



Tell Ye Your Children...

STÉPHANE BRUCHFELD AND PAUL A. LEVINE

A book about the Holocaust
in Europe 1933-1945

THE LIVING HISTORY FORUM

In 1997, the former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson initiated a comprehensive information campaign about the Holocaust entitled “Living History”. The aim was to provide facts and information and to encourage a discussion about compassion, democracy and the equal worth of all people. The book “Tell Ye Your Children...” came about as a part of this project. The book was initially intended primarily for an adult audience.

In 1999, the Swedish Government appointed a committee to investigate the possibilities of turning “Living History” into a permanent project. In 2001, the parliament decided to set up a new national authority, the Living History Forum, which was formally established in 2003. The Living History Forum is commissioned to work with issues related to tolerance, democracy and human rights, using the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as its starting point.

This major challenge is our specific mission. The past and the present are continuously present in everything we do.

Through our continuous contacts with teachers and other experts within education, we develop methods and tools for reaching our key target group: young people.

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A book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933–1945

– THIRD REVISED AND EXPANDED ENGLISH EDITION –

THE LIVING HISTORY FORUM

www.levandehistoria.se

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

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

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

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This book was originally published in 1998, and to date, over 1.5 million copies have been distributed free of charge in Sweden.

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Table of contents

6	Foreword	36	Deportation	70	Swedish Chronology 1928–1945
7	Children as guinea pigs	38	Umschlagplatz	71	From bullets to gas
8	Introduction	39	A place of blood and tears	72	Operation Reinhardt
8	The background to racist ideologies	41	Separations	75	Franz Stangl
8	Antisemitism and racial biology	42	The genocide of the “Gypsies”	76	Auschwitz-Birkenau
<hr/>		<hr/>		78	The 200 pictures from Birkenau
13	Chronology 1919–1933	45	Chronology 1943–1945	80	The 600 boys
<hr/>		<hr/>		81	Working in hell
14	Jewish life before the war	46	The genocide begins	82	Recreation time for the SS
16	The “Gypsies”	49	The Einsatzgruppen	84	Bombing Auschwitz
16	“Gypsies” and the racist state	51	Sweden and the Holocaust	86	The Holocaust in other parts of Europe
18	Homosexuals	52	Racial theories in Sweden before the war	87	Resistance and rescue
19	The handicapped and “asocials”	52	Jews in Sweden	89	The Warsaw ghetto revolt
<hr/>		54	The Nazi temptation	91	The death camp revolts
20	Chronology 1934–1939	55	The “new Germany” as seen from Sweden	92	German civil resistance
<hr/>		56	Sweden and the refugee crisis of 1938	93	The Rosenstrasse protest
21	Persecution	57	Reactions to the November pogrom	95	The democracies close their doors
22	Jewish businesses terrorised	59	“Business as usual” – everyday relations with Nazi Germany	97	Witnesses to genocide
23	International reactions	60	Sweden after “Operation Barbarossa”	100	The death marches and the end of the Holocaust
25	The November pogrom	60	First reports of mass murder	101	The Holocaust – lessons to be learned?
26	A “Germanic” empire in Europe	62	The “Final Solution” in Norway	104	Memories of the Holocaust
27	The ghettos are formed	64	Swedes in foreign armies	106	Selected bibliography
29	Life in the ghetto	65	Sweden’s Foreign Office fights genocide with diplomacy	107	List of quotations
32	The impossible choices	66	Raoul Wallenberg and other Swedes in Budapest	109	Pictures and illustrations
33	Death in the streets	67	The White Buses and other rescue operations		
<hr/>		68	Peace in Europe, joy in Sweden		
35	Chronology 1940–1942	69	What does the Holocaust mean for Sweden today?		
<hr/>					

Foreword

This book, “Tell Ye Your Children...” was first published in 1998 as part of the “Living History” information campaign initiated by then Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. Over a decade later, the now permanent Living History Forum commissioned us to revise and update the book, which included complementing it with a newly written chapter on Sweden and the Holocaust. This has enabled us to include some of the findings of the extensive research conducted over the past decade, particularly when writing the new chapter on Sweden. We are grateful for this opportunity to publish an expanded edition in English. Many questions still remain, but there is a clearer picture today of how Sweden and its population reacted to first the persecution of Germany’s Jews and the subsequent deportation and murder of them throughout Europe between 1941 and 1945. There was, in fact, no unified Swedish response. On the contrary, the Government and its citizens displayed a wide range of reactions.

Despite massive research conducted into what is commonly known as the Holocaust, there remains much information missing. The order of events has, however, long been clear. The “Final Solution of the Jewish question” was characterised by its total, systematic and global nature. The road to the death camps and the countless scenes of murder in Europe went from old and new prejudices via hateful propaganda to the classification, discrimination and segregation of human beings. This was followed by the assembly, deportation and finally physical extermination by bullet, gas, starvation or dis-

ease. For Jews living in Central and Western Europe, this process could take several years. In other areas, it could be remarkably swift. For Jews in the Baltic States and the Soviet Union, it could be a matter of a few weeks – sometimes even one, single day.

Even if we can never establish exactly how many people suffered from the Nazi vision of a “Germanic” empire in Europe under Greater Germany, the dimensions of the crime are clear enough. Simultaneous to approximately six million Jews being murdered in the Holocaust, over two hundred thousand “Gypsies” (Romani-speaking groups and Travellers) were subjected to genocidal policy. In Germany, tens of thousands of members of political resisters and “ordinary people” fell victim to the Nazis, along with well over one hundred thousand physically and mentally disabled people and “asocial elements”, thousands of homosexuals and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Close to ninety-eight per cent of victims lived outside Germany’s borders. Three million Soviet prisoners of war and as many, if not more, civilians in Poland, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic States also fell victim to the Nazi ideology of “race” and “Lebensraum” (living space).

However, these figures come across as abstract and their real meaning is easily lost. Behind each number is a name, a face, a loved one; a future lost. Children, parents, relatives. That is why we begin with the story of the children of Bullenhuser Damm. During the war, the Nazis murdered close to one and a half million Jewish children. For every ten Jewish children alive in Europe when the war began, nine lost their lives. Why did this happen?

We sought to describe historic events in a factual and sober manner, combining an enormous body of research

with personal accounts. We hope this book will contribute to a greater awareness of the Holocaust, and act as a basis for a dialogue about morality, ethics and democracy – not only today but also in the future. Nonetheless, it can serve only as a starting point, and we urge all who are interested to continue their own search for knowledge and understanding.

This book would have been impossible to write without the painstaking and persistent efforts of historians the world over to understand and explain different aspects of the Holocaust. We are greatly indebted to them. We also wish to take this opportunity to thank those who assisted us in revising and updating the book. We would particularly like to extend our warm thanks to our assistant Viktor Bernhardt, photo editor Sanna Johansson and layout designer Magnus Wigg. We would also like to express our gratitude to Martin Månsson and Rune Rautio, who kindly supplied us with rare photos. Lars M. Andersson, Charlotta Brylla, Matthew Kott, Helmut Müssener, Ester Pollack, Mattias Tydén, Klas Åmark and Oscar Österberg shared their invaluable knowledge. Lastly, we wish to thank this edition’s project manager, Bitte Wallin, for her patience and support.

Stockholm and Uppsala, August 2012
Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul A. Levine

Children as guinea pigs

In April 1945, Allied armies were advancing steadily into Nazi Germany. Yet the Germans did not surrender until 8 May. As the war was coming to an end, those who knew they had committed crimes were trying to dispose of as much evidence as possible. On the evening of 20 April – the same day Adolf Hitler was celebrating his last birthday – the “White Buses” were evacuating Scandinavian prisoners from the Neuengamme concentration camp outside Hamburg. Left behind in the camp were twenty Jewish children between the ages of five and twelve. The group included ten girls and ten boys, among them two pairs of siblings. The children were not included in the rescue mission that day. For several months, they had been guinea pigs in medical “experiments” conducted in Neuengamme by SS doctor Kurt Heissmeyer. He had removed the children’s lymph glands and injected living tuberculosis bacteria into their skin. He had also introduced the bacteria directly into the lungs of several children through a tube. During an interrogation in 1964, Heissmeyer explained that, for him, “there had been no real difference between Jews and animals”.

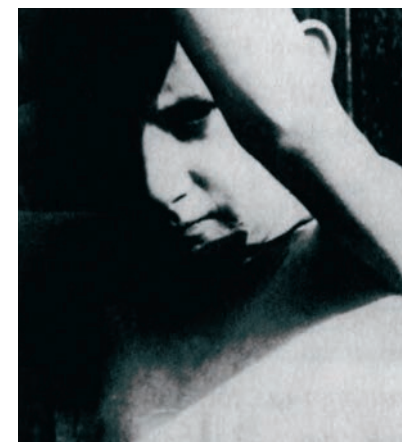
A few hours after the last Scandinavian prisoner had left the camp, the children, together with four adult prisoners who had cared for them, were taken



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

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

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



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

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

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

Introduction

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

H.S. CHAMBERLAIN, EUROPEAN RACIAL IDEOLOGUE

The history of Nazi Germany is inextricably linked to the Nazi “world view”. The persecution and murder of Europe’s Jews was a direct consequence of Nazi ideology, expressed clearly in Adolf Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf*. The Nazis made no secret of their fundamentally racist view of mankind, or of their loathing for democracy and its values. For the Nazis, “race” and the “German people’s community” meant everything. The individual had no value other than as a tool for the racist state. The implementation of this ideology began when Hitler assumed power on 30 January 1933.

The background to racist ideologies

Racist ideas had, however, gained a foothold in Europe long before this. As early as the 17th century, intellectuals and philosophers had speculated about the existence of different human races. In 1854, French diplomat Arthur de Gobineau published an influential book about the “inequality of the human races”. He argued that the “Aryan” race was superior to all others, but that it was threatened by “racial mixing” with “non-Aryans” considered to be of “inferior quality”. In an age when European nationalism and imperialism was increasingly important, such thoughts were welcomed by many.

Influenced by Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection, often referred to as “survival of the fittest”, scientists and intellectuals in the Western world began applying these biological ideas to human society. So-called Social Darwinism argued that the “strong” had a natural right to rule over the “weak”. Another influential

thinker was the English-born German citizen H.S. Chamberlain. In 1899, he published his vision that the “Aryan race”, led by the Germanic peoples, would save Christian European civilisation from the enemy: “Judaism”.

Antisemitism and racial biology

Jews had lived in Europe since ancient times. During the early Middle Ages, the Church began blaming the Jews for Jesus’ death, and to condemn them for refusing to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. Such accusations worsened the situation of the Jews in Europe. Violent persecution (pogroms) and massacres of Jews flared up periodically throughout the following centuries. After the French Revolution of 1789, with its democratic ideals, the situation of the Jews began to improve. The period of so-called emancipation (liberation) during the 19th century made it possible for them to participate in society like any other citizens.

Yet, as the 19th century neared its end, a new form of antisemitism took shape in reaction to Jewish emancipation. Hatred of Jews was now expressed in both religious and political terms. During periods of spiritual, economic and political uncertainty, antisemites accused Jews of having too much influence in society. They also believed that Jews had a secret plan to seize “world power”.

Simultaneously, modern science was influenced by Social Darwinism. This trend found its greatest expression in the “eugenics movement”, known also as “racial hygiene”. Its supporters argued that the inferior genes of “the weak” were a threat to society. They maintained that it was possible to protect and improve the quality and “health” of society by preventing these genes from reproducing and spreading. The ideas of the eugenic move-



"I intend to deal with the Jewish question in the spirit of Christian love... I do indeed consider modern Jewry a great danger to German national life. (...) [Judaism] is a form of religion which is dead at its very core. (...) The social abuses which are caused by Jewry must be eradicated by wise legislation. (...) In the event [of failure] our whole future is threatened and the German spirit will become Judaised."

ADOLF STOECKER,
PRIEST AND POLITICIAN, 1879

The game is called "Juden raus!" (Jews out!), and was introduced in the nineteen thirties by a German manufacturer as "a great game" for both children and adults. The hats on the pieces are the same shape as the hats Jews were forced to wear during the Middle Ages, and they were adorned with anti-Jewish caricatures. On the board it says: "If you manage to send off 6 Jews, you've won a clear victory!"



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

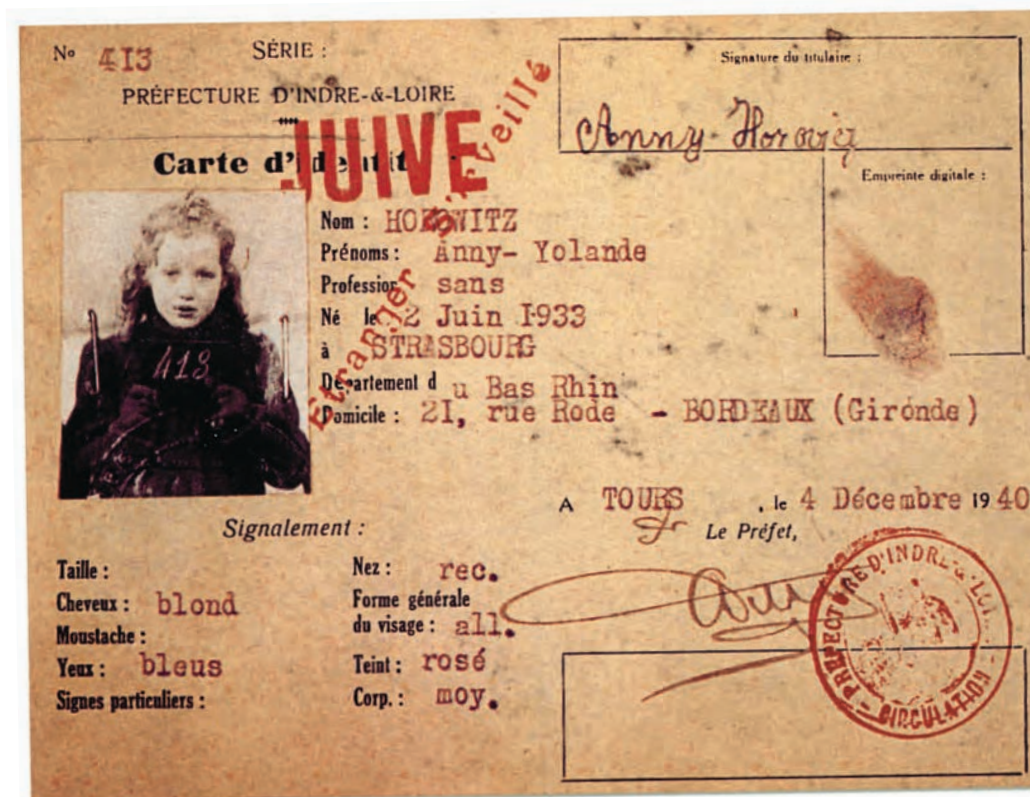
ADOLF HITLER IN A SPEECH 2 DECEMBER 1938

A Hitler Youth member instructs a young girl in a German colony in occupied Poland. These colonies were established to help secure German “Lebensraum” (living space) in the East. Native populations were deported from their farms, which were then occupied by German families.

ment were realised in Europe and the United States during the first half of the 20th century with the sterilisation of hundreds of thousands of people, mostly women.

The First World War, 1914-1918, demonstrated the capacity of industrialised societies to kill men on a massive scale. Many of the Nazi Party's members were veterans who experienced Germany's defeat first-hand. They blamed this catastrophe on the country's small Jewish population, creating a desire for revenge. The Nazis said that Germany's redemption and rebirth could only be accomplished by introducing racial biology, eugenics and antisemitism into politics. They wished to create a "racially pure", homogeneous society in which the "natural" differences between people were recognised and legalised. The so-called Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were an expression of this. The laws were initially aimed at Jews, but soon came to include "Gypsies, negroes and their bastard offspring". Only "citizens of German or kindred blood" were granted full civil rights. The legal experts who drafted the laws commented: "Against the teachings of the equality of all people (...) National Socialism brings forth the hard but necessary awareness of the basic differences between people..."

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



Anny Horowitz identified

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

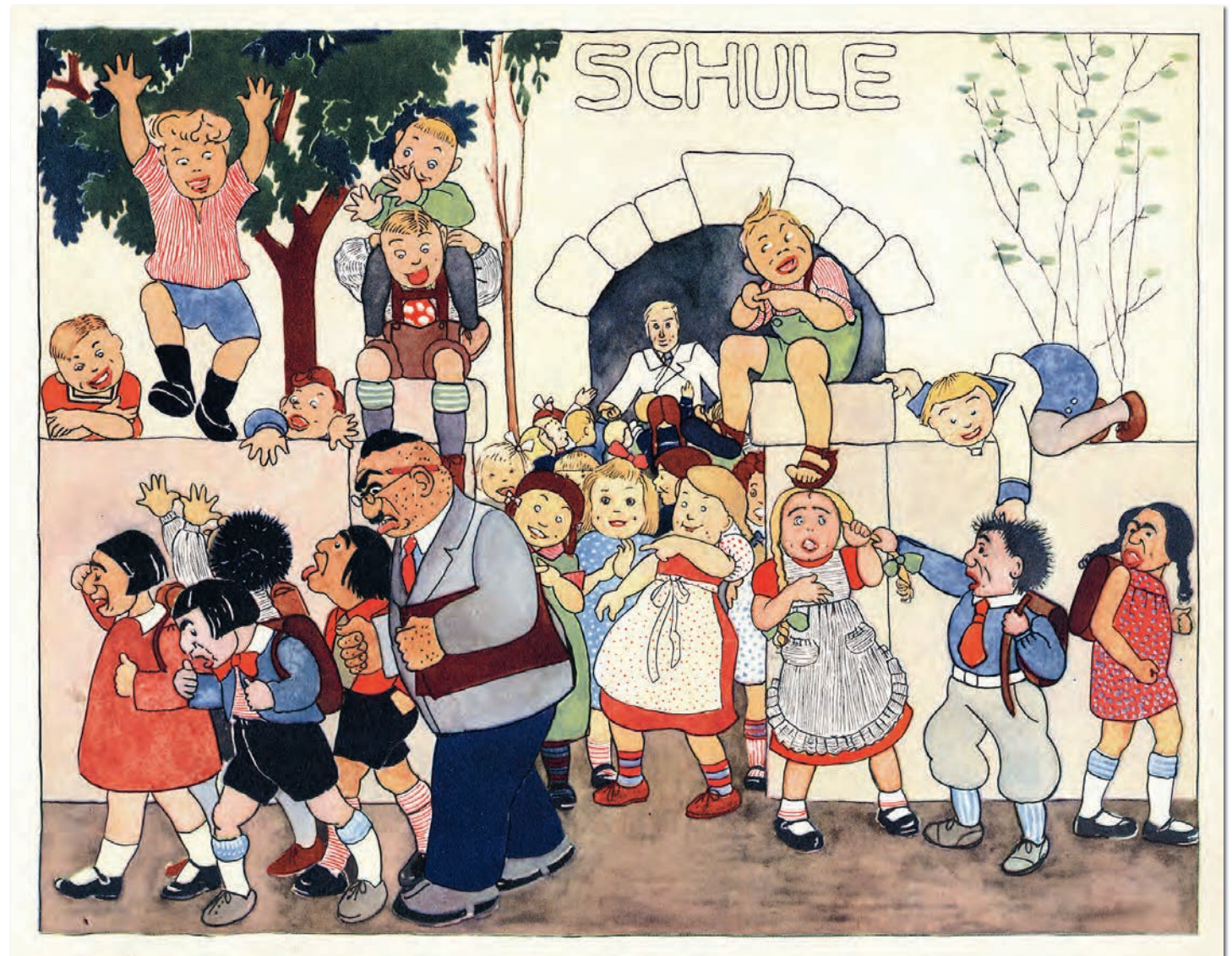
Anny Horowitz was a French Jew born in Strasbourg in 1933, yet classified as a "foreigner under surveillance" as her identity card indicates. First interned at a camp near Tours, she was then sent to the Drancy camp, located in a Parisian suburb. On 11 September 1942 she was deported to Auschwitz with the 31st deportation train from France. With her on the train were her mother Frieda and her 7-year-old sister Paulette. On the trans-

port were 1,000 men, women and children. Upon arrival on 13 September, more than 600 of them, including all children, were taken straight to the gas chambers. Anny and Paulette were only two of the approximately one and a half million Jewish children murdered during the Holocaust. On average, only one in ten survived the war. In countries like Poland and the Baltic States, and in occupied areas such as the Soviet Union, the chances of Jewish children surviving were extremely low.

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

FROM THE LAW OF
THE HITLER YOUTH, 1935

The German children's book "Trust No Fox on the Green Heath, and No Jew on His Oath" was written in rhyme and published in 1936. The picture shows Jewish teachers and children being expelled from their school, which becomes "purely Aryan". Afterwards, "going to school becomes quite enjoyable". The author also explained that the "father of the Jews is the Devil" and that "once a Jew, always a Jew".



1919

16 Sept. Adolf Hitler joins the German Workers' Party (DAP).

1920

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

1923

8–9 Nov. "The Beer-Hall Putsch". Hitler tries to topple the Bavarian Government, but fails. He is sentenced to five years' imprisonment in April 1924 after a politically charged trial. In prison, he writes the book *Mein Kampf*.

1925

November The SS is formed in Munich as Hitler's private bodyguard.

1928

20 May Reichstag (parliamentary) elections. The Nazi Party wins 2.6 % of the votes.

1930

14 Sept. Reichstag elections. In the wake of the "Great Depression", the NSDAP wins 18.3 % of the votes. The Social Democrats (SPD) get 24.5 %, the Communists (KPD) 13.1 % and the Catholic German Centre Party (Zentrum) 11.8 % of the votes.

1931

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

1932

Spring Hitler loses two elections for the German presidency.

31 July Reichstag elections. With 37.4 % of the votes, the NSDAP wins its greatest success in free elections and becomes the largest party. The SPD gets 21.6 %, the KPD 14.3 % and the Centre Party 12.5 % of the votes.

6 Nov. New Reichstag elections. The Nazis lose ground, falling to 33.1 % of the votes. The SPD gets 20.4 %, the KPD 16.9 % and the Centre Party 11.9 % of the votes.

1933

30 Jan. Persuaded by conservative politicians, Reich President Hindenburg appoints Adolf Hitler German Reich Chancellor to head a Nazi minority government.

27 Feb. The Reichstag in Berlin is set on fire. This attack is used as an excuse to issue an "emergency decree" which curtails basic civil liberties, and legalises terror against anti-Nazi resistance (primarily Communists and Social Democrats) and dissidents.

5 March Reichstag elections. Despite terror and massive propaganda efforts, the NSDAP fails to obtain a majority, winning only 43.9 % of the votes. The SPD gets 18.3 %, the KPD 12.3 % and the Centre Party gets 11.3 % of the votes.

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

23 March By murdering, arresting or forcing Communist and Social Democratic MPs underground, the Nazis reach the two-thirds majority needed to implement the "Enabling Act", which allows the Government to legislate without parliamentary approval or involvement. Despite being subjected to threats and ridicule, 94 Social Democratic MPs vote against it. The Enabling Act overrides the concept of parliamentary democracy and provides the legal foundation for Hitler's dictatorship.

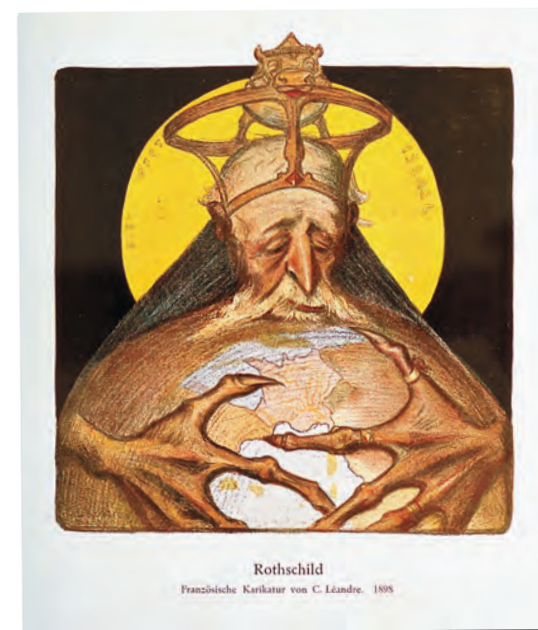
1–3 April Boycott of Jewish lawyers, doctors and shops.

April Jews and democrats are banned from civil service.

10 May The Nazis organise public burnings of books by Jewish and democratic authors.

14 July The NSDAP is declared the only legal party in Germany. Laws are passed allowing compulsory sterilisation of "Gypsies", disabled people and "mixed-race" Germans.

September Jews are excluded from "Aryan" cultural activities.



A "classic" French antisemitic caricature from 1898. Many of the symbols in the picture later became central Nazi antisemitic themes.

For following chronologies, see pp. 20, 35 and 45. For Swedish chronology, see p. 70.

Jewish life before the war

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

ALBERT EINSTEIN. PHYSICIST
AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Before the Nazis came to power, every country in Europe was home to native Jewish inhabitants, although Jewish life in Western and Central Europe differed a lot from that in Eastern Europe. By the middle of the 19th century, after hundreds of years of discrimination, persecution and even ghettoisation, most Jews in Western and Central Europe had gained their civil rights through emancipation. Aided by these new freedoms, the Jews participated in the on-going modernisation of European society. Yet despite this progress, or perhaps because of it, Jews again became targets of political attacks, primarily from groups opposed to social change.

In Western and Central Europe, most Jews found their place and integrated fully into society. Antisemitism persisted, but most Jewish families felt safe and optimistic about their future.

Like everyone else, Jewish men fought for their countries in the First World War, and Jewish communities participated in the post-war reconstruction of Europe. For this reason, few of them could imagine that the rapid arrival of Nazism would mean an end to life as they knew it.

In Eastern Europe, at the beginning of the 20th century, most Jews carried on with traditional occupations and lived according to the same traditions they had

followed for hundreds of years. They had migrated to Eastern Europe from France and Germany in the 14th and 15th centuries. In countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia and Romania – a region inhabited by more Jews than anywhere else in the world – a culture founded on the Jewish religion and the Yiddish language was created over the centuries. In small towns and rural areas, Jews often lived separate from the Christian majority, yet a substantial proportion of the Jewish population began achieving middle-class status. In spite of prevailing prejudices, they played an important role in the development of modern urban society.



