

Holocaust Time line as published by Yad Vashem

Timeline

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8/1/1914

World War I Begins

Following the crisis touched off by the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo, Germany declared war on Russia and additional countries joined the war within several days. The Central Powers (Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire) fought against the Allied powers (Great Britain, France, and Russia). In November 1914, Turkey sided with the Central Powers; in 1915, Italy joined the Allies.

4/24/1915

The Armenian Genocide

In the first year of World War I, in the course of war between Turkey and Russia in the Armenian provinces of Turkey, the Turks questioned the Armenians' loyalties and drove them out of their homes. At least 1 million Armenians, about half of the Armenian population in Turkey, were murdered in the expulsion by the Turks.

11/2/1917

Balfour Declaration

The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Arthur James Balfour, proclaimed Britain's support of the creation of a national home for the Jews in Palestine. This declaration, given after British forces had already taken control of the southern part of Palestine and were about to occupy its north, transformed the Zionist vision into a political program that seemed attainable.

11/7/1917

Communist Revolution in Russia

In response to Russia's defeat on the front, Czar Nicholas II was dethroned in a revolution in March 1917 and a new government of mixed liberal-conservative complexion came into being. As political deadlock and defeats on the front continued, the socialists gained in popularity and their radical wing, the Bolshevik party, under Lenin, called for immediate peace and apportionment of land to the peasants. In November 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power. The new government concluded an armistice with Germany in December 1917 and a separate peace treaty with Germany in March 1918, but slid into a protracted civil war with its opponents.

1/8/1918

Wilson Presents "Fourteen Points" As Basis for World Peace

American President Woodrow Wilson unveiled his 14-point peace plan in a speech before both houses of Congress. The central provisions of the scheme were a German retreat from all territories occupied during the world war and from France in 1871; self-determination of various peoples in the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, and the establishment of a Polish state. The last clause in the plan prescribed the formation of a general organization of nations that would assure peaceably the independence and sovereignty of states large and small.

11/9/1918

Democratic Weimar Republic Established

Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany abdicated the imperial throne and fled to Holland. Governance in Germany went over to the socialist leader, Friedrich Ebert, who established a provisional government. A liberal-socialist coalition won the elections for the National Assembly on January 19, 1919, and the constitution of the new democratic republic was proclaimed in Weimar on September 19.

6/28/1919

Germany Signs Versailles Treaty

Representatives of the new German Republic signed a peace treaty in Versailles. The accord forced Germany to admit its guilt for instigating the war; to cede extensive territories in the west (to France), the east (to Poland), and the north (to Denmark); to accept substantial restrictions on the size of its armed forces; and to undertake to pay large reparations to France. Large groups in Germany considered these commitments a national humiliation that had to be reversed. A subsequent treaty signed at Trianon of 1920 left Hungary one-third of its prewar territory and two-fifths of its population, thus fueling Hungarian discontent throughout the inter-war period.

2/24/1920

Nazi Party Established

The evolution of organized National Socialism began with the formation of the German Workers' Party in Munich on January 5, 1919, out of a small right-wing group headed by Anton Drexler that was noted for fanatic antisemitism. On February 24, 1920, it was reconstituted as the National-Socialist Democratic Workers' Party -the NSDAP-or the Nazi Party for short. Nazi ideology was predicated from the outset on antisemitism, populism, racism, and pan-Germanism. The master-race idea, a virulent anti-Bolshevism and the vision of German conquest of Lebensraum ("living space") in the East were dominant from the very beginning. Adolf Hitler joined the party on September 12, 1919, and, after a brief career as the party propagandist, became its leader in 1921. The 1920 party platform, elaborated by Hitler and Drexler, included clauses concerning the army, the nation, society, the economy, and antisemitism. By 1923, the party was active in various places, foremost in Bavaria. A short time later, it earned a reputation as an aggressive ultra-national movement by stirring up political ferment by means of sensational tactics, such as confrontational provocations by the party's SA storm-trooper organization and various actions based on the fascist model (street parades, mass rallies, etc.). At that time, Nazi influence was especially strong among German-racialist and nationalist organizations in Bavaria. As an immediate result of this, Hitler headed a failed attempt to bring the Weimar government down by means of an armed putsch in Munich, on November 9, 1923. The party was outlawed for a short time; Hitler spent nine months in prison. Shortly after his release, the Nazi Party was re-established and spread from Bavaria to western and northern Germany. Under the influence of brothers Gregor and Otto Strasser and Joseph Goebbels, the NSDAP took on the character of a pronounced anti-bourgeois, national revolutionary, and social revolutionary party. In elections to the Reichstag in 1924, the Nazis won only 3 percent of the vote. Their dramatic ascent began in the 1930s, the party's parliamentary strength rising from 18.3 percent in 1930, to 37.3 percent in 1932, and 43.9 percent in elections held on March 5, 1933 (by then the Nazi's were already in power). Party membership climbed from 6,000 in 1922 to 8.5 million in 1945. Much of the party's popularity before the accession was based on mass mobilization (rallies, demonstrations) and other modern forms of political expression. In the Nazi regime of the 1930s, the annual party conferences and accompanying pageantry in Nuremberg became central public features in German political life. The Nazi Party was typified by a centralized, authoritarian structure based on the Fuehrerprinzip (the "leadership principle"). The party leader, Adolf Hitler, headed it; below him was the deputy Fuehrer. Organizationally, the party was run by eighteen party officials at the rank of regional leader (Reichsleiter); territorially, the party was managed by thirty-two Gauleiters. The party's institutions included the SA, the SS, and the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend).

10/24/1922

Mussolini, Fascists March on Rome

On October 24, 1922, Benito Mussolini, leader of the Fascist party in Italy, announced at a conference in Naples his intent to seize power by marching on Rome. Six days later, some 40,000 armed Fascists entered Rome without resistance and the king appointed Mussolini to the Italian premiership. Initially the head of a coalition government, Mussolini gradually transformed himself into the dictator of a one-party state.

1/11/1923

Occupation of the Ruhr Leads to Hyper-Inflation in the Weimar Republic

The economic crisis, prompted by war damage and the burden of compensation, sent the German economy into a severe inflationary spiral. In an effort to force the Germans to pay reparations, France invaded the Ruhr region of Germany on 11 January 1923. As a result, the mark plunged to one ten-thousandth of its original value; by the autumn of that year, inflation peaked as the mark plummeted to one-trillionth of its original value.

11/8/1923

Hitler's Putsch Fails

Hitler attempted to seize power in Bavaria (southern Germany) by capturing its capital, Munich. He and Ludendorff, Roehm, and Goering planned to seize Munich and set out from there to Berlin. The Nazi putsch failed; Hitler was arrested. Sentenced to five years in prison, he was released after obtaining a pardon in December 1924 after serving only nine months.

10/5/1925

Locarno Conference Convenes to Prevent War between Germany and Western Neighbors

In an agreement signed pursuant to a conference held in Locarno, Germany recognized the western border stipulated in the Versailles Treaty and undertook not to send armed forces into the Rhineland region after the occupying powers evacuated it. The agreement belonged to a set of political actions by the German Prime Minister, Gustav Stresemann, who, in the mid-1920s, stabilized Germany's status in Europe and improved relations with the West and with the Soviet Union.

10/25/1929

Black Friday: New York Stock Exchange Crashes

The collapse of the New York Stock Exchange prompted a severe economic crisis in the United States and, in its wake, around the world. In response to the crisis, the American electorate installed Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the White House in the 1932 presidential elections. Roosevelt's far-reaching program, the New Deal, intensified federal-government involvement in economic life and helped pull the country out of its malaise.

11/6/1932

Nazis Take 33.1 Percent of Vote in Reichstag Elections

In the Reichstag elections in 1924, the Nazis received only 3 percent of the votes and were considered a phantom party. The political and economic crises that swept Germany in the late 1920s animated a dramatic Nazi ascent in the 1930s, the party's parliamentary strength increasing apace. In the so-called "disaster elections" in 1930, the Nazis took 18.3 percent of the vote. As parliamentary crises continued to afflict Germany, new elections were called in July 1932; this time, the Nazis earned 37.3 percent of the vote and became the largest party in the Reichstag. President Paul von Hindenburg, who had misgivings about Hitler, refused to appoint him to the chancellorship; Hitler, in turn, refused to join any coalition. The

Conservative minority government did not hold on, and the electorate went to the polls again in November. In these elections, the strength of the Nazi Party slipped to 33.1 percent; many believed that the party had passed its peak and would begin to decline. The Conservative leader, Franz von Papen, held the chancellorship a little longer but was forced to resign amidst increasingly frequent coalition crises. In early December, the Defense Minister, Kurt von Schleicher, was named chancellor. His government, too, was not long-lived, and it fell on January 28, 1933. Hindenburg had little choice but to appoint Hitler to the premiership.

1/30/1933

Hitler becomes Chancellor

Several days after the November 1932 elections, the Reichstag rejected the program of the incumbent Chancellor, Franz von Papen, for a "government of national concentration." In response, von Papen resigned. Hitler asked President Paul von Hindenburg to appoint him chancellor, but the president refused, feeling that Hitler would use the office to amass dictatorial power. In early December, he appointed the Minister of Defense, Kurt von Schleicher, to the premiership, but he, too, resigned less than two months later. Now Hindenburg chose Hitler by recommendation of the Conservatives, who thought they could manipulate him for their purposes. The new era started out modestly; only three of the 11 ministers in Hitler's government were Nazis. (Hitler, Wilhelm Frick, minister of the interior and Goering, minister for Prussia). Swiftly, however, Hitler took over all mechanisms of governance and functions of state, making Nazi Germany a totalitarian dictatorship.

2/3/1933

Hitler presents Lebensraum program

Hitler revealed his political goals in a speech to the leading army and navy commanders. He spoke of the need for an authoritarian state purged of Marxism and pacifism, the occupation of living space in the East for the German people, rearmament, and resistance to the Versailles Treaty. He stressed the importance of the military and promised not to involve it in domestic political disputes. Hitler's purpose in making these remarks was to earn the generals' support for his regime.

2/27/1933

Reichstag arson leads to state of emergency

Shortly before election day, the Reichstag building went up in flames—most probably at the initiative of the Nazis themselves. Hearing about the arson, Hitler reportedly first said, "Now I've got them in my hands." The Nazis exploited the torching of the Reichstag to describe the act as a manifestation of an attempted Communist putsch and, on the basis of this allegation, to legitimize an all-out war against the Communists. That very night, Goering declared a supreme state of emergency throughout his police forces. The Nazis rounded up 4,000 political activists, mostly Communists, but including several non-Communist intellectuals. The headquarters and newspaper editorial boards of the Social-Democratic party were taken over. The heads of the Communist party in the Reichstag turned themselves over to the police voluntarily to prove that the charges were groundless. The next morning, Hitler presented President von Hindenburg with an emergency order, ready for his signature, that voided important basic civil rights, expanded substantially the list of crimes that carried the death penalty, and vastly boosted the central government's powers to pressure the individual states. The police were now empowered to imprison suspects and extend remand indefinitely at their discretion. They could keep relatives utterly uninformed about the reason for the arrest and the fate of the imprisoned person. They could prevent lawyers or other people from visiting detainees and reviewing their files. No court was entitled to intervene. The emergency order, "for the protection of the people and the State," was augmented that very day by an order "against treason and treachery." The two orders became the basis of jurisprudence and the foundation stones of the Nazi dictatorship. Thus, the emergency order of February 28, 1933, read:

"Paragraphs 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153 in the German Reich Constitution are provisionally null and void. Accordingly, the restrictions on personal freedom and the right to express opinions freely, including freedoms of the press, association, and assembly; monitoring of letters, cables, and telephone calls, searches of homes, and expropriation of property, and restrictions thereon, are hereby revoked within the limits previously stipulated in the law."

The order, to be in effect until 1945, replaced constitutional rule with a perpetual state of emergency.

3/5/1933

Reichstag elections: Nazis gain 44 percent of vote

The main reason for the elections on March 5, 1933, was Hitler's aim to strengthen his grip and attain total Nazi Party control of Germany. Hitler brought about the new elections after he was appointed Chancellor on January 31. Despite their aggressive propaganda and the climate of terrorism that they fomented as election day approached, the Nazis came away with only 44 percent of the vote. Although this represented an 11-percentage-point increase relative to the previous elections in November 1932, Hitler still had to form a coalition government.

3/22/1933

Dachau camp established

The new Nazi regime established the first concentration camp about 15 kilometers northwest of Munich, at a site where a munitions factory had stood until it was abandoned in the wake of the economic crisis. Heinrich Himmler dedicated the camp, meant to contain 5,000 prisoners, at a press conference on March 20. The first group of prisoners—mostly Communists, Social-Democrats, and homosexuals—was taken there on March 22. Bavarian police guarded the prisoners until April 11, when the SS took over. Theodor Eicke, appointed commandant of the camp in June 1933, elaborated its organizational structure and its detailed rules. When Eicke was placed in charge of all concentration camps, he applied the rules and the regimen that he had developed at Dachau elsewhere, too. Because the institution Eicke developed was meant, by its very existence, to sow fear among the population, it became an efficient tool in silencing opponents of the regime. The first Jewish detainees were among the best-known political opponents of the Nazi regime, since Dachau was a "political camp" throughout its 12-year tenure. However, Jews were treated more harshly than other prisoners. Gradually, members of the Sinti and Roma peoples (Gypsies) were imprisoned there, along with the regime's political opponents, and more than 10,000 Jews from all over Germany were interned there after the Kristallnacht pogrom. From autumn 1937 until the autumn of 1941, those who could prove that they were about to leave Germany were released. When the systematic genocide of Jews began, the Jewish prisoners were deported from Dachau and other camps in the Reich to the extermination camps in the East.

3/24/1933

Enabling Act

The Nazis hoped in the March 5, 1933, elections to obtain an absolute majority that would allow them to rule without hindrances. However, because they came away with only 44 percent of the votes, they sought another way to establish a dictatorship: They sponsored the Enabling Act, a bill that would give Hitler's government dictatorial powers for four years. To make sure the law passed, the Nazis imprisoned Communists and took actions to soften up public opinion, especially among conservative parties. Several days before the elections, the Nazis held a meticulously staged ceremony in Potsdam. Hitler was depicted that day as a conservative national leader and not as the head of a radical party. He promised that the law would, in no way, be detrimental to the Reichstag, the presidency, and the municipal government. The moment it passed, however, the democratic constitution was abrogated and Nazi Party rule faced no further obstacles. On March 23, 1933, Hitler pushed the Enabling Act through the Reichstag and thus equipped his government with dictatorial powers, first for four years and afterwards indefinitely. The regime invoked the new law to rescind the democratic freedoms of the Weimar Republic and to dissolve political parties and

organizations. Thus, in a pseudo-legal process, Hitler consolidated his dictatorship-which, contrary to his promises, was in no way provisional. The disempowerment of the Reichstag is an example of the way the Nazis usurped and emasculated Germany's governing institutions, but refrained from destroying them in order to portray the dictatorship as a soundly functioning state. When the Enabling Act passed, the Nazi newspaper Voelkische Beobachter proclaimed it a "historic day." The parliamentary regime succumbed to the new Germany. For four years, Hitler could do anything he pleased-by negation, to destroy the corrosive forces of Marxism; and by affirmation, to establish a new German-racial society. The great enterprise was underway. "The day of the Third Reich has come!"

4/1/1933

Boycott of Jewish businesses

By decision of the party leaders, a boycott of Jewish-owned businesses was proclaimed. A party committee organized it down to its finest minutiae. It was to begin at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 1, 1933, throughout Germany, from major cities to small villages. A uniform format was stipulated: Vigils of uniformed Nazis, some armed with rifles, would station themselves in front of every Jewish-owned shop, business, or professional office and keep customers or inquirers from entering. Concurrently, cars circulated in the street broadcasting slogans condemning buying from Jews. Businesses of Jews originally from Eastern Europe suffered particularly. In contrast to the original plans, the official boycott was halted after only one day. The boycott, the first countrywide action against German Jewry after the Nazi takeover, legitimized anti-Jewish activity and gave it an official sanction that it had lacked until then. The boycott expressed the inception of a policy, which would gather momentum, of ousting Jews from economic and business affairs and undermining the economic basis of German Jewish existence. Despite the declared end of the boycott, unofficial, local-initiated boycott activities continued throughout Germany on a smaller scale.

4/7/1933

Civil Service "Reform"

The early days of the Nazi regime were characterized by actions designed to alienate the Jews from key positions in the community and the German administration.

The "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" was one of the means to this end.

Excerpts from the Law:

"To restore a national professional civil service and to simplify administration, civil servants may be dismissed from office in accordance with the following regulations, even where there would be no grounds for such action under the prevailing Law.

[...]

Civil servants who have entered the service since November 9, 1918, without possessing the required or customary educational background or other qualifications are to be dismissed from the service. [...] They will have no claim to temporary pensions, full pensions or survivors' benefits, nor to retain designation of rank or titles, or to wear uniforms or emblems....

1) Civil servants who are not of Aryan descent are to be retired.... if they are honorary officials, they are to be dismissed from their official status.

2) Section 1 does not apply to civil servants in office from August 1, 1914, who fought at the Front for the German Reich or its Allies in the World War, or whose fathers or sons fell in the World War. Other

exceptions may be permitted by the Reich Minister of the Interior in coordination with the Minister concerned or with the highest authorities with respect to civil servants working abroad.”

Reich Chancellor: Adolf Hitler

Reich Minister of Interior: Wilhelm Frick

Reich Minister of Finance: Graf Schwerin von Krosigk

4/21/1933

Jewish ritual slaughter banned

Jewish ritual slaughter was fallaciously portrayed by Nazi propaganda as a cruelty that inflicted much suffering on animals. On April 21, Jewish ritual slaughter was banned in Germany. Some slaughterers continued to work secretly, in order to provide observant Jews with kosher meat. However, as Jews were gradually ousted from the livestock trade, this became increasingly difficult.

4/25/1933

School quota system

The Law against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning set a Jewish quota of 1.5 percent of high-school and university enrollment, and stipulated a limit of 5-percent Jewish enrollment in any single school. Because a compulsory education law was in effect, Jewish enrollment in primary schools was not limited for the time being. However, growing numbers of Jews voluntarily moved to purely Jewish settings by 1938, when they were totally barred from general institutions. In autumn 1941, the Jewish schools were closed by administrative order.

5/2/1933

Dissolution of German Trade Unions

To encourage the working class to support the new regime, the Nazis sought to take over the trade unions. Union officials and leaders became targets of harassment and imprisonment, and union leaders were ousted from their positions, but the Nazi trade organization failed to establish a power base among the working class. On May 1, the regime held opulent May Day festivities, including parades and a festive speech by Hitler. The next day, the headquarters of all the free trade unions were seized and their leaders thrown into prison. In the course of May and June, the unions were dissolved and a German Labor Front was established under Robert Ley.

5/10/1933

Nazis burn thousands of anti-Nazi, Jewish-authored, and "degenerate" books

The rationale behind public book-burning, the suppression of free speech and ideas, swiftly evolved into a general tactic that was cast into an administrative framework. Joseph Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda undertook the supervision of all aspects of cultural and intellectual life. In December of that year, more than 1,000 titles and the complete works of several authors were banned. By the end of the next year, more than 4,000 publications were so treated. Goebbels set up a dense network of 41 propaganda officers across the Reich. After the Nazis completed their takeover of radio broadcasts in the spring of 1933, the Nazis turned against the press. Orders and restrictions were placed on publishing houses, limiting freedom of the press to a small domain that the press could find between the lines. Intermittent acts of book-burning continued across Germany throughout the year.

7/14/1933

Forced sterilization

In July 1933, the "Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring," which had been initiated by Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick, was put into effect. This law required the forced sterilization of German citizens with congenital disabilities such as "feeble-mindedness," schizophrenia, manic depression, epilepsy, and more. The sterilizations were performed by doctors throughout the Reich.

- Anyone who has a hereditary illness can be rendered sterile by a surgical operation, if according to the experience of medical science, there is a strong probability that his/her progeny will suffer from serious hereditary defects of a physical or mental nature.
- Anyone is hereditarily ill within the meaning of the law who suffers from one of the following illnesses:
 - Congenital feeble-mindedness
 - Schizophrenia
 - Manic depression
 - Hereditary epilepsy
 - Huntington's chorea
 - Hereditary blindness
 - Hereditary deafness
 - Serious physical deformities
- In addition, anyone who suffers from chronic alcoholism can be sterilized.
- Proceedings before the Hereditary Health Courts are not public.
- If the court finally decides upon sterilization, the operation must be performed even if it is against the wishes of the person to be sterilized, unless that person was solely responsible for the application.

The medical officer is responsible for requesting the necessary measures to be taken by the police authorities. Insofar as other measures prove insufficient, the use of force is permissible."

It is estimated that between 200,000 to 350,000 individuals were sterilized between 1933 and 1945.

7/14/1933

Germany proclaimed a one-party state

Once the Enabling Act was passed, the government no longer needed legislators' votes to pass laws. In fact, other parties had already been banned. The property of the SPD (buildings, newspapers, and the exchequer) was confiscated on May 10. Many of this party's deputies to the Reichstag were placed in custody. On June 23, the Conservative Party was ordered officially to dissolve. On June 27, the DNVP decided to deactivate itself, most of its members already having resigned or joined the Nazi Party. On July 14, 1933, a one-party state was ordained in a statement that forbade the formation of any other party.

7/14/1933

Denaturalization law

The law canceled all naturalizations between November 9, 1918, and January 30, 1933. Most of those affected were Eastern European Jews who had immigrated to Germany in the wake of the First World War.

7/20/1933

Nazi government signs Concordat with the Vatican

On July 20, 1933, the Vatican Chancellery in Rome held a ceremony in which the Holy See concluded a Concordat with Nazi Germany. Representing the Germans was Franz von Papen, the deputy chancellor; the Vatican was represented by Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli—the initiator and architect of the Concordat, the secretary of state, and subsequently Pope Pius XII (1939-1958). The occasion gave Hitler an important diplomatic victory, while preserving a modicum of space for Catholic independence of action in Germany.

8/20/1933

American Jewish Congress declares boycott against Nazi Germany

As soon as the persecution of German Jews began, various public figures in American Jewry, headed by Stephen Wise, a Zionist and the head of the American Jewish Congress, bruited proposals for tough action against Germany. Large segments of American Jewry were reluctant to defend German Jewry publicly because of antisemitism in America and the prevailing isolationist climate. Nevertheless, on March 19, 1933, the Association of American Jewish War Veterans declared a boycott of German manufacturers in response to preparations for the April 1 boycott in Germany, and in August the American Jewish Congress issued a boycott statement of its own. American Jewry, divided and fragmented, did not lend full and organized support to the boycott activity.

8/25/1933

Ha'avara Agreement

Nazi Germany and the Jewish Agency concluded the "Ha'avara" (transfer) negotiations, allowing Jews immigrating to Palestine to deposit part of their assets in Germany and receive Palestine pounds upon arrival in Palestine. After three months of talks, the Zionist Federation of Germany, the Anglo-Palestine Bank, and the German economic authorities signed the agreement, which permitted the transfer of Jews' capital from Germany to Palestine by immigrants or investors in the form of goods. The German authorities thereby partially removed a barrier that had greatly impeded the efforts of German Jews to emigrate to Palestine and, at the same time, increased the production and export of German goods. For the Zionists, the agreement facilitated immigration to Palestine by allowing Jewish emigres to salvage some of the value of their property as they left, and to meet one of the criteria for obtaining a certificate of immigration from the British authorities. For a time, the Ha'avara Agreement helped the Nazis in undermining the anti-Nazi boycott.

9/13/1933

Race theory in German schools

Racism was an essential component of the Nazi worldview, and from the moment they rose to power, the Nazis sought to make it an integral and binding part of all areas of life. To help assimilate the racial worldview, study of heredity and "racial science" was made a compulsory and tested subject for all pupils.

9/17/1933

Reich representation of German Jews established

The *Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden*, the Reich Representation of German Jews, was the central organization of German Jewry under the Nazi regime. When the Nazis came to power, German Jewry did not really have a comprehensive organization of representational nature. Only in September 1933 was this inclusive, federative representative agency established, composed and empowered to cope with German Jewry's grave existential problems under the new totalitarian regime. The organization was headed by Rabbi Leo Baeck, but the motive, spirit, and force were provided by its director, Otto Hirsch. Alongside them was an administration that represented the main political and religious organizations. The *Reichsvertretung* aspired to embrace all aspects of German Jewish internal affairs and to represent the community as such vis-a-vis the German authorities and Jewish organizations outside Germany. Its main fields of activity, arranged by the *Zentralausschuss der Deutschen Juden fuer Hilfe und Aufbau* (Central Committee of German Jews for Relief and Reconstruction) were:

- Education, including the promotion and expansion of Jewish schools, and extensive adult education activity.
- Vocational training and retraining for the growing number of Jews who had lost their means of livelihood, and primarily to prepare them for emigration.

- Welfare services for the rising population of the needy and for nursing homes, hospitals, and related institutions. Jewish welfare increasingly had to compensate for the rescinding of support by local government welfare authorities.
- Economic assistance, including the establishment of labor exchanges and loan funds.
- Emigration, handled by the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden (German Jews' Aid Society) and, with respect to emigration to Palestine, by the Palestine Office.

Extensive cultural activity was promoted by the *Kulturbund Deutscher Juden* (Cultural Society of German Jews), which remained autonomous until late 1941. The *Reichsvertretung's* intensive operations, which enabled German Jews to cope with the grim effects of state discrimination and persecution, relied heavily on Jewish welfare associations around the world but, foremost, on the volunteering spirit and mutual assistance of German Jews themselves.

In its contacts with the authorities, the *Reichsvertretung* sought to safeguard the physical and moral existence of German Jewry, and considered itself competent to respond to major anti-Jewish events such as the Nuremberg Laws and the spate of terrorism in the summer of 1938. Although it was not recognized under law, the authorities recognized the *Reichsvertretung* de facto as the sole representative of the Jews in Germany vis-a-vis the Reich government. After the legal status of the *kehillah* (Jewish community organization) was nullified, the *Reichsvertretung* reconstituted itself as a national kehillah of sorts by forming "a national association of Jews in Germany", The *Reichsvereinigung*. In July 1939, the regime officially recognized this organization, which was placed under Gestapo supervision, thus empowering it to be active in emigration, education, and welfare. From then until 1943, the *Reichsvereinigung*, was the only organization in Germany that dealt with Jewish survival. The last of its leaders, including Rabbi Leo Baeck, were deported to Theresienstadt in the first half of that year, and it was officially abolished in July.

Some scholars regard the organization's work as an expression of the will to preserve and foster the authentic character and basic values of German Jewry even under the totalitarian and racist regime. As such, they consider its activities "spiritual resistance." For others, however, precisely these aims were illusions and, indeed, a tragic error, which may perhaps have prevented sufficient emphasis from being placed on emigration efforts that could have saved lives..

9/22/1933

Reich Chamber of Culture Law

The law hinged professional activity in literature, the arts, press, theater, and music on membership in a corresponding "chamber." Such membership was denied to Jews.

10/14/1933

Germany quits League of Nations and disarmament talks

The Nazi regime's first measure in foreign policy was to pull out of the League of Nations on October 14, 1933. This step, meant to release Germany from international controls over its rearmament, marked a departure from the Weimar policy. As a result, Germany could no longer claim that it was pursuing the conciliatory policy that it had adopted in the 1920s. The idea of German disarmament gradually receded.

1/26/1934

German-Polish non-aggression pact

Germany and Poland signed a 10-year non-aggression pact: "...The moment has arrived for inaugurating a new era in Polish-German political relations by means of direct communications between the two countries." It was proposed by Hitler, and Poland never consulted France, its chief ally. Germany was signaling that it had no quarrel with Poland, but only with Communist Russia. Warsaw had concluded it could no longer rely on outside support in preserving Poland's independence. The treaty stated that neither

signatory would "proceed to use force in order to settle" disputes. The pact was also significant in that Poland became the first nation to enter into a harmonious relationship with the new Nazi regime. Warsaw was anxious to avoid becoming involved in the quarrels of Poland's neighbors, and the pact accurately reflected a Polish policy of trying to maintain friendly relations with all powers.

6/30/1934

"Night of the Long Knives"

Ernst Roehm was one of the first members of the Nazi Party. He took part in the Beer-Hall Putsch of 1923, but after the trial he was released. After the victory of the Nazis in the 1930 election he was appointed commander of the SA by Hitler, which at that time had about 170,000 members. Following the Nazi seizure of power Roehm wanted the SA to be incorporated into the German Army. He was bitterly opposed by high ranking army officers and by Hitler, who was afraid that Roehm would try to seize power as the head of a military government. Hitler ordered the liquidation of the SA. On June 30, 1934 Roehm and other SA leaders were arrested and shot - this purge was later known as "The Night of the Long Knives."

7/25/1934

Nazi putsch in Austria fails

The policy of threats that Hitler applied against Austrian Premier Engelbert Dollfuss in 1933-1934 prompted the latter to conclude an alliance with Mussolini. After establishing an Italian-style dictatorship, Dollfuss began taking measures leading to the political liquidation of his opponents, including Austrian Nazis. In response, the latter assassinated Dollfuss on July 25, 1934, hoping thereby to exploit the assassination for a putsch. The putsch failed; Germany denied all involvement in the affair.

8/2/1934

Hindenburg dies

German President Paul von Hindenburg died on August 2, 1934, at the age of 86. Although the superannuated president gave the regime an aura of continuity and legitimacy, he possessed no political power and played no role in state affairs. After Hindenburg's death, Hitler merged the offices of chancellor and president and became the Reichsfuehrer, thereby making him the sole and unrivalled leader of Germany.

1/13/1935

Germany reclaims Saar region

In early 1935, as part of their attempts to undo the decisions of the Versailles agreement and expand the Reich borders to include all members of the "Aryan-German race," the Nazis began to create facts on the ground. On January 13, 1935, after a plebiscite held in the Saar region, in which the local population voted overwhelmingly to come under German rule, Germany proclaimed the liberation of this region (which had been annexed by France after World War I), and re-annexed it.

2/10/1935

Prohibition of gatherings urging Jews to remain in Germany

In its first few years, the Nazi policy against German Jews sought to separate German society from Jewish society in every possible respect and, practically speaking, to rescind the Jewish emancipation in Germany. Large groups of Jews, at one level or another, wished at precisely this time to strengthen their German identity and affiliation. The February 10 legislation, outlawing assemblies that encouraged Jews to remain in Germany, was one of a series of laws, orders, and regulations meant to fight this trend of thought. In contrast, Jewish activities in the Third Reich that urged Jews to dissimilate, if not to emigrate, were given

official approval and even support. On this basis, the interests of various Nazi establishment figures and Zionist groups sometimes converged and even led to ad-hoc cooperation.

3/16/1935

Military conscription in Germany

On March 16, 1935, pursuant to his efforts to reverse provisions of the Versailles accords that were adverse to Germany, Hitler ordered the enactment of a conscription law. The Versailles treaty allowed Germany to have no more than 100,000 men under arms; the new statute promised to multiply this figure many times over. Thus, Germany abrogated another provision of the agreements that had aimed to contain her.

