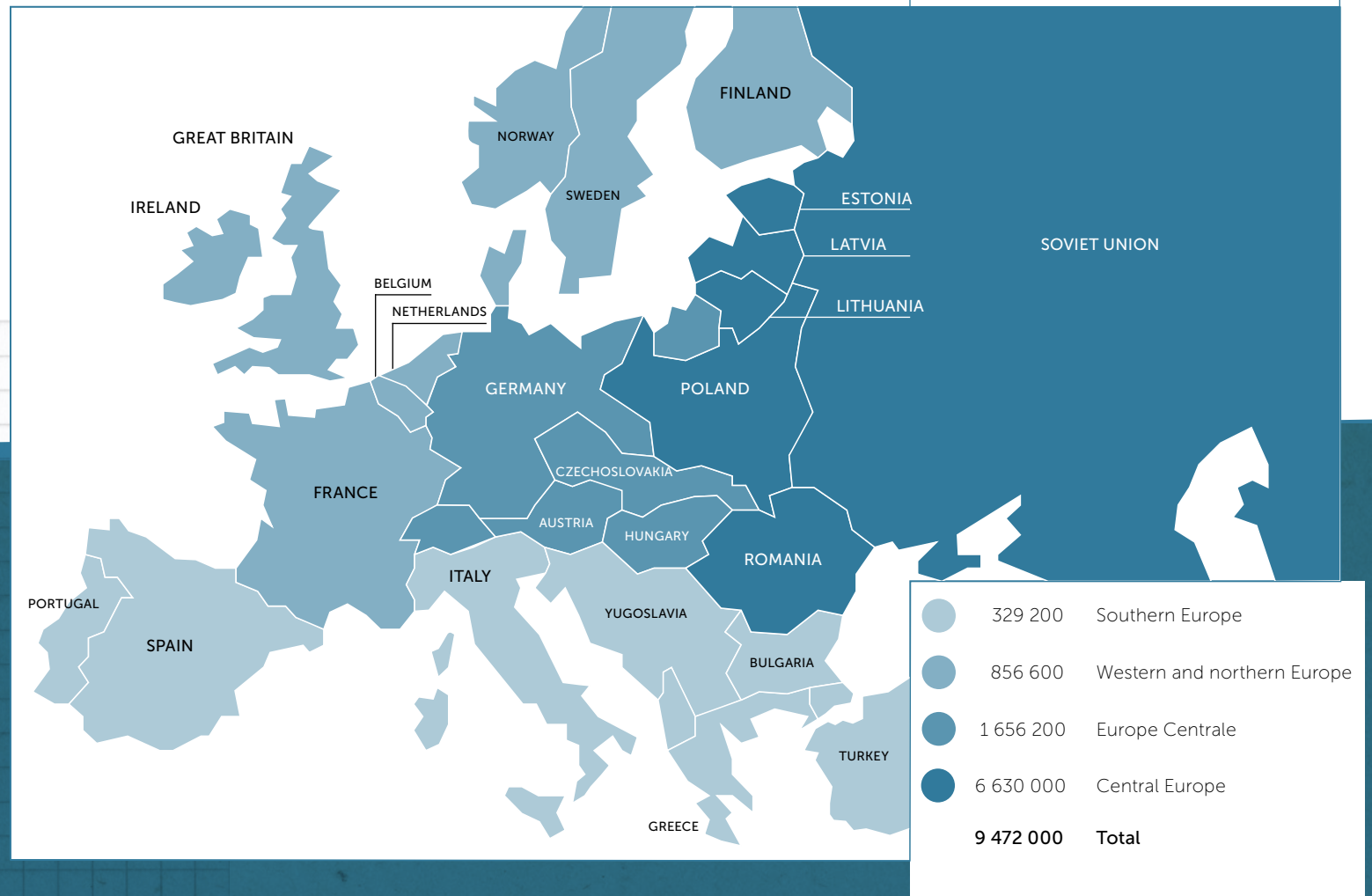
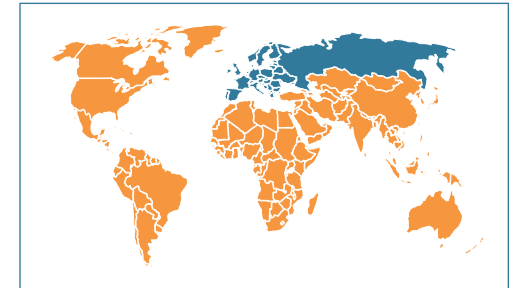
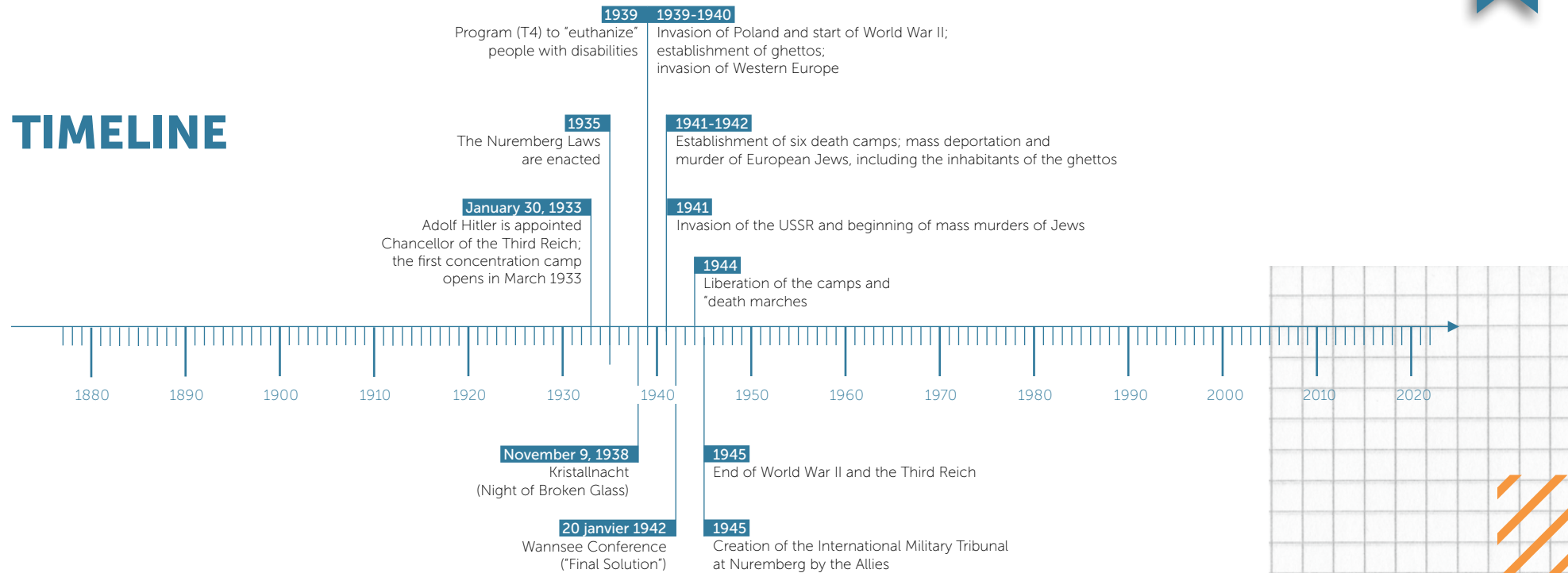


