



Tell ye your children...

**A book about the Holocaust in
Europe 1933–1945**

The Living History project about the Holocaust was launched by the Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson during a parliamentary debate in June 1997. His initiative aimed to raise issues such as humanitarianism, democracy and the equality of people, starting with the Holocaust during the Second World War.

Living History focuses on educational and information activities in schools and for parents about the Holocaust, public manifestations, support for universities and research. This book is one of the project activities, aimed primarily at adults.

STÉPHANE BRUCHFELD AND PAUL A. LEVINE

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THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT OFFICES

LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Foreword

This book was commissioned by the Swedish government as part of its education project “Living History”. It is not easy to put together a book about so vast and difficult a subject as the Holocaust, within such a limited format and the shortest imaginable space of time. Nevertheless, we accepted the commission since we are convinced that the Holocaust must be treated in a serious way. Knowledge about the Holocaust neither can nor should be treated as a political commodity or created with marketing methods. We received considerable support for this understanding. Evidently it is not for us to judge whether or not we have succeeded in achieving our goals within the existing framework. We have tried to integrate factual information with the voices of individuals. It has been a painful experience to have to choose which voices and faces should be given the chance to speak from an extensive and difficult material.

Much is known about the Holocaust. The order of events has long been clear. The road to Auschwitz wound from hateful propaganda to the classification, discrimination and then segregation of human beings. After that came the rounding up, deportation and finally physical extermination of millions of individuals. They were killed in the fields of Europe and in camps built only for that purpose. Even if it can never be established exactly how many people suffered from the Nazis’ vision of a “racially pure” Greater Germany, the magnitude of the crime is clear enough. At the same time as between five and just over six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, several hundred thousand Gypsies (Roma)

were victims of genocide. Nazism’s other victims included well over a hundred thousand handicapped, mentally retarded and “asocial” elements, thousands of homosexuals and Jehovah’s Witnesses, millions of Polish civilians and millions of Soviet civilians and prisoners of war.

But what do these figures mean? They are so immense that they quickly become abstract, making it easy to lose their real meaning. It is therefore necessary to try to understand that behind each number there is a name, a face and a loved one, a future lost. Children, parents, relatives. That is why we begin with the story of the children of Bullenhuser Damm. It is a story without a happy ending and it is, sadly, typical of the Holocaust. The Nazis murdered close to one and a half million Jewish children during the war. This means that nine out of ten Jewish children in Europe lost their lives. How was this possible?

We hope that this book will be a contribution to the knowledge about the Holocaust in Sweden, and on how to teach the subject. We also hope that the book, in conjunction with the Government’s primary goal of its campaign, will form the basis for a dialogue between parents and their children about morality, democratic values and humane ethics – not only today but also in the future. However, this book can serve only as a starting point for the interested reader. The information it contains represents only a fraction of the total body of knowledge available about those terrible years during the Second World War. We are merely scraping the surface, and we urge all readers of the book to find out more on their own.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have helped us create this book in such a brief period. Without their help it would not have been pos-

sible and all have done more than duty called for: Lena Albihn (Natur och Kultur Publishing), Anna-Karin Johansson (Information Rosenbad and project leader), Sanna Johansson (photo editor), Jakob Wegelius (maps), Elsa Wohlfahrt (graphic designer), Marita Zonabend and Eva Åkerberg (translations). Finally we would like to thank our editorial assistants Anita Karp and Mia Löwengart. They did a bit of everything and without their help this book would never have been completed.

Stockholm, January 1998

Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul A. Levine

Children as guinea pigs

By April 1945 Allied armies had penetrated far into Nazi Germany, yet the Germans did not surrender until 8 May. As the war was coming to its end those who knew they had committed crimes were trying to dispose of as much evidence as possible.

On 20 April, at 8:00 p.m. – the same day Adolf Hitler was celebrating his last birthday alive – the so-called “white buses” were evacuating Scandinavian prisoners from the Neuengamme concentration camp outside of Hamburg. Left behind in the camp were twenty Jewish children between the ages of five and twelve. The group included ten girls and ten boys, amongst them two pairs of siblings. The children were not included in the rescue mission that day. For several months they had been “guinea pigs” in medical “experiments” conducted in



Neuengamme by SS doctor Kurt Heissmeyer. He had removed the children’s lymph glands and injected living tuberculosis bacteria into their skin. The doctor had also introduced the bacteria directly in the lungs of several children by means of a probe. During an interrogation in 1964 Heissmeyer explained that for him “there had been no real difference between Jews and animals”.

A few hours after the last Scandinavian prisoner had left the camp, the children, together with four adult prisoners who had cared for the children, were taken to a

large school building in Hamburg, which they reached just before midnight. The adults were the French doctors Gabriel Florence and René Quenouille, and the Dutchmen Dirk Deutekom and Anton Hölzel. The school was called Bullenhuser Damm and had for some months functioned as an annexe to the concentration camp. It also functioned as a collection point for Scandinavian prisoners being prepared for repatriation.

The group was taken into the cellar. In the boiler room the SS soldiers first hanged the adults from a pipe in the ceiling. Then it was the children’s turn. A few had been given morphine injections, according to the SS doctor in attendance, Alfred Trzebinski. One of them was Georges-André Kohn, who was in a terrible condition. The slumbering Georges-André was hanged first, but from a hook in the wall, not the pipe. SS corporal Johann Frahm had to use all his weight to get the noose to tighten sufficiently. After that Frahm hanged two more children from different hooks, “just like pictures”, he explained when being interrogated about the event in 1946. He added that none of the children had cried.

When all the children were dead schnapps and cigarettes were doled out to the SS men present. Then it was time for the next group to be hanged – this time twenty Soviet prisoners of war. We do not know their names, but we know the names and ages of the children: *Mania Altmann, 5, Lelka Birnbaum, 12, Surcis Goldinger, 11, Riwka Herszberg, 7, Alexander Hornemann, 8, Eduard*



On 17 August 1944 12-year-old George-André Kohn was deported with his family from Paris to Auschwitz. Their train was the 79th and one of the last deportations of French Jews. On arrival at Auschwitz George-André was selected for pseudo-medical experiments. He was sent to the Neuengamme concentration camp at the end of November. The picture to the left was taken in 1944 prior to deportation. SS doctor Kurt Heissmeyer in Neuengamme took the picture above after he had removed George-André’s underarm lymph glands.

Hornemann, 12, Marek James, 6, W. Junglieb, 12, Lea Klygermann, 8, Georges-André Kohn, 12, Blumel Mekler, 11, Jacqueline Morgenstern, 12, Eduard Reichenbaum, 10, Sergio de Simone, 7, Marek Steinbaum, 10, H. Wassermann, 8, Eleonora Witńska, 5, Roman Witński, 7, Roman Zeller, 12, and Ruchla Zylberberg, 9.

The following day the bodies were taken back to Neuengamme, where they were burned. Today the school is called the Janusz Korczak School. There is a small rose garden in memory of the children.

Introduction

“Nothing is so convincing as the consciousness of the possession of Race. The man who belongs to a distinct, pure race, never loses the sense of it ... Race lifts a man above himself: it endows him with extraordinary – I might almost say supernatural – powers, so entirely does it distinguish him from the individual who springs from the chaotic jumble of peoples drawn from all parts of the world.”

H.S. CHAMBERLAIN, EUROPEAN RACIAL IDEOLOGUE

The history of Nazi Germany is impossible to separate from the Nazi world view. The Holocaust was the outcome of National Socialist ideology, expressed clearly in Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Hitler and his political party, the Nazis, made no secret of their fundamentally racist view of mankind, or their loathing of democratic society and its values. For the Nazis, “race” meant everything. The individual had no value other than as a tool for the racist state. The implementation of this ideology was begun immediately upon the taking of power on 30 January 1933.

The background to racist ideology

Long before the Nazis came to power racist ideas had sunk deep roots into the thinking of many Europeans. As early as the 17th century intellectuals and others speculated about the existence of different races within mankind. In 1854 the French diplomat Arthur de Gobineau published an influential book about the “inequality of the human races”. He argued that the so-called “Aryan” race was superior to all others, yet was threatened by “racial mixing” with “non-Aryans” considered to be of inferior “quality”. In an age when European nationalism and imperialism played ever-larger roles in domestic and international politics, such thoughts were welcome to many.

Influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, often called “survival of the fittest”, social theorists in the Western world began applying these biological ideas to human society. So-called Social Darwinism

argued that the “strong” had a natural right to rule, even conquer the “weak”. Another influential thinker was the German-Englishman H.S. Chamberlain. In 1899 he published his vision that the “Aryan race”, led by the Germanic peoples, would save Christian European civilisation from the enemy: “Judaism”.

Antisemitism and racial biology

Jews had lived in Europe since ancient times. Although Jesus was killed by the Romans, the Church during the early Middle Ages began to blame the Jews for his death and condemned them for not recognising Jesus as the Messiah. Such accusations caused the position of the Jews to decline. Violent persecution (pogroms) and massacres of Jews periodically flared up throughout the centuries. After the French revolution in 1789, based on democratic ideas, the situation of the Jews began to improve. The so-called Jewish emancipation during the 19th century allowed them increasingly to participate as normal citizens of European society. Yet as the 19th century neared its end a new form of antisemitism arose in reaction to emancipation. Hatred of the Jews was expressed not only in religious but also political terms. During periods of spiritual, economic and political uncertainty antisemites accused the Jews of having too much influence in society. They also imagined that the Jews had a secret plan to seize “world power”.

Simultaneously modern science began to be influenced by Social Darwinism. This trend found its greatest expression in the so-called eugenics movement, known also as “racial hygiene”. Its propounders argued that the “inferior genes” of the “weak” were a threat to society. They maintained that it was possible to protect and

“The Jewish question is not only a matter of trade it is also a matter of race and culture (...). Judaism is the ruination of the European peoples.”

PEHR EMANUEL LITHANDER, SWEDISH
MERCHANT AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. 1912



The game is called "Juden raus!" (Jews out!), and was introduced in the thirties by the German manufacturer as "great fun to play" for adults and children. The hats on the pieces are the same shape as the hats Jews were compelled to wear during the Middle Ages, and anti-Jewish caricatures can be seen on the hats. Amongst other things it says on the board: "If you manage to see off 6 Jews, you've won a clear victory!"



“These young people, learn nothing but to think and act German. And when these boys and girls join our organisations at the age of ten and then experience fresh air often for the very first time, then after four years in the Pioneers they join the Hitler Youth, and there we keep them for four more years (...) and they will never be free again, not in their whole lives.”

ADOLF HITLER IN A SPEECH OF THE 2 SEPTEMBER 1938

A Hitler Youth member instructing a young girl in a German colony in Poland. These colonies were founded in Eastern Europe to help secure German “Lebensraum” (living space). The native population was deported from their farms, which were then taken over by German families.

improve the quality and “health” of society by preventing “weak” genes from reproducing and spreading. The ideas of the “eugenic movement” were realised during the first half of the 20th century in Europe and the United States with the sterilisation of hundreds of thousands of people, mostly women.

The First World War, 1914-1918, showed the world the capacity of industrialised societies to kill men efficiently and on a massive scale. Many of the Nazi party’s first members were war veterans and they had experienced the disaster first-hand. Germany’s defeat, which was blamed on the country’s small Jewish population, brought about a desire for revenge. The Nazis said that Germany’s redemption and rebirth could be accomplished only by introducing racial biology, eugenics and anti-semitism into practical politics. They aimed to create a “racially pure”, homogeneous society in which the “natural” differences between people were recognised. One expression of this were the so-called “Nuremberg Laws” of 1935. The laws aimed at separating Jews from the rest of society, and soon were applied also to Gypsies. Only “citizens of German or kindred blood” could enjoy full civil rights. Legal experts who drafted the laws commented: “Against the teachings of the equality of all people (...) National Socialism brings forth the hard but necessary awareness of the basic differences between people...”

Such factors laid the necessary ideological foundations for the Holocaust, and paved the way for its psychological and technological realisation. From 1933 to 1945 persecution and genocide was perpetrated throughout Europe: the practical result of Hitler’s regime and its Nazi ideology.



Anny Horowitz identified

After the Germans occupied France in 1940, all Jews were registered. This was the first step towards the Holocaust in France.

Anny Horowitz was a French Jew born in Strasbourg in 1933, yet classified as a “foreigner under observation”, as her identity card says. First interned at a camp near Tours, she was then sent to the Drancy camp, located in the Paris suburbs. On 11 September 1942 she was deported to Auschwitz with the 31st deportation trains from France. With her on the train were her mother

Frieda and her 7-year-old sister Paulette. On the train were 1000 men, women and children. Upon arrival more than 600 of them, including all children, were taken straight to the gas chambers.

Anny and Paulette were only two of the up to one and a half million Jewish children murdered during the Holocaust. On average only one in ten survived the war. In some countries, such as Poland and the Baltics, the chances of Jewish children surviving were even much smaller.

“In addition to home and school, all German youth is to be brought up in the Hitler Jugend [Youth] in the bodily, spiritual and ethical National Socialist spirit for the benefit of the people and the community.”

FROM THE LAW
OF THE HITLER JUGEND, 1935

From the German children's book *The Poisonous Mushroom* published in 1938. The picture shows how Jewish teachers and children are driven away from their old school, which becomes “purely Aryan”. Amongst other things the book explains that “just as it is hard to distinguish between poisonous and edible mushrooms, it is very hard to see that Jews are rogues and criminals”.



Chronology 1919 - 1933

1919

16 Sept. Adolf Hitler joins the German Workers' Party.

1920

8 Aug. The National Socialist German Workers' Party is formed.

1923

8–9 Nov. "The Beer-Hall Putsch". Hitler tries to topple the Bavarian government and fails. He is sentenced to five years' imprisonment in April 1924. Writes Mein Kampf in prison.

1925

November The SS is formed in Munich as Hitler's private body-guard.

1928

20 May Reichstag elections. The Nazi party wins 2.6 per cent of the votes.

1930

14 Sept. Reichstag elections. In the wake of world depression, the Nazis win 18.3 per cent of the votes

1931

December Unemployment in Germany at crisis levels: 5.6 million out of work.

1932

Spring Hitler loses two elections for the German presidency.

31 July Reichstag elections. The Nazi party has its greatest success in free elections. With 37.4 per cent of the vote, the Nazis are the largest party in Germany.

6 Nov. Reichstag elections. The Nazis lose ground, winning 33.1 per cent of the vote.

1933

30 Jan. Adolf Hitler becomes German Chancellor. German Jews soon notice the consequences of the Nazis' anti-Jewish policies.

20 March Dachau, the first concentration camp, is set up 16 km north-west of Munich. Its first inmates are Communists, Social Democrats and trade unionists, most of whom will later be released. The brutal practises perfected here by the commander Theodor Eicke became the model for all other concentration camps.

1–3 April Boycott of Jewish lawyers, doctors and shops.

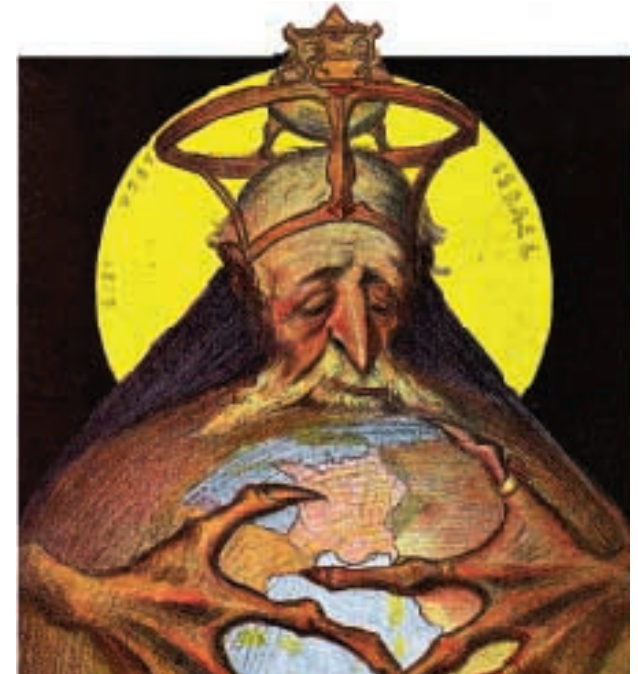
April Jews banned from the civil service.

10 May Nazis organise public burnings of books by Jewish authors, and writers who are against Nazism.

14 July The National Socialist German Workers' Party is the only party allowed in Germany. Laws are passed allowing compulsory sterilisation of Gypsies, and handicapped and coloured Germans.

September Jews are excluded from cultural activities.

Chronology continued on pp. 16, 33 and 45.



A "classic" French anti-Semitic caricature from 1898. Many of the symbols in the picture became central themes in Nazi anti-semitism.

Jewish Life before the War

“The world is too dangerous to live in – not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who stand by and let them.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN. PHYSICIST
AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Every country in Europe was home to native Jewish inhabitants before the Nazis came to power. The diversity of Europe itself was reflected in the diversity of the Jewish population, and generally speaking, Jewish life in Eastern Europe was considerably different than that of the Jews living in Western Europe. By the middle of the 19th century, after hundreds of years of persecution, discrimination and even ghettoisation, most Jews in Western Europe had been awarded their civil rights through emancipation. Aided by these new freedoms, they soon flourished and began to participate in the rapid modernisation that characterised most of European society at this time. Yet despite this progress, or even perhaps because of it, Jews became the targets of political attacks, principally from groups opposed to social change and the on-going modernisation.

In Western and Central Europe most Jews integrated into the majority society and found their place in its daily life. Antisemitism remained a factor, but most Jewish families felt safe and had high hopes for their children. Jewish men fought with pride for their countries in the First World War, and the Jewish communities participated in the reconstruction of Europe in the 1920's.

In Eastern Europe most Jews at the beginning of the 20th century carried on the same trades and lived accor-

ding to the same traditions as they had always done. Jews had migrated to Eastern Europe from France and Germany in the 14th and 15th centuries. In areas such as Poland, the Baltic States, the Ukraine, Russia and Romania – an enormous region with the world's largest Jewish populations – a culture founded on the Jewish religion and the Yiddish language was created over the centuries. In the small towns and countryside the Jews often lived separately from the majority Christian population. Yet a

substantial portion of the Jewish population had also begun to advance, obtaining middle-class status. In spite of prevailing prejudices, their role in urban society was considerable.

Antisemitism was deeply imbedded in East European culture and it was further strengthened by anti-Jewish propaganda and policies spread by governments. Because of the difficult

conditions many millions of Jews had emigrated to other countries, primarily the United States. Many people, among both groups, called for drastic changes in the problematic situation which prevailed. By the 1930s, in spite of growing levels of assimilation, in most of the region relations between the minority Jewish populations and the much larger Christian majorities were deeply troubled. The millions of Jews who were still living in Eastern Europe at the outbreak of the Second World War were soon to meet their deaths in the Nazi extermination machinery. The rich religious and secular Jewish culture in Eastern Europe disappeared with them.



Anne Frank

Anne Frank was born in Frankfurt am Main in Germany in June 1929. She began to write her diary, one of the most famous accounts of the Holocaust, as a young girl (age 13). It is today one of the most widely read books in the world, and has been translated into over 50 languages. Recently a complete unabridged version was published.

Shortly after Hitler came to power in 1933, Anne and her family escaped Germany into the Netherlands. Like many other Jews from Germany, her father Otto, mother Edith and sister Margot believed and hoped that they had found refuge from Nazi persecution. The picture to the right shows the six-year-old Anne with her friend Sanne playing in the street in Amsterdam in 1935.

The family's everyday existence in Amsterdam came to an abrupt end in May 1940, when the German army occupied the country. Like many other Jews in the Netherlands Otto Frank organised a hiding place for his family. In July 1942 they finally were forced to use the space – a small secret annexe.

Anne wrote in her diary about her father's vital decision. "Hiding was dangerous, Jews found in hiding or who were betrayed were sent at once to a concentration camp, and the punishment for helping anyone was death." Even though the family received help from non-Jewish neighbours, the Gestapo was finally given a tip-off and on 4 August 1944 the family was seized.

Just like over 100,000 Dutch Jews before them, the Frank family was taken to the Westerbork concentration camp. A month later the whole family was sent to Auschwitz.

Edith Frank died shortly before the liberation of Auschwitz in January 1945. Anne and her sister Margot were sent back west to Germany and the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. That camp was liberated in April 1945, but both sisters died of typhus a few weeks before British soldiers arrived. Otto Frank survived captivity in Auschwitz and eventually returned to Amsterdam. There he received Anne's diary from family friends, who had been safeguarding it.





This picture from 1930's Germany shows a side of Gypsy life, which has become a cliché. Many German Gypsies had abandoned their nomadic life however, and adapted to town existence. Hundreds of thousands of Gypsies were murdered by the Nazis during the war, most probably also the children in the picture.