5/12/1935

Death of Pilsudski

Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, leader of Poland, dies.

Until Pilsudski's death, Poland was governed by a coalition of minorities, with members representing the Jews, the Ukrainians, the Germans, and other minorities living in Poland. After his death, a right-wing, antisemitic coalition came to power, and life became more difficult for the Jews of Poland.

5/31/1935

German army becomes "all-Aryan"

On March 16, 1935, the German government promulgated the Formation of the Wehrmacht (German Army) Law. Although the law stipulated that service in the Wehrmacht be performed on the basis of general compulsory service, Jews would not be allowed to serve in its ranks. In a letter to the Minister of War, Werner von Blomberg, on March 23, members of the Reichsvertretung complained that the law deprived Jews of the right to be German soldiers. Their protest on this account was to no avail.

6/11/1935

"Jews Not Welcome" signs temporarily removed

By order of the Ministry of Propaganda, prompted by the upcoming Winter Olympics in Germany, "Jews Not Welcome" signs on main streets vanished quietly. This was one of the measures that Nazi agencies adopted to improve Germany's image in the eyes of the outside world as the Olympics approached. This measure, like others that sought to restrain anti-Jewish activity to some extent, created the feeling that the anti-Jewish policy had eased. Indeed, many observers-Jewish and non-Jewish, German and non-German-"took the bait" and believed that the Nazis' anti-Jewish spree had peaked and was petering out. Thus, the Nazis enhanced their image considerably; many foreign visitors and journalists returned to their home countries with a feeling that the complaints about the condition of German Jewry had been overstated. Importantly, however, the easing of policy was temporary and for outside consumption only. Some of the most crucial decisions concerning the Jews, such as the Four-Year Plan, were made by the Nazis soon thereafter-1936, the Olympic year.

6/18/1935

German-British Naval Agreement Concluded

Germany and Britain signed a naval agreement limiting Germany's fleet to 35 percent of Britain's surface craft and 45 percent of its submarines. This deeply upset the French, since Paris doubted Britain's sincerity in an alliance against Germany. France also thought Britain was signaling approval of German rearmament-which it was, of course. The agreement was the first time that a European power not only condoned, but agreed to, an overt violation of the Versailles treaty.

9/15/1935

Nuremberg Laws enacted

The term "Nuremberg Laws" refers to anti-Jewish legislation adopted at the Nazi Party Convention, where the Reichstag were guests, in Nuremberg on September 15, 1935. Two swiftly elaborated acts brought about the final legal and social separation of Jews and non-Jews in Germany. The Reich Citizenship Law deprived Jews of electoral rights and made them into second-class citizens. The immediate result was the dismissal of all Jewish civil servants, employees, and workers who still held their jobs. The Citizenship Law provided the legal basis for 13 subsequent administrative orders.

The second law endorsed by the Reichstag that day was the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor. This statute forbade Jews to marry nationals of German or kindred blood. In the wake of this law, a complicated classification system was enacted, defining various degrees of Jewishness according to how many grandparents were Jews, i.e., members of the Jewish community: "full Jew," "considered Jewish," etc. Each degree had its own specified privileges, rights, and disabilities. Aryans and German blood were never defined.

The law is a clear expression of Nazi racial ideology, and also clearly illustrates the pseudo-science behind it. Individual Jews were defined by their lineage (an objective biological criterion), but the root of their lineage (their grandparents' identity as Jews) was determined by "membership in the Jewish religious community," a most subjective and non-scientific criterion.

10/30/1935

Italy attacks Ethiopia

Fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia. The Ethiopians' appeal to the League of Nations did not result in substantive intervention, because of British and French appeasement policies. The Italians overran Ethiopia after half a year of combat; the country's Emperor, Haile Selassie, went into exile. The Italian occupation lasted until the British liberated the country in 1941, whereupon the emperor reclaimed his throne.

11/14/1935

Additions to Nuremberg Laws

On November 14, 1935, the Nuremberg Laws of September 15-the Reich Citizenship Law, and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor-were augmented by the first two of 13 regulations issued through July 1943. The regulations were meant to complement the process that the Nuremberg Laws symbolized: the eviction of German Jews from all fields of life in Germany. The November 14, 1935, regulations were: a) Regulation No. 1 to the Reich Citizenship Law, which deprived Jews of the right to vote and the right to hold government positions (resulting in the dismissal of Jewish civil servants); and, b) Regulation No. 1 to the Protection of German Blood and German Honor Law, prohibiting miscegenation between Jews and second-degree *Mischlinge*.

3/7/1936

Germans enter Rhineland

On March 7, 1936, exploiting disagreements among the Western powers and their preoccupation with the crisis in Ethiopia, Hitler occupied the Rhineland region, which had been demilitarized since the Versailles accords. Hitler had made up his mind to occupy this area in February, regarding the signing of a French-Soviet agreement in early March as a pretext to breach the 1925 Locarno accords, which had ended the border dispute between Germany and France. Despite this act of aggression, the European powers refrained from taking meaningful action against Germany.

3/15/1936

Mass anti-Nazi rally in New York

The Jewish Labor Joint Boycott Council, established by the American Jewish Congress in 1936, advocated a boycott of German-manufactured goods and sponsored a series of protest demonstrations against the persecution of Jews in Germany. However, the full spectrum of Jewish organizations did not join ranks for action of this kind, because of disunity among American Jews and disagreements on how to treat Germany.

6/17/1936

Himmler appointed Chief of Police

On June 17, 1936, Reichsfuehrer-SS Heinrich Himmler was named chief of police for all German states. The appointment created a centralized police command, entrusted de facto to the SS; until then, the police had been subordinate to the individual state governments. The effect was to give the SS an autonomous status and to erase the line that separated a party from a government institution. This is a clear example of one of the principal ways in which the Nazis sought to Nazify German society. Upon his appointment, Himmler reorganized the police by drawing a clear distinction between the *Ordnungspolizei* ("Order Police") and the *Sicherheitspolizei* ("Security Police"). The Order Police were tasked with ordinary police affairs; the Security Police imposed ideological control in the name of the central regime.

7/16/1936

Spanish Civil War begins

The war began when military forces under General Francisco Franco staged a coup against the Republican government, in order to establish an authoritarian right-wing regime. The insurrectionists were opposed by a coalition of liberals, socialists, and Communists. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy helped the rebels almost from the beginning of the war. On the other hand, volunteers from throughout the world fought on the Republican side, seeing the war as a chance to take a clear stand against, and stop the spirit of, Fascism. After heavy losses, the insurrectionists won the war and set up a dictatorship under Franco in early 1939.

8/1/1936

Olympic Games begin in Berlin

The Berlin Olympiad was one of the Nazis' greatest propaganda victories. Visitors and journalists were impressed by Germany's order, discipline, and might. It even seemed that the Jews had vastly overstated their suffering. Even the president of the United States was misled. In a conversation with the president of the World Jewish Congress, Stephen Wise, Roosevelt said that, according to two witnesses who had been in Germany, the synagogues were full and there seemed nothing especially grim about the situation at that time. Indeed, the Nazis made every effort to portray Germany as a respectable member of the community of nations and to soft-pedal the persecution of Jews. In the buildup to the Winter Games, anti-Jewish signs were removed from main streets and overt anti-Jewish activity was restrained. In response to pressure from foreign Olympic delegations, several *Mischlinge* and one full-blooded Jew, the ice-hockey player Rudi Ball, were placed on the German team.

In the United States, the question of participating in the Olympics became a matter of public debate. On October 22, 1935, General Charles Sherrill, a ranking American representative on the International Olympic Committee, wrote the following in the *The New York Times*:

There is grave danger in this Olympic agitation. Consider the effect on several hundred-thousand youngsters training for this contest throughout the United States, if the boycott movement gets so far that they suddenly are confronted with the fact that somebody is trying to defeat their ambition to get to Berlin and compete in the Olympic Games. We are almost certain to have a wave of Anti-Semitism among those who never before gave it a thought, and who may consider that about 5,000,000 Jews in this country are using the athletes representing 120,000,000 Americans to work out something to help the German Jews....

This Anti-Semitism resulting here might last for years. In response to Sherrill's remarks, the Committee on Fair Play in Sport made the following statement in the *New York Times* of October 23, 1935:

He has gratuitously attempted to make the Olympic Games a purely Jewish issue. The issue is not Jewry against Germany, but fair play. It has been denied not only Jewish athletes in Germany, but also to Catholic and Protestant sport clubs which do not accept Nazi doctrines of conscience. General Sherrill's attitude that the Jews should not stir up too much row lest they invite suppression in this country, as well as in Germany, marks him as an unconscious Anti-Semite, even conceding that he sincerely believes he is a friend of the Jews. The Germans, in turn, considered sports one of the arenas in which they should wage a struggle to justify their doctrines. For example, Goebbels wrote in his diary on June 20, shortly before the games began, about the victory of the German boxer Max Schmeling over the American Joe Louis in the heavyweight championships: "Schmeling fought and won for Germany. The white trounced the black, and the white was a German." However, Goebbels's remarks on the first day of the games were less jubilant: "We Germans won a gold medal and the Americans won three, two of them by blacks. White humankind should be ashamed. But for what does that count there, in that uncultured country?"

The person who most angered the Germans was the black runner Jesse Owens, who won four gold medals, set several world records, and earned the following half-enraged, half-gloating headline in the *The New York Times*: "Hitler Ignores Black Medallist."

9/9/1936

Four-Year Plan

The Four-Year Plan was the Nazis' economic program to prepare Germany for war. Adolf Hitler personally wrote the memorandum for the plan in August 1936. In this, this intervention in economic policy, Hitler personally set forth the goals of the upcoming war and stipulated a timetable for intensified rearmament. The goals were twofold: to give the Wehrmacht operational capabilities within four years; and to enable the German economy to cope with wartime conditions. To attain these goals, the plan called for the creation of a command economy with special emphasis on protecting German agriculture under war conditions, so that it could withstand a blockade to the limits of its ability. Autarchy would be achieved through the adoption of an expansionist policy that would render Germany less dependent on imported raw materials. For this purpose, the Hermann Goering Reich Works were founded, and refineries and aluminum plants were established. The plan also promoted the development of a synthetic-materials industry, in order to replace raw materials and control of the allocation of labor. Hermann Goering was nominated as commissioner for the implementation of the plan and was given extraordinary general powers in the economic sphere. During the war, these powers were extended to the economic structure of the occupied countries, so as to extract everything possible from them in a policy of ruthless plundering. Goering also directed the deportation of millions of people from the occupied territories to forced-labor camps.

Germany's economic reinvigoration had a direct effect on the potential for speeding up the Reich's antisemitic policy.

10/9/1936

Political activities of Association of Jewish War Veterans banned

The SS enjoined the Association of Jewish War Veterans from engaging in any activity apart from dealing with disabled Jewish veterans of the world war. Nevertheless, members of the association continued to meet intermittently until their organization was outlawed in November 1938.

10/25/1936

Rome-Berlin Axis Agreement signed

The term "Axis," denoting the German-Italian alliance, was first used by Mussolini in a speech he delivered in November 1938 in Milan. In the first three years of Nazi rule, the two countries avoided an alliance

despite their ideological closeness, because Italy feared German territorial expansion and because of political interests.

Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935 ruptured Rome's relations with the democracies and prompted a rapprochement with Nazi Germany that gathered strength when Italy and Germany sided with the Fascists in the Spanish Civil War. At first, the Axis was based on political interests. Mussolini still did not identify with Germany's anti-Jewish racism. However, in view of Germany's growing strength, Mussolini eventually issued anti-Jewish decrees too.

11/25/1936

Germany and Japan Conclude Anti-Comintern Pact

By concluding the Anti-Comintern Pact on November 25, 1936, Hitler placed further pressure on Great Britain which, in any case, was concerned about the escalating Japanese threat to its interests in the Far East. Hitler hoped that Britain would also reach terms with Japan, but the British refused.

3/21/1937

Pope issues statement against racism

On March 21, with the religious freedom of German Catholics at grave risk, the concordat notwithstanding, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* ("With Burning Concern"). In this missive, he questioned the errors of Nazi ideology. "Whoever detaches the race, the nation, the state, the form of government...from the earthly frame of reference and makes them into the highest norm of all, higher than religious values, and worships them with idolatry, perverts and distorts the order of things provided and commended by God." He made no specific mention of the plight of German Jewry.

9/13/1937

Jews can be released from "protective detention" by emigrating

Heinrich Himmler, Reichsfuehrer-SS and chief of police, issued an administrative order allowing Jews to be released from detention on the condition that they emigrate from Germany. The order was meant to pressure Jews to exhaust all possibilities of emigrating from Europe. The order was later honored by many of the tens of thousands of Jews who had been arrested on Kristallnacht. This is a clear articulation of the Nazi policy of using force to effect the emigration of Jews from Germany.

10/21/1937

Himmler: returning emigres will be sent to concentration camps

Heinrich Himmler, Reichsfuehrer-SS and chief of police, issued an order stipulating the arrest and confinement in a concentration camp of any German emigre who re-immigrated. The order, meant to dissuade anyone who left Germany from returning, defined emigres as persons who left Germany after the Nazi accession on January 30, 1933.

11/5/1937

German Army Ordered to Prepare for War

In the course of a discussion in the Chancellery on November 5, 1937, documented in the records of Hitler's military adjutant, Colonel Friedrich Hossbach, Hitler presented the military and political leadership with his goals. In Hitler's thinking, Germany's cramped confines and growing population made territorial expansion necessary. From the intellectual standpoint, his remarks were an extension of the imperialist foreign policy that he had revealed in *Mein Kampf*. In the realities of 1937, they could be construed as a clear-cut intention to go to war in the near future.

11/26/1937

Reshuffling of Portfolios: Schacht Resigns

Hjalmar Schacht, Minister of Economic Affairs and the governor of the German Central bank-who until then had restrained the economic assault on the Jews for pragmatic reasons (to protect the German economy)-resigned his portfolio as Minister for Economic Affairs. This resignation was the first stage in a round of new appointments in which party hard-liners replaced relative moderates in key positions. In early 1938, the foreign minister and the defense minister also resigned, and the army command was reshuffled.

12/29/1937

Antisemitic legislation passed in Romania

After Octavian Goga's National Peasants' party merged with Alexandru Cuza's League of National Christian Defense, the anti-Semitic Goga-Cuza cabinet was formed in Romania. The Goga-Cuza party advocated an alliance with the Third Reich and undertook to amend the constitution. Political power would be confined to "Romanians who had pure Romanian blood in their veins"; the Jews would be removed from the press; Romanians would have priority in all economic enterprises and cultural institutions; and Jews would be barred from government service. The government committed itself to the expulsion from the country of Jews who had entered it by illegal means, to deprive the Jews of their citizenship, and to the confiscation of Jewish property.

The gravest of the anti-Jewish measures was a law enacted on January 22, 1938, to review the citizenship of Jews. As a result of this review, a quarter of a million Jews - about one-third of the total Jewish population - were deprived of their rights as citizens.

Under the regime instituted by King Carol II in February 1938, the deterioration in the situation of the Jews that had begun under the Goga-Cuza government continued.

3/13/1938

Anschluss: Reich Annexes Austria

Hitler sent his army into Austria on March 11, and the Anschluss-the incorporation of Austria into the "Third German Reich"-was proclaimed two days later. Most of the Austrian population accepted the annexation willingly, if not enthusiastically. The annexation was accompanied by protracted antisemitic eruptions and humiliations of Jews by Austrian citizens under German patronage.

Immediately after the annexation, the Gestapo embarked on a week of organized looting of Jewish apartments, in which confiscated objects d'art and valuables were hauled away to Berlin. Before the week was out, Jews were dismissed from their positions in theaters, popular cultural institutions, and public libraries; soon afterwards, they were banned from universities and colleges. Synagogues were desecrated. Jews were arrested and held in detention until they signed away their property.

3/23/1938

Recognition of Jewish organizations revoked

The public status of Jewish community organizations was revoked. From March 31 on, these organizations were no longer recognized under public law and had to re-register as associations under civil law. This cost them their tax exemption as religious societies and deprived them of the right to collect community taxes.

3/28/1938

Hitler incites Sudeten German party

On March 28, 1938, shortly after the annexation of Austria, Hitler summoned the heads of the German party in the Sudetenland, Konrad Henlein and Karl Frank, for a briefing. Hitler informed them that he intended to have his representative in the Sudetenland, Henlein, solve the "German problem" of this Czech province in the near future. Hitler appointed Henlein and promised him all possible support. From Hitler's standpoint, the purported oppression of Germans in the Sudetenland had long since become intolerable. It was agreed that the Reich would not actively intervene in the Sudetenland for the time being and that Henlein would attend to the Sudeten Germans' needs.

6/14/1938

Jewish businesses registered since April are marked

The third regulation to the Citizenship Law, passed in Nuremberg, defined a Jewish business or enterprise. From then on, if an owner or partner in a business was defined as a Jew, the company was considered Jewish and had to be registered as such. This regulation paved the way for compulsory Aryanization. From then on the prior discrimination of the Jews in the economy, advanced to the banishment of Jews from economic life under the provisions of the Four-Year Plan.

6/15/1938

"Operation June"-mass arrests of Jews and banishment to concentration camps

In the summer of 1938, 2,200 "asocial" (meaning "criminal") Jews were arrested and imprisoned in three concentration camps: Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen. Many of these people had committed petty administrative offenses such as illegal parking, late payments, and the like. Unemployed Jews were arrested for having evaded the requirement to work. As a condition for their release, they had to promise to leave Germany.

7/6/1938

Evian Conference

Eleven days after the Anschluss, as the persecution spree ruled out the possibility of an orderly departure of refugees from Germany and Austria, President Roosevelt proposed an international conference at Evian, on the shore of Lake Geneva in France, to ease the emigration of refugees and to establish a new international organization that would elaborate an overall solution to the refugee problem. Roosevelt noted that none of the participating countries should be expected to modify its refugee admission policy.

Between July 6-15, representatives of 29 states met in Evian to discuss the international refugee problem. 24 voluntary organizations also attended, as observers, many of whom presented plans orally and in writing. The conference was governmental; neither the refugees themselves nor representative organizations of refugees participated. The various countries' delegates explained why they could not take in masses of refugees from Germany and Austria. The conference achieved almost no success in opening any country's gates to the refugees, and by the time it adjourned, there was a public consensus that it had failed to find them a safe haven.

7/6/1938

Anti-Jewish economic strictures

Another series of anti-Jewish economic regulations was enacted between early July 1938 and the end of the year. The new series focused on restricting Jews' access to many fields of activity such as bookkeeping, realty, lending, marriage brokerage, tour-guiding, peddling, and any labor outside their area of residence.

8/17/1938

Compulsory middle names for Jews

As of January 1, 1939, all Jews except for those who had typical Jewish names were required to take on new middle names: "Israel" in the case of men, and "Sarah" for women. They were ordered to register these names at the population registry offices and to invoke the added name wherever their names were mentioned or used and in any official document. The new rule also prohibited Jews from giving their children any name on a list of "German" names.

8/26/1938

Jewish emigration office opens in Vienna

The Central Bureau for Jewish Emigration was an office through which the Security Police and the SD promoted the departure of Jews. It was headed by Adolf Eichmann, who orchestrated the expulsion of Austrian Jewry in ways that would subsequently be applied in deporting Jews throughout Europe: concentration of Austrian Jews in Vienna; setting defined quotas and tasking the Jewish community with full responsibility for filling them; eliminating bureaucratic obstacles; and, charging wealthy Jews for the expenses of ousting the needy.

On January 24, 1939, Hermann Goering established a similar center in Germany-the Reich Center for Jewish Emigration-and installed Reinhard Heydrich at its head. After the Reich occupied Bohemia and Moravia, a central office patterned after that in Vienna was set up under Heinrich Mueller. The office in Prague would eventually oversee the banishment of Jews from the Protectorate to Theresienstadt. The offices in Vienna and Prague were subordinated to the Reich Center for Jewish Emigration, the management of which was handed to Eichmann.

After Poland was occupied, Eichmann was instructed to deport the Jewish population from the western Polish provinces, which Germany had annexed. In December 1939, he was further tasked with the "centralized treatment of all Security Police affairs associated with the evacuation of the eastern area."

9/27/1938

Jewish lawyers disbarred

Regulation No. 5 to the Citizenship Law banned Jewish lawyers from the profession. From then on, a small proportion of these lawyers was allowed to work in providing legal counsel for Jewish clients only.

9/29/1938

Munich Agreement: England and France accept German annexation of parts of Czechoslovakia

The Munich conference was held on September 29-30, 1938, at a hotel in the Bavarian capital. The participants were Adolf Hitler, French Prime Minister Eduard Daladier, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and Benito Mussolini. The conference was called after a protracted crisis created by the ethnic German minority-sponsored and supported by Nazi Germany-in the Sudetenland, a province of the Republic of Czechoslovakia.

The Nazi regime exacerbated the crisis; the British government, in contrast, was fervently committed to keeping matters from escalating into hostilities-even if it meant repudiating its tripartite defense treaty with France and Czechoslovakia, and even as Hitler constantly changed and stepped up his demands.

Chamberlain and Hitler negotiated at length. Representatives of Czechoslovakia were not invited to take part in the talks. Daladier and Mussolini were secondary players. First, they attempted to conclude an autonomy arrangement for the German minority in Czechoslovakia; later on, they debated the annexation of the Sudetenland to Germany. When Germany increased its demands again, Great Britain, France, and Czechoslovakia verged on declaring war on Nazi Germany. However, in Chamberlain's famous speech, he stated: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing!"

To prevent war, Chamberlain offered Hitler and Mussolini a quadripartite conference. By accepting the invitation, Hitler forewent a military invasion at the last moment in favor of a settlement. The decisions at the conference amounted to the contents of the memorandum that the British had refused to accept shortly before. The decisions were reported to the government of Czechoslovakia as a final verdict, with which it was to comply without appeal.

Upon his return from Munich, Chamberlain waved the joint statement at the airport in London and proclaimed, "I bring you peace in our time."

Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland—with its military industries, gold reserves, communications system, coal mines, and anti-German defense lines—sealed the fate of the Republic of Czechoslovakia. With the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia on March 15, 1939, breaking the Munich Agreement, Western statesmen awakened to the realization that war was inevitable.

10/5/1938

Passports of German Jews marked with the letter "J"

The Swiss Alien Police, wishing to stanch the influx of refugees, asked the Germans to introduce a symbol of some kind so that they could identify Jews at the border checkpoints. After talks in Berlin with the participation of Heinrich Rothmund, chief of the Alien Police, the Nazis passed a regulation that nullified all Jews' passports. Jews were given two weeks to deposit their voided passports with the police and were allowed to reclaim them only after they were imprinted with the letter "J".

10/6/1938

Germany annexes Sudetenland

The Sudetenland province of Czechoslovakia was populated by largely ethnic Germans. At the Munich Conference in September 1938, Great Britain and France agreed to allow Germany to annex this area. This consent, and the actual annexation on October 6, 1938, cost Czechoslovakia its fortifications and most of its industry. However, Hitler continued to consider Czechoslovakia a threat to his southeastern border in the event that Germany would be involved in war on another front. The Slovaks' demand for autonomy from the Czech government, and the Czechs' dissolution of the government of Slovakia, gave Germany a pretext to invade Czechoslovakia. On March 15, 1939, the Czech president, Emil Hacha, coerced by pressures and threats, signed over control of Czechoslovakia to Germany with no need for an act of war, ostensibly to assure Slovak autonomy.

10/28/1938

17,000 Polish-Born Jews expelled from Germany to Poland; most interned in Zbaszyn

Even before Kristallnacht, tens of thousands of Jews living in Germany but whose origins were East European had been deported. The expulsion from the Reich of Jews holding Polish passports was known as the Zbaszyn deportation. On the evening of October 27, the German authorities began to arrest these Jews in order to banish them to Poland. They were thereupon transported immediately to the Polish border and literally dumped there—without their possessions and without even an opportunity to put their affairs in order. The deportees spent months in the border area in limbo, because the Poles, too, were unwilling to accept them.

11/9/1938

Grynszpan Affair and the Kristallnacht Pogrom

On November 7, Herschel Grynszpan, a distraught 17-year-old refugee Polish Jew in Paris, whose parents were among the thousands deported to the Zbaszyn area in Poland, assassinated the Third Secretary in the German Embassy in Paris. Grynszpan hoped to call public attention to the plight of the thousands of

helpless deportees. Vom Rath died of his gunshot wounds on the afternoon of November 9. The assassination prompted the Nazis to implement previously made plans to conduct a pogrom across Germany and throughout Austria. Although the pogrom was described officially as a spontaneous popular response to the murder of the third secretary, it was, in fact, an organized action at the initiative of Minister of Propaganda Goebbels, and with Hitler's consent. That very night, instructions were handed out across the country. The SA encouraged the masses to take part in the pogrom. Mass hysteria erupted. Some 1400 synagogues were partially or totally destroyed. The pogrom was given the name Kristallnacht, because of the innumerable shop windows that were shattered. Shops were burgled, plundered, and looted. Property damage was immense. Jews' homes were attacked in many locations, many Jews were wounded, and about 100 Jews were murdered. Some 30,000 Jews were arrested, most of them affluent and influential, often on the basis of prepared lists. They were sent to concentration camps, where the SS subjected them to brutal treatment. Hundreds died; others were released after signing statements affirming their intention to leave Germany. Their property was confiscated. In many locations, rioting continued even after it was officially declared over. After the pogrom, the Jewish community was assessed a collective fine of 1 billion reichsmarks in reparations for the murder of vom Rath and was charged for the damage caused on Kristallnacht. The Kristallnacht pogrom was a watershed in preparing the final eradication of the Jews' status in Germany.

11/10/1938

Italy adopts antisemitic racial laws

The Italian racial laws prohibited miscegenation between Jews and "Aryans," and placed Jews, defined by racial criteria much as in the Nazi legislation, under further restrictions. These laws were part of a comprehensive racial system that Fascist Italy began to implement in the autumn of 1938, including the banishment of alien Jews, expulsion of Jewish students and teachers from the school system, and economic constraints.

11/12/1938

Harsh anti-Jewish measures

On November 12, several days after Kristallnacht, high-ranking representatives of the various Nazi state ministries and the SS met in Goering's office to consider all aspects of the "Jewish problem." This forum discussed the problems that had come about after the Kristallnacht devastation and decided to apply economic measures against the Jews. Here, the Nazis adopted the forced-emigration policy as a guideline for action. The goal now was to remove the Jews from Germany by any possible means. The discussants also decided to impose upon the Jews a fine of 1 billion reichsmarks ("for the murder of vom Rath") and to establish a Central Jew Emigration Office.

11/15/1938

Jewish children banned from German schools

One of the laws promulgated after Kristallnacht concerned the expulsion of Jewish pupils from the general education system, even where special classes for Jews existed. Even before the official ban, many children had switched from public schools to Jewish schools because of the anti-Jewish climate and harassment on the part of non-Jewish teachers and students. On November 15, 1938, youngsters defined as Jewish were totally banned from general schools. The 10th regulation to the Nuremberg Laws, dated July 4, 1939, handed responsibility for the education of Jewish children to the newly constituted Reichsvereinigung. Jewish schools continued to exist until the summer of 1941, when schooling of Jewish children was outlawed totally, even in the form of tutoring by volunteers.

1/24/1939

Goering creates the Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration

By recommendation of Reinhard Heydrich, and by explicit order of Hitler, Hermann Goering established a center in Germany, headquartered in Berlin. This office was similar to the one that had been established the previous year in Vienna under Adolf Eichmann, to deal with the emigration-and deportation-of Jews. On January 30, Heydrich informed all relevant institutions that the new office would be directed by Heinrich Mueller, chief of the Gestapo. Bureaus similar to those in Vienna and Berlin were established in Prague.

3/15/1939

Germans occupy Bohemia and Moravia

A crisis erupted in Czechoslovakia in the middle of March, and with the Germans' encouragement, Jozef Tiso, prime minister of autonomous Slovakia, proclaimed his country's independence. Germany occupied the Czech zone the next day (March 15), thus liquidating the second Czechoslovak Republic, which had lasted for only a few months. The first Czech Republic had been established after World War One, after the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The second Czech Republic, was created in the wake of the Munich Conference (September 28-29, 1938).

On March 16, Hitler proclaimed a German "protectorate" in the Czech region. Practically speaking, this area became part of the Reich. Baron Konstantin von Neurath was appointed Reich Protector; Karl Hermann Frank, leader of the Sudeten German Party, was named secretary of state; and all major governmental posts were staffed with Reich appointees. Only in the formal sense did the government of the "autonomous" Czech zone remain intact.

An operation code-named Aktion Gitter, launched immediately after the onset of the occupation, led to the arrest of emigrants from Germany and Czech and Jewish public figures. Anti-Jewish incitement and persecution became vocal. Anti-Jewish actions began; synagogues were torched and Jews were assaulted in the streets. The lead was taken in this "operation" by the most extreme of fascist organizations, Vlatka (The Flag), which was especially active in Moravia.

3/28/1939

Civil War in Spain ends

Madrid formally surrendered to General Francisco Franco. The collapse of all Loyalist resistance led to a series of tribunals that judged individual leaders of the former government and imposed harsh sentences, including many executions. In all, about 750,000 people were killed in the civil war. The Italians had as many as 75,000 "volunteers" involved on the Nationalist side. Germany provided 19,000 men.

4/27/1939

Conscription in Great Britain

His Majesty's Government asked Parliament to authorize it to introduce conscription.

4/27/1939

Germany cancels non-aggression pact with Poland and 1935 Naval agreement with Britain

The Germans said that "the British Government is now governed by the opinion that England, in whatever part of Europe Germany might be involved in warlike conflict, must always take up an attitude hostile to Germany, even in a case where English interests are not touched in any way by such a conflict." Britain had by now, of course, given guarantees of aid for the first time to countries east of the Rhine.

On April 28, 1939, in a speech in Wilhelmshaven, Hitler abrogated Germany's 1934 non-aggression pact with Poland, which was intended to be effective for ten years, pronouncing it anti-German and inconsistent with the "encirclement policy." The "encirclement policy" referred to isolating Poland as much as possible and the avoidance of a two - front struggle by reaching an understanding with the Russians. Poland turned

to Great Britain and expressed its willingness to join London, France and Moscow in a common front against Germany.

8/23/1939

Nazis, Soviets sign non-aggression pact

Viacheslav Molotov, the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister, agreed after hasty negotiations to conclude an economic treaty and a non-aggression pact that would partition Eastern Europe into Soviet and German spheres of influence.

Ribbentrop signed the non-aggression pact during a visit to Moscow on August 23, 1939. The sides undertook neither to attack each other, nor to help any third party do the same. They agreed to settle bilateral disputes cordially. The treaty was to be in effect for 10 years.

A secret appendix to the agreement discussed the apportionment of spheres of influence and the future locations of borders. The agreement and its appendix were signed a week before the German invasion of Poland. After the invasion, Germany and the USSR carved Poland into separate spheres as stipulated in the agreement.

