



**CEDIN** CENTRE FOR  
EDUCATION  
& INNOVATIONS

## **The Holocaust as a Starting Point (training program)**

### **Learning Activity**

**.name:**

**Dream**

**.target group:**

**students aged 14-16 years**

**.time:**

**45 minutes**

**.learning aids:**

**cards, pens or pencils, worksheet, World War II maps, text, projector, pictures of families, glue, colored sticky notes, flipchart**

**.aims and objectives:**

**active learning**

**use of primary sources**

**analytical work**

**collaborative and group work**

**characterize life in occupied Europe**  
**compare political, economical and cultural conditions in occupied and satellite countries**  
**express attitude towards Holocaust in own words**  
**process Holocaust topic through a concrete story**

**.structure of the lesson plan:**

**.notes and recommendations for teacher before the lesson:**

Teacher prepares the classroom placing WWII maps on a table in the centre of the room and surrounds it with chairs for students. Teacher also places a flipchart close to the map. Then prepares 4 other tables around the room with cards of 4 countries: United Kingdom, Nazi Germany, Slovakia, Poland (or chooses countries of teachers preference). Tables are placed in the corners, so all the groups would have enough and good space for discussion.

**I. Activity - ball toss brainstorming (evocation):**

**expected time: 15 minutes**

Students sit on the chairs around the map of WWII. Teacher shows a picture of a modern day family to them, says the name of one student sitting there and tosses a ball to that student, that student has to answer in one word and tosses the ball back to the teacher. The teacher asks the student to write the word on the flipchart.

(source: Juraj Varga)

### Picture of a modern day family

#### Basic question:

- What do you see in that picture?

#### Recommended questions on how to lead the way of inquiry:

- How do we know it is a family?
- What country do they live in?

Students answer and respond and the teacher writes all these answers and responses on the flipchart.

Then the teacher shows to the students another picture of a family. The family of Abramek Koplowicz. Asks the same set of questions and writes them on the flipchart.



(source: [Yad Vashem](#))

#### Basic question:

- What do you see in that picture?

### Recommended questions on how to lead the way of inquiry:

- How do we know it is a family?
- What country do they live in?

## II. Activity - group work (realisation of meaning):

**expected time: 15 minutes**

Students are divided into 4 groups and every group will explore life in one European country during WWII.

### **.notes and recommendations for teacher:**

Teacher places signs with names and descriptions of the countries visibly around the classroom and then prepares cards with names of the countries according to the number of students in the classroom. There can be a bag with names of the countries and students can pull out the names of the bag. Then students move and group around the signs with names and descriptions of the countries. After the groups are formed the teacher provides them with a historical atlas, page from textbook and worksheet.

### **Work with map, textbook and worksheet:**

#### **Teachers asks the students**

- to look for their group country in the map
- to find out if the country has been occupied by Nazi Germany
- to find out if their country has collaborated with Nazi Germany

### **Teacher hands three different definitions to every group and students have to identify country with one of these three definitions:**

**Axis allies country** - formally independent in the world, but under heavy political, economic and military influence or control from another country

**neutral country** - is neutral towards belligerents in a specific war, or holds itself as permanently neutral in all future conflicts

**occupied country** - effective provisional control by a certain ruling power over a territory, which is not under the formal sovereignty of that entity, without the violation of the actual sovereign

**According to information from provided text students then have to describe the life and dreams of Abramek in the assigned country by answering questions in the worksheet.**

**Then the teacher asks them to group around the WWII maps in the middle of the classroom and asks the groups to place colored sticky notes on the assigned countries with labels: satellite, neutral, occupied. After this every group has to present the assigned country, their chosen label and what are their thoughts on potential Abramek's life in this country.**

### **III. Conclusion and discussion (reflection):**

**expected time: 15 minutes**

**Teacher finishes the lesson with questions about:**

- **difference conditions in assigned countries**
- **similar conditions in assigned countries**