THE HOLOCAUST

EUROPEAN JEWS IN 1933



TIMELINE



HIGHLIGHTS

What?

- // Systematic murder of six million men, women and children simply because they were classified as Jews
- // Economic, religious and biological racism, fascism and radical nationalism

When?

- // 1933-1945: From the election of the Nazi Party until the end of World War II

Where?

- // In almost all of Europe and North Africa

Who?

- // The perpetrators were the Nazis and their collaborators in occupied and allied countries, who believed in a superior race (the Aryan race).
- // The victims of Nazism were the Jews and many other groups, such as the Roma and Sinti, homosexuals and people with disabilities, as well as resistance groups and other opponents of the regime.

EXCERPT OF AN ACCOUNT

"Very soon afterwards, we were told that Jews had to leave the schools. And then there was a sort of Jewish school where we absolutely learned nothing. We were just sitting there. And this was disbanded after some time. My mother, and other Austrians thought the same thing, they said, 'Well, if we are not allowed to go to the theatre, because they already knew that the German Jews were not allowed in German theatres, so all right, we won't go to the theatre. If we're not allowed to go to the amusement park, all right, so we won't go. We'll just make do.' And this was really the big mistake, that everyone thought they would be tolerated, although they would have to reduce their standard of living."

DORA COHEN, JEWISH SURVIVOR WHO EMIGRATED TO CANADA
SOURCE: MONTREAL HOLOCAUST MUSEUM



Eastern European Jew before the Holocaust

Credit: Montreal Holocaust Museum

ISSUE

The killing of **Jews** by the Nazi regime has been the subject of thousands of films and books (history, fiction and biographies). This is undoubtedly one of the most widely discussed historical events in the world. It could even be considered a central element of our collective memory and Western culture. However, despite the abundant documentation, it is difficult to understand the Holocaust. The variety of terms used to name this crime in itself reflects the difficulty in describing the events, and the choice of a particular term often means interpreting the event in a certain way.¹ The term “genocide” was used for the first time in the Nuremberg trials to characterize the crimes perpetrated by the **Nazis** against **Roma**, **Sinti** and Jews. Since then, it has been used by the United Nations (UN) to describe crimes against other peoples. The term “Holocaust,” which can be defined as “a large-scale sacrifice by fire” and is widely used in North America, has both historical and religious significance, and refers to a sacrificial notion, which can sometimes be problematic.² In contrast, the use of the Hebrew term “Shoah” (catastrophe), an official term in Israel and France, specifically refers to the crime committed against the Jews by the Nazis during World War II.³ Unlike the majority of known genocides, which are localized in a specific country, the genocide of the Jews affected all the countries of continental Europe to varying degrees, as well as North Africa.



