

Holocaust and World War II Timeline

1933

- January 30 German President Paul von Hindenburg appoints Adolf Hitler Chancellor of Germany
- Feb. 27-28 German *Reichstag* (Parliament) mysteriously burns down, government treats it as an act of terrorism
- Feb. 28 Decree passed which suspends the civil rights granted by the German constitution
- March 4 Franklin Delano Roosevelt inaugurated President of the United States
- March 22 Dachau concentration camp opens as a prison camp for political dissidents
- March 23 *Reichstag* passes the Enabling Act, empowering Hitler to establish a dictatorship
- April 1 Nationwide Nazi organized boycott of Jewish shops and businesses
- April 7 Laws for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service bars Jews from holding civil service, university, and state positions
- April 26 Gestapo established
- May 10 Public burning of books written by Jews, political dissidents, and others
- July 14 The Nazi Party is declared the only legal party in Germany.
Law on the Revocation of Naturalization stripping East European Jewish immigrants, as well as Roma (Gypsies), of German citizenship

1934

- June 20 The SS (*Schutzstaffel* or Protection Squad), under Heinrich Himmler, is established as an independent organization.
- June 30 Night of the Long Knives – members of the Nazi party and police murdered members of the Nazi leadership, army and others on Hitler's orders. Ernst Röhm, leader of the SA was killed.
- August 2 President von Hindenburg dies. Hitler proclaims himself Führer. Armed forces must now swear allegiance to him
- Oct. 7 Jehovah's Witness congregations submit standardized letters to the government declaring their political neutrality
- Oct.-Nov. First major arrests of homosexuals throughout Germany
- Dec. 20 A law against "insidious slander" makes it a crime to criticize the regime, even as a joke

1935

- April 1 Nazis ban the Jehovah's Witness organization
- May 31 Jews barred from serving in the German armed forces
- June 28 Ministry of Justice revises Paragraph 175 and 175a, providing the police with broader means of prosecuting homosexual men
- Sept. 15 The Nuremberg Laws are passed. These constitutional laws provide for the legal and social separation of German Jews from German non-Jews

1. The Reich Flag Law makes red, white, and black the official national colors and makes the swastika flag (the flag of the Nazi Party) the national flag.
2. The Reich Citizenship Law strips German Jews of their German citizenship, designating them as *Staatsangehörige* (state subjects) and designating non-Jews as *Reichsbürger* (citizens of the Reich).
3. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor forbids German Jews to marry or have sexual relations with German non-Jews; nor may they employ non-Jewish women under age 45 in their homes; nor may they fly the German flag (an offense against German honor).

Nov. 14

The first set of supplementary Decrees to the Nuremberg Laws

First Supplementary Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law

- Defines the following as a “full Jew”: anyone with three Jewish grandparents or with two Jewish grandparents who is married to a Jewish spouse or belongs to the Jewish religion at the time this law is published or enters into such commitments later.
- Denies German Jews the right to vote and takes away their civil rights

First Supplementary Decree to the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor

- Clarifies the numerous categories of “forbidden marriages”
- Creates a complicated system for classifying those Germans with various combinations of Jewish and non-Jewish relatives and ancestors
- Forbids German non-Jews to marry or have sexual relations with persons of “alien blood” other than German Jews

1936

March 3

Jewish doctors barred from practicing medicine in German institutions

March 7

Germans march into the Rhineland, previously demilitarized by the Versailles Treaty

June 17

Heinrich Himmler appointed the chief of all German police and security forces

July 12 Construction begins on Sachsenhausen concentration camp

August

Berlin hosts the 1936 Olympic Games. Anti-Jewish signs are temporarily removed to present a more favorable picture to foreign tourists.

