of prejudice or other reasons refuse to believe the truth of the atrocity stories and the many good people of America who have difficulty in believing them, not to take my word for it but to see the Signal Corps moving pictures which I trust will be shown. No honest person can refuse to believe the evidence they portray from a dozen or more different concentration camps, all of them telling the same unbelievable story.

What It Would Be Like in the US

These camps, there were about 100* of them in all of Europe, as the reader knows, were filled with "political enemies." I think there is significance in that word "enemies." Perhaps the easiest way to bring it home to the American reader is to remind him that if the Nazi system were in effect in St. Louis, where there happens to be a Republican administration in office, every Democrat and every independent voter and every member of a labor union and every Jew and every person of Russian or Polish extraction and many ministers would find himself or herself rotting to death down at Jefferson Barracks. There would be some six to sixteen of them -- the women in separate barracks -- sleeping in a bunk the size of a large American double bed. The great majority of them would die of starvation. American surgeons stated that the adult corpses weighed only 60 to 80 pounds, having in practically all cases, lost 50 per cent to 60 per cent of their normal weight, and also having shrunk in height.

Some people are just naturally tough and a very few would survive in spite of starvation, dysentery and raging typhus epidemics. Some 125 of them would have died last night. If the picture of Dachau were repeated there would be standing on the Missouri Pacific spur which runs through the camp some 39 box cars recently arrived from another prison camp. Upon being opened, the contents would consist of the cadavers lying three or four tiers deep, with a few still alive among them, of prisoners who had been on the road without food or water for 20 days. It was the sight of this train which we newspaper men all saw, which, we were told, so enraged our troops when they overran the camp that they showed no mercy whatever for the German guards and troops who were still to be found.

*Editor's note: There were actually over 1,000 concentration camps throughout Europe and parts of North Africa.

Watch “The Hook”

At these same Jefferson Barracks there would be found, as we found it at Buchenwald, the much-pictured and much-described strangling chamber, with some 40 hooks protruding from the walls of a room perhaps 30 feet square. It was here that those, who for one reason or another had incurred the displeasure of the camp authorities, would not be hanged, for hanging breaks the neck and brings death comparatively quickly, but literally choked to death. When the bodies were lowered, if there was any life left in them, the victims were clubbed to death with that much pictured club resembling a large rolling pin. The bodies were raised in an elevator and cremated. In this crematory appeared this typically sadistic German expression, inscribed on an artistic bronze tablet high on the wall and seemingly addressing itself to the victims in the ovens. Translated it read: “Let not worms eat my body. Let it be consumed by fire flame. I love always warmth and light. Therefore burn, do not bury me.”

Again, at these same Jefferson Barracks there would be found a well-designed, well-built brick building containing in its center section a number of efficiently designed gas-operated crematory ovens. The reader may say to himself, as I at first did, why not a crematory in a large camp built to contain some 32,000 prisoners? The visitor to the barracks, however, would soon change his mind.

Reception for Death

At one end of this rather handsome building and adjoining the crematory he would find a small ante-room containing a desk and a chair. At this desk sat a reception clerk. Usually the desk was decorated with a small vase of flowers -- those flowers that grow so beautifully in beautiful Germany. The reception clerk would record the names and numbers of a group of prisoners. My estimate is -- and it is only an estimate -- that the group would consist of not more than 20 or 30 persons. Probably the first thing that would catch their eye after noticing the flowers on the desk would be a neat gilt sign over a door reading “Spritz Bad,” or, in English, “shower bath.”

Mass Production Murder

The new arrivals would each be given a piece of soap and a towel and, after disrobing, would be directed to enter the shower bath. The door through which they entered the shower room, a room perhaps 20 feet square, would then be closed behind them. They may or may not have noticed that the door -- I did not measure it exactly -- was some 10 or 12 inches thick. Certainly they would not have noticed the pipes overhead connected with the pipes leading to the crematory ovens, nor would they have noticed that on one side of their shower room was a round glass circular peephole, some five inches in diameter, with a sliding metal plate to block off vision when that seemed desirable. This shower bath was, of course, the much-described gas chamber. The nozzles overhead discharged not water but gas. Indeed, there were no water pipes that we could see. It did not take long to dispose of the bodies in the adjoining crematory. Crematory and shower baths don't mix, and there is not the slightest doubt in my mind but that it was a well-designed plan to “liquidate” the undesirables and to leave no tell-tale evidence being.

The Persistent “Why”

Why, I am often asked, did the Nazis take the trouble to starve, strangle and gas their prisoners to death? Why did they not shoot them? I do not know the answer to that question. I can only guess and my guess is that, having confined the undesirables within the limits of a concentration camp, they felt that they had better get what work they could out of them on adjoining farms or in nearby factories, and that when they were too weak to work, they merely let

them die, with the strangling and gassing processes used on the obstreperous and on the Jews.

Is all this unbelievable? Perhaps it is. To a normal American these facts are very difficult to believe. I can only say that the groups of newspaper and magazine editors, whom I accompanied to Europe, made the most painstaking and scrupulous effort to sift the true from the false, to dismiss exaggerations or unprovable assertions of the prisoners and to present the true value of the evidence disclosed. I can only say that inspecting these two prisoners' camps at Buchenwald and Dachau I leaned over backwards in using my four senses -- those of seeing, hearing, touching and smelling.

I have seen the bodies and the crematories and the gas chamber and many other things with my own eyes. I have seen the sinister appearance of one black barracks after another at Buchenwald, with the intervening streets of side-walks paved with small cobblestones, without a blade of grass or a tree to be seen anywhere. I have seen the pathetically sick lying on the floor on clean mattresses and with clean bedclothes and wearing clean clothing, all recently supplied by the United States Army. They were lying on the floor because cots were not yet available.

We were told that the great majority of them would die. When we entered the room, all but one of them were too sick even to raise their heads. All they could do was to roll their eyes in our direction.

“Because I am a Jew”

There was one exception. He was a Polish lad of perhaps 17. His hair was closely cropped; his face thin and very grey, his black eyes blazed as he told us his story. He spoke pretty good English. He was strong enough to be able to sit up, but from time to time he would bring the back of his hand up to his forehead to wipe off the sweat of extreme fatigue. Pathetically enough, the Signal Corps men were taking flashlight photographs, as they did wherever we went, and whenever a flashlight would go off, the boy's entire body would shiver.

We asked him why he was in this camp. He replied: “Because I am a Jew. You understand that? Because I am a Jew.”

I have seen a half-acre of the dead, the crop of the previous night who perished at Dachau. I have seen and I took intense satisfaction in seeing lying near this field of dead, but separated from them, as though to avoid contamination of these helpless victims of the SS, eight bodies of SS prison guards. They were dressed in camouflaged coats and pants with brown and green spots on them, not unlike the camouflage outfit of our Army. There were various explanations of how they happened to be there. Some said they had been killed when our troops overran the camp for days before. Others said that the inmates had killed them. I shall always remember with intense satisfaction looking down at one hideous wretch.

“How Could this Have Happened to Me?”

He must have been even more hideous in life than in death. He had curly red hair and very blue eyes which seemed to stare up at me and to say, “How on earth could this thing have happened to me, a member of the SS?” We shall not have to trouble about trying those particular rats.

At Dachau it was a common sight to see bodies, two or three of them at a time, lying out in the street. They were still dying off so fast that as they died the surviving inmates would throw them outside to await the arrival of a pushcart which would take them away.

Joke -- SS Variety

In demonstration of one of the SS's little jokes I have seen a prisoner lie on his stomach with his hands theoretically tied behind his back wriggling along on the ground. I have seen another

demonstrating how they would tie a man's wrists together behind his back and then hang him up by his wrists for perhaps an hour, letting all his weight fall on his shoulders. Try it yourself and imagine what it would do to your shoulders. I have heard the testimony of many prisoners and of honorable American officers who had preceded us into Dachau by about for days.

I have heard a glorious and sublime sound, one which I shall never forget. As our group walked into a hospital ward of post-operative patients lying in double deck bunks and with everything, thanks to our Army doctors, spick and span, the patients observed the uniforms of the officers who preceded us and perhaps recognized the appearance of ourselves as American civilians. They tried to applaud and they tried to cheer, but they were so weak that the sound they made was almost plaintive. They were cheering the Americans. Hearing that sound made me proud to be an American.

The Unforgettable Smell

I have touched the emaciated hands of a considerable number of prisoners and of several hospital patients who insisted on shaking hands with the Americans, and I have smelt the unforgettable stench of the scores of bodies piled up in two rooms of the Dachau crematory which the Army had not yet had an opportunity to dispose of. On another nice, spring day I smelt the stench too, that came out of an open window of a bunk house at Buchenwald which the Army had evacuated, had not yet had an opportunity to disinfect and which they had locked up. I believe that peering into that dark, filthy pesthouse, with its very few windows and its bunks still filled with the bedding of the inmates and smelling that smell, shocked me worse than anything else. Curiously enough, the bodies I was to see later shocked me comparatively little, for these poor creatures were so emaciated, literally down to skin and bones, that they appeared unreal. It was difficult to believe that they were corpses of human beings. They rather resembled caricatures of human beings.

Overwhelming Evidence

I have found exaggeration in previously published reports to be absolutely negligible. The evidence of the atrocities is so overwhelming that I feel, as we newspaper men all did, that it would weaken the case to report anything that was not obviously the truth. I will cite one such example. The wife of the commandant at Buchenwald had herself made a lamp shade and other objects of tanned human skin, much of it bearing tattoo marks. Photographs proving this have been published in the newspapers and should appear in the forthcoming Signal Corps film. The report was published in the United States that these pieces of skin were removed, probably under local anesthetic by the grafting process familiar to all surgeons, from living victims. I found no evidence to indicate the victims were alive.

Gen. Eisenhower gave us the assignment to come to Europe and to report the existence of atrocities in Germany. I have met Gen. Eisenhower and I know that he is not a revengeful man. His purpose in giving us this assignment was to make the American people realize the incredible extent of the Nazi crimes so that those who were guilty would be justly punished -- and here I repeat and emphasize the words "justly punished," not by Gestapo-like lynchings but by fair trials where a guilty man is found guilty and an innocent man has a fair opportunity to prove his innocence. If this report will help to bring about that result, I shall feel that my trip in Europe was justified.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 1945: The Year of Liberation. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1995, pages 151-156. © United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

EXCERPTS FROM EYEWITNESSES

The United States and the Soviet Union fought together as Allies in World War II. In 1944-45, the armies of the two countries moved toward Germany from opposite directions. The American Army moved East across Germany toward Berlin in early 1945. As the troops progressed they liberated scores of concentration camps. Soldiers of all ranks were amazed and horrified at what they saw.

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In the words of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, 1945:

The same day I saw my first horror camp. It was near the town of Gotha. I have never felt able to describe my emotional reactions when I first came face to face with indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every shred of decency. Up to that time I had known about it only generally or through secondary sources. I am certain, however, that I have never at any other time experienced an equal sense of shock.

I visited every nook and cranny of the camp because I felt it my duty to be in a position from then on to testify at first hand about these things in case there ever grew up at home the belief or assumption that "the stories of Nazi brutality were just propaganda." Some members of my visiting party were unable to go through the ordeal. I not only did so but as soon as I returned to Patton's headquarters that evening I sent communications to both Washington and London, urging the two governments to send instantly to Germany a random group of newspaper editors and representative groups from the national legislatures. I felt that the evidence should be immediately placed before the Americans and British publics in a fashion that would leave no room for cynical doubt.

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In the words of David Malachowsky, Staff Sergeant, VII Corps, 104th Infantry Division, 329th Medical Battalion company D:

As we kept moving in closer, about three miles from the town, we came across oh, maybe eight to ten huge warehouses set on a field. We could see these from a great distance away and as we got closer we went to these warehouses and were amazed to find what was in there. We more or less broke in. They were unattended. There were no guards or anything. The Germans were pulling out before us as we kept moving along. We got into these warehouses and it was an astounding sight. They were each approximately eight to ten stories high, and each floor had a different food commodity on it, as far as the eye could see. Thousands of boxes, say, tins of salmon, would be in one, sardines in another. Another floor had chocolate ... chocolate from all the countries the Germans had been in. It seems that every time they would literally strip the country of all the commodities and ship it back and this evidently was one of the depots where all these supplies were stored, commodities, foods, primarily wines of all sorts in the baskets and all. I remember I was impressed by the fact that there was enough food there to feed the entire countryside. Of course, we "liberated" lots of cases. The liquor we took out with us and the wines and I remember taking cans of sardines and having trouble opening them. But at any rate, in contrast to what we found when we went into Nordhausen ... That's what really bugged me. Here was all this food stocked in warehouses and yet three miles away there were people eating horses' heads, because that's all they had. People, who literally had not eaten or been given water for weeks at a time.

We had no knowledge at all of what we were going to find. When we came to the source of this big, heavy odor, we had gone through the factory, through the town and now on the other side of the town here was Nordhausen, the camp. It had barbed wire fences and all. We had no concept of what we'd find there. We heard machine guns fire as we came into the one end of the camp. We discovered later that that machine gun fire was the last German troops pulling out, indiscriminately machine-gunning anyone who was still able to stand on their feet, any one of the prisoners in the camp. But there weren't too many of these, because when we actually got into the camp through the barbed wire, we saw row upon row of bodies just stacked like cordwood maybe five feet high as far as the eye could see. We later were told there were approximately five or six thousand inmates of whom just a handful were able to ambulate. All the others had either been shot down or were in an advanced state of emaciation. Even though they were working in the factory they'd be herded through the gate, through the town into the underground factory and herded back again like cattle. No food was given to them and as they died of hunger that's where they lay. The guards would stack them in these rows. And that's what we found when we came through the gate. The stench was coming from this area. This was the smell that covered the entire countryside ... for miles around.

And yet, when we asked these people in the town, the civilians, a couple of days later, how could they permit such things to exist, they said they did not know there was a camp like that next to them. They were just townspeople who minded their own business, etc. etc.

The first thing we saw after the barbed wire entanglement that we went through was, like, cordwood stacks, but as we got closer we saw they were human beings, were bodies, totally emaciated, many of them naked, no clothes. The ones that had clothes had the striped uniforms which we learned after a while were the typical uniforms of the concentration camps. The ones that were naked were just bones. I have pictures that I took which I look at once in a while to remind me it actually happened. Just bones. Eyes -- all you saw were wide, huge eyes because the sockets were shrunken and I just can't describe it. The thing that really bugged me was bodies were lying there stacked up, but when we saw movement, like three bodies down, an arm was moving, you realized that among these people, there were living people who were in these piles. So immediately we got to work trying to separate, trying to pull out the ones that were alive and that's when we realized that we're gonna have to give them medical attention. Being with the medics I left half my platoon there to untangle them, get them on litters. Meanwhile other groups came up, other medical battalions and units; infantry men dropped their rifles, dropped their guns and began sorting these people out. I took the first load of trucks and ambulances back to our clearing station, about a mile or so out of town from the camp where we had set up a station, for the handling of wounded soldiers, primarily those who'd been hit in battle. But we stopped all that and began taking care of them from a medical standpoint. These were all political prisoners and they were lumped together indiscriminately. We ran across Poles, Russians, Frenchmen, Spaniards. You name it. It just seemed as though it was a microcosm of the entire world and each one of those nationalities had Jewish representation. In other words, I remember talking to someone who looked about, oh, I would say, just, just old and emaciated. It turned out to be a seventeen year old girl. We spoke in Yiddish, too, I remember this very vividly. And she kept asking for water, "Wasser." But we had learned by then if we give them water orally it would kill them.

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In the words of Dr. Philip Lief, Captain First Army, 3rd Auxiliary Surgical Group:

Our hospital went into Buchenwald about two hours after the Germans had left. The first sight that greeted me when I entered the camp with my operating room truck was a horse and wagon. And as I looked into the contents of the wagon, I could see it was filled with human bones. One

could recognize the humeri, the femurs, the spinal bones and the pelvis and skulls of many of the deceased prisoners who had been in the camp. Where this wagon was going I really did not know, but I was horrified at this sight.

I had studied German literature while an undergraduate at Harvard College. I knew about the culture of the German people and I could not, could not really believe that this was happening in this day and age; that in the twentieth century a cultured people like the Germans would undertake something like this. It was just beyond our imagination.

Many of the people were asking about their kinfolk, a brother, a father, a mother -- and wanted to know what happened to the rest of the family. Unfortunately, in many cases, most of the members of their families had perished in Buchenwald concentration camps or in other similar camps. Most of the inmates had signs of malnutrition. Those who had been at the camp for longer periods of time showed more intense signs of malnutrition. That meant very little skin on the face, sunken bones, eyes, eyeballs sunken in their eye sockets, very little muscle tissue on the legs or arms. One could see all the bones of the thoracic cage, the ribs were very prominent. If the inmate took off his shirt you could see the spinal column very, very prominently. The mental disturbance of the inmates was very, very apparent. Many of them did not realize the significance of having been liberated. Many of them spoke to us and said that they were ordered that morning to go on a forced march and they were sure they were going to be shot at that time, because they had heard rumors that the Americans were approaching. The Germans left in a hurry and the inmates were free and wandered about without any purpose, aimlessly, not realizing fully that finally they had been liberated.

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In the words of Leon Bass, Sergeant, 183rd Combat Engineer Battalion:

We had gone through the Bulge, we had seen the horrors of war: death, people who were wounded. Many of us came very close to losing our lives during that period. But we had no knowledge, and our first encounter came one day when we were asked to go to a place outside of Weimar, Germany. It wasn't a mission of battle, it was just to go. And we came to this place, which was somewhat like a security place, a place you might see in any urban center that was a prison. But we were totally unprepared -- at least I was, for what I encountered when I went into Buchenwald. The outside was very beautiful. It was in a suburban-type community, the grass was well manicured and cared for. And then you go inside, and then all of a sudden the stark horror of it all strikes you. And that's the way I encountered it at the age of 19. When I walked in I saw what should be considered human beings, that had been reduced to the point where they were just merely surviving. I called them the walking dead, because I felt they had reached the point of no return.

We all expressed horror. We were aghast at what we saw. How deep that feeling was is hard to say. I cannot even speak for myself, in terms of how deep that hit me because I felt that I pushed it aside. I sort of covered it up; I didn't want to deal with that. It was too traumatic. And like most people, you have to find some kind of security blanket, some way to insulate yourself from the horror. And I sort of pushed it away, and I never talked about it at all.

There were those survivors who hadn't been there very long, who were much more healthy. But then I got to those who had probably been there for some time or who had gone through the tortures and the dehumanizing kind of things. There was a variety there, you might call it a smorgasbord. I talked to a young fellow who was there who spoke very good English. He said that at first the camp had held something like 300,000. But when we came on the scene it was less than 20,000. And we talked to him and he said that the Germans got rid of political prisoners first. They were really frightened of them, and then they began to systematically work on Jews. Jews had high priority for extermination. And of course Gypsies, and others. I had been told by this young man that most of the Jews had been exterminated.

We saw the whole works. The crematorium ... There was a fellow there who spoke English -- a young fellow -- and he must have been a student before being incarcerated. He walked around with us. And as we walked I looked at different things -- people defecating in the holes in the ground, there were no tissues, no sense of dignity -- just go ahead. Someone retching out of a window, where they had been encapsulated in such large numbers in a small space in the barracks. I saw clothing, it must have been baby clothing that they had piled up for their own use, later I guess. Then we saw the crematorium where the dead bodies were outside, stacked up like cordwood, and we went into the crematorium and you could see the residue in the ovens -- the rib cages, the skulls. And it was so hard to believe -- to try to understand why. What did these people do that merited this kind of treatment? And it boggles the mind when you think that it had gone on for almost ten years before we got into the war! Why wasn't it dealt with? Why did nobody scream and shout, "Stop?" They never did. And we saw the laboratory where they were experimenting on different people, and the parts of the body. And then there was the torture chamber, and you could see the stains of the blood on the stone, and on the wall. They even had the instruments. Some of them were still there.

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In the words of Ben Berch, Private First Class, 102nd Infantry Division, 701st Tank Battalion:

There was an area near the Elbe River called Gardelegen, a small town. It was just another area, nothing special. Outside of the town there was a red barn and it veered with the wind. And there was smoke coming up from this and, somehow, it didn't look right, so it was examined and it was found that there were over a thousand people, dead, in this place. Dead! What happened was, the SS in that town heard the American guns, they heard us coming, and they knew, as all the way down the line they had known, that we would be there. So, in this town, they decided they wouldn't give the slave laborers the satisfaction of surviving. So they herded all the slave laborers from the town, over a thousand, into this barn. And they set them on fire, they put hay and gasoline in there, and if anyone tried to get out, they were machine-gunned. So there were a thousand.

Now here were men who had been through some very fierce fighting. Men who had been in tanks that were torn open, pieces of metal ripped right through them. They had seen all this, had been through everything, had been burning in tanks, tanks are very flammable; a lot of them, a lot of men had burned to death. All kinds of horrors these men had been through, beyond everything. But this wasn't war. This goes beyond: "You hit him, he hits you." This was total horror.

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In the words of Chaplain Major Judah Nadich, US Army, American Rabbi, adviser on Jewish affairs to General Eisenhower:

Now, the first concentration camp that I visited in my new duties [as adviser on Jewish affairs to General Eisenhower] was Dachau. I want to make it clear that I did not visit Dachau upon its liberation, or shortly thereafter. Yet, when I did visit Dachau, it had not as yet been prettied up. The corpses had been removed and buried, and the sick had been taken to hospitals, and those who were comparatively well, even though suffering from the effects of malnutrition and from various other conditions in the concentration camps, had been moved to displaced persons camps.

When I came into Dachau, I saw soon after entering a large enclosure in which there were dog kennels. In my naivete, I thought that the dog kennels must have been kept for the pets of the German officers of Dachau.

I was soon disillusioned when I was told that these kennels were for guard dogs who were deliberately kept famished, and a prisoner in the camp, for some infraction of the rules, in some

cases not even for an infraction of the rules, was tossed into that enclosure. The dogs were let loose to leap upon the poor victim and the victim was torn apart. That was my introduction to what I was to see later in Dachau.

I moved on in the camp and came to the anteroom to the gas chamber, and the anteroom had some hooks for the hanging of clothing with a large sign in German on the door leading into the gas chamber itself reading "shower bath." I went through that door into the gas chamber and tried to imagine what it must have been like to have been packed like sardines into that area and suddenly to have begun smelling the gas that was to take away one's life.

One cannot really imagine it, because one cannot put oneself in that position. But then I looked at the inside of the door, and I saw thousands of scratches upon it, scratches that must have been made by the fingernails of so many men and women and children because the scratches covered the entire door from high up all the way down to a low position.

I went from the gas chamber into the next area, which was the crematorium, and looked into the mouths of the furnaces, into which the bodies were shoveled, one after the other, and burned in the fires.

My attention was suddenly caught by some sacks that looked like potato sacks standing at the side of the crematorium. I went over to the sacks to see what they were. On the front of them was stamped the German word for fertilizer, and I looked into the sacks and what I saw there I soon realized was human ash that had been taken from the furnaces in the crematoria, ready for shipment to German farms in order to make the soil more fertile to grow more crops for the Herrenvolk [master race].

I plunged my arm into one of the sacks up to the elbow and pressed the "fertilizer," the human ash, with the fingers of my hand into my palm and ground it into my palm so that I might never forget what I had seen there.

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From Edward R. Murrow's CBS Radio Broadcast from London, April 15, 1945:

... Permit me to tell you what you would have seen and heard had you been with me on Thursday. It will not be pleasant listening. If you are at lunch or if you have no appetite to hear what Germans have done, now is a good time to switch off the radio, for I propose to tell you of Buchenwald.

It is on a small hill about four miles outside Weimar, and it was one of the largest concentration camps in Germany. And it was built to last ...

I looked out over that mass of men to the green fields beyond where well-fed Germans were plowing. A German, Fritz Kersheimer, came up and said, "May I show you around the camp? I've been here ten years." An Englishman stood to attention saying, "May I introduce myself? Delighted to see you. And can you tell me when some of our blokes will be along?" I told him, "Soon," and asked to see one of the barracks. It happened to be occupied by Czechoslovakians.

When I entered, men crowded around, tried to lift me to their shoulders. They were too weak. Many of them could not get out of bed. I was told that this building had once stabled 80 horses; there were 1,200 men in it, five to a bunk. The stink was beyond all description ...

There was a German trailer which must have contained another 50 [bodies], but it wasn't possible to count them. The clothing was piled in a heap against the wall. It appeared that most of the men and boys had died of starvation; they had not been executed. But the manner of death seemed unimportant - murder had been done at Buchenwald. God alone knows how many men and boys have died there during the last 12 years. Thursday I was told that there were more than 20,000 in the camp; there had been as many as 60,000. Where are they now?

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In the words of Isabella Leitner, Auschwitz survivor:

Tanks, trucks, ammunition carriers, blood spattered soldiers, bedraggled soldiers -- worn, dying, on horses, on feet, pitiful, not brave, just spent, wretched looking. They have no nationality, no politics, no ideology. They are just battle weary and worn. Who are they? What do they want from us? Why don't they go home and get bandaged with gauze and love? Men, you need care. Do not spend the little strength you have on killing us. Seek solace, not hate. Seek out your children. They need your love. They need to give you theirs. Stop killing. Stop it.

But wait. Wait. These men are wearing strange uniforms. They are not German or Hungarian. They are unfamiliar. And there is a red flag -- red, red.

What is red?

Red is not German, red is Russian.

We are ... we are -- What? What are we? We are ... we are ... we are liberated!

Barefoot, wearing only a single garment each, we all surge out into the brutal January frost and snow of eastern Germany and run toward the troops. Shrieks of joy. Shrieks of pain. Shrieks of deliverance. All the pent-up hysteria accumulated over years of pain and terror suddenly released.

I have never since heard sounds like those we uttered, sounds released from the very depths of our being. The sheer force of it must have scattered the ashes of Auschwitz to every corner of the universe, for our cries of joy suddenly turned into a bitter wail: "We are liberated! But where are they all? They are all dead!"

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Following the War an international tribunal was convened at Nuremberg in Germany to consider the crimes against humanity committed by the Nazi regime. This was the first time in history there had been an attempt in international law to define such crimes.

According to the Nuremberg Tribunal:

The following acts, or any of them, are crimes coming within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal for which there shall be individual responsibility...(c) CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY: namely, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.

Leaders, organizers, instigators and accomplices participating in the formulation or execution of a common plan or conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing crimes are responsible for all acts performed by any persons in execution of such plan.

Source: Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances (Second Edition). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, page 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 89, 112 .

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WAR CRIMES CHRONOLOGY

1939

September 1 Germany invades Poland; World War II begins.

1940

May 10 Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. The former three countries surrender within the month; France falls on June 22.

1941

June 22 Germany invades the Soviet Union.

October 25 American President Franklin D. **Roosevelt**, referring specifically to the German execution of hostages in France, warns that such acts will “bring fearful retribution.” On the same day, British Prime Minister Winston **Churchill** announces that punishment of **war crimes** should be “counted among the major goals of the war.”

1942

January 13 Representatives from Belgium, France, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, and Yugoslavia conclude an Inter-Allied conference on the punishment of **war crimes** (Saint James Palace Declaration), held in London, with the statement that a primary aim of the war was “the punishment through the channel of organized justice of those guilty of or responsible for these crimes.” At this point, “war crimes” are defined as violations of the **Hague and Geneva Conventions**.

January 20 The Wannsee Conference convenes in a lakeside suburb of Berlin. Under the Chairmanship of **Central Office for Reich Security** chief Reinhard **Heydrich**, senior German officials coordinate the implementation of the “**Final Solution**,” the systematic mass extermination of the Jews in Europe.

May 4 For the first time, a “**selection**” is carried out at the ramp at the **Auschwitz-Birkenau** killing center, whereby German officers decided who would die in the **gas chambers** and who would live as **forced laborers**. This marks the beginning of mass gassing of Jews at the Auschwitz complex.

October 7 The United States and Great Britain issue simultaneous declarations suggesting the creation of a **United Nations War Crimes Commission** to bring war criminals to justice. The Allied governments-in-exile and the French National Committee approve and adopt this concept, and the commission is inaugurated on October 20, 1943. The Soviet Union alone refuses to join, and instead establishes its own war crimes agency, the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission to Investigate War Crimes.

1943

- February 2** Surrounded at Stalingrad, the German Sixth Army surrenders to Soviet forces, signaling a turning point in the German war effort.
- April 19** The **Warsaw Ghetto Uprising** begins. More than 1,300 Jewish resistance fighters defy German forces under the command of *SS-Brigadeführer* [SS Brigadier General] Jürgen **Stroop** until May 16, 1943.
- July 17** In the first adjudication of **Nazi war crimes** during World War II, a Soviet military tribunal in the **Krasnodar Trial** convicts 11 Soviet citizens and 13 Germans (the latter tried *in absentia*) for the murder of 7,000 Soviet civilians, including patients from three hospitals. All the defendants are members of an auxiliary unit attached to the German **Einsatzgruppe D**; eight of the Soviets are hanged for their crimes, and three are sentenced to 20 years at hard labor.

1944

- January 23** A **war crimes** office is established within the office of **Judge Advocate General** of the U.S. Army to gather evidence on war crimes.
- March 16** Herbert Pell, American representative to the **United Nations War Crimes Commission**, presents a resolution that crimes committed against stateless persons or against individuals due to their race or religion be regarded as **war crimes**, since such acts are against the “laws of humanity.”
- May 16** Members of the **United Nations War Crimes Commission** agree on measures for the capture of war criminals, including the compilation of lists of such criminals and the need to arrest all members of the **SS** and **Gestapo** on surrender.
- June 28** The British War Cabinet approves a memorandum by the Lord Chancellor that states, in part, that Britain will gather evidence of German atrocities against Jews only in occupied countries, since German crimes against German Jews could not be construed as **war crimes**.
- November 27** Six **SS** men stand trial before a Polish Special Tribunal, in Lublin, at the first trial of **Majdanek** concentration camp staff. The trial ends several days later with four of the defendants sentenced to death; two men commit suicide before the sentence is carried out.

1945

- January 31** Lord Quincy Wright of Australia become chairman of the **United Nations War Crimes Commission**.
- February 4-12** American President Franklin D. **Roosevelt**, British Prime Minister Winston **Churchill**, and Soviet Premier Joseph **Stalin** attend the **Yalta Conference** in the Crimea. Among the topics under discussion are the postwar “**denazification**” of Germany and procedures for the prosecution of Axis war criminals.

- April 22** At the invitation of General Dwight D. **Eisenhower**, a bipartisan Congressional delegation begins a tour of the concentration camps of **Buchenwald, Dora-Mittlebau, and Dachau**, all liberated by U.S. forces. Senator Alben Barkley (D-Ky.), Senate majority leader, presents the delegation's report to Congress on May 15. Eisenhower also invites 18 American editors and publishers to view the liberated camps. Widespread publication of German atrocities strengthens American resolve to try **Nazi** war criminals.
- May 7** German General Alfred **Jodl** signs terms of unconditional surrender at Rheims, France. War in the European theater officially ends on May 8 (VE-Day).
- June 14** The British Government promulgates the Royal Warrant, the basis for jurisdiction for British military courts trying **Axis** war criminals.
- July 16** United States Forces, European Theater sets up Military Government Tribunals for **war crimes** proceedings in the American zone.
- July 25** The Darmstadt Trial, the first war crimes trial tried by the War Crimes Branch of the U.S. Army's **Judge Advocate General's** Office in the American occupation zone of Germany, begins as eleven German civilians are tried for the beating deaths of six downed American airmen. Prosecutor Colonel Leon **Jaworski** wins ten convictions; seven defendants are sentenced to death and three are given sentences of 15 to 25 years at hard labor.
- July 28** The first British war crimes trial begins with the arraignment of Italian General Bellomo. He is convicted of killing escaped British prisoners of war and is executed on September 11, 1945.
- August 8** The London Agreement, establishing the **International Military Tribunal** (IMT) at Nuremberg, is signed by the four major Allied powers: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the French Republic, and the Soviet Union.
- August 15** French Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain is convicted of treason and sentenced to death by the French High Court of Justice for **collaboration** with German occupation forces. Due to his advanced age and former service, France's Provisional Government under General Charles de Gaulle commutes his sentence to life imprisonment.
- August 29** The list of major war criminals to be tried before the **International Military Tribunal** is released.
- September 2** Japan signs the instrument of surrender in Tokyo Bay as World War II comes to an end.
- October 5** The Berlin Protocol is signed, reconciling discrepancies concerning the interpretation of the concept of **crimes against humanity** between signatories of the **London Agreement** (see entry for August 8).
- October 8-15** At the **Hadamar Trial**, the first mass atrocity trial in the U.S. zone, seven German civilians are convicted of murdering 476 tubercular Russian and Polish forced laborers at the **Hadamar "euthanasia"** facility. Three receive death sentences; four receive sentences ranging from 25 years to life.

- October 12** General Anton Doestler is found guilty at the **Doestler Trial** of ordering the execution of fifteen U.S. servicemen captured in March 1944. He is sentenced to death by an American military tribunal in Rome and executed on December 1.
- October 19** The **International Military Tribunal** formally indicts twenty-four Nuremberg defendants on four counts: **crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy** to commit these crimes.
- October 30** The **Control Council for Germany** enacts Control Council Law No. 4, which regulates the reopening of German law courts. The law dissolves the infamous People's Courts (*Volksgerichtshöfe*) and prevents the reopening of the Reich Supreme Court. It also specifically forbids German courts from trying **Nazi war crimes** perpetrated against Allied nationals.
- November 4** The **Dachau Trial** begins, as American military officials try forty former members of the **Dachau** concentration camp staff at Dachau. Prosecutors win convictions for all defendants on December 15. Thirty-six are sentenced to hang; four receive prison sentences of 10 years to life.
- November 17** At the **Bergen-Belsen Trial**, the British tribunal trying former camp commandant Josef Kramer and forty-four other defendants for atrocities committed at the **Bergen-Belsen** concentration camp convicts twenty-nine of the defendants. Nine, including Kramer, are sentenced to hang; twenty defendants receive prison sentences, while fourteen are acquitted. (The original charge sheet accuses thirteen defendants with crimes at Bergen-Belsen and at the **Auschwitz** concentration camp, a decision that complicates the Bergen-Belsen proceedings.)
- November 20** The first public session of the trial of major German war criminals opens before the **International Military Tribunal** in Nuremberg.
- December 17** The Central Registry of War Criminals and Security Suspects (CROWCASS) delivers "Wanted List No. 7" to the U.S. Judge Advocate General's office. It is the first "usable" list to aid in the apprehension of war criminals.
- December 20** The **Control Council for Germany** issues **Control Council Law No. 10**, which establishes "a uniform legal basis in Germany for the prosecution of war criminals and similar offenders." The law recognizes four crimes (**crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, war crimes**, and membership in **criminal organizations** as defined by the **International Military Tribunal**) and regulates the apprehension, extradition, and trial of war criminals in Germany's four occupied zones. It also permits German courts, at the discretion of each zone's military authority, to deal with cases involving crimes committed by German nationals against other German nationals or stateless persons.

1946

- March 8** The **Zyklon B Trial**, held by a military tribunal in the British zone of occupied Germany, ends with the conviction of two of the three defendants, who are sentenced to death.
- May 13** The **Mauthausen Trial** ends after less than two months with all sixty-one defendants found guilty of violations of the laws of war committed at the **Mauthausen** concentration camp. All but three are sentenced to death and executed.

- September 5** The former commandant of the **Plaszów** labor camp, Amon Goeth, is found guilty of mass murder by Poland's Supreme National Court in Cracow in connection with the liquidation of the Szebnie and Tarnów **ghettos** and with his tenure at Plaszów. Sentenced to death, he is hanged on September 13, 1946.
- October 1** The **International Military Tribunal** in Nuremberg convicts nineteen of the twenty-two defendants tried (Martin **Bormann** is tried *in absentia*) and acquits three. Ten are hanged later that month; Hermann **Göring** commits suicide before his death sentence can be carried out. Seven are sentenced to prison terms.
- October 25** In the **Doctors Trial**, U.S. Military Tribunal I tries Adolf **Hitler's** chief physician and former Reich Commissioner for Health and Sanitation Karl **Brandt** and twenty-two others for **war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy** to commit these crimes. Found guilty in August 1947 of murdering handicapped patients and performing grisly medical experiments on **concentration camp** inmates, prisoners of war, and civilians in occupied territories, Brandt and six other defendants are executed; nine receive prison sentences, and seven are acquitted. This is the first of twelve proceedings before U.S. military tribunals known as the Subsequent **Nuremberg Military Trials**.
- November 13** In the **Milch Trial**, U.S. Military Tribunal II in Nuremberg tries Erhard Milch, German state secretary to the Reich Air Ministry. Milch is convicted in December 1947 of exploiting **forced labor** in the development of the German Air Force and is sentenced to life imprisonment. His sentence is later reduced to 15 years.

1947

- January 4** In the so-called **Jurists' Trial**, an American military tribunal tries Josef Altstötter, chief of the Civil Law and Procedure Division in the Reich Ministry of Justice, and fifteen other prominent German jurists with **war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy** to commit these crimes. Convicted on December 4 of supporting the **Nazi** regime by subverting German law, ten defendants are given prison sentences (four life sentences); four defendants are acquitted; two are not tried.
- February 8** The **Flick Trial** begins as the U.S. Nuremberg Military Tribunal tries prominent industrialist Friedrich Flick and five of his associates for **war crimes and crimes against humanity**, including the plunder of conquered territories, utilizing **forced labor**, and participating in the "**Aryanization**" of Jewish property. When the trial ends on December 22, Flick and two others are given sentences ranging from 2 to 7 years; three are acquitted.
- March 21** The German **Hadamar Trial**, held before the district court in Frankfurt am Main, ends with the conviction of eleven of the twenty-five defendants. Dr. Adolf Wahlman and one other are sentenced to death; nine others receive prison sentences of up to 8 years.
- May 3** The U.S. Military Tribunal VI in Nuremberg begins the trial of twenty-four officers of the **I.G. Farben** concern, Germany's largest chemical conglomerate, in the **I.G. Farben Trial**. Convicted in June of plunder and spoliation of conquered territories and utilization of **forced labor** (most notoriously at their **Auschwitz-Monowitz** installation), thirteen defendants, including Carl Krauch, chairman of Farben's supervisory board, receive prison sentences of one to 8 years.

- May 10** The **Hostage Trial** begins as German Field Marshal Wilhelm List and eleven German generals stand accused of **war crimes** and **crimes against humanity**. The trial ends in February 1948, when eight men are given prison sentences ranging from 12 years to life; two are acquitted, while proceedings against an additional defendant are suspended due to ill health. One of the indicted commits suicide before arraignment.
- November 3** After a ten-month trial, the **Pohl Trial** ends with the conviction of fifteen former members of the SS Central Office for Economy and Administration. Oswald Pohl and three other defendants are sentenced to death, and eleven are given prison terms ranging from 10 years to life; three defendants are acquitted.
- November 4** The **Ministries Trial** begins as high-ranking German government officials are tried on eight counts by an American military tribunal. Nineteen defendants are found guilty and given prison sentences when the trial ends in November 1948; of these, former Interior Minister Stuckart, seriously ill, is sentenced to “time served.”
- November 21** United Nations Resolution 177 adopts the Nuremberg Principles of international law concerning **war crimes** and war criminals.

1948

- January 12** The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of **Genocide** comes into force. The Convention, not immediately ratified by the United States, recognizes various acts that demonstrate the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.”
- March 10** In Nuremberg, the **RuSHA Trial** ends as U.S. Military Tribunal I convicts thirteen of the fourteen defendants, all former members of the **SS Central Office for Race and Resettlement**, the **Reich Commission for Strengthening Germanism**, and various subsidiary organizations, for crimes associated with the “**Germanization**” of German-occupied Europe. One defendant is acquitted.
- March 29** Rudolf **Höss**, commandant of the killing center **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, is sentenced to death by the Polish Supreme Court in Warsaw after a trial lasting several weeks. Höss is hanged in Oswiecim on the grounds of the former **Auschwitz** camp on April 16.
- April 10** The **Einsatzgruppen Trial** ends. A U.S. military tribunal convicts twenty-two defendants in connection with **Einsatzgruppen** atrocities in Eastern Europe. Fourteen are sentenced to death; eight receive prison sentences ranging from time served to life.
- August 16** The **Krupp Trial** begins as steel magnate Alfred Krupp and eleven of his associates are tried by an American military tribunal for **crimes against peace, conspiracy**, plunder of occupied territories, and utilization of **slave labor**. The following July, eleven are convicted and given prison sentences ranging from 2 to 12 years.
- October 28** U.S. Military Tribunal in Nuremberg closes the **High Command Trial**, in which thirteen army generals and one navy admiral had been indicted on four counts: **crimes against peace, war crimes against enemy belligerents and civilians, crimes against humanity**, and **conspiracy**. (Counts 1 and 4 were later dropped.) Eleven are convicted

and give prison sentences ranging from 3 years to life. Two defendants are acquitted; another commits suicide in his cell during the proceedings.

November 24 Arthur Liebehenschel, briefly the commandant of **Auschwitz** and later commandant of the **Majdanek** concentration camp, is tried by a Polish court in Cracow along with thirty-nine other defendants, many of whom had held key staff positions at Auschwitz. The following month twenty-three defendants receive the death penalty; sixteen receive prison sentences.

1950

May 8 West Germany issued a fifteen-year statute of limitations on **Nazi** crimes other than premeditated murder. The statute lists May 8, 1945 — the day the European war ended — as the date from which the duration of the statute would be calculated for all Nazi crimes rather than the date on which the crimes were committed, since it was not possible to prosecute these crimes during the Nazi regime (See entry for May 8, 1960.)

1951

July 18-23 The trial of SS police chief Jürgen **Stroop**, who presided over the suppression of the 1943 **Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**, begins before the Warsaw District Criminal Court. Accused of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto and the mass murder of Jews and Polish civilians, Stroop is sentenced to death several days later and hanged on March 6, 1952.

1955

May 3 A Transition Agreement, signed by West Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, stipulates that persons previously tried by Allied occupation authorities will not be tried by German courts for the same offense, regardless of the outcome of the initial trial.

1958

October The recent trial of German *Einsatzgruppen* in Ulm, using newly uncovered evidence, convinces German justice officials meeting at Bad Harzburg that many of the most heinous **Nazi** crimes — especially those committed in the East — have yet to be tried. Justice ministers representing all German federal states (*Länder*) agree to establish the Central Office of State Administrations of Justice for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes (*Zentrale Stelle*) in Ludwigsburg. In its first year it initiates 400 extensive investigations; the most important are those cases involving the actions of the *Einsatzgruppen* and affiliated organizations and mass murder in **killing centers** located in German-occupied Poland.

