

# The Polish Experience During World War II



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Polish Perspectives

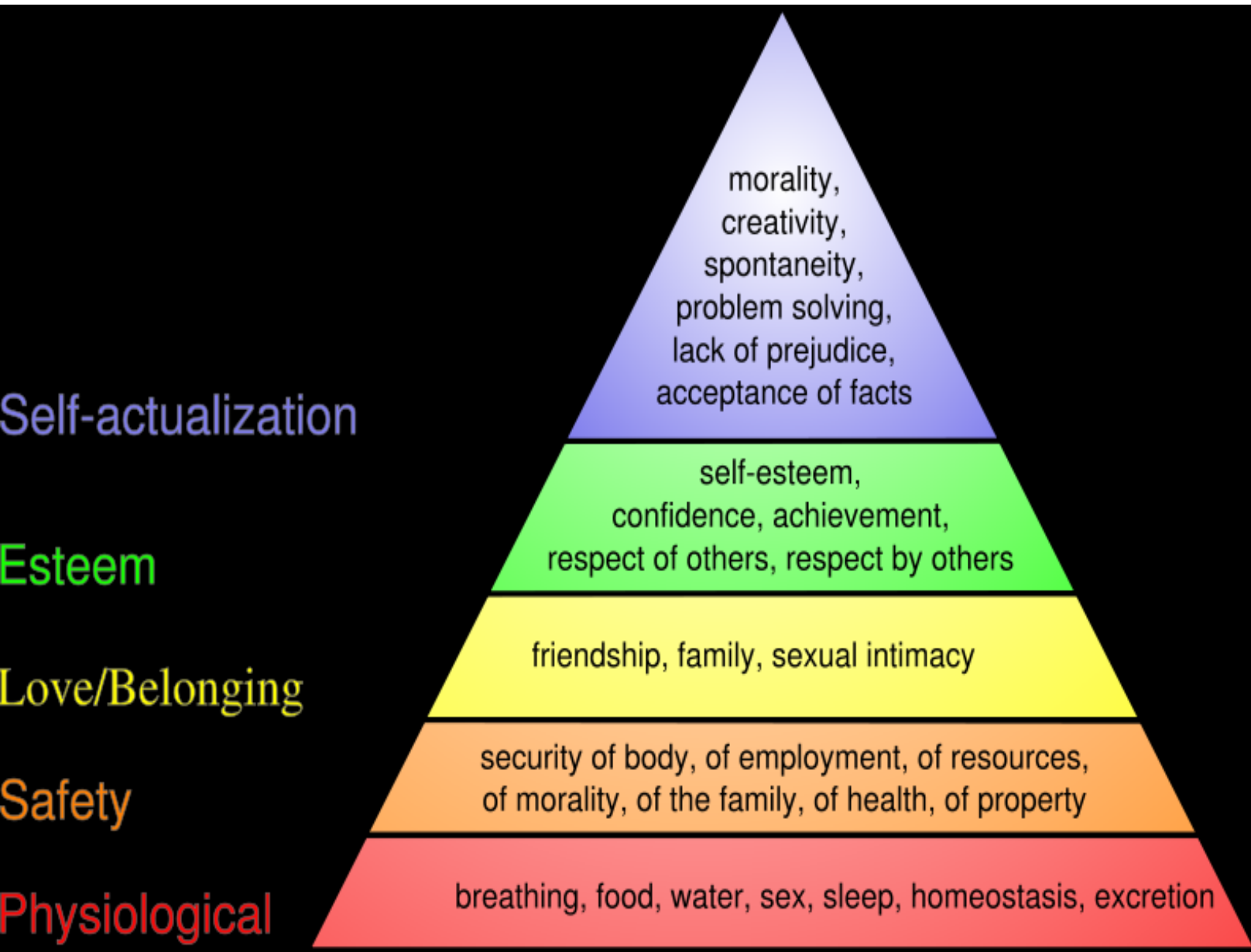
How does fear affect one's acceptance of  
authority?  
Poland and its neighbors during WWII

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# Some questions this presentation will answer:

- How do our moral development and needs influence our choices?
- What was life like for the Poles during the war?
- How does the Polish wartime experience compare to the rest of Europe?

# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

- According to the theory, adults move through all the levels they can. They risk the lower needs, such as hunger and shelter to realize in some way, self-actualization.
- A model of true human needs which shows that a well-adjusted person satisfies their physical needs, such as hunger and thirst, on level one before the other safety needs such as shelter and clothing of level two, etc. The last and highest level is self-actualization. Theoretically, if this need is fulfilled, people can reach their fullest potential.

# Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

- Kohlberg based his theory upon research and interviews with groups of young children. A series of moral dilemmas were presented to children, who were then interviewed to determine the reasoning behind their judgments of each scenario.
- **Level 1. Preconventional Morality**
- **Stage 1 - Obedience and Punishment**
  - The earliest stage of moral development is especially common in young children, but adults are capable of expressing this type of reasoning. At this stage, children see rules as fixed and absolute. Obeying the rules is important because it is a means to avoid punishment.
- **Stage 2 - Individualism and Exchange**
  - At this stage of moral development, children account for individual points of view and judge actions based on how they serve individual needs. Reciprocity is possible, but only if it serves one's own interests.
- **Level 2. Conventional Morality**
- **Stage 3 - Interpersonal Relationships**
  - Often referred to as the "good boy-good girl" orientation, this stage of moral development is focused on living up to social expectations and roles. There is an emphasis on conformity, being "nice," and consideration of how choices influence relationships.
- **Stage 4 - Maintaining Social Order**
  - At this stage of moral development, people begin to consider society as a whole when making judgments. The focus is on maintaining law and order by following the rules, doing one's duty, and respecting authority.
- **Level 3. Postconventional Morality**
- **Stage 5 - Social Contract and Individual Rights**
  - At this stage, people begin to account for the differing values, opinions, and beliefs of other people. Rules of law are important for maintaining a society, but members of the society should agree upon these standards.
- **Stage 6 - Universal Principles**
  - Kohlberg's final level of moral reasoning is based upon universal ethical principles and abstract reasoning. At this stage, people follow these internalized principles of justice, even if they conflict with laws and rules.

# World War II

- Began September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939 when Germany invaded Poland.
- At about 5:00 A.M. on that date, Germany initiated the war by firing on the Polish fort, Westerplatte.
- Seventeen days later, the Soviets invaded Poland from the east- September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1939
- Two weeks later, England and France declared war on Germany.
- The war in Europe ended May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945, referred to as V-E Day.

# Life in Poland during the War

- During the war, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany occupied Poland.
- Blitzkrieg or “lightning war”- Included extensive bombing of Poland, and other allied countries, as a strategy to force submission.
- Germans bombed planes, railroads, communication posts, weapons and ammo depots, other military targets, and often civilians.
- The Germans followed the huge air strikes with troops, tanks, and artillery.

- Germans confiscated food from Poles to feed their army.
- Soviets looted Polish industrial goods and machinery.
- Soviets and Germans created intentional conflict between Poland's Jews, Ukrainian immigrants, and Christians.
  
- Soviets arrested and deported up to 1.5 million people for slave labor to gulags in Siberia and elsewhere.
- Large portions of the Jewish population in Poland sent to ghettos and concentration camps by the SS.

- During the war, approximately 6 million Poles were killed. This represents a greater proportion of Poland's population than any other participant in the war.
- In addition, Nazis and Soviets killed cultural, intellectual, and economic elites in Poland. Germany also destroyed museums, universities, and burned the capital, Warsaw.



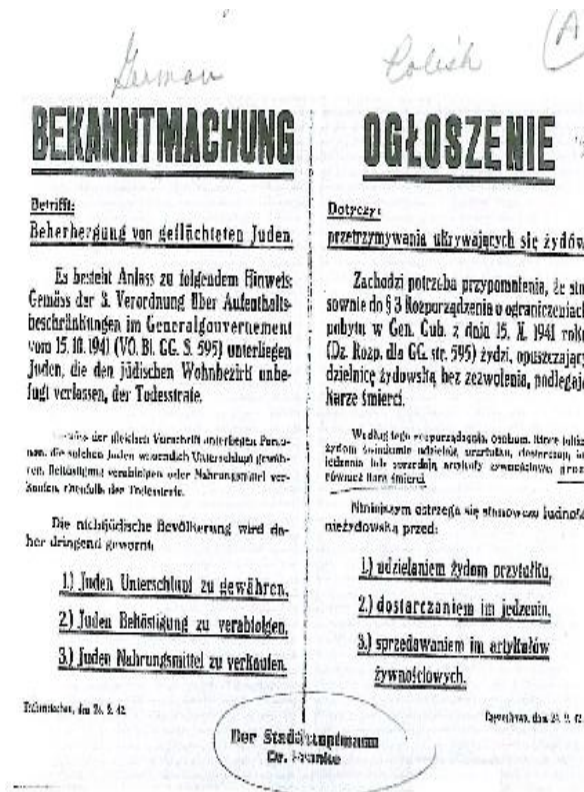
**Notice the bird  
in the little  
boy's cage.**



