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Holocaust & WWII Timeline

January 30, 1933: President Hindenburg appoints Adolf Hitler Chancellor of Germany



Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler greets President Paul von Hindenburg, March 21, 1933

Recently appointed as German chancellor, Adolf Hitler greets President Paul von Hindenburg in Potsdam, Germany, on March 21, 1933. Hitler appears in civilian dress, bowing in deference to the heavily decorated von Hindenburg. After the March 5, 1933 elections failed to realize Nazi hopes for an absolute majority in the German parliament, photo opportunities such as this one conferred legitimacy on Hitler's leadership

February 27, 1933: The Reichstag Fire



Dome of the Reichstag building, virtually destroyed by fire on February 27, 1933.

Hitler and his conservative nationalist Vice-Chancellor, Franz von Papen convinced President Hindenburg that the act of arson was the signal for a Communist uprising to overthrow the state. Nazi & Nationalist coalition partners exploited the Reichstag fire to induce President von Hindenburg to declare a state of emergency. On February 28, the Decree for the Protection of the People & the State, popularly known as the Reichstag Fire Decree, suspended rights of free assembly, free speech, freedom of the press, & other constitutional protections, which removed all restraints on police investigations of criminal or subversive behavior.

August 1, 1936: Summer Olympic Games open in Berlin, Germany



Olympic torch bearer running through Berlin shortly before the opening ceremony.

While hosting the Summer Olympics for two weeks in August 1936, the Nazi regime camouflaged its racist, militaristic character. Fifteen months after the Games ended, Germany's expansionist policies and the persecution of Jews and other "enemies of the state" accelerated dramatically.

March 11-13, 1938: Germany incorporates Austria in the Anschluss (Union)



Viennese civilians welcome the arriving German troops into the city.

German troops march into Austria on March 12, 1938, after that nation has endured a prolonged period of economic stagnation, internal political dictatorship, and intense Nazi propaganda. Motivated by committed engagement, fear, exhaustion, and indifference, most Austrians welcomed the invading German troops enthusiastically. Austria was incorporated into Germany the next day.

November 9, 1938: Kristallnacht, "Night of Broken Glass"



Firefighters protect a nearby house, as residents watch a synagogue burn during Kristallnacht. Oberramstadt, Germany, November 9-10, 1938.

Violence against Jews engulfed the Reich. Though appearing to be spontaneous, Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels and other Nazi Party leaders in fact carefully organized & coordinated the violence. In two days, as police and firefighters stood by, Nazi thugs murdered dozens of Jewish people, burned over 250 synagogues, trashed and looted more than 7,000 Jewish businesses, and desecrated or vandalized Jewish cemeteries, hospitals, schools, and homes.

USHMM Photo Archives #04467

September 1, 1939: Germany invades Poland, starting World War II in Europe



German soldiers parade through Warsaw to celebrate the defeat of Poland.

After securing the neutrality of the Soviet Union, Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, starting World War II. Honoring their guarantees to Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3. German forces and, beginning on September 17, 1939, invading Soviet forces conquered Poland by the end of that month. Following this, Nazi Germany & the Soviet Union partitioned the Polish state.

USHMM Photo Archives #09866

October 1939: Hitler authorizes killing of the impaired



View of Hadamar sanitorium, one of the six euthanasia killing centers. Hadamar, Germany, April 7, 1945

Adolf Hitler orders the implementation of the "euthanasia" program -- the systematic killing of those Germans whom the Nazis deem "unworthy of life." The so-called "T-4" or "euthanasia" program targeted individuals with intellectual or physical disabilities or had mental illness, who lived in institutions, for murder.

USHMM Photo Archives #05456

April 9, 1940: Germany invades Denmark and Norway
May 10, 1940: Germany attacks western Europe (France and the Low Countries)



German soldiers walk past a burning hotel during the invasion of Norway, 1940.

On April 9, 1940, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway. Denmark surrendered that day, Norway on June 10. Germany attacked Western Europe on May 10, 1940; the campaign lasted less than six weeks. Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands surrendered in May; France signed an armistice on June 22, eight days after the Germans occupied Paris.

June 22, 1941: Germany invades the Soviet Union



German infantry during the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.

Under the codename Operation "Barbarossa," Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941 in the largest German military operation of World War II. The destruction of the Soviet Union by military force, the permanent elimination of the perceived Communist threat to Germany, and the seizure of prime land within Soviet borders for long-term German settlement had been a core policy of the Nazi movement since the 1920s.

September 29-30, 1941: German SS & Police lead shooting of nearly 34,000 Jews at Babi Yar, outside Kiev



At Babi Yar, German SS & police, under guidance by officials of Einsatzgruppe C force Jews to hand over their possessions & undress before shooting them in the ravine.

Near Kiev, September 29 or 30, 1941.

This was the largest shooting operation at a single location in a forty-eight hour period during WWII. As German units--SS and police & their auxiliaries as well as units of the German army forced the victims towards the ravine, Einsatzgruppe personnel shot them in small groups. Einsatzgruppe C reported the massacre of 33,771 Jews to Reich Security Main Office headquarters in Berlin.