9/1/1939

Germany invades Poland

After creating a series of provocations, Germany attacked Poland on September 1. The Wehrmacht, which enveloped the country from the west, the north, and the south, outnumbered the Polish forces three to one and had superior equipment. The invasion revealed the German fighting method for the first time: the blitzkrieg, cooperation among naval, air, and ground forces to concurrently attack and surround the enemy extremely rapidly. In response to the invasion, France and Great Britain declared war on Germany on September 3, but took no military measures on Poland's behalf. Warsaw succumbed on September 28, and the last fighting took place in the first few days of October.

9/3/1939

Britain blockades Germany

Despite the initial weakness of its armed forces, Great Britain declared a naval blockade of Germany on September 3, two days after the latter invaded Poland. The Royal Air Force dropped 6 million leaflets on towns in northern Germany and the Ruhr district, the first of the propaganda raids.

Germany countered with a naval blockade of its own against Britain on September 11, stating that since economic warfare had been forced on it, it could not but repay in the same coin.

9/3/1939

Britain, France, India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa declare war on Germany

France and Britain issued an ultimatum to Germany demanding the immediate withdrawal of the German forces from Poland. When Hitler accused Britain of encouraging the Poles to pursue a policy of provocation, Britain, France, India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa declared war on Germany.

9/17/1939

Soviets invade Poland

On September 17, when it was clear that the German invasion had succeeded, the Red Army entered the eastern part of Poland in accordance with the secret agreements between Germany and the USSR in the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact.

September 21, 1939, it was announced that the Germans would divide the Polish areas that it had occupied into two sectors: One sector was annexed to Germany and became part of the Reich; the other was named the Generalgouvernement and placed under a German civil administration headed by Hans Frank.

9/21/1939

Heydrich issues the "Schnellbrief"

Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police, briefed the commanders of the Einsatzgruppen, and Adolf Eichmann, ordering: the formation of Judenraete ("Jewish Councils") in Polish towns, the deportation of Jews from the areas of northwestern Poland that were earmarked for annexation to the Reich, and the concentration of Jews in large towns situated near railroad junctions. He also ordered a census of Polish Jewry and a survey of Jewish property. Heydrich's edicts made Jewish councils subordinate to his organization and dictated Reich policy toward Polish Jewry.

It was asserted in the brief that these measures were considered as temporary steps on the way to the "final goal" - "Endziel", which was of course undefined in this brief.

9/22/1939

Establishment of the Reich Security Main Office

On September 22, 1939, the SD (Security Service) and Sipo (the Security Police) merged and became the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA). Under the command of Heydrich, the RSHA evolved between 1939 and 1941 into a mammoth organization that eventually included seven departments: Personnel; Organization and Law; Internal Affairs; Gestapo; Criminal Police (Kripo); Intelligence; and, Ideological Affairs.

9/28/1939

Poland partitioned

Germany and the Soviet Union signed a boundary and friendship treaty that formally divided Poland, giving the Germans control over the area generally west of the Bug River. The occupying governments said the partition was necessary "after the disintegration of the former Polish state" and that Moscow and Berlin "consider[ed] it their task to restore law and order in this region."

Germany obtained nearly 73,000 square miles of Polish territory, including nearly 2 million Jews who lived there, and Russia obtained 78,000 square miles. The Russians included the Baltic states: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in their sphere of influence. The countries also signed an economic agreement that extended their previous trade pact.

Poland surrendered to Germany on October 5. The last regiments of its armed forces surrendered in the Radzyn-Kock vicinity. Out of 800,000 Polish troops, 694,000 were taken prisoner by the Germans; the remainder perished, returned to their homes, or fled to Romania or Hungary. German military losses in the campaign were 13,111 killed and missing, and 27,278 wounded.

Russia, which achieved its gains by invading an overwhelmed Poland, lost only 737 men in the brief conflict.

10/4/1939

Warsaw Judenrat Is established

"I was taken to Szucha Avenue, where I was ordered to add twenty-four people to the community council and to serve as its head," wrote Adam Czerniakow on October 4, concerning the first decisive measure toward establishing the Warsaw Judenrat. Although Czerniakow was a member of the prewar executive council of the Jewish community, he was not well known among the Jews of Warsaw.

10/7/1939

Jewish "resettlement" in the Lublin district

On September 28, 1939, one day after the agreement with the Soviets assigned the Lublin area to Germany, Heydrich spoke of a "Reichs-Ghetto" in the Lublin district. The plan to establish a Jewish "reservation" in that vicinity was part of a more comprehensive program to reorganize Eastern Europe along "racial" lines and to physically separate out and isolate the Jews. The program became operative in early October 1939. Eichmann visited Vienna, Moravaska Ostrava (Mährisch Ostrau) (in the Protectorate), and Kattowice (Kattowitz) (Upper Silesia), where he made preparations for deportations from these three cities.

On October 12, Eichmann chose the Zarzecze vicinity, not far from Nisko on the San River, to be the heart of a reservation, another plan in the search for a "territorial solution".

10/8/1939

First Jewish ghetto established in Piotrkow Trybunalski

Piotrkow Trybunalski is a town in central Poland, about 16 miles (26 km) south of Lodz. In 1939, there were some 18,000 Jews in Piotrkow, about one-third of the total population, with a vibrant community life.

Piotrkow was occupied by the Germans on September 5, 1939, four days after the outbreak of World War II. Anti-Jewish excesses took place at once: brutal beatings, kidnappings for forced labor, and killings. Jewish valuables and household effects were plundered in large quantities. The Germans broke into the main synagogue, famed for its beauty, robbed it of all its sacred objects, and beat and seized 29 worshipers. When Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) came, 10 days later, nothing remained of the synagogue except the four walls. Some 2,000 Jews of Piotrkow managed to escape during the initial days of the occupation, but the number of Jews in the town swelled as refugees from neighboring towns poured in.

On October 8, 1939, the commander of Piotrkow Trybunalski, Hans Drexler, created by decree a ghetto for the Jews in this central Polish town. The Piotrkow Ghetto is the first known ghetto to have been formed in occupied Poland. However, it took until late January 1940 to force the Jews to move there. The Judenrat issued several announcements ordering Jews to make this move, but since they did not have the desired impact, the Germans eventually evicted the Jews one by one from the "Aryan" quarter, ordered them to relocate to the ghetto, and transferred their vacated dwellings to Christians. Although Christian residents of the ghetto area were also ordered to leave their homes, many Poles lived or ran businesses there until the spring of 1942. The ghetto was not fenced and its boundary was not guarded. Signs proclaiming the area a ghetto, bearing the likeness of skulls, were posted only near the ghetto boundaries and the main gate. The Jews were allowed to leave the ghetto without permits, albeit only at specified times of the day, and were allowed to spend longer periods of time on several "Aryan" streets. However, they were not allowed on the main streets. The Jewish curfew in the ghetto varied from order to order. An influx of refugees and displaced persons caused the ghetto population to swell from 10,000 at the beginning of the war to 16,500 in April 1942.

10/26/1939

Civil Administration (the "Generalgouvernement") established in Poland

On October 26, 1939, the German occupation authorities established a political administration known as the Generalgouvernement in the sector of occupied Poland that had not been annexed to the Reich. The name originated in World War I, during which the Germans also occupied Poland and established a civil regime under this title. The Generalgouvernement was divided into four districts: Warsaw, Cracow, Radom,

and Lublin, each of which was parceled into subdistricts. The capital of the Generalgouvernement was Cracow. After the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, they added a fifth district, Galicia. The Generalgouvernement was headed by Governor-General Hans Frank.

11/8/1939

Failed attempt to assassinate Hitler in Munich

Every year, on November 8, Hitler and the "veteran soldiers" of the National Socialist Party would gather to commemorate the failed putsch of November 9, 1923. Hitler would usually begin his speech at 8:30 p.m., and would continue speaking until 10:00. On November 8, 1939, Hitler decided to begin his speech approximately half an hour earlier than usual. He finished at 9:07, and left the site. At 9:20, a bomb exploded and shook the beer hall. Hitler escaped an assassination attempt. Nine people were killed.

While Hitler had been speaking in Munich, a man by the name of Johann George Elser was arrested in Constance while attempting to illegally cross the border into Switzerland. A number of suspicious items were found on his person, and he was sent to be interrogated. When news of the assassination attempt was made known, the initial investigation pointed toward Elser, who, after being tortured, confessed to having planted the bomb in Munich. Elser was sent to Sachsenhausen, and from there to Dachau. In April 1945, he was murdered by order of high-ranking government officials.

Officials of the Nazi regime were convinced that Elser had been operating in conjunction with British intelligence. Opposition forces, on the other hand, as well as many outside Germany, were convinced that Elser had, in fact, been employed by the Gestapo as a provocation. Later research showed beyond doubt that Elser had actually operated on his own.

Elser, who was a carpenter by profession, thought that the Nazis' rise to power had greatly damaged the labor conditions of the working class. He was outraged by the fact that human beings were no longer free and that the education of children had been taken out of their parents' hands and turned over to such institutions as the Hitler Youth. He had decided to assassinate Hitler in the wake of the Sudetenland crisis in 1938, in order to avert the war which he was convinced had become imminent. In August 1939, after the war broke out, he began to plan the assassination. He spent a month hiding in the beer hall after it had closed, and dug a tunnel under a row of floor tiles. Every morning he would cover up the tunnel, and would leave the beer hall after it had opened. When he had completed the tunnel, he planted the bomb, which was set on a timer.

11/9/1939

Lodz incorporated into Reich

German terror against Jews and Poles escalated after Lodz was annexed to the Reich on November 9. Several thousand Jews and Poles were arrested and taken to the Radogoszcz prison on the outskirts of town; shortly afterwards, some were murdered and the rest were removed to concentration camps in Germany.

11/23/1939

Jews in Poland must wear the Jewish Badge

On November 23, Hans Frank, in one of his first edicts as governor-general, ordered "all Jewish men and women in the *Generalgouvernement* aged ten and over [to begin] on December 1, 1939, to wear on the right sleeve of their garments and upper garments a white band bearing a [blue] Star of David at least ten centimeters wide."

11/30/1939

Soviets invade Finland

On August 23, the Soviets demanded that Finland cede territories near Leningrad and a military base at Hango, for which they offered Finland alternative territory. On November 30, 1939, after the negotiations failed, the Soviet Union launched the "Winter War." Despite the unequal balance of forces, the Finnish put up stiff military resistance. On March 12, 1940, the countries concluded a peace treaty in which the Soviet demands were met.

Practically speaking, the stipulation that Finland would fall within the Soviet sphere of influence was part of the secret appendix to the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement that partitioned such spheres between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

12/2/1939

Nazis initiate use of gas vans to eliminate mental patients

In October 1939, the Nazis started murdering mentally ill patients, patients with hereditary diseases, people with disabilities, "asocial elements" (criminals, employees evading work), homosexuals, sick soldiers, residents in welfare institutions, concentration camp prisoners, foreign workers and others, as part of the "Euthanasia Project". The murders, executed by shooting, gas or lethal injection, were carried out by several hundred doctors, nurses and administrators, as per an order from Hitler. The project did not have an official budget, and some of the murderers - government officials - took on assumed identities in order to preserve the secrecy of the murders. To prevent pangs of conscience, the murderers were supplied with alcohol, and received generous wages and extra days off.

On 2 December, gas vans were introduced, and by the summer of 1941, more than 100,000 people had been murdered. Following a public outcry, Hitler officially ordered a halt to the murders in the summer of 1941, but they continued clandestinely until the end of the war.

12/2/1939

Nazis initiate use of gas vans to eliminate mental patients

missing text

12/14/1939

USSR expelled from League of Nations following pact with Germany

missing text

12/14/1939

Soviet Union expelled from League of Nations

The Soviet Union is expelled from the League of Nations following the pact with Germany and aggression against Finland.

The Soviet Union only became a member of the League of Nations in 1934, a year after Germany left, and was expelled from the League on 14 December 1939 for aggression against Finland. In expelling the Soviet Union, the League breached its own regulations: only 7 out of 15 members of the Council voted for the expulsion, (among them Britain, France and Belgium), and three of these were chosen as members of the Council just one day before the voting: South Africa, Bolivia and Egypt. This was one of the League's final acts before it ceased functioning due to World War II.

1/24/1940

Jewish property in "Generalgouvernement" registered

As soon as an administrative regime was installed in the occupied provinces, the Jews were buffeted with decrees and ordinances meant, among other things, to oust them from economic life and dispossess them of their property. The process of expropriating and liquidating Jewish and Polish factories and businesses in the annexed areas began in September 1939, when this region was still under military rule. In January 1940, the *Generalgouvernement* regime issued an order placing under German custodianship any business whose owners were absentees or that were being inefficiently run. The rationale of inefficiency was a pretext for the liquidation of all the largest Jewish-owned factories and businesses. That month, the Jews were also required to register their property with local authorities. Uniformed and non-uniformed Germans, with and without formal powers, partook of the booty.

1/25/1940

Judenrat established in Lublin

After the Germans occupied Lublin, the *kehillah* (the Jewish community council) was left intact and almost unchanged. Its sphere of activity was expanded to meet the Germans' demands and the Jewish population's new needs. The *kehillah* now had to deliver quotas of people for forced labor; hand over valuables, furniture, and other household items; cope with economic strictures imposed on individual Jews and the entire community; and make welfare arrangements for refugees and the needy, to name only a few examples. On January 25, 1940, the committee was officially recomposed as a 24-member Judenrat, although almost no changes in personnel were made. The Judenrat was headed by Engineer Henryk Bekker, but his deputy, Mark Alten, was the central personality. The Judenrat maintained the policies previously pursued by the committee, but its maneuvering ability diminished as German policy toward the Jews became tougher.

1/26/1940

Warsaw Judenrat fined after ethnic German beaten in street

On January 26, 1940, Adam Czerniakow, head of the Warsaw Ghetto Judenrat, was summoned to the police station and told that unless the community remitted 100,000 zlotys by the next day because of the beating of a *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic German), 100 Jews would be shot to death. Czerniakow described the event in his diary: "I appealed to the Gestapo for an annulment of the fine, then, for permission to pay for it in installments, and finally for the release of the Community from the obligation of clearing the snow, which would let us save some money. Nothing came out of it. We must pay up and tomorrow morning at that. Under these circumstances I began a money collection in the Community. We must borrow 100,000 zloty and then get it back from the taxpayers" (*Diary*, p. 50).

3/4/1940

Katyn massacre: Soviets execute tens of thousands of Polish officers

According to data in the possession of the Polish government-in-exile, in early 1940 the Soviet Union held as many as 15,000 Polish prisoners of war, of whom 8,300 were officers. Taken prisoner by the Red Army in the second half of September 1939, they were interned in three camps: Kozelsk, Starobelsk, and Ostaszko. Late that year, there were reports that the three camps had been disbanded. In 1941 and 1942, the Polish government-in-exile repeatedly asked the Soviet Union for information on the prisoners' fate, but to no avail.

On April 13, 1943, the Germans announced that mass graves had been discovered in the Katyn Forest, in their area of occupation, containing the bodies of thousands of Polish officers who had been shot in the back of the head. The Germans charged the Soviet authorities with the murder and appointed a multinational medical commission to probe the matter. In May 1943, the commission reported that the graves contained the bodies of 4,143 officers, of whom 2,914 were identified by documents in their uniforms. It was the commission's opinion that the men had been shot to death in the spring of 1940. The Soviet authorities flatly rejected the accusations of the German-appointed commission, arguing that the Germans themselves had committed the deed when they had occupied the area in July 1941.

In mid-April 1943, when the Polish government-in-exile demanded that an investigation of the Katyn killings be made by the International Red Cross, the Soviet Union reacted on April 25 by severing relations with the government-in-exile. This step would have far-reaching effects on relations between the Soviet Union and Poland. In November of that year, several months after the Red Army had liberated the area, the Soviet Union appointed a commission of inquiry of its own, which blamed the Germans for the Katyn murders. A United States congressional inquiry in the early 1950s found the NKVD (the Soviet secret police) responsible, and most Western historians now believe that the massacre was committed at the behest of the Soviet authorities. On March 8, 1989, the Polish government officially accused the NKVD of perpetrating the slaughter.

In 1990, in keeping with Mikhail Gorbachev's Glasnost policy, the Soviet Union released documents indicating its responsibility for the massacre at Katyn, and uncovered further mass graves in the area.

4/9/1940

Germany invades Denmark and Norway

German forces invaded Denmark and Norway by sea, by land, and by aerial bombardment. Some 10,000 German soldiers hidden in vessels disguised as merchant ships occupied the coasts of Oslo, Bergen, Kristiansund, Trondheim, and Narvik. Paratroopers captured the airports of Oslo and Stavanger. Although the onslaught took the Norwegians by total surprise, they inflicted heavy losses on the German navy. In Denmark, the invader met with almost no resistance. Explaining its action, Germany argued that, according to documents in its possession, Britain and France were planning to occupy Norway against its will.

The German invasion forces in Norway were greeted by Vidkun Quisling, who declared himself prime minister of Norway. Upon this invasion, Hitler abandoned any hopes of striking a peace settlement with France and Great Britain.

4/30/1940

Lodz Ghetto sealed

The Jews were resettled in the Lodz Ghetto in an action replete with brutality, looting, abuse, and murder. As they were led to the ghetto, snipers on rooftops opened fire on them to frighten them and expedite their departure. They fled to the ghetto in panic. The Lodz Ghetto was sealed on April 30. Some 164,000 Jews of Lodz were packed into its four square kilometers, of which only two and a half square kilometers were built. The congestion in the area that comprised the ghetto was seven times greater than it had been before the war. The ghetto area was carved into three sectors by two main streets that linked neighborhoods outside the ghetto. Congestion, hunger, cold, and poor sanitation led immediately to mass mortality.

5/10/1940

Germany invades Belgium and Netherlands

The Low Countries maintained their neutrality and hoped to avoid the fate that befell Norway and Denmark. However, at approx. 3:00 a.m. on May 10, 1940, the Germans launched a Blitzkrieg on the Belgian frontier and, on the pretext that Britain and France were planning to invade Germany via Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, invaded the Low Countries. Belgium presented Germany with a fiercely worded protest: "All facts in the possession of the Belgian government indicate that the offensive was planned in advance." The Netherlands were attacked mainly by air. As negotiations for the surrender of the Dutch were under way, Hitler had Rotterdam bombed not for any military reason but to express the doctrine of intimidation: Terror impairs the will to resist. The bombardments leveled the center of Rotterdam and killed more than 800 people. The Germans' main intention in this invasion was to enhance their ability to threaten France.

5/10/1940

Chamberlain resigns; Churchill Prime Minister of U.K.

Great Britain reached what may have been its nadir as Chamberlain resigned and Winston Churchill became the new prime minister. The Conservatives, the Labor Party, and the Liberals formed a new coalition. On May 22, an emergency law vested Churchill with wide-ranging powers to prepare the British economy and army for the war effort.

5/26/1940

Allies Evacuate Forces at Dunkirk

On May 24, Hitler, true to his original invasion plans but against the counsel of his officer corps, ordered his forces to turn toward Paris. The greatest concentration of Allied troops—380,000 soldiers in all—was trapped by German forces at Dunkirk, in an area of 60 square miles.

Hitler waited two days before ordering his forces to attack the troops at Dunkirk. The evacuation of the trapped forces at Dunkirk began on May 26 in one of the most dramatic retreats in military history, as 861 ships and boats were mobilized and began to remove the trapped forces. Within a week, 224,585 British soldiers and 112,546 French and Belgian fighters were taken to safe shores; 40,000 French soldiers were left behind. 231 vessels were sunk, most by the Luftwaffe. The British left behind 11,000 machine guns, 1,200 cannons, 1,250 anti-aircraft and anti-tank pieces, and 75,000 motor vehicles.

At Britain's most difficult hour, Churchill addressed the House of Commons and proclaimed: "We shall not flag or fail. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing ground, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender."

6/14/1940

Germany occupies Paris

On May 10, German armed forces began their offensive against France itself. The French had fewer troops than the Germans, and the French general Weygand termed their deployment "a line of troops without depth or organization."

Artillery shelling and air cover helped the German army to breach the ostensibly impermeable Maginot defense line. The Wehrmacht routed the French army within a few days. The government fled from Paris to Bordeaux; German forces marched into Paris. The next day, June 14, French military forces began to retreat from the Maginot Line. Columns of refugees attempting to escape the conquering German army were savaged by Luftwaffe bombing raids on the roads.

France surrendered to Nazi Germany on June 22. The armistice agreement, tailored to Hitler's terms, was signed in the same railroad car in which Germany had surrendered to France 22 years previously. Hitler personally witnessed the humiliation of the French. For him and the Germans, it was sweet revenge. Marshal Petain blamed his country's stinging defeat on "too few children, too few armaments, too few allies." Hitler now expected the conflict to end quickly: "The British have lost the war, but they do not know it. Give them time and they will realize it."

6/18/1940

Hitler presents Mussolini with Madagascar Plan

Many antisemites had long toyed with the idea of deporting European Jewry to Madagascar and, briefly, in the summer of 1940, this scheme was the centerpiece of the Nazis' Jewish policy. In the spring of 1940, after the victory over France, Himmler proposed to Hitler that the Jews be banished to some African colony. However, the official who made this plan practical was Franz Rademacher, the expert on Jewish affairs in the German Foreign Office. Hitler disclosed the plan to Mussolini in June 1940 as part of its elaboration. The Madagascar Plan was shelved when, in the autumn of 1940, Germany failed to win its

battle with Britain. The French also refused to cooperate with the plan. Essentially the plan was not feasible logistically.

6/28/1940

USSR annexes Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from Romania

During the Soviet annexation of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia in June of 1940, and the withdrawal of Romanian troops from that area, the Romanians attacked the local population, particularly the Jews, accusing them of being Communists and Soviet sympathizers, and blaming them for armed acts of provocation against Romanian soldiers. During this period, and without any connection to the Nazis, Romanian army units murdered hundreds of Jews: on 30 June 1940, a withdrawing Romanian battalion massacred some 200 Jews in Dorohoi, a town on the border with Bukovina. Infantry Battalion 16, withdrawing south from Northern Bukovina towards Falticeni, under the command of the antisemitic Maj. Valeriu Carp, brutally tortured and murdered dozens of Jews. Even when the withdrawal of the Romanian troops from Soviet-annexed territory was completed the massacres continued, assisted by further infantry battalions which actively participated.

Jewish soldiers serving in the Romanian army were also the victims of humiliation and torture by the Romanian soldiers, and a number of Jewish soldiers were murdered.

7/10/1940

Vichy government formed

The German offensive in May-June 1940 breached the Maginot Line and prompted the French army to collapse. The armistice accord, actually a surrender agreement, was signed on June 22. This brought the Third Republic to an end, and on July 10, 1940, the French parliament in joint session dissolved the Republican regime and installed Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain as head of the French state with full governing powers. The government established its seat at Vichy, in the southern part of the country. The results of the armistice were already evident by the end of June. France was partitioned into two sectors: a German-occupied zone (including the Atlantic coast, the English Channel front, and Paris); and an unoccupied zone in the southeast, administered by the Vichy government. The Vichy regime replaced the principles of the French Revolution—Liberté, égalité, fraternité—with new principles: Travail (work), Famille (family), and Patrie (fatherland). The Vichy regime, bolstered by nationalists who demanded a policy of "returning France to the French," began systematically to circumscribe "aliens" influence and erode the rights of refugees and Jews. Vichy adopted a policy of courting Nazi Germany in order to extract more tolerable arrangements from the German authorities. The Vichy regime did much to help the Germans persecute the Jews and took anti-Jewish actions at its own initiative—such as the Statut des Juifs—the Jewish Statutes (October 1940) and the establishment of institutions such as the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs (March 1941).

7/19/1940

U.K. turns down German peace offer for recognition of domination in Western Europe

After his military advisers warned him about the difficulties that Operation Sea Lion (the plan for an amphibious landing on England, scheduled for September 15) would encounter, Hitler made Britain a non-belligerency offer. In a speech at the Reichstag, he offered Britain peace in return for British recognition of German dominion in Western Europe and the restoration of former German colonies:

Mr. Churchill, or perhaps others, for once believe me when I predict a great empire will be destroyed, an empire that it was never my intention to destroy or even to harm. I do realize that this struggle, if it continues, can end only with the complete annihilation of one or the other of the two adversaries. Mr. Churchill may believe this will be Germany. I know that it will be Britain.

Britain rejected the offer.

8/8/1940

"Battle of Britain" begins

In his *Adlertag* - Eagle Day order, Hitler instructed his air force: "Within a short period of time, you will wipe the British Air Force from the sky. *Heil Hitler*." Thus, the Luftwaffe (the German air force) attacked British air-force targets in a vast operation. With clear supremacy in the skies (2,700 warplanes against 700), Hitler hoped to bring Britain to its knees quickly from the air and thereby set the stage for a ground invasion of the island. When the Germans' attempt to defeat the British air force failed, the Luftwaffe changed its tactics and began to bombard cities, mainly to brutally intimidate the civilian population.

Churchill had the following to say about Hitler: "This wicked man, this monstrous product of former wrongs and shame, has now resolved to break our famous island race by a process of indiscriminate slaughter and destruction".

Hitler's gambit failed; Operation Sea Lion was delayed again and again. Great Britain spent that summer in utter isolation, fighting not to rescue its air force, but to save the country itself.

8/8/1940

Antisemitic Racial Laws in Romania - "The Jewish Statute"

The Jewish Statute was passed in Romania on 8 August 1940, in an effort to forge stronger ties with Germany. The statute revoked most Romanian Jews' civil rights, and forbade mixed marriages. The Jews, accused of being communists who served the interests of the Soviet Union, were collectively blamed for the disasters that had befallen Romania and its citizens.

8/17/1940

Germany declares "total blockade of Britain"

The naval war in the waters around the British Isles was in full progress. The whole area had been mined. German planes attacked every vessel. Any neutral ship that entered these waters was liable to be destroyed.

9/7/1940

German "blitz" on England reaches climax

The Luftwaffe launched its most devastating attack on London, setting aside a force of 625 bombers for this purpose. By November 13, 150–200 tons of bombs were being dropped on London each day; the total came to approximately 1 million bombs. Hitler regarded these massive bombings as a response to the bombardment of Berlin by the Royal Air Force. The Germans continued to bomb the British capital until June 1941.

9/27/1940

Germany, Italy, and Japan conclude Tripartite Pact

Germany, Italy, and Japan entered into a 10-year military and economic agreement. The stated "prime purpose" of the Tripartite Pact, signed in Berlin, was to establish and maintain a new order, calculated to promote the mutual prosperity and welfare of the peoples concerned. The pact expressed the formalization of the Axis partnership, and the unmistakable targets of the strengthened alliance were the United States and the Soviet Union.

10/3/1940

France enacts "Jewish Statute"

Vichy's first comprehensive anti-Jewish statute (*Statut des Juifs*), passed on October 3, 1940, defined a Jew as a person with three grandparents "of the Jewish race," or with two Jewish grandparents if the spouse was also Jewish. In the latter provision, and in its explicit reference to race, the Vichy definition was both harsher and more inclusive than that stipulated by the Germans in the occupied zone of France and elsewhere. The law went on to provide the basis for drastically reducing the role of Jews in French society. It excluded Jews from top positions in the French civil service, the corps of officers and noncommissioned officers in the army, and professions that helped shape public opinion—teaching, the press, radio, cinema, and theater. Jews could hold menial public-service positions, provided they had served in the armed forces between 1914 and 1918, or had distinguished themselves in the campaign of 1939–1940. The statute also stated that a quota system would be devised to limit the presence of Jews in the liberal professions (law, medicine, etc.). Formulated purely on French initiative, the law was hastily prepared in the Justice Ministry of Raphael Alibert, a militant antisemite, a friend of the monarchist and fascist-leaning Action Française movement, and the formulator of the Vichy motto "*Travail, Famille, Patrie*" ("Work, Family, Fatherland").

Vichy's efforts to apply this statute effectively and toughen some of its provisions led to a second *Statut des Juifs*, on June 2, 1941. It emerged from Xavier Vallat's *Commissariat General aux Questions Juives* (Commissariat for Jewish Affairs; CGQJ), and was carefully drafted in a series of cabinet meetings and consultations with Justice Minister Joseph Barthelemy. After tightening the definition of Jewishness and tinkering with the provisions for the purging of Jews from public posts, the law opened the way for a massive removal of Jews from the liberal professions, commerce, and industry. Only a handful of well-established French Jews could benefit from the exemptions provided by the statute. Even Jewish prisoners of war, if returned from captivity, faced the rigors of the anti-Jewish law.

Keenly attentive to detail, Vallat was determined to close every loophole through which Jews might escape the jurisdiction of the anti-Jewish program. Never fully satisfied with the handiwork of the CGQJ, the coordinator of the antisemitic legislation elaborated a new *Statut des Juifs* over the fall and winter of 1941. Although this law never saw the light of day, its successive drafts point to a continuing effort to tighten the definition and ease the task of legal definition—as, for example, in the case of the children of foreigners whose grandparents' racial makeup could not be determined. Mean-spirited and beset with contradictions on the matter of race and religion, the statutory core of the Vichy regime's policy toward the Jews reflected its legalistic approach toward, and animus against, all Jews, whether or not they were French citizens.

10/7/1940

Romania Consents to German Army Entry

In October 1940, 12 German army divisions entered Romanian territory. They were presented by Hitler not as an army of occupation, but rather as an extension of the German military mission that had been dispatched to Romania one month earlier. Hitler's desire to maintain a facade of Romanian independence derived from his awareness of the country's key position in the Balkans and the undesirable effect that its occupation would have on Germany's allies in the region, the Italians and the Soviets.

Some six weeks later, Romania joined the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis.

10/22/1940

Jewish businesses in occupied Netherlands registered

After the Dutch civil service was purged of Jews, an order issued on October 22 stipulated the registration of businesses owned or influenced by Jews. Registration was the first step toward the "Aryanization" of Jewish property. In all, 20,690 businesses were recorded. The registration campaign proved that the Jews played a relatively small role in the Dutch economy and that most of their businesses were small.

10/28/1940

Registration of Jewish property in Belgium

Economic measures against the Jews were introduced in late 1940. No such measures had been taken in the first few months of the occupation, and for a while it even seemed that the Jews might be allowed to pursue a reasonable level of economic activity. Some Jews who had fled to France (mainly to the southern zone) when Belgium was occupied actually returned to Belgium and resumed their economic activities there, especially in the diamond industry in Antwerp. In November 1940, however, Hermann Goering ordered the Belgian economy to be "Aryanized," thus prompting interest by various German enterprises in acquiring Jewish businesses. In practice, "Aryanization" was launched only in late 1941, its "legal" basis being decrees of October 28, 1940, and May 21, 1941. Aryanization gathered momentum in March and April 1942, when the systematic liquidation of Jewish businesses in the textile, leather, and diamond industries was set in motion. However, the Aryanization process was never completed; according to a comprehensive survey conducted by the Germans, the large Jewish enterprises stayed in existence and kept their assets intact. The situation in Jewish-owned real estate was similar.