A member of the Polish resistance...



This poster warns Poles of the “death penalty” for harboring Jews, and delivering, providing or selling food.



**Poland: only German occupied country where the death penalty for helping Jews was OFFICIALLY ENFORCED**

# Another example...

## Bekanntmachung

Belr.: Todesstrafe für unbefugtes Verlassen der jüdischen Wohnbezirke.

In der letzten Zeit ist durch Juden, die die ihren zugewiesenen Wohnbezirke verlassen haben, in zahlreichen Fällen nachweislich das Fleckfieber verbreitet worden. Um die hierdurch der Bevölkerung drohende Gefahr abzuwenden, hat der Herr Generalgouverneur verordnet, dass in Zukunft ein Jude, der den ihm zugewiesenen Wohnbezirk unbefugt verlässt, mit dem Tode bestraft wird.

Die gleiche Strafe trifft diejenigen, die diesen Juden wesentlich Unterschlupf gewähren oder in anderer Weise (z. B. durch Gewährung von Nachtlagern, Verpflegung, Mitnahme auf Fahrzeugen aller Art usw.) den Juden behilflich sind.

Die Aburteilung erfolgt durch das Sondergericht Warschau.

Ich weise die gesamte Bevölkerung des Distrikts Warschau auf diese neue gesetzliche Regelung ausdrücklich hin, da nunmehr mit unerbittlicher Strenge vorgegangen wird.

Warschau, am 10. November 1941.

gez. **Dr. FISCHER**  
Gouverneur

## Obwieszczenie

Dolęczy: kary śmierci za nieuprawnione opuszczenie żydowskich dzielnic mieszkaniowych.

W ostatnim czasie rozprzestrzenili żydzi, którzy opuścili wyznaczone im dzielnice mieszkaniowe, w licznych udowodnionych wypadkach tyfus plamisty. Aby zapobiec grożącemu w ten sposób niebezpieczeństwu dla ludności, rozporządził Generalny Gubernator, że żyd, który w przyszłości opuści nieuprawniony wyznaczoną mu dzielnicę mieszkaniową, będzie karany śmiercią.

Tej samej karze podlega ten, kto takim żydom udziela świadomie schronienia lub im w inny sposób pomaga (np. przez udostępnienie noclegu, utrzymania, przez zabranie na pojazdy wszelkiego rodzaju itp.).

