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DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

**A Department of Defense Guide
for Commemorative Observance**

This book was produced with the assistance
and cooperation of the International Center
for Holocaust Studies of the
Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1702005

Cover Illustration

Dedicated on May 30, 1985, the fifteen foot, two-ton bronze *Liberation* is the creation of the late Natan Rapoport, a world-renowned sculptor. The monument rests on a base of black marble and was cast at the Talix Foundry in Peekskill, New York. It was through the overwhelming generosity of thousands of New Jersey people of all ages and backgrounds who contributed their enormous resources of funds and skilled workmanship that the Liberty Park Monument Committee was able to deed this statue to the state of New Jersey.

This monument depicts an American soldier carrying a survivor out of a concentration camp. Their chests, that of rescuer and rescued, are joined, as if sharing one heart. Comfort and trust is reflected in the way the survivor's body rests in the arms of his savior.

It was the wish of Natan Rapoport to erect the monument in a place where children would view it and learn of the compassion and spirit of the American soldier who sacrificed for a fellow human being. Liberty State Park, which forms a triangle with the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, is a most appropriate site for *Liberation*, which now joins these two great symbols of liberty and freedom.

Liberation is a testament to the deeds of those ordinary Americans who freed Europe after World War II. We see a theme of the ultimate triumph of hope and the indestructibility of the human spirit. Furthermore, this monument commemorates the liberation of thousands of people from the Nazi concentration camps. Ultimately, it symbolizes the American soldier who participated in all conflict in a unique way, not for conquest or oppression, but for freedom and democracy. It is the strong helping the weak, not persecuting them. It is one human being supporting another. It is a tribute to all that America stands for: Freedom, compassion, and hope.

This monument was created as a reminder of the past and as an inspiration for generations of the future.

Days of Remembrance of The Victims of the Holocaust

**A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE GUIDE
FOR COMMEMORATIVE OBSERVANCE**



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 8, 1988



Greetings to the men and women of the Armed Forces as you take part in the Days of Remembrance.

Remembrance has a power for good that is all its own, and each of us must use that power as we contemplate the Holocaust—and its impact on the entire world. We must remember; we must do so for the millions lost, for those who survived, and for the relatives and the descendants of these many people. We must remember as well for humanity itself; in search of the purpose and the strength to utter the words, "Never Again!" and to live by them, as individuals, governments, and nations.

We know that remembrance is possible for both those who have witnessed and those who have heard. My generation cannot forget, but neither must any generation. This *Guide* from the Department of Defense introduces the history of the Holocaust and analyzes the lessons we must take from it about the human spirit and the good and evil ever before us. There are some in every age who choose evil, not good, and death, not life. If we truly remember, we will choose life.

Let us make our remembrance, then, always in the manner and the spirit of those who liberated the concentration camps and freed and cared for survivors. These soldiers came not in conquest but in compassion, not to kill and enslave but to free and to heal. Let our remembrance ever be thus and it will be a resolution true and noble— "Never Again".

May every blessing be yours.

Ronald Reagan



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

February 3, 1988

**A MESSAGE FROM
SECRETARY CARLUCCI**

I am pleased to provide this Department of Defense Guide for Commemorative Observance. It has been developed to assist you in the planning and conduct of a variety of meaningful programs in commemoration of the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Council establishes a one-week period each spring for Days of Remembrance observances. I already have advised the Service Secretaries that in 1988 the Days of Remembrance will be observed from Sunday, April 10, through Sunday, April 17. I encourage all Armed Forces personnel, who are entrusted with the security of our Nation's values, to join in observing these Days of Remembrance.

The Holocaust presents many universal lessons we would do well to recall through our observances of the Days of Remembrance. As we continue our celebration of the Bicentennial of the Constitution of the United States, these lessons give us the chance to reaffirm our belief in the worth and dignity of every individual and to strengthen our dedication to securing the blessings of liberty.



Carl C. Carlucci

Grateful acknowledgment is made for permission to reprint from the following:

In Evidence: Poems of the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps by Barbara Helfgott Hyett, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986; *The Liberators*, eds. Yaffa Eliach and Brana Gurewitsch, Center for Holocaust Studies Documentation and Research, 1981; *The Holocaust*, by Martin Gilbert, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1986; *Auschwitz and the Allies*, by Martin Gilbert, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981; "Bergen-Belsen, April 24, 1945," by Patrick Gordon Walker, *The New York Times*, 1985; *The Gunskirchen Lager*, ed. Fred R. Crawford, Emory University, 1980; *Survival in Auschwitz*, by Primo Levi, Orion Press, 1959; *Clouded Sky*, by Miklos Radnoti, translated by Steven Polgar, Stephen Berg, and S.J. Marks, Harper and Row, 1972; *The Men With the Pink Triangle*, by Heinz Heger, translated by David Fernbach, Alyson Publishers, 1980; *The Reawakening*, by Primo Levi, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1965; "Death Fugue," by Paul Celan, translated by Joachin Neugroschel, "Getting Lost in Nazi Germany," by Marvin Bell, "You Move Forward," by Thomas Sessler, from *Voices Within the Ark: The Jewish Modern Poets*, eds. Howard Schwartz and Anthony Rudolf, 1980, Avon Books; *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich*, by George Mosse, Grosset Universal Library, 1966; "Chorus of the Rescued," by Nelly Sachs, Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, Inc., 1967; *Strangers In Their Own Land: Young Jews In Germany and Austria Today*, by Peter Sichrovsky, English translation copyright 1986 by Basic Books, Inc., originally published in German as *Wir Wissen Nicht Was Morgen Wird, Wir Wissen Wohl Was Gestern War: Junge Juden in Deutschland und Osterreich*, copyright 1985 by Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Koln, reprinted by permission of Basic Books, Inc.; *The Nazi Doctors*, by Robert Jay Lifton, Basic Books, 1986; *Born Guilty: Children of Nazi Families*, by Peter Sichrovsky, translated by Jean Steinberg, Basic Books, 1988; *The Future of Immortality and Other Essays for a Nuclear Age*, by Robert Jay Lifton, Basic Books, 1987; *The Destruction of the European Jews*, by Raul Hilberg, Harper Torch Books, Harper and Row, 1961; *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, Hill and Wang, 1960; *Women in the Resistance and in the Holocaust*, by Vera Laska, Greenwood Press, 1983; *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, Tadeusz Borowski, Penguin, 1967; *History: A Novel*, by Elsa Morante, Vintage Books, 1984; *Ghetto Diary*, by Janusz Korczak, Schocken, 1978; *The Drowned and the Saved*, by Primo Levi, Simon and Schuster, 1988; "The Hidden Holocaust," by Theodore S. Hamerow, *Commentary*, 1985; *The Holocaust and Genocide*, Harry Furman editor in chief, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1983; *Responsa From the Holocaust*, by Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, Judaica Press, 1983; *They Thought They Were Free*, by Milton Mayer, University of Chicago Press, 1955; *The Terrible Secret*, by Walter Laqueur, Little, Brown 1980; *The Survivor*, by Terrence Des Pres, Oxford, 1976; *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust*, by Claude Lanzmann, Pantheon, 1985; *An Interrupted Life*, by Etty Hillesum, Pantheon, 1984; *Letters From Westerbork*, by Etty Hillesum, Pantheon, 1986; *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*, by Philip Hallie, Harper Colophon Books, 1979; *The Abandonment of the Jews*, by David S. Wyman, Pantheon, 1984; *The Rescuers: A Social-Psychological Study of Altruistic Behavior During the Nazi Era*, doctoral dissertation by Eva Fogelman, 1987; *The Courage to Care*, by Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, New York University Press, 1986.

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1. An Introductory Message to Commanders

In 1984, mindful of the fact that it was our Nation's military forces which first witnessed evidence of the Holocaust as they liberated the camps – and cognizant of the fact that those of us in uniform must remember both the dreams we stand for and the nightmares we stand against – the Secretary of Defense encouraged the Military Services to create appropriate observances for the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust. Since 1984, a Secretary of Defense memorandum to Service Secretaries encouraging local command observances has been issued annually.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Council (USHMC), established in 1980 by Public Law 86-388, coordinates an annual, national civic commemoration of the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust, which is held in the Capitol Rotunda. Local civilian ceremonies are conducted throughout the United States during the annual Days of Remembrance, proclaimed by the USHMC for a designated one-week period (Sunday to Sunday) each spring – between mid-April and mid-May.

National efforts to reaffirm the values of America must include the military. When our leaders meet at our annual national breakfast to remember the prayers and the dreams all Americans share, local command breakfasts are scheduled on ships and stations around the world. Now local military observances will link us to our nation's efforts to remember the Holocaust: Command ceremonies will be scheduled during the same week as our national ceremony in the U.S. Capitol and civilian observances throughout the land. Together we will remember the past so that together we might build a better future.

This Department of Defense Observance Guide was developed to assist your project officer and his or her committee in designing meaningful programs of remembrance. Included are suggestions for planning commemorative observances, a detailed planning checklist which can be tailored to local circumstances, and other helpful tools. The minimum level of observance is to conduct an appropriate program or ceremony some time during the week commemorating the Days of Remembrance. By way of illustration, a complete sample ceremony is provided.

The Observance Guide itself is designed to be useful to project officers/committees in programming a variety of commemorative events, not only ceremonies. The text of the Guide is divided into seven sections of readings, many of which have applications in a wide range of education programs. Local creativity is encouraged.

2. Background Information For Resource Personnel and Project Officers

A. Remembering The Holocaust

The result of this war will be the complete
annihilation of the Jews.

Adolf Hitler, 1942

Focus on the Specific

It is crucial to be specific about the definition of the Holocaust that is commemorated during the Days of Remembrance. As defined in 1979 by the President's Commission on the Holocaust:

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators as a central act of state during the Second World War; as night descended, millions of other peoples were swept into this net of death. It was a crime unique in the annals of human history, different not only in the quantity of violence – the sheer numbers killed – but in its manner and purpose as a mass criminal enterprise organized by the state against defenseless civilian populations. The decision to kill every Jew everywhere in Europe: the definition of Jew as target for death transcended all boundaries. There is evidence indicating that the Nazis intended ultimately to wipe out the Slavs and other peoples; had the war continued or had the Nazis triumphed, Jews might not have remained the final victims of Nazi genocide, but they were certainly its first.

The concept of the annihilation of an entire people, as distinguished from their subjugation, was unprecedented; never before in human history had genocide been an all-pervasive government policy unaffected by territorial or economic advantage and unchecked by moral or religious constraints. . .

In the Nazi program of genocide, Jews were the primary victims . . . destroyed only [because] they were Jews. Gypsies, too, were killed throughout Europe, but Gypsies who lived in the same place for two years or more were exempt. Many Polish children whose parents were killed were subjected to forced Germanization – that is, adoption by German families and assimilation into German culture – yet Jewish children were offered no such alternative to death.

The Holocaust stands as a tragedy for Europe, for Western Civilization, and for all the world. We must remember the facts of the Holocaust, and work to understand these facts.

Avoid the Abstract

To learn from history, we must record its events as accurately and as specifically as possible. We must use words with precision.

With the passage of time, the word, "Holocaust," has been used in many contexts, and has been given many meanings. For the purposes of recalling *the* Holocaust – the horror we remember and confront during the Days of Remembrance – we must remember what this event was, within the context of history. To do that, it is equally important to identify what it was not.

The Holocaust is not a term for:

- all the evils of the world;
- any tragedy of great magnitude, or widespread death and destruction;
- all war or all world wars;
- all the terrors of World War II – or all the many civilian deaths associated with that war, in cities throughout Europe.

B. Confronting The Holocaust

**Not all victims were Jews,
But all Jews were victims.**

Elie Wiesel

The Holocaust and Anti-Semitism

The Holocaust was an event contemporaneous in large part with World War II – but separate from it. In fact, the Final Solution often took precedence over the war effort – as trains, personnel, and material needed at the front were not allowed to be diverted from death camp assignments.

On a very basic level, therefore, the Holocaust must be confronted in terms of the specific evil of anti-Semitism – virulent hatred of the Jewish people and the Jewish faith. An immediate response to the Holocaust must be a commitment to combat anti-Semitism, wherever it might exist.

The Holocaust and Humanity

But, remembering the Holocaust as a specific event does not mean seeing it in isolation. On the contrary, it means beginning with the specific to give foundation to larger truths.

The Holocaust begins with the Jews as targets; but it takes in all humanity as victim. For, once the Holocaust began – once the plan took hold – values and morality fell victim just as surely as did lives.

Since the Holocaust, we need not theorize about human potential for evil: we need face up to it as fact. We need to see that progress cannot be measured in technology alone; history has shown that technology's successes can still go hand-in-hand with morality's failures.

From the Holocaust, we begin to understand the dangers of all forms of discrimination, prejudice, and bigotry: hatreds which, in their extreme forms, can lead to the world evils of mass slaughter and genocide – and, on the personal level, can endanger our ethical being.

From the Holocaust, we can learn of the way evil can become commonplace and acceptable so long as change is gradual – so that no one takes a stand until it is too late.

From the Holocaust, we can examine all the roles we humans play: victim or executioner; oppressor or liberator; collaborator or bystander; rescuer; witness.

From the Holocaust, we are reminded that humans can exhibit both depravity and heroism. The victims of Nazi persecution demonstrated tremendous spiritual fortitude and resistance. There was also the physical and spiritual heroism of those who risked their lives to save others.

From the Holocaust, we must remember the depths to which humanity might sink; but then we must remember, as well, the heights to which we might aspire.

C. Use of This Observance Guide

This Department of Defense Guide for Commemorative Observance has been developed to assist in the design and conduct of a wide range of programs for the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust. It is suggested that project officers and planning committees review the contents of this Guide as an initial step in the planning process. You will find that it contains useful background information plus many tools and materials which will prove of great assistance in your efforts.

Many of the resources listed in this Guide are available through local military sources or local libraries, schools, and other agencies. They are also available for rental or purchase through the International Center for Holocaust Studies; Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; 823 United Nations Plaza; New York, NY 10017-3560. In addition, a complete listing of materials can be obtained free of charge by writing to the Center.

3. Materials for Project Officers

Suggestions for Planning Commemorative Observances for the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust

The two most important elements to ensure a successful program or ceremony are planning and coordinating. Planning in detail and coordinating with command and support offices are critical – from the very first discussion of a program through the closing of the historical file.

This DOD Observance Guide includes a great deal of material to assist in the planning and conduct of Holocaust Observances. The tools in this section are provided as examples which should prove useful to the Project Officer and his or her Planning Committee.

It is suggested that planners make use of locally available resources in planning a Holocaust Observance. Members of the staff, library personnel, and people in the local community (to include Holocaust survivors) may be anxious to assist in the planning and/or conduct of an observance. Some survivors or their families may want to help in some way without actually participating in the ceremony.

As with all programs of a professional nature conducted on or with the assistance of a military installation, the planning process for a Days of Remembrance Observance must be conducted in a meticulous manner, and preferably with the use of milestones and detailed checklists. The following sample documents should be adjusted to fit local needs and situations so that the resulting program is appropriate for the military audience and setting – be it at a CONUS installation, in a school, at an overseas station, or aboard a ship at sea.

Project Officer Planning and Coordination Checklist

Note for the newly-appointed project officer: This checklist is, of necessity, general in nature. Nevertheless, it is based on extensive experience in the planning and conduct of a wide variety of commemorative observances within the Department of Defense. It is expected that you and your committee will need to tailor this checklist to meet local requirements, to conform with command guidance, and to be consistent with command or installation standing operating procedures. Items in the following checklist are *not* necessarily accomplished sequentially.

Checklist Items

Accomplished

Date Contact Notes

- | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| <p>1. Contact appropriate installation/local organizations (e.g., Public Affairs; Morale, Welfare and Recreation or similar organization; command section; Staff Chaplain, etc.) to compare calendar of events for installation/command activities during the time frame being considered for this observance. Inform staff members of your preliminary plans and look for interface with other local activities planned for the observance (either on the installation or in the local civilian community).</p> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <p>2. Determine availability of facilities to accommodate the program[s]. Reserve facilities on a tentative basis. Consider back-up facilities</p> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <p>3. Verbally apprise your commander, chief of staff, or appropriate supervisor of your general plan. Obtain essential planning guidance from this discussion.</p> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <p>4. Compose a rough draft of each of the following documents:</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a. Publicity releases announcing event.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">b. Commemorative observance program outline.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">c. List of possible guest speakers, including name, title, address, and background information.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">d. Brief description of desired and/or planned event[s] (e.g., auditorium ceremony, exhibits, luncheon with speaker, panel, audio-visual presentation, etc.).</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">e. Structure of desired planning committee showing proposed members and their organizations of assignment (e.g., Personnel, Public Affairs, Equal Opportunity/Social Actions, Chaplain, Military/Security Police, etc.).</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">f. Estimated funds required for program.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">g. Introductory message (i.e., first draft of welcoming remarks).</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">h. Letter to proposed keynote speaker.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">i. Memo or letter to the Commander, summarizing what you are planning.</p> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <p>5. Present the proposal to your commander (or the person to whom you will be reporting). Obtain additional guidance.</p> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <p>6. Upon approval by the commander/responsible official, proceed with the program by scheduling a Planning Committee Meeting. This meeting should result in the assignment of tasks to committee members. Keep minutes of these meetings and send copies promptly to Committee members.</p> | _____ | _____ | _____ |

7. Ensure Planning Committee members cover all aspects of the observance. It is recommended that *detailed* checklists be developed. Many of the following categories may be applicable:

- a. Funding requirements established and/or approved. _____
 - b. Desired advertising of the program[s] including any special invitations to be sent. _____
 - c. Facility acquisition/confirmation; verify in detail what is needed (e.g., flags in stands, chairs for stage, lectern, restrooms, etc.). _____
 - d. Arrangements for Color/Honor Guard. _____
 - e. Initial contact with keynote speaker. _____
 - f. Written invitation to speaker. _____
 - g. Musical support (including coordination with the Color Guard). _____
 - h. Audio-visual materials for program. _____
 - i. Audio-visual support. _____
 - j. Photographic support. _____
 - k. Signing (i.e., interpreter) support for hearing impaired guests. _____
 - l. Special support for physically handicapped guests. _____
 - m. Exhibit materials. _____
 - n. Reception arrangements (including refreshments, if required). _____
 - o. Luncheon/panel arrangements. _____
 - p. Program design and printing arrangements (including time constraints). _____
 - q. Biography and photograph of speaker[s] and other special guests. _____
 - r. Transportation requirements (to include meeting of speakers and/or special guests). _____
 - s. Support for conduct of program (e.g., use of a Command Post with telephone, distribution of programs, greeting and accommodation of stage party, escorts for special guests, seating of special guests, etc.). _____
 - t. Decide on and arrange to obtain appropriate presentation items (e.g., plaque, certificate, souvenir items, etc.) for speaker(s) and other special participants. _____
8. Secure advance copy of speaker's presentation (if applicable). _____
9. When complete package is formulated, send copies to your commander/commanding officer (and other individuals, if required). _____
10. When the observance is over, obtain copies of publicity coverage of the program[s], to include articles with pictures of installation and community activities. _____
11. Compile comprehensive After Action Report (looseleaf format recommended) to assist planners of similar programs in the future. Report should include at least the following:
- a. Narrative summary of planning and implementation of the observance. Include lessons learned, pitfalls, success stories, and recommendations for future observances. _____

-
- b. List of all Planning Committee members, organizations and phone numbers, and tasks each member performed. _____
 - c. Minutes of all Planning Committee meetings. _____
 - d. Copies of any printed materials used (e.g., programs, invitations, tickets, press releases, parking permits, etc.). _____
 - e. Copy of any special invitation list used. _____
 - f. Copy of all correspondence (sent or received) related to the observance. _____
 - g. Miscellaneous materials of potential value to planners of similar programs in the future (e.g., articles from installation and other local newspapers, summaries of expenditures, useful memoranda and notes, photographs or contact prints, videotape or audio-tape, seating plans and stage layouts). _____
12. Initiate action, as required, to ensure that appropriate individuals are recognized for their contributions. File letters of appreciation and any special recognition recommendations as part of the After Action Report. _____

Generalized Sample Correspondence

Memorandum For (Refer to your Service directive on correspondence preparation)

Subject: Commemorative Observance for the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust

In 1980, Congress enacted a law establishing the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Congress directed the Council to recommend appropriate ways for Americans to observe the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust as an annual national commemoration, and to encourage appropriate activities throughout the United States.

This year, the Council has advised that the Days of Remembrance will be observed during the week of _____ (see footnote) _____. The Secretary of Defense traditionally writes the Service Secretaries and encourages them to join in observing the Days of Remembrance through appropriate local ceremonies.

Your participation in the _____'s observance this year would greatly enhance the program. We would appreciate your [making opening remarks] [delivering the keynote address] [introducing the keynote speaker] [introducing our special guests to the audience].

[This paragraph may be applicable.] We propose to invite _____ as the guest speaker. He/she is the _____ [brief identification of speaker] _____. Her/his biography and photograph are attached. The _____ [approving office] _____ has been appraised of this proposal and approves. If you concur, please sign the attached letter of invitation to _____.

The observance is scheduled for _____ [date] _____ at _____ hours at _____. We recommend you host a reception immediately following the ceremony. Request your concurrence.

NOTE: The United States Holocaust Memorial Council (USHMC) announces the dates for observance each year. By way of example, the 1988 observance is scheduled during the week of Sunday, April 10 through Sunday, April 17, 1988. The USHMC traditionally establishes a week, from one Sunday to the following Sunday, for each annual observance.

Suggested Program Outline

Name of Installation/Command Observance for the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust

(see Section 4 for a complete sample ceremony)

Time	
1. 1440-1500	Pre-Program Concert
2. 1501-1504	Welcoming Remarks
3. 1505-1507	Presentation of the Colors
4. 1508-1510	National Anthem
5. 1511-1515	Invocation
6. TBD	Introduction of Special Guests (may include remarks)
7. TBD	Musical Interlude, audio-visual program, and/or selected reading
8. TBD	Introduction of Guest Speaker and Keynote Address
9. TBD	Responsive Reading
10. 1550-1553	Benediction or Closing Remarks
11. 1553-1555	Retirement of Colors

Notes

1. The times shown are typical, and should not be considered as constraints. However, time of day scheduling and the overall length of a program should meet local requirements in order to facilitate maximum attendance (including commanders and other senior personnel). Experience has shown that successful commemorative observances in the Department of Defense can be conducted in slightly less than one hour.

2. The sequence of events (without the minute-by-minute time summary) may be transferred to the printed program for the observance. It is customary to include names of participants and their titles on the program itself.

3. The abbreviation TBD means "to be determined."

Sample News Release

Post/Base/Installation [Name of Organization Hosting Event]

[Rank/Name of senior officer officiating],

title/organization], will participate in a commemorative observance for the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of Holocaust.

Joining [_____ rank/name _____] in this year's observance is [name] who is the [brief description of guest].

[Include other appropriate remarks about the upcoming observance and/or background information about the USHMC, the most recent Secretary of Defense/Service Secretary memo or message on Holocaust observance, or other material of interest to the local military and Department of Defense civilian population.]

[If the public is invited, so state. Be certain to include a contact person/office and telephone number in the News Release.]

Planning Calendar for the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust

The Days of Remembrance are observed each spring from one designated Sunday to the following Sunday. The following dates are provided for planning purposes. Each year the dates of observance are subject to confirmation by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

1988	10-17 April
1989	30 April-7 May
1990	22-29 April
1991	7-14 April
1992	26 April-3 May
1993	18-25 April
1994	3-10 April
1995	23-30 April
1996	14-21 April
1997	4-11 May
1998	19-26 April
1999	11-18 April
2000	30 April-7 May

4. Sample Ceremony for Days of Remembrance

The following sample ceremony has been provided as a model for use during the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust. It is meant to be a flexible instrument which can be adapted according to the special needs of each post/base/installation. The readings in this sample ceremony may be replaced or augmented with selections from the text of this Guide.

*There is a wide variety of music suitable for performance in commemoration of the Holocaust. Certainly appropriate music could be chosen from traditional sources for the ceremony. The Holocaust itself, however, has inspired numerous original musical works which should be considered, ranging from simple songs to full orchestral arrangements. A complete listing of available Holocaust-inspired music can be obtained in David M. Szonyi, *The Holocaust: An Annotated Bibliography and Resource Guide*, which is readily available from the International Center for Holocaust Studies of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in New York City.*

Sample Ceremony

1. Pre-Program concert: optional.
2. Welcoming Remarks/Introduction.

Sample Remarks

On 7 October 1980, the United States Congress enacted Public Law 96-388, establishing the United States Holocaust Memorial Council (USHMC).

In addition to other responsibilities, the USHMC coordinates the annual, national commemoration of the Days of Remembrance of Holocaust Victims (traditionally held in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda), and encourages local Days of Remembrance observances throughout the United States.

With USHMC support and encouragement, local civilian ceremonies will be held this week – during this year's National Days of Remembrance – throughout the nation, in every one of the fifty States.

Since 1984, ceremonies for the Days of Remembrance have been held on military ships and stations, as well. Mindful of the fact that it was our nation's military forces which first witnessed evidence of the Holocaust as they liberated camps – and cognizant of the fact that those of us in uniform must remember both the dreams we stand for and the nightmares we stand against – the Secretary of Defense has encouraged local commands to observe the Days of Remembrance, as part of our country's national effort.

It is in pursuit of that goal that we welcome you to our ceremony today.

3. Presentation of Colors.
4. National Anthem.
5. Invocation.

Alternative Suggestion:

Read the following introduction by RADM J.R. McNamara, CHC, USN (Navy Chief of Chaplains), to the U.S. Navy Chaplain Resource Board workbook, "Horror and Hope: Americans Remember the Holocaust":

As the Jewish people slowly made their way through the wilderness toward the Promised Land, Aaron – first of the High Priests – witnessed the sudden and tragic deaths of two of his sons. Moses, his brother, tried to make theological sense of the event, but Aaron could find no words. "Aaron," according to the simple, yet eloquent testimony of the scripture, "was silent" (Leviticus 10:3).

Forty years have passed since the slaughter and horror that we refer to as "The Holocaust." Like Aaron, many of the witnesses, the survivors, the relatives, found silence to be the only proper response. Silence may have been the only response – for there were no words which could be found to describe such indescribable events.

With the passage of time, words must be found – events must be confronted – and struggles to draw lessons for our future must begin. Already some spread the lie that the Holocaust did not occur at all, that it is a hoax of some sort, that no death camps or ovens or crematoria existed, that no special effort was made to erase the Jewish presence from this earth.

Justice Robert H. Jackson, the U.S. Representative and Chief Counsel for European War Crimes Trials, anticipated such an eventuality. On 6 June 1946, he wrote to President Truman, "Unless we write the record of this movement with clarity and precision, we cannot blame the future if in days of peace it finds incredible the accusatory generalities uttered during the war. We must establish incredible events by credible evidence."

Our nation, and our military personnel, were among those who liberated the death camps. We know the truth. And now our country has reaffirmed its commitment to remember the Holocaust, to ensure that it will not be forgotten: to vow that it will not happen again.

6. Introduction of Special Guests.

7. Musical Interlude; Audio-Visual Program; and/or Selected Readings.

Sample Selected Readings – some or all of the following selections may be read by command representatives, chosen in advance. (Other readings can be found in this Guide):

Historical Background:

On September 1, 1939, the date marking the outbreak of World War II, the German army launched an assault on the Polish Republic. With Poland subdued, Hitler's forces moved on. Within three months, between April and June 1940, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France fell under Nazi domination. On June 22, 1941, the Nazis were within 20 miles of Moscow. In two years, Germany had invaded virtually the whole of Western and Eastern Europe. The policy of Nazi Germany was to destroy whatever they conquered. Some peoples – like the Scandinavians – could be bred into the German race; some – like the French – could be used for technical skills; still others – like the Slavs – would be "hewers of wood and drawers of water," serving Nazi masters. But nowhere in the Third Reich would there be any place for Jews. They were marked for annihilation. As Elie Wiesel has put it: "Not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims."

