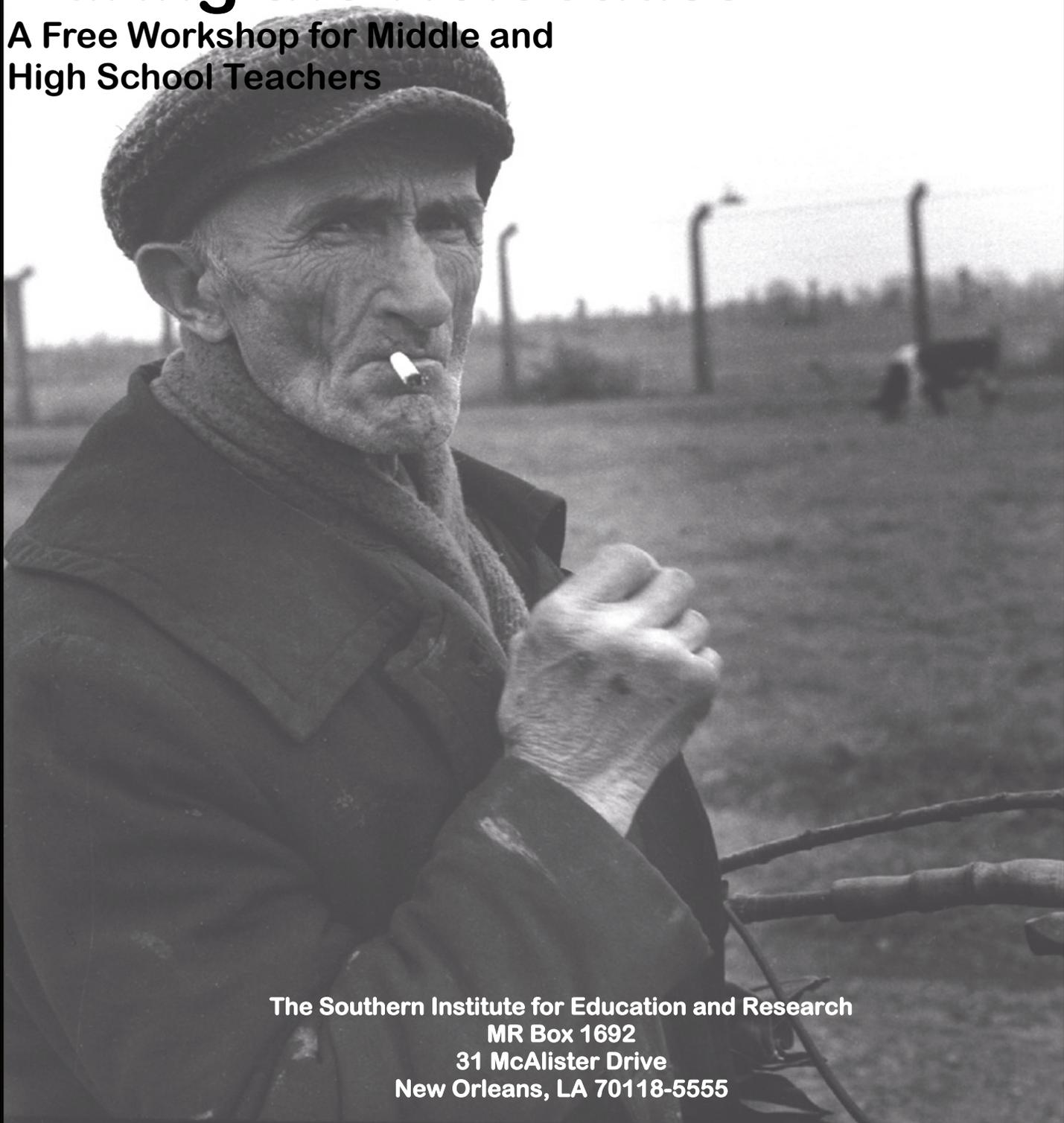


Deathly Silence: Ordinary People During the Holocaust

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HISTORY OF ANTI-SEMITISM

"The Nazis did not discard the past, they built on it. They did not begin a development. They completed it."

- Raul Hilberg, Holocaust historian

In ancient times, the Jewish people established themselves as a distinct and separate people by their belief in one God (monotheism) and by their refusal to accept the dominant religion. Jews often became the scapegoat, a people to blame for the hardships of mankind, real and imagined. The history of anti-Semitism, or hatred of the Jews, is part and parcel of western civilization.

In 63 B. C., the Romans conquered Jerusalem, center of the Jewish homeland. The first religious groups persecuted by the Romans were the Christians, charged with being heretics (or believers in a false religion). Initially, the Romans allowed the Jews to practice their religion freely, but this did not last. The Jews were ordered to worship Roman gods. Jews resisted, but division among Jews followed, one side insisting on orthodoxy, the other side (including Jesus) arguing that Jews must be willing to adapt. After the death of Christ, his followers renounced Judaism and established Christianity.

In 72 A. D., the Romans expelled the Jews from Palestine. The Jews settled in North Africa, Spain, and eastern and western Europe. For the Jewish people, life outside of Palestine was called the Diaspora. At the start of each Jewish New Year, Jews in the Diaspora would toast one another and promise, "Next year in Jerusalem." It appeared a forlorn hope.

In the early fourth century, Constantine the Great made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. Anti-Semitism became a threat to Jewish existence.

THE MYTHS

The Romans demanded that the Jews convert to Christianity. If not, they were denied citizenship rights and protection under law. At the end of the fourth century, as the struggle between Christianity and Judaism intensified, Jews were stamped with the pernicious label of "Christ killers," meaning that Jews as a people were responsible for the death of Christ.

The theological basis for anti-Semitism, the account of Christ's crucifixion, is found in the New Testament, St. Matthew 27.

“And the governor [Pilate] said, 'Why, what evil hath he [Christ] done?' But they [the Jews] cried out the more, saying, 'Let him be crucified.'

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.'

Then answered all the people, and said, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.'”

St. Augustine, one of Christianity's influential leaders, compared the Jewish people to Cain, who murdered his brother and became the first criminal in biblical history. The Jews, St. Augustine wrote, were “a wicked sect” and should be banished because of their evil.

In 1965, the Second Vatican Council established that the Jewish people were not to be held responsible for the death of Christ.

The so-called "blood libel" against the Jewish people originated in Norwich, England, in about 1140. A superstitious priest and an insane monk charged a local Jewish man with killing a Christian child in order to procure Christian blood for the preparation of matzo bread for a Jewish holiday.

Ludicrous though it appeared, the "blood libel" found a wide audience among the well-educated as well as among the ignorant and superstitious masses who needed only a slight pretext to attack the Jews, a people declared “alien” long before. Christian mothers

instructed their children about the dangers of straying too far from home, "Be good, or the Jews will get you."

In the middle of the sixth century, a group of scholars working for the Roman Emperor Justinian issued a series of anti-Jewish rulings, known as the Justinian Code. The rulings excluded Jews from all public places, prohibited Jews from giving evidence in lawsuits in which Christians took part, and forbade Jews from reading the bible in Hebrew. In 533, marriage between a Jew and a Christian was outlawed, as was the possibility of a Jew converting to Christianity. Laws forbade Jews from holding public office, employing Christian servants, or even appearing on the streets during Holy Week, the week between Jesus' "Last Supper" and his crucifixion. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council issued a decree whereby Jews were ordered to wear special clothes and markings to distinguish themselves from Christians. In addition, Jews were not permitted to attend universities. Between 1431-43, the Council of Basel decreed that Jews in cities must live in ghettos, physically separate from Christians. The Jews could not leave the ghettos except to pursue business interests with Christians.

In most of Europe, Jews were denied the right to own land, and, consequently, Jews did not have the opportunity to become farmers. Similarly, commerce guilds were closed to Jews and the difficulties of pursuing a profession were compounded. Jews were left with few ways to make a living.

Jews became peddlers, buying and selling ordinary goods far and wide. They became craftsmen (cobblers, tin smithies, scribes) and developed a reputation for their "golden hands" which produced expert work.

Jews were engaged in money-lending. The Christian religions forbade their brethren from partaking of usury, or money-lending at interest. Jews also emerged as managers of the large estates owned by non-Jewish nobles. They became tax collectors for the nobles. Inevitably, Jews were viewed as oppressors by the peasant class with whom the Jews, representing the noble man, came into contact. These hard feelings ripened over centuries. It did not matter that the overwhelming majority of Jews were as bitterly impoverished as

their Gentile neighbors.

THE CRUSADES

Christian soldiers left Europe on the first crusade to win control of the Holy Land in 1096. The purpose of the crusade was to expel the Muslims from the birthplace of Christ. They were the "infidels," those who did not believe in God. Before leaving Europe, the slaughter got off to an early start against the "infidels" at home: the Jews. During an intense reign of blood-letting, from January to July 1096, twelve thousand Jews, between one third and one fourth of the Jewish population in Germany and France, were massacred by the crusaders. Entire communities were forced to choose between baptism or death.

Jews fled to Central and Eastern Europe, where they suffered pogroms (or outbursts of violence) at the hands of Cossacks in 1648 and '49 and where they were ultimately annihilated by the Nazis beginning in 1939.

THE BLACK DEATH

In 1348, the Black Death (or bubonic plague) spread across Europe and killed one third of the population. Predictably, the Jews were charged with poisoning wells and initiating the epidemic. It mattered little that great numbers of Jewish people also died as a result of the plague. It mattered only that an explanation was found and someone blamed. During two years of massacre, superstitious and hate-filled mobs slaughtered thousands of Jews, believing firmly that killing Jews was not only justified but in accordance with the Lord's will. The massacres resulting from the Black Death were eclipsed only centuries later when Hitler and his henchmen launched their "final solution."

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

In the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation split Christianity into different branches. The violent clashes between Protestant and Catholic armies reduced much of Central Europe to ashes. The Jews, living in ghettos behind walls often guarded by Christian sentries, eluded much of the destruction. However, as in every period of tumult, the Jews, a distinct and visible minority, became the object of hatred. In 1546, Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation who initially wanted to convert the Jews to Protestantism, issued a

booklet that stands as a treatise on anti-Semitism. It was titled, "Of Jews and Their Lies."

"First, their synagogues or churches should be set on fire...Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed...They ought be put under one roof or in a stable, like gypsies...Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayer books. Fourthly, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach anymore."

It should come as no surprise that the Nazis, when they seized power in Germany, gave wide publicity to Martin Luther's rabid anti-Semitic views.

As Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg has written, "The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect, 'You have no right to live among us as Jews.' The secular rulers who followed had proclaimed, 'You have no right to live among us.' The German Nazis at last decreed, 'You have no right to live.'"

NATIONALISM

In the age of nationalism, when the people of Europe began to view themselves as belonging to separate nations, the identification of Jews as "aliens" entered a new chapter. The litmus test for loyalty to the state was loyalty to Christianity. Hence, the Jews were disqualified from citizenship. They were expelled from England in 1290, France in 1306 and again in 1394, and parts of Germany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Jews were not allowed to live legally in England until the sixteenth century. In Russia, the tsar (emperor) banished all Jews to the so-called Pale of Settlement, the area comprising Ukraine, Byelorussia, and eastern Poland. Jews were not allowed to live legally in France until the French Revolution. The Emancipation Decree issued by Napoleon in 1791 gave full citizenship rights to the Jews of France. Where Napoleon's armies traveled in Europe, the Jews were liberated from the confines of the ghetto. By royal decrees, the Jews of Prussia and Bavaria, two provinces in the German lands, became full citizens in the early 1800's.

INDUSTRIALISM

The 19th century was a time of vast economic change. Economic life became fiercely competitive. In the words of historian William Jenks, “The modern state was overcast with storm clouds, and it was easiest to blame the unpredictable weather upon the Jew.” The Jews now came to be seen as the ones who controlled big business, the banks, the shop on the corner, the economy in general. Indeed, the Jews were at the forefront of change. Feudalism had collapsed, the inherent restrictions placed on economic activity were no more, merit alone sufficed. Change was unpleasant for many. The old way of life had its comforts, namely, predictability and a measure of security. The estate owner now had to compete with foreign products in his once closed market. Free trade was bemoaned as a “Jewish invention.” The merchant had to accustom himself to the challenges of the new times.

SOCIAL DARWINISM

In the late 19th century, the debate on the Jewish question entered a new chapter. Hitherto, the Jews had been viewed as different and unacceptable because of their religion. In 1873, with the publication of the book The Victory of Judaism over Germanism by Wilhelm Marr, the Jewish question became one of race. The Jews, it was argued, were different because of who they were, not what they thought. They were different because of birth. They were different because of blood. An “alien” people, the Jews could never be Germans. It was in this book that the term anti-Semitism first appeared. This so-called scientific basis of anti-Semitism excluded any possibility of Jews being assimilated into German culture. Once defined as such in the popular mind, a major obstacle to Jewish destruction, the common bond in humanity, was overcome.

Social Darwinism took root. This was the belief that people of different races were in competition with one another, and only the strongest of the races would ultimately survive.

Treitschke, the German philosopher, noted, “The Jews are our misfortune.” The expression captured the spirit of the age.

VIENNA

One of the most rabid hot-beds of anti-Semitic agitation at the turn of the 20th century was Vienna, the imperial capital of the Habsburg dynasty that comprised much of the lands of Central and Eastern Europe, lands heavily populated with Jews, many of whom sought to immigrate to the capital. In 1885, students at the University of Vienna formed a union based on anti-Semitism, bewailing the increasing percentage of Jewish students at the University and, in general, the number of Jewish lawyers, journalists, artists, doctors, and professors. Prior to the First World War, the percentage of Jewish students at the University of Vienna reached 28%. Jewish students in medical school comprised almost 29%; in law and politics, 20%. In 1887, the Austro-Hungarian government passed a law prohibiting the migration or settlement of foreign Jews in Austria. It was based on the Chinese Exclusion Act of the United States, with the word "Jew" substituted for "Chinese."

The young Adolf Hitler, born in the Austrian town of Braunau in 1889, spent six bitter years in Vienna living on failed dreams in a succession of rented rooms, flop houses, and one modern and comfortable mens' hostel (built, incidentally, by the Jewish philanthropist Epstein). Though he lived comfortably on an orphan's pension for some time, Hitler wrote in his autobiography, "For me this was the time of the greatest spiritual upheaval I have ever had to go through. I had ceased to be a weak-kneed cosmopolitan and became an anti-Semite."

The years Hitler spent in Vienna, between 1907 and 1913, represented a time of political radicalism, economic pressure, and intense anti-Semitism in the imperial capital. The mayor of Vienna, Karl Luegar, unashamedly used anti-Semitism to win votes, blaming life's problems on the Jews. Of course, Luegar had a Jewish secretary, which he explained by saying, "I decide who is a Jew." Jewish people constituted 10% of the Viennese population. Part of the Jewish population of the city was unusually successful by European standards. They spoke German perfectly, dressed in the fashion of the day, and viewed the splendor of Vienna with the pride and arrogance of the native born. They were doctors, lawyers, journalists, writers, and store owners. It was said that three of the four major bankers in Vienna were Jews, the fourth a Greek.

Poor Jews also lived in Vienna. They were mostly Orthodox Jews from the empire's rural provinces. Dressed in black coats and black hats and with their

earlocks and long beards, the so-called "ost-Juden" (or eastern Jew) became the object of intense loathing by the Christian population of Vienna (as well as by some Viennese Jews, themselves poor immigrants from the provinces but one generation before). In the popular mind, the eastern Jew was dirty in appearance, unscrupulous in business, aggressive in the market, spoke bad German, reeked of onion and garlic, and worshiped a foreign God. He was also probably a socialist or a communist, a "red" in any event, though this was a thought not quickly reconciled with the image of the observant Jew rushing to synagogue.

A Viennese Jew named Theodor Herzl began a movement among Europe's Jews to establish a Jewish state (based on the commune) in Palestine. It was called Zionism, and offered hope to the impoverished, scorned Jewish masses that they might one day live in peace in their own land.

In sum, the gentile population of Vienna very much feared being physically overwhelmed by a populace they viewed as foreign and repulsive: namely, the poor Jews from the provinces who came to the city in the effort to find work and survive. It was precisely this fear that so heightened the virulent anti-Semitism that was a Viennese speciality, and that would erupt on the streets of the former imperial capital when the Nazis took over in March 1938.

HITLER

Hitler's father Alois, who died in 1903, was a customs inspector at the border, a job of prestige and economic standing (considerably higher than a school headmaster). The family was middle class. In his childhood, Hitler lived in relatively privileged circumstances. A willful child and an indifferent student, he was forever suffering the rebuke of his father, a man who accomplished a respectful position in life and wanted the same of his son, possibly a job in the imperial bureaucracy. The young Hitler recoiled at the prospect. His mother Klara was a gentle woman who merely pointed to her husband's row of pipes on the kitchen shelf when she wanted her childrens' attention. The father and mother were distantly related and the father was considerably older than his bride, who he met when she was a bar maid in the local tavern. Alois Hitler barely spoke a word to his wife at home. In 1900, Hitler's younger brother Edmund died of measles. Neither the father or mother attended the funeral nor supplied a stone marker. Eleven year old Hitler attended the burial in a snow

storm with one sibling at his side. Two other of Hitler's siblings died of diphtheria. Klara Hitler died of cancer in 1907, and her Jewish doctor received an appreciative card from the son. In March 1938 the doctor was allowed to leave Nazi-occupied Austria by special order of the fuhrer.

At age 18, Hitler arrived in Vienna to enroll at the esteemed Academy of Fine Arts. With a hundred and twenty other candidates, Hitler took the entrance exam. He passed the first exam; thirty-three others failed. Students then submitted sample drawings. Hitler's samples did not realistically portray human beings. He was rejected along with fifty-one other candidates. Of the original hundred and twenty candidates, only twenty-eight passed both exams. It was suggested that he try to enroll in architecture school, but he lacked a high school diploma, the necessary prerequisite. His lackadaisical attitude as a school boy had come back to haunt him. Typical of the culture, he blamed the Jews for his setbacks. In the beginning of his sojourn in Vienna, Hitler lived off an orphan's pension and held to the pretenses of a young nobleman, sporting an ivory-handled walking stick and dressing in "a most presentable outfit," said his friend Kubizek. Hitler attended the theater regularly and enjoyed the works of Richard Wagner, the arch Nationalist and Jew hater (whose operas gave Hitler the inspiration for the dramatic Nuremburg Party rallies). Soon the young Hitler was reduced to tattered clothing and to sleeping in the park or in homes for the down and out. In all, Hitler lived in sixteen different places while in Vienna, one (to repeat) financed by a Jewish philanthropist (Epstein). Among the downtrodden Hitler learned the tactics of cunning and deceit that he took to be the ways of the world. Hitler made a meager living by painting water colors of traditional scenes in Vienna. He later sued his partner, accusing him of theft. Hitler spent inordinate amounts of time in Viennese cafes, gulping down pastries and cups of tea filled with sugar. In these cafes he read free newspapers and argued, or shouted down, the regulars on the subjects of politics, the communist threat (known as the Great Dread), the corrupt Habsburgs, the glorious Germans, and the despised Jews.

"In the dim twilight of underground Vienna," the German historian Joachim Fest has written, "anti-Semitism was merely the concentrated form of his

hitherto general and undirected hatred, which finally found its object in the Jews.”

It is no coincidence that Hitler became a full fledged anti-Semite precisely at the time when he had used up his orphan's pension. Vienna, Hitler later wrote, was the “most thorough school of my life.” The only companion who didn't abandon him, he later bitterly observed, was “hunger.”

In his 1924 autobiography Mein Kampf, Hitler described his first encounter with the Eastern Jews living in Vienna.

"Once, as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? was my first thought. Is this a German?"

Hitler's race theory was in part based on what the historian Joachim Fest calls “sexual-envy complexes.”

In his autobiography, Hitler wrote, “With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for an unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people.”

Hitler believed that the Jewish people were the “eternal enemy” of the German people. In order to save the German people, he had to exterminate the Jews. Not some of the Jews. But all of them, particularly the children lest they grow up to avenge the murder of their parents (as Himmler said in 1943 with a tape recorder running).

WORLD WAR I

On August 1, 1914, the First World War began when the German armies attacked France by way of Belgium. In the exultant first days of that August, twenty-five year old Adolf Hitler joined a Bavarian regiment in his new home of Munich. He reached the front lines in October 1914 and immediately went into combat. Hitler served as a messenger and displayed notable bravery for which he was rewarded with the prestigious Iron Cross (first class). The award gave Hitler de facto German citizenship, which he lacked, being an Austrian. During four long years, war raged across the European landscape, laying waste

to much of northern France and Belgium as well as to virtually all of Poland. In the end, when the German high command surrendered on November 11, 1918, communist revolutions broke out in Germany. Communism was indelibly identified with the Jews. In Poland they called it "zydo-kommunism," or "Jew-communism." The revolutions, most notably in Munich and Berlin, were crushed by German soldiers thoroughly brutalized by four years at the front. These were the so-called Freikorps who would later comprise the ranks of Hitler's storm-troopers, the SA or Brownshirts. The Weimar Republic, based on a liberal constitution and despised by conservative forces and founded in the city of Weimar, was established on shaky ground indeed. After they came to power in 1933, as if to mock the liberal association with Weimar, the Nazis constructed one of the concentration camps a few miles outside of it. It was named Buchenwald.

Embittered by war and disillusioned by peace, the German people faced an uncertain future. Twice within four years the economy collapsed. For a people who strove for order, there was none. How did this dramatic turn of events occur? The answer was simple: Germany lost the war because she had been "stabbed in the back" by the Jews.

So began the twenty-one year hiatus between the First and the Second World Wars. The Jews were blamed for World War I. The Jews were blamed for the Treaty of Versailles. The Jews were blamed for the Soviet takeover in Russia. The Jews were blamed for the economic depression. The Jews were blamed for the black market. The Jews were blamed for the unpredictable weather. The Jews prospered while the good Germans suffered. Hard feelings had always existed towards Jews, and hard feelings intensified with the deep insecurity of the post-war period. In Munich, Hitler began giving speeches that explained the difficult circumstances. It was the fault of the Jews, he repeated ad nauseam. This point always elicited a strong approval from the audience. Hitler later said that if he did not have the Jews to blame everything on, and to unify the masses in the common bond of hatred, then he would have had to invent them. Yet Hitler took anti-Semitism a step further. Life was based on racial struggle, he stressed. Conversion or expulsion of the Jews was no longer viable. The way to get rid of the problem was murder. In Mein Kampf, referring to the First World War, the

future Reichschancellor wrote:

"If at the beginning of the War and during the War, twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best German workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain."

In the end Hitler would keep only one promise. It was his promise to murder the Jewish people of Europe.

THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

The Treaty of Versailles, signed to conclude the First World War, reduced the size of the much vaunted German army, ceded parts of the former Reich to Czechoslovakia, Poland, and France (Alsace-Lorraine), militarized the Rhineland with French troops (including black colonial troops), saddled Germany with onerous reparations and a war guilt clause. The nation, totally unprepared for defeat because of its own government's false propaganda, was stunned, confused, angry, and humiliated. Owing to the continued Allied blockade for several months after the cessation of fighting (to force compliance), starvation reigned in Germany. The new German government, the Weimar Republic, was a democracy that enjoyed little tradition or support. The German people, unified as a nation since 1871, had always been ruled by a king (or kaiser) or by a local prince. The hierarchy of society was based on a leadership principle. Obedience was an admired characteristic, offering a sense of order (and security) to the nation. In the popular mind of many Germans, democracy, which required individual responsibility and personal decisions, was linked with corruption, decadence, weakness, and, of course, the Jews.

HOLOCAUST SUMMARY

THE RISE OF HITLER

The end of World War I devastated Hitler. He was twenty-nine years old, and lay in a hospital near Berlin, having been blinded by British tear gas towards the end of the war. Life in the army had provided him with the only sense of family life he had known. Other soldiers received letters from home; Hitler did not (except from his former landlord in Munich). He was one of the few soldiers who liked the war. The war had given him purpose, a sense of belonging, and, not least, a job. As the historian Fest has written, "In no man's land he felt at home." Hitler returned to Munich and witnessed the street fighting (and war of extermination) between the communists and the right wing Freikorps troops, whom Hitler sided with but did not join. In his job as an observer (a spy, really) for the local army command, Hitler was assigned to report on an obscure rightist political party named the German Worker's Party. Hitler attended a meeting of the fledgling party, interrupted the meeting, unleashed his hatreds in a violent torrent of words, and impressed the participants sufficiently enough that he received a polite invitation to return to the next meeting. He became its seventh member. As a political agitator in Munich, Hitler gave his first speech in October 1919, wherein he demonstrated his remarkable ability to read the grievances written across the faces of a dispirited people. He was a mirror of the age. He sensed their anger, their fear, their frustration, and he explained it all in a way conditioned by history: the Jews are responsible for Germany's defeat; the Jews are behind communism (and everything filthy); the Jew is the plague of the German people; the Jews must go. The link between Jews and communism was deeply imbedded in the popular mind, and Hitler seized upon it and hammered it deeper. In addition to virulent anti-Semitism, always the most well received of his rhetoric, Hitler deftly combined the two most important movements of the twentieth century: nationalism and socialism.

According to the historian Joachim Fest, "Socialism meant the responsibility of the whole for the individual, whereas nationalism was the devotion of the individual to the whole, thus the two elements could be combined in National Socialism [Nazism]."

Workers, middle class types, and aristocrats flocked to the Nazi banner. Hitler and his movement tried to appeal to everyone no matter their class origin. With his demagogic talent, propaganda flair, and deft touch at sensing the mood of the people, Hitler seized control of the German Worker's Party, changed the

name to the National Socialist German Worker's Party, or NSDAP, expanded the party, inaugurated terror ("Cruelty impresses," said Hitler) in street brawls with the communists, won the increasing support of the disillusioned middle class as well as the vital support of wealthy benefactors of the higher social plateau whose beliefs the Austrian corporal espoused in a way they could never hope to and to an audience they could never reach.

BEER HALL PUTSCH

On November 8, 1923, Hitler and his fledgling Nazi party staged a putsch (or revolt) in Munich. At the Burgerbraukeller (a beer hall), Hitler fired a shot from his pistol at the ceiling and dramatically announced the start of the "national revolution" to overthrow the Weimar Republic. The next day he and followers staged a march through the streets of Munich to the Feldenhallplatz, a central point in the city. The march ended when soldiers of the German army fired on the Nazis. The first row of the Nazi procession, locked arm in arm, scattered at the first volley, and Hitler injured his shoulder when pulled to the ground during the melee. He fled the scene, although with his usual modesty he later constructed a tale of helping an injured child from the scene. He even produced the child. Hitler was hunted down, arrested, and put on public trial. The public trial was a stroke of luck. Hitler adroitly sensed the opportunity to seize the national stage. He quickly recovered his spirits, and while the other conspirators denied any involvement in the failed putsch, Hitler claimed all the responsibility, explaining before a deferential court that the republican government was weak, corrupt, democratic, Jewish, etc. This sort of plain speaking won the silent applause of many people; Hitler's grievances reflected their own. The Nazis later converted the debacle of the "beer hall putsch" into one of the most glorious events in the Nazis' long struggle for power. They celebrated November 8th annually with a return to the famous beer hall and a flourish of nostalgic speeches.