Antisemitism remained part of Eastern European culture, with anti-Jewish propaganda and policies promoted by governments. Before the First World War the difficult conditions had motivated millions of

Jews to emigrate, primarily to the United States. Despite increasing assimilation in the inter-war years, relations between Jews and the Christian majorities were often deeply troubled. Many called for drastic changes to the situation. Following the outbreak of the war in 1939 the millions of Jews still living in Eastern Europe would before long meet their deaths in the Nazi extermination machinery. The rich religious and secular Jewish culture of Eastern Europe vanished with them.

Anne Frank

Anne Frank was born in Frankfurt am Main in Germany in June 1929. She began writing her diary, one of the most famous accounts of the Holocaust, at the age of 13. It has been translated into over 50 languages, and now includes a complete unabridged version.

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

The family's everyday existence in Amsterdam came to an abrupt end in May 1940, when the German army occupied the country. Nazi persecution of Jews in the Netherlands and throughout Western Europe led Otto Frank to organise a hiding place for his family to avoid deportation to the death camps in Poland. In July 1942, the family left its flat and went into hiding in a secret annex to Otto Frank's business.

On 8 July that year, Anne wrote in her diary: "The stripped beds, the breakfast things on the table, the pound of meat for the cat in the kitchen – all of these created the impression that we'd left in a hurry. But we weren't interested in impressions. We just wanted to get out of there, to get away and reach our destination in safety. Nothing else mattered."

Even though they received help from neighbours, the Gestapo was finally tipped off, and on 4 August 1944, the family was arrested.

Just like the over 100,000 Dutch Jews before them, the Frank family was taken to the Westerbork transit camp, and then sent to Auschwitz at the beginning of September 1944.

Edith Frank died shortly before Auschwitz was liberated in January 1945. Anne and Margot were sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany, where they died of typhoid fever in March 1945, not long before the camp's liberation. Otto Frank survived captivity in Auschwitz, eventually making it to the Netherlands, where Anne's diary was returned to him by family friends who had been keeping it safe.





This picture, taken in Germany in the 1930s, depicts “Gypsy” life in a clichéd way. Many German “Gypsies” had already abandoned their nomadic ways and adapted to city life. Most German “Gypsies” were murdered by the Nazis during the war, and these children were probably among them.

The “Gypsies”

During the Middle Ages, groups of Romani-speaking peoples came to Europe from Northern India via Persia, Asia Minor and the Balkans. Initially accepted, they were soon hounded by suspicion and prejudice. For example, they were often accused of being spies. For centuries Europeans could kill “Gypsies” with impunity: in Eastern and Central Europe, “Gypsy hunts” were sometimes organised, in which “Gypsies” were hunted down and killed like animals.

Some Romani-speaking groups kept up their nomadic existence while others settled down, gradually assimilating into society. Eventually, they came to be regarded less as an ethnic group and more as a social group with low status. Even to this day, myths claim that they kidnap children, practise witchcraft and cause dangerous diseases. Antiziganism (hatred of “Gypsies”) remains deeply ingrained and widespread. Romani-speaking people are among the most targeted minorities in Europe, still enduring racist discrimination and violence.

“Gypsies” and the racist state

In the 1930s, there were approximately 1 million “Gypsies” in Europe, with some 30,000 living in Germany, either in caravans or in cities.

By the beginning of the 20th century, a “Gypsy information bureau” was established in order to maintain a file on the whereabouts of German “Gypsies”. They were considered dangerous and declared a threat to be dealt with. Especially common were warnings against “race-mixing”. In 1905, a special chart was published with genealogical information and photographs of hundreds of German “Gypsies”.

In 1926, the state of Bavaria passed a law “against Gypsies, travellers and the work-shy”. A “Gypsy” without a permanent job risked being put in a house of correction. This law and others like it were adopted by the Nazis after 1933. As decreed by Nazi ideology, persecutions along similar lines as those against the Jews were initiated. SS Chief Heinrich Himmler believed that some “original Aryans” might still exist in the German Romani-speaking groups, but the majority was considered to be of “mixed blood” and therefore a “social danger”. Such racial biological notions influenced policies of persecution against German “Gypsies”, and during the war would often determine who lived and who was killed.

From the Bavarian law of 16 July 1926 for

“the combating of Gypsies, travellers, and the workshy”

§ 1

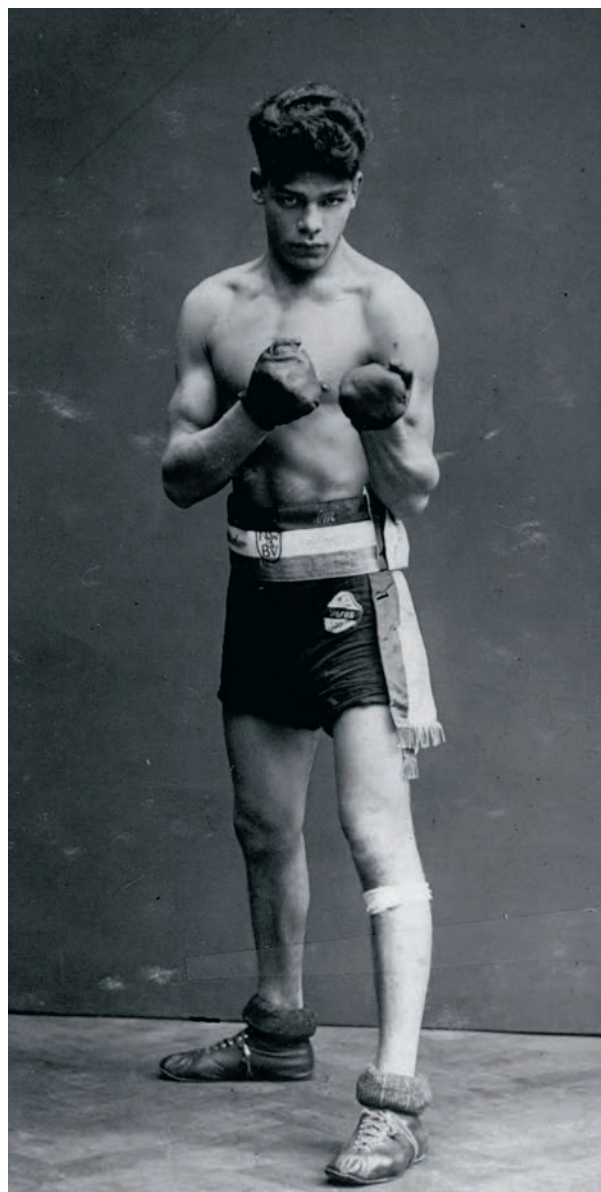
Gypsies and persons who roam about in the manner of Gypsies – ‘travellers’ – may only itinerate with wagons and caravans if they have permission from the police authorities responsible. This permission may only be granted for a maximum period of one calendar year and is revocable at all times. (...)

§ 2

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

§ 9

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



“Gipsy” Trollmann

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

But on 9 June, Witt is humiliated by his slender opponent. For twelve rounds the 26-year-old Trollmann dances around Witt, winning points and totally outclassing his opponent. The organisers are embarrassed and declare the match a draw. The audience is infuriated. For several minutes, they protest loudly and threaten to smash up the hall. Finally, the organisers give in and declare Trollmann the new German middleweight champion. He is immediately attacked by the boxing magazine Boxsport. His style is labelled “alien” and “theatrical”, and they jeer at his “Gypsy-like unpredictability”. Eight days later, Trollmann is stripped of his title. His career is effectively over.

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

Later, four of his brothers are sent to concentration camps, while in 1939, Trollmann himself is called up and joins the infantry. Eventually, he is sent to the Russian front. While on leave in 1942, he is arrested by the Gestapo and sent to the Neuengamme concentration camp, where he is forced to do the heaviest labour. At their parties, well-built SS guards have fun playing “German champion” and boxing with the starving 35-year-old. On 9 February 1943, the SS has tired of this game and Johann Trollmann is shot and killed.

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

TESTIMONY FROM A GERMAN HOMOSEXUAL MAN

Homosexuals

As soon as the Nazis seized power, they began persecuting homosexuals living in Germany. Nazi leaders thought that homosexuals would endanger the birth rate of the German people as well as the physical and spiritual health of the “national body”. SA groups raided places where homosexuals were known to meet, such as taverns and even private homes, and the police did whatever they could to harass them.

This persecution brought an end to what had been a trend towards more liberal treatment of homosexuals. The Nazis reinforced an already existing law against homosexual activity and during the 1930s, homosexuals were arrested and persecuted with increasing intensity. SS leader Heinrich Himmler set up an office for the purpose of registering and harassing homosexuals, and many Party members demanded that the death penalty be introduced for men who had been convicted of homosexual “indecentcy”.

Between 1937 and 1939, the number of legal cases against homosexuals peaked. Of an estimated 1.5 million homosexuals, approximately 100,000 German and Austrian men were arrested, mainly the result of voluntary denunciations. After serving their prison sentences, between 5,000 and 15,000 homosexuals were sent to concentration camps, and forced to wear a pink triangle. Particularly brutal treatment from SS guards and other prisoners killed many. It is unknown how many homosexuals died in the camps, but estimates say up to 60 per cent.

Nazi treatment of homosexuals combined racial ideology with pseudo-science. Many were subjected to “experiments” which tried to change their sexual behaviour.

The handicapped and “asocials”

In the 1920s, some German scientists began advocating the killing of people they referred to as “useless entities”. By this, they meant certain groups of handicapped and mentally disabled citizens. The expression “life unworthy of life” was coined. Such ideas were quickly absorbed by the Nazis, whose ideology called for society to aid the “healthy” and eliminate the “sick” and “inferior”. Jews and “Gypsies” were regarded as external threats to the German “national body”, while the mentally and physically handicapped, along with others who did not fit in the “people’s community”, also to be contained and combatted. Classed as economically “unproductive”, they were considered a too “heavy burden” for “healthy” and “productive” members of society to bear. From a racial-biological point of view, they were considered “inferior”. Their “negative” qualities were believed to be hereditary, thereby constituting a mounting danger to the well-being of the “national body”.

In their enthusiasm to “cleanse” both German society and the “Aryan race”, the Nazis persecuted and imprisoned thousands of citizens from a group of people arbitrarily labelled “asocials”. This group even included prostitutes and those who refused a job offer. The Nazi ideology simply punished those whose way of life was regarded as offensive. This included petty criminals, who, according to the science of “criminal biology” prevalent in Germany at the time, were considered to be biologically “inferior”. Individuals who fell into this category were forcibly sterilised or castrated. In the concentration camps they wore a black triangle and were very low down in the camp hierarchy, with slight chances of survival.



Taken in the Buchenwald concentration camp sometime between 1938 and 1940, the propaganda picture above shows a group of handicapped Jewish men. Handicapped people were considered “useless” and only fit to serve as “objects” for pseudo-medical research. These men are unlikely to have remained alive for long after this picture was taken.

1934

3 July New laws forbid marriages between Germans and people of “foreign races” as well as “defective” people of “German blood”.

2 Aug. The German President, Paul von Hindenburg, dies.

19 Aug. Hitler appoints himself Führer and Reich Chancellor of the Third Reich.

October-November Arrests of homosexuals conducted throughout Germany.

1935

April Jehovah’s Witnesses excluded from the civil service, and many arrested.

21 May Jews banned from serving in the military.

15 Sept. The “Nuremberg laws” are proclaimed by Hermann Göring at a Nazi Party meeting. Jews are forbidden from marrying people of “German blood” or having sexual relations with them. At the same time, another law is passed stating that only people of “German or related blood” may enjoy full civil rights. Jews are proclaimed national subjects without full civil rights. A direct result of this law is the focusing of the bureaucracy and lawyers on who is to be classified a Jew, and thus subjected to segregation and other methods of persecution. The Nuremberg laws are quickly supplemented by many others, resulting in over 400 anti-Jewish laws enacted in Germany during the 1930s.

26 Nov. “Gypsies” and “negroes” are forbidden to marry people of “German blood”.

1936

17 June SS Chief Heinrich Himmler becomes head of the German police.

1 Aug. Hitler opens the Summer Olympic Games in Berlin.

1938

13 March “Anschluss”: The Third Reich “annexes” Austria, and the so-called Jewish refugee problem is rapidly aggravated.

April Resolution passed requiring the registration of all Jewish property.

6–15 July Representatives of 32 nations meet at Evian, France, to discuss the Jewish “refugee problem”.

17 Aug. All Jewish women in Germany must add “Sara” to their names, and all Jewish men “Israel”.

5 Oct. Following requests by Sweden and Switzerland, the passports of German Jews are stamped with a red capital “J” for “Jew”.

28 Oct. Nearly 17,000 Jews of Polish origin are expelled from Germany to the Polish border.

9–13 Nov. Often called “Kristallnacht”, the November pogrom causes widespread murder and damage to Jewish homes and institutions. Some 30,000 Jews are arrested and interned in concentration camps.

15 Nov. Jewish children no longer allowed to attend German schools. After the November pogrom, the Swedish Government allows 500 German Jewish children to enter the country.

1939

30 Jan. Hitler tells the German Reichstag that a new world war will mean the “annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe”.

21 Feb. Jews forced to give up their jewellery and precious metals.

15 March German troops invade Czechia.

29 June More than 400 “Gypsy” women from Austria are deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

1 Sept. The Second World War starts with Germany’s invasion of Poland. German “Einsatzgruppen” (Special Units) murder many priests, academics and Jews. German Jews not allowed out after 9 p.m.

20 Sept. Jews no longer allowed to possess radios.

October Deportations of Jews from Germany to the Lublin region of Poland.

20 Nov. Heinrich Himmler gives orders to imprison all female “Gypsy fortune-tellers”.

23 Nov. All Jews in the General Government of occupied Poland must wear the Star of David. The decree was eventually extended to Jews in Germany and other countries occupied by Germany.

“If even in later years a researcher who is acquainted with Jews only through hearsay would rummage in the records of the municipal archives of Dortmund, he will discover that the municipal pawnshops also did their small part in the solution of the Jewish question.”

FROM A REPORT WRITTEN IN AUGUST 1941, BY THE DIRECTOR OF A MUNICIPAL PAWNSHOP IN DORTMUND

Persecution

Although German Jews numbered less than 1% of the country's population, the Nazis accused them of dominating society, threatening and undermining everything "German". In order for the Nazis to achieve their goals, they had to isolate Jews from society's normal activities. This process began in April 1933 when the Party and Government urged a boycott of Jewish-owned shops and businesses. The boycott frightened many Jews into leaving Germany, yet it failed to achieve the aims of the Nazi leadership. They realised that they would have to act more carefully against the Jews in order to win the active support of the German population, or at least their passive consent.

During the 1930s, the Nazis passed over 400 laws depriving Jewish citizens of their civil and economic rights. This process took five years in Germany, but happened literally overnight in Austria when the country was annexed to the German Reich in March 1938 (an event known as the Anschluss). In both countries, Jewish professionals such as doctors, teachers, lawyers, professors and businessmen were forbidden from serving "Aryans" and, with that, lost their ability to support their families. Jewish children had to go to special schools, Jewish university students were banned from attending lectures, and most Jewish university lecturers were banned from teaching. Some tried to emigrate, but even those able to find a safe haven were forced to leave their possessions and assets behind.

As the process of segregation and exclusion accelerated, most Germans either supported Nazi measures to make Germany "free of Jews", or chose to remain

silent. When deportations began in 1940, Germany's Jews were essentially cut off from social and economic contact with their Christian neighbours. In September 1941, a final symbolic act of segregation became a fact: all German Jews had to wear a yellow star on their clothing when leaving home.

The Nazis' systematic plunder

In addition to physical extermination, the Holocaust was European history's greatest and most thoroughly planned and executed robbery. Throughout the 1930s, the German state seized the private possessions of Jews, such as art, jewellery, properties and family heirlooms. Jewish-owned banks and businesses were also "Aryanised", i.e. confiscated. Some Jews tried to protect their assets (in the form of cash, insurance policies, precious metals and gem stones) by transferring them abroad, mainly to Switzerland.

The Germans systematically confiscated all possession owned by Jews deported to the death camps. Everything they had taken on the journey with them – clothes, shoes, glasses, rings, even babies' prams – was also confiscated upon arrival. Many of the objects were later shipped back for use by German civilians.

Even the bodies were exploited. Hair cut from women before or after gassing was used, for example to make warm socks and blankets for submarine crew members. Gold teeth were extracted and melted down. Sometimes ashes from the burnt bodies were used as an agricultural fertiliser.

After the war, West Germany compensated several hundred thousand Holocaust survivors all over the world, but those living in Communist Eastern Europe never received any compensation. During the 1990s, many European countries, including Sweden, formed national commissions to investigate questions of compensation for Holocaust survivors and their descendants.

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

JEWISH DOCTOR HERTHA NATHORFF
IN HER DIARY, 9 OCTOBER 1935



Jewish businesses terrorised

Following local initiatives throughout Germany to boycott Jewish businesses, in April 1933, the Nazis organised the first national effort to strike an economic blow against the nation's Jews. This included "warnings" plastered on Jewish shop windows, medical surgeries and lawyers' offices, urging "Aryans" against visiting.

Doctor Hertha Nathorff, a Jewish medical practitioner, wrote in her diary of an event from April 1933:

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

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

International reactions

When Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power at the end of January 1933, the world watched the "New Germany" with a mixture of hope and concern. The hope was that Germany would quickly regain financial stability, but it was soon obvious that coming to power was not enough to rein in violent Nazi tendencies. Through newspaper articles and diplomatic reports from Germany, the world learned that Germany's economy was stabilising, but that the situation for political opponents and the Jews was rapidly and radically deteriorating. It was no secret that thousands of Jewish and other employees were banned from working in the state bureaucracy and that all over Germany, Jews were humiliated openly as a matter of course. However, the German regime labelled such foreign press reports on the accelerating oppression as "scaremongering". Jews – whether they lived in or outside Germany – were blamed for the reports and accused of having "declared war on Germany." Once the initial outrage and criticism wore off, however, a lot of people got used to the situation. While Germany armed and regained international influence, Hitler promised peace, with many people wanting to believe him. In the democratic Western world during the 1930s, antisemitic sentiment increased. Jews seeking to emigrate from Germany found almost every border closed to them and their families.

Between 1933 and the end of the Second World War, the Swedish press frequently published news about Nazi Germany's actions against its Jews. This gave the Swedish public ample opportunity to form an idea of what was happening.

SKONINGSLÖS TYSK JUDEBOJK TT

HEIMOJUMALA OCH LAPPO. Jude som skjutit



Lappdemonstranter från Osterbotten.

Finsk nationalism under reflexverkan från tysk nazism.

Från ett Finlandsbrev meddelar dr. Torsten Fogelqvist i nedanstående artikel några iakttagelser beträffande Lappdemonstrations utveckling ur religiös, politisk och kulturell synpunkt och nämner ett man i Konstas församling vid namnet Torsten Fogelqvist.

(Ytterst, vackra kakor kalla). Det var när den stora fredsunderskriftningsaktionen utbrände från Petersburg till Helsingfors med sina 28 inlösningskommunikationer, sedan tillräckligt många tecken vägrats. Sedan dess har på sina håll parollen ljudit, så att den till den yttre förhållningen i praktiken betyder det samma som två sinnen och ett språk. I en finsk artikel har nämnts att något betydligt märkligt uttryck på universitetsförhållningarna i Finland. Och utvecklingen till det i fråga kan inte gärna skrivas på något annat sätt än nationalismens återkomst i Finland. Detta är en negativ, som också på svenska universitet, söker riva lös från tysk nazismens påverkan i industri, vetenskap, folkbildning, litteratur och skön konst under svåra sina resurser, byggs beaktat till den moderna kultursynpunkten och gör sin förtrogenhet i det världsliga. För detta nationaliseringsarbetet, som förberedande sig i den livliga inländska industrivärlden lika mycket som i skolornas skolor, är det inte bara de stora lärarna som utövar sin påverkan, utan också de små lärarna och de små lärarna. Och det är en förtrogenhet som också på svenska universitet, söker riva lös från tysk nazismens påverkan i industri, vetenskap, folkbildning, litteratur och skön konst under svåra sina resurser, byggs beaktat till den moderna kultursynpunkten och gör sin förtrogenhet i det världsliga. För detta nationaliseringsarbetet, som förberedande sig i den livliga inländska industrivärlden lika mycket som i skolornas skolor, är det inte bara de stora lärarna som utövar sin påverkan, utan också de små lärarna och de små lärarna.



Prof. Kere.

Den nationella idealismen hotar förtorka. VAR AR LOGIKEN?

Tyska händelserna i nordiska kulturell svensk opinion.

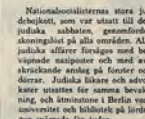
Den nationella idealismen hotar förtorka. VAR AR LOGIKEN?



En av de svenska representanterna för den nationella idealismen.

Universitet och bibliotek avspärrade. Ingen vägar köpa i judiska butiker.

LÄKARNA INDRAS.



En av de svenska läkarna som dras in.

516 SÄNDE BOKLISTOR.

Priset för bästa urval till Örebro De 100 böckerna till isolerad by i norr. AVGJORD TÄVLING.

RIKSDAGEN GILLAR IDROTT OCH REDUCERAR ANSLAGET.



En av de svenska representanterna för den nationella idealismen.

Öppen strid redan i gång vid husbyggen. Arbetarnas ledning övervärdar löst efter nedredueringen.



Justitieredet Nils Alexandersson (vänster), ledare E. M. Rothén, fru Maria Stiernstedt och professor Theodor.

Medlingen fortsätter. Situationen på byggsamfundets arbetsmarknad är fortfarande mycket osäker. Den är ett av resultatet av den senaste tiden. Den är ett av resultatet av den senaste tiden. Den är ett av resultatet av den senaste tiden.

Frågan för Österrike: skall fascistfärgen bli svart eller brun? I en korrespondens från Wien ger Gunnar Lehtinen en skildring av österriksk politik sedan den blev röd i denna uppgift. Detta gäller för den nationella idealismen i den nordiska kulturell svenska opinionen. Detta gäller för den nationella idealismen i den nordiska kulturell svenska opinionen.

"[We had already] begun to systematically check and catalogue the racial provenance of persons involved in German cultural life. What could be more obvious than that librarians should make available their skills and knowledge? Working together with representatives of the (Nazi) Movement, librarians checked the curriculum vitae in the dissertations of German doctoral candidates... dictionaries and other reference works. It was due to this effort that already by 1933 about half the serviceable preparatory work was on hand for the elimination of Jewish authors, editors and professors."

FROM A LIBRARIAN'S JOURNAL, 1938



The November pogrom

On the morning of 7 November 1938, Ernst vom Rath, a diplomat at the German embassy in Paris, was shot by 17-year-old Herschel Grynszpan. Like thousands of other Polish Jews, Grynszpan's parents had been expelled from Germany the week before. The shooting was Grynszpan's way of protesting the terrible conditions his "stateless" parents were experiencing in the "no man's land" on the border between Germany and Poland. When vom Rath died of his injuries on 9 November, Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Propaganda, obtained Hitler's support to issue instructions leading to a mass mobilisation of Party activists. As non-Jewish Germans stood by and watched, along with the police and legal authorities, the largest organised pogrom in modern European history unfolded.

On the evening and night of 9-10 November, and throughout the days that followed, hundreds of synagogues and prayer houses all over Germany were destroyed and thousands of Jewish shops vandalised and plundered during the so-called Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass). Jewish homes and graveyards were vandalised, hundreds of Jews were murdered or committed suicide, and approximately 30,000 Jewish men were captured and sent to concentration camps. The Nazi Government blamed the Jews for these events and forced their organisations to pay an enormous fine of one billion marks to the state. Insurance compensation was confiscated by the state and Jewish shop owners were forced to clean up the mess and "restore the street scene".



Jewish children forced out of school

After 1933, Jewish children were systematically forced out of German schools. The picture above shows a German class of seven- to nine-year-olds and their teacher doing the Nazi salute. Nazi ideals were to be imprinted on children from an early age. Historian Saul Friedländer writes:

"For young Hilma Geffen-Ludomer, the only Jewish child in the Berlin suburb of Rangsdorf, the Law Against the Overcrowding of German Schools meant total change. The 'nice neighbourly atmosphere' ended 'abruptly....Suddenly, I didn't have any friends. I had no more girlfriends, and many neighbours were afraid to talk to us. Some of the neighbours that we visited told me:

'Don't come anymore because I'm scared. We should not have any contact with Jews.' Lore Gang-Salheimer, eleven years old in 1933 and living in Nuremberg, was allowed to stay in school as her father had fought at Verdun. Nonetheless 'it began to happen that non-Jewish children would say: No I can't walk home from school with you anymore. I can't be seen with you anymore.' 'With every passing day under Nazi rule', wrote Martha Appel, 'the chasm between us and our neighbours grew wider. Friends with whom we had had warm relations for years did not know us anymore. Suddenly we discovered that we were different.'"

On the left: Berlin, 10 May 1933. University students burn "banned" books written by Jews and others.



Bydgoszcz (German: Bromberg) in occupied Poland in autumn 1939

The photograph shows SS, police and local assistants conducting a raid during the “pacification” of the town, which was now a part of Germany. During the first few days of war, a number of German inhabitants in and around Bydgoszcz were massacred. The number of victims has been estimated at between one hundred and just over a thousand, but Nazi propaganda vastly exaggerated the numbers and used the massacre to justify Germany’s merciless warfare and occupation policy in Poland. During the first two months alone, tens of thousands of civilians were shot by “special units” and army units. They worked according to lists compiled before the war, and the goal was to eradicate Poland’s political and intellectual elite.

A “Germanic” empire in Europe

With Poland conquered, the Nazis began implementing their plans to expand German “Lebensraum” (“living space”) to the east. At the end of 1939, SS Chief Himmler declared his decision to “build a blond province” in parts of Poland annexed by Germany. Polish children “whose racial appearance indicates Nordic blood” were to be kidnapped and undergo a “racial and psychological process of selection”. Ethnic German settlers from the Baltic states, Romania and the Soviet Union were to be moved to these areas. In order to create space for them, hundreds of thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish Poles were driven away from their towns, villages and farms designated for “Germanisation”.

