

## **Guidelines for working with the exhibition, *Some Were Neighbours: Choice, Human Behaviour, & the Holocaust***

### **1. Introduction**

- **The purpose of this exhibition, Definitions of terms, timeline of the Holocaust and a map**

### **2. Working with the Exhibition using Photo Analysis Tools**

### **3. Suggested Lesson Plan: Deconstructing the Familiar Photo Activity**

### **4. Questions for Unguided Tours**

## **ADDENDUM 1, II, III**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION to the exhibition:**

Many people believe that only Hitler and high-ranking Nazi officials were responsible for the Holocaust. But a crime of such enormous scope and scale, with millions of victims across vast geographical territory, required help from countless ordinary individuals. The exhibition, *Some Were Neighbours: Choice, Human behaviour & the Holocaust*, explores the widespread involvement of people at all levels of society who witnessed the persecution and systemic deportation and murder of Jews from their communities and either actively or passively tolerated what they saw.

The exhibit is grouped geographically - the Holocaust was a massive crime that occurred over a long period of time, with millions of victims across vast geographical territory, and time and place had significant and varied impacts on choices and motivations.

**The purpose of this exhibition** is to encourage students and other viewers to consider how ordinary people behaved during the Holocaust, and the impact of this behaviour. After interacting with the poster set, participants will know that:

1. Nazi leaders needed and found a broad range of people to assist them.
2. Ordinary people were involved in the Holocaust.
3. A range of decisions and behaviours were both possible and evident.

4. People acted (or were passive) based on a range of motives, fears, and pressures.
5. Knowledge of Nazi persecution of Jews was well-known if not always understood throughout Nazi-occupied Europe.
6. The impact of the way people behaved

## **Definition of terms**

- **Antisemitism:**  
Prejudice against or hatred of Jewish people, including denial and minimization of the Holocaust as well as violent targeting of Jews and Jewish institutions.
  
- **Collaboration:**  
Two or more people working together to create or achieve a common product or goal.
  
- **Complicity:**  
The state of being involved with others in an illegal activity or wrongdoing.
  
- **Ethnic Group:**  
A social group which shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, or language, or other common characteristics which set the group apart from other groups. Ethnicity can, but does not have to, include common ancestry.
  
- **Ghetto:**  
Under the Nazis, ghettos were city or town districts (often enclosed) in which the Germans concentrated the municipal and sometimes regional Jewish population and forced them to live under inhumane conditions. Ghettos isolated Jews by separating Jewish communities from the non-Jewish population and from other Jewish communities. German occupation authorities established the first ghetto in Poland in October 1939, just over a month after Germany invaded Poland and started the Second World War. The Germans established over 1,000 ghettos in German-occupied and annexed Poland and the Soviet Union alone.
  
- **Holocaust:**

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators from 1933-1945. During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived “racial inferiority”: Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, Germans of African descent, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, or because they challenged the Nazis grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals.

- **Kristallnacht:**

On November 9–10, 1938, Nazi leaders unleashed a series of pogroms (attacks) against the Jewish population in Germany and recently incorporated territories. This event came to be called Kristallnacht (The Night of Broken Glass) because of the shattered glass that littered the streets after the vandalism and destruction of Jewish-owned businesses, synagogues, and homes.

- **Nazism and Nazis:**

The word “Nazi” was a nickname for the followers of the NSDAP, or the National Socialist German Workers Party (or Nazi Party). National Socialism (or Nazism) was both an ideology (world view) and a political movement. Racism was central to Nazism. The Nazis viewed the world as being divided up into competing inferior and superior “races”, each struggling for survival and dominance. They falsely believed the Jews were not a religious denomination, but a dangerous non-European “race.” National Socialism held that the state was responsible for the welfare of the nation. However, the “nation” was very narrowly defined by the Nazis according to their racist and antisemitic worldview. Thus, Jewish Germans who were citizens of Germany and had lived in Germany for many generations, were stripped of their German citizenship by the Nazis. The Nazis who came to power in Germany in January 1933 aimed to gain political control and to dismantle democracy, to remove the constraints of the Versailles Treaty, and to regain and expand upon those lands lost after a humiliating defeat in the First World War. They also wanted to shape a so-called racial community (“Volksgemeinschaft”) which aligned with Nazi ideals. This community excluded so-called Jewish, “foreign,” and “degenerate” influences.

- **Perpetrator:**  
A person who carries out a harmful, illegal, or immoral act.
- **Prejudice:**  
Judging people before you get to know them.
- **Pogrom:**  
Violent attacks by local groups against an ethnic group. Originally, the term referred to acts of violence including looting, rape and murder against members of Jewish communities.
- **Racism:**  
A false belief that people are not equal but different biological species whose behaviour and values are determined by their inheritance – through their “blood”. Racism is a form of prejudice: judging people before you get to know them.

## **Timeline of the Holocaust**

### **Before 1933**

World War I (1914–1918) devastated Europe and created new countries. The years that followed saw the continent struggle to recover from the death or injury of tens of millions of soldiers and civilians, as well as catastrophic damage to property and industry. In 1933, over 9 million Jews lived in Europe (1.7% of the total population)—working and raising families in the harsh reality of the worldwide economic depression. German Jews numbered about 500,000 or less than 1% of the national population.

