

THE MASS MURDER OF JEWS AND ITS STAGES

Context



Although anti-Semitism was a main original tenet of the Nazi party programme, the idea of physically eliminating Jews from German and other societies after the outbreak of the Second World War crystallised only gradually until mid-1941. When attacking Poland in September 1939 and thereby starting the Second World War, the Germans did not yet have a coherent plan for what was called the 'final solution to the Jewish question'.

Anti-Jewish measures adopted by the Nazis after taking power in the form of stripping Jews of citizen rights, exclusion and discrimination proved insufficient to rid of them from Germany and subsequently from other countries in occupied Europe. Other solutions to that 'problem' were therefore sought. One of them was a mandatory resettlement of Jews, as conceived by Adolf Eichmann, the head of the unit called the Jewish section in the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA),

The initial plan had been drafted before the war and entailed the settlement of European Jews in Madagascar, then a French colony controlled by the Vichy regime collaborating with Germany during the war. According to the Nazis, means to execute that 'Madagascar Plan' were to be provided by the Jews themselves, as it was planned to resettle them to the island by the spring of 1941. However, the German attack on Great Britain which required enormous engagement of air and naval forces forestalled its implementation. As a consequence, the Madagascar Plan was delayed and ultimately

shelved due to inability to defeat Great Britain which ruled the seas at the time.

In the autumn of 1939, Adolf Eichmann put forth another concept: the establishment of Jewish colonies in occupied Poland (The General Government). The scheme, codenamed the Nisko Plan, entailed the creation of a 'reservation' for Jews under SS control in the basin of the San River near the town of Nisko. The selected area was swampy and required enormous manpower to construct the necessary infrastructure. In October, first groups of Jews were deported from the Third Reich and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Resettlement of successive groups was suspended because trains were needed for military transport to the front. Therefore, that plan was also scrapped in the spring of 1940. Reinhard Heydrich concluded, however, that Jews should be concentrated in occupied Poland to 'work' for the Reich until the end of the war.

In the first phase of the war, drastic orders restricting the rights of Jews were introduced in the General Government. Already on 26 October 1939, General Governor Hans Frank issued an order on forced labour of the Jewish population age 14 to 60 across the territory under his authority. The document initiated a series of regulations intended to discriminate against Jews. They intruded into nearly every aspect of Jewish life. They also introduced the obligation for Jews to wear a Star of David armband and limited free movement on public transport.

Over time, Jews were concentrated in ghettos, where – especially if closed – appalling living and sanitary conditions frequently prevailed with completely inadequate provisions. The Germans established ghettos in occupied Polish territories starting from the autumn of 1939. In October of that year, the first one appeared in Piotrków Trybunalski and most followed in 1940–1941. According to estimates, approximately 400 ghettos existed in the General Government in the short or long term, with approximately 680 in entire occupied Poland. The creation of ghettos in territories incorporated into the Reich was accompanied by deportation of Jews to the General Government (between January 1940 and March 1941). The largest ghetto there was that in Łódź (Litzmanstadt ghetto). It was created on 8 February 1940 and isolated from the rest of the city on 30 April. It is estimated that approximately 200,000 Jews passed through it. The Germans created the largest and most populous ghetto of the General Government in Warsaw, where nearly 450,000 people were crowded in an area of approximately 300 ha. Ghettos were also created in 1942 after the mass killing of Jews was launched under Operation Reinhardt. Its aim was to murder Jews in the GG and *Bezirk Białystok* (Białystok district). Ghettos then took on a different task: not to isolate the Jewish population and use it as free labour but rather to assemble Jews in a single location prior to a planned execution or transport to a death camp. In many localities, mainly smaller ones, no separate ghettos were created and Jews lived in their own homes until deportation or on-the-spot execution.

Ghetto boundaries were delineated in various forms – with barbed wire, a fence or erected borders. Some ghettos were separated with a wall (e.g. Warsaw and Krakow). The enclosure of Jews in a ghetto, according to the Nazis, was of a final, absolute and irreversible nature. Justification of ghettos, regardless of whether economic, social or sanitary, was merely a step in the process of eliminating Jews from society. The conditions created in what was known as Jewish quarters were adapted to plans for their economic exploitation. Behind ghetto walls and cut off from the world, hundreds of thousands of people were forced into slave and debilitating labour causing many Jews to perish. A particular example is the Warsaw ghetto, where, as a result of hunger, disease and horrendous living conditions, approximately 100,000 people died. Those actions constituted a

stage in their ‘intermediate extermination’. Some Jews, mainly young men and women, were confined in labour camps built in occupied Polish territories, where they served as slave labour for the German economy.

Ghettos were created not only in occupied Poland but, starting from 1941, also Lithuania and Latvia, as well as in Belarus, Ukraine and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (Theresienstadt). In 1944, they also appeared in Hungary and Romania (Bukovina and Bessarabia). Areas where Jews were concentrated prior to deportation to death camps were also established in West European countries (e.g. in Amsterdam). However, they were organised differently than ghettos in East-Central Europe and conditions there were considerably better than those, for example, in occupied Poland.