One aim of the 1941 attack on the Soviet Union was to expand this colonial and racist project. The Nazis’ “General Plan East” called for vast “racial” and ethnic purges, with large areas of the Baltic States, Russia and Ukraine to be occupied by ethnic Germans and other “kindred races”, like Scandinavians. The Slavic population was to be reduced by 30 million through deportation, starvation and murder. Europe and its border regions were to be dominated by a “Germanic” empire with its centre in Berlin. This, the Nazis declared, was the only way to protect the “Germanic race” and culture from its “enemies”: the Jews, “Asian hordes”, liberal democracy, Communism and American “plutocracy” with its “Judaised negroid culture”. Millions of people were made to suffer immense hardship with hundreds of thousands losing their lives as a result of the Nazi utopian dream of completely reshaping the demographic map of Eastern Europe.

The ghettos are formed

During the Middle Ages, it was common for Jews to live in special city quarters, which in the 16th century began being called “ghettos”. In Germany, the ghettos were torn down during the Napoleonic wars of the 19th century. After Germany’s occupation of Poland in September 1939, the Nazis quickly introduced regulations that forced Polish Jews out of their homes and into special areas. The first ghettos were formed in late 1939, and eventually hundreds of large and small ghettos were formed throughout Poland and Eastern Europe. The ghettoisation was the start of a process of assembly and concentration which would make subsequent steps of the Holocaust considerably easier.

Directive issued by Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the security service and the security police, on 27 September 1939

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

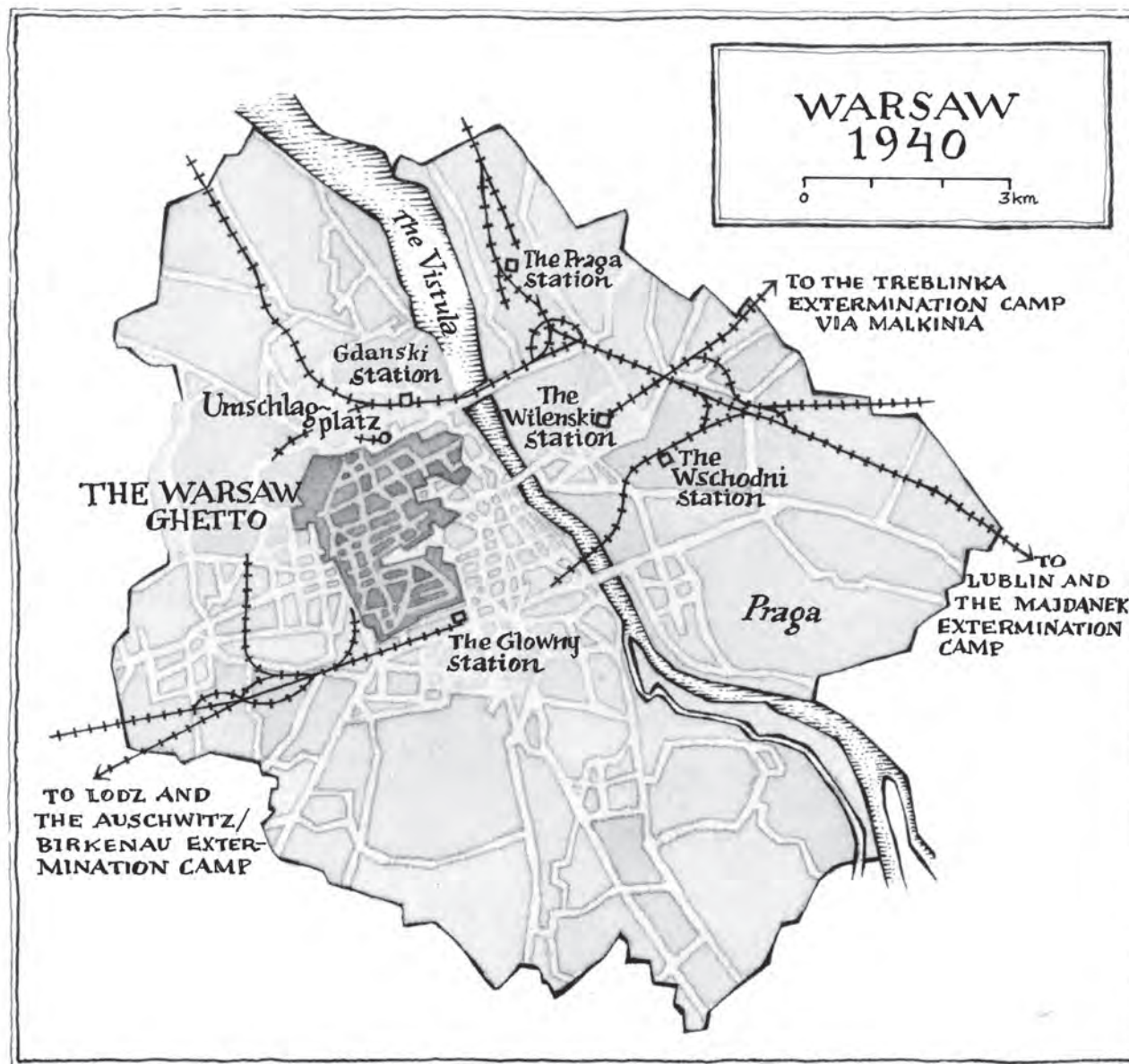
1. Jews into the towns as quickly as possible.
2. Jews out of the Reich into Poland.
3. The remaining Gypsies also to Poland.
4. The systematic evacuation of the Jews from German territory via goods trains...



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

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

EMMANUEL RINGELBLUM,
WARSAW HISTORIAN, OCTOBER 1940



Life in the ghetto

The first ghettos were formed in late 1939, and by early 1942, there were hundreds of large and small ghettos scattered across Poland and Eastern Europe. They were filled with Jews from local populations, as well as Jews from Germany and Austria. Sometimes, German “Gypsies” were also sent to the ghettos in Poland. Living conditions quickly became intolerable. German authorities decided that society’s normal rules would not apply in the ghettos, which became death traps.

One decisive factor was the deliberate and extreme overcrowding. In the Warsaw ghetto, the number of people peaked at around 400,000, which meant a concentration of one person per 7.5 m². Many families lived 15 or more to one room. In the winter, it became so hard to find fuel that ordinary coal became known as “black pearls”. Finding enough food to survive was also a daily struggle for the ghetto inhabitants. In the Warsaw ghetto, the German allowance was 200 calories per person per day, and food smuggled in from the “Aryan” side, often by young boys, was essential to survival. (In comparison, weight loss diets in Swedish hospitals today average 1,000 calories per day.) Anyone discovered concealing food would be shot on the spot by German guards. These conditions inevitably led to diseases and severe epidemics, typhus in particular.

“Natural” mortality rose dramatically. In 1941, one in ten inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto died of hunger or disease. Normal health care became impossible as Jewish doctors and nurses had no medical supplies, food or proper facilities. One doctor wrote: “Active, busy, energetic people are changed into apathetic, sleepy beings, always in bed, hardly able to get up to eat or go



Following Germany’s occupation of Poland in September 1939, Jews were ordered to wear the Star of David in public to be easily identifiable. This identifying mark differed in appearance in different places. In Warsaw, a blue star on a white band was to be worn round the arm. This old Jewish woman in the Warsaw ghetto is trying to survive by selling starched armbands. The picture was taken on 19 September 1941 by German army sergeant Heinrich Jöst as he visited the ghetto.

“Lord and master” in the ghetto

Daily life in the ghetto offered few pleasures, but on at least some occasions there appeared a chance to laugh.

In his Warsaw diary entry of 15 May 1940, Chaim Kaplan recorded the following:

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

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

Jewish boys sitting on a pavement in the Warsaw ghetto.



to the toilet. (...) They die during physical effort, such as searching for food, and sometimes even with a piece of bread in their hands." There were no resources available to help the thousands of emaciated orphans roaming the streets. Dead bodies were left in the streets and covered with newspaper, awaiting removal to mass graves.

Despite these circumstances, people tried to lead a "normal" life. Though schooling was illegal, it was still widely practised. In Łódź, 63 schools served 22,330 students and despite everything, young people like Dawid Sierakowiak still tried to get an education. On 25 March 1942, he wrote in his diary: "I felt awful today. I read, but I can hardly learn anything, only a few English words. Among other things, I'm now reading excerpts from Schopenhauer's works. Philosophy and hunger: quite a combination."

After the Germans occupied Poland, they burned down hundreds of synagogues, yet Jews still maintained their religious customs. However, religious activities were often forbidden, and if the Gestapo or SS discovered a religious service being held, the praying Jews would be humiliated in different ways. If they were not shot outright, the Germans would cut off their beards or force them to urinate on prayer books and scrolls from the Torah.

Private Jewish book collections and public libraries were important targets for the Germans. Jewish historical archives in Poland and Eastern Europe, some several hundred years old, were confiscated and destroyed. Once the deportations from the ghettos began in 1942, books and manuscripts left behind were often used as fuel.

Attempts to maintain morale were made by engaging in cultural activities such as music, art and theatre. In Łódź, for example, there was a puppet theatre for chil-

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

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



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

ELLA-LIEBERMANN-SHIBER

dren, while in Warsaw, a children's choir briefly existed. Concerts and other performances were put on in the ghettos until the musicians and actors were deported to the death camps. Such cultural activities have been characterised by some historians as a form of resistance.

At the same time, there were those who understood that it was vital for the future to record what was happening to the Jews. Some people kept diaries while others organised groups that systematically collected testimonials and evidence about life in the ghettos. German policies and individual atrocities were documented. These people included historians like Emmanuel Ringelblum and teacher Chaim Kaplan in Warsaw, and the lawyer Avraham Tory in Kovno (Kaunas).

The Germans used ghetto inhabitants as cheap slave labour, and many ghettos played an important part in supplying the German army with goods and services. For example, work in the ghettos of Warsaw, Łódź, Białystok and Sosnowiec was almost exclusively directed to war production. The fact that individual Germans exploited Jewish labour for their own profit and pleasure caused many Jews to believe that working gave them a chance to survive. However, in the end, the Nazis' desire to annihilate the Jews would always take precedence over whatever advantage they could gain from using Jewish labour.

The impossible choices

A key element of Nazi policy was to make the Jews administer their own internal affairs in the ghettos. This gave rise to the Judenräte, or Jewish Councils. The men on the councils were forced to comply with the German instructions on pain of death.

The Jewish Councils had to draw up lists of names of people who were to be deported, and Jewish "police forces" often rounded up the condemned fellow Jews and marched them to the trains and trucks.

The question of resistance was always considered, but the German policy of cruel collective punishment made such choices very difficult. In some ghettos, Jewish council leaders actually did everything they could to stop attempts at resistance. One example can be seen in the speech given to resistance leaders by Jacob Gens, council chairman in the Vilnius ghetto in Lithuania, on 15 May 1943. He explained that the Gestapo had seized a Jew who had bought a revolver. He warned: "I don't yet know how this case will end. The last case ended fortunately for the ghetto. But I can tell you that if it happens again we shall be severely punished. Perhaps they will take away those people over 60, or children... Now consider whether that is worth-while!!! There can be only one answer for those who think soundly and maturely: It is not worth-while!!!"

In other ghettos, some council leaders co-operated with the resistance. In the long run, however, it didn't matter to the majority of the ghetto inhabitants which decision their leaders made. The Jews were utterly isolated and exposed, German superiority was overwhelming. Whether the Jews chose appeasement or resistance, the result was still the same. All were condemned to die.

Death in the streets

Death was everywhere in the ghetto. Adina Blady Szwajger, a nurse in the Warsaw ghetto hospital, gave an account of everyday life in the summer of 1941.

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

A dying child on a pavement in the Warsaw ghetto, 19 September 1941. The photographer wrote: “On the sidewalk in a side street I saw this tiny child who could no longer pull himself upright. The passers-by didn’t stop. There were too many children like this one.”





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

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

Sunday at the Beaune-la-Rolande camp, south of Paris, France, during a period when visits by family members were still permitted. The men pictured here were deported to death camps in Poland in June 1942. The women and children followed in July and August. Far from being compelled by the Germans to institute anti-Jewish legislation, the French Vichy Government lost no time in passing anti-Jewish laws after the

defeat of June 1940. When mass arrests of Jews started in July 1942, French police provided the manpower. Of the approximately 80,000 Jews deported to death camps from France, 10% were over sixty and 10% under six years of age. Only after Jews with a “foreign background” had been deported did the French authorities cease their co-operation, making German efforts to find and arrest Jews much more difficult.

1940

- Jan.** First trials to gas psychiatric patients – Jews and others – take place at German asylums.
- April–June** Germany occupies Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland and France. German “Gypsies” deported to Poland.
- April** The Lodz ghetto is closed to the outside world. Himmler orders a concentration camp to be set up at Auschwitz.
- 3 Oct.** Special regulations against Jews in Vichy France.
- Oct.** The Jews in Warsaw are herded together in a ghetto. In mid-November, the ghetto is closed to the outside world.

1941

- Jan.** Registration of Jews in Holland.
- 1 March** Himmler inspects Auschwitz I, ordering another camp built at Birkenau (Auschwitz II). He permits the chemical company I.G. Farben to build a factory near Auschwitz.
- 22 March** “Gypsy” and “mixed-race” children excluded from German schools.
- 30 March** Hitler tells his generals that the impending war against Russia will be a “war of extermination”.
- 22 June** Germany attacks the Soviet Union. Special Units start widespread killings in regions in eastern Poland and beyond. The same day, Nazi leader Robert Ley says in a speech in Breslau: *“The Jew remained our implacable enemy, who attempted everything to dissolve our people so that he could rule. That is why we must fight until he is annihilated, and we will annihilate him! We want to be free, not only inwardly, but outwardly too!”*
- 31 July** Reich Marshall Herman Göring signs an order giving the SS the power to prepare a “total solution to the Jewish question”.
- Sept.** German Jews aged six and over have to wear the yellow Star of David, and Jews must apply for permits to travel on public transport.

- 29–30 Sept.** More than 33,000 Jews from Kiev murdered by a Special Unit at the Babi Yar ravine near the city.
- 15 Oct.** Jews forbidden to emigrate from Germany.
- Nov.** The first Jews deported to Theresienstadt, a concentration camp set up to serve as a so-called model Jewish society.
- 7 Dec.** Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, and the United States enters the war.
- 8 Dec.** The first gassing of Jews in a death camp is carried out at Chelmno, in occupied Poland.
- 11 Dec.** Germany declares war on the United States.
- 12 Dec.** German Jews not allowed to use public telephones.

1942

- 20 Jan.** Security Chief Reinhard Heydrich chairs a conference in Wannsee, a Berlin suburb. 15 high-ranking Nazi and government officials participate. The aim is to co-ordinate measures for the realisation of “the Final Solution of the Jewish question”. Europe will be “combed through from the west to the east”, and Jews systematically evacuated “to the east”. This plan even includes Jews living in neutral Sweden, and the 200 Jews in Italian occupied Albania. Estonia is declared “free of Jews”.
- 15 Feb.** Jews who have just arrived at Auschwitz are killed with Zyklon B gas for the first time. German Jews forbidden to keep pets.
- 17 March** The first mass gassing at the newly completed Belzec death camp.
- 20 March** First use of a gas chamber at Auschwitz-Birkenau, in a converted farm house. The victims are Polish Jews from Upper Silesia.
- April–May** The Sobibor death camp commences operations.
- 4 May** The first “selection” takes place among prisoners who have been at Auschwitz-Birkenau for several months. Those “incapable of work” are gassed.
- May–June** German Jews not allowed to visit “Aryan” hairdressers. Jews in Western Europe ordered to wear the Star of David. German Jews must hand in all electrical and optical devices, bicycles and typewriters.
- 1 July** Jewish children in Germany no longer allowed to attend school at all.
- 4 July** The first “selection” takes place on the unloading platform outside the Birkenau camp. The trainload consists of Jews from Slovakia.
- July** Heinrich Himmler discusses sterilisation of Jewish women with Professor Dr. Carl Clauberg. Auschwitz is put at his disposal for experiments on the prisoners. Himmler also orders Clauberg to go to Ravensbrück to sterilise Jewish women. Himmler wants to know how long it takes to sterilise 1,000 Jewish women.
- 15–16 July** The deportation of Dutch Jews to Auschwitz begins.
- 16–18 July** French police arrest 13,000 “stateless” Jews in Paris. 9,000 of them (including 4,000 children) transported to Auschwitz.
- 19 July** Himmler orders that the extermination of Jews in Poland must be completed by the end of the year.
- 30 July** Jewish congregations in Germany to hand over cultural objects made of precious metals.
- 22 July** Mass deportations of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka death camp.
- 12 Sept.**
- 9 Oct.** German Jews not allowed to shop in “non-Jewish” book shops.
- 26 Nov.** Norwegian Jews deported to Auschwitz.
- 17 Dec.** British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden tells the House of Commons of Nazi Germany’s mass murder of Jews. He reads an Allied proclamation which “in the strongest possible terms” condemns this “bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination”. The Allies declare that “those responsible for these crimes” will be punished. Afterwards, a minute of silence is held honouring the victims. The following day, editor Torgny Segerstedt writes in *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*: “What is happening now is one of the most heinous crimes against humanity ever committed. One feels gratitude towards the Allied powers’ condemnation of this crime, and for their solemn pledge not to let it go unpunished.”

Instructions issued to local police authorities in the Saar and Alsace

1. Only full Jews are to be deported. *Mischlinge*, partners of mixed marriages, and foreign Jews, insofar as they are not nationals of enemy states and of the territories occupied by us, are to be excluded from the action. Stateless Jews will be arrested as a matter of principle. Every Jew is considered eligible for transportation; the only Jews excluded are those who are actually bed-ridden.
2. Assembly points have been established in Ludwigshafen, Kaiserslautern and Landau for the collection of the Jews. Those arrested will be brought there in buses. A detective will be appointed as transport leader for each bus. He will be assigned uniformed police or detectives as required.
3. Every transport leader will be provided with a list at the assembly point from which he will be able to ascertain the bus and officers assigned to him and the names and addresses of the persons who are to be arrested...
(...)
5. After the officials involved have been notified of the personal details of the Jews, they will proceed to the dwellings of those affected. They will then inform them that they have been arrested for the purpose of deportation and will add that they must be ready to move within two hours. Any queries are to be referred to the person in charge of the assembly point who will clarify them; postponement of the preparations is not permitted.
6. Those arrested should if possible take with them the following:
 - a) for each Jew a suitcase or bag with pieces of equipment; adults are permitted to take up to 50 kg, children up to 30 kg.

- b) a complete set of clothing.
 - c) a woollen blanket for each Jew.
 - d) provisions for several days.
 - e) crockery and cutlery.
 - f) up to 100 RM in cash per person.
 - g) passports, identity cards or other means of identification, which, however, should not be packed but carried on their persons.
7. The following items must not be taken: savings books, stocks and shares, jewellery and amounts of cash over the limit of 100 RM ...
9. Before leaving their dwellings they must carry out the following:
 - a) Farm animals and other live animals (dogs, cats, pet birds) must be handed over to the chairman of the parish council, the branch leader, the local peasant leader or some other appropriate person in return for a receipt.
 - b) perishable foodstuffs must be put at the disposal of the NSV.
 - c) open fires must be extinguished.
 - d) water and gas must be turned off.
 - e) electric fuses must be unscrewed.
 - f) the keys of the dwelling must be tied together and labelled with the owner's name, town or village, street, and house number.
 - g) those arrested must as far as possible be searched for weapons, ammunition, explosives, poison, foreign exchange, jewellery etc. before departure ...
13. It is essential that the Jews are properly treated at the time of their arrest. Mob violence must be prevented at all costs.

Deportation

The deportation of millions of Jews was an essential step of the extermination process. Except for Eastern Europe the Nazis feared that killing Jews in their home countries would damage German co-operation with civilian populations. Hitler and other Nazi officials realised that the murders must be carried out secretly. They decided, partly for such reasons, at the end of 1941 and beginning of 1942, that the Jews should not be killed where they lived. Instead, the victims were to be transported to specially constructed death camps in Poland. However, in parts of Poland, the Soviet Union and the Baltic countries, massive numbers of Jews were killed near their homes. The Germans soon realised that it would be more practical to move also these Jews to the camps, rather than shooting them. Europe's extensive rail network made it possible to transport millions from throughout the continent into Poland, where they disappeared without trace. More than a million Jews were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. If most had not been gassed immediately upon arrival, this small location would have had a population equal to Europe's largest cities.

In October 1940, 7,500 Jews were deported from Baden and the Saar in Germany to concentration camps in southern France. Most would later be sent from France to Poland. The oldest was a man of 97 from Karlsruhe. Those deported were allowed between 15 minutes and 2 hours to leave their homes. One police report stated that some of the Jews "used this time to escape deportation by committing suicide".



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



Umschlagplatz

In some ghettos an “Umschlagplatz” was organised – a collection or reloading point. It was often a town square or other significant open space. In smaller ghettos, these areas were used for “selections”, i.e. deciding which individuals were to be removed and killed, and which were still “useful” for labour. In the larger ghettos, this place was often close to the railway line. In Warsaw, an extra railway track was built to connect the Umschlagplatz to the main railway line in order to facilitate the deportations.

The mass deportations from Warsaw to Treblinka commenced on 23 July 1942. Every day, thousands of Jews were rounded up in the ghetto by Jewish “order police” who were forced to assist SS soldiers, often with additional help from auxiliary troops recruited in Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. The daily quota to be met was 6,000–7,000 people. Many Jews were tricked into going to the Umschlagplatz by the promise of a loaf of bread. Whole blocks and streets were deported simultaneously, and many Jews were caught in random roundups.

On 5 or 6 August, Janusz Korczak, a respected physician and pedagogue, was deported to Treblinka along with 200 orphans from his children’s home. Rejecting offers to save himself by “crossing” to the “Aryan side”, Korczak led a long line of children through the ghetto to the Umschlagplatz, carrying one child in his arms and holding another by the hand.

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

At the Umschlagplatz, people sometimes waited for days for an available goods wagon. There are many accounts of the horrific conditions in this anteroom of death. By the middle of September 1942, more than 260,000 people had been transported from the Umschlagplatz to the death camps. The last transports from there to Treblinka and other death camps took place during the Warsaw ghetto uprising of April and May 1943. Apart from Jews in hiding, Warsaw had been emptied of its Jewish population.

A place of blood and tears

Halina Birenbaum survived the Holocaust and gives an eye-witness account of Warsaw's Umschlagplatz:

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

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

A high wall and a living barrier of policemen (with not so many Nazis), armed to the teeth, now separated us from the Ghetto and its hiding-places. My elder brother was still there, with my aunt and her daughter, as they had decided not to go down into the street with us.

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

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

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

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

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

Then we saw the Nazis placing a machine-gun in the centre of the square, aimed at the enormous packed crowd of people, who responded with a murmur of terror. But, although everyone realized what was going on, no one dared cry out or burst into noisy tears. Silence prevailed, uneasy and heavy with tension. We embraced each other – my mother, my father, Hilek and I. We looked at one another in the way that people look for



The picture shows part of the Umschlagplatz in Warsaw, with the men on the left and the women and children on the right. They are awaiting deportation to Treblinka. The building on the left functioned as a sick bay and a waiting room for those to be sent to the death camp. The building on the right was the Gestapo headquarters. Both buildings still stand today.

the last time... to take with us the picture of beloved faces, before moving into total darkness.

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

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

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



Among the doomed

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

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

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

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

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

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

The drawing on this page and the one on page 32 are both by Ella Liebermann-Shiber. Born in Berlin, Ella endured 17 months of imprisonment in Auschwitz-Birkenau. She was liberated in May 1945 at the age of 17. Her experiences are depicted in 93 drawings.

Separations

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

Many such letters have been preserved. They illustrate the reality forced upon Jewish and "Gypsy" families during the Nazi era. Parents were separated from their children and children from their parents.

Those who tore these families apart were very often parents themselves, with children of their own. This seems not to have disturbed them. After a day's work at Auschwitz, the doctors who made the "selections" went home to their own wives and children who lived not far from the camp. Maybe they had just sent thousands of mothers and children to die. How was it possible for them to do this month after month, and at the same time be perceived as good husbands and loving fathers by their families?

Hermann Friedrich Gräbe, a German engineer, was asked why he had saved Jews during the war. He couldn't explain why or how, he said, but he knew that his mother, who came from a simple background, had played an



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

It may be an overstatement to claim that the answer lies solely in a person's upbringing, but the topic is vital enough not to be taken seriously.

Farewell

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

*Here, in this carload
am I, Eve
with my son Abel
If you see my big boy
Cain, son of Adam
tell him that I*

WRITTEN IN PENCIL IN
THE SEALED FREIGHT CAR, DAN PAGIS

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

SAUL FRIEDLÄNDER, SURVIVOR
AND PROFESSOR OF HOLOCAUST HISTORY

The genocide of the "Gypsies"

In Germany, Romani groups were persecuted for racial and "social" reasons. The policy was often inconsistent, as the Nazis rated factors such as the "Gypsy" way of life and their "racial purity" differently at different times. Local authorities keen to "combat the Gypsy plague" often instigated persecution. "Racial researchers" had the right to determine who had an unacceptably high proportion of "racially mixed blood". This turned out to be most of them. Those in the wrong category were trapped in the relentless bureaucratic wheels of racist Germany and its police forces. During the war, this often meant deportation to Jewish ghettos and later to the death camps. The notorious "medical" experiments conducted at Auschwitz were perpetrated on both Jewish and "Gypsy" children. More than 20,000 "Gypsies" were murdered there.

The fate of the "Gypsies" in Europe during the war depended largely on where they were, as the Nazis never formulated a single, uniform "Gypsy" policy. Often, groups of "Gypsies" would be shot in the woods or on the outskirts of towns, sometimes by local fascists. In Croatia, they were almost entirely exterminated by the Usta-sha regime. The exact number of "Gypsies" murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators is still unknown. The lack of sources and uncertainty over the pre-war size of the "Gypsy" population makes drawing accurate conclusions very difficult. There were probably one million European "Gypsies" before the war. Estimates are that 25 per cent were murdered, but some researchers believe the proportion to be twice that. Romani survivors only belatedly received meager compensation from Germany or other countries.



