

Grade 11

The Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre is pleased to offer a series of eight (8) units covering the following Grade 11 CAPS topic:

***Ideas of Race in the late 19th and 20th Centuries** – What were the consequences when pseudoscientific ideas of Race became integral to government policies and legislation in the 19th and 20th centuries?*

Case studies: **Australia** and the indigenous Australians; Nazi **Germany** and the Holocaust.

Unit 8

Case Study: Nazi Germany Part 4

In this unit you will learn about the following:

- Stages 8-10 of Stanton's 10 Stages of Genocide
- The genocide of the Jews of Europe (the Holocaust)
- The connection between this history and democratic South Africa

Stage 8 – Persecution:

Property confiscated, people deported or moved into ghettos, sent to camps – the genocide has started

- As soon as the Nazis invaded Poland they began putting Jewish people into ghettos
- No matter how big or small the city town or village, Jewish residents were forced out of their home and into a demarcated area
- One of the largest ghettos in Europe was the Warsaw Ghetto (Warsaw is the capital of Poland)

September 1 1939 Germany invaded Poland. They began putting Jewish people into ghettos. No matter how big or small the city or village or town, the residents were forced out of their homes and into a demarcated area. One of the largest ghettos was the Warsaw ghetto, Warsaw being the capital of Poland. But there were ghettos in all the countries that the Nazis invaded.

This formed part of stage eight per Stanton's 10 stages of Genocide, where people are deported, moved into camps and a genocide has begun. Early in 1940, the residents of the Warsaw Ghetto were still reasonably healthy. They had warm clothes and shoes and there was some food. But as time went on, more and more people were forced into a very small space, so overcrowding became a problem.

People became sick and diseases like typhus spread. People died of disease, they died of starvation as food was scarce and difficult to obtain. There was no sanitation, they couldn't keep clean. Conditions deteriorated and death became commonplace. Tens of thousands died.

What was happening with the War?

June 22 1941

- Under the codename “Operation Barbarossa” Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in the largest German military operation of WWII
- They took the decision not to put the Jews in their newly conquered territories into ghettos

Think about what was happening on the war front. On 22 June 1941, under the codename Operation Barbarossa, the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, which was then occupying the Eastern section of Poland. It was the largest military operation of World War II. The Nazis had previously signed the Molotov Von Ribbentrop Non-Aggression pact with the Soviets, but they broke this pact by invading occupied Poland. In Soviet occupied Poland lived even more Jewish people, and at this point, The Nazis took a decision not to put Jews in the conquered territories into ghettos. Instead, they would escalate to murder.

Stage 9 – “Extermination”:

Begins quickly and becomes mass killing known as genocide. The term “extermination” is dehumanising and used by perpetrators to justify the murder

