

LESSON 4.2

TIMELINE



UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM ushmm.org

June 1919

The Treaty of Versailles

The Treaty of Versailles was signed in France in 1919. After the loss of World War I, Germany had to accept full responsibility for starting the war. Many Germans were shocked and angered over the terms of the treaty which deprived Germany of significant military power and territory, and imposed financial penalties.



Allied delegates in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles witness the German delegation's acceptance of the terms of the Treaty Of Versailles, the treaty formally ending World War I. Versailles, France, June 28, 1919. *National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

August 1919

Ratification of Weimar constitution

A national assembly drafted a democratic constitution, a new and unfamiliar form of government for Germans, initiated in the wake of World War I. Fearing the unknown, the delegates agreed to the inclusion of Article 48. The article allowed the democratic government to suspend basic rights in order to stabilize the country during a national crisis or emergency.

February 1920

Hitler presented 25-point program

In this 25-point program, Nazi Party members publicly declared their intention to segregate Jews from “Aryan” society and to abrogate Jews’ political, legal, and civil rights.

Point 4 stated:

“Only a national comrade can be a citizen. Only someone of German blood, regardless of faith, can be a citizen. Therefore, no Jew can be a citizen.”



Pamphlet outlining the National Socialist Party 25-point program. The headline reads, “Die Zeile der Nationalsozialisten” [The Goals of National Socialists). US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Gift of Patrick Gleason

1920

Adoption of the swastika by the Nazi Party

The swastika became the most recognizable Nazi symbol. It appeared on the Nazi flag, as well as on election posters, armbands, medallions, and badges for military and other organizations.



Nazi Party armband with swastika. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Gift of Alfred Beck*

1923

Hitler imprisoned at Landsberg

From March 1924 to December 1924, Hitler was imprisoned for attempting to overthrow the government in November 1923. His trial brought him fame and followers. While imprisoned, he dictated his political ideas in a book, *Mein Kampf* [My Struggle]. After his release, he was prohibited from speaking at public gatherings in Bavaria until 1927.



Adolf Hitler reads a newspaper in his cell in Landsberg prison.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Richard Freimark

1920s

Inflation and the world economic crisis

In order to finance World War I, the German government sold bonds. After the Treaty of Versailles, the government printed paper money to repay bondholders and make reparation payments. These and other measures generated catastrophic inflation that peaked in 1923. Devaluation of the currency brought seeming stability, but the US stock market crash of 1929, and the world economic crisis that followed, forced German banks to close and unemployment to skyrocket.



Berlin woman starting the morning fire with marks “not worth the paper they are printed on.” *Farm Security Administration—Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress*

1924-1925

Spreading technology

From January 1924 to January 1925, the number of radio sets registered in Germany increased from 1,580 sets to 548,749 sets. Millions of people could now tune in.



Adolf Hitler listens to a radio broadcast of the results of German parliamentary elections. *National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

1932–1933

Film and the Nazi Party

Films played an important role in disseminating Nazi ideology. In 1932, Germany had 3,800 cinemas equipped to play sound films. A year later, in June 1933, new regulations gave major tax advantages to films exemplifying the Nazi spirit.



Canisters that held filmstrips used to teach Hitler Youth members. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Gifts of Luigi Lucaccini, Susan Gitlin*

January 1933

Hitler appointed chancellor

President Hindenburg appointed Hitler chancellor, and the Nazi Party assumed control of the German state. The German Nationalists and the traditional elites felt they could better control him if he were a part of the coalition government.



German chancellor Adolf Hitler greets President Paul von Hindenburg during opening ceremonies for the new Reichstag Parliament building in Potsdam. Hitler, the veteran soldier, deferentially paid his respects to the aged von Hindenburg, the heroic field marshal of World War I. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of B. I. Sanders.*

February 1933

The Reichstag Fire

A lone arsonist set fire to the Reichstag, Germany's parliament building, just a month after Hitler became chancellor. The Nazis and their Nationalist coalition partners demanded emergency legislation. Right-wing propaganda exploited fears of a Communist revolution. President Hindenburg invoked Article 48, and the Nazi-nationalist government issued the Reichstag Fire Decree. All basic rights and constitutional protections were dissolved, restricting the media. German police and Nazi paramilitaries targeted, terrorized, and imprisoned political opponents.



