

Holocaust Notes



Pre-War

- Jews were living in every country in Europe before the Nazis came into power in 1933
- Approximately 9 million Jews found in all walks of life: farmers, factory workers, business people, doctors, teachers, and craftsmen
- The Soviet Union and Poland had the largest populations



Anti-Semitism



- Jews have faced prejudice and discrimination for over 2,000 years.
- Jews were scapegoats for many problems, such as the “Black Death,” which killed thousands in Europe during the Middle Ages.
- Political leaders used anti-Semitism to portray Jews as a race rather than a religion.

Weimar Republic

- After Germany lost World War I, a new government formed and became the Weimar Republic.
- Many Germans were upset that they lost the war and had to repay (make reparations) a total of \$70 billion to all of the countries they had “damaged” in the war.
- Extremists blamed Jews for Germany’s defeat in WWI.

Totalitarian State



- Totalitarianism is the total control of a country in the government's hands
- It rules using fear and paranoia, and crushes individual's rights.
- During this time in Germany, Adolf Hitler and the Nazis passed laws which restricted the rights of Jews: the Nuremberg Laws.

Totalitarian State



- Jews were prohibited from marrying persons of “German or related blood”
- Jews were required to carry identity cards, stamped with a red “J,” which allowed police to easily identify them.
- The Nazis used propaganda to justify the Nuremberg Laws and promote their anti-Semitic ideas.

Persecution

The Nazi plan for dealing with the “Jewish Question” evolved in three steps:

1. Expulsion: Get them out of Germany
2. Containment: Put them all together in one place – ghettos
3. “Final Solution”: annihilation

Persecution

Nazis targeted other individuals and groups in addition to the Jews:



- Gypsies (Sinti and Roma)
- Homosexual men
- Jehovah's Witness
- Handicapped Germans
- Poles
- Political protestors

U.S. and World Response

- The Evian Conference took place in the summer of 1938 in France.
- 32 countries met to discuss what to do about the Jewish refugees who were trying to leave Germany and Austria.
- Despite voicing feelings of sympathy, most countries made excuses for not accepting more refugees.



World War II

- Germany began World War II when it invaded Poland in 1939.
- German forces conquered most of Europe in the next two years.
- The Axis powers included Germany, Italy, and Japan
- The Allied powers included the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union, China, and the United States

Final Solution

- The Nazis aimed to control the Jewish population by forcing them to live in areas that were only for Jews, called *ghettos*.
- Ghettos were established across all of Nazi occupied Europe, especially in areas where there was already a large Jewish population.



Final Solution



- Ghettos were closed by barbed wire or walls and guarded by SS or local police.
- Life in the ghettos was hard: food was rationed; several families often shared a small space; disease spread rapidly; heating and sanitation were limited.

Final Solution

- In January of 1942, high-ranking Nazis met at the Wannsee Conference
- The Final Solution was the plan to establish death camps with gas chambers.
- There were six death camps: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Chelmno, Sobibor, Majdanek, and Belzec.

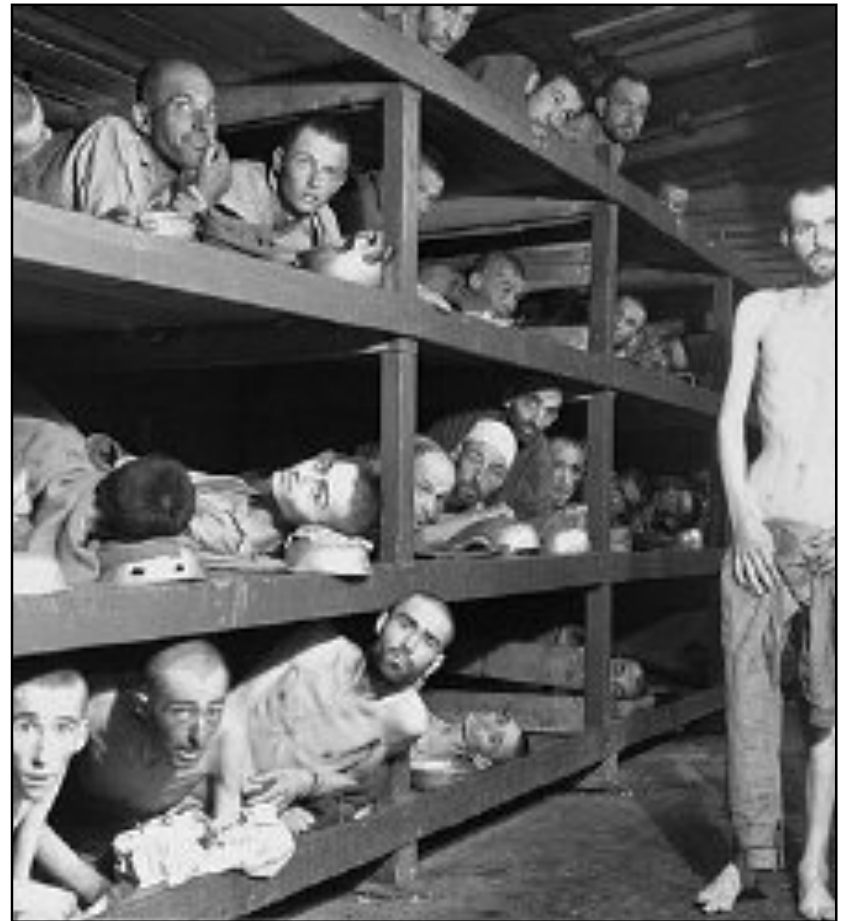
Final Solution

There were many other concentration and labor camps where people died from exposure, lack of food, extreme working conditions, torture, and executions.



Aftermath

- Soviet soldiers were the first to liberate camp prisoners on July 23, 1944.
- British, Canadian, American, and French troops also freed camps.
- Prisoners looked like “living skeletons” and many died even after liberation.



Aftermath

- Many of the camp prisoners had nowhere to go.
- They stayed in Displaced Persons camps in Germany, which were run by the Allies.
- Many Jews relocated to the newly formed Jewish state of Israel.
- U.S. President Truman allowed Jewish refugees to enter the US without normal immigration restrictions.

Aftermath



- The Nuremberg Trials brought some of those responsible to justice.
- There were 22 Nazi criminals tried by the Allies, 12 were sentenced to death.
- Most claimed that they were only following orders.
- National trials followed throughout Europe.