Hitler was sentenced to a short prison term at Landsberg in Bavaria, a slap on the wrist punishment during which Hitler dictated his autobiography, Mein Kampf. In a turgid, plodding, ungrammatical style, Hitler mapped out his later plans with remarkable bluntness (many Germans would later say they never

read it, although it was an obligatory “gift” to all newly married couples). He planned to establish a dictatorship, but only after coming to power using “legal” means (this was the lesson of the failed putsch). He planned to smash the communists at home. He planned to restore order and pride. He promised jobs. He planned to win lebensraum, or living space, in the East, meaning the Soviet Union, which of course he viewed as a Jewish conspiracy with whom he must one day settle accounts. The famous black soil of the Ukraine would well serve the German colonialists. And, of course, the budding fuehrer promised to deal with the Jewish problem in Germany. They owned all the big department stores, after all!

WORLD DEPRESSION

The world depression of 1929 was the saving grace of Nazism. The party's efforts appeared on the brink of collapse, but, as reflected in parliamentary seats, support for the Nazis shot up when the effects of the Wall Street collapse were felt in Germany. The figures speak for themselves: before the economic catastrophe, the Nazis had seven seats in the German parliament (the Reichstag). In September 1930, however, the Nazis had won 107 seats. Economic security intensified the search for a leader who promised to save the nation. The German people had already experienced two severe bouts of inflation (1918 and 1924), dealing a double blow to the pocket book and to the self-esteem of the people. The impact of this third assault on the pursuit of a well-ordered life was devastating. Chaos prevailed in Germany. There was street fighting between the Communists and the Nazis. Order was absent. Germany's fling with democracy appeared a failure. The average German might begin asking questions that were hard to answer. Is the Weimar republic capable of saving the nation? Is Hitler the right man for the job? 'Let's see what he can do,' said many a humble citizen.

JANUARY 30, 1933

On January 30, 1933, the dottering German president von Hindenburg, fed on fears of a communist uprising, appointed Adolf Hitler chancellor of Germany. Hitler was appointed on the basis of Article 48 of the Weimar constitution, which gave the president authority to invoke dictatorial powers to protect the democratic order (from Communist overthrow). The night of Hitler's seizure of power the Nazi SA, or brown shirts, staged a torch lit parade through the streets

of Berlin and passed beneath the porch of the Reich chancellery where Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, and other Nazis exulted in the first moments of power. An elderly Jewish man, a veteran of the German army unable to believe that Hitler represented the German people, told his frightened daughter (who heard the music and wanted to march like a good German), "This won't last one hundred days."

NAZI TERROR

In November 1933, Hitler said, "I did not become Chancellor in order to act otherwise than I have preached for fourteen long years." To quote the historian Fest: "Now that it had conquered power, the regime set about conquering people."

With the power of the state behind it, the Nazis unleashed their terror. The police, from the role of protecting people, now became instruments of suppression. The SA, or brown shirts, immediately went after their political opponents in the Social Democratic and Communist parties. The SA established interrogation and torture chambers in basements of regular apartment buildings throughout Berlin. Hitler achieved power under the pretense of legality, but the movement had always been driven by violence and as soon as the Nazis crossed the threshold the terror exploded.

Hitler's corpulent, ruthless underling, Hermann Goering, later to lead the German air force (the Luftwaffe) to victory and disaster, established the secret state police known as the Gestapo, or Geheime Staatspolizei, which ruthlessly tracked down political opponents of the regime and no less ruthlessly penetrated the lives of ordinary Germans to the degree that fear and distrust were the governing principles of life. Heinrich Himmler established the Schutzstaffel, or SS, meaning Defense Corps. Originally Hitler's body guard, the fanatic SS saw themselves as the racial elite of the nation and later served as the chief executioners of the Jewish people. A standard lecture for the SS in the years before the war: "The Jew is a parasite. Wherever he flourishes, the people die...elimination of the Jew from our community is to be regarded as an emergency defense measure."

REICHSTAG FIRE

Less than a month after the Nazis came to power, the Reichstag (or parliament building) in Berlin was torched. Goering arrived on the scene with alacrity and cried out, "This is the beginning of the communist uprising. Now they are going to strike. Not a minute must be lost!"

A mentally handicapped Dutchman (a communist, of course) was charged with burning the Reichstag and executed, but it was certainly possible (one might say without a doubt) that the Nazis themselves were behind the Reichstag fire. Hitler certainly took advantage of the excitement to promulgate a law that established the basis for his dictatorship: the Emergency Decree "for the protection of the people and the state." The decree, as a measure to ward off "communist acts of violence endangering the state," suspended freedom of speech, press, assembly, freedom from invasion of privacy, and from house search without a warrant. It gave the federal government the power to take over the state governments to restore public security. It imposed the death penalty for "treason," an ambiguous term which would include the opponents of the Nazi regime.

Reichstag elections were held on March 5, 1933. Despite the propagandistic efforts and the reign of terror, the German people did not give the Nazis a majority of delegates. On March 21, 1933, the new Reichstag opened with a ceremony at Garrison Church in nearby Potsdam, spiritual home of the recently departed Prussian kaiser. The leftist Social Democrats and Communists, on the run, in exile, or murdered, did not partake of the inauguration ceremonies, but the representatives of the old Germany, Field Marshall von Hindenburg and the army officers, etc., and the representatives of the new Germany, Hitler dressed in an uncharacteristic black tie and tails with his similarly attired satraps, met, shook hands, and, symbolized by the famous photograph of the occasion, established a bond that paved the way for Germany's later ruin. Hitler paid tribute to Hindenburg and to his "great hearted decision" that made possible the union "between the symbols of old greatness and youthful strength." Two days later, on March 23, 1933, Hitler had the Reichstag pass the Enabling Act which

gave him four years of dictatorship rule. Hitler had accomplished a “legal” revolution. He struck with terror and annihilated his opponents. Simultaneously, Himmler opened the first concentration camp at Dachau, a suburb of Munich, to concentrate “all communist and...social democrat officials...[who] cannot be allowed to remain free as they continue to agitate and to cause unrest.” The Nazis were in firm control of Germany, the nation that the Jewish people admired most of all. Violence struck the Jews in German cities. In Breslau, SA men attacked a Jewish department store. When the police intervened, the SA broke into the courts and brutalized Jewish judges and lawyers who were then dragged through the streets. It was evident to the Nazi leadership that the violence against the Jews had to be controlled and directed by the state. The Nazi leadership was not interested in a traditional pogrom that left a few Jews beaten, a few Jewish women raped. It was interested in a orderly, systematic process of expropriation and murder that left no Jew standing.

NAZI BOYCOTT

The Nazis launched their public campaign against the German Jews on April 1, 1933. This was the first day of the Nazi boycott of Jewish stores. It lasted three days. Armed SA and SS guards stood at the doors of Jewish businesses and offices with signs that said, “Germans! Do not buy at the Jew's! Jews get out!” This was an effort to intimidate foreign Jews who demanded a world wide boycott of Nazi Germany, and, on the domestic front, to cut the ties between the German populace and their Jewish neighbors. It was also an effort to reward the rank and file of the Nazi movement by letting it taste the joys of Jew-baiting. Germans who defied the Nazi presence at the door and entered a Jewish store had their names taken down, a very intimidating set of circumstances for anyone.

JEWS DISMISSED

The first steps against the Jews were small. The first steps were incremental. On April 7, 1933, the Reichstag passed the Law for Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. This law, the first of some four hundred laws or decrees against the Jews, authorized the elimination of Jews and Nazi political opponents from

the civil service. "Civil servants of non-Aryan descent must resign," the law stated. The list included judges, lawyers, clerks, state prosecutors, civil servants, teachers, and university professors. In appreciation of the nostalgic feelings of President von Hindenburg, who complained to Hitler of the Nazis' unfriendly treatment of Jews who had been front line soldiers during the Great War, the new law allowed exceptions for World War veterans, those who lost their sons or fathers at the front, or those who were already employed before August 1, 1914. This step turned out to be a shrewd one for the Nazis because it divided German Jewry between those who had the modicum of privilege and those who had none. Ultimately, those who had the modicum of privilege were simply the last to be sent to a death camp in Poland.

On April 11, 1933, to clarify the matter, the Nazis issued the so-called Aryan paragraph ("Arierparagraph") which defined a non-Aryan: namely, anyone "descended from a non-Aryan, especially Jewish parents or grandparents." A person was considered non-Aryan even if only one parent or grandparent was non-Aryan, especially "if one parent or grandparent was of Jewish faith."

As Holocaust historian Lucy Dawidowicz has written, "The Nazi definition was simple: a Jew is a Jew is a Jew - that is, down to the third generation."

In cases of ambiguity, religious identification was the deciding criterium. If a grandfather or a grandmother attended synagogue services, then you were a Jew even if all the other relatives was of impeccable Aryan (or Nordic) stock. All Germans had to prove their Aryan identity with birth certificates, their parents' marriage certificates, and, finally, a detailed genealogical questionnaire. SS officers had to prove their Aryan descent from to 1750. The only person who did not have to fill out this form was Hitler himself. It was believed that Himmler kept a secret file on the Fuehrer, giving credence to the unverified claim that one of Hitler's grandfathers was a Jewish youth in the household where Hitler's grandmother had worked as a servant.

On April 25, 1933, the Reichstag passed a Law Against Overcrowding of German Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning, the purpose of which was to limit the number of Jewish students in German schools.

Shrewdly, the Nazi declared May 1, or May Day, the traditional holiday of workers (and a prominent communist holiday), as a national celebration

glorifying not workers but the Nazi party as the party of workers. The next day, Nazi thugs smashed the offices of labor unions and forced all German workers to join a single labor union under the control of the Nazis. Hitler would not allow the labor strife that characterized the Weimar Republic to beset the new Germany. Many Germans, the industrialists foremost, praised the absence of labor strife, but others recognized that with the destruction of the labor unions, the German worker had lost all independence. That summer Jewish writers and journalists were forbidden to publish their work.

THE BOOK BURNINGS

On May 10, 1933, at about midnight, thousands of German students marched down the main thoroughfare of Berlin, the Unter den Linden, and staged a book burning in the square opposite Berlin University. The Nazi propaganda chief Goebbels directed the ritual and declared, "The soul of the German people can again express itself. These flames not only illuminate the final end of an old era; they also light up the new." The book burning ceremony also occurred in other German cities. The books thrown into the bon-fires were by authors of world reputation, including German writers: Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Jakob Wassermann, Arnold and Stefan Zweig, Erich Maria Remarque, Walther Rathenau, Albert Einstein, Alfred Kerr and Hugo Preuss, the last named being the author of the despised Weimar constitution. The works of foreign writers were also tossed into the flames: Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Helen Keller, Margaret Sanger, H. G. Wells, Havelock Ellis, Arthur Schnitzler, Freud, Gide, Zola, and Proust. The implications of the book burning were ominous, as it suggested a complete lack of tolerance for a different point of view.

"Where they burn books," said the prophetic German philosopher of an earlier time, "they will later burn people."

DEATH OF HINDENBURG

On August 2, 1934, President von Hindenburg died. Long prepared for this day, Hitler promptly declared himself fuhrer, or leader, of the German people, and

changed the army oath of allegiance from a pledge to the “nation and fatherland” to an oath of unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler personally. This oath was taken very seriously by the German people, and it impeded the army officers who later disagreed with Hitler, not so much on the Jewish issue but as a result of the military set-backs in Russia, and dallied with the idea of killing him. Many felt they had to be loyal to him until the end because they had given their word as German soldiers. This was a prime example of how Hitler seized upon a virtue and exploited it to his ends. The oath of allegiance sealed the pact between Hitler and the German military, and in this way the German military became the servant of a criminal regime and fully implicated in the destruction of the Jews.

NUREMBERG LAWS

In September of each year, the Nazis held their annual party congress in Nuremberg, a medieval city in southern Germany. SA, SS, Hitler Youth, and German Maiden groups from around the country descended on Nuremberg for a week of parades, rallies, and endless speeches, the most important of course being the one by the loquacious fuehrer.

At the party congress in September 1935, Hitler instituted a set of anti-Jewish laws titled “Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor” but known more simply as the Nuremberg Laws. The laws were drafted at the last minute by an official from the Interior Ministry, Dr. Barnhard Loessner, a career civil servant who had no experience in Jewish matters. Hitler's decision to create the new racial laws was so sudden that Loesener was completely unprepared for it; he ran out of paper while writing the citizenship law and requisitioned some old menu cards to finish the assignment. The Nuremberg Laws, as they became known, represented an immensely foreboding step against the German Jews: to destroy a people, the people first had to be defined. That was not an easy task. Intermarriage and conversion complicated the matter. The Nuremberg Laws simplified it, and defined who was a Jew: anyone with a Jewish parent or grandparent.

Every German had to submit seven documents to the authorities: his or her own birth or baptismal certificates, the same of both parents and all four grandparents. The documents came from the Christian churches, which, as Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg has written, were “drawn into the

administration of very first measure of the destruction process.”

The purity of blood became a legal category. In addition, Jews were stripped of German citizenship. They were deprived of legal rights. Marriage and extramarital relations between Germans and German Jews were forbidden. German woman under forty-five were forbidden to work as domestics for Jewish households. Hitler said that “blood sin and desecration of the race are the original sins in this world and the end of a humanity which surrenders to it.”

REARMAMENT

The Nazis found devoted friends among German industrialists, this following the decision to reintroduce compulsory conscription and to rearm the German armed forces, hitherto restricted in size by the Treaty of Versailles. In March 1935, Hitler unveiled the infant Wehrmacht, or German armed forces. The German industrialists delighted at the prospects of new contracts and big profits, and the German people themselves (not unnaturally) felt a measure of pride in this reappearance of German military might and the defiance of the hated Versailles Treaty. The signatories of the treaty, sitting in western capitals, reacted to this development with the usual angry protests. Many people in the west believed that the restrictions placed on Germany had been onerous in the first place. Many believed that Hitler was the necessary bulwark against communism in the form of Soviet Russia.

“Better Hitler than Stalin,” said not a few.

In 1936, the Germany economy was booming and reached full employment, a masterful achievement that Hitler could justly boast of and an achievement that deepened the loyalty of the average German to the fuhrer. The thoughtful observer, however, might wonder about feverish pace of rearmament? What was the purpose? But most people didn't ask awkward questions. Rearmament was the engine of the booming German economy. When the war began in 1939, the staggering pace of German rearmament left the western democracies with an arsenal of obsolete weapons.

THE GERMAN VOLK

Hitler made the Germans once again feel good to be Germans. He defied the hated Versailles Treaty. He created employment. And he restored a sense of community and the idea of the Volk, or people.

The historian Joachim Fest has written, "Hitler's fundamental insight, acquired in the loneliness of his youth, was that people wanted to belong."

To this end the Nazis created social clubs and programs for the masses, both young and old. Children joined Nazi organizations like the Hitler Youth and German Maiden's Guild, organizations in which the young were thoroughly indoctrinated in Nazi ideology and Hitler worship. Workers joined an organization known as Strength Thru Joy (Kraft durch Freude) and traveled on cruises and vacations to the Mediterranean Sea and to other locales. The trips were unheard of in former times but now offered to the lowly German factory worker who had not been forgotten by the beloved fuehrer. Hitler, after all, was a man of the people. Didn't he promise every German a Volkswagen automobile (a peoples' car)?

ANSCHLUSS

On March 12, 1938, Hitler ordered German armed forces to seize and occupy his native Austria, a task he had set out for himself in the first paragraph of Mein Kampf. The German troops were greeted by flowers strewn at their feet, giving the bloodless conquest the sobriquet of the "flower war." The Jews of Vienna were treated to a different kind of war. The Jewish writer Stefan Zweig wrote,

"All the morbidly filthy hate fantasies orgiastically conceived in the course of many nights were released in broad daylight."

Zweig later committed suicide in South America.

In Vienna, life changed overnight. Local Nazis seized Jews in the former imperial capital and forced them to scrub the streets and walls with toothbrushes. Crowds gathered, hissed, and spat abuse at the helpless and often elderly Jews. The American journalist William Shirer witnessed the abuse and humiliation meted out to the Jews of Vienna and described it as "an orgy of sadism." Jewish stores were plundered by SA men who sometimes (cynically but with a pretense of legality) left a receipt. Hundreds of Jews committed

suicide. The Nazis listed the deaths in the newspapers under the title of "Traffic accidents." Jewish businesses were Aryanized, that is, Jewish owners were forced to sell their businesses to Germans, or Aryans, in a transaction that was decidedly one sided and invariably a big financial loss to the Jew. In Vienna, an estimated thirty-five hundred Nazis, completely untrained for the job, grabbed Jewish businesses and acted as commissars, or managers, of the establishments. The greed in Vienna ran out of control as the Nazis stepped on one another to get at Jewish wealth. In an ominous development, the SS officer Adolf Eichmann established the Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna, at the Rothchild's palace, whereby Jews, alarmed by the terror, found their emigration out of the country much facilitated by Eichmann's diligent bureaucrats. This was one of Eichmann's contributions to Jewish annihilation: an assembly line process through which the forsaken Jew passed in a day's time, relinquishing one document (and piece of property) at every step of the way until the end when he and his loved ones had the prized possession: a visa, the ticket of life. Eichmann also employed the services of the local Jewish leadership to facilitate the emigration, as he would later to facilitate the destruction. Eichmann later became the SS officer in charge of organizing the "evacuation" of Jews by trains to the death camps in Poland. It was an easy switch for he and his team of experts, virtually all of whom were Austrians. The demands of forced emigration were not so different from the demands of mass murder: terror; identification; collaboration; expropriation; concentration; expulsion, or, after 1941, extermination. Extermination, like emigration, was a logistical problem and nothing more. Actually, extermination was a logistical and an industrial problem.

THE EVIAN CONFERENCE

The events in Austria and the subsequent pressures for immigration led the Roosevelt administration to call for an international conference to deal with the refugee situation.

The American invitation to the foreign governments was cautiously worded. "No country," the invitation read, "would be expected or asked to receive a greater number of immigrants than is permitted by its existing legislation."

Thirty-two nations agreed to meet at the French resort town of Evian to discuss the plight of the Jews. Poland and Rumania, interested principally in the prospect of getting rid of their Jews, sent observers to Evian.

The U. S. refused to send a high ranking delegation to Evian. Its representative was the president's friend Myron C. Taylor. At the opening of the conference, Taylor said, "The time had come when governments...must act and act promptly." At the end of the conference, reporting on its results, a reporter for *Newsweek* answered Taylor's call with bitter sarcasm: "Most of the governments represented acted promptly by slamming their doors against Jewish refugees." Indeed, the U. S. ominously noted in its invitation that no country would be called upon to change its existing quota system to admit Jews.

The conference was held in July 1938. Its ostensible purpose was to facilitate the flow of Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied Austria, and to put pressure on the German government to permit the Jews to take with them a reasonable amount of property and wealth. No foreign country was interested in taking on impoverished Jews. However, the U. S. government called the Evian Conference with a different purpose in mind. A 1938 memorandum from the State Department referred to the increasing pressure on the U. S. government to assume the leadership of world efforts to deal with the refugee question. The pressure, the memorandum stated, emanated from journalist Dorothy Thompson and "certain Congressmen with metropolitan constituencies." As a result, U. S. Secretary of State Cornell Hull and Under Secretary Sumner Welles concluded that a strategy far preferable to trying to hold off this pressure would be "to get out in front and attempt to guide" the pressure, mainly in order to forestall moves for more liberal immigration legislation. In other words, the State Department felt that the best way to handle the refugee crisis would be to seize the initiative before pressure built and to spread the responsibility among the thirty-two nations instead of upon the U. S. With this rationale, the State Department recommended that President Roosevelt call the Evian Conference.

At the Evian Conference, U. S. representative Myron Taylor stated that the U. S. would make the German and Austrian quota fully available. Delegates from other countries despaired of admitting more refugees than currently allowed. The British delegate did not mention the prospect of British controlled Palestine

(present-day Israel), the most logical place for the Jewish refugees. Instead, he asserted that the British Commonwealth was largely unavailable because it was already overcrowded and, in any event, the climate was too severe. Britain itself, the delegate continued, was completely out of the question as a place for refugees because of the high rate of unemployment. The other countries uttered similar pleas for understanding of their difficulties. The chief concierge at the Hotel Evian reflected on the proceedings:

“Very important people were here and all the delegates had a nice time. They took pleasure cruises on the lake. They gambled at night at the casino. They took mineral baths and massages at the Establissement Thermal. Some of them took the excursion to Chamonix to go summer skiing. Some went riding; we have, you know, one of the finest stables in France. But, of course, it is difficult to sit indoors hearing speeches when all the pleasures that Evian offers are outside.”

CASE STUDY #1: ANSCHLUSS

Anschluss, which means “union” in the German language, refers to the Nazi seizure of Austria on March 12, 1938. The treatment by Nazi SA men and average citizens meted out to random Jews on the streets of Vienna was described by the journalist William Shirer as “an orgy of sadism.”

...

1. Mimi Brandt, a Jewish girl living in Vienna when the Nazis arrived, remembers seeing Hitler on the Ringstrasse on the day of his triumphant arrival.

2. Rosa Funk was a Jewish girl (and a communist) living in Vienna when the Nazis arrived. Both she and her mother were seized by the Nazis and forced to wash the streets.

3. Paul Grosz, the leader of the small Vienna Jewish community in 1988, witnessed the humiliation of the Jews in the streets of Vienna.

4. Henny Milstein, a Jewish girl in Vienna, remembers the Viennese enthusiasm that greeted the Nazis. In contrast, the topic of conversation among the Jews became twofold: emigration and suicide.

5. In response to the images of Jews being humiliated in Vienna and Jews trying to flee Austria, President Roosevelt called for an international conference on the refugee crisis to be held at Evian, a resort in the south of France. The response of the free world to the plight of the Jewish refugees on the eve of war served as an ominous prelude to the response of the free world to the plight of the Jews once the extermination policies were underway.

“AN ORGY OF SADISM”

This is a passage from William L. Shirer's book The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich.

Shirer was a CBS radio journalist in Vienna when the Nazis arrived.

...

For the first few weeks the behavior of the Viennese Nazis was worse than anything I had seen in Germany. There was an orgy of sadism. Day after day large numbers of Jewish men and women could be seen scrubbing Schuschnigg [Hitler's political opponent] signs off the sidewalk and cleaning gutters. While they worked on their hands and knees with jeering storm troopers standing over them, crowds gathered to taunt them. Hundreds of Jews, men and women, were picked off the streets and put to work cleaning public latrines and the toilets of the barracks where the SA and the SS were quartered. Tens of thousands more were jailed. Their worldly possessions were confiscated or stolen. I myself, from our apartment in the Plosselgasse, watched squads of S.S. men carting off silver, tapestries, paintings and other loot from the Rothschild palace next door. Baron Louis de Rothschild was later able to buy his way out of Vienna by turning over his steel mills to the Hermann Goering Works. Perhaps half of the city's 180,000 Jews managed, by the time the war started, to purchase their freedom to emigrate by handing over what they owned to the Nazis.

Shirer, William L., The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, A History of Nazi Germany. Simon and Schuster: New York, 1960.

MUNICH CONFERENCE

Throughout the summer of 1938 Hitler demanded that Germany be ceded the Sudetenland, the frontier territory of Czechoslovakia. The republic of Czechoslovakia was a creation of the Treaty of Versailles, and was by 1938 the sole remaining democracy in Central Europe. The Sudetenland was heavily populated by ethnic Germans who (orchestrated by local Nazis acting on orders from Berlin) clamored for a “return” to the Reich. Hitler deftly used this emotional issue to give his naked aggression a cover of self-determination. The Treaty of Versailles, Hitler piously observed, had emphasized the principle of “self-determination.” What Hitler wanted, truth be told, was not the Sudetenland but all of Czechoslovakia. Hitler had learned to despise the Czechs during his unhappy sojourn many years before as a failed artist in Vienna. The Sudetenland was merely the wedge in Hitler's shrewd scheme (its German inhabitants would pay for their love of the fuehrer after the war, in 1945-'46, when they were expelled by the Czech authorities to the neighboring Germany, a bitter “return” to the Reich). The western democracies, France and England, were allied to Czechoslovakia through a series of treaties, but the leaders of these countries, representing the will of their people, did not want to go to war against Nazi Germany, least of all over the issue of Czechoslovakia. On September 29-30, 1938, in the third of his trips to negotiate with Hitler, the British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, with the French premier Eduouard Daladier, flew to Munich, the birthplace of the Nazi Party. Here they met Hitler and Mussolini, the fascist leader of Italy, and here the two western leaders, without consulting their ally Czechoslovakia, which was mobilized for war, agreed to Hitler's demand for the Sudetenland. Chamberlain and Daladier used their alliance with Czechoslovakia to force that nation, the one democratic nation in Central Europe, to comply with Hitler's demands. The Sudetenland, not coincidentally, comprised the frontier of Czechoslovakia and an intricate system of fortifications had painstakingly been built there precisely in anticipation of war with Germany. These fortifications were lost as a result of the Munich Conference. Chamberlain flew back to London and with a copy of the Munich agreement in his hand. He addressed those gathered on the

tarmac with the immortal words, "I believe this is peace in our times." It must be emphasized that Chamberlain and Daladier were widely hailed by their respective countrymen (with the exception of Winston Churchill, who was then in the political wilderness and thought a quack by sensible people). No one, except small, brave Czechoslovakia, wanted to fight the Nazis. The term "Munich" has come to symbolize "appeasement," giving in to force in order to have peace. In fact, Hitler was furious with the Munich settlement. He was astonished that Britain and France would give in to his demands. He wanted them to refuse his demands so that he could attack Czechoslovakia and start the war in 1938 (and not in 1939) when German rearmament was far ahead of the west's puny efforts to date. As for Chamberlain and Daladier, Hitler later remarked, "I have seen our enemies at Munich. They are worms." A year later, when Britain and France threatened to go to war over Poland, Hitler refused to believe them.

German troops occupied the Sudetenland on October 5, 1938. The Jews and Czechs were brutally expelled from their homes and sent to the rump state of Czechoslovakia. Speaking to the British government, a lonely Churchill intoned: "You had a choice between shame and war. You have chosen shame and you will get war."

Despite Hitler's promises that the Sudetenland was his "last territorial demand" in Europe, the German leader ordered his troops to occupy the rump state of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939. In response, Chamberlain and Daladier, against their desires but in response to the national outrage in their respective countries, extended a unilateral guarantee to that country next on Hitler's list: Poland.

CASE STUDY #2: MUNICH CONFERENCE

On September 29-30, 1938, the prime minister of Great Britain, Neville Chamberlain, and the premier of France, Edouard Daladier, journeyed to Munich, Germany, to discuss with Hitler (and Mussolini) the fate of Czechoslovakia, an ally of France and (by extension) Britain. In hopes of appeasing Hitler, the western leaders acquiesced in his demand for the Czechoslovak territory known as the Sudetenland. Hitler disregarded the Munich settlement when he occupied the rump state of Czechoslovakia five months later, on March 15, 1939.

...

1. Jan Wiener, who is Jewish, was a school boy when the first Nazi SS troops marched down St. Wenceslas Square in Prague on March 15, 1939, in a snow storm. He immediately made plans to leave Czechoslovakia and to join his father in Yugoslavia, but this required a number of trips to obtain documents at various offices, including one office where Jan had to deal with a Czech bureaucrat who was working for the Nazis.

2. On May 27, 1942, the Nazi SS general Reinhard Heydrich was fatally wounded by a Czechoslovak commando team (parachuted from Britain) that had lain in wait for him at a turn in the road outside of Prague. In retaliation, the Nazis executed hundreds of Czech intellectuals and suspected resistance fighters, leveled the Czech town of Lidice, shooting its male inhabitants, deporting the women to a concentration camp, gassing most of the children, and sending a select few to German families for adoption.