Several economic decrees were enacted in 1942: confiscation of property owned by German Jews (April 22 and August 1); severe restrictions on the practice of medicine (June 1); and, forbidding the sale of real estate without special permission (September 29) during the period when Jews were being deported to camps.

10/28/1940 **Italy invades Greece**

Italy claimed that Greece had inspired attacks on its forces along the Greek-Albanian frontier, Albania having been invaded by Italy in April 1939. By now, Italy had massed a force of 162,000 men along the border. Greece had only 75,000 men to counter an invasion on this front.

11/16/1940 **Warsaw Ghetto sealed**

The Jewish ghetto, located in the heart of the Jewish quarter in northern Warsaw, was sealed. Until the last day, the Jews did not know if the ghetto was going to be sealed. On November 16, the ghetto was closed and thousands of Jews were dispossessed of belongings that they had left on the other side. According to the Germans' statistics, 30 percent of the city population was crammed into the 2.4 percent of its area that was reserved for the ghetto, and housing in the ghetto was occupied at seven persons per room. The ghetto had severely inadequate sanitary provisions, no greenery, and no trees. This was the largest of the Jewish ghettos; some 330,000 people were placed there in its first stage; later on, another 120,000 Jews were sent there.

12/1/1940 **"Oneg Shabbat" clandestine archives established**

Within a few months of the beginning of the war, Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum and a group of friends began to gather testimonies and descriptions of events of Jews who had come to the capital from peripheral towns. When the Jews were interned in the Warsaw Ghetto, a new phase in the work of the archives began. Ringelblum, aware that the events befalling the Jews under the occupation regime were unprecedented, believed it essential to enable future historians to obtain painstakingly recorded material. The team did not settle for gathering material and taking notes on events; it also encouraged writers and laypersons to write about, and analyze, the ghetto realities. Among the small circle of friends who established and managed the collection known as the "Oneg Shabbat" archives, only one member survived.

1/21/1941 **The Revolt of the Iron Guard; Anti-Jewish Riots in Romania**

On 21-23 January, the Iron Guard rose in revolt and tried to seize power in the country. The revolt was accompanied by anti-Jewish riots in Bucharest. Members of the Iron Guard, together with bands of thugs,

rioters from the suburbs and gypsies attacked Jewish neighborhoods, murdered 127 Jews and destroyed and looted houses and shops. Within a few days, the revolt was crushed by the army. In order to garner Romanian support for Germany in the upcoming invasion of the Soviet Union, Hitler came out in support of Ion Antonescu and his army in putting down the revolt.

2/5/1941

Anti-Jewish Legislation in Romania, with German support

In the months between the repression of the "Legionary Rebellion" at the end of January and the advent of the war against the Soviet Union, a string of anti-Jewish laws were passed in Romania. The German Foreign Ministry sent a special advisor on "Jewish affairs" to Romania - Gustav Richter, who was an aide to Adolf Eichmann. His official function was "to advise the Romanian government on legislation against the Jews, similar to the kind of laws that have been enacted in Germany." On 5 February, the Law for the Protection of the State was passed, which provided that for the same offense, Jews would be given double the punishment meted out to Christians. On 27 March, a further law was passed permitting the confiscation of Jewish-owned property, resulting in the confiscation of over 40,000 Jewish houses and apartments. On 15 May, Jews were stripped of the last vestiges of legal protection, and were drafted for forced labor.

2/25/1941

Anti-Nazi strike in Amsterdam

The arrest and deportation of several hundred Jews to Buchenwald in February 1941 horrified the inhabitants of Amsterdam. Communist Party activists declared a strike and, in their manifesto, demanded an enhancement of social benefits and the release of the Jewish prisoners. The strike spread rapidly as all segments of the population, irrespective of their adherence to the Communist platform, shut down all means of transport, large enterprises, and public services. By the next day, the strike spread to the towns around Amsterdam. The Germans, although surprised by the extent of the strike, countered it with massive forces and stamped it out by its third day. The failure of the strike prompted the Germans to toughen their anti-Jewish policies.

3/1/1941

Construction of Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp begins

In March 1941, Himmler issued orders for the construction of a second wing at the Auschwitz camp, a much larger facility three kilometers away from the original camp known as Auschwitz I. The new division would be called Auschwitz II-Birkenau. To make room for the new camp, 2,000 residents of several Polish villages, including Brzezinka, known in German as Birkenau, were evicted from their homes. The villagers' homes were razed and a vast area of 40 square kilometers was declared off-limits.

Intensive construction of barracks and other facilities at Auschwitz II began in October 1941. In its final stage, Auschwitz II was composed of nine sub-units, separated from each other by electrified barbed-wire fences.

Auschwitz II (Birkenau) was the most populous of the concentration camps at Auschwitz, and the most brutal and inhuman in its conditions. Most of its prisoners were Jews, followed by Poles, Germans and Gypsies. It was Auschwitz II that became the extermination center containing all gas chambers and crematoria, except for the first which had been built in Auschwitz I.

3/11/1941

U.S. Congress passes Lend-Lease Act

After two months of protracted discussions and in defiance of isolationists' opposition, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act. Churchill's entreaty from London "Give us the tools and we will finish the job" also had an influence.

The Lend-Lease agreement authorized the president to lend and lease military equipment to the anti-Axis powers for direct or indirect payment. The transfer of mammoth sums of money (\$50 billion by the end of the war) and important war material effectively terminated the American neutrality policy.

Roosevelt responded to the passage of the Act by proclaiming: "This decision is the end of any attempt at appeasement in our land; the end of urging us to get along with the dictators; the end of compromise with tyranny and the forces of oppression."

4/6/1941

Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece

On April 6, 1941, Hitler's forces, in alliance with the Hungarians and the Bulgarians, invaded Yugoslavia and Greece. Hitler intervened in the war in this fashion to secure his southern flank in anticipation of the imminent invasion of the Soviet Union.

Yugoslavia Yugoslavia refrained from joining the Axis until March 25, 1941, when it made this move under duress. Two days later, a pro-Western military coup took place in Belgrade and Yugoslavia's alliance with the Axis was aborted. The invasion of Yugoslavia by German, Hungarian and Bulgarian forces began a week and a half later (April 6), and the Yugoslav army lay down its arms on April 18.

Greece The Prime Minister of Greece, General Ioannis Metaxas, attempted to maintain neutrality until the war began. On October 28, 1940, however, the Italians invaded his country. Metaxas died in January 1941. When the Germans invaded Greece on April 6, 1941, the Greek army, despite valiant resistance aided by a small British force, could not arrest the onslaught. On April 18, 1941, Greek Prime Minister Alexandros Koryzys committed suicide, the Greek army and king fled to Crete, and the Germans closed in on Athens. Most of the British forces were evacuated.

4/9/1941

Germany occupies Salonika

On April 9, 1941, the Germans occupied Salonika, which had a Jewish population of 50,000. Within a week, the members of the Jewish community council were arrested, Jews' dwellings were expropriated, and the Jewish hospital was requisitioned for the use of the Wehrmacht. Three Jewish newspapers in French and Ladino were shut down and replaced with antisemitic and collaborationist papers. In April-May 1941, Einsatzstab Rosenberg (Rosenberg Operational Staff), aided by units of the Wehrmacht, systematically looted 500-year-old literary and cultural treasures in dozens of private and public libraries and synagogues in this city. Most of the booty was taken to Frankfurt, where the Nazis were establishing a library for the study of Judaism.

4/24/1941

Lublin Ghetto closed

The ghetto in Lublin was established in late March 1941 and more than 34,000 Jews were gathered there. Approximately 10,000 Jews were evicted from the city as part of ghettoization. From April 24 on, Jews were not allowed to leave the ghetto, except for members of labor groups and holders of special permits.

5/10/1941

Rudolf Hess parachutes into Duke of Hamilton's estate

Rudolf Hess was the deputy Fuehrer, Hitler's No. 2 man. Nevertheless, Hess's sense of having been removed from centers of policymaking power, coupled with his knowledge of the planned attack on the Soviet Union, evidently joined with other factors to prompt his bold decision to fly to England. Hess set out on his mission in early May 1941, hoping that Britain would be willing to make peace with Germany after the impending invasion of the USSR. To this day, it is not clear whether the initiative for the flight was purely Hess's or whether it was inspired, albeit indirectly, by Hitler. In either case, Hitler repudiated Hess's mission as soon as its failure became known. Hess was arrested when he landed in England and was held there until the end of the war. After the war, he was prosecuted along with the other surviving leaders of the Nazi regime at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, and was held in Spandau prison after being found guilty. He committed suicide there in 1987.

6/6/1941

"Commissar Order"

About two weeks before the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Wehrmacht high command (OKW) issued the *Kommissarbefehl*, the "Commissar Order." The order was consistent with the Nazis' ideological perception of the invasion of the USSR as an action meant to liquidate Bolshevism by physically eliminating all bearers of the idea and the Soviet State apparatus. Thus, in contravention of international law, the order stipulated:

...If captured during combat or while offering resistance, [these commissars] must on principle be shot immediately.... As for the others, the following rules shall apply: Even if they are only suspected of resistance, sabotage, or instigation thereto... protection granted to prisoners of war... will not apply to them. After having been segregated they are to be liquidated.

The Commissar Order, signed by General Walter Warlimont and approved by the OKW Chief of Staff, General Wilhelm Keitel, directly implicated the German army in involvement in, and responsibility for, war crimes in the occupied territories. In the summer of 1941, Keitel had all copies of the Commissar Order destroyed, in order to remove evidence of the army's crimes.

6/22/1941

"Operation Barbarossa"

The largest military offensive in history began at 3:00 a.m. on June 22, 1941. The armed forces of Germany and its allies attacked the Soviet Union along a frontier 1,800 miles long. Stalin disregarded all forewarnings about the impending onslaught, leaving his army formations totally unprepared. The war was meant to fulfill Hitler's Lebensraum plans. Germany's goal was not only to defeat the Red Army, but also to destroy it and the Soviet Union in a mammoth and ruthless tide of annihilation. Hitler's strategy was simple: a blitzkrieg that would wipe out large Red Army formations quickly, by denying them the possibility of retreat or assistance from other units. To accomplish this, the Germans prepared a military offensive on an unprecedented scale: More than 3 million fighting men, 600,000 motor vehicles, 750,000 horses, 3,580 tanks, and 1,830 aircraft took part in the invasion. Hitler hoped to attain a rapid victory and to reach the Ural Mountains before the winter. German forces advanced toward the immediate targets: Leningrad, Moscow, and Kiev. The Wehrmacht attained prodigious success in the first few weeks, occupying a strip hundreds of kilometers deep. Masses of Soviet soldiers were killed or taken prisoner, and the German military juggernaut, treating the occupied civilian population with a brutality never before witnessed, seemed unstoppable.

6/23/1941

Einsatzgruppen begin killings in the USSR

In the Spring of 1941 four Einsatzgruppen were organized who together numbered some 3000 people. They were mobile units of the SD and the Security Police who were disposed after the combat forces to take control of the areas that the army had occupied. Each unit advanced in a predetermined direction toward a

pre-assigned sector. The Einsatzgruppen engaged in "special tasks", ie: mass murder on an unprecedented scale. Their orders were spelled out in a letter given to them on July 2 by Heydrich:

The following is the gist of the highly important orders that I have issued to the Einsatzkommandos... Executions: The following categories are to be executed: Comintern officials (as well as all professional Communist politicians); party officials of all levels; and members of the central, provincial, and district committees; people's commissars; Jews in the party and state apparatus; and other extremist elements (saboteurs, propagandists, snipers, assassins, agitators, etc.).

In Nazi eyes, all Jews were Bolsheviks, extremists, and dangerous. Hence practically speaking, the order encompassed all Jews.

We know that these Einsatzgruppen were helped by other units who participated in the murder, such as other SS units, the Wehrmacht, and other local militias.

By the Spring of 1943, when the Germans began their retreat from Soviet Territory, the Einsatzgruppen had murdered approximately 1.25 million Jews and hundreds of thousands of other Soviet nationals including Prisoners of War.

6/24/1941

Germans occupy Vilna; in July, killings begin at Ponary, south of Vilna

On June 24, 1941, two days after the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Germans occupied Vilna. In July, the Germans began taking Jewish victims by foot, in motor vehicles, and by train to Ponary, where they were led in groups of hundreds and thousands to enormous pits. The victims were marched through a circular entrance at the construction site of a fuel depot. They could not see where they were being taken, because their upper garments were pulled over their heads as they marched. Having reached the pits, they were shot by SS men and German police, with collaboration from Lithuanians.

6/28/1941

Romanian soldiers kill 14,000 Jews in Iasi

On the evening of June 28, Romanian and German soldiers, members of the Romanian Special Intelligence Service, police, and masses of residents participated in an assault on the Jews of this town. Thousands were murdered in their homes and in the streets; additional thousands were arrested by patrols of Romanian and German soldiers and taken to police headquarters. In their homes, Christians posted crosses, icons, and inscriptions such as "Here live Christians, not Jewboys." The next day, "Black Sunday," Romanian soldiers shot thousands of Jews who had been interned in the police headquarters yard. The 4,330 survivors, and many Jews who had been rounded up from all parts of town, were packed into freight cars and vans; 2,650 of them died of suffocation or thirst, and others lost their sanity. On August 30, the 980 Jews who survived the torture were brought back to Iasi.

6/30/1941

Germany occupies Lvov; 4,000 Jews killed by July 3

The Germans occupied the city on June 30. Members of Einsatzgruppe C, German soldiers, and Ukrainian nationalists and rabble began to murder Jews that very day. The Germans and the Ukrainians spread rumors implicating the Jews in killing Ukrainian political prisoners whose bodies had been found in the cellars of the Soviet political police station. In the four days of rioting that ensued, the Ukrainian rabble ran wild, assaulting, abusing, torturing, and murdering Jews, and raping Jewish women as German soldiers took pictures. By July 3, 1941, 4,000 Jews had been murdered.

6/30/1941

Einsatzkommando 4a and local Ukrainians kill 300 Jews in Lutsk

The Germans entered Lutsk on June 25. The next day, Ukrainians perpetrated a pogrom including looting, beatings, and murdered several Jews. On June 27, a vanguard unit of an Einsatzkommando reached the town. Visiting the local prison, the unit discovered the corpses of numerous inmates, including Ukrainians whom the Soviets had murdered before their retreat. The German military administration and Ukrainian nationalist leaders accused the Jews of the murders, and 300 Jews were rounded up and executed on June 30 in reprisal. On July 2, Jewish men were summoned for work, about 2000 of them were taken to the Lubart Fortress and murdered. German soldiers from rearguard units stationed in the city participated in the murder.

7/1/1941

Romanian units and Einsatzgruppe D shoot 160,000 Jews in Bessarabia between July 1 and August 31

Ion Antonescu, dictator of Romania, issued a secret order: Before the Germans and Romanians invaded the Soviet Union, all Jews in Bessarabian villages were to be murdered on the spot; Jews in the towns removed to ghettos; and anyone who served the Soviets during the year of Soviet rule was to be executed after being found guilty. A special unit was established as a spin-off of the Security Police, patterned after the Einsatzgruppen units, and placed under the command of Deputy Premier Mihai Antonescu. The unit was assisted by the Romanian army, and both of these agencies collaborated with the corresponding German entities. Some 150,000-200,000 Jews were murdered in July-August, mostly by Romanians.

7/4/1941

Vilna Judenrat established

The Germans occupied Vilna on June 24. Within a few days, the Germans and the Lithuanians issued orders forcing Jews to wear the Jewish Badge, forbidding them to walk on sidewalks and enter certain locations, stipulating a nighttime curfew, and limiting their food purchases. On July 4, the Jews were ordered to establish a Judenrat. Concurrently, the Germans, assisted by Lithuanian volunteers, began to abduct Jews—some 5,000 in July—from the streets and their homes, to take them to Ponary, and to murder them. The Jews of Vilna and their relatives knew nothing whatsoever about the fate of their loved ones.

7/8/1941

Murder of the Jews of Bukovina and Bessarabia begins

Following the invasion of the USSR in June 1941, Germany and Romania occupied Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. Romanian leaders Marshal Ion Antonescu and Deputy Prime Minister Mihai Antonescu and other government members gave the Romanian army and gendarmerie secret orders to murder all the Jews in Bukovina and Bessarabia under the code name "Cleansing of the Ground" (Curăţirea Terenului).

On the eve of the war, a special killing unit was created from the Security Services, commanded by the deputy Prime Minister, Mihai Antonescu, and called the Esalon Special (Special Echelon). Together with the German army and Einsatzgruppe D, they massacred about 150,000 to 160,000 Jews in Bukovina and Bessarabia during July and August 1941.

In a government meeting on 8 July, Mihai Antonescu said:

"Be merciless. Saccharine and foggy humanitarianism has no place here... I am all for the forced migration of the entire Jewish element of Bessarabia and Bukovina, which must be dumped across the border... If necessary shoot your machine guns... I couldn't care less if history will recall us as barbarians... I take formal responsibility and tell you there is no law."

The Jews who had survived the massacres were deported in the direction of the Dniester River. They were forced to march hundreds of kilometers in the summer heat, hungry, sick and exhausted. Anyone falling behind was shot by the Romanian escorts. After some six weeks in temporary camps, the deportation continued towards Transnistria. The establishment of ghettos and camps in the Transnistria region began in August 1941, and the remaining Jews were incarcerated there. Some 195,000 Jews were deported to these camps, of whom approximately 145,000 perished. Additionally, some 180,000 Ukrainian Jews who had lived in this region previously were murdered by the Romanians.

7/20/1941

Minsk Ghetto established

The order to establish the ghetto in Minsk 34 streets and alleys plus the Jewish cemetery was given on July 20, 1941. Jews were brought to the ghetto from Slutsk, Dzerzhinsk, Cherven, and other localities in the vicinity of Minsk. Jewish men and women who had married non-Jews were also taken to the ghetto, as were their children. In all, the ghetto population climbed to 100,000.

7/24/1941

Kishinev Ghetto established; 10,000 Jews already dead since the invasion

The Jews of Kishinev were annihilated in several phases. When Romanian and German units entered the town, many Jews were slaughtered in the streets and in their homes. Their exact number is not known, but the researcher Matatias Carp estimates it at some 10,000. After the ghetto was established, 2,000 Jews were systematically murdered by a unit comprised of men from Einsatzkommandos 11a from Einsatzgruppen D. This unit selected for murder members of the liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, engineers) and Jewish intellectuals. In some of these executions, Romanian soldiers and police participated alongside the Einsatzkommando men as an auxiliary force. The 11,000 Jews who survived the murder spree were concentrated in the ghetto that was established on July 24, 1941, by order of the Romanian governor of the district and the German commander of the Einsatzkommando. The Jews in the ghetto were dispossessed, tortured, and mobilized for forced labor. Many were executed and their bodies were not removed, thereby angering the Germans.

7/25/1941

Pogrom in Lvov

On July 25-27, Ukrainians under German patronage rioted against the Jews again. The pogroms were organized by Ukrainian nationalist circles with German encouragement. Among the Jews of Lvov, rumors had spread that the Ukrainians were planning a pogrom. As July 25 approached, an unusual bustle was noticed among the Ukrainian police in the city. Jews tried not to step outside. Early in the morning of July 25, groups of peasants from nearby villages began to flow into Lvov. They assembled on the premises of police stations, set out from there to the street accompanied by Ukrainian policemen, and assaulted any Jew whom they encountered with clubs, knives, and axes. Groups of Jews were taken to the Jewish cemetery and murdered brutally. A roundup of Jews from their homes, coupled with looting, began in the afternoon. The proportion of Jewish intellectuals was high. Ukrainian police circulated in groups of five and consulted prepared lists. Some 2,000 people were murdered in approximately three days. The pogrom was known as the "Petliura Days," in commemoration of Simon (Semyon) Petliura, the Ukrainian premier who had organized massive pogroms against Jews in 1919 and was murdered in exile by a Jew in 1926.

7/31/1941

Goering orders Heydrich to prepare a plan for the "Final Solution of Jewish Problem."

Hermann Goering instructed Reinhard Heydrich to compose and submit "all the necessary preparations with regard to organizational, practical and financial aspects for an overall solution (Gesamtlosung) of the "Jewish question" in the German sphere of influence in Europe". Heydrich himself seems to have initiated this commission. To discharge this duty, Heydrich received cooperation from all Reich ministries and

convened the Wannsee Conference, where Heydrich summoned the directors of the main government agencies that would have to cooperate for the plan to succeed. Many researchers consider Goering's instruction the first important document that set the wheels of the "Final Solution" in motion.

8/1/1941

50,000 Jews confined in Bialystok Ghetto

The Germans reoccupied Bialystok on July 27, 1941. Two days later, the military commander of the town summoned the Chief Rabbi of the city, Dr. Gedaliah Rosenmann, and the head of the Jewish community council, Efraim Barasz, and ordered them to establish a Judenrat. On August 1, 50,000 Jews were confined in the ghetto area, a newly developed non-Jewish neighborhood that was split into two parts, east and west, divided by the Biala River. There were 2 gates in the ghetto, and a third gate was eventually added. The Judenrat had its offices at 32 Kupiecka, and most of the departmental offices, dealing with the ghetto's day-to-day affairs, were housed there as well.

8/4/1941

Kovno Ghetto sealed

The Jews of Kovno who survived the violent rampage that accompanied the occupation of this town on June 24 were given a month to move to two ghetto districts in Slobodka, on either side of the main street—the "large ghetto" and "small ghetto." The area was encircled with barbed wire and heavily guarded, including German soldiers stationed at the gates. Some 29,760 Jews lived in the sealed ghetto before mass murder operations began in August.

8/5/1941

Murders in Pinsk; 10,000 Jews killed in three days

The first spate of murders in Pinsk began on August 5, 1941. The Germans occupied Pinsk on July 4; 16 Jews were abducted and murdered the next day. In the second half of July, a 28-member Judenrat, headed by David Alper, the principal of the Tarbut High School, was established. On August 5, some 8,000 men were rounded up on the pretext of having to repair a railroad track; among them were 20 members of the Judenrat, including the chairman. All were taken to pits outside the city and murdered. On August 7, another 2,500-3,000 males (elderly, adults, and boys) were rounded up and subjected to the same fate.

8/27/1941

Massacre at Kamenets-Podolsk

In July, Kamenets-Podolsk was occupied by the Hungarian forces that fought alongside Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union. Beginning in mid-July, some 14,000 Jews, residents but not citizens of Hungary, were deported to Korosmezo near the Polish border. From there, they were sent to Kolomija near Kamenets-Podolsk, and turned over to the SS. By August 10, at least 14,000 Jews had been handed over in this fashion. On August 25, these Jews' fate was sealed in a meeting at the headquarters of the commander of the Wehrmacht logistics division at Vinnitsa. At this meeting, SS-Obergruppenfuehrer Friedrich Jeckeln promised to finish murdering, by September, the Jews whom the Hungarians had turned over. The Aktion took place on August 27-28, and according to Jeckeln's report (Operational Report USSR No. 80), 23,600 persons were murdered— 14,000-18,000 from Hungary and the rest local. The Hungarians had also played an active role in the murder.

9/1/1941

Nazi "Euthanasia Program" officially terminated

Growing criticism of the "euthanasia" operation—such as a sermon given by Clemens Galen, the Catholic Bishop of Muenster on August 3, 1941—prompted Hitler to terminate the operation officially. Practically,

however, it continued under improved camouflage until the end of the war. By September 1, 1941, when the operation was officially terminated, 70,273 people had been "purged," according to T4 figures; by the end of 1941, T4 reported that 93,521 beds had been made available for other purposes.

9/3/1941

First experimental gassings at Auschwitz

On September 3, the first pilot group of people—600 Soviet prisoners of war and 250 other prisoners, selected among those who had fallen ill—was put to death at Auschwitz by means of Zyklon B gas. The initial attempts failed; the intended victims did not die as had been planned. They had to be taken out and made to wait until the technical flaws were corrected. Then, they were led back to the cells and killed in accordance with the plan.

9/5/1941

Two ghettos established and sealed in Vilna

On September 3-5, the area that had been cleansed of Jews in the "Great Provocation" Aktion (in which the Germans faked a gunfire attack by Jews on German soldiers) was fenced off, and 8,000 Jews of this city were murdered in "retribution." Two ghettos were established there: Ghetto No. 1 and Ghetto No. 2, separated by Deutsche Street. On September 6, all the Jews of Vilna were banished to the ghettos—30,000 to Ghetto No. 1, and 11,000 to Ghetto No. 2. About 6,000 were taken to Ponary and murdered there. The Germans appointed Judenraete in both ghettos the next day.

9/8/1941

Siege of Leningrad

The German army advanced so rapidly toward Leningrad, the second-most important city in Russia, that by August 30, 1941, the last of the railroad tracks that led to the town had been cut. Several days later, German tank units completed their stranglehold on the town. German troops under Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb from the southwest, and Finnish Marshal Mannerheim's army from the northwest, rushed to the city outskirts quickly and began to shell the city fiercely. However, the Nazis' hopes of a swift occupation of Leningrad faded when Marshal Zhukov was placed in charge of organizing the town's defense. He turned the city into a maze of strongholds and firing positions.

9/12/1941

Hitler: "Leningrad will be starved into submission"

The last overland connections with the city were severed in early September. Leningrad and its population of 3 million were under siege, with enough food for one month. A trickle of supplies was hauled across Lake Ladoga. Terrible hunger set in. The German forces encamped on the outskirts of town for a protracted siege. Hitler forbade his commanders to accept a surrender. Leningrad and its population, Hitler ordered, would be bombed and shelled to death. Although Hitler's plan was not carried out in full, by the time the siege was lifted and Leningrad liberated in January 1944, an estimated million inhabitants had died of severe hardship and horrifying starvation.

9/15/1941

150,000 Jews deported to Transnistria; 90,000 perish

Transnistria is a region in the western Ukraine, across the Dniestr River from Romania, that Hitler handed to Romania as a reward for its participation in the war against the Soviet Union. After it was occupied, Transnistria became a concentration ground for the Jews of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and northern Moldavia, whom the Romanian authorities deported on the direct order of Ion Antonescu. The deportations began on September 15, 1941, and continued on-and-off until the autumn of 1942; September 15 is the official date

of the deportation of the Jews of Bessarabia. Most of the deportations to Transnistria took place on foot, via four transit points: Atachi (the principal transit point), Cosauti, Rezina, and Tiraspol. In all, an estimated 150,000 persons were deported; German sources speak of 185,000. In addition to massacres carried out by Romanians, Jews were murdered in the camps of Bogdanovka, Akhmechetka and Domankevka.

The Romanian army and gendarmerie also participated in the murder of some 200,000 Jews from Ukraine.

In October, the Jews of southern Bukovina were also deported to Transnistria. Ion Antonescu stated that Bessarabia would be "Judenrein" and that in Bukovina, the Jewish population of 90,000 would be reduced to the 10,000 Jews who were considered indispensable to the region's economy.

9/19/1941

Germans in Kiev

Stalin instructed Marshal Semyon Budenny to hold Kiev at any price, but it was too late; German tanks had placed the Ukrainian capital in a stranglehold. Stalin addressed his soldiers over the radio, urging them to continue holding the town and to fight to the death. Nevertheless, the Wehrmacht occupied Kiev, killing 350,000 Soviet soldiers and taking 600,000 prisoner. The Soviet losses included 3,718 artillery pieces, 884 armored vehicles, and five armies.

9/19/1941

German Jews to wear Jewish badge in public

In September 1941, Jews in the Third Reich areas were ordered to wear a yellow badge, referred to as a "Jewish star" (Judenstern). According to the order, issued two years after a similar requirement was introduced among Polish Jews, all Jews aged 6 or over were to wear, on the left side of their chest, a fist-sized yellow six-point star bearing the inscription "Jude." The Judenstern order in the Reich and the areas annexed to it, as in every other location, was but one of a series of anti-Jewish decrees, each representing a general escalation in severity of the Jewish policy applied.

At this stage (September 1941), the marking of the Jews in Germany was carried out in preparation for the "Final Solution." Persons not employed in enterprises of importance to the state economy were placed under restrictions of movement that month, and were sent to the East over the next few months.

9/19/1941

Zhitomir Ghetto liquidated; 10,000 murdered

Zhitomir was a district capital in the Soviet Ukraine. When the Germans occupied the town on July 9, 1941, they found 10,000 Jews there. In July and August of 1941, nearly 5,000 Jews were murdered in groups under various pretexts, and the remaining 5,000 were ghettoized. Early in the morning of September 19, the ghetto was surrounded by German and Ukrainian police. The 5,000 Jews in the ghetto were led to pits and murdered.

9/29/1941

33,771 Kiev Jews killed at Babi Yar

On September 28, the Germans posted notices in Kiev ordering the Jews to report the next day at 8:00 a.m. to the corner of Melnik and Dekhtyarev streets for relocation to other localities. The Germans expected 6,000 Jews to comply; instead, 30,000 reached the assembly point. The Germans herded the masses down Melnik Street toward the Jewish cemetery at the edge of the city and the nearby ravine of Babi Yar. The interior of the ravine was fenced with barbed wire and guarded by police, soldiers of the Waffen-SS, and Ukrainian police. As they approached the vale of death, the victims were forced to hand over their valuables, undress, and advance in ranks of 10 toward a terrace at the edge of the valley. When they

reached the edge, they were gunned down by automatic fire and their bodies toppled into the ravine. The squads of shooters from Sonderkommando 4a relieved one another every few hours. At the end of the day, the bodies were covered with a thin layer of soil. On September 29-30, according to official reports of the Einsatzgruppe, 33,771 Jews were shot. Most of the victims were women, children, the elderly, and the ill—those who had not been able to flee from Kiev after the Germans invaded. The Einsatzgruppe report noted proudly that, "owing to exceptionally clever organization," the Jews did not realize what awaited them until the last moment. The report added that "there were no incidents."

10/8/1941

Vitebsk Ghetto liquidated; more than 16,000 Jews murdered

The Germans occupied Vitebsk, a district capital in northeastern Belorussia, on July 11, 1941. Immediately, the Jews suffered persecution, forced labor, and murder. A ghetto was established in the town and 16,000 Jews were settled there. The liquidation of the Vitebsk Ghetto began on October 8, 1941, on the pretext of epidemics that allegedly emanated from the place. In the course of the three-day murder Aktion, Jews were taken to the Vitbe River, where they were shot and their bodies hurled into the water.

10/11/1941

Jews of Czernowitz, Romania, ghettoized

Czernowitz (Chernovtsy, Cernauti) was the district center of the Chernovtsy Oblast and former capital of the Bukovina province. On October 11, by order of District Governor Corneliu Calotescu, all the Jews of Czernowitz—more than 50,000—were confined to an area of several side-streets, and representatives of the Romanian National Bank confiscated their belongings and property. The deportation of the Jews of Czernowitz to Transnistria began the next day. By 15 November, some 28,000 Jews had been deported.

