Greece and the Holocaust

The Destruction of a Community

A Teacher's Guide
Greece and the Holocaust
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ISBN 1-895754-41-0

Greece and the Holocaust: The Destruction of a Community
A Teacher's Guide

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Made possible through generous support from Christopher Investments Ltd., the Consulate of Greece (Vancouver), Jewish War Veterans of Canada and Carole and Lucien Lieberman.
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Introduction

The Exhibit Catalogue *Portraits of our Past* which accompanies this Teacher's Guide provides an historical overview of the Jews in Greece before, during and after the Holocaust. The photographs reproduced in the catalogue offer teachers and students a preview of those that they will see during their visit to the exhibit.

This Teacher's Guide was developed to complement the catalogue. It presents suggestions for pre and post-visit activities and develops the twin themes of Resistance & Rescue in Greece. A timeline, glossary and list of resources are included at the back of the guide. Teachers are welcome to borrow any of the listed books and videos.

Reading Photographs

The pre-visit activity is designed to prepare students to "read" and understand the different kinds of photographs that they will encounter during their visit and in contemporary media. Students will learn to make informed judgements about who took the photograph, the purpose of the photograph and the circumstances under which it was taken.

Rescue

The post-visit activity is intended to follow the video screening of *It Was Nothing...It Was Everything* during the class visit. Greek Jews were not alone in their suffering under German occupation. Food, fuel and supplies were in short supply. Yet, despite the threat of Nazi reprisals, many Greeks spoke up or acted in defence of their non-Jewish neighbours. Others helped and where possible, rescued Jews in Greece. This is a story that needs to be told. It allows students to understand some of the options available to people during the Holocaust. By extension, it helps students consider the individual and collective responsibilities of citizens today in responding to contemporary issues of injustice and racism.

Resistance

This activity examines the theme of Jewish resistance by exploring the experience of Greek Jews in the concentration camps. Despite the obstacles and obvious futility, Greek Jews distinguished themselves by engaging in both physical and spiritual resistance in Auschwitz. They refused to participate in the murder of Hungarian Jewry, they joined fellow inmates in the Sonderkommando Revolt which destroyed Crematorium III and many went to their death singing the Greek national anthem.
Behind the Camera

Goal
By examining the posture, expression and dress of subjects in photographs, students can make informed judgements about who took the photo, its purpose and the circumstances under which it was taken. Students visiting the exhibit *Portraits of Our Past* at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, will examine photographs of Greek Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. The following activity is designed to help students "read" and understand different types of photographs in preparation for those that they will encounter in the exhibit.

Teacher Preparation
Collect newspaper photographs that show individuals or families in situations of trauma or crisis. These may include people caught up in natural disasters such as floods or famines or during political crises such as wars, refugee camps and refugee migrations. Make multiple copies of the newspaper photographs and of the two photographs which follow, so that there are enough photos for each student.

Students should be asked to bring in any family photograph, either an informal snapshot or a studio portrait. Make a photocopy of each student's family photo.

Activity
Have students choose one of the documentary photographs and one of the photographs, belonging to a fellow classmate. Students examine their two photographs and respond to the following questions.

Student Questions
What was the first thing that you noticed about each photograph?
Compare the two photographs. How are they similar or different?
What do you think the subject of each photo is thinking or feeling?
How can you tell?
Who do you think took the photograph? (elicit - professional photographer, friend or family member, enemy, photo-journalist, Nazi photographer, other)
What makes you think so? What are the visual clues?
Why do you think the photograph was taken - for what purpose?
Do you think it matters who took the photo? Explain.
In what way can the photographer affect the way the subject of the photograph is portrayed?
How might knowing who the photographer is, help you better understand pictures you see in the newspaper or on television?

Chart
Draw a chart on the blackboard or poster board, like the one below. Ask students to list the different types photographers they have come across as part of this activity. (Elicit - photojournalists, professional photographers, friends, family, enemies, etc.) Beside each photographer students list the various possible reasons that person might have for taking photos and the visual clues that have informed their ideas.
Historic Photographs

Kim Phuc, age 9, running up the road outside the village of Trang Bang, her skin on fire. June 8, 1972. Photojournalist, Nick Ut won a Pulitzer Prize for this photo, which dramatically changed public perception of the war in Vietnam. Kim Phuc points out that after Ut took the photograph, he put down his camera to help her. "He was not just a photographer, he was one human being helping another." It took seventeen operations to save her. Kim Phuc now lives in Ajax, Ontario.

Many of us are familiar with this photograph of a little boy, his arms raised in surrender, as a Nazi soldier trains his machine gun on him. Photographed in the Warsaw ghetto in July 1943, this image has come to symbolize the process of the Final Solution - the systematic roundups and deportations to the concentration camps.

