



Timeline of the Holocaust (1933-1948)

1933

January 30: German President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler chancellor. At the time, Hitler was leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi party).

February 28: Hitler convinced President von Hindenburg to invoke an emergency clause in the Weimar Constitution. The German parliament then passed a decree that suspended the civil rights provisions in the existing German constitution, which included freedom of speech, assembly, and press, and formed the basis for the incarceration of potential opponents of the Nazis without benefit of trial or judicial proceeding.

March 22: The SS (Schutzstaffel), Hitler's "elite guard," established a concentration camp outside the town of *Dachau*, Germany, for political opponents of the regime. It was the only concentration camp to remain in operation from 1933 until 1945.

March 23: The German parliament passed the Enabling Act, which empowered Hitler to establish a dictatorship in Germany.

April 1: The Nazis organized a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned businesses in Germany.

April 7: The Nazi government passed the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which excluded Jews and political opponents from university and governmental positions. Similar laws enacted in the following weeks affected Jewish lawyers, judges, doctors, and teachers.

May 10: Nazi party members and others burned books written by Jews, political opponents of Nazis, and the intellectual avant-garde during public rallies across Germany.

July 14: The Nazi government enacted the Law on the Revocation of Naturalization, which deprived naturalized Jews as well as Roma (Gypsies) of German citizenship. The Nazi government enacted the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases, which mandated the forced sterilization of certain physically or mentally impaired individuals.

1934

June 30–July 1: During "the Night of the Long Knives," members of the Nazi party and police murdered members of the Nazi leadership, army, and others. Hitler declared the killings legal and necessary to achieve the Nazi party's aims.

August 2: German President von Hindenburg died. Hitler became Führer in addition to Reich chancellor. There was no legal or constitutional limit to Hitler's power as Führer, and he became absolute dictator of Germany.

October 7: Jehovah's Witness congregations from all over Germany declared their political neutrality but also affirmed defiance of Nazi restrictions on the practice of their religion.

1935

April 1: The Nazi government banned the Jehovah's Witness organization and persecuted Jehovah's Witnesses because of their religious refusal to swear allegiance to the state.

May 31: Jews were barred from serving in the German armed forces.

June 28: The German Ministry of Justice revised Paragraphs 175 and 175a of the criminal code to criminalize all homosexual acts between men.

September 15: The Nazi government decreed the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of the German Blood and Honor. These Nuremberg "racial laws" made Jews second-class citizens and prohibited sexual relations and intermarriage between Jews and "persons of German or related blood." The Nazi government later applied the laws to



Roma (Gypsies) and to black people residing in Germany.

November 15: Germany defined a Jew: anyone with three Jewish grandparents; someone with two Jewish grandparents who identifies as a Jew.

1936

March 7: Germany invaded the Rhineland in a violation of the Treaty of Versailles.

July 12: Prisoners and civilian workers began construction of the concentration camp Sachsenhausen at Oranienburg near Berlin. By September, German authorities had imprisoned about 1,000 people in the camp.

August 1–16: Athletes and spectators from countries around the world attended the Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany. The Nazis made every effort to portray Germany as a respectable member of the international community and soft-pedaled their persecution of the Jews. They removed anti-Jewish signs from public display and restrained anti-Jewish activities. In response to pressure from foreign Olympic delegations, Germany also included Jews or part-Jews on its Olympic team.

October 25: Hitler and Mussolini formed the Rome-Berlin Axis.

1937

July / August: Buchenwald concentration camp opened.

1938

March 12–13: German troops invaded Austria, and Germany incorporated Austria into the German Reich in the “Anschluss.”

July 6–15: Delegates from 32 countries and representatives from refugee aid organizations attended the Evian Conference in Evian, France, to discuss immigration quotas for refugees fleeing Nazi Germany. The United States and most other countries were unwilling to ease their immigration restrictions.

August 1: Adolf Eichmann established the Office of Jewish Emigration in Vienna to increase the pace of forced emigration.

September 30: Britain, France, Italy, and Germany signed the Munich Pact, forcing Czechoslovakia to cede its border areas to the German Reich.

