

A Brief History of the HOLOCAUST

A Reference Tool



Musée Holocauste Montréal
Montreal Holocaust Museum

2018 edition



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Montreal Holocaust Museum

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01 Montreal Holocaust Museum



Facilities & Services:

The Museum is located in the main lobby of 1 Cummings Square

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For Museum hours, group tours and admission fees, please contact our reservation agent at (514) 345-2605, ext. 3291.

The Museum is accessible to individuals with reduced mobility and/or hearing impairment. All films can be viewed with French or English subtitles.

TO LEARN, TO FEEL, TO REMEMBER

The Montreal Holocaust Museum educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the Holocaust*, while sensitizing the public to the universal perils of antisemitism*, racism, hate and indifference. Through its Museum, commemorative programs and educational initiatives, the MHM promotes respect for diversity and the sanctity of human life.

The museum's collection is unique in Canada. It holds more than 12,900 items to date, many of which are historic documents, photographs and objects that belonged to Jewish families from Europe. The Museum acquires new objects that document the life of Jewish communities before the war and the Holocaust*.

The Montreal Holocaust Museum tells the story of the Holocaust from the unique perspective of Montreal survivors. The Museum brings to life the human story of the Holocaust through survivor testimony, artefacts and historical archival material. Visitors learn the history of the Holocaust, and gain an understanding of events in Quebec, Canada and the world during that time. They are encouraged to consider the implications of prejudice, racism and anti-Semitism.

The exhibition tells the story of Jewish communities before, during and after the Holocaust. It explores the terrible tragedy in which so many lives were lost, and the horrors that were witnessed by the few who survived.

Montreal became home to a large survivor population after the Second World War. As of 2018, approximately 4,000 survivors resided in the Montreal area.

Introduction 02



The Holocaust was the systematic persecution and murder of 6 million Jews, organized by the Nazi State and its collaborators from 1933 to 1945.

In addition to committing genocide against the Jews, the Nazis committed genocide against the Roma and the Sinti.

Other marginalized groups were also persecuted during this period: people with disabilities, homosexuals, Slavic people, political opponents, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Holocaust* was not an accident in history. Individuals, organisations and governments made choices that promoted and permitted discrimination, prejudice, hatred which ultimately, allowed mass murder to take place.

Teaching history of the Holocaust* demands a high level of sensitivity and a keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. This guide provides background material to the Permanent Exhibition of the Montreal Holocaust Museum. Pre-visit preparation will reinforce your students' ability to connect to the subject matter, as they encounter artefacts, photographs and Holocaust survivor video testimonies.

This guide presents the history of the Holocaust* in five parts: Historical Context, Holocaust Chronology, Artefacts, Glossary and Bibliography. The definitions of terms followed by an asterisk (*) can be found in the glossary.

As an educator, you can select the content that speaks to your students' interests in order to ensure that their visit to the Montreal Holocaust Museum is a memorable one.

Jewish man arrested by two SS officers, during the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Poland, Circa 1943.

03 Historical Background



Samuel Rabitchek, his wife Ida, Mitzie Sicher and her husband Ernest stand in front of Samuel Robitchek's shop in the 1920's. Czech Republic.

Pre-Holocaust Jewish Communities

Jews have a long history in Europe. By 1939, they had lived in Europe for more than 2,000 years.

The first evidence of a Jewish community in Germany dates back to the 4th century in the city of Cologne. The Jewish communities of Germany grew over the years and at times thrived both culturally and economically. At other times they endured extremely harsh decrees, defamation and ghettoization. By the 20th century, many Jews were well integrated into German society, and active in industry, commerce, arts, sciences and politics. Overall, they represented less than 1% of the German population (not more than 500,000 people).

There was great diversity within the various Jewish communities, with respect to economic situation, level of education, political affiliation, and religious observance. There is not one sweeping definition that describes all pre-Holocaust Jews or Jewish communities.

The first Jewish community in North America was established in 1654, when twenty-three Jews arrived in New Amsterdam (New York) expulsion from Brazil. Jews settled in Canada shortly thereafter and the first synagogue was founded in Montreal in 1768. Before the Second World War, there were about 131,000 Jews in Canada, primarily in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg.

Rise of Nazism

World War I (1914-1918) ended with the defeat of Germany by France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States.

The Treaty of Versailles (1919), a peace agreement, forced Germany to accept moral and financial responsibility for the unprecedented destruction that had devastated Europe. Severe restrictions limited its armed forces, and the production and use of heavy weapons. Germany was ordered to pay reparations and to give up a significant part of its territory and all of its colonies. The Treaty was perceived by the Germans as unduly harsh, a belief that was later exploited by the Nazis*. Military and right-wing leaders propagated the idea that the German army had been betrayed by the Communists, liberals and Jews.

The Weimar Republic, a democratic parliamentary republic, was formed in the midst of the post-war chaos. There was widespread economic turmoil in Germany throughout the 1920s. Inflation and unemployment rose to unprecedented levels, and this led to political instability. Ultimately, the Germans lost confidence in their government.

In 1919, German First World War veterans formed the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi Party), which Adolf Hitler became the leader of in 1921. Nazi* ideology was based on militaristic, racial, antisemitic and nationalist policies. After failing to seize power in an armed coup in 1923, the Nazis* turned to electoral politics, exploiting Germany's fragile democracy.

The Great Depression of 1929, which had an impact on the world economy, created even higher levels of mass unemployment, driving many Germans to seek radical solutions and turning to the new Nazi* party.

In the 1930 federal elections, the Nazi* party increased its number of seats from 12 to 107, while actively spreading propaganda, staging street fights and further destabilising Germany.

