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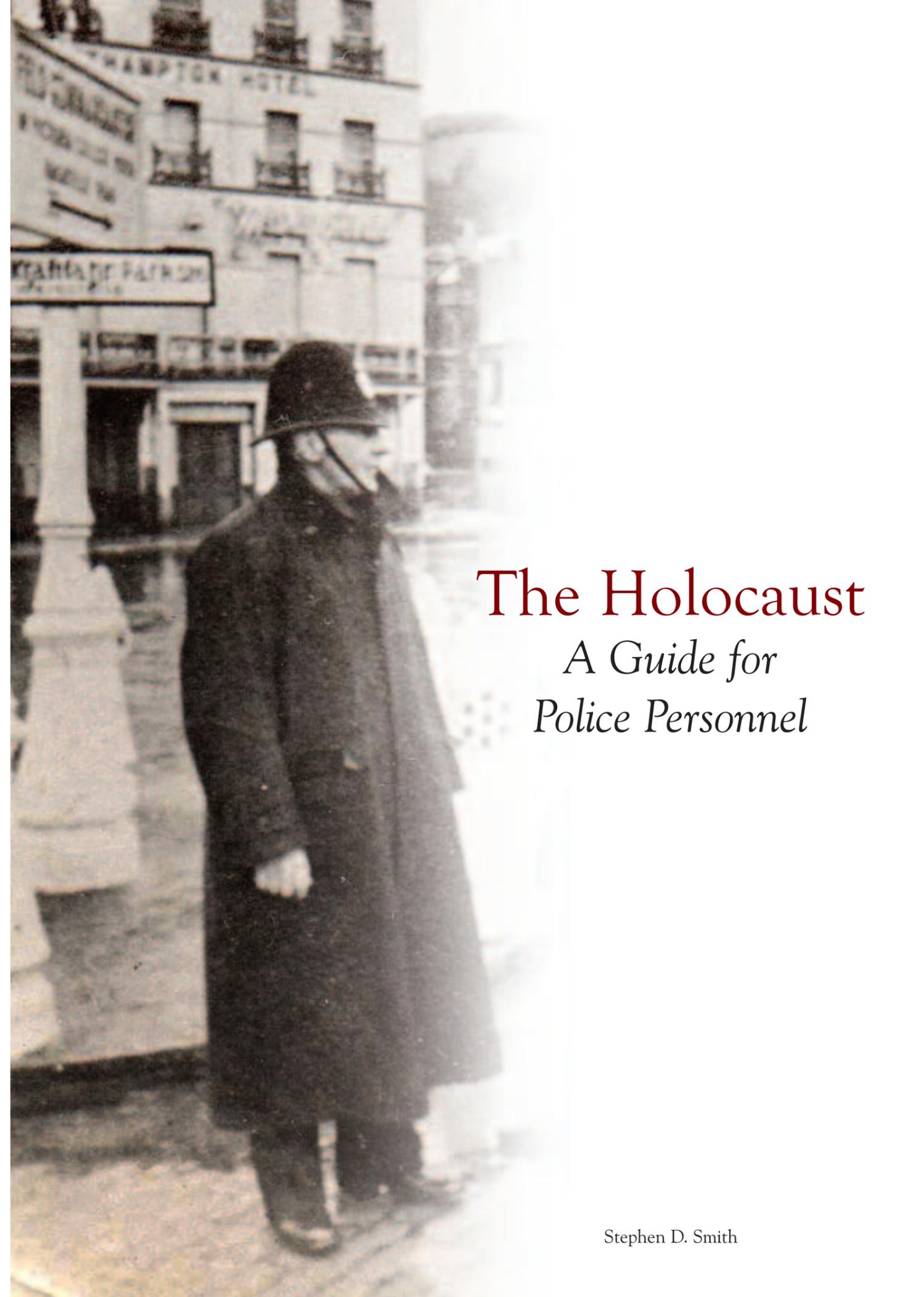
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The Holocaust

A Guide for Police Personnel

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“When we look back in history, we wonder how the Nazis managed to persuade an educated country to carry out the mass murder of the Jews.

They did it one step at a time.

To succeed, they needed the apparatus of state – doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, clerics, the civil service, the train service, the health service, the military, the police – it could not have happened without them. Each was a cog in the wheel; a wheel that eventually turned effortlessly and effectively.

Not all professionals acted in support of the Nazis’ aims. But most did. We do look back as a warning. To remind ourselves that it really is possible. Then we need to ask ourselves, “What can I do to ensure I am alert, I am active and I never, never allow the thin end of the wedge to pass me by?”

Richard Benson, Chief Executive, CST



*A group of refugee girls being registered by a police officer on arrival in the port of Harwich, Autumn 1938.
The Wiener Library Ltd*

Police Constable Renouf in conversation with Dr. Bleckwenn of Feldkommandantur 515, at the Weighbridge, St. Helier, late 1943. This image is extremely rare since on the whole British police officers were not faced with the dilemma of Nazi occupation. However, when the Nazis occupied the Channel Islands, British police were required to enforce Nazi regulations, as in other occupied countries.

Jersey War Tunnels



Why The Holocaust?

Themes and Key Questions

The history of the Holocaust is moving on one level, troubling on another, and challenging on yet another. Millions of lives were wasted, communities ruined, culture destroyed. It makes demands on us as a civilisation, and as individuals too, because the people on all sides of this extraordinary history were remarkably ordinary.

As an extraordinary world event on an unthinkable scale, the Holocaust could not seem further away from the lives that most of us lead. The mass murder of European Jews in forests and ‘death camps’, as well as the persecution, enslavement and killing of millions of civilians – including the Roma gypsies, the disabled, gay men, Slavs, Jehovah’s witnesses and political prisoners – happened in quite different circumstances from the day-to-day problems that we face. And yet, one of the most challenging questions we confront is, ‘How was it possible for an educated, well-read, integrated, cultured democracy to become a genocidal racist state?’

The answer lies in the detail. The Holocaust did not happen overnight. It was a step-by-step process. It was founded on centuries of mistrust, infused by creeping ideology, supported by racism, promoted through propaganda and implemented by a whole society. Looking back, it seems so extraordinary. Yet for many involved, it became an everyday part of their ordinary lives. That is why we examine this history and formulate questions about it. Genocide is unlikely to happen in our society. But the necessary preconditions of genocide include divided societies, mistrust, lack of respect, racism, discontent and fear of the ‘other’. All of these precursors exist in some small measure in our society and are *our* responsibility. This guide is intended to outline the history and help map out some of those issues.

“This introductory guide offers both evidence and a clear rationale for the modern police officer, who wishes to be a wise custodian of the powers he or she has. We must investigate the historical and global context of policing to better understand how the ‘universal also affects the particular’.”

Manny Barot, Member of the Trust and Confidence Board and Police Officer (Rtd)

Holocaust History

You will discover more about the history and development of the Holocaust, its origins and the ideas behind it, as well as the experiences of those who went through it. The facts tell us about the process and the people.

Police in the Third Reich

As a police state, the Nazis used police structures to create their own web of power to enforce their racist ideology effectively. You will find frequent references to the development of policing in the Third Reich.



Jewish men being shaved in public as a form of humiliation.
Yad Vashem

Personal Choices

People caught up in the Holocaust on all sides faced quite demanding dilemmas and difficult choices. When you think about the choices that uniformed officers had to make at the time, consider

also the lack of choice available to the victims. Think about how choices determine actions, and the consequences for those around you.

Defining Personal Boundaries

A key defence of the perpetrators was that they were ‘following orders’ when they shot the Jews or sent them into gas chambers. Compliance with such orders was the norm. On reflection, dissent would have been a more appropriate action. The text explores these moral boundaries between duty and personal ethics.



The Einsatzgruppen were task forces assembled from military and police units in order to carry out the killing of Eastern European Jews. 1.5 million people were murdered in this way.
Yad Vashem



This photograph, showing the arrival of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz, is taken from the Auschwitz Album, a unique photographic record made by the SS.
Yad Vashem



Nazi rally, Germany 1930s.
The Holocaust Centre



Police await the arrival of British National Party leader Nick Griffin at the start of his race hate trial at Leeds Crown Court, 16 January 2006. Griffin and leading BNP member Mark Collett were charged with using words or behaviour intended or likely to stir up racial hatred.
© AFP/Paul Ellis

Identifying Causes

Making links to society today could trivialise the history of the Holocaust and simultaneously make simplistic comparisons to the complexity of today’s society. But the causes of community tension, racism, hatred and intolerance in our society have similar origins. These actions cause society to become vulnerable to extreme ideologies and ultimately damage groups and individuals.



Policemen in uniform march along the London Embankment on the Mardi Gras Gay Pride March – the first time gay police officers were allowed to march in uniform, 26 July 2003.
© Bruno Vincent/Getty Images

Racial Hatred

Crimes are reported on a surprisingly frequent basis in which individuals and communities are attacked because of their ethnic, religious, sexual or racial background. This clearly shows that there are people prepared to commit the crime of racism. It is essential to understand the threat they pose to stable society in order to work effectively to eradicate their prevalence.



A policewoman stands outside Kings Cross Station as people lay flowers to mark the second anniversary of the London Bombings, 7 July 2007.
© Chris Young/AFP/Getty Images

Personal Values

It was outside the power of any individual citizen to influence the course of the Holocaust. But there was also never a body of opinion to speak out against it and slow its success. Knowing when to speak, about what, and to whom, needs to be understood long before we are called upon to do it.

The Racist State

Nazi Ideology and the Jews

“The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew.”

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 1924

The Nazi Party created a racist ideology founded on the principle that the German people were a superior race, which deserved its unique space, traditions and racial heritage. This was based on the assumption that they were part of the Aryan race, deemed to be superior to all others. In pursuit of their Aryan Utopia, the Nazis set out to create a racial state, in which only those of pure blood could be citizens. This meant that all those not deemed to be of Aryan origin would be excluded.

Antisemitism

Ten years before he came to power, Adolf Hitler made it clear that the opposite of the superior ‘Aryan race’ was the inferior ‘Jewish race’. From the start of his political career, he made clear that the Jews had no future in the racial state that he intended to create. The precise source of his hatred of the Jews is widely debated. But whatever its origins, Hitler was convinced that the Jews had no place in the future of the Thousand Year Reich he intended to found.

Antisemitism – the hatred of the Jews – had existed in Europe long before the Nazi

Party was formed. Its history was entangled with everything European: from the early years of Christianity to the Enlightenment, from Capitalism to Communism, and geographically from Lisbon to Moscow. The Jews (along with some other groups) had been the scapegoats of virtually every crisis that Europe had endured and figures of suspicion or distrust in the imaginations of many of Europe’s greatest minds.

It did not require the emergence of the Nazis for Jews to endure persecution and hatred in Europe. But Nazi ideology introduced a new and more complete form of antisemitism in which the Jews were seen as an all-pervasive and corrupting influence within German society, of which it must rid itself in order to succeed. Antisemitism was central to the idea of National Socialism itself.

A Mosaic of Victims

As a result of the same racist ideas, a number of groups other than Jews were also targeted. Some were persecuted because they were deemed racially inferior; others because they were deemed socially unacceptable; many because they were politically opposed to the Nazi regime. Gypsies, gay men, trades unionists, Communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the mentally or physically disabled, and people of colour were all targeted at different times with a variety of measures.

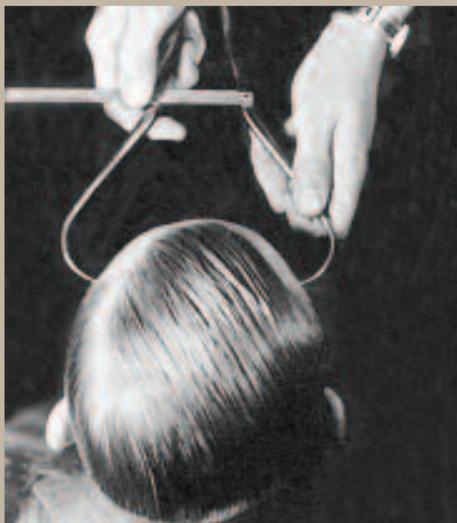
Through a combination of draconian antisemitic laws and measures, Jews and all

“They preached a sermon of salvation through a biological racism which, they argued, would save the sick and the poisoned German nation by removing the poison which had entered its arteries and infected it with a disease which would ultimately prove fatal: the Jewish spirit and Jewish blood.”

Hermann Graml, *Antisemitism in the Third Reich*

Race Science

The Nazis based their racial policies on late 19th-century social anthropology and eugenics. Their concept of an ‘Aryan’ superior race also defined those they deemed inferior. This spawned the racist state. Himmler also set up a special organisation called *Lebensborn* (Fount of Life) to breed a pure Aryan race. *Lebensborn* offered privileges to pregnant women who could prove their children’s Aryan ancestry. Those with disabilities or mental health problems were deemed unfit and subjected to the ‘T4’ programme, which involved sterilization and ‘euthanasia’. More than 75,000 were murdered this way.



The measurement of a man’s skull. The Nazis believed that physical features were an indication of people’s position within a supposed racial hierarchy. They drew heavily on so-called race sciences to support their claims.

