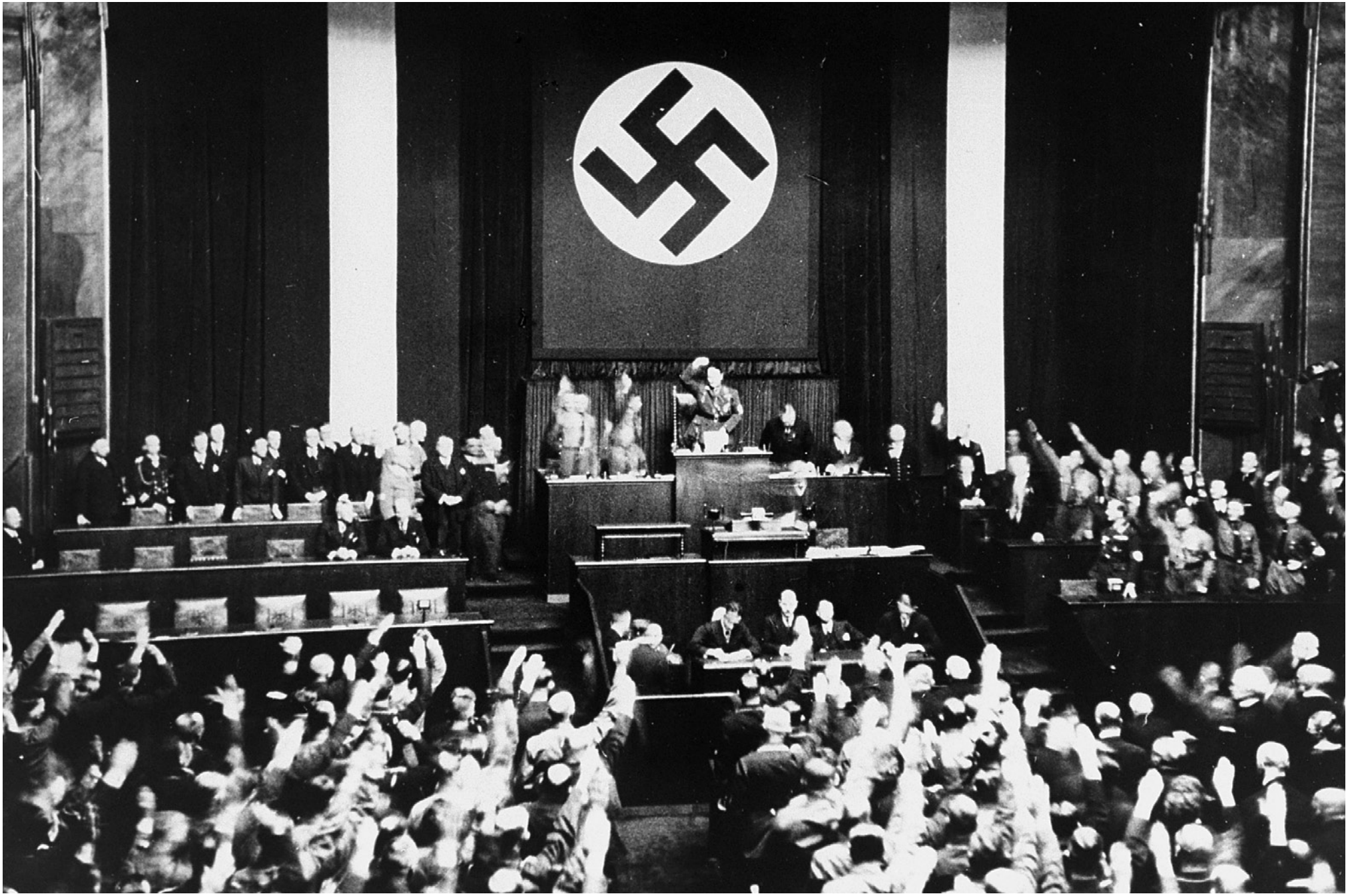


THE HOLOCAUST

NAZI ASSAULT 1933–1939



TAKEOVER OF POWER, 1933

In March 1933, Adolf Hitler addressed the first session of the German Parliament (Reichstag) following his appointment as chancellor. After this photograph was taken, all political parties in the Reichstag—with the exception of the Socialists and Communists—passed the “Enabling Act” giving Hitler the power to rule by emergency decree.

Berlin, Germany, March 1933

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

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THE TERROR BEGINS

A storm trooper (SA) guards newly arrested members of the German Communist Party in a basement jail of the SA barracks in Berlin. Communists, Socialists, and other political opponents of the Nazis were among the first to be rounded up and imprisoned by the regime.

