

The Holocaust: A Glossary of Terms

Anschluss, "Joining together," annexation. On March 12, 1938, Hitler annexed Austria to Germany

Antisemitism, Systematic prejudice against Jews. Notice the absence of a hyphen (-); there has never been any such thing as "Semitism." The term "antisemitism" is, properly one word.

Aryan, In the Nazi ideology, the pure, superior Germanic (Nordic, Caucasian) race.

Auschwitz, The city of Auschwitz, Poland, located in southwestern Poland, was the site of one of the largest of the Nazi extermination camps. The camp was expanded in August, 1942. Camp II was named Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Babi Yar, A deep ravine outside the Ukrainian city of Kiev, on the Dnieper River where the Einsatzgruppen killed and buried 34,000 Jews in one or two days (September 29-30, 1941).

Belzek, Death Camp located in the Lublin District of Poland. More than 600,000 Jews were gassed at Belzek between 1941 and 1943.

Blitzkrieg, "lightning war," used to describe the speed, efficiency and intensity of Germany's military attack against their opponents.

Buchenwald, concentration camp established in 1937 between Frankfurt and Leipzig in Germany. While it was primarily a work camp in the German concentration camp system and not a major extermination center, thousands died there from exposure, over-work and execution.

Bund, a socialist movement among Jews in the Pale of Settlement in western Russia in the late 1800's. The Bundists supported Jewish linguistic and political autonomy. Their nationalism was cultural

rather than territorial and, thus, they were at odds with much of the Zionist movement,

Capo, Jews who worked inside the death camps. Their tasks including transporting victims of gassing to the ovens, cleaning the gas chambers of human excrement and blood, removal of gold from the teeth of the victims, shaving the heads of those going to the gas chambers.

Chelmo, generally thought to be the first of the six death camps in Poland to become operational. At the beginning, the camp was under the direction of SS Major, Christian Wirth, formerly administrative head of the Euthanasie Programme. Located in the Wartheland. Between December 1941 and fall 1942 and again from May until August 1944 gassings by means of carbon monoxide from motor exhaust gas took place. Altogether more than 150,000 Jews as well as 5000 gypsies died at Chelmo.

Concentration Camp, Any internment camp for holding "enemies of the Third Reich." The construction of concentration camps began almost immediately after Hitler gained power in Germany. There were several kinds: labor camps, prison camps and death camps.

Dachau, a concentration camp located in Upper Bavaria, northeast of Munich. In 1942 a gas chamber was established at in connection with the medical experiments of the chief company commander of SS Dr. Rascher also a few experimental gassings were undertaken.

Death Camps, or Killing Centers, a concentration camp the distinct purpose of which was the extermination of its inmates. Almost all of the German death camps were located in Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzek, Chelmo, Madjanek, Sobibor, Treblinka.

Death Marches, at the end of the war when it became obvious that the German army was trapped between the Soviets to the east and the advancing Allied troops from the west, the Nazis, in an attempt to prevent the liberation of camp inmates, forced them to march westward. Thousands died in these marches.

Deportation, the removal of people from their areas of residency for purposes of resettlement elsewhere. With regard to the Jews of Europe, deportation meant removal either to a ghetto or a concentration camp in preparation for yet another removal to an extermination center.

Einsatzgruppen, Mobile killing units ("task groups") under the command of Reinhard Heydrich which accompanied German Troops when they invaded Russia. Their task was to dispose of, liquidate, undesirables who posed a threat to the Reich.

Final Solution, Euphemism for the extermination of European Jewry.

fuhrerprinzip, See "leadership Principle."

General Government The Nazi-ruled state in central and eastern Poland. Headed by Governor Hans Frank.

Genocide, the systematic annihilation of a whole people or nation.

German Military Rank Provided by Richard Breitman in *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991

Oberstgruppenfuehrer	General
Obergruppenfuehrer	Lt. General
Gruppenfuehrer	Major General
Brigadefuehrer	Brigadier General
Oberfuehrer	between Brigadier & Colonel
Standartenfuehrer	Colonel
Obersturmbannfuehrer	Lt. Colonel
Sturmbannfuehrer	Major
Hauptsturmfuehrer	Captain
Obersturmfuehrer	1st. Lieutenant
Unterscharfuehrer	Corporal
Rottenfuehrer	Private, First Class

Sturmann	Private
SS-Mann	No equivalent in U.S. military

Gestapo, the German internal security police - secret police. The Gestapo was organized in 1933 to protect the regime from political opposition. Under Himmler's command after 1936.

Ghetto, a Yiddish word referring to a walled section of a city in which Jews were required to live during the Middle Ages. The concept was revived by the Nazi regime as part of the Final Solution to the Jewish Question.

Holocaust, a Hebrew word (*olah*) meaning "burnt offering."

In the Septuagint version (translated Hebrew Bible into Greek during the reign of Ptolemy II, 3rd century B.C.), the word, *olah*, is consistently translated by the Greek word, *holokauston*, "an offering consumed by fire."

Juden, The German word for Jew.