Street propaganda of the National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands (NSB), 1944. Children perform the Hitler salute. NSB propaganda went to great lengths to win over the young.

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

Jews

The term “Jew” and “Jewish” can refer to religious believers, or an ethnic group, or both. In these documents, we will use it in its ethnic sense.

Nazi, or National Socialists (NSDAP)

At first, “Nazi” was a pejorative nickname adopted by their opponents to designate members of the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*), the National Socialist German Workers' Party. By extension, Nazism, a specific form of German fascism, refers to the program followed by this political movement when it was in power.

Roma and Sinti

Members of a group originating in India that came to Europe in the 9th century. They are also pejoratively referred to as “Gypsies” or “tsiganes”. Roma means “human being” in Hindi. The term “Sinti” refers to the people living in German-speaking regions who were deported and murdered by the Nazis. The Nazis were tried for their genocide at Nuremberg.

The Jews, Sinti and Roma experienced persecution as soon as the Nazis came to power in 1933. They were perceived by the Nazis as threatening “Aryan purity.” Homosexuals (who were male citizens of the **Third Reich**), some **Slav** peoples, people with disabilities and political opponents were seen as undesirable or threatening to the regime. World War II, which took place from 1939 to 1945, allowed these crimes to occur at a magnitude never seen before. To what extent is this genocide related to the context of World War II?



Third Reich

The Third Reich was a period in German history, from January 30, 1933, to May 8, 1945, that refers to the Hitler regime or the National Socialist (Nazi) regime. The name refers to two other German empires that dominated Central Europe in the Middle Ages and the 19th century.

Slave

Adjective referring to a person who belongs to the Slavic ethnic group in Eastern Europe and the Balkans (a mountain chain in southeastern Europe) whose languages have a common origin. The Nazis considered them subhuman.

Jewish rabbis during the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland, 1943

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

It is important to provide a very brief historical overview to examine the context that led to the mass murder of European Jews during Nazi rule. Historical anti-Judaism was based on religious, political and economic prejudices. Beginning in Antiquity, from Mesopotamia to ancient Rome, including the Persian, Egyptian and Greek empires, the elites perceived the Jewish people as a threat to their monopoly of power, and therefore promoted an ever-stronger anti-Judaism world-view in the population.⁴

Since the first millennium of the common era, the Christian Church had maintained⁵ this form of anti-Judaism by blaming the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.⁶ The persecutions in France in the 13th century and in Spain in the 15th century are cases in point⁷ (confiscation of property, conversion campaigns, evictions, wearing of distinctive symbols, relegation to **ghettos**).⁸

Nevertheless, Jewish populations began to experience a certain degree of emancipation fuelled by the principle of equal rights popular in Europe in the 18th century.⁹ In Germany, although discrimination persisted, civil equality was legally recognized in the **Empire (Second Reich)** in 1871. At the same time, the Jewish population also experienced increased economic and social freedom and integrated fully into the countries in which they lived.¹⁰

Ghetto

Starting in the 16th century, part of a city where Jews are forced to live. During World War II, the Germans established more than 1000 ghettos in which Jews were concentrated and forced to live in inhumane conditions.

Empire (Reich)

Before 1871, Germany was a collection of independent states. Unification took place in January 1871 in the form of an empire (Reich) made up of 25 federated states.



Last wedding celebrated at the Carpentierstraat synagogue, The Hague, in 1942. The building is covered with Nazi swastikas.

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

At the same time, starting in the 19th century, European societies shifted from traditional anti-Judaism to anti-Semitism,¹¹ which, although based on old economic and religious prejudices, has an added element of biological racism (a doctrine that falsely asserts the existence of unequal and hierarchical human races)¹² and a radical form of nationalism. On May 9, 1873, the Vienna stock exchange crashed, marking the start of the “first Great Depression.”¹³ An associative and political movement of anti-Semites and nationalists falsely blamed Jews for causing the crisis, spreading anti-Semitism throughout German society. Proponents of this racist theory saw the Jews as an anti-national population, paradoxically linked to both capitalist exploitation and the dangers of socialism.¹⁴

After the German defeat in World War I (1914-1918), the German Empire collapsed. The harsh terms of the **Treaty of Versailles**, which deprived the country of more than 70000 km² of its continental territory, made it difficult for the nascent Weimar Republic (1919-1933) to meet numerous challenges, such as **communist** insurrections and political instability, and then, the economic crises of 1923 (hyperinflation) and 1929. These events created fertile ground for the rise of violent extreme right paramilitary parties and groups

such as the **SA** and the **SS**, armed branches of the Nazi party (NSDAP), who blamed the Jews for all the difficulties facing Germany. These groups specialized in political agitation and anti-Semitic propaganda.

Treaty of Versailles

Name given to the treaty that put an end to World War I, which was signed on June 28, 1918, in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, between Germany and the Allies. The treaty took away Germany's territories, significantly reduced its army and forced it to pay huge amounts of money to the Allies, which resulted in significant resentment among the German people..

