

DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

Victims Of The Holocaust



One week
incorporating
the
Jewish holiday
HaShoah
April-May



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Prepared by
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DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

PREFACE

The author, Cadet Amy T. Kemp, is currently a junior at the United States Military Academy at West Point and will be commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army upon graduation in 2003. She served as a participant in West Point's Academic Individual Advanced Development (AIAD) program with the Department of Behavioral Science and Leadership at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) in July/August 2001 and conducted the research on Days of Remembrance to prepare this report.

SCOPE

The Academic Individual Advancement program at West Point provides cadets the opportunity to broaden their academic experience at West Point by volunteering to participate in academic programs both within and outside the Department of Defense. This particular AIAD provides cadets a unique opportunity to work on a diversity and/or equal opportunity project while on a three-week tour of duty at DEOMI. During their tour, the cadets use a variety of primary and secondary source materials to compile a review of data pertaining to an issue of importance to equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) specialists, supervisors, managers, and other leaders throughout the Services. The resulting publications (such as this one) are intended as resource and educational materials and do not represent official policy statements or endorsements by the DoD or any of its agencies. The publications are distributed to EO/EEO personnel and selected senior officials to aid them in their duties.

August 2001

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INTRODUCTION

God remember—God remember; we do not ask for more... Three generations we have lost, the old grandfather with his grandchild. Both were slaughtered on the same day. The fields of Poland lament, the trees of Lithuania weep, and cursed Europe is crying—where are our Jews? Why did our earth become a grave for them?

-(Jewish Voice of the Far East), Shanghai, December 1945. (29:1)

Almost 60 years after the Holocaust, all that we can do is remember. Remember all the deaths and destroyed families, the fear and the brutality. Each year's Days of Remembrance or "Yom Hashoah" call the nation to remember. This booklet serves as a reference for the observance of Days of Remembrance and provides a collection of information about the Holocaust. The focus of this booklet is mainly on the Jewish victims, however others such as gypsies, Poles, mentally ill and other "undesirables" were victims.

The booklet has been divided into six major sections, "Days of Remembrance," "Events Leading Up to the Holocaust," "The Holocaust," "The Liberation," "Starting Over," and "Why We Must Remember." In addition, there are appendices with a list of concentration camps, a historical timeline, and a list of helpful web-sites for readers.

DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

Whereas, less than forty years ago, six million Jews as well as millions of others were murdered in Nazi concentration camps as part of a planned program of extermination; whereas the people of the United States of America should always remember the terrible atrocities committed by the Nazis so that they are never repeated.... Now therefore, be it *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, That, in memory of all victims of the Holocaust and in the hope that Americans will strive always to overcome cruelty and prejudice through vigilance and resistance, the days of April 13 through April 19, 1980 are hereby designated as the "Days of Remembrance" of Victims of the Holocaust.* (6:115)

Our national leaders recognized the need for this remembrance and designated a week to be dedicated every year. The purpose of the Days of Remembrance observance is to reflect upon, to learn about, and never forget what happened to the millions silenced during the Holocaust.

The things I saw beggar description... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick...I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give first hand evidence

of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda.'

-General Dwight D. Eisenhower (6:9)

A joint resolution designating the Days of Remembrance was proposed on July 20, 1979. Part of the intent behind the observance was to dispel the propaganda that General Eisenhower spoke of above. The main intent was to dedicate the week not just as a commemoration but as a living memorial. (6:115) Days of Remembrance are held annually from a designated Sunday to the following Sunday. Yom Hashoah, the international day of remembrance, which is the 27th day of the month of Nissan, is sandwiched between the Sundays. Nissan is the seven month of the Jewish calendar based on the lunar year. The first observance sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council was held in 1980. (6:10) President Reagan spoke these words at the dedication of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1988:

...American troops who liberated concentration camps saw things no human eyes should ever see. But if we in America remain strong—if we hold fast and true to the conviction that, yes, there are things worth fighting for, there are things worth dying for, and we will heed the call if we must—humans will never suffer so, nor will others be called upon to save them from such suffering. (6:121)

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust was a shocking tragedy to everyone. Until World War II was over, no one knew the degree that the brutality of the Nazis had reached. The anti-semitism witnessed by the world during World War II was present long before the 20th century. Martin Luther, the theologian who led the Protestant Reformation, lashed out, "Know, Christian, that next to the devil thou hast no enemy more cruel, more venomous and violent than a true Jew," when Jewish people would not convert to Christianity. (1:20) In the early 1800s Ernst Arndt, a German Nationalist, and Friedrich Jahn, his student, gave to German Nationalism the idea of "Volk," which became an almost religious term describing the true German character, a Christian of the state. "A state without Volk is nothing... a Volk without a state is nothing, a bodiless airy phantom, like the Gypsies and the Jews." (1:24) Anti-semitism grew through the years; the League for anti-semitism in Germany was founded in 1879. Germany's defeat in World War I was blamed on the Jewish people of the nation, and anti-semitic literature was widely dispersed. (12) Adolf Hitler became an infamous force in the anti-semitism movement. It is easiest to explain his reign with a timeline.

- **1919** - September - Adolf Hitler is ordered by the Army's Political Department to investigate a tiny political group called the "German Workers' Party," which he ends up joining.
- **1920** - Hitler takes over organizing the party's propaganda.
 - February 24 -Hitler presents the 25 points, his proclamation of the rules and laws governing the Aryan (all White) society.

- April 1 - The party changes its name to the "National Socialist German Workers' Party" (NSDAP, later to become the Nazi Party), and on the same day Hitler quits working for the army.
- Summer - they adopt the red, white and black flag with the swastika as their symbol.
- **1921** - Hitler becomes leader of the NSDAP, after threatening to quit the party.
- **1923** - Bavaria declares its own state of emergence, giving dictatorial power to a triumvirate, a group of three men. Hitler grows frustrated with the triumvirate's inaction and in November attempts his famous "Munich Beer Hall Putsch," in which he tries to kidnap the three Bavarian leaders and force them to accept him as their leader. The attempt fails and Hitler is sent to prison for eight months. During this time he writes the first part of his book Mein Kampf.
- **1926** - Volume Two of Mein Kampf is finished.
- **1928** - The Nazi party has only seven seats (out of 608) in the Reichstag.
- **1933** - January 4 at a meeting between German entrepreneurs and Hitler, the entrepreneurs promise to pay off the Nazi party election debt as long as Hitler promises to keep out of the way of the German industry.
 - January 30 - German President Hindenburg appoints Hitler as Chancellor (Prime Minister).
 - February 27 – Nazis burn the Reichstag.
 - March – Hitler calls a snap election; the Nazi party won the largest number of seats.
 - March 23 – Hitler passes the Enabling Act giving him absolute dictatorial powers for four years. Also in March, the Dachau concentration camp opened. Hitler violates the Versailles Treaty (treaty signed by Germany to end WWI) and begins to re-arm Germany.
 - April 2 – There is a boycott of Jewish shops and businesses.
 - May 10 – The Gestapo (a secret-police organization operations especially against persons suspected of treason or sedition and often employing underhanded and terrorist methods) is established.
 - June 30 – Hitler purged the Nazi party and eliminated his personal rivals (the Night of the Long Knives).
 - August 2 – Hitler named President and Commander-in-Chief of armed forces following death of the German President Hindenburg.
 - October 19 – Germany left the League of Nations.
- **1935** – The Nazi party passes the Nuremberg Laws, persecuting the German Jews.
- **1939** – On January 30, 1939 he spoke before the Reichstag against the Jews, Europe will not have peace until the Jewish question has been disposed of. The world has sufficient capacity for settlement,