**Do you see differences in assigned countries?**

**(classroom can be managed in a circle of chairs or students stand in a circle and asks each group)**

**Do you see similarities in assigned countries?**

**After their responses the teacher describes all the countries to set specific frames.**

**and informs students about Abramek's life:**

**Abramek Koplowitz was a Jewish boy who was murdered in his 14 years in Auschwitz. He lived in Lodz ghetto with his parents for four years and his father was the only one of all three to survive Auschwitz in 1944.**

**Teacher then can read or ask students to read Abramek's poem named Dream or [play a fictionalized video of this poem](#):**

**More information about Abramek and his family:**

Avremek was in his eleventh year and the next four years with his mother and father in the ghetto effectively ended the happiness of a short childhood. During these years, the boy-poet wrote his poems in an exercise book which remained in the family apartment, untouched, until his father Mendel Koplowitz, the only one of the three to survive Auschwitz, returned to that apartment to find his son's writings where he had left them on the day they were transported to the death camp.

The father, Mendel, was so traumatized with guilt by the manner of the boy's death<sup>1</sup> in Auschwitz that the poems in his son's handwriting remained in his drawer unseen and unknown to anyone until his death in 1983 in Israel, to which he had emigrated with his second wife ten years after the war.

The poems were discovered by Mendel's stepson who rescued them from their anonymity. He passed the exercise book over to Yad Vashem

which then published the poems with an introduction from Eliezer Greenfelt, Avremek's half brother.

**Then can the teacher conclude the lesson with YES or NO discussion (a) or Colored sticky notes discussion (b).**

**(a) Teacher prepares then two flipchart papers one with YES and one with NO and places them in different corners of the classroom. Then asks questions and students have to move to YES or NO according to their attitudes and opinions:**

- **Do you think that the Nazi Germany forces took the interests of the people in occupied countries into consideration?**

After students move, the teacher asks one of them to describe and explain his/her attitude and specifically asks the other to complement him/her.

- **Do you think that the fate of Jews was similar in all European countries?**

After students move, the teacher asks one of them to describe and explain his/her attitude and specifically asks the others to complement him/her.

- **Teacher needs to carefully lead all discussions about students attitudes and opinions and articulate the definition of The Holocaust, genocide and different fates of European Jews. Like this attached textual source informs us.**

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- (b) Teacher asks students to write their dreams on colored sticky notes and stick them on flip chart papers and then think about Abramek's dreams and compare what their and Abramek's dreams have in common and what is different and write it on the sticky note.**
- **Teacher needs to carefully lead all discussions about students attitudes and opinions and articulate the definition of The Holocaust, genocide and different fates of European Jews. Like the attached textual source and visual source (map) inform us.**
  - Then at the end of the lesson teacher can go through students sticky notes, describe and connect these possible topics:
    - examples of human rights abuse, possibly gender violence, radicalization and violence
    - value of human life
    - analogize and compare restrictions, limitations and life conditions with recent pandemic times and articulate differences and similarities



## Dream

poem available at [this blog](#):

MARZENIA (The Dream)  
By Abramek Koplowicz  
(Translated by Sarah Honig)

When I will be 20 years old,  
In a motorized bird I'll sit,  
And to the reaches of space I'll rise.  
I will fly, I will float to the beautiful faraway world  
And skywards I will soar.  
The cloud my sister will be  
The wind is brother to me.  
I will fly, I will float over rivers and seas.  
I will marvel at the Euphrates and Nile.  
I will gaze at the Sphinx and Pyramids  
In the goddess Isis' ancient land.

I will glide over the mighty Niagara Falls,  
And soak up the warmth of the Sahara's sun.  
Over the cloud-covered Tibetan peaks will ascend,  
Above the mysterious magic land of the Hindus.  
And when extricated from the sun's heat,  
I will take wing to the Arctic north,  
And I will whir above the giant Kangaroo Isle,  
And then over the ruins of Pompeii.  
From there I'll set my sights to the Holy Land,  
Where our Covenant was given.  
I will even reach illustrious Homer's country,  
And will be so amazed by the beauty of this world.  
To the heavens I will take off.  
The cloud my sister will be;  
The wind is brother to me.