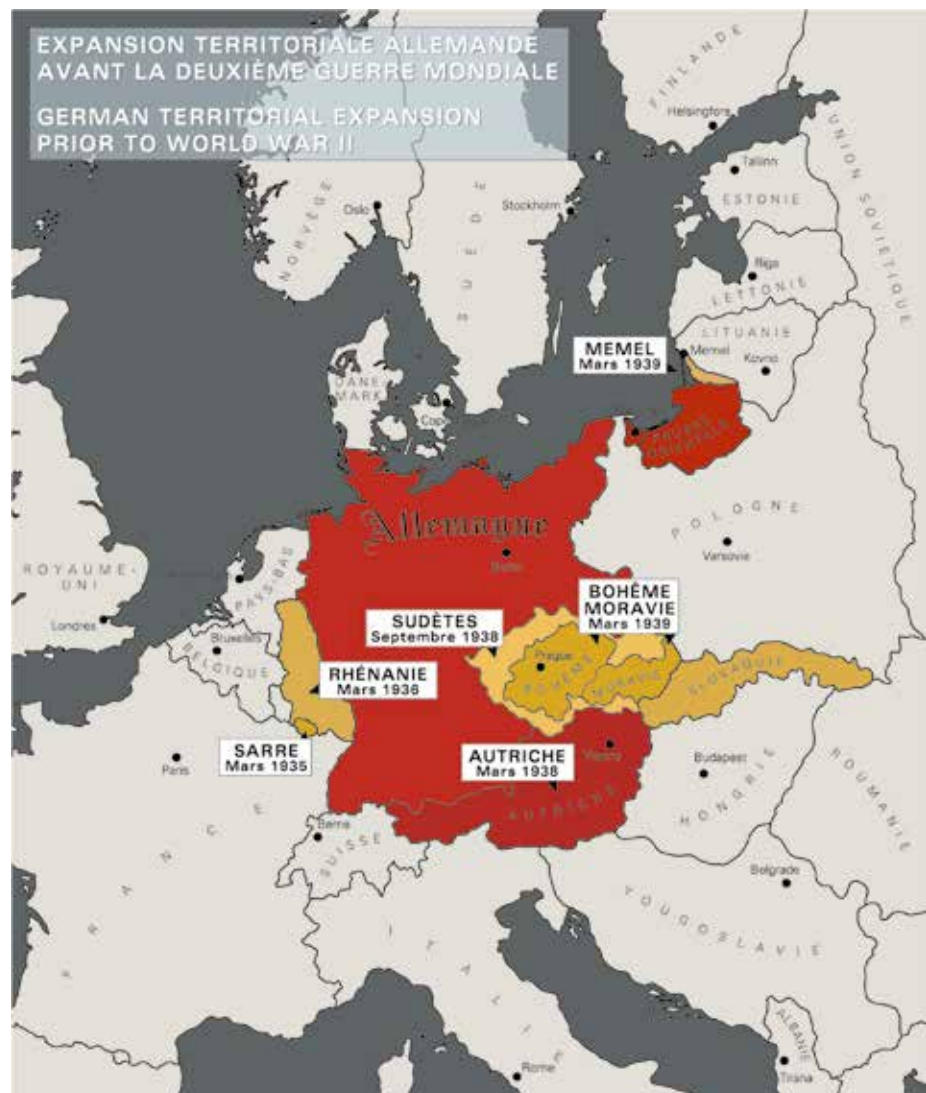


This photograph shows a Jewish shop destroyed during the pogrom of Kristallnacht. This pogrom against the Jews was organized by the Nazis on November 9th and 10th, 1938. This picture was taken on November 11th in Magdeburg, Germany.

Adolf Hitler Comes to Power

In 1933, the Nazi party and its leader Adolf Hitler received 32% of the votes during the federal election. The Nazis' inflammatory combination of patriotism and racism drew upon historical myths of a racially pure 'Aryan' nation that offered simplistic solutions, pledging to end economic instability and restore Germany's role as a world power.

On January 30th, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor, meaning head of the German government. After President Hindenburg's death in 1934, Hitler became President. He was the head of state and thus, the omnipotent ruler of Germany. Hitler then declared himself ultimate dictator of Germany, and the Third Reich began. He used all the resources at his disposal to expand his racist, antisemitic, anti-democratic, and anti-communist ideology. Hitler introduced anti-Jewish legislation through the infamous Nuremberg Laws*, which excluded Jews from the social, economic and political life of the country.



Racist and Antisemitic Ideology

Antisemitism* is an ideology and form of racism based on hatred and discrimination of the Jews. Although it has been a part of Christian European culture for centuries, until the 19th century it mainly involved religious, political and economic discrimination.

Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle") portrays Jews as Germany's chief enemy, and the primary cause of its economic and social problems.

Book burnings took place at universities across Germany in May 1933. Literature by Jews and non-Jews considered "un-German" was destroyed. Examples of "un-german" authors included Ernest Hemmingway, Thomas Mann and Helen Keller. Discriminatory policies against "degenerate" artists and musicians led many of them to flee.

Based on popular pseudo-scientific theories, the Jews were for the first time, defined as a race rather than as a religious group. The Nuremberg Laws* (1935) provided the legal foundation for the Nazis' exclusion and degradation of Jews. The alleged inferiority of Jews people was no longer based on religious differences, but on supposed inherent biological defects.

The Nazis* divided humans into racial categories defined by genetics, with "Aryans"* (Germanic peoples) seen as a biologically superior "Master race", destined to rule the world. The "inferior" races included the Slavs, Roma and Sinti*, and Blacks. The Jews were placed at the bottom of this racial hierarchy. To ensure "racial purity", Jews were forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with Germans.

From 1933 to 1935, Jewish businesses were boycotted. Jews were barred from the civil service and liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, professors). Eventually, Jews were denied German citizenship.

From November 9 to 10, 1938 (*Kristallnacht*), the Nazis* unleashed their first state-organized and coordinated campaign of terror against the Jews of Germany and Austria (which Germany had recently annexed). During *Kristallnacht*, 267 synagogues were destroyed, Jewish stores were looted and homes were ransacked. Over thirty thousand Jewish men and boys were arrested and sent to concentration camps*, most of them to Dachau.

Never before had the Nazis* unleashed this level of mass violence. *Kristallnacht* was followed by a series of decrees designed to ruthlessly complete the exclusion of Jews from participation in German economy and society. The persecution of Jews continued to escalate, as the world's response remained minimal and ineffective.



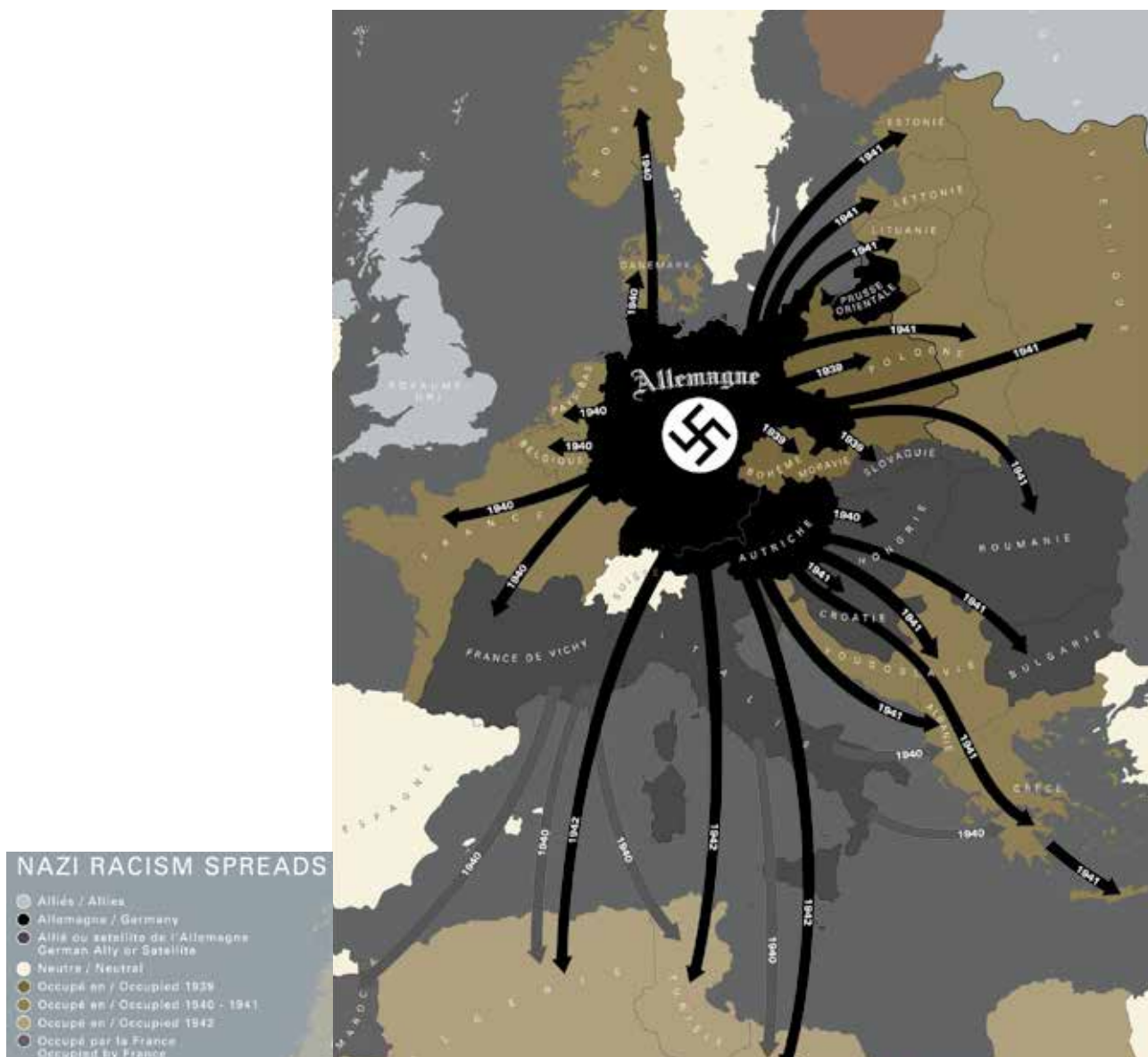
Walter Absil (born Bondy) and his sister Liesl Bondy in Belgium, in front of an antisemitic poster about "Le complot Juif", 1941. The "V" for victory on their right was the symbol of the Belgian resistance.