October 1–10: German troops occupied the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia under the stipulations of the Munich Pact.

October 5: On the request of Swiss authorities, Germany marked all Jewish passports with a large “J” to restrict Jews from immigrating to Switzerland.

November 7: Herschel Grynszpan assassinated German diplomat Ernst vom Rath in Paris.

November 9–10: In a nationwide pogrom called *Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”), the Nazis and their collaborators burned synagogues, looted Jewish homes and businesses, and killed at least 91 Jews. The Gestapo, supported by local police, arrested approximately 30,000 Jewish men and imprisoned them in the Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Mauthausen concentration camps. Several hundred Jewish women also were imprisoned in local jails.

November 15: All Jewish students were expelled from German schools.

December 12: German Jews were fined one billion marks for the destruction of property during *Kristallnacht*.

1939

January 30: Hitler declared “if war erupts it will mean the extermination of European Jews.”

March 14: Slovakia declared itself an independent state under protection of Nazi Germany.



March 15: German troops occupied the Czech lands and established the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

May 13–June 17: Cuba and the United States refused to accept more than 900 refugees (almost all Jewish) aboard the ocean liner *St. Louis*, forcing its return to Europe.

August 23: The Soviet and German governments signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact in which they agreed to divide up eastern Europe, including Poland; the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia; and parts of Romania.

September 1: German troops invaded Poland, marking the beginning of World War II.

September 3: Britain and France fulfilled their promise to protect Poland's border and declared war on Germany.

September 28: In a secret amendment to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the German and Soviet governments outlined their plans to partition Poland.

October: Hitler initiated an order to kill those Germans whom the Nazis deemed "incurable" and "unworthy of life." Health care professionals sent tens of thousands of institutionalized mentally and physically disabled people to central "euthanasia" killing centers where they killed them by lethal injection or in gas chambers.

October 12: Germany began deportation of Austrian and Czech Jews to Poland.

October 26: Germany annexed the former Polish regions of Upper Silesia, Pomerania, West Prussia, Poznan, and the independent city of Danzig. Those areas of occupied Poland not annexed by Germany or the Soviet Union were placed under a German civilian administration and were called the General Government (Generalgouvernement).

November 12: German authorities began the forced deportation of Jews from West Prussia, Poznan, Danzig, and Lodz (also in annexed Poland) to locations in the General Government.

November 23: German authorities required that, by December 1, 1939, all Jews residing in the General Government wear white badges with a blue Star of David.

1940

April 9–June 10: German troops invaded, defeated, and occupied Denmark and Norway.

June 30: German authorities ordered the first major Jewish ghetto, in Lodz, Poland, to be sealed off, confining at least 160,000 people in the ghetto. Henceforth, all Jews living in Lodz had to reside in the ghetto and could not leave without German authorization.

May 10: German troops invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. By June 22, Germany occupied all of these regions except for southern (Vichy) France.

May 20: SS authorities established the Auschwitz concentration camp (Auschwitz I) outside the Polish city of Oswiecim.

November 15: German authorities ordered the Warsaw ghetto in the General Government sealed off. It was the largest ghetto in both area and population. The Germans confined more than 350,000 Jews—about 30 percent of the city's population—in about 2.4 percent of the city's total area.

1941

April 6: German and other Axis forces (Italy, Bulgaria, and Hungary) invaded Yugoslavia and Greece.

June 22: Germany and its Axis forces invaded the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa. German mobile killing squads called *Einsatzgruppen* were assigned to identify, concentrate, and kill Jews behind the front lines. By the spring of 1943, the *Einsatzgruppen* had killed more than a million Jews and an undetermined number of partisans, Roma (Gypsies), and officials of the Soviet state and the Soviet Communist Party.

July 20: German authorities established a ghetto in Minsk in the German-occupied Soviet



territories and, by July 25, concentrated all Jews from the area in the ghetto.

July 31: Reich Marshal Hermann Göring charged SS-Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police and the SD (Security Service), to take measures for the implementation of the “final solution of the Jewish question.” The “Final Solution” was a euphemism for the mass murder of the Jewish population of Europe.

