

Teacher's Guide

# **Witness: Voices from the Holocaust**

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Stories to Remember

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## **Witness: Voices from the Holocaust**

### **Grades: 7-12**

#### **USING THIS GUIDE**

This guide is to be used in conjunction with the film *Witness: Voices from the Holocaust* and the book by the same title (ISBN 0-684-86525-4), edited by Joshua M. Greene and Shiva Kumar in consultation with Joanne Weiner Rudof. (New York: Free Press, 2000). The book provides additional excerpts from and information about the 19 witnesses who appear on film and also includes material from nine additional testimonies. All page numbers listed in this guide refer to the book. The book is available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Additional information about the book and video is available at [www.witnessvoices.org](http://www.witnessvoices.org).

#### **SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES**

##### **Teacher Preparation**

- Preview all three sections of the program *Witness: Voices from the Holocaust*.
- Read the Foreword to the book by Lawrence L. Langer.
- Read topical introductory sections of book (see pages 3, 6, 9).
- Read biographical summaries of witnesses (see page 2).
- Discuss journal writing with your students.
- Duplicate and distribute maps you intend to use.
- Duplicate and distribute glossary and list of websites.
- Compile bibliographic materials for research projects.

#### **STUDENT OBJECTIVES**

This guide provides suggested individual assignments, journal entries, projects and classroom discussion topics. The film is suitable for high school students and meets the following objectives:

- To illustrate how the events during the Holocaust affected individuals.
- To identify the value of witness accounts in studying history.



- To describe the impact of a racial ideology upon innocent individuals.

- To illustrate the dangers of standing by when harm is caused to other individuals.

- To discuss connections to the past which explain the universality of human experiences and the benefits of living in a free society that values human rights.

- To define how becoming active citizens in their communities can lead students to safeguarding a free democratic society.

- To illustrate from the survivors' testimonies the importance of sensitivity, tolerance, and respect for individual differences in a pluralistic society.

- To write about the individual survivors and convey their stories to others.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES OF WITNESSES

In order of appearance in the film:

Edith P.	page 113
Helen K.	page 164
Robert S.	page. 241
Frank S.	page 13
Jacob K.	page 23
Joseph K.	page 49
Joseph W.	page 43
Martin S.	page 156
Celia K.	page 86
Abraham P.	page 22
Father John S.	page 40
Renée H.	page 77
Bessie K.	page 110
Golly D.	page 5
Hanna F.	page 143
Herbert J.	page 173
Werner R.	page 181
Clara L.	page 148
Colonel Edmund M.	page 205

## PART 1

### TOPICAL INTRODUCTORY SECTIONS IN THE BOOK

**A Way of Life (Page 1)**

**The Outbreak of War (Page 31)**

**Ghettos (Page 45)**

**Viewing Time: 24 minutes**

### DISCUSSION

Journal entries may be written after the film segments are shown. Discussion questions can be used in follow-up lessons in class. Research topics can be short- or long-term assignments.

#### Suggested Journal Entries

1. Many of the survivors speak of harassment by teachers, non-Jewish classmates, and neighbors. They were aware of the anti-Semitism, but when personally attacked at a young age, found this discrimination difficult to bear. Describe in your journal a situation in which someone you know has been singled out or embarrassed. How do you think that person felt? Have you ever found yourself in this position? Was there anything that could have been done to ameliorate the situation?

2. After the Nuremberg Laws were enacted in 1935, the Jews lost their civil liberties and rights as German citizens. Identify the civil rights you hold dear.

3. *Kristallnacht* marked the end for Jewish future life in Germany. Even though the "handwriting was on the wall," German Jews found it hard to leave their homes even when emigration was somewhat possible. List some reasons why it is difficult to leave one's home and one's country.

4. American philosopher William James (1842-1910) said, "When you have a choice to make and you don't make it, that in itself is a choice." Many of the survivors tell us about being turned away by neighbors and friends. Have you ever needed the aid of someone whom you expected to help you, and that person failed to do so? Have there been times in your life when

somebody needed your help, and you were unable to respond? Write about these situations.

5. Joseph K. speaks about a hostage situation that involved his father. If anything happened to a non-Jewish German, Jews were executed. This was a method the Nazis used to instill fear and to punish resistance. It was known as collective responsibility. Have you ever experienced, either in school or at home, punishment or disappointment because of a group's mistake or another individual's fault? Discuss these experiences.

6. Using the biographical pages in the book, calculate the ages of each of the survivors when World War II began in 1939. Discuss your thoughts about why so many of the survivors were so young.

### **Classroom Discussion**

1. Golly D., Frank S., and Joseph K. tell us about Brown Shirts marching and the activities of the Hitler Youth. Robert S. speaks of being a member of the Hitler Youth at the age of ten. What do you think might have attracted young people to join the Party? Do you think that you could have been persuaded?

2. What is propaganda? Do we have propaganda here in the U.S.? Give examples of propaganda and how to distinguish it from the truth.

3. What is racism? What kind of racism do we have today?

4. What is a "ghetto"? Do we have any ghettos in the United States? How are our ghettos different from the Jewish ghettos during the Holocaust?

5. Edith P. said, "Had we known enough, I think we would have done more." Why didn't the Jews leave their homelands after the first signs of persecution and restrictions?

6. Helen K. said, "We didn't believe what Hitler said or what he was going to do." How do you think disbelief played a part in decision making for the Jews? Has denial ever played a role in your decision making, or that of someone you know?

### **Research Topics**

1. The evolution of anti-Semitism. What was the major difference between Hitler's anti-Semitism and earlier forms of anti-Judaism?

2. The Nuremberg Laws. Of what did these laws consist, and what was the significance of the judicial system backing such laws?

3. The St. Louis (1939), the Sturma (1941), and the quota system used in most non-European countries in the 1930s.

4. *Kristallnacht*. Who were Herschel Grynszpan and Ernst von Rath? What were the events leading up to this Nazi pogrom of 1938? What was the world's reaction to this publicized event and the Evian Conference in July of 1938?

5. Research one of the ghettos that the survivors describe.

6. The ghetto uprisings, especially the Warsaw and Vilna Ghettos. What were the many obstacles to fighting back in the ghettos?

7. Theresienstadt. What was a transit camp? Why was this camp called a "model camp"? In spite of the terrible conditions found in this camp, the prisoners participated in a variety of artistic endeavors. Research this aspect of Theresienstadt. (See *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, edited by Hana Volavkova and *The Terezin Requiem* by Josef Bor.)

8. Find the total populations and the Jewish populations of the European nations prior to World War II and calculate the Jewish percentage of the general population in each country. Discuss how Nazi ideology presented this small minority group as an overwhelming danger. Using the maps, analyze the border changes and the impact of territorial expansion in terms of the Jewish populations under Nazi control.

## **PART II**

### **TOPICAL INTRODUCTORY SECTIONS IN THE BOOK**

**Escape, Hiding and Resistance (page 83)**

**Deportation and Arrival (page 103)**

**The Camps (page 127)**

**Viewing Time 37 minutes**

### **DISCUSSION**

Journal entries may be written after the film segments are shown. Discussion questions can be used in follow-up lessons in class. Research topics can be short- or long-term assignments.

#### **Suggested Journal Entries**

1. Escape and hiding can be considered forms of resistance. Imagine the obstacles encountered in escaping and hiding from the enemy by Hanna F., Celia K., and Renee H. In the book *Witness*, read all of the excerpts of their testimonies and their biographical summaries. Discuss what some of the obstacles were or may have been.

2. In the early stages of liquidating the ghettos, the Nazis used deception and euphemisms to gather the Jews for deportation. Some people suspected that leaving the ghetto could be worse for them, but they reported to the gathering centers anyway. Identify what alternatives were available to the Jews. Demonstrate why escape and hiding are difficult even today.

3. Renee H., at nine years of age, had to take care of her deaf sister who was seven-and-a-half. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to take on a great responsibility? If not, do you know anyone who has? Identify the difficulties.

4. The survivors tell of heartbreaking separations from loved ones at the time of deportation and arrival in the camps. Discuss why you think the Nazis used the plan of separating families.

5. The survivors speak of so many hardships in the deportation, arrival, and camp experiences. The physical and mental tor-

ments were many. Write about why the lack of privacy was mentioned as part of their sufferings. Is this a hardship?

6. Illustrate what you imagine and know from these testimonies about the obstacles to resistance in the camps.

7. The survivors speak of the uncertainty of living through a day in the camps. Discuss how the lack of control affected the daily lives of the survivors.

8. Fear is a great immobilizer. Father John S. speaks of fear. Contrast daily fears we may all have even though they may not be life-threatening.

#### **Classroom Discussion**

1. Describe the methods used to deceive the Jews about deportation and the camps.

2. Hanna F. and Martin S. tell us about music and orchestras in the camps. Hanna F., regarding Auschwitz, says, "We marched to music every morning." Discuss why you think the Nazis used music.

3. Father J. tells us of viewing a deportation train and then running from it. Speculate what he might have done differently and what might have been the result of his actions.

4. Discuss what you think Hanna F. means when she says about being tattooed, "They should be ashamed, not me."

5. In spite of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Helen K. tells us about women's role in the revolt of the crematorium workers in Auschwitz. What does this illustrate about the element of courage? What do you think courage is?

6. Many of the survivors discuss their own disbelief concerning events they saw and experienced and how the world allowed these events to happen. Do you think such places as Auschwitz and other killing places could exist today without the world knowing about them immediately? Describe why the Holocaust may have been different.

7. Joseph K. tells us of how the Nazis killed babies. Define what you think he means when he says, "Cultured people did this."

