

World War II and Events of the Holocaust

I. “Pre-War” Nazi Germany Territorial Gains (building “Greater Germany”)

- A. The Saar: province separated from Germany by Versailles; returned after plebiscite, 1935
- B. March 7, 1936: Nazis March into the Rhineland (demilitarized by Treaty of Versailles)
- C. Austria
 - 1. Torn within by outlawed but agitating Nazi party; Austrian Chancellor intimidated by Hitler
 - 2. March 12/13, 1938: Nazi troops move into Austria
 - 3. Hitler announces *Anschluss* (union) and Austria became part of the Third Reich
 - 4. Immediate persecution of 180,000 Jews of Austria
 - a. Random humiliations
 - b. Office for Jewish Immigration set up by Heydrich to extort wealth; run by **Adolph Eichmann**
 - c. Himmler established **Mauthausen** concentration camp near Linz (120,000 worked to death/shot)
- D. Czechoslovakia
 - 1. September 1938: Munich Conference; England, France agree to give Hitler Czech. “on a plate”
 - 2. October 1, 1938: Nazi occupation of Sudetenland, heavily German part of Czechoslovakia
 - 3. March 15, 1939: German occupation of remainder of Czechoslovakia

II. November 9, 1938: *Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”)

- A. Prelude: Anti-Jewish legislation in 1938
 - 1. July 6, 1938: Jews banned from trading and providing a variety of specified commercial services
 - 2. July 23, 1938: Jews over age 15 must apply for identity cards, to be shown on demand to police
 - 3. July 25, 1938: Jewish doctors prohibited by law from practicing medicine
 - 4. Aug 11, 1938: Nuremberg synagogue destroyed
 - 5. Aug 17, 1938: Jewish women must add Sarah and men Israel to names on all legal documents
 - 6. Sept 27, 1938: Jews prohibited from all legal practices
 - 7. Oct 5, 1938: Jewish passports to be stamped with a large red “J”
- B. Catalyst
 - 1. October 27, 1938: Polish Jews Expelled from Germany; refused by Poland
 - 2. Grynspan family expelled from Hannover, stuck in no-man’s land between Germany, Poland
 - 3. November 7, 1938: 17 year-old Hershel Grynspan in Paris shot German consular official
 - 4. November 9, 1938: official died; Nazis (assembled for Beer Hall reenactment) planned retribution
- C. The Riots
 - 1. Planned popular uprising did not materialize, but no police interference of SA/SS
 - 2. Storm Troopers vandalized and destroyed 2500 Jewish shops throughout Germany-Austria
 - 3. 267 synagogues burned, 177 destroyed; Thousands of Jews beaten, 91 killed
- D. Aftermath: the beginning of the Holocaust
 - 1. 25,000 Jews arrested, sent to concentration camps
 - 2. existing camps in Germany: **Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbruck** (for women)
 - 3. Nazis fine Jews RM one billion for damages related to *Kristallnacht*, confiscate insurance payments
 - 4. November 15: Jewish students expelled from non-Jewish German schools
 - 5. December 3, 1938: Law for compulsory Aryanization of all Jewish businesses
 - 6. Jan, 1939: Heydrich ordered by Göring to speed Jewish emigration; Hitler threatens Jews in Reichstag
 - 7. February 21, 1939: Jews forced to hand over all gold, silver
 - 8. Apr 30, 1939: Tenant rights taken from Jews; Jews relocated to Jewish houses
 - 9. May, 1939: *St. Louis*, with 930 Jewish refugees, turned away by Cuba, USA, other countries; returns
 - 10. July 4, 1939: German Jews denied right to hold government jobs