10/12/1941

Germans reach outskirts of Moscow

"On the night of October 14-15, the situation on the western front deteriorated," a Red Army document states. "The German-Fascist forces pitted large forces of tanks and mobile infantry against our forces and penetrated our defenses in one sector." Two entire Soviet armies, with more than 650,000 soldiers, were neutralized in the first two weeks of October. Stalin ordered government offices and some enterprises in the capital to evacuate, although he remained there to command the defense. German patrols came so close to the Soviet capital that they could see its water tower 15 miles away. This marked the Soviets' lowest point in the military campaign.

10/15/1941

Deportation of German and Austrian Jews to ghettos in the East begins

A mass deportation from Austria to Lodz—5,000 Jews from Austria and a similar number of Gypsies from the Burgenland area—began in the middle of October 1941. Afterwards, another 5,000 Jews were banished to the Lodz Ghetto and 3,000 to the Baltics.

10/16/1941

Odessa occupied and Jews massacred

Odessa, the largest port city in the Ukraine—on the coast of the Black Sea—was occupied on October 16, 1941, after a two-month siege. Immediately afterwards, the operations company of Romanian intelligence and Einsatzkommando 11b of Einsatzgruppe D massacred more than 8,000 people, mostly Jews.

10/24/1941

20,000 Jews transported to Dalnik; all murdered

On October 22, the Romanian command building was blown up and 66 members of the military, including the military governor of Odessa, were killed. In response, the dictator of Romania, Marshal Ion Antonescu, ordered the following: the execution of 200 Communists for each officer killed and 100 for each soldier; the incarceration of all Communists; and the taking of hostages among Jewish families. The next day, some 5,000 people, mostly Jews, were apprehended and executed, most by hanging and a smaller number by gunfire.

That afternoon, the Romanians rounded up another 20,000 Jews in the local prison and led them the next day to the village of Dalnik. Some of the victims were shot; others were locked in warehouses or herded into the harbor square where they were burned alive. After the massacre, many Jews of Odessa were sent to the camps, and another 35,000-40,000 who remained in the town were concentrated between October 25 and November 3, 1941, and kept outdoors for ten days. Those who did not die of exposure and starvation, or at the hands of the German inhabitants, were sent to their deaths a month later.

10/25/1941

Eichmann approves plan for use of mobile gas vans

On the initiation of Heinrich Lohse, Reich Commissar for the Ostland, and Alfred Rosenberg, Minister of the Occupied Territories, a meeting was held at which Rosenberg and representatives from Lohse's and Adolf Eichmann's office were present. Soon thereafter, on October 25, Eichmann expressed his approval and requested the swift implementation of the use of mobile gas vans for murdering Jews.

10/28/1941

Massacre in Kovno: more than 9,000 Jews killed

The "great *Aktion*" in Kovno took place on October 28, 1941. The Jews of the ghetto were assembled in Democrats Square, SS Master Sergeant Helmut Raucke separated those fit for labor from the others. Workers were referred to the left, and non-workers - more than 9,000 men, women, and children - to the right. At dusk, when the sorting was completed, everyone on the right was sent to the "small ghetto"; those to the left were allowed to return to their homes. The next morning, the Jews who had been gathered in the "small ghetto" were marched to the Ninth Fort, where they were murdered by gunfire that toppled them into large pits prepared by Russian prisoners of war.

10/30/1941

Bratislava Jews expelled to rural Slovakia

Anti-Jewish legislation in Slovakia, Germany's ally and patron state, gathered much momentum in 1941. Jews were required to wear the Jewish Badge and perform forced labor. Construction of labor camps for Jews began in the autumn. An order for the banishment of 10,000 of the 15,000 Jews in Bratislava to several peripheral towns and labor camps was issued in September and implemented in October. In a statement to the German Foreign Office of October 22, 1941, concerning the deportations to the peripheral towns, the German Ambassador to Slovakia, Hans Ludin, noted that the action had followed the example of the ghettos in the Generalgouvernement and took place with the encouragement of the German advisor on Jewish affairs, Dieter Wisliceny.

11/1/1941

Construction of Belzec camp begins

In May 1940, the Germans built a labor camp for Jews in Belzec, a small town in the southeastern part of the Lublin district in Poland. The Jewish inmates were put to work at building fortifications and anti-tank trenches on the German-Soviet frontier. The camp was closed in late 1940. In late October, 1941, construction of an extermination camp at Belzec began as part of Operation Reinhard. The camp was built along a railroad siding half a kilometer from the Belzec railroad station. The anti-tank trenches on the camp premises were given a new purpose: mass graves for the Jews who would be murdered there.

By December 1942, some 600,000 Jews had been murdered in Belzec.

11/1/1941

Romanians agree to the murder of Jewish citizens living outside Romania

In November 1941, Deputy Prime Minister of Romania Mihai Antonescu agreed to the deportation to the extermination camps of Jews who were Romanian nationals living in Germany or German-occupied countries. Several thousand of these Jews were deported and killed.

11/15/1941

Jews murdered in Maly Trostinets, near Minsk

From November 1941, Jews and other victims of the Nazi regime (Soviet POWs, partisans, hostages etc) were murdered in the Blagovtshina Forest, near the village of Maly Trostinets, south-east of Minsk. The first to be murdered were some 10,000 Jews from the Minsk ghetto, and beginning in May 1942, Jews were transported from Germany, Bohemia and Moravia, Poland and the Netherlands, to be murdered there. Some were murdered in gas vans, and all were buried in pits that were dug at that time. According to different estimates, between 206,500 and 500,000 people were murdered in the region of Maly Trostinets.

11/24/1941

"Model Camp" established in Theresienstadt

The first deportees to the Theresienstadt Ghetto arrived at the end of November 1941. By the end of May 1942, 28,887 Jews, one-third of the Jews in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, had been banished to this camp. The Czech Jewish leadership initially supported the plan to establish this ghetto, hoping that it would spare the Jews from deportation to the East. In the first few months, conditions in Theresienstadt resembled those in other Nazi concentration camps, and the hopes that the ghetto would prevent deportation to the East were also dashed. After the first deportation of 2,000 Jews to Riga in January 1942, the inmates of the ghetto lived in dread of deportation at all times.

Between November, 1941 and April 20, 1945, 140000 Jews had been expelled to Theresienstadt. Of these 32,497 people died there from the intolerable conditions. Of the 86,934 who had been deported from the Ghetto to Auschwitz, 3097 survived. At the end of October 1944, only 11,068 inmates remained in Theresienstadt.

11/30/1941

30,000 Riga Jews arrested, subsequently shot at Rumbuli

The Germans established two ghettos for the Jews of Riga. On the night of November 29, Germans separated working Jewish men from the rest of the ghetto inhabitants and removed them to a fenced area at the northeastern corner of the city that had been cleared of its residents three days before. On the night of November 30, German and Latvian guards ringed the western part of the "large ghetto." The inhabitants were rounded up in groups of 1,000, and on the following day, December 1, they were taken out to the Rumbuli Forest, eight kilometers from town, and shot to death at the edge of large pits that had been prepared.

All inhabitants of the "large ghetto" were murdered on December 8-9. In the two phases of the Aktion, approximately 30,000 people were murdered at Rumbuli, including the members of the Aeltestenrat and the historian Simon Dubnow.

12/6/1941

Soviets launch counteroffensive at Moscow

The Germans were already at the gates of the Soviet capital. The Soviet Union reached its lowest point in the war, its institutions of state about to fall to the German army. Georgi Zhukov, Red Army chief of staff, was summoned to orchestrate the city's defense. He built the defense line and waited for his colleague, "General Winter." The German generals pleaded with Hitler to establish a defense line for the winter, but he refused, insisting they continue to attack. The counteroffensive began on December 6 under Zhukov. Three new, specially prepared Soviet armies consisting of 1 million combat soldiers, attacked the German forces. The onslaught caught the German forces exhausted, dug into heavy snow, freezing in the cold, and too widely dispersed by surprise. The German defense disintegrated, thousands of German soldiers were taken prisoner, and Soviet newspapers ran photographs of them covered with women's undergarments and furs against the bitter cold. Zhukov's counterattack spared Moscow from the threat of German occupation and handed the Wehrmacht its first defeat.

12/7/1941

Japanese attack Pearl Harbor; U.S. enters war

Japanese forces attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii, and other American and British sites in the Pacific Ocean. The main Japanese force chose to assault Pearl Harbor from the air, in order to take out the principal American fleet in the Pacific. Most of the warships were unscathed, because they were not in the harbor at that time. The U.S. Navy, although not destroyed totally, incurred heavy losses: 4 warships, 92 naval aircraft, and 96 army aircraft were destroyed; 2,334 American servicemen killed and 1,347 wounded. The Japanese lost 28 planes, 5 submarines, and fewer than 100 men.

The United States declared war on Japan the next day. Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, the Free French, the Netherlands, and other countries joined the declaration. Some 60 million Americans heard President Roosevelt urge Congress to declare war against all the Axis forces.

12/7/1941

"Night and Fog" suppresses resistance in Western Europe

General Wilhelm Keitel, the OKW chief of staff, signed an order prescribing repressive measures against resistance movements in the German-occupied countries of Western Europe—France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway. To deter all inhabitants of occupied Western Europe from taking action, Keitel ordered the use of extreme measures of terror. The death penalty was introduced for resistance activity. The order prohibited the broadcasting of information on suspects, thereby facilitating their disappearance in nacht und nebel—"Night and Fog."

Keitel sent the minister of justice instructions on how to interpret and implement the order. He stressed that Hitler considered even life imprisonment for anti-German activity an indication of German weakness. The Ministry of Justice expressed no objection to being charged with implementing the punishments stipulated in the order or to the guidelines it was given by the Wehrmacht General Staff. The right to clemency was not applied to Jews and Communists. The surviving "Night and Fog" prisoners were liberated in April and May 1945.

12/8/1941

Gas vans introduced at Chelmno

Transports to Chelmno for extermination began on December 7, and the camp went into operation the next day. Chelmno was meant to be a site for the murder of the Jews of the Lodz Ghetto and the Wartheland. The first victims were Jews from communities in the vicinity, who were told that they were being transported to Germany for labor and that they must undergo disinfection in groups of 70-90 persons. As the Jews undressed, their valuables were collected in baskets and the appearance of recording them with their owners' names was made. Then they were led naked through a doorway bearing a sign "To the Baths" into a 25-meter passage, fenced on both sides. At its end, the passage turned into a slope that led to a gas

van. From the moment the victims reached the slope, the Germans, with great cruelty, made them run in the only direction possible: downhill into the truck.

The camp had three gas vans, each of which was equipped with a sealed rear compartment that had a set of double doors. From the outside, they looked like moving vans. Inside, the compartment was lined with galvanized steel and had a wooden grating on the floor. Under the grating was a pipe with openings, and at the end of the pipe was a fixture with which gas was pumped into the compartment through a hose. The driver padlocked the rear doors and started the engine. Within 10 minutes, the victims died of suffocation from the exhaust fumes. Forced laborers were induced, under severe torture, to remove the corpses from the gas vans and bury them in mass graves.

12/11/1941

Germany and Italy declare war on the U.S.

The United States declared war on Japan the day after the Japanese attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941). In response, Italy and Germany, Japan's allies, declared war on the United States, making the U.S. a full partner in the war against Germany. However, back in March of that year, in the context of the war in the Atlantic, American naval vessels had begun patrolling maritime routes in the western Atlantic in order to relieve the pressure on the British navy. In September 1941, a German submarine attacked the American destroyer Greer; and in October, a German submarine sank the American vessel Reuben James. President Roosevelt ordered his fleet to carry out a reprisal attack, thus bringing the U.S. into the campaign at that early stage, albeit indirectly.

The official and full participation of the U.S. in the war against Germany and its allies would become one of the main factors in Germany's defeat. The other two Axis countries, Bulgaria and Hungary, added their names to the declaration of war on December 13.

12/12/1941

First transport of Jews reaches Majdanek extermination camp

The first persons deported to the Waffen-SS concentration and extermination camp on the outskirts of Lublin, Poland, were prisoners of war. The true functions of the camp, however, were to remove and exterminate enemies of the Third Reich, to exterminate Jews, and to assist in the deportation and resettlement of the inhabitants of the Zamosc region. The camp was ringed with a high-tension electrified double barbed-wire fence punctuated by 18 watchtowers. Adjoining the camp and its gas chambers were workshops, warehouses, a laundry, and other facilities. The SS's residential section of the camp also had a casino.

On 12 December 1941, the first group of Jews was deported to Majdanek: 150 men who had been captured in a manhunt in the Lublin ghetto. By 6 January 1945, just 17 of them were still alive, and were liberated from the camp by an order of the German Labor Ministry in Lublin. Between 22 February and 9 November 1942, at least 4000 Jews from Lublin were murdered in Majdanek.

12/21/1941

More than 40,000 Jews shot at Bogdanovka

Bogdanovka was an extermination camp that the Romanian occupation authorities established in the village of that name on the Bug River, in the Golta district of Transnistria. In the middle of December 1941, when several cases of typhus were discovered in the camp, a joint decision was made by Fleisher the German advisor to the Romanian administration of the district and Romanian District Commissioner: Col. Modest Isopesco, to murder all the inmates. Participating in this operation were Romanian soldiers and gendarmes, Ukrainian police and civilians from Golta, and local ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche) under the commander of the Ukrainian regular police, Kazachievici. The Aktion began on December 21. Some 5,000 ill and disabled prisoners were gathered in barns that were set ablaze. The remaining Jews were arranged in rows

of 300-400, led to a forest near the camp, and shot in the neck. The four-day operation resulted in the murder of 30,000 Jews. The remaining Jews, waiting their turn in bitter cold, dug pits with their bare hands and packed them with frozen corpses. Thousands of Jews froze to death. The murders were halted on Christmas Eve and resumed on December 28. By the evening of December 31, the last 11,000 Jews were also dead.

12/22/1941

33,500 of 57,000 Jews in Vilna already murdered

The last *Aktion* in a series of operations in the Vilna Ghetto took place on December 22, 1941. The Germans' method was to murder inmates who did not hold a "Schein," a German-issued labor permit. For this reason, the Jews in this city termed the murder operations "Schein-aktionen." By the end of 1941, the Germans had murdered 33,500 of the 57,000 Jews in Vilna, mostly at the massacre site at Ponary.

Several Jews managed to survive Ponary and return to the Vilna Ghetto. A teacher, Rivka Yoselewska, who regained consciousness in the mass grave related:

'When I came up to the place - we saw people, naked, lined up. But we were still hoping that this was only torture. Some of the young people tried to run, but they were caught immediately, and they were shot right there. It was difficult to hold on to the children. We took all children not ours, and we carried them - we were anxious to get it all over - the suffering of the children was difficult; we all trudged along to come nearer to the place and to come nearer to the end of the torture of the children. The children were taking leave of their parents and parents of their elders.

We were driven; we were already undressed; the clothes were removed and taken away; our father did not want to undress; he remained in his underwear.

Then they tore off the clothing off the old man and he was shot. I saw it with my own eyes. And then they took my mother, and we said, let us go before her; but they caught mother and shot her too; There was my younger sister, and she wanted to leave; she prayed with the Germans; she asked to run, naked; she went up to the Germans with one of her friends; they were embracing each other; and she asked to be spared, standing there naked. He looked into her eyes and shot the two of them. They fell together in their embrace, the two young girls, my sister and her young friend. Then my second sister was shot and then my turn did come.

We turned towards the grave and then he turned around and asked "Whom shall I shoot first?" We were already facing the grave. The German asked "Whom do you want me to shoot first?" I did not answer. I felt him take the child from my arms. The child cried out and was shot immediately. And then he aimed at me. First he held on to my hair and turned my head around; I stayed standing; I heard a shot, but I continued to stand and then he turned my head again and he aimed the revolver at me and ordered me to watch and then turned my head around and shot at me. Then I fell to the ground into the pit amongst the bodies; but I felt nothing.

The moment I did feel I felt a sort of heaviness and then I thought maybe I am not alive any more, but I feel something after I died. I thought I was dead, that this was the feeling which comes after death. Then I felt that I was choking; people falling over me. I tried to move and felt that I was alive and that I could rise. I was choking. I heard the shots and I was praying for another bullet to put an end to my suffering, but I continued to move about. I felt that I was choking, strangled, but I tried to save myself, to find some air to breathe, and then I felt that I was climbing towards the top of the grave above the bodies.

I rose, and I felt bodies pulling at me with their hands, biting at my legs, pulling me down, down. And yet with my last strength I came up on top of the grave, and when I did I did not know the place, so many bodies were lying all over, dead people; I wanted to see the end of this stretch of dead bodies but I could

not. It was impossible. They were lying, all dying; suffering; not all of them dead, but in the last throes of suffering; naked; shot, but not dead. Children crying "Mother", "Father"; I could not stand on my feet.'

12/31/1941

First partisan manifesto in Vilna

As Jews were being deported from Vilna to Ponary, several inhabitants of the ghetto realized that the actions being perpetrated against them belonged to a genocide scheme. Several leading members of the Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir youth movement in Vilna slipped out of the ghetto, found refuge in a monastery a short distance from town, and attempted to understand the meaning of the events and the conclusions to adduce from them. Abba Kovner said, "One mustn't believe that those who were taken from us are alive, that their removal was merely a deportation. Everything that has happened to us thus far; that is, Ponary is death, and even this fact is not the whole truth. It is immeasurably greater and deeper than that. The annihilation of thousands is but a portent of the extermination of millions.... Vilna is not just Vilna. Ponary is not a [passing] episode. The yellow Schein is not an invention of the local commandant. We are facing a carefully thought-out method, which for the moment we cannot fathom.... Is there any possibility of rescue? As brutal as the answer sounds, we have to state it: No, there is no deliverance!" In a meeting with members of the youth movement on December 31, Kovner showed them a poster in which he urged Jewish young people to resist: "Hitler is plotting to annihilate all of European Jewry.... *Let us not go like lambs to the slaughter!* True, we are weak and defenseless, but the only answer to the enemy is resistance!" It was the first time that an Einsatzgruppe murder *Aktion* was judged to be part of a general plan to obliterate European Jewry, and the first time that Jews were urged to defend themselves against the Nazis with arms.

1/6/1942

Molotov hands over information on mass graves

On January 6, 1942, Soviet Foreign Minister Viacheslav Molotov sent a message to all countries with which the USSR had diplomatic relations, with information on mass graves that the Soviet army had discovered after liberating a series of towns and localities on the Moscow front in the winter offensive. The letters, entitled "Concerning the Nazis' terrible crimes against civilians, prisoners of war, and others," quoted witnesses who had come from the occupied territories and described the murder of 52,000 people in Kiev and additional thousands in Odessa, Dnepropetrovsk, Mariopol, Kamenets-Podolsk, and other locations. The letters supported fragmentary reports that were gradually reaching the Western countries and corroborated accounts of the genocide raging through Europe.

1/14/1942

Concentration and expulsion of Dutch Jewry begin

Preparations for the annihilation of Dutch Jewry were made in late 1941 when the German authorities informed the Jewish leadership that "unemployed Jews" would be sent to labor camps. The first deportation in the Netherlands took place on January 14, 1942, as part of a plan to make the country Judenrein. It began in the town of Zandam: Jews with Dutch citizenship were ordered to move to Amsterdam, and alien Jews were transported to the Westerbork camp.

1/16/1942

Deportation of some 55,000 people from Lodz to Chelmno begins

Amidst much terror and intimidation, the first transport from Lodz set out for the gas vans of the Chelmno extermination camp. Earlier, the German authorities forced the chairman of the Judenrat, Chaim Rumkowski, to prepare lists of candidates for deportation and to organize the assembly points at the edge of the ghetto. Rumkowski was not aware of the purpose of the deportation at that time. A committee was appointed and ordered to select victims among those in the "asocial" category-people sentenced for various offenses (who would be banished along with their families), and those on welfare. Excused from the deportation were the seriously ill, sick children, residents of old-age homes, public functionaries, and

rabbis. Those who did not report as told were taken to the collection point by the Jewish police. The first deportation also included deportees from Germany: groups of Jews and Gypsies, who had been living in a separate part of the ghetto since October 1941. From the assembly point, the victims were transported to the Chelmno extermination camp under especially heavy German guard. All were murdered in gas vans the day they arrived, or the day after.

Between January and May 1942, approximately 55,000 Jews were deported from Lodz to Chelmno. By the end of these deportations, the Lodz Ghetto had been "productivized," turned into a camp where the only legal inhabitants were forced laborers who manufactured for the Germans.

1/20/1942 Wannsee Conference

On January 20, a meeting took place in a villa in Wannsee, on the outskirts of Berlin, to discuss the measures and inter-ministerial coordination needed to implement the "Final Solution" of the Jewish problem. The meeting was held at the initiative of Reinhard Heydrich, who, as Himmler's deputy and the head of the RSHA, had been authorized by Hermann Goering to elaborate a program that would solve the Jewish problem totally. Heydrich summoned the directors of the main government agencies that would have to cooperate for the plan to succeed. The goal of the meeting was not to discuss a decision to solve the Jewish problem by murdering all the Jews, but only to consider ways of implementing a decision already made.

The meeting was originally scheduled for December 9, 1941, but did not take place until January 20, 1942. It was attended by the State Secretaries of the most important German government ministries. Including the highest-ranking representatives of the Interior Ministry of the Generalgouvernement, the Foreign Office, the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, the Ministry of Justice, the Reich Chancellery, the Four-Year-Plan Office, several leading officials in the SS Race and Resettlement Main Office, the commander of Einsatzgruppe A, the director of the Party chancellery office, Heydrich, and his Jewish affairs expert, Adolf Eichmann.

Heydrich began the meeting with a lengthy speech. Because most of the participants were directly or indirectly involved in the mass murders that were already underway, he did not need to relate to a matter that was unfamiliar to the participants. Heydrich's plan targeted all 11 million Jews in Europe as by Nazi definition and statistics. He would exploit the Jewish masses for road-building and subject those who survived this grueling labor to "special treatment"-murder.

In the last portion of his speech, Heydrich addressed himself to several special problems, foremost the fate of Jews who had married Aryans, and their offspring. The conference participants did not resolve these questions.

The directors of the government offices presented no obstacles; the meeting lasted only 60-90 minutes.

1/21/1942 United Partisan Organization established in Vilna

On January 21, 1942, representatives of Zionist youth movements convened in the Vilna Ghetto, resolved to mount a resistance, and founded the United Partisan Organization-the Fareynegte Partizaner Organizatsye (FPO) in Yiddish. The FPO was an outgrowth of the discussion held on the night of December 31, 1941, in which the poster concerning "Lambs to the slaughter" was read out and the Jewish youth movement leaders were urged to organize for struggle against the Germans, in the awareness that the Germans intended to subject the Jews to genocide. Yitzhak Wittenberg, a representative of the Communists, was chosen as commander. The task of the FPO was to make preparations for armed resistance that would be offered the moment the Germans came to liquidate the ghetto. The members of the new organization were divided into five-person underground cells that were combined into platoons and

companies. All the parties and youth movements that united for resistance were represented in the FPO command. The FPO sent representatives to other ghettos in order to establish contact, apprise them of the genocide campaign underway, and spread the idea of resistance and rebellion. The FPO's main problem and constraint was the procurement of weapons.

2/15/1942

Establishment of Jadu concentration camp in Libya

The Jadu concentration camp in Libya was established in February 1942. Jadu was a former army camp, surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. Its commandants were Italian, and the guards were Italian and Arab policemen. Out of the twenty-six hundred Jews sent there, more than five hundred died within 3 months, of weakness and hunger, and especially from typhoid fever and typhus. Water shortages, malnutrition, overcrowding, and filth intensified the spread of contagion. Inmates buried the dead in a cemetery on a hill outside the camp.

In January 1943, the camp guards left. Several weeks later, British soldiers arrived, but many of the prisoners could not be moved due to their poor physical condition. The first Jews returned to their homes from Jadu in the spring of 1943, and the last group of prisoners only left Jadu in October 1943.

2/24/1942

Sinking of the "Struma"

In December 1941, 769 Jews boarded the old cattle boat Struma in the port of Constanta, Romania; their destination was Eretz Israel.

The boat reached the port of Constantinople, where it remained at anchor for over two months with its passengers confined on board, as they did not have entry permits for Eretz Israel.

The many pleas from various quarters to the British to permit the entry of the Jews on the basis of the existing modest legal immigration quota were to no avail. The Turkish authorities, for their part, were adamant in refusing permission to transfer the would-be immigrants to a transit camp on land until the resumption of their voyage could be arranged, even though the camp was maintained by Jewish organizations at their own expense.

On February 24, 1942, the Turkish police towed the boat into the open sea, although it had no water, food, or fuel on board. Within a few hours it was sunk, struck by a torpedo apparently fired in error from a Soviet submarine. Only a single passenger was saved.

3/13/1942

JDC: Germans have already killed 240,000 Jews in Ukraine alone

In March 1942, Bertrand Jacobson (for two years the JDC's main agent in its relief efforts in Eastern Europe) held a press conference that provided information for newspapers around the world. Jacobson estimated that the Nazis had already murdered 240,000 Jews in the Ukraine alone and asserted that the killings in Eastern Europe were continuing in full fury.

One of the most horrifying disclosures made in the United States to that point was an account by a Hungarian soldier who had observed a large mass grave near Kiev. Seven thousand Jews, some dead but others wounded and alive, had been thrown into the shallow grave and covered with a thin layer of soil. The spectacle of this field, "heaving like a living sea," was etched into the soldier's memory.

Although we know today that these figures underestimated the extent of the Nazis' genocide among the Jews through March 1942, the press coverage had the important effect of revealing the reports on the murders to the free world.

3/17/1942

Belzec Extermination Camp inaugurated

By March 17, the main installations of the Belzec Extermination Camp, located near a siding of the Belzec railroad line, had been constructed, tried out, and the program for mass extermination was launched. In experimental gassings conducted in late February, Jews from Lubycze Krolewska and the Jewish forced laborers who had built the camp for the Germans were murdered. Anti-tank trenches on the camp premises were given a new function: mass graves for the Jews who would be murdered there. At first the camp had three gas chambers, each eight meters long and four meters wide. The trip to the camp took hours, if not days, under appalling conditions that left many deportees dead en route and others on the verge of death. The survivors were unloaded from the trains with shouting, beatings, and threats. They were told that they were about to be disinfected. After they undressed and handed over their possessions, they entered the gas chambers through what the Germans called "the tube"-a passageway 20 meters long, 2 meters wide, and lined with fences, through which the victims were driven naked. The chambers were hermetically sealed and could be opened only from the outside. The gas, pumped into the chambers through hoses, killed everyone inside within 20-30 minutes. Each chamber had another aperture for the removal of the corpses. Some 80,000 Jews from Lublin, Lvov, and other ghettos in the vicinity were murdered in Belzec in the camp's first four weeks of operation.

3/26/1942

58,000 Slovakian Jews deported

The deportation of Slovakian Jews to the Lublin district and to Auschwitz began in late March 1942. This transport was undertaken with cooperation and substantive assistance from the Slovaks, who prepared the transport trains and arrested Jews for deportation.

Alfred Wetzler, subsequently famous as one of the four young men who escaped from Auschwitz in the spring of 1944, testified about the circumstances of his removal from his parents' home: "Guardsmen arrested the Jews and took everyone they found, including people aged sixty and over. When the guardsmen came to take my parents, I asked them to leave my parents alone and let me go in their stead."

3/28/1942

First transport of French Jews to Auschwitz

In December 1941, the military commander Otto Stuepnagel took advantage of the attempted killing of a German officer in Paris to escalate anti-Jewish activities in France. He sought permission to shoot 100 hostages, impose a mammoth fine on the Jews of France, and deport 1,000 Jews to the East. Hitler approved these measures, and on December 12 Jews were arrested in Paris and interned in a camp in Compiègne. Serious transport difficulties delayed the deportation for some time. The deportation of Jews from France to Auschwitz was the first such action in Western Europe, and Eichmann approached the matter cautiously. He wished to increase the number of deportees to 10,000 and obtained authorization to do so from the German Foreign Office, which operated in close coordination with the government of France. The first train, carrying 1,012 Jews, did not leave on March 23 as planned, but on March 27. The Jewish population was horrified; thousands of panic-stricken Jews sought hideouts from the Nazis and the French police in any possible location. Eichmann, inspired by the success of this transport, began to plan mass deportations from the West.

4/1/1942

Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee established in USSR

After Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, a people's assembly on the air was organized under the slogan of Soviet Jews' unity with "their Jewish brethren" around the world. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee first met in Kuybyshev, where some of the institutions of state had moved when the German army advanced toward Moscow. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was one of a set of anti-Fascist committees that operated under the Ministry of Propaganda. The committee urged world Jewry, especially that in the United States, to mobilize for the anti-Fascist struggle. Its communiqués made abundant use of Jewish motifs, symbols, and personalities' names. The committee presidium was headed by some 20 famous Soviet Jews from all walks of life.

4/8/1942

Einsatzgruppen report: No Jews left in Crimea

In April 1942, the Crimean Peninsula was declared Judenfrei-cleansed of Jews. When the Axis occupied most of the Crimea in October 1941, the area had a Jewish population of 50,000-60,000. They were murdered by the Einsatzgruppen units, with active assistance from the local population.

4/30/1942

Pinsk Ghetto established

On April 30, the Germans ordered the Jews of Pinsk to move into the ghetto by 4:00 p.m. on May 1. More than 20,000 persons were packed into the ghetto, a cramped area in a slum quarter.

5/1/1942

First mass killing in Sobibor Extermination Camp

The Sobibor camp was built near the small village of that name in the eastern sector of the Lublin district, close to a railroad line. Construction of the camp was based on experience gained in building and operating the camp at Belzec. Sobibor, laid out in a rectangle 600 x 400 meters, was partitioned into three zones. The "forward camp" had a railroad platform, room for 20 cars, and Germans' and Ukrainians' housing quarters. Jews transported to the camp for extermination were taken to the "reception area," where they underwent all steps preceding their murder: removal of clothing, removal of women's hair, and appropriation of valuables. The extermination area, the most distant, contained the gas chambers, the burial pits, and a barracks for Jewish prisoners. The reception area and the extermination area were connected by a path 150 meters long, 3 meters wide, and bordered by barbed-wire fences camouflaged with vegetation, through which the victims were driven naked. The camp had three gas chambers, each one 4 x 4 meters. Each chamber had an additional door through which the bodies were removed. The gas was pumped in from an adjacent shed. In the middle of April 1942, as construction of the camp was nearly complete, a group of Jews, mostly women, was taken to Sobibor from the labor camp in Krychow to make sure the gas chambers would work properly. The pilot run was attended by the entire camp command. Operations at Sobibor were based on deception; the victims did not know what awaited them until the gas was being pumped into the sealed chambers. The first transport included 10,000 Jews from Germany and Austria, 6,000 from Theresienstadt, and thousands from Slovakia. In the first two months—from early May to the end of June—100,000 Jews were murdered in Sobibor. The Germans found that the gas chambers, which had a capacity of fewer than 600 people, were a bottleneck in the murder process. Therefore, a halt in camp operations in the summer was used to construct three more chambers, thus doubling the pace of extermination.

