

WORLD WAR TWO DICTIONARY

Based on an educational
project by Alexandra
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ADOLF EICHMANN

- ▶ Adolf Eichmann (1906–1962) was a member of the [SS](#) (will define later) and played a major role in organizing the so-called „Final Solution“ (the plan to exterminate the Jewish people, as formulated January 20th 1942 at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin).
- ▶ Eichmann was in charge of, and oversaw the logistics of the deportation of Jews from all over Europe to the gas chambers at death and concentration camps on German occupied territories.
- ▶ He is probably the most known for the direct role he played in overseeing the deportation of the Hungarian Jews in just over a 50 day period May - July 1944 (primarily to Auschwitz-Birkenau).

ADOLF EICHMANN TRIAL

- ▶ After the war, Eichmann fled to Argentina, where he lived under a false name.
- ▶ The Mossad captured Eichmann in May 1960 and brought him to Israel where he stood trial for the crimes he committed during the Second World War.
- ▶ He was found guilty on numerous charges and sentenced to death. He was hanged June 1st, 1962.
- ▶ Hannah Arendt coined the phrase “banality of evil” after the Eichmann trial

ADOLF HITLER

- ▶ Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) was the Austrian-born leader of the Nazi party ([NSDAP](#)) and Chancellor of Nazi Germany from 1933 until his death in 1945 (he was elected in 1933). During this time, Hitler was referred to as „Führer“ (leader) by the German people.
- ▶ Hitler was (basically) democratically elected into the German government and was appointed Chancellor January 1933. With the help of the so-called Enabling Act (*Ermächtigungsgesetz*), his party then transformed the political system into a dictatorship, prohibiting any opposition.
- ▶ Hitler was vehemently anti-Semitic and his politics followed the geopolitic concept of *Lebensraum* (living space). For Hitler and his followers, this translated into a German claim to *Lebensraum* in the East, based on a racist ideology of superior and inferior races. Hitler's ideology is expressed very clearly in his autobiographic writing „Mein Kampf“ (my struggle). (For more information see : Piper, Franciszek "The Political and Racist Principles of the Nazi Policy of Extermination and Their Realization at KL Auschwitz.")

ADOLF HITLER

- ▶ The Nazi ideology he represented entailed a thorough remodeling of the German society and aimed at a restructuring of Europe according to its racist principles.
- ▶ Hitler's foreign policy was expansive and extremely aggressive; it ultimately led to the outbreak of the Second World War.
- ▶ After negotiating a German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact (Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact), his army invaded Poland in September 1939.
- ▶ Hitler and his high command were responsible for the so-called "Final Solution" (the plan to exterminate the Jewish people, as formulated January 20th 1942 at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin).
- ▶ In June 1941, Hitler ordered the [Wehrmacht](#) to invade the Soviet Union.
- ▶ Hitler committed suicide when the Soviet Army entered Berlin in April 1945.

GENERALGOUVERNEMENT / GENERAL GOVERNMENT

- The General Government (*Generalgouvernement* / GG) was the German zone of occupation of Poland after the 1939 invasion by the German and Soviet armies.
- The Western parts of Poland were annexed and therefore became a part of the Reich (following Nazi ideology, they were „reunited“ with the fatherland).
- Hans Frank (1900-1946) was appointed Governor-General of the GG in October 1939. His headquarters were in Kraków.
- The GG was the main destination for the deportation of the European Jewry.
- The Warsaw Ghetto as well as the Death Camps of Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor and Majdanek were located in the GG.

GESTAPO

- ▶ The Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*) was the secret state police of Nazi Germany.
- ▶ After rising to power, Nazi functionaries restructured the state and its institutions. [Hermann Goering](#) separated the intelligence and the political sections from the police and merging the two, he established the Gestapo.
- ▶ In April 1934, [Heinrich Himmler](#) became the leader of the Gestapo.
- ▶ The Gestapo had far reaching authority. They investigated ,crimes‘ against the Nazi Party (a term that could cover every possible offense). Since they did not answer to any judiciary authority, they were basically above the law and could detain people with no trial.
- ▶ The Gestapo does not exist without the Nazi state (it did not exist in Weimar Germany and did not exist in post-war Germany).
- ▶ It was deemed a criminal organization after the end of WWII.

HERMANN GÖRING

- ▶ Hermann Göring (1893-1946) was a high-ranking Nazi functionary.
- ▶ He was the founder of the [Gestapo](#) in 1933.
- ▶ Since 1935, he was Commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe (German air force) and received the rank of *Reichsmarschall* in 1940.
- ▶ Göring was also a very influential figure in the Reich's economy. He held responsibility for the economic exploitation of the occupied territories as part of the Nazis' Four Year Plan. He was also head of the *Reichswerke Hermann Göring*, one of Germany's biggest state run economic conglomerates.
- ▶ His high standing in the Nazi party fell when the Luftwaffe was starting to fail during the war (1942).

HERMANN GÖRING

- ▶ Göring became an art collector. He kept for his private use many works of art and pieces of property confiscated from Jews who were sent to ghettos and concentration or death camps.
- ▶ Göring received a death sentence during the Nuremberg Trials, but committed suicide before the sentence could be carried out.

HEINRICH HIMMLER

- ▶ Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945) was the head of the [SS](#), the Chief of German Police and Minister of the Interior under Hitler. He was the second most powerful man in the German Nazi State.
- ▶ Himmler was also responsible for the so-called *Einsatzgruppen* (Nazi death squads operating on occupied territories).
- ▶ He established the first German Nazi concentration camp at Dachau in 1933. As head of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA / Reich Main Security Office) and head of the [SS](#), he was also overseeing the building and administration of the other Nazi concentration and extermination camps.
- ▶ He is therefore one of the people mainly responsible for the planning and implementation of the „Final Solution“ (the plan to exterminate the Jewish people).

