

Timeline to Genocide

Timeline: Under Cover of War, 1939-1945

1939

February:

Wagner-Rogers act voted down in U.S. (See **Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior**, "The Failure to Help", p. 275)

March:

- Germany takes over all of Czechoslovakia.

April:

- Jews are no longer permitted to rent from Christians.

May-June:

- The S.S. St. Louis carrying 930 Jewish refugees returns to Europe after being turned away by Cuba, the U.S., and other countries.

August:

- Germany and the Soviet Union sign the Hitler-Stalin pact.

September:

- Germany invades Poland. World War II begins in Europe.
- Hitler secretly orders the systematic murder of the mentally and physically disabled in Germany and Austria.
- The SS Einsatzgruppen (The Nazis' elite special action squads) in Poland gather Jews into ghettos near railroad stations.
- Nazis and Soviets divide up Poland.

November:

- Polish Jews are required to wear special armbands or yellow stars.

1940

January:

- German physicians begin gassing mental patients, using carbon monoxide gas in fake showers in a psychiatric hospital near Berlin. The program is carried out under the code name T4 (the abbreviated address of the head of Hitler's "euthanasia program"). By September, over 70,000 are dead.

February:

- First group of German Jews are deported to occupied Poland.

April:

- Nazi Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
- The Lodz Ghetto is sealed from the outside world with 230,000 Jews locked inside.

May:

- Rudolf Hoess is named kommandant of Auschwitz, a new concentration camp in Poland.
- Germany invades France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

June:

- The Nazis begin gassing Jews. The first 200 are from a mental institution.
- France signs an armistice with Germany.

July:

- The first anti-Jewish measures are taken in France.

September:

- Germany begins massive bombing of London.
- Germany, Italy and Japan form an alliance.

October:

- Germany invades Romania.

November:

- Hungary, Romania and Slovakia become allies of the Nazis.

- The Krakow and Warsaw ghettos, containing about 470,000 Jews are sealed off.

1941

- German psychiatrists train the SS on mass murder techniques learned by experimenting on
- mental patients.
- The Reich Interior Minister orders the killing of Jews in German mental hospitals.
- Roving bands
- of T4 commissions send those too ill to work as well as Jews and "Gypsies" in concentration camps
- to the gas chambers.

March:

- Work begins on an expansion of Auschwitz at nearby Birkenau. The new addition can hold 100,000 prisoners.

April:

- Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece.

June:

- Germany invades the Soviet Union.

Summer:

- Jews throughout Europe are forced into ghettos and internment camps.

September:

- German Jews ordered to wear yellow star.
- Mobile killing units begin the systematic slaughter of Jews. In two days, one unit murders 33,771
- Ukrainian Jews at BabiYar-the largest single massacre of the Holocaust.

December:

- After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the United States enters World War II by declaring war on both Japan and its main ally, Germany.
- The first gassings begin at Chelmno, a death camp in Poland.

1942

January:

- Mass killings of Jews begins at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- At the Wannsee Conference, Nazi officials turn over the "Final Solution"-their plan to kill all European Jews-to the bureaucracy.
- Five death camps begin operation in Poland: Majdanek, Sobibor, Treblinka, Belzec, and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

May:

- *The New York Times* reports on an inside page the mass murder of Jews in the Baltic countries, Poland, and the western part of the Soviet Union.

June:

- The Nazis order Jews in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Croatia, Slovakia, and Romania to wear the yellow star.

Summer: Otto Frank leads his family into hiding (See **Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior**, "In Hiding," pg. 337)

July:

- The deportation of Dutch and French Jews to Auschwitz begins.
- Treblinka opens in occupied Poland, east of Warsaw.

Major Trapp offers Police Battalion 101 a choice. (See **Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior**, "Reserve Police Battalion 101", p. 313)

Adam Czerniakow, the head of the Judenrat (Jewish Council) in the Warsaw Ghetto, commits suicide. (See **Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior**, "The Jewish Councils", p. 329)

December:

- The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union acknowledge that Germans are systematically

murdering the Jews of Europe.

1943

January:

- Jews in Warsaw openly resist the Nazis.
- Nazis begin sending Sinti and Roma ("Gypsies") to death camps.

April:

- Representatives from Britain and U.S. discuss the plight of refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe at the Bermuda Conference but take no action on the plight of the Jews.
- A Jewish uprising begins in the Warsaw Ghetto.

October:

- Jews and Soviet prisoners of war escape from Sobibor. Most are recaptured and murdered.

1944

January:

- U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt creates the War Refugee Board in response to political
- pressure to help Jews under Nazi control.

March:

- Germany occupies Hungary.

May:

- Germans begin deporting 12,000 Hungarian Jews a day to Auschwitz.

June:

- On the 6th, Allied troops land in Normandy as part of the D-Day invasion of France.

July:

- Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg arrives in Budapest, Hungary, and saves nearly 33,000 Jews by issuing diplomatic papers and establishing "safe houses."
- Soviet troops liberate first concentration camp at Majdanek.
- Attempt to assassinate Hitler fails.

October:

- Danish citizens help 7,200 Jews escape to Sweden.
- A revolt by Jewish slave laborers at Auschwitz-Birkenau results in the destruction of a crematory.

1945

January:

- As the Russian army pushes east, the Nazis evacuate the death camps.

May:

- World War II ends in Europe with Hitler's defeat. Hitler's racial state is dismantled. About one-third of all Europe's Jews are dead and most of the survivors are homeless.
- *Sonia Weitz is liberated from Mauthausen.*

(See **Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior**, "As the War Ended", p. 412. Also see *I Promised I Would Tell.*)

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