Physically and spiritually, Jews were to be extinguished from the memory of humanity. Temporarily, the Nazis found use for some. They experimented on Jews "for science." How much pain does it take to bring on insanity? How much pain does it take to kill? They tortured Jews for amusement. Will it hurt more to wound a Jew – or to force him to watch his wife die? Or his family suffer? They took their skin for lampshades; their fat for soap; their teeth, their hair... only their humanity was of no worth.

The Nazi plan – the Final Solution – put into action a death-machine that systematically took the lives of six million Jewish people, among them more than one million children.

"As night descended, millions of other peoples were swept into this net of death..."

This was the Holocaust.

The following words were found scratched on the walls of a cellar in Cologne, Germany, where Jews hid from the Nazis who would take their lives:

I believe in the sun,
even when it is not shining.
I believe in love,
even when I don't feel it.
I believe in God,
even when He is silent.

The Reverend Martin Niemoeller, a pastor in the German Confessing Church, spent seven years in a concentration camp. He wrote the following words:

First they came for the Jews,
and I did not speak out –
because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the socialists,
and I did not speak out –
because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out –
because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me –
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.

The following words come from the book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, written by Victor Frankl:

We who lived in the concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last pieces of bread.

They may have been few in number, but they offer a sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of his freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way to die.

The following words come from Anne Frank's diary. They are dated 15 July 1944:

It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death.

I can see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I can feel the sufferings of millions – and yet, if I look into the heavens, I think that it will all come out right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again.

In the meantime, I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out.

On April 12, 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces Europe, wrote the following words in a letter to George Marshall, his Chief of Staff – describing his first visit to one of the camps liberated by U.S. forces:

The things I saw beggar description. ... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick.

In one room, where there were piled up twenty or thirty naked men killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so.

I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda'.

8. Introduction of Guest Speaker, followed by speaker's message or remarks.

Suggestion:

The speaker's remarks can be based on themes and readings from this Guide.

Alternative Suggestion:

In place of a prepared speech, have someone read selected portions from this Guide, such as the broadcast by Edward R. Murrow or the news release by Fred Friendly (From Section 1). A reading of the Background Information for Resource Personnel and Project Officers also could be used here.

9. Responsive Reading.

Sample

(can be printed in program, and read "responsively" – so that a leader and the attendees take turns reading consecutive sections):

"Lord, Give Us Strength"

Lord, as we gather today,

We pray for courage, and for strength.

When we remember the evils in the past,

The innocents tortured, maimed, and murdered,

We are almost afraid to make ourselves
remember. But we are even more afraid to forget.

We ask for wisdom, that we might mourn,

And not be consumed by hatred.

That we might remember,

and yet not lose hope.

We must face evil –

And, so doing, reaffirm our faith in future good.

We cannot erase yesterday's pains,

But we can vow that they will not have been suffered in vain.

And so, we pray:

For those who were given death,

Let us choose life –

for us and for generations yet to come.

For those who found courage to stand against

evil – often at the cost of their lives –

Let us vow to carry on their struggle.

We must teach ourselves, and our children:

To learn from hate that we must love,

To learn from evil to live for good.

10. Benediction.

Alternative Suggestion:

Close by reading the following benediction, delivered by Chaplain Arnold E. Resnicoff, U. S. Navy, at the 1987 National Civic Commemoration of the Days of Remembrance, in the U. S. Capitol Rotunda.

O Lord our God

help us pray – as our *ceremony* ends,

that our *service* might begin.

And keep us from forgetting the difference.

Keep us from feeling too good

about what we say and do today,

for words are not enough,

and it is far too easy to recall
gigantic evil done by others,
yet miss the link to seeds of future horror
in our own lives:
in apathy, in the careless racial slur,
in blindness to a neighbor's wound,
or deafness to his cry
And yet,
let us take some pride — and hope —
in what we do today,
for sometimes, words can pave the way:
songs and prayers
can bear witness to the good within us still;
can give dreams a voice —
a call which might be, must be, heard,
to give direction to our lives.
So, *from* the Holocaust, we learn:
when we deny humanity in others,
we destroy humanity within ourselves.
When we reject the human, and the holy,
in any neighbor's soul,
then we unleash the beast, and the barbaric,
in our own heart.
And, *since* the Holocaust, we pray:
if the time has not yet dawned
when we can all proclaim our faith in God,
then let us say at least
that we admit we are not gods ourselves.
If we cannot yet see the face of God in others,
then let us see, at least,
a face as human as our own.
So long ago
the Bible taught that life might be
a blessing or a curse:
the choice is in our hands.
Today we vow:
the curse will be remembered.
But our prayer must also be:
to fight despair;
to find the strength, the courage,
and the faith,
to keep alive the dream
that — through us and through our children —
the *blessing* might still be.

11. Retirement of the Colors.

5. Resources for Ceremonies and Education Programs

Section 1: The Liberators

The American Army moved East across Germany toward Berlin in early 1945. As the troops progressed they liberated scores of concentration camps. Soldiers of all ranks were amazed and horrified at what they saw.

The things I saw beggar description ... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where there were piled up twenty or thirty naked men killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so. I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda.'

— General Eisenhower's letter to Chief of Staff George Marshall, April 12, 1945



General Eisenhower with American soldiers viewing corpses of the victims at Bergen-Belsen, 1945. [photo credit: YIVO]

The same day I saw my first horror camp. It was near the town of Gotha. I have never felt able to describe my emotional reactions when I first came face to face with indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every shred of decency. Up to that time I had known about it only generally or through secondary sources. I am certain,

however, that I have never at any other time experienced an equal sense of shock.

I visited every nook and cranny of the camp because I felt it my duty to be in a position from then on to testify at first hand about these things in case there ever grew up at home the belief or assumption that "the stories of Nazi brutality were just propaganda." Some members of my visiting party were unable to go through the ordeal. I not only did so but as soon as I returned to Patton's headquarters that evening I sent communications to both Washington and London, urging the two governments to send instantly to Germany a random group of newspaper editors and representative groups from the national legislatures. I felt that the evidence should be immediately placed before the Americans and British publics in a fashion that would leave no room for cynical doubt.

— General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, 1945

I saw Eisenhower go to the opposite end of the road and vomit. From a distance I saw Patton bend over, holding his head with one hand and his abdomen with the other. And I soon became ill. I suggested to General Eisenhower that cables be sent immediately to President Roosevelt, Churchill, DeGaulle, urging people to come and see for themselves. The general nodded, then stuck out his hand and said, "You and Hoge did a good job in pushing me to come. Weinstein, you're persistent as all hell, and I was pissed off, but you were right. I never would have believed that this was possible."

— Lewis H. Weinstein, Lieutenant Colonel and chief of the Liaison Section of General Eisenhower's staff, April, 1945

Our men cried.
We were a
combat unit.
We'd been to
Anzio, to
southern France,
Sicily, Salerno,
the Battle of
the Bulge, and
we'd never, ever
seen anything
like this.

— American Liberator

David Malachowsky, a sergeant with the 329th Medical Battalion and liberator of Nordhausen, realized like many other medics, that their candy, chocolate and canned food were killing the inmates, whose shrunken stomachs, unaccustomed to nourishment, simply could not tolerate food. David Malachowsky's commander, General Terry Allen, quickly assessed the horrendous situation at Nordhausen. Instead of pursuing the Germans, he ordered his men to stay on in Nordhausen and save human lives. "So ... everybody dropped their guns and became medics for four, or five, maybe six days." Only after the living were helped, the dead were buried and the camp was bulldozed, did the liberating units continue their drive towards the Elbe.

— Yaffa Eliach, Holocaust scholar

As we kept moving in closer, about three miles from the town, we came across oh, maybe eight to ten huge warehouses set on a field. We could see these from a great distance away and as we got closer we went to these warehouses and were amazed to find what was in there. We more or less broke in. They were unattended. There were no guards or anything. The Germans were pulling out before us as we kept moving along. We got into these warehouses and it was an astounding sight. They were each approximately eight to ten stories high, and each floor had a different food commodity on it, as far as the eye could see. Thousands of boxes, say, tins of salmon, would be in one, sardines in another. Another floor had chocolate ... chocolate

from all the countries the Germans had been in. It seems that every time they went into a country and occupied it they would literally strip the country of all the commodities and ship it back and this evidently was one of the depots where all these supplies were stored, commodities, foods, primarily wines of all sorts in the baskets and all. I remember I was impressed by the fact that there was enough food there to feed the entire countryside. Of course, we "liberated" lots of cases. The liquor we took out with us and the wines and I remember taking cans of sardines and having trouble opening them. But at any rate, in contrast to what we found when we went into Nordhausen ... That's what really bugged me. Here was all this food stocked in warehouses and yet three miles away there were people eating horses' heads, because that's all they had. People, who literally had not eaten or been given water for weeks at a time.

We had no knowledge at all of what we were going to find. When we came to the source of this big, heavy odor, we had gone through the factory, through the town and now on the other side of the town here was Nordhausen, the camp. It had barbed wire fences and all. We had no concept of what we'd find there. We heard machine guns fire as we came into the one end of the camp. We discovered later that that machine gun fire was the last German troops pulling out, indiscriminately machine-gunning anyone who was still able to stand on their feet, any one of the prisoners in the camp. But there weren't too many of these, because when we actually got into the camp through the barbed wire, we saw row upon row of bodies just stacked like cordwood maybe five feet high as far as the eye could see. We later were told there were approximately five or six thousand inmates of whom just a handful were able to ambulate. All the others had either been shot down or were in an advanced state of emaciation. Even though they were working in the factory they'd be herded through the gate, through the town into the underground factory and herded back again like cattle. No food was given to them and as they died of hunger that's where they lay. The guards would stack them in these rows. And

that's what we found when we came through the gate. The stench was coming from this area. This was the smell that covered the entire countryside... for miles around.

And yet, when we asked these people in the town, the civilians, a couple of days later, how could they permit such things to exist, they said they did not know there was a camp like that next to them. They were just townspeople who minded their own business, etc. etc.

The first thing we saw after the barbed wire entanglement that we went through was, like, cordwood stacks, but as we got closer we saw they were human beings, were bodies, totally emaciated, many of them naked, no clothes. The ones that had clothes had the striped uniforms which we learned after a while were the typical uniforms of the concentration camps. The ones that were naked were just bones. I have pictures that I took which I look at once in a while to remind me it actually happened. Just bones. Eyes — all you saw were wide, huge eyes because the sockets were shrunk and I just can't describe it. The thing that really bugged me was bodies were lying there stacked up, but when we saw movement, like three bodies down, an arm was moving, you realized that among these people, there were living people who were in these piles. So immediately we got to work trying to separate, trying to pull out the ones that were alive and that's when we realized that we're gonna have to give them medical attention. Being with the medics I left half my platoon there to untangle them, get them on litters. Meanwhile other groups came up, other medical battalions and units, infantry men dropped their rifles, dropped their guns and began sorting these people out. I took the first load of trucks and ambulances back to our clearing station, about a mile or so out of town from the camp where we had set up a station, for the handling of wounded soldiers, primarily those who'd been hit in battle. But we stopped all that and began taking care of them from a medical standpoint. These were all political prisoners and they were lumped together indiscriminately. We ran across Poles, Russians, Frenchmen, Spaniards. You name it. It just seemed as though it was a

microcosm of the entire world and each one of those nationalities had Jewish representation. In other words, I remember talking to someone who looked about, oh, I would say, just, just old and emaciated. It turned out to be a seventeen year old Jewish girl. We spoke in Yiddish, too, I remember this very vividly. And she kept asking for water, "Wasser." But we had learned by then if we give them water orally it would kill them.

— David Malachowsky, Staff
Sergeant, VII Corps, 104th
Infantry Division, 329th
Medical Battalion Com-
pany D

Our hospital went into Buchenwald about two hours after the Germans had left. The first sight that greeted me when I entered the camp with my operating room truck was a horse and wagon. And as I looked into the contents of the wagon, I could see it was filled with human bones. One could recognize the humeri, the femurs, the spinal bones and the pelvis and skulls of many of the deceased prisoners who had been in the camp. Where this wagon was going I really did not know, but I was horrified at this sight.

I had studied German literature while an undergraduate at Harvard College. I knew about the culture of the German people and I could not, could not really believe that this was happening in this day and age; that in the twentieth century a cultured people like the Germans would undertake something like this. It was just beyond our imagination.

Many of the people were asking about their kinfolk, a brother, a father, a mother — and wanted to know what happened to the rest of the family. Unfortunately, in many cases, most of the members of their families had perished in Buchenwald concentration camps or in other similar camps. Most of the inmates had signs of malnutrition. Those who had been at the camp for longer periods of time showed more intense signs of malnutrition. That meant very little skin on the face, sunken bones, eyes, eyeballs sunken in their eye sockets, very little muscle tissue on the legs or arms. One could see all the bones of the thoracic cage, the ribs were very prominent. If the inmate took off his shirt

you could see the spinal column very, very prominently. The mental disturbance of the inmates was very, very apparent. Many of them did not realize the significance of having been liberated. Many of them spoke to us and said that they were ordered that morning to go on a forced march and they were sure they were going to be shot at that time, because they had heard rumors that the Americans were approaching. The Germans left in a hurry and the inmates were free and wandered about without any purpose, aimlessly, not realizing fully that finally they had been liberated.

—Dr. Philip Lief, Captain
First Army, 3rd Auxiliary
Surgical Group

There were three ovens that had cast-iron doors on them, and I just didn't have the heart to look inside and I knew the bones were all charred and things like that were in there, and I just didn't want to look inside.

We looked at the gas chambers but we really didn't know what they were for, we saw them there but we really couldn't comprehend what they really were for.

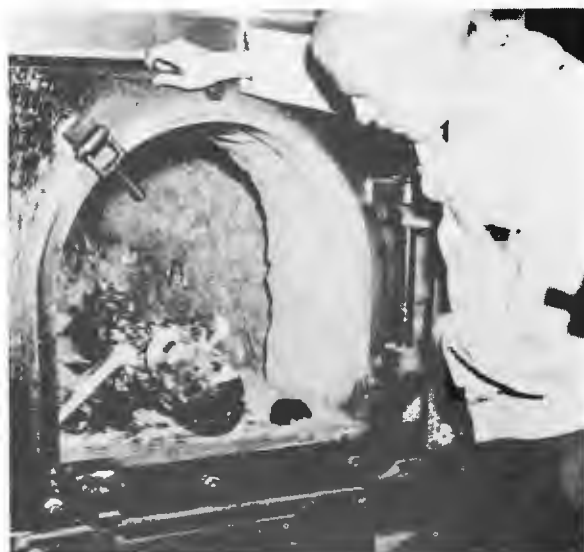
—Alex Schoenberg, Private
First Class, 90th Infantry
Division



American liberators of German concentration camps found the dead and the dying. Sometimes, as with these prisoners, they found survivors who stared at them with haunted and almost uncomprehending stares.

Human beings. These
are human beings. No cheeks.
No muscles in the chin. Only
skin and lips like paper tapes,
men thrashing like animals
but less graceful, begging —
But your clean American hands
don't want to touch them,
alive with lice. Stinking.
Still, you have to. So you think
of the twenty thousand others
for whom things have to be done
and before you can lift a finger
another thousand are dead and you
don't feel anything except
Jesus Christ Jesus Christ Jesus Christ.

— American Liberator



Crematoria, Bergen-Belsen, 1945. [Photo credit: YIVO]

When we saw
the ovens,
we were
silent.
Not a word
spoken, not
a single
expression.
Not, *Oh Jesus,*
not, *What is*
this? Not,
What have we
done?

— American Liberator

We had gone through the Bulge, we had seen the horrors of war: death, people who were wounded. Many of us came very close to losing our lives during that period. But we had no knowledge, and our first encounter came one day when we were asked to go to a place outside of Weimar, Germany. It wasn't a mission of battle, it was just to go. And we came to this place, which was somewhat like a security place, a place you might see in any urban center that was a prison. But we were totally unprepared — at least I was, for what I encountered when I went into Buchenwald. The outside was very beautiful. It was in a suburban-type community, the grass was well manicured and cared for. And then you go inside, and then all of a sudden the stark horror of it all strikes you. And that's the way I encountered it at the age of 19. When I walked in I saw what should be considered human beings, that had been reduced to the point where they were just merely surviving. I called them the walking dead, because I felt they had reached the point of no return.

We all expressed horror. We were aghast at what we saw. How deep that feeling was is hard to say. I cannot even speak for myself, in terms of how deep that hit me because I felt that I pushed it aside. I sort of covered it up; I didn't want to deal with that. It was too traumatic. And like most people, you have to find some kind of security blanket, some way to insulate yourself from the horror. And I sort of pushed it away, and I never talked about it at all.

There were those survivors who hadn't been there very long, who were much more healthy. But then I got to those who had probably been there for some time or who had gone through the tortures and the dehumanizing kind of things. There was a variety there, you might call it a smorgasbord. I talked to a young fellow who was there who spoke very good English. He said that at first the camp had held something like 300,000. But when we came on the scene it was less than 20,000. And we talked to him and he said that the Germans got rid of political prisoners first. They were really frightened of them, and then they began to systematically work on Jews. Jews had high priority for extermination. And of course

Gypsies, and others. I had been told by this young man that most of the Jews had been exterminated.

We saw the whole works. The crematorium ... There was a fellow there who spoke English — a young fellow — and he must have been a student before being incarcerated. He walked around with us. And as we walked I looked at different things — people defecating in the holes in the ground, there were no tissues, no sense of dignity — just go ahead. Someone retching out of a window, where they had been encapsulated in such large numbers in a small space in the barracks. I saw clothing, it must have been baby clothing that they had piled up for their own use, later I guess. Then we saw the crematorium where the dead bodies were outside, stacked up like cordwood, and we went into the crematorium and you could see the residue in the ovens — the rib cages, the skulls. And it was so hard to believe — to try to understand *why*. What did these people do that merited this kind of treatment? And it boggles the mind when you think that it had gone on for almost ten years before we got into the war! Why wasn't it dealt with? Why did nobody scream and shout, "Stop!" They never did. And we saw the laboratory where they were experimenting on different people, and the parts of the body. And then there was the torture chamber, and you could see the stains of the blood on the stone, and on the wall. They even had the instruments. Some of them were still there.

— Leon Bass, Sergeant,
183rd Combat Engineer
Battalion

In the children's cell block,
the bedding, the clothing,
the floors besmeared with
months of dysentery, I could
put my fingers around their
upper arms, their ankles,
so little flesh. Two hundred
and fifty children. Children
of prisoners. Polish children.
Czechoslovakian children. I
can't remember what I did
after I saw the children.

— American Liberator

There was an area near the Elbe River called Gardelegen, a small town. It was just another area, nothing special. Outside of the town there was a red barn and it veered with the wind. And there was smoke coming up from this and, somehow, it didn't look right, so it was examined and it was found that there were over a thousand people, dead, in this place. Dead! What happened was, the SS in that town heard the American guns, they heard us coming, and they knew, as all the way down the line they had known, that we would be there. So, in this town, they decided they wouldn't give the slave laborers the satisfaction of surviving. So they herded all the slave laborers from the town, over a thousand, into this barn. And they set them on fire, they put hay and gasoline in there, and if anyone tried to get out, they were machine-gunned. So there were a thousand.

Now here were men who had been through some very fierce fighting. Men who had been in tanks that were torn open, pieces of metal ripped right through them. They had seen all this, had been through everything, had been burning in tanks, tanks are very flammable; a lot of them, a lot of men had burned to death. All kinds of horrors these men had been through, beyond everything. But this wasn't war. This goes beyond: "you hit him, he hits you." This was total horror.

— Ben Berch, Private First Class, 102nd Infantry Division, 701st Tank Battalion

The medical units, including my ambulance entered Ohrdruf as it was being liberated; one medic was wounded by enemy fire, but not seriously. We saw evidence of the horror: thousands of bodies thrown into shallow pits, hundreds of others stacked like cordwood or thrown about at random in buildings or sheds or along the roads. Emaciated, putrefied, covered by insects, flies, maggots, they created unbearable stench. All around me I saw the consequences of barbarism, appalling atrocities and monstrous slaughter-houses.

Human beings were dying before our eyes. One moment they were slow-moving, living skeletons; the next moment they collapsed

and were dead. Some uttered "essen" (food); others just held outstretched arms. I saw the tattooed numbers on their arms. The medical staff, officers and men were working with tense fury, without respite, efficient. Prisoners in their pajama-like striped suits (which seemed like bags around them) begged for food and were given soup and warned to eat slowly. One living corpse was on a blanket. His mouth and lips were swollen, and had sores and pus. He tried to talk and I understood him to say in broken German and Yiddish that his brother had been murdered the day before. A medical captain ordered him to be handled with extreme care and fed intravenously. But it was too late, in a few moments the living corpse was dead. After the doctor returned, the medical aides covered the body with an army blanket. Then I became physically sick; but I stood erect and tried to give the appearance of being cool and hardened.

In one building I saw boxes of soap that I was told came from human bodies. In the camp commander's office were piles of human hair, gold dentures and teeth, eyeglasses, small boxes of jewelry and pocket notebooks, rings, some with parts of fingers, and earrings with the flesh of ears. Almost filling a small building next to the gallows and the whipping table were corpses, thrown together like dead animals in a slaughter house.

— Lewis H. Weinstein, Lieutenant Colonel and chief of the Liaison Section of General Eisenhower's staff, April, 1945

When the German SS troops guarding the concentration camp at Guns kirchen heard the Americans were coming, they suddenly got busy burying the bodies of their victims — or rather, having them buried by inmates — and gave the prisoners who were still alive what they considered an extremely liberal food ration: One lump of sugar per person and one loaf of bread for every seven persons. Then, two days ... before we arrived, the SS left. All this I learned from talking to inmates of the camp, many of whom spoke English. Driving up to the camp in our jeep, Cpl.

DeSpain and I, first knew we were approaching the camp by the hundreds of starving, half crazed inmates lining the roads, begging for food and cigarettes. Many of them had been able to get only a few hundred yards from the gate before they keeled over and died. As weak as they were, the chance to be free, the opportunity to escape was so great they couldn't resist, though it meant staggering only a few yards before death came.

Then came the next indication of the camp's nearness – the smell. There was something about the smell of Guns kirchen I shall never forget. It was strong, yes, and permeating, too. Some six hours after we left the place, six hours spent riding in a jeep, where the wind was whistling around us, we could still detect the Guns kirchen smell. It had permeated our clothing, and stayed with us.

Of all the horrors of the place, the smell, perhaps, was the most startling of all. It was a smell made up of all kinds of odors – human excreta, foul bodily odors, smoldering trash fires, German tobacco ... all mixed together in a heavy dank atmosphere, in a thick, muddy woods, where little breeze could go. The ground was pulpy throughout the camp, churned to a consistency of warm putty by the milling of thousands of feet, mud mixed with feces and urine. The smell of Guns kirchen nauseated many of the Americans who went there. It was a smell I'll never forget, completely different from anything I've ever encountered. It could almost be seen and hung over the camp like a fog of death.

As we entered the camp, the living skeletons still able to walk crowded around us and, though we wanted to drive farther into the place, the milling, pressing crowd wouldn't let us. It is not an exaggeration to say that almost every inmate was insane with hunger. Just the sight of an American brought cheers, groans and shrieks. People crowded around to touch an American, to touch the jeep, to kiss our arms – perhaps just to make sure that it was true. The people who couldn't walk crawled out toward our jeep. Those who couldn't even crawl propped themselves up on an elbow, and somehow, through all their pain and suffering, revealed

through their eyes the gratitude, the joy they felt at the arrival of Americans.

– Captain J.D. Pletcher, 71st
Division Headquarters



April 15, 1945. Corpses in the barn-inferno near Gardelegen, Germany. Russian, French, Polish, and Jewish political prisoners were herded into the barn and forced to sit on gasoline-soaked straw which Nazi SS troopers ignited. The atrocity was exposed when Ninth U.S. Army troops captured the Gardelegen area, 75 miles west of Berlin, before the Germans had time to remove the evidence. [photo-credit: U.S. Signal Corps photo ETO-HQ-45-33059, YIVO]

Besides soldiers, witnesses to the horror included journalists – and another future President.

We saw the cremation room there. Details of Jews worked here every day. It was their job to shovel hundreds of gas victims into the ovens. Each oven was approximately coffin size, but capacity was listed at six bodies. They used Jews for this detail because they were certain to die anyhow. And the Nazis did not want the thousands of other prisoners to know about their "future" lest their work in the quarry lack spirit.

We saw the initial arrival point for new prisoners to Mauthausen. Here they were stripped and chained to a wall for 24 hours, exposed to the weather, hot or cold.

We saw cell blocks in which men lived, if such a word may be used for such conditions. For purposes of description, let us say the cell blocks resembled the tar paper barracks we had in the States, but just half their size. Normal capacity of these blocks was 300

human beings. It was so crowded they had to sit up all night. Their latrine facilities were just outside. They could not stray far from the cells or they would be shot. Often, after a year or so, they didn't even bother to use the outside latrines.

We saw their hospitals. There were two of them. One held 90 patients and was ultra-modern. This one they showed important visitors. The other hospital held 5,000. Wards were just like the prison blocks, except there were bunks in tiers five high.

In each bed were five human beings, each sick, half of them dying from malnutrition. Each had lost from 50 to 100 pounds. Their legs had lost all control and looked like heavy ropes. Their toilet was their bed. There were running sores on many of them. Sometimes Nazi surgeons ended their misery by squirting gasoline against their hearts.

We saw their bodies, hundreds of them. Prisoners said at times there were thousands laying around camp. We saw them piled up like cordwood – big and little piles of dead. All of them were emaciated and discolored and covered with insects and worms. These were human beings. Their crime was not being a German.

– Fred Friendly, noted journalist, dispatch, May 24, 1945

... Permit me to tell you what you would have seen and heard had you been with me on Thursday. It will not be pleasant listening. If you are at lunch or if you have no appetite to hear what Germans have done, now is a good time to switch off the radio, for I propose to tell you of Buchenwald.

It is on a small hill about four miles outside Weimar, and it was one of the largest concentration camps in Germany. And it was built to last. ...

I looked out over that mass of men to the green fields beyond where well-fed Germans were plowing. A German, Fritz Kersheimer, came up and said, "May I show you around the camp? I've been here ten years." An Englishman stood to attention saying, "May I introduce myself? Delighted to see you. And can you tell me when some of our blokes will be along?" I told him, "Soon," and asked to

see one of the barracks. It happened to be occupied by Czechoslovakians.

When I entered, men crowded around, tried to lift me to their shoulders. They were too weak. Many of them could not get out of bed. I was told that this building had once stabled 80 horses; there were 1,200 men in it, five to a bunk. The stink was beyond all description. ...

There was a German trailer which must have contained another 50 [bodies], but it wasn't possible to count them. The clothing was piled in a heap against the wall. It appeared that most of the men and boys had died of starvation; they had not been executed. But the manner of death seemed unimportant – murder had been done at Buchenwald. God alone knows how many men and boys have died there during the last 12 years. Thursday I was told that there were more than 20,000 in the camp; there had been as many as 60,000. Where are they now?

– From Edward R. Murrow's CBS Radio Broadcast from London, April 15, 1945

I went to Belsen. The Wehrmacht is not allowed near it. It was entirely guarded by SS men and women. The first night of liberty, many hundreds of people died of joy. Next day some men of the [British] Yeomanry arrived. The people crowded around them, kissing their hands and feet – and dying from weakness.