The Gypsies

The group of peoples known as the Gypsies (also called Roma) came to Europe during the Middle Ages, fleeing from Northern India via Persia, Asia Minor and the Balkans. Initially accepted, they were soon surrounded by suspicion and myths. They were accused of being spies and like the Jews also held responsible for the death of Jesus. For centuries Europeans could kill Gypsies with impunity and often went on "Gypsy hunts", in which Gypsies were hunted down and killed like animals.

In modern times some Gypsies continued to live a nomadic existence while others moved into cities, often adopting trades and assimilating into daily life. Eventually the Gypsies came to be regarded less as an ethnic group and more as a social group with very low status. For centuries Gypsies in all parts of Europe have been surrounded by myths and severe prejudice, and even to this day many Europeans believe that Gypsies kidnap children, practise witchcraft and cause dangerous diseases. Mistrust and ill will towards them continues to exist and is actually very deep and widespread.

Gypsies and racist ideas

When the Nazis came to power there were millions of Gypsies living throughout Europe, with about 30,000 living in Germany. There they lived in both nomadic caravans and as average city dwellers.

As noted, discrimination against Gypsies by no means began with the Nazis. For example there had been in Germany for many years a "Gypsy information bureau" whose task was to record Gypsies and their whereabouts. Many officials declared them a "threat". Especially common were warnings against mixing with people thought

to be of “different race”. In 1905 a calendar was published with genealogical information and photographs of hundreds of German Gypsies. The Land of Bavaria passed a law in 1926 “against Gypsies, travellers and the work-shy”. A Gypsy without a permanent job risked being put in a house of correction. The Nazis took over such laws after 1933. Persecution was initiated which was reminiscent of that practised against the Jews. Even if SS Chief Heinrich Himmler believed that there were still “pure Aryans” amongst the Gypsies, the bulk were considered to be of “mixed blood” and therefore “inferior”. It became the task of “racial biologists” to decide who should be killed and who should be allowed to live.

From the Bavarian law for the combating of Gypsies, travellers, and the workshy of July 1926

§ 1

Gypsies and persons who roam about in the manner of Gypsies – ‘travellers’ – may only itinerate with wagons and caravans if they have permission from the police authorities responsible.

This permission may only be granted for a maximum of one calendar year and is revocable at all times. (...)

§2

Gypsies and travellers may not itinerate with school age children. Exceptions may be granted by the responsible police authorities, if adequate provision has been made for the education of the children. (...)

§9

Gypsies and travellers over sixteen years of age who are unable to prove regular employment may be sent to work-houses for up to two years by the responsible police authorities on the grounds of public security.



“Gipsy” Trollmann

In March 1933, Erich Seelig is stripped of his title as German national middleweight boxing champion. The reason – he is Jewish. The title remains vacant until June that year. Then two completely different boxers are matched against each other. In one corner is Adolf Witt, an “Aryan”. In the other is Johann Trollmann. The nazified boxing association does not appreciate that Trollmann will be fighting for the title. The reason – he is a Gypsy. But Trollmann, also known by his fighting name “Gipsy”, is one of Germany’s most popular boxers. The Nazis are sensitive to public opinion, and the boxing association is forced to make an exception. The association has chosen Witt as he is the only one capable of challenging Trollmann.

But on 9 June, Witt is humiliated by his slender opponent. For twelve rounds the 26-year-old Trollmann dances around Witt, amassing points and totally outclassing his opponent. The organisers are embarrassed and they declare the match a draw. The audience is infuriated. For several minutes they protest loudly and threaten to smash up the hall.

Finally, the organisers give way and declare Trollmann Germany’s middleweight champion. The boxing magazine Boxsport immediately attacks him. His style is labelled “alien” and “theatrical”, and his “Gypsy unpredictability” is jeered at. After eight days Trollmann is stripped of his title. His career is effectively ended.

But another match has already been scheduled, to which Trollmann turns up with his hair dyed blond. This time, instead of dancing, he stands in the middle of the ring like an oak and takes one blow after another. In the fifth round the bloodied “Gipsy” is counted out.

Sometime later three of his brothers are sent to concentration camps while in 1939 Trollmann joins the army. He fights in the infantry on the Russian front. While on leave in 1942 he is arrested by the Gestapo and sent to Neuengamme concentration camp. He is forced to do the heaviest labour. At their parties heavily built SS guards have fun playing the game “German champion”, fighting with the now starving 35-year-old boxer. On 9 February 1943 the SS shoot Johann Trollmann to death in Neuengamme.

“At one and the same time a number of arrests of homosexuals were carried out in our town. One of the first to be arrested was my friend, whom I had had a relationship with since I was 23. One day the Gestapo came to his house and took him away. There was no point in reporting him missing. If anyone did, they risked being arrested too. It was enough to know them to be a suspect too. After my friend had been arrested, the Gestapo ransacked his house (...). The worst thing was the address books. Everyone mentioned in the books or who was connected with them was arrested. Me too. (...) We had to be extremely careful with all contacts and I had to break with all my friends. We passed by each other in the road just so as not to put ourselves in danger. There were no longer any places where homosexuals could meet.”

TESTIMONY FROM A GERMAN HOMOSEXUAL MAN

Homosexuals

As soon as the Nazis took power they began to persecute Germany's homosexual population. Nazi leaders thought that the presence in society of this group would endanger the birth rate of the German people as well as the physical and mental health of the “national body”. Groups of SA raided places where homosexuals were known to frequent such as pubs and even private homes. The regular police also harassed homosexuals.

This persecution brought to an end what had been a trend towards liberalised treatment of homosexuals. The government strengthened an already existing law against homosexual activity and throughout the 1930s homosexuals were frequently arrested and subjected to increasingly harsh harassment. SS leader Heinrich Himmler set up an office whose task was to register and harass homosexuals. Many party members demanded the death penalty for homosexual “indecenty”.

Towards the end of the 1930s persecution increased sharply, and of reportedly 1,5 million homosexuals probably around 100,000 men were arrested, most because of denunciations. Between 10,000 and 15,000 homosexuals were eventually sent to concentration camps where they were marked with a pink triangle. This exposed them to especially brutal treatment by both SS guards and other prisoners and thousands died. Exactly how many homosexuals died in the camps is unknown, but evidence suggests a figure of up to 60 percent.

In their treatment of homosexuals the Nazis tried to combine their racial ideology with “science”, and carried out pseudo-scientific experiments on some of them in order to change the sexual behaviour of homosexuals.

The handicapped and the “asocials”

In the 1920's, a group of scientists in Germany began advocating the killing of people they referred to as “useless entities”. By this they meant certain groups of handicapped and mentally retarded citizens. The expression “life unworthy of life” was coined. Such ideas were quickly absorbed by the Nazis, whose ideology called for society to aid the “healthy” and eliminate the “sick” and “inferior”. Jews and Gypsies were seen as external threats to the German “national body”, while the mentally and physically handicapped as well as others who did not fit into the mainstream of the “People's Community” were thought to be internal threats, also to be contained and eventually eliminated. They were seen as economically unproductive and thus far too great a burden for the healthy and productive members of society. From a racial-biological point of view they were also considered “inferior material”, their illnesses a sign of their hereditary inferiority. This, the Nazis argued, constituted a growing danger to the health of the “national body”.

In their zeal to “cleanse” both German society and the “Aryan race”, the Nazis persecuted and imprisoned thousands of citizens arbitrarily labelled “asocials”. This group included, among others, prostitutes and even those who twice refused job offers. Even those alleged to have caused “outrage” to other Germans were punished for ideological reasons. According to the so-called science of “criminal biology”, petty criminals were considered to be biologically “inferior”. Individuals placed into this category were sometimes forcibly sterilised or castrated. In concentration camps this group wore a black triangle.



Taken in the Buchenwald concentration camp sometime between 1938 and 1940, the picture above shows a group of handicapped Jewish men. Those so handicapped were considered by the

Nazis to be “useless” for anything but “raw material” for pseudo-medical research. It is unlikely that these men remained alive long after the picture was taken.

Chronology 1934 - 1939

1934

- 3 July Laws forbid marriage between Germans and people of “foreign races” and “defective” people of “German blood”.
- 2 Aug. The German President, Paul von Hindenburg, dies.
- 19 Aug. Hitler appoints himself Führer of the Third Reich.
- Oct.- Nov. Arrests of homosexuals throughout Germany.

1935

- April Jehovah's Witnesses are excluded from the civil service and many are arrested.
- 21 May Jews are excluded from military service.
- 15 Sept. The Nuremberg laws are proclaimed at Nazi Party meeting. Jews are not allowed to marry people of “German blood” or have sexual relations with them. During the 30s over 400 laws were enacted in Germany restricting Jewish rights.
- 26 Nov. The Nuremberg laws are extended to Gypsies and coloured people.

1936

- 17 June SS Chief Heinrich Himmler becomes head of the German police.
- 1–16 Aug. Hitler opens the Olympic Games in Berlin.

1938

- 13 March “Anschluss” The Third Reich annexes Austria.
- April Resolution to register all Jewish property.
- 6–15 July Representatives of thirty-two nations discuss the Jewish refugee problem at Evian.
- 17 Aug. Jewish women in Nazi Germany must add Sara to their names and all Jewish men Israel.
- 5 Oct. German Jews' passports are stamped with a large, red J for Jew.
- 28 Oct. Nearly 17,000 former Polish Jews are expelled from Germany to the Polish border.
- 9–10 Nov. “Kristallnacht”. Pogroms, murder and comprehensive damage. Nearly 30,000 Jews are interned in concentration camps.
- 15 Nov. Jewish children are no longer allowed to attend German schools. After the Kristallnacht Sweden allows in 500 German Jewish children.

1939

- 30 Jan. Hitler tells the German Reichstag that a world war will mean the “extermination of the Jewish race in Europe”.
- 21 Feb. Jews have to hand over jewellery and precious metals.
- 29 June More than 400 Gypsy women from Austria are deported to Ravensbrück concentration camp.
- 1 Sept. The Second World War starts with Germany's invasion of Poland. German “Einsatzgruppen” [Special Units] shoot priests, academics and Jews. German Jews are not allowed out after 9 p.m.
- 20 Sept. Jews are not allowed to possess radios.
- October Deportations of Jews from Nazi Germany to the Lublin area.
- 20 Nov. Heinrich Himmler gives the order to imprison all Gypsy women fortune-tellers.
- 23 Nov. All Jews in the General Government in Poland have to wear a Star of David.

Persecution

Although the Jews constituted less than 1% of the population, the Nazis accused them of being Germany's masters. In order for them to achieve their goals the Nazis had to isolate the Jews from all of society's normal activities. This process began in April 1933 when the Party and government urged a boycott of Jewish-owned shops and businesses. The boycott succeeded in frightening many Jews into emigrating, but generally it failed to achieve the aims of the Nazi leaders. As a result they understood that they had to proceed against the Jews more carefully. They now sought either the active support of the population or at least passive consent to anti-Jewish measures.

Between 1933 and 1939 the Nazis passed over 400 laws depriving the Jews of their civil and economic rights. The process of segregation and expropriation, which took five years in Germany, occurred literally overnight in Austria, annexed to the Reich in March 1938 (the so-called *Anschluss*). In both countries Jewish professionals such as doctors, teachers, lawyers, professors and businessmen all lost their jobs and with that, their ability to support their families. In schools Jewish children were forced out of their classes, and in universities Jewish students were forbidden to attend lectures, and Jewish teachers forbidden to teach. Thousands tried to emigrate, but those who were able to find a safe haven were usually forced to relinquish all their possessions and assets.

As the process of segregation and exclusion accelerated in the 1930s, most Germans either accepted the Nazi measures or remained silent – ensuring that the process

went further. When deportations of German and Austrian Jews began in 1940, social and economic contact between Jews and non-Jews had been almost completely cut-off. In September 1941 the final symbolic act of segregation became a fact. Jews had to wear a yellow star on their clothing when going out of their homes.

The Nazis' plunder of their victims

Apart from physical extermination the Holocaust also entailed the planned and systematic stealing of property, in fact the greatest robbery in European history. Throughout the 1930's the German Nazi state seized Jewish private possessions such as homes, businesses, art, household items even family heirlooms. Jewish-owned banks and businesses were confiscated or bought by private individuals at a fraction of their real worth. Some tried to protect their assets by transferring them abroad, mainly to Switzerland.

Those who were deported to death camps and killing fields also had their possessions stolen. Clothing, shoes, glasses, rings, baby carriages, even artificial limbs were gathered and sorted, and often shipped back to Germany for use by civilians.

Even the bodies were plundered. Hair cut from women before or after gassing was used, for example, for warm socks and blankets used by U-boat crewmen. Gold teeth were extracted and melted down. Sometimes ashes from the burnt bodies were used as an agricultural fertiliser.

Only today has the scale of the plunder been recognised. As a result many European countries, including Sweden, have formed national commissions to find out about Jewish assets transferred to their countries before and during the war. The former West Germany paid compensation to Jews living in the West, but Jewish survivors in Eastern Europe who endured two generations of communism most often received nothing.

"I met my former secretary today. She fixed me sharply with her short-sighted eyes and then turned away. I was so nauseated I spat into my handkerchief. She was once a patient of mine. Later I met her in the street. Her boyfriend had left her and she was out of work and without money. I took her on, trained her for years and employed her in my clinic until the last day. Now she has changed so much that she can no longer greet me; me, who rescued her from the gutter!"

THE JEWISH DOCTOR HERTHA NATHORFF IN HER DIARY,
9 OCTOBER 1935

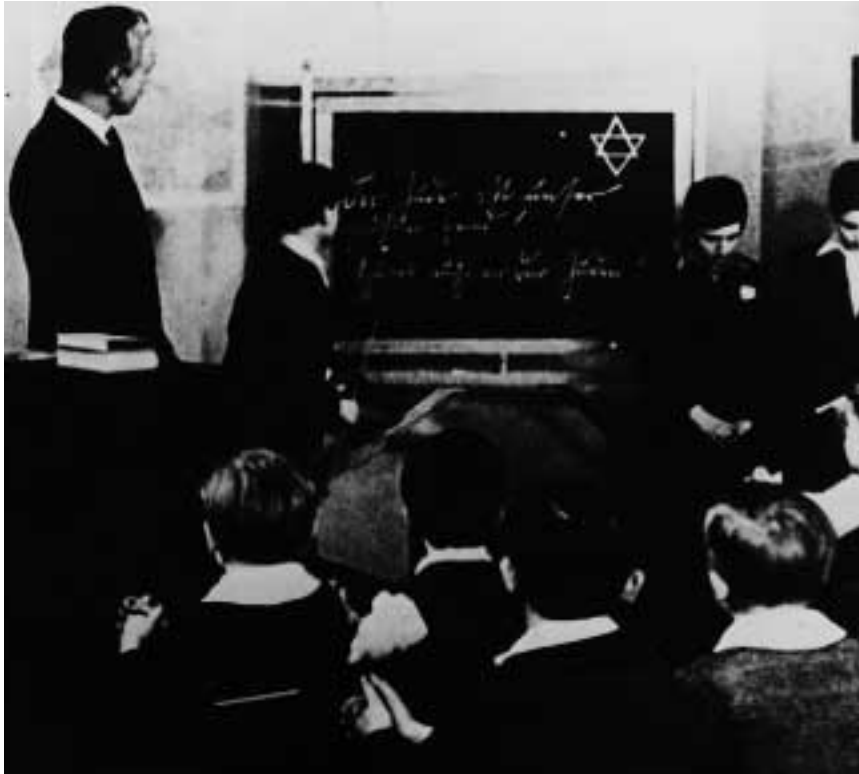


Jewish businesses terrorised

Just two months after coming to power, the Nazis targeted Jewish businesses and subjected them to terror and boycott. In April 1933 the Party called on all Germans to boycott Jewish businesses. Harassment became a normal part of everyday life in Germany for Jewish businesses which were often terrorised by Party members, even young people belonging to the “Hitler Youth”. They would often paint a “warning” on shop windows against buying from Jewish shops. Jewish doctors and lawyers were also subject to similar measures.

Doctor Hertha Nathorff, a Jewish medical practitioner, wrote in her diary of an event in April 1933: “This day is engraved in my heart in flames. To think that such things are still possible in the twentieth century. In front of all Jewish shops, lawyers’ offices, doctors’ surgeries and flats there are young boys with signs saying, ‘Don’t buy from Jews’, ‘Don’t go to Jewish doctors’, ‘Anybody who buys from Jews is a traitor’, ‘Jews are the incarnation of lies and deceit’. Doctors’ signs on the walls of houses are soiled, and sometimes damaged, and people have looked on, gawping in silence. They must have forgotten to stick anything over my sign. I think I would have reacted violently. It was afternoon before one of these young boys visited me at home and asked: ‘Is this a Jewish business?’ ‘This isn’t a business at all; it’s a doc-tor’s surgery’, I said. ‘Are you sick?’ (...)

In the evening we were with friends at the Hohenzollerndamm, three couples, all doctors. They were all quite depressed. One of the company, Emil, the optimist, tried to convince us: ‘It’ll all be over in a few days.’ They don’t understand my anger when I say, ‘They should strike us dead instead. It would be more humane than the psychological death they have in mind...’ But my instincts have always proved right.”



“The Jew” forced out of schools

From 1933 forward Jewish students were systematically driven out of the German school system. The picture shows how two Jewish pupils are being humiliated during a lesson in Nazi ideology. On the blackboard read the words: “The Jew is our greatest enemy. Watch out for the Jews!”

Here we read of how some Jewish schoolgirls were affected by the introduction of Nazi ideology into their schools in the 1930's:

“For young Hilma Geffen-Ludomer, the only Jewish child in the Berlin suburb of Rangsdorf, the Law Against the Overcrowding of German Schools meant total change. ‘The nice neighbourly atmosphere’ ended ‘abruptly....Suddenly, I didn’t have any friends. I had

no more girlfriends and many neighbours were afraid to talk to us. Some of the neighbours that we visited told me: ‘Don’t come anymore because I’m scared. We should not have any contact with Jews.’ Lore Gang-Salheimer, eleven years old in 1933 and a resident of Nuremberg, was allowed to stay in school because her father was a veteran of Verdun. Nonetheless ‘it began to happen that non-Jewish children would say: ‘No I can’t walk home from school with you anymore. I can’t be seen with you anymore.’

‘With every passing day under Nazi rule’, wrote Martha Appel, ‘the chasm between us and our neighbours grew wider. Friends with whom we had had warm relations for years did not know us anymore. Suddenly we discovered that we were different.’

Kristallnacht

On the morning of 7 November 1938, Ernst vom Rath, a diplomat at the German embassy in Paris, was shot by Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old Polish Jew. Grynszpan’s parents had been expelled from Germany the week before, along with 17,000 other formerly Polish Jews. Conditions in the “no man’s land” between Germany and Poland were deplorable, and Grynszpan – who had found out about his parents’ condition – shot the German diplomat in protest and outrage. When vom Rath died of his injuries shortly after, German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels issued instructions that led to the mobilisation of party activists who started the largest organised pogrom in modern European history.

Throughout Germany during the evening and night between 9 and 10 November, hundreds of synagogues were destroyed and thousands of Jewish-owned shops were vandalised and looted. Jewish cemeteries were desecrated, around a hundred Jews were murdered and tens of thousands of Jewish men were arrested and put into concentration camps. The Nazi government blamed the Jews also for these events and Jewish organisations in Germany were forced to pay an enormous “compensation” to the State of one billion marks. Payments from insurance companies to Jews were confiscated and Jewish businessmen were ordered to clean up after the destruction and to “restore the street scene”.

Right: University students burning “banned” books written by Jews and others, Berlin 10 May 1933.

"[We had already] begun to systematically check and catalogue the racial provenance of persons involved in German cultural life. What could be more obvious than that librarians should make available their skills and knowledge? Working together with representatives of the (Nazi) Movement, librarians checked the curriculum vitae in the dissertations of German doctoral candidates... dictionaries and other reference works.

It was due to this effort that already by 1933 about half the serviceable preparatory work was on hand for the elimination of Jewish authors, editors and professors."

FROM A LIBRARIANS' JOURNAL, 1938



The Ghettos are formed



A pedestrian bridge over an “Aryan” street in the Łódź ghetto, Poland. Jews in ghettos were to be kept strictly segregated from the surrounding world. In larger ghettos with more than one area, such bridges were sometimes built for communication between the Jewish sections divided by “Aryan” thoroughfares. The crowding on the bridge reflects the living conditions in the ghetto: a very large number of people living in a very small area.