Second World War

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, bringing Poland's allies*, Great Britain and France, into the war. Germany's technological superiority resulted in Poland's defeat in less than one month.

From 1940 to 1941, the Nazis* attacked and defeated Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Yugoslavia and Greece. Despite the non-aggression pact signed between the two countries, German forces attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941.

The Second World War was fought between the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) and the Allies*: the British Empire (including Canada), France, the Soviet Union and the United States (who joined in December 1941, following the bombardment of Pearl Harbor). On the European front, the Second World War ended with Germany's unconditional surrender on May 7, 1945 to the Western Allies*, and on May 9, 1945 to the Soviets. Japan's formal surrender came on September 2, 1945.



Ghettos

After Germany invaded Poland in 1939, approximately two million Polish Jews came under German control. Almost immediately, Jews were moved from their homes into ghettos*, usually located in poor areas of towns or cities. Their goods were also confiscated. Jews were forced to live in guarded, overcrowded and unsanitary areas. Many of them suffered or perished from hunger, disease, brutal treatment and forced labour.

The *Judenrat* (Nazi-appointed Jewish council) was charged with carrying out orders issued by the Nazis* for the daily operation of the ghettos*. The *Judenrat* tried to provide a desperate, starving and overcrowded population with housing, food, health care and sanitation. In addition, they were responsible for supplying the Nazis* with a labour force and eventually, filling deportation* quotas. Failure to comply with Nazi* orders meant certain death. Hundreds of ghettos* were established across Europe, with more than 400 in Poland alone (for example, in Lodz and Warsaw).

Despite the inhumane conditions, the ghetto population struggled to provide for its physical and spiritual needs, resisting Nazi* efforts to dehumanize them. Orphanages, soup kitchens, and medical care services were established. Underground schools, as well as religious and cultural activities continued to operate, demonstrating the population's resourcefulness and determination to survive.

The Nazis* viewed most ghettos* as a temporary measure. By 1944, all ghettos* had been liquidated, and the remaining population deported to concentration and death camps*.



Deportation of Jews from the Lodz ghetto. There were two waves of deportation in Lodz, one in 1942, and one in 1944. Lodz was one of the biggest ghettos in Poland.



Dachau concentration camp, Germany. This model-camp was in operation from 1933 to 1945.

Concentration Camps

Between 1933 and 1945, Nazi Germany established a series of detention centres to imprison and murder “enemies of the state”. The first camp, Dachau, was built in 1933. The Nazis deported political opponents and Jews there, particularly after Kristallnacht. The camps were an essential part of the systematic oppression by the Nazis*. The extensive camp system included over 20,000 camps and sub-camps, ranging from transit camps to forced labour camps, and concentration camps*. Disease, starvation, overcrowding and unsanitary conditions, as well as torture and death were a daily part of concentration camp* life. Dachau, Bergen-Belsen and Ravensbrück are examples of concentration camps*.

Transit camps were established in Western Europe where Jews were held prior to being transported to killing centres* in the East. Deportees were transported in overcrowded, filthy cattle cars without windows, food, water, or bathrooms. Many died during the journey.

In the beginning (1933-1936), the majority of camp inmates were political and ideological opponents of the regime (such as Communists and Social Democrats). Later (1936-1942), concentration camps* were expanded to include non-political prisoners, like Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the handicapped, individuals accused of “asocial” or socially deviant behaviour, and Soviet POWs.

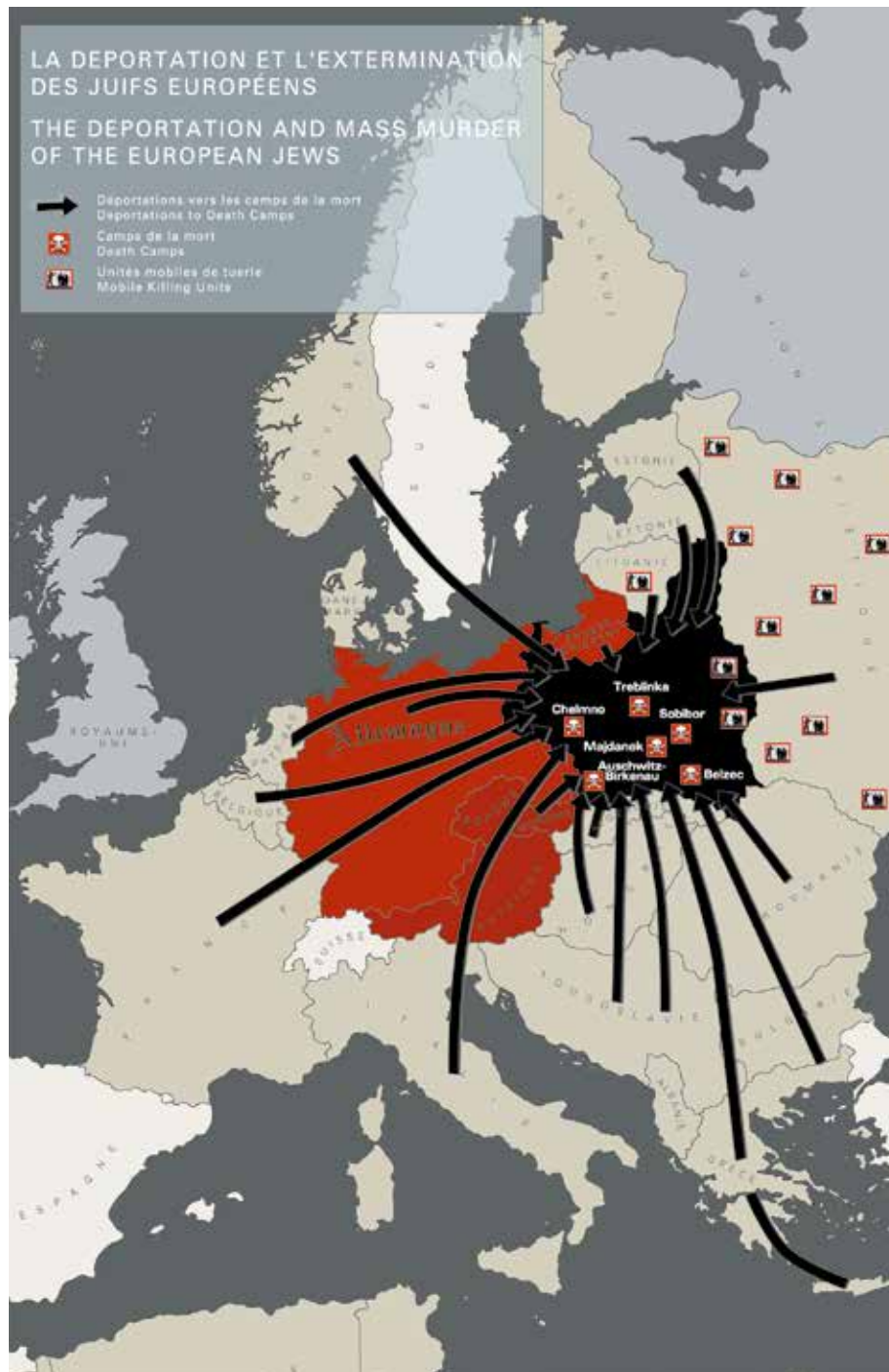
The “Final Solution” and the Creation of Killing Centres

