Learning from the past ~ lessons for today

The Holocaust Memorial Day Committee in association with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; the Office of the Minister for Integration; Dublin City Council; Dublin Maccabi Charitable Trust and the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland
Holocaust Memorial Day Candle Lighting

It is traditional at Holocaust memorial events to light six candles in memory of the six million Jews who perished in the Shoah. In Ireland, we also light candles in memory of all of the other victims of the Holocaust.

Victim Groups

**DISABLED VICTIMS:**
In memory of people with disabilities and disabling conditions who were murdered, starved to death and forcibly sterilised by doctors and other willing helpers

*Candle-lighters:* Deirdre Spain, *Inclusion Ireland* and John Dolan, *Disability Federation of Ireland*

**POLES, SLAVS and ETHNIC MINORITIES:**
In memory of millions of Poles and Slavs who were murdered, displaced, and forcibly ‘Aryanised’ by the Nazis; and the thousands of ethnic minorities who were persecuted and murdered and sterilised

*Candle-lighters:* Beata Piekarska-Daly, Salome Mbuguia, *African and Migrant Women’s Network Ireland*

**GYPSIES:**
In memory of the Romany people of Europe who were rounded up, murdered, displaced and forcibly sterilised

*Candle-lighters:* Ion Zatreanu and Jorg Dancea, *Roma Support Group, Ireland*

**HOMOSEXUALS:**
In memory of homosexual men and women who were persecuted and murdered because of their sexual orientation

*Candle-lighters:* Ross Golden-Bannon and Noelle Moran

**POLITICAL VICTIMS:**
In memory of the political opponents of the Nazis, Socialists, Communists, Trade Unionists, Democrats, and other anti-Nazi organisations

*Candle-lighters:* Eibhlin Byrne, former Lord Mayor of Dublin and Gerry Gregg, film maker, Trade Union activist and political campaigner

**CHRISTIAN VICTIMS:**
In memory of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Christian victims of all denominations — many of whom saved Jews — who were persecuted and murdered by the Nazis

*Candle-lighters:* Louise Mary O’Sullivan, *Mater Dei*, Revd Darren McCallig, chaplain, *Trinity College Dublin*

**JEWISH VICTIMS**
Six candles are dedicated to the memory of the six million Jews, including one and a half million children, who were annihilated in the Holocaust by the Nazis and their collaborators. Jews were exterminated in gas chambers, death camps and concentration camps; Jews perished in the ghettos; Jews died of starvation and disease; Jews were shot in the forests and Jews were murdered in the streets and in their homes.

*Candle-lighters:* These candle-lighters are children or grandchildren of Holocaust survivors living in Ireland

Joe Katz, whose mother, Frida, survived Auschwitz
Sharlette Caplin, whose father, Raphael Urbach, survived Buchenwald and Theresienstadt
David Phillips, whose father, Geoffrey escaped to England on the kindertransports
Caroline Zinn-Collis, whose father, Zoltan, survived Bergen-Belsen concentration camp
Moti Neuman, whose parents, Abraham Yekutiel Neuman and Sheindl Golda (Yaffa) Shtainbock, survived camps in Siberia and the massacre in Bronica forest
Rita Evrony, wife of Israel’s ambassador to Ireland, whose father, Leo Loeffler, survived Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz and Buchenwald
National Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration
Sunday 31 January 2010
Mansion House, Dublin

Programme

MC: Yanky Fachler     Violin: Feilimidh Nunan     Keyboard: Maria Geheran

• Introductory remarks: Yanky Fachler
• Words of Welcome: Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr Emer Costello
• Minister for Integration: John Curran, TD
• The Stockholm Declaration: Swedish Ambassador to Ireland, H.E. Mr Claes Ljungdahl
• Keynote address: An Taoiseach, Mr Brian Cowen, TD

Musical interlude
• The Impact of the Holocaust: Dr Garret FitzGerald
• The Evian Conference: Jenny Kenny (Hirsch)
• Victimisation of the Jews: The Hon. Mr Justice John L. Murray, The Chief Justice
• Victim Readings
  - Disabled Victims: Mr Brian O’Donnell, CEO, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies
  - Poles: Aleksandra Rzeczkowska
  - Gypsies: Denise Charlton, CEO, Immigrant Council of Ireland
  - Black and Ethnic Minorities: Thabi Madide, Women Writers in New Ireland
  - Homosexual Victims: Ian Doyle
  - Political Victims: John White, General Secretary, ASTI
  - Christian Victims: Dr Susan Hood, Church of Ireland
• All of the Victims: Alan Shatter, TD

Musical interlude
• Unspeakable Horror: Ingrid Craigie
• Wannsee: Frank McGuinness, Writer-in-Residence, School of English and Drama, UCD
• Ghettos: Dr Zuleika Rodgers, Director, Herzog Centre, TCD
• Resistance Poem: Theo Dorgan
• Sacred Trust: John Tierney, Dublin City Manager
• Scroll of Names: Stratford College; Malahide Community School; Salesian College; East Glendalough School

Musical interlude
• Liberation: Michael Coleman
• Righteous Among the Nations: Joanna Tuffy, TD
• Legacy of the Holocaust: Dr Eleanor O’Higgins, School of Business, UCD and London School of Economics
• Second Generation: Riva Neuman
• SURVIVORS of the HOLOCAUST: Zoltan Zinn-Collis, Suzi Diamond, Tomi Reichental, Jan Kaminski
• Go Home From This Place: Mary Banotti, HETI
• Minute’s Silence
• CANDLE LIGHTING
• El Malay Rachamim: Prayer for the Repose of the Souls of the Departed, Rabbi Zalman Lent, Cantor Alwyn Shulman, Irish Jewish Community
• Closing Remarks: Yanky Fachler
Holocaust Memorial Day

The Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration is designed to cherish the memory of all of the victims of the Nazi Holocaust. A candle-lighting ceremony is an integral part of the commemoration at which six candles are always lit for the six million Jews who perished, as well as candles for all of the other victims. The commemoration serves as a constant reminder of the dangers of racism and intolerance and provides lessons from the past that are relevant today.

Summary of the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust

Issued in January 2000, on the 55th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945 and endorsed by all participating countries, including Ireland

We, the governments attending the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, recognise that the Holocaust was a tragically defining episode of the 20th century, a crisis for European civilisation and a universal catastrophe for humanity. In declaring that the Holocaust fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilisation, we share a commitment to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, and to honour those who stood against it. The horrors that engulfed the Jewish people and other victims of the Nazis must forever be seared in our collective memory. With humanity still scarred by genocide, antisemitism, ethnic cleansing, racism, xenophobia and other expressions of hatred and discrimination, we share a solemn responsibility to fight against these evils. Together with our European partners and the wider international community, we share a commitment to remember the victims who perished, to respect the survivors still with us, and to reaffirm humanity’s common aspiration for a democratic and tolerant society, free of the evils of prejudice and other forms of bigotry.
Message from An Taoiseach Brian Cowen

As a signatory to the Stockholm Declaration, Ireland is committed to commemorating the Holocaust and to teaching about it. This is a very important, ongoing responsibility, and as a sign of our commitment, Ireland is currently working towards full membership of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.

Six million Jews were murdered by the Nazi State in the course of the Holocaust. Millions of other people were killed because of their ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or political affiliations. Holocaust Memorial Day helps us to keep alive the memory of the Jewish people and all those who were persecuted because they were considered different. It allows us to honour their humanity, to mourn their passing, and to show our respect for the survivors. And it provides an opportunity to salute the brave people who put themselves in terrible danger to take a stand against evil.

Holocaust Memorial Day also enables Irish people to make a strong statement against antisemitism and all forms of racism, bigotry and intolerance. Hatred of the 'other' is never very far from the surface in any country. The Holocaust, in all its horror, shows where this can lead to.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the excellent and essential work which is undertaken by Holocaust Education Trust Ireland.

Brian Cowen, TD,
Taoiseach

Message from Councillor Emer Costello, Lord Mayor of Dublin

I am honoured to host this important national event on behalf of the City of Dublin.

The Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration is marked each year on the Sunday nearest to 27 January, the date of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945. It has become an important annual date not only in the calendar for the City of Dublin, but indeed for the whole country.

On this day we recall the horror and suffering inflicted on the Jewish people during the Second World War and we assert our determination that such brutal acts of inhumanity should never happen again.

We are privileged this evening to have with us survivors and descendents of survivors of the Holocaust who made Ireland their home. Their presence strengthens our resolve to make sure that the victims are never forgotten, that the survivors are never abandoned, and that the lessons of history will not go unheeded.

Dublin has enjoyed a proud association with Ireland’s Jewish Community which goes back more than 150 years. Although small in number, this community has made a remarkable contribution to all spheres of Irish life in Dublin and in Ireland. Indeed the relationship which has evolved between the Jewish community and the City of Dublin is a fine example of mutual respect for all of us living in Ireland today.

I would like to thank the committee and individuals whose hard work ensures that we give this solemn occasion the respect it is due.

