

Grade 9

The Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre is pleased to offer a series of eight (8) units covering the following Grade 9 CAPS topic:

Failure of the Weimar, the rise of Nazi Germany, outbreak of WW2 in Europe, the Holocaust, people's experiences and resistance.

Unit 7

- The Holocaust : Einsatzgruppen, Death Camps
- End of WW2

By the end of the unit Learners should be familiar with

1. The differences between labour camps and Death camps
2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

June 22, 1941

Under the codename

“Operation
Barbarossa”

**Nazi Germany
invaded the Soviet
Union in the
largest German milita
ry operation of World
War II.**

**They take the
decision not to put
the Jews in the
conquered territory
into ghettos**

In the previous unit we learnt about how the Nazis used ghettos to separate and isolate Jewish people in their conquered territories.

In this unit we will learn about the building of death camps and the genocide of the Jewish people.

We have learnt about the Nazi regime's domestic policies and how they treated people they believed to be inferior, and we have learnt about their foreign policies how they wanted to incorporate, dominate and colonise other countries.

In 1941 The Nazis invaded the Soviet Union breaking their non – aggression pact. They decided that the Jews in these newly conquered territories would not be put into ghettos. They decided to murder every last Jewish man, woman and child.

Einsatzgruppen – Mobile Killing Squads



In order to murder the Jews in conquered territories they used Einsatzgruppen, mobile killing squads. These killing units followed the army into the captured towns and villages and rounded up all the Jewish people.

They forced them out of their homes, into the nearby forests and shot them into mass graves.

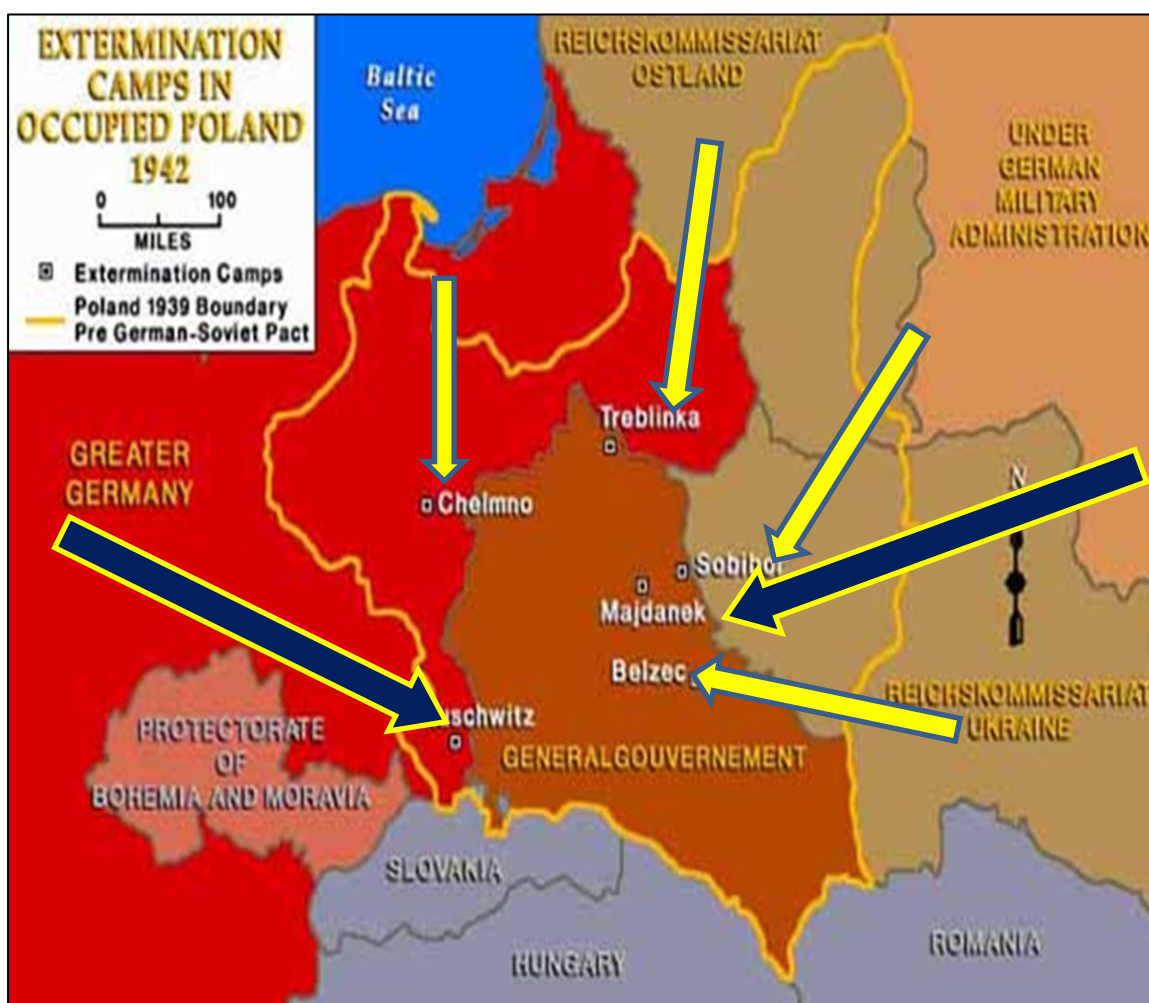
They did this from 1941 until 1942. They were ably and enthusiastically assisted by the townspeople in some cases, but this was a Nazi initiative.