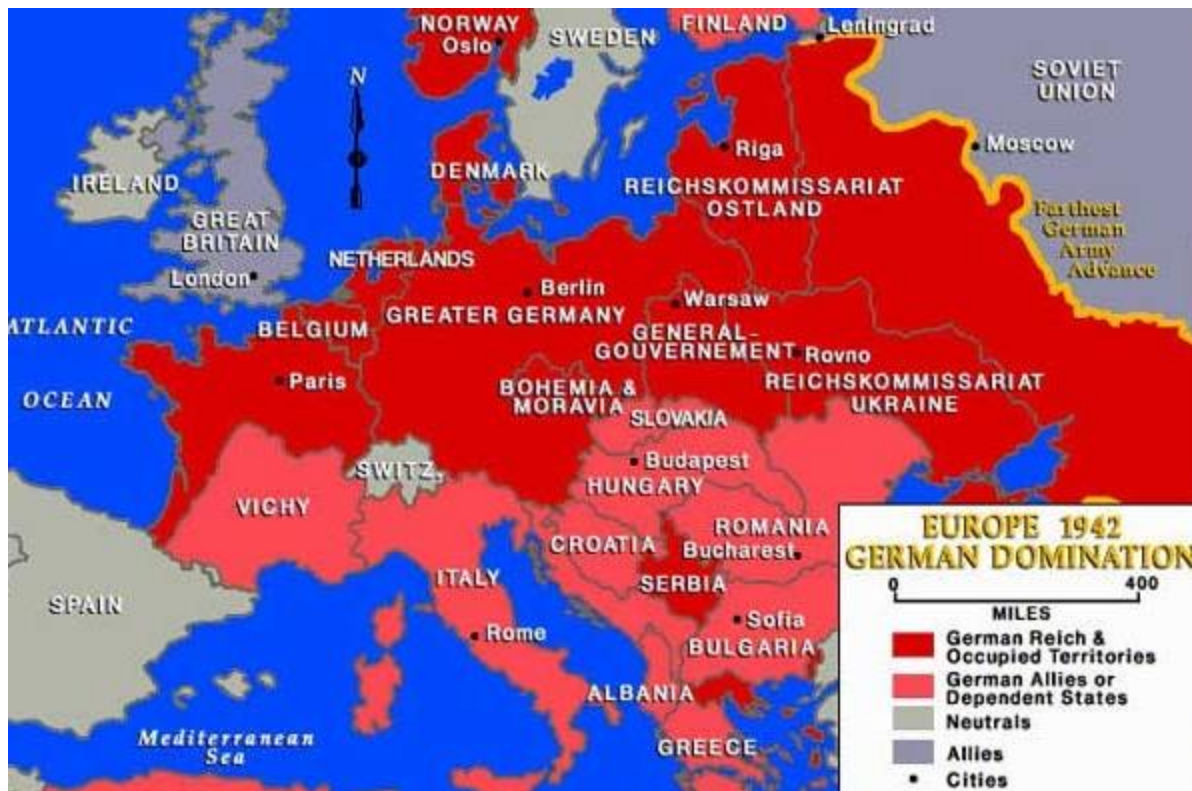
Orządzenie nastąpi przez Sąd Specjalny w Warszawie.

Zwracam całej ludności Okręgu Warszawskiego wyraźnie uwagę na to nowe postanowienie ustawowe, ponieważ odtąd będzie stosowana bezlitosna surowość.



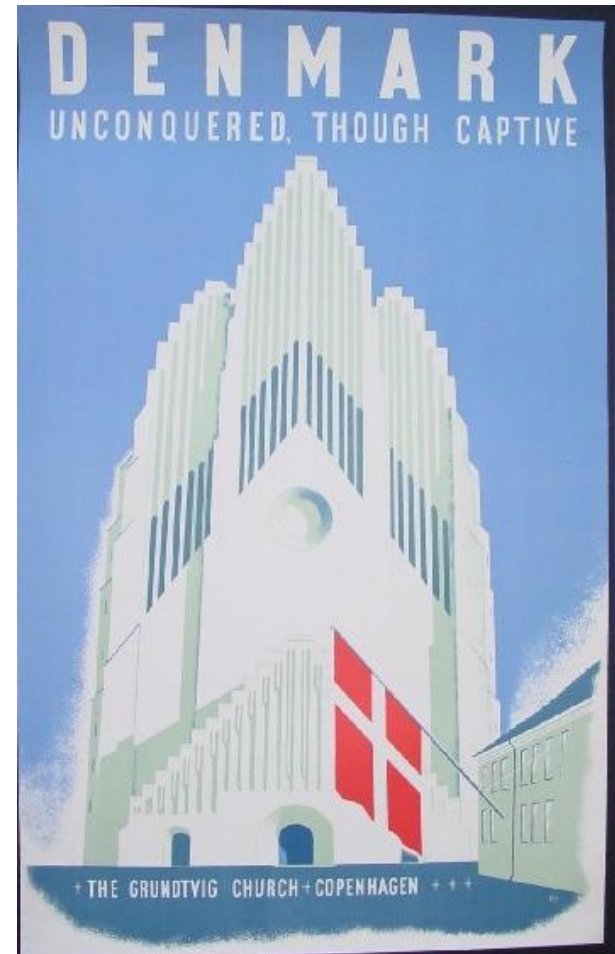
Polish Forces 1945 (WorldWar2incolor.com)

Let's compare the Polish experience to  
some other countries occupied by the  
Nazi regime...