Corpses in every state of decay were lying around, piled up on top of each other in heaps. One woman came up to a soldier who was guarding the milk store and doling the milk out to children, and begged for milk for her baby. The man took the baby and saw that it had been dead for days, black in the face and shriveled up. The woman went on begging for milk. So he poured some on the dead lips. The mother then started to croon with joy and carried the baby off in triumph. She stumbled and fell dead a few yards (away) ...

"My father and mother were burned. My sister was burned." This is what you hear all the time ... A story of Auschwitz was told to me by Helen – and her last name she didn't remember. She was a Czechoslovak. When the women were given the chance to go and

work elsewhere in the work zones like Hamburg, mothers with children were, in fact, given the choice between their lives and their children's. Children could not be taken along. Many preferred to stay with their children and face certain death. Some decided to leave their children. But it got around amongst the 6 year old children that if they were left there they would at once be gassed. There were terrible scenes between children and their mothers. One child was so angry that though the mother changed her mind and stayed and died, the child would not talk to her...

– Patrick Gordon-Walker,
Oxford historian and BBC
commentator, 1945

I'm horrified today when I know that there are actually people now trying to say that the Holocaust was invented, that it never happened, that there weren't six million people whose lives were taken cruelly and needlessly in that event, that all of this is propaganda. Well, it's the old cliché that a picture is worth a thousand words. In World War II, not only do we have the survivors today to tell us firsthand, but in World War II, I was in the military and assigned to a post where every week we obtained from every branch of the service all over the world the combat film that was taken by every branch. And we edited this into a secret report for the general staff. We had access to and saw that secret report. And I remember April '45. I remember seeing the first film that came in when the war was still on, but our troops had come upon the first camps and had entered those camps. And you saw, unretouched – and no way that it could have ever been rehearsed – what they saw – the horror they saw ... it remains with me as confirmation of our right to rekindle these memories, because we need always to guard against that kind of tyranny and inhumanity. Our spirit is strengthened by remembering and our hope is in our strength.

– Remarks of President
Ronald Reagan at Days of
Remembrance Ceremony,
April 30, 1981

We ceased to work, and the German soldiers and civilians ran to the shelters ... We had nothing to lose, only expected to enjoy the destruction of the big factory which we were building for the I.G. Farben Industry...

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

Those bombardments elevated our morale and paradoxically, awakened probably some hopes of surviving, of escaping from this hell. In our wild imagination we also saw a coordination between the Allies and the indeed small underground movement in the camp, with which I was in touch. We imagined a coordinated destruction and escape; destruction from above by the bombers, and from our hands, while escaping, even if we had to be living bombs – to be killed.

– Shalom Lindenbaum:
statement on the American
bombings of Auschwitz,
September 13, 1944

The United States and Russia fought together as Allies in World War II. In 1944-45, the armies of the two countries moved toward Germany from opposite directions. As the Americans and other Allies were liberating the concentration camps in Western Europe, the Russian Forces, which were marching East toward Berlin, were liberating the camps in Poland and Eastern Europe, among them Auschwitz.

The first Russian patrol came in sight of the camp about midday on 27 January 1945, Charles and I were the first to see them: we were carrying Somogyi's body to the common grave, the first of our room mates to die. We tipped the stretcher on to the defiled snow, as the pit was now full, and no other grave was at hand: Charles took off his beret as a salute to both the living and the dead.

They were four young soldiers on horseback, who advanced along the road that marked the limits of the camp, cautiously holding their sten-guns. When they reached the barbed wire, they stopped to look, exchanging a few timid words, and throwing

strangely embarrassed glances at the sprawling bodies, at the battered huts and at us few still alive.

To us they seemed wonderfully concrete and real, perched on their enormous horses, between the grey of the snow and the grey of the sky, immobile beneath the gusts of damp wind which threatened a thaw.

— Primo Levi, Italian-Jewish
chemist and writer, Aus-
chwitz survivor

And there were
bones. God,
there were bones, all
over the place,
wherever you
looked, like
pebbles,
wherever you
stepped there
were little
bits of bones.

— American Liberator

Reverend L. H. Hardman of Leeds and father I.
C. Morrisen of Dublin giving the last sacrament
at a mass grave in Bergen-Belsen, 1945. [photo
credit: YIVO]



We, the rescued
From whose hollow bones death had begun to
whittle his flutes,
And on whose sinews he had already stroked
his bow —
Our bodies continue to lament
With their mutilated music.
We, the rescued,
The nooses wound for our necks still dangle
before us in the blue air —
Hourglasses still fill with our dripping blood
We, the rescued,
The worms of fear still feed on us.
Our constellation is buried in dust...
We, the rescued,
Beg you:
Show us your sun, but gradually.
Lead us from star to star, step by step.
Be gentle when you teach us to live again.
Lest the song of a bird,
Or a pail being filled at the well,
Let our badly sealed pain burst forth again
and carry us away —
We beg you:
Do not show us an angry dog, not yet —
It could be, it could be
That we will dissolve into dust —
Dissolve into dust before your eyes.

— Nobel Prize-winning poet,
Nelly Sachs

Suggested Film For This Section

The *Liberation* directed by Irmgard von Zur Muhlen. When Allied Russian troops liberated Auschwitz in January-February 1945, they shot fifty-five minutes of

film based on the conditions they discovered and the testimony of a handful of survivors. (Length: 60 minutes) Distributed by National Center for Jewish film, Brandeis University.

For Reflection

1. Can you imagine yourself an American soldier in 1945 liberating one of the German concentration camps? How would you have felt? How would you have acted?

2. Many of the American liberators say that although they had been through "the Bulge," through "fierce fighting," "burning tanks," "death," and "horror," that the concentration camps were different. "This wasn't war," said one liberator, "This goes beyond..." What did this liberator mean? How were the camps different from the "horror" they had already witnessed as American soldiers in World War II?

3. General Terry Allen directed his men to stay on at Nordhausen to save human lives rather than continue their drive toward the Elbe. "Everybody dropped their guns and be-

came medics for... maybe six days," recalls Sergeant Malachowsky. Why did this American general decide that helping the living, and properly burying the dead, took top priority?

4. How would you have felt toward the townspeople who said they "did not know there was a camp next to them," in Nordhausen, even though "the stench... covered the entire countryside... for miles around," and even though the concentration camp prisoners were "herded through the gate, through the town into the... factory and herded back again like cattle?"

5. Do you think the liberators needed a special kind of courage to confront the concentration camps? How do you think the experience might have affected their lives?

Further Reading

Yaffa Eliach and Brana Gurewitsch, *The Liberators: Eyewitness Accounts of the Liberation of Concentration Camps* (New York: Center for the Holocaust, 1981).

Extensive interviews with American liberators, photographs included.

Barbara Helfgott Hyett, *In Evidence: Poems of the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986).

A collection of poems in the voices of those who liberated Nazi concentration camps in Europe. Based on the eyewitness testimony of United States soldiers.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, *The Liberators: A Tribute to the American Soldiers and Resisters Who Liberated European Jewry* (Simon Wiesenthal Center California, 1985).

A richly illustrated compendium of American liberator experiences in Europe.



SIX MILLION MURDERED

There is no way to establish an accurate figure for the total number of Jews murdered in The Final Solution. In 1945, the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal estimated that 5,700,000 Jews had been killed by the Nazis, representing two-thirds of the pre-war European Jewish population.

Section 2: The Horror

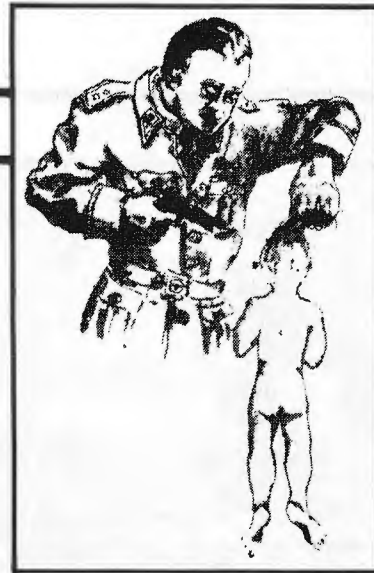
Because little children at their mothers' breasts were a great nuisance during the shaving procedure, later the system was modified and babies were taken from their mothers as soon as they got off the train. The children were taken to an enormous ditch; when a large number of them were gathered together they were killed by firearms and thrown into the fire. Here, too, no one bothered to see whether all the children were really dead. Sometimes one could hear infants wailing in the fire.

When mothers succeeded in keeping their babies with them and this fact interfered with the shaving, a German guard took the baby by its legs and smashed it against the wall of the barracks until only a bloody mass remained in his hands. The unfortunate mother had to take this mass with her to the "bath." Only those who saw these things with their own eyes will believe with what delight the Germans performed these operations; how glad they were when they succeeded in killing a child with only three or four blows; with what satisfaction they pushed the baby's corpse into the mother's arms.

The invalids, cripples and the aged who could not move fast were put to death in the same way as the children. The ditch in which the children and infirm were slaughtered and burned was called in German the *Lazarett* [infirmery], and the workers employed in it wore armbands with the Red Cross sign.

— Samuel Rajzman, survivor
of Treblinka

Of all the concentration camps, of all the extermination camps, Auschwitz was the crown of perverted imagination, the feather in the cap of the master builders bound on efficient extermination with an assembly line leading from freight trains through gas chambers to crematoria going full blast night and day, in sun and fog. Production was kept up in order to transform human beings from "parasitic consumers" into consumer goods. Human hair, bones and gold teeth served the German economy well. Ground bonemeal was sold for the manufacturing of superphosphates. Flesh re-



"Nazi and Child," by
Waldemar Nowakowski. Drawn in
Auschwitz, 1943.

duced to ashes took up no living space (Lebensraum). Whether in some cases ashes were used for fertilizer, I am not sure. They were used as ground fill, and they were also indiscriminately stuffed into urns and sold as the remains of their loved ones to the families of political prisoners; not so the ashes of Jews — there were hardly any loved ones left. Political prisoners often arrived with the marking R.U. (*Rückkehr unerwünscht*), return undesirable. The thousands of SS men and SS women with their whips and vicious dogs saw to it that such orders were carried out.

The fires of the crematoria soared without letup twenty-four hours a day. At times the chimneys cracked from overheating and had to be reinforced with steel bands. Inside, their walls were covered with human fat inches deep. When the going was good that the gas chambers and crematoria could not handle the volume, people had to dig their own graves, undress for clothing should not be wasted — and be machine gunned; or bodies were tossed from the gas chambers into ditches and incinerated on pyres in the open air, permeating our nostrils with the stench of burning flesh and bones. The soot from the chimneys was constantly covering us, as a last caress by those who had gone before us. The flames of the crematoria were shooting high into the air, covering the night sky with a constant glow. The sun was often obscured by the thick, choking smoke that spread a depressing cover over the already gray surroundings: our gray sack dresses, gray blocks, gray dust, turning with the rain into gray mud under our wooden clogs.

— Vera Laska, survivor,
historian.

She and two other women in camp Palamon were put in charge of 30 children, all under 13 years of age, some quite small. They could give the children only little food, but they tried to cheer them up and give them hope that a better future awaited them. One day the camp was surrounded by German troops, armed with guns. A horde of SS men rushed in and screamed that the children were to be dressed quickly and taken out. To hurry the children, the soldiers beat them. In the middle of the yard they made a fire. When a mother tried to drag her child away, they threw her with her child into the fire. The rest of the children screamed in terror. Reassurance was no longer possible. In the middle of this turmoil our informant fell unconscious, perhaps from the beating administered to her. When she awoke, she was lying on a cement floor with other adults. The children were gone. They had been herded into cattle wagons and taken to Treblinka, one of the extermination camps the Nazis erected in Poland

—Judith Kestenber*g*, psychiatrist who has worked extensively with survivors

One day when we came back from work, we saw three gallows rearing up in the assembly place, three black crows. Roll call. SS all around us, machine guns trained: the traditional ceremony. Three victims in chains — and one of them, the little servant, the sad-eyed angel.

The SS seemed more preoccupied, more disturbed than usual. To hang a young boy in front of thousands of spectators was no light matter. The head of the camp read the verdict. All eyes were on the child. He was lividly pale, almost calm, biting his lips. The gallows threw its shadow over him.

This time the Lagerkapo refused to act as executioner. Three SS replaced him.

The three victims mounted together onto the chairs.

The three necks were placed at the same moment within the nooses.

"Long live liberty!" cried the two adults.

But the child was silent.

"Where is God? Where is He?" someone behind me asked.

At a sign from the head of the camp, the three chairs tipped over.

Total silence throughout the camp. On the

horizon, the sun was setting.

"Bare your heads!" yelled the head of the camp. His voice was raucous. We were weeping.

"Cover your heads!"

Then the march past began. The two adults were no longer alive. Their tongues hung swollen, blue-tinged. But the third rope was still moving; being so light, the child was still alive...

For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. And we had to look him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him. His tongue was still red, his eyes not yet glazed.

Behind me I heard the same man asking:

"Where is God now?"

And I heard a voice within me answer him:

"Where is He? Here He is — He is hanging here on this gallows..."

That night the soup tasted of corpses.

—*Night*, by Elie Wiesel, survivor of Auschwitz and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, 1986



With the outbreak of the War, Nazi policy shifted from persecution to internment of Jews in concentration camps. Throughout occupied Europe, Jews were forced into ghettos which served as way stations for the Final Solution. Here, terrified children are being rounded up for deportation during the Warsaw ghetto uprising in April, 1943. [Photo credit: YIVO]

One of the most important medical projects was the sterilization of women "unworthy of reproduction" (*fortpflanzungsunwürdige Frauen*). This was done by overdoses of X-rays. The physician in charge was gynecology professor Karl Clauberg from Königshutte, who functioned in Ravensbruck before coming to Auschwitz in 1942. He used as his guinea pigs women in their twenties, and between him and his colleague, Horst Schumann, they sterilized thousands of women. In other experiments, women's organs were gradually injected with jodipin, a substance called F12a and citobarium diluted with water. Block 10 resounded with the constant screams of these women. Many had one or both ovaries removed; these organs were shipped to Berlin for further research. The women's blood was frequently taken, including that of Jewish women. Other experiments consisted of castration of males and the artificial insemination of females. The main purpose of this research was to find the fastest ways of limiting and eventually exterminating "inferior races," and to raise the birth rates of the "pure" Nordic race. The directives came from Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS. By the summer of 1943, Clauberg could proudly notify Himmler that the time was near when with ten assistants he could sterilize "several hundred, possibly thousand women in a single day." His rival Schumann raised the ante to 3,000-4,000 per day. All these experiments and others were fully corroborated and documented by former prisoners — physicians who had been witnessing them over the years.

— Vera Laska, historian, survivor of Auschwitz

Claire, a sweet and shy young woman was held in great affection by her comrades, partly because of her knowledge of poetry; I think she was a professor of literature. My mother liked her and often spoke to me about her. In March 1947 I sent an account of what I had learned about her death to the others who had known her: Do you remember Claire? First of all she was cruelly bitten and mangled by a dog. Who set the dog on her? We do not know, but he was Claire's first assassin. She went then to the *Revier* [hospital barrack] where she was denied treatment. Who refused her? We don't know for sure, probably [chief nurse] Marschall. The

second murderer. Her wounds did not heal and she was sent to the *Jugendlager* [youth prison]. Who sent her? We don't know — probably [chief of Ravensbruck labor force] Hans Pflaumn or [camp physician] Winkelman. The third murderer. Now that she was among the ranks of the condemned who kept her from fleeing? An *Aufseherin* [supervisor] or one of the police? Possibly both, possibly [supervisor] von Skine or Boesel. The fourth murderer. At *Jugendlager*, Claire refused to swallow the poison [prisoner] Salvewart had [been ordered to] give her, and Salvewart, with the help of [military medics] Rapp and Kohler, beat her senseless with a club and finally killed her.

Claire was only one woman among 123,000 — one solitary agony. For this one victim, five bands of murderers. And for all the others there were the same assassins, or some like them; every victim was killed and re-killed. We were all caught in a terrifying cycle with an assassin waiting at every turn.

— Germaine Tillion, historian, survivor of Ravensbruck

It was early spring when we began building a soccer field on the broad clearing behind the hospital barracks. The location was excellent: the gypsies to the left, with their roaming children, their lovely, trim nurses, and their women sitting by the hour in the latrines; to the rear — a barbed wire fence, and behind it the loading ramp with the wide railway tracks and the endless coming and going of trains; and beyond the ramp, the women's camp... To the right of the field were the crematoria, some of them at the back of the ramp... others even closer, right by the fence. Sturdy buildings that sat solidly on the ground. And in front of the crematoria, a small wood which had to be crossed on the way to the gas.

We worked on the soccer field throughout the spring, and before it was finished we started planting flowers under the barracks windows and decorating the blocks with intricate zigzag designs made of crushed red brick. We planted spinach and lettuce, sunflowers and garlic. We laid little green lawns with grass transplanted from the edges of the soccer field, and sprinkled them daily with water brought in barrels from the lavatories.

Just when the flowers were about to bloom, we finished the soccer field.

From then on, the flowers were abandoned, the sick lay by themselves in the hospital beds, and we played soccer. Every day, as soon as the evening meal was over, anybody who felt like it came to the field and kicked the ball around.

One day I was the goalkeeper. As always on Sundays, a sizeable crowd of hospital orderlies and convalescent patients had gathered to watch the game. Keeping goal, I had my back to the ramp. The ball went out and rolled all the way to the fence. I ran after it, and as I reached to pick it up, I happened to glance at the ramp.

A train had just arrived. People were emerging from the cattle cars and walking in the direction of the little wood. All I could see from where I stood were bright splashes of colour. The women, it seemed, were already wearing summer dresses; it was the first time that season.

The men had taken off their coats, and their white shirts stood out sharply against the green of the trees. The procession moved along slowly, growing in size as more and more people poured from the freight cars. And then it stopped. The people sat down on the grass and gazed in our direction. I returned with the ball and kicked it back inside the field. It travelled from one foot to another and, in a wide arc, returned to the goal. I kicked it towards a corner. Again it rolled out into the grass. Once more I ran to retrieve it. But as I reached down, I stopped in amazement – the ramp was empty. Out of the whole colorful summer procession, not one person remained. The train too was gone. ...

Between two throw-ins in a soccer game, right behind my back, three thousand people had been put to death.

– **Taduesz Borowski, Polish
journalist and poet who
was sent to Auschwitz in
1942**

Suggested Film For This Unit

Night and Fog, directed by Alain Resnais is a 1955 French film with English subtitles. A brutally graphic, artistic depiction of life and death in Auschwitz. It combines ghostly scenes of the abandoned camp today with Nazi and Allied film footage and stills. This juxtaposition between past and present is seen in the stark contrast between the contemporary sequences shot in color and the

black-and-white of the historical footage. Excellently produced and directed by Alain Resnais, the film is a personal statement about evil and atrocity. Although the film is an old one, it remains one of the best documents of its kind due to its content and length, both of which permit a wide range of programming uses. (31 minutes)

For Reflection

1. How do you think the horrors described in this unit compare with the brutality generally of war? What was it about the camps that allowed almost any form of violence and brutality to occur?

2. Some survivors have said that while in a concentration camp, they felt they were living in another reality. Can you imagine yourself as a victim in such a camp?

3. Germaine Tillion describes the killing and re-killing of victims at Ravensbruck concentra-

tion camp for women. What is she trying to capture in the experience of the victims with such imagery? If their goal was simply to kill people, why did the Nazis bother to humiliate and torture their victims in this way?

4. Some people try to deny the existence of the Holocaust and call it a hoax. Having studied about the liberators and the horrors of the concentration camps, how would you respond if you encountered such views?

Further Reading

Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, translated from the Polish (New York: Penguin, 1976).

A Polish poet's short stories, haunting in their simplicity, based on his experiences in Auschwitz.

Des Pres, Terrence, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976)

Studying eyewitness reports and talking with former inmates, Des Pres suggests that the most significant fact about the struggle for survival is that it depended on fixed activities, on forms of social bonding and

interchange, on collective resistance, and on keeping dignity and moral sense active.

Gilbert, Martin, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews in Europe During the Second World War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986).

Martin Gilbert's monumental chronicle of the Holocaust is based chiefly upon the victims' letters, smuggled notes, and survivor testimony. After briefly outlining the important events that overtook the Jews of Europe, Gilbert gives voice to the persecuted, showing the different ways in which the trapped Jews attempted to resist their fate.

Section 3: The Process of Annihilation

Not all victims were Jews
But all Jews were victims.

— Elie Wiesel

The Holocaust of the Jews of Europe was an event of unprecedented magnitude. In 1979 President Jimmy Carter established a Presidential Commission on the Holocaust of which Auschwitz survivor and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Elie Wiesel, was appointed Chairman. That Commission issued a report that later resulted in the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. One important charge of the Holocaust Memorial Council was to develop an appropriate form of commemoration for the Days of Remembrance. On January 3, 1980, Congress unanimously passed an Act to establish the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. On April 30, 1981, President Ronald Reagan joined in the Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony at the East Room of the White House. At the same time Ceremonies were conducted in twenty-nine states at state capitals, synagogues, and universities. By 1982 Remembrance Ceremonies had spread to forty-three states. There are now Remembrance Ceremonies in all states of the Union.

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators as a central act of state during the Second World War; as night descended, millions of other peoples were swept into this net of death. It was a crime unique in the annals of human history, different not only in the quantity of violence — the sheer numbers killed — but in its manner and purpose as a mass criminal enterprise organized by the state against defenseless civilian populations. The decision to kill every Jew everywhere in Europe: the definition of Jew as target for death transcended all boundaries. There is evidence indicating that the Nazis intended ultimately to wipe out the Slavs and other peoples; had the war continued or had the Nazis triumphed, Jews might not have re-

mained the final victims of Nazi genocide, but they were certainly its first.

The concept of the annihilation of an entire people, as distinguished from their subjugation, was unprecedented; never before in human history had genocide been an all-pervasive government policy unaffected by territorial or economic advantage and unchecked by moral or religious constraints...

In the Nazi program of genocide, Jews were the primary victims, to be destroyed only for the fact that they were Jews. (In the Nuremberg Decree of 1935 a Jew was defined by his grandparents' affiliation. Even conversion to Christianity did not affect the Nazi definition.) Gypsies, too, were killed throughout Europe, but Gypsies who lived in the same place for two years or more were exempt. Many Polish children whose parents were killed were subjected to forced Germanization — that is, adoption by German families and assimilation into German culture — yet Jewish children were offered no such alternative to death.

The Holocaust was not simply a throwback to medieval torture or archaic barbarism but a thoroughly modern expression of bureaucratic organization, industrial management, scientific achievement, and technological sophistication. The entire apparatus of the German bureaucracy was marshalled in the service of the extermination process...

The location and operation of the camps was based on calculations of accessibility and cost-effectiveness, the trademarks of modern business practice. German corporations actually profited from the industry of death. Pharmaceutical firms, unrestricted by fear of side effects, tested drugs on camp inmates, and companies competed for contracts to build ovens or supply gas for annihilation. (Indeed, they were even concerned with protecting the patents for their products.) German engineers working for Topf and Sons supplied one camp alone with 46 ovens capable of burning 500 bodies an hour.

Adjacent to the extermination camp at

Auschwitz was a privately owned, corporately sponsored concentration camp called I.G. Auschwitz, a division of I.G. Farben. This multi-dimensional, petro-chemical complex brought human slavery to its ultimate perfection by reducing human beings to consumable raw materials, from which all mineral life was systematically drained before the bodies were recycled into the Nazi war economy – gold teeth for the treasury, hair for mattresses, ashes for fertilizer. In their relentless research for the least expensive and most efficient means of mass murder, German scientists experimented with a variety of gasses until they discovered the insecticide Zyklon B, which could kill 2,000 persons in less than 30 minutes at a cost of one-half-cent per body.

– From the report by the President's Commission on the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel, Chairman, September 27, 1979

*Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, after years of political strife and economic collapse. He brought hope to Germans for a rejuvenated future. He also brought deep hatred for Jews as a despised minority that somehow had caused all of Germany's problems. Hitler's attitudes toward the Jews, from his book *Mein Kampf* (1925), to his suicide in 1945 at the end of World War II, provided the basis for the Nazi Program of Discrimination against the Jews and, after 1942, the Final Solution—to completely exterminate the Jewish People.*



Hitler was a charismatic leader for the Germans. The adulation he inspired was intense and genuine, especially at the annual Nazi Party rallies held each fall in Nuremberg.

With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people. With every means he tries to destroy the racial foundations of the people he has set out to subjugate. Just as he himself systematically ruins women and girls, he does not shrink back from pulling down the blood barriers for others, even on a large scale. It was and it is Jews who bring the Negroes into the Rhineland, always with the same secret thought and clear aim of ruining the hated white race by the necessarily resulting bastardization, throwing it down from its cultural and political height, and himself rising to be its master.

– Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 1925

The result [of future war] will not be the bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.

– Adolf Hitler, Berlin, January 30, 1939

The result of this war will be the complete annihilation of the Jews.

– Adolf Hitler, 1942

The *volkisch* state must see to it that only healthy beget children... Here the state must act as the guardian of a millennial future... It must put the most modern medical means in the service of this knowledge. It must declare unfit for propagation all who are in any way visibly sick or who have inherited a disease and can therefore pass it on.

– Adolf Hitler

There is no such thing as coming to an understanding with the Jews. It must be the hard-and-fast "Either-Or."

Should the Jew, with the aid of his Marxist creed, triumph over the people of this world, his Crown will be the funeral wreath of mankind, and this planet will once again follow its orbit through ether, without any human life on its surface, as it did millions of years ago.

And so I believe today that my conduct is

in accordance with the will of the Almighty creator. In standing guard against the Jew I am defending the handiwork of the Lord.

— Adolf Hitler



The forced registration of Jews and many other bureaucratic practices gave the Final Solution a false legitimacy. Here a Polish Jew signs Nazi-required registration papers. [YIVO]

Anti-Semitism was central to Nazi ideology. Many writers and other leaders of German society embraced racist views.

Let us repeat once more, and again and again, the most important point that has been made up to now: the Jewish religion completely lacks the belief in a supra-sensible Beyond. Indeed, one even gets an almost positive impression that, in the course of time, everything that in the least could foster a belief in an incorporeal life after death was intentionally eliminated. The Jews, with their religion oriented to purely earthly affairs, stand alone in the world! This should not be forgotten for a single moment; it is highly significant. For it is this exceptional situation which explains why a "shady nation" such as that of the Jews has survived the greatest and most glorious nations, and will continue to survive, until the end of all time, until the hour of salvation strikes for all mankind. The Jewish nation will not perish before this hour strikes.... Thus, we are obliged to accept the Jews among us as a necessary evil, for who knows how many thousands of years to come. But just as the body would become stunted if the bacteria increased beyond a salutary number, our nation too — to describe a more limited circle — would gradually succumb to a spiritual

malady if the Jew were to become too much for it ... if the Jew were continually to stifle us, we would never be able to fulfill our mission, which is the salvation of the world. ... It is known that the Jewish people are especially prone to mental disease. ... Their aim is to strip mankind of its soul.

— Alfred Rosenberg, "The Earth-Centered Jew Lacks a Soul," 1928



Jews were deprived of their legal and civil rights as an avowed objective of the Third Reich. All Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David which had to be prominently displayed as shown here.

Actually, one could conceivably designate will power, a definite faculty of judgment rooted in a coolly deliberating sense of reality, the impulse to truthfulness, an inclination to knightly justice, as the repeatedly striking psychological features of Nordic men. Such features can be intensified in individuals within the Nordic race to pronouncedly heroic disposition, to a transcendent leadership in statesmanship or creativity in technology, science and art. The relatively great number of Nordic people among the famous and outstanding men and women of all Western countries is striking, as also is the relatively low number of famous men and women without noticeable Nordic strain.

