



A Chronology: Nechama Tec's *Dry Tears*

1931

Nechama Tec is born in Lublin, Poland to Roman Bawnik, owner of a candle and chemical factory, and Esther (Hachamoff) Bawnik.

1933

January 30 - President **Paul von Hindenburg** appoints **Hitler** Chancellor of Germany following a Reichstag election in which Hitler's Nazi Party receives approx. 33% of the vote.

1934

January 26 - Germany and Poland sign a ten-year non-aggression pact.

August 2 - President Hindenburg dies; Hitler becomes Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of armed forces, whose members are now required to take a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler.

1935

September 15 - "**Nuremberg Laws**". Nazi racist ideology legalized. The Reich Citizens Law takes away citizenship rights to German Jews and the "*Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor*" forbids marriage or sexual intercourse between Aryans and Jews. In addition, Jews can no longer fly the German flag.

1936

August: Olympic Games in Berlin; temporary removal of all anti-semitic signs as things are cleaned up for the world. By now, Hitler has forced one fourth (150,000) of Germany's Jews to leave their homeland.

October 25 - **Hitler** and **Mussolini** form Rome-Berlin **Axis** alliance.

1937

November 5 - In a secret meeting, Hitler makes known his war plans.

1938

March 13 - German troops enter Austria and annexes it to the Third Reich (the **Anschluss**); All anti-Jewish decrees are now applied in Austria.

July 6 - Evian Conference on German refugees is convened at the behest of the United States.

September 29-30 - **Munich Conference**. Great Britain and France appease Hitler by agreeing to the annexation of part of Czechoslovakia (**Sudetenland**) to Germany.

October 28 - Over 17,000 Polish Jews suddenly expelled from Germany to Poland (before deadline of 31 October). Most stranded at Polish frontier town of Zbaszyn.

November 9-10 - **Kristallnacht**. Goebbels-organized pogrom throughout the Reich vandalizes over 7,500 shops and businesses; also cemeteries, hospitals, schools and synagogues. At least 91 Jews are murdered, and 25-26,000 Jewish men arrested.

1939

January 30 – Hitler in Reichstag speech, “If war erupts it will mean the (extermination) of European Jews.”

March 15 - Germany occupies the remainder of Czechoslovakia.

August 23 - Soviet/German non-aggression pact signed by Molotov and Ribbentrop. It contains a secret protocol for the partition of Poland.

September 1 - World War II begins as Germany invades Poland. German and Austrian Jews subjected to a night curfew and restricted shopping hours during the day. *Einsatzgruppen* accompany invading German army.

September 3 - Britain and France declare war on Germany.

September 7 - **Heydrich** orders *Einsatzgruppen* to arrest all Polish Jews.

September 17 - Red Army (U.S.S.R.) invades eastern Poland.

September 21 - **Reinhard Heydrich** orders ghettos to be established in occupied Poland with each under a Judenrat (Jewish governing council).

September 23 - Jews forced to turn in radios, cameras, and other electric devices to police. Jews receive more restrictive ration coupons for food and clothing.

September 27 - Warsaw surrenders.

October 8 - The first German-enforced Jewish ghetto is established in Poland.

October 12 - First deportation of Jews from Austria and Moravia to Poland.

October 28 - Jewish star introduced for the first time into Poland.

November 23 - Wearing a yellow six-pointed Jewish star is made mandatory throughout Poland for all Jews over the age of ten.

December 5-6 - German authorities appropriate Jewish-owned property in Poland.

1940

February 8 - Order for the establishment of the Lodz Ghetto is issued.

February 12 - Deportation of Jews from Germany to occupied Poland begins.

April 27 - **Himmler** directive to establish a concentration camp at **Auschwitz**.

April 30 - Ghetto at Lodz, Poland (approx. 165,000 people in 1.6 square miles) is sealed off from the outside world.

May 10 - Germany invades Holland, Belgium and France.

May 20 - The former Polish army barracks at **Auschwitz** are converted into a concentration camp under Kommandant **Rudolf Hoess**.

October 16 - Order for the creation of the Warsaw Ghetto issued.

November 15 - Warsaw ghetto (approx. 400,000 Jews) is sealed off from the outside world.

1941

February-April - Deportation of 72,000 Jews to the Warsaw ghetto.

March 3-20 - A Jewish ghetto in Cracow is decreed, established, and sealed.

April 24 - The Jewish ghetto in Lublin, Poland, established in late March, is sealed.

June 6 - **The Commissar Order**, signed by General Walter Warlimont and approved by the OKW Chief of Staff, General Wilhelm Keitel, directly implicated the German army in involvement in, and responsibility for, war crimes in the occupied territories. In the summer of 1941, Keitel had all copies of the Commissar Order destroyed, in order to remove evidence of the army's crimes.

June 22 - Germany launches massive invasion of the Soviet Union, called "**Operation Barbarossa**." *Einsatzgruppen* follow regular army troops and begin mass murders of Jews, Roma and Sinti, and communist officials.