Cllr Emer Costello
Lord Mayor of Dublin
Europe – The number of Jews annihilated by the Nazis in each European country

The white figures on black relate to the approximate number of Jews who perished in each European country between September 1939 and May 1945. The total of just over 5,750,000 does not include thousands of infants murdered by the Nazis in late 1941, before their births could be recorded. Thousands of people from the remoter villages in Poland were added to the deportation trains which left larger localities, without any record of their existence or of their fate.
The Nazi Holocaust
A systematic programme to annihilate the Jews of Europe

- February 1933 – the first concentration camp, Dachau, is established to hold prisoners arrested after the arson attack on the Reichstag parliament building.
- May 1933 – Nazi students and militiamen light huge public bonfires in which they burn books by Jews, communists and other ‘disruptive’ influences.
- 1933 onwards – Jews are expelled from the army, the civil service, professional associations, sports and social clubs.
- 1935 – The Nuremberg Laws strip Jews of citizenship and define them by racial criteria.
- 35,000 Jewish war veterans who had won medals for bravery during WWI lose their privileges.
- 9 November 1938 – Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass). Widespread pogroms against the Jews of Germany and German-controlled lands.
- Euthanasia Programme – murder of people with disabilities. More than 200,000 men, women and children with disabilities are put to death.
- 100,000 Jews die in labour camps between 1939 and 1940.
- Following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, SS mobile murder squads known as Einsatzgruppen murder over 2,000,000 civilians, most of them Jews in Russia and eastern Poland.
- 1-1.5 million Jews die in ghettos from starvation and disease.
- Some 30,000 Jewish partisans fight the Nazis in Eastern Europe.
- In the Warsaw Ghetto, more than 100,000 Jews die of starvation and disease; more than 300,000 are deported to the death camps and 7,000 are killed in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising between 19 April and 16 May 1943.
- 1,100,000 Jews, 150,000 (non-Jewish) Poles, 23,000 Gypsies, 15,000 Soviet POWs and thousands of others die in Auschwitz.
- 1,500,000 Jewish children are murdered in the Holocaust.
- Of the 300,000 Jews who go into hiding, pretend to be Aryans or acquire false identity papers, 100,000 die after capture or betrayal.
- Out of approximately nine and a half million Jews living in Europe before 1939 only one third survive the Holocaust.

One and a half million Jewish children were murdered by the Nazis as well as thousands of other children whom they considered ‘unworthy of life’. Some of them were children with physical and mental disabilities; black, mixed-race and other ethnic children; Polish, Slav and Gypsy children. Children of Jehovah’s Witnesses and other Christian denominations who resisted the Nazis were destroyed, along with children of the Nazis’ political opponents. The Nazis particularly targeted the children in an attempt to destroy the future of all of these groups of people.
The Évian Conference

With thousands of Jews fleeing Nazi antisemitism, it was clear that an international refugee crisis had developed. Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, convened an international conference at Évian-les-Bains in France in July 1938 to consider refugee policies. Out of all of the 32 countries represented at the conference, which included the United States, Britain, France, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Latin America, Ireland and others, none was willing to take in more Jewish refugees.

The Évian Conference, called to resolve the situation for Jewish refugees, was deemed a failure. Myron Taylor, a retired executive from the US who chaired the meeting, asserted to the delegates that existing American immigration quotas were liberal. Lord Winterton, a member of the British cabinet, said that England was not a country of immigration and that British colonies and territories weren’t either. Canada said: no Jew is too many. A German newspaper said: Jews for Sale – Who Wants Them? No One.

Time magazine said shortly afterward: the hard fact remains that no nation is willing to receive more penniless Jews.

Ireland and Refugees

As Hitler’s power and influence increased in the 1930s, thousands of German Jews and others opposed to him and to Nazism attempted to flee Germany. The main targets of persecution and discrimination were the Jews. They were gradually excluded from public life, and eventually forced into ghettos and rounded up for deportation. Few could have guessed what lay at the end of those deportation transports.

Ireland was aware of the antisemitism of the Nazi state and the fact that German Jews were being outlawed in their own country. Although no formal policy regarding refugees from Germany was worked out until 1938, the Irish government and civil service effectively determined to allow entry to as few Jews as possible.

There were two basic reasons cited for Ireland’s reluctance to see a large number of refugees — and specifically Jews — enter the country. First, the rate of unemployment in Ireland was such that an influx of people in need of work might damage the economy further. Consequently, the government thought refugees might damage the economy further and the government feared refugees would end up a burden on the State. Secondly, many in government held the view that the arrival of large groups of Jews would result in a rise in antisemitism. This second factor was never stated openly as a reason for the Irish government’s ungenerous response to the refugee crisis.

We do not know how many Jewish refugees applied to come to Ireland, although it is definitely in the hundreds, if not thousands. Only a small percentage of applicants was actually admitted. While it is important to examine Ireland’s reaction to the refugee crisis in the light of the broader historical context, and the policy examples provided by other countries, especially Britain, one cannot ignore a persistent theme about this episode in Irish history: immigrants were not welcome, refugees were not welcome, but Jewish immigrants and Jewish refugees were less welcome than others.

Katrina Goldstone, Ireland and the International Reaction to Jewish Refugees, Dublin 2000
Herzog Letter

The Chief Rabbi pleads with Chief Justice Kennedy for action to be taken to expose atrocities against the Jews: The position is going from bad to worse. We no longer cry out about the atrocities but I have it from an indubitable source that Jews are being killed in Germany every day, though with such devilish methodicity and 'scientific' design and plan that it is difficult to speak of pogroms in Germany. Many Jews brought to the extreme end of despair are committing suicide. A very prominent Jewish jurist, one of the leading figures in German Jewry whom I know personally has exclaimed: ‘Would to Heaven that 5000 Jews were killed in Germany in one open pogrom, for then the world might wake up!’

The letter is accompanied by a list of 29 prominent Irish persons, whom the writer claimed would support his protest. The list includes Cardinal MacRory, Archbishop Gregg, W.B. Yeats, AE, Provost Gwynn and several others.

Isaac Herzog later became Chief Rabbi of Israel and his son, Chaim (1918-93), became President of the State of Israel (1988-93). This important letter provided evidence of the mass persecution of Jews as early as May 1933.

Ettie Steinberg

Ettie Steinberg was the only Irish-born Jew to die in the Holocaust. She was one of a family of seven children who were reared in Raymond Terrace, South Circular Road, Dublin. Originally from Czechoslovakia, her family had come to Ireland from London in 1926. In 1937, at the age of twenty-two, Ettie Steinberg married a twenty-four-year-old goldsmith from Antwerp, Vogtjeck Gluck. The couple moved to Belgium, where their son Leon was born. When the Germans invaded the Low Countries, Ettie and her family moved to France where they went into hiding.

Ettie’s family in Dublin had succeeded in getting visas for them from the British Home Office in Belfast which would allow them to travel to Northern Ireland. But it was too late – Ettie, Vogtjeck and Leon had been rounded up the previous day, sent to Drancy transit camp outside Paris, from where they were deported to Auschwitz and their deaths.

Ettie wrote a final postcard to her family in Ireland and managed to throw it out of the train window. A passer-by found it and posted it. The postcard was coded with Hebrew terms and read: ‘Uncle Lechem we did not find but we found Tisha B’Av’ Ettie’s family understood her tragic message: Lechem is the Hebrew word for bread and Tisha B’Av is a Jewish fast day commemorating the destruction of the Temple.
Kristallnacht, 9/10 November 1938, November Pogrom

Every annual Yom Ha-Shoah commemoration brings new testimony of the previously forgotten: nightmares told by friends, congregants, survivors, and the children of survivors. Kristallnacht is recalled:

In November 1938, Herschel Grynszpan, a Jewish student in Paris, assassinated the Third Secretary at the German embassy, Ernst vom Rath. Headlines appeared in the Nazi newspaper Der Angriff that stated ‘From this vile deed arises the imperative demand to proceed at once against the Jews with the most severe consequences.’ In response to the assassination, the Nazis launched the November pogrom known as Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, on 9/10 November 1938.

During that state-sponsored pogrom, 7,500 Jewish shops were wrecked and their windows smashed – leaving the streets strewn with glass. Hundreds of synagogues, Jewish homes, schools and businesses were destroyed and burnt to the ground. Ninety-one Jews were murdered and approximately 30,000 thrown into concentration camps. The Jewish communities of Germany were fined 1 billion Reichsmarks to pay for the damage.

Kristallnacht provoked outrage abroad and disquiet amongst ordinary Germans. Three days later, one hundred senior Nazi officials gathered to discuss the solutions to the ‘Jewish Question’. They considered plans such as confining Jews in ghettos but finally decided to get them out of the economy and out of the country. At the time, expulsion appeared to them as an adequate measure. After Kristallnacht, Jewish businessmen had to sell their businesses at very low prices, employers were urged to sack Jewish workers, and offices were set up to speed emigration.

Kindertransports

Kristallnacht had an instant impact on world public opinion. Within a week, a deputation that included Chief Rabbi Hertz of Great Britain and Chaim Weitzmann, later president of Israel, persuaded the British government to allow Jewish child refugees into Britain. The first Kindertransport left Berlin by train via Holland in December 1938. The children arrived in London’s Liverpool Street Station where they were met by their volunteer foster parents or representatives of hostels and boarding schools. Over the next 10 months, almost 10,000 Jewish children aged between two and eighteen years arrived in Britain via the Kindertransports. They came from Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Each child clutched a small suitcase holding their most cherished possessions. Most of the children never saw their parents again.

