

ONLINE

bbc.co.uk/history

Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder in

WW2 will go live within the World War

Two section of **bbc.co.uk/history** towards the end of 2004.

The site will include a three-dimensional interactive timeline charting the development of Nazi racial policy – from the first racial laws in 1933 to the end of the killing in 1945 – and highlighting events as they happened to the people who lived through them. Visitors can trace the development of the camp through an animated map of Auschwitz-Birkenau and there will be access to detailed analysis from leading historians in a series of features. There are also plans for historians and programme-makers to host message boards during the run of ***Auschwitz: The Nazis & the 'Final Solution'*** next year.

Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder in

WW2 will also be accessible as a subsection of *Wars and Conflicts* under the heading ***Genocide and Mass Murder***.

The content is intended as a lasting contribution to the BBC's history website.

bbc.co.uk/ww2

The *WW2 People's War* website aims to capture and preserve for future generations the personal and family stories of the people who lived and fought during World War Two. Visitors to the site can browse several thousand stories online, add their own or their family's memories or photos of the war and join in related discussions and forums.

The 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau will be marked on the site and developed during the run of the series. The call to action will focus on the British experience, such as soldiers who liberated Bergen-Belsen, camp survivors, nurses who went to Europe to treat survivors, and people who met refugees during and after the war. The site will also offer a series of lesson plans on the subject for teachers, focusing on the British experience and its contemporary relevance.

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In the week of Holocaust Memorial Day in January, the CBBC *Newsround* website will be featuring a Press Pack Report written by one of the group of students who went to Auschwitz with the Holocaust Educational Trust in October 2004. Jack will share his experience of the visit and how it affected him. The main CBBC website will also be covering the event with information on what the day is all about and offering advice to children on how to tackle racism today, with links to our exclusive Press Pack Report.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

The UK Holocaust Memorial Day is a government initiative and was first held on 27 January 2001. It commemorates all the communities which suffered as a result of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution. Whilst its central focus remains the Holocaust, the day also provides an opportunity for reflection on more recent atrocities that raise similar issues, and has a different theme each year.

The fifth Holocaust Memorial Day will be on 27 January 2005, marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the former Nazi concentration and extermination camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau. Since 2001, Holocaust Memorial Day has been hosted by a different part of the UK; this year it is the turn of London. Hundreds of activities and events will take place across the whole country exploring the theme 'Survivors, Liberation and Rebuilding Lives'.

For further information on Holocaust Memorial Day, please visit www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk

OTHER BBC PROGRAMMES

The following programmes are planned for broadcast on or around Holocaust Memorial Day. Exact transmission details will be available nearer the time.

Holocaust Memorial Event BBC Two

Holocaust Memorial Day 2005 will see the biggest assembly to date of British-based survivors of the camps and ghettos of Nazi Europe. All known survivors will be invited to a ceremony in Westminster Hall, London, due to be attended by Her Majesty the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and major political leaders.

At the first Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001, survivors were addressed by big names from the world of theatre, film, television and music, including Emma Thompson, Sir Antony Sher, Sir Ian McKellen, Sir Bob Geldof and Sir Trevor MacDonald.

This year will see the world's first performance of *Annelies*, an original oratorio based on the diaries of Anne Frank performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The event will also introduce Stephen Leas to a wider audience. Stephen is the cantor at Great Portland Street Synagogue, London, and will sing the memorial prayer. Unusually for a cantor, Stephen has also trained in secular music with the English National Opera.

Holocaust – A Music Memorial Film from Auschwitz BBC Two

For many prisoners in Auschwitz, music played a unique and precious role. Several orchestras and bands were set up, made up entirely of inmates. Amidst all the horrors, music was a part of daily life: marches were played at the camp gates as labour gangs were led out to work each morning and musicians were called on at all times of the day and night to perform for the SS and Nazi officers.

Now, in a unique tribute to the millions who died in the Nazi genocide and for the first time in its history, the museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau has allowed a number of leading musicians from around the world to come to the camps and perform in a 90-minute film shot entirely on location. A sequence of carefully chosen music, all connected in some way with the Holocaust, will be interwoven with the powerful accounts of three survivors from the men's and women's orchestras.