Einsatzgruppen – mobile killing squads

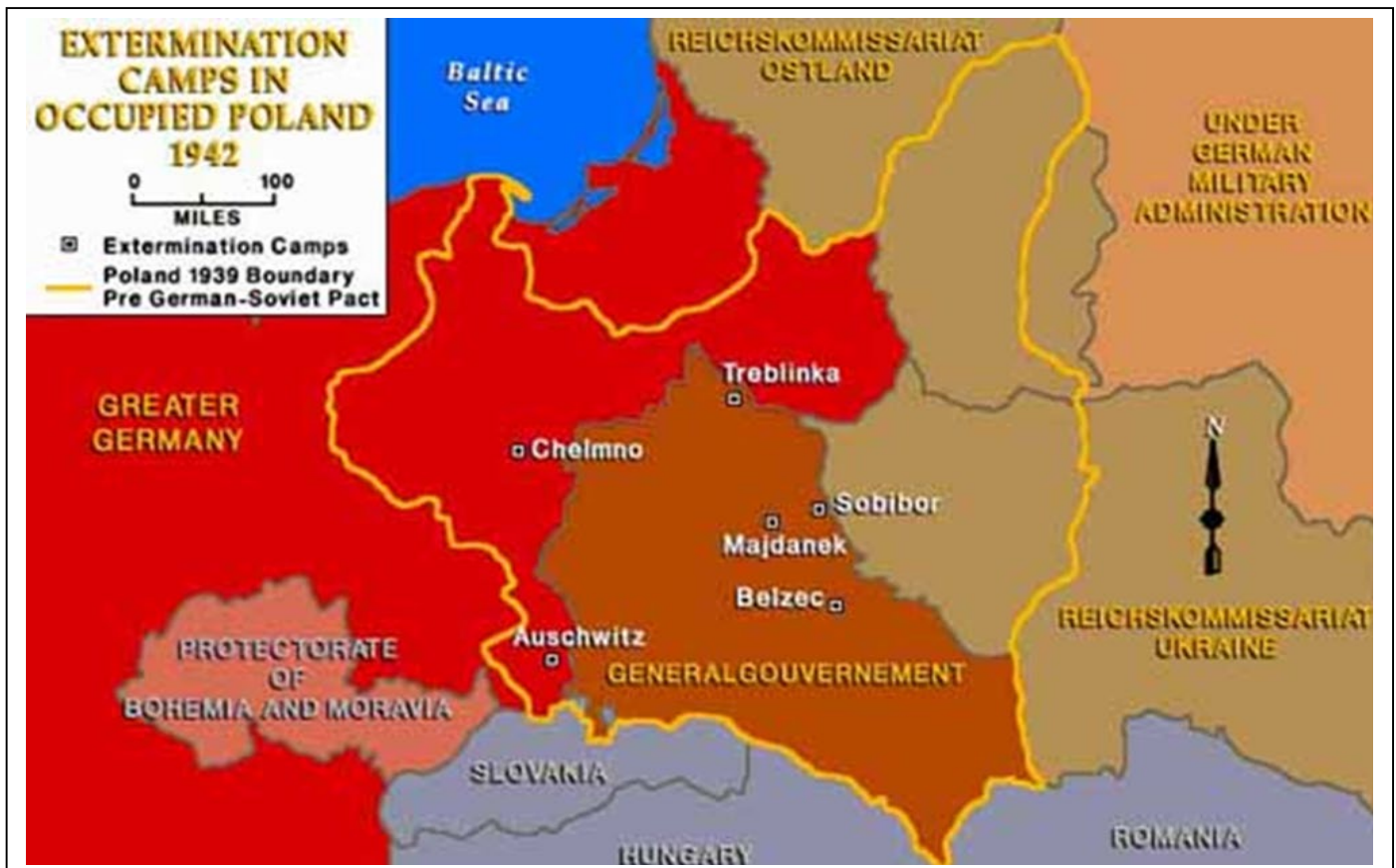


The Nazis decided to kill every single Jewish person. It began quickly. The genocide, once it started, happened fast. The Nazis called it extermination. Why? Because it is another way of dehumanising victims. You exterminate insects and vermin; you don't exterminate humans. You murder humans. They used this term to justify murder. How did they go about this murder? They got mobile killing squads together called Einsatzgruppen. Mostly these men were German soldiers, sometimes men from the occupied countries got involved as well. These units went into villages, rounded up the Jewish men, women and children, forced them into the local forest, made them dig ditches, and then shot these people into the ditches. The genocide had begun.