Geoffrey Phillips, who lives in Dublin, escaped from Germany as a thirteen-year-old on one of the Kindertransports. He recalls that night: In the early hours of the morning we heard that our synagogue had been set on fire by squads of Hitler Youth. Later we heard the same thing was happening all over the country. Before we had recovered from the shock of this terrible news, there was a knock on the door. Two plainclothes policemen asked for my father, told him to pack a change of clothes and take him away. We heard afterwards that my father had been taken to a concentration camp. A cousin of ours was a welfare officer in a neighbouring town. From her we learned that Britain was prepared to take in a limited number of young Jewish children. She urged my mother to register me for the transport. I am here today; I never saw my parents again.

Kindertransport children found refuge in Northern Ireland on a farm in Millisle in County Down where over 200 children aged between three and eighteen years were able to stay and work before moving on after the war.
The Holocaust

The Holocaust did not begin with gas chambers and crematoria, it began with whispers, taunts, humiliation, discrimination, confiscation of property, segregation, restrictions, rules and laws. It began with stereotyping, attitudes, bigotry and prejudice.

When Adolf Hitler became leader of the Nazi party in 1921, he stated clearly that his ultimate aim was the removal of the Jews from German society. By the time he became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, he was planning to remove the Jews from Germany by expulsion and evacuation. With the annexation of Austria in 1938 and the subsequent absorption of Czechoslovakia in 1939, Hitler was in control of more territory and more Jews. The invasion of Poland in 1939, which heralded the beginning of World War II, brought a further three million Jews under German control. The persecution of the Jews went through several stages. The words ‘expulsion’ and ‘evacuation’ soon became euphemisms for murder.

It is estimated that 9.6 million Jews lived in what became Nazi occupied Europe in 1939. By the end of the war in 1945, 3.2 million had survived the Holocaust. Millions of other victims were also murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators.

Nazi Persecution of the Jews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humiliation</th>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>Segregation Concentration</th>
<th>Murder</th>
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After the Holocaust

Grodno, Byelorussia: A street in a shtetl

Suddenly, all those places where Jews had lived for hundreds of years had vanished. And I thought that in years to come, long after the slaughter, Jews might want to hear about the places which had disappeared, about the life that once was and no longer is.

Roman Vishniac
Nazi Persecution of People with Disabilities

The Nazis considered people with intellectual and physical disabilities as ‘life unworthy of life’. School textbooks contained examples of maths problems calculating the costs of care for people with disabilities compared to the costs of caring for a healthy person. People with disabilities were shown to be a ‘burden on the state’. The Nazis decided that the elimination of such people from society would strengthen and purify the German race.

On 1 September 1939 Hitler officially established the T-4 Euthanasia Programme (named after the address of its headquarters at Tiergartenstrasse 4). The secret Reich Committee for the Scientific Registering of Serious Hereditary and Congenital Illnesses ordered the compulsory registration of ‘malformed’ newborn children: those suffering from intellectual or physical disabilities. Doctors and midwives were paid two Reichsmarks for each case they reported to their superiors. It is estimated that the Nazis murdered more than 200,000 people with disabilities in the ‘voluntary euthanasia programme’. Many of the doctors involved spoke with pride of their work even after the war, maintaining that they had been contributing to human progress.

The children’s registration forms were marked with a + if they were to be killed and sent on to the nearest public health office, which would then order the child’s admission to a paediatric clinic. Initially, there were four such clinics, which increased in number to a total of thirty. Very soon it was not only children with disabilities who were being murdered, but adults too. Thousands of intellectually disabled adults and psychiatric patients were murdered in gas vans in killing centres at Bernberg, Hadamar, Hartheim and Sonnenstein. Public outcry, led by Bishop Clemens von Galen, caused the cessation of the T-4 Euthanasia Programme in August 1941, but it continued clandestinely until 1945.

The machinery of mass murder developed in the course of T-4 Euthanasia Programme had operated with grim efficiency. Having proved itself in this context, it was now ready to be applied to others, on a far larger scale.

Manfred Bernhardt

Manfred Bernhardt was born in 1929 to a happy, working class family in Dortmund, Germany. The photograph shows him at home with his older sister, Gerda. Manfred was born with a mental disability and at a very young age he was diagnosed with ‘water on the brain’, epilepsy and idiocy. His parents loved him very much.

In 1942 when he was thirteen years old, Manfred’s parents reluctantly sent him to Aplerbeck asylum, a children’s care home, hoping that he would benefit from doing farm work in the open air. They visited Manfred often.

However, the family did not realise that Aplerbeck was part of a secret ‘euthanasia’ programme in which the doctors and nurses killed patients in their care. Six months after he arrived at Aplerbeck, Manfred was murdered by his doctors because they believed his disability made him ‘unworthy of life’. He was one of 70,000 Germans with intellectual disabilities who were murdered in the initial phase of the T-4 Euthanasia programme.
Nazi Persecution of Gypsies

The Nazi genocide of the Gypsies, who today are referred to as Roma and Sinti, is known in the Romany language as the *Pharrajimos* (the devouring). No exact figures are available, but it is estimated that the Nazis and their collaborators killed 250,000-500,000 Roma and Sinti men, women and children across German-occupied Europe. They were gassed, starved or used as human guinea-pigs. At least another half million were displaced and dispossessed, their identity documents destroyed.

On 2 September 1939, a Nazi conference on racial policy discussed the removal of 30,000 German and Austrian Gypsies to occupied Poland. The ‘resettlement in the east’, followed by mass murder, closely resembled the systematic deportations and killings of the Jews. In the summer of 1942, German and Polish Gypsies imprisoned in the Warsaw ghetto were deported to Treblinka where they were gassed. German Gypsies were also deported to ghettos in Bialystock, Krakow and Radom.

250 Romani children were murdered in Buchenwald in January 1940: they were used to test the efficacy of the Zyklon B crystals, later used in the gas chambers in the death camps. In December 1941 Himmler ordered all Romanies remaining in Europe to be deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau for extermination. They were brought there from German-occupied territories that included Moravia and Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway. 23,000 perished.

After the war, thousands of Gypsies remained in Transnistria, Baragan and other Displaced Persons’ camps. Their situation was compounded by the fact that they were unable to provide formal proof of their identities, nationalities or ancestry.

In 2004, an annual wreath-laying ceremony was inaugurated at the site of the Gypsy camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau, 60 years after the gassing of the final 2,900 Gypsies in that camp.

**Amalie**

The people referred to simply as ‘Gypsies’ by their neighbours actually came from distinct peoples such as the Roma, Sinti, Lalleri and Medvashi. They lived a nomadic life, moving from place to place. Seen as outsiders by the majority population, they were often treated with suspicion and hostility and had been persecuted throughout Europe for centuries. The Nazis thought of the Gypsies as racially inferior and murdered them in thousands across Nazi-occupied Europe.

When she was nine years old, the Nazis took Amalie Schaich and her brothers and sister away from their parents and placed them in children’s homes. Amalie’s father was immediately sent to the concentration camp at Dachau and her mother was later deported. The Schaichs had done nothing wrong, they had committed no crime, but their family was torn apart when they became victims of the Nazis’ racist campaign.

In May 1944 Amalie and about 30 other Sinti children were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Some 25,700 Gypsies were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau where about 2,700 were murdered in gas chambers as soon as they arrived. The others were placed in a section called the ‘Gypsy camp’ where most died of illness or starvation or were later ‘selected’ for the gas chambers. Amalie was one of only 2,000 Gypsies sent to Auschwitz who survived the war.

*From: The Nazi genocide of the Sinti and Roma, edited by Romani Rose (Documentary and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma, 1995).*
Nazi Persecution of Poles

It is estimated that three million Poles were murdered by the Nazis. Poland held lands vital to Germany. Nazi ideology viewed men, women and children of Polish derivation and language as ‘sub-humans’. Hitler had ordered that all members of the Polish intelligentsia were to be killed and declared that Poland was to be totally destroyed, its academically educated and professional classes annihilated, and its population reduced to a state where their lives were worthless. Tens of thousands of political leaders, church leaders, intellectuals, professionals, entrepreneurs, landowners and other Poles were targeted. They were either murdered or sent to concentration camps. Polish universities, scientific laboratories, schools, museums, and libraries were destroyed. Polish children did not progress beyond elementary school and thousands were forcibly taken to Germany to be reared as Germans. The expropriation of Polish and Jewish property was explicitly ordered from Berlin, as was the ‘Germanisation’ of the incorporated territories and the transfers of population. The invading German armies undertook their work with zeal and brutality.

Nazi Persecution of Black and Ethnic Minorities

Fifty years before the Holocaust, Germans were carrying out medical experiments on black people. Between 1894 and 1904 German settlers in the colony of German South Africa (part of present-day Namibia) systematically lynched members of the Herero tribe, raped their women and stole their cattle. When the Herero rebelled they were killed or incarcerated in concentration camps. Their numbers were reduced from 80,000 to 15,000. In the early years of the 20th century, the German geneticist, Eugen Fischer, published his scientific race theories in a book called *The Principles of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene*, which impressed and influenced Hitler and ultimately, Josef Mengele.

After the First World War, France occupied the German Rhineland and deployed black African colonial soldiers as the occupying force. The result was hundreds of mixed-race children born to German women, who became targets of Hitler.