The “Final Solution” is the Nazi code name for the deadly plan for all the Jews of Europe. Hitler convinced his allies that Germany’s survival depended on the annihilation of all Jews.

The mass murder of the Jews began in 1941. Death squads, known as the Einsatzgruppen*, followed the advancing German army on the Eastern front. Their primary mission was to annihilate the local Jewish population, mostly through mass shootings. Approximately 1.3 million Jews were murdered in this manner. However, this technique was deemed ineffective by the Nazi authorities, as it was too expensive and psychologically disturbing to some soldiers.

The Wannsee Conference was held near Berlin on January 20, 1942. High-ranking German officials convened to deliberate the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question”*. For the first time in history, the destruction of an entire people had become official government policy. The means developed at this conference matched the ambitions of the Nazi leaders.

Starting in 1942, the Nazis* established six killing centres* all located in Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Gas chambers were devised to increase the efficiency of the killings and to make the process more impersonal for the perpetrators. Two-and-a-half million people perished in the gas chambers of these camps. The Nazis rendered mass murder an industrial process.



Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest concentration camp and killing centre, consisting of 48 sub-camps. At its peak, over 10,000 people were murdered daily. By the end of the war, fatalities had reached 1.5 million.



Picture of the Bielski group of partisans which included men and women. They were fighting against the Nazis in the Polish forest. They were led by four brothers: Tuvia, Alexander, Asael and Aaron Bielski. Circa 1943-1944.

Jewish Resistance

Individually and in groups, Jews participated in both planned and spontaneous resistance to the Germans. Despite overwhelming odds, Jews fought against the Nazis* and their collaborators in ghettos*, concentration camps* and killing centres*. Examples of armed resistance include the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (April 1943), and revolts at the killing centres* of Treblinka (August 1943) and Sobibor (October 1943).

Jews joined partisan units (both Jewish, like the Bielski, and non-Jewish, like the Żegota group in Poland) that were formed in the forests of Eastern Europe. They functioned with minimal arms, but with support from the surrounding population. Jews were also

active in underground resistance movements throughout Western Europe. It is important to note that resistance cannot be measured by armed attacks alone. Jews endlessly struggled to maintain their Jewish identity and their humanity. Cultural and educational activities, the preservation of Jewish institutions and clandestine religious activities were some acts of spiritual resistance against the Nazi* policy of genocide*.

Nazi collaborators

The Nazis* could never have carried out their deadly scheme without help from others. Governments cooperated in the arrest and deportation* of Jews to killing centres*, and in several cases committed atrocities against Jewish citizens within their own national borders. Such collaboration was a crucial element of the “Final Solution”*.

Amongst the collaborators were the French Vichy government, the Ustasha government in Croatia, the Norwegian government; Lithuanian, Estonian, Ukrainian, Latvian, and Belorussian pro-Nazi units, as well as paramilitary organizations such as the Hlinka Guard in Slovakia, the Iron Guard in Romania, and the Arrow Cross in Hungary.

Rescuers

Despite the widespread indifference of Europeans and the participation of collaborators, thousands risked their lives to save Jews. These remarkable individuals defied the Nazis*, risking constant danger of discovery, imprisonment, and death. They proved that ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary deeds. Some actions of the rescuers involved hiding Jews (sometimes whole families) providing identity documents (which allowed Jews to flee), organizing the departure of Jews, etc... By helping Jews, they risked not only their own lives, but that of their families as well. Rescuers acted in the firm belief that this was their moral obligation.

The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Centre in Jerusalem has honoured more than 20,000 such individuals, designated as the “Righteous Among the

Nations”.

Some exceptional communities, ranging from the French village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon to the government of Denmark, demonstrated courage by actively defying the Nazis* and saving Jewish lives.

Liberation

The Allied forces (the Soviet, British, Canadian and American armies) liberated death and concentration camps* as they advanced against Germany between July 1944 and May 1945.

By the end of the war, six million Jews, two-thirds of European Jewry, had been murdered by the Nazis* and their collaborators. The nightmare of the war was over, but this new reality brought unique hardships to the surviving Jews. Unlike other liberated inmates, most attempts by Jewish survivors to find remaining family members ended in failure. The once vibrant Jewish communities of Europe had been destroyed. Many Jews, dispossessed of their homes and properties, had nowhere to go.



UNRRA transport of survivors to the DP camps. 1945.

Displaced Persons Camps

Displaced Persons (DP) camps* were established for the Jews who were unable to return to their former lives. In many instances, the Allies* were forced to use former concentration camps*, such as Bergen-Belsen as DP camps*. Many homeless Holocaust* survivors migrated westward to territories liberated by the Allies*, where they were placed in DP camps*.

Many of those who returned to their countries of origin encountered indifference and/or hostility. In Poland, antisemitism persisted and there were a number of pogroms*. The most notable pogrom* was in Kielce in 1946, where 42 Jews were killed. This convinced the majority of Jews that they had no future in Poland, and many of them fled to DP camps*, waiting for an opportunity to leave.

Survivors in the DP camps* returned to pre-war community models, establishing schools, religious institutions, social services, and political and cultural organisations.

Those attempting to immigrate to North America faced restrictive quotas, and many of them spent extended periods in DP camps*. In 1948, Canada began to open its doors to immigrants, and in five years, more than 200,000 displaced persons entered the country, including about 25,000 Holocaust* survivors. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, a new destination became available to survivors. The vast majority of DP camps closed by 1951, but some remained open until 1957.

Pursuit of Justice: Nuremberg Trials

The Nuremberg Trials* (1945-1946) set in motion sentencing of leading Nazi* war criminals. The trials exposed the world to the horrors of the Nazi genocide*. The so-called “Nuremberg follow-up trials”, which took place up until 1949, prosecuted other parties involved, such as medical doctors, legal practitioners, the SS*, police, industrialists and high-ranking government officials.

