

# THE HOLOCAUST

## on the Eastern Front

The invading German forces wiped out Jews along the Eastern Front with startling efficiency. Four special units called *Einsatzgruppen* (task forces) A, B, C, and D accompanied the Army to carry out the “Final Solution” (see map on following page). *Einsatzgruppe D*’s 600 men attached to the Eleventh Army passed right through the Chortitza Colony, Zaporozhia to the East, and south to the Caucasus. German troops, police units, and locals were sometimes ordered to assist them.

In each conquered municipality, the *Einsatzgruppen* used a systematic approach to bring about the “Final Solution.” Within a few days of German occupation, they hung fliers requiring the Jews of that city to register at a local Jewish council office, pay a fine, and wear a yellow Star of David. A few days later, Jews were notified to report for relocation, bringing their possessions and valuables. Having no idea what lay in store for them, the Jews complied.



A truck driver named Hofer testified about the events in Kiev in September 1941: “I watched what happened when the Jews—men, women and children—arrived. The Ukrainians led them past a number of different places where one after the other they had to give up their luggage, then their coats, shoes and over-garments and also underwear. They also had to leave their valuables in a designated place. There was a special pile for each article of clothing. It all happened very quickly and anyone who hesitated was kicked or pushed by the Ukrainians to keep them moving.

“Once undressed, they were led into the ravine, where they were seized by members of the *Schutzpolizei* and made to lie down on top of Jews who had already been shot. The corpses were literally in layers. A police marksman came along and shot each Jew in the neck with a sub-machine gun. I saw these marksmen stand on layers of corpses and shoot one after the other...” A total of 33,771 Jews were murdered in two days in the Babi Yar ravine; only 29 survived. Later, another 150,000 Jews, Soviet POWs, Romanians, and Ukrainian nationalists were killed there.

This obscene “cleansing” of enemies of the Nazi regime played out over and over. Mass shootings, concentration camps, ghettos, forced labor, starvation, and torture were part of the Eastern Holocaust.



Jews digging their own graves in Storow, Ukraine, on July 4, 1941. The Germans killed thousands of communists, Gypsies, and the mentally ill or handicapped as well.

German forces occupied Zaporozhia on October 3, 1941. In November, several dozen Jewish men and boys were shot at the local stadium, and in March, 1942, another 3,700 Jews were shot near a collective farm. Even some Mennonites participated. In the two-year occupation, 44,000 Jews were killed in the Zaporozhia area.

As the Germans conquered new territory, the killings continued. The murder sites varied (factory warehouses in Odessa; a glass factory in Mineralnye Vody; trenches elsewhere), but the method remained the same: Jews were registered, fined, and “relocated.” The numbers defy reason: 10,000 Jews killed in Mariupol; 10,000 in Dnepropetrovsk; 34,000 in Odessa. In April, 1942, in Donetsk, 15,000 Jews were thrown alive down abandoned mine shafts. Eventually the Army concluded that shooting live victims was difficult emotionally for the *Einsatzgruppen*; to make the process easier on the perpetrators (not the victims), gassing vans were supplied to help them murder Jews.

Meanwhile, the Army carefully removed the Stars of David from the clothing of the murdered Jews, then distributed the clothing among the *Volksdeutsche* and others to gain their support. Most Mennonites had no idea of where the clothing came from, and knew little of the Holocaust until after the war.

During the two years of German occupation, hundreds of thousands more were killed in occupied territories. By the spring of 1943, the *Einsatzgruppen* had killed 1.25 million Jews and hundreds of thousands of Soviets and POWs.



A member of *Einsatzgruppe D* shoots a man by a mass grave in Vinnytsia, Ukraine in 1942, while German Army soldiers look on.

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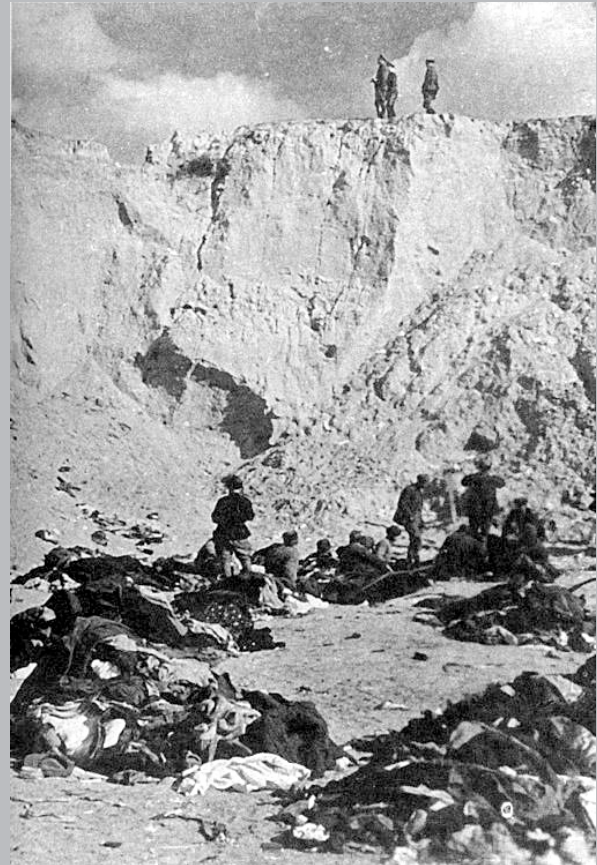
Invading German forces wiped out Jews on the Eastern Front with horrifying efficiency. Four special units called *Einsatzgruppen* (task forces) A, B, C, and D accompanied the Army to carry out the "Final Solution."



Murder of a Jewish woman and her child in Ivongorod, Ukraine, 1942.



A mass execution site in Ukraine.



Babi Yar, one the largest mass executions of Ukraine.



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Jews were subject to brutal physical attacks in plain sight of complicit onlookers.



A Jewish woman runs in terror from attackers.



An older Jewish man kicked and sent sprawling in Lvov, Ukraine, 1941.



The Kovel ghetto was established on May 25, 1942, and less than three months later, "liquidated" by murdering 8,000 Jews (Aug 19, 1942). Jewish victims were driven by train from Kovel to Bakhiv where pits were dug close to the railroads. They were ordered into the pits and shot.