After the Third Reich launched its attack on the USSR on 22 June 1941, plans to resettle Jews were scrapped and the decision was made to commence another stage of the Holocaust known as direct extermination. In the summer of 1941, the mass murder of Jews began as the German army advanced eastwards. Four main groups, called *Einsatzgruppen*, were created for that purpose and systematically executed Jews in occupied territories. Usually, *Einsatzgruppen* members ordered their victims to dig ditches and strip naked after which all of them were shot, regardless of age or gender. One of the largest mass executions took place in Babi Yar at the outskirts of Kiev in occupied Ukraine. Over the course of just few days (29 September–3 October 1941), more than 33,000 Jews were murdered.

It is estimated that at least 1.5 million Jews died as a result of *Einsatzgruppen* actions. As the image of defenceless victims, particularly women and children, had a negative psychological impact on the shooting German soldiers, other forms of mass murder of Jews were found. In the late summer of 1941, experiments were conducted in Block 11 at KL Auschwitz on the killing of its inmates with poisonous gases (Zyklon B). Soviet and Polish prisoners were the first to be gassed. Over time, gas began to be used on a mass scale. In addition to stationary gas chambers, mobile units were used to kill Jews in death camps poisoning them with exhaust fumes from diesel engines. The officer tasked with ‘resolving the Jewish question’ was Marshall Reich Herman Göring. On 31 July 1941,

he ordered Reinhard Heydrich to prepare details of the execution of his plan.

On 20 January 1942, a conference of Nazi leaders and state officials took place at a villa in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee. It was of enormous significance for adopting the 'final solution to the Jewish question', which was most likely sealed in the summer of 1941. Logistical details were worked out on a plan for mass genocide of European Jews. As a consequence, the Germans launched their operation codenamed 'Reinhardt' in the General Government and *Bezirk Bialystok* on the night of 16/17 March 1942. Its purpose was the extermination of Jews residing there, whose number is estimated at approximately 2,284,000. Three death camps were constructed for that purpose in 1942: in Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka to which the Jewish population was deported. Jewish communities in the General Government were successively liquidated. Jews were also murdered *en masse* at KL Lublin (Majdanek), which operated as a concentration and death camp. Jews from occupied Polish territories were primarily deported there, as were those from the Third Reich, Slovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The camp in Maly Trostenets in present-day Belarus, transformed in 1942 to a killing facility for Jews from the USSR and West European countries, operated in a similar fashion. Initially, Operation Reinhardt was supposed to end on 31 December 1942, yet it was extended to November 1943 given that some Jews worked for the German armament industry. Irrespective of that operation, some already established death camps, primarily Kulmhof am Ner (Chełmno nad Nerem) and KL Auschwitz-Birkenau (Oświęcim-Brzezinka),

continued to function. Built in December 1941, the first-mentioned served mainly to murder Jews from *Warthegau*, or Warta Lands. The other one, the largest concentration and death camp, became the killing site of Jews from throughout Europe as of 1942. During the liquidation of ghettos and deportation of most Jews to death camps, the Germans spared a small number of Jews still able to work, who were sent to labour and concentration camps.

