
MAJOR EVENTS OF WORLD WAR II

Compiled by Zach Alleman



1939

August

- 23 The Nazi euthanasia program begins. By the end of the war, seventy thousand mentally and physically disabled Germans are killed.
- 24–26 American LDS missionaries are evacuated to Denmark and the Netherlands.
- 28 Food ration cards are introduced in Germany. Meat, dairy, sugar, eggs, bread, cereal, and fruit are limited.

September

- 1 Germany invades Poland.
- 2 Willy Klappert of the Frankfurt am Main Branch is the first German LDS soldier to die.
- 3 Great Britain and France declare war on Germany.
- 29 Germany and the Soviet Union formally divide up Poland.

October

- 1 Royal Air Force (RAF) airplanes drop propaganda leaflets over Germany.

November

- 12 Clothing ration cards are issued in Germany.

- 23 Jews in German-occupied Poland are ordered to wear the yellow Star of David on their outer clothing.
- 27 German “Aryans” are given twelve months to divorce their Jewish spouses.

1940

January

- 11 German citizens suffer from coal shortages.

February

- 13 Thomas E. McKay appoints Herbert Klopfer as supervisor of the East German Mission.

April

- 9 Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
- 27 Heinrich Himmler issues orders for the construction of a concentration camp at Auschwitz.
- 27 German women ages fifteen to forty are required to register with the Employment Ministry.

May

- 10 Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. Winston Churchill becomes British prime minister.

- 19 The German ports of Hamburg and Bremen are bombed by the RAF.
- 20 German forces reach the English Channel.
- 26 British forces start the Dunkirk evacuation.
- 31 A shortage of doctors causes viruses to spread among the German people.

June

- 5 German forces launch an attack into France proper.
- 14 German forces enter Paris.
- 22 France surrenders to Germany.
- 26 Germany's meat ration is cut to fourteen ounces per week per person.

July

Hermann Goering, second to Hitler in the Nazi hierarchy, gives Reinhard Heydrich the authority to carry out preparations for a "final solution of the Jewish question" throughout German-occupied Europe.

August

- 13 The Battle of Britain starts.
- 25–26 The RAF conducts its first air raid on Berlin.

September

- 15 The German Luftwaffe launches a major attack on London.
- 17 Artur Axmann, the new German youth leader, decrees that all Hitler Youth ages fourteen to eighteen in areas vulnerable to air raids must attend air-raid training on Sunday mornings.
- 27 Germany, Italy, and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact.

1941

February

- 12 German Lt. General Erwin Rommel arrives in Tripoli in North Africa.

March

- 2 German forces enter Bulgaria.
- 24 Rommel launches his first offensive in North Africa.

April

- 2–6 German forces cross Hungary to invade Yugoslavia and Greece.

May

- 4 Hitler delivers his "Thousand-Year Reich" speech.
- 7 Joseph Stalin assumes premiership of the Soviet Union.
- 24 The German battleship *Bismarck* sinks Britain's battle cruiser HMS *Hood*.
- 27 The British Royal Navy sinks the *Bismarck* in the North Atlantic.

June

- 22 Operation Barbarossa begins when German forces invade the Soviet Union.

July

- 9 German forces capture three hundred thousand Soviet troops near Minsk.
- 10 Stalin assumes the role of commander-in-chief of the Red Army.
- 12 Britain and the Soviet Union sign a mutual assistance treaty.

August

- 1 The focus on the Wehrmacht and the armaments industry leaves German citizens without replacement parts for cars and other forms of transportation.

September

- 1 All German Jews over the age of six are ordered to wear a yellow Star of David with the word *Jude* written on it.
- 8 German forces lay siege to Leningrad.

October

- 2 In Operation Taifun, Germany starts the drive on Moscow.
- 31 German workers are required to “volunteer” to donate twenty-five reichsmark a week from their wages.

November

- 22 The German raider *Atlantis* is sunk.

December

- 7 Japanese forces attack Pearl Harbor.
- 8 The United States declares war on Japan.
- 11 Germany and Italy declare war on the United States.
- 19 Hitler assumes command of the German *Heer* (Army).
Only women are serving as missionaries in the East German Mission.

1942

January

- 14 German submarines attack shipping vessels off the U.S. East Coast.
- 26 The first contingent of U.S. troops to reach Europe arrives in Northern Ireland.

February

- 28 The use of cars for anything but work is banned in Germany.

March

- 17 Branches throughout Germany celebrate the Relief Society centennial.
- 19 A gas chamber is first used on human beings at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- 21 Severe penalties, including sentences in concentration camps, are announced to deter German citizens from making unnecessary journeys by rail.

May

- 30–31 The RAF conducts a thousand-airplane raid on Cologne.

June

- 4 Mass evacuation of Cologne takes place.

July

- 4 U.S. bombers fly their first mission in Europe.
British bombers begin attacking Germany’s second-largest city, Hamburg, continuing for four straight nights and causing a firestorm that kills thirty thousand civilians.

August

- 23 German forces reach Stalingrad.

October

- 27 Helmut Hübener of the Hamburg-St. Georg Branch (West German Mission) is executed in Berlin for treason.

November

- 19 Soviet forces counterattack at Stalingrad.

1943

January

- 14–23 Allied leaders hold the Casablanca Conference.
- 27 U.S. bombers conduct the first all-American raid on Germany.
- 28 All German men between ages sixteen and sixty-five and all women between ages seventeen and forty-five are to be mobilized for military employment.
- 30 The RAF conducts its first daylight raid on Berlin.

February

- 2 The German Sixth Army surrenders at Stalingrad; there are 295,000 casualties, including Karl Albert Göckeritz, president of the Chemnitz District.