After his entire family was killed in their hometown of Sandomierz, Poland, seven-year old Tzvi Nussbaum went into hiding with his aunt and uncle on the Aryan side of Warsaw. The photograph shows him being deported from the Warsaw Ghetto to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Remarkably, Tzvi survived and emigrated to Palestine with his aunt and uncle. Tzvi Nussbaum is now a physician who lives in New York with his family. The aunt and uncle live in Toronto.
Extension

Find other Holocaust photographs and make predictions about who the photographer was, the circumstances under which the photo was taken, the effect on the subject and how we view the subject. Develop a chart similar to the one above to categorize student ideas, opinions and predictions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Photographers</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Visual Clues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>photojournalist</td>
<td>purpose of the photo</td>
<td>subject’s expression, pose etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional studio</td>
<td>curiosity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photographer</td>
<td>documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friend, etc.</td>
<td>money, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three Months & Nineteen Transports
Centuries Of Jewish Culture Destroyed

Jews had lived in the region, which later became known as Greece, from Roman times, around 300 BCE. Romaniotes, or Greek-speaking Jews, trace their presence in Greece back to the first century CE. In the 15th century the Jewish presence in Greece swelled with the influx of Spanish Jews, known as Sephardim, who fled the religious persecution of the Spanish Inquisition.

Goal
In three short months in 1943, the Nazis used nineteen train transports to deport much of the Greek Jewish population, extinguishing centuries of Jewish culture in the process. This activity will help students understand the historical timeline of Greek Jewish culture. Students will also appreciate the extent of the cultural loss and the rapidity and efficiency with which the Final Solution was dispatched in Greece.

Teacher Preparation
Photocopy pages 3, 4, 12, 14 & 18 from the exhibit catalogue Portraits of our Past for your students' use.
Photocopy a selection of photographs and their captions from the catalogue.
Photocopy the map included with this activity.

Timeline Activity
Give small groups of students different parts of the photocopied materials. Using chalk or masking tape, ask students to trace a line along several blackboards or wall space. Students place markers at hundred year intervals to designate the centuries from about 300 BCE (Roman era) - to the 15th century (Spanish Inquisition) - to the Holocaust (1933-1945) on through the twentieth century until the current year.

Students examine their photocopies and make a chronological list of the events mentioned and their dates. Students plot these dates on the class timeline.

Students may expand their timeline by including the following dates or those from the timeline at the end of this Teacher's Guide.

1933, Jan. 30 Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany, Nazis assume power
Holocaust begins
1941, April 6 Nazis invade Greece
1943 Deportations of Greek Jews
1944 Jewish community in Greece decimated
1945, May 8 V-E Day: Germany surrenders; the war ends in Europe

Student Discussion
Compare the duration of Jewish culture in Greece with the length of time it took for the Nazis to execute the Final Solution in Greece. What does this tell you?
The Nazi deportation of Greek Jewry came late in the war, at a time when Germany's efforts would have been better focused on winning the military war against the Allies. Instead, Germany continued to pursue its goal to eliminate European Jewry at all costs. Discuss and research possible reasons for this course of action.

Research a human rights crisis in the world today. Chart its chronology on a timeline and compare the relative time periods of peace and crisis.
Greek Rescuers

The video *It Was Nothing...It Was Everything* to be screened for students during their visit to the exhibit *Portraits of our Past*, examines the courageous actions of Greek citizens who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

Goal

This activity will give students an opportunity to explore the actions of Greek rescuers in greater detail. Students will gain insight into the moral dilemmas that confronted Greeks during the Holocaust and students will apply their understanding to the issues of bystander, rescuer and moral choices today.

Brainstorm

In small groups or as a class, students list ways in which people can resist or stand up to social injustice or violations of human rights today. Students generate a second list describing the kinds of resistance that they think might have been possible during the Holocaust. Students compare the two lists and discuss some of the risks and obstacles to resistance during the Holocaust and today.

Read

Each student reads the student material on Rescuers and one of the following:

- Damaskinos, Archbishop Of Athens & Greece
- Angelos Evert, Athens Chief Of Police
- Letter from Archbishop Damaskinos to the Greek Prime Minister

Journal Reflection

Students write a journal reflection based on their readings that includes responses to some of the following questions:

- What impressed you the most about your reading and why?
- How do you think the personal character traits, moral decision making and courageous actions of rescuers can be fostered in students or citizens today?
- Evaluate the significance of the rescuer's actions, given that only a small percentage of non-Jews helped Jews during the Holocaust

Nominate A Rescuer For An Award

Make a list of all of the reasons that the rescuer you have read about should receive an award. Develop a strong argument by considering the following:

- who the rescuer helped and how
- the form of resistance taken (non-violent, passive resistance, armed resistance)
- obstacles to resistance at that time and place\personal risks taken
- personal characteristics demonstrated by the rescuer
- motivation (the reasons for the rescuer's actions)
- their ability to inspire actions in others

Research

Research other acts of resistance or moral action during the Holocaust or today. Nominate that individual or group for a humanitarian award using the guidelines above. For example, many people believe that General Romeo Dallaire's refusal to withdraw Canadian peacekeepers from Rwanda was an heroic act of resistance.
Rescuers

The act of rescue was a rare occurrence during the Holocaust. Few protested or chose to help when their Jewish neighbours or colleagues were singled out, segregated and finally deported. It is estimated that less than one-half of one percent of those under Nazi occupation helped Jews. And yet our imaginations are drawn to the stories of those few, who chose moral action during that desperate time.

