

*That was only the beginning—where one burns books, one will finally also burn people.* • HEINRICH HEINE (1797–1856)

temporarily separated the warring parties on either side of the seventeenth parallel until elections scheduled for 1956. In the north was the DRV under President Ho; in the south were the French, from which emerged the Republic of Vietnam under Ngo Dinh Diem (1901–1963). In the north was the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) under President Ho; in the south emerged the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), inaugurated on 23 October, 1955, under Ngo Dinh Diem (1901–1963) who refused to hold the 1956 reunification elections as stipulated by the Geneva Accords. With the United States' intervention, the Second Indochina War (1960–1973) plunged Vietnam deeper into bloody and destructive conflict. The Communist forces continued the combat with the U.S.-sponsored southern regime, which the DRV considered illegitimate. Until his death on 2 September 1969, Ho Chi Minh was able to keep the DRV focused on carrying on the struggle. His stature acquired legendary proportions, and he became known as Bac Ho or "Uncle Ho" among supporters. Ho Chi Minh came to symbolize the Vietnamese determination to resist, and his name was chanted repeatedly in antiwar marches in the 1960s and 1970s in the West and in Third World countries. Ho Chi Minh was deft in steering the DRV through the shoals of Communist rivalry that pitted the Soviet Union against China during the Sino-Soviet crisis while managing to obtain vital economic, financial, and military aid from both. His final wishes were that his ashes be deposited in the three regions of Vietnam, but he was embalmed and remains in state at the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum in Hanoi.

*Nguyen Thi Dieu*

See also French Empire; Revolutions, Communist

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# Holocaust

Prior to the mass slaughter of European Jews by the Nazis during World War II, commonly known as the Holocaust, German dictator Adolf Hitler made no secret of his intentions. Writing in prison in 1924, he laid out his anti-Semitic views in the book *Mein Kampf*, and he began to act on them after coming to power in 1933. Though great effort was ultimately devoted to concealing the murder of Jews in concentration camps, Hitler repeatedly spoke publicly about his plans, predicting in January 1939, for example, the "extermination of the Jewish race in Europe" in the event of war.

Despite Hitler's openness about his objective, few people inside or outside Germany took his words seriously. After all, Germany was regarded as one of the world's most civilized nations, and Jews were among its most prominent citizens. It therefore came as a shock when a boycott against Jewish businesses was initiated early in 1933.

Gradually, the persecution of Jews in Germany escalated, culminating in the adoption of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. These laws excluded Jews from all public business life and denied them the right to vote or hold public office. Later, professionals such as doctors were stripped of their licenses. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor prohibited the marriage of Jews to non-Jews. Other bans prevented Jews from using the same facilities as non-Jews. In 1937, the Nazis began to confiscate Jews' possessions. Jewish children were expelled from school, Jews were banned from cultural and sporting events, and limits were placed on what Jews could do in public.

The prohibitions were devised, implemented, and enforced by a bureaucracy devoted to the "Jewish question." Virtually every government institution contributed to the Nazi anti-Jewish policies. Among the most important were the Press and Propaganda Ministry, which fed the German people a steady stream of anti-Semitic propaganda. The result was the dehumanization of Jews to the point where ordinary citizens were willing to persecute

## The Nuremberg Trial Proceedings Vol. 1 Indictment ...

*The following text concerning the Holocaust is an extract from the record of the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal following the German defeat in World War II.*

... Implementing their "master race" policy, the conspirators joined in a program of relentless persecution of the Jews, designed to exterminate them. Annihilation of the Jews became an official State policy, carried out both by official action and by incitements to mob and individual violence. The conspirators openly avowed their purpose. For example, the Defendant Rosenberg stated: "Anti-Semitism is the unifying element of the reconstruction of Germany." On another occasion he also stated: "Germany will regard the Jewish question as solved only after the very last Jew has left the greater German living space... Europe will have its Jewish question solved only after the very last Jew has left the Continent." The Defendant Ley declared: "We swear we are not going to abandon the struggle until the last Jew in Europe has been exterminated and is actually dead. It is not enough to isolate the Jewish enemy of mankind—the Jew has got to be exterminated." On another occasion he also declared: "The second