### **Research Topics**

1. The camps. Learn more about one of the camps in the film.
2. Resistance in the camps. Helen K. speaks of "blowing up one crematorium." Learn more about the resistance in Sobibor, Treblinka, or Auschwitz.
3. Music and art in the camps. Martin S. says regarding Buchenwald, "I remember that my brother and I began to sing. To entertain people...there were some poets and writers..."

## **PART III TOPICAL INTRODUCTORY SECTIONS IN THE BOOK**

**Death March (page 177)**

**Liberation (page 197)**

**Aftermath (page 291)**

**Viewing Time: 26 minutes**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Suggested Journal Entries**

1. Hanna F. states, "So this wasn't good and that wasn't good. So what choice did we have?" Holocaust scholar Lawrence Langer uses the expression "choiceless choice" in describing many survivors' situations. Have you, or anyone you know, ever been faced with tough decisions, perhaps a "choiceless choice"? Describe them.
2. The liberators were unprepared for what they saw when they entered the camps. Speculate about the gamut of emotions they might have felt and document your reasons.
3. Many of the liberating soldiers, including Colonel Edmund M., were shocked at the surrounding population's denial of knowledge of the camps. People lied about not knowing what was going on. How do you think the soldiers felt in handling this situation? Describe if you have ever been witness to obvious lying and how did you deal with it.
4. Even though it is a difficult undertaking for the survivors to give their testimonies, they have done so. Describe why you think, after many years, they have spoken to us.
5. Renee H. couldn't remember her liberation because she was too sick. Other survivors describe the moment and events when they were freed. Write about what you think these survivors felt when the liberating soldiers entered their camps.
6. When given a rifle and told he could shoot German officers, Joseph K. could not strike back. Discuss Joseph K.'s reaction.



Speculate about what others might have done in similar situations.

7. Although it is impossible to banish evil from the world, we can aspire to diminishing it. Helen K. says to us, "I don't know if we learned anything or if we ever will—I don't know." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Describe your feelings after listening and learning from the survivors.

8. After listening to the testimonies, reflect and write about your feelings. What will be your responsibility in receiving the survivors' legacies? How will you remember their experiences and use what you have learned?

### **Classroom Discussion**

1. List the reasons you think the Nazis wanted to evacuate the camps when they learned the Allies were advancing toward them.

2. Many survivors speak of shoes, especially during the winter marches. Helen K. gave her shoes to a friend. Golly D. tells of wooden shoes disintegrating and then using rags. One survivor relates how some people had rubber boots and that was the worst. Discuss what you think was the importance of shoes in these circumstances.

3. To us, liberation means freedom, but to many of the survivors this was not so. Describe some of their fears and worries upon liberation.

4. The Allies had to deal with many problems after entering the camps. Medical help had to be given immediately. Discuss why feeding the survivors was also a major problem.

5. The survivors speak of the difficulties of reentering life and finding willing listeners and of their own ability to speak of their horrific experiences. Discuss why you believe that people need to share their experiences and the conditions necessary to do so.

6. Robert S., a member of the Hitler Youth, faced many problems after the war. Discuss the difficulties he confronted.

7. Using the maps, discuss the changing borders of Europe resulting from two World Wars and the possible impacts on the local populations.

### **Research Topics**

1. World reaction to the Holocaust. What did other countries and the United States know about what was happening to the Jews? What did they do?

2. Compile pre-war Jewish population statistics for Germany and Nazi occupied countries, then how many Jews from Germany and Nazi-occupied countries were murdered during the Holocaust. Calculate the percentage of the total pre-war Jewish population that was murdered. Discuss the differentials of percentages from country to country.

3. Other victims. Jews were not the only victims of the Holocaust. Find out about non-Jewish prisoners in the camps.

4. Punishment. Research the Nuremberg Trials.

5. Remembering through artistic endeavors. Create a monument, painting, sculpture, or testimonial, or write poetry based on what you have learned (and emotionally experienced) from the survivors' testimonies and your responses to them.

6. Invite a Holocaust survivor to class, or as a guest speaker for your program. (Local synagogues, Jewish Community Centers/Federations, or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum have listings to help locate survivors in your area.) Have students write letters to the guest survivor after the visit. Students should include in their letters the extent to which the survivor's testimony helped them to come closer to understanding their experience. Students might want to inform the survivor of their personal participation in community activities that further tolerance, understanding, or helping others.

## CHRONOLOGY WEBSITES

The following websites contain chronologies of the history of the Holocaust. Some also contain maps, historical summaries, articles about specific events, survivor testimonies, and maps.

<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html>

<http://www.ushmm.org/holocaust/>

<http://english.gfh.org.il/history.htm>

[http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/Chronology\\_1945.html](http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/Chronology_1945.html)

<http://jehovah.to/general/nazi/jwtime.htm>

<http://www.yale.edu/yup/holocaust/chronology.htm>

[http://www.yad-vashem.org.il/about\\_holocaust/chronology/1933-1938.html](http://www.yad-vashem.org.il/about_holocaust/chronology/1933-1938.html)

<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/resources/education/timeline/index.html>

## RESOURCES

### Curricular Programs:

*Facing History and Ourselves Resource Book*

16 Hurd Road

Brookline, MA 02146

Telephone: (616) 232-1595

FAX: (617) 232-0281

Website: [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)

*Life Unworthy of Life*

Published by The Center for the Study of the Child

31000 Northwestern Highway

P.O. Box 9079

Farmington Hills, Michigan 48333-9079

Telephone: (313) 626-1110

Website: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/EPTW/eptw8/eptw8f.html>

*Teaching About the Holocaust - Resource Book*

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Resource Center for Educators

100 Raoul Wallenberg Plaza, SW

Washington, DC 20024-2150

Outreach Request Telephone Hotline: (202) 488-2661

FAX: (202) 314-7888

E-Mail: [education@ushmm.org](mailto:education@ushmm.org)

Website: [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

### Services and Centers:

Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies

Yale University

Sterling Memorial Library, Room 331C

New Haven, CT 06520

Telephone: (202) 432-1879

E-Mail: [fortunoff.archives@yale.edu](mailto:fortunoff.archives@yale.edu)

Website: [www.library.yale.edu/testimonies](http://www.library.yale.edu/testimonies)

Museum of Jewish Heritage

A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

18 First Place

Battery Park City

New York, NY 10004-1484

Telephone: (212) 509-6130

Website: [www.mjhnyc.org](http://www.mjhnyc.org)

Simon Wiesenthal Center

9760 West Pico Boulevard

Yeshiva University of Los Angeles

Los Angeles, CA 900035

Website: [www.wiesenthal.com](http://www.wiesenthal.com)

Social Studies School Services

10200 Jefferson Blvd.

P.O. Box 802

Culver City, California 90232-0802

Telephone: 800-421-4246

Website: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
Resource Center for Educators  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2150  
Outreach Request Telephone Hotline: (202) 488-2661  
FAX: (202) 314-7888  
E-Mail: education@ushmm.org  
Website: www.ushmm.org

Yad Vashem - The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority  
P.O. Box 3477  
Jerusalem 91034, Israel  
Website: www.yadvashem.org

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#### SCRIPT OF NARRATION

#### WITNESS: VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST

*Since 1978, more than 4,000 surviving victims and other witnesses to the Holocaust have recorded their stories at the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, the oldest such archive in the world.*

**Edith P.**

**Born Michalovce, Czechoslovakia, 1920**

Times became hard because Hitler became more powerful. And it disturbed our beautiful life. We didn't know from one day to the other what's going to happen. The family was very strong, and it was just unthinkable, absolutely unthinkable, that somebody or some power would be able to unroot us.

**Helen K.**

**Born Warsaw, Poland, 1924**

First of all, we felt that if there's going to be a war, it's going to be like a blitzkrieg. It will last a month or so and then it will be over. So we felt well if it is only going to last a little while, the Jews are going to survive. They always somehow do. We didn't think it was going to last long, first of all. Number two, we didn't believe that what he said, what he was going to do, would really happen.

**Robert S., former Hitler Youth**  
**Born Weisenstadt, Germany, 1927**

One of the members of the family was a Brown Shirt man, an SA man. One night they marched by our window with torches and singing SA songs and stopping at the house of this relative of mine, and bringing him some sort of a salute. And I also remember how impressed I was that someone would get a whole torch light parade. This is me as a ten-year-old, very proud, as a matter of fact, to have this uniform. I believe at that time everybody reaching a certain age had to join the Hitler youth.

**Frank S.**

**Born Breslau, Germany**

The greetings were changed from Salvete Discipuli and Salver Magister, it was changed to Heil Hitler. He came in and he said, "Heil Hitler, students," and we had to stand up and say, "Heil Hitler, teacher." Then we had a different curriculum because we had this "Racenkunde," which was Raceology. That was a regular subject that we had, and we were supposed to learn what an Aryan is, the Aryan race. Opposed to the Aryan race, we were the Jews. And the children, the students were to learn what makes the difference between a blond, blue-eyed pure Aryan to a Jew. And I hated this biology teacher with a passion. He always pulled me up by my sideburns and put me up in front of the class and he would say, "Here a Jew," and he started to describe my nose, and my cheekbones, my hair and my features, and how to recognize a Jew. I was very humiliated, and I hated it, and I felt terrible about the whole thing.

**Jacob K.**

All my friends, that I was good friends, I would never think they would do it, they made up songs, antisemitic songs. I recall one song they were singing:

Remember Jew, you are on Polish soil.

Your bones we will pile on a heap.

Hitler's calamity you will not avoid,

And we will beat your crippled destiny with a whip.