The Reichstag (German parliament) building burns in Berlin. *National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

March 13, 1933

Creation of Ministry of Propaganda

In March 1933, the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda was established under Joseph Goebbels.

The Ministry's mission was to ensure Nazi control over the media and culture.

Nazi messages were communicated through art, music, theater, films, books, radio, educational materials, and the press.



Joseph Goebbels addressing the crowd urging Germans to boycott Jewish-owned businesses. Berlin, Germany, April 1, 1933. *National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

1933

Boycott of Jewish businesses

The Nazis carried out the first nationwide, planned action against Jews, a boycott of Jewish businesses. Signs were posted saying “Don’t Buy from Jews” and “The Jews Are Our Misfortune.” The boycott lasted just a day, but marked the beginning of a nationwide campaign against the entire German Jewish population.



An SA man pastes a boycott sign on the window of a Jewish-owned business. *National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

November 1933

Invention of the People's Radio

To make mass radio transmission possible, “People’s Radios” were developed in Germany. These devices increased the radio audience and took propaganda into the home. The People’s Radio received only long wave, meaning that it could not receive broadcasts from most foreign radio stations.



1936 poster: “All of Germany Listens to the Führer with the People’s Radio.” The poster depicts a crowd surrounding a radio. The radio looms large, symbolizing the mass appeal and broad audience for Nazi broadcasts. *Bundesarchiv Koblenz (Plak003-022-025)*

August 1934

Hindenburg's Death

Hitler, in agreement with the army, abolished the office of president, declaring himself fuhrer and Reich chancellor, leader of the nation and head of the government.



Paul von Hindenburg's original burial in the central yard of the Tannenberg Memorial. August 7, 1934.
Bundesarchiv Bild 183-2006-0429-502

September 1934

Filming *Triumph of The Will*

Triumph des Willens (*Triumph of the Will*) was shot at the Nuremberg Nazi Party rally in 1934. German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl directed the film.

Triumph des Willens ranked as an epic work of documentary filmmaking, and is widely regarded as one of the most masterful propaganda films ever produced.



A film still from Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. The swastika is prominently displayed. US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Ruth Budd

March 1935

Germany formally announced remilitarization

In 1935, Germany openly defied the 1919 Treaty of Versailles by reinstating the draft and increasing its military strength.



During the remilitarization of the Rhineland, German civilians salute German forces crossing the Rhine River in open violation of the Treaty of Versailles. Mainz, Germany, March 7, 1936.

