



# Holocaust

## MEMORIAL DAY

2005

**Learning from the past ~ lessons for today**

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The Holocaust Memorial Day Committee in association with  
the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Dublin City Council;  
Dublin Maccabi Charitable Trust and the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland



...Has the like of this happened in your days or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it and let your children tell theirs, and their children the next generation...

Joel 2, ii-iii



Tisa

# Holocaust

## MEMORIAL DAY

City Hall, Dublin ~ January 2005

### Programme

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- *Introductory remarks*, Yanky Fachler

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  - *Words of welcome*, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr Michael Conaghan

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  - *Address*, the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD

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  - *The Stockholm Declaration*, Michael McDowell TD, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform

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  - *Holocaust Memorial Day*, Oliver Donohoe, Chairperson, Holocaust Memorial Day committee

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  - Musical interlude

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  - *The Shoah must never be trivialised* (Simone Veil), read by Dr Garret FitzGerald

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  - *Sadism and humiliation* (Eva Hoffman), read by John Bowman, Historian and Broadcaster

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  - *All of the victims* (Elie Wiesel), read by Senator Mary O'Rourke

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  - *Nazi persecution of people with disabilities and disabling conditions*, read by John Dolan, CEO, Disability Federation of Ireland

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  - *Nazi persecution of Gypsies*, read by Anastasia Crickley, Chairperson, National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism

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  - *Nazi persecution of homosexuals*, read by Senator David Norris

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  - *Nazi persecution of black people*, read by Clement Esebamen, Equalities Co-ordinator, Tallaght Partnership

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  - *Nazi persecution of political opponents*, read by David Begg, General Secretary, Irish Congress of Trade Unions

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  - *First they came...* (Martin Niemoeller), read by Theo Dorgan, Poet and Broadcaster

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  - *The Concentration Camps*, read by Niall Toibin

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  - Musical interlude

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  - *The rescuers*, read by Sister Carmel Niland, member of the Council of Christians and Jews

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  - *The Old Man and the Conference*, read by Paul Durcan

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  - *Liberation*: readings by the ambassadors of the United States, Britain, Canada and the Russian Federation

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  - Musical interlude

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  - *It could happen again* (Yehuda Bauer), read by Ruairi Quinn TD

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  - *Go home from this place...* (Paddy Fitzgibbon), read by Senator Mary Henry

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  - Minute's silence

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  - CANDLE-LIGHTING CEREMONY

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  - *Prayer for the Repose of the Souls of the Departed*, Rabbi Dr Yaakov Pearlman, Chief Rabbi of Ireland

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  - *El Malei Rachamin*, Reverend Alwyn Shulman, Cantor of The Dublin Hebrew Congregation

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  - *Closing remarks*, Yanky Fachler

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## Holocaust Memorial Day

### Mission Statement

The Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration is designed to cherish the memory of all of the victims of the Nazi Holocaust. A candle-lighting ceremony is an integral part of the commemoration at which six candles are always lit for the six million Jews who perished, as well as candles for all of the other victims. The commemoration serves as a constant reminder of the dangers of racism and provides lessons from the past that are relevant today.

## Summary of the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust

Issued in January 2000, on the 55th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945 and endorsed by 44 countries, including Ireland.

We, the governments attending the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, recognise that the Holocaust was a tragically defining episode of the 20th Century, a crisis for European civilisation and a universal catastrophe for humanity. In declaring that the Holocaust fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilisation, we share a commitment to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, and to honour those who stood against it. The horrors that engulfed the Jewish People and other victims of the Nazis must forever be seared in our collective memory. With humanity still scarred by genocide, anti-semitism, ethnic cleansing, racism, xenophobia and other expressions of hatred and discrimination, we share a solemn responsibility to fight against these evils. Together with our European partners and the wider international community, we share a commitment to remember all the victims who perished, to respect the survivors still with us, and to reaffirm humanity's common aspiration for a democratic and tolerant society, free of the evils of prejudice and other forms of bigotry.

## Message from the Lord Mayor of Dublin Councillor Michael Conaghan

I am proud to continue the association of Dublin City with Holocaust Memorial Day. I am sure that all future holders of this office will wish to perpetuate this tradition in the city's annual calendar.



In addition to commemorating the horrors of the Holocaust and paying tribute to all of the victims, the theme of Holocaust Memorial Day is to learn the lessons of the past and make them relevant today.

There can be no place in the City of Dublin, which has enjoyed a long and positive relationship with the Jewish community, for the manifestations of anti-Semitism such as we witnessed in recent weeks. Racist behaviour of this sort must serve as a timely wake-up call for greater vigilance.

I call on all members of Irish society to renew their commitment to embrace a more inclusive and more culturally diverse future together.

I would like to commend everyone involved in organising this Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration.

Cllr Michael Conaghan  
Lord Mayor of Dublin

## Excerpts from the address by President McAleese at the Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration in Dublin, January 2004

I am very grateful to have been invited to this solemn commemoration and to join with you in this act of remembrance as we call forcefully to mind the enormity of the Shoah, the barbaric human wasteland that was the Holocaust.



Sectarian hatred, racist hatred are awesome when they run amok. The Holocaust told us that so emphatically when it confronted the world with 'the crashing fires of Hell' to use that phrase from the song of the Warsaw Ghetto sung in Auschwitz.

I visited Majdanek in Poland last year. Today that former Concentration Camp looks so innocuous, so silent and yet even after all these years it has an overwhelming atmosphere of despair and anger, of disbelief and rage so powerful it robs you of speech and of any lingering complacency.

On this third day of Sh'vat, we dedicate our time here today as a Yahrzeit for all those who suffered and died in the Holocaust and for all who survived but carried the memory through broken lives. In their name we call on all peacemakers to do the work, to take the risks, to cross the divides to make our world a better place, a blessed place.

May they bring peace upon us and upon all the earth.

## Europe – The number of Jews annihilated by the Nazis in each European country



The white figures on black relate to the approximate number of Jews that perished in each European country between September 1939 and May 1945. The total of just over 5,750,000 does not include thousands of infants murdered by the Nazis in late 1941, before their births could be recorded. Thousands of people from the remoter villages in Poland were added to the deportation trains which left larger localities, without any record of their existence or of their fate.



## The Nazi Holocaust – a systematic programme to exterminate the Jews of Europe

- The first concentration camp, Dachau, is established to hold the prisoners arrested after the arson attack on the Reichstag parliament building in February 1933.
- May 1933 – Nazi students and militiamen light huge public bonfires in which they burn books by Jews, communists and other ‘disruptive’ influences.
- 1933 onwards – Jews are expelled from the army, the civil service, professional associations, sports and social clubs.
- 1935 – The Nuremberg Laws strip Jews of citizenship and define them by racial criteria.
- 35,000 Jewish war veterans who had won medals for bravery during WWI lose their privileges.
- 9 November 1938 – *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass).
- 275,000 men, women and children with disabilities die in Nazi euthanasia programmes.
- 100,000 Jews die in labour camps between 1939 and 1940.
- Following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, SS mobile murder squads known as Einsatzgruppen murder over 2,000,000 civilians, most of them Jews.
- Some 500,000 Jews die in ghettos from starvation and disease.
- 30,000 Jewish partisans fight the Nazis in Eastern Europe.
- More than 7,000 Jews are killed in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising between 19 April and 16 May, 1943.
- 1,000,000 Jews, 70,000 Christian Poles, 23,000 Gypsies, 15,000 Soviet prisoners and thousands of others die at Auschwitz.
- Of the 300,000 Jews who go into hiding, pretend to be Aryans or acquire false identity papers, 100,000 die after capture or betrayal.
- Out of 9,000,000 Jews living in Europe before 1939, only 3,000,000 remain after 1945.

## Hats, Ribbons and Refugees

The impoverished state of the west of Ireland in the 1930s, prompted the Irish government to send a trade delegation to Europe to explore the possibility of attracting European industries to relocate to Ireland. The delegation succeeded in bringing two hat factories and one ribbon factory to the region.



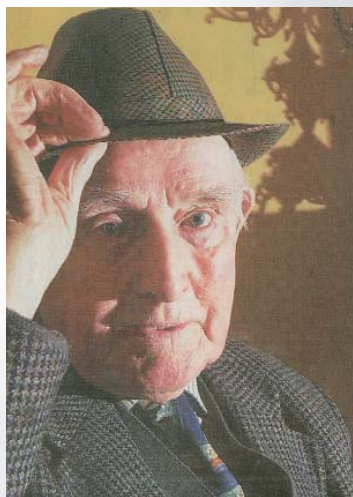
*Western Hats Board of Directors meeting 1940's. Left to right: D.P. O'Dwyer, P Sarsfield Brady, Senator J.E. McEllin, James Murphy and F. Schmolka*

Spear-headed by the then Minister for Trade, Sean Lemass, the delegation including Senator John E McEllin and Marcus Witztum (a Polish-born Jewish businessman who lived in Ireland), set off for France. They visited a small hat factory called *Les Modes Modernes*, owned by a French Jew, Henri Orbach. He had invited his brother-in-law Serge Phillipson to leave Berlin and work with him in France. Henri agreed to move his factory to Galway, and sent Serge to run the business there in November 1937.