Judenrat, Jewish community authority, appointed by the Nazis for administration within the ghetto.

Kristallnacht, "Night of broken glass," November 9, 1938, pogrom against German Jews, Jewish businesses and synagogues orchestrated by the Gestapo in retaliation for the assassination of a minor German embassy official in Paris by a 17 year-old Jewish youth named Herchel Grynszpan. 7,500 businesses and 101 synagogues were destroyed, almost 100 Jews were killed and several thousand were arrested and sent to concentration camps. The beginning of the Holocaust.

Leadership Principle, Ger. *fuehrerprinzip*, the ideological and administrative principle established by Hitler early in his rise to power of one vital party controlled by one, and only one, leader to whom all subjects owed absolute and unquestioning obedience.

Lebensraum, one of Hitler's motivations for invading Poland

and, later, the Soviet Union, was to acquire *lebensraum*, or additional "living space," to be colonized by German people.

Madagascar Plan, in 1940, before the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazis seriously considered moving all Jews under their authority to the island of Madagascar, a French possession off the east coast of Africa.

Majdanek, located in the Lublin district, general government of Poland. The concentration camp existing since September 1941 turned into an extermination camp when between April 1942 and November 1943 mass shootings took place to which 24,000 Jews fell victim. In October 1942 also two, later three gas chambers were built. In the beginning the killings in these were done by means of carbon monoxide. Later Zyklon B was implemented. Up until the dissolution of the camp in March 1944 about 50,000 Jews have been gassed. The camp was closed in 1944 after a major inmate riot occurred and several inmates escaped.

Nazi, National Socialist German Workers' Party - the political party which emerged in Munich after World War I. The party was taken over by Adolph Hitler in the early 1920's. He created the SA (Storm Troopers, also known as "Brownshirts") in 1921 and chose the swastika as the party's symbol.

Nuremberg, a city in Germany where the Reichstag met in September, 1935 to promulgate the Nuremberg Laws. A decade later, an International Military Tribunal convened there to hold trials of Nazis accused of War Crimes in connection with the Holocaust.

Operation Barbarossa, the military code name for Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union. The invasion began in June, 1941.

Operation Reinhard, the code name for the entire process of building extermination camps, deportation of Jews first to ghettos, then to the camps for extermination and incineration. The Operation was named for Reinhard Heydrich.

Pink Triangle The Nazi concentration camps developed a system of badges to be worn by inmates depending on why they were imprisoned. Those convicted of sexual deviance, primarily homosexuality, were required to wear a pink triangle. Jews were required to wear the yellow Star of David. Purple designated Jehovah's Witnesses, red for political criminals, black for asocials, including the Roma, and green for criminals.

Pogrom, A Russian word meaning *devastation* used to describe an organized, systematic discriminatory action against Jews.

Reichstag, the German Parliament under the Weimar Constitution. It was purely ornamental during Hitler's dictatorship.

SD, Sicherheitsdienst - The SS Security Service Sonderkommandos.

SS, originally Hitler's elite guards. Under Himmler's leadership, the SS was in charge of the death camps.

Shoah, a Hebrew word meaning "Desolation." Shoah has come to be the preferred term for the Holocaust by Jewish scholars who feel that "Holocaust" has lost much of its significance through overuse.

Sobibor, located in the Lublin District, (general government) received in April 1942, three, later in September 1942 six gas chambers and until October 1943 it was "in operation". During this period at least 200,000 Jews were murdered through carbon monoxide gas.

Third Reich, Nazi Germany from the end of the Weimar Republic to the end of World War II.

Treblinka, located in the Warschau District of the general government in eastern Poland. From the end of July, 1942 on, Treblinka had three gas chambers and at the beginning of September,

1942, installed ten larger gas chambers. Up to the dissolution of the camp in November 1943 altogether 700,000 Jews were killed there by carbon monoxide.

Vichy, France, after the Nazis conquered France, a puppet government was set up here.

Wannsee (Conference), a conference held on January 20, 1942 beside Lake Wannsee in Berlin. At this conference it was decided and made official Nazi policy that the total annihilation of European Jews was the only rational means of a "Final Solution" to the Jewish Question.

Yad Vashem, a museum in Jerusalem dedicated to the memory of Holocaust victims. The name of the Museum is taken from an Old Testament passage in Isaiah: "I will build for them a name and a memorial." (Isiah 56:5).

Zionism- The fervent desire of Jews of the Diaspora to return to their ancestral homeland of Palestine. This ideal is at least 2,500 years old, dating to the Babylonian Captivity. Its first statement is found in Psalm 137:1, "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept as we remembered Zion. Political Zionism which emerged in the 19th century and ultimately resulted in the creation of the modern state of Israel in 1948 is an outgrowth of spiritual Zionism.

Zyklon B, hydrogen cyanide, a poisonous gas originally developed as a fumigation agent to remove pesticides. In October, 1941, it was used experimentally on Soviet prisoners of war. The success of these experiments had devastating consequences for millions of Jews who were gassed in the Nazi death camps.