

## Project Sounds in the silence – glossary of terms<sup>1</sup>

### Allies of the Second World War

The Allies of the Second World War (formalised by Declaration by United Nations of 1 January 1942), were the countries that together opposed German, Japanese and Italian aggression during the Second World War (1939–1945). Germany, Japan and Italy were called the Axis powers.

At the start of the war on 1 September 1939, the Allies consisted of France, Poland and the United Kingdom, as well as their dependent states, such as British India. Within days they were joined by the independent Dominions of the British Commonwealth: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. After the start of the German invasion of North Europe until the Balkan Campaign, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, and Yugoslavia joined the Allies. After first having cooperated with Germany in invading Poland whilst remaining neutral in the Allied-Axis conflict, the Soviet Union joined the Allies in June 1941 after being invaded by Germany. The United States officially joined in December 1941 after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. China had already been in a prolonged war with Japan since 1937, but officially joined the Allies in 1941.

### Civilian Forced Labourers (German: Zivile Zwangsarbeiter)

Modern term for forced labourers who were not prisoners of war or concentration camp inmates. In the summer of 1944, there were about 5.7 million civilian foreign workers in the German Reich. They were employed by private companies, government agencies, farmers and families who also provided them with accommodation and kept them under surveillance. This term differs from forced labourers who were prisoners of war (POW), as such under the control of the Wehrmacht and imprisoned in POW camps.

### Concentration camps

Concentration camps were sites of isolation and slave labour set up by the Nazis in Germany in the 1930s to eliminate political opponents. From the summer of 1938, they were used as prisons for German Jews, and during the war also for prisoners of war of, inter alia, Polish, Romani and Soviet origin. Concentration camp inmates were

---

<sup>1</sup> Parts of the glossary are created by using and adapting different existing glossaries and sources: Project “Forced Labor 1939–1945” by Freie University Berlin (<http://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de>); Educational material of “All about Anne”. Exhibition of the Anne Frank Zentrum in Berlin and others.

weakened by hard physical work, beatings and negligible food rations, which led to high mortality rates. The German abbreviation for concentration camp is “KZ”.

### **“Corrective labour camps” (German: “Arbeitserziehungslager”)**

The German term for this camp as well as its translation into other languages are misleading: People were not educated in these camps, led by the Gestapo, but treated violently and even killed. The German industry, the communities and labour administrations were interested in disciplining the workforce as well as oppressing any workforce resistance. Officially, a term of imprisonment of 21 to 56 days was intended, however, some prisoners had to stay for three months or longer in the “Arbeitserziehungslager”. Between 1940 and 1945 there were about 200 Arbeitserziehungslager in the German Reich and occupied territories.

### **Death camps / Extermination camps**

Death camps were Nazi German institutions for mass extermination of humans operating in 1941–1945. Their sole purpose was killing Jews from Germany and all German-occupied countries as well as those allied with Germany. The creation of death camps was a result of a shift in the German policy from the stage of indirect to direct extermination after invading the USSR on 22 June 1941. The first death camp was created in Poland (near the village Chełmno, next to Ner river) and became operational in December 1941.

### **Death marches**

Especially from winter 1944/45 to the end of the Second World War prisoners who were taken from the concentration camps were sent on what became known as “Death Marches” (German: Todesmärsche). Some of these groups were marched hundreds of miles. The prisoners were given little to no food and little to no shelter. Any prisoner who lagged behind or who tried to escape was shot. The purpose was to remove evidence of crimes against humanity committed inside the camps and to prevent the liberation of the people. The Nazis themselves called this cruel act “evacuation”.

### **Deportation**

Deportation means that people are brought to another site against their will. The Nazis deported the people they persecuted and brought them to different places, for example to concentration and extermination camps.

### **Eastern Workers (German: Ostarbeiter)**

Nazi term for civilian workers from the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. After the initial recruitment of volunteers, there soon followed the forcible deportation of 2.1 million Soviet men and women to Germany. The Eastern workers had to wear discriminatory "OST" badges and were usually housed in special camps and treated far worse than forced labourers from other countries. After liberation, many of them were discriminated in the Soviet Union and persecuted for their alleged collaboration.