## Group worksheet

Name of the country:

Have there been Nazi Germany occupational forces in that country?

Yes No

.....  
Has the country collaborated with Nazi Germany?

Yes No

.....  
Selected definition (Axis ally/neutral/occupied):

Describe the life of Abramek in this country. Your only information about him is that he is a Jew.

Questions:

- Do you think that Abramek is free? Free to move? Free to do whatever he wants to?
- Do you think that he can go to school?
- Do you think that he is restricted by any laws?
- Do you think that he can travel?
- Do you think that he has to hide?

## Textual sources (Source: Mémorial de la Shoah, (Tal Bruttman and Bruno Boyer)

### Genocide: concept and definition

Approximately 6 million Jews were killed across Europe during the Holocaust, as part of the Nazi project "*The Final Solution of the Jewish Question*". 2.7 million ethnic Poles died during WWII. 4 millions others including the disabled and mentally ill who were deemed "*unworthy of life*", Soviet prisoners of war also died, homosexuals, Freemasons, and Jehovah's Witnesses, but only Jews and Roma were sentenced by the Nazis for full extermination genocide. The concept of Genocide was created in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer. From November 20, 1945, to October 1, 1946, the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal charged 22 major Nazi leaders on charges of "*Crime against Humanity*" and not Genocide. The concept of Genocide was acknowledged in 1948 by the United Nations as a deliberate and systematic destruction of a religious, racial, national, or ethnic group by the [Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#).

### Nazi ideology and terror before the Second World War

Adolf Hitler's appointment as chancellor in January 1933 marks the end of democracy in Germany. The Nazi state abolished fundamental freedoms. Culture, education, economy, law, for example, were submitted to Nazi ideology and control. Any form of opposition was hardly fought. Repression policies relied on a wide network of organisations, especially various services - as Gestapo, Order Police or SD after 1938.

Since March 1933, the Nazi regime has created hundreds of concentration camps dedicated to political prisoners or those seen as enemies of the Nazi regime. Among those first camps settled was Dachau, near Munich and became the model from which the concentration camp system was modeled in the following years. They aimed at eradicating all forms of social, political or cultural protest. So-called reeducation went through forced labour, physical exhaustion, and torture. Various groups became the target of repression, such as Sinti and Roma or those accused of undermining German society such as the homosexuals, or the so-called asocials especially after the outbreak of the war.

The Nazi vision of the world was also based on the "supremacy" of the "Aryan race" and a fierce racial anti-Semitism: Jews were considered as a deadly threat for the community of the people (as was named the German society). German people according to Nazi ideology. It was and disseminated in many ways such as posters,

political cartoons, newspaper illustrations, and even children's books. The Nazi rhetoric led also to physical violence such as the November pogrom in 1938 after boycotts, book burnings, desecration, segregation. Anti-semitism was a state policy, but also with a legal application : the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, provided base for the Nazi exclusion of the German Jews from society. The Third Reich launched in 1939 a killing policy against disabled persons and mentally ill who were deemed "unworthy of life".

## Occupation

Nazi occupation depended on local Nazi priorities and these might be divided in two areas. In Western, Northern, and Central Europe, Germany implemented an economic predation together with repressive policies : 69.5 billion reichsmarks (27.8 billion US dollars) were ransomed by the end of the war (not included the sizeable plunder of industrial products, military equipment, raw materials and other goods). Out of the neutral countries in Europe the Nazi domination began with the annexation of various territories seen as being German. After the Anschluss with Austria, acclaimed by a huge majority of the population, other territories were incorporated to the Greater Reich by force before the war and during its first months (Sudetenland, parts of Poland and France). Other territories were occupied, while most countries became allies to Germany (Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania) or subject to heavy German influence and engaged in a complete collaboration as Vichy France).

