

WWII and Holocaust Timeline

Rise of the Nazis

1919: Letter to Adolf Gemlich

- States that Jews are “definitely a race and not a religious community”
- Jews produce a “racial tuberculosis”
- Anti-Semitism “based on reason must lead to the systematic legal combating and removal of the rights of the Jew...its final aim...must be the uncompromising removal of the Jews altogether.”

1920: Hitler delivers a speech in Munich that is regarded as the foundation of Nazism

- “The final aim must unquestionably be the irrevocable Entfernung [removal] of the Jews.”
- Catch phrase: “Germany, awake!”

1920: “Why We Are Anti-Semites” speech

Nov. 1923: Beer Hall Putsch

- Hitler and the Nazi Party attempt to overthrow the Weimar government in Munich.
- Arrested and charged with high treason
- Trial went on in front of Judge Georg Neithardt, who presided over another trial involving Hitler in 1921.
 - Asserted his devotion to goodwill and need for bold action to protect people; did not say anything about his anti-Semitism.
 - Asserted that he was the only one in charge of the coup.
- Hitler received a 5 year sentence
- Future Nazis, notably Goring, Rohm, and Himmler (along with WWI commander Ludendorff) also participated

1925: Mein Kampf written

- Establishes racial purity ideals, with Aryans at the top and Slavs and Jews on the bottom.
- “He who would live must fight. He who doesn't wish to fight in this world, where permanent struggle is the law of life, has not the right to exist.”
- Jews are “parasites”; establishes need for *lebensraum* in the East at the expense of the Slavs
- “the sacred mission of the German people...to assemble and preserve the most valuable racial elements...and raise them to the dominant position.
- “must necessarily be a bloody process”
- “by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord”

1926: Hitler Youth formed

May 1928: Nazis do poorly in elections

- Won 2.6% of the vote
- Shifted strategy to more antisemitism

1929: Heinrich Himmler takes over SS

1929: Weimar Government struggles with Great Depression

- Hindenburg utilizes emergency powers to create a new government ruling by emergency decrees rather than legislative procedures.
- Chancellor position initiated.

1932: Government begins to Nazify

- Hindenburg (84) won presidency; Hitler received 37% of the vote
- Nazi Party won 37% of Reichstag

January 30, 1933: Hitler appointed Chancellor

February 27, 1933: Reichstag building went up in flames

March 22, 1933: Dachau created

- Established by Heinrich Himmler
- Model for all later concentration camps
- Initially intended to intern political opponents to ‘restore calm’

March 24, 1933: Enabling Act passed

- Used Article 48 of Weimar Constitution

Hitler in Power

April 1, 1933: Boycott of Jewish shops and businesses

April 26, 1933: Gestapo formed

May 10, 1933: Book burnings in Berlin

- 25,000 “un-German” books burned
- Joseph Goebbels speaks: “no to...moral corruption”

25 August 1933: Haavara Agreement signed

1933 Laws:

- Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases
 - Mandated the forced sterilization of those with certain mental/physical disabilities.
 - Every case went to court, so it was inefficient.
 - Hitler apparently stated that he favored the murder of the incurably ill but recognized that the public would not approve.

- Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service
 - Banned Jews from civil service
 - Any non-Aryan civil servants must leave their job
- Denaturalization Law
 - Revoked citizenship for naturalized Jews
- Law on Editors
 - Banned Jews from editorial posts
- Law Against the Founding of New Parties
 - Nazi Party the only legal political party

1934: Hindenburg dies

- Hitler merges presidential powers and chancellor powers into one station: the Führer.
- He passes a law saying he is Chancellor for life.

1935: Nuremberg Race Laws passed

- Reich Citizenship Law: Only those with German blood could be citizens.
- Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor: Banned intermarriages and sexual relations between Jews and Germans. Defined who was a Jew (3-4 Jewish grandparents belonging to Jewish religious community), Mischlings (1-2 Jewish grandparents)

1935: Hitler publicly announced that the German Army was to be expanded and the draft reintroduced

- Jews barred from serving

1936: Rheinland occupied

1936: Berlin Olympics

- Jews are banned from gyms so they could not compete
- Anti-Semitic signs briefly taken down

1936: Hitler Youth becomes compulsory for boys

1936 and 1937: Anti-Comintern Pact signed

- Signed first by Germany and Japan, then by Germany, Japan, and Italy
- Against international Communism (but mostly the USSR)

1938: Anschluss occurs (Austria merges with Germany)

1938: Law on Alteration of Family and Personal Names

- Jewish men and women with non-Jewish first names had to change their middle names to Israel or Sara, respectively.

1938: Driver's licenses taken from Jews

July 1938: Evian Conference held

- Organized by FDR to address refugee crisis
- Not very well organized; American official was FDR's friend

1938: US population polled to be against refugees

- 70% of population against war and crisis

1938: Madagascar Plan begins to be considered

1938: Sudetenland Crisis

- Sudetenland contained many ethnic Germans and pan-Germanists like Hitler wanted to bring it under German control. Hitler was given the Sudetenland in order to placate him (Britain's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sensed his ambition), but it ended up doing the opposite.