**Joseph K.**

**Born Gorlice, Poland, 1925**

When we lived among these people before 1939, we knew that they hated us because in Poland there was nothing hidden. Ever since I could remember as a child, going to school I would see it on the street—be it on a fence, or on a building of a Jewish home or on front on a Jewish store, or on the sidewalk—there were signs all over the place: "Jew Go To Palestine. You filthy Jew, We Don't Want You in Poland."

**Joseph W.**

**Born Przemysl, Poland, 1922**

Of course the antisemitism in Poland was becoming more open because Hitler was in Germany, so the Nazi party had a great influence on the Polish Nationalist Party. They had a priest, he published a newspaper. His name was Chaunce Checdek, Father Checdek, he published the most antisemitic newspaper. There was a joke—is it okay if I tell a joke? There is a Jewish man sitting in Warsaw on a bench. He has this antisemitic paper, and he is reading it. And so another friend, a Jew, passes by and he says, "Reb Chaim, vus lede du diese seit? Why are you reading this paper?" And he says, "Reb Schloima, if I read the Jewish papers all I read about is tsurus: "The Jews are pogrommed here, there, there is this, there is that, look what they are doing in Germany—" I'm depressed. So if I want to feel good, I take the antisemitic paper, and it says, "The Jews own all the apartment houses in Poland. The Jews own all the factories. The Jews are the richest. They control the world, they control America, and Roosevelt is a Jew." It makes me feel good!" That's the kind of a life that was going on. This was the 30s, and the clouds were getting darker, darker.

Hitler's speech: "If international finance-Jewry inside and outside of Europe should succeed once more in plunging nations into another world war, the consequence will not be the Bolshevization of the earth and thereby the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."

**Robert S.**

I remember the beginning of the war. I remember the speech of Hitler. I remember the whole frenzy that all of a sudden rose up.

And where I was, in the environment that I was, the people I knew, including my teachers, were all for the war. And I think in conjunction with that, for whatever stood in its way to be destroyed, I wasn't even unhappy about that. I thought, "War! I'm going to be a hero!" And tanks were rolling by day and night. We were sitting in the windows, so caught up by this display of might that I thought, "My God, I'm so glad I'm here!"

**Martin S.**

**Born Tarnobrzeg, Poland, 1934**

I remember the war coming to our town with a very severe air raid. I remember the whole city was just an inferno, and we all ran for our lives. We crossed a river called the Vistla. Certain things you can remember, and one of the things I remember as we were crossing in a little boat was looking at a wall of fire in back of us.

**Celia K.**

**Born Szarkowszczyzna, Poland, 1923**

There was bombing, constant bombing. And everyone was going toward the East. The roads were littered with trucks and bodies, bodies and bodies everywhere. And I was swept with this tide of people going East. I had no idea how to get home. I had no idea how my family fared. And everyone was trying to evacuate, but there was no way. No way. There was a Polish girl in my dormitory who was very good to me. She used to help me out a lot. I thought, "Gee, she is only a couple of miles away from here. I'll stop there and get something to wear to cover myself." I had only a flimsy nightgown on. As soon as I came down to her gate, she said "Get away from here, you filthy Jew!" And this was the first time that it hit me, that I really understood what it was really about.

**Edith P.**

We had refugees from Poland, Polish Jews who told us, "Do something. Go. Go to America. Go to Isreal—go to Palestine. Do something. Escape, because this is what is going to happen to you." And we thought "That's impossible. I mean, my father was born here, his father was born here, and my grandfather was born here. It's impossible!" But we didn't know enough. Had we known enough, I think we would have done more.

**Abraham P.**

**Born Beclean, Romania, 1924**

My mother decided she was going to go over to a friend of hers who turns out to be a German. She went to her friend and said, "Look here, I don't know what is going to happen to us. I got here some money. Keep it for me. Keep it. I don't know if I am going to come back, but if the kids come home give it to them, give it to them. If not, keep it." This very friend of hers went to the authorities, and she turned in my mother.

**Reverend John S.**

**Born Kosice, Czechoslovakia, 1922**

The real fear was of denunciation. Suppose you were trying to hide a Jewish person. In our city, it was not safe. Somebody would denounce you. So this I hold up as a crime, as a collective crime. Our people were still too antisemitic. And the nice, the good people, on whom the Jewish people could have counted, were the most scared, the most weak, the least prepared to take on this huge, brutal machine that was exploding all around.

**Joseph K.**

We still couldn't believe what the Germans had in mind: the total annihilation of our people. It was still beyond comprehension. As a matter of fact, for the bulk of the sixty-eight months under the German occupation, at no time did I realize or believe that this was a total annihilation process going on.

**Helen K.**

At the beginning they organized the ghetto. They pushed all the people from the small little towns, and they pushed them into I don't know how many square blocks. And they built walls around the Warsaw ghetto. You were trapped! I don't know if anybody can feel this feeling, with all the freedom we have today. Nobody can feel this feeling of being trapped.

**Celia K.**

Every day there were different decrees. Jews turn in your bicycles, Jews turn in your valuables, Jews turn in your winter coats. Children are not allowed to go to school. Jews don't walk on sidewalks. One day they said they wanted twenty-five bookkeepers. So of course people who were bookkeepers volunteered. They were all shot on the spot.

**Joseph K.**

Then came about the edict of hostages. Ten Jewish men were named as hostages, and their names were posted on placards all over town: should anything happen to a German, those ten would be executed. They knew, because of this hostage system, that nothing would happen to them. This perhaps is also one of the reasons why the majority of people in the free world cannot comprehend why six million people could allow themselves to be led to the slaughter—like sheep—without lifting a finger in their defense. It is very difficult to raise a finger against a machine gun. It is also very difficult to live knowing that because of my foolish act, ten men have been executed, and there are widows and orphans.

**Renee H.**

**Born Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, 1933**

We would hear certain sounds of boots on the street. Usually whenever there was a transport, it was accompanied by ten to twelve soldiers coming marching together, from house to house, and gathering all the people. They would come knocking on the door and say, "You have an hour." We use to live in terror of these boots. We lived on the fourth floor in an apartment. My parents were both deaf, and I had a deaf sister. So I became the ears. I would have to warn them that the transport was coming.

**Jacob K.**

We heard noise outside the house. They were yelling, the Germans. And they came through the door. They burst into the room, they kicked the door open, with fixed bayonets, steel helmets strapped around their heads, paraphernalia around their waists, and they started to yell that we should undress. So we all undressed, mother and women and men. And one of them said that my father didn't undress quick enough, and so he started to beat him on the face with a bayonet, poking. Like this. Then they took out matches, and I thought they were going to strike the matches. No. They struck our genitals. The women's and the men's. They were only a few minutes in the room, maybe ten minutes. It was so frightening.

**Joseph K.**

The Germans were the most educated and enlightened people in Europe at that time. And yet I saw with my own eyes Germans tossing babies in the air and shooting them. I couldn't believe it, but I saw it. It did happen, and they were laughing as they were doing this.

**Helen K.**

You know, a lot of people don't know and feel we were really very passive. But if you look at history, I'm sure you know that countries like France, Belgium, Holland, they went in a few days. The German came and took over. The Warsaw ghetto was holding out for four weeks. Even Poland didn't hold out for four weeks. We were holding out for four weeks. The Germans were really afraid to come into the Warsaw Ghetto. They came in with tanks when they decided to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto. This was 1943, Passover. By that time there were maybe twenty thousand people left. We didn't have much ammunition, so we threw Molotov Cocktails on the tanks, and a lot of Germans got killed. My mother was with me and my brother. One day, the Germans came in. This was at the very end of the Warsaw ghetto—I want you to know my mother wasn't even forty years old. Neither was my father. But my mother was—the Germans were coming, and we had to pull ourselves up by a rope in that building. But she couldn't make it, so she went into the bunker below with the resistance. There were several bunkers. We didn't make big bunkers because we didn't want that if the Germans came in all the people should be caught. So we had five different bunkers downstairs. We were hiding upstairs, maybe fifty or sixty people. My mother couldn't make the rope because the Germans were coming very rapidly. She was hiding downstairs. After they left, the Germans, I went to look for her, and she was gone. Everything was burning. You couldn't stay there. They smoked us out. People had to get out of the houses. We couldn't hide. And then on top of this, after the houses were burning, they came in and demolished them. So even you were hiding, people got suffocated underneath. They came with a fire truck, and with a ladder they took us all down—my brother, myself, at that time I was married, my husband and his sisters. We were all hiding there, maybe fifty people.

**Jacob K.**

Some of them refused to go, so the Germans killed them right then. So we piled up the dead people, and while we were digging at the cemetery the grave, a mass grave, somebody brought a little girl to the grave. A Jewish girl. She was maybe four years old, a blond little girl. The parents gave her away to Polish people to hide. And the Germans gave an order anybody who would hide is going to be killed. So they brought this little girl. A gendarme was standing there on a little hill watching us work. So he went over to her and gave her an apple. And he asked her, "What's this?" in Polish. So she named it, "Jabka," which is Polish for apple. He asked her name, and he repeated it in broken Polish. He went back to his post and started to lecture us about the Jewish mother. He said, "Dis is keine mutter." "This is not a mother who leaves her child." And he said, "I assure you that she is not going to go far, that mother who ran away and left her child. We are going to get her." And while the girl is eating the apple, he shot at her. He aimed at her. And the bullet went through her hair. The child screamed. Then he shot her again and killed her. And the child fell dead to the ground, and the apple rolled away. And we buried her with the rest of the others.