The list of world-class musicians taking part in the film includes the acclaimed Russian violinist Maxim Vengerov, the American pianist Emanuel Ax, and a number of international singers, including sopranos Isabel Bayrakdarian and Kate Royal, mezzo-soprano Tove Dahlberg and bass-baritone Gerald Finlay. The Sinfonietta Krakowia and Camerata Silesia will be conducted by John Axelrod. The film includes music from the Jewish liturgy as well as works by Chopin, Górecki, Messiaen, Viktor Ullmann and Bach.

A new work for brass and shofars (a Hebrew instrument made from animal horns) by the sought-after Jewish-Argentinian composer Osvaldo Golijov has been specially commissioned for the film.

Holocaust – A Music Memorial Film is an international endeavour, with artists coming from as far afield as Poland, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, the Czech Republic, Sweden and Russia. The film is a co-production between the BBC, TVP (Poland), CBC (Canada) and ZDF (Germany). It will be directed by the award-winning Jewish director James Kent, whose credits include *The Genius of Mozart* and numerous documentaries for the BBC, Channel 4 and HBO. The executive producer is Peter Maniura and the producer is Ben Weston.

Descendants of the Holocaust BBC One

In 1939, Rene was just 12 years old when she was sent to the Lodz Ghetto and later to Auschwitz and Belsen. Her ten-year-old sister was killed in Treblinka and her mother died 12 days after Belsen was liberated. Rene has never discovered what happened to her father. She is the only member of her family to have survived.

Today, Rene, a sprightly 75 year old, lives in a comfortable home in the UK with her husband Charles, who was one of the British volunteers who liberated Belsen. They have been married for more than 50 years and her pride and joy are her five grandchildren, who she never thought she would live to see.

Like so many survivors, Rene has never been able to express fully the pain of her experiences or expunge the guilt of surviving when so many millions perished. "Statistics say I shouldn't be here. I survived so many selection processes under the Nazis that I can't believe I am still here today to tell my story," she says.

Rene's son, Martin, has never asked her about what happened to her during the war; it is something she has not talked about for 50 years. But Martin's own 13-year-old son Adrian is always asking his granny about her war-time experiences. Now, for the first time, Rene is about to reveal to Adrian what her life was really like when she was growing up in Poland, at the same age as he is now.

Descendants of the Holocaust joins Rene and her family on an emotional voyage of discovery as she passes on to her grandchildren the memory of what she went through in the hope that it will not all be forgotten. The documentary is a celebration of the continuation of her family, and of families like hers, against all the odds.

Songs of Praise BBC One

This special edition of **Songs of Praise** to mark National Holocaust Memorial Day follows three sixth-form students on a journey to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Laura, Mark and Asha all have very personal reasons for wanting to visit the camp and learn more about the horrors that unfolded there.

Their visit has been organised by the Holocaust Educational Trust, which aims to raise awareness and understanding of the Holocaust and its relevance today.

Presented by Aled Jones, music comes from Libera and The Zemel Choir and includes 'Lead Kindly Light' and 'Abide with Me'.

Sunday Worship Radio 4

Sunday Worship on 23 January 2005 comes from Beth Shalom in Newark, on the edge of Sherwood Forest. Beth Shalom – meaning House of Peace – is Britain's first dedicated Holocaust Memorial and Education Centre. Since 1995, the centre has provided a peaceful setting in which visitors can learn, remember and reflect. This ecumenical service will be led by the director of the centre, Dr Stephen D Smith, and includes contributions from member of the local Jewish and Christian communities.