1960

May 8 Fifteen years after the end of World War II, the statute of limitations expires on the crimes of manslaughter, deliberate physical injury resulting in death, and robbery. In practical terms, West German courts prosecuting **Nazi** crimes may pursue only those cases involving premeditated murder. Politicians in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) attempt to introduce a law that would block enforcement of the statute for Nazi **war crimes**, but the *Bundestag* (German parliament) votes to retain it.

1961

April 10

Following his dramatic kidnapping from Argentina by the Israeli security service, Adolf **Eichmann** is tried in the District Court in Jerusalem. Mastermind of the deportation scheme that sent at least three million Jews to their deaths, Eichmann is convicted of crimes against the Jewish people, **crimes against humanity**, and **war crimes**, and is sentenced to death. The trial has a profound impact on Holocaust research and documentation and leads to an intensified search for remaining **Nazi** war criminals.

1964

September 3

The **Treblinka Trial** ends with the conviction of nine of the ten defendants who were charged with directly participating in the murder of more than 300,000 people at the **Treblinka** killing center. All are sentenced to prison terms ranging from several years to life.

November 20

Six months before the German twenty-year statute of limitations would block the trial of cases involving **Nazi** killings, the West German government makes a formal request that foreign governments put at their disposal all available evidence concerning Nazi **war crimes**. The request is aimed primarily at Communist bloc countries, where Cold War politics has blocked access to pertinent documents.

1965

March 25

After sharp debate, the West German parliament (*Bundestag*) votes to extend the statute of limitation for **Nazi** crimes involving murder from May 8, 1965 to December 31, 1969. The statute is extended another ten years in 1969 (See entry for July 1979).

1967

January 23

The Harster Trial begins in Munich, as Wilhelm Harster and two others are tried for aiding and abetting in the murder of Dutch Jews. All three are found guilty on February 17 and sentenced to prison terms.

1968

April 8

Eleven of fourteen former German policemen of Reserve Police Battalion 101 are convicted by a district court in Hamburg of mass shootings of Jews in Lublin, Poland, during summer 1942. Five of the convicted defendants are sentenced to prison terms.

1970

December 22

After seven months, the **Stangl Trial** ends; defendant Franz Stangl is convicted of the murder of over 400,000 victims at the **Treblinka** killing center. He is sentenced to life in prison and incarcerated but dies of heart failure in 1971.

1978

October 30 The U.S. Congress passes the Holtzman Amendment to the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952. The Amendment created a “watch list” of alleged war criminals who are to be denied entry to the United States and permits deportation proceedings against those suspected of committing **war crimes** from 1933 to 1945.

1979

June 2 The Office of Special Investigations, U.S. Department of Justice, is founded, with the mission of investigating and taking legal action against individuals who “in association with the **Nazi** government, ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution of any persons because of race, religion, national origin, or political opinion between 1933 and 1945.”

July The German parliament (*Bundestag*) abolishes the existing statute of limitations for crimes of murder under German law. This measure effectively enables German courts to try **Nazi** war criminals for murder without impediment.

1980

November 26 The **Asche Trial** begins in Kiel, Germany; Kurt Asche and two other defendants stand trial for aiding and abetting the **deportation** of Belgian Jews. Asche is found guilty and is sentenced to 12 years in prison in June 1981.

1981

June 30 The **Majdanek Trial** ends with the conviction of eight of the defendants, including Hermine Braunsteiner-Ryan, the only American citizen extradited from the United States for **war crimes** up to that time. [Later, other U.S. citizens lost citizenship and were deported.] Braunsteiner-Ryan is sentenced to life in prison. The trial began in November 1975, making it the longest German criminal trial for defendants accused of **Nazi** war crimes.

1984

December 21 Feodor Fedorenko, a former Ukrainian SS guard at the **Treblinka** killing center, is deported to the Soviet Union to stand trial after he is denaturalized from United States citizenship in the **Fedorenko Hearing**. He had concealed his wartime **SS** activities upon applying for U.S. citizenship.

1987

July 4 Klaus Barbie, “The Butcher of Lyon,” is sentenced by a French court to life in prison for **crimes against humanity**. Barbie was the **Gestapo** chief in Lyon and responsible for the **deportation** of Jews and the torture and murder of French **resistance** fighters.

1993

July 29

Israel's Supreme Court overturns the guilty verdict (death sentence) in the case of John Demjanjuk. He was deported by the U.S. to Israel in February 1986 to stand trial for alleged activities as the **SS** guard "Ivan the Terrible" at the **Treblinka** killing center. Mr. Demjanjuk claimed that he was detained by the Nazis as a prisoner of war during World War II, having served in the Soviet Army. In 1994, he became the first convicted war criminal deported by the United States to be allowed to return. The U.S. Supreme Court, in October 1994, refused to review a Federal Appeals decision and ruled that Justice Department officials had mishandled the case.

1994

April 20

Paul Touvier, former Chief of French police in Lyon, France, is sentenced to life in prison for **crimes against humanity**; he had ordered the shooting of seven Jews near Lyon on June 29, 1944.

1995

May 8

Italy opens what could be the last war crimes proceedings after Argentina extradites SS Captain Erich Priebke at Italy's request. Priebke stands trial from the 1944 massacre of 335 men and boys in the Ardeatine caves south of Rome.

Additional Activity

Have students research any war crime-related activities that have occurred since 1995.

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The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial

With the defeat of Germany in 1945, the world saw firsthand photographs of the concentration camps. The Allies made plans to bring to justice the Nazis responsible for what happened during the war.

Millions of Germans and other Europeans were considered eligible for possible prosecution. Of these, only a small number were actually prosecuted, the most famous in the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal. Nineteen major Nazis were brought to trial. The defense questioned the legality of Germans being tried by the Allies. Even today, some people doubt that “war crimes” can be defined in legal terms adequate enough to prosecute people’s actions. The Germans responded by arguing that they followed orders of the government and that they could not be tried for breaking laws that did not exist until after the war. The defense charged that Allied airmen were also guilty of war crimes when they bombed German cities to terrorize civilians. Germans spoke of the fire-bombing of Dresden.

Many Germans, according to surveys, regarded the photographs of atrocities in the concentration and death camps with disbelief and without sorrow. This refusal to accept the reality of the death camps continues today with the publication of books such as Arthur Butz’s *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*. Butz denies that the camps served as death factories and that 6 million Jews were killed. He claims that the Holocaust never happened, that it is a Zionist propaganda hoax.

Many Germans could not understand why they were being prosecuted. Consider this exchange between a German prisoner and his Allied captors quoted in *The Jew as Pariah* by Ron H. Feldman:

- Q: Did you kill people in the camp?
 A: Yes.
 Q: Did you poison them with gas?
 A: Yes.
 Q: Did you bury them alive?
 A: It sometimes happened.
 Q: Were the victims picked from all over Europe?
 A: I suppose so.
 Q: Did you personally help kill people?
 A: Absolutely not. I was only paymaster in the camp.
 Q: What did you think of what was going on?
 A: It was hard at first but we got used to it.
 Q: Did you know the Russians will hang you?
 A: (Bursting into tears) Why should they? What have I done?

November 12, 1944

As the trials proceeded, Holocaust victims slowly began to reintegrate their lives. It soon became clear to many survivors that they had lost almost their entire families. Many experienced the normal responses of loss and depression. Many survivors were placed in Displaced Persons (DP) camps while the Allies discussed the issue of where these people were to go. Poland and Germany were no longer nations in which most Jews felt they had any future. Some Jews boarded ships and attempted to run the British blockade of Palestine. Many were caught and sent back to DP camps. But in 1948, the United Nations voted for partition of Palestine, resulting in the creation of the state of Israel. In the ensuing years, many Jews went to Israel; and when immigration barriers were lifted in the early 1950s many Jews came to North and South America, most especially the United States, where survivors of the Holocaust began new lives.

The four counts of the Indictment were (1) Common Plan or Conspiracy; (2) Crimes against Peace; (3) War Crimes, (4) Crimes Against Humanity.

Defendants

Wilhelm Frick: Reich Minister of the Interior and Director of the Central Office for all Occupied Territories:
 “The whole Indictment rests on the assumption of a fictitious conspiracy.”
 Guilty 2, 3, 4 Death

Walter Funk: Press Chief, later Minister of Economics: "I have never in my life done anything which could contribute to such an Indictment. If I have been made guilty of the acts which stand in the Indictment, through error or ignorance, then my guilt is a human tragedy, and not a crime."
 Guilty 2, 3, 4 Life in prison

Hjalmar Schacht: Reich Minister of Economics and President of the Reichsbank: "I do not understand at all why I have been accused."
 Acquitted

Karl Donitz: Commander in Chief of the German Navy: "None of these Indictment counts concerns me in the least—typical American humor."
 Guilty 2, 3 10 years

Erich Raeder: Admiral of the German Navy
 Guilty 1, 2, 3 Life in prison

Baldur Von Schirach: Reich Governor and Leader of Youth: "The whole misfortune came from racial politics."
 Guilty 4 20 years

Fritz Sauckel: Reich Governor and General in the SS: ". . . The terrible happenings in the concentration camps has shaken me deeply."
 Guilty 3, 4 Death

Alfred Jodl: Army General and Chief of Staff to General Keitel: "I regret the mixture of justified accusations and political propaganda."
 Guilty 1, 2, 3, 4 Death

Martin Bormann: Chief of Staff to Rudolf Hess and Hitler's secretary. Bormann disappeared and has never been found. He is reputed to be in South America.
 Guilty 3, 4 Death (in absentia)

Franz Von Papen: Reich Vice-Chancellor and Ambassador in Vienna and Turkey: "I believe that paganism and years in totalitarianism bear the main guilt."
 Acquitted

Alfred Von Seyss-Inquart: Deputy Governor General of occupied Poland and the Netherlands: "Last act of the tragedy of the second World War, I hope!"
 Guilty 2, 3, 4 Death

Albert Speer: Reich Minister for Armament and Munitions. "The trial is necessary. There is a common responsibility for such horrible crimes . . . even in an authoritarian system."
 Guilty 3, 4 20 years

Konstantin Von Neurath: Foreign Minister before Ribbentrop and Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. "I was always against punishment without the possibility of defense."
 Guilty 1, 2, 3, 4 15 years

Hans Fritzsche: Director of Propaganda: "It is the most terrible Indictment of all times."
 Acquitted

Hermann Goering: Chief of the Air Force, ranked second after Hitler: "The victor will always be the judge, and the vanquished the accused."
 Guilty 1, 2, 3, 4 Death

Rudolf Hess: Reich Minister Without Portfolio, ranked third after Goering: "I can't remember."
 Guilty 1, 2 Life in prison

Joachim Von Ribbentrop: Foreign Minister: "The Indictment is directed against the wrong people."
 Guilty 1, 2, 3, 4 Death

Ernst Kaltenbrunner: Head of the Security Police: "I do not feel guilty of any war crimes; I have only done my duty as an intelligence organ."
 Guilty 3, 4 Death

Wilhelm Keitel: Army General and Chief of the German High Command: "For a soldier, orders are orders."
 Guilty 1, 2, 3, 4 Death

Alfred Rosenberg: Nazi Party Leader for Ideology and Foreign Policy: "I must reject an Indictment for conspiracy."
 Guilty 1, 2, 3, 4 Death

Hans Frank: Reich Minister Without Portfolio: "I regard this trial as a God-willed world court, destined to examine and put an end to terrible era of suffering under Adolf Hitler."
 Guilty 3, 4 Death

Julius Streicher: Editor of *Der Sturmer*, an anti-Jewish newspaper and a favorite of Hitler: "This trial is a triumph of World Jewry."
 Guilty 4 Death

Questions for Discussion

1. Robinson Jeffers, the poet, has written:
 "Justice and mercy are human dreams; they do not concern the birds nor the fish nor eternal God."
 How could justice really be served after the Holocaust?
2. Do you think it was possible for survivors to forget their past and forgive those who committed acts of atrocity against them? Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal wrote a novel called *The Sunflower* in which just such an issue is raised. A 21-year old soldier lies on his deathbed just after the war. Wiesenthal is called in to hear the soldier's last words, in which he confesses his acts during the war and begs Wiesenthal to forgive him so that he can die in peace. What should Wiesenthal have done?
3. Examine the chart on the preceding pages of those Nazis judged in the most famous of all Nuremberg Trials. On what basis do you think the decisions were reached? Examine the quotations; did any of the Nazi leaders repent?

Source: Furman, Harry, ed. *Holocaust and Genocide: A Search for Conscience*. New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1983, pages 180-183. Developed under the auspices of the State of New Jersey Department of Education. Reprinted by permission.

SIMON WIESENTHAL OFFERS HIS SERVICES

The Allied governments were not the only ones concerned with apprehending war criminals. Survivors, such as Simon Wiesenthal, the famed "Nazi hunter," also took part in the search. In the decades since the war, Wiesenthal has helped to locate a number of war criminals, including Franz Stangl, former commandant of Sobibor and Treblinka killing centers. A Jewish architect from Poland, Wiesenthal had lost his entire family during the Holocaust. Soon after his liberation from Mauthausen concentration camp in May 1945 he offered his services to the American Military Government officials.

May 25, 1945.

Classification Code
of
The War Relocation Authority
by authority of the War Relocation Authority
on 05-11-1964

To the U.S. Army Command,
Camp Mauthausen.

Sir,

Having spent a number of years in Mauthausen and other concentration camps, including Mauthausen from which I was liberated by the American Forces on May 10th and where I was kept on a special diet, and endeavor to be of help to the U.S. authorities in their efforts to bring the Axis criminals to account, I take the liberty of submitting the following:

- As all of the camps where I was confined are located in the same town by the name of Mauthausen, it is my conviction that those responsible for the alternative conditions therein by the SS men are not to be found in the various parts of Europe but should be sought either in Austria or Germany.
- I am enclosing a brief list of those whom I have seen in those various camps and whom I can identify with an exact date as well as to my fellow inmates. Some of those I have personally seen commit murder gratuitously both in Austria and within. As many cases of these had either their names or initials written in inscriptions over their living quarters.
- With all of the members of my family and of my nearest relatives killed by the Nazis, I am seeking of your kindness to place me at the disposal of the U.S. authorities investigating war crimes. Although I am a Polish citizen and would like to return to my homeland, I feel that the crimes of those men are of such magnitude that an effort should be made to apprehend them. I also feel that it is my duty to offer my services either for the purpose of furnishing the identification of their names or as an operative in their identification.
- To furnish you with the personal data regarding my person, a brief narrative vitae is attached.

Respectfully,

/s/ Ing. Wiesenthal Simon
Ing. Wiesenthal
(Camp Mauthausen, 1945).

CLASSIFICATION CONCURRED
by authority of the War Relocation Authority
on 05-11-1964
by authority of the War Relocation Authority
on 05-11-1964
by authority of the War Relocation Authority
on 05-11-1964

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Classification Code
of
The War Relocation Authority
by authority of the War Relocation Authority
on 05-11-1964

Ing. Wiesenthal Simon
Ing. Wiesenthal

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A PERPETRATOR'S TESTIMONY

One of the commanders of the four EINSATZGRUPPEN active in the Soviet Union was Otto Ohlendorf, a lawyer who had joined the NAZI PARTY and SS in the mid-1920s. Joining the SS in 1936, he was on the staff of the CENTRAL OFFICE FOR REICH SECURITY by 1939, and became the commander of Einsatzgruppen D in June 1941. His Einsatzgruppe swept through the southern Ukraine to the Crimea and the northern Caucasus, killing Jews, GYPSIES, and Communist functionaries. The largest single massacre of Jews took place in his operational area, in Odessa (Ukraine), during October 1941, when up to 75,000 Jews and Communists were killed by troops of Germany's ally, Romania, with the help of SS troops under Ohlendorf's command.

After the war, Ohlendorf testified quite freely to the murders committed by his Einsatzgruppe at the INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL, as is shown by his testimony below. A year later he was one of the defendants at the EINSATZGRUPPEN TRIAL, where he was convicted and sentenced to death. Ohlendorf was hanged for his crimes in 1951.

COL AMEN: Do you know how many persons were liquidated by Einsatz Group [sic] D under your direction?

OHLENDORF: In the year between June 1941 to June 1942 the Einsatzkommandos reported 90,000 people liquidated.

COL AMEN: Did that include men, women, and children?

OHLENDORF: Yes.

COL AMEN: On what do you base those figures?

OHLENDORF: On reports sent by the Einsatzkommandos to the Einsatzgruppen.

COL AMEN: Were those reports submitted to you?

OHLENDORF: Yes.

COL AMEN: And you saw them and read them?

OHLENDORF: I beg your pardon?

COL AMEN: And you saw and read those reports, personally?

OHLENDORF: Yes.

COL AMEN: And it is on those reports that you base the figures you have given the Tribunal?

OHLENDORF: Yes.

COL AMEN: Do you know how those figures compare with the number of persons liquidated by other Einsatz groups?

OHLENDORF: The figures which I saw of other Einsatzgruppen are considerably larger.

COL AMEN: That was due to what factor?

OHLENDORF: I believe that to a large extent the figures submitted by the other Einsatzgruppen were exaggerated.

COL AMEN: Did you see reports of liquidations from the other Einsatz groups from time to time?

OHLENDORF: Yes.

COL AMEN: And those reports showed liquidations exceeding those of Group D; is that correct?

OHLENDORF: Yes.

COL AMEN: Did you personally supervise mass executions of these individuals?

OHLENDORF: I was present at two mass executions for purposes of inspection.

COL AMEN: Will you explain to the Tribunal in detail how an individual mass execution was carried out?

OHLENDORF: A local Einsatzkommando attempted to collect all the Jews in its area by registering them. This registration was performed by the Jews themselves.

COL AMEN: On what pretext, if any, were they rounded up?

OHLENDORF: On the pretext that they were to be resettled.

COL AMEN: Will you continue?

OHLENDORF: After the registration the Jews were collected at one place; and from there they were later transported to the place of execution, which was, as a rule, an antitank ditch or a natural excavation. The executions were carried out in a military manner, by firing squads under command.

COL AMEN: In what way were they transported to the place of execution?

OHLENDORF: They were transported to the place of execution in trucks, always only as many as could be executed immediately. In this way it was attempted to keep the span of time from the moment in which the victims knew what was about to happen to them until the time of their actual execution as short as possible.

COL AMEN: Was that your idea?

OHLENDORF: Yes.

COL AMEN: And after they were shot what was done with the bodies?

OHLENDORF: The bodies were buried in the antitank ditch or excavation.

COL AMEN: What determination, if any, was made as to whether the persons were actually dead?

OHLENDORF: The unit leaders or the firing-squad commanders had orders to see to this and, if need be, finish them off themselves.

COL AMEN: And who would do that?

OHLENDORF: Either the unit leader himself or some body designated by him.

COL AMEN: In what positions were the victims shot?

OHLENDORF: Standing or kneeling.

COL AMEN: What was done with the personal property and clothing of the persons executed?

OHLENDORF: All valuables were confiscated at the time of the registration or the rounding up and handed over to the Finance Ministry, either through the RSHA

[CENTRAL OFFICE FOR RACIAL SECURITY] or directly. At first the clothing was given to the population, but in the winter of 1941-1942 it was collected and disposed of by the NSV [NATIONAL SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S WELFARE SOCIETY]

COL. AMEN: All their personal property was registered at the time?

OHLENDORF: No, not all of it, only valuables were registered.

COL. AMEN: What happened to the garments which the victims were wearing when they went to the place of execution?

OHLENDORF: They were obliged to take off their outer garments immediately before the execution.

COL. AMEN: All of them?

OHLENDORF: The outer garments, yes.

COL. AMEN: How about the rest of the garments they were wearing?

OHLENDORF: The other garments remained on the bodies.

COL. AMEN: Was that true of not only your group but of the other Einsatz groups?

OHLENDORF: That was the order in my Einsatzgruppe. I don't know how it was done in other Einsatzgruppen.

COL. AMEN: In what way did they handle it?

OHLENDORF: Some of the unit leaders did not carry out the liquidation in the military manner, but killed the victims singly by slitting them in the back of the neck.

COL. AMEN: And you objected to that procedure?

OHLENDORF: I was against that procedure, yes.

COL. AMEN: For what reason?

OHLENDORF: Because both for the victims and for those who carried out the executions, it was, psychologically, an immense burden to bear.

COL. AMEN: Now, what was done with the property collected by the Einsatzkommandos from these victims?

OHLENDORF: All valuables were sent to Berlin, to the RSHA or to the Reich Ministry of Finance. The articles which could be used in the operational area, were disposed of there.

COL. AMEN: For example, what happened to gold and silver taken from the victims?

OHLENDORF: That was, as I have just said, turned over to Berlin, to the Reich Ministry of Finance.

COL. AMEN: How do you know that?

OHLENDORF: I can remember that it was actually handled in that way from Simferopol.

COL. AMEN: How about watches, for example, taken from the victims?

OHLENDORF: At the request of the Army, watches were made available to the forces at the front.

COL. AMEN: Were all victims, including the men, women, and children, executed in the same manner?

OHLENDORF: Until the spring of 1942, yes. Then an order came from Himmler that in the future women and children were to be killed only in gas vans.

COL. AMEN: How had the women and children been killed previously?

OHLENDORF: In the same way as the men— by shooting.

COL. AMEN: What, if anything, was done about burying the victims after they had been executed?

OHLENDORF: The Kommandos filled the graves to efface the signs of the execution, and then labor units of the population leveled them.

COL. AMEN: Referring to the gas vans which you said you received in the spring of 1942, what order did you receive with respect to the use of these vans?

OHLENDORF: These gas vans were in future to be used for the killing of women and children.

COL. AMEN: Will you explain to the Tribunal the construction of these vans and their appearance?

OHLENDORF: The actual purpose of these vans could not be seen from the outside. They looked like closed trucks, and were so constructed that at the start of the motor, gas was conducted into the van causing death in 10 to 15 minutes.

COL. AMEN: Explain in detail just how one of these vans was used for an execution.

OHLENDORF: The vans were loaded with the victims and driven to the place of burial, which was usually the same as that used for the mass executions. The time needed for transportation was sufficient to insure the death of the victims.

COL. AMEN: How were the victims induced to enter the vans?

OHLENDORF: They were told that they were to be transported to another locality.

COL. AMEN: How was the gas turned on?

OHLENDORF: I am not familiar with the technical details.

COL. AMEN: How long did it take to kill the victims ordinarily?

OHLENDORF: About 10 to 15 minutes; the victims were not conscious of what was happening to them.

COL. AMEN: How many persons could be killed simultaneously in one such van?

OHLENDORF: About 15 to 25 persons. The vans varied in size. . . .

COL. AMEN: Did you receive reports from those who were working on the vans?

OHLENDORF: I received the report that the Einsatzkommandos did not willingly use the vans.

COL. AMEN: Why not?

OHLENDORF: Because the burial of the victims was a great ordeal for the members of the Einsatzkommandos.

— Reprinted from Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, 42 vols. (Nuremberg, 1947), 4: 319-23.

"I'M BACK IN THE CAMP"

The MAJDANEK TRIAL tried fifteen members of the Majdanek camp staff. The most notorious defendant at the trial was the camp's former overseer, Austrian-born Hermine Braunsteiner-Ryan. Ryan earned her nickname "Kobyła" (Polish for "mare") for her habit of kicking her victims to death. After the war, Ryan concealed her identity and emigrated to the United States, where she married and became an American citizen. Twenty years later, "Kobyła" was exposed when the Federal Republic of Germany attempted to extradite her. The arrest of this New York housewife and her eventual denaturalization by the U.S. government in the BRAUNSTEINER HEARING sparked American interest in the prosecution of war criminals. As a result, the Office of Special Investigations, a branch of the United States Department of Justice, was formed to investigate WAR CRIMES in 1979.

In the following excerpt from the Majdanek Trial, witness Hela Rosenbaum identifies the defendant Ryan.

Day 260, 10 May 1978. Following protocol, the presiding judge asks the witness Hela Rosenbaum the question, "Are any of the accused relatives of yours or related to you by marriage?" The woman, fifty-one years old, becomes bright red in the face. "I am a Jew!" The judge explains to her why he must ask this question. The woman pulls nervously

on her black velvet jacket. Finally, after she is again asked about any possible relation to the SS guards of Majdanek, she quietly answers, "No. Thank God, no."

Hela Rosenbaum can hardly control the tension that this reunion with the women SS guards has welled up inside her. As she stands in front of the accused Hermine Braunsteiner-Ryan, she is only able to choke out, "Kobyła, that's Kobyła." Then the presiding judge has to interrupt the proceedings. A doctor treats the over-excited woman. Twenty minutes later she is standing in front of Hildegard Lächert. "Bloody Brygida. Never without her whip," she says. Once she received twenty-five lashes from her. She describes that, then pauses. The judge asks her a question. She does not answer. He asks her again. Hela Rosenbaum says, "Excuse me please. I am no longer here, Your Honor. I am back in the camp."

— Reprinted from Gunther Schurberg, *Der Juwelen von Majdanek* (Hamburg, 1981), 162. Translated from the German by Neal Guthrie.

Meeting Again*

By Elie Wiesel

Some thirty-six and thirty-seven years ago, we experienced, together, a moment of destiny without parallel -- never to be measured, never to be repeated; a moment that stood on the other side of time, on the other side of existence.

When we first met, at the threshold of a universe struck by malediction, we spoke different languages, we were strangers to one another, we might as well have descended from different planets. And yet -- a link was created among us, a bond was established. We became not only comrades, not only brothers; we became each other's witnesses.

I remember -- I shall always remember the day I was liberated: April 11, 1945. Buchenwald. The terrifying silence terminated by abrupt yelling. The first American soldiers. Their faces ashen. Their eyes -- I shall never forget their eyes, your eyes. You looked and looked, you could not move your gaze away from us; it was as though you sought to alter reality with your eyes. They reflected astonishment, bewilderment, endless pain, and anger -- yes, anger above all. Rarely have I seen such anger, such rage -- contained, mute, yet ready to burst with frustration, humiliation, and utter helplessness. Then you broke down. You wept. You wept and wept uncontrollably, unashamedly; you were our children then, for we, the twelve-year-old, the sixteen-year-old boys and girls in Buchenwald and Theresienstadt and Mauthausen knew so much more than you about life and death. You wept; we could not. We had no more tears left; we had nothing left. In a way we were dead and we knew it. What did we feel? Only sadness.

And also: gratitude. And ultimately, it was gratitude that brought us back to normalcy and to society. Do you remember, friends? In Lublin and Dachau, Stuthoff and Nordhausen, Ravensbruck and Maidanek and Belsen and Auschwitz, you were surrounded by sick and wounded and hungry wretches, barely alive, pathetic in their futile attempts to touch you, to smile at you, to reassure you, to console you and most of all to carry you in triumph on their frail shoulders; You were heroes, our idols: tell me, friends, have you ever felt such love, such admiration?

One thing we did not do: We did not try to *explain*; explanations were neither needed nor possible. Liberators and survivors looked at one another -- and what each of us experienced then, we shall try to recapture together, now, at this reunion which to me represents a miracle in itself ...

And so ... I suddenly had the idea of bringing together liberators from all the allied forces. To listen to you and to thank you. And -- why not admit it? -- to solicit your help. Our testimony is being disputed by morally deranged Nazis and Nazi-lovers; your voices may silence them. You were the first men to discover the abyss, just as we were its last inhabitants. What we symbolized to one another then was so special that it remained part of our very being.

Well -- here you are, friends from so many nations, reunited with those who owe you their lives, just as you owe them the flame that scorched your memories.

On that most memorable day, the day of our liberation -- whether it took place in 1944 or in 1945, in Poland or in Germany -- you embodied for us humanity's noblest yearning to be free, and even more; to bring freedom to those who are not.

For us, you represented hope. True, six million Jews were annihilated, millions of brave men and women massacred by the Nazis and their collaborators, but we are duty-bound to remember always that to confront the fascist criminal conquests, a unique alliance of nations, gigantic armies, transcending geopolitical and ideological borders, was raised on five continents, and all went to war on behalf of humankind. The fact that millions of soldiers wearing different uniforms united to fight together, to be victorious together, and, alas, sometimes to die together, seemed to justify man's faith in his own humanity -- in spite of the enemy.

*A speech delivered at the International Liberators Conference in Washington, D.C., on October 26, 1981.

We thought of the killers and we were ready to give up on man; but then we remembered those who resisted them -- on open battlefields as well as in the underground movements in France, Norway, Holland, Denmark, and the U.S.S.R. -- and we reconciled ourselves with the human condition. We were -- can you believe it? -- naive enough to think that we who had witnessed, for a while, the domination of evil would prevent it from surfacing again. On the very ruins of civilization, we aspired to erect new sanctuaries for our children where life would be sanctified and not denigrated, compassion practiced, not ridiculed.

It would have been so easy to allow ourselves to slide into melancholic resignation. Instead we chose to become spokespersons for the human quest for generosity and need and capacity to turn suffering into something productive, something creative.

We had hoped then that out of so much grief and mourning a new message would be handed down to future generations, a warning against the inherent perils of discrimination, fanaticism, poverty, deprivation, ignorance, oppression, humiliation and injustice, and war -- the ultimate injustice, the ultimate humiliation.

Yes, friends; we were naive.

And perhaps we still are.

Together we have the right and the duty to issue an appeal to which no one can remain deaf: an appeal against hatred, against human degradation, and against forgetfulness.

We have seen that which no one will ever see. We have seen what fanaticism leads to: mass cruelty, imprisonment, and death.

We have seen the metamorphosis of history, and now it is our duty to bear witness. When one people is destined to die, all others are implicated. When one ethnic group is humiliated, humanity is threatened. Hitler's plans to annihilate the Jewish people and to decimate the Slavic nations bore the germ of universal death. Jews were killed, but humankind was assassinated.

You, friends, liberators, stopped this process. Be proud. We are grateful.

If we unite our memories and wills, as we did then, everything is possible. Forgetfulness leads to indifference; indifference to complicity and thus to dishonor.

Friends, I speak to you as brothers. The ties that bind us to one another are powerful and timeless. Together we constitute a community that has no equal. Yet it diminishes from day to day. Who among you will be the last messenger? Our moral judgment, both past and present, determines our dignity. Yes, we are against prisons, against dictatorships, against fear, against confrontation, nuclear or otherwise. We give proof that it is possible for men and women to join forces and affirm the right to live and dream in peace.

I may be naive but I believe with all my heart that if we speak loudly enough, Death will retreat.

To paraphrase Nietzsche, we looked deep into the abyss -- and the abyss looked back at us. No one comes close to the kingdom of night and goes away unscathed. We told the tale -- or, at least, we tried. We resisted all temptations to isolate ourselves and be silent. Instead we chose to affirm our desperate faith in testimony. We forced ourselves to speak -- however inadequately, however poorly. We may have used the wrong words -- but then there are no words to describe the ineffable. We spoke in spite of language, in spite of the void that exists between what we say and outsiders *hear*. We spoke and ... explosions in Paris, bombs in Antwerp, murderous attacks in Vienna. Is it conceivable that Nazism could dare come back into the open so soon -- while we are still alive, while we are still here to denounce its poisonous nature, as illustrated in Treblinka?

Again we must admit our naiveté. We thought we had vanquished the beast, but no: it is still showing its claws. At best, what a gathering such as this could do is to shame the beast into hiding. If we here succeed -- and I hope and pray that we shall -- in rising above politics, above the usual recriminations between East and West, above simplistic propaganda, and simply tell the world what both liberators and liberated have seen, then something may happen; the world may choose to pay more attention to what hangs as a threat to its very future.

If we succeed -- and I hope and pray that we shall -- in putting aside what divides us -- and what divides us is superficial -- if we dedicate ourselves not only to the memory of those who have suffered but also to the future of those who are suffering today, we shall be serving notice on mankind that we shall never allow this earth to be made into a prison again, that we shall never allow war to be considered as a solution to any problem -- for war *is* the problem. If we succeed, then our encounter will be recorded as yet another of our common victories.

If we do not raise our voices against war, against hate, against indifference -- who will? We speak with the authority of men and women who have seen war; we know what it is. We have seen the burnt villages, the devastated cities, the deserted homes, we still see the demented mothers whose children are being massacred before their eyes, we still follow the endless nocturnal processions to the flames rising up to the seventh heaven -- if not higher ...

We are gathered here to testify -- together. Our tale is a tale of solitude and fear and anonymous death -- but also of compassion, generosity, bravery, and solidarity. Together, you the liberators and we the survivors represent a commitment to memory whose intensity will remain. In its name we shall continue to voice our concerns and our hopes not for our own sake, but for the sake of humankind. Its very survival may depend on its ability and willingness to listen.

And to remember.

Elie Wiesel was raised in Transylvania and in 1944 was deported to Auschwitz with his family. Liberated from Buchenwald, he later took up studies at the Sorbonne in Paris and became a foreign correspondent. Elie Wiesel has since written over thirty books and was the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. He served as chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council from 1980 to 1986. In his words and deeds, Wiesel has helped to bring the Holocaust to the frontiers of American consciousness. He is a professor in the humanities at Boston University.

Source: Excerpts from "Meeting Again" in Wiesel, Elie, *From the Kingdom of Memory*. New York: Summit Books, 1990. Copyright © 1990 by Elirion Associates, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Georges Borchardt, Inc. on behalf of the author.

**50th Anniversary of VE Day (Victory in Europe)
Hadassah Rosensaft
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Washington, D.C., May 8, 1995**

For most of the world, May 8, 1945 marked the end of World War II in Europe, but for the survivors of the concentration camps, the war ended on the day of our liberation.

I am a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust. I was born and raised in Poland. In early August 1943, together with thousands of Jews from my hometown of Sosnowiec, I was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. There, I lost my entire family: my parents, my first husband and our 5-year-old son, and my younger sister. They were all killed in the gas chambers of Birkenau. I remained alone.

After 15 months at Auschwitz, I was sent with eight other women as a medical team to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany. We arrived there on November 23, 1944, and I was assigned as the supervisor of the so-called "hospital."

Conditions in Belsen were horrible. The camp was filthy and overcrowded. Ironically speaking, whatever was bad in Auschwitz was worse in Belsen, except that there were no gas chambers. Hundreds of inmates -- thousands toward the end -- were dying daily from starvation, torture, and all kinds of epidemic diseases. We lived in despair, without any ray of hope that we would ever be free again.

But the miracle happened. The day was Sunday, April 15, 1945. I was sitting with a group of Jewish orphans who had been placed in my charge, telling them stories, trying to comfort them. Suddenly, a few minutes after 3 p.m., we heard a voice repeating the same words in English and German over and over: "Hello, hello, you are free, we are British soldiers and we came to liberate you!" These words still resound in my ears.

It is hard to imagine how we felt. The British found 58,000 inmates in Belsen: men, women and children -- over 90% of them were Jews. The vast majority were living skeletons. What the British saw was a sea of crying bones.

Although the war was still going on, one of our liberators, Brigadier General H.L. Glyn-Hughes, the Chief Medical Officer of the Second British Army, decided to remain in Belsen with a medical unit headed by Colonel James Johnston, and to try to save as many of the survivors as possible. I was asked to organize and head a medical team to help them, and I was honored and privileged to do so.

A new hospital for 17,000 patients was established in the nearby former German military barracks. The patients were transferred there and we started to work. Our group included eight doctors from among the survivors and 620 other men and women who, although still convalescents themselves, came forward to help. We worked hard, around the clock. Thousands were saved thanks to the performance of superhuman work, but 13,944 still died during the two months following the liberation. They are buried in the mass-graves of Belsen.

I don't remember the 8th of May in 1945. We were too busy with the sick and the dying. Of course, we were told by our British friends that the war in Europe was over, but we did not celebrate.

I am not a masochist, but for years, I have been watching a film on television recording reactions in different countries to the end of the Second World War. I see people in New York, London and Paris, dancing in the streets, laughing, singing, filled with joy that their dear ones will soon be coming home. These scenes fill me with terrible pain.

We in Belsen did not dance on that day. We in Belsen had nothing to be hopeful for. Nobody was waiting for us anywhere. We were alone! The liberation came too late -- not only for the dead but also for the survivors. While we were liberated from death and the fear of death, we were not free from the fear of life.

We also know that the liberation of Belsen and the other camps was not a priority on the agenda of the war strategy. We were discovered accidentally.

This does not in any way lessen our deep, everlasting gratitude to every soldier of the Allied Armies who took part in freeing us from the Germans. But every year on May 8th, when the world celebrates, my thoughts are with the dead, and I remember the anguish with which we, the survivors, returned to life.

Hadassah Bimko Rosensaft studied medicine at the University of Nancy in France, received her doctorate as a dental surgeon in 1935 and practiced dentistry in her native city of Sosnowiec, Poland until August 1943 when she was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp. She helped rescue hundreds of inmates in Auschwitz and saved 149 orphans in Bergen-Belsen.

In 1958, Dr. Rosensaft moved to the United States. She served on the President's Commission on the Holocaust and later on the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. She was the chairwoman of the archives and library committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, a member of the museum's executive committee and the honorary president of the World Federation of Bergen-Belsen survivors.

PHOTOGRAPH



American troops from the 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion of the 8th Corps, U.S. Third Army, are shown a stack of corpses lying outside of the crematorium at Buchenwald. (*William A. Scott III, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives*)

TESTIMONIES

Halina Laster was born in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Poland on June 4, 1921. Forced to live in the ghetto there for two years during World War II, she was subsequently sent to Blizin, Auschwitz, Reichenbach, and Altona. She was liberated by the Swedish Red Cross at the end of April 1945.

Q. What happened then?

A. We were taken to cattle trains. We should have suspected that something good was coming because they were counting us, fifty to each wagon, which was a luxury. We could sit down, even if it meant we had to pull our knees under our chins. I was sitting next to a wall by the door, because whenever the train made a stop, they had to let me out. I was so sick. Every train always had two SS men assigned when it was this kind of a short trip. And these two SS men in our train said, "Well, whatever, now you're going to be free. We don't know what is going to happen to us." We looked at them as if they were speaking Greek, because we didn't know what they meant. And at one point, the train stopped and our Lagerältester [camp elder or supervisor], Mrs. Popper, was walking from one train to the other with a couple of SS officials. She was saying, "The war is almost over. Hitler committed suicide." We thought that she had lost her mind, that they were just leading her off to be shot. We didn't know what to make of it. We just didn't understand at all. It didn't penetrate.

Then we arrived in Padberg, which is in Denmark. It took us a few days, a trip that really normally should have taken a few hours. I believe that the tracks were bombed, and they had to go in a roundabout way. When we came there, they started making a list of our names. We didn't trust them, and we didn't know why they were interested in our names. So, everybody gave them the wrong name. They had to do it all over again the next day.

They took us into barracks, which we were afraid to leave. The only way they could clean the barracks was to offer us food. So, as we left the barracks, we got our food. Also, when we first arrived, people had headaches and other problems. They gave us valeriana drops [medicine used to alleviate stomach aches]. As long as they were giving them as well as sugar cubes, people fought over them. Later, nobody had a stomach ache because they administered them in water instead. And when we got our sandwiches, they were wrapped in wax paper, in the Scandinavian manner. It was just unbelievable. We were standing in the yard and comparing the sandwiches and looking at them. We didn't really understand why there was all this wrapping and re-wrapping and playing around with food. We were used to a chunk of bread in the hand and a liter of soup in a bowl.

And then I noticed a Danish man with three girls standing outside of the compound, crying. We quickly hid our sandwiches. We didn't want to be looked at as freaks. But, still, there was a farmer outside there who had a mound of potatoes and, sure enough, in the morning there was not one potato left. We ate them. We were hungry, because the bread they gave us was very delicate, very lightweight. We were used to this rough piece of bread, and we didn't feel it. We thought it was another way of starving us to death.

Q. Were the SS still with you?

A. They had gone. We were totally now in the hands of the Red Cross, but it didn't penetrate. We didn't understand.

Q. Were they wearing uniforms?

A. They were mostly women wearing nurse's uniforms with big aprons.

Q. You thought they were still Nazis?

A. No, we knew they were not Nazis, but we knew that only in our heads. We didn't feel that. We didn't know who they were, exactly. We didn't know why they would take care of us. We were just very suspicious of everybody and everything. And then they took us on trains again. Trains were not our favorite subject, even if those were real Pullman trains. We sat in those trains.

When we arrived in Denmark, it was a very sad experience for me, because the Danish prisoners were met by their families. And they came in clothes. They were wearing coats, gloves, pocketbooks, and hats. They came with bouquets of flowers and took the people home. I was sitting on the floor looking and thinking, "Where am I going?" I had nobody and no place to go.

Then the nurses put wooden steps next to the trains when they unloaded us and helped us down. I was looking at those nurses and was thinking they were like giants. They seemed so big to me, so terribly big.

This was the moment when I couldn't move anymore. I was paralyzed from my waist down, I just couldn't move. But my friends were camouflaging me so nobody would see it, because we did not want the authorities to know that I couldn't walk. My friends were schlepping [carrying] me until Sweden. When we got to Sweden, that's when they couldn't do it any longer, because they were not strong enough. At this time, somebody must have discovered it and put me on a stretcher. Again, we were taken on the Pullman trains, and we were to be ferried over to Sweden. One of the railroad workers, who was a Polish Christian man, said to us, "You think they're going to take you to Sweden? They're going to sink the ship." We believed him. So we were really expecting the ship to sink, because we knew that they sank some ships with prisoners in Lubeck.

Q. When did you hear that the war was over?

A. Well, at this time it wasn't over yet. So, when we came to Sweden, another interesting thing happened. The train stopped, and a man came and stuck his head in the door. He said, "Shalom" [hello or peace] and we thought that meant we're going to die. We asked, "Who are you?" He said he was the rabbi of the city. We said, "Jews? Are there Jews here?" So he said, "Yes, there are Jews here." "And they're free?" So, he said, "Yes. There are Jews who live here." "Do they walk on the street?" We couldn't fathom that there were Jews living free.

Suddenly, there was a commotion. Some of the so-called Polish-Christian girls who were there came running to us and said that they were Jewish. They had been in hiding. They heard the word, "shalom," and they came. They admitted to being Jewish.

They brought us to Hälsingborg and put us in a school. But again there was a problem. The bus drivers had uniforms, uniform caps, and nobody wanted to get on the bus. Then they said that we were going to have a bath and, of course, nobody wanted to take a bath. Not

that we didn't want to be clean, but we didn't know if the bath was for real. When we came in, they took my clothes off of me and disposed of them. They put us in tubs with a lot of soap. Soap, soap, soap. We didn't want to leave those tubs! They gave us clean towels and dressed us. We were then shown to the rest of them, "Look, see."

It was a terrible thing with our health, because everybody had diarrhea and dysentery and all kinds of things and the toilets broke down. So, then they had us using the outdoor facilities but nobody dared to go at night, because placed around the school were Swedish soldiers. They were not even carrying guns. They were just there to protect the population from all kinds of diseases that we had. This was more of a medical thing than anything else but, of course, we didn't trust them.

