



CHILDREN OF THE HOLOCAUST

BY EMILY SCHLESINGER

A white bird is flying in the upper left corner against a sunset sky. Below it, a strand of barbed wire is visible. The background of the entire page is a dark blue gradient with faint, light-colored silhouettes of trees and structures.

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Separation

Edith Weingarten ran as fast as she could. Her parents and three brothers did too. All around them, people fled for their lives. Officers yelled at them in German. Then they took aim. Anyone who could not run fast enough was shot. That was when Edith began to lose her family.



In 1941, **Nazis** came to Edith's home. Her family was Jewish. They lived in Czechoslovakia. The officers told her family to pack. They had to board a train to Poland. That would be their new home. Everyone would get houses and businesses there. That's what the Nazis said.

Instead, they got off the train and were told to run. Edith's mother quickly collapsed. As Edith held her, an officer shouted. He told the girl she would be going to work. She had to leave her mother behind. That was the first separation.

THE START OF WORLD WAR II

In the late 1930s, Nazi Germany began invading other countries. First, they took over Austria. Next, they went into Czechoslovakia. Then, in 1939, they invaded Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. This was the start of World War II.



Those who remained after the run were lined up. Men went in one line. Women went in another. Edith watched her father and three brothers disappear. She was just a teen. Her family was gone.

The Nazis put Edith to work. They took her to a **ghetto**. Her job was to wash diapers. There were 300 babies. Their parents had been sent away.

Later, the babies were put on trucks. The people caring for them were killed. But Edith and her friend Leah crawled into a **cellar**. For a few days, they hid near the furnace. No one found them. When the Nazis left, the girls sneaked out.

This was the first of many escapes. Edith's journey had just begun. Thousands of children like her were taken from their families by the Nazis. Not many survived. A few who did were **smuggled** across borders. Others jumped from trains. Many hid in dangerous places. These children beat incredible odds to live. Their stories survived with them.

JEWISH GHETTOS

After invading other countries, the Nazis marked off sections of cities as "ghettos." They forced Jews to live in these areas. The largest ghetto was in Warsaw. This was the capital city of Poland. Almost half a million Jews lived there.



A Deadly Idea

Six million Jewish people were killed in the **Holocaust**. They had not done anything wrong. These people lost their lives for being Jewish. It was a **genocide**.

The events leading up to this started in Germany. A new political party had come to power. It was the Nazi Party. Adolf Hitler was their leader. He became **chancellor** in 1933.



DEMOCRACY TO DICTATORSHIP

Germany held an election in 1932. Hitler's Nazi Party won 230 seats in the government. The Communists won the second-largest number of seats. Several months later, there was a fire in the main government building. The Nazis blamed the Communists. They used the fire as an excuse to take over the government. This made Germany a one-party dictatorship.



FAST FACT: The official name of the Nazi Party was the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

Germany had lost World War I. That was 15 years earlier. Since then, their economy had suffered. Many Germans did not have jobs. They were angry with their leaders.

Hitler told these Germans a story. He said they were a “master race.” This meant they were better than others. They would take over the world. The name he gave them was Aryans. Hitler’s story made them feel better about themselves.

Germans had struggled after the war. Hitler said it was not their fault. Instead, he said Jewish people were responsible. Many of them lived in Germany. But Hitler did not accept them as Germans. He began blaming them for every problem. Soon his followers did too.

OTHER VICTIMS

Jewish people were not the only group targeted by the Nazis. People with disabilities were killed. Hundreds of thousands of Roma people were also murdered. These people originally came from northern India. Their language is called Romani. They spread throughout Europe and were known as travelers. In many places, they faced persecution.



The Nazis passed **anti-Semitic** laws. Jews lost their civil rights. They were not allowed to marry non-Jews. Many children could no longer go to school. Jewish books were burned.

Turning Point

On November 9, 1938, hatred turned to violence. After night fell, a riot began. This had been carefully planned. Hundreds of **synagogues** were burned. Jewish businesses were destroyed. Windows got smashed. Jews were beaten. Police stood by and watched. They did not stop it.

This was Kristallnacht. It means “night of broken glass.” Thousands of Jewish men were taken away. Most never returned.



FAST FACT: Kristallnacht was the first pogrom carried out by the Nazis. A pogrom is an organized attack on an ethnic group.



CHILDREN OF THE HOLOCAUST

Six million Jewish people were killed in the Holocaust. Children were not spared. But some managed to survive. Large numbers were sent to concentration camps. Others were hidden by friends and neighbors. Some were smuggled across borders. Many lost their families. Still, they did not give up. These are their stories of survival.



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