Communism

Based on the ideas of philosopher Karl Marx, this leftist ideology opposed capitalism and advocated for the distribution of wealth among those who create it. This ideology was at the root of the Russian revolution in 1917, and spawned political parties in a number of countries in the 20th century.

SA and SS

The Sturmabteilung (Assault Section) was a paramilitary branch of the Nazi party (the Brown Shirts) specializing in agitating urban violence. The Schutzstaffel (SS or Protection Squad) was a Nazi paramilitary and police force founded in 1925 to provide personal protection for Adolf Hitler. It became one of the most important organizations in the Nazi Regime



They put their words into action by writing profanities on graves, desecrating synagogues and committing acts of terrorism.¹⁵ These abuses hit the Jews particularly hard, since they had been emancipated, were integrated into society, and had demonstrated fervent patriotism during World War I.¹⁶ The strategy used by the Nazis was very effective: on one hand, the SA and SS helped create a chaotic atmosphere and, on the other, the NSDAP presented itself as the only party capable of restoring order in Germany.¹⁷ From 1924 to 1932, the extreme right Nazi Party increased its share of seats in the Reichstag (German parliament) from 37 to 230. On January 30, 1933, Paul von Hindenburg, President of the Weimar Republic, appointed Adolf Hitler chancellor (1933-1945). When Hindenburg died in 1934, Hitler proclaimed himself dictator and supreme leader (Führer) of the Third Reich.

“These forces ... which, with capitalism in one hand and revolution in the other, crush the people with both, are born of... Judaism. No nation can stand for it; it is public perfidy that calls for revenge!” (Berding, 1991, 85, [translation]).

Excerpt of a speech by Adolf Stoecker, leader of the Christian Social Party in 1890



Joseph Schleifstein, a four-year-old survivor of the Buchenwald concentration camp, sitting on the running board of a UNRRA (United Nations) truck shortly after the liberation of the camp in 1945

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

STAGES OF GENOCIDE

TO CLASSIFY

“We had a piece of cloth, yellow cloth, with a Magen David and a Ž, which meant Židov, Jew, printed on this cloth.”

Account by Joseph Markovic, Croatian Jewish survivor, on the anti-Jewish measures taken by the Croatian government after German armed forces invaded the country

Source: Montreal Holocaust Museum



Once in power, the Nazi leaders put in place a system of “race” classification, where the **Aryans** (the Germanic people), considered “genetically superior” as the “master race” destined to rule the world, were diametrically opposed to the “inferior races,” with the Jews squarely at the bottom of the hierarchy.¹⁸ Beginning in 1938, the passports of the German Jews had to be stamped with the letter J.¹⁹ A year later, after the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany, Polish Jews were forced to wear a yellow star or an armband. These measures would then be imposed in the countries occupied by Nazi Germany to identify the Jews.²⁰

Aryans

This term originally referred to an ancient people. It was then applied, based on racist theories, to white populations in general and more particularly, northern and German peoples. It was used by the Nazis to refer to a so-called “superior” race.

Badge, or yellow star, with the word “Jude” (Jew in English) that was worn by George Ehrman when he lived in Prague. This badge represents a symbol of discrimination against Jews.

Credit: Montreal Holocaust Museum

TO DEHUMANIZE

**“Antisemitism is exactly the same as delousing. Getting rid of lice is not a question of ideology. It is a matter of cleanliness”
(Vidal-Naquet, 2005, 24, [translation]).**

Speech by Nazi leader Himmler to SS officers on April 24, 1943



Two SS soldiers apprehending a Jewish man during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in Poland, May 1943

Credit: Montreal Holocaust Museum

Even before the advent of the Nazi Party, anti-Semitic propaganda compared Jews to vermin or parasites. Lists of “Jewish parasites” or accomplices who “suck the blood from the German people” were compiled. In his books and speeches, Hitler referred to Jews as “worms in a decaying body,” “pestilence,” “black plague,” “spiders,” “carriers of bacilli,” “blood suckers,” “a pack of rats,” and “vampires” which should be “exterminated.” Jews were treated as a “race” of subhumans, whose inferiority was attributed to their alleged genetic defects.²¹ In the concentration camps, prisoners were dehumanized: their names were erased and replaced with a number sewn onto their uniform or tattooed on their arm. The N.N. (Nacht und Nebel, or Night and Fog) symbol, stamped on the administrative documents of individuals who were to be put to death, was used to erase the names and thus the identity of the victims. The acronym N.N. is derived from the Latin *nomen nonetur*, designating a person whose name is unknown.²² Everything about the treatment of prisoners was intended to dehumanize them: depriving them of clothing, shaving them, making them wear uniforms, underfeeding them, not allowing them dishes or utensils, etc. The fact that they were deported in cattle cars is also proof of dehumanization.

In addition, in the death camps, the use of gas chambers and crematoria, and the industrial character of this mass killing operation were an integral part of the dehumanization process. The industrialization of death made it possible to dehumanize both the victims and the murderers, who attempted to diminish their accountability in a systemic process.²³



Newly arrived Polish prisoners at a camp undressing before being washed and shaved

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

“We got into the camp, where they undressed us, they shaved us from top to bottom, and we were standing around practically a whole day, naked. Finally, towards the end they gave us these blue-striped uniforms. And the first food we got was about the following noon. They gave us a big bowl of thick vegetable soup they called ‘Dorgemuze,’ one bowl for every six persons. Except they wouldn’t give us a spoon. So we had to slurp it like dogs, but you’re hungry enough to do it. And that was one of the many attempts of the Germans to dehumanize you.”