— Hans F.K. Gunther, "The Nordic Race as 'Ideal Type,'" 1933

Nazi ideology often joined traditionally conservative ideas of how to organize society with mystical and fanatical notions. The Nazis completely opposed most of the values Americans cherish.

Advocated by Nazis	Opposed by Nazis
community	democracy
unity	equality
the fuhrer	individual freedom
mysticism	Jews
salvation	thinking
charisma	peace
order	internationalism
discipline	Marxism/Communism
duty	rationalism
sacrifice	a passive Jesus
conformity	modernity
Aryan	birth control
blood	integration of races
destiny	conscience
Volk	pluralism
Lebensraum	intellectual inquiry
physical labor	abstract art
heroism	
sense of mission	
strength	
war	
patriotism/ nationalism	
Social Darwinism	
male dominance	
force/violence	
eugenics	
control	

**—Harry Furman, teacher,
editor of *Holocaust and
Genocide*.**

Hitler was remarkably successful in the 1930s in restoring order and bringing economic prosperity to Germany. Contemporary views of him, even those of foreigners, were often favorable.

The old trust him, the young idolize him. It is not the admiration accorded to a popular Leader. It is the worship of a national hero who has saved his country from utter despondency and degradation ... He is as immune from criticism as a king in a monarchical country. He is something more. He is the George Washington of Germany — the man

who won for his country independence from all her oppressors. To those who have not actually seen and sensed the way Hitler reigns over the heart and mind of Germany, this description may appear extravagant. All the same it is the bare truth.

—David Lloyd George, *Daily Express*, London, November 17, 1936



Throughout the 1930s, German troops often participated in rallies and parades. Civilians thrilled to the spectacle.

The Nazis based their justification for direct medical killing on the concept of “life unworthy of life” (lebensunwertes Leben). While the Nazis did not originate this concept, they carried it to its ultimate biological, racial, and “therapeutic” extreme. From the outset, they initiated a systematic program of sterilization and so-called euthanasia.

Once in power — Hitler took the oath of office as Chancellor of the Third Reich on 30 January 1933 — the Nazi regime made sterilization the first application of the biomedical imagination to this issue of collective life or death. On 22 June, Wilhelm Frick, the minister of the interior, introduced the

early sterilization law with a declaration that Germany was in grave danger of *Volkstod* ("Death of the people" [or "nation" or "race"]) and that harsh and sweeping measures were therefore imperative. The law was implemented three weeks later, less than six months after Hitler had become chancellor, and was extended by amendment later that year. It became basic sterilization doctrine and set the tone for the regime's medicalized approach to "life unworthy of life." Included among the "hereditarily sick" who were to be surgically sterilized were the categories of congenital feeble-mindedness (now called mental deficiency), an estimated 200,000; schizophrenia, 80,000; manic depressive insanity, 20,000; epilepsy, 60,000; Huntington's chorea (a hereditary brain disorder), 600; hereditary blindness, 4,000; hereditary deafness, 16,000; grave bodily malformation, 20,000; and hereditary alcoholism, 10,000. The projected total of 410,000 was considered only preliminary, drawn mostly from people already in institutions; it was assumed that much greater numbers of people would eventually be identified and sterilized....

Mental hospitals became an important center for the developing "euthanasia" consciousness. From 1934, these hospitals were encouraged to neglect their patients; each year funds were reduced and state inspections of standards were either made perfunctory or suspended altogether. Especially important were courses held in psychiatric institutions for leading government officials and functionaries — courses featuring grotesque "demonstrations" orchestrated to display the most repulsive behavior of regressed patients — of "life unworthy of life." After 1938, these courses were systematically extended to include members of the SS, political leaders of the Party, the police, prison officials, and the press. In the process, the medical profession itself was made ready for the extraordinary tasks it was to be assigned....

The Nazis viewed their biomedical vision as having a heroic status parallel to that of war. Hitler's concept that the state in itself was nothing, and existed only to serve the well-being of the *Volk* and the race, applied also to the major enterprises of the state,

especially in its transcendent enterprise of war. Rather than medical killing being subsumed to war, the war itself was subsumed to the vast biomedical vision of which "euthanasia" was a part. Or, to put the matter another way, the deepest impulses behind the war had to do with the sequence of sterilization, direct medical killing, and genocide.

—Robert Jay Lifton, historian, author, *The Nazi Doctors*

On May second, 1933 SS-doctor Kurt Strauss appeared in the Moabit Hospital, Berlin and dismissed the last Jewish surgeons: Dr. Ernst Berla, Dr. Leopold Kaufer and Dr. Erich Loewenthal. What happened thereafter is described by nurses and doctors who were employed by the hospital at the time: "Doctors with white smocks over their uniforms appeared, who were simply incompetent. The patients died like so many flies. We nurses wondered at the time why there were so many deaths as a result of appendix-and gall-bladder operations. That had previously not been the case. Rumors about what went on in the operating theatre were whispered, but nothing like that could be mentioned in a normal tone of voice.

"It was general knowledge that Strauss was a terrible surgeon and that many of his patients died. As a result, many patients refused to have operations at Moabit Hospital. Even the ambulance drivers advised patients to consider being taken to other hospitals for treatment.

"I was present when Strauss operated on a political prisoner who was in detention at Moabit Prison pending trial. He had swallowed a spoon. Strauss cut open the man's abdomen, using local anesthesia alone. The patient groaned with every stitch. Strauss didn't bother to sew the abdominal wall together again, since the patient was in such pain, but simply carried out a tamponage. The next day I witnessed how Strauss poked around in the open wound and said: 'We'll make a good German out of you yet'..."

—Christian Pross, German medical historian



Forced march of Jews in Baden-Baden the morning after *Kristallnacht*, or "The night of the broken glass," November 9, 1938. *Kristallnacht* marked the beginning of open attacks on Jewish businesses, synagogues and other institutions. This forced march was a typical form of public humiliation. [photo credit: YIVO]

On November 7, 1938, Ernst Vom Rath, a member of the German Embassy in Paris, was assassinated by Herschel Grynszpan, a young Polish Jew. Grynszpan had received a letter from his sister in which she stated that the Grynszpan family, together with all Polish Jews living in Germany, had been arrested and deported to Poland. Seeking revenge for the suffering of his family, Grynszpan, who was 17 years old, bought a hand gun, went to the German Embassy, and shot Vom Rath, who later died.

Supposedly in retaliation, the Nazis determined that all places of Jewish worship in Germany and Austria were to be destroyed. In reality, plans for such a riot had been made long before, and only awaited the appropriate moment for execution. Thus, on November 9, 1938, a "spontaneous" demonstration of anger was carried out. In fifteen hours, 101 synagogues were destroyed by fire, and seventy-six others were demolished. Seventy-five hundred Jewish-owned stores were destroyed. The streets were filled with broken glass; thus the name given to this event was *Kristallnacht*, or "The Night of Broken Glass." Then the government decided that the Jews would have to pay an "atonement payment" for having caused the damage. Millions of dollars had to be paid by the Jews and their insurance companies to the Nazi government. A new stage in the process of death had begun.

– Harry Furman, teacher,
Holocaust historian

World War II began in September, 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. A year later Germany conquered France as well as most of Northern, Southern, and East Central Europe. In occupied areas, especially in the East, the Nazis forced Jews into newly created ghettos that were often physically separated from the rest of the city. Life in the ghetto was always difficult, and often brutal. The ghettos were under the strict surveillance of the Germans.

When I think of the faces of that squad of armed green-uniformed guards – my God, those faces! I looked at them, each in turn, from behind the safety of a window, and I have never been so frightened of anything in my life. I sank to my knees with the words that preside over human life: And God made man after His likeness. That passage spent a difficult morning with me.

– Etty Hillesum, a Dutch Jew, died in Auschwitz in November, 1943

What ghastly dreams! Last night: the Germans, I without an armband during a curfew at Praga. I woke up. And again a dream. On a train, I am moved, a meter at a time, into a compartment where there are already several Jews. Again some had died tonight. Bodies of dead children. One dead child in a bucket. Another skinned, lying on the boards in the mortuary, clearly still breathing. Another dream: I am standing high up on a wobbly ladder, and my father keeps on pushing a piece of cake into my mouth, a big lump with sugar frosting and raisins, and anything that falls from my mouth he puts into his pocket.

– Janusz Korczak ran an orphanage in the Warsaw ghetto, and kept a diary until his death August 6, 1942

Jan Karski was a non-Jewish Polish diplomat before the War. After the German victory, he joined the Polish underground. In that capacity, he became familiar with the details of the German treatment of the Jews in Poland. He wrote a report in 1942 that fully described the Warsaw ghetto and the concentration camps

throughout the country. He brought this report to the Polish Government in Exile in London, which in turn distributed it widely to the Allies.

By that time ... Out of approximately four hundred thousand Jews, some three hundred thousand were already deported from the ghetto...

It was not a world. There was not humanity. Streets full, full. Apparently all of them lived in the street, exchanging what was the most important, everybody offering something to sell – three onions, two onions, some cookies. Selling. Begging each other. Crying and hungry. Those horrible children – some children running by themselves or with their mothers sitting. It wasn't humanity. It was some ... some hell.

... we left the ghetto ... [and] then [the representative of the Jewish Bund] said: "You didn't see everything; you didn't see too much. Would you like to go again? I will come with you. I want you to see everything..."

Next day we went again. ... I was much more conditioned, so I felt other things. Stench, stench, dirt, stench – everywhere, suffocating. Dirty streets, nervousness, tension. Bedlam. This was Platz Muranowski. In a corner of it some children were playing something with rags – throwing the rags to one another. He says: "They are playing, you see. Life goes on. Life goes on." So then I said: "They are simulating playing. They don't play."

"There were a few trees, rickety. So then we just walked the streets; we didn't talk to anybody. We walked probably one hour. Sometimes he would tell me: "Look at this Jew!" – a Jew standing, without moving. I said: "Is he dead?" He says: "No, no, no, he is alive ... [but] remember – he's dying, he's dying. Look at him. Tell them over there. You saw it. Don't forget." We walk again. It's macabre. Only from time to time he would whisper: "Remember this, remember this." Or he would tell me: "Look at her." I would say: "What are they doing here?" His answer: "They are dying, that's all. They are dying." And always: "But remember, remember."

... I reported what I saw. It was not a world. It was not a part of humanity. I was not a part

of it. I did not belong there. I never saw such things, I never ... nobody wrote about this kind of reality. I never saw any theatre, I never saw any movie... this was not the world. I was told that these were human beings – they didn't look like human beings. Then we left. He embraced me then. "Good luck, good luck." I never saw him again.

– Jan Karski, courier of the Polish Government in Exile, 1985

The Germans soon began to move Jews from the ghettos into concentration camps. These transports by rail of Jews and other "undesirables" from all over Europe were the next step in the process of annihilation.

The Jews, when caught, are driven to a square. Old people and cripples are then singled out, taken to the cemetery and there shot. The remaining people are loaded into good cars, at the rate of 150 people to a car with space for 40. The floor of the train is covered with a thick layer of lime and chlorine and sprinkled with water. The doors of the cars are locked. Sometimes the train starts immediately on being loaded. Sometimes it remains on a siding for a day, two days or even longer. The people are packed so tightly that those who die of suffocation remain in the crowd side by side with the still living and with those slowly dying from the fumes of lime and chlorine, from lack of air, water and food...

– Jan Karski in his report to the Polish Government in Exile, 1942

Towards the oblique road leading to the tracks, the sound's volume increased. It was not, as Ida had already persuaded herself, the cry of animals packed into cattle-cars, which could sometimes be heard echoing in this area. It was a sound of voices, of a human mass, coming, it seemed, from the end of the ramps, and Ida followed that signal.

There were perhaps twenty cattle-cars, some wide-open and empty, others closed with long iron bars over the outside doors. Following the standard design of such roll-in-stock, the cars had no windows, except a

tiny grilled opening up high. At each of those grilles, two hands could be seen clinging, or a pair of staring eyes. At that moment, nobody was guarding the train.

The interior of the cars, scorched by the lingering summer sun, continued to reecho with that incessant sound. In its disorder, babies' cries overlapped with quarrels, ritual chanting, meaningless mumbles, senile voices calling for mother, others that con-

versed, aside almost ceremonious, and others that were even giggling. And at times, over all this, sterile, bloodcurdling screams rose; or others, of a bestial physicality, exclaiming elementary words like "water!" "air!" From one of the last cars, dominating all the other voices, a young woman would burst out, at intervals, with convulsive piercing shrieks typical of labor pains.

—Elsa Morante, contemporary Italian novelist.



Here in this transport
I Eve
and Abel my son
if you should see my older son
Cain son of man
tell him that I

— *Written in Pencil in the
Sealed Freight Car, by Don
Pagis.*

There were many designated victims in the Nazi schema, including Poles, Gypsies, and homosexuals. In the concentration camps, different colored triangles were sewn onto prison uniforms so that SS guards could distinguish the various groups. Some groups were especially despised and were singled out for brutal treatment. The colors of the triangles were as follows:

*yellow for Jews,
red for politicals,
green for criminals,
pink for homosexuals,
black for anti-socials,
purple for Jehovah's Witnesses,
blue for emigrants,
brown for gypsies*

As soon as we were unloaded on the large, open paradeground, some SS NCOs came along and attacked us with sticks. We had to form up in rows of five, and it took quite a while, and many blows and insults, before our terrified ranks were assembled....

When my name was called I stepped forward....

It was January and a few degrees below zero, with an icy wind blowing through the camp, yet we were left naked and barefoot on the snow-covered ground, to stand and wait. An SS corporal in winter coat with fur collar strode through our ranks and struck now one of us, now another, with a horse-whip crying: "This is so you don't make me feel cold, you filthy queers."

— **Heinz Heger, survivor**

The SS considered it great sport to taunt and torture the homosexuals. The camp commander at Flossenburg often ordered them flogged.

The SS man struck with such force that the victim's skin broke open in centimeter-wide weals at each stroke and his blood ran down to the ground ... he howled like an animal and screamed for help — help which we couldn't give him. But the Commander was panting with excitement, and masturbated wildly in his trousers until he came.

— **Heinz Heger, survivor**

Until 1942 the Nazis carried out the extermination of the Jews with large-scale but unorganized shootings, hangings, and other violence. After 1942, however, the so-called Final Solution to exterminate the Jews went into effect, and the killing process in some concentration camps was systematized. The latest technology was applied. Mass gassing of Jews (and others) was instigated. The bodies were burned in huge crematoria. Some scholars have estimated that by the end of the war there were as many as 1,000 concentration camps of all kinds and sizes throughout Europe. But it was only in a small number of "death camps," like Treblinka and Auschwitz, that millions died in gas chambers.

Over time, five crematoria were built in which the gas chambers were also located. People from all nations, of both sexes, of all ages were gassed. ... Gassings of unthinkable dimensions took place at the arrival of prisoner transports from France, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Czechoslovakia and Germany, as well as from the Polish camps and from Norway.

— **Otto Wolkin, Austrian-Jewish prisoner physician, survivor of Auschwitz**

The selection process was the first experience in the camps for the arriving prisoners. Few survived. The following describes selections at Auschwitz, the largest extermination camp, located in Southern Poland.

When the transport trains came in, the arrivals had to pass before the camp doctor ... on duty. He pointed his thumb either to the right or to the left. Left meant death by gas. From a transport consisting of about 1,500 people, about 1,200 to 1,300 went to the gas chambers. Very seldom was the percentage greater

of those who were permitted to live. At these selections [Dr. Josef] Mengele and [Dr. Heinz] Thilo made their selections while whistling a melody. Those elected for the gas chambers had to undress in front of the gas chambers and were then chased into them with whip lashes, then the doors were closed and the gassing took place. After about eight minutes (death occurred after about four minutes) the chambers were opened and a special *Kommando* for this purpose had to take the corpses for cremation to the furnaces, which were burning day and night. There were not enough ovens at the time of the Hungarian transports [beginning in late May, 1944] so that large trenches had to be dug to burn the corpses. Here the wood was sprayed with petroleum. Into these trenches the corpses were thrown. Often living children and adults were thrown into the burning trenches. These poor ones died a terrible death by burning. The necessary oil and fats for the burning were obtained partly from the corpses of the gassed in order to save petroleum.

—Otto Wolkin, Austrian-Jewish prisoner physician, survivor of Auschwitz

And suddenly it started: the yelling and screaming. "All out, everybody out!" All those shouts, the uproar, the tumult! "Out! Get out! Leave the baggage!" We got out stepping on each other. We saw men wearing blue armbands. Some carried whips. We saw some SS men. Green uniforms, black uniforms...

We were a mass, and the mass swept us along. It was irresistible. It had to move to another place. I saw the others undressing. And I heard: "Get undressed! You're to be disinfected!" As I waited, already naked, I noticed the SS men separating out some people. These were told to get dressed. A passing SS man suddenly stopped in front of me, looked me over, and said: "Yes, you too, quick, join the others, get dressed. You're going to work here, and if you're good, you can be a kapo — a squad leader!"

—Richard Glazar, Treblinka survivor



Heinrich Himmler visiting Auschwitz to supervise the vast expansion of the existing concentration camp into the major center for annihilation of the Jews and other "undesirables." In the photograph, Himmler mops his sweaty forehead as he reviews the blueprints. [photo credit: YIVO]

Selection was presumably based on the need to identify the physically fit for slave labor, until they, too, would be killed. The process, however, was seldom that rational.

We also know that not even this tenuous principle of discrimination between fit and unfit was always followed, and that later the simpler method was often adopted of merely opening both doors of the wagon without warning or instructions to the new arrivals. Those who by chance climbed down on one side of the convoy entered the camp; the others went to the gas chamber.

—Primo Levi, Italian-Jewish writer and chemist, survivor of Auschwitz



Selection at Auschwitz. [Photo credit: YIVO]

In the selections, the Nazis revealed their perverted dreams of power.

The Nazi project... was not so much Darwinian or social Darwinist as a vision of absolute control over the evolutionary process, over the biological human future. Making widespread use of the Darwinian term "selection," the Nazis sought to take over the functions of nature (natural selection) and God (the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away) in orchestrating their own "selections," their own version of human evolution.

—Robert Jay Lifton, historian, author of *The Nazi Doctors*

Black milk of dawn we drink it at dusk
we drink it at noon and at daybreak we drink
it at night
we drink it and drink it
we are digging a grave in the air there's room
for us all
A man lives in the house he plays with the
serpents he writes
he writes when it darkens to Germany your
golden hair Margarete
he writes it and steps outside and the stars all
aglisten
he whistles for his hounds
he whistles for his Jews he has them dig a
grave in the earth
he commands us to play for the dance....

He shouts play death more sweetly death is a
master from Germany
he shouts play the violins darker you'll rise as
smoke in the air
then you'll have a grave in the clouds there's
room for you all
Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death is a master from
Germany
we drink you at dusk and at daybreak we
drink and we drink you
death is a master from Germany his eye is
blue
he shoots you with bullets of lead his aim is
true
a man lives in the house your golden hair
Margarete

he sets his hounds on us he gives us a grave in
the air
he plays with the serpents and dreams death
is a master from Germany

—From *Death Fugue*, by
Paul Celan, survivor

There was an elaborate hierarchy in the concentration camps between the German SS and the prisoners. Some important categories included Kapos, who oversaw the slave labor gangs; Kommandos who helped unload the incoming transports of people destined for the gas chambers; and the Sonderkommandos who worked in the crematoria. Those appointed Kapos and Kommandos were usually non-Jewish; Sonderkommandos were always Jewish.

The following is a fictionalized depiction of a conversation between two Kommandos.

We unwrap the bacon, the onion, we open a can of evaporated milk. Henri, the fat Frenchman, dreams aloud of the French wine brought by the transports from Strasbourg, Paris, Marseille ... Sweat streams down his body.

"Listen, *mon ami*, next time we go up on the loading ramp, I'll bring you real champagne. You haven't tried it before, eh?"

"No. But you'll never be able to smuggle it through the gate, so stop teasing. Why not try and 'organize' some shoes for me instead — you know, the perforated kind, with a double sole, and what about that shirt you promised me long ago?"

"Patience, *patience*. When the new transports come. I'll bring all you want. We'll be going on the ramp again!"

"And what if there aren't any more 'cremo' transports?" I say spitefully. "Can't you see how much easier life is becoming around here: no limit on packages, no more beatings? You even write letters home... One hears all kind of talk, and, dammit, they'll run out of people!"

"Stop talking nonsense." Henri's serious fat face moves rhythmically, his mouth is full of sardines. We have been friends for a long time, but I do not even know his last name. "Stop talking nonsense," he repeats, swallowing with effort. "They can't run out of people,

or we'll starve to death in this blasted camp. All of us live on what they bring."

— **Taduez Borowski, Polish journalist and novelist, survivor of Auschwitz**

[At Belzec] more than six hundred thousand Jews were murdered in less than a year. No selection was made to keep alive those capable of work: only a few hundred were chosen to be part of a *Sonderkommando*, or 'Special Commando,' some employed in taking the bodies of those who had been gassed to the burial pits, others in sorting the clothes of the victims and in preparing those clothes and other belongings for dispatch to Germany. Eventually the members of this *Sonderkommando* were also murdered.

— **Martin Gilbert, historian**

[A surviving member of the *Sonderkommando*] tells how camp policy shifted from early brutality to "another method that made their work easier by telling the new arrivals that they had to take a shower to be clean after the long trip." Now it became the task of the Jews in the *Sonderkommando* to "calm the people" [arrivals headed for the gas chamber]. These Jews engaged in this deception because they "were in a slaughterhouse from which there was no escape and everybody clung to his own life," and also because "it was better to save the victims from ... tortures" (the previous policy of exposing Jews to beatings, vicious dogs, and fiendish shouting): thus, "by taking over the task of the SS men, they rendered a last service to the death candidates."

This same witness went on to say that when *Sonderkommando* Jews did tell arrivals that they were going to be gassed, "they became insane, so that we later preferred to keep quiet."

— **Robert Jay Lifton, historian, author, *The Nazi Doctors***

In early 1945, the Russian Army moved rapidly across Poland toward Berlin. The Germans, in hasty retreat, tried to destroy the camps. They then marched the surviving prisoners West toward other camps closer to Germany. In these

"death marches," prisoners walked hundreds of miles. Sometimes they were loaded onto trains for further transport.

Throughout January 18 and 19 enormous columns, some with as many as 2,500 prisoners, set off on foot, in the freezing weather, westwards toward the cities of Silesia. Anyone who fell, and could not rise again, was shot. The slightest protest was met with savage brutality from the armed guards. The death marches had begun. In one column of eight hundred men, only two hundred survived the eighteen days of marching and savagery. In another column of 2,500, a total of seventy-one were shot during the first day's march....

Not only from Auschwitz, but from all the slave labor camps of Upper Silesia, the Jews were being marched away. At the same time, United States bombers continued to strike at the whole region. On January 20 they hit the hydrogenation plant at Blechhammer, where nearly four thousand Jews worked as slave labourers: all of them former inmates of Auschwitz.

— **Martin Gilbert, historian.**



"Forced March." Hungarian poet, Miklos Radnoti, was brutally murdered on a death march from a forced labor camp in Yugoslavia. In 1946, his wife identified his body, found in a mass grave not far from the town of Abda, in Hungary. From the pockets of his trenchcoat, she recovered a notebook of the poems he had written during his internment in the Nazi labor camp. [Illustration by Sandor Racmolnar]

You're crazy. You fall down, stand up and walk again your ankles and your knees move pain that wanders around, but you start again as if you had wings.

The ditch calls you, but it's no use you're afraid to stay, and if someone asks why, maybe you turn around and say that a woman and a sane death a better death wait for you.

– **Written on a death march, September 15, 1944 by Hungarian poet, Miklos Radnoti, whose notebooks were later found on his decaying body in a mass grave**

The train stopped in the middle of a deserted field. The suddenness of the halt woke some of those who were asleep. They straightened themselves up, throwing startled looks around them.

Outside, the SS went by, shouting:

"Throw out all the dead! All corpses outside!"

The living rejoiced. There would be more room. Volunteers set to work. They felt those who were still crouching.

"Here's one! Take him!"

They undressed him, the survivors avidly sharing his clothes, then two "gravediggers" took him one by the head and one by the feet, and threw him out of the wagon like a sack of flour.

From all directions came cries: "Come on! Here's one! This man next to me. He doesn't move."

I woke from my apathy just at the moment when two men came up to my father. I threw myself on top of his body. He was cold. I slapped him. I rubbed his hands, crying:

"Father! Father! Wake up. They're trying to throw you out of the carriage..."

He remained inert.

The two gravediggers seized me by the collar.

"Leave him. You can see perfectly well that he's dead."

"No!" I cried. "He isn't dead! Not yet!"

I set to work to slap him as hard as I could. After a moment my father's eyelids moved slightly over his glazed eyes. He was breathing weakly.

"You see," I cried.

The two men moved away.

Twenty bodies were thrown out of our wagon. Then the train resumed its journey, leaving behind it a few hundred naked dead, deprived of burial, in the deep snow of a field in Poland.

– **Elie Wiesel, survivor, *Night***

The Holocaust baffles the imagination. One recent attempt to comprehend its evil is from a contemporary psychiatrist and writer.

One approaches the task of writing about the Holocaust knowing that it is virtually impossible to convey the experience, to find words or concepts for the extremity of its horror. We are faced with the paradox of making an effort to understand, in terms of human feeling, the most antihuman event in human history. The European Holocaust after all was invented by, and consumed, human beings. Its very extremity has something to teach us about our more ordinary confrontations with death and violence.

– **Robert Jay Lifton**

Suggested Films For This Section

T*riumph of the Will* is a brilliant propaganda film, made for the Third Reich by Leni Riefenstahl, of the 1934 Nazi Party rally held in Nuremberg. The film is an effective document for learning about Hitler's image of himself, his manipulation of the crowds, and his use of film as propaganda. (120 minutes, abridged version 50 minutes)

Genocide is perhaps the definitive film on the Holocaust. Part of the British produced "World at War" TV series, *Genocide* is the history of the Holocaust from the 1920s, when waves of anti-Semitism spread through Germany, to 1945, when the remnants of European Jewry were

liberated from concentration camps. Extraordinary film footage, much of it never seen before, and interviews with concentration camp survivors as well as Germans who were directly involved in implementing the Holocaust. The film conveys the bestiality of the Nazi era and the near total destruction of the Jewish people. Seeing and hearing the living who tell of the dying remains a haunting experience for anyone who has viewed the film. Israel, though never mentioned, emerges as a land of refuge for the Jewish people, since many of the interviews with survivors were filmed there. It is narrated by Sir Laurence Olivier. (52 minutes)

For Reflection

1. In retrospect, "The Night of the Broken Glass," Crystal Night, can be seen as an early warning sign of the horror that was to follow. Imagine yourself a non-Jewish German the morning after Crystal Night. What would you do? Do you think you would be inclined to help your Jewish neighbors?

2. Anti-Semitism in Germany led to terror and mass extermination. Do you think that apparently minor forms of racism like slurs and ethnic jokes are therefore dangerous?

3. Psychologists have often used the idea of "designated victim" to describe the way a given society selects certain ethnic minorities as scapegoats. In Nazi Germany, the Jews clearly were the designated victim. Are there such designated victims in the United States?

4. The Nazis systematically rounded up ho-

mosexuals and other "undesirables," who did not belong to an ethnic group. Many were brutalized and killed in concentration camps. Do you think that America could ever likewise declare "life unworthy of life?" What insurance does a democracy like ours have against such dehumanizing principles?

5. The Nazi attempt to annihilate all Jews and their creation of death camps during World War II was a unique event in human history. Do you think it could ever happen again?

6. Imagine yourself as a Jew in Auschwitz who made it past the selection on the ramp. What resources within yourself could you call on to survive?

