

SD

(*Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsfuehrers-SS*, Security Service of the SS), the SS's intelligence service and one of the major agents of the "Final Solution."

The SD was created as the SS's intelligence service in 1931, and put under the command of Reinhard Heydrich. Its purpose was to expose enemies of the Nazi Party and keep them under observation.

After Hitler brought the Nazi Party to national power in Germany in 1933, the SD was given official government responsibilities, such as creating and operating a widespread spy network among the German people. It reported on the activities of political and racial enemies of the Reich, mainly Jews, and kept Hitler informed of public opinion.

In 1934 the SS took over the Gestapo, the Reich's secret political police. Soon thereafter, the SD was declared the party's exclusive intelligence service. However, the line between the two intelligence branches---the SD and the *Gestapo*---was quite blurry. The two agencies were headed by the same people and had similar responsibilities, namely, dealing with the "Jewish question." This did not prevent rivalry, however. Soon, SS chief Heinrich Himmler clarified the division of labor: the SD was to serve as an intelligence and counterintelligence service whose job was to identify state enemies; once they were exposed, the *Gestapo* would deal with those enemies. The SD also attempted to get into international espionage and military intelligence. Regarding the Jewish issues, the SD and *Gestapo* shared responsibilities.

At the end of 1936 the SD's Jewish section adopted an official policy of ridding Germany of Jews. From then on, the SD harassed German Jews in order to get them to leave the country. The SD used confiscation of property, public pressure, and terror to achieve its goal. With the establishment of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, RSHA) in 1939, SD functions were divided between two of the newly created offices. Certain individual staff members in other RSHA offices continued to be considered SD personnel. Many of them played a major part in planning and executing the "Final Solution." Many served in the Einsatzgruppen units that carried out the systematic mass murder of Jews in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941.

After the war, the SD was declared to be a criminal organization by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, and its members subject to punishment as war criminals.