Then we were moved from Hälsingborg to Båstad. Båstad was a resort where the King Gustav V used to play tennis. And we were in a school there.

Q. Were all of you moved or only the sickest ones?

A. All of us, yes, were moved. People were dying daily. When we arrived in Sweden, the authorities, the Red Cross, didn't comprehend that we couldn't be fed immediately in a normal manner. They had to give us food slowly. I would exchange my meat, fish, or whatever they gave us to my friends for the jello because jello was soothing. I could swallow it, and it was so easy to eat. And this was my luck, because I really was very ill and this saved me.

By the time I got a little bit better, I made a pact with myself. I decided, "Either I'm going to walk again and be a functioning individual, or I'm going to take my life." Because by this time, I lost the incentive for living. I just didn't see any sense in continuing. I had a very nice background, but I wasn't able to earn a dollar. I didn't have a skill or anything. I didn't have a home. So I gave myself some time.

As soon as I was able to sit upright, I was sitting at the edge of my bed. I just got up and then moved my legs with my hands. I just moved them physically. One and then the other, and then the other. And then something happened -- but I really hesitate to tell people because it sounds like an imaginary thing -- but it really did happen this way.

It was as I got to the window. I was looking out the window and there was this fence around the school. A man came on a bicycle and looked up. He saw me and motioned to me with his hands to come quickly down. And my heart started beating. I said, "He must have some news about my family." It did not occur to me that this man didn't know who I was and obviously couldn't see me very well on the second floor in the school. I most certainly didn't know who he was. But I ran down the steps. He gave me a big package and said, "Bye, bye," got on his bicycle and left. I came up to my room and opened this package. They were chocolates, candy. He came to give somebody candy. On the way, maybe to work, he was in a hurry, and he saw me in the window so he summoned me and I came. I cried like a baby. I didn't want those chocolates. I gave them all away. But that's how I started walking. I really walked. It sounds so stupid, but that's how it was.

Q. Did you have any family in the United States?

- A. Yes. I knew that I had relatives in America. I didn't remember their address, I didn't know English. All I knew was that they had changed their name to Seaman. At some point, I got a telegram from my aunt. We kept in touch, but I did not want to go to America. I got married. My husband and I became Swedish citizens, and I liked the country very much. One day in 1956, my aunt and uncle came to visit us. They started kissing and hugging the children. My children were just melting because a constant question was, "Why do all the other children have grandparents? Why do all the other children have cousins?" And they didn't have anybody. So when they came and started kissing and hugging our children, my uncle said to me, "Look, you work for somebody here, you can work for somebody in America. The whole family's in America." So we decided to come to America. And that's what we did in 1958.

This excerpt is adapted from the original testimony of Halina Laster which is part of the Oral History Collection of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

Dvora Wagner, née Neiman, was born on August 3, 1930 in Łódź, Poland. She was forced to spend four years in the Łódź ghetto before being sent to several concentration camps, including Auschwitz, Ravensbrück, and Milhausen. Finally, she was sent to Bergen-Belsen, where she was liberated by the British in April 1945.

Q. You were in Bergen-Belsen at the time it was liberated. A few days prior to liberation, was there any knowledge at all on the part of anyone as to what was about to happen?

A. Nothing.

Q. Did the German soldiers all remain in the camp?

A. Yes, that was a surprise for them, too. I remember that they worked very hard, cleaning out and taking out the dead people.

Q. What was liberation day like? Can you describe it to me?

A. I remember that we sat together. We were so sick already, and most of us were crying. People didn't even have strength to pick up their heads. We couldn't drink the water anymore. I don't remember if they gave us bread to eat. All of a sudden, we saw English soldiers. They came, and some of them were Jewish people, too. Most of the Jewish people started to cry. Even the English could not believe seeing people in this condition.

Q. Was there any resistance on the part of the German soldiers as the English troops marched in? Did they try to resist the English coming in?

A. I don't know. We were in a closed camp. I think they surprised them, too, because they came so fast that the Germans couldn't run away anymore.

Q. Do you remember hearing any shooting or anything . . . any guns going off, as they entered the camp?

A. I don't remember.

Q. When were you first aware that the English troops were coming into the camp? How did you find out?

A. We saw them coming in. We saw different soldiers who had on brownish-green uniforms.

Q. And what happened as they came in?

A. Right away, they gave us the food they had. This was a big mistake. They gave the people cans of beans and coke. Our stomachs were so weak that the people couldn't take it. Most of us were sick.

Q. But they didn't realize. They were trying help.

A. They saw dying people and the hunger. So they gave us everything. After the war, I think many people died from eating when they weren't ready to eat.

Q. What did they do once they entered the camp?

A. They started to organize. First, they gave us food. Then they started to put some stuff on our beds and bodies to kill the lice. Then they took us out and brought us to a nearby camp where the Germans used to live. It wasn't far from Bergen-Belsen.

Q. They had taken all the German soldiers out of that camp?

A. Yes, sure. I don't know what they did with the Germans.

Q. Did any of the soldiers stop to talk to you at all?

A. I think yes, but we couldn't talk with them. We didn't speak English.

Q. Could any of them speak either in Polish or Yiddish to you?

A. I think the Jewish people knew Yiddish. So they talked with us. They took out the youngest children that were left over, and they brought us over to a nice place called a Kinderhaus [children's house]. We stayed there for a couple months, I think. Right away they opened a school and started to teach us.

Q. Who did this?

A. I think Jewish English people from the army started to organize to help us as well as other Jewish people such as Hadassah Rosensaft, a concentration camp survivor. Her husband was head of the Jewish community in Bergen-Belsen. They did a lot for the children at that time; for all the people, actually. Then they brought us to a beautiful home in Hamburg, Germany.

Q. How many children were there in the group at this time?

A. There were about ninety children.

Q. And all ninety were brought to this lovely place in Hamburg?

A. Yes.

Q. How long did you remain there?

A. We remained there until we went to Palestine. We went to Palestine in May 1946.

Q. So, it was about a year. What was life like in Hamburg once you got there?

A. Oh, it was like heaven over there. We had people who were so wonderful to us. They started to teach us to play the piano and we used to study four or five hours a day in school. Then we socialized with the children in the afternoon and at night.

Q. And was there an effort made on the part of anyone to try to locate those members of your family who had survived?

A. Yes. After the war, I think it was the Red Cross that started to look for people who survived.

I remember it was a very hard time for me. Some of my girlfriends found members of their families. One found her father, one found her brother, one found her sister. Every day, there was somebody new coming in, and I had nobody.

Q. Did you ever find out what happened to your brother?

A. No, we didn't hear anything.

Q. How old were you at this time?

A. I must have been fifteen years old.

Q. What happened at the end of this year?

A. The head of the Jewish community was working with the British people in Palestine. I remember that [David] Ben Gurion came to Bergen-Belsen to see us with certificates for the children to go to Palestine.

Q. Did you realize that you were going to go to Palestine eventually while you were in Hamburg, or you had no idea what was going to happen?

A. Oh, no, we knew what was going to happen to us. We started to learn Hebrew right away.

Q. And had they told you that you were going to Palestine?

A. Oh yes. The brigada [brigade] right away prepared us to go to Palestine.

Q. How did you feel about that?

A. Oh, we felt beautiful, wonderful.

Q. You left Hamburg after a year and you went to Palestine. How did they transport you to Palestine?

A. We left Germany and went to Marseilles. We were on a train, too, but a different train than when we went to Auschwitz. The teachers were with us. We waited for the boat to take us over to Palestine. The name of the boat was the Chantoleon.

Q. And how long did the trip take?

A. Five days.

Q. What were the sights that you first saw when you came into Palestine?

A. Oh, it was very exciting. We saw the mountains of Haifa. It was so beautiful. Then we got off the boat at the port of Haifa, and so many people were waiting for us. Everybody gave us candies and chocolate. They touched us, because we came from Germany. They welcomed us in Israel. I remember that I was so excited. I was crying all the time. I felt like I was coming home.

This excerpt is adapted from the original testimony of Dvora Wagner which is part of the Oral History Collection of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

Howard Cwick was born in New York City on August 25, 1923. During World War II, he was a corporal in the U.S. Army 281st Combat Engineers. In April 1945, he was among the early liberators of Buchenwald, the largest concentration camp on German soil, because he happened to be in the vicinity when it was first discovered by the American forces.

Q. How old were you at the time of liberation?

A. Twenty-one. I was in the 281st Combat Engineers.

Q. What was your rank at that time?

A. I was a corporal.

Q. What camp did you liberate?

A. It's strange you say, what did I liberate? It makes me feel like I was John Wayne going in and shooting up. I found myself going through the gates of Buchenwald, outside of Weimar.

Q. Approximately what date was that?

A. It was exactly April 11, 1945.

Q. Did you have any advance knowledge of the camp before you got there?

A. No. Actually, we had a Jewish officer, and he came to tell me that we were going into Germany, and that either we should not wear our dog tags because of the letter H, for Hebrew, on the corner of them, or we should keep them in our pocket. It was felt that if we were captured by the Germans, being Jewish, we would be in much more danger. And as far as the camps were concerned, we heard rumors about how they killed Jews, but I was a typical young, American who knew everything, and in reality knew nothing. So, the fact that the camp was there, we did not know.

We did know that for the last three or four days, we were outside of Weimar, Germany, and there was a horrible, horrible smell that permeated the air. We had no idea what it was. It was like nothing we ever smelled before, and no matter where you went, you just couldn't get away from it. But, we didn't know where it was coming from, or what it was. It was just there.

Q. When did you learn of the camp's existence?

A. Well, the morning of April 11th, a few of the men and myself were living actually in the back of a liberated truck, a German truck. It was better than sleeping on the ground and warmer. That morning, I was reloading the truck when a vehicle -- I believe it was a jeep -- came racing up to me. The other guys were out doing something else, and it struck me as strange, because the jeep didn't come from our side of the land. It came from the enemy side of the land. Yet, when it got up to me, the driver spun around by jamming on his brakes. He yelled, "Drop what you're doing, come!" It took about six or seven or eight minutes driving across land, across the terrain, and we came to this barbed wire city. It seemed to me that it went from that end of the horizon to the other end of the horizon. It was monstrous.

We came up to the fence, and it was an electrified fence. You could see the white insulators between the fence itself and the wires at the top. We saw people inside the camp in these strange costumes, just wandering around aimlessly. And we saw some bodies in the distance lying on the ground. We followed the fence until we came to the main gate. About the same time, another vehicle came up and stopped. Then a few minutes later, a truck came up with three more men. And we were all just sitting in front of this gate, until somebody -- I don't remember who it was -- just said, "What the hell are we waiting for?" We all got out of the vehicles. There must have been about a dozen or so there by the time, and we walked in.

What struck me was that on this iron or steel gate, this wrought iron gate, steel bars, in letters about four or five inches high, out of metal, it said *yeder fir sich alaint*, which I assume meant, from Yiddish, to each his own. Why that, I don't know. But the gate was not locked. It was partly open.

We walked in and found out later that this was Buchenwald. The things that we saw were absolutely horrifying. I had carried a camera all through the war as a hobby. From the time I was a little over seven years old when an aunt gave me a camera as a present, I carried one with me at all times. I was always waiting for that special picture, such as an airplane falling to the ground or a train hitting a trolley car. My parents would send me cigarettes and film. I used to trade the cigarettes with other soldiers if they gave me a roll of film. This particular day, I had just twenty-two shots left on the roll, and I photographed what I saw.

I wish I had a thousand rolls of film that day, because it was a world that couldn't possibly have been real. It was unreal. We thought we were living like animals, doing the things that we were doing. Taking human life is easy to talk about, but it's not easy to live with. But that day, I suddenly grew up, and I found out how totally ignorant and purposeless my life had been until then. What we found there changed my life, literally, forever.

We walked in, and ahead of us, people were walking around. They looked like drum skins, stretched over bony frames. There was no meat to them, like living skeletons. Every so often, there would be somebody lying on the ground--some in ragged clothing, some in these long striped gowns that they wore. Some of them were already dead. Some of them were dying. Over on the side, there were many bodies, just scattered haphazardly where they fell and died.

Near the first building, there were long, wooden wagons. They had to be maybe fifteen, eighteen, twenty feet long. And they were piled ten, twelve, fifteen bodies high, for the entire size of the wagon, I guess waiting for mass burial, or burning, whatever it was. I tried to go over to people who were still living. A number of them would back away from me as though they were afraid. I imagine some of them thought that it could possibly be a trick of the Germans, so they would back away. And I kept saying, "*Ich bin ein Amerikaner Soldat. Ich bin a Jude.*" [I am an American soldier. I am a Jew.] But they would back up. [crying]

One man pointed at my canteen, and he kept saying, "*Wasser, Wasser.*" Water. So I gave him my canteen, and in one quick shot, he drained it. About ten minutes later, he grabbed around his stomach, and he began to wretch horribly. Nothing came out. He had nothing inside of him to come out. I guess he had drained my canteen too fast, and his empty body just couldn't take the shock of all of that liquid.

At that time, I heard them, some of the prisoners who had backed up away from us, in horror, speaking in -- I think it was Polish, I know no Polish, whatever, or German -- but in their conversation, I thought I recognized the word *Sam*, which I knew in Yiddish means poison. And I tried to convince them that no, we're not a trick, and we didn't poison him, and we wanted to talk to them. And I kept repeating, "*Ich bin a Jude. Ich bin a Jude.*" (I am a Jew.) It was too difficult, I think, for them to realize that American soldiers were now in the camp; that their horror may be over.

We couldn't believe what we were seeing. There was a man lying on the ground. His head was totally encased in bandages. When he turned to face me, it looked to me like half his face had been obliterated. I walked over to another prisoner, and he started to yell at me in broken English, "Why couldn't you come a few minutes earlier?" [crying] "This is my friend." [sobbing] Excuse me. "We heard you were coming. He couldn't wait any longer. He just died."

A couple of the prisoners came over to us, and they said that they knew where a *Kapo* was hiding. Now for the sake of posterity, a *Kapo* was a fellow prisoner who, for some reason or other, began to work for the Nazis. Maybe he believed he'd have his name lowered on the death list. Maybe he thought he'd get a little extra food. But for whatever reason, he cracked, he broke, and he began working for them. We found out that a great number of those *Kapos* became more bestial than the Nazis were themselves. These prisoners told us, they knew where one of these *Kapos* was hiding, and we very nonchalantly said, "Bring him to us."

In the meantime, we were walking around. There were three of us, whom I didn't know from Adam. I'd never met them before. I was there totally by mistake. I should have been at company headquarters. We sort of stuck together. I was taking pictures, and they were talking about what they were seeing, and what they had heard in the past about atrocities. I had heard nothing about atrocities, other than the fact that the Germans were killing Jews, period.

We saw about eight or nine prisoners dragging this creature between them, amongst them. It was the *Kapo*. If you ever saw horror, dread on a human being's face, it was on his face. He knew what was in store for him. As they came closer to us, dragging this man, more and more prisoners gathered around. They remembered him, they knew him. And they began to scream, "Give him to us!" I think that's what they were yelling, because they were yelling in every conceivable language. But the way they were reaching for him, I figured that's what they meant. As God is my witness, I knew [choked up] why they wanted him, and what they were going to do. And we very quietly turned around to discuss it. Not even as far away as you are sitting from me, which is like five or six feet, they punched and pummeled and kicked and stomped. They killed him. I could have interceded very easily. I weighed maybe 128, 129 pounds. But I had to be thirty, forty pounds more than they weighed, at the time. I had a rifle, I could have stopped them. I had a pistol, I could have stopped them. [crying] I took part in his death, just as surely as if I put my pistol to his head and fired. I've carried that, and his face, for the rest of my life.

A couple of years ago, I spoke to a group of Holocaust survivors. And when I finished, a number of people came up to talk to me. This little woman stood there for the longest time, trying to get a word in edgewise, and she couldn't. When she finally had a chance to talk, she said, "My husband became a *Kapo*. You did not do bad. We say, you did good. Six million say, you don't do bad." But even hearing her say it, didn't make it any easier. It's so easy to talk about killing. It's so easy to take a human life. It's not easy to live with it. [crying]

I stayed in that camp for the rest of that day. The next day, we went back in. By that time, there were hundreds of other soldiers and officers of every conceivable rank. They brought in people from town, at gunpoint, at bayonet point, to force them to go through the camp. Every one of them was totally innocent of information. They had to have seen the railroad cars going into the camp, with arms and legs sticking through the sides of the old boxcars, and coming out again empty. If we smelled that stench, five miles or more away, they in town had to have smelled that all the time. But they knew nothing. They were totally innocent. In all my time in Germany, I never met a Nazi. It was always somebody else. Or they would say, "The things that our soldiers did, they were following orders."

One of the men drove me back to where I remembered my outfit being. I told a few of the men in my outfit what I had seen, and they looked at me like I was talking about Buck Rogers in the 25th Century, when we were kids, you know. In one town, I don't know where it was, we found chemicals for processing film, and that night, or two nights later, a friend of mine and I took pieces of wood, and we made like a box on the ground. We took a raincoat, and laid it into this box, oh, no more than six or seven inches high. We poured the chemicals in. He stood over me, with another great big raincoat. And in that batch, I literally took the roll of film, and like the old days, I seesawed it up and down into the developer. And I developed the roll of film. Thank God, it worked, and they came out. I hadn't seen the prints. I just saw the film, and I took the roll of film, and I put it into one of these little metal canisters that the film had come in, and about three, four, five weeks later, I made up a package, and I sent that roll of film home to my folks. That roll of film lay in that canister, easily, ten years.

In the early 1960s, I think it was, I was teaching in New Hyde Park on Long Island. There was a film on TV that night about the Holocaust. My kids came into the photo lab, and they were saying that, "That's Hollywood. It couldn't have been that bad, it couldn't have been." That went through me like a red-hot poker. The next day, I brought in my pictures, and instead of teaching photography, I lectured to every one of my classes. The kids, of course, went out of the class talking about what they saw and what I told them. And that one class grew to every social studies class in the school, then the other buildings, the other schools in the district. And I began getting calls, like from the Lutheran church in town. They wanted to see them, and that's how I began lecturing.

Beate Klarsfeld was born in Berlin, Germany in 1939. She is a world-renowned Nazi hunter who, along with her husband, historian and attorney Serge Klarsfeld, has brought many Nazi war criminals to justice, most notably Klaus Barbie, “the Butcher of Lyon [France].”

- A. When I was growing up, I learned nothing about Nazi crimes at home. My parents never spoke about the war, like most Germans, except to complain about having lost. In school at this time, teaching the truth about Germany’s responsibility for World War II was banned. So really, I learned about this only when I came to France in 1960. I met my future husband, Serge. His father died in Auschwitz. He told me the story and so slowly, I learned what really happened in Germany between 1933 and 1945. I learned that Serge’s family is Jewish. During the war, his father was deported. He and his mother and sister survived by a miracle, because they were hiding in the southern part of France in Nice. So this was the first time I realized the atrocity of the German people towards the Jews.
- Q. When you first began to become aware of this, do you remember what your thoughts and feelings were?
- A. I would say I was ashamed when I was with my future mother-in-law, and she explained to me how she had survived.
- Q. Did you ever -- after you began to find out the reality of the German part in World War II -- go back to your family and confront them with these facts?
- A. Oh, yes, when I returned to Berlin to see my parents. I asked them, “What did you do to prevent Hitler from coming to power?” Finally, I gave up, because I could see they were embarrassed. They never wanted to answer these questions and they didn’t want me to ask them. They were very unhappy in the beginning about my work, and for years, I didn’t speak to my mother. She was ashamed when I started to protest against Kurt Georg Kiesinger in 1966, after he was elected German Chancellor [Prime Minister], for having been a propagandist for and member of the Nazi party. So for a time, she and I didn’t speak together.
- Q. Could you tell me what incident prompted you and your husband to take on the life’s work that you have chosen of hunting down Nazi war criminals?
- A. Our first decision was to obtain Kiesinger’s resignation as Chancellor of West Germany. In the very beginning, we were naive and new in this field of work, and we could not see in advance that it would be very difficult to oblige the Chancellor to resign. We carefully documented his past. I was running around to the German universities. I tried to explain to the students that they have to fight against this Nazi Chancellor. I interrupted a speech he delivered in the German parliament. For the first time, I saw that the newspapers not only had to portray the incident, but also explain why I was speaking out against him and asking him to resign, because he was a Nazi.

And then together, we decided to make a symbolic action. That means an action where the new generation would react against the generation of Nazi Germany, in other words, my parents’ generation. Symbolically, it was the reaction of the daughter of the Nazis to someone who could have been my father and a Nazi.

I slapped Kiesinger in the face in 1968 in Berlin, during the Christian Democratic party convention. I think this was certainly a very symbolic action. I was, by the way, arrested and sentenced the very same day to one year in jail without parole. But then, it was revealed that I was French. I had, in the meantime, become a French citizen. We were, in Berlin, occupied by the four Allies [Americans, Russians, British, and French]. I told them I would like to be treated as a French citizen. They became afraid, and I was released until the appeal. Then I was sentenced to two months of jail without parole. As soon as I was freed, I continued my work against this Nazi Chancellor. In 1969, he lost the election, largely because of the slap, which did a lot to mobilize the German youth. He was replaced by an anti-Fascist fighter, Willie Brandt, and for us this was comforting. Our struggle at that time against the continuation of Nazi Germany succeeded. That the Nazi Chancellor was replaced by an anti-Fascist fighter, I think, was something very important for the German youth.

Q. In one of the articles that you wrote for the French magazine "Combat," you said, if I may quote, "If Eichmann represents the banality of evil, then to me Kiesinger represents the respectability of evil." Could you explain that statement to me please?

A. Yes. Kiesinger was a man who, when he was traveling abroad, represented the old, and also the young, German generations. This was a respectable man. He was not a beast. He did not kill the Jews. He was a man who, from his office as a deputy director of Hitler's radio propaganda for foreign countries, had all the messages concerning the military situation. He also knew what was going on in the gas chambers. He was a lawyer. He was a highly educated man. So, this was the respectability of the evil. Because he was at this place at this time, he helped to make the propaganda for Nazi Germany. And you know, after the war, he did whatever he could in order to return to politics and become the chief of the German government.

Until the late 1960's, the Germans seemed to be ignoring the fact that these men were walking around holding political office, and there was no accountability for their evil deeds during the war. Those who had been active during the war and in administration continued after the war. Kiesinger was the top, but in the ministry of foreign affairs and ambassadors going to foreign countries, they had been older Nazis. There was an awakening of the student movement in Germany, because it was a moral revolt. They couldn't stand any longer that Nazi Germany was continuing every day and at every place. So, they were all judges of Nazi Germany. They had to judge the young people, who protested against Nazism. The German population was very much aware, but they were very happy. Because if even a small member of the Nazi party was completely rehabilitated, the Nazis could continue.

Q. In bringing these people to trial and trying to make Germany responsible for the trials of these people, what were you trying to bring about as a result of this? I know that one of your goals was to have the Germans bringing these people to trial themselves. What were you hoping to accomplish by that?

A. My husband, a group of friends, and I later worked for the sons and the daughters of the Jews deported from France. That meant they wanted to get to justice and to jail those who deported their parents. So, what we took over in 1971 was to bring to justice the German Nazi criminals, who had been the high officials in the police in France and who were responsible for the deportation of 76,000 Jews from France to Auschwitz. In 1979, we discovered that even those sentenced after the war by French military court in absentia had returned to Germany. They became lawyers, judges, businessmen, where they had the high functions. You can imagine. To put an end to this, we had to select from all the 200 and more people who had been active in France and had been sentenced to life imprisonment in absentia or to death.

We chose three very representative men and campaigned from 1971 to 1979, fighting against the German society to put on a new law, to have them sentenced in Germany. We fought with the German judicial system to indict them. We documented everything we could, collecting the proof against these criminals, as they had been the high officials who signed the documents of arrest and deportation. The documents were there, hundreds and hundreds. We gave them to the German prosecutors and to France as well.

On the other side, in order to advance the case, to oblige German society to act and the justice to indict, we had to provoke incidents. So, with our group, we came to Germany and these actions were illegal. We mobilized and always tried to show what a big scandal it was that nothing was happening with these criminals. They were still lawyers, judges. One was the Bürgermeister [mayor] in Bavaria. He was twenty-one years old when he was the deputy to the chief of the anti-Jewish service in Paris. His name was Ernst Heinrichsohn.

Sometimes we were arrested by the German police and beaten up. Constantly, we came back. We provoked incidents, and only in this way did we obtain the opening of those trials in 1979. It was not a question of vengeance but a question of justice. We were surrounded all the time by the survivors and by those who lost their parents or their children. I knew all of them, and I knew their stories. I knew they had nightmares and never found a quiet and normal life, while those criminals remained completely unpunished, working in high positions. So, this was one of our first aims, to bring them to justice, and secondly, through this trial in Cologne, to educate the generations.

We were able to get a young judge from the German justice. We were much impressed by the final speech he delivered. He said, "You know, for me, it's not very easy to judge men like Lischka, Hagen and Heinrichsohn, these three criminals, because they could be my father or my uncle. They never committed another crime after the war. But we have to judge them, because through them, the whole system will be sentenced. We also have to sentence them in order to prevent these crimes from ever happening again."

- Q. How long after you began to collect information on Klaus Barbie were you able to finally make sure the trial took place and how did that ultimately come about?
- A. Klaus Barbie, just like Lischka, Hagen, and Heinrichsohn, was a Nazi criminal who had been sentenced after the war by a French military court in absentia to life imprisonment or to death. Barbie had fled to South America. He was known as a German criminal in Bolivia. He himself admitted that he was involved in the war and the German club in La Paz. The Secret Services of West Germany, France, and the United States knew who Klaus Barbie was. But again, as in Germany, we had to provoke something in order to get this case working and advancing.

Several times, I had been to South America, to Bolivia, to unmask him, because he was living under a false name. I came with a Jewish mother, whose children had been deported from the Jewish children's home in Izieu, because the telex of Barbie was to send all 44 children from Izieu to Auschwitz. For years, when the Bolivian government refused to extradite Klaus Barbie to France, we kept trying. We had friends who were surveying Barbie.

We learned whatever we had to know about him. We had even tried to kidnap him and to bring him over to Chile, at the time of Allende, and then back to France but this failed.

Our connections finally put enough pressure on the government of France to obtain the extradition of Barbie to Lyon, France for his trial. It was a trial against the deportation of the Jews, and a trial for the resistance fighters, because Barbie, as the chief of the Gestapo in Lyon, was a brutal man. He tortured resistance fighters. This trial was well-known and well-covered by the media all over the world. Klaus Barbie was condemned to life imprisonment. Here again, as always, my husband represented the associate plaintiffs, the mothers of the children deported from Izieu. We delivered this most important indictment against him. It was a telegram he signed in 1944 to send the Jewish children to Auschwitz. It was a very historic trial.

- Q. If you were to leave one message to the young people of the world today, what would that message be?
- A. My husband and I consider ourselves to be ordinary people. We didn't have a special background, even though my husband is a specialist in history, preparing us for the work we did. I think that everybody can do something. It was our experience in the very beginning that you can do much more than you even realize. Sure, there are always limits for everybody. Not everyone went as far as we did, but I think that young people today have to protest against xenophobia, against right-wing parties, and against antisemitism. I would like to tell today's youth to act immediately, not to wait, because if you see that something is wrong, you have to talk about it, and you have to do something about it. You have to shout against this and protest immediately. I think all our actions were a kind of education for the young people. If we have inspired some of them and they want to follow in our footsteps, I would be very happy.

Liesel Appel, née Steffens, was born on September 14, 1941 in Klingenberg, Germany. Her father was a high-ranking Nazi. During World War II, he was the Minister of Education in Poland who shut down all the schools and enacted policies denying an education to Polish, Jewish, and Gypsy children. He was put on trial in Nuremberg after the war.

A. Maybe I should tell you first that I was actually created as a gift to Adolf Hitler. My brother was already twenty years old, but my parents had wanted another child to dedicate to Adolf Hitler. I was this child. My mother had to undergo a special operation to be able to bear another child. There was a special doctor who performed this operation on her, and she was absolutely delighted when I was born in 1941. I was dedicated to Adolf Hitler at two weeks old.

Q. How did your parents earn a living?

A. My father was an educator. He was headmaster of the local school and later became Minister of Education in Poland.

Q. What was life like in those days in post-war Germany?

A. My childhood was really idyllic. My father adored me. We had a large, loving family with lots of uncles and aunts, and we were very close. There was also an uncle whose name was Erich Koch. He was constantly in our home when I was a young girl. He was my father's best friend and my uncle, and he was later condemned to death for the murder of 500,000 Jews and Poles.

Q. When did you first become aware of the war years?

A. Father and I went on long walks in the forest. Quite often I saw some smoke in the distance. I remember the smell of burning flesh. But I don't remember if I asked him about it.

Q. Was there a concentration camp nearby?

A. There was a concentration camp in Hadamar [Germany], just one of the smaller camps. I also remember being on the balcony of our house and watching the soldiers, the German army, go by with their goose steps. My father was making the salute. Then my father disappeared for a period of time. I later found out that he went to Poland with his friend Erich Koch and had been made Minister of Education of Poland. And Erich Koch was the governor of Poland.

After the war, I wanted to find out what a Minister of Education did in Poland in those years. And I found out, in fact, that all schools were closed, since Jewish, Polish, and Gypsy children were not entitled to an education. That, in fact, was the achievement of my father. But as a young child, I really adored him.

Q. How old were you when he returned from Poland?

A. I must have been six or seven years old. And then, later, in my very early childhood, something changed. All of a sudden, my parents, who had always been happy, were very secretive and withdrawn. My father had to go into hiding. He took off at night on his bicycle, and then soldiers came to our house. They were American soldiers who were looking for him. My father was riding his bicycle at night and hiding in the fields during the day. But, eventually, he was caught and put on trial.

Q. How old were you at that time?

- A. About seven years old. He was put into a denazification camp. I later found out what that was like, but that's the first time I heard about a camp. And, in fact, I heard the term "concentration camp" used for the first time. He was released for a short time. We took a vacation to help him recover while he was waiting for his trial. He was walking with me at the ocean shore in northern Germany, and suddenly he went onto his knees. He tried to get up, but he fell backward and he, in fact, died in my arms. I was nine years old.

Six months after my father had died, I was playing outside of our house when a man came walking down the street. He looked very different from any man I'd ever seen. He had a little cap on the back of his head, and he carried a brief case. He asked me, "Little girl, where do you live?" I pointed to our house and he nodded and said, "This is where I used to live. I used to live in the house right next door to you." And he looked at me again.

He said, "You were probably way too young, but I'm looking for a special man, a man who saved my life during *Kristallnacht*." I had no idea what *Kristallnacht* was. I'd never heard of it before. So, I asked him to explain to me, and he told me that his life had been saved by a neighbor. The Nazis had broken into the house. His parents were killed, and all the furniture had been thrown from a balcony on the second floor. Somebody had picked him up and thrown him from the balcony also. He was sure he was going to die, but a neighbor had stepped forward and caught him in his arms. So, his life had been saved. He had come back to Germany -- this was now 1951 -- to find the man who had saved his life and thank him.

I was very excited and told him, "This man was my father." I took him by the hand and rushed him into my house, thinking that my mother would be just as excited to see him as I was. The man and I rushed into the living room. There was my mother with another neighbor, a *Frau* [Mrs.] Lauder, and they were whispering. We came into the room, and the man froze by the door. Mother and *Frau* Lauder also stopped talking, so there was something going on between these people that I wasn't privy to. I didn't know what was going on. Then my mother told *Frau* Lauder to take me out of the room and put me into my own room and lock the door. I kept banging on the door. They wouldn't let me out.

I looked out the window. I pulled myself up on the window sill -- we had those large German window sills -- and I saw the man walking down the street, very sadly. His head was bent. Soon after, my mother opened the door and said, "I want you to come to the living room." She was very angry. I had no idea what was going on. I had no idea what I had done. She said to me, "Don't you ever do anything like that again." And I said, "*Mutti*, anything like what?" She said, "Don't you bring anybody like that into our house again." I said, "*Mutti*, anything like what?" She said, "You brought in a Jew." I had no idea what a Jewish person was. That was the first time I actually heard the word "Jew." And I said, "*Mutti*, did we not save this man?" And she said, "Why should we have saved a Jew? Your father was a good man." I was so outraged, and my mother got bright red. She took me and she shook me.

It was just a terrible confrontation. I had never stood up to my mother before. I'd always been a very well-brought up little girl, but this was the first time I stood up to her. I pushed her away from me and said, "Don't you ever touch me again. You're a murderess." And I just went out of the room and slammed the door shut. It was basically the end of my childhood. My mother and I never talked about anything important after that and I held onto this for over 37 years.

Q. With not knowing anything before that, how did you know that they had done something wrong?

A. In a split second, I connected what this man -- his name, I found out later, is Willie Meyer -- had told me. It was so horrible. I couldn't picture that my family was part of that but, in a split second, I connected that after my mother told me off in a very severe way for bringing him into the house. So, I realized that they were part of this terrible thing that had happened in my neighborhood and that the people that I had idolized had, in fact, betrayed me.

Q. And after that, what did you do?

A. I just became very difficult. I wouldn't let my mother touch me again. I was very alone. I was looking at people and thinking "Were they part of it?" Soon we had the first books coming into our local libraries so I got those and read them, like *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The total world of horror opened up to me. I just looked around and felt so terribly burdened by things that were living around me.

Q. What were they teaching you in school?

A. Nothing. They were teaching us nothing about it. I did my own research. I read books. But, basically, everybody was in denial. My mother never talked about it. People never mentioned those times. And then after, I didn't mention them anymore either. I only had that one confrontation with my mother. After that, I didn't speak about it for over 30 years. I didn't tell anyone where I came from. I didn't tell anyone about my family. In fact, I developed a story that my father had been the man who had saved the Jewish boy. That was the only way I could survive with my terrible guilt.

Q. Did you have anyone to talk to about it?

A. No one, absolutely no one. I didn't talk to other people my age, to my mother, or to my teachers. I was totally isolated and couldn't wait to leave Germany. As soon as I finished school, I just put a few things into a suitcase and took off for London. I couldn't wait to get out of Germany.

UNIT 10

REFLECTION, REMEMBRANCE, AND RESPONSIBILITY

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UNIT 10

REFLECTION, REMEMBRANCE, AND RESPONSIBILITY

*“Remember and never forget it all your days;
And pass this memory as a
sacred testament to future generations.”*

*From the last letter of Dr. Elkhanan Elkes
Chairman, Jewish Council, Kovno Ghetto
Fall, 1943*

INTRODUCTION

The study of the Holocaust is a commitment to past, present and future generations. This event challenges our moral and ethical convictions.

As we begin to confront and continue to learn how the tragedy of the Holocaust evolved, the students must ultimately cross the threshold of complacency and recognize that each and every one of us could have been a perpetrator, a victim, or a bystander.

As students, the study of the Holocaust redefines our standards of education. No longer are we safe in believing that higher education is related to a higher code of conduct. It was medical doctors who personally selected people for death; it was Ph.D.'s in engineering who built the gas chambers to kill large groups of people quickly; it was lawyers and judges in the courts who willingly perverted the judicial system to deny the rights of the individual. At all levels of society, people willingly abandoned their values and educational training to betray and murder others.

To learn the lessons of the Holocaust and respond to them are bold steps that students can take in the march toward humanism and freedom for people everywhere. As our Florida mandate states, we should be challenged to teach “in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions.”

OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define words and terms listed in the VOCABULARY.
2. Consider how history repeats itself.
3. Explain that knowledge of the past is a critical safeguard for our future.
4. Recognize that education and individual responses can make a difference.
5. Make a connection between the evil in today's world and the Holocaust.
6. Recognize that every individual can be "good" or "evil." The choice lies within each of us. In this regard, students should be able to define the terms: victim, perpetrator, bystander, resister and protector.
7. Analyze the lessons of the Holocaust in terms of their impact on us today.
8. Critically examine their own values and actions should a genocide happen to them.
9. Recognize the dangers of prejudice.
10. Consider the appreciation of multiculturalism.
11. Realize the consequences of one's moral choices.
12. Realize that individuals can make a difference.

VOCABULARY

TERMS

Bigotry: Intolerance for the beliefs of others, particularly those of minority groups.

Bystander: One who is present at some event without participating in it; also a spectator or passerby.

Discrimination: An act of exclusion prompted by prejudice.

Minority: A group that differs, as in race, religion, or ethnic background, from the larger group or majority society of which it is part.

Perpetrator: One who deliberately carries out an injurious act against an individual or a group.

Persecution: The oppression and/or harassment of people based on their race, religion, color, national origin, or other distinguishing characteristics.

Prejudice: A strong feeling for or against something formed before one knows the facts; also irrational hostility toward members of a particular race, religion, or group.

Scapegoating: A verb coined from the noun scapegoat to mean placing undeserving blame on a person or group.

Stereotype: A generalized image of a person or group which is often prejudicial to that person or group.

Victim: One who is subjected to oppression, hardship, or mistreatment.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

REFLECTION, REMEMBRANCE, RESPONSIBILITY

To the Teachers

by Elie Wiesel

April, 1945. Liberation. All I remember of that event, of that month, is that there was no joy. There was no joy in those who opened their eyes at the end of a nightmare. They were alive, but something of them had remained on the other side. In a way they were dead but did not know it. No dancing marked the occasion, no festivities, no exuberance, no speeches, no solemn declarations, nothing. Only emptiness, nothing else. Fatigue, perhaps. For months, for eternities, they had waited for this moment. Now it was here, but so many friends were not. So many comrades, so many faces and eyes vanished as they flickered in the middle of darkness. Darkness triumphed: not the glory of the flame, but its ashes.

The question of questions that we faced then and shall face forever is: What does one do with such knowledge? There were children who were my friends: some were eight years old, one was six, others were ten, twelve; the oldest -- and I belonged to that group -- were fifteen or sixteen. Those children were the real teachers of their generation and of all generations. Somehow they knew more about life and death, about the poetic aspect of immortality than the oldest of their old teachers.

There was an immense knowledge in those children, in those people whom we today call survivors, and perhaps they were crushed by it. They possessed all the questions and they knew there were no answers. There never will be; there never should be. And the more they knew, the more they accumulated, the less they knew. The more they read, the less they understood. The more they came to absorb, the more they felt that the words that served as vehicles were the wrong words. What, then, should they have done, what should we have done with our knowledge?

As teachers, surely you will agree that this is the problem man has faced since he supposedly became human. We could then have asked for the impossible, for we had lived the impossible. We could have imposed our will, our vision, on mankind. We could have asked for the ultimate redemption. We had an authority unmatched in history, the authority of cumulative suffering and the authority of remaining human. We spoke on behalf of a kingdom inhabited by martyrs and victims numbering six million. We had the power, the moral strength, to speak up and demand and compel mankind to change, to give up intolerance and hate, bigotry and fanaticism. We had the right then to say, "We are your teachers." And we had the power, the metaphysical power to say that we shall teach mankind how to survive without linking survival to betrayal.

But we did not know how to go about it. We were hesitant to speak. Had we started to speak then, we would have found it impossible to stop. Having shed one tear, we would have drowned the human heart. As invincible as we had been in the face of death and the enemy, we felt helpless then. How is man to make use of this pain? What if he decides to remain mute? And what if he chooses to carry his secret with him into his grave?

Such questions could not but haunt the teachers we became. The witnesses felt remorse; they were mad with disbelief. People refused to listen, to understand, to share. There was a division between us and them, between those who had endured and those who read about it or refused to read about it.

Many survivors will tell you today that they are tired. They really are. After the liberation all illusions were hopes. We were convinced that on the ruins of Europe a new world would be built, a new society would be formed. There would be no more wars, no more hatred, no more bloodshed. We thought people would remember our experience, our testimony, and how we managed to suppress our violent impulses to kill or to hate.

Well, look at the world today. People know little or nothing today, and therefore I believe no subject is more urgent, more burning, than the one you and I are teaching. No subject is more linked to justice than ours. But today the greatest injustice is being perpetrated: the obliteration of those memories, the erasing of those events... A real movement is afoot not only to rewrite history but to destroy it and in so doing to humble and humiliate those teachers who still not only remember but also carry their wounds secretly. If we are to believe those morally deranged, perverted, so-called historians, the Holocaust never took place, the victims did not perish. Auschwitz, they say, is a fraud, Treblinka, a lie. Belsen, a convalescent home...

What does one say to all this, and why have more people not protested?

I confess, I do not know how to respond to this situation. Are we really to debate these charges? Is it not beneath our dignity and the dignity of the dead to refute these lies? But then is silence the answer? Since silence never has been an answer, the survivors chose to teach -- and what is their writing, their testimony, if not teaching? -- to tell the tale and to bear testimony. But apparently their words have not been accepted. What then are they to do with their memories? They would much rather speak of other things . . .

But we go on teaching because we believe that our life is grace. No one in the world is as capable of gratitude as we are because we know what it means to live one extra moment, one extra day, and we know what it means to meet a smile and not a fist. Every word of friendship touches us. So we go on teaching. But we despair.

I cannot foresee a new Holocaust -- a systematic undertaking with ghettos, camps, barbed wire. But given the proper circumstances - the political situation in the Middle East, the economic situation here -- there could be an upsurge of anti-Semitism that would bring fear to this country.

If the teachers fail, and I include myself among them, if these desecrators succeed in erasing the memories of their victims, we shall experience something worse than we experienced then. We shall feel shame because we will have betrayed the victims for the last time -- we will have completed the killers' work. Their task was to destroy the living Jews and bum dead Jews, and only now will they have succeeded.

Anyone who does not engage actively today in keeping these memories alive is an accomplice of the killers. Surely you teachers have read the history books, and you know that the killers' final step was to burn, to kill the killed, in order to erase their memory. If now such an attempt should succeed, we would have to hide ourselves, afraid to face people in the street because they would accuse us of having invented this tragedy.

So we teach. But how can I and you, teachers, explain to our students so many things related to the Holocaust? How can we explain to them the indifference of so many nations and so many leaders to so many Jews? I always start at the beginning; I go back to the roots. And when we read about the Evian Conference we remember that the New York *Herald Tribune* published a report under the headline "650,000 Exiled Jews Refused at Evian." Refused by the world, rejected by the world. As for the German papers, one headline read: "Jews for Sale ... Who Wants Them?" No one. An editorial stated: "Other nations pity German Jews, but nobody is ready to take them in." How can we explain that to our students? How can we explain to them that Switzerland, humanitarian Switzerland, suggested that Germany stamp Jewish passports with the distinctive "J" so that Jews could be refused visas everywhere, not only to Switzerland? How can we explain the *St. Louis*, the refugee-laden ship that was not allowed to land in the United States? What shall we say to our students when they learn that Jewish children were not admitted into the United States even though quotas were unfilled, and when they learn that while the ghetto fighters were fighting in Warsaw there was silence here? No wonder that gradually Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich, and their associates came to the conclusion that Jews were unwanted everywhere, that all nations would be glad to be rid of them, that what was taking place in Germany was an example to be followed. The Nazi leaders were convinced that one day all nations would be grateful to them for doing their work for them. Goebbels mentions this frequently in his diaries. The extermination of the Jews, he was convinced, was a service to humanity. What other conclusion was possible? The world was silent.

