

Episode 8: Out of the Ashes

VIII-1: Rise of the Nazi Party/Early History of the Nazi Party - Timeline 1919

This presentation begins with an opening panel that details unrest after World War I. A button takes users to six text/graphic pages of information about the early history of the Nazi Party, including the Crisis in the Weimar Republic, the Party, the Beer Hall Putsch, Mein Kampf, the Reorganization of the Nazi Party and its Growing Popularity in the Polls. (It is important to remember that Hitler was the *democratically elected* Chancellor of Germany.) The five historical documents amplify the rise to power of the Nazis, including the text of the Nazi anthem “The Horst Wessel Song,” two excerpts from Mein Kampf, and the humiliation of Germany at Versailles, authored by the first Weimar prime minister.

VIII-2: Dictatorship/Cult of the Fuhrer - Timeline 1933

An opening panel shows a delighted Hitler and Goering celebrating Hitler’s election in January, 1933. The multimedia segment explains the rapid manipulation of the system by Hitler, such that the republic was all but dead within months of his election. Then, a button takes users to four panels describing the cult of the Fuhrer, including the cult itself, details of Nazi pageantry, the Hitler Youth, and the Nazification of religion. The eight historical documents show the cultic manipulations from various viewpoints: a math textbook, a book-burning chant, the ten commandments of marriage, a Hitlerian grace before and after meals, and an excerpt from the Hitler Youth manual. It also includes the Nazi view on women, which blames the Jews for creating gender equality for women.

VIII-3: Ghettos/The Lodz Ghetto - Timeline 1940

This presentation opens with a panel that explains the proliferation of Nazi ghettos -- not as residential quarters, but as prisons. Then, a narrated segment discusses life within the ghetto, and the false hopes the ghettos raised among Jews. A button takes users to an explorable map of the Lodz ghetto, which allows users to see and hear information about key sites in the ghetto and about its leadership. Audio memoirs provide personal perspectives. Three historical documents include a ghetto sermon, a young girl’s memoir and, astonishingly, jokes from the Warsaw Ghetto.

VIII-4: Murder Squads - Timeline 1941

This chilling presentation begins with a panel describing the invasion of the death squads (einsatzgruppen) behind the Wehrmacht in Hitler’s invasion of Russia in the summer of 1941. The segment shows the killing techniques, and notes that within five weeks of the invasion, the Germans had killed more Jews than they had from 1933-41. Then, three panel buttons take users to Babi Yar, explain the humiliation of victims, and describe the killers, which included German, Polish, Ukrainian and Baltic police forces. Oral testimonies personalize the information. Six historical documents provide a key Hitler speech from 1939, ghetto rumors, tales of massacres, and Nazi reports that simply defy description.

VIII-5: Death Camps/Industrialized Murder - Timeline 1942

This feature begins with an opening panel that names the six Nazi camps in Poland, including most infamously, Auschwitz/Birkenau, and gives their grisly result: 3.5 million Jews, plus many others. A multimedia segment then shows how the death camps were conceived as an industrial model of “manufacturing death.” Then, a picture gallery of seven panels traces the assembly line of death: railways, selection, looting of possessions, extermination in gas chambers, removal of hair and gold teeth, disposal of corpses, and secrecy and deception. Seven spine-chilling historical documents present Hess’ testimony at Nuremberg, comments by an SS doctor and engineer and the warden of Treblinka, as well as inmate testimony.

VIII-6: Ghetto Fighters/Vilna Partisan Song/Warsaw Ghetto Uprising - Timeline 1942

This section includes an opening panel that details uprisings and Jewish partisans. The narrated segment describes how ghetto fighters and partisans had a virtually impossible task in obtaining arms, and being on guard against anti-Semitic fellow fighters. Buttons then take users to the Vilna partisan song, and to a sequence of four panels describing the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, entitled The Uprising Begins, Street by Street, The Uprising Continues for 28 Days, and The Uprising Inspires Other Revolts. It is a powerful tale. Five historical documents provide a rabbi’s advice, a call to arms, the testimony of a participant, and a grisly one about partisan revenge.

VIII-7: What the World Knew/American Response - Timeline 1942

This presentation begins with an opening panel that claims quite forthrightly that by 1942/3, the US was aware of the genocide. Then, five panels describe Pressure on the Government of the US, Publicity and Mass Meetings, the War Refugee Board (formed only in 1944), Rescue and Aid, and Urging Bombing of Auschwitz. Two historical documents provide crucial proof that warnings went unheeded in 1941 and 1942.

VIII-8: Survivors - Timeline 1945

An opening panel notes that the number of Jewish refugees greatly increased in the years following the war, as Jews fled from the USSR and Poland. By the summer of 1947, there were 200,000 Jewish refugees in the US/UK sector of central Europe. The feature describes how the DP’s (displaced persons) languished for years in their new makeshift homes, denied entry to Palestine and to the US, yet building a civil society within the camps. Then, six buttons take users to topics including Reunions and New Families, Religious Revival, Rebuilding a Culture, Vocational Training and Education, Political Activism (there was actually an elected council representing all the camps), and Commemorations and Testimony, including a stirring partisan song. Finally, three historical documents describe the tragic but hopeful lot of World War II’s Jewish refugees in the months following the end of the war.