7. Is there any similarity between the concentration camp experience and what American prisoners of war went through in Vietnam?

Further Reading

Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985).

This massive work describes in minute detail the conception and execution of the Nazi program of extermination, adding a convincing and perceptive analysis. Hilberg focuses on the perpetrators, not the victims.

Vera Laska, *Women in the Resistance and in the Holocaust: The Voices of Eyewitnesses* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983).

Unforgettable portraits of human courage and dignity in the face of butchery. Her passion to tell the story of women resisters and survivors motivated the amazing industry which undergirds this work of scholarship.

Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medicalized Killing and the Psychology of Gen-*

ocide (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

How did physicians, trained to heal, become killers? How did the German medical community, once the most prestigious in the world, become an integral part of the Final Solution. In this powerful book, Lifton explains the Nazi vision of a "healthy" society, a vision which precipitated the breakdown of the tradition boundary between healing and killing.

Elie Wiesel, *Night*, (New York: Bantam, 1984).

This brief volume is presented on two levels – that of the author's personal account of his years in concentration camps and the loss of his family, together with his moral dilemma regarding religious faith and conviction. A powerful story about actual events.

SECTION 4: Bystanders and Collaborators

Most Germans and other Europeans under Nazi rule were neither victims nor executioners in the Holocaust. A small number of brave people actually aided and assisted Jews and other victims (See Section 6). But the vast majority of Germans and others in occupied Europe were somehow associated with the destruction of the Jews. Some watched the transports leave their cities but did not intervene. Others benefited economically. Some drove the trains filled with terror-stricken Jews. Some heard reports of mass extermination in "the east" but dismissed them as rumors or propaganda. A few, perhaps, knew nothing, though that is unlikely. All were affected. As historian Walter Lacquer has noted: "When all allowances have been made, when all mitigating circumstances have been accorded, it is still true that few come out of the story unblemished."

We mentioned one thing to a German family in a town we had taken, that there was a concentration camp about four and a half miles from where they lived and they acted very surprised. They didn't know about it. But they did know, they did know about it. They had to be blind or deaf not to know about it. They saw cars and trucks going there and cars and trucks coming back. Cars and trucks going with people on them and the trucks returned with no people on them.

—American liberator, Alex Schoenberg, Private First Class

We could never understand the townspeople not knowing about the camps. They swore they never knew. They told us there were camps in the United States. But there was no way you couldn't know. No matter

which way the wind
blew, you could
smell it.

—American liberator

The principle that governs the biblical vision of society is, "Thou shall not stand idly by when your fellow man is hurting, suffering, or being victimized." It is because that injunction was ignored or violated that the catastrophe involving such multitudes occurred. The victims perished not only because of the killers, but also because of the apathy of the bystanders. Those who perished were victims of Nazism and of society — though to different degrees. What astonished us after the torment, after the tempest, was not that so many killers killed so many victims, but that so few cared about us at all.

—Elie Wiesel, survivor

Several year ago, Claude Lanzmann produced a remarkable documentary, Shoah, An Oral History of the Holocaust. The film presents interviews Lanzmann conducted with bystanders, collaborators, perpetrators and victims throughout Europe. Lanzmann said of his work: "Incredulous, I read and reread this naked and bloodless text. A strange force seems to have filled it through and through, it resists, it lives its own life. It is the writing of disaster, and that for me is another mystery."

Translator: He had a field under a hundred yards from the camp. He also worked during the German occupation.

Lanzmann: He worked his field?

Translator: Yes. He saw how they were asphyxiated; he heard them scream; he saw that. There's a small hill; he could see quite a bit.

Lanzmann: What did this one say?

Translator: They couldn't stop and watch. It was forbidden. The Ukrainians shot at them.

Lanzmann: But they could work a field a hundred yards from the camp?

Translator: They could. So occasionally he could steal a glance if the Ukrainians weren't looking.

Lanzmann: He worked with his eyes lowered?

Translator: Yes.

Lanzmann: He worked by the barbed wire and heard awful screams. His field was there?

Translator: Yes, right up close. It wasn't forbidden to work there.

Lanzmann: So he worked, he farmed there?

Translator: Yes. Where the camp is now was partly his field. It was off limits, but they heard everything.

Lanzmann: It didn't bother him to work so near those screams?

Translator: At first it was unbearable. Then you got used to it.

Lanzmann: You get used to anything?

Translator: Yes. Now he thinks it was impossible. Yet it was true.

—Interview with Polish peasant living near Treblinka, from *Shoah, An Oral History of the Holocaust*, by Claude Lanzmann

It's hard to recognize, but it was here. They burned people here. A lot of people were burned here. Yes, this is the place. No one ever left here again. The gas vans came in here... There were two huge ovens, and afterward the bodies were thrown into these ovens, and the flames reached to the sky. It was terrible. No one can describe it. No one can recreate what happened here. Impossible? And no one can understand it. Even I, here, now... I can't believe I'm here. No, I just can't believe it. It was always this peaceful here. Always. When they burned two thousand people — Jews — everyday, it was just as peaceful. No one shouted. Everyone went about his work. It was silent. Peaceful. Just as it is now.

—Simon Srebnik, survivor of Chelmo.

Lanzmann: Is there still hunting here in the Sobibor forest?

Piwonski: Yes, there are lots of animals of all kinds.

Lanzmann: Was there hunting then?

Piwonski: Only manhunts. Some victims tried to escape. But they didn't know the area. At times people heard explosions in the minefield, sometimes they'd find a deer, and sometimes a poor Jew who tried to escape.

That's the charm of our forests: silence and beauty. But it wasn't always so silent here. There was a time when it was full of screams and gunshots, of dogs' barking, and that period especially engraved on the minds of the people who lived here then. After the revolt the Germans decided to liquidate the camp, and early in the winter of 1943 they planted pines that were three or four years old, to camouflage all the traces.

—Jan Piwonski, present-day Sobibor

Near the end of March 1942, sizable groups of Jews were herded here, groups of fifty to one hundred people. Several trains arrived with sections of barracks with posts, barbed wire, bricks, and construction of the camp as such began. The Jews unloaded these cars and carted the sections of barracks to the camp. The Germans made them work extremely fast. Seeing the pace they worked at — it was extremely brutal — and seeing the complex being built, and the fence, which, after all, enclosed a vast space, we realized that what the Germans were building wasn't meant to aid mankind.

Early in June the first convoy arrived. I'd say there were over forty cars. With the convoy were SS men in black uniforms. It happened one afternoon. I had just finished work but I got on my bicycle and went home.

—Jan Piwonski, present-day Sobibor

Translator: He was born here in 1923, and has been here ever since.

Lanzmann: He lived at this very spot?

Translator: Right here.

Lanzmann: Then he had a front-row seat for what happened?

Translator: Naturally. You could go up close or watch from a distance. They had land on the far side of the station, to work it, he had to cross the track, so he could see everything.

Lanzmann: Does he remember the first convoy of Jews from Warsaw on July 22, 1942?

Translator: He recalls the first convoy very well, and when all those Jews were brought here, people wondered, "What's to be done with them?" Clearly, they'd be killed, but no one yet knew how. When people began to understand what was happening, they were appalled, and they commented privately that since the world began, no one had ever murdered so many people that way.

Lanzmann: While all this was happening before their eyes, normal life went on? They worked their fields?.

Translator: Certainly they worked, but not as willingly as usual. They had to work, but when they saw all this, they thought: "Our house may be surrounded. We may be arrested too!"

Lanzmann: Were they afraid for the Jews too?

Translator: Well, he says, it's this way: if I cut my finger, it doesn't hurt him. They knew about the Jews: the convoys came in here, and then went to the camp, and the people vanished.

— Czeslaw Borowi, present-day Treblinka, *Shoah*

Lanzmann: Is it very cold here in winter?

Translator: It depends. It can get to minus fifteen, minus twenty.

Lanzmann: Which was harder on the Jews, summer or winter? Waiting here, I mean.

Translator: He thinks winter, because they were very cold. They were so packed in the cars, maybe they weren't cold. In summer they suffocated; it was very hot. The Jews were very thirsty. They tried to get out.

Lanzmann: Were there corpses in the cars on arrival?

Translator: Obviously. They were so packed in that even those still alive sat on corpses for lack of space.

Lanzmann: Didn't people here who went by the trains look through the cracks in the cars?

Translator: Yes they could look in sometimes as they went by. Sometimes when it was allowed, we gave them water too.

Lanzmann: How did the Jews try to get out? The doors weren't opened. How'd they get out?

Translator: Through the windows. They removed the barbed wire and came out of the windows. They jumped, of course. Sometimes they just deliberately got out, sat down on the ground, and the guards came and shot them in the head.

— Villager, present-day Treblinka



The execution wall at Auschwitz. On close examination the imprint of agonized fingers are evident in the brick. [photo credit: YIVO]

Lanzmann: Did he hear screams behind his locomotive?

Translator: Obviously, since the locomotive was next to the cars. They screamed, asked for water. The screams from the cars closest to the locomotive could be heard very well.

Lanzmann: Can one get used to that?

Translator: No. It was extremely distressing to him. He knew the people behind him were human, like him. The Germans gave him and the other workers vodka to drink. Without drinking, they couldn't have done it. There was a bonus – that they were paid not in money, but in liquor. Those who worked on other trains didn't get this bonus. He drank every drop he got because without liquor he couldn't stand the stench when he got here. They even bought more liquor on their own, to get drunk on.

– **Henrik Gawkowski, present-day Malkinia**

We stayed there at that station waiting to go into Treblinka. Some of the German SS came around and were asking us what we have. So we said some of the people have gold, they have diamonds, but we want water. So they said: "Good, give us the diamonds, we bring you water." They took the diamonds away; they didn't bring any water at all.

– **Abraham Bomba, Treblinka survivor**

Then, on the second day, I saw a sign for Malkinia. We went on a little farther. Then, very slowly, the train turned off of the main track and rolled at a walking pace through a wood... we'd been able to open a window and an old man in our compartment looked out and saw a boy... cows were grazing... and he asked the boy in signs, "Where are we?" And the kid made a funny gesture. This: (draws finger across throat).

– **Richard Glazar, Treblinka survivor**

Many bystanders and collaborators were one step removed from the actual concentration camps. Their experiences varied.

Now the inmates told me they used to be awakened at three or four in the morning every day, and marched to the factories near Munich where they were being worked. The people of Munich claim that they never knew. But that isn't true. They saw them being marched back and forth everyday.

– **American Liberator**

And then there was the largest group of all, those who witnessed the Holocaust in silence and indifference, not participating in its cruelty but doing nothing to alleviate it. They went about their ordinary business, trying to survive, living from day to day, ignoring the horror around them.

Where the local bureaucracy refused to cooperate in the Holocaust, on the other hand, the outcome was as a rule dramatically different. Italy was the first fascist country in Europe and Hitler's oldest ally. Yet the authorities stubbornly resisted all attempts to enlist their aid in the war against Jews. There was procrastination, dissimulation, equivocation, and sometimes open defiance, not only in their own country but in the parts of France, Yugoslavia and Greece occupied by their armies. Thanks to their noncooperation, about 80 percent of the Italian Jews survived the extermination campaign.

Even more illuminating is the case of Bulgaria. There the authorities decided that Jews living within the prewar boundaries of the state should be protected, but those in the newly acquired parts of Macedonia and

Thrace were to be handed over to the Germans. The results underscore the crucial role of the non-German bureaucracy in the Holocaust. Of the 14,000 Jews in the regions annexed by Bulgaria during the war, almost all were deported and never returned. Of the 50,000 living in Bulgaria proper, on the other hand almost all survived. Thus the evidence that the collaboration of the local administration system was essential for the success of the extermination campaign appears irrefutable.

— Theodore S. Hamerow,
historian

This is no longer home, you see. And especially it's no longer home when they start telling me that they didn't know, they didn't know. They say they didn't see. "Yes, there were Jews living in our house, and one day they were no longer there. We didn't know what happened." They couldn't help seeing it. It wasn't a matter of one action. These were actions that were taking place over almost two years. Every fortnight people were thrown out of the houses. How could they escape it? How could they not see it?

I remember the day they made Berlin Judenrein. The people hastened in the streets; no one wanted to be in the streets; you could see the streets were absolutely empty. They didn't want to look, you know. They hastened to buy what they had to buy — they had to buy something for Sunday, you see. So they went shopping and hastened back into their houses. And I remember this day very vividly because we saw police cars rushing through the streets of Berlin taking people out of the houses. They had herded the Jews together, from factories, from houses, wherever they could find them, and had put them into something that was called "Klu." Klu was a dance restaurant, a very big one. From there they were deported in various transports. They were going off not very far from here on one of the tracks at the Grunewald station, and this was the day when I suddenly felt so utterly alone, left alone, because now I knew we would be one of the very few people left. I didn't know how many more would be underground. This also was the day when I felt very guilty that I didn't go

myself and I tried to escape fate that the others could not escape. There was no more warmth around, no more soul akin to us, you understand. And we talked about this. What happened to Elsa? To Hans? And where is he and where is she? My God, what happened to the child? These were our thoughts on that horrible day. And this feeling of being terribly alone and terribly guilty that we did not go with them. Why did we try? What made us do this? To escape fate — that was really our destiny or the destiny of our people.

— Inge Deutschkron, a German Jew who survived the war hiding in Berlin

Milton Mayer, an American newspaperman of German Jewish descent, spent a year in Germany in the early 1950s trying to understand how ordinary citizens remembered their experiences in Nazi Germany. The characters in his book have fictionalized names but are real people Mayer got to know. These Germans were the furthest removed from direct witness to the killing process.

Seven of them ducked my question. My question, which I framed very carefully and put to them in a variety of ways in the last weeks of our conversations, was, "What did you do that was wrong, as you understand right and wrong, and what *didn't* you do that was right?" The instinct that throws instant ramparts around the self-love of all of us came into immediate operation; my friends in response, spoke of what was legal or illegal, or what was popular or unpopular, or what others did or didn't do, or what was provoked or unprovoked. But I was interested, at this point in none of these things. "Who knows the secret heart?" I was trying to know the secret heart; I knew all about Versailles and the Polish Corridor and the inflation, the unemployment, the Communists, the Jews, and the Talmud.

The eighth of my friends, young Rupprecht, the Hitler Youth leader, having taken upon himself (or having affected to take sovereign responsibility for every first and last injustice of the whole Hitler regime, was no better able to enlighten me than Herr Schwenke, the old Fanatiker, who, when I was at last able to divert him, with my

insistent last question, from Versailles, the Polish Corridor, etc., said "I have never done anything wrong to any man." "Never?" said I, just to hear myself say it. "Never," said he, just to hear himself say it.

— Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free*

One of the most important interpreters of the Holocaust, Raul Hilberg, explains how the killing process became routinized in German bureaucracy.

In all of my work I have never begun by asking the big questions, because I was always afraid that I would come up with small answers, and I have preferred to address these things which are minutiae or details in order that I might then be able to put together in a gestalt a picture which, if not an explanation, is at least a description, a more full description, of what transpired. And in that sense I look also at the bureaucratic destruction process — for this is what it was — as a series of minute steps taken in logical order and relying above all as much as possible on experience. And this goes not only, incidentally, for the administrative steps that were taken, but also the psychological arguments, even the propaganda. Amazingly little was newly invented till of course the moment came when one had to go beyond that which had already been established by precedent, that one had to gas these people or in some sense annihilate them on a large scale. Then these bureaucrats became inventors. But like all inventors of institutions they did not copyright or patent their achievements, and they prefer obscurity.

From the past, the Nazis got the actual content of measures which they took. For example, the barring of Jews from office, the prohibition of intermarriages and of the employment in Jewish homes of female persons under the age of forty-five, the various marking decrees — especially the Jewish star — the compulsory ghetto, the voidance of any will executed by a Jew that might work in such a way as to prevent inheritance of his property by someone who was a Christian. Many such measures had been worked out over the course of more than a thousand years by authorities of the church and by secular

governments that followed in those footsteps. And the experience gathered over that time became a reservoir that could be used, and which indeed was used to an amazing extent. One can compare a rather large number of German laws with their counterparts in the past and find complete parallels, even in detail, as if there were a memory which automatically extended to the period of 1933, 1935, 1939 and beyond.

They invented very little, and they did not invent the portrait of the Jew, which also was taken over lock, stock and barrel from writings going back to the sixteenth century. So even the propaganda, the realm of imagination and invention — even where they were remarkably in the footsteps of those who preceded them, from Martin Luther to the nineteenth century. And here again they were not inventive.

They had to become inventive with the "final solution." That was their great invention, and that is what made this entire process different from all others that had preceded that event. In this respect, what transpired when the "final solution" was adopted — or, to be more precise, bureaucracy moved into it — was a turning point in history. Even here I would suggest a logical progression, one that came to fruition in what might be called closure, because from the earliest days, from the fourth century, the sixth century, the missionaries of Christianity had said in effect to the Jews: "You may not live among us as Jews." The secular rulers who followed them from the late Middle Ages then decided: "You may not live among us," and the Nazis finally decreed: "You may not live." Conversion was followed by expulsion, and the third was the territorial solution, which was of course the solution carried out in the territories under German command, excluding emigration: death. The "final solution." And the "final solution," you see, is really final, because people who are converted can yet be Jews in secret, people who are expelled can yet return. But people who are dead will not reappear.

— Raul Hilberg, historian, in an interview with Claude Lanzmann for *Shoah*

Suggested Films For This Section

Shoah: *An Oral History of the Holocaust* is Claude Lanzmann's masterful documentary on the Holocaust. The result of years of research, the film brings together a full range of witnesses: the SS officers who served in the death camps; the Polish villagers who tilled their fields within yards of the crematoriums; the Germans who resettled occupied Poland, moving into the houses whose Jewish owners had been sent to their death; the state employee

who sold Jews half-fare excursion tickets to the camps — one way, and Western scholars of the Holocaust. The movie is nine and a half hours long but can be viewed in two parts.

The Sorrow and the Pity is an unrelenting documentary about collaboration and resistance during the German occupation of France. (260 minutes), French with English subtitles.

For Reflection

1. How do you think so many people could directly observe the Holocaust and not raise their voices?
2. The great moral issue about the Holocaust is that of responsibility. Are leaders like Hitler more responsible than the soldiers who ran the death camps? Is there a moral difference between Polish peasants observing Treblinka in operation and ordinary German citizens benefitting economically from the persecution and expulsion of the Jews from their communities?

3. What would you do if you observed atrocities in warfare? How far does your responsibility go as a soldier? Does it differ from that of civilians?
4. What if you were ordered as a soldier to carry out commands that you thought were immoral? Where does your individual accountability begin and end?
5. In what ways did the bureaucracy of the Holocaust make the mass killing possible? Did it help diffuse responsibility?

Further Reading

Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus, and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1986)

Scholarly, meticulous, and well organized, this study of three internationally prominent theologians who welcomed the rise of Hitler explores how Germany's best and brightest succumbed to the lure of the irrational.

Leonie Ossowski, *Star Without A Sky* (New York: Lerner, 1985)

This moving novel tells the story of four

teenaged German boys in the last days of World War II who discover a Jewish boy in hiding. They face the dilemma of whether or not to turn him in to the authorities.

Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans 1933-45* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966)

The author portrays the rise of Nazism as seen through the eyes of ten ordinary citizens in a small German city. For them, the Third Reich meant full employment and a sense of belonging.

Section 5: The Response

Like individual bystanders, the Allied governments – and other international organizations – moved with caution and often fatal reluctance to assist Jews as the evidence of mass extermination became indisputably known in the West.

In my opinion a disproportionate amount of the time of the Office is wasted on dealing with these wailing Jews.

– Orminius R. Dew, British Foreign Office

We will not survive this war. The Allied governments cannot take such a stand. We contributed to humanity – we gave scientists for thousands of years. We originated great religions. We are humans. Do you understand it? Do you understand it? Never happened before in history, what is happening to our people now. Perhaps it will shake the conscience of the world.

Will you do it? Will you approach them? Will you fulfill your mission? Approach the Allied leaders? We want an official declaration of the Allied nations that in addition to the military strategy which aims at securing victory, military victory in this war, extermination of the Jews forms a separate chapter, and we want the Allied nations formally, publicly, to announce that they will deal with this problem, it must become a part of their overall strategy in this war.

– Jan Karski, recalling the request by the leaders of the Warsaw ghetto that he take word of the plight of the Jews to the outside world

... the most bestial, the most squalid and the most senseless of all [the German] offences [is] the mass deportation of Jews from France, with the pitiful horrors attendant upon the calculated and final scattering of families.

This tragedy fills me with astonishment as well as with indignation, and it illustrates as nothing else can the utter degradation of the Nazi nature and theme, and the degradation

of all who lend themselves to its unnatural and perverted passions.

– Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister, September 8, 1942

Jan Karski's report on the Warsaw ghetto and the extermination camps in Poland [see section 3] was presented to the British Cabinet, which in turn brought it to the attention of Parliament and the House of Lords.

This is not an occasion on which we are expressing sorrow and sympathy to sufferers from some terrible catastrophe due unavoidably to flood or earthquake, or some other convulsion of nature. These dreadful events are an outcome of quite deliberate, planned, conscious cruelty of human beings.

– Lord Samuel, December 17, 1942

Though individual Catholic clergy and laity often risked their lives to save Jews, the Vatican proved resistant to a formal response to the emerging evidence of the Holocaust.

Both the British and American Governments tried to persuade Pope Pius XII to associate himself with the [British] Declaration of December 17. On the day after the Declaration was issued, the British Minister to the Vatican, Francis d'Arcy Osborne, was instructed "to urge the Pope to use his influence either by means of a public statement in connection with Christmas, or through some less obvious action through the German bishops," to encourage German Christians "to do all in their power to restrain these excesses." But he was unsuccessful, and on December 26 President Roosevelt's personal representative to the Pope, Myron C. Taylor, reported to Washington that the Cardinal Secretary of State, Maglione, while "deploring cruelties that have come to his attention," added that the Holy See "was unable to verify Allied reports as to the number of Jews exterminated etc."

The Pope considered this sentence a clear and sufficient reference to Nazi crimes

against the Jews. At the same time, he was reluctant to endorse specific atrocity stories, for, as Myron Taylor's assistant, Harold H. Tittman reported on December 30, after his own audience with the Pope: "he 'feared' that there was a foundation for the atrocity reports of the Allies but led me to believe that he felt that there had been some exaggeration for the purposes of propaganda."

— Martin Gilbert, historian

The silence of the world may simply have been indifference to the suffering of others; the silence of the churches was more than indifference. It expressed a vaguely religious sense that Jews were not our brothers and sisters, they represented something antithetical to the Christian vision of society, they bore the mark of Cain on their foreheads, and they were now visited by a mysterious providential act.

— Sister of Mercy, Carol Rittner

I kneel before all the inscriptions that come one after another bearing the memory of the victims of Oswiecim . . . In particular I pause with you, dear participants in this encounter, before the inscription in Hebrew. This inscription awakens the memory of the people whose sons and daughters were intended for total extermination. This people draws its origin from Abraham our father in faith as was expressed by Paul of Tarsus. The very people who received from God the commandment "thou shalt not kill," itself experiences in a special measure what is meant by killing. It is not permissible for anyone to pass by this inscription with indifference.

— Prayer of Pope John Paul II, on his pilgrimage to Auschwitz in 1979.

Jewish leaders were increasingly desperate to gather international support for the rescue of the Jews of Europe from annihilation.

Following the arrival of the eye-witnesses in Palestine, the Jewish Agency intensified the search for avenues of rescue. On December 18 the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem telegraphed to the senior member of the

Executive then in London, Moshe Shertok, instructing him to consult the British authorities on three possible measures. The first was to approach national Governments, "including Argentine," in the hope that they would make "direct representations" to the German Government, urging the Germans to "discontinue annihilation [of the] Jews."

The second suggestion was to ask the Swiss Government to persuade the International Red Cross "actively" to help "get children out." The third suggestion was radio broadcasts to "warn" the satellite countries.

— Martin Gilbert, historian

The International Red Cross was aware that it faced a grave dilemma and, as some of their post-war statements indicate, they failed to resolve it adequately. Historian Walter Laqueur has carefully analyzed the actions of the International Red Cross.

The IRC had delegates not only in Germany but also in Croatia and Rumania, the countries in which the first major massacres of Jews took place. Furthermore the IRC in Geneva was constantly approached by the local Jewish representatives with various requests for information about the fate of various individuals in Nazi-occupied countries. The IRC did try to find out until it was told by the German Red Cross that no information would be forwarded about "Non-Aryan prisoners." What could the IRC have done in these circumstances? To protest was pointless, professor Huber [a top IRC official] argued; the Red Cross was not an international tribunal. Had the committee adopted the method of public protest, it would inevitably have been forced more and more into taking a definite stand with regard to all acts of war, and even of political matters and this, of course, was quite impossible. It was the considered view of the IRC, on the grounds of past experience, that "public protests are not only ineffectual but are apt to produce a stiffening of the indicted countries' attitude with regard to the Committee, even the ruptures of relations with it."

"Germany had put the Jews into a new category, that of second-class human beings"

the IRC post-war report said. Just as the general laws did not pertain to dogs, cats and sheep, so they did not pertain to Jews. But what use would it have been to bang on the table and to protest — “what protests and threats have ever changed criminal methods?”

— Walter Laqueur, historian

As governments stalled, victims blindly placed all their hopes in an Allied response.

People still harbor such childish hopes that the transport won't get through. Many of us were able from here to watch the bombardment of a nearby town, probably Emden. So why shouldn't it be possible for the railway line to be hit too, and for the train to be stopped from leaving? It's never been known to happen yet. But people keep hoping it will, with each new transport and with never flagging hope . . .

The evening before, I had walked through the camp. People were grouped together between the barracks under a gray, cloudy sky. “Look, that's just how people behave after a disaster, standing about on street corners discussing what's happened,” my companion said to me. “But that's what makes it so impossible to understand,” I burst out. “This time, it's before the disaster!”

Tonight I shall be helping to dress babies and to calm mothers — and that is all I can hope to do. I could almost curse myself for that. For we all know that we are yielding up our sick and defenseless brothers and sisters to hunger, heat, cold, exposure, and destruction, and yet we dress them and escort them to the bare cattle cars — and if they can't walk, we carry them on stretchers. What is going on, what mysteries are these, in what sort of fatal mechanism have we become enmeshed? The answer cannot simply be that we are all cowards. We're not that bad. We stand before a much deeper question. . .

My God, are the doors really being shut now? Yes, they are. Shut on the herded, densely packed mass of people inside.

This time the quota was really quite small, all considered: a mere thousand Jews. . .

One more piece of our camp has been amputated. Next week yet another piece will

follow. This is what has been happening now for over a year, week in, week out: We are left with just a few thousand. A hundred thousand Dutch members of our race are toiling away under an unknown sky or lie rotting in some unknown soil. We know nothing of their fate. It is only a short while, perhaps, before we find out, each one of us in his own time. For we are all marked down to share that fate, of that I have not a moment's doubt.

— ETTY HILLESUM, writing from Westerbork concentration camp in Holland, months before her deportation and death in Auschwitz

One reason so few Jews left Germany and Europe in general before the war was that the British severely restricted immigration into their protectorate in Palestine (which became the country of Israel after the war).

The Jews who lived in safety, beyond the limits of Nazi rule, made repeated efforts to seek help, and to find avenues of rescue, for those whose lives were now in danger. Since 1917 the Zionists had, with British support, been building up in Palestine a Jewish National Home, and between the wars, more than 300,000 Jews had reached Palestine from Europe, the majority of them from Poland. The rise of Hitler in Germany in 1933 had intensified the pressure of immigration, so much so that in 1936 the Arabs of Palestine, supported by several nearby Arab States, had risen in revolt against Britain, demanding a halt to Jewish immigration. The British Government had sought, first, to suppress the revolt. But, in the early months of 1939, as Britain's own military weakness exposed her to increasing danger from Nazi Germany, the British Government had agreed to the demands of four independent Arab States, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the Yemen and of the Palestinian Arab leaders, to restrict future Jewish immigration to an upper limit of 75,000, at a rate of no more than ten thousand a year.