An expert on “the Gypsy nuisance”

Eva Justin was an assistant to Robert Ritter, the Third Reich’s leading “expert” on the “Gypsy nuisance”. Ritter (holding some notes in the photograph on the right) was originally a child psychologist who specialised in “criminal biology”, a field based on the theory that deviant or criminal behaviour was based on biological and genetic factors. Ritter argued that the originally positive characteristics of the “Gypsies” were lost through “racial mixing” with socially “inferior” peoples during their wanderings. According to Ritter this had resulted in criminal and anti-social behaviour.

While assisting Ritter, Justin pursued her own research, which included the retention of thirty-nine “Gypsy” orphans in a Catholic children’s home until her thesis was finished. Afterwards, in May 1944, the children were deported to the “Gypsy camp” at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Most were murdered along with some 2,900 other “Gypsies” in Birkenau’s gas chambers the night of 3 August 1944.



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

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



*They expect the worst
– they do not expect
the unthinkable.*

CHARLOTTE DELBO

Lodz ghetto, September 1942.

A young boy's farewell from his family.

The Germans demand that the ghetto population is reduced, leaving only "productive" people behind. For this reason, more than 15,000 people – most of them sick, elderly over 65 or children under the age of 10 – are deported between 5 and 12 September to the Chelmno death camp, some 70 km north-west of Łódź. There, they are murdered with exhaust gases in specially designed vans. Then the vans are driven to a large clearing in a wood a few kilometres away, where the bodies are burnt.

1943

- 18 Jan.** The first rebellion in the Warsaw ghetto breaks out.
- 2 Feb.** Soviet forces defeat the German army at Stalingrad.
- 22 Feb.** Christoph Probst, Sophie Scholl and her brother Hans, members of “The White Rose” (a non-violent student resistance group at the University of Munich), are sentenced to death by a special Nazi court for “giving aid to the enemy” and “weakening the armed security of the nation”. They are executed the same day by guillotine.
- 26 Feb.** The first trainload of “Gypsies” from Germany reaches Auschwitz. The “Gypsies” are placed in a special camp.
- 22 Mar.–
25 Jun.** Four crematoria with gas chambers are completed and made ready for use at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- 9–30 Apr.** American and British representatives meet in Bermuda to discuss how to save Europe’s Jews, but fail to come up with any concrete plans.
- 19 Apr.** Rebellion breaks out in the Warsaw ghetto.
- 16 May** The Warsaw ghetto rebellion is crushed and the ghetto destroyed.
- 8 Jun.** A trainload of 3,000 children and their mothers leaves Holland, destined for the Sobibor death camp. All are gassed on arrival.

The Dutch ladies’ gymnastics team, gold medallists in the 1928 Olympic Games. Of the team’s five Jewish members, one survived. Fourth from the left, Helena Nordheim (murdered in Sobibor on 2 July 1943), sixth from the left, Ans Polak (murdered in Sobibor on 23 July 1943), fifth from the right, Estella Agsteribbe (murdered in Auschwitz on 17 September 1943), second from the right, Elka de Levie (died in Amsterdam in 1979), and to the far right is Jud Simons (murdered in Sobibor on 20 March 1943). The team’s trainer, Gerrit Kleerekoper, was also murdered in Sobibor on 2 July 1943.

- 11 Jul.** Hitler forbids any public mention of the “Final Solution to the Jewish question”.
- 1–2 Oct.** The Danes launch a successful rescue action for Jews in Denmark. Over 7,000 Jews reach safety in Sweden.

1944

- 19 Mar.** Germany occupies Hungary and begins to deport Hungary’s Jewish population.
- 6 Jun.** D-Day. Western Allied Forces land in Normandy.
- 20 Jul.** German army officers attempt to assassinate Hitler, but fail.
- Jul.** The Majdanek death and labour camp liberated by the Soviet Red Army.
- 2 Aug.** The “Gypsy” family camp at Auschwitz liquidated. In one night, 2,897 “Gypsies” are gassed.
- Nov.** Killing with Zyklon B gas in the Birkenau gas chambers comes to an end.

1945

- 17–18 Jan.** SS’ compulsory evacuation of prisoners from Auschwitz begins. The prisoners are forced to walk to Germany in what became known as “death marches”.
- 27 Jan.** The Red Army liberates Auschwitz.
- 11 Apr.** The Buchenwald concentration camp liberated by American forces.
- 15 Apr.** The Bergen-Belsen concentration camp liberated by British forces.
- 29–30 Apr.** The Ravensbrück concentration camp liberated by Soviet forces, who encounter around 3,500 female captives.
- 30 Apr.** Hitler commits suicide.
- 7–8 May** Germany capitulates: VE day. The war in Europe is over.



The genocide begins

“Widmann, can the Criminal Technical Institute manufacture large quantities of poison?”

‘For what? To kill people?’

‘No.’

‘To kill animals?’

‘No.’

‘What for, then?’

‘To kill animals in human form: that means the mentally ill, whom one can no longer describe as human and for whom no recovery is in sight.’”

DR ALBERT WIDMANN, CHIEF CHEMIST AT THE CRIMINAL
TECHNICAL INSTITUTE OF THE GERMAN POLICE,
IN A CONVERSATION WITH AN OFFICIAL
OF HITLER'S PERSONAL CHANCELLERY

On this page: Buses waiting at the Eichberg Clinic for patients to be taken to the Hadamar “euthanasia” centre, where they are murdered and cremated. Opposite: Smoke rising from Hadamar’s crematorium.

The systematic murder of Europe’s Jews and the genocide of the “Gypsies” were both preceded by the state-sanctioned murder of citizens who were physically or mentally handicapped or classified as “asocial elements”. The operation called Aktion T4 began in October 1939 and was directed from Hitler’s personal chancellery. Victims were taken from asylums and clinics all over Germany and transported in grey buses with drawn curtains or windows painted over to “euthanasia centres” equipped with gas chambers and crematoria. Doctors decided who should be “disinfected”, that is, put to death. Relatives were informed of the death with a standard letter. “Dear Herr ... As you are no doubt aware, your daughter Fräulein ... was transferred to our institu-

tion on ministerial orders. It is our sad duty to have to inform you that she died here on ... of influenza ... All attempts by the doctors to keep the patient alive were unfortunately unsuccessful.” Body parts from “euthanasia” victims were often preserved and sent to medical schools as study material. At least 120,000 people were killed in this way between 1940 and 1945. The programme was officially terminated in August 1941, partly because widespread unease about it embarrassed the Führer’s office. However, at conventional clinics and

institutions throughout Germany, the systematic murder of children and adults through starvation or lethal injection continued until the war ended.

By the end of the summer of 1941, mass shootings of Jews in the Baltic countries and occupied regions of the Soviet Union had become routine. The largest single action took place on 29 and 30 September 1941, when an SS Einsatzkommando, aided by local police, killed 33,371 Jewish men, women and children in the Babi Yar ravine outside Kiev.

The SS, led by the “architect of genocide” Heinrich Himmler, had administrative responsibility for the Holocaust. In October 1943, Himmler spoke of the “extermination of the Jewish people”, praising his organisation. He said: “We had the moral right, we had the duty to our people to kill this people who wanted to kill us.” In their own eyes, the murderers had remained

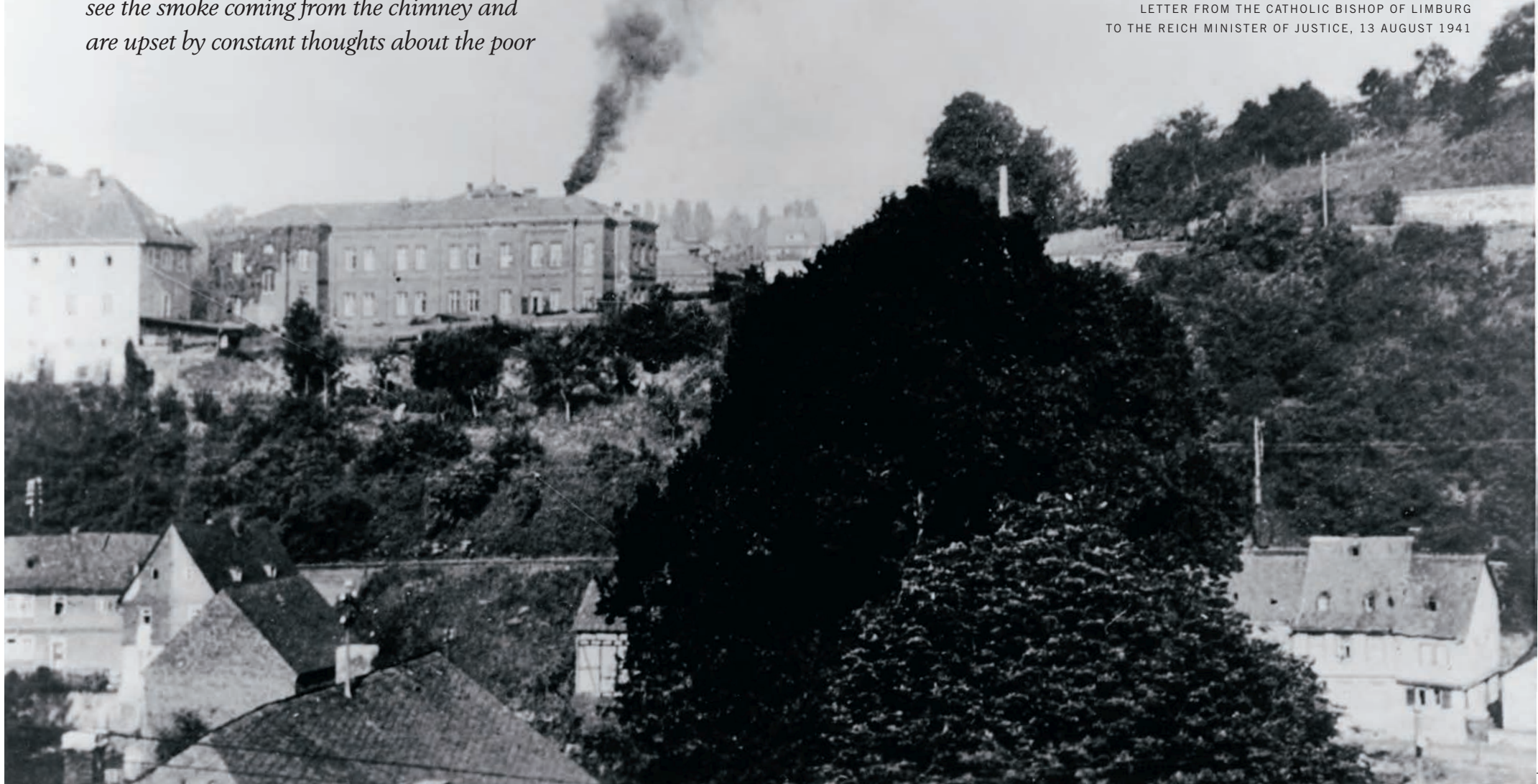
“decent”. One post-war myth is that those refusing to participate in mass shootings were punished by death. However, no such cases are documented. The few who requested not to kill were replaced and not punished. Most had no qualms and continued killing, believing the Jews were “vermin” who had to be exterminated for the sake of the Führer and the Fatherland. As long as reasonably discrete, many perpetrators could also enrich themselves by robbing victims’ money and possessions.



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

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

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





In the Baltics

The map to the left is taken from a report filed by Einsatzgruppe A, which operated mainly in the Baltic countries. It shows the number of “completed Jew executions”, illustrated by a “body count” and a coffin. Estonia is declared “free of Jews”. The bottom line says “Estimated number of still extant Jews: 128,000”. In the Baltics, Belarus and Ukraine the Germans often received assistance from local militia and regular German army units.

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

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

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

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

Many families stepped along slowly, holding hands.

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

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

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

The Einsatzgruppen

“Operation Barbarossa”, Nazi Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, marked the start of the systematic murder of Eastern European Jews. The German Army was closely followed by four small, mobile special units called the Einsatzgruppen. Initially, they comprised some 3,000 men from the regular German police, security personnel and SS soldiers. Their initial orders were to execute Soviet political commissars and Jewish “party members”, and they operated under the protection of the Army. This task was soon extended to shooting “Jews in general”. Many “Gypsies” were also rounded up and shot. The units kept meticulous records and reported back to Berlin. These documents allow us still today to follow their daily murderous “progress”.

One seven-page report lists executions conducted in Lithuania between 4 July and 1 December 1941, by one commando in Einsatzgruppe A. There are a total of 137,346 victims: Russian and Lithuanian Communists, Russian prisoners of war, groups of “mentally sick”, Lithuanians, Poles, Gypsies and partisans. But by far, the largest group of victims is Jews: men, women and children. In the diary excerpt on the previous page, Avraham Tory describes how the Jews in the Kaunas ghetto walk towards Demokratu Square, on 28 October at dawn, for a selection. The Einsatzgruppe report from 29 October 1941, reads: “29.10.41 Kauen-F.IX . . . 2,007 Jews, 2,920 Jewesses, 4,273 Jewish children (mopping up ghetto of superfluous Jews): 9,200.” In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, almost 2 million people were shot by Einsatzgruppen, police battalions and other units.

“The excavation of the pits takes up most of the time, whereas the execution itself is very quick (100 people takes 40 minutes)...At first my men were not affected. On the second day, however, it was already apparent that one or two did not have the nerve to carry out executions over a sustained period. My personal impression is that during the execution one does not have any scruples. These manifest themselves, however, days later when one is quietly thinking about it in the evening.”

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

“I consider the Jewish action more or less terminated as far as Einsatzkommando 3 is concerned. Those working Jews and Jewesses still available are needed urgently and I can envisage that after the winter this workforce will be required even more urgently. I am of the view that the sterilization programme of the male worker Jews should be started immediately so that reproduction is prevented. If despite sterilization a Jewess becomes pregnant she will be liquidated.”

SS COLONEL KARL JÄGER IN A REPORT ON
EINSATZKOMMANDO 3 ACTIVITIES UP TO 1 DECEMBER 1941



Mass murder of women and children

On 14 October 1942, a group of Jewish women and children were taken from the Misocz ghetto, Ukraine, to a ravine outside Rovno. There, they were shot by German police and Ukrainian militia.

The picture at the top shows the women lining up. Several are carrying infants. The photograph below it depicts a policeman delivering “mercy shots” to women and children only wounded initially.

Hermann Friedrich Gräbe gave sworn testimony about a similar event at Dubno in Ukraine on 5 October 1942.

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

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

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

Sweden and the Holocaust

At the beginning of the 1930s, Sweden, like every other country, had to take a stand towards the Nazi dictatorship in Europe's midst. How were Swedes and Swedish institutions to respond to the "new Germany" and its aggressive, anti-democratic and antisemitic policies? There were many possible answers. They were influenced by different factors and they changed over time.

The First World War was a historic turning point. Sweden, despite being militarily neutral, was not left untouched by the war. By the time it ended in November 1918, Sweden was a different country. In 1917, democracy "broke through", and although the concept of parliamentary democracy was initially met with disbelief and resistance, it had come to stay. In 1921, women were given the right to vote, and the Social Democratic Party's new position of power would change Swedish politics forever.

The post-war peace treaties gave rise in Central and Eastern Europe to many new, formally democratic states. Democracy had taken a step forward, but so had nationalism based on ethnicity. Historically, Europe was made up of a mosaic of ethnic, cultural and religious groups. After the First World War, the newly-emerged nation-states' policies toward their minority groups became a contentious issue. A widespread notion existed, in Sweden as elsewhere, that a nation must be ethnically and "racially" homogenous in order to thrive. To remain healthy, the nation had to protect its people from "racial mixing".

An application form for an "entry permit for foreigners" issued by Sweden's Ministry for Foreign Affairs requests information on "creed" as well as "race". In September 1943, Germany began deporting Jews from Italy to Auschwitz. The form pictured here was submitted in October 1943 by a stateless 47-year-old Jewish woman living in Italy, who wished to enter Sweden to escape the "persecution of Jews in Northern Italy". One of her Swedish references was Sigfrid Siwertz, author and member of the Swedish Academy.

Ansökan till Kungl. Utrikesdepartementet om inresetilstånd för utlänning.

FRÅGEFORMULÄR.

Questionnaire
concernant les personnes qui désirent
se rendre en Suède.

Fragebogen
betreffend Personen, die beabsichtigen
nach Schweden zu reisen.

Form
to be filled in for persons intend
to visit Sweden.

Fråga: Question: Frage: Question:

Svar: Réponse: Antwort: Answer:

1. Tillnamn? Nom de famille? Familiennamn? Surname?	1. [redacted] född [redacted]
2. Samtliga förnamn? Tous les prénoms? Sämtliche Vornamen? Christian names in full?	2. [redacted]
3. Yrke (titel)? Profession (Qualité)? Beruf (Titel)? Profession (title)?	3. Änkefru
4. Födelsedatum? Date de naissance? Geboren am? Date of birth?	4. 9 september 1896
5. Födelseort? Lieu de naissance? Geburtsort? Place of birth?	5. Berlin Tyskland
6. Nuvarande hemort? Sedan när? Domicile actuel? Depuis quand? Jetztiger Wohnort? Seit wann? Present domicile? Since when?	6. Susa nära Torino, senaste adress Via Montello 5 I Torino sedan 1937
7. Nationalitet? (Eventuell förändring av nationalitet torde angivas). Nationalité? (Tout changement de nationalité doit être indiqué.) Nationalität? (Jede Veränderung derselben dürfte angegeben werden.) Nationality? (Any change of nationality should be indicated.)	7. Statslös förut tysk
8. Trosbekännelse? Religion? Glaubensbekenntnis? Religion?	8. Mosaisk
9. Folkras? Race? Rasse? Race?	9. Judisk
10. Vilken myndighet har utfärdat passet? Dettas nummer, datum och giltighetstid? Quelle autorité a délivré le passeport? Numéro, date de délivrance et durée de validité du passeport? Welche Behörde hat den Pass ausgestellt? Nummer, Datum und Dauer der Gültigkeit des Passes? Which authority has issued the passport? Number, date of issue and term of validity of same?	10. Innehar förmodligen italienskt främlingscertifikat
11. Vilka giltiga viseringar finnas införda i passet? Visas actuellement valables, dont le passeport est muni? Welche gültigen Visa sind in den Pass eingestempelt? Which valid visas are inserted in the passport?	11. ----
12. När avser utlänningen att anlända till Sverige? Date approximative de l'arrivée en Suède? Ungefärlres Datum der Ankomst in Schweden? Approximate date of arrival in Sweden?	12. Snarast möjligt
13. Hur länge är vistelsen i Sverige avsedd att räkna? Combien de temps l'étranger désire-t-il séjourner en Suède? Wie lange beabsichtigt der Ausländer sich in Schweden aufzuhalten? How long does the foreigner intend to sojourn in Sweden?	13. Till dess världsläget möjliggör nya dispositioner
14. Vad är anledningen till resan? But du voyage? Zweck der Reise nach Schweden? Purpose of journey to Sweden? (Närmare uppgifter kunna angivas nedan under "Anmärkningar". Des renseignements plus détaillés peuvent être donnés au paragraphe "Observations". Nähere Angaben können unter "Anmerkungen" angegeben werden. Further statements can be given below under "Observations".)	14. Judeförföljelse i Norditalien
15. Vistelseort och adress under/uppehållet i Sverige? Lieu de résidence et adresse pendant le séjour en Suède? Wohnort und Adresse während des Aufenthaltes in Schweden? Residence and address during the stay in Sweden?	15. Hos undertecknad Vanadisvägen 16, Stockholm



A poster for the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games. It depicts the “new man”, a physical and hereditary ideal shared by many Europeans. The growing importance of sports, racism and nationalism contributed to the impact of such ideas. Similar depictions of white masculine power was characteristic of Nazi propaganda.

Jews in Sweden

For centuries, Sweden has hosted different minority groups. The first Jewish congregation was established in Stockholm in the 1770s, after receiving permission from King Gustav III. The rights and obligations of Jews were regulated by specific laws. Though the French Revolution of 1789 led to the beginnings of Jewish emancipation throughout Europe, Jews in Sweden were not granted full civil rights until 1870.

By then, many Jews were economically and socially integrated into Swedish society, and were no longer legally discriminated against. However, antisemitic attitudes persisted, and negative portrayals of “the Jew” were commonly contrasted to all things “Swedish”. These attitudes were also propagated in literature, caricatures and film. There was also strong resistance against Jewish immigration from Central and Eastern Europe. In particular, many business men felt threatened by potential competition.

“The Jewish question is not just a matter of trade and industry, it’s also a racial and cultural issue. (...) Jewry is the ruin of the European peoples.”

PEHR EMANUEL LITHANDER, SWEDISH
MERCHANT AND MP, 1912

Racial theories in Sweden during the 1920s and the 1930s

During the first half of the 20th century, concepts of “race” and the notion that individual nations had to maintain and preserve their national and ethnic “purity” were quite influential in the Western world. In Sweden, these ideas were partly implemented through the establishment in 1922 of the State Institute for Racial Biology. The Institute had broad support across the political spectrum. Research conducted under the leadership of Herman Lundborg was closely related to that of leading German “race researchers”, who enjoyed close long-term contacts and co-operation with the Swedish Institute.

Notable groups in Swedish society fraternised with ideas and proposals which would later find their most radical political expression in Nazi Germany. The idea of extinguishing “life unworthy of life” was not only aired in Germany in the 1920s. In a 1922 Swedish parliamentary debate on the death penalty, leading Social Democrat and prominent journalist Arthur Engberg said that society might be forced to “consider extinguishing the lives of idiots and the physically deformed who are beyond help, and as such doomed to be a burden unto society and a curse unto others and themselves”.

Interest in the possibilities offered by so-called eugenics was even greater. In 1934 and 1941, laws were passed allowing the Government to sterilise the “mentally deficient”, “vagrants”, alcoholics and “loose women”, on either social or hereditary grounds.

“Fundamentally, our ability and our strength lie in the racial attributes of our people. In the constant competitive struggle between nations, safeguarding the racial qualities of the people is of the utmost importance. The nation’s strength, prosperity and culture depends on it. Consequently, miscegenation is one of the greatest hazards to a superior people.”

AN EXCERPT FROM “HANDBOOK FOR SOLDIERS”,
1930, VALID UNTIL 1944.

This woman won a competition on the “purest Swedish racial type”, organised by the newspaper *Stockholms Dagblad* in 1922. No first prize was awarded for the most “racially pure Swedish man”, as there were too few competitors, making the “material too one-sided”. One of the jury members was Herman Lundborg from the State Institute for Racial Biology. Similar competitions were organised by several other major newspapers.

Stockholms Dagblad.
GRUNDAD 1824

iebolags
12 000 000 : -
14 000 000 : -
120 137 700 : -
25 633 898 : 89
17 198 270 : 30
377 820 : 74
886 407 : 02
134 059 : 94
9 777 270 : 54
209 145 427 : 43

**EN ÄKTSVENS
KVINNOTYP.**

STOCKHOLMS DAGBLADS STORA RASTYP-
TÄVLAN AVGJORD.



ETT 1: A PRIS I
KVINNLIGAGRUP-
PEN. INGEN MÅN-
LIG 1: E PRISLAGA-
RE FUNNEN. MÅN-
GA EXTRAPRIS
SKÅNKTA, BL. A. AV
SELMA LAGERLÖF

Detta rena, äktsvenska utse-
ende har erhållit första priset i
Stockholms Dagblads stora
landstävlan om den renaste
svenska rastypen, kvinnliga täv-
lingsgruppen. Något första pris
har prisnämnden ej ansett sig
kunna utdela i den manliga
gruppen, emedan antalet man-
liga tävlande varit begränsat
och materialet för snålidigt.

NÄRMARE DETALJER OM PRISNÄMNDENS AVGORANDE, MOTIVERINGEN SAMT ETT STORT
ANTAL PRISLAGAREBILDER ÅTERFINNAS PÅ SIDAN 3.

ment
Z & Co.
itzcomp.
N.
GÅ.
ISM.
da ur
gång i
sedan i går af-
svägspersonalen
ransporter.
på järnvägs-
(TT). Tid-
ka statsjänste-
ig att redan i
trejkande järn-
terstuga strejke-
sörja för att
skalar strejke-
art, sedan de
isolerats, kom-
kallas.
järnvägstrafiken
om ej i dag så
ns lopp. Möj-
a några dagar,
la utsträckning

SVENSKA
Kommun
partis
i Köp
Den nuvarande
ledningen
avs
KÖPENHAMN
Kommunistiska fed-
hamsavdelning har
av en revolutionär
under namn av D
stiska parti samt at
rande ledning av d
ganisationerna. På
hålles den 12 febr
att fattas om vad
partiet.
Det första offret
len ene redaktören
Johannes Ervig, so-
delbart efter ett k
medlemmar begäv
derbladets redaktio
med styrka, om ha
svann. Ervig törk
gå. Han har tills
daktionskapet av t
liga bevakningskon-
brikerna samt över
partiernas uppväg
slagens genomföra



A Nazi rally at Hötorget in Stockholm, 1932. During the 1930s and early 1940s, pro-Nazi gatherings and demonstrations were a common sight all over Sweden. They were initially well-attended, but participation gradually diminished.

The Nazi temptation

During the inter-war period, many Europeans questioned the benefits of democracy and felt a certain attraction towards Hitler and Nazism's messages. However, in Sweden, Social Democratic Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson and other leading politicians managed to keep Sweden's political scene free of significant fascist and authoritarian influences. No notable Nazi or fascist movements secured a foothold in Sweden. Nazi influence was marginalised by measures such as the May 1933 agreement between the Farmers' League and the Social Democrats. When the war broke out in 1939, there was hardly any direct Nazi influence in Swedish politics.

