

# AXIS RULE IN OCCUPIED EUROPE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.

## Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959)

Raphael Lemkin was a Jewish lawyer, born in Poland in 1900. He was practicing law in Poland when Hitler and Nazi Germany invaded on September 1, 1939, sparking the Second World War. He escaped through Lithuania to Sweden and eventually made his way to the United States where he joined the law faculty at Duke University in North Carolina. Over 40 members of his family were murdered during the Holocaust.

Lemkin first used the term “genocide” in 1933 at a conference in Madrid, Spain. He proposed to the League of Nations that they create an international agreement to condemn vandalism and barbaric crimes. Later, by analyzing the actions of Nazi Germany against the Jews, Lemkin went on to define the crime of genocide in the book he published in 1944: *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. After the war, the world was confronted with the horrors of the Holocaust and through the tireless work of Lemkin, who was instrumental in its creation, the United Nations passed the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on December 9, 1948.



CITATION: Lemkin, R. (1944). *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law.

## I. GENOCIDE - A NEW TERM AND NEW CONCEPTION FOR DESTRUCTION OF NATIONS

New conceptions require new terms. By “genocide” we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group. This new word, coined by the author to denote an old practice in its modern development, is made from the ancient Greek word *genos* (race, tribe) and the Latin *cide* (killing), thus corresponding in its formation to such words as tyrannicide, homicide, infanticide, etc. Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.