Ted Bolgar, Holocaust survivor who emigrated to Canada in 1948, describing his arrival at Auschwitz

Source: Montreal Holocaust Museum



TO POLARIZE

“I saw three men with the leather coats, you know, the Gestapo, breaking the gate, coming up to get my father.”

Account by Leo Dortort, Austrian Jewish survivor, about Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass

Source: Montreal Holocaust Museum, n.d.



During the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), the violence of the words used and of the anti-Semitic acts intensified. Leaflets, pseudo-historical writings, newspapers, stickers and popular novels spread the idea that the Jews were responsible for the military defeat and the difficulties encountered by the Republic. In *Mein Kampf* (1925), Hitler explicitly calls for the mass murder of the Jews.²⁴ As soon as the Nazis came to power in 1933, laws and measures were put in place to limit the rights of Jews in Germany. The Nazis called for a boycott of Jewish businesses, and Jews were excluded from the public service, health services, liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, teachers), media and the arts (theatre, music, visual arts).²⁵ On May 10, 1933, during an immense book burning, Nazi students destroyed tens of thousands of books written by Jewish, liberal or communist authors, which they claimed were “un-German.” The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour and the Reich Citizenship Law were passed in 1935. Better known as the Nuremberg Laws, these racial laws defined who was Jewish, stripped Jews of their German citizenship and forbade them from marrying Germans “of pure blood.”²⁶ The Nazi Party increased the abuses against the Jews, in particular on November 9, 1938, during Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass). During this riot, citizens and members of the Nazi Party destroyed synagogues and attacked Jewish-owned shops in Germany, the Sudetenland and Austria.²⁷

A storefront plastered with swastikas and anti-Jewish slogans in the town centre of The Hague, November 1940

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

“The goal is to raise awareness of the nature and scope of the Jewish peril and to fight it using all political, civil and economic means.” (Berding, 1991, 166, [translation]).

Article 1 of the charter of the German people's defensive-offensive and national-popular alliance, a highly anti-Semitic organization founded in 1919



Cover of an anti-Semitic book for children with a drawing of a fox on a heath and a caricature of a Jew taking an oath. The German title can be translated as, "Trust no fox on his green heath and no Jew on his oath."

Credit: Montreal Holocaust Museum

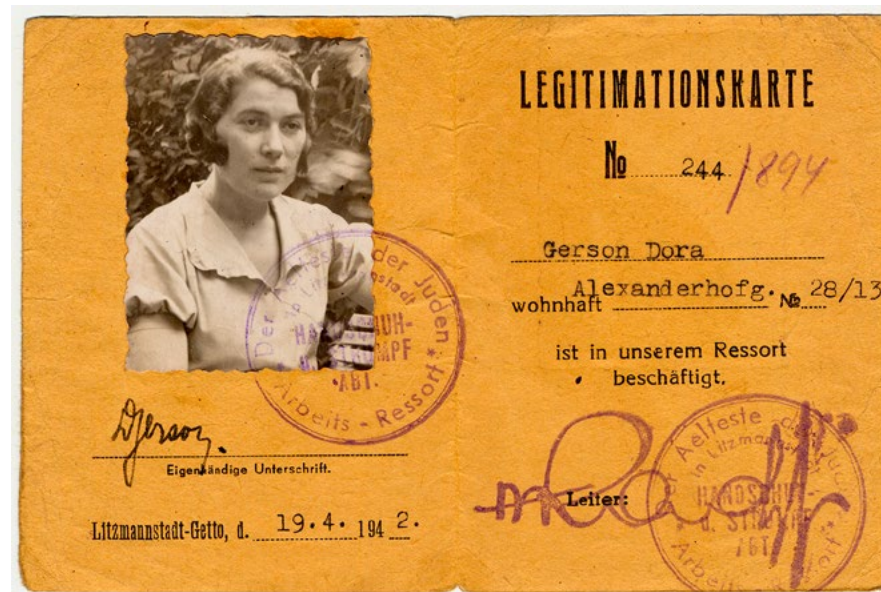
“All the Jewish assets in banks, all stocks, bonds, whatever you had in banks, was frozen... My father found himself at the age of 52 kicked out of his office. . . . We had to bring to the police station our valuables... By fall 1939, all Jewish students were forbidden any attendance in classes... including kindergarten upwards... But this time... the Germans gave orders to squeeze many families into one apartment... [and] that no Gentile should socialize, no matter on what level, with the Jews.”

Account by Vera Schiff, Czechoslovakian Jewish survivor, on the persecutions suffered by the Jews after the German army took control of the country

Source: Montreal Holocaust Museum, n.d.