August 15: By order of German authorities, the Kovno ghetto, with approximately 30,000 Jewish inhabitants, was sealed off.

September 3: At the Auschwitz concentration camp, SS functionaries performed their first gassing experiments using Zyklon B. The victims were Soviet prisoners of war and non-Jewish Polish inmates.

September 6: German authorities established two ghettos in Vilna in German-occupied Lithuania. German and Lithuanian units killed tens of thousands of Jews in the nearby Ponary woods.

September 15: The Nazi government decreed that all Jews over the age of six who resided in Germany had to wear a yellow Star of David on their outer clothing in public at all times.

September 29–30: German SS, police, and military units shot an estimated 33,000 persons (mostly Jews) at Babi Yar, a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev, Ukraine. In the following months, German units shot thousands of Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and Soviet prisoners of war at Babi Yar.

October 15: German authorities began the deportation of Jews from the German Reich to the ghettos of Lodz, Riga, and Minsk.

October 28: After requiring all Kovno ghetto inhabitants to assemble at Demokratu Square, German and Lithuanian units took more than one-third of the ghetto’s population—some 9,200 people—to Fort IX and shot them in what was called the “Great Action.”

October–November: SS functionaries began preparations for Einsatz Reinhard (Operation Reinhard; often referred to as Aktion Reinhard), with the goal of murdering the Jews in the General Government. Preparations included construction of the killing centers Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka in the territory of the General Government.

November 24: German authorities established the Theresienstadt (also known as Terezin) ghetto, in the German controlled Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

November 26: SS authorities established a second camp at Auschwitz, called Auschwitz-Birkenau or Auschwitz II. The camp was originally designated for the incarceration of large numbers of Soviet prisoners of war but later was used as a killing center.

December 1: Einsatzkommando 3, a subunit of Einsatzgruppe A that operated in Lithuania, reported that its members had killed 136,442 Jews since June 1941.

December 7: Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next morning, the United States declared war on Japan.

December 8: Gassing operations began at Chelmno, one of six Nazi killing centers, situated in the Polish territory annexed by Germany. SS and German civilian officials killed at least 152,000 Jews and an undetermined number of Roma (Gypsies) and Poles at Chelmno using special mobile gas vans.

December 11: Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

1942

January 16: German authorities began the deportation of Jews from the Lodz ghetto to Chelmno.

January 20: Senior Nazi officials met at a villa in the outskirts of Berlin at the Wannsee Conference to discuss and coordinate implementation of the “Final Solution.”

March 17: At the Belzec killing center, an SS special detachment began using gas chambers to kill people. Between March 17 and December 1942, approximately 600,000



people, mostly Jews but also an undetermined number of Roma (Gypsies), were killed at Belzec.

March 27: German authorities began systematic deportations of Jews from France. By the end of August 1944, the Germans had deported more than 75,000 Jews from France to camps in the East, above all, to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center in occupied Poland, where most of them perished.

March–April: German SS and police units deported Jews from Lublin, in the General Government, to Belzec, where they were killed. The Lublin deportations were the first major deportations carried out under Operation Reinhard, the code name for the German plan to kill more than 2 million Jews living in the General Government of occupied Poland.

May: After trial gassings in April, an SS special detachment began gassing operations at the Sobibor killing center in early May. By November 1943, the special detachment had killed approximately 250,000 Jews at Sobibor.

May 4: SS officials performed the first selection of victims for gassing at the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center. Between May 1940 and January 1945, more than one million people were killed or died at the Auschwitz camp complex. Close to 865,000 were never registered and most likely were selected for gassing immediately upon arrival. Nine out of ten of those who died at the Auschwitz complex were Jewish.

May 31: German authorities opened the I.G. Farben labor camp at Auschwitz III (also known as Monowitz or Buna), situated near the main camp complex at Auschwitz.

June: Jewish partisan units were established in the forests of Belorussia and the Baltic States.

