

# EUROPE AND THE WORLD IN THE FACE OF THE HOLOCAUST – PASSIVITY AND COMPLICITY

Societies in all European countries, whether fighting against the Germans, occupied by or collaborating with them, or neutral ones, faced an enormous challenge in the face of the genocide committed against Jews: how to react to such an enormous crime? The attitudes of specific nations as well as reactions of the governments of the occupied countries and the Nazi-free world to the Holocaust continue to be a subject of scholarly interest and great controversy at the same time.

Some of them, as noted in the previous work sheet, guided by various humanitarian, religious, political, personal or financial motives, became involved in aiding Jews. There were also those, however, who exploited the situation of Jews for material gain, engaged in blackmail, denunciation and even murder. Some joined German-formed auxiliary formations, e.g. the police, which participated in liquidation campaigns, executions, roundups, etc. The vast majority of people, nevertheless, remained passive toward the Holocaust. They neither became involved in helping Jews nor supported the Germans in their persecution. The reasons for such an attitude could have been fear of punishment for helping Jews or mere indifference to their fate.

In many European countries, there were also those who approved of the German occupiers' anti-Jewish policy, including extermination, and even knowingly and voluntarily took part in the process. Some did so from 'behind the desk' by helping in identifying Jews, their marking and deportation to

death camps. Others actively helped the Germans in such campaigns 'in the field' carried out in France, the Baltic States, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine and elsewhere.

After the German attack on France in June 1940, the country was divided into two zones: Northern – under German occupation, and Southern – under the jurisdiction of the French state commonly known as Vichy France (*La France de Vichy* or *Le Régime de Vichy*) collaborating with the Germans. Of its own accord, the Vichy government initiated anti-Jewish legislation and in October 1940 and June 1941 – with consent from head of state Marshal Philippe Petain – issued the *Statuts des Juifs* which applied in both parts of France and its overseas territories. They specified criteria for determining Jewish origin and prohibited Jews from working in state bodies and professions associated with culture. As of the end of May 1942, Jews in occupied France also had to wear Star of David badges. Many French citizens protested against such persecution of Jews by pinning that star to their clothes. In 1941, mass deportations of Jews from France ensued (with the participation of the French police and rail officials). Jews were first sent to internment camps in the country, e.g. in Drancy and Pithiviers, and subsequently to KL Auschwitz. The largest mass arrest of French Jews known as the *Vel d'Hiv* Roundup, which took place on 16 and 17 July 1942, was carried out with the help of the French police. More than 13,000 persons of Jewish origin living in Paris and its vicinity were detained then. They were first brought to a cycling

track called *Vélodrome d'Hiver*, then to temporary camps, and finally deported to KL Auschwitz, where most of them were murdered.

In the Baltic States as well as in Ukraine, collaborating auxiliary police formations were created, e.g. the Lithuanian *Litauischen Hilfspolizei-Bataillonen*, Belarusian *Weißruthenische Hilfspolizei* and Ukrainian *Ukrainische Hilfspolizei*. Their duties included participation in roundups as well as pacification and liquidation campaigns. In the Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine, Jews were executed by German *Einsatzgruppen* as of the summer of 1941. They were killed in mass executions near their homes and their bodies were buried in 'death pits' dug by the victims themselves. Local Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian branches of the police and other paramilitary formations also took part in those executions. Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and Ukrainians also worked in labour, concentration and death camps. Some of them took part in deporting Jews from the General Government and were deployed to pacify uprisings and liquidate ghettos.

Throughout the entire summer and autumn of 1941, Jews in the eastern territories of Europe occupied by the Germans after the attack on the USSR were brutally repressed by the occupation forces and fell victim to pogroms initiated by local populations. The most tragic events took place in the summer of 1941 in Lviv, where Jews were murdered by local Ukrainians. Those crimes were sometimes inspired by the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists hoping that the Germans would allow it to create an independent state. Also Lithuanians attacked and murdered Jews, initially for allegedly supporting communist authorities and later simply because they were Jews. The bloodiest pogrom inspired by the Germans took place in Kaunas in June 1941, during which 38,000 people died. Pogroms of Jews in which Poles participated took place mainly in July 1941 (in Jedwabne, Wąsosz, Radziłów and other localities). Those events involving certain local anti-Semites were a consequence of German orders, propaganda and individual motivations.

There were also indigenous anti-Jewish pogroms in Romania. The first ones were initiated by local inhabitants in the summer of 1940, nearly one year prior to Operation Barbarossa. A pretext for those events was, among others, accusing Jews of collaboration with the Soviets. Later in the same year, the fascist regime implemented many other anti-

Jewish measures. Jews became victims of abuse, looting and torture. In January 1941, the Iron Guard (a fascist movement and political party in Romania) rose against their political partner General Ion Antonescu. It staged a coup and instigated a deadly pogrom in Bucharest, where more than 120 Jews were killed. Romania participated in the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and soon re-annexed previously lost territories – Bessarabia and northern Bukovina – and took over Transnistria. At the end of June, the Romanian authorities staged a pogrom against the Jewish population in the city of Iași by accusing them of collaboration with the Soviets. It claimed the lives of 13,000 people. By the end of 1941, the Romanian army and gendarmerie in cooperation with *Einsatzgruppe D* and some members of the local population killed up to 60,000 Jews in Bessarabia and North Bukovina. Those not killed in the summer of 1941 were deported to ghettos and camps in Transnistria.

By October 1942, the Independent Croatian State (NDH) adopted new laws aimed against minorities, primarily Jews. On 30 April 1941, three strict anti-Jewish laws went into effect: on racial identity, maintenance of the purity of Aryan blood and protection of Croatian national honour. Jews were forced to wear Star of David badges. Their freedom of movement was restricted and their assets confiscated. Some Jews, including those in mixed marriages, were treated less harshly, however. *There is no place for Jews in the NDH* was the slogan that accompanied physical attacks on Jews as well as plundering and destruction of their property. Similar crimes, mainly inspired by the Ustashe (a Croatian fascist movement), were also committed by ordinary and politically uninvolved people. At the start of June 1941, concentration camps were constructed in the NDH for communists, political prisoners, Serbs, Roma and Jews. The largest camp complex in Croatia was in Jasenovac – Stara Gradiška. By the end of 1941, a half of the Jewish population was imprisoned in local concentration camps.

Anti-Jewish legislation was also introduced in Slovakia. The new government of the Slovak Republic (politically and economically dependent on the Third Reich) led by Jozef Tiso, a Catholic priest supporting the Nazis, introduced anti-Jewish restrictions. Gradually, Jews were deprived of basic rights and freedoms. Initial regulations included the entry of the term 'Jew' in the legislation and the

process of transferring Jewish property to Slovaks was launched. The 'Jewish Code' of September 1941 deprived Jews of nearly all their property, excluded them from many professions, imposed wearing Star of David badges and prohibited mixed marriages. State propaganda significantly influenced the attitude of Slovak society toward the anti-Semitic repression. Many accepted the new regulations. By October 1942, most Slovak Jews were sent to the labour and concentration camps Sereď, Nováky and Vyhne. Units of the Hlinkova Garda (a paramilitary organisation of the Slovak People's Party), assisted by Slovak gendarmes and ethnically Slovak members of German paramilitary units, dispatched nearly 60,000 people there. Ultimately, the state authorities accepted the deportation of Jews and even paid the Third Reich for each deportee. Between March and October 1942, approximately 58,000 Slovak Jews reached concentration and death camps in occupied Poland. After the outbreak of the Slovak national uprising (29 August 1944), when Slovakia found itself under Third Reich occupation, the German army took over the deportations and sent approximately 13,500 Jews to death camps.

In the Netherlands, in turn, repression of Jews encountered public resistance. A general strike broke out when the Germans deported several hundred Dutch Jews to concentration camps in February 1941. Stifled the following day, it led to heightened repression of the civilian population. Also, the marking of Jews with the letter J (for the Dutch word *Jood* – Jew) and Star of David badges drew protests from a section of society. Dutch bishops protested against the deportations. Nevertheless, the Dutch administration and police generally carried out German orders. By September, the Germans, supported by local collaborators, deported more than 100,000 Jews through transit camps in Westerbork and Vught of whom more than a half reached KL Auschwitz. The situation was different in neighbouring Belgium, where uncooperative officials saved many Jews from deportation. Unlike in the Netherlands, those were not Belgian Jews but mainly Jewish refugees who had reached Belgium just before the war or soon afterwards. The Dossin barracks (SS-Sammellager Mechelen) were a transit camp from which Jews as well as Sinti and Roma people were deported from Belgium to KL Auschwitz. Local residents reacted to the anti-Jewish policy in various ways. In Antwerp, local residents and the administration, due to

various factors, accepted regulations against Jews for the most part. In Brussels, in turn, there was opposition, for example, to forcing Jews to wear Star of David badges and to work or to arresting them.

In Hungary, ruled by Regent Admiral Miklós Horthy, regulations were introduced in 1938–1941 to exclude Jews from economic life and restrict their freedoms. Despite various actions taken against them until 1944, Jews in Hungary were relatively safe and for a long period the country served as a safe haven for Jewish refugees from other countries. The situation changed in March 1944 when Hungary came under German occupation and Döme Sztójay became Prime Minister. He legalised the fascist and anti-Semitic Arrow Cross party. Jews outside of Budapest were locked up in ghettos and deportations to KL Auschwitz began in April 1944 on the order of Adolf Eichmann. Most of the more than 400,000 deportees perished in gas chambers.

In 1938, the Italian fascist regime enacted a series of laws against Jews. They were stripped of their basic rights, banned from school, military and public service, and later also forbidden to own a business or land and prevented from marrying 'Aryans'. Jews of foreign origin were ordered to leave the country. Italy joined the war in June 1940 as an ally of the Third Reich. In 1940, the Ministry of Interior ordered the arrest and internment of foreign Jews. At the same time, however, the fascist regime refused to deport those residing in Italian-controlled parts of France, Greece and Croatia. In September 1943, the northern and central regions came under control of Nazi Germany, which re-installed Mussolini as the head of a new puppet fascist regime called the Italian Social Republic. Harsher measures against Jews were now taken. The fascist militia and German forces arrested and deported Jews to German concentration and death camps in Eastern Europe. The largest round-up took place in Rome on 16 October 1943. Soon, the Italian Ministry of Interior ordered the arrest of Jews and confiscation of their possessions. By March 1945, over 8,000 Italian and foreign Jews were deported.

Historians assess that in the face of the genocide of Jews the Allies could not do much due to the Third Reich's domination in much of Europe. The British received initial information on mass executions in the East by Einsatzgruppen already in the summer of 1941. They obtained it from

systematic monitoring of operational group radiograms. On that basis, they made estimates of the number killed. Prime Minister Winston Churchill was aware of the scale of the crime, yet did not take action. Public condemnation, in the view of the British government, would have exposed their eavesdropping and reading of encrypted messages to the Germans, which from the military standpoint of Great Britain was unacceptable.

