

GLOSSARY -- For Students

Aktion – A Nazi operation involving seeking out, assembling, shooting, deporting to labor or annihilation camps—taking place in Jewish villages or ghettos.

Arbeit Macht Frei – Work makes one free.

Aryan – A term used by Hitler to describe Caucasians of Nordic descent, usually of Northern European background.

Auschwitz – The largest Nazi concentration camp, located 37 miles west of Kracow. Established in 1940, it became an annihilation camp when it began receiving deportees in March/April 1942. Eventually it consisted of a number of sections. Auschwitz I, the main camp in the Auschwitz camp complex, is the first camp established near Oswiecim. Auschwitz I is primarily a concentration camp, serving a penal function, it also has a gas chamber and crematorium. Auschwitz II-Birkenau was designated as the main annihilation camp. Auschwitz-Birkenau plays a central role in the German plan to annihilate the Jews of Europe. Four large crematoria buildings are constructed between March and June 1943. Each has three components: a disrobing area, a large gas chamber, and crematorium ovens. Gassing operations continue until November 1944. Auschwitz III, also called Buna or Monowitz, opened in May 1942 in Monowice to provide forced laborers for the Buna synthetic rubber works (part of the German conglomerate I.G. Farben). During its brief existence, at least 1.1 million Jews were killed in Auschwitz. Other victims included between 70,000 and 75,000 Poles, 21,000 Roma (Gypsies), and about 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war.

BdM – (Bund Deutsche Madel); The League of German Girls, a constituent organization of the Hitler Youth, aimed to prepare German girls for a life under the motto: children, kitchen, church (Kinder, Küche, Kirche).

Bergen-Belsen – Originally a prisoner-exchange camp, it became a concentration camp in March 1944. Anne and Margo Frank died there in March 1945.

Birkenau – Auschwitz II, built in the summer of 1941, with four gas chambers to murder Jews.

Buchenwald – located near Weimar in Germany, it first opened for male political prisoners in July 1937, it became a Jewish forced-labor camp. Women were not part of the across Germany, from Duesseldorf in the Rhineland to the border with the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in the east.

Concentration Camp – Camps established in the beginning of the Nazi regime for imprisonment and forced-labor of “enemies” of the Reich, political and “anti-social,” as well as Jews. Disease, maltreatment, and starvation led to many deaths, as did direct executions.

Crematoria – The ovens and furnaces where dead bodies of prisoners were consumed.

Dachau - Established in March 1933, it was the first regular concentration camp established by the Nazis located about 10 miles northwest of Munich. The first group of so-called protective-custody prisoners, consisting mainly of Communists and Social Democrats. The Dachau camp was a training center for SS concentration camp guards, and the camp's organization and routine became the model for all Nazi concentration camps.

Death March – From late 1944-May 1945, the SS marched $\frac{3}{4}$ million camp inmates on long treks back to Germany-Austria in order to hide the atrocities and prevent inmates from testifying. One-quarter died of hunger, exhaustion, privation, or were shot.

Der Stürmer – Nazi propaganda weekly (“The Attacker”), luridly antisemitic, founded in 1923 and edited by unrepentant Julius Streicher, who was convicted at Nuremberg and hanged.

Displaced Person – Holocaust survivor who, after the war, had no home.

D.P. Camp – Special camps (**Displaced Persons**) set up to treat and revive Holocaust survivors.

Einsatzgruppen - Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) were squads of German SS and police personnel. Under command of Security Police (Sipo) and Security Service (SD) officers, the Einsatzgruppen had among their tasks the murder of those perceived to be racial or political enemies found behind the front lines in the occupied Soviet Union. The Einsatzgruppen also murdered thousands of residents of institutions for the mentally disabled. The German army provided logistical support to the Einsatzgruppen, including supplies, transportation, and housing.

Evian Conference – A conference arranged by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in July 1938, which met in France to discuss the Jewish refugee problem. Of 32 countries attending, only the Dominican Republic agreed to accept additional refugees.

Extermination Camp – A term synonymous with “annihilation” camp. Jews were murdered, not exterminated, a term usually referring to rodents.

Final Solution – The “Final Solution to the Jewish Problem” formally enunciated at the Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942. The decision to systematically murder all Jews in Europe rather than follow the previous policy of forced emigration.

Gas chamber – a sealed room in which numerous victims could be killed all at once by inhaling poisonous gas. Although Auschwitz used Zyklon B gas, most camps used carbon monoxide.

Gauleiter – a leader of a local branch of the NSDAP or the head of a *Reichsgau* (an administrative division of the state). The German word *Leiter* means leader, whilst the *Gau* was the region itself.