**Renee H.**

By 1943, my parents realized it was just hopeless, that there was no point in trying to live in this fearful way. So they decided to send my sister and me to a farm family out in the country for which they paid great sums. And I had to hide the fact that I was Jewish. At that time, I was nine years old. I had my sister who was seven and a half. Then the son came back to the farm and announced to me that my parents had failed to pay for the last five months. They never told us that they had already been taken by the last transport out of Bratislava. I took my suitcase and my sister, looking for a place to stay. I would go to places where I knew people who were Christians, and I knocked on the door, and they slammed the door right in my face. Not saying a word, not explaining. Just as if I were a beggar at the door, and they just closed the door in my face. Finally, I went to the home of these friends of my parents who were living under a forged passport—and they did the same thing. And then I knew that indeed I was the last Jew left. There was nothing for me to do.

For two days, we had no money, we were scrounging around trying to find food. Finally I said to my sister, "We can't live this way. We will die on the street, so we might as well go to the police." I went to the police, and I said my name, and I said my parents' name, and I said, "I would like to join them." And we were finally put on a train, and I was told we would be going to Auschwitz.

**Bessie K.**

**Born Vilna, Poland, 1924**

I saw they were taking away the men separate, the children separate, and the women separate. So I had the baby, and I took the coats what I had in a bundle, and wrapped it around the baby and put it on my left side, because I saw the Germans saying, "Left," or "Right," and I went through with the baby. But the baby was short of breath. It started to choke, and it started to cry. So the German called me back. He said, "What do you have there?" in German. Now, I didn't know what to do because everything was so fast, everything happened so suddenly, I wasn't prepared for it. To look back, the experience was, I think I was numb or something happened to me, I don't know. I wasn't there even. He stretched out his arms, I should hand over the bundle—and I handed over the bundle. And this was the last time I had the bundle.

**Martin S.**

I recall when they were piling us into the car and they wanted everybody to move back so they could put more people in. Eventually people kept going back, but there was no more room. I do recall they fired across to make more room. So they could shove another batch of people in. I remember a good percentage of people died. For three days, people defecated on the floor. For three days, we didn't have any food or water. Then I remember that the thirst was the overwhelming thing. We just couldn't, ah, that is again something that keeps recurring in my mind, this constant thirst. And I remember when they let us off the cattle cars in Buchenwald, there was a hose with water, and some people couldn't even make it to the water.

**Rev. John S.**

I sneaked up to the fence. I found a hole there—it was a raw-wood fence—and that was the day I saw my train, my deportee

train. And it just must have pulled into the station. Right in front of me stood one of the wagons, and one man immediately jumped off. My feeling was, my instinct or what I made out, was that he was asking for water. And immediately that SS soldier with the club of his rifle clubbed him down, and several times, to insensitivity. Whether he died or was later put in the train—and then I ran away. I was so scared, I was so upset. I never saw anything like that in my life. I simply ran away.

**Edith P.**

I still here the train tum, tum, tum, tum. Nobody said a word. We were just wondering where are they going to take us. One morning, I think it was morning or early afternoon, the train stopped there for an hour. Why? We didn't know. And a friend of mine said, "Why don't you stand up"—there was just a little window, with bars—"and see?" "I can't. I don't have enough energy to climb up." She said, "I'm going to sit down, and you stand on my shoulders." And I did. And I looked out. And I saw paradise. The sun was bright and vivid. There was cleanliness all over. It was a station somewhere in Germany. There were three or four people there, one woman with a child, nicely dressed up, and the child was crying. People were people, not animals. And I thought, "Paradise must look like this." And I had such yearning; I still feel it in my bones. I had such yearning to live, to run, to just run away and never come back. To run to the end, where there is no way back. Then I told the girls, "Girls, you have no idea how beautiful the sun is. And I saw a baby was crying, and a woman was kissing that baby,"—is there such a thing as love?

**Helen K.**

My brother died in my arms. My younger brother was—and my husband's two sisters. There wasn't enough oxygen for all those people. And they kept us in those wagons for days. They wanted to us die in the wagons. You know the cattle cars with the very little windows? [Interviewer: "How old was your brother?"] Maybe thirteen. He wasn't even barmitzvah'd. You know, when my brother died in my arms, I said to myself, "I am going to live. I must be the only one survivor from my family. I'm going to live." I made up my mind that I'm going to do defy Hitler. I'm not going to give in. Because he wants to me to die, I'm going to live.



**Edith P.**

And before we arrived at Auschwitz, this was maybe a few miles, we didn't know where we were. We had never heard of Auschwitz. We just saw people just running around like mad people, no hair and clothes with stripes. I said to my father, "You know, maybe we are going to survive. Look. There are people running around. Maybe they are workers." My father said, "Look, my family, I think we have arrived. There is one thing I want to tell you. Whoever survives, you've got to go and work right away. Sell your knowledge. Go to work. Keep your sanity. And keep the principles that you have been taught."

**Abraham P.**

The train screeched. All of a sudden they came and knocked at the doors, and we heard voices, dogs barking. Then people were jumping in, and dogs were jumping in with them. And they were screaming and yelling "Raus! Raus! Raus!" And you were confused, there was nothing—and one guy, who walked in who must have been a prisoner, said to me in Yiddish, "Hast du gold? Hast du brillianten?" Do I have gold or do I have diamonds? I looked at the guy, "Is he crazy or something?" And I saw older people they had to jump out of the train, but the platform was low and the train was high. People were beaten. And then when we finally got out of the train, out of the boxcars, all of a sudden there was stench hit you. And you didn't know what that is. And nobody told you what is going to happen. Nobody told you where you were, what was going on. The only thing we saw was SS, and we saw prisoners in striped clothes, and I saw dogs who were sniffing, and I saw people being beaten up, and they tell you to stand in line. And then way in the distance you here music! A band playing! My God, it was such a confusion. I mean, you didn't know what was going on.

**Golly D.**

I saw from a distance this high SS officer with a big German shepard next to him, and the women had to step in front of him one by one. I saw a brief exchange of words, and I saw him pointing either to his right or to his left. And when I looked a little later I saw that all the older people, or mothers and children or handicapped people, were sent to his left.

**Clara**

There, also, these Polish people—both Jews and non-Jews—helped, because they would say to these young women who carried their babies in their arms, "Give it to your mother. Give it to your mother-in-law. Don't be a fool. You can save your life." And many women did that. They handed their babies to the older women, and they went to the working side and they were saved. Their children perished.

**Hanna F.**

But the day we arrived in Auschwitz, the SS people came in, the soldiers. We were stark naked. We were waiting to have our heads shaved. And he recognized this opera singer—she was a Jewish woman—and he got very hysterical with a smirk on his face. And he made that woman—a middle age woman—get up, stark naked, and sing. [Interviewer: "What was your number?"] 50069. I still have it. I'm not ashamed of it. They should be ashamed of it.

**Abraham P.**

This man came—this tall SS man—and pointed with a finger. He put the three of us, the three older brothers, together and my little kid brother. My little kid brother was with us, and I told my little kid brother, I said, "Solly, gay su totti und mommi," ["Go with mommy and daddy."] And like a little kid he followed, he did. Little did I know that—that I—sent him to the crematorium. I am—I feel like—I killed him. My brother, who lives in New York now, he used to live in South America, every time we see each other he talks about that. He says, "No, I am responsible, because I said the same thing to you." And it has been bothering me—I've been thinking—whether he has reached my mother and father. And if he did reach my mother and father, he probably told them, "Avram gesucht a deise us gayn mit ank." [Abraham told me to go with you."] I wonder what my mother and father were thinking. Especially when they all went into the crematorium. I can't get it out of my head. It hurts me, it bothers me, and I don't know what to do.

**Edith P.**

Auschwitz, if I would like to describe it, I would say there is—there has not been —there has not been—uh—people did not

invent an expression what Auschwitz was. It was hell on earth. The silence of Auschwitz was hell. The nights were hell. And the days, somehow, we got up at three o'clock in the morning, and at four o'clock summer time or four-thirty when the sun came up, it was not like the sun. I swear to you, it was not bright. It was always red to me. It was always black to me. It never said—never—never was life to me. It was destruction. And in the evening, when you dared to go out, and you saw the flames of the crematorium, that was disastrous. The smell of the human flesh which we didn't know it was. We were young kids, inexperienced for such horrors. Who is?

#### **Martin S.**

My father, my brother and I were taken in one direction. My mother was immediately put into another camp. I was particularly attached to my mother, so it was devastating I would say. But interestingly enough, as I said to you, there was an instinct, a sudden instinct of survival, that quite frankly I didn't dwell on it. I can tell you honestly I attribute my survival to this instinct. Because I saw children just falling by the wayside. People dying. As a matter of fact, I trained myself to be very brutal, very cold. And often times I—I have some—I guess I can't ask them to turn this off, can I? [Interviewer: "If you want."] No, no. Keep it on. It should be documented. I sometimes think I was made too inhuman. Because I didn't care about anybody else.

#### **Herbert J.**

##### **Born Maine, USA, 1921**

There were all nationalities. A lot of people think it was the Jewish people alone, but there were political prisoners and captured prisoners such as I was. I was in the eleventh armored division, and they moved us to camp Mauthausen. Before I went to the quarry, I worked in I supposed you'd call it a kind of carpenter shop where they were working with wood. But I was anxious to get out of there because one of the men made a mistake cutting a piece of wood. He tried to hide it, but he was seen. The officer that was in charge there walked up, picked up the wood, and he looked at it, looked at this guy, then grabbed him by the arm and ran his arm under the bandsaw and threw his arm in a corner. Of course, the man ran over to the corner

and tried to put his arm back on. He died. Bled to death, you know. Nobody helped him. He just bled to death.