News provided by the London-based Polish government-in-exile had vital significance in informing the outside world about the Holocaust. Reports were drafted within structures of the Polish Underground State on the situation of Jews in the country and sent to London by couriers. Already during the September 1939 defensive campaign in Poland, information appeared in reports and dispatches on attitudes -towards the Jewish population under the Soviet occupation as well as on growing anti-Semitism within the civilian population and in political circles. Information on the plight of the Jewish population in territories occupied by the Third Reich was also sent to the Polish government-in-exile. From 1942, information was provided on the Holocaust. It originated from the underground press, informants, contacts within Jewish communities, as well as reports sent by field delegates. Some reports were prepared by members of the Oneg Szabat underground group in the Warsaw ghetto. They were written on the basis of received information, brief dispatches on ongoing matters and longer ones concerning problems, which were subsequently sent to military leaders as well as to the Polish delegation and government-in-exile. There were also reports on Polish-Jewish relations, including their negative aspects, and on post-war plans to encourage Jews to emigrate from the country. In the autumn of 1942, Jan Karski (born Jan Romuald Koziński) provided a report on the Holocaust in the occupied Polish territories to members of the Polish government-in-exile and subsequently to British and American politicians (including the US President) and representatives of Jewish organisations in America with a plea to help the murdered Jews. As first among the Allied countries, the Polish government made the report on the Jewish Holocaust public on 10 December 1942 in a note from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Raczynski, who called for the defence of Jews murdered by the Third Reich. The note sought a declaration by the Allied countries on punishment of the German criminals. A visit by Jan Karski to US President

Franklin D. Roosevelt in July 1943, during which the Polish emissary, among other important matters, sought to provide complete information on the tragic situation of the Jews, was of a similar nature. He also spoke with other Allied leaders, primarily British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, about the Holocaust of Jews. The purpose of his mission was to induce the Allied countries to act in defence of the Jews. Nevertheless, those efforts proved to be fruitless because the priority of Allied countries was to defeat Germany militarily as quickly as possible rather than to save Jews.

The Western world was also informed about the German-perpetrated genocide by Gerhard Riegner, head of the World Jewish Congress representation in Geneva. On 8 August 1942, through diplomatic outposts of the United States and Great Britain in Bern, he reported on the fate of Jews to Stephen Wais, Chairman of the World Jewish Congress in Washington. Wais was a close friend of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Although that telegram did not include all information, it clearly indicated the mass scale of the crime and mentioned the use of gas (Zyklon B) to reflect a sense of urgency. That news was nevertheless met with reservation. The reaction was similar to that to the information provided by Kurt Gerstein, an employee at the Waffen-SS Hygiene Institute, through a Swedish diplomat and subsequently by a papal nuncio. Gerstein had witnessed events at the death camp in Belzec. His reports were intercepted at the Swedish Embassy.

Systematic reports to the Allied countries about the Holocaust hit a wall of indifference. There was no expectation of an attempt to halt the genocide but rather to save at least some Jews condemned to death. According to available sources, involvement in a rescue campaign could only have been possible if initiated by the United States. As suggested in many reports, there was also no bombing planned of railway tracks leading to death camps. For various reasons, including fear of jeopardising military operations, neither the great powers of the West nor the Soviet Union took effective steps to aid the dying Jewish population. In the view of the powers, the war first had to be won, whereas rescuing Jews was put off to a later date. However, most European Jews had already been murdered by the time that took place.

# EUROPE AND THE WORLD IN THE FACE OF THE HOLOCAUST – PASSIVITY AND COMPLICITY



## Chart 1. THE PASSIVITY AND SILENCE OF THE WORLD

### Unit 1

**Karski Jan** (Kozielewski) (1914–2001) was a courier of the Polish underground state who brought news to the free world about the situation in occupied territories. During his second mission in the autumn of 1942, he delivered a report to members of the Polish government-in-exile as well as British and American politicians (including the US President) and representatives of Jewish organisations in America about the Holocaust in occupied Polish territories together with a plea to help the murdered Jews. He obtained this information from members of the Jewish underground. He himself also twice entered the Warsaw ghetto and the transit ghetto in Izbica Lubelska, where he observed preparations for the transport of Jews to the death camp in Belzec. He remained in the US after the Second World War as a university professor. He taught Modern History and Political Science. In 1982, he was awarded the medal Righteous among the Nations. Public domain

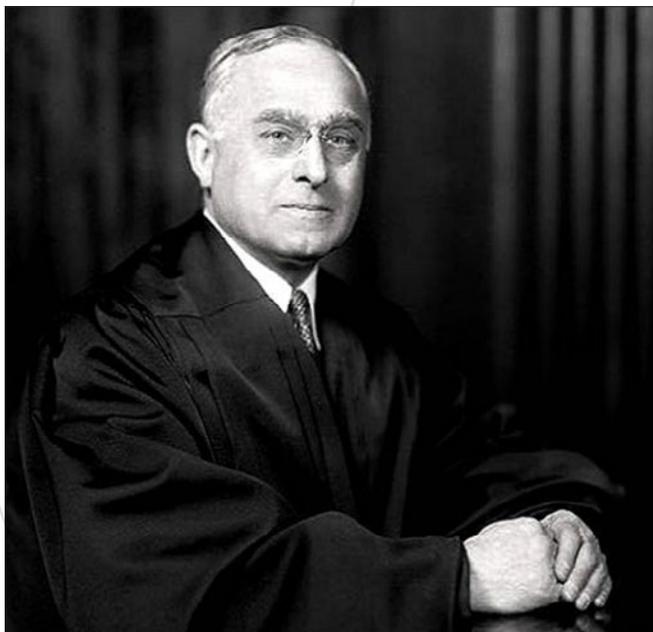


**A note of the Polish ambassador to the US, J. Ciechanowski, from Jan Karski's conversation with President F.D. Roosevelt on Wednesday, 28 July 1943.**

**Jan Karski:** I am certain that most people are not aware of the horrific fate of our Jewish population. Over 1,800,000 Jews have been murdered in our country. There is a difference between the terror used against the Poles and the Jews. The Germans want to destroy the Polish nation as a nation, but they want the Polish population on these territories, deprived of their political, intellectual, religious and economic elites, with only farmers, workers and the city middle class. With the Jews, they want to destroy the entire Jewish nation biologically [organically]. I brought an official announcement for my Government from the Government Delegate [for Poland] and the Home Army Commander, saying that if the Germans don't change their methods toward the Jewish population, or if there is no Allied intervention – whether it is through repressions, or other methods – if there are no unexpected circumstances, in a year and a half from my departure from the country, the Jewish population in Poland, with the exception of those working in the Jewish Underground resistance, will cease to exist.

**President F.D. Roosevelt:** /After the war we will account with the Germans for everything they did. The greatest and true help that we can provide is through victory. The swiftest possible defeat of Hitler.'

An account of Karski's conversation with President Roosevelt, [http://www.karski.muzhp.pl/karski\\_en/misja\\_raporty\\_karskiego\\_rozmowa.html](http://www.karski.muzhp.pl/karski_en/misja_raporty_karskiego_rozmowa.html)



**Felix Frankfurter** (1882–1965) was an American lawyer of Jewish origin and a Supreme Court Justice, highly esteemed in America. During his conversation with Jan Karski, shocked by the news on the extermination of Jews and its methods, he stated that he was unable to believe what he heard, but at the same time did not claim that Karski was lying. This simply overwhelmed him. 'My mind, my heart, are so constructed that I cannot acknowledge this. I am a judge of the nation. I know what it means to be a human. I know people. This is impossible. No! No!' Public domain

## EXERCISES:

### Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:

- Who was Jan Karski? What did his courier mission entail?
- How did Karski obtain information on the situation of Jews in occupied Poland?
- What was the substance of his conversation with US President F.D. Roosevelt?
- How did Roosevelt react to Karski's information about the Holocaust of Jews? How do you assess his actions?
- Why did Justice Felix Frankfurter state that his mind and heart were so constructed that he could not accept what he heard from Karski? How do you explain the judge's reaction? What does it tell us about the passive attitude of people towards the Holocaust of Jews?

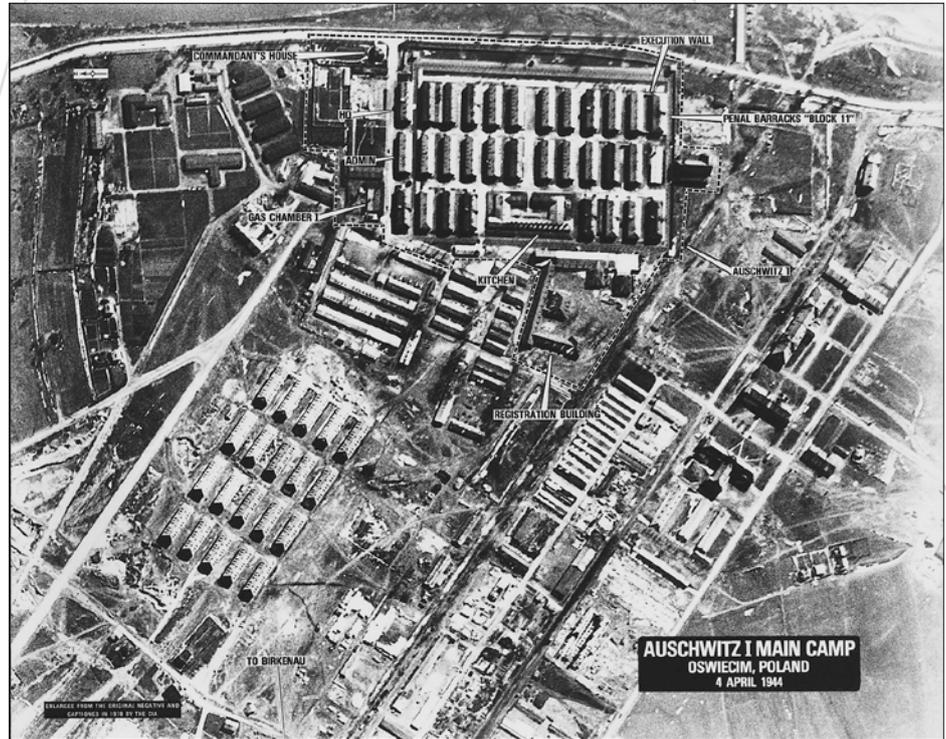
### Search for additional information and think:

- How did information on the situation of Jews under German occupation reach the West? Who was the emissary and what information did he provide?
- What was the attitude of Allied leaders towards the Holocaust? Did they take any action to rescue Jews from death?
- How did Jewish communities in the United States and Palestine react to news from Europe about the Holocaust of Jews?
- Do you agree with F.D. Roosevelt's opinion that Jews could have been saved from the Holocaust only by defeating Germany militarily ('Rescue through victory')?

## Unit 2

An aerial photo of KL Auschwitz taken by the Allies in April 1944.