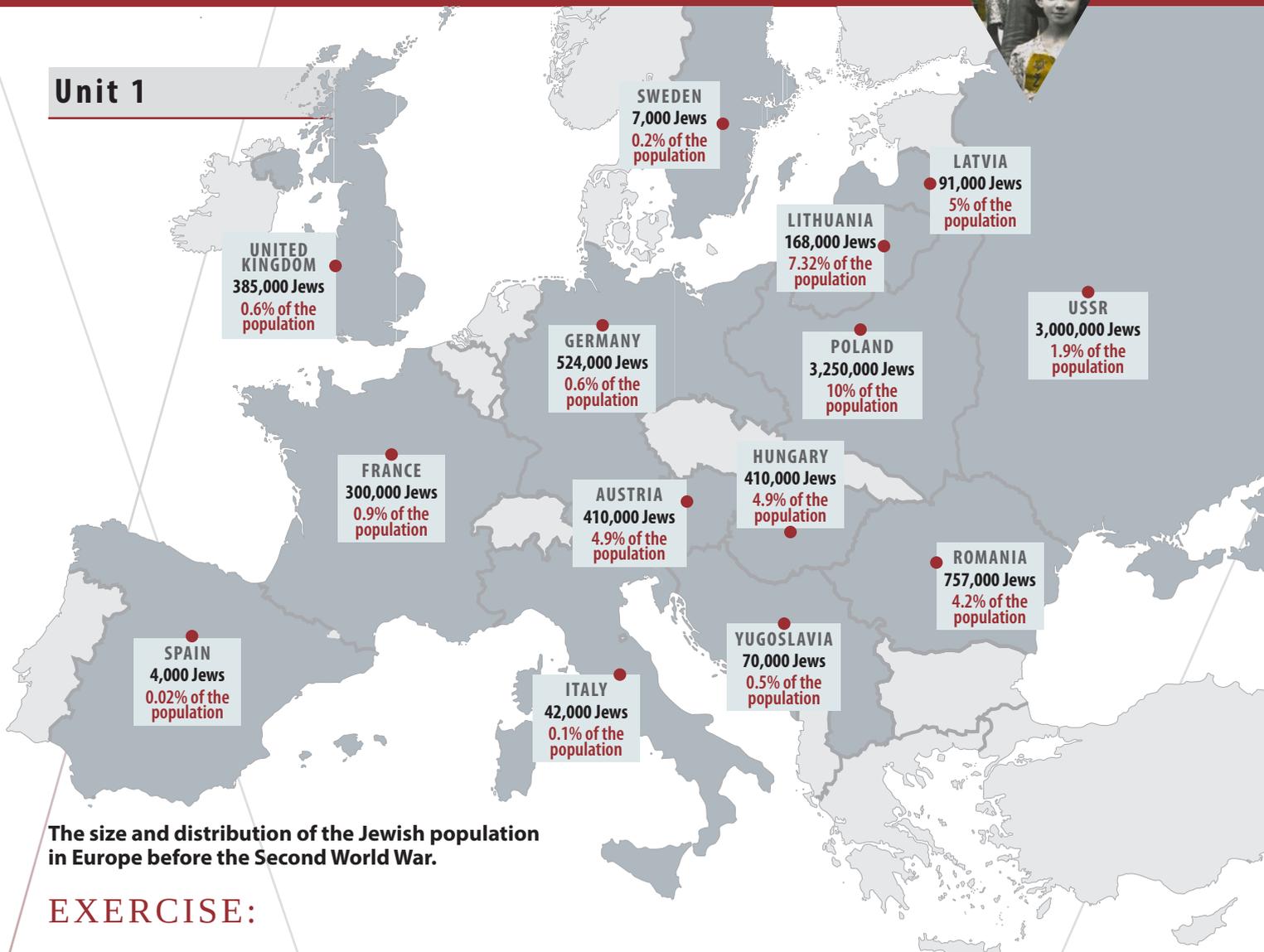
Some Jews, although their number is not certain, left ghettos prior to their liquidation. Others escaped from labour and concentration camps. All of them sought shelter on what was called the Aryan side. That was the turning point determined their further fate as well as relations with the non-Jewish population whose attitudes at the time became a vital factor in ensuring their survival. The period following the liquidation of more ghettos and deportation of their residents to death camps in 1942/43–1944/45 is considered to be the third stage of the Holocaust. The Germans also referred to it as the 'hunt for Jews' (*Judenjagd*). It began when the Nazis proclaimed a given region to be 'free of Jews' (*Judenrein*) and lasted until its liberation. Two sub-periods can be distinguished in the last phase of the Holocaust. The first lasted several or more days after deportation campaigns, when the Germans captured ghetto escapees hiding in the vicinity. In the other period lasting – as said – until the end of the war, hiding Jews were hunted, captured and murdered. The Germans frequently sought help from the local population and tipoffs from informants, or indirectly captured Jews seeking refuge.

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Chart 1. PERSECUTION

Unit 1



The size and distribution of the Jewish population in Europe before the Second World War.

EXERCISE:

Look at the map and answer the following questions:

- Which countries had the most and least populous Jewish communities?
- In which country was the percentage of Jews the highest and in which the lowest?

Search for additional information and think:

- What were the reasons for such a territorial distribution of Jews in Europe?
- To what degree did the number of Jews affect the scope of the Nazis' anti-Jewish policy in a given country?

Unit 2

A farewell to German soldiers departing for the war against Poland in September 1939. The slogan on the train carriage reads 'We are going to Poland to deal with the Jews'.

Yad Vashem



EXERCISE:

Look at the photograph and answer the following questions:

- Who bid farewell to the German soldiers departing for the front?
- What was the atmosphere of this farewell?
- Who do the drawings on the carriage depict?
- How do you understand the slogan on the carriage 'We are going to Poland to deal with the Jews'?
- What was the purpose of these drawings and signs?

Search for additional information and think:

- What role did anti-Semitism play in motivating soldiers to fight in Poland?
- In what way did Hitler speak about a potential future world war?
- What would be the fate of Jews, whom Hitler considered warmongers, in such a war?

Unit 3



A photograph of a German soldier cutting off a Jew's beard. In the background, a group of Wehrmacht soldiers observing the situation and laughing at the Jew. Wizna 1939.

Museum of the Second World War

EXERCISE:

Look at the photograph and answer the following questions:

- Who are the individuals in the photograph and what are they doing?
- How do you assess the German soldiers' behaviour?
- Who could have taken this photograph and for what purpose?

Search for additional information and think:

- *What other forms of torture and humiliation of Jews were there in the first months of the war?*
- *Why did German soldiers engage in such acts?*

Unit 4

A Jewish boy in Radom selling Star of David armbands (occupied Poland, 1940). Bundesarchive, Wisniewski-010-21A



A young Jewish woman poses on Town Hall Square in Copenhagen during the German occupation (occupied Denmark, ca. 1941–1942). USHMM



A portrait of a Jewish child wearing a Star of David badge (occupied France, ca. 1940–1945). USHMM



Members of a Jewish family pose outside their home in Zagreb wearing the rectangular yellow Jewish badges required by the Croatian regime (Independent State of Croatia, 1941). USHMM

EXERCISE:

Look at the photographs and answer the following questions:

- *What were the forms of marking Jews in specific countries of occupied Europe?*
- *In what occupied country did Jews not have to wear the Star of David on their clothing?*

Search for additional information and think:

- *What was the purpose of the Nazis ordering the marking of Jews?*
- *Why did the Nazis not introduce an order to mark Jews in all occupied countries of Europe?*
- *Had Jews been similarly stigmatised in the past? If so, when and by whom?*

Unit 5

A 'For Jews Only' tram in
occupied Warsaw,
October 1940. Bundesarchiv Bild
183-L14404



EXERCISE:

Look at the photograph and answer the following questions:

- Who are the people in the photograph and what are they doing?
- How would you feel being one of the passengers on this tram?