TO ORGANIZE

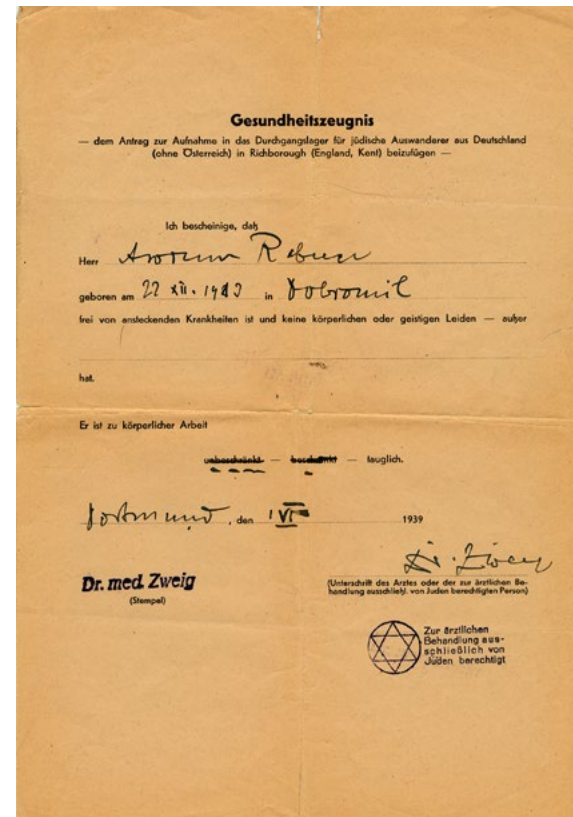
As soon as it came to power, the Nazi Party set up a very hierarchical bureaucratic system (ministries, army, planned economy, regional administration), which became one of the main tools for the mass murder of the European Jews.²⁸ In 1939, it launched a secret program known as “T4.” The aim of the program was to count, identify and murder all people with physical or mental disabilities by giving them drug overdoses or sending them to the Nazi regime’s first gas chambers.²⁹ These were the first attempts to systematically murder all those considered a threat to the “purity of the race.” In the same vein, after the Jews were identified in racial laws, the process of destruction was carried out in three progressive stages: “expropriation,” “concentration” and mass killings.³⁰ Expropriation involved stripping Jews of all their property, their professions and their businesses.³¹ The regime first encouraged emigration, taking advantage of an “escape tax” to seize a quarter of the value of the emigrants’ property before they could leave.³²



Identification card issued to Dora Gerson on which the place of birth is listed as the Lodz ghetto, 1942

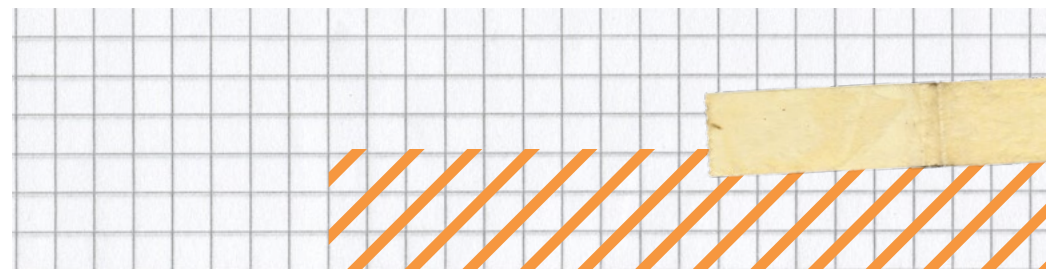
Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration,

A sharp reduction in wages, increased taxes and rationing put the Jews in a situation of quasi-slavery and widespread famine even before the concentration camp system was established.³³ The German invasion of Poland in 1939, which triggered World War II, marked a decisive step in the escalation of violence. Jews in Eastern Europe were concentrated in enclosed ghettos. Forced to live in overcrowded and unhealthy conditions, Jews experienced hunger, disease, abuse, forced labour and, for many, death. The prison camps, initially designed to house political opponents, were enlarged to take in apolitical prisoners (including Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and people with disabilities). There were more than 40 000 concentration camps, including transit camps, forced labour camps and death camps. The third and final step was mass murder. Overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, disease, famine, torture and death were part of daily life in the ghettos and concentration camps.



Stamp at the bottom right-hand corner of the medical certificate granted to Avrum Rabner, in Germany, 1939, indicating that Dr. Zweig was permitted to treat Jewish patients only. As of July 1938, it was illegal for Jewish doctors to treat "Aryan" patients.

Credit: Montreal Holocaust Museum



TO PERSECUTE AND TO MURDER

“On January 18 [1945], the evacuation of Auschwitz took place... Out of Auschwitz we walked in bitter, bitter cold... In my eyes, it was just about the worst that you could imagine. If you stumbled, you ended up with a bullet in your head.”

Account by Meir Schondorf, Czechoslovakian Jewish survivor, on the “death marches”

Source: Montreal Holocaust Museum, n.d.