3. Jan Wiener tells the story of a Czech resistance fighter, fleeing the Gestapo, who sought refuge with a man named Vaclav Horek, the janitor in the high school the resistance fighter and Wiener had attended before the war.

4. Radomir Luza, a Czech resistance fighter, describes his unveiling of a Czech traitor and, separately, the qualities of those who resisted the Nazis.

5. At the end of the war, Jan Wiener returned to Prague a decorated war veteran, having served with the Czech air force flying bombing raids on Germany from England. In Prague Wiener returned to office of the Czech bureaucrat he had met five years before when trying to leave the country.

KRISTALLNACHT

In March 1938, after the flight of Polish Jews from Vienna to Poland, the Polish government promulgated a decree to annul the Polish citizenship of Poles living abroad for more than five years unless those Poles received a special stamp in their passports by October 31, 1938. This was clearly an attempt by the thoroughly anti-Semitic Polish government to free itself of the Polish Jews living in Germany. The special stamp necessary for the passports, predictably, was denied the Polish Jews. As a result, over fifty thousand became state-less. Not to be outwitted, the Nazis made arrangements to expel the Polish Jews forthwith. In brutal fashion, the Jews were uprooted and dumped in a no-man's land on the German-Polish frontier. In Paris, a seventeen year old Jewish student named Hershl Grynszpan, outraged at the expulsion of his parents from Hanover, Germany, shot and fatally wounded the third secretary of the German Embassy, a man named Ernst vom Rath who was, ironically, anti-Nazi.

On November 8, 1938, at the annual celebration of the 1923 beer hall putsch, Hitler was overheard telling Goebbels that the "SA should have a fling."

Hitler left the beer hall before giving his expected speech. This was an obvious effort to disassociate himself and the government from what would later be described as a "spontaneous" outburst of German anger against the Jews. That night the order went out to Nazi party offices throughout Germany instructing the local SA in the details of what became known as Kristallnacht, or Night of the Broken Glass, or Crystals. The instructions were blunt: burn synagogues; smash windows of Jewish businesses; ransack Jewish homes and businesses, and arrest all Jewish males and take them to concentration camp. SA men dressed in civilian clothing led the assault. Crowds of Germans invariably gathered, including the curious, the delighted, and the appalled. Virtually all of the synagogues in the Greater German Reich (Germany, Austria, and the newly incorporated Sudeten territories) were torched (a few were spared because they were located next to Aryan buildings and the dutiful fire department, as instructed, was on hand to

prevent the damage to German property); Jewish homes had been raided; seven thousand Jewish businesses had been destroyed, the glass from their windows littering the sidewalks and giving the pogrom its name: Kristallnacht. Thirty thousand Jewish men were sent to concentration camps; many perished but those with a visa to another country found the rare exit from the camp. Over a hundred Jews were killed that night, and thousands were subjected to sadistic torture. Not surprisingly, Goering and Heydrich (a leading SS general and the “engineer of the final solution”) were angered by Goebbels' call for the pogrom. They saw it as an effort by he and the SA to get a piece of the immense wealth involved in the expropriation of the Jews. Goering and Heydrich wanted the anti-Jewish action to be done in an orderly way; mob violence was not the answer. For example, who was to pay for the six million dollars worth of plate glass that was shattered on Kristallnacht? German insurance companies? No, that would exhaust Germany's precious foreign currency reserves. The glass represented half the yearly output from Belgium, the country whence it came. Goering decided that a one billion reich mark fine should be levied on German Jews and that this fine would pay for the destruction wrought on November 9-10, 1938. This was an ominous precursor. There would be no budget for the destruction of Jews. In the end, the Jews had to pay the costs of their own destruction.

“Incidentally,” Goering said mockingly at a meeting after Kristallnacht, “I'd like to say again that I would not like to be a Jew in Germany.”

Kristallnacht was the last occasion when violence was meted out to Jews on the streets of Germany. When the destruction began, the German Jews would be escorted to the train stations and whence to their unknown future in Poland.

On November 15, 1938, the Ministry of Education issued an ordinance barring all Jewish children from attending school. In December, Jews were barred from all public places, theaters, movies, beaches, resorts, and Pullman sleeping car compartments.

WAGNER-ROGER'S BILL

In the Greater German Reich, an estimated 20,000 children had been left both homeless and fatherless by the Kristallnacht destruction and the

imprisonment of Jewish men. In the U. S., Senator Wagner and Representative Rogers proposed the Wagner-Rogers bill that would allow these children to immigrate into the U. S. outside of the existing quota. The bill would permit the admission of only these children. It would not permit the admission of other children at a later date. It was a one time only affair. According to a Gallup poll conducted at the time, two thirds of the American public opposed the bill. In the end, the bill did not even reach the floor of Congress for debate. It was squelched in committee. During the debate on the Wagner-Roger's bill, President Roosevelt remained silent. Once, when the president was on a cruise in the Caribbean, his wife Eleanor Roosevelt telegraphed him to ask if she might state publicly that both of them supported the bill. The president answered, "You may, but it's better that I don't for the time being." The "time being" did not change. The president never voiced an opinion, one way or the other, on the Wagner-Roger's bill. He signed an internal memorandum on the bill, "File. FDR."

In 1940, when Nazi Germany attacked western Europe and German bombs began to fall on England, great numbers of Americans offered refuge to British children who had been displaced by the bombings. This was in great contrast to the lack of refuge offered to Jewish children just two years before.

The type of British child most typically requested by American families was "a six year old girl, preferably with blond hair."

CASE STUDY #3: KRISTALLNACHT

On November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis staged a pogrom against the Jews in Germany, in newly annexed Austria, and in the Sudeten territories recently seized from Czechoslovakia. The Nazis called it Kristallnacht, or Night of the Broken Glass, or Crystals. Synagogues were torched, Jewish homes and businesses pillaged, the windows of Jewish shops shattered, and Jewish men sent to concentration camps.

...

1. Mimi Brandt was living with her mother in an apartment in Vienna. The father had already fled to Poland. An SA man, a neighbor, had eyed the family's apartment for some time. Mimi knew the SA man. She had grown up "playing with his daughter on the street." Then came Kristallnacht.

2. Henny Milstein tells of her father's narrow escape from the Nazis and the role played by an envelope from the American consulate.

3. Fifty years after Kristallnacht, Mimi Brandt returned to the apartment in Vienna from which she had been expelled on the night of November 9, 1938.

4. After Kristallnacht, the Wagner-Roger's Bill was proposed on Capitol Hill in

Washington. The bill called for admitting twenty thousand German-Jewish children into the country.

5. Irene Woods, a Jewish girl in Berlin, describes the difficulties of seeking emigration to America. "They really didn't want us," she said. "That message we got."

6. In 1987, Kurt Waldheim, a former officer in the German army, ran for president of Austria. At the same time, Waldheim was accused of being an accessory to war crimes during World War II, notably in the deportation of Jews from Greece to their death in Poland. After the war Waldheim served as head of the United Nations. In his presidential bid, Waldheim met strong resistance from what he described as Jewish groups "in New York," and answered them by turning anti-Semitism to his advantage in the traditional manner. Paul Grosz, president of the Viennese Jewish community, explains.

EUTHANASIA

In September 1939, coinciding with the outbreak of war, Hitler ordered the killing of mentally deficient and physically deformed children in Germany. As historian Nora Levin has noted, "With its morbid preoccupation with youth and health, National Socialism had made illness a crime." The euthanasia program was known as T-4, named after the Berlin address at Tiergartenstrasse 4 from which the program was administered. The first people destroyed by the Nazis were Germans who did not measure up to Nazi racial ideals. Five thousand children were gassed in euthanasia centers. The adult insane were similarly gassed. In the Nazi lexicon, these people were grouped in the category of "Life unworthy of living." The Euthanasia program led to that rare event in Nazi Germany: public protest. There was no disguising the killing operations; the smoke alone presaged similar plumes in the Polish skies; locals pointed at the buses arriving with the doomed patients; rumors flourished. Parents of the handicapped children were devoted to their children precisely because the children were handicapped. They did not accept the facile explanations about the sudden death of the patient. In addition, religious leaders protested the killings.

Pastor P. Braune, a leader of the Lutheran Church, wrote Hitler in July 1940, "Where is the limit? Who is abnormal, asocial, hopelessly sick? How will soldiers fare who acquire incurable ailments fighting for their country?" Braune was arrested.

The Nazis, however, halted the euthanasia program. Hitler was very sensitive to public opinion, particularly during war time; he did not want a revolt on the home front which, he believed, had caused Germany's defeat during World War I. The euthanasia program resumed operations when the war turned the public's attention to more pressing concerns. Significantly, the same individuals who operated the euthanasia centers in Germany later built and operated the Nazi death camps in Poland. They had already perfected the assembly line of death, and later they simply expanded it.

ROAD TO WAR

On March 15, 1939, the German army occupied the rump state of Czechoslovakia, shattering the agreements made at the Munich Conference where Hitler promised that the Czechoslovak territory known as the Sudetenland was his "last territorial claim" in Europe. In response, the governments of Britain and France, the self-congratulating signatories of the Munich accord, stunned by Hitler's violation of the agreement, extended a pledge of support to Poland should that nation be invaded by the Germans. Hitherto, the Polish government enjoyed relatively good relations with the Nazis, particularly on the Jewish question, but now saw itself confronted on three sides by the Wehrmacht. The Poles hastened to accept the offer of western protection, though relations between Poland and the western democracies had been less than cordial. The West viewed the Polish government as fascist and anti-Semitic. When the Wehrmacht attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, England and France, bound by their pact with Poland, reluctantly declared war on Germany two days later.

HITLER'S THREATS TO THE JEWS

On January 21, 1939, Hitler told the Czech foreign minister Chvalkovsky, "We are going to destroy the Jews. They are not going to get away with what they did on November 9, 1918. The day of reckoning has come." On January 30, 1939, in his annual message to the Reichstag, Hitler uttered an explicit threat to the Jews of Europe, blaming them for the war Hitler was preparing:

"If international finance Jewry within Europe and abroad should succeed once more in plunging the peoples into a world war, then the consequence will be not the bolshevization of the world and therewith a victory of Jewry, but, on the contrary, the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe."

WORLD WAR II

With a method of warfare known as Blitzkrieg, or Lightning War, the German army quickly destroyed the valiant but antiquated and hopelessly outgunned Polish army. On September 17, 1939, the Soviet Red Army crossed Poland's eastern frontier and occupied a huge swath of Poland's eastern territories.

The Soviet action was undertaken in accordance with the Nazi-Soviet Pact signed a week before the Nazi attack on Poland. Though mortal enemies, Hitler and Stalin put aside their differences on the matter of Poland: the pact, in a secret protocol, allowed for the division of Poland between the two totalitarian powers. Warsaw, the Polish capital, fell to the Germans on September 27, 1939, after a terrific pounding by artillery and the air force, which appeared to delight in singling out the Jewish Quarter of the city for punishment.

Following immediately behind the German troops were mobilized units of SS killers known as the Einsatzgruppen, or strike commandos. As the German army general Franz Halder noted in his diary, the mission of these killers was “cleaning out: Jewry, [Polish] intelligentsia, clergy, nobility.”

The first targets of the Nazis were the representatives of the Polish elite, the ones perceived as most likely to organize underground resistance to the Nazis. The best and the brightest of the Polish nation were murdered at killing sites such as Palmiry outside of Warsaw: doctors, lawyers, teachers, university professors, police, army officers, priests, etc. The Poles were viewed as “sub-humans” by the Germans. They would be treated as slaves of the “master race.” It would be enough, said Himmler, if the Poles knew enough to count to ten in German.

On September 21, 1939, as the Polish campaign came to an end, the Nazi leader Heydrich held a conference to map out Nazi policy in occupied Poland. He ordered that lists be prepared with the names of all top and middle level Polish leaders, including teachers, clergy, nobility, and army officers. As for the Jews in Poland, Heydrich's memorandum of September 21, 1939, provided a blue print for the “final solution.” Heydrich instructed that the Jews be concentrated in city ghettos “for a better possibility of control, and later possibility of deportation.” He made a distinction between the “ultimate goal,” which required a certain period of time to implement, and the short-term measures “leading to the fulfillment of the ultimate goal.” Heydrich called for the establishment of Judenrats, or Jewish councils, to facilitate the flow of orders from the Germans to the Jewish populace. The Jewish owners of small businesses were to disappear. Jewish property was to be handed over to Aryans.

INVASION OF RUSSIA

On June 22, 1941, Hitler unleashed the Wehrmacht on the Soviet Union, bringing to an end the twenty-one month old “friendship” with Stalin. The invasion of Russia signaled the beginning of the Nazi wholesale slaughter of Jews. Before, it had been piecemeal destruction. On March 30, 1941, in preparation of the Russian invasion, code named Barbarossa, Hitler harangued two hundred of his leading officers:

“The war against Russia will be such that it cannot be conducted in a knightly fashion. This struggle is one of ideologies and racial differences and will have to be conducted with unprecedented, merciless, and unrelenting harshness. All officers will have to rid themselves of obsolete ideologies...German soldiers guilty of breaking international law...will be excused.”

In the aftermath of this speech, there was apparently much discussion among the officers present concerning the traditional honor of the Germany army and the moral obligations involved in following Hitler's order. The leading German officers, however, were afraid to mention the complaints to Hitler, fearing his ire and its consequences for personal well-being.

On June 6, 1941, the German high command issued the Commissar Order, an order to govern the actions of German troops during the forthcoming Russian campaign. All commissars, that is, political officials attached to the Soviet Red Army, were to be executed upon capture. In addition, “all Jews” were to be shot, the formula equating Jews and Communists having long been prepared. The German soldier was given a free hand in the execution of enemy civilians and the right to apply collective retaliation. Total immunity would govern his behavior in the east.

EINSATZGRUPPEN

In the summer and autumn of 1941, the Wehrmacht steadily advanced on Moscow, encircling and destroying one Soviet army group after another, most notably around Kiev in September. Following closely behind the triumphant Wehrmacht were the Einsatzgruppen, or Strike Commandos. Their task was the execution of Jews in the cities, towns, and villages of the occupied territories. In two vast sweeps across Russia (in 1941 and '42), the Einsatzgruppen, by simply shooting Jews, were responsible for the murder of over a million.

The Einsatzgruppen numbered about three thousand men was divided into four different groups spread across the occupied Russian territories. The leaders of the Einsatgruppen commandos included a university professor, a Protestant pastor, a physician, a professional opera singer, and a large number of lawyers. Historian Raul Hilberg has said, "These men were in no sense hoodlums, delinquents, common criminals, or sex maniacs. Most were intellectuals." Although the killers were dedicated to National Socialist ideology, none asked for assignment to the Einsatzgruppen. In two sweeps across the occupied Russian territories, the Einsatzgruppen accounted for the murder of one million Jews, most shot on the edge of a pit outside their ancestral home, a pit the Jews were forced to dig.

In September 1941, a massacre occurred outside the Ukrainian city of Kiev: the Nazis murdered over thirty-three thousand Jews at a ravine called Babi Yar. The German army and the SS killers worked very closely together. "The armed forces surprisingly welcomed the hostility against the Jews," reported Einsatgruppen C on July 6, 1941. The commander of Einsatzgruppen A, Dr. Stahlecker, described his relations with the German army as "very close, yes, almost cordial." Soldiers, some dressed in bathing suits, gathered near the killing pits to watch the executions of Jewish families. Some photographed the grisly scenes; others described them in letters home; just about everyone talked about it. In August 1941, the German Sixth Army issued instructions that photographs taken by soldiers of the massacres be confiscated and that officers work closely with the killing units to keep spectators away.

In the autumn of 1941, Himmler witnessed the massacre of a hundred Jews in Russia. During each volley of shots Himmler looked at the ground. The local Nazi officer, von dem Bach-Zelewski, said to Himmler:

"Look at the eyes of the [German] men in this kommando. How deeply shaken they are. These men are finished ('fertig') for the rest of their lives.

What kind of followers are we training here? Either neurotics or savages!”

Himmler recognized that shooting Jews was not the answer, and asked one of his officers, Nebe, “to turn over in his mind” various other killing methods more humane (for the executioners) than shooting. The handicapped and insane in Germany had been killed by gas. The SS took one logical step and recognized that this technique could be applied to the Jews of Europe, beginning with the Polish Jews. On December 8, 1941, the Nazis first employed gas vans at the death camp Chelmno in western Poland.

On July 31, 1941, Goering, as head of the Four Year Plan, sent a letter to Heydrich: “I hereby charge you with making all necessary preparation with regard to organizational and financial matters for bringing about a complete solution of the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe.” This letter, drafted by Eichmann, was of fatal significance for European Jewry. The Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg has written, “The centuries old policy of expulsion was terminated and a new policy of annihilation was inaugurated.”

WANNSEE CONFERENCE

On January 20, 1942, the ministers of the various bureaucracies of the German government met at a villa in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee known for the nearby lake of the same name, hence the name given to the occasion: the Wannsee Conference. The officials had been invited by the SS general Heydrich, whose assistant Eichmann took notes during the meeting. Heydrich explained to the assembled that the fuhrer “had given sanction for the evacuation of the Jews to the east.” The purpose of the conference, he continued, was to organize the destruction of all the Jews in Europe, although he didn't put it that way.

The transcript of the Wannsee Conference is filled with references to 'wandering off,' 'evacuated,' 're-settled,' and 'disappeared.' The word murder is not mentioned. “These terms were not the product of naivete,” Raul Hilberg has written. “They were convenient tools of psychological repression.”

Heydrich provided a list that included all the Jews of Europe including the Jews of England. Annihilation on this scale, a task with no precedent, required the cooperation of every department of the German government. The Jews had to be identified, expropriated, concentrated, and “evacuated.” None of the ministers gathered at Wannsee balked at what Heydrich proposed. Indeed, there was no hint of dissent; the ministers offered suggestions as to how the “final solution” might be more efficiently realized. By and large, the ministers were not Nazi Party members but were long time bureaucrats who held their jobs long before the Nazis assumed power. The cooperation between the Nazi Party and the old Germany, the civil service in this instance, was an essential feature of the Holocaust. Heydrich and Eichmann had expected problems with the ministers and were greatly relieved at the cooperation they met. On that pleasant note, Heydrich and Eichmann toasted their successes with a glass of brandy before the fireplace.

THERESIENSTADT

The Nazis recognized that the “evacuation” of certain Jews, the prominent, the elderly, the decorated and disabled World War I veteran, would lead to protests in foreign nations, some of which were allied to the Nazis. Hence, Heydrich and Eichmann decided to create a “model” ghetto for prominent Jews at the Czech town of Terezin sixty kilometers north of Prague. The town, named Theresienstadt, had been a fortress built by the Austrian empress Maria Theresa in the 18th century to fend off Prussian aggression. In 1941, once the Czech population was expelled, the town, surrounded by walls and a moat, proved an ideal setting for a concentration camp that had a veneer of normalcy but for all intents and purposes was a mere transit camp to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Deportations (or “transports”) left Theresienstadt almost continuously, but between September and October 1944, 18,400 Jews, including the last of the Jewish children, were sent to their death at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Judenrat (or Jewish Council) in Theresienstadt, under orders from the Nazis, compiled the lists of the Jews to be placed on the transports. To save Jews, the Jewish leaders were forced to send others to their death. In 1944, partly to assuage the fears of Dutch authorities who were concerned about the four hundred (or so) Dutch Jews sent to Theresienstadt, the SS conducted a tour of the “model ghetto” for the benefit of the International Red Cross, which had developed a belated concern for the Jews. On the day of the visit, the representatives of the Red Cross were treated to the sight of a group of elderly Jews enjoying a cup of coffee at an open air cafe, listening to an orchestra. This was hardly a representative

image. The representatives, by design or stupidity, were fooled by the Nazis and left Theresienstadt after a short visit, marveling at how well the Jews were being treated. It was all a mere facade, a "Potemkin Village," a curtain before death. The Nazis even made a propaganda film about Theresienstadt: "The Fuehrer gives the Jews a City."

THE DESTRUCTION OF POLISH JEWRY

Poland was the setting of the Holocaust. When the Nazis talked of "evacuating" Jews "to the east," that meant killing Jews in Poland. In this country the Nazis built their six major death camps: Auschwitz-Birkenau; Chelmno; Belzec; Sobibor; Treblinka; and Majdanek. In addition, German concentration or labor camps, in which Jews were worked to death, dotted the countryside.

The first Jews annihilated by the Nazis were the Jews of eastern Poland. Before the Second World War, three and a half million Jewish people lived in Poland, or ten percent of the population of the country. The Nazis murdered three million Polish Jews. The first step in the process was humiliation in public. This was to break the will to resist and to demonstrate to all that the Jews were subhuman and not to be helped nor pitied. The most concentrated period of Nazi killing was between 1942 and '43. In fourteen months, the majority of Polish Jewry was annihilated. One quarter died in the ghettos from starvation, disease, or random Nazi violence. Six hundred thousand Jews died at Belzec. In August 1942 alone, 145,000 Jews from Galicia and the Lublin region, the heartland of world Jewry, were murdered at Belzec. In September, at least ninety-six thousand perished there, and in October fifty-eight thousand shared the same fate. Between July and September 1942, 350,000 Jews were deported from the Warsaw ghetto and exterminated at Treblinka, where a total of 850,000 died. Two hundred and fifty thousand Jews were murdered at Chelmno. One million died at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The technique in every village, town, and city was the same: the Jews were terrorized and humiliated in public; they were robbed of their valuables and then of everything save for what they could take with them in a bag; they were expelled from their homes and forced into overcrowded ghettos; they were starved and subjected to disease; some were shot and buried in pits

they had been forced to dig at the edge of town; the rest were forced on to trains that took them to a death camp; they were gassed almost immediately except for the few (usually) young Jewish men spared for the task of burning the bodies of (among others) their loved ones. In this fashion, eight hundred years of Polish Jewry came to an end.

CASE STUDY #4: OLESZYCE

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Oleszyce (Oh-la-shit-za) is a small town in Poland where Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians lived before the war. It was a quintessential multi-ethnic community, with profound differences but with a rhythm of cooperation. In September 1939, the first month of the Second World War, Poland was divided between the Nazis and the Soviets as a result of a secret agreement in the Nazi-Soviet Pact, also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact after the respective foreign ministers. The Nazis occupied Oleszyce for a few months before withdrawing in response to the renegotiated border. The Soviets then occupied the town for almost two years, until Hitler finally attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. When the Nazis returned to Oleszyce, the humiliation of the Jews was played out in public for everybody to see. This was done to satisfy the sadistic impulses of the perpetrators (and the observers), but it was also done with a purpose in mind. The victims were brutalized, but so were the spectators.

...

1. Eva and Henry Galler, who are Jewish, were “sweethearts” in Oleszyce before the war. “It was a typical Jewish religious city,” Henry remembered. “The life was quiet. Nobody knew any better,” Eva said. “So we were happy.”
2. Janek Skulomovski, who is Polish, was a eight years old when the Soviets deported he and his family to the depths of Siberia in April 1941.
3. Eva Galler was sixteen when the Nazis returned to Oleszyce in 1941 She

describes the public humiliation of the Jews at the market-place.

4. Franek Zaremba and his wife Franciska, who are Polish, still live in Oleszyce. Franek fought in the Polish army and then as a partisan, or guerrilla fighter, in the forest. He was captured and tortured seven times (by the Soviets, by the Nazis, and, at the moment of so-called liberation, by the Polish communists). Franek remembers Henry Galler and his family's fabric store. Franciska remembers the day the Jews were expelled to the nearby town of Lubachow, the transit ghetto to Belzec.

5. On January 6, 1943, the Jews of Oleszyce were loaded on trains in Lubachow for the short trip to Belzec. With a brother and a sister, Eva jumped from the train. They were killed "right away" by the guards on top of and between the train cars. Eva fell in a snow bank and was hidden. She emerged and sought refuge first with a Ukrainian woman and then with a Polish woman.

6. Annie Bleiberg, Eva's childhood friend, also jumped from the train taking the Jews to Belzec. She found shelter with a Polish woman, Helena Fitovska, in Oleszyce (with whom she reunited in 1995). The Polish underground helped Annie Bleiberg with false documents and transportation, but in Krakow she was denounced by a former classmate and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

7. The Polish family Valavander hid the Jewish man Puzik in their barn. Puzik was betrayed to the Nazis by an unknown neighbor. The Valavanders

suffered the Nazi penalty for harboring Jews: death.

8. Annie Bleiberg returned to Oleszyce with her father after the war. They were threatened and forced to flee. On the outskirts of town, they were robbed and narrowly escaped with their lives.

9. After the war Henry Galler returned to Oleszyce. He learned the fate of his family from Mrs. Byianska, “a personal friend of my momma's” who was also Henry's school teacher. Before leaving Oleszyce, Henry visited his house a final time, the house where he spent his “sweet childhood.”

10. Eva and Henry reunited at Annie Bleiberg’s wedding in April 1946. They were married in Stockholm on December 24, 1946. With their three girls, the family moved to New Orleans in 1962.

ORDINARY MEN

The SS and Gestapo were the implementers of Hitler's order to destroy the Jewish people. After the war these two Nazi organizations were blamed for their role in the Holocaust. The SS, for one, became “the alibi of the nation.”

In other words, the idea took root that the SS was guilty but nobody else. This was patently false. The murder of Europe's Jews required the services of ordinary Germans as well as the professional killers.

The historian Christopher Browning, in his book Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland, describes the attitudes of a German police battalion that was engaged in anti-Jewish "aktionen" in Poland. Police Battalion 101 comprised five hundred middle aged men of working class and lower-middle class backgrounds who had been pressed into service. They were not soldiers, but policemen; they were not killers; they became killers. These men had been ordered to Poland because no other German men could be spared. They were off fighting on Germany's many fronts: in France, in North Africa, in Italy, in Yugoslavia, in Russia, etc.

After the war, these "ordinary men" slipped back into ordinary lives, but in the 1960's the men were tried by a German court in Hamburg. Browning was able to study the interrogations of 210 men of the unit that consisted of slightly less than 500 when it was sent to Poland in 1942. The unit was responsible for the murder of 38,000 Jews. The first "Judenaktion" the unit launched was on July 13, 1942. At dawn the unit arrived in the Polish town of Jozefow (in eastern Poland) and, through the course of the day, shot 1,500 Jewish old men, women, and children (the young men were taken as slave labor). Before the executions began, the unit's commander, fifty-three year old career policeman Major Trapp, addressed the assembled men and made an extraordinary offer: if any of the older men among them did not feel up to the task, he could be excused from the actual killing. A dozen men out of the five hundred in the unit took this opportunity to step aside. Through the course of the relentless shooting of Jews (in a forest) a number of the unit's soldiers also stepped aside. However, Browning writes that no more than twenty percent of the men availed themselves of the opportunity to cease with the murderous work. Browning cites the "pressure of conformity" as an important factor. He describes this as "The basic identification of men in uniform with their comrades and the strong urge not to separate themselves from the group by stepping out." Twenty years later, one policeman told interrogators, "If the question is posed to me why I shot with the others in the first place, I must answer that no one wants to be thought a coward." Most of the policemen denied that they had any choice. One objected to shooting a German Jew, although he had no problem shooting Polish Jews. Though few of the policemen spoke of anti-Semitism, the years of Nazi propaganda had already reduced the Jews to "the other." As Browning writes, the Jews stood

outside their circle of human obligation and responsibility. The majority of the men who did drop out once the shooting began cited "sheer physical revulsion" as the prime motive, but did not express any ethical principles behind this revulsion.