— Martin Gilbert, historian

Some individual Jews in Palestine worked valiantly to provide help. The official organization of the Jews in Palestine, however, devoted most of its energy to the development of the State of Israel.

In another place at another time, [Polish survivor] Zuckerman said to Israeli poet Haim Guri: "If 500 Palmah fighters [Palestinian Jews struggling against the British to create the State of Israel] had set out for Europe, German anti-aircraft fire would have downed 490 of them. And if the remaining ten had parachuted into Poland and reached the ground alive, we would have had the problem of how to conceal them, with their ignorance of Polish and Yiddish, their Mediterranean faces, and their sabra Hebrew. You could not have saved us, you were not superman. But why didn't one come? One?!"

— Idith Zertal, "The Jews of Palestine and the Holocaust"

In that grim summer of 1944, a determined group of six young people from Palestine parachuted into Nazi-controlled Hungary on a suicidal mission, with the intention of helping to prevent the Holocaust from being carried through there. Among the six was one girl, Hannah Senesh, the radio operator, aged twenty-three, formerly of Hungary.

The mission might seem impractical and hopeless from hindsight: six "invaders" against the safely entrenched Nazi might; but it expressed poignantly their idealism, dedication and self-sacrifice. Hannah was captured, tortured physically and mentally and tried for treason in Budapest. On November 7, 1944, while still awaiting sentencing, she was shot.

— Vera Laska, survivor and historian

Russia was an Ally in World War II. The Soviet attitude toward the Jews was simply to treat them as one of many oppressed peoples under Nazi rule. In that sense, the Russians refused to recognize that the destruction of the European Jews was a unique aspect of the Nazi mission.

From an early date the Soviet press published much general information about Nazi atroci-

ties in the occupied areas but only rarely revealed that Jews were singled out for extermination. To this day the Soviet Communist Party line has not changed in this respect.

As far as the Soviet publications are concerned the Government and the Communist Party acted correctly — Soviet citizens of Jewish origin did not fare differently from the rest under Nazi rule.

— Walter Laqueur, historian

In June, 1940 the Germans invaded France which quickly capitulated. Marshall Henri Philippe Petain became nominal chief of State over a portion of occupied France. Petain collaborated with the Germans, enforcing their anti-Semitic measures. The Allied powers recognized General Charles De Gaulle as the official representative of France, even though he was in exile until after the Allied invasion in 1944. The story of the deportation and annihilation of the Jews in France is unusually complex due to these political divisions.

The most important remark by [Commissar for Jewish Affairs] Vallat at the press conference following his appointment as commissar concerned the Jewish immigrants who had "flooded" France between the two wars and who were now to be "shoved off" again. Here was the wedge which became the starting point of the "final solution" in France. At the time when Vallat took office the general policy toward the foreign and stateless Jews had already been fixed. Under the law of October 4, 1940, these Jews were subject to internment, and the French government lost little time in implementing that law.

The 7500 Reich Jews who had been dumped in unoccupied France from Baden and the Saarpfalz were promptly interned at a camp in Gurs. According to a report by Rabbi Kaplan, these Jews "lived in crowded barracks, sleeping on the ground, devoured by vermin, suffering from hunger and cold in a damp muddy region. During the one winter of 1940-41, they suffered 800 deaths. By 1941 the Vichy government had established in southern France a network of camps: Gurs, Rivesaltes, Noe, Recebedon, La Venet, and Les Milles. Besides the Baden-Saarpfalz

Jews, the camps contained recent arrivals from the Reich-Austria-Protectorat-Polish area as well as an assortment of "stateless" Jews of all kinds. The total number of inmates was 20,000.

In Paris the German administration watched these developments with approving acceptance; they saw in the French measure a basis for similar action in the occupied territory. Under the direction of SS-Obersturmführer Dannecker, the Jewish expert detailed to the embassy, the Paris prefecture of police compiled a card index in which every Jew was listed (1) alphabetically, (2) according to street address, (3) by profession and (4) in accordance with the crucial criterion of nationality....

The circumstance that the arrested victims were heads of families developed into still another problem: A French informant of the German Rustungskontrollinspektion (the Armament Control Inspectorate in the unoccupied zone) offered the opinion that the arrest of the men without their women and children had been a mistake. These women said the French informant, were now wandering around in the streets of Paris, arousing the sympathy of "unknowing Frenchmen." Other Jews, he said, were disappearing in Paris and the provinces under false names....

Nonchalantly, the French police chief [Bousquet] asked Heydrich whether he could not also remove the stateless Jews who had already been interned for a year and a half in the unoccupied zone. Heydrich replied that it was all a matter of transport. In the meantime, therefore, the deportations had to be confined to the Jews in the camps of the occupied zone. A total of 5138 victims were removed from these camps to Auschwitz.

Encouraged by these developments, the bureaucrats began to make preparations for concentrations and deportations on a major scale. By the middle of May the Militärbefehlshaber's office was hard at work on a decree compelling every Jew who had reached the age of six to wear a Jewish star with the inscription Juif. Although the decree was to apply to French and foreign Jews alike, the treatment of some of the foreign nationalities had to be handled with caution. After consultations with the Foreign Office,

the following nationalities were determined to be safe targets for the measure: Reich, Polish, Dutch, Belgian, French, Croat, Slovakian and Roumanian.

The decree was issued on May 29 and went into effect on June 7. Difficulties in its enforcement made themselves felt immediately. Some of the Jews decided not to wear the star. Others wore it in the wrong way. Still others wore several stars instead of one. Some Jews provided their star with additional inscriptions. And, finally a number of non-Jews took to wearing the star or something that looked like it. Angrily, the Germans arrested some of the Jewish offenders and their French supporters to intern them in one of the camps.

[Chief of Government] Laval now had to make a "rapid decision." He decided to save the French nationals and involve the police in the roundup. Writing his memoirs in the death house after the liberation, Laval defended his decision in the following words: "I did all I could considering the fact that my first duty was to my fellow-countrymen of Jewish extraction whose interests I could not sacrifice. The right of asylum was not respected in this case. How could it have been otherwise in a country which was occupied by the German Army? How could the Jews have been better protected in a country where the Gestapo ran riot?"

When the delegate of the American Friends Service Committee protested against the impending deportations, he was told by [Chief of Government] Laval "that these foreign Jews had always been a problem in France and that the French Government was glad that a change in the German attitude towards them gave France an opportunity to get rid of them." Laval asked the Quaker delegate why the United States did not take these Jews and concluded with "a rather bitter general discussion of the Jewish problem."

— Raul Hilberg, historian



"The Jew in France," an exhibition of anti-Semitic propaganda funded by the Nazis and administered by French bureaucrats. The purpose of this exhibit was to ignite local anti-Semitic sentiment, to prepare a French contribution for a Nazi Final Solution. The exhibition took place in Bordeaux in late March, 1942. [photo credit: YIVO]

The first deportations from Western Europe to Belzec had taken place on 24 March 1942. Two days later, the first deportations of Jews to Auschwitz began first from Slovakia, and on the following day from France. At Auschwitz all were sent to the barracks. No gassing took place there until 4 May 1942.

The first Jews deported to Auschwitz from France on 27 March 1942 were all foreign-born Jews who had been rounded up in Paris seven months earlier, and interned. Their birthplaces ranged from Marrakech to Haifa, and from London to Simferopol. Many had left their birthplaces between the wars, to seek a new livelihood in France. Others had reached France as refugees. The majority had been born in Poland, within the area that had now become a part of Greater-Germany.

The Paris deportation of 27 March 1942 was timed by the SS with precision. The train left Paris at 17.00 hours reaching the border of Greater Germany at 13.59 on the following day, and arriving at Auschwitz at 5.33 in the morning of March 31.

Even French-born Jews were now subjected to the full rigours of anti-Jewish legislation. On 29 May 1942 all Jews were forbidden access to all public places, squares, restaurants, cafes, libraries, public baths, gardens and sports grounds.... more than 80,000 Jews were deported from Paris to Auschwitz in little over two years.

— Martin Gilbert, historian



Local people lining up for "The Jew in France," Bordeaux, 1942. [photo credit: YIVO]

America's "abandonment of the Jews," as one historian put it, occurred at many levels. For almost inexplicable reasons planes bombed the area of Auschwitz in the summer and fall of 1944 but never hit the main railroad lines leading to the camp or the crematoria within it.

On Sunday August 20, [1944] late in the morning, 127 Flying Fortresses, escorted by 100 Mustang fighters, dropped 1,336 500-pound high explosive bombs on the factory areas of Auschwitz, less than five miles to the east of the gas chambers. Conditions were nearly ideal for accurate visual bombing. The weather was excellent. Anti-aircraft fire and the 19 German fighter planes there were ineffective. Only one American bomber went down; no Mustangs were hit. All five bomber groups reported success in striking the target area.

Again, on September 13, a force of heavy bombers rained destruction on the factory areas of Auschwitz. The 96 Liberators encountered no German aircraft, but ground fire was heavy and brought three of them down. As before, no attempt was made to strike the killing installations, though two stray bombs hit nearby. One of them damaged the rail spur leading to the gas chambers.

On December 18 and also on December 26, American bombers again pounded the Auschwitz industries.

— David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*

This failure to bomb Auschwitz, and other camps late in the war came despite the urgent appeal of Jewish leaders who were well aware of the dangers.

Jewish leaders in Europe and the United States, assuming the use of heavy bombers and the consequent death of some inmates, wrestled with the moral problem involved. Most concluded that the loss of life under the circumstances was justifiable. They were aware that about 90 percent of the Jews were gassed on arrival at Auschwitz. They also realized that most who were spared for the work camps struggled daily through a hellish, famished existence as slave laborers and were worn out in a matter of weeks. Once unfit for hard labor, they were dispatched to the gas chambers. The bombing might kill some of them, but it could halt or slow the mass production of murder.

—David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*

The official explanation for the refusal to bomb the concentration camps was that the War Department of the United States was unwilling to divert military resources for nonmilitary purposes. But this policy was only applied consistently toward the Jews.

Exceptions occurred quite often, many of them for humanitarian purposes. For instance, the Allied military moved 100,000 non-Jewish Polish, Yugoslav, and Greek civilians to camps in Africa and the Middle East and maintained them there. Again, the American and British armies in Italy supplied thousands of refugees with food, shelter and medical care.

—David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*

United States policy about the Jews began at the highest level.

America's response to the Holocaust was the result of action and inaction on the part of many people. In the forefront was Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose steps to aid Europe's Jews were very limited. If he had wanted to, he could have aroused substantial public backing for a vital rescue effort by speaking out on the issue. If nothing else, a few forceful

statements by the President would have brought the extermination news out of obscurity and into the headlines. But he had little to say about the problem and gave no priority at all to rescue.

Roosevelt's personal feelings about the Holocaust cannot be determined. He seldom committed his inner thoughts to paper. And he did not confide in anyone concerning the plight of Europe's Jews except, infrequently, Henry Morgenthau. There are indications that he was concerned about Jewish problems. But he gave little attention to them, did not keep informed about them, and instructed his staff to divert Jewish questions to the State Department. Years later, Emanuel Celler charged that Roosevelt, instead of providing even "some spark of courageous leadership," had been "silent, indifferent, and insensitive to the plight of the Jews." In the end, the era's most prominent symbol of humanitarianism turned away from one of history's most compelling moral challenges.

—David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*

Nor did other individuals or institutions in the United States exert significant pressure to alter an attitude of indifference and a policy of abandonment. The State Department was callous and wasted little sympathy for Jews; 90 percent of the quotas for Jewish immigrants were never filled. The same indifference prevailed in Congress. Even American churches were silent.

American's Christian churches were almost inert in the face of the Holocaust and nearly silent too. No major denomination spoke out on the issue. Few of the many Christian publications cried out for aid to the Jews. Few even reported the news of extermination, except infrequently and incidentally.

—David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*

It must also be said that many Jewish political and intellectual leaders in the United States were tragically absorbed in other matters. Several Jews were close to Roosevelt including David Niles, Bernard Baruch, Herbert Lehman, Felix Frankfurter, and Henry Morgenthau. Too

few rearranged schedules or put aside projects of lesser significance. The difficulties are aptly illustrated in the role of Samuel Rosenman.

As special counsel to the President, Samuel Rosenman had frequent contact with Roosevelt, who relied heavily on him for advice on Jewish matters. But Rosenman considered the rescue issue politically sensitive, so he consistently tried to insulate Roosevelt from it. For instance, when Morgenthau was getting ready to urge the President to form a rescue agency, Rosenman objected. He did not want FDR involved in refugee matters, although he admitted that no one else could deal effectively with the problem. Rosenman also argued that government aid to European Jews might increase anti-Semitism in the United States.

—David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*

In desperate straits, Jewish inmates of the many concentration camps could only rely on their own meager resources.

In the fall of 1944, Jewish women who worked at a munitions factory inside Auschwitz managed to smuggle small amounts of explosives to members of the camp underground. The material was relayed to prisoners who worked in the gassing-cremation area. Those few wretched Jews then attempted what the Allied powers, with their vast might, would not. On October 7, in a suicidal uprising, they blew up one of the crematorium buildings.

—David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*

In the early years of the war the Allies knew of German brutality toward the Jews but never suspected the enormity of the Nazi scheme to annihilate all Jews.

The fact that the Germans had been murdering Jews in Europe was well known to the Allies. Since the outbreak of the war, German brutality had received wide publicity. But none of the Allies yet knew that these killings were part of a deliberate plan to murder every Jew in Europe. The Wannsee Conference, and the setting up of the eastern death camps, had been closely guarded

secrets. The deliberate attempt to destroy systematically all of Europe's Jews was unsuspected in the spring and early summer of 1942: the very period during which it was most intense, and during which hundreds of thousands of Jews were being gassed every day at Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor and Treblinka.

—Martin Gilbert, historian

General Dill took from the start a completely negative attitude. His argument was that bombing the camps would result in the death of thousands of prisoners.

I replied to him that they were destined to being gassed anyhow and explained that the idea to bomb the death camps had been suggested to us by the Jewish underground in Poland, with whom we were in a certain contact through the Polish government in exile in London, which regularly conveyed messages from the Jewish Nazi victims to us — mainly Rabbi Stephen Wise and myself — via the American State Department.

General Dill thereupon revealed his real motivation, by declaring that the British had to save bombs for military targets and that the only salvation for the Jews would be for the Allies to win the war.

I answered that the few dozen bombs needed to strike the death camps would not influence the outcome of the war and pointed out that the Royal Air Force was regularly bombing the I.G. Farben factories, a few miles distant from Auschwitz.

At the end of our talk, which lasted over an hour, I accused General Dill and his colleagues of lack of human understanding for the terrible tragedy of the extermination camps. He regarded it as discourteous for me to be so outspoken in my criticism.

—Nahum Goldmann, American Jewish leader

Americans have a very selective version of history. We live within a mythology of a benign and benevolent experience, and we tend to suppress those demonic influences of our history. The fact of the matter is that the white man who came to this country drove the Indian out of his culture, far from the reservations of his God into the reservations

of containment and isolation. The treatment of black slaves ... was never treated in textbooks when I was growing up in East Texas... anti-semitism ... has always been just below the surface, and not always below the surface of the American experience....for very positive reasons we have tended to stress the affirmative... the ideals and human values so succinctly stressed in the Declaration of Independence and in the wonderful rhetoric of the framers of our government.

America is a divided mind. Americans have resorted to violences to achieve many of their objectives. Human beings are capable of doing great harm to others as well as great love to others. The more we ... become a tribe isolated into our individual clans....the more we tend to be ignorant and insensitive to others. The more we know about others the more we know they harbor the same intuitions, the same instincts, the same aspirations that we do. Breaking down the wall of ignorance is the first way of opening up to one another and to our possibilities to coexist as a civilization despite our abiding differences.

— From an interview with American Journalist Bill Moyers on facing the history of the Holocaust

Following the War an international tribunal was convened at Nuremberg in Germany to consider the crimes against humanity committed by the Nazi regime. This was the first time in history there had been an attempt in international law to define such crimes.

The following acts, or any of them, are crimes coming within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal for which there shall be individual responsibility... (c) CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY: namely, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.

Leaders, organizers, instigators and accomplices participating in the formulation or execution of a common plan or conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing crimes are responsible for all acts performed by any persons in execution of such plan.

— The Nuremberg Tribunal



Seven of the twenty-three defendants of the *Einsatzgruppen* case at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, all former members of Hitler's extermination SS units accused of murdering one million Jews and other victims. [photo credit: YIVO]

Suggested Films

Judgment at Nuremberg is a fictionalized account of the trial of Nazi war criminals. The film serves as a case study of Germany during the Holocaust. It provides insight

into the issues of freedom of choice, obedience to authority, and responsibility to mankind. (186 minutes)

For Reflection

1. As a citizen and soldier are you responsible for the actions of your government? How can you influence your government as an individual?
2. At the Nuremberg trials many former Nazis argued they were not war criminals because they had simply followed orders from their military and political leaders. As a soldier, are you responsible for carrying out all orders? How can you determine whether an order is illegal or immoral?
3. Among other things, the American response

to the Holocaust grew out of anti-Semitism in this country. Do you think such prejudice still exists? How is it like other forms of ethnic prejudice and racism?

4. Is there anything you as a soldier can do to fight prejudice? How do you respond, for example, to ethnic slurs or jokes?
5. What is meant by the term "crimes against humanity?" How are such crimes different from the brutal acts of individual soldiers against other human beings in a war?

Further Reading

Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies: A Devastating Account of How the Allies Responded to the News of Hitler's Mass Murder* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981).

Gilbert details the story of the Allied failure to respond in any meaningful way to the clear evidence of the Holocaust coming out of Eastern Europe from 1942 on.

David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

Wyman's prize-winning book describes with meticulous research the appalling extent to which the United States, despite overwhelming evidence of the Holocaust, refused to help rescue the victims until very late in the war.

Section 6: Resistance and Rescue

The Holocaust, as a unique and terrible event in human history, generated responses on many levels. In this unit, readings are organized around some of the different kinds of resistance and rescue that developed in reaction to the Holocaust.



At the Holocaust Memorial Wall on the facade of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, National Director Abraham H. Foxman (left) confers ADL's Courage to Care award to rescuers of Anne Frank, Miep Gies (center) and her husband, Jan.

I: Resistance

Anne Frank was a young girl in Amsterdam hidden by a Christian couple during the Nazi occupation. Shortly before her deportation to Bergen-Belsen, where she died, she wrote the following in her diary:

It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build my hopes on a foundation of confusion, misery and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the approaching thunder, I can feel the suffering of millions, and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right one of these days, that this cruelty will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again. In the meantime, I must hold on to my ideals for perhaps the day will come when I shall be able to carry them out.

— Anne Frank

Another Dutch Jew, twenty-seven year-old Etty Hillesum, refused to hide despite the pleas of her dearest friends. Her diary records some of her thoughts and feelings under the Nazi occupation.

We human beings cause monstrous conditions, but precisely because we cause them so soon learn to adapt ourselves to them. Only if we become such that we can no longer adapt ourselves, only if, deep inside, we rebel against every kind of evil, will we be able to put a stop to it. Aeroplanes, streaking down in flames, still have a weird fascination for us — even aesthetically — though we know, deep down, that human beings are being burnt alive. As long as that happens, while everything within us does not yet scream out in protest, so long will we find ways of adapting ourselves, and the horrors will continue.

Does that mean I am never sad, that I never rebel, always acquiesce, and love life no matter what the circumstances? No, far from it. I believe that I know and share the many sorrows and sad circumstances that a human being can experience, but I do not cling to them, I do not prolong such moments of agony. They pass through me, like life itself, as a broad, eternal stream, they become part of that stream, and life continues. And as a result all my strength is preserved, does not become tagged on to futile sorrow or rebelliousness.

And finally: ought we not, from time to time, open ourselves up to cosmic sadness? One day I shall surely be able to say to Ilse Blumenthal, "Yes, life is beautiful, and I value it anew at the end of every day, even though I know that the sons of mothers, and you are one such mother, are being murdered in concentration camps. And you must be able to bear your sorrow; even if it seems to crush you, you will be able to stand up again, for human beings are so strong, and your sorrow must become an integral part of yourself, part of your body and your soul, you mustn't run away from it, but bear it like an adult. Do not relieve your feelings through

hatred, do not seek to be avenged on all German mothers, for they, too, sorrow at this very moment for their slain and murdered sons. Give your sorrow all the space and shelter in yourself that is due, for if everyone bears his grief honestly and courageously, the sorrow that now fills the world will abate. But if you do not clear a decent shelter for your sorrow, and instead reserve most of the space inside you for hatred and thoughts of revenge – from which new sorrows will be born for others – then sorrow will never cease in this world and will multiply. And if you have given sorrow the space its gentle origins demand, then you may truly say: life is beautiful and so rich. So beautiful and so rich that it makes you want to believe in God.”

– Ety Hillesum, Dutch Jew,
perished in Auschwitz,
1944

In some cases resistance continued even in concentration camps and in the factories where camp prisoners were detailed. The extent of this resistance depended on the circumstances of time and place. There were political resistance cells in most camps, the strongest in Buchenwald. They usually aided the few attempts at escape. Only once did resistance succeed in sabotaging a crematorium in Auschwitz, and the members of the *Sonderkommando* (Special Detail) paid for it with their lives. Less spectacular sabotage went on in most places of work, slowing down production or causing damage. From my own experience I recall weakening hemp threads in the spinning factory of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp complex, or mis-measuring with a micrometer – as I did – the rings that went into the V-2 buzz-bombs, which were manufactured in the infamous tunnel at Nordhausen, next to the concentration camp Dora. It was gratifying after the war to hear Churchill acknowledge the value of our sabotage. Where there was a will, there always was a way to leave a window open overnight so pipes would freeze, or drop a wire among the ball-bearings. We were also alert, collecting evidence for future reference, observing the SS men and women in their treatment or mistreatment of prisoners.



Jewish *Maquis* resistance unit victoriously entering the French town of Mazamet. [photo credit: YIVO]

There were also separate Jewish resistance and partisan groups. Agents from Palestine infiltrated enemy-occupied territories. In each of these cases women participating, as did Hannah Senesh, the brave radio-operator parachuted into Hungary.

It is generally believed that the Jews did not fight back. It seems as if there had been a blackout on Jewish resistance since the time of Masada in A.D. 73 to the Warsaw ghetto uprising between April 19 and May 16, 1943. On that Passover morning in April, the fighting leadership of the 60,000 Jews left in the ghetto (over 300,000 had already been shipped out to the east and annihilation at Treblinka) launched an energetic revolt. According to at least one source, a fifteen year old girl hurled the first grenade from a balcony. The men and women fought valiantly, with primitive and insufficient arms, against the flame-throwers, machine guns, tanks and planes. The ghetto kept calling for help, but the cry was not answered.

It is a myth that the Jews gave in to slaughter without protest or fight. They revolted in five extermination camps, including Treblinka and Auschwitz. It was a Jewish girl, Rosa Robota, who smuggled in the explosives that blew up the Auschwitz crematorium. In Sobibor, where as many as 15,000 Jewish bodies were burned a day at the

height of the "production" in 1943, Soviet officer Alexander Pechersky led 600 prisoners in a breakout that put an end to that camp. There were revolts in the ghettos of Czestochowa, Vilno, Bialystok, Minsk, Lachwa and several others. Considerable smuggling of people, food, medicines and arms went on in the ghettos. Babies were drugged with sleeping pills and carried out in coffins. Inventiveness to outsmart the Nazis and death were almost limitless, but unfortunately could not be applied on a large scale.

In Berlin the Jewish Baum Group of men and women operated from 1937 to 1942; they once blew up one of Goebbels' propaganda exhibits. Jewish resistance groups also functioned in Paris and other European cities. "Jews held leadership positions in over 200 partisan detachments" in the Soviet Union. There is no lack of evidence that the Jews fought back.

The Jews also organized their own underground railroad that tried to rescue Jews and take them to Palestine.

They defied Nazis and Britons, and while some of their boats sank with great loss of lives, they managed to get 40,000 people out of the Holocaust and to Palestine. These rescues in often leaky boats were among the most traumatic and tragic ones of the war. The main trouble was that they could not accomplish more without massive assistance from abroad.

— Vera Laska, survivor and
Holocaust scholar

Francoise: What have you heard?
Claire: That you wanted to commit suicide.
Francoise: Yes, so what?
Claire: You have no right to.
Francoise: Oh, that'll do, Claire. Forget your formulas; here they aren't worth anything. It's the only right I have left, the only choice. The last free act.
Claire: There are no free acts here. No choices like that.
Francoise: Oh yes. I have a choice. I have a choice, between becoming a cadaver which will have suffered for only eight days, which will

still be clean enough to look at, and one which will have suffered fifteen days, which will be horrible to look at.

Claire: You have nothing left. No such choices, nothing. You are not free to do it. You don't have the right to take your life.

Francoise: And why don't I have the right?

Claire: A fighter doesn't commit suicide.

Francoise: Claire, please. Forget your affirmations, forget your certitudes. None of them fit here. Don't you see that the truth has changed, that truth is no longer the same?

Claire: There must be one who returns, you or another, it doesn't matter. Each of us expects to die here. She is ready. She knows her life doesn't matter any more. Every one of us looks to the others. There must be one who comes back, one who will tell. Would you want millions of people to have been destroyed here and all those cadavers to remain mute for all eternity, all those lives to have been sacrificed for nothing?

— Charlotte Delbo, survivor,
Who Will Carry The Word?

... that precisely because the Lager [prison camp] was a great machine to reduce us to beasts, we must not become beasts; that even in this place one can survive, and therefore one must want to survive, to tell the story, to bear witness; and that to survive we must force ourselves to save at least the skeleton, the scaffolding, the form of civilization. We are slaves, deprived of every right, exposed to every insult, condemned to certain death, but we still possess one power, and we must defend it with all our strength for it is the last — the power to refuse our consent. So we must certainly wash our faces without soap in dirty water and dry ourselves on our jackets. We must polish our shoes, not because the regulation states it, for our dignity and propriety. We must walk erect, without

dragging our feet not in homage to Prussian discipline but to remain alive, not to begin to die.

—Primo Levi, Auschwitz survivor.

The result of this pitiless process of natural selection could be read in the statistics of Lager [camp] population movements. At Auschwitz, in 1944, of the old Jewish prisoners (we will not speak of the others here as their condition was different), "*kleine Nummer*," low numbers less than 150,000, only a few hundred had survived; not one was an ordinary Haftling [prisoner], vegetating in the ordinary Kommandos, and subsisting on the normal ration. There remained only the doctors, tailors, shoemakers, musicians, cooks, young attractive homosexuals, friends or compatriots of some authority in the camp; or they were particularly pitiless, vigorous and inhuman individuals, installed (following an investiture by the SS command, which showed itself in such choices to possess satanic knowledge of human beings) in the posts of Kapos, *Blockaltester*, etc.; or finally, those who, without fulfilling particular functions, had always succeeded through their astuteness and energy in successfully organizing, gaining in this way, besides material advantages and reputation, the indulgence and esteem of the powerful people in the camp. Whosoever does not know how to become an "Organisator," "Kombinator," "Prominent" (the savage eloquence of these words!) soon becomes a "mussulman." In life, a third way exists, and is in fact the rule; it does not exist in concentration camp.

—Primo Levi, survivor, Auschwitz

Escape from concentration camps was nearly impossible, yet many still tried. As the following passage discloses, the SS used escape attempts as an excuse to brutally abuse all of the interned.

