

Handout

Phases of the Holocaust

In the video *Step by Step: Phases of the Holocaust*, historian Doris Bergen divides the history of the Holocaust into four phases:

1. Planning and Propaganda: 1933 – 1939

Key events:

- German Jews and other so-called inferior races and people are isolated from the rest of the population.
- Germany rebuilds military in violation of Treaty of Versailles.
- Nazi government prepares German public for war.

2. Expansion and Violence: September 1939 – June 1941

Key events:

- World War II begins with German invasion of Poland.
- Nazi violence expands into Poland and across Europe.
- Nazis establish ghettos and new concentration camps to imprison millions of Jews.
- Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) murder millions of Jews and other targeted groups in mass shootings in eastern Europe.
- Germany invades Soviet Union.

3. Dedication to Mass Killing: 1941 – 1944

Key events:

- Decision is made by Hitler and his advisors to annihilate all of the Jews in Europe.
- Six killing centers are established, where millions of Jews, Sinti and Roma, and other targeted groups are murdered in gas chambers. The most infamous killing center is Auschwitz.

4. Death Marches: January 1945 – May 1945

- As Germany is losing the war, and the Soviets are pushing the German military west, killing centers and camps are closed or liberated.
- Nazis force prisoners from camps to march from eastern Europe toward Germany. Hundreds of thousands die along the way.