During the Middle Ages it was common for Jews to live in special quarters in European towns and cities. Since the 16th century these areas were often called “ghettos”. In Germany ghettos were eliminated during the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century. After the occupation of Poland in September 1939, the Nazis quickly declared that most Polish Jews must leave their homes and move to special areas of designated towns. The first ghettos were formed in early 1940, and soon there were hundreds of large and small ghettos throughout Poland and Eastern Europe. The assembling of large numbers of Jews into small areas, made subsequent steps of the Holocaust considerably easier.

SS security chief Heydrich regarding the rounding up of Jews, 27 September 1939

The Jews are to be brought together in ghettos in cities in order to ensure a better chance of controlling them and later of removing them. The most pressing matter is for the Jews to disappear from the countryside as small traders. This action must have been completed within the next three to four weeks. Insofar as the Jews are traders in the countryside, it must be sorted out with the Wehrmacht how far these Jewish traders must remain in situ in order to secure the provisioning of the troops. The following comprehensive directive was issued:

1. Jews into the towns as quickly as possible.
2. Jews out of the Reich into Poland.
3. The remaining Gypsies also to Poland.
4. The systematic evacuation of the Jews from German territory via goods trains...

Judisk karavan.

Judarna i Kovno måste gå i körbanan. Observera Zionsstjärnan på bröstet! Därunder: den stora judeomflyttningen i staden är i full gång samt ett talande anslag: "Den som plundrar blir skjuten".



"A beautiful, sunny day has risen. The streets are closed off by the Lithuanians. The streets are turbulent. (...) Soon we have our first view of the move to the ghetto, a picture of the Middle Ages – a gray black mass of people goes harnessed to large bundles. We understand that soon our turn will come. I look at the house in disarray, at the perplexed, desperate people. I see things scattered which were dear to me, which I was accustomed to use. (...) The woman stands in despair among her bundles and does not know how to cope with them, weeps and wrings her hands. Suddenly everything around me begins to weep. Everything weeps."

EXTRACT FROM 13-YEAR-OLD YITZHAK RUDASHEVSKI'S DIARY, VILNIUS 6 SEPTEMBER 1941

ETT GHETTO SKAPAS.

Intryck från den stora judeomflyttningen i Kovno efter bolsjevikväldets fall och

SJÄLVHÄMNDENS OHYGGLIGHETER.

VI KÖRDE FRAM i ett moln av damm. I den djupa sanden på vägkanterna skramlade en oändlig rad av bondkärror, och vi mötte oupphörligt lastbilskolonner med ryska krigsfångar.

Det var inte långt från Kovno, Litauens huvudstad.

Krigets närhet hade redan börjat göra sig märkbar. Här och där voro byarna ganska illa medfarna. Det var som på de flesta andra ställen ryssarna som bränt. I något fall talade man om befolkningens egen hämnd mot nå-

sel från kolliderande vagnar, från nedramlande möbler och andra saker, ett helvetiskt larm.

Alla skulle fram. Trafiken fick inte stoppa. Tiden var knapp.

Fyra dagar hade man på sig.

En kungörelse, tryckt dels på tyska och dels på litauiska, gav förklaringen till vagnarnas långa rader, till judarnas iver och böndernas brådska. Judarna, som tidigare i hög grad dominerat i Litauen och framför allt under bolsjevikregimen sett sina förut i nedgående stadda konjunkturner stiga, hade nu mött sitt öde. En man

I det nya Tysklands gigantiska kamp på skilda fronter intar judefrågan en framskjutet plats, och hur man i de besatta områdena i öster löser detta problem, får man ett starkt och åskådligt intryck av i vidstående artikel — den andra i den serie skildringar av "Tre veckor vid tyska fronter", som AB:s utvärdade medarbetare inledde i gårdagens nummer.

torna. Männerna voro tysta och kvinnorna kunde väl prata med varandra — endast de unga flickorna skrattade och hastade tysta blickar omkring sig.

"Today, Sunday, the 13th of October, left a peculiar impression. It's become clear that 140,000 Jews from the south of Warsaw (...) will have to leave their homes and move into the Ghetto. All the suburbs have been emptied of Jews, and 140,000 Christians will have to leave the Ghetto quarter. (...) All day people were moving furniture. The Jewish Council was besieged by hundreds of people wanting to know what streets were included in the Ghetto."

EMMANUEL RINGELBLUM,
WARSAW HISTORIAN, OCTOBER 1940



Life in the ghetto

The first ghettos were formed in 1940, and by early 1942 there were hundreds of large and small ghettos scattered throughout Poland and Eastern Europe. Not only the local Jewish populations, but also Jews from Germany and Austria were deported to many of them. German Gypsies were also sometimes sent to the ghettos in Poland. Conditions in these areas soon became intolerable. German authorities had decided that the normal “rules” of society would not apply in the ghettos. The ghettos became death traps.

One decisive factor was the deliberately created extreme overcrowding. In the Warsaw ghetto the number of people peaked at around 400,000, which meant a concentration of one person per 7.5m². Many families lived 15 or more to a room. During winter it was so hard to obtain fuel that ordinary coal became known as “black pearls”. Obtaining sufficient food was very difficult, and this meant a daily struggle for the ghetto inhabitants. In the Warsaw ghetto the Germans allowed around 200 calories per person per day. (Slimming diets in Swedish hospitals today are around 1000 calories per day.) Food smuggled in from “the Aryan side” was therefore essential to survival. Yet those discovered concealing food, often young boys, were shot on the spot by German guards. Inevitably the conditions led to diseases and severe epidemics, especially typhus.

“Natural” mortality rose dramatically. In 1941, one in ten inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto died of hunger or disease. Health care was impossible because Jewish doctors and nurses had no medicines, food or proper facilities available. One doctor wrote: “Active, interested people are being changed into apathetic sleep-walkers. They



Following Germany's occupation of Poland in September 1939, Jews were ordered to wear the Star of David while in public for reasons of identification. Different in appearance in different places, in Warsaw the identifying mark was a blue star on a white band to be worn round the arm. This old Jewish woman in the Warsaw ghetto is trying to survive by selling starched armbands.

The picture was taken on 19 September 1941 by German army sergeant Heinrich Jöst as he visited the ghetto.

The "Lord and master" in the ghetto

Daily life in the ghetto offered few pleasures, but on at least some occasions there appeared a chance to laugh. In his Warsaw diary entry of 15 May 1940, Chaim Kaplan recorded the following:

"Once there came into the ghetto a certain Nazi from a province where the Jews are required to greet every Nazi soldier they encountered, removing their hats as they do. There is no such practice in Warsaw, but the 'honoured guest' wanted to be strict and force the rules of his place of origin on us. A great uproar arose suddenly in Jewish Karmelicka Street: Some psychopathic Nazi is demanding that every passer-by take his hat off in his honour.

Many fled, many hid, many were caught for their transgression and beaten, and many were bursting with laughter. The little 'wise guys', the true lords of the streets, noticed what was going on and found great amusement in actually obeying the Nazi, and showing him great respect in a manner calculated to make a laughing-stock out of the 'great lord' in the eyes of all the passers-by. They ran up to greet him a hundred and one times, taking off their hats in his honour. They gathered in great numbers, with an artificial look of awe on their faces, and wouldn't stop taking off their hats. Some did this with straight faces, while their friends stood behind them and laughed. Then these would leave, and others would approach, bowing before the Nazi with bare heads. There was no end to the laughter."

Jewish boys sitting on a pavement in the Warsaw ghetto.



stay in bed and hardly have the strength to get up to eat or go to the toilet. (...) They die from the physical effort of looking for food. Sometimes they even die with a bit of bread in their hand." No resources were available to help the thousands of emaciated orphans roaming the streets. Bodies lay in the streets covered with newspaper, awaiting removal to mass graves.

Yet despite these circumstances, the Jews continued to try to lead "normal" lives. Schooling was illegal, yet it was widely practised. In Łódź there were 63 schools trying to instruct some 22,330 students. Despite everything young people like David Sierakowiak of Łódź still tried to get an education. On 25 March 1942 he wrote in his diary: "I feel very ill. I read, but I can't study, so I learn English vocabulary. Amongst other things I read Schopenhauer. Philosophy and hunger. What a combination!"

Although the Germans burned down hundreds of synagogues after they occupied Poland, many Jews still maintained their religious customs. Religious activities were often forbidden. If the Gestapo or SS discovered religious services, the praying Jews were humiliated in many ways. If they were not shot, the Germans would cut their beards off or even force them to urinate on prayer books and scrolls from the Torah.

Private Jewish book collections and public libraries were important targets for the Germans. The Jewish historical archives in Eastern Europe, hundreds of years old, were confiscated or destroyed. When deportations from the ghettos began in 1942, books and manuscripts left behind were often used for heating fuel.

Other cultural activities such as music, art and theatre were also carried on, which gave them a chance of maintaining morale. In Łódź, for example, there was a puppet

"Heard how the rabbi from Wengrow was killed on Yom Kippur. He was ordered to sweep the street. Then he was ordered to collect the refuse into his fur hat; while he was bending over, They bayoneted him three times. He continued working and died at work."

FROM EMMANUEL RINGELBLUM'S NOTES FROM
THE WARSAW GHETTO, 26 APRIL 1941



Bendzin 1942. SS Captain Franz Polter from Breslau gathers the Jews' children around him and shrieks: "You wanted the war!" We look at him uncomprehendingly. A six-year-old child dares to step forward. "No uncle S.S. man. We don't want the war. We want some bread."

ELLA-LIEBERMANN-SHIBER

theatre for children while in Warsaw a children's choir existed for a while. Concerts and performances took place in the ghettos until the musicians and actors were deported to death camps. Historians have characterised such cultural activities as a form of resistance.

There were people in the ghettos who realised that it was vital for the future to record everything that was happening. Some people kept diaries while some organised groups who systematically collected evidence and documents about life in the ghettos and about German policy and individual Germans committing atrocities. Among them were historians such as Emmanuel Ringelblum and the teacher Chaim Kaplan in Warsaw, and in Kovno (Kaunas) the lawyer Avraham Tory.

Early on the Germans used the inhabitants of the ghettos as cheap slave labour, and several of the ghettos played an important role in supplying the German army with goods and services. For example, the ghettos of Warsaw, Łódź, Białystok and Sosnowiec were almost exclusively directed to war production. Individual Germans often exploited Jewish labour for their own profit and pleasure. Many Jews therefore believed that such work was their only chance of survival. But sooner or later the Nazis' desire to annihilate the Jews would always reveal itself to be of greater importance than whatever profits they could gain from their work.

The impossible choices

A key element of Nazi policy in the ghettos was to make the Jews administer their own internal affairs. From this came the *Judenräte*, or Jewish Councils. Such groups of Jewish leaders were formed by the Germans in every ghetto, and they had to pass along orders to the ghetto

population. The men on the councils were forced to comply with the German instructions on pain of death. Some Jewish councils had to draw up lists of names of people for work and for deportation. Jewish "police" forces were ordered to round up those condemned to deportation and take fellow Jews to the trains and trucks.

The question of resistance or escape was always considered, but the German policy of cruel collective punishments made such choices very difficult. If, for example, a handful of young people escaped a ghetto, the Germans could shoot hundreds of others in retaliation. Nevertheless, in some ghettos council leaders co-operated with resistance leaders while in others the leadership did everything to counteract attempts at resistance. We see an example of this "impossible choice" in a speech given to the ghetto inhabitants of Vilnius, Lithuania by the council leader, Jacob Gens, on 15 May 1943. He explained that the Gestapo had seized a Jew who had bought a revolver.

He warned: "I don't yet know how the case will end. The last case ended fortunately for the ghetto. But I can tell you that if it happens again we shall be very severely punished. Perhaps they will take away those people over 60, or children ... Now consider whether that is worthwhile!!! There can be only one answer for those who think soundly and maturely. It is not worthwhile!!!"

In the long run it was in fact irrelevant to the fate of the majority of ghetto inhabitants which decisions their leaders took. Whether they chose appeasement of German demands or resistance the result was the same – almost all ghetto inmates were condemned to die because of the total German superiority and the utter isolation and exposure of the Jews.

Death on the street

Death was everywhere in the ghetto. Adina Blady Szwajger was a nurse in the Warsaw ghetto hospital. She depicted everyday life during the summer of 1941.

“After three weeks I went back to the hospital. (...) Back to the typhoid ward were children weren't dying. Except there weren't enough beds for them and they lay two and sometimes even three to a bed, with little numbered plasters stuck to their fore-heads. They ran a fever and kept calling out for something to drink. No, they didn't die of typhus. We discharged them but we were terribly tired because every day we took in a dozen new children and the same number had to be discharged or transferred from 'suspected' to 'certain' and the records of the typhoid ward were, after all, under German supervision. We discharged them so they could die of hunger at home or come back, swollen, for the mercy of a quiet death. Such was each day.”

A dying child on a pavement in the Warsaw ghetto, 19 September 1941. The photographer wrote: “People just passed by; there were too many such children.”





Sunday at the Beaune-la-Rolande camp, south of Paris, France, during a period when visits by family members were still permitted. The men pictured here were deported to extermination camps in Poland in June 1942. The women and children followed in July and August.

Far from being compelled by the Germans to institute anti-Jewish legislation, the French Vichy government lost no time after the defeat in June 1940 in passing anti-Jewish laws. When mass arrests of Jews started in Paris and elsewhere in July 1942 prior to deportation eastward, French police forces provided the manpower. Of the approximately 80,000 Jews deported from France (of which very few survived) 10% were over sixty and 10% under 6 years of age. Only after most Jews with a “foreign background” had been deported did the French authorities cease their co-operation, making the German attempts to find and arrest French and other Jews much more difficult.

“They have traveled for days and nights from Pithiviers in sealed boxcars. 90 to a car with one woman who usually had two, three or four of her own in the pile. They are all between 15 months and 13 years old and are indescribably dirty. The three- and four-year-olds are covered with suppurating sores: impetigo. There would be so much to do for them. But we have nothing, despite the incomparable devotion of our camp director, Commandant Kohn. We immediately begin to set up showers. We have four towels if that many, for 1,000 children.”

ODETTE DALTROFF-BATICIE, PRISONER AT DRANCY,
AUGUST 1942, ABOUT JEWISH CHILDREN WHO CAME
TO DRANCY FROM OTHER COLLECTION CAMPS.

The Holocaust in Europe

In every country under German influence during the Second World War the Holocaust happened in a somewhat different way. However, the basic steps of identification, assembly, expropriation, deportation and extermination were similar and relentless.

Hungary was allied with Nazi Germany throughout the war, yet until 1944, its very large Jewish population (in all around 800,000 individuals) remained in physical safety. Even though Hungary's leaders enacted anti-Jewish laws, they resisted German pressure to deport Jews to the death camps. Everything changed on 19 March 1944, when the German army occupied Hungary. For 42 days from mid-May forward, more than 437,000 Hungarian Jews were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. As the entire world watched, up to 12,000 people a day were murdered in the gas chambers of Birkenau.

Only in early July did Miklos Horthy, the head of the Hungarian state, order the deportations to stop. Since they depended on Hungarian manpower in co-ordination with German planning, around 200,000 Jews of Budapest were saved from deportation. They were aided by neutral diplomats from such countries as Sweden, Switzerland, the Vatican and Spain. In late 1944 some 30,000 Jews were killed during so-called "death marches" to the Austrian border and through mob violence associated with the Arrow Cross (Hungarian Nazis).

Italy was Germany's closest ally. Anti-Jewish laws were passed, but many Italian officials tried to obstruct their intent and implementation. Only after the fascist government fell in July 1943 could German troops, aided by Italian Nazis, round up over 8000 of the country's 35,000 Jews. Most were sent to Birkenau – few returned.

Following Germany's occupation in April 1941, Yugoslavia was divided into different sections. There were about 80,000 Jews in the country, with some 16,000 Serbian Jews living mainly in Belgrade. The Germans forced thousands into slave labour, and plundered their property. In August that year mass arrests took place and most Serbian Jews were shot. In the spring of 1942 a mobile gas van was in use at the Semlin concentration camp near Belgrade. By the summer, only a few hundred Serbian Jews remained alive.

Croatia's fascist government, the Ustasha, aligned itself closely with the Nazis. In Croatia Jews were forced to wear the Star of David and their property was confiscated. Throughout the country the regime systematically slaughtered many thousands of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies. At the Jasenovac concentration camp south of Zagreb, tens of thousands of Serbs and Gypsies were murdered, as were some 20,000 of the country's 30,000 Jews. By late October 1941 most Croatian Jews were dead. Of those that remained, 7,000 Jews were later transported to Auschwitz to be killed. Altogether over 60,000 Yugoslavian Jews were murdered during the war.

Greece was occupied by both the German and Italian armies. As in Italy, the Jews in the Italian zone remained safe until 1944. In the German zone the ancient Sephardic community of Salonika suffered severely. From March to August 1943 about 44,000 Jews were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau where most were gassed on arrival. Only some 1000 Jews returned to the city after the war.

Bulgaria was a German ally and had enacted many antisemitic laws, yet resisted German demands to deport its Jews, who numbered over 50,000. Most survived the war because the highest authorities decided to prevent



the deportation of Bulgaria's Jewish citizens. However, the Germans and Bulgarians deported Jews living in areas annexed by Bulgaria, particularly Thrace and Macedonia. Over 11,000 Jews were deported from territory under Bulgarian control, most to Treblinka death camp.

In Romania, which aided the German invasion of the Soviet Union, there were over 750,000 Jews when the war began. About 160,000 were starved and shot to death by Romanian and German army units in the regions of Bessarabia and Bukovina, while 150,000 were deported to Transnistria where most were killed along with local Jews. However, in central areas of Romania some 300,000 Jews survived the war. As elsewhere the Germans could not deport Jews without local help. Despite the murderous anti-Jewish policies of Marshal Ion Antonescu, the Romanians for political reasons did not deport their remaining Jewish citizens.

Assembly in Scandinavia

Germany occupied Denmark and Norway on 9 April 1940. In Norway discrimination against the country's Jewish community began immediately. At the so-called Wannsee Conference on 20 January 1942, convened in order to co-ordinate and hasten the pan-European measures necessary for the implementation of the "final solution of the Jewish question", Norway's 2000 Jews were added to the list of those to be deported and killed. That same month measures were taken to identify Norwegian Jews, but arresting them waited until the autumn. Late in October several hundred Jewish men over sixteen years were arrested in the cities of Trondheim, Bergen and Oslo. They were sent to camps and their property was confiscated. Women and children were arrested on 26 November. Yet about 1000 Jews in Norway eventually found safety in neighbouring Sweden.

In Denmark the government refused to discriminate against Denmark's 7500 Jews. The Germans left the Jews alone for over three years. But in August 1943, Hitler decided that their time had come. However, information about the impending arrests leaked out. Because of this most Danish Jews fled safely across the Sound to Sweden in October, helped by Danish and Swedish fishermen. The Danish authorities never ceased to take an interest in the fate of the 400 Jewish citizens deported to Theresienstadt, and most of them survived the war and returned to their homes.

Finland's small Jewish population, about 2000, survived the war even though their government supported the German war effort against the Soviet Union. Except for a few individual cases, Finnish leaders refused to deport their country's Jews.



Chronology 1940 - 1942

1940

- January First trials to gas mental patients – Jews and others – take place at German asylums.
- April–June Germany occupies Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland and France. Jews and some 2500 Gypsies are deported from Germany to Poland.
- April The Lodz ghetto is closed to the outside world. Himmler orders the setting up of a concentration camp at Auschwitz.
- 3 October Special provisions against Jews in Vichy France.
- October The Jews in Warsaw are herded together in a ghetto. In mid-November the ghetto is closed to the outside world.

1941

- January Registration of Dutch Jews.
- 1 March Himmler inspects Auschwitz and orders another camp to be built at Birkenau (Auschwitz II) and allows the chemical company I.G. Farben to use prisoners to build a factory near Auschwitz.
- 22 March Gypsies and coloured children are no longer allowed to attend German schools.
- 30 March Hitler tells his generals that the impending war against Russia will be a “war of extermination”.
- 22 June Germany attacks the Soviet Union. Special Units begin mass slaughter in areas to the east of Poland. The same day Robert Ley, one of the Nazi leaders, says in a speech in Breslau: “The Jew continued to be our implacable enemy, who did his utmost to destroy our people so that he could rule. That is why we must fight until he is annihilated, and we will annihilate him! We want to be free, not only inwardly but outwardly too!”
- 31 July Reich Marshall Herman Göring signs an order giving the SS powers to prepare a “total solution to the Jewish question”.

- 1 September German Jews aged six and over have to wear the yellow Star of David.
- 18 Sept. Jews have to apply for permits to travel on public transport.
- 29–30 sept. More than 33,000 Jews from Kiev are murdered by a Special Squad at the Babi Yar ravine.
- 15 Oct. Jews are forbidden to emigrate from Germany.
- November The first Jews are deported to Theresienstadt, a ghetto/concentration camp set up to service as a “Jewish model society”, suitable for inspections by the Red Cross.
- 7 Dec. Japan attacks Pearl Harbour. The United States enters the war.
- 8 Dec. The first gassing of Jews in an extermination camp is carried out at Chelmno, in former Poland.
- 11 Dec. Germany declares war on the United States.
- 12 Dec. German Jews are not allowed to use public telephones.

