

## Nazi Actions 1939-45: The Impact of War on Nazi Anti-Semitism

### Task 1

If you are able to do so, now would be a good time to watch the classic "World at War" episode "Genocide" and make notes to consolidate what you know already and to learn more about how Nazi policies changed after the outbreak of War.

"The historical guilt of world Jewry for the outbreak and extension of the war is so clearly proven that there is no point in wasting any words on it. The Jews wanted their war and now they have got it. But now they are feeling the effects of the prophecy which the Führer made on 30th January 1939 in the German Reichstag that, if international finance Jewry should succeed in plunging the nations once again into a world war, the result would be the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe"

*Goebbels, 1942*

"...I suddenly became very aware of my Jewish identity. Up until this point my religion had never seemed an important part of who I was...It wasn't very nice, to look over at the tennis courts and to know that you can't go in. You see your friends on their way to play tennis or hockey ... and you can't do any of those things any more."

*Edith Velmun, who was in Holland during the Nazi occupation.*

### 1. 'Resettlement' – The Ghettos

- As the German expansion began, it became impossible to deal with all the Jews at once. **Adolf Eichmann** was put in charge of 'Jewish resettlement'. This involved rounding up Jews from occupied countries and moving them to **ghettos** in a range of cities, the largest being **Warsaw**.
- Walls were built to separate the ghetto from the rest of the city. Jews lived in cramped conditions – seven or eight people to a room, each given only 300 calories of food per day.



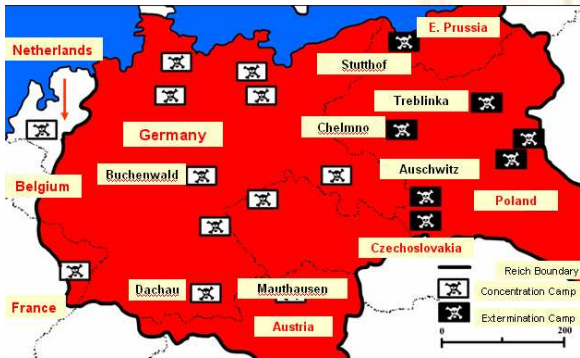
"On the streets children are crying in vain, children who are dying of hunger. They howl, beg, sing, moan, shiver with cold, without underwear, without clothing, without shoes ... emaciated skeletons ... Already completely grown up at the age of five ... I no longer look at the people; when I hear groaning and sobbing I cross the road."

*A visitor to Warsaw, 1940.*

### 2. Genocide: The 'Final Solution'

- In January 1942, a secret conference was held at **Wannsee** to discuss the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Problem'. According to **Rudolf Hess**, speaking at the **Nuremberg War Trials** of 1946, "The 'Final Solution' meant the complete extermination of all Jews in Europe..."

a. Where were the Jews taken?



- The Final Solution saw special SS units – the infamous **Einsatzgruppen** (execution squads) – were set up with the sole purpose of hunting down and shooting dead any Jews they came across in conquered territories.
- Secondly, Jews were herded out of their ghettos and into existing **concentration camps**, which quickly turned from harsh prisons into

straightforward execution sites.

- In addition, brand new '**Death Camps**' were created. These were built by the prisoners themselves and were designed specifically to kill as many people as quickly as possible.

Discussion point: Why do you think that the Death Camps are situated in the East?

b. What happened to the inmates upon arrival?

**Children, pregnant women, the old and the infirm** were told they were to be "de-loused". They were stripped naked and all their hair was cut off. Clothes and spectacles could be recycled. Hair could be used for making wigs and stuffing furniture. They were then led into a "shower room". Once inside, the doors were locked behind them and they were gassed with an industrial pesticide, **Zyklon B**.



**Men and women fit enough to work** were taken set to work in separate camps – this would be the last time that some husbands and wives would see each other. They would build roads and buildings, and grow food for the army. Life expectancy was three months. Prisoners died from disease, exhaustion or lack of food. When they became too weak to work, they were gassed in their turn.

c. What was the impact on the Allied soldiers who liberated the Death Camps?

- In 1945, with the Nazis in full retreat, Allied soldiers were able to liberate the death camps and the concentration camps.
- What they found there affected them deeply. The English reporter, Richard Dimbleby, recorded a famous report on the day he arrived at Belsen with

American troops. Although famous for his cool, clipped delivery, Dimbleby in fact broke down in tears half way through the report and had to re-record it.

▪ The BBC were so shocked by his revelations that they initially refused to broadcast it. Only by threatening his resignation did they agree to broadcast the report in its entirety. It is one of the most powerful pieces of journalism of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **Task 2**

Listen to the Richard Dimbleby broadcast if you have it available to you.

### **Task 3**

- Your job is to produce a Mindmap about the Holocaust.
- Use the information here, the audio and video files you have seen and any other sources you can find: photographs of this subject are especially powerful.

### **Task 4**

- With Task 3 completed, use whatever resources you have available, find three sources which you think most powerfully capture the horror of the Holocaust.
- Place your sources into a PowerPoint presentation – one on each slide.
- IMPORTANT: You must be prepared to talk about each source to the rest of the class: what it represents, why you chose it, in as much detail as you can.

Source 1: A photograph

Source 2: A written account

Source 3: A screenshot of a useful website