Source unknown

Textbooks

The following is an extract from a German schoolbook of 1935, which clearly indicates how propaganda and education were used to develop the racial theory to justify the Holocaust.

“When there is a foreign body within us – something that does not belong there... we must make sure that it disappears; otherwise we will be destroyed by it. Every man has the drive for survival, which commands him to fight against foreign bodies...”

Your beloved leader, Adolf Hitler, is one of those people who thinks in this way... you know that he does not struggle against the Jews out of wild hatred or envy... why must we be enemies of the Jews? Because the Jews are a destructive force against the German nation.”

We and the Jew – What Young People Must Know About Jews, Berlin, 1935

political opponents of National Socialism were first removed from positions of influence, then marginalised from society altogether, until eventually, under the cover of the Second World War, the intended destruction of all Jews – everywhere within Nazi territory – was implemented.

Der Stürmer

Every week from 1924 onwards, the Nazis produced a journal called *Der Stürmer* – The Stormer. It contained Nazi news and views and was one of the main propaganda mouthpieces for Nazi ideology.



German boys read an issue of *Der Stürmer* newspaper posted in a display box at the entrance to a Nazi party headquarters (Ortsgruppe Mitte der NSDAP) in the Dresden region. The German slogan at the bottom of the display box reads, “The Jews are our misfortune.”

© USHMM

“Their synagogues should be set on fire... for the honour of Christianity their homes should be destroyed... their rabbis forbidden to preach under threat of death... Let us drive them from the country for all time. If this advice does not suit, then find a better one that we may be rid of this devilish burden – the Jews.”

Martin Luther, founder of Protestant Christianity, *Against the Jews and Their Lies*, 1543



Poster of the Social Democratic Party during the July 1932 election. The Nazis were their main opponents and emerged victorious with the majority of the seats. The poster says, “The worker in the realm of the swastika. Vote Social Democrat.”

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Archiv der sozialen Demokratie

Fact File

- Jews had lived continuously in Germany for over 1,000 years.
- In 1933 less than 1% of the German population was Jewish.
- Many German Jewish men had fought in the First World War.
- In the general election of July 1932, 37.2% of the popular vote went to the Nazis.
- By 1935 480,000 copies a week were printed of *Der Stürmer*, the antisemitic newspaper run by Julius Streicher. The circulation of *Cosmopolitan* in the UK is around 475,000 copies a month (2006).

Talking Points

What was the intention of the Nazi Party in making *Der Stürmer* available to the public in the streets of towns and cities?

Why is propaganda so effective?

For Further Reading

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www.thepcaa.org/report.html

The Police State

Law and Order under Nazi Rule



Police search in Berlin, Germany, 1933. Source unknown

“When the Nazis came to power in January 1933, many policemen remained skeptical of the party and its intentions.

Nazi agitation, especially in the latter years of the Weimar Republic, had been subversive and the police had been investigating both the Nazis and the Communists with vigor. Nevertheless Hitler posed as a champion of law and order, claiming he would uphold traditional German values.”

© USHMM, “German Police in the Nazi State,” *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*

After the First World War, Germany had a new constitution, creating a new democracy known as ‘The Weimar Republic’. The fresh start was intended to give Germany the chance to establish a liberal, social and democratic country for its citizens. But times were difficult, with economic instability and political tension.

Germany was also a challenging place to police. Crime had risen sharply, stretching the police force to its limits. Prostitution, drug culture, theft and pornography had all grown. Well-run gangs were responsible for this growth in crime. Each state in the German Federation had its own police service, making it difficult for officers to operate effectively across state borders.

In addition to the criminal gangs, political opponents of democracy also attacked the state, with regular rioting and disorder. In turn, the press attacked the police for being unable to control the lawlessness. But the constitution constrained what the police could do. Public criticism increased their sense of frustration. Police officers resented their lack of power to be able to act effectively.

In 1930-1932, a series of general elections was held in which the Communist and Nazi parties gained ground from the moderate parties.

Ultimately, the Nazis won almost 37% of the vote. In January 1933, Adolf Hitler was invited to form a government, and on 30 January he was sworn in as Chancellor of the Weimar Republic.

In February 1933, the *Reichstag* (the Parliament building in Berlin) was burned down. Seizing his opportunity, Hitler called a state of emergency, dissolved Parliament and took power. He quickly moved to align the organs and institutions of state with Nazi ideology. Integrating the army, police, legal and judicial systems was critical to the success of the Third Reich, the Nazi totalitarian regime.

As early as April 1933, new laws were introduced, outlawing Jews and known Socialists from practising law or being involved in the judicial system.

Many police officers had encountered the Nazis during the riots of the Weimar Republic and were not enthusiastic supporters. But Hitler set himself up as a champion of law and order. To many in the police services, the emergence of the Third Reich was a welcome relief once their powers were strengthened. They now had clear direction and a definite mandate to police the streets of Germany for security, with the instruments to apprehend the gangs that had previously made their work difficult.

The SS

The *Schutzstaffel* (SS, German for Protection Squadron) were Hitler’s personal guard. In the early days of the Nazi organisation, they acted as a paramilitary bodyguard. Later, as the Third Reich developed, they became an elite, racially pure unit of military and police personnel. They had the military powers of the *Wehrmacht* (German army) and greater influence. The *Waffen-SS* (armed SS) were notorious as executors of the Final Solution and masters of the concentration camps right across the continent.

Fact File: The Police in the Third Reich

Under the dictatorship of the Third Reich, the role of the police and new security services became the surveillance and brutal control of the local population and the fulfilment of Nazi political, economic and racial laws.

When the Nazis took power in 1933, they reorganised the police unit. It consisted of:

The Order Police or **Orpo** – mainly reservists and a mix of police disciplines;

The plain-clothed Criminal Police, the **Kripo**;

The police dealing with political offences and state security, the **Stapo**.

The Nazis developed a complicated system of overlapping security organisations.

Each could monitor and check the others.

The **SS** or **Schutzstaffel** implemented many aspects of the “Final Solution”, ran the concentration camp and slave labour system, and as the **Waffen-SS** formed a counterbalance to the regular army. Initially, as only the regular army had the right to enlist men, SS members were recruited as ‘police’.

The **Gestapo** was made up mainly of professional police officers recruited from the **Stapo** and **Kripo**. They had the power to arrest, ‘interrogate’ and send a victim to a concentration camp.

The **SD** or **Security Service** was the intelligence branch of the SS. Most of its members came from the intellectual elite and committed Nazis.

The **Einsatzgruppen**, Special Military Operations or ‘Task Forces’, were groups of approximately 1,000 men (and some female staff). They were made up of SS, Gestapo, Security Services, Police and Auxiliary Police. They organised mass shootings and atrocities.

Police strength was expanded with members of Nazi paramilitary groups integrated as auxiliary police officers.



Cap bearing the Totenkopf (death’s head) symbol of the SS
Wikipedia

“Antisemitism for purely emotional reasons will find its formal expressions in pogroms. The antisemitism of reason, however, must lead to the systematic combatting and elimination of the Jewish privileges.”

Adolf Hitler, 1919

Heinrich Himmler

In June 1936, the Nazis consolidated the police and merged them with the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) and SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*, the secret police) under the overall leadership of Heinrich Himmler. In the coming years, Himmler would become the principal architect of the Final Solution. Himmler is often typified as a chicken farmer mystic and described as being a bureaucrat. In fact, he joined the Nazis early and was with Hitler on the night of the Beer Hall Putsch, the failed attempt to seize power, in 1923. He was a determined leader and ultimately headed one of the most powerful police forces in the world. He also controlled the concentration camp system.



Heinrich Himmler confers with SS officers while visiting the Mauthausen concentration camp.
© USHMM, courtesy of David Mendels

Talking Points

“The Nazis shielded the police from public criticism by censoring the press. They ended street fighting by eliminating the Communist threat... The Nazis centralized and fully funded the police to better combat criminal gangs and promote state security. The Nazi state increased staff and training, and modernized police equipment... The police moved to take ‘preventive action’, that is, to make arrests without the evidence required for a conviction in court...”

(*Holocaust Encyclopedia*)

What would the impact have been for the average serving police officer after the Nazi Party took power?

The *Waffen-SS* were selected for their racial purity and schooled in the ideology of National Socialism. From 1934, they were placed in control of the concentration camps as well as providing Hitler’s personal bodyguard.

What does the relationship between these two roles indicate about the priority assigned to the concentration camps?

For Further Reading

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www.ushmm.org

Kristallnacht

The Night of Broken Glass



The synagogue of Baden-Baden in flames, 10 November 1938.

© Yad Vashem Archives

“We Jews now fear the Ninth of November, the great feast day of the party... the radio is broadcasting extracts from the people’s demonstrations ... from the loudspeakers are voices like the howling of rabid dogs.”

J. Littner, *Kristallnacht* eyewitness

In July 1938, a law was passed requiring all Jews to carry identity cards, as well as introducing a series of economic restrictions. Then on 28 October, 17,000 Jews with Polish citizenship were arrested and relocated across the Polish border. The Polish Government refused to admit them so they were interned in ‘camps’ on the Polish frontier.

Reprisals for Deportation

Among them was the Grynspan family, whose 17-year-old son, Herschel, was living with his uncle in Paris. When he discovered that his family had been expelled, Herschel bought a revolver and on 7 November went to the German embassy in Paris. He intended to assassinate the German ambassador, but the ambassador was not there. Herschel said he had a secret document to deliver and was shown in to see a junior official, Ernst vom Rath. Grynspan shot vom Rath twice at close range and he died two days later, on 9 November, with Hitler’s personal physician in attendance.

The attempt on vom Rath’s life made the front page of the papers on 8 November. Readers were left in no doubt that this was a Jewish attack against the Third Reich. News of vom Rath’s death provided Propaganda Minister Josef Göbbels with the excuse he needed to launch an all-out attack against the Jews of Germany. November 9th was a significant day in the Nazi calendar. It was 15 years to the day

since the failed ‘Beer Hall Putsch’ of 1923, when Hitler had been arrested and jailed. November 9th became a day of revenge and orchestrated anarchy.

The Order to Destroy

Following orders given to the police, SA and fire units across the Third Reich, the personal and communal property of Jews was to be attacked. Synagogues were ransacked and burned, religious artefacts desecrated, shops operating under Jewish ownership were smashed, homes were entered and property destroyed. Jewish men were arrested and incarcerated in the concentration camps.

In Dessau the violence broke out within moments of the announcement of vom Rath’s death. It appeared to be spontaneous and angry. In Berlin, however, there was no spontaneous outburst. Time was first given for police squads to isolate Jewish buildings, cut telephone wires and switch off electricity supplies to prevent accidents. Road blocks were set up to ensure that mobs stayed within agreed zones, without disturbing other neighbourhoods.

The Nazis were still aware of the need to keep law and order in the midst of the carnage. Plain clothes Gestapo and *Kripo* (criminal investigation) police were ordered to ensure that no looting took place. At 3.00a.m. an order was issued by Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess to avoid destroying businesses and homes. The order was issued at ‘the highest level’ – and there was only one person in Nazi Germany higher than Hess. The Nazis had realised the potential cost of insurance claims for damage to personal and commercial premises. Religious and community property was fair game – as was the freedom of Jewish individuals.

Kristallnacht (The Night of Broken Glass) broke new ground. It was an open, ‘legal’ state act of violence against individuals and an established religious community. The organs of law and order, including the police, army and rescue services, were ordered to protect the German population, while taking an active part in the destruction of Jewish lives.



Jewish prisoners paraded by the SS and local police through the streets of Baden-Baden, 10 November 1938.

© Yad Vashem Archives

Camps Full to Capacity

As a result of the very large number of arrests made, on 11 November an urgent message was sent to all police areas. It ordered that, “All Jewish women and children arrested in the course of the action are to be released at once, unless specific reasons exist for their continued arrest.” On 12 November, Gestapo HQ in Berlin sent out another urgent teletype:

“TO ALL STATE POLICE HEADQUARTERS AND BRANCH OFFICES

The Buchenwald concentration camp is filled to capacity with current deliveries. Therefore further transfers to Buchenwald are to be cancelled, with the exceptions of transports already underway. To prevent errors this HQ will be informed well in advance of transfers to the Dachau and Sachsenhausen camps.”

Kristallnacht signalled a new and more open era in the Third Reich’s antisemitic policies. Now it was clear that they were prepared not just to persecute but to murder the Jews of Germany.

Atonement

On Sunday 12 November, senior members of the Nazi hierarchy met to discuss how the Jews might ‘atone’ for what had happened. Plans were drawn up to fine the Jews 1bn Reichsmarks (the equivalent of more than £4bn today). Jews were also to be banned from public places, destroyed synagogues were to be turned into car parks, Jewish children would no longer be able to attend state school, and Jewish business interests were to be wound up.



Jewish prisoners being humiliated in the synagogue of Baden-Baden, 10 November 1938.

© Yad Vashem Archives

Written Orders from Chief of Police Heydrich

Secret

To All Headquarters and Stations of the State Police. Urgent!

