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Aktion

The term used for anti-Jewish operations carried out against Jews under Nazi orders. It most commonly was used for deportation and killing operations.

Allies

The nations fighting Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan during World War II, primarily the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union.

anti-Judaism

Prejudice against Jews because of their religious beliefs and practices; anti-Judaism implies that Jewish religious beliefs have been superceded or eliminated as a path to salvation.

antisemite

A person who discriminates against or is prejudiced or hostile toward Jews.

antisemitism

The term for hatred of Jews as a group or a concept. Hatred of Jews has existed since ancient times, and in the nineteenth century it was being influenced by modern scientific ways of thinking. The word “antisemitism” was popularized in Germany by political activist Wilhelm Marr to represent this newer way of thinking. “Semitism” supposedly expressed all things Jewish, since at the time national groups were frequently defined by their language and the traditional language of Jews is Hebrew, which is a Semitic language. Of course, there is no such thing as “Semitism” and all speakers of Semitic languages never belonged to the same national or ethnic groups. Antisemitism may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, their supposedly evil nature, or other negative ideas about Jews. It may include political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or other stereotyped views about Jews derived from racial or other ideologies. --antisemitic adj.

Appell (a pell)

"Roll call" in German.

Appellplatz (a pell plah ts)

Refers to the square where a roll call was held.

armed resistance

Acts of opposition, defiance, or sabotage using weapons, including battles, attacks, or guerrilla strikes. (See also cultural resistance and spiritual resistance.)

Armenian Genocide

From 1915- 1923, an estimated 1-1,500,000 Armenians were murdered or died through mass executions, deportation marches, forced starvation, and other brutalities by order of a nationalist elite party ruling the Ottoman Empire.

Aryan

A rather ambiguous term the Nazis primarily applied to people of Northern European racial background. Although never defined, in April 1933, the Nazis defined "non-Aryans" as individuals who had a parent or grandparent who was Jewish.

Auschwitz (ow sch vits)

Auschwitz camp complex (Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, Auschwitz III-Monowitz) as well as more than 40 sub-camps

Auschwitz I

was the first and main camp of the Auschwitz camp complex. Established near the town of Oswiecim in Polish Upper Silesia, it was 37 miles west of Cracow and located in a former Polish military compound.

See full definition +

Auschwitz II-Birkenau

During his March 1, 1941 visit to Auschwitz I, Heinrich Himmler ordered an expansion of the camp. In October 1941, 10,000 Soviet POWs began the construction of Auschwitz II-Birkenau.

See full definition +

The site of the camp was near the Polish village of Brzezinka which was emptied of its Polish population for the project. Overcrowding in Auschwitz I, caused by the arrival of Soviet prisoners of war in late 1941, forced the acceleration of the camp’s construction. The first sections of Auschwitz II-Birkenau were completed in 1942. When construction was complete, the camp had nine sections separated by electrified barbed-wire fences. Originally intended as a camp for 100,000 Soviet POWs, Auschwitz II-Birkenau’s main function became the murder of European Jews. The insecticide Zyklon B was used in the camp’s gas chambers. The first provisional gas chambers were judged inadequate for the scale of gassing planned. Four large gas chamber and crematoria facilities became operational between March and June 1943. When all four were operational, Auschwitz II-Birkenau possessed an unsurpassed capacity for mass murder and body disposal. Gassing operations continued until November 1944. The pace of deportations increased in the spring of 1944 after the German occupation of Hungary. The Hungarian Jewish community was by then the largest remaining Jewish community in German-controlled Europe. Between April and November 1944 Auschwitz received more Jewish deportees than it had in the previous two years. During the initial selection, newly arrived prisoners were declared fit or unfit for forced labor by SS physicians or other camp officials. Most were sent immediately to the gas chambers. On January 27, 1945, the Auschwitz camp complex was liberated by Soviet forces; at Auschwitz II-Birkenau 5,800 prisoners remained alive. During the course of its existence, prisoners in the camp represented many categories including political prisoners, Poles, criminals, Jews, Soviet POWs, and Sinti-Roma. It is estimated that between 1.1 and 1.6 million predominantly Jewish men, women, and children were murdered at Auschwitz, nearly all of them in the gas chambers at Auschwitz II-Birkenau.

See less -

On April 27, 1940, Heinrich Himmler ordered the establishment of a concentration camp at the site. Construction began in May 1940 and the officially reported date of the camp’s opening was May 20, 1940. The first prisoners were Germans and Poles, sent from Sachsenhausen and Tarnow. By March 1941, prisoner ranks had swelled to 11,000. Primarily a concentration camp serving penal functions, Auschwitz I included a crematorium and, in late summer 1941, the camp briefly operated an experimental gas chamber. From 1940 to 1942, prisoners were primarily Polish political, civic, and spiritual leaders, the intelligentsia, and members of the resistance. Beginning in 1942, some of the Jews deported to Auschwitz were admitted to this main camp. Auschwitz I was also a testing ground for SS physicians carrying out inhumane and pseudoscientific medical experiments in the camp “hospital” (Block 10). Near the hospital was the Death Wall (a.k.a. “Black Wall”) where thousands of prisoners were shot. Auschwitz I expanded rapidly and by late 1941 held 18,000 prisoners; by 1943 it held approximately 30,000 inmates. The evacuation from the camp started on January 18, 1945. On January 27, 1945, Soviet troops liberated 1,200 prisoners at Auschwitz I.

See less -

Auschwitz III-Monowitz

Also called Buna, this camp located near the Polish town of Monowice, was the last of three Auschwitz camps established in the vicinity of Oswiecim.

See full definition +

Construction began in late 1941 and the camp opened in 1942. Auschwitz III-Monowitz was a massive slave-labor camp that supplied workers for the large chemical and synthetic-rubber works of IG Farbenindustrie’s Buna Werke. By summer 1944, the prisoner population rose to over 10,000 not including the prisoners of its forty subcamps. Due to conditions in the camp, the average life span of prisoners was three to four months and even less in the subcamps. Over 30,000 prisoners died in Auschwitz III-Monowitz during its existence. The evacuation of Auschwitz III-Monowitz and its subsidiary camps began on January 18, 1945, and the prisoners were sent to the camp at Gleiwitz. On January 27, 1945, when Soviet forces liberated Auschwitz, there were only 600 remaining prisoners at Auschwitz III-Monowitz.

