



SHOAH

HOW WAS IT HUMANLY POSSIBLE?

1933 1934 1935 1936 1937 1938 1939 1940 1941 1942 1943 1944 1945

SHOAH - The Holocaust

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**Remember only that I was innocent and, just like you, mortal on that day,
I, too, had had a face marked by rage, by pity and joy,
quite simply, a human face!**

Benjamin Fondane, murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1944



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC, USA

Jewish Life between the Two World Wars. For almost 2,000 years, Aspiring to integrate into all spheres of life and to share in the destiny of the Jewish people lived as a minority among the nations. In the modern era, the Jews struggled to acquire equal civil rights, joined political movements, and underwent an accelerated process of modernization.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, USA

The Joseph Yehoshua Maccabi Sports Archive, Kiryat Haim, Haifa, Israel

How many look up to him [Hitler] as their savior... to him who rescues... the scholar, the clergyman, the worker, the unemployed, who rescues them from the parties back into the nation.

Louise Solmitz, German teacher, 1933



Adolf Hitler among his supporters, 1930's, Germany.

The Rise to Power of Nazism in Germany. In the aftermath of the First World War (1914-1918), Europe found itself in a state of political, economic, and social upheaval. Various ideological movements offered radical alternatives to liberal values from both the right and the left, aspiring to attain total superiority of the nation and race, on the one hand, or class, on the other. At the same time, the creation of ethno-national states undermined the standing of some minorities throughout

Europe, particularly the Jews, who were often accused of treachery and of endangering the nation. In Germany, this process gradually strengthened the National-Socialist (Nazi) party, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. In 1933, following democratic elections and with the support of the conservatives, the Nazis rose to power, and immediately embarked upon a totalitarian, racist, and antisemitic revolution.



Poster of the German-Jewish War Veterans' Association (RJF) emphasizing the 12,000 Jewish soldiers that fell in World War I, to counter antisemitic propaganda portraying Jews as having evaded army service.

My fiance was killed in action in 1914. My brothers Max and Julius Cohn were killed in 1916 and 1918. My remaining brother, Willy, came back blind... All three received the Iron Cross for their service to the country. But now... pamphlets saying, "Jews, get out!" are being distributed on the streets... Is incitement against Jews a sign of courage or one of cowardice, when Jews comprise only one percent of the German people?

Letter from Frieda Friedmann to President Paul von Hindenburg, Germany, February 1933

A Hanukkah Menorah in the window of the home of Rabbi Akiva and Rachel Posner, Kiel, Germany

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He [the Aryan] alone... represents the prototype of all that we understand by the word "man." The Jew is the antiman.

Adolf Hitler

Nazi antisemitic poster. The Jew is portrayed as a parasite that aspires to control the world

Nazi Antisemitic Ideology. Nazi ideology, which was based on a racist-antisemitic world view, perceived the Jews as a destructive race that poisons and undermines the foundations of human existence. Drawing as well from traditional European anti-Judaism, the Nazis viewed Jews and Judaism as a satanic force seeking world

domination, fomenting social revolutions, and abetting communism, exploitative capitalism, and the democratic states. The Nazis considered the Germans to be the master race, and sought to create a new world order under their leadership – a world without Jews.



Jakob Feibelmann was the owner of a successful factory that made aluminum foil and a member of the city council of Memmingen, Bavaria. He had served as an officer in the German army in World War I. After the Nazis rose to power, Jakob was arrested, but was eventually released thanks to his position in the community. At the same time, his daughter Miriam began to suffer from antisemitic harassment in school. In 1934, Jakob began to receive anonymous hate-filled postcards each week. In total, the Feibelmann family received 46 such postcards. Jakob Feibelmann and his family fled to the Land of Israel in 1935.

Jakob and Irma Feibelmann



"Outcomes of the Enlightenment
No girl will fall into his trap no more
he drinks his Liqueur alone hencefore"

"When finally you impertinent Jew plan to go back to Palestine?"



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This was my farewell from everything German. My internal farewell from what had been my fatherland... I could no longer be German.