HEINRICH HIMMLER

- ▶ In October 1943, Himmler held a speech to high ranking party officials in Poznań, explicitly referring to the „extermination“ of the Jewish people.
- ▶ Himmler visited Auschwitz twice.
- ▶ Himmler committed suicide in May 1945 while in British custody.

JOSEPH GOEBBELS

- ▶ Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) was the Reich Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany.
- ▶ His ministry took control over media and the arts.
- ▶ Goebbels was a very skilled speaker and very successfully instrumentalized the fairly new media of radio and film for Nazi propaganda. He was the first to introduce a propaganda that was based on repeated lies.
- ▶ When the war broke out Goebbels used propaganda to boost the moral of the German people.
- ▶ Propaganda was a huge aspect of Nazism in Germany and Goebbels held incredible power and influence.
- ▶ One day after [Hitler](#), Goebbels committed suicide in the *Führerbunker* (Hitler's bunker).

NAZI

- ▶ A Nazi is anyone who believes in and follows the ideology of Nazism.
- ▶ A Nazi could be a member of the National Socialist German Worker's Party, however a person could follow and believe in the ideology without being a member of the Nazi Party.
- ▶ Nazism promoted ideas of racial hierarchy, social Darwinism and the concept of *Lebensraum*.
- ▶ A Nazi believed that Germanic peoples were the Aryan master race and deserved to reclaim the lands that were “historically German” in addition to lands for German people to settle (and expel those who they considered inferior ie. Poles).
- ▶ Neo Nazis do exist today.

NAZI GERMANY

- ▶ Nazi Germany is the period of German history from 1933-1945 in which Germany was ruled by the Nazi Party and [Adolf Hitler](#).
- ▶ Nazi Germany was a fascist (far right on the political spectrum) and totalitarian state.
- ▶ May 1945 marks the end of Nazi Germany.

NATIONAL SOCIALIST GERMAN WORKERS' PARTY

- ▶ NSDAP (AKA The German Nazi Party).
- ▶ The Nazi Party was a fascist political party.
- ▶ The party's ideology was strongly anti-semitic, populist and racist.
- ▶ The Nazi Party was in rule in Germany from 1933 until 1945.
- ▶ One could be a member of the Nazi party or not. There were privileges associated with a membership, but for a German citizen, there were not necessarily direct consequences if a German did not join the Nazi Party.
- ▶ Neo Nazis that exist today in various countries are not members of the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

RUDOLF HÖSS/HOESS

- ▶ Rudolf Höss (1900-1947) was the first commandant of Auschwitz.
- ▶ He was a member of the SS.
- ▶ He oversaw the establishment of the camp and expanded Auschwitz into Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- ▶ As commandant of Auschwitz, Höss was in charge of testing and using Zyklon B gas.
- ▶ In December 1943, Höss left Auschwitz and was temporarily replaced by Arthur Liebehenschel. He was ordered back to oversee the Hungarian Jewish Transports on May 8, 1944.
- ▶ After the war he tried to avoid being captured by hiding as a member of the German Navy and then as a farmer.
- ▶ He was eventually captured and hanged at Auschwitz I next to the crematoria and his former house at the camp.

SCHUTZSTAFFEL (SS)

- ▶ The SS was a paramilitary organization of the Nazi Party and later became its military arm.
- ▶ Members of the SS were also members of the Nazi Party and they were to protect the party and carry out party orders.
- ▶ The SS was under the direction of Heinrich Himmler from 1929-1945 and grew to be one of the most powerful organizations in Nazi Germany.
- ▶ The guards at concentration and death camps were made up of SS members and employees.
- ▶ The SS was firmly aligned with the ideology of the Nazi party.
- ▶ The SS was considered a criminal organization after the war.
- ▶ The SS does not exist in Germany today and was a specifically Nazi Party organization.

THIRD REICH

- ▶ Can sometimes be synonymous with Nazi Germany however there is more to it. The Third Reich was the ideal that Nazi Germany was striving to build.
- ▶ Hitler wanted to create the *Third Reich* (third empire) which was supposed to last for 1000 years (- did not happen).
- ▶ The Third Reich began with the Nazi Party rising to power and the creation of Nazi Germany in 1933.
- ▶ In 1939, the Third Reich included parts of occupied Poland (after the successful invasion which took place in September of 1939).
- ▶ Though Germany invaded France and occupied part of the country, occupied France was never apart of the Third Reich.
- ▶ I like to think of the Third Reich as an idea, and an ideal for Hitler where as Nazi Germany was a defined state (the land boarder of Germany from 1933-1945).

WEHRMACHT

- ▶ German (state) armed forces during the war.
- ▶ It consisted of the army, the navy and the air force.
- ▶ They fought in the Second World War and usually are separated from the war crimes committed by Nazi party organizations like the SS (a few Wehrmacht leaders were charged for war crimes).
- ▶ They were the soldiers who fought for Nazi Germany in the war but did not necessarily have to be Nazis or members of the Nazi Party.

WEIMAR REPUBLIC

- ▶ Interwar period of German history (1919-1933).
- ▶ During the inter war years Germany was a democratic federal republic.
- ▶ The Weimar Republic faced many problems such as hyper inflation and mass unemployment, partly caused by massive war reparations. It also suffered heavily during the Great Depression of 1929.
- ▶ The young democracy was exposed to very intense political struggles from both the left and the right spectrum.
- ▶ Although politically and economically fairly unstable, the Weimar Republic was a period of immense cultural and artistic freedom in Germany.
- ▶ [Hitler](#) and his party used the economic and political tensions and the social discontent to gain votes and eventually used the democratic system in place to gain power democratically (relatively) before overturning the system from within.