German secret weapon is anti-Semitism because if it is consistently pursued by Germany, it will become a universal problem which all nations will be forced to consider." The Defendant Streicher declared: "The sun will not shine on the nations of the earth until the last Jew is dead." These avowals and incitements were typical of the declarations of the Nazi conspirators throughout the course of their conspiracy. The program of action against the Jews included disfranchisement, stigmatization, denial of civil rights, subjecting their persons and property to violence, deportation, enslavement, enforced labor, starvation, murder, and mass extermination. The extent to which the conspirators succeeded in their purpose can only be estimated, but the annihilation was substantially complete in many localities of Europe. Of the 9,600,000 Jews who lived in the parts of Europe under Nazi domination, it is conservatively estimated that 5,700,000 have disappeared, most of them deliberately put to death by the Nazi conspirators. Only remnants of the Jewish population of Europe remain.

or even murder Jews while others watched silently. While it may be an overstatement to say, as some scholars have, that Germans were predisposed to anti-Semitism, few Germans were prepared to raise any objections to Hitler's policies.

### The Danger Rises

The discriminatory measures adopted in Germany did not initially pose a physical threat to the Jews. This began to change on 9-10 November 1938, when the government organized attacks by mobs that destroyed 191 synagogues and looted 7,500 shops. At least ninety-one Jews were killed in what became known as the Night of Broken Glass, or *Kristallnacht*.

The authorities' clear role in the attacks convinced many Jews the time had come to flee. The question, for those with the courage and the means to leave their homes, was where to go. Just four months earlier, delegates from thirty-two countries had met at Evian, France, to discuss what to do about the growing number of

refugees trying to flee Europe. The United States, which had initially proposed the conference, showed so little interest in solving the problem that other countries felt no need to open their doors to fleeing Jews. In the end, the Dominican Republic was the only country that welcomed Jews.

The situation grew increasingly ominous for the Jews when more than 26,000 Jewish men were imprisoned in concentration camps at Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen. The first of these camps, Dachau, was established in June 1933 for non-Jewish opponents of the Nazi regime and other criminals, but Dachau, along with the others, gradually became prisons primarily for Jews.

### World War II Begins

Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, marked the unofficial start of World War II. One of the reasons Hitler said he went to war was to make room—*Lebensraum*, or "living space"—for Germans. He believed that eastern Europe had to be conquered to create a vast



*Humanity has advanced, when it has advanced, not because it has been sober, responsible, and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious, and immature.* • TOM ROBBINS, (B. 1936)

German empire with a greater population and new territory to supply food and raw materials.

The conquest of Poland, however, brought another 2 million Jews under German authority. These people needed to be removed to create the German living space. Toward that end, Heinrich Himmler, the head of all German police forces, created special task forces within the elite SS, called *Einsatzgruppen*, which were charged with liquidating all political enemies of the Third Reich.

The *Einsatzgruppen* killed approximately 1.4 million Jews in actions that involved little more than lining men, women, and children up in front of ditches and machine-gunning them. Ultimately, however, the mass shooting of Polish Jews was not practical, so while the Nazis planned the creation of special camps for the efficient extermination of the Jews, they decided to isolate them in ghettos.

## Ghettoization

The Polish ghettos were enclosed areas—barbed wire at Lodz, a brick wall in Warsaw and Cracow—guarded by German soldiers. The Jews tried to live as normally as possible, but conditions in the ghettos were horrible. Malnutrition was widespread and death by starvation and disease was a daily occurrence.