Re: Measures against Jews tonight

Following the attempt on the life of Secretary of the Legation vom Rath in Paris, demonstrations against the Jews are to be expected in all parts of the Reich in the course of the coming night, November 9/10, 1938.

1. The Chiefs of the State Police, or their deputies, must immediately upon receipt of this telegram contact, by telephone, the political leaders in their areas... and arrange a joint meeting with the inspector or commander of the Order Police to discuss the arrangements for the demonstrations.

- Only such measures are to be taken as do not endanger German lives or property (i.e., synagogues are to be burned down only where there is no danger of fire in neighbouring buildings).
- Places of business and apartments belonging to Jews may be destroyed but not looted. The police are instructed to supervise the observance of this order and to arrest looters.
- In commercial streets particular care is to be taken that non-Jewish businesses are completely protected against damage.
- Foreign citizens – even if they are Jews – are not to be molested.

- The demonstrations are not to be prevented by the police, which is only to supervise the observance of the guidelines.
- Police will seize all archives to be found in all synagogues and offices of the Jewish communities so as to prevent their destruction during the demonstrations.
- The control of the measures... is vested in the organs of the State Police.
- As many Jews – especially the rich – as can be accommodated in existing prisons are to be arrested. Only healthy male Jews, who are not too old, are to be detained. After the detentions have been carried out, the appropriate concentration camps are to be contacted immediately for the prompt accommodation of the Jews in the camps. Special care is to be taken that the Jews arrested in accordance with these instructions are not ill-treated.

signed Heydrich, *SS Gruppenführer Documents on the Holocaust*, Yad Vashem, 1981

Fact File

On *Kristallnacht*:

- 91 people were killed.
- 7,500 businesses were damaged or destroyed.
- 101 synagogues were burned down.
- 26,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps.
- Fire brigades were sent to protect Aryan property, but they watched synagogues burn.
- The SS were given orders not to interfere with the destruction in the streets against the Jews.

Talking Points

In 1938 there were strict curfew laws for Jews, who were not allowed on the streets of Berlin without an appropriate permit. How do you discern when it is appropriate to limit the freedoms of an individual?

The fire service watched property owned by Jews burn to the ground, while dousing neighbouring homes and businesses. When state apparatus is used as an accessory to crimes such as this, what responsibility do individual officers have?

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Anthony Read and David Fisher, *Kristallnacht, The Unleashing of the Holocaust*, 1989.

Hannele Zürndorfer, *The Ninth of November*, 1983.

Lodz Ghetto

Life and Death in Captivity



Children of the ghetto, playing as ghetto policemen. The photo was taken on 22 October 1943 – more than a year after the majority of ghetto children were deported.

© Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (Chris Boot Ltd), Photograph by Henryk Ross

In September 1939, the German armed forces took Poland. There were 3.3m Jews living there. Poland suffered atrociously because of the impact of German occupation. The Jews were to suffer further as German anti-Jewish laws were applied with brutal force.

In order to control the Jewish community, German forces established areas known as ghettos. These were usually sealed-off zones to which Jews had to move. Those living in the country were taken to neighbouring towns. Jews in the cities were squeezed into tiny areas. Once the Jews were in the ghettos, German forces could control their movement, housing, rations, work – and their ultimate fate.

The Lodz Ghetto

The city of Lodz demonstrates this policy. Lodz had the second largest Jewish population in Europe. Its extensive textile industry had attracted Jews in the late 1800s. It was a vast community of the ultra-wealthy and the miserably poor; the entirely assimilated and the highly Orthodox.

In February 1940, the Germans announced their intention to seal off an area of Lodz. Jews were ordered to move there. Chaim Rumkowski was appointed as the senior representative of the Jews. He established an economic relationship with the Germans to keep people alive as long as

possible. The Germans agreed to his plan on 30 April 1940: the ghetto would supply services in return for food. The next day, the ghetto was sealed. Over 230,000 people were behind barbed wire.

Hunger, Work and Death

The ghetto factories worked day and night, using the population as slave labour, to provide uniforms and other goods for the German war effort. But the amount of food allocated in return was purposefully too low for people to survive. The Nazis reduced the rations to the bare minimum – working the ghetto on the barest possible outlay. Women, children and the elderly suffered first. Starvation, dysentery, typhus and tuberculosis quickly spread as a result of malnutrition and appalling living and sanitary conditions.

To make matters worse, further transports of 20,000 Jews from other countries and 5,000 Roma gypsies were also sent to the ghetto. Rations were not increased, nor was any more space created. Corpses littered the streets. Orphaned children were taken in but were a drain on the meagre rations available. As intended, conditions in the ghetto were destroying its populace. It was having its effect.

Deportations

Once the Nazis had formulated their plan for the genocide of the Jews, deportations began. Chelmno death camp had only been open two days when the order came to deport 20,000 Jews from Lodz. Chaim Rumkowski – placed in the invidious position of having to draw up the lists – talked the Germans down to 10,000. The Jewish authorities drew up lists and the trains departed during January 1942. The remaining Roma were on the first trains. A total of 10,003 people were sent to their deaths.

Every few weeks, the Nazis requested another deportation of 10,000. Then, in September 1942, the ghetto was to be totally cleared, except for the factory workers. This was mainly the women and children, the elderly and sick.

The ghetto struggled on, working, starving, dying slowly, until mid-1944 when the order for liquidation was given. The remaining Jews were sent to Auschwitz. Of the 255,000 Jews and 5,000 Roma who went into Lodz ghetto, only 877 remained.



Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, chairman of the Lodz ghetto Jewish Council, delivering a speech.

© USHMM

“In my old age I am forced to stretch out my hands and to beg... Fathers and mothers, give me your children... I was given the order to send away more than 20,000 Jews... Should we have accepted this and carried it out ourselves, or left it to others? But we were guided not by the thought: ‘how many will be lost?’ but ‘how many can be saved?’ I must carry out this difficult and bloody operation, I must cut off limbs in order to save the body! I must take away [your] children...”

Chaim Rumkowski, head of the Lodz ghetto Jewish Council, at a public speech announcing that he has negotiated with the Nazis to send 10,000 children rather than 20,000 working adults on the next deportation, 4 September 1942.

Summary Execution by Jewish Police

Announcement No 356
In accordance with an order, I announce hereby that
For Resisting the Police
On Monday January 19, 1942
Dr Ulrich Georg Israel
SCHULZ
From Prague
Born on 8 June 1897
Was lawfully
SHOT
By the Police
Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski
Senior Elder of the Jews



Members of Police Battalion 101 on inspection at the Lodz ghetto.

© USHMM

The Jewish Police

The Nazis structured the ghettos for maximum control and minimum effort. In each ghetto they created a Jewish Council known as the *Judenrat*. Each council had a leader who reported to the Nazis. Leaders were responsible for administering the ghetto, dealing with food, sanitation, work and, in some cases, the deportations of Jews to concentration camps and killing centres.

The Nazis also insisted on the creation of a Jewish Order Service in many ghettos, which quickly became known as the ‘Jewish Police’. Jewish volunteer officers were required to keep law and order in the ghetto on behalf of the Nazi authorities, in return for some measure of privilege. The police units reported directly to the German forces. They were used to escort Jewish workers to and from the slave-labour factories, and often to oversee their work. As their effectiveness became apparent, the service grew and became a significant way to control the ghetto.

While the Jewish population was starving and dying on the streets, the Jewish Order Service were generally better fed and clothed; and they had access to freedoms unthinkable to most inhabitants of the ghetto.

When deportations began, the Jewish Order Service was largely responsible for the round-ups, escorting Jews to the trains that would take them to their deaths. Many survivors report that they were vicious and uncaring, unequivocally respecting the orders of their German masters.

Members of the Jewish police were not spared. Like the rest of the Jews, they were eventually placed on the same trains and sent to their deaths.



Ghetto police at Lodz ghetto.

© Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (Chris Boot Ltd), Photograph by Henryk Ross

Fact File

- In Germany, Jews were not allowed to serve in the police from 1934.
- There were 100s of ghettos across the Third Reich.
- There were 2,500 Jewish Order Service volunteers in the Warsaw ghetto alone.
- After the war, 40 Order Service volunteers were taken to a Jewish community court in Munich. They were publicly found guilty of collaboration and ostracised.



A destitute girl sits on the kerb of a street of the Lodz ghetto.

© USHMM, courtesy of Arie Ben Menachem

Talking Points

What viable alternatives did the Jews have to joining the Jewish Council and volunteering for the Jewish Order Service at the behest of the Nazi authorities?

Were the Jewish Order Service and Jewish Councils collaborators?

For Further Reading

Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege*, 1989.

Lodz Ghetto Album, Photographs by Henryk Ross, 2004.

The Diary of David Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto, 1996.

Web Links

www.jewishgen.org/databases/Poland/LodzGhetto.html

“This evening there was suddenly news another 15,000 are to be deported immediately, in groups of a thousand a day. Everyone is saying that now all of the ghetto’s inhabitants will go.”

Diary of David Sierakowiak, Lodz ghetto

The Einsatzgruppen

Mass Killing and the Order Police

“I made the effort, and it was possible for me, to shoot only children. It so happened that the mothers led the children by the hand. My neighbour then shot the mother and I shot the child that belonged to her, because I reasoned with myself that after all without its mother the child could not live any longer. It was supposed to be, so to speak, soothing to my conscience to release children unable to live without their mothers.”

Unnamed police officer, Police Battalion 101



A group of Jewish women, taken to a beach near Liepaja, stand at the edge of an open mass grave facing the sea, where they await execution by a firing squad of Latvian SD and police, 15 December 1941. USHMM, courtesy of Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen (Bundesarchiv- A)

In June 1941, the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union. It is unclear when the Nazis decided to start what they called ‘The Final Solution of the Jewish Question’ – the systematic mass murder of the Jews. It appears to have been a developing process. There may have been a verbal order from Hitler before the invasion of the Soviet Union in mid-1941. Certainly, six months after this, Nazi leaders were talking openly about the total annihilation of the Jews. Then, in January 1942, the Wannsee Conference took a formal and documented decision to murder all Jews in Nazi-occupied territory – without exception.

The initial strategy of the Soviet offensive was to secure the Western territories of the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Baltic countries while pushing on through Russia towards Moscow.

As the Nazis moved eastward, they were occupying areas with large Jewish communities. The Nazi hierarchy needed a policy to deal with these communities and enforce their race laws swiftly and brutally.

They formed four special units called *Einsatzgruppen*, which means ‘Task Forces’. These groups comprised *Waffen-SS*

supported by Gestapo, Order Police and Security Police. Three of the units were deployed immediately behind the front line forces with the sole purpose of murdering Jews in newly-conquered territory. The fourth remained in one densely populated region.

In the last six months of 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* murdered half a million Jews. They took people from their homes, assembled them in squares or synagogues, and then marched them into nearby fields and forests. The Jews were often made to dig their own graves; they were stripped of clothes and valuables and shot.

Approximately one and a half million Jews were murdered in this way during the persecution.

Reserve Police Battalion 101

The Order Police formed a significant part of the killing apparatus of the Third Reich. Order Police units consisted of serving police officers, a number of new recruits, men over the age of military conscription and recalled reservists. Reserve Police Battalion 101 was one such unit. It had just under 500 men, who were mainly middle-aged serving police officers or army reservists.

“I thought that I could master the situation and that without me the Jews were not going to escape their fate anyway... Truthfully I must say that at that time we didn’t reflect about it at all. Only years later did it first occur to me that it had not been right.”

Unnamed police officer, Police Battalion 101



Seconds later a Latvian policeman walks along the edge of a mass grave towards the bodies of Jewish women and children who have just been executed. Known as a ‘kicker’, it was his job to push the bodies into the mass grave that had not fallen in during the shooting. This was necessary to make room on the edge of the grave for the next group of Jews to be shot. 15 December 1941. USHMM, courtesy of Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen (Bundesarchiv- A)

Their role was not intended to be military. In 1939, Reserve Police Battalion 101’s first tour of duty was to collect arms from the defeated Polish army and guard a POW camp. In 1940, they returned and carried out a resettlement programme (ethnic cleansing of non-Aryans), removing Polish families from annexed territory to make it ‘racially pure’. They evacuated approximately 37,000 people. They were then posted to guard the Lodz ghetto. Their orders were to shoot would-be escapees on sight.

In June 1942, Police Battalion 101 was re-formed and assigned another tour of duty to Poland. Most of the 486 men and 11 officers were new to the battalion and had not seen active military service. Their average age was 39. Most of them were lower middle-class and working-class men with little or no ambition within the Nazi apparatus.

On 13 July 1942, their senior officer, Major Wilhelm Trapp, informed the men that their duty was to round up the 1,800 Jews of the small town of Josefow and shoot them. He made the offer that any of the older men who did not feel up to the task could step out and hand in their rifles. Just 12 of the 486 men stepped down.

The order was given to assemble the Jews in the market square. Those too weak to make it to the square were to be shot on the spot, as were infants and those attempting to hide or resist. The patients in the Jewish hospital were shot in their beds. The Jews were then taken by truck to the edge of a nearby forest, where the Order Police officers took the victims individually into the trees, ordered them to lie down and shot them at close range. By the end of the seventeen-hour shift, the Jews of Josefow no longer existed.