### **1933–1938**

Following the appointment of Adolf Hitler as German chancellor on January 30, 1933, the Nazi state (also referred to as the Third Reich) quickly became a regime in which citizens had no guaranteed basic rights. The Nazi rise to power brought an end to the Weimar Republic, the German parliamentary democracy established after World War I. In 1933, the regime established the first concentration camps, imprisoning its political opponents, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and others classified as “dangerous.” Extensive propaganda was used to spread the Nazi Party’s racist goals and ideals. During the first six years of Hitler’s dictatorship, German Jews felt the effects of more than 400 decrees and regulations that restricted all aspects of their public and private lives.

### **1939–1941**

The Holocaust took place in the broader context of World War II. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Over the next year, Nazi Germany and its allies conquered much of Europe. German officials confiscated Jewish property, in many places required Jews to wear identifying armbands, and established ghettos and forced-labor camps. In June 1941, Germany turned on its ally, the Soviet Union. Often drawing on local civilian and police support, Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) followed the German army and carried out mass shootings of civilians as it advanced into Soviet lands. Gas vans intended to kill people also appeared on the eastern front in late fall 1941.

## **1942–1945**

In a period marked by intense fighting on both the eastern and western fronts of World War II, Nazi Germany also intensified its pursuit of murdering all the Jews of Europe. These years saw systematic deportations of millions of Jews to increasingly efficient killing centres, some using poison gas. By the end of the war in spring 1945, as the Germans and their Axis partners were pushed back on both fronts, Allied troops uncovered the full extent of crimes committed during the Holocaust.

## **After 1945**

By May 1945, the Germans and their collaborators had murdered six million European Jews as part of a systematic plan of genocide—the Holocaust. When Allied troops entered the concentration camps, they discovered piles of corpses, bones, and human ashes—testimony to Nazi mass murder by the Germans and their collaborators. Soldiers also found thousands of survivors—Jews and non-Jews—suffering from starvation and disease. For survivors, the prospect of rebuilding their lives was daunting. With few possibilities for emigration, tens of thousands of homeless Holocaust survivors were housed in displaced persons (DP) camps. In the following years, many international and domestic courts conducted trials of accused war criminals.

## A map showing Nazi Germany's administration of Europe, 1942



*Courtesy of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

In 1942, Germany dominated most of Europe. Greater Germany had been enlarged at the expense of its neighbours. Austria and Luxembourg were completely incorporated. Territories from Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, Belgium, and the Baltic states were seized by Greater Germany. German military forces occupied Norway, Denmark, Belgium, northern France, Serbia, parts of northern Greece, and vast tracts of territory in eastern Europe. Italy, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Finland, Croatia, and Vichy France were either allied to Germany or subject to heavy German influence. Between 1942 and 1944, German military forces extended the area under their occupation to southern France, central and northern Italy, Slovakia, and Hungary.

## **2. WORKING with the EXHIBITION using PHOTOANALYSIS TOOLS**

### **Key Question: How was the Holocaust possible?**

The facilitator should remind visitors of this question as they move throughout the exhibit and ask how their understanding is changing and evolving.

### **Poster 1 – Introduction to the exhibition.**

The facilitator begins the visit to the exhibition by reminding participants that:

1. It was not possible for one man only to have carried out the Holocaust.
2. Although Adolf Hitler was the leader of the Nazis and he had other senior Nazis helping him carry out the Holocaust,
3. The Nazis depended on countless ordinary people supporting them in the actions they took against Jewish men, women and children.

The facilitator asks: **How did people respond to the Nazi cruelty and inhumanity? And why did they respond this way?**

The facilitator explains:

**In this exhibition, we will find clues in photographs taken during the Holocaust of HOW people responded to the plight of their Jewish classmates, coworkers, neighbours and friends. Within Nazi Germany and across German-dominated Europe, ordinary people responded to the Nazis in a variety of ways, from small acts of solidarity with victims to active rescue efforts and from toleration of anti-Jewish measures to eager collaboration with Nazi perpetrators,**

**and**

**WHY people responded the way they did. Why were there some zealous participants in the persecution of the Jews, while most simply went along or joined in? Why did so few help the victims? What motives and pressures influenced the choices and behaviours of individuals during the Holocaust?**

As the group begins the tour, the facilitator can encourage the participants to look at the large photograph on the first poster and can use the following questions to help the participants analyze the image and look beyond what is happening in the centre of the photograph.

(Possible responses are provided in *italics*).