Genocide – a term coined by historian Raphael Lemkin during World War II to describe the systematic and planned annihilation of an entire racial, national, or ethnic group.

Gestapo – Secret State (SS) Police of the Third Reich who used brutal physical and psychological torture to create immense fear in the population and to seek out enemies of the State. Although not as large a body as often suspected, they were able to create an atmosphere of fear due to the collaboration of many German citizens.

Ghetto – a location in a city or town that was restricted to Jews in order to physically segregate and isolate Jews. The term originates in 1516, when an enclosed neighborhood for Jews was created in Venice. The Ghetto both isolated and protected the Jewish residents of Venice who lived within its walls. "Ghetto" referred to the foundry that the district replaced.

During the Nazi era, the ghettos were recreated by Reinhard Heydrich in 1939 as temporary collection points to deport Jews to the Lublin “reservation.” Eventually, after the failure of deportation and demographic engineering schemes, they were used as collection points from which Jews were sent to the camps for annihilation.

Heydrich, Reinhard - Head of the Nazi Security Police, head of the Security Service (SD) and chief of the Gestapo. One of the most ruthless Nazis, he helped Hitler by collecting information on political opponents and became a close ally of Himmler. He chaired the Wannsee Conference and was placed in charge of “The Final Solution to the Jewish Question.” He was assassinated on May 27, 1942.

Heinrich Himmler - Reichsführer-SS, head of the Gestapo and the Waffen-SS, Minister of the Interior from 1943 to 1945 and organizer of the mass murder of Jews in the Third Reich.

Holocaust – From *Samuel I* (7:9), literally meaning “a completely burned sacrifice.” It was the term used to describe the destruction of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators in Europe and North Africa between the years 1941-1945. The term was first used in connection with European Jews by Elie Wiesel in his book *And the World Was Silent*.

Kaddish – Jewish mourners’ prayer. It is a traditional prayer that is said daily with a quorum of at least ten Jewish males who are over the age of thirteen.

Kristallnacht – During the night of 9-10 November 1938, a massive *pogrom* (state-sponsored anti-Jewish violence) was orchestrated by the Nazi (National Socialist) government throughout Germany and the recently annexed state of Austria. A total of 815 shops, 29 department stores, 171 residences, and 267 synagogues were burned or otherwise destroyed. Ninety-one Jews were killed. The shattered panes of beveled glass that littered sidewalks, most of it coming from the shop windows of Jewish stores, gave the *pogrom* its name: *Kristallnacht*, or “Night of Broken Glass.” In the days that followed, 25-30,000 Jewish men were arrested and taken to Germany’s concentration camps. *Kristallnacht* marked the Nazis’ first centrally organized operation of large-scale, anti-Jewish violence. It served as prelude to the coming Holocaust.

Lebensraum – Guiding principle of German foreign policy; literally meaning “living space” for the Aryan race by “going East.” With the memory of the Blockade of the First World War and the idea of Grand Imperialism fresh on their minds, Germans largely embraced this policy. For Hitler and the SS, this meant more than simply changing geo-political borders. Combined with Hitler’s ideology of antisemitism and anti-Bolshevism, this policy also meant an ideological and racial fight to the finish in the East.

Nazi – Member of “NSDAP” – Nationalist Socialist German Workers’ Party (National Socialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) which was founded after World War I and eventually taken over by Hitler.

Pogrom – State-sponsored anti-Jewish violence. Spontaneous or prearranged and organized attacks by non-Jewish citizens or military against Jews.

Refugee – One who, as a result of a war or another disaster, is forced to leave his place of residence and becomes homeless.

Reich – Monarchy or Kingdom; The “Third Empire” of Germany, declared by Hitler, which came after the “Holy Roman Empire” and the Chancellor Otto von Bismarck’s empire. Hitler planned that Germany and its Aryan citizens would rule the world in its Third Reich for 1000 years.

Shoah – Hebrew for “Holocaust” meaning “destruction”—found in *Isaiah* 10:3.

Shtetl – A Yiddish word describing a predominately Jewish small town or rural village.

SS – (Schutzstaffel); “Black Shirts.” Under the leadership of Himmler, the SS gained control of organizing and running the concentration camp system. The SS evolved from what was originally intended as Hitler’s personal bodyguard units into the infamous terror-striking force that essentially was instrumental in destroying European Jewry through the implementation of the “Final Solution.”

Streicher, Julius – a Nazi Party member since 1921 and named Gauleiter of Franconia in 1925. He was the editor and publisher of "Der Stürmer" from 1922 until 1933 and was one of the chief antisemitic propagandists of the Nazi Party.