but we must finally break away from the notion that a certain percentage of the Jewish people are intended, by our dear God, to be the parasitic beneficiary of the body, and of the productive work, of other peoples. If the international finance-Jewry inside and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations into a world war yet again, then the outcome will not be the victory of Jewry, but rather the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!
(19)

In September of 1939, the Nazis launched the Blitzkrieg on Poland and had completely overpowered them by mid-October. Over 200,000 Poles were killed or wounded and 420,000 taken prisoner. On August 22, 1939, Hitler sent out an edict authorizing the “killing without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of Polish descent and language. Only in this way [could they] obtain the living space [they] needed.” (4:3) As soon as Poland was occupied, Hitler began to focus once again on removing the Jews from Germany. A complete time line is located in Appendix A.

THE HOLOCAUST

There is no specific date on which the Holocaust actually began. Many events contributed to the entire development of the situation. The general time period assigned to the tragedy is from 1933-1945. Years before war was declared by any nation, many Germans were already instilling fear in the Jewish population by denying them their rights as citizens and invoking increasingly threatening laws.

One of the most noticeable harassments thrust upon the Jewish people was the wearing of a yellow Star of David. All Jewish people had to sew the star on all outer layers of clothing. SS Leader, Reinhard Heydrich recommended that the Jews be forced to wear badges following the Kristallnacht pogrom (an organized massacre of helpless people) in November 1938. The German government first introduced mandatory badges in Poland in November 1939. Jews who failed to wear the star risked death. (16) This policy was a form of labeling, enabling Jews to be easily distinguished and separated from the rest of society.

Germans euphemistically called this “Special Treatment.” (16) Under this treatment, the Jews also endured an escalation of bondage and violence that included:

- 1) A consistent propaganda campaign labeling them as the embodiment of evil and the misfortune of German society.
- 2) The revoking of all their rights of citizenship.
- 3) The confiscation of their property and businesses.
- 4) Their removal from jobs, schools, professions, and all social and professional intercourse with the rest of society. (16)

These measures culminated in the Final Solution:

- 1) Mass murder in various localities under German control.

- 2) Deportation of all remaining Jews to concentration, labor, and death camps.
- 3) Death in gas chambers built especially for the Jews. (16)

Perhaps the beginning of the outright brutality and destruction can be marked by Kristallnacht, which started late on November 9, 1938, and lasted into the early morning of November 10. "Fires were ignited throughout the country, and the streets were littered with broken glass from the windows of synagogues, Jewish stores, and homes. Over seven thousand businesses were destroyed, nearly one hundred Jews were murdered, and thousands more were cruelly mistreated." (1:61)

The main targets of the German rioters were the synagogues and businesses, but they also attacked the Jewish people in their homes, dragging people out into the streets and beating them.



Figure 1. The burning of a Synagogue.

The world now knows it as Kristallnacht - the night of broken glass. It marked the true beginning of the destruction of our people. I saw it; I was in the midst of it... [They] came down the street on which Grandpa had his bookstore. Smashed windows. Burned merchandise. Beat up any Jew they could lay their hands on. Two men who tried to fight back were beaten to death on the spot. (17)

Many of the Jews who were dragged from their homes or caught in the streets were taken to concentration camps during the night. Approximately 25,000 Jewish men

were taken to Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen concentration camps where SS guards (a unit of Nazis created to serve as bodyguard to Hitler and later expanded to take charge of intelligence, central security, policing action, and extermination of undesirables) randomly chose some to be beaten to death. (15) The words of Martin Luther once again echoed from history,

“First, to set fire to their synagogues and schools, and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn so that no man will ever again see a stone or a cinder to them. In Deuteronomy 13 Moses writes that any city that is given to idolatry shall be totally destroyed by fire and nothing of it shall be preserved. If he were alive today, he would be the first to set fire to the synagogues and houses of the Jews.” (2:14)

Kristallnacht was initiated as a punishment to the Jews for the murder of Ernst Von Rath, a German Embassy official in Paris. Von Rath was killed by a Polish Jew who had received a letter from his sister which stated that his family and all Polish Jews were deported to Poland. (17) It also marked the beginning of unregulated brutality toward the Jews that would ultimately result in the demise of millions. In 1978, West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt said these words on the anniversary of Kristallnacht:

Why do we cast back our minds to all this today? Not in order to dissociate ourselves from our own history and not in order to point our finger at others who had become guilty... We commemorate in order to learn how people ought to behave towards each other and how they ought not to behave. (28:1)

Following Kristallnacht came the forced movement of Jews into ghettos, districts that the Germans made entirely Jewish.



Figure 2. Jewish people surrendering to the Nazis.

The Jews in Europe were transported east to Poland where there were many ghettos, including the famous Warsaw and Lodz Ghettos. Anne Frank, one of the most famous victims of the Holocaust, wrote from her ghetto in Holland before she was ultimately sent to Auschwitz where she died of typhoid:

Our many Jewish friends are being taken away by the dozen. These people are treated by the Gestapo without a shred of decency, being loaded into cattle trucks and sent to Westerbork...It is impossible to escape; most of the people in the camp are branded as inmates by their shaven heads.... If it is as bad as this in Holland, whatever will it be like in the distant and barbarous regions they are sent to? We assume that most of them are murdered. The English radio speaks of them being gassed. (2:72)

The ghettos were fenced off and Jews were forbidden to venture into the rest of the city. The Nazis formed a Ghetto Council made up of Jews who were responsible for coordinating departments associated with nutrition, health, security, registration, and housing. Since Jews were not allowed to leave the ghetto, everything the Nazis felt was needed for Jews to subsist was delivered in exchange for some kind of textile produced inside. Jews caught outside the fences were executed. The Lodz Ghetto housed the

second largest population of Jews in Poland. (25) The ghettos were located in the oldest, most dilapidated parts of the cities and lacked proper sanitation, lighting, and roadways.