*The finished products at Western Hats*

At the opening of *Les Modes Modernes* in Galway, business was boosted when the Bishop of Galway encouraged his lady parishioners to wear hats instead of head-scarves to Mass. Serge was joined in Galway by his wife Sophie and their daughter Rachel, but soon afterwards, mother and daughter made the tragic mistake of returning to Paris for Sophie to be with her elderly mother and for Rachel to attend school there. Sophie was eventually arrested by the French police and sent, via Drancy, to the concentration camp where she perished. Rachel survived the war and was reunited with her father in Ireland. She currently lives in Canada.



*Mr Tom Ketterick, who worked in Western Hats in Castlebar from 1939, at his home in Ballina, Co. Mayo in 2003*

Shortly after the establishment of *Les Modes Modernes*, McEllin and Witztum were instrumental in bringing a second hat factory to the west of Ireland. In 1938, Belgian designers began work on the factory for *Western Hats* in Castlebar, Co Mayo. It opened for business in 1940 under the watchful eye of Franz Schmolka who originally came from Prague.

Several Czech and Slovak Jewish families came to Ireland to work in *Western Hats*, causing the locals to designate the Blackfort area of Castlebar as 'Little Jerusalem'. The factory was officially opened by Sean Lemass and blessed by the Bishop of Galway. During its lifetime, *Western Hats* employed hundreds of local people, and even had its own football team.

The third factory to move from Europe to Ireland was the Hirsch Ribbon Factory. Erskine Childers, then TD for Athlone-Longford, campaigned for the establishment of a factory in Longford. Emil Hirsch became the only Jew in Austria who managed to ship his entire factory out of the country after the 1938 Anschluss (when Germany forcibly annexed Austria).





Emil Hirsch

In March 1939, the Irish Minister for Finance signed a 30-year lease agreement with John McEllin and Marcus Witztum for the disused Connolly Army Barracks on Battery Road in Longford Town.

Emil became the managing director of *Hirsch Ribbons*, and his son Robert, was general manager. Ruby Burns, who spoke fluent German, translated for managers and staff and later became Robert's wife. Their two children, Desmond and Jenny, also worked in the factory and later in the Dublin sales office.

The establishment of these enterprises in Ireland which facilitated the move out of Europe for several Jewish families was achieved through the intercession of Marcus Witztum, Serge Phillipson, and other prominent businessmen. They used their excellent negotiating skills and provided the funds necessary to procure passports and entry visas for the Jewish refugees.

When Robert Hirsch first arrived in Longford, he shared lodgings with George Klaar (Clare), author of *Last Waltz in Vienna*, which tells the family story. George's father, Ernst, was dismissed from his job at the bank in Vienna because he was a Jew. He was put in contact with Emil Hirsch who arranged for Ernst to be included among the 'experts' who would move to Ireland with the ribbon factory.

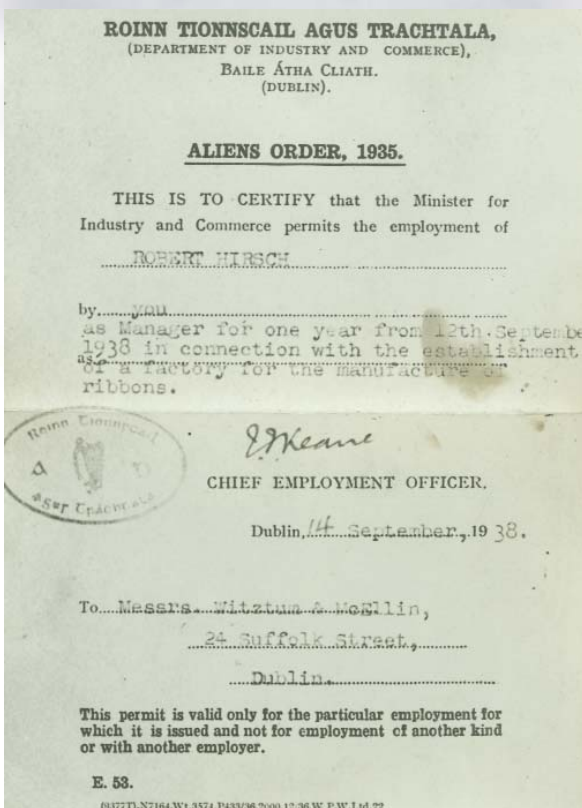
While waiting in Berlin for his Irish visa, Ernst took up work in a Paris bank. His wife, Stella, and son, George, remained in Berlin to wait for their visas. Despite inexplicable delays and prevarication, Stella and George received their visas the morning after *Kristallnacht* in November 1938.



Connolly Army Barracks, Battery Road, Longford, that became the premises for Hirsch Ribbons

Stella and George reached Longford where they joined the Hirsch family. Although Ernst eventually received his Irish visa in Paris, he also made the fatal mistake of remaining in France instead of leaving immediately for Ireland. Stella missed her husband so much that she left the safety of Ireland to join him in Paris, arriving the day after war was declared. Ernst Klaar was arrested by the French police in August 1942 and deported to Auschwitz. Stella chose to accompany him, even though she had not been arrested – they both perished in the death camp.

The three factories provided a limited avenue of access to Ireland for Jewish families fleeing Nazi tyranny. Altogether, about thirty Jewish families came from Europe and settled in the West of Ireland. The factories turned areas of unemployment, emigration and desolation into regions of employment and prosperity. Generations of local men and women found good employment in the ribbon and hat factories and remember with fondness the people they worked for and their times working with them.



Permit for Robert Hirsch granted by Dept. Industry & Commerce, 1935

## The Hat Factory

...Myself, I am thinking of the local hat factory,  
Of its history and the eerie fact  
That in my small town I have never known  
Anyone who worked in it  
Or had to do with it at all;  
As a child I used to look through a hole in the hedge  
At the hat factory down below in the valley;  
I used to lie flat on my face in the long grass  
And put out my head through the hole:  
Had the hatters looked out through their porthole  
windows  
They would have seen high up in the hillside  
A long wild hedgerow broken only  
By the head of the child looking out through the hole;  
I speculate;  
And as to what kind of hats they make;  
And do they have a range in black birettas;  
And do they have a conveyor belt of toppers;  
And do the workers get free hats?  
And I recall the Pope's skull-cap  
Placed on my head when as a boy-child  
In a city hospital I lay near to death  
And the black homburg of the red-nosed undertaker  
And the balaclavas of assassins  
And the pixies of the lost children of the murdered earth  
And the multicoloured yamulka of the wandering Jew  
And the black kippa of my American friend  
In Jerusalem in the snow  
And the portly Egyptian's tiny fez  
And the tragic Bedouin's kefia in the sands of sun  
And the monk's cowl and the nun's wimple

And the funereal mortarboards of airborne puritans  
And the megalithic coifs of the pancake women of Brittany  
And the sleek fedoras of well-to-do thugs  
And sadistic squires' Napoleonic tricorns  
And prancing horse-cavalry in their cruel shakos  
And the heroic lifeboatman's black sou'wester  
And the nicotine-stained wig of the curly-haired barrister  
And the black busby used as a handbag by my laughing  
brother  
And the silken turban of the highbrow widow  
And foreign legionaires in nullah kepis  
And May Day presidiums in astrakhans  
And bonnets and boaters and sombreros and stetsons  
And stove-pipes and steeples and mantillas and berets  
And topis and sunhats and deerstalkers and pill-boxes  
And naughty grandmothers in toques  
And bishops' mitres and soldiers' helmets;  
And in Languedoc and in Aran – cloth caps.  
And what if you were a hatter  
And you married a hatter  
And all your sons and daughters worked as hatters  
And you inhabited a hat-house all full of hats;  
Hats, hats, hats, hats.  
Hats: the apotheosis of an ancient craft;  
And I think of all the nationalities of Israel  
And of how each always clings to his native hat,  
His priceless and moveable roof,  
His hat which is the last and first symbol  
Of a man's slender foothold on this earth...

*From: The Hat Factory in A Snail in my Prime, by Paul Durcan*

## Kristallnacht

In November 1938, Herschel Grynspan, a Jewish student in Paris, assassinated the third secretary in the German Embassy. In retaliation, the Nazis launched **Kristallnacht** – The Night of Broken Glass – on 9 November 1938. As this pogrom raged throughout Germany, over 100 Jews were murdered, synagogues, Jewish homes, schools and businesses were burnt to the ground.

In response to *Kristallnacht*, Jewish and gentile leaders in Britain persuaded the government to allow some 10,000 children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia to find shelter and refuge in Britain. This programme was known as the *Kindertransports*.



*Kristallnacht* Tisa von der Schulenburg



## Forgotten Victims of the Holocaust

### Gypsy Victims of the Nazis

The Nazi Holocaust of the Gypsies is known in the Romany language as the *Pharrajimos* - 'the devouring'. No exact figures are available, but an estimated 500,000 Gypsies were gassed, starved or used as human guinea-pigs. At least another half million were displaced and dispossessed, their identity documents destroyed.

There was a long tradition of persecution of Hungarian Roma. In 1916, a decree mandated that all 'wandering' Gypsies were to be registered publicly and physically marked. Many were placed in state work camps, and from 1928, official national Gypsy raids took place at least twice a year. In 1934 Laszlo Endre demanded that wandering Gypsies were put into concentration camps.