Why some people chose to help while others remained bystanders, challenges our most basic assumptions about human nature. Those who helped were not saints or heroes, but rather ordinary people who made a moral decision and acted on it at a critical moment in time. Those who have studied the personalities of rescuers have found that they tended to be individualistic, with a strong commitment to helping others and were more likely to have experienced close family relationships and a caring, non-authoritarian upbringing. Their altruistic behaviour did not seem to be related to their age, sex, class, education or religion.

Although the terms "rescuer" and "helper" are often used interchangeably, in reality, only a few people managed to actually rescue Jews. Most were only able to help. They hid Jews, falsified documents and secured food and clothing, as in the case of Anne Frank and her family who were hidden for over two years before they were deported from Holland. Some helpers joined resistance groups but many acted independently. Some like Oskar Schindler are well known. Others are known only to those who they rescued.

Churches and foreign diplomats were in a unique position to help. They provided asylum in churches, convents and orphanages and issued life-saving visas. Geography and politics also played a role. Jews found refuge more readily in the more sympathetic countries of Belgium, Denmark, Greece and Italy than in Poland, where the death penalty for helping a Jew was more severely enforced.

Most rescuers did not seek out opportunities to help but responded when faced with a request for help. Some were motivated by friendship with Jews, some by money and others by moral conviction or religious belief, as in the case of the Huguenot farmers of Chambon sur Lignon, who hid hundreds of Jews in their small French village.

Many rescuers say that they did not do anything heroic or extraordinary, that they were only doing their duty. The Chinese diplomat, Dr. Feng Shan Ho who issued thousands of life-saving visas, said, "I thought it only natural to feel compassion and to want to help. From the standpoint of humanity, that is the way it should be."

People's actions during the Holocaust challenge us to think about the responsibility of individuals, groups and nations today. The stories of rescue tell us something about the nature of human response during moral crisis and provide evidence that opportunities to fight injustice did and can exist.
Archbishop Damaskinos
Archbishop of Athens & Greece

The Jewish community had flourished in Salonica for nearly five centuries before the Nazis emptied the city of its Jews in three short months in 1943. When Archbishop Damaskinos heard about the fate of the Jews of Salonica, he was determined to rescue the Jews of Athens. Damaskinos spoke out publicly. He protested to the Greek government and called on the clergy of the Greek Orthodox Church to protect Jewish refugees, hide Jewish children and issue false baptismal certificates to Jews.

In March 1943, the Archbishop wrote a letter to the Greek Prime Minister, who was cooperating with the Nazis. The letter was signed by many other important Athenian public figures and reminded the Prime Minister that all Greek citizens were guaranteed equal treatment, regardless of race or religion. Damaskinos argued that Jews were invaluable Greek citizens who contributed to the country’s economic success, intellectual life and defense. He called the deportation of Greek Jews “unjustified” and “morally unacceptable.”

When General Jurgen Stroop, a senior SS officer and Police Leader for Greece, found out who was behind the letter, he threatened to shoot Damaskinos. The Archbishop bravely reminded Stroop that, "According to the traditions of the Greek Orthodox Church, our prelates [priests] are hung and not shot. Please respect our tradition."

After the letter was ignored, Damaskinos called the Athenian Chief of Police, Angelos Evert, to his office and said, "I have spoken to God and my conscience tells me what we must do. The church will issue false baptismal certificates to any Jew who asks for them and you will issue false identification cards." Together, Damaskinos and Evert saved the lives of thousands of Greek Jews.

The Archbishop led by example. He personally issued hundreds of backdated baptismal certificates and helped hide 250 Jewish children in Christian homes. He also instructed the clergy of the Greek Orthodox Church to protect Greek Jews. Over 600 clergymen were arrested for helping Greek Jews and many were deported to the concentration camps. Damaskinos himself was imprisoned by the Nazis.

Thanks to the efforts of Greek rescuers, only 15% of the Jewish population of Athens was deported. In October 1945, Damaskinos became Prime Minister. After the war, he was honoured for his courage and awarded the title of "Righteous Among the Nations," by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Museum of Israel.
Angelos Evert
Athens Chief Of Police

Athens was located in the area of Greece that was occupied by Italy. It was designated as an “open-city” safe from aerial bombings. As a result, Athens became a destination for Jewish refugees from other parts of Greece and Central Europe. The Italian authorities who were in charge of Athens were generally courteous to the Jews and in many cases disobeyed the Nazis’ anti-Jewish orders.

