

THE FINAL SOLUTION

- - -

An Objective Overview

Compiled by

Campbell M Gold

(2009)

(This material was compiled from various sources - physical and electronic)

--()---

Introduction

The following material has been compiled to create a chronology of the major events, and dates, which surround the "Final Solution".

In a 1939 conference with health minister Leonardo Conti and the head of the Reich Chancellery, Hans Lammers, a few months before the euthanasia decree, Hitler gave as examples of "life unworthy of life" severely mentally ill people who could only be bedded on sawdust or sand because they "perpetually dirtied themselves", or who "put their own excrement into their mouths, eating it and so on".

Both his physician, Dr Karl Brandt, and the head of the Reich Chancellery, Hans Lammers, testified, after the war, that Hitler had told them as early as 1933, at the time the sterilization law was passed, that he favoured killing the incurably ill, but recognized that public opinion would not accept this. In 1935 Hitler told the Reich Doctors' Leader, Dr Gerhard Wagner, that the question could not be taken up in peacetime: "Such a problem could be more smoothly and easily carried out in war", he said. He intended, he wrote, "in the event of a war radically to solve the problem of the mental asylums."

Table: key Dates

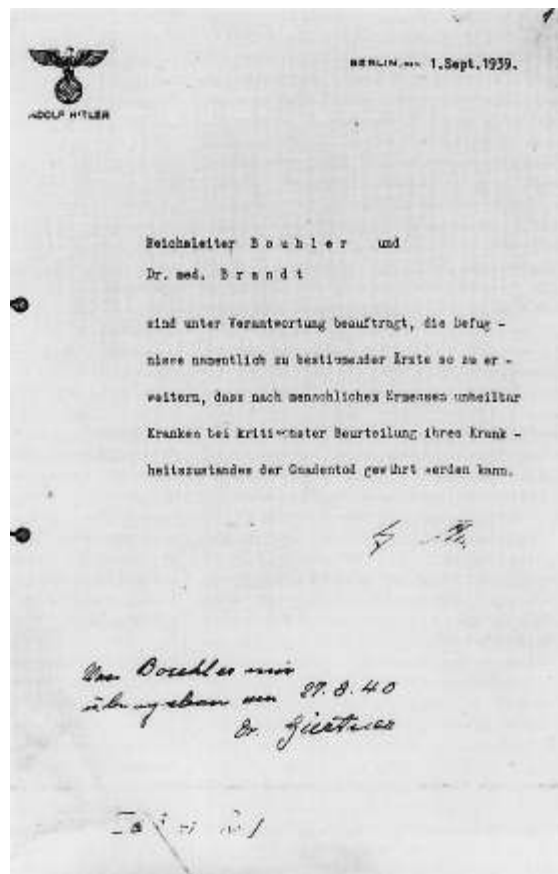
Key Dates	
1930 - 1938	Stalin's Purge - during Joseph Stalin's reign of terror in Russia and in the Soviet Republics (1930-1938), his regime killed or starved an estimated 15 million peasants, 5 million Ukrainians, 200,000 Jews, and as many as 3 million "enemies of the state". The total could be as many as 23.2 million victims.

1933 (January)	Hitler becomes chancellor of a coalition government
1933 (March)	The Enabling Act passed - powers of legislation pass to Hitler's cabinet for four years, making him a virtual dictator
1933 (March - April)	1st set of Anti-Jewish legislation enacted
1933 (July)	Sterilization Law for the "Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring"
1935 (September)	2nd set of Anti-Jewish Legislation enacted - "Nuremberg Laws"
1938 (November)	3rd set of Anti-Jewish Legislation enacted
1939 (October) - 1940 (April)	Nisko and Lublin Plan (1st Jews Transported - October, 1939. Plan cancelled April 1940)
1939	In a 1939 conference with health minister Leonardo Conti and the head of the Reich Chancellery, Hans Lammers, a few months before the euthanasia decree, Hitler gave as examples of "life unworthy of life" severely mentally ill people who could only be bedded on sawdust or sand because they "perpetually dirtied themselves", or who "put their own excrement into their mouths, eating it and so on".
1939 (October) - 1941 (August)	The "T4" Euthanasia Program - In October 1939, the German government established, under the Reich Chancellery, the <i>Euthanasie Programme</i> under the direction of Philip Bouhler and Dr. Karl Brandt. As well as killing patients from mental homes, nursing homes and sanatoria, Euthanasia centres were also used to kill prisoners transferred from concentration camps in Germany and Austria.
1940 (Summer)	Madagascar Plan - Cancelled October, 1940 because of defeat in the "Battle of Britain" (10 July 1940 - 31 October 1940)
1941 (July)	In July 1941 Hermann Goering ordered Reinhard Heydrich to coordinate a plan for the "Final Solution." Heydrich's Einsatzgruppen had been murdering Russian Jews by firing squad since the war against the Soviets started in 1941. However, this was not a suitable way to kill the Jews outside the war zone. Thus, Reinhard Heydrich had to create something "new". In November 1941 extermination camps in Chelmno and Belzec were already being built with facilities for murder by poison.

1941 (07 December) - 1943 (March)	Chelmno - 1st extermination camp (Poland) operational. The camp began operations 07 December 1941, and ended operations March 1943. It resumed operations 23 June 1944, and finally ceased operations 17 January 1945. The estimated number of deaths is 150-300,000, mainly Jews. Chelmno operated three gas vans using carbon monoxide (tested in the T4 Euthanasia program).
1942 (20 January)	Wannsee Conference (Final Solution) - originally called for 09 December 1941
1942 (March to November 1944)	Auschwitz operational
1945 (30 April)	Death of Hitler

--()--

1939 - Secret "Euthanasia" Memo from Adolf Hitler, 01 September



Secret "Euthanasia" Memo from Adolf Hitler, 01 September 1939

Berlin, ??? 1.Sept.1939.

[Seal]

ADOLF HITLER

Reichsleiter Bouhler and

Dr Brandt MD

have the responsibility of increasing the authority of certain doctors to be designated by name so that persons who, according to human judgement, are incurably ill can, upon a most careful diagnosis of their condition, be granted a mercy death.