I confess I do not know how to teach these matters, especially the later periods, when we speak of that extraordinary confrontation between the killer and his victim; something happened there, something theological, metaphysical, something trans-historical and historical. I cannot comprehend them. How do you teach events that defy knowledge, experiences that go beyond imagination? How do you tell children, big and small, that society could lose its mind and start murdering its own soul and its own future? How do you unveil horrors without offering at the same time some measure of hope? Hope in what? In whom? In progress, in science and literature and God? In the viability of human endeavors? And what if man were but a spasm of history, a smile, a sneer, a rejection by fate? The Holocaust was preceded not by medievalism but by emancipation and enlightenment, by generations of humanists and liberal revolutionaries who preached their gospels, advocated their faith in universal brotherhood and ultimate justice.

The teachers in the ghetto were my heroes, but they had problems in explaining simple words to their young pupils. How do you describe to a child in the ghetto who had no bread what it is to have a cake? Or fruit? Or sugar? "What does an apple look like?" a child asks a father. Another wants to know, "What does happiness mean? Are there happy Jews in the world? Have there ever been?" And a third child inquires, "You told us that people are good at heart. Are they?" And a five-year-old girl asks, "Am I going to die? Have I lived enough?"

We read stories by and about teachers in the ghettos and are filled with admiration for their devotion, sacrifice, and courage. We can never know what they endured, what they knew. We will never know what their teaching meant to them and to their pupils, what it meant to teach children history, literature, fairy tales, geography, Bible and Talmud, and morality, knowing all the while that one month later, one week later, one day later, one hour later, they would be gone. That was part of the uniqueness of the experience. One hour before being led to the altar, children learned about the immortality of the Jewish spirit and about the invincibility of the human mind.

When we think of the past, we are faced with two options: we can despise the living or we can try to help them. We can either spread misfortune or we can curtail it. We can either join the madness, the criminal madness, or fight it with another madness, a humane madness. We possess

a strange truth that can either destroy or prevent destruction. How do we do it? As Albert Camus used to say, for modern man there are two options: one can either be a smiling pessimist or a weeping optimist. We study and we are both.

Our problem was and remains what to do with our words, with our tears.

We go back to our sources, hoping to find some links -- not consolation. There can be no consolation.

When I teach these matters, I teach of children. When one thinks of children or reads of them, one usually sees images of innocence, sunshine, happiness, play, laughter, teasing, dreaming, simple chants, so much promise. But not for us because to us childhood meant something else. It meant death, the death of childhood.

Children for me evoke war, thunder and hate, shouts, screams, dogs howling. I see them in the street -- hunted, beaten, humiliated. I see them walking and running like the old men and women who surround them -- as though to protect them -- without protecting them. There is no protection for Jewish children. Thirsty children, and all one wants is to offer them a glass of water. Hungry children, and all one wants is to give them a crust of bread. Frightened children, and all one wants is to comfort them. You watch them marching, marching, and you know they will never come back; and yet you go on seeing them, but they no longer see you.

So what do you do? I will tell you what I do. I teach. I teach about the children because those children became philosophers, they became theologians, they became historians, they became poets. And, in a strange way, whenever I need to be uplifted I read their poetry, and it breaks my heart at the same time that it lifts my spirit.

What can I tell you as a teacher who teaches young people? It is more than a matter of communicating knowledge. Whoever engages in the field of teaching the Holocaust becomes a missionary, a messenger.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Survey the backgrounds of the students' families. Talk about what countries their ancestors came from, what reasons they had for coming to America, and when they emigrated to America. What common strands do the students see in their respective backgrounds? Discuss the theories of the "melting pot" versus the "salad bowl." What is the difference between those two concepts? Have students express their ideas about which theory they support.

2. Invite a survivor, child of a survivor, liberator, and/or rescuer to share his/her experiences with the class. Ask the speaker to share with the class the implications and ramifications of the lessons of the Holocaust.

3. With the teacher as a moderator, conduct a classroom debate on the following topic: Are the basic characteristics of prejudice inherent or learned? Make sure that students define what they mean by the terms "prejudice," "inherent," and "learned."

4. Have the students identify what they feel are the ultimate lessons of the Holocaust and express their opinions through poetry or artwork.

5. The democratic process in America provides its citizens with a privilege and responsibility to vote for our leaders. Discuss with students the following questions:

- a) Why is it necessary for citizens to be aware of the backgrounds and platforms of the political candidates?
- b) Why should citizens exercise their right to vote?
- c) How will their commitment and involvement defend and uphold the democratic process?
- d) Why should students who are under the age of eighteen concern themselves with the rights and responsibilities involved with voting?

6. Have students consider what influences our individual beliefs and attitudes. Tell them to think about speeches they may have heard or movies they may have seen which changed their ideas. Have them consider advertising. What simple, repetitive messages are constantly heard which influence us? What do the students think about advertisements? Which ads do they think are the most effective -- what we see (newspapers and magazines), what we hear (radio), or both (television)? Make sure they explain their answers.

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7. Students should write a journal entry about a time in which they experienced or witnessed an act of prejudice. They should describe how they felt at the time and what they did about it. If this were to happen again, how would they react to the situation? Have the students share their experience with the rest of the class and discuss how you can begin a prejudice reduction program in your school with your class being the leaders.

8. Explain to students what a eulogy is and when such a speech is given. Have them each create a eulogy for the millions of victims of genocide throughout history. They can read this eulogy to the class. They may wish to select a piece of classical music and play it softly in the background while they read their speeches.

9. Discuss the following with your students and then have them put their thoughts into words:

- a) Why is it important to learn about and remember the Holocaust?
- b) What are the lessons of the Holocaust and how do they apply to all people, everywhere?

10. Have students create essays, poems, or artistic designs in reaction to the following statement concerning the guilt and responsibility of the people of Europe during the Holocaust: "Some are guilty, all are responsible."

11. Below is a list of many different compositions which were inspired by the Holocaust. Obtain a recording of some of these and play it several times for your students. Have them close their eyes and think about all they have learned about the Holocaust. While the music is playing, have them list all the words and images that come to mind and compose a written piece about any aspect of the Holocaust.

A Child of our Time, Michael Tippett (1941)
A Survivor from Warsaw, Arnold Schoenberg (1948)
Symphony No. 13 ("Babi Yar"), Dmitri Shostakovich (1962)
Different Trains, Steve Reich (1988)

12. Ask students what they think are the major lessons of the Holocaust -- lessons that all students should learn to help them in the decisions they make in life. They should compare their lessons with those of other students and create a class list.

13. Upon completion of your study of the Holocaust, students can create a time line. With others in the class, they can compile a list of 10 events of the Holocaust they believe to be most important. Individuals or small groups can then select one of the events and list it on a piece of paper along with a summary that reflects the significance of the event and an illustration. Arrange the finished portions of the time line into chronological order and display.

14. Create a class newspaper in which significant events of the Holocaust are reported: badge, book burning, concentration camps/death camps, Nuremberg Laws, Olympic Games of 1936, Kristallnacht, forced labor, ghettos, deportations, Wannsee Conference, etc. (Note: This activity may be organized according to the events that the students have studied.)

The following activities comes from Gary Grobman. The Holocaust: A Guide for Pennsylvania Teachers. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1990. Reprinted by permission.

15. Discuss the following topics with students: Is there an "African-American" area of your community? A "white" area? Is there an area which is "restricted" to one race, religion, ethnic group, or national origin? What would the consequences be for someone of the "wrong" race, religion, or national origin to seek to reside in that area?

16. Obtain a recording of the music and a copy of the lyrics from the songs “The Sounds of Silence” (Simon and Garfunkel) and “Carefully Taught” (from South Pacific -- Rodgers and Hammerstein). Discuss the issues of silence, indifference, fear of new people and situations -- how we may accept other’s prejudices too easily and without thinking.

17. Obtain a recording of the music and a copy of the lyrics from the song “Word Game” by Stephen Stills. This song describes the origins of prejudice and how it affects human behavior.

The following activity was created by Dee Dee Toner, Miami Lakes Middle School, Miami, Florida. It has been modified to apply to this curriculum.

18. As a class or in individual groups, students should discuss the reality that racism and intolerance remain major problems in the United States today, despite the abundance of legislation enacted to protect minorities. Since government mandates obviously cannot wipe out intolerance, what could be done to create more harmony among diverse groups of people? What, if any, is the connection between peaceful people and a peaceful world? How can we best teach/learn peace? Have students make a list of five strategies or actions that would build peace in our communities.

The following activities come from Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances (Second Edition). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense. Produced by the International Center for Holocaust Studies of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith and the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Reprinted by permission of the Department of Defense and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

19. Antisemitism in Germany led to terror and mass murders. Have students consider the following question: Do you think that apparently minor forms of racism like slurs and ethnic jokes are therefore dangerous? Explain your answers.

20. The Nazi attempt to annihilate all Jews and their creation of death camps was a unique event in human history. Ask students to consider whether or not they think it could happen again. Make sure they explain their answers.

The following activity comes from Schindler’s List: A Viewers Guide. Produced by the Martyrs Memorial Museum of the Holocaust. It has been modified to apply to our curriculum:

21. Have students keep a hate or prejudice notebook for at least two weeks. Ask them to write down all incidents of hate or prejudice they see or hear firsthand. At the end of the two weeks, have students discuss their feelings about the process of keeping a notebook. Then have them describe the experience in writing.

CORRELATIONS TO THE SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS FOR THE ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND READINGS

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“HAVE YOU LEARNED THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON OF ALL?”

By Elie Wiesel

May I share with you one of the principles that governs my life? It is the realization that what I receive I must pass on to others. The knowledge that I have acquired must not remain imprisoned in my brain. I owe it to many men and women to do something with it. I feel the need to pay back what was given to me. Call it gratitude.

Isn't this what education is all about? There is divine beauty in learning, just as there is human beauty in tolerance. To learn means to accept the postulate that life did not begin at my birth. Others have been here before me, and I walk in their footsteps. The books I have read were composed by generations of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, teachers and disciples. I am the sum total of their experiences, their quests. And so are you.

You and I believe that knowledge belongs to everybody, irrespective of race, color or creed. Plato does not address himself to one ethnic group alone, nor does Shakespeare appeal to one religion only. The teachings of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. do not apply just to Indians or African-Americans. Like cognitive science, theoretical physics or algebra, the creations and philosophical ideas of the ages are part of our collective heritage and human memory. We all learn from the same masters.

In other words, education must, almost by definition, bring people together, bring generations together.

Education has another consequence. My young friends, I feel it is my moral duty to warn you against an evil that could jeopardize this generation's extraordinary possibilities. That evil is fanaticism.

True education negates fanaticism. Literature and fanaticism do not go together. Culture and fanaticism are forever irreconcilable. The fanatic is always against culture, because culture means freedom of spirit and imagination, and the fanatic fears someone else's imagination. In fact, the fanatic who wishes to inspire fear is ultimately doomed to live in fear, always. Fear of the stranger, fear of each other, fear of the other inside him or her.

Fanaticism has many faces: racism, religious bigotry, ethnic hatred. What those faces have in common is an urge to replace words with violence, facts with propaganda, reason with blind impulses, hope with terror.

For a while we might have believed that fanaticism was on its decline. It is not. Quite the contrary, it is on the rise in our cities, in our country and in our world.

In Western Europe -- in Germany and France, Belgium and Austria -- we are seeing a resurgence of yesterday's demons of fascism and intolerance. In Eastern Europe, ethnic factions are rekindling old conflicts. In the Middle East, deeply held hatreds seem ever on the verge of sparking more raging conflagrations. "It's us against them" has been taken as an essential truth. Strangers are being greeted with animosity almost everywhere.

Let us look at our own country. As this last decade of a century, which is also the last decade of a millennium, runs to its dazzling denouement, we seem ever more divided. Can't all our citizens -- white Americans and African-Americans, Hispanics and Asians, Jews and Christians, Jews and Moslems, young and old -- live together, work together and face together their common challenges? Must they -- must we -- constantly subject ourselves to useless social tensions and dangerous ideological conflicts that could turn joy into dust and creation into ashes?

We face many difficulties and must find answers to thorny questions if our nation is to flourish: What has happened to our economy? What went wrong with elementary and secondary education? Why are so many youngsters seduced by crime? By drugs? By hate? Why is there so much bloodshed in so many quarters?

The answers to these questions do not lie with the cliches, senseless stereotypes and absurd accusations that are being used to justify religious or ethnic hatred....

I insist: All collective judgments are wrong. Only racists make them. And racism is stupid, just as it is ugly. Its aim is to destroy, to pervert, to distort innocence in human beings and their quest for human equality.

Racism is misleading. There are good people and bad people in every community. No human race is superior; no religious faith is inferior. We all come from somewhere, and we all wonder where we are going.

I know: You have been tested during your years in school, more than once. But the real tests are still ahead of you. How will you deal with your own or other people's hunger, homelessness, sexual or gender discrimination, and community antagonisms?

The world outside is not waiting to welcome you with open arms. The economic climate is bad; the psychological one is worse. You wonder, will you find jobs? Allies? Friends? I pray to our Father in heaven to answer "yes" to all these questions.

But should you encounter temporary disappointments, I also pray: Do not make someone else pay the price for your pain. Do not see in someone else a scapegoat for your difficulties. Only a fanatic does that -- not you, for you have learned to reject fanaticism. You know that fanaticism leads to hatred, and hatred is both destructive and self-destructive.

I speak to you as a teacher and a student -- one is both, always. I also speak to you as a witness.

I speak to you, for I do not want my past to become your future.

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From the Desk
of
steven spielberg

When Florida mandated Holocaust education, it was a significant step to ensure that this and future generations would know the history of those terrible years. Too many people, young and old, still know too little about one of the world's darkest chapters.

Preserving those memories for Holocaust education will help this generation and future generations to seek an end to hatred and intolerance by making the connections between the past and the present.

Message from Benjamin Meed, President of American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors

In the years immediately following the Holocaust, a small group of activists among the survivors demanded - yes, demanded - that the world remember the catastrophe that befell mankind and especially the Jewish people. Most of the time, our stories of pain, grief and unimaginable evil were met with silence.

Perhaps people didn't know how to respond. Maybe they felt ashamed that nothing had been done to help the victims. Maybe - in spite of the horrible photographs and chilling stories - they still could not believe man could be so barbaric, so ugly. Or, maybe because it happened to Jewish people, it just didn't matter to others.

Whatever the reasons, our early attempts to describe what had been done to us were met, typically with silence. Mostly, when we spoke, people responded with annoyance, a cold shoulder, or blank expressions on their faces.

Not only had the world shut its eyes when we were being murdered, after the war, it did not want to be reminded of the appalling consequences of its failure to act against the German Nazi murderers and their collaborators. Abandoned during the war, we were ignored after the war. And we survivors again felt alone and forsaken: no one wanted to listen; no one seemed to care about our experiences.

But we persisted. We were driven to tell our stories; and to motivate others to learn, to be vigilant, to remember. This ever-burning drive in us to communicate our message, and to have others remember what had happened, eventually made us the spark and catalyst behind many projects of remembrance.

If not the survivors, there would be no Yom Hashoa commemorations in the nation's capitol or around the country; there probably would be no museum in Washington, or memorials in Miami and elsewhere. And if not for our inspiration, there would be far fewer academics, scholars, authors, and film-makers involved in Holocaust remembrance-related activities.

The world still needs to learn much from the Holocaust. Just glance at any newspaper or listen to a news report. Killings continue around the world as democracies debate how to avoid becoming involved; a vicious antisemitic leader grows popular in Russia; Arab countries ban "Schindler's List" -- it is too Jewish, they say; and vicious hate groups spew poison about Jews. In addition, there are specific, direct threats to memory. The remaining physical evidence of the Holocaust deteriorates. The Holocaust related education most students receive is appalling. The most widely used school text books, for instance, contain very general, and often misleading, statements about the Holocaust. Thus, the magnitude of the German Nazi atrocities is lost.

There is also a blatant attempt by well-financed deniers to falsify history. These sick minded anti-semites want to kill our Six Million Kedoshim again, erasing their murders from history. More sophisticated now, the deniers no longer dress as Nazis, skinheads or thugs. They wear suits, pretending to be professionals engaged in serious scholarship. However, their lies are as preposterous as ever.

Most of this country's population, born after the war, is far removed from and uneducated about the Holocaust. Because of the shocking level of ignorance, the deniers may be able -- on television talk shows; in college newspapers -- anywhere they can get publicity -- to plant seeds of doubt about our memory. But this is not a legitimate debate between the "view" that the Holocaust happened and the "view" that it didn't. It is a war between the truth and the chronic disease, antisemitism. And the real danger posed by the deniers is not today, next week, or next year; but ten to twenty years from now when there are no more eyewitnesses. Thus, our mission to communicate and guard the truth of what happened to us must continue.

Survivors -- in person, on tape, or on paper -- offering personal testimony about what they endured are now, and will become even more, important. For such testimonies will remain in our voice and our legacy as our presence fades.

Those who fight the drive to introduce Holocaust studies in the schools should know that such instruction not only teaches you, the students, about the nightmare we endured, but educates you as to the reasons behind much of the violence you watch on the daily news. The study of the Holocaust teaches what can happen when we fail to be vigilant and meet hatred with indifference.

Source: Adapted from Benjamin Meed's remarks, from The Holocaust Documentation and Education Center's Tribute Luncheon at Turnberry Isle Country Club, Miami, Florida, April 21, 1994.

***Benjamin Meed** was born in Warsaw, Poland. He worked as a slave laborer for the Nazis, survived in the Warsaw Ghetto and was an active member of the Warsaw Underground. A member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council since its inception, he chairs the Museum's Days of Remembrance Committee. He is the President of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and a leader of a number of other organizations. Mr. Meed founded the Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors permanently housed at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

Message from Dr. Irving Lehrman, Founding Rabbi of Temple Emanu-El of Greater Miami

I was born in Europe and all my life, I yearned to revisit my birthplace, a little town in Poland, Tykocin -- or Tiktin, as we called it. This is where my parents were married and where I was raised and lived until we left the country when I was about seven years old.

When I last visited Poland in 1947 immediately after the Holocaust, I wanted desperately to go to Tiktin, which I remembered as a prosperous, bustling, happy town. I was discouraged by everyone. I was told that the entire Jewish community had been destroyed by the Nazis, that the cemetery had been desecrated and that the beautiful synagogue that I attended with my family had been converted to a storehouse. I did not go.

Dr. Louis Finkelstein, Chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, often remarked that when Hitler wiped out the Jewish communities of Europe, he did not just destroy cities, towns and villages. He destroyed universities -- for every city, town and village, large or small, housed a great academy of learning where Torah was studied and taught, where students of all ages pored over sacred tomes, day and night. Such a community was Tiktin, home of three thousand Jews and widely acclaimed for its brilliant scholars and sages.

Years passed and my heart was heavy whenever I thought of my childhood in Tiktin. I deeply regretted not having gone there in 1947.

It was only by chance that I recently learned that the Tykocin synagogue had been restored by the Polish government and is now a museum, a tourist attraction. I was determined to re-live my childhood.

From Israel, we boarded an El Al flight to Warsaw where we were greeted by the guide who was to escort me home. Through the years, I often spoke of the huge statue in the city square that dominated my world, where I played with my friends and bloodied my bare feet on the cobblestones during the summer months. I remembered the home in which we lived situated on the shore of the Nirew River, by which my grandfather, a lumber merchant, shipped logs to Germany. What a thrill it was to find it all still there and to be able to re-trace my steps from the statue of Marshall Zarniecki (a hero of the Polish military) right to my home, a two-story building on the corner of Brovarna. Miraculously, it was one of the few original buildings still standing. On the outside, it seemed as I remembered it, but the shabby interior had been remodeled into small apartments and when the guide explained to one of the residents who I was, she immediately remembered my grandfather's family name, Dinowitz.

I visited the cemetery hoping to find some remnant of my grandfather's grave but alas, it was desolate. Every headstone had been removed to construct houses or pave roads, and there was nothing to see or mourn.

Finally, I entered the synagogue and my heart beat faster as I looked about. There were the same great bronze chandeliers hanging from the high ceiling; there were the walls on which an unknown artist had lovingly inscribed Hebrew quotations from the Book of Psalms, the Prophets, the Talmud.

There was the ornate blue and gold trim that decorated the ark and the columns. For three hundred years, it was admired as one of the most beautiful synagogues in Poland and today, with the destruction of so many others, it is the largest synagogue remaining in the country. There I stood, in the empty sanctuary, looking back into the past. I could see my father and my grandfather sitting in their customary seats and as recorded cantorial music filled the silence around me, I broke down and I wept. A glorious synagogue, without Jews. A magnificent Torah ark -- empty, devoid of its Scrolls of the Law. This was a community dating from the 14th century, a community steeped in Jewish living and rich in spiritual and cultural values with nothing remaining but a deserted shell as a reminder of a glorious past.

But then I suddenly remembered the miracle of re-birth in the land of Israel and my tears became tears of joy as I thanked God that there is a state of Israel today, and I thanked Him that there is a United States of America.

Simon Wiesenthal, the famed Nazi hunter, calls hatred the greatest problem that mankind faces. It was hatred that was responsible for the destruction of my Tiktin and all the Tiktins in human history. If we are to learn anything constructive from the agony of the Holocaust, we must always remember the terrible evil that hatred inflicts on all who are touched by it. It was the prophet Malachi who asked, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us all? Why shall we deal treacherously one with another?"

I pray that the day will come when the world will heed this sacred plea and live by it.

Message From
The Most Reverend John Clement Favalora, D.D., S.T.L., M.Ed.
Archbishop of Miami

The Catholic Church has declared a Great Jubilee for the year 2000, the opening of a new millennium. For the Jubilee, a custom rooted in Hebrew Scripture, all persons are called to repent of past sinful failures -- be they personal or corporate -- which have promoted hatred, prejudice and discrimination among members of the human family. Preparation for the new millennium requires conversion -- a turning away from whatever separates us from God and embracing his commandments of justice, peace and charity. The Catholic Church firmly condemns all forms of genocide as well as the racist theories that have inspired and claimed to justify them. Racism is a negation of the deepest identity of the human being, who is a person created in the image and likeness of God.

It is important to reflect together on the sins of the past, particularly that of the *Shoah*. This is not an occasion of vengeance but rather an opportunity to remember. When we remember we can draw closer to the Truth and work toward a common spirit of reconciliation. We must also remember that, in the mist of sin, we also share a history of virtue. Many, Christians and non-Christians alike, did everything that they could to save those who were persecuted during the *Shoah*, even to the point of risking and losing their own lives. Such examples of virtue should serve to inspire our young people.

The Catholic Church invites all persons of good will to use this historical moment of preparation for the new millennium to reflect and meditate on the catastrophe which befell the Jewish people, and on the moral imperative to insure that never again will selfishness and hatred grow to the point of sowing such suffering and death.

Living in a country of religious diversity and tolerance, it is especially the young who must hold fast to their innate ability to accept others. The historical failures and jaded perspectives of some should never be allowed to corrupt this gift nor hinder young persons from developing bonds of respect and friendship with those who are of a different race or ethnic background or who profess another faith. In so doing, the young will offer a living witness that humanity has indeed learned the hard universal lessons of the horror of the *Shoah*.

Message from David Lawrence, Former Publisher of The Miami Herald

I am an optimist -- unashamedly and unabashedly so -- living with the daily expectation that people can, and frequently will, exercise great individual power to do good things. But even the most optimistic soul knows that the greatest faith in people will not be enough to forestall the tragedy of a Holocaust. It can happen again. You and I are simply required to be eternally vigilant.

Memories even of the greatest tragedies -- the Holocaust itself -- can fade. Today in our midst are people, some of them more foolish than hateful, who question whether Hitler's Third Reich actually claimed the lives of 6 million Jewish men, women and children. Some, idiotically and hatefully so, are the skinheads, the Klan members and followers of racial and ethnic supremacy. Others are simply misguided out of touch.

Let us pledge, you and I, that we will fulfill our obligation to make sure that no one is ever permitted to forget the true and terrible stories of one of history's saddest chapters.

We need to hear, every chance we get, from those Holocaust survivors who can still describe what really happened in Nazi death camps. But we also need younger generations with as much passion for telling stories that will never lose their importance.

Meanwhile, my own craft must insist that uncomfortable truths be brought to light, as we did recently in reporting, even a half-century after the fact, how so-called "neutral" countries in World War II profited from possessions stolen from murdered Jews.

We in journalism ought to remember that we generally failed to cover the Holocaust as it occurred (failing, for instance, to heed the calls of individuals such as Dr. Stephen Wise, past chairman of the World Jewish Congress, who in November 1942 held a press conference to announce that the Nazis had already murdered more than a million and a half Jews. His news failed to make most front pages, getting only brief mentions). Imagine how many lives might have been saved if editors around the world had responded differently.

It would be too easy, and inadequate, to blame the press, failings in covering this story on simple, ugly anti-Semitism. And it would be fair to point out the difficulty faced by journalists, who have a responsibility to check before printing those allegations of horror beyond most people's beliefs. But there were clearly many clues to know that something monstrously evil was occurring. Our own government certainly knew a great deal.

We are all endangered if we fail to learn the lessons of history. We are all endangered if we fail to appreciate the humanity that resides in every human being.

It is up to you and to me. We must make a difference. You and I have the privilege of living in South Florida, which previews the future of a demographically diverse America. It is up to us to show the rest of the nation -- indeed, the world -- that a community of so many cultures can reach out to understand one another, that we can celebrate what we have in common, and that we can respect our differences. In so doing, we will set an example for all. And we will have prevailed over those who would blame their troubles on "different" people, those who would preach the politics of division.

Our sense of caring and compassion will serve as evidence that the Holocaust's painful lessons have indeed been heeded.

If we fail to learn the lessons of the horrors of the Holocaust, then we will have simply compounded the tragedy.

I could not bear that. Nor could you, I am sure.

Yours in vigilance all our lives...

Dave Lawrence Jr.

Our Presidents Remember...

Although words do pale, yet we must speak. We must strive to understand. We must teach the lessons of the Holocaust. And, most of all, we ourselves must remember ... The world's failure to recognize the moral truth forty years ago permitted the Holocaust to proceed. Our generation -- the generation of survivors -- will never permit the lesson to be forgotten.

-- Jimmy Carter

Remembrance has a power for good that is all its own, and each of us must use that power as we contemplate the Holocaust -- and its impact on the entire world ... We know that remembrance is possible for both those who have witnessed and those who have heard. My generation cannot forget, but neither must any generation ... Let us make our remembrance, then, always in the manner and spirit of those who liberated the concentration camps and freed and cared for survivors. Those soldiers came not in conquest but in compassion, not to kill and enslave but to free and heal. Let our remembrance ever be thus and it will be a resolution true and noble -- "Never Again."

-- Ronald Reagan

Our challenge today is to insist that time will not become the Nazis' friend, that time will not fade our sense of specificity, the uniqueness of the Holocaust, that time will not lead us to make the Holocaust into an abstraction. Our challenge today is to remember the Holocaust, for if we remember we will, as our soldiers did, look its evil in the face ... For memory is our duty to the past, and memory is our duty to the future.

-- George Bush

The Holocaust transformed the 20th century, sweeping aside the facile Enlightenment hope that evil can somehow be permanently vanquished; demonstrating there is no war to end all war, that the struggle against the basest tendencies of our nature continues forever and ever and demands eternal vigilance.

The Holocaust began when the most civilized country of its day unleashed unprecedented acts of cruelty and hatred, abetted by perversion of science, philosophy and law. A culture which produced Goethe, Schiller and Beethoven brought forth Hitler and Himmler's merciless hordes, and because the educated stood by, or worse, participated, the innocent perished ...

To build bulwarks against the evil, there is but one path to take. We have our differences but we cannot separate ourselves from each other. This is the dynamic tension in the life of the contemporary world. Organizing a civil society, a civil world, requires us to honor diversity even as we reaffirm our common humanity. The framework within which individuality, ethnicity, and nationality can exist without turning murderous is constitutional democracy, and the respect in international law for human rights.

-- Bill Clinton

EXCERPTS ON REMEMBRANCE

In the words of an American high school student, during a discussion with Holocaust survivors:

You wonder if you could know that there's a concentration camp in your town and not do anything about it. It would upset you, because you would feel ashamed that people saw what was going on, but wouldn't stop it. You feel really guilty for being a human being. Not for being part of a certain group -- but just for being in the human race at all.

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In the words of Senator Claiborne Pell, National Civic commemoration, April, 1985:

We can ask ourselves why we are memorializing the most massive and darkest example of man's inhumanity to man. Why? The reason is to seek to prevent such inhumanity from occurring again and to be alert to the need to snuff out those same dreadful instincts that turn human beings like you and me into beasts.

Let us remember, too, Dante's words so oft quoted by a noted colleague, Robert Kennedy: "He who sees, stands by, and does nothing as evil is performed, is just as guilty as he who performs it." Here we must remember how we stood by as millions of Jews and Gentiles and gypsies were murdered. Examples: we returned the passenger vessel St. Louis with its load of 900 Jews back to Bremen and the concentration camps of Europe; we declined to change our own immigration laws one jot and then declined to take in most of these unfortunate human beings who were clamoring at our consulates for visas. In fact, in 1944, only nine percent of our visa allotment for Europe was used. As reads our War Department telegram, exhibited at Yad Vashem [the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Israel] we even refused to bomb the rail line that carried the Nazi victims to Auschwitz. We did all too little 40 years ago; what can we do now?

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In the words of Secretary of State Alexander Haig, International Liberators conference, October 1981:

I believe that we can hear the memory of the Holocaust only if we strive to prevent its recurrence. Let us, therefore, remember well the signposts on the road to genocide. First, individual rights were revoked. Then, individual dignity was denied. Finally, in the abyss of despair, came the murder itself. It began with the most defenseless, but it did not stop with them

...

The victims and the survivors of the Holocaust have shown us, each in their own ways, that man need not succumb to this evil. Those who went to their deaths singing of their belief in God did not lose their souls. Those who fought against hopeless odds did not lose their dignity. Those who survived did not despair ...

The liberators, too, bear witness. You will tell us that the values we cherish become meaningful only if we are prepared to work for them, to defend them, and to fight for them. A generation unwilling to bear the burden of its own beliefs makes possible a Holocaust of its dreams. I know this as a former soldier, and we are all soldiers for our beliefs...

There is an old Jewish saying, "The memory of the righteous shall be for the blessing." As we remember the righteous today, let us resolve to act in such a way that we merit their blessing.

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In the words of Sigmund Strochlitz, survivor; member, USHMC, International Liberators Conference, October 1981:

Many years have passed since the Allied armies entered the camps. The Russian armies entered the camps in the East, being first to expose to the world the horrors committed by the Nazis and their collaborators. The English army entered the camps in the North and confirmed to the western world the brutal realities of death factories in the heart of Europe, next to big towns and small villages, while the inhabitants went about their daily work, unconcerned, undisturbed, and yet knowing very well that mass murder was taking place in their backyard. In the south, American armies entering the camps and suspecting that time may erase the memory of Nazi behavior, brought a high-ranking congressional delegation to record for posterity the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany.

Survivors will never forget the valiant effort made by the Allied armies to save even those who were beyond help and to help restore a semblance of normal life to those who were at that moment not even able to respond to human decency or to react to human compassion ...

Those who fought in the last war and those who have been victims of hate, prejudice, and indifference owe it to present and future generations to sound the warning that we live in times when military forces of unimaginable destructiveness, religious fanaticism that caused so much misery in the past, and blind hatred that transcends boundaries are building up around the world that can in one summer day or winter day drive mankind to madness again. Let's hope, therefore, that today's eyewitness testimonies to acts of evil will stand as a permanent witness to an event that must be remembered and transmitted to younger generations, not only by us, the victims, but also by you, the victors. You and we are partners to a legacy forced on us by fate: to uphold the truth, to prevent the dead from being murdered again, and to save the conscience, the decency, and the humanity of mankind.

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Source: *Days of Remembrance: A Department of Defense Guide for Annual Commemorative Observances* (Second Edition). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, page 109, 113, 114, 116, 117, 123, 124, 125.

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A TEACHER SHARES

“On the first day in the new school year, all the teachers in one private school received the following note from their principal:

Dear Teacher:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:

Gas chambers built by learned engineers.

Children poisoned by educated physicians.

Infants killed by trained nurses.

Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.

So, I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns.

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane.”

Haim Ginott

WHY STUDY THE HOLOCAUST?

The following are responses from community leaders, educators and clergy when asked: "Why should we study the Holocaust?"

Former U.S. Congressman William Lehman

The study of the Holocaust is of utmost importance today. With the gradual disappearance of the generations directly affected by the Holocaust, the atrocities of the concentration camps must be taught so that the truth can never be denied. Through education we can learn a lesson about the importance of human life and the fragility of freedom. As a founding member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council which conducts the annual Days of Remembrance and is engaged in creating the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the study of the Holocaust will serve as a living memorial from which we can find application today. Only an understanding of these events can teach us how to prevent genocide and to learn the importance of not remaining silent in the face of future human tragedy.

Dr. Gregory B. Wolfe Former President, Florida International University

Preservation of the memory of the Holocaust is critical to the future of freedom and human dignity. There is no more illustrative chapter in recorded human history of the cruel extremes of man's inhumanity to man than the Holocaust. It must not be forgotten. Every generation must know about it. Learning about its causes and its cancerous influence on a whole society will provide high school students and teachers with an essential lesson in the contemporary significance of the Holocaust and ultimately, to avoid ever being compelled to repeat it.

Gene Greenzweig Director, Central Agency for Jewish Education

The Holocaust was a great human tragedy. It presents us with the universal and timeless issues of society. As educators, students, citizens, we have a responsibility to confront the significant moral and ethical questions raised by the Holocaust. The broader questions of: "What can such a catastrophe tell us about human nature?"; "What is the role and responsibility of the individual in society?" need to be essential questions in any meaningful curriculum in the human and social sciences.

Sister Trinita Flood, O.P. Founding President, Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

Why study the Holocaust?... Because it is the most graphic and tragic example of what prejudice and discrimination can do to a people.

For the sake of the future, the proper teaching of history must be a primary concern. Archbishop Eugene Marino of Atlanta stated: "There is always danger in discriminating between people and groups, and overemphasizing differences or contrasting them as necessarily opposed can sometimes lead to violent behavior...."

It is one thing to denounce discrimination; it is another thing to trace it to its roots, through education, so the new generation of men and women will have mutual respect and concern for each other and be willing and prepared to serve each other, whatever their religion, nationality, culture or color.

George Katzman
An American G.I. who was with troops
who liberated some of the Nazi concentration camps

Why study the Holocaust? Because it could happen to you...And only by studying the Holocaust can you learn the price that is paid because some people think they are better than other people. Maybe it's the color of their skin or the shape of their eyes or how they pray to their God that will determine who will live and who will die.

Frank J. Magrath
Former Regional Director,
The National Conference of Christians and Jews, Inc.

It is essential that youth learn the history of genocide instituted by Adolph Hitler during the 1930s and 40s against the Jewish people. A student would never be considered even partially educated unless he or she is familiar with the root causes and the ultimate effect of the Nazi genocide directed towards Jews, which culminated in the devastation known as the Holocaust. The Holocaust is the result of centuries-old antisemitism that caused the worst horror in the history of mankind involving the murder of millions of men, women, and children by the Nazi regime. History cannot and must not be repeated. One way of insuring that such a Holocaust will never again take place in the future is the education of the citizens of the world, especially our youth.

Paul Hanson
Former Social Studies Supervisor,
Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Throughout human history there have been numerous examples of inhumane treatment of people by other people. No example is as tragic as the Nazi Holocaust during the Second World War period. A study of the Holocaust will provide students a definitive lesson in the ultimate violation of human rights and how people's values can be distorted to result in such a human tragedy. A study of the Holocaust should be included in the social studies instruction of every student to ensure the development of a value system so that future generations will not experience a Holocaust.

Rita Hofrichter
Holocaust Survivor and Ghetto Fighter

We must embark on a remedial civil rights course for children who are being taught to hate and a remedial non-violence course for children who are being taught to destroy. The lesson of Holocaust teaches vividly the danger points. Please use it... it was paid for in blood of millions.

SURVIVORS AND LIBERATORS ON “WHY REMEMBER?”

The following passages are adapted from testimonies which are part of the Oral History Collection of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc. The final question to which these individuals responded was: *“If you wanted to leave a message to the world about the Holocaust, what would it be?”*

From this tragedy of the Holocaust, we learned much in our lives. First of all, we respect the courage and the attitude of the righteous people who risked their lives to save suffering humanity. This is indescribable, really. And we admire the courage for the freedom to fight and never to lose hope or faith in the Almighty.

Helena Bibliowicz, Survivor

We each have to make our own contribution to the future. The suffering cannot be forgotten, but Jewish history is much more than the history of suffering. It has had its glorious period. It has been enriched by all civilizations and has enriched other civilizations. The story must be told so that mankind can learn a lesson. If we don't, it could happen again and it may not be the Jewish people next time, but maybe another people instead. On a global scale, all of humanity today is in danger of having a Holocaust.

Rabbi Saul Diament, Survivor

Be tolerant. Don't generalize. Don't condemn. Don't use your own personal experience with one or two people to condemn a whole group of people. Try to understand the other person's point of view and be respectful of it.

Berthold Leidner, Survivor/Liberator

Six million Jews were burned alive. I saw it happening. I was there. They threw the children in the oven like a piece of paper. How come the whole world kept their mouth shut?

Nacha Krieger, Survivor

People should care about other people, not only their immediate family, but also those outside of their family. Too many people care about their children and their immediate family, but not about others.

If the world had not stood silent, Hitler couldn't have accomplished as much as he did. If Hitler would have seen that Roosevelt let the boats of refugees in, he wouldn't have had the courage to do what he did.

Regina Kahn, Survivor

I would like people to learn to be good, not to be enemies. When I start talking about the Holocaust, some people tell me to forget it. I say to them, "If we forget, who will remember? We are the ones to remember and keep talking to our children."

Sala Pietkowski, Survivor

I think the Holocaust should be brought out and that people should be made aware that these things happened. It should definitely be a chapter in our history and should be taught in all schools, so that we never have a reoccurrence of such a thing. We must be on our guard, be well-prepared, and never let one individual accumulate that much power, such as Hitler, or even the Ayatollah in Iran.

Henry Pryor, Liberator

First of all, everything comes from the same thing — not respecting each other's religion or nationality. We can live in harmony. You don't necessarily have to like everybody else, but you should respect others so you can be respected, too. In that way, we can live in peace.

Nat Glass, Survivor

Students ought to be aware that these things happened. These are historical facts. If you teach history, you have got to relate the different events that happened in the history of our times. The Holocaust certainly is a big event, when you kill something like five or six million people, my God, that has got to be reported and talked about and brought to the attention of other people. It is a historical fact. It is just part of history, as any other part of the war is.

Dr. Rene Torrado, Liberator

My opinion is, you have to know the beginning, not the end. Everybody knows the end. Everybody knows about the six million, but they don't know how it started. It started with our neighbor, with our next-door good friend who went with us to school. We were sitting together, playing football together, eating together. Suddenly they became our enemy.

Theodore Weiss, Survivor

I would certainly not want anybody to experience what we innocent people had to go through just because we were Jews. No person should discriminate against others because of their religious upbringing or their birth. Everybody should have the right to be a human being.

Magda Bader, Survivor

Being part of the investigation of the crimes made me much more patient in listening to people. I might have been gullible and not believed a lot of stuff if I hadn't been there. Because of my role as an investigator, I would be glad to do almost anything to make sure these events never happen again. I think the Lord sent me there to do that job. I don't know why I was selected.

Dr. John Hege, Investigator of Nazi War Crimes

We should teach everybody. Everyone should know what happened. We don't want this to happen to anyone, whether they're black, blue, or green. When somebody is doing wrong to anyone, whomever it is, people should speak up. Because otherwise, it's going to happen again. It can happen to anybody. We should tell the story of the Holocaust over and over again, until people realize that we cannot go on like this.

Irving Graifman, Survivor

The Jewish people have to live. We have a legacy. We gave the world a lot. We gave the world a Freud, Salk, Einstein, big philosophers, and all kinds of great thinkers through the ages, but the world didn't return it. The world didn't give us justice.

Henryk Ehrlich, Survivor

Pastor Martin Niemoeller's Quote

Pastor Martin Niemoeller was a highly decorated commander in World War I. He later became a preacher and the most prominent leader of the anti-Nazi Confessing Church in Germany. In 1934, he formed the Pastors Emergency League. He was later arrested for attacking the state and was sent to a concentration camp. From 1937 until the end of the war, he was held in prison as well as in Sachsenhausen and Dachau.

*“First they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out --
because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the Socialists
and I did not speak out --
because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out --
because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out --
because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me --
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.”*

Have the students rewrite this poem in their own words so that the people and groups apply to today's society.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE SCIENTISTS OF THE FUTURE

Today you may call it fantasy or some silly talk. But let me assure you that I am not the Don Quixote type nor a little boy daydreaming. I am a Holocaust survivor, 70 years old, and I am dead serious.

First, let me express my admiration for your numerous and most miraculous achievements. You found cures for the most dreadful diseases, you prolonged life, you succeeded in restoring sight to the blind, and you developed a device that enables the deaf to enjoy beautiful music. You harnessed the energy of the sun and you made the desert bloom. You controlled the climate and made possible for man to live and work in every season of the year. Thanks to your ingenuity, people on earth can spend time on the moon and send missions to the most distant planets. The list of your successes seems endless.

Now I am not sure how to classify this letter to you. It could be a request, a plea, or a challenge. I would like to ask you to use your talent and wisdom and all the means in your possession to extract the sound trapped in the walls of rail car 31599G, the one displayed in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Please understand how important this is. Let the world in the 21st century hear the anguish of the people going to their death not knowing why. Let the people in the future listen to little children gasping for breath of air and to the cry of those helpless mothers who keep asking why. Why is my baby not allowed to grow up? What crime is it to be born Jewish? Let the world of the 22nd century hear the last prayers of men and women in the face of death, keep their faith in the Almighty God and also let the future listen to the anger against the world in the middle of the 20th century that let it all happen.

Please, scientists of the future, don't let me down. Fulfill my wish for the sake of 6,000,000 innocent victims.