Eventually, approximately 150 German Nazi* leaders were convicted and 12 were executed. However, the majority evaded justice. A number of them escaped to South America, including Dr. Mengele, notorious for his medical experiments in Auschwitz. Leading German Nazi* scientists were invited to work in the United States and the Soviet Union. Many continued to live in Germany, while others entered Western countries under assumed identities.

Eichmann Trial

Adolf Eichmann, head of the Gestapo's* section for Jewish affairs, was captured by the Israeli Secret Service in Argentina in 1960. Responsible for the deportation* of over 1.5 million Jews to death camps, he was brought to Israel to stand trial for crimes against humanity. The Eichmann trial aroused considerable media interest, marking a turning point in Holocaust* awareness. It was also the first public opportunity for survivors to testify about their experiences.

Pursuit of Nazi Criminals

Simon Wiesenthal (1908-2005), a survivor of the Nazi killing centres*, dedicated his life to documenting the crimes committed during the Holocaust* and hunting down its perpetrators. He is credited with mobilizing Western governments to locate and prosecute escaped Nazis*, and with ferreting out nearly 1,100 Nazi* war criminals, including Adolf Eichmann.

In 1979, the United States created an Office of Special Investigations to prosecute Nazis* who hid their pasts in order to enter the country.

In 1985, the Canadian Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals (the Deschênes Commission) was established to examine issues relating to a number of Nazi* war criminals living in Canada, the circumstances under which they entered, and the legal means to hold them accountable for their crimes. Few were ever prosecuted.

International Justice

Sixty years after the Holocaust, the majority of Nazi* war criminals and their collaborators had not been brought to trial.

International rules established during the course of the Nuremberg Trials* formed the basis for the Convention of Human Rights and the Genocide* Convention. They remain inscribed in the constitution of the United Nations.

The Nuremberg Trials* continue to be a precursor for international tribunals established for the prosecution of war criminals. Post-WWII examples of international tribunals include those for crimes committed in Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia.

Holocaust Chronology 04



1933 -1939

January 30, 1933

Adolf Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany.

March 22, 1933

Dachau concentration camp* opened.

March 23, 1933

The German parliament passes the Enabling Act, which empowers Hitler to establish a dictatorship in Germany.

April 1, 1933

The Nazis* organize a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned businesses in Germany. Many of these boycotts continue throughout much of the 1930s.

April 7, 1933

The German government passes the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Service, which excludes Jews and political opponents from university and governmental positions. Similar laws enacted in the following weeks affect Jewish lawyers, judges, doctors and teachers.

May 10, 1933

Nazi* party members, students, professors and others burn books written by Jews, political opponents and other "undesirable" authors.

July 14, 1934

The Nazi* government enacted the Law on the Revocation of Naturalization, which deprived foreign and stateless Jews, as well as the Roma of German citizenship.

SS officer standing in front of burning buildings. 1945.

August 2, 1934	Following the death of German President von Hindenburg, Hitler proclaims himself Führer* (leader) in addition to his position as Chancellor, making him absolute dictator. Armed forces must now swear allegiance to him.
April 1, 1935	The Nazis* outlaw and arrest many Jehovah's Witnesses because of their refusal to swear allegiance to the state.
June 28, 1935	The Nazis* criminalize homosexuality and begin the persecution and imprisonment of homosexuals.
September 15, 1935	The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, and the Reich Citizenship Law are passed. Commonly known as the "Nuremberg Laws"*, these "racial" laws strip Jews of their German citizenship and forbid them from marrying people of "pure German blood". The Nazi* government later applies the laws to the Roma and to black people living in Germany.
July 12, 1936	The construction of Sachsenhausen concentration camp* begins.
August 1, 1936	The Olympics open in Berlin. Canada participates, as does the United States, reversing a 1933 vote by the U.S. Amateur Athletic Union to boycott the games.
July 15, 1937	The Buchenwald concentration camp* opened.
October 25, 1937	Hitler and Mussolini form the Rome-Berlin axis.
March 12 - 13, 1938	"Anschluss"* - Germany invades Austria and annexes it to the Third Reich*. All the antisemitic decrees are immediately implemented in Austria.
July 6 - 15, 1938	At the Evian Conference in France, 32 nations discuss the Jewish refugee crisis, yet take little action. Canada refuses to change its restrictive immigration policy.
August 17, 1938	German Jews whose names are not obviously Jewish are forced to include the name of "Israel" or "Sara" on official documents.
September 30, 1938	Eager to avoid war, Britain and France sign the Munich Pact which forces Czechoslovakia to cede its border areas of Sudetenland to Germany.
November 9 - 10, 1938	"Kristallnacht", state-organised attacks on Jewish businesses, synagogues, apartments occur across Germany and Austria. Jews were forced to pay fines of over a billion German marks.
November 12 - 15, 1938	German Jews are not allowed to pursue their professions, they are forced to close their businesses and their remaining assets are confiscated. Jews of all ages are banned from non-Jewish German schools.

December 1938	In a rescue mission called the Kindertransport, the British government allows 10,000 unaccompanied predominantly Jewish children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia entry into Britain. The majority of these children will never see their families again.
May 13 – June 17, 1939	Cuba, the United States and Canada refuse to accept over 900 refugees – almost all of whom are Jewish – on board of the ocean liner St. Louis, which is thus forced to return to Europe.
August 23, 1939	The Soviet Union and Germany sign the Ribbentrop-Molotov Non-Aggression Pact.
September 1, 1939	German troops invade Poland. Polish defences crumble under a massive land and air assault (Blitzkrieg*).
September 3, 1939	Britain and France declare war on Germany.
September 27-28, 1939	Warsaw falls. The capital of Poland, home to 350,000 Jews, surrenders to German troops after a three-week siege. The Jewish population of Poland is 3.35 million, which is 10% of its total population.
October 1939	As part of the “euthanasia” program*, doctors are instructed to kill physically or mentally “defective” German children and adults. Approximately 200,000 handicapped persons are murdered.
October 12, 1939	Germany begins deportation* of Austrian and Czech Jews to Poland.
October 28, 1939	The first Jewish ghetto* in Poland is established in Piotrkow.
November 23, 1939	In occupied Poland, visible Jewish badge sewn on clothing or worn as an armband becomes mandatory for Jews aged ten and older.



1940

- April 9 - June 22, 1940

Germany invades Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and France. Most of Western Europe is under Nazi* control.
- May 20, 1940

The Auschwitz concentration camp* opens outside the Polish city of Oswiecim.
- June 30, 1940

German authorities order the first major ghetto* in Lodz to be sealed, where at least 160,000 Jews are confined.
- November, 1940

5,000 Roma and Sinti are deported from Austria to the Lodz ghetto*.
- November 15, 1940

German authorities order the Warsaw ghetto* to be sealed off. It is the largest ghetto* both in terms of its surface area and population. The Germans confine more than 350,000 Jews – about 30% of the city's population – into about 2.4% of the city's total area.