The Third Reich set up militarized political police units (Einsatzgruppen) and ordered them to implement “the Final Goal (Endziel).”³⁴ Following the German troops as they advanced eastward, these units’ primary mission was to liquidate the Jewish population through mass shootings. Between 1.5 and 2 million Jews were executed in this manner,³⁵ sometimes referred to as “Holocaust by bullets.” This technique, however, was considered ineffective by the Nazi authorities, since many German soldiers eventually refused to participate. On January 20, 1942, at the Wannsee Conference, German leaders agreed to implement the “Final Solution” to the “Jewish Problem.”³⁶ In all the European countries under their control, the German authorities then organized, with the help of collaborating local authorities, the arrest and deportation by train, in particularly inhumane conditions, of Jews to the concentration camp system established in Eastern Europe.³⁷ Starting in 1942, the Nazis created six death camps, all of them located in occupied Poland: Auschwitz (part of which remained devoted

Three child prisoners at the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany, 1944, sitting behind barbed wire

Credit: Montreal Holocaust Museum

to detention and forced labour), Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka. The gas chambers were designed to increase the efficiency and depersonalization of the murders. The crematoria made the victims disappear. More than 2.5 million Jews were murdered in this industrialized killing system. In total, nearly 6 million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.³⁸ Some of the death camps, including Sobibor and Treblinka, were destroyed at the end of the war. In 1944, with the defeat of the Third Reich on the horizon, Jewish survivors were evacuated from the concentration camps and put to death by the Nazi authorities. Thousands of Jews died of cold and abuse or were shot in what were later called the “death marches.”³⁹

“Later I found out what happened. My mother-in-law took the baby, but the baby was heavy, six months old already, so my sister-in-law took away the baby from [my mother-in-law]... She carried my baby to death.”

Account by Rose Svarc, Czechoslovakian Jewish survivor, on the death of her baby at Auschwitz. When the train arrived, in all the confusion, she handed her baby to her mother-in-law before the entire family was separated

Source: Montreal Holocaust Museum, n.d.



Newly arrived Polish prisoners, hands on their heads at roll call in the Buchenwald concentration camp

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

“At first, the Third Reich wanted to get Jews to emigrate, not to liquidate them physically. Had they intended extermination, 500000 concentration camp survivors [fictitious number] would not now be in Israel to collect fancy indemnities from West Germany. Second, absolutely no Jews were ‘gassed’ in any concentration camps. There were crematoria for cremating corpses who had died from whatever cause, including especially also the victims of the genocidic Anglo-American air raids.”

TO DENY

Throughout the Holocaust, the Nazis tried to hide the existence of the genocide. German writer and philosopher Victor Klemperer pointed out the use of misleading terms in “The Language of the Third Reich”⁴⁰ such as the Auschwitz “mill,” “removal” and “special treatment.”⁴¹ As early as 1942, ahead of the advance of the Red Army, evidence of the killings was systematically destroyed.⁴² In 1944, the Nazis even invited the International Red Cross to inspect the Theresienstadt concentration camp, which was carefully set up to deceive them into believing that the Jews were being well treated in the occupied territories. At the end of the war, the Nazis destroyed the gas chambers. After the war, denialism, or revisionism, took different forms: the assertion that the figures were exaggerated, that the Holocaust was a Jewish conspiracy, the denial of German responsibility, or the denial of the means used for the mass murders. Pseudo-historians and ideologues such as Arthur Butz and Robert Faurisson have disseminated their ideas through symposia and journals.⁴³ Revisionism still exists in certain extreme right literature in Germany, the United States, France and Canada. Today, denialism is condemned by the United Nations, Canada, Israel and a number of European countries, including Germany.⁴⁴

Excerpt from an article by Dr. Austin J. App, a German-American college teacher in the revisionist publication *Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 1 (1980), 57.



Defendants in their dock at the Nuremberg trials, 1945

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

JUSTICE

To punish the perpetrators of these crimes, it was necessary to set up an unprecedented international criminal tribunal system. The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg was created by the Allies in 1945 to put on trial those responsible for the crimes committed by the Nazi regime. The tribunal's mission was to judge and punish the major war criminals of the European countries of the Axis. On October 1, 1946, 12 Nazis were sentenced to death on the following charges: crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity and conspiracy. This trial marked the first time that heads of State and their subordinates were held criminally responsible. Twelve other trials followed, in which 200 people were prosecuted. They resulted in 38 acquittals, 38 death sentences, and prison sentences ranging from 18 months to life.⁴⁵

At the same time, a hunt for Nazi criminals began, which led to thousands of prosecutions, many of which took place in Poland. Survivors, including Simon Wiesenthal, participated in this process. Montréal survivor Joseph Riwash also played an important role in the arrest of many Nazi leaders, such as Martin Weiss, the former commander of the Vilna ghetto. Despite these initiatives, many criminals escaped justice. Although efforts are still being made to track down Nazi criminals, those involved face several challenges, including the advanced age of the perpetrators of the genocide and the witnesses.