Memoirs of Edwin Landau, a German Jew who immigrated to the Land of Israel



German citizens watching the burning of the Horowitz Synagogue in Frankfurt am Main on *Kristallnacht*, Germany, November 10, 1938

Reich Jewry under the Nazis. Immediately upon taking power in 1933, the Nazis launched a process of growing discrimination against Jews. They cut the Jews off from their surroundings and economically dispossessed them. In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws revoked the Jews' German citizenship. During the 1930s, hundreds of thousands of Jews sought to emigrate, leaving the homeland that had betrayed them, but only a limited number were able to find asylum elsewhere. Others created alternative frameworks, especially in the areas of culture, education, and social aid, and deepened their Jewish identity.

During 1938, the situation worsened, with further economic dispossession, the forced emigration of Jews from Germany, and increased violence against Jews. This culminated in the November pogrom - *Kristallnacht* - when thousands of synagogues, Jewish homes, and Jewish businesses were burned and destroyed all over Germany. Tens of thousands of Jews were arrested and deported to concentration camps and numerous Jews were killed. Jewish life in Germany had become untenable.



Nazis post a sign on a Jewish-owned shop: "Germans! Protect Yourself. Don't Buy from Jews," Germany, April 1, 1933. On April 1, 1933, the Nazis organized the first nationwide antisemitic action - an economic boycott that was part of a deliberate policy to isolate and ostracize Germany's Jewish citizens.



A Jewish man and a Christian woman are humiliated in public for having an intimate relationship. Cuxhaven, Germany, July 27, 1933. The Nuremberg Laws, the racist legislation passed in 1935, forbade sexual relations between Jews and Aryans.



The Refugee, 1939
Felix Nussbaum
Murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1944

I have never been so humiliated in my life as when I looked through the gate to the square and saw the happy, smiling faces of passersby, laughing at our misfortune.

David Sierakowski, Lodz, Poland, October 4, 1939
Murdered in the Lodz Ghetto 1943



Women wearing the yellow star marking them as Jews, Vienna, Austria, 1941

The Occupation of Europe. World War II began when Germany invaded Poland, on September 1, 1939. Within two years, Germany controlled most of Europe and North Africa. The Nazis dictated a "New Order," in which the Jews had no place. The Jews were exploited and oppressed and their rights denied; they were separated from all the other populations and violently deported to forced-labor camps. The Nazis succeeded in mobilizing local governmental apparatuses and completely uproot them from the civil, social, and economic spheres.



Slovak militiamen shearing a Jew's beard, Stropkov, Slovakia, May 21, 1942



Humiliation of Jews during the "Black Sabbath", Saloniki, Greece, July 11, 1942

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Suddenly we see ourselves penned in on all sides. We are segregated and separated from the world... driven out of the society of the human race.

Chaim A. Kaplan, Warsaw Ghetto, Poland, November 17, 1940
Murdered in Treblinka extermination camp, August 1942



Starving Jewish children in the streets of the Warsaw Ghetto, Poland, September 19, 1941.

Ghettos. In many places in Eastern Europe, the Nazis implemented a gradual process involving the imprisonment of the Jews in areas designated exclusively for Jews – ghettos – at the head of which the Germans imposed coerced Jewish leadership. The ghettos were characterized by extreme overcrowding, hunger, disease, forced labor, and the deaths of hundreds of thousands. Despite these unbearable conditions, the Jews made every effort to survive - *iberleben*, as they called it in Yiddish.

In underground conditions, youth movements in many places continued their educational activities clandestinely, people engaged in lively political activities, welfare and cultural institutions were established, religious activities were held, and Jews wrote diaries to serve as testimony for the coming generations. Their sense of isolation was further exacerbated by the alienation and indifference exhibited by many among the surrounding populations.



