

Eppstein, Paul

(1901--1944), A leader of the Jewish community in Germany during the Holocaust.

A sociology professor, Eppstein became principal of an adult education college in 1929. However, when Hitler rose to national power in 1933, the Nazis closed down the college. At that point, Eppstein was invited to come to Berlin to work for the Jewish community. His first positions in Berlin were with the Central Committee of German Jews For Help and Reconstruction and the Union of Jewish Communities of Prussia.

Soon, Eppstein joined the board of the Reich Representation of German Jews, where he dealt with social activities and administration. After the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 1938, he was invited to England to lecture there on sociology. However, he refused to leave Germany as long as the Jews there needed him. He continued his work for the Reich Representation, whose name by that time had been changed to the Reich Association of Jews in Germany, and was given even more responsibilities, including being in close contact with the German authorities and dealing with emigration. By the end of 1940, Eppstein became the organization's executive director.

During his time with the Reich Representation/Association, Eppstein was arrested several times by the *Gestapo*. In October 1940 he was released from a stint in prison that had followed his arrest in the summer of that year. At that point, the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA) warned him to stop his emigration activities. From then on, Eppstein kept to administrative duties. In January 1943 Eppstein was deported to the Theresienstadt Ghetto, where he replaced Jacob Edelstein as leader of the Ghetto's Jewish Council. Historians disagree about Eppstein's role in Theresienstadt. Some fault him for not challenging the German authorities enough and for giving in to their demands, while others believe that he was a loyal and resolute spokesman for the Jews, both in Germany and in the ghetto.

Eppstein was put in prison in the summer of 1944, and executed the day after the Jewish High Holiday of *Yom Kippur*.