Each ghetto was administered by a Jewish council (*Judenrat*) composed of influential members of the Jewish community who had to decide whether to help the Nazis or risk being murdered for their refusal. While the *Judenrats* hoped to improve the plight of Jews in the ghettos, they were often forced to choose who would be deported to the death camps. Ultimately, their cooperation did not save them from suffering the same fate as the other Jews. In 1942, Hitler decided to liquidate the ghettos and, within eighteen months, had the more than 2 million Jews deported to death camps.

## The Final Solution

The first people Hitler systematically began to murder were not Jews. In September 1939, he gave an order authorizing doctors to grant “the incurably ill a merciful death.” The program was based in Berlin at No. 4 Tiergartenstrasse and became known afterward as the T-4

program. Patients from hospitals all over the Reich who were considered senile, insane, or in some way “mentally defective” were marked for death. Initially people were killed by starvation, then by injections of lethal doses of sedatives, and ultimately by gas. The gas chambers, disguised as showers, were first developed for use in the T-4 program, and corpses were cremated, as those of Jews would later be in the camps.

Hitler’s extermination campaign was already nearly three years old when Reinhard Heydrich, head of the SS Reich Security Main Office, arranged for a conference in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee on 20 January 1942. The German army had overrun most of Europe, and the Nazis recognized that it would require greater coordination among their various institutions and officials to accomplish the goal of a “final solution” to the Jewish question, namely the extermination of the 11 million Jews Hitler believed to be living in Europe.

From that point until the surrender of Germany, the Nazis followed the course laid out at Wannsee and murdered approximately 6 million Jews as well as an almost equal number of non-Jews. The killing continued unabated even when the tide of war turned against Germany. When every German was needed to fight, and when food, oil, and transportation were in short supply, resources continued to be diverted to the killing of Jews rather than to military use.

The Germans were determined to find practical ways to kill as many people as quickly as possible. They built six camps—Chelmno, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Majdanek, and Auschwitz/Birkenau—specifically for murdering Jews. In Auschwitz alone, more than a million people were murdered, mostly in gas chambers.

## The Last Stop

Jews deported from their homes or ghettos were usually told they were being transferred to another area or sent to work; they had no idea what to expect when they were packed like animals into boxcars and shipped to their final destination. Before they knew what was happening, their possessions were seized and they were confronted by snarling dogs, armed soldiers, and officials barking orders at them. Those taken directly from the trains to the

*The fools among the people will say: What has turned them from their qiblah which they had? Say: The East and the West belong only to Allah; He guides whom He likes to the right path.* • QURAN 2.142

gas chambers did not realize they were headed to their deaths, and it did not occur to them to resist.

The numbers of bodies being buried eventually grew so large that the mass graves were overflowing. Ovens were installed in some camps to cremate the dead. After the Jews were killed, camp inmates were forced to extract gold from the teeth of the corpses, as well as confiscate money, jewelry, and anything else of value, which was then delivered to the German Reichsbank. Other personal items, such as clocks, wallets, and clothes, were cleaned and delivered to German troops. The best of the loot was reserved for SS officers.

Jews who were not immediately killed were segregated by sex, their personal possessions taken away, and their heads shaved. They were issued prison uniforms and, at Auschwitz (after 1941), had numbers tattooed on their arms. Prisoners were fed starvation rations and brutalized by guards.

Because the Germans believed Jews were inferior and essentially subhuman, they felt no hesitation about using them for cruel experiments. At Auschwitz, the Germans experimented with sterilization techniques. At other camps, the Nazis broke bones over and over again to see how many times it could be done before the bone would no longer heal. Prisoners were exposed to extreme heat and cold to determine the maximum and minimum temperatures at which people could survive, and experiments were conducted to determine the effects of atmospheric pressure on the body.

Jews were not only murdered in concentration camps. At the entrance to camps such as Auschwitz, a sign read, *Arbeit Macht Frei*, or "Labor wins freedom." Thousands of prisoners were literally worked to death. Others died working in German industrial factories owned by large companies such as IG Farben (which produced synthetic rubber and fuel) and Krupp (which produced fuses).

