



Adolf Hitler on his 50th birthday, April 20, 1939

Poster encouraging Americans to buy war bonds

The Holocaust

MAIN IDEA

EMPIRE BUILDING During the Holocaust, Hitler's Nazis killed six million Jews and five million other "non-Aryans."

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The violence against Jews during the Holocaust led to the founding of Israel after World War II.

TERMS & NAMES

- Aryan
- Holocaust
- *Kristallnacht*
- ghetto
- "Final Solution"
- genocide

SETTING THE STAGE As part of their vision for Europe, the Nazis proposed a new racial order. They proclaimed that the Germanic peoples, or **Aryans**, were a "master race." (This was a misuse of the term *Aryan*. The term actually refers to the Indo-European peoples who began to migrate into the Indian subcontinent around 1500 B.C.) The Nazis claimed that all non-Aryan peoples, particularly Jewish people, were inferior. This racist message would eventually lead to the **Holocaust**, the systematic mass slaughter of Jews and other groups judged inferior by the Nazis.

The Holocaust Begins To gain support for his racist ideas, Hitler knowingly tapped into a hatred for Jews that had deep roots in European history. For generations, many Germans, along with other Europeans, had targeted Jews as the cause of their failures. Some Germans even blamed Jews for their country's defeat in World War I and for its economic problems after that war.

In time, the Nazis made the targeting of Jews a government policy. The Nuremberg Laws, passed in 1935, deprived Jews of their rights to German citizenship and forbade marriages between Jews and non-Jews. Laws passed later also limited the kinds of work that Jews could do.

"Night of Broken Glass" Worse was yet to come. Early in November 1938, 17-year-old Herschel Grynszpan (GRIHN•shpahn), a Jewish youth from Germany, was visiting an uncle in Paris. While Grynszpan was there, he received a postcard. It said that after living in Germany for 27 years, his father had been deported to Poland. On November 7, wishing to avenge his father's deportation, Grynszpan shot a German diplomat living in Paris.

When Nazi leaders heard the news, they launched a violent attack on the Jewish community. On November 9, Nazi storm troopers attacked Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues across Germany and murdered close to 100 Jews. An American in Leipzig wrote, "Jewish shop windows by the hundreds were systematically . . . smashed. . . . The main streets of the city were a positive litter of shattered plate glass." It is for this reason that the night of November 9 became known as ***Kristallnacht*** (krih•STAHL•NAHKT), or "Night of Broken Glass." A 14-year-old boy described his memory of that awful night:

PRIMARY SOURCE *All the things for which my parents had worked for eighteen long years were destroyed in less than ten minutes. Piles of valuable glasses, expensive furniture, linens—in short, everything was destroyed. . . . The Nazis left us, yelling, "Don't try to leave this house! We'll soon be back again and take you to a concentration camp to be shot."*

M. I. LIBAU, quoted in *Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust*



Kristallnacht marked a major step-up in the Nazi policy of Jewish persecution. The future for Jews in Germany looked truly grim.

A Flood of Refugees After ***Kristallnacht***, some Jews realized that violence against them was bound to increase. By the end of 1939, a number of German Jews had fled to other countries. Many however, remained in Germany. Later, Hitler conquered territories in which

▲ After 1941, all Jews in German controlled areas had to wear a yellow Star of David patch.

millions more Jews lived.

At first, Hitler favored emigration as a solution to what he called “the Jewish problem.” Getting other countries to continue admitting Germany’s Jews became an issue, however. After admitting tens of thousands of Jewish refugees, such countries as France, Britain, and the United States abruptly closed their doors to further immigration. Germany’s foreign minister observed, “We all want to get rid of our Jews. The difficulty is that no country wishes to receive them.”

Isolating the Jews When Hitler found that he could not get rid of Jews through emigration, he put another plan into effect. He ordered Jews in all countries under his control to be moved to designated cities. In those cities, the Nazis herded the Jews into dismal, overcrowded **ghettos**, or segregated Jewish areas. The Nazis then sealed off the ghettos with barbed wire and stone walls. They hoped that the Jews inside would starve to death or die from disease.

Even under these horrible conditions, the Jews hung on. Some formed resistance organizations within the ghettos. They also struggled to keep their traditions. Ghetto theaters produced plays and concerts. Teachers taught lessons in secret schools. Scholars kept records so that one day people would find out the truth.

The “Final Solution”

Hitler soon grew impatient waiting for Jews to die from starvation or disease. He decided to take more direct action. His plan was called the

▼ German soldiers round up Jews in the Warsaw ghetto.



“**Final Solution.**” It was actually a program of **genocide**, the systematic killing of an entire people.

Hitler believed that his plan of conquest depended on the purity of the Aryan race. To protect racial purity, the Nazis had to eliminate other races, nationalities, or groups they viewed as inferior—as “subhumans.” They included Roma (gypsies), Poles, Russians, homosexuals, the insane, the disabled, and the incurably ill. But the Nazis focused especially on the

More About . . .

Jews in France The Vichy government helped the Nazis persecute French Jews. When Marshal Henri Pétain was questioned about persecutions, he replied, “As for free-masons, I hate them, as for communists I am afraid of them, as for the Jews it is not my fault.” Most Jews detained in Vichy France were housed in windowless barracks surrounded by barbed wire. In 1941, one reporter wrote: “These people have been detained for reasons they, in many instances, do not understand and . . . they are without the slightest information about what is to be their future.” After 1942, Nazis began transporting Jews to work or be killed in camps in Eastern Europe.