Public domain



**An excerpt from recollections of Lindy Breder, a Jewish inmate at KL Auschwitz:**

God forgot us and [the] people of the war forgot us, didn't care about what's going on and they knew what's going on [at Auschwitz]. [...] We wanted them to put the bombs on the camp, at least we could run and hundreds and hundreds of planes were coming [to bomb other targets in Poland] and we are looking up and no bombs. So this we could not understand.

L. Rees, *The Holocaust. A New History*, Penguin Books UK 2017, p. 404–405.

**A testimony of the Holocaust survivor Lidia Vago:**

Each time the Americans bombed the area, the air-raid sirens would sound. The SS men all ran to shelters, but of course the Jews were left unprotected. Our building was never directly hit, but the windows and the glass part of the ceiling shattered from the force of the explosions nearby. Of course we were scared — but we were also very, very happy. Even though we knew that we or other prisoners might be killed by the bombings, we knew that we were all going to be killed by the Germans anyway, so we hoped and prayed that the Allies would bomb the gas chambers and the crematoria. That would have stopped the mass murders. [...] There I met some Polish Jewish girls who knew more details about the bombing raids. They told us that in the bombing of Sept. 13, part of the railway line leading into the camp was damaged, and also that an SS barracks was hit and some of the SS men were killed.

<https://www.thejewishstar.com/stories/New-testimony-about-US-failure-to-bomb-Auschwitz,138>

## EXERCISES:

**Look at the photograph, read the texts and answer the following questions:**

- What buildings and elements of Auschwitz I infrastructure were marked on the air map?
- What can you learn on this basis about the Allies' knowledge of what took place at the Auschwitz camp?
- Were Auschwitz prisoners aware of the Allies' ability to bomb the camp? How did they view this?

- What hopes did they have of the bombing of gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz II-Birkenau?
- Did they take account of prisoners being the victims of this bombing?
- Why could they not understand that the camp was never a target of a bombing by the Allies?
- What damage did the Allies' bombing of KL Auschwitz cause?

### Search for additional information and think:

- When did Auschwitz find itself within the range of Allied aircraft?
- From what airfields did the airplanes take off? What was the purpose of the bombing?
- What then took place at the Auschwitz camp?
- Why did the Allies not decide to bomb the gas chambers and railway lines leading to Auschwitz?
- Could this decision have affected the fate of the Jews sent there? Argue for and against the bombing of Auschwitz. Use the opinions of former Auschwitz prisoners who witnessed air raids on industrial parts of the Auschwitz compound.

## Unit 3



**Szmul Zygielbojm** (1895–1943) was a Jewish delegate to the Polish national government in London who committed suicide on 12 May 1943 in protest against the world's passivity towards the Holocaust. Public domain

### An excerpt from Szmul Zygielbojm's farewell letter:

The responsibility for the crime of the murder of the whole Jewish nationality in Poland rests first of all on those who are carrying it out, but indirectly it falls also upon the whole of humanity, on the peoples of the Allied nations and on their governments, who up to this day have not taken any real steps to halt this crime. By looking on passively upon this murder of defenceless millions – tortured children, women and men – they have become partners to the responsibility. [...] By my death I wish to give expression to my most profound protest against the inaction in which the world watches and permits the destruction of the Jewish people.

*Documents on the Holocaust. Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria*, Y. Arad, I. Gutman, A. Margalio (eds.), Jerusalem 1999, p. 324.

## EXERCISES:

### Look at the photograph, read the text and answer the following questions:

- Who did Szmul Zygielbojm charge with crimes committed against the Jews and why?
- According to Szmul Zygielbojm, what was the indirect responsibility of the world (all of humanity) for the Holocaust of Jews?
- How does Zygielbojm explain the motives for his suicide? How do you assess his stance?

## Search for additional information and think:

- What were the capabilities and limitations of the international community organising effective rescue of Jews during the war?
- In your view, did the international community and leaders of the free world do everything they could to rescue as many Jews as possible?

### Unit 3



Swings and a merry-go-round in Krasinski Square, at the wall of the Warsaw ghetto, which became a symbol of the indifference of some Warsaw residents to the tragedy of Jews fighting in the uprising. The carousel became the leitmotif of Czesław Miłosz's poem entitled 'Campo di Fiori', April 1943. Jan Lisowski, Jewish Historical Institute



The pacification of the Warsaw ghetto visible from Piłsudski Square, April 1943. Jewish Historical Institute/FORUM

## Campo di Fiori

by Czesław Miłosz

(translated by David Brooks and Louis Iribarne)

In Rome on the Campo di Fiori  
baskets of olives and lemons,  
cobblestones spattered with wine  
and the wreckage of flowers.  
Vendors cover the trestles  
with rose-pink fish;  
armfuls of dark grapes  
heaped on peach-down.

On this same square  
they burned Giordano Bruno.  
Henchmen kindled the pyre  
close-pressed by the mob.  
Before the flames had died  
the taverns were full again,  
baskets of olives and lemons  
again on the vendors' shoulders.

I thought of the Campo di Fiori  
in Warsaw by the sky-carousel  
one clear spring evening  
to the strains of a carnival tune.  
The bright melody drowned  
the salvos from the ghetto wall,  
and couples were flying  
high in the cloudless sky.

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

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

But that day I thought only  
of the loneliness of the dying,  
of how, when Giordano  
climbed to his burning  
he could not find  
in any human tongue  
words for mankind,  
mankind who live on.

Already they were back at their wine  
or peddled their white starfish,  
baskets of olives and lemons  
they had shouldered to the fair,  
and he already distanced  
as if centuries had passed  
while they paused just a moment  
for his flying in the fire.

Those dying here, the lonely  
forgotten by the world,  
our tongue becomes for them  
the language of an ancient planet.  
Until, when all is legend  
and many years have passed,  
on a new Campo di Fiori  
rage will kindle at a poet's word.

Warsaw, 1943

'Campo di Fiori' from *The Collected Poems 1931–1987*  
by Czesław Miłosz. Copyright © 1988 by Czesław Miłosz Royalties, Inc.  
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**An excerpt from  
recollections of Adina  
Blady-Szwajgier,  
a physician who was able  
to cross from the Warsaw  
ghetto to the 'Aryan side':**

People said that there were [shots] in the ghetto. It began. [...] I changed my clothes. I put on the 'best' and only dress, a brown plaid suit. I then carefully combed my hair in front of the mirror, put on makeup and lipstick. I went. I went to the city and bought a giant bouquet of yellow daffodils from a street flower shop. Daffodils – after all it was spring. This was the holy week. Monday. These daffodils were my turn to happiness and could hide my face there. But, I did not cry anyhow. I went to Krasiński Square, stood alongside the carousel with these beautiful daffodils in both hands and smiled. The carousel turned, the children laughed, I smiled toward them and some music played, perhaps I only thought so? The sunshine and there was some smoke and shots. [...] Only when I later read Miłosz's poem 'Campo di Fiori' did I think for a minute that perhaps he saw this happy girl with the daffodils alongside the carousel?

Adina Blady-Szwajgier, *Świadectwo*, Łódź: „Solidarność Walcząca”, 1987, s. 6.

**An excerpt from  
a testimony of Władysław  
Bartoszewski:**

Armed resistance in the ghetto caused great consternation in Warsaw. Throngs of people gathered around the walls, particularly on Bonifraterska St from where the red-white flag was visible that was hung alongside a white-blue flag on a high floor of one of the buildings at Muranowski, Square where a unit of the Jewish Military Union fought.

[https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34862,17778169,Prof\\_\\_Bartoszewski\\_\\_Powstancy\\_z\\_getta\\_chcieli\\_sie.html](https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34862,17778169,Prof__Bartoszewski__Powstancy_z_getta_chcieli_sie.html)

**An appeal of the Jewish  
Combat Organisation:**

Poles, Citizens, Soldiers of Freedom. (...) From among the smoke of fire and the dust of blood in the murdered Warsaw ghetto – we, ghetto prisoners, send you sincere fraternal greetings. We know that you are watching the battle that we have been fighting for many days with

the cruel occupant in heartfelt pain and with tears of sympathy, with admiration and trepidation about the outcome of this struggle. But know that every threshold of the ghetto, as before, will continue to be a stronghold and that we may all die in this fight, but we will not surrender, that we are pining, as you are, for retaliation and punishment for all the crimes of the common enemy. A battle is being waged for our and your Freedom. Ours and yours – human, social, national – honour and dignity. We will avenge the crimes of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, Majdanek! Long live the brotherhood of arms and blood of fighting Poland!

*Polacy – Żydzi 1939-1945: wybór źródeł, oprac. A.K. Kunert.*

## EXERCISES:

### **Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:**

- *What do the photographs show? How do they relate to each other?*
- *How can the title of Czesław Miłosz's poem 'Campo di Fiori' be interpreted?*
- *What linked Krasiński Square in Warsaw to Campo di Fiori Square in Rome?*
- *Why did Czesław Miłosz select a merry-go-round as the leitmotif? What did he want to convey in this manner?*
- *What does Miłosz's poem tell us about the loneliness of dying and indifference of the world to the suffering of others?*
- *How does Adina Blady-Szwajger, a Jewess who hid on the Aryan side, recall the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising?*
- *Why did she go to Krasiński Square with a bouquet of flowers? What did she see there?*
- *How does this scene described by Adina relate to Czesław Miłosz's poem 'Campo di Fiori'?*
- *How does Władysław Bartoszewski recall the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising? What did the two flags hung on the ghetto wall, Jewish and Polish, symbolise?*
- *What does the appeal of the Jewish Combat Organisation tell us about the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto? Who was its addressee? What did the Jewish fighters want to tell us? To what values do they appeal?*

### **Search for additional information and think:**

- *What was the reaction of the non-Jewish population of Warsaw to the uprising in the ghetto?*
- *Who provided aid to the fighting insurgents? What was its scope and form?*
- *Taking into account the prevailing geopolitical and military situation of the resistance movement as well as that of the Allies, consider whether it was possible to rescue Warsaw Jews in 1943.*
- *What could have been the reasons for the city residents' attitude towards the tragedy of the Jews?*
- *How could these attitudes have been perceived by the fighting Jewish insurgents?*

## Chart 2. STATE AND INSTITUTIONAL COMPLICITY

### Unit 1

The Iași pogrom started on 27 June 1941, just a few days after the beginning of Operation Barbarossa (the German invasion of the Soviet Union). It was partly instigated by the Romanian government. The official propaganda claimed that Jews in Iași had actively helped the Soviets against the Romanian authorities and incited to 'cleanse the city of Jews'. Soldiers and policemen together with civilians murdered several thousand people, including women and children. Thousands of survivors were loaded onto 'death trains'. At least 4,000 people died in overcrowded cars moving around the countryside.