Search for additional information and think:

- Why did the Germans insist on separating Jews from the rest of society?
- Did cases of racial segregation also take place after the Holocaust? If so, where and when?

Unit 6

An excerpt from a speech by Hans Frank on the Madagascar Plan, July 12, 1940.

Another very important point is the decision of the Führer, which he made at my request, that there will be no more transports of Jews into the area of the General Government. As a general political observation, I would like to state that it is planned to transport the entire pack of Jews (Judensippschaft) from the German Reich, the General Government and the Protectorate in the shortest conceivable time after peace is reached to an African or American Colony. Madagascar, to be ceded by France for this purpose, is being considered. There will be ample room here for a few million Jews on an area of 500,000 sq. km. I have tried to let the Jews in the General Government also share in this advantage of building a new life on new land. This has been accepted, so that there should be a tremendous easing within sight...

Documents on the Holocaust. Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, ed. Y. Arad, I. Gutman, A. Margalio, Jerusalem 1999, p. 218.

EXERCISE:

Read the text and answer the following questions:

- What were the assumptions underlying the 'Madagascar Plan'?
- What was the origin of Jews who were to be transported to Madagascar?
- Why did Hans Frank speak so enthusiastically about that idea?

Search for additional information and think:

- What was the origin of the 'Madagascar Plan'?
- What was the reaction of Jews to that idea?
- What was the reason for the plan's fiasco?
- Why could the slogan 'Jews to Madagascar' be heard before and after the war? Who used it and for what purpose?

Chart 2. GHETTOISATION

Unit 1

Heydrich's message on policy and operations concerning Jews in occupied territories dated 21 September 1939.

**Express letter to Chiefs of all Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police.
Subject: Jewish Question in Occupied Territory.**

II Council of Jewish Elders

(1) In each Jewish community, a Council of Jewish Elders is to be established and composed, as far as possible, of remaining influential personalities and rabbis. The council is to comprise up to 24 male Jews (depending on the size of a Jewish community).

The council is to be made fully responsible, in the literal sense of the word, for exact punctual execution of all directives issued or to be issued.

(2) In case of sabotage of such instructions, councils are to be warned of severest measures.

(3) Jewish councils are to take an improvised census of Jews in their local areas broken down, if possible, by sex (age groups): a) up to 16 years of age, b) from 16 to 20 years of age, and c) 20 and over, as well as by principal occupation groups, and are to report results in the shortest possible time.

(4) Councils of Elders are to be informed of dates and deadlines for departure, departure facilities, and departure routes. They are then to be made personally responsible for the departure of Jews from the countryside.

The reason to be given for the concentration of Jews in cities is that Jews have most influentially participated in guerrilla attacks and plundering.

(5) Councils of Elders are to be made responsible in cities of concentration for appropriately housing Jews moving in from the countryside.

For general reasons of security, the concentration of Jews in cities will probably necessitate orders altogether barring Jews from certain sections of cities or, for example, forbidding them from leaving a ghetto (2) or going out after a designated evening hour, etc. However, economic needs are to always be considered in this connection.

(6) Councils of Elders are also to be made responsible for appropriate provisions for Jews during transport to cities.

No objections are to be voiced if migrating Jews take their movable possessions with them to the extent technically possible.

(7) Jews who do not comply with the order to move into cities are to be allowed a short additional grace period if circumstances warrant. They are to be warned of strictest punishment if they fail to comply with this latter deadline.

Documents on the Holocaust. Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, ed. Y. Arad, I. Gutman, A. Margalio, Jerusalem 1999, p. 174–175.

EXERCISE:

Read the text and answer the following questions:

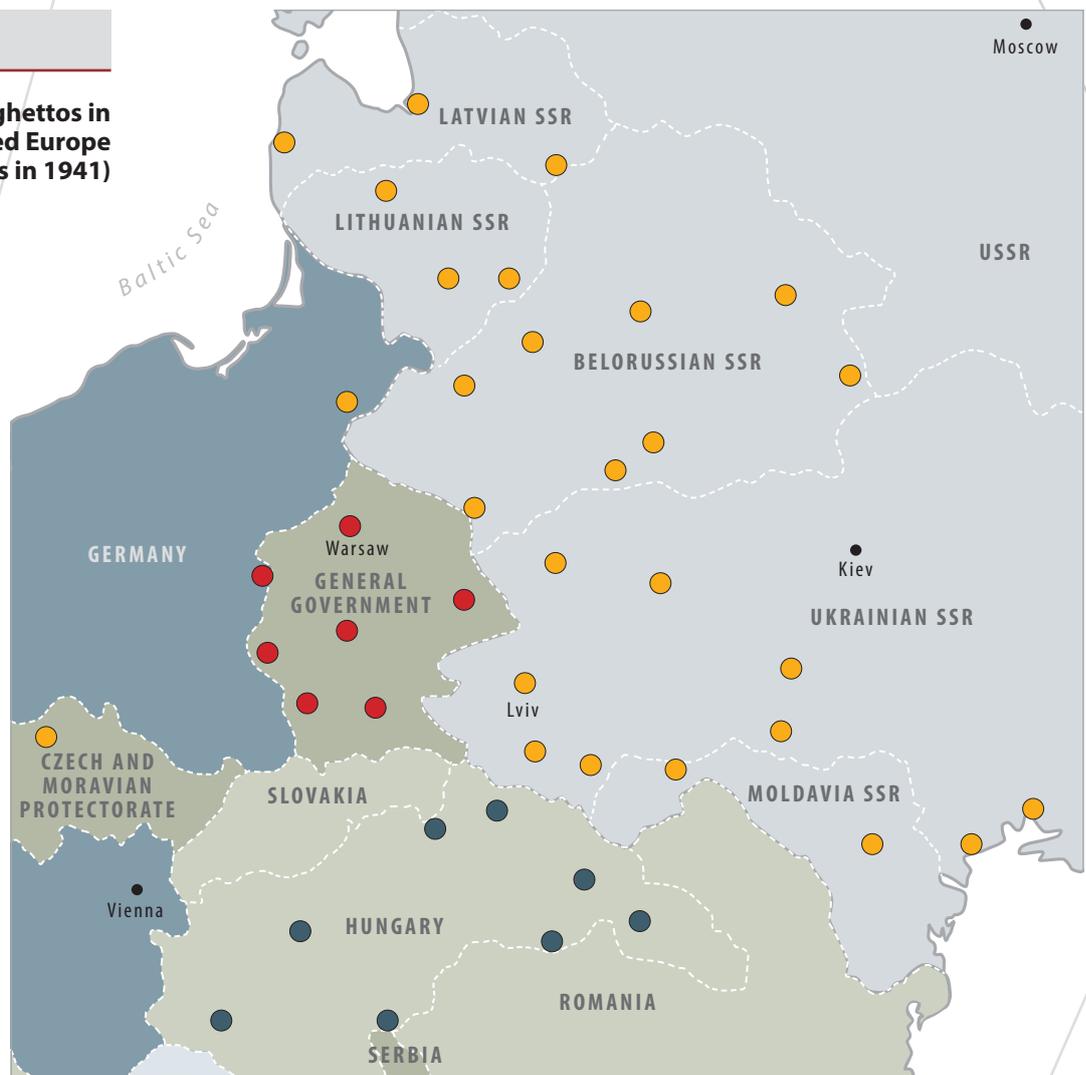
- What was the purpose of the Germans establishing Jewish Councils of Elders?
- Who were their members and what was their authority?
- What faced council members for refusal to carry out German orders?

Search for additional information and think:

- What were the propaganda and actual reasons for concentrating Jews in cities?

Unit 2

Major ghettos in German-occupied Europe (national borders in 1941)



EXERCISE:

Look at the map and answer the following questions:

- When did ghettos for Jews appear?
- Where were the most and fewest of them?

Search for additional information and think:

- Why were ghettos created during the entire wartime period?
What events affected their creation?
- Why did the Germans create most of the ghettos in Eastern Europe?

Unit 3



A barbed-wire fence in the Riga ghetto, 1942. Bundesarchiv



The construction of a ghetto wall in Warsaw, 1940. Public Domain



Samuel Schryver poses beneath a sign indicating the entrance to the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam. USHMM



A sign in German and Polish posted at entrance 2 to the Warsaw ghetto reads 'Area closed due to an epidemic. Only through traffic permitted'. USHMM

EXERCISE:

Look at the photographs and answer the following questions:

- What did borders of 'Jewish quarters' look like in various cities of occupied Europe?
- Why did certain ghettos have an open nature, whereas others were surrounded by a fence or high wall?
- What was the purpose of placing signs at ghetto entrances warning against entry?

Search for additional information and think:

- When did the first ghettos for Jews appear in Europe and what were their functions? How did they differ from those created by the Germans during the war?
- Were there similar instances after the war of limiting freedom of residents due to nationality, skin colour or religion?

Unit 4

Photographs taken by German soldiers with scenes from the Warsaw ghetto.



USHMM



USHMM



USHMM



USHMM



USHMM



USHMM

Bundesarchiv



USHMM



USHMM

EXERCISE:

Look at the photographs and answer the following questions:

- What scenes from life in the Warsaw ghetto do the photographs present?
- What can you say on their basis about conditions prevailing in the ghetto?
- Why did German soldiers take these photographs and what did they wish to achieve through this?

Search for additional information and think:

- What were the differences in ghetto living conditions? Who could count on better conditions and why?
- What was the reason for the high death rate among ghetto residents?
- How did people try to survive?

Unit 5

An excerpt from an account in the Ringelblum Archive on the smuggling of food into the Warsaw ghetto.

Smuggling began at the very moment that the Jewish area of residence was established; its inhabitants were forced to live on 180 grams [6 ½ oz.] of bread a day, 220 grams of sugar a month, 1 kg [2.2 lbs.] jam and ½ kg of honey, etc. It was calculated that officially supplied rations did not cover even 10 percent of normal requirements. If one had truly wanted to restrict oneself to official rations, then the entire ghetto population would have to die of hunger in a very short time...

The German authorities did everything to seal off the ghetto hermetically and not allow in a single gram of food. A wall was put up around the ghetto on all sides that did not leave a single millimetre of open space.