1941

- April 6, 1941

Germany together with its Axis allies* invade Yugoslavia and Greece.
- June 22, 1941

German troops invade the Soviet Union and are followed by death squads (Einsatzgruppen*) who massacre over a million Jews.
- July 31, 1941

Hermann Goering, General Field Marshall of the Reich, orders Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police and the SD (Security Service) to take measures for the implementation of the "Final Solution"*.
- September 3, 1941

Zyklon-B, a poisonous gas, is used for the first time to mass murder Soviet prisoners-of-war at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- September 15, 1941

The Nazi* government decrees that Jews over the age of six residing in Germany must wear a yellow Star of David on their outer clothing in public at all times.
- September 29-30, 1941

33,000 Jews are massacred at Babi Yar, a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev.

December 7, 1941	Japan bombs Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next morning, the United States declares war on Japan.
December 8, 1941	Death by gas begins in Chelmno, one of the six Nazi killing centres,* using special mobile gas vans.
December 31, 1941	In the Vilna Ghetto*, Abba Kovner calls for Lithuanian armed resistance, leading to the first Jewish fighting force, the United Partisan Organisation.

1942



January 20, 1942	At a meeting in Wannsee, on the outskirts of Berlin, the guidelines for the implementation of the "Final Solution"* are established.
March 17, 1942	Killing in gas chambers begins at the Belzec killing centre*. An estimated 600,000 people, mostly Jews, are murdered before the camp is dismantled in December 1942.
March 27, 1942	The Germans begin the systematic deportation* of Jews from France, mostly to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
May 1942	Killing in gas chambers begins at the Sobibor killing centre*. By November 1943, an estimated 250,000 Jews are killed.
May 4, 1942	SS* officers perform the first selection of weak, sick and "unfit" prisoners for gassing at the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing centre*. Between May 1940 and January 1945, more than one million people are killed. Nine out of ten victims at the Auschwitz complex are Jewish.
July 15, 1942	The deportation* of Dutch Jews begins from the Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
July 23, 1942	Gassing operations at the Treblinka killing centre* begin. By November 1943, an estimated 750,000 Jews and at least 2,000 Roma* are murdered.
November 1942	Jan Karski, an emissary of the London-based Polish Government-in-Exile provides British and American leaders (including Churchill and Roosevelt) with eyewitness accounts of atrocities against the Jews. No action is taken.



1943

January, 1943	The German army surrenders at Stalingrad, a major turning point in World War II.
March 15, 1943	Deportation* of Jews from Salonika, Greece, to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
April 19 - May 16 1943	Jewish fighters resist the German attempt to liquidate the Warsaw Ghetto*. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is the first mass armed revolt in Nazi-occupied Europe.
April 19 - 30, 1943	At the Bermuda Conference, Britain and the United States discuss policies related to the rescue of European Jewry, but no concrete action is taken.
June 1943	Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS*, orders the deportation* of all Jews in the Baltic States and Belorussia to concentration camps*.
August 2, 1943	Jews at the Treblinka killing centre* stage a revolt, using weapons stolen from the SS* guards. Of those that escape, most are recaptured and killed.
Late summer, 1943	Armed resistance by Jews in the ghettos* of Bedzin, Bialystok, Czestochowa, Lvov, and Tarnow.
October 1, 1943	Non-Jewish Danish resistance groups launch a three-week operation that ultimately smuggles more than 7,900 Jews and their non-Jewish relatives to safety in Sweden.
October 14, 1943	Armed revolt at the Sobibor killing centre*. After the recapture and murder of most of the escapees, the camp is closed and dismantled.

1944



March 19, 1944

German troops occupy Hungary.

May 15 - July 9, 1944

Under the guidance of German SS* officers, Hungarian rural police units deport nearly 430,000 Jews from Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The majority are gassed upon arrival.

Through the monumental efforts of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and others, thousands of Hungarian Jews are saved.

June 6, 1944

British and American troops launch an invasion in Normandy, France, on what becomes known as D-Day.

June 22, 1944

A massive Soviet offensive destroys the German front in Belorussia.

July 23, 1944

Soviet troops liberate the Majdanek killing centre*. Surprised by the rapid Soviet advance, the Germans failed to destroy the camp and the evidence of mass murder.

1945



January 17, 1945

Germans begin evacuating Auschwitz-Birkenau. Approximately 66,000 prisoners are forced on "death marches" in which at least 15,000 people perish. About 7,650 prisoners, the sickest ones, are left behind.

January 27, 1945

Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz-Birkenau.

April 6-10, 1945

Death march of inmates of the Buchenwald concentration camp* in Germany.

April 11, 1945

U.S. troops liberate Buchenwald.

April 15, 1945

British and Canadian troops liberate the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp*.

April 29, 1945

U.S. troops liberate the Dachau concentration camp*.

April 30, 1945

Hitler commits suicide in his bunker in Berlin.

May 7-9, 1945

The German armed forces surrender unconditionally. The Allies* and the Soviet Union proclaim May 8 as Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day).

September 2, 1945

Japan surrenders. World War II is officially over.

November 14, 1945 -
October 1, 1946

An International Military Tribunal convenes on in Nuremberg, Germany. Twenty-two top Nazi * leaders stand trial for Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes.



1946 - 1985

July 4, 1946

Jews returning to their homes in Kielce, Poland, faced a violent pogrom*in which 42 Jews were killed. Several anti-Jewish pogroms break out across Poland. Following the violence, 100,000 Polish Jews leave their native country.

December 8, 1946 -
April 11, 1949

An American military court in Nuremberg tries 177 German industrialists who used slave labour and judges and doctors who took part in Nazi euthanasia programs*.

1948

Canada finally opens its doors to Jewish immigration. Between 1939 and 1944, only 4,000 Jews – or 6.5% of all immigrants – had been allowed entrance.

May 14, 1948

The State of Israel is established. Jewish immigration is unrestricted, and almost 700,000 are admitted, including more than two-thirds of the Jewish DP's from Europe.

April 10, 1961

Adolf Eichmann is put on trial in Israel for Crimes Against Humanity. He is convicted and sentenced to death.

February 1985

The Canadian government establishes a Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals.

Table - Number of Victims 05

Estimated Jewish Deaths in the Holocaust

Country	Jewish Population at Outset of WWII	Deaths
Austria	185,000	50,000
Belgium	65,700	28,900
Bohemia and Moravia	118,310	78,150
Bulgaria	50,000	0
Denmark	7,800	60
Estonia	4,500	1,500-2,000
Finland	2,000	7
France	350,000	77,320
Germany	566,000	134,500-141,500
Greece	77,380	60,000-67,000
Hungary	825,000	550,000-569,000
Italy	44,500	7,680
Latvia	91,500	70,000-71,500
Lithuania	168,000	140,000-143,000
Luxembourg	3,500	1,950
Netherlands	140,000	100,000
Norway	1,700	762
Poland	3,300,000	2,900,000-3,000,000
Romania	609,000	271,000-287,000
Slovakia	88,950	68,000-71,000
Soviet Union	3,020,000	1,000,000-1,100,000
Yugoslavia	78,000	56,200-63,300
Total*	9,796,840	5 596 029 - 5 860 129

Source : Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, Yad Vashem 1990.

* Of this total, 1.5 million victims were children.