**An excerpt from a testimony of Haim Solomon, a survivor of the pogrom in Iași:**



Jews assembled by the Romanian police and soldiers during the Iași pogrom sitting among corpses in the courtyard of the city police headquarters, 29 June 1941. USHMM

Romanian soldiers and a cadet arrest a group of Jews at 157 I.C. Bratianu St during the Iași pogrom, 29 June 1941. USHMM



1941, June 22, Germany invaded the Soviet Union and German tanks, singing soldiers were marching all over the city. We stayed indoors and watched them from windows. On June 26th, the Soviet Union Air Force bombed the train station in Iași and many victims they suffered but the Germans, or the Romanians insisted that Jewish Communists signalled the Soviets where to bomb, drop the bombs. So, they initiated a vicious, barbaric, animalic, pogrom in Iași with the scenario that they utilized in many other occasions, they asked the Jews to come to the city hall and exchange their old identification cards with new ones.

Once they got there and because soldiers and policemen kept bringing waves of more and more Jews, they as they cross the street, the police

centre had a big yard surrounded by a stone wall. And as they entered from the police, from the city hall to that stone yard, stone wall yard, aligned on both sides were Romanians, Germans, Romanian, German, etc. That was for the Germans to teach the Romanians what to do and as the Jews passed by, they split their heads or shot them in their temple because the Jews were holding their hands up.

[...] Back to the yard, the police and the Germans shooting people or wounding them. For a day before the 29th, between one o'clock and six, seven o'clock in the evening, they killed 4.000 people coming into that yard.

The next day they brought in the trash disposal, garbage removal, carts. Those were horse drawn carts to remove the dead and take them to the Jewish cemetery. The rest of the Jews they walked them to the train station and there they filled up train cars, that would hold 50-60 people they put 120 in each car and started them on a long travel, a long trip that went back and forth and June 29th, July 1st, under the heat and without water, half of them were dead when they arrived in the first village, Podul Iloaei. They removed the dead but then did not leave the 60 or so people by themselves, no they brought in more from back, guards to again fill up the train with 100, 120 people.

<https://www.ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-survivors/first-person-conversations-with-survivors/first-person/haim-solomon-hiding-during-the-pogrom-in-iasi>

## EXERCISES:

### Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:

- *When did the pogrom in Iași take place? What were its origins and course?*
- *Who initiated the pogrom? What was its propaganda justification?*
- *Who perpetrated the pogrom? What was the fate of Jews who survived the pogrom?*
- *Who were the victims? How many were murdered and in what way?*

### Search for additional information and think:

- *What was the situation of Jews in Romania before the war? How did it change during its course?*
- *What was the attitude of Romanian authorities towards Jews living in Romania and that in occupied territories?*
- *When and why did Romania join the Axis? What were the consequences thereof?*
- *Where is Iași? What was its fate during the Second World War?*
- *Why did the Romanian authorities accuse the local Jews of collaboration with the Soviets?*
- *What were 'death trains'? How many Jews were murdered in this campaign?*
- *When and in what circumstances did Romanian authorities decide to conduct a mass deportation of Jews from Bukovina and Bessarabia? Where were they deported?*
- *Who carried out the deportation and in what conditions did it take place? How many Jews fell victim to it?*

## Unit 2



Members of a Lithuanian militia unit forcing a group of Jewish women from Panevezys to undress before their execution in the Pajuoste forest, July–August 1941. USHMM

Einsatzkommando 3

Kauen, am 1. Dezember 1941

**Geheime Reichssache!**

5 Ausfertigungen

4. Ausfertigung.

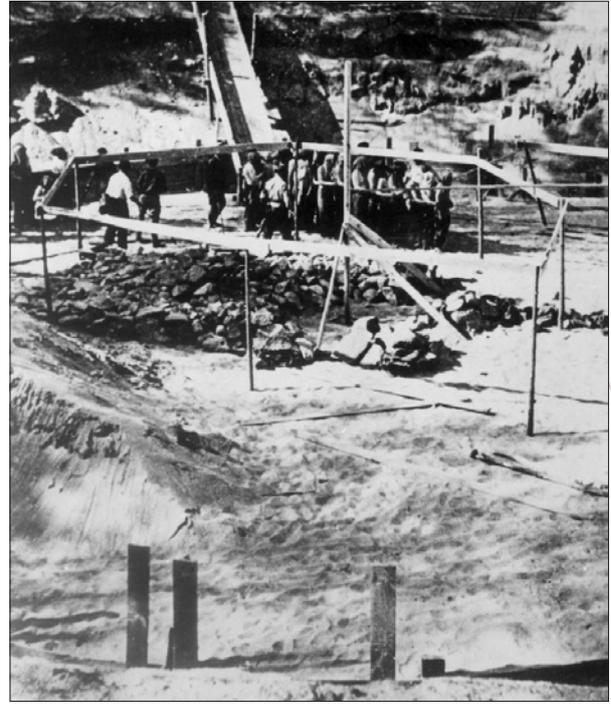
Gesamtaufstellung der im Bereich des EK.3 bis zum 1. Dez. 1941 durchgeführten Exekutionen.

Blatt 6.

-Übertrag: 99 800

12.9.41	Wilna-Stadt	993 Juden, 1670 Jüdinn., 771 J.-Kind.	3 334
17.9.41	" "	337 " 687 " 247 " und 4 lit. Kommunisten	1 271
20.9.41	Kemencing	128 Juden, 176 Jüdinn.	405
22.9.41	Novo-Silejka	468 " , 495 " 196 "	1 159
24.9.41	Riema	512 " 744 " 511 "	1 767
25.9.41	Jahliunai	215 " 229 " 131 "	575
27.9.41	Ryainky	989 " 1636 " 821 "	3 446
30.9.41	Trakai	366 " 483 " 597 "	1 446
4.10.41	Wilna-Stadt	432 " 1115 " 436 "	1 983
6.10.41	Semilinski	213 " 359 " 390 "	962
9.10.41	Svenciany	1169 " 1840 " 717 "	3 726
16.10.41	Wilna-Stadt	382 " 507 " 257 "	1 146
21.10.41	" "	718 " 1063 " 586 "	2 367
25.10.41	" "	- " 1766 " 812 "	2 578
27.10.41	" "	946 " 184 " 73 "	1 203
30.10.41	" "	382 " 789 " 362 "	1 533
6.11.41	" "	340 " 749 " 252 "	1 341
19.11.41	" "	76 " 77 " 18 "	171
19.11.41	" "	6 Kriegsgefangene, 8 Polen	14
20.11.41	" "	3 "	3
25.11.41	" "	9 Juden, 46 Jüdinnen, 8 J.-Kinder, 1 Pole wegen Waffenbesitz u. Besitz von anderem Kriegsgüter	64
Teilkommando des EK.3 in Minsk vom 28.9.-17.10.41:			
	Pleschnitz, Micholin, Bcak, Bober, Uda	620 Juden, 1285 Jüdinnen, 1126 J.-Kind. und 19 Kommunisten	3 050
			133 346
Vor Übernahme der Sicherheitenpol. Aufgaben durch den EK.3, 4 000 Juden durch Prognose und Exekutionen - ausschließlich von Partisanen - liquidiert.			
			137 346

The last page of a report by Karl Jaeger, head of Einsatzkommando 3, presenting a list of executions conducted by the Germans in Lithuania from the start of July until the end of November 1941. The report details dates, locations and number of those murdered with a division into Jews and others. Men, women and children are distinguished among the Jews. The number of people murdered was 137,346 of whom 135,288 were Jews.



One of six Ponary murder pits in which victims were shot (July 1941). Note the ramp going downwards and the group of men forced to wear hoods. The massacre at Paneriai was the biggest mass killing of Jews in Lithuania. By the summer of 1944, between 50,000 and 70,000 persons were shot there. Most of the victims were Jews. The Special Squad, subordinated to the Nazi German security police and consisting mostly of Lithuanians, actively participated in the killings. Public Domain

**An excerpt from a testimony of a German soldier, an eyewitness to the execution of Jews in Ponary:**

I cannot remember whether we arrived in Ponary on 5 or 10 July 1941. While we were repairing our vehicles [...] I suddenly saw a column of about four hundred men walking along the road into the pine wood. They were coming from the direction of Vilnius. The column which consisted exclusively of men aged between twenty-five and sixty, were led into the wood by a guard of Lithuanian civilians. The Lithuanians were armed with carbines, the people were fully dressed and carried only the barest essentials on them. As I remember, the guards wore armbands, the colour of which I can no longer recall. [...]

The very next day – I think it was around lunchtime – once again I saw a group of four hundred Jews coming from the direction of Vilnius going into the same wood. These too were accompanied by armed civilians. [...]

<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/einsatz/ponary.html>

**An excerpt from a testimony of Kazimierz Sakowicz, a witness to the execution of Jews in Ponary.**

[...] On Tuesday, the 2nd of September it was both windy and raining. On the road to the site I could see a long column of people that stretched almost two kilometres back to the church. The guards forced everyone to run all the way to the site, a journey that took around 15 minutes. Jankowski claimed there were around 4,000 people in all. Others said there were more than that. Most of the people in the column were women with babies. When they reached the path that

led to the wooded area, they realized what awaited them and began shouting Help'. A group of 80 Lithuanian murderers opened fire on them while another 100 stood watch to prevent anyone escaping. They were all drunk. Jankowski said that to make sure they had the guts to kill them, the murderers abused their victims first. They beat the men and women and then shot the men separately. They forced the women to strip down to their underwear. The victims believed they were being moved to a ghetto and had therefore brought all their personal property with them. Once they were dead, the fur coats and valuables began to pile up. The Lithuanians made each group stand on top of the row of corpses of the people that had been shot before them. People were literally trampling on the dead. Many of those who lay in the pit with gunshot wounds were still alive. One woman managed to escape to Dolna with only an injury to her hand. She saw her children being murdered in one pit and her husband in another....

Kazimierz Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary*, 1941–1943:  
A Bystander's Account of a Mass Murder; Yad Vashem

## EXERCISES:

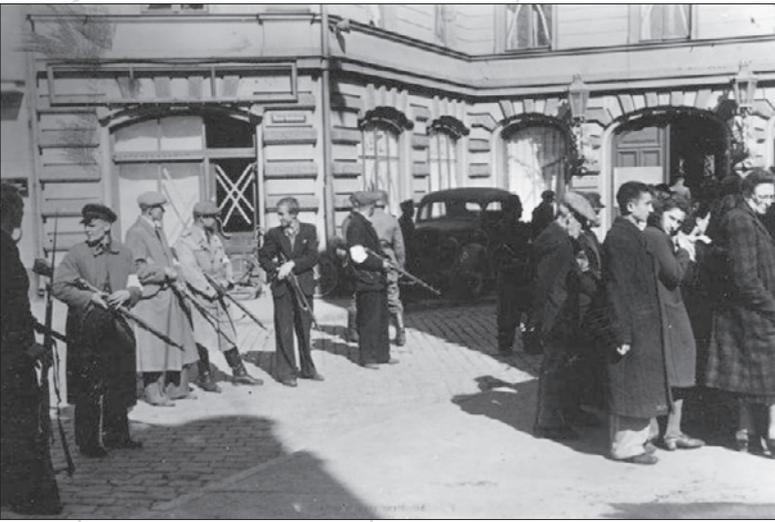
### Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:

- What were the names of Lithuanian auxiliary formations that in July 1941 supported Einsatzkommando 3 in the execution of Jews?
- List the places where Lithuanians took part in the execution of Jews.
- How did Karl Jaeger, head of Einsatzkommando 3, describe the input of Lithuanians in the solution to the Jewish question' in Lithuania?
- When did the mass execution of Jews in Ponary take place? Who carried it out?
- Where were the mass execution sites situated? How did they look?
- From where did the Jews executed in Ponary originate?
- How did these executions take place?
- What does the report of Karl Jaeger tell us about the nature of German crimes in Lithuania? Who were the victims of Einsatzkommando 3? What was the proportion of Jews and non-Jews?