Hans and Sophie Scholl are arrested on the Munich University campus for distributing pamphlets for the White Rose resistance group.

March

3 Friedrich Biehl, former supervisor of the West German Mission, dies in a fire in Russia.

May

31 Meat rations in Germany are cut to nine ounces.

June

13 German forces in North Africa surrender to the Allies.

July

7 Allied forces invade Sicily.

24–30 RAF bombings reduce Hamburg to rubble.

25 Benito Mussolini is overthrown and arrested.

August

17 Regensburg and Schweinfurt are destroyed in air raids.

September

3 More than one million citizens are evacuated from Berlin in one month.

October

13 Italy joins the Allies and declares war on Germany.

23 Martin Werner Hoppe, president of the Breslau District, dies in a field hospital in the Soviet Union.

November

20–22 The office of the East German Mission in Berlin is destroyed in air raids occurring on successive nights.

1944

February

20–27 Allied air forces launch the “Big Week” air raids over Germany.

March

6 U.S. bombers attack Berlin for the first time.

30–31 Nuremberg is bombed.

June

6 (D-day) Allied troops land in Normandy, France.

July

20 Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg attempts to assassinate Hitler.

22 Herbert Klopfer, supervisor of the East German Mission, is reported missing in action on the Eastern Front.

September

10 Himmler orders that the families of all deserters be executed.

German civilians begin the evacuation of eastern German provinces.

11 U.S. forces cross the German border near Aachen.

15 U.S. forces take the city of Nancy in Alsace-Lorraine.

25 Hitler calls up remaining sixteen- to sixty-year-old males for military service.

30 Germany's rationing of fish and meat drops to three ounces per person per week plus one-third of an ounce of egg.

October

5 All German hospitals are put under military control.

German sixteen-year-olds are called up for military service.

November

28 Soviet forces cross the Danube River and approach Austria.

December

- 16 The Battle of the Bulge commences in Belgium and Luxembourg.

1945

January

- Millions of German refugees begin the trek west by land and across the Baltic Sea.
Latter-day Saint refugees begin to gather in the Langheinrich home in Berlin and the Lehnig home in Cottbus.
- 15 The Battle of the Bulge is concluded; the Allies prevail.
- 16 Soviet troops liberate the Auschwitz extermination camp.
- 28 Soviet forces enter the German province of Pomerania.
- 30 The German hospital ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* is sunk in the Baltic Sea by a Soviet submarine and thousands of German refugees perish.

February

- 1 Soviet forces establish a small bridgehead over the Oder River east of Berlin.
- 9 "Fortress Königsberg" surrenders to the Red Army; district president Max Freimann is one of several Latter-day Saints who disappear there.
British and Canadian forces penetrate the Siegfried line and reach the Rhine River.
- 12 German women between the ages of sixteen and sixty are declared eligible for Volkssturm (home guard) service.
- 13–14 Allied air forces carry out the fire-bombing of Dresden.

March

- 5 U.S. forces enter Cologne.
German boys sixteen and older are sent into combat.

- 5–6 Chemnitz is destroyed by Allied airplanes.
- 7 U.S. forces cross the Rhine River at Remagen.
- 19 Herbert Klopfer, supervisor of the East German Mission, dies as a POW in the Soviet Union (this will not be known until 1948).
- 20 U.S. forces take Saarbrücken and Zweibrücken.
- 27 U.S. forces capture Frankfurt am Main.

April

- 5–14 Soviet forces take Vienna, Austria.
- 10 Allied forces enter the city of Hanover.
- 12 Franklin D. Roosevelt dies in office; Harry S. Truman becomes U.S. president.
- 15 British forces liberate Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.
- 16 Soviet forces start the final assault on Berlin.
- 17–20 U.S. forces capture Nuremberg.
- 19 Christian Heck, former supervisor of the West German Mission, is killed near Bad Imnau in southwest Germany.
- 22 U.S. forces cross the Danube River.
- 29 U.S. forces liberate Dachau concentration camp.
Hitler designates Karl Dönitz to succeed him as president and Martin Bormann as chancellor.
- 30 Hitler commits suicide in his underground bunker in Berlin.

May

- 2 Berlin is surrendered to Soviet forces.
- 6 "Fortress Breslau" surrenders to the Red Army.
The Dresden District holds a spring conference in Dresden; Russian artillery fire is heard in the distance.

- 7 In Reims, France, Alfred Jodl signs the surrender of all German forces.
- 8 (VE Day) In Berlin, Wilhelm Keitel signs the surrender of German forces. At least 60 percent of the Saints in the East German Mission are homeless.
- 14 Heber J. Grant, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, dies in Salt Lake City.

June

- 5 The Allies (France, Great Britain, Soviet Union, United States) occupy Germany and Austria in four zones.

July

- 1 American troops evacuate territory conquered in eastern Germany; Soviet troops move in. East German Mission leaders are granted use of the Wolfsgrün Castle near Zwickau and send LDS refugees to live there. Mission leaders make the first of two trips through the Soviet Occupation Zone to assess the status of the Saints of the East German Mission.

Fall

The first LDS refugees arrive in Langen near Frankfurt am Main and establish a colony.

1946

February–November

Elder Ezra Taft Benson visits the Saints in Europe and arranges for the distribution of welfare supplies from Salt Lake City.

1947

The only surviving LDS branch east of the new German-Polish border is in Selbongen (formerly East Prussia).

1950

The last surviving LDS soldier returns from a Soviet POW camp.



Mission and District conferences (such as this one in Schneidemühl) often attracted more than a thousand members and friends during the first few years of the war. (W. Kindt)