

Abetz, Otto

(1903–1958), Germany's ambassador to Vichy (unoccupied) France during World War II.

An art teacher, Abetz gave his support to the Nazi Party in 1931. In 1935 he joined the German Foreign Office as a French expert. He spent a lot of time in France, but was thrown out of the country in 1939 when the French cracked down on a secret fascist association called the *Cagouards*.

Germany invaded France in May 1940. Abetz returned that year and in August was named ambassador to the Vichy government. He served in that position for four years. His obligations as ambassador included dealing with all political matters in both occupied and unoccupied France and counseling the German military and police administration in Paris, the capital of Nazi-occupied France. His main responsibility was to make sure the French collaborated with the Nazis in furthering their antisemitic goals. He played a large part in the deportation of both foreign Jewish refugees and French-born Jews, particularly after Germany occupied southern France in the fall of 1942. After the war Abetz was tried for war crimes and sentenced to 20 years doing hard labor. He served just five years. (For more on Vichy, see also France.)