A public kitchen of the Jewish Mutual Aid Society, Warsaw Ghetto, Poland



A boy working in the Jewish cemetery, pulls a body out of the morgue for burial, Warsaw, Poland, September 19, 1941



Geography class in the Lodz Ghetto, Poland

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**I am twenty years old. Oh, how lovely is the world around me...
Are these my final moments?
Revenge! May all those who read my last request take revenge.**

Last testament written on the walls of a synagogue where the Jews of the ghetto were gathered before their execution, Kovel, Poland, 1942



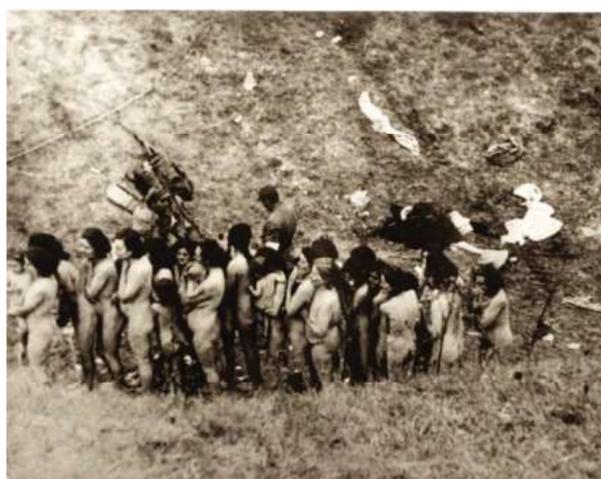
A photograph sent from the front by a German soldier. Written on the back of the photo: "Jews in an Aktion, Ivangporedj, Ukraine, 1942"

A Murderous Turning Point. On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany launched a surprise attack on the Soviet Union. This attack was a critical turning point in World War II and lethal for the fate of the Jews, who were perceived by the Nazis as the embodiment of Communism. The campaign was waged in the form of an all-out ideological and racial war, and was characterized by extensive attacks on the civilian

population and the Germans' murderous policy against the Jews. The *Einsatzgruppen*, special German death squads, together with the German army and police aided by local collaborators, rounded up Jews at sites near their towns and cities and shot them to death. Approximately 1.5 million Jews were murdered in this way.



Skeden, Latvia, 1941



Mizocz, Poland, 1941



Vinnitsa, Ukraine, July 1941

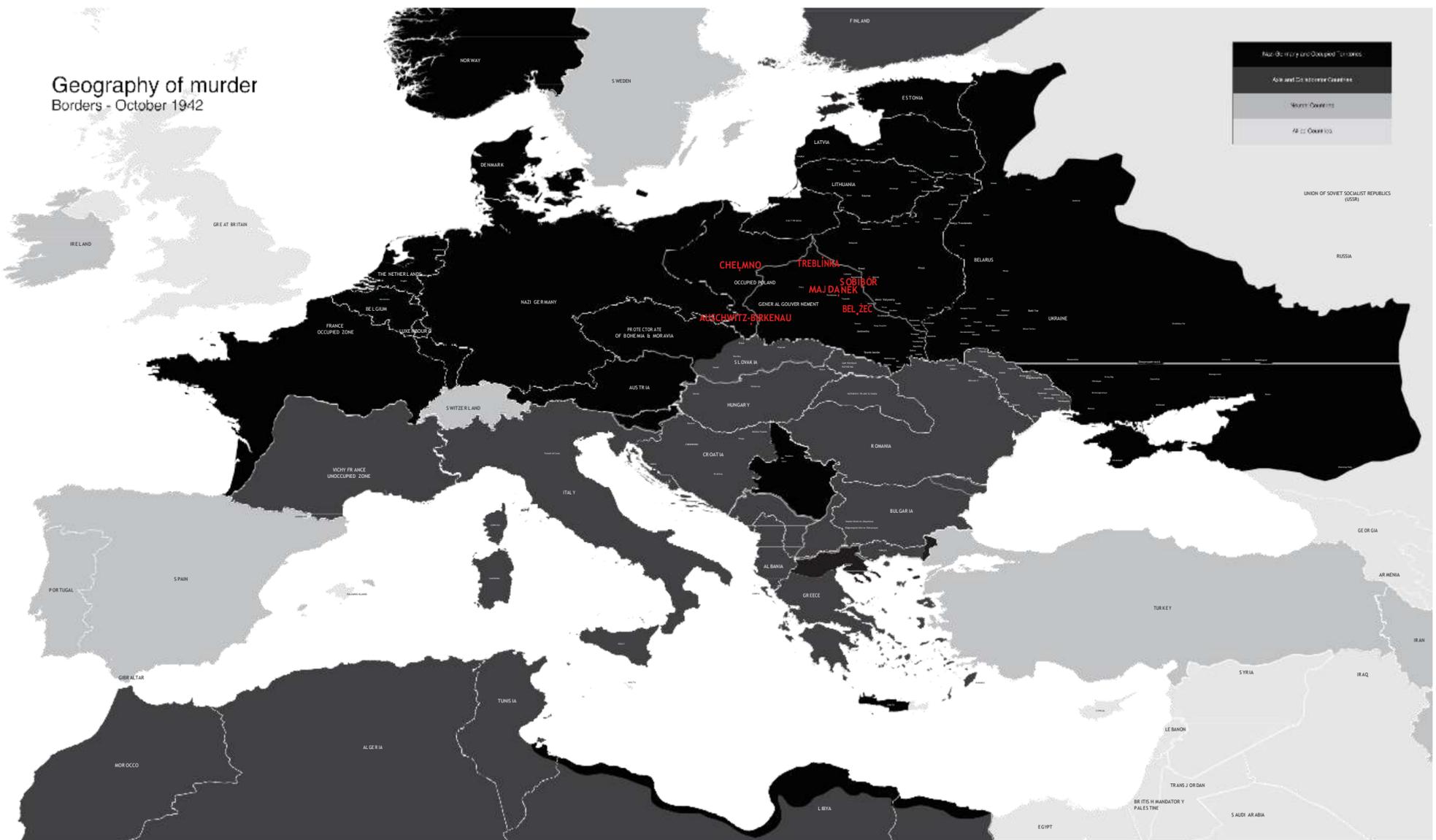
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Plonsk Ghetto, December 14, 1942