My ears are filled with the deafening clamor of crowded streets and cries of people dying on the sidewalks. Even the quiet hours of the night are filled with the snoring and coughing of those who share the same apartment or, only too often, with the shots and screams coming from the streets! (1:116)

It was the Nazi intent to milk everything out of the ghettos. All winter outerwear was confiscated, the food delivered consisted only of bread and potatoes, and the people in the ghetto could only acquire other supplies from the outside by trading with textiles rather than money. When the ghettos grew too crowded, the Nazis began deporting thousands to the concentration camps, which had recently been completed. The first mass deportation of 300,000 Jews to Treblinka began in the summer of 1942. The number of deportees averaged about 6,000 people daily, and reached a high of 13,000. On April 19, 1943, under the leadership of Mordechai Anielewicz, the Jewish Fighting Organization rose up against the Nazis when they attempted a third deportation from the Warsaw ghetto. The Nazis could not contain the Jews in the open streets so they resorted to burning down the buildings. The rebellion lasted until May 8, when the Jewish Fighting Organization Headquarters was burned down. On May 16, 1943, the ghetto was liquidated and blown up. Over 60,000 Jews died in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. (27)

Concentration camps were the next step in Hitler's Final Solution. There were work camps and death camps. Jews deported from ghettos to death camps such as Auschwitz or Treblinka were killed almost upon arrival. Those deported to work camps such as Bergen-Belsen became slaves, living with inhumane conditions, little food, and rampant disease. If they did not die at the work camp from exhaustion and disease, they were ultimately transported to an extermination camp. More than 100 work camps had been created by the end of World War II. Death camps were high in number as well. The names of such death camps as Belzec, Chelmo, Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Sobibor caused prisoners to cower in fear. (See Appendix B for a larger listing of camps.) Fritzie Fritshall, a captive in Auschwitz, explains the fear:

How do I describe fear? How do I describe hunger to someone that has probably had breakfast and lunch today? Or even if you're dieting, or even if you're fasting for a day. I think hunger is when the pit of your stomach hurts. When you would sell your soul for a potato or a slice of bread. How do I describe living with lice in your clothes, on your body? The stink. The fear. The selections. The "appells." The being told when to go to a toilet, not when you needed to use it. The using of the morning coffee to wash your face with. Mengele. And mostly, mostly death and the gas chambers. (2:134)



Figure 3. Mass grave of victims.

The appearance from the outside of the camps gave no clue as to what happened on the inside. Most of the camps were hidden in the countryside, surrounded by trees and secluded. What lay within was an entirely different world. Food was scarce, shelter was pathetically crowded, and hygiene was non-existent. The best way to relate what happened in the camps is to read the accounts of people who survived.

Judith Jaegermann recounts her story:

Finally the cross bars were taken off the doors outside and the doors opened. Though it was dark, searchlights were focused on us from all directions and again the barking dogs and the shouts, "Out, out, faster, faster, come on, come on." Nobody knew what was happening. The men and women were kept separated. Everything happened very fast and again we were without Papa. I saw lots of barbed wire and searchlights and felt a strong smell of smoke. We were herded into a huge hall and we had to undress completely. I was 13 years old and I felt probably more ashamed at this age than the adult women, who couldn't care less. I was only thinking, "Where did they take Papa? Will we ever see him again? What will happen to all of us now?" After we were given the clothes to wear, we had to stand in line again to be tattooed. To stand around for hours was not unusual in Auschwitz. Mama was standing in front of me, then I and behind me my sister Ruth. Mama was given number 71501, I was 71502 and Ruth got 71503.

It was very painful and when I wanted to take my hand away because it hurt, I was given a slap in the face. It was a big, ugly Polish woman who did the tattooing. In short - it took only a couple of hours after our arrival to Auschwitz and we were not human beings any more, but only numbers and none of us could do or say anything about it. I was only thinking: "How is it possible that grownups are capable to do these things to others?" Where is Justice and why do we deserve this? In my unhappiness I became more and more silent and reserved. (10)

The inprocessing for other camps was done in much the same way. Some were immediately sent to the gas chambers, but those who weren't were forced to go through the degradation of giving up their clothes and belongings and being shaved and tattooed before they were crammed into barracks and forced into work. The following is an excerpt from Night by Elie Wiesel:

Never shall I forget that night, that first night in the camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget those things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never. (7)

The selection process was quite simple. If not at first chosen to go straight to the gas chamber, a person would be condemned to work in some way, whether it be moving rocks, pushing carts, or helping in the disposal of the corpses. By Nazi design, the selection process ultimately ended in death in one way or another. Those condemned to death were scavenged for clothes, hair, gold teeth, shoes, or anything of value to the Nazis.

An account by Solomon Radasky describes the hurry the Nazis were in to dispose of the Jewish prisoners:

I saw when the transports came. I saw the people who were going in, who to the right and, who to the left. I saw who was going to the gas chambers. I saw the people going to the real showers, and I saw the people going to the gas. In August and September of 1944 I saw them throw living children into the crematorium. They would grab them by an arm and a leg and throw them in. (20)

Radasky was the only one of 78 people in his family to survive the Holocaust. (20)

As the threat of discovery grew greater, the Nazis began to liquidate the death camps. They hurriedly cleared out living prisoners from the camp. The crematoria could not consume enough of the corpses being produced by the gas chambers, so the Germans began to dig wide, open trenches and throw the bodies into common graves.

For those still living, some were put onto trains, others were organized and marched to the next camp. Most of the time the nearest camps were hundreds of kilometers away so the relocation turned into a death march. During death marches, SS guards brutally mistreated the prisoners and killed many. (26) Elie Wiesel participated in a death march.

I was putting one foot in front of the other mechanically. I was dragging with me this skeletal body which weighed so much. If only I could have got rid of it! In spite of my efforts not to think about it, I could feel myself as two entities - my body and me. I hated it. (9)

Early on, death vans were also used to dispose of the prisoners. German soldiers would round up groups of Jewish people and cram them into the back of a van, take them out onto a country road and then release gas into the compartment the prisoners were locked in. The following is an excerpt from a report on the execution of the Jews in these vans.

