

# DOCUMENTS ON THE HOLOCAUST

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Selected Sources on the Destruction  
of the Jews of Germany and Austria,  
Poland, and the Soviet Union

## DOCUMENTS ON THE HOLOCAUST

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Edited by

**Yitzhak Arad**

**Yisrael Gutman**

**Abraham Margaliot**



**YAD VASHEM**

**THE HOLOCAUST MARTYRS'  
AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE  
AUTHORITY, JERUSALEM**



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## FOREWORD

In this volume we have presented a comprehensive collection of essential documents for students and laymen interested in the history of the Holocaust. The collection reflects both the major trends and developments in Nazi ideology and policy towards the Jews and the behavior and reaction of the Jews in the face of the Nazi challenge in the following countries: Germany, Austria, Poland, the Baltic countries, and the areas of the Soviet Union occupied by the Germans in World War II.

The documents that have been chosen are concerned primarily with the following topics: the crystallization of the principles of Nazi anti-Semitism, the policies of the Third Reich towards the Jews, the period of segregation and enclosed ghettos, and the stages through which the "final solution" was implemented, on the one hand, and the Jewish public activities, the struggle for life, and the organization of the Underground and Jewish self-defense on the other. In addition to the German documents, a large part of which has been published in the past, the book includes many documents of Jewish origin, of which only a small amount was published previously. The documents derive from a variety of sources — German, Jewish and others — and appear here in chronological order and in accordance with the events they concern.

The book is divided into three sections:

1. *Germany and Austria* (according to the borders established after World War I).
2. *Poland* (in the borders that existed between the two world wars, excluding the eastern areas annexed by the Soviet Union during the war, but including the Bialystok District).

## DOCUMENTS ON THE HOLOCAUST

### 3. *The Baltic Countries* and areas of the *Soviet Union* occupied by Nazi Germany.

In each section the documents are presented consecutively, from the beginning of Nazi rule or occupation, but within its separate geographical-political area. At the same time some documents are also included whose application is not limited to any specific geographical-political unit, but concerned the Jews in all the areas under the rule or influence of the Nazi Third Reich. Thus, for example, the protocol of the Wannsee Conference is included in the section about Poland, although, of course, the decisions taken at the conference sealed the fate of all the Jews in all areas where the Germans were able to apprehend them.

Special care was taken to include in this collection only documents whose source and authenticity was not in doubt, and, except for a few, all were produced at the height of the period itself.

It must be noted here that the Nazis were particularly concerned to execute the murders in secret and not to leave traces in writing of the destruction process. Official documents make no reference in plain language to the extermination or its various stages, using accepted code phrases instead. Thus, for instance, the general plan for the destruction of the Jews of Europe was referred to as the "final solution (*Endlösung*) of the Jewish question."

We have tried to keep the translation as faithful as possible to the original. Each section in this volume is preceded by a short introduction. These introductions are not intended to take the place of a historical review; their purpose is to assist the reader in identifying the main events and viewing the documents against the background of these events and developments.

We tried not to burden the text with many notes. The documents themselves are accompanied by a small number of necessary explanations of the material and of expressions in use at the time.

A selected number of photocopies of original documents is

## GERMANY AND AUSTRIA

included, and a detailed index of names of persons, places, organizations and institutions, accompanied by explanations, complements the volume.

Most of the documents are reproduced in their entirety. Deletions have been indicated in the customary fashion. Words that appear here in italics were emphasized in the original. Most documents appear under a title chosen by the editorial board, and these titles are marked in larger type than the titles that existed in the original.

Proper use of these documents entails a broadening of the reader's knowledge of the subject through the study of research and background material on the Holocaust period.

*The Editors*

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## **Part One**

### **Germany and Austria**

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## INTRODUCTION

The selection of documents in this section covers Germany and Austria and consists of two parts :

- a) *Basic elements* of *National-Socialist anti-Semitism* that were formulated during the period of the Weimar Republic;
- b) *Policy lines* of the *Third Reich* toward the Jews of Germany and Austria, as well as the *Jewish response* to this policy during the years 1933-1945.

The first part includes the 1920 Party Program (Document 1), which was in fact never changed. By comparison with its concentrated and relatively moderate formulations, the tone of Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf* (Document 4) is conspicuous for its incitement and violence. The passages from that book reveal of what its author accused the Jews, how he envisioned them, and how he described their position among the nations. The phrases and ideas coined in *Mein Kampf* became the iron, immutable basis of anti-Semitic demagoguery. They were brought to their conclusion in *Hitler's Secret Book* (Document 5), which was published after the war. This is the background to the extremist proposals for the solution to the Jewish question that were raised at that time (Document 2).

For many years the National-Socialist Party was no more than a minority group within the anti-Semitic camp in Germany, and its rise was beset by failures (Document 6). Its leaders were required to demonstrate the party's merits over those of the other racist factions, and to justify their demand for the leadership of the right-wing nationalist front (Document 3). The party's strength increased as a result of the severe economic crisis and the millions of unemployed. The outcome of the



## DOCUMENTS ON THE HOLOCAUST

elections to the Reichstag in 1930 verify that the party became a decisive factor on the political scene from that date (Document 6). The passages from the original sources that set out the principles of the racist doctrine referred to above make it possible to see—and even enforce the view—that they were at the root of the brutal policies adopted, in due course, by the German rulers and which emerge from the subsequent documents in the book.