They fixed barbed wire and broken glass to the top of the wall. When that failed to help, the Judenrat was ordered to make the wall higher, at the expense of Jews, of course...

Smuggling took place through – a) walls, b) gates, c) underground tunnels, d) sewers, and e) houses on the borders.

Documents on the Holocaust. Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, ed. Y. Arad, I. Gutman, A. Margalio, Jerusalem 1999.



Jewish children smuggle food into the Warsaw ghetto. Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw



A frame from a German propaganda film showing the detention of Jewish children smuggling food into the ghetto. Public domain

EXERCISE:

Read the text and answer the following questions:

- What were the food rations in the Warsaw ghetto? Were they sufficient to survive?
- Why did German authorities not allow legal supplies of food into the ghetto?
- What were the forms of smuggling food into the ghetto?

Look at the photographs, search for additional information and consider the following:

- Why were Jewish children used to smuggle food into the ghetto?
- What was the purpose of the Germans filming the scene of children caught smuggling food into the ghetto?

Unit 6



Workers at the saddle-making workshop stand next to their work tables in the Lodz ghetto. USHMM



Teenagers work in a Lodz ghetto metal workshop. USHMM

EXERCISE:

Look at the photographs and answer the following questions:

- What workshops operated in the Lodz ghetto?
- Who worked there?
- What were the working conditions?

Search for additional information and think:

- What significance did the work of Jews in ghettos have for the German economy?
- Were Jews in closed ghettos able to work?
- Why is the Lodz ghetto called the largest slave labour camp?

Chart 3. MASS MURDER OF THE JEWS

Unit 1



German soldiers of the *Waffen-SS* and the Reich Labour Service look on as a member of an *Einsatzgruppe* prepares to shoot a Ukrainian Jew kneeling on the edge of a mass grave filled with corpses, September 1941. USHMM



A German police officer shoots Jewish women still alive after a mass execution of Jews from the Mizocz ghetto. USHMM

EXERCISE:

Look at the photographs and answer the following questions:

- Who are specific individuals in the photographs and how are they behaving?
- What is their attitude toward what they are doing?
- In your view, are all soldiers depicted in the photograph equally responsible for this genocide?

Search for additional information and think:

- What kind of formation were the *Einsatzgruppen*? When did they appear and for what assignments were they used?
- Under what order did German soldiers carry out mass executions of civilian population, primarily Jews, in the summer of 1941 after the attack on the Soviet Union?

Unit 2

The title page of minutes of the Wannsee Conference (20 January 1942) listing the names of its participants (left) and what is known as the Eichmann list with the number of Jews in specific countries of Europe to be murdered (right).

Public Domain

Land	Zahl
A. Altreich	131.800
Ostmark	43.700
Ostgebiete	420.000
Generalgouvernement	2.284.000
Bialystok	400.000
Protectorat Böhmen und Mähren	74.200
Estland - judenfrei -	
Lettland	3.500
Litauen	34.000
Belgien	43.000
Dänemark	5.600
Frankreich / Besetztes Gebiet	165.000
Unbesetztes Gebiet	700.000
Griechenland	69.600
Niederlande	160.800
Norwegen	1.300
B. Bulgarien	48.000
England	330.000
Finnland	2.300
Irland	4.000
Italien einschl. Sardinien	58.000
Albanien	200
Kroatien	40.000
Portugal	3.000
Rumänien einschl. Bessarabien	342.000
Schweden	8.000
Schweiz	18.000
Serbien	10.000
Slowakei	88.000
Spanien	6.000
Türkei (europ. Teil)	55.500
Ungarn	742.800
UdSSR	5.000.000
Ukraine	2.994.684
Weißrußland aus- schl. Bialystok	446.484
Zusammen: über	11.000.000

EXERCISE:

Analyse the table and answer the following questions:

- How many European Jews did the Nazis intend to murder as part of the ‘final solution to the Jewish question’?
- In what countries did those Jews live? Did all find themselves under German rule at that time?

Search for additional information and think:

- Who convened the conference in Wannsee and who took part in it?
- What significance did this conference have for the ‘Endlösung’?

Unit 3



Jewish deportees, carrying personal belongings in bundles and suitcases, march through town along the Hindenburgstrasse from the assembly centre at the Platzscher Garten to the railroad station. USHMM



Foreign-born Jews arrive at the Gare d'Austerlitz station during a deportation campaign in Paris. USHMM



Jews in the Kaunas ghetto are boarded onto trucks during a deportation campaign to either a work camp near Kaunas or to Estonia 1943. USHMM



Jews from the Lodz ghetto board deportation trains for the Kulmhof (Chełmno) death camp (1942–1944). USHMM

EXERCISE:

Look at the photographs and answer the following questions:

- Who was subject to deportation?
- What personal effects could be taken?
- What were the conditions of travel?
- Who escorted the deportees?

Search for additional information and think:

- Where were the Jews deported?
- Did all deportees immediately reach a death camp?
- What were the stages in the deportation of Jews?
- Were the deportees aware of where they were going?
- How did bystanders react to the view of columns of Jewish deportees walking down streets?

Unit 4

Deportation of Jews from the Krakow ghetto to the death camp in Belzec (June 1942).