Since December 1941, ninety-seven thousand have been processed, using three vans, without any defects showing up in the vehicles... Experience shows, however, that when the back door is closed and it gets dark inside, the load pushes hard against the door. The reason for this is that when it becomes dark inside the load rushes toward what little light remains. This hampers the locking of the door. It has also been noticed that the noise provoked by the locking of the door is linked to the fear aroused by the darkness. It is therefore expedient to keep the lights on before the operation and during the first few minutes of its duration. Lighting is also useful for night work and for the cleaning of the interior of the van. (18)

The application of gas usually is not undertaken correctly. In order to come to an end as fast as possible, the driver presses the accelerator to the fullest extent. By doing that the persons to be executed suffer death from suffocation and not death by dozing off as was planned. My directions now have proved that by correct adjustment of the levers death comes faster and the prisoners fall asleep peacefully. Distorted faces and excretions, such as could be seen before, are no longer noticed. (8)

It is estimated that by the end of World War II, six million Jews died at the hands of the Nazis. Approximately five million people who were not Jews also lost their lives, including the mentally ill, political prisoners, gypsies, and others labeled as "undesirables." The following statistics are from The History Place web-site. (14)

Country	Initial Jewish Population	Estimated % Killed	Estimated Killed	Number of Survivors
POLAND	3,300,000	91%	3,000,000	300,000
USSR	3,020,000	36%	1,100,000	1,920,000
HUNGARY	800,000	74%	596,000	204,000
GERMANY	566,000	36%	200,000	366,000
FRANCE	350,000	22%	77,320	272,680
ROMANIA	342,000	84%	287,000	55,000
AUSTRIA	185,000	35%	65,000	120,000
LITHUANIA	168,000	85%	143,000	25,000
NETHERLANDS	140,000	71%	100,000	40,000
BOHEMIA MORAVIA	118,310	60%	71,150	47,160
LATVIA	95,000	84%	80,000	15,000
SLOVAKIA	88,950	80%	71,000	17,950
YUGOSLAVIA	78,000	81%	63,300	14,700
GREECE	77,380	87%	67,000	10,380
BELGIUM	65,700	45%	28,900	36,800
ITALY	44,500	17%	7,680	36,820
BULGARIA	50,000	0%		50,000
DENMARK	7,800	0.80%	60	7,740
ESTONIA	4,500	44%	2,000	2,500
LUXEMBOURG	3,500	55%	1,950	1,550
FINLAND	2,000	0.03%	7	1,993
NORWAY	1,700	45%	762	938
TOTAL	9,508,340	63%	5,962,129	3,546,211

THE LIBERATION

Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, and Canada followed on September 10. The United States joined the Allied forces late in 1941 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It was not until March and April of 1945 that the Allied forces were able to break through German lines to liberate the concentration camps. Much of the information about the concentration camps is available today because of accounts told by the soldiers who liberated the camps. The soldiers who walked through the camps looking for survivors and gave aid to the emaciated people that still had life in their bodies have first hand accounts of the Holocaust.

Our men cried. We were a combat unit. We'd been to Anzio, to southern France, Sicily, Salerno, the Battle of the Bulge, and we'd never, ever seen anything like this.
-American Liberator, in the words of poet Barbara Helfgott Hyett (6:31)

We had no knowledge at all of what we were going to find. When we came to the source of the big, heavy odor, we had gone

through the factory, through the town and now on the other side of the town here was Nordhausen, the camp. ... When we actually got into the camp through the barbed wire, we saw row upon row of bodies just stacked like cordwood maybe five feet high as far as the eye could see. ... Eyes—all you saw were wide, huge eyes because the sockets were shrunken and I just can't describe it.

-David Malachowsky, Staff Sergeant, VII Corps,
104th Infantry Division, 329th Medical Battalion
Company D (6:32)

Dealing with survivors was difficult, many were so emaciated that food or water consumed orally would be fatal. Those still strong enough showed the liberators around the camps. An American liberator's thoughts are recalled in the words of poet Barbara Hefgott Hyett:

In the children's cellblock, the bedding, the clothing, the floors besmeared with months of dysentery, I could put my fingers around their upper arms, their ankles, so little flesh. Two hundred and fifty children. Children of prisoners. Polish children. Czechoslovakian children. I can't remember what I did after I saw the children. (6:34)

The crematories were used until the last minute. The Germans did not stop the annihilation until the few moments before the camps were liberated. Chaplain Herschel Schacter recounts his experience:

As long as I live I shall never forget that scene that is indelibly engraved upon my heart and mind. I slowly approached the site of the huge ovens, from which the smoke was still curling upward. I could smell the stench of charred remnants of human flesh. There were literally hundreds of dead bodies strewn about, piled high waiting to be shoveled into the furnaces, which were still hot. I stood riveted to this scene for what seemed like an eternity, tormented within the searing agony, until I finally tore myself away, my eyes burning from the smoke and even more so from my inner rage. (6:37)

For the living that were liberated, the first hours of freedom were difficult and confusing. They were no longer under the rule of the Nazis, but they did not have anyplace to go and possibly no family left to reunite with. Hadassah Bimko, a survivor wrote:

For the great part of the liberated Jews of Bergen-Belsen, there was no ecstasy, no joy at our liberation. We had lost our families, our homes. We had no place to go, nobody to hug, nobody who was waiting for us, anywhere. We had been liberated

from death and from the fear of death, but we were not free from the fear of life. (2:190)

Yet many were relieved and joyful with the liberation. Their hope had not been extinguished.

A new life was breathed into the camps. Jeeps, command cars, and half-tracks drove among the barracks. Khaki uniforms abounded. ...Our liberators were well fed and bursting with health, and they move among our skeletal silhouettes like surges of life. We felt an absurd desire to finger them, to let our hands trail to their eddies as in the Fountain of Youth. ...These men seemed not to know that one could live in slow motion, that energy was something you saved.

-Fania Fenelson, Bergen-Belsen survivor- (2:190)

Soon after the liberation, the Allied forces reached Berlin. After visiting the Ohrdruf concentration camp, General Eisenhower said:

As soon as I returned to Patton's headquarters that evening I sent communications to both Washington and London urging the two governments to send instantly to Germany a random group of newspaper editors and representative groups from the national legislatures. I felt that the evidence should be immediately placed before the American and British publics in a fashion that would leave no room for cynical doubt. (6:112)

When knowledge of negotiations to end the war reached Hitler, he committed suicide in his air raid shelter. Nazi leaders were arrested and put on trial for war crimes. The trials began on November 20, 1945, and were held in Nuremberg, Germany. Testimonies lasted for 216 days. The facts produced at these trials were the means by which the rest of the world learned of the atrocities in the concentration camps. The International Military Tribunal charged the defendants with a Common Plan conspiracy instead of individual responsibility for specific crimes. With this charge, the accused military and civilian leaders, including one journalist, were indicted for the following, Crimes Against Peace, including the launching of an aggressive war, War Crimes against the provisions of the Hague and Geneva conventions, and Crimes Against Humanity, covering any and all atrocities committed by the Nazi regime during its reign. Organizations as well as individuals were charged, so that membership in an organization was enough to prove guilt. (23) The United States was delegated to prove those on trial guilty of Count One: Conspiracy to Wage Aggressive War. Britain was assigned Count Two: Waging Aggressive War or Crimes Against Peace. France and Russia divided the final two counts: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity. The judgement was delivered on September 30, 1946 and October 1, 1946. It sentenced 12 of 22 defendants to death. Of the 12 sentenced to death, one committed suicide and one had been sentenced in absentia. The other 10 were hanged on October 16, 1946. Three men received life imprisonment, four were given sentences lasting 10 to 20 years, and three were acquitted. (11)

STARTING OVER

Attempting to give the Jewish survivors a true home to rebuild their lives, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish state in Israel. Here is an excerpt from the resolution:

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. (21)

The United States recognized Israel as a state on May 14, 1948. The document reads: This government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the provisional Government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new state of Israel.