See less -

"Auschwitz Protocols"

Two reports about the mass murders taking place at Auschwitz based on information provided by four escapees from the camp in 1944.

Babi Yar

A ravine on the outskirts of the Ukrainian city of Kiev, where the Einsatzgruppe C murdered and buried close to 34,000 Jews over the course of two days (September 29-30, 1941). (See also Einsatzgruppen.)

Balfour Declaration

A November 2, 1917 letter from British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Baron Lionel Walter Rothschild that expressed the British government’s support for a Jewish homeland in what was known as Palestine.

Bar Mitzvah

see below

Bat Mitzvah

A Jewish male at the age of thirteen and a Jewish female at age of twelve transitions to a state of religious and ritual obligation under the precepts of Jewish law becomes a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The term has also come to denote a communal initiation ceremony signifying the beginning of religious/ritual responsibility.

Battle of Britain

The German air force's attempt to gain air superiority over the Royal Air Force from July to September 1940. Their ultimate failure was one of the turning points of World War II and prevented Germany from invading Britain.

Battle of the Bulge

A major German offensive launched through the densely forested Ardennes mountain region of Wallonia in Belgium, France, and Luxembourg on the Western Front towards the end of World War II.

BDS Movement

A global effort to isolate and punish Israel because of its perceived policies toward the Palestinians. While supporters of the BDS movement claim to embrace the tactic as a nonviolent way to pressure Israel into negotiations, such campaign efforts actually demonize Israel and place the entire onus of the conflict on one side: the Israelis. BDS activists regularly lobby multinational companies, churches, universities, actors, academics, and private individuals to cut ties with Israel or to refuse to engage in collaboration with Israelis.

Belzec

A Nazi extermination camp in Poland, built in 1942 where more than 500,000 Jews were murdered in 1942 and 1943. The Nazis dismantled the camp in the fall of 1943.

Bergen-Belsen

A Nazi concentration camp located in northern Germany that was established in 1943. Although this camp was originally designated for persons who were slated to be exchanged with German nationals in Allied countries, only a few of the Jews who were brought to Bergen-Belsen were actually set free by the Germans.

See full definition +

At the end of 1944 and early in 1945, thousands of Jewish prisoners who were forcibly marched from the east began arriving in the camp. Due to the deteriorating conditions, a typhus epidemic broke out and by mid-April 1945, 35,000 prisoners had perished. On April 15, 1945, the camp was liberated by British forces, who were appalled to find most of the 60,000 inmates in critical condition. During the next five days, 14,000 prisoners died, and in the following weeks, another 14,000 perished.

See less -

Bermuda Conference

A conference convened by the United States and Great Britain on April 19, 1943, ostensibly to find solutions for wartime refugees. In fact, it marked the high point of efforts by officials in both nations to thwart a move for more effective action to rescue European Jewry.

blood libel

An unfounded accusation that began in the Middle Ages rumoring that Jews kill Christian children to use their blood for the ritual of making wine as well as unleavened bread (matzah) for the Passover festival. The false allegations often led to phony trials, assaults, and murders of Jews.

boycott

To abstain from using, buying, or dealing with a business as an expression of protest or disfavor or as a means of coercion.

British Mandate/British Mandatory Palestine

In 1920, the Council of the League of Nations appointed Britain as the mandatory power entrusted with the administration of the Land of Israel. The borders of the land, as a separate country, were defined for the first time in many centuries. The territory of the British Mandate included land on both sides of the Jordan River, encompassing the present-day countries of Israel and Jordan. About 77% of this Mandate was east of the Jordan River, and in 1921, Great Britain created there a separate administrative entity called Transjordan. The changed mandate took effect in 1923.

Brownshirts (SA, Sturmabteilung, Storm Troopers)

The Nazi militia created in 1921 that helped the Nazi Party come to power but was eclipsed by the SS in 1934; known as "Brownshirts" because of the color of the uniform.

Buchenwald

A concentration camp established in 1937 near Weimar, Germany. While it was primarily a labor camp in the German concentration camp system and not an extermination center, thousands died there from exposure, over-work, and execution. Many Jews from other camps were forcibly marched there by the Nazis in early 1945.

Bund

Short for Bund Deutsch Judische Jugend (BDJJ), a Jewish Youth Movement established in 1933 to organize cultural, social, and educational activities for German-Jewish youth.

bystander

One who is present at an event or who knows about its occurrence without participating in it.

Cambodian Genocide

From 1975-1979, an estimated 1.5-3.0 million people-probably around 1.8 million, about a quarter of the population—were killed in a systematic campaign of mass murder organized by the Cambodian government at that time, known as the Khmer Rouge.

cantor

A role (traditionally held by a man) within formal Jewish religious worship which employs elaborate musical chanting while leading a congregation in prayer.

caricature

A representation, especially pictorial or literary, in which the subject's distinctive features are deliberately exaggerated to produce a comic or grotesque effect.

Chanukah or Hanukkah

An eight-day holiday that celebrates the unlikely victory of the Israelites, led by the Maccabees, against Greek Assyrian persecution and religious oppression in the Land of Israel in the second century B.C.E. In addition to marking a military victory against religious oppression and the subsequent rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, Chanukah recognizes a miracle in that a single flask of oil used to light the Temple menorah lasted for eight days.

Chelmno

A Nazi extermination camp in Poland, established at the end of 1941, Chelmno was the first of the Nazi extermination camps employing carbon monoxide gas vans as the main method of killing. At least 152,000 Jews, Roma, Poles and others were murdered there between late 1941 and 1944, although not continuously. The Nazis dismantled the camp in late 1944 and early 1945.

Christianity

A monotheistic system of beliefs and practices based on the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus as embodied in the New Testament and emphasizing the role of Jesus as savior.

collaboration

The act of working jointly; in the context of war, it is often the act of cooperating traitorously with an enemy that is occupying one's country. --collaborator n.