Eastern territories are seen as colonial areas for German settlement (*Lebensraum*) and economic exploitation of the civilian population, under a Nazi administration. The Nazi racial policy encouraged extreme brutality against those considered to be racially inferior. Partisans and resistance were operating all over Occupied Europe. However, their impact on German forces remained quite low. **At the end of WW2, about 12 million Europeans from German occupied countries were abducted and used as a slave work force in German industry, agriculture and war economy.**

## Extermination of Jews and Roma

Two words mainly refer nowadays to the destruction of the European Jews. Holocaust, literally means a religious sacrifice by fire. It has been widely used in English speaking countries, but it might be problematic. The word Shoah, meaning in Hebrew a major catastrophe, is more acknowledged in Western and Southern Europe. Before and during activities of the killing centers, Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing squads) and local suppletive units slaughtered 1.5 million Jews on The Eastern Front between June 1941 to 1944, like In Babi Yar, where 33 771 Jews were murdered in two days (on September

29 and 30 1941). In January 1942, Nazi leaders met in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee, for a meeting also known as the Wannsee Conference, to coordinate and set up the project of deportation and destruction of the European Jews. Project that already started with the Einsatzgruppen's actions on the soviet territory. Nazi administration built killing centers, such as Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Majdanek. Other places, such as Ponary where over 75,000 people were murdered from June 1941 until July 1944, can be considered as killing centers too and part of the extermination infrastructures.

In the eastern part, the Nazi process of exclusion began with the creation of ghettos on (the major one was the Warsaw ghetto, built on October 1940) or with internment camps in the Western parts such as France (for example in Drancy). Nazis organized brutal round-ups from 1941 (as in France during the *Rafle du Vel d'Hiv* in July 16 and 17 in 1942) . People (men, women and children) were arrested, interned and deported to these killing places; when they arrived, most of them were immediately sent to death, in gas chambers or by shooting. Selected deportees, only in Auschwitz-Birkenau and in Majdanek, were temporarily kept alive to work in the camp. Unlike concentration camps, killing centers or sites were devoted to the genocidal process, and deportees were not submitted to slave labour but murdered immediately after their arrival.

Only in Auschwitz a concentration camp is intertwined with a killing center. The camp, or rather the camps (Auschwitz, Auschwitz II Birkenau and Auschwitz III Monowitz), were for political prisoners and these were used as slave labourers. Because of the need for workers, some Jews were sent to the nearby killing center and were "selected" before the killing and sent to the concentration camp. The killing center consisted of six gas chambers. Five located in Birkenau camp were designated for the extermination of the Jews coming from all over Europe.

The genocide of the Roma-Sinti has his own specificities. German, Austrian, and Czech Roma were deported mainly to Auschwitz Birkenau (or Chelmno), interned for a few months in a special part of the camp called "The Gypsy family camp". In spring 1944, almost all of them were assassinated in two mass actions. Between 19.000 and 23.000 Roma were sent to Auschwitz and died there. Others were deported to the killing center of Chelmno or shot by the killing squads. At least 150 000 Roma were murdered in Europe by Nazi Germany and their allies, especially in the Independent state of Croatia, in Romania and in The Eastern Front.

## Text

### Genocide, concentration camps, and slave labour

Nazi Germany was responsible for the Holocaust (which killed approximately 6 million Jews) as well as for killing 2.7 million ethnic Poles<sup>[364]</sup> and 4 million others who were deemed "unworthy of life" (including the disabled and mentally ill, Soviet prisoners of war, Romani, homosexuals, Freemasons, and Jehovah's Witnesses) as part of a programme of deliberate extermination, in effect becoming a "genocidal state".<sup>[365]</sup> Soviet POWs were kept in especially unbearable conditions, and 3.6 million Soviet POWs out of 5.7 died in Nazi camps during the war.<sup>[366][367]</sup> In addition to concentration camps, death camps were created in Nazi Germany to exterminate people on an industrial scale. Nazi Germany extensively used forced labourers; about 12 million Europeans from German occupied countries were abducted and used as a slave work force in German industry, agriculture and war economy.<sup>[368]</sup>