In order to preserve the purity of the Aryan population, the Nazis established Commission Number 3, which secretly organised the forced sterilisation of hundreds of children of African ancestry. By the outbreak of the Second World War, thousands had fled and those who remained were annihilated.

Mahjub bin Adam Mohammed was born in Tanzania, joined the colonial German East Africa services and served with the army. He emigrated to Berlin in 1929 where he immediately got into trouble with the authorities by demanding his outstanding service pay. He married a German woman, Maria Schwander, and they had three children, Adam, Annemarie, and Bodo. Bin Adam was arrested in 1941, charged with the crime of ‘racial intermarriage’ and sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp where he died in November 1944.
Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals

Male homosexuality was illegal, under a definition whose scope had already been considerably expanded before the war. Heinrich Himmler and the Reich Ministry of Justice announced the death penalty for some homosexuals and in July 1943, Ernst Kaltenbrunner of the SS succeeded in having an edict passed for the forced castration of homosexuals.

The Nazis arrested thousands of gay men, who were sent to prison or concentration camps. They were forced to wear pink triangles on their camp uniforms, and lesbians were forced to wear black triangles. In the concentration camps, homosexuals were subjected to harder work, less food, and stricter supervision than other inmates. Thousands were put to death.

Discrimination against homosexuals continued after the war, and gay concentration camp survivors were not acknowledged as victims of Nazi persecution. Some even had to serve out the terms of their original prison sentences, as the laws against homosexuals remained on the West German statute books until 1969.

Albrecht Becker

Albrecht Becker, a designer, lived in the town of Würzburg with his partner Josef Abert, the Director of the Bavarian State Archive. In 1935 they were arrested with several others, put on trial for homosexuality and sent to prison.

Thousands died from the appalling conditions. After the war, Nazi anti-homosexual laws remained in place until 1969. Homosexuals were still considered as criminals, and some were even forced to complete the terms of their imprisonment with no allowance for the time they had served in the camps.

Nazi Persecution of Political Opponents

The Nazis persecuted hundreds of thousands of political dissidents and opponents – some for what they did, some for what they refused to do, and some for what they were. In the early 1920s, the Nazis began disrupting meetings of Liberal Democrats, Socialists, Communists, and Trade Unionists. The torching of the Reichstag national parliament building in 1933 gave the Nazis a pretext for suppressing the Communist Party, and later the Social Democratic Party, with brutal violence.

The Nazis abolished trade unions and co-operatives, confiscated their assets, and prohibited strikes. Political dissidents and political opponents were among the first to be arrested. In 1933, the Nazis established the first concentration camp, Dachau, as a detention centre for political prisoners arrested after the Reichstag fire.

Opponents of Hitler were murdered in the Night of the Long Knives in 1934. Hundreds of thousands of political prisoners were imprisoned in the concentration camps throughout Nazi-occupied Europe during the war. They were identified by a red triangle which they had to wear on their camp uniforms.
Nazi Persecution of Christian Victims and of Jehovah’s Witnesses

Thousands of Jehovah’s Witnesses were murdered by the Nazis for their refusal to salute Hitler as ‘Saviour’ or to serve in the German armed forces. Thousands of Catholics, Protestants, and others of Christian affiliation were persecuted and murdered. There were also hundreds of Christians, Quakers and others who actively opposed the Nazi regime, many of whom risked their lives to save Jews.

One of the most vocal political opponents of the Nazis was Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller. He spent 12 years in various concentration camps for his anti-Nazi activities. After the war, he persuaded the German Protestant churches to formally accept guilt for their complicity in the suffering of Jews and political dissidents during Hitler’s tyranny.

Christian Victims – The Bondi family

The photograph shows Marie Bondi surrounded by her children and grandchildren. Marie Bondi was a Christian who married a Jew. Her husband had died before the war, but her four children – considered Jewish under Nazi laws – were all deported with their families from Brno in Moravia. In the back of her Bible, Marie kept a record of the dates they were taken away: her son Willi was sent to Auschwitz; her daughters Mina and Julie and their children to Terezin; and her daughter Elsa, with her family, to an ‘unknown destination’.

Jehovah’s Witnesses

Jehovah’s Witnesses had a history of persecution in Germany, and after the Nazis came to power, this persecution intensified. In July 1933, the Gestapo closed the printing operation of the Witnesses’ Watchtower Society, and ordered all state-police precincts to search regional Witness groups and organisations.

Magdalena Kusserow

Magdalena had ten brothers and sisters and lived with her parents in a large house. In the evenings the whole family played music together.

The Kusserows were Jehovah’s Witnesses and, as deeply committed believers, the Bible was a central part of their lives. They openly criticised Nazi policies against the Jews. When the Nazis came to power, Jehovah’s Witnesses refused on moral and religious grounds to acknowledge Hitler as the ‘saviour’ of Germany; they refused to say ‘Heil Hitler’, salute the German flag, or serve in the German armed forces.

The Kusserow family became victims of the Nazis. The house that had been so full of life was gradually emptied as Magdalena’s young brothers and sisters were taken from their parents and sent to a children’s home while her mother, father and older brothers and sisters were arrested. Magdalena was just 17 years old when the last of her family was taken from her and she was left alone in the big house. Shortly afterwards, the Gestapo came for Magdalena. She was arrested, imprisoned and later sent to a concentration camp. In the Nazi concentration camps, Jehovah’s Witnesses wore purple triangular patches on their prison clothing. Thousands suffered in the camps and prisons; about 2,000 died.
Badges of Hate

The yellow Star of David imprinted with the word ‘Juif’ – the French word for ‘Jew’ – is typical of the badges the Nazis forced Jews to wear.

Jews also wore Star of David armbands.

Jehovah’s Witnesses, whose religion prevented them from swearing an oath of loyalty to Hitler, had to wear purple triangles.

Pink triangles were for homosexuals and those accused of homosexual acts.

Criminals wore green triangles.

This armband was worn by a labour camp prisoner.

Jews who were in concentration camps often wore yellow triangles like this one marked with a ‘U’ indicating that the prisoner who wore it was from Hungary.

This patch identified a Polish person living under Nazi control.

Black triangles were worn by those classified as ‘antisocial’ including Gypsies, lesbians and prostitutes.

Political prisoners wore red triangles.

First they came for the Communists
But I was not a Communist, so I did not speak out.
Then they came for the Socialists and Trade Unionists
But I was not a Socialist or Trade Unionist, so I did not speak out.
Then they came for the Jews
But I was not a Jew, so I did not speak out.
Then they came for me
But by then there was no one left to speak out for me.

Martin Niemöller
The term 'ghetto' was first used in Venice in 1516. It was a separate quarter of the city where Jews were allowed to live. Later, in many other countries of Europe, Jews were closed into separate quarters, maintaining only economic ties with the surrounding societies.

During World War II, the Germans established approximately 1,200 ghettos in Central and Eastern Europe. On 21 September 1939, Reinhard Heydrich, Chief of the Reich Security Main office, called for the centralisation of Polish Jews into separate areas of cities and used the term ghetto. Sometimes ghettos were also referred to as Jewish Residential Districts.

The purpose of establishing the ghettos was to separate the Jews from the rest of the population. From the Nazis point of view, concentrating the Jews into one place provided an efficient way of segregating them from the rest of society. In this way, the Nazis could easily control the lives of the ghetto inhabitants.

The ghettos comprised a number of dwellings and streets usually in poor and run-down areas of a city, often located near railway lines which facilitated the transport of the inhabitants 'somewhere else' without disrupting the rest of the city.

The Nazis forced the Jews to move from their city homes or from surrounding towns and villages into the newly-formed ghettos from which they were not allowed to leave. Jews who left the ghettos without permission were often shot. Most ghettos were locked during deportations.

Each ghetto was unique in how and when it was set up, governed, isolated or sealed off from the rest of the city. In large cities such as Lodz and Warsaw, pedestrian bridges were built so that the Jews could cross from one side of the ghetto to the other without setting foot on the main street or tramlines that ran underneath! The Lodz ghetto was separated by a wooden fence and barbed wire; the Warsaw and Kraków ghettos were surrounded by brick walls.

The ghettos represented places of degradation, hardship and unimaginable suffering. The Nazis forced thousands of Jews to live in cramped areas that could not possibly accommodate the huge numbers being forced into them, often without either running water or a connection to the sewage system. As a result, starvation and disease were rampant wreaking a huge death toll. It is estimated that between one million and one and a half million Jews died in the ghettos of Nazi occupied Europe.

The inhabitants in the ghettos struggled to survive and many tried to escape the harsh conditions. Although there are several heroic stories of resistance, most of the ghetto populations were deported directly to the death camps, and just a few to the forced labour or concentration camps. Thousands of Roma and Sinti were
also incarcerated in the ghettos along with the Jews, and ultimately met the same fate.

Soon after the Nazis began to carry out the Final Solution, they began to eliminate the ghettos. The first were liquidated in Spring 1942. The Lodz ghetto, established in May 1940 and in existence the longest, was the last to be destroyed in the summer of 1944.

Almost all of the Jews in Eastern Europe had been forced to leave their homes for the ghettos. In parts of the Soviet Union occupied by the Germans, ghettos were usually set up after mass killings of the Jews. The ghettos served as ‘holding areas’ where the remaining Jews were incarcerated before being shot or sent to death camps. By the end of the war, not one Eastern European ghetto was left in existence.