Yet, thousands of Swedes were attracted to Nazi doctrines. The Nazi goal of creating an ethnically "pure" nation state struck a chord with many people. Simultaneously, elements of Swedish society increasingly feared immigration to Sweden in the 1930s. Many from the social elite, such as academics, doctors, military officers and vicars, often found a great deal to admire about Hitler's "new Germany". During the war some newspapers, not only those with Nazi sympathies, sided with Germany. For years, publications such as *Aftonbladet*, *Helsingborgs Dagblad*, *Norrbottnens-Kuriren* and *Östgöta-Correspondenten* expressed their support for Nazi Germany, while at the same time criticizing the Allies and those Swedes who backed them against Nazi Germany.

The “new Germany” as seen from Sweden

For generations, Sweden enjoyed close cultural, economic, political and scientific ties with Germany, so it was only natural that many Swedes closely followed developments in Hitler’s Germany. Some were appalled, while others admired and approved of the rapid changes. Swedish diplomats carefully monitored developments. In September 1935, a Swedish diplomat in Berlin reported on Nazi school policy to the Prime and Foreign Ministers in Stockholm: “It is becoming obvious in this respect, just as in many others, that Herr Hitler strives with unyielding consistency in one area after the other to implement the guidelines drawn up in his book *Mein Kampf*.”

Most criticism of Nazi Germany came from either the labour movement or liberal circles. By and large, the right wing was also sceptical. One of the most prominent critics was Torgny Segerstedt, editor of the daily *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*. As early as 3 February 1933, he commented on the appointment of Hitler as German Reich Chancellor: “Forcing international political affairs and the international press to deal with that fellow is unforgivable. Herr Hitler is an insult.” During the war, Segerstedt continued to criticise Sweden for its passivity towards Nazism and Nazi crimes, something that annoyed not only German leaders, but also many Swedes. They accused him of risking Sweden’s “peace and neutrality”.

During the 1930s, many Swedes’ admiration for Nazi Germany grew, as did their fear. In various ways, the Nazis made considerable efforts to influence Swedish

public opinion. They cultivated a “dream of the North” as a “racial” paradise, hoping that the Swedes would be their natural allies. Additionally, many Swedes were increasingly impressed by the propaganda of “Germany’s rebuilding efforts”. Even if the persecution of Jews made some people uncomfortable, there existed a widespread understanding that Germany had a particular “Jewish question” requiring a “solution”. Leading members of the Swedish Academy, such as Sven Hedin and Fredrik Böök, urged Swedes to support the “New Germany”. They considered a strong Germany led by Hitler beneficial for Sweden.

Even those doubting Hitler’s goals and methods feared that Soviet Bolshevism was even more threatening. They regarded Germany’s rearmament as protection from the “threat from the East”. This attitude affected their ability, as well as their inclination, to recognise Nazi Germany’s darker sides. Once war began in 1939, Sweden’s sensitive political and geographical position meant that there was limited scope for criticism to be voiced, particularly during the period 1940-1942. Formed in December 1939, Sweden’s new coalition government for a long time struck an uneven balance between considerations for the freedom of the press, and the fear of annoying Germany by allowing criticism. In March 1942, as many as 17 newspapers were confiscated on the orders of KG Westman, Minister of Justice, after publishing testimonies of torture in Norwegian prisons. Despite such obstacles some Swedes refused to remain silent, continuing to warn society about Nazi Germany and Nazism.



The fear of Communism

There was a common conception in Sweden that Russia was the “traditional enemy”. The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, followed by the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922, gave rise both to increasing alarm and growing hope among many Europeans. Initially, the organisation behind the above poster, the National Youth League of Sweden (SNU), was an independent youth organisation attached to the Conservative Party. But in 1934, it reconstituted itself into a separate party, the National League of Sweden. The party combined conservative, racist and antisemitic ideas with a demand for the abolition of democracy and the reorganisation of society according to “corporatist” principles. During the Second World War, the party, whose members were primarily from social elites, supported Nazi Germany.



Refugees who changed Sweden

Most Jews who applied for, and were granted, asylum in Sweden before the war came from Central Europe. The adults were often well-educated and had held prominent positions in their former countries. They could offer Sweden much in the fields of business, medicine, literature, art and music. Of the 3,000 or so refugees admitted into Sweden, many contributed enormously. These included Nelly Sachs, author and later Nobel Prize laureate, the journalist and author Stefan Szende, and entrepreneur

"We have not been particularly generous with residence permits for foreigners who have applied for them in order to escape terror and persecution. Those who accuse the National Board of Health and Welfare of being too liberal in this respect may, when all is said and done, have less reason to criticise than those who claim that the Board has pursued too restrictive a policy."

SIGFRID HANSSON, NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE BOARD DIRECTOR, ISSUING AGENCY FOR RESIDENCE PERMITS, FEBRUARY 1939

Herbert Felix. Felix came to Sweden in 1938 and achieved rapid success in the food industry. After the war, he created his well-known brand Felix. His products, ranging from relish to tomato ketchup, remain household names. Other refugees were only children when they arrived, and contributed to post-war Sweden. These included, among others, Harry Schein, Georg Riedel, Joachim Israel and Erwin Leiser.

Sweden and the refugee crisis of 1938

As soon as the Nazis came to power in 1933, Jews began leaving Germany. Most countries, Sweden included, were reluctant to accept more than a handful. When Germany annexed Austria in 1938, the European "refugee crisis" was aggravated, as tens of thousands of Jews tried to leave the Third Reich. As a result of an appeal from American president Franklin Roosevelt, representatives of 32 governments met in Évian, France, in July 1938 for a ten-day conference to discuss the crisis. The poorly planned conference was a humanitarian disaster. Government upon government expressed their regret for the Jewish plight, while simultaneously saying they could not help. The Swedish chief delegate, Gösta Engzell from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, explained that Sweden had very limited possibilities to assist, and that the "burden" created by Europe's Jewish "problem", could only be borne if it was "extended to countries outside Europe". Of all the large and small nations represented in Évian, only the tiny Dominican Republic in the Caribbean offered to receive 10,000 Jews for a limited period of time. For many European Jews the failed conference effectively meant a death sentence. For Hitler and Nazi Germany, it served as a propaganda tool. The Nazis mocked a world which criticised Germany for its "Jewish policy", while refusing to open its doors to Jewish refugees. The Évian fiasco is commonly considered to be the final demise of the League of Nations.

Reactions to the November pogrom

The November 1938 pogrom worsened the "refugee crisis". Its massive and public violence stunned the world. Some countries reacted by withdrawing their ambassadors, but not Sweden. A few individuals demanded that the Government allow more Jewish refugees into Sweden, but the public largely supported the restrictive refugee policy. The country's small Jewish population failed in their attempts to pressure the Government to open the borders.

Sweden's negative response was influenced by several factors. There was no ideologically motivated anti-semitism in Sweden except in Nazi and related circles. But traditional prejudices against Jews subsisted, with a widespread sentiment that there existed a genuine "Jewish question". Moreover, the focus on race meant that official documents and application forms required people to state whether they were of "Aryan" or "Jewish race". While general guidelines were drawn up by the politicians, actual practices were shaped by the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Swedish police and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Another important factor was the desire to protect the labour market from "foreign competition". By the start of the war, a mere 3,000 Jewish refugees had been allowed into Sweden; fewer than, for instance, had been granted entry into the much smaller Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Resistance against permitting more Jews into Sweden was expressed in many different parts of society, amongst them trade unions, political parties, universities and their students. In November 1938, Swedish Nazis began a campaign against Jewish immigration, called

"Stop Moses at the gate", which achieved considerable impact. In Uppsala in early 1939, student organisations arranged a debate (known as the Bollhus meeting) on the refugee issue. The majority present protested against allowing more Jewish refugees to Sweden. Similar rallies were soon arranged by medical students in Stockholm and the students' union in Lund, with even larger majorities against Swedish assistance to refugees. Antisemitic and Nazi groups began compiling lists of Swedish Jews and Jewish refugees. At the same time, many realised the moral and political urgency of taking a clear stand against Nazism and of helping Jews and other victims of persecution. One of those was the already mentioned Torgny Segerstedt. Another was the historian, publicist and humanist Hugo Valentin, who throughout the Hitler era published detailed accounts of Nazi crimes.

However, these two were by no means alone in taking a definitive stand against Nazism and expressing support for the persecuted. Numerous liberals and democrats, including representatives of the labour movement and the trade unions, also raised their voices in protest against Nazi Germany and the refugee policies implemented by Sweden's government. Journalists such as the editor of *Sjömannen*, Ture Nerman of *Trots Allt!* and J.A. Selander of *Eskilstuna-Kuriren*, along with the syndicalist newspaper *Arbetaren*, members of the groups *Tisdagsklubben* and *Kämpande Demokrati* and many others were opposed to the Nazi regime. Other prominent names were economist Karin Kock and journalist Mia Leche-Löfgren.

"The most serious aspect of this problem is, however, that it is not only a union problem, but also a racial problem. To deny this would be ridiculous. It would be ridiculous to deny that it has been a great strength for our nation, that in contrast to most other European nations we have not had a nationality and race problem. These are not problems we frivolously seek. (...) Even a small number of immigrants would create friction that no one could surely desire."

FROM ARVID FREDBORG'S BOLLHUS MEETING SPEECH,
17 FEBRUARY 1939



Swedish authorities board the German ship Isar before it docks in Luleå harbour. Isar carried munitions and 1,000 SS soldiers, who continued to Norway by passenger train. The munitions followed in goods carriages.

Swedish trade with Nazi Germany

Sweden's trade with Germany had for decades been of considerable importance to both countries. After 1933, this interdependency increased, with the value of trade reaching unprecedented heights. When the war began, regulating trade between Sweden and Germany on the one hand, and Sweden and the Allies on the other, became a critical political and economic element of Sweden's efforts to remain neutral. After the Skagerrak Strait was blockaded on 9 April 1940, Swedish diplomats skilfully negotiated trade agreements which largely proved beneficial to all parties.

When in 1943 the war turned, the UK and the USA increased their pressure on Sweden to discontinue its shipments of raw materials and product important for the German war effort. Particularly important was iron ore and ball bearings. Despite appeals from the Western democracies, Sweden's government and leading businesses refused to stop trading with Nazi Germany. Trade continued long after reports of Nazi mass murder of Jews appeared in the press and became general knowledge. Some historians assert that Sweden's trade with Nazi Germany actually prolonged the war and with it, the Holocaust. Finally in November 1944, six months before the war ended, Sweden cut off its supply of products vital to Germany's military needs.

Another controversial aspect of Sweden's commercial relations with Nazi Germany, particularly during the 1930s, was the Nazi "Aryanisation policy". Swedish businesses involved in commercial dealings with Germany were requested to dismiss their Jewish employees. A few companies complied, with some even anticipating this demand by instigating such dismissals on their own initiative. Most, however, refused to adopt "Aryanisation", and such attempts to force Nazi ideology on Sweden were largely a failure.

“Business as usual” – everyday relations with Nazi Germany

While Europe was torn apart by the war, thousands of Swedes continued visiting Nazi Germany and the Continent. Businessmen, diplomats, politicians, writers, musicians and other artists, vicars, athletes, chess players, as well as normal citizens visiting friends and family, all travelled there and back in a steady stream. They were both visitors and observers. Many of them were aware of Germany’s persecution – and later deportation – of Jews during the early 1940s, as no efforts were made to conceal it from the public.

Some Swedish businessmen remained active in Europe until the war was almost over. Their experiences outside Sweden initiated discussions in Sweden about what was happening on the Continent. There, they often lived and worked and were thus able to witness events first-hand as they unfolded. In Poland, as conditions drastically deteriorated for the Jews, a handful of Swedes employed at ASEA, LM Ericsson and Svenska Tändsticks AB grew increasingly concerned. These bold and courageous men acted as couriers for the Polish resistance movement, with Nils Berglind, Carl Herslow and Sven Norrman leading this dangerous task. They passed on intelligence about German policies from the Polish “Home Army” to the Allies, and carried money and messages in return. In 1942, the Gestapo found out about these activities and the Swedes were arrested. Some were sentenced to death.

Their lives were in great danger, but Sweden’s favourable relationship with Nazi Germany eventually led to their release. One Swedish diplomat involved in

the negotiations was Göran von Otter. In August 1942, SS officer Kurt Gerstein approached him on the night train between Warsaw and Berlin. Gerstein described to von Otter what he had recently witnessed in the Belzec

death camp and implored the Swede to tell the world what was happening. This was one of many ways the Swedish Government received new and shocking information about the extermination of the Jews.



Sunday, 20 September 1942. In Sweden, local and county elections are being held, while in Berlin, Sweden and Germany face one another in an international football match at the Olympic Stadium. Around 90,000 spectators see Sweden win 3-2. Most in attendance are soldiers on leave. Two weeks later, Reich Marshal Hermann Göring gives a speech in Berlin, quoted on 5 October in Swedish newspapers. That very day, Norwegian Jews are being arrested by the Gestapo and Norwegian police.

Towards the end of his speech, Göring says: “This war is not the Second World War, but the great race war. The question is ultimately whether the world will be ruled by the Jew or by the German and Aryan. The Jew has declared upon us a war of death and destruction. But this war will be won because it must be won, and as long as we remain a German people’s community solid as a block of granite, we are invincible.”

“My friend led me to believe that Germany would be very pleased to see a volunteer’s movement in Sweden and that it would also benefit us greatly. Quite naturally, by the way. (...) Should we not find some way to actively display our interest in contributing to the obliteration of the Soviet Union? Surely we ought to make up for P.A. H(ansson)’s watered-down speech yesterday? Is there nothing we can do?”

AN EXCERPT FROM A LETTER FROM COMMANDER ANDERS FORSHELL, SWEDISH NAVAL ATTACHE TO BERLIN, TO THE HEAD OF THE SWEDISH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, CARLOS ADLERCREUTZ, 30 JUNE 1941

Sweden after “Operation Barbarossa”

The war in Europe took a new turn after Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. The Germans would fight a “war of annihilation”, urging all Europeans to join in their “crusade against Bolshevism”. In many countries, thousands responded to this call. The Swedish Government resisted abandoning its policy of neutrality, but reluctantly let the Wehrmacht’s Engelbrecht division transit from occupied Norway across Swedish territory to Finland. Some Swedes were unhappy with the Government’s reluctance, preferring more active participation on the German side.

In December 1941, Japan’s attack at Pearl Harbor and Hitler’s declaration of war brought the US into the war alongside the Allies, essentially guaranteeing Germany’s eventual defeat. Despite the Soviet Union’s massive losses it stood victorious at war’s end; a fact lamented by some Swedes. Though public opinion had vacillated during the war, most Swedes supported the Allies throughout.

First reports of mass murder

News that Germany’s brutal policies had taken an even more murderous turn after June 1941 reached Swedish citizens and government officials through various channels. Although reports were sporadic, some newspapers published information about them frequently. In September 1941, both *Stockholms-Tidningen* and *Dagens Nyheter* quoted the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, when it wondered where Croatia’s Jews had disappeared to. According to *La Stampa*, an investigation into the matter had “not been able to reveal what fate has befallen these 50,000 Croatian Jews”.

Swedish officials often received information on how Germany’s policies were becoming increasingly radical. In mid-October 1941, Sweden’s Military Attaché at the Legation in Berlin, C.A. Juhlin-Dannfelt, reported on mass death among Soviet prisoners-of-war, which he thought might prove to be “history’s greatest decimation”. Twelve days later, he reported that “in occupied parts” of the Soviet Union, Jews were being shot by SS special units, “including women and children”.

But how, and when, do random pieces of information turn into knowledge and an understanding which leads to a change in attitudes and actions? Sweden received several pieces of the mass murder jigsaw, but an overall understanding was difficult to achieve. The will to actually believe the information and acknowledge this broader perspective was crucial to the individual’s ability to comprehend what was happening. For example, such a willingness existed in some Christian circles. In August 1943, Fl. Hällzon, editor of *Hemmets Vän*, wrote: “The mass graves of Jews cry out to the world; yes, they scream, and the screams pierce the skies up to God in Heaven. Woe betide Germany and those responsible when the bloody crops are harvested. Woe betide the world, which through its sins has participated in this blood-soaked crime being committed in our days.” By the end of 1942, many were already more or less aware of what was happening, which had a significant impact on Sweden’s official reaction to the genocide. Despite this, when the war ended, there were still those who denied that Germany had perpetrated such crimes.

"Do we not even now remain silent before the horrible persecution of the Jews, which now seems to have reached levels of cruelty far beyond what the human mind can fathom? Can this silence at all be joined to a Swedish policy, which presumes to be Christian? The answer is obvious: It may be Swedish, but it can on no account be characterised as Christian."

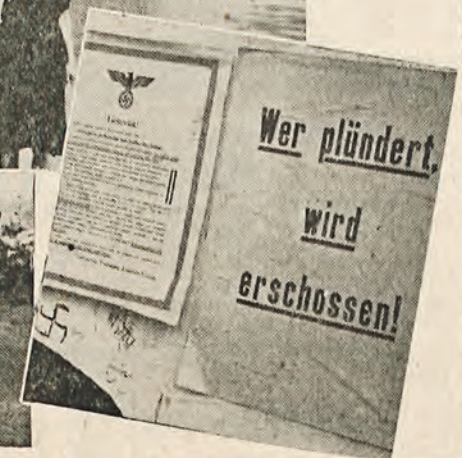
LEADER IN ESKILSTUNA-KURIREN, 16 SEPTEMBER 1942

An article in the pro-Nazi newspaper *Aftonbladet*, 14 August 1941. Fritz Lönnegren, a journalist who had been granted special permission by the Germans to follow their troops, describes how the ghetto in Kaunas, Lithuania, takes shape. The article expresses a certain understanding for both the Lithuanian population's cruelty towards the Jews when the Germans marched in, and of the need for establishing the ghetto.

TRE VECKOR VID TYSKA FRONTER:

Judisk karavan.

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



ETT GHETTO SKAPAS.

Intryck från den stora judeomflyttningen i Kovno efter bolsjevikväldets fall och

SJÄLVHÄMNDENS OHYGLIGHETER.

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

Det var inte långt från Kovno, Litauens huvudstad. Krigets närhet hade redan börjat göra sig märkbar. Här och där voro byarna ganska illa medfarna. Det var som på de flesta andra ställen ryssarna som bränt. I något fall talade man om befolkningens egen hämnd mot någon bolsjevik eller jude. En och annan sönderskjuten rysk tank låg som skrot vid vägkanten. Överallt var man i färd med att iordningställa vägnarna, och mycket ofta var det judar, som

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

Alla skulle fram. Trafiken fick inte stoppa. Tiden var knapp. Fyra dagar hade man på sig.

En kungörelse, tryckt dels på tyska och dels på litauiska, gav förklaringen till vagnarnas långa rader, till judarnas iver och böndernas brådska. Judarna, som tidigare i hög grad dominerat i Litauen och framför allt under bolsjevikregimen sett sina förut i nedgående stadda konjunkturer stiga, hade nu mött sitt öde. En man berättade för oss om befolkningens glädje över att tyskarna befriat landet från Sovjet men han konstaterade att judarna höllo på att få sitt.

Kungörelsen på vägen var knappast

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

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

Det var icke uppbyggligt. En upplevelse, som gjorde ont. Men vad som skedd måste ses i sitt sammanhang.

Judarna hade här som annorstädes

The “Final Solution” in Norway

Like in many other occupied countries, the collaborationist administration in Norway attacked its own Jewish population. Jews in Norway were subjected to discrimination and had their property seized. In autumn 1942, the Germans decided that the “Final Solution” would be carried out in Norway. Assisted by Norwegian police, the Germans organised the arrest and deportation of the 2,200 Jews still living there. Early in the morning of 26 November, 532 Jews were taken onboard the German cargo vessel *Donau*, which left Oslo harbour that same day.

Many Swedish newspapers expressed their outrage about the event. On 29 November, *Göteborgs-Tidningen* wrote: “After the recent events in Norway one’s conscience can no longer be silenced by repeating the self-delusional mantra ‘maybe it’s not that bad...’ (...) It is people like you and me being treated in this way. (...) No-one with a conscience could feel anything but shame and outrage at the thought of what is going on.” The Dean of Göteborg said in a sermon: “The Church of Sweden must not remain silent when such things are taking place near our very border. If we are silent, the stones themselves would cry out.”

Events in Norway had a strong impact on public opinion and the Swedish government, and assistance was immediately offered to Norway’s Jews. However, the reluctance to assist other Jews persisted, and a plan proposed two weeks later to grant thousands of Jewish children from Poland entry into Sweden was not well received. For example, *Göteborgs-Posten* editorialised that



“considerable numbers’ of Jewish children cannot be integrated in Nordic society nor with its character”. Sweden had “problems transporting children closer to home” and should therefore focus on “trying to save as many children and youngsters of Nordic origin as possible”.

Norwegian Jews waiting to board the cargo vessel *Donau*. When they arrived in Auschwitz on 1 December 1942, all women and children were immediately taken to Bunker 2 in Birkenau and gassed, while the men were put to work. The Germans and their Norwegian counterparts never gave up the hunt for Jews, and by 1944, a total of 772 Norwegian Jews had been deported. Of these, only 33 survived. Unlike other Norwegians in German captivity, these survivors had to find their own way home after liberation.



“One day, these heinous crimes will be forced into the light. Peoples will find out what really happened behind the iron curtains. The truth will triumph and the veil will be lifted. Much is already known. The fragments of the larger picture fill us with fear. (...) In our immediate vicinity, we have witnessed scenes that have filled us with horror. The death ship was loaded and departed with innocent people, with no regard for their age or sex. They were herded on board like cattle on their way to the slaughter. Their crime lies in their race. Nothing else has been held against them. They are to be exterminated. (...) It is as if the stones themselves cry out to curse the perpetrators of this crime. Children’s eyes filled with terror; heart-wrenching cries from mothers; vain pleas and prayers from the mature and aged – these scenes are enough to make one promise never to forget, never excuse, never compromise. Because here radical evil is met. At stake is the choice between man and devil.”

COUNTY GOVERNOR ARTHUR ENGBERG IN VECKO-JOURNALEN, ISSUE 50, 1942

Aided by Norwegian resistance groups, ordinary civilians and the tacit approval of the Swedish authorities, 1,100 Jews reached Sweden. An opinion poll conducted in early 1943 showed that the deportation of Norway’s Jews had a greater impact on Swedes than any other event during 1942.



SS Chief Himmler, pictured here speaking to, from right to left: Valter Nilsson, Estonian Swede Axel Lindström, Carl-Martin Ågrahn and Karl-Olof Holm. The Waffen-SS was heavily involved in war crimes and in carrying out the Holocaust. What did these Swedes, and others, know about the reality of what they were involved in? After the war, no-one was willing to talk openly, but during the war, Swedish officials received various reports which proved Swedish Waffen-SS volunteers knew more than they were later prepared to admit. On Christmas Eve, 1943, Kurt Lundin, an SS volunteer from 1941-1943,

was questioned by Swedish police. Lundin recalled both what he heard from others and scenes he witnessed himself. The report states that Lundin, "on several occasions witnessed the killing of Jews, /men, women and children/ up to 800 at a time. A member of a special task force, called the Jew company, had as its task to hunt down and kill Jews, told Lundin that during a five-month period, the force had killed some 300,000 Jews in the occupied areas south of Kiev. They had been shot with machine guns or locked into buses and gassed with exhaust fumes."

Swedes in foreign armies

The few hundred Swedish men who volunteered to join the Waffen-SS exemplify Nazism's allure. Most of them served in specially established divisions consisting mainly of ethnic European minorities. In order to be accepted, they had to agree with Nazi ideals and swear an oath of allegiance to Hitler. The Waffen-SS was involved not only in battle, but also in "ethnic cleansing" and the murder of Jews and others, activities that escalated rapidly after Operation Barbarossa. The relatively low number of Swedish volunteers was partly a result of the Swedish government's disapproval of German recruitment efforts. The majority of Swedish SS volunteers survived the war, yet never faced any legal consequences for having fought on Germany's side.

During the war, many more Swedes fought in the armies of other countries than for Germany. During the Russo-Finnish Winter War of 1939-1940, some 8,500 Swedish volunteers fought alongside the Finnish soldiers against the Soviet Union. Another 8,000 or so Swedes served the Allies on armed convoy duty. A few also served in combat units. One of them wrote: "I am not of the opinion that the Allies are right in everything they do. But the other side represents something that has to be stopped... By helping Europe, I can help Sweden... it is a moral duty."

Sweden's Foreign Office fights genocide with diplomacy

Even though the Nazis sought to kill every Jew in the areas they controlled, their ability to do so was in some ways limited. One difficulty were Jews who were citizens of states with which Germany sought good relations, allied states and neutrals such as Sweden.

After the "Final Solution" was carried out in Norway, some officials at Sweden's Ministry for Foreign Affairs realised that its citizenship could even protect non-Swedish Jews. The Swedes understood that if these Jews were kept off deportation transports, their chances of survival greatly increased. Swedish diplomats began virtually daily negotiations with both German and local officials in Germany, Norway, France, Denmark and, above all, Hungary. When Sweden clearly stated its interest in the welfare of some individual Jews, or families, the Germans would not treat these people as they normally did. Sweden used what might be described as "bureaucratic resistance", demonstrating that even government bureaucrats were to a certain extent able to assist in trying to stop genocide. This method proved particularly effective in Hungary, where Swedes and diplomats from other neutral states and the International Red Cross employed the method to help Jews, often saving lives in the process.



The escape across Öresund

During the Holocaust, in 1943, something unique happened in northern Europe. Even though Germany had occupied Denmark since April 1940, Denmark's government refused to discriminate against the country's nearly 8,000 Jewish citizens and refugees. After the unrest of summer 1943, German occupation authorities proclaimed a state of emergency, and Danish government resigned. Hitler decided that it was time to deal with Denmark's Jews. Surprisingly, senior German officials in Copenhagen leaked the information that a full-scale operation was planned for the beginning of October. Once the rumour began circulating most Jews in Denmark managed to flee.

Assisted by Danish and Swedish fishermen, they fled to Sweden across the Öresund Strait. Sweden's official acceptance of thousands of Jewish refugees in just a few days marked a complete overturning of the country's previously extremely restrictive refugee policy. Most Danish police refused to help arrest the Jews who remained, although 481 Jews were deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Because Danish officials never lost interest, most deportees survived and returned to Denmark after the war. This 1944 photograph shows some Danish-Jewish children in a Save the Children Home in Malmö, Sweden.