Communism

An ideological concept or system of society in which the collective community shares ownership in resources and the means of production. In theory, such societies provide for equal sharing of all work, according to ability, and all benefits, according to need. In 1848, Karl Marx, in collaboration with Friedrich Engels, published the Communist Manifesto that provided the theoretical impetus for the Russian Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. –Communist n. or adj.

concentration camp

Camps established by the Nazi regime, which eventually became a major instrument of terror, control, punishment, and killing performed through both deliberate means as well as attrition by hunger and/or disease.

contemporary antisemitism

A term used to describe a modern-day form of antisemitism that has developed in the late 20th and early 21st centuries and manifests itself in anti-Zionism and opposition to the State of Israel.

See full definition +

While not all anti-Israel bias can be considered antisemitism, there are instances when bias against the State of Israel crosses over into antisemitism. This form of antisemitism is sometimes known as the “new antisemitism.”

See less -

crematoria

Furnaces used to cremate bodies. During the Holocaust, crematoria were installed in several camps, among them the extermination camps and the Theresienstadt ghetto.

crimes against humanity

Acts of persecution against a group or groups so heinous as to warrant punishment under international law. The term was first used in the preamble of the Hague Convention of 1907 and subsequently used during the Nuremberg Trials as a charge for actions during World War II—actions that did not violate a specific treaty but were deemed to require punishment.

Crusades

Military campaigns embarked upon in the name of Christianity to recover the Holy Land from Muslim occupation during the Middle Ages. Many times these campaigns included brutal and murderous attacks on Jewish communities on the road to the Holy Land.

cultural resistance, cultural/spiritual resistance

Acts of opposition that are usually related to cultural traditions and the preservation of human dignity, intended to undermine an oppressor and inspire hope within the ranks of the resistors.

See full definition +

During the Holocaust, cultural/spiritual resistance was often the only possible way to oppose Nazi tyranny. Examples of cultural resistance included defying Nazi directives by creating schools in the ghettos, maintaining religious customs, writing poems and songs, drawing, painting, or keeping journals and other records of ghetto or camp life. (See also spiritual resistance and armed resistance.)

See less -

CUP – Committee of Union and Progress

The Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), the leading Turkish nationalist party of the Young Turks, gained absolute control of the Ottoman Empire in 1913. They spread an ideology of “Pan-Turkism,” a radical form of nationalism, which supported a centralized Turkish state and left no room for minorities, including the Armenians.

D-Day (Invasion of Normandy)

The name associated with June 6, 1944 when some 160,000 American, British, and Canadian forces landed on five beaches along a 50-mile stretch of the heavily fortified coast of France's Normandy region. The invasion was one of the largest amphibious military assaults in history.

Dachau

Dachau was a concentration camp located near Munich, Bavaria. The opening of Dachau was announced at a press conference by Heinrich Himmler on March 20, 1933.

See full definition +During the camp’s 12-year existence, the prisoner population included, among others, political opponents, criminals, Sinti and Roma, Jews, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and members of the Catholic clergy. During World War II, Dachau and its system of subcamps was principally responsible for furnishing slave labor to the armament industries. Over 200,000 prisoners were incarcerated at Dachau during its existence. American forces liberated Dachau on April 29, 1945. They found box cars near the camp filled with bodies in an advanced state of decomposition. These were prisoners who were brought to Dachau from other camps towards the end of the war. In the main camp, American forces liberated approximately 30,000 prisoners.

See less -

death march

Referring to the forced marches of Nazi camp prisoners toward the German interior at the end of World War II, these marches began when the German armed forces, trapped between the Soviets to the east and the advancing Allied troops from the west, attempted to prevent the liberation of camp inmates in the harsh winter of 1945. Treated with tremendous brutality during the forced marches, thousands were shot or died of starvation or exhaustion.

dehumanization

As a political or social measure, dehumanization is intended to change the manner in which a person or group of people are perceived, reducing the target group to objects or beings not worthy of human rights.

deicide

the killing (or killer) of a god

democracy

A system of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.

deportation

Removal of people from their areas of residency for purposes of resettlement elsewhere. With regard to the Jews of Europe during the Holocaust, deportation by the Nazis meant removal to another city, ghetto, concentration camp, or extermination center.

Der Stürmer

The weekly newspaper published by Julius Streicher for twenty-two years, beginning in May 1923. Every issue denounced Jews in crude, vicious, and vivid ways, often through the use of caricatures. (See also caricatures.)

discrimination

The denial of justice and fair treatment by both individuals and institutions in many arenas, including employment, education, housing, banking, and political rights. Discrimination is an action that can follow prejudicial thinking.

displaced persons' camp (DP camp)

Camps set up after World War II in Austria, Germany, and Italy as temporary living quarters for the tens of thousands of homeless people created by the war. Many survivors of the Holocaust who had no home or country to which they could return were among the displaced persons.

Eichmann Trial

Adolf Eichmann, SS Lieutenant-colonel and head of the "Jewish Section" of the SD, was arrested at the end of World War II in the American zone, but escaped, went underground, and disappeared.

See full definition +

On May 11, 1960, members of the Israeli Secret Service captured him from Argentina and brought him to Israel to stand trial. Eichmann was tried in Jerusalem (April-December 1961), convicted, and sentenced to death. Executed on May 31, 1962, Eichmann is the only individual ever sentenced to death by the Israeli penal system.

See less -

Einsatzgruppen

Referring to the four mobile death squads (A, B, C, and D) estimated to have killed more than 1.5 million Jews. Victims were executed in mass shootings and buried in unmarked graves — usually in the ditches they were forced to dig themselves. (See also Babi Yar.)

European Jewry

Over 9.5 million European (including the Soviet Union) Jews in the pre-World War II period. By 1948, there were only an estimated 3.7 million Jews remaining in Europe.

Euthanasia Program

Referring to the Nazi order for the deliberate extermination of German people institutionalized with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities, carried out as a measure to prevent contamination of the Nazi-defined Aryan race. The Euthanasia Program began in 1939, with German non-Jews as the first victims.

Evian Conference

A conference convened by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July 1938 to discuss the problem of refugees. While thirty-two countries were represented at the conference in Evian-les-Bains, France, not much was accomplished, since most western countries were reluctant to accept Jewish refugees.

extermination camp

A Nazi facility where victims were killed on a mass industrialized scale and their bodies burned or buried in mass graves. The Nazis operated six extermination camps: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Translated from the Nazi term "Vernichtungslager" (literally death camp or killing site), the designation "extermination" reflects the Nazi ideology that Jews were pests who should be exterminated.