As they did in the concentration and forced-labour camps, the Nazis subjected the inhabitants of the ghettos to similar brutality, shootings, beatings and starvation. They created conditions that were so harsh they could claim the residents died of ‘natural causes’. By 1943, the severe conditions in any of these places of incarceration, were very similar and it was not easy to differentiate between them.

For the inhabitants of the ghettos, who came from all walks of life, it soon became clear that the ghetto served as a place to destroy them physically and psychologically and that their ultimate fate would be death. The illusion that the temporary nature of the ghetto as a place to reside before being sent for ‘resettlement in the east’ was soon dispelled as the residents realised the euphemism for murder.

Judenraete

Daily life in the ghettos was administered by Nazi-appointed Jewish Councils called Judenraete which had to oversee the instructions of the Nazis including organising the deportations of Jews to the killing centres. Each ghetto was governed uniquely and the Jews were forced to run services and institutions for themselves for which they had little experience: police forces, housing, healthcare, work-allocation and food distribution. The Germans ordered Jews residing in ghettos to wear labels or badges (usually a white armband with a blue Star of David) and they exploited the ghetto inhabitants for slave labour. As long as the ghetto inhabitants were of use to the Reich, they lived; if they were not useful, they died. Sometimes a ghetto was divided into two separate areas: one for the workers and one for the rest of the population. There are many stories about the impossible choices and dilemmas faced by leaders of the Judenraete. Despite the inhuman conditions and the fight for survival, a focused effort was made in the ghettos to sanctify life and respond to the public’s needs and even drama and musical concerts were performed regularly.

Choiceless Choices

In every ghetto, the defining moments that tested the courage of the Judenrat leaders came when they were asked to provide lists of those to be deported. Once all tactics of bribes, delay, argumentation and pleading had been exhausted, ultimately a decision had to be made.

Adam Czerniaków, head of the Judenrat in the Warsaw Ghetto, could not live with the strain on being forced to make ‘impossible’ decisions concerning the distribution of medicines, food and ultimately submitting lists of Jews ‘suitable’ for deportation to the death camps. He committed suicide.

Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, head of the Lodz Judenrat, thought he could save the young, healthy Jews (and himself) by complying with the Nazi orders. He handed over the elderly, the infirm and very young children. He reasoned that his duty was to preserve the Jews who remained. The part that can be saved is much larger than the part that must be given away. You may judge me as you wish. In the end, nothing saved Rumkowski or the Jews of the Lodz ghetto.
The Warsaw Ghetto

In October 1940, the Nazis issued a decree establishing the Jewish Residential District in the North-west of the city of Warsaw. The ghetto was sealed on 16 November 1940 when the Nazis drove the Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw and surrounding towns and villages into this concentrated area surrounded by walls which the Jews had to build with their own hands and from which they were forbidden to leave. Gypsies were also confined to the ghetto. The Nazis hoped to exterminate the ghetto’s inhabitants by conducting a reign of terror and creating appalling living conditions. By July 1942 over 100,000 people had died in the Warsaw Ghetto from starvation, cold and disease.

The Warsaw Ghetto was divided into two areas, joined by a bridge that crossed Chlodna Street. At its peak, 450,000 Jews were squeezed into the Warsaw ghetto. Officially, it had an administration, in the form of the Jewish Council (Judenrat), led by Adam Czerniaków, but the Judenrat had no autonomy and only Nazi orders were carried out. The Nazis took over Jewish factories and introduced slave labour.

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

On 19 April 1943, realising their fate, a group of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto led by Mordechai Anielwicz, rebelled against their Nazi oppressors, determined to die with honour rather than be led like sheep to the slaughter. 7,000 Jews died in the uprising, which lasted until 16 May 1943. In the end, the Nazis razed the Warsaw ghetto to the ground, and the vast majority of its population was murdered or transported to the death camps. There were few survivors.

Oneg Shabbos Archive

Emmanuel Ringelblum was a historian and social activist who organised the Oneg Shabbos group to document ghetto life. Ringelblum’s diary and the archives he gathered are indispensable for understanding life inside the Warsaw ghetto. Hidden on the Aryan side after the final destruction of the ghetto, Ringelblum was shot by the Nazis on 7 March 1944.
Resistance in the Ghettos

Active Resistance in Other Ghettos

Members of the Jewish Resistance movements in other ghettos staged armed uprisings. There were revolts in Krakow, Vilna, Bialystok, Czestochowa and several smaller ghettos.

Passive Resistance in the Ghettos

Although Jewish schools and religious education were forbidden in the ghettos, the Jewish residents managed to run clandestine religious schools and to observe Jewish festivals and religious rituals; youth movements, Yiddish theatre, musical societies and poetry recitals flourished in the ghettos. They were undertaken at considerable risk by the ghetto inhabitants. This form of maintaining Jewish cultural heritage under such difficult circumstances is often considered ‘passive resistance’.

Starvation in the Ghettos

Starvation was one of the main causes of death in the ghettos during the Nazi era. Jews in the Warsaw ghetto were allowed 181 calories per day and there was no provision for food for children in the ghettos. Kovno, Lodz and Warsaw ghettos relied on work for the German factories. The inhabitants who had work permits received rations that enabled them to survive. Smuggling in of food, through sewers, holes in walls and other small spaces, was carried out by children.

Resistance

To smuggle a loaf of bread was to resist
To teach in secret was to resist
To cry our warning and shattering illusion was to resist
To forge documents was to resist
To smuggle people across borders was to resist
To chronicle events and conceal the records was to resist
To hold out a helping hand to the needy was to resist
To contact those under siege and smuggle weapons was to resist
To fight with weapons in streets, mountains, and amid forests was to resist
To rebel in death camps was to resist
To rise up in ghettos, among the crumbling walls, in the most desperate revolt was to resist

Chaim Guri and Monica Avrahami

From: Ghetto Fighters House, Israel, as shown in the exhibition Fighting for Dignity: Jewish Resistance in Kraków, Galicia Jewish Museum.
Other Ghettos

The Lodz Ghetto – Although intended to be a temporary transit facility, it lasted more than four years as the Nazis exploited the inhabitants as forced labourers. Some 164,000 Jews were packed into the ghetto with no electricity or water, causing disease to rapidly diminish the numbers. Other groups that included Roma and Sinti were also interned in Lodz.

Krakow – Approximately 60,000 Jews lived in the Jewish quarter of Kasimierz in Krakow. Established in March 1941, the ghetto held up to 18,000 Jews at any one time. Dense overcrowding caused a heavy death toll from starvation and disease. Jews from the ghetto were packed into railway trucks and transported to their deaths in Belzec and Auschwitz. Everyone in the ghetto lost a family member during these deportations. Over ninety percent of Krakow’s Jews were murdered.

Lublin – 40,000 Jews lived in Lublin: it was a centre for Jewish learning in Poland. The Nazis established the ghetto in March 1941 and incarcerated 34,000 Jews. Thousands died from a typhus epidemic. From March to April 1942, 30,000 Jews were deported to Belzec death camp; the remaining four thousand were ultimately murdered.

Kovno – This was a renowned centre for Jewish learning, and many of the Jews of the area had been murdered by their Lithuanian neighbours. In August 1941, 34,000 Jews were imprisoned in the ghetto. Some 12,000 babies, children and elderly people were murdered and many young people sent to forced labour camps in Estonia. The ghetto was liquidated in advance of the Soviet Army’s arrival. Those who remained alive were sent to Stutthof, Dachau and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Terezin – Established in 1942, created by the Nazis as a ‘model camp’ to cover up the genocide of the Jews, the ghetto held a high proportion of artists, intellectuals, children and elderly people. Of more than 155,000 Jews who passed through Terezin, 35,440 died in the ghetto and 88,000 were sent for extermination. Out of 15,000 children, very few survived; their drawings and writings expressing their optimism, hopes and fears were found hidden in a milk churn after the war and are now in Yad Vashem. The drawings and poems are all that is left of these children; their ashes have long since drifted across the fields of Auschwitz.

Newborn infant with yellow star, Kovno ghetto

The Butterfly, Terezin

Entrance to the Lodz Ghetto: the sign reads ‘Jewish residential district, entry forbidden’

Building Krakow ghetto wall

Begging in Lublin Ghetto

Yad Vashem
Wannsee Conference

A major purpose of the German administration of occupied countries, as well as of German representatives in client states and allied nations, was to implement there as well as at home the final solution to the Jewish question in Europe. Everywhere that they could, German administrators, civilian, military and SS, moved quickly to secure the passing of anti-Jewish laws, the Aryanisation of Jewish property and finally the round-up of the Jewish population and its deportation to the killing centres in the east.

The Wannsee Conference took place on 20 January 1942, attended by 15 top German and Nazi officials. Hitler’s final solution to the Jewish problem, the total elimination of the Jews of Europe, had already been decided upon. Eichmann presented the delegates with a list of the number of Jews living in each country, whom the Nazis intended to annihilate. Ireland appears on the list with 4,000 Jews. At the Wannsee Conference, Reinhard Heydrich sought institutional and organisational endorsement to carry out the Führer’s plans. It took the delegates less than two hours to discuss the issues and unanimously to offer Heydrich their full support.