There are five groups of documents in the second part of this section.

The *first group* deals with the events of the years 1933-34, the beginning of Adolf Hitler's rule. In these two years Hitler took action against the Jews in various ways: by means of threats and denigration (Document 22), by excluding them from their means of livelihood (Documents 2, 8, 22), and by the introduction of legislation to remove them from positions of influence in German public life (Documents 10, 22). But at the same time there were signs that radical anti-Semitism was being braked. The Ministry of Economics objected to the removal of Jews from economic activity (Documents 12, 30), and other state authorities sought to prevent violent persecution (Document 13).

The revolution in government came as a shock to the German Jews, and many of them no longer knew what to do (Document 16). The extreme assimilationist organizations tried to preserve their members' status as German citizens (Document 23), hoping that Hindenburg (Document 9) would help them, as loyal patriots, to protect their rights. The large Jewish organizations increased their mutual cooperation and joined forces in a Central Committee of German Jews for Relief and Reconstruction (Document 15). The Committee set up projects for mutual aid and vocational training and carried out other constructive tasks made necessary by the distress of the period. A *Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden* was also set up (Document 21), which was to establish a unified policy on behalf of all parts of the community. The central institutions planned systematic educational work (Document 24) and, together

with the local communities, broadened the scope of the Jewish school network and of the Jewish adult education centers (Documents 17, 18). Aid was also extended to the Jewish theater and other branches of the arts (Document 25, 26). An emigration organization was set up by the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* (Documents 27, 28), with the help of the Central Committee of German Jews for Relief and Reconstruction (Document 15). The Zionist institutions took care of emigration to Eretz Israel and assisted with the transfer of the emigrants' property through Ha'avara (Documents 19, 20). At the same time, through their journal, the *Jüdische Rundschau*, they endeavored to instill in the Jews a feeling of pride in their Jewishness (Document 14). There were some groups, such as the organization of independent Orthodox Communities, that protested to Hitler with regard to the persecution and oppression (Document 22).

After the year 1934 had brought with it a comparative let-up, the racial policies again became more oppressive in 1935, as can be seen from the *second group* of documents. A wave of attacks was directed against Jewish-owned businesses, despite the attempt of the Minister of Economics to stop it (Document 30); Jews were not permitted to join the ranks of the German Army, which was being rebuilt (Document 29); and the Nuremberg Laws (Documents 32-34) put an end to the "emancipation" of the Jews and their place in German social life. Differences of opinion among the German leadership concerning the Jewish question (Document 31) did not affect the general policy, which called for their total social segregation. For foreign consumption spokesmen of the regime, including Hitler himself, declared that the Nuremberg Laws made co-existence possible between the Germans and the Jews by creating separate living space for them (Documents 36, 37). Such reassuring declarations made it more difficult for the Jewish public leadership to understand correctly the gravity of the position and to prepare for a future shrouded in mist (Document 38). Nevertheless, amongst themselves they expressed their feeling of anger at this racial oppression (Document 39).

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In the course of these switches between pressure and the easing of government policy, the treatment of Jews improved somewhat in the years 1936-37. But the period 1938-39 brought bitter blows, violent attacks and unbridled hatred, as is recorded in the *third group* of documents.

In the spring of 1938 the legal position of the Jewish communities, which up to then formed the backbone of the life of the Jewish population, was reduced; organizations legally recognized as public bodies became private associations (Document 42). The process of excluding the Jews from the means of earning a living was also speeded up, until they were totally removed from their sources of livelihood (Documents 51, 52). The failure of the Evian Conference (Document 45), evidence of the indifference of the nations of the world to the fate of the Jews, served as a signal for Germany that she had nothing to fear from international pressure in aid of the victims. In the rioting on *Kristallnacht* (Document 49), in November 1938, tens of Jews were murdered, 26,000 of them were imprisoned in detention camps, and synagogues all over Germany were set on fire. The German government was now seeking a comprehensive solution to the Jewish question (Documents 51, 54); it began to uproot the Jews completely from German life and enforced a mass migration across Germany's borders (Documents 51, 54, 57). The German leaders' eyes were on the property of the Jews. They ordered the property to be registered and imposed an "Expiation Fine" of one billion German marks on the Jews (Document 53). Göring and Hitler threatened that they would settle accounts thoroughly (Document 51) and would exterminate the Jewish race in Europe (Document 59) if another war broke out.

At the end of October 1938, the first deportation was carried out; it was known as the Zbaszyn deportation and involved persons holding Polish citizenship (Document 55). The Jewish world rose to the aid of the deportees and helped them to the best of their ability (Document 56). Administrative pressure on the Jews increased continuously. In July 1939 the German Authorities