

GLOSSARY

Antisemitism Prejudice against or hatred of Jews. Antisemitism has led to the persecution of Jewish people for more than 2,000 years. The most extreme result of antisemitism was the systematic extermination of Jews during the Holocaust. The Nazis and their allies targeted the Jews of Europe for extermination because they believed that Jews were racially inferior.

Assimilate To conform or adjust to the customs, attitudes, etc., of the majority group.

Blood libel The false belief that Jews kill Christian children and use their blood for religious purposes. The blood libel charge emerged in antiquity and took hold particularly in medieval Christianity, but it continues to be used in antisemitic propaganda today.

Capitalism An economic system in which ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange of wealth is maintained chiefly by private individuals or corporations.

Communism An economic and social system envisioned by the 19th-century German scholar Karl Marx. In theory, under communism, all means of production are owned by the collective, rather than by individuals (*see* Marxism). In practice, a single authoritarian party controls both the political and the economic systems. In the 20th century, communism was primarily associated with the economic and political systems of China and the Soviet Union.

Crucifixion A method of killing by nailing or binding to a cross, normally by the hands and feet, which was widespread in the ancient world. Jesus was killed in this manner by Roman authorities under direction of the governor Pontius Pilate.

Deicide charge The false charge that the Jewish people are collectively and for all time responsible for the murder of Jesus.

Dreyfus In France in 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the only Jewish member of the French Army's general staff, was convicted of passing military secrets to Germany. Dreyfus was eventually proven innocent, but he remained the victim of a cover-up to divert attention from army corruption. The Dreyfus Affair revealed deep antisemitism in French society.

Genocide The deliberate targeting and murder of an ethnically, culturally, or politically defined group. The term was coined by Polish-born US jurist Raphael Lemkin in 1944 in reference to the Nazi mass extermination of Jews. Genocide was declared an international crime by the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The convention defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, as such:

- a. killing members of the group;
- b. causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The phrase "intent to destroy" is unique to genocide. A closely related category of international law, crimes against humanity, is defined as widespread or systematic attacks against civilians.

Ghetto The term "ghetto" originated from the name of the medieval Jewish quarter in Venice, established in 1516, in which the Venetian authorities compelled the city's Jews to live. During World War II, the Nazis forced the Jewish population to live in ghettos (often under miserable conditions).

Guild An association of workers sharing the same interests, such as merchants or artisans, formed for mutual aid and protection and to maintain craft standards.

Holocaust denial and distortion The false belief and conspiracy theory that the events of the Holocaust did not happen or were exaggerated to advance the interest of Jews. This ideological perspective seeks to rewrite the historical record and perpetuate hatred of Jews.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)/Protestant Reformation German priest and theologian, founder in Germany of the Protestant Reformation (a religious movement of the 16th century that began as an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church and resulted in the creation of Protestant churches). Luther initially sought to convert Jews but later wrote virulently antisemitic tracts.

Marxism The doctrines of Karl Marx and his associate Friedrich Engels on economics, politics, and society. They include the notion of economic determinism—that political and social structures are determined by the economic conditions of people. Marxism calls for a classless society, where all means of production are commonly owned, a system to be achieved by the overthrow of capitalism by the working class.

Nostra Aetate In 1965, the Second Vatican Council ratified *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. In its explicit repudiation of the centuries-old “decide charge” that held Jews responsible for the death of Jesus, its condemnation of antisemitism, and its acknowledgement of the enduring validity of Judaism, *Nostra Aetate* opened a new era in interfaith dialogue. The document is one of the many statements of reform announced by the Roman Catholic Church with the Second Vatican Council.

Passover The Jewish festival commemorating the biblical exodus, the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. During Passover, unleavened bread, called matzah, is eaten.

Peace of Versailles The 1919 Treaty of Versailles ended the state of war between Germany and the European allied powers following World War I. The “war guilt clause” forced the German nation to accept complete responsibility for initiating World War I. Germany was liable for all material damages and was not allowed to regain its economic superiority or to rearm.

Pogrom A Russian word meaning “to wreak havoc, to demolish violently.” Historically, the term refers to violent attacks by local non-Jewish populations on Jews in the Russian empire and in other countries during the late 19th century.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion The most widely distributed antisemitic publication of modern times. Its lies about Jews, which have been repeatedly discredited, continue to circulate today, especially on the Internet. The individuals and groups who have used the *Protocols* are all linked by a common purpose: to spread hatred of Jews. The *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.

Pseudoscientific A system of theories, assumptions, and methods falsely claimed to be scientific.

Scapegoat An innocent person or group assigned blame in place of others. Jews have been falsely blamed for many historic events such as the death of Jesus and Germany’s defeat in World War I.

Usurer A person who lends money and charges interest at an exorbitant rate.