Hungary

Hungary was an ally of Germany, and although Horthy’s government had nationalised Jewish-owned property, it had frustrated Hitler’s demand for the deportation of its 800,000 Hungarian Jews. However, in March 1944 German troops marched into Hungary and the fate of its Jewish population was sealed. On 7 April Jews were forced to wear the Jewish star. This was followed by the round-up of Jews throughout Hungary, who were sent to ghettos and camps. The Jewish intelligentsia of Budapest were arrested and sent to concentration camps in Austria.

The first trainloads of Jews left for Auschwitz on 14 May 1944. Every day, 12,000-14,000 were packed into cattle-trucks and sent to the camp. Four gas chambers and crematoria worked around the clock to deal with the influx. In just over two months, 438,000 Hungarian Jews had been taken to Auschwitz, where some 394,000 were gassed immediately on arrival.

The Nazis gave free rein to the pro-Nazi and antisemitic Arrow Cross gangs, who perpetrated a reign of arbitrary terror against the Jews of Budapest. Hundreds of Jewish men and women were violently murdered (many shot into the Danube), and many others died from the brutal conditions of forced labor to which the Arrow Cross subjected them. In November 1944, the Arrow Cross regime ordered the remaining Jews of Budapest into a ghetto, which became a temporary residence to nearly 70,000 people.

Out of approximately 825,000 Jews living in Hungary in 1941, about 560,000 were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. Less than one-third of those who had resided within enlarged Hungary in March 1944 survived the Holocaust.

The horror of the Holocaust is not that it deviated from normal human behaviour, the horror is that it didn’t. What happened may happen again, to others not necessarily Jews, perpetrated by others, not necessarily Germans. We are all possible victims, possible perpetrators, possible bystanders.

Yehuda Bauer
T-4 Euthanasia Programme

The T-4 Euthanasia programme was named after the headquarters of the operation at Tiergartenstrasse 4, Berlin. Adolf Hitler initiated this programme in 1939 to kill elderly people, the terminally ill and people with disabilities. The Nazis referred to the programme’s victims as ‘burdensome lives’ and ‘useless eaters’, they considered them ‘unworthy of life’. Although it was officially discontinued in 1941, killings continued covertly until the military defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945. It is estimated that the number of people with disabilities killed in this programme, including the covert phase, exceeded 200,000.

Concentration and Forced Labour Camps

BERGEN-BELSEN in northern Germany. More than 70,000 prisoners died of starvation and disease. Liberated by the British in April 1945.

BUCHENWALD in central Germany. More than 65,000 out of approximately 250,000 perished. Liberated by the Americans on 11 April 1945.

DACHAU, near Munich in Germany, was the first concentration camp, established in March 1933. Liberated by the Americans.

FLOSSENBURG in Bavaria where 30,000 perished. Liberated by the Americans in April 1945.

MAUTHAUSEN, near Linz in Austria, opened in August 1938. Many political prisoners and some Jews were held there and in its subcamps as slave labourers. Thousands were murdered by being pushed from the 300-foot cliffs into stone quarries.

MALY TROSTENIC near Minsk was also a forced labour camp where thousands of prisoners were shot or murdered in gas vans.

RAVENSBURCK concentration camp for women. Opened in 1939. It is estimated that 120,000 prisoners were incarcerated there including many political prisoners, Jews, Gypsies and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

SACHSENHAUSEN, Germany. A gas chamber was added in 1943. Had several subcamps including Neuengamme. 45,000 prisoners perished there. Liberated by Soviet troops in April 1945.

STUTTHOF opened in Poland 2 September 1939, first camp established outside Germany. In excess of 100,000 died there. Had a gas chamber. Liberated by Soviet troops in May 1945.

The Nazis established more than one thousand concentration camps and subcamps in Germany and its occupied territories. The Nazis imprisoned Jews, Gypsies, POWs, political and religious opponents, homosexuals and others considered ‘enemies of the state’. A great number of concentration camps also served as forced labour camps, the numbers of which reached more than 2,100, where the prisoners were subjected to work under extreme brutality and harsh conditions. The very poor living conditions, subsistence levels of food, lack of insulation from the cold, lack of sanitation coupled with maltreatment, caused prisoners to die within a couple of months of arrival. Shooting and hanging of prisoners was common.

Einsatzgruppen

Einsatzgruppen were mobile killing squads who murdered Jews throughout Russia and eastern Europe in towns, villages, fields and cemeteries. On 21/22 June 1941 Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa), where special killing squads called Einsatzgruppen followed the German army and murdered more than 1.5–2 million people. They shot mostly Jews but also Gypsies, Communists and others on racial and ideological grounds. Einsatzgruppen comprised German police and SS units, local collaborators, and officers and soldiers of the German army. They continued to operate in rural areas in parallel to the exterminations taking place in the death camps.
Death Camps/Killing Centres

There were six death camps, all in Nazi-occupied Poland, established specifically to murder people (mainly Jews) by poison gas. Four of the death camps were established specifically for this purpose and were dismantled on completion of their function: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. Revolts took place in Sobibor and Treblinka. Majdanek and Auschwitz-Birkenau were originally established as POW camps, slave labour and concentration camps and ultimately also became extermination camps. They were both liberated by the Soviet Army towards the end of the war: Majdanek in July 1944 and Auschwitz-Birkenau in January 1945.

Operation Reinhard

Named after Reinhard Heydrich, this was the establishment of three killing centres at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka between March 1942 and August 1943. At least 1,500,000 Jews were gassed at these death camps. They were established as an efficient method of ‘disposing’ of Jews in a way that did not cause the killers too much psychological trauma such as had been reported by the Einsatzgruppen on the eastern front. These killing centres were dismantled on completion of their ‘task’ and all evidence of their existence destroyed. Forests and farmlands were planted on the sites.

Death Marches

As the Allies were closing in, the Nazis wanted to remove all traces of their murderous deeds in the concentration and the death camps. They forced prisoners out of the camps on foot to march back towards Germany. These were known as Death Marches. It has been estimated that between 200,000 and 350,000 concentration camp prisoners died on the ‘death marches’ and in the camps to which they were taken in the final months.

Sixty five years since the end of the Second World War, most of those who lived through the Third Reich are no longer with us. Within a few decades there will be no one left who remembers it at first hand. And yet its legacy is still alive in myriad ways. It extends far beyond Germany and Europe. The Third Reich raises in the most acute form the possibilities and consequences of the human hatred and destructiveness that exist, even if only in a small way, within all of us. It demonstrates with terrible clarity the ultimate potential consequences of racism, militarism and authoritarianism. It shows what can happen if some people are treated as less human than others. It poses in the most extreme possible form the moral dilemmas we all face at one time or another in our lives, of conformity or resistance, action or inaction, in the particular situation with which we are confronted.

Richard J Evans, Cambridge University
We had scarcely been inside a few minutes when Isa, a girl I had chatted to on the way here, pulled me to a window. ‘You must see this, look.’ I didn’t want to look. I was too afraid of what I might see. But I had to go and stand beside her. Not fifty yards away was an incredible sight. A column of people had been shuffling from the direction of the railway line into a long, low hall. When the place was full, there was a delay; but I went on watching, hypnotised. What I was witnessing was murder, not of one person, but of hundreds of innocent people at a time. Of course we had known, had whispered about it, and been terrified of it from a distance; but now I was seeing it, right there in front of me...

On the outside of the low building a ladder had been placed. A figure in SS uniform climbed briskly up. At the top he pulled on a gas mask and gloves, tipped what looked from here like a white powder into an opening in the roof, and then hurried back down the ladder and ran off...

Screams began to come out of the building. We could hear them echoing across to our hut, the desperate cries of suffocating people. I held my breath and pressed my hands over my ears, but the screams were so loud you’d have thought the whole world must be able to hear them. ‘It’s over.’ Someone was shaking me. ‘It’s all right, it’s gone quiet. They’re all dead now!...’

I went on staring at the building. Smoke was beginning to billow out of the tall chimneys. Soon a spurt of flame shot up into the sky. The black smoke became thicker and darker and choking, bringing with it the smell of burning fat and bone and hair. As evening came, the whole sky was red. Smoke and flames were pouring out of all the chimneys now. None of us slept that night. It was no longer possible to pretend even to yourself that the stories were not really true. All that we had heard and guessed was now before our eyes. Here were the death factories.

Kitty, age 14

The Holocaust was intended not to have any witnesses or history. The Nazi plan was to erase an entire people from the history and memory of the world. Everything was planned, thought out and organised so as not to leave any trace. We were not supposed to survive. The Nazi death machine was designed to eradicate not only the Jews and Gypsies as peoples, but also all evidence of their extermination.

It was the survivors themselves who first acknowledged their responsibility for passing on knowledge of the Holocaust and keeping its memory alive. The Shoah reflects the image of absolute deprivation, of a process of dehumanisation carried through to the end, and as such it inspires an endless debate on the human conscience and human dignity. It is essential to teach about the Shoah, whether there are Jews in your respective countries or not – whether there are many, or few, or none left.

We have a responsibility to ensure that the Holocaust is never trivialized.

Simone Veil, France, Holocaust survivor, former president of the European Parliament
Escape from Auschwitz

Although Auschwitz was one of the most closely guarded secrets of the Final Solution, five Jewish inmates succeeded in escaping from that notorious extermination camp: Siegfried Lederer, Rudolf Vrba, Alfred Wetzler, Czeslav Mordowitz and Arnost Rosin.