### Search for additional information and think:

- How did the Lithuanians behave during the German invasion of the Soviet Union?
- Why did the Lithuanians support the murder of Jews by the Germans?
- Who were the Szaulisi (The Lithuanian Riflemen's Union) and the Ypatingasis būrys (Vilnian Special Squad) police formation?
- In what area did the Lithuanian police formation, the Vilnian Special Squad, operate?
- For what crimes is it responsible?
- Over what period did the execution in Ponary take place? How many people were murdered there? Who are the victims of this execution?
- Where are there other places in Lithuania where Jews were mass murdered?
- Who were the non-Jewish victims of the execution by Einsatzkommando 3 in Lithuania?
- What happened to Jaeger's report after the war? What importance does it have for historians studying the Holocaust of Jews in Lithuania?

## Unit 3



Members of Latvian Auxiliary Police assembling a group of Jews, Liepāja, July 1941. On June 29, the Nazi invaders started forming the first Latvian SD auxiliary unit in Jelgava. Mārtiņš Vāgulāns, a member of the Pērkonkrusts organisation, was chosen to head it. Public domain



Members of a Latvian self-defence unit assembling a group of Jewish women for their execution on a beach near Liepāja, 15 December 1941. Public domain



The Arajs *Kommando* (also *Sonderkommando Arajs*), led by the SS commander and Nazi collaborator Viktors Arājs, was a unit of Latvian Auxiliary Police (German: *Lettische Hilfspolizei*) subordinated to the German Sicherheitsdienst (SD). It was a notorious killing unit during the Holocaust. The group was composed of students and former officers with far-right views. All of the Arajs *Kommando* members were volunteers, and free to leave at any time. The Arajs *Kommando* unit actively participated in a variety of Nazi atrocities, including the killing of Jews, Roma, and psychiatric patients, as well as punitive actions and massacres of civilians along Latvia's eastern border with the Soviet Union. Public domain



A monument at the site of the massacre of Jews in Rumbuli. The Rumbuli Massacre is a collective term for the events of 30 November and 8 December 1941, in which about 25,000 Jews were killed in or on the way to the Rumbuli forest near Riga, Latvia. The Rumbuli Massacre was carried out by the Nazi *Einsatzgruppe A* with the help of local collaborators of the Arajs *Kommando*, with support from other such Latvian auxiliaries. In charge of the operation was *Höherer SS und Polizeiführer* Friedrich Jeckeln, who had previously overseen similar massacres in Ukraine as well as Rudolf Lange, who later participated in the Wannsee Conference. Public domain

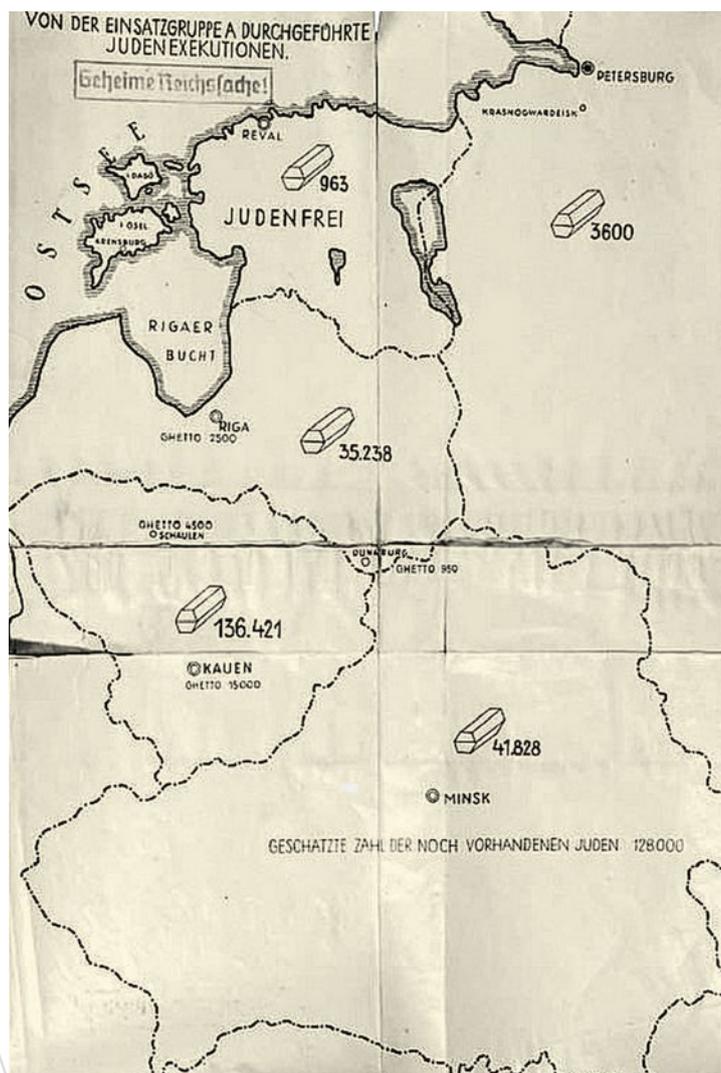
**An excerpt from a testimony of Frida Michelson about the Rumbuli Massacre:**

It was already beginning to get light. An unending column of people, guarded by armed policemen, was passing by. Young women, women with infants in their arms, old women, handicapped helped by their neighbours, young boys and girls – all marching, marching. Suddenly, in front of our window, a German SS man started firing with an automatic gun point blank into the crowd. People were mowed down by the shots, and fell on the cobblestones. There was confusion in the column. People were trampling over those who had fallen, they were pushing forward, away from the wildly shooting SS man. Some were throwing away their packs so they could run faster. The Latvian policemen were shouting ‘Faster, faster’ and lashing whips over the heads of the crowd. [...] The columns of people were moving on and on, sometimes at a half run, marching, trotting, without end. There one, there another, would fall and they would walk right over them, constantly being urged on by the policemen, ‘Faster, faster’, with their whips and rifle butts. [...] I stood by the window and watched until about midday when the horror of the march ended [...]. Now the street was quiet, nothing moved. Corpses were scattered all over, rivulets of blood still oozing from the lifeless bodies. They were mostly old people, pregnant women, children, handicapped – all those who could not keep up with the inhuman tempo of the march.

Frida Michelson, *I Survived Rumbuli*, Holocaust Library, New York, NY 1979 p. 77–8.

A map used to illustrate Stahlecker's report to Heydrich on 31 January 1942. It is entitled 'Jewish Executions Carried Out by Einsatzgruppe A' and stamped 'Secret Reich Matter'. It shows the number of Jews executed in the Baltic States and Belarus in 1941. The legend at the bottom states that 'the estimated number of Jews still on hand is 128,000'. Estonia is marked as *judenfrei*. Kept by the Latvian State Historical Archives, Riga.

Public domain



## EXERCISES:

### Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:

- What Latvian military formations took part in the execution of Jews in Liepāja?
- What was the Arajs Kommando? Who was its leader? Who were its members? What crimes did Arajs Kommando commit during the war?
- How does Frida Michelson recall the massacre in Rumbuli? Who were its victims? What role did Latvian policeman play in the massacre?
- What map from Stahlecker's report tells us about crimes committed by the operational group Einsatzgruppe A in the Baltic States?
- In what territory did this group operate? How many Jews did its members murder and where? In what country were all its Jews murdered?

### Search for additional information and think:

- What circumstances surrounded the formation of auxiliary police units in Latvia, which supported the Germans in murdering Jews?
- When did the massacre of Jews in Rumbuli take place? How long did the shooting last? Who participated? Which Latvian auxiliary formations took part?
- What role did Latvians play in the Holocaust of Jews in Latvia?

## Unit 4

Hungarian soldiers and gendarmes taking part in the massacre of Jews and Serbs on 23 January 1942. Novi Sad, Yugoslavia. Public Domain



**A statement by Vojislav Martinov, a historian and a curator at the Novi Sad-based Museum of Vojvodina.**

The violence in Novi Sad was not an isolated incident, however, but just one in a series of raids on towns and villages in the Backa region during which civilians were executed. The raids started on 4 January 1942, in the village of Curug, some 40 kilometres from Novi Sad, then spread to other villages and towns nearby – Zabalj, Djurdjevo, Gospodjinci, Gardinovci, Vilovo, Lok, Mosorin, Sajkas, Kisac, Srbobran, Temerin and Becej.

The pattern was almost always the same: Hungarian army, police and gendarmerie forces would arrest, torture and execute civilians in warehouses or schools, and then throw them into the frozen Tisa or Danube rivers. In some places, they would kill their victims on the riverbanks.

Members of the local Hungarian population usually helped out, and some of them were particularly cruel.

Ivana Nikolic, Last Survivors Recall WWII Massacre in Occupied Yugoslavia, <https://balkaninsight.com/>

**An excerpt from *A Razzia in Novi Sad* by the survivor Andreja Deak describing how he and his family experienced the scene at the Danube:**

After a quarter of an hour the van stopped in front of the Strand at the Danube. We were commanded to get off. People who were sick and old were thrown into the snow. In front of the entrance to the Strand many were gathered, Serbs and Jews. They stood in rows of two. Maybe 2,000 people. A strong cordon of gendarmes and soldiers surrounded them. It was a horrible scene that one can never forget. So many waiting for their unavoidable death!... Most stood motionless, stoned by shock. Some prayed, others howled in desperation and tore their hair. The gendarmes and soldiers quickly restored silence with the butts of their rifles... Every five minutes four doomed people had to enter the Strand. They were forced to undress in the cabins and then to move forward... Each naked victim had to step on the plank and then a 'representative of state authority' fired a bullet into his neck... Time went by. With nerves taxed to the breaking point, only rarely did they try to resist. Most obediently they entered the Strand... Their staggering indifference in the face of death, their powerlessness, the indescribable horror – all these merged into something almost like normalcy.

Excerpt from the book: Arpad von Klimo, *Remembering Cold Days: The 1942 Massacre of Novi Sad and Hungarian Politics & Society, 1942–1989*, University of Pittsburgh Press 2018

Košice (then Hungary).  
Jews deported  
by the Hungarian  
army, 1942. Yad Vashem



## EXERCISES:

### Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:

- What events do the photographs show?
- Who are the people in them and what are they doing?
- What do these two photographs have in common?
- When did the massacre in the Bačka region begin?
- Where did it start and what localities did it encompass?
- According to what pattern did it take place?
- How did the local Hungarian population behave during the massacre?
- How does the survivor Andreja Deak describe the massacre of Serbs and Jews in Novi Sad?
- Why did the murder of people on the bank of the Danube create the impression of 'something nearly normal'?

