

Danzig (Gdansk)

City on the Baltic Sea. Over centuries, Danzig was passed back and forth between Germany and Poland. After World War I, the League of Nations designated Danzig a "free city" that did not belong to any specific country. Ninety-six percent of the city's population was German. Thousands of Jews moved to Danzig, increasing the city's Jewish population five-fold, despite the fact that the government had begun to restrict Jewish rights. In addition, the German majority was strongly nationalistic and antisemitic. They were very influenced by the Nazis after Hitler came to power in January 1933.

In May 1933 the Nazi Party became the leading power in Danzig. Hermann Rauschning, a Christian conservative, was elected head of the senate. He was opposed to racial antisemitism for both ideological and practical reasons. In November 1934 he was fired by the Nazi leader, Albert Forster. The next man in the post, Arthur Greiser, also believed that he was obligated to respect Danzig's international character and not completely associate the city with the anti-Jewish policies of Nazi Germany.

In 1935 the Jewish community of Danzig turned to the League of Nations for help, but by that time the organization was too weak to have enough influence. The League's High Commissioner for Danzig did attempt to get antisemitic actions postponed, and in September 1937, he was able to convince Hitler to postpone the activation of the Nuremberg Laws in Danzig. However, after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 1938, the Nuremberg Laws were put into effect, with just a few changes.

As the anti-Jewish legislation became more severe, most of the Jews of Danzig emigrated, leaving only 4,000. The Jewish community and the government decided to cooperate with regard to Jewish emigration, and on December 17, 1938, the Jews announced publicly that they were willing to leave. When the war broke out in September 1939 and Danzig united with Germany, only 1,600 Jews were left. Emigration continued until the fall of 1940. At the end of February 1941, the city's remaining 600 Jews were deported to their deaths in Poland.