### **Forced Labour (German: Zwangsarbeit)**

Generally, work that an individual is forced to do against her/his will and under threat of penalty. Forced labour under the Nazi regime refers particularly to the abduction and exploitation of more than 12 million foreign concentration camp prisoners, prisoners of war (POWs) and foreign civilian workers in Germany. Forced labour also occurred in ghettos, "corrective labour camps" and other camps throughout occupied Europe and affected in total approximately 20 million people. German Jews and German prisoners also performed forced labour. In addition, in many occupied countries the general civilian population was required to perform compulsory labour.

### **Forced labour camps**

Sites for keeping prisoners who had to perform forced labour for the benefit of the economy of the Third Reich, mostly in the arms industry, in quarries or mines. The living conditions in the labour camps for civilian labourers were quite different. Apart from freedom of action of the camp management, the National Socialist racist ideology played a major role with respect to the quality of prison conditions: While the living and working conditions of European workers were less restrictive at least in the beginning, the camps for Eastern European forced labourers being classified as "aliens" had the character of a detention site right from the start. The camps for Eastern European forced labourers were fenced in and safeguarded; the inmates were marked with a badge ("P" for Poland, "OST" for "Ostarbeiter", which was the identification of Soviet civilian workers). Also their nutrition was of poorer quality than that of Western European labourers. They were neither allowed to listen to the radio nor read the paper or have contact with the German civil population. Hard physical work, repressive measures, poor nutrition and lacking medical care as well as disastrous sanitary conditions led to undernourishment, exhaustion and to the death of forced labourers in the course of the war.

### **Foreign Workers (German: Fremdarbeiter)**

Common term for foreign civilian slave labourers in Nazi Germany. However, the term foreign workers ("Fremdarbeiter") obscures the compulsory nature of the work. Even the initially voluntary foreign workers, i.e. those who came to Germany out of economic necessity, were later not allowed to leave their jobs. Although the expression foreign workers is rarely found in original sources, its use became more widespread after 1945 in order to distinguish the Nazi use of foreign labour from the guest workers ("Gastarbeiter") programme of the Federal Republic of Germany. In political debates, migrant workers are still occasionally referred to as "Fremdarbeiter".

### **German Reich (German: Deutsches Reich)**

Deutsches Reich was the constitutional name in German language for the German nation state that existed from 1871 to 1945. The Reich became understood as deriving its authority and sovereignty entirely from a continuing unitary German "national people"; with that authority and sovereignty being exercised over a unitary German "state territory" with variable boundaries and extent. Although commonly translated as "German Empire", the word Reich here better translates as "realm", in that the term does not in itself have monarchical connotations.

### **Gestapo**

The *Geheime Staatspolizei* (Secret State Police), abbreviated as Gestapo, was the official secret police of Nazi Germany and German-occupied Europe. From 1940 on the Gestapo was administrating the "corrective labour camps" (German: "Arbeitserziehungslager"). During Second World War, the Gestapo played a key role in the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe.

### **Italian military internees**

During the Second World War, Nazi Germany and fascist Italy were initially allies. On 8 September 1943 Italy withdrew from the alliance. The German Wehrmacht then captured Italian soldiers and officers. About 650,000 Italians were transported to the German Reich and the occupied territories. With the founding of the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI) in 1944, the prisoners were declared "military internees". Thus, despite the new fascist alliance and without regard to international law, they could be used as forced labourers in armaments.

## **Nazis**

The term refers to the members of Adolf Hitler's party, NSDAP – "Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei" (National Socialist German Workers' Party), founded after the First World War. The Nazis were in power in Germany from 1933 to 1945. They claimed to be superior to other people and threatened by them. With this conviction, they persecuted, mistreated and murdered people whom they have declared their enemies.

## **Neuengamme Concentration Camp / Satellite camps**

Located in south-east Hamburg, Neuengamme was the largest concentration camp in north-west Germany from 1938 to 1945. More than 100,000 people from all over Europe were imprisoned in the main camp and over 85 satellite camps, which were established all over northern Germany for construction projects and armaments production. In these camps prisoners had to do hard labour for the war economy. Living and working conditions were murderous. At least 42,900 prisoners died in the Neuengamme main camp, its satellite camps and during the camp evacuations (death marches) at the end of the war. In Bremen were about 10 of the Neuengamme satellite camps, among those Bremen-Farge as the biggest one with about 2000 imprisoned persons.