#### **Martin S.**

I don't think there was ever a week that went by when you didn't feel, "This may be it." It was one of those situations that you were always looking over your shoulder. You always had to think ten steps ahead. You always had to plan, "What if? What if?" Obviously, you don't always keep your head downtrodden. You try, just to survive, you have to make light. So there would be times that I remember we would make some jokes. You try to lighten things up. For example, when we were in Buchenwald, I remember that my brother and I began to sing. To entertain people. There were some poets and writers among the Jews, and they began writing songs for us—and we'd sing them! Now you say, "How can you do this in this inferno? How can you do this in all this?" You had to find moments.

#### **Renee H.**

When I was in the camp, I managed to find a roll of toilet paper. And I managed to also barter something I had for a pencil. And I started to write. I was writing down everything that was happening to me, about my longings, my fears, conversations I overheard, things people had said. And at one point this roll of toilet paper was found in one of the searches by the soldiers. I remember coming back from the appel seeing a soldier sitting on the lower bunk from the one I was, with the toilet paper, unrolling it and reading it to someone else and laughing and finding it very amusing. When suddenly I rushed up to snatch it, he pulled it away, and he said, "No, this is too good for you." And he took it with him, and of course I heard the conversation. I heard what they were describing. One of the things that I remember him saying to the other was, "She has a wonderful sense of humor." And I didn't remember writing anything funny in it.

#### **Abraham P.**

What I used to do was I used to take the sulfur from a bucket and I used to pour it into the missile. And we each one of us had a quota of doing it. And if you didn't do it, you were beaten. And that's when that "Laus! Raus! Mach laus! Raus!" used to

be every second, every minute—they were driving you out of your mind! And to top it all off, that foreman, come lunch time, he used to come in with a sandwich, a thick sandwich in his hand. With all kinds of vurst, kilbasa, and you would smell it. It generates, and it made you—you were hungry anyhow. And he use to eat it front of you. And after he got through with it he through it down on the floor so that we could all go and try to grab a crumb out of it.

#### **Martin S.**

I remember the hunger. The wrenching, twisting pain that lived with you on a daily basis. All you could ever think of is to get something to eat. You could never fill your belly. It used to be uppermost in your mind. You used to dream of a feast. Just one day you kept hoping you could get through the day without this twisting pain that you felt. That is an indescribable feeling.

#### **Hanna F.**

One night I was so hungry I couldn't sleep. It was a very bad night. They were bringing in people for destruction from two particular parts of the country. From Bengin and Sosnovietz. And the screaming and the howling was going on, and all three chimneys were lit up. It was like broad daylight. I couldn't sleep. My roommate, she saved a tiny, tiny, slice of bread and a piece of margarine for breakfast. And that particular night, I stole that piece of bread from her. I never admitted. And she got up in the morning, and she was swearing like a truck driver. I just closed my ears, not to listen to the swearing that she did. Still in all, together we went to work in the morning. The whole day she didn't forget that she lost that piece of bread. I never admitted that I took it.

#### **Helen K.**

They put me in a block with five hundred other women, and someone told me my mother was there. My mother was taken a few days before, as I told you. I went to see—and, you know, my mother was there. So it was like I lost here twice, really. But she was very, very lost. She was lost. She was very passive. Lost. And they gave you one portion of bread and soup for the day. My mother had become very skinny, very thin, very lost there. I used to bring my soup to her, and I just cut off a little

piece of bread. I said to her, "Somebody gave it to me. Eat it." And I would give it her and run out, because if she would say "Eat a little bit," I would eat because I was very hungry, But I felt she needs it more than me, I was younger, and I felt she needed it more. So I used to give her the soup and run out because I didn't want to be tempted. She was in the camp with me for about six weeks. After a few weeks, they had selections, and one day just before they took me to Auschwitz, I walked out with her, and she went one way and I went the other way. I had a friend—we were hiding out in the ghetto together—a childhood friend from many years. She didn't let me—she pulled me back. I said, "How can I let her go?" She said, "Helen, you can't help her. You know where she's going." And I stayed.

#### **Martin S.**

There was a period of time that I walked around, I just kept asking "Why?" And I couldn't get the answer. I remember I walked by a spot, and a guard hit me very hard over the head. After I recovered—because he did put me to a sort-of semi-conscious state for a few minutes—I turned around and said, "He doesn't know me." I wasn't even thinking about the fact that I was a child. "He doesn't know me. I don't know him. Why does he have such a hatred for me?" Those things used to gnaw at me. The brutality of killing. There was clean way of killing, and there was a brutal way of killing. I could not understand the brutality.

#### **Herbert J.**

This one American, we kept telling him, "Be quiet!" But he was very insolent, giving the Germans a lot of talk, a lot of language and whatnot. He could speak a few words of German. I didn't speak any German, but the Germans were speaking among themselves and pointing him out and laughing. They took us to Mauthausen and they staked him out, stripped him and staked him out on the ground, his arms outstretched and his feet outstretched. But they didn't put any pressure on him or anything to hurt him. Come nighttime, we went to sleep, and all of sudden we heard screaming and yelling. We jumped up and went rushing out. A lot of the Russians had been there for a number of years and had turned to cannibalism. They had so torn at his

body that he died from the effects. He was bleeding to death, and there wasn't much we could do. This was why the Germans were laughing. Staking him out simply made him available.

#### **Helen K.**

There were five or six girls who were working in the powder room. They put active ammunition, the powder, into the grenade. So they were everyday searched from head to toe naked when they were going into work and when they left work. But they were able to smuggle out some of the powder. In the vagina, in the mouth, we were able to smuggle out some of the powder. The powder was in a capsule, a very small capsule that was put inside of a grenade. Then we gave it to the men. And we blew up one crematorium. In Auschwitz. I want you to know in the camp, in the concentration camp with Germans surrounding, really the impossible, we did blow up one crematorium. When the Germans were looking through the ruins of the crematorium, they were able to find the shells, and they saw it was from our factory. They took the five girls, the six girls who were working in this ammunition factory, and they hung them. I just never got it out of my mind. It was so painful. And the whole camp had to watch. And they were hanging there for three days. You know, when I talk about it I just have such pain.

#### **Herbert J.**

When I was at the last end of my time in the camp, I was so sick. But I was told not to go on sick call, and I asked why. They said, "You don't come back from sick call." When the Germans made their inspection after everybody had gone out to work, they found me there and started beating on me. I crawled under the barracks, and underneath was all muck and slim and human feces. They tried to chase me out from under there. That night when I crawled out, some of the fellows in my outfit who were still alive brought me some soup. The next morning, they piled me with the dead bodies, and I stayed with the dead bodies until they would bring me back in again at nighttime. Because they buried from one end, the oldest bodies first, and they couldn't catch up with the amount. They put me with the fresh bodies. Every morning, that was one of the first things we had to do was to carry out the dead.

#### **Renee H.**

Right across from us was a charnel house filled with corpses. Not just inside but overflowing all over. There were corpses all over. I lived, walked beside dead people. And after a while it just got to be so that one noticed and one had to say to oneself, "I am not going to see who it is. I am not going to recognize anyone in this person who is lying here." It got to a point where I realized I had to close my eyes to a number of things. Otherwise I would not have survived even at that time, because I saw people around me going mad. I was not only having to live with all these things, but with madness.

#### **Hanna F.**

I was very sick. I got diarrhea—that was already recuperating a little bit from the malaria—and I walked out with two pails of human waste, and I was going toward the dump. I walked out, and between the barracks was a mountain of people as high as myself. Of course I was wearing those wooden shoes, Hollander shoes. The people that died at night were just taken out and dumped—a big pile of people. I said to myself, "Oh God, must I walk by?" But meanwhile I couldn't hold back, and I put down the two pails and sat down because I had a sick stomach. And the rats were standing and eating the people's faces, eating, you know, they were having a—anyway, I had to do my job. I was just looking what's happening to a human being. That could have been my mother. That could have been my father. That could have been my sister or my brother.

#### **Helen K.**

Sometimes at night, I lay and I can't believe what my eyes have seen. I really cannot believe it. You know in Auschwitz, whenever I got up in the morning the lines were unbelievable. The children were waiting in line to be cremated. Whenever I used to get up in the morning, I would say, "My God, how can God allow this?" They were standing in line, waiting to be cremated.

#### **Golly D.**

Word spread around that the Russian troops are coming close from the East. So our hopes were on the rise again because we thought the Germans would just disappear and leave us there to be liberated by the Russians. But that would have been too good

a fate for us, too good a solution for us. Instead, on January 20th, they lined us up again, threw each of us a quarter of a bread. Outside the camp we lined line, and that's when the death march started—the march started. We didn't know then. Later it became known as a "death march" in the truest sense of the word.

**Helen K.**

**Age 20, Nazis evacuate 60,000 prisoners from Auschwitz (1945)**

All the people that could walk they just took. And I said, "No, I'm not going. I don't care." What we were made to believe was that the whole camp was mined, and that once the Germans would leave they would blow up Auschwitz. I didn't care. I told you, after I saw those girls hanged something happened to me. I really, this was already, I was so close to those girls. It was just very, very terrible.

**Werner R.**

We were each given a chunk, a loaf of bread about this size, and a chunk of margarine. And I had, I got myself some shoes. Other people managed to get some rubber boots from somewhere. Don't ask me from where they got those rubber boots, which proved to be disastrous. And having worked for this German, cooking occasionally, I filled my pockets with sugar. And that was it. So they lined us up and said, "Okay, start marching." So we marched. And step by step, things got bad.