November 1938: Kristallnacht

- Ostensibly spontaneous attack by German civilians against German Jews
- Synagogues, cemeteries, shops were defaced and destroyed
- Perpetrated by remainder of SA, orchestrated by Goebbels
 - Because of the murder of Ernst vom Rath by a Jew in France
- 15,000 Jews emigrated after this incident
- Many Germans, including Nazis themselves, were against this
 - 63% expressed extreme indignation
 - Gauleiters refused to enact destruction

1939: Rental apartments seized from Jews

January 30, 1939: Prophecy Speech

- Threatened "the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe" if there was war

March 1939: Czechoslovakia occupied

August 1939: Reich Committee established to register "defective" infants

- Secret killing occurred soon after
- "Lebensunwertes Leben" – life unworthy of life
- 6 extermination centers established

August 23-24, 1939: Non-Aggression Pact between Germans and Soviets signed

- Agreed that Germany would split Poland with the USSR upon the imminent invasion in exchange for the USSR promising not to attack them.
- AKA Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

August 1939: Einsatzgruppen established

- Began with 27,000

August/September 1939: T4 Program begins

- Involved adults
- Started in Berlin
- Brack directed the program, ‘zealously’ executing people in the belief that this was ethical
- Medical evaluators decided on deaths based on paperwork
- All institutions had to provide specific information on patients
- 1 doctor decided life or death for 15,000 patients
- No one was punished for refusing.

The War

August 31, 1939: Hitler gives the order to invade Poland

- Blitzkrieg lightning attacks from land and air

September 17, 1939: USSR invades Poland from the east

September 21, 1939: Heydrich issues directives to establish ghettos

October 6, 1939: Poland surrenders

- Intelligentsia first ones taken

October 12, 1939: Germany begins deportation of Jews to Poland

October 28, 1939: First Polish ghetto established

October 1939: General Government established in Poland

- Housed non-German peoples. Germans were sent to the best lands on the exterior.
- Run by Hans Frank
 - Dealt with overcrowding with extermination not on direct orders
 - Began the armband labeling system

May 20, 1940: Auschwitz established

June 25, 1940: France capitulates to Germany

- 42,000 Jews were shipped to concentration camps by 6 months later

July-October 1940: Germany wages an air war against Britain

1941: Struma Incident

- Boat carrying 800 Jews bound for Palestine was held in Turkey waiting for permission to continue on. Eventually it was dragged into the Black Sea and sunk.

May 1941: Hunger Plan in advanced planning stages

- Would starve 4 million+ Russians

June 1941: Operation Barbarossa commences

July 31, 1941: Heydrich given authority to plan for the Final Solution

September 28-29, 1941: Babi Yar

- 34,000 Jews were massacred outside of Kiev, Ukraine

October 1941: Auschwitz II-Birkenau established for the extermination of Jews. Effective beginning of Operation Reinhard

December 7, 1941: Japan bombs Pearl Harbor

December 8, 1941: Chelmno extermination camp begins operations

- First facility where poison gas was used for mass murder of Jews

December 11, 1941: Germany declares war on the US

January 20, 1942: Wannsee Conference

- Heydrich outlines plan to murder Europe's Jews

July 22, 1942: Treblinka established

January 1943: Germans surrender at Stalingrad

March 1943: Liquidation of Cracow ghetto

1943: Establishment of US's Jewish Refugee Board containing State Department, Treasury, and War Department

- Did not do anything

April 1943: Bermuda Conference

- Procedures to rescue Jews “should not be inconsistent with the efficient waging of the war”
- No special emphasis for Jews – just refugees

April 19, 1943: Warsaw Ghetto revolt

- Germans were attempting to liquidate 70,000 inhabitants. Some held out for over a month

June 1943: Himmler orders liquidation of all ghettos in Poland and USSR

1943: Jewish resistance in ghettos; armed revolt in Sobibor camp

1943: Liquidation of Minsk, Vilna, Riga ghettos

March 19, 1944: Germany occupies Hungary

May 15, 1944: Hungarian Jews begin to be deported

Summer 1944: Red Army advances through German territory

November 8, 1944: Death march from Budapest to Austria on the part of 40,000 Jews

January 17, 1945: Evacuation of Auschwitz and subsequent death march

- Other camps follow suit

April 30, 1945: Hitler commits suicide

Death Count at Camps

1. Auschwitz: At least 1.1 million (960,000 Jews) between May 1940 and January 1945
2. Treblinka: Between 700,000 and 900,000 between July 1942 and October 1943
3. Belzec: Between 430,000 and 500,000 between March 1942 and June 1943
4. Sobibor: Between 170,000 and 250,000 between May 1942 and October 1943
5. Chelmno: Between 150,000-180,000 between December 1941 and March 1943

1946: Nuremberg Trials

- Trials by the Allies for murder of “noncombatants.” Tried for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes against peace.
- Most recognizable figures had killed themselves (Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels, Frank; Goering followed after his sentence to death)
- 14 were hung, 7 got long prison sentences
- Eichmann ran away to Argentina but was kidnapped and tried in Israel in 1966. He was also hung.
- US opened immigration for intelligent Nazi criminals.