**1. The subjects (Who is in the photograph?):**

- **Describe the people in the photograph. How are they dressed? What actions are happening? What facial expressions do they have?**
  - *People kneeling on the ground, scrubbing the street; can only see the face of one man - hard to read his expression.*
  - *Man in trench coat behind the people on ground - he appears focused on them; next to him is another man in coat with visible swastika armband*
  - *Many people crowded up against building, some on bikes; expressions range from curiosity to openly smiling; many are leaning forward*

**2. What objects are in the photograph?**

- *Bikes, buildings, street, etc.*

**3. Are the people on the edges of the photograph behaving differently from those in the centre?**

- *Yes - the people at the edges are observing, trying to see what is going on; they appear relaxed and unbothered*
- *In the centre, people are either on the ground scrubbing the street or supervising*

**4. What captured your attention in the photograph?**

- *Various answers*

**5. Setting of the Photograph:**

- **Estimated time of day?**
  - *Appears to be mid-day*
- **Estimated time of year, and how do you know?**
  - *Possible spring or fall - people are wearing coats*
- **Outside or indoors?**
  - *Outdoors*

## 6. Photographer's Point of View (Perspective)

The facilitator asks group to think about the photographer's point of view or perspective.

**The photographer makes decisions about what will be framed within the camera's lens. They determine even photographic images that appear to be spontaneous.**

- **Can you tell anything about the perspective, or point of view of the photographer, what the photographer thought important, by what has been included or omitted/left out from the photograph?**
  - *The photographer captured a wide array of people, the photographer captured different people doing different things, the photographer might have wanted to document the events*
- **Does the photograph seem spontaneous – unplanned - or posed? What makes you say this?**
  - *The photograph does not seem spontaneous as the angle captures many people, but it does not seem to be posed as there are many actions and people are not facing the camera*
- **Based on what you have observed above, what might you conclude about the role of ordinary citizens during the Holocaust?**
  - *People were aware of the persecution; people allowed the persecution; the Jewish people did not have support*
- **What might be the significance of this photograph – how does it add to our understanding of the events of the Holocaust?**
  - *The photograph is evidence that people were aware of the Nazi persecution of Jewish people and that people made choices to stand by and observe, walk away, or intervene*
- **What is at least one question you still have about this photograph?**

## **SUGGESTED APPROACH to the remaining POSTERS 2-21:**

Facilitators should inform participants that the exhibit is divided into three thematic sections that examine how time (when) and place (where) impacted the actions of Nazis and the behaviours of those who lived in those territories. Facilitators should continue to encourage and facilitate discussions applying the same photo analysis that was used for poster one.

1) Guiding questions to ask for each poster:

1. Who is in the photo?
2. What is happening?
3. How are people responding?
4. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role played by ordinary people in the Holocaust?

2) The Facilitator provides additional information not obvious from the photographs to build understanding of the context.

### **THEMATIC GROUP 1: (Posters 2 to 8)**

#### **Nazi Germany and Nazi Controlled Territories - True Believers - Opportunists - Conformists - Dissenters**

The facilitator can explain that this group of posters (posters 2 to 8) examines responses of ordinary people to the adoption of Nazi ideology in Germany as well as the annexed (taken over) Czech lands and Austria.

#### **\* Poster 2: Nazi Rule Stirs Support, Compliance, and Fear \***

1. Guiding questions:

1. **Who is in the photo?**
2. **What is happening?**

3. **How are people responding?**
4. **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **Some Germans believed in the Nazi racial ideology and actively supported anti-Jewish policies.**
- **Some supported anti-Jewish measures for a variety of reasons, including because the policies positively affected their careers and economic life, or they benefitted from Nazi successes in foreign policy and lowering crime.**

**\* Poster 3: Exclusion from the “National Community” \***

1. Guiding questions:

1. **Who is in the photo?**
2. **What is happening?**
3. **How are people responding?**
4. **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **Many who joined the Nazi Party and other affiliated groups actively supported the Nazi beliefs that targeted those who were seen by the Nazis as “inferior.”**

**\* Poster 4: Responses to Violence \***

1. Guiding questions:

1. **Who is in the photo?**
2. **What is happening?**
3. **How are people responding?**

4. **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **During the November pogrom of 1938, most community leaders, firefighters, and police obeyed orders to not put out fires unless they threatened “Aryan” buildings or disrupt attacks.**
- **Citizens often looted from Jewish-owned shops.**

**Poster 5. Who Benefited? Having a Stake in Persecution**

1. Guiding questions:

1. **Who is in the photo?**
2. **What is happening?**
3. **How are people responding?**
4. **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **As the Nazi regime pushed Jewish people to leave Germany, many Jewish assets were confiscated and sometimes sold at public auctions.**
- **Non-Jews were able to buy Jewish belongings at low prices, allowing some people to benefit from the continuing persecution.**

**\* Poster 6. Wartime Identification of the “Enemy Within” \***

1. Guiding questions:

1. **Who is in the photo?**
2. **What is happening?**
3. **How are people responding?**

4. **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **As the war progressed, persecution of Jews intensified, emblemized by the forced wearing of a yellow cloth Star of David.**
- **This star made wearers easily identifiable targets.**
- **Generally, German church leaders either supported the Nazi policies or quietly conformed to protect themselves.**