Reports from the officers suggest that there were other volunteers who later stood down from the shooting. Most continued. By the end of their tours of duty, the men of Police Battalion 101 are known to have shot 6,500 Jews directly. A further 1,000 were murdered as a result of ‘Jew hunts’. They also killed some 30,500 at Majdanek and Poniatowa concentration camps. In addition, they rounded up and placed 48,000 Jews on trains to Treblinka death camp.

The battalion of 500 men was responsible for the deaths of 83,000 Jews.

Fact File

- As early as 1933, the Nazis created a ‘police army’ of 56,000 men and gave them military training.
- In 1939 there were 131,000 Order Police.
- By 1940 there were 244,500 Order Police.
- By 1942 there were 97 Generals in the German armed forces who had originally trained in the ‘police army’ in 1933.

Talking Points

How do you define when the state is using the police to uphold laws which benefit society, or when it is manipulating the police to the disadvantage of society?

If the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 could become killers under such circumstances, what group of men cannot?



Members of Police Battalion 101 celebrate Christmas in their barracks. © USHMM, courtesy of Michael O’Hara

For Further Reading

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

Saul Friedlander, *The Year of Extermination*, 2007.

The Camp System

The Network of Terror

Between 1933-1945, the Nazis established a network of camps across Europe. There were different regimes in each camp according to its purpose. This map highlights examples of the different types of centre. From 1941, six death camps were established with the express purpose of murdering Jewish people within hours of their arrival. Most camps were used for slave labour, detention or transit. The organisation of these sites shows the systematic destruction of Jewish communities and the enslavement of other groups.

Westerbork, Holland



More than 100,000 Jews in the Netherlands were deported to death camps from Westerbork camp. www.isurvive.org

Westerbork was a refugee camp for Jews fleeing the Nazis, built by the Dutch Government in 1939. It became a transit camp under Nazi rule in 1942. From Westerbork, Jews were deported to the killing centres in German-occupied Poland.

Drancy, France



Drancy transit camp, using the buildings of a half-completed housing estate, where Jews were taken by the French authorities prior to their deportation to Nazi death camps. USHMM

Drancy had served as a police barracks for the city of Paris before the war. It was initially used as an internment camp, but it then became the major transit camp for the deportation of Jews from France. It was staffed by French officials under German supervision until 1943, when the Germans took direct control. Between 1941 and 1944 some 70,000 prisoners passed through Drancy. 62 of the 74 trains that left France for Auschwitz and Sobibor departed from Drancy.

Dachau, Germany



An aerial photograph of Dachau concentration camp. USHMM

Dachau was the first concentration camp, established by the Nazis in 1933. It became one of the main training centres for SS concentration camp guards and a model of organization and routine for all Nazi concentration camps. In Dachau, as in other Nazi camps, prisoners were used as forced labourers and also subjected to medical experimentation.

Mauthausen, Austria



Prisoners carry large stones up the 'stairs of death' (Todesstiege) from the Wiener Graben quarry at Mauthausen concentration camp, 1942. USHMM

Mauthausen concentration camp was established in March 1938. It had 49 sub-camps. Here prisoners were forced to carry heavy stone blocks up 186 steps from the camp quarry. It also had its own mobile gas vans and 'T4 Euthanasia' killing centre.

Hadamar, Germany



Large grey buses arrived daily at Hadamar, carrying victims from nearby mental homes to their deaths in the extermination building. Unknown source

Hadamar was a psychiatric clinic where almost 15,000 men, women and children were killed between 1941 and 1945 in the Nazi 'T4 Euthanasia Programme'. In 1941, 10,000 German patients were murdered with carbon monoxide in a gas chamber disguised as a shower room. It was the first instance of such killing.

Bergen-Belsen, Germany



The liberation of Belsen concentration camp. A British army bulldozer pushes bodies into a mass grave at Belsen, 19 April 1945. Imperial War Museum

Bergen-Belsen was initially (1940-43) a POW camp, and in 1943 was used to hold several thousand Jewish prisoners who might be exchanged for German prisoners held by the Allies. From 1944 numbers increased rapidly as prisoners arrived from other concentration camps. Up to 60,000 prisoners were found there when the British liberated the camp in April 1945. More than 35,000 people died in Belsen camp starvation, overwork, disease, brutality and sadistic medical experiments.

Number of Jews murdered in six death camps in Poland

Auschwitz	1,100,000
Belzec	434,500
Chelmno	153,000
Majdanek	240,000
Sobibor	250,000
Treblinka	750,000
Total	2,927,500

Source, USHMM

Ninth Fort, Lithuania



During the years of Nazi occupation, Ninth Fort was put to use as a place of mass murder. At least 5,000 citizens of Kovno were murdered here. The Holocaust Centre

The Ninth Fort in Kovno, Lithuania, was built as a stronghold in the late 19th century. It was used by the Soviets as a transit station for prisoners being transported to the Gulag. During the Nazi occupation, over 50,000 people were executed here, including over 30,000 Jews and over 10,000 foreigners.

Belzec, Poland



Group portrait of ethnic German guards at the Belzec concentration camp, one of whom plays a mandolin. USHMM

Belzec was the second Nazi killing centre to begin operation. Between March and December 1942, at least 600,000 people were deported to Belzec and murdered. The camp was finally dismantled in July 1943 and the Nazis then established a farm at the site, planting trees and crops to disguise the area.

Auschwitz, Poland



The entrance to Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of the six death camps in Poland. Yad Vashem

Auschwitz was the largest complex established by the Nazis, made up of three large camps near the Polish town of Oswiecim - Auschwitz 1, Auschwitz II (Birkenau) and Auschwitz III (Monowitz). It was in effect a network of camps, including concentration, extermination and forced-labour sections. Auschwitz-Birkenau had the largest prisoner population and four gas chambers. One million Jews were murdered at the Auschwitz complex.



Auschwitz Camps

Factories of Slavery and Death



Child waiting with family next to the gas chambers and crematoria. They clearly do not realise where they are or what fate awaits them.

Yad Vashem

In mid-1940 the Nazis established a concentration camp on the site of a Polish army barracks just outside the town of Oswiecim. Situated conveniently on main transport routes through southern Poland, the site, which was named Auschwitz, was well positioned for logistical reasons.

The first inmates of the camp were Polish political prisoners, rounded up and incarcerated for their views or their social status. As the use of slave labour continued, the camp grew quickly, adapting to the needs of the Nazis. Eventually, there were three main camps and a series of over 40 sub-camps across a wide area. The main camps provided slave labour to the sub-camps, which included farms, factories and the large facility known as the 'Buna works'.



The ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Hungarian prisoners undergoing a selection.

1. Train on the 'ramp' – platform
2. New prisoners' belongings
3. Inmates assisting with arrivals
4. Women awaiting selection
5. Men awaiting selection
6. SS Officer supervising selections
7. Column of people walking towards the gas chambers
8. Entrance to Crematorium II

"Birkenau is sickening to the core. Simply knowing this was the point of life and death for so many thousands of people is an emotional experience that is almost too overwhelming to comprehend."

Rush Middleton, London Metropolitan Police

Auschwitz I

Also known as the 'Stammlager', the main camp, Auschwitz I comprised two-storey brick-built barracks which held 15,000-20,000 inmates. Most of the inmates of this camp were used for slave labour and were marched out of the infamous 'Arbeit Macht Frei' gate each morning to work. A crematorium was built in August 1940 before gas chambers were in use. This was for disposing of bodies. It was designed to incinerate 340 corpses a day. The large morgue was later converted into a gas chamber and was used for gassing Jews, Poles and other inmates at the main camp. From late 1942, it was superseded by the large gas chambers at Birkenau. In Block 10 medical experiments were carried out on inmates, including the experiments carried out on twins by Dr Josef Mengele.



Auschwitz I

In 1942 the decision was taken to expand Auschwitz to become a main destination for Jews being deported from right across Europe. Jews from France, Greece, Italy, Denmark, Germany, Norway and even the Channel Islands were taken there to be murdered en masse. Many survivors of the camp tell of the long and intolerable journey, crammed into cattle cars. On arrival, they went through 'selection', the process by which the Nazis would decide who would live and who would die. Only around 25% of those who arrived were given work details and their life extended. Most of those arriving were directed straight to one of four gas chambers, where they were asphyxiated with Zyklon B and then incinerated in the vast crematoria.

It is difficult to establish exact numbers of victims for the camp because not all



The entrance to Auschwitz-Birkenau © The Holocaust Centre

Auschwitz II

In 1941 the Nazis destroyed the nearby village of Brzezinka to create a vast open space two kilometres from the Stammlager. It was named 'Birkenau' and was designed as a large housing facility. By 1944 the camp was able to hold over 90,000 inmates in mainly wooden barracks, designed as stables. Approximately 1,000 inmates were crammed into a building designed for 70 horses.

Birkenau was also the site where the Nazis built two small experimental gas chambers in neighbouring farm houses, used initially on Soviet POWs. They then built four large gas chambers with crematoria as the main facilities for the mass murder of the Jews.

On arrival at the site, Jews were tricked into believing that they would be showered after their long journey, prior to being settled into the facilities. Only when it was too late did most victims realise where they were.

As well as the killing facilities, there were several 'hospitals', the 'sauna' building where inmates were processed and deloused, and the 'Kanada' section where mountains of belongings from murdered victims were stored and sorted.

In the summer of 1944, while the Normandy landings were underway at one end of the continent, Jews were being transported from Budapest to Birkenau. Over 400,000 Jews were murdered at Birkenau between May and August 1944.

were registered, and reliance on transport details leaves questions over precise statistics. Historians agree that not less than 1.1m people in total, and not more than 1.5m, were murdered there. It is generally agreed that at least one million Jews were murdered at Auschwitz, mainly in the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

We know more about Auschwitz than any other death camp. Because it was the largest killing centre, and because a small proportion of people from the transports

survived as eyewitnesses, and because some of its records survived, a clear picture of its origins and function have remained. Although nearly as many Jews were murdered in Treblinka in a shorter space of time, Auschwitz has become the most potent symbol of the Holocaust. It represents the suffering of all victim groups from right across the continent. Both the specific and the universal are bound up in its history and its legacy.

"I went on staring at the building. Smoke was beginning to billow out of the tall chimneys. The black smoke became thicker and darker and choking, bringing with it the smell of burning fat, bone and hair. As evening came the whole sky appeared red. Smoke was pouring out of all the chimneys now."

Kitty Hart-Moxon, Holocaust survivor

Auschwitz III

The largest of the 40 sub-camps was at Monowitz, where the Buna works were built by IG Farben especially to utilise slave labour from the Auschwitz camp system. Although it was a commercial plant, the Buna works housed 10,000 slaves at the height of its operation in 1944. Most slaves died of malnutrition, overwork, disease and mistreatment. Those unfit to continue work were subjected to selection and sent back to Birkenau, where they were gassed.



Auschwitz III

Fact File:

Minimum numbers of inmates of Auschwitz:

- 1,100,000 Jews
- 140,000 Poles
- 20,000 Gypsies
- 10,000 Soviet POWs
- 10,000 Various
- 1,280,000 Total



Rusting cutlery in the open air at the Kanada section of Auschwitz-Birkenau © The Holocaust Centre

Talking Points

Why were transport links critical to the success of Auschwitz?

Why has Auschwitz become such a symbol of man's inhumanity to man?

For Further Reading

Danuta Czech, *KL Auschwitz Seen by the SS*, 1984

Deborah Dwork & Robert Jan van Pelt, *Auschwitz*, 1996.

Kitty Hart-Moxon, *Return to Auschwitz*, 2007.

Lawrence Rees, *Auschwitz, The Nazis & The Final Solution*, 2005.