Fascism

A social and political ideology that has as its primary guiding principle that the state or nation is the highest priority, rather than personal or individual freedoms.

"Final Solution of the Jewish Question" ("Final Solution")

A Nazi code phrase referring to their systematic plan to murder every Jewish man, woman, and child in Europe.

Gaza

A self-governing Palestinian territory on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, that borders Egypt on the southwest and Israel on the east and north.

gendarme

A member of the police force in France or in countries formerly influenced or controlled by France.

General gouvernement

An administrative unit established by the Germans on October 26, 1939, consisting of those parts of Poland that had not been incorporated into the Third Reich. It included the districts of Warsaw, Krakow, Radom, Lublin, and Galicia.

genocide

The United Nations defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, including killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about a physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

From April – July, 1994, at least 800,000 Rwandans lost their lives in a campaign of deliberate, state-organized mass murder now referred to as the fastest genocide in modern history. The genocide targeted the Tutsi population (approximately 14% of the population) of the country, a social group that came to be defined as an ethnic group, even though they shared language, culture, and land with their killers, the Hutu.

Gentile

Someone who is not of the Jewish faith; most often referring to a Christian.

Gestapo

The Nazi Secret State Police who were directly involved in implementing the murder of Jews and other Nazi victims during the Holocaust.

ghetto

Sections of towns and cities mostly in Eastern Europe that the German occupation authorities and their allies used to concentrate, exploit, and often starve local and regional Jewish populations. Jews from Central and Western Europe were also sent to some of the ghettos, as were some Roma.

Great Depression

The economic crisis beginning with the stock market crash in the United States in 1929 and continuing through the 1930s; a worldwide economic downturn resulted.

Gross-Rosen

The Gross Rosen concentration camp, located south of the town of Gross Rosen (Rogoznica) in Lower Silesia, was established as a subsidiary camp of Sachsenhausen in July 1940.

See full definition +

In May 1941 it became an autonomous concentration camp. The increasing need to use concentration camp prisoners in armaments production led to the expansion of the Gross Rosen camp. It became the center of a vast network of more than 60 subsidiary camps. The main camp held about 10,000 prisoners, and the net of subsidiary camps in Lower Silesia (Germany) and Czechoslovakia held as many as 80,000 inmates. In 1942 the deportation of Jewish prisoners from different parts of Poland to the Gross Rosen camp began. From January 1944 to early February 1945 the camp received more than 100,000 prisoners. Beside Polish Jews, there was an influx of transports from Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Greece, France, the Netherlands, Italy, the USSR, and other European countries occupied by Germany. In total, 239 transports arrived at Gross Rosen. There were two networks of forced labor camps for Jews in Gross Rosen. The first comprised more than 20 camps that were part of the Organization Schmelt system in Silesia. The second was a series of subsidiary camps for more than 10,000 Hungarian Jews. The evacuation of the main camp began in early February 1945. The Gross Rosen inmates were transferred to Mittelbau-Dora, FlossenbÙrg, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, and Sachsenhausen concentration camps. The Soviet Army liberated Gross Rosen on February 13, 1945.

See less –

Hamas

A terrorist Palestinian militant movement that also serves as one of the two major political parties in Gaza and the West Bank. A nationalist-Islamist spinoff of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas was founded in 1987, during the first intifada (see separate entry), and later emerged at the forefront of armed resistance to Israel.

harassment

The act of annoying persistently; creating an unpleasant or hostile situation especially by uninvited or unwelcome verbal or physical conduct.

Hasid

From the word meaning “pious”, someone who belongs to a sub-group within ultra-Orthodox Judaism that arose in Eastern Europe in the 1700s as a spiritual revival movement stressing religious devotion and joy through prayer. The term “Hasidic” refers to this movement, its traditions, religious observance, and way of life.

hate crime

A criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.

hate group

A group whose worldview is based significantly on strong intolerance or hatred of a certain group(s) of people based on race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. Hate groups usually, but not always, claim superiority to those whom they oppose. They often advocate separation: removing themselves from the presence of the people they hate, or removing the people they hate from their presence. They sometimes advocate elimination: killing those people whom they hate.

hate speech

Speech intended to offend, threaten, or insult an individual or group based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other traits.

"Hatikvah"

The title of the Israeli national anthem; means "the hope" in Hebrew.

Hitler Youth, Hitlerjugend

The Nazi Party's compulsory (after 1939) youth movement, which emphasized physical training, Nazi ideology, and absolute obedience to Hitler and the Nazi Party. Youth were subject to intensive propaganda regarding racial and national superiority.

Holocaust

The state-sponsored systematic murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. Sinti-Roma, Poles, people with physical and mental disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents were also targeted by the Nazis.

Holocaust denial

An antisemitic belief that the Holocaust never happened or that minimizes or trivializes it.

"Horst Wessel" song

The official anthem of the Nazi Party and the second national anthem of the Third Reich, whose lyrics were taken from a poem written by Horst Wessel, a member of the Storm Troopers (SA).

Ideology

Ideology is a set of shared beliefs or a system of ideas that organizes one’s goals, expectations, and actions. Ideologies can have positive or negative influences on a society. For example, feminism is an ideology that advocates rights and equality for women; and Nazism was an ideology that promoted harmful racist and nationalist views. See Nazi ideology/Nazi racial ideology for more information.

internment camp

A camp in which foreigners or others considered dangerous to pursuing a war effort are confined during wartime.

Intifada

Derived from the Arabic “nafada,” which means “to shake,” “shake off,” or “get rid of,” the term is often used to refer specifically to an armed uprising of Palestinians against Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza. The “First Intifada” refers to a Palestinian uprising lasting from December 1987 to 1993; the “Second Intifada” refers to a period of intensified Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which began in late September 2000 and ended around 2005.

Iron Guard

A far-right movement and political party in Romania in the period from 1927 into the early part of World War II.

Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

The military forces for the State of Israel. In addition to defending the country, the IDF carry out a range of social and economic functions.

Jehovah's Witness

A Christian denomination that originated in the United States and had about 20,000 members in Germany in 1933. Their religious beliefs did not allow them to swear allegiance to any worldly power, making them enemies in the eyes of the Nazi state.