The Soviet Gulag became a de facto system of deadly camps during 1942–43, when wartime privation and hunger caused numerous deaths of inmates,<sup>[369]</sup> including foreign citizens of Poland and other countries occupied in 1939–40 by the Soviet Union, as well as Axis POWs.<sup>[370]</sup> By the end of the war, most Soviet POWs liberated from Nazi camps and many repatriated civilians were detained in special filtration camps where they were subjected to NKVD evaluation, and 226,127 were sent to the Gulag as real or perceived Nazi collaborators.<sup>[371]</sup>

### Occupation

In Europe, occupation came under two forms. In Western, Northern, and Central Europe (France, Norway, Denmark, the Low Countries, and the annexed portions of Czechoslovakia) Germany established economic policies through which it collected roughly 69.5 billion reichmarks (27.8 billion US dollars) by the end of the war; this figure does not include the sizeable plunder of industrial products, military equipment, raw materials and other goods.<sup>[377]</sup> Thus, the income from occupied nations was over 40 per cent of the income Germany collected from taxation, a figure which increased to nearly 40 per cent of total German income as the war went on.<sup>[378]</sup> In the East, the intended gains of Lebensraum were never attained as fluctuating front-lines and Soviet scorched earth policies denied resources to the German invaders.<sup>[379]</sup> Unlike in the West, the Nazi racial policy encouraged extreme brutality against what it considered to be the "inferior people" of Slavic descent; most German advances were thus followed by mass executions.<sup>[380]</sup> Although resistance groups formed in most occupied territories, they did not significantly hamper German operations in either the East<sup>[381]</sup> or the West<sup>[382]</sup> until late 1943.

## **Textbook page**

**(History textbook for 9th grade in Slovakia, authors: Kratochvíl, Kováč, Kamenec, Tkadlečková, chapter: Life in occupied Europe, p. 68, translation: J. Varga)**

### **Nazi terror**

All life conditions in occupied parts of Europe have been determined by the occupants. Present everywhere have been not just the military forces, but also units of feared secret police - Gestapo. Everything has been administered by national-socialist (nazi) ideology.