WHY WE MUST REMEMBER

A philosopher has written that language breaks down when one tries to speak about the Holocaust. Our words pale before the frightening spectacle of human evil unleashed upon the world, and before the awesomeness of the suffering involved, the sheer weight of its numbers—eleven million innocent victims exterminated—six million of them Jews. But we must strive to understand, we must teach the lessons of the Holocaust, and most of all we ourselves must remember. (28:vi)

President Jimmy Carter, International Holocaust Day,
Washington, April 24, 1979

The Holocaust was not just something that affected Europe. It was a world event that had a ghastly outcome. By 1945, Nazi efforts to exterminate the European Jews had almost succeeded. The religious and cultural life of East European Jews was wiped out. (28:38) Generations of families were destroyed. The world had hesitated and watched for a while before anyone organized to intervene. Why did no one intervene at the onset of the annihilation? David S. Wyman gives these answers in his book [The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945.](#)

1. The American State Department and the British Foreign Office had no intention of rescuing large numbers of European Jews. On the contrary, they continually feared that Germany or other Axis nations might release tens of thousands of Jews into Allied hands. Any such exodus would have placed intense pressure on Britain to open Palestine and on the United States to take in more Jewish refugees, a situation the two great powers did not want to face.
2. Strong popular pressure for action would have brought a much fuller government commitment to rescue and would have produced it sooner. Several factors hampered the growth of public pressure. Among them were anti-semitism and anti-immigration attitudes, both widespread in American society in that era and both entrenched in Congress; the mass media's failure to publicize Holocaust news, even though the wire services made most of the information available to them; the near silence of the Christian churches and almost all of their leadership; the indifference of most of the nation's political and intellectual leaders; and the President's failure to speak out on the issue. (5:256-7)

Now the responsibility falls on the world to never forget the Holocaust. It is important that people study it and learn from the faults of the society that looked on as approximately 11 million people were heartlessly murdered. The Holocaust is a warning as to how easily attitudes and ideas can be sculpted despite morality. (28:40)

That which has happened is a warning. To forget it is guilt. It must be continually remembered. It was possible for this to happen, and it remains possible for it to happen again at any minute. Only in knowledge can it be prevented. Karl Jaspers (28:40)

The Holocaust is one of the largest and most recent destructions of human life, however it is not the first attempt to destroy Jewry. Anti-semitism began long before the twentieth century. It is impossible to bring 11 million humans back to life, however the truth must live on so that nothing like this will happen again. Museums and memorials have been dedicated all around the world so that everyone may learn and remember.

Still there are some that deny the Holocaust ever happened. Anti-semitism in America during the 1950s and 1960s fueled the idea that the Holocaust never occurred. Paul Rassinier, a Holocaust revisionist, argued that the Holocaust had been created by Jewish leaders in order to control the world's finances and increase support for Israel. (3:65) Some even claimed that the six million Jews who supposedly died were actually hidden away in the United States. (3:66) It is important to understand that the Holocaust did really happen. The evidence is too overwhelming to claim that the murder of eleven million people never happened. Today, there are people who claim Neo-Nazism. These people want to clear their homelands of any non-White person. A German man of Mozambique origin was kicked to death in the street by a group of Neo-Nazis. This is only one of the 11,000 racially charged demonstrations that took place in 1999 in Germany. (22)

The frightening part of the Holocaust, about Nazism, is that it was everyday nice people who went home at 5:30, who hung up their hats, who had dinner, who went to church on Sunday. I wonder if I can meet the challenge of telling my own children, and my children's children, about the Holocaust. If I am fortunate enough to be alive that long, I will tell them that Evil is part of the ordinary, we can't push it away and out of our existence, we can't just say it's an aberration. We have to confront Evil. It's part of life, part our existence. -Moshe, child of survivors (6:109)

The Days of Remembrance commemoration was established to combat the forgetfulness that time brings. Our nation commemorates the days annually so that each year anyone who does not know will learn, and so that people who have learned will never forget. It is important to remember this event and apply its lessons to our lives today. The victims of the Holocaust deserve this respect and remembrance. There may come a day when our Armed Forces will once again have to combat an enemy attempting to repeat the Holocaust. Hopefully that day will never come. Nevertheless, it is pertinent that each member of the military be educated and sensitive to the memorials dedicated to the 11 million who lost their lives. Former President Jimmy Carter says it best:

We must learn not only about the vulnerability of life, but of the value of human life. We must remember the terrible price paid for bigotry and hatred and also the terrible price paid for indifference and for silence... To truly commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, we must harness the outrage of our memories to banish all human oppression from the world. We must recognize that when any fellow human being is stripped of humanity; when any person is turned into an object of repression; tortured or defiled or victimized by terrorism or prejudice or racism, then all human beings are victims, too. The world's failure to recognize the moral truth forty years ago permitted the Holocaust to proceed. Our generation—the generation of survivors—will never permit the lesson to be forgotten. (6:114)

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APPENDIX A: TIMELINE

Note: The following timeline is from:
<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html>

1933

Jan 30, 1933 - Adolf Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany a nation with a Jewish population of 566,000.

Feb 27, 1933 - Nazis burn Reichstag building to create crisis atmosphere.

Feb 28, 1933 - Emergency powers granted to Hitler as a result of the Reichstag fire.

March 22, 1933 - Nazis open Dachau concentration camp near Munich, to be followed by Buchenwald near Weimar in central Germany, Sachsenhausen near Berlin in northern Germany, and Ravensbrück for women.

March 24, 1933 - German Parliament passes Enabling Act giving Hitler dictatorial powers.

April 1, 1933 - Nazis stage boycott of Jewish shops and businesses.

April 26, 1933 - The Gestapo is born, created by Hermann Göring in the German state of Prussia.

May 10, 1933 - Burning of books in Berlin and throughout Germany.

July 14, 1933 - Nazi Party is declared the only legal party in Germany; Also, Nazis pass Law to strip Jewish immigrants from Poland of their German citizenship.

Sept 29, 1933 - Nazis prohibit Jews from owning land.

1934

May 17, 1934 - Jews not allowed national health insurance.

June 30, 1934 - The Night of Long Knives occurs as Hitler, Göring and Himmler conduct a purge of the SA (storm trooper) leadership.

July 22, 1934 - Jews are prohibited from getting legal qualifications.

Aug 2, 1934 - German President von Hindenburg dies. Hitler becomes Führer.

Aug 19, 1934 - Hitler receives a 90% Yes vote from German voters approving his new powers.