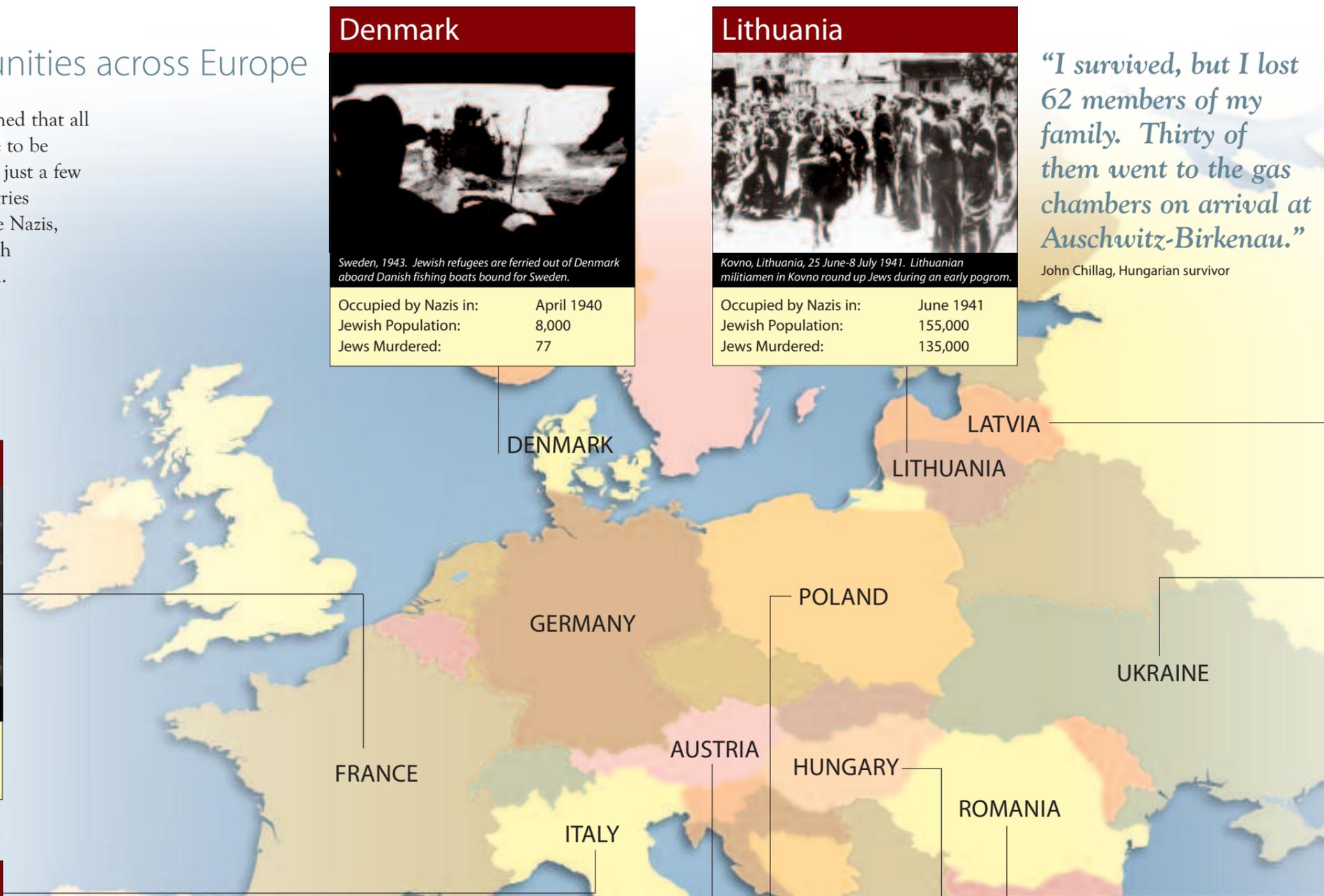
Web Links

www.auschwitz.org.pl

The Destruction

Jewish Communities across Europe

The Final Solution determined that all Jews without exception were to be murdered. This map shows just a few examples of the many countries occupied by, or allied to, the Nazis, where long-established Jewish communities were destroyed.



Denmark

Sweden, 1943. Jewish refugees are ferried out of Denmark aboard Danish fishing boats bound for Sweden.

Occupied by Nazis in:	April 1940
Jewish Population:	8,000
Jews Murdered:	77

Lithuania

Kovno, Lithuania, 25 June-8 July 1941. Lithuanian militiamen in Kovno round up Jews during an early pogrom.

Occupied by Nazis in:	June 1941
Jewish Population:	155,000
Jews Murdered:	135,000

Latvia

Liepaja, Latvia, 15 Dec 1941. Jewish women forced to undress on a beach near Liepaja by Latvian police.

Occupied by Nazis in:	July 1941
Jewish Population:	95,000
Jews Murdered:	80,000

"I survived, but I lost 62 members of my family. Thirty of them went to the gas chambers on arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau."

John Chillag, Hungarian survivor

France

Rennes, France, 21 November 1944. French police officer places blindfold on collaborator.

Invaded by Nazis in:	May 1940
Jewish Population:	225,000
Jews Murdered:	83,000

Ukraine

Ukraine, 14 October 1942. A German policeman prepares to complete a mass execution by shooting two Jewish children following the liquidation of the Mizocz ghetto.

Occupied by Nazis in:	Sept 1941
Jewish Population:	1,500,000
Jews Murdered:	900,000

Italy

Italy, 1943. English prisoners arrive at the concentration camp of Fossoli.

© FondazioneFossoli

Occupied by Nazis in:	Sept 1943
Jewish Population:	48,000
Jews Murdered:	8,000

Austria

Austria, 14 March 1938. Viennese civilians welcome the German troops arriving in the city.

Annexed by Nazis in:	March 1938
Jewish Population:	210,000
Jews Murdered:	65,000

Poland

A German police officer kicks a Jew who is climbing onto the back of a truck during a round-up. Two other Germans look on with derision.

Occupied by Nazis in:	Sept 1939
Jewish Population:	3,300,000
Jews Murdered:	3,000,000

Hungary

Hungary, December 1944. Police arrest Jewish resister, Robert Mandel, in Budapest.

Occupied by Nazis in:	March 1944
Jewish Population:	825,000
Jews Murdered:	500,000

Romania

Targu-Frumos, Romania, 1 July 1941. Romanian police remove corpses from Iasi-Calarasi death train.

Occupied by Nazis in:	Nov 1940
Jewish Population:	980,000
Jews Murdered:	364,000

All photographs, courtesy of USHMM unless otherwise stated

Search for Justice

“I Was Only Following Orders”



Members of Einsatzgruppe D, under Commander Otto Ohlendorf, gather round for a photo after a mass shooting in Vinnitsa. Taken by a squad member, it was placed in an album of his tour of duty and entitled *The last Jew of Vinnitsa*.

Yad Vashem

Throughout 1942-1944 the ‘Final Solution’ was a structured programme of killing the Jews that had its origins at the highest levels of the Nazi hierarchy. Once it was established, all members of the armed services, civil service, and even the commercial world, who came into contact with it were given roles – some dealing with local practicalities, others with the overall direction.

Identifying Perpetrators

After the Second World War, there were a number of trials in which key Nazi leaders were brought to justice. The Nuremberg trials, which are the most well known, began in November 1945. The 24 defendants were drawn from the higher echelons of the Nazi regime and included Rudolf Hess, Martin Bormann and Hermann Göring.

The defendants at Nuremberg were tried for ‘crimes against peace’, ‘war crimes’, ‘crimes against humanity’ and ‘planning acts of aggression’. The principal point of the indictments was to demonstrate that the acts of the Nazi regime as a whole were criminal. The concentration camp system and the mass murder of the Jews were part of the evidence.



The defendants sit in the dock at the Einsatzgruppen Trial. The 24 defendants were leaders of killing units. Their defence hinged upon the argument that they had acted legally, as soldiers, and had merely been following orders. Fourteen of the 24 defendants were sentenced to death. Ultimately, four death sentences were carried out. All the others were released in 1958.

© USHMM, courtesy of John W. Mosenthal

“Only from the fact that the reports... came from the pens of men within the accused organizations can the human mind be assured that all this actually happened. The... defendants themselves verify what otherwise would be dismissed as the product of a disordered imagination.”

Justice Michael Musmanno on the Einsatzgruppen Trials

There were a number of subsequent trials, which dealt more specifically with the attempted annihilation of European Jewry. These included the *Einsatzgruppen* Trials, the Doctors’ Trials, the Dachau Trials, the Buchenwald Trials, and many more dealing with businesses and government departments linked directly or indirectly to the atrocities. Later in the 1960s, further trials – such as the ‘Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials’ – began to indict lower functionaries of the camp system.

‘Willing Executioners?’

One of the key arguments that defendants made was that they were ‘following orders’. They claimed that the nature of the orders left them with no option but to carry out the actions, and they therefore deemed themselves not responsible. Through many successful convictions, the courts dismissed this argument. However, the lower the rank of the individual, the greater was the degree of leniency. The courts considered the more senior officers to be more aware of the intent behind the orders.

The Final Solution was not always ‘efficient’. It took a lot of manpower and was at times extremely labour-intensive.

Order Police on Trial

After the war, some German Order Police were placed on trial. German historians who interviewed the men after their trials found the following:

“They all felt that they had been victims. Those who originally wanted to be only ‘decent policemen’ saw themselves as people who had been exploited for the implementation of a crime. Others admitted that they had never doubted the justification of the orders they had received nor questioned the binding nature of the orders... Lastly one has to mention those who had real pangs of conscience... and whose moral views had been shattered as a result. The fate of their victims, however, was hardly reflected in their testimonies; they were at best scars on the perpetrators’ psyche.”

Die Normalität der Verbrechen (The Normality of Crime), Edition Hentrich, 1994.



Bialystok Synagogue after its destruction.
© Yad Vashem

Bialystok Synagogue

On 27 June 1941, over 500 Jews were burned alive in Bialystok synagogue. It was Order Police Battalion 309’s first operation since arriving in Poland. Major Weis informed his men that he had received an order from Hitler to execute Soviet commissars and Jews.

Hans Behrens, Company 1 Commander, gave the order for the Jews of the city to be arrested and shot. They should be brought to the market-place, where he would personally select Orthodox Jews for execution. An army officer demanded the Jews’

release because the war was not directed at civilians. Behrens told him that he had his orders; it was a police matter. The officer left and the operation continued.

Rolf-Joachim Buchs was present at the synagogue throughout the event. “When he discovered that his men were shooting wildly at the Jews, he stopped them because he did not want to lose control of the situation. He did not initiate the plan for the burning, but ensured that the area was secure and that no Jew would escape.”

A police officer proposed that the Jews be taken into the Great Synagogue and burned. Company 3 members pushed them inside the large building. Over 100 police officers were stationed outside to stop civilians approaching and the Jews escaping. Fuel was poured in, the doors barred. Grenades were thrown in and the building set alight.

Division Commander General Pflugbeil asked Major Weis for a report. The soldier delivering the message found him drunk, surrounded by empty bottles. General Pflugbeil disapproved of the manner of the killings, but did nothing.

Extract adapted from Irena Steinfeldt, *How Was it Humanly Possible?*, 2002.

The Nazis could not have been successful in making the Holocaust happen without large numbers of officers of all ranks and functionaries within the bureaucracy to carry out the orders.

There are many statements which suggest that individual members of the German armed forces and Order Police were reluctant, although compliant. But there is also a significant body of evidence to suggest that once the rank-and-file team members had coped with the initial shock of the killing, they then participated willingly. At times, they acted creatively to ensure that orders were carried out efficiently. This meant murdering as effectively and brutally as possible according to circumstance.

The example of the burning of Bialystok synagogue in Poland demonstrates how this worked in the field.

Hans Behrens

Behrens joined the police force in the 1920s. He arrived in Bialystok at the age of 46 and participated in the synagogue massacre. After serving with Battalion 309 in the Soviet Union, he was transferred to policing in Holland. When the war was over, he was detained briefly by the British military and then returned to police service.

“We came to the question: what to do with the women and children? I decided to find a clear solution here as well. I did not consider myself justified to exterminate the men... and allow the avengers of our sons and grandsons in the form of their children to grow up.”

Heinrich Himmler talking to SS officers in Posen, 6 October 1943

Fact File

Members of Police Battalion 322 maintained close private relations after the war, holding social evenings into the 1960s.

Only six defendants of Police Battalion 309 were found guilty. Three were sentenced to life imprisonment; the other three were convicted and released without punishment.

Six of the twelve sub-trials conducted by the Nuremberg Military Tribunal between 1946-1948 included senior perpetrators of the Nazi mass murder programme:

- Doctors’ Trial: 23 defendants, 17 convictions
- Judges’ Trial: 10 defendants, 4 convictions
- IG Farben Trial: 13 defendants, 10 convictions
- Einsatzgruppen Trial: 24 defendants, 24 convictions
- Krupp Trial: 12 defendants, 1 conviction
- Ministries Trial: 21 defendants, 19 convictions

No German soldier, police officer or member of the SS received particularly harsh punishment for refusing to kill Jewish people.

Talking Point

Was it a fair defence for officers involved in killing civilians to say that they were ‘following orders’?

For Further Reading

Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, 1996.

Irena Steinfeldt, *How was it Humanly Possible?*, 2002

Wendy Whitworth (ed.), *Survival: Holocaust Survivors Tell Their Story*, 2003.

Fascism in Britain in the 1930s

The Battle of Cable Street

“I said I was at the Battle of Cable Street. But that was not literally true... I never had a chance to get within a mile... The protest at Cable Street... was an all-London event.”

Reg Weston, eyewitness

Around the same time that the Nazis were ascending to power in Germany, Fascism was also growing in Britain. Oswald Mosley became the youngest Member of Parliament when he won the seat for Harrow for the Conservatives in 1918. He served as a Conservative, Independent and Independent Labour Party MP at various times during the 1920s before forming his own fascist-leaning New Party. When he lost his seat in 1931, Mosley went on a study tour of European fascist movements, including that of Mussolini.

British Union of Fascists

Mosley created the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in 1932 in an attempt to unify British fascists. The BUF was anti-Communist and protectionist.

Like its counterpart movements, the BUF was xenophobic and antisemitic. Although the party was losing support by June 1936, its members held a big rally in Victoria Park in the East End of London. They intended to besiege the East End through street-corner meetings, fire-

bombings, racist abuse and physical attacks as well as shattering the windows of Jewish shops.