Archbishop Damaskinos approached Angelos Evert, the Chief of Police of Athens, and appealed to him to issue false identity cards to Jews in danger of being deported to concentration camps. Evert readily agreed and worked with the Archbishop and P. Haldezos, Director of the Administrative Services of Athens to help hundreds of Jews find refuge.

Haldezos and another colleague provided 500 Athenian Jews with false identity certificates. These certificates enabled Jews to obtain false identity cards from Evert and his fellow-policemen. False identity cards enabled Jews to hide as Christians.

On Evert’s orders, the police issued about 18,500 false identity cards to protect Jews hiding from the Nazis. Evert personally issued false identity cards to over fifty Jewish families. Hundreds of other Jews were able to obtain false identity cards through Dimitris Vranopoulos, police chief of Piraeus, and Michael Glyklas, Head of Department VI of the Athens police.

Thanks to the efforts of these courageous community leaders, 85% of the Jewish population of Athens survived. The false identity cards issued by Evert were particularly effective in Athens because Athenian Jews spoke Greek and were able to blend into the generally sympathetic Greek population. After the war, Evert was honoured as a rescuer by the Yad Vashem Foundation in Israel and awarded the title of “Righteous among the Nations.”
Logothetopoulos

The Greek people have recently learned with understandable surprise and distress that the German and Military Occupation Authorities have begun to implement in Thessaloniki the measure of the gradual displacement of the Greek Jewish element beyond the country's borders and that the first groups of the displaced persons are already on their way to Poland. This distress of the Greek people has been all the more profound since:

1. According to the spirit of the terms of the armistice, all Greek citizens were to receive the same treatment by the Occupation Authorities regardless of race and religion.

2. The Greek Jews have not only proved themselves valuable factors in the country's economic performance, but have generally shown themselves law-abiding and fully cognizant of their duties as Greeks. Thus they have shared the common sacrifices for the Greek Homeland and have been in the front line of the battles which the Greek Nation has fought in defence of its indefeasible historical rights.

4. In the national consciousness, the children of our common Mother Greece are seen as indissoluble united and equal members of the body of the nation, regardless of any religious or denominational difference.

5. Our Sacred Religion recognizes no discrimination, superiority or inferiority upon race or religion, teaching that "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:28), any inclination towards the creation of any discrimination deriving from racial or religious difference thus being condemned.

6. Our common fortunes in days of glory and in times of national adversity has forged upon the anvil of Greek nobility of soul indissoluble bonds between all Greek citizens without exception, to whatever race they may belong.

Damaskinos, Archbishop of Athens and all of Greece
E. Skassis, Rector of the University of Athens
M. Karzis, Chairman of the Medical Association of Attica and Boeotia
P. Anastassopoulos, Chairman of the Athens Bar Association
Georgios Karantzaz, Chairman of the Journalists' Union
T. Synodinos, Chairman of the Society of Greek Writers
I. Kaveklis, Chairman of the Athens Dentists' Association
M. Moridis, Chairman, Greek Actors, Etc.
Jewish Resistance

Goal
In the immediate post-war years many believed that Jews went to their deaths "like sheep to the slaughter" with little opposition or struggle. In this activity, students will debunk the myth and understand the obstacles and personal risks faced by Jews who tried to resist or escape during the Holocaust. More specifically, students will reflect on the importance of the acts of resistance demonstrated by Greek Jews in Auschwitz.

Student Readings
Students read the following information sheets:
- Resistance in the Concentration Camps
- Greek Resistance in Auschwitz

Student Questions
Students write responses to the following questions:
What were the obstacles to resistance faced by Greek Jews in Auschwitz-Birkenau?
What do you think motivated them and others to resist?
What did their resistance accomplish, if anything?
Do you think that it is better to try and save yourself or attempt resistance, knowing that resistance would bring certain death?
What do you think you would have done, had you been in their position?

Debate
The class is divided into two groups. Each group is given one of the following propositions to support. Each side develops a list of arguments based on the above readings and further research if time permits. Each group chooses a three person team: one to develop the opening, one to develop the body and one to develop the rebuttal. The two teams conduct the debate in front of the class and a group of judges composed of teachers and students.

Position A
Given that resistance was futile in Auschwitz, it would have been far better for Greek Jews to have focused their efforts on staying alive, thereby saving as many lives as possible.

Position B
Given that death was a near certainty in Auschwitz, it was far better to die defiantly in the hope of obstructing the death camp machinery and inspiring resistance in others.
Resistance

In the Concentration Camps

The atmosphere of total terror and isolation in the camps as well as the chronic starvation of most prisoners severely inhibited the will of the prisoners and the possibilities of resistance. Barbed and high voltage electrical wires and guard towers left little hope of escape. The daily routine in the larger camps was brutally regimented. It included an elaborate system of harsh punishments for the slightest infractions, close surveillance, and endless roll calls for counting prisoners. Those who attempted to resist or escape were killed when caught.

