



Holocaust

What was the Holocaust?

The term *holocaust* can be used to refer to any catastrophic event, but when capitalized the word refers to the Nazis' program of killing the Jewish people under their control. The Nazis called their extermination plan the "Final Solution." Six million Jews died in the Holocaust, along with members of other groups the Nazis considered undesirable.

What was the Nazi policy toward German and other European Jews in the 1930s?

After Hitler gained control of the German government in 1933, he made laws forcing Jews to leave German towns and cities. Many were forced to leave Germany and to give up their homes and businesses. As the Nazis gained control over other European countries, they persecuted Jews in those countries as well. The Jewish people in Poland were forced to live in segregated communities known as ghettos, where they had limited access to food and medical supplies.

What were the concentration camps?

As the Nazis conquered more territory, they put the last phase of their program into effect. They forced Jews to leave their homes and board railroad freight cars. They told them they were being resettled in the eastern territories, but instead the Nazis sent them to prisons called concentration camps. These camps included Auschwitz and Treblinka in Poland. In some of these camps the inmates performed slave labor and were killed when they became too weak to work. Other camps were extermination camps, where prisoners were marched to gas chambers and murdered with poison gas.

Did the Nazis meet opposition as they carried out the "Final Solution"?

Resistance to the Nazi plan had to be secret because Nazi punishment was brutal. Opposition was usually in small acts of defiance by courageous individuals. Some neighbors hid their Jewish friends in attics or cellars. Bulgaria and Denmark did not cooperate with the Nazi plan. In Bulgaria the government did not send its Jewish citizens to the concentration camps as ordered. The people of Denmark smuggled over 5,000 Danish Jews into the neutral country of Sweden. Nazi Party member Oskar Schindler saved the lives of over 1,300 Jews in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Still millions died. As the Allied troops pushed into the territories the Germans had conquered, they liberated the surviving concentration camp inmates.

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

Directions: Fill in the numbered blanks with the correct terms.

The Nazis called their plan for exterminating the Jews the (1) _____.

In addition to killing approximately (2) _____ Jews, the Nazis also executed members of other groups they considered (3) _____.

German leader (4) _____ began oppressing German Jews soon after taking control of the country in 1933. After the 1939 invasion of Poland, Polish Jews were forced to live in crowded (5) _____. During the last phase of the Nazi program, Jews were sent to (6) _____ including the Polish camps of (7) _____ and (8) _____.

Many Jews were killed with (9) _____.

Some people chose to resist the Nazis. They hid their Jewish friends during the war. The country of (10) _____ smuggled its Jewish citizens to Sweden. A member of the Nazi Party, (11) _____, saved the lives of many Jews in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

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