

WHAT WAS THE HOLOCAUST?



The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators. The Nazis came to power in Germany in January 1933. They believed that the Germans belonged to a race that was "superior" to all others. They claimed that the Jews belonged to a race that was "inferior" and a threat to the so-called German racial community.



Before 1933

World War I (1914–1918) devastated Europe and changed borders. Millions of soldiers and civilians were dead or injured. Property and manufacturing were severely damaged.

The Treaty of Versailles punished Germany for the war. They had to:

- Give up land
- Dismantle their military
- Pay huge reparations
- Take responsibility for the war.

The Great Depression added to the misery in Germany. In 1933, over 9 million Jews lived in Europe (1.7% of the total population). German Jews numbered about 500,000 or less than 1% of Germany's population.



1933–1938

Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933. Under Nazi rule, German citizens lost their rights and democracy ended. Concentration camps imprisoned political opponents, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others believed to be "dangerous." Propaganda spread Nazi racist ideas. Hundreds of new laws limited the freedom and took away the rights and citizenship of German Jews.



1939–1941

The Holocaust took place during the "fog of war" brought about by World War II. Nazi Germany started the war on September 1, 1939, invading Poland. Germany and its allies conquered many countries in Europe. They took over Jewish property, sometimes required Jews to wear identifying armbands, and set up ghettos and forced-labor camps. In June 1941, Germany invaded its former ally, the

Soviet Union. As the troops marched through the Soviet Union, mobile killing squads and local collaborators carried out mass shootings of Jews and political opponents. By 1941, gas vans were also being used to commit mass murder.



1942–1945

Although Nazi Germany was fighting a war on multiple fronts, they also moved forward with their plan for the murder of Europe’s Jews – the Final Solution. Millions of Jews were deported from ghettos and work camps to Nazi killing centers in Poland. There, many were murdered with poison gas. It wasn’t until the final months of the war that Allied soldiers encountered the crimes committed by the Nazis and their collaborators.



After 1945

When Allied troops entered the concentration camps, they found dead bodies and human ashes. Six million European Jews had been murdered in a systematic plan of genocide—the Holocaust. There were also thousands of survivors suffering from starvation, exposure and disease. Most had no families or homes to which they could return. And many countries had immigration laws which prevented them from emigrating. These survivors were

provided shelter in displaced persons (DP) camps. Some of those liberators and survivors came or returned to Georgia. They share their experiences in the hope that this can never happen again.

Here are some of them...

 <p>Henry Birnbrey</p>	 <p>John Yates</p>	 <p>W.A. Scott III</p>	 <p>Manuela Mendels Bornstein</p>	 <p>Murray Lynn</p>	 <p>Tosia Szechter Schneider</p>
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499 words

WWI CARTOON, 1918. 'And this is no scrap of paper.' Comment on the close of World War I from the New York Herald, depicting French Marshal Foch presenting Germany with a demand for reparations on the point of his sword. Cartoon by William Allen Rogers, 7 November 1918.

Children from the Marysin colony who were rounded-up during the "Gehsperre" action in the Lodz ghetto, walk in a line to the trucks that will transport them out of the ghetto.

Photographer

Mendel Grosman

Date

September 1942

Locale

Lodz, [Lodz] Poland

Variant Locale

Litzmannstadt

Photo Designation

GHETTOS (MAJOR) -- LODZ (Poland) -- Deportations -- "Gehsperre" Aktion

Photo Credit

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Jacob Igra

US Army medics help evacuate ill and starving survivors. Buchenwald, Germany, April 1, 1945. —*US Holocaust Memorial Museum*