"To break ranks and step out, to adopt overtly nonconformist behavior, was simply beyond most of the men. It was easier for them to shoot," Browning concluded.

Refusing to shoot constituted refusing one's share of an unpleasant collective obligation. Those who did not shoot risked isolation, rejection, and ostracism, a very uncomfortable prospect within the framework of a tight knit unit stationed abroad among a hostile population. The individual had virtually nowhere else to turn for support and social contact. The threat of isolation was intensified by the fact that stepping out could also have been seen as a form of moral reproach of one's comrades: the non-shooter was potentially indicating that he was "too good" to do such things. Instead, they didn't plead that they were "too good," but that they were "too weak" to kill. Toughness was a superior quality.

Browning writes,

"Insidiously, most of those who did not shoot only reaffirmed the 'macho' values of the majority, according to which it was a positive quality to be 'tough' enough to kill unarmed, non combatant men, women and children, and tried to not to rupture the bonds of comradeship that constituted their social world."

Browning, Christopher Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland, Harper Collins, New York, 1992.

COLLABORATION

The Nazis relied to a great extent on foreign collaborators. In many of the occupied countries, the Nazis established puppet regimes that ably assisted

them in the destruction of Jews. In Paris, when the Jews were rounded up in the summer of 1942, the French police did the job. In Slovakia and Croatia, the local rulers actually paid the Nazis to deport the local Jews. The violence meted out to the Jews in the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) resembled a 17th century pogrom. These countries had been occupied by the Soviets since April 1940. During that time a large number of people of those countries had been executed and a large number deported to Siberia. The disaster visited upon the Baltic countries during the Soviet occupation was blamed on the Jewish population (in general) because Jews were highly visible as members of the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, this combined with the long honored association of Jews with communism, etc.

In all of Nazi-occupied Europe, scoundrels betrayed the Jews to the authorities. The Nazis promised a reward to such people. In Amsterdam, the family and friends of Anne Frank were betrayed by a person whose identity has never been discovered. In Poland, a professional class of denouncers emerged, the so-called "szmalnowicki," the innumerable, dastardly figures who black-mailed, and then denounced to the Germans, Jews who were trying to escape from the ghetto or trying to "pass" as a Christian on the forbidden Aryan side of the wall.

In the "liquidation" actions of the eastern and central European ghettos, the Nazis relied heavily on Ukrainian and other foreign auxiliaries known as Trawniki, named so because they had been trained by the SS at Trawniki near the Madanek death camp in eastern Poland. The regular Polish police, known as the Blue Police, helped the Germans in the round up of Jews. Polish peasants also assisted in the "liquidation" actions by capturing the fleeing Jews in the fields and forests.

"Generally a strange brutalization has taken place regarding the Jews," a Polish underground officer wrote in November 1942. "People have fallen into a kind of psychosis: following the German example, they often do not see in the Jew a human being but instead consider him as a kind of obnoxious animal that must be annihilated with every possible means, like rabid dogs, rats, etc."

Certain Jews (relatively few) collaborated with the Nazis. The Nazis organized a Jewish police force for the ghettos and the police assisted in the "liquidation" actions, often serving as the ones who went into Jewish apartments and rounded up victims for deportation. Jewish spies for the

Gestapo were “a plague,” according to a Jewish resistance fighter in Krakow, Poland.

JUDENRAT

The Nazis also established a Judenrat, or Jewish Council, in every village, town, or city, to serve as a conduit of Nazi orders to the Jewish inhabitants. The Judenrat members were usually taken from the pre-war Jewish leadership. Some refused to work with the Nazis and were murdered. Others worked with the Nazis hoping to alleviate Jewish suffering. The Judenrat has been accused of collaboration in the Nazi annihilation process. The opposite argument is that the Judenrat, with exceptions, were composed of decent men who did the best they could for their people in an inhuman hour. The tragic rationale of the Judenrat was that in order to save some Jews, other Jews had to be given up. In this way, it was reasoned, the “biological substance” of the Jewish people would be preserved. It was impossible for even the most hard core realists to believe that the Nazis intended to destroy all the Jews. Jews worked in German factories, assisting the German war effort. The Nazis, Jews believed, had an economic interest in the Jews. Historically, the Jews had experienced waves of violence and always survived. Hitler was different, but few people had the foresight to recognize that.

CASE STUDY #5

SOBIENIE JEZOIRY: A Small Town in Poland

...

1. Sobienie Jezoiry, on the Vistula River thirty-five miles south of Warsaw, was a typical Polish-Jewish town before the war.

2. The outbreak of war, the first “aktion” in Sobienie directed against Polish intelligentsia, and the humiliation of the Jews.

3. Gestapo and police (including Polish born ethnic-Germans) confiscate Catholic parsonage, beside church, and establish their headquarters. Prisoners are shot in cellar. Jews ordered to uproot grave stones from Jewish cemetery and lay as pavement slabs across muddy courtyard in front of parsonage.

- Polish woman (in 1989) passing by courtyard and her comment about stones being “none of her business.”

The local priest, a newcomer to Sobienie, explains that the removal of the Jewish stones is expensive.

4. Establishment of a ghetto in Sobienie. Jews from neighboring small towns ordered to Sobienie ghetto. Creation of local guards comprised of Polish collaborators.

- The importance of local collaborators in the Nazi destruction of the Jewish people.

5. Liquidation of Sobienie ghetto: October 2, 1942 (Yom Kippur).

- Ghetto burned; deportation of 3,680 Jews to Treblinka; Jews flee to forest and river; collaborating Polish peasants run them down and deliver them to Germans.

6. The Polish peasant Josef and his experience with another peasant who was returning a captured Jew to Germans.

- Waclav, the collaborator (Vats-suave). What was he accused of? Three years of a five year sentence after the war: charged with Nazi-collaboration.

7. First visit to Waclav and then to river. Second visit on Sunday morning, his name day. Third visit.

- What does Waclav say? What happened? How does he justify himself?

AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU

In the beginning of the war, the Nazis established a prisoner of war camp at the former Polish cavalry barracks in the town of Oswiecim, known as

Auschwitz in the German language. In February 1941, prior to the Russian campaign, Himmler visited Auschwitz and saw the potential for expansion in a nearby field (a marsh, really) at the village of Birkenau. Jewish slaves were forced to build a new camp there. Architects from Germany designed and built four large (underground) gas chambers and (above ground) crematoriums. In the summer of 1941, two civilians from Hamburg arrived at Auschwitz to familiarize the SS staff, including the medical doctors (who ran the place) with the killing agent Zyklon B, an industrial poison used to kill rodents. Pellets of Zyklon B, dumped from a small hole in the ceiling of the gas chamber (transported in a truck marked with a red cross), would be used now to kill human beings, succeeding diesel exhaust as the prime killing agent. In September 1941, the first gassing of human beings was conducted in the notorious Block 11 at Auschwitz. The victims were two hundred and fifty patients from the camp hospital and six hundred Russian prisoners of war.

Jewish people from all of the countries in Europe were sent on trains to Auschwitz. Ninety percent were gassed immediately, having been told they were going to take a shower and to breathe deeply. Some of the young and healthy Jews were “selected” by an SS doctor to live, in other words, to live long enough to be worked to death. The average life expectancy of a prisoner at Auschwitz was three months. The vast camp was also the site of the extermination of tens of thousands of Polish prisoners.

On October 7, 1944, Jewish slaves (“sonderkommandos”), whose task was to burn bodies in the crematorium, blew up a crematorium and staged a short-lived revolt. It was, of course, brutally suppressed by the SS. Jewish revolts occurred at Treblinka and Sobibor. SS men were killed, and scores of Jews fled to the forests. Jewish slaves attempted a revolt at Belzec; the effort was discovered and the conspirators hanged.

German industry fully participated in the Holocaust. Auschwitz-Birkenau was not only a large factory of death, it was the site of major German industries, like Krupp and I. G. Farbens. Jewish slaves provided a vast reservoir of free labor.

Auschwitz-Birkenau had the capacity to exterminate 17, 280 persons a day. The SS doctor Mengele described the destruction process at the camp as “applied biology.”

CASE STUDY #6

JANUSZ KORCZAK: King of the Children

“I am a doctor by education, a pedagogue by chance, a writer by passion, and a psychologist by necessity.”

-- Korczak

...

1. Who was Jan-ush Kor-chak?

Medical doctor. Psychologist. Children’s Hospital in Warsaw. Writer of children’s books, including King Mat about a child king who lived in an ideal republic. Brilliant lecturer and teacher. Pedagogue. Director of orphan’s home.

2. What was Korczak’s background?

An assimilated Polish Jew in Warsaw: the pet canary buried in the courtyard and the observation by the janitor’s son.

Korczak’s philosophy? Educator: “sculptor of a child’s soul.”

· First day of Korczak’s first lecture on child’s heart at Children’s Hospital:

Korczak placed a young boy behind fluoroscope and turned off overhead light. Medical students could see the boy’s heart beating rapidly on the screen: “Don’t forget this sight. Before you raise a hand to a child, before you administer any kind of punishment, remember what his frightened heart looks like.”

“I won’t be a writer, but a doctor. Literature is just words, while medicine is deeds.”

· “We need to stop breeding children thoughtlessly. We need to think about children before they are born. We need to start creating them.”

“A hundred children, a hundred individuals who are people, not people to be, not people of tomorrow, but people now, right now, today.”

3. Orphan’s Home, 92 Krochmalna Street, in Warsaw.

“Their pale skin stretched like thin parchment over their crooked bones.”

- “If the process was not interrupted, evil would be passed on to the urchins.”

“Saved only if reached through education in their early years. Who will educate them? Not their parents. No one had educated them.”

Self-responsibility. Work. Routine. Respect. Punishment.

- “Children like a certain amount of coercion. It helps them to fight their own inner resistance. It spares them the intellectual effort of having to make a choice.”

“Lose your temper if you must, but only once a day.”

Court of peers, a cornerstone of Korczak’s system, stressed forgiveness. Korczak himself was called before court.

- The young boy named Stefa:

Korczak wrote: “There is nothing special about him, nothing to attract attention, an ordinary face, uncoordinated boy, average mind, little imagination, absolute lack of tenderness, nothing of what makes children adorable. But it is nature, its eternal laws, God, speaking through this unspectacular child just as through any scrub bush growing by the roadside. Thank you, for being just as your are: just ordinary.”

4. Who was Stefa Wilczynska?

Madame Stefa.

5. “Long live the Herring!”

The absence of pea soup, a delicacy, at dinner in the orphanage.

- “It is better to strive and suffer than to have everything and be bored. A

difficult life, even with its suffering, has the tang of herring.”

Later, at 10 P.M., Stefa said it was time to put the children to bed. Korczak ended his talk, and proclaimed, “Long live the herring!”

6. The outbreak of war (September 1, 1939) and the creation of the Warsaw ghetto (November 1940).

Korczak’s orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto.

- Last play performed by Korczak’s children: “The Post Office” by Indian poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore. July 18, 1942 (four days before start of “liquidation.”)

Amal, a dying children, is shut up in room with little hope. The village leader promises that “the greatest doctor in the world will arrive.” Finally the king’s own doctor appears and opens all the doors and windows, and Amal declares that all his pain has disappeared.

Historian Betty Jean Lifton has written: “Everyone felt momentarily lifted to some realm not only beyond the walls of the ghetto but beyond life itself.”

- Flight from Ghetto? Igor Newerly, after he offered Korczak a false identity card for escape to the Aryan side of Warsaw: “He looked at me as though I proposed betrayal or embezzlement. I wilted under his gaze. He turned away, saying, but without reproach in his voice, ‘You know, of course, why Zalewski was beaten?’”

Piotr Zalewski, a Polish janitor at the Orphanage, was caught by the Germans while trying to smuggle food to the children. He was severely beaten.

7. Liquidation of the Ghetto: July 22, 1942.

- August 5, 1942: “Alles juden raus!” 7:00 A.M. 192 kids, 10 adults.
- Vladka Meed of ZOB (Jewish Fighting Organization).
- Freida Radasky and her husband Solomon.

March to the trains, four abreast, surrounded by German and Ukrainian guards.

- Umschlagplatz:

Nathan Remba observed Korczak and the children at Umschlagplatz: “I shall never forget this scene as long as I live. This was no march to the train cars, but rather a mute protest against this murderous regime...a procession the like of which no human eye has ever witnessed.”

8. Extermination at Treblinka.

Today’s monument.

The King of Children: The Life and Death of Janusz Korczak, by Betty Jean Lifton, St. Martin’s Griffin, New York. 1997.

RIGHTEOUS GENTILES

The Nazis made it very clear to the non-Jewish population that helping the Jews was a very grave matter and that the punishment would be severe. In western Europe, where the Nazis viewed the civilian population more or less as Aryan, a Christian might be caught sheltering a Jew and still manage to survive a Nazi concentration camp. In eastern and central Europe, whose

population the Nazis viewed as barely human, it was a different matter. In Poland, the Nazis issued a decree in October 1941 making assistance to Jews an offense punishable by death. The decree applied to “abettors and assisters.”

The Nazis applied terror as a weapon to pacify the people of the conquered territories. They did not have German soldiers to spare for the extermination of Jews. The healthy German men were fighting on the different fronts in Russia, North Africa, Italy, Yugoslavia, and France. Terror, and collaborators, proved the key. It was much more liberally applied in eastern Europe, where the inhabitants were despised “subhumans,” as opposed to western Europe, where the population was viewed as racially akin.

Still, in every occupied territory of Europe, a relative handful of non-Jews risked their lives to rescue a relative handful of Jews from Nazi annihilation. The fact that these people were very few in number makes their activities all the more significant. The Righteous Gentiles had to overcome the fear of Nazi terror, and the fear of being denounced by neighbors who did not look kindly on the idea of helping Jews. Long before the Nazis arrived, the Jews had been defined as different and as living in a dark world beyond the boundaries of human obligation. That, too, was an obstacle.

Beginning in the 1950's, the State of Israel's Yad Vashem, Holocaust Memorial, has honored the non-Jews who rescued Jews from the Nazis. The largest number of Righteous Gentiles honored have been from Poland and Holland. The very term Righteous Gentile is controversial in some countries. Some in the wartime generation argue: do you mean if I didn't risk my life and the lives of my family members to rescue Jews, I am somehow not righteous?

ZEGOTA

In Poland, a small, unique group of Polish Catholics, led by the novelist Zofia Kossack, whose writing was not free of anti-Semitic references, formed a clandestine group called Zegota that devoted itself to the rescue of Jews. Older Jews in hiding were given money to live on, as well as medicines, and

an estimated four thousand Jewish children were spirited out of the ghettos, taught to be Catholic, and transported to Catholic orphanages, convents, or cloisters where they assumed new identities and where, under the kindly eye of a mother superior or a priest, they survived the Nazi annihilation in a relative oasis. Some Jewish people later complained bitterly that the children had been saved in order to convert them to Catholicism. After the war, some of the children were returned to their parents or to surviving relatives; some were not, their identities, long a secret, lost in the chaos of war, or the emotional bond between child and protector unbroken by conscience.

WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

Jewish resistance, in one form or another, occurred in the ghettos of virtually every village, town, and city. There were no arms available to Jews (or to civilians in general). Jews sometimes acquired guns from disgruntled Italian soldiers (reluctant allies of the Germans), from the black market, from the Polish communist underground, or, rarest of all, from the nationalist Polish underground movement known as the AK, or Home Army, which did not have a reputation of friendliness towards the Jews. Armed resistance was virtually impossible.

“We didn't even have a stick,” a Jewish survivor said.

But Jews resisted in other ways: by practicing Judaism, by stealing out of the ghetto to obtain food, by constructing hiding places in the ghettos, by jumping and running from the trains leading to death camps, by defying the wish to die at a time when it was easier to die than to live.

The most famous example of Jewish resistance was the ghetto uprising in Warsaw. On July 22, 1942, the Nazis, ably assisted by their collaborators, began deporting three hundred and fifty thousand Jews in the Warsaw ghetto to the death camp located at the village of Treblinka some seventy kilometers directly east of the city. This was the “liquidation” of the Warsaw ghetto that had long been awaited. In January 1943, the last of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, attacked the Nazis and their foreign collaborators, forcing them from the ghetto in a stunning retreat of the “super race.” The Nazis bid their time, and planned their next move with a little more caution. It came on Passover, the Jewish holiday which coincided with Easter that year.

On April 19, 1943, the Nazis entered to the ghetto with their collaborators,

including the despised Jewish ghetto police. Once again they were attacked by the Jewish fighters, mostly from the Jewish Fighting Organization, or ZOB, led by twenty-one year old Mordechai Anilewicz. On the first day of the ghetto revolt, a carousel, or merry-go-round, was operating near the ghetto wall in the so-called Aryan Side of Warsaw. Poles flocked to the carousel while a few feet away (literally) the ghetto burned. The Jewish fighters, numbering several hundred, had a few weapons of inferior quality obtained on the black market or from the small communist underground. Bullets did not fit the pistols, and pistols were virtually useless because they required the Jewish fighter be close to the enemy, which was not always possible. The Jews had a very effective bomb in the form of bottles filled with gasoline and thrown at the Nazis. This was dubbed the Jewish Cocktail. The Polish underground, for reasons both tactical and anti-Semitic, did not lend a hand to the Jewish fighters, although an AK detachment made a noble but futile effort to blow a hole in the ghetto wall on the first day of the fighting. Met by resistance (and casualties), the Nazis decided simply to burn the ghetto to the ground, and called on the Luftwaffe to rain incendiaries on the Jews. After several weeks of fighting, in the sewers, the attics, house to house, room to room, the Nazis managed to crush the uprising. The last of the Jewish fighters committed suicide in a bunker beneath the ruins at 18 Mila Street. These Jewish fighters did not want to be taken alive, and shot one another rather than submit to that fate. To symbolize the destruction of Polish Jewry, the Nazis blew up the largest synagogue in Warsaw.

THE BERMUDA CONFERENCE

On April 19, 1943, the same day as the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt, British and American diplomats (of a relatively low rank) met on the island of Bermuda ostensibly to discuss what might be done to relieve the plight of European Jews. It should be noted that tens of thousands of Jews were still alive in countries beyond the reach of the Germans: Bulgaria, Spain,

Hungary, and Rumania. The Bermuda Conference was held largely as a result of growing public pressure in England.

However, as historian David Wyman (Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945) has said, "Rescue was not the purpose of Bermuda. The purpose was to dampen growing pressures for rescue." In a phrase, Bermuda was "a facade for inaction."

The first task of the U.S. diplomats was to locate a prominent American who would be willing to represent the U.S. at the conference. Myron Taylor, the U. S. representative at the Evian Conference five years before, and the American with the most experience on the refugee issue, was rejected by President Roosevelt. Associate Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts rejected the offer, a rejection to which President Roosevelt lightheartedly replied, "I fully understand, but I am truly sorry that you cannot go to Bermuda, especially at the time of the Easter lilies! After my talk with you, the State Department, evidently decided (under British pressure) that the meeting should be held at once instead of waiting until June." The president of Yale University at first accepted the offer to represent the U.S. at Bermuda, but then rejected it under pressure from his board of directors. Finally, the president of Princeton University, Harold W. Dodds, accepted the appointment. Wyman caustically observed, "It was not a good spring for finding distinguished Americans who could devote time to the tragedy of the Jews of Europe."

Bermuda was selected as the site of the conference because travel to the island was strictly limited under war-time conditions. There would be a few (hand picked) reporters and no nettlesome Jewish representatives hovering over the shoulders of the diplomats, who stayed at the Horizons Oceanside resort "set among hibiscus and oleander and lilly fields in bloom for Easter." The State Department made it very clear to the diplomats at Bermuda that there would be no special emphasis placed upon the suffering of the Jews. This was "strictly prohibited." In addition, it was made clear that the Roosevelt administration did not have the power to relax or to rescind the immigration laws. It was left unmentioned, however, that the administration did have the power to permit the quota to be filled to its legal limit. During the Second World War, the U. S. quota was virtually untouched: 21,000 refugees, most of them Jews, were admitted into the country. This number constituted ten percent of the allowed quota. In other words, nearly 190,000 openings went unfilled while the slaughter of Jews continued unabated. The diplomats at

Bermuda did not reach any conclusions regarding the rescue of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. Perhaps because of the "poverty" of their results, the diplomats did not issue a final report.

"Not even the pessimists among us expected such sterility," said Sam Dickstein of the House of Representatives.

Several months after the Bermuda Conference, the Jewish newspaper *The Frontier* wrote, "The Warsaw ghetto is liquidated. The leaders of Polish Jewry are dead by their own hand, and the world which looks on passively is, in its way, dead too."

CASE STUDY #7: WARSAW GHETTO

The Nazis built a wall around the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw in November 1940. The ghetto was one of the preliminary stages on the road to destruction. The deportations to the death camp at nearby Treblinka began on July 22, 1942. Three hundred and fifty thousand Warsaw Jews were murdered at Treblinka. The Jews remaining in the Warsaw ghetto, led by the Jewish resistance

movement ZOB, chose to fight the Nazi killers. On April 19, 1943, the Nazis began the “final liquidation” of the ghetto. The Nazis and their host of collaborators (led by the Jewish police) marched into the ghetto but were sent fleeing twice. The Luftwaffe rained incendiaries on the ghetto, which was engulfed in flames. Gun shots echoed through the city. Jews leaped from burning buildings. A few feet away, literally, Polish families fresh from celebrating Easter at nearby churches flocked to a carousel that had been set up in Krasinski Park, outside the ghetto wall.

...

1. Zofia Korbonska was a member of the Polish underground resistance movement known as the Home Army or AK. By radio she informed British authorities in London that the Nazis were deporting the Jews of Warsaw to their death at Treblinka. The message urged British authorities to do something, suggesting the rail lines be bombed. London did not reply.

2. Vladka Meed, a Jewish resistance fighter “passing” as a Polish Christian, stood in nearby Krasinski Park among the festive crowd and watched as the ghetto burned and listened as the screams of the Jews mingled with the sound of the carousel.

3. Janusz Zawodny, a fighter in the Polish underground movement (Home Army), was in Krasinski Park and watched the ghetto burn. He wondered why there was no help given to the Jewish fighters. There was, in fact, an effort to blow up the wall, but it failed.

4. Adina Blady Szwajger, a Jewish woman “passing” as a Christian, worked in the Jewish resistance and was present at Krasinski Square as the ghetto burned.

5. Jan Blonski was a Polish fourteen year old at the time of the ghetto revolt. He saw the carousel at Krasinski Park and remembers the music. In 1987, he wrote an article about the carousel and called for Polish introspection on the subject of Polish indifference to the Nazi destruction of the Jews.

6. Marek Edelman was a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization known as ZOB. He fought the Nazis in the Warsaw Ghetto and was one of the few Jewish commanders to survive; he is the only ghetto fighter still living in Poland. On April 19, 1943, Edelman could hear the sound of the carousel at Krasinski Park.

7. On the same day as the start of the ghetto revolt in Warsaw, British and U. S. diplomats met on the island of Bermuda to discuss what might be done to help the European Jews.

Krall, Hanna, Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Marek Edelman, The Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Henry Holt Co., New York, 1986.

Meed, Vladka, On Both Sides of the Wall, Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto, Holocaust Library, New York, 1979.

Szwajger, Adina Blady, I Remember Nothing More, The Warsaw Children's Hospital and the Jewish Resistance, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1990.

CAMPO DEI FIORI

This is a poem by the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz. He was present at Krasinski Park while the ghetto burned. He published the poem in an underground newspaper on the first anniversary of the ghetto revolt, April 19, 1944. The title, "Campo dei Fiori," is a reference to the market place in Rome where, in 1600, the heretic Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake by order of the Inquisition.

In Rome on the Campo dei Fiori
baskets of olives and lemons,
cobblestones spattered with wine
and the wreckage of flowers.

Vendors cover the trestles
with rose-pink fish;
armfuls of dark grapes
heaped on peach-down.

On this same square
they burned Giordano Bruno.
Henchmen kindled the pyre
close-pressed by the mob.
Before the flames had died
the taverns were full again,
baskets of olives and lemons
again on the vendors' shoulders.

I thought of the Campo dei Fiori
in Warsaw by the sky-carousel
one clear spring evening
to the strains of a carnival tune.
The bright melody drowned
the salvos from the ghetto wall,
and couples were flying
high in the cloudless sky.

At times wind from the burning
would drift dark kites along and
words for mankind,
mankind who live on.

Already they were back at their
wine
or peddled their white starfish,
baskets of olives and lemons
they had shouldered to the fair,
and he already distanced
as if centuries had passed
while they paused just a moment
for his flying in the fire

riders on the carousel caught petals
in midair. That same hot wind blew
open the skirts of the girls and the
crowds were laughing on that
beautiful Warsaw Sunday.

Someone will read as moral that the
people of Rome or Warsaw haggle,
laugh, make love as they pass by
martyrs' pyres.

Someone else will read
of the passing of things human,
of the oblivion
born before the flames have died.

But that day I thought only
of the loneliness of the dying, of
how, when Giordano
climbed to his burning
he could not find
in any human tongue

Those dying here, the lonely
forgotten by the world,
our tongue becomes for them
the language of an ancient planet.
Until, when all is legend
and many years have passed,
on a new Campo dei Fiori
rage will kindle at a poet's word.

--CZESLAW MILOSZ

CASE STUDY #8: Sisters in the Warsaw Ghetto

Anne and Lila were born in Poland. The family's name was Skorecki. When World War II began in 1939, Anne was 4 years old and Lila was 2. With other young men, their father Marek fled to Russia and avoided Nazi annihilation. He later smuggled himself into the Warsaw ghetto where his wife Ruth lived with the two girls on the verge of starvation. Marek, who had "golden hands" and could do any type of work, became a manager in a German factory in the ghetto. In 1943, helped by Polish Christians, the family was smuggled out of the ghetto and survived the last two years of the war "passing" as Christians on the "Aryan side." The Skoreckis were among the very few Jewish families who emerged intact from five years of Nazi-occupation in Poland.

...

1. Life before the war in Lodz, Poland. Marek and Ruth Skorecki. Anne and

Lila, summer of 1939.

2. The war begins on September 1, 1939. Marek joins mass flight of men to the East, beyond Nazi reach (and into Soviet hands). Anne witnesses burning of synagogue. The Star of David is introduced. The expulsion from apartment.

3. Ruth and two girls flee to Warsaw ghetto. Henry Tempelhof and his wife Mary Mejnster. Henry is office manager of Czyste Hospital, Warsaw's Jewish hospital.

- Ruth's "welfare agency" in apartment building. Hunger and starvation: death in the ghetto. Lila's first memories are of Nazi occupation.

4. Marek's return to family: a knock on the door in Warsaw ghetto. Tiny pieces of bread. Marek becomes manager in Schultz's factory, and befriends Polish manager Stelmaszek and other Poles.

- Anne and Lila in hiding: beneath stacks of wooden shoes; in the vegetable bin with "potty." Children saved the parents, as the parents saved the children.

5. Escape from Warsaw ghetto in January 1943. Momentarily losing Lila: tram on the "Aryan side." Shelter with Christians, the Piotrowskas (daughter Natalia Piotrowska Gorecka).

- Ruth's forged "Aryan" papers.

6. Life on “Aryan side.” Anne’s reference to “Awful red stuff.” Lila as a Christian girl, with rosary and Easter basket. Fresh air on balcony at night: family betrayed by a neighbor.

7. Flight to lumber yard: Polish owner looks the other way.

- Ruth’s cards (sent to herself) at Christmas time. Ruth visits warehouse of stolen Jewish goods. “My mother was always thinking of tomorrow,” says Lila. Ruth talked to God “all the time,” says Anne.