Nearly a third of all Jewish people killed in the Holocaust were murdered by Einsatzgruppen.

The Nazis felt that this was not an efficient way of killing people, it was not only expensive – as they had to use one bullet per person but it was taking a personal toll on the perpetrators.

WANNSEE CONFERENCE

- In January 1942 Nazi officials met to discuss the "final solution of the Jewish question," in the Berlin suburb, Wannsee
- Known as the Wannsee Conference
- This meeting was to discuss a more efficient systematic and industrialised method to rid Europe of every Jewish man, woman and child
- **They decided to build 6 Death Camps in Poland and to bring every single Jew to the camps to be murdered**



- All these **Death Camps** were in occupied Poland

Please note that the Nazis called these places extermination camps.

Think about the word “exterminate”: it refers to the killing of pests, of vermin or cockroaches. It was used by the Nazis to further dehumanise their victims. The Nazis were killing human beings.

Historians refer to these camps as Death Camp or Killing Centres.

- People who were sent to Chelmno, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec died on arrival, there was almost no chance of survival or it was very slim
- People who were sent to my Majdanik or Auschwitz, had a chance to survive because these were both death camps and labour camps

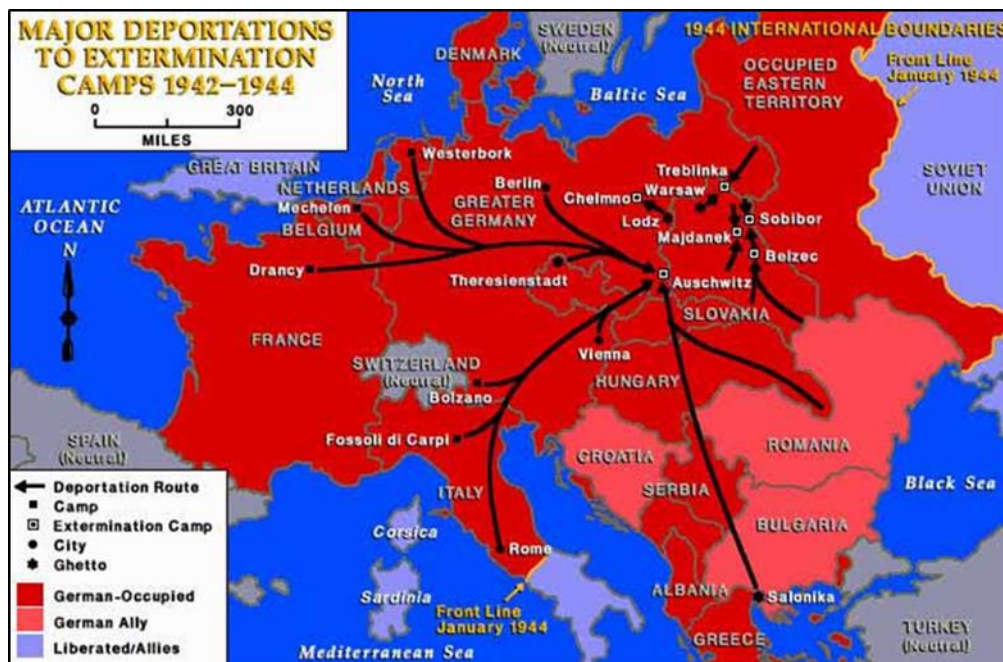


Image 1

Image 1: Nazis created railway stations all around Europe, in every country that they'd occupied there were deportation centres with a railway system and they would bring the Jews to the station and rail them to the death camps. Did they tell the Jewish people, they were doing this? Absolutely not. They told lies. What they said to the Jewish people in the ghettos was that they would be given land in the East and that they should pack all their belongings. That's what people did in the belief that they were going to go and start a new life; they packed up all their goods.