In fact, an escape was a difficult undertaking, and it was unlikely that the fugitive had no accomplices or that his preparations had not been noticed. His hut companions, or at times all the prisoners in the camp, were

made to stand in the roll call clearing without any time limit, even for days, under snow rain, or the hot sun, until the fugitive was found, alive or dead. If he was tracked down and captured alive, he was invariably punished with death by public hanging, but this hanging was preceded by a ceremony that varied from time to time but was always of an unheard-of ferocity, an occasion for the imaginative cruelty of the SS to run amok.

To illustrate how desperate an undertaking an escape was, but not only with this purpose in mind, I will here recall the exploit of Mala Zimetbaum. In fact, I would like the memory of it to survive. Mala's escape from the women's Lager at Auschwitz-Birkenau has been told by several persons, but the details jibe. Mala was a young Polish Jewess who was captured in Belgium and spoke many languages fluently, therefore in Birkenau she acted as an interpreter and messenger and as such enjoyed a certain freedom of movement. She was generous and courageous; she had helped many of her companions and was loved by all of them. In the summer of 1944 she decided to escape with Edek, a Polish political prisoner. She not only wanted to reconquer her own freedom: she was also planning to document the daily massacre at Birkenau. They were able to corrupt an SS and procure two uniforms. They left in disguise and got as far as the Slovak boarder, where they were stopped by the customs agents, who suspected they were dealing with two deserters and handed them over to the police. They were immediately recognized and taken back to Birkenau. Edek was hanged right away but refused to wait for his sentence to be read in obedience to the strict local ritual: he slipped his head into the noose and let himself drop from the stool.

Mala had also resolved to die her own death. While she was waiting in a cell to be interrogated, a companion was able to approach her and asked her, "How are things, Mala?" She answered: "Things are always fine with me." She had managed to conceal a razor blade on her body. At the foot of the gallows, she cut the artery on one of her wrists, the SS who acted as executioners tried to snatch the blade from her, and Mala, under the eyes of all the women in the camp,

slapped his face with her bloodied hand. Enraged, other guards immediately came running: a prisoner, a Jewess, a woman, had dared defy them! They trampled her to death; she expired, fortunately for her, on the cart taking her to the crematorium.

This was not "useless violence." It was useful: it served very well to crush at its inception any idea of escaping. It was normal for new prisoners to think of escaping, unaware of these refined and tested techniques; it was extremely rare for such a thought to occur to older prisoners. In fact it was common for escape preparations to be denounced by the members of the "gray zone" or by third parties, afraid of the reprisals I have described.

— Primo Levi, *Auschwitz*
survivor

Not all survivors would agree with Levi's stark characterization.

In places like Buchenwald and Auschwitz the SS set up brothels in an attempt to dissipate the growing strength of the political underground. They assumed — incorrectly, it turned out — that powerful prisoners would enjoy themselves at the expense of their comrades. Only criminals went, men in league with the SS and untroubled by the need for solidarity....

In extremity life depends on solidarity. Nothing can be done or kept going without organizing and inevitably, when the social basis of existence becomes self-conscious and disciplined, it becomes "political" — political in the elementary human sense, as in the following description by two survivors of Auschwitz:

Unlimited egoism and a consuming desire to save their own lives at the expense of their fellows were common phenomena among prisoners who were politically backward, for such people were quite incapable of realizing that in this way they merely strengthened the hand of the SS against the prisoners.... Our experience of other concentration camps [prior to Auschwitz] had taught us the vital need to live collectively. Political consciousness and contact with others in the struggle

against Nazism were necessary conditions of success; it was this that gave people a sense of purpose in life behind the barbed wire and enabled them to hold out.

Prisoners were "politically backward" if they did not see that collective action is more effective than individual effort, or if they did not understand that solidarity becomes power in proportion to the degree of disciplined order. Many never understood, and theirs was "the tragedy of all people who live under the illusion that isolation is individualism":

The great "individualists" of our free days, the unorganized and backward workers, the cynics, not to mention business men who knew nothing of organized action... all disintegrated morally. They became witless tools for the Nazis. They groveled for favours although their groveling degraded them still further. And they did not live long in Buchenwald.

Kogon observes that "the lone wolves here were always especially exposed to danger," and Bettelheim has noted that "non-political middle class prisoners" were among the first who "disintegrated as autonomous persons." Another survivor sums it up this way: "survival... could only be a social achievement, not an individual accident"...

The survivor's experience is evidence that the need to help is as basic as the need for help, a fact which points to the radically social nature of life in extremity and explains an unexpected but very widespread activity among survivors. In the concentration camps a major form of behavior was gift-giving. Inmates were continually giving and sharing little items with each other, and small acts like these were enormously valuable both as morale boosters and often as real aids in the struggle for life. Sometimes the gift was given outright, with no apparent relation between donor and receiver:

One evening we were served a soup made with semolina. I drank this with all the more relish since I often had to forgo the daily cabbage soup because of my bowels. Just then I noticed a woman, one of the prostitutes, who always kept very much to themselves, approaching my bunk holding her bowl out to me with both hands.

"Micheline, I think this is a soup you can eat; here, take mine too."

She emptied her bowl into mine and went without food that day.

More often gifts came from friends or others in close association:

It was astonishing to see how anxious these hungry men were to share what they had... There was half an orange on all the beds in the room. One of our friends had received a parcel. He had not even been able to wait for our return.

... Whatever form it took, food-sharing was a mode of human interchange through which the survivor's all but defeated humanity could be regained and kept going:

It became a regular custom in the factory — bearing witness to increased solidarity — that a jug of warm liquid or bread slops passed from hand to hand, among all those at the same work-table. Each woman took a sip, first the sick, then the healthy, by turn. . . If anyone managed to flavor the water with a pinch of salt acquired somewhere, a scrap of margarine, or clove of garlic, all her comrades without exception enjoyed it. This was a good custom, a humane custom, even though the conditions of our lives were becoming increasingly bestial.

—Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*

II: Rescue

Few non-Jews intervened to rescue Jews from Nazi persecution. The following rescuers represent noteworthy exceptions who have been honored by the title of "Righteous Among the Nations of the World" by Yad Vashem, the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Israel.

When the time came for the total liquidation of the [Warsaw] ghetto, those 12 people in my factory did not have a place to go. They asked me for help. What could I do? I, at that time, lived in a tiny little room by the diner. I didn't have a home to take them to. There was only one thing left for me to do. I did not have any

resources; I didn't have my parents. I **prayed**. And as I prayed that night I threw a tantrum at my Maker: "I do not believe in you! You are a figment of my imagination! How can **you** allow such a thing to happen?" The next **day** I was on my knees saying, "Forgive me. I **don't** know what I'm talking about. Your **will** be done."

The next morning like a miracle, the [Gestapo] major asked me to be his housekeeper. He said, "I have a villa. I need a housekeeper. Would you do it?" The decision was made for me. Like a young child, without thinking or preparing anything I told the 12 Jewish people I knew that I would leave open the window in the villa where the coal chute led to the cellar. One by one, they went there.

—Irene Gut Opdyke, a Polish Catholic who hid 12 Jews during the German occupation of Poland



Jewish and Christian youth at play in Le Chambon during the winter of 1944 in Nazi-occupied France. [Photo courtesy of Friends of Le Chambon]

Le Chambon-sur-Lignon is situated on a high plateau surrounded by rugged mountains in south-central France. It is a place where the winters are very long and very cold. But there, in that little village, during World War II, the climate of the heart was warm, for it was in Le Chambon that people fleeing from the Nazis were welcome and found a place of refuge. Adults as well as children were cared for by people in the village and by peasants from the surrounding countryside. Jewish

children taken from internment camps like Gurs and Rivesaltes, were hidden and helped by these good people. There Jewish children went to school and had their lessons together with non-Jewish children from the area. They played tug-of-war and other games. They had a pig named Adolf.

The people of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon not only resisted the Nazis, they resisted the policies of their own country, Vichy France. While there is no single explanation for their actions – perhaps we should leave that to future social scientists – the most important fact for us to know is that they were brought up to understand all the idioms of the language of love. When their hearts spoke to them they first listened, then they acted.

– Pierre Sauvage, filmmaker, child survivor, whose family was hidden in the mountain village of Le Chambon in Nazi occupied France

While the story of Le Chambon was unfolding, it was being recorded nowhere. What was happening was clandestine because the people of Le Chambon had no military power comparable to that of the Nazis occupying France, or comparable to that of the Vichy government of France, which was collaborating with the Nazi conquerors. If they had tried to confront their opponents publicly, there would have been no contest, only immediate and total defeat. Secrecy, not military power, was their weapon.

The struggle in Le Chambon began and ended in the privacy of people's homes. Decisions that were turning points in that struggle took place in kitchens, and not with male leaders as the only decision-makers, but often with women centrally involved. A kitchen is a private, intimate place; in it there are no uniforms, no buttons or badges symbolizing public duty or public support. In the kitchen of a modest home only a few people are involved. In Le Chambon only the lives of a few thousand people were changed, compared to the scores of millions of human lives directly affected by the larger events of World War II.

The "kitchen struggle" of Le Chambon resembles rather closely a certain kind of conflict that grew more and more widespread as the years of Occupation passed. Guerrilla action, clandestine, violent resistance to the German occupants, was as much a part of history of that Occupation as the story of that little commune. Secrecy was as vital to guerrilla warfare as it was to the resistance of the people of Le Chambon, and so was a minimum of permanent records. In both cases military weakness dictated that there be few records and much secrecy.

But the kitchen struggles differed greatly from the bush battles (the Maquis, the name given to the wing of the armed resistance which had no direct connections with de Gaulle's Secret Army, refers to le maquis, the low prickly bushes that grow on dry, hilly land). The guerrillas were fighting for the liberation of their country. Some of them received their orders from de Gaulle's exiled French government (Free France), and others owed their allegiance to the Soviet Union; still others had no particular political alliance, but they were all parts of military units. Especially in time of war such units are primarily concerned with achieving by violent means a victory over the enemies of those units. Their primary duty is not to save lives but to save the life of some public entity; and especially in time of war they cherish heroism – living and dying gloriously for a public cause – more than they cherish compassion. The consciences of individuals in military units tend to be in lock-step with the self-interest of the units. In fact, for the bush warriors as for the uniformed warriors, public duty took precedence over personal conscience.

But the people of Le Chambon whom Pastor Andre Trocme led into a quiet struggle against Vichy and the Nazis were not fighting for the liberation of their country or their village. They felt little loyalty to governments. Their actions did not serve the self-interest of the little commune of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in the department of Haute-Loire, southern France. On the contrary, those actions flew in the face of that self-interest: by resisting a power far greater than their own they put their village in grave

danger of massacre, especially in the last two years of the Occupation, when the Germans were growing desperate. Under the guidance of a spiritual leader they were trying to act in accord with their consciences in the very middle of a bloody, hate-filled war.

And what this meant for them was non-violence. Following their consciences meant refusing to hate or kill any human being. And in this lies their deepest difference from the other aspects of World War II. Human life was too precious to them to be taken for any reason, glorious and vast though that reason might be. Their consciences told them to save as many lives as they could even if doing this meant endangering the lives of all the villagers; and they obeyed their consciences.

There are many friends for the rescuers of nations, but there do not seem to be many sympathizers for the rescuers of a few thousand desperate human beings.

I, who share Trocme's and the Chambonnais' beliefs in the preciousness of human life, may never have the moral strength to be much like the Chambonnais or like Trocme; but I know what I want to have the power to be. I know that I want to have a door in the depths of my being, a door that is not locked against the faces of all other human beings. I know that I want to be able to say from those depths, "Naturally, come in, and come in."

— Phillip Hallie, historian of
Le Chambon

Why did they come to us? Because we were in the mountains, because it was a Protestant place, because someone had spoken, perhaps, of a minister who at that time had funny ideas, who was a conscientious objector. You could not know how people knew that they might have a good place in our town. I can tell you what happened in our house, but I cannot tell you what happened in other houses, although I know that little by little there were Jews all over the place.

It is important ... to know that we were a bunch of people together. This was not a handicap, but a help. If you have to fight it alone, it is more difficult. But we had the support of people we knew, of people who understood without knowing precisely all

that they were doing or would be called to do. None of us thought that we were heroes. We were just people trying to do our best.

...I want [people] to know that I tried to open my door. I tried to tell people, "Come in, come in." ... I would like to say to people, "Remember that in your life there will be lots of circumstances that will need a kind of courage, a kind of decision of your own, not about other people, but about yourself." I would not say more.

— Magda Trocme, who with
her husband, Pastor Andre
Trocme, helped Jews hide
in and around the village of
Le Chambon

Many rescuers had strong religious convictions. Christina, a Dutch rescuer, began by taking in one Jewish child. She and her husband went on to save over 450 people.

I plopped her between three kids in a bed. My husband, upon returning from work, was afraid. "Chrissie, Chrissie, what are you doing?" he asked. "Remember this," I answered, "we call ourselves Christians. We cannot put this little girl out on the street. She will be gassed." My husband was not convinced. "I have to take care of my own," he said. Later, when the children were all sleeping, we talked it over. "Remember the story of the Good Samaritan?" I asked. "Martin, do you want to be like the first two who looked away and turned their backs? Or do you want to be like the third, who, no matter the cost said, 'okay, I will help?'"

Christina and her husband later joined a network of other rescuers.

We never used our own name. There was an organization that brought people and another that stole food ration cards. We always had at least 18 people in my house. Some stayed until liberation. One little boy was born in my house ... for me it was an indication that no matter what Hitler did, the Lord was at work. He would not let his people perish. If Hitler killed, the Lord would let new ones come. I said to her, "Your husband planted the seed, but life is from God the Almighty. Hitler tries to destroy the Jewish people, but

the Lord lets new ones come up. I shall call you 'Blessed mother.'"

— Christina, a Dutch rescuer who with her husband saved over 450 people, mostly Jews, but also Allied pilots and Dutch youth attempting to escape forced German labor camps

Many rescuers had an early awareness of the Nazis' intentions toward the Jews. A Dutch rescuer who saved fifty Jews in Holland had visited Germany in 1939, shortly before the German invasion.

I asked my German friend what her son was up to every night and she said, "It is better not to speak of it." After a few more evenings, I could not help but ask her again. At my insistence, she revealed that her son was in the Hitler Youth movement. "In the evening," she explained, "the boys catch animals — rabbits, pigs, mice or rats — and they learn to kill, to see blood!" Her story made an enormous impression on me, and with this haunted feeling, I returned to Holland.

— Henry, Dutch rescuer

Rescuers often had to put their own fears aside in order to offer hope to their terrified and desperate charges.

My wife tried to keep people laughing, to give them hope. She would say, "I hear the Germans are losing," and she said that to keep the boat floating. When you sit together — 15 or more people — you see all their deaths before you. You cannot just sit. It became our work, and it was very intensive and hard work.

I was very anti-German. But once I saw a man lying in the road — a soldier bleeding. I put him on my bicycle and carried him, with all my energy, to a house. I asked that someone take care of him. Later, a friend said, "How could you have done that? If you are anti-Hitler, that man is your enemy!" It is very difficult to explain my action. You see, he was not a German soldier — he became a wounded human being.

— Henry, Dutch Rescuer

Young children were often enlisted by their rescuer parents to help victims of Nazi persecution.

It began because the adults were afraid to read the announcements, the lists of those whom the Nazis were after which were posted around the city. Everybody had at least one relative or friend in the resistance — so we were often sent to find out whether or not they had been discovered and therefore listed. My mother and father made it clear that we — every one of us children — had certain functions to fulfill. Soon I played an important role in the anti-Nazi conspiracy. I was constantly alert. My whole attention was concentrated on the movements of the Germans: how they behaved, what their intentions toward people were ... and I told father and mother everything. But my real function was taking Jews out of the ghetto and locating hiding places for them. My father had many contacts with the ghetto. When Jews came out to perform a special mission, I would escort them to a prearranged address.

I was a small girl and my head and eyes were always inclined to one side. This came from always having to watch for Germans. People knew my function but no one betrayed me. I would make believe I lived close to the spot I had to bring the Jews, stopping every now and then in front of a window pane to make sure I was not followed. While executing dangerous functions, a person matures and there is a fast understanding of the adult world. One blink of the eye made it possible to grasp the whole event.

— Bojena, Polish rescuer who began helping Jews in Warsaw when she was nine years old

Social psychologist Eva Fogelman has noted that many rescuers experienced a transforming encounter with death before they began actively helping Jews escape Nazi persecution.

One morning on my way to school I passed by a small Jewish children's home. The Germans were loading the children, who ranged in age from babies to eight-year olds, on trucks. They were upset, and crying. When they did not move fast enough the Nazis

picked them up, by an arm, a leg, the hair, and threw them into the trucks. To watch grown up men treat small children that way – I could not believe my eyes. I found myself literally crying with rage. Two women coming down the street tried to interfere physically. The Germans heaved them into the truck, too. I just sat there on my bicycle, and that was the moment I decided that if there was anything I could do to thwart such atrocities I would do it.

It did not occur to me to do anything other than I did. After what I had seen outside that children's home, I could not have done anything else. I think you have a responsibility to yourself to behave decently. We all have memories of times we should have done something and didn't. And it gets in the way the rest of your life.

**– Marion P. van Binsbergen
Pritchard, rescuer of Jews
during the occupation of
Holland**

Sometimes we have a desire to help but we don't know how to do it. I decided, since I knew the area of the French-Swiss border around Collonges so well, that I would try to help Jews and others who were in danger by getting them across the border into Switzerland, which was a neutral country during the war. In the beginning I did it alone, then members of my family and friends began to help, but I knew that we needed more help, if we were going to be successful. Eventually, with others we became known as "Dutch-Paris" – I organized a network and set up a route that enabled us to bring people from Holland to Belgium then to France, and on to Geneva, via the Seventh-Day Adventist school in Collonges, which was at the foot of a mountain and not too far from the Swiss border.

People often asked me what I remember most vividly about the Nazis during the occupation of France. What I particularly remember were their voices. They sounded inhuman, hard. They didn't speak like human beings, or act like human beings. They were a brutal force without brains, without thinking. I also remember their brutality: they beat me with their guns – on

my head, in my stomach, all over my body. They had no humanity. The Nazis were force and violence; they would smash and beat you without pity.

During our lives, each of us faces a choice: to think only about yourself, to get as much as you can for yourself, or to think about others, to serve, to be helpful to those who are in need. I believe that it is very important to develop your brains, your knowledge, but it is more important to develop your heart, to have a heart open to the suffering of others.

**– John Weidner organized a
rescue network in France
known as "Dutch-Paris"
which helped approx-
imately 800 Jews escape
the Nazis**

Raoul Wallenberg's work in saving 30 thousand Jews in Budapest is well known. He took on the special mission of extending aid to the Jews of Hungary at the very time when transports were leaving Budapest for Auschwitz every day – ten thousand deportees a day. On his own initiative, when he reached Budapest, he began to print up Swedish certificates of protection and distributed them among the Jews slated for deportation. When he saw that the authorities were honoring these documents, he went on to establish the so-called international ghetto. At a certain stage, this colony absorbed 33 thousand people who were cared for and protected from deportation.

**– Moshe Bejski, Justice of
the Supreme Court of the
State of Israel**

Field Marshal Montgomery called the Danish underground "second to none." Of the four million Danish men and women (and children) about 50,000 belonged to the resistance movement against the German occupants. Nowhere was it more widespread, effective and life saving.

Their thousands of acts of sabotage greatly contributed to the defeat of the Nazi machine. They cooperated with the Royal Air Force and British intelligence, pinpointing military targets and Gestapo headquarters. They fire-bombed factories that manufac-

tured components of the V-2 rockets and earned the gratitude of Eisenhower's Supreme Headquarters of Allied-European Forces for preventing the total destruction of London. They disrupted railroad transportation, thus delaying German troop movements. They maintained communication with the free world through neutral Sweden, smuggling out people in danger, including Jews and downed Allied pilots and smuggling in arms, ammunition, explosives, mail, film and secret agents. They organized strikes, they liquidated traitors.

They printed twenty-six million issues of illegal newspapers, some in Braille. They published cookbooks that gave recipes for homemade bombs and sabotage techniques, and sold the Germans pocket diaries with tips on how to feign illness or induce fever. They collected evidence by filming German atrocities, even inside a concentration camp.

— Vera Laska, survivor, Holocaust scholar

Resistance or Underground activities covered a wide range of actions, from passive resistance in not viewing a German film, to outright guerrilla warfare by partisans against the invaders ... There was considerable partisan fighting in World War II, with women participating in it, mostly in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and corresponding maquis actions in France. Partisan statistics are usually inflated by both sides; still, partisans performed a valuable service for the Allies. The Soviet partisans claimed 500,000 operations against the invading German armies, who admitted less than half that number. Most activities were directed against railroads and bridges to disrupt troop movements.

In general, partisan groups were underarmed and often suffered for reasons of political rivalry. Many men joined their ranks to escape forced labor in Germany. Although we encounter women among the partisans there were fewer women than men among them. The lines cannot be drawn precisely; many resisters, including women, at times placed explosives under German tanks or carried out violent sabotage against the German war machine, without being partisans.

The activities of the resistance were infinite. Planning and carrying them out involved thousands of women, men and even children. Resisters came from all walks of life, from princes to paupers, and they served as messengers, couriers, typists, writers, editors, guides, chauffeurs, pilots, nurses, doctors, radio operators, cipher clerks, artists, photographers, saboteurs, experts on explosives forgers of documents and ration coupons. Women on an equal footing with men collected military and economic information, and prepared films, photographs and microfilms to be sent to the Allies. They printed and disseminated information from the BBC, also from WRUL in Boston and WCBX in New York. They wrote, printed and distributed news releases, speeches, pamphlets and jokes about the occupiers and instructions for sabotage of all degrees. Secretly, they put flowers on patriots' monuments, in defiance of German rules. They placed German leaflets with anti-Nazi propaganda into German newspapers, cars and mailboxes. They arranged classes when the universities were forcefully closed. They displayed at public places posters of bombed cities and crying children, of the burning of books or bombings of synagogues, all under the heading "German Culture."

They purloined German equipment including arms. They sabotaged railways, blew up fuel depots, mined bridges and tunnels, cut telephone and telegraph wires. They placed explosives into barracks and under vehicles. They slashed tires. They dropped lice on German personnel. They blackmailed or talked the Germans into selling their insignia, belts, identification cards and even their guns.

Some resisters worked alone, others in small groups or in networks. One of the most spectacular networks was that of the French "Alliance," nicknamed by the Gestapo "Noah's Ark." Its chief was Marie-Madelein Fourcade known as "Hedgehog;" it cooperated with the Allies and consisted of about 3,000 agents, all under code names of animals. Another example of what a resistance network could accomplish is illustrated by the Czechs whose resistance groups maintained a connection with their central organ.

UVOD (Ustredni vedeni odboje domacih or Central Leadership of Home Resistance). Between 1940 and 1942, they sent 20,000 telegrams over clandestine radio transmitters to the Allies. They supplied information about "Sea Lyon," the planned German invasion of Great Britain, about the date of the invasion of the USSR (which Stalin allegedly did not believe) and about the developments of the V-1 and V-2 rockets at Pennemunde.

Humor was not lacking in these undertakings. An Italian priest's group transported Jews to safety in German army trucks, with a German driver as "pilgrims." All over occupied Europe it became the custom to turn around the arrows at highway crossings or switch street signs, creating utter confusion among the supermen of the German armies. Cooks placed laxatives into their food. The "Only for Germans" signs were removed from certain houses of entertainment and hung from lampposts. The Danes invaded movie houses and replaced German films with the like of "In Which We Serve," the British war film. They also distributed Danish cookbooks, but the last pages contained anti-Nazi recipes, urging German soldiers to desert (with one "s").

A most serious side of the resistance was the smuggling of people across closely watched borders to safety. Politicians, officers and young men intending to join the Allied armies, Jews, prisoners of war, or people who simply needed to escape the clutches of the totalitarian regime, were spirited away often under circumstances that put the best of sleuths to shame. This was a dangerous undertaking as smuggling people and aiding members of enemy armed forces carried the death penalty after December 7, 1941. Just like the underground railroad of the

American Civil War era, these lines crossed several states, but in this case the frontiers were heavily guarded. One well-traveled line led from the Netherlands through Belgium, France, across the Pyrenees to Spain; another from Bohemia or Poland through Slovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Greece to Lebanon. The organization of these lines was complex involving messengers, guides and people at each safe-house or meeting point. Some of the best safe-houses were brothels and convents. There were countless women who risked their lives repeatedly to help others escape, and they went back to do it over and over again. Many were caught and perished in concentration camps.

— Vera Laska, Auschwitz survivor, Holocaust scholar

It's easy to assume that people who denounced Jews in hiding were evil people. One has to keep in mind that anti-Semitism and hatred of Jews was accepted by most people. It was not unique to denounce Jews because there was a general acceptance of the persecution of the Jews. In addition if a person helped a Jew in those days and if the Germans found out, the person as well as the Jew got killed. To be a rescuer under those circumstances took a unique person. It took someone who had a deep-seated conviction that he or she had to help. These were not people making choices on reflection... they simply had to help, because that's the kind of people they were.

— Emanuel Tanay, M.D., survived the Nazi occupation of Poland by hiding in a monastery

Suggested Films For This Section

The *Courage to Care* is an award-winning documentary on the few but significant non-Jews who knowingly risked their lives during the Holocaust to aid Jews. It features interviews with rescuers and survivors whose stories address the basic issue of individual responsibility: the notion that one person can act — and that those actions can make a difference.

The Diary of Anne Frank is a touching and optimistic story of a young German Jewish girl who later died in Bergen-Belsen. The film is based on the diary that she kept while in hiding in Amsterdam before her deportation late in the war. (180 minutes)

For Reflection

1. If you were a prisoner of war in a foreign land, how would you respond to brutal treatment? Would you resist? How is the Code of Conduct relevant to such circumstances?
2. What makes some people willing to risk their lives to save others?
3. Elie Wiesel has said that those who helped

Jews during the Holocaust remained “human.” What do you think he means by that?

4. Nonviolent resistance, it has been suggested, was irrelevant against the Nazis. Considering the case of the community of Le Chambon, is it necessarily useless?

Further Reading

Reuben Ainsztein, *The Warsaw Ghetto Revolt* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979).

An account by an authority on Jewish resistance in Eastern Europe.

Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers: The Christian Heroes and Heroines Who Helped the Oppressed Escape the Nazi Terror* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978).

This book is well-documented and deeply moving.

Phillip Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed: The Story of the Village of Le Chambon and How Goodness Happened There* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

In full view of the Vichy government and a nearby division of Nazi SS, this Protestant village in Southern France, led by its clergy, saved thousands of Jews from death. The story is based on the testimony of the villagers.

Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

Companion volume to the Academy Award-nominated documentary of the same title.

Section 7: The Shadow

My father's voice drew me from my thoughts. ... My forehead was bathed in cold sweat. But I told him that I did not believe that they could burn people in our age, that humanity would never tolerate it ... "Humanity? Humanity is not concerned with us. Today anything is allowed. Anything is possible, even these crematories ... " His voice was choking. "Father," I said, if that is so, I don't want to wait here. I'm going to run to the electric wire. That would be better than slow agony in flames." He did not answer. He was weeping. His body was shaken convulsively. Around us, everyone was weeping. Someone began to recite the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. I do not know if it has ever happened before, in the long history of the Jews, that people have ever recited the prayer for the dead themselves.

— *Night*, Elie Wiesel

In the ghettos and concentration camps there were many situations of moral complexity for Jews. Jewish law, Halacha, had to respond to these situations both during and after the Holocaust. For example, a man who had once worked as a kapo in a concentration camp sought after the War to be appointed a cantor in a synagogue. His request was brought before the community's Rabbi.