Jewish Badge

Symbol that Jews were forced to wear during the Holocaust so they could be identified as Jews. The Germans used the Jewish Badge, often in the form of a yellow Star of David, to harass and isolate the Jews, thereby creating a wide rift between Jews and the rest of the population.

Jewish Brigade

A unit of the British army, which fought under the Zionist flag. The Jewish Brigade was formally established in September 1944 and included more than 5,000 Jewish volunteers from Palestine organized into three infantry battalions and several supporting units. The Jewish Brigade fought against the Germans in Italy from March 1945 until the end of the war in May 1945.

Judaism

A religion developed among the ancient Hebrews and characterized by belief in one God who has revealed himself to Abraham, Moses, and the Hebrew prophets and by a religious life in accordance with Scriptures and rabbinic traditions.

Judenrat

A Jewish council established in many of the German or Axis-occupied Jewish communities in Europe. These councils were appointed by the Germans to implement various occupier/persecutorial directives within the ghettos.

Kadoshim

Hebrew: plural, literally "sacred ones," or "holy ones," from Kadosh, meaning holy.

Khmer Rouge

A group that started in the 1960s as the armed wing of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (Cambodia). Led by the dictator Pol Pot, their goal was to establish a classless, agricultural state that completely rejected capitalism and was based on communal living by eliminating anyone they deemed urban, intellectual, a minority, or anyone deemed to be corrupted by outside influences.

Kindertransport

A rescue operation carried out primarily by British organizations for Jewish children from Greater Germany, following the Kristallnacht Pogrom. The British government allowed 10,000 children to enter Great Britain.

kippah

A skullcap head covering worn by some Jews at all times, and other Jews during prayer and/or meals; also know as a yarmulke.

Knesset

The Israeli parliament.

kosher

Food that is permissible to eat under Jewish dietary laws; can also describe any other ritual object that is fit for use according to Jewish law.

Kovno ghetto

After the Nazis invaded Lithuania in 1941, they established a ghetto in Kovno/Kaunas, in the suburb of Slobodka. When the Kovno ghetto was first established, about 30,000 Jews were confined there. Within the first three months of its existence, 12,000 of the Jews in the Kovno ghetto had been massacred by Lithuanian volunteers under German command. When Kovno was liberated by Soviet forces on August 1, 1944, only a few hundred Jews remained there.

Kristallnacht Pogrom

An organized pogrom against Jews in Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland on November 9-10, 1938. Kristallnacht is also known as the "Night of Broken Glass," or "Crystal Night."

See full definition +

Orchestrated by the Nazis in retaliation for the assassination of a German embassy official in Paris by a seventeen-year-old Jewish youth named Herchel Grynzspan, 1,400 synagogues and 7,000 businesses were destroyed, almost 100 Jews were killed, and 30,000 were arrested and sent to concentration camps. German Jews were subsequently held financially responsible for the destruction wrought upon their property during this pogrom. (See also pogrom.)

See less -

Ku Klux Klan

A racist, antisemitic movement with a commitment to extreme violence to achieve its goals of racial segregation and white supremacy. Of all the types of right-wing hate groups that exist in the United States, the Klan remains the one with the greatest number of national and local organizations around the country.

League of Nations

An intergovernmental organization founded as a result of the Paris Peace Conference that ended World War I. It was the first international organization whose principal mission was to maintain world peace.

liberation

The process of one army driving an occupying army out of an occupied territory. Holocaust survivors and citizens of occupied Europe used the word "liberation" to refer to the moment they were freed from Nazi control. Individuals and/or nations involved in the liberation are referred to as "liberators."

liquidated

A Nazi euphemism for destroying a ghetto and its inhabitants by conducting massive deportations to concentration and extermination camps, or by murdering Jews on the outskirts of town.

Lodz ghetto

On February 8, 1940, German orders decreed the establishment of the Lodz ghetto, and on April 30, 1940, the ghetto was sealed. The chairman of the ghetto's Judenrat was Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski.

See full definition +

The Lodz ghetto served as an important industrial center in occupied Poland. One of the first ghettos created, Lodz was also the one that existed the longest. By August 1942, there were about 100 factories in the ghetto. The largest specialized in textile production, notably uniforms for the German army. In 1941 and 1942, about 40,000 Jews were deported to the Lodz ghetto from Germany, Austria, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Luxembourg, and smaller towns in the Lodz province. This dramatically increased the ghetto population. German authorities established a killing facility nearby and between January and September 1942, deportations to the Chelmno death camp totaled over 116,000 people. Deportations in early September 1942 resulted in the loss of 15,000 people, many of them children and the elderly. By spring of 1943, when most of the other ghettos in Poland and Eastern Europe had been destroyed or were in the process of destruction, the Lodz ghetto still held 70,000 people. In June 1944 massive deportations to Auschwitz and other concentration and death camps ensued. The ghetto was emptied of all but a few of its inhabitants. Soviet forces liberated Lodz on January 19, 1945.

See less -

Lodz Ghetto Chronicle

A daily chronicle of events in the Lodz ghetto that was written at the initiative of the archivist in the Judenrat organization. The compiling of the chronicles by writers and intellectuals in the ghetto continued uninterrupted from January 1941 until July 30, 1944. The writing was cautious, since Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the head of the Judenrat, and the Germans themselves oversaw what was written.

Madagascar Plan

In 1940, before the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazis seriously considered deporting all Jews under their authority to the island of Madagascar, a French territory off the east coast of Africa.

Magen David

The shield of David, or as it is more commonly known, the Star of David, is the symbol of intertwined equilateral triangles most commonly associated with Judaism today. (See also Star of David.)

Majdanek

The Majdanek concentration camp, also known as the Lublin concentration camp, existed from October 1941 to July 1944. The first prisoners arrived in October 1941.

Mauthausen

Mauthausen was a concentration camp for women and men in the province of Upper Austria. The camp was located in the vicinity of the villages of Mauthausen and Marbach near the Wiener Graben stone quarry. The camp opened in early August 1938 and was liberated in May 1945 by the United States military. Mauthausen had more than 20 satellite camps. Approximately 200,000 prisoners passed through Mauthausen during its existence as a camp.

menorah

A seven-branched candelabrum used in the Temple; one of the oldest symbols of the Jewish faith.