January 20, 1942: Wannsee Conference held near Berlin, Germany



View of the Wannsee villa

On January 20, 1942, 15 high-ranking Nazi Party, SS, & German government officials gathered at this villa in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee to discuss & coordinate the implementation of what they called the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question." In 1941 Hitler authorized this European-wide scheme for mass murder. Reinhard Heydrich convened the Wannsee Conference to inform & secure support from government ministries & other interested agencies relevant to the implementation of the "Final Solution."

July 15,1942: Systematic deportations from the Netherlands begin



Arrival of Jews at the Westerbork transit camp. The Netherlands, 1942.

With the help of the Dutch police, German SS and police authorities concentrated the Jews in the Netherlands in the Westerbork transit camp before deporting them to killing centers in German-occupied Poland. From 1942 until 1944, the Germans deport more than 100,000 Jews from Westerbork and other locations to Auschwitz and Sobibor; killing center authorities murder the overwhelming majority upon their arrival.

April 19, 1943: Warsaw ghetto uprising begins



German soldiers direct artillery against a pocket of resistance during the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Warsaw, Poland, April 19-May 16, 1943.

German SS & police forces initiated the operation to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto on April 19, 1943, the eve of Passover. When the Germans & their auxiliaries entered the ghetto that morning, the streets were deserted. Nearly all of the residents of the ghetto had gone into hiding places or bunkers. The renewal of deportations was the signal for an armed uprising within the ghetto.

USHMM Photo Archives #34083B

March 19, 1944: Germans forces occupy Hungary

May 15, 1944: Germans begin the mass deportation of about 440,000 lows from Hungary

May 15, 1944: Germans begin the mass deportation of about 440,000 Jews from Hungary



Hungarian Jews get off the deportation train & assemble at Auschwitz-Birkenau. May, 1944

After the German defeat at Stalingrad on the eastern front in 1942-1943, Minister-President Miklós Kállay sought to negotiate a separate armistice for Hungary with the western Allies. To forestall these efforts, German forces occupied Hungary on March 19, 1944. Upon agreement with the Germans, Hungarian authorities deported nearly 440,000 Jews from Hungary, most to Auschwitz-Birkenau, in six weeks. By the end of July 1944, the only intact Jewish community left in Hungary resided in Budapest, the capital.

June 6, 1944: D-Day: Anglo-American forces invade Normandy, France



General Dwight D. Eisenhower visits with paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division just hours before their jump into German-occupied France. June 5, 1944.

On June 6, 1944, under overall command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower and, on the ground, of British General Bernard Montgomery, more than 130,000 British and U.S. troops landed on five beaches on the French coast, code named Omaha, Gold, Juno, Sword, and Utah. The night before, 23,000 paratroopers dropped into France behind the German lines. The invasion force of more than 155,000 troops included 50,000 vehicles (including 1,000 tanks). Nearly 7,000 naval craft and more than 11,500 aircraft supported the invasion.

May 7-9, 1945: Germany surrenders to the western Allies and to the Soviets

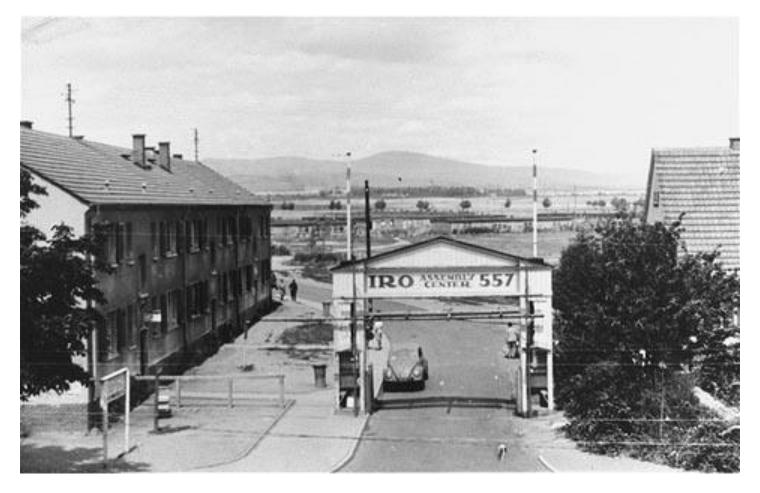


U.S. Army troops march through the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.

From their bridgehead across the Oder River, Soviet forces launched a massive final offensive toward Berlin in mid-April 1945. The German capital was encircled on April 21. Soviet forces met U.S. troops at Torgau, on the Elbe River in central Germany. On May 7, Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Western Allies at Reims and on May 9 to the Soviets in Berlin.

USHMM Photo Archives #26308

August 3, 1945: Harrison Issues Report on Jews in Germany



View of the Zeilsheim displaced persons camp. Zeilsheim, Germany, 1947-1948.

The Western Allies establish camps for displaced persons (DPs) for the refugees. Most Jewish DPs prefer to emigrate to Palestine but many also seek entry into the United States. They remain in the DP camps until they can leave Europe. At the end of 1946 the number of Jewish DPs is estimated at 250,000.

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