German Reichsmarschall, Luftwaffe commander, Hermann Göring, under cross-examination during his trial for war crimes before the International Military Tribunal (IMT), in Room 600 of the Nuremberg courthouse, Germany, 1946

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

In addition to the horrific loss of life in Jewish communities in all countries, material losses also needed to be addressed. Survivors were left completely destitute. The plundering of Jewish property (spoliation) during the Holocaust affected the entirety of Jewish heritage. Opposing these spoliation attempts could lead to internment in a concentration camp or death. Companies and corporate assets were stolen (economic Aryanization process). Real estate and movable property were confiscated or destroyed, including many works of art. In Germany, starting in 1941, the deportation of Jews led to the automatic confiscation of the deported individuals' property for the benefit of the Reich.

After the war, Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann, charged with organizing the deportation of European Jews to the concentration and death camps, found refuge in Argentina, where he lived with his family under a false identity. In 1960, an Israeli secret service team kidnapped him and extradited him to Israel. Eichmann was the first Nazi criminal to be tried in Israel, where many of the Holocaust survivors went to live after World War II. This trial had a huge impact on the international community thanks to the televised testimony of survivors, who described numerous acts

of Jewish resistance in the ghettos and the camps. Among other things, Eichmann was accused of crimes against the Jewish people and crimes against humanity. Without denying his actions, Eichmann stated that he was not responsible for the crimes held against him because, in his opinion, he was just obeying orders. Found guilty, he is currently the only person ever sentenced to death in Israel.⁴⁶ *The New Yorker* special envoy and philosopher Hannah Arendt followed the trial closely. She was struck by the banality, the mediocrity and the “insignificance” of Eichmann, who presented himself as a minor public servant who was merely following orders, far from the monster he was perceived to be.⁴⁷

At the end of the war, restitution, indemnification and reparation policies were put in place in a number of European countries to compensate for loss of life and property. In Germany, the measures included the reinstatement of public servants, the creation of pension systems for the moral compensation of victims and their families, and restitution of looted property. However, at present, and for various reasons, many works of art, which were seized by Germany during the war, have not been restored to their rightful owners.⁴⁸



Chief U.S. prosecutor, Robert H. Jackson, addressing the Nuremberg tribunal in November 1945

Credit: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

ANTI-SEMITISM IN CANADA

Although we do not know exactly who said this, the statement attributed to a Canadian public servant, “None is too many,” appears to have been the leitmotiv of the federal government when it came to dealing with Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Europe.⁴⁹ Apparently, someone heard this during the MS *St. Louis* incident. In May 1939, more than 900 German Jews fled Nazi Germany on the MS *St. Louis* ship. They crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the hope of being welcomed as refugees in America. However, one after the other, the governments of Cuba, the United States and Canada denied them entry. Finally, England took in only 288 of them. The others were returned to Europe, where 254 of them were killed.⁵⁰ This story is a reflection of a Canadian immigration policy marked by strong anti-Semitism. Of all the developed countries, Canada accepted the fewest Jewish refugees between 1919 and 1945. Between 1933 and 1945, the United States accepted 200 000 Jews and Great Britain, 70 000, but Canada took in only 5 000. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King’s advisors, including Frederick Blair, Ernest Lapointe and General Crerar, intervened to limit the number of Jews allowed into Canada. Some public servants, such as Odilon Cormier, were zealous in their application of this policy⁵¹.



Anti-Semitic poster displayed in the village of Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, Québec, Canada, July 1939
Credit: Canadian Jewish Archives



Jews across Canada faced severe discrimination in the first half of the 20th century. Many companies refused to hire them, they were excluded from certain universities, and Jewish doctors were boycotted. They were denied entry to certain hotels and sports events. In English Canada, political movements such as Social Credit, the Orange Order and the Native Sons of Canada disseminated anti-Semitic ideas. In Toronto, at the Christie Pits Riot in 1933, spectators violently attacked Jewish immigrants and flew swastika flags during a baseball game. The riot spilled over into the entire city, becoming “one of the worst outbreaks of ethnic violence in Canadian history” [translation].⁵² In Québec, the Catholic Church, as well as intellectuals like Lionel Groulx and newspapers such as *Le Devoir*, *La Vérité*, *La Semaine religieuse*, *L'Action nationale* and *L'Action sociale* transmitted harsh anti-Semitic rhetoric. In 1910, following a violently anti-Semitic speech by Joseph Plamondon, shops owned by Jewish merchants in Québec City were ransacked. In the 1920s, the “Buy from us” campaign promoted boycotting Jewish storekeepers.⁵³ Journalist Adrien Arcand, who styled himself as the “Canadian Führer,” founded several parties based on Nazi ideology, such as the Parti national social chrétien, whose flag displayed a swastika, maple leaves and a Canadian beaver. Arcand demanded that Jews living in Canada be relocated to Hudson Bay. His party garnered little support, and he was finally sent to prison until 1945. His party was banned.⁵⁴

Anti-Semitism is still rampant in Canada today. According to Statistics Canada, between 2016 and 2019, Jews were the most common targets of hate crimes relating to religion (49%). These crimes included revisionist discourse, acts of vandalism and harassment.⁵⁵



Holocaust deniers demonstrating in Toronto, Canada, May 1981; Photographer: Ben Lechtman
Credit: Canadian Jewish Archives

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