**\* Poster 7. Responses to Wartime Deportations \***

1. Guiding questions:

- A. **Who is in the photo?**
- B. **What is happening?**
- C. **How are people responding?**
- D. **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **In 1939 and 1940, Nazi leaders took steps toward ridding the Greater German Reich of Jews and other groups with forced relocation to German-occupied Poland.**
- **The majority of German church and civic leaders stayed silent as the deportations began; some police forces assisted in rounding up Jews.**
- **Few individuals expressed solidarity or even said goodbye to former friends and neighbours.**

**\* Poster 8. Large Photograph \***

1. Guiding questions:
  - A. **Who is in the photo?**
  - B. **What is happening?**
  - C. **How are people responding?**
  - D. **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**
  
2. Facilitator concludes:
  - **This poster presents an opportunity to explicitly revisit the analysis protocol and ask the group what they notice in the image and the significance of what people are doing, both actively and passively. (provide questions?)**

**THEMATIC GROUP 2: (Posters 9 to 15)**

**German Occupiers, Local Recruits, Neighbours**

This group of posters (from Poster 9 to Poster 15) examines the responses of ordinary people in German-occupied countries once the Second World War began. These responses ranged from actively collaborating with the Germans to helping Jewish people to survive.

**\* Poster 9. Nazi Terror Heightens Ethnic Conflicts and Self-Interests \***

1. Guiding questions:
  - A. **Who is in the photo?**
  - B. **What is happening?**
  - C. **How are people responding?**
  - D. **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **Following the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and the Soviet Union in 1941, German forces became thinly spread across vast occupied areas. As a result, they needed tens of thousands of non-German local citizens to help implement occupation policies, including harsh racial measures that targeted Jews and others. Locals who cooperated with the Germans were motivated by a variety of factors, often in combination:**
  - **Antisemitism**
  - **The opportunity to acquire employment, food, or looted Jewish property**
  - **Eagerness to prove loyalty to the new masters**
  - **Hope of avoiding German occupation policies, such as deportation to forced labor**
  - **Desire to avenge suffering under Soviet rule**
  - **Nationalist aspirations for independence**
- **Everyone’s actions took place in a climate of state approved violence against Jews and pervasive Nazi propaganda that reinforced long-standing anti-Jewish hatred.**

**\* Poster 10. Nazis Exploit Community Divisions \***

1. Guiding questions:

- A. Who is in the photo?**
- B. What is happening?**
- C. How are people responding?**
- D. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **After the invasion of Poland, Nazi leaders aimed to keep conquered peoples from uniting against Nazi rule by using preexisting tensions and divisions among groups.**
- **German officials forced many Jews into closed off parts of cities, often referred to as “ghettos,” where many died from harsh conditions.**

- Because it was felt that they might form cells of resistance, tens of thousands of Polish priests, teachers, and other elites were killed or imprisoned.
- Efforts to survive war and terror led to varied responses and a breakdown of trust in communities.

**\* Poster 11. Perpetrators of Mass Murder and Their Helpers \***

1. Guiding questions:
  - A. Who is in the photo?
  - B. What is happening?
  - C. How are people responding?
  - D. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?
2. Facilitator concludes:
  - In summer 1941, Nazi policy escalated to mass murder as the German government attempted to secure newly occupied Soviet territories.
  - While SS and ordinary German police units participated in the murders, German officials relied on tens of thousands of non-German police, local officials, and citizens to assist in the identification and rounding up of Jewish people.
  - In some cases, Soviet citizens robbed and killed Jews in violent pogroms.

**\* Poster 12. Non-German Helpers in the Liquidation of Ghettos \***

1. Guiding questions:
  - A. Who is in the photo?
  - B. What is happening?
  - C. How are people responding?
  - D. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **After Nazi leaders decided on the policy of murdering all the Jews of Europe, Germans deported the inhabitants of ghettos in occupied Poland to SS-run killing facilities.**
- **In order to empty the ghettos, the German forces relied on non-German soldiers and local police forces.**

**\* Poster 13. Local Responses to Persecution \***

1. Guiding questions:

- A. Who is in the photo?**
- B. What is happening?**
- C. How are people responding?**
- D. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **After the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, thousands of Jews were killed in local pogroms, in many cases by community members.**
- **Germans warned locals that they were forbidden to help Jews and offered rewards for information regarding escaped Jews.**

**\* Poster 14. Should I Take the Risk to Help? \***

1. Guiding questions:

- A. Who is in the photo?**
- B. What is happening?**
- C. How are people responding?**
- D. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **Risks for helping Jews were great; individuals who helped, often because of personal motivation, were sometimes killed if their help was discovered.**
- **Organized networks rescued the greatest number of Jews as they had access to more resources.**

**\* Poster 15: Two Kinds of Neighbours \***

1. Guiding questions:

- **Who is in the photo?**
- **What is happening?**
- **How are people responding?**
- **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **This poster presents two divergent stories: a family who chose to help and a group who tried to benefit from the plight of the Jews. The image, stories, and quotation all reinforce the concepts presented on the previous posters.**
- **Ask visitors to reflect on the quotation and ask how the quotation helps them make sense of what they have seen so far in the exhibit.**

### **THEMATIC GROUP 3: (Posters 16 to 21)**

#### **Leaders, Public Servants, Onlookers**

This group of posters (from Poster 16 to Poster 21) examines the governmental responses in countries that were further removed from direct Nazi control. Responses in these countries often focused on identification, registration, seizing of property, and deporting.