III. Early Stages of World War II in Europe

- A. August 23, 1939: Nazi-Soviet Pact (Poland secretly divided)
- B. Invasion of Poland
1. **September 1, 1939: German invasion of Poland**; Jews in Germany under curfew
 2. Sept 3, 1939: England and France declare war on Germany
 3. Sept 4, 1939: Warsaw is cut off by Wermacht
 4. Sept 17, 1939: Soviet invasion of eastern Poland
 5. Sept 27, 1939: surrender of Warsaw; Heydrich becomes leader of RSHA
 6. The Jews
 - a. Poland: 3.35 million Jews, the largest such population in Europe
 - b. Sept 21, 1939: Heydrich orders SS *Einsatzgruppen* (special action squads)
 - 1) Jews to be gathered into ghettos near railroads for the future “final goal”
 - 2) Jewish administrative councils within the ghettos to implement Nazi policies and decrees
 - c. Sept 29, 1939: Poland divided between Nazi Germany and Russia
 - 1) 2 million Jews in Nazi controlled areas
 - 2) 1.3 million Jews in Soviet area
 - d. The **Ghettos**
 - 1) Oct, 1939: Hitler proclaims isolation of the Jews; Jews evacuated from Vienna
 - 2) October 26, 1939: Forced labor decree for Polish Jews, age 14 to 60
 - 3) November 23, 1939: Jews over 10 required to wear yellow stars
 - 4) February 12, 1940: First deportation of German Jews to Polish ghettos
 - 5) April, 1940: **Lodz** Ghetto (230,000 Jews) sealed from outside world
 - 6) November, 1940: **Krakow** Ghetto (70,000 Jews) and **Warsaw** Ghetto (400,000 Jews) sealed
 - 7) 500,000 died from starvation, disease in ghettos by mid-1941
 - e. **Auschwitz**
 - 1) Jan 25, 1940: Site for new concentration camp chosen at Oswiecim (German = Auschwitz)
 - 2) May 1, 1940: Rudolf Höss named kommandant
 - 3) Mar 1, 1941: Himmler visits Auschwitz, Höss begins expansion = **Birkenau** for 100,000 prisoners
- C. In Germany
1. Oct, 1939: Nazis begin “euthanasia” (Aktion T-4) program at 6 killing centers, including Hadamar
 - a. persons with certain conditions were condemned by a panel of doctors
 - b. Aug 3, 1941: Catholic Bishop Clemens von Galen issued sermon against the practice
 - c. First gassing victims; future SS camp kommandants trained in this program
 - d. Aug 23, 1941: suspension of Aktion T-4 by Hitler (3 priests beheaded, however)
 2. December, 1939: **Adolf Eichmann** as head of Gestapo sect. IV **B4**, Jewish affairs and evacuations
July, 1940: Eichmann's Madagascar Plan proposed to deport all European Jews to Madagascar
 3. March 7, 1941: German Jews ordered into forced labor
- D. The War in the West, 1940
1. April 9, 1940: German invasion of Denmark (Jewish pop. 8,000), Norway (Jewish pop. 2,000)
 2. May 10, 1940: Nazis invade . . .
 - a. France (Jewish pop. 350,000)
 - 1) Paris occupied June 14; June 22 France signs armistice
 - 2) Oct, 1940: local version of Nuremberg Laws in Vichy France (allied with Germany)
 - 3) Oct, 1940: 29,000 German Jews to Vichy from Baden, the Saar, Alsace-Lorraine
 - 4) May 14, 1941: 3,600 Jews arrested in Paris
 - b. Belgium (Jewish pop. 65,000)
 - c. Holland (Jewish pop. 140,000)
 - d. Luxembourg (Jewish pop. 3,500)

- E. The War in the South, 1940-1941
 1. Sept 27, 1940: Tripartite (Axis) Pact by Germany, Italy and Japan
 2. Oct 7, 1940: Nazi invasion of Romania (Jewish pop. 34,000)
 - a. Jan, 1941: 2,000 Jews killed in pogrom
 - b. June 29/30, 1941: Romanian troops kill 10,000 Jews in Jassy
 - c. Aug, 1941: Jews in Romania forced into Transnistria; 70,000 perish by Dec.
 3. Nov, 1940: Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia become Nazi Allies
 4. March 2, 1941: Nazi occupation of Bulgaria (Jewish pop. 50,000)
 5. April 6, 1941: Invasion of Yugoslavia (Jewish pop. 75,000) and Greece (Jewish pop. 77,000)

IV. Expanded War in the East, Summer 1941: Hitler's Invasion of the USSR

- A. Preparations in March, 1941
 1. Commissar Order authorizes execution of suspected Communist officials in seized Soviet territories
 2. Army High Command approval to RSHA and Heydrick on tasks of *Einsatzgruppen* in occupied land
 3. The "**Final Solution**"
 - a. Himmler to Höss in Berlin: "The Führer has ordered the Final Solution of the Jewish question. We, the SS, have to carry out this order...I have therefore chosen Auschwitz for this purpose."
 - b. July 31, 1941: Göring to Heydrich: prepare for Final Solution (*Endlösung*)
- B. June 22, 1941: Hitler's invasion (Operation Barbarosa) of Soviet Union (Jewish pop. 3 million)
- C. *Einsatzgruppen* Activities (and other Mass Murders)
 1. Followed advance of German army and conducted mass murder of Jews in seized lands
 2. Some specific atrocities
 - a. July 25/26, 1941: 3,800 Jews killed in Kovno pogrom by Lithuanians
 - b. Sept 19, 1941; **Kiev** taken; Sept 29/30, 1941: *Einsatzgruppen* kill 33,771 Jews at **Babi Yar** ravine
 - c. Sept 27/28: 23,000 Jews killed at Kamenets-Podolsk, in the Ukraine
 - d. Oct, 1941: 35,000 Jews from Odessa shot
 - e. Nov 30, 1941: mass shooting of Latvian and German Jews near Riga
 3. Nov, 1941: SS *Einsatzgruppe* B reports tally of 45,476 Jews killed
 4. Jan 31, 1942: SS *Einsatzgruppe* A reports a tally of 229,052 Jews killed
- D. Ghettos and Camps
 1. July, 1941: Ghettos Established at Kovno, Minsk, Vitebsk, Zhitomer
 2. July 21, 1941: **Majdanek** camp declared by Himmler in E Poland, near Lublin; October, operational
 3. Aug, 1941: Ghettos established at Bialystok and Lvov
 4. Sept 6, 1941: Vilna Ghetto is established containing 40,000 Jews
- E. In Germany and the West
 1. Sept 1, 1941: German Jews ordered to wear yellow stars
 2. Sept 17, 1941: Begin general deportation of German Jews
 3. Oct 23, 1941: Nazis forbid emigration of Jews from the Reich (no escape)
 4. Nov 24, 1941: **Theresienstadt** Ghetto/camp established near Prague, Czechoslovakia as propaganda ghetto