Tomorrow we will be heading towards the Great Unknown in full awareness and at peace. If we are meant to live, all the better; and if not...

Abramek, Poland



"The Final Solution": Deportations to Extermination Camps. During the latter part of 1941, the shooting murders evolved into an overall comprehensive, systematic plan that the Nazis called "The Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe." Nazi Germany designated the Jews of Europe for total extermination. To this end, the Nazis mobilized the entire apparatus of the government, military, SS (the ideological army of the Nazi Party), police, and industry. Collaborating regimes along with members of the local population in the occupied countries also enlisted in this effort.

Millions of Jews from all over Europe were rounded up and deported on freight trains to extermination camps – industrial murder facilities in which the Jews were gassed to death. During the entire process, the Germans deceived the victims as to the real purpose of their journey. In this way, some three million Jews were murdered in the extermination camps, including **Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Belzec, Chełmno, Majdanek, and Sobibor.** Nearly six million Jews were murdered throughout Europe in 1941-1945.



From the Warsaw Ghetto, Poland, to the **Treblinka** and **Majdanek** extermination camps, April-May, 1943



From Thrace, annexed by Bulgaria, to the **Treblinka** extermination camp, March 1943



From Westerbork transition camp, the Netherlands, to **Auschwitz-Birkenau** extermination camp



Birkenau entrance gate, Poland, 1945

Auschwitz-Birkenau. Auschwitz was established as a concentration camp for enemies of the Nazi occupation regime. During 1942-1944, the camp also became the principal extermination center for European Jewry. At Birkenau (Auschwitz II), the Nazis erected four murder facilities, each with undressing rooms, gas chambers, and crematoria. Jews were sent to Birkenau in transports from all over Europe. Most were exterminated upon arrival.

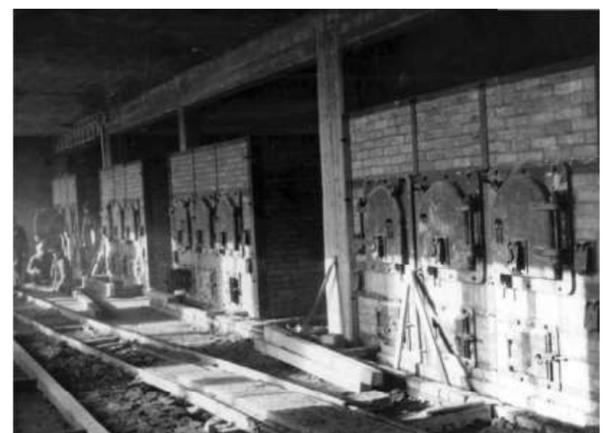
Only a few survived the selection, and remained alive temporarily as camp inmates and slave laborers. Approximately 1,120,000 persons were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, which is remembered as a symbol of the Holocaust, of absolute evil and human suffering, of humiliation and murder. Nearly 1,000,000 of those murdered were Jews, including more than 200,000 children.