Molotov Cocktail

A makeshift bomb made of a breakable container, filled with flammable liquid, and provided with a rag wick that is lighted just before being hurled.

nationalism

Nationalism is an ideology based on the premise that an individual’s loyalty and devotion to his nation-state surpasses all other individual or group interests.

Nazi

Short for Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei (N.S.D.A.P.), the German national socialist political party that emerged in Munich after World War I. The party was taken over by Adolf Hitler in the early 1920s. The swastika was the party symbol.

Nazi ideology or Nazi racial ideology

The Nazi system of beliefs, based on a racial view of the world. According to Nazi ideology, the Nordic Aryan Germans were the "master race." Other races were inferior to them and the Jews were considered to be the "anti-race," the exact opposite of the Germans, and an evil and destructive race. Germans were said to be the natural rulers of the world and, in order to achieve that position, influence of the Jews needed to be ended. Thus, racial antisemitism and solving the so-called "Jewish Question" lay at the heart of Nazi ideology, as did the desire for more territory or Lebensraum (living space).

“new antisemitism”

(See term: Contemporary antisemitism.)

Nuremberg Laws

Racial laws put into effect by the German parliament in Nuremberg on September 15, 1935. These laws, which extended to more than 400 decrees and regulations, became the legal basis for the racist anti-Jewish policy in Germany.

See full definition +

One of the first Nuremberg Laws declared that only Aryans could be citizens of the Reich. This stripped Jews of their political rights, forbade sexual relations between “Aryans” and Jews and did not allow Jews to display the German/Nazi flag or national colors. Thirteen additional decrees were added to the Nuremberg Laws over the next eight years; these included the first official definition of who was to be considered a Jew and who an Aryan.

See less -

Nuremberg Trials, 1945-46

The war crimes trials of twenty-two major Nazi figures in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1945 and 1946 before the International Military Tribunal.

occupation

The invasion, conquest, and control of a nation or territory by foreign armed forces.

Oneg Shabbat (Oyneg Shabbos) Archive

Literally "joy of the Sabbath," Oneg Shabbat was the codename for a secret collection of documents gathered in the Warsaw ghetto during the German occupation. Led by Jewish historian Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum, a group of historians, rabbis, social workers and others chronicled Jewish life in the ghetto so that their memory would be preserved. The archive was developed from September 1939 to January 1943. Just before the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the documents were hidden in metal boxes and milk cans and buried in three locations. Two of the three collections were unearthed in 1946 and 1950, but the third has never been found. The 6,000 documents (35,000 pages) that were discovered are housed in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

Palestine

The Roman term for what is now Israel; the name used by the British during World War II to denote the area they held under a League of Nations mandate.

Parliamentary Democracy

A democratic form of government in which the party (or a coalition of parties) with the greatest representation in the parliament (legislature) forms the government and its leader becomes prime minister. The parties in the minority serve in opposition to the majority and have the duty to challenge it regularly. Countries with some form of parliamentary democracy include Israel, United Kingdom, Denmark, Slovakia, and Australia to name a few.

partisans

Forces that use guerrilla tactics when operating in enemy-occupied territory. Throughout occupied Europe, partisans banded together to engage in guerrilla warfare against the Germans.

See full definition +

Jewish partisans played a prominent role in parts of the Soviet Union where the geographical conditions permitted such warfare. In southern European counties such as Yugoslavia and Greece, Jews joined general partisan units as they did in Slovakia. In western European countries, such as Belgium and France, resistance was characterized mainly by underground movements, where Jews played a significant role.

See less -

Passover

The celebration of the Jewish people's freedom from Egyptian bondage that took place approximately 3,500 years ago, as told in the first fifteen chapters of the biblical Book of Exodus. This eight day festival begins with a feast called the Seder. The word "seder" means "order" or "procedure" in Hebrew and refers to the order of historical events recalled in the Passover meal as well as the meal itself.

perpetrator

Someone who does something that is morally wrong or criminal.

Persecution

Unfair or abusive treatment of an individual or group over a period of time; a campaign to subjugate, expel, or exterminate a group of people based on their religion, race, ethnicity, or other aspect of their identity.

pogrom

Originally a Russian word meaning "devastation" used to describe organized, large-scale acts of violence against Jewish communities, especially the kind instigated by the authorities in Czarist Russia.

Potsdam Conference

A meeting held in Potsdam (Germany) in the summer of 1945 where Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill drew up plans for the administration of Germany and Poland after World War II ended.

prejudice

Prejudging or making a decision about a person or group of people without sufficient knowledge. Prejudicial thinking is frequently based on stereotypes.

Profiteer

A pejorative term for a person, company, or institution that makes a profit excessively, unethically, or both.

propaganda

False or partly false information intended to shape people's opinion and action that fulfills the propagandist's intent.

Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Originally written in 1903, Protocols is entirely a work of fiction, intentionally written to blame Jews for a variety of ills. Those who distribute it claim that it documents a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world. The conspiracy and its alleged leaders, the so-called Elders of Zion, never existed.

Purim

A holiday commemorating when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from a plan to annihilate them. During this joyous holiday, it is customary to read the Book of Esther, parade in costume, give charity to the poor, send friends bags of goodies, and partake in a festive meal.

racism

The practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, and domination of a group based on that group's race.

Rassenkunde

A term literally translated as "racial science." (See also Nazi ideology.)

refugee

One who flees or is deported in search of safety, as in times of war, political oppression, or religious persecution.

Reich, Third Reich

The official name of the Nazi regime; ruled from 1933 to 1945 under the command of Adolf Hitler. Historically, the First Reich was the medieval Holy Roman Empire, which lasted until 1806. The Second Reich included the German Empire from 1871-1918.

Reichstag

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

resistance

Generally, action of an individual, nation or group in opposition to those in power. More specifically, efforts by Jews and others to oppose persecution at the hands of the Nazis and their partners.

Ressortes

A German term used in the Lodz ghetto referring to the factories that mostly manufactured materials for the Reich's war economy (from the German Arbeitsressorte—“work section").

"Return to Life"

A term referring to how Holocaust survivors began to rebuild their lives following the Holocaust.

revisionism

Advocating for the revision of an accepted, usually long-standing view, theory, or doctrine, especially a revision of historical events and movements. To give themselves more legitimacy, many Holocaust deniers call themselves "revisionists."