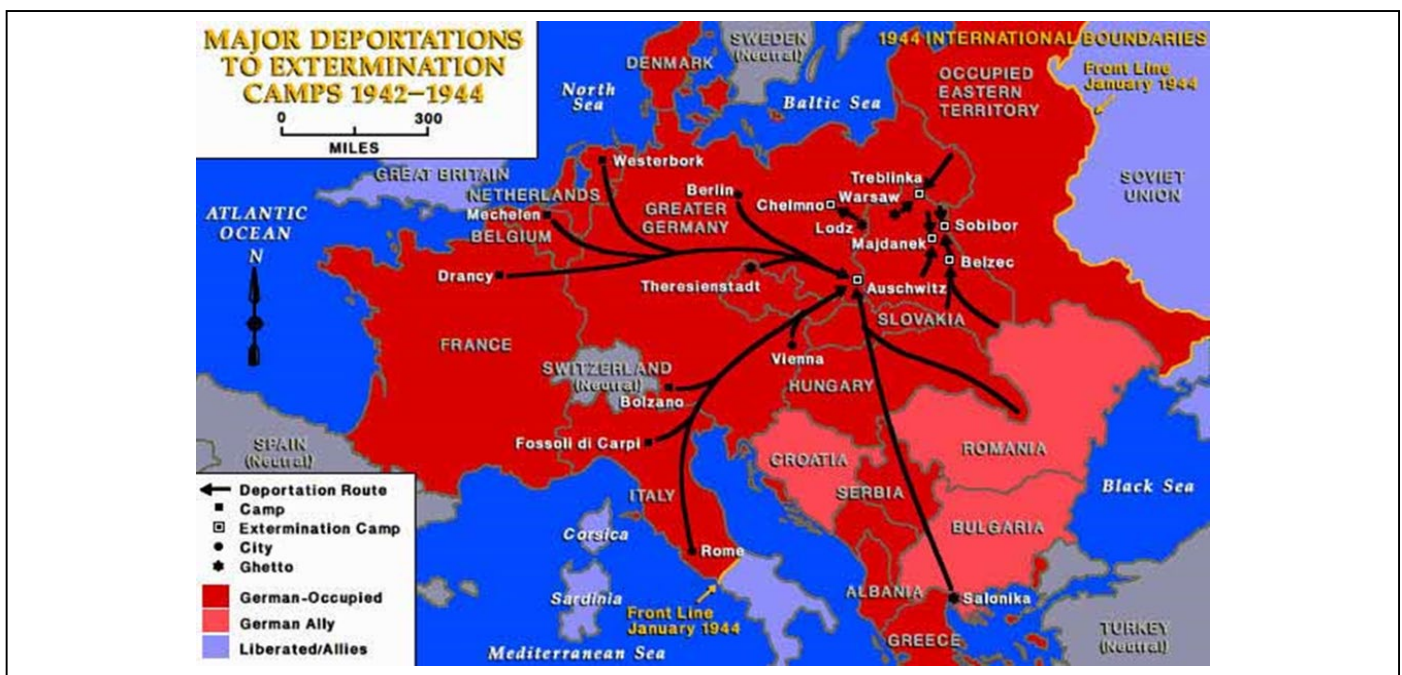
- In January 1942 Nazi officials met to discuss the “final solution of the Jewish question” in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee
- Known as the Wannsee Conference, this meeting did not decide on the killing of the Jews, which had already been decided and was already taking place
- They met to organise a more systematic method and rid Europe of every Jewish man, woman and child
- They decided to build 6 Death Camps in Poland and to bring every single Jew in Europe to the camps to be murdered

After a few months, the Nazi officials decided, though, that this wasn't an efficient way of killing Jews. It was traumatic for the perpetrators and one bullet per victim was proving expensive, so they decided to find a more systematic way of murdering Jews.

They met at a place called Wannsee at what became known as the Wannsee Conference, they decided on how they could make the killing of Jewish people more systematic and more “industrial”. They decided instead of taking death to the Jews, they were going to bring the Jews to death camps, where they would be murdered.



And where were these death camps? They were not in Germany, like the 'euthanasia' death centres, but in Poland. There were six of them. Chelmno, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec. That's four camps. If you were sent to those four camps, it was almost impossible for you to survive because those were purely death camps. One was murdered on arrival. But Majdanek and Auschwitz were both death camps and labour camps. If you were sent to one of those two camps, you had a chance to survive.



The Nazis looked at the railway system to decide how to bring everybody to those camps. You can see on the map above that there were railway systems all over Europe for the sole purpose of bringing Jewish people to their death.



The Nazis deceived the Jewish people. They lied to them, telling them that they were leaving the ghettos to go “East” where they would be resettled. They told them to pack all their belongings for their new life. Then they packed them into trains used for transporting cattle.

Sometimes up to a hundred people were in a cattle car. People were shoved into these cattle cars, pushed in, and sometimes for weeks they would travel with no sanitation. When they got to their destination, many were already sick and dirty. Others were dead.



The Nazis continued the deceit, telling the people that they would get their belongings once they had showered. They asked the men to form one queue and the girls and women to form another queue. Sometimes that was the last time a wife saw her husband or a mother saw her son. Then people were selected for hard labour or death. People were forced to walk past Nazis officers who would decide who looked ‘useful’ and who did not. These were called “selections”. Those considered ‘useless’, were sent immediately to die. This meant the sick, the very old and the very young were immediately sent to their deaths



Sometimes there were so many people condemned to die that they were told to wait, all believing that they were going to be given a shower. That deceit continued all the way into the gas chambers. They were told to hang up their clothes on a numbered peg and remember that number, because they would be coming back afterwards. They were asked to ensure their shoes were tied together so they could fetch them quickly when they returned. Then when they went into these gas chambers, these massive rooms, they looked up, they saw plumbing pipes, they saw showerheads. But, of course, it was all false, there was no plumbing and no water came from these pipes. The people were gassed to death.