Jews from Carpathian Ruthenia, Hungary, undergoing the selection process by the Nazis, Birkenau, May 27-28, 1944.



Unsuspecting Jewish women and children on their way to the gas chambers following "selection", Birkenau, May 27-28, 1944.



The ovens for burning victims' bodies, Crematorium III at Birkenau, 1943

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**Don't rush to fight and die...we need to save lives.
It is more important to save Jews than to kill Germans.**

Tuvia Bielski



Partisans in the *Family Camp* under the command of Tuvia Bielski. The Naliboki forests, Belarus, May 1944.

Jewish Responses. During the Holocaust, the Jews found themselves abandoned and forsaken by most of the population among whom they lived. As a result, and in view of the limited options available to them, Jews searched for ways to resist both personally and collectively: hiding and escape; social-welfare, religious, and cultural activity; armed resistance; and organizing rescue missions for other Jews.

Throughout Europe, Jews attempted in various ways to assist those fighting against the Nazis, either by joining partisan groups, some of which did not allow Jews to enter their ranks, or by establishing Jewish underground groups. In the Warsaw Ghetto and other ghettos, underground Jewish groups engaged in armed resistance, once they realized that they had little chance of survival.



German soldiers arrest Jewish rebels during the suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Poland, April-May 1943.

In response to the final liquidation of the ghetto, the underground organizations launched an armed uprising, supported by residents who were entrenched in bunkers and hiding places.

In reaction to the Jewish uprising, the Germans systematically set fire to the ghetto buildings, which quickly became a firetrap. Nevertheless, the Jews of the ghetto held out for a month.



Children and nurses in "De Creche", Children's home, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

The home served as a transit point for Jewish children designated for deportation. Henriette Henriques Pimentel, the home's headmistress, together with Walter Suskind of the Jewish leadership in the Netherlands, made contact with the Dutch underground, and managed to smuggle hundreds of the children into hiding.

In 1943 the home was liquidated. Henrietta and the remaining children were deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp.

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Anne Frank, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 1940
 In July 1942, 13-year old Anne Frank, together with her family and others, went into hiding with the help of Dutch men. For two years she kept a diary, in which she recorded her thoughts and feelings. On August 4, 1944, as a result of betrayal, the entire group was arrested and deported to Auschwitz, Krakow. Anne was later sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp where she was murdered in March 1945.

The Majority Society's Stance towards the Jews. The fate of Jews in the occupied countries was decided not only by German policy, but also by the stance of the majority society. The local population reacted in diverse ways to the environment of violence and terror in which the Jews were the target of persecution and murder. Some took part in the murders along with the Germans, while others helped Jews. Many people gloated over the Jews' desperate plight, and sought some profit

by informing on them, blackmailing them, or looting their property. In most cases, the local population reacted with apathy toward the murder of Jews. Both traditional and modern antisemitic feelings, the atmosphere of fear imposed by the Nazis, and conformism led most Europeans to consciously deny the obvious crimes against their Jewish neighbors who had lived in their midst for centuries.



Deportation of Jews to Transnistria by Romanian authorities and local collaborators, Briceva, Romania, 1941



Ukrainians abusing a Jewish woman Lvov, Poland, July 1941



German soldiers and local population witnessing Jews being murdered by Lithuanian nationalists, Kovno, Lithuania, June 27, 1941

We were clerks, farmers, workers, students, priests, nuns - we were simple persons, our deeds were unsophisticated, yielding to vileness would have been a dis grace.

Anna Bandžáková-Kučárová, Slovakia



Julie De-Bast with Micheline Wierzchowski, Brussels, Belgium, 1943

In 1942, Julie De Bast rescued Anna Meiers and Micheline Wierzchowski from a Catholic institute after learning the Gestapo had raided the place in search of Jewish children. The girls stayed in Julie and Jean's home until the end of the war under false identity. In 1994, Yad Vashem recognized Jean and Julie De Bast as Righteous Among the Nations.