1942

- 20 January SS Security Chief Reinhard Heydrich is chairman at the Wannsee (Berlin suburb) conference. High-ranking Nazi and government officials meet to co-ordinate “the final solution”. Deportation of Jews and Gypsies from the Lodz ghetto to Chelmno continues.
- 15 Feb. The first trainloads of Jews are killed with Zyklon B gas at Auschwitz. German Jews are not allowed to keep pets.
- 17 March The first mass gassings at the Belzec extermination camp south-east of Lublin.
- 20 March Gas chambers in use at Auschwitz-Birkenau, in two farm houses converted for this purpose. Polish Jews from Upper Silesia are the first victims.
- April–May Sobibor extermination camp opens.
- 4 May The first “selection” takes place amongst prisoners who have been at Auschwitz-Birkenau for several

- months. Anyone found “incapable of work” is sent to the gas chambers.
- 12 May German Jews are not allowed to visit “Aryan” hairdressers.
- May–June Jews in Western Europe have to wear a Star of David.
- 12 June German Jews have to hand in their radios, binoculars, bicycles and typewriters.
- 1 July Jewish children in Germany are no longer allowed to attend Jewish schools.
- 4 July The first “selection” takes place in Auschwitz, on the unloading platform. The trainload contains Jews from Slovakia.
- 7 July Heinrich Himmler discusses sterilisation of Jewish women with Professor Carl Clauberg and others. Himmler tells Clauberg that Auschwitz is at his disposal for experiments on the prisoners.
- 10 July Clauberg is told that Himmler wants him to go to Ravensbrück to sterilise Jewish women. Himmler wants to know, in particular, how long it takes to sterilise 1000 Jewish women.
- 15–16 July The first trainload of Dutch Jews to Auschwitz.
- 16–18 July French police arrest 13,000 “stateless” Jews in Paris. 9000 of them (including 4000 children) were transported to Auschwitz.
- 19 July Himmler gives orders that the extermination of Jews in Poland must be completed by the end of the year.
- 30 July Jewish congregations in Germany have to hand over cultural objects made of precious metals.
- 22 July Mass deportations of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka extermination camp.
- 12 Sept. 9 Oct. German Jews are not allowed to buy from “Aryan” book shops.
- 26 Nov. Norwegian Jews are deported to Auschwitz.
- 17 Dec. The Allies declare that those guilty of killing Jews will be punished after the war.

Deportation

Instructions issued to local police authorities in the Saar and Alsace

1. Only full Jews are to be deported. Mischlinge, partners of mixed marriages, and foreign Jews, insofar as they are not nationals of enemy states and of the territories occupied by us, are to be excluded from the action. Stateless Jews will be arrested as a matter of principle. Every Jew is considered eligible for transportation; the only Jews excluded are those who are actually bed-ridden.
 - b) a complete set of clothing
 - c) a woollen blanket for each Jew
 - d) provisions for several days
 - e) crockery and cutlery
 - f) up to 100 RM in cash per person
 - g) passports, identity cards or other means of identification, which, however, should not be packed, but carried on their persons.
2. Assembly points have been established in Ludwigshafen, Kaiserslautern and Landau for the collection of Jews. Those arrested will be brought there in buses. A detective will be appointed as transport leader for each bus. He will be assigned uniformed police or detectives as required.
3. Every transport leader will be provided with a list at the assembly point from which he will be able to ascertain the bus and officers assigned to him and the names and addresses of the persons who are to be arrested...
(...)
5. After the officials involved have been notified of the personal details of the Jews, they will proceed to the dwellings of those affected. They will then inform them that they have been arrested for the purpose of deportation and will add that they must be ready to move within two hours. Any queries are to be referred to the person in charge of the assembly point who will clarify them; postponement of the preparations is not permitted.
6. Those arrested should if possible take with them the following:
 - a) for each Jew a suitcase or bag with pieces of equipment; adults are permitted to take up to 50 kg, children up to 30 kg
 - b) perishable foodstuffs must be put at the disposal of the NSV.
 - c) open fires must be extinguished
 - d) water and gas must be turned off
 - e) electric fuses must be unscrewed
 - f) the keys of the dwelling must be tied together and labelled with the owner's name, town or village, street, and house number
 - g) those arrested must as far as possible be searched for weapons, ammunition, explosives, poison, foreign exchange, jewellery etc., before departure...
(...)
7. The following items must not be taken: savings books, stocks and shares, jewellery and amounts of cash over the limit of 100 RM. (...)
9. Before leaving their dwellings they must carry out the following:
 - a) Farm animals and other live animals (dogs, cats, pet birds) must be handed over to the chairman of the parish council, the branch leader, the local peasant leader or some other appropriate person in return for a receipt.
 - b) perishable foodstuffs must be put at the disposal of the NSV.
 - c) open fires must be extinguished
 - d) water and gas must be turned off
 - e) electric fuses must be unscrewed
 - f) the keys of the dwelling must be tied together and labelled with the owner's name, town or village, street, and house number
 - g) those arrested must as far as possible be searched for weapons, ammunition, explosives, poison, foreign exchange, jewellery etc., before departure...
(...)
13. It is essential that the Jews are properly treated at the time of their arrest. Mob violence must be prevented at all costs.

The massive killings of the Holocaust could not have been accomplished without the deportations of millions of European Jews. For various reasons the Germans decided that most of the arrested Jews could not be killed in the countries under occupation, but that they should be transported principally to the specially built death camps in Poland. One of the most important reasons was that it was clear to Hitler and Nazi officials that the murders must be carried out in secret. In Western, Central and Southern Europe the Nazis were afraid that killing the Jews there would damage cooperation with the civilian population and the authorities. In parts of Poland, the Soviet Union and the Baltic countries, massive numbers were killed near their homes. Still, the Germans soon realised that it was more practical to move a large part also of those Jews to the camps, than to shoot them. The well-developed European railway network made it possible to organise transports from all parts of Europe into Poland, where millions disappeared without a trace. If the majority of the more than one million Jews deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau had not been gassed upon arrival, that little place would have been one of Europe's biggest cities.

In October 1940, 7500 Jews were deported from Baden and the Saar in Germany to concentration camps in southern France; most would later be sent from France to Poland. The oldest individual was a man of 97 from Karlsruhe. Those deported were allowed between 15 minutes and 2 hours to leave their homes. One police report stated that some of the Jews "used this time to escape deportation by committing suicide".



The deportation "to the East", 25 April 1942, of 995 Jewish inhabitants from the German city of Würzburg, under the surveillance of police and military. They are forced to leave their homes and possessions, and are allowed to bring with them only "the bare essentials". Already at the Würzburg train station they will have to relinquish part of their luggage. These Jews will be transported first to the Trawniki and Izbica transit camps in southeast Poland, and then on to the nearby Belzec extermination camp.



Umschlagplatz

Umschlagplatz was the term for a location in some ghettos, often a town square or other large open space, from whence Jews were taken to their deaths. In the larger ghettos this place often lay close to railway lines. In smaller ghettos the location also served for selections, where the Germans would decide which individuals were to be taken away to be killed, and which were still “of use” for work. In Warsaw an extra railway spur was built connecting Umschlagplatz with the main railway line, in order to facilitate the deportations.

Massive deportations from Warsaw to Treblinka commenced on 23 July 1942. Every day for weeks thereafter thousands of Jews were rounded up in the ghetto. The daily “quota” was 6000–7000. Whole blocks and streets were deported at one time, and many people were caught in raids just by chance. SS soldiers, often with the help of auxiliary troops from Latvia, Lithuania and the Ukraine conducted the arrests. Jewish “policemen” were also forced to assist in the arrests. Many Jews were drawn to Umschlagplatz with the promise of a loaf of bread.

On either the 5th or 6th of August, Janusz Korczak, a respected physician and educator, was deported to Treblinka along with 200 orphans from his children’s home. Rejecting offers to save himself by “going over” to the “Aryan” side of Warsaw, Korczak was last seen leading the children to Umschlagplatz. Holding one child in his arms and another by the hand, Korczak led his column of orphans through the length of the ghetto to the death trains. Through the middle of September 1942, more

Women and children at the Umschlagplatz in Warsaw awaiting deportation to Treblinka, January 1943.

than 260,000 men, women and children were transported from Umschlagplatz to Treblinka and other camps. The last transports took place in connection with the Warsaw ghetto uprisings of January and April/May 1943. When the latter revolt had been crushed there were no longer any Jews left in Warsaw.

A place of blood and tears

Often people were forced to wait for days in these open collecting assembly points, in hot and cold weather, for goods wagons to become available. Many recollections and other evidence relate the terrible conditions in this anteroom of death. Halina Birenbaum survived the Holocaust and Warsaw's Umschlagplatz. This is her eyewitness account.

"They brought us to the *Umschlag*. To that hundred-times accursed *Umschlag*, drenched in blood and tears, filled with the whistling of railroad locomotives, the trains that bore away hundreds of thousands of Jews to the ultimate destination of their lives.

The great square, near a building which had been a school before the war, was thronged with a desperate and highly agitated crowd. For the most part, they were workers from factories and workshops in the Aryan district, owners of an *Ausweis*, who until very recently had still possessed "the right to live". When they were coming home from work today, as usual escorted by Storm Troopers to the homes from which their nearest and dearest had been dragged after seizing all their possessions, they had been ambushed.

A high wall and a living barrier of policemen (with not so many Nazis), armed to the teeth, now separated us from the Ghetto and its hiding-places. My elder brother

was still there, with my aunt and her daughter, as they had decided not to go down into the street with us.

We waited in suspense for what would happen next, looking round in search for some way out. My father held us close, kissing my mother, brother and me. He held us tightly by the hand, not letting us move even a step away, especially my mother, who fidgeted incessantly, trying to tear us away from the crowd and somehow sneak into the school building where there was a first-aid post and a Jewish police post. She wanted to hide us there, to prevent us from being herded into the wagons.

My father was so upset and terrified that he was incapable even of thinking of escape; all he could do was to show his pass to the Hitlerites, as he believed up to the last moment that we would all be saved by it. He was afraid. He thought that to disobey the Storm troopers could only hasten our doom.

My mother was different. That was why I always clung to her, profoundly convinced that she would find us a way out of the worst situation... In my father's presence I had completely different feelings.

And now, in the *Umschlag*, the same thing happened.

Freight cars had never before been drawn up at this time of day. So we supposed we would have to wait all night at the *Umschlag*, until a train arrived in the morning. This gave us some opportunity of escape, of returning to the Ghetto and the attic.

Then we saw the Nazis placing a machine-gun in the center of the square, aimed at the enormous packed crowd of people, who responded with a murmur of terror. But, although everyone realized what was going on, no one dared cry out or burst into noisy tears. Silence prevailed, uneasy and heavy with tension. We embraced



The picture shows part of the Warsaw Umschlagplatz. The men on the left of the picture and the women and children on the right, separated by German soldiers and auxiliaries, are awaiting deportation to Treblinka. The building on the left functioned as a sickbay and waiting room for those to be sent to the extermination camp. The building on the right was the Gestapo headquarters at Umschlagplatz. Both buildings still stand today.

each other – my mother, my father, Hilek and I. We looked at one another in the way that people look for the last time... to take with us the picture of beloved faces, before moving into total darkness.

Everything else, everything we had lived by and fought for up to now, ceased to matter.

My father was half-conscious, my mother – as always – serene. She even smiled at me.

'Don't be afraid,' she whispered in my ear, 'everyone must die sometime, we only die once... And we shall die together, so don't be afraid, it won't be so terrible...'

“Taking the Olympic Games as a pretext, the Berlin police in May 1936 arrested hundreds of Gypsies and transferred whole families, with their wagons, horses and other belongings to the so-called Marzahn ‘rest place’, next to a garbage dump on one side and a cemetery on the other. Soon the rest place was enclosed with barbed wire. A de facto Gypsy concentration camp had been established in a suburb of Berlin. It was from Marzahn, and from other similar rest places soon set up near other German cities, that a few years later thousands of Sinti and Roma would be sent to the extermination sites in the East.”

SAUL FRIEDLÄNDER, SURVIVOR AND PROFESSOR
OF THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST

The deportation of the Gypsies

The Gypsies were persecuted for ideological reasons, yet SS Chief Heinrich Himmler believed that some Gypsies were “racially pure” and “Aryan cousins”. They should therefore be preserved and identified for placement on a “reservation”. The task of so-called racial investigators was primarily to decide which Gypsies had too much “racially mixed blood” to be classified as “Aryans”. This turned out to be most of them. Caught in the relentless bureaucratic wheels of racist Germany, most Gypsies suffered deportation. Many were sent first to Jewish ghettos and from there to the death camps. The notorious “medical” experiments conducted at Auschwitz were perpetrated not only on Jews but also on Gypsy children. More than 20,000 Gypsies were murdered there.

In Eastern Europe it became practice to shoot groups of Gypsies in the woods or outside of towns, often by local collaborators. In Croatia they were almost entirely exterminated. The number of Gypsies murdered by the Nazis and their helpers is not known with certainty. This is due to insufficient research, lack of sources and uncertainty about the size of the Gypsy population both before and after the war. The minimum number estimated by historians is about 200,000 but some put the figure closer to 600,000 men, women and children murdered. It is estimated that approximately between 10% to 50% of Europe’s Gypsies lost their lives.

Unlike Jewish survivors, Gypsy survivors have never received any compensation either from Germany or other countries. In a Europe with increasing ethnic tensions, Gypsies remain the most persecuted group, often subjected to discrimination and violence.



Eva Justin – an expert on “the Gypsy nuisance”

Robert Ritter was Nazi Germany’s leading “expert” on what was often called the “Gypsy nuisance”, and Eva Justin was one of his assistants. Ritter was originally a child psychologist specialising in “criminal biology”, a theory which assumed that deviant or criminal behaviour was based on biological inheritance. Ritter argued that though Gypsies once had been “racially pure Aryans”, their implicit valuable qualities had been lost through “racial mixing” with various “inferior” peoples because of their nomadic lifestyle. This caused, according to Ritter, criminal and anti-soci-

al behaviour. Eva Justin pursued her own research while assisting Ritter. Thirty-nine Gypsy children were retained in a Catholic children’s home so that Justin could complete her thesis. When the research was completed in May 1944, the children were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and placed in the so-called Gypsy camp. Most were murdered along with close to 2,900 other Gypsies in the gas chambers of Birkenau on the night of 3 August 1944.

“Ritter made it all nice and easy. You came in one after the other and sat on the chair. Then he compared the children’s eyes and asked us all questions and Justin wrote it all down. Then you had to open wide and he had an instrument to measure the throat, nostrils, nose, root of the nose, distance between the eyes, eye colour, eyebrows, ears inside and out, neck, hands (...). Everything you could possibly measure.”

JOSEF REINHARDT, A GERMAN GYPSY,
GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF THE EXAMINATIONS
BY GERMAN “RACIAL INVESTIGATORS”



Among the doomed

Calel Perechodnik was a Jewish policeman in the ghetto of Otwock, Poland. He was forced to put his own wife and little daughter on the deportation train to Treblinka. Afterwards he wrote:

"You are in the fourth cattle car from the locomotive, a car that is almost completely filled with women and children. In the whole car there are only two men – are these your protectors? You are sitting on the boards with your legs tucked under you, holding Aluška in your arms. Is the child sleeping already at such a late hour? Is it maybe suffocating for lack of air on such a sultry August night? (...)

You are sitting alone in the midst of this crowd of condemned. Are you maybe finding some comfort that this fate has not only touched you but also all those around you? No, you are not thinking of that. You are sitting, and there is one thing that you do not understand. How is it possible? Your Calinka, who loved you for ten years, was loyal to you, guessed at and fulfilled all your thoughts and wishes so willingly, now has betrayed you, allowed you to enter the cattle car and has himself remained behind. (...)

I know you clench your fists, and a wave of hatred toward Aluška sweeps over you. That is, after all, his child. Why do I have to have her here? You are getting up; you want to throw the little one out the window.

Anka, Anka, do it, throw out the child, and don't let your hand shake! Maybe the child will fall under the wheels of the speeding wagon, which will crush her to a pulp. And maybe, if there is really a God in the world, there are good angels who will spread an invisible carpet so that nothing will happen to her. Maybe your Aluška will fall softly to the ground, will fall asleep far from the train rails, and in the morning some decent Christian, captivated with her angelic looks, will pick her off the ground, cuddle her, take her home, and raise as his own daughter.

Do it, Anka, do; don't hesitate for a second!"

The drawing on this page and the one on page 28 are both by Ella Liebermann-Shiber. Born in Berlin, Ella endured 17 months imprisonment in Auschwitz-Birkenau. She was liberated in May 1945 at the age of 17. Her experiences are depicted in 93 drawings.

Separations

On 12 July 1942 Hertha Josias from Hamburg, Germany, wrote a letter to her 17-year-old daughter Hannelore who, with her younger sister Ingelin, had been granted a safe haven in Mellerud, Sweden. Hertha knew she was to be deported but does not know the destination. She writes: "I beg you, dear Hannele, to take great care of Ingelin. You must be both mother and father to her. Be kind to her and promise you'll always cherish and look after her. Stick together and keep a watchful eye on her. I am relying on you completely, my big daughter. We won't hear from each other for a while but as soon as I can, I'll write." Hertha Josias ends the letter with a wish that God shall look after her daughters and that they shouldn't forget her. Letters like this are written by people who know they are condemned to die.

Many such letters have been preserved. They are typical of the reality Jewish and Gypsy families suffered during the Nazi era. Parents were separated from their children and children from their parents.

Those who caused the families to be torn apart were very often parents themselves with children of their own, yet this does not seem to have affected them. After a day's work in Auschwitz, the doctors returned home to their wives and children who lived in the vicinity of the camp. Maybe they had just sent thousands of mothers and children to die in the gas chambers. How was it possible for them to do this month after month and at the same time be proper husbands and nice daddies to their own wives and children? Hermann Friedrich Gräbe, a German engineer, was asked why he saved Jews during he war. He couldn't explain why or how, he said, but he knew that his mother, who was from a simple back-



ground, had meant much to him. As a child he and some friends had harassed an old Jewish lady. Gräbe recounted: "My mother said to me: 'You should never do that. Why did you do that?' And of course I would reply, 'Well, because the others did.' She replied firmly, 'You are not the other ones. You are my son. Don't ever do it again. If you do, you will hear from me, and you will see what I will do about you. Would you like to be in her shoes?' 'No', I said. 'Then, tell me, why did you do that? Don't ever do that again. That lady has feelings, that lady has a heart, like you, like me. Don't do that again.' (...) This was the way my mother influenced me. She said, 'Take people as they come – not by profession, not by religion, but by what they are as persons.'"

Perhaps it's an exaggeration to claim that the whole answer lies in how parents bring up their children, but it is too important a subject not to be taken seriously.

Farewell

The deportation trains ran ceaselessly. Therese Müller, a Hungarian woman who survived Auschwitz, recalls: "Light reaches us through the little barred window. We can see the trees and the mountainous landscape rush past. What do the trees outside want to tell us? What does the thunder of the rails tell us and the whistle when the train goes over the points? Nor can I see individuals now. I see them all as through a haze. All are waiting or sleeping. All is quiet. These people are my family. We receive support from each other. But at the same time I know that this is also a parting. I am sure that many of us will perish. We try to take everything as it comes. It is dawn. My mother is holding my hand. This is her farewell."

Written in pencil
in the sealed freightcar.

*Here in this carload
I am Eve
With my son Abel
If you see my older boy
Cain son of Adam
Tell him that I*

DAN PAGIS



“They expect the worst – they do not expect the unthinkable.”

CHARLOTTE DELBO

Łódź ghetto, September 1942. A young boy's farewell from his family. The Germans have announced that the population of the ghetto must be reduced, and that only the “productive” can remain. For this reason more than 15,000 individuals; sick, elderly and children under 10 are taken away between 5 and 12 September. They are sent from the ghetto to the Chelmno extermination camp, some 70 km north-west of Łódź. There they are murdered with exhaust gases in specially equipped vans. After the procedure ends, the vans drive to a large clearing in a wood a few kilometres away. There the bodies are burnt.

Deportation aboard the SS Donau

Early in the morning of 26 November 1942, 532 Norwegian Jews were forced to board the German vessel SS Donau. It left Oslo that day and the group reached Auschwitz-Birkenau on 1 December. The elderly, women and children were gassed immediately in the so-called Bunker 2. The men were sent away for slave labour. The Germans and their Norwegian helpers never ceased in their search and by 1944 a total of 770 Jews had been deported to Auschwitz. Only 24 survived the war. Unlike other imprisoned Norwegians, they had to make their own way back to Norway after liberation.