In order to secure the future of the Aryan race, German Gypsy men were sterilised *en masse*. After the enactment of Germany's racial laws in September 1935, and the establishment of the *Racial Hygiene Research Institute* in November 1936, 'racially inferior' Roma and Sinti were continuously deported. From March 1939 the Gypsies had to wear differentiating insignia. Roma and Sinti were held in Gypsy detainment camps before being sent to concentration camps.



*The arrival of Gypsy prisoners in Auschwitz*

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After the Anschluss, Austrian Roma were also rounded up, and were taken to the Lodz ghetto in Poland. In 1943, they were sent from there to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Gypsy concentration camp. Mass slaughters of Gypsies took place elsewhere. The Ustasha killed Gypsies in the Jasenovac camp in Croatia, and the Romanians sent Roma



*Gypsy children, victims of medical experiments. Auschwitz*

communities to Transnistria where officials condemned them to death by starvation. After the war, thousands of Gypsies remained in Transnistria, Baragan and other Displaced Persons' camps. Their situation was compounded by the fact that they were unable to provide formal proof of their identities, nationalities or ancestry.

In 2003, the Jewish community in Prague hosted the first-ever conference on the genocide of the Roma during the Second World War. A further step towards recognising the plight of Europe's Gypsies was taken in August 2004 when a wreath-laying ceremony was held on the site of the Gypsy camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. 60 years after the gassing of the final 2,900 Gypsies, several hundred mourners, including camp survivors, walked from the barracks area to the ruins of a gas chamber, where Gypsy representatives lit candles.



*Roma leaders at wreath-laying in Auschwitz*

Czarek Sokolowski / AP The Irish Times 3 August 2004

## Nazi Persecution of People with Disabilities

In the early decades of the twentieth century the study of Eugenics was popular and considered a serious science. Practitioners in Europe and America advocated the elimination of 'weaker strains' in order to promote a healthy and strong human race. While other nations abandoned the practice of Eugenics, the Nazis used it as an ideological justification for medical practitioners to eliminate 'unfit' members of society. The Nazis adopted the concept of 'weaker strains' to annihilate Jews, blacks, homosexuals, Gypsies, people with disabilities and disabling conditions, and others they considered non-Aryan.

One of the first and most extreme measures was The Euthanasia Programme which provided the prototype for broader genocidal actions. It is estimated that the Nazis murdered 275,000 people with physical and intellectual disabilities, on the grounds that these people were a 'burden on the state'. High school textbooks contained examples of maths problems calculating the costs of care for the disabled compared to the costs of caring for a healthy person.

Under Hitler's orders, the T4 Advanced Euthanasia Programme was established. When the physicians at T4



*A mentally disabled girl photographed shortly before her murder*

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decided that the methods used to kill the children in the initial programmes were not efficient enough for the mass killing of adults, they experimented with various gases and delivery systems. At first they used gas vans and eventually came up with the idea of disguising gas chambers as showers in order not to cause panic.



*"You are sharing the load! A hereditarily ill person costs 50,000 reichsmarks on average up to the age of sixty," reproduced in a biology textbook by Jakob Graf*

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Under the Nazis, there was compulsory registration of all 'malformed' newborn children. Hundreds of Nazi doctors and nurses betrayed their professional ethics by participating in the euthanasia programmes. In one medical centre, psychiatrists, nurses and secretaries held a party to celebrate the cremation of its ten-thousandth victim.

The adult euthanasia programme was halted due to negative publicity in 1941 but the killing continued on a smaller scale. The gassing technology and knowhow that had proved so successful in T-4 were transferred to the extermination camps as part of *The Final Solution*.

## Polish victims of the Nazis

The Nazi ideology viewed men, women and children of Polish derivation and language as subhumans who occupied lands vital to Germany. As part of the policy to destroy any future Polish resistance, Hitler decreed that all members of the Polish intelligentsia were to be killed. Tens of thousands of political leaders, church leaders, intellectuals, professionals, entrepreneurs, landowners and other Polish elites were targeted. They were either murdered or sent to concentration camps. It is estimated that 3,000 priests were murdered between 1939 and 1945. As part of wider efforts to suppress Polish culture, the Nazis destroyed universities, schools, museums, libraries and scientific laboratories. They made sure that Polish children did not progress beyond elementary school.



## Black Victims of the Nazis

Fifty years before the Holocaust, Germans were carrying out medical experiments on black people. Between 1894 and 1904, German settlers in the colony of South West Africa systematically lynched members of the Herero tribe, raped their women and stole their land and cattle. When the Herero rebelled, most of the tribe was wiped out by the German army.



*Images used for lectures on genetics, ethnology, and race breeding*

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The German geneticist, Eugen Fischer, was allowed to perform medical experiments on the Herero captives. He published his scientific race theories in a book called *The Principles of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene*. These theories impressed and influenced Hitler. In order to keep intact the purity of the Aryan population, the Nazis established *Commission Number 3* to secretly organise the forced sterilisation of hundreds of children with African ancestry.

Fischer went on to become chancellor of the University of Berlin, where he taught medicine to a generation of Nazi physicians, including Josef Mengele. The medical experiments begun on the Hereros in 1904 were the blueprint for Mengele's notorious genetic experiments in Auschwitz 35 years later.



*Slide of mulatto child used in lectures on genetics and race at the State Academy for Race and Health in Dresden*

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## Political Opponents of the Nazis

The Nazis persecuted hundreds of thousands of political dissidents and opponents - some for what they did, some for what they refused to do, and some for what they were. In the early 1920's, the Nazis began disrupting meetings of Liberal Democrats, Socialists, Communists, and Trade Unionists. The torching of the Reichstag national parliament building in 1933 gave the Nazis a pretext for suppressing the Communist Party, and later the Social Democratic Party, with brutal violence.



*Political opponents being arrested. Berlin, Germany, 1933*

The Nazis abolished trade unions and co-operatives, confiscated their assets, and prohibited strikes. Political dissidents and political opponents were among the first to be arrested. In 1933, the Nazis established the first concentration camp, Dachau, as a detention centre for political prisoners arrested after the Reichstag fire.

One of the most vocal political opponents of the Nazis was Lutheran pastor, Martin Niemoeller. Although before the War he held conventional anti-Semitic views, his anti-Nazi activities led to him spending 12 years in concentration camps. After the War, it was Niemoeller who persuaded the German Protestant Churches to formally accept guilt for their complicity in the suffering of Jews and political dissidents during Hitler's tyranny.

## Homosexual Victims of the Nazis

The Nazis regarded homosexuality as a political crime. They said it was a sickness linked to a Jewish plot to weaken Aryan men. In 1935, local police departments were required to submit to the Gestapo lists of suspected homosexuals. Paragraph 175 of the Legal Code was amended to criminalise homosexuality. In 1942, Himmler and the Reich Ministry of Justice announced the death penalty for homosexuals.

The Nazis arrested 100,000 gay men, of whom 50,000 were sent to prison or concentration camps. Homosexuals were forced to wear pink triangles on their prison uniforms, and lesbians were forced to wear black triangles. In Auschwitz, Dachau, Gross-Rosen, Mauthausen and Ravensbrück, homosexuals were placed under triple camp discipline: they were subjected to harder work, less food, and stricter supervision than the other inmates.



*Solidarity*, by Richard Grune, lithograph 1947

Schwules Museum, Berlin.

Many homosexuals were subjected to medical experiments. At Buchenwald, SS physician, Dr. Carl Vaernet, performed castrations and surgical operations designed to 'convert men to heterosexuals'. In their quest to create an Aryan Master Race, the Nazis put hundreds of homosexuals to death.



*Mug shot of homosexual Auschwitz prisoner Alfred Fischer*

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Discrimination against homosexuals continued after the war. Homosexual concentration camp survivors were not acknowledged as victims of Nazi persecution. Some even had to serve out their terms of imprisonment because the Nazi anti-homosexual laws remained on the West German statute books until 1969. The criminalisation and social stigmatisation of homosexuals in Europe and the United States in the years after the Holocaust, made most homosexual survivors afraid to tell their stories.

## Nazi Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses had a history of persecution in Germany, and after the Nazis came to power, this persecution intensified. In July 1933, the Gestapo closed the printing operation of the Witnesses' Watchtower Society, and ordered all state-police precincts to search regional Witness groups and organisations.

The Witnesses defied Nazi prohibitions by continuing to meet and distribute literature smuggled in from Switzerland. As a consequence, many Witnesses were arrested and sent to prison and concentration camps. Although Jehovah's Witnesses were banned by law in April 1935, they refused to be drafted into the military services or to perform war-related work. The children of Witnesses were ridiculed by their teachers because they refused to give the 'Heil Hitler' salute.

Many Witnesses were tortured by the Gestapo to renounce their faith – few did so. It is estimated that half of the 10,000 Witnesses imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps perished.



## Badges of Hate

The yellow Star of David imprinted with the word 'Juif' – the French word for 'Jew' – is typical of the badges the Nazis forced Jews to wear.