### Search for additional information and think:

- What was the situation of Jews in Hungary before the war and how did it change during its course?
- When and in what circumstances did Novi Sad and Košice find themselves under Hungarian occupation?
- How did the Hungarian army behave in these territories?
- Why did the massacre of Serbs and Jews take place in the regions of Vojvodina and Bačka? What was its course and who was responsible?
- How did the Hungarian population react to this massacre? Were the perpetrators punished and imprisoned?
- When did mass deportations of Jews in territories occupied by Hungary begin? Who governed Hungary at the time? From what territories and were Jews deported and how many?
- Who initiated these deportations and who carried them out? How were Jewish ghettos liquidated in Hungarian-occupied territories of Trans-Carpathian Ruthenia and Transylvania? How did the Hungarian gendarmerie and army behave during these events?
- When and why were deportations of Hungarian Jews suspended? Who exerted pressure on the Hungarian government of M. Horthy on this matter? At what price were the Germans ready to release some Hungarian Jews? How many could therefore be saved?
- What was the role of the Hungarian state in the Holocaust of Jews? What did this responsibility entail? Were those guilty punished and imprisoned?

## Unit 5

Ustashe militia men pointing rifles at the victims; ca. 1943–1945. One of the objectives of the Ustashe movement was to 'cleanse' Croatia of 'foreign' elements – Serbs, Jews and Roma. During the war, its members murdered approximately 300,000 persons, mainly Serbs. The victims also included members of the Croatian resistance movement and political opponents. USHMM



The Ustashe confiscating property of newly arrived prisoners at the Jasenovac camp (photo: 1941–1945). The Jasenovac-Stara Gradiška complex consisted of five sub-camps and was the largest of its kind in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). Some 100,000 people lost their lives here, predominantly Serbs. 18,000 to 20,000 Jews also died in the camp. Public domain



### Recollections of Egon Berger.

On 11 September 1941, forty of us arrived at Jasenovac. There were around two hundred well-armed Ustashe at the station. They sent us walking down a long road toward the woods. It was a hot day in autumn. We could not stop, even though the road was two miles long. It was really tiring, so we started throwing away our luggage, piece by piece.

We finally arrived. Just one look was enough to realize what it meant to be in a camp in the 'new Europe' under German occupation. It was 1,500 square feet surrounded by barbed wire. There were three shacks made of old wooden planks, and between every plank there was a gap one to two inches wide. It was obvious that the shacks were letting snow, wind, and rain inside.

In the first two shacks were around seven hundred Jews. They had come three days before us. They were the remaining captives from the island of Pag, where they had already suffered a great deal. They were afflicted with terrible hunger.

There were around six hundred Serbs in the third shack. Every shack could hold three hundred fifty people, so they were already above capacity. Our arrival doubled the number of occupants, so every captive had about fifteen inches of room to lie. On shoulders, coat lapels, and clothes were sluggish lice, now moving from old to new captives.

The Ustashe had not yet totally robbed us, so we still had some food. One of my friends whom I had known since childhood came to me with tears in his eyes and begged me for some bread. I did not have any, so I gave him a piece of walnut cake. He greedily stuffed the big piece of cake in his mouth and ate as if nobody else in the world existed. Another man started collecting cake crumbs that had fallen onto the ground.

New groups were constantly coming through, and life became harder and harder.

Egon Berger, Holocaust Survivor; book *44 Months in Jasenovac*

## EXERCISES:

### Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:

- What was the aim of the Ustashe movement? How many people did they murder during the war?
- What did the camp in Jasenovac look like? What were its components?
- Who were the prisoners? In what conditions were they held?
- How many people did the Ustashe murder at the camp? Who were the main victims?

### Search for additional information and think:

- What were the ideological underpinnings and programme of the Ustashe movement?
- When and in what circumstances did the Independent State of Croatia arise?
- What was the Ustashe policy towards the Jews and other minorities?
- When and for what purpose was the camp in Jasenovac established? Who was his commandant?
- How many prisoners did the Ustashe lock up in the camp? How were they treated? How many of them were murdered there and how?
- Why was the concentration camp in Jasenovac called the 'Auschwitz of the Balkans'?

## Unit 6



Foreign-born Jews arrive at the Gare d'Austerlitz station during a deportation from Paris, 1941. The deportation of foreign born Jewish men in occupied Paris was carried out in accordance with the decree of 4 October 1940 which called for their arrest and concentration into camps. The motivation for the legislation was spontaneous and was not mandated by Germany. The statutes were aimed at depriving Jews of the right to hold public offices, designating them as belonging to an inferior class and depriving them of citizenship. Many Jews were subsequently rounded up at internment camps before being deported for extermination in Nazi concentration camps. On 14 May 1941 approximately 5,000 foreign-born Jewish men aged between 18 and 40 reported to various assembly points. Once they arrived, they were forbidden to leave. The detainees were then put on buses and driven to the Gare d'Austerlitz train station, where they were immediately boarded onto four special trains bound for the internment camps of Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers located in Loiret near Orleans. USHMM

The Vélodrome d'Hiver (or Vél d'Hiv) roundup was the largest French deportation of Jews during the Holocaust.

On 16–17 July 1942, the Germans, with the help of the French police, detained arrested 13,000 Jews in Paris, who were then interned in transit camps and then sent to KL Auschwitz. Public Domain



**An excerpt from a testimony of Sarah Lichtsztejn-Montard, then a 14-year-old girl.**

Some people put their things in sheets, others carried children's mattresses. Parents were completely panic-stricken and looked haggard. They were holding little children, who were awake, crying, surrounded by policemen. It was a terrible shock. [...] There were already 5,000 people in there. It was dreadful. There was a horrible hubbub. Children were running around, but the parents in the stands were silent. There was an atrocious smell. The few toilets were quickly clogged. I saw adults go to the bathroom everywhere. When we asked the police [French police] what they were going to do with us, they told us that we were going to be sent to work in Germany.

<https://www.france24.com/en/20170712-vel-dhiv-roundup-holocaust-france-survivor-remembers-world-war>

## EXERCISES:

**Look at the photographs, read the text and answer the following questions:**

- *When did the arrests of foreign-born Jewish men take place in Paris?*
- *What was the legal basis for these arrests?*
- *How many people were arrested on 14 May 1941 and where were they taken?*
- *Who conducted the arrests and organised the deportation of Jews to camps?*
- *What are the mass arrests of Jews that took place in Paris on 16–17 June 1942 called? Who conducted this campaign and how?*
- *How many Jews were arrested at the time? Where were they held and in what conditions?*
- *How did the French police explain to Jews the purpose of their detention?*
- *Where did the arrested Jews ultimately end up?*

**Search for additional information and think:**

- *When did the Petain government introduce anti-Jewish laws? What did they entail and how did they change the status of Jews in France? Who initiated the introduction of these laws and did the Germans put pressure on the French government to introduce them?*
- *When did the arrests of Jews in France begin?*
- *Why were foreign-born Jews arrested first?*
- *What were the names of the camps to which the arrested Jews were taken?*

- Who carried out the arrests of Jews and organised their deportation to camps?
- What is the origin of the term *Vél d'Hiver* Roundup?
- Who initiated this campaign and what was its purpose? What was the role of the collaborating Vichy government?
- How did the arrests of Jews in Paris transpire? Where were they taken?
- How many Jews were arrested at the time? Why did the arrests primarily concern foreign-born Jews? How many were able to survive the war?
- What was the reaction of French public opinion and the Catholic Church to the arrests of Jews? Did it have any effect on the fate of remaining Jews in France?
- What were the names of the largest internment and transit camps through which French Jews passed when deported to KL Auschwitz?
- What was the responsibility of the Vichy government and French society for the persecution and the Holocaust of Jews?

## Unit 7

A French-language poster detailing the Anti-Jewish laws enacted in Belgium on 28 October 1940. The text reads: *Proclamation Ordinance of the German military authority of 28 October 1940 concerning Jews... Jews are required to inscribe themselves on the register of Jews. The holders of Jewish establishments must refer to the communal administration to procure a poster in accordance with the ordinance.* Public domain



**On 14 April 1941, after watching the German propaganda film *Der Ewige Jude*, Flemish paramilitaries from the Volksverwering, VNV and Algemeene-SS Vlaanderen began a pogrom in the city of Antwerp. A description based on Jeffrey Kleiman's testimony:**

The future of Antwerp's Jews played out in April 1941 as a local version of the Kristallnacht pogrom brought shattered businesses and promoted vandalism, along with random personal violence in its wake. Kleiman inadvertently met up with the perpetrators en route to the Jewish district and recalled his encounter: walking through the city, he found himself at the De Keyserlei by the main railroad station, where he ran into a huge crowd laughing and singing and marching southward down the Breydelstraat toward the diamond district. Then turning into the Pelikaanstraat, he noticed that German military officers and Belgian police flanked the crowd on either side. At that point, he fell in with the marchers until able to make his escape, cutting through the Lange Kievitstraat in order to reach home, warn his wife, and barricade his shop<sup>8</sup>. Tellingly, for Kleiman, a Christian neighbor leaned out the window to tell him about the impending onslaught. However, for Kleiman, the neighbor did not offer to help shelter or hide him and his

family. Left to his own devices, Kleiman gathered his wife and daughter into a safe place in the cellar waiting for things to pass through. When morning came, he and other Jews found their shop fronts smashed, wooden blinds shattered, goods and produce of every description littering the streets. Eventually, laws promulgated by the German military administration effectively pushed Jews out of the marketplace as business owners, setting them up to look for wage work, if possible, or otherwise to starve.

Jeffrey Kleiman, *Surviving Hitler. An Antwerp Jew's Compelling Testimony*, <https://journals.openedition.org/cmc/292>



The Mechelen transit camp, officially SS-Sammellager Mechelen, is also known as the Dossin barracks. It was a detention and deportation camp established in a former army barracks in Mechelen in German-occupied Belgium. The camp served as an assembly point for Belgian Jews and Romani ahead of their deportation to German concentration and death camps in occupied Eastern Europe. The camp was established in March 1942 and was the only transit camp in Belgium. It was managed by the *Sicherheitspolizei* (SiPo-SD). Between 4 August 1942 and 31 July 1944, 28 trains left from near the camp deporting over 25,800 people. It is estimated that about 1,240 survived the war. The camp was abandoned when Belgium was liberated in September 1944. Public Domain

### Deportation of Jews from Belgium, the Netherlands and France, a short comparison according to the researcher Lieven Saerens:

During the occupation, 42 percent of Jews in Belgium who were registered by order of the Germans were deported. Although this is not a comparative study, it would be correct to examine this number within a broad Western European context. In comparison with other countries, the Belgian figure lies in the middle, between that of France (roughly 25–30 percent deported) and that of the Netherlands (roughly 70–75 percent deported). [However,] if we examine matters at the level of regions of Belgium, we find a different picture. Of all Jews registered in Brussels, Luik/Liège, and Charleroi, 37 percent, 35 percent, and 42 percent, respectively, were taken away. In Antwerp, a different magnitude is observed. There, at least 65 percent [9,009 Jews out of 13,779] became victims of the Final Solution [to the Jewish problem] – a figure that places Antwerp on the verge of the extremely high Dutch figure.