#### **\* Poster 16. War and Antisemitism Impact the Will to Collaborate \***

1. Guiding questions:
  - A. **Who is in the photo?**
  - B. **What is happening?**
  - C. **How are people responding?**
  - D. **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**
  
2. Facilitator concludes:
  - **In lands far from the killing sites in occupied eastern Europe, Nazi Germany also found many helpers in its “war against the Jews.” Government leaders of countries allied with or occupied by Germany deployed police, officials at all levels, transportation workers, and others who usually “did their duty” by deferring to their superiors. They helped locate and register Jews, arrest and intern them, seize their property, put them on trains and boats, and hand them over to German officials for deportation “to the east.” Cooperation with Germans was generally greater before the German defeat at Stalingrad (winter 1942-1943), a major turning point in the war.**
  - **Some citizens helped the victims by providing false papers, warning of arrests, or publicly protesting. The possibilities for such acts were often greater outside of Nazi Germany or occupied eastern Europe. Actions to help Jews, like acts of collaboration, varied with local conditions, including levels of hostility toward Jews and the degree of Nazi control.**

**\* Poster 17: Cooperation in Deportations from Western Europe \***

1. Guiding questions:

- A. Who is in the photo?**
- B. What is happening?**
- C. How are people responding?**
- D. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **In summer 1942, French policemen arrested over ten thousand Jews in Paris and held them in terrible conditions until the Jewish prisoners were deported and most murdered.**
- **In the Netherlands and Norway, civil servants and police generally followed German directives to deport the Jews from their countries.**
- **Denmark, with a largely integrated Jewish population, saved more than 90 percent of the Jewish population by smuggling them on boats to Sweden.**

**\* Poster 18. Zealous Collaboration Late in the War \***

1. Guiding questions:

- **Who is in the photo?**
- **What is happening?**
- **How are people responding?**
- **What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator concludes:

- **After German occupation in 1944, Hungary - which had earlier resisted pressure to hand over Jews - deported its Jewish population with the help of Hungarian police.**
- **425,000 Hungarian Jews were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where three out of four were murdered in gas chambers upon arrival.**

**\* Poster 19: Helping the Victims \***

1. Guiding questions:

- A. Who is in the photo?**
- B. What is happening?**
- C. How are people responding?**
- D. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

2. Facilitator Concludes:

- **The risks for helping Jews were often lower in countries and regions of western and central Europe more distant from the Nazi terror and killing sites of German-occupied eastern Europe.**
- **When German defeat seemed more likely after early 1943, organized resistance efforts increased, though many people still actively aided the Nazis by turning over Jews.**

**\* Poster 20. The Unknown and the Unimaginable \***

1. Guiding questions:

- A. Who is in the photo?**
- B. What is happening?**
- C. How are people responding?**
- D. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

### 3. Facilitator Concludes:

- Many Jews had not heard of what was happening in German-occupied Poland.
- Others who had heard reports from leaders or the radio, often could not believe the reports of mass gassings.

#### **\* Poster 21.**

### 1. Guiding questions:

- A. Who is in the photo?**
- B. What is happening?**
- C. How are people responding?**
- D. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

### **Students and other visitors can discuss the quotation presented on the poster:**

*“I feel such gratitude to those people that saved us.*

*And these ... were ordinary people that will never be in history books....*

*In the era when goodness was very rare, they cultivated it....*

*They didn't think of themselves....*

*This is something that I want the post-Holocaust generation to know, that people have choices....”*

*—Esther Bem, recalling how strangers helped her family survive in hiding*

### 2. Facilitator Concludes:

- **How does this help us understand the range of choices that ordinary people have and the impact of those choices?**

### **3. LESSON PLAN: deconstructing the familiar**

#### **Rationale:**

Looking at the events of the Holocaust through the themes of choice and human behaviour provides educators and students with a unique understanding of why and how the Holocaust occurred.

#### **Overview:**

This photo activity has students examine photographs (on the posters) from the Holocaust that may or may not be familiar to them. By examining the photographs and the poster text, students see the behaviours of ordinary individuals and think about the pressures and motives that might have shaped the behaviours.

**Guide to Estimated Time:** 45 – 60 minutes (but variable, depending on size of group, resources available and ability)

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

- When the activity is complete, students will have several examples of ordinary men and women contributing, in often-times ordinary ways, to Nazi Germany's persecution and eventual annihilation of Europe's Jews. The pictures when seen together offer students a unique understanding of how and why the Holocaust occurred.
- Nazi leaders needed and found a broad range of helpers.
- Ordinary people were involved in the Holocaust.
- A range of decisions and behaviours were both possible and evident.
- People acted (or were passive) based on a range of motives, fears, and pressure.
- Knowledge of Nazi persecution of Jews was well-known if not always understood throughout Nazi-occupied Europe.

## **Instructions for Facilitators:**

Depending on time, size of group and availability of resources, students work can work individually, in pairs, or larger groups, and can write their answers down or discuss them.

