

HOW & WHY DID THE HOLOCAUST OCCUR?

Exploring Action And Inaction Through The Survival Story Of Esther Gutman Lederman

- To view this pdf as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “view” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “full screen mode”
- To request an editable PPT version of this file, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- *Special thanks to Dr. Peter Stein of the Center for Holocaust, Genocide & Human Rights Education of NC for providing content for this presentation*





Was the Holocaust inevitable?
(Meaning, did it *HAVE* to happen?)
Why or why not?

Major Holocaust Groups

1. Perpetrators
2. Collaborators
3. Bystanders
4. Victims & Survivors
5. Resisters
6. Rescuers/Liberators

Source: Raul Hilberg's typology, 1961

DISCUSS:

- What does it mean to be a “_____?”
 - perpetrator
 - collaborator
 - bystander
 - victim
 - resister
 - rescuer/liberator
 - What comes to mind when you consider this category of people?
 - Can you cite examples for each category?
 - How would you describe people in this category?
-



Perpetrators & Collaborators

- The most obvious perpetrators were the master minds behind the Holocaust & those who actively denied rights, deported, stole, murdered, etc. , including the German government, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, Nazi police and Gestapo, concentration camp guards and employees, doctors conducting medical experiments, etc.
- Active Collaborators voluntarily worked with Nazis due to shared ideology or for their own agendas (i.e., economic advantage and property.) Examples included bureaucrats, professionals, employees, German corporations, collaborating governments, and others who contributed to and profited from the Holocaust.

Who else might you consider a
perpetrator and/or a collaborator?

Bystanders:

Passive Accommodation

Most Germans and Europeans knew about the treatment of Jews, but many chose not to speak out or act.

- **Bystanders** were people who were not impacted by Nazi legislation, but who for various reasons, didn't want to get involved or were too afraid to stand up for those who were targeted.
 - The Nazi propaganda and promises of prosperity, stability, and greatness were very convincing.
 - Many people didn't speak out against the Nazis because they were satisfied with or profiting from Nazi policies – they felt their comfort level and progress was more important than the defense of democracy.
 - Another major factor inhibiting protest was, of course, fear of the Gestapo and the concentration camps. To speak out meant risking not only your life and livelihood, but that of your loved ones.
-



“...a civilization is not destroyed by wicked people;
it is not necessary that people be wicked,
but only that they be spineless.”

James Baldwin



Victims

1. Six million Jewish men, women and children were murdered during the Holocaust — not for what they did or believed — **but because of their religion.**

2. In addition to the lives lost, there **was the destruction of entire Jewish communities and culture** — a once vibrant & complex network of economic, social, political, & religious activities in Europe for over 2,000 years


*Dachau memorial sculpture by Nandor Glid (detail);
photograph courtesy of Adam Jones*



Other Victims of the Holocaust

- **Five million:**

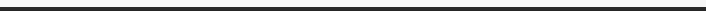
- Political prisoners:
communists & socialists
- Christian clergy & nuns
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- Homosexuals
- Gypsies (Romani)
- Russian and Polish army
prisoners -over 3 million
- Physically and mentally
disabled