V. Other Events, late 1941

- A. Hungary and the South
 1. Aug 26, 1941: The Hungarian Army rounds up 18,000 Jews at Kamenets-Podolsk
 2. Dec 12, 1941: The saga of the *Struma*
 - a. leaves Romania for Palestine carrying 769 Jews; denied entry by British authorities
 - b. Feb. 1942: sails back to Black Sea; sunk by a Soviet submarine as an "enemy target"
- B. The United States enters the war
 1. Dec 7-8, 1941: Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor; USA and Britain declare war on Japan
 2. Dec 11, 1941: Hitler declares war on the USA; Roosevelt responds by declaring war on Germany

VI. The Final Solution Effectuated

A. Extermination Camps

1. Dec 8, 1941: **Chelmno** (Ger. Kulmhof) camp becomes operational in occupied Poland, near Lodz
 - a. Jews driven to burial place in mobile gas vans
 - b. victims killed by carbon monoxide exhaust circulated to sealed rear compartment
 - c. operation until spring, 1943; again in June-July, 1944
 - d. Polish Commission on War Crimes: 356,000 persons killed at Chelmno, 90% Jews; 5,000 Gypsies
2. March, 1942: **Auschwitz II-Birkenau** began operating as a death camp
 - a. first gassing with Zyklon-B at small, experimental gas chamber in Auschwitz
 - b. eventually, Birkenau operated with 4 gas chambers, each with 6000 person/day capacity
 - c. bodies originally buried in mass graves near Birkenau
3. *Aktion Reinhard*
 - a. Plan to eliminate all Jews in *Generalgouvernement* area (occupied, not incorporated Poland)
 - b. 3 death camps established in Aktion: Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka (near railroads, isolated)
 - c. Name "Aktion Reinhard" coined by SS men after death of Reinhard Heydrich (below)
4. March 17, 1942: **Belzec** began operation with deportation of Jews from Lublin
 - a. used carbon monoxide gas chambers designed by **Christian Wirth**, with his T-4 experience
 - b. 6 gas chambers had capacity of 15,000 persons/day; operated from March-December, 1942
 - c. 600,000 persons killed, all Jews except for a few hundred Gypsies
 - d. remaining prisoners sent to Sobibor in December, 1942; one survivor: Rudolf Reder
 - e. Dec, 1942-Spring 1943: mass graves exhumed, corpses burned; area converted to farm
5. May, 1942: **Sobibor** began operation
 - a. 3 gas chambers built, with 20,000 persons/day capacity
 - b. May-July, 1942: 1st wave, 90-100,000 Jews of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany killed
 - c. 3 more gas chambers built; 2nd wave began, Oct. 1942; total Jews killed, 250,000
 - d. July 5, 1943, Himmler orders conversion to concentration camp
 - e. October 14, 1943: prisoner revolt
 - 1) 130 prisoners used for corpse disposal attempted revolt; about 30 escaped
 - 2) camp liquidated; by year end dismantled, plowed under, planted
6. July, 1942: **Treblinka** began operation
 - a. 850,000 Jews plus Gypsies exterminated in carbon-monoxide gas chambers
 - b. August, 1943: 750 workers revolted; 70 escaped; camp liquidated, plowed, planted
7. **Majdanek** (existing concentration camp) also used as a killing center at times

B. Organization of the Final Solution

1. Jan 20, 1942: Wannsee Conference
 - a. to coordinate the "Final Solution"
 - b. Heydrich and Eichmann met with state secretaries of ministerial bureaucracies
 - c. revealed scope of mass murder project; received support
2. June 5, 1942: SS report 97,000 persons have been "processed" in mobile gas vans
3. June 1, 1942: Jews in France, Holland, Belgium, Croatia, Slovakia, Romania must wear yellow stars
4. June 11, 1942: Eichmann coordinated deportation of Jews with representatives in western Europe

C. Death of Reinhard Heydrich

1. May 27, 1942: Heydrich mortally wounded by Czech Underground agents; June 4, died
2. June 10, 1942: Nazis liquidate Lidice in retaliation; Heydrich's name applied to "*Aktion Reinhard*"

D. *Aktion 1005*

1. action plan ordered by Gestapo head Heinrich Muller to remove all trace of mass murder in east
2. June, 1942: **Paul Blobel** (formerly SS commander Einsatzgruppe C) = head of *Aktion 1005*
3. used special *sonderkommando* units and other units
4. mass graves of *Einsatzgruppen* actions and death camps exhumed and bodies burned on huge pyres
5. *sonderkommando* 1005 personnel were valued for their experience in this job; many escaped in the end