Oct. 25

Hitler and Benito Mussolini form Rome-Berlin Axis

1937

July 15

Buchenwald concentration camp opens

1938

March 13

Anschluss (incorporation of Austria in the Third Reich): all antisemitic

- decrees immediately applied in Austria
- April 26 Mandatory registration of all property held by Jews inside the Reich
- July 6 - 15 Evian Conference held in Evian, France to discuss the problem of Jewish refugees worldwide
- August 1 Adolf Eichmann establishes the Office of Jewish Emigration in Vienna to increase the pace of forced emigration
- Sept. 30 Munich Conference: Great Britain and France agree to German occupation of the Sudetenland, previously western Czechoslovakia, in the Munich Pact
- Oct. 5 Following a request by Swiss authorities, Germans mark all Jewish passports with a large red letter "J" to hinder Jewish immigration to Switzerland
- Oct. 10 German troops occupy the Sudetenland
- Oct. 27-28 Over 54,000 Jews who are Polish citizens living in Germany are expelled from the country and forcibly transferred to the Polish border. Poland denied them entry. About 17,000 are left stranded in a camp near the frontier town of Zbaszyn, Poland.
- Nov. 7 Assassination in Paris of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath by Herschel Grynszpan, a Jew whose parents were forcibly removed to Poland days earlier. This event serves as a catalyst to the *Kristallnacht* pogrom.
- Nov. 9-10 *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass): anti-Jewish pogrom in Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland; 200 synagogues destroyed; 7,500 Jewish shops looted; at least 91 Jewish men killed, 30,000 male Jews sent to concentration camps (Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen)**
- Nov. 12 The Measure for the Elimination of Jews from the German Economy bans all Jewish economic life in Germany as of January 1, 1939. All businesses, land, stock, jewelry and art must be transferred to non-Jewish owners
- Nov. 15 All Jewish pupils expelled from German public schools
- Dec. 6 First *Kindertransport* leaves Germany. This action under the auspices of the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany transports 9,354 children (70% of whom are Jewish) to Great Britain and other countries until September 2, 1939
- Dec. 12 One billion mark fine levied against German Jews for the destruction of property during *Kristallnacht*

1939

- March 15 German troops occupy the Czech lands and establish the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia
- May-June Cuba and the U.S. refuse to accept over 900 refugees aboard the *St. Louis*
- August 23 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed: non-aggression pact between Soviet Union and Germany

- Sept. 1 Beginning of World War II. Germany invades Poland
- Sept. 3 Britain and France declare war on Germany
- Sept. 21 Reinhard Heydrich issues directives to establish ghettos in German-occupied Poland
- Sept. 28 Amendment to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact outlines the planned partition of Poland between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union
- October Hitler orders the killing of handicapped and disabled German citizens, beginning the T-4 euthanasia program
- Oct. 8 Hans Frank, the Governor-General of occupied Poland, orders the formation of *Judenräte* (Jewish Councils)
- Oct. 12 Germany begins deportation of Austrian and Czech Jews to Poland
- Oct. 26 Germany formally annexes the former Polish regions of Upper Silesia, Pomerania, West Prussia, Poznan and Danzig. The rest of German occupied Poland becomes the General Government.
- Oct. 28 First Polish ghetto established in Piotrków
- Nov. 12 Forced deportations of Jews in German annexed Poland to the General Government begin
- Nov. 23 All Polish Jews over the age of 10 must wear identifying “Jewish Star” badges (either yellow stars or white armbands) by December 1

1940

- Feb. 12 First deportation of German Jews into occupied Poland
- April 9 Germans occupy Denmark and southern Norway
- May 7 Łódź Ghetto (Litzmannstadt) sealed: 165,000 people in 1.6 square miles
- May 10 Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France
- May 20 Concentration camp established at Auschwitz (Auschwitz I)
- June 22 France surrenders to Germany
- August 8 Battle of Britain begins
- Sept. 27 Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis
- Nov. 15 Warsaw Ghetto sealed

1941

- Jan. 21-26 Anti-Jewish riots in Romania
- February 1 German authorities begin rounding up Polish Jews for transfer to Warsaw Ghetto
- March Adolf Eichmann appointed head of the department for Jewish affairs of the Reich Security Main Office, Section IV B 4.
- March 24 Germany invades North Africa
- April 6 Axis invasion and occupation of Yugoslavia and Greece
- June 22 Germany invades the Soviet Union – Operation Barbarossa. Mobile killing squads known as Einsatzgruppen travel with the advancing army, conducting mass shootings of Jews and Communists
- July 20 Minsk ghetto established

- July 31 *Reinhard Heydrich appointed by Hermann Göring to implement the "Final Solution"*
- August 15 Kovno ghetto sealed
- Sept. 3 first experimental gassing using Zyklon B performed at Auschwitz
- Sept. 6 Vilna ghetto established in Lithuania
- Sept. 28-29 34,000 Jews massacred at Babi Yar outside Kiev
- October Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz II) established
- Oct. 15 deportation of German Jews to ghettos of Łódź, Riga and Minsk
- Oct. – Nov. Operation Reinhard preparations begin (Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka)
- Nov. 24 Theresienstadt (Terezin) ghetto established in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia
- Dec. 7 Japanese attack Pearl Harbor – bring United States into World War II
- Dec. 8 Gassing operations (using carbon monoxide) begin at Chelmno (Kulmhof) extermination camp
- Dec. 11 Germany and Italy declare war on the United States

1942

- January 16 deportations from the Łódź ghetto to Chelmno begin
- January 20 Wannsee Conference in Berlin: Reinhard Heydrich outlines plan to murder Europe's Jews
- March 17 Murder of Jews in gas chambers at Bełżec begin
- March 27 Deportations from France begin
- May Murder of Jews in gas chambers at Sobibór begin
- May 4 First selection of victims for gassing at Auschwitz-Birkenau takes place
- May 31 Germans open the I.G. Farben plant at Monowitz (Auschwitz III)
- July 15 deportations of Dutch Jews from Westerbork transit camp begin
- July 22 deportations from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka concentration camp begin
- July 23 Murder of Jews in gas chambers at Treblinka begin
- August 4 deportations from Belgium begin
- Winter Deportation of Jews from Germany, Greece and Norway to killing centers