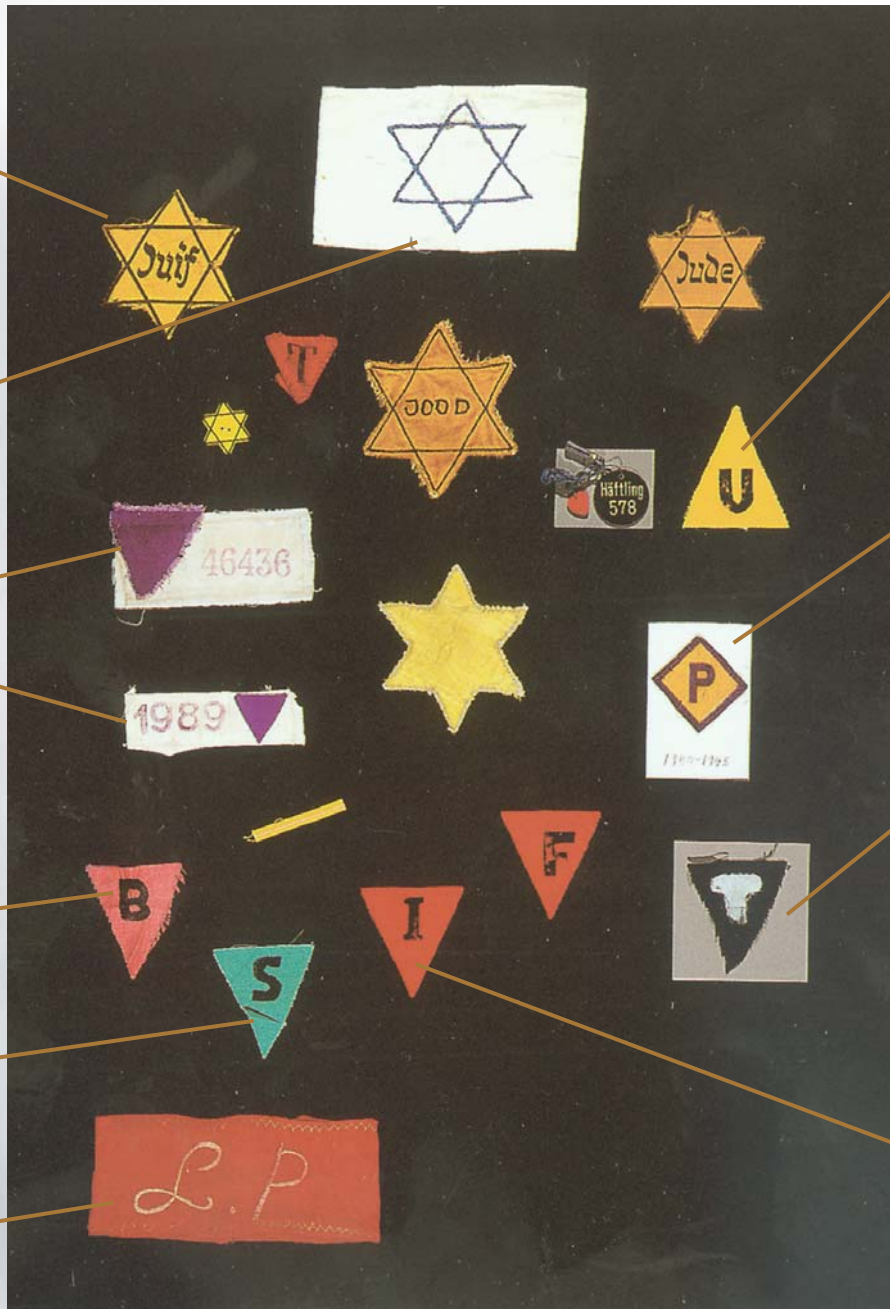
Jews also wore Star of David armbands.

Jehovah's Witnesses, whose religion prevented them from swearing an oath of loyalty to Hitler, had to wear purple triangles.

Pink triangles were for homosexuals and those accused of homosexual acts.

Criminals wore green triangles.

This armband was worn by a labour camp prisoner.



Jews who were in concentration camps often wore yellow triangles like this one marked with a 'U' indicating that the prisoner who wore it was from Hungary.

This patch identified a Polish person living under Nazi control.

Black triangles were worn by those classified as 'antisocial' including Gypsies, lesbians and prostitutes.

Political prisoners wore red triangles.

Markings used by the Nazis to identify their victims

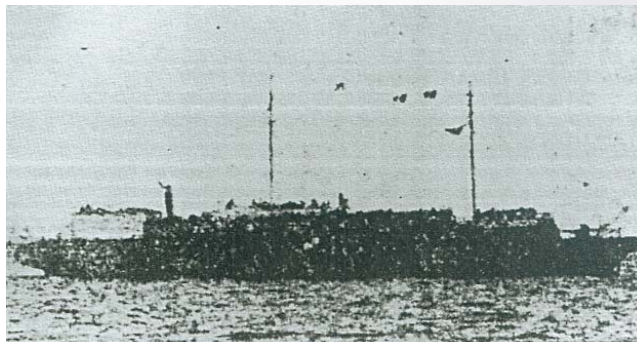
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First they came for the Communists  
 But I was not a Communist, so I did not speak out.  
 Then they came for the Socialists and Trade Unionists  
 But I was not a Socialist or Trade Unionist, so I did not speak out.  
 Then they came for the Jews  
 But I was not a Jew, so I did not speak out.  
 Then they came for me  
 But by then there was no one left to speak out for me.

**Martin Niemoeller**

## The Plight of the *Struma*

In December 1941, a group of 769 Jewish men, women, children and babies left the Romanian port of Constanza aboard a rickety 6m x 16m Danube barge called the *Struma*, built in 1830. The passengers were headed for Istanbul in neutral Turkey, where they hoped to be given permission to make their way by land to Palestine. Instead of the scheduled 14 hours, the unsteady vessel took four days to reach the Bosphorus, off the coast of Turkey.



*The only photograph that exists of the Struma*



*Ticket for the Struma*

The engine gave out, the boat was without fuel, food or water, and although a Turkish tugboat towed the *Struma* into Istanbul Harbour, the Turkish authorities were concerned about jeopardising their neutrality. Bowing to intense pressure from the British Mandatory authorities, Turkey denied assistance to the ship and its passengers, and the *Struma* was left quarantined in the harbour.

Only 9 passengers were allowed to disembark on medical grounds or because they held valid entry visas for Palestine. No one else left the crippled boat, where the hundreds of passengers were imprisoned in narrow, unventilated confines, taking turns to climb up for a breath of fresh air. There was not enough sleeping space for all, no infirmary, no galley, no bathing facilities, and just one single makeshift toilet. Some food was smuggled aboard by local Jews who had bribed officials.

After 8 weeks in Istanbul Harbour, Britain belatedly relented and announced that they would allow children aged 11 to 16 to enter Palestine. But it was too late.

On 24 February 1942, in order to rid itself of this embarrassing problem, Turkey decided to tow the floating death-trap beyond its territorial waters into the Black Sea, despite warnings from the Jewish community that a sea journey could only end in disaster.

For one day, the *Struma* remained stranded, paralysed, and drifting precariously with no provisions or fuel. On 25 February, an explosion ripped the *Struma* apart. To this day, the cause of the blast is unknown. What is known is that the *Struma* sank within minutes. The crew and over 760 refugees perished. Only one passenger, David Stoliar, survived.



*Entry Visa of survivor David Stoliar*



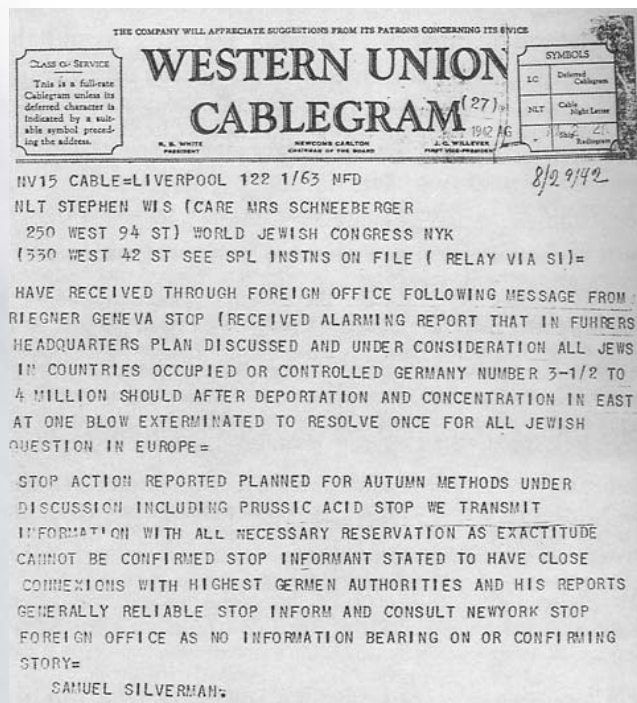


Park Bench 'not for Jews'

Hulton archive, reproduced in The Irish Times, 19 April 2003

### The Riegner Cable – First documentary evidence of *The Final Solution* to reach the West

Telegram sent by Samuel Silverman MP to American Jewish leader, Rabbi Stephen Wise, revealing the contents of a message received from Dr Gerhart Riegner, the World Jewish Congress representative in Switzerland on 8 August 1942. This was the first documentary evidence to reach the West of the Nazi plan to murder the Jews, known as *The Final Solution*.