To have everything taken away

Herman Sachnowitz was a Norwegian Jew who survived the Holocaust. Here he describes the shock of deportation.

“We reached Oslo at midday. Grey and miserable. The air raid siren went off. No Norwegian civilians were supposed to witness what was to happen. But people were still standing in front of the barrier to the America dock, Norwegian friends. I saw them through a window in the ambulance.

I also saw something else. A tall, grey-black ship's hull just 7–8 meters away: it was the SS Donau from Bremen, the slave ship. Outside the wagon a man's voice gave a desperate shout, something about women and children. We understood that the women had also been seized. Professor Epstein collapsed completely and burst into tears. Everyone broke down, including me. We could no longer see the Norwegian collaborators who had been guarding us. They had been replaced by SS troops in green uniforms, there were swarms of them. With the officers screaming hysterically they drove us out of the wagons over to the dock to the gangways which led to the ship's deck. We who were ill stood last in line and saw the whole thing. Women, children and men in a hopeless battle against a brutal and callous superpower, a living ring of iron drawn together round the unfortunates. For us



who had grown up in a country where brotherly love was the first and greatest commandment, the sight was worse than any nightmare. This was the first great shock, and we didn't think it could get any worse.

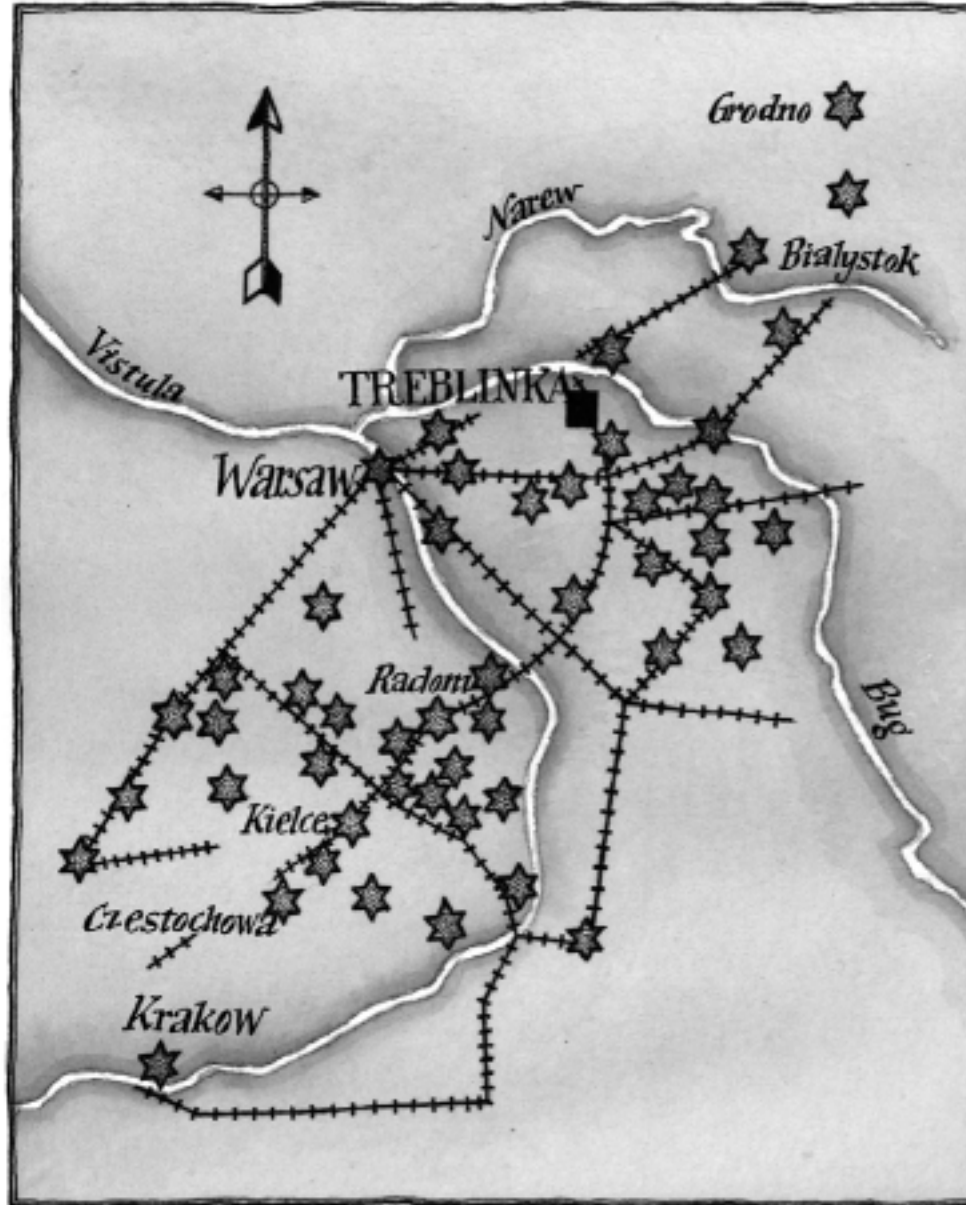
More than 600 people who had lived their lives with great faith in the just state had suddenly had everything taken away: their freedom, their country, and worst of all – their human dignity. They were pushed and kicked and beaten. They begged not to have to go on-board, for they knew what it meant: deportation. They threw themselves down on the dock, tore their hair and shri-

eked for mercy for themselves and for their loved ones, but no quarter was given. Iron-toed boots and rubber truncheons hit them on the head and stomach. Mothers with babies in their arms and pregnant women, were pushed and mistreated. Clothes were ripped to pieces so you could see bare skin. Small children were thrown around. And amid all this – I can still see it before my eyes – a slow column of weak, old women and men proceeded slowly and with bowed heads up the gangway, to what they saw as an inevitable fate. They knew more than us young people. They knew the history of our people. They were already dead.”

The routes of the "special trains"

Europe's railway network played a decisive role in the perpetration of the Holocaust. Several million people were transported aboard "special trains". Passenger and freight cars traversed Europe, arriving at ghettos, execution fields, transit and death camps. Because of these transports the German war effort often suffered. The SS chartered scarce rolling stock and often forced Jews to pay for one-way tickets. The SS sought to have the murder pay for itself.

This map shows the deportation routes from ghettos within Poland to Treblinka. Below is an extract from a schedule for one of the "special trains". On 25 September 1942 it left Szydlowiec with a "full load" (800 tons) and reached Treblinka the next day at 11:24. The "empty train" (600 tons) was returned to Kozienice, arriving after midnight. That is, full loads to Treblinka, empty on return. Day after day and month after month from July 1942 to August 1943.



TRANSPORTS TO THE TREBLINKA DEATH CAMP

★ Ghettos from which Jews were deported to Treblinka

---+--- Railway line

5.) P Kz 9232 (30.9) von Szydlowiec n

Szydlowiec	(3.08)/21.50
Radom	22.49/ 0.13
Deblin Gbf	2.00/ 3.10
Lukow	5.17/ 6.08
Siedlce	6.58/ 8.34
Treblinka	11.24/(15.59)

6.) Rückleitung des Leierzuges!

<u>Ep Kz 9233 (30.11) von Treblinka</u>	
Treblinka:	(11.24)/15.59
Siedlce	17.56/18.42
Lukow	19.36/20.37
Deblin Gbf	22.34/23.36

Chronology 1943 - 1945

1943

- 18 Jan. The first rebellion in the Warsaw ghetto breaks out.
2 Feb. Soviet forces defeat the German army at Stalingrad.
22 Feb. Sophie Scholl, a member of "The White Rose" (a resistance group consisting of students from the University of Munich), is executed after being found guilty of treason by a special Nazi court.
26 Feb. The first trainload of Gypsies from Germany reaches Auschwitz. They are placed in a special Gypsy camp.
22 March Four crematoria with gas chambers are completed and ready for use at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
19–30 April American and British representatives meet in Bermuda to discuss saving Europe's Jews, but fail to come up with any concrete plans.
19 April Rebellion breaks out in the Warsaw ghetto.
16 May The rebellion in the Warsaw ghetto is crushed and the ghetto destroyed.
8 June A trainload of mothers and their 3000 children leaves Holland for transportation to Sobibor. All are gassed on arrival.
11 July Hitler forbids the public mention of the "final solution to the Jewish problem".
1–2 Oct. The Danes launch a rescue action for Jews in Denmark.

1944

- 19 March Germany occupies Hungary and begins to deport Hungary's Jewish population.
6 June D-Day. Western Allied Forces land in Normandy.
20 July German officers try to assassinate Hitler.
July The Majdanek camp is liberated by the Red Army.
2 Aug. The Gypsy family camp at Auschwitz is liquidated. 2897 Gypsies are gassed in one night.
November Killing with Zyklon B gas at the Auschwitz gas chambers ceases.

1945

- 17–18 Jan. SS compulsory evacuation of captives from Auschwitz begins. Captives were forced to walk to Germany in so called death marches.
27 January The Red Army liberates Auschwitz.
11 April Buchenwald concentration camp is liberated by American forces.
15 April Bergen-Belsen concentration camp is liberated by British forces.
29–30 April Ravensbrück concentration camp is liberated by Soviet forces, who encounter around 3500 female captives.
30 April Hitler commits suicide.
7–8 May Germany capitulates: VE day. The war in Europe is over.

"... Thus all the imprisoned Jewish persons, men and women, children and elderly are presumably loaded onto cattle trucks and removed either to Germany or to the Polish General Government (...)

In Budapest the Jews have been deprived of almost all their property. They now live 8–10 people in a single room.

Those lucky enough to be capable of necessary labour are likely to be transported to German factories where they have the prospect of reasonable treatment. The rest, on the other hand, children, weak women and the elderly are deported to the extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau near Kattowitz in Poland."

IVAN DANIELSSON, SWEDEN'S REPRESENTATIVE IN BUDAPEST
REPORTS HOME TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE IN STOCKHOLM,
24 JUNE 1944

The genocide begins

*“Widmann, can the Criminal Technical Institute manufacture large quantities of poison?”
‘For what? To kill people?’
‘No.’
‘To kill animals?’
‘No.’
‘What for then?’
‘To kill animals in human form: that means the mentally ill, whom one can no longer describe as human and for whom no recovery is in sight.’”*

DR ALBERT WIDMANN, HEAD OF THE CHEMICAL SECTION
AT THE FORENSIC INSTITUTE IN A CONVERSATION WITH
AN OFFICIAL OF HITLER'S PERSONAL CHANCELLERY
JULY 1938

The picture on this page: buses waiting at the Eichberg Clinic for patients to be taken to the Hadamar “euthanasia” centre, to be murdered and cremated.

Opposite: Smoke from the Hadamar crematorium.

The systematic murder of the European Jews was preceded by the state-sanctioned murder of German citizens who were handicapped, mentally retarded and “asocial elements”. The operation, called Aktion T4, began in October 1939 and was directed from Adolf Hitler’s personal chancellery. Throughout Germany the victims were collected from asylums and clinics and taken in grey buses with drawn curtains or windows painted over to “euthanasia centres” equipped with gas chambers and crematoria. Medical doctors decided who should be “disinfected”, that is, put to death. Relatives were later informed of the death with a *pro forma* letter. “Dear Herr ... As you are no doubt aware, your daughter Fräulein ... was transferred to our institution on ministerial orders. It is our sad duty to have to inform you that she died here on ... of influenza ... All attempts by the doctors to keep the patient alive were unfortunately unsuccessful.” Often body parts from “euthanasia” victims were preserved and sent to medical schools as study material. At least 120,000 people fell victim to “euthanasia” from 1940 to 1945. Embarrassment in the Führer’s office, caused by popular unease, led the program to be “officially” halted in August 1941. Unofficially it continued for years.

At the same time, shootings of Jews in the Baltic coun-



tries and occupied regions of the Soviet Union were reaching a high point after weeks of routine mass murder. One of the largest single actions took place on 29 and 30 September at Babi Yar, a ravine outside of Kiev when a so-called SS Einsatz Squad, aided by police, killed 33,371 Jewish men, women and children.

Led by “the architect of genocide” Heinrich Himmler, the SS had administrative responsibility for the genocide. In October 1943 Himmler spoke of the “extermination of the Jewish people” and praised his organisation.

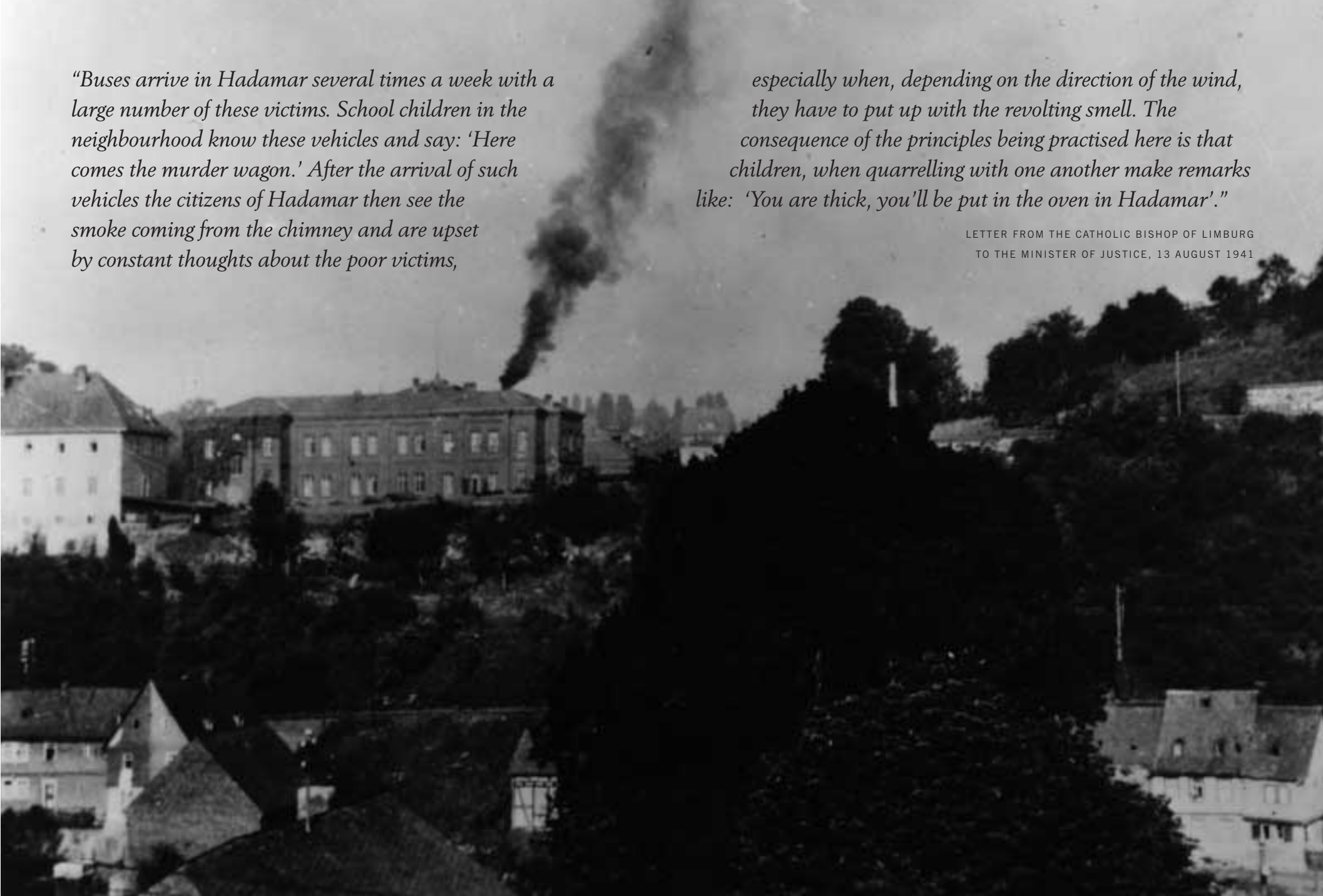
He said: “We had the moral right, we had the duty to our own people to kill this people who wanted to kill us (...) We have carried out this most difficult task out of love for our people. And we have suffered no harm internally, in our soul, in our character.” The murderers had, in their own eyes, remained “decent”.

One post-war myth claims that those who refused to carry out an order in a death camp, or to participate in mass shootings of civilians would be punished, even with death. There are, however, no such cases known. Actually the very few who requested not to kill were replaced, and never punished. Most of those involved had no qualms and simply carried on, believing the Jews to be “vermin” to be exterminated. Many believed they were performing a sacred act for Führer and Fatherland. As long as they were reasonably discrete, many perpetrators could enrich themselves from the victims’ possessions.

"Buses arrive in Hadamar several times a week with a large number of these victims. School children in the neighbourhood know these vehicles and say: 'Here comes the murder wagon.' After the arrival of such vehicles the citizens of Hadamar then see the smoke coming from the chimney and are upset by constant thoughts about the poor victims,

especially when, depending on the direction of the wind, they have to put up with the revolting smell. The consequence of the principles being practised here is that children, when quarrelling with one another make remarks like: 'You are thick, you'll be put in the oven in Hadamar'."

LETTER FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF LIMBURG
TO THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, 13 AUGUST 1941





In the Baltics

The map to the left is taken from a report filed by Einsatz Unit A, which operated mainly in the Baltic countries. It shows the number of “completed Jew executions”, illustrated by a “body count” and a coffin. Estonia is declared “free of Jews”. The bottom line says “Estimated number of still extant Jews 128,000”. In the Baltic countries, Belorussia and the Ukraine the Germans received much assistance from both local militias and regular German army (Wehrmacht) units.

Avraham Tory was a lawyer who survived the Kaunas ghetto in Lithuania. In his diary he describes a day in 1941 when the inhabitants of the ghetto were taken to a “selection”: Who is going to live and who is to die?

“Tuesday morning, October 28, was rainy. A heavy mist covered the sky and the whole Ghetto was shrouded in darkness. A fine sleet filled the air and covered the ground in a thin layer. From all directions, dragging themselves heavily and falteringly, groups of men, women, and children, elderly and sick who leaned on the arms of their relatives or neighbours, babies carried in their mothers’ arms, proceeded in long lines.

They were all wrapped in winter coats, shawls, or blankets, so as to protect themselves from the cold and the damp.

Many carried in their hands lanterns or candles, which cast a faint light, illuminating their way in the darkness.

Many families stepped along slowly, holding hands.

They all made their way in the same direction – to Demokratu Square. It was a procession of mourners, grieving over themselves. Some thirty thousand people proceeded that morning into the unknown, toward a fate that could already have been sealed for them by the bloodthirsty rulers.

A deathlike silence pervaded this procession tens of thousands strong. Every person dragged himself along, absorbed in his own thoughts, pondering his own fate and the fate of his family whose lives hung by a thread.

Thirty thousand lonely people, forgotten by God and by man, delivered to the whim of tyrants, whose hands had already spilled the blood of many Jews.”

The Special Units

“Operation Barbarossa”, Nazi Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, marks the start of what became known as “the Final Solution”: the systematic murder of European Jewry. Immediately behind the German Army came four small, mobile groups called the Einsatzgruppen, or “Special Units”. In June they were about 3000 men strong, staffed by regular German police, security and SS soldiers. Their orders were specifically to execute Soviet political commissars and Jewish “party members”. The army protected their movements and actions. This task soon evolved into shooting “Jews in general”. Many Gypsies were also rounded up and shot. These units kept meticulous records and sent reports to Berlin; through them it is possible still today to follow their murderous “progress” day by day.

One such document of seven pages lists the executions conducted in Lithuania by one commando in Einsatz Unit A from 4 July 1941 until 1 December. There were a total of 137,346 victims: Russian and Lithuanian Communists, Russian prisoners of war, the “mentally ill”, Lithuanians, Poles, Gypsies and partisans. But the largest group of victims by far was Jewish men, women and children. In the excerpt from A. Tory’s diary cited, he describes how the Jews in the Kaunas ghetto were on their way 28 October at dawn to a selection at the Demokratu Square. The report for the 29 October 1941 states that: “29/10/41 Kaunas... 2007 Jews, 2920 Jewesses, 4273 Jewish children (cleansing the ghetto from superfluous Jews): 9200.” In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union it seems clear that a total of nearly 2 million people were shot by “Special Units”, police battalions, and other units seeking to kill large numbers of Jews.

Digging graves takes up the greatest amount of time, whilst the actual execution is far quicker (100 people 40 minutes)...To start with my soldiers were unaffected. But during the second day it was noticeable that one or two didn’t have the moral strength to carry out executions for longer periods of time. My personal impression is that one is not affected by psychological inhibitions during an execution. These arise later when you think about it in peace and quiet during the evening several days later.