1943

- Jan. 18-22 Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) mounts armed resistance during deportations from Warsaw ghetto
- January German 6th Army surrenders at Stalingrad
- March Liquidation of Kraków ghetto
- March 15 deportation of Greek Jews from Salonika begin
- April 19 Warsaw Ghetto uprising begins as Germans attempt to liquidate 70,000 inhabitants; Jewish underground fights until May 16
- June 21 Heinrich Himmler orders the liquidation of all ghettos in Poland and the Soviet Union

- August 2 Prisoner revolt at Treblinka. Initially over 300 inmates escaped, though most were recaptured and killed. The camp was closed and dismantled after the revolt.
- Oct. 14 Prisoners mount armed revolt at Sobibór Approximately 300 escaped, though more than 100 were recaptured. The camp was closed and dismantled after the revolt.
- Nov. 3-4 Operation Harvest Festival – liquidation of several camps in the Lublin area. At least 42,000 Jews killed at Majdanek, Trawniki, and Poniatowa

1944

- March 19 Germany occupies Hungary
- May 15 Nazis begin deporting Hungarian Jews. By July, 430,000 Hungarian Jews are deported
- June 6 D-Day: Allied invasion at Normandy
- June 22 Soviet offensive destroys German front in Belorussia
- July 20 Group of German officers attempt to assassinate Hitler
- July 22 SS authorities evacuate most prisoners from Majdanek westward to evade the advancing Soviet Army
- July 23 Soviet troops liberate Majdanek killing center – the camp was captured intact
- Aug. 7-30 Łódź ghetto liquidated - inhabitants deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau
- October 7 *Sonderkommando* at Auschwitz-Birkenau revolt, blowing up Crematorium IV and killing the guards
- Oct. 30 last transport of Jews from Theresienstadt arrive at Auschwitz
- Nov. 25 SS begin to demolish gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau

1945

- January 17 Death march from Auschwitz begins as the Germans try to evade the advancing Soviets
- January 25 Beginning of death march for inmates of Stutthof
- January 27 Soviet troops liberate about 8,000 remaining prisoners at Auschwitz
- April 11 U.S. troops liberate over 20,000 prisoners at Buchenwald
- April 12 Generals Eisenhower, Bradley and Patton tour the Ohrdruf concentration camp in Germany, a satellite camp of Buchenwald. Eisenhower writes: “The things I saw beggar description... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were...overpowering...I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to propaganda.”
- April 29 U.S. troops liberate approximately 32,000 prisoners at Dachau
- April 30 Hitler commits suicide in his Berlin bunker
- May 2 German units in Berlin surrender to the Soviet army

- May 5 U.S. troops liberate over 17,000 prisoners at Mauthausen and more than 20,000 at Gusen concentration camp
- May 7 German armed forces surrendered unconditionally in the West
- May 8 V-E Day: proclaimed end of the war and of the Third Reich
- May 9 German armed forces surrender unconditionally in the East
- August 3 U.S. special envoy Earl Harrison made a public report to President Truman on the treatment of Jewish displaced persons in Germany. The report contained a strong indictment of Allied military policies, underscored the plight of Jewish DPs, and eventually led to improved conditions for them in the American zone of occupied Germany.
- Sept. 2 Japan surrenders to the United States - end of World War II
- Nov. 20 The International Military Tribunal (IMT), made up of U.S., British, French, and Soviet judges, began a trial of 21 major Nazi leaders at Nuremberg, Germany
- Dec. 22 President Truman issues a directive giving Displaced Persons preference in receiving visas under the existing U.S. immigration quotas

1946

- July 4 Mob attack against Jewish survivors in Kielce, Poland following a ritual murder accusation. More than 40 Jews killed and dozens injured.
- Aug. 1 The IMT passes judgment on the major Nazi war criminals. Eighteen are convicted, three acquitted. Eleven are sentenced to death.
- Oct. 16 Ten defendants executed by hanging. Hermann Göring commits suicide before his execution.
- Dec. 22 The Truman Directive states that favored treatment should be given to displaced persons seeking entry to the United States. As a result, 400,000 refugees are allowed to immigrate – among them 137,000 Jews

1947

- Nov. 29 In response to a proposal submitted by the British government, the United Nations partitions Palestine into two states. The proposal is accepted by the Jewish leadership 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. Between 1948 and 1951, almost 70,000 Jews immigrated to Israel, including more than two-thirds of the Jewish DPs in Europe.