Cable Street March

In late September 1936, the BUF announced that it intended to put on a show of strength on the afternoon of Sunday 4 October, aiming to intimidate the organised working class and especially the local Jewish community. Fascists in uniform would assemble in military formation at Royal Mint Street. There they would be reviewed by their leader before marching in separate units to four meetings in East London.

In response to this provocation, the Jewish People's Council organised a petition, calling for the march to be banned. Having gathered 100,000 signatures in 48 hours, the Council presented the petition to the Home Office on Friday 2 October. The Home Secretary refused to stop the march.

The BUF were due to assemble in Royal Mint Street at 2.30p.m.



Battle of Cable Street, 4 October 1936. Anti-fascists fleeing from police moving to dismantle barricades.

© The Jewish Museum, London

Bill Fishman

Professor Bill Fishman was 15 years old on the day of the Cable Street march. He recalls: “Suddenly a barricade was erected there and they put an old lorry in the middle of the road and old mattresses. The people on the top of the flats, whom we were later told were mainly Irish Catholic women, were throwing rubbish onto the police. We were all side by side. I was moved to tears to see bearded Jews and Irish Catholic dockers standing up to stop Mosley. I shall never forget that as long as I live, how working-class people could get together to oppose the evil of racism.”

© The Holocaust Centre and David Parry

Daily Herald Report

The *Daily Herald* reported that up to 300,000 anti-fascists had gathered, with 50,000 crammed around Gardner's Corner alone. As many as 10,000 police were drafted in from all over London and deployed to protect the fascist march in what was obviously a well-prepared battle-plan, according to the *Daily Herald's* estimates.

“Outside Mark Lane station the crowd closed in on six of Mosley's men, and before the police could do anything three of the Fascists had been knocked down and were bleeding profusely from head-wounds. One of them had been hit on the head with a bottle. Several men and women were hurt in a fierce exchange of blows... But the police precautions enabled the rest of the Fascists to assemble unmolested. They formed in military formation, a column of 3,000 stretching for half a mile, with over 200 black-bloused women in the centre... The Blackshirts jeered back at distant booing. ‘The Yids, the Yids, we are going to get rid of the Yids,’ they chanted, or, ‘M-O-S-L-E-Y, we want Mosley,’ to which the crowd shouted back, ‘So do we, dead or alive.’”

Successful Protest

The confrontation between police and anti-fascists was concentrated on Cable Street, on the route of the fascists' march. Witnesses described the violence of the scene: “Barricades were built in the street, and packing cases, a lorry and a couple of carts, to say nothing of the contents of a builder's yard, were called into service to build it. Paving stones were torn up and broken into convenient sizes to serve as

ammunition, glasses and bottles were broken and the splintered glass ground into the road to impede the passage of the mounted. The police tried to stop these operations but were powerless to do so.”

Richard Price and Martin Sullivan, “The Battle of Cable Street: Myths and Realities,” *Workers News*, March-April 1994.



Sir Oswald Mosley is saluted by Blackshirts.

© Getty Images

“The Battle of Cable Street is a history lesson for us all. People as people must get together and stop racism and antisemitism so people can lead an ordinary life and develop their own ideas and religions.”

Eyewitness Max Levitas, quoted in *The Guardian*, 30 September 2006

Fact File

- When Hitler joined the Nazi party, he was the 53rd member. It was a small extremist movement, with little or no chance of being successful at the polls.
- Sir Oswald Mosley was reported to have 50,000 members of the British Union of Fascists.
- The British Union of Fascists had the backing of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* until the party fell from popular support.
- In 2006 there were 50,000 reported hate crimes in the UK.
- The British crime survey puts the figure at 260,000, including unreported incidents.
- Most hate crimes are committed by young white males under the age of 30, who live locally to their victim.

Talking Point

Where is the line between freedom of speech and hate crime?

For Further Reading

Tony Kushner and Nadia Valman (eds.), *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society*, 2000.

M. Turnbull, “The Public Order Act 1936,” *Labour Review*, January 1978.

William J. Fishman, “A People's Journey: The Battle Of Cable Street (October 4th 1936),” *History From Below, Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology*, 1985.

Britain under Nazi Occupation

Channel Islands

“Many are now in a most repulsive condition. All are treated like cattle by their German taskmasters...[they are] at work on a light railway... It is repulsive to note the squalor of these poor wretches.”

The Reverend Douglas Ord, Diary, April 1942, describing slave labourers working on the Islands.

In June 1940, the Channel Islands were occupied. British sovereign territory was subjected to Nazi law for the first time.

Persecution

The history of persecution on the Islands is complicated, because many who suffered there were not Channel Islanders' residents. Fearing Nazi occupation, many of the Jews living there left before June 1940, leaving a very small Jewish population on the islands. Once the Germans had established themselves, they imported slave labour from France and other European countries, including Jews and other persecuted groups.

Racist Ideology

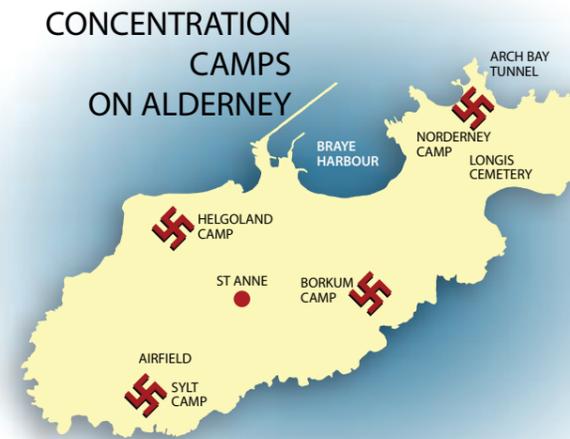
As in other occupied territories, the Nazis went to considerable effort to influence islanders with racist ideology and antisemitism. The local press published antisemitic articles and the film *The Jew Süss* was adapted for a British audience with English subtitles. Censorship of Jewish books and musical recitals followed exactly the same pattern as in Nazi Germany.

Measures against the Jews

The civilian authorities were mainly involved in bureaucratic administration. There is no evidence that they carried out deportations or that they agreed with Nazi policy. However, without the local administration, the Nazis would not have been able to govern the Islands. Local officials became part of the infrastructure of the Third Reich.

There was a series of 'Orders Relating to Measures against the Jews' on the Channel Islands, which were formally submitted through the civilian courts. They included orders for Jews to register with the police; to declare their assets to the Bailiff, which were then sold to Aryans; to declare their parentage according to the Nuremberg laws; to forbid trade; to curtail their right to employment; to introduce a curfew; to wear the yellow star; to forbid their participation in social and cultural life.

On 21 April 1942, the deportation of the tiny Jewish community of the Channel Islands began. The deportees' final destination was Auschwitz-Birkenau. Numbers of victims are hard to quantify because of the movement between the Islands and the mainland. Very few Jews



survived the occupation and their subsequent deportation to the camps. The occupation of the Channel Islands was run in exactly the same way as in other occupied countries, the local residents and civil administration were fully and successfully utilised to operate Nazi rule.

“... no Jew was to be engaged as a 'higher official or as an employee who comes into contact with customers' and Jewish employees should 'be dismissed and replaced by non-Jewish employees'.”

'The Third Order' of Measures against the Jews on the Channel Islands, June 1941.

Forced Labour on the Islands

The German armed forces were building fortifications on the Islands because they were vulnerable to British attack. In the spring of 1941, the Germans began a large-scale construction programme and needed labour. Forced and slave labourers were taken to the island for the project. Jews from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Alsace-Lorraine were among labourers used for tunnelling underground to build the underground hospital.

Four camps were established across the island of Alderney: Norderney, Sylt, Helgoland and Bokum. Sylt camp was ruled by the notorious *Totenkopf* section of the SS and was a sub-camp of Neuengamme concentration camp in Germany. The first 1,000 prisoners taken to the camp included Russian, Polish, Dutch, Czech, French and German political prisoners. Jews from Paris were taken to the island of Alderney.

Conditions in the camps were poor, with insufficient nutrition provided for the work being carried out. Starvation and disease were predictably high. Summary beatings and cruelty followed the pattern of all other Nazi camps. Life expectancy for forced labourers in the Channel Islands camps was calculated at nine months on average. Jewish forced labourers had their own section at the Norderney camp, where they were officially allocated lighter rations than other prisoners, meaning the chances of survival were very low.

After D-Day there were still forced labourers left on the Channel Islands and orders were issued to deport them. As late as 3 July 1944, the Nazis were trying to remove prisoners. Tragically, the *SS Minotaure*, evacuating 500 prisoners, was hit by British torpedoes after failing to obey an order to stop. Half of the prisoners died on board the vessel.

Fact File

- 22 Jersey residents died in concentration camps.
- 620 Channel Islanders were deported.
- 2,220 British-born Channel Islanders were deported.
- 4,000 Islanders were imprisoned.
- 609 slave labourers died on the Channel Islands.
- 1,000 French Jews were sent to Alderney.



A group of people in Midvale Road, Jersey, including five German soldiers in uniform and Mrs Robins, a well-known collaborator.
© Société Jersiaise

Talking Point

What can be learned from the reaction of Britons living on the Channel Islands to the German occupation?

“Alderney left a mark on the lives of all of us. Each time I go to bed... I remember things that happened on Alderney. I want people to know what it was like and to remember what happened.”

Kirill Nevrov, former forced labourer at Norderney camp, Alderney, quoted in Madeleine Bunting, *The Model Occupation*.



Spanish Republican Forced Workers of the Organisation Todt in Jersey. Jersey War Tunnels



A British policeman holds the car door as Major-Doctor Lanz, the first German Kommandant, alights outside his HQ at the former Channel Islands hotel, St Peter Port, Guernsey.
The Imperial War Museum

For Further Reading

- Madeleine Bunting, *The Model Occupation, The Channel Islands under German Rule 1940-45*, 1995.
- Frederick Cohen, *The Jews in the Channel Islands during the German Occupation 1940-1945*, 1998.
- Tom Freeman-Keel, *From Auschwitz to Alderney and Beyond*, 1996.

Web Links

www.jerseywartunnels.com

Rule by Proxy

The Occupation of France

“Germany was not at the origin of the anti-Jewish legislation of Vichy. That legislation was spontaneous and autonomous.”

Chief of Staff, Vichy regime.

The Nazi campaign to dominate Europe meant that through successive waves of occupation, German armed forces conquered countries – until most of Europe was under their control. Each time the Nazis took power, they enforced their rule in conjunction with local civilian structures and existing laws. They needed the local infrastructure and personnel. They could rule Europe, but not run it.

France Divided

During the Nazi Occupation of France, there was a shameful effort on the part of French authorities to comply with anti-Jewish regulations introduced by the Nazis. The Germans invaded in May 1940. The following month, it was agreed that France would be divided into two parts – the occupied North and the unoccupied South. Under the leadership of Marshal Philippe Pétain, the Vichy regime was set up. It nominally administered the whole of France, while accepting the German occupation of the North. In practice, the Nazis ruled the North and strongly influenced the South. Shortly after the occupation, Pétain met with Hitler. The two shook hands on the structure. Pétain stated publicly, “I enter today on the path of collaboration.”

The Jews of Vichy France

A month before Pétain even had the chance to meet with Hitler, he introduced the ‘Statute on Jews’. This was discriminatory Vichy legislation which took away the citizenship of French Jews and made them second-class citizens. The statute introduced the rule of wearing a yellow star and also excluded Jews from the armed forces, the arts and professional life.

There was also an instruction to register the Jews. Jews were asked to declare themselves to their local police office. The Prefecture of Police introduced a new filing system to document the 150,000 unsuspecting people who presented themselves. The colour-coded files were cross-referenced by nationality, profession and street, making follow-up actions – such as the confiscation of telephones and radios – easy to conduct. The files were then handed over to the Gestapo, who later used them for selecting which people to deport and where to find them.

A network of detention centres was established across French territory. Only one concentration camp was set up by the Germans, at Natzweiler. The rest were French-built and French-run. The Vichy regime also established 11 labour camps for Jews in Algeria and Morocco.

The 1942 Round-Up

The main camp established in 1941 for the deportation of the Jews was at Drancy, directed by SS Officer Alois Brunner.

Following an instruction from the Gestapo, in July 1942 the French police arrested 12,884 Jews from around Paris, using the data they had collected. This number included 4,051 children – which the Gestapo had not asked for. They were all sent to the transit camp at Drancy. From there, they were deported to Auschwitz.

Deportations continued after this, until by the end of the German occupation the Vichy Government had assisted with the deportation of 76,000 Jews to German extermination camps. Only 2,500 survived the war.



Round-up of 20 August 1941: Jews arrested in Paris, surrounded by French police and Germans. Afterwards they were transferred to Drancy.

© Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.



Round-up of 20 August 1941, Paris: French police and German officers supervise the boarding of arrested Jews onto trams.
© USHMM, courtesy of Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris

Children of Izieu



Jewish refugee children on the terrace of the children's home in Izieu.
© USHMM, courtesy of Diane Popowski Fenster

The Jewish orphanage at Izieu shows the detail that locals and the Nazis went into, to ensure that Jews were rounded up. In April 1944, three vehicles pulled up in front of the orphanage. The Gestapo, under the direction of Klaus Barbie, entered the orphanage and forcibly removed the 44 children and their seven supervisors, throwing the crying and terrified children onto the trucks.