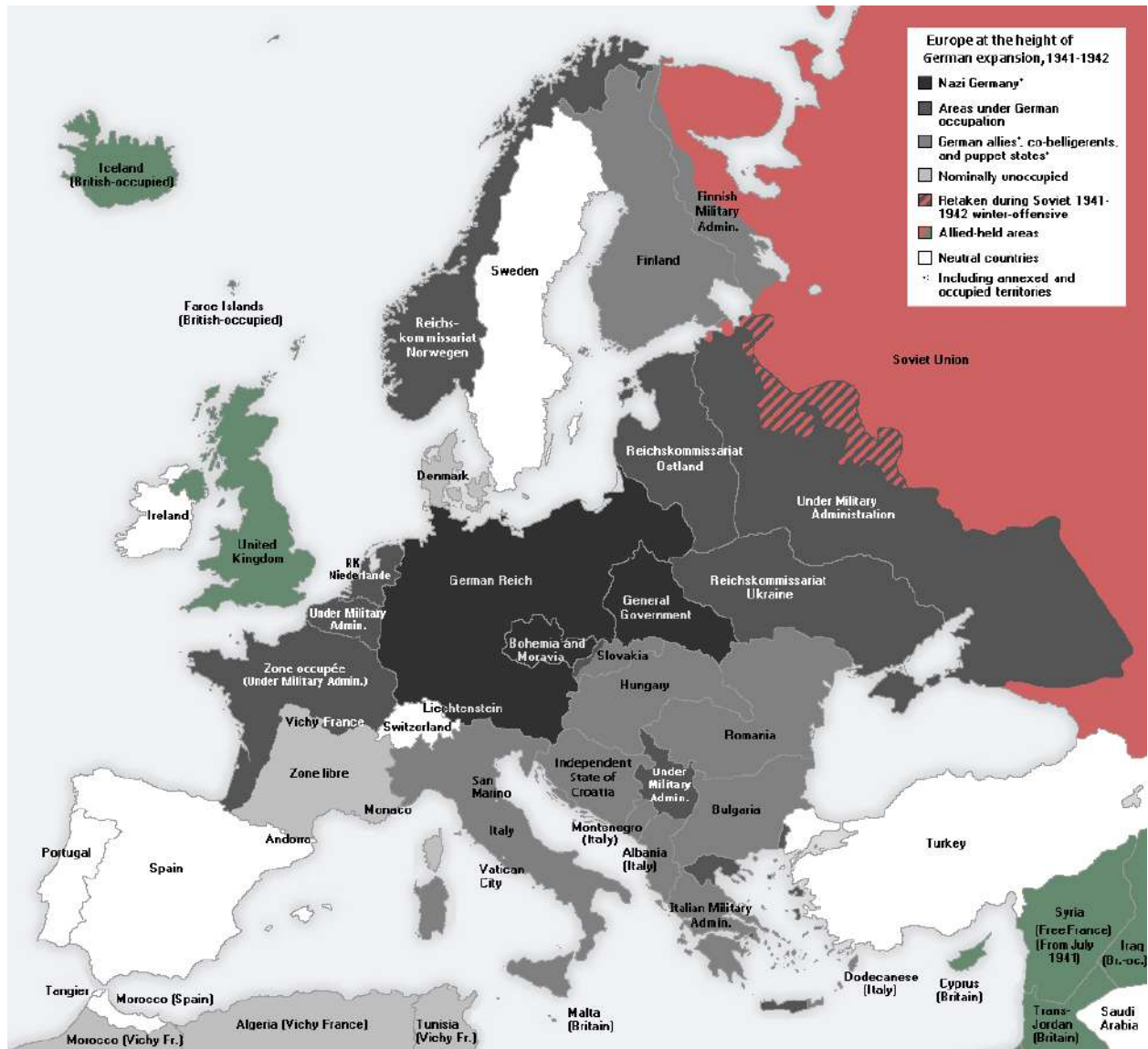
Before the attack on Poland Hitler gave a secret order to his generals to evoke as great terror as possible in Poland and to not spare anyone. Attacking forces fought not just the defending forces, but bombed places without forces. Fired onto fleeing civilians from airplanes, executed captured soldiers and mass exterminated civilians in areas of front movement. Poles lost all their rights in the occupied homeland. Occupants imprisoned them in concentration camps, moved to Nazi Germany for forced labor, systematically exterminated intelligence to make Poles into a nation of unconscious slaves.

### **Extermination of Jews and Roma**

In every state, occupied or satellite, Nazis designated two groups of people whose fate was death. Nazi leadership decide in 1941 that Jews have to be deported from all parts into concentration camps. Most of these camps were built in Poland. There they let them to die by hunger, malnutrition, exhausting labor and by various torture. Thus there have been established special death camps designated for murdering of Jews. Similar fate affected also Roma people. Only Denmark, Bulgaria and Italy have disobeyed this instruction. Even though they have persecuted them in these countries, they didn't deliver them to death. This death threatened also other nations, ethnic and social groups (Soviet POWs, homosexuals, Jehova's Witnesses), if they openly stood against Nazi tyranny or didn't conform to Nazi ideology.