Raoul Wallenberg and other Swedes in Budapest

In 1944, Europe's largest surviving Jewish population lived in Hungary, a German ally. Although Hungary introduced discriminatory laws against its approximately 800,000 Jewish citizens, Hungarian leaders refused to have them deported. On 19 March 1944, Germany occupied Hungary and took immediate action against the Jews. Assisted by local collaborators, Jews outside of Budapest were forced from their homes, robbed of their possessions and placed in temporary ghettos before deportation to camps, mainly Auschwitz-Birkenau. When the deportations were discontinued in early July, 437,000 people had been deported, more than 300,000 of them gassed immediately upon arrival.

The situation in Budapest differed from that in the provinces. Swedish and other neutral diplomats were able to assist at least some of the city's Jews, and help them survive. Germany's military and political situation was rapidly deteriorating, making the Germans largely dependent on Hungarian assistance to deal with the Jews. This gave the neutral diplomats space to manoeuvre. In June, Swedish Ambassador Carl Ivan Danielsson wrote to the Foreign Ministry: "(In Budapest) the Jews have been deprived of virtually all their property. They have had to put up with living 8-10 people in a single room (...) Those lucky enough to possess necessary labour skills are believed to be transported to German industrial facilities where they have a chance to be treated fairly well. The rest however, children, weak women or the elderly, are said to be transported to the extermination camps in Auschwitz-Birkenau, near Kattowitz in Poland."



Sweden's efforts were strengthened and energized with Raoul Wallenberg's arrival in Budapest on 9 July. The young businessman's courage and inventiveness brought Sweden's humanitarian diplomacy for foreign Jews to a new and historic phase. However, Wallenberg would not have been as successful as he was without the support of his colleagues Ambassador Danielsson and Per Anger. Valdemar Langlet of the Swedish Red Cross also made significant contributions. The Swedes and other diplomats employed "bureaucratic resistance" and other diplomatic methods with historic creativity.

The most well-known activity was the issuance of "protective passports", which Wallenberg gave to as many Jews as possible. The Swede and his colleagues worked relentlessly until the Red Army occupied Budapest, saving the lives of tens of thousands of people.

In January 1945, Raoul Wallenberg was arrested by Soviet forces, and never returned to Sweden. His actual fate remains unknown.

The White Buses and other rescue operations

When the Nazi empire neared its final collapse, even SS chief Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's most faithful follower, began looking for ways of saving the Third Reich or his own skin. One result was the secret negotiations which took place in March 1945, between leading Nazis and Count Folke Bernadotte, Deputy Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross. These led to Sweden and Denmark obtaining permission to send to Germany an expedition made up of dozens of army buses painted white with big red crosses. This risky expedition was staffed by several hundred members of the armed forces and some doctors and nurses. Their mission was to transport women and children with links to Sweden out of Germany, and rescue Scandinavian concentration camp prisoners. The prisoners were to be transferred first to the Neuengamme concentration camp before being transported home. For that to happen, the Swedish Red Cross accepted at the end of March the SS demand that they move some 2,000 seriously ill and dying French, Polish and Soviet prisoners from Neuengamme to other camps. During transport, some died. In April, the mission was expanded and all told, approximately 20,000 prisoners from some 30 different nationalities were transported to Sweden in one of the largest rescue actions of the war. About one third of these were Jews, of whom a majority were women.

The exact number of Jews and others saved by the White Buses remains uncertain, as are other important aspects of this rescue mission.



Receiving the condemned in 1945

After the Bernadotte expedition ended, Sweden continued to accept thousands of Nazi victims. Throughout Sweden they received treatment, some long-term, in order to regain their physical health. Most chose eventually to leave the country. Many such survivors were interviewed by the Cooperative Committee for Democratic Reconstruc-

tion, and some of the interviews were published for the book *De dödsdömda vittna* ("The Condemned Bear Witness") in the autumn of 1945. Decades later, one survivor again interviewed said: "It was difficult to be re-born in 1945: a sick body and a tortured soul. But life wanted me, and life collected me again from the abyss."



Celebrating peace on Kungsgatan in central Stockholm, 7 May 1945.

Peace in Europe, joy in Sweden

The news that Germany had surrendered on 7 May 1945 caused Swedes to gather in the streets to celebrate the peace. The war in Europe had left a trail of tens of millions dead in its wake, with many more civilian casualties than soldiers. But while peace was being celebrated, some Swedes asked: "Whose peace?" For many, the war years had been good years. The coalition government managed to keep Sweden out of the war, and most people were satisfied with its policies. Moreover, Sweden's standard of living was better at the end of the war than in September 1939. Tens of thousands of refugees were offered protection and medical care, while Sweden began contributing to and benefiting from Europe's political and financial recovery.

Those who regarded the war as an ideological struggle were, however, tormented by the fact that economically, Sweden had played a larger role as benefactor to Nazi Germany, than as an active supporter of democracy and freedom. Had Sweden contributed to Germany's defeat, or had Sweden's "selfish realpolitik" played into Hitler's hands? Would Swedish democracy have had a future if Nazi Germany had managed to stabilise its control over Europe? These competing perceptions of the war were already apparent when it ended, but with blossoming Swedish prosperity and the on-set of the Cold War, there was little scope for critical discussions of Sweden's role during the war. Questions about the coalition government's policy and society's reaction to genocide were postponed.

What does the Holocaust mean for Sweden today?

Genocides' devastating effects last long after the killing has ended. The genocides carried out on the European continent during the Second World War still affect people and societies today in many different ways. When the war ended, some people understood how important knowledge and reflection about the twelve-year period between 1933 and 1945 was – particularly about Nazi extermination policies. As early as 1944, Hugo Valentin wrote that the Holocaust was “an unprecedented event in the history of European civilisation”, which was “of concern to each and every one of us”. Voices like Valentin's, however, were few and rarely supported. For decades, most Swedes failed to understand the effect the Holocaust had on their nation. Questions related to it were discussed on and off with varying degrees of interest, but teaching about this part of the war was rarely encouraged and research not at all. This contributed to the myths and fragmentary memories which dominated Swedish society's understanding of that complicated period and its consequences. Not until the end of the 1990s was there significant interest in the Holocaust, when it became more generally accepted that protecting and promoting democracy and humane values requires promoting knowledge and understanding of its history and significance.

Examining Sweden's many different reactions to the persecution and genocide of the Jews prompts questions such as: Should Sweden have done more before the war to help Jews obtain residence permits, or let them transit through the country? Could Sweden have done more during the war? What role did Swedish

xenophobia, racism and antisemitism play in shaping the nation's wartime policy? Sweden's flexible neutrality made it possible to remain profitably outside the war, while simultaneously so many Europeans and others had to pay a very high price to liberate Europe from the Nazis. Is this problematic or not? Is it possible to remain neutral when faced by radical racism and genocide at one's doorstep? Despite their awareness of this, many morally problematic decisions were taken by Swedish officials, businessmen, different institutions and individual citizens.

These questions will be discussed for years, and there are no simple answers. There is much to probe and criticise, particularly regarding the unwillingness of both Sweden's government and people to help before the war. It was possible to have done more. Yet during the war, Sweden probably assisted and saved more Jews than any other nation. Does the latter circumstance make up for the former? And, since historical inquiry into Sweden's role during the Holocaust was delayed for so long, it has been difficult to conduct a balanced discussion. Many gaps in knowledge have begun to be filled only recently. One commentator wrote: “The blind spot in Swedish historiography lies in the cross section between moral claims and reality.” That such questions are now asked, and must continue to be asked, is among the lessons the Holocaust holds for Sweden today.

*“Blood, crime, disrepute, hate, despair.
How have we Swedes reacted in the face
of this catastrophe for our European civilisation?
A sense of unease, no doubt. But above and beyond that?
We have been neutral! We haven't had to take sides!
On the contrary, we have constantly been discouraged
from making any judgment, for or against. We haven't even had to,
nor been allowed, to find out what has actually happened.”*

BERTIL STÅLHANE, ENGINEER,
AUTHOR AND MEMBER OF TISDAGSKLUBBEN, 1943

1928

1 Jan. A new aliens act comes into force, introducing “race” as one criterion for immigration to Sweden.

1933

Apr. German antisemitic measures are reported and condemned in the Swedish press.

1934

One third of Swedish physicians protest German Jewish doctor Bernhard Zondek’s application to practice in Sweden. Zondek withdraws it.

1935

14 May Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s deputy, speaks at Stockholm’s Grand Hôtel, invited by the Swedish-German Association. Prince Gustaf Adolf and Princess Sibylla attend.

1936

20 Sept Swedish parliamentary elections. The various Nazi and pro-Nazi parties receive less than 2% of votes and no parliamentary seats.

1937

A new immigration law is passed, stating that Sweden may not expel political refugees. German Jews, however, are not categorised as political refugees.

Dec. The National Association Sweden-Germany is formed, seeking to promote a positive image of the “new Germany”. Verner von Heidenstam and Sven Hedin are among its almost 6,000 members.

1938

5 Oct. After requests from Switzerland and Sweden, German Jews receive passports stamped with a red “J”. Anyone trying to cross Sweden’s borders with these but without a valid residence permit is automatically denied entry.

Nov. After the November pogrom, Sweden grants 500 German Jewish children entry. 839 of the 1,748 applications for entry are denied. Most turned away were later murdered in the Holocaust.

1939

Feb.-Mar. Göring awarded Commander of the Order of the Sword by King Gustav V. Students from Uppsala, Lund and Stockholm protest against Jewish immigration.

10-18 Feb. National Health and Welfare Board conducts an “aliens census” to dispel rumours. In total, less than 28,000 foreigners are in Sweden, Of 2,810 refugees, 2,029 are Jews.

22 Feb. In Parliament, Otto Wallén of the Farmer’s League declares himself an antisemite, “without feeling ashamed”. The Social Democrat Zeth Höglund vehemently protests. Right-wing leader Gösta Bagge, while calling antisemitism a “spiritual pest” and “ruinous for a country”, warns against “unsuitable immigration”.

1-3 Sep. The Second World War begins. Sweden declares its neutrality.

13 Dec. All parliamentary parties, except the Communists, form a coalition headed by Social Democratic Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson.

1940

9 Apr. Germany attacks Denmark and Norway. Sweden maintains its neutrality. “The Tuesday Club” forms, headed by Amelie Posse. A secret society, it unites anti-Nazi supporters and aids refugees. For “tactical” reasons, it is closed to Jews.

6 Jul. Sweden grants Germany use of its railways for transporting troops and materiel to and from occupied Norway.

1941

Aug. Swedish press reports on ghettoisation.

Sep. The Foreign Ministry receives reports from Berlin legation on murder of disabled people.

Sep-Dec Jewish applications for entry increase. However, many approved permits remain unused as Germany ends Jewish emigration.

Oct. Gustav V congratulates Hitler on “great success already achieved” in war against Soviet Union.

1942

13 Mar. 17 newspapers report German torture in Norway. Justice minister KG Westman orders them seized.

24 Aug. Foreign Ministry receives reports from Berlin on the gassing and mass murder of Jews. Report classified confidential.

13 Sep. Influential newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* editorialises that the goal of Nazi persecution of Jews “appears to be physical annihilation”. Three days later, regional paper *Eskilstuna-Kuriren* assails Sweden’s passivity regarding Europe’s Jews.

27 Nov. Newspapers report deportation of Norway’s Jews, leading to public protests. Opinion poll shows that this event had greatest impact on public in 1942.

1943

5 Aug. Sweden halts transit of German troops to Norway.

1-3 Oct. The Swedish government declares all Danish Jews welcome. Over 7,000 reach the country’s shores in first large-scale Jewish rescue action of the war.

1944

30 Jun. Gustav V appeals to Hungarian Regent Horthy to halt deportation of Jews, and “save those who remain of that unfortunate people”.

9 Jul. Raoul Wallenberg arrives in Budapest.

1945

Mar. Negotiations between Red Cross’s Folke Bernadotte and German officials result in 7,000 Scandinavian prisoners transferred to Neuengamme concentration camp, prior to evacuation.

Apr.-May White Buses also permitted to evacuate prisoners from other camps.

8 May V-E Day. Sweden continues its assistance work, accepting Jewish and non-Jewish camp survivors. They are given medical and other care.

From bullets to gas

After Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, information on the radicalisation of Germany's "Jewish policy" leaked out. Quickly, British intelligence intercepted radio messages from German troops regarding mass shootings, while Italy, Germany's ally, also knew what was happening. Such information also reached neutral Sweden. The organisers of the mass murder realised that mass shootings attracted too much attention, were too time-consuming and negatively affected soldiers' morale. Therefore, by autumn 1941, more efficient, less conspicuous ways of killing large numbers of people

were sought. After some experimentation, a solution was found: gas. In the T4 programme, carbon monoxide contained in steel cylinders was used in "euthanasia centres". However, this was not an option for the large-scale murder planned. One suggestion was to use engine exhaust gases, and on 8 December 1941, specially designed gassing vans were utilised for the first time at the Chelmno death camp. On 17 March 1942, the gas chambers at Belzec were ready to receive Jews deported from Lublin's ghetto. At the Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka death camps, exhaust fumes from large Soviet tank engines were used. These camps were run by some one hundred men who previously served in the T4 programme.

At Auschwitz in the autumn of 1941, experiments were conducted with the insecticide Zyklon B, used for delousing clothes and barracks. It proved very effective, as the Prussic acid gas led to rapid suffocation. Soon, regular mass gassings using Zyklon B were carried out at Auschwitz, at the Majdanek camp located on Lublin's outskirts, and at some concentration camps in Germany. With these industrial methods, a relatively small number of SS men, aided by auxiliaries, murdered close to three million people in the gas chambers of various camps between December 1941 and November 1944.

Health risks for gas van staff

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

"The overhaul of the vans of Einsatzgruppen D and C has been completed...

I have had the vans of [Einsatz] Gruppe D disguised as house-trailers, by having a single window shutter fixed to each side of the small vans, and on the larger ones, two shutters, such as one often sees on farm houses in the country. The vans had become so well known that not only the authorities but the civilian population referred to them as the 'Death Vans' as soon as one appeared. In my opinion, the vans cannot be kept secret for any length of time even if they are camouflaged. (...)

I pointed out to the commanders of the *Sonderkommando* (Special Unit) concerned the enormous psychological and physical harm this may cause the men, possibly later even if not immediately. The

men complained to me of headaches that recur after each such unloading. Nevertheless there is reluctance to change the orders because it is feared that if prisoners were used for this work they might make use of a favourable moment to escape. I request appropriate instructions in order to save the men from suffering harm.

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

Today I shall continue my journey to [Einsatz] Gruppe B, where I may be reached for further instructions."

“All through that winter small children, stark naked and barefooted, had to stand out in the open for hours on end, awaiting their turn in the increasingly busy gas chambers. The soles of their feet froze and stuck to the icy ground. They stood and cried; some of them froze to death. In the meantime, Germans and Ukrainians walked up and down the ranks, beating and kicking the victims.

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

YANKEL WIERNIK, TREBLINKA SURVIVOR

Operation Reinhardt

Between March 1942 and October 1943, at least 1.5 million people were murdered at the Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka death camps. These camps were part of “Operation Reinhardt”, which sought to empty Poland of its Jews and seize their possessions. Nothing was to be wasted. Aside from clothes, money and personal effects, even hair and gold dental fillings were plundered. This work, and the clearing of the corpses, was carried out by Jewish prisoners.

The three camps were small, about 600 metres long and some 400 metres wide, and were constructed according to similar principles. Few Germans were at each camp: the staff usually comprised about 30 SS soldiers, aided by some 100 Ukrainian and Baltic auxiliaries. Treblinka, a former SS man stationed there said, was “a primitive but efficient production line of death”. In those camps, unlike in Auschwitz and Majdanek, no doctors “selected” victims when they arrived, usually in packed freight cars. The Jews were told that they had come to work, but that they must first undress for “disinfection” and leave all their possessions. Men went to one side and women and children to the other. Then they were separately herded into the gas chambers.

The engines started and pipes introduced exhaust fumes into the tightly packed chambers. The entire process was over in an hour or two. At Treblinka, up to 15,000 people could be murdered in one day, but, the same SS man explained, they “had to spend half the night at it”. Initially, bodies were buried in enormous mass graves, but from autumn 1942, the Germans burned them. At most, a hundred Jews survived Treblinka, fewer than fifty survived Sobibor, and Belzec, only two.

Sign at Treblinka:

“Attention Warsaw Jews!
 You are now entering a transit camp from which you will be transported to a labour camp. To prevent epidemics, both clothing and luggage must be handed in for disinfecting. Gold, cash, foreign currency and jewellery are to be given in at the cash desk in return for a receipt. They will be later returned on presentation of the receipt. All those arriving must cleanse themselves by taking a bath before continuing their journey.”

The death camps and estimated total number of victims

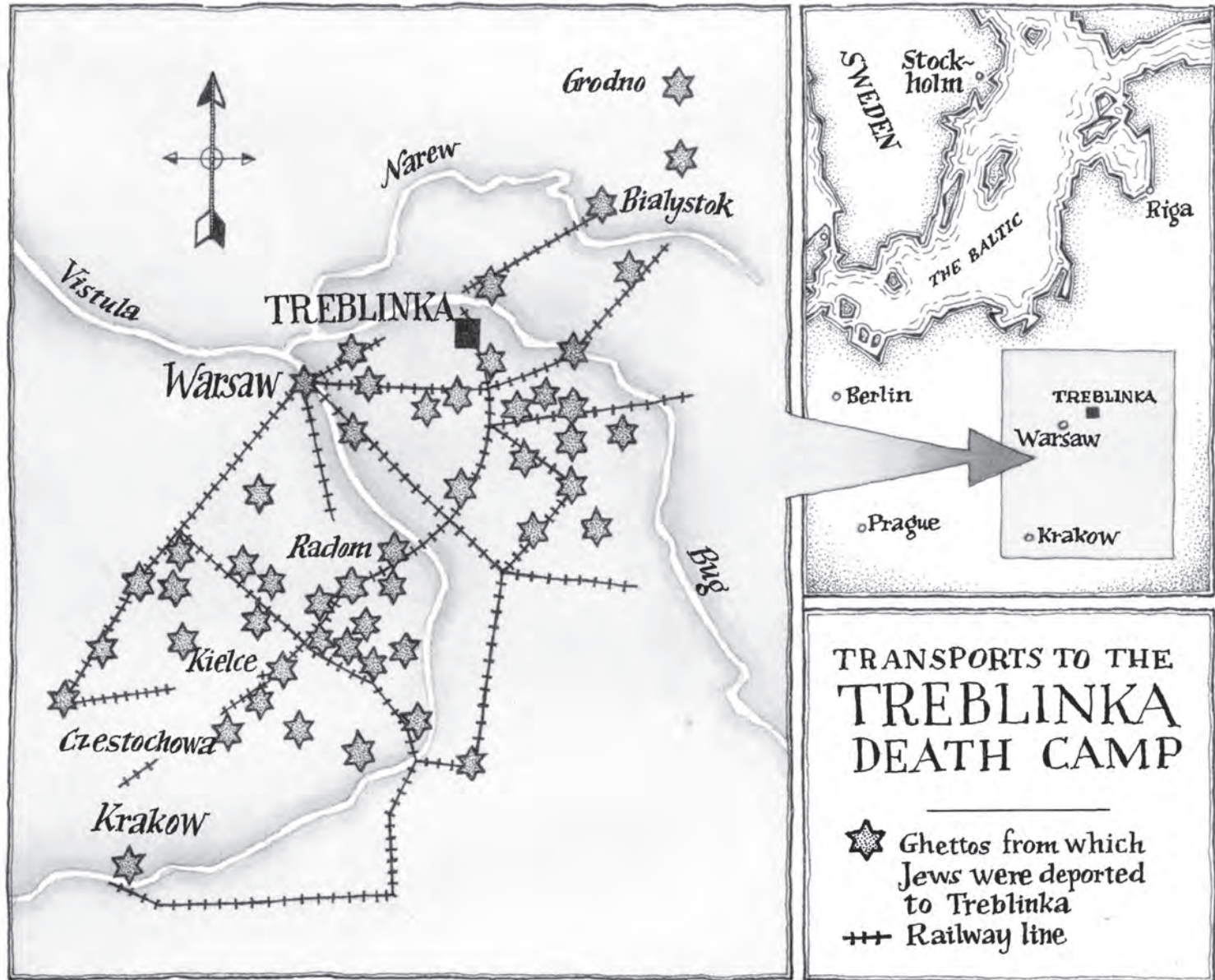
Chelmno	at least	
Dec. '41 – Jul. '44	152,000	
Belzec	at least	
Mar. '42 – Dec. '42	435,000	
Sobibor	approximately	
Apr. '42 – Oct. '43	200,000	
Treblinka	approximately	
Jul. '42 – Aug. '43	850,000	
Majdanek	approximately	
Oct. '41 – Jul '44	78,000	
Auschwitz-Birkenau	over	
Jan. '42 – Jan. '45	1,100,000	



The routes of the "special trains"

Europe's railway network played a crucial role in the perpetration of the Holocaust. Several million people were transported by "special trains". Passenger and freight cars crossed Europe, arriving at ghettos, execution fields, and transit and death camps. The SS chartered sometimes scarce rolling stock, often forcing the Jews to buy one-way tickets to the camps. The Holocaust was to cover its own costs.

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



5.) 3 Kr 9272 (30.9) von Szydłowiec na

Szydłowiec	(3.08)/21.30
Radom	22.49/ 0.13
Deblin Gbf	2.00/ 3.10
Lukow	5.17/ 6.08
Siedlca	6.58/ 8.34
Treblinka	11.24/(15.59)

6.) Rückleitung des Leerzuges:

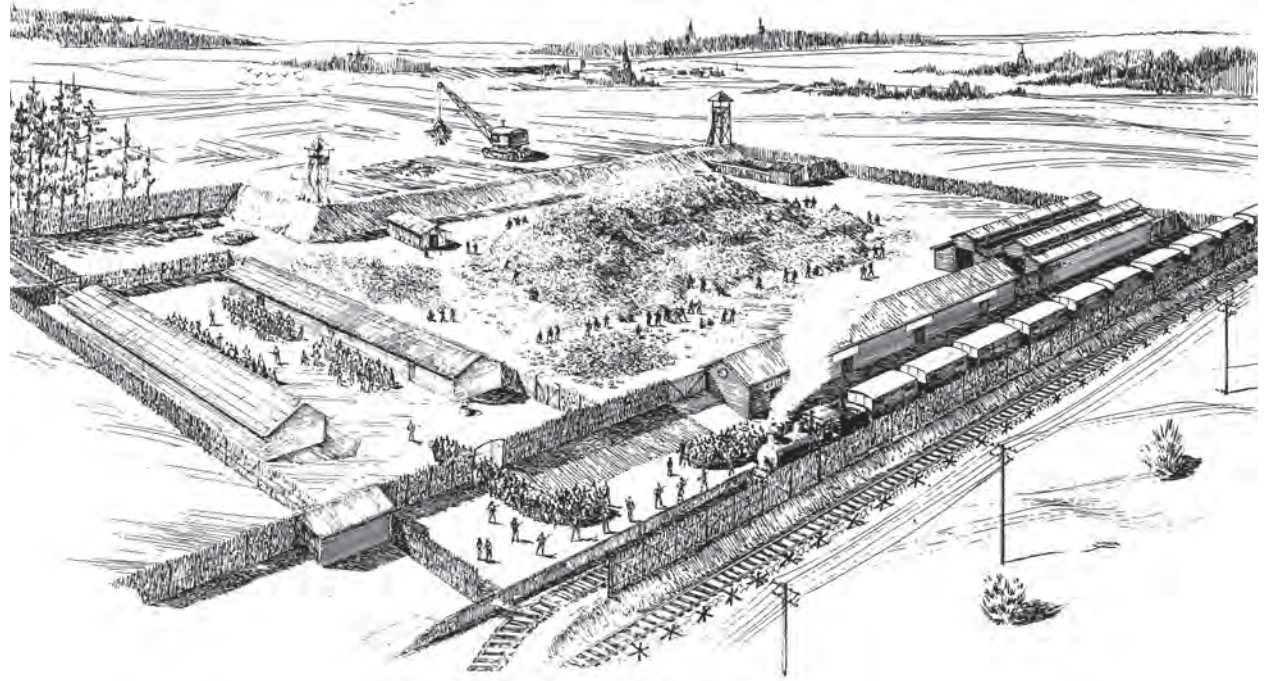
<u>3 Kr 9273 (30.11) von Treblinka n</u>	
Treblinka	(11.24)/15.59
Siedlca	17.56/18.42
Lukow	19.36/20.37
Deblin Gbf	22.34/23.36
Karolowo	0.00/ 0.05

Franz Stangl

Discussions about the perpetrators of the Holocaust often revolve around expressions such as “desktop killers” administering the “machinery of death” from afar. Nonetheless, it should be realised, as historian Christopher Browning wrote: “Ultimately, the Holocaust took place because at the most basic level individual human beings killed other human beings in large numbers over an extended period of time.”

Even the death camp commanders were people like us. Franz Stangl was initially commander of Sobibor, after that of Treblinka. In the 1960s, he was arrested in Brazil and sent back for trial in West Germany, where he was convicted of the murder of hundreds of thousands of human beings. Yet while overseeing an enormous process of murder, he was also a father and husband. The following quote illustrates a choice that was never made, because during the war the question was never posed. A journalist interviewed Stangl’s wife, and asked her this question: “Would you tell me what you think would have happened if at any time you had faced your husband with an absolute choice; if you had said to him: ‘Here it is; I know it’s terribly dangerous, but either you get out of this terrible thing, or else the children and I will leave you.’” Theresa Stangl replied: “I believe that if I had ever confronted (him) with the alternatives: Treblinka – or me; he would ... yes, he would in the final analysis have chosen me.”

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



The Treblinka death factory

Arrival at Treblinka. The gas chamber building is outside the picture, to the left. At the far end of the long hut to the left is where the “pathway to Heaven” begins – leading to the gas chambers. In the large open square, the “sorting squad” is depicted going through the mountain of personal belongings left by the victims. In the background an earth mover is seen at the mass graves. Close to a million people were sent to Treblinka. Only about one hundred survived.