AUSCHWITZ – FACTS

- In all, 1.1 million people died during the four and a half years of Auschwitz's existence; 1 million of them were Jewish men, women and children.
- Other groups of people who died included Polish political prisoners, Soviet prisoners of war, Gypsy families, homosexuals, people with disabilities and prisoners of conscience or religious faith (including several hundred Jehovah's Witnesses).
- More people died in Auschwitz than the British and American losses of World War Two combined.
- About 60 million Reichmarks – equivalent to £125million today – was generated for the Nazi state by slave labour at Auschwitz.
- Nazis at Auschwitz offered some non-Jewish female prisoners the option of 'light work'. As the women soon discovered, 'light work' meant prostitution.
- To lull new arrivals at Treblinka death camp into believing they were only in transit, plants were placed on the railway station and at the entrance to the gas chambers. The train ramp was disguised to look like a regular railway station with signs, timetables and even a clock painted on the wall. A Star of David was placed above the entrance to the gas chamber and a sign was painted in Hebrew on a purple curtain covering the entrance to the gas chamber that said "This is the Gateway to God. Righteous men will pass through".
- A unit in Auschwitz where valuables snatched from incoming prisoners were kept was known as Canada, because Canada was thought to be a land of untold riches.
- Auschwitz guards had their own athletics team. The camp was like a small town, with its own staff canteen, cinema, theatre and grocery store.
- There were 170 female SS staff at Auschwitz, of whom the most infamous was Irma Grese, the 20-year-old daughter of a dairyman.
- Josef Mengele's scientific experiments at Auschwitz often involved studies of twins. If one twin died, he would immediately kill the other and carry out comparative autopsies.
- Denmark was the only Nazi-occupied country that managed to save 95% of its Jewish residents. Following a tip-off by a German diplomat, thousands of Jews were evacuated to neutral Sweden.
- Some Jewish prisoners secretly wrote eye-witness accounts of the atrocities of the gas chambers and hid them in bottles or metal containers buried in the ground. A number of these accounts were discovered after the war.
- Of a total of about 7,000 staff at Auschwitz, only 750 were ever punished. Many went on to build good careers, including one man who became head of human resources for a large German company.
- There are approximately 500 survivors of Nazi death camps or ghettos living in Britain today.

AUSCHWITZ – A TIMELINE

1933

Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp, is established near Munich.

May 1940

Rudolf Höss arrives in the Polish town of Oświęcim to create a new concentration camp on the site of a deserted Polish army barracks.

14 June 1940

The first transport of Polish political prisoners arrives at Auschwitz.

22 June 1941

Germany invades the Soviet Union. Special Nazi killing squads, the Einsatzgruppen, operate behind the German army in Russia, inciting pogroms against the Jews and murdering “Jews in the service of the party or the state”.

28 July 1941

Five hundred and seventy-five sick and disabled inmates at Auschwitz are selected for gassing. There is nowhere to kill them without disturbance, so they are sent back to Germany to be murdered there.

14 August 1941

Himmler visits the headquarters of Einsatzgruppe B in Minsk and discovers that shooting women and children is causing some of his troops psychological damage. He contemplates other methods of killing Jews in the East.

Autumn 1941

The first gassing experiments take place using Zyklon B, a powerful disinfectant, in order to exterminate supposed Soviet ‘commissars’ as well as those at the camp who are considered to be unfit for work.

October–November 1941

Plans of the new camp extension at Birkenau are altered to exclude basic living space. Ten thousand Soviet prisoners of war arrive to build the extension.

November 1941

The first German Jews are deported to eastern Europe. Belzec, a small experimental gas camp, is used as a place to kill ‘unproductive’ Jews.

20 January 1942

Senior Nazis meet at the Wannsee conference to co-ordinate the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish Question’ and to agree a definition of ‘Jew’.

Spring 1942

The first large-scale gassing of Silesian Jews in Auschwitz-Birkenau takes place.

20 June 1942

Prisoner Kazimierz Piechowski escapes from Auschwitz with three other prisoners, dressed as SS men.

2 July 1942

In France, the Vichy Government agrees that gendarmes will co-operate in rounding up foreign Jews throughout France, provided Jews with French citizenship are allowed to remain.

19 July 1942

Himmler orders the General Government (eastern Poland) to be ‘cleansed’ of Jews by the end of the year.

Summer 1942

The hot summer has rotted thousands of corpses. Höss visits Chelmno to inspect machinery for incinerating bodies.

March 1943

The new crematoria are put into operation at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

May 1943

Dr Josef Mengele joins Auschwitz as camp physician and begins to carry out experiments on inmates.

October 1943

The heads of the Danish churches publish a strong protest against Nazi treatment of Jews. Danish social and economic organisations and King Christian X also object strongly, and universities close for a week in protest.

Autumn 1943

The war is not going well for Nazi Germany and some other countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania, resist handing over their Jews.

14 October 1943

Half of the 600 Jews in Sobibor concentration camp manage to escape on one day. Fifty of them evade capture and survive the war.

17 March 1944

Hitler orders the occupation of Hungary, fearing that the Hungarians might be thinking of changing sides. Jewish deportations begin under Adolf Eichmann.

31 May 1944

A meeting of the British War Cabinet Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees discusses Eichmann's 'goods for blood' offer of swapping Jewish prisoners for money. The committee recommends that the Cabinet rejects his offer.