The non-Jewish victims of the Nazis

Group	Deaths
Soviet war prisoners	3,000,000
Catholic Poles	3,000,000
Serbs (persecuted by the Croatian Ustasha)	700,000
Roma, Sinti and Lalleri	222,000 to 250,000
Germans (political opponents, clergy and other non-secular people, partisans)	80,000
Germans (Disabled)	70,000
Homosexuals	12,000
Jehovah Witnesses	2,500

Source : Collectif. 2005. Chronique de la Shoah. Nice: Association B'nai Brith Golda Mair. 765 p



Concentration Camp Clothing

Most concentration camp prisoners selected for forced labour were shaved, deloused, deprived of all their clothing and belongings, and given a uniform to wear. For women, this consisted of a thin blue and grey striped dress; for men a pyjama-like jacket and pair of pants of the same material. The more fortunate were also allocated hats and shoes. This clothing was their only protection against the harsh conditions of the Polish climate.

The jacket to the right belonged to Zigmunt Schick. Zigmunt was born in 1920 in Czechoslovakia, and moved to Antwerp, Belgium with his family when he was seven years old. In 1942, Zigmunt, like many Belgian Jews, was sent to the camp of Charleville, France. In October 1942, he was deported to Auschwitz where he was selected to work. Sent on a death march in January 1945, he managed to escape with two other prisoners. He was liberated wearing nothing but this jacket. Zigmunt was one of the first Jewish camp survivors to return to Belgium in May 1945. He immigrated to Canada in 1951 with his wife and their son.

The "Artefacts" section illustrates objects from the permanent collection. These tangible items provide the students with a personal connection to the historical narrative, and can be used in a classroom setting to demonstrate the events of the Holocaust.





The dress to the left belonged to Sonia Tencer. She was born in 1915 in Vilna, Poland, where her family had lived for hundreds of years. Sonia, whose parents owned a beer and lemonade factory, grew up surrounded by brothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

During the Holocaust*, Sonia and her husband were forced into the Vilna Ghetto* with the rest of their family, where they lived for two years until the ghetto* was liquidated in 1943. Sonia was sent to a forced labour camp with her sister-in-law and a close friend. These three women made a pact that they would stay together. This mutual support helped them survive the severe conditions in the various camps to which they were sent: Stutthof, Kaiserwald, Strassenhof and Bigoz. They were forced to do hard manual labour, barely surviving on extremely meagre food rations. By the end of the war, Sonia weighed only 80 pounds. Sonia and her two friends survived, as did her parents, who had been hidden by Poles. Sonia remarried in 1949 and immigrated to Montreal.



Talit (prayer shawl) of a Holocaust Victim from Montreal

This tallit (prayer shawl) belonged to Harry Cohen, the only Canadian victim of Auschwitz hitherto known. Born in Lodz, Poland in 1891, Harry came to Canada in 1919 and became a scrap dealer in Montreal. He was a regular in the synagogue of Roy Street, where he wore the tallit during his prayers. Following the death of his mother, Harry returned to Poland in the summer of 1939 to settle her estate. In September, the invasion of Poland by Germany triggers the start of the war and Harry was no longer able to return to Canada where his four children were waiting. He was later deported to Auschwitz. He was never seen again and is presumed dead in the camp.

In 1945, a Polish woman who had hidden him before his deportation, contacted Harry's children in Montreal. She returned their father's tallit, siddur (prayer book) and some traveler's checks that he had not signed.

Identifying the Jews

As anti-Jewish persecution increased, new measures were introduced to isolate and victimise German Jews. In 1938, two laws were passed stating that all official documents was to be marked with a "J", and the name "Sara" or "Israel" was to be added to the holder's given name, singling out Jews and making them easy targets for control and humiliation.

This Identity Card was issued in 1939 and belonged to Maria Louise Cahn. The red "J" and the first name "Sara" identified Maria as a Jew.

In November 1938, after Kristallnacht, Maria's husband, Karl was arrested and sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp. Maria's mother wrote to Canadian businessman William Birks, who had met Karl briefly many years earlier, and asked him to sponsor them as immigrants. Canada's policy regarding Jewish immigration was very restrictive at the time, so Mr. Birks wrote to Prime Minister MacKenzie King. The Prime Minister replied that there were difficulties involved, "particularly at the present time, when conditions in Europe have increased manifold the numbers of those seeking permits for entry into Canada, and when economic and other conditions in the Dominion itself make it more than ever necessary that particular care and scrutiny be observed in the granting of applications". He did, however, refer the matter to the Minister of Mines and Resources, who approved their admission. Karl was released because of this approval, and Maria landed in Halifax on March 5, 1939 with her mother, husband, and three sons.



Portrait of a Canadian Holocaust survivor, Jennie Lifschitz

Jennie Lifschitz was born in Montreal on July 8, 1924 to Abraham Lifschitz and Paola Bloomberg. A few months after Jennie's birth, her parents separated, and Paola returned to Libau (Liepaja), Latvia taking the children with her. Six years later, in January, 1931, the two older children returned to their father in Montreal, while Jennie stayed with her mother.

Following the Nazi occupation of Latvia on June 29, 1941, anti-Jewish measures were put into place immediately. Jennie's mother and remaining family in Libau were shot on the beach at Skede and buried in mass graves. Jennie was sent to the Libau ghetto where she stayed until October 1943. She was 18 when she was deported to the Kaizerwald concentration camp, where she became prisoner number 56-164. Due to her experience in railroad work, she was picked out for labour and transferred to another camp to work on German railroads. As the Soviet front was approaching, the Nazis closed the camp and moved the prisoners to another. Jennie was finally liberated by the British army at the Neustadt-Holstein camp on May 3, 1945.

Jennie returned to Canada on March 2, 1946. After rejoining her father and siblings in Montreal, she assisted him in his store. On March 7, 1947, she had her first child, a daughter, whom she named Paula after her mother.



07 Glossary



Children in the concentration camp of Buchenwald, Germany. Circa 1944.

Allies: The nations – Canada, Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States – that joined together in the war against Germany and its partners – Italy and Japan (known as the Axis powers). Later, the Axis was joined by Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

Anschluss: The annexation of Austria by Germany on March 13, 1938.

Antisemitism: A hostile and discriminatory doctrine and attitude with regard to the Jews. Particular form of racism.

Aryan: The Nazis* took a term used to describe an ancient tribe and applied it to themselves, falsely claiming that their own “Aryan race” was superior to all other racial groups. The term “non-Aryan” was used to designate Jews, part-Jews and others of supposedly inferior race.

Blitzkrieg: German for “lightning war”, used to describe the speed, efficiency and intensity of Germany’s military attack against its opponents.

Concentration Camp: Any internment camp for holding “enemies of the Third Reich”*. The construction of concentration camps began almost immediately after Hitler came to power. Thousands of camps were established during the war.

Death Camp: Killing centres established in occupied Poland for the mass murder of Jews and other victims, primarily by poison gas. These were Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.

Death Marches: Trapped between the Soviets in the East and the Allies* in the West, the Nazis* emptied concentration camps*, forcing inmates to march long distances toward camps in Germany. Facing intolerable conditions and brutal treatment, thousands died en route as a result of mistreatment, starvation and shootings.

Deportation: The removal of people from their homes for purposes of “resettlement”. The Jews of Europe were designated for deportation to ghettos*, concentration camps* and killing centres.

Displaced Persons (DP) Camps: Camps established after World War II for those who had been liberated but could not return to their former homes. Tens of thousands of Jews remained in the camps for a number of years until they were able to immigrate to other countries.