Still, despite these enormous obstacles, there were acts of resistance by members of the diverse camp populations. In many camps, underground groups formed, sometimes across the divergent political, ethnic, and language barriers; members exchanged information and coordinated efforts to alleviate suffering of the inmates. While the conditions of imprisonment made armed resistance extremely difficult, it was not impossible.

The most dramatic examples of armed resistance were revolts planned and carried out by organized underground groups of Jewish inmates at Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. As was the case with the ghetto revolts, the uprisings in the killing centres occurred with little hope of success against the superior German force. But, like the ghetto revolts, the Jewish prisoners realized their days were numbered anyway.

Courtesy: Resistance During the Holocaust, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, p.23-24.
Greek Resistance

In Auschwitz

At least 54,533 Greek Jews were transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp between 1943-1944. Of these, 41,776 were immediately sent to the gas chambers and 12,575 were selected for forced labour, the orchestra, medical experiments, and the Sonderkommando.

The Sonderkommando

The Sonderkommando was a special command unit of prisoners who were assigned to do the most degrading work in the gas chambers and crematoria of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Their tasks were to clean out the gas chambers after victims had been gassed, remove hair and gold teeth from the corpses, and shovel bodies into the ovens of the crematoria. The Nazis normally killed off Sonderkommandos every three months and replaced them with new prisoners.

In the summer of 1944, the Nazis began the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. They selected over 400 of the strongest Greek Jews to serve as Sonderkommando to help with the murder of these Hungarian Jews. The Greek Jews courageously refused, knowing that their disobedience would mean certain death. All were gassed, but not without first leaving a strong impression on their fellow inmates.

The Crematorium Uprising

On October 6 and 7, 1944, Sonderkommando Jews from Poland, Hungary, and Greece took part in an uprising at Auschwitz. The Jews attacked SS guards with hammers, stones, picks, crowbars, and axes. Using explosives that had been smuggled into the camp from a nearby munitions factory, the prisoners blew up one of the four crematoria at Auschwitz. The Germans fought back with machine guns, hand grenades, and dogs. Two-hundred and fifty Jews were shot, including 135 from Greece. An additional 12 Jews who escaped were later found and executed. According to survivor testimonies, nearly all those involved died singing the Greek national anthem.

Most of the men and women from Greece selected for forced labour died of cold, hunger, disease, or the cruelty of the guards. Others committed suicide after learning the fate of their families. Those who survived until January 17, 1945 were forced on death marches to other concentration camps such as Bergen-Belsen, Mauthausen, and Stutthof. Fewer than 2,000 of the 54,000 Jews deported from Greece survived.
Glossary

Anti-Semitism
Opposition or hatred of Jews. As a term, it came into wide-spread use in the 1870's. Subsequently, it has come to denote hatred of Jews, in all of its forms throughout history.

Athens
The capital of Greece where Jews, especially refugees from Salonica, sought refuge.

Auschwitz
A concentration camp established in 1940 at Oswiecim, Poland. In 1942, it became an extermination camp. It contained a labour camp, the death camp, Birkenau, and the slave labour camp, Buna-Monowitz. Up to 1.5 million Jewish men, women and children were murdered in this camp and 100,000 victims from other ethnic and cultural groups. Only 7,650 people were found alive at liberation.

Birkenau
A sub-camp of Auschwitz with four gas chambers. Most of the Auschwitz gassings took place here, as many as 6,000 people a day.

Bulgaria
Balkan country bordered by Romania and Yugoslavia in the north, Greece and Turkey in the south, and the Black Sea on the east coast. It was allied with Germany during World War II. Bulgaria’s 50,000 Sephardic Jews represented 10 percent of the population. Although a joint effort by the clergy, monarchy, and parliament to halt the deportation of the nation’s Jews limited the death of Bulgarian Jews to 14 percent, 11,484 Jews were sent to the concentration camp Treblinka.

Concentration Camps
Immediately after assuming power on January 30, 1933, the Nazis established camps where they “concentrated” and imprisoned perceived enemies of the state that included: Communists, Socialists, Monarchists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Gypsies, homosexuals and others deemed “anti-social.” The general round-up of Jews did not begin until 1938. Before then, only Jews who fit the above categories were interned in the camps. The first three camps were Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen.

Crematorium
Building in a concentration camp containing large brick ovens where corpses of those who had been gassed to death were burned, often referred to as "ovens." Jewish prisoners, called Sonderkommandos, were assigned to work in the crematoria for a few months until they were killed and replaced by other prisoners.

Death March
As the Allied Forces advanced and the Eastern Front collapsed from late 1944 to 1945, the SS force-marched concentration camp inmates on long treks, up to several months, towards Germany and Austria. Of the estimated 750,000 prisoners on the death
marches, 250,000 died of hunger, exhaustion, or were shot when they walked too slowly or fell down.