24 June 1944

The most detailed news yet about the mass gassings of Jews reaches the US War Department. It is based on reports from a number of escaped prisoners.

30 June 1944

A train takes 1,684 to freedom, brokered directly between Eichmann and Jewish organisers. The Nazis charge \$1,000 per head for the places. The train eventually makes it to Switzerland and freedom.

2 August 1944

The Gypsy camp at Auschwitz is liquidated.

7 October 1944

The Sonderkommando in Crematorium IV of Auschwitz instigates a revolt, and is later joined by those from Crematorium II. They are brutally put down by the SS.

27 January 1945

The Red Army liberates Auschwitz-Birkenau and its remaining 7,000 prisoners.

12 March 1945

Himmler signs an agreement not to pass on Hitler's order to destroy all concentration camps and kill all prisoners. In early April, against Hitler's express wishes, he permits the Allies to take Bergen.

BIOGRAPHIES

Laurence Rees (producer and writer of the Auschwitz series and BBC book)

Laurence Rees is currently Creative Director of BBC History, and is perhaps best known for writing and producing *The Nazis: A Warning from History* which won him many awards including a BAFTA, an International Documentary Association Award and a Broadcasting Press Guild Award. He went on to write and produce two other acclaimed series on World War Two, *War of the Century* about the Hitler/Stalin war and *Horror in the East* about the war against Japan.

In 1994, Laurence launched the BBC's historical biography strand *Reputations*. He was also editor of *Timewatch* for a number of years and under his editorship the strand won three Emmy Awards in three years.

Laurence's commitment to furthering innovation and accessibility in history film-making is immense. He recently conceived and executive produced *Pyramid* and *Colosseum*. These 60-minute dramas with state-of-the-art computer special effects transmitted on BBC One to large audiences. *Pyramid* became the most watched history programme ever made by the BBC. In 2005 he will receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Sheffield for his contribution to history and television.

Laurence has written five books: a novel, *Electric Beach* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1990), *Selling Politics* (BBC Books 1992), *The Nazis: A Warning from History* (BBC Books 1997), *War of the Century* (BBC Books 1999) and *Horror in the East* (BBC Books 2001).

Professor Sir Ian Kershaw (series historical and script consultant)

Sir Ian Kershaw is widely regarded as one of the world's leading experts on Hitler and the Third Reich. He is a fellow of the British Academy and the Royal Historical Society, and was knighted earlier this year for services to history.

Sir Ian is best known for his hugely important and influential work on Hitler. His published work includes *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (fourth edition, Hodder Arnold 2000), *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford Paperbacks in both English, in 1987, and German) and *Hitler: Profiles in Power* (Longman, revised edition, 2001). But most famous is probably his two-part biography of Hitler that was published in 1998 and 2000 under the titles *Hubris* and *Nemesis* (Penguin Books 2001).

Sir Ian has been a leading figure in overturning much of the traditional thinking about Hitler and the Third Reich, concentrating on the people around Hitler, the atmosphere in Germany and the social climate that made possible Hitler's rise to power and its terrible consequences.

Sir Ian was a consultant both on the BAFTA Award-winning *The Nazis: A Warning from History* (1997) and on the acclaimed *War of the Century* (1999) about the war between Hitler and Stalin.

Professor David Cesarani (series consultant)

David Cesarani is Professor of Twentieth-Century Jewish History and Culture at Royal Holloway College, London University, a leading British expert on Jewish history.

He held the prestigious position of Director of the Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library between 1989 and 2000. The Wiener Library, established in 1933, is the world's oldest institution for the study of Nazi Germany and, later, the fate of German Jewry, the Holocaust and its aftermath.

David has been involved actively in the prosecution of war criminals, and was a consultant between 1987 and 1991 to the All-Party Parliamentary War Crimes Group, and Principal Researcher of its *Report on the Entry of Nazi War Criminals and Collaborators in the UK 1945–1950*. His research on this culminated in the important and acclaimed book, *Justice Delayed: How Britain Became a Refuge for Nazi War Criminals* (Mandarin 1992; updated and republished in 2000). His work on Nazi war crimes led him to write and edit books on many aspects of the Holocaust. His most recent work is the acclaimed *Eichmann: His Life and Crimes* (William Heinemann 2004).