A. Hitler

--()--

1941 - The German "Final Solution"

Nuremberg document PS-710:

Reich Marshal of Greater German Reich Göring to Chief of Security Police and Security Service Heydrich

Berlin, July [31], 1941

Complementing the task already assigned to you in the decree of January 24, 1939, to undertake, by emigration or evacuation, a solution of the Jewish question as advantageous as possible under the conditions at the time, I hereby charge you with making all necessary organizational, functional, and material preparations for a complete solution of the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe.

In so far as the jurisdiction of other central agencies may be touched thereby, they are so to be involved.

I charge you furthermore with submitting to me in the near future an overall plan of the organizational, functional, and material measures to be taken in preparing for the implementation of the aspired final solution of the Jewish question.

--()--

The Final Solution

The "Final Solution" was the code-name for the Nazis' plan to solve the "Jewish question" by murdering all the Jews in Europe. The "Final Solution" was the culmination of many years of evolving

Nazi policy: from Hitler's earliest writings about the need for a solution to the Jewish question in Europe; through the Nazis' attempts to induce mass emigration during the 1930s; to the plan for collective exile to a specific destination during the first war years; and by 1941, the mass extermination of Jews.

In September 1919 Hitler penned his first political document. In it, he stated that the Jewish question would eventually be solved by the removal of the Jews from Europe altogether. According to Hitler, this removal would not be carried out in an emotional fashion, with pogroms and such, but executed with typical German thoroughness and efficient planning. For Hitler, the Jewish question was the essential question for all Nazis. However, his early writings and statements cannot be viewed as a blueprint for the "Final Solution" and murders put into effect much later.

Throughout the 1930s, Hitler believed that "mass emigration" was the answer to the Jewish problem. The Anti-Jewish Legislation[1] passed in Germany from the time Hitler rose to national power, in January 1933, to the outbreak of World War II, in September 1939, was designed to convince and later coerce the Jews into leaving the country. In January 1939 Hitler spoke before the German parliament. He criticized the free world for not taking in Jewish immigrants and warned that the consequences of war would include the "annihilation" of European Jewry. It is still open to debate whether that statement should be interpreted as a direct articulation of Hitler's intention to murder the Jews, or whether it was just Hitler's manipulative way of leaning on the free world to take in Jewish immigrants.

When Germany invaded Poland[2], launching World War II, an additional 1.8 million Jews came under German control. Hitler did not immediately order their extermination. Instead, a plan was formulated whereby all Jews living within the Reich were to be exiled to a reservation in the Lublin district of the Generalgouvernement[3]. The Nazis tried to implement this Nisko and Lublin Plan[4], but it never came to fruition. By the spring of 1940, it was clear that the Lublin program was no longer the answer to the Jewish question, as Poland did not have enough territory to spare for the Jews.

The next phase in anti-Jewish policy, introduced in May 1940, was the Madagascar Plan[5]--a plan to deport all of Europe's Jews to the island of Madagascar, a French colony in Africa. However, the Germans were defeated in the Battle of Britain (10 July 1940 - 31 October 1940) just a few months later, rendering the Madagascar idea unfeasible.

The Germans attacked their former ally, the Soviet Union, in June 1941. Mobile killing units called Einsatzgruppen[6], along with regular army, police units and local collaborators immediately began the systematic murder of the Jews in the Soviet Union. This was the first time that mass systematic extermination was used as a method of solving the Jewish question.

In July, Hermann Goering authorized the preparation for the "Final Solution." At the end of 1941 and early in 1942, the Nazis established Extermination Camps[7], began Deportations[8] to them, and perfected killing methods. The first gassing experiment was performed in Auschwitz in September 1941, and extermination camps at Belzec and Chelmno were constructed in late autumn. Sobibor, Treblinka, Majdanek and Auschwitz became extermination centres in the spring of 1942. In the meantime, on December 12, 1941, Hitler told his intimate circle that the murder was to be extended to include German Jews, thereby including all the Jews of Europe in the plans for the "Final Solution."

At the "Wannsee Conference"[9] in January 1942, German government and SS leaders met to coordinate the extermination of every Jew in Europe. From then until the end of the war in 1945, the "Final Solution" was official Nazi policy and meant one thing only--death to the Jews.

--()--

Poison Gas and Gas Chambers

Poison Gas/Gas Chambers - Key Dates		
Date	How	Who
December 1939 - 1st use of	Carbon Monoxide	Polish mental patients

Poison Gas		exterminated
By August 1941	Five euthanasia centres/ mobile Gas Vans Carbon Monoxide	70,000 Germans exterminated (handicapped, chronically ill, aged, etc)
Summer of 1941	Shooting	Jews
December 1942	Gas Vans at the Chelmon Extermination Camp	Jews (46 victims at a time)
1942 - During the Summer, plans were made to build newer, more efficient gas chambers, and crematoria ovens	Gas Chambers	Jews
1943 - By the Spring of 1943, Auschwitz had become the Nazis' main killing centre.	Gas Chambers	Jews

The Nazis first began using poison gas as a means for mass murder in December 1939, when an SS *Sonderkommando* unit used carbon monoxide to suffocate Polish mental patients. One month later, the head of the Euthanasia Program[10] decided to use carbon monoxide to kill the handicapped, chronically ill, aged, and others who had been put in his charge. By August 1941 some 70,000 Germans had been murdered in five euthanasia centres, which were equipped either with stationary gas chambers or with mobile Gas Vans.

In the summer of 1941 the Germans began murdering Jews in a systematic and mass fashion. After several months, it became clear to them that the mass murder method they had been using, shooting, was neither quick nor efficient enough for their needs. Thus, based on the experience gained in the Euthanasia Program, they began using gas chambers to annihilate European Jewry.