5/18/1942

The New York Times reports by May 18, more than 400,000 Jews shot by Germans

Reports on the mass murders carried out by the Einsatzgruppen began to filter into the United States and England very shortly after the Aktionen themselves. As early as July 1941, the Yiddish daily press in New York revealed that hundreds of Jewish citizens had been slaughtered by Nazi soldiers in Minsk, Brest-Litovsk, Lvov, and elsewhere. Additional reports arrived in subsequent months, and in late October 1941,

The New York Times carried a story on its inside pages concerning the murder of thousands of Jews in eastern Poland and the Ukraine. In March 1942, the Jewish and the general press reported the mammoth dimensions of the genocide for the first time.

On May 18, The New York Times carried a report by a United Press correspondent who had been trapped in Germany when the United States entered the war. Reaching Lisbon with a group of American citizens who had been exchanged for citizens of the Axis countries, the correspondent revealed that the Germans had machine-gunned to death more than 100,000 Jews in the Baltic countries, nearly as many in Poland, and more than twice as many in western Russia.

5/27/1942

Czech Underground assassinates Heydrich

Reinhard Heydrich, acting governor of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, was driving to Prague on May 27. At 10:30 a.m., two Czech parachutists, who had been trained in England, attacked him at a bend in the road and wounded him seriously with a hand grenade. Two hours after the attack, Hitler issued orders to execute 10,000 Czechs, and he raised this figure to 30,000 after Heydrich died on June 4.

The assassins went into hiding in a church in Prague. They were discovered after denunciation and fell on June 18 after a fierce battle. After they were killed, the mass reprisal order was postponed and subsequently revoked.

On June 10, 1942, the Czech town of Lidice was liquidated, in response to the assassination.

6/2/1942

BBC: 700,000 Jews killed in Poland

In May 1942, a Bund underground activist in Warsaw, Leon Feiner, sent a preliminary report to London containing information on the murder of Jews in various parts of Poland. The report traced the path of the murder actions: town after town, district after district, month by month. It described the extermination center at Chelmno, including the gas vans, and estimated the number of Jews whom the Germans had murdered in Poland by May at 700,000 (the figure was much higher). Feiner stated that, in the absence of substantive actions to halt the murders, no Jews would survive in Europe by the end of the war. The report also urged the Allies to adopt a policy of retaliation against German citizens residing in Allied countries.

Feiner's report was forwarded to the media and to the political echelon, including the Polish government-in-exile in London, and became the decisive factor in the eruption of reports on the mass murder and their assimilation in public opinion.

On June 2, the BBC broadcast the main contents of the report, including the estimate of the 700,000 murdered Jews. However, it did not stress the conclusion of the report: that the program to murder all the Jews was already being carried out. A week later, the Polish government-in-exile presented the findings of the report to the Allied governments in an official missive. On June 25, Samuel Zygelbojm, one of two Jewish representatives in the Polish government, released the entire document to the press. The Allied governments did not respond to these efforts, but newspapers began to carry the information with greater frequency. The Boston Globe and The New York Times presented prominent reports, including the assessment that the Jewish population was being systematically annihilated.

Shortly after this, two authoritative voices in Britain reinforced the Bund's announcement. At a press conference, the Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken, stated that 700,000 people, all of them Jewish, had been murdered in Poland. He also proclaimed that, once the war ended, the "United Nations" would ensure the rapid and severe punishment of the persons responsible for the grievous war crimes that had been perpetrated in Poland against Jews and Poles alike. He fiercely criticized those who regarded the

murder reports as propagandistic hyperbole. The truth is solid, he said vehemently, and the murder will eventually come to light.

6/2/1942

First Deportation of German Jews to Theresienstadt

The first deportation of German Jews left for Theresienstadt. In July 1942, the removal of the non-Jewish population of Theresienstadt was completed. At this point, thousands of Jews from Germany and Austria were brought in, most of them old people and some of them persons of special merit who had distinguished themselves in World War I or in some other way.

6/7/1942

Deportation of Czernowitz Jews to Transnistria starts anew

Deportations to Transnistria restarted on 7 June 1942 for the Jews of Czernowitz. By 28 June, 4000-5000 Jews had been deported. Some were handed over to the SS and taken across the River Bug, where most of them were murdered. By November 1943, no more than 500 remained alive. All the children deported to Transnistria were either shot, or perished from cold, hunger or disease.

6/10/1942

Germans obliterate Czech village

Early in the morning of June 10, 1942, all the inhabitants of the Czech village of Lidice were taken out of their homes, and all the men in the village - 192 in all - were killed, as were 71 women. The remaining women, numbering 198, were imprisoned in the Ravensbruck concentration camp, and of these, 143 returned to the village after the war. Of the 98 children who had been abducted and "put into educational institutions," no more than 15 survived, most of them having been eventually deported to Chelmno and murdered there.

In the presence of Frank and of Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Heydrich's successor, as well as of photographers, Lidice was razed to the ground, the official reason being that the villagers had helped Heydrich's assassins - an allegation that had no basis in fact.

Lidice was rebuilt after the war and became a symbol of the Nazi reign of terror and the valor of the Czech resistance.

6/21/1942

Germans wrest Tobruk (Libya) from British

The Germans cut off the supply routes to the British forces in Tobruk on June 17. On June 20, General Erwin Rommel's forces launched an offensive against the British there. The town fell to the Germans on June 21, as Rommel led his troops past its fortifications. The Germans took 33,000 Allied prisoners of war and mammoth quantities of foodstuffs. Rommel immediately advanced eastward, in a move applauded by Hitler. Two days later, Rommel's forces reached Sidi Barrani, Egypt. In appreciation of his accomplishments in northern Africa, Rommel was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal.

6/22/1942

First transports from Drancy Camp to Auschwitz

The first transport from Drancy, with 1,000 Jews aboard, set out for Auschwitz-Birkenau on June 22. Drancy, a collection and detention camp for French Jews in the large northeastern suburb of Paris of this name, became a junction from which Jews were deported from France to labor and extermination camps. Guarded by members of the French Gendarmerie armed with machine guns, the camp held as many as

4,500 Jews at a time. The first deportation from Drancy was the third that left France as part of the "Final Solution". The deportations from France went on for over two more years, in the course of which some 75,000 Jews were deported.

7/16/1942

13,000 Jews imprisoned in Paris

On July 16-17, 1942, in one of the most brutal and overt deportation operations, thousands of French police gathered up 12,884 Parisian Jews-including families with children, and irrespective of sex, age, and physical condition-and placed them in the Velodrome d'Hiver stadium without any provisions whatsoever. In several locations, children were separated from their parents. The victims were loaded aboard cattle cars and sent to Drancy en route to Auschwitz.

This deportation evoked the first substantial manifestations of opposition to the Vichy regime among several segments of the French population. It was impossible to keep the arrests of the Jews secret, and the brutality invoked in separating families was fiercely protested. The fact that most of the arrests were made by French police prompted charges against the force concerning collaboration with the Nazi regime on the part of France and its institutions, particularly with respect to the murder of Jews in this country.

7/19/1942

Himmler: Elimination of all Jews in "Generalgouvernement" by end of 1942

On July 19, Himmler issued a deadline for the completion of the "Final Solution" in the Generalgouvernement: "It is my order that the evacuation of the entire Jewish population in the Generalgouvernement area be carried out and completed by December 31, 1942. As of December 31, 1942, no persons of Jewish origin shall be present in the Generalgouvernement. The means to be used are those in accordance with the spirit of the new European arrangement, as are vital to achieve the ethnic separation of races and nations, and as are needed to assure the safety and purity of the German Reich and the entire German sphere of influence. Any breach of this arrangement endangers quiet and order throughout the German sphere of influence, provides resistance movements with a focal point, and creates a source for the spread of moral and physical scourge. For all these reasons, a total purge is needed and therefore must be carried out."

This order consigned the Jews of the Generalgouvernement to death, and their sentence was carried out efficiently in the months to come.

7/21/1942

Mass protest rally at Madison Square Garden

On July 21, a day after the Ninth of Av-memorial day for the destruction of the ancient Temples in Jerusalem-20,000 people gathered at Madison Square Garden in New York, with additional thousands standing outside, to protest against the Nazis' atrocities. The participants issued a communique lauding the valorous spirit of the trapped Jews and urging the United Nations to give thought to the Jews' tragedy and to express their resolve to bring the Nazis to trial. The statement expressed the commitment of American Jewry "to make any sacrifice to help the United Nations in their struggle for freedom and human decency."

7/22/1942

Construction of Treblinka completed

The Treblinka extermination camp, one of three such camps established under Operation Reinhard, was built in a sparsely populated area along the main railroad line between Warsaw and Bialystok. The camp was camouflaged in a forest and concealed from the surroundings. The construction work, begun in late May, was carried out by German companies that used Jewish and Polish forced labor. Giant burial pits

were excavated on the camp's grounds. The camp was built in the form of a rectangle, 600 meters long and 400 meters wide, and was encased in a double barbed-wire fence. High watchtowers were positioned at the corners of the rectangle and along the fences. The camp was partitioned into three zones: housing, reception, and extermination. The last-mentioned was totally separate. Three gas chambers, designed to look like shower rooms in every respect, were installed in brick buildings. Groups of Jews were undressed and made to run to the gas chambers through a "chute" with fences on either side. A Diesel motor pumped carbon monoxide gas into the chambers; death by asphyxiation was achieved in about half an hour. Mass murder in Treblinka began on July 23, the day after construction was completed, with groups of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto.

7/22/1942

Mass deportation from Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka begins

The great deportation from Warsaw began on Wednesday, July 22, 1942. Posters in the ghetto streets spelled out the deportation procedure and listed the persons who were to report: 70,000 of the 380,000 Jews in the ghetto. The first deportees were the most unfortunate and defenseless inhabitants-refugees, the elderly, and the homeless. The ghetto was panic-stricken; no one could say where the deportees were being taken. The chairman of the Warsaw Judenrat, Adam Czerniakow, committed suicide the next day, rather than cooperate in the deportation.

In the first stage of the deportation, which lasted until the end of July, it was the duty of the Jewish police to meet the transport quota. When the quota was not filled, Germans and their assistants raided the ghetto alleys and abducted men indiscriminately. In the second phase, from July 31 until August 14, the Germans and their accomplices conducted the Aktion, and uncontrolled mass expulsion became rife. The entire physical structure of the ghetto disintegrated after this phase, as streets and quarters of the ghetto shriveled. In the third phase, from August 15 until September 6, the deportation took on the appearance of a general liquidation. The final phase began on the night of September 6, when all Jews in the ghetto were ordered to gather on several streets. A Selektion was held there, which only 35,000 Jews-less than one-tenth of the original ghetto population-passed. Another 25,000 went into hiding.

7/23/1942

Adam Czerniakow commits suicide

Adam Czerniakow refused to be the Germans' lackey in the deportation of the Warsaw Ghetto Jews. At 4:00 p.m. on July 23, he poisoned himself to death. According to one account, a note was found on his desk, addressed to his wife, stating, "They are demanding that I kill the children of my people with my own hands. There is nothing for me to do but die." Czerniakow's death stands as the protest of a Jewish leader and Judenrat chairman who refused to cross the line between conducting ghetto activities and handing over Jews.

7/28/1942

Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) founded in Warsaw

The Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) was established in the Warsaw Ghetto while 300,000 Jews were being removed in mass deportations. In the lengthy discussions that preceded the founding of the ZOB, some participants argued that the Germans would not annihilate the Jews of Warsaw because of the city's central location and because they did not wish to forfeit the Jews' labor capacity. An underground organization, they said, might endanger the entire ghetto and prompt the Germans to liquidate it. The great deportation rendered these considerations largely irrelevant. The goals of the ZOB were Jewish self-defense and armed struggle against the Germans. Its first constituents were three Zionist youth movements: Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir, Dror, and Akiva. The ZOB urged the ghetto inhabitants to resist deportation, but, at the same time, was unable to engage in combat operations and reprisals. In practice, only after the great deportation did the ZOB make strong inroads among the surviving ghetto Jews and manage to organize, amass influence, and obtain weapons.

8/8/1942

U.S. delays information on plan to annihilate Jews, in order to verify sources

The World Jewish Congress representative in Geneva, Gerhard Riegner, obtained information from a German manufacturer, Eduard Schulte—who had connections in Hitler's general headquarters—indicating that Hitler had decided to systematically annihilate all of European Jewry, and that gas was being used to attain this goal. After Riegner gathered further information about his source, he approached the American Consulate in Geneva with the report. He handed the deputy-consul a cable and asked him to forward it to Stephen Wise, an American Jewish leader. The cable contained the information that Riegner had obtained from Schulte concerning the plans for the murder of European Jewry. The State Department received the cable, but decided not to transmit messages from "private individuals". On August 28, the second addressee of the cable, Sidney Silverman, a member of the British Parliament, sent a copy of the cable to Wise. The Assistant Secretary of State, Sumner Welles summoned Wise and asked him not to disclose the information until it could be verified.

Wise agreed, yet he informed a number of cabinet ministers, President Roosevelt, Court Justice Felix Frankfurter and Christian clergymen.

On November 24, when the US government was finally convinced, Wise broke the news of the cable, together with other supporting information to the press.

8/10/1942

Deportations from Lvov to Belzec begin; 50,000 gassed

The "great Aktion" in the Lvov Ghetto began on August 8, 1942. By the time it ended on August 23, 50,000 Jews had been sent to the Belzec extermination camp and murdered.

9/3/1942

Armed Jewish resistance in Lachva, Belarus

On September 2, two underground leaders in Lachva received word that pits were being dug near the town. Late that afternoon, 150 Germans and 200 police encircled the ghetto. The underground, with full cooperation from the Judenrat, planned to attack the police and the soldiers at midnight at the ghetto fence; the Jewish inmates would exploit the fracas and the chaos to flee to the forests. The uprising was postponed to the morning. When the German commander informed Dov Lopatyn, chairman of the Judenrat, that he was about to liquidate the ghetto of 2,300 Jews and leave behind only 30 skilled artisans, Lopatyn replied, "Either we all stay alive or we all perish." When the underground gave the signal, the fence was broken through and the underground members instigated a battle with the Germans, with axes and bare hands. The ghetto gate was breached; large numbers of Jews rushed through the hole, but many were killed by German gunfire. Of approximately 1,000 Jews who escaped, some 600 made their way to the Pripet Marshes. Some 500 Jews, women and old men, were taken to the pits and shot to death. Many of those who escaped were betrayed by local non-Jewish inhabitants. Only about 120 managed to assemble in the forest. Twenty-five of them, armed with two rifles, were accepted into the ranks of a Soviet partisan unit. Lopatyn joined the "Stalin" partisan unit and was killed on February 21, 1944, when he stepped on a mine.

9/12/1942

The German Army reaches the suburbs of Stalingrad

In Order No. 45, Hitler ordered his armed forces to occupy the Caucasus and Stalingrad in the summer of 1942. The offensive began in July. Against the advice of his generals, Hitler split up his forces and attempted to occupy both areas concurrently. In September, Stalin again summoned Field Marshal Georgi Zhukov, posted him to the Stalingrad front, and assigned General Vasily Chuikov to defend the city itself. The battle for Stalingrad escalated on August 26 as a 1-million-strong German force attacked the defending Russian forces. The population's morale was poor; in one aerial attack alone, 600 aircraft claimed 40,000

casualties. Despite the soldiers' display of supreme valor, the German supremacy in material forced the defenders to retreat gradually into the city proper. On September 13, a German division broke through the town's defense lines and nearly reached Chuikov's headquarters in house-to-house, floor-to-floor, and room-to-room fighting. Parts of Stalingrad were occupied and reduced to mounds of soil. Soviet units fought to the last soldier. Chuikov had every building mined and posted snipers at every spot.

9/24/1942

Uprising in Tuczyn Ghetto

On the evening of Tuesday, September 23, 1942, a blockade was mounted against the ghetto of Tuczyn, a town in the Oblast (district) of Rovno. The leaders of the uprising declared a full alert; the fighting groups took up positions. On the dawn of September 24, German forces and Ukrainian auxiliaries advanced toward the ghetto fences. When the resistance forces gave the signal, the buildings of the ghetto and the German warehouses at its edge were set ablaze. The fighting groups opened fire, broke through the ghetto fence, and urged the population to escape. Under cover of smoke and gunfire, some 2,000 people—about two-thirds of the ghetto population, including women, children, and the elderly—fled into the forest. The flames continued to burn for the rest of that day and part of the next; the gunfire continued as well. Several Germans and Ukrainian auxiliary police were killed. One-third of the ghetto population fell, including almost all the fighters. The uprising ended on Saturday, September 26. The escapees fared very badly. Half of them were captured and murdered within three days. About 300 women, clutching infants, unable to withstand the conditions of the forest, returned to Tuczyn and were shot. Many of the remainder died; others were turned in or murdered by peasants in the vicinity. Some young people joined the partisans and were killed in combat. Of the 3,000 Jews of Tuczyn, only 20 were still alive on January 16, 1944, when the town was liberated.

10/23/1942

British begin counteroffensive at El Alamein

The battle began under strong moonlight as a tremendous burst of artillery fire shattered the silence. The commander of the German forces, Erwin Rommel, was on sick leave in Germany for the first time in his career. Since September, the commander of the British forces, Major General Bernard Montgomery, had been amassing vast reserves along the northern front, and on the southern side he constructed a mammoth dummy stronghold. The ruse succeeded: He attained total surprise when he attacked from the north and trapped the German forces in a 40-mile corridor. At first, Rommel could move only forward or backward. Nine days later, he knew he could move backward only. He faced round-the-clock bombardments and attacks by infantry, tanks, and artillery, in waves that seemed endless. Rommel fell into Montgomery's trap. Because Hitler had ordered him to fight to victory or death, he also lost important parts of his forces. When Rommel finally attempted to retreat, Montgomery outflanked him and staunchly resisted the withdrawal. Thus, in one of the decisive battles of the war, the Germans' invasion of Africa was repelled and the tide of battle turned. Rommel's invincible German army was mauled and the Allies began to drive the German forces into a lengthy withdrawal.

10/27/1942

Nazis inclined to nullify mixed marriages, sterilize "Mixed Breeds"

The third and last part of the Wannsee Conference (the meeting held in early 1942 in a suburb of Berlin to coordinate the implementation of the "Final Solution") took place on October 27, 1942. The discussants again debated the way to treat mixed Jewish-"Aryan" marriages and their offspring, the "mixed breeds" (Mischlinge). The proposals included deportation to the East and forced sterilization. In the end, no decision was made, because, it was feared, each of the options would have detrimental effects on the many German relatives of the Mischlinge.

10/28/1942

First deportations from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz

Deportations from the Theresienstadt Ghetto to the Treblinka and Auschwitz extermination camps commenced in October 1942. They marked the beginning of a wave of deportations that did not end until the autumn of 1944, when the gas chambers in Auschwitz were shut down. The hopes of Jewish leaders, that the deportations from the Protectorate to the ghetto would spare these Jews from brutal deportation to the East, were proven false. When the transports ended, only 11,000 Jews out of the nearly 140,000 who had originally inhabited the ghetto were still there.

10/29/1942

Most Pinsk Jews murdered

20,000 inhabitants of the Pinsk Ghetto were rounded up and murdered on October 29 through November 1. To spare the ghetto population from collective punishment, the Jewish underground in the ghetto decided, instead of fleeing into the forest, to set the ghetto afire shortly before the projected liquidation. To this end, it stockpiled flammable substances. However, on October 28, as rumors of the impending liquidation proliferated, the Judenrat released soothing statements in the Germans' name and frustrated the plans. Just the same, many dozens fled or went into hiding. A "small ghetto" was established, and its initial population of 143 skilled artisans was boosted when people in hiding joined them. On December 23, the "small ghetto" was liquidated and its inhabitants murdered.

11/1/1942

First deportation from Bialystok district to Auschwitz

In the first half of October 1942, the Gestapo was given secret orders to liquidate the ghettos in Bialystok and other localities in the district. Because military and economic leaders were afraid to paralyze munitions industries in the area, the decree was made conditional on its impact on these industries. Thus, the population of the Bialystok Ghetto was to be reduced and all other Jews in the district were to be evacuated in the manner stipulated in the original order. On November 2, 1942, with the help of the local Gendarmerie, all ghettos in the district were suddenly encircled and quarantined. Within a few days, the Germans assembled the Jews in town squares, loaded them on wagons, and transported them to five concentration points and thence to the extermination camps. Concurrently, control of the Bialystok Ghetto was removed from civilian auspices and handed to the SS.

Between November 1942 and February 1943, approximately 100,000 Jews in the Bialystok district, including some 10,000 from Bialystok proper, were sent to the Treblinka and Auschwitz death camps. The final liquidation of the Bialystok Ghetto took place in August 1943, when the remaining 30,000 Jews there were sent to extermination. It was then, too, that the Bialystok Ghetto uprising erupted.

11/5/1942

"Europa" Rescue Plan

The Europa Plan was devised by the semi-underground Jewish organization Pracovna Skupina (Working Group) in Slovakia to spare the Jews of Europe from extermination by means of ransom.

In the summer of 1942, a group of activists at the Ustredna Zidov (Jewish Center) in Slovakia sought to end the deportation of Slovak Jews to extermination camps. One of the people whom these activists tried to influence was Dieter Wisliceny, the SS officer who served as the Jewish affairs adviser to the government of Slovakia. The plan was to bribe him with a substantial sum of U.S. dollars. The deportations did come to an end after the group reached agreement with Wisliceny on the sum to be paid (between \$40,000 and \$50,000). Although there is no evidence that it was Wisliceny's intervention that brought the deportations to an end, or that there was any such intervention on his part, the members of the group believed this to be the case. Encouraged by what the group regarded as a success, and stunned by reports received from Poland about the fate of Jews deported there, one of its leading members, Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandel, suggested that an attempt be made to end the extermination process in Poland and to assist Jews who had already been deported. On the basis of ties that two members of the group-Gisi Fleischmann and Andrej

Steiner had established with Wisliceny, a plan was worked out. It became known by various names: the Europa Plan; the Rabbis' Plan; and, the Great Plan. The substance of the plan was that in exchange for an end to the Germans' deportations and exterminations, the Jews of the Free World would pay them a large sum in hard currency-\$2 million-\$3 million.

Negotiations over the plan continued for nearly a year, from the fall of 1942 until August 1943, when Wisliceny brought them to an end, because the scheduled payments did not arrive. In the course of the negotiations, the Working Group made attempts to save the Jews of Greece through Wisliceny, and to establish contact between the SS and several Hungarian Jewish leaders.

The members of the Working Group were convinced that the Europa Plan failed because the requisite funds had not been provided. In response to its queries, Jewish organizations and institutions in Switzerland and Istanbul informed the group that the money was unavailable and that the transfer of funds to Axis countries was prohibited. The negotiations conducted by the Germans in Hungary concerning the rescue of Jews-"Blood for Goods"-were a direct sequel to the Europa Plan. To this day, the plan has remained the subject of searching debate. No clear-cut evidence has been found that the SS was indeed ready to make a deal with the Jews in exchange for money; the only accounts to this effect are testimonies given by Working Group members and by Wisliceny. Because the appeals and entreaties of the Group were sometimes met with disdain, derision, and callousness, the surviving members of the Working Group smarted under feelings of frustration and bitterness.

11/8/1942

U.K. and U.S. invade Northern Africa

Allied forces landed on the coast of Morocco. Their main targets were Casablanca, Algiers, and Oran. Strategically, the Allies' intention was to cleanse the western coast of Africa of German forces and create a basis for a future offensive in southern Europe. Algiers fell that evening, but the Vichy French put up stiff resistance in Oran. One of the forces meant to land in Casablanca lost 242 ships, 64 percent of its fleet, but established a beachhead anyway. It was obvious to everyone that the Allies' North African toehold would hasten the liberation of France.

11/9/1942

Germany occupies Tunisia

In response to the Allies' invasion of Algeria and Morocco, German and Italian forces entered Tunisia on November 9, 1942. By early December, the Axis forces there were in serious trouble. Relentless Allied aerial attacks almost drove them out of Tunis on November 24. On December 6, the Germans dissolved the Tunis Jewish Community Board and ordered Moise Borgel to establish a nine-member board in its stead. The new panel was given 24 hours to induct 2,000 Jews for forced labor. Despite its efforts, and even though the French authorities intervened to grant a 24-hour extension, the board managed to mobilize only 120 men. In response, the Germans took dozens of community leaders hostage, made mass arrests in the Jewish quarter, and threatened to blow up the main synagogue of Tunis. After another extension, some 5,000 Jews were mobilized for forced labor and dispersed among 30 locations and camps on the front.

11/10/1942

British victories in Egypt

Referring to the Allies' successes in Egypt and Africa, Churchill said, "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.... I have not become the King's first minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."

11/19/1942

Soviet counterattack near Stalingrad

With the town still besieged and engulfed in fierce street battles, General Georgi Zhukov brought in large reinforcements that began a massive counterattack on November 19. The massive Soviet offensive that commenced that morning took the Third Romanian Army by surprise and caught it unprepared. The next day, a further Soviet offensive found the German army surprised. The two offensives, 100 miles apart, merged into a single, grand movement of forces that ringed and, within four days, trapped the German army under Friedrich von Paulus. Hitler's generals urged the Fuehrer to allow them to break through the noose and retreat while this was still possible. Hitler refused, ordering von Paulus to continue fighting with no change in direction. The bitter winter cold-30 degrees below zero-assailed the stricken German forces, which lacked appropriate equipment for these extreme conditions. The fighting continued until January 31, when von Paulus and his forces-exhausted, starved, and depleted-surrendered. Hitler never forgave von Paulus for laying down his arms; he expected him to fight to the last soldier and then to commit suicide. The German army never recovered from its defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad.

12/4/1942

Council for Aid to Jews (Zegota) established in Poland

The Council for Aid to Jews in Poland was a successor to the Provisional Committee for Aid to Jews, established in September 1942, in which Catholic democratic activists gathered to assist Jews. In December 1942, the provisional committee became a permanent council. Renamed Zegota, it was staffed by representatives of five Polish and two Jewish movements.

Zegota provided thousands of Jewish families with financial aid in 1943-1944, but its main contribution was in providing, free of charge, "Aryan" documents to thousands of Jews under its patronage. Zegota also arranged hideouts for Jews, thus exposing its activists to the death penalty.

Among the few organizations in occupied Europe that were active in giving aid to Jews, only Zegota was run jointly by Jews and non-Jews from a wide range of political movements, and only it, despite the arrests of some of its members, was able to operate for a considerable length of time and to help Jews in so many different ways.

12/17/1942

Allies condemn German mass murder

Confronted with growing public pressure in view of the flow of reports on the systematic murder of Jews, a statement was elaborated by the British Foreign Office, amended by the U.S. State Department, and issued on December 17 under the signatures of Great Britain, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Soviet Union, the United States, and the National Council of France. The statement explicitly condemned the Germans' policy of bestial and cold-blooded extermination and stressed that hundreds of thousands had been killed. Although those who demanded assistance for the Jews did not find the statement satisfactory, it was the first public acknowledgment of the fact that masses of Jews had been murdered.

12/23/1942

Jewish Fighting Organization attacks Germans in Cracow

The Jewish Fighting Organization (the ZOB), believing that the Cracow Ghetto was too small to make armed struggle against the Germans possible, decided to carry the fight to the "Aryan" side of the city. The best-known operation outside the ghetto took place on December 23, 1942, when 11 Germans were killed and 13 wounded in an attack on a downtown cafe, called Cyganeria, that German officers used as a meeting place.

1/18/1943

Jewish Armed Resistance to Deportations from Warsaw Ghetto

On January 18, 1943, the Germans again began to deport Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. Believing that the final liquidation of the ghetto was at hand, the ZOB, the Jewish Fighting Organization, sent two companies into action. One unit, armed with handguns, planted itself in a convoy of Jews who had been captured and were being led to the umschlagplatz (the collection point for deportation). When the signal was given, they engaged the group's German escorts in hand-to-hand combat. Several German soldiers fell in the battle, and almost all the Jewish fighters perished. The second unit, elsewhere in the ghetto, greeted German soldiers with a hail of gunfire.

January 18 was a critical day for the ZOB, marking the organization's baptism by fire and prompting a crucial change in the behavior of the ghetto inhabitants. The Jews in the ghetto stopped obeying the Germans' orders to leave their homes and report to collection points. We know today that the Aktion in January was not part of a German scheme to liquidate the ghetto; the Nazis intended to remove only a few thousand Jews. However, the ZOB response had a strong effect on morale: Jews interpreted the Germans' decision to halt the Aktion as a sign of weakness and a retreat that they had brought about by use of force.

2/2/1943

Germans Surrender at Stalingrad

The contest for Stalingrad was over. The airlift that Hitler had ordered to assist his besieged forces failed. Some 147,200 German soldiers were killed in the futile effort to occupy the city. Another 91,000 surrendered, including 24 generals. Berlin acknowledged its defeat in this battle and announced that "the victims of this army, a corps [in pursuit of] of a historic European goal, were not in vain." Germany proclaimed three days of national mourning; Soviet forces advanced on all fronts.

2/5/1943

Deportation of 10,000 Jews from Bialystok to Treblinka Begins

The first Aktion in the Bialystok Ghetto took place on February 5-12. About 10,000 ghetto inhabitants were transported to Treblinka; another 2,000 were shot by Germans in the course of the operation. "Front A," the first underground cell established in the ghetto, attempted to resist the Aktion with its scanty means. Many of its members were killed; others, including the commander, Edek Boraks, were sent to Treblinka.

2/25/1943

First Transports from Salonika to Auschwitz

The Aktion against the Jews of Greece began in the first week of February. On February 6, the order that set the deportations in motion was sent: Jews were to mark their businesses and homes prominently and move into a ghetto. Implementation was assigned to the SD, and the financial expenses were charged to the Jews. Within several days, the standard set of restrictions and decrees went into effect: the yellow badge, home quarantine, the injunction against the use of public transport, forfeit of telephones, and a nighttime curfew. The Germans sent the first transport of deportees from Salonika to Auschwitz on February 25, 1943.

2/26/1943

First Transport of Gypsies Reaches Auschwitz

A special camp for Gypsies was established in Birkenau on February 26. Organized in the form of a family camp, it received mostly Gypsies from other concentration camps and smaller numbers of Gypsies from elsewhere in the Reich. Among them were veterans of the Wehrmacht; some arrived in Auschwitz in uniform and with citations in hand. Because of the harsh conditions, the mortality rate in the Gypsies' camp was the highest in any of the Birkenau camps. Some 20,000 Gypsies were interned in the Gypsies' camp; few survived.

3/4/1943

Jews of Thrace Deported to Treblinka

On March 4, the Bulgarians placed most of the Jews in Thrace, which had been annexed to Bulgaria in 1941, in confinement. According to Bulgarian statistics, 4,058 Jews were handed to the Germans and sent to Treblinka, where they were murdered at once. Approximately 200 Jews survived in Thrace amongst the partisans or hidden by their Christian neighbors, including 42 young men who were in Bulgarian labor camps.