1. Students choose one photograph to analyze by using following guide.
2. Students share their reflections with the group.

### **Option A**

1. Divide the students into groups of three.
2. Each group views one posters from the three groups of posters (1-8; 9-15; 16-21), and answers the following questions (See Appendix I for handout):
  - What is happening in the photograph?
  - How might these behaviours supported or worked against the aims of the Nazis?
  - What may have motivated people to behave this way?
  - What factors might have influenced the choices made?

### **Option B:**

1. Divide students into four groups. (See appendix II for the separate photographs)

- GROUP 1 (poster 8): Onlookers watch from the balcony as Jewish men and women are led to trucks for deportation from Germany.
- GROUP 2: (poster 9): Onlookers whose ethnic identity is unknown watch as German soldiers humiliate Jewish men by forcing one to cut the beard of another.
- GROUP 3 (poster 13): Locals loot a ghetto that has been cleared of its Jewish inhabitants.
- GROUP 4 (poster 18): Townspeople pass as Hungarian gendarmes (police) march Jews to the train station for deportation from Hungary.

2. Students describe and analyze their selected photograph by answering the questions. (See Appendix II for the activity sheet handout with questions).

### **Refer to the photograph you have chosen to answer the following questions:**

- a. Describe the people in the photograph.
  - i. How are they dressed?

- ii. What facial expressions do they have?
    - iii. Are they old or young?
    - iv. Who seems to have authority or power?
    - v. What evidence from the photograph makes you say that?
  - b. Describe what the people are doing.
  - c. What objects are in the photograph?
  - d. Are the people on the edges of the photograph behaving differently from those in the centre?
  - e. What captured your attention in the photograph?
  - f. Based on what your answers, what might you conclude from this photograph about the role of ordinary citizens during the Holocaust?
  - g. How does this photograph add to our knowledge about how people behaved during the Holocaust?
3. Bring the students back together as one large group. Each group reports back and shares reflections on their photographs and what they can tell us about the role of ordinary people during the Holocaust.

The facilitator may find it helpful to project the photographs on a large screen for all to see since not all the groups will have seen or examined all the images. If this is not possible, the posters may also be placed on the walls around the room so that the students can see all of them. As groups are reporting, the class can move from poster to poster.

### **Extension activity:**

#### **Method:**

Have the students consider the selected quotes below, which are taken from the poster exhibition, and answer the questions. They can do this either in group work, or individually. If the group is small enough, the students could begin by finding the poster from which the quote comes and identifying it by giving it a poster number. (See Appendix III for the handout).

#### **Refer to the sources to answer these questions:**

1. What do each of these quotes tell us about the choices that were possible for people to make during the Holocaust?
2. What do each of these quotes tell us about the choices that people did make during the Holocaust?
3. What do these quotes tell us about the impact of choices that people make?

**Source 1:** “I do not know you, but you will now be greeted often. We are a group who say, ‘Hello,’ to Jews wearing the star.” *Victor Klemperer, in a diary entry about kindness toward those like himself, marked by the star, 24 November 1941*

**Source 2:** “One woman had the courage to come out and embrace my mother, to say goodbye. Nothing happened to her. If more people had done something like that, things may have changed.” *Manfred Wildmann, recalling his family’s wartime deportation from Germany*

**Source 3:** “One of the nastiest memories I have is getting going on that journey, and people were lined up ... [by] the door ... waiting to ransack whatever we left behind, cursing at us, yelling at us, spitting at us, as we left.” *Steven Fenves, deported in 1944 as a teenager with his family from Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau*

**Source 4:** “I feel such gratitude to those people that saved us. And these ... were ordinary people that will never be in history books.... In the era when goodness was very rare, they cultivated it...They didn’t think of themselves.... This is something that I want the post-Holocaust generation to know, that people have choices....” *Esther Bem, recalling how strangers helped her family survive in hiding*

#### **4. QUESTIONS FOR UNGUIDED TOURS**

The following can be printed out and posted for visitors to refer to as they look at and engage with the posters.

**These posters document the role of ordinary people during events of the Holocaust. As you analyze what you see and read in the posters, consider the following questions:**

- 1. Who do you see in the photo(s)?**
- 2. What actions are taking place?**
- 3. How are people responding?**
- 4. What might be the significance of these actions in helping us understand the role of ordinary people in the Holocaust?**

## ADDENDUM I – Option A

Poster Number: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is happening in the photograph?

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2. How might these behaviours supported or worked against the aims of the Nazis?

