

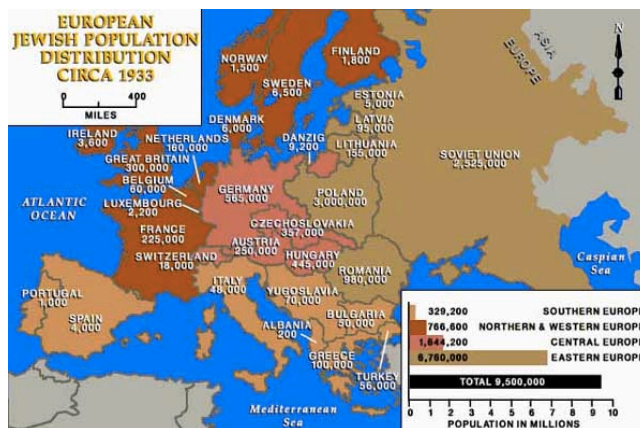
The Holocaust

Between 1933 and 1945, the German government led by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party carried out the systematic persecution and murder of Europe's Jews.

This genocide is now known as the Holocaust.

Pre-War

- Jews were living in every country in Europe before the Nazis came into power in 1933 (totaling approx. 9 million)



- Poland and the Soviet Union had the largest populations
- Jews could be found in all walks of life: farmers, factory workers, business people, doctors, teachers, and craftsmen

Antisemitism

- Jews have faced prejudice and discrimination for over 2,000 years.
- Jews were scapegoats for many problems. For example, people blamed Jews for the “Black Death” that killed thousands in Europe during the Middle Ages.
- In the Russian Empire in the late 1800s, the government incited attacks on Jewish neighborhoods called *pogroms*. Mobs murdered Jews and looted their homes and stores.
- Political leaders who used antisemitism as a tool relied on the ideas of racial science to portray Jews as a race instead of a religion.
- Nazi teachers began to apply the “principles” of racial science by measuring skull size and nose length and recording students’ eye color and hair to determine whether students belonged to the “Aryan race.”

Antisemitism

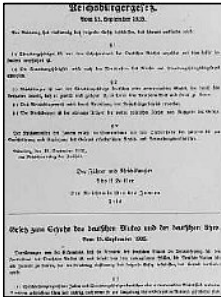


A woman reads a boycott sign posted on the window of a Jewish-owned department store.

On April 1, 1933, the Nazis initiated a boycott of Jewish shops and businesses across Germany.

Antisemitism

In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews of their German citizenship. They were prohibited from marrying or having sexual relations with persons of “German or related blood.”



An instructional chart distinguishes individuals with pure “German blood” (left column), “Mixed blood” (second and third columns), and Jews (right two columns).



Jews, like all other German citizens, were required to carry identity cards, but their cards were stamped with a red “J.” This allowed police to easily identify them.

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

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

- Gypsies
- Homosexual men
- Jehovah’s Witness
- Handicapped Germans
- Poles
- Political dissidents

Persecution



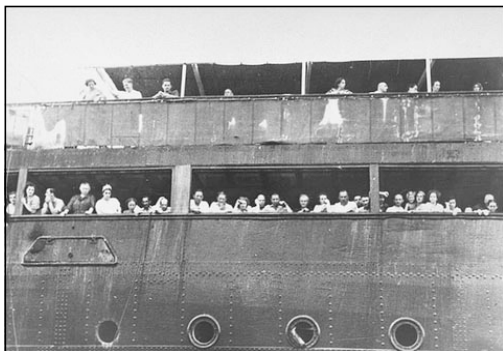
- Kristallnacht was the “Night of Broken Glass” on November 9-10, 1938
- Germans attacked synagogues and Jewish homes and businesses



- Einsatzgruppen were mobile killing squads made up of Nazi (SS) units and police.
- They killed Jews in mass shooting actions throughout eastern Poland and the western Soviet Union.

US and World Response

- Evian Conference: 32 countries met in the summer of 1938 in Evian, France to discuss what to do about the Jewish refugees who were leaving Germany and Austria.
- Despite voicing feelings of sympathy, most countries made excuses for not accepting more refugees.
- Some American congressmen proposed the Wagner-Rogers Bill, which offered to let 20,000 endangered Jewish refugee children into the country; the bill was not supported in the Senate.



The SS St. Louis, carrying refugees with Cuban visas, were denied admittance both in Cuba and in Florida. After being turned back to Europe, most of the passengers perished in the Holocaust.

The Final Solution

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



- Many ghettos were closed by barbed wire or walls and were guarded by SS or local police.
- Jews sometimes had to use bridges to go over Aryan streets that ran through the ghetto.

The Final Solution

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

Within the concentration camp system, colored, triangular badges identified various prisoner categories, as seen in this image of a roll call at the Buchenwald concentration camp.