I ruled that this man was not to be appointed a cantor. All the sources of Halacha indicate that a man should not be appointed to any communal position if he has or had a reputation as a sinner. This was certainly true for this man; everyone knew how he had cursed and beaten his fellow-Jews. No matter how much penance he might claim to have done, he was not to be appointed to any communal position.

— "The Repentant Kapo," A Responsum from the Holocaust by Rabbi Ephraim Oshry.

I don't know that we were angry
We were too numb
for that. We were
drained, iced over,
frozen. It was
just too much. We
couldn't take it
in. We couldn't
have any human
feelings. That
came later, when
I woke for a month
of nights, screaming.

— American Liberator

The Jews of the Holocaust, rather than representing the culmination of a history of passivity, are rather a symbol of the helplessness of the individual in the face of the modern state gone mad.

— David Biale, director of the Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California



Arbeit Macht Frei, "work liberates," the sign over the gates of Auschwitz. [photo credit: YIVO]

We felt we had something to say, enormous things to say, to every single German, and we felt that every German should have something to say to us; we felt an urgent need to settle our accounts, to ask, explain and comment, like chess players at the end of a game. Did 'they' know about Auschwitz, about the silent daily massacre, a step away from their doors? If they did, how could they walk about, return home and look at their children, cross the threshold of a church? If they did not, they ought, as a sacred duty, to listen, to learn everything, immediately, from us, from me: I felt the tattooed number on my arm burning like a sore.

—Primo Levi, writer, survivor of Auschwitz

At issue is the possibility of fashioning adequate metaphors for the catastrophe, that is, metaphors which, in comparing calamity to familiar things, serve to mitigate that which is most frightening in the Destruction: its unprecedentedness and its incomensurability.

—Alan Mintz, Holocaust scholar

Only the survivors have the right to words. The others and especially those born after the war should be silent, silent. Their words are obscene and indecent.

—Henri Raczymow, *Un cri sans voix* ["A Voiceless Cry"]

There is no religious problem with silence, provided it is the silence of respect and not the silence of denial.

The Holocaust is an epoch-making event in human history, an event of the mass of which men and women thereafter say, "before (the event)..." and "after that..."

To think of the Holocaust as an event in history, in sacred history and in general human history, means already to have made comparisons and to have reached decisions. Why should the Holocaust be remembered ahead of Napoleon's defeat at Moscow or Hitler's defeat at Stalingrad? Why should the planned and systematized murder of

6,000,000 Jews be considered the key to unlock the tragic mysteries of the Age of Genocide, rather than the ghastly sacrifice by dictatorial regimes of 5,000,000 kulaks in Soviet Russia or 20,000,000 Chinese during the "cultural revolution" under Mao or 300,000 Ugandans under Idi Amim? Affirming the uniqueness of the Holocaust is a moral and theological decision. Affirming its relevance to other tragedies suffered by other peoples is a decision both moral and scientific.

—The Rev. Franklin H. Littell, Anne Frank Institute

Finding out about my father's past, the deception, the recognition that he wasn't the kind, good person I had thought, also affected my feeling of independence. I changed, became shy and anxious. I also cried a lot, and when I did I'd go down to the basement, sit down on a crate, put on my father's old uniform coat, and stay there until all traces of tears disappeared.

—Monika, daughter of a Nazi, interviewed by Peter Sichrovsky

First of all I must tell you that I'm haunted by guilt. Born in guilt, left behind in guilt.

The dreams are worst of all. Always at night they come and get me. Always the same dream. I know it like a movie I've seen a hundred times. They tear me from my bed, drag me through the room, down the stairs, and push me into a car. They're men wearing striped uniforms. The car races through a city. There's noise all around. People shout "Hurrah," yelling and screaming. Sometimes I think we're driving through a street in which the people cheer us. We arrive at a house I don't recognize. I'm pushed down the stairs into a cellar, they rip my pajamas off and push me into a room. The door closes behind me. Do I have to tell you what room it is?

There are showerheads on the wall, and through the openings something streams out with a soft hiss, like air from a defective bicycle tire. I have trouble breathing; I think I'm choking. I rush to the door, try to open it,

rattle it, scream, my eyes are burning. Then I wake up. Usually I then get up and don't go back to bed. I can't sleep anymore. As soon as I close my eyes it starts all over again. They tear me out of bed.

I must not have any children. This line must come to an end with me. What should I tell the little ones about Grandpa? I lived with my parents too long, who knows what evil I carry within me? It mustn't be handed down. It's over, our proud noble lineage. If anyone should ask, the "von" [from] in my name at most means "from where." But soon there'll be nobody to ask.

—Rudolf, son of a Nazi, interviewed by Peter Sichrovsky

The Holocaust is often linked with discussion of the potential for nuclear genocide. While sometimes trivial, the similarity can be subtle and troubling.

Perhaps if the world now acknowledges the reality of the Holocaust, it may take the necessary steps to prevent a nuclear holocaust. For 2,000 years the Jewish people have lived always on the threshold of uncertainty. For 2,000 years our fate often depended upon the decision of a person whom we had never met and we were made responsible for things we had never done or that had happened in other times, in other places. Now the whole world is in the same situation. Because of the gesture of one person everyone may be affected. We are all Jews in that way. It's also true that somehow we have managed to acquire an art of survival. We should try to share that art. How? It's not in one day or in one year that we can find the answer.

—Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize winner, survivor.

Though Jewish, profoundly Jewish in nature, the Holocaust has universal implications, and I believe, we believe, that the memory of what was done may shield us in the future.

—Elie Wiesel, survivor

When I talked to the Army chaplain, I asked him if what we saw in Germany could happen in America and he said, No. He swore that it couldn't. Then we heard that Hiroshima had been blown to hell. We all cheered. The war was over. We didn't care.

—American liberator

While growing up, we the children of Nazi Holocaust survivors heard bits and pieces about our parents' shattered lives. Even now, especially around the holidays our mothers and fathers remember all those relatives who are no longer here to celebrate with us as they did in Europe — where they went to school, participated in sports, politics, and tried to make a living. Accelerating harassments of Jews were a beginning of the Final Solution. Some of our parents escaped or joined the Resistance, others hid or tried to disguise their identities. But unfortunately most were rounded up and deported to ghettos and concentration camps. When the Allied troops advanced across Europe in 1945 almost six million Jews had been murdered. Those who were liberated were malnourished, ill, and emotionally battered. Food, clothing, and medical attention slowly helped them recover their strength. In vain they began to look for family members that survived. Many waited in camps for displaced persons for as long as six years hoping to emigrate to a new world. Many married other survivors and began new families. An estimated quarter of a million established themselves in North America. We, their children, were the hope for the future.

—Eva Fogelman, psychologist, child of survivors

I'm the product of a trauma ... if I was a mystic, I'd call it a cosmic rip, a cosmic tear. Something went wrong, something went askilter. Civilization went awry, and children

of survivors, I think, are particularly sensitive to the fact that civilization failed.

— **Moshe, a child of survivors**

I was born, born of ash. Born of ash borne across the sea, on a hot wind, smelling of death. A wisp of ash, a particle, a flake, infected my mother's womb. No egg. No sperm, but this odd smelling thing. Ash of my ancestors, Abraham, Sarah and the rest, beaten as they walked, beaten from the cattle cars, beaten as they choked, choked on prayers. I was born of ash into ash. Born of ash into a world of ash. Destined to become, to be, to reveal myself an insubstantial thing. World of ash which was, which once was, which once was hot, fire, hot fiery flesh.

— **From Us, by Karen Malpede, American playwright.**

Somehow there was always an awareness ... that my parents were different from other people ... I wondered why they kept those pictures around ... pictures of bodies piled up and bodies being put into the ovens. The first time I came across them I thought I had been bad, that I had stumbled upon something that I wasn't supposed to see. I was shocked, and sort of morbidly fascinated. I couldn't take my eyes away ... and yet I was really frightened.

— **Carole, a child of survivors**

Ever since I was a little kid, I could remember being told that I was the last male left, that it was up to me to continue the family. That is a big job, especially for a little kid.

— **Mark, a child of survivors**

I didn't know exactly what the Holocaust was. But I did know about ovens and about gas chambers. There was so little differentiation between my mother's experience, and my own ... to the point of having fears about showers and showerheads and what would come out of them. I felt that I was almost living in a concentration camp of the mind.

— **Child of survivors**

You wonder if you could know that there's a concentration camp in your town and not do anything about it.

It would upset you, because you would feel ashamed that people saw what was going on, but wouldn't stop it.

You feel really guilty for being a human being.

Not for being part of a certain group — but just for being in the human race at all.

— **American high school students, during a discussion with Holocaust survivors**

The frightening part of the Holocaust, about Nazism, is that it was everyday nice people who went home at 5:30, who hung up their hats, who had dinner, who went to church on Sunday. I wonder if I can meet the challenge of telling my own children, and my children's children, about the Holocaust. If I am fortunate enough to be alive that long, I will tell them that Evil is part of the ordinary, we can't push it away and out of our existence, we can't just say it's an aberration. We have to confront Evil. It's part of life, part of our existence.

— **Moshe, child of survivors.**



Warsaw Ghetto Monument designed by Natan Rapoport [photo credit: Monika Krzajewska]

Some years ago there was a fire in my building. Fireman came, there was a big fuss, tenants ran out on the street. That's when I became fascinated with the idea of fleeing. Thoughts about what to do if I suddenly had to flee went through my mind. What would I take along? Would I remain calm or go to pieces? Would I be up to the demands of the situation? Or would I give myself up? The way I would handle such an escape has been preoccupying me for years. What bothers me is not so much the fear of having to flee, but rather the fear that I wouldn't manage it well enough....

Recently I found an old steamer trunk in a junk shop. It opens up like a wardrobe, with drawers on one side. At least once a week I pack this trunk in my imagination, taking along things that at that moment seem the most important to me.

— Aryeh, a young Jew living in Germany, interviewed by Peter Sichrovsky

You do not move about, but try to maintain your position. Would you eat the fruit of the corpses? — You would. Your friends are the points of a star now a golden, unattainable "elsewhere" because there is no elsewhere for a Jew.

— "Getting Lost in Nazi Germany," by Marvin Bell

You know that I often think of emigrating, even if for the time being I feel at home here, have my practice and make my living here. Still, I'm haunted by the idea that I may be forced to leave. And in these flight fantasies I escape by myself. Whenever I think of leaving here I see myself alone in a train compartment, on a plane, perhaps with another man who also has had to flee. But never with a wife and a child. I always see [them] staying here, surviving in safety as Austrians. Perhaps that's the real reason I am living with [a non-Jewish woman], rather than a Jewish woman. To have to flee with a wife and child

is the very worst thing imaginable. It may sound brutal and inhuman, but I don't want to have Jewish children.

And if they catch me? That's all right. Whether I live another few years or not doesn't matter. But my daughter? I can't even think of that. When I do, I see pictures of children in concentration camps, and I have to stop, I feel as if my head is spilt in two.

— Robert, child of survivors, living in Austria, interviewed by Peter Sichrovsky

....we have a lot of work to do if we're going to get love to be a part of us. I mean that sincerely. We don't know how to love. We're so busy hustling, making that buck; we get scar tissue built up. We get immune to other people's cries.

— Sergeant Leon Bass, American liberator

This little car came out of Dachau. I picked it up in the street. Some child had brought it. My wife has painted it black. She painted the little wheels red. I did not see any children in Dachau — alive.

We always have a Christmas tree in our house. And underneath the tree we always have a garden. We always have skiers, farm animals, a little village and that car from Dachau. It's our family's tradition.

— American liberator

Suggested Film For This Section

Breaking the Silence: *The Generation After the Holocaust*. This award-winning documentary by social psychol-

ogist Eva Fogelman reveals the difficult but ultimately healing dialogue between children of Holocaust survivors and their parents.

For Reflection

1. Why does the Holocaust continue to cast its shadow over contemporary life? What are its messages for Americans today?
2. Some feel the Holocaust should be respected by silent memory, that words desecrate the dead. Do you agree?
3. Do you feel there is a meaningful connection between the Holocaust and potential nuclear genocide?
4. Why did the Holocaust create such painful

scars in lives of the children of survivors? How do you imagine other sons and daughters of World War II veterans respond to their parents' military experiences?

5. Given the importance of the Holocaust in its influence on contemporary life and culture, isn't it surprising how little most Americans know about the destruction of the European Jews? What can you do to keep alive the memory of this important event?

Further Reading

Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of the Survivors*, (New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1979; Bantam 1980, paper).

Journalist Epstein, herself a child of survivors, collected interviews with children of survivors in North America. This moving book catalyzed the "second generation" community.

Robert Jay Lifton, *The Future of Immortality:*

Essays for a Nuclear Age (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

Lifton's collected essays over the past decade treat ethical, cultural and historical issues as they pertain to genocide and nuclear threat.

Peter Sichrovsky, *Born Guilty: Children of Nazi Families*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

Interviews with children of Nazi families. A companion to Sichrovsky's *Strangers in Their Own Land: Young Jews in Germany and Austria Today*.

6. Glossary

Anti-Semitism:

Concept rooted in the biological and racial thinking of the late 19th and 20th Century. Its aim is to transform pre-modern religious and economic hostility against the Jews into an irrational social rejection of Jews and their alleged sinister influences. Connotes a deep suspicion of an imaginary Jewish force that is hidden, organized, and seeks world dominion.

Aryan:

Aspect of racial doctrine to emphasize the myth of Nordic, and especially German superiority. This racial connotation corrupted the term's original purpose of designating and classifying an Indo-European language group.

Auschwitz:

Notorious death camp in Poland. Opened by the Nazis in 1940, it soon became the largest death camp run by a staff which had acquired experience from other camps. Supervised by SS Captain Rudolf Hoess, the camp eventually took the lives of over two million people by means of gassing, starvation, overwork, and disease. At its peak, with the gas chambers and crematoria operating full time, as many as 24,000 people were put to death each day.

Babi Yar:

A ravine near Kiev, inside the Soviet border, where in 1941, the Nazis with the support of Ukrainian militia men, shot and buried over 100,000 Jews in one mass grave.

Book Burning:

On May 10, 1933, in Berlin thousands of students gathered and put to the torch approximately 20,000 books written by Jews and other "undesirables." The scene was repeated in other cities. The books destroyed were written by such distinguished writers as Jack London, Helen Keller, H.G. Wells, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Andre Gide, Emile Zola, and Erich Maria Remarque.

Boycott:

On April 1, 1933, shortly after seizing political control of Germany, the Nazis declared a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned busi-

nesses, chiefly to demonstrate their might and ideological purpose.

Buchenwald:

One of the three original concentration camps, opened in 1933. Located in central Germany, near Weimar, it imprisoned and eventually destroyed thousands of Jews.

Concentration Camps:

A group of labor and death camps located in Germany and Poland for the incarceration of Nazi opponents, and other "undesirables" political dissidents, Gypsies, Russian POWs and Jews. Conditions were so terrible that most inmates died after about four months. The death camps in Poland were Auschwitz, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.

Crematorium:

A furnace installed and used in the death camps to cremate and dispose of bodies after death by gassing, starvation, disease, or torture.

Crystal Night:

Night of the broken glass (*Kristallnacht* in German). Name for the violent pogroms, or terror attacks carried out on November 9-10, 1938, in Germany and Austria against hundreds of synagogues and Jewish owned stores. Results: 101 synagogues were destroyed in fifteen hours, along with 7,500 Jewish shops. The Nazis levied the Jewish communities with severe fines for the damage they allegedly "provoked."

Dachau:

Concentration camp located near Munich in Southwestern Germany. One of the three original camps opened by the Nazis in 1933.

Deportation:

The transportation or "resettlement" of Jews from Nazi-occupied countries to labor or death camps.

Displaced Person (DP):

A refugee from his or her native country in flight from terror or oppression. Without the legal or social protection of his former country, this fugitive suffered from all the legal,

economic, political and social disabilities of a stateless person. After the Holocaust DP camps were set up throughout Europe as temporary detention camps for many of those liberated from concentration camps.

Eichmann, Adolf:

Chief of Subsection IV B-4 of the Central Reich Security Office. Eichmann was charged with the responsibility for organizing the destruction of millions of European Jews. By his own admission he reported to Himmler in August, 1944 that approximately 4 million Jews had died in the death camps and another 2 million had been shot or killed by mobile units. In May, 1960 the Israeli Secret Service smuggled him back to Israel where he was tried, found guilty of crimes against the Jewish people and all humanity, and, in May, 1962, was executed.

Einsatzgruppen:

German for special mobile death squads in the rear guard of the German military, used in the Eastern theatre of the European War. Accompanying regular German army units into a given area, they then proceeded to murder all Jews they came across. Usually forcing Jews to dig their own mass graves, and then mowing them down with machine gun fire, the Einsatzgruppen are estimated to have killed 2 million of the 6 million Jews murdered in the Nazi destruction of European Jewry.

Euthanasia Program:

So-called "mercy" killing of those the Nazis deemed incurably insane or biologically inferior, including Jews and others regarded as "racially valueless." The program culminated in the late 1930s as the first laboratories for mass murder and in the 1940s as training centers for the death camps. The program aimed at purging Germany of "defective" social influences by protecting and strengthening "the racial integrity of the German people." Between 80,000 and 100,000 people died this way, before sufficient pressure, exerted in large part by the German Church, brought the program to a halt.

Genocide:

A deliberate and systematic policy aimed at destroying an entire racial, political, or cultural group of a nation or a people. Coined in

1943 by the Polish-Jewish legal scholar Raphael Lemkin, it identified the policy characterizing Nazi racial goals especially against Jews and Polish dissidents.

Gestapo:

Acronym in German for Geheime Staatspolizei [Secret State Police]. The Nazis established the Gestapo in order to monitor and stamp out any political opposition aimed at the Hitler regime. Under Himmler, the Gestapo's powers became brutal and far reaching in ferreting out Jews, Marxists, and even moderate critics of the regime. At the International Military Tribunal held at Nuremberg after the war, the prosecution accused the Gestapo of "the persecution and extermination of the Jews, brutalities and killings in concentration camps, excesses in the administration of the occupied territories, the administration of a slave-labour programme, and the mistreatment and murder of prisoners-of-war."

Ghettos:

A medieval system, revived and advanced by the Nazis, designating an area of a city where Jews were restricted and forbidden to leave on pain of death. The inhabitants were crowded into a small area with little food and a minimum of hygienic facilities. Even in these terrible conditions, Jews managed to provide education for their children and cultural events.

Goebbels, Joseph:

The Nazi Party's chief of the Department of Propaganda. He controlled all newspapers and radio broadcasts to solidify support for Hitler.

Goering, Hermann:

Number two Nazi, after Hitler, military and economic chief of the Third Reich. Hitler named Goering as his successor, but later accused him of treason.

Grynspan, Herschel:

Polish-Jewish youth who, distressed by his parents' recent deportation from Germany, murdered the third secretary to the German Embassy in Paris, Ernst vom Rath, on November 7, 1938. Goebbels used the assassination as a pretext for a widespread anti-Semitic pogrom throughout the Reich which

became known as Kristallnacht [Night of the Broken Glass].

Hess, Rudolf:

Early supporter and confidant of Hitler, at one point number three Nazi after Hitler and Goering. Assisted Hitler with the writing of *Mein Kampf*. On May 10, 1941, Hess piloted his own plane and parachuted into Scotland in an unsuccessful attempt "to stop the war," by means of persuading England to join Hitler in the forthcoming war against Russia.

Heydrich, Reinhard:

Head of the Reich Security Service and administrator of the concentration camps. At the Wannsee Conference in 1942, Heydrich was chosen to administer the Final Solution. On May 29, 1942 three members of the Czech resistance assassinated Heydrich in Prague.

Himmler, Heinrich:

As Reichsfuehrer of the SS [the Nazi elite guard] leader of the Gestapo, and fanatical racist, Himmler rose to be arguably the most ruthless man in Germany behind Hitler. Devised methods of mass murder based on a systematic process of extermination. Toward the end of the war, he tried to strike a deal that would have involved the swapping of Hungarian Jews bound for Auschwitz for badly needed trucks for the German war effort. The deal failed.

Hitler, Adolf:

Fuehrer [leader] and Chancellor of the Third Reich, from 1933 until his death in 1945. He built a German regime unparalleled as an instrument of tyranny, oppression, and ruin. Waging war in Europe and the campaign to annihilate the Jewish people, he brought Western civilization itself to the brink of destruction.

Hoess, Rudolf:

Commandant of Auschwitz, the largest mass-killing installation. In March, 1946, Hoess made the following statement: "I personally arranged on orders from Himmler, the gassing of 2,000,000 persons from June 1941 to 1943." After the war, Hoess was sentenced to death at Warsaw, and was hanged several days later at Auschwitz.

Holocaust:

Term devised in the late 1950s to describe the Nazi program of the wholesale physical annihilation of European Jewry. Connotes unprecedented phenomenon of human destruction. By the end of World War II, it was estimated that some 5.7 million Jews had perished as a result of the systematic killing program of the Nazis.

Kapo:

Trustee or overseer in charge of work detail, or some other branch of a concentration camp such as a hospital or kitchen. Kapos were drawn from the camp prisoners, usually from the criminals among them.

Kristallnacht:

[See Crystal Night]

Master Race:

Term used to designate Germans as being a "superior" race as opposed to the "inferior" and defective races.

Mein Kampf:

German for My Struggle. Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitic, anti-Russian autobiographical and political testament. First of two volumes written in the Landsberg prison while he served an 8-month sentence for his part in an unsuccessful attempt in 1923, to seize political power. In it he developed his mass-psychological political techniques and the racial doctrine of Aryan-German superiority over Jewish "sub-human" inferiority.

Mussolini, Benito:

Fascist dictator of Italy, 1922-1943.

National Socialist German Workers Party (N.S.D.A.P.):

The Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei. The party came into being in 1920, soon headed by Hitler. It acquired national political power in 1933.

Nazi:

Acronym for the National Socialist German Workers Party

Nuremberg Laws:

Enacted in 1935. The "Reich Citizens Law" declared that only those persons of "German blood" were Reich citizens, while those of "impure blood," such as the Jews, were no longer citizens. The "Law for the Protection

of German Blood and Honor," forbade marriage and sexual intercourse between Jews and the "bearers of German blood." Designed by Hitler to isolate the Jews socially as well as politically.

Nuremberg Trials:

An international military tribunal established after the war, in August, 1945, to try and punish those who had planned or waged aggressive war or acted criminally against humanity. Great Britain, the U.S., the USSR, and France acted on behalf of the United Nations for the 26 countries who had fought Germany. The evidence taken by the tribunal exposed to the world the genocidal fury which had fueled the Nazi movement.

Partisans:

Underground fighters against Nazi occupation forces, mainly operating in the forests in White Russia, Poland and Lithuania. Jews either belonged to the general movement or, whenever excluded, formed their own units.

SS [Schutzstaffel]:

This elite guard was originally organized to serve as Hitler's personal protection service. Under Himmler, the organization expanded enormously, from 280 men in 1929 to 240,000 members in 1939. Their activities and powers grew to administer the concentration camps. It was the SS that eventually suppressed the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto.

Sobibor:

Death camp in Lublin region of Poland, erected in 1942. Prisoners were Jews from Poland, the USSR, Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, and Holland. The SS was responsible for gassing to death some 250,000 people. On October 14, 1943, about 150 inmates staged an uprising which was quickly suppressed.

Sonderkommandos [Special Detachments]:

Jewish prisoners in the death camps assigned to deal with the corpses. This involved the extraction of gold teeth and the transfer of bodies from the gas chambers to crematoria.

Swastika:

Called Hakenkreuz in German. An ancient symbol used in India, Persia, Greece, and elsewhere as a religious emblem to ward off evil spirits. Using it as the official symbol of

the Nazis, Hitler corrupted the meaning of the holy insignia to denote Aryan racial superiority.

Third Reich:

The Third Empire. This was the official name of Hitler's regime, which ruled from 1933-1945. The Nazis regarded their rule as the successor to two previous empires – The Holy Roman Empire (962 AD-1806) and the Second Reich founded by Otto von Bismarck (1871-1918). It appears that Hitler adopted the name Third Reich from the title of a book written in 1923 by the German nationalist Moeller van den Bruck entitled *Das Dritte Reich* [The Third Reich]. Hitler boasted that his Third Reich, the most glorious to date, would last 1,000 years.

Treblinka:

One of the Nazi death camps in Poland, where from 1940 to 1943, 750,000 persons, mostly Jews from Warsaw and its environs, were gassed. On August 2, 1943, prisoners revolted; about 150-200 of the 700 inmates then in the camp escaped. They were all recaptured. An awareness in the Warsaw Ghetto of certain death at Treblinka spurred the ghetto inhabitants to rebel against German troops and police.

Wannsee Conference:

A meeting held in January, 1942, in the Berlin suburb of Grossen-Wannsee where the Nazis mapped the "Final Solution," the planned annihilation of the Jewish people.

Warsaw Ghetto (and Uprising):

The largest of the walled-in, segregated areas specifically designated for Jews in wartime Europe. At its peak, the ghetto was home to 360,000 Jews crammed into an area of about 35 square miles. On November 15, 1940 the SS sealed the ghetto, isolating its inhabitants from the outside world. Thousands died of starvation and disease. By mid-summer 1942 mass deportations to the gas chambers at Treblinka began. By January 1943, only 60,000 Jews were left in the ghetto. The Jewish Fighting Organization, using guns that it had purchased from the Polish underground, staged an uprising. From January to April 1943, the Jews held off the superbly trained and armed Nazi enemy, inflicting heavy losses. Eventually, with increased

armaments, the Germans succeeded in liquidating the final remnants of Jewish resistance. Fewer than 100 people survived the ghetto; many of these joined the partisans in the forests to continue the struggle against the Nazis.

Zyklon-B:

Poison gas used in the gas chambers of death camps.

—Excerpted from *The Record: The Holocaust in History*, an Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith publication.

7. Additional Resources

Atlas of the Holocaust, by Martin Gilbert. (Michael Joseph Ltd.). 316 maps, 45 photographs and an excellent narrative depicting the events from 1942 to 1945.

Dimensions: A Journal of Holocaust Studies. Published three times a year by the ADL's International Center for Holocaust Studies. Essays, excerpts from survivors' testimonies, reviews, book selections, and an international calendar of events.

The Holocaust, by Seymour Rossel. (Franklin Watts). A historical account with an emphasis on the universal issues involved: passive and active resistance to evil, justice and injustice, and the moral responsibility of governments.

The Holocaust: An Annotated Bibliography and Resource Guide, edited by David M. Szonyi. (KTAV). Lists resources on subjects related to learning about or teaching the Holocaust, as well as to programming and commemorations.

The Holocaust: Catalog of Publications and Audio-Visual Materials. Compiled by the staff of the ADL International Center for Holocaust

Studies, lists more than 100 annotated and graded resources in ten subject areas.

The Holocaust in Books and Films: A Selected, Annotated List, edited by Judith Herschlag Muffs; general editor Dennis B. Klein. (Hippocrene Books). Lists over 400 resources, new and classic.

Holocaust Poster Series. Created by ADL's International Center for Holocaust Studies. A major and unique educational tool. Twenty black-and-white posters (18" x 24"), viewer's guide and suggestions for display.

Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps, by Robert H. Abzug. (Oxford University Press). Reconstructs the wide-range of liberators' responses from initial numbness, to a questioning of a lifetime of beliefs, to the desire to forget and yet remember.

The Record: The Holocaust in History, 1933-1945. ADL's International Center for Holocaust Studies reconstructs the Holocaust with period news reports and photographs. Discussion guide and glossary of terms.

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Comments on use of this publication and recommendations for inclusion in future editions should be directed to Colonel Harvey T. Kaplan, USA, Executive Director, Defense Equal Opportunity Council; Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel); The Pentagon; Washington, DC 20301-4000.