Berlin, Germany, April 1933

Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, New York

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FROM CITIZENS TO OUTCASTS

A woman reads a boycott sign posted on the window of a Jewish-owned department store. The Nazis initiated a boycott of Jewish shops and businesses on April 1, 1933, across Germany. Many Germans continued to enter the Jewish stores despite the boycott, and it was called off after 24 hours. In the subsequent weeks and months more discriminatory measures against Jews followed and remained in effect.

Berlin, Germany, April 1, 1933
National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

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NAZI RACE LAWS

An instructional chart distinguishes individuals with pure “German blood” (left column), “Mixed blood” (second and third columns), and Jews (right two columns), as defined in the Nuremberg Laws. Among other things, the laws issued in September 1935 restricted future German citizenship to those of “German or kindred blood,” and excluded those deemed to be “racially” Jewish or Roma (Gypsy). The laws prohibited marriage and sexual relationships between Jews and non-Jews.

Germany, circa 1935

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hillel at Kent State University

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THE “SCIENCE” OF RACE

Members of the Hitler Youth receive instruction in racial hygiene at a Hitler Youth training facility. The Nazis divided the world’s population into superior and inferior “races.” According to their ideology, the “Aryan race,” to which the German people allegedly belonged, stood at the top of this racial hierarchy. The Nazi ideal was the Nordic type, displaying blond hair, blue eyes, and tall stature.

Germany, circa 1935

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz

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“NIGHT OF BROKEN GLASS”

Residents of Rostock, Germany, view a burning synagogue the morning after *Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”). On the night of November 9–10, 1938, the Nazi regime unleashed orchestrated anti-Jewish violence across greater Germany. Within 48 hours, synagogues were vandalized and burned, 7,500 Jewish businesses were damaged or destroyed, 96 Jews were killed, and nearly 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

Rostock, Germany, November 10, 1938
Archiv der Hansestadt Rostock, Germany

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“ENEMIES OF THE STATE”

Within the concentration camp system, colored, triangular badges identified various prisoner categories, as seen in this image of a roll call at the Buchenwald concentration camp. Although Jews were their primary targets, the Nazis also persecuted Roma (Gypsies), persons with mental and physical disabilities, and Poles for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered oppression and death.

Buchenwald, Germany, circa 1938–41

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Robert A. Schmuibl

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SEARCH FOR REFUGE

Jews in Vienna wait in line at a police station to obtain exit visas. Following the incorporation of Austria by Nazi Germany in March 1938, and the unleashing of a wave of humiliation, terror, and confiscation, many Austrian Jews attempted to leave the country. Before being allowed to leave, however, Jews were required to get an exit visa, plus pay large sums of money in taxes and additional fees.

Vienna, German-incorporated Austria, circa 1938–1939

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Österreichische Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte

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THE HOLOCAUST

NAZI ASSAULT 1933–1939



AMERICAN RESPONSES

Government policies in the 1930s made it difficult for Jews seeking refuge to settle in the United States. In May 1939 the passenger ship *St. Louis*—seen here before departing Hamburg—sailed from Germany to Cuba carrying 937 passengers, most of them Jews. Unknown to the passengers, the Cuban government had revoked their landing certificates. After the U.S. government denied permission for the passengers to enter the United States, the *St. Louis* returned to Europe. Some 250 of the refugees would later be killed in the Holocaust.

Hamburg, Germany, May 1939
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Herbert and Vera Karliner

National
Days of Remembrance

UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

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THE HOLOCAUST

“FINAL SOLUTION” 1939–1945



THE WAR BEGINS

Sections of Warsaw lay in ruins following the invasion and conquest of Poland by the German military begun in September 1939 that propelled Europe into World War II. For most of the next two years German forces occupied or controlled much of continental Europe. By the end of 1942, however, the Allies were on the offensive and ultimately drove back the German forces. The war in Europe ended with the unconditional surrender of Germany in May 1945.

Warsaw, Poland, circa September 1939

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Julien Bryan

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THE HOLOCAUST

“FINAL SOLUTION” 1939–1945



LIFE IN THE GHETTO

Jews in the Warsaw ghetto wait in line for food at a soup kitchen. Ghettos were city districts, often enclosed, in which the Germans concentrated the municipal and sometimes regional Jewish population to control and segregate it from the non-Jewish population. In November 1940, German authorities sealed the Warsaw ghetto, severely restricting supplies for the more than 300,000 Jews living there. Survival was a daily challenge as inhabitants struggled for the bare necessities of food, sanitation, shelter, and clothing.

Warsaw, Poland, 1941
Archiwum Dokumentacji Mechanicznej, Warsaw, Poland

National
Days of Remembrance

UNITED STATES
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THE HOLOCAUST

“FINAL SOLUTION” 1939–1945



MOBILE KILLING SQUADS

About a quarter of all Jews who perished in the Holocaust were shot by SS mobile killing squads and police battalions following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. These units carried out the mass murder of Jews, Roma, and Communist government officials. This man was murdered in the presence of members of the German Army, the German Labor Service, and the Hitler Youth.