**Werner R.**

So this whole bedraggled group was marching, and people were dying left and right. And there was absolutely nothing you could do. I mean, if you tried to help somebody you would stay there. It was totally hopeless.

**Joseph K.**

As we started to march into the woods, it must have been late in the night when they made us stop. We laid down on ice, because I remember waking up in the morning in water. Our bodies had melted the ice.

**Golly D.**

The shoes we had gotten had wooden soles, and from walking so much the soles wore off completely. Also, when the snow fell it would stick to the soles so you couldn't walk with them either. Anyway the shoes dissipated, and at that point we would rip a piece of cloth of whatever we were wearing and wrap it around our feet.

**Joseph K.**

We couldn't bend our knees or ankles, just walk like robots. Just drag step by step. But we knew the minute we fall down, that was the end.

**Clara L.**

My sister kept saying she can't do it, and I said you have to. And it came to a point that I had to take her on my back and practically carry her. Those who couldn't walk, the Germans would say once or twice, "Gay! Du must gayn! Gay veiter!" Bust some of them just resigned themselves. We would march on—maybe five hundred or a thousand of us—and then about five minutes later we would hear the sound of a gun.

**Joseph K.**

It started to rain, and it was like a cloudburst, thunder, lightning, it was pouring. And they just kept shooting all night. They dessimated us that night. This was one of the most unbelievable experiences any man can even visualize.

**Golly D.**

When the nature came back to life, say in March or so, and things started to sprout, they would run into the fields to pick a blade of grass or a bud from the tree just to eat, to eat.

**Werner R.**

We left I was told something like five or ten thousand, and we arrived by the time the trip was over there were only a few hundred of us left.



**Colonel Edmund M.**  
**Born Baltimore, MD, 1927**

I was in my mid-twenties, twenty-six, twenty-seven. My rank at that time was first lieutenant. I was an infantry officer in General Patton's Third Army. We were waiting, I'm speaking of my specific unit. We were told to stop and wait for the advance for the Soviet army that was coming from the East, from Vienna that they had recently captured, and approaching us.

**Werner S.**

Unfortunately, nobody counted that the Russian forces would be held up in Vienna. So the whole thing got delayed, and in the meantime, while the squeeze was going on, there was no food in the camp. It was sort of a concentration camp at its worst. The camp was over crowded. There were cases of cannibalism in the camp at that time. If there was a little grass or some stuff like that growing outside, it was all eaten up. There was nothing there. I'll never forget there was a huge pile of corpses—a huge pile of corpses which were moving. They were still alive and breathing, but they were just piled up there, and this pile was actually moving. And the moment somebody fainted or passed out you just drag them and put them on there.

**Col. Edmund M.**

Two or three tanks then stumbled upon Mauthausen concentration camp. Again, there was no prior knowledge as far as we knew of about this concentration camp. The effect, I think, was pure chance that our American tanks found these. I jumped out of the jeep to head in towards the main gate. And even though it was a beautiful day, very, very beautiful day as I mentioned, I felt a brief a chill. I don't know what caused the chill. Perhaps a premonition of what we were about to see within the camp. But I jumped out of the jeep and then proceeded into the camp, looking around at this horrifying picture of stone, barbed wire, machine guns that encircled the whole camp.

**Edith P.**

We heard lots of commotion all over. It was tremendous pressure all over. The gates were closed, and I want to emphasize that Salzwedel did not have only have Jewish prisoners. We had lots of Danish and Dutch prisoners, and gypsies. The gates were

closed, and everybody was standing in the yard like one man. About eleven o'clock, we heard a tank stopping at the gate. And two shots fired, and the gates opened. And as we ran, there was a white and a black American—standing side by side in the tank. (weeps) It was the first time I saw a black man; and I loved him for it all my life. And he stood there erect, maybe because he understood. And the boss was running, and he shot him. I still see him lying there with his beautiful shiny boots that I was shining an hour before, and I had no pity on him. And we were liberated, and the American said, "Everybody goes." And everybody went crazy. Crazy.

**Martin S.**

It was April 11th, four o'clock in the afternoon. I remember this as clear as a bell. I remember the Americans coming in. I remember we almost killed one of them because we kept throwing him up in the air. He just couldn't take it. His body couldn't take it. But first we thought, "Is this really an American soldier?" Don't forget we heard the front coming up. You hear the bombardment, and you hear the heavy cannon fire in the distance. So we knew they were coming. And when you see the skeleton crew, you begin to realize something is happening. You walk around and you say to yourself, "Is this really happening?" It's a feeling that is elation but at the same time you say, "Don't get carried away because it could be a let-down." So you don't know whether you want to jump and be happy or not. When they finally came in and you saw the jeeps roll in and the different uniforms, you realized, "It's over."

**Col. Edmund M.**

The thing that impressed I think all of us almost immediately was the horrible physical condition of most the inmates whom we saw. Some of them actually looked almost like living skeletons. I took a look at some, and I would estimate that the average weight might have been probably eighty-five, ninety pounds or so. Many inmates, including some whom I met later, were in very bad situations physically from diseases. There was diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid, pneumonia, dysentery, you have it, almost any disease mentionable.

**Renee H.**

One of the saddest things in my life has been that I have no recollection of the liberation because I was totally ill with the typhus. Had I had to wait another two days for the English, I would not have survived.

**Werner S.**

So they bring up these K-Rations, and they distribute it throughout the camp. Now this produced a tremendous death rate instantly. People were eating that stuff and got diarrhea, and there was nothing in the world to stop it. It was like poison.

**Martin S.**

And I remember there were doctors, prisoners in the camps, going around saying, "Don't eat this. Your bodies can't take it." I don't remember whether I paid much heed. I know I overdid it. Thank God I didn't die, but oh, I was sick, deathly sick.

**Col. Edmund M.**

We talked with some of the civilians down from the camp, and they of course denied any knowledge whatsoever of the camp. What they were in effect were saying was that up at the top of the hill where the camp was, that this to them was just a training area for the German troops. In other words, they were trying to impress us with the fact that this was to them just a training camp for German troops. They admitted no knowledge whatsoever of the camp. They just basically lied to us, perhaps with few exceptions. Because when one analyzes the records of what had actually gone on at that place, the people could not help but know that the camp was there.

**Joseph K.**

There was this American soldier who spoke Polish. And he asked us who we were. When we explained it to him, he interpreted to the American boys, and one of them took off a sub-machine gun and handed it to me, motioning to kill the German prisoners. I became very frightened and I gave it back to him and walked away from him. I couldn't believe that the Americans were real. I could not believe that the Germans were defeated. It took a long time to understand that there was a stronger power than Germany. To us, they were the all-power-

ful. They had brainwashed us to such an extent that we had no belief in ourselves, we had no understanding of right and wrong.

**Edith P.**

I recall the same afternoon, I sat there on a big stone and I said to myself, "What's now? What's going to happen now? We're all free. Are we really free? Where's the family? I'm a young person who had a sheltered, innocent life, and what am I going to do now? Who's going to take care of me?"

**Martin S.**

After the war, we went back. We didn't even want to lay claim to anything. We just wanted to look for our families. We went to Krakow. In that two-week period there were two pogroms. I cannot find the words to describe the feeling—the incredulousness! It's impossible to elucidate. Here I am, coming back from what I call hell, and I remember saying to myself, "You know, when we get back to Poland, they are going to feel sorry for us. They will open the doors for us." And we arrived in Krakow, and we were waiting in one of those holding areas for the DPs—and they were attacking with guns, knives. The Russians were protecting us!

**Joseph K.**

I heard a group of Polish people talking among themselves, saying something to the effect, "Well, whatever Hitler did, at least we are grateful to him for having solved the Jewish problem for us." Now, this is after the war. This is after what has happened to our people.

**Hanna F.**

What I felt when the liberation came? That I am alone in the whole world. I escaped from the transports, I ran away two weeks before the liberation to Czechoslovakia. I had no desire to live. I had no place to go. I had nobody to talk to. I was just simply lost, without words.

**Martin S.**

We arrived in June. It was June the 27th I recall. And June 29th, a group of children were going to a camp, and my uncle said, "We're going to send you to a camp." We said, "Nothing doing!"

"No, no," he said, "No, no, this is a good camp!" "Nothing doing!" One of the things I remember as a child coming out, I felt I had to tell the world what had happened. That was the highest priority. So I remember the first few months in a Yeshiva, I would speak freely. I would tell the kids everything. I would tell my rabbi what happened and so on. And one day, we went out on recess. One of the kids got a hold of me. We were all in a circle, and he said, "Why don't you tell one of your bullshit stories?" And from that day on—this was 1946, '47—I did not say a word, I would say till about, five or seven years ago.

**Renee G.**

When I came to the United States, I was determined to tell everybody about my experiences. I was shameless, telling everybody in my family. And I am afraid that they were not, being very religious people, they felt that I had to move my own experience into the general experience of the Jewish people. And I found that it was a way they were telling me that they could not bear to listen to it.

**Jacob K.**

The scars, the German behavior toward us, the tortuous days and nights, it is something we have in our minds. You can't forget about that. Six million people is just women and children? I can't tell you everything to you. I can't even describe one day in the ghetto. I don't want to live with that pain, but it's there. It's there. It forms its own entity and it surfaces whenever it wants to. I go on a train and I will cry. I will read something, and I will be right back there where I came from. I can't erase it. I don't ask for it. It comes by itself. It has formulated something in me. I'm a scarred human being among human beings.