**Deportation**

Forced relocation of Jews, Polish Catholics, and Roma from their homes to ghettos, labour, concentration, or death camps. The Nazis used the euphemism “resettlement.” Part of the Nazi program to remove Jews from Germany, and increase living space for ethnic Germans. Initially an effort to rid German-occupied countries of Jews, deportation eventually became a means to deliver Jews to concentration camps and implement the Final Solution.

**Displaced Persons (DP)**

Jews who could not or did not wish to return to their former communities or countries. Most had no homes to return to. Their families had perished and often entire villages were destroyed. In some cases, returning Jews faced hostility and anti-Semitism from the non-Jewish population in their home towns. Many Jews spent years in DP Camps waiting for other countries to admit them.

**Final Solution**

Nazi code name for the plan to annihilate the Jews of Europe.

**Gas**

The Nazis used poison gas to kill large numbers of victims. Among the different gases used, Zyklon B was one of the most efficient and deadly.

**Gas Chamber**

Underground room where victims were gassed. Prisoners were told that the rooms were showers intended for sanitation purposes. After gassing, the bodies of the victims were taken to the crematorium to be burned.

**Ghetto**

A section of the city where all Jews from the surrounding areas were forced to live. Surrounded by barbed wire or walls, the ghettos were often sealed to prevent people from entering or leaving. Established mostly in Eastern Europe, ghettos were characterized by overcrowding, starvation and forced labour. All were eventually destroyed as the Jews were deported to death camps.

**Holocaust**

The destruction of 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their followers in Europe between the years 1933-1945. Other individuals and groups were persecuted and suffered grievously during this period, but only the Jews were marked for complete annihilation. The term "Holocaust" - literally meaning "a completely burned sacrifice" - suggests a sacrificial connotation to what occurred. The word Shoah, originally a Biblical term meaning widespread disaster, is the modern Hebrew equivalent.
Mauthausen
A concentration camp for men, opened in August 1938, near Linz in northern Austria. It was classified by the SS as a camp of utmost severity. Conditions were brutal, even by concentration camp standards. Nearly 125,000 prisoners of various nationalities, including Greeks, were either worked or tortured to death before its liberation by American troops in May 1945.

Nazi
Name for the National Socialist German Workers Party.

Nazism
The ideology of the National Socialist German Workers Party and the party's system of rule from 1933 to 1945. Also a form of fascism. The ideology included: 1) anti-liberalism and anti-parliamentarianism, 2) anti-communism and anti-socialism; 3) the Fuhrer principle which replaced parliament with a hierarchical, dictatorship based on the concepts of leader and follower, command and obedience; 4) nationalism; 5) racism and anti-Semitism; 6) imperialism; and 7) militarism.

Refugee
Someone who flees their country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group or political opinion.

Resistance (Jewish)
Opposition to Nazi occupation. Jewish resistance took many forms. Armed resistance occurred in ghettos - the most famous was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising - but there were also concentration camp uprisings. Resistance also took place in forests and rural areas where Jews formed partisan units. Jews joined underground movements in the countries where they lived and practiced spiritual resistance. They prayed, observed holidays, organized cultural events and children's classes in the ghettos and to a lesser degree, in the concentration camps.

Rescuer
Someone who helped Jews, despite the personal risk and without expectation of remuneration. Most rescues involved concealment in the home or property of the rescuer. This kind of rescue was dangerous because of the long period of hiding, the frequent searches for people in hiding, and the risk of betrayal by Nazi collaborators. Others provided forged papers that allowed a Jew to live as a non-Jew outside a ghetto or camp, or helped smuggle Jews over the border to an unoccupied region.

Rhodes
Greek island in the Aegean Sea ceded to Italy by Turkey in 1923. The Germans occupied the island after the Italian surrender to the Allies in 1943. The Jewish population of 1,700 was deported to Greece en route to killing centers in the East; only 151 survived.
Righteous Among the Nations
Term used to describe non-Jews who saved Jews from Nazi persecution at the risk of their own lives. It is an honour awarded to rescuers by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Israel.

Romaniote
Greek-speaking Jews who had been in Greece from the first century. The largest community was centered in Jannina. Romaniote practiced ancient Greek customs and maintained close associations and commercial ties with other Greek-speaking and Sephardic communities, and supported the separate Romaniote synagogues.

Roundup
Term used to refer to the Nazi collection of Jews and other victims for deportation, labour or murder.

Salonica
Main port city of Greek Macedonia with an established Sephardic Jewish community of 56,000 people. Nazi occupation began on April 9, 1941. Jewish properties were confiscated and ghettos were created. Deportations began in February 1943. From March 14-August 7, 1943, most of the Jews (44,000) were deported to their deaths in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Jews holding Italian, Spanish, and Turkish passports were protected. In 1945, Salonica's Jewish population was 1,950

Sephardic Jews
Jews from Spain or Portugal who were expelled during the Spanish Inquisition in 1492 and 1510, respectively. Most Sephardim settled in North Africa, Greece, Italy, Turkey, and the Netherlands. Salonica, Greece became the cultural capital for these displaced Jews.

