

## **General Context:**

- **Ghettoization policy affects Poland more than any other geographic location**
- **More limitedly ghettoization affects Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus and western Ukraine.**
- **Ghettos are the last places European Jews lived as families and communities**

Relevant documents include:

- *Schnellbrief*
- Sierakowiak Diary
- Bialystok Debate
- *Zog Nit Keynmol*

# *Schnellbrief*

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary Source
- Sept. 21, 1939 (3 weeks post invasion)
- Exists in multiple copies disseminated to Cabinet-level officials
- Addressed to Chiefs of Einsatzgruppen

## Nazi policy implication

- Concentration of Jews near rail lines
- No active murder

## Countries impacted

- Primarily Poland, Lithuania, Belarus
- More limitedly western Ukraine and northern Baltic Countries

## Historical Context

- Immediate reaction to invasion of Poland and larger Jewish populations
- Outlines short and long term plans
- Specific about rail access
- Establish Jewish councils to govern
- Allowances made for economic considerations

## Issues to Consider

- Why is this the regional approach chosen by the Nazis?
- What is the direct impact to the local Jewish community?

# Sierakowiak Diary

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary source
- Testimony from someone who does not survive
- Written during ghettoization in Lodz, Poland
- Ghetto testimony begins in Spring 1942 when deportations are already underway

## Nazi policy implication

- Impact of long-term temporary policy
- Impact of deportations (final policy)

## Obstacles

- Mass deportations
- Sickness
- Starvation
- Dissolution of communal and family structure
- Total confusion (March 26, 1942)
- Misinformation (Warsaw is good)
- Gradually losing hope (April 29, 1942)
- Too weak to protest (May 7, 1942)
- Complicity of Jewish police and leadership
- Personal tragedy and suffering amidst larger tragedy

## Historical Context

- Lodz ghetto established February 1940—large, sealed ghetto
- Perception among ghetto residents that work permits would protect them (and sometimes their families) from deportation
- Perspective of a teenage boy
- Member of a Communist underground group
- Dawid died on August 8, 1943, probably of tuberculosis

## Issues to Consider

- The *Judenrat* leader in Lodz, Chaim Rumkowski, was the most controversial of all the *Judenrat* leaders
- Despite membership in underground he does not participate in armed resistance
- Role reversal—what is the role of the child in the family under ghetto conditions?

# Bialystok Debate

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary source
- February 27, 1943
- Notes from meeting of resistance leadership

## Impact

- Debate about how to die and dignity
- Realistic about Nazi policy and power to implement it.
- Will not go to the factories while others are taken away
- “some witnesses must stay alive”

## Goals

- Determine course for the resistance
  1. Fight in the ghetto and die doing it
    - First moment of deportation the counter action will begin
    - Kill Germans and destroy factories
  2. Flee to forests
    - Not a place to hide— “a base for battle and vengeance”
- Find a collective answer for the group then each individual must decide for him/herself whether to take part
- Agree that young workers will not live in ghetto on work permits as others are taken in deportations. As soon as deportations begin the counter-action must start.

## Obstacles

- Recognize that this is a movement of the youth only— “our daddies will not take care of us. This is an orphanage.”
- Two competing views
  - All is lost—die with dignity fighting in the ghetto
  - It is more important for some to survive—flee to the forests

## Historical Context

- Bialystok Ghetto established August 1941
- Bialystok was in the Soviet occupation zone until June 1941
- First deportations to Treblinka in February 1943
- Uprising August 1943

# *Zog Nit Keynmol*

## Evaluation of Source

- Composed 1943
- “Partisan Song”
- Written by Vilna poet

## Impact

- Adopted by those who had resolved to fight
- Acknowledges Jewish suffering in the past
- Acknowledges Jewish suffering in the present
- Direct message urging others to fight

## Historical Context

- Vilna is a unique location
  - Polish and Lithuanian
  - Point where Eastern policy (shooting) and more western policy (ghettoization) meet

## Issues to Consider

- Compare to the tone in Bialystok debate
- Comes from territory East of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line
- What does “We are here” mean to these fighters?

