

READING A CHRONOLOGY

THE FINAL SOLUTION

The event that we call the Holocaust—the murder of 6 million Jews—was not a simple outgrowth of World War II (1939-1945). Years before he came to power, German dictator Adolf Hitler wrote that Jews

should be eliminated from Europe. Below is a brief chronology of “the final solution” eventually devised by Hitler and other Nazi leaders. Read it, then answer the questions that follow.

January 30, 1933. Adolf Hitler, head of the Nazi party, is appointed Chancellor of Germany. Within months, the Nazis have boycotted Jewish businesses, banned Jews from universities, and burned their books.

November 9, 1938. Nazis organize anti-Jewish violence throughout Germany, damaging or burning more than 1,000 synagogues and 7,500 businesses. Some 30,000 Jewish men are arrested and sent to concentration camps. This campaign of terror is called *Kristallnacht*, or “Night of Broken Glass.”

September 1, 1939. Germany invades Poland, triggering World War II. Millions of Polish Jews soon come under Nazi control.

November 1940. The Nazis barricade the Warsaw Ghetto. It is the largest of some 400 ghettos in European territory occupied by the German army.

June-December 1941. As the German army invades the Soviet Union, it uses special squads of soldiers to kill Jews in towns that come under their control. On September 28 and 29, 33,771 Jews are murdered in the Babi Yar valley, Ukraine. By the end of the year, the special squads have killed about 1,400,000 people.

January 1942. The Nazi high command meets at the German town of Wannsee. At this conference they formalize a “final solution”—the systematic killing of Europe’s Jews in “extermination” camps. In July, Nazis begin deporting some 5,000 Jews a day from the Warsaw Ghetto to the camp at Treblinka, where they are killed by poison gas.

April 19, 1943. Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt against the Nazis. The rebels hold out until May 16, when the Germans burn the ghetto and crush the uprising.

Winter 1944-1945. As forces of the Allied powers (the U.S., Britain, and Soviet Union) close in on Germany, Nazi officials try to evacuate camps. Thousands of prisoners die in forced marches with little food or water.

January 27, 1945. Soviet troops liberate the camps built at Auschwitz, Poland. They find 7,650 sick or starving prisoners left behind. As many as 1.5 million people have been killed at Auschwitz. U.S. and British troops are also liberating other camps.

April 29, 1945. With defeat certain, the German high command surrenders to the Allies. Hitler commits suicide in his bunker in Berlin the next day, and the war in Europe is soon over.

QUESTIONS

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. About how many Jews were killed during the Holocaust?
2. *True or false:* The Nazis came to power in Germany through armed rebellion.
3. What were some of the first solutions the Nazis devised for what they saw as the Jewish “problem”?
4. Where and when did “the final solution” become a formal plan?
5. About how many Jewish ghettos did the Nazis establish?
6. What happened during *Kristallnacht*?
7. How were Jews at first eliminated during the German invasion of the Soviet Union?
8. Which countries comprised the Allied powers during World War II?
9. How did the Warsaw Ghetto uprising end?
10. How did the German camp commanders react to the coming of Allied forces?