In December 1941 the SS inaugurated the large-scale use of gas vans at the Chelmo extermination camp. These worked by piping exhaust fumes into the closed cab through a special tube. Forty to sixty victims were jammed into the van at a time, and after several minutes, they were suffocated. However, this method was insufficient for the millions of Jews that the Nazis hoped to kill, so when they built three extermination camps in 1942 as part of Aktion Reinhard[11]—the program to exterminate the Jews in the Generalgouvernement[3]—they equipped them with large, stationary gas chambers. Belzec, which opened for operation in March, had three gas chambers located in a wooden barrack; Sobibor, where the killings began in May, housed its gas chambers in a brick building; and Treblinka, which was established in July, had three gas chambers that could be hermetically sealed. At each of the three camps, hundreds of thousands of Jews were murdered by exhaust gas from diesel engines. During the summer and fall of 1942 the Nazis enlarged the existing gas chambers and added new ones.

When transports arrived at Sobibor, Treblinka, and Belzec, a few of the victims were chosen to join *Sonderkommando* units, while a few others with various skills were selected to work in repair shops that served the camp staff. The rest of the victims were sent on an assembly line, where they were stripped of their possessions and clothing and their hair was cut. They were then pushed into the gas chambers with their arms raised so the maximum number of people could be jammed in. Babies and young children were thrown in on top of the heap. After the victims had died, the *Sonderkommando* men would remove the bodies from the chamber and bury them.

The Nazis continued to look for a still more efficient method of mass murder. After some experimentation done on Soviet Prisoners of War, the Nazis found a commercial insecticide called Zyklon b to be an appropriate gas for their needs. Zyklon b, a form of hydrogen cyanide, was put to use in the extermination centre at Auschwitz. Over its four years of existence, more than one million people were gassed to death there. However, the Nazis were never satisfied with the rate of extermination. During the summer of 1942 plans were made to build newer, more efficient gas

chambers and crematoria ovens to dispose of the corpses. The project was completed under the direction of JA Topf und Soehne by the spring of 1943, allowing Auschwitz to become the Nazis' main killing centre.

(Picture below - Auschwitz - 04 April 1944)

This is one of a series of aerial reconnaissance photographs of the Auschwitz concentration camp taken between 04 April 1944, and 14 January 1945 by a de Havilland Mosquito photo-reconnaissance aircraft operated by the South African Air Force. The Allies had the range and capability to bomb Auschwitz from May 1944, but chose not to.



Some of the Nazis' other camps also contained gas chambers, but they were not used on a regular basis for mass extermination. Gas chambers functioned at Mauthausen, Neuengamme, Sachsenhausen, Stutthof, and Ravensbrueck. All of these gas chambers utilized Zyklon b.

--()--

Zyklon b

Originally, the Germans used carbon monoxide in Gas Vans and in sealed rooms, such as at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. The Nazis realized, however, that carbon monoxide gassing was not efficient for the large-scale killing they were planning for Auschwitz. Adolf Eichmann then went in search of a different poisonous gas that would be more appropriate. On September 3, 1941 the Nazis experimented on a group of Russian Prisoners of War; they wanted to see whether Zyklon b, used in the camps for fumigation purposes, was an effective means of mass murder. The experiment was successful. From then on, Zyklon b was used in Birkenau (Auschwitz II) for the mass gassing of Jews transported there from all over Europe.

Zyklon b was delivered to the camps in crystal pellet form. As soon as the pellets were exposed to air they turned into poisonous gas. A Nazi equipped with a gas mask would empty the crystals into the packed gas chamber through a small opening. Within a short space of time, the victims were dead.

--()--

Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp

The Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was located in Belsen. The site of the former concentration camp and the present day Bergen-Belsen Memorial Centre fall mainly within the municipality of Winsen (Aller) and its parish of Walle (Winsen). Between Bergen and Belsen are the ramps on which prisoners from the incoming goods wagons were unloaded and from where they had to cover the remaining distance of about 4 kilometres to the camp on foot.

Belsen - Nazi concentration camp near Bergen and Belsen, villages in what was then Prussian Hannover, Germany. Established in 1943 partly as a prisoner-of-war camp and partly as a Jewish transit camp, it was designed for 10,000 prisoners but eventually held about 60,000, most of whom lacked any food or shelter. It contained no gas chambers, but some 35,000 prisoners died there, including Anne Frank, between January and mid-April 1945. As the first such camp to be liberated by the Western Allies (April 15, 1945), it received instant notoriety. Some 28,000 prisoners died of diseases and other causes in the weeks after their liberation by British troops.

Bergen-Belsen was not an extermination camp.

Definition - Concentration Camp

Concentration camps are places for assembling and confining political prisoners and enemies of a nation. Concentration camps are particularly associated with the rule of the Nazis in Germany, who used them to confine millions of Jews as a group to be purged from the German nation. Communists, Gypsies, homosexuals, and other persons considered undesirable according to Nazi principles, or who opposed the government, were also placed in concentration camps and eventually executed in extermination camps in large numbers.

--()--

Notes

[1] **Anti Jewish Legislation** - The more than 2,000 anti-Jewish measures put into effect in Germany under Nazi rule.

When the Nazi Party was formed in 1920, its party platform included four anti-Jewish goals: Jews should not be citizens, and should be given the legal status of foreigners; Jews should not be public officials; Jews should be forbidden to immigrate to Germany; and Jewish owners or editors of German newspapers should be removed from their positions. These declarations were similar to the platforms of other anti-Semitic groups active at that time.

The Nazis rose to national power in Germany in January 1933. During their rule, which lasted from 1933--1945, three separate groups of anti-Jewish legislation were enacted. The first began in March--April 1933, peaking with the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. This law legalized firing "non-Aryan" government employees. It also acted as a precedent for the exclusion of Jews from other jobs. Most "non-Aryan" students were barred from attending German schools and "non-Aryans" were forbidden to take final state exams for many occupations. This last clause was also adopted by private firms, societies, and clubs. Another set of laws discriminated against the Jewish religion. By 1935, Jewish life had been severely restricted in Germany.

The second wave of anti-Jewish legislation began in September 1935, with the passage of two laws by the German parliament, termed the Nuremberg Laws. According to the first law, Jews were stripped of their citizenship and were denied the right to vote. Within a few months 13 additional decrees were attached to this law. The second law, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, prohibited marriage and sexual contact between Germans and Jews. This legislation led the Germans to clearly define who was an "Aryan," Jew, or part-Jew, and to what degree.