LEO SHNIDERMAN
Holocaust Survivor

April 1991

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR JOURNAL WRITING

By Merle R. Safenstein

Director of Educational Outreach

During the study of the Holocaust, we recommend that you and your students keep journals. Because of the nature of the material which you will be presenting and exploring, because of the difficulty in understanding the scope as well as the steps which preceded the Holocaust and because its lessons lead to an examination of moral issues and human behavior, keeping journals will help both the teacher and students gain insights into the universal implications of the Holocaust.

One of the most important things to remember is that journal writing is unlike any other kind of writing. It has no rules, is flexible and leads to self-discovery. Journal writing is a process, not a product, which evolves with each new entry the writer adds.

REASONS FOR TEACHERS TO INCLUDE THIS AS PART OF THE EXPERIENCE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- It is a way to log the course and take notes on what is being taught and learned.
- It serves as a place to recall, digest, and record conversations, ongoing encounters, feelings, dreams, and ideas.
- It assists in exploring thoughts and responses to the various information the teacher presents on a daily basis.
- It helps the individual work through issues and find creative solutions - thus providing a cathartic and therapeutic experience.
- It provides the opportunity to record perceptions and memories and later revisit them.
- It gives the writer a better sense of self.
- It helps clarify goals.

HINTS FOR JOURNAL WRITING FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS:

- Write fast since the key is spontaneity, flow, and intuition.
- Write everything and do not censor anything. Accept whatever comes to mind. Allow the unexpected to happen.
- Write from your feelings.
- Write from your body.
- Date your entries with the day of the week, month, date, and year.
- Use a pen.
- Include as many details as possible using descriptions and observations.
- Write for yourself.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS TO DO JOURNAL WRITING WITH YOUR STUDENTS:

- Devote 5 - 10 minutes daily to the practice.
- Always write in your journal while students write in theirs.
- On occasion, allow time for students to share their entries with the class.
- Assign journal writing as part of the homework assignment throughout the study. It will help your students deal with the emotions which they might be experiencing.

A meaningful way to introduce students to the topic of journal writing is to read them excerpts from journals written by people during the Holocaust. They provide us with firsthand accounts about life in the ghettos, in hiding, and in concentration camps. Some examples are as follows:

Frank, Anne. The Diary of a Young Girl. New York: Pocket Books, 1953.

Ringelblum, Emmanuel. Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum. New York: Schocken, 1974.

Tatelbaum, Itzhak. Through Our Eyes (Children Witness the Holocaust). Chicago: IBT Publishing Company.

Tory, Avraham. Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Yoors, Jan. Crossing: A Journal of Survival and Resistance in World War II. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

HOLOCAUST DOCUMENTATION AND EDUCATION CENTER, INC.

Florida International University, North Miami Campus, 3000 NE 151 Street, Miami, Florida 33181-3000

PHONE: (305) 919-5690; FAX: (305) 919-5691; E-MAIL: xholocau@fiu.edu

Healing the Hate



QUESTIONS FOR BEGINNING YOUR JOURNAL

- What is your culture or racial/ethnic background?

- Where are your parents and grandparents from?

- Have you ever felt that you have been a victim of prejudice or discrimination? Describe your experience. How did it make you feel?

- Have you ever victimized someone else through prejudice or discrimination? Describe the experience and how it made you feel during and after. (Remember, you will not have to share this with anyone).

- What would you like to see happen in the world today so that there would be less hatred, prejudice, and discrimination?

- What can young people do to make this a reality?

Diaries and Memoirs

Grade Levels: Middle and high school

Goals:

- To analyze how personal diaries and memoirs record actual events.
- To compare and contrast diaries and memoirs from the Holocaust.
- To engage in journal or diary writing as away to explore one's own feelings and self.

Materials: Excerpts from Holocaust diaries and memoirs appropriate to the reading ability of the students.

Procedure:

1. Discuss with students the differences between a diary and a memoir. Provide examples of each. The important difference is that history unfolds in the diary without the diarist knowing the outcome. The author of a memoir has a different agenda.
2. What famous diaries and memoirs have the students heard of? This is part of the KWL process: What do the students KNOW, What do they WANT to know, then What have they LEARNED?
3. Why do people keep diaries? Sometimes diaries are kept to record upsetting, dangerous, or difficult times in people's lives. How likely would you be to record events truthfully and accurately? Does it matter?
4. Compare diaries and memoirs from people in the same time period. Did they cope with similar events? How do the writing styles differ? What was the motivation for writing?
5. Why did Anne Frank's diary become so famous? Is this diary more of a coming-of-age book than a Holocaust book? Have students debate this issue.
6. Compare Anne Frank's diary with other diaries and memoirs: *All But My Life*, by Gerda Klein, *Alicia: My Story* by Alicia Appleman-Jurman, and *Vedem* the Boys' Magazine from Terezin. How are these works different and similar? Read a memoir written by a woman and one written by a man. Are there gender differences? If so, what are they and what are they attributable to?
7. Who do diarists write for, themselves or a possible unseen audience? Do they ever hope or intend for their work to be published, as a way to document their experiences? Holocaust victim who kept diaries have often stated their intent to "let the world know" what life was like during the Holocaust.
8. Have students participate in a literary circle using a diary or memoir. How does each student feel the character or writer is like himself or herself? What are the similar hopes and dreams shared by the students and the diarist? What about fears, worries, complaints?
9. Did the diarist or memoir author follow any discernible format? Why do some diarists name their diaries? Have students keep a journal or diary for a week, a month, or longer. Is it difficult to discipline oneself to write every day? Why are some days easier to write about than others? How does Anne Frank communicate her fears, successes, traumas, happiness, etc?
10. Have students find a passage in a diary or memoir that is especially meaningful or moving to them. Have them write a letter to the author about the impact of the passage.
11. Provide activities across the curriculum (music, art) for students to express themselves and their reactions to what they have read. Some memoirs lend themselves to Reader's Theatre. Use Holocaust music as a background in the classroom. Put some of the photographs and/or artwork on a website or on overheads to create a multimedia presentation.

Assessment: Keep all of the students' writing in a portfolio so that they can evaluate their progress and share their writing with the other students. The teacher can then assess the students' work and evaluate the portfolio for a grade. These activities encourage students to write on their own, to explore how other people write, to discover what motivates people to write, and to think about why people write in so many different ways.

Source: *A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust*. Produced by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology, College of Education, University of South Florida © 1997. Adapted from curriculum developed for use with students at the Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum and Education Center. Reprinted by permission.

A World War II Anthology

An anthology is a collection of pieces of literature. Usually, anthologies are chosen for you to read. Now, you will have the opportunity to be the “editor” and prepare a personal anthology made up of several pieces of literature in different genre or types all related to a theme based on World War II. Some themes you might consider include: cruelty, heroism, prejudice, courage, hope, despair, faith, survival. You may wish to do the required reading before you select your theme.

Selections to be included in your anthology are

1. The play "The Diary of Anne Frank."
 - Select a line or a part of a scene from the play, quote it, and explain in a paragraph how it relates to your theme. Be sure to identify and explain how key characteristics of your theme are revealed in the section of the play.

2. A short story about World War II that we have read in class or that you choose.
 - Select a passage from the story, quote it, and explain in a paragraph how it relates to your theme.

3. A work of fiction or non-fiction about World War II you choose to read.
 - After reading this book, write a four paragraph essay about it including the following:

SETTING - Explain why the setting of the book is important to the plot or subject. Could the same story have been told in a different setting? Why or why not?

CHARACTERS - Characters are revealed through several means. They are described to us by what they say, what they do and think, and what other people say about them. Describe a key character of your book and use three examples (quotes) from the book to support your description. Include some discussion about how this character's actions relate to the theme of your anthology.

CONFLICT - Discuss the major conflict in the book. Explain whether it is internal (within the character) or external (between the character and others). State whether the conflict is man versus man, man versus nature, or man versus society. Explain how the conflict is resolved.

THEME - Explain the lesson(s) to be learned. Find specific quotes from the book to show what the themes are. How do these themes relate to the focus of your anthology?

4. An article from a magazine or newspaper that relates to the theme of your anthology.
 - Include a photocopy of the entire article. Highlight the passages you think most relate to your topic.
5. A poem that illustrates your theme.
 - Include a photocopy of the poem. Highlight verses or stanzas that reveal the theme. Write a paragraph explaining how the words, verses, stanzas in the poem illustrate the theme.
6. A movie. Choose one of the movies shown in class or advisory related to World War II. You may also view another film with approval.
 - Write a three paragraph essay after viewing the film. One paragraph should be a summary of the movie. The second paragraph should show how the theme of your anthology is illustrated by the movie. The last paragraph should describe your personal reaction to the film.
7. A quote. Find a quotation related to the theme of your anthology.
 - Write the quote and identify who said it. Explain the quote's meaning and how it relates to the meaning of your theme. What does the quote mean to you? To your life?
8. Bibliography. Type a complete list of all the sources you use to compile this anthology. Be sure to use the correct bibliographic style given to you.

Your anthology should be presented in a folder or binder and should be organized with

- TITLE PAGE– Give your anthology a title. Include your name, grade, teacher's name and date. You may decorate this page.
- TABLE OF CONTENTS- List all the items included in your folder with page numbers. Identify each piece of literature by title, author, and genre.
- PREFACE- This is an introduction which you will write. It will define and explain you topic. It will relate your topic to the study of World War II. It will show why you chose each of the items in the anthology and explain how the theme connects the play, the short story, the outside reading book, article, poem, movie and quote. It should end with an explanation of what you have learned by putting this all together.

TASK	Date Completed
I. PREFACE	
Introduction to define your theme and why you've selected each piece of literature	_____
II. DIARY OF ANNE FRANK	
Quote from play	_____
Paragraph to explain how quote relates to theme	_____
III. SHORT STORY	
Passage from story	_____
Paragraph to explain how passage relates to theme	_____
IV. OUTSIDE READING BOOK (4 paragraphs)	
Character paragraph	_____
Setting paragraph	_____
Conflict	_____
Theme	_____
V. ARTICLE - relates to theme (not to Holocaust)	
Photocopy and highlight the theme	_____
VI. POEM - relates to theme (not to Holocaust)	
Photocopy of the poem	_____
Highlight parts that reveal the theme	_____
Paragraph to explain how poem relates to theme	_____
VII. MOVIE - (3 paragraphs)	
Summary	_____
Explanation of theme	_____
Personal reaction	_____
VIII. QUOTE	
Write the quote and who said It	_____
Explain the quote and how it relates to theme	_____
Personal reaction.....	_____
IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY (follow format)	
Put it all together in the following way:	
TITLE PAGE - name, grade, teacher, date (optional design or decoration)	_____
TABLE OF CONTENTS - list items. page numbers Identify each piece by title author. genre	_____

- **OPTIONAL**– You may include a dedication page.
- This project is due _____ and will be evaluated by both your English and History teachers.

Source: Andy Cahn, Bronxville Middle School, Bronxville, NY. Mr. Cahn was chosen to be a Mandel Fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum In 1996. Reprinted by permission.

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Holocaust Remembrance Day (also known as Yom Hashoah) has been set aside for remembering the victims of the Holocaust and for reminding Americans of what can happen to civilized people when bigotry, hatred, and indifference reign. The day's principal message is that another Holocaust must never be allowed to happen.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Council was created by a unanimous act of Congress in 1980 and was charged to build the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and to encourage annual, national, civic commemorations of the Days of Remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust.

After a study of the Holocaust, you might want to plan to have a classroom Day of Remembrance. This could include a variety of activities:

- A candle lighting ceremony which the students could write
- The reading of names of victims killed in the Holocaust
- The reading of names of concentration camps
- Original poetry done by the students
- Poetry or diary excerpts written during the Holocaust
- A pledge of remembrance
- Original art work, short stories, essays or music
- A survivor guest speaker
- A presentation of a tile or quilt project

The following is the list of dates on which Holocaust Remembrance Day occurs:

1999	Tuesday, April 13	2005	Friday, May 6
2000	Tuesday, May 2	2006	Tuesday, April 25
2001	Friday, April 20	2007	Sunday, April 15
2002	Tuesday, April 9	2008	Friday, May 2
2003	Tuesday, April 29	2009	Tuesday, April 21
2004	Sunday, April 18	2010	Sunday, April 11

ASSIGNING STUDENTS THE TASK OF INTERVIEWING SURVIVORS OF THE HOLOCAUST

By Bernice Wiener

Adapted from a presentation given at the 1997 Teachers' Institute on Holocaust Studies at the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Miami, Florida.

As an activity in communities where there are Holocaust survivors, you, the teacher, may assign the students the task of interviewing a survivor. Prior to the actual interview, your student must first gain the necessary knowledge, awareness and understanding of the subject as well as be able to display tremendous sensitivity and compassion. The teacher must also have an understanding of what students might encounter in order to choose student interviewers wisely.

In preparation for an interview, the following four steps must be shared with each student:

1. Define terms.
2. Research available biographical data.
3. Know the purpose and goals of the interview.
4. Establish the qualifications of the interviewer.

Define Terms

When we discuss any group of people, we must be able to answer the question, "Who are they?" In this case, the question becomes, "Who are the survivors?" A survivor is anyone who was caught up in or interned in the Nazi Final Solution, and as a result was forced to leave his or her home (from 1933 on in Germany and in other countries from the year of occupation).

The term survivor represents a cross section of the European Jewish community prior to 1938. It is important to keep in mind that these people were not born survivors but were forced into this position by the madness that was Europe at that time. Their backgrounds were diverse and included the most highly educated (doctors, lawyers, scientists, authors, teachers, etc.) to those with only a primary education. They ranged from the cosmopolitan to the village peasant, from the wealthiest to the impoverished.

When Hitler rose to power, the people who we now call survivors were all under the irrevocable sentence of death. Elie Wiesel stated, "While not all victims were Jews, all the Jews were victims."

At the end of the war, those that had survived emerged from a myriad of experiences. There were those who had endured the hell of the concentration camps, where dehumanization, starvation, brutality, disease, and death were a way of life.

There were those who emerged from isolation and fear after years of hiding in cellars, sewers, and under floor boards. There were those who fled into the forest and were constantly on the run as well as others who joined the partisans, and from moment to moment risked their lives to help others.

Never to be forgotten are the child survivors, who were too young to understand, and in many instances were left with strangers, who would hide them. There are also those children who miraculously survived the camps.

These people emerged with experiences containing their own individual horrors and stresses, all being too overwhelming to describe. How could they adjust to the world once they had been liberated? A world, where in most instances, they were the sole survivor of a large and loving family; a world where home and roots no longer existed.

Research Available Biographical Data

Prior to the formal interview, the student will want to conduct a brief telephone interview with the survivor. At that time, the student will be able to get an idea of the kind of experience the survivor had (ghettos, camps, hiding, etc.) so he/she can formulate questions for the interview itself. Before the formal interview, the student should take the time to research the locations that the survivor mentioned in the telephone interview. The more background the student is able to research, the more he/she will be able to glean from the formal interview.

Know the Purpose and the Goals of the Interview

Prior to the formal interview, the teacher should help the student establish the purpose and goals of the interview and then decide on an appropriate strategy to reach these goals. One of the main goals should be to gather first-hand information from the survivor about his/ her personal experiences and events he/she witnessed during the Holocaust.

The goals can be obtained by having the student organize a carefully constructed questionnaire, where information will be sought in a chronological order.

The following format can be used:

The pre-war years:

- to get a full and comprehensive description of life prior to war

The war years:

- to illicit a full description of war years with an in-depth description of the survivor's own experiences

Liberation and post war years:

- to have an understanding of post war experiences leading to life today

Establish the Qualifications of the Interviewer

The fourth and last category, and the one that is of the utmost importance to the teacher, is what are the necessary qualifications for a student to be eligible to interview? The student must be fully aware of the background of the interviewee and have sensitivity and maturity. He/she must be well organized and able to have both strength and compassion in order to hear the details. He/she must realize that it is truly a privilege to be allowed to conduct this interview.

After the interview is complete, the student can either give an oral report to the class or submit a written report which can be shared with others.

REGISTRY OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Note to teachers: If you have a large community of Holocaust survivors in your area, this is a worthwhile activity. Share with your students the following description of the background to the Registry. Then have students encourage survivors in the community to fill out the National Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors form and mail the completed forms to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The book, *The Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors*, is based on the records of the Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. The Registry is a computer database listing 110,000 names of Holocaust survivors and their family members that was established in 1983 and developed over a thirteen year period through the efforts of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. In April 1993, the Registry was transferred to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Open seven days a week from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., the Registry is located on the fifth floor of the Museum in the Research Institute. Using the Registry, visitors can obtain basic information concerning a survivor's prewar and wartime history as well as photographs, when supplied, using touch screen computers. The Registry serves as a resource for researchers, scholars, survivors, and their families.

Although consisting primarily of the names of Jewish Holocaust survivors, any other Holocaust survivor who is interested may register. The Registry includes the names of survivors who are now deceased but does not indicate that they have passed away. This information remains in the files of the Registry and is kept strictly confidential. Most of the survivors listed in this volume immigrated to the United States or Canada following the war, but some survivors living in other countries who completed a registration form are also included.

The Registry includes members of the second and third generation. This publication, however, only includes information about survivors based on their individual files. To insure privacy no addresses are being published and, further, the Registry will not release a survivor's address to anyone without express permission.

The publication consists of two volumes.

Volume I: Alphabetical Listing of Survivors

In this index, survivors are cross listed under all names provided when they registered, including names before and during the war. The main entry, however, appears next to the survivor's current name.

In the main entry, each survivor is listed followed by his or her name(s) before and during the Holocaust (if any) in parentheses. The number assigned to each survivor refers to a file maintained by the Registry at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. If provided, prewar and wartime locations appear next. If both prewar and wartime locations are listed, they are separated by a semi-colon. Countries and regions appear in this index **only** where more specific information **was not** submitted.

Volume II: Listing by Place of Birth and Town Before the War

This is a listing of survivors by birthplace or residence before the Holocaust. The towns are listed alphabetically independent of country. When a separate place of birth and town of residence before the war were given, the survivor is listed under both localities.

Listing by Location During the Holocaust

Survivors who lived in more than one place during the Holocaust are listed under all locations supplied on their registration forms.

The two indices in volume II list survivors by prewar and wartime locations. In order to maintain continuity and consistency between these indices, town names as they were known before the Holocaust are generally used. The names of countries and regions do appear in both alphabetical listings of place names. However, only those survivors who did not provide specific locations are listed under these entries. Parentheses () indicate a name previously used by a survivor; e.g. a prewar name, maiden name or alias. Refer to the Alphabetical Listing of Survivors in volume I for relationships between current names and other names used.

Extensive editing was required to correct town names which were sometimes submitted with phonetic spellings. Despite the editing, there still remain many town names that could not be verified and consequently are included as submitted on the form. Readers are encouraged to propose corrections. (See the Registry's address below.)

A Note to Holocaust Survivors

The Registry is a compilation based on thousands of registration forms submitted through December 31, 1995. Errors and omissions are inevitable. Survivors who find errors or omissions are encouraged to write to the Registry (c/o United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024-2150). Survivors not yet listed are encouraged to write to either the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum or the American Gathering (122 W. 30th Street, Suite 205, New York, NY 10001) for a registration form so that they may be included in the next edition.

Upon request, this volume will be distributed at no charge to public libraries and Holocaust related institutions.



UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2150, Telephone (202) 468-6130, Fax (202) 479-9726

Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors

If you are a survivor please complete the following:

Current name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____ Occupation: _____

Prewar name: _____ Maiden name: _____

Other "Alias" Name: _____ Date of birth: _____
month day year

Place of birth: City: _____ Country: _____

Place of residence before war: City: _____ Country: _____

Places during the war (ghettos, concentration camps, or hiding places; please include country): _____

If you have given an oral history please give year and location: _____ If no, are you interested in giving one? Yes/No

Spouse's name (if not a survivor): _____

If your spouse is a survivor please complete the following:

Current name: _____ Occupation: _____

If deceased, please provide date of death: _____

Prewar name: _____ Maiden name: _____

Other "Alias" Name: _____ Date of birth: _____
month day year

Place of birth: City: _____ Country: _____

Place of residence before war: City: _____ Country: _____

Places during the war (names of ghettos, concentration camps, or hiding places; please include country): _____

If you have given an oral history please give year and location: _____ If no, are you interested in giving one? Yes/No

Please include a photograph of each survivor:

Photographs from the 1930s or 1940s are preferred. Please write the name(s) of the person, approximate date, and place where the photo was taken on the reverse. Do not affix the photo to this form.

Release (must be completed by the person providing this information):

I hereby declare this information is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand this information will be included in the Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Current addresses and phone numbers will NOT be released to the public without express permission. I further understand photographs submitted with this form will become the sole property of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and may be used to further the educational mission of the institution. I affirm I do own the submitted photographs and to the best of my knowledge I have good and complete right, title, and interests to give.

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Date: _____

Please list other survivors in your family:

Please use this page to record information about both living and deceased family members who survived the Holocaust.

Current name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____ Occupation: _____

If deceased, please provide date of death: _____

Prewar name: _____ Maiden name: _____

Other "Alias" Name: _____ Date of birth: _____
month day year

Place of birth: City: _____ Country: _____

Place of residence before war: City: _____ Country: _____

Places during the war (ghettos, concentration camps, or hiding places; please include country): _____

This person is my: Mother Father Aunt Uncle Brother Sister Other (please specify) _____

Current name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____ Occupation: _____

If deceased, please provide date of death: _____

Prewar name: _____ Maiden name: _____

Other "Alias" Name: _____ Date of birth: _____
month day year

Place of birth: City: _____ Country: _____

Place of residence before war: City: _____ Country: _____

Places during the war (ghettos, concentration camps, or hiding places; please include country): _____

This person is my: Mother Father Aunt Uncle Brother Sister Other (please specify) _____

Current name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____ Occupation: _____

If deceased, please provide date of death: _____

Prewar name: _____ Maiden name: _____

Other "Alias" Name: _____ Date of birth: _____
month day year

Place of birth: City: _____ Country: _____

Place of residence before war: City: _____ Country: _____

Places during the war (ghettos, concentration camps, or hiding places; please include country): _____

This person is my: Mother Father Aunt Uncle Brother Sister Other (please specify) _____

Please list children of survivors (2nd generation):

Please use this page to record the children (second generation) of the survivor(s) you are registering with this form.

Name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Child of: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____

Name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Child of: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____

Name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Child of: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____

Name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Child of: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____

Name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Child of: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____

Name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Child of: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____

Name: _____
First name Middle name Last name

Child of: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip code Country

Phone: (_____) _____

My Father's Shadow

Peter Sussman was one of the few people to survive the Nazi concentration camps. For years, he didn't speak of the Holocaust. But recently, he began writing his children a series of letters looking back on that time. Here, his daughter explains her family's struggle with his legacy.

By Deborah Sussman

Dear children ... I am not reluctant to talk about my experiences; it is not too painful for me. It is, however, a very special memory, and I don't like to share it with people who are unwilling or unable to understand what I have to tell.... When I tell my story in America, I rarely come across anyone who has had an experience that is even vaguely similar. Such people can understand my tale only if they are somehow able to construct a frame of reference. That takes compassion, imagination, and something like a sense of history."

I think I was about 10 when my father first told me. We were in Aspen, Colorado, on vacation, my brothers, and I were looking through some history books with pictures, and one of them was about World War II. I remember my father explaining about the concentration camps—what they were, and how they worked, and that he'd been in one. And I remember looking at the black-and-white photographs of bodies heaped on top of each other, like animal carcasses. The idea of those



camps, of what people did to each other there, and what had happened to my father, was impossible for me to understand.

"I knew that I would want to tell you all about my life in due course, but not before you were ready. I

Peter Sussman, shown here on his father's shoulders as a child. He was 4 years old when Hitler came to power.

didn't think you should be hardened with it when you were little, and were just beginning to form a concept of what the world is all about. It seems to me cruel to cast a dark shadow on those early years, which ought to be largely unburied with optimism."

My father was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1928. In 1933, after Adolf Hitler became chancellor, my father and his parents fled to Czechoslovakia, then, in 1938, to the Netherlands. They were picked up by the Nazis on September 30, 1943. My father was 15 years old. They spent four months in Westerbork, a transit camp. From there they were assigned to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp in northern Germany. It is the camp where Anne Frank, a former classmate of my father's who documented her experiences in her

famous diary, died.

"We were in Bergen-Belsen for one year. I have been trying to figure out how to describe that year to you, but it's difficult. It was a long succession of grim, undifferentiated days. Very few dramatic things happened. There was very little besides death, disease, filth, and hopelessness. There was no beauty of any kind."

After that talk in Aspen, my father asked my brothers and me not to tell people that he'd been in a camp. I said I wouldn't, but I tried the secret out on a couple of my friends. If my father had really been in a concentration camp, they said, how come he didn't have a number on his arm? I couldn't answer them, and I didn't know how to ask my father.

By the time I was 16, though, I was ready to start asking questions. My father was ready to answer. He showed me the yellow star that he had to wear in Holland, a piece of worn fabric with the word "Jew" stenciled on it in Dutch. He also showed me the notebook he kept in the camp. There's not much in it: a few pages of signatures—my father was experimenting with the way his name looked on paper—and then row after row of neat X's to mark the days. There's a drawing in the notebook, too. I couldn't figure out what it was at first. It looked like a kind of map, with little circles and squares, all different sizes. From the circles and squares my father had drawn lines that led to a larger square in the center of the page.

"I was trying to remember how to make a cake," he explained. "See?" The little circles were eggs, the other smaller squares were flour, sugar, butter. The larger square in the center was an oven.

"From my earliest childhood I

knew that Hitler was evil incarnate, and that he had to be stopped. I also knew that nobody was stopping him.... Those 10 years of persecution before the camp did affect me, and loom in my memory as far more frightening than the camps themselves. The camp, once it came, was the final test: within a relatively short time we'd either be dead or finally at the end of the 10-year nightmare."



"Growing up," says Deborah, "my two brothers and I all felt we were supposed to have perfect childhoods, to make up for the fact that my father didn't have a childhood at all."

I still can't imagine the camp and my father in it. I try instead to imagine the long slide of days leading into the camp. I try to understand that of all the things the Nazis did to my father, the fact that they took away his bicycle seems to outrage him the most. He'd bought the bicycle with his own money when he got to Holland, and says he loved it for the sense of freedom it allowed him.

Growing up, my two brothers and I all felt we were supposed to have perfect childhoods, to make up for the

fact that our father didn't have a childhood at all. Today, as adults, we tend to see our own lives and problems as trivial compared to our father's. (Sometimes we joke about it, dark jokes we know other people would find offensive: it's a tremendous relief.) And we're extraordinarily cautious about whom we trust. I think all three of us feel that no one outside the family can ever really understand us. Our family is so close that my boyfriends and my brothers' girlfriends have always felt shut out.

"From the age of 4 on, I felt hunted and an outcast. In 1940, when the Germans invaded Holland, they smashed my world in months. The three-and-a-half years before our deportation were awful. It was like being caught in a vise that tightened slowly but inexorably, until, finally, everything that makes life worth living is gone and you wait to be thrown away."

How much of who I am is shaped by my father's experience? I'll probably never be able to answer that question. But I do know that I need to keep writing about it. I've been struggling with this issue for half my life, and only now do I feel as if maybe I'm beginning to understand. Now I tell people about my father's past not because I want to shock them, but because I want them to know what my father lived through, and what millions of others didn't make it through. It is not just a chapter from a history book. The victims of the Holocaust were real people. They had hopes and faults and passions, as you and I do. They were fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters. Their lives touched other lives, and we need to—we must—remember their stories. I begin with my father's.

Deborah Sussman is currently working on a book based on her father's letters.

HOW MANY DIED?

Objective: To help the students realize the enormous amount of life lost in the Holocaust.

Materials Needed: Lots of books and 1" strips of construction paper.

- Step One:** Explain to the students how hard it is to comprehend that 6,000,000 Jews died in the Holocaust. To illustrate the magnitude, have students complete some simple calculations.
- Step Two:** Suppose you decide to observe a minute of silence for each of the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust. If you start your silence now, when will you speak?
- Step Three:** If you counted one second of your life for every 100 Jews killed, how old would you be by the time they had all been remembered?
- Step Four:** Suppose you were asked to type out a list of the names of all the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust. You can put 250 names on each page. How many pages long will your list be?
- Step Five:** Use books to make a stack this many pages high.
- Step Six:** Distribute strips of colored construction paper to the students. Have them make a ring for every 5,000 Jews that perished. Connect all the rings and hang the chain around the room.

IDENTITY CARDS

Objective: To have students research a certain person from the Holocaust and complete an identity card about that person.

Materials Needed: Biographies of people from the Holocaust, 3x4 squares of paper.

Step One: You may either distribute biographies of people you have access to or assign the students to research and find someone on their own. The person may be either young or old, male or female. The only stipulation is that they be able to find enough information to write about the person.

Step Two: The students take their person and locate the following information:
Name
Date of birth
Place of birth
Information about childhood
Information about the person's life during the years 1933-39
Information about the person's life during the years 1940-44
Explain what eventually happened to your person.
If the person is alive, what is he/she doing now?

Step Three: Have the students type the information onto the squares of paper and make the front cover. The students will then assemble the identification card and staple it together.

Step Four: As you study the Holocaust, stop throughout and have students share with the class what happened to their person.

Step Five: After your unit concludes, have the students sit in a circle and pass around the cards to see all the different biographies.

CONSTRUCTING A "WALL OF RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE"

Objective: To enable the students to understand the impact that certain individuals had by helping to rescue victims in the Holocaust and to pay tribute to those individuals

Materials Needed: Names of people who helped rescue victims and colored construction papers.

Step One: Assign each student a person who helped rescue people. The student is to locate a picture of the person and write a brief history of what the person did.

Step Two: The student is to mount the picture on construction paper and write the description of the person's deeds underneath the picture.

Step Three: Display the picture on a wall in honor of those who risked their own lives.

Source: Ms. Shelly Pulliam, 1996-97 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Mandel Fellow Teacher, Cimarron Middle School, Oklahoma

DESIGNING TILES FOR A "WALL OF REMEMBRANCE"

Objective. To let students express their thoughts and feelings about what they have learned and to pay tribute to those who perished.

Materials Needed: A 4x4 square of white ceramic tile for each student and paint

Step One: Explain to the students that they will be painting on the tiles anything they want to express their thoughts and feelings about what they have learned or to honor individuals whose stories affected them.

Step Two: Have the students create a rough draft on paper of how they will decorate their square.

Step Three: Let the students paint their design on a tile. Let them dry.

Step Four: Mount the tiles somewhere so all the students can see your "Wall of Remembrance."

*This same project could be done in the form of a quilt using fabric instead of tiles.

DEFINITIONS

1. Without using a dictionary or discussing the word with your class, write your own definition of the word PREJUDICE on a sheet of paper.
2. After you have written your own definition, look up the word PREJUDICE in a dictionary and write the dictionary definition below your own.
3. Now, discuss with your classmates the similarities and differences between the definitions you have written and the ones you found in the dictionary. What surprised you about the dictionary definition? What questions do you have about the definition?
4. Finally, combine what you have written with what is written in the dictionary and create a new definition of PREJUDICE. Make sure the definition makes sense to you and that you can use it correctly. Write this new definition on a new sheet of paper.

Additional activities: Follow the directions in this activity using the words STEREOTYPE, DISCRIMINATION, and SCAPEGOAT. As an extension, you can illustrate your definitions and create a display of your work.

Source: This activity was adapted from the March of the Living, Central Agency for Jewish Education, Miami, Florida. Reprinted by permission.

**Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.
Annual Writing Contest Winners
High School Division**

**1995 - Scott Backer
School for Advanced Studies South - Grade 11**

Remember, a poem for the millions

A time of innocence
Goodness in the eye.
A weed strangled the flower,
And the flower began to die.

The weed spread its deadly seed,
throughout the Garden's life.
Poison and death arouse,
from the womb of the weed's strife.

The Garden took no notice,
of the dying flower.
As behind their eyes the weed did grow,
taller than a tower.

But in the end the weed was plucked,
Saving the helpless plant.
Yet, when we look back, we see our faults,
And proclaim next time, we can't.

Cannot allow the weed to grow,
to take another flower.
But never forget the flower's death,
While the Garden did nothing but cower.

**1996 - Jessica E. Hafkin
Highland Oaks Middle School - Grade 9**

Eternal Flame

In the midst of the bitter winter
for them they came,
All were merely numbers,
now they bore no name.
They marched through the cities
which were once their own,
Until ignorance and indifference
infested their homes.

Religion, color, and belief
their only transgression,
A lifeless heart and a heartless life
the instigator of their oppression.
Creatures who had not learned
from their grievous ancestries,
They led the shadows in sobbing lines,
straight into the presence of history.
A few miles ahead they stopped,
their eyes wide with terror and shame.
In the center of the fields, bright as the sun,
stood an incorrigible flame.
As they neared the sight,
the demise of mankind,
They glimpsed at the brightness,
yet turned as if they were blind.
Then they continued as though the flame
would suddenly flicker and then fade.
Yet one small child, an innocent boy,
wandered about it, of what was it made?
Instantly he cried aloud,
a piercing bullet in the serene night sky.
He continued to shriek and eventually,
they all came back and not a single one
went by.
Gradually each one had his turn
to peer into the flame.
Their reactions were similar,
despite their differences, their horror
was the same.
Inside the burning mass of hate,
were eleven million terrified faces.
Men and women and babies, too,
Jews and Gypsies and all different races.
Not one word was uttered,
yet their expressions were clear.
Starvation and humiliation,
intimidation and fear.
Images of countless hordes taken to showers
with the promise of rejuvenation.
Only to be gassed, their life drawn slowly out,
then carried to ovens for cremation.
And then there were the lucky ones
who escaped a sudden death.
Who labored and toiled
only to find
a hint of ash with each
breath.

1997- Michelle Levy
Highland Oaks Middle School - Grade 9

Remember the Children

I read Anne's diary and started to cry,
Why did this lovely young girl have to die?
She was no more than a child, just thirteen,
Not yet a woman, somewhere in between,
When, due to the Nazis, she was forced to hide,
With only a blank book in which to confide
The secret hopes and dreams that were her due;
Yet none of her dreams had a chance to come true.
The dreams died in Belsen along with Anne,
Because of the hate of that terrible man.
A hate that grew and spread across nations,
Resulting in brutal abominations,
Too horrible to remember, yet we must,
To insure a future in which children can trust.
By remembering with love all the children who died,
We can continue to turn the terrible tide
Of the evil that flooded our world like rain,
And never, ever let it happen again.

1998 - Fiorella Juarez
Highland Oaks Middle School - Grade 9

If I were to ponder...

If I were to ponder why,
So many people had to die,
Time would seem so sad and long...
Were they right or were they wrong?
All I wish I really knew,
is: If I did, What did I do?

If I were to ponder how,
Everyone could just allow,
All the killing pass them by,
Like a loud, unheard war cry;
Then that day I'd realize,
Just how hatred blinds all eyes.

If I were to ponder who,
could grant death to six million Jews,
man would seem so inhumane,
to wipe out life and feel no pain.

There's no just cause or no just reason,
to commit such deadly treason.

If I were to ponder what,
could cause those lives to become cut...
Cut short of life, cut short of love,
To die and reunite above.
But this I'll never understand:
What could have caused this to be planned?

If I were to ponder where,
This could happen unaware,
In this world there'd be no place,
to wipe out an entire race.
And if this place did once exist,
I hope it's never reminisced.

If I were to ponder when,
This could happen once again,
My heart would feel, my eyes would see,
That terror once surrounding me...
Because one day it might return,
And next time it might be your turn...

And now that I have pondered all,
Simply let your heart recall,
to make what's happened well aware.
Please remember and beware...
Keep love strong and hatred far,
and pray for all those unhealed scars...

If I were to ponder...
If I were to ponder...

News Watch

Grade Levels: Middle and high school

Goals:

- To identify newspaper articles that deal with human rights issues, prejudice, ethnic wars, antisemitism, racism, and inequality.
- To relate recurrent themes of prejudice existent in our society today with the Holocaust.

Materials: Newspaper, scissors, oaktag paper, index cards, glue.

Procedure: Over a two-week period, students are to scan the newspaper for articles that deal with human rights issues and prejudices. They then paste their articles to a piece of oaktag, and on an index card, write a summary of the article, identifying the types of prejudices or issues they discovered in the article.

At the end of the two weeks, students may share their posters with the class. As a class, compare today's prejudices with those that initiated the Holocaust. How are the two worlds the same? How are they different? Why is prejudice and inequality ever present? Are there any solutions?

Variation: Search the Web for current human rights stories instead of using newspapers.

Assessment: Evaluate students based on completion of assignment (number of related articles found) and their discussion, whether written or oral, describing how the article relates to the Holocaust. You may wish to develop a rubric specifying the criteria you will be assessing.

Indifference

People who have recognized the existence of evil may decide that it is not in their own self-interest to become involved in correcting or mitigating the effects of that evil. They prefer, instead, to retreat behind the attitudes “It’s somebody else’s problem” or “Why should I get involved in something which is none of my business?” Involvement with other people requires feeling for them. It means worrying about their well-being, and it involves rage at those who assault them. It may even mean risking one’s life to protect them.

Read the following quotation:

“Each person withdraws into himself, behaves as though he is a stranger of the destiny of all the others. His children and his good friends constitute for him the whole of the human species. As for his transactions with his fellow citizens he may mix among them, but he sees them not, only touches them, but does not feel them, he exists only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms there remains in his mind a sense of family, there no longer remains a sense of society.”

This statement was actually written over 150 years ago by the Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, during a visit to America.

1. Does this statement still appear to be true today? Why or why not?
2. What does the author mean when he says “he may mix among them, but he sees them not, he only touches them, but does not feel them”?
3. Are people today as caring for one another as you would like them to be? Explain your answer.
4. How does this statement apply to the lessons of the Holocaust?

Source: University of the State of New York. *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide: The Human Rights Series*. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1985. Reprinted by permission.

Hangman

by
Maurice Ogden

1

Into our town the Hangman came,
Smelling of gold and blood and flame —
And he paced our bricks with a diffident air
And built his frame on the courthouse square

The scaffold stood by the courthouse side,
Only as wide as the door was wide;
A frame as tall, or little more,
Than the capping sill of the courthouse door.

And we wondered, whenever we had the time,
Who the criminal, what the crime,
The Hangman judged with the yellow twist
Of knotted hemp in his busy fist.

And innocent though we were, with dread
We passed those eyes of buckshot lead,
Till one cried: "Hangman, who is he
For whom you raise the gallows-tree?"

Then a twinkle grew in the buckshot eye,
And he gave us a riddle instead of reply:
"He who serves me best," said he,
"Shall earn the rope on the gallows-tree."

And he stepped down, and laid his hand
On a man who came from another land —
And we breathed again, for another's grief
At the Hangman's hand was our relief.

And the gallows-frame on the courthouse lawn
By tomorrow's sun would be struck and gone.
So we gave him way, and no one spoke,
Out of respect for his hangman's cloak

2

The next day's sun looked mildly down
On roof and street in our quiet town
And, stark and black in the morning air,
The gallows-tree on the courthouse square.

And the Hangman stood at his usual stand
With the yellow hemp in his busy hand;
With his buckshot eye and his jaw like a pike
And his air so knowing and businesslike.

And we cried: "Hangman, have you not done,
Yesterday, with the alien one?"
Then we fell silent, and stood amazed
"Oh, not for him was the gallows raised . . ."

He laughed a laugh as he looked at us.
" . . . Did you think I'd gone to all this fuss
To hang one man? That's a thing I do
To stretch the rope when the rope is new."

Then one cried "Murderer!" One cried "Shame!"
And into our midst the Hangman came
To that man's place. "Do you hold," said he,
"With him that was meant for the gallows-tree?"

And he laid his hand on that one's arm,
And we shrank back in quick alarm,
And we gave him way, and no one spoke
Out of the fear of his hangman's cloak.

That night we saw with dread surprise
The Hangman's scaffold had grown in size
Fed by the blood beneath the chute
The gallows-tree had taken root;

Now as wide, or a little more,
Than the steps that led to the courthouse door,
As tall as the writing, or nearly as tall,
Halfway up on the courthouse wall

3.

The third he took — we had all heard tell —
Was a usurer and infidel.
And "What," said the hangman, "have you to do
With the gallows-bound, and be a Jew?"

And we cried out: "Is this one he
Who has served you well and faithfully?"
The Hangman smiled: "It's a clever scheme
To try the strength of the gallows-beam."

The fourth man's dark, accusing song
Had scratched our comfort hard and long,
And "What concern," he gave us back,
"Have you for the doomed —
The doomed and black?"

The fifth The sixth. And we cried again:
"Hangman, Hangman, is this the man?"
"It's a trick," he said, "that we hangmen know
For easing the trap when the trap springs slow."

And so we ceased, and asked no more,
As the Hangman tallied his bloody score,
And sun by sun, and night by night,
The gallows grew to monstrous height.

The wings of the scaffold opened wide
Till they covered the square from side to side,
And the monster cross-beam, looking down,
Cast its shadow across the town.

4.

Then through the town the Hangman came
And called in the empty streets my name —
And I looked at the gallows soaring tall
And thought: "There is no one left at all
For hanging, and so he calls to me
To help pull down the gallows-tree."
And I went out with right good hope
To the Hangman's tree and the Hangman's rope.

He smiled at me as I came down
To the courthouse square through the silent
town,
And supple and stretched in his busy hand
Was the yellow twist of the hempen strand.

And he whistled his tune as he tried the trap
And it sprang down with a ready snap —
And then with a smile of awful command
He laid his hand upon my hand.

"You tricked me, Hangman!" I shouted then,
"That your scaffold was built for other men . . .
And I no benchman of yours," I cried,
"You lied to me, Hangman, foully lied!"

Then a twinkle grew in the buckshot eye:
"Lied to you? Tricked you?" he said, "Not I.
For I answered straight and I told you true:
The scaffold was raised for none but you.

"For who has served more faithfully
Than you with your coward's hope?" said he,
"And where are the others that might have stood
Side by your side in the common goul?"

"Dead," I whispered; and amiably
"Murdered," the Hangman corrected me:
"First the alien, then the Jew . . .
I did no more than you let me do."

Beneath the beam that blocked the sky,
None had stood so alone as I
And the Hangman strapped me,
and no voice there
Cried "Stay!" for me in the empty square

Questions for Discussion on the “Hangman”

1. What limitations, if any, are there to authority?
2. When must authority be opposed, if ever?
3. Do you suppose the Hangman could have acted the way he did if more than one person would have opposed him? Explain your answer.
4. Have you ever been in a situation that demanded you stand up and oppose wrong and you did not?
5. First the stranger, then the dissident, then the Jew, and then the black -- why didn't the majority stand up?
6. Do you think that the people were happy that the others were hanged? Why or why not?
7. Is non-action as great a sin as action? Explain your answer.
8. How did the last person in town serve the Hangman?
9. Are there any parallels in American society in the past or today that could mirror the events in this poem? Explain your answer.
10. How could someone being “different” lead to prejudice?