## **General Context:**

- **Shooting actions affect all areas east of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line and later large sections of Poland.**
- **The problems identified with this policy lead to a shift to murder by gas, but shooting actions continue to be perpetrated concurrently with gassing operations.**
- **Shooting actions are a uniquely Eastern phenomenon.**

Relevant documents include:

- Einsatzgruppen Maps and Diagrams
- Einsatzgruppen OSRs
- Jäger Report
- One Day in Józefów

# Einsatzgruppen Maps and Diagrams

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary and Secondary Sources

## Nazi policy implication

- Shooting actions
- Gas van operations
- Full sweep east of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line

## Countries impacted

- Poland
- Belarus
- Baltic Countries
- Ukraine and USSR

## Historical Context

- Bureaucratic nature of the reporting
- Exekution in Shitomir—training materials
- Reports turned into more easily understood graphic reports
- Einsatzgruppen work overlapped ghettoization and active murder phases

## Issues to Consider

- Effective killing operation but lacking in efficiency

# Einsatzgruppen OSRs

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary Sources
- Dates range from July 1941-April 1942

## Nazi policy implication

- Include early and late shooting actions

## Countries impacted

- Poland and all territory East of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line

## Historical Context

- Murdering Jews and Communists
- Preponderance of evidence
- Reports sent to Chief of Security Police in Berlin—Heydrich
- Outlines local collaboration with roundups and active shooting
- #97 & 101—report preparing for Babi Yar
- Narratives outline charges of sabotage, smuggling, and other acts against the occupying forces

## Issues to Consider

- Nature of reporting
  - Who is prepping the report?
  - Who is receiving the report?
  - What is the purpose of the report?
- Number of report copies

# Jäger Report

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary Source
- Dec. 1, 1941

## Nazi policy implication

- Early operation of Einsatzgruppen on first sweep through newly occupied land

## Countries impacted

- Lithuania—operating near Vilna and Kovno

## Historical Context

- Murders sometimes carried out by Lithuanians with German oversight
- Very specific accounting for number of murdered and their categorization
  - Jews by gender
  - Jews by age
  - Communists
  - Lithuanians or generally listing non-Jews by nationality
  - Claims 137,346 from June 1-December 1, 1941
- Wanted to kill the work Jews too
- Recommends the sterilization of male work Jews and the murder of women who become pregnant
- Freeing some local people from prisons (suggestion is that they were wrongfully imprisoned by the Communists)

## Issues to Consider

- Much lower level leader
- Local complicity
- Collective responsibility actions

# One Day in Józefów

## Evaluation of Source

- Secondary source
- Details of one day of an Einsatzgruppen shooting action in July 1942

## Nazi policy implication

- Late shooting actions running concurrent to death camp operations

## Countries impacted

- Poland and all territory East of the Molotov-Ribbentrop line

## Historical Context

- Receive lesson on proper shooting technique
  - Instruction provided unevenly and other companies were shooting incorrectly
- LATE shooting action on second sweep
- Second sweep caught some Polish ghettos
- First shooting action for this company
- Perpetrator preparation
  - No advance notice or training
  - Given brief shooting instructions immediately before starting
  - Second group of shooters were not given any instruction (369)

## Issues to Consider

- Perpetrator reactions
- Perpetrator consequences
  - Ridicule from commanders or friend
  - Mental distress
- Role this plays in Nazi policy

## **General Context:**

- **Six sites were established to mete out the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.” All were in occupied Poland.**
- **The Operation Reinhard camps—Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka—largely finished their tasks and were dismantled.**
- **Majdanek and Auschwitz-Birkenau were liberated by Soviets after being abandoned by the Nazis.**
- **Chelmno was not a physical camp but a gas van site.**

Relevant documents include:

- Shooting to Gas
- Final Solution Authorization
- Wannsee Protocols
- Belzec by Reder
- Höss on Gassing