The third group of anti-Jewish laws restricted Jews from the German economy. The Germans began issuing this legislation as early as 1936 and 1937, but timed most severe measures to coincide with

the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1938. The government made it legal to confiscate Jewish property through Aryanization. On November 9, 1938 Reinhard Heydrich became the chief of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration (Zentralstelle Fuer Juedische Auswanderung). The creation of this office empowered the SS to make all decisions regarding the Jews and their fate.

World War II broke out in September 1939. At that time, the Germans expanded all existing anti-Jewish measures. Later, in September 1941, the Jews were forced to wear the Jewish-badge any time they went out in public, and by October 23 of that year Jewish emigration from Germany was strictly forbidden. On December 12, 1941 Hitler told a gathering of his intimates that the murder of the Jews, which had begun in the east (June 1941), would be extended to German Jews as well.

Within the countries that allied themselves with Germany and those that were invaded and occupied by Germany, anti-Jewish laws were enacted to different degrees based on the type of occupation regime established by the Germans, how much pressure Germany put on the country, how anti-Semitic the country's government was to begin with, or how successfully the country could convince Germany to leave it alone to make its own rules. Racial laws were enacted at lightning speed in Austria, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and Poland. In Germany's satellite states or in countries defeated by the German army, Jews were generally excluded from economic activities, and laws were made which defined exactly who was to be considered a Jew. Only in Denmark, where the government did not resist German occupation but insisted on protecting its Jews, were no anti-Jewish measures put into effect, until the attempt to deport the Jews in October 1943.

--()--

[2] **Invasion of Poland** - On September 1, 1939 Germany attacked Poland, launching World War II. Poland's allies, Great Britain and France, immediately declared war on Germany. Despite this, Poland fell to the Germans in just weeks, its capital, Warsaw, capitulating on September 28.

A Polish Government-In-Exile was quickly established in France (when France fell to the German army in mid-1940, the government-in-exile moved to London). This government, represented in Poland by the underground Delegatura and the Polish National Council, continued to wage war against Germany for the duration of World War II.

--()--

[3] **Generalgouvernement** - (General Government), territorial unit in Poland with its own administration, created by the Nazis on October 26, 1939. When the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, they split the country into three parts: the western third was annexed to the Third Reich; the eastern third was occupied by the Soviet Union; and the central third was made into the *Generalgouvernement*, a semi-independent unit which the Nazis intended to use as a place to do all their racial "dirty work." The *Generalgouvernement* was to serve as a "racial dumping ground," an endless supply of slave labor, and ultimately, as a site for the mass extermination of European Jewry.

The *Generalgouvernement* was divided into four districts: Cracow, Warsaw, Radom, and Lublin, with Cracow serving as the administrative center. These areas, which had a total population of 12 million, of which 1.5 million were Jews were further divided into sub-districts. After the Germans attacked the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, they attached Eastern Galicia to the *Generalgouvernement*, making it the fifth district and adding between three and four million people to the population.

The head of the *Generalgouvernement* was Hans Frank, who held the position of governor-general. However, he was not free to govern as he pleased. The racial policies carried out in the *Generalgouvernement* were the responsibility of the SS and the police, which were first headed by SS-*Obergruppenfuehrer* Friedrich Kruger, and then by Wilhelm Koppe.

The Nazis treated the Poles of the *Generalgouvernement* in a terrible fashion. They only allowed a handful of Polish institutions to continue functioning, including the bank that put out the country's currency; the Polish Police, known as *Granatowa*, meaning Blue; and the Central Relief Committee. These were not allowed to operate however they wanted: they were subject to the strict supervision of

the *Generalgouvernement* authorities. The Nazis viewed the Poles living within the *Generalgouvernement* as a cheap labor source, to be taken advantage of at any occasion. Later, the Germans tried to deal with the Poles by distinguishing between those who were of German origin (*Deutschstammig*) and those who were inferior.

The Germans tried to make sure that the Poles would obey them by terrorizing the population. If the Polish underground killed a German, 50--100 Poles were executed as a punishment and warning. Two acts of terror that the Nazis inflicted on Polish citizens were particularly barbaric. In November 1939 the Nazis performed *Sonderaktion Krakau* (Special Action Cracow), in which they arrested 183 school and college staff members who were attending a meeting with the German police. These Poles were deported to Sachsenhausen; most never returned. The second act was carried out in Lvov, where 38 Polish professors were executed soon after German troops entered the city.

The Germans also destroyed Polish scientific and cultural institutions, and pillaged artistic and archaeological treasures. In addition, they stripped the Poles of their financial infrastructure, leaving them to support themselves with only small businesses and agriculture. The Poles were made to turn over food to the Germans, and were forbidden to trade foodstuffs. Thus, those Poles living in urban areas were limited to the pitiful food rations provided--a veritable starvation diet. They were forced to smuggle food illegally just to stay alive.

The Jews of the *Generalgouvernement* were subject to terribly harsh decrees. From the very beginning, the Germans confiscated their property and made them perform Forced Labour. From late 1939, the Jews were put in Ghettos, where they were totally isolated from the outside world and severely restricted. In the spring of 1942 the Germans began deporting the Jews from the ghettos to Extermination Camps located in the Lublin district, and by 1944 all ghettos in the *Generalgouvernement* had been liquidated.

The *Generalgouvernement* was completely liberated by Soviet troops by January 1945.

--()--

[4] **Nisko and Lublin Plan** - Plan developed by the Germans at the beginning of World War II for the expulsion of Jews living in German-occupied areas to the Lublin region of Poland. Adolf Eichmann and Franz Stahlecker initiated the plan. They chose Nisko, near the eastern Galician border, as the site for a transit camp for the Jews, from which the Jews would be resettled in the Lublin district of the *Generalgouvernement*. The Lublin Reservation was slated to be "a Jewish state under German administration." Near the end of 1939, this plan was accepted among SS leaders.