Righteous Among the Nations. The Righteous Among the Nations are non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save persecuted Jews. Acts of rescue included giving shelter; providing forged papers, including protective documents and diplomatic visas; finding escape routes, smuggling Jews over the border; and hiding children.

Children were given shelter with families, in children's homes, and in religious institutions through the help of religious leaders, priests, and nuns. The rescuers lived in constant fear of betrayal. In Western Europe, they risked being arrested

by the Germans and sent to the camps. In Eastern Europe, they faced the danger of execution and the possibility of harm to their families. The acts of Righteous Among the Nations attest to the fact that it was possible to rescue and help Jews. Their stories serve as a model of heroism and humane and moral behavior, as well as the preservation of the sanctity of human life.

The State of Israel, on behalf of the Jewish people, conferred upon Yad Vashem the task of commemorating the acts of the Righteous Among the Nations, who risked their lives to save Jews.



Oskar Schindler
Germany



Tatiana Chariuta
Zelenska
Russia



Piotr Afanasiev
Latvia



Leopold Socha
Poland



"Whosoever saves a single life,
saves an entire universe"
The medal of the Righteous
Among the Nations



Odile Teysseidier
France



Zajneba Hardaga
Bosnia



Metropolitan Chrysostomos,
Greece



Raoul Wallenberg
Sweden

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In my heart – how strange – there is no hatred,
only a terrible pain, astonishment,
and the constant question – “Why?”

Elisheva (Elsa) Binder

*We must always take sides.
Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.
Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.*

Elie Wiesel

No man should judge unless he asks himself in absolute honesty
whether in a similar situation he might not have done the same.

Viktor E. Frankl

For us, the victory had come too late, much too late.

Shmuel Krakowski, liberated in Theresienstadt camp by the Soviet Army



An inmate of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after its liberation by the British Army, Germany, April, 1945

Liberation. The liberation of North Africa and Europe from Nazi rule occurred gradually, beginning in late 1942 until the final collapse of the Reich in May 1945. Most of Europe's Jews had been murdered by the time the Allies liberated the territories from German control. Towards the end of the war, as the front drew closer, the Nazis began to evacuate prisoners from the camps to the German hinterland. As liberation

approached, hundreds of thousands of starving, ill, and exhausted Jewish inmates were murdered in "Death Marches." The Allied troops who liberated the camps were horrified by what they found. The surviving Jews faced the liberation with mixed feelings. For the victims of the Holocaust, liberation had come too late.