1935

May 21, 1935 - Nazis ban Jews from serving in the military.

Sept 15, 1935 - Nuremberg Race Laws against Jews decreed.

1936

Feb 10, 1936 - The German Gestapo is placed above the law.

In March - SS Deaths Head division is established to guard concentration camps.

March 7, 1936 - Nazis occupy the Rhineland.

Aug 1, 1936 - Olympic games begin in Berlin. Hitler and top Nazis seek to gain legitimacy through favorable public opinion from foreign visitors and thus temporarily refrain from actions against Jews.

1937

In Jan - Jews are banned from many professional occupations including teaching Germans, and from being accountants or dentists. They are also denied tax reductions and child allowances.

1938

March 12/13, 1938 - Nazi troops enter Austria. Hitler announces Anschluss (union) with Austria.

April 26, 1938 - Nazis order Jews to register wealth and property.

June 14, 1938 - Nazis order Jewish owned businesses to register.

In July - At Evian, France, the U.S. convenes a League of Nations conference with delegates from 32 countries to consider helping Jews fleeing Hitler, but results in inaction as no country will accept them.

July 6, 1938 - Nazis prohibited Jews from trading and providing a variety of specified commercial services.

July 25, 1938 - Jewish doctors prohibited by law from practicing medicine.

Aug 11, 1938 - Nazis destroy the synagogue in Nuremberg.

Aug 17, 1938 - Nazis require Jewish women to add Sarah and men to add Israel to their names on all legal documents including passports.

Sept 27, 1938 - Jews are prohibited from all legal practices.

Oct 5, 1938 - Law requires Jewish passports to be stamped with a large red J.

Oct 15, 1938 - Nazi troops occupy the Sudetenland.

Oct 28, 1938 - Nazis arrest 17,000 Jews of Polish nationality living in Germany, then expel them back to Poland which refuses them entry, leaving them in no-man's land near the Polish border for several months.

Nov 7, 1938 - Ernst vom Rath, third secretary in the German Embassy in Paris, is shot and mortally wounded by Herschel Grynszpan. Rath dies on November 9, precipitating Kristallnacht.

Nov 9/10 - Kristallnacht - The Night of Broken Glass.

Nov 12, 1938 - Nazis fine Jews one billion marks for damages related to Kristallnacht.

Nov 15, 1938 - Jewish pupils are expelled from all non-Jewish German schools.

1939

Jan 24, 1939 - SS leader Reinhard Heydrich is ordered by Göring to speed up emigration of Jews.

Jan 30, 1939 - Hitler threatens Jews during Reichstag speech.

Feb 21, 1939 - Nazis force Jews to hand over all gold and silver items.

March 15/16 - Nazi troops seize Czechoslovakia (Jewish pop. 350,000).

April 30, 1939 - Jews lose rights as tenants and are relocated into Jewish houses.

In May - The St. Louis, a ship crowded with 930 Jewish refugees, is turned away by Cuba, the United States and other countries and returns to Europe.

July 4, 1939 - German Jews denied the right to hold government jobs.

Sept 1, 1939 - Nazis invade Poland (Jewish pop. 3.35 million, the largest in Europe).

Sept 3, 1939 - England and France declare war on Germany.

Sept 4, 1939 - Warsaw is cut off by the German Army.

Sept 17, 1939 - Soviet troops invade eastern Poland.

Sept 21, 1939 - Heydrich issues instructions to SS Einsatzgruppen (special action squads) in Poland regarding treatment of Jews, stating they are to be gathered into ghettos near railroads for the future final goal.

Sept 23, 1939 - German Jews are forbidden to own wireless (radio) sets.

Sept 29, 1939 - Nazis and Soviets divide up Poland. Over two million Jews reside in Nazi controlled areas, leaving 1.3 million in the Soviet area.

Oct 6, 1939 - Proclamation by Hitler on the isolation of Jews.

Oct 26, 1939 - Forced labor decree issued for Polish Jews aged 14 to 60.

Nov 23, 1939 - Yellow stars required to be worn by Polish Jews over age 10.

1940

Jan 25, 1940 - Nazis choose the town of Oswiecim (Auschwitz) in Poland near Krakow as site of new concentration camp.

Feb 12, 1940 - First deportation of German Jews into occupied Poland.

April 9, 1940 - Nazis invade Denmark (Jewish pop. 8,000) and Norway (Jewish pop. 2,000).

April 30, 1940 - The Lodz Ghetto in occupied Poland is sealed off from the outside world with 230,000 Jews locked inside.

May 1, 1940 - Rudolf Höss is chosen to be kommandant of Auschwitz.

May 10, 1940 - Nazis invade France (Jewish pop. 350,000), Belgium (Jewish pop. 65,000), Holland (Jewish pop. 140,000), and Luxembourg (Jewish pop. 3,500).

June 14, 1940 - Paris is occupied by the Nazis.

June 22, 1940 - France signs an armistice with Hitler.

July 17, 1940 - The first anti-Jewish measures are taken in Vichy, France.

Sept 27, 1940 - Tripartite (Axis) Pact signed by Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Oct 7, 1940 - Nazis invade Romania (Jewish pop. 34,000).

Oct 22, 1940 - Deportation of 29,000 German Jews from Baden, the Saar, and Alsace-Lorraine into Vichy France.

In Nov - Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia become Nazi Allies.

In Nov - The Krakow Ghetto is sealed off containing 70,000 Jews.

Nov 15, 1940 - The Warsaw Ghetto, containing over 400,000 Jews, is sealed off.

1941

Feb 22, 1941 - 430 Jewish hostages are deported from Amsterdam after a Dutch Nazi is killed by Jews.

March 2, 1941 - Nazis occupy Bulgaria (Jewish pop. 50,000).

April 6, 1941 - Nazis invade Yugoslavia (Jewish pop. 75,000) and Greece (Jewish pop. 77,000).

June 22, 1941 - Nazis invade the Soviet Union (Jewish pop. 3 million).

Summer - Himmler summons Auschwitz Kommandant Höss to Berlin and tells him, "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."

In July - Ghettos established at Kovno, Minsk, Vitebsk, and Zhitomer.

July 21, 1941 - In occupied Poland near Lublin, Majdanek concentration camp becomes operational.

In Aug - Jews in Romania forced into Transnistria, by December, 70,000 perish.

Sept 3, 1941 - The first test use of Zyklon-B gas at Auschwitz.

Sept 6, 1941 - The Vilna Ghetto is established containing 40,000 Jews.

In Nov - SS Einsatzgruppe B reports a tally of 45,476 Jews killed.

Nov 24, 1941 - Theresienstadt Ghetto is established near Prague, Czechoslovakia. The Nazis will use it as a model ghetto for propaganda purposes.