The first transport of 901 Jews from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia set off for Nisko on 18 October 1939. When they arrived, the Jews were forced to set up barracks in a swampy field. Another 1,800 Jews from Katowice and Vienna arrived a few days later. However, despite Eichmann's long-term plans for the site, the transports were soon stopped, and the camp was shut down in April 1940.

Officially, the Nisko and Lublin Plan was cancelled due to "technical difficulties," which probably referred to the difficulties Heinrich Himmler had in finding jobs for those ethnic Germans he had resettled in Poland in place of the Jews. Additionally, Hitler lost interest in a Jewish reservation--and turned his attention to deadlier means of solving the "Jewish question."

--()--

[5] **Madagascar Plan** - Plan to deport the Jews of Europe to Madagascar, a French island colony off the southeast coast of Africa, that was briefly brought up in the summer of 1940 as a solution to the "Jewish question."

The idea of sending European Jewry to Madagascar was not new: British, Dutch, and Polish anti-Semites had been suggesting a similar plan since World War I. In 1937 the Polish government sent a three man commission to Madagascar to explore the possibilities of settling Jews there. In early 1938

Adolf Eichmann was asked to prepare a report on the subject of Madagascar. However, it was not until more than two years later that the idea caught on in the upper echelons of the Nazi regime.

In the spring of 1940 it became obvious that the Nisko and Lublin Plan[4]--which called for the Deportation of all the Jews in the annexed parts of Poland to the Generalgouvernement[3]--was not going to work. The Germans were also about to invade Western Europe, which would potentially bring hundreds of thousands more Jews under German control. In late May, while France, which controlled Madagascar was being taken, Hitler approved the idea of sending Jews to an African colony.

The Madagascar Plan became technically unfeasible later that year when the Germans lost the Battle of Britain (10 July 1940 - 31 October 1940).

--()--

[6] **Einsatzgruppen** - (full name: *Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitsdienstes [SD] und der Sicherheitspolizei [SIPO]*), German term, meaning "action-groups," that originally referred to Nazi police intelligence units that worked with the German army after the invasion of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. Later, the term referred to mobile SS killing units that traveled with the German forces that invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.

When the Germans invaded Austria in March 1938 and Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the job of the *Einsatzgruppen* was to follow the advancing military, and act as portable offices of the Nazis' Security Service and Security Police until permanent offices could be set up. The *Einsatzgruppen* were in charge of security in these regions, which meant finding and imprisoning opponents of the Nazis.

In preparation for the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, the *Einsatzgruppen* were commanded to combat elements that were hostile to the Reich; they interpreted that as an order to murder thousands of Jews and members of the Polish upper-class. Soon after the invasion, the *Einsatzgruppen* were instructed on how to deal with Jews in the newly conquered regions: they were to arrest the Jews and put them in Ghettos near railway lines to facilitate future population movement, and set up Judenraete (Jewish Councils). These *Einsatzgruppen* were disbanded in November 1939; their members joined the permanent Security Services and Security Police offices in occupied Poland.

As Germany prepared to invade the Soviet Union in June 1941, Hitler made it clear to the army that the upcoming war was based on a fundamental conflict between two completely opposing ideologies. It was imperative to destroy those elements that perpetuated the conflicting ideology. Thus, special units called *Einsatzgruppen* were formed to accompany the advancing military forces. Their job was to search for opponents of the Reich, including Communists and all Jews--and execute them.

When Operation "Barbarossa" began, the *Einsatzgruppen* followed the German army Wehrmacht right in to the Soviet Union. Four units had been established, *Einsatzgruppen* A, B, C, and D. Each one was assigned to liquidate the Jews in its own region and each was divided into sub-units called Sonderkommandos or *Einsatzkommandos*. *Einsatzgruppe* A, the largest group with about 1,000 men, was attached to Army Group North. They operated in the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) and the area between their eastern borders and Leningrad. *Einsatzgruppe* B, 655 men attached to Army Group Center, worked in Belorussia and the Smolensk district, east of Moscow. *Einsatzgruppe* C, a group of 700 attached to Army Group South, covered the northern and central Ukraine. *Einsatzgruppe* D, with 600 men attached to the Eleventh Army, operated in the southern Ukraine, the Crimea, and Ciscaucasia. These groups did not carry out the destruction of Soviet Jewry alone-- wherever they went, regular German soldiers, German police units and local collaborators helped get their murderous job done. By the spring of 1943, the *Einsatzgruppen* had exterminated 1.25 million Jews and hundreds of thousands of Soviets, including Prisoners of War.

The *Einsatzgruppen* killed their victims--men, women, and children--by gathering them in ravines, mines, quarries, ditches, or pits dug specifically for this purpose. First they would force the Jews to hand over their possessions and remove their clothing. Then they would shoot them, and throw the bodies into the ditch. The commanders filed daily reports of their murderous activities.

The constant up-close contact with murder had a terribly destructive effect on the *Einsatzgruppen* members, despite the large amounts of alcohol they were plied with. This led the Nazis to search for other execution alternatives. Soon the *Einsatzgruppen* were given Gas Vans for the murder of the remaining Jews.

After the war, leaders of the *Einsatzgruppen* were tried at Nuremberg and at later trials. Of 24 defendants, 14 were sentenced to death. Only four were actually executed; the rest had their sentences reduced.

--()--

[7] **Extermination Camps** - (in German, *vernichtungslager*), Nazi camps located in occupied Poland whose sole purpose was to murder the Jews brought there. Altogether, about 3.5 million Jews were killed in extermination camps as part of the "final solution."

The Nazis began systematically mass murdering Jews when they invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. At first, hundreds of thousands of Jews were shot to death by *einsatzgruppen*[5] and other units. However, this method quickly proved cumbersome, and the Nazis began searching for other murder methods. They soon began experimenting with poison gas at Auschwitz and other camps. After these experiments showed gas to be a successful technique, Nazi leaders ordered the establishment of extermination camps where gas would be used for the murder of Jews.

The extermination camps were constructed in the region of Poland occupied by Germany in 1939. They included the Birkenau (Auschwitz II) section of Auschwitz, Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Some experts also include Majdanek, with its 360,000 victims as there was a time when the Jews who arrived there were subjected to selections, as at Auschwitz, and most sent to their deaths.