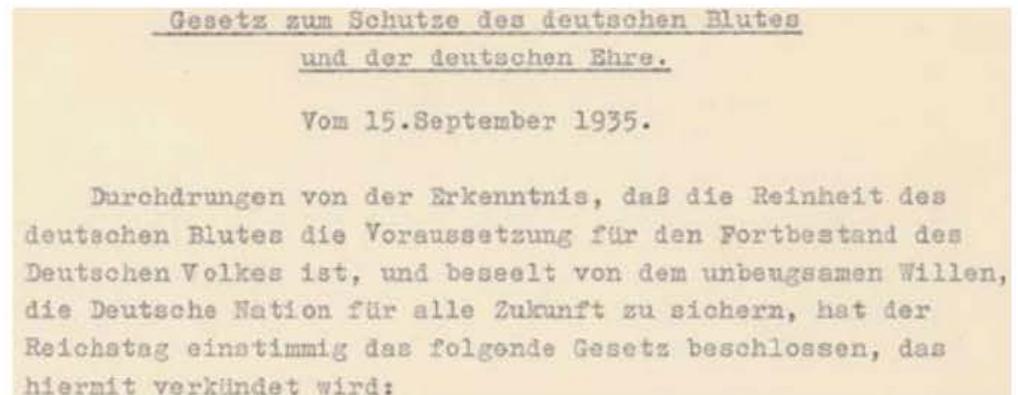
US Holocaust Memorial Museum

September 1935

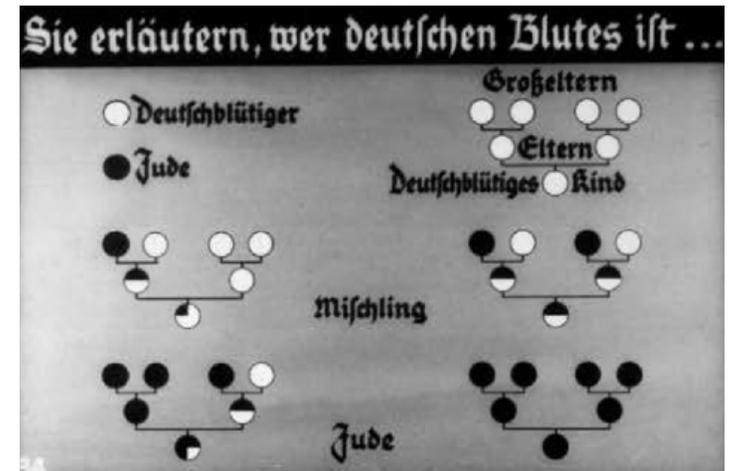
Nuremberg Race Laws

The German government enacted hundreds of laws to define, segregate, and impoverish German Jews. In September 1935, at its annual rally, the Nazi Party introduced new race laws.

By late 1938, Jews were isolated and segregated from German society, eliminating most opportunities to earn a living.



Law for the Safeguard of German Blood and German Honor barred marriage between Jews and other Germans. *National Archives Gift Collection*



A Nazi propaganda slide from Hitler Youth educational presentation entitled "Germany Overcomes Jewry." *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Stephen Glick*

August 1936

Berlin Olympics

In August 1936, Nazi Germany scored a huge propaganda success as host of the Summer Olympics in Berlin. The regime camouflaged its racist, militaristic character while hosting the Summer Olympics. Nazi Germany exploited the Games to bedazzle many foreign spectators and journalists with an image of a peaceful, tolerant Germany.



German (swastika) and Olympic flags bedeck Berlin during the Olympic Games. Berlin, Germany, August 1936. *National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

March 1938

Annexation of Austria

In March 1938, German troops moved into neighboring Austria. Germany shredded another provision of the Versailles Treaty, as Hitler's homeland was incorporated into Germany.



View of the Loos Haus, a public building in Vienna, adorned with decorations and a large banner bearing a quote from Hitler, "Those of the same blood belong in the same Reich!" Such banners were hung throughout Austria in the weeks preceding the incorporation of Austria into the German Reich. *Library of Congress*

November 1938

Kristallnacht

On November 9–10, 1938, the Nazi Party orchestrated an outbreak of anti-Jewish violence throughout greater Germany. Nazi thugs killed at least 91 Jews during the violence and over 7,000 Jewish-owned businesses were vandalized. It became known as *Kristallnacht*—Night of Broken Glass—for the shattered windows of Jewish-owned stores that littered the streets.



View of the destroyed interior of the Hechingen synagogue the day after *Kristallnacht*.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Dr. Adolf Veas

September 1939

Invasion of Poland

On September 1, 1939, a massive German force invaded and conquered Poland within a month. It was the start of World War II.



German soldiers parade through Warsaw to celebrate the conquest of Poland. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Richard A. Ruppert*

Late 1939

First ghettos established in occupied Poland

Separated from the non-Jewish population, German authorities forced those identified as Jews into tightly packed areas called ghettos. Jews in the larger ghettos were imprisoned behind brick walls and barbed wire.