Sugihara, Chiune - Japanese consul general in Kovno, Lithuania, who in July-August 1940 issued more than 2,000 transit visas for Jewish refugees. After leaving Lithuania in September 1940, Sugihara was posted to Prague, and later Königsberg and Bucharest. When he returned to American-occupied Japan in 1947, the Foreign Ministry retired him with a small pension as part of a large staff reduction. In 1984, Yad Vashem named Sugihara one of the "Righteous Among the Nations" for his efforts to save Jews.

Synagogue – The Hebrew term is beit k'nesset (literally, House of Assembly). It is the center of the Jewish religious community: a place of prayer, study and education, social and charitable work, as well as a social center.

T 4 “Euthanasia” Program - The physically and mentally handicapped were viewed as "useless" to society, a threat to Aryan genetic purity, and, ultimately, unworthy of life. At the beginning of World War II, individuals who were deemed mentally retarded, physically handicapped, or mentally ill were targeted for murder in what the Nazis called the "T 4" or "euthanasia," program. Despite public protests in 1941, the Nazi leadership continued this program in secret throughout the war. More than 200,000 handicapped people were murdered between 1940 and 1945. The T 4 program became the model for the mass murder of Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and others in camps equipped with gas chambers that the Nazis would open in 1941 and 1942. The program also served as a training ground for SS members who manned these camps.

Theresienstadt – Originally an Austrian garrison. In early 1942 it became a Jewish town governed by the SS, although used as a model camp for the Red Cross. Eventually, 88,000 of the invalids, prominent Jews and other special cases who were sent there, were deported to death or labor camps in the East.

Torah – refers to the Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The word "torah" can also be used to refer to the entire Jewish bible (the body of scripture known to Jews as the Tanakh or Written Torah), or in its broadest sense, to the whole body of Jewish law and teachings.

Torah Scrolls - The scriptures that are used in services and are written on parchment scrolls. They are always hand-written, in Hebrew calligraphy. You are not supposed to touch the parchment on these scrolls. Instead, you follow the text with a pointer, called a Yad. "Yad" means "hand" in Hebrew, and the pointer usually is in the shape of a hand with a pointing index finger. The scrolls are kept covered with fabric, and often ornamented with silver crowns on the handles of the scrolls and a silver breastplate on the front. The scrolls are kept in a cabinet in the synagogue called an "ark," as in Ark of the Covenant.

Treblinka – An annihilation camp in Northeast Poland, situated between Warsaw and Bialystok, which was established in July 1942. It was blown up by the Nazis in the fall of 1943 (after an August 2, 1943 Jewish uprising) to conceal their crimes in the face of invading armies, but not until 850,000 Jews were killed.

Typhus – An infectious disease carried by fleas, lice, or mites. It was deadly to the malnourished inmates of the camps.

Vichy (Unoccupied) France – The French state of 1940-1944 that was a puppet government under Nazi influence. It was established after France surrendered to Germany in May 1940. The key section of the surrender agreement divided France into two zones - occupied and unoccupied. Germany would control northern and western France and the entire Atlantic coast. The remaining two-fifths of the country would be administered by the French government with the capital at Vichy under Pétain. Further, all Jews in France would be handed over to Germany. The French had to pay the occupation costs of the German troops, and prevent any French people leaving the country.

Wannsee Conference – A conference which took place on January 20, 1942, at a lake near Berlin. The “Final Solution” was formally revealed to non-Nazi leaders who would help arrange for Jews to be transported from all over German-occupied Europe to SS-operated "extermination" camps in Poland. Not one of the men present at Wannsee objected to the announced policy. Never before had a modern state committed itself to the murder of an entire people. The conference signified the assumption of overall control for the implementation of the “Final Solution” by Himmler, Heydrich, and the SS.

Wehrmacht – The German army after 1935—Perpetrators and collaborators in the Holocaust.

Yellow Star (Jewish Badge) – A Jewish ID badge worn on the arm or chest that Germans demanded Jews in most parts of occupied Europe to wear at the risk of being shot. On September 1, 1941, all Jews over the age of six were forced to wear the star in public in Germany.

Yiddish –It arose (c.1100) out of a blend of a number of German dialects in the ghettos of Central Europe. Its vocabulary is basically German, but it has been enlarged by borrowings from Hebrew, Slavic, Romance languages.

Zyklon B – (Prussic acid-hydrogen cyanide)—Pesticide, blue crystals would turn into a deadly gas when oxidized—First tested in the euthanasia (T 4) program and at Auschwitz I in Cell Block 11 on Soviet POWs—considered more efficient, less taxing on the SS, and economical (cost 5 cents per victim, 2000 people per application). The SS owned the majority stock in the German firm Degesch that produced Zyklon B.