## Survival and Resistance

It took luck and determination to survive in the camps or in hiding. People lived underground in caves for years, escaped through latrines, and hid inside monasteries, pretending to be non-Jews. Prisoners in the camps had to stay healthy enough to work, and that often required

stealing or trading food and clothing. The very young and old had little chance of survival; more than a million children were murdered in the Holocaust. Women were more likely to be killed than men, because they were less able to perform hard labor and because they could not be allowed to live and produce more Jews.

Despite the overwhelming odds, lack of training and weapons, and their usually weak physical condition, Jews did engage in acts of resistance, such as joining armed partisan groups, participating in the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, attempting to escape from Sobibor, and blowing up the crematorium at Auschwitz. Prisoners who refused to give in to the dehumanization of the camps displayed a different type of resistance, secretly organizing religious services or classes.

## The Failure to Act

Many reports of what was happening to the Jews appeared in media abroad, but they were often buried deep in the newspaper and written in a way that detracted from their credibility. Most people could not believe that hundreds of thousands of people could be murdered in a single place.

The U.S. government knew what was happening to the Jews in Germany throughout the 1930s and learned about the Final Solution by 1942. Roosevelt was urged to use the military to slow down or try to stop Hitler's killing machine, but defense officials rejected suggestions to bomb the concentration camps. Roosevelt believed the best way to save the Jews was to devote all the nation's resources to winning the war. Undoubtedly, the Allied victory saved Europe and millions of lives, but 6 million Jewish lives were still lost in part because U.S. officials made it difficult and sometimes impossible for Jews—except those who were famous or could help the war effort—to enter the country to escape Hitler. Late in the war, Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board, which took modest measures to rescue Jews, but it was too little too late.

## Rescuers

The Holocaust was only possible because of the complicity of ordinary citizens. Besides the perpetrators and bystanders, however, thousands of people acted coura-





geously and morally, risking their lives to save others. These “righteous persons” did everything from providing shelter to food to documents to Jews in danger. A few diplomats, such as Sweden’s Raoul Wallenberg and Japan’s Chiune Sugihara, helped Jews escape by giving them visas. In the case of Le Chambon, France, a whole town shielded Jews from their tormentors. Denmark was the only occupied country that actively resisted the Nazi regime’s attempts to deport its citizens and saved almost its entire Jewish population.

## War Crimes

Hitler and several of his top aides committed suicide at the end of the war to avoid arrest and prosecution. The twenty-two highest-ranking surviving officials were tried for war crimes at Nuremberg, Germany, and hundreds of other trials were held for camp guards and others who committed atrocities. Low-ranking officials claimed they were “only following orders” and should not be held responsible for their actions, but the judges rejected this excuse. Both those who gave orders to commit atrocities and those who pulled the triggers were found guilty.

Many Nazis were executed for their crimes, but most had their sentences reduced or commuted. Others were never tried and escaped to countries in Latin America and elsewhere, where they lived quiet lives under assumed names. The United States actively recruited some Nazis to help in intelligence operations against the Soviet Union. A number of Nazi hunters pursued Nazis who escaped justice. The most dramatic case was that of Adolf Eichmann, one of the architects of the Final Solution, who escaped to Argentina and was found and abducted by Israeli agents who took him to Israel, where he was tried, convicted, and executed for his crimes against humanity. By the start of the twenty-first century war criminals were still being found and tried.

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See also Genocide; Hitler, Adolf; Judaism; World War II

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## Homer

(9TH–8TH? CENTURY BCE)

GREEK POET

Homer is the Greek poet credited with the composition of the epics the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. There is little evidence for a historical figure called Homer. The earliest written mentions of him date from the seventh century BCE, but these are not in agreement. A number of Greek cities claim Homer for their own, most of them in Ionia in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Textual and linguistic analysis suggests that Homer was from Euboea, a large island that hugs the east flank of mainland Greece opposite Ionia, and that he lived in the early 800s BCE.

Although the background to both epics is the Trojan War (c. 13th century BCE) fought at Ilium (Troy) in