



The Holocaust

The Holocaust took place under the direction of Adolf Hitler, leader of Germany during World War II. In his book *Mein Kampf* (My Fight), Hitler said that when he became ruler of Germany, he would get rid of all the Jewish people. Hitler wanted to breed a race of “perfect” people by getting rid of everyone who he thought was inferior or damaged in any way.

Few people believed Hitler would actually do such a thing, but he began when he became Chancellor. He first took away the rights of the Jewish people. He then began directing attacks on their businesses and homes. On November 9th and 10th, 1938, over 1,000 Jewish synagogues and over 7,500 Jewish businesses were destroyed in a pogrom (organized massacre of a particular race of people) masterminded by, among others, German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. The following night, about 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and taken to concentration camps. This event has gone down in history as Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass), because of all the windows that were shattered that night during the violence.

During World War II, in cities across Europe, the Nazis forced all the Jewish people into one part of town called the ghetto. A ghetto was typically bordered with barbed wire and guarded. Conditions were crowded, and food, water, and medicine were scarce. Eventually, the Jewish people were transported from ghettos to concentration camps. Like prison camps, the people there were forced to do hard labor before eventually being killed. As many as 17 million people, including 6 million Jewish and Polish people, Catholics, Serbs, and those who were ill or handicapped were murdered during the Holocaust.

Many Jewish people hid from the Nazis with the help of non-Jewish families. One of the best known stories of hiding from the Nazis is told in the *Diary of Anne Frank*, in which a young girl chronicled how her family hid for two years before eventually being found and taken to a concentration camp where Anne Frank died.