"Righteous Among the Nations"

An award given by Yad Vashem in the name of the State of Israel to non-Jews who risked their lives, or in the case of diplomats, their careers, to help Jews during the Holocaust.

Roma

The umbrella term ‘Roma’ includes different related groups, including Roma, Sinti, and numerous others diverse in culture and lifestyles. The Roma communities live predominantly in Eastern Europe since the 15th Century and their origin is traced to India. They shared a common language, culture, and until the twentieth century, a wandering way of life. "Gypsies" was a collective term often used for Roma and similar communities. The term is considered offensive due to its association with damaging stereotypes, including poverty and dishonesty. Roma people were considered asocial elements by the Nazis and persecuted relentlessly. An estimated 1 to 1.5 million members of this minority lived across Europe before the war. Between 250,000 and 500,000 Roma were killed by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the war.

RTLM

A Rwandan radio station that was influential in spreading propaganda and hate speech, inciting the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

SA

(See Brownshirts.)

Sabbath

In Judaism, a weekly day of rest, spirituality, and celebration commemorating the creation of the universe – the seventh day, when God rested, as described in the Bible. It begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday. No work is permitted, except that connected with worship or the preservation of health. Instead, traditional Jews pray, study and spend time with family.

scapegoat

To blame an individual or group for something based on that person or group's identity when, in reality, the person or group is not responsible. Prejudicial thinking and discriminatory acts can lead to scapegoating. The individual or group blamed is the "scapegoat."

selection

A euphemism for the process carried out by German physicians to select victims for extermination or forced labor.

Shoah (sho ah)

A Hebrew word meaning "catastrophe," referring to the Holocaust.

Shtetl

The Yiddish word for “small town.” Generally, shtetls were small market towns with large Jewish populations in Central and Eastern Europe during the 18th to 20th centuries. The Jews had their own communal life that revolved around religious traditions. Poverty in the shtetls was common, and Jews often worked in crafts and as peddlers. The shtetl had a tightly-knit Jewish community that played an important role in supporting its needy members. This way of life was completely destroyed in the Holocaust.

Sinti

Sinti is the name of a nomadic people of northwestern Europe, related to the Roma people. Roma people were considered asocial elements by the Nazis and persecuted relentlessly. An estimated 1 to 1.5 million members of this minority lived across Europe before the war. Between 250,000 and 500,000 Roma were killed by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the war. (See also Roma)

Sobibor

A death camp opened in March 1942, as part of Aktion Reinhard, near Sobibor, Poland. The camp commandant was Franz Stangl, and later Franz Reichsleitner.

See full definition +

The camp’s personnel consisted of members of the German SS, Ukrainian guards, some Soviet POWs, and a number of Volksdeutsche. Sobibor’s gas chambers were constructed in mid-April 1942, and used until the end of September 1943. Jews from Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, and the Soviet Union were killed in the Sobibor camp. A small number of Jews were transferred from Sobibor to forced labor camps in the area. On October 14, 1943, the camp’s surviving inmates rebelled and approximately 300 prisoners from the main camp compound managed to escape (of these only about 50 to 70 survived until May 1945). The Sobibor camp was completely dismantled by the end of 1943. In mid-1944 the Soviet army and the Polish People’s Army liberated the area. Roughly 250,000 Jews were killed at Sobibor throughout its existence as a death camp.

See less -

Social Darwinism

A theory promoted by philosopher Herbert Spencer, arising in the late nineteenth century that the laws of evolution, which scientist Charles Darwin had observed in nature, also apply to society. Social Darwinists argued that social programs resulted from conflicts in which the fittest or best adapted individuals, or entire societies, would prevail. It gave rise to the slogan "survival of the fittest." The theory was used to promote racial superiority.

Socialism

A theory or system of social organization that advocates the ownership and control of land, capital, industry, etc. by the community as a whole. In Marxist theory it represents the stage following capitalism before reaching communism. --Socialist n.

Sonderkommando

A special commando, also referring to Jewish prisoners in extermination camps whose forced labor assignment was to dispose of/cremate bodies of gas chamber victims.

spiritual resistance

Acts of resistance aimed at preserving human dignity in the dehumanizing conditions of the ghettos and camps. (See also cultural resistance and armed resistance.)

SS Schutzstaffel

Originally organized as Hitler's personal bodyguard, the SS was transformed into a giant organization under Heinrich Himmler. Although various SS units were assigned to the battlefield, the organization is best known for carrying out the destruction of European Jewry.

Star of David

A six-pointed star made up of two triangles superimposed over each other. In Judaism it is often called the Magen David, which means the "shield of David" in Hebrew. It is one of the symbols most commonly associated with the Jewish people.

stereotype

An oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences. Even seemingly positive stereotypes that link a person or group to a specific positive trait can have negative consequences.

Storm Troopers

(See Brownshirts.)

survivor

Within the context of the Holocaust, a survivor is someone who escaped death at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators.

swastika

An ancient Eastern symbol appropriated by the Nazis as their emblem. (See Students’ Toughest Questions for additional information.)

synagogue

A building or place of meeting for worship and religious instruction in the Jewish faith.

Talmud

The name of the two collections (Mishnah and Gemara) of records of the discussion and administration of Jewish law by scholars in various academies from 200 C.E.-500 C.E.

Theresienstadt

A ghetto in Theresienstadt (Terezin), a town in Northwestern Czechoslovakia, where the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia, elderly Jews and persons of "special merit" in the Reich, and several thousand Jews from the Netherlands and Denmark were interned. Although in practice the ghetto, run by the SS, served as a transit camp for Jews en route to extermination camps, it was also presented as a "model Jewish settlement" for propaganda purposes.

Torah

The first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

totalitarian

A racial dictatorship or doctrine in which one political party or group maintains complete control, down to the level of the intimate details of an individual's life.

Treaty of Sèvres

The post-World War I pact between the victorious Allied powers and representatives of the government of Ottoman Turkey. The treaty abolished the Ottoman Empire and obliged Turkey to renounce all rights over Arab Asia and North Africa.

