



ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
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Level II Vocabulary:

Dehumanization- Actions taken with the intent to negatively change the manner in which a person or group of people are perceived. Dehumanization reduces the target group to objects therefore no longer human and worthy of human rights, dignity and life. The Nazis dehumanized the Jews before The Final Solution, comparing them to rats. During the Holocaust dehumanization of Jews was crucial for perpetrators to carry out their horrifying tasks.

Einsatzgruppen- German name for the SS mobile killing squads that followed behind the German army into Russia and eastern Poland. They rounded up Jews and other “inferior people” in the conquered territories, forced their victims to dig their own graves, into which they were shot. At least one million Jews were killed by the *Einsatzgruppen*.

Euphemism- A form of language manipulation to conceal true intentions. The Nazis used euphemisms to use their true intentions from victims and bystanders such as: “Final Solution,” meaning the complete annihilation of all the Jews of Europe; “Resettlement in the East,” meaning deportation to concentration camps; “Processing,” meaning the selection, gassing, burning and disposal of people.

Evian Conference- A conference convened by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July 1938 to discuss the problem of Jewish refugees. Thirty-two countries met in Evian-les-Bains, France and since most western countries were not willing to accept Jewish refugees, little was accomplished. Hitler interpreted this to mean that no one cared about the Jews and he could dispose of them as he wished

“Final Solution”- The Nazi name for the killing of every Jewish person in Europe. Other solutions to “the Jewish problem” had been debated but WWII provided the cover for Germany to carry out genocide against European Jews.

Kindertransport- Informal name given to rescue efforts of Jewish children after *Kristallnacht*. Rescue efforts brought thousands of refugee children without their parent to mainly Great Britain between 1938 and 1940. Many of these children would never see their parents again.

Liberation- The discovery of concentration camps by Allied forces and the freeing of prisoners. The first major concentration camp liberated was Majdanek in July 1944 by the Soviet Army. Many did not believe the horrors the Soviets described. Auschwitz was liberated on January 26, 1945. Many Auschwitz survivors were forced west on death marches away from the advancing Soviet Army and liberated in Germany in April and May of 1945. After liberation many thousands of camp inmates perished because they were too weak to live. Others survived and began looking for family members with the help of the Red Cross, often in vain. After liberation many survivors needed months of medical attention in various European countries. Other survivors began to rebuild their lives in displaced persons' camps. From 1945 to 1952, more than 250,000 Jewish displaced persons (DPs) lived in camps and urban centers in Germany, Austria, and Italy.

Liquidation- Nazi euphemism for the killing of Jews. Ghettos and occupied areas were to be "liquidated," meaning either deportation to killing centers or mass shootings of Jews.

Partisan- A member of a resistance group operating secretly within enemy lines. Often hiding in forests, partisan groups used "hit-and-run" guerilla tactics against the Germans. Jewish partisans played a prominent role in parts of the Soviet Union and Poland where the geographical conditions aided such warfare. In the southern European countries of Yugoslavia and Greece, Jews joined general partisan units. In the western European countries of Belgium and France, resistance was characterized mainly by underground movements with Jews playing significant roles.

Pogrom- A Russian word which historically means sporadic violent attacks by local non-Jewish populations on Jews in the Russian Empire. Kristallnacht was a carefully organized nationwide pogrom. During WWII, Nazis encouraged indigenous populations living in newly-conquered Soviet territory to launch pogroms. Pogroms did not end after the war; in Kielce, Poland, local residents launched a pogrom against surviving and returning Jews in the city on July 4, 1946. The pogrom in Kielce was one of the factors that led to a mass westward migration of hundreds of thousands of Jews who had survived the Holocaust.

SS – *Schutzstaffel*, Hitler's elite guard, headed by Heinrich Himmler. There were many divisions of the SS, and one of the most powerful was the Gestapo. The Einsatzgruppen were also members of the SS, as well as the Death's Head Regiment whose members became commandants of concentration and death

camps. Known as the “Blackshirts,” they wore black uniforms and became known throughout Europe as Hitler’s butchers, the most dreaded group of all. The SS also recruited from occupied territories, attracting the most fanatical antisemites.

Treaty of Versailles- After World War I, the victorious powers imposed a series of treaties upon the defeated powers. The 1919 treaty held Germany responsible for starting the war and required Germany to give up 13% of its pre-war territory. Germany also became liable for the cost of massive material damages. The shame of defeat and 1919 peace settlement played an important role in the rise of Nazism, World War II and the genocide committed under the cover of war.

Wannsee Conference- A gathering of Nazi officials held on January 20, 1942 at Lake Wannsee in Berlin where the logistics of killing all European Jews were discussed. The purpose of the conference, called by Reinhard Heydrich, was to ensure the cooperation of administrative leaders of various government departments in the “Final solution to the Jewish question.” In the meeting Heydrich outlined how European Jews would be rounded up and sent to killing centers in occupied Poland, with those not immediately killed being worked to death.