This is a pile of glasses belonging to people who were murdered in the gas chambers. This is just from one death camp (Auschwitz).

It gives you some kind of indication of the numbers because it's very difficult to imagine it otherwise.



For those condemned to live the dehumanisation took place immediately. They had all their hair shaved off. If they were in Auschwitz, they had a number tattooed on their arm. And then they no longer had a name. They were referred to by number only, whether that was on their skin or on their uniform. They had to learn very quickly to respond only to their number. Here is an image of some women who've arrived, they've been through the actual showers, they've had their hair shaved and you can see some of them are wearing dresses that don't appear to fit them properly. They were just thrown any clothes to put on after the shower. People who went through this and survived, testified afterwards that they were standing next to their sister or cousin and didn't recognize them because, of course, the hair was gone.

Pseudoscientific experimentation on human beings took place at the Auschwitz concentration camp

Many horrific experiments were performed on human beings at the Auschwitz concentration camp. In the name of "science". Doctors and scientists had many human beings at their disposal and their attitude was such that they felt they could do what they liked with them. They performed cruel and brutal experiments on them, for example exposure to radiation, experimenting with sterilisation drugs, performing tests on twins, and much more.



After a long, terrible time where many people died from being gassed, from hard labour and from starvation, the process of liberation began. It began in 1944 with British, American and Soviet troops advancing towards Germany and continued until Germany surrendered unconditionally on 8 May 1945.

On your left is an image of some survivors. These were their living conditions and you can see how starved and emaciated they were.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed at the United Nations in 1948

8 countries refused to sign:

- Poland
- Czechoslovakia
- Soviet Union
- Byelorussian SSR
- Ukrainian SSR
- Yugoslavia
- South Africa

So what happened after the war? Well, in 1948, the international community created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights because they had seen what had happened and they understood that people needed a book of rules as to how to behave, to avoid catastrophes like the Holocaust and the Porajmos. Eight countries did not sign this Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Czechoslovakia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Soviet Union, Byelorussian, Ukraine, Yugoslavia and South Africa.

Why did South Africa not sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, after all, it fought against the Nazis in WWII? Well, in 1948, Apartheid was put into law and they were about to abuse the human rights of 90% of the population. Fast forward to 1994, we in South Africa were liberated, we got our democratic Constitution and that Constitution is based on the very Declaration of Human Rights that South Africa refused to sign after World War II. So when we said in earlier Units that as South Africans we need to learn this history because we have a strong link to it, we hope you can see now what the link is and how connected we are.

Stage 10 – Denial:

Covering up of evidence by digging mass graves, burning bodies, intimidating witnesses, etc.

There's one final stage of genocide according to Stanton: denial. This refers to the covering up of evidence, lying at trials, and refusing to own up to the events. But there's also another kind of denial, a denial that the actual event even happened, and the more time that passes, the easier it gets to deny. One needs to be very, very careful of this. One cannot actually revise history and turn it into the history you want. Sometimes facts are just facts and this is the case with the Nazi genocides.

QUESTIONS

1. What were the names of the six death camps and where were all six located?
2. In your own words, describe the manner in which the Einsatzgruppen operated.
3. Thinking about content covered in all eight units, discuss reasons for why genocidal governments use the term 'extermination' instead of 'murder'.
4. What happened at the Wannsee Conference?
5. Describe, in your own words, the process that happened to victims on arrival at Majdanek or Auschwitz.
6. On what date were concentration camps liberated?
7. Explain South Africa's connection to this history in your own words, using both the information in this Unit, the previous ones, and your own knowledge.
8. **"We learn about the Holocaust so that we can become more human. We learn about it so we can become more gentle, more caring, more compassionate, valuing every person as being of infinite worth so that we know such atrocities will never happen again, and the world will be a more humane place." – Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999)**

Reflect on the quote above, using the information you've learned in these Units and your own knowledge. Do you agree or disagree with the Archbishop? Give reasons for your answer.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre: <http://ctholocaust.co.za/>

Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwVBUs5VqvsumuwDdzYIAaQ/>

The Development of the Final Solution: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPXPjZurupc>

Wannsee Conference: Screenplay for the Holocaust: <https://www.dw.com/en/wannsee-conference-screenplay-for-the-holocaust/a-37197330>

Holocaust by Bullets: <https://www.yahadinunum.org/what-is-the-holocaust-by-bullets/>

The Death Camps: <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/final-solution/death-camps.html>