Treaty of Versailles ((ver sigh))

A peace treaty that was signed at the end of World War I in Versailles, France.

Treblinka

The Treblinka death camp was built in a thinly populated area four kilometers from the village and train station of Treblinka, Poland. The camp was established as a part of Aktion Reinhard in 1942.

See full definition +

The first transports arrived from the Warsaw ghetto in July 1942. Between July 23 and September 21, 1942, 254,000 Jews from Warsaw and 112,000 from other places in the Warsaw district were murdered at Treblinka II. From mid-November 1942 until January 1943, transports to Treblinka II came primarily from Bialystok. Some transports of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto were sent to Treblinka II in the second half of January 1943. It is estimated that around 900,000 Jews were murdered in Treblinka between July 1942 and March 1943. In March 1943, an operation was launched to burn the bodies of the victims in order to obliterate traces of the killing. An uprising in the camp took place on August 2, 1943. About 850 inmates were at the camp during the uprising. A number of prisoners managed to escape, but only about 150-200 evaded capture but many of them did not survive the war. It is estimated that around 70 prisoners from Treblinka were alive at the end of World War II. The last transports to Treblinka II came from the Bialystok ghetto on August 18 and 19, 1943. In November 1943 about thirty Jewish prisoners remained in Treblinka II. They were all shot before the German and Ukrainian staff left the site of the dismantled camp.

See less -

tyranny

A government in which a single ruler is vested with absolute power or control through the use of threats and violence.

underground

Any resistance organization devoted to undermining or overthrowing a government in power.

United Nations (UN)

An international organization whose stated aims are facilitating cooperation in international law, international security, economic development, social progress, human rights, and achievement of world peace. The UN was founded in 1945 after World War II to replace the League of Nations, to stop wars between countries, and to provide a platform for dialogue and cooperation.

V-E (Victory in Europe) Day

The public holiday celebrated on May 7/8, 1945 to mark the date when the World War II Allies formally accepted the unconditional surrender of the armed forces of Nazi Germany, ending the war in Europe.

Vichy, Vichy France

A government set up by the Nazis after they conquered France in spring 1940, with its capital in the town of Vichy, in the southern part of France.

victim

One who has been physically or emotionally harmed by another.

visual history testimony

As defined by USC Shoah Foundation, visual history testimony is a videotaped account of one person's experiences of life before, during, and after the Holocaust. Visual history testimony offers a deeper understanding of these events as they were lived, filtered through the reflections of one person.

Wagner-Rogers Bill

The 1939 Wagner-Rogers Bills (identical bills in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate) proposed admitting 20,000 German refugee children under the age of fourteen to the United States over a two-year period outside of immigration quotas. Due to lack of support, the bills were withdrawn and never voted on by the U.S. Congress.

Wannsee Conference

A conference held on January 20, 1942, beside Lake Wannsee in Berlin. At this conference, the apparatus was coordinated to carry out the total annihilation of European Jews.

war crimes trial

A trial of a punishable offense during war time by a person or persons, military or civilian. Under international law, war crimes are offenses that fail to adhere to the norms of procedure and rules of battle, including mistreatment of prisoners of war or attacking those displaying a flag of truce.

War Refugee Board

The executive agency established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in January 1944 to aid civilian victims of Nazi Germany and its allies.

Warsaw ghetto

The Warsaw ghetto was officially established on October 2, 1940 and sealed on November 16, 1940. At one point, the ghetto held over 450,000 Jews. The first wave of mass deportations took place between July 22, 1942 and September 12, 1942.

See full definition +

A second wave of deportations, meant to clear the ghetto, began January 18, 1943 but was suspended after four days due to armed resistance. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began on April 19, 1943, in response to renewed efforts to deport the remaining Jews and was led by the commander of the Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Z.O.B.), Mordecai Anielewicz. The Germans declared the ghetto liquidated on May 16, 1943, although fighting continued after that date and some Jews remained in bunkers within the razed ghetto area until at least January 1944.

See less -

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

The Warsaw ghetto uprising was an act of Jewish resistance that occurred from April 19 to May 16, 1943. The armed revolt began after German troops entered the ghetto to deport Jewish residents to the Majdanek and Treblinka extermination camps. The uprising ended after German forces brought in heavy artillery and set fire to the ghetto. The surviving Jewish residents were deported to concentration camps and killing centers. The revolt in Warsaw was the largest uprising by Jews during World War II and inspired other revolts in ghettos and camps throughout German-occupied Europe.

Weimar Republic

The period of German history from 1919 to 1933; named after the city of Weimar, where a national assembly convened to produce a new constitution after the German monarchy was abolished following the nation's defeat in World War I. The first attempt at establishing a democracy in Germany was a time of great tension and conflict, and it ultimately failed with the ascent of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party in 1933.

White supremacy/supremacist

White supremacist groups believe that white, Christian identity is superior and strive toward a segregated society and/or a nation of white people. They target Muslims, immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ people, Jews, and others who are different from them. Though most Jewish people are perceived as white, they are seen by white nationalists as elites who exert global control and enable the rise of non-white groups. Antisemitism is a core feature of white nationalist belief systems because Jews are seen as the organizers of a global conspiracy to bring down the “white race.”

xenophobia

A fear or hatred of strangers or foreigners.

Yad Vashem

The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem. The name Yad Vashem is taken from an Old Testament passage: “And to them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name (Yad Vashem)… that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 56:5).

Yiddish

The language spoken by millions of Jews throughout Europe for one thousand years of their history. It developed in the 10th century and includes elements of Hebrew, German, and Slavic languages The fact that so many Jews spoke Yiddish made it an international language that united them, allowed them to cultivate international trade and business, and contributed to and preserved their collective Jewish identity and culture. In the 21st century, most people who speak Yiddish in their daily lives are strictly Orthodox Jews in various pockets around the world.

Yom Hashoah

A day established to commemorate the Holocaust and the six million Jews who perished; it is the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Yom Kippur

The Day of Atonement; the holiest day in the Jewish year.

Zionism

The movement for the self-determination and statehood for the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland, the land of Israel.

Z.O.B.

The Jewish Fighting Organization that led the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. (See also Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.)

Zyklon B

Hydrogen cyanide, a poisonous gas originally developed as a fumigation agent to remove insects. In September 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 extermination camps.