Image 2: You can see they're all wearing armbands. The youngsters look quite cheerful. The old people look a little tired but they are getting ready to go to their new life.

Image 3: But they were packed into trucks that were designed for animals (Image 3). There were no seats, no windows and very little space to breathe. In each of these trucks, between 75 and 100 people were packed in like sardines. On the one end was a bucket of water and on the other end was a bucket to use as a toilet. Depending on where you were coming from, these journeys could take days or weeks until people arrived at their destination. Many people died en route.

Image 2



Image 3

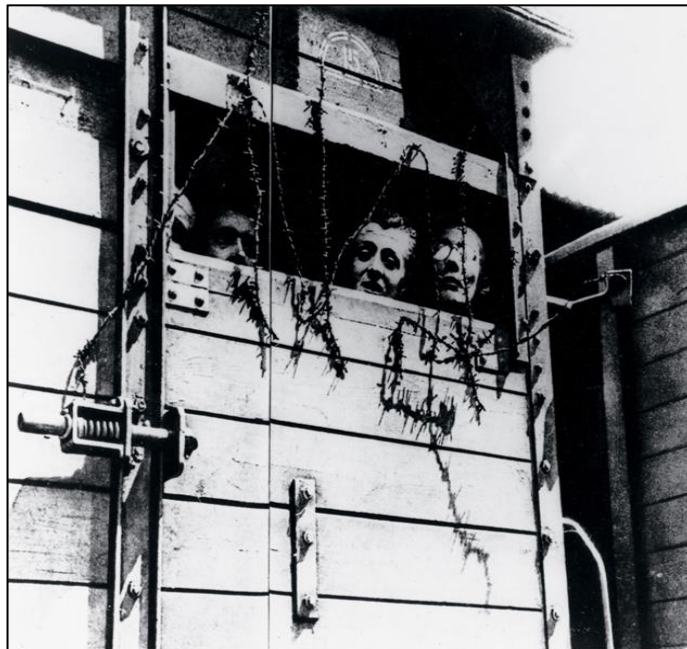




Image 1

Image1: of Auschwitz; Auschwitz being the most infamous (famous in a negative way) of all the camps

On arrival that men and women were separated because the guards told the people that they were going to shower and the men and women couldn't shower together

This was the first separation of families often it was the last time a mother saw a son or a husband saw a wife or a brother saw a sister

From these separations, selections took place; the Nazis looked at the people and decided who was going to live and who was going to die

Image 2: The very old and the very young were sent to die immediately they were considered useless because they couldn't work.

The Nazis called them “useless eaters”.



Image 2

Image 3: None of these people survived. All of them were waiting for their turn to have a “shower”

They would be put into a huge room that was made to look like a shower room that had showerheads.

But no water came out of the shower heads only gas.

Every person in this image was gassed to death.