8. The war ends in 1945. Returning to Lodz, Ruth tries to register family, a family of four; bewilderment, and resentment, by mothers who lost everyone.

- Lila reacts to Jewish people after war. Lila learns she’s Jewish.

9. Life in Germany after the war: two childhoods begin. Jewish children treasured by Jewish community in Tirschenreuth, small German town. *ESKA* bus, founded by Marek and partner Roman Kriegstein (*ESKA* is phonetic spelling of the initials of their surnames).

- Lila, Ruth, and Anne at Tirschenreuth, 1946, in bathing suits.
- Wreath laying at Flossenburg concentration camp, with Anne.
- Anne, Helen Rubinstein, Lila, and Danusia Rubinstein.

10. In November 1949, the Skorecki family leaves Germany and travels by boat to New Orleans, disembarking at Poland Avenue Wharf.

- An American family, circa 1954-55. Thanksgiving.
- Life in New Orleans as teenagers.

- Anne and Stan at Fortier High School prom, 1955.
- Views of Jim Crow segregation.

11. Confronting the past. Telling the children. Anne returns to Tirschenreuth. With daughter Robin in Israel. Chasing Duke.

To read interviews with Anne and Lila, see the Southern Institute's Web Site. WWW.TULANE.EDU/~SO-INST See also Larry Powell's remarkable book on the Skorecki family, Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, the Holocaust, and David Duke's Louisiana, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

DENMARK

Of all the countries in Europe, only Denmark rescued the majority of its Jewish citizens, numbering a little over seven thousand. The Jews of Denmark were highly assimilated into Danish culture. They were viewed by the Christian populace as Danish citizens. The non-Jews of Denmark, because of a racial affinity with the Germans, were treated leniently by Nazi authorities for the first year of the war. The fighting, and the annihilation of the Jews, swirled around Denmark during these early years but left the tiny nation unscathed. In October 1943, however, the Nazis prepared to seize the Jews of Denmark and transport them to their (unannounced) death in Poland. A Nazi official warned the Danes that an "aktion" was imminent, and the Danish response was immediate. A cross section of the non-Jewish population rallied to the Jews.

The Lutheran Bishop of Copenhagen urged Danes to help the Jews: "We shall fight for the cause so that our Jewish brothers and sisters may preserve the same freedom which we ourselves evaluate more highly than life...We must obey God before we obey man."

Fishing boats were rented to transport the Jews from Denmark across the Baltic Sea to neutral Sweden. Scores of non-Jews, including fishermen and police, risked their lives to save the Jews. In October 1943, 7,220 Jews fled

Denmark on the fishing boats. Only the handicapped and the poor were left behind, the former because they could not move, the latter because they could not pay for transport across the narrow straits to Sweden. Four hundred and sixty-four Jews were transported to Theresienstadt. Most of these survived Nazi incarnation, largely because Dutch authorities ceaselessly harangued Nazi authorities about their well-being. When the war was over, the Jews returned to Denmark and discovered their property untouched and guarded by their neighbors.

BULGARIA AND THE HOLOCAUST

THE JEWS OF HUNGARY

The five hundred thousand Jews of Hungary were the last Jews to be deported to their deaths at Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the spring of 1944, the Nazis began the well-practiced task of rounding up and centralizing the Jews in a ghetto and then loading them on cattle cars for “transport” to Poland. The Nazi annihilation of European Jewry had been going on for three years by this point, but the Jews of Hungary (including the young Elie Wiesel) did not have the slightest idea that murder awaited them in Poland. Jews who listened secretly to the Voice of America radio or to the BBC (British Broadcasting Company) did not hear any reference to the Holocaust. For the reception of Hungarian Jewry, the Nazis constructed a special railroad spur that led directly into the Birkenau camp and facilitated the destruction process admirably.

In the autumn of 1944, as the Soviet army was approaching the Hungarian capital Budapest, a “diplomat” from neutral Sweden named Raoul Wallenberg, recently arrived, began passing out forged Swedish identity cards to the beleaguered Jews, enabling them to pose as Swedish citizens and thus to avoid Nazi deportation. Wallenberg managed to find a loophole in the Nazi

destruction process: namely, the reluctance of even Eichmann to tamper with foreign policy by arresting citizens holding papers (even false papers) to a country with whom the Nazis enjoyed good relations, or at least neutrality. Wallenberg managed to save an estimated twenty thousand people. He disappeared into Soviet captivity at the end of the war, and has never emerged.

Leaders of the Jewish resistance in Europe and in Palestine petitioned the western powers to disrupt the flow of death trains by bombing the railroad lines leading from Hungary to Poland. The British and U. S. air force, stationed in Italy, followed precisely these same railroad lines while navigating their way to the very region where Auschwitz-Birkenau was located, a region heavily populated by German industries that were availing themselves of the Jewish slave labor nearby. When the possibility of rescuing war refugees (which meant Jews) was first raised, the War Department made the decision that the U. S. armed forces would not engage in rescue efforts at all. It refused to bomb the railroad lines or the Auschwitz-death camp itself, although U. S. bombers passed directly over the camp (and photographed it) while on bombing mission to hit the nearby German industries. In fact, the Americans accidentally dropped a few bombs on the camp, to the exultation of the Jews below who prayed that the camp would be bombed and the machinery of death crippled. The official view of the American government on rescue was blunt: winning the war was the best way to rescue the Jews. There were, however, two wars going on: a conventional war between armies; and a war the Nazis waged against the Jews. In the war against an undefended, unsuspecting civilian populace, the Nazis won.

During the period of time when the Jews of Hungary were being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the German army was fighting a desperate battle to hold back the Soviet Red Army on the eastern front. The German troops needed trains to bring arms and supplies to the front. Despite the urgency of the situation, Hitler ordered that trains carrying Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau have priority over trains carrying the needed war material to the eastern front. The war against the Jews came first.

Historian David Wyman has written, "To kill the Jews, the Nazis were

willing to weaken their capacity to fight the war. The U. S. and its allies, however, were willing to attempt nothing to save them.”

MAY 8, 1945

On April 30, 1945, ten days after his fifty-sixth birthday, as Soviet artillery shells landed in the garden above, Hitler (with his wife of several hours, Eva Braun) committed suicide in his underground bunker in Berlin. The German armed forces surrendered to the Soviets and to the western allies on May 8, 1945. The annihilation of the Jewish people of Europe finally ground to a halt. Himmler, in disguise, was captured by the British and promptly committed suicide when his identity was discovered. With the wealth of their victims as financial backing, the Nazi killers created a secret organization called Odessa which organized the escape of countless war criminals to friendly countries in the Middle East and South America. Eichmann, for one, fled to Argentina, where he worked as a mechanic under his own name until Israel agents kidnaped him in 1961. According to Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, an Austrian priest located in an office near the Vatican in Rome was a critical link in organizing the flight of the Nazi criminals to post-war safety.

On November 20, 1945, the first of the war-crimes trials began in Nuremberg, the German city where before the war the Nazis had staged their annual rallies. The leading Nazis were tried by judges from the Allied countries. This was somewhat awkward given the fact that the Soviets had begun the war on the side of the Nazis. Indeed, the Soviets had their own crimes to account for, including the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Poles to Siberia and the massacre of Polish officers at Katyn Forest and elsewhere. None of this was raised at Nuremberg. Twelve leading Nazis were sentenced to death; in addition, three received life prison sentences; four received reduced prison terms; and three were acquitted. Goering managed to commit suicide a few hours before he was to hang. In general, the majority of Nazi criminals returned to normal life without a hitch. It was not a difficult transition from murderer to ordinary citizen. Indeed, in many cases the murderer was an ordinary citizen who, he or she pleaded, was just taking orders. The elite were involved in the Nazi crimes up to their necks. In the Who's Who of the Austrian and German war time generations, a curious gap invariably exists between the years 1939-'45. In the post-war years, the Austrian judiciary has made a joke out of prosecuting Nazi criminals: the victims are ridiculed, the perpetrators accorded deferential treatment. In contrast, Nazi criminals have often been pursued rigorously in (then West) Germany.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Jewish survivors of the Holocaust tried to leave Europe. The U. S. quota system was still intact. Palestine (present-day Israel) was a British Protectorate, and the British blockade of Palestine was formidable. In the meantime, many of the survivors left eastern Europe (particularly after the July 1946 pogrom in Kielce, Poland, when local Poles slaughtered forty-two Jews) and settled in Displaced Persons camps in Germany under the protective eye of the Western Powers. After the Holocaust and the almost total abandonment of the Jewish people, Jewish leaders (although not all) believed that a Jewish state was the only guarantee the Jewish people could trust. The Jewish underground group Hassad secretly smuggled Jews out of Europe to Palestine. The Jewish refugees were often arrested by the British and the survivors of Hitler were placed in camps behind barbed wire. The Jewish underground in Palestine fought a terrorist war against the British authorities until the British government decided to withdraw from Palestine. On May 14, 1948, the United Nations voted for the establishment of the State of Israel. Simultaneously, six Arab armies attacked the infant state. The Israelis, the Arabs said, were stealing their land. The Arab armies were thrown back. This was the first of four wars between Israelis and Arabs, wars that serve to explain the acrimony typical of the Middle East today.

BYSTANDER PSYCHOLOGY

Studying Pivotal Role of Bystanders by Ervin Staub

"Evil that arises out of ordinary thinking and is committed by ordinary people is the norm, not the exception."

--Ervin Staub

Erwin Staub is a Holocaust survivor from Hungary who was saved through the courage of a Christian woman. He is today a prominent psychologist and scholar who is devoted to the study of bystander behavior during the Holocaust and in everyday life. This article appeared in the *New York Times*.

In one of Dr. Staub's studies, volunteers were taken into a room in pairs for what they believed was an experiment in assessing people's personalities from written accounts of them. Actually one of each pair was a confederate of Dr. Staub's. Midway through their task, the people heard a loud crash from the next room, followed by sobbing and groans.

When the confederate said, "That probably has nothing to do with us," only about 25 percent of the volunteers investigated the source of the groans in the next room (actually a tape recorder). But when the confederate said, "That sounds pretty bad - I'll go get the experimenter and maybe you should go check what's happening next door," every one of the volunteers went to see what was wrong.

"It showed me the power of bystanders to define the meaning of events in a way that leads people to take responsibility," said Dr. Staub.

That principle - in the form of the assumption that police brutality can best be prevented by the intervention of on looking fellow officers - is at the core of the training program Dr. Staub has designed for the police in California.

It proposes, for example, that chiefs and supervisors need to counter a drift toward overuse of violence by officers in their departments by holding them to strict accountability. The failure of supervisors to do or say anything about excessive violence is taken as a tacit acceptance. "That seems to have been the situation in the L.A. police force before the Rodney King incident," said Dr. Staub.

Stopping Police Brutality

“You should need to shift the mind set, so officers realize that if they remain passive as bystanders they are responsible for what their fellow officers do,” said Dr. Staub.

“You have to do it in a way that does not undermine their loyalty to each other, but changes what loyalty means - stopping excess violence rather than hiding it behind a code of silence.”

The program aims to make the police better able to readily recognize when a fellow officer is about to run the risk of using too much force, and encourage officers to step in to avert it by, for example, quickly explaining to the person being subdued what he needs to do to avoid being the target of even greater violence, or taking command of the situation from the other officer.

“Given the nature of police culture, this kind of intervention is easier before there is actual violence than once violence has started,” said Dr. Staub.

Beyond that, the training seeks to help officers understand the forces that make police brutality more likely, such as seeing certain ethnic or racial groups in terms of negative stereotypes. Those attitudes make it easier for the police to justify the use of excessive force with members of those groups, Dr. Staub said.

In recent years, Dr. Staub's research has shifted from the experimental laboratory to case studies of events like the Holocaust, the genocidal reign of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the wholesale slaughter of enemies of right-wing military governments in Argentina.

“I wanted to understand in totality the dynamics of genocide and other group violence,” said Dr. Staub. “I'm no longer interested in the kind of piecemeal principles that lab science studies yield.”

His analysis of how such atrocities come about, and what might be done to prevent them, is summed up in his 1989 book, “The Roots of Evil,” published by Cambridge University Press.

The Path to Atrocity

The path to grave horror begins with minor transgressions. “The Holocaust

began with much milder persecutions, like the laws forbidding Jews to hold positions in commerce or government,” said Dr. Staub.

These steps are crucial junctures. “If bystanders - people who are neither perpetrators nor victims - object firmly at this point, it can slow or even stop the whole process,” said Dr. Staub. “But if no one objects, it emboldens the transgressors.” For example, he says, in the early days of Serbian aggression against Bosnia, “if a U.N. fleet had appeared offshore and said 'Stop or we'll bomb your artillery' it would have sent a clear signal the world disapproved.”

But just as perpetrators become more violent unless stopped, those who help them, even in small ways, are often drawn to greater acts of altruism, Dr. Staub finds. He cites the case of Oscar Schindler, a German bon vivant who was given control of a Jewish-owned factory after the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939. Starting with small acts of kindness to protect the welfare of his Jewish workers, Mr. Schindler eventually took greater and greater risks to protect them, finally surreptitiously setting up another factory outside Poland, taking along his entire contingent of “skilled workers” and saving the lives of more than 1,300 Jews.

Standing by passively while witnessing an evil act has a subtle effect on bystanders themselves. “If you empathize with the victim, but do nothing, you feel guilty,” said Dr. Staub. “So there is a tendency to diminish the seriousness in your own mind, or to distance yourself from the victim. One way this happens is through the assumption that people who are suffering must somehow deserve it. Without quite realizing it, you can join the perpetrator in devaluing the victim.”

By the same token, the passivity of bystanders has a demoralizing effect on victims. “When the rest of the world did nothing to help the Jews in Germany, Jews felt abandoned,” said Dr. Staub. “When you feel helpless and alone, you are less likely to resist. But in Belgium, where the population resisted Germany in its persecution of the Jews, Jews themselves did much more on their own behalf.”

In short, “actions by bystander - even simply protesting what's being done - empower the victims, while passivity adds to their suffering,” said Dr. Staub.

While that may seem self-evident, Dr. Staub finds that all too often people whose voices could have helped protect victims remain passive. “People don't realize the power they have as bystanders to make a difference,” he said.

AMERICA AND THE HOLOCAUST

**WHAT WE DID.
WHAT WE DIDN'T DO.**

America and the Holocaust

“To kill the Jews, the Nazis were willing to weaken their capacity to fight the war. The U. S. and its allies, however, were willing to attempt almost nothing to save them.

-- Historian David Wyman

The story of the Righteous Gentiles is the story of the non-Jews who defied the Nazi terror (and their own culture) to rescue those who were the objects of Nazi destruction. It is, in turn, the story of the moral dilemma that beset at least some non-Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe: Do I help? Don't I? Others, of course, didn't give the question a thought. To rescue a Jew, the person defined as “the other” long before the Nazis arrived, was a ludicrous thought, hardly within the boundaries of obligation.

The student reading about the behavior of non-Jews in Europe during the Holocaust is inclined to make moral judgements. It is instructive, therefore, to look at the behavior of non-Jews closer to home. What, for example, was the attitude of the U. S. government to the persecution of Jews before the war? What was the attitude of the government to Jewish rescue during the war? How did the American people feel about the plight of the Jews in Europe?

In sum, what was the role of the United States during the Holocaust?

DEPRESSION

The 1929 economic depression is a decisive event in terms of understanding the attitude of the American people towards the persecution of Jews (and others) in Nazi Germany (and, later, in Nazi-occupied Europe).

Economic hardship (and the insecurity it inspired) had a profound impact upon Americans. It instilled a fear in the hearts of the average person, a fear that he or she would not be able to provide for loved ones. As a

result, Americans became an increasingly inward-looking people who were concerned first and foremost with their own economic well-being and very little with the plight of the Jews (or the Poles, etc.) in Europe.

ROOSEVELT AND THE JEWS

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated president in March 1933 (two months after Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany). The presence of several high ranking Jewish officials in FDR's administration was seized upon by his enemies who popularized the notion that the president's "New Deal" was in fact a "Jew Deal." From the beginning of his presidency, Roosevelt had to contend with the view that he was pro-Jewish. His support among American Jewry was solid, and he did not have to worry about losing it. Paradoxically, the devotion of Jews to FDR was their political undoing. The president became much more interested in winning the support of his enemies, often conservative congressmen from the South who were not the least bit interested in offering shelter to refugees (i.e. Jews) or to any foreigners.

In the summer of 1937, the rug was pulled from beneath the modest economic recovery the Roosevelt administration had engineered. Recession set in, and unemployment soared anew. Eight to ten million Americans were out of work (fifteen percent of the work force). American confidence was shattered. The issue of jobs was paramount. The average American was unemployed, knew someone who was unemployed, or both. Few American families were untouched by the economic collapse. During this time of economic hardship in the United States the Jews of Europe sought an avenue of escape from the Nazis. The visa [an official authorization appended to a passport, permitting entry into and travel within a particular country] became, literally, a ticket to survival. Dorothy Thompson, an American journalist who championed the cause of refugees, addressed the issue with plain words:

"It is a fantastic commentary on the inhumanity of our times that for

thousands and thousands of people a piece of paper with a stamp on it is the difference between life and death.”

In Washington, strident opponents of immigration argued for a reduction of the U. S. quota by 90%. The quota is the number of visas (for entrance to the U. S.) allocated to residents of a given foreign country. The opponents of immigration demanded a halt to permanent immigration for ten years, or until unemployment fell to three million.

The U. S. quota for Germany and Austria was 27,370. Between 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany, and 1938, when the Nazis seized neighboring (and fellow German speaking) Austria, a mere 10% of the U. S. quota was filled, despite the obvious danger to German and Austrian Jews. Until 1938, the debate in the U. S. was not about enlarging the quota. Far from it. The few proponents of the refugees realized this debate would jeopardize the existing quota. Instead, the debate was about whether the existing quota would be filled, or if it would be stretched beyond the existing 10%. In 1938, following Anschluss [the Nazi seizure of Austria], the friends of refugees won a victory. The State Department permitted the U. S. quota to be filled, although not enlarged. As it turned out, the quota was filled for only two years. The outbreak of war between the U. S. and Germany in December 1941 effectively closed the doors to U. S. immigration. State Department officials, never happy with the idea of Jewish immigration, argued that the threat of spies smuggling themselves into the country by the immigration process was too great. Better to close the door altogether.

ANSCHLUSS

On March 12, 1938, Hitler ordered the German armed forces to seize and occupy his native Austria, a task he had set out for himself in the first paragraph of his autobiography Mein Kampf [My Struggle]. The German troops were greeted by flowers strewn at their feet, giving the bloodless conquest the sobriquet of the “flower war.” The Jews of Vienna were treated to a different kind of war. The Jewish writer Stefan Zweig wrote,

“All the morbidly filthy hate fantasies orgiastically conceived in the course of many nights were released in broad daylight.”

Zweig later committed suicide in South America.

In Vienna, life changed overnight. Local Nazis [the SA men] seized Jews in the former imperial capital and forced them to scrub the streets and walls with toothbrushes. Crowds gathered, hissed, and spat abuse at the helpless and often elderly Jews. The American journalist William Shirer witnessed the abuse and humiliation meted out to the Jews of Vienna and described it as “an orgy of sadism.” Jewish stores were plundered by SA men who sometimes (cynically but with a pretense of legality) left a receipt. Hundreds of Jews committed suicide. The Nazis listed the deaths in the newspapers under the title of “Traffic accidents.” Jewish businesses were Aryanized, that is, Jewish owners were forced to sell their businesses to Germans (or Aryans) in a transaction that was decidedly one sided and invariably a big financial loss to the Jew. In Vienna, an estimated thirty-five hundred Nazis, completely untrained for the job, grabbed Jewish businesses and acted as commissars, or managers, of the establishments. The greed in Vienna ran out of control. The Nazis stepped on one another to get at the Jewish wealth. In an ominous development, the SS officer Adolf Eichmann (an Austrian) established the Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna, at the seized Rothchild palace, whereby Jews, alarmed by the terror, found their emigration out of the country much facilitated by Eichmann's diligent bureaucrats. This was one of Eichmann's contributions to Jewish annihilation: an assembly line process through which the forsaken Jew passed in a day's time, relinquishing one document (and piece of property) at every step of the way until he and his loved ones had the prized possession, a visa, the ticket of life. Eichmann also employed the services of the local Jewish leadership to facilitate the emigration, as he would later use their services to facilitate the destruction. Eichmann later became the SS officer in charge of organizing the “evacuation” of Jews

by trains to the death camps in Poland. It was an easy switch for him and his team of experts, virtually all of whom were Austrians. The demands of forced emigration were not so different from the demands of mass murder: terror; identification; expropriation; concentration; expulsion; extermination. Extermination, like emigration, was a logistical problem and nothing more.

THE EVIAN CONFERENCE

The events in Austria and the subsequent pressures for immigration led the Roosevelt administration to call for an international conference to deal with the refugee crisis.

The American invitation to the foreign governments was cautiously worded. "No country," the invitation read, "would be expected or asked to receive a greater number of immigrants than is permitted by its existing legislation."

On this basis thirty-two nations of the world gathered at the French resort town of Evian to discuss the plight of the European Jews. Poland and Rumania, interested in the prospect of getting rid of their Jews, sent observers to Evian.

The U. S. Government refused to send a high ranking delegation to Evian. Its representative was the president's friend Myron C. Taylor. At the opening of the conference, Taylor said, "The time had come when governments...must act and act promptly." At the end of the conference, reporting on its paltry results, a reporter for *Newsweek* magazine answered Taylor's call with bitter sarcasm: "Most of the governments represented acted promptly by slamming their doors against Jewish refugees."

The conference was held in July 1938. Its ostensible purpose was to facilitate the flow of Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied Austria, and to put pressure on the German government to permit the Jews to take with them a reasonable amount of property and wealth. No foreign country was interested in taking on impoverished

Jews. However, the U. S. government called the Evian Conference with a different purpose in mind. A 1938 memorandum from the State Department referred to the increasing pressure on the U. S. Government to assume the leadership of world efforts to deal with the refugee question. The pressure, the memorandum stated, emanated from journalist Dorothy Thompson and “certain Congressmen with metropolitan constituencies” [i. e. Jews]. As a result, U. S. Secretary of State Cornell Hull and Under-Secretary Sumner Welles concluded that a strategy far preferable to trying to hold off this pressure would be “to get out in front and attempt to guide” the pressure, mainly in order to forestall moves for more liberal immigration legislation. In other words, the State Department felt that the best way to handle the refugee crisis would be to seize the initiative before pressure became too strong and to spread the responsibility for doing something among the thirty-two nations instead of upon the U. S. With this rationale, the State Department recommended that President Roosevelt call the Evian Conference.

At the Evian Conference, U. S. representative Myron Taylor stated that the U. S. would make the German and Austrian quota fully available. Delegates from other countries despaired of admitting more refugees. With an eye towards placating the Arabs, the British delegate did not mention the prospect of British controlled Palestine (present-day Israel), the most logical place for the Jewish refugees. Instead, he asserted that the British Commonwealth was largely unavailable because it was already overcrowded and, in any event, the climate in the British colonies was too severe. Britain itself, the delegate continued, was completely out of the question as a place for refugees because of the high rate of unemployment. The other countries uttered similar pleas for understanding of their difficulties. The chief concierge at the Hotel Evian reflected on the proceedings:

“Very important people were here and all the delegates had a nice time. They took pleasure cruises on the lake. They gambled at night at the casino. They took mineral baths and massages at the

Establissement Thermal. Some of them took the excursion to Chamonix to go summer skiing. Some went riding; we have, you know, one of the finest stables in France. But, of course, it is difficult to sit indoors hearing speeches when all the pleasures that Evian offers are outside.”

KRISTALLNACHT

In March 1938, after the flight of Polish Jews from Vienna to Poland, the Polish government promulgated a decree to annul the Polish citizenship of Poles living abroad for more than five years unless those Poles received a special stamp in their passports by October 31, 1938. This was clearly an attempt by the thoroughly anti-Semitic Polish government to free itself of the Polish Jews living in Germany. The special stamp necessary for the passports, predictably enough, was denied the Polish Jews. As a result, over fifty thousand Jews became state-less. Not to be outmaneuvered, the Nazis made arrangements to expel the Polish Jews forthwith. In brutal fashion, the Jews were uprooted and dumped in a no-man's land on the German-Polish frontier. In Paris, a seventeen year old Jewish student named Hershl Grynszpan, outraged at the expulsion of his parents from Hanover, Germany, shot and fatally wounded the third secretary of the German Embassy, a man named Ernst vom Rath who, ironically, was said to have been an anti-Nazi.

On November 8, 1938, at the annual celebration of the 1923 beer hall putsch, Hitler was overheard telling Goebbels that the “SA should have a fling.”

Hitler left the beer hall before giving his traditional speech. This was an obvious effort to disassociate himself and the government from what would later be described as a “spontaneous” outburst of German anger against the Jews. That night the order went out to Nazi party offices throughout Germany instructing the local SA in the details of what became known as Kristallnacht, or Night of the Broken Glass. The instructions were blunt: burn synagogues; smash windows of Jewish businesses; ransack Jewish homes and businesses; arrest all Jewish males and take them to concentration camp. SA men dressed in civilian

clothing, but with the tell-tale black boots, led the assault. Crowds of Germans invariably gathered, including the curious, the delighted, and the appalled. Virtually all of the synagogues in the Greater German Reich (Germany, Austria, and the newly incorporated Sudeten territories) were torched (a few were spared because they were located next to Aryan buildings and the dutiful fire department, as instructed, was on hand to prevent the damage to German property); Jewish homes were raided; seven thousand Jewish businesses were destroyed, the glass from their windows littering the sidewalks and giving the pogrom its name. Thirty thousand Jewish men were sent to concentration camps; many perished but those with a visa to another country found the rare exit from the camps. Over a hundred Jews were killed that night, and thousands were subjected to sadistic torture. Not surprisingly, Goering and Heydrich (a leading SS general and the future “engineer of the final solution”) were angered by Goebbels' call for the pogrom. They saw it as an effort by him and the SA to get a piece of the immense wealth involved in the expropriation of Jewish property. Goering and Heydrich wanted the anti-Jewish action to be done in an orderly way; mob violence was not the answer. It was too costly: who was to pay for the six million dollars worth of plate glass that was shattered on Kristallnacht? German insurance companies? No, that would exhaust Germany's precious foreign currency reserves. The glass represented half the yearly output from Belgium, the country whence it came. Goering decided that a one billion Reich mark fine would be levied on German Jews. This fine would pay for the destruction wrought on November 9-10, 1938. This was an ominous precursor. There would be no budget for the destruction of Jews. In the end, the Jewish wealth would pay the costs of Jewish destruction.

“Incidentally,” Goering said at a meeting to decide who would pay for the destruction that resulted from Kristallnacht, “I'd like to say again that I would not like to be a Jew in Germany.”

Kristallnacht was the last occasion when violence was meted out to Jews

on the streets of Germany. When the physical destruction of Jewry began, the German Jews would be escorted to the train stations and whence to their unknown future “in the east” [i. e. Poland].