Sonderkommando
German meaning, "special commando." Sonderkommando was a unit of SS soldiers given special duties, such as to help the mobile killing squads. It is also the name given to Jewish prisoners assigned to work at the gas chambers and crematoria. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, Jewish Sonderkommando were killed and replaced with new prisoners every few months.

Sonderkommando Revolt
The revolt by prisoners in Birkenau on October 6-7, 1944, during which Crematorium III was blown-up.

SS
Abbreviation usually written with two lightning symbols for Schutzstaffel (Defense Protective Units). Originally Hitler's personal bodyguard, the SS was transformed into a giant organization by Heinrich Himmler. Although various SS units were assigned to the battlefield, the organization is best known for carrying out the destruction of European Jewry.
Star of David
A six-pointed star formed of two equilateral triangles; a traditional symbol of Judaism. Used by the Nazis as an identification mark for Jews. By Nazi decree, Jews over the age of six in occupied territory had to wear a yellow Star of David badge on their clothing or face beatings, deportation or death.

Swastika
Symbol of the Nazi party. A cross with equal arms each of which is bent at a right angle. It appeared on Nazi uniforms and flags.

World War Two
The war fought from 1939-1945 between the Axis and the Allied powers. The war began when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939. Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945. On August 6, 1945, the U.S.A. dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. On August 15, Japan surrendered. The war ended with the signing of a peace treaty on September 2, 1945.
Timeline

140 BCE (Before the Common Era, formerly known as BC)
Alexandrian Jews form the first Jewish settlement in Salonica.

395 CE (Common Era, formerly known as AD)
Salonica becomes a major city of the Byzantine Empire, second only to Constantinople.

1170
An organized Jewish community is in place in Salonica.

1376
Central European Jews settle in Salonica.

1492-96
20,000 Jews expelled from Spain & Portugal during the Spanish Inquisition, settle in Salonica.

1890
Fire nearly destroys Salonica's Jewish quarter.

1912 - 13
Outbreak of the Balkan Wars. Turkey cedes Salonica to Greece. Greece agrees to respect the religion and customs of all the inhabitants.

1917
August - Most of Salonica is destroyed by fire, leaving thousands of people, mostly Jews, homeless.

1931
Anti-Jewish riots and burning of the Campbell quarter of Salonica result in the emigration of 20,000 Jews to France and Palestine.

1936
Beginning of the Metaxas dictatorship. Fascist-type organizations are set up.

1939
World War II begins.

1940
Seven thousand Salonican Jews fight against the Italian invasion.
1941

April 6 - Germany invades.

April 9 - Salonica falls.

April 27 - Athens falls. Anti-Jewish measures enacted almost immediately. Jews forbidden to enter cafes and cinemas. Jewish homes and hospitals are confiscated. Jewish offices, libraries, and archives are raided. Many Jews are imprisoned.

June - Greece is divided between Germany, Bulgaria, and Italy.

July - Damaskinos becomes Archbishop of Athens. He petitions for Greek Jews to be exempted from Nazi deportations.

September - Partisan movements are founded.

1942

Winter - Many Jews and non-Jews die of famine, disease, and slave labour.

June - The first executions of Greeks in Athens.

July - Nazis order all Jewish men in Salonica, aged 18 - 45, to assemble in Liberty Square. They are humiliated, tortured and 3,500 are sent to do forced labour. Jewish property is looted and confiscated.

October - Many forced labourers suffer disease or death.

November - Resistance organizations help Jews escape.

December - Nazis destroy the 2,000 year old Jewish cemetery of Salonica and confiscate all Jewish businesses and shops.

1943

February - The “special treatment” of Jews begins. Jews are ordered to wear the Star of David, obey curfew, identify their homes and businesses, declare all their assets, and move to one of three ghettos.

March - All the Greek Jews (approximately 12,000) in the Bulgarian-occupied areas are arrested. Most die either en route to the camps or upon arrival. The first transport of
2,800 Salonican Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau. By August, almost all Jews of Salonica have been deported to the death camps. Most are gassed within hours of arrival.

**September** - The Italians surrender to the Allies. Athens and the rest of the Italian-occupied zone, once a refuge for Jewish refugees is now under Nazi rule. Rabbi Barzelai destroys all records of the Jewish community in Athens and flees with Jewish partisans. Archbishop Damaskinos orders Greek Orthodox clergy to issue false baptismal certificates to Jews and to hide Jewish children. Athenian police chief Angelos Evert issues thousands of false identity cards to Jewish families.

1944

**March** - Jews from Kastoria and Ioannina are arrested.

**April** - Jews are deported from Athens to Auschwitz in a transport of 80 box-cars.

**May** - Jews arrested in Crete and shipped to Athens. The ship sinks and all are drowned.

**June** - Jews from Corfu are arrested and deported to Auschwitz.

**July** - The Jews of Rhodes and Cos are deported to Auschwitz. Greeks chosen for the Sonderkommando refuse orders and are executed.