# Shooting to Gas

## Evaluation of Source

- Secondary Source

## Nazi policy implication

- Shooting
- Experimental explosions
- Experimental gassing
  - Zyklon
  - CO in chambers and vans
- Final determinations
  - Zyklon at Auschwitz
  - CO gas at Reinhard camps (Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka)

## Countries impacted

- Shooting actions
- Gas Vans—Poland, Belarus, Baltic Countries, Ukraine
- Gas Chambers—primarily Poland and western/southern Europe

## Historical Context

- Experimenting with methods of murder
- Results sent to Heydrich as proposals for his decision
- T-4 personnel looking for work after downsizing of the program reallocated to the Final Solution

## Issues to Consider

- Top down policy and how it interacts with ground up implementation
- The role of T4 in the Final Solution

# Final Solution Authorization

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary Source
- July 31, 1941

## Nazi policy implication

- Indicates need for a new (and final) policy
- Shift from shooting to something new
- Request for a plan—not being given direct orders for what that is

## Countries impacted

- “German sphere of influence within Europe”
- This order will affect Poland more than any other eastern country

## Historical Context

- Order issued mere weeks after invasion of USSR and the beginning of Einsatzgruppen actions
- From Göring to Heydrich—represents full shift of operational control of Jewish policy to the SS

## Issues to Consider

- Why was a new policy needed?
- What does it mean for the SS to be in operational control of this policy?

# Wannsee Protocols

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary Source
- January 1942—weeks a

## Nazi policy implication

- Analysis of previous policy
- Represents FINAL solution in Nazi policy
- Establish death through work and direct murder as policy

## Countries impacted

- All of occupied Europe
- Request from Nazi leaders to begin implementation of policy in the General Government (occupied Poland)

## Historical Context

- Involved 15 high-ranking SS governmental representatives
- Analysis of previous forced emigration policy
- Detailed accounting of anticipated Jewish population by country
- Establishment of *Vernichtung Durch Arbeit* as a policy of death through work.

## Issues to Consider

- 30 copies circulated—bureaucratic nature of the Final Solution
- Not brought there to offer thoughts on the policy—rather to endorse it and iron out details
- Difficulty with foreign governments defining Jewishness as religious rather than racial
- Addresses bureaucratic grey area of *Mischlinge* (people of mixed parentage)
- Murder by gas being conducted in Chelmno in December 1941—before this meeting

# Belzec by Reder

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary source
- 1946—very early testimony
- Reder is one of only 2 known survivors from Belzec

## Countries impacted

- Primarily Poland—all Operation Reinhard camps had a primary target of Jews in the General Government

## Historical Context

- Women were majority of transport—many men fled east at the invasion leaving a disproportionate number of women among the very young and elderly
- **Representative of the MAJORITY of Polish Jewish experiences—they did not survive**

## Issues to Consider

- Accuracy—as the only written
- testimony of a Belzec survivor
  - No one to directly corroborate
  - Significantly matches what we know of other camps, Nazi policy and other survivor testimonies
- Gestapo did not serve in Belzec—his references are to SS guards
- Train switches engineers at station before pulling into camp
- Description of gassing from Höss versus Reder
- Belzec was specifically designed to kill Jews but there were Roma murdered there as well

# Höss on Gassing

## Evaluation of Source

- Primary Source
- Excerpt from memoirs of SS Kommandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss

## Nazi policy implication

- Represents on the ground experimentation with methods of murder—especially gas
- Represents shift from shooting to gas
- Represents more sophisticated gassing mechanism than carbon monoxide
- Demonstrates that ingenuity was rewarded in the quest for a murder method
- Improvement of the situation for the perpetrators

## Countries impacted

- Auschwitz slated to receive Jews from continental Europe
- Polish Jews and limited numbers from Eastern Europe find themselves there through internal transports

## Historical Context

- Recounts lessons learned in test gassings at Auschwitz in September 1941

## Issues to Consider

- Context under which testimony gathered—last memoir of a man
- convicted to hang
- Tone—his “relief” for the perpetrators and the victims after finding a suitable method
- His description of the gassed bodies—fails to match *Sonderkommando* descriptions