WAGNER-ROGER'S BILL

In the Greater German Reich, an estimated 20,000 Jewish children had been left both homeless and fatherless by the Kristallnacht destruction and the imprisonment of Jewish men. In the U. S., Senator Robert F. Wagner and Representative Will Rogers Jr. proposed the Wagner-Rogers bill that would allow these children to immigrate into the U. S. outside of the existing quota. The bill would permit the admission of only these children. It would not permit the admission of other children at a later date. It was a one time only affair. According to a Gallup poll conducted at the time, two thirds of the American public opposed the bill. In the end, the bill did not even reach the floor of Congress for debate. It was squelched in committee hearings. During the debate on the Wagner-Roger's bill, President Roosevelt remained silent. When the president was on a cruise in the Caribbean, his wife Eleanor telegraphed him to ask if she might state publicly that both of them supported the bill. The president answered, “You may, but it's better that I don't for the time being.” The “time being” did not change. The president never voiced an opinion, one way or the other, on the Wagner-Roger's bill. He signed an internal memorandum on the bill, “File. FDR.”

In 1940, when Nazi Germany attacked western Europe and German bombs began to fall on England, great numbers of Americans offered refuge to British children who had been displaced by the bombings. This was in great contrast to the lack of shelter offered to Jewish children just two years before.

The type of British child most typically requested by American families was “a six year old girl, preferably with blond hair.”

THE ST. LOUIS

In May 1939, one month before the outbreak of World War II, the ocean liner St. Louis sailed from Hamburg, Germany, bound for the U. S. with several hundred Jewish refugees, none of whom had visas. The refugees figured they had nothing to lose and willingly took the chance. The St. Louis sailed up and down the Atlantic coast of the U. S. but was not permitted to dock at any port. It then sailed to Havana, Cuba, but the refugees were refused entry. In the end, the St. Louis sailed back to Europe. Its passengers disembarked at Amsterdam, Holland. Less than a year later, the German armies swept across Western Europe and many of the former passengers on the St. Louis were swept up in the Holocaust. For his efforts to save the Jews on his ship, the German captain of the St. Louis was later honored as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial organization in Israel.

Only one place in the world did not require a visa for Jewish refugees to disembark: Shanghai. It became a refuge for thousands of Jews who otherwise would have perished.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IN 1938

In 1938, four different polls indicated that between 71% and 85% of the American public opposed raising the quota to admit refugees. An estimated 67% of the American public wanted to keep all refugees out of the country.

WORLD WAR II

With a method of warfare known as Blitzkrieg, or Lightning War, the German Army quickly destroyed the valiant but antiquated and hopelessly outgunned Polish Army. On September 17, 1939, the Soviet Red Army crossed Poland's eastern frontier and occupied Poland's eastern territories. The Soviet action was undertaken in accordance with

the Nazi-Soviet Pact signed a week before the Nazi attack on Poland. Though mortal enemies, Hitler and Stalin put aside their differences on the matter of Poland: the pact, in a secret protocol, allowed for the division of Poland between the two totalitarian powers. Warsaw, the Polish capital, fell to the Germans on September 27, 1939, after a terrific pounding by artillery and by the vengeful German air force, which appeared to delight in singling out the Jewish Quarter of the city for punishment.

Following immediately behind the German troops were mobilized units of SS killers known as the Einsatzgruppen, or strike commandos. As the German army general Franz Halder noted in his diary, the mission of these killers was “cleaning out: Jewry, [Polish] intelligentsia, clergy, nobility.”

The first targets of the Nazis were the representatives of the Polish elite, the ones perceived as most likely to organize underground resistance to the Nazis. The best and the brightest of the Polish nation were murdered at killing sites such as Palmiry outside of Warsaw: doctors, lawyers, teachers, university professors, police, army officers, priests, etc. The Poles were viewed as “sub-humans” by the Germans. They would be treated as slaves of the “master race.” It would be enough, said Himmler, if the Poles knew enough to count to ten in German.

On September 21, 1939, as the Polish campaign came to an end, the Nazi leader Heydrich held a conference to map out Nazi policy in occupied Poland. He ordered that lists be prepared with the names of all top and middle level Polish leaders, including teachers, clergy, nobility, and army officers. As for the Jews in Poland, Heydrich's memorandum of September 21, 1939, provided a blue print for the “final solution.” Heydrich instructed that the Jews be concentrated in city ghettos “for a better possibility of control, and later possibility of deportation.” He made a distinction between the “ultimate goal,” which required a certain period of time to implement, and the short-term measures “leading to the fulfillment of the ultimate goal.” Heydrich called for the establishment of Judenrats, or Jewish councils, to facilitate the flow of orders from the Germans to the Jewish populace. The Jewish owners of small

businesses were to disappear. Jewish property was to be handed over to Aryans.

THE HOLOCAUST

In late 1941, the murder of European Jews entered a new phase, a phase in which the death camps were utilized. Hitherto, the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe had been subjected to disease, starvation, and violence in the Nazi ghettos. In fact, an estimated 20% of Polish Jewry died in the ghettos. With the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, mobile squads of Nazi murderers known as Einsatzgruppen (cooperating with the German Army) swept the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) as well as Ukraine and Byelorussia. The Einsatzgruppen commanders included a former opera singer, a university professor, a Protestant pastor, and a large number of lawyers. In excess of one million Jews were murdered by the Einsatzgruppen. Typically, the Jews (men, women, and children) were shot in the back of the head and dumped in ditches the Jews themselves had been forced to dig. There was, however, a problem with German soldiers killing unarmed Jews (who were labeled communists, partisans, or simply “enemies of the Reich”). The shootings had a devastating psychological toll. The Jews were dead, but the men who killed them were also, in a sense, dead. As well, the expenditure of millions of bullets did not sit well with the economy-minded Germans. There had to be a change in tactics if Hitler's instructions for “a final solution of the Jewish question” was to be realized. The decision was taken to establish death camps in which Jews were destroyed by, first, carbon monoxide, and, subsequently, by Zyklon B, a poisonous gas whose original purpose was the extermination of rodents.

On December 8, 1941, the Nazis opened the first death camp at the village of Chelmno, in western Poland. Here the Jews were murdered in gas vans (the size of large moving vans) by carbon monoxide. The bodies were burned in pits dug by Jews at a nearby forest. In the spring

of 1942, the Nazis established death camps in Eastern Poland outside the villages of Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. In June 1942, the Nazis expanded Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest and most infamous death camp. It was located approximately thirty-five miles west of the Polish city of Krakow.

AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU

In the beginning of the war, the Nazis established a prisoner of war camp at the former Polish cavalry barracks in the town of Oswiecim, known as Auschwitz in the German language. In February 1941, prior to the Russian campaign, Himmler visited Auschwitz and saw the potential for expansion in a nearby field (a marsh, really) at the village of Birkenau. Jewish slaves were forced to build a new camp there. Architects from Germany designed and built four large (underground) gas chambers and (above ground) crematoriums. In the summer of 1941, two civilians from Hamburg arrived at Auschwitz to familiarize the SS staff, including the medical doctors (who basically ran the place) with the killing agent Zyklon B, an industrial poison used to kill rodents. Pellets of Zyklon B, dumped through a small hole in the ceiling of the gas chamber (transported in a truck marked with a red cross), would be used now to kill human beings, succeeding diesel exhaust as the prime killing agent. In September 1941, the first gassing of human beings was conducted in the notorious Block 11 at Auschwitz. The victims were two hundred and fifty patients from the camp hospital and six hundred Russian prisoners of war.

Jewish people from all of the countries in Europe were sent on trains to Auschwitz. Ninety percent were gassed immediately, having been told they were going to take a shower and to breath deeply. Some of the young and healthy Jews were “selected” by an SS doctor to live, in other words, to live long enough to be worked to death. The average life expectancy of a slave at Auschwitz was three months. The vast camp was also the site of the extermination of tens of thousands of Polish prisoners.

On October 7, 1944, Jewish slaves (“sonderkommandos”), whose task

was to burn bodies in the crematorium, blew up a crematorium and staged a short-lived revolt. It was brutally suppressed by the SS. Jewish revolts also occurred at Treblinka and Sobibor. In those instances, SS men were killed, and scores of Jews fled to the forests. Jewish slaves attempted a (little known) revolt at Belzec; the effort was discovered and the conspirators hanged.

German industry fully participated in the Holocaust. Auschwitz-Birkenau was not only a large factory of death, it was the site of major German industries, like Krupp and I. G. Farben. Jewish slaves provided a vast reservoir of free labor.

Auschwitz-Birkenau had the capacity to exterminate 17, 280 persons a day. The SS doctor Mengele described the destruction process at the camp as “applied biology.”

REIGNER'S TELEGRAM

In July 1942, a German industrialist living near Auschwitz-Birkenau learned of the camp's existence through friends and contacts in the Nazi high command. The industrialist, Dr. Eduard Schulte, also learned of Hitler's determination to destroy all of the Jews in Europe. In an effort to alert the leaders of the Western democracies about the genocide, Schulte traveled to neutral Switzerland (ostensibly on war-related business). In Geneva, he relayed information (through an intermediary) about the destruction of Jews to Gerhardt Reigner, an official of the World Jewish Congress. Reigner transmitted Schulte's information (by way of the American consulate in Geneva) to the British Foreign Ministry and to the U. S. State Department. Reigner specifically requested the State Department to forward the information to Rabbi Stephen Wise, president of the World Jewish Congress. In August 1942, Reigner's telegram describing Schulte's information reached both London and Washington. Before this information reached the West, it was generally believed that terrible atrocities had been perpetrated against the Jews

(and others) in Nazi-occupied Europe. However, no one seemed to understand that the atrocities were a mere prelude to the total destruction of the Jews. Hence the importance of Schulte's message: he provided the Western leaders with the information that there was a Nazi plan at the highest levels to eliminate all Jews and that all the ghettos and deportations and other individual measures were only steps along the way to total extermination.

When Reigner's telegram reached the State Department in Washington, officials described its contents as “fantastic allegations” and refused to pass on the information to Rabbi Wise. In an interview, Richard Breitman, author of Breaking the Silence, has said that the State Department officials felt that forwarding the information to Rabbi Wise would cause Jewish officials “to react in ways which the State Department did not think helpful. That is to say, to put pressure on the government to do things they believed not in the government's interest to do. In other words, to try to save Jewish lives.”

Later, a State Department official wrote an internal memorandum explaining U. S. policy regarding refugees: “There was always the danger that the German Government might agree to turn over to the United States and to Great Britain a large number of Jewish refugees.”

For three months, the State Department refused to publish the information contained in the Reigner telegram. Indeed, the State Department instructed the American consulate in Switzerland to stop transmitting information about the destruction of the Jews because “it would expose us to increased pressure to do something more specific to aid these people.”

By the late autumn of 1942, sources in Europe had confirmed the contents of Reigner's telegram. One source was the Polish underground courier Jan Karski. He entered both the Warsaw Ghetto and the Belzec death camp to witness the Nazi destruction policies so that he could authoritatively report that Jewish annihilation was not a rumor and that he himself saw it. Karski then smuggled himself out of Nazi-occupied Poland to Britain from which he traveled to America. He informed the

Western governments of what was happening to the Jews in Poland.

It was impossible to keep a lid on the story. On November 24, 1942, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles informed Rabbi Wise, "I regret to tell you, Dr. Wise, that these (documents) confirm and justify your deepest fears" about the annihilation of European Jewry. The same evening, Rabbi Wise gave a press conference in which he detailed the destruction of the Jews in Europe based upon information the State Department had confirmed. Wise estimated that two million Jews had already been murdered. Sadly, that estimate was less than the actual number of murdered Jews. The following day, November 25, 1942, the *New York Times* published an account of Wise's press conference. Rabbi Wise was quoted as saying: "The State Department finally made available today the documents which have confirmed the stories and rumors of Jewish extermination in all Hitler-ruled Europe." The article, describing the U. S. government's first acknowledgment of the Holocaust, appeared on page 10 of the *New York Times*. Only five of the nineteen most widely circulated newspapers in the U. S. put the story of Jewish destruction on the front page. None of the articles in any of the nineteen papers were prominently placed. Two of the nineteen papers did not include information about Rabbi Wise's press conference.

During the three months between the arrival of the Reigner telegram in Washington and the confirmation of the Holocaust by the State Department, an additional one million Jews had been murdered.

BERMUDA CONFERENCE

On April 19, 1943, the same day as the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt, British and American diplomats (of a relatively low rank) met on the island of Bermuda ostensibly to discuss what might be done to relieve the plight of European Jews. It should be noted that tens of thousands of Jews were still alive in countries beyond the reach of the Germans: Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary, and Rumania. The Bermuda

Conference was held largely as a result of growing public pressure in England.

However, as historian David Wyman (Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945) has said, "Rescue was not the purpose of Bermuda. The purpose was to dampen growing pressures for rescue." In a word, Bermuda was "a facade for inaction."

The first task of the U. S. diplomats was to locate a prominent American who would be willing to represent the U. S. at the conference. Myron Taylor, the U. S. representative at the Evian Conference five years before and the American with the most experience on the refugee issue, was rejected by President Roosevelt. Associate Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts refused the offer. President Roosevelt lightheartedly replied, "I fully understand, but I am truly sorry that you cannot go to Bermuda, especially at the time of the Easter lilies! After my talk with you, the State Department, evidently decided (under British pressure) that the meeting should be held at once instead of waiting until June." The president of Yale University at first accepted the offer to represent the U. S. at Bermuda, but then rejected it under pressure from his board of directors. Finally, the president of Princeton University, Harold W. Dodds, accepted the appointment. Wyman has caustically observed, "It was not a good spring for finding distinguished Americans who could devote time to the tragedy of the Jews of Europe."

Bermuda was selected as the site of the conference because travel to the island was strictly limited under war-time conditions. There would be a few (hand picked) reporters and no nettlesome Jewish representatives hovering over the shoulders of the diplomats, who stayed at the Horizons Oceanside resort "set among hibiscus and oleander and lily fields in bloom for Easter." The State Department made it very clear to the diplomats at Bermuda that there would be no special emphasis placed upon the suffering of the Jews. This was "strictly prohibited." In addition, it was made clear that the Roosevelt Administration did not have the power to relax or to rescind the immigration laws. It was not mentioned, however, that the administration did have the power to permit the quota to be filled to its legal limit. During the Second World War, the U. S. quota

was virtually untouched: 21,000 refugees, most of them Jews, were admitted into the country. This number constituted ten percent of the quota. In other words, nearly 190,000 openings went unfilled while the slaughter of Jews continued unabated. The diplomats at Bermuda did not reach any conclusions regarding the rescue of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. Perhaps because of the “poverty” of their results, the diplomats did not issue a final report. “Not even the pessimists among us expected such sterility,” said Sam Dickstein of the House of Representatives.

Several months after the Bermuda Conference, the Jewish newspaper *The Frontier* wrote, “The Warsaw ghetto is liquidated. The leaders of Polish Jewry are dead by their own hand, and the world which looks on passively is, in its way, dead too.”

A WHITE HOUSE MEETING

In March 1943, one month before the Bermuda Conference, Secretary of State Cornell Hull, President Franklin Roosevelt, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, and British Ambassador to the U. S. Lord Halifax, met at the White House. At one point in the wide ranging discussions, Secretary of State Hull raised the subject of the 70,000 Bulgarian Jews and the possibility of their rescue from the Nazis.

According to the transcript of the meeting, Eden replied, “The whole problem of the Jews in Europe is very difficult. We should move very cautiously about offering to take all the Jews out of a country like Bulgaria. If we do that then the Jews of the world will be wanting us to make similar offers in Poland and in Germany.”

In an interview, historian David Wyman offered this comment: “Eden was afraid that large numbers of Jews would be saved. This was his fear and everybody in that room knew then what was the fate of the European Jews. They had known for four months. In that room were the foremost leaders of the two great western democracies with the one exception of Winston

Churchill. As far as the record shows, nobody objected to that statement.”

Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate, said this about the indifference of the West: “All those unused visas, all those unheeded appeals, all those useless screams.”

PALESTINE

The British, for their part, were not interested in the prospect of Jewish refugees from Europe finding their way to Palestine (present-day Israel), which was then a British mandate. In 1939, British authorities issued a White Paper placing a restriction on Jewish immigration to Palestine. The presence of additional Jews in Palestine would place immense pressure on the British policy of placating the Arab population of the region. The British interest in Arab oil is not to be overlooked. It is of note that after the Second World War the British tried to thwart Jewish emigration to Palestine, leading to the incarceration in British camps of Jews who had survived Hitler's camps.

THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

Fourteen months after the State Department confirmed the Nazi extermination of the Jews, the Roosevelt Administration established the War Refugee Board, a government agency whose purpose was to rescue Jews still alive in Europe.

The Roosevelt Administration was reluctant to be seen as friendly to Jews even at this late date. The War Refugee Board was formed only begrudgingly. Public pressure had been growing, and it had become evident that the government, particularly the State Department, was avoiding the task of Jewish rescue altogether. The U. S. Treasury Department, under Secretary Henry Morgenthau, realized that the State Department was actually obstructing efforts to rescue Jews. Indeed, the State Department (led by Breckenridge Long) had issued secret instructions to suppress information about atrocities against Jews and to postpone issuing visas to Jews trying to escape the Nazis. Disgusted, Morgenthau had his subordinates at Treasury prepare a report detailing the State Department's actions, or lack of actions, regarding the Jewish question. The report, titled “On the Acquiescence of this Government in the Murder of Jews,” was sent to the president on January 15,

1944. David Wyman has written, "Roosevelt was finally cornered into the position that he had to do something or a scandal was going to break."

On January 22, 1944, the president established the War Refugee Board. The executive order the president signed establishing the War Refugee Board (known as the WRB) specified that it would have the support of every government agency, specifically the support of the State Department, Treasury Department, and the War Department (today's Pentagon).

The most notable achievement of the War Refugee Board was the successful transport of 982 refugees (89% of them Jewish) from unoccupied territories in Europe to the small community of Oswego in upstate New York.

In order to assuage that part of the American public that was against the admission of refugees, President Roosevelt pledged that the 982 refugees bound for Oswego would return to Europe after the war's end. In fact, the refugees were required to sign a document promising to do just that, although the overwhelming majority of the refugees had lost their entire families to the Nazis and there would be nowhere to return. The refugees were met by hostility on the part of many residents of Oswego. After the war, President Truman (who became president when FDR died in April 1945) issued an executive order permitting the Oswego refugees to remain in the U. S.

The journalist I. F. Stone remarked that Oswego was "a kind of token payment of decency, a bargain counter flourish in humanitarianism."

John Pehle, a Treasury Department official who lent his full energies to Jewish rescue, said this to say about the War Refugee Board: "What we did was little enough. It was late...late and little."

WALLENBERG AND THE JEWS OF HUNGARY

The five hundred thousand Jews of Hungary were the last Jews to be deported to their deaths at Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the spring of 1944, the Nazis began the well-practiced task of rounding up and centralizing the Jews in ghettos and then loading them on cattle cars for "transport" to

Poland. The Nazi annihilation of European Jewry had been going on for three years, but the Jews of Hungary (including the young Elie Wiesel) did not have the slightest idea that murder awaited them in Poland. Jews who listened secretly to the Voice of America radio or to the BBC (British Broadcasting Company) did not hear any references to the Holocaust. For the reception of Hungarian Jewry, the Nazis constructed a special railroad spur that led directly into the Birkenau camp. This facilitated the destruction process immensely.

In the autumn of 1944, as the Soviet Army approached Budapest, a “diplomat” from neutral Sweden named Raoul Wallenberg arrived in the Hungarian capital. He was sent by the War Refugee Board in Washington. Wallenberg began passing out forged Swedish identity cards to the beleaguered Jews, enabling them to pose as Swedish citizens and thus to avoid Nazi deportation. Wallenberg had managed to find a loophole in the Nazi destruction process: namely, the reluctance of even Eichmann to tamper with foreign policy by arresting citizens holding papers (even false papers) to a country with whom the Nazis enjoyed good relations, or at least neutral relations. Wallenberg managed to save an estimated twenty thousand people. When the Soviets liberated Budapest in January 1945, Wallenberg was summoned to Russian headquarters in a nearby city. The Soviets possibly thought he was an American spy. Wallenberg disappeared into Soviet captivity, and was never heard from again.

THE BOMBING OF AUSCHWITZ

Leaders of the Jewish resistance in Europe and in Palestine petitioned the Western powers to disrupt the flow of death trains to Auschwitz. They urged bombing of the railroad lines leading from Hungary to Poland. The British and U. S. air force, stationed in Italy, followed precisely those railroad lines while navigating their way to the very region where Auschwitz-Birkenau was located, a region heavily populated by German industries that were availing themselves of the Jewish slave labor nearby. When the possibility of rescuing war refugees (i. e. Jews) was first raised, the War Department made the decision that the U. S. armed forces would not engage in rescue efforts at all. It refused to bomb the

railroad lines or the Auschwitz-death camp itself, although U. S. bombers passed directly over the camp (and inadvertently photographed it) while on bombing mission to hit the nearby German industries. In fact, the Americans accidentally dropped a few bombs on the camp and damaged the rail spur, to the exultation of the Jews who prayed that the camp would be bombed and the machinery of death crippled. The official view of the American government on rescue was blunt: winning the war was the best way to rescue the Jews. This lackadaisical view did not take into account that there were two wars going on: a conventional war between armies; and a war the Nazis waged against the Jews. In the war against an undefended, unsuspecting civilian populace, the Nazis won.

During the period of time when the Jews of Hungary were being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the German Army was fighting a desperate battle to hold back the Soviet Red Army on the eastern front. The German troops needed trains to bring arms and supplies to the front. Despite the urgency of the situation, Hitler ordered that trains carrying the Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau have priority over trains carrying the needed war material to the Eastern Front. In other words, the war against the Jews came first.

Historian David Wyman has written, "To kill the Jews, the Nazis were willing to weaken their capacity to fight the war. The U. S. and its allies, however, were willing to attempt nothing to save them."

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

In conclusion, Wyman had this to say about President Roosevelt's reaction to the Jewish catastrophe in Nazi-occupied Europe: "One of the key reasons Roosevelt didn't act, I'm convinced, and definitely the key reason the State Department wouldn't act, was the fear of the anti-Semites in Congress, and the hell they'd raise if any moves were made in that direction. The anti-Semitism in congress was reflective of the anti-Semitism in American society."

Evidently, FDR did not lose his political touch. In January 1943, when Polish Jewry had been destroyed and the rest of European Jewry was on the verge of destruction, a Roper poll asked Americans a simple question: "Would it be a good idea, or a bad idea to admit more refugees (i. e. Jews) after the war?" Seventy-eight percent of the respondents answered it would be "a bad idea." In a 1944 survey, Americans were asked to identify "the most dangerous group" to the country. The response: 1. Jews (24%) 2. Japanese (16%) 3. Germans (8%).

MAY 8, 1945

On April 30, 1945, ten days after his fifty-sixth birthday, as Soviet artillery shells landed in the garden above, Hitler (and his wife of several hours, Eva Braun) committed suicide in his underground bunker in Berlin. The German armed forces surrendered to the Soviets and to the Western allies on May 8, 1945. The annihilation of the Jewish people of Europe finally ground to a halt. Himmler, in disguise, was captured by the British. When his identity was discovered, he promptly committed suicide. With the wealth of their victims as financial backing, the Nazi killers created a secret organization called Odessa which organized the escape of countless war criminals to friendly countries in the Middle East and South America. Eichmann, for one, fled to Argentina, where he worked as a mechanic under his own name until Israel agents kidnaped him in 1961. According to Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, an Austrian priest located in an office near the Vatican in Rome was a critical link in organizing the flight of the Nazi criminals to post-war safety.

On November 20, 1945, the first of the war-crimes trials began in Nuremberg, the German city where before the war the Nazis had staged their annual rallies. The leading Nazis were tried by judges from the Allied countries. This was somewhat awkward given the fact that the Soviets had begun the war on the side of the Nazis. Indeed, the Soviets had their own crimes to account for, including the deportation of over a million Polish citizens from Eastern Poland to Siberia and the massacre of Polish officers at Katyn Forest and elsewhere. None of awkward

history was raised at Nuremberg. Twelve leading Nazis were sentenced to death; in addition, three received life prison sentences; four received reduced prison terms; and three were acquitted. Goering managed to take cyanide a few hours before he was to hang. In general, the majority of Nazi criminals returned to normal life without a hitch. It was not a difficult transition from murderer to ordinary citizen. Indeed, in many cases the murderer was an ordinary citizen who, he or she pleaded, was just taking orders. The elite of German and Austrian societies were involved in Nazi crimes up to their necks. In the Who's Who of the war time generation, a curious gap exists between the years 1939-'45. In the post-war years, the Austrian judiciary has made a joke out of prosecuting Nazi criminals: the victims are ridiculed and the perpetrators are accorded deferential treatment. In contrast, Nazi criminals have often been pursued rigorously in (then West) Germany.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Jewish survivors of the Holocaust tried to leave Europe. The U. S. quota system was still intact. Palestine (present-day Israel) was a British Mandate, and the British blockade of Palestine was formidable. In the meantime, many of the survivors left Eastern Europe (particularly after the July 1946 pogrom in Kielce, Poland, when local Poles slaughtered forty-two Jews) and settled in Displaced Persons camps in Germany under the protective eye of the Western Powers. After the Holocaust and the almost total abandonment of the Jewish people, Jewish leaders (although not all) believed that a Jewish state was the only safe place for the Jewish people. The Jewish underground group Mossad secretly smuggled Jews out of Europe to Palestine. The Jewish refugees were often arrested by the British and the survivors of Hitler were placed in British camps behind barbed wire. The Jewish underground in Palestine fought a terrorist war against the British authorities until the government decided to withdraw from Palestine. On May 14, 1948, the United Nations voted for the establishment of the State of Israel. Shortly thereafter, six Arab armies attacked the infant state. The Israelis, the

Arabs said, were stealing their land. The Arab armies were thrown back. This was the first of four wars between Israelis and Arabs.

CASE STUDY #9: AMERICA AND THE HOLOCAUST

In 1942, the U. S. State Department suppressed information about the Holocaust that emerged from Europe. Once the U. S. government acknowledged the systematic destruction of European Jewry, in November 1942, it did nothing for fourteen months. Finally, in January 1944, after the Treasury Department released a report criticizing the “acquiescence of this government” in the Holocaust, the Roosevelt administration established the War Refugee Board. In its “abandonment” of the Jews, the U. S. government reflected the profoundly anti-Semitic attitudes of the U. S. population.

...

1. Economic depression, anti-Semitism, nativism, and the emergence of an American Nazi Party.

2. Anschluss and Evian Conference. The State Department.

3. Kristallnacht and Wagner-Rogers's Bill; not out of committee hearings.

4. In 1940-'41, Varian Fry, a U. S. citizen in the south of France facilitated escape of anti-Nazi intellectuals, political opponents, and resistance fighters, including Jewish refugees.

- Varian Fry, Assignment Rescue: An Autobiography. Scholastic Inc. (Published in conjunction with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). Originally published 1945.
5. The ill-fated St. Louis sailed in May 1939.
 6. Reigner's Telegram. Suppression of "the Terrible Truth."
 7. Jan Karski and news of the Holocaust to Western world.
 - E. Thomas Wood, and Stanislaw M. Jankowski. Karski: How One Man Tried to Stop the Holocaust (forward by Elie Wiesel). John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1994.
 8. Sumner Wells met Rabbi Stephen Wise at the State Department: November 24, 1942. *New York Times*: November 25, 1942. The article appeared on page 10.
 9. FDR and White House meeting in March 1943.
 10. April 19, 1943: Warsaw Ghetto revolt, carousel in Krasinski Park, and Bermuda Conference.