### A note left by Shmuel Zygielboym addressed to Allied political leaders, following their failure to aid the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, 12 May 1943

"...By my death I wish to make my final protest against the passivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people. I know how little human life is worth today, but as I was unable to do anything during my life, I

shall contribute to breaking down the indifference of those who may now, at the last moment, rescue a few Polish Jews who are still alive...I bid farewell to everybody and to everything that was dear to me and that I have loved."





*Illustration of Crematorium II with chimney by Alfred Kantor*



*Gas chamber at Majdanek*



*Crematoria III in Birkenau*



**It is almost impossible to grasp the magnitude, the scale and the horror of the Nazi programme of extermination. Nazi death camps and concentration camps were established in: Germany, Poland, Russia, France, Holland, Belgium, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Italy, Morocco, Algeria, Austria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Norway.**

Auschwitz	Slavonska-Pozega	Schmolz	Berg
Birkenau	Gradiska	Börgermoor	Bredtvet
Majdanek	Jadovno	Schokken	Missour
Sobibor	Jasenovac	Wieliczka	Tendrara
Stutthof	Stara-Gradiska	Lwow	Amersfoort
Treblinka	Danica	Mielec	Ommen
Bergen-Belsen	Dakovo	Pawiak	Vught
Buchenwald	Gornja reka	Plaszow	Bolzano
Dachau	Jastrebarsko	Zabivoko	Fossoli
Janowska	Tasmajdan	Le Vernet	Krapje
Ravensbruck	Zemun	Natzweiler-Struthof	Sered
Sachsenhausen	Lepoglava	Noé	Brocice
Mauthausen	Loborgrad	Récébédou	Chabatz
Drancy	Sajmite	Zakopane	Kragujevac
Theresienstadt	Klooga	Vivara	Yanowski
Breendonck	Sisak	Kangasjarvi	Vertugen
Westerbork	Neuengamme	Koveri	Banjica
Krakow	Papenburg	Argeles	Kruscica
Lemberg	Dieburg	Aurigny	Risiera di San Sabba
Mezjapark	Esterwegen	Brens	Czwartaki
Ponary	Belzec	Gurs	Daugavpils
Rawa-Russkaja	Biesiadka	Les Milles	Balanowka
Salapils	Dzierzazna	Rieucros	Palemonas
Riga-Kaiserwald	Litzmannstadt	Rivesaltes	Domanievka
Dundaga	Gross-Rosen	Suresnes	Tromsdalen
Eleje-Meitenes	Sachsenburg	Thill	Ulven
Jungfernhof	Huta-Komarowska	Abadla	Akmétchetka
Lenta	Kulmhof-Chelmno	Ain el Ourak	Bisjumajsje
Spilwe	Lublin	Bechar	Edineti
Kaunas	Poniatowa	Berguent	Kielbasin
Aleksotaskowno	Bierznaw	Bogari	Pravieniskès
Strazdumajsje	Pustkow	Bouarfa	Volary
Flossenburg	Radogosz	Djelfa	Baerum
Gundelsheim	Khorol	Kenadsa	Falstadt
Slano	Radom	Meridja	Bogdanovka

## The Burial – A Personal Memory

The plans for the elimination of Slovak Jewry began late in 1941 and in March 1942 the arrest and deportation of Jews became a reality. When the deportation of Slovak Jewry started for the first time, my grandmother was smuggled to Hungary where it was still safe for Jews. The pre-war population of Slovak Jewry was approximately 90,000. By Sept 1942, only 25,000 were left and in hiding. Altogether 15,000 survived the war. At this time, partly by the intervention of the Catholic Church and bribery by the Jewish leadership of high-ranking government officials, the deportation of Jews was suspended.

In the year 1944, everything changed. Germany occupied Hungary and then the persecution of Hungarian Jews started. It was necessary to smuggle my grandmother back to Slovakia. Also, Slovak Jewry was under threat. We decided to leave our village because it was too dangerous to stay, as everybody knew us. The plan was to move to another village and, with false papers, to pretend that we were Catholics. I attended private lessons with a priest who was sympathetic to our plight, to learn how to pray in church, cross myself etc. As children we would be most exposed to the public.

My grandmother was waiting for us, so was the Gestapo.

My grandmother, Rosaleen, is waiting for us in a shop in the centre of Bratislava. Two tall men in long leather



*Tomi's grandmother, Rosaleen, the day she was arrested by the Gestapo*

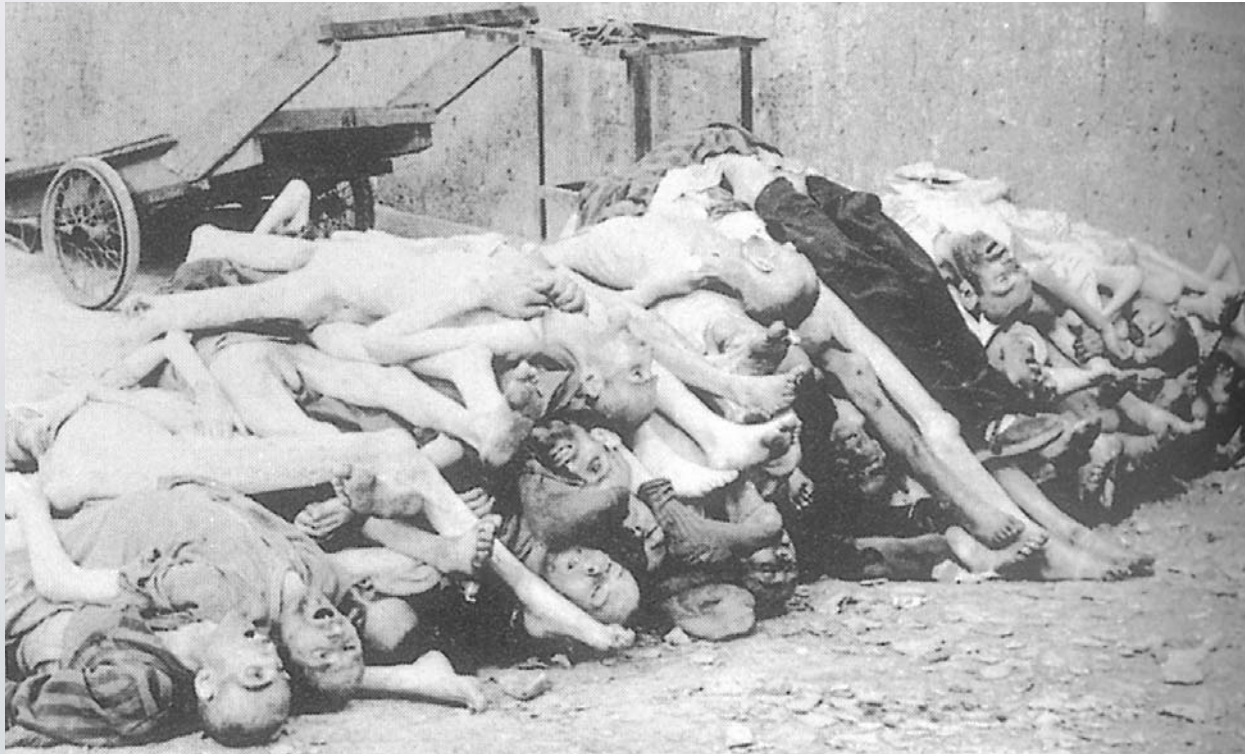
coats enter the shop. It is the Gestapo. This is the state police with the responsibility for arresting Jews and members of the resistance. They are checking identity papers. My grandmother is dressed like a peasant. She has false papers. It doesn't take long for them to discover this. They work with ruthless efficiency. It is late October 1944. They physically pressurised her and forced her to disclose our plans and the addresses of some of our family members. When my mother entered the shop she was apprehended too. By the evening, 13 of us - including aunts and uncles - were caught and brought to the Gestapo headquarters in Bratislava. Out of the 13, only 5 of us survived: my mother Judith, my brother Miki, my aunt Margo, my cousin Eva and myself. No false papers or effort helped. When finally the deportation of Slovak Jews stopped, just 5,000 were left in hiding.

At the beginning of November 1944, we were deported to Bergen Belsen. My grandmother was already 76 years old. It was Winter. We were travelling for seven days in cattle carriages. Many did not survive the trip. It was very difficult for my grandmother. On our arrival it was raining and cold. We had to walk for hours to our new home. The fear was constant that my grandmother would not survive the ordeal; she was not a well person. After settling down every day, I would sit beside her when she took out a box of medication, pills and powders that kept her alive. I would go out with her for small walks and she would tell me stories. It was very cold and the time was very difficult for all of us.

It was usual that every family had one pre-packed case with some provisions of food, sweets etc. as we were not given time to pack when the state police knocked on the door. My grandmother was responsible for this case. Every day we, the children, sat around her and she would give us some goodies. She stretched it for several weeks, but finally everything was gone.

Sadly, the medication also ran out and my grandmother finally fell ill and one night in March 1945, she passed away.





USHMM

I remember waking up, seeing my mother and my aunt Margo quietly sitting beside the bed. There were no more tears. She had to be buried. The procedure was brutal.

In Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, people were dying mainly due to starvation and disease. Towards the end of the war, the amount of people dying was so vast that there was nobody to take the bodies away. The bodies were piling up. At the end of the war, there were thousands of bodies piled up just across from our barracks.

Every morning, two women came with a two-wheel carriage and enquired if anybody died over night. It was a daily routine and most times they took several bodies away.

On the morning when my grandmother died, these two women came to our room. We just sat in silence. One grabbed the hands and the other the feet and they threw her onto the trolley over several bodies that had been collected from other blocks. It was very painful to watch but nobody uttered a word. We sat for ages taking in what had happened.

Later I went out to see where she was buried. Unfortunately there was no grave. She was buried under a pile of dead bodies.

**Tomi Reichental, who now lives in Dublin, was 9 years of age when he was in Bergen-Belsen in 1945.**

*Sadism and humiliation: Those were the distinctive horror marks of the Holocaust. The extravaganzas of cruelty that characterised Nazi behaviour towards Jews; the bouts of brutal mockery and loutish laughter that accompanied the free-for-all massacres in Eastern European villages – those as much as the phantasmagoric statistics of death, gave the Nazi project of annihilation its uniquely grotesque character. The possibility of such behaviour leaves a contaminating stain on all our perceptions, on our very idea of human nature.*

**Eva Hoffman**

## Janusz Korczak

Henryk Goldszmit, better known to the world by his pen-name Janusz Korczak, was born in Warsaw in 1878. He wanted to become a writer, but his family prevailed upon him to follow a more practical career, and he became one of the few Jews to study medicine at the University of Warsaw. He graduated in 1905 and served in field hospitals in the Ukraine and Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War.



*Monument to Janusz Korczak, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Israel*

He started writing as a medical student, using the pseudonym Janusz Korczak. For the next four decades he led a double life. He was Dr. Henryk Goldszmit, the paediatrician and child psychologist; and he was Janusz Korczak, the author of popular children's books and champion of children's rights. In 1911 he opened an orphanage for Jewish children, followed nine years later by an orphanage for Catholics. He edited the weekend supplement of a popular newspaper, *Maly Przegląd*, which was entirely written and edited by children. Korczak also had his own weekly radio programme, for which he used the name *Old Doctor*. No one knew that a Jewish educator was shaping the minds of Polish children.

When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, Korczak accompanied his 200 Jewish orphans into the Warsaw Ghetto. Powerful friends from the outside arranged for him to escape, but he chose to remain with his children. On 6 August 1942, the Nazis ordered the liquidation of all orphanages. Korczak lined his children up in orderly rows, and led them singing as they walked for two miles to the collection site. As they climbed the 70 steps over the ghetto bridge, they were jeered by Polish onlookers. Korczak and the children were sent to Treblinka, where they all perished.

## The Butterfly

**The last, the very last,  
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.  
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing  
against a white stone....**

**Such, such a yellow  
Is carried lightly 'way up high'.  
It went away I'm sure because it wished to go  
kiss the world good-bye.**

**For seven weeks I've lived in here,  
Pinned up inside this ghetto.  
But I have found what I love here.  
The dandelions call to me  
And the white chestnut branches in the court.  
Only I never saw another butterfly.**

**That butterfly was the last one.  
Butterflies don't live in here,  
in the ghetto.**

**Pavel Friedmann, aged 17,  
June 1942, Theresienstadt**



**This poem was found amongst a cache of children's artwork  
at the end of the war that had been hidden by the artist  
Friedl Dicker-Brandeis who was a prisoner in Theresienstadt.  
It was subsequently deposited in the Jewish Museum, Prague.**

**Pavel was eventually deported from Theresienstadt to  
Auschwitz, where he died on 29 September 1944.**



## Escape from Auschwitz

Although Auschwitz was one of the most closely guarded secrets of *The Final Solution*, five Jewish inmates succeeded in escaping from that notorious extermination camp: Siegfried Lederer, Rudolf Vrba, Alfred Wetzler, Czeslav Mordowicz and Arnost Rosin.

On 5 April 1944, Siegfried Lederer escaped from Auschwitz dressed in an SS uniform. Afterwards he sneaked into the Theresienstadt ghetto in order to warn the Jews about what awaited them in Auschwitz. The leaders of the Jewish Council decided that it was better for the potential victims to remain ignorant of their impending fate.

Two days after Lederer escaped, two Slovak Jews, Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler also broke out of Auschwitz. They had learned from a kapo that preparations were in hand for constructing another railway line to Auschwitz. This would streamline the killing process by transporting the newly arrived Hungarian Jews directly to the gas chambers. Vrba had been planning his escape for more than two years, but now it was urgent: "It was no longer a question of reporting a crime, but of preventing one."

Between 7 and 10 April, the 20-year-old Vrba and the 26-year-old Wetzler hid in a hideout that had been sprinkled with gasoline-soaked tobacco to prevent the dogs from sniffing them out. They then broke through the outer perimeter of Birkenau and walked over a hundred miles for 11 days to their native Slovakia. On 24 April they established contact with Leo Baek. He and other members of the Working Group were the first Jewish leaders to hear a first-hand report about Auschwitz. Vrba had brought with him a label off a Zyklon B gas canister.

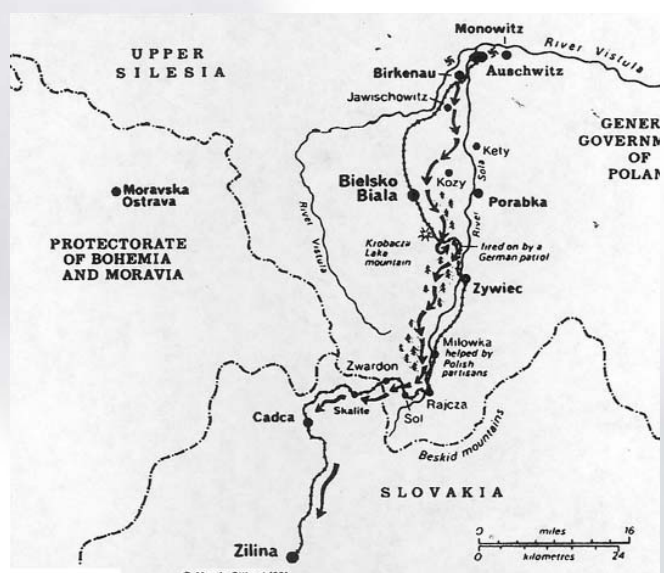
Vrba and Wetzler were interviewed in two separate rooms for 3 days, and produced a detailed plan of Auschwitz-Birkenau, its methods of mass murder, and the events they had witnessed. They begged the Slovak Jewish Council to warn Hungarian Jewry about the expansion of the extermination facilities at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Two other escapees, Czeslav Mordowicz and Arnost Rosin, who reached Slovakia on 6 June, confirmed what Vrba and Wetzler had described, adding that the Auschwitz crematoria had started to consume Hungarian Jews at an unprecedented pace, and could hardly cope with the task.



Rudolf Vrba

The Vrba-Wetzler report became known as *The Auschwitz Report*. It was the first document by Auschwitz inmates to reach the free world and its accuracy and authenticity dispelled any doubts that had existed until then. Between May and June 1944, more than 437,000 Hungarian Jews had perished in the death camps. When the report was published in the Swiss and then the Western press, it confirmed the reality of the Nazi extermination programmes. *The Auschwitz Report* was drawn to the attention of Winston Churchill, Franklin D Roosevelt and Pope Pius XII who reacted by bringing pressure on Miklos Horthy. 170,000 Jews still remained in Budapest when the order came to halt the deportations. The cessation of the deportations even at this late stage, meant that the two escapees from Auschwitz had managed to save 170,000 lives.



Vrba's escape route

## Liberation and Survival

Despite the brutal nature of Stalin's regime before, during and after the Second World War, the defeat of Nazism would have taken much longer without the Red Army's invasion of German-held territory from the East. The D-Day allied invasion of Normandy took place in June 1944. The same month, Marshal Zhukov's main assault started on the German front lines, with 4,000 tanks and more than one and a half million soldiers fighting on a 500-mile long front. By the end of the summer of 1944 the Red Army had reached the gates of Warsaw and the road to Berlin had been opened.



*Tanks roll into Theresienstadt*

Yad Vashem Archives

On 27 January, 1945, Red Army troops - including many Jewish soldiers - liberated the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. It is this date that was chosen by the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust as the date for annual Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations. When the Soviet liberators entered the gates of Auschwitz, they found only about 7,000 emaciated prisoners alive. These survivors had been too frail to leave when the Nazis had forced the majority of Auschwitz prisoners on death marches. The Soviet soldiers also found 836,525 items of women's clothing, 348,820 items of men's clothing, 43,525 pairs of shoes, and seven tons of human hair.

Over the course of the last months of the war in Europe, Allied troops liberated Nazi death camps and



*Russian soldier in Auschwitz*

Yad Vashem Archives

concentration camps. Between April and May 1945 the Americans liberated Buchenwald, Dachau, Dora/Mittelbau, Flossenbürg and Mauthausen; the British liberated Bergen-Belsen and Neuengamme; the Canadians liberated Westerbork.