Vinnitsa, Ukraine, 1942

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC

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THE HOLOCAUST

“FINAL SOLUTION” 1939–1945



DEPORTATIONS

Between 1942 and 1944, trains carrying Jews from German-controlled Europe rolled into one of the six killing centers located along rail lines in occupied Poland. Commonly between 80 and 100 people were crammed into railcars of this type. Deportation trains usually carried 1,000 to 2,000 people. Many died during the extreme conditions of the journey, and most survivors were murdered upon arrival at the killing centers. This railcar is on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Polskie Koleje Państwowe S.A., Poland

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THE HOLOCAUST “FINAL SOLUTION” 1939–1945



CONCENTRATION CAMP UNIVERSE

Jews from Hungarian-occupied Czechoslovakia (present-day Ukraine) are taken off the trains and assembled at the largest of the killing centers, Auschwitz-Birkenau. The overwhelming majority of Jews who entered the Nazi killing centers were murdered in gas chambers—usually within hours of arrival—and their bodies cremated.

Auschwitz, Poland, May 1944

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Israel

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THE HOLOCAUST

“FINAL SOLUTION” 1939–1945



CONCENTRATION CAMP UNIVERSE

The German authorities confiscated all the personal belongings of the Jews, including their clothing, and collected them for use or sale. Soviet troops discovered tens of thousands of shoes when they liberated the Majdanek concentration camp in Poland in July 1944. These confiscated shoes from Majdanek and Auschwitz are on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum na Majdanku, Poland, and State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oswiecim, Poland

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THE HOLOCAUST LAST CHAPTER



THE COURAGE TO RESCUE

For several weeks in October 1943, Danish rescuers ferried 7,220 Jews to safety across the narrow strait to neutral Sweden. As a result of this national effort, more than 90 percent of the Jews in Denmark escaped deportation to Nazi concentration camps. This boat, now on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., was used by a group of rescuers code-named the “Helsingør Sewing Club.”

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Proben Munch Nielsen

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THE HOLOCAUST LAST CHAPTER



RESISTANCE

In fall 1939, Jewish activists in Warsaw, around the historian Emanuel Ringelblum, established a secret archive to document Jewish life and death in the ghetto and the extreme conditions of German occupation. In 1942–1943, they buried these documents in metal containers, such as this milk can, to preserve a record of Nazi crimes for future generations. This milk can is on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Żydowski Instytut Historyczny imienia Emanuela Ringelbluma, Warsaw, Poland

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THE HOLOCAUST LAST CHAPTER



DEATH MARCHES

This photo taken from the window of a private home shows prisoners being marched from one concentration camp to another. In response to the deteriorating military situation in late 1944, German authorities ordered the evacuation of concentration camp prisoners away from advancing Allied troops to the interior of Germany. Evacuated by train, ship, or on foot, prisoners suffered from malnutrition, exhaustion, harsh weather, and mistreatment. SS guards followed strict orders to shoot prisoners who could no longer walk or travel.

Dachau, Germany, April 1945
akg-images / Benno Gantner

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THE HOLOCAUST LAST CHAPTER



LIBERATION

General Dwight D. Eisenhower and other high-ranking U.S. Army officers view the bodies of prisoners killed by German camp authorities during the evacuation of the Ohrdruf concentration camp. Eisenhower visited the camp to witness personally the evidence of atrocities. He publicly expressed his shock and revulsion, and he urged others to see the camps firsthand lest “the stories of Nazi brutality” be forgotten or dismissed as merely “propaganda.”

Ohrdruf, Germany, April 12, 1945
National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

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THE HOLOCAUST LAST CHAPTER



POSTWAR TRIALS

Leading Nazi officials listen to proceedings at the International Military Tribunal, the best known of the postwar trials, in Nuremberg, Germany, before judges representing the Allied powers. Beginning in October 1945, 22 major war criminals were tried on charges of crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy to commit such crimes.

Nuremberg, Germany, November 1945–October 1946

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of John W. Mosenthal

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THE HOLOCAUST LAST CHAPTER



GENOCIDE DID NOT END WITH THE HOLOCAUST

In response to the Holocaust, the international community worked to create safeguards to prevent future genocides. The United Nations in 1948 voted to establish genocide as an international crime, calling it an “odious scourge” to be condemned by the civilized world. Despite this effort, genocide has continued, and it continues to threaten parts of the world even today. Refugees from the 2003–2005 genocide in Darfur, Sudan, above, struggle to survive after being displaced from their villages.

Touloum refugee camp, Chad, May 2004
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

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