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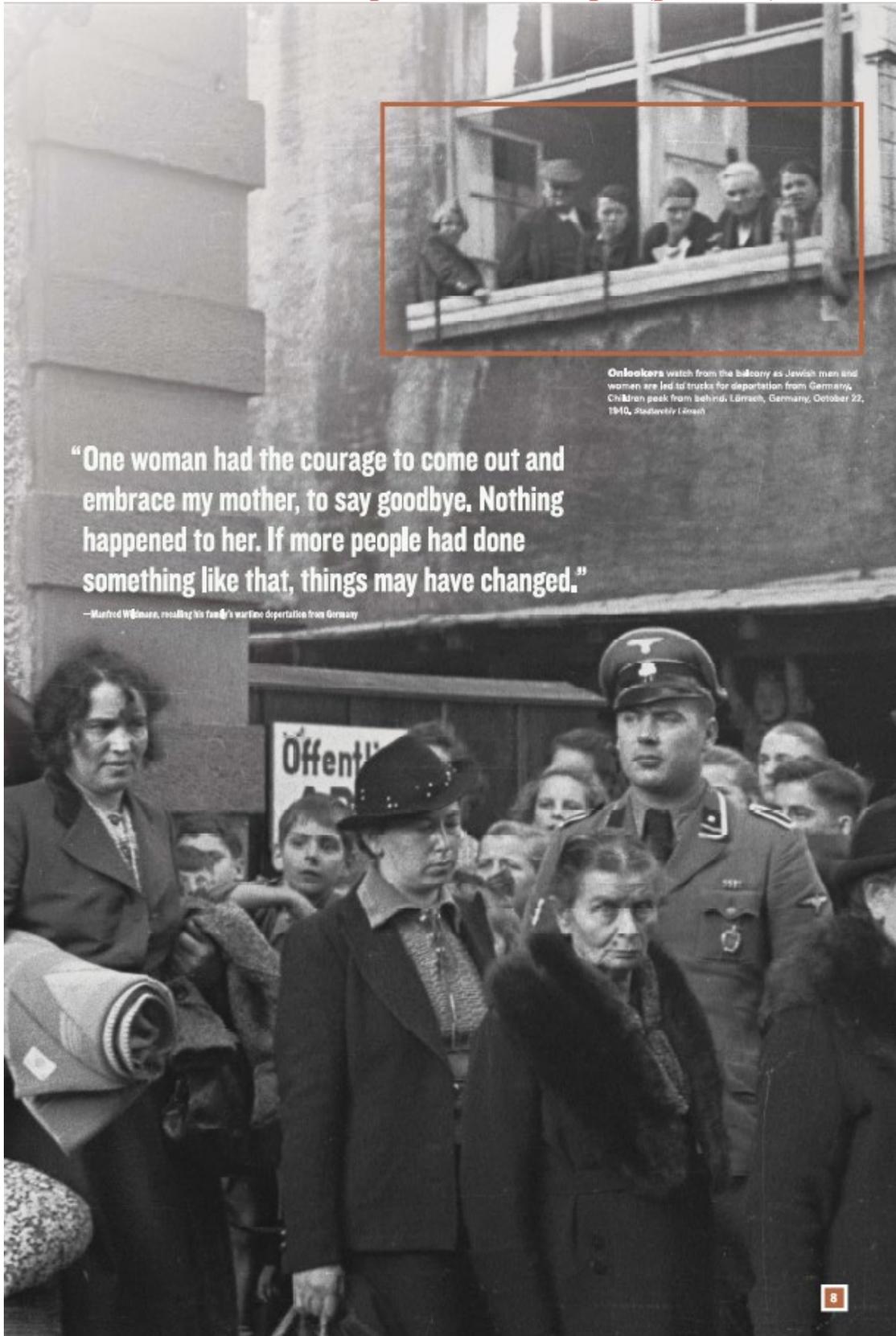
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3. What may have motivated (influenced) people to behave this way?

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## APPENDIX II Option B – Group 1 (poster 8)



## APPENDIX II Option B – Group 2 (poster 9)

### GERMAN OCCUPIERS

### LOCAL RECRUITS · NEIGHBORS

#### Nazi Terror Heightens Ethnic Conflicts and Self-Interests

Following the invasion of Poland in 1939 and the Soviet Union in 1941, German forces became thinly spread across vast occupied areas. As a result, they needed tens of thousands of non-German local citizens to help implement occupation policies, including harsh racial measures that targeted Jews and others. Locals who cooperated with the Germans were motivated by a variety of factors, often in combination:

- Antisemitism
- The opportunity to acquire employment, food, or looted Jewish property
- Eagerness to prove loyalty to the new masters
- Hope of avoiding German occupation policies, such as deportation to forced labor
- Desire to avenge suffering under Soviet rule
- Nationalist aspirations for independence

Everyone's actions took place in a climate of licensed violence against Jews and pervasive Nazi propaganda that reinforced long-standing anti-Jewish hatred.

NAZI GERMANY

**Onlookers** whose ethnic identity (German or Polish) is unknown watch as German soldiers humiliate Jewish men by forcing one to spit the beard of another. Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Poland, September–October 1941. (Instytut Pamięi Narodowej)



9

## APPENDIX II Option B – Group 3 (poster 13)



**A priest,** Father Cyprian Lazowski, leading a religious procession passed by German soldiers who are guarding Jews held hostage, Jasienowka, Poland, June 28, 1941. After he pleaded that "no Communists" were among the Jews, the soldiers released them. The priest also told his parishioners that they would be excommunicated if they stole from Jews. In many situations, clergy supported or tolerated the persecution of Jews. Deutsches Historisches Museum/Gerhard Grenfeld

### Local Responses to Persecution

Immediately after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, thousands of Jews were killed in pogroms, many by their neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances. Later, during the destruction of ghettos, cruelty and murder were common. German placards warned locals to stay inside and forbade help to Jews. Rewards were offered to help hunt down escapees. In ghettos cleared of Jews, looting by locals was common and often encouraged by the Germans to foster complicity.