Dec 7, 1941 - Japanese attack United States at Pearl Harbor. The next day the U.S. and Britain declare war on Japan.

Dec 8, 1941 - In occupied Poland, near Lodz, Chelmno extermination camp becomes operational. Jews taken there are placed in mobile gas vans and driven to a burial place while carbon monoxide from the engine exhaust is fed into the sealed rear compartment, killing them.

Dec 11, 1941 - Hitler declares war on the United States. President Roosevelt declares war on Germany saying, "Never before has there been a greater challenge to life, liberty and civilization." The U.S. enters the war in Europe and will concentrate nearly 90% of its military resources to defeat Hitler.

1942

In Jan - Mass killings of Jews using Zyklon-B begin at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Bunker I (the red farmhouse) in Birkenau with the bodies being buried in mass graves in a nearby meadow.

Jan 20, 1942 - Wannsee Conference to coordinate the Final Solution.

Jan 31, 1942 - SS Einsatzgruppe A reports a tally of 229,052 Jews killed.

In March - In occupied Poland, Belzec extermination camp becomes operational. The camp is fitted with permanent gas chambers using carbon monoxide piped in from engines placed outside the chamber, but will later substitute Zyklon-B.

March 24, 1942 - The start of deportation of Slovak Jews to Auschwitz.

March 27, 1942 - The start of deportation of French Jews to Auschwitz.

March 30, 1942 - First trainloads of Jews from Paris arrive at Auschwitz.

In April - First transports of Jews arrive at Majdanek.

In May - In occupied Poland, Sobibor extermination camp becomes operational. The camp is fitted with three gas chambers using carbon monoxide piped in from engines, but will later substitute Zyklon-B.

May 18, 1942 - The New York Times reports on an inside page that Nazis have machine-gunned over 100,000 Jews in the Baltic states, 100,000 in Poland and twice as many in western Russia.

May 27, 1942 - SS leader Heydrich is mortally wounded by Czech Underground agents.

June 1, 1942 - Jews in France, Holland, Belgium, Croatia, Slovakia, Romania ordered to wear yellow stars.

June 5, 1942 - SS report 97,000 persons have been "processed" in mobile gas vans.

June 30, 1942 - At Auschwitz, a second gas chamber, Bunker II (the white farmhouse), is made operational at Birkenau.

June 30 and July 2 - The New York Times reports via the London Daily Telegraph that over 1,000,000 Jews have already been killed by Nazis.

July 2, 1942 - Jews from Berlin sent to Theresienstadt.

July 14, 1942 - Beginning of deportation of Dutch Jews to Auschwitz.

July 22, 1942 - Beginning of deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto to the new extermination camp, Treblinka. Also, beginning of the deportation of Belgian Jews to Auschwitz.

July 23, 1942 - Treblinka extermination camp opened in occupied Poland, east of Warsaw.

Aug 23, 1942 - Beginning of German army attack on Stalingrad.

Sept 9, 1942 - Open pit burning of bodies begins at Auschwitz in place of burial. The decision is made to dig up and burn those already buried, 107,000 corpses, to prevent fouling of ground water.

Oct 5, 1942 - Himmler orders all Jews in concentration camps in Germany to be sent to Auschwitz and Majdanek.

Oct 25, 1942 - Deportations of Jews from Norway to Auschwitz begin.

Oct 28, 1942 - The first transport from Theresienstadt arrives at Auschwitz.

Dec 10, 1942 - The first transport of Jews from Germany arrives at Auschwitz.

In Dec - Exterminations at Belzec cease after an estimated 600,000 Jews have been murdered. The camp is then dismantled, plowed over and planted.

1943

In 1943 - The number of Jews killed by SS Einsatzgruppen passes one million. Nazis use special units of slave laborers to dig up and burn the bodies to remove all traces.

Jan 18, 1943 - First resistance by Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Jan 29, 1943 - Nazis order all Gypsies arrested and sent to extermination camps.

In Feb 2, 1943 - Germans surrender at Stalingrad in the first big defeat of Hitler's armies.

In March - The start of deportations of Jews from Greece to Auschwitz, lasting until August, totaling 49,900 persons.

March 1, 1943 - In New York, American Jews hold a mass rally at Madison Square Garden to pressure the U.S. government into helping the Jews of Europe.

March 14, 1943 - The Krakow Ghetto is liquidated.

April 9, 1943 - Exterminations at Chelmno cease. The camp will be reactivated in the spring of 1944 to liquidate ghettos. In all, Chelmno will total 300,000 deaths.

May 13, 1943 - German and Italian troops in North Africa surrender to Allies.

May 19, 1943 - Nazis declare Berlin to be Judenfrei (cleansed of Jews).

June 11, 1943 - Himmler orders liquidation of all Jewish ghettos in occupied Poland.

June 25, 1943 - Newly built gas chamber/crematory III opens at Auschwitz. With its completion, the four new crematories at Auschwitz have a daily capacity of 4,756 bodies.

July 9/10 - Allies land in Sicily.

In Aug - Exterminations cease at Treblinka, after an estimated 870,000 deaths.

In Sept - The Vilna and Minsk Ghettos are liquidated.

Sept 11, 1943 - Beginning of Jewish family transports from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz.

Oct 14, 1943 - Massive escape from Sobibor as Jews and Soviet prisoners of war break out, with 300 making it safely into nearby woods. Of those 300, 50 will survive. Exterminations then cease at Sobibor, after over 250,000 deaths. All traces of the death camp are then removed and trees are planted.

In Nov - The Riga Ghetto is liquidated.

In Nov - The U.S. Congress holds hearings regarding the U.S. State Department's inaction regarding European Jews, despite mounting reports of mass extermination.

1944

Jan 3, 1944 - Soviet troops reach former Polish border.

Jan 24, 1944 - In response to political pressure to help Jews under Nazi control, Roosevelt creates the War Refugee Board.

March 19, 1944 - Nazis occupy Hungary (Jewish pop. 725,000).

March 24, 1944 - President Roosevelt issues a statement condemning the Germans and Japanese for ongoing "crimes against humanity."

May 16, 1944 - Jews from Hungary arrive at Auschwitz.

In June - A Red Cross delegation visits Theresienstadt after the Nazis have carefully prepared the camp and the Jewish inmates, resulting in a favorable report.

June 6, 1944 - D-Day: Allied landings in Normandy.

Summer - Auschwitz-Birkenau records its highest-ever daily number of persons gassed and burned at just over 9,000. Six huge pits are used to burn bodies, as the number exceeds the capacity of the crematories.

July 24, 1944 - Soviet troops liberate first concentration camp at Majdanek where over 360,000 had been murdered.

Aug 4, 1944 - Anne Frank and family arrested by Gestapo in Amsterdam, then sent to Auschwitz. Anne and her sister Margot are later sent to Bergen-Belsen where Anne dies of typhus on March 15, 1945.