This drawing is by Samuel Willenberg, a survivor of Treblinka, and was published in his book “Revolt at Treblinka”. Willenberg was forced to cut women’s hair before they were driven into the gas chambers. He also sorted the victims’ possessions for shipment back to Germany. Willenberg participated in the revolt which occurred at Treblinka on 2 August 1943. He made his way back to Warsaw and joined the Polish national resistance movement, taking part in its August 1944 rebellion.

“For the first time been present outside at 3 a.m. in the morning during a ‘Special action’ [Sonderaktion]. Compared with this, Dante’s Inferno seems almost like a comedy. It is not for nothing that Auschwitz is called the extermination camp!

(...)

Participated in a ‘Special action’ from the women’s concentration camp (“Muslims”): the most horrible of horrors. Camp doctor sergeant Thilo is right when he told me today that here we find ourselves at the anus mundi [arse-hole of the world].”

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

Auschwitz-Birkenau

From 1940, Auschwitz served as a German concentration camp for Polish political prisoners. Situated near a major rail junction, the camp soon grew into a gigantic complex of some 40 different camps. Best known are Auschwitz I (Stammlager), Auschwitz II (Birkenau) and Auschwitz III (Monowitz). A large number of doctors were at these camps, many of them conducting pseudo-medical experiments on prisoners.

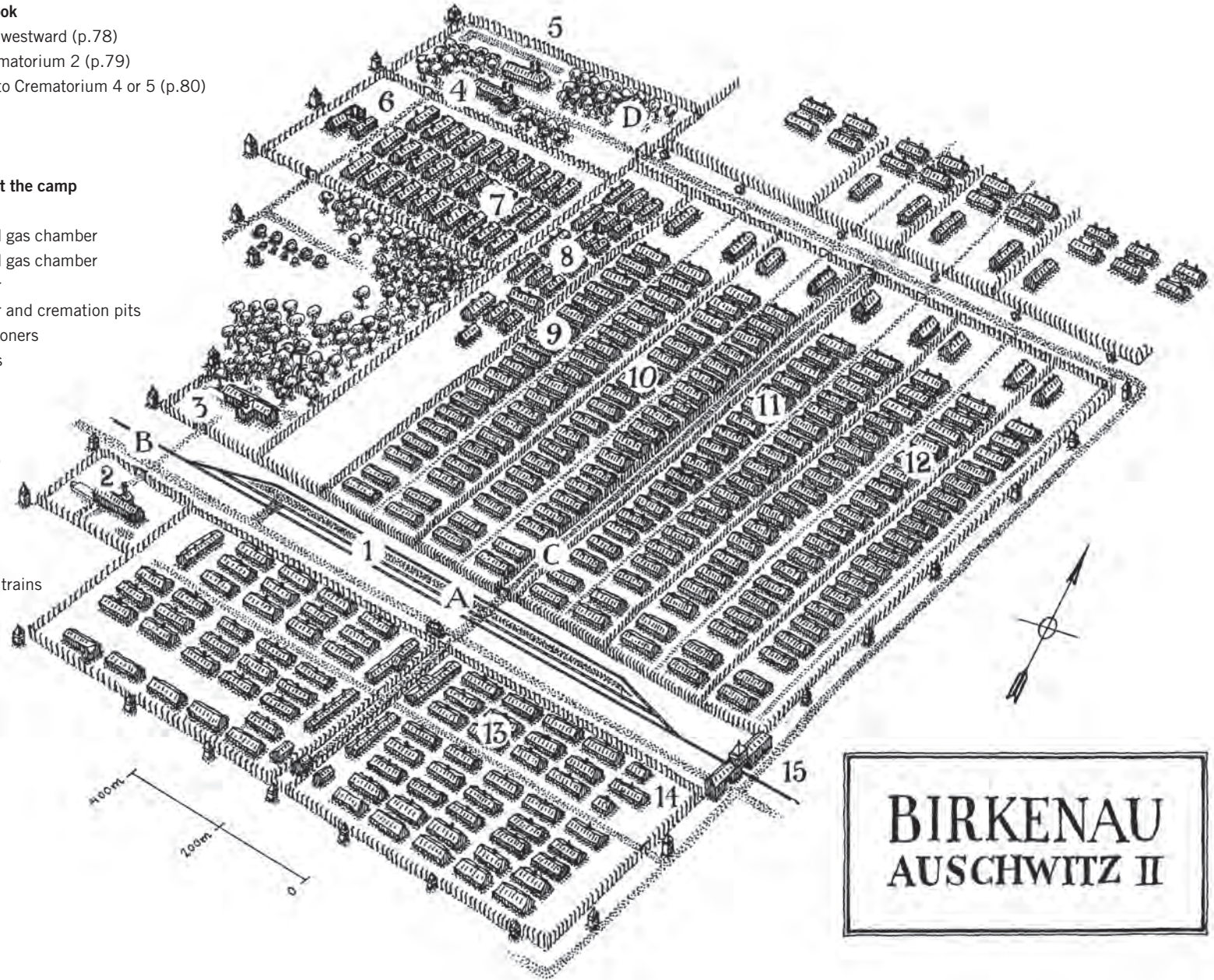
Mass gassings at Auschwitz began towards the end of 1941. In spring 1942, they moved to Birkenau, where two small farmhouses were converted into crude gas chambers. In spring 1943, four large specially constructed and technically advanced crematoria with gas chambers were completed. The gigantic murder process culminated in spring and summer 1944, when Hungarian Jews were deported to Birkenau. During this period, as many as 3 to 4 trainloads could arrive every day, each carrying 3,000-3,500 people. About a quarter were selected for labour. The rest were gassed immediately. Yet even the recently improved crematoria at Birkenau could not handle the strain, and many thousands of corpses were burnt in open pits near the crematoria. The last gassings took place in November 1944. Before the Soviet Army liberated the camp in January 1945, the SS dismantled and blew up the crematoria. At Auschwitz, at least 1 million Jews from all over Europe were murdered, along with approximately 75,000 Poles, 21,000 “Gypsies”, 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war and 15,000 others. The camp claimed at least 1.1 million victims.

Pictures from Birkenau in this book

- A. Central part of the ramp, looking westward (p.78)
- B. Women and children outside Crematorium 2 (p.79)
- C. Women and children on the way to Crematorium 4 or 5 (p.80)
- D. Cover picture

Important places and buildings at the camp

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



Aussortierung



“The Selection”. This is one of several photographs showing the selection process on the ramp at Birkenau. Many survivors bear witness to how this moment meant the end for their families. Within seconds, camp doctor Heinz Thilo (closest to camera) and other SS officers decide who will be let into the camp for labour and who will be gassed. At the top of the photograph is a line of people “of no further use”, primarily women, children and elderly people. They are on their way to the gas chamber in Crematorium 2.

The 200 pictures from Birkenau

Officially, taking pictures of “the Final Solution of the Jewish question” was strictly forbidden, but many did so anyway. Particularly during mass shootings, individual soldiers took photos which they sent home or showed to their families and friends while home on leave. However, very few pictures taken in the death camps exist.

This fact makes the photo album entitled *Umsiedlung der Juden aus Ungarn* (“The resettlement of the Hungarian Jews”) a unique document. The album was found in a concentration camp after the war. The pictures were taken either at the end of May or at the beginning of June 1944, when the transports from Hungary arrived frequently. Who took them or why is unknown. The photographs are in chronological order and captioned with calligraphic headings. The first caption reads: “A trainload arrives”. The captions that follow are: “Selection”, “Men still fit for use”, “Women still fit for use”, “Men of no further use”, “Women and children of no further use”, “Referral to labour camp” and finally “Effects”. The last caption is followed by a series of photographs of huge amounts of luggage, shoes, etc., and finally two pictures of a crematorium taken at a smaller concentration camp. Those “still fit for use” were young and strong women and men selected for labour. Elderly people, the handicapped and women with children were deemed “of no further use”, and taken straight to the gas chambers. On the present book’s cover, this page and the following pages are photographs from the sections “Selection” and “Women and children of no further use”.

Nicht mehr einsatzfähige Frauen u. Kinder.



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

the adjoining gas chamber with a capacity of up to 2,000 people. The chamber’s massive door will shut, the lights will go out and Zyklon B crystals suffused with Prussic acid will be dropped. After ventilation, squads of Jewish prisoners, the *Sonderkommandos*, will remove the bodies for burning in the cremation ovens, or open pits. The entire process often took no longer than a few hours.

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

They proceed in good order – so as not to be faulted for anything.

They reach a building and heave a sigh. At last they have arrived.

And when the women are barked at to strip they undress the children first careful not to wake them completely. After days and nights of travel the little ones are edgy and cranky

and the women begin to undress in front of the children oh well

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

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

And perhaps at that moment they all understand.

CHARLOTTE DELBO

The 600 boys

Salmen Lewenthal was a member of the *Sonderkommando*, the “special squad” of prisoners forced to serve in the gas chambers. On 20 October 1944, he witnessed the following scene near Crematorium 3, which he recorded in a manuscript later buried near one of the crematoria and recovered in 1961:

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

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

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

Many boys ran like crazy to the Jews of the *Sonderkommando*, threw themselves round their necks and begged them to save them. Others ran naked in different directions on the large square (to avoid death). The Commander called an SS guard with a truncheon for assistance. The sound of the clear, young, boyish voices rose by the minute until it changed into bitter weeping. This terrible wailing could be heard for miles. We stood stiff and paralysed from the weeping and wailing. The SS men stood there with contented smiles, without showing the slightest sign of compassion, and looked like proud victors, driving them into the bunker with terrible blows. (...)

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



Women and children as they start the 1,5km walk to Crematorium 4 or 5, Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the background some freight cars at the ramp can be seen.

Working in hell

The so-called *Sonderkommando*, comprised almost only of Jewish prisoners, was forced by the Germans to carry out the most horrifying tasks. Because these men were bearers of a terrible secret, they were kept segregated from all other prisoners and the outside world. Day after day, their “job” was to empty the gas chambers, pull out gold teeth, cut off dead women’s hair, and finally burn the bodies in the ovens or in pits. As a rule they survived only a short while, and were regularly replaced by a new group of “living dead”. One survivor explained: “Certainly, I could have killed myself or got myself killed; but I wanted to survive; to survive to avenge myself and bear witness. You mustn’t think that we are monsters. We are the same as you, only much more unhappy.” Primo Levi, an Italian survivor of Auschwitz, wrote several books about his experiences. According to him, “conceiving and organising the squads was National Socialism’s most demonic crime. (...) This institution represented an attempt to shift onto others – specifically the victims – the burden of guilt, so that they were deprived of even the solace of innocence.” Levi believed that the *Sonderkommando* had a meaning, which was the Nazis’ way of saying: “We, the master race, are your destroyers, but you are no better than we are; if we so wish, and we do so wish, we can destroy not only your bodies but also your souls, just as we have destroyed ours.” Those who accept Nazism as their guiding star, Levi was convinced, will live with an inevitable inner corruption of their souls.

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

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

CHARLOTTE DELBO



Recreation time for the SS

After mass extermination had begun in 1941, SS Chief Heinrich Himmler stressed the importance of providing enjoyable recreational activities for those carrying out lethal tasks. Good meals, participation in social activities such as singing and playing music, would unburden the men, reinforce camaraderie and take them to “the beautiful realm of German spirit and inner life”. Similar recommendations were issued for death camp staff. The 3,000 or so guards, doctors, commanders, engineers and other officials who worked at Auschwitz in the spring and summer of 1944 knew what sort of place it was and what it was for. Most of them had chosen to work there, yet like all other people, they too needed some days away from their work. The most privileged staff could spend their free time in a picturesque mountain area 30 km south of Auschwitz. Here, at the Solahütte retreat, those working death’s machinery were able to relax, laugh and socialise with colleagues. The photographs on the left were taken in the summer of 1944, about the same time as the photograph on the cover of the book and those on pages 78-80. Every day, thousands of people were gassed at the camp and their bodies burned. Upon re-entering the camp from Solahütte, staff members were again ready to undertake their regular tasks. For hundreds of thousands these tasks meant instant death, while for tens of thousands of others, a daily hell.



Top: SS officers and their female assistants on a wooden bridge in Solahütte. Second Lieutenant Karl Höcker, adjutant to Commandant Richard Baers, poses in the middle. To the left: SS officers, women and a small child on the wooden deck outside the lodge.

“Most of you will know what it means when a hundred corpses lie together, or five hundred are lying there or a thousand are lying there. To have stuck this out and—apart from exceptions due to human weakness—to have remained decent, that has made us hard. This is a page of glory in our history never written and never to be written. (...) All in all, however, we can say that we have fulfilled this most difficult task [the extermination of the Jewish people] for the love of our people. And our inner being, our soul, our character has suffered no harm by it.”

SS CHIEF HEINRICH HIMMLER TO HIS
TOP-RANKING OFFICERS, POSEN 4 OCTOBER 1943

Top right: Leading SS officers from Auschwitz at a sing-along in Solahütte. They include Karl Höcker, crematory supervisor Otto Moll, Commandant Rudolf Höss, Commandant Richard Baer, Commandant Josef Kramer (partly obscured by Hössler), prison director and Baer’s aide-de-camp Franz Hössler and camp doctor Josef Mengele. Bottom right: SS officers and doctors take a break at the camp. On the far left is doctor Fritz Klein, who regarded Jews as “a gangrenous appendix in the body of humanity”. Thus, he didn’t feel that he was breaking his Hippocratic oath by taking an active part in the Holocaust.



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

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

Those bombardments elevated our morale and, paradoxically, awakened probably some hopes of surviving, of escaping from this hell. In our wild imagination, we also saw a co-ordination between the Allies and the indeed small underground movement in the camp, with which I was in touch. We imagined a co-ordinated destruction and escape; destruction from above by the bombers, and from our hands, while escaping, even if we have to be living bombs—to be killed. Unfortunately, this never occurred.”

SHALOM LINDENBAUM, AUSCHWITZ-MONOWITZ SURVIVOR

Bombing Auschwitz

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

The war was in its last year and the Allied air forces ruled the skies of Europe. American bombers flying from Italy passed almost daily over or near the camp. Sometimes, they took high-altitude photographs of Birkenau. These pictures, analysed only at the end of the 1970s, show different phases of the mass murder.

Yet for a number of reasons, American and British officials refused to order the camp bombed. Some of the official explanations appear cynical. British Minister Richard Law delayed answering Chaim Weizmann, a prominent Jewish leader, for two months after his request was made. In September 1944, he finally wrote: “The matter received the most careful consideration of the Air Staff, but I am sorry to have to tell you that, in view of the very great technical difficulties involved, we have no option but to refrain from pursuing the proposal in present circumstances. I realise that this decision will prove a disappointment for you, but you may feel fully assured that the matter was most thoroughly investigated.” Historians have argued that indifference explains the failure to bomb; the controversy continues. Nonetheless, no effort was made to stop the gassing of the Jews.



Annihilation through work

The Germans also killed prisoners with a method they called “annihilation through work”. Under extremely hard conditions, prisoners were forced to carry out more or less meaningless physical labour. This, combined with a severe food shortage, extremely poor hygienic conditions, the guards’ brutality and the arbitrary punishments imposed for any alleged “offence”, however small, led to a very high death rate among the camp inmates in thousands of work and concentration camps. Many tens of thousands lost their lives this way.

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

The Holocaust in other parts of Europe

Though the basic steps were always the same – identification, segregation, assembly, deportation and extermination – the Holocaust happened differently in every country where it occurred.

Hungary was Germany's ally, yet almost 1 million Jews, including refugees from other countries, remained physically safe there until 1944. Hungary passed anti-Jewish laws, but resisted German pressure to deport its Jews to the death camps. Everything changed in March 1944, when Germany occupied Hungary. Deportations to Auschwitz began in mid-May. For 42 days, over 437,000 Jews were deported. Every day, up to 12,000 people were gassed to death. Finally in early July, Regent Miklós Horthy ordered the deportations ended. Since these depended on Hungarian manpower, this order gave respite to some 200,000 Budapest Jews. Many received assistance from diplomats of neutral countries like Sweden, Switzerland and the Vatican. Yet, by December, some 30,000 Jews were killed, either during "death marches" to Austria or were murdered by members of the Arrow Cross (Hungarian Nazis).

Fascist Italy, another German ally, also passed anti-Jewish "race laws", but refused to deport its Jews. A senior minister told Mussolini, "We know the destiny of those Jews deported by the Germans. They are gassed. Everybody: women, old men, children. We want nothing to do with such evil deeds." He demanded that Mussolini not allow any deportations. After Mussolini's government fell in July 1943, German troops and Italian antisemites deported some 8,000 of Italy's 35,000 Jews to Auschwitz.

Yugoslavia was divided after Germany's April 1941 occupation. About 80,000 Jews lived in the country,

with most of Serbia's 16,000 Jews in Belgrade. The Germans plundered their property and forced them into slave labour. In August 1941, most Serbian Jews were shot. In spring 1942, a mobile gas van was used at the Semlin concentration camp near Belgrade. By summer, only a few hundred Serbian Jews remained alive.

Croatia's new fascist *Ustasha* regime aligned itself with Germany, and its Jews were forced to wear the yellow star and had their property seized. The *Ustasha* systematically slaughtered Serbs, Jews and "Gypsies". In Jasenovac concentration camp near Zagreb, tens of thousands of Serbs and "Gypsies" were murdered, as were some 20,000 of Croatia's 30,000 Jews. By late October 1941, most were dead, with 7,000 later deported to Auschwitz. In all, over 60,000 Yugoslavian Jews were murdered.

Greece was occupied by both Germany and Italy. Until 1944, Jews in Italy's zone were safe. In the German zone, Salonika's Jewish community was virtually destroyed. From March to August 1943, some 44,000 were deported to Auschwitz, with only about 1,000 returning to Salonika after the war. In the Greek islands, Jewish life was almost completely wiped out.

Bulgaria, another German ally, resisted demands to deport its over 50,000 Jews. Hence, most survived the war. However, Bulgaria allowed Germany to deport Jews who were not citizens, mostly from Thrace and Macedonia. In total, more than 11,000 Jews were deported to Treblinka from territories controlled by Bulgaria.

At the beginning of the war, over 750,000 Jews lived in Romania. In Bessarabia and Bukovina, some 160,000 were starved or shot by Romanian troops aided by the



Germans. Over 150,000 were deported to Transnistria, where most were killed along with local Jews. In central Romania, however, some 300,000 Jews survived. Despite Marshal Ion Antonescu's anti-Jewish policies, for political reasons, the Romanians did not allow their remaining Jewish citizens to be deported.

After Finland allied itself with Germany in June 1941, a few dozen Jewish refugees and Soviet Jewish prisoners-of-war were handed over. Finland's tiny Jewish minority was left unharmed.

Resistance and rescue

One of the most tenacious myths about the Holocaust is millions of Jews went “like sheep to the slaughter” without resisting. In reality, there were literally thousands of examples of resistance, ranging from armed resistance and revolts in many ghettos to Jewish partisans attacking Germans in Western and Eastern Europe. Even in concentration and death camps, Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners put up resistance and revolted. However, the Germans crushed any attempt to resist with unrestrained and total violence, usually imposing lethal collective punishments.

Those who decided to resist, often the young, were aware that this involved immense danger. They risked not only their own lives, but also those of their parents, brothers and sisters, and possibly hundreds of others. Prisoners in work teams knew that their escape would backfire on their unfortunate comrades. Even death camp prisoners hesitated, although they knew they could be killed at any moment. For many, the will to live, or to die with some dignity, was the critical factor for their decision to resist.

In January 1943, the Jewish Fighting Organisation in Warsaw tried to mobilise ghetto inhabitants to armed resistance: “Know that escape is not to be found by walking to your death passively, like sheep to the slaughter. It is to be found in something much greater: in war!”

Whoever defends himself has a chance of being saved! Whoever gives up self-defense from the outset – he has lost already! Nothing awaits him except only a hideous death in the suffocation-machine of Treblinka.

Let the people awaken to war! (...)

We also were destined to live! We too have a right to life! (...) Let the people awaken and fight for its life!”

Resistance groups of various sizes formed in about 100 Eastern European ghettos. More effective however were the partisan groups active in the forests of Eastern Europe. Up to 20,000 Jews fought in such groups, some of them forming family camps in the vast forests. In Western Europe, Jewish partisans were active in the national resistance movements in France and Belgium, where many such groups hid Jews.

Sanctuary was found for small numbers of Jewish children in monasteries or with Christian families in Poland, Holland and France. Many were raised in the Christian faith, losing their Jewish identity. Even though the Germans severely punished those caught hiding Jews – in Poland, it was a capital offence – there were still some people willing to take the risk, either for money or as a matter of principle.

Another form of resistance was smuggling Jews out of Nazi-controlled areas. This was not easy, since some key countries, such as Switzerland, kept their borders closed for years, often sending Jews who had managed to cross the border back to Germany. Some Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe, made their way to Palestine by circuitous routes, while others fled even further, some all the way to Shanghai. Although Japan, Germany’s ally, controlled Shanghai, they did not share the Nazis’ ideological hatred of Jews.

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

ANDREA DEVOTO, ITALIAN PSYCHIATRIST



Revolt in the ghetto

In spite of inhumane living conditions and hopeless odds, attempts to resist were made in ghettos. In the Warsaw ghetto there were two revolts. The picture shows captured resistance fighters being taken away. Others managed to escape. Simcha Rotem, who survived, describes the second revolt in spring 1943 and his escape from the ghetto:

"During the first three days of fighting, the Jews had the upper hand. The Germans retreated at once to the ghetto entrance, carrying dozens of wounded with them. From then on, their onslaught came entirely from the outside, through air attack and artillery.

We couldn't resist the bombing, especially their method of setting fire to the ghetto. The whole ghetto was ablaze (...) I don't think the human tongue can describe the horror we went through in the ghetto. In the streets, if you can call them that, for nothing was left of the streets, we had to step over heaps of corpses. There was no room to get around them. Besides fighting the Germans, we fought hunger, and thirst. We had no contact with the outside world; we were completely isolated, cut off from the world. We were in such a state that we could no longer understand the very meaning of why we went on fighting. We thought of attempting a breakout to the Aryan part of Warsaw, outside the ghetto. (...)

Early in the morning we suddenly emerged into a street in broad daylight. Imagine us on that sunny May 1, stunned to find ourselves in the street, among normal people. We'd come from another planet. (...) Around the ghetto, there were always suspicious Poles who grabbed Jews. By a miracle, we escaped them. In Aryan Warsaw, life went on as naturally and normally as before. The cafés operated normally, the restaurants, buses, streetcars, and movies were open. The ghetto was an isolated island amid normal life."

The Warsaw ghetto revolt

After more than 260,000 Jews had been deported from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka, the remaining members of the Jewish resistance realised that their only alternative was armed resistance. When German troops entered the ghetto on 18 January 1943 in order to deport the remaining inhabitants, they were met with gunfire, suffering losses. Yet before withdrawing in shock from the ghetto, the Germans rounded up some 6,000 Jews. After this, the Germans remained outside the ghetto for several months. During the lull, Jewish resistance fighters managed to obtain a hundred or so revolvers, several rifles and one machine gun, some hand grenades and home-made bombs. About 800 men and women prepared for the inevitable assault, organising fighting locations, bunkers and hideaways. The revolt began when German troops entered the ghetto on 19 April, the eve of the Jewish Passover that year.

Even with tank support, the Germans and their auxiliaries were forced to change tactics because of the intense resistance. They started using artillery and even carried out air attacks. On the sixth day of the revolt, one of its leaders, Mordechai Anielewicz, wrote: "One thing is clear; what happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the ghetto. (...) Our losses in manpower are minimal."

The Germans then started to set fire to block after block, forcing those in hiding to come out so they could shoot them. The ghetto revolt lasted for four weeks. One surviving fighter wrote: "We fought back, which made it easier to die and made our fate easier to bear."

Sog nit kejn mol Hirsch Glik

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

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

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

*"Then he says in Russian:
'Comrades, this is the most beautiful
day of my life because I lived to
see such a big group come out of
the ghetto!... I don't promise you
anything, we may be killed while we
try to live. But we will do all we can
to save more lives. This is our way,
we don't select, we don't eliminate
the old, the children, the women. Life
is difficult, we are in danger all the
time, but if we perish, if we die, we
die like human beings.'"*

MOSHE BAIRACH, MEMBER OF THE BIELSKI FAMILY CAMP



Partisans in the forest

Tuvia Bielski was a young Polish Jew who decided to go underground when the Germans occupied his country. Eventually, he gathered a group of comrades in the forests of western Belorussia.

Bielski decided that the group should not only defend itself, but also actively assist other Jews who were suffering and try to convince them to join what became known as the Bielski partisans.

By liberation in 1944, up to 1,200 men, women and children were living under the fighters' protection. Their policy of saving Jews before attacking Germans contributed to the group's survival.

There were other similar family camps in the forests of the German-occupied eastern parts of Poland and western parts of the Soviet Union. In the quote on the left, Moshe Bairach recalls what Bielski said when they first met him in the woods.

The death camp revolts

Of all the attempts made to resist during the Holocaust, those in death camps were both the bravest and the most futile. The Jewish prisoners knew they were destined to die and that death could come any moment. Every attempted escape led to intensive manhunts. In spite of such obstacles, revolts took place: in Treblinka August 1943, Sobibor October 1943, and Auschwitz-Birkenau October 1944.

The revolt in Treblinka began the afternoon of 2 August. Some prisoners obtained weapons, and others attacked the guards with axes, shovels and their bare hands. Camp buildings were set on fire and in the ensuing chaos, many of the 700 prisoners escaped. Most were quickly recaptured and killed. Fewer than 100 survived both the revolt and the war. Treblinka's gas chambers remained active for two weeks afterwards.

The revolt in Sobibor on 14 October was the best organised. A number of SS soldiers and their Ukrainian auxiliaries were killed. Of the 550 prisoners in the camp that day, some 320 escaped, though 170 were quickly recaptured and killed. All in all, 48 prisoners managed to survive through to war's end. After the revolt, the camp was closed down.