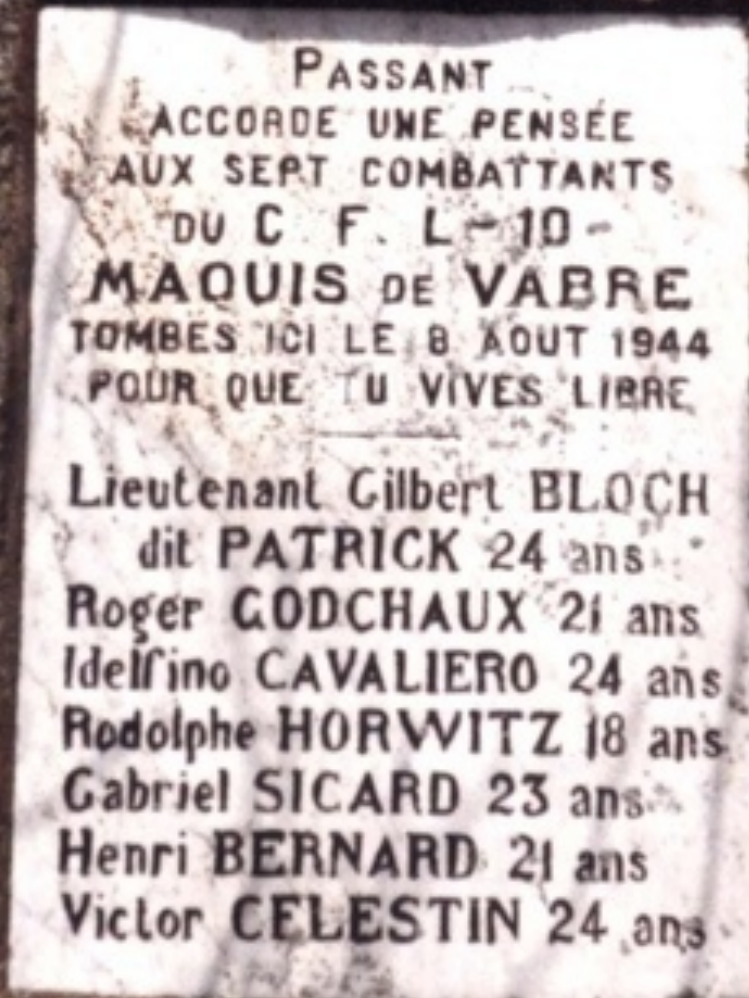
Smoke rises from the burning of corpses in the Treblinka camp, February 1943. The photograph was presented in the Treblinka trials in Duesseldorf in 1964.



SURVIVORS



Memorial panel for French resistance fighters
killed by the Germans in 1944



Resisters

- Men and women, Jews and non-Jews, who actively opposed perpetrators of the Holocaust
- Resisters took actions individually, or in groups, including:
 - organized armed resistance
 - disrupted communication
 - blew up supply lines, train tracks, factories
 - gathered information for Allies (spies)
 - rescued downed pilots
 - attacked German soldiers
 - aided and rescued those persecuted
 - acts of defiance and heroism, including escaping, hiding and surviving
 - spiritual resistance, artistic expression and cultural preservation





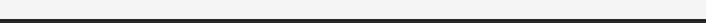
“In every ghetto, in every deportation train, in every labor camp, even in the death camps, the will to resist was strong, and took many forms. Fighting with the few weapons that would be found, individual acts of defiance and protest, the courage of obtaining food and water under the threat of death, the superiority of refusing to allow the Germans their final wish to gloat over panic and despair...

Even passivity was a form of resistance. To die with dignity was a form of resistance. To resist the demoralizing, brutalizing force of evil, to refuse to be reduced to the level of animals, to live through the torment, to outlive the tormentors, these too were acts of resistance... Simply to survive was a victory of the human spirit.”

Source: GILBERT, MARTIN. The Holocaust. The Jewish Tragedy. London: Fontana. 1987

**“Whosoever saves a single life,
saves an entire universe”**

(Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5)



Rescuers

- Even though they were the minority, there were individuals in every European country and from all religious backgrounds that risked their lives to help Jews, despite the incredible risks.
- Rescue efforts ranged from the isolated actions of **individuals** to **organized networks**, both small and large. Rescue efforts included:
 - Hiding those persecuted
 - Smuggling and assisting Jews and others persecuted in escaping
 - Assisting with forged or faked documents for Jews to assume false identities
 - Providing food, clothing, money, and other necessities
 - Offering transportation to safety
 - Sacrificing self so that others can escape/survive
 - Offering spiritual and mental support and strength (i.e., kindness, hope, encouragement, etc.)
 - Rescuing children (i.e., taking in a child or ensuring their safe transport elsewhere)



Just because a historical event took place, and it is documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen... **The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to ACT or NOT TO ACT.**