**Robert S.**

I would like to believe, as a person who has learned to think later in life, and as a person who is a native German, that the Germans would not have been able to do all this total madness of the destruction of Jews and other nationalities if it had not been sort of tied up in this madness of war. I am a product of that culture. I think many of the things that were brought out in their most negative form, I was a part of that. And I just really

felt I had to get away from that in order to look at myself. I couldn't do that in Germany, I couldn't do that asking these questions: "Who am I? If this is Germany, and these are Germans, and I am a German, am I like that? Am I that?"

**Edith P.**

I have given a great deal of thought to how I should conduct myself viz-a-vis the Germans. How I should feel. Should I hate them? Should I despise them? Should I go out with a banner and say, "Do something against them"? I don't know. I never found the answer in my own soul, and I have to go according to my own conscience. I cannot conduct myself by what my husband tells me or my children, or by what the world has said. The only thing I can say is that up until now I ignore them. I don't hate them. I can't hate. I feel I would waste a lot of time in my life. But sometimes I wish, in my darkest hours, that they would feel what we feel sometimes when you are uprooted and bringing up children—I'm talking now as a mother and a wife—and there is nobody to share your sorrow or your great happiness.

**Reverend John S.**

I see it personally as the greatest tragedy of my life, that, you know, Jewish people were deported all around me, and I didn't do anything. I panicked—not even panic, not even fear. I just didn't know what to do.

**Helen K.**

I don't know, I don't know if it was worth it. I don't know if it was worth it because, you know, when I was in the concentration camp and even after I said to myself, "You know, after the war people will learn, they, will know, they will see, we will learn." But did we really learn anything? I don't know.

# Europe Between World Wars I and II



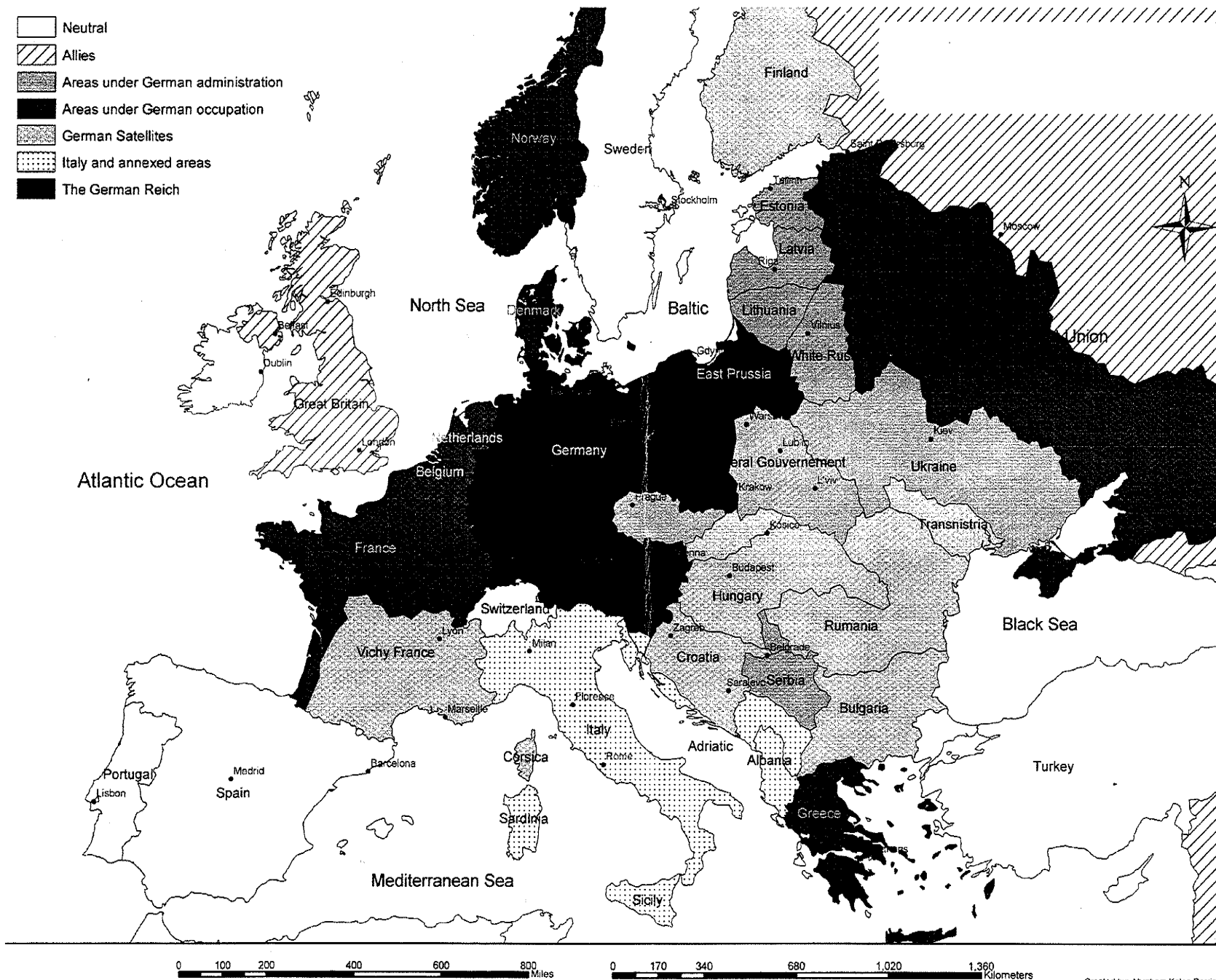
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WITNESS: VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Europe Under German Rule December 1942



# WITNESS: VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST

Name



# Europe 1991



WITNESS: VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# WITNESS: VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST

## Glossary

**Aktion** - Mass herding or round-up of Jews for deportation to Nazi ghettos, concentration, or slave labor camps.

**Anschluss** - The annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in March, 1938.

**Anti-Semitism** - Hatred or persecution of Jews. Racial anti-Semitism was one of the principal platforms of Nazi ideology.

**Appel** - Roll call in concentration camps. Prisoners often stood for many hours in order to be counted.

**Arbeit Macht Frei** - *Work Makes You Free*. Slogan on the main gates of Auschwitz I.

**Aryan** - A nonexistent race of people whom the Nazis believed was superior and should rule the world. In Nazi ideology, "pure Germans" belonged to this so-called race.

**Auschwitz** - The largest death camp, located in southwestern Poland in the town of Oswiecim. Established in 1940, it grew to incorporate the slave labor camp Buna-Monowitz, the death camp Birkenau, and many other sub-camps. It was liberated in January, 1945, by Soviet troops.

**"Avraham hot gezogt ikh zol geyn mit aykh"** - Abraham P. Translation: "Abraham said I should go with you."

**Bar mitzvah** - A traditional Jewish ceremony recognizing a boy of 13 as an adult member of the Jewish community with religious responsibilities and duties.

**Bergen-Belsen** - A Nazi concentration camp in Germany. Bergen-Belsen was initially a camp in which prisoners for potential exchange with other countries were incarcerated. As the war was ending, the Nazis marched thousands of emaciated prisoners from camps in the east to Bergen-Belsen. It was liberated by British troops in April, 1945.

**Birkenau** - Also known as Auschwitz II, it was the primary Jewish camp of Auschwitz and the site of four gas chambers.

**Blitzkrieg** - Nazi Germany's military strategy of making quick, surprise land and air strikes against the enemy. (Examples: Poland, 1939 and Holland, 1940).

**Buchenwald** - Nazi concentration camp in central Germany. It was built in 1937 for the internment of German political prisoners. Buchenwald was liberated by its own inmates in April, 1945, a few hours before the arrival of United States troops.

**bunkers** - Underground chambers built by Jews for hiding from round-ups in ghettos, towns, and forests.

**cattle car** - Freight cars that were used to transport Jews.

**collective responsibility** - The act of holding a group responsible for the actions of any of its individual members. (Example: Joseph K. speaking of the hostage situation.)

**concentration camp** - A prison camp where the Nazis sent people on the basis of identification with a particular ethnic or political group rather than as individuals and without benefit either of indictment or fair trial. Thousands of these camps existed throughout Germany and Nazi-controlled Europe.

**crematorium** - Oven or furnace where the bodies of concentration and death camp prisoners were burned.

**Dachau** - The first concentration camp, it was opened by the Nazis in 1933 near Munich, Germany and was primarily used to incarcerate German political prisoners until late 1938, when large numbers of Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, and other supposed enemies of the state and anti-social elements were sent as well. It was liberated by United States troops in April, 1945.

**death camps** - Nazi centers for industrialized murder. Jews and non-Jews were brought to these camps to be put to death. These camps were established for the murder of Jews.

**denounce** - To inform against, to condemn. Many Jews were denounced by their neighbors and turned over to the Nazis.

**deportation** - Term used for the forced removal of Jews in Nazi occupied countries under the pretense of "resettlement." Most Jews were taken to the death camps and killed.

**diphtheria** - An infectious disease that affects the throat and air passages.

**D.P. - Displaced Person.** A term used for the survivors of the Holocaust and others who had been forcibly removed from their countries. After the war many lived in displaced persons camps.

**dysentery** - An infectious disease that produces uncontrollable diarrhea and can lead to death. It was common due to starvation and poor sanitary conditions.

**extermination** - Refers to the annihilation or total destruction of the Jews. The six camps established in Poland for the extermination of the Jews were Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka.

**"Final Solution"** - Nazi term for their program to exterminate all the Jews. It was a euphemism for mass murder.

**Führer** - This title was used by Adolf Hitler to define his role of absolute dictatorship in Germany's Third Reich (1933-45). As early as July, 1921, he had declared the *Führerprinzip* ("leader principle") to be the law of the Nazi Party, and in *Mein Kampf* (1925-27) he asserted that such a dictatorship would be extended to the coming Third Reich.