Lieven Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad. Een geschiedenis van Antwerpen en zijn joodse bevolking* (1880–1944), Tiel: Lannoo, 2000, p. 745. <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/academic/why-did-so-many-of-the-jews-in-antwerp-perish-in-the%C2%A0holocaust.html>

**A statement by Øystein Sørensen, a professor of History at the University of Oslo:**

There is no doubt that the NS [Nasjonal Samling] regime and those who actively supported it had a moral co-responsibility for the fate of the Norwegian Jews during the Second World War, regardless of what each individual NS member knew about the fate of the Jews. The 1934 NS programme contained nothing about Jews. But since the party was governed by the leader principle (Führerprinzip), the official party view was to be found in Vidkun Quisling's speeches and articles.

Source:??

Anti-Semitic graffiti on shop windows in Oslo in 1941.

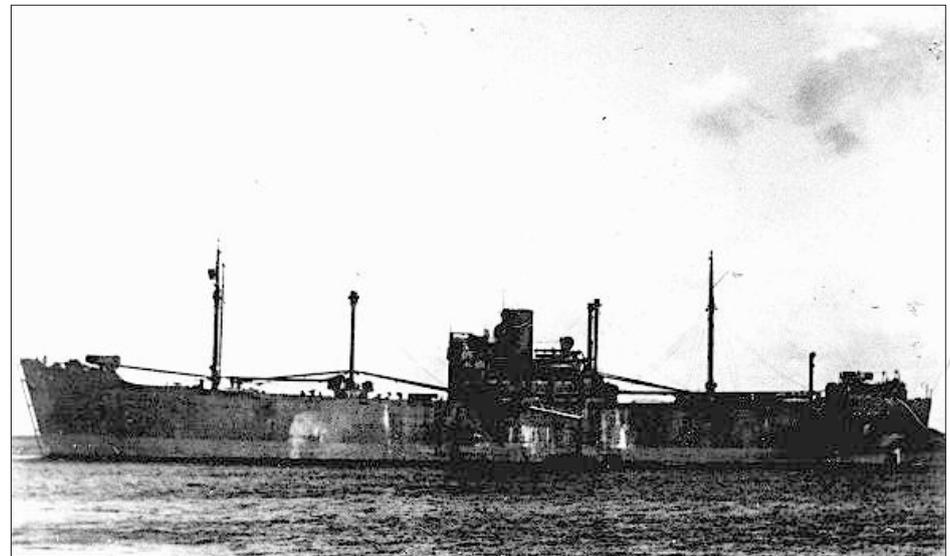
Public Domain



The Gotenland, one of the ships used during the deportation of Jews from Norway to Germany.

Norway, 1943. There were at least 2,173 Jews in Norway.

During the Nazi occupation of Norway, 772 of them were arrested, detained, and/or deported, most of them sent to Auschwitz. The Norwegian police and German authorities kept records of these victims, and so researchers were able to compile information about the deportees. USHMM



**EXERCISES:**

**Look at the photographs, read the text and answer the following questions:**

- *When did the pogrom of Jews in Antwerp take place? Who organised it? What was its course?*
- *Where in occupied Belgium was the transit camp from which Jews and Roma were deported to death camps? How many people passed through this camp? How many survived the war?*

- How can data on the number of Belgian, Dutch and French Jews deported to death camps be interpreted?
- Do you agree with the opinion of Prof. Øystein Sørensen who stated that the NS regime and those who actively supported it had a moral co-responsibility for the fate of the Norwegian Jews during the Second World War? Justify your response.
- What sign was written on the shop front window in Oslo? To what anti-Jewish stereotype does it refer?
- What was the name of the ship on which Norwegians brought Jews to Germany? How many Norwegian Jews were deported to death camps?

### Search for additional information and think:

- What anti-Jewish regulations were introduced in occupied Belgium in 1940?
- Who introduced them and how did they affect the situation of Belgian Jews?
- How many Jews and Roma were placed at the camp in Mechelen? How many of them survived the war?
- What was the situation of Jews in occupied Norway?
- Who initiated and carried out the deportation of Dutch Jews to death camps?

## Chart 3. INDIVIDUAL COMPLICITY

### Unit 1

#### A testimony of Elena Kutorgiene-Buivydaite, an eyewitness to a pogrom of Jews in Kaunas in June 1941.

On 26 June 1941 at 2 a.m., when it began to get light outside, I heard the noise of a vehicle. I went to the window. A truck pulled up in front of the grey wooden house at Kant St 13 across from my apartment (the caretaker of that building was one of the first to hang a Nazi flag). Several people got out. First, they knocked down the door, went inside, turned on the light in the anteroom... Then, there was a loud heart wrenching and indescribable shriek of a woman... It resounded for a few minutes, then a male voice rang out, shouting in Jewish, begging for something, hurriedly mumbling some words, still the same... then came shots (three or four), in a split second everything went quiet... A male voice said in Lithuanian: 'Don't shoot without my order,' then there was a mournful childish cry, as if two children. Again, two shots and it went quiet... That means that they shot four innocent people. [...] The Germans allow these nocturnal screams in a city they have conquered, where no one is allowed to walk the streets at this time. It is clear that the murderers act with permission and consent of their new masters. [...]

27 June [...] A state of patriotic and sadistic intoxication persists throughout the day: with the permission and approval of the rulers, Jews are murdered and tormented... [...]

Throughout the day, people with victorious faces and armbands in Lithuanian national colours crowd the streets, break into houses and in broad daylight remove Jewish property, not despising the last of the junk. It is like an epidemic, an explosion of greed... Everyone is armed with rifles [...]

Everywhere you see the national colours or white armbands with a red cross. The medical service is to collect the corpses of murdered Russians and Jews. From the laboratory window I could see how the 'sisters' prepare for these excursions: shouting, laughter, vulgar flirting, banal

jokes... Only one of the nurses, a simple uneducated woman, sadly spoke about how Red Army men are killed and Jews are herded en masse for execution with shovels, how they are first forced to dig their own grave and sing 'If war tomorrow...' [a song sung by Red Army soldiers] [...] The city is as if dead. [...] There are reports of every possible humiliation to which the Jews are subjected, forced to carry out the dung with their bare hands. I saw a group of imprisoned Jews led with shovels. In the evening a patient [...] told me how she saw Jews, who were digging their own graves at the cemetery, killed with wooden scants [...]

[http://www.zydzivpolsce.edu.pl/biblioteka/zrodla/r3\\_4.html](http://www.zydzivpolsce.edu.pl/biblioteka/zrodla/r3_4.html)

Civilians and German soldiers looking at the massacre of 68 Jews in the Lietukis garage of Kaunas (Lithuania) on 27 June 1941.

Bundesarchiv, B 162 Bild-04128.



**A testimony of Laimonas Noreika, a non-Jewish resident of Kaunas who was witnessing the beatings and torture of prisoners at the Lietukis garage:**

A large crowd had gathered alongside the perimeter fence of the garage yard. So we also went over to see what was happening. I keep asking myself whether I just imagined it all but I know I did not.

Those horrific events have been burned onto my memory and will remain there until my dying day. In the middle of the yard, in broad daylight and in full view of the assembled crowd, a group of well dressed, spruce intelligent looking people held iron bars which they used to viciously beat another group of similarly well dressed, spruce, intelligent people. It was obvious the yard also served as a horse stable as animal droppings were littered everywhere.

The assailants yelled the word 'norma' (move it) repeatedly as they relentlessly battered the Jews until they fell to the ground and began gathering feces. They kept hitting them until finally they lay inert. Then, using a hosepipe for washing cars, they doused them with water until they came round following which the abuse would start all over again. And so it went on and on until the hapless victims lay dead. Bodies began to pile up everywhere.

I stood next to the fence and watched it all until finally, my brother Albertas pulled me away...

The Jerusalem Post. <https://www.jpost.com/blogs/the-world-according-to/the-lietkis-garage-massacre-501884>

## EXERCISES:

### Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:

- What atmosphere prevailed in Kaunas in the first days of the German occupation?
- Why did the Lithuanians gladly greet the German soldiers and direct their hatred against Jews?
- Who, in Elena Kutorgiene-Buivydaite's view, stood behind the pogrom of Jews and allowed it to happen?
- How does she describe the events that took place in Kaunas on 25 and 27 June 1941?
- Who are the people in the photograph and what are they doing? Describe the actions of specific persons: observers and perpetrators.
- How do you assess the attitude of Germans and the crowd of onlookers viewing the beating and murdering of Jews?

### Search for additional information and think:

- What was the reason for a sudden growth in anti-Jewish sentiment in Lithuania after the arrival of Germans in the summer of 1941?
- Why did the Lithuanians accuse the Jews of treason and collaboration with Soviets?
- How did the Germans seek to exploit anti-Jewish sentiment in Lithuanian society?
- What was the role of Germans in promoting the pogrom? How did they behave when it happened?
- Who were its perpetrators? How did the bystanders and witnesses behave?
- How long did the pogrom last? How many victims were there?
- What was the significance of the pogrom?

## Unit 2



German soldiers welcomed on entering Lviv on 30 June 1941. Ukrainians joyously greeted the invading Germans in the hope that leaders of the Third Reich would allow them to create independent Ukraine. <https://twojahistoria.pl/2019/04/27/30-czerwca-1941-roku-we-lwowie-rozpetalo-sie-pieklo-jak-doszlo-do-pogromu-ludnosci-zydowskiej/>



Bystanders watching Jews rounded up on the streets of Lviv, summer 1941. After the Soviet-German war broke out, two German-inspired Jewish pogroms took place in Lviv in June and July 1941. Local Ukrainians actively participated in the pogroms. Jews were accused of collaborating with the Soviets occupying Ukrainian territory. The Germans exploited anti-Semitic sentiment among Ukrainians and spread the rumour about the involvement of Jews in murders on political prisoners by the NKVD shortly before the Soviets left the city. Ukrainian nationalists broke into homes, attacked and cruelly tortured the Jews. They were caught on streets and led to squares and prisons where they were murdered. Around 4,000 were killed, many of them children, women and elderly persons. USHMM

**An excerpt from  
a testimony of Rózia  
Wagner who recalls  
the pogrom in Lviv:**

The very first days gave us a foretaste of what was to come. They began to catch the Jews for labour. This task was entrusted to the Ukrainian scum. The first job of those who had been caught was to clean and remove corpses from prisons in Zamarstynowska, Łąckiego and Kazimierzowska Streets (the Brygidki prison). It was a horrible work, especially as the Ukrainian and Gestapo overseers treated the Jews as if they had murdered those people, and beat them unmercifully. It was then already that streams of tears began to flow from the eyes of wives, mothers and children of those men who had been caught for labour and never returned home. The following day, Tuesday, saw the beginning of mass excesses perpetrated by the Ukrainians, which the Germans watched with satisfaction until they took over from them after a few days. Those were days and nights of great terror. Hardly anyone slept in his flat – people were hiding in cellars, attics etc. [...]