The 12 minute video, “The Hangman,” can be ordered from CRM Films, 2215 Faraday Avenue, Carlsbad, CA 92008. Phone: (800) 421-0833.

The following description of the video appears in the CRM catalogue: “Maurice Ogden’s powerful allegorical poem, narrated by the late Herschel Bernardi, builds to a dramatic climax as the coward, who has let others die to save himself, becomes the Hangman’s final victim.” Produced by Melrose Productions.

Hangman Worksheet

1. Whenever they had the time, the townspeople wondered who was the _____ and what was the _____.
2. When a townspeople asked the hangman who the gallows were for, the hangman answered in a _____ instead of a reply.
3. What was the hangman's answer? _____

4. Why do you think the hangman answered this way? _____

5. What mistake did the townspeople make when the hangman executed the alien?

6. When the townspeople sought an excuse for their lack of action, they said it was in _____ for the hangman's _____.
7. How do the townspeople react when they find out the gallows were not for the alien? _____

8. When the hangman lets them know that the gallows are not for just one man, one townspeople cries, "Murderer!" What is this person's fate? _____
9. Who tries to stop the hangman then? _____ Why? _____

10. The hangman always points out that his victims are different from the rest of the remaining townspeople. Why? _____

11. After the sixth victim, how did the townspeople feel? _____

12. When the hangman called the last man's name, the last man thought the hangman wanted help to _____

13. How did the last man feel when the hangman laid his hands on him? _____
14. The last man said he was no _____ of the hangman.
15. The hangman calls the last man a _____ .
16. How did the last man feel when he realized there was no one to help him? _____
17. At the end of the poem, the hangman identifies the last man as the one who served the hangman more _____ .
What did the hangman mean? _____
18. The last man says all the other townspeople are _____, but the hangman corrects him and says they were _____ .
19. What happened to the last man? _____

20. What is the poet saying about human relationships?

21. What did Maurice Ogden mean when he wrote the statement, "I did no more than you let me do"? _____

Source: Rabinsky, Leatrice B. and Carol Danks, co-editors. *The Holocaust: Prejudice Unleashed*. Columbus: Ohio Council on Holocaust Education, 1989. Reprinted by permission.

Hangman Checklist

Directions: Before reading the poem, check those statements with which you agree. After reading the poem, check those statements with which you believe the poet, Maurice Ogden, would agree.

You	Poet	
_____	_____	1. A person who commits a crime should be punished
_____	_____	2. I don't care what happens, as long as it doesn't disturb me.
_____	_____	3. Evil actions occur because of bad people.
_____	_____	4. It is difficult for me to give support to someone who is being taken advantage of by someone else.
_____	_____	5. It is important to mind only your own business
_____	_____	6. Getting involved in other people's problems is not the responsible thing to do
_____	_____	7. Many people need to be persecuted to be kept in line
_____	_____	8. If someone pushes me around, I want everyone to know about it.
_____	_____	9. People should help other people who are being wronged.
_____	_____	10. The ultimate crime is murder
_____	_____	11. I think many people have been murdered for no reason whatsoever.
_____	_____	12. I would defend one of my own group only.
_____	_____	13. I expect help if I am wronged.
_____	_____	14. Someone else can help others who are wronged even if I'm unable to intervene
_____	_____	15. I think people who infringe on the rights of others would do the same to me.
_____	_____	16. People should stick together for the common good.

Healing the Hate

What Prejudice and Stereotyping Feel Like: Entering a New Group

Purpose

Through interactive exercise, students identify and empathize with the psychological and emotional effects of prejudice and stereotyping and reflect on ways to reduce their own prejudiced attitudes and behaviors, as well as the prejudiced behaviors of others.

Student Objectives

In this lesson, students will accomplish the following:

- ◆ identify the psychological and emotional impact of prejudice and stereotyping by examining their own experiences entering new groups
- ◆ realize how prejudice and stereotyping deny individual experiences and feelings
- ◆ empathize with the feelings of those who have been the victims of stereotyping and prejudice
- ◆ identify ways to decrease stereotyping and prejudice in their school and create greater comfort for students of diverse backgrounds

Preparation

- Copy Handouts 1 and 2 for students.

Healing the Hate

Teaching Points



VOCABULARY

Distribute Handout 1, “Vocabulary.” **Tell** students to read over the list of vocabulary words and let you know if they have any questions about any of the words or the definitions listed. After students have had a few moments to read over the list, **review** the words with them. **Tell** students they may refer to the vocabulary list whenever they need to during the lesson.

Before beginning this lesson, **convey** the following points to students:

- Prejudice** may be defined as making up your mind about what a person or group is like before you get to know them.
- People are not born prejudiced; they learn prejudice from parents, schools, peers, the media, and society in general. Prejudiced behavior can range from simple avoidance to the most severe action, extermination, with negative speech, discrimination, and physical attack in between.
- Although most prejudiced individuals will not commit acts of hate violence, prejudice is a motivation for those who do commit acts of hate violence.

Activity One



Entering a Group: An Introduction to Prejudice and Stereotyping

Teaching Points

Explain to students:

- A **stereotype** is a belief about an individual or a group, based on the idea that all people in a certain group will act in the same way. People who stereotype usually generalize - believing that because some people in a group are assumed to act a certain way, all or most of the group must behave that way, for example, “all teenagers are rude and loud.”
- Sometimes stereotypes involve putting people into groups according to a label or a behavior and assuming that they have more in common than that label or behavior.

Healing the Hate

- Once someone stereotypes a group of people, they tend to reject or dismiss evidence that is contrary to the stereotype. For example, if someone believes all girls are weak, they will not “see” any strong girls, or if they do they will believe that individual is the rare exception. They are unable to “see beyond the stereotype.”
- Generally, when people really get to know a person or a few people from a group they stereotyped, they stop believing the stereotype because they see it is not true. For example, if someone who thought all girls are weak were to hang around a girls’ sports team, they would be less likely to hold onto their stereotype. Working, playing, or otherwise being involved with individuals from various groups and backgrounds is one way to break down stereotypes.

☞ **Tell** students that most of us have had the experience of entering a new group of people in which we do not know anyone, such as a new classroom, community, club, or after-school job. **Explain** to students that one way to relate to how it feels to be stereotyped is to reflect on your own experience of entering a new group of people when that group of people does not yet know you. Distribute Handout 2, “Entering a New Group.” **Ask** students to fill out the worksheet. **Tell** them they will have 10 minutes to complete the handout.

☞ Ask for volunteers to share with the class their responses to the worksheet. After several students have volunteered their responses, **facilitate** a class discussion. **Frame** the discussion around the following questions:

- *How much do a group’s behavior and attitude affect how you act when entering?*
- *How do your inner thoughts and feelings affect the way you act when entering a new group?*
- *Do you ever act differently in order to “fit in” to a new group? How do you feel and act when you don’t “fit in”?*
- *Do you ever feel you are being stereotyped by a new group? How can you tell? How do you feel when the stereotype seems positive (e.g., he’s an athlete so he must be cool)? When the stereotype is negative (e.g., she’s smart, she must be no fun)?*
- *What is it about being negatively or positively stereotyped that makes you uncomfortable, angry, or sad?*

Healing the Hate

Teaching Point

Explain to students:

- All of us have been stereotyped at one time or another. Some of the stereotyping may seem positive (e.g., all athletes are cool); many stereotypes are obviously negative (e.g., smart people are no fun). All stereotypes are negative because they limit people. Thinking about how we feel when we are being stereotyped can help us to avoid stereotyping others.



Ask students:

- How can you avoid stereotyping other people?



Write their responses on a chalkboard or flip chart.

Activity Two



Out of the In, Into the Out: In-group/Out-group Bias in School

Teaching Point

Explain to students:

- Belonging to one group sometimes results in an “**in-group bias**” - a feeling that your group is better than other groups. The term “**out-group**” refers to those that do not belong to the in-group. People within the in-group sometimes do not see members of the out-group as individuals with both differences and similarities.



Ask students:

- *Are there in-groups and out-groups in your school? How can you tell?*
- *Is there more than one type of in-group or out-group? What kinds of in-groups and out-groups are there?*
- *Do people move from in-group to out-group, or do they tend to remain in one or the other? Why?*
- *What are the negative aspects of having in-groups and out-groups? Are there any positive aspects?*



Write their responses on the chalkboard or flip chart. **Ask** students to brainstorm ways to reduce in-group/out-group stereotyping in their own schools. **Write** their ideas on a flip chart. You may want to post their ideas on the wall so that students can see them and refer to them during various points in the program.

Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1

Vocabulary

Prejudice	Making up your mind about what a person or group is like before you get to know them.
Stereotype	A belief about an individual or a group, based on the idea that all people in a certain group will act in the same way.
In-group Bias	A feeling that your group is better than other groups.
Out-group	Those that do not belong to the in-group.

ONE VOTE: One Person Can Make A Difference

Is one vote important? Can one voice make a difference?
After reading this article, answer the above question again.

Elections are losing popularity, though they have become more important than ever. One reason people often give for not voting is that they believe one vote won't make a difference. **THEY ARE WRONG.** In England, King Charles I was beheaded in 1610, and King George I was placed on the throne in 1714, **BOTH BY ONE VOTE.** Six American presidents were placed in office by **ONE ELECTORAL VOTE** or by **ONE VOTE** cast in a handful of election precincts; Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Rutherford Hayes, Woodrow Wilson, Harry Truman and John F. Kennedy. **ONE VOTE** saved President Andrew Jackson from impeachment. The U.S. Senate approved a Declaration of War **BY ONE VOTE** sending America to war against Mexico back in 1846. The Military draft was approved by Congress in 1941 **BY ONE VOTE.** In one year, 1962, Maine, Rhode Island and North Dakota all elected governors by a margin of, you guessed, **ONE VOTE** per precinct.

Adolph Hitler, a man whose evil destiny set the world on fire, was elected head of Germany's fledgling Nazi party **BY ONE SINGLE VOTE.**

It has been said that people should "act as if the whole election depended on your single vote".....History shows that occasionally it does.

Abraham Lincoln, in his Gettysburg Address, said that we have a "government of the people, by the people, for the people." But if government is truly to belong to the people -- rather than the reverse -- the people must take an active and educated role in shaping their government.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How does this reading relate to Holocaust studies?
2. How and where might you use this reading?

Source: The March of the Living, Central Agency for Jewish Education, Miami, Florida. Reprinted by permission.

Healing the Hate

Victims of Hate Crime in America

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand the prevalence and magnitude of hate crimes in our society.

Student Objectives

In this lesson, students will accomplish the following:

- ◆ realize that hate crime victimization is a significant and serious problem in our country
- ◆ understand the range of victims and types of crimes involved
- ◆ empathize with the victims of such crimes

Preparation

- Cut reading strips from handout 1 along the lines indicated.
- Provide each student with an individual reading strip of a hate crime.
- Provide each student with 3 sheets of paper.

Healing the Hate

Teachers Instructions

To introduce the lesson, **review** the definitions of **hate crime** and **hate incident** with students:

A **hate crime** can be defined as a crime motivated by prejudice against a person, property, or group of people. Examples: (1) A Hispanic man beats up an Asian man because he does not like "Orientals"; (2) A group of white people burn a cross on the lawn of an African-American family; (3) Several teenagers draw swastikas on the steps of a Jewish temple.

A **hate incident** can be defined as harmful words or actions motivated by prejudice against a person or property, which do not fall into any criminal category according to United States law. Examples: (1) A white student calls a black student a "nigger"; (2) A group of black teenagers tells a group of white teenagers they don't want "whiteys in their neighborhood"; (3) A group of young men taunt a gay man, calling him "faggot" and "queer."

Teaching Points

Convey the following points to the class as an overview of the lesson:

- ❑ Victims of all types of crime experience losses and difficulties. Victims of hate crime often experience similar losses, but may also have some unique difficulties. For example, being targeted for victimization because of a core and unchangeable aspect of oneself is a devastating experience. Victims of hate crimes may try to distance themselves from their own group and, in doing so, deny a large part of their identity.
- ❑ Many victims experience a personal crisis as a result of their victimization, resulting in difficulties in their work, home life, and friendships.
- ❑ Victims of hate crimes, like victims of other crimes, may suffer (1) physical injury; (2) financial loss; and (3) psychological trauma.

Healing the Hate

Activity One



The Widespread Victimization in the United States: Examples of Real Cases

Note to Teacher

These statements have been carefully selected to represent a range of actual hate crimes and incidents that have occurred in various parts of the country and have been perpetrated against a variety of different racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, and gender groups. To fully engage the students, more incidents involving adolescents have been included. If you feel that any of the statements would be too disturbing to members of your class, you may delete these cases before beginning the lesson.



Explain to students that this activity may be disturbing to them, but it is important for their understanding of the seriousness of the problem of hate crime in America. **Tell** them that they will get a chance to discuss their feelings about the activity after it is completed.



Ask students to stand in a circle and instruct each student to read their passage aloud, one person at a time. **Ask** students to remain quiet throughout the readings and refrain from any comments. After the last person is finished, tell students to think about what they have just heard. **Wait** a minute or two before proceeding with the rest of the activity.

Note to Teacher

This activity is meant to provide students with an awareness of the many individual victims of hate crimes. The statements may evoke strong emotional reactions among the students, so it is important for them to be able to speak informally about their feelings and thoughts after everyone has read.


Some students may react to their discomfort by giggling or laughing; tell students that although we sometimes try to handle uncomfortable feelings by giggling or laughing, it is not appropriate to do so here. Remind them that they will have a chance to talk about their real thoughts and feelings once the activity is over.


This activity may provoke a few students to make biased or prejudiced comments. Tell students that such comments and behaviors will not be tolerated in the classroom. Ask them to reflect on how they would feel if such crimes had happened to them or members of their families.




Ask if anyone needs one of the statements repeated or explained. **Make sure** understand the incidents they have just communicated.

Healing the Hate

 **Provide** each student with paper. **Tell** students to take a few minutes to write their thoughts and feelings about the activity on the paper. **Explain** to students that what they write is for their eyes only and that they will have the opportunity to share as much or as little of their thoughts and feelings as they wish with the class.

 **Help** students process their thoughts and feelings by **asking** the following questions:


- *How did you feel about what you just heard?*
- *Think of three words that describe how this makes you feel.*

 **List** students' feelings on the board.


- *Now imagine that these things happened to a friend or family member you care about. How would you feel?*


 **Add** new feelings to the list on the board.

- *Which incidents bothered you the most? Why?*
- *Are there any that didn't bother you? Why not?*

 If students were not bothered by the incidents which did not involve physical violence, **explain** that even words can cause a great deal of fear and emotional pain. If the students are not bothered by incidents which target a certain group of people (perhaps students say they do not identify with or know any members of a certain group), **point out** that these people feel the same kind of pain that everyone else feels. **Stress** the point that the victims did nothing to harm others or invite the attack.

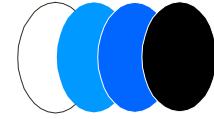
- *Did anyone have a hard time believing the incidents actually occurred?
Did anyone wonder if any of the victims did something to cause the crime?*

 **Explain** that these are all normal reactions to upsetting events that are outside our control. **Remind** students that in most cases the victims of hate crimes are targeted because of a core aspect of their identity, such as their race or religion, and that victims do nothing to provoke the attack.

 **Conclude** the lesson by asking students why they think it is important to study hate crimes. **Tell** students that in upcoming lessons we will be learning more about hate crimes, their perpetrators and victims, and how to prevent them.

Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1



HATE CRIMES IN THE UNITED STATES, 1988-1995

These examples are representative of the thousands of violent hate crimes that occurred during 1988-1995.



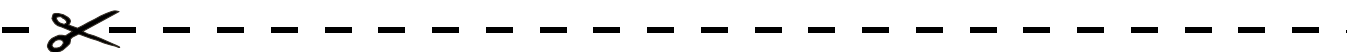
In 1989, a cross was burned outside the home of a Chinese American, and BB gun pellets were fired at his house, causing \$1800 in damages.



In 1990, the home of Joe Moore, a black man, and his white wife, Kathy, was severely damaged by an arson fire. The home was sprayed with neo-Nazi graffiti. Moore said he had received threatening phone calls from an anonymous caller who said, "Get out, nigger!"



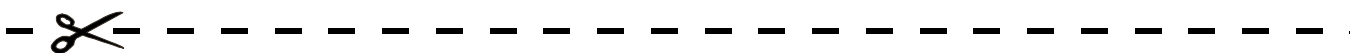
Candido Galloso Salas, 27, a migrant worker, was dragged to the rear of a store, handcuffed for two hours and hit in the stomach in 1990. Police later found him tied up in a field with a sack over his head, which bore a clown's face and the words, "No más aqui" (No more here").



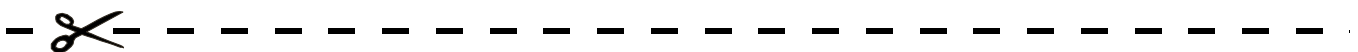
In 1990, the home and car of Tandolph Brown, a 31-year-old black man, were spray-painted with racial slurs. He had previously received several telephone threats telling him, "Get out of town in 24 hours, or we'll kill your wife and family."



Teenagers painted swastikas on the floor of a Jewish-owned restaurant before they set fire to the building in 1990.

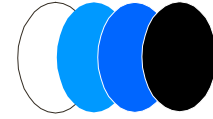


A 1990 battle over Native American fishing rights in Wisconsin led racist whites to adopt the slogan, "Save a Fish, Spear an Indian."



Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1, Continued



In 1990, in San Francisco, a gay church was bombed; in New York, a gay man was beaten to death; in Seattle, three members of the hate group Aryan Action planned to blow up a gay bar. On college campuses in Ohio and Utah, gays and lesbians were threatened and harassed.



In 1988, a man in Portland, Maine, smashed the windshield of a car belonging to a lesbian and attempted to set it on fire. Later the victim found the word *dyke* scrawled on the car.



In 1990, Cindy Evans, a white woman, and Millie Thorton, a blackwoman, moved out of the mobile home they had shared for two months after a series of threatening incidents, including a cross burning, hate mail, racial slurs, vandalism, and the burglary of their home.



Three members of the Ku Klux Klan issued threats against a St. Louis gay/lesbian bookstore in 1991. As they were asked to leave the bookstore, they were overhead saying, "We're watching you; we know where you are."



An openly lesbian candidate for a seat on the city council of Hawaii Island was attacked in her home and left unconscious in 1988.



In 1990, Charles Gibson, a 19-year-old blackteenager, was beaten to death by white teenagers while driving through a suburb.

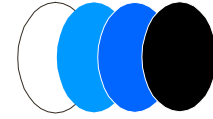


In 1990, Henry KwokK in Lau, a recent immigrant from Hong Kong, was stabbed to death on a train in Bay Ride by a man who yelled Asian slurs.



Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1, Continued



In 1990, a white man was shot as he tried to aid a black man who was being harassed by two white men.



In 1989, a cross was burned on the lawn of a black woman whose family is one of three black families that live on a street. During the past year, the children of the families have been taunted with racial slurs, their pets have been killed, and the houses have been pelted with eggs.



On June 2, 1991, a gay man in Wisconsin was stabbed to death by a man who told police, "I wanted to kill this fag. My whole life is devoted to killing faggots and child molesters... They spread AIDS."



On June 15, 1991, three teenagers with baseball bats in Pensacola, Florida, went out on a "wilding" spree targeting gays and African Americans. They beat a man to death because they thought he was gay.



On August 15, 1991, bombs exploded outside a lesbian and gay bookstore in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The explosions damaged the building, shattered windows, and destroyed merchandise.



At California State University at Northridge in October 1991, anti-gay flyers were posted across campus. The flyers announced a "gay-bashing night" and included the caption, "Smear the queer."

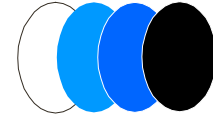


During the Gulf War, an Arab American activist received a call the day after he took part in a peace rally. The caller threatened, "Stop supporting Saddam or we will blow your house up."



Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1, Continued



During the Gulf War, someone called an Arab American community center in Cleveland, Ohio, and said, "If there are any attacks on this country, you people are going to die."



On January 14, 1991, two individuals in Dayton, Ohio threatened to shoot worshipers at a local Islamic center. Later that night, several windows were broken at the mosque.



During 1992, 16 desecrations of Jewish cemeteries took place in the following states: Georgia, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Texas, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Virginia.



On March 19, 1992, a number of dead cats stolen from a science lab were dropped in toilets at Queens College in New York City. Written on the wall above the toilets were the words, "We're going to do to Jews what we did to the cats."



In Houston, Texas, on July 4, 1991, a gay man was killed and another was injured when they were attacked by a group of ten young men outside a gay bar. The group was armed with wooden clubs and a knife. The murder victim died several hours later from a knife wound in the abdomen.



In Bellmore, New York, on December 28, 1991, two men in a car screamed anti-gay slurs at men in a parking lot outside a gay bar, kicked their cars, and tried to run them down. When one of the men tried to flee, the attackers rammed the man's car off the road and into a tree. The victim died as a result of this attack.

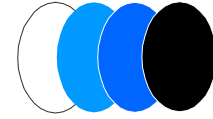


In Springfield, Missouri, in May 1991, members of the Ku Klux Klan harassed and threatened a gay couple after one of the men testified in support of a proposed local hate crime law. Robed Klan members regularly paraded outside their home, smashed the windows of their car, threw eggs and tomatoes at their house, and drove trucks through their yard, tearing up the lawn.



Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1, Continued



On July 12, 1991, in Canton, Ohio, a teenager entered a house that was to be used as a private residence for people with AIDS, poured gasoline in every room, and set it on fire. Damage as a result of the blaze was estimated at \$22,000.



In Berkeley, California, on July 26, 1992, a black man and a 16-year-old black youth beat two white men outside a nightclub, telling them that they had to pay for their fathers' sins.



On July 27, 1992, in Glendale, California, an Asian woman claimed that she was verbally and physically assaulted by a store clerk who did not want to serve her.



In 1992, in Denver, Colorado a 17 year old who was one of a group of teenagers harassing a Hispanic family shot at the Hispanic family's car, hitting the father in the forehead (1992).



In Hermosa Beach, Florida, on August 24, 1992, two 19-year-old Vietnamese gang members confronted two white men and shot one of them.



On July 6, 1992, five black women tried to run over a 14-year-old runaway white girl with a truck after robbing and beating her in Largo, Florida.

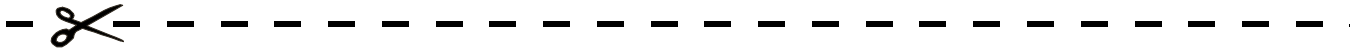
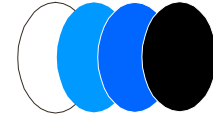


On July 3, 1992, in Tampa, Florida, a black man said that all whites should be killed, as he struck a white man in the face with a beer bottle.



Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1, Continued



On July 25, 1992, in Idaho, a black man was chased and thrown through a store window by about 30 teenagers.



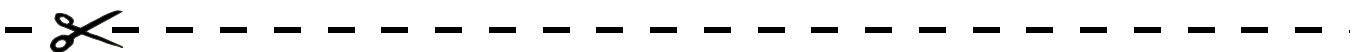
Two 11-year-old boys pointed a toy rifle at a black woman and yelled racial slurs at her in Chicago, Illinois, on August 4, 1992.



In Attleboro, Massachusetts, on June 26, 1992, two skinheads attacked a Hispanic teenager, beating him unconscious.



In Minneapolis on August 8, 1992, a black teenager was shot by white motorcycle gang members. The gang members reportedly shot the first black person they saw after being told that a black person had turned over their motorcycles.



In Greensboro, North Carolina, on July 11, 1992, a crowd of 75 people chanting "Rodney King!" threw rocks and bottles at two police officers. This occurred after the officers arrested the host of a rowdy party for assaulting a fellow police officer.



In Willingboro, New Jersey, on June 23, 1992, a group of about 30 black men beat another black man whom they thought was Hispanic.

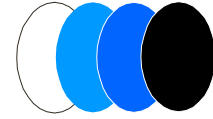


In Monsey, New York, an elderly Jewish man was thrown to the ground, punched, and kicked by a young white man who screamed anti-Semitic slurs.



Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1, Continued



In Princes Bay, New York, on June 26, 1992, a gang of teenagers attacked a youth with high-pressure water guns while yelling anti-Semitic slurs.



In Walnut Hills, Ohio on July 14, 1992, a group of black teenagers attacked a stranded car full of white teenagers. They destroyed the car and injured several of the occupants.



A group of skinheads attacked two black teenagers and a white friend who were walking together in Eugene, Oregon, on August 13, 1992.



In June 1992, in Medford, Oregon, a white woman spit on a Japanese college student and slapped another one after asking them their ancestral origin.



On July 9, 1992, in Akron, Ohio, a cross was burned on the hood of a black man's truck.



On July 14, 1992, in Arlington, Texas, two teenagers burned a cross in the yard of a black family.

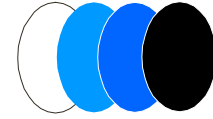


On July 21, 1992, in Dayton, Texas, a cross was burned in a yard to retaliate for the previous night's incident when four black men beat a retarded, disabled white man.



Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1, Continued



In December 1992, Luyen Phan Nguyen, a Vietnamese American college student, was beaten to death by a group of teenagers at a party in a Coral Springs, Florida, apartment complex. One of the young partygoers was heard to scream, "I should have killed you in 'Nam, you gook!" Twenty partying teenagers watched the whole event.



In 1989, Patrick Purdy, dressed in military clothing, entered a Stockton, California schoolyard and fired an assault rifle, killing five Asian American children and wounding 29. Purdy told authorities he had picked the school because he felt "particular animosity" toward Southeast Asians.



As Hung Truong, a 15-year-old Vietnamese refugee, walked down a Houston street in 1990, two 18-year-old youths jumped from a car shouting, "White power!" and beat him. "God, forgive me for coming to this country," Truong said before dying.



In March 1992, at Northeastern University in Boston, a male student made an anonymous phone call to the campus lesbian and gay organization's office and threatened to blow it up. He also threatened to kill all the group's members. The perpetrator later turned himself in to authorities.



On January 11, 1991, four or five drunken men verbally assaulted a man, calling him a "Filthy Arab! Arab pig!" and shouted obscenities. The man was a Polynesian Jew.



On January 12, 1991, The Detroit Free Press reported a bomb threat at Fordson High School where approximately 50 percent of the students are of Arab descent. The Fordson basketball team reported ethnic hostility at games, in which opposing teams and fans said, "Go back to Saudi Arabia. You are not wanted here."

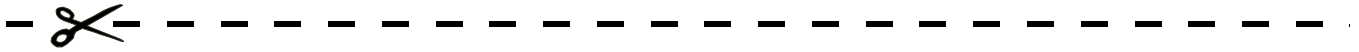
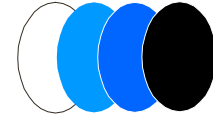


On January 14, 1991, faculty and students harassed Iraqi American children in school. Incidents included mentions of internment camps and statements that the American should kill all the Iraqis.



Healing the Hate

HANDOUT 1, Continued



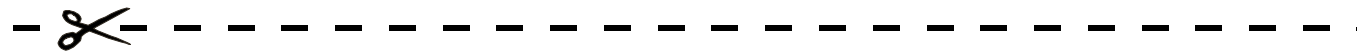
Someone stoned an Iranian student's windshield. Another driver shouted, "Kill that Iranian." The victim filed a report, but was told that a "reliable" witness (the second driver, a retired police officer) had already testified against him.



The *San Jose Mercury News* reported that someone issued a bomb threat against a local Islamic center and shouted racial epithets at children wearing traditional Arab clothing. This prompted the center to cancel class.



In 1995 and 1996, dozens of churches were burned in the South. Most of these churches had primarily black congregations.



COMMITMENT TO COMBAT RACISM

YES NO

- | | | |
|-------|-------|--|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Have I aggressively sought out more information in an effort to enhance my own awareness and understanding of racism (talking with others, reading, listening)? |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Have I spent some time recently looking at my own racist attitudes and behavior as they contribute to or combat racism around and within me? |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Have I reevaluated my use of terms or phrases or behaviors that may be perceived by others as degrading or hurtful? |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Have I openly confronted a racist comment, joke, or action among those around me? |
| _____ | _____ | 5. Have I made a personal contract with myself to take a positive stand, even at some possible risk, when the chance occurs? |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Have I become increasingly aware of racist TV programs, advertising, news broadcasts, textbooks, holiday observances, slogans, etc. |
| _____ | _____ | 7. Have I complained to those in charge of promoting racist TV programs, advertising, news broadcasts, holiday observances, slogans, etc.? |
| _____ | _____ | 8. Have I suggested and taken steps to implement discussions or workshops aimed at understanding and eliminating racism, sexism, and ageism with friends, colleagues, social clubs, or church groups? |
| _____ | _____ | 9. Have I been investigating and evaluating political candidates at all levels in terms of their stance and activity against racist, sexist, and ageist government practices? |
| _____ | _____ | 10. Have I investigated curricula of local schools in terms of their treatment of the issues of racism, sexism, and ageism (also, textbooks, assemblies, faculty, staff, administration, and athletic programs and directors)? |
| _____ | _____ | 11. Have I contributed time and/or funds to an agency, fund, or program that confronts the problems of racism, sexism, and ageism? |
| _____ | _____ | 12. Have my buying habits supported nonracist, nonsexist, and nonageist shops, companies, or personnel? |
| _____ | _____ | 13. Is my school or place of employment a target for my educational efforts in responding to racism, sexism, and ageism? |
| _____ | _____ | 14. Have I become seriously dissatisfied with my own level of activity in combating racism, sexism, and ageism? |

YES **NO**

_____ _____ 15. Have I ended my affiliation with organizations which are racist, sexist, or ageist in their membership requirements?

_____ _____ 16. Have I subscribed to a publication which will educate me in the area of culture other than my own? Have I left copies of that publication in sight where my friends and associates might see it and question my interest in it?

_____ _____ 17. Have I made an effort to learn some of the language of those in my community who may speak something other than English?

Adapted from White Awareness, A Handbook for Human-Relations Training, by Judith Katz, University of Oklahoma.

Cabbie brutally murdered

By Jim Hughes
Denver Post Staff Writer

March 30 - Four men beat an off-duty taxi driver to death and stuffed his body in the trunk of his cab in a normally quiet south Denver neighborhood early Sunday morning.

Police said an unknown number of neighbors watched the whole thing through their windows - without picking up a telephone to dial 911. Their failure to act, they said, might have cost the man his life.

"It's sad, it's tragic, and it's outrageous that someone who saw this taking place couldn't simply pick up the phone and call 911, ..." said Denver Manager of Public Safety Butch Montoya. "It could have made the difference."

The predawn murder occurred two blocks away from the University of Denver campus, an area inhabited by students and professionals. The suspects beat the man in the parking lot outside the Spartan Apartments in the 2400 block of South York Street.

The victim was identified as Moustapha Marouf, a Moroccan immigrant. Denver police spokeswoman Virginia Lopez said Marouf "was in terrible, terrible shape" and that his face was unrecognizable.

Police arrested one person late Sunday for investigation of first-degree murder, but Lopez declined to identify the man because of the ongoing investigation.

A man identified as Chris Buchanan, a resident of the Spartan Apartments, was taken in earlier for questioning. Lopez would not say whether he was a suspect or a witness, but police searched his apartment Sunday afternoon. Police were hunting for other suspects Sunday night.

It was not clear Sunday exactly why Marouf, who drives for Yellow Cab, was at the apartment complex. Steve Fowler, president of the cab company, said Marouf had ended his shift around 10:30 p.m. Saturday.

But John Contrevas, manager of the building, said several other Moroccans live in the complex down the hall from Buchanan.

Marouf was with his roommate, Elassidy Bouchaib. Bouchaib ran to a nearby convenience store to call for help at 4:20 a.m.

When police arrived, they couldn't see any sign of the attack except for some bloodstains on the ground around Marouf's empty cab. They spent precious minutes searching the area looking for the victim.

Only after police started knocking on doors to figure out what was going on did some neighbors tell them to look for a body in the trunk, authorities said.

Lopez said it is possible Marouf died in the trunk of his cab - and that he might have lived if officers at the scene had found him earlier.

"The situation might have been different if the witnesses had come forward

immediately and notified us his body was in the trunk," Lopez said. "Eyewitnesses saw him being beaten and dragged by his feet and thrown in the trunk, but no one called 911. It's disgusting." Lopez also noted that "numerous people (in the building) could be seen viewing the activities down below" while police were searching the lot.

Both Contrevas, the apartment manager, and a neighbor speculated that the victim may have been killed in a fight over a parking space. Parking spaces are frequently the subject of heated arguments at the complex, they said. But when Bouchaib called 911, he reported that he and Marouf had been robbed.

Marouf, who friends said was using some of his income to support a family back in the small Moroccan city of Youssoufia, where he was born, lived at the Florida Garden Apartments at 4185 E. Florida Ave. He had been in the United States for 11 years, having spent three years in New York City and eight in Denver.

A small group of Moroccans gathered at Marouf's apartment complex Sunday to grieve the loss of their friend.

Mohammed Zaher, who moved here last summer from Casablanca, Morocco, sat in his apartment next door to Marouf's, cradling his head and speaking quietly in his native tongue. English books lay scattered on the floor as Marouf's friends gathered in the apartment and consoled each other. Many said they had recently come from Morocco to build a better life here.

"This doesn't happen in Morocco," Zaher said. "There are no guns. People don't do this there."

For metro-area cab drivers, news of Marouf's slaying was a disturbing reminder of their vulnerability on the streets.

And as they heard news reports Sunday that their fellow driver had died before a silent audience, their sorrow turned to outrage. To let the public know how disgusted they were with witnesses' apparent lack of concern for Marouf's life, drivers representing each of Denver's five taxi companies gathered at the apartment complex for an impromptu protest Sunday afternoon.

"That man died because somebody didn't pick up their phone," said American Cab driver Barry Hajek, his eyes brimming behind dark glasses. He had brought his wife and four children to the scene to illustrate the impact of cab-driver attacks.

"When grandma or grandpa need to get to the hospital and they need their prescriptions picked up, we're there," he said. "We risk our lives every day for the public of this city. What do we get in return? (People) that wouldn't pick up their telephone. They flipped the switch, or pulled the plug, or however you want to put it, on his life."

Hajek said that although he was working Sunday, he almost stayed home in protest.

"I was just going to not work, because I don't think the citizens of this city deserve to have us on the streets today," he said.

But most of the residents of the apartments interviewed Sunday said they heard nothing during the attack. One woman at the scene of the cabbies' protest

defended herself and her neighbors, saying that most of them had been fast asleep.

But Irene Gownas, 80, who has lived across the street from the spot where Marouf died for 44 years, said she thought it was terrible that her neighbors may have failed to help save the man's life.

"It's a dirty shame," she said.

To some, Sunday's attack was reminiscent of the 1964 stabbing death of Kitty Genovese, a 25-year-old New York waitress who was killed while scores of neighbors ignored her screams for help, a murder that set a new standard for civic indifference in America.

Hajek, a Denver native, said he thinks this city may be on the same path.

"It's changed," he said. "And it's changed for the worse." But Montoya cautioned against that view.

"I would hope people in Denver are still very much concerned about one another and would get involved," he said. "In this case, I know that police were really sickened by the fact that someone may have seen something and not called. One individual or several individuals who may have seen this certainly don't typify the majority of people in Denver."

Police missing vital info

By Kieran Nicholson and Howard Pankratz
Denver Post Staff Writers

March 31 - Denver police - who castigated witnesses to the fatal beating of a Denver cabbie Sunday for failing to come forward - admitted Monday that "vital" details about the crime were not relayed to officers at the scene by the department's own communications bureau.

Police Chief David Michaud said a review of 911 tapes showed that a witness did indeed call the department to report the beating - and told police the victim's assailants had dragged his body toward a car with an open trunk.

But it took street officers a full 58 minutes to look in the trunk, where they found cabbie Moustapha Marouf, a 27-year-old Moroccan immigrant, dead of his injuries.

"Was that vital information?" Michaud said at an afternoon news conference. "It sounds like it was pretty vital."

Marouf's death has drawn national media attention. The key element to the story was the early assertion by Denver police that residents of nearby apartment buildings stood by silently while Marouf was beaten to a pulp by a group of men in a parking lot below.

Michaud said he had ordered an internal investigation to find out why the information from the 911 call didn't get to cops in the field.

"We don't know if it was a system problem or a personnel problem," Michaud said. "We will explore internally to see if we've come up short."

CALIFORNIA

80 years of marriage from love at first sight

SACRAMENTO — For George and Gaynel Couron, love at first sight has lasted nearly 81 years.

The couple, who celebrate their 81st anniversary April 10, has the nation's longest-lasting marriage, according to Worldwide Marriage Encounter, a group offering programs to improve communication between spouses.

"That was the girl for me. I've had her for 80 years, soon to be 81," said Couron, who is 100. "I got the woman I wanted."

"I got the man I wanted," his 97-year-old wife added.

They have 14 children, 43 grandchildren, 75 great-grandchildren and 30 great-great-grandchildren.

Questions:

1. What do you think this article has to do with the study of the Holocaust?

2. The following statement is found in the Talmud:

"Whoever causes the loss of a single soul is as though he caused the loss of a world entire, and whoever saves one is as though he saved a universe."

Put this statement into your own words.

Healing the Hate

The Power of the Young: An Introduction

Purpose

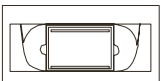
By learning what youth and communities can do to prevent or reduce hate violence, students will become inspired to initiate their own projects.

Student Objectives

In this lesson, students will accomplish the following:

- ◆ demonstrate that community and individual organizations and mobilization can effectively prevent and reduce hate crimes and hate incidents

Preparation



- **Obtain** the video *Not in Our Town*

(This video can be ordered from the Anti-Defamation League - call 1-800-343-5540 for a catalog and further information.)

Healing the Hate

Teaching Points

Convey the following points to the students as an overview of the lesson:


- ❑ Today, we still have far to go to live up to the ideal of equality in the Declaration of Independence. Two of the greatest barriers to the promise of democracy and the strength of our diverse nation are hate incidents and hate crimes.
- ❑ People working to stop hate violence across the nation have made a big difference. Working together, the people of this country really can create a fair society free of racism and hate violence.
- ❑ Because youth are the aggressors of much hate violence, young people must play an equally important role in reducing and preventing it. Young people can bring to a community an increased awareness of the problems of prejudice. For example, after the murder of an African American in Reno, Nevada, a student founded Teens Against Racial Prejudice.
- ❑ Before starting our own efforts to respond to hate crimes and incidents in our communities, it is important to know that we are not alone. The movement against hate groups and hate violence includes hundreds of nationwide, regional, statewide, and local organizations, in addition to thousand of individual volunteers who collect information, assist victims, and help organize community responses. At the national level, many groups targeted by hate violence have their own civil rights organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, The American Jewish Committee, The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, and the National Network Against Anti-Asian Violence, among others. Many of these groups have local chapters and affiliates.


Healing the Hate

Activity One



One Example of Community Action: The American Agenda

 **Show** students the video *Not in Our Town*, which demonstrates community mobilization against anti-Semitism in Billings, Montana on February 3, 1994. (*We highly recommend this video; however, if you are unable to obtain it, you can show another video that depicts individuals working to combat hate violence or bring in newspaper clippings of such activities to present to the class.*)

 **Facilitate** a class discussion of the video. **Ask** the following questions to frame the discussion:

- *Who could be considered the victims, aggressors, and bystanders in this film?*
- *What forms of resistance did the community initiate?*
- *How did organized hate group members react to the union of Jews and non-Jews in the community?*
- *Do you think it is true that the community "found a weapon more powerful than [the KKK's]"? What was it, and what made it more powerful?*
- *How would you react if this type of hate crime was committed in your community?*
- *How would you want your community to react to this type of hate crime?*
- *Has this type of prejudice or a similar type ever occurred in your community?*
- *What, if any forms of resistance were used to combat it?*

Writing Activity

After students have read and discussed the rationales for studying about the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, have them complete the following writing activity. This lesson might serve as a culminating activity for this section.

Setting:

Your school district recently sent letters to parents explaining that the high school will now include a new Holocaust and Genocide unit as part of the social studies and history curriculum. Several days after the letters went out, surprised school officials received a number of phoned responses to the announcement. Some parents expressed satisfaction and appreciation; others expressed anger and annoyance. One parent who called angrily shouted that the students should not waste time dwelling on misery and studying about horrors which occurred long ago. Yet, another caller complimented the school district for exploring so sensitive an issue. Surely, she adds, awareness might prevent future atrocities.

The editor of the school newspaper agreed to publish the best student responses to the issue. As a vocal, well-respected student you decide to write a letter to the school newspaper expressing your opinion.

Task:

Write a letter to the editor of your school newspaper taking a position either for or against the inclusion of a Holocaust and Genocide curriculum at your high school. Offer substantial reasons taken from the readings for your opinion.

Time Capsule

Grade Levels: Middle and high school

Goals:

- To allow students the opportunity to predict how the Holocaust may be viewed in the future.
- To design a culminating activity for a Holocaust unit.

Materials: Will vary according to student choice to respond in writing, music, artwork, etc.

Procedure: As a culminating activity in a Holocaust unit of study, discuss why it is important to remember the Holocaust and the lessons we have learned from this tragic event. Encourage personal and specific responses in addition to the generalities which will be suggested first. Remind students that the memory of most historical events fades with time. Then pose the question, "If you could communicate one thing about what we have studied to persons living a hundred years from now, what would that be?" After that discussion ask what would be the best method of communication for the various ideas. Answers might include a poem, artwork, a multimedia presentation, a recorded piece of music, or a videotaped play. Students then work individually or in groups to create these messages to future generations and the results are gathered and placed in a time capsule. The burial of the capsule might take place as part of a remembrance ceremony in which some of the student responses are performed or read.

APPENDIX

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BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

High School

1. HISTORY, GENERAL

Bauer, Yehuda, and Nili Keren. *A History of the Holocaust*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1982.

Broader in scope than the title indicates, this work examines the origins of antisemitism and Nazism as well as the history of Jewish-German relationships. Bauer also arranges material on the Holocaust by individual country; this is useful for following events as they affected each occupied nation and for demonstrating the scope of the Holocaust. One of the most readable general histories for high school students.

Gilbert, Martin. *The Holocaust. A History of the Jews in Europe during the Second World War*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986.

Gilbert combines historical narrative with personal testimonies of survivors. Although the book is long, excerpts can easily be handled by students. It is also well-indexed, making it an invaluable tool for providing supplementary material on almost any aspect of the Holocaust.

Hilberg, Raul. *The Destruction of the European Jews [student text]*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985.