Einsatzgruppen (German, literally “operational squads”): Mobile killing units of the Nazi SS*.

Euthanasia: Nazi* euphemism for the deliberate killing of the institutionalised physically and mentally handicapped.

“Final Solution of the Jewish Question”: Nazi* euphemism for the extermination of European Jewry.

Führer: Leader in German.

German Antisemitism: A nineteenth century “racial science” that added a false and dangerous “biological” dimension to the traditional hatred of Jews. Jews were stigmatized as being different and of an inferior race that could never evolve. They were falsely accused of conspiring to dominate the world. At the end of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th, radical forces of the political right – in Germany especially – targeted Jews as the “racial enemy” responsible for all the problems of the modern world. The Nazis then used this new definition of “Jew” to justify the creation of a “new Germany”, and launched a war against Jews. The culmination of this would be the “Final Solution”, an attempt to annihilate all the Jews of Europe.

Genocide: (from Greek *genos*, “race”, and Latin *caedes*, “killing”): A word coined by Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1943 to describe the official government policy for the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, cultural, or religious group. The term ‘genocide’ is defined by the United Nations in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948). Genocide is defined as an act committed with the intention to exterminate a national, ethnic, racial or religious group (in whole or in part). Its current legal definition does not include the extermination of political opponents. Members of the group are murdered or systematically persecuted through various means such as murder, “measures intended to prevent births within the group”, “the transfer of children of the group to another group”, etc. Genocide is committed by those in power, in their name or with their open or implied consent. Genocide is considered a crime against humanity.



Portrait of Adolf Hitler.

Gestapo (German): Secret State Police of Nazi* Germany, created in 1933.

Ghetto: The Nazis* revived the medieval term to describe their device of concentration and control the compulsory “Jewish Quarter”. Established in poor areas, Jews were forced to live in overcrowded and desperate conditions.

Holocaust: Systematic, state-sponsored murder of approximately six million Jews between 1933 and 1945, committed by the Nazis* and their collaborators. The word “holocaust” is a Greek word meaning sacrifice, specifically by fire.

In addition to the Holocaust, the Nazis* persecuted other victims, too: the Roma and Sinti (their genocide* is named Samudaripen), the disabled (T4 program), the homosexuals, the Slavs, the political opponents, etc.

Kristallnacht: Name given to violent attacks (pogrom) against the businesses, places of worship and homes of the Jews throughout Germany and in the annexed countries (Austria and Sudetenland) on November 9 and 10, 1938. The violence was implemented by the Nazi leaders. The sound of broken glass explains the name given to the event.



Nazism (National Socialism): German Political Movement of Adolf Hitler. In 1933, the Nazi Party took political control of Germany in a democratic election. The Nazi party was violently antisemitic and believed in the supremacy of the “Aryan race”. Nazi ideology includes discrimination on grounds such as origin, ethnicity, skin colour, sex, disability, religion, language, sexual orientation or political convention. It is marked by a strong authoritarian and “Cult of the leader” (Führerkult). The aim of the Nazis was the purification of their race and the expansion of “living space” for Germans by exterminating the Jews of Europe and invading the neighbouring countries.

Wedding picture of Salomon and Flora Schrijver (nee Mendels) in Amsterdam, 1942. The wedding ceremony took place at the Great Synagogue of Amsterdam. Theirs was the last wedding performed at the Great synagogue before the German occupying forces ordered the synagogue to close (September 1943). Salomon and Flora were first deported to the transit camp of Westerbork and from there to the death camp of Sobibor (Poland) where they were killed.

Nuremberg Laws: A series of laws promulgated in 1935, which defined who was Jewish, and which introduced their systematic discrimination and persecution.

Nuremberg Trials: Trials against major Nazi* figures held in Nuremberg, Germany in 1945 and 1946 before the International Military Tribunal.

Partisans: Groups operating in enemy-occupied territory using guerrilla tactics. Some partisan groups were Jewish or included Jewish members, while others were made up entirely of non-Jewish resistance fighters.

Pogrom: Derived from Russian, literally meaning “devastation”. An organised, often officially encouraged massacre or persecution of Jews.

Propaganda: : Propaganda consists of using various means of communication (media, speeches, advertisements), to convince people to adopt an idea, doctrine, or ideology. The Nazis used every means of communication (radio, newspapers, children’s books, political speeches, films, etc.) at their disposal

in order to propagate their ideology , including antisemitism and the idea of the superiority of the “Aryan race”.

Righteous or Rescuers: Name given to individuals who risked their own lives to save Jews by hiding them, giving them identity papers, helping them flee, etc.

Roma and Sinti: Minority people present in Europe since the 11th Century.

Shoah: The Hebrew word for Holocaust*, and a biblical term meaning “catastrophe”, “destruction”, or “disaster”.

Shtetl: A small Jewish town or village in Eastern Europe.

SS (schutzstaffel: protection squad): Guard detachments originally formed in 1925 as Hitler’s personal guard. From 1929, under Himmler, the SS became the most powerful affiliated organisation of the Nazi* Party. By mid-1934, they had established control of the police and security systems, forming the basis of the Nazi* police state and the major instrument of racial terror in the concentration camps* and in occupied Europe.

Third Reich: The Nazi* designation of Germany and its regime from 1933 to 1945. Historically, the First Reich was the medieval Holy Roman Empire, which lasted until 1806. The Second Reich referred to the German Empire from 1871 to 1918.

Yiddish: The language of Eastern European Jews and their descendants. Yiddish is based on middle-high German, infused with many Hebrew words and expressions using the Hebrew script.



Augsburg under Nazi banners.
Germany.

08 Selected Bibliography



For students

This is a brief selection of books that can be used to introduce the topic of the Holocaust before your visit to the Museum.

Author	Title	Age	Category
Karen Levine	Hana's Suitcase	11-13	History
John Boyne	Boy in the Stripped Pyjama		Fiction
Anne Frank	Anne Frank Diary	14-15	Biography
Ruud Van der Rol et al	Anne Frank, A Life		Biography
Eric Walters	Sheltered		History
Art Spiegelman	Maus	16-18	Biography
Elie Wiesel	Night		Biography

Short Bibliography

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Poliakov, Leon. *The History of Anti-Semitism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

Montreal Holocaust Museum's Online Resources:

Tips for teaching and pedagogical activities under the Education tab:

museeholocauste.ca

Maps and interactive timelines: histoire.museeholocauste.ca/en

Virtual exhibition *Building New Lives*: refairesavie.museeholocauste.ca/eng

Virtual exhibition *United Against Genocide: Understand, Question, Prevent*: genocide.mhmc.ca/en/

Virtual exhibition *Holocaust Life Stories*: holocaustlifestories.ca

Over one hundred objects from our collection, with their stories and photos: museeholocauste.ca/en/objects-of-interest

Video clips of Holocaust survivors' testimonials: museeholocauste.ca/en/survivors-stories

Our Facebook group for educators, *Pedagogical Resources for Teachers*: www.facebook.com/groups/842661695882193

BUILD BETTER CITIZENS



From guided tours of our exhibitions to the study of a survivor's story or artefacts, our educational programs focus on the **human experience**.

School curricula across Canada prepare students to become educated, responsible and engaged citizens. Using our tools, invite your students to reflect on citizens' and governments' roles in the face of human rights violations.

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Musée Holocauste Montréal
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