The children were shipped directly to Drancy, then put on the first available train to Auschwitz. Forty-two children and five adults were gassed on arrival.

The one survivor of Auschwitz recounted at Barbie's trial, “I asked myself where were the children who arrived with us? In the camp there wasn't a single child to be seen. Then those who had been there for a while informed us of the reality.”

Le Chambon

While the French authorities were focussed on ensuring that racial laws and antisemitic measures were in place, there were some individual acts of bravery that stand out. In Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in southern France, André and Magda Trocmé coordinated a campaign in the town to rescue Jews and other refugees. They arranged hiding places in private homes, farms and community buildings around the town. They also coordinated ration cards and false documents. When Nazi patrols arrived, the Jews would hide or leave the village, returning when it was safe again. Some of the residents paid a high price. The Gestapo arrested André's cousin, Professor Daniel Trocmé, who was running two orphanages for refugee children. He was deported and eventually murdered at Majdanek concentration camp in Poland.

The people of Le Chambon rescued more than 3,000 Jews.



Pastor André Trocmé (right) and Edouard Theis during their imprisonment in the Saint-Paul d'Eyjeaux internment camp after their arrest for sheltering Jewish refugees in January 1942.

© USHMM, courtesy of Jacqueline Gregory

Fact File

- 50 detention centres were built by the Vichy regime.
- There was 1 German concentration camp in France – Natzweiler.
- There were 11 Vichy-built labour camps in Algeria and Morocco.
- 76,000 Jews were deported, mainly to Auschwitz.
- 5,000 Spaniards were deported from France to Mauthausen.
- 3,000 Frenchmen applied to become members of the SS when the Vichy regime advertised the opportunity in 1943.

Talking Points

Most Jews did not come into contact with uniformed Nazis prior to leaving French soil. What does that say about the French authorities?

What does the village of Le Chambon illustrate about society acting together to prevent an action?

For Further Reading

Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and the Ukraine, 1941-1944*, 2000.

Serge Klarsfeld, *The Children of Izieu: A Human Tragedy*, 1985.

Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 1981.

“... all this French activity occurred largely without German Diktat. The French did it mostly on their own, with a zestful logical thoroughness that often seems to defy easy explanations...”

Richard Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, 1996.

Outstanding Courage

Ordinary People who Saved Lives

“Acts of heroic altruism are not the exclusive province of larger-than-life figures such as Mahatma Gandhi... rather they are the manifestation of ordinary people whose moral courage is born out of the routine ways in which they live their lives.”

Samuel Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*

Kindertransport

After *Kristallnacht*, the British Jewish Refugee Committee appealed to MPs about the plight of children and Parliament agreed to admit an unspecified number to England. Some 10,000 children travelled here on the *Kindertransport* trains. The British were not risking their lives to save these children, but ordinary people opened their homes and made a great effort to save them.

Righteous Among The Nations

Poland	6,004
Netherlands	4,767
France	2,740
Ukraine	2,185
Belgium	1,443
Hungary	685
Lithuania	693
Belarus	576
Slovakia	465
Germany	443
Italy	417
Greece	271
Yugoslavia (Serbia)	124
Russia	124
Czech Republic	118
Croatia	106
Latvia	103
Austria	85
Moldova	73
Albania	63
Romania	53
Switzerland	38
Bosnia	35
Norway	41
Denmark	21
Bulgaria	17
Great Britain (incl. Scotland)	13
Sweden	9
Macedonia	10
Armenia	10
Slovenia	6
Spain	3
Estonia	3
China	2
USA	3
Brazil	2
One of each: Chile, Japan, Luxembourg, Portugal, Turkey, Georgia (Gruzia)	7
Total Persons	21,758

as at Jan 2007, © Yad Vashem

In Jerusalem there is an avenue of olive trees at the Holocaust memorial museum, Yad Vashem. Each tree is dedicated to one person who has been awarded the ‘Righteous among the Nations’ award. It recognises those people who, for no financial or personal gain, actively tried to help a Jewish person or persons to avoid deportation and death.

Taking Risks

To attempt to save a Jewish person during the Nazi period was extremely dangerous. In some countries, those caught were liable to pay with their lives. The threat also extended to their family. Despite the risks, thousands of people were prepared to make the sacrifice, saving tens of thousands of lives. To date, over 22,000 people have been recognised as Righteous in this way. There are likely to be many whose acts were never known and will never be recognised.

At a time in history when the perpetrators of violence and genocide succeeded and most people stood by, the acts carried out by this small, but significant, group of people are particularly important. Their acts are actions and attitudes to inspire to. They were selfless, humane and proactive. They did not wait for others to do something, but took history into their own hands and used their moral conviction. They understood the risk. They risked their lives.

Ordinary Heroes

Historians have observed that there was no ‘typical’ rescuer during the Holocaust. They were present right across the continent and in every walk of life. Most had a sense of moral conviction, and a significant number had religious values; but neither were necessary, or even deemed important, by the rescuers themselves. Very few were heroes in any other context.

In the same way that perpetrators were often ordinary people committing extraordinarily evil acts, so too the rescuers were ordinary people, carrying out extraordinarily courageous acts. The Holocaust presents us with a crucial question: what makes an ordinary person do something to help his fellow human being?

Police Chief Paul Grüninger



© Paul Grüninger Foundation

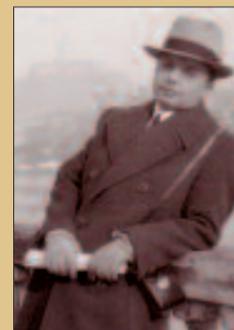
Switzerland had closed its borders to Jewish refugees. Paul Grüninger (1891-1972) became commander of the St.Gallen police force, Switzerland, in 1938. He applied

directives in a way that allowed Jews to cross the border. He falsified official documents to prevent expulsions, sent writs of summons for people to appear in court and invitations to inmates of Dachau concentration camp to allow them to travel to Switzerland. He closed his eyes to fake visas. Grüninger was suspended from his duties in April 1939, dismissed from the service and then fined on the grounds of violating official duties.

Grüninger is estimated to have given between 2,000-3,000 Jews safe passage into Switzerland, thereby avoiding their otherwise certain death.

Giovanni Palatucci

Giovanni Palatucci was an Italian police official who saved thousands of Jews from deportation. In 1940 he was head of the ‘Foreigners Office’ in Fiume. He successfully destroyed the records of 5,000 Jews living in the town and issued them with false papers. He then sent them to a large internment camp in southern Italy protected by his uncle, the



© Comitato Palatucci Campagna (SA)

Catholic bishop of Campagna. When Italy capitulated to the Nazis, he continued his work clandestinely while remaining in post, but he was discovered. He was arrested in 1944 and sent to Dachau concentration camp, where he died before the liberation.

The White Rose

The White Rose was a non-violent German resistance movement formed in 1942 by a group of university students and their Professor. They distributed anti-Nazi leaflets urging opposition to Hitler. They were arrested by the Gestapo, convicted and executed in 1943.

Joint Action in Denmark



Jews crossing the strait between Denmark and Sweden as part of the rescue of Danish Jewry. USHMM, courtesy of Frihedsmuseet

There were 8,000 Jews living in Denmark. When the German authorities gave the order for Danish Jews to be arrested and deported, many Danes and Swedes took part in a joint effort to save them by taking them across the straits in small boats. Following a tip-off by a German diplomat, an announcement was made in the synagogues at the Jewish New Year services. Jews were taken in small groups to the coast and ferried across the ten miles of water – in fishing boats, rowing boats and even kayaks. Freight crates on regular ferries were broken into and resealed with Jews inside. Through this effort, over 90% of all the Jews of Denmark avoided deportation. The Danish coastguards and police cooperated with the rescue; otherwise German security services would have been alerted. The Danish Resistance Movement was honoured for this remarkably well-coordinated and courageous act.



Part of Schindler's list, as reconstructed in 1945. German industrialist Oskar Schindler ran an enamel works using slave labour from the nearby Plaszow camp near Krakow. His ‘list’ comprised 800 workers, whom he treated fairly and fought hard to keep alive. He was recognised in 1967.

Yad Vashem

Fact File

- 100 false documents were issued to Jews by Angelos Evert, head of Athens Police.
- 13 British people have been recognized for saving Jews.
- 1,500 Japanese visas were issued to Jews in Lithuania by diplomat Sempo Sugihara.
- Armin Wegner was given the award for being the only known person to protest openly and directly to Hitler on the occasion of the first anti-Jewish boycott in 1933. He did not save any Jews. He did use his voice.

Talking Point

Which is the most challenging question: ‘Why were there so few rescuers?’ or ‘How were there so many rescuers?’

“Among them are clerics and lay persons, intellectuals and illiterates, farmers and labourers, side by side with white collar workers, professionals, civil servants, men in uniforms, as well as housewives, domestics and the unemployed.”

Mordechai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous*

For Further Reading

Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous, The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust*, 2003.

Mordechai Paldiel, *The Path of the Righteous: Gentile Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, 1993.

Web Links

www.yadvashem.org

Path to Genocide

A Step-by-Step Process



Under the Government of Pol Pot (1975-1979), approximately 1.7 million Cambodians were killed through political executions, starvation and forced labour. Identity photos taken on arrival at Toul Sleng prison.

© Photo Archive Group

Genocide is “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction...”

From the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948.

Genocide never happens by chance. It is a slow process that begins with stereotypes and ideas about ‘the other’. Ideas become ideologies, which in turn spread hatred. It requires leaders and people from all walks of life to obey them. It takes the apparatus of state, the power of propaganda, and the majority to do nothing. It is never spontaneous. It is planned, coordinated and deadly.

100 Years of Genocide

Before and since the Holocaust, there have been many acts of mass violence. Historians estimate that in excess of 200 million civilians lost their lives in the twentieth century through state-sponsored acts of violence. Some of these violent acts were political purges; others were crimes against humanity, war crimes and acts of aggression. Most emerged out of troubled times of transition, change or the struggle for power, when controlling or killing part of the population became central to the ideology.

In Namibia, Armenia, Nazi Germany, Cambodia, Bosnia, East Timor, Rwanda and Darfur, acts of genocide were committed which resulted in the deaths of millions of people because of their ethnic, racial or religious background. This repeated means of attempting to eliminate groups was named ‘genocide’. Today there are specific laws and specialist genocide courts to deal with its existence and persistence in human activity.

“Never be victim, never be a perpetrator and never, never be a bystander.”

Yehuda Bauer, Professor of Holocaust Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Prevention

When genocide occurs, there are clear patterns of behaviour which can be identified early. Substantial research has gone into recognising the warning signs. One thing which has become clear is that stable, open societies that respect human rights and promote equality, civil society and democratic principles are less likely to traverse the road to genocide. Unstable societies, which are divided, with suspicion and misunderstanding between groups, are more likely to begin a process that at its extreme results in genocide.

The key to prevention in stable societies is not to look for the signs of genocide, but rather to promote respect, equality and positive relationships between individual groups. When you think of others in your circle and promote respect of the values of all, society becomes more cohesive because everyone shares the same values. That is what prevents the fragmentation, jealousy and hatred that so often fuel the path to genocide.

Genocide was apparently an impossibility in the Germany of 1920. Twenty years later, through a series of stages, Germany and its collaborators had perpetrated the definitive genocide.

Raphael Lemkin

Raphael Lemkin was a Polish Jewish lawyer. Before World War II, Lemkin was disturbed by the Armenian genocide. He campaigned in the League of Nations to stop what he described as “barbarity”. In 1943 he coined the term ‘genocide’. *Genos* is the Greek for family or group and *-cide* is Latin for killing. Lemkin then worked towards the creation of new international laws to define, identify,



© Corbis

punish and prevent the crime of genocide. During the Holocaust, 49 members of Lemkin’s own family were murdered.

Rwanda

Hutus and Tutsis had lived alongside each other in Rwanda for centuries. They had different ethnic backgrounds, but there was little distinction between them. The Hutus were mainly agricultural; the Tutsis were more likely to herd animals. There were ‘tribes’, but the tribes were mixed and divided by kingdoms. There was more likely to be conflict between kingdoms than between tribes. Ethnic hatred did not exist.

In the twentieth century, Rwanda was colonised first by the Germans, then by the Belgians. The colonisers needed a middle class. The Belgians used ethnicity to divide and rule, promoting the Tutsis. They realised that they had created a problem and switched their policy before Rwanda’s independence in 1962. They left the Hutus, who were angry and seeking revenge, in power. Violence broke out and continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The Tutsis were targeted; there was ethnic cleansing and bloodshed. Many left as refugees.

‘Hutu Power’ was the ideology which took hold in Rwanda. It asserted that the Tutsis were a threat and needed to be eliminated like ‘cockroaches’. Tutsi children were ostracised, certain professions were barred to Tutsis, higher education stopped. Hutu Power created a state for the Hutus at the expense of the Tutsis.