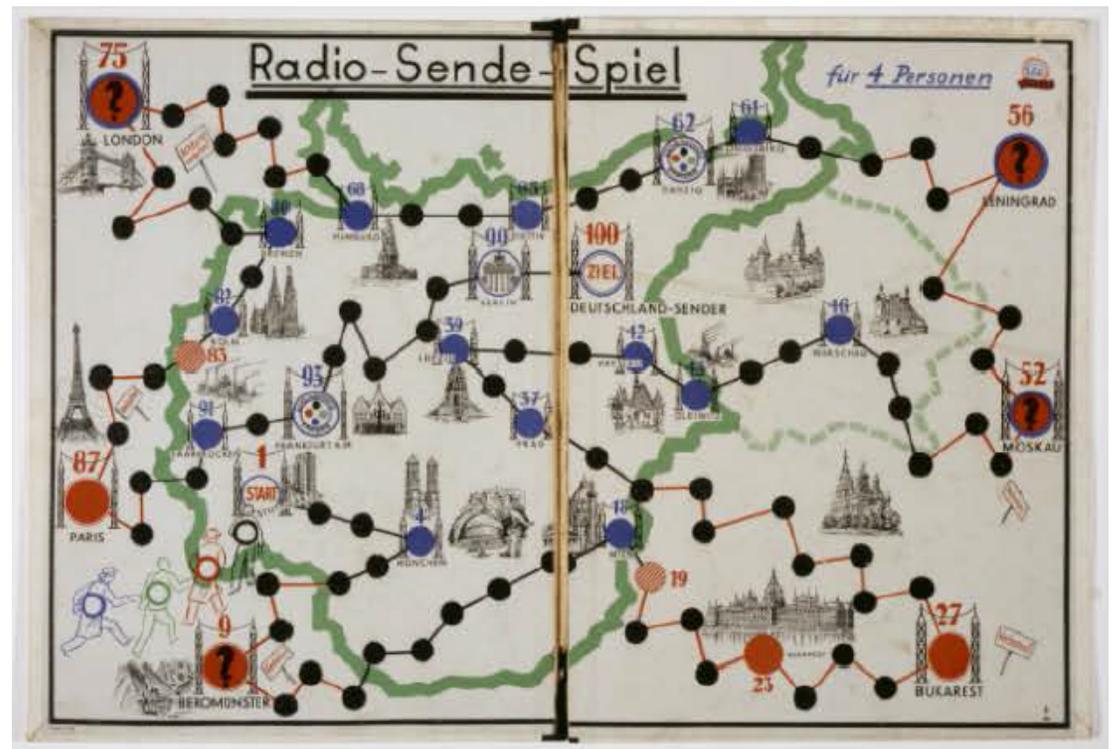


Jewish youth peer over the wall overlooking Mirowski Plac (Square) that divided the Warsaw ghetto into the small and large ghettos. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Irving Milcberg*

1939-1941

Regulating news and media

In 1939, Germans were prohibited from listening to and disseminating information from foreign radio stations. By 1940 all German stations were synchronized into one Reich broadcast. Listening to foreign radio broadcasts became an offense against national security punishable with a prison term. In 1941, the punishment was death.



This German board game encouraged players to listen to German radio stations while punishing those who landed on a foreign radio station. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of the Abraham and Ruth Goldfarb Family Acquisition Fund*

Spring 1940

Invasion of Western Europe

In April 1940, Germany occupied Denmark. In May, Germany invaded France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium. In June, after Paris fell, France surrendered, as did Norway.



Ruined buildings in a French town destroyed by German forces during the Western Campaign. France, May–June 1940. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

June 1941

Invasion of the Soviet Union

In June 1941, the German Army—with more than three million soldiers—invaded the Soviet Union to wage a war of annihilation that targeted tens of millions of civilians.



German infantry during the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

July 1941

The “Final Solution”

In July 1941, Hermann Goering, Hitler’s second in command, authorized all necessary preparations for the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” in the European territory under German control.



Jews from the Lodz ghetto are loaded onto freight trains for deportation to the Chelmno extermination camp. Lodz, Poland, between 1942 and 1944. *National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia*

September 1941

Introduction of the yellow star

In September 1941, the Nazi regime ordered Germany's Jews over the age of six to sew on their clothing a yellow Star of David with the word Jude (Jew) in bold, Hebrew-like letters. The following year, the measure was introduced in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and other lands under German control.



US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Gift of Hannab Kastan Weiss



Members of a Jewish ice hockey team wearing Stars of David on their shirts pose in the snow.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Artur (Arieh) Klein

February 1943

German defeat at Stalingrad

After months of fierce fighting and heavy casualties, German forces surrendered at Stalingrad on the Volga. The battle for the city of Stalingrad proved a decisive psychological turning point, ending a string of German victories in the summer of 1942 and beginning the long retreat westward. Germany proved unable to defeat the Soviet Union which, together with Great Britain and the United States, seized the initiative from Germany.



Assault units of the 62nd Soviet Army battle the Germans in Stalingrad. *National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

1944–1945

Liberation of camps

The camps of Majdanek and Auschwitz were the first liberated as Soviet troops reached Poland. In April–May 1945, US troops in Germany and Austria came upon concentration camps at Buchenwald, Dachau, Nordhausen, Mauthausen, and Ohrdruf. General Dwight Eisenhower, Commander of the Allied liberating forces, wrote:

“The things I saw beggar description...The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were...overpowering....”

In American movie theaters, newsreels made witnesses of thousands more.



General Dwight D. Eisenhower (center, right) views the corpses of victims of the Ohrdruf camp. Germany, April 12, 1945. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*