Image 3

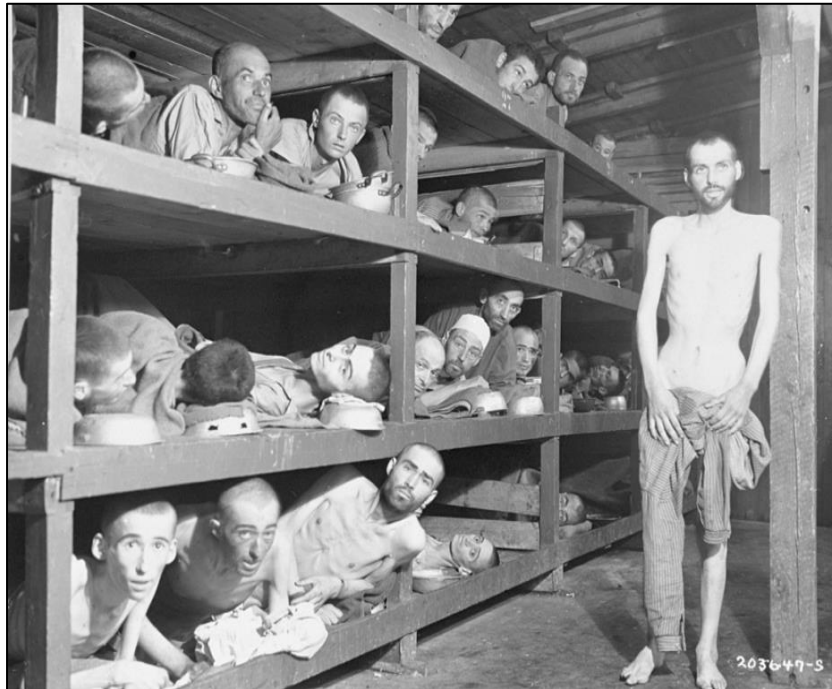
What of those “condemned” to live? “Condemned” to live was a Nazi term. Those people who were not selected for immediate death had their hair shaved off, in Auschwitz they had a number tattooed on their arm and their dehumanisation took place immediately. They were never referred to by name only by number.

People who could not work or starved on the poor rations they were given, were sent off to die in gas chambers and then burnt in crematoria. Selections took place regularly so prisoners were always at the mercy of their captors as to whether they would live or die. They tried against all odds to stay alive.

Below is an image of a group of women selected to live. They have had their heads shaven, have been made to line up and are now awaiting instructions.



The image below is the men's barracks at **Buchenwald Camp**. This is the state in which liberators found prisoners who were still alive. Most were starved, skeletal and at death's door.



LIBERATION

Liberation began in nineteen forty four, and it continued until Germany surrendered unconditionally on May the 8th Nineteen forty five by which time two thirds of the Jews of Europe, almost 6 million men, women and children had been murdered. Hitler committed suicide when he realised that Germany was vanquished (defeated).

After the war in 1948:

The people who saw what had happened in Europe decided that human beings needed a list of what were considered basic human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed by most countries in the world, except for eight of them.

Czechoslovakia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, the Soviet Union, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Yugoslavia **did not sign**. If you count those countries, you'll see there are only seven on that list.

The 8th country that did not sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was South Africa. Think about why South Africa did not sign and, we will revisit this in our last unit

QUESTIONS

1. What decision did the Nazis take with regard to Jewish people after they invaded the Soviet Union?
2. What were the “Einsatzgruppen”?
3. At Wannsee the Nazis decided to industrialise the killing process and to bring all the Jewish people to killing centres. Why did they locate all these killing centres (death camps) in Poland?
4. In this unit we talk about death camps or killing centres and not “extermination” camps as the Nazis called them. Give a reason why you think we do not/should not use the term “extermination camp”?
5. Why do you think South Africa refused to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre:

<http://ctholocaust.co.za/>

Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwVBUs5VqvsumuwDdzYIAaQ>

Yadvashem.org

https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/final-solution/auschwitz.html?gclid=Cj0KCQiAlsv_BRDtARIsAHMGVSav5WI7mkoJrscXCphGoTWPLlpU6pqEyLQt9-Ig6IKpUgYcz0ifSQaAoArEALw_wcB

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/killing-centers-an-overview>