After the liberation of Auschwitz, the Red Army went on to liberate the extermination camps at Plaszow, Gross-Rosen, Majdanek, Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, Sered, Sobibor, Stutthof and Theresienstadt.



*US soldiers in Buchenwald*

Yad Vashem Archives





*Bergen-Belsen shortly after liberation*

Yad Vashem Archives



*In this kingdom of darkness there were many people. People who came from all the occupied lands of Europe. And then there were the Gypsies and the Poles and the Czechs...it is true that not all the victims were Jews. But all the Jews were victims.*

**Elie Wiesel**



*Liberation of Auschwitz*

Yad Vashem Archives

## Beyond the Call of Duty



**RAOUL WALLENBERG** was a Swedish diplomat and banker who travelled to Budapest in 1944 at the request of the War Refugee Board and Hungarian Jewish organisations. By the time he arrived, almost half a million Jews had already been

deported to Auschwitz. He immediately set about issuing Swedish certificates of protection which were granted to Jews with any sort of Swedish link. As the political situation changed in Hungary, Wallenberg found refuge for 33,000 Jews in houses flying the flags of neutral countries. In November 1944, he accompanied Jews on a forced march to the Austrian border, distributing food, clothing and medicine. When the Red Army liberated Hungary, Wallenberg was taken as a prisoner to the USSR, where his fate remains an unsolved mystery to this day. The Soviets always maintained that he died in prison. In 1991 the Russians handed his death certificate to the Swedish authorities.



**PAUL GRUENINGER** was the police commander of the Swiss canton of St. Gallen when neutral Switzerland, under pressure from Germany, closed its borders to Jewish refugees in 1938. Disregarding orders, Grueninger provided thousands

of Jewish refugees with falsely dated papers, indicating that they had entered Switzerland before the borders were closed.



**SELAHATTIN ULKUMEN** was the Turkish consul-general on the German-occupied Greek island of Rhodes in 1944. Ulkumen managed to save more than 50 Jews by bending the rules in order to accredit them with Turkish citizenship.



**ARISTIDES de SOUSA MENDES** was the Portuguese consul-general in Bordeaux, France in 1940. He stamped thousands of Jewish passports with Portuguese transit visas enabling them to flee. Even when he was ordered home for

insubordination and eventual dismissal, he stopped at the Portuguese consulate in Bayonne, and issued hundreds more visas to fleeing Jewish refugees.



**SUGIHARA SEMPO**, was the Japanese consul to Kovno, Lithuania in 1940. He blatantly ignored Japanese Foreign Ministry instructions by issuing transit visas to about 6,000 Jewish refugees from Poland and Lithuania. The visas allowed the

Jews to travel on the Trans-Siberian railway to Vladivostok, where they sailed to Japan. Their ultimate destination was Curacao, a Dutch colony in the Caribbean that did not require entry visas. Between 1939 and 1941, several thousand Jewish refugees passed through Kobe, including the three hundred teachers and students from Poland's Mir Yeshiva, the only talmudical college on the European mainland to fully survive the Holocaust. By the time the Pacific War broke out after Pearl Harbour in December 1941, most of the Jewish refugees had been allowed to settle in Hongkew, the Japanese-controlled section of Shanghai.

*The Holocaust was one of the greatest outrages against humanity in all recorded history. It was so bad that people living in the comparative sanity of this country should hardly be blamed for not anticipating the lunacy of Hitler, or his henchmen. But the fact still remains that we sat by in mute indifference while the greatest outrage of modern times was being perpetrated, and we should learn from our mistakes.*

**Archbishop of Armagh, Sean Brady**  
St Patrick's Day, 2004



## The Rescuers

For many of those who put their lives at risk to help Jews during the Holocaust, this was a moral duty that they did not question at the time.

“How can you call us good?  
We did what had to be done.”

Pastor André and Magda Trocmé were French Protestants (Huguenots) from Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, the town that collectively defied Vichy and Germany to shelter thousands of Jewish refugees before they escaped to neutral Spain or Switzerland.

“No law in the world says  
that I should live and you die.  
The Nazis have decided that,  
but I am fighting against them  
and am not bound by their rules.”

Stanislawa Ogrodzinska, Poland.

“I had many Jewish friends  
before the war,  
and we were all very close.  
During the war I was poor, but  
I did whatever I could.  
It was very dangerous,  
but I knew that if I decided  
to help I had to do it  
without fear.”

Agnieszka Budna-Widerschal, a religious Catholic from the north of Poland, defied the Nazi orders threatening to shoot any Pole or Ukrainian caught trying to hide Jews.



Over 20,000 gentiles have been designated  
Righteous Amongst the Nations by  
Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Authority  
in Israel, for their role in sheltering  
and protecting Jews during the Holocaust.

“The way it started was, my  
wife's girlfriend, her name is  
Henny, came to us. She was  
Jewish and she needed help.  
We didn't ever talk about it.  
It was something you had to  
do, and it was easy to do  
because it was your duty.  
And that was the beginning  
because when her husband  
came, that was all right too.  
And when the sister came,  
well, why not?”

Bert Bochove of The Netherlands,  
who hid 37 Jews.

“What I did  
came naturally.  
It would have been unnatural  
not to do it.”

Herta Muller-Kuhlenthal,  
Netherlands.

“What I did for the Jewish  
people...was but an  
infinitesimal contribution to  
what ought to have been done  
in order to prevent this  
horrible slaughter...”

Father Marie-Benoit, France.

## Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) are well known for their philosophy of helping their fellow-man. During the 1920s, 30s and 40s, they worked tirelessly to help those fleeing Nazi Europe. Between 1928 and 1939 the Quaker International Centre in Vienna handled over 11,000 applications for exit papers and re-settlement, affecting 15,000 people. The Centre managed to help more than 4,500 people settle in other countries and assisted 2,408 Jews to leave Austria. Several refugees were facilitated by Friends in Ireland who sheltered them in their private houses. Some of these refugees settled here and made Ireland their new home.

## An improbable train journey

During the war, the Nazis made efforts to repatriate German nationals held by the Western Allies, by exchanging them for Jews. In 1943, the Nazis established Bergen-Belsen concentration camp on the site of what had been a camp for wounded French, Belgian and Russian prisoners of war. In a special section put aside for the exchange programme, 4,000 Jewish inmates awaiting exchange were relatively well treated.



In the event, few Jews were actually exchanged. But following complex negotiations involving German and British officials, the Jewish Agency, and the International Red Cross, one train carrying 222 Dutch Jews did leave Bergen-Belsen on 29 June, 1944. When the train arrived in Istanbul in neutral Turkey, the Dutch Jews were exchanged for a group of German Templars who had been interned as enemy aliens by the British Mandatory authorities in Palestine.

The Jews, who had been issued with entry visas by the British, continued their journey to Palestine by train. They reached Rosh Hanikra on the border with Lebanon just 11 days after being plucked from almost certain death in the heart of the Nazi genocide machine. Some of the Dutch Jews who reached the safety of the Jewish homeland are still alive in Israel today.

## Herbert Remmel – the German child with a Mayo accent

Ireland's reluctance to accept Jewish refugees both before and after the War, contrasted sharply with the warm welcome for German children under Operation Shamrock in 1946. In Cologne, the local selection committee gave priority to children of anti-Nazi victims of persecution.

Herbert Remmel's family were staunch opponents of the Nazis. His father, Christian, was a member of the Communist Party. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Christian and his comrades helped individuals on the run escape Germany across the well guarded 'green' border into neutral Holland or Belgium.

Although Christian's activities were originally for the benefit of political opponents of Nazism, he and his friends also helped several Jews to escape. During the war, Christian gave refuge to a half-Jewish woman for several months who would otherwise have been reported to the Gestapo.

Christian Remmel continued to work with the Cologne resistance movement, the Klettenberg Group, until someone betrayed him to the Gestapo. He was arrested in November 1944 and sentenced to death. He was sent to Butzbach prison, but liberated by a US tank squadron just 24 hours before he was due to be executed.

After the war, Christian's son, Herbert, lived with an Irish foster family in Inchicore in Dublin for three years. He shared his time with them in the city and with their relations on a farm in Co. Mayo where he went to school and learned Irish.