**October** - Greek prisoners participate in an uprising at Auschwitz-Birkenau and destroy Crematorium III.

1945

**May 8** - Germany surrenders, the war ends in Europe. In 1941 the Jewish population of Greece was 71,000. By 1945, only 12,000 have survived.

1944

**October** - Greece is liberated from the Nazis. The National Unity government returns from exile. George Papandreou becomes prime minister.

1944-49

Greek Civil War devastates the country.

1949

**July** - The royalist government defeats of the Greek Communist Party forces. More than 80,000 Greeks die in this civil war, another 700,000 people become homeless. These political divisions continue to affect Greek politics.
Resources

Books


Compiled by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the University of Athens. Presents documents on the modern history of Greek Jewry and original documents related to the Holocaust including: petitions written by Greek community leaders on behalf of the Jews and reports by foreign observers concerning the plight of Greek Jewry. (Scholarly)


Story of Elia Aelion, a Greek Jew from Salonica and the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust. Deals with the struggle to survive and the nature of the loss in Greece due to the Holocaust. The introduction offers a succinct overview of Jewish life in Salonica and Ladino proverbs open each chapter. (Appropriate for High School students)


Combines enormous historical research with the personal testimony of survivors. Offers a comprehensive account of the destruction of European Jewry, including an overview of the German invasion of Greece and the implementation of the Final Solution in Salonica and Athens. Highlights Greek resistance to Nazi atrocities and the role of Greek Jews in the Sonderkommando revolt at Auschwitz-Birkenau.


An account of the author's childhood memories of growing up in Salonica and the rapid destruction of the city's vibrant Jewish community following the German occupation in 1941. Interweaves the personal and the historical, including the role of Rabbi Koretz in expediting the deportation of Salonica's Jewry. Outlines the obstacles that climate and language posed to Greek survival in the camps. (Appropriate for High School students)


A combination of political reporting, literary travel writing, and historical reflection, Kaplan's work explores the irreconcilable differences among the various ethnic and religious groups of the Balkans. In addition to discussing Yugoslavia, Romania, and Bulgaria, Kaplan examines the ambiguous position of Greece as a crossroads between the East and the West. The chapter on Salonica includes personal testimonies and historical research to illustrate how the tragedy of Greek Jews has been erased from Greece's collective memory.


A synthesis of personal memoir, literary criticism, and interpretative narrative. Explores the poetry, friendships, and politics that defined Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell's sojourn in Greece. George Seferis, George Katsimbalis, and other famed Greek poets welcomed Miller and Durrell. Explores Greek life, freedom and art against the backdrop of the German occupation and the Greek civil war.

Drawing on personal and family memoirs, Matsas offers a detailed account of the role of the resistance movement in helping Greek Jews. The author is the first to explore State Department and OSS wartime reports on Greek Jews available to the American government. He exposes the hypocrisy of the United States and Great Britain and their failure to disseminate known information about the Final Solution to the Jews of Greece. (Not available in VHEC library)


Focusing on Greek individuals Mazower explores the experience of Nazi occupation. Describes the effects of policy on the social, military cultural, and economic lives of ordinary people. Includes a brief but comprehensive chapter on Greek Jewry and the Final Solution. (Not available in VHEC library)


Account of Greek Jewish communities before and after the Holocaust with an emphasis on post-Holocaust survival between 1956 and 1983. Focuses on Salonica but includes many of the other Jewish communities in Greece. (Scholarly)

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Resistance During the Holocaust*. A clearly, comprehensive pamphlet exploring the various manifestations and motivations of resistance and Jewish resistance, as well as the obstacles to opposing Nazi rule. In addition to examining armed resistance in ghettos and camps, the booklet highlights often-ignored acts of spiritual resistance such as the continuance of religious traditions and the preservation of cultural institutions. Includes maps, photographs, translations of partisan songs and manifestos, and the accounts of first-hand observers. (Appropriate for High School students)


Although the Jews from Rhodes were only deported during the final year of the war, the 2,300 year old Jewish community was virtually wiped out and fewer than 150 of the 2,500 Rhodesian Jews survived. In evocative prose, Varon recounts pre-war Jewish life in Rhodes, her experiences in Birkenau, Dachau, and Bergen-Belsen, and her post-war physical and spiritual rehabilitation. (Appropriate for High School students)

Videos

*It Was Nothing...It Was Everything: Reflections on the rescue of Jewish Fugitives in Greece during the Holocaust.*

Although close to 90 percent of Greece’s Jewish population perished in the German killing centers, approximately 10,000 Jews survived. Some lived through the death camps, some became partisans, but most were helped by other Greek citizens who risked their lives. Through interviews and archival footage, this film tells the story of the many courageous farmers, housewives, church leaders, professionals, and partisans who contributed to the rescue of thousands of Greek Jews.