# Denmark

- Germany invaded Denmark April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1940. The Danish Army surrendered a day later.
- Germany allowed Denmark to keep its monarchy in place.
- The Danish government kicked out Allied diplomats and heavily censored their people.
- Germany forced Denmark to give up food and supplies to the German military. This had a negative effect on the Danish economy, causing inflation.



# France

- Vichy-French Government cooperated with Nazi Germany and fought against Allied forces.
- The French Resistance, mainly in Southern France, opposed the Vichy government and Nazi rule over France.
- Like other countries during the war, France experienced rationing and food shortages.



# Annihilation of the Jewish Population of Europe by Country:

Country	Est. Pre-War Jewish Population	Est. Jewish Population Annihilated	Percent Killed
Poland	3,300,000	3,000,000	90
Baltic Countries	253,000	228,000	90
Germany & Austria	240,000	228,000	90
Slovakia	90,000	75,000	83
Greece	70,000	54,000	77
Netherlands	140,000	105,000	75
Hungary	650,000	450,000	70
Ukrainian SSR	1,500,000	900,000	60
Belgium	65,000	40,000	60
Yugoslavia	43,000	26,000	60
Romania	600,000	300,000	50
Norway	2,173	890	41
France	350,000	90,000	26
Bulgaria	64,000	14,000	22
Italy	40,000	8,000	20
Luxembourg	5,000	1,000	20
Denmark	8,000	52	<1
Finland	2,000	22	<1

\*Occupied Nations Shown in Red

# Some Penalties for Helping Jews in Poland:

- Help provided to a person of Jewish faith was punishable by death
  - All household members were punishable by death if a Jew was found on the property
- Threat of death was a huge deterrence to helping Jews in Poland
- Nazi death squads carried out mass executions of entire villages that were discovered to be aiding Jews.
- Polish responses varied. They included acts of altruism at the risk of endangerment, to blackmail, and denunciation or even forced participation in massacres of Jewish inhabitants

# Comparing the Wartime Experience in Europe...

Country	Invaded	Occupied/Government Status
Germany	Founding state of anti-Semitic Nazi ideology	Hitler is Chancellor, President, Dictator of Nazi Germany (Third Reich)
Austria	Annexed by Germany in March 1938 (Anschluss)	Controlled by Germany, non-independent until post WWII
Poland	Invaded in September 1939  Never surrendered- fought on all fronts from first day to last	Controlled by, divided between (mainly) Germany and the Soviets
France	Invaded, surrendered in June 1940	Divided into French and Italian occupation zones, Vichy Regime (pro-German) established, Free French Forces led by De Gaulle in exile
Belgium	Invaded, surrendered in May 1940	Occupied by German forces until 1944
Netherlands	Invaded, surrendered in May 1940	Harshly occupied by Germany until 1945, Queen Wilhelmina evacuated to <a href="#">London</a> , founded a government in exile

Greece	Invaded by Italy in 1940, invaded by Germany in April 1941	Occupied by Germany until 1944
Denmark	Invaded, surrendered in April 1940	Occupied by Germany during WWII
Norway	Invaded in April 1940, surrendered in June 1940	Occupied by Germany during WWII, important source of resources, operational base
Finland	Invaded by USSR in November 1939, surrendered in March 1940	Allied with both the Axis and Allied Powers during the war, assisted both factions
Sweden	Maintained an official policy of neutrality	Allowed troops to pass through Swedish territory
Hungary	Signed the Tripartite Pact in November 1940, joined the Axis powers	Withdrew troops in April 1943 to prevent Soviet aggression, led to German occupation
Romania	Invaded by Germany in October 1940, signed the Tripartite Pact in November 1940, joined the Axis powers	Iron Guard, the Romanian Nazi Party, assisted the Axis Powers military, resource-wise (oil)

## Using the Biography:

Based on what you have learned, how might the individual have reacted to the Jewish genocide?

What justification would Maslow offer to explain such action? Kohlberg?

How can an activity such as this be used with students to help them understand “why some people” didn’t do anything to help?

# Modern Relevance

**Police: As many as 20  
present at gang rape  
outside school dance**

What caused many to walk by and not offer aid?

Why didn't anyone call for help?

Those who ignore history-

Are doomed to repeat it.

George Santayana