In 1990, a rebel army of former refugees led by the current president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, invaded the north of the country. For several years there was unrest and persecution, as peace was negotiated. On the day the peace deal was signed, 6 April 1994, a plane carrying the then president, Juvénal Habyarimana, was shot down and all-out genocide began. Militia, who had been training for months, blocked the roads and organised a systematic purge of every neighbourhood.

One hundred days later, the rebel army was successful in removing the Hutu Government and stopping the bloodshed. One million people had been murdered. The UN had been warned about the genocide, but failed to respond to the warnings. While the genocide went on, the world watched it happen.



Ntarama, Rwanda: While able-bodied males attempted to stop the genocidaires, women, children and the elderly in Bugesera fled to the church. Hand grenades were thrown into the building. Stunned victims were hacked or shot to death. Thousands were murdered around the church.

© James Smith, Aegis Trust



Burning village in Darfur, 2005

Brian Steidle and Aegis Trust

Darfur

Darfur is an area the size of France in the western region of Sudan. It is mainly desert inhabited by black African Muslims. Arab militia, supported by the Government of Sudan, have been attacking villages and towns in the region, driving the inhabitants out of the territory. There has been widespread killing and rape. Over 4m have been displaced. More than 250,000 people have been killed. There is no figure for the victims of systematic rape. At the time of going to press, there have been promises of a UN force, but it is unlikely to have sufficient resources to be effective. The UK has been sending asylum seekers from Darfur back to Sudan.

Armenia



During the First World War, the Turkish regime conducted a programme of ethnic cleansing and mass murder of the Armenian community. It resulted in a million Armenians losing their lives through starvation, hangings, shootings and in the network of concentration camps they established. Group of Armenian deportees, 1915-16.

© Armenian National Institute



A riot policeman hits a woman in downtown Nairobi as supporters of Kenya’s Opposition take to the streets on 16 January 2008.

© Shaul Schwarz/Getty Images

Fact File

1904	65,000 Hereros in Namibia
1916-18	1,000,000 Armenians
1939-1945	6,000,000 Jews in the Holocaust
1939-1945	5,000,000 Non-Jewish victims of the Nazis
1975-1979	1,700,000 Cambodians
1994	1,000,000 Rwandans
1992-1995	250,000 Bosnians
2004-2007	250,000 Darfuris

Talking Points

When genocide occurs, the army and police are almost always used as an instrument of the perpetrators. How can those organisations ensure that they never face the dilemma of being asked to carry out the persecution of groups within society?

If you were asked to carry out an action which you felt wronged a group or an individual because of his or her background, what would you do?

“I ask you, someone, anyone, USA, UN, UK, please anyone, do what you can to help those people...”

Adam Hussain, survivor of Darfur massacre.

For Further Reading

Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide*, 2004.
Wendy Whitworth (ed.), *We Survived: Genocide in Rwanda*, 2006.

Web Links

www.aegistrust.org

Challenges for Policing Today

Key Questions

The Holocaust seems distant. In some regards, society has moved forward in the intervening years. International legislation to prevent and punish genocide has been introduced. There are now also Conventions on human rights, torture and refugees.

There is domestic legislation on equality, incitement to racial hatred and hate crime. Policing has advanced, too. Technology, communications and data access have improved, as has the way in which police duties are carried out. There is a greater sensitivity and awareness about vulnerable communities. We are also alert to the fact that there is the real possibility of racism and prejudice taking root on the streets – and even among officers in service. We take active steps to combat that.

Yet we live in a finely balanced society with many vulnerable groups. Some are disaffected, others disenfranchised, others too weak to have an effective voice. There are barriers between communities and suspicions on all sides. Those who are trapped in crisis have a tendency to look for extreme – and sometimes criminal – answers to their sense of disempowerment. This, in turn, places them at odds with the authorities, further alienating them from a sense of belonging.

The creation of a racist state, the breakdown of civil values and the implementation of genocidal ideas are not events that anyone wants to see as a remote possibility, let alone see repeated. To avoid this possibility, causes need to be understood. Just as diet and exercise are recognised to support a healthy body and

limit the onset of disease, so, too, a healthy society is a way of life, made up of small acts over a long period of time. Not paying attention to daily details undermines long-term health and stability.

The Holocaust is a clear and unequivocal warning about causes. Antisemitism, fascist ideology, national crisis, international monetary crisis and poor community relations were sufficiently lethal, when combined, to result in the mass murder of the Jews.

This page identifies some areas you may want to think more about. It poses some unresolved dilemmas. They are intended to start a process, which, over time, will enhance the thinking behind your policing in practice.



Skinheads from the far-right National Front Party march through Lewisham under the watchful eye of a black police officer, May 2001.
© Tom Stoddart/Getty Images



Muslim woman on an advertising billboard in Birmingham's Bordesley Green area, near the location of anti-terror raids in which nine men were arrested on 31 January 2007.
© Christopher Furlong/Getty Images



Sign saying 'Asian Resource Centre' seen behind smashed glass, Birmingham, 23 October 2005.
© Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images

Racism

Incitement to racial hatred is an offence. It is a deliberate attempt to provoke hatred of a racial group. Racism takes a range of forms. Its most visible form – verbal or violent abuse – is not the most prevalent. Racism manifests itself through prejudicial behaviour and attitudes. You will find it at home, at work and on the streets. Be outspoken when you detect it.



Swastika daubed on a Jewish gravestone in Eastham Jewish cemetery, London, 16 June 2005.
© Graeme Robertson/Getty Images

Antisemitism

Antisemitism is the hatred of Jews. Attacks on Jewish community property are increasing. Such attacks are not thoughtless vandalism. They represent an attack on the identity of Jewish people, wherever they are. Take time to get to know people in your own Jewish community.

Islamophobia

Islamophobia is the hatred of Muslims. Underlying attitudes towards Muslims include uncertainty, fear and misunderstanding. Recent violence perpetrated in the name of Islam only indicates that those who committed the crimes are guilty of terrorism. Take time to meet people in your Muslim community and read about Islam, its traditions and culture.

Migrant Workers

The influx of migrant workers from Eastern Europe is creating new communities within our communities. As they become established, migrant workers are open to resentment and accusations of undermining the stability of the local populace. Remember, migrants today are citizens tomorrow. Think about how to keep this principle.

Asylum Seekers

The right to asylum is an important tenet of life in our country. It clearly states that those fleeing persecution can know for sure that they can seek safety here. Recent abuses of the system have undermined the principle. Imagine running for your life.

Travellers

In May 2003, Johnny Delaney was killed in Liverpool in a racist attack. He was a traveller. The killers received short sentences because it was 'difficult' to identify what was said, and by whom, during the attack. Take time to get to know travellers' culture and concerns.

Homophobia and Transphobia

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community have consistently been marginalised. Until recently, promotion of their way of life was illegal. Discrimination and attacks against them continue today. Take time to understand individuals.



Protester holding a sign claiming exploitation and discrimination against migrant workers, Trafalgar Square, London, 7 May 2007.
© Matt Cardy/Getty Images



Young children join protesters from G8 Alternatives outside Dungavel Detention Centre, Scotland, 5 July 2005.
© Christopher Furlong/Getty Images



Travellers attend the annual Appleby horse fair, 8 June 2006.
© Christopher Furlong/Getty Images



A drag queen talks to a policeman during the Gay Pride '97 march in central London.
© Paul Vicente/AFP/Getty Images



“Policing today has many challenges in which officers have to make difficult judgement calls in sensitive areas. What is vitally important is that the police service acts with integrity, discretion and sensitivity. This responsibility lies with every officer. Whenever we take action, there is another human being on the end of that action, and the way we treat them reflects on who we are as individuals and as a police service as a whole.”

Nick Hardwick, Chairman, Independent Police Complaints Commission

Armed police patrolling Downing Street, 19 July 2005.

© Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images

Community Cohesion

Religion, colour, culture, language, national origins, generation and sects within religious groups are among the many ways in which people are differentiated. In some towns and cities, these natural and interesting differences between people become the basis of divided communities. The idea behind community cohesion is to recognise and respect difference, while working together to ensure that communities are not divided.

Your Responsibility

Helen Fein, a genocide scholar, said that genocide is only possible when the victim group is ‘outside your universe of moral obligation’. By this she means that if you consider the group as ‘them’ – and therefore not part of ‘us’ – when that group comes under attack, you do not feel obliged to intervene. Think about who is in your own universe of moral obligation. Once you have got past spouse, parents, children and close friends... who else would you act to help if you saw them suffering?

Issues

In service new issues emerge for debate. There are always new problems to address and policies and laws to implement. Some of these changes are proactive, some reactive. Subjects such as the DNA database of black men, stop and search criteria, identifying the potential perpetrators of extremist ideology, reducing terrorism etc. are all shaping how police will behave in future. These issues will be resolved at a senior level. Your role is to know where you stand personally on such issues, as well as carrying out the policy.



A police constable comforts a fellow officer after laying flowers for murdered colleague Sharon Beshenivsky, 19 November 2005.

© Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Democracy and Dictatorship

The German populace voted the Nazis into power. Democracy is only as good as the decision of the electorate. In Germany in the late 1920s there were extreme circumstances which persuaded many to vote for extreme movements. Both Nazi and Communist parties had a surge in popularity after the Wall Street Crash of 1929. The electorate was weary of mainstream politics, which appeared to have failed. They then took less notice of the detail of the ideology of National Socialism. Their desire for strong leadership and direction meant that they voted without understanding the consequences. Dictatorship only followed the decision of the people to give Hitler a mandate to rule.

Key Question: How do we ensure that we make informed choices?

Power and Persuasion

The Nazis ruled with a significant abuse of power from shortly after Hitler’s ascendancy to rule. Nazi structures were too overwhelming for the individual to counter. That said, one of their main tools was the power of persuasion. To succeed, the regime needed all sectors of German society to believe in its mission. Racist propaganda was a well-honed tool, but the real power in their persuasive tactic was providing a positive and popular ‘feel-good’ factor. For society to be transformed into a genocidal state, the majority of the populace have to feel that they benefit in some way, or that their livelihood is under threat. The Nazis successfully persuaded the population that they were under threat from the Jews. The justification for their removal was in place.

Key Question: How do we know when we are being persuaded to believe ideas and policies that are dangerous?

Orders and Choices

The Nazis were highly hierarchical. The Führer was precisely that – a leader. He was powerful and ruled with focused determination, much to the frustration of some of his senior staff. However, research has shown that there was a surprising amount of latitude for those who chose to exercise their conscience. On the one hand, some chose to apply Nazi ideals without orders. In the Rhineland, black children were sterilised by the local health authority, because they thought it would meet with approval. On the other hand, there is little evidence that soldiers who refused to carry out orders to kill civilians were sanctioned for their decision. It was not easy for an individual officer to approach superiors, precisely because of the hierarchy. But if their defence was that ‘they were following orders’, they chose to obey those orders. Only the Jews had no choice about their lives.

Key Question: How do you know when to obey an order and when to question it?

“With the continuing rise of extremist views in Britain and Europe, and increasing incidents of hate crime and racially motivated attacks, the lessons we can gain from the Holocaust are as relevant to police officers today as they have always been.”

Kevin McCudden, General Secretary, Police Diversity Trainers Network



Jamaica-born Sislín Fay Allen becomes the first black woman to join London’s Metropolitan Police Force, 15 February 1968.

© William Vanderson/Fox Photos/Getty Images

“I think we can recognise certain signs that can lead to genocide. But what was going on at the time? Were there any mass demonstration out in the streets? Were there any petitions being taken to the Houses of Parliament? We can’t disinvent Auschwitz... To prevent it happening again, we must recognise the signs before they become a reality and take away innocent lives.”

Susan Pollack, survivor of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen camps



“My baby sister was sent to the concentration camps by the local Dutch police. The Amsterdam police arrested the couple who had shielded me for two years and the husband died in Neuengamme concentration camp. The police officers involved would surely have passed as ordinary policemen in peacetime, but became efficient accessories to mass murder when circumstances changed.”

Martin Stern, Holocaust survivor

“Some four decades passed before people recognized the urgent need for lessons to be learned from the Holocaust. Being the worst example, the Holocaust is central to understanding the causes of the genocides that have occurred in many parts of the world since the end of the Second World War.”

Kitty Hart-Moxon, survivor of the Lublin ghetto, Auschwitz, Gross Rosen and Bergen-Belsen camps.



“More than half a century has passed since the events took place, but for me not a single day has gone by without reliving at some point the pain and the trauma. It just comes and haunts me. I still cannot come to terms with – let alone comprehend – the total, calculated destruction of the world I knew, and the life I was born into.”

Esther Brunstein, survivor of Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen camps



A British Police Officer and Community Support Officer (right) hand out information leaflets to residents near Foxton Road, Birmingham, 1 February 2007.
© Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

“We all make choices every day about how we carry out our duties. During the Holocaust, serving police officers chose to obey orders which led to the destruction of other human beings. Maybe they were unthinking in their actions. One unthinking officer served papers, another unthinking officer guarded the round-up, another unthinking officer helped load the trains. If we learn anything from this, it has to be: ‘Think about the consequences of your actions!’”

Superintendent John Morgan, Metropolitan Police