Chelmno was the first extermination camp to be established. Located near Lodz, the camp began operations 07 December 1941, and ended operations March 1943. It resumed operations 23 June 1944, and finally ceased operations 17 January 1945. The estimated number of deaths is 150-300,000, mainly Jews. Chelmno operated three gas vans using carbon monoxide (tested in the T4 Euthanasia program).

Auschwitz was both a concentration camp and an extermination camp. Its extermination section in Birkenau was instituted in March 1942, and finally closed in November 1944. During its two and a half years of operation, about one million Jews were murdered in the camp's gas chambers, which used "Zyklon b" gas. In addition, tens of thousands of gypsies and Soviet prisoners of war were also murdered there.

Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka were all set up in 1942 as a result of Aktion Reinhard[11]. Belzec was in operation from March to December 1942, during which time 600,000 Jews were murdered there; Sobibor operated from April 1942 to October 1943, with 250,000 victims; and Treblinka operated from July 1942 to August 1943, encompassing 870,000 murders. Those annihilated at these camps were suffocated to death by carbon monoxide gas.

Table - Polish Extermination Camps

Polish Extermination Camps			
(Germany Invaded Poland - September 1, 1939)			
Camp	Date Instituted	Date Closed	Victims[*]
Chelmno (1st Extermination Camp)	December 7, 1941	March 1943	320,000
Auschwitz Birkenau	March 1942	November 1944	1,000,000
Belzec[**]	March 1942	December 1942	600,000
Sobibor[**]	April 1942	October 1943	250,000
Treblinka[**]	July 1942	August 1943	870,000
Majdanek	September 1941	July 1944	360,000

[*] It is suggested that altogether, about 3.5 million Jews were killed in extermination camps as part of the "final solution".

[**] The establishment of the Extermination Camps of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka was known as, "Operation Reinhard".

In June 1941, mobile killing units called Einsatzgruppen were used to exterminate Russian Jews.

On December 12, 1941 Hitler told a gathering of his intimates that the murder of the Jews, which had begun in the east (June 1941), would be extended to German Jews as well.

--(--)

[8] **Deportations** - In 1919 Adolf Hitler wrote of his desire for the complete removal of Jews from Germany, and his belief that methodical measures were needed in order to achieve that goal. By the mid-1930s, the SS transformed that theoretical goal into a policy that called for a Germany that was physically "cleaned" (*Judenrein*) or "free" (*Judenfrei*) of Jews. After the annexation of Austria (Anschluss) in March 1938 and even more so after the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1938, the Nazis began pressuring Jews to emigrate.

Soon after the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, they began the first stage of deportation by forcing Jews out of their homes and into Ghettos. There were also attempts to drive the Jews into Soviet territory. The Nazis then decided to deport all the Jews living within the Reich to an area in Poland's Generalgouvernement[3] called the Lublin Reservation. This scheme was part of the Nazis' larger plan to move around the populations of Europe: besides these designs for the Jews, they intended to remove many Poles from Poland, and resettle the area with ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche) primarily from the Soviet Union. Adolf Eichmann was put in charge of the deportations of Jews and Poles, as the SS expert on "Jewish affairs and evacuations." However, the so-called Nisko and Lublin Plan[4] faltered. Germany's resettlement plans halted completely in mid-1941, during preparations to invade the Soviet Union. Thus, Hitler's goal to expel all Jews from German-occupied areas had not yet been achieved.

The next stage of deportation was the result of a shift in the Nazi's Jewish policy from expulsion to mass extermination. After invading the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Germans began to massacre Soviet Jewry by firing squad. However, this method could not reasonably be used in the cities of Eastern and Western Europe. Thus, the Nazis decided to deport Jews to extermination centres in the east. Deportations from the Lodz Ghetto to the first Extermination Camp, called Chelmno, began in December 1941. The other major extermination camps were ready for operation by mid-1942.

The Jews were transferred to the camps by train. The German Transport Ministry and German Railways helped the Nazis in their murderous goal by providing special trains for the Jews. In most cases, the Jews were crowded into cattle cars; in northern Europe some Jews paid for their tickets,

and sometimes even upgraded to first-class. In the end, though, however they got there, the Jews deported to the east suffered a similar fate.

The Jews of Poland were transported to extermination camps throughout 1942. In March 1942 nearly 60,000 Slovak Jews were deported to Poland to their deaths. In July 1942 mass deportations were launched from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands--at first consisting mostly of foreign Jewish refugees. In August, 5,000 Jews from Croatia were deported. Starting in late October, more than 700 Norwegian Jews were arrested and taken to the extermination camps. Deportations continued in 1943 from all those countries, but the Germans began to concentrate mainly on deporting the Jews in the Balkans.

Romania carried out the deportation of Jews to Transnistria from the territories it had taken from the Soviet Union, including Bessarabia and Bukovina. Nonetheless, the Romanians refused to deport their own Jews. The Italian government protected the Jews within its jurisdiction, such as in southern Greece and France, and parts of Yugoslavia. However, most Greek Jews lived in northern Greece, in Salonika, which was occupied by Germany. Thus, some 44,000 Greek Jews were deported to extermination camps between March and August 1943 the rest following later.

The Germans also tried to deport the Jews of Denmark in October 1943. However, the local population foiled their plan by hiding their country's Jews and then smuggling them to neutral Sweden.

In 1944 most of the remaining Jews were deported from Slovakia and from the last ghetto, Lodz. But the Nazis' main effort at that time regarded the destruction of Hungarian Jewry. After Germany occupied Hungary in March 1944, 437,000 Jews were deported to their deaths at Auschwitz.

--()--

[9] **Wannsee Conference** - Meeting held at a lakeside villa in Wannsee, Berlin, on January 20, 1942, whose purpose was to discuss and coordinate the "final solution" to the "Jewish Problem"--the mass extermination of all European Jewry.