It was 11 a.m. They said that the Ukrainians were leading columns of Jewish men and women along the street. But we did not know what was happening. Suddenly, a thuggish looking youth appeared in the gate. With a sarcastic and hateful expression he said to me and my neighbour, who was with me in the gallery: 'Come on young ladies, do a bit of work.' My heart stood still. They were going to take us to the corpses. But I went along with him without a word of pleading or resistance, glad that those on the second floor must have seen what was happening and would have time to hide. I had scarcely emerged from the gate of our tenement when I was surrounded by a pack of

young rogues. Pushed and prodded, still without comprehending the situation, I walked towards the barracks. In front of the barracks there was a double row of men, women and youths – the scum of the city. Before I had time to take in this scene, I was blinded by a blow on the face. Savage shouting and yelling; someone grabbed me by the hair; tossed from hands to hands like a ball, I arrived at the gate of the barracks, and from there I was propelled by kicks and shoves into the courtyard. I was stunned and half-conscious with pain, but I instinctively felt that I should immediately get away from the entrance and start working. So I used the moment when my tormentors were receiving another victim to slip to the centre of the courtyard, which was already occupied by hundreds of men, women and children. 'What is there to do?' – I asked my nearest fellow sufferer. 'Please, don't talk,' she said. 'Bend down and make heaps of sand with your hands, for if any of these youths notices that you don't, you'll expose yourself to more abuse and beating,' I needed no more explanations. I got it. I was afraid of working with corpses, but this was much worse. It was not for work that they were bringing more and more unfortunate victims here. I remembered stories about the Khmelnytsky pogroms and realized that today it was I and my poor companions who had fallen victim to such a pogrom.

I got to work with exceptional stoicism. Keeping an eye on the entrance gate, I was relieved to see that there were none of my dear ones among the bloodied bodies thrown in every now and then. In the meantime, the 'fun' was heating up. Inhuman shouts, broken heads, massacred bodies and horribly disfigured faces of the beaten, covered in blood and mud – all this contributed to unleashing the basest instincts of the bloodthirsty mob that was howling in ecstasy. Even women and the elderly who lay in a faint and almost lifeless on the ground continued to be frenziedly bashed with clubs, kicked and dragged around. The wild horde sought new sensations. They tore clothes off the wounded and bruised bodies, making no difference between men and women. We, who have already passed through this purgatory and were eagerly sweeping the sand in the courtyard with our hands, watched these scenes with horror, and the blood froze in our veins. And when the insatiable persecutors had stripped a woman completely naked and kept battering her with sticks, German soldiers walking in the courtyard, whom we begged to intervene, answered in a tone of approval: 'Das ist die Rache der Ukrainer' [It's the Ukrainian vengeance – the translator's note]. They were strutting about with a masterful air, taking photos of naked, beaten women: 'Das wird in Stürmer sein' [This will be in Der Stürmer – the translator's note] – they said, pleased that their countrymen would be able to see the exploits of their husbands and sons fighting for humanity.

<https://training.ehri-project.eu/sites/training.ehri-project.eu/files/A09%20wagner.pdf>

**An excerpt from a book  
by Dieter Schenk:**

There is no doubt that the German army, security police and secret field police (Geheime Feldpolizei) not only allowed these mass murders, but also inspired and supported them using Ukrainians as the initiative factor, as defined by Heydrich. It is also certain that members of the Nachtigall Battalion also directly took part in these murders. Everything took place before the eyes of the 295th infantry division. The massacre was only suspended for some time by a protest from an officer of the general staff of this division sent to headquarters of the 17th army on 2 July 1941.

Dieter Schenk, *Der Lemberger Professorenmord und der Holocaust in Ostgalizien* [The night of murderers. The carnage of (Polish) professors in Lviv and the Holocaust in Eastern Galicia], translated from German into Polish by Paweł Zarychta and Dariusz Salamon, Krakow: Wysoki Zamek, 2011, p. 109,

## EXERCISES:

### Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:

- How were German soldiers greeted in Lviv?
- How did the pogrom in Lviv start? Who inspired it and who carried it out?
- What work were the Jews forced to perform? Who organised the roundups of Jews?
- How did the Ukrainians treat the captured Jews? What actions did they take against them?
- How did the Germans react to the anti-Jewish excesses of the Ukrainians?
- Why did Rózia Wagner, who witnessed the pogrom make the association with the Khmelnytsky Uprising?
- What did the German soldier mean when stating that this was ‘Ukrainian revenge’?
- Why did the Germans photograph the pogrom and proudly state what they were doing?

### Search for additional information and think:

- What took place in Lviv shortly before the Soviets left the city?
- How did German propaganda exploit Soviet crimes perpetrated against Ukrainian and Polish prisoners?
- Why were the Jews charged with complicity in these crimes?
- What hopes did the Ukrainians have in connection with the entry of German forces?
- Why did the Germans resolve to deal with the Jews with Ukrainian hands?
- What was the course of the Lviv pogroms? When did they take place and how long did they last? How many victims were there?
- Who tortured the Jews and in what way? Who were the other non-Jewish victims of the Lviv pogroms?
- Why was the hatred of Ukrainians also directed against Poles after the German army entered Lviv?
- How did the Germans and bystanders behave during the pogroms?
- When did the pogroms end and why?
- What was the responsibility of Germans and that of Ukrainians for crimes committed on Jews in Lviv?

## Unit 2

### A telegram of Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Reich Main Security Office, dated 29 June 1941 to the leaders of *Einsatzgruppen* operating in occupied territories:

With reference to my oral instructions on 17 June in Berlin,  
I wish to call your attention once more to the following:

- 1) The attempts by local anti-Communist or anti-Jewish circles to engage in cleansing activities within the territories now to be occupied should not be hindered in any way. On the contrary, they must be implemented, and intensified when necessary, though without leaving a trace, and directed onto the right path. But this should be done in such a manner that the local ‘self-defence circles’ cannot later refer to orders or any political assurances given.

[https://training.ehri-project.eu/sites/training.ehri-project.eu/files/Heydrich%20order%2029%20June%201941\\_0.pdf](https://training.ehri-project.eu/sites/training.ehri-project.eu/files/Heydrich%20order%2029%20June%201941_0.pdf)

Jewish and Polish children with their schoolteachers, Jedwabne, 1933, including three boys who survived the war by hiding on Antonina Wyrzykowska's farm. Back row, second left: Szmul Wasersztajn (who testified in 1945); third, Mosze Olszewicz; and fourth, Jankiel Kubrzański.

Public domain: Jewish Historical Institute



**A pogrom in Jedwabne, 10 July 1941. The testimony of Szmul Wasersztajn, one of the seven Jewish survivors, about the murder of Jews in Jedwabne.**

On 10 July 1941, five Gestapo men arrived in town and held talks with the local authorities. [...] When the meeting ended, the massacre began. Local bandits, armed with axes and special sticks with spikes at their end and other instruments of torture, drove the Jews out of their homes into the streets. As first victims for their brutal torture they chose 75 young and healthy Jewish men and ordered them to carry the big sculpture of Lenin that the Russians had placed in the town centre.

It was an impossible task, and the Jews carried the statue while being incessantly clobbered. They were forced to sing as they carried the sculpture to the designated place. There they were ordered to dig a hole in the ground, throw the statue into it, and when they finished they were beaten to death and thrown into the same hole. The second cruel deed was: the murderers forced each person to dig a hole and to bury those who had been killed before him; then they too were killed and buried by those after them.

[...] Finally they arranged a last act – burning. The entire town was surrounded with guards so that no one could escape. Then they stood the Jews up in four lines. The town's rabbi, over 90 years old, and the kosher butcher were put at the head, with a flag in their hands. Then they were all chased into the barn. The thugs beat them brutally. At the entrance were several bandits who were playing music and tried to drown the poor people's screams. They were bleeding as they were pushed into the barn, and then they were doused with kerosene and fire was set to the barn.

Yad Vashem

**An excerpt from recollections of Antonina Wyrzykowska on the pogrom in Jedwabne and the rescue of Szmul Wasersztajn:**

Smoke was visible and cries were heard. It was quickly apparent what had happened. I cried, mother cried as did a neighbour. [...] Shortly after the Jews were burned in the barn, my husband saw Szmul [Szmul Wasersztajn] as he sat on the stairs of his home. He asked him whether he wants to come work for us, because one could employ Jews at the time and pay off the Germans. Szmul immediately jumped on the wagon and came to us to Janczewek. From then on he helped us in

the field. [...] He got used to us calling him Staszek. He went with us to May masses, I remember, sang our Polish church songs. Beautiful, clear language, although it was not so clear when he spoke.

A. Bikont, *My z Jedwabnego* [We from Jedwabne], Warsaw 2004, p. 249–251.

**An excerpt from Antonina Wyrzykowska's letter to the Jewish Historical Institute. 1945:**

I hid seven people for 28 months in a shelter in a pigsty under dung. I point out that they were penniless. I was not concerned about money, but rescuing human life, not about religion, but a human being. After the liberation I was repeatedly beaten and threatened with misfortune, so I had to leave my hometown.

File of A. Wyrzykowska at the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Institute (Yad Vashem).

## EXERCISES:

### Look at the photographs, read the texts and answer the following questions:

- What was the role the Germans in inspiring anti-Jewish pogroms in the territories newly captured from the Soviets in the summer of 1941?
- What public attitudes and anti-Jewish prejudices did the Germans exploit to incite the local population against the Jews?
- Why were the Germans determined to cover up traces of the SS role in inspiring and organising pogroms?
- How did the pogrom in Jedwabne transpire? Who were its perpetrators and how did they torture the Jews?
- What significance did the forcing of Jews to remove the Lenin monument in the town centre and bury it in the ground outside the town have in the pogrom?
- How did the majority of Jedwabne residents perish?
- How does Antonina Wyrzykowska recall the pogrom? What did she see and how did she react?
- How did Szmul Wasersztajn, one of the survivors of the pogrom in Jedwabne, manage to survive?
- Why did Antonina Wyrzykowska decide to rescue Jews?

### Search for additional information and think:

- Where is Jedwabne? What is the history of this place during the war?
- What was the attitude of the local Polish population toward Jews and why?
- How many town residents actively took part? How did remaining residents of Jedwabne behave? What was the role of the Germans there at the time?
- Who was Antonina Wyrzykowska? How many Jews did she rescue and how? Why did she have to leave her hometown after the war? What was her later fate?

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