**gas chamber** - Large, sealed, airtight room used to put people to death with poison gas.

**Gestapo** - abbreviation of *Geheime Staatspolizei* (German: "Secret State Police"). The political police of Nazi Germany. It eliminated opposition to the Nazis within Germany and its occupied territories and was responsible for the round-up of Jews throughout Nazi-occupied Europe for deportation.

**ghetto** - Often the most run-down section of a city, where Jews were forced to live. In many ghettos, barbed wire or walls enclosed the inhabitants, and special permission was needed to leave. Jews found outside the ghetto without permission were killed.

**Heil!** - German: Hail!

**Hitler Jugend** - (German: Hitler Youth) An organization established by Adolf Hitler in 1933 that taught Nazi philosophy to German male youth from ages thirteen to eighteen. By 1935, almost sixty percent of German boys belonged to this group and on July 1, 1936, it became a state agency that all boys were expected to join. A similar organization for girls was the League of German Girls (German: *Bund Deutscher Mädel*).

**Holocaust** - The systematic state-sponsored killing of approximately six million Jewish men, women, and children and millions of others by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during World War II.

**"Host du gold? Host du brilyant?"** - Abraham P. Translation: "Do you have gold? Do you have diamonds?"

# WITNESS: VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST

## Glossary

**Juden Raus!** - (German: Jews out!) The command given for the Jews to come out of their houses, freight cars, barracks, or hiding places.

**Jungvolk** - (German: young people) A youth group for boys from ages 10 to 12 to prepare them for the Hitler Jugend.

**kosher** - Jewish dietary laws.

**K-rations** - Military field rations for use under combat conditions, consisting of packaged meals. Many of the American soldiers gave their K-rations to the starving concentration camp prisoners.

**Kristallnacht** - (German: Crystal Night) Also referred to as "Night of the Broken Glass." On November 9-11, 1938, throughout Germany, Nazis attacked Jews, Jewish homes, synagogues, and Jewish businesses. Over 35,000 Jews were taken into "protective custody" and sent to concentration camps. Jews were charged a billion marks to pay damages. This was followed by a series of anti-Jewish laws.

**labor camp** - A camp where prisoners, working in inhumane conditions, were used for slave labor by German businesses, SS, the government, or the military.

**lice** - Tiny parasitic insects that attach themselves to human or animal bodies and cause typhus. They thrive in unsanitary and crowded conditions.

**liquidation** - The euphemistic term used by the Nazis for killing and/or removing all Jews from an area.

**Mauthausen** - A Nazi concentration camp in northern Austria, it was established in April, 1938. Approximately 120,000 prisoners perished there, including some 38,000 Jews. It was liberated by United States troops on May 5, 1945.

**Nazi** - Abbreviation for National Socialist German Workers Party. (German: *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP)). It was Adolf Hitler's political party, the party that came to power in Germany in 1933 and governed by totalitarian methods until 1945.

**Nuremberg Laws** - Two constitutional laws issued on September 15, 1935, they denied all Jews citizenship, depriving them of most civil and basic rights.

**Orthodox** - Adherence to traditional Judaism.

**partisans** - Volunteers who organized to fight against the enemy in Nazi-occupied territory.

**pogrom** - An organized, officially tolerated attack against a Jewish community.

**Rassenkunde** - (German: Race lore or Raceceology). Specious Nazi concept of a racial hierarchy with Aryans at the top and sub-humans like Jews (German: *Untermenschen*) at the bottom. This was taught in German schools.

**refugees** - People who seek refuge in a foreign country due to political or religious persecution.

**Reich** - (German: empire). Germany under Hitler was called the Third Reich which was to have lasted for a thousand years. It lasted only twelve years.

**Reichswehr** - German Army.

**resettlement** - A Nazi euphemism to deceive the Jews so they would enter trains and other vehicles for deportation.

**SA** - Abbreviation for Assault Division (German: *Sturmabteilung*), also known as storm troopers, or brown shirts. They were a paramilitary organization of the Nazi party founded by Hitler in Munich in 1921, whose violent methods played a role in Hitler's rise to power.

**selection** - The process by which the Nazis, very often physicians, decided who would be slave laborers and who would be killed.

**Sobibor** - Nazi extermination camp in eastern Poland, it was built in March 1942. From May, 1942, until October, 1943, approximately 250,000 Jews were murdered there. After a prisoner revolt on October 14, 1943, the Nazis dismantled the camp.

**"Solly, gey tsu tate un mame"** - Abraham P. Translation: "Solly, go with your father and mother."

**SS** - Abbreviation for Protective Echelon (German: *Schutzstaffel*). This black-uniformed elite corps of the Nazi party was founded by Hitler in 1925 as his personal bodyguard. It was headed by Heinrich Himmler from 1929 to 1945 and became very powerful, growing from 300 members to more than 50,000 when Nazi Germany was defeated. They were also known as Death's Head because of the insignia they wore.

**Sudetenland** - Western Czechoslovakia, which was annexed by Germany in March, 1938, as a result of the Munich Agreement negotiated by England, France, and Italy to appease Hitler.

**swastika** - A twisted cross, adopted by the Nazis from an ancient symbol often representing prosperity and good fortune in Eastern religions. The black swastika on a white circle with a red background became the national flag of Germany on September 15, 1935. This use of the swastika ended in World War II with the German surrender in May, 1945, although it is still used by neo-Nazi groups.

**Theresienstadt** - Nazi concentration camp in northwestern Czechoslovakia, it was established in 1941 and was shown to the Red Cross inspectors as a "model camp." Of the approximately 144,000 Jews sent to Theresienstadt, some 33,000—almost 1 in 4—died there, and about 88,000 were deported to Auschwitz and other death camps. By the war's end, only 19,000 were alive. About 15,000 children were among the prisoners, of whom it is estimated 150-1,100 survived.

**transports** - Trains that carried Jews and other victims to ghettos and concentration camps. They were almost always freight cars intended to carry cattle, and at the end of the war, open coal cars.

**Treblinka** - Nazi extermination camp that opened in July, 1942, 50 miles northeast of Warsaw. At least 750,000 Jews were murdered there, more than 250,000 of them from Warsaw. On August 2, 1943, a planned prisoner revolt occurred. Although they killed several guards, most of the 200 or more escapees were either caught or killed. The Nazis dismantled the camp in October, 1943.

**typhus** - An acute series of diseases, it is transmitted to humans by insects and is marked by fever, headache, chills, general pain, a rash, and toxemia. It is associated with cold, starvation, filth, and overcrowding.

**Waffen SS** - The military unit of the Nazi SS.

**Wehrmacht** - The German Armed Forces.

**WITNESS: VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST****Chronology Websites**

The following websites contain chronologies of the history of the Holocaust. Some also contain maps, historical summaries, articles about specific events, survivor testimonies, and maps.

<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html>

<http://www.ushmm.org/holocaust/>

<http://english.gfh.org.il/history.htm>

[http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/Chronology\\_1945.html](http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/Chronology_1945.html)

<http://jehovah.to/general/nazi/jwtime.htm>

<http://www.yale.edu/yup/holocaust/chronology.htm>

[http://www.yad-vashem.org.il/about\\_holocaust/chronogy/1933-1938.html](http://www.yad-vashem.org.il/about_holocaust/chronogy/1933-1938.html)

<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/resources/education/timeline/index.html>

# WITNESS: VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST

## **Curricular Programs:**

### *Facing History and Ourselves Resource Book*

16 Hurd Road  
Brookline, MA 02146  
Telephone: (616) 232-1595  
FAX: (617) 232-0281  
Website: [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)

### *Life Unworthy of Life*

Published by The Center for the Study of the Child  
31000 Northwestern Highway  
P.O. Box 9079  
Farmington Hills, Michigan 48333-9079  
Telephone: (313) 626-1110  
Website:  
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/EPTW/eptw8/eptw8f.html>

### *Teaching About the Holocaust - Resource Book*

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
Resource Center for Educators  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2150  
Outreach Request Telephone Hotline: (202) 488-2661  
FAX: (202) 314-7888  
E-Mail: [education@ushmm.org](mailto:education@ushmm.org)  
Website: [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

## **Services and Centers:**

Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies  
Yale University  
Sterling Memorial Library, Room 331C  
New Haven, CT 06520  
Telephone: (202) 432-1879  
E-Mail: [fortunoff.archives@yale.edu](mailto:fortunoff.archives@yale.edu)  
Website: [www.library.yale.edu/testimonies](http://www.library.yale.edu/testimonies)

Museum of Jewish Heritage  
A Living Memorial to the Holocaust  
18 First Place  
Battery Park City  
New York, NY 10004-1484  
Telephone: (212) 509-6130  
Website: [www.mjhnyc.org](http://www.mjhnyc.org)

Simon Wiesenthal Center  
9760 West Pico Boulevard  
Yeshiva University of Los Angeles  
Los Angeles, CA 900035  
Website: [www.wiesenthal.com](http://www.wiesenthal.com)

Social Studies School Services  
10200 Jefferson Blvd.  
P.O. Box 802  
Culver City, California 90232-0802  
Telephone: 800-421-4246  
Website: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
Resource Center for Educators  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2150  
Outreach Request Telephone Hotline: (202) 488-2661  
FAX: (202) 314-7888  
E-Mail: [education@ushmm.org](mailto:education@ushmm.org)  
Website: [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

Yad Vashem - The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes'  
Remembrance Authority  
P.O. Box 3477  
Jerusalem 91034, Israel  
Website: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

# WITNESS: VOICES FROM THE HOLOCAUST

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