REPORT BY LIEUTENANT WALTHER OF AN EXECUTION
NEAR BELGRADE, 1 NOVEMBER 1941

The execution itself lasted three to four hours. I was involved the whole time. The only break I had was when my carbine was empty and I had to reload. It is thus impossible for me to say how many Jews I actually killed during these three to four hours, since somebody else took my place during this time. We drank quite a lot of spirits while this was going on to keep us in the mood.

ALFRED METZNER, GERMAN SOLDIER



Mass murder of women and children

On 14 October 1942, a group of Jewish women, some pregnant, and children were taken from the Misocz ghetto, Ukraine, to a ravine outside of Rovno. There they were shot by German police and Ukrainian militia. The upper picture shows the women lining up. Several are carrying infants. The lower photo pictures a policeman delivering a “mercy shot” to women only wounded initially.

German engineer Hermann F. Gräbe in testimony given after the war described a similar event at Dubno in the Ukraine, 5 October 1942.

“Moennikes and I went straight to the ditches. We were not prevented from doing so. I could now hear a series of rifle shots from behind the mounds. The people who had got off the lorries – men, women, and children of all ages – had to undress on the orders of an SS man who was carrying a riding or dog whip in his hand. They had to place their clothing on separate piles for shoes, clothing and underwear. I saw a pile of shoes containing approximately 800–1000 pairs, and great heaps of underwear and clothing.

Without weeping or crying out these people undressed and stood together in family groups, embracing each other and saying good-bye while waiting for a sign from another SS man who stood on the edge of the ditch and also had a whip. During the quarter of an hour in which I stood near the ditch, I did not hear a single complaint or a plea for mercy. I watched a family of about eight, a man and a woman, both about fifty-years-old with their children of about one, eight, and ten, as well as two grown-up daughters of about twenty and twenty-four. An old woman with snow-white hair held a one year old child in her arms singing to it and tickling it. The child squeaked in delight. The married couple looked on with tears in their eyes. The father held the ten-year-old boy by the hand speaking softly to him. The boy was struggling to hold back his tears. The father pointed a finger to the sky and stroked his head and seemed to be explaining something to him.

At this moment, the SS man near the ditch called out something to his comrade. The latter counted off some about twenty people and ordered them behind the mound. The family of which I have just spoken was among them. I can still remember how a girl, slender and dark, pointed at herself as she went past me saying: ‘twenty-three’.”

From Special Units to death factories

The mass shootings conducted by the special units killed hundreds of thousands, yet they became problematic. They attracted too much attention, often had a negative influence on the soldiers' morale and were too slow at killing the numbers required. From autumn 1941 the Germans searched for and soon found more effective ways of killing many thousands per day. After some gruesome experiments with explosives, the solution was found: gas. In the T4 programme at the "euthanasia centres", carbon monoxide contained in steel cylinders had been used. This method was however inadequate for the scale of killing envisioned after early 1942. On 8 December 1941, at the Chelmno extermination camp, specially designed vans using exhaust gases were first used. On 17 March 1942 the gas chambers at Belzec extermination camp were ready to receive the first train transport of Jews from the Lublin ghetto. Exhaust gas from large Soviet tank engines was used at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. These three camps employed some one hundred men who were veterans of the T4 program.

In autumn 1941 experiments were conducted at Auschwitz using the insecticide Zyklon B. It proved effective at killing humans also, for the prussic acid gas released from the Zyklon B pellets quickly suffocated those forced to breathe it. Soon regular mass gassings using Zyklon B began at Auschwitz. The gas was also used at the Majdanek camp outside of Lublin and at some concentration camps in Germany. Using these industrial methods, a relatively small number of SS men, aided by auxiliaries, would succeed in murdering around three million people in various camp gas chambers between December 1941 and November 1944.

Health risks for gas van staff

The excerpt below is from a report written on 16 May 1942 by SS Lieutenant August Becker. It concerns the specially built gas vans employed in the Ukraine, Serbia and the Chelmno death camp.

"The overhauling of the vans of [Einsatz] Gruppe D and C has been completed.

I have had the vans of [Einsatz] Gruppe D disguised as house-trailers, by having a single window shutter fixed to each side of the small vans, and on the large ones, two shutters, such as one often sees on farm houses in the country.

The vans had become so well known that not only the authorities but the civilian population referred to them as the 'Death Vans' as soon as one appeared. In my opinion the vans cannot be kept secret for any length of time even if they are camouflaged. (...)

I also gave instructions that all personnel should stay as far away as possible from the vans when the gassing is in progress to prevent damage to their health in the event of gas leaking out. I would like to take this opportunity to call attention to the following: several of the special units let their own men do the unloading after gassing.

I pointed out to the commanders of the Sonderkommando (Special Unit) concerned the enormous psychological and physical harm this may cause the men, possibly later even if not immediately. The men complained to me of headaches that recur after each such unloading. Nevertheless there is reluctance to change the orders because it is feared that if prisoners are used for this work they might make use of a favorable moment to escape. I request appropriate instructions in order to save the men from suffering harm.

The gassing is generally not carried out correctly. In order to get the Aktion finished as quickly as possible the driver presses down on the accelerator as far as it will go. As a result the persons to be executed die of suffocation and do not doze off as was planned. It has proved that if my instructions are followed and the levers are properly adjusted death comes faster and the prisoners fall asleep peacefully. Distorted faces and excretions, such as were observed before, no longer occur. Today I shall continue my journey to [Einsatz] Gruppe B, where I may be reached for further instructions."

“All through that winter small children, stark naked and barefooted, had to stand out in the open for hours on end, awaiting their turn in the increasingly busy gas chambers. The soles of their feet froze and stuck to the icy ground.

They stood and cried: some of them froze to death. In the meantime, Germans and Ukrainians walked up and down the ranks, beating and kicking the victims.

One of the Germans, a man named Sepp, was a vile and savage beast, who took special delight in torturing children. When he pushed women around and they begged him to stop because they had children with them, he would frequently snatch a child from the woman’s arms and either tear the child in half or grab it by the legs, smash its head against a wall and throw the body away.”

YANKEL WIERNIK, TREBLINKA SURVIVOR

Operation Reinhardt

During the period March 1942 to October 1943 about 1.7 million people were murdered at the Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka death camps. The camps were part of “Operation Reinhardt”, intended to empty Poland of its Jews and to plunder the victims of their last possessions. In addition to clothes, money and personal effects, the bodies were plundered of hair and gold fillings. Nothing was to be wasted. This work, and the clearing away of the corpses, was done by up to 1000 Jewish prisoners.

The camps were small, about 600 metres in length and some 400 metres wide. About 30 German soldiers staffed these camps, aided by some 100 Ukrainian and Baltic auxiliaries. The three camps were very similar, and according to a former SS soldier, were “primitive but functional and deadly conveyor-belts”. The victims arrived by train, usually in packed freight cars. There were no doctors in these camps to “select ” the victims as in Auschwitz and Majdanek. They were told that they had come to work, but that they must first undress for “disinfection” and take a “bath”. Men to one side and women and children to the other were forced to undress, leave their belongings and walk towards the gas chambers.

Engines were started and the exhausts were introduced into the fully packed chambers. The entire process was over in an hour or two. At Treblinka up to 15,000 people could be murdered in one day but, explained the same SS man, “then we worked half the night”. Initially the bodies were buried in enormous graves, but from autumn 1942 the Germans began burning them. There were few survivors from the Operation Reinhardt camps. At most around a hundred Jews survived Treblinka, less than fifty Sobibor, and Belzec, two.



Notice at Treblinka:

Attention Warsaw Jews!

You are now entering a transit camp from which you will be transported to a labour camp.

To prevent epidemics both clothing and luggage must be handed in for disinfecting. Gold, cash, foreign exchange, and jewellery are to be given in at the cash desk in return for a receipt. They will be later returned on presentation of the receipt. All those arriving must cleanse themselves by taking a bath before continuing their journey.

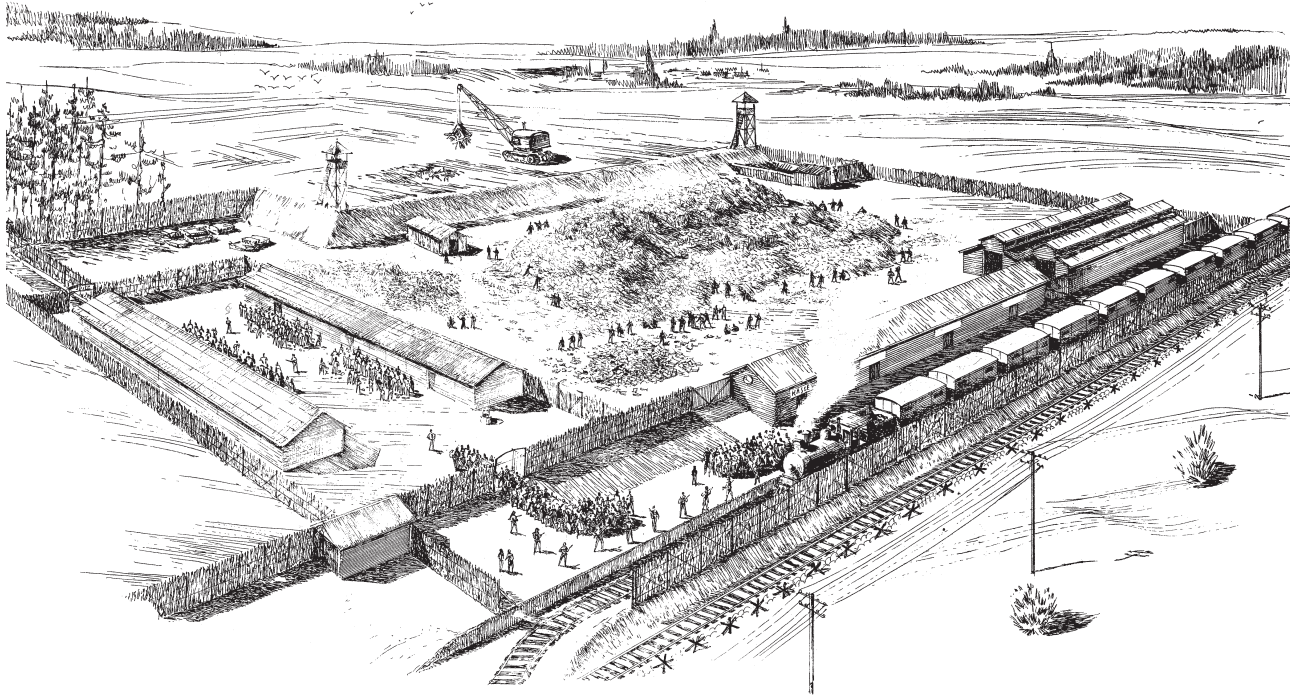
The death camps and estimated total number of victims	
Chelmno	152,000 –
Dec. '41 – July '44	320,000
Belzec	
March '42 – Dec. '42	600,000
Sobibor	
April '42 – Oct. '43	250,000
Treblinka	700,000 –
July '42 – Aug. '43	900,000
Majdanek	
Oct. '41 – July '44	Over 360,000
Auschwitz-Birkenau	
Jan. '42 – Jan. '45	Over 1,100,000

Franz Stangl

Discussions about the perpetrators of the Holocaust often revolve around expressions such as “desktop killers” administering the “conveyor belt of death”. Nonetheless care should be taken to realise that, as historian Christopher Browning has written: “Ultimately, the Holocaust took place because at the most basic level individual human beings killed other human beings in large numbers over an extended period of time.”

Even the camp commanders were people like us. Franz Stangl was first commander of Sobibor and later at Treblinka. In the 1960's he was arrested in Brazil and sent back to stand trial in West Germany where he was convicted of the murder of hundreds of thousands of human beings. Yet at the same time that he administered the death machines, he was also a father and husband. The following citation illustrates a choice that was not made, because during the war the question was never put forth. A journalist interviewed Stangl's wife and asked her this question. “Would you tell me (...) what you think would have happened if at any time you had faced your husband with an absolute choice; if you had said to him: ‘Here it is; I know it's terribly dangerous, but either you get out of this terrible thing, or else the children and I will leave you.’” Theresa Stangl responded: “I believe that if I had ever confronted (him) with the alternatives: Treblinka – or me; he would ... yes, he would in the final analysis have chosen me.”

In reality her husband chose voluntarily to assist in the murder of over a half a million people.



The Treblinka death factory

The arrival at Treblinka. The gas chamber building is outside the picture, to the left behind the trees. At the far end of the long hut on the left begins the “pathway to Heaven” (a typical euphemism invented by the Germans), leading to the gas chambers. In the large open square the “sorting squad” is depicted going through the mountain of personal possessions brought by the victims. In the background is the large earthmover, which dug the graves for the gassed victims. Close to a million people were brought to Treblinka, but only about a hundred of them survived the war.

The drawing is by Samuel Willenberg, a survivor of Treblinka. It is published in his book *Revolt at Treblinka*. He was forced to cut women's hair before they were driven into the gas chambers. He also sorted the victims' possessions for shipment back to Germany. Willenberg participated in the Treblinka revolt of 2 August 1943. Escaping, he made his way back to Warsaw and joined the Polish national resistance movement and eventually its August 1944 rebellion.



Death through work

The Germans also killed Jews by a method they called “death through work”. Under extremely hard conditions, prisoners were forced to carry out more or less meaningless physical work. Together with severe food shortages, very poor hygienic conditions, the brutality of the guards and the arbitrary punishments for alleged “offences” however small, this led to a very high death rate of Jews and other camp inmates. Many tens of thousands lost their lives this way in the concentration camps.

Joseph Schupack was a prisoner at the Majdanek death and labour camp. He describes the humiliating “work” at the camp.

“Then we went to ‘work’. In our wooden shoes we were chased by blows from rods into a corner of the field and had to fill sometimes our caps, at other times our jackets, with stones, wet sand or mud, and, holding them with both hands and running under a hail of blows, bring them to the opposite corner of the field, empty the stuff, refill it and bring it back to the opposite corner, an so on. A gauntlet of screaming SS men and privileged prisoners (Häftlingsprominenz), armed with rods and whips, let loose on us a hail of blows. It was hell.”

“For the first time been present outside at 3 in the morning at a ‘Special action’ [Sonderaktion]. Compared with this Dante’s Inferno is pure comedy. It is not without reason that Auschwitz is called an extermination camp!

(...)

Participated in a ‘Special action’ with prisoners from the women’s camp. (...) Quite dreadful. I agree with Thilo who pointed out we were in the anus mundi [arse-hole of the world].”

FROM JOHANN P. KREMER’S DIARY. SS DOCTOR
AT THE AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU EXTERMINATION CAMP,
2 AND 5 SEPTEMBER 1942

Auschwitz-Birkenau

In 1940 the Germans made Auschwitz a concentration camp for Polish political prisoners. Situated near a major rail junction, the camp soon grew into a gigantic complex with some 40 different elements. The best known are Auschwitz I (Stammlager), Auschwitz II (Birkenau) and Auschwitz III (Monowitz). A large number of doctors were active at the camps and many of them conducted pseudo-medical experiments on prisoners.

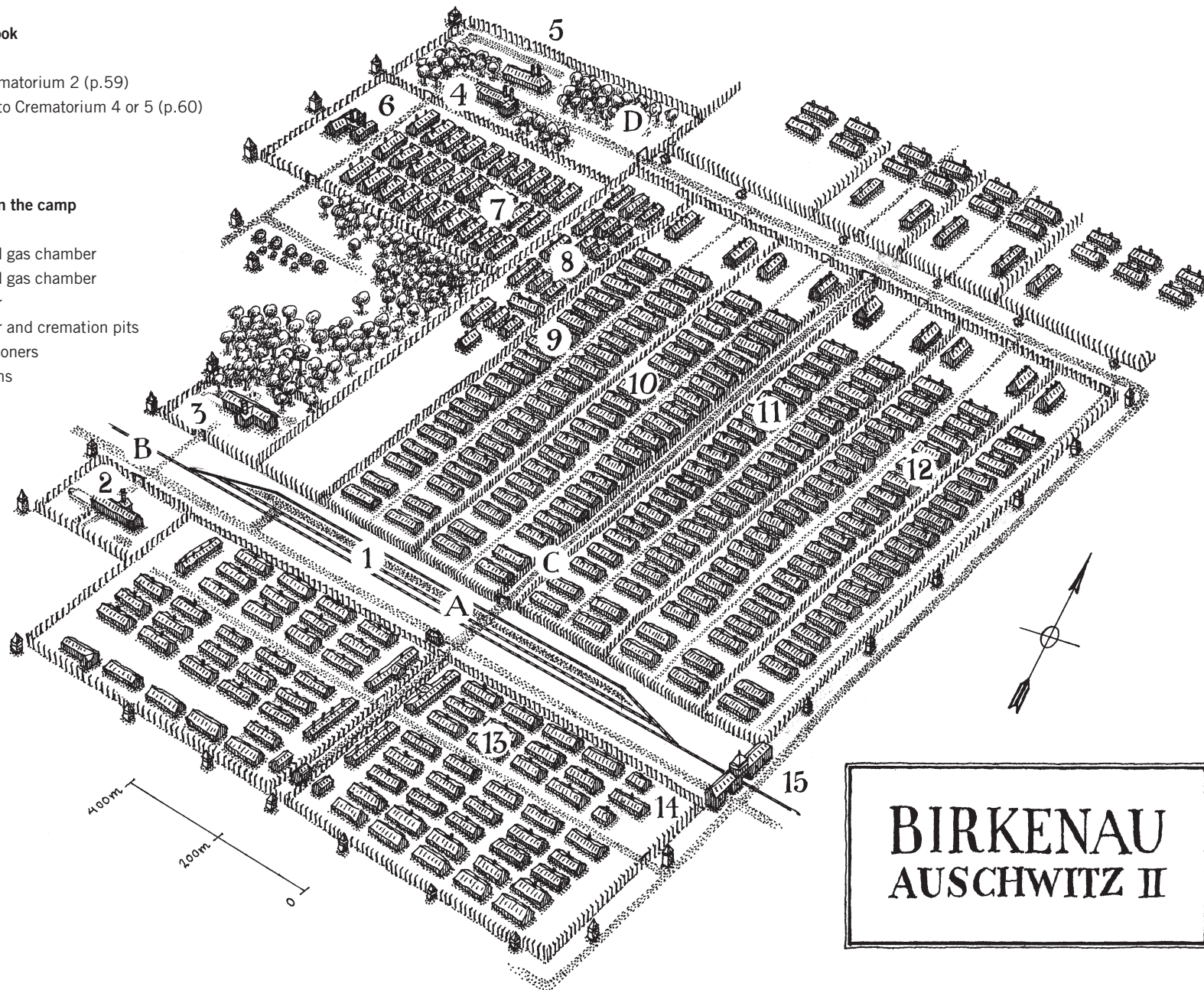
Mass gassings began at Auschwitz I in late 1941 and were then moved to Birkenau in the spring of 1942, where two small farmhouses were converted into crude gas chambers. The large, specially constructed and technically advanced crematoria (there were four, all of them with gas chambers) went into operation during the spring of 1943. The gigantic murder process culminated in the spring and summer of 1944 when, after undergoing repairs and improvements, the crematoria were “processing” up to 12,000 Jews a day arriving from Hungary. During this time 3-4 trainloads arrived each day with some 3,000-3,500 people aboard. About a tenth were selected for work, the rest gassed immediately. Yet even the improved facilities couldn’t handle the strain and many thousands of corpses were burnt in open pits near the crematoria. The last gassings took place in November 1944. Before the Soviet Army liberated the camp in January 1945, the SS dismantled and blew up the crematoria. The ruins can be seen today. At least 1 million Jews from all over Europe were killed at Auschwitz. Some 75,000 Poles, 21,000 Gypsies, 15,000 Soviet war prisoners and 15,000 others of various nationalities were also murdered at Auschwitz. The camp claimed at least 1.1 million victims.

Pictures from Birkenau in this book

- A. Northern part of the ramp (p.58)
- B. Women and children outside Crematorium 2 (p.59)
- C. Women and children on the way to Crematorium 4 or 5 (p.60)
- D. Cover picture

Important places and buildings in the camp

- 1. Selection ramp
- 2. Crematorium 2 with underground gas chamber
- 3. Crematorium 3 with underground gas chamber
- 4. Crematorium 4 with gas chamber
- 5. Crematorium 5 with gas chamber and cremation pits
- 6. "The Sauna" – registration of prisoners
- 7. "Canada" – sorting out possessions
- 8. Sick bay
- 9. Gypsy family camp
- 10. Men's camp
- 11. Hungarian Jewish women's camp
- 12. Family camp for Jews from Theresienstadt
- 13. Women's camp
- 14. Barrack for medical experiments
- 15. "Gate of Death" – entry point for trains



**BIRKENAU
AUSCHWITZ II**

Aussortierung



“The Selection”. This is one of several pictures of the selection process on the ramp at Birkenau. Many survivors bear witness to how this moment meant the end of their families. German SS doctors and other officers select those let into the camp for labour. At the very top of the picture a column of mostly women, children and elderly can be seen. They are on their way to the gas chamber in Crematorium 2.