July 15: German authorities began deportations of Dutch Jews from the Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands to Auschwitz. By September 13, 1944, over 100 trains had carried more than 100,000 people to killing centers and concentration camps in the German Reich and the General Government.

July 22: Between July 22 and September 12, German SS and police authorities, assisted by auxiliaries, deported approximately 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to killing centers and concentration camps. Of that number, about 265,000 Jews were sent to the Treblinka killing center where they were murdered.

July 23: Gassing operations began at the Treblinka killing center. Between July 1942 and November 1943, SS special detachments at Treblinka murdered an estimated 750,000 Jews and at least 2,000 Roma (Gypsies).

August 4: German authorities began systematic deportations of Jews from Belgium. The deportations continued until the end of July 1944. The Germans deported more than 25,000 Jews, about half of Belgium's Jewish population, to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center in occupied Poland, where most of them perished.

1943

January 18–22: SS and police units deported more than 5,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka killing center. Members of the Jewish Fighting Organization (Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa, or ZOB) fought against the Germans in armed revolt as Jews were rounded up for deportation.

March: Krakow ghetto was liquidated.

March 15: German SS, police, and military units began the deportation of Jews from Salonika, Greece, to Auschwitz. Between March 20 and August 18, more than 50,000 Greek Jews arrived at the Auschwitz camp complex. SS staff killed most of the deportees in the gas chambers at Birkenau.

April 19–May 16: In the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Jewish fighters resisted the German attempt to liquidate the ghetto. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the first mass revolt in



Nazi-occupied Europe.

June 21: Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS, ordered the liquidation of all ghettos in the Baltic states and Belorussia (Reich Commissariat Ostland) and the deportation of all Jews to concentration camps.

August 2: Jewish prisoners revolted at the Treblinka killing center. Although more than 300 prisoners escaped, most were caught and killed by German SS and police units assisted by army troops. After the prisoners were forced to dismantle the killing center in November 1943, the special detachment shot them.

September 15: SS authorities converted the Kovno ghetto into a concentration camp (Concentration Camp Kauen) under the direction of SS Captain Wilhelm Goecke.

September 23: SS authorities ordered the final deportation of Jews from the Vilna ghetto. SS and police units in Vilna deported 4,000 Jews to the Sobibor killing center and evacuated approximately 3,700 to labor camps in German-occupied Estonia.

October 14: Jewish prisoners at the Sobibor killing center began an armed revolt. Approximately 300 escaped. German SS and police units, with assistance from German military units, recaptured more than 100 and killed them. After the revolt, SS special detachments closed and dismantled the killing center.

October 21: German authorities declared the Minsk ghetto officially liquidated after they murdered the remaining 2,000 Jews.

November 3–4: German SS and police units implemented Operation Harvest Festival. The purpose of Harvest Festival was to liquidate several labor camps in the Lublin area. During Harvest Festival, German SS and police units killed at least 42,000 Jews at Majdanek, Trawniki, and Poniatowa.

1944

March 19: German military units occupied Hungary.

May 15–July 9: SS officials and Hungarian rural police deported nearly 430,000 Jews from Hungary. Most were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where SS staff immediately killed about half of them in gas chambers.

June 6: D-Day. British and American troops launched an invasion of France.

June 22: A massive Soviet offensive destroyed the German front in Belorussia.

July 8–12: As the Soviet army neared, SS authorities liquidated the Kauen concentration camp, transferring 6,000 Jews to the Stutthof and Dachau concentration camps in the German Reich.

July 22: SS authorities evacuated most of the remaining prisoners from Majdanek westward to evade the advancing Soviet army.

July 23: Soviet troops liberated Majdanek. Surprised by the rapid Soviet advance, the Germans failed to destroy the camp and the evidence of mass murder.

August 7–30: SS and police officials liquidated the Lodz ghetto and deported approximately 60,000 Jews and an undetermined number of Roma (Gypsies) to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

August 28/29– October 27: Members of the Slovak resistance revolted against the German-supported Slovakian government. Between September and October, German SS and police officials, assisted by German military units and Slovak fascist paramilitary units, deported approximately 10,000 Slovak Jews to Auschwitz- Birkenau.

