

HOLOCAUST GLOSSARY

Anti-Semitism: prejudice against the Jewish people

Aryan: term used by the Nazis to describe a “race” of people they viewed as being racially superior; originally, the term used to classify an Indo-European language group

Auschwitz-Birkenau: located in Poland, largest death camp built by the Nazis; over 2,000,000 people died here by means of starvation, disease, and gassing; Birkenau is often referred to as Auschwitz II

Babi Yar: the site of a mass grave inside the Soviet border, near Kiev, where more than 100,000 Jews were shot and buried by the Nazis with the support of the Ukrainian militia

Balfour Declaration: a British government document issued in 1917 that dealt with the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine

Bermuda Conference: the 1943 meeting between representatives from the United States and Britain in which the problems of refugees of Nazi persecution were discussed

Buchenwald: one of the first concentration camps; located in central Germany

Bericha: Hebrew for “flight;” name given to the organized underground assistance given to the Jews who were trying to reach Palestine after the Holocaust

Concentration Camps: work and death camps located in Germany and Poland to incarcerate and exterminate Jews, Gypsies, political dissidents, and others deemed “undesirable” by the Nazis

Crematorium: a furnace used in the death camps to cremate the bodies of victims

Dachau: one of the first concentration camps built by the Nazis, located in southwestern Germany

Death Camps: camps built to exterminate Jews and other “enemies” of the Nazi regime

Death Marches: forced marches of concentration camp prisoners as the Nazis tried to keep ahead of the Allied forces; approximately one third of those in the death marches died as a result of either disease, starvation, overexposure to the elements, or being shot by their guards

Deportation: forced removal of Jews from their homes in Nazi-occupied lands; under the pretense of resettlement, victims were sent to death and labor camps

Displaced Person Camps: camps set up after World War II as temporary living quarters for survivors of the Holocaust who now had no home or country to which they could return

Einsatzgruppen: special German mobile death squads estimated to have killed millions of Jews. Victims were executed in mass shootings and buried in unmarked graves—usually the ditches they were forced to dig

Evian Conference: conference organized by President Franklin Roosevelt and held at Evian-les-Ban in France, in 1938, to discuss the plight of Jews trying to escape Nazi persecution; 32 nations were represented but the conference did little to solve the problem

“Final Solution”: Nazi code word for the physical extermination of European Jews

Gas Chamber: a sealed and airtight room where death was induced through the use of poisonous gases

Genocide: the systematic killing of a nation or race of people

Gestapo: the Nazi Secret State Police

Ghetto: an area of a city to which the Jews were restricted and from which they were forbidden to leave

HOLOCAUST GLOSSARY

Holocaust: term used to describe the systematic annihilation of the Jewish people of Eastern Europe by the Nazi regime; by the end of World War II, approximately 6,000,000 Jewish men, women, and children had been killed

Kapo: a prisoner appointed by the Nazis to oversee labor details in the concentration camps

Kovno Ghetto: one of the most well-known of the Jewish Ghettos, located in the capital of Lithuania

Gypsies: a group of people also singled out for extermination by the Nazi regime; by the end of World War II, approximately one quarter of a million Gypsies had been killed

Kristallnacht: Night of Broken Glass, the organized pogrom against Jews in Germany and Austria on November 9–10, 1938

Labor Camp: a Nazi concentration camp predominately designed for slave labor

Liberators: soldiers who freed the prisoners of the concentration camps

Majdanek: death camp located outside Lublin, one of the largest cities of Poland; most of the camp still remains today since the Nazis did not have time to dismantle it before the Russian troops arrived

Nazi: acronym for the National Socialist German Workers Party

Nuremberg Laws: issued in 1935, laws which were designed to exclude the Jews from Germany both socially and politically

Nuremberg Trials: the trial of 22 major Nazi figures held in Nuremberg, Germany, before an international military tribunal

Partisans: patriotic civilians who banded together to fight Nazi rule, usually operating in the forests in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania

Pogroms: organized acts of discrimination and violence aimed at a specific group of people

Prejudice: an attitude toward a person, group of people, or idea formed without adequate information

Racism: practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, and domination on the basis of race

Reichstag: the central legislative body of Germany, its Parliament

Resistance: physical and spiritual opposition to the Nazi regime

“Righteous Among the Nations”: the term used for non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews from Nazi persecution

Righteous Gentiles: non-Jews who helped save Jewish lives

SA: storm troopers or Brown Shirts; organized to protect Nazi rallies

Scapegoat: an innocent person or persons blamed for the problems or troubles of another

S.D. (Sicherheitsdienst): the Security Service of the Nazi regime; headed by Reinhard Heydrich and responsible for security of the high-ranking members of the Nazi party

Shtetl: a small Jewish village in Poland

SS (Schutzstaffel): elite guard, under the command of Heinrich Himmler, responsible for the administration of the concentration camps and for carrying out the “Final Solution”

Sobibor: death camp in Poland where a quarter of a million people were gassed; setting for a famous uprising by prisoners in October 1943

HOLOCAUST GLOSSARY

Sonderkommandos: prisoners in the death camps whose jobs were to clear away the bodies of gas chamber victims

St. Louis: ship carrying Jewish refugees to Cuba and the United States in June 1939; denied safe harbor, it eventually was forced back to Europe where many of its passengers met their deaths; immortalized in the movie *Voyage of the Damned*

Swastika: symbol of the Nazi party, it was originally an ancient religious symbol

Talmud: the body of Jewish laws and prayers

Theresienstadt: Nazi ghetto located in Czechoslovakia; frequently called a “Model Ghetto” to show the outside world, including the Red Cross, how well the Jews were being treated; prisoners were kept here briefly before being transported to the death camps

Third Reich: official name of the Nazi regime; ruled from 1933 to 1945 under command of Adolf Hitler

Totalitarianism: a government or doctrine in which one political party or group maintains complete control and makes all others illegal

Treaty of Versailles: peace treaty that was signed at the end of World War I in Versailles, France; its conditions imposed economic hardships on Germany, weakened and humiliated the nation, and led to the popularity of the Nazi movement

Treblinka: one of the Nazi death camps established in Poland; between 1940 and 1943, approximately 750,000 people, many from Warsaw, were gassed there; site of a 1943 revolt in which about one-fourth of the prisoners there at the time escaped but ultimately were recaptured

Wannsee Conference: held in Wannsee, a suburb of Berlin, on January 20, 1942, to coordinate the Nazi plans for a “Final Solution”

War Refugee Board: U.S. agency established in January 1944, by order of President Roosevelt to rescue people from Nazi-occupied territories

Warsaw Ghetto (and Uprising): the largest ghetto in Europe, established in November 1940; at one time it held over 350,000 people in an area of approximately 3.5 square miles; between January and April 1943, a small group, the Jewish Fighting Organization, with few weapons, were able to hold off the Nazi soldiers; less than 100 people survived the uprising and many of them escaped to join the partisans

The White Paper: British mandate of 1939 which limited Jewish immigration to Palestine

Yellow Star: the six-pointed Star of David made of yellow cloth and sewn to the clothing of European Jews so Nazis could easily identify them

Zionism: the movement to establish a Jewish homeland in Israel

Z.O.B.: the Jewish Fighting Organization which led the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto

Zyklon-B: the gas used in the gas chambers of the death camps

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