The 200 pictures from Birkenau

Officially, taking pictures of the killing of Jews was forbidden, but many did anyway, particularly at mass shootings. Soldiers would take such pictures home, and show them to family and friends. Sometimes in horror, sometimes bragging. However, very few pictures of the death camps remain.

Thus, the photo album entitled *Umsiedlung der Juden aus Ungarn* (The resettlement of Hungarian Jews) is a unique document. It was found in a concentration camp after the war. The pictures are most likely from either the end of May 1944 or the beginning of June, when the transports arriving from Hungary were very frequent. Who took them and why is unknown. The photos were put into chronological order and captioned with calligraphic headings. The first reads: “A trainload arrives”. Others are, in the following order: “Selection, Men still fit for use, Women still fit for use, Men of no further use, Women and children of no further use, Referral to labour camp and, finally, Effects. Following this caption there are pictures of enormous amounts of luggage, shoes, clothes, etc. The album’s last two pictures are of a crematorium taken at a smaller concentration camp. The “fit for use” are strong enough for labour. Those “of no further use” are the old, the handicapped, the children and the women with children. They were taken straight to the gas chambers. On this book’s cover, this and the following pages are pictures with the captions “Selection” and “Women and children of no further use”.

Nicht mehr einsatzfähige Frauen u. Kinder.



Women and children “of no further use” stand outside the gate of Crematorium 2. They have perhaps an hour or so left to live. Before the day is over these women and children will have been suffocated to death and turned into ashes – the end result of a well-planned, industrial process. From where they are standing they will pass by a small garden, then down a short flight of stairs into a large room. There they will be ordered to undress, and then

proceed into the adjoining gas chamber with a capacity of up to 2000 people. The chamber's massive door will shut, the lights go out and the Zyklon B crystals suffused with prussic acid will drop. After ventilation, squads of Jewish prisoners, the Sonderkommandos, will remove the bodies for burning either in the building's crematoria or outside in the open air. The entire process often took no longer than an hour or two.

“Five by five they walk down the street of arrivals. It is the street of departures but they don't know.

It is a one-way street.

They proceed in orderly fashion – so as not to be faulted for anything.

They reach a building and heave a sigh. They have reached their destination at last.

And when the soldiers bark their orders, shouting for the women to strip, they undress the children first, cautiously not to wake them all at once.

After days and nights of travel the little ones are edgy and cranky

and then the women undress in front of the children, nothing to be done

and when each is handed a towel they worry whether the shower will be warm because the children could catch cold

and when the men enter the shower room through another door, naked too, the women hide the children against their bodies.

And perhaps at that moment they all understand.

CHARLOTTE DELBO

The 600 Boys

Salmen Lewenthal was a member of the *Sonderkommando*, the “special squad” of prisoners forced to “service” the gas chambers. On 20 October 1944 he witnessed the following, which he recorded in a manuscript buried near one of the crematoria and recovered in 1961.

”In broad daylight 600 Jewish boys between 12 and 18 were brought here. They were clad in long, very thin, prison clothing; on their feet they had worn-out shoes or clogs. (...) When they reached the square the Commander ordered them to undress. The boys noticed the smoke coming from the chimney and realised at once

that they were going to be put to death. They began to run around the square in total desperation and tore their hair without knowing how to escape. Many of them broke out in terrible weeping, inconsolable shouts for help could be heard a long way off.

The boys undressed with an instinctive fear of death. Naked and barefoot they huddled together to avoid the blows and stood absolutely still. One brave boy went up to the Commander - who was standing near us - and asked him to allow him to live, promising to carry out all the heaviest jobs. He was rewarded with blows to the head from a thick cudgel.

Many boys ran to the Jews of the 'Special Commando', threw themselves round their necks and begged them to save them. Others ran naked in different directions on the large square (to avoid death). The Commander called an SS-guard with a truncheon for assistance.

The sound of the clear, young, boyish voices rose minute by minute until it changed to bitter weeping. This terrible wailing could be heard for miles. We stood stiff and paralysed by the weeping and wailing. The SS-men stood there with contented smiles, without the least sign of compassion, and looked like proud victors, driving them into the bunker with terrible blows. (...)

Some boys were still running around the square and tried to escape. The SS-men ran after them, hitting out in all directions, until they had the situation under control and finally got them into the bunker. Their joy was indescribable. Didn't they have children of their own?"



Women and children as they start the 1.5 km walk to Crematoria 4 or 5, Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the background some freight cars at the ramp can be seen.

Working in Hell

The *Sonderkommando* (Special Squad) was a group of Jewish prisoners whom the Germans forced to carry out the most horrifying labour. These men were kept segregated from all other prisoners, and the outside world. Their “job”, which they endured day after day until they themselves were killed and replaced by a new group of “living dead”, was to empty the gas chambers, pry open the mouths of the dead and pull out gold teeth, cut the dead women’s hair, and then burn the bodies in the ovens or in pits. One survivor explained afterwards: “Certainly I could have killed myself or got myself killed; but I wanted to survive, to survive to avenge myself and bear witness. You mustn’t think that we are monsters; we are the same as you, only much more unhappy.”

Primo Levi, a survivor of Auschwitz, authored several books about his experiences. He wrote “Conceiving and organising the squads was National Socialism’s most demonic crime. (...) This institution represented an attempt to shift on to others – specifically the victims – the burden of guilt, so that they were deprived of even the solace of innocence.” Levi believed that the *Sonderkommando* actually held a meaning for the Nazis: “We, the master race, are your destroyers, but you are no better than we are; if we so wish, and we do so wish, we can destroy not only your bodies but also your souls, just as we have destroyed ours.” Those who accept Nazism, Levi believed, and who make it their guiding star, have accepted an inevitable inner corruption of the soul.

Opening up the gas chamber. One of several drawings by the French *Sonderkommando*, David Olère, who managed to survive. Olère produced this drawing the year after the end of the war.

*“And all day and all night
every day every night the
chimneys smoke, fed by this fuel
from all parts of Europe.”*

CHARLOTTE DELBO





Revolt in the ghetto

In spite of inhuman living conditions and hopeless odds, two revolts took place in the Warsaw ghetto. The following tells of the second revolt, spring 1943. The picture shows captured resistance fighters. Few managed to flee.

Resistance and rescue

One of the most tenacious myths about the Holocaust is that the millions of Jews went “like sheep to the slaughter” without resisting. There are in reality literally thousands of examples of active resistance. From the revolt in the Warsaw ghetto and Jewish partisans attacking German troops in Western and Eastern Europe to what is sometimes called “unarmed” resistance, many Jews struck back against the overwhelming power of their murderers. Even in the camps, Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners resisted and revolted against their German captors. Some consider escape a form of resistance. Yet with unrestrained, total violence, the Germans crushed all attempts to resist and/or escape, usually imposing terrible collective punishment.

Those wanting to resist, often the young, faced a terrible dilemma. They risked not only their own lives, but also those of their parents, brothers and sisters, children and even hundreds of their neighbours. Those in work gangs knew that if they succeeded in escaping, their comrades would almost surely be killed. Even death camp inmates, aware they had only a limited time to live, found it hard to create conditions necessary for resistance.

The will to live, or at least to die with dignity, was the decisive thought for most in deciding whether or not to resist. We see this in the following exhortation to arms issued by the “Jewish Fighting Organization” in Warsaw, from January 1943.

“Know that escape is not to be found by walking to your death passively, like sheep to the slaughter. It is to be found in something much greater: in war! Whoever

defends himself has a chance of being saved! Whoever gives up self-defence from the outset – he has lost already! Nothing awaits him except only a hideous death in the suffocation-machine of Treblinka. Let the people awaken to war! (...) We also were destined to live! We too have a right to life! (...) Let the people awaken and fight for its life!”

Resistance groups of various sizes formed in about 100 Eastern European ghettos. More effective were the partisan groups active in the forests of Eastern Europe. Up to 20,000 Jews fought in such groups, with some of them even forming family camps in the vast forests. In Western Europe Jewish partisans were active in the national resistance movements in France and Belgium. Many such groups hid Jews. Small numbers of Jewish children managed to find sanctuary in monasteries or with Christian families in countries such as Poland, Holland and France. Many were then raised as Christians, often losing their Jewish identity. Even though the Germans severely punished those caught hiding Jews, a capital offence in Poland, there were still some people willing to take the risk, either for money or as a matter of principle.

Yet another form of resistance was the smuggling of Jews out of Nazi-controlled areas. This was not easy for even those countries bordering Germany, such as Switzerland, usually kept their borders closed to Jews trying to flee. Switzerland even sent Jews back after they crossed the border to apparent safety. Some Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe, managed to get to Palestine by circuitous routes, while others fled even farther. Several thousand escaped all the way to Shanghai, China. Japan, Germany’s wartime ally controlled the city, but did not share the Nazis’ ideological hatred of Jews.

“Anything could be resistance, because everything was forbidden. Every activity represented resistance that created the impression that the prisoner retained something of his former personality and individuality.”

ANDREA DEVOTO, ITALIAN PSYCHIATRIST

"Then he says in Russian: 'Comrades, this is the most beautiful day of my life because I lived to see such a big group come out of the ghetto!'

... I don't promise you anything, we may be killed while we try to live. But we will do all we can to save more lives. This is our way, we don't select, we don't eliminate the old, the children, the women. Life is difficult, we are in danger all the time, but if we perish, if we die, we die like human beings."

MOSHE BAIRACH, MEMBER OF BIELSKI'S FAMILY CAMP



Partisans in the forest

Tuvia Bielski was a young Polish Jew who went underground when the Germans occupied his country. Eventually he gathered a group of comrades in the forests of western Belorussia. Bielski decided that the group should not only defend itself, but also actively aid other Jews. The fighting group became known as the Bielski partisans. When liberated in 1944, up to 1200 men, women and children lived under the fighters' protection. Their

policy of helping Jews before striking against the Germans contributed to collective survival. There were other similar family camps, which survived the German occupation in the forests of eastern Poland and western parts of the Soviet Union.

In the quote to the left Moshe Bairach recounts what Bielski said to his group when they met him in the woods.

The Warsaw ghetto revolt

Following the massive deportations in late summer 1942 to Treblinka of more than 260,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto, the remaining members of the Jewish resistance groups decided to put up armed resistance. No other choices remained. When German troops entered the ghetto on 18 January 1943 to round up the remaining people for deportation, they were attacked with gunfire. Some Germans died. Although some 6000 starving Jews were rounded-up, the Germans withdrew from the ghetto in shock. For several months the Germans kept out. During the lull the Jewish fighters tried to gather more arms for a battle they knew was inevitable. They managed to obtain several rifles, a hundred or so revolvers and one machine gun, in addition to some hand grenades and home-made bombs. Awaiting attack some 800 men and women prepared fighting locations, bunkers and hideaways. The final battle began on 19 April when German troops again entered the ghetto.

Even with the support of tanks, the Germans and their auxiliaries were forced back. The intensity of the resistance made them change tactics, and artillery and air attacks were used. On the revolt's sixth day one of its leaders, Mordechai Anielewicz wrote: "One thing is clear: what happened has exceeded our boldest expectations. The Germans have fled the ghetto twice. (...) Our losses are minimal."

But German strength was overwhelming, and they set fire to block after block, forcing those hiding to come out, where they were shot or captured. The ghetto revolt continued for four weeks. One surviving fighter wrote: "We fought back; it made it easier to die, and our fate became easier to bear."

Sog nit kejn mol Hirsch Glik

Sog nit kejn-mol, as du gejsst dem lez-tu Weg, chotsch Him-len
blaj-e - ne far-schtel-en-bloj-e Teg. Ku-rnen
wet noch un-ser oiss-ge benk-te Scho, ss'wet a
Pojk-ton un-ser Trot mir se-nen do!

Never say you walk the final road
although dark skies are clouding the blue day
The day we dreamt of will come
our steps will echo: We are here!

Hirsch Glik (1920–1943) joined the partisans in the Vilnius ghetto in 1943. Inspired by the revolt in the Warsaw ghetto, he wrote the song *Sog nit kejn mol!* which became known as the Jewish partisans' song.

“Exactly at four in the afternoon, emissaries are sent to the groups with the order to come immediately to the garage to receive weapons. Rodak from Plock is in charge of distributing them. Everyone who comes to receive a weapon is obliged to state the password: Death! To which comes the answer: Life! Death – life; death – life – the ardent messages are repeated in quick succession and hands are stretched out to grasp the longed-for rifles, pistols, and hand grenades. At the same time, the chief murderers in the camp are being attacked. (...) Captain Zelomir attacks two SS guards with an axe and breaks through to us. He takes over command. By the garage stands a German armored car whose engine Rodak has immobilized in good time. Now the car serves him as shelter, from which he fires at the Germans. His shots fell Sturmführer Kurt Meidlar and several of Hitler’s hounds. The armory is captured by force by Sodovitz’s group. The weapons are divided up among the comrades. We have two hundred armed men. The remainder attack the Germans with axes, spades and pickaxes. (...) Most of our warriors fall, but Germans fall as well. Few of us are left.”

STANISLAW KON, SURVIVING PARTICIPANT OF THE TREBLINKA REVOLT

The death camp revolts

Of all the attempts to resist, those conducted in three of the death camps were the bravest and most hopeless. The Jewish prisoners knew they were destined to die and that death could come at any moment. Every successful escape led to intensive manhunts. Nonetheless, revolts took place in Treblinka in August 1943, Sobibor in October the same year, and Auschwitz-Birkenau October 1944.

The revolt in Treblinka began the afternoon of 2 August. After some prisoners obtained a few weapons, others attacked guards with axes, shovels and their bare hands. Camp buildings were set on fire and in the general chaos many of the 700 prisoners escaped. Most were quickly recaptured and killed. Fewer than 100 survived both the revolt and the war. For two weeks afterwards, the gas chambers remained in use.

The revolt at Sobibor 14 October was the best planned. Many SS and their Ukrainian auxiliaries were killed. Of the 550 prisoners in the camp that day, some 320 managed to escape of which 170 were quickly recaptured and killed. About 50 Jews managed to survive through the end of the war. The camp was never put back into use.

By autumn 1944, mass murder at Birkenau had abated. Thus the surviving members of the Sonderkommando knew that their days were numbered. On 7 October they blew up Crematorium 4 using explosives smuggled in by some female prisoners. As far as is known, no one survived this revolt. Soon thereafter SS Chief Himmler ordered the remaining gas chambers dismantled and destroyed.

German Civil Resistance

Although Nazi Germany was a totalitarian state, German citizens could resist in a variety of ways. Passive resistance, that is, choosing not to support the regime and its crimes, was not punished. Only active resistance attracted the harsh attention of the Gestapo, who in fact depended upon the active assistance of tens of thousands of Germans to create terror so effectively. Without their denunciations, the Gestapo would have failed.

Precisely how much the average German knew of the murder of the Jews remains unclear and a matter of controversy, but a general knowledge among ordinary people was very widespread. Nonetheless, few protested.

The Jehovah's Witnesses were one group, which openly chose not to support the regime, a choice that brought about severe punishment. They refused to swear an oath of allegiance to Hitler and Nazi Germany. This resistance is exceptional because merely signing a document declaring their allegiance would have ended their persecution – yet few chose this option. Thousands of the almost 20,000 Jehovah's Witnesses were put in concentration camps. About 25% of the group are thought to have been murdered by the Nazis.

Some German youth, resisting compulsory participation in the Hitler Youth, protested against the regime. Groups such as the Edelweiss Pirates and the "Swing Kids" (who protested against the regime by listening and dancing to American jazz music) existed throughout the regime. At first the Nazis were unsure how to handle these groups, even though clashes often took place between Hitler Youth groups and the "Pirates". Finally in autumn 1944 the government struck at several protesting groups, arresting and hanging some of their leaders.



The "White Rose" movement was active in Munich between June 1942 and February 1943. This small protest group was led by siblings Sophie and Hans Scholl, assisted by their university professor Kurt Huber. They distributed leaflets calling for their fellow students to condemn the Nazis and protest against the murder of the Jews. They were caught by the Gestapo, tried and executed. One member, Alexander Schmorell, wrote in his last letter: "We fought with Hans against the German regime, we were betrayed and sentenced to death."

The youthful resistance movement, the Edelweiss Pirates, fought against the Hitler Youth. Many of them were hanged in Cologne in November 1944. Here is one of their battle songs:

Hitler's power may lay us low,
And keep us locked in chains,
But we will smash the chains one day,
(...)
And smash the Hitler Youth in twain.
Our song is freedom, love and life,
We're Pirates of the Edelweiss.



The Rosenstrasse protest

One of the most interesting protests against the Nazi regime took place openly in the streets of Berlin in March 1943. Throughout the war the government was hesitant about deporting Jewish men married to non-Jewish women, fearing protests from the latter. Yet these Jewish men living more or less openly in Berlin greatly irritated Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, who finally ordered these Berliners arrested and deported.

The fears of the Nazis proved justified, for the women refused to accept the removal of their husbands. The women defied the Gestapo and SS, and thousands protested openly in the street in front of the building where the men were being kept. One of the demonstrators was Charlotte Israel, whose husband was inside. She later told what happened. "You murderers", the women screamed at the guards, "We didn't scream just once but again and again, until we lost our breath." The protests succeeded and most of the women got their husbands back. Of the few German Jews who survived the war, almost all were men married to non-Jewish women.

Two German-Jewish children after their arrival in England in 1938. Because it was often difficult for whole families to obtain entry visas to safe havens, many parents made the painful decision to send their children away without them, to safety. After Kristallnacht some countries eased their severe restrictions against Jews seeking shelter, especially regarding children. Very few such families were re-united after the war.

Sweden resists

Even though the Nazis sought to kill “every Jew they could lay their hands on”, some limitations did exist in their ability to do so. One such limitation was if Jews were citizens of countries with which Germany needed good relations. This applied both to German allies, and the neutral nations in Europe, such as Sweden.

Following the implementation of “the Final Solution” in Norway in late 1942, Swedish diplomats realised that Swedish citizenship could mean protection for some Jews in the German sphere of influence, and thus possible survival. In practice this protection was extended to many non-Swedish Jews.

From 1942 onwards, Swedish diplomats conducted almost daily negotiations with German authorities in Oslo, Berlin, Vichy, Copenhagen and Budapest to keep Jews away from the deportation trains. Swedish officials declared a political interest in the fate of individual Jews, and because the Germans sought good relations with Sweden, the appeals had a chance of succeeding. This “bureaucratic resistance” showed that even civil servants could resist Nazi racial policy.

Particularly in Budapest in 1944, Swedish diplomats such as Ivan Danielsson, Per Anger, Lars Berg and, best known of all, Raoul Wallenberg, used their neutral status to protect Jews. In various ways they assisted between 20,000 and 30,000 Jews. Similar methods were also used by, among others, Charles Lutz of Switzerland and Angelo Rotta of the Vatican.



The Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg at his desk in Budapest. His arrival to that city in July 1944 energised on-going diplomatic efforts to help Jews. From Uppsala on 25 May, Dr. L. Porszolt wrote the following to the Swedish Foreign Office after learning that his parents had received Swedish assistance:

“...allow me to express a sincere thanks to UD and the Swedish Legation in Budapest for the whole hearted and quick action. One function the protective letter will serve under all cir-

cumstances is to lesson worry and provide moral support for my parents. For people who find themselves in their situation the feeling of having a European state's support behind them has a significance scarcely less than life itself.”

Wallenberg was arrested by the Soviet Red Army in January 1945 and never returned to Sweden. Exact details of his fate remain unknown.

The Bystanders

"[The guilt] lies with the Nazis... But can we escape blame if, having it in our power to do something to save the victims, we fail to take the necessary action, and take it swiftly? ...if the British and American Governments were determined to achieve a programme of rescue in some way commensurate with the vastness of the need, they could do it."

GEORGE BELL, BISHOP OF CHICHESTER, 18 MAY 1943

Historians of the Holocaust divide the primary historical actors of the event into three basic categories: perpetrators, victims and bystanders. The decisions taken by those in the third category are often the most problematic from a moral point of view. It is difficult to assign responsibility for actions not taken and for knowledge not admitted. Severe critics of the bystanders describe their inactivity as a form of participation in the murder. Yet such judgements must be made with great care, if at all.

