



Eichmann, Adolf

(1906--1962), SS officer who played a major role in the annihilation of European Jewry.

Eichmann was born in the German Rhineland, and grew up in Austria, joining the Austrian Nazi Party in 1932. A year later, he arrived in Germany and joined the SS Austrian unit. In October 1934, Eichmann moved on to the headquarters of the Security Service (SD). In 1935 he joined the SD's new Jewish section, becoming one of the SS's main planners and executors of anti-Jewish policy.

In 1937 Eichmann traveled to Palestine and concluded that the establishment of a Jewish state would not be in Germany's best interests. After the *Anschluss*—the annexation of Austria by Germany in March 1938—Eichmann was responsible for organizing the emigration of Austria's Jewish community. He devised a plan that would force the Jews to emigrate. Through stripping them of their property and thus destroying their economic situation, he forced them to leave elsewhere. The Jewish population was terrorized into leaving - they lost control of Jewish community institutions, forcing their leaders to cooperate with the emigration plans. Despite his previous position on Jewish immigration to Palestine, Eichmann began cooperating with *Aliyah Bet* agencies to make the forced emigration process more efficient and consolidated. In August 1938, Eichmann set up the Central Office for Jewish Emigration (*Zentralstelle Fuer Juedische Auswanderung*) in Vienna. A few months later, after the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1938, Hermann Goering established a similar office in Germany. In 1939, Eichmann also set up a *Zentralstelle* in Prague.

With the establishment of the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA) in September 1939, Eichmann became head of the Jewish section in the *Gestapo*. Eichmann now had more power than any other section chief—working under Reinhard Heydrich, and sometimes even worked directly with Heinrich Himmler.



In 1939 and 1940 Eichmann oversaw the deportation of Poles and Jews from those areas of Poland that had been annexed by the Reich. One of the first ideas to be proposed was the Nisko and Lublin Plan, in which the SS envisioned the mass deportation and resettlement of Jews in the *generalgouvernement*. Though the plan quickly failed, it became a prototype for mass deportations of Jews for the remainder of the war.

By the end of 1940, Eichmann's office controlled all Jewish populations within the Reich. He sent his representatives, including Alois Brunner, Theodor Dannecker, Dieter Wisliceny, and his deputy, Rolf Guenther, to act as advisors on Jewish affairs to various governments. Their task was to encourage the implementation of anti-Jewish policy. His representatives were active all over Nazi-dominated Europe, except in Scandinavia and in the areas where the *Einsatzgruppen* functioned.

In October 1941, Eichmann participated in the initial discussions concerning the "Final Solution." On Heydrich's orders, Eichmann organized the Wannsee Conference to coordinate the murders; the conference took place in Berlin in January 1942. Once the "Final Solution" was launched, Eichmann's office issued the orders regarding when and where deportations were to occur. He and his staff also designed the regiment for rounding up Jews and confiscating their property. Eichmann himself paid several visits to extermination camps to monitor their efficiency and progress, and was directly responsible for the Theresienstadt Ghetto.

Eichmann actively foiled rescue attempts of local Jewry from Romania and Bulgaria. He personally directed the 1944 deportations from Hungary, where he had tried to make an exchange: the trade of Jewish lives for goods or for money.

After the war, Eichmann escaped to Argentina. He lived there undetected until May 1960, when the Israeli Security Service captured him. He was tried in Jerusalem in April 1961. Eichmann was found guilty and sentenced to death. He was hanged on June 1, 1962.