11. Karski's visit to White House: July 1943.

12. Deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau: spring and summer 1944.

- Sigmund Boraks, 15 year old Jewish slave at Auschwitz-Birkenau working on ramp
- Dora Niederman, 13 year old Jewish girl arriving at Birkenau in April 1944

13. War Refugee Board: Raoul Wallenberg goes to Budapest versus Eichmann.

- Seizing a Nazi loop hole: Schutz-Pass to "Swedish citizens." Safe houses. Chased down train bound for Auschwitz. Confrontation with SS in ghetto.

Per Anger. With Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest: 1938-1945. (Translated by Barrows Mussey). Holocaust Library. 1981.

John Bierman. Righteous Gentile: The Story of Raoul Wallenberg, Missing Hero of the Holocaust. Viking Press. 1981.

14. On May 15, 1944, Angelo Rotta, Papal Nuncio in Budapest, stated,

- "The Hungarian Government is preparing to deport 100,000 people. The whole world knows what this deportation in fact means. The Office of the Apostolic Nuncio regards it as its duty to protest against such measures Acting not out of a false sense of compassion but in the name of thousands of Christians, it requests the Hungarian Government once again not to continue its war against the Jews beyond the limits prescribed by the laws of nature and God's commandments..."

On June 25, 1944, Pius XII sent this message to Hungarian government:

- “Supplications have been addressed to Us from different sources that we should exert all Our influence to shorten and mitigate the sufferings that have for so long, been peacefully endured on account of their national or racial origin by a great number of unfortunate people belonging to this noble and chivalrous nation. In accordance with Our service of love, which embraces every human being, Our fatherly heart could not remain insensible to these urgent demands. For this reason We apply to Your Serene highness, appealing to your noble feelings, in the full trust that your serene highness will do everything in your power to save many unfortunate people from further pain and sorrow.”

15. Allied bombing of Auschwitz? McCloy’s letter on July 4, 1944. Dora’s wish.

16. Wallenberg’s disappearance in Soviet hands: January 1945.

17. Palestine and the creation of Israel, May 1948.

AMERICA AND THE HOLOCAUST: QUESTIONS

Name _____

1. In what ways did the 1929 world depression influence American public opinion regarding Jewish refugees from Europe? Explain.

2. "It is a fantastic commentary on the inhumanity of our times that for thousands and thousands of people a piece of paper with a stamp on it is the difference between life and death."

Who made this statement? What was this person's connection to the refugees? What does the term "a piece of paper with a stamp" mean? Explain the statement?

3. What was Anschluss? When did it occur? How did Anschluss impact the refugee situation? What impact did Anschluss have on American refugee policy?

4. What was the Evian Conference and what was the State Department's purpose in calling it? What was the result of the conference?

5. The statement "None is too many" was made by whom? Explain the meaning of the statement.

6. What was Kristallnacht and when did it occur? Jewish men taken into custody were released under what conditions? Give examples.

7. What was the quota? During the pre-war period, organizations working on behalf of Jewish refugees did not raise the subject of enlarging the quota. Why?

8. What was the Wagner-Roger's Bill? When was it proposed? What did it propose? What happened to it?

How did the fate of the Wagner-Roger's Bill compare with U. S. legislation in 1940 concerning British child refugees? What was the difference?

9. What was the St. Louis? What was its fate? Explain.

10. Where was the one place in the world where Jews could land without a visa?

11. Who was Eduard Schulte? What was his role and significance in the history of the Holocaust?

12. What was the Reigner telegram? What was its importance? What was the response of the U. S. State Department to this telegram?

13. Who was Jan Karski? What was his role and significance during the Holocaust?

14. According to polls conducted before and during the war, what was the attitude of the American public towards the Jewish refugees in Europe?

15. What was the stated purpose of the Bermuda conference? Why did

the State Department call for the conference? Why was the conference held on the island of Bermuda?

Compare and contrast the Bermuda conference with the Evian conference?

What happened in Warsaw on the first day of the Bermuda conference?

16. What was the U.S. War Refugee Board? When was it created? Why did President Roosevelt create it? What were its accomplishments?

17. Why were the railroad tracks leading to the death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau not bombed by the Allies? What was the U. S. military's policy in regard to refugees? Explain.

18. The historian David Wyman has said, "To kill the Jews, the Nazis were willing to weaken their capacity to fight the war. The U.S. and its allies, however, were willing to attempt almost nothing to save them."

Explain and give examples.

GLOSSARY

Terms in this section include words, phrases, and conditions particularly related to the Holocaust, including euphemisms used by the Nazis to conceal the true intent of their acts.

Anti-Semitism - Acts or negative feelings against Jews which take the form of prejudice, dislike, fear, discrimination, and persecution.

Aryan - A term used by the Nazis to describe Caucasians of non-Jewish descent. The Nazis believed that the ideal Aryans -- blond-hair and blue-eyed North Europe -- were a master race destined to rule the world.

Auschwitz - Largest and most notorious of all the concentration camps. Auschwitz, located in Poland, was both a slave labor camp and a killing center. Auschwitz I was the central camp. Auschwitz II (also known as Birkenau) was the extermination center. Auschwitz III (Monowitz) was the I.G. Farben labor camp which served as a source of slave labor for the German military machine.

Authoritarianism - Believing in or characterized by unquestioning obedience to authority, as that of a dictator, rather than individual freedom of judgment and action.

Buchenwald - Located in Weimar, Germany, this was one of the first concentration camps to begin operation (1937). German and Austrian Jews and Gypsies arrived in 1938. Prisoners too ill to work at the camp were sent to Bernburg under the euthanasia program. Before the United States Army liberated the camp in 1945, the prisoners had seized control of the camp.

Bystanders - Individuals or governments who were indifferent to the persecution of the victims of the Holocaust. Bystanders failed to come to the aid of Jews and other persecuted groups.

Concentration Camp - A prison where the Nazi regime sent people considered by them to be dangerous. Some concentration camps were "killing centers" that employed poison gas to systematically kill hundreds of thousands of people. Prisoners were typically worked or starved to death. Persons held in the camps were political and religious dissidents, resisters, homosexuals, as well as racial and ethnic victims of the Nazi regime and its collaborators (see "victims"). Of the more than 100 camps that existed, the largest were Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Belzec, Chelmno, Dachau, Maidanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.

Conformity - Acting in accordance with popular opinion, rather than following the dictates of one's own conscience.

Dachau - The first concentration camp, opened in 1933 near Munich, Germany. An example of a camp that was not equipped for mass extermination program with poison gas, though many prisoners died of overwork, starvation and disease. The camp was liberated by the U. S. Army in 1945.

Dissent - To differ in belief or opinion (especially from official government policy).

Eugenics and Population Biology Research Station (at the Reich Health Office for Racial Hygiene and Population Biology) - The department responsible for the racial and genealogical registration of Jews, Gypsies and other targeted groups. The registration of individuals by religious and ethnic category eventually permitted the Nazi regime to conduct a campaign to "racially purify" Germany by segregating, sterilizing, deporting, and murdering members of these groups.

Einsatzgruppen - mobile killing commando units which closely followed invading armies into the Soviet Union, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Their purpose was to immediately kill the Jewish population by shooting them or packing them into vans and gassing them. These units, often led by educated ??? were responsible for 2 million of the deaths. The mass murder tactics of the Einsatzgruppen initiated the pattern of mass murder that distinguished the Holocaust.

Euthanasia Program (the T4 program) - A Nazi government program created to kill mentally and physically handicapped Germans deemed "incurably sick". The program murdered 90,000 people and was eventually ended due to protests by religious leaders and victims' families. The T-4 death technicians were transferred to Poland where they continued to apply their techniques in the death camps.

The Final Solution - Euphemism used by the Nazis to describe their plan to exterminate all European Jews. The full name of the plan was "The Final Solution of the Jewish Question."

Genocide - The deliberate and total extermination of a culture. The Jews, Gypsiesish population and to some extent the Gypsies, were slated for genocide during the Nazi regime.

Gestapo - The secret political police in Nazi Germany created to eliminate political opposition. The Gestapo enforced Nazi rule through terror, arrest and torture.

Ghetto - Term used to describe the compulsory "Jewish Quarter" -- the poor sections of cities where Jews are forced to reside. These areas, surrounded by barbed wire or walls, confined people in overcrowded conditions where they were forced into heavy labor and provided little to eat.

Gypsies - Collective term for the Romani and Sinti nomadic people originally from northwest India. The Nazi regime targeted gypsies who inhabited Germany and the occupied territories.

Holocaust - The systematic, bureaucratic annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and their collaborators during World War II. Although Jews were the primary victims, up to one-half million Gypsies and at least 250,000 mentally or physically disabled persons also victims of genocide. In addition, three million Soviet prisoners of war were killed because of their nationality.

Poles, as well as other Slavs, were targeted for slave labor, and as a result tens of thousands perished. Homosexuals and others deemed "anti-social" were also persecuted and often murdered. In addition, thousands of political and religious dissidents such as communists, socialists, and trade unionists, and Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs and behavior and many of these individuals died as a result of maltreatment.

Jew - A person whose religion is Judaism. The Jewish faith is not comprised of any one ethnic group, but rather has followers among all nationalities, races and ethnic groups.

Killing Centers - Camps maintained to systematically kill Jews. Gas chambers were built especially for that use. There were six such camps, all in Poland: Auschwitz, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.

Kristallnacht (Crystal Night) - The Night of Broken Glass - November 9, 1938. The night Nazi police and collaborators subjected Jews to an onslaught of anti-Semitic violence. Nazis vandalized and burned synagogues and Jewish businesses, and randomly terrorized Jews. This event signaled the beginning of the Nazi effort to exterminate the Jewish people.

Nazism - The political doctrine of the Nazi party. Nazism advocated anti-Semitism, racism, militarism, one-party rule, anti-communism and a rigid authoritarian dictatorship.

Nazi Party - The National Socialist German Workers Party founded in Germany at the end of World War I. The Nazi party became a popular mass-based party winning significant elections by 1932. In 1933 the party, led by Adolph Hitler, assumed power constitutionally and ruled Germany until the defeat of Germany in 1945. The Nazi Party was the central organizing force of the Holocaust.

Nuremberg Laws - In 1935, the Nazis gave legal force to their anti-Semitism by implementing these laws that excluded Jews from German society, deprived them of their citizenship rights, removed them from their jobs, expelled them from schools and universities, and prohibited them from marrying non-Jews under penalty of death.

Nuremberg Trials - Trials of Nazi war criminals conducted by former military

opponents of Germany after World War II. The trials resulted in several executions and prison sentences, though thousands of Nazi war criminals escaped prosecution. Testimony at the trials gave wide publicity to the Nazi policy of mass murder.

Occupied Territories - Those nations overrun and occupied by the Nazi government.

Peer pressure - social pressure to conform to the beliefs and behaviors exerted by those people of about the same age, status, etc.

Perpetrators - In the Holocaust, those persons, agencies, or governments who assist in or gain from the persecution of others.

Prejudice - A negative, inflexible attitude toward a group (ethnic or religious) impervious to evidence or contrary argument. In most cases racial prejudice is founded on suspicions, ignorance, and irrational hatred of other races, religious or nationalities.

Racism - The belief that a racial group is inferior because of biological or cultural traits.

Resettlement - deportation of Jews to killing centers in Poland.

Resistance - Act of rebellion, sabotage, and attempts to escape committed by individuals and groups within the concentration camps and ghettos.

Rescuers - Those who in some way offered assistance to Nazi victims. This assistance may have been food or shelter for a period of time; alerting individuals and families of scheduled deportations; or getting the message to individuals, groups, and governments about the atrocities that were taking place.

Scapegoat - A person, group, or thing that bears the blame for the mistakes or crimes of others. Hitler made Jews a scapegoat by blaming them for Germany's unemployment and economic decline.

Sonderkommando (Special Squad) - Jewish inmates in Nazi killing centers whose job was to remove bodies from the gas chambers and burn them.

SS - The elite Nazi military group that engaged in extensive murder and terror.

Stereotyping - Attributing to a group a quality or trait possessed by only part of the group. Stereotypes are usually negative and lead to prejudging individuals based on their ethnicity or religion.

Treblinka - A killing center near Warsaw which opened in 1942. A revolt of inmates in August of 1943 destroyed most of the camp. It was closed in November of 1943.

Victims - In the context of the Holocaust, those groups singled out for persecution and/or extermination by the Nazis: Jews, Gypsies, political dissenters, leftists, homosexuals, and other ethnic and religious groups.

Wannsee Conference - A meeting of the Nazi bureaucracy and military held in Wannsee, a Berlin suburb. The purpose of the conference was to coordinate the role of various government agencies in the extermination of the Jews.

Zyklon B - Hydrogen cyanide, the pesticide used in crystalline form in the gas chambers of the Auschwitz and Majdanek killing centers.

ORDINARY PEOPLE

Who were the everyday people - those whose beliefs, convictions, and motivations led them to act as they did? What is it in the human character that allows people to react the way they do when confronted with moral decisions?

PERPETRATORS - those who were actively involved in the atrocities. Many of the perpetrators were "gainers" -- those who profited from their actions. They may have initially been "bystanders" -- individuals who initially were indifferent to the Jewish plight -- but eventually saw how they could take advantage of the situation. The Nazi regime was a perpetrator due to its role in planning the Holocaust.

Sophie Ehrhardt, Dr. - A university professor and assistant to Dr. Robert Ritter. She applied the pseudo-science of race hygiene to register Gypsies. This provided the data the German police used to implement segregation, sterilization and deportation of Gypsies. She was never prosecuted for her role in this process.

Adolf Eichmann - Nazi whose assignment was to round up the Jews and implement the Final Solution. Eichman typified the bland, colorless bureaucrat who was deeply involved in the mass killings. In 1961, Israel located, captured, tried, convicted, and executed Eichmann.

I. G. Farben - Chemical combine which manufactured pharmaceutical, photographic equipment and synthetic rubber. The plant was erected in Auschwitz and took advantage of the slave labor force there. Dr. Walter Durrfield, a Nazi party member, served as director. Inmates worked on the construction of the plant and thousand perished there.

Medical Doctors - Nearly 50% of Germany's medical doctors were members of the Nazi Party: evidence of the complicity of ordinary citizens in the Holocaust. In 1933 medical students willingly turned in their fellow Jewish classmates so that the academic competition could be eliminated.

Reinhard Heydrich - Ordered the death squads to relocate all Jews to the ghettos. This was considered the first phase of the Holocaust. He was also the architect of the Wannsee Conference plan to exterminate the Jews.

Heinrich Himmler - A former chicken farmer who controlled the SS formations, police force, concentration and labor camps and various offices for the resettlement of ethnic Germans. He was the senior SS officer responsible for implementing the "Final Solution." In late 1944 he ordered an end to the gassings and in 1945 he tried to negotiate with the Allies. After a failed escape attempt, he committed suicide.

Adolf Hitler - The leader of the Nazi party and, beginning in 1933, dictator of Germany.

Joseph Mengele - Senior medical physician at Auschwitz II (Birkenau), responsible for grisly medical experiments on prisoners. Mengele eluded capture and died of natural causes in Brazil

Nations - Governments as well as individuals were perpetrators. Many Nations cooperated with Germany by deporting Jewish residents to the concentration camps. They include: Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary; and the occupied countries of Norway, the Netherlands, and the Vichy government of France.

Otto Ohlendorf - Commander of the Einsatzgruppe D mobile killing unit in South Ukraine. He was an economist who had attended several universities and returned to his career after the War.

Hans Rauter - An Austrian and Nazi police leader in the Netherlands. He succeeded in deporting 100,000 of the 140,000 Jews in the Netherlands. This was the highest percentage on the western rim of Europe.

Reserve Police Battalion 101 - Unit of approximately 500 men (mostly from Hamburg) who were part of one of the Nazi killing units. They were workers,

artisans, statesmen, and clerks who were too old for front line combat duty but participated in the shooting deaths of 38,000 Jews and the deportation of 48,000 more to Treblinka.

BYSTANDERS - were those who were indifferent to the acts of violence against the Jews.

Everyday people - The Holocaust was set into motion with the support and consent of most Germans. Contrary to the popular notion that Germans were tricked or fooled into supporting Hitler and the Nazis, the historical evidence indicates that millions of ordinary Germans supported or were indifferent to the Nazi's racist policies.

Churches - Most organized Christian denominations in Germany remained silent in the face of Nazi persecution of Jews and other targeted groups. The Nazi regime and German public interpreted Church silence as indifference if not consent.

Neutral countries including Sweden and Switzerland - Though these countries claimed to be neutral in the War, many cooperated with the Nazi regime by continuing private trade with Germany. Sweden allowed German military transports across its territory to and from Finland and Norway, while Switzerland tolerated the transit of coal.

United States Government and other allied countries - Similar to other countries, the United States failed to respond effectively to Nazi crimes that foreshadowed the Holocaust. In 1938 Congress refused to increase Jewish immigration quotas to accommodate those fleeing Nazi persecution. The United States government knew of the killing centers as early as 1942, but failed to respond until 1944.

RESCUERS - those who in some way offered assistance to the victims. This assistance may have been food or shelter for a period of time; alerting individuals and families of scheduled deportations; or getting the message to individuals, groups, and governments about the atrocities that were taking place.

The Dutch people - Most of Holland's population regarded the Jews as fellow citizens. At one point they staged a strike to protest Jewish persecution. After Jewish deportations began, the Dutch often hid Jews from the Nazis.

Elsinore Sewing Club - Danish resistance group that smuggled Danish Jews and resistance fighters across the Oresund channel from Denmark to Sweden. This was accomplished because Danish king, Christian X forcefully told German officials that he would not permit resettlement of Denmark's small Jewish population.

Kurt Gerstein - Gerstein exemplified the German citizen who dissented from prevailing Nazi thinking. In 1942 Gerstein was an SS officer responsible for shipping poison gas to the killing centers. He was deeply shaken by what he witnessed at the camps and eventually risked his life to inform the Allies of the atrocities.

Janusz Korczak - Educator, author, and humanitarian, Korczak typified the heroic efforts of Jews to resist the Nazi terror. Korczak was a Polish Jew who directed a Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. When the Nazis seized his orphans, Korczak refused to abandon them and instead went with them to the gas chamber in Treblinka.

Raoul Wallenberg - Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews in Hungary by issuing them passports. He was arrested by the Russians in 1945 and his subsequent fate remains a mystery.

Zegota - An underground organization of Polish Catholics who protected Jews from extermination.

LESSON PLAN

ORDINARY PEOPLE

Objectives:

Analyze the roles played by everyday people in a variety of situations.

Identify the roles of perpetrators, rescuers, and bystanders in daily life.

Compare the roles of bystanders, rescuers, and perpetrators during the Holocaust of World War II to current examples.

Materials

Current magazine or news paper articles

Courage to Care - a film about a few individuals who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews.

Key Terms

Victim

Bystander

Perpetrator

Rescuer

Procedure/Activities

Develop the meaning of perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers, by presenting a current newspaper articles on a specific events. Divide students into groups and give a different articles to each group to analyze.

Student Handout 1 can be used to help the students organize the information from the article.

Use **Student Handout 2** to guide whole class discussion on one article.

Discuss individual situations in which perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers can be identified. Encourage students to write their reactions to the situations. What did they do? What could they have done? Why?

Provide students with accounts of Holocaust perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers. Guide the discussion into analyzing the reasons the persons acted as they did and how they were treated by others for the actions they took.

Suggested activities to accompany the film *Courage to Care*.

Develop a chart that compares the methods used by rescuers to hide Jews from the Nazis.

Use cooperative learning groups to reenact the events described in each story.

Compile a collection of the students' personal accounts of acts of courage or compassion.

Research the stories of other rescuers that were not featured in the film.

Note: At the end of the film, the present occupations of the individuals are mentioned. Students may find it interesting that most chose a helping profession (psychologist, etc) and make some predictions why.

STUDENT HANDOUT 1
Everyday People

Title of Article: _____

Directions: Read the assigned article. Analyze the actions of the persons or groups identified in the article. Explain why the individuals or groups were placed in the categories to which they were assigned.

Bystander

Rescuer

Perpetrator

Describe the moral issue addressed in the article.

Give reasons why the individual or groups acted as they did.

Compare the events and actions of the individuals in the article to those of the

Holocaust.

Analyze the roles played by the various governments involved.

STUDENT HANDOUT 2

Everyday People

Civilians Dying As Cease-Fire Fails

Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina - A new cease-fire accord failed to curb fighting Wednesday in central and southwestern Bosnia, where civilians appeared to be bearing the brunt of the attacks.

"The aggression continues with the same intensity," said Stjepan Siber, deputy commander of Bosnia's Muslim-led government army.

Presidents Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Franjo Tudjman of Croatia signed an accord Tuesday in Geneva calling for fighting to stop "immediately and by no later than Saturday.

Serbs, who control 70 percent of Bosnian territory, were not party to the agreement.

Several earlier agreements failed to halt the bloodshed, and Siber held out little hope that fighting between Croat and government forces would ease before Saturday, if then,

State-run Bosnia radio reported heavy shelling around Mostar, the major city in southwestern Bosnia, where 55,000 Muslims are under siege by Croats. U. N. officials say 10 to 15 people are dying daily from shelling and sniper fire.

Croats, meanwhile, accused government soldiers of murdering 29 civilians Tuesday in the tiny village of Uzdol, near Prozor about 30 miles north of Mostar.

A spokesman for the self-declared Croatian government in Bosnia, Toni Vucic, said of 29 villages killed in Uzdol, 18 were men, eight were women, and three children.

The Croats said 11 Muslim soldiers were killed by Croat Soldiers as they fled Uzdol. the Croats listed eight dead among their troops.

News photographer Laurent Rebours, who visited Prozor and the Uzdol after the killings, said about half the houses in the village, once home to 583 people, were burned down.

He said six corpses were still in the village Wednesday, including a dead man lying in a courtyard with a chest wound. His wife's bullet-riddled body was on the dining room floor inside their house.

The bodies of an older couple were found huddled together under blankets in a barn, where they apparently tried to hide.

"I think they had no time to understand what happened," Rebour said. "It seemed as if they had heard noises, went outside and then were killed."

British U.N. peacekeepers reportedly were heading to the village to investigate.

At the outset of Bosnia's war, Croats and government forces fought together against heavily armed Bosnian Serbs who belled over a decision to secede from Yugoslavia.

But the alliance collapsed in bitter fighting over central Bosnian territory. There is evidence of murder and other atrocities against civilians by both sides.

Sarajevo, Bosnia's besieged capital, was relatively calm Wednesday during a visit by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, who is trying to get three-way Geneva peace negotiations restarted.

Talks on a plan to divide Bosnia among its three warring factions ended abruptly September 1, when Izetbegovic objected to what he said was an unfair deal that rewarded Serb aggression.

All sides have expressed willingness to resume talks, but no date has been set.

Sept, 16, 1993
The Times-Picayune

LESSON PLAN

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Objectives:

Understand the problems faced by groups of people interested in maintaining their religious heritage.

Analyze the role played by religion in Hitler's decision to annihilate the Jews

Analyze the change in American immigration policy that allowed persons to seek escape from religious persecution.

Compare the religious freedom faced by Jews in America to that of other immigrants during the 20th century.

Describe the similarities/differences between the role of religion in the life of Jews today to role under Nazi occupation.

Define the role of the clergy in the Holocaust.

Materials

Copy of taped presentation - *Free Your Mind - Part II*

Anthology of Holocaust Literature p. 11-13 - *Sabbath* by Marga Minco

Key Terms

Religious persecution

Intolerance

Procedure/Activities

Discuss the role that religion plays in lives today.

Show the taped segment of *Free Your Mind - Part II*. Analyze the story to determine if there are perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers apparent. Discuss the reactions to the story and determine individual

actions students might take.

Research the role religion played in the persecution of Jews and Jehovah Witnesses during the Nazi regime. Discuss the reasons for the persecution (religious, economic, political. Determine how these reasons compare with the persecution of the Gypsies during the same period? Of American Indians?

Allow students to choose sides (Jews, Jehovah Witnesses, or Nazis). and defend the actions taken by the group. Provide opportunities for students to express their personal convictions regardless on the group they defended.

Research the various religions groups today. Determine the kind of persecutions they may have faced within the history of the United States.

- Jews (Reform, Orthodox, Conservative)

- Protestants

- Catholics

LESSON PLAN

RACISM

Objectives

Compare the kinds of discrimination faced by Jews under Nazi occupation to the discrimination they faced in the U. S.

Describe the political and economic conditions which allowed the Holocaust to be possible.

Analyze the role played by everyday people in perpetuating racism.

Compare the consequences of Nazi terror on the lives of Jewish and Gypsy victims.

Describe the techniques used by governments to get people to conform.

Compare the lives of the Jewish victims prior to 1933 to life in ghettos.

Compare the actions taken against Jews in Germany during World War II and those of persons in the former Yugoslavia.

Compare the plight of the Gypsies under Nazi domination to the events today.

Key Terms

Discrimination

Racism

Stereotypes

Scapegoat

Sanskrit

Rom

Non-Conformit

Procedure/Activities

Develop the meaning of discrimination, racism, and stereotypes.

Compare the situation in Bosnia today to that of Jews and Gypsies during the Holocaust. Formulate predictions about the outcome of the problem.

Form interest groups to further research the effects of racism on the lives of Holocaust victims.

Use examples of writings and poetry to focus on life in the ghettos and the strategies used to help victims cope with the effects of racism. Compare the writing, art work, and songs to examples of other victims of racism.

Allow students to write about an event or time when they felt discriminated against. Provide a forum for discussing their feelings and analyzing the actions they took. Determine whether there is any basis for comparison between the actions people take in the face of racism and discrimination.

Discuss the discrimination of immigrants to the United States during the era prior to the Holocaust. How does this compare with the discrimination face by immigrants today? Are there differences in treatments of immigrants depending on their homeland or religious belief, etc. What can everyday people do to assist recent immigrants.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Racism

Directions: Write your personal definitions of the terms listed below. Give an example of each term.

Racism

Example

Discrimination

Example

Stereotype

Example

STUDENT HANDOUT

Racism

GYPSIES FACE RISING TIDE OF RACISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

Usti Nad Labem, Czech Republic - the popularity of Magdalena Babicka, the local beauty queen, soared after her response to the question in the Miss Czech 1993 content, even though she failed to win the crown,

Babicka, a high school junior, said during the ceremony televised across the Czech republic in April that she wanted to get a law degree and become a prosecutory.

And then, Babicka said, she would "cleansing" her hometown of its "dark-skinned" residents.

The ballroom crowd applauded, while across the country - and particularly in Babinka's hometown-many Czechs were glad that someone had finally spoken out about the Gypsies.

"All Gypsies have one thing in common: They all lie,"said Miroslav Polak, a pensioner sitting on a bench in Usti Nad Labemm's main square. "Babicka is the only person who wasn't afraid to say in public the opinion of many people."

Polk said he is glad that Usti has a gang of skinheads because they beat up the Gypsies, who make up about 5 percent of the city's 100,000 residents. A policeman who was listening to the conversation shrugged. A woman sharing the bench with Polak giggled. A passing schoolgirl said that all her friends are on babicka's side.

With the czech word vycistení-cleansing- creeping into daily use, gypsies worry that the practice will too.

Babicka's words would probably arouse similar support in other East European countries. gypsies, who were among the targets of Nazi extermination efforts during World War II, again face a tide of racism throughout the region.

The problem is exploding because of hard economic times. Gypsies led a relatively secure life under Communist regimes, which kept a lid on public displays of racism. but now, with the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the lid on free speech is gone, and so are many of the jobs that the Communists handed to Gypsies. they are on their own again, when some East Europeans are looking for scapegoats.