The Western democracies, often referred to as bystanders, received many appeals during the war to help the Jews. But did countries and groups labelled bystanders actually have a responsibility for aiding Jews of other nationalities? The answer was far from clear in the 1940's, and many differing opinions were voiced.

The Soviet Union was fighting for its life, and could offer little assistance. Yet during the war that country did not persecute either its Jews or those from other countries. The attitude of the Vatican is a matter of great controversy, and the response of its representatives varied greatly. Many priests helped hide Jewish children, while others helped Nazis to flee Europe after the war. The role of Pope Pius XII remains a source of controversy. In Budapest the papal representative Angelo Rotta helped thousands of Jews, while in Slovakia priest Josef Tiso, head of the government, collaborated in the deportations of tens of thousands of his Jewish fellow citizens to the gas chambers in Auschwitz. Such varied activity makes it hard to draw general conclusions. Assessment of the bystanders understandably remains a sensitive subject.

“The people of the Reich, it seems, knew as much (for example about the killing of their German fellow citizens) or as little (for example about the killing of their Jewish fellow citizens) as they wanted to know. What they did not know, they did not want to know, for obvious reasons. But not wanting to know always means knowing enough to know that one doesn't want to know more.”

J.P. STERN, ENGLISH HISTORIAN AND EYEWITNESS

As Allied armies liberated concentration camps in Germany (Soviet armies liberated the death camps in the East), the troops were so outraged and disgusted at what they found that they often forced the local population to bury the thousands of corpses. Here German civilians in Nuremburg, guarded by American soldiers, carry the remains of concentration camp prisoners through town for burial.





“I had learned from the example of my parents [who were German Nationalist supporters] that one could have antisemitic opinions without this interfering in one’s personal relations with individual Jews. There may appear to be a vestige of tolerance in this attitude, but it is really just this confusion which I blame for the fact that I later contrived to dedicate body and soul to an inhuman political system, without this giving me doubts about my own individual decency. In preaching that all the misery of the nations was due to the Jews or that the Jewish spirit was seditious and Jewish blood was corrupting, I was not compelled to think of you or old Herr Lewy or Rosel Cohn: I thought only of the bogy-man, ‘The Jew’.

And when I heard that the Jews were being driven from their professions and homes and imprisoned in ghettos, the points switched automatically in my mind to steer me round the thought that such a fate could also overtake you or old Lewy. It was only ‘the Jew’ who was being persecuted and ‘made harmless’.”

MELITA MASCHMANN, HEAD OF THE LEAGUE OF GERMAN GIRLS
SECTION FOR 14–18-YEAR-OLDS IN THE HITLER YOUTH.

Vienna, 1938. A Jewish youth is being humiliated as he is forced to vandalise Jewish property, supervised by a local Nazi party official.

Witnesses to Genocide

From the very first day of Germany's occupation of Poland, violence, brutality and cruelty was the rule. The devastation the Nazis caused the Polish nation was enormous. The damage is felt to this day. Worst of all, the Poles were forced to witness directly, almost daily, the genocide of the Jews. Few Poles contributed directly to the Holocaust, yet all too many reported fleeing Jews to the authorities or, after being paid to hide a family, denounced them. On the other hand, thousands of Poles put themselves at grave risk to help Jewish friends and neighbours, risking not only their own life but also that of their families. The Polish national resistance organised a group (Zegota), whose only task was to save Jews.

Even before the war Polish-Jewish relations were complicated and characterised by mistrust and enmity on both sides. Polish Jews were discriminated against in many ways. But it was not unheard of even for convinced antisemites to help Jews during the war. They may have done so motivated by Christian charity or hatred of the Germans. For apart from Jews and Gypsies, no group suffered more than the Poles, and the struggle against the common Nazi enemy sometimes fostered compromise.

Yet the general situation was not helped when Jews who had survived the war (some 300,000 of 3 million Polish Jews) returned home only to be met by coldness and outright hostility. Pogroms and mistreatment of Jews occurred and, again, many Jews fled. Today many younger Poles are becoming interested in the Jewish contribution to their nation's history and the signs of their presence, such as the empty synagogues and the abandoned cemeteries. But the Jews have gone.



A Polish school class

Cecylia Przylucka, a Polish woman, remembers her Jewish classmates, and tells of their fate.

“Have a look at the children in the picture through a magnifying glass. They are children from the town of Kozowo in Podolia, from class 5a, happy because vacation is about to begin.

When I first went to school, my father asked that I be seated with the Jewish children. He was always saying: ‘The Jews are a wise people – one should heed their advice.’ Maybe that is why I became so close to them. Closest to my heart were Róża and Klara, who sat in the middle of the classroom. Róża was serious. She used to wear her hair plaited with ribbons and tied into buns over her ears. She was best at mathematics, and would help the

other students with math. On trips she would bring along crisp rolls for all the student. Her parents had a bakery.

Next to her sat Klara, her inseparable companion. She had very curly hair, with short braids. She liked to make the children laugh with her remarks. In the class there was another Klara, terribly quiet, hard-working, a nice girl. In the picture she is standing by the wall. Behind her is Mosio, with the white turned-down collar. He always wore that kind of shirt. Often he would lean on his elbow, thinking, and the teacher would say, ‘Mosiu, I’m sure you already know it’. And indeed, he did. Sonia, sitting in the back on the left, was an only child, and was well-groomed and simply beautiful. She went to class dancing and laughing. There was also Sara (here, on the right) with coppery hair. She

was shy, and had problems with Polish. And there was another girl and boy, but I don’t remember their names. (...) When the Germans came, the Jewish children from this photograph and from the school – and their parents, and siblings and other relatives – were all murdered. They took them out of town to the quarries and shot them to death. In this way one third of our town died. Four persons survived. A father and son went into hiding in the marshes far from town, and my mother protected Szmuc and her fiancé. She put them up in our cellar and for a year and a half she gave them food, not even telling our father. And in the cellar they survived the tragedy. They had a child, but it was stillborn. They had to bury it next to them. They told us about it only once they were free.”

The democracies close their doors

Nazi Germany's brutal persecution of the Jews was confusing for many in the Western democracies. Antisemitic attitudes were widespread, but the total social ostracism of an assimilated group clashed with humanitarian and democratic traditions. Some individuals wanted to help Europe's Jews, yet most were indifferent and the doors to safety were kept closed. Few politicians dared to challenge established anti-immigration policies. Voices of concern were raised, but direct and sufficient action to help was rare. Sweden's government acted like other Western democracies. In February 1939 Sigfrid Hansson, Head of the National Board of Health and Welfare, admitted: "We cannot thump our chests and say that we helped the refugees in such a way as would justify the expression 'open arms'. We haven't been very generous with residence permits for aliens who have tried to come here to escape persecution and terror."

In autumn 1942 details about the mass murders reached the general public and pressure on the Allies to act increased. They resisted this pressure. When in 1944 the US government under President Roosevelt formed the War Refugee Board, whose task it was to save Jews, the British government called it a "public relations trick".

Even though the WRB was in some ways effective, many historians have described America's response to the Holocaust as the worst failure of Roosevelt's presidency. On the other hand, defenders of Allied policy argue, with some justification, that the best way of helping Europe's Jews was to fight for a speedy end to the war. Yet many commentators maintain that the feeble response of the liberal imagination to the Holocaust led to "a failure for the democracies".



No refuge to be found

Jewish refugees from the SS St. Louis after being forced to return to Europe. On 13 May 1939 some 1000 Jewish refugees left Hamburg fleeing the Nazis on the German ship, SS St. Louis. Their destination was Cuba, which refused them entry. Attempts to gain asylum in the US also failed. Therefore just over a month

after they left Europe, they landed in Antwerp on 17 June. No country outside of Europe opened their doors to them. Even though some eventually found safety in England, most eventually ended up in German hands and were killed in concentration or extermination camps.

Bombing Auschwitz

From May to July 1944, the world looked on as the Germans deported hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews, through Slovakia, to be gassed at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Many individuals and organisations pleaded with the Allies to do something to stop the killing. The idea of bombing the Birkenau camp, whose function was known to all, was especially promoted. Bombing the railways to the camp was also urged.

The war was in its last year and the Allied air forces ruled the skies of Europe. American bombers flying out of Italy passed almost daily over the camp. Yet for a number of reasons, American and British officials refused to order the camp bombed. Some of the official explanations given at the time reek of cynicism. British Minister Richard Law delayed answering Chaim Weizmann, a prominent Jewish leader, for two months after the request was made. He finally did so in September, and wrote: "The matter received the most careful consideration of the Air Staff, but I am sorry to have to tell you that, in view of the very great technical difficulties involved, we have no option but to refrain from pursuing the proposal in present circumstances. I realize that this decision will prove a disappointment for you, but you may feel fully assured that the matter was most thoroughly investigated." Some historians have argued that indifference explains the failure to bomb; the controversy continues to this day. Yet the fact remains: an effort to do something for the Jews that were being gassed in their thousands was never mounted.

"We ceased to work, and the German soldiers and civilians ran to the shelters. Most of us didn't. So probably, we expressed our superiority feeling, and a kind of revenge. We had nothing to lose, only expected to enjoy the destruction of the big factory which we were building for the I.G. Farben Industrie. It was naturally so.

This happy feeling didn't change also after the Americans indeed, began to bomb, and obviously we had casualties too – wounded and dead. How beautiful was it to see squadron after squadron burst from the sky, drop bombs, destroy the buildings and kill also members of the Herrenvolk.

Those bombardments elevated our morale and, paradoxically, awakened probably some hopes of surviving, of escaping from this hell. In our wild imagination, we also saw a co-ordination between the Allies and the indeed small underground movement in the camp, with which I was in touch. We imagined co-ordinated destruction and escape; destruction from above by the bombers, and from our hands, while escaping, even if we have to be living bombs – to be killed.

Unfortunately this never occurred."

SHALOM LINDENBAUM, AUSCHWITZ-MONOWITZ SURVIVOR

The Holocaust – lessons to be learnt?

French author Charlotte Delbo, herself a survivor of Auschwitz as a political prisoner, described in her work the bottomless pit that was the world of the Nazi concentration camps. She urged us to try and look at this world without averting our eyes, to try “in order to understand”. At the same time she was profoundly aware that the knowledge she had gained was “useless”.

The evil that is the Holocaust constitutes a fundamental challenge to our ability to learn lessons from the past. The destruction wreaked by the Second World War is still, for many, beyond comprehension.

We know that there were two primary aspects to the war in Europe. The first was a “conventional” war over resources and power in which millions lost their lives. The second was, however, different – and it was new. It was an ideological war, aimed mainly at eliminating the biological life and future of the Jews in Europe. Hitler lost the “conventional” war. Many believe he won the second and doubt that the Jewish people, who contributed so much to European history, will have a future on the continent in the long run. Whether this assessment is correct or not remains to be seen, but we can be certain that the development and future of Europe has been affected for all eternity – and this in a negative way.

We know much about the genocide of the Jews. “How?” has long been one of the most important questions for scholars, and many answers exist. But “Why?” – why for example 90% of Jewish children alive in 1939 “had” to die, is as inexplicable today as it was for the victims, then. Some believe that a full understanding of the

Holocaust is beyond the human imagination. Few if any other events in history are so considered.

Remaining indifferent and not trying to understand the “why” of the Holocaust, could threaten our common future. Not because it is a Jewish concern – it is a universal human concern. Author Primo Levi said that: “It is neither easy nor agreeable to dredge this abyss of viciousness (...). One is tempted to turn away with a grimace and close one’s mind: this is a temptation one must resist.” We can wish that the Holocaust never happened. But it happened in the heart of Europe and will forever be part of the European heritage.

Historian Omer Bartov believes that the most frightening thing is “the impossibility of learning anything from the Holocaust ... of putting its facts to any use”. For him the Holocaust renders vain all questions about learning and progress. It is, he fears, “precisely the meaninglessness of the event ... the utter uselessness of it all, the total and complete emptiness ... that leaves us breathless, bereft of the power of thought and imagination”.

This is a strong argument. The Holocaust is a black hole in the history of Europe and the modern world. Yet it must be understood, at a minimum, that the Holocaust took place because people like you and I chose to make it happen. They chose to plan mass murder and carry it out over a period of many years. They could have chosen otherwise. They should have chosen otherwise.

It will thus always be the responsibility of parents, teachers, politicians and all adults to teach our children, and they in turn will teach their children, that the right choice exists equal to the wrong one. But the right choice can only be made if we understand what the wrong choice may lead to.

“These crimes are unprecedented ones because of the shocking numbers of victims. They are even more shocking and unprecedented because of the large number of persons who united to perpetrate them (...) they developed a contest in cruelty and a competition in crime.”

JUSTICE ROBERT H. JACKSON, CHIEF AMERICAN
PROSECUTOR AT THE NUREMBERG TRIALS

*O you who know
did you know that hunger makes the eyes sparkle
that thirst dims them*

*O you who know
did you know that you can see your mother dead
and not shed a tear*

*O you who know
did you know that in the morning you wish for death
and in the evening you fear it*

*O you who know
did you know that a day is longer than a year
a minute longer than a lifetime*

*O you who know
did you know that legs are more vulnerable than eyes
nerves harder than bones
the heart firmer than steel*

*(...)
Did you know that suffering is limitless
that horror cannot be circumscribed*

*Did you know this
You who know*

CHARLOTTE DELBO



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Living History An information programme about the Holocaust

In a parliamentary debate between the party leaders in June 1997, the Swedish Prime Minister, Göran Persson, initiated a broad information programme about the Holocaust under the heading *Living History*. The aim is to use the events of the Holocaust in the Second World War as a basis for discussions about compassion, democracy and the equal worth of all people. Through knowledge and debate we can prevent similar events from occurring again. The Holocaust must be a constantly sounding alarm bell reminding us of what can happen if we fail to keep the debate about democracy and human dignity alive.

Living History is made up of three parts:

– Activities reflecting political agreement in expressing disapproval of those forces which deny that the Holocaust ever took place and defend the ideology behind the genocide.

– Information to parents and the public. A Web site has been launched containing information about the Holocaust. The address is www.levandehistoria.org

– Information programmes directed at schools as well as extra resources for research. Schools have been offered teaching materials including films. Teachers' seminars have been arranged, and a national centre for research and education on the Holocaust and genocide has been opened at Uppsala University.

Parliamentary parties in agreement



The Holocaust was one of the most hideous crimes ever committed against humanity. Millions of people were murdered by the Nazis. Today this crime seems totally incomprehensible. Yet it took place only fifty years ago.

All of us who live in a society which respects human dignity, democracy and equal rights for all, need to stand firm against the ideology of violence. We cannot stand idly by and watch as the ideas of Nazism are propagated once more and its crimes denied. Those who forget history, risk repeating it.

Eye-witnesses to the crimes of Nazism are still alive. Knowledge of what actually happened fifty years ago must not be allowed to die with them. Their suffering must not be forgotten. It is our task to make sure that what happened then does not happen again.

It was against this backdrop that the Government initiated *Living History*, a broad information programme aimed at increasing awareness of the Holocaust. It has received tremendous support. What is more important is that all the parliamentary parties stand united behind the *Living History* project.

As Sweden's Prime Minister I am proud that we are so united in the fight against Nazism and in our support of human dignity.
Göran Persson, Swedish Social Democratic Party



I have stood in silence before the crematoria of the Nazi extermination camps and before the open mass graves after the cruel murders committed in the war in Bosnia. And I have read the chilling descriptions of those who managed to survive the mass purges of the Stalin era.

It could happen again. Perhaps not exactly a new Hitler or Stalin, but fear of

the unknown could lead to intolerance, hate could spread or be whipped up, and the ground could once again be laid for murder. Fear of those who look different, or who think differently. Fear of people who have a different faith. Or of Jews, or whites or black people. Of people whose only "fault" is that they are different from their murderers.

This is why it is so important for us to learn from history. It must never be forgotten. And we should be able to draw conclusions from it. The very things that divide us as individuals and peoples and cultures are often the things that bring richness and dynamism to our development. There should be ever closer cooperation between individuals and nations and states to build a firebreak to prevent the forces of barbarism from perpetrating new murders.

Carl Bildt, Moderate Party



Every individual is unique and should be treated with respect. Openness and tolerance towards other people, whatever their race, religion, culture or sexual orientation are fundamental to a democratic society.

But these values are not given for all time. Each new generation needs to defend and reclaim these humanist and

democratic values.

In other words, respect and tolerance are not just a matter of legislation or administrative solutions. The values on which we wish to build our society must emerge from precisely that respect for all people as individuals. The violation of an individual is a violation of the very foundation of a humane and democratic society.

During the Hitler period and the Holocaust, humanitarian values and human dignity were trampled underfoot. It must not be allowed to happen again. This we owe to those who suffered. People must be allowed to be people. This we owe to ourselves.

Olof Johansson, Centre Party



"Never again", we say, when we are confronted by the evil deeds of Nazism. Yet still it happens, time and time again. Ethnic cleansing, concentration camps, genocide. Most recently in Bosnia and Rwanda. Long after the fall of Nazism, barbaric methods re-emerged in the treatment of dissenting and dissident elements by other dictatorships.

But we must continue to say "Never again". And above all we must act in that spirit. If we accept barbarism as inevitable we will have given up the fight for humanitarianism and human dignity.

Knowledge is the key. Some of the necessary knowledge concerns anti-Semitism – its history, its character, its twisted outlook. But even now, in January 1998, a Swedish lawyer can say that he cannot understand why a Hitler salute can cause offence. The bulk of the White Power Music sold on the world market comes from Sweden. In my view, these two examples suffice to demonstrate that the project Living History has an important task to perform.

Lars Leijonborg, Liberal Party



It is more necessary than ever to remind people of the Holocaust. Not just because there are forces denying that it actually took place, but also because social development in Europe today bears a certain resemblance to the conditions that applied in Germany before the Nazis took power.

During the Second World War the human race had to pay a high price to learn and understand what economic crisis, growing unemployment and social insecurity can lead to. Then as now, obscure, anti-democratic political forces are playing on cultural and ethnic differences. With their racist ideology they seek to find scapegoats to blame for unsatisfactory

social conditions caused by unequal and unjust development.

Naturally, information and education about Nazism and racism are necessary. But they must be combined with comprehensive measures against unemployment, segregated housing and other unsatisfactory social conditions.

Gudrun Schyman, Left Party.



Of our own history and the terrible events that took place in Europe 50 years ago – the Holocaust – we say we cannot understand how it could have happened. But it happened because people like you and I did not defend people's right to be different, we did not defend their right to think and feel differently, we failed to react in time to racism and xenophobia.

It must not be allowed to happen again. That is why it is so important to understand that all people have equal worth and common basic needs, to understand that solidarity between people and with future generations is essential for a democratic society. We must all take responsibility for building a society where there is room for everyone, a society where people feel involved, and feel that they can influence events, a society where democracy and safety are safeguarded.

Marianne Samuelsson, Green Party



Those who deny the truths of history deny themselves. We can never free ourselves of the greatest insanity in the history of humankind and the degradation that Nazism stood for. But it is the inescapable duty of each generation, the most urgent and obvious task of each family and each individual, to face up to the truth and nurture it, to pass it on and

to make sure that it is never obscured or misrepresented. Ignorance of history and indifference are devastating. It is easy for us

to imagine that our generation and our time can conquer evil and madness, and that we who are alive now will let reason guide us and triumph. This is a dangerous and erroneous approach. Every society requires ethical awareness.

It is round the kitchen table, in our clubs and societies, in the canteen, and in the streets and market places that we must all have the courage to show in word and deed that each individual, whatever their race, religion, age, sex, intelligence, etc. is precious. It is by taking up the battle together, against trends fed on lies that we can best safeguard the future.

Alf Svensson, Swedish Christian Democrats

The title of the book is based on a quotation from the Bible, Book of Joel 1:2-3

Hear this, ye old man, and give ear,
all ye inhabitants of the land
Hath this been in your days,
or even in the days of your fathers?

Tell ye your children of it,
and let your children tell their children,
and their children another generation.

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The book is published as part of the information programme Living History.

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The educational editors of the publishing house Natur och Kulturs have assisted with the publication of Tell ye your children...

Women, children and old people wait in a spinny 100 metres from one of the gas chambers in the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. Soon they will undress. Then they will be herded into a room where they will be gassed to death. Afterwards, their corpses will be burned in ovens in the same building or in nearby pits.

The people in the picture are Jews deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau from Hungary in late May or early June 1944. The picture comes from a photo album compiled by a German working at the camp at the time. The many pictures show what happened to Jewish deportees on reaching the camp. The picture taken at the spinny is to be found under the caption: "Women and children of no further use".

The spinny is still there today. All that remains of the women and children is their picture.

This book describes what human beings are capable of doing to other human beings when democratic values have been destroyed and replaced by an ideology advocating intolerance, hate and violence.

The book presents facts about the Holocaust and attempts to explain how the unimaginable became reality.

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