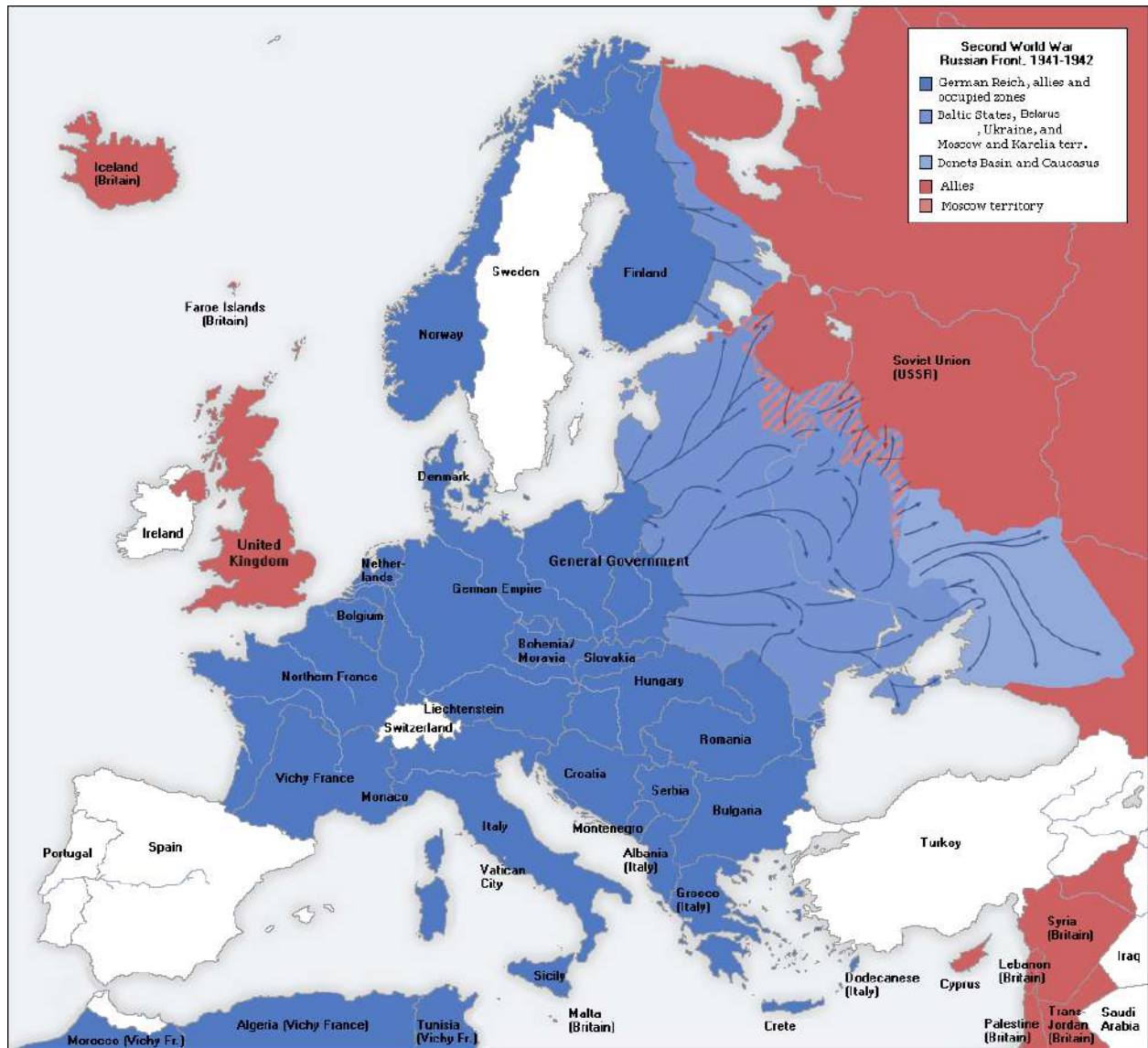


[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/16/Europe\\_under\\_Nazi\\_domination.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/16/Europe_under_Nazi_domination.png)





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[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f5/Second\\_world\\_war\\_europe\\_1943-1945\\_map\\_en.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f5/Second_world_war_europe_1943-1945_map_en.png)