October 6: At Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Sonderkommando (special detachment of Jewish prisoners deployed to remove corpses from the gas chambers and burn them) blew up Crematorium IV and killed the guards. About 250 participants of the revolt died in battle with SS and police units. The SS and police units shot 200 more members of the Sonderkommando after the battle was over.



October 30: The last transport of Jews from Theresienstadt (Terezin) arrived at Auschwitz. During October, SS officials deported approximately 18,000 Jews to the Auschwitz camp complex. Most of them were killed in the gas chambers at Birkenau.

November 25: The SS began to demolish the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

1945

January 17: As Soviet troops approached, SS units evacuated prisoners in the Auschwitz camp complex, marching them on foot toward the interior of the German Reich. The forced evacuations came to be called “death marches.”

January 27: Soviet troops liberated about 8,000 prisoners left behind at the Auschwitz camp complex.

April 11: U.S. troops liberated more than 20,000 prisoners at Buchenwald.

April 29: U.S. troops liberated approximately 32,000 prisoners at Dachau.

April 30: Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin.

May 2: German units in Berlin surrendered to Soviet forces.

May 5: U.S. troops liberated more than 17,000 prisoners at Mauthausen concentration camp and more than 20,000 prisoners at the Gusen concentration camps in the annexed Austrian territory of the German Reich.

May 7–9: German armed forces surrendered unconditionally in the West on May 7 and in the East on May 9. Allied and Soviet forces proclaimed May 8, 1945, to be Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day).

August 3: United States special envoy Earl Harrison made public a report to President Truman on the treatment of Jewish displaced persons (DPs) in Germany. Harrison’s report contained a strong indictment of Allied military policies, underscored the plight of Jewish DPs, and led eventually to improved conditions for them in the American zone of occupied Germany.

September 2: Japan surrendered. World War II officially ended.

November 20: The International Military Tribunal (IMT), made up of United States, British, French, and Soviet judges, began a trial of 21 major Nazi leaders at Nuremberg, Germany.

December 22: President Truman issued a directive giving DPs preference in receiving visas under the existing quota restrictions on immigration to the United States.

1946

July 4: Following a ritual murder accusation, a Polish mob killed more than 40 Jews and wounded dozens of others in Kielce, Poland. This attack sparked a second mass migration of Jews from Poland and Eastern Europe to DP camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy.

August 1: The IMT passed judgment on the major Nazi war criminals on trial in Nuremberg, Germany. Eighteen were convicted, and three were acquitted. Eleven of the defendants were sentenced to death.

October 16: In accordance with the sentences handed down after the convictions, ten defendants were executed by hanging. One defendant, Hermann Göring, escaped the hangman by committing suicide in his cell.

1947

July 11: The *Exodus 1947* ship carrying 4,500 Jewish refugees sailed for British-administered Palestine from southern France, despite British restrictions on Jewish immigration. The British intercepted the ship and forced it to proceed to Haifa in Palestine and then to the French port of Port-de-Bouc.



September 8: Ultimately, the British took the Jewish refugees from the *Exodus 1947* to Hamburg, Germany, and forcibly returned them to DP camps. The fate of the *Exodus 1947* dramatized the plight of Holocaust survivors in the DP camps and increased international pressure on Great Britain to allow free Jewish immigration to Palestine.

November 29: The British government decided to submit the status of Palestine to the United Nations. In a special session on this date, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into two new states, one Jewish and the other Arab. The decision was accepted by the Jewish and rejected by the Arab leadership.

1948

May 14: David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Jews of Palestine, announced the establishment of the State of Israel in Tel Aviv and declared that Jewish immigration into the new state would be unrestricted. Between 1948 and 1951, almost 700,000 Jews immigrated to Israel, including more than two-thirds of the Jewish DPs in Europe.

June: Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act, authorizing 200,000 DPs to enter the United States in 1949 and 1950. By 1952, thousands of Jewish DPs entered the United States. An estimated 80,000 Jewish DPs immigrated to the United States with the aid of American Jewish agencies between 1945 and 1952.

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