*The horror of the Holocaust is not that it deviated from human norms; the horror is that it didn't. What happened may happen again, to others not necessarily Jews, perpetrated by others, not necessarily Germans. We are all possible victims, possible perpetrators, possible bystanders.*

**Yehuda Bauer, 2001**



## The Legacy of the Holocaust

From an address by Simone Veil, President of the Foundation for Holocaust Remembrance

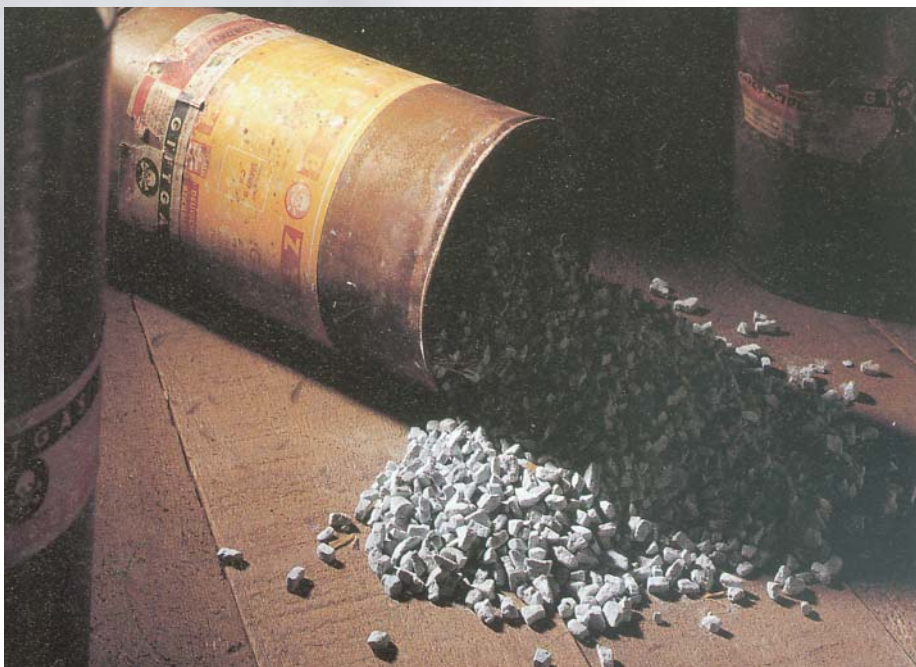
It was the survivors themselves who first acknowledged their responsibility for passing on knowledge of the Holocaust and keeping its memory alive. The Holocaust was intended not to have any witnesses or history. The Nazi plan was to erase an entire people from the history and memory of the world. Everything was planned, thought out and organised so as not to leave any trace. We were not supposed to survive. The Nazi death machine was designed to eradicate not only the Jews and Gypsies as peoples, but also all evidence of their extermination. The existence of the gas chambers was kept hidden like a state secret.

The Shoah reflects the image of absolute deprivation, of a process of dehumanisation carried through to the end, and as such it inspires an endless debate on the human conscience and human dignity. For this reason, I consider it essential to teach about the Shoah, whether there are Jews in your respective countries or not - whether there are many, or few, or none left.

The crux of the matter is the facts themselves, the concrete, unvarnished, straightforward facts, the will to humiliate and degrade, the organisation, the planning and the methods used to kill. But the facts in themselves would have little meaning if no attention was paid to the racist ideology that led to the genocide, the support it received from many different quarters, and its sources and spokespeople. There are so many avenues to explore before we understand how, in the 20th century, a nation of philosophers, musicians and poets was able not only to devise the "final solution", but also to carry it out so efficiently!

The Shoah should never be scoffed at, watered down, buried, used for other ends and, in short, trivialised.

The Shoah is a legacy that belongs to us all. I ardently hope that the memory of the Shoah will not be used to give us a clear conscience, but that it will permanently serve to foster respect for human dignity and the fundamental values that underpin our civilisation.



*Can of Zyklon B. A commercial pesticide, Zyklon B was originally used to kill vermin. The Nazis first used it to kill human beings in August 1941 when Soviet prisoners of war were murdered in an improvised gas chamber at Auschwitz I. Seven kilogrammes of the pellets produced enough hydrogen cyanide gas to kill 1,500 people*

# Holocaust

## MEMORIAL DAY

### HONOURED GUESTS

**Mr Terry Samuels** – Bergen-Belsen  
**Mrs Suzi Diamond** – Bergen-Belsen  
**Mr Tomi Reichental** – Bergen-Belsen  
**Mr Geoffrey Phillips** – Kindertransport  
**Mrs Doris Segal** – Sudetenland  
**Mr Zoltan Zinn-Collis** – Bergen-Belsen  
**Mrs Rosel Siev** – Aurich, Germany

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### PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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**Pile of corpses:** USHMM courtesy of William A. Scott III  
**Monument to Janusz Korczak:** Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, Jerusalem, Israel  
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**US soldiers in Buchenwald: Russian tanks in Theresienstadt; Survivors in Auschwitz:** courtesy of Yad Vashem photo archives  
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### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

#### The committee wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of:

The Participants  
The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform  
The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr Michael Conaghan  
Dublin City Council  
City Hall  
Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, Jerusalem, Israel  
The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC

#### This project was made possible through the generosity of:

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform  
The Dublin Maccabi Charitable Trust  
The Jewish Representative Council of Ireland  
The Sisters of Zion  
The Council for Christians and Jews

### MASTER of CEREMONIES: Yanky Fachler

**Musical Director:** Mark Duley **Soloist:** Rachel Talbot **Cello:** Aisling Drury Byrne

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Marilyn Taylor Sister Carmel Niland Estelle Menton Debbie Briscoe

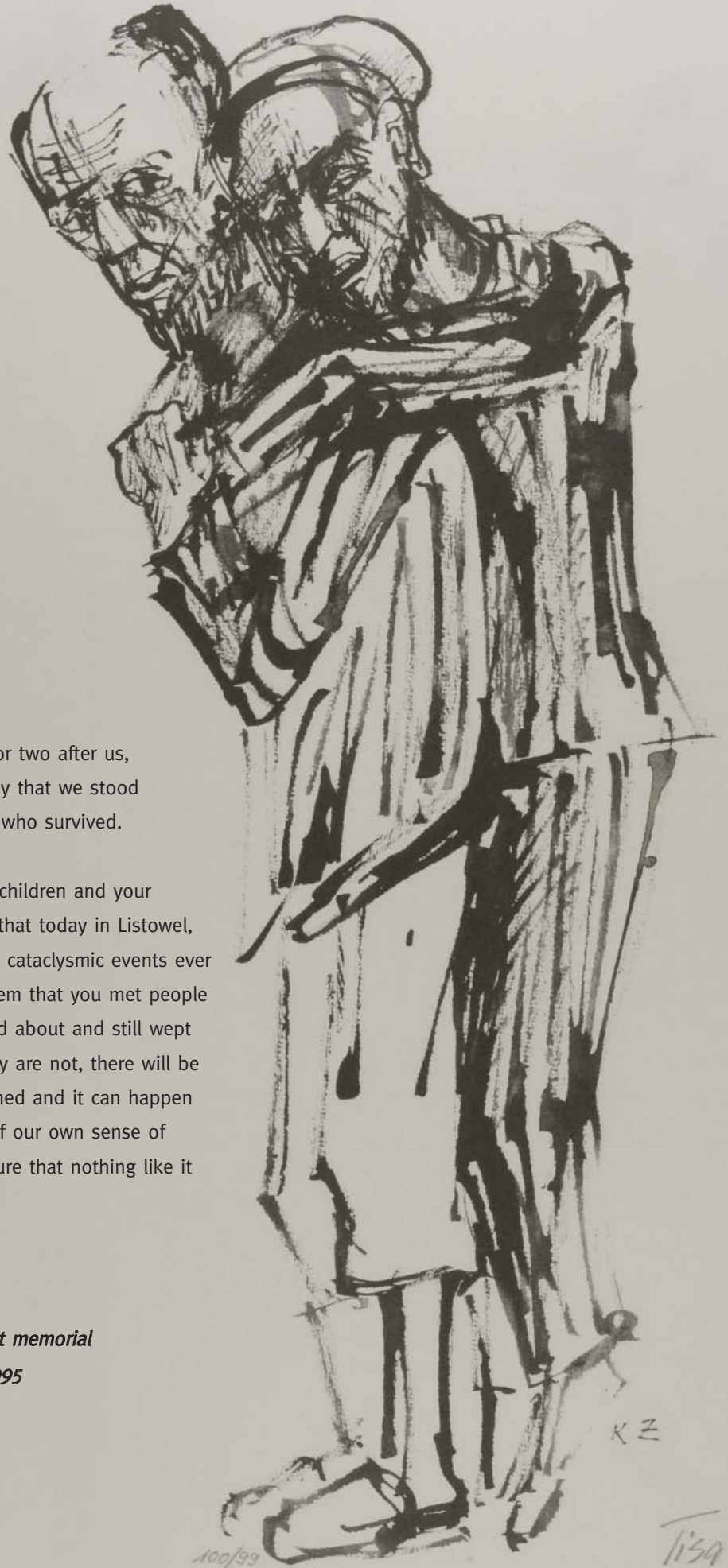
### BROCHURE

**Editors:** Lynn Jackson, Yanky Fachler  
**Printing:** Print Bureau, The Triangle, Ranelagh, Dublin 6 **Design:** Siobhán O Reilly, Print Bureau

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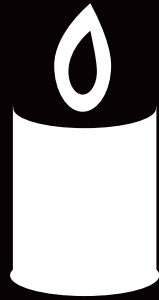




Our generation, and the generation or two after us, will be the last that will be able to say that we stood and shook hands of some of those who survived.

Go home from this place and tell your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren that today in Listowel, you looked into eyes that witnessed the most cataclysmic events ever unleashed by mankind upon mankind. Tell them that you met people who will still be remembered and still talked about and still wept over 10,000 years from now – because if they are not, there will be no hope for us at all. The Holocaust happened and it can happen again, and every one of us, if only out of our own sense of self-preservation, has a solemn duty to ensure that nothing like it ever occurs again.

*Paddy Fitzgibbon*  
*at the unveiling of the Holocaust memorial*  
*in Listowel, Co. Kerry, 1995*



# Holocaust

MEMORIAL DAY

Dublin  
January 2005