Aug 6, 1944 - The last Jewish ghetto in Poland, Lodz, is liquidated with 60,000 Jews sent to Auschwitz.

Oct 7, 1944 - A revolt by Sonderkommando (Jewish slave laborers) at Auschwitz-Birkenau results in complete destruction of Crematory IV.

Oct 28, 1944 - The last transport of Jews to be gassed, 2,000 from Theresienstadt, arrives at Auschwitz.

Oct 30, 1944 - Last use of gas chambers at Auschwitz.

Nov 8, 1944 - Nazis force 25,000 Jews to walk over 100 miles in rain and snow from Budapest to the Austrian border, followed by a second forced march of 50,000 persons, ending at Mauthausen.

Nov 25, 1944 - Himmler orders the destruction of the crematories at Auschwitz.

Late 1944 - Oskar Schindler saves 1,200 Jews by moving them from Plaszow labor camp to his hometown.

1945

In 1945 - As the Allies advance, the Nazis conduct death marches of concentration camp inmates away from outlying areas.

Jan 6, 1945 - Soviets liberate Budapest, freeing over 80,000 Jews.

Jan 14, 1945 - Invasion of eastern Germany by Soviet troops.

Jan 17, 1945 - Liberation of Warsaw by the Soviets.

Jan 18, 1945 - Nazis evacuate 66,000 from Auschwitz.

Jan 27, 1945 - Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz. By this time, an estimated 2,000,000 persons, including 1,500,000 Jews, have been murdered there.

April 4, 1945 - Ohrdruf camp is liberated, later visited by General Eisenhower.

April 10, 1945 - Allies liberate Buchenwald.

April 15, 1945 - Approximately 40,000 prisoners freed at Bergen-Belsen by the British, who reported, "both inside and outside the huts was a carpet of dead bodies, human excreta, rags and filth."

April 23, 1945 - Berlin reached by Soviet troops.

April 29, 1945 - U.S. 7th Army liberates Dachau.

April 30, 1945 - Hitler commits suicide in his Berlin bunker.

April 30, 1945 - Americans free 33,000 inmates from concentration camps.

May 7, 1945 - Unconditional German surrender signed by Gen. Jodl at Reims.

May 9, 1945 - Hermann Göring captured by members of U.S. 7th Army.

May 23, 1945 - SS Reichsführer Himmler commits suicide.

Nov 20, 1945 - Opening of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal.

1946

March 11, 1946 - Former Auschwitz Kommandant Höss is arrested by the British. He testifies at Nuremberg, then is later tried in Warsaw, found guilty and hanged at Auschwitz, April 16, 1947, near Crematory I.

Oct 16, 1946 - Göring commits suicide two hours before the scheduled execution of the first group of major Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg. During his imprisonment, a (now repentant) Hans Frank states, "A thousand years will pass and the guilt of Germany will not be erased." Frank and the others are hanged and the bodies are brought to Dachau and burned (the final use of the crematories there) with the ashes then scattered into a river.

1947

Sept 15, 1947 – Twenty-one former SS Einsatz leaders go on trial before a U.S. Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. Fourteen are sentenced to death, with only 4 (the group commanders) actually being executed. The other death sentences are commuted.

1960

May 11, 1960 - Adolf Eichmann is captured in Argentina by Israeli secret service.

1961

April 11 - August 14 - Eichmann on trial in Jerusalem for crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity and war crimes, found guilty and hanged at Ramleh on May 31, 1962. A fellow Nazi reported Eichmann once said, "he would leap laughing into the grave because the feeling that he had five million people on his conscience would be for him a source of extraordinary satisfaction."

APPENDIX B: CONCENTRATION CAMP LISTING

Note: This listing is from:
<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/cclist.html>

Germany:

Bergen-Belsen (probably 2 subcamps but location is unknown)
Börgermoor (no sub-camp known)
Buchenwald (174 subcamps and external kommandos)
Dachau (123 subcamps and external kommandos)
Dieburg (no sub-camp known)
Esterwegen (1 sub-camp)
Flossenburg (94 subcamps and external kommandos)
Gundelsheim (no sub-camp known)
Neuengamme (96 subcamps and external kommandos)
Papenburg (no sub-camp known)
Ravensbruck (31 subcamps and external kommandos)
Sachsenhausen (44 subcamps and external kommandos)
Sachsenburg (no sub-camp known)

Austria:

Mauthausen (49 subcamps and external kommandos)

Belgium:

Breendonck (no sub-camp known)

Czechoslovakia:

Theresienstadt (9 external kommandos)

France:

Argeles
Aurigny
Brens
Drancy
Gurs
Les Milles
Le Vernet
Natzweiler-Struthof (70 camps satellites)

Noé
Récébédou
Rieucros
Rivesaltes
Suresnes
Thill

Poland:

Auschwitz-Birkenau - Oswiecim-Brzezinka (extermination camp - 51 subcamps and external kommandos)
Belzec (extermination camp - 1 subcamp)
Bierznów
Biesiadka
Dzierżazna & Litzmannstadt (These two camps were "Jugendverwahrlage", children camps.
Gross-Rosen - Rogoznica (77 subcamps and external kommandos)
Kraków
Kulmhof - Chelmno (extermination camp - no sub-camp known)
Maidanek (extermination camp - 3 subcamps)
Sobibor (extermination camp - no subcamp known)
Treblinka (extermination camp - no subcamp known)

APPENDIX C: HELPFUL WEBSITES

1. <http://amuseum.org/jahf> Jewish-American Hall of Fame
2. <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/default.htm> A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust
3. <http://www.friends-partners.org/partners/beyond-the-pale/english/46.html> Beyond the Pale: Nazis and the Holocaust
4. <http://www.historyplace.com> The History Place
5. <http://www.holocaustcommission.org> The Holocaust Commission
6. <http://www.jewish-history.com/Default.htm> Jewish-American History on the Web
7. <http://www.nizkor.org> The Nizkor Holocaust Educational Resource
8. <http://www.nmajh.org/links.htm> National Museum of American Jewish History Links
9. <http://www.remember.org> A Cybrary of the Holocaust
10. <http://www.ushmm.org> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

APPENDIX D: PICTURE CREDITS

1. <http://shamash.org/holocaust/photos/index.shtml>
2. <http://shamash.org/holocaust/photos/images/Warsw01.jpg>
3. <http://shamash.org/holocaust/photos/images/Belsen01.jpg>

Note: Photos are from Shamash, the Jewish Network that strives to be the highest quality central point of Jewish information and discussion on the Internet. Their mission is to provide a broad array of state-of-the-art education and community building resources to Jewish organizations and individuals for the benefit of the Jewish community.

FINAL THOUGHT

In Germany, they first came for the communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Catholic. Then they came for me -- and by that time there was nobody left to speak up.

-Martin Niemoller (13)