The streets were full of SS troops. Leaving home was prohibited. The Germans entered apartments and brought out adults and children. We stood with Lusya at the window. The terrible scenes we witnessed were indescribable. People were thrown out of windows. [...] They threw an elderly man with a long white beard out of our building. It was said that he was a rabbi and that his entire white beard was covered in blood. Someone was constantly led and kicked. The Germans were wild, shooting the entire time. The street was full of blood.

Source: Esther Friedman, *Daleka droga do domu*, Kraków 1997.

The first people come out to Zgoda Square. Pushed, kicked and beaten with a stream like shadows in a peaceful slow step, serious and with dignity. Others run in groups or individually, while others appear to be dazed. Around them are German policeman, each with a rifle in hand, fingers on triggers, ready to shoot. The crowd moves under my windows. Everything takes place with constant screaming, merciless beating, kicking and shooting.

Source: Tadeusz Pankiewicz, *Pharmacy in the Krakow Ghetto*, Kraków 2003.



Three elderly Jews walk arm-in-arm through the streets of Krakow during deportation from the Krakow ghetto to the death camp in Belzec (June 1942). USHMM



A column of Jews marches with bundles down a main street in Krakow during the liquidation deportation from the Krakow ghetto to the death camp in Belzec (June 1942). SS guards oversee the deportation. USHMM

EXERCISE:

Read the recollections, look at the photographs and answer the following questions:

- How did the deportation of Jews from the Krakow ghetto to the Belzec death camp transpire?
- How did the Jews behave, and how did the German policeman and SS soldiers?
- Why did the Germans murder the elderly and ill on the spot?

Search for additional information and think:

- How many deportations were there in the Krakow ghetto? What was their purpose and effect?
- Where were Jews deported from the ghetto brought and what was their fate?
- When did final liquidation of the Krakow ghetto take place?
- What well-known people passed through the Krakow ghetto? How were they able to survive the war?

Unit 5

Jews from Sub Carpathian Rus await selection on a ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. USHMM



EXERCISE:

Look at the photographs and answer the following questions:

- In what conditions were Hungarian Jews transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau?
- Were they aware of where they were heading and what awaited them?
- What took place immediately upon arrival?
- What did the selection of prisoners look like?
- Who was sent to work in the camp and who to the gas chamber?
- What happened to personal belongings of deported Jews?

Search for additional information and think:

- Who, when and at whose instruction took these photographs?
- What was the history of Lili Jacob's album and what significance does it have for us today?

Unit 6



A Magirus-Deutz truck. Similar vehicles were used as mobile gas chambers in which people were killed with poisonous fumes from vehicle engines. Public domain



A gas chamber at KL Lublin in Majdanek. The State Museum at Majdanek

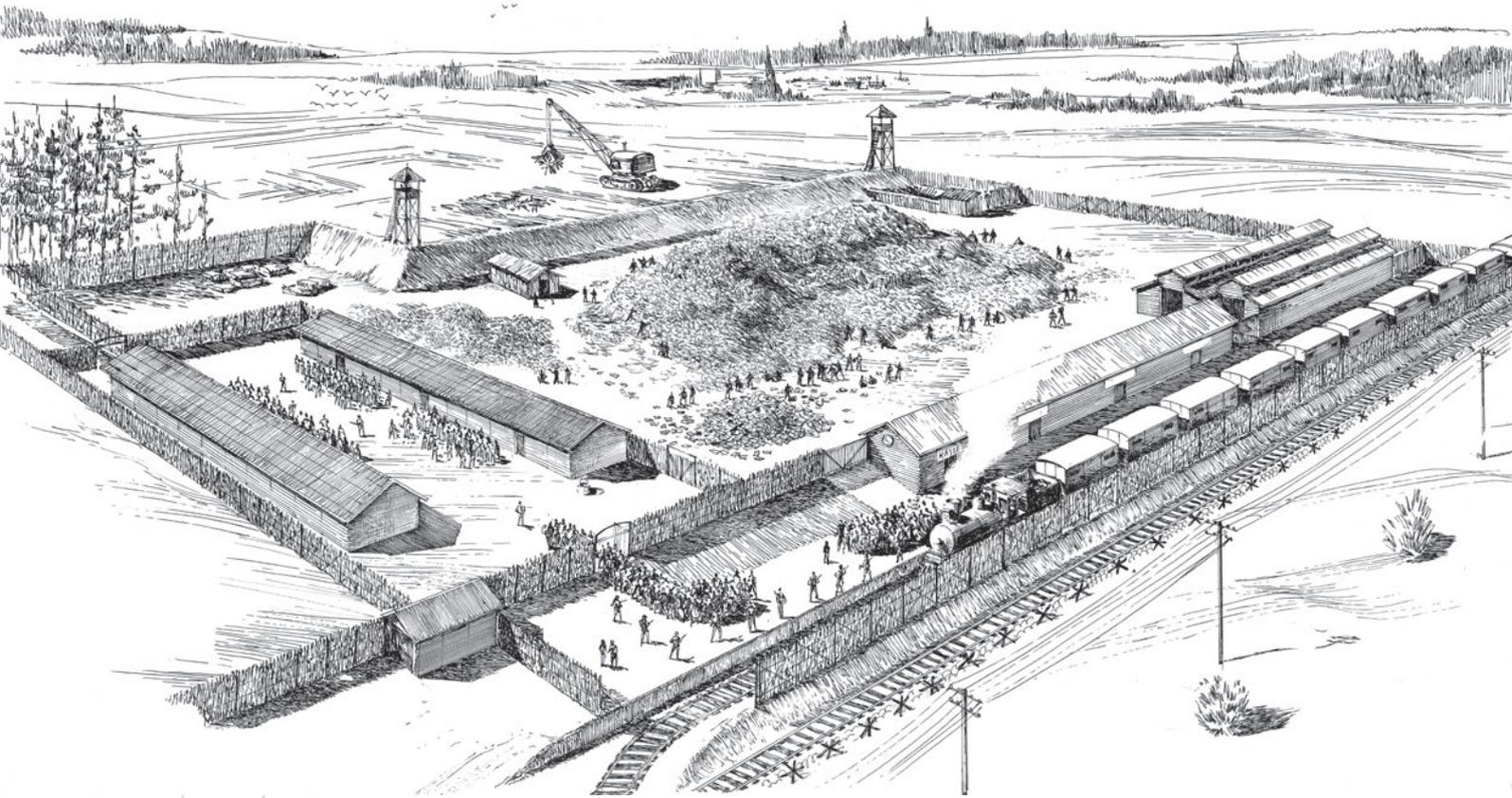
EXERCISE:

Look at the photographs and answer the following questions:

- What did mobile and stationary gas chambers look like?
- Why did stationary gas chambers look like baths?

Search for additional information and think:

- Why did the Germans decide to use gas chambers for the mass killing of Jews?
- Who were the first victims of the Nazis murdered in gas chambers?
- In which death camps were mobile gas chambers used, and in which camps stationary gas chambers?



A plan of the death camp in Treblinka drawn by Samuel Willenberg (1923–2016). The author of the drawing was a sculptor and participant of the prisoner uprising at the death camp in Treblinka on 2 August 1943. After escaping from Treblinka, he returned to Warsaw where he searched for his father, a well-known painter. He took part in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. After the war, he served in the Polish army for a time and subsequently became involved in a search for Jewish children given to Polish families for hiding and in organising illegal immigration to Palestine. He lived in Israel and authored the memoir titled *Revolt in Treblinka* and a series of sculptures depicting victims and scenes from the Treblinka death camp. Public domain

EXERCISE:

Look at the photograph and answer the following questions:

- What did the instant death camp in Treblinka look like?
- What are its parts? What did they serve?
- Why did the Germans build a temporary ramp and a railway station?
- What were the subsequent stages of murdering people in the camp?

Search for additional information and think:

- What is the history of the death camp in Treblinka?
- Who was Samuel Willenberg and what was his fate?

Unit 8

Nazi German concentration and death camps in occupied Europe in 1939–1945

- ▲ Death camps
- Larger concentration camps
- Other subcamps



EXERCISE:

Analyse the map and answer the following questions:

- Where were the concentration and death camps primarily located?
- What was the connection between their location and the number of Jews in a given area?

Unit 9

Excerpts from a testimony describing the experiences of Jews during the 'third wave' of the Holocaust called Judenjagdt (a hunt for Jews) by the Germans. The target of those searches was Jews hiding on the 'Aryan side' who had fled prior to the liquidation of ghettos and deportations to Nazi concentration camps. Germans searched for Jews starting from early 1942 with the help of auxiliary civilian formations.

An excerpt from the testimony by Adina Blady-Szwajgier:

It was never known who now is this 'friend' with whom in prehistoric times one spoke 'man-to-man' on the street or in a coffee shop. He could still be a human wanting to extend a helping hand – there were such people. He could be human enough to glide with unseeing eyes over a once familiar face, which signified – I do not know you, do not want to know that you are here and will tell no one. But, he could also be someone who will come up and say: 'Come, Jew,' and lead straight to German hands or one who says 'pay for silence' and take one's last shirt. Everything was there. So, there was fear.

An excerpt from the testimony by Józef Fedorczy:

With my own eyes I saw Lucjan Matusiak and the gendarmes hunt down Jews. I saw him leading three Jews: Czerwony, Złotkowski and another one whose name escapes me, all of them from our village. Matusiak, who led the Jews, knocked on doors and ordered them to take shovels and to follow him. Later, he told us [Poles] to go into the formerly Jewish houses and throw mattresses, bed covers, and furniture out into the street. In the meantime, the gendarmes stood over the Jews, who dug a grave for themselves. Then, Fredek, the chief gendarme, shot those Jew.

Source: AIPN; Testimony by Józef Fedorczy

The German police and auxiliaries in civilian clothing prepare to execute naked Jewish men and boys lined up at the edge of a mass grave, Sniatyn (Chernivtsi County, Ukraine), 11 May 1943. USHMM



EXERCISE:

Read the text, look at the photograph and answer the following questions:

- Why could a meeting with a pre-war acquaintance prove dangerous?
- According to Adina Blady-Szwajgier, what behaviour of an accidentally encountered friend could be deemed human?
- How did Józef Fedorczy describe the ‘hunt for Jews’ that took place in his hometown?

Which of the events that he describes does the photograph illustrate?

- What role did the German police play in that campaign and what was the role of auxiliary units?
- Did the local civilian population witness executions of the captured Jews?

Search for additional information and think:

- What did Jews hiding on the ‘Aryan side’ fear most?
- What auxiliary units supported the Germans in their search for hiding Jews?
- How did the local population react to that?

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