This edition of Hilberg's classic work is an abridgement of the original, three volume edition. The focus here is on the Nazis and their destruction process, from the concentration of the Jews in ghettos to the killing operations of the mobile units and the death camps. This essential history is recommended for more advanced students.

Hilberg, Raul. *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders. The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

In his most recent work, Hilberg expands his focus from the study of the perpetrator alone to include, as the title indicates, victims and bystanders. He also includes rescuers and Jewish resisters, groups which he ignored in his earlier work; however, the attention he gives to these groups is minimal. His main focus continues to be on the destruction and those responsible for it. Hitler's role is more central here than in the earlier work. This is Hilberg's most accessible book.

Niewyk, Donald L., ed. *The Holocaust. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992.

This series of essays by well-known historians offers distinct perspectives on five different themes of the Holocaust. The topics include the development of the Nazi plan to solve the "Jewish Question," experiences of the camp victims, viewpoints on Jewish resistance, reactions of Christians to the "Final Solution," and concludes with perspectives on rescue.

Yahil, Leni. *The Holocaust. The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945*. New York: Oxford, 1991.

The chronological approach used here groups the material into three broad time periods: 1932-39, 1939-41, and 1941-45. About two-thirds of the book deals with the period 1941-45, with major emphasis on the "Final Solution." This is a valuable research tool for advanced students, and excerpts on specific topics can be used more generally.

2. HISTORY, SPECIALIZED

Abzug, Robert H. *Inside the Vicious Heart. Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Using the diaries, letters, photographs, and oral testimonies of American GIs and journalists, Abzug analyzes the reactions of the first eyewitnesses who entered the liberated concentration camps in Germany and Austria during the spring of 1945. This highly readable account is liberally illustrated with photographs.

Adelson, Alan, and Robert Lapides, eds. *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community Under Siege*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1991.

As the source book for the Lodz ghetto film, this work is an excellent supplement to the documentary, but it also stands on its own. It contains both German and ghetto documents as well as the personal expressions of ghetto residents in a variety of forms, including diaries, speeches, paintings, photographs, essays, and poems.

Allen, William S. *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945*. Revised edition. New York: Franklin Watts, 1984.

Norheim, a small town of medieval origins in the center of prewar Germany, is the setting for this absorbing study of the impact of Nazism on a single community. As one of the few detailed local studies of Nazi Germany available in English, this book is an invaluable complement to histories of Nazism from the national perspective.

Arad, Yitzhak. *Ghetto in Flames*. New York: Holocaust Publications, 1982.

For centuries, its large number of rabbinic scholars assured Vilna a central place in the cultural life of Lithuanian Jewry. Arad's scholarly and ground breaking study focuses upon the life, struggle, and annihilation of the Jews of Vilna in the period between 1941 and 1944.

Block, Gay, and Malka Drucker. *Rescuers. Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1992.

The interviews and full-size color portraits are of 49 ordinary individuals from 10 countries who risked their lives to help Jews by hiding them, sharing their food rations, forging passports and baptismal certificates, and raising Jewish children as their own. The rescuers' portraits are presented by country of origin, and a brief historical overview of rescue efforts in each country precedes their personal stories.

Conot, Robert E. Justice at Nuremberg. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1984.

In addition to the detailed history of the Nuremberg Trials, Conot discusses the preparations for the trials. He also goes beyond the events of the trials themselves to discuss the difficulties involved in creating and implementing an international legal entity.

Des Pres, Terrence. The Survivor. An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Des Pres studies survivors of the death camps in an attempt to determine what enabled people to survive; his conclusions are controversial and are unlike those of Bettelheim (The Informed Heart), Frankl (Man's Search for Meaning), and other Holocaust survivors.

Flender, Harold. Rescue in Denmark. New York: Anti-Defamation League, (cont.) 1963.

The exceptional, honorable character of the Danes' successful operation to rescue most of its Jewish residents has aroused profound admiration. Individual stories of rescue are cited here, as well as more general historical background and a look at the reasons for the Nazis' failure to implement the "Final Solution" in Denmark.

Friedman, Philip. Their Brothers' Keepers: The Christian Heroes and Heroines Who Helped the Oppressed Escape the Nazi Terror. New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1978.

One of the first studies of Christians who rescued Jews during the Holocaust, this work was originally published in 1957. It is primarily an overview of rescue activities, although some stories of individual rescue are told. Background material and activities for individual countries are included.

Josephs, Jeremy. Swastika Over Paris. The Fate of the Jews in France. New York: Arcade Publishing, 1989.

In this highly readable work, Josephs tells the story of French Jews during the Holocaust by focusing on two Jews of widely different class backgrounds. One was the only member of the well-known Rothschild family to remain in France during the German occupation; the other was the 16-year-old daughter of working-class parents and a member of the French Resistance.

Mayer, Milton. They Thought They Were Free: The Germans 1933-45. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

After the war, Mayer, an American journalist, interviewed ten men of different backgrounds but from the same German town in an effort to determine, through their eyes, what had happened in Germany and what had made it possible. This is an excellent companion to Allen's Nazi Seizure of Power.

Patterson, Charles. Anti-Semitism: The Road to the Holocaust and Beyond. New York: Walker and Company, 1988.

As the title implies, this history of antisemitism includes the years both before and after the Holocaust. Patterson begins with ancient and medieval times and concludes with a discussion of modern antisemitism in various parts of the world.

Plant, Richard. *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals*. New (cont.) York: Henry Holt, 1986.

The Nazis condemned homosexuals as "socially aberrant." Soon after Hitler came to power in 1933, Storm Troopers raided nightclubs and other places where homosexuals met. About 10,000 people were imprisoned as homosexuals, and many of them perished in concentration camps. In the camps, homosexuals' uniforms sometimes bore a pink triangular badge as an identifying mark. In this volume, the first comprehensive study available in English, Plant examines the ideological motivations for the Nazi persecution of homosexuals and the history of the implementation of Nazi policies.

Read, Anthony, and David Fisher. *Kristallnacht: The Tragedy of the Nazi Night of Terror*. New York: Random House, 1989.

Beginning with a brief background and ending with the Evian conference, the focus of this work is the events of Kristallnacht itself and its immediate aftermath, including the German response, the Nazi follow-up, and the international response. Both the prologue and epilogue deal with Herschel Grynszpan, the young man who triggered Kristallnacht by shooting a German officer in Paris.

Rittner, Carol, and Sondra Meyers, eds. *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*. New York: New York University Press, 1989.

Taken from the film of the same name, the book presents vignettes from rescuers and those rescued in a variety of countries, with additional commentaries from historians and writers. This is a particularly valuable resource when used with the film.

Szner, Zvi, and Alexander Sened, eds. *With a Camera in the Ghetto*. New York: Schocken, 1987.

Mendel Grossman was the only Jewish photographer who succeeded in capturing a ghetto on film; his pictures depict life in the Lodz ghetto in 1941 and 1942. This is an excellent companion to the Lodz ghetto film and the Adelson book. It can also supplement the book if the film is not available.

3. BIOGRAPHY

Bierman, John. *Righteous Gentile: The Story of Raoul Wallenberg, Missing Hero of the Holocaust*. New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1981.

Only the first half of the book is truly a biography of this well-known figure who helped save at least 30,000 Jews in Hungary. The second part of the book describes the circumstances surrounding Wallenberg's disappearance and subsequent attempts to locate him or at least find out what happened to him.

Breitman, Richard, and Walter Laqueur. *Breaking the Silence: The Man Who Exposed the Final Solution*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986.

Eduard Schulte was a major German industrialist who abhorred Hitler and Nazism. He is the man credited with passing on to the Allies news not only of troop movements and weapon programs but of the Nazi plans for genocide. This

biography relates Schulte's story from his childhood to his postwar years. The authors also describe the responses of Allied governments to the information he passed on to them.

Lifton, Betty Jean. *The King of Children: A Portrait of Janusz Korczak*. New York: Schocken, 1989.

Much of the material in this biography is taken from Korczak's diaries, but Lifton also interviewed many of his former charges and people who worked with him. In addition to the personal portrait of Korczak, she includes background material on the Warsaw ghetto based on Korczak's diary and diaries of other ghetto victims.

Scholl, Inge. *The White Rose: Munich, 1942-43*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan, 1983.

Inge Scholl was the sister of Hans and Sophie Scholl, founders of the famous "White Rose" resistance movement in Germany. Originally written in 1952, this is the story of the Scholls and of the White Rose movement. It also includes original documents concerning their indictments and sentences. This book was previously published under the title *Students against Tyranny*.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus* [vols. I & III]. New York: Pantheon, 1991.

Spiegelman uses his talents as a cartoonist to present his parents' experiences during the Holocaust in a unique way; here cartoon characters represent people, with the Jews portrayed as mice and the Nazis as cats. In the first volume, the author relates the real-life trials of his parents at Auschwitz. The second volume continues their story from Auschwitz to America. The cartoon format will appeal to reluctant readers, and the satirical irony of these works make them appropriate for a wide audience.

4. FICTION

Appelfeld, Aharon. *To the Land of the Cattails*. New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986.

A young man and his mother living in Austria travel eastward across the heart of Europe to the distant land of her childhood. The year is 1938 and the two arrive just as the Jews of the village are being shipped off on a mysterious train to an unspecified destination. Appelfeld is a master storyteller, and this haunting narrative of an ironic pilgrimage will not easily be forgotten.

Fink, Ida. *A Scrap of Time*. New York: Schocken, 1989.

The title story in this collection of short stories concerns the way time was measured by Holocaust victims. Other stories describe people in a variety of normal human situations distorted by the circumstances of the times. Many of these stories can be effectively used with students.

Friedlander, Albert. *Out of the Whirlwind*. New York: Schocken, 1989.

Not all of the entries included in this anthology are fiction. Excerpts are also included from historical works and personal narratives. The book is arranged

thematically, making it especially helpful for a teacher looking for material to support specific aspects of a curriculum.

Glatstein, Jacob. *Anthology of Holocaust Literature*. New York: Macmillan, 1973.

Chapters in this collection cover life in the ghettos, children, the camps, resistance, and non-Jewish victims. Excerpts are included from both works of fiction and primary source materials such as diaries, memoirs, and ghetto documents. Many of these pieces can be especially useful if teachers provide additional background information on the authors and context of the writings.

Lustig, Arnold. *Darkness Casts No Shadows*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1985.

Two young boys escape from a transport between a concentration camp and an unknown destination that would probably turn out to be a killing center. They are also trying to escape from the memories of their past experiences and are searching for a home that no longer exists. Far from the typical romanticized escape novel, this is a sensitive but unsentimental look at the child in war.

Ozick, Cynthia. *The Shawl*. New York: Random House, 1990.

Originally published as two separate stories in *The New Yorker*, the title story tells of a mother witnessing her baby's death at the hands of camp guards. Another story, "Rose," describes that same mother 30 years later, still haunted by that event. This is Holocaust fiction at its best, brief but unforgettable.

Ramati, Alexander. *And the Violins Stopped Playing. A Story of the Gypsy Holocaust*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1986.

Written as a novel, this book is actually based on notes given to Ramati by Roman Mirga, a Polish Gypsy and the main character. It tells of Mirga's experiences from 1942 to 1945, when he escaped from Nazis in Poland only to be caught by them in Hungary and sent to Auschwitz.

Uhlman, Fred. *Reunion*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977.

More a novella than a novel, this brief but moving story told in retrospect by a Jewish-German youth describes his friendship with a non-Jewish German youth during the 1930s. Its brevity and readability make it especially suitable for reluctant readers.

5. MEMOIRS

Eliach, Yaffa. *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*. New York: Vintage Books, 1988.

Through interviews and oral histories, Eliach garnered eighty-nine tales, both true stories and fanciful legends. This beautiful, compelling collection bears witness, in a traditional idiom, to the victims' suffering, dying, and surviving.

Fenelon, Fania. *Playing for Time*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Fenelon recounts her experiences in the Nazi concentration camps. The Nazis transported her from the Drancy camp in Paris to the Auschwitz killing center. While her descriptions reveal the horrors of the camps, the book's primary focus is on her experiences in the Auschwitz-Birkenau women's orchestra.

Gies, Miep, and Alison L. Gold. *Anne Frank Remembered: The Story of the Woman Who Helped to Hide the Frank Family*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Miep Gies, along with her husband, were among the people who helped the Frank family while they were in hiding. Her story is an important supplement to Anne Frank's diary as it adds historical background as well as an outside perspective to Anne's story. Gies enables the reader to understand what was happening both inside and outside the Annex.

Gurdus, Luba K. *The Death Train*. New York: Holocaust Publications, 1987.

The title encapsulates the author's story of her Holocaust experiences. She and her family spent a considerable amount of time either on a transport or in a hideout near the train tracks in their desperate, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to avoid the camps. She illustrates her memoir with original drawings, which give an additional personal touch to what is already a very personal and moving account.

Leitner, Isabella. *Fragments of Isabella: A Memoir of Auschwitz*. New York: Dell, 1983.

A survivor of Auschwitz recounts the ordeal of holding her family together after their mother is killed in the camp. This slim volume is an eloquent account of survival in the midst of chaos and destruction. A glossary of death camp language is a valuable addition. Leitner's story is continued in *Saving the Fragments*.

Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York: Macmillan, 1987.

Levi was an Italian Jew captured in 1943 and still at Auschwitz at the time of the liberation. He not only chronicles the daily activities in the camp, but his inner reactions to it and the destruction of the inner as well as the outer self. This memoir is one of the most important books on the Holocaust.

Meed, Vladka. *On Both Sides of the Wall*. New York: Holocaust Publications, 1979.

This is an informative memoir of the Warsaw ghetto by one of the young smugglers who maintained contact between the ghetto and the Aryan side of the city. Working for the Jewish Combat Organization (ZOB), Vladka Meed helped smuggle weapons and ammunition into the ghetto.

Nir, Yehuda. *The Lost Childhood*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991.

This compelling memoir chronicles six extraordinary years in the life of a Polish Jewish boy, his mother, and his sister, who all survived the Holocaust by obtaining false papers and posing as Catholics. Yehuda Nir lost almost everything, including his father, his possessions, his youth and innocence, and his identity, but he managed to live with the help of chance, personal resourcefulness, and the support of his family.

Senesh, Hannah. *Hannah Senesh: Her Life and Diary*. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.

A native of Hungary, Senesh moved to Palestine just before World War II and later joined a parachute corps formed by the British. She was captured and later executed after her final mission, to warn Hungarian Jews about the "Final Solution." This volume includes the diary Senesh kept from the age of thirteen, many of her poems and letters, and memoirs by her mother and others who knew her.

Tec, Nechama. *Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

The author and her family were Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust on the Aryan side of the ghetto. Although she escaped the worst horrors of the Holocaust, her story adds another dimension to Holocaust literature. She describes her childhood experiences as seen through the child's eyes, but with the added retrospective of her adult perception.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. New York: Bantam, 1982.

Wiesel is one of the most eloquent writers of the Holocaust, and this book is his best-known work. This compelling narrative describes his own experience in Auschwitz. His account of his entrance into Auschwitz and his first night in the camp is extraordinary. This narrative is often considered required reading for students of the Holocaust.

Yoors, Jan. *Crossing. A Journal of Survival and Resistance in World War II*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

Every summer during his teen years, Yoors left his comfortable, upper-middle-class family life in Belgium to travel around Europe with a Rom (Gypsy) family. This beautifully written journal focuses on the participation of Yoors and his fondly remembered Rom friends in resistance activities during World War II.

6. ART

Volavkova, Hana, ed. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly. Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp 1942-1944*. New York: Schocken, 1993.

A poignant memorial to the children of Terezin, the collages, drawings, and poems published in this selection are impressive for their artistic merit and their value in documenting the feelings and lives of the children in the camp. Some prior knowledge of what life in the camp was like will make this book more meaningful to students.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Teaching About the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators*. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

ANNOTATED VIDEOGRAPHY

The videography that follows lists videotapes by topics, beginning with videos that provide a general overview of the Holocaust. The topics are generally arranged in chronological order, beginning with videos on life before the Holocaust and continuing through ghettos and camps, to rescue, resistance, and liberation, to post-Holocaust subjects, including the war crimes trials. The videography concludes with videos on subjects related to but not directly addressing the Holocaust. An index to all annotated videos by title and subject may be found after the annotations.

Key:	D: Documentary	ST: Survivor Testimony
	DD: Docu-Drama	A: Animation
	DR: Drama	B/W: Black and White
	C: Color	CC: Closed Captioned

Overviews of the Holocaust

Genocide, 1941-1945 (World At War Series)

D C B/W 00:50:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #SV2

Credits: Produced and directed by Michael Darlow. 1982.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

The story of the destruction of European Jewry is told using archival footage and testimonies of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. This excellent overview has been used effectively by many teachers.

Shoah

ST C

(Part 1) 02:00:00; (2) 02:00:00; (3) 01:50:00; (4) 02:00:00; (5) 01:56:00

Source: Available in most video stores and many libraries. Also may be purchased from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, 9760 West Pico Blvd., Yeshiva University of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA 90035; 310-553-9036.

Credits: Directed by Claude Lanzmann. 1985.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

This powerful film includes interviews with victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, and takes us to the locations of the Holocaust in camps, towns, and railways. The video may be segmented for classroom use.

Witness to the Holocaust

D B/W 02:10:00 (Two video set)

Source: ADL, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

Credits: Produced by the Holocaust Education Project for Zachor: National Jewish Resource Center.

Produced and directed by C.J. Pressma. 1984.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

This video presents a series of seven documentaries which can easily be segmented for specific topical use in the classroom. Each segment is approximately 20 minutes in length. Survivor narration is combined with photos and historic film

footage. The topics include: Rise of the Nazis, Ghetto Life, Deportations, Resistance, The Final Solution, Liberation, Reflections.

Life before Holocaust

Image Before My Eyes

D C B/W 01:30:00

Source: Simon Wiesenthal Center, 9760 West Pico Blvd., Yeshiva University of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA 90035; 310-553-9036.

Credits: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Produced by Josh Waletzky, Susan Lazarus. 1980. Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Using photographs, drawings, home movies, music, and interviews with survivors, this documentary recreates Jewish life in Poland from the late nineteenth century up to the time of its destruction during the Holocaust. The diversity of the culture is examined as well as its achievements.

The Camera of My Family. Four Generations in Germany 1845-1945

D C B/W 00:20:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #ADL45V-J4.

Credits: Anti-Defamation League. 1991. Recommended for Middle School and High School.

Catherine Hanf Noren left Nazi Germany with her Jewish parents shortly after her birth in 1938. This effective film describes her perseverance as an adult to use old family photographs to trace her family roots through several generations. Includes guide.

The Last Chapter

D B/W 01:25:00

Source: No distributor currently available.

Credits: Produced and directed by Benjamin and Lawrence Rothman. Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

This thorough and artistic documentary traces the history of the earliest Jewish communities in Poland through their destruction during World War II. It also examines the pogroms in the postwar period which occurred as survivors tried to return to Poland and rebuild their lives

Perpetrators

Das Leben von Adolf Hitler (The Life of Adolf Hitler)

D B/W 01:51:00

Source: Video Yesteryear, Box C, Sandy Hook, CT 06482; 800-243-0987. #852.

Credits: Directed by Paul Rotha. 1961.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Using archival footage, this film moves chronologically through the major events from the rise of the Nazis to their defeat by the Allies. It could be segmented for classroom use into three periods: 1933-36, 1936-39, and 1939-45.

A New Germany 1933-1939 (The World at War Series)

D B/W C 00:52:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #SV251V-J5.

Credits: Written and directed by Michael Darlow. 1975.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

This video traces the rise of Hitler to power and Nazi racism and antisemitic policies before the war. Photo stills and film footage are complemented by the testimonies of survivors and German perpetrators. The development and role of the Nazis' elite SS corps is highlighted.

The Wannsee Conference

DD C 01:26:49

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #SV443V.

Credits: Directed by Heinz Schirk. Co-production of Infafilm GmbH Munich; Manfred Korytowski, Austrian Television O.R.F.; and Bavarian Broadcasting Corporation. 1984.

Recommended for Middle School and High School.

The video dramatizes the famous conference where the leading Nazis discussed the implementation of the "Final Solution" by the German bureaucracy. An excellent film, it is in German with English subtitles.

Hitler: The Whole Story

D B/W 00:50:00 / 2:30:00

Source: Discovery Channel. 800-475-6636.

Credits: Produced by Weiner Rieb and directed by Joachim C. Fest and Christian Herrendoerfer. 1989.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Based on Joachim C. Fest's book Hitler, the film combines rare footage, photographs, and interviews. This film can be segmented into three parts for classroom use: Germany's quest for land, the "New Man" and Germania -- a vision of the future, and deportations and mass killings.

Heil Hitler! Confessions of a Hitler Youth

D B/W C 00:30:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #TL338V-J4.

Credits: HBO. 1991.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Eloquent Alfons Heck, a former member of Hitler Youth and now a U.S. citizen dedicated to Holocaust education, recounts the compelling story of how he became a fanatic supporter of Nazism. Documentary footage vividly demonstrates how songs, youth camps, speeches, and education turned millions of young Germans like Heck into the most fervent and loyal proponents of Nazi racism and militarism. The short length of this highly recommended film makes it especially suitable for classroom use.

The Democrat and the Dictator

D B/W C 00:55:00

Source: PBS Videos, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314-1698; 800-344-3337.
Credits: Produced by Betsy McCarthy. 1984.
Recommended for High School and Adult.

This film is a part of A Second Look with Bill Moyers and compares the personal history and style of the two major political leaders of the twentieth century, Adolf Hitler and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Racism, Antisemitism

The Longest Hatred: The History of Anti-Semitism

D C CC 02:30:00

Source: WGBH, P.O. Box 2284, South Burlington, VT 05407-2284; 800-255-9424
Credits: Thames Television and WGBH Educational Foundation. 1993.
Recommended for High School and Adult.

Drawing on interviews with Jews and antisemites as well as prominent scholars in Europe, America, and the Middle East, this excellent video traces antisemitism from its earliest manifestations to recent outbreaks in Germany and Eastern Europe. This film can be segmented for classroom use.

Shadow on the Cross

D C 00:52:00

Source: Landmark Media, 3450 Slade Run Drive, Falls Church, VA 22042; 800-342-4336.
Credits: CTVC Production for Channel 4, England. Produced by Ray Bruce. 1990. Recommended for High School and Adult.

This documentary film looks at the tragic story of Jewish-Christian relations over the past 2,000 years and explores the influences of historic Christian antisemitism on the Third Reich. The film is divided into two parts. Part 1 summarizes the history of religious antisemitism over the two thousand years Jews lived in Europe as a religious minority. In Part 2 theologians discuss the implications of the Holocaust for Jewish-Christian relations today. This is useful for college or high school history, political science, religion, or philosophy classes.

Of Pure Blood

D B/W C 01:40:00

Source: No distributor currently available.
Credits: Produced by Maryse Addison and Peter Bate. A film by Clarissa Henry and Marc Hillel. 1972.
Recommended for High School and Adult.

Using historical film footage and interviews with some of Hitler's victims, this film chronicles the Nazis' attempts to create a "master race." This is an excellent film for examining the whole issue of eugenics and racism. It also helps answer the question, "How was Hitler representative of the master race when he failed to match the ideal of the tall, blond-haired, blue-eyed German?" One segment of this film portrays nudity.

Mosaic of Victims

More Than Broken Glass: Memories of Kristallnacht

D ST C 00:57:00

Source: Ergo Media Inc., P.O. Box 2037, Teaneck, NJ 07666. 800-695-3746. #616.

Credits: Written, produced, and directed by Chris Pelzer. 1988.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

Using archival footage, photographs, and interviews with survivors, Jewish life in Germany prior to and during the Holocaust is described. This is excellent for examining the persecution of German Jews

One Survivor Remembers

D B/W C 00:36:00

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Shop, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington DC 20024-2150; 202488-6144.

Credits: Home Box Office in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Wentworth Films, Inc. 1995.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

Survivor Gerda Weissmann Klein eloquently recounts the personal story of her life before the war in Poland, her Holocaust experiences, including the painful loss of most of her family, and the suffering she endured on a final "death march" near the end of the war. Her story is told in fuller detail in her autobiography *All But My Life*.

Persecuted and Forgotten

D ST C 00:54:00

Source: EBS Productions, 360 Ritch Street, San Francisco, CA 94107; 415-495-2327.

Credits: Medienwerkstatt Franken. 1989.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

This video follows a group of German Gypsies as they return to Auschwitz after World War II. In personal accounts, Gypsies recall the "Gypsy Police," the Institute for Racial Hygiene, and the genealogical research that led to the imprisonment and murder of Gypsies during the Holocaust. The Gypsies who are interviewed also reveal the discrimination they continue to suffer.

Purple Triangles

D ST C 00:25:00

Source: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

Credits: Produced and directed by Martin Smith. 1991.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

During the Holocaust, Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted as a religious group. Their story is told by surviving members of the Kusserow family who describe their arrest and incarceration in concentration camps, where they were identified by their purple triangles.

We Were Marked with a Big "A"

D C B/W 00:44:00

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Shop, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024-2150; 202-488-6144.

Credits: Directed by Elke Jeanrond and Joseph Weishaupt. 1991.
Recommended for High School and Adult.

Little is known about the persecution of homosexuals by the Nazis. For the first time, in this effective documentary, three gay survivors tell the story of their arrests and incarceration in concentration camps. In German, with subtitles.

Korczak

DD B/W 02:00:00

Source: New York Films Video, 16 W, 61 st Street, New York, NY 10023; 212-247-6110. Attn.: John Montague. Rental, 16 and 35mm.

Credits: Directed by Andrzej Wajda. 1990.
Recommended for High School and Adult.

Nominated for Best Foreign Film, this movie is based on the true story of a doctor who cared for 200 orphans in the Warsaw ghetto. Korczak refused offers of rescue for himself and insisted on remaining with the children as they were deported to their deaths at the Treblinka extermination camp. In Polish, with subtitles.

Ghettos

Lodz Ghetto

D C B/W 01:43:00

Source: Alan Adelson, Exec. Dir., Jewish Heritage Project, Inc., 150 Franklin Street, #IW, New York, NY 10003; 212-925-9067.

Credits: Produced by Alan Adelson. Directed by Alan Adelson and Kathryn Taverna. 1989.
Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

This documentary recounts the history of one of the last ghettos to be liquidated. The film draws on written accounts by Jews in the Lodz ghetto and on photographs, slides, and rare film footage. The book *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community Under Siege* may be effectively paired with the video.

The Warsaw Ghetto

00:51:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #BVI03V.

Credits: B.B.C. Production. 1969.
Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Narrated by a ghetto survivor, this documentary uses historic film footage made by the Nazis and shows the creation of the ghetto, early Nazi propaganda, scenes from everyday life, and the final weeks of resistance before the ghetto was liquidated.

Camps

Auschwitz: If You Cried, You Died

D C B/W 00:28:00

Source: Impact America Foundation, Inc. c/o Martin J. Moore, 9100 Keystone at the Crossing, Suite 390, Indianapolis, IN 46240-2158; 317-848-5134.

Credits: Impact America Foundation. 1991, 1993.
Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Two survivors recount their experiences in Auschwitz after returning there with family members. Combined with historic footage, this is a moving commentary on prejudice. It also discusses Holocaust deniers. Teacher's guide available.

Night and Fog

D B/W 00:32:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #VY I OOV

Credits: Directed by Alain Resnais. 1955.

Recommended for Adult.

This award-winning, highly artistic documentary uses historic footage shot inside Nazi concentration camps and contrasts them with contemporary color scenes. The film includes very graphic footage. Attempting to universalize the Holocaust, the film never identifies the victims as Jews. In French, with English subtitles.

Triumph of Memory

D ST C 00:30:00

Source: PBS Video, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314-1698; 800-344-3337.

Credits: Produced and directed by Robert Gardner. Executive Producers, Sister Carol Rittner, R.S.M., and Sondra Myers. 1972.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Non-Jewish resistance fighters sent to Nazi concentration camps bear witness to the atrocities that took place in Mauthausen, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. This film is divided into three parts, which can be segmented for classroom use: initiation to the camps, daily life in the camps, and genocide. This is an excellent film for increased understanding of the Holocaust and life in the camps. It also includes a discussion of the victimization of Gypsies in the camp.

Resistance

Flames in the Ashes

D ST B/W 01:30:00

Source: Ergo Media, Inc., P.O. Box 2037, Teaneck, NJ 07666; 800-695-3746.

Credits: A Ghetto Fighters' House Release. Produced by Monia Avrahami. 1986.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

Historic, seldom seen footage tells the story of the variety of ways that Jews resisted the Nazis. Both murderers and resistance fighters tell the story. In Hebrew, Yiddish, French, Italian, and Polish, with subtitles.

Partisans of Vilna

D C B/W 02:10:00

Source: National Center for Jewish Film, Brandeis University, Lown 102, Waltham, MA 02254; 617-899-7044. #M5053.

e-mail: ncjf@logos.cc.brandeis.edu

website: www.brandeis.edu/jewishfilm/index.html.

Credits: Produced by Aviva Kempner. Directed by Josh Waletzky. 1987.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

Featuring 40 interviews with survivors, this moving, informative film tells the story of Jewish resistance in the Vilna ghetto. Music sung in the ghetto and resistance, as well as interesting archival film footage, add greatly to the production. The film documents well the moral dilemmas and difficulties the resisters faced both inside the ghetto and later, in relations with non-Jews in partisan camps in the forests. It also shows the prominent role women played in the Vilna resistance. An important film best suited for more advanced students of the Holocaust. In Hebrew, Yiddish, and English, with subtitles.

Rescue

The Courage to Care

D C B/W 00:28:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #ADLI50V.

Credits: Produced and directed by Robert Gardner; Executive Producers, Sister Carol Rittner, R.S.M., and Sondra Meyers. 1986.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Nominated in 1986 for an Academy Award for best short documentary film, the film encounters ordinary people who refused to succumb to Nazi tyranny and reached out to help victims of the Holocaust.

The Other Side of Faith

D ST C 00:27:00

Source: Documentaries International Film and Video Foundation, 1800 K Street, N.W., Suite 1120, Washington, DC 20006; 202-429-9320.

Credits: Produced by Sy Rotter. 1990.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Filmed on location in Przemysl, Poland, this first-person narrative tells of a courageous sixteen-year-old Catholic girl who, for two-and-a-half years, hid thirteen Jewish men, women, and children in the attic of her home.

Raoul Wallenberg: Between the Lines

D ST C B/W 01:25:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #SV996V.

Credits: Written and directed by Karin Altmann. 1985.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, was responsible for saving thousands of lives. Friends, family, and former members of his staff describe Wallenberg's efforts to confront the Nazi destruction of Hungarian Jewry. The video also examines the controversy surrounding his arrest and imprisonment in 1945 by the Soviets. Historic film footage is used.

Au Revoir Les Enfants (Goodbye, Children)

DD C 01:03:00

Source: Orion Home Video, 1888 Century Park East, Los Angeles, CA 90067; 310-282-2576

Credits: Produced and directed by Louis Malle. 1987.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

Based on Malle's own experiences in a French boarding school during the German occupation, this moving film documents the friendship between a 12 year-old Catholic boy and a Jewish youngster being sheltered at the school by a priest. The movie ends with the betrayal of the hidden child's identity to the Gestapo and his arrest, along with the priest. In French, with subtitles.

Schindler's List

DD B/W C 03:17:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #MCA172V-J5.

Credits: Directed by Steven Spielberg. Adapted from Thomas Keneally's fictionalized account of a true story. 1993.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

Shot on location in Poland in stark black-and-white, this compelling Oscar-winning film tells the story of German businessman Oskar Schindler who saved more than 1000 Jews from deportation and death. The book Schindler's List by Thomas Keneally chronicles the story more fully and with the greater nuance that a written account allows. Contains graphic violence, strong language, and nudity.

Weapons of the Spirit

D C 00:38:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #ADL156V.

Credits: Written, produced, and directed by Pierre Sauvage. 1988.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

This is the story of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, a small Protestant village in south-central France, and how its predominantly Protestant citizens responded to the Nazi threat against the Jews. Residents of the area hid and cared for 5,000 Jews, many of them children.

American and International Responses

Auschwitz and the Allies

D ST C B/W 01:53:00

Source: No distributor currently available.

Credits: B.B.C. Production. Martin Gilbert, Consultant. 1980.

Recommended for High School and Adult. Could be segmented for use in Middle School.

This film examines the responses of Allied governments as well as those of the International Red Cross, the Jewish community, and the victims. There are also many interviews with historic figures. This excellent film can be segmented for classroom use.

Safe Haven

D ST C 00:57:40

Source: No distributor currently available.

Credits: VMI-TV, Rochester, NY. Produced and directed by Paul Lewis. 1987.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Safe Haven tells the story of America's only refugee camp for victims of Nazi terror. Nearly 1,000 refugees were brought to Oswego, N.Y., and incarcerated in a camp known as Fort Ontario for eighteen months.

Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?

D B/W 01:30:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-4214246. #KN103V-J4.

Credits: Produced by James R. Kurth and Laurence Jarvik; directed by Laurence Jarvik. 1982.
Recommended for High School and Adult.

This film examines American responses to the Holocaust with particular attention to the actions (or failures to act) of American Jewish leaders. It is a detailed, informative presentation of a complex topic, with oral testimony from a wide range of Jews and non-Jews involved with the issue of Jewish rescue. Indispensable for more advanced students of the Holocaust. Graphic images.

America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference

D B/W C 01:00:00

Source: PBS Video, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314-1698; 800-344-3337.

Credits: Produced by Marty Ostrow. 1994.
Recommended for High School and Adult.

This film focuses mostly on the responses of Roosevelt, the State Department, and other U.S. government leaders to the Nazis' persecution and mass murder of European Jews. Weaving together interviews, official photos and documents, home movies, and archival footage, the production is especially good at tracing the complex social and political factors that shaped American responses to the Holocaust. The history is interwoven with the moving personal story of Jewish refugee Kurt Klein, who failed in his efforts to obtain visas for his parents to follow him to the United States.

The Double Crossing. The Voyage of the St. Louis

D B/W C 00:29:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802. 8004214246. #ER 11 OV-J4.

Credits: A production of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois and Loyola University of Chicago. Produced by Elliot Lefkovitz and Nancy Partos, 1992.
Recommended for High School and Adult.

More than 900 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany in 1939 on the luxury cruise ship the SS St. Louis were denied entry to Cuba and the United States and forced to return to Europe. In interviews interwoven with archival footage and photos, surviving passengers relive their voyage. The general issues this highly recommended film addresses -- racism, quota systems for refugees, and immigration policies -- remain urgent ones today.

The Boat is Full

DR B/W 01:44:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #FJIOOV-J4.

Credits: Produced by George Reinhart, Limbo Films, Inc., in coproduction with SRG, ZDF, ORE
Directed by Markus Imhoo. 1980.
Recommended for High School and Adult.

In 1942 the Swiss government, alarmed at the vast numbers of people fleeing Nazi Germany, established stringent immigration policies as they declared the country's

"lifeboat" full. Nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign film, this suspenseful drama tells the story of a group of refugees forced back to the border by ordinary citizens too frightened or indifferent to take them in. In German, with English subtitles.

Liberation

Holocaust: Liberation of Auschwitz

D B/W C 00:18:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #EBE 296 V.

Credits: Encyclopedia Britannica. 1990.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

The liberation of Auschwitz is filmed by Soviets, who linger on the faces of the inmates. Commentary describes the selection process, medical experiments, and daily life at Auschwitz. Soviet cameraman Alexander Vorontsov shares his impressions of the liberation. Highly graphic footage is included.

Liberation 1945: Testimony

D B/W C 01:16:00

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW, Washington, DC 20024-2150; 202-488-6144.

Credits: Produced by Sandy Bradley, Wentworth Films, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 1995.

This film includes expanded eyewitness testimony produced for the Museum's special exhibition Liberation 1945. Jewish survivors and Allied liberators recall how they felt at liberation and describe conditions inside the camps, including difficulties faced by medical relief teams working in the liberated camps. Survivors interned in displaced persons camps describe the organization of those camps and their efforts both to find surviving family members and, by marrying, to establish new families.

Opening the Gates of Hell

D B/W C 00:45:00

Source: Ergo Media Inc., P.O. Box 2037, Teaneck, NJ 07666; 800-695-3746.

Credits: Production of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois and Loyola University of Chicago.

Directed by Timothy Roberts. 1992.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

American liberators of the Nazi concentration camps share their memories of what they saw. Interviews are effectively combined with historic photos and footage showing the camps that were liberated by Americans: Buchenwald, Nordhausen, Dachau, Landsberg, and Mauthausen. The video includes graphic footage.

Post-Holocaust

The Last Sea

D B/W 01:30:00

Source: Ergo Media Inc., P.O. Box 2037, Teaneck, NJ 07666; 800-695-3746.

Credits: A Ghetto Fighters' House Release. Film by Haim Gouri, Jacquot Ehrlich, and David Bergman. 1987.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

The dramatic story of the postwar Jewish exodus from Europe to Israel is told using historic film footage. Finding themselves without family or homes to return to, many chose to make the hazardous journey by truck, by train, on foot, and finally on overcrowded boats.

Murderers Among Us: The Simon Wiesenthal Story

DR C 02:57:55

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #Yv1V I 17V.

Credits: HBO Pictures, Robert Cooper Production. Produced by John Kemeny and Robert Cooper. 1988.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

This is the true story of a Holocaust survivor who committed himself in the years after liberation to the task of hunting Nazis and bringing them to justice. This video can be effectively paired with the book *The Sunflower*. It is also useful for examining the response to the Holocaust in the postwar period.

Nazi War Crime Trials

D B/W 01:07:00

Source: Video Images, Box C, Sandy Hook, CT 06482; 800-243-0987.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

This vintage film made in 1945 uses newsreels and documentary footage to show the fate of Goering, Hess, Schacht, Streicher, Keitel, and other Nazis who were brought to trial after the war.

Related Films

The Hangman

A C 00:12:00

Source: CRM, 2215 Faraday, Suite F, Carlsbad, CA 92008; 800-421-0833.

Credits: Melrose Productions. 1964.

Recommended for Middle School and High School.

Animation is used to illustrate the poem by Maurice Ogden about a town in which the people are hanged one by one by a mysterious hangman while the town stands by rationalizing each victimization. This may be useful in introducing the subject of individual responsibility and the role of the bystander in the Holocaust.

Obedience

D B/W 00:45:00

Source: Penn State Audio-Visuals Service; 800-826-0132. Rent or purchase.

Credits: Produced by Stanley Milgram. 1962.

Recommended for Middle School and High School.

This documentary shows the experiment conducted at Yale University testing the willingness of people to follow orders which required inflicting pain on another. This film may be used to provoke discussions on morality and responsibility. It has been used effectively with films on the Nuremberg Trials or the trial of Adolf Eichmann, where the standard defense was that the criminals had only been following orders.

The Wave

DR C 00:46:00

Source: Zenger Video, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802; 800-421-4246. #FLM252V

Credits: Embassy Films. 1984.

Recommended for Middle School and High School.

This film recreates a classroom experiment done by a high school teacher who set up strict rules and behavior codes in an effort to show how peer pressure, conformity, and loyalty could work in a classroom the same way they had in Nazi Germany. This film may be used together with lessons on the rise of Nazism.

The Forgotten Genocide

D ST B/W C CC 00:28:00

Source: Atlantis Productions, 1252 La Granada Drive, Thousand Oaks, CA 91362; 805-495-2790.

Credits: Written, produced, and directed by J. Michael Hagopian, Ph.D. 1975.

Recommended for Middle School, High School, and Adult.

Nominated for an Emmy, this is a shortened version of The Armenian Case, which documents the Armenian genocide that took place during and after World War I. Personal narrative is included with historic photos and film footage.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

For the Living

D C 01:00:00

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW, Washington, DC 20024-2150; 202-488-6144.

Credits: Produced by WETA, Washington. 1993.

Recommended for High School and Adult.

This film documents the creation, design, and building of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Combining archival film footage and photos with on-location scenes at former Nazi camps in Poland, the video shows how the Museum's exhibits tell the story of both victims and survivors of the Holocaust. This film works best as an orientation for visitors to the Museum.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Teaching About the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators. Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reprinted by permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

[ANNOTATED WEBOGRAPHY OF THE HOLOCAUST](#)

<http://holocaust.fiu.edu>

State of Florida Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education Web Site. Includes links to Florida District Holocaust Coordinators and Holocaust Task Force affiliated centers in Florida. Task Force mission is to assist school district professional and support staff in the implementation of Florida Statute 233.061, Required Public School Instruction of the History of the Holocaust.

<http://www.ushmm.org/> [for the Student Outreach Site (authorization required) --
<http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/>]

The *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* homepage. Includes information about: background history and statistics of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, how to plan a visit to the Museum, Museum membership, community programs, films and lectures, conferences for educators, guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust, historical summaries, a videography for teachers, answers to five frequently asked questions about the Holocaust, Holocaust Resource Centers nationwide, and a searchable database of the Research Institute's archives and Library.

<http://www.yad-vashem.org.il/>

Yad Vashem. Homepage for Israel's Museum and Memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Currently under construction, and contains primarily general information, some photographs and excerpts from survivor testimony transcripts. There are educational materials available in Hebrew.

<http://www.wiesenthal.com/>

The *Simon Wiesenthal Center* homepage. Headquartered in Los Angeles, the Simon Wiesenthal Center is an international center for Holocaust remembrance, and the defense of human rights and the Jewish people. Contains answers to thirty-six frequently asked questions about the Holocaust, biographies of children who experienced the Holocaust, updates on current events, information on hate groups on the Net, and information about the Center and the Museum of Tolerance. Much of this information is available in several languages including Spanish, German and Italian.

<Http://wahoo.netrunner.net/~holomem/>

Homepage of the Holocaust Memorial Garden in Miami Beach, Florida. This site is a virtual tour of the Holocaust Memorial Garden, designed by Kenneth Treister. It serves as a memorial to those who died in the Holocaust and have no formal graves.

<http://www.facing.org/>

Facing History and Ourselves Homepage. Facing History and Ourselves is a national educational and professional development organization whose mission is to engage

students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. At the present time, their homepage offers basic information about their programs and resources.

<http://www.remember.org>

Homepage of the Cybrary of the Holocaust. At the time of this writing, The Cybrary is probably the largest web site on the Holocaust. It contains a collection of Encyclopedic information, answers to frequently asked questions, curriculum outlines (including a lesson plan on Anne Frank), excerpts from survivor testimony, transcripts of Nazi speeches and official documents, artifact photos, historical photos, artwork, poetry, books written by survivors, links to other Holocaust sites, and more. Both audio clips and transcripts of survivor testimony and interviews with scholars are available. Some of the recent additions to this site include photo tours of Auschwitz, genealogy tracing information, and online chats with scholars. As is the case with most servers on the Web, this one is under continuous construction and continues to grow.