**Locals** loot a ghetto that has been cleared of its Jewish inhabitants, Olsztyn, Poland, 1942. Ancewim/Al Neezen

## APPENDIX II Option B – Group 4 (poster 18)



"One of the nastiest memories I have is getting going on that journey, and people were lined up ... [by] the door ... waiting to ransack whatever we left behind, cursing at us, yelling at us, spitting at us, as we left."

—Steven Forster, deported in 1944 as a teenager with his family from Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau

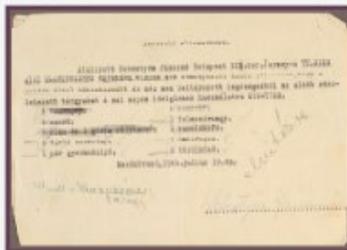
Townpeople pass as Hungarian gendarmes march Jews to the train station for deportation from Hungary, Kőszeg, Hungary, 1944, Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, Tervelet Fényképtár

### Zealous Collaboration Late in the War

Despite being Germany's military ally and imposing anti-Jewish measures, including forced labor and the deportation of Jews without citizenship, Hungary generally resisted pressures to hand over Jews. This changed after the Germans occupied Hungary in 1944 and installed extremist antisemitic leaders. Between April and July 1944, 14,000 Hungarian gendarmes, directed by district officials, forced 440,000 Jews into makeshift ghettos, stripped them of their belongings, and loaded them into trains. The gendarmes were a powerful tool for the small SS special unit charged with "cleansing" Hungary of its Jews.

Some 425,000 of the deportees went to Auschwitz-Birkenau where three out of four were gassed upon arrival.

A Hungarian woman (signature at bottom right) received this receipt for Jewish property, one of countless such transactions. A Hungarian gendarme signed on the left. In the heightened antisemitic climate, some Hungarians betrayed their Jewish neighbors not only under pressure to defer to authorities, but often motivated, as were many gendarmes and civil servants, by the desire for material gain. Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, Budapest



#### Proof of Receipt

The undersigned, Mrs. János Sebestyén, [who] moved from Budapest Xth district Jersey St, 72 to Munkács, Harla St, 4, acknowledges that today I received the following items for temporary use from the personal effects that had been left behind by the Jews, but had not yet been listed.

- |                            |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1 [illegible]              | 1 brush          |
| 1 broom                    | 1 mop            |
| 2 [illegible]              | 1 scrub brush    |
| 2 nightstands              | 1 clothes hanger |
| 1 pair of children's shoes | 2 towels         |

Munkács, July 13, 1944

Signed by: Sándor Kókai      Mrs. János Sebestyén

## Appendix II Option B

Refer to the photograph you have chosen from the exhibition to answer the following questions:

- a. Describe the people in the photograph.
  - i. How are they dressed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. What facial expressions do they have, for example, do they look happy, sad, bored, scared? \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. Are they old or young? \_\_\_\_\_
  - iv. Who seems to have authority or power? \_\_\_\_\_
  - v. What evidence from the photograph makes you say that? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. Describe what the people are doing. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. What objects are in the photograph? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Are the people on the edges of the photograph behaving differently from those in the centre? \_\_\_\_\_
- e. What captured your attention in the photograph? \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Based on what your answers, what might you conclude from this photograph about the role of ordinary citizens during the Holocaust? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- g. How does this photograph add to our knowledge about how people behaved during the Holocaust? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix III

### **Refer to the sources to answer these questions:**

1. What do each of these quotes tell us about the choices that were possible for people to make during the Holocaust?
2. What do each of these quotes tell us about the choices that people did make during the Holocaust?
3. What do these quotes tell us about the impact of choices that people make?

**Source 1:** “I do not know you, but you will now be greeted often. We are a group who say, ‘Hello,’ to Jews wearing the star.” *Victor Klemperer, in a diary entry about kindness toward those like himself, marked by the star, 24 November 1941*

**Source 2:** “One woman had the courage to come out and embrace my mother, to say goodbye. Nothing happened to her. If more people had done something like that, things may have changed.” *Manfred Wildmann, recalling his family’s wartime deportation from Germany*

**Source 3:** “One of the nastiest memories I have is getting going on that journey, and people were lined up ... [by] the door ... waiting to ransack whatever we left behind, cursing at us, yelling at us, spitting at us, as we left.” *Steven Fenves, deported in 1944 as a teenager with his family from Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau*

**Source 4:** “I feel such gratitude to those people that saved us. And these ... were ordinary people that will never be in history books.... In the era when goodness was very rare, they cultivated it...They didn’t think of themselves.... This is something that I want the post-Holocaust generation to know, that people have choices....” *Esther Bem, recalling how strangers helped her family survive in hiding*