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

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

STANISLAW KON, SURVIVING PARTICIPANT OF THE TREBLINKA REVOLT

German civil resistance

Nazi Germany was a totalitarian state which didn't tolerate criticism or dissent. During the war, tens of thousands of deserters and people suspected of "subversion of the war effort" were executed. Yet it remained possible for people to go their own way, protest or even resist. No one was forced to support the regime's crimes. Policemen who refused to take part in mass executions were simply transferred. Doctors and caretakers of disabled people could protect them: they were not forced to murder them. It was even possible for army units to disobey criminal orders. Yet, few chose to do so, even though that choice held little or no danger. The Gestapo harshly punished active resistance, but its effectiveness was dependent on denunciations made by average citizens against their neighbours and colleagues.

The Nazi leadership was very sensitive to public dissatisfaction. Public protests against the "euthanasia" program from church leaders like Bishop von Galen contributed to ending the visible, semi-official murder of disabled people. However, similar protests were not made against the regime's anti-Jewish policies.

Precisely how much the average German knew of the murder of Jews remains unclear, but there is little doubt that most people had a basic idea of what was going on. People saw their Jewish neighbours arrested and taken away. Deportations took place openly, and public auctions of Jewish possessions were common. Many knew of the mass shootings "in the East", since they were carried out in front of ordinary soldiers, who sometimes participated. One historian wrote: "The people of the Reich, it seems, knew as much (for example about the killing of



their German fellow citizens) or as little (for example about the killing of their Jewish fellow citizens) as they wished to know. What they did not know, they did not want to know, for obvious reasons. But not wanting to know always means knowing enough to know that one doesn't want to know more."

The churches remained silent, and leaders who protested were left untouched. However, many priests were sent to the camps and some lost their lives. The country's 20,000 Jehovah's Witnesses refused to carry arms or

The youth resistance movement the Edelweiss Pirates rejected compulsory Hitler Youth membership and refused to adjust. Many were hanged in Cologne in November 1944. (It is unclear whether this photograph shows these hangings, or those of forced labourers carried out at the same time.) One of the Edelweiss Pirates' battle songs appears below:

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

swear an oath of allegiance to Hitler and Nazi Germany. This refusal to submit was remarkable, as merely signing a document would have spared them: few however chose this option. They were taken by the thousands to the camps, where some 25 per cent were killed.

Some German youth also protested. One group was the Edelweiss Pirates, who formed “wild gangs”, or the “Swing Kids” (who danced to forbidden American jazz music). Despite frequent clashes between groups of Hitler Youth and the “Pirates”, the regime was initially unsure about how to handle such protests. Not until autumn 1944 did the authorities strike, and several “Pirate” leaders were hanged.

Between June 1942 and February 1943, the “White Rose” movement was active in Munich and other cities. This small protest group was led by Alexander Schmorell, the Scholl siblings (Sophie and Hans) and their professor Kurt Huber of the University of Munich. They distributed leaflets condemning the Nazis and protesting against the mass murder of Jews and others. Caught by the Gestapo, they were tried and executed.

During the regime’s early years, social democratic, communist and trade union groups organised resistance, but these networks were quickly destroyed. Though some individual members managed to resist until war’s end, most were either murdered, put in prisons or camps, or forced into exile. Right-wing national conservative and military elements failed to resist until after the war began. Some were motivated to resist because they wanted to save Germany from the threat of defeat, while others sought to distance themselves from mass murder. Among the latter was Helmuth von Moltke, a lawyer who was executed in January 1945. In a clandestine letter to a

friend in England he described resistance in Germany as suffering from a “lack of unity, lack of men, lack of communications”. In other countries ruled by the Nazis even the ordinary criminal had a chance of being regarded as a martyr. In Germany, Moltke complained, the situation was reversed and even the martyr was “certain to be classed as an ordinary criminal”.

The Rosenstrasse protest

One remarkable protest against the Nazi regime occurred openly in Berlin in March 1943. Throughout the war, the regime hesitated to deport Jews married to non-Jews, fearing protests from the latter. When Jewish spouses were arrested in February, protests followed. Believing that their detained spouses were to be deported, thousands of women defied the Gestapo and the SS by gathering in front of the building where their husbands were detained.

Charlotte Israel, a demonstrator whose husband was inside, later recalled what happened: “We bel-lowed, ‘you murderers,’ and everything else that one can holler. (...) We didn’t scream just once but again and again, until we lost our breath.” Eventually, most of those detained were released. The actual reason for their release is debated by historians, as is the regime’s initial motivation for the arrests. However, all agree that the women demonstrated great courage by their public protest. Those few Jews who survived in Germany did so almost exclusively in mixed marriages.

“There is an unsolved riddle in the history of the creation of the Third Reich. I think it is more interesting than the question of who set fire to the Reichstag. It is the question: ‘What became of the Germans?’ Even on the 5th of March 1933 a majority of them voted against Hitler. What happened to that majority? Did they die? Did they disappear from the face of the earth? Did they become Nazis even at this late stage? How was it possible that there was not the slightest visible reaction from them?”

SEBASTIAN HAFFNER (PEN NAME FOR RAIMUND PRETZEL),
GERMAN AUTHOR AND JOURNALIST, AROUND 1939



On the left: Two German-Jewish children after arriving to England in 1938. After the November pogrom, some countries eased their severe restrictions against Jewish refugees, especially regarding children. Because it was often difficult for entire families to obtain entry visas to safe havens, many parents made the harrowing decision to send their children away to safety without them. Very few such families were reunited after the war.

The Bystanders

Holocaust historians divide the main historical actors of the event into three basic categories: perpetrators, victims and bystanders. The third category is often the most problematic to judge from a moral perspective. It is difficult to hold someone responsible for actions not taken and knowledge not acknowledged. Those critical of the bystanders describe their actions, or their inactivity, as a form of complicity. Yet, such judgements must be made with great care – if at all.

We know that during the war the Western democracies, which are often referred to as bystanders, received many appeals to help Jews. But did countries and groups labelled as “bystanders” actually have a responsibility for aiding millions of Jews of other nationalities? In the 1940s, an answer was far from clear and many differing opinions were voiced.

The Soviet Union was fighting for its life. Although the country did little to aid Jews, there was no active discrimination against them during the war.

The Vatican’s attitude towards Nazi Germany vacillated. Many priests helped hide Jewish children during the war. Afterwards, others helped Nazis escape from Europe. In Budapest, papal representative Angelo Rotta helped thousands of Jews, while in Slovakia priest Josef Tiso collaborated in the deportations of tens of thousands of Jews to the gas chambers.

Such contradictory behaviour makes drawing general conclusions difficult. Assessing the bystanders understandably remains a controversial subject.

The democracies close their doors

Nazi Germany's brutal persecution of the Jews was confusing for many in the Western democracies. The humanistic traditions of many countries clashed with widespread antisemitic sentiments. Though many wished to help their fellow human beings in need, their countries' doors remained mostly shut for fear of letting "too many" Jews in. Few politicians dared to challenge these deeply ingrained prejudices. Regarding German Jews, many spoke in favour of helping them, but few demanded that their governments take genuine action. By autumn 1942, as more and more details about the mass murders became public, pressure increased on the Allies to act, but little actually changed.

When the US Government finally established the War Refugee Board, an organisation whose task it was to aid Jews, the British Government protested, calling it a "public relations trick". Even though the WRB was in some ways effective, some historians have described America's overall response to the Holocaust as the worst failure of Roosevelt's presidency. On the other hand, his defenders argue with some justification that the best way to help Europe's Jews was to bring about a rapid end to the war. Some commentators nonetheless maintain that the feeble response to the Holocaust of the democracies demonstrated the failure of the "liberal imagination".



Looking for safe haven

The photograph shows Jewish refugees from the German ship St. Louis upon their forced return to Europe. In May 1939, over 900 refugees departed Hamburg. Their original destination was Cuba, but few gained entry. Attempts to reach safety in the US

also failed. Just over a month after departure, the ship returned to Antwerp in Belgium. Several hundred eventually found safety in Britain, while about 250 of the over 500 trapped on the continent were murdered in the Holocaust. The remainder survived.



Vienna 1938. A young Jew is humiliated by being forced to vandalise Jewish property. A local Nazi Party official supervises.

"I had learned from my parents [who were German Nationalist supporters] that one could have antisemitic opinions without this interfering in one's personal relations with individual Jews. There may appear to be a vestige of tolerance in this attitude, but it is really just this confusion which I blame for the fact that I later contrived to dedicate body and soul to an inhuman political system, without this giving me doubts about my own individual decency. In preaching that all the misery of the nations was due to the Jews or that the Jewish spirit was seditious and Jewish blood was corrupting, I was not compelled to think of you or old Herr Lewy or Rosel Cohn: I thought only of the bogy-man, 'The Jew'. And when I heard that the Jews were being driven from their professions and homes and imprisoned in ghettos, the points switched automatically in my mind to steer me round the thought that such a fate could also overtake you or old Lewy. It was merely the Jew who was being persecuted and 'made harmless'."

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

Witnesses to genocide

From the day Germany occupied Poland, violence, brutality and cruelty were the rule. The devastation inflicted on Poland by the Nazis was enormous and its consequences continue to be felt today. Moreover, the Poles were forced to witness the Holocaust directly. Some responded by collaborating with the Nazis, for instance by denouncing fugitive Jews or turning over families they had been paid to hide. In contrast, thousands of Poles put themselves in grave danger trying to help Jewish friends and neighbours, risking not only death, but also the lives of their families.

Before the war, Polish-Jewish relations were complicated. Jews suffered discrimination, and relations between the groups were often characterised by mutual mistrust and enmity. Yet during the war even convinced antisemites sometimes helped Jews. They may have done so for religious reasons, or because they had been neighbours. The Polish national resistance organised a group (Zegota), whose only task was to save Jews. The struggle against the Nazi enemy sometimes even enabled the groups to work together. Few still realise that apart from Jews and “Gypsies”, no group suffered more at the hands of the Nazis than the Poles.

Many surviving Polish Jews (about 300,000 of some 3 million) returned home, where they were often met by coldness and outright hostility. Pogroms and individual attacks caused many to flee again. Today, many Poles are taking a renewed interest in their nation’s Jewish past, including abandoned prayer houses and cemeteries. But the Jews are gone.

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

*At times wind from the burning
would drift dark kites along
and riders on the carousel
caught petals in mid-air.
That same hot wind
blew open the skirts of the girls
and the crowds were laughing
on the beautiful Warsaw Sunday.*

*Someone will read a moral
that the people of Rome and Warsaw
haggle, laugh, make love
as they pass by martyrs' pyres.
Someone else will read
of the passing of things human,
of the oblivion
born before the flames have died.*

*But that day I thought only
of the loneliness of the dying.*

FROM CAMPO DEI FIORI BY CZESLAW MILOSZ,
1943



A Polish school class

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

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

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

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

And there was another girl and a boy, but I don’t remember their names. (...)

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

“These past few days the Jews from our district have been transported away. From here, it was the Strauss and the Heinemann families. I heard from a well-informed source that all the Jews were being brought to Poland to be murdered there by SS units. This cruelty is horrifying. Such shameful deeds will never be erased from the history of humankind. Our government of murderers has sullied the name of ‘Germany’ for all eternity. For a decent German it is incomprehensible that no-one can put a stop to these Hitler bandits.”

AN ENTRY IN FRIEDRICH KELLNER'S DIARY, 16 SEPTEMBER 1942

As the Allied armies liberated the concentration and labour camps, the troops were often so outraged at what they found that they often would order the local population to bury the thousands of emaciated corpses. In this picture German civilians in Neunburg, guarded by American soldiers, are forced to carry the bodies of camp prisoners through town to bury them.





A death march between Dachau concentration camp and Wolfratshausen passes through a village in April 1945. The photograph was secretly taken.

The death marches and the end of the Holocaust

Many camps were situated along routes taken by advancing Allied armies in spring 1945. However, rather than allowing prisoners to be liberated, many camp commanders forced them to march into Germany's shrinking territory. Tens of thousands of starving and freezing men and women staggered onwards. Those unable to keep up were shot and left by the roadside. All in all, some 250,000 people endured these brutal marches, many of which passed through German towns and villages. Some residents tried to help, while others jeered the prisoners.

The Nazis' murder of Jews and others stopped only at war's end. A large proportion of the surviving Jews were unable to return home. Instead, they were housed in DP camps ("displaced persons camps"), often situated in former concentration camps. Many spent several years in such camps, trying to regain their health and human dignity.

The Holocaust may have ended, but not its consequences. One survivor tried to explain the feelings of many Jews who survived: "For the greater part of the liberated Jews there was no ecstasy, no joy at our liberation. We had lost our families, our homes. We had no place to go, nobody to hug. Nobody was waiting for us anywhere. We had been liberated from the fear of death, but we were not free from the fear of life."

The Holocaust – lessons to be learned?

The war in Europe had two primary elements. One was the catastrophic “conventional” political war, fought over power and resources. Tens of millions of people lost their lives, and the destruction was beyond comprehension. But it also had an unprecedented element. For the Nazis, this was an ideological war: it was the “great race war” whose goal was to place Europe under “Germanic” rule. Only by eliminating all other political systems, and suppressing or eradicating undesirable “races” and peoples, would it be won. At the centre of this “war of annihilation” were Europe’s Jews, who above all others were portrayed as “the enemy”. Their goal was to make Europe forever “free of Jews” by physically exterminating them.

We may wish that the Holocaust had never happened. It is a genuinely horrendous subject to study, and knowledge of it is not easy to bear. Primo Levi wrote: “It is neither easy nor agreeable to dredge this abyss of viciousness (...). One is tempted to turn away with a grimace and close one’s mind; this is a temptation one must resist.” For many reasons, this desire and temptation to turn away or to forget is strong, and not only for the perpetrators. Since 1945, influential voices have argued that the past should remain in the past; that we should “look to the future” and forget “all crimes and follies of the past”.

French author Charlotte Delbo urged us instead, “in order to understand”, to try and look at the bottomless pit that was the world of Nazi concentration camps

without averting our gaze. Yet she also believed that the knowledge she had been forced to learn as a political prisoner in Birkenau was “useless”. This thought raises many important questions: What is there to learn from the Holocaust? Can we learn from it, and if so, how and what? And, most importantly, why? For historian Omer Bartov, most frightening is “the impossibility of learning anything from the Holocaust”. For him, “the utter uselessness of it all, the total and complete emptiness” of the Holocaust makes questions about its purported lessons futile.

Yet, there are reasons too compelling to leave it at that. With each passing year, the war and the Holocaust slide further into the past, and those with personal memories of it are fewer and fewer. This is inevitable. But is it inevitable that indifference, ignorance and silence – even denial – should be the Holocaust’s only legacies, and hence in effect the murderers’ final victory?

The genocide unfolded in the heart of Europe. It will always influence the history and development of our continent and of our world, and we must understand why and how. At the very least, we must acknowledge that it happened because people like you and me chose to make it happen. They chose to conduct it over many years, though they could have chosen otherwise. The Holocaust, in fact, was not inevitable. Philosopher Theodor Adorno emphasised this when he said that the fundamental demand of all education must be that Auschwitz is never repeated. If anything is to be learned from the Holocaust, perhaps this is it.

“What is happening to the Jews today could happen to another people tomorrow. This gives the Nazi extermination campaign against the Jews a weight and significance that can scarcely be exaggerated. This concerns nothing less than Western culture’s very foundations.”

HUGO VALENTIN, HISTORIAN AND HUMANIST, 1944

Hur reagerar Ni för denna bild?



En av de ohylligaste bilderna från ett av dödslejren i Tyskland — i detta fall gäller det Belsen — som *Expressen* tidigare inte ansett sig kunna publicera, visas här ovan. Att vi gör det nu beror på att tidningen uppmärksamats därtill från flera håll, där man anser att ingenting av bevismaterialet över dessa vedervärdigheter bör undanhållas den svenska allmänheten.

”Ryslig tidning”, säger Sven Hedin,
Margit Levinson: ”Ord förslår inte”

Expressen kunde i sitt torsdagsnummer presentera ett bildreportage från de tyska skräcklejren i Buchenwald. Det var dokument som i sin brutala uppriktighet utgjorde ovedersägliga bevis för de nazistiska missgärningar, vars existens folk i det längsta vägrat att tro på. Detta reportage innehöll dock endast ett begränsat antal bilder ur den hemiska kollektionen, då redaktionen gallrat ur de mest uppskandande sakerna och starkt beskurit materialet.

Nu har *Expressen* visat några av de icke publicerade bilderna för ett antal kända män och kvinnor. Bilderna har lagts framför var och en utan förberedelse, och vederbörande har ombetts redogöra för sin reaktion inför de vidriga skräckmålningarna.

De olika besöken har refererats endast med vederbörandes egna ord. Inga kommentarer har gjorts — hur frestande det än skulle ha varit. Reflexionerna överlämnas helt åt läsaren själv.

Fil. dr Sven Hedin är trött på tid-

ningsmän och nekar först att ta emot. Genom ystern Alma låter han meddela att han ”anser all slags grymhet mot människor förkastlig”. Doktorn ändrar sig dock och tar emot trots att han redan från början säger ifrån, att han anser *Expressen* vara ”en ryslig tidning”.

Bilderna vill han dock inte se.

— Man bör vara mycket skeptisk mot sådana bilder, säger han. Man vet inte vad som är sant och vad som är konst. Jag har själv besökt tyska fångläger för ett par år sedan, ett för engelsmän och ett för tyska sociala — politiska fångar och liknande — och där var behandlingen överallt mycket bra. Jag fördömer all grymhet mot människor men anser att propagandan bör tas med en viss försiktighet.

Fröken Kerstin Hesselgren är en kulturmänniska vars namn är känt och ökat i utlandet lika mycket som hemma hos oss. Hennes reaktion inför bilddokumenten illustrerar klart deras ohylliga karaktär.

— Man saknar ord för att kunna uttrycka vad man känner inför allt detta, säger hon djupt gripen. Det är så mycket

Fantastiskt diploma

Tyska legat ha fått

I det läge som uppstått g... tillsjutsade politiska situati... självfallet ryktesbildningen ko... legationen i Stockholm fått r...

Det uppgavs åter — för vil... ordningen — på lördagen att upp... ning rådde inom beskickningar... ment brändes och att flera sa... hållits varvid man dryftat fråg... mensam avhoppning”. Man sl... lertid ha enats om att någon c... ske, då den under alla förhål... längre skulle tjäna något till p... stadium av utvecklingen.

Talesmän för de tyska legat... na har framhållit att legationsle... rit i förbindelse med de svens... heterna i denna fråga och där... det att icke hoppa av” då detta... försämrade personalens ställning... av ”rättor som lämnade de... skeppet”.

Expressen har i utrikesdep... hört sig för om dessa påståd... sloner och fått svaret att man... ting känner till om dylik ”r... från svensk sida. Det hela f... betraktas som ren dimbildning... legationens sida.

I detta sammanhang kan eme... nas att uppgifter från initierat... om att flera av de tyska lega...

Blev förolyck 20 minuter e arbetets bi

NORRKÖPING, söndag (E)

En omkring sextiårig stuve... Gottfrid Brunstedt har föroly... schaktingsarbete invid No... hamn. Han tillträdde sin... vid arbetsplatsen klockan 7... dagsmorgonen, och tjugu min... efter var han död. På släta... snavade han på några lösa s... slog huvudet mot en vagn... gen träffade vagnens järnu... och skadan var så svår att... i ambulansen.

Två rökförgifta vid villah

As British and American troops liberated the camps in Western and Central Germany during the war's final weeks, footage and photos from them started circulating. Though the war lasted six years, scenes like this one still shocked soldiers, their commanders and civilians alike. On 29 April 1945, the Swedish newspaper *Expressen* confronted the public with this photograph from the recently liberated Bergen-Belsen camp. The paper asked well-known Swedes and members of the public their reaction to it. Some were deeply moved and expressed their horror. Others refused to look at or comment at a picture they perceived as “propaganda”. For decades, especially in the West, images of such mass graves and the emaciated bodies of the living and dead, symbolised Nazism and its consequences.

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

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

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

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

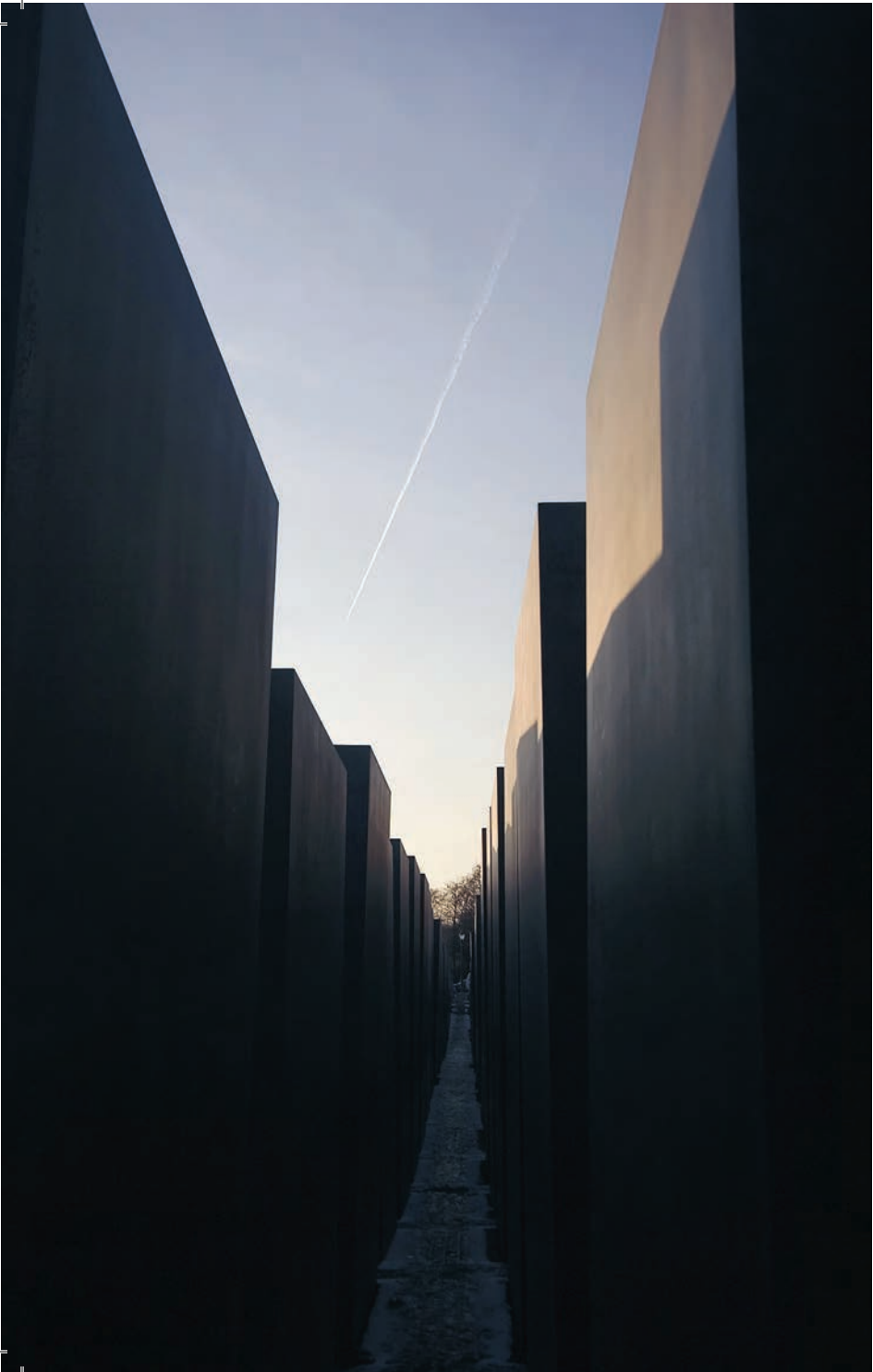
*O you who know
did you know that legs are more vulnerable than eyes
nerves harder than bones
the heart firmer than steel*

(...)

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

*Did you know this
You who know.*

CHARLOTTE DELBO



On the left: Holocaust memorials exist worldwide. Pictured is Germany's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, inaugurated in central Berlin, May 2005.

Memories of the Holocaust

Pictured to the right are the remnants of the old Jewish cemetery in Busk, western Ukraine. Like it, thousands upon thousands of desolate, overgrown and forgotten Jewish cemeteries lie scattered all over Europe. A civilization created over centuries was obliterated in a matter of years, taking with it virtually all traces of human life, memories and its diverse manifestations. The link between the past and the future, and the generations to come, was violently severed, abruptly and irrevocably. Who were the people buried in Busk's old cemetery, or in the mass graves nearby? Does anyone remember them?

In recapturing Europe's lost memory, we are confronted with a choice. If Busk's gravestones were to tell us their stories of a vanished world and what happened there between 1941 and 1943, would we listen? Or would we turn away? Or are we like the geese that strut heedlessly among the mass graves, unable to do otherwise?

We should not turn away from the gravestones, pretending they tell us nothing. Nor can we face them endlessly, ignoring the present and future. We must find ways to consciously bring with us into the future that which those stones, documents and witnesses tell us. Only then will knowledge of the Holocaust and its memory support us as we craft a present and future in which Auschwitz can not be repeated.

On the right: Across the river Bug is Busk, known before the First World War as "the Venice of Galicia". The town was home to a significant Jewish population. On the slope to the river, below the cemetery, are 17 mass graves with the remains of about 1,750 Jews, shot by the Germans in 1943. In 2006, a French-Ukrainian research team examined the site.

“My past is always at my side, but I camouflage it well. It is always with me, and I remember every moment with my family. When I die, they also die, because they live in my memory. The day I die, no-one can remember them”.

ANNA GELLERÓVA, THE ONLY SURVIVOR IN HER FAMILY



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- p. 43 Josef Reinhardt, quoted in Krausnick, M., p. 97.
- p. 44 Delbo, C., *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, p. 11.
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- p. 46 Albert Widmann conversation, quoted in Burleigh, M., p. 119.
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- p. 99 Kellner, F., p. 311.
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 p. 101 Delbo, C., *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, pp. 137-139; *Une connaissance inutile*, p. 185 and passim.
 p. 101 Bartov, O., p. 89.
 p. 101 Valentin, H., p. 169.
 p. 103 Delbo, C., *Auschwitz and After*, p. 11.

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 p. 48. Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, vol. 8

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

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

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

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