On 5 April 1944, Siegfried Lederer escaped from Auschwitz dressed in an SS uniform. Afterwards he sneaked into the Theresienstadt ghetto in order to warn the Jews about what awaited them in Auschwitz. The leaders of the Jewish Council decided that it was better for the potential victims to remain ignorant of their impending fate.

Two days after Lederer escaped, two Slovak Jews, Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, also broke out of Auschwitz. They had learned from a kapo that preparations were in hand for constructing another railway line to Auschwitz. This would streamline the killing process by transporting the newly arrived Hungarian Jews directly to the gas chambers. Vrba had been planning his escape for more than two years, but now it was urgent: ‘It was no longer a question of reporting a crime, but of preventing one.’

Between 7 and 10 April, the 20-year-old Vrba and the 26-year-old Wetzler hid in a hideout that had been sprinkled with gasoline-soaked tobacco to prevent the dogs from sniffing them out. They then broke through the outer perimeter of Birkenau and walked over a hundred miles for 11 days to their native Slovakia. On 24 April they established contact with Leo Baek. He and other members of the Working Group were the first Jewish leaders to hear a first-hand report about Auschwitz. Vrba had brought with him a label off a Zyklon B gas canister.

Vrba and Wetzler were interviewed in two separate rooms for 3 days, and produced a detailed plan of Auschwitz-Birkenau, its methods of mass murder, and the events they had witnessed. They begged the Slovak Jewish Council to warn Hungarian Jewry about the expansion of the extermination facilities at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Two other escapees, Czeslav Mordowicz and Arnost Rosin, who reached Slovakia on 6 June, confirmed what Vrba and Wetzler had described, adding that the Auschwitz crematoria had started to consume Hungarian Jews at an unprecedented pace, and could hardly cope with the task.

The Vrba-Wetzler report became known as The Auschwitz Report. It was the first document by Auschwitz inmates to reach the free world, and its accuracy and authenticity dispelled any doubts that had existed until then. Between May and June 1944, more than 437,000 Hungarian Jews had perished in the death camps. When the report was published in the Swiss and then the Western press, it confirmed the Nazi extermination programmes. The Auschwitz Report was drawn to the attention of Winston Churchill, Franklin D Roosevelt and Pope Pius XII, who reacted by bringing pressure on Miklos Horthy. 170,000 Jews still remained in Budapest when the order came to halt the deportations. The cessation of the deportations, even at this late stage, meant that the two escapees from Auschwitz had managed to save 170,000 lives.
By spring 1942 there were many bandits who were robbing and killing in the eastern territories and some parts of Poland. It was difficult to find out who they were, as Polish, Russian and even German deserters had become partisans. Many partisan groups were well armed and organised and some Polish officers were forming regular units of the Home Army. Villagers, thrown out of their homes to make way for ethnic Germans, swelled their ranks. The Home Army liaised with the Polish government in exile in London who seldom heeded the advice to be patient! Rival partisan groups were also active in Russia. Partisan activity further fuelled the antisemitism of civilian administrators who claimed that the Jews were responsible for the success of the campaign of sabotage and destruction.

It is estimated that over the whole period of the German occupation, about 283,000 people in Belarus took part in partisan groups.

Jewish partisan groups, consisting of men and women who had fled deep into the forests of Eastern Europe to escape the machine-guns of the Einsatzgruppen, also began to emerge early in 1942. Many individual Jews escaped to the forest on their own, but failed to link up with partisans. Often robbers stole their clothes and many starved. Other partisan groups did not welcome the Jews. Nevertheless, Jewish involvement in the partisan movement was widespread. The first Jewish resistance group in Eastern Europe was started by the 23 year old intellectual Abba Kovner in Vilna on 31 December 1941. Another group had been set up by the four Bielski brothers in early 1942, whose parents had been killed by the Germans. Based in a secret camp deep in the endless woods of the region, the brothers set up an elaborate system of procuring weapons and were joined by other Jews; their number reached 1,500 by the end of the war. Many more Jews joined local communist-led partisans units as individuals.

*From: The Third Reich at War*
Despite the brutal nature of Stalin’s regime before, during and after the Second World War, the defeat of Nazism would have taken much longer without the Red Army’s invasion of German-held territory from the East. The D-Day allied invasion of Normandy took place in June 1944. The same month, Marshal Zhukov’s main assault started on the German front lines, with 4,000 tanks and more than one and a half million soldiers fighting on a 500-mile long front. By the end of the summer of 1944 the Red Army had reached the gates of Warsaw and the road to Berlin had been opened.

On 27 January, 1945, Red Army troops – including many Jewish soldiers – liberated the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. It is this date that was chosen by the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust as the date for annual Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations.

When the Soviet liberators entered the gates of Auschwitz, they found only about 7,000 emaciated prisoners alive.

These survivors had been too frail to leave when the Nazis had forced the majority of Auschwitz prisoners on death marches. The Soviet soldiers also found 836,525 items of women’s clothing, 348,820 items of men’s clothing, 43,525 pairs of shoes, and 7.7 tons of human hair.

Over the course of the last months of the war in Europe, Allied troops liberated Nazi death camps and concentration camps. Between April and May 1945 the Americans liberated Buchenwald, Dachau, Dora/Mittelbau, Flossenbürg and Mauthausen; the British liberated Bergen-Belsen and Neuengamme; the Canadians liberated Westerbork and other camps in the Netherlands.

After the liberation of Auschwitz, the Red Army went on to liberate the camps at Plaszow, Gross-Rosen, Majdanek, Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, Sered, Sobibor, Stutthof and Theresienstadt.
Holocaust Survivors in Ireland

Zoltan Zinn-Collis

Zoltan Zinn-Collis thinks he was four or five years old at the time he was found in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, although no one is sure of his exact date of birth. He was found with his sister Edit, by Han and Dr Bob Collis who helped treat his tuberculosis and other ailments. Eventually, Bob brought him back to Ireland where he reared Zoltan as part of his own family. Zoltan took Bob’s name as part of his own.

As I reared my own children and grandchildren, I realised there is a void in our family. There were no grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins while I was growing up – they perished in the Holocaust – and my children and grandchildren are missing them too. It is on such family occasions that we become acutely aware of the sense of loss, the absence of close family and distant relatives.

Suzi Diamond

Suzi Diamond was born in Debrecen, Hungary and was with her mother and brother on the last transport to leave Hungary which, miraculously, was diverted from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen. Her mother died just after liberation. Suzi was a very young child when she, too, was found with her brother, Terry, by Dr Bob Collis who also brought them back to Ireland where they were adopted by a Jewish couple, Elsie and Willie Samuels. All of her family perished.

My brother passed away a year ago. Now there are only four of us Holocaust survivors living in Ireland. Apart from my personal loss, Terry’s passing underlines the importance of telling our story to the next generation. It is important that we pass it on to our children and our children’s children.

Tomi Reichental

Tomi Reichental was born in 1935 in Piestany, Slovakia. In 1944 he was captured and deported to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp with his mother, brother, aunt and cousin. Tomi was just 9 years old when the camp was liberated. 35 members of Tomi’s family were murdered in the Holocaust.

I could not play like a normal child, we didn’t laugh and we didn’t cry. If you stepped out of line at all, you could be beaten up and even beaten to death. I saw it with my own eyes.

Geoffrey Phillips

Geoffrey Phillips (originally Gunther Phillips) was born in Wanne-eckel, Germany in 1925. In December 1938, along with thousands of other German children, he was sent away to Britain on the Kindertransports. He didn’t know where he was going. He had a small suitcase as well as another small bag with provisions, and a ticket to a foreign land. He was thirteen years old.

I am here today, I never saw my parents again.

Jan Kaminski

Jan Kaminsky was born in Bilgoraj, Poland in 1932. When he was 7 years old, he managed to escape a round-up of the Jews and fled, leaving his family behind. He survived the war on his wits, running errands, working on farms and even becoming a mascot of the 21st Artillery Regiment of the Polish army. Jan lost most of his family in the Holocaust.
Lilly Friedman doesn’t remember the last name of the woman who designed and sewed the wedding gown she wore when she walked down the aisle over 60 years ago. But the grandmother of seven does recall that when she first told her fiancé Ludwig, that she had always dreamed of being married in a white gown he realized he had his work cut out for him.

For the tall, lanky 21-year-old who had survived hunger, disease and torture this was a different kind of challenge. How was he ever going to find such a dress in the Bergen Belsen Displaced Person’s camp where they felt grateful for the clothes on their backs?

Fate would intervene in the guise of a former German pilot who walked into the food distribution centre where Ludwig worked, eager to make a trade for his worthless parachute. In exchange for two pounds of coffee beans and a couple of packs of cigarettes Lilly would have her wedding gown.

For two weeks Miriam, the seamstress, worked under the curious eyes of her fellow DPs, carefully fashioning the six parachute panels into a simple, long sleeved gown with a rolled collar and a fitted waist that tied in the back with a bow. When the dress was completed she sewed the leftover material into a matching shirt for the groom.

A white wedding gown may have seemed like a frivolous request in the surreal environment of the camps, but for Lilly the dress symbolized the innocent, normal life she and her family had once led before the world descended into madness. Lilly and her siblings were raised in a Torah observant home in the small town of Zarica, Czechoslovakia where her father was a highly respected scholar.