Jews.

The Killings Begin As Nazi troops swept across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the killings began. Units from the SS (Hitler’s elite security force) moved from town to town to hunt down Jews. The SS and their collaborators rounded up men, women, children, and even babies and took them to isolated spots. They then shot their prisoners in pits that became the prisoners’ graves. Jews in communities not reached by the killing squads were rounded up and taken to concentration camps, or slave-labor prisons. These camps were located mainly in Germany and Poland. Hitler hoped that the horrible conditions in the camps would speed the total elimination of the Jews.

The prisoners worked seven days a week as slaves for the SS or for German businesses. Guards severely beat or killed their prisoners for not working fast enough. With meals of thin soup, a scrap of bread, and potato peelings, most prisoners lost 50 pounds in the first few months. Hunger was so intense, recalled

one survivor, “that if a bit of soup spilled over, prisoners would . . . dig their spoons into the mud and stuff the mess in their mouths.”

The Final Stage The “Final Solution” reached its last stage in 1942. At that time, the Nazis built extermination camps equipped with huge gas chambers that could kill as many as 6,000 human beings in a day. (See the map on page 953.) When prisoners arrived at Auschwitz (OUSH•vihts), the largest of the extermination camps, they paraded before a committee of SS doctors. With a wave of the hand, these doctors separated the strong—mostly men—from the weak—mostly women, young children, the elderly, and the sick. Those labeled as weak would die that day. They were told to undress for a shower and then led into a chamber with fake showerheads. After the doors were closed, cyanide gas poured from the showerheads. All inside were killed in a

matter of minutes. Later, the Nazis installed crematoriums, or ovens, to burn the bodies.

The Survivors Some six million European Jews died in these death camps and in Nazi massacres. Fewer than four million survived. Some escaped the horrors of the death camps with help from non-Jewish people. These rescuers, at great risk to their own lives, hid Jews in their homes or helped them escape to neutral countries. Those who survived the camps were changed forever by what they had experienced. As Elie Wiesel, nearly 15 years old when he entered Auschwitz, noted:

PRIMARY SOURCE *Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. . . . Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. . . . Never.*

ELIE WIESEL, quoted in *Night*

More About . . .

Nazi Medicine: German doctors used Jews for medical experiments that often resulted in great suffering or death. For example, doctors infected prisoners with typhus and other diseases to see how long they could survive. To practice surgery, student doctors would operate on prisoners without anesthesia. Many of these

More About . . .

The “Final Solution” Reinhard Heydrich, head of the SS intelligence service, spelled out the “Final Solution” in January 1942 at a conference of Nazi leaders. “The Reichführer SS has forbidden any further emigration of Jews. The Jews remaining in the Reich and all European Jews in our present and future spheres of influence will be evacuated to the East for the final solution.”

History in Depth

Jewish Resistance In the ghetto of Kovno in Lithuania, Jews took an oath to resist Nazis. “I promise to fight with all my powers against the Nazi occupation; to endanger their encampments; disrupt their transport; burn and blow up bridges; destroy railroads; organize and help carry through acts of sabotage at every opportunity and under all circumstances, without sparing myself—and when necessary, to offer up my life.” Ask students to research how Jews in ghettos and camps conducted sabotage.

| Jews Killed Under Nazi Rule* | | | |
|---|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| | Original Jewish Population | Jews Killed | Percent Surviving |
| Poland | 3,300,000 | 2,800,000 | 15% |
| Soviet Union (area occupied by Germans) | 2,100,000 | 1,500,000 | 29% |
| Hungary | 404,000 | 200,000 | 49% |
| Romania | 850,000 | 425,000 | 50% |
| Germany/Austria | 270,000 | 210,000 | 22% |

*Estimates
Source: Hannah Vogt, *The Burden of Guilt*

History in Depth

Jewish Resistance

Even in the extermination camps, Jews rose up and fought against the Nazis. At Treblinka in August 1943, and at Sobibor in October 1943, small groups of Jews revolted. They killed guards, stormed the camp armories and stole guns and grenades, and then broke out. In both uprisings, about 300 prisoners escaped. Most were killed soon after. Of those who survived, many joined up with partisan groups and continued to fight until the end of the war.

Late in 1944, prisoners at Auschwitz revolted, too. Like the escapees at Treblinka and Sobibor, most were caught and killed. Young women like Ella Gartner and Roza Robota made the Auschwitz uprising possible. Gartner smuggled gunpowder into the camp from the munitions factory where she worked. Robota helped organize resistance in the camp. Gartner and Robota were executed on January 6, 1945. Less than a month later, Auschwitz was liberated.



▲ Ella Gartner



► Roza Robota

Ch. 32 Sec. 3
Section Review:

THE HOLOCAUST

Name: _____ date: _____ hr: _____ class #

GROUP / SOLO

Due on: _____

TERMS & NAMES

1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Aryan

- Holocaust

- *Kristallnacht*

- ghetto

- “Final Solution”

- genocide

3. How did some non-Jews oppose Hitler’s “Final Solution”?

4. Why might people want to blame a minority group for most of their country’s problems?

5. Why do you think the German people went along with the Nazi policy of persecution of the Jews?

6. What impact did the Holocaust have on the Jewish population of Europe?

2. Make a timeline of the lead-up to and events of the Holocaust. Start with Hitler’s rise to power—you may draw on information in other worksheets. Include at least 10 events.