The Savior, 1945
Zinovie Tolkachev, Soldier in the Soviet Army



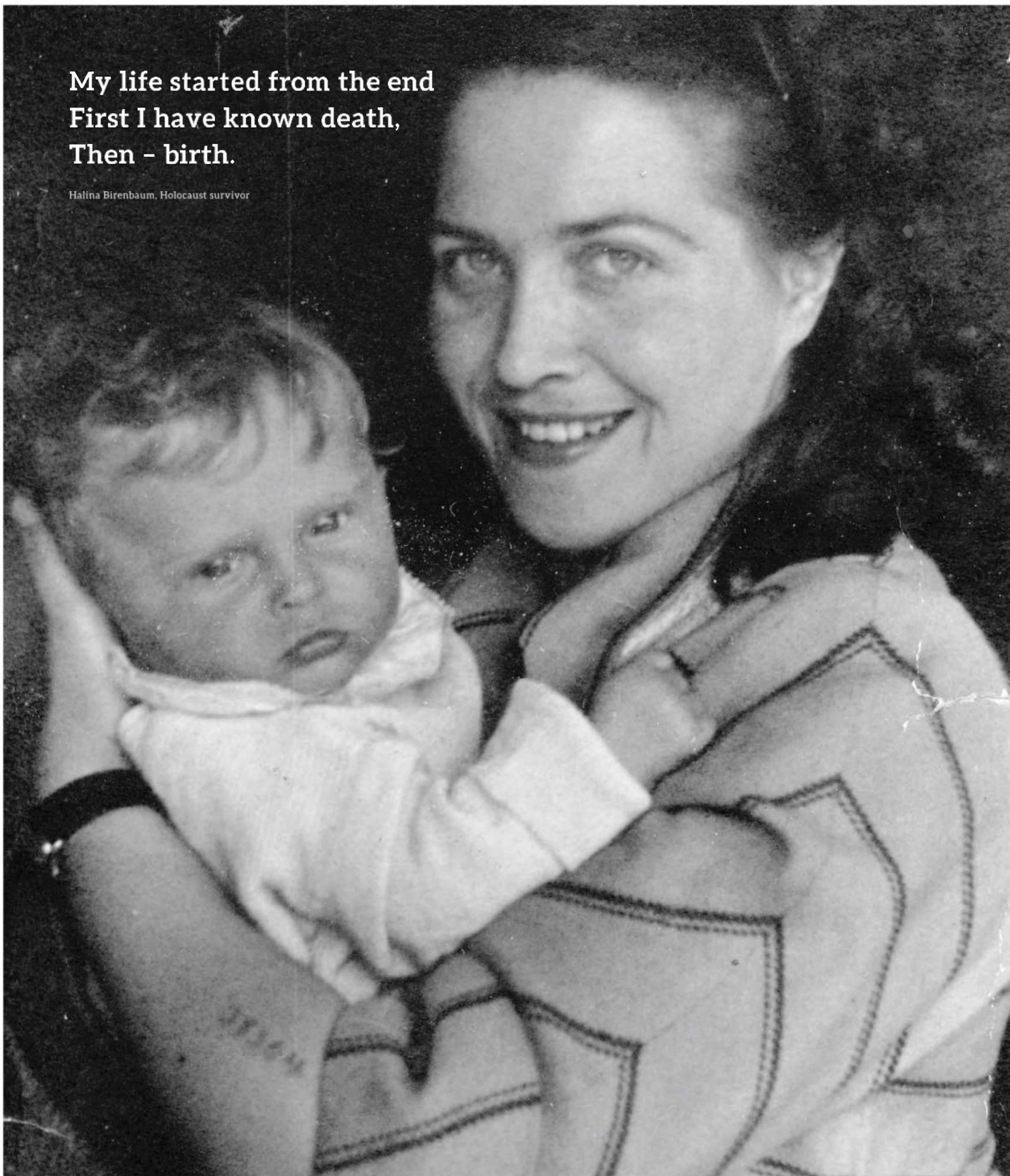
Concentration camp inmates liberated by the Soviet Army, Dachau, Germany, April 29, 1945



An American soldier and a liberated inmate at Buchenwald concentration camp, Germany, April 1945

My life started from the end
First I have known death,
Then - birth.

Halina Birenbaum, Holocaust survivor



Auschwitz survivor Natalia Bierzynska, tattooed with prisoner number 38364, with her infant daughter, Zabierzow, Poland, 1950

Return to Life. After liberation, as the hope of finding living family members proved largely futile, the survivors of the Holocaust focused their energies on rebuilding their lives. Most did not seek revenge, retaining their beliefs and their faith in humanity. They set about establishing families and communities.

Many refused to continue living in Europe, which they now viewed as a vast graveyard.

The majority of Holocaust survivors immigrated to Israel, with the hope of finally achieving freedom - as Jews, and as human beings.

IT HAPPENED

THEREFORE

IT CAN HAPPEN AGAIN

THIS IS THE CORE

OF WHAT WE HAVE TO SAY

Primo Levi

SHOAH

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Yad Vashem - The World Holocaust Remembrance Center

Yad Vashem was established in 1953, as the world center for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust. As the Jewish people's living memorial to the Holocaust, Yad Vashem safeguards the memory of the past and imparts its meanings for future generations.



The Hall of Names, Yad Vashem Museum, Jerusalem, Israel

The Hall of Names is the place where the names of Holocaust victims are permanently preserved. Yad Vashem has been fulfilling this testament since its establishment by providing them with a “name and remembrance.”

**The exhibition was produced by the Traveling Exhibitions Department,
Museums Division, Yad Vashem
Design: Tarazi Studio**