3/20/1943

First Deportations from Salonika arrive at Auschwitz

Beginning on 25 February, deportation convoys from Salonika to Auschwitz were prepared by assembling Jews in the Baron Hirsch quarter, located near the railway station. The first transport from Salonika reached Auschwitz on 20 March. By the time the transports ended on August 18, 43,850 of the 50,000 Jews in Salonika had been deported to Auschwitz. Most were murdered as soon as they reached the camp.

4/19/1943

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Begins

The final liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto began on the Eve of Passover, April 19, 1943. The deportation did not come as a surprise. The Germans had amassed a military force to carry it out, but did not expect to engage in a confrontation that included street battles. Armed German forces ringed the ghetto at 3:00 a.m. The unit that entered the ghetto encountered armed resistance and retreated. The main ghetto, with its population of 30,000 Jews, was deserted. The Jews could not be rounded up for the transport; the railroad cars at the deportation point remained empty.

After Germans and rebels fought in the streets for three days, the Germans began to torch the ghetto, street by street, building by building. The entire ghetto became a sizzling, smoke-swathed conflagration. Most of the Jews who emerged from their hideouts, including entire families, were murdered by the Germans on the spot. The ghetto Jews gradually lost the strength to resist. On April 23, Mordecai Anielewicz the ZOB commander wrote the following to Yitzhak Zuckerman, a member of the ZOB command who was stationed on the "Aryan" side: "I cannot describe the conditions in which the Jews are living. Only a special few will hold out; all the others will perish sooner or later. Their fate is sealed. None of the bunkers where our comrades are hiding has enough air to light a candle at night.... Be well, my dear, perhaps we shall yet meet. The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self - defense in the ghetto will have been a reality. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men of battle". The rebels pursued their cause, even though they knew from the outset that they could not win. Even before the war ended, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising became a symbol of Jewish resistance.

5/8/1943

Leaders of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Die

The massive German forces that had been brought into the former Warsaw Ghetto to fight the Jewish rebels burned the ghetto street by street. Only by torching the buildings could the fighters be flushed out and forced to seek another place to hide and fight. Terror and inferno raged in the improvised underground bunkers as the Germans made the fighters come out in the only way possible-by hurling grenades into the bunkers or by pumping in tear gas. The ZOB command bunker, staffed by Mordecai Anielewicz and other leaders of the resistance, fell on May 8. With the destruction of the Great Synagogue on Tlomackie Street, outside the confines of the ghetto the German commander General Juergen Stroop bragged that "there is no longer a Jewish quarter in Warsaw." On May 19, Warsaw was declared Judenrein.

5/12/1943

Samuel Zygelbojm Commits Suicide

In late May 1942, Samuel Zygelbojm, a Bund leader and one of two Jewish representatives to the Polish government-in-exile in London, obtained a thorough report about the murder being perpetrated against Polish Jewry (the Bund Report). He spared no effort in disseminating such reports and in prompting the Allies to take action in the matter, foremost with respect to rescue. Reports on the murder of European Jewry continued to flow in, and as they accumulated, his attempts to make the Allies respond became more and more frequent and desperate. He was gripped with helplessness.

Zygelbojm's last letters, to the Polish Bund's office in the United States and to his brother in Australia, speak with despair of the futility of his rescue efforts; he states in them that he "belongs to those who are over there." On May 12, 1943, when word came of the liquidation of the last Jews of Warsaw-among them his wife, Manya, and his 16-year-old son, Tuvia-Zygelbojm put an end to his life. In farewell letters addressed to the president of the Polish Republic, Wladyslaw Raczkiewicz, and to the Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile, Wladyslaw Sikorski, Zygelbojm wrote:

Responsibility for the murder of the entire Jewish population of Poland lies primarily with the murderers themselves, but indirectly humanity as a whole is responsible, all the Allied nations and their governments who to date have done nothing to stop the crime from going on.... The Polish government did much to rouse world opinion, but it was not convincing enough.... I cannot keep quiet, I cannot live, while the remnants of the Jewish people in Poland, who sent me here, are being destroyed. My comrades in the Warsaw Ghetto have died a hero's death in the final battle, with a weapon in their hands. I did not have the honor to fall like them. But I belong to them and to their grave-their mass grave. May my death be a resounding cry of protest, against the indifference with which the world looks at the destruction of the Jewish world, looks on and does nothing to stop it. I know that a human life is of little value nowadays, but since I did not succeed in accomplishing anything while I was alive, I hope that my death will shock those who have been indifferent, shock them into action in this very moment, which may be the last moment for the remnants of Polish Jewry.

5/24/1943

Protest by Sofia Jews

In the course of March 1943, 11,343 Jews were deported to Treblinka from Thrace, Macedonia and Pirot, areas that Bulgaria had occupied and administered according to a military agreement with Germany. The deportation was based on a unique accord between the Bulgarian Jewish Commissary and the Germans on February 22, 1943, for the deportation of 20,000 Jews from Bulgaria. The deportation was also supposed to include nearly 9000 Jews from the area of prewar Bulgaria. On March 9, the concentration of the nearly 9,000 Jews began.

In light of the deportation from Thrace and Macedonia and the preparations in old Bulgaria, a delegation from the town of Kiustendil approached the vice chairman of the Bulgarian Parliament Dimitar Peshev on March 9. As a result of this meeting and the activities of various parliament officials, the deportations were postponed. On March 17, Dimitar Peshev, along with 42 other members of the Parliament, in a protest statement, demanded that the government desist from all future deportations. However, German officials continued to pressure the Bulgarians to comply with the agreement.

On May 21 a new decree, number 70, of the Bulgarian Government was enacted for the evacuation of about 25,000 Sofia Jews to the provincial towns. A notice to this effect was advertised on May 22. On May 24, the Jews of Sofia, supported by Communist Party activists, demonstrated against the decree. The police dispersed the demonstration brutally and the expulsion order went into effect. Within twelve days, over 19,000 Jews were exiled to the provinces. Owing to grass roots pressure on the government and the King, the Jews from Sofia were never deported outside of Bulgaria. Because of a complex combination of political interests, the war situation and public resistance across a broad social and political spectrum, about 50,000 Bulgarian Jews were saved.

An important factor in the rescue was the position of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the activity its officials. The role of the Bulgarian King Boris III in all of this remains a subject of controversy. Some writers say he courageously stopped the action against the Jews, whereas others pin much of the blame on his shoulders for the deportation and the plans to continue them.

6/1/1943

Lvov Ghetto Liquidated

German and Ukrainian police surrounded the ghetto-camp to prevent escape as additional police units entered to round up all the inhabitants. They met with resistance: a barrage of hand grenades and firebombs from buildings, and gunfire from several locations. Nine Germans and Ukrainians were killed, and 20 were wounded. The Germans responded by blowing up or burning the ghetto buildings to kill or flush out their inhabitants. Approximately 3,000 Jews were killed in the ghetto in the course of the Aktion; another 7,000 were captured and sent to the Janowska camp, where they were murdered. The Aktion lasted until June 20, and manhunts in search of hiding Jews continued until July.

6/21/1943

Himmler Orders Liquidation of All Ghettos in Occupied Soviet Territories

On June 21, 1943, Reichsfuehrer-SS Heinrich Himmler issued the following order: "All Jews who may still be found in ghettos in the Ostland must be confined in concentration camps.... All non-essential inhabitants of the Jewish ghettos are to be referred to the East.... The reorganization in concentration camps is to be completed by August 1, 1943." The practical intent of this order was the elimination of all surviving Jews in the occupied Soviet territories. However, in keeping with his long-standing policy, Himmler wanted to exploit the Jews' labor as he spilled their blood. Thus, the able-bodied were to be put to work in the concentration-camp network, while the "non-essential" were to be "referred to the East," i.e., murdered.

The order was evidently coordinated with Hitler. Two days before it was issued, Himmler discussed the matter with Hitler and wrote afterwards, "After my lecture on the Jewish question, the Fuehrer expressed the view that the evacuation of Jews should be implemented in a radical fashion over the next four months."

Thus, a series of ghettos was liquidated: Bialystok in August; Vilna and Minsk in September; and, Riga in November. For reasons that are not clear, two ghettos in Lithuania-Kovno (Kaunas) and Shavli (Siauliai)-were left intact until mid 1944. Almost no Jews remained in the occupied Soviet territories.

6/28/1943

Four Crematoria Completed at Auschwitz-Birkenau

After using improvised gas chambers that had been installed in a village house, the Nazis built four new, large gas chambers in Birkenau, and erected crematoria next to them to incinerate the bodies. Construction took place between March 22 and June 28, 1943. The Nazis rated the killing capacity of each chamber at 2,000 persons at a time. At their peak, the crematoria consumed 4,756 bodies within a 24-hour period.

7/5/1943

German Offensive at Kursk Fails

German forces launched a massive offensive at Kursk, in what would be their last attempt to breach the central front. Three German armies attempted to press from the Urals to Belgorod, but were halted by the strength and depth of the Soviet defense, which had achieved superiority in numbers and equipment.

On July 10, the German forces were blocked north of Kursk after advancing only five miles and losing 25,000 men, 200 tanks, and 200 aircraft. Russian forces began a counteroffensive on July 12, pushing the

Germans hundreds of kilometers eastward. Some 8,000 tanks took part in the Battle of Kursk, about 5,000 of them Soviet tanks, as well as some 2.6 million soldiers from both sides. Kursk, like Stalingrad, marked a watershed on the Russian front.

7/10/1943

Allies Invade Sicily

The invasion of Sicily began at 2:45 a.m. on July 10, as American and British forces landed on the southeastern shore of the island. The Allies considered the capture of Sicily a prerequisite for an assault on Italy. The German and Italian forces on the island (350,000 men in all) were taken by surprise and actually put up little resistance. Palermo fell to General Patton on July 22. The last stage in the offensive was found unnecessary, because the invasion force met no further resistance. The takeover of Sicily was completed on August 17, when American and British forces entered Messina at 10:00 a.m.

7/25/1943

Mussolini Deposed

The landing of Allied forces in Sicily in July 1943 prompted the downfall of the Fascist Italian leader and Hitler's ally, Benito Mussolini.

On July 24, 1943, the Fascist High Council, which had not met since the war began, summoned Mussolini to a meeting at which King Victor Emmanuel was appointed in his stead as commander-in-chief of the Italian armed forces. The next day, the king dismissed Mussolini from all of his functions, had him arrested, and sent him to prison in an ambulance. Allied forces landed in Italy on September 2; Italy surrendered on September 8. However, in a daring rescue action, a German commando unit released Mussolini from incarceration, and a new Fascist government, set up under his leadership in northern Italy, claimed that it was continuing to prosecute the war alongside the Germans. This government had no real power, but the Germans invaded and occupied most of Italy. Not until June 4, 1944, did Allied forces enter Rome. On April 27, 1945 partisans captured Mussolini as he attempted to flee to Switzerland, and shot him the next day.

8/2/1943

Uprising at Treblinka

Shortly after the bodies at Treblinka were cremated, the underground that had coalesced at the camp decided not to postpone the uprising any longer. The date they chose was August 2. Using an improvised key to the camp arsenal, members of the underground began to remove and distribute weapons. The rebels became suspicious that one of the camp commanders had discovered the action and were forced to eliminate him. The sound of the gunshot brought the camp guards to the site, disrupted the continued distribution of weapons, and interfered with the plan to take over the camp. As members of the underground opened fire on the SS men and torched most of the camp. Masses of prisoners rushed to the fences. Guards opened fire on them from the watchtowers. Most of the escapees were shot near the fence; others managed to break out, but were caught and shot by German reinforcements that had been rushed to the area. Approximately 70 escapees survived.

Most of the buildings were ablaze the uprising, except for the gas chambers. Prisoners who had not escaped were shot at once, or were murdered after having to efface the murder that had been carried out in the camp.

8/8/1943

First of Five Organized Groups Leaves Vilna Ghetto to Join Partisans

In late 1941, the first Jews from the towns of Lithuania made their way to the forests, mostly as individuals or in small groups. They were soon joined by escapees from the Vilna Ghetto. Some of them formed family camps; others joined partisan brigades. In August 1943, a group of fighters from the United Partisan Organization (FPO) in Vilna, under Josef Glazman, went to the Narocz Forest and formed a Jewish partisan brigade called Nekama (Hebrew for "Revenge"), with about 200 fighters. About two months later, the brigade was disbanded by order of the Soviets. In September and October, additional Vilna FPO groups went to the Rudniki Forests. In all, the Jews of Vilna established four brigades under the auspices of the Soviet and Lithuanian partisan movement, with a total of 400 persons.

8/15/1943

Bialystok Ghetto Liquidated

On the night of August 15-16, 1943, the Bialystok Ghetto was enveloped in three tight rings of Wehrmacht and SS forces-armed with heavy and light weapons and artillery-and by Ukrainian auxiliary forces. The chairman of the Judenrat was informed that the ghetto inhabitants would be relocated to Lublin. Some 30,000 Jews, exhausted, spent, and burdened with whatever possessions they could carry, streamed toward the evacuation point. At that precise moment, the Jewish underground in the ghetto launched an uprising. Flyers were disseminated to the population to disobey the German evacuation order. For five days, fierce battles raged in the ghetto between forces that were vastly unequal in size, training, and equipment. A large detachment of German soldiers and police, backed by armored vehicles and tanks, was brought into the ghetto, and the main bunker of the underground was surrounded on August 19. The Germans shot all the underground fighters, except one, that day. There is no firm information on how the commanders of the uprising, Mordechai Tenenbaum-Tamaroff and Daniel Moszkowicz, met their death, but it appears that they committed suicide.

Deportations from the ghetto began on August 18 and went on for three days, in the course of which most inhabitants of the ghetto were sent to extermination in Majdanek and Treblinka. The 2,000 Jews who were left behind were deported three weeks later.

8/18/1943

Prisoners of Sonderkommando 1005 Made to Exhume Tens of Thousands of Bodies at Babi Yar

As the Red Army approached, the Germans decided to attempt to efface their genocidal actions. A special unit, Sonderkommando 1005, was established for this purpose. On August 18, the members of this unit began to exhume and cremate the corpses at Babi Yar. For this purpose, the Germans brought in 327 prisoners, including 100 Jews. They were housed in a bunker dug into the side of the ravine; it had an iron latticework gate that was locked at night and was guarded by a sentry armed with a machine gun. The prisoners were bound in metal chains at night and were treated brutally; those who slackened were shot at once. A bulldozer exposed the mass graves, and the prisoners dragged the bodies to a cremation pyre composed of wooden logs, doused in gasoline, on a base of railroad ties. The bones that could not be incinerated were crushed, for which purpose the Nazis brought in tombstones from a Jewish cemetery nearby. The ashes were sifted to retrieve any gold or silver they might have contained.

As they completed their work on September 29, the prisoners discovered that they were about to be put to death. In a hasty consultation, some of them decided to attempt to escape that night. After midnight, 25 prisoners broke out, 15 escaped, and the remainder were shot immediately or murdered the next day. After the Nazis' covering-up action, almost no trace remained of the site where, according to research of a Soviet commission, it is estimated that 100,000 people had been murdered.

9/1/1943

Vilna Underground Uprising Fails

In the midst of a deportation Aktion in the ghetto on September 1-4, 1943, the FPO, the Jewish underground organization in the ghetto, urged the inhabitants not to report for deportation and to launch an

uprising. The inhabitants ignored the call, believing that they were heading not to death in Ponary, but to labor camps in Estonia, as the Germans had stated and, as it happened, was indeed the case. In the late afternoon on September 1, members of the underground clashed with German forces that were combing the ghetto. In an armed battle, Yechiel Scheinbaum, commander of one of the underground units, "Yechiel's Combat Group," was killed.

Lest the Germans destroy the entire ghetto in the event of another armed clash, Jacob Gens, the chairman of the Judenrat, delivered to the Germans the entire quota of Jews that they had demanded for the deportation.

9/3/1943

Belgian Jews Arrested for Deportation to Auschwitz

In early September 1943, in the course of Operation "Iltis," Jews who held Belgian citizenship and who had been spared from deportation thus far, were rounded up and deported. This deportation was carried out by a special section of the Association of Belgian Jews (the Belgian Judenrat) in Brussels. The act of arrest and deportation was managed by units of the German police, the Feldgendarmerie. The majority of those deported perished in Auschwitz.

9/15/1943

Deportation of Italian Jews to Auschwitz begins

For much of the war period, Italian Jews were not deported to the extermination camps, but on 8 September 1943, Italy surrendered to the Allies, and in response, Germany took control of most Italian territory. The Italian Jews residing in the areas under German occupation were thus subjected to the racial laws.

Between September 1943 and January 1944, at least 3,110 Jews were deported from Italy to Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2,224 of whom are known to have perished. By December 1944, another 4,056 had been deported to the east. By the end of the war, some 12,000 of the 44,500 Jews living in Italy at the time of its occupation by Germany had been deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

9/23/1943

Vilna Ghetto Liquidated

The ghetto was liquidated for good on September 23-24. Some 3,700 men and women were transported to concentration camps in Estonia and Latvia. More than 4,000 children, women, and the elderly were sent to the Sobibor extermination camp, where they were murdered. Several hundred elderly and ill Jews were taken to Ponary and murdered there. About 2,500 Jews were left behind in labor camps in Vilna. More than 1,000 went into hiding in the depopulated ghetto, but nearly all were found in the months following the liquidation. The Jews remaining in the ghetto were taken to Ponary and murdered several days before the liberation of Vilna.

10/1/1943

Danish Jews Rescued

Reports regarding the planned deportation of Danish Jews were leaked to various Danish public groups by George Duckwitz, a member of the German legation in Copenhagen. The information evoked a spontaneous response. The Danish resistance warned the Jews, helped them go into hiding, and moved them to the coast where, with the assistance of the Danish fishermen, they crossed to Sweden. On the night of October 1-2, 1943, German police began arresting Jews in all parts of Denmark. After the initial period of spontaneous action, the Danes joined in and helped to organize the flight after the Swedish Government proclaimed its willingness to take in the escapees. In Denmark, all segments of the population went into action to save the Jews. Protests poured into the offices of the German authorities from Danish economic and social organizations, King Christian X expressed his firm objection to the German plans, the heads of

the Danish churches published a strong protest and urged the public to help the Jews, and, the universities were shut down for a week, with the students lending a hand in the rescue operation. Within three weeks, 7,200 Jews and another 700 non-Jewish relatives were taken to Sweden. The operation was funded in part by the Jews themselves and in greater part by contributions from Danes. The Danish police not only refrained from collaborating with the Germans, but actually helped the Jews flee. Nevertheless, about 500 Jewish men, women, and children were captured and deported to Theresienstadt. The Danish population and leadership defended them vigorously, sent them food parcels, and had the Danish Foreign Ministry bombard the Germans with warnings. The ministry also put forward a demand that a Danish delegation be allowed to visit the internees. These Jews were not transported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz.

10/14/1943

Uprising at Sobibor

In July and August, Jewish prisoners in the Sobibor extermination camp established a resistance cell under Leon Feldhendler to prepare a prisoners' uprising and a general escape. In the second half of September, Jewish prisoners of war from the Red Army were brought to the camp. One of them, Lt. Aleksandr (Sasha) Pechersky, was recruited by the resistance and installed as its commander. The plan was for the prisoners to kill the SS men, obtain weapons, and break through the fence at an area that was not mined.

The painstakingly prepared uprising broke out on October 14. In its course, 11 SS men and several Ukrainians were killed and some 300 prisoners managed to escape, most of whom were killed by their pursuers. Those who had not joined the escape for various reasons were all murdered. Only 50 escapees survived to witness liberation day. After the uprising, the Germans abandoned the idea of turning Sobibor into a concentration camp and closed it down.

10/18/1943

Jews of Rome Deported to Auschwitz

The Judenrazzia (roundup of Jews) in Rome began at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday, October 16, 1943. Jews in all parts of the city were rounded up brutally and taken to a military school. Two days later, at least 1,035 of the 1,060 Jews slated for deportation to Auschwitz were sent away. Sections of the Italian population attempted to both passively and actively resist the deportation of the Jews.

10/21/1943

Liquidation of Minsk Ghetto

The Jewish population of Minsk, roughly 80,000 at the beginning of the war, dwindled to only 9,000 by the end of 1942. The Germans had murdered most of the others and had converted the ghetto into a labor camp. In August 1943, a transport of Jews was sent from Minsk to the Sobibor extermination camp. Another 2,000 Jews were sent to the Budzyn labor camp in September, and in a final Aktion, on October 21, the last 4,000 Jews in Minsk were transported to the killing site, Maly Trostinets. When Minsk was liberated on July 3, 1944, only a few Jews of those who had gone into hiding during the final Aktion remained alive.

10/25/1943

Dnepropetrovsk Liberated; 15 of 80,000 Jews Remain

On the eve of World War II, Dnepropetrovsk had a Jewish population of 80,000 out of a total population of 500,662. As the German armies approached on August 5, 1941, the evacuation of the city was begun and some 60,000 Jews left. The Germans took the city on August 25. In the first few days of the occupation, the Ukrainian population was extremely hostile to the Jews, plundering their property and denouncing many of them to the Germans. The 20,000 Jews of the city were ordered to wear the Jewish Badge (a blue Star of David on a white background), and to elect a committee that was referred to as the "community leadership." Its first chairman was a lawyer named Gorenberg. House managers were ordered to provide the

command headquarters in the city with a list of their Jewish tenants, and the military administration made preparations to establish a ghetto for Dnepropetrovsk's Jews.

On October 8, 1941, the military governor imposed a collective fine of 30 million rubles on the city's Jews. On October 13, even before the fine was collected, Einsatzkommando 6 (of Einsatzgruppe C) began rounding up the Jews and confining them to a large department store in the city; from there, the Jews were taken in groups to a nearby ravine to be murdered. A total of 15,000 Jews were killed in this operation, which was followed at a later stage by the killing of the remaining 5,000 Jews.

When Dnepropetrovsk was liberated by the Red Army on October 25, 1943, only 15 Jews were left alive in the city.

11/3/1943

Germans Launch "Operation Harvest Festival" (Erntefest)

After the prisoners' rebellion at Sobibor made the Germans fearful of further uprisings, Heinrich Himmler ordered Jakob Sporrenberg, the senior commander of the SS and the police in the Lublin district, to liquidate the Jewish forced labor camps. On November 3, "Operation Erntefest" began, in which 43,000 Jews were murdered. On November 5, more than 10,000 prisoners in Trawniki were taken to trenches outside the camp and murdered. On the night of November 3-4, massive SS forces and a special unit of Auschwitz camp guards came to the Poniatowa camp with instructions to murder the prisoners. The prisoners were driven out of the barracks and made to run in groups to pits that had been readied near the camp. There, all of them were murdered by machine-gun fire. Some of the prisoners refused to leave the barracks and put up resistance; the Germans torched the barracks with their inhabitants inside. The Germans then attempted to force 200 prisoners to cremate the bodies. They resisted, refused-and were also murdered. That day, 15,000 Jewish prisoners were murdered in Poniatowa and 18,000 in Majdanek.

11/17/1943

Jewish Partisans Liberate Jews in Borshech

On November 17, 1943, in an audacious action, a group of Jewish partisans from the Borshech Ghetto in Eastern Galicia liberated approximately 50 prisoners in this town, including 20 Jews. The liberators were a group of young people that coalesced in the ghetto, acquired a small quantity of arms, and planned a resistance action. Several days before the ghetto was liquidated, the members of the group went into the nearby forests.

11/28/1943

Teheran Conference

On November 1, 1943, "The Moscow Declaration", composed by Churchill, was accepted by Roosevelt and Stalin. This document pledged that those who were responsible for German atrocities should be returned to the countries where their crimes were committed and therefore be judged on the spot by the people whom they had outraged. The three powers pledged to do their utmost to see that justice would be done.

On November 28, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin held their first joint conference in Teheran. The leaders agreed on the following: that Germany would be defeated before Japan; that the Western Allies' invasion of the French coast, Operation Overlord, would be given the highest priority and would be carried out in June 1944; and that as Overlord was underway, the Red Army would launch an offensive on the eastern front. Stalin repeated his commitment to join the war against Japan after Germany surrendered. The Teheran Conference was considered especially successful. The Allied leaders regarded the strategic coordination they had achieved, in contrast to the disarray among the Axis powers, as one of the keys to the success of their policy.

1/26/1944

War Refugee Board Established

More than a year after the American administration received unequivocal reports about the rampant murder of Jews in Europe, President Roosevelt made a modest gesture to rescue such Jews as remained alive-if only to preempt Congress in taking swift action and receiving the credit for it. The War Refugee Board was established by special request of U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, who had presented the president with evidence about the State Department's systematic efforts to sabotage rescue efforts. The board was instructed to take action to rescue and assist the victims. Theoretically, it was given impressive powers and was promised assistance from all Administration agencies. Practically, it was established at a very late stage for most Jews in Europe, was under-funded, and received little assistance from the rest of the Administration. The board was put to its first real test when the Nazis occupied Hungary in March 1944, putting the last remaining large Jewish community at risk. It was instrumental in the rescue activities that developed there. As the war wound down, the board played a crucial role in saving additional Jews, mainly by threatening to have Nazi officials, as well as accomplices from the Axis powers, prosecuted as war criminals after the impending surrender.

1/27/1944

Siege of Leningrad Ends

Moscow announced that the German siege on Leningrad, which had lasted since September 1941, was over. The blockade had caused terrible privation in food, medicines, and running water. These conditions, coupled with bombardments and shelling by the Germans and their accomplices, as well as the terrible cold of the far north, subjected the besieged millions of inhabitants to horrific suffering and caused frightful losses among them. The number of victims, although unknown, is estimated at 1 million, if not more. Hitler had ordered his armed forces to reject the surrender of Leningrad, Russia's second-largest city, and to reduce the city to rubble and obliterate its population. He failed, but Leningrad paid a terrible price.

2/15/1944

Orphans return to Romania from Transnistria

With the German defeat at Stalingrad, and the heavy losses suffered by the Romanian army at the front, the specter of a German defeat in the war galvanized the Romanian government to establish contacts with the Allies and negotiate with them. This shift had major ramifications on their policies towards the Jews. Many of the bureaucratic impediments in the path of Romanian Jewry that had prevented them from sending help to the Jews in Transnistria were removed, and connections were reestablished with the various ghettos in Transnistria. On 12 November 1943, the Romanian government agreed to the repatriation of Jewish orphans under age 12, which after deliberations was raised to 15. On 15 February 1944, 1,884 Jewish orphans who had been gathered together in Mogilev-Podolski and Tiraspol were allowed to return to Romania.

In March 1944, the Jewish leadership in Bucharest obtained permission to repatriate a further 1,400 orphans from Transnistria. The children were brought to Iasi, and from there, were sent to various communities in Romania.

3/18/1944

German Troops March into Hungary

After Hungarian Regent Admiral Miklos Horthy refused to sign a German document in which he ostensibly sought immediate German intervention, Hitler ordered his forces to occupy the country. On March 19, German paratroopers seized the Hungarian airports as other units crossed the border and occupied the countryside. Germany completed its occupation of Hungary on March 20.

3/24/1944

Roosevelt Warns Hungary to Refrain from Anti-Jewish Measures

In response to reports about Germany's intentions to implement the "Final Solution" in newly occupied Hungary, an urgent appeal was made to leaders in Western countries to warn Hungary repeatedly not to permit the annihilation of the Jews. The Hungarians should be told emphatically, the appeal stated, that their treatment of the Jews would become a litmus test for peace arrangements after the war. Roosevelt responded affirmatively to the request. In a manifesto released that very day, he not only condemned the Nazis and their accomplices for their despicable crimes in the course of the war, but also warned the Hungarians to refrain from any atrocities against the Jews.

3/30/1944

Soviets liberate Transnistria

In March 1944, Transnistria was liberated by the Red Army. On 30 March, Czernowitz was liberated. During the same period, a Jewish committee from Bucharest succeeded in repatriating some 2,500 Jews who had been deported to Transnistria. By the liberation, approximately 90,000 of the 150,000 deportees had perished, this in addition to the 185,000 Ukrainian Jews who were murdered in Transnistria by the Romanian and German armies.

4/7/1944

Two Jewish Prisoners Deliver "Auschwitz Protocols"

Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, two Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz, escaped from the camp on April 7 and provided detailed reports on the murder practiced there. The two escapees spent two days hiding in a pile of logs outside the inner perimeter of the camp. Members of the Auschwitz resistance misled the Nazis' search dogs by dipping pungent Russian tobacco in gasoline whose scent led the dogs in the wrong direction. Two weeks later, the escapees reached Slovakia and met with Andre Steiner, a representative of the Underground Working Group. On the basis of this meeting, Oscar Krasnansky wrote a 30-page report, the "Auschwitz Protocols." The protocols described in detail the murderous actions being committed at the camp, the number of Jews who had been murdered there, and preparations that were being made there for the murder of some 800,000 Hungarian Jews. On May 16, the gist of the report was forwarded to the West after several previous attempts had failed. After its contents were disseminated, the world understood clearly that Auschwitz was, in fact, an extermination camp.

4/16/1944

Hungarian Government Registers Jews, Confiscates Their Property

On April 16, after a swift and extensive confiscation campaign against Jewish property and the issuance of anti-Jewish decrees, the Hungarian Council of Ministers adopted a far-reaching resolution to oust the Jews from economic activities such as commerce and the capital market. Pursuant to the decree, the Jews were given until April 30 to declare, on a form obtained at the nearest branch of the Finance Ministry, the current value of their property, including objets d'art, rugs, gold and silver, jewelry, securities, and bank accounts. Safe-deposit boxes of Jews were blocked. All transfers of Jewish property to non-Jews concluded after March 22 were nullified, and the items included in them also had to be declared. Most Jews obeyed all provisions of these decrees painstakingly.

On April 27, the Minister of Supply gave all Jews until May 1 to provide government offices in their places of residence with their personal details. Depicted as a measure to facilitate the issue of new ration cards and coupons, it was, in fact, a ruse meant to allow the authorities to double-check and complete a list they had prepared at the beginning of the month, and to assist the German and Hungarian units that engaged in rounding up Jews.

4/25/1944

"Blood for Trucks" Negotiations Start

On April 25, Joel Brand, a member of the Relief and Rescue Committee of Budapest, was summoned to a meeting with Adolf Eichmann, who presented him with an offer that would be known as "Blood for Trucks." Eichmann told Brand that the highest SS authorities had approved the terms, in which Eichmann would barter "a million Jews" for goods obtained outside of Hungary, including 10,000 trucks for civilian use, or, as an alternative, for use on the eastern front. The 1 million Jews would have to leave the country—since Eichmann had promised that Hungary would be Judenrein—and might head for any destination other than Palestine, since he had promised the Mufti of Jerusalem that no Jews would be allowed to emigrate there. To negotiate the effectuation of the deal, Eichmann let Brand leave Hungary.

Although Brand was unaware of it at the time, the offer was evidently connected with an attempt by Himmler to drive a wedge between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union, and to conclude a separate peace with the former. Brand did go to Ankara, Jerusalem, and Cairo, and he negotiated with American officials and leaders of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. However, he was arrested and imprisoned in Cairo, and the rescue scheme was never implemented.