The Wannsee Conference was organized by Reinhard Heydrich, Heinrich Himmler's deputy and head of the reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Security Main Office, or RSHA). The attendees included the state secretaries of those German government offices that carried out Hitler's anti-Jewish policies, and some SS leaders. Adolf Eichmann, the director of Heydrich's Jewish office, was one of those included; he later wrote the conference report. At the meeting, Heydrich announced that the official policy of the German government regarding the Jews would be total annihilation. The men invited to the meeting all knew about the Jewish policy; they were either involved in or directly aware of the murder of Jews already taking place across Europe. The question at hand was not whether to implement the policy, but *how* to implement it.

In July 1941 Hermann Goering had ordered Heydrich to coordinate a plan for the "Final Solution." Heydrich's Einsatzgruppen had been murdering Russian Jews by firing squad since the war against the Soviets broke out in 1941. However, this was not a suitable way to kill the Jews outside the war zone. Thus, Heydrich had to create something new. In November extermination camps in Chelmno and Belzec were already being built with facilities for murder by poison.

The Wannsee Conference was originally called for December 9, but was pushed off until January 20, 1942. Heydrich opened the conference with a long speech. He first repeated that he had authorization from Goering to coordinate the "Final Solution." Then he reviewed the Nazis' previous, temporary solution to the Jewish problem--the forced emigration of Jews from the areas under German control, until Himmler forbade any more emigration in the fall of 1941. Next, he announced the new policy that was taking the place of emigration: the "Final Solution." The program would begin with the "Evacuation of the Jews to the East," a thinly veiled term for deportation of the Jews to camps. This phase would include all "11 million" Jews in Europe, even those living in countries not yet occupied by the Germans. However, the camp phase was only to be a temporary one, which would lead finally to the annihilation of all European Jewry. He allowed that the strong and healthy Jews would be used as laborers, but that most would not survive. Heydrich concluded his speech by describing some of the

specific problems facing the program, such as what to do with Jews in mixed marriages and their part-Jewish children. The attendees spent much time discussing this issue. Different possible solutions were mentioned, but nothing was decided, so the problems were discussed at two later conferences in March and October 1942.

The next part of the meeting was less structured. The attendees drank and discussed the general issues at hand. At some point, they got down to the business of suggesting various methods of mass destruction. At his war crimes trial in Jerusalem, Eichmann testified that "during the conversation, they minced no words about it at all. They spoke about methods of killing, about liquidation, about extermination." At that stage of the war, the Germans still had little experience in mass murder on such a large scale.

Heydrich closed the meeting with an appeal for cooperation among the participants. Afterwards, Heydrich seemed satisfied that all had gone according to plan, and that the government secretaries were in full agreement about what had to be done. Soon after the Wannsee Conference, the construction of the rest of the extermination camps began.

--()--

[10] **The T4 Euthanasia Program - 1939 to 1941** (*Aktion T4*, T4 Operation), term meaning "mercy killings", which the Nazis used to euphemistically refer to their systematic extermination of certain groups including the incurably ill, physically or mentally disabled, emotionally distraught, and elderly people. As well as killing patients from mental homes, nursing homes and sanatoria, the Euthanasia centres were also used to kill prisoners transferred from concentration camps in Germany and Austria.

The Euthanasia Program, code-named T4, was part of the Nazis' attempt to preserve the purity of the master race--in order to create a superior group of "Aryans", the Nazis needed to destroy all those with racial defects.

The Nazis first began cutting out undesirable elements of their society in the 1930s, with the forced sterilization of children of black fathers, those with genetic diseases, and repeat criminals. By late 1939, Hitler appointed Dr. Karl Brandt and Philip Bouhler heads of the Euthanasia Program. These men hired a staff of medical doctors and established four euthanasia centres in Germany during the first half of 1940, in Grafeneck, Brandenburg, Hartheim, and Sonnenstein.

Residents of welfare institutions, some Concentration Camp inmates, the chronically sick, the mentally and physically disabled, homosexuals, and even sick German soldiers were brought to these centres and gassed, shot, or killed by lethal injection. By the end of that year, almost 27,000 Germans had been killed as part of the program; and by August 1941, more than 35,000 more had been exterminated.

The Euthanasia Program was officially closed down on September 1, 1941, due to growing public pressure, including a sermon delivered by Bishop Clemens Galen in Muenster on August 3. However, the Nazis secretly continued their "mercy killings" all the way up to the end of the war.

The Euthanasia Program staff were transferred to Aktion Reinhard [11], and different Nazi institutions took over the killing. According to sources at the Nuremberg Trials, there were 275,000 victims of the Euthanasia Program, other sources estimate about 200,000 victims.

One of the most heinous aspects of the Euthanasia Program was the fact that its staff members were trained medical doctors, sworn to help care for their patients, not destroy them because of a racial difference. At its inception, the program was even illegal--and yet the Euthanasia practitioners seemed to have no moral, religious, or legal doubts about what they were doing.

T4 - Euthanasia Program - 1939 to 1941

In October 1939, the German government established, under the Reich Chancellery, the *Euthanasie Programme* under the direction of Philip Bouhler and Dr. Karl Brandt.

Action T4 was a program, also called the "Euthanasia Program", operated from October 1939 to August 1941, during which physicians killed tens of thousands of people specified in Adolf Hitler's secret memo of 01 September 1939 as suffering patients "judged incurably sick, by critical medical examination,"

Picture Right - This poster reads: "60,000 Reichsmarks is what this person suffering from hereditary defects costs the People's community during his lifetime. Comrade, that is your money too. Read '[A] New People', the monthly magazine of the Bureau for Race Politics of the NSDAP." (c. 1938)



T4 was the code name for this euthanasia program, and it was derived from the address of the chancellery headquarters at Tiergartenstrasse No. 4 in Berlin.

This was the so-called 'mercy' killing of those people the Nazis deemed unworthy for life, undesirable to German society. The program operated from October 1939 until August 1941

These included the physically and intellectually disabled, the aged and infirm, and many others regarded as 'racially valueless'.

In the autumn of 1939, Hitler signed a secret authorization in order to protect participating physicians, medical staff, and administrators from prosecution; this authorization was backdated to September 1, 1939, to suggest that the effort was related to wartime measures.