He and his two sons were murdered immediately upon arriving at Auschwitz. For Lilly and her sisters it was only their first stop on their long journey of persecution, which included Plashof, Neustadt, Gross Rosen and finally Bergen Belsen.

Four hundred people marched 15 miles in the snow to the town of Celle on January 27, 1946 to attend Lilly and Ludwig’s wedding. The town synagogue, damaged and desecrated, had been lovingly renovated by the DPs with the meagre materials available to them. When a Sefer Torah arrived from England they converted an old kitchen cabinet into a makeshift Aron Kodesh (ark).

‘My sisters and I lost everything – our parents, our two brothers, our homes. The most important thing was to build a new home.’ Six months later, Lilly’s sister Ilona wore the dress when she married Max Traeger. After that came Cousin Rosie. How many brides wore Lilly’s dress? ‘I stopped counting after 17.’ With the camps experiencing the highest marriage rate in the world, Lilly’s gown was in great demand.

In 1948 when President Harry Truman finally permitted the 100,000 Jews who had been in DP camps since the end of the war to emigrate, the gown accompanied Lilly across the ocean to America. Unable to part with her dress, it lay at the bottom of her bedroom closet for the next 50 years.

Home was the U.S. When Lilly’s niece, a volunteer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, told museum officials about her aunt’s dress, they immediately recognized its historical significance and displayed the gown in a specially designed showcase, guaranteed to preserve it for 500 years.

But Lilly Friedman’s dress had one more journey to make. The Bergen-Belsen museum opened its doors on October 28, 2007. The German government invited Lilly and her sisters to be their guests for the opening. They initially declined, but finally travelled to Hanover with their children, grandchildren and extended families to view the extraordinary exhibit created for the wedding dress made from a parachute.

Two weeks later, the woman who had once stood trembling before the selective eyes of the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele returned home and witnessed the marriage of her granddaughter.

The three Lax sisters – Lilly, Ilona and Eva, who together survived Auschwitz, a forced labor camp, a death march and Bergen Belsen – have remained close and today live within walking distance of each other in Brooklyn. As mere teenagers, they managed to outwit and outlive a monstrous killing machine, then went on to marry, have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and were ultimately honored by the country that had earmarked them for extinction.

Lilly Friedman’s story courtesy of USHMM
In 1953 the State of Israel established Yad Vashem the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority in order to document and record the history of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. Yad Vashem inaugurated the award Righteous Among the Nations in 1963 to honour non-Jews who saved Jews during the Second World War. Over 22,000 people from 38 different countries have received the award. There are countless others who have never received any recognition, and many more who were killed by the Germans for assisting Jews.

The Righteous come from all levels of society, from different backgrounds, ages, religions and ethnic groups. They are individuals such as simple villagers in occupied countries, families, groups of friends or members of organised efforts such as the Dutch Resistance, the village of Le Chambon sur Lignon in France, or Zegota (the Council for Aid to Jews) in Poland. They include well-known efforts, from that of businessman Oskar Schindler, to assistance by diplomats such as the Swedish consul, Raoul Wallenberg, in Hungary or the Japanese official Sempo Sugihara in Lithuania, who saved several thousand Jews. Many Jews who survived Nazi rule and occupation in Europe between 1939 and 1945 owe their survival to Righteous gentiles.

What I did for the Jewish people...was but an infinitesimal contribution to what ought to have been done in order to prevent this horrible slaughter...

Father Marie-Benoit, France

Over 22,765 gentiles have been designated Righteous Amongst the Nations by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Authority in Israel, for their role in sheltering and protecting Jews during the Holocaust.
Although there were collaborators and committed Nazis in most countries during the war years, some countries acted collectively ‘as a nation’ to save their Jewish communities from deportation and probable annihilation.

The Rescue of Denmark’s Jewish Population

The German occupation of Denmark began in April 1940. Eager to cultivate good relations with a population they regarded as fellow Aryans, the Nazi occupiers allowed the Danish government to continue running their own domestic affairs. The Danes even held elections and it is said that every day King Christian X rode his horse through Copenhagen, reassuring his people that the Danish establishment still continued.

The Danish–German Agreement of 1940 stipulated that Denmark’s 8,000 Jews were not to be deported. But in August 1943, the Danish government resigned rather than yield to new German demands. Three and a half years of relatively benign occupation came to an end when the Nazis proclaimed a state of emergency. Reich plenipotentiary Werner Best drew up plans to deport the Danish Jews.

Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz, the German attaché for shipping affairs, used his close contacts with leading Danish Social Democrats to inform them of the impending danger for the Jews. On 29 September, the day before the Jewish New Year, Denmark’s Chief Rabbi, Marcus Melchior, warned his congregation to go into hiding immediately with their friends and relatives.

The Nazis acted on 1 October. Danish police refused to cooperate. German special units knocked on Jewish doors, but found hardly anyone at home. Jews had left their homes by train, by car and on foot, finding refuge in private homes, hospitals, and churches. The rescue operation involved thousands of Danish people from all walks of life.

The Danish Jews were taken to the coast, where fishermen helped ferry 7,220 Jews and 680 non-Jewish family members to safety across the water to neutral Sweden. The previous year, Sweden had accepted 900 Jewish refugees from Norway and they now absorbed the Danish Jewish community.

The collective heroism of the Danes in rescuing its Jewish population from the Nazis is recognised all over the world. The main door of Copenhagen’s Danish Jewish Museum bears the sign with the Hebrew word ‘mitzvah’ (a good deed).

Many Danes still see nothing extraordinary in what they did. The modesty of the Danish people for their exceptional altruism is reflected in the words of the Danish police officer and fisherman, Knud Dyby, who has been honoured for his heroism in saving Jews: ‘If you wanted to retain your self-respect, you did what you could.’

Bulgaria Saves her Jewish Community from the Nazis

In 1941 Bulgaria became an axis partner of Nazi Germany, acquiring the territories of Thrace and Macedonia. Some 11,000 Jews from these territories were deprived of their citizenship, rounded up and handed over to the Germans. Most were murdered. However, 49,000 Bulgarian Jews living within the pre-war borders were saved. On hearing of plans for the deportation of Bulgaria’s Jews, Deputy Speaker of the Assembly Dimitar Peshev organised a petition signed by 42 legislators, including several bishops, urging king Boris not to deport the country’s Jewish community. The petition and campaign which followed proved successful and the Jews of Bulgaria were saved from the Nazis. Dimitar Peshev, Bishop Stephan, Bishop Kyril, and Dimo Kazasov were later designated Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel.

Monument in the centre of Plovdiv, with the inscription: ‘To all who helped to save us on 10 March, 1943. From the grateful Jewish Community of Plovdiv’.

Photo: USHMM
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We Remember…

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*We Remember…*

Six million Jews perished in the Holocaust as well as millions of others, annihilated because of their ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or political affiliations. It is important that we cherish their memory, remember their sacrifice and commit ourselves to teaching lessons about the Holocaust that are relevant to our lives today. This is particularly true when confronting the problems of racism in general and of antisemitism in particular.

Brian Lenihan TD, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform,
Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration, January 2008
HONOURED GUESTS

Suzi Diamond – Bergen-Belsen
Jan Kaminski – Bilgoraj, Poland
Geoffrey Phillips – Kindertransport
Tomi Reichental – Bergen-Belsen
Doris Segal – Sudetenland
Rosel Siev – Aurich, Germany
Edit Zinn-Collis – Bergen-Belsen
Zoltan Zinn-Collis – Bergen-Belsen

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Persecuation of the Gypsies by Guenter Lewy, Oxford University Press 2000
Among the Righteous by Robert Satloff, Perseus Books 2005
First Memorial to black victims of Nazi genocide, Michael Leidig, Vienna, The Observer, Sunday September 16, 2007
Resistance: poem by Chaim Guri and Monica Avrahami, From: Ghetto Fighters House,Israel

PHOTOGRAPHS and ILLUSTRATIONS

Map of Europe: Atlas of the Holocaust by Martin Gilbert, 1988
Arabs who saved Jews photographs from Among the Righteous by Robert Satloff, Perseus Books 2005
Black, mixed race children, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Irene Sendler photograph by Katarina Stoltz/Reuters
Stefan Mika from: Polish Heroes: those who rescued Jews Galicia Jewish Museum, Krakow
Torching synagogue in Germany: Yad Vashem
Einsatzgruppen in action: Imperial War Museum, London
Tattooed Arms from: Getty Images

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The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC

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Violin: Feilimidh Nunan  Keyboard: Maria Geheran

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The only public Holocaust memorial monument in Ireland was unveiled in The Garden of Europe in Listowel Co Kerry in May 1995. The occasion marked fifty years since the end of World War II when the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed.

Paddy Fitzgibbon, of the Rotary Club of Listowel, made a very moving speech on that occasion; an excerpt is printed below:

Our generation, and the generation or two after us, will be the last that will be able to say that we stood and shook the hands of some of those who survived.

Go home from this place and tell your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren that today in Listowel, you looked into eyes that witnessed the most cataclysmic events ever unleashed by mankind upon mankind.

Tell them that you met people who will still be remembered and still talked about and still wept over 10,000 years from now – because if they are not, there will be no hope for us at all.

The Holocaust happened and it can happen again, and every one of us, if only out of our own sense of self-preservation, has a solemn duty to ensure that nothing like it ever occurs again.