5/15/1944

Beginning of Mass Deportations of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau

Immediately after the German army occupied Hungary on March 19, the Germans took rapid organizational action to annihilate Hungarian Jewry, the largest Jewish community in Europe that had not yet been swept away for genocide. In short order, from the first deportation on May 15 until the transports were halted on July 7, 437,000 persons were deported and a large majority of them met their deaths in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau, to which they were sent directly upon arrival at the camp. The others were put to work in Auschwitz, its sub-camps, and various other Nazi camps. Out of the more than 800,000 Jews in Greater Hungary (as defined by the Hungarian racial definition), nearly 570,000 were murdered.

6/4/1944

Americans Occupy Rome

On June 3, Hitler allowed Field Marshal Albert Kesselring to retreat with his forces from Rome. On June 4, American forces entered the city, and occupied it with no need to destroy it in bombardments. American General Mark Clark described the scene: "There were gay crowds in the streets, many of them waving flags, as our infantry marched through the capital. Flowers were stuck in the muzzles of the soldiers' rifles and of guns on the tanks. Many Romans seemed to be on the verge of hysteria in their enthusiasm for the American troops."

The fall of Rome heralded the beginning of the end of the war in Europe. Two days after Rome was occupied, Eisenhower's forces landed at Normandy and breached Hitler's stronghold through the front door.

6/6/1944

"D-Day"

The great Allied invasion of Hitler's fortress Europe, the largest amphibious operation in military history, began under General Dwight David Eisenhower at 6:00 a.m. as forces began to land along the coast of northern France, between Cherbourg and Le Havre. Within 24 hours, more than 4,000 ships discharged 176,000 soldiers on the shore. They were defended by 9,500 aircraft and 600 warships.

American forces captured Utah Beach as British forces overcame most of the German resistance and advanced toward Caen. Serious resistance occurred only at Omaha Beach, where it took the forces until

sundown to establish a toehold. Despite immense losses and difficulties in advancing, it was clear that the invasion had succeeded. Within 10 days, Field Marshal Rommel and General von Rundstedt knew there was no further point in attempting to hold the lines, and urged Hitler to authorize a retreat.

6/9/1944

Hannah Szenes Arrested in Hungary

About a week before the Germans occupied Hungary, the Palestinian Jewish parachutist Hannah Szenes was dropped into Yugoslavia. She spent three months with Tito's partisans, but resolved to reach Hungary with their assistance.

She crossed the Hungarian border in early June 1944 and was immediately captured with a radio transmitter in her possession. She was taken to prison in Szombathely, where, despite severe torture and threats against her mother's life, she did not reveal the code of her transmitter. In November 1944, after being incarcerated for five months, she was executed by gunfire at the age of 23.

6/13/1944

Germany Launches First V-1 Rockets at England

Germany began to launch V-1 rockets at England, opening a new phase in terrorism against civilian populations. 8,000 missiles were fired at England, including more than 2,300 at London alone. They had a harsh psychological effect on the virtually defenseless population. The buzz that typified their flight was followed by a deafening explosion. The V-1 was 25 feet long, and carried a one-ton warhead. Its tremendous destructive force caused thousands of deaths and demolished more than a million buildings. Even more terrifying was the V-2, against which there was no defense at all. They savaged the population until their launching facilities were captured or destroyed.

6/23/1944

Red Cross Mission Visits Theresienstadt

When reports about the genocidal campaign against the Jews began to filter in, the Germans decided to invite representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit the Theresienstadt Ghetto-camp. The delegation reached Theresienstadt on June 23, 1944. To prepare for the visit, the German commanders of the camp orchestrated every detail, opening fake shops, a cafe, a bank, kindergartens, and schools, to name but a few. They blanketed the town with flower gardens. They hand-picked the inmates with whom the committee members would meet and told them what to say. Immediately after the visit, the Germans made a propaganda film about the inmates' new lives under the patronage of the Third Reich. After the filming, the majority of the actors, most members of the ghetto leadership, and almost all the children in the ghetto were sent to the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

7/3/1944

Minsk Liberated; Few of 80,000 Jews Survive

The Red Army liberated Minsk on July 3, in what Moscow defined as "one of the most crucial victories of the war." Only a few of the 80,000 Jews who had inhabited Minsk before the war were still there upon the liberation. 60,000 had fled. They had managed to hide out during the final Aktion on October 21, 1943, in which the last 5,000 were taken to Maly Trostinets, where they were murdered.

7/7/1944

Hungarian Government Halts Deportations

Admiral Miklos Horthy, the Hungarian Regent, ordered a halt to the deportation of Hungarian Jews to the extermination camps in the East. Nevertheless, for the next two days, the deportation teams continued

working, eradicating Jewish communities in western Hungary near Budapest. Between May 15 and the cessation of deportations on July 9, 437,351 Jews had been taken to the death camps. All of Hungary was Judenrein except for the capital, Budapest.

7/8/1944

Kovno Ghetto Liquidated

On July 8, as the Red Army approached the city, the German authorities began to remove Jews to concentration camps in Germany. Many attempted to find refuge in underground hideouts that they had prepared; the Germans flushed them out with the help of dogs, smoke grenades, and firebombs. Approximately 2,000 Jews died of asphyxiation as the ghetto went up in flames and its buildings collapsed. About 4,000 Jews were transported to the Reich and territory that was annexed to the Reich, mainly to Dachau, Kaufering, and Stutthof.

7/13/1944

Jewish Partisans Help Liberate Vilna; 2,500 of 57,000 Jews Survive

The Red Army liberated Vilna on July 13, 1944, a year after the final liquidation of the ghetto. Jewish prisoners who had been kept in labor camps to exhume and cremate the bodies of earlier murder victims in Ponary were now taken to Ponary and murdered. Some 150-200 managed to flee before this liquidation and survived. Jewish partisan units that had fled from the Vilna Ghetto into the forest now helped the Red Army forces liberate the town.

7/20/1944

Attempt to Assassinate Hitler Fails

The Allies' landing in France and the Soviets' rapid progress on the eastern front prompted a group of Germans to conspire against Hitler. Aware that he was leading Germany to utter destruction, they believed that if they continued to stay their hand, the Allies would no longer agree to negotiate with a new German administration. The anti-Hitler conspirators were not well organized, but they managed to recruit Lt.-Col. Count Klaus von Stauffenberg, a courageous soldier who had lost an eye, a hand, and two fingers in war for his homeland. Stauffenberg plotted a coup and undertook to eliminate Hitler personally. When he was invited to a meeting with Hitler at an eastern Prussian outpost, he brought a suitcase containing a time bomb. His intention was to place the suitcase in the bunker where meetings with Hitler were usually held, and then to leave. The meeting was relocated to a retreat house made of wood, but Stauffenberg continued to seek an opportunity to implement his plan. He placed the suitcase under the conference-hall table, a short distance from Hitler's legs, and left the room. At 12:37, a loud explosion was heard. Four people were killed and 20 wounded. The reason for the small number of casualties was that somebody moved the briefcase. Hitler was not seriously injured. Several conspirators, including Stauffenberg, were caught and shot at once; the others were given an opportunity to commit suicide and spare their families. Field Marshal Rommel, wrongly suspected of direct involvement in the conspiracy, was among the suicides; the Germans' official communique reported his death as the result of a traffic accident. In the aftermath, 15,000 people were arrested and 5,000 executed. Several of the most famous conspirators were subjected to abuse and then strangled in an especially brutal manner. By order of Hitler, their executions were filmed and shown to selected audiences as a warning.

7/22/1944

Lvov Liberated; 110,000 Jews Dead

After battles on the outskirts of the city, the Red Army occupied Lvov on July 22, 1944. A large majority of the 110,000 Jews who had inhabited this city before the war had long since been murdered. A few Jewish prisoners from the Janowska camp, whom the Germans had employed and considered "crucial," were murdered as the Soviets drew closer in June 1944. A very small number were transferred to the West. Manhunts for concealed Jews in Lvov lasted until the very last days of the German occupation. The

Ukrainian population caused many deaths by denouncing Jews and turning them over to the Germans. After the city was liberated, survivors who had concealed themselves on the "Aryan" side or in forest hideouts began to return; Ukrainian nationalists murdered several of them after the liberation.

7/24/1944

Jews from Rhodes and Kos deported to Auschwitz

On July 20, 1944, the male Jews of Rhodes were arrested. The women and children joined them, and on July 24, 1,700 were shipped to Athens on two coal barges with no food or water; 120 Jews from the island of Kos were added to the transport. On arrival in Athens, they were imprisoned in the notorious Haidari prison, and from there, were deported to Auschwitz. The transport reached Auschwitz on August 17. 400 Jews were selected for hard labor and the rest were murdered. Only 150 survived the war. Several Jews managed to escape the round-up and joined the partisans.

7/25/1944

Red Army Liberates Majdanek

In anticipation of the approaching Red Army offensive, the Germans decided to deactivate the Majdanek extermination camp. Nearly 1,000 prisoners were removed from the camp; half of them were sent to Auschwitz. Before abandoning the camp, the deactivation team destroyed documents and set the crematorium ablaze. However, in their haste to withdraw, the Germans didn't murder all the remaining prisoners, and left the gas chambers and most of the prisoners' barracks intact. The liberators of Majdanek found some 2,500 survivors.

8/7/1944

Liquidation of Lodz Ghetto Begins; 74,000 Jews Deported to Auschwitz

The decision to liquidate the Lodz ghetto was taken in the spring of 1944. To accomplish this, the Germans reactivated the Chelmno extermination camp, which had previously been closed. Deportations to Chelmno, disguised as transports to labor camps in Germany, began on June 23. A transport moratorium occurred between July 15 and August 6, and the deportations were re-routed to Auschwitz on August 7. Quarter by quarter, the ghetto was quarantined and combed. Each area was declared off-limits; anyone found there faced death. The trapped Jews sought shelter in every way possible, in the hope of surviving until the Red Army could liberate the town. Liberation seemed imminent until, in late July, the Soviets changed the direction of their advance. Despite the fact that the ghetto's wooden buildings did not lend themselves to the construction of hideouts, many were built. Until the liberation occurred, the Germans combed the ghetto and removed more and more Jews from their hideouts.

8/23/1944

Romania surrenders to the Soviet Union

The Red Army renewed its attack on Romania on 20 August, occupying Iasi on 23 August. In an anti-fascist rebellion, King Michael arrested Marshal Ion Antonescu, overthrew his regime and formed a new government under the leadership of General Sanatescu. By the end of August, the Soviets had decimated a large percentage of the German troops in Romania, and occupied main cities including Bucharest, and King Michael had declared war on Germany. With the surrender of Romania to the Soviet Union, Germany lost most of its oil supply, and all the Romanian produce.

8/28/1944

Slovak National Uprising Begins

The Slovaks embarked on a large-scale uprising to remove the Slovak People's Party of Hlinka from power, and to free the state from its dependence on Nazi Germany. The plans rested on the hope that the

Soviet army would concurrently break through the German lines on two fronts. Thus, the rebels hoped they could hold out against the Germans until the Soviets came. Even before the uprising, the partisans controlled much of eastern and central Slovakia. On August 28, the Germans invaded Slovakia to keep the partisans from taking over further territory. Most of campaign went against the rebels, as the Germans held supremacy in troops and firepower. However, the endurance of the resistance, especially the partisan units, dashed the Germans' hopes of quelling the uprising within several days. About 10 percent of the partisan fighters were Jewish, and several Jewish parachutists from Palestine participated as well. Wherever the Germans put down the rebel forces, they combed the area for Jews. In all, they captured and killed approximately 5,000 civilian Jews and 1,900 Slovak fighters. Some 13,000 additional Jews were deported to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt.

9/4/1944

Antwerp Liberated

Military forces liberated Antwerp on September 4. The last Jews in this city -aliens who were staying there as refugees - had been banished to the death camps in September 1943. According to initial estimates, some 3,000 men and women and 300 children were in hiding in and around the town. After the fact, these numbers turned out to have been overstated. Precise figures are unavailable.

9/28/1944

Churchill Announces Formation of Jewish Brigade

At the very beginning of the war, the President of the World Zionist Organization, Chaim Weizmann, offered the government of Great Britain the full cooperation of the Jewish community in Palestine in mobilization and began to negotiate for the formation of a Jewish combat force under British Army auspices. Although many Palestinian Jews joined the British Army-some in Jewish companies-the British refused to establish an identifiably Jewish formation at brigade strength that would fight under a Jewish flag.

In the summer of 1943, the Zionists revised their proposals. Churchill favored them and, applying all of his personal authority, urged his colleagues to approve them. On July 3, 1944, the British War Cabinet decided that, although the formation of a Jewish division was not feasible on practical grounds, the creation of a brigade should be immediately and positively examined. On September 20, 1944, an official communique by the War Office announced the formation of the Jewish Brigade Group. The Zionist flag was officially approved as its standard.

The Brigade Group took part in the early stages of the Allies' final offensive in Italy in April 1945 and then was withdrawn for reorganization. It was the first and only Jewish formation to fight in World War II under the Jewish flag, recognized as representing the Jewish people.

After the termination of hostilities, the Brigade Group was stationed in Tarvisio, near the border triangle of Italy, Yugoslavia, and Austria. Soon, it became a source of attraction for young Jewish survivors all over the Continent.

In July 1945, the Brigade Group moved to Belgium and the Netherlands. About 150 of its soldiers were clandestinely dispatched to engage in organizational and educational work in the displaced persons' camps, to organize the Beriha ("Escape") stations in Austria and Germany, and to help prepare for "illegal" immigration to Palestine. Other soldiers concentrated on arms purchase for the Hagana (the main Jewish underground military organization in Palestine). Despite last-moment attempts by the Jewish Agency to prolong the existence of the Brigade Group, the British were determined to disband it according to their demobilization plan, and this was accomplished in June and July of 1946.

10/3/1944

Polish Uprising in Warsaw Crushed

The Germans brutally stamped out the Polish uprising. The leaders of the uprising, members of the anti-Communist Polish underground, accused the Soviets of having held back to allow the Germans to put down the rebellion, and of having withheld their assistance. During the two months of the uprising, 250,000 Poles lost their lives in a hopeless attempt to rid themselves of Nazi occupation. In retaliation the Germans exiled many of the Warsaw Poles and razed most of the city to the ground.

10/7/1944

Sonderkommando Uprising at Auschwitz

On October 7, prisoners assigned to the Sonderkommando staged a rebellion destroying one of the crematoria (Crematoria IV) and killing some of their German guards. The Sonderkommando, a squad of Jewish forced laborers who incinerated the bodies of gas-chamber victims in the crematoria, discovered that the Germans were about to murder them, too. They contacted the international resistance that had coalesced in Auschwitz and sought to launch a joint uprising. When the international resistance refused to collaborate for various reasons, the Sonderkommando people decided to go ahead on their own. All the participants in the uprising fell in combat. In their investigation of the affair, the Germans discovered that the explosives used in the uprising had been smuggled by a group of young Jewish women elsewhere in Auschwitz. On January 6, 1945, four of these women were executed.

11/8/1944

Deportations from Budapest Resume

Deportations from Hungary resumed a collaboration between the Germans and members of the Arrow Cross party. Some 70,000 Jews were marched from Budapest toward the Austrian border in a combination deportation and death march. The Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who had already managed to issue thousands of Jews in Budapest with diplomatic protection papers, pursued the great convoy of deportees in his car, removed hundreds of passport holders, and led them back to Budapest. He even rescued such persons from the railroad station where they waited to entrain to Auschwitz. In all, he saved about 20,000 people, whom he housed in special buildings under Swedish protection-the so-called "international ghetto," next to the main ghetto of Budapest.

11/25/1944

Germans Stop Gassings at Auschwitz

The last gassings in Auschwitz took place in early November. On November 3, 509 Jews were transported to Auschwitz from the labor camp in Sereď, Slovakia, and 481 were gassed upon arrival. Shortly afterwards, the gassings were halted by direct order of Heinrich Himmler. Later that month and in December, the technical fixtures in the gas chambers and Crematoria 1 and 2 were dismantled for relocation to the Gross-Rosen camp. Special Sonderkommando units, composed of male and female prisoners, were ordered to clean out the crematorium pits, fill them with human ash from the crematoria, cover them up with soil, and plant the area with grass.

12/16/1944

"Battle of the Bulge"

At 5:00 a.m., German forces launched a massive and intricately coordinated offensive against the Allied forces positioned on the German border. The offensive, spearheaded by the German panzer formations under General Gerd von Rundstedt, was carried out along a 40-mile front in the Ardennes Forest in Luxembourg and Belgium, as German paratroopers landed behind the American forces' lines and cut communication and supply lines. The unprepared American forces were taken by surprise, and many units were trapped. Some 14,000 soldiers were taken captive. The purpose of the offensive was to breach the American front and allow the Germans to advance to Antwerp. The intention was to capture several Allied armies and destroy them, thus forcing the Allies to start peace negotiations. In this way, Germany would be able to concentrate on its war against the Soviet Union without having to continue to fight on two fronts.

The Americans retreated under German pressure, but still held firm in Bastogne, the strategic location of which prevented the Germans from continuing their attack efficiently. Wehrmacht forces surrounded Bastogne, and on 22 December, the Wehrmacht gave the commander of the 101st Airborne Division of the American Army, Anthony McAuliffe, a summary ultimatum: Surrender with honor or witness the destruction of his formation. McAuliffe delivered the famous one-word reply: "Nuts!" The American counter-offensive began on 24 December. The German supply lines were delayed, and the weather improved, allowing the Allied airforces to gain the upper hand. The Germans began to retreat. The stranglehold on Bastogne was lifted two days later.

In this, the last "Blitzkrieg", approximately 100,000 German soldiers lost their lives, and another 100,000 fell prisoner to the Allies. The Wehrmacht invested its best reserves in this battle, and never recovered from the defeat. Henceforth, it ceased to constitute a substantial threat to the Allies on the Western front.

1/16/1945

Soviets Liberate Half of Budapest

Pest, half of the city of Budapest, was liberated on January 16. There are no accurate data on the number of Jews who survived in this city, but it is estimated at 70,000. Some 25,000 were living under diplomatic protection and another 25,000 were in hiding, in some cases with forged "Aryan" papers. In all, about 120,000 Jews eventually returned to Budapest. Although Hungary surrendered to the Soviet Union on January 20, Nazi units held positions in Buda until mid-February and systematically demolished that side of the city.

1/17/1945

Soviets Liberate Warsaw; Few Jews Remain

After the Polish uprising in Warsaw broke out on August 1, 1944, Hitler issued orders to reduce the city to rubble and establish a fortress in its place. Once the uprising was quelled, some of the city's Polish inhabitants were deported. In October-December 1944, the Germans methodically destroyed many of Warsaw's antiquities and collections of cultural artifacts. The Soviet and Polish armies began an offensive in early January 1945, and liberated the city on January 17. In the course of the German occupation, 685,000 residents of Warsaw were murdered, most of them Jews.

1/18/1945

Auschwitz Abandoned; Death March of Prisoners Begins

In the middle of January 1945, the Soviet Army began an offensive in the direction of Cracow and Auschwitz. As the Nazis retreated hastily, they sent 58,000 prisoners, mostly Jews, out of the camp on "death marches" in the direction of concentration and labor camps in Germany. Most of the marchers were murdered en route; others were put to death before they left the camp. In the frantic retreat that had been forced on them, the Germans were unable to drive out the last of the prisoners and have them join the death marches. Nor did they have time to empty the warehouses of the victims' looted belongings. When the Soviets entered Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, they found the storage facilities brimming with 7.7 tons of human hair, packed and ready for shipment, and many other items.

1/19/1945

Soviets Liberate Lodz

The last 74,000 inhabitants of the Lodz Ghetto had already been sent to Auschwitz. The only remaining Jews in the former ghetto were several hundred whom the Germans inducted to remove, and crate for shipment to Germany, the belongings of those sent to Auschwitz. The Germans intended to murder these Jews before their retreat from Lodz, but the prisoners, watching the Germans prepare this action, escaped and went into hiding. The Red Army entered Lodz on January 19. Of the 175,000 Jews who had lived in this, the second-largest Jewish ghetto, 800 were liberated from the ghetto on 19 January, 1945. No precise

figures are available for the number of Lodz ghetto inmates who survived the concentration and death camps, estimates range from 5,000 - 7,000.

1/27/1945

Soviets Liberate Auschwitz

Red Army soldiers entered the camp in the early afternoon of January 27 and found 600 corpses of prisoners whom the Germans had murdered several hours before they fled. However, they also found 7,650 living prisoners, ill and exhausted, who survived because the Germans fled too hastily to force them to join the death marches. The Germans also had no time to empty or destroy the storage facilities in which they kept the victims' possessions. Thus, the Soviets found 350,000 men's suits, 837,000 women's garments, tens of thousands of pairs of shoes, and almost eight tons of human hair, packed in sacks and ready for shipment. According to the Polish historian Francizek Piper, at least 1.1 million people had been murdered in Auschwitz, of whom 90 percent were Jews.

2/1/1945

Forty Thousand Prisoners Marched Out of Gross-Rosen

In the great evacuation of Gross-Rosen which is situated in lower Silesia, 40,000 prisoners were removed from the main concentration camp and from several sub-camps. These people were led over great distances on foot, under conditions of starvation and serious lack of equipment. Anyone who fell, or struggled to continue walking, was shot by the guards; the bodies were hurled to the sides of the road. Thousands were murdered en route; the rest were taken to several camps: Dora-Mittelbau, Flossenbuerg, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, and Sachsenhausen.

2/13/1945

RAF and USAF Air Raids Devastate Dresden

British and American air raids virtually obliterated the city of Dresden. Estimates of the toll of civilian casualties ranged in the vicinity of 100,000. The author Kurt Vonnegut, a prisoner of war in Dresden, described the bombardment in his book *Slaughterhouse Five*. Remarking on the offensive, Winston Churchill commented, "The destruction of Dresden remains a query against the conduct of Allied bombing."

4/11/1945

Americans Liberate Buchenwald

Thousands of Jewish prisoners who survived the death marches began to reach Buchenwald in early 1945. However, as the American forces advanced through Germany, an evacuation of the prisoners in this camp began. About 25,000 inmates-Jews and members of other nationalities-perished at the time of the evacuation, but the Nazis' scheme failed because successful actions by the prisoners' underground, such as obstructing SS orders over the radio, sabotaged and considerably slowed the evacuation process.

On April 11, 1945, American forces liberated 21,000 prisoners at Buchenwald and its sub-camps. Some 4,000 of them were Jews, including 1,000 children and teenagers.

Two years later, an American tribunal handed down sentences to 31 members of the camp staff-two to death, and four to life in prison.

4/12/1945

FDR Dies, Succeeded by Truman

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd president of the United States, died on April 12. Aged, exhausted, and ill, Roosevelt was resting at Warm Springs, Georgia, when he suddenly complained of a terrible headache. Two hours later, he was pronounced dead of a stroke. Churchill responded to the news by bemoaning "a loss of the British nation and of the cause of freedom in every land." In Moscow, the streets filled with sobbing men and women. Goebbels, in contrast, called Hitler in delight: "Mein Fuehrer, I congratulate you! Roosevelt is dead! It is written in the stars that the second half of April will be a turning point for us." Roosevelt was succeeded by Vice President Harry S Truman.

4/15/1945

British Forces Liberate Bergen-Belsen

On April 15, British forces liberated the Bergen-Belsen camp. The British soldiers were horror-stricken at the spectacle that greeted them. They found some 60,000 human beings alive under appalling conditions. Most of them were seriously ill. Alongside them were thousands of unburied corpses, strewn in every direction, and vast numbers of emaciated bodies in mass graves and piles. Because the British Army was not geared to treat everyone who needed assistance, 14,000 additional prisoners died in the first few days and a similar number perished in the following weeks. The British forces began to treat and rehabilitate the rest of the survivors.

4/25/1945

American and Soviet Troops Meet at the River Elbe

The day the Soviet forces encircled Berlin, reconnaissance forces of the American 69th Division and the Russian 59th Division met at the River Elbe near Torgau, about 75 miles south of Berlin. It was the first encounter of ground forces of the West and the East.

4/28/1945

Mussolini Shot

Allied forces began to close in on Mussolini's stronghold. Mussolini and his family first turned in the direction of Milan, where unsuccessful surrender negotiations were taking place. At the last moment, he contacted his wife by telephone and bid her farewell. He gathered some money and a few secret documents, and, together with his mistress, Clara Petacci, headed for the Swiss border. Italian partisans captured Benito Mussolini, the Italian Duce, as he attempted to slip out of Italy. Although he was disguised in a German pith helmet and uniform, he and his mistress were identified in the village of Dongo, next to Lake Como. The execution was carried out quickly. Mussolini was pressed to a wall as the commander of the partisans, Colonel Valerio, read out the death sentence. The act was consummated with a machine gun. The next day, the dictator's corpse was hanged by its legs and presented for display in the Piazza Loreto in Milan.

4/29/1945

America's 45th Infantry Liberates Dachau

On April 29, 1945, the U.S. Seventh Army's 45th Infantry Division liberates Dachau's main camp after a brief battle with the camp's remaining guards. A major Dachau subcamp was liberated the same day by the 42nd Rainbow Division. Dachau, originally intended to hold political prisoners was the first of the Nazi concentration camps opened in Germany and served as a model training center for all other camps. The prisoner's entrance was secured by an iron gate "Arbeit Macht Frei" ("Work will make you free.") Dachau administration recorded an intake of 206,206 prisoners and deaths of 31,951, many of which have transported to other camps. Dachau was the longest camp in operation from March 1933 to April 1945.

4/30/1945

Hitler Commits Suicide

The battle for Berlin was raging, but Hitler, hiding in the Reich chancellery, was still safe from the Soviet forces. On April 29, he married his lover, Eva Braun, and wrote his personal and political will. He named Martin Bormann as his deputy, and banished Goering and Himmler from the Party for their disloyalty to him in his final hours. He appointed Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz as president of the Reich and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He delivered his last tirade against "international Jewry." At 3:30 in the afternoon, about 15 minutes after Eva Braun took a cyanide capsule, Hitler, dressed in a new Nazi uniform, committed suicide by firing one shot into his mouth. Bormann's assistants gathered up the two bodies, doused them in gasoline, and set them afire. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels and his wife also took their own lives after killing their six children. The free world knew no end of delight over Hitler's demise. In Germany, his suicide was not revealed to the public; instead, Germans were told that the Fuehrer "fell in battle against Bolshevism." With his death, a week before Germany's unconditional surrender, the "thousand-year Reich" came to its end.

5/2/1945

Soviets Occupy Berlin

The great finale of the war, the battle for Berlin, began on April 21. Stalin suspected that the Western armies would attempt to jump the gun and claim the city before him. He also believed that the Germans preferred to surrender to the Western forces. Therefore, he instructed his two best generals, Georgi Zhukov and Ivan Stepanovich Konev, to occupy the city before the Western powers could.

As they subjected Berlin to heavy bombardment, Konev and Zhukov's troops occupied the burning city, street by street, building by building, floor by floor, room by room. An estimated 200,000 Soviet soldiers lost their lives in the battle for Berlin. The city fell on May 2.

5/5/1945

Mauthausen Liberated

On May 3, the task of guarding the camp was handed to a police unit from Vienna. On May 4, the prisoners were not taken out to work and SS men were observed leaving the camp. That day, the commander of the bunker (prison) murdered all prisoners who had worked at the crematorium and the bunker (except for one). The camp was liberated at 11:30 a.m. the next day, May 5, as two American armored vehicles approached the camp gate and were admitted by the prisoners.

5/7/1945

Germany Surrenders to Allies

The German High Command surrendered to the Allies unconditionally. Final German attempts to conclude a surrender accord with the Western powers failed. General Alfred Jodl, representing Germany, signed the letter of surrender in the war room of the Allied headquarters in Reims, France. Fighting was to stop at 11:01 a.m. on May 9. Two days later, the general surrender was formally ratified in Berlin, this time with the Soviets, as Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel signed an identical document for General Georgi Zhukov. This marked the official end of Nazi Germany's war with the Allies.

5/8/1945

V-E Day - The War in Europe is Officially Over

Several days after the fall of Berlin, in Berlin itself desperate street - by street resistance was put up by the Germans and was not completely overcome until the war itself ended, after Hitler's suicide, with Germany's unconditional surrender. On May 7, the remnants of the German army surrendered unconditionally. The end of the war in Europe was declared. Churchill and Truman proclaimed the day of victory. The response to this news was basically identical in all the Allied countries: eruptions of boundless joy. Tens of thousands flowed into the streets of London, into Red Square in Moscow, and into the boulevards of New York, all celebrating.

7/16/1945

Potsdam Conference

The Potsdam Conference was the last in which the leaders of the three great powers—Churchill, Truman, and Stalin—took part. The West agreed to cede German territory east of the River Oder to Poland. To compensate the Soviet Union for its war effort, an agreement was concluded in which the USSR would be given pieces of German, Austrian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, and Finnish territory.

Germany was partitioned into four spheres of influence: a Soviet sector, in the east; a British sector, in the northwest; a French sector, in the southwest; and, an American sector, in the south. Berlin, although situated entirely in the Soviet occupation sector, was removed from this jurisdiction, partitioned into four sectors following the pattern used in the rest of Germany, and placed under a quadripartite command.

8/6/1945

Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima; Nagasaki Bombed Three Days Later

The first atomic bomb ever used against a civilian population was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945. The city was chosen because it was a major port and a manufacturing center for aircraft and synthetic fuel. The detonation killed 78,150 people and wounded 64,000. The downtown area was totally destroyed; tens of thousands were left homeless. On August 9, 1945, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, killing 40,000 and wounding 25,000.

One week later, on August 14, 1945, Japan surrendered.

The Americans justified their action by arguing that, by abbreviating the war through the use of nuclear weapons, they saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of American and British soldiers, not to mention Japanese.

10/18/1945

Nuremberg Trials Begin

An international tribunal in Nuremberg began to hear the cases of 22 Nazi leaders in government, the army, and the economy. Before the war ended, the powers had declared their resolve to punish the perpetrators of war crimes. The appellation "international tribunal" was meant to stress the universality of the judgments to be rendered, and their importance for the entire world. It was the first trial in history meant to administer punishment by means of proper jurisprudence, including adequate defense for the accused, and not by executions or the summary verdicts of lightning trials. The court which was composed of judges from the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and France. They took a clear stand on the issue of responsibility for crimes carried out on orders from above. The court declared that the following of superior orders was not a cause for the perpetration of a crime.

The adjudication of war crimes, and crimes against humanity, was linked to the persecution and murder of the Jews, in order to define these actions as manifestations of the most consistent and systematic inhumanity ever practiced.

In the rulings, delivered on September 30 and October 1, 1946, 12 defendants were sentenced to death: Hermann Goering, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Wilhelm Keitel, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Alfred Rosenberg, Hans Frank, Wilhelm Frick, Julius Streicher, Fritz Sauckel, Alfred Jodl, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, and Martin Bormann (who was tried in absentia).