In neighboring Slovakia, for instance, the major of Spisske Podhradie issued an edict last month forbidding Gypsies and "other suspicious people"

to leave their homes between 11 p.m. and 4:30 a.m. Gypsies also were forbidden to drive cars that were in bad shape, and police were given special powers to search their homes.

In explaining the reason for the edict, Major Frantisek Slobodnik said that crime was out of control and that the Gypsies were responsible. "They sleep during the day and steal; at night," he was quoted as saying. the curfew drew strong support from the town's 3,500 Slovaks.

The Slovak parliament, sensing a public relations disaster, moved to quash the curfew, declaring it unconstitutional. But the government softened the blow by promising Slobodnik that police reinforcements would be sent to Spisske Podhradie.

"They are dealing with the problem by using repressive force," said Klara Orgovanova, a Gypsy who advises the Slovak government but is quitting her job at the end of the summer in disgust. "Criminality is a cliché. It's not the problem."

In the Hungarian city of Eger, known as the country's skinhead capital, Gypsies staged a protest march earlier this month after a Gypsy youth was beaten into a coma by skinheads. It was the city's 25th assault on Gypsies since 1991.

The several million Gypsies who live in Eastern Europe are descendants of Indians who migrated this far westward by the 15th century, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, and many have retained their nomadic ways. Even during communist times, many gypsies continued to move from place to place, defying borders and police.

In general, they have not assimilated into the mainstream cultures of the countries in which they live. Gypsies have dark skin, and they speak their own language, which is related to ancient Sanskrit. They call themselves Rom and view the word Gypsy as an epithet.

Although they have a rich musical tradition, many are illiterate. Few have high school diplomas. And some hardly speak the language of the country in which they live.

Most Gypsies are poor, and they are the underclass of Eastern Europe. In Hungary, Gypsies account for about 5 percent of the population by more than 50 percent of the prison population. In Romania, unemployment among Gypsies is nearly 80 percent.

Gypsies are usually the first thrown out of work when a factory must cut

back, and they are the last hired if jobs become available, according to Gypsy leaders and human rights officials. Sometimes employers publish want ads that include the phrase, "Gypsies not accepted," and some stores have signs saying, "Gypsies not served."

Gypsy leaders say the accusations against their people are exaggerated. They acknowledge that Gypsies are probably committing more crimes on a proportional basis than the rest of the population, but they say they are not committing nearly as many as claimed. They argue that high crime rates among Gypsies are caused by their poverty, which is in turn linked to the discrimination they face.

The leaders admit that some Gypsies have become leery, especially where education is concerned. Mothers do not insist that children stay in school, so they frequently drift away before they can read or do arithmetic. According to Michal Husak, a businessman and journalist in Prague, the government must cooperate with Gypsy organizations to keep children in school.

Husak said Gypsy organizations in Prague have given the government a plan for creating a Head Start Program for Gypsy children. But so far, he said, the government has not responded.

The attitude in official circles is not promising. While saying they are doing all they can to help, government officials have taken relatively little concrete action, partly because Gypsies have little political influence.

IDENTIFYING VICTIMS

Directions: Listed below are the names of groups that the Nazi regime targeted during the Holocaust. Who were they and what explanation can you give for the discrimination they faced?

Jews

Gypsies

Mentally and Physically Handicapped

Homosexuals

Soviet Prisoners

Polish and Slavic citizens

Communists

Socialists

Trade unionists

Jehovah's Witnesses

To the teacher:

Encourage students to research the fate of a variety of people involved in the Holocaust. Then, examine the fate of ordinary people in contemporary situations. As an example: the person who filmed the Rodney King beatings, and the person who rescued the truck driver during the Los Angeles riots.

LESSON PLAN***USE OF POWER*****Objectives:**

Examine the efforts of governmental collaboration on human rights issues.

Investigate how the actions of governments affect their relationship with other nations.

Determine the role played by non-governmental officials and civil servants in decision making.

Materials/Resources

C-Span In The Classroom

Key Terms

Intervention
Compromise
Deliberations

Procedure/Activities

View C-Span programming dealing with U. S. policy toward refugees. Compare the policy to the policy of Soviets toward Jews.

Discuss how the present policy compares to that of governments toward victims fleeing the Holocaust.

Compare the actions of both U. S. and foreign governments toward immigrants today. Investigate the laws that govern the status of immigrants

Examine the manner used by Nazis to gain power and exercise control over the German government. Encourage students to think about effective use of governmental power.

STUDENT HANDOUT
Use of Power

Directions: Think of a world issue that is important to your generation today. Research the current governmental policy regarding the issue. Develop a plan that **YOU** would use to address the issue if you held a position of power.

ISSUE:

CURRENT POLICY:

MY PLAN:

LESSON PLAN

NATIONALISM

Objectives:

Know the characteristics of a nation

Understand the effects that laws governing nations have on immigrants to the nation.

Analyze the problems resulting from disputes among nations.

Materials

News articles and editorials on the current crisis in Bosnia, Africa, or Russia.

MTV tape on Eastern Europe and ethnic cleansing

C-Span in the Classroom

Key Terms

Ethnic Cleansing

Immigration

Identity

Procedure/Activities

Trace the events of the national disputes over a two week period. Examine the problems that occur for those who remain or flee their homeland. Determine what role the communities of the world should play in these disputes.

Discuss the social, political, and economic issues involved in the partitioning of a country. Guide students to analyze their feelings when personal conflicts arise that require separation from home, family, or peer group.

Study first person accounts of those involved in national disputes. Examine their family, religious, and political feeling to determine their sense of belonging.

Extension Activities

Language Arts

Compile a list of words specific to the Holocaust

Research word origins

Determine the relationship between similar words (labor camp, ghetto, killing center)

Read and discuss a variety of journals, poems, and other first person accounts. Compare the writings as they relate to the author's purpose in telling the story.

Investigate the role of authors who wrote about resistance efforts.\

Design a flyer that may have been used as propaganda against Jews and other victims.

Science

Research the types of medical experiments performed on victims.

Determine the effects on the lives of the victims today.

Describe the technological changes made by the Nazis in an effort to make killing more efficient.

Art

Investigate the events surrounding the stolen art treasures plundered by Nazis and the efforts to locate them.

Math

Graph the percentage of victims living in a specific region prior to the Holocaust, immediately after the Holocaust, and today. Determine the entire percentage of the population in each instance.

Geography

Chart the regions surrounding concentration camps and study the geographical conditions that might have hampered/helped those fleeing to safety.

POEMS/WRITINGS

The way we communicate our feelings, whether it's verbally or through art, music, or poetry, gives insight into our feelings. Out of every human experience there is an emotional attachment. Fear, Pain, anger, joy, and excitement are but a few of the emotions that could communicate the depth of an experience. There is no place where this is more evident than in times of personal turmoil. The victims of the Holocaust as well as other victims of tragic events often used journals, writings, and poetry to show defiance, and reaffirm their religious and cultural beliefs. The following writings are a few examples depicting the cries of agony, hope, and helplessness in the face of Nazi tyranny.

FEAR

Eva Pickova, 12 years old

Today the ghetto knows a different fear,
Close in its grip, Death wields an icy scythe.
An evil sickness spreads a terror in its wake,
The victims of its shadow weep and writhe.

Today a father's heartbeat tells his fright
And mothers bend their heads into their hands.
Now children choke and die with typhus here,
A bitter tax is taken from their bands.

My heart still beats inside my breast
While friends depart for other worlds.
Perhaps its better--who can say?--
Than watching this, to die today?

No, no, my God, we want to live!
Not watch our numbers melt away.
We want to have a better world,

We want to work--we must not die!

The Butterfly
Pavel Friedman

The last, the very last,
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing against a
white stone...

Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high.
It went away I's sure because it wished to kiss
the world goodbye.
For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto
But I have found my people here.
the dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut candles in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
In the ghetto.

From *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, McGraw-Hill,
1976

From Tomorrow On
Motele

From tomorrow on, I shall be sad---
From tomorrow on!
Today I will be gay.

What is the use of sadness---tell me that?---
Because these evil winds begin to blow?
Why should I grieve for tomorrow---today?
Tomorrow may be so good, so sunny,

Tomorrow the sun may shine for us again:
We shall no longer need to be sad.

From tomorrow on, I shall be sad---
From tomorrow on!
Not today: no! Today I will be glad.
And every day, no matter how bitter it be,
I will say:
From tomorrow on, I shall be sad,
Not today!

I Must Be Saving These Days
Martha

I must be saving these days,
(I have no money to save),
I must save health and strength,
Enough to last me for a long while.
I must save my nerves,
And my thoughts, and my mind
And the fire of my spirit;
I must be saving of tears that flow---
I shall need them for a long, long while.
I must save endurance these stormy days.

There is so much I need in my life:
Warmth of feeling and a kind heart---
These things I lack: of these I must be saving!
All these, the gifts of God,
I wish to keep.
How sad I should be
If I lost them quickly.

I'd Like to Go Alone

Alena Synkova

I'd like to go away alone.
Where there are other, nicer people,
Somewhere into the far unknown,
There, where no one kills another.

Maybe more of us,
A thousand strong,
Will reach this goal
Before too long.

I Believe

I believe
In the sun
even when
it is not
shining.

I believe
in love
when feeling
it not.

I believe
in God
even when
He is silent.

(Inscription on the walls of a cellar in Cologne,
Germany, where Jews hid from Nazis.)

The Last Wish of My Life Has Been Fulfilled

Mordecai Anilewicz's Last Letter

It is now clear to me that what took place exceeded all expectations. In our opposition to the Germans we did more than our strength allowed--but now our forces are waning. We are on the brink of extinction. We forced the Germans to retreat twice--but they returned stronger than before.

One of our groups held out for forty minutes; and another fought for about six hours. The mine which was laid in the area of the brush factory exploded as planned. Then we attacked the Germans and they suffered heavy casualties. Our losses were generally low. That is an accomplishment too. Z. fell next to his machine-gun.

I feel that great things are happening and that this action which we have dared to take is of enormous value.

We have no choice but to go over to partisan methods of fighting as of today. Tonight, six fighting-groups are going out. They have two tasks--to reconnoiter the area and to capture weapons. Remember, "short-range weapons" are of no use to us. We employ them very rarely. We need many rifles, hand-grenades, machine-guns and explosives.

I cannot describe the conditions in which the Jews of the ghetto are now "living." Only a few exceptional individuals will be able to survive such suffering. The others will sooner or later die. Their fate is certain, even though thousands are trying to hide in cracks and rat holes. It is impossible to light a candle, for lack of air. Greetings to you who are outside. Perhaps a miracle will occur and we shall see each other again one of these days. It is extremely doubtful.

The last wish of my life has been fulfilled. Jewish self-defense has become a fact. Jewish resistance and revenge have become actualities. I am happy to have been one of the first Jewish fighters in the ghetto.

Where will rescue come from?

*Written during the Revolt, 1943, Warsaw Originally published by World Hashomer Hatzair, Kibbutz Merchavia, Israel, 1963.

The Diary of David Rubinovcih

Translated From The Yiddish by Adam Fogel

May 5

There are rumors flying about that tonight there will be a police raid on the Jews. Papa hasn't been home since yesterday--and what if he returns today right in the middle of the raid? We wrote him a letter that he and my cousin shouldn't come today, and gave it to a boy from Kraino who just happened to be here.

May 6

A terrible day. At about 3 a.m. I was awakened by banging. It was the police, starting the raid. I wasn't frightened--Papa and my cousin are in Kraino and they know that the other cousins are in hiding. a few minutes later there was knocking at the door, and my uncle quickly opened. Two policemen come in--one Polish and one Jewish--and immediately began to search the house. One of them told me to get dressed, but the other one asked me how old I was, and when I told him, "Fourteen," he left me alone. They snooped around a bit, but they didn't find anyone, just the two men from Plotzk, whom they took with them. When the police left I fell asleep. Very early my cousin woke me up, because Papa had arrived in a wagon. Although I didn't feel afraid, I dressed quickly and went outside, but he had already left--he couldn't wait because of the raid.

The stuff on the wagon had already been unloaded. Just then I saw a policeman turning into our yard. I started to run, but he began to yell: "Where are the potatoes? Bring the rest!" and other things which I couldn't make out. "Now it is really the end," I thought. When they had finished loading everything he went back to police HQ.

Papa isn't here. What were we going to do? Mama and my aunt went to the police. I was awfully upset. They had taken everything we owned, now we would die for a piece of bread. Soon Anshl came and told us that Papa and my cousin had been arrested. I started to cry. They had taken Papa

away from us, they had taken all our possessions. Suddenly I felt a deep yearning for Papa. Who cared about the things? Mama ran to the *Judenrat* to ask them to release Papa because he's sick and can't live without his medicine, and if they should assign him to hard labor in a concentration camp it would be a disaster.

At the *Judenrat* they told her Papa would be released after they examined him, and we began to hope he might be set free. I didn't go into the street because I might be caught, too, but my brother and Anshl took food to the prisoners. When Anshl came home he told us that his brother-in-law was also in prison. the panic was horrible. Everyone hid wherever he could find a corner, and the relatives and wives of the prisoners were sobbing hysterically. How could you not?

The Bielin were helping to conduct the raid. When things calmed down a bit, two automobiles drove up. One of them had a platform in the back. When I saw them the thought struck me that Papa might be sent away, and I began to weep uncontrollably. Papa had told my brother to bring him food, several pairs of underwear, and a small pan. when I saw my brother packing the things, I burst into tears again.

All this time Mama was at the *Judenrat* asking them to intervene, and they kept telling her Papa would be released. My brother came to get a warm hat, but he was too late--the automobile was already on the next block. I began to scream when they approached: "Papa, where are, let me see you just once more" then I saw him, in the last car, and he was crying.

I watched the car until it disappeared at the crossroads. I burst into tears and felt a deep love for Papa, and his love for me, and realized that when I had written on May 1 that he didn't love me it was a lie, totally false, and, who knows, maybe I would have to pay for suspecting him of something that wasn't true. god willing, when he comes home, I will behave differently toward him. I cried for a long time, and when I remember Papa's tear-stained face, I cried even harder. Papa was the most precious of all, and he had been taken away from us, and he was sick, too.

When we quieted down, Mama went to the police because it was getting close to 2 o'clock. I stayed in the house and thought about the fate which awaited Papa and the bad luck which had already struck us. My sister arrived and said:

"Go the police, but take someone with you, because they given

everything away." Anshl and I started out, and on the way we met Mama. Anshl took the bundle she was carrying, and I went along with her. We had made several trips before we brought all the things back to the house. You can't imagine what a joy it was, but our happiness was really superficial, because our hearts were heavy with an indescribable sadness. Mama had pleaded with the entire *Judenrat* to help her salvage the merchandise, and nobody wanted to help, but God saw to it that we got it back without them. When we came home we were visited by a policeman, who wanted to know if all our possessions had been returned to us. He was a friendly German, and if not for him we wouldn't have gotten a slice. Mama was exhausted from this one day as if it had stretched for four weeks.

When I got into bed, I thought of Papa. Here I was in a comfortable bed and Papa was in a barrack, and maybe without even a handful of straw on which to rest his head. My heart constricted with pain and I started to cry, and cried myself to sleep.

ANALYZING STORIES

Setting

Problem

Characters

Bystanders

Perpetrators

Rescuers

Victims

What Did They Do?

What Would You Do?

Why?

Events

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Results

Conclusions/Solutions

Predictions

Examples:

Appelfeld, Ahron. *Badenheim*. Jewish vacationers sense impending

Tunis, John. *His Enemy, His Friend*. A former German soldier refuses to kill hostages in occupied France.

RESOURCES

Books

Browning, Christopher R. (1992) *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*.

The book examines documents and court records to capture the motivations of the men who were members of the killing squads.

Dawidowicz, Lucy S. (1975). *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*. New York. Bantam Books.

This is a history of the Holocaust that explores the answer to the question: How was it possible for a modern state to carry out the systematic murder of people for no reason other than that they were Jewish?

Galtstein, Jacob, et.al. (1969) *Anthology of Holocaust Literature*. Philadelphia. Jewish Publication Society of America.

A collection of eye witness accounts describing resistance, the concentration camp, and ghetto life.

Hilberg, Raul.(1992) *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945*. New York. Harper Collins

An examination of the attitudes and reactions of individuals, groups, or governments who experienced the Holocaust

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (1992) *The Story Of Karl Stojka: A Childhood in Birkenau*. Washington, D.C.

A catalog of the autobiographical works of a Gypsy survivor and his family incarcerated in Birkenau. It also includes a chronology on the fate of Gypsies in Germany and Austria during 1933-1945.

Cable Programming

Cable In the Classroom Magazine - a source for commercial free television programming information. The current issues that are addressed can be used to make the connections (bridge the barriers) between the attitudes and activities during the Holocaust and those that exist today. For example:

C-SPAN - provides a monthly guides to teachers using C-Span in the Classroom (1-800-523-7586). Program themes include Comparative Government, Psychology, and English.

MTV - *Community of the Future Series* provides teacher's guides with lesson ideas for monthly shows (212) 258-8568

Nick/News W/5 - Provides teacher's guides with program summaries. Issues addressed include bigotry, religion, stereotypes, and betraying friends. (212) 258-7773.

A & E Classroom - source of documentaries on specific perpetrators, victims, and bystanders of the Holocaust.

Contemporary Music

En Vogue

Hypocrisy

Nirvana

The Breeders

"J"

Teaching Resources

National Issues Forums
100 Commons Road
Dayton, Ohio 45459-2777

This public policy institute provide books, videos and teaching information (In the Classroom) which focus on current issues facing the American Public. Two examples are: *America's Role in the World: New Risks, New Realities* and *Remedies for Racial Inequality: Why Progress Has Stalled, What Should Be Done*.

Social Science Education Consortium
3300 Mitchell Lane, Suite 240
Boulder, Colorado 80301-2272

This is a source for curriculum materials on public issues that lead to the development of critical thinking and discussion skills. Topics include: *Tolerance for Diversity and Beliefs* and *Religious Freedom: Belief, Practice, and the Public Interest*.

Video Tapes

Europa Europa - describes the activities of a young Jewish boy in Europe from 1938-1945.

Genocide, 1941-1945 - victims, perpetrators, and bystanders tell the story of the destruction of the European Jewry.

Judgement at Nurenberg - depicts the confrontation between the American judge presiding over the German war criminal trials and the former Nazi magistrates.

Night and Fog - historic film of Nazi concentration camps are contrasted with contemporary scenes.

Shoah - interviews with victims, perpetrators, and bystanders

Sophie's Choice - story of a Polish woman's attempt to justify her existence in America after WW2.

The Raoul Wallenberg Story - portrait of the Swedish diplomat who rescued Hungarian Jews during WW2 only to be captured by the Russians at the end of the war.

The Sound of Music - musical based on the life of the Austrian Von Trapp family who fled their homeland to escape from Nazi rule.

The Wall - film, shot in Poland just before the Solidarity movement, about the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto.

To Kill A Mockingbird - story of a Southern lawyer who defends a black man accused of rape, and tries to explain the proceedings to his children and their friends.

Television Programming

I'll Fly Away - family drama which explores civil and human rights issues during the 1960's.

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HOLOCAUST CHRONOLOGY

Prior to 1933

Jews had been assimilated into German society since the first half of the 19th century. They had become prominent in industry, culture, and the arts.

At the same time, a strong tradition of anti-Semitism that prevailed in Germany since the Middle Ages remained alive.

National Socialism doctrine held that the Germanic or Nordic race was destined by "natural superiority" to rule mankind. Jews were considered parasites, "a world plague to be eradicated."

1933

- January 30 Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany.
- February 28 Mass arrests of Communists, suspension of rights, declaration of a State of Emergency.
- March 5 Hitler receives strong vote of confidence from the German people in the Reichstag (legislature) elections.
- March 23 First concentration camp opens at Dachau.
- April 1 Jehovah's Witnesses pamphlets banned from circulation. The German government called for a boycott of all Jewish shops and businesses.
- April 7 Law for Reestablishment of the Civil Service results in firing of Jewish professors from universities.
- May 10 Books by Jews and opponents of Nazism are burned publicly.

Deathly Silence: Ordinary People During the Holocaust

July 14 Law passed providing involuntary sterilization of Gypsies, "social misfits", the disabled, Afro-Germans, and Jews.

August 21-24 Confiscation and burning of bibles and other Christian literature of Jehovah's Witnesses

1934

August 2 After the death of German President Hindenburg--Hitler becomes Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

October First major wave of arrests of homosexuals throughout Germany.

1935

March 17 Hitler's army invades the Rhineland.

April Jehovah's Witnesses are banned from all civil service jobs and are arrested.

Summer "No Jews" signs placed around towns and cities, outside shops, restaurants, and public recreation facilities.

Sept. 15 Nurenberg laws issued. These laws deprived Jews of German citizenship.

1936

- March 7 Jews no longer have the right to participate in German elections.
- July 12 First German Gypsies arrested and deported to Dachau Concentration Camp.
- August 1 Olympic Games open in Berlin. Anti-Semitic signs are removed and homosexual bars reopened until the games are over.
- 600 Gypsies are arrested and sent to internment camp at Berlin-Marzahn.
- August 28 Mass arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany. Most are sent to concentration camps.

1937

- November 16 Jews can obtain passports for travel outside of Germany only in special cases.
- Dec. 14 Law implemented against migrant and unemployed Gypsies who were considered "enemies of the state" and were considered "antisocials who threatened the community by their existence." Those arrested were detained in concentration camps.

1938

- March 13 Austria annexed by Germany.
- April 4 Himmler directive requires men convicted of homosexual crimes to be transferred to concentration camps.
- June 12-18 One thousand Gypsies in Germany and Austria are

arrested in Operation "Work Shy".

October 5 Jewish passports marked with the letter "J".

October 28-29 18,000 Polish stateless Jews expelled from Germany.

Nov. 9 "Kristallnacht" ("Night of Broken Glass"). The Nazi-organized program of violence and vandalism against Jewish businesses and homes.

Nov. 15 All Jewish children expelled from public schools. Segregated Jewish schools are created.

Dec 2-3 All Gypsies required to register with the police.

Dec. 8 Himmler issues a decree recommending the "resolution of the Gypsy question based on its racial nature."

1939

March 15 German troops invade Czechoslovakia.

April 7 Jehovah's Witnesses are arrested throughout Germany. Those who renounce their faith are released.

June 2,000 Gypsies from Austria are arrested. Men above age 16 are sent to Dachau, Buchenwald, and Mauthausen concentration camps. Women above 15 are deported to Ravensbruck concentration camp.

Cuba and the United States refuses to accept Jewish refugees aboard the ship "S.S. St. Louis". Ship is forced to return to Europe.

Sept. 1 Hitler signs the order for the "euthanasia" program also known as T4. Under this program, all institutionalized

physically, mentally, and emotionally handicapped persons were deliberately killed. The program was eventually extended to include Jews.

- Sept. 3 Great Britain and France declare war on Germany.
- Sept. 7 German army invades Poland. World War II begins.
- Nov. 23 Jewish star introduced throughout occupied Poland. After December 1, 1941, all Jews above 12 years old were required to wear a white arm band, imprinted with the blue Star of David. Later Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David sewn to the right side of their clothing in front and back.
- December Euthanasia murders begin in children's unit at Brandenburg-Gorden. Approximately 3,000 children are killed.

1940

- April 9 Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
- April 30 First ghetto created in Lodz.
- May 10 Germany invades Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France.
- May 15 Romania passes a law which condemns adult Jews to forced labor.
- May 15-18 2,800 Gypsies deported from Germany to the ghetto in Lublin.
- May 29 Jehovah's Witness organizations are banned in occupied Holland.
- June 10 Italy enters war as Germany's ally.
- October Jehovah's Witnesses are arrested in Belgium and

deported to concentration camps.

1941

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| March | Bulgaria enters the war as Germany's ally. |
| March 7 | German Jews used as forced labor. |
| March 22 | Gypsy and Afro-German children are prohibited from attending German public schools. |
| March 24 | Germany invades North Africa. |
| April 6 | Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece. |
| May 15 | Romania passes law condemning adult Jews to forced labor |
| June 22 | Germany invades Soviet Union. |
| July 31 | Heydrich is in charge of the deportation of European Jews -- the "Final Solution" begins. |
| Sept 15 | The Nazi regime requires all Jews above the age of six to wear the Jewish Star for identification purposes. |
| Sept. 23 | First gassing experiments on Soviet prisoners of war and Polish prisoners in Auschwitz. |
| Sept 28-29 | Massacre of nearly 34,000 Jews at the Babi Yar ravine outside Kiev. |
| October | Theresienstadt ghetto opens. |
| Oct.-Nov. | First deportations of German and Austrian Jews to Lodz |

and Riga ghettos.

- Dec. 7 Japan attacks Pearl Harbor.
- Dec. 8 Chelmno Killing center begins operations.
- Dec. 11 Germany declares war on the United States.

1942

- Jan. 20 Wannsee Conference in Berlin to implement the plan of the "final solution."
- March 1 Sobibor killing center begins operations.
- March 17 Belzec killing center begins operations.
- June 1 Introduction of Jewish Stars in France and Holland.
Treblinka killing center begins operations.
- July 28 Jewish resistance fighting organizations set up in Warsaw Ghetto.
- Oct. 4 All Jews still in concentration camps in Germany are sent to Auschwitz killing center.
- Nov. 7 Allied invasion and liberation of North Africa.
- Nov. 25 First deportations of Jews from Norway to Auschwitz.
- Dec. 16 Himmler issues decree for deportation of "all Roma Gypsies, part Gypsies, and all non-German Gypsies of Balkan origin" to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

1943

Deathly Silence: Ordinary People During the Holocaust

- Feb 2 Deportation of all Gypsies remaining in Germany to Auschwitz.
- April 19 Warsaw ghetto revolt begins.
- Anglo-American Bermuda conference on refugees opens. The allied decision is not to rescue the Jews from occupied Europe.
- June 11 Himmler orders liquidation of all Polish ghettos. This results in mass deportations to Treblinka and other killing centers in Poland.
- July 24 Revolt in Italy; Mussolini deposed.
- Aug. 2 Armed revolt begins in Treblinka killing center.
- Sept. 8 Italy signs armistice with Allies.
- Oct. 13. Italy declares war on Germany.
- Oct. 14 Armed revolt begins in Sobibor killing center.
- 1944**
- March 19 Germany invades Hungary.
- June 6 D-Day, the launching of the Western Allied invasion of Europe.
- July 20 German officers attempt to assassinate Hitler.
- July 24 Soviet troops liberate Majdanek concentration camp.
- Oct. 7 Prisoner revolt at Auschwitz-Birkenau results in the

blowing up of one crematorium.

Nov. Last deportations from Theresienstadt ghetto to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

1945

January 17 Evacuation of Auschwitz; prisoners begin death march. This transfer of prisoners came after Himmler issued the order to evacuate the camps in eastern Europe. Over a third of the 700,000 persons who began the march in the middle of winter lost their lives.

Jan. 26 Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz.

April 11 Buchenwald liberated by U. S. troops.

April 28 Dachau liberated by U. S. troops

April 30 Hitler commits suicide.

May 5 Mauthausen liberated by U. S. troops.

May 7 Germany's unconditional surrender; end of the war in Europe.

May 8 Theresienstadt liberated.

Aug 6 First atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Aug. 15 Japan surrenders; end of World War II.

November Nuremberg Trials begin in Nuremberg, Germany and last until October, 1946. High-ranking former Nazi leaders were put on trial.

After the War

Efforts to settle displaced victims.

Deathly Silence: Ordinary People During the Holocaust

Hunting former Nazi officials.

Division of Europe

Deathly Silence: Ordinary People During the Holocaust

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