## **Non-Germans (German: Fremdvölkische)**

Nazi term for people who were not of Germanic origin and who therefore did not count as part of the national community. All foreigners who did not come from "Germanic countries" such as the Netherlands or Scandinavia, were considered non-German ("fremdvölkisch"). Slavs were considered particularly racially inferior. At the bottom of the Nazi racial hierarchy were Jews, gypsies and people of colour; they were considered "fremdvölkisch" even if they were German.

## **Organisation Todt (OT)**

The Organisation Todt (OT) was a paramilitary building group in National Socialist Germany that bore the name of its leader Fritz Todt (1891–1942). Founded in 1938, the organisation was also subordinated to him from March 1940 as Reich Minister for Armament and Ammunition (RMfBM and the successor ministry under Albert Speer). After the beginning of the Second World War, it was mainly used for construction measures in the areas occupied by Germany. It became known through the extension of the west wall, the construction of the submarine bases on the French coast and the

"Atlantikwall" (bunkered artillery and defence positions). From 1943 it built the launching ramps of the V1 and V2 missiles. In the summer of 1943, air-raid shelters for the civilian population (Extended LS Leader Program) and the underground relocation of industrial plants followed in the Reich's territory. Since the beginning of the war, many forced labourers, prisoners of war and concentration camp prisoners have been deployed in this organisation.

### **Prisoner-of-war (POW) camps and Soviet prisoners of war**

A prisoner-of-war camp is a prison, often in the form of a barracks camp, for enemy soldiers (prisoners of war) captured during and immediately after a war. International treaties, such as the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War, are intended to ensure minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners. These are monitored by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The treaties should also avoid confusing prisoner-of-war camps with labour camps. The German prisoner-of-war camps during Second World War were either main camps (Stammlager, abbreviation: Stalag) for the accommodation of the "crew tribe" (crews and non-commissioned officers) or for the detention of enemy officers, the so-called Oflags (Offizierslager). The closest POW camp to Bremen was the Stalag Sandbostel. About 1000 Soviet prisoners of war were sent to the construction site of Bunker Valentin, exploited as forced labourers and kept in a separated camp that was called "Russians camp" by the Nazis.

### **Racism, racist**

Racism claims that there is a difference between people, in order to justify unequal treatment. Racists divide people into two groups: "us" and "them". They use real and imaginary characteristics – such as origin, skin colour, religion or language – as a basis for division. Racism has been around for a long time: "White" people have used racism to justify the enslavement and exploitation of "black" people. People affected by racism today face it every day: when they deal with other people but also in structures and institutions.

### **Slave Labourers (German: Sklavenarbeiter)**

Modern term for workers completely deprived of their rights, particularly inmates of concentration camps. Although the term slave labourers was used at the Nuremberg trials for anyone who had been abducted and forced to work under the Third Reich, in the compensation debates of the 1990s it was used only to describe groups of

concentration camp prisoners who had been forced by the SS to work at private or public companies and had been extremely exploited (extermination through work).

## The SS

SS is the abbreviation for the "Schutzstaffel" (Protection Squad) of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (German abbreviation: NSDAP). The SS was founded in 1925 and was a paramilitary organisation. Its members wore uniforms and carried weapons. They persecuted, abused and murdered people whom the Nazis had declared their enemies. The SS was the organisation most responsible for the genocidal killing of estimated 5.5 to 6 million Jews and millions of other victims during the Holocaust. The SS was also involved in commercial enterprises and exploited concentration camp inmates as slave labourers. After the war, the SS was banned and declared as a criminal organisation by the Allies.

## Third Reich

It is important to know that the National Socialists themselves described their reign from 1933 to 1945 as the "Third Reich". They used the term "Third Reich" for their National Socialist propaganda. In nationalist ideology already in the 1920s the "First Reich" was seen as the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" in the Middle Ages, Bismarck's Empire since the foundation of the Empire in 1870/71 as the "Second Empire" and the "Third Empire" as the empire that was to come. The National Socialists took up this concept because they saw themselves as the realisers of this idea. They saw this empire as a "millennial empire", i.e. an empire "almost" for eternity.