CHRONOLOGY OF THE HOLOCAUST

JANUARY 30, 1933

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 27–28, 1933

The German parliament (Reichstag) building burned down under mysterious circumstances. The government treated it as an act of terrorism.

FEBRUARY 28, 1933

Hitler convinced President von Hindenburg to invoke an emergency clause in the Weimar Constitution. The German parliament then passed the Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of Nation (Volk) and State, popularly known as the Reichstag Fire Decree. The decree suspended the civil rights provisions in the existing German constitution, including 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, 1933

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. By 1934, the SS had taken over administration of the entire Nazi concentration camp system.

MARCH 23, 1933

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

APRIL 1, 1933

The Nazis organized a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned businesses in Germany. Many local boycotts continued throughout much of the 1930s.

APRIL 7, 1933

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, 1933

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

JULY 14, 1933

The Nazi government enacted the Law on the Revocation of Naturalization, which deprived foreign and stateless 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. The law institutionalized the eugenic concept of "life undeserving of life" and provided the basis for the involuntary sterilization of the disabled, Roma (Gypsies), "social misfits," and black people residing in Germany.

JUNE 30–JULY 1, 1934

In what came to be called "the Night of the Long Knives," on Hitler's orders 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. The murders were reported throughout Germany and in other countries.

AUGUST 2, 1934

German President von Hindenburg died. Hitler became Führer in addition to his position as chancellor. Because there was no legal or constitutional limit to Hitler's power as Führer, he became absolute dictator of Germany.

OCTOBER 7, 1934

In standardized letters sent to the government, 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.

APRIL 1, 1935

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

JUNE 28, 1935

The German Ministry of Justice revised Paragraphs 175 and 175a of the criminal code to criminalize all homosexual acts between men. The revision provided the police broader means for prosecuting homosexual men.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1935

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. They 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.

JULY 12, 1936

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, 1936

Athletes and spectators from countries around the world attended the Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany. The Olympic Games were a propaganda success for the Nazi state. 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.

MARCH 12–13, 1938

German troops invaded Austria, and Germany incorporated Austria into the German Reich in what was called the Anschluss.

JULY 6–15, 1938

Delegates from 32 countries and representatives from refugee aid organizations attended the Evian Conference at Evian, France, to discuss immigration quotas for refugees fleeing Nazi Germany. However, the United States and most other countries were unwilling to ease their immigration restrictions.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1938

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

OCTOBER 1–10, 1938

German troops occupied the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia under the stipulations of the Munich Pact.

NOVEMBER 9–10, 1938

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 uniformed 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.

MARCH 14, 1939

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

MARCH 15, 1939

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

MAY 13–JUNE 17, 1939

Cuba and the United States refused to accept more than 900 refugees—almost all of whom were Jewish—aboard the ocean liner *St. Louis,* forcing its return to Europe.

AUGUST 23, 1939

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, 1939

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

SEPTEMBER 3, 1939

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

SEPTEMBER 28, 1939

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

OCTOBER 1939

Hitler initialed an order to kill those Germans whom the Nazis deemed "incurable" and hence "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 26, 1939

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, 1939

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, 1939

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

APRIL 9–JUNE 10, 1940

German troops invaded, defeated, and occupied Denmark and Norway.

JUNE 30, 1940

German authorities ordered the first major Jewish ghetto, in Lodz, 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, 1940

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, 1940

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

NOVEMBER 15, 1940

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.

APRIL 6, 1941

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

JUNE 22, 1941

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. In 1941–42, some 70,000–80,000 Jews fled eastward, evading the first wave of murder perpetrated by the German invaders.

JULY 20, 1941

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, 1941

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, 1941

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

SEPTEMBER 3, 1941

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, 1941

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, 1941

The Nazi government decreed that 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, 1941

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

OCTOBER 15, 1941

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

OCTOBER 28, 1941

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 1941

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, 1941

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

NOVEMBER 26, 1941

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, 1941

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, 1941

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

DECEMBER 8, 1941

Gassing operations began at Chelmno, one of six Nazi killing centers. Situated in the Polish territory annexed by Germany, Chelmno closed in March 1943 and resumed its killing operations during two months in the early summer of 1944. 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, 1941

Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

JANUARY 16, 1942

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

JANUARY 20, 1942

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, 1942

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, 1942

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 1942

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 1942

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, 1942

SS officials performed the first selection of victims for gassing at the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center. Weak, sick, and "unfit" prisoners were selected and housed in an isolation ward prior to being killed in the gas chambers. 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, 1942

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.

JULY 15, 1942

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, 1942

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, 1942

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, 1942

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.

JANUARY 18–22, 1943

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 15, 1943

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, 1943

In what is called the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Jewish fighters resisted the German attempt to liquidate the ghetto. German SS and police units deported many of those who survived the armed revolt to Treblinka, and sent others to Majdanek and forced labor camps at Trawniki and Poniatowa in the General Government. Some resistance fighters escaped from the ghetto and joined partisan groups in the forests around Warsaw. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the first mass revolt in Nazi-occupied Europe.

JUNE 21, 1943

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, 1943

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. The SS special detachment forced surviving prisoners to remove all remaining traces of the camp's existence. After the killing center was dismantled in November 1943, the special detachment shot the remaining prisoners.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1943

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

SEPTEMBER 23, 1943

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, 1943

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, 1943

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

NOVEMBER 3–4, 1943

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.

MARCH 19, 1944

German military units occupied Hungary.

MAY 15–JULY 9, 1944

Hungarian gendarmerie (rural police units), under the guidance of German SS officials, 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, 1944

D Day. British and American troops launched an invasion of France.

JUNE 22, 1944

A massive Soviet offensive destroyed the German front in Belorussia.

JULY 8–12, 1944

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, 1944

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

JULY 23, 1944

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, 1944

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, 1944

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, 1944

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, 1944

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, 1944

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

JANUARY 17, 1945

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, 1945

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

APRIL 11, 1945

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

APRIL 29, 1945

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

APRIL 30, 1945

Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin.

MAY 2, 1945

German units in Berlin surrendered to Soviet forces.

MAY 5, 1945

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, 1945

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, 1945

United States special envoy Earl Harrison made public a report to President Truman on the treatment of Jewish displaced persons (DPs) in Germany. Following World War II, several hundred thousand Jewish survivors were unable or unwilling to return to their home countries. 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, 1945

Japan surrendered. World War II officially ended.

NOVEMBER 20, 1945

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, 1945

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

JULY 4, 1946

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

AUGUST 1, 1946

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, 1946

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.

JULY 11, 1947

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, where it lay at anchor from more than a month.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1947

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, 1947

As the postwar Jewish refugee crisis escalated and relations between Jews and Arabs deteriorated, 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.

MAY 14, 1948

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 1948

Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act, authorizing 200,000 DPs to enter the United States in 1949 and 1950. Though at first the law's stipulations made it unfavorable to Jewish DPs, Congress amended the bill, and 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.

Jews cross a pedestrian bridge from one section of the Lodz ghetto (in Poland) to another. German guards control access to the ghetto from the street below—a main thoroughfare that is not part of the ghetto. (1941)

USHMM