July 31 - **Heydrich** appointed by **Goring** to carry out a "Total Solution" of the Jewish Question.

August - Jewish ghettos are established in Bialystok, Poland and Kishinev, .

September 3 - First experimental gassing using **Zyklon B** is carried out at **Auschwitz** on 600 Soviet prisoners of war and 250 other prisoners.

September 29-30 - *Einsatzgruppen* murder approximately 34,000 Jews at Babi Yar, near Kiev, Ukraine.

October - Construction of the **Majdanek** camp begins near Lublin, Poland.

- October 8 - Construction begins on an **Auschwitz II (Birkenau)**. It includes a killing center that begins operation in early 1942.
- October 12 - Germans approach Moscow.
- October 15 - Deportation of German Jews begins. Decree in General Government, Poland: death sentence for Jews who moved outside the ghettos without authorization and the same applied to Christian Poles who sought to help Jews hide or move outside the ghettos.
- October 23 - Massacre of 19,000 Odessa Jews.
- November 5-9 - 5,000 Gypsies deported from labor and internment camps in Austria to Lodz ghetto.
- November 6 - Massacre of 15,000 at Rovno.
- November 7-20 - 32,000 Jews are killed in Minsk, Belorussia.
- November 20-December 7 - 30,000 Jews are killed in Riga, Latvia.
- November 24 - Establishment of **Theresienstadt**, near Prague, Czechoslovakia. Germany will use this "model ghetto" for propaganda purposes.
- November 25 - Proclamation that all Jewish property will be confiscated on deportation.
- December 7 - Japan attacks the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.
- December 8 - Opening of **Chelmo** extermination camp near Lodz, Poland. First gassing of victims in mobile gas vans. U.S. declares war on Japan. (Massacre in Riga kills 27,000.)
- December 9 - Meeting in Berlin suburb of **Wannsee** postponed to 20 January.
- December 22 - Massacre in Vilna, Lithuania. 32,000 victims.

1942

By 1942, Nechama's father felt that his family should leave Lublin and "live in the forbidden Christian world." First, the Bawniks went to the larger city of Warsaw where they were hidden. But after hearing of betrayals and Gestapo raids, Nechama's parents decided to send their daughters to the nearby town of Otwock to live with a Polish couple, Marta and Tosiek. Food was scarce, lice were plentiful, and Marta proved unkind to her charges. Yet for the time being the sisters were safe. Nevertheless, in search of greater safety Nechama's sister went to Kielce, where her parents joined her. Left behind, Nechama felt lonely: "All my life revolved around hiding; hiding thoughts, hiding feelings, hiding my activities, hiding information. [. . .] always on the alert, always dreading that something fatal might be revealed"(109).

- January 20 - **The Wannsee Conference**, attended by senior Nazi and German government officials, is held to plan the annihilation of the Jews in Europe. It lasts 87 minutes.
- January 21 - Jewish resistance and partisan groups organize in Vilna and Kovno, Lithuania.

March 17 – Extermination program begins in Belzec; by the end of 1942, 600,000 Jews will have been murdered.

June 1 – Treblinka Extermination camp opens.

July 22 – 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto are deported to Treblinka.

July 28 – Jewish resistance organization is established in the Warsaw Ghetto.

(March-October) - Killing centers in occupied Poland at **Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Majdanek** become operational and begin mass murder of Jews in gas chambers.

1943

Reunited with her family in Kielce, Nechama felt "loved and protected"(115). The Bawniks paid to live in the home of the Homars, a Polish Christian family. For the Homars, the acceptance of the Bawniks was a commercial arrangement. On the whole they treated them with respect and some affection.

After 1943, the Germans became more ruthless and rations were more limited. Thus Mr. Bawnik helped the Homars establish an underground business bootlegging vodka. The Bawniks themselves began baking and selling bread and rolls in order to earn money. Because Nechama had a "Polish" look, she took on the dangerous task of selling, marketing and distributing the bread in the marketplace-this was extremely risky since the Germans forbade these transactions. Nechama hides in Kielce, reunited with her parents and sister.

1945

In 1945, the Russians took over Kielce, making it possible for the Bawniks to come out of hiding. The Homars, who had offered them shelter and kindness for more than two years, asked their boarders not to reveal their Jewish identity in Kielce. Russians come to Kielce; the Bawniks return to Lublin.

After Hiding and Passing

The Bawniks returned to Lublin, where they found only about 150 Jews had survived. The Bawniks were one of only three intact Jewish families. Their homecoming was a mixed and conflicting experience. Their possessions had been taken by the former factory janitor and his wife; their factory co-opted. Above all, a resurgence of antisemitism frightened the family, especially Nechama's father. For a time the sisters were able to study in Lodz, Poland, but soon their parents decided that the family would have to leave Poland. They traveled to the American zone in Berlin, Germany, where they lived in a displaced persons camp (DP camp). Winter: left for the American Zone in Germany, ddisplaced persons camp.