<http://www.mtsu.edu/~baustin/holo.html>

Ben Austin's Holocaust Page. Ben Austin of Middle Tennessee State University put together this web site which contains a large amount of historical information, including sections specifically on Roma (Gypsies), homosexuals, and the International Military Tribunal. Austin frequently cites sources for his information which may aid students who decide to search for sources outside of the Internet.

<http://www.charm.net/~rbennett/l'chaim.html>

L'Chaim: A Holocaust Web Project. Developed and maintained by Robert J. Bennett, a graduate student at the University of Baltimore, this site highlights a virtual tour of Dachau which incorporates photographs and text from primary sources, excerpts from the survivor's book, and links to other major sites on the Holocaust. Still under construction.

<http://www.tulane.edu/~so-inst/>

Southern Institute for Education and Research at Tulane University. This impressive web site highlights antibias education training resources for combating prejudice. It includes: information about diversity training workshops, Holocaust education and civil rights workshops and lesson plans (including excerpts from an on-line lesson plan on Schindler's List and one on "everyday people" during the Holocaust), transcripts of Holocaust survivor testimony, and links to other sites on civil rights, human rights, the Holocaust, Judaism/Jewish history, and African-American history/culture.

<http://www.library.yale.edu/testimonies/homepage.html>

Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. Contains general information about the archive and how to use it, as well as audio and video clips of several testimonies from survivors, liberators, rescuers and bystanders.

<http://www.hooked.net/users/rgreene/>

The Holocaust Album: A Collection of Historical and Contemporary Photographs. is a homepage of rotating collections by Dr. Ron Greene that presently contains two main sections. One is called Visas For Life: The Remarkable Story of Chiune and Yukiko Sugihara which recreates a major exhibition of photos and text that tells the story of Sugihara's rescue of European Jews. The other is an exhibit with text that tells the story of liberation of the camps accompanied by photos of survivors revisiting Germany 50 years later.

<http://sorrel.humboldt.edu/~rescuers/>

To Save a Life--Stories of Jewish Rescue. Written and maintained by Ellen Land-Weber, this site contains excerpts from an unpublished book about the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust. It features personal narratives and photographs of rescuers.

<http://www.vhf.org/>

Survivors of the Shoah. The Visual History Foundation created by Steven Spielberg has recorded more than 25,000 videotaped interviews with Holocaust survivors. These are being recorded electronically for computer distribution to museums, CD-ROMs and other sites. You can find out more about it at this web site.

<http://www.logos.com/holocaust/main.html>

Lest We Forget-- A History of the Holocaust. This web site is about a CD-ROM from Logos Research Systems documenting the historical events. The CD-ROM costs \$59.95 and can be ordered by calling 1(800)87-LOGOS.

<http://www.annefrank.com/>

Anne Frank Online. This site is dedicated to everything about the Nazis' most famous victim.

<http://www.intrescom.org>

Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is the leading nonsectarian voluntary organization providing relief, protection, and resettlement service for refugees and victims of oppression or violent conflict. The IRC is committed freedom, human dignity, and self-reliance.

<http://www2.ca.nizkor.org/~klewis>

A history of the Einsatzgruppen killing units as seen through documents, images, and testimonies of victims and perpetrators.

<http://www3.umassd.edu/cybered/usersuite/>

Click on Current Courses; click on the Holocaust. CyberEd Course on the Holocaust. From the University of Massachusetts, this course includes online sites as part of the course of study about the Holocaust.

http://www.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/History/20th_Century/Holocaust_The/

Yahoo's Holocaust Listings. Here's a pointer to many Holocaust resources.

<news:soc.culture.jewish.holocaust>

An Internet discussion group (not a web site) about the Holocaust.

<http://www.fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/>

A Teacher's Guide To The Holocaust. An Overview for Teachers which includes a timeline, people, the arts, student activities, teacher resources.

<http://h-net2.msu.edu/~holoweb>

H-Holocaust. Allows scholars of the Holocaust to communicate with each other. Makes available diverse bibliographical, research and teaching aids.

<http://www.adl.org/>

Anti-Defamation League, an organization founded in 1913 to fight antisemitism through programs and services that counteract hatred, prejudice and bigotry. The mission of the ADL is "to stop the defamation of Jewish people, to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike."

<http://www.spectacle.org/695/ausch.html>

An Auschwitz Alphabet. Vocabulary of the Holocaust.

<http://www.historychannel.com>

History Channel.

<http://www.holocaust.miningco.com> [<http://www.holocaust.miningco.com/msub5.htm> contains educational resources]

The Mining Company. Includes Holocaust vocabulary, timeline, links to other sites, bulletin boards, chatrooms, bookstore, photographs, poetry.

<http://www.annefrank.nl>

The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam.

<http://www.raoul-wallenberg.com/>

The official site about Raoul Wallenberg, one of the greatest rescuers during the Holocaust.

<http://www.gfh.org.il/>

Ghetto Fighters' House. Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum in Israel.

<http://www.ellisland.org>

Ellis Island Home Page.

<http://www.socialstudies.com>

Social Studies School Service. An on-line catalog.

<http://www.learn.org/hgp/>

I*EARN Holocaust/Genocide Project. An international nonprofit telecommunications project focusing on the study of the Holocaust and other genocides. Involves participating schools around the world.

<http://www.splcenter.org/teachingtolerance.html>

Southern Poverty Law Center. Teaching Tolerance project started in 1991 in response to alarming increase in hate crime among youth. Offers free or low-cost resources to educators at all levels.

<http://www.maven.co.il/subjects/idx178.htm>

Holocaust and Antisemitism.

<http://www.hatewatch.org>

Hate Watch is a web-based organization that monitors the growing and evolving threat of hate group activity on the Internet.

<http://www.mol.org>

Official website of the March of the Living.

<http://www.hrusa.org>

Human Rights USA suggests ideas and tools for advocating and protecting human rights. Encourages community-based action.

Sources:

Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.
Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff, Holocaust Specialist, Miami-Dade County Public Schools
The Miami Herald
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

HOLOCAUST TASK FORCE AFFILIATED CENTERS IN FLORIDA

THE HOLOCAUST OUTREACH CENTER OF FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

777 Glades Road
P.O. Box 3091
Boca Raton, Florida 33431
For Information, call 561-297-2929, Fax 561-297-2925, E-Mail: eheckler@acc.fau.edu.

The Holocaust Outreach Center of Florida Atlantic University is a joint effort of the College of Holocaust Studies. Its purpose is to provide training, resources, and support for teachers, media specialists, and school administrators in FAU's service area of Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, and Okeechobee Counties.

With the passage of mandated Holocaust education by the State legislature, FAU established the first endowed chair of Holocaust studies in the state of Florida, the Raddock Eminent Scholar Chair of Holocaust Studies. Dr. Alan L. Berger occupies the chair and also supervises the Holocaust Outreach Center. Dr. Berger also directs the Holocaust and Judaic Studies program, which is currently moving toward BA and departmental status.

The Holocaust Outreach Center sponsors a yearly week-long summer institute on Holocaust Studies as well as several mini-institutes held during the year. These programs include lectures by scholars in the field, hands-on experience with curricular materials, and personal testimony by those whose lives have been directly touched by the Holocaust.

Attendees not only explore the history of the Holocaust and inquire into its contemporary lessons but focus on the methods necessary for effective teaching of the Holocaust at age appropriate levels. The Center has developed its own differentiated and sequenced curriculum. K-5 curricula focus on prejudice reduction and 6-12 social studies and language arts units concentrate on various aspects of the Holocaust. Additionally, undergraduate social studies and language arts students at the College of Education receive pre-service training.

The Center maintains a lending library of videos, posters, maps, class sets of curricular materials, and fiction and non-fiction books at elementary, middle and high school levels. The Center's Speakers' Bureau of survivors, hidden children, and second generation brings personal testimony to students in their classrooms and to training sessions. Furthermore, the Center sponsors special programs for students at all grade levels. The W.I.N. program (Wipeout Intolerance Now) is directed at 4th and 5th grade students, Living Voices at 8th grade, and Student Awareness Days at 10th-12th grade pupils.

To keep in contact with teachers, media specialists, and administrators, the Center maintains its own web site and sends out frequent notices of current and future programming.

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY HOLOCAUST STUDY SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATORS

Center for Professional Development
555 W. Pensacola Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-1640
For information, call 850-644-1882, Fax 850-644-2589, E-Mail: kbickley@cpd.fsu.edu

The Holocaust Study Summer Institute for educators addresses the need to reach Florida's school students by providing a week-long institute to train teachers in Holocaust studies. Participant-teachers hear thought-provoking presentations in multiple disciplines, visit with Holocaust survivors and members of the Jewish community, and receive ideas and materials to be applied to the classroom. Attendees are selected partly for their leadership in designing instructional materials or developing curriculum in their school or county. They return to their schools to integrate Holocaust studies in their own classrooms and complete a final project for faculty review which includes lesson plans incorporating Holocaust educational materials. They also promote the inclusion of Holocaust studies within the larger school curriculum by offering in-service training and counsel to other teachers, school resource professionals and schools, county and district curriculum supervisors. The institute seeks to help ensure that:

- the significance of the Holocaust, which encompasses important lessons in hate, intolerance, insensitivity, and the resiliency of the human spirit, will not be lost for future generations.
- the curriculum is revised to educate young people about the enormous significance of the Holocaust.
- systematic curriculum change is reinforced by teachers going back to their districts and conducting training sessions for their school colleagues on the information learned at the institute.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL RESOURCE AND EDUCATION CENTER OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

851 North Maitland Avenue

Maitland, Florida 32751

For information, call 407-628-0555, Fax 407-628-1079, E-Mail: execdir@holocaustedu.org

Mission Statement

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Central Florida is a not-for-profit, interfaith, interdenominational organization. Its mission is to provide educational and cultural experiences -- to examine the past in order to learn from it, and to help people become aware of and alert to present dangers to our freedoms, our human rights, and our lives by learning the lessons of the Holocaust.

The vision of a just community in a diverse, multi-cultural setting engaged in combatting the dark forces of prejudice and antisemitism is the focus of our work, which we undertake for the benefit of present and future generations. Thus, "memory is transformed into study and study into memory" (Elie Wiesel) in hopes that oppression and genocide will be combatted and shall never happen again to any minority group.

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center is an appointed member of the Florida Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education. Since April 1994, when the Florida legislature passed the mandate to teach the Holocaust in all classes, the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center is charged with implementation of the mandate in Central Florida and beyond. To this end, a Summer Teacher's Institute is offered each year, training teachers and providing resources.

State Mandate

Implementation of the state mandate to teach the Holocaust through training hundreds of teachers, instructing tens of thousands of students in the museum and classroom.

Youth-At-Risk

Re-educating and counseling Skinheads and youth-at-risk.

Curricula Distribution

Writing, publishing and distributing curricula for all levels. Our curricula are currently in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Holocaust Scholar Development

Developing Holocaust scholars for university and grade school levels -- currently numbering fourteen teachers and professors in Central Florida.

Teaching Resources

Creating "teaching trunks" -- complete resource for classroom teaching of the Holocaust unit.

World Class Exhibits

World class exhibits featured annually at the Holocaust Center and/or in area museums and in libraries (at least three each year).

Annual Essay & Art Contest

Annual essay and art contest for all students.

Cultural Community Programs

Dramatic and ballet performances in collaboration with area theater and ballet ensembles.

Yom Hashoah

Yom Hashoah community interfaith program with music, candlelighting and multimedia presentation, featuring the major lecture of the year with eminent author-scholar.

Survivors/Speakers

Survivors/speakers for schools and civic organizations.

Community Film Series

Annual film series for community at large.

Film & Video Acquisitions

Acquisitions of current and new books, films and videos.

Annual Event to Honor Community Leaders

Annual tribute dinner with entertainment to honor outstanding community leaders.

Participation in Holocaust Conferences

Inter-networking with Holocaust Centers throughout the world and participation in nationwide and worldwide scholars' conferences on Holocaust education.

Publishing of Bibliography of Holocaust Works

Our bibliographies are widely used both in U.S. and internationally in teaching the Holocaust.

Developing Coalitions

Coalitions for specific cultural and educational projects created with: University of Central Florida, Rollins College, Orlando Museum of Art, Civic Theater, Promise of Tomorrow (young Shakespeare Company), International Dance ensemble, Junior League, Jewish Community Center, National Conference (formerly National Conference of Christians and Jews), Mayor's & County Commission's Chair's Diversity Board.

HOLOCAUST DOCUMENTATION AND EDUCATION CENTER, INC.

Florida International University - North Miami Campus
3000 N.E. 151 Street
North Miami, Florida 33181
For information, call 305-919-5690, Fax 305-919-5691, E-Mail: xholocau@fiu.edu

The History

The Center was established in 1979 as a non-profit, non-sectarian documentation and educational resource. The vision of the founders, Arnold Picker and Abe Halpern, was to create a permanent and irrefutable record of the Holocaust: "A Living Memorial Through Education." The primary mission was to collect and preserve eyewitness testimonies of Holocaust survivors, their rescuers, and liberators, thus making this a unique oral history collection available to local, national, and international students and scholars for non-commercial educational and research purposes.

The founders of the Center recognized that the Holocaust is one of history's most extreme examples of intolerance, bigotry, and denial of human rights. With this in mind, the founders invited all of the South Florida university and college presidents to participate in the establishment and work of the Center.

Today, the Center is governed by a Board of Directors, which is composed of leaders in education, presidents of the fifteen Holocaust survivor clubs and representatives of the child survivor and children of survivor groups in Southeast Florida as well as other supporters whose expertise and dedication have guided our development and broadened our goals.

Oral History Programs

Documentation

Since the first interviews in 1980, the Center has achieved recognition and acclaim for the largest, self-produced, standardized collection of Holocaust testimony in the country. To date, the Center's volunteer interviewers have conducted over 1,600 interviews. Licensed copies of these oral histories are currently housed at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

College Accredited Interviewer Training Course

Annually, the Center provides a 54-hour, college-accredited, volunteer interviewer lecture training series presented by scholars of the Holocaust, historians, educators, and psychologists as well as survivors, liberators, and rescuers. The history lecture portion is followed by intensive interview skills workshops devoted to learning those interviewing skills which have been exclusively developed to elicit accurate memory of the Holocaust from those who were there.

Educational Outreach Programs

Since the passage of the legislation in 1994 mandating Holocaust education, our Center has been recognized as an officially appointed member organization of the Florida Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education.

Thus, we have been integrally involved in every aspect of this state-wide effort through the following programs and activities.

The State of Florida Resource Manual on Holocaust Education

On behalf of the Task Force, the Center has coordinated the overall effort to bring this resource manual to fruition. At present, the Center, on behalf of the Task Force, is focusing on the development of Holocaust curricula for grades K-8. Completion of these resources is scheduled for June 1999.

Student Awareness Days

The goal of the Student Awareness Day is to raise the consciousness of students by alerting them to the dangers of prejudice. Through the guidance of speakers, in particular survivors, the students journey through the historical and philosophical implications of prejudice exemplified by the Holocaust. A portion of the program is devoted to help students become aware of and confront their own feelings and experiences with discrimination, hatred, and bigotry.

The programs are targeted for high school and college and university students. They are seated at a table with ten peers, a Holocaust survivor, and a facilitator. Throughout the day, the students have the opportunity to talk with and question the Holocaust survivor. This experience provides them with firsthand information from someone who lived through the Holocaust, thus bringing history alive for the students in a unique and meaningful way.

Teachers' Institute On Holocaust Studies

The goals of this week-long institute, which is sponsored by the State of Florida Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education, are to provide educators with a hands-on, interdisciplinary approach to teaching the Holocaust and also to provide them with materials and techniques to use in their classrooms. The educators will have the opportunity to probe deeply and understand the in-depth historical perspective which is cultivated throughout the week. By introducing a variety of methods to help teachers impart to their students' knowledge of the Holocaust and its implications for our world today, the institute will prepare teachers to implement the Florida legislative mandate to teach the Holocaust.

Annual Visual Arts & Writing Contest

Each year, the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center sponsors a visual arts and writing contest for students in grades 6-12 as well as in colleges and universities. This contest gives the students the opportunity to reflect on the Holocaust and to understand how the lessons impact on their lives over fifty years later. This contest also provides the students with a vehicle to express their feelings through creative avenues such as writing, painting, etc.

Speakers' Bureau

We fulfill speaking requests to schools, community organizations, churches, and synagogues. The speakers include Holocaust survivors, liberators, rescuers, child survivors, children of survivors, and educators. During this past year, our speakers addressed a total of 15,000 people.

Library/Newspaper Clipping File

The Center maintains a newspaper clipping file for use by teachers, students, authors, and anyone else interested in researching issues applicable to the Holocaust events and their recent implications. The in-house reference library collection contains many books on various aspects of the Holocaust.

Memorabilia Collection

This collection is comprised of invaluable documents, letters, manuscripts, personal narratives, diaries, ghetto and concentration camp postage and money, photographs, magazines, newspapers, maps, posters, rare books, pamphlets, and original artwork.

Other Programs

The Center co-sponsored the first National Conference on the Identification, Treatment and Care of the Aging Holocaust Survivor. (Selected published proceedings are available upon request.) The Center supervises student research for Master's and Doctoral theses on subjects of the Holocaust. It also provides assistance to the United States Department of Justice, Office of Special Investigation in locating particular individuals who may have been witness to events currently under investigation.

Future Beginnings

The Center is now embarking on a major mission to erect an appropriate and lasting facility and endow a chair of Holocaust Studies, thus memorializing the unique legacy and perpetuating the universal impact of the lessons of the Holocaust so that future generations will build bridges of life and not gas chambers for death.

FLORIDA HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

55 5th Street South

St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

For information, call 727-820-0100, Fax 727-821-8435

Website: <http://www.tampabayholocaust.org>

"The center is dedicated to advancing public awareness, education and understanding of the Holocaust, honoring the memory of millions of innocent people who suffered, struggled and died in the Shoah."

In every generation, there are those who seek to destroy those who are different from themselves. By studying about the Holocaust, we can recognize and fight bigotry, hatred, and prejudice. Our children respond with their hope and optimism as they learn that there are those who will take a chance, will risk all to help the downtrodden, the victim, even against all odds. Through lessons of the Holocaust, we teach tolerance and diversity.

Architecture: The new 27,000 square foot Holocaust Center is the fourth largest Holocaust museum in the country. Eleven eternal flames, in remembrance of the eleven million victims, are ensconced on the exterior of the building. The entrance incorporates a wall of seven transparent triangles etched with the mission statement of the museum and deliberately chose quotations. The large backdrop behind the triangles contains a montage of painted images of the Holocaust. Design of the Center was the collaborative efforts of Nick Benjacob, architect and L. David Von Thaden, interior design.

Exhibitions: Through a collection of photographs, testimonies, and historical artifacts relating to the Holocaust, the visitor is guided through the comprehensive Core Exhibit. Divided into twelve areas, the Core Exhibition takes a visitor from the flourishing pre-war life of eastern Europe, through the events of the Holocaust, concentration camps and ultimately, the birth of the State of Israel. Located in the central atrium of the exhibition space is Auschwitz Boxcar #113 0695-5. Resting on railroad tracks from Treblinka, this boxcar was once used by the Nazis to transport Jews and other men, women, and children to the killing centers. The permanent exhibition was designed by Bob Davidson of EAM Shopworks. Hundreds of digitized images, and historical and cultural artifacts comprise the museum's Core Exhibition.

General Information:

- The Holocaust Museum was instrumental in shaping and passing legislation to mandate Holocaust education in the schools.
- 160,000 people have viewed 27 different exhibits.
- 2,500 teachers have received training in Holocaust education from the Center.
- 100,000 students have visited the Center.
- A 1997 study revealed many community leaders view The Holocaust Center as a critical vehicle to impact racial discord, antisemitic and white supremacist activities.
- The following services are available from the Center:
 - * Book and Author series
 - * Commemoration
 - * Community Outreach
 - * Scholarly events
 - * School programs
 - * Survivor services
 - * Traveling exhibits
 - * Video testimonies

Education Resources:

- Curriculum K-12 The Holocaust, Classroom Connections
- K-12 Teaching Trunks with accompanying curriculum frameworks
- Outreach programs to public/parochial/private schools

Tour information: Docent-led tours are available for schools and groups of ten or more by appointment. The guided tour includes the theater, permanent exhibition, changing exhibition gallery, library, and memorial rooms.

Museum Hours / Admission / Policies

Monday - Friday	10 am - 5 pm
Saturday - Sunday	noon - 5 pm

The Center is closed: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur & Christmas Day

General Admission \$6

Seniors and College Students (with ID) \$5

Students 18 and under \$2.

Discounts are available to groups of ten or more by prior reservation.

Eating, drinking and smoking are not permitted.

Photography, video and audio recording are not permitted.

The museum is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Directions: The museum is conveniently situated in downtown St. Petersburg, Florida. It can easily be reached from Interstate 275. Visitors should use exit 10 (I-375) and follow the signs to 4th Street North. Turn right onto 5th Street and go 4 blocks. The museum is immediately on the right once you cross Central Avenue.

Affiliations: The Center is a member of:

The American Association of Museums

The Association of Holocaust Organizations

The Association of Jewish Libraries

The Council of American Jewish Museums

The Florida Museum Association

The Florida State Task Force for Holocaust Education

FLORIDA DISTRICT HOLOCAUST COORDINATORS

COUNTY	HOLOCAUST	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE
Alachua	Christina F. Shaw Multicult./Diversity Ed.	620 E. University Ave. Gainesville, 32601	352-955-7614 352-955-7619
Baker	David Crawford	392 S. Boulevard E. Macclenny, 32063	904-259-6251
Bay	Mr. Lendy Willis	1311 Balboa Ave. Panama City, 32401	850-872-4100
Bradford	Eugenia Whitehead	611 N. Orange St. Starke, 32091	904-966-6810
Brevard	Irene Ramnarine	2700 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera, 32940	321-631-1911
Broward	Linda Medvin	M.E.T.R.I.C. Bldg, 1441 S. Federal H'way Ft. Lauderdale, 33316	954-761-2453
Calhoun	Patricia Suggs	337 River St. Blountstown, 32424	850-674-8734
Charlotte	Elanna Silberman Dr. Dyane Marks	1445 Education Way Port Charlotte, 33948	941-255-0808
Citrus	Ron Kirves	1007 W. Main St. Inverness, 34450	352-726-1931
Clay	Lyle Bandy	23 S. Green St. Green Cove Springs, 32043	904-272-8100 ext. 461
Collier	Jack Bovee	3710 Estey Ave. Naples, 34104	941-643-2700
Columbia	Lenora Steadman	Route 4 - PO Box 1000 Ft. White, 32038	904-497-2301
DeSoto	Tamara O'Donnell Dir. of Instructional Svc.	530 LaSolona Ave. Arcadia, 34266	941-494-4222 ext. 112
Dixie	Kenneth Baumer	PO Box 890 Cross City, 32628	352-498-1301
Duval	Alan Rushing	1701 Prudential Drive Jacksonville, 32207	904-390-2130
Escambia	Dr. Jacqueline Young Subject Area Specialist	JE Hall Center 30 E. Texar Drive Pensacola, 32503	850-469-5392

FLORIDA DISTRICT HOLOCAUST COORDINATORS

Flagler	Phyllis Edwards	PO Box 755 Bunnell, 32110	904-437-7526
Franklin	Brenda Wilson	155 Avenue E Apalachicola, 32320	850-653-8831
Gadsden	Janey DuPont	35 Experiment Station Rd. Quincy, 32351	850-627-9651
Gilchrist	n/a		
Glades	n/a		
Gulf	Sara Joe Wooten	150 Middle School Road Port St. Joe, 32456	850-229-8256
Hamilton	Brenda Graham	PO Box 1059 Jasper, 32052	904-792-6521
Hardee	Greg Dick Sylvia Collins	PO Drawer 1678 Wauchula, 33873	863-773-9058
Hendry	Scott Cooper	PO Box 1980 LaBelle, 33975	863-674-4555
Hernando	Charles Casciotta	919 N. Broad St. Brooksville, 34601	352-797-7052
Highlands	Jim Bible	426 School St. Sebring, 33870	863-471-5571
Hillsborough	Kathy Taylor	901 E. Kennedy Blvd PO Box 3408 Tampa, 33601	813-272-4810
Holmes	Sheri Brooks Tommie Hudson	701 E. Pennsylvania Bonifay, 32425	850-547-6674
Indian River	Karen VanDeVoorde	1990 25 th St. Vero Beach, 32960	561-564-3000
Jackson	Frank Waller	PO Box 5958 Marianna, 32446	850-482-1211
Jefferson	Cynthia Shrestha	1490 W. Washington St. Monticello, 32344	850-342-0100
Lafayette	Betina Hurst	Route 10 Mayo, 32066	904-294-1351
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Leon	Marvin Byers	PO Box A-19 Tallahassee, 32307	850-599-3325
Levy	Rick Turner	PO Drawer 129 Bronson	352-486-5231
Liberty	Sue Summers	PO Box 429 Bristol, 32321	850-643-2249
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Manatee	Linda Guilfoyle	PO Box 9069 Bradenton, 34206	941-741-7403
Marion	Mary Lou Van Note	512 SE 3 Street Ocala, 34471	352-671-7548
Martin	Diane Pierce	500 E. Ocean Blvd. Stuart, 34994	561-219-1200
Miami-Dade	Miriam Klein Kassenoff	1500 Biscayne Blvd. Miami, 33132	305-995-1201
Monroe	Kathleen Guevremont	241 Trumbo Road Key West	1305-293-1400
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Okaloosa	Charlene Couvillon	120 Lowery PL, SE Fort Walton Bch., 32548	850-833-3481
Okeechobee	Barbara James	700 SW 2 Ave. Okeechobee, 34974	863-462-5000 ext. 273
Orange	Mitch Blomer	445 W. Amelia St. Orlando, 32801	407-317-3200
Osceola	John Boyd	817 Bill Beck Blvd. Kissimmee, 34744	407-870-4919
Palm Beach	Steve Byrne	3310 Forest Hill Blvd. West Palm Beach, 33406	561-434-8619
Pasco	Kathleen Steiner	7227 Land O'Lakes Blvd Land O'Lakes, 346639	813-929-2243

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Sarasota	Camille Ashcraft Lori White	1960 Landings Blvd. Sarasota, 34231	941-927-9000 ext. 4100
Seminole	Jane Palmer	400 E. Lake Mary Blvd. Sanford, 32773	407-320-0189
Sumter	John Dixon	2680 WC 476 Bushnell, 33513	352-793-2315 ext.213
Suwannee	James Cooper	702 2 nd St. NW Live Oak, 32060	904-364-2624
Taylor	Clyde Cruce	900 Johnson Stripling Rd. Perry, 32347	850-838-2525
Union	Marsan Carr	55 SW 6 th St. Lake Butler, 32054	904-496-4179
Volusia	Jason Caros	PO Box 2410 Daytona Beach, 32115	904-255-6475
Wakulla	Judy Myhre	PO Box 100 Crawfordville, 32326	850-926-7131
Walton	Marsha Pugh	145 Park St. DeFuniak Springs, 32433	850-892-8310
Washington	Michael Welch	652 3 rd St. Chipley, 32428	850-638-6222

NATIONAL HOLOCAUST RESOURCE CENTERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

STATE/CITY ZIP	INSTITUTION ADDRESS	TELEPHONE FAX
CA Huntington Beach 92647	Auschwitz Study Foundation, Inc. P.O. Box 2232	714/848-1101 714/842-1979
CA Burbank 91505-3944	Committee of Concerned Christians 222 N. Rose Street, #104	818/848-3442 818/848-1444
CA Los Angeles 90046	Friends of Le Chambon 8033 Sunset Boulevard, Suite 784	213/650-1774 213/654-4689
CA San Francisco 94118	Holocaust Center of Northern California 639 14th Avenue	415/751-6040 415/751-6735
CA San Francisco 94107	Holocaust Oral History Project P.O. Box 77603	415/882-7092
CA Los Angeles 90036	Los Angeles Holocaust Museum 6006 Wilshire Boulevard	213/761-8170 213/761-8174
CA Los Angeles 90035-4792	Simon Wiesenthal Center/Museum of Tolerance 9760 West Pico Boulevard	310/553-9036 310/277-6568
CA Rohnert Park 94928	Sonoma State University Holocaust Studies Center 1801 East Cotati Avenue	707/664-4076 707/664-2505
CA Los Angeles 90078-3168	Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation P.O. Box 3168	800/661-2092 818/866-0312
CO Denver 80208	Holocaust Awareness Institute/ University of Denver 2199 South University Boulevard	303/871-3013 303/871-3037
CT New Haven 06520-8240	Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies P.O. Box 208240 Sterling Memorial Library - Yale University	203/432-1879

CT West Hartford 06117	Holocaust Child Survivors of Connecticut, Inc. 2658 Albany Avenue	
DE Wilmington 19801	Halina Wind Preston Holocaust Education Center 100 West 10th Street, Suite 301	302/427-2100 302/427-2438
FL North Miami 33181	Holocaust Documentation and Education Center Florida International University Biscayne Bay Campus 3000 N.E. 151 Street	305/919-5690 305/919-5691
FL Maitland 32751	Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Central Florida 851 North Maitland Avenue	407/628-0555 407/628-1079
FL Boca Raton 33431-0991	Holocaust Outreach Center of Florida Atlantic University P.O. Box 3091 777 Glades Road	561/367-2929 561/297-3613
FL Davie 33328	Mania Nudel Holocaust Learning Center	954/434-0499 ext. 314
	David Posnack Jewish Center 5850 South Pine Island Road	954/434-1741
FL St. Petersburg 33701	Florida Holocaust Museum and Educational Center 55 - 5th Street South	727/820-0100 727/821-8435
FL Deland 32723	West Volusia Holocaust Memorial Council, Inc. P.O. Box 4045	904/734-1926
GA Atlanta 30322	Fred R. Crawford Witness to the Holocaust Project-Emory University	404/329-6428
GA Atlanta 30334	Georgia Commission on the Holocaust 330 Capitol Avenue SE	404/651-9273 404/657-8427
GA Atlanta 30309-2837	The Lillian and A.J. Weinberg Center For Holocaust Education of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum The Spring Center 1440 Spring Street NE	404/873-1661 404/874-7043

HI Honolulu 96822	The Hawaii Holocaust Project W.S. Richardson School of Law University of Hawaii, Monoa 2515 Dole Street	808/956-6994 808/956-6402
IL Skokie 60076-2063	Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois 4255 West Main Street	847/677-4640 847/677-4684
IL Chicago 60605	Zell Holocaust Memorial/Zell Center for Holocaust Studies of Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies 618 S. Michigan Avenue	312/922-9012 312/922-6406
KS Shawnee Mission 66211-1800	Midwest Center for Holocaust Education 5801 W. 115 Street, Suite 106	913/327-8190 913/327-8193
LA New Orleans 70118-5555	Southern Institute for Education and Research at Tulane University Tulane University MR Box 1692 31 McAlister Drive	504/865-6100 504/862-8957
ME Augusta 04330-1664	Holocaust Human Rights Center of Maine P.O. Box 4645	207/933-2620 207/993-2620
MD Baltimore 21215	American Red Cross Holocaust and War Victims Tracing and Information Center American Red Cross 4700 Mount Hope Drive	410/764-5311 410/764-7664
MD Baltimore 21215	Baltimore Jewish Council 5750 Park Heights Avenue	410/542-4850 410/542-4834
MA Brookline 02146	Facing History and Ourselves National 16 Hurd Road	617/232-1595 617/232-0281
MA Springfield 01108	Hatikvah Holocaust Education and Resource Center 1160 Dickinson Street	413/737-4313 413/737-4348
MA Peabody 01960	Holocaust Center of the North Shore Jewish Federation McCarthy School 76 Lake Street - Room 108	508/535-0003

MA Boston 02111	New England Holocaust Memorial Committee 59 Temple Place, Suite 608	617/338-2288 617/338-6885
MI Ann Arbor 48104	Center for the Study of the Child 914 Lincoln Avenue	313/761-6440 313/761-5629
MI West Bloomfield 48322-3005	Holocaust Memorial Center 6602 West Maple Road	248/661-0840 248/661-4204
MO St. Louis 63146	Holocaust Museum and Learning Center 12 Millstone Campus Drive	314/432-0020 314/432-1277
NV Reno 89557	Center for Holocaust, Genocide and Peace Studies - University of Nevada University of Nevada Reno (402)	702/784-6767 702/784-6611
NV Las Vegas 89119-7520 Holocaust	Jewish Federation of Las Vegas Education Committee 3909 S. Maryland Parkway Suite 400	702/732-0556 702/732-3228
NV Las Vegas 89119-7520 on	Nevada Governor's Advisory Council Education Relating to the Holocaust 3909 S. Maryland Parkway Suite 400	702/732-0556 702/732-3228
NH Keene 03435-3201	Holocaust Resource Center - Keene State College Mason Library Keene State College 229 Main Street	603/358-2490 603/358-2745
NJ Teaneck 07666	American Friends of the Ghetto Fighters' House POB 2153 765 Queen Anne Road	201/836-1910 201/801-0786
NJ Mahwah 07430	Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies - Ramapo College Ramapo Valley Road	201/529-7409 201/529-6654
NJ Lincroft 07738	Center for Holocaust Studies Brookdale Community College 765 Newman Springs Road	908/224-2769 908/224-2664

NJ Morristown 07960	College of St. Elizabeth/Holocaust Education Resource Center 2 Convent Road	973/290-4351
NJ Madison 07940	Drew University Center for Holocaust Study Rose Memorial Library/301	201/408-3600 201/408-3768
NJ Cherry Hill 08003	Holocaust Museum Educational Center of the Delaware Valley Weinberg Jewish Community Campus 1301 Springdale Road Suite 200	609/751-9500 X249 609/751-1697
NJ Clifton 07012	Holocaust Resource Center of the Jewish Federation of Greater Clifton-Passaic 199 Scoles Avenue	201/777-7031 201/777-6701
NJ Union 07083	Holocaust Resource Center of Kean University Thompson Library, Second Floor Kean College	908/527-3049 908/629-7130
NJ Pomona 08240	Holocaust Resource Center/The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey	609/652-4699 609/748-5543
NJ Lawrenceville 08648	The Julius and Dorothy Koppelman Holocaust/Genocide Resource Center Rider University 2083 Lawrenceville Road	609/896-5345 609/895-5684
NJ Whippany 07981	Metrowest Holocaust Education and Remembrance Council 901 Route 10	201/884-4800 x178 201/884-7361
NJ Trenton 08625-0500	New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education N.J. Dept. Of Education 240 W. State Street CN500	609/292-9274 609/292-1211
NY New York 10017	ADL Braun Holocaust Institute 823 United Nations Plaza	212/885-7804 212/867-0779

NY New York 10001	American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors 122 West 30th Street	212/239-4230 212/279-2926
NY New York 10110-1699	American Society for Yad Vashem 500 Fifth Avenue Suite 1600	212/220-4304 212/220-4308
NY New York 10012	Anne Frank Center USA 584 Broadway Suite 408	212/431-7993 212/431-8375
NY Rochester 14607	Center for Holocaust Awareness and Information (CHAI) Jewish Community Federation of Greater Rochester 441 East Avenue	716/461-0290 716/461-0912
NY New York 10038	Commission on Holocaust Remembrance of Agudath Israel of America 84 William Street	212/797-9000 X31 212/269-2843
NY Brooklyn 11229	Rabbi Leib Geliebter Memorial Foundation, Inc. 1663 East 17th Street	718/998-4437 718/998-2137
NY New York 10017	Hidden Child Foundation/ADL 823 United Nations Plaza	212/885-7901
NY Plainview 11803	Holocaust-Genocide Studies Center Plainview/Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School 50 Kennedy Drive	516/937-6382 516/937-6382
NY Rochester 14623-5780M	Holocaust-Genocide Studies Project Monroe Community College 1000 East Henrietta Road	716/292-3228 716/427-2749
NY Brooklyn 11235	Holocaust Memorial Committee of Brooklyn 1405 Avenue Z, Box 265	718/934-3500 718/646-0376
NY Glen Cove 11542	Holocaust Memorial and Education Center of Nassau County Welwyn Preserve 100 Crescent Beach Road	516/571-8040 516/571-8041

NY Cheektowaga 14225	Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo 1050 Maryvale Drive	716/634-9535 716/634-9625
NY Bayside 11364	Holocaust Resource Center and Archives- Queensborough Community College 222-05 56th Avenue	718/225-1617 718/631-6306
NY Bronx 10468	Holocaust Studies Center and Museum, The Bronx High School of Science Bronx H.S. of Science 75 West 205th Street	718/367-5252 718/796-2421
NY Latham 12110 Pursuit	Holocaust Survivors and Friends in of Justice, Inc. 800 New Loudon Road Suite #400	518/785-0035 518/783-1557
NY New York 10014	International Association of Lesbian and Gay Children of Holocaust Survivors c/o CBST 57 Bethune Street	212/929-9498 212/620-3154
NY New York 10016	International March of the Living, Inc. 136 East 39th Street	212/252-0900 212/252-0474
NY New York 10022	The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous 165 E. 56th Street, Suite 301	212/421-1221 212/421-1811
NY New York 10010	Jewish Labor Committee 25 East 21st Street	212/477-0707 212/477-1918
NY Riverdale 10471	Manhattan College Holocaust Resource Center 434 De La Salle Hall Manhattan College Manhattan College Pkwy.	718/862-7143 718/862-7248 718/862-8044
NY New York	Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust 18 First Place Battery Park City	212/968-1800 212/968-1368

NY New York 10023	The National Association of Jewish Child Holocaust Survivors, Inc (NACHOS) P.O. Box 1010 Ansonia Station	718/998-4266 718/380-5576
NY New York 10001	North American Friends of AMCHA-Israel, Inc. Seven Penn Plaza, Suite 1600	212/330-6054 212/643-1951
NY Spring Valley 10977	Rockland Center for Holocaust Studies, Inc. 17 South Madison Avenue	914/356-2700 914/356-1974
NY New York 10036	The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies/CUNY Graduate School and University Center of The City University of New York 33 West 42nd Street - Room 1516GB	212/642-2184 212/642-1988
NY Manhasset 11030	Temple Judea of Manhasset Holocaust Resource Center 333 Searingtown Road	516-621-8049
NY New York 10151	Thanks to Scandinavia 745 Fifth Avenue, Suite 603	212/486-8600
NY New York 10028	Tribute to the Danes and Other Rescuers 1185 Park Avenue	212/348-7720 212/348-2937
NY Purchase 10577	Westchester Holocaust Commission 2900 Purchase Street	914/696-0738 914/696-0843
NC Raleigh 27603	North Carolina Council on the Holocaust Department of Human Resources 101 Blair Drive	919/733-2173 919/733-7447
ND Dickinson 58601-4896	Holocaust Resource Center, West River Teacher Center - Dickinson State University Dickinson State University - North Campus	701/227-2129 701/227-2006
OH Dayton 45415	Dayton Holocaust Resource Center 100 East Woodbury Drive	937/278-7444 937/832-2121
OH Cincinnati 45249	Greater Cincinnati Interfaith Holocaust Foundation 11251 Ironwood Court	513/489-1177 513/489-1176

OH Sylvania 435606465	Holocaust Resource Center of Toledo Sylvania Avenue	419/885-4485 419/885-3207
OH Kent 44242	Ohio Council on Holocaust Education 314 Satterfield Hall Kent State University	330/672-2389 330/672-4009
OK Edmond 73083-0774	Holocaust Resource Center of Oklahoma P.O. Box 774	405/359-7987 405/359-7987
OR Forest Grove 97116	Oregon Holocaust Resource Center 2043 College Way Warner 2S	503/359-2930 503/359-2246
PA Allentown 18104	Allentown Jewish Archives/Holocaust Resource Center 702 N. 22nd Street	215/821-5500 215/821-8946
PA Merion Station 19066	The Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches P.O. Box 10	610/667-5437 610/667-0265
PA Bryn Mawr 19010-7133	Eyes From the Ashes Box 1133	610/527-3131 610/527-9334
PA Bryn Mawr 19010	Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust 1019 Morris Avenue	610/527-8960 610/520-9283
PA Pittsburgh 15217	Holocaust Center of the United Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh 5738 Darlington Road	412/421-1500 412/422-1996
PA Scranton 18510o	Holocaust Museum and Resource Center f the Scranton-Lackawanna Jewish Federation	717/961-2300 717/346-6147
PA Melrose Park 19027	Holocaust Oral History Archive of Gratz College Old York Road & Melrose Avenue	215/635-7300 215/635-7320
PA Philadelphia 19106	Liberty Museum and Education Center 321 Chestnut Street	215/925-2800 215/925-3800

PA Greensburg 15601	The National Catholic Center for Holocaust Education Seton Hill College	412/830-1033 412/830-4611
PA Merion Station 19066	The Philadelphia Center on the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights (Formerly The Anne Frank Institute of Philadelphia) P.O. Box 10	610/667-5437 610/667-0265
PA Melrose Park 19027	Seidman Educational Resource Center of The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education 7607 Old York Road	215/635-8940 215/635-8946
RI Providence 02906	Rhode Island Holocaust Memorial Museum: An Educational Outreach Center 401 Elmgrove Avenue	401/453-7860 401/861-8806
SC Columbia 29204	South Carolina Council on the Holocaust 2352 Two Notch Road	803/413-3819 803/635-3165
TN Murfreesboro 37132	Holocaust Studies Committee-Middle Tennessee State University P.O. Box 97	615/898-2505 615/890-2285
TN Nashville 37240Education/Tennessee	Tennessee Holocaust Commission on Holocaust Commission, Inc. 2417 West End Avenue	615/343-2563 615/343-8355
TN Nashville 37240Art	The Vanderbilt University Holocaust Collection Vanderbilt University 402 Sarratt Student Center	615/322-2471 615/343-8081
TX Dallas 75230Holocaust	The Dallas Memorial Center for Studies 7900 Northaven Road	214/750-4654 214/750-4672
TX El Paso 79912	El Paso Holocaust Museum and Study Center 401 Wallenberg Drive	915/833-5656 915/584-0243

TX Houston 77004	Holocaust Museum Houston 5401 Caroline Street	713/942-8000 713/942-7953
VA Newport News 23606-6153	Holocaust Education Foundation, Inc. P.O. Box 6153	757/930-2124 757/930-9555
VA Richmond 23221	Virginia Holocaust Museum 213 Roseneath Road P.O. Box 14809	804/257-5400
WA Seattle 98121	Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center 2031 Third Avenue	206/441-5747 206/443-0303
Washington, DC 20024-2150	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW	202/488-0400 202/488-2690
WV West Virginia	West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission P. O. Box 1125 Morgantown, WV 26507	

INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Babi Yar Memorial Fund

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Cape Town Holocaust Memorial Council

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Fax: (21)23-2775

The Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research

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