While the program ran, historians estimate "Euthanasia" Program, in all its phases, claimed the lives of 200,000 people who were suffering patients, "judged incurably sick, by critical medical examination".

According to T4's own internal calculations, the "euthanasia" effort claimed the lives of 70,273 institutionalized mentally and physically disabled persons at the six gassing facilities between January 1940 and August 1941.

Victims were killed by lethal injections, gassing, or other methods (including starvation). During the 1930s the euthanasia centres were essentially the precursors for Nazi mass murder, and by the 1940s they were the training centres for the personnel of the death camps.

During 1940, euthanasia institutions went into operation, namely: Grafeneck, in January; Brandenburg, in February; Hartheim, in May; and Sonnenstein, in June. Other centres were located in Bernburg in Saxony-Anhalt and Hadamar in Hesse.

Questionnaires were distributed to mental institutions, hospitals and other institutions caring for the chronically ill. Patients had to be reported if they suffered from schizophrenia, epilepsy, senile disorders, therapy resistant paralysis and syphilitic diseases, retardation, encephalitis, Huntington's chorea and other neurological conditions, also those who had been continuously in institutions for at least 5 years, or were criminally insane, or did not possess German citizenship or were not of German or related blood, including Jews, Negroes, and Gypsies.

Patients were transferred from their institutions to the killing centres in buses operated by teams of SS men wearing white coats to give an air of medical authenticity. To prevent the families and the doctors of the patients tracing them, they were often sent to "transit" centres in major hospitals where they were allegedly "assessed" before being moved again to "special treatment" centres.

As well as killing patients from mental homes, nursing homes and sanatoria, the Euthanasia centres were also used to kill prisoners transferred from concentration camps in Germany and Austria.

14 f 13 Euthanasia Program

A coded language was used to record the death of the inmates of concentration camps. "14 f 1" signified natural death, "14 f 2" - suicide or accidental death, "14 f 3" - shot while trying to escape, "14 f I" - execution.

By Himmler's order, in April 1941, "Special Treatment (*Sonderbehandlung*) 14 f 13", the "euthanasia" of sick or infirm prisoners was instituted. From inception, T4 sent medical personnel to the camps to select and list prisoners for liquidation.

Of the number of people killed in the T4 and the 14 f 13 projects, the following statistics are usually given: adult mental patients from institutions, 80,000 to 100,000; children in institutions, 5,000; special action against Jews in institutions, 1,000; concentration camp inmates transported to killing centres (14 f 13), 20,000 (Klee estimated that at the end of 1941, some 93,521 "beds" had been emptied for other uses [70,000 patients gassed, plus over 20,000 dead through starvation and medication] - in other words approximately one-third of the places for the mentally ill.)

--(--)

[11] **Aktion Reinhard** - Code name for the Nazi operation to exterminate the 2,284,000 Jews living in the five districts of the Generalgouvernement[3], including the Warsaw, Lublin, Radom, Cracow, and Lvov districts. During the last few months of 1942 the operation was extended to the Bialystok district, adding some 210,000 Jews. *Aktion Reinhard* was named after Reinhard Heydrich, the main organizer of the "final solution" in Europe, who had been assassinated by Czech resistance fighters.

The Nazis began planning *Aktion Reinhard* in the fall of 1941. SS chief Heinrich Himmler appointed Odilo Globocnik (SS and Police Leader of the Lublin district) to head up *Aktion Reinhard*, and SS-*Hauptsturmfuehrer* Hans Hofle as chief of operations. They were assigned a staff of 450 Germans, including 92 men who had previously worked for the euthanasia program. In addition, the *Aktion Reinhard* headquarters recruited a special unit made up of Ukrainian volunteers, most of whom had been Soviet prisoners of war.

Three extermination camps were established for *Aktion Reinhard*: Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Belzec, situated along the Lublin-Lvov railway, was constructed between November 1941 and March 1942. The extermination process began there on March 17, 1942. Sobibor, located east of Lublin, was built in March and April 1942, and was opened for operations in early May 1942. Treblinka, located 50 miles northeast of Warsaw, was set up in June and July 1942 and began functioning on July 23, 1942--in conjunction with the mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto.

The Nazis set up a deportation process that they used unwaveringly in most parts of Eastern Europe. Their main goal was to keep the victims in the dark about where they were going until they got there. In the smaller ghettos, the Nazis carried out this process in just one or two days. In the large ghettos, which sometimes contained hundreds of thousands of Jews, the deportation could not be carried out in one day only. Thus, the Judenrat would be instructed to gather several thousand people each in several smaller *aktionen*. If the *Judenrat* could not or would not provide the Germans with the number of people they had asked for, German and Ukrainian troops would be sent in to break into the houses and courtyards where the Jews were hiding and drag them out.

After being removed from the ghetto, the Jews were marched to a railroad station, where they were jammed into cattle cars. The trip to the extermination camp sometimes only took a few hours, but often took days. The long trip and the insufferable conditions in the train cars (including overcrowding, terrible heat in the summer months and cold in the winter, and lack of water or sanitation) resulted in many people dying en route.

In July 1942 Himmler visited the *Aktion Reinhard* camps. Afterwards, he ordered that the deportation of the *Generalgouvernement's* Jews was to be completed by December 31 of that year. However, the army appealed his order, citing its need for Jewish manpower for the war effort. As a result, it was decided to keep some Jewish laborers in several of the large ghettos for the time being.

During *Aktion Reinhard* the Germans confiscated huge amounts of Jewish property, worth more than 178 million reichsmarks. The cash and valuables gathered in the extermination camps were sent to the SS Economic-Administrative Main Office (*wirtschafts-verwaltungshauptamt, WVHA*), while other items were spread out among the Economy Ministry, the army, SS workshops, and the ethnic Germans (*volksdeutsche*) living in the occupied territories.

Aktion Reinhard continued until early November 1943, when the last *Generalgouvernement* Jews in the Majdanek, Poniatowa, and Trawniki camps were exterminated as part of Operation *Erntefest*. Altogether, more than two million Jews in the *Generalgouvernement* were killed during *Aktion Reinhard*.

End

--()--

14072009