

Anti-Jewish Legislation

The more than 2,000 anti-Jewish measures put into effect in Germany under Nazi rule.

When the Nazi Party was formed in 1920, its party platform included four anti-Jewish goals: Jews should not be citizens, and should be given the legal status of foreigners; Jews should not be public officials; Jews should be forbidden to immigrate to Germany; and Jewish owners or editors of German newspapers should be removed from their positions. These declarations were similar to the platforms of other antisemitic groups active at that time.

The Nazis rose to national power in Germany in January 1933. During their rule, which lasted from 1933–1945, three separate groups of anti-Jewish legislation were enacted. The first began in March–April 1933, peaking with the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. This law legalized firing "non-Aryan" government employees. It also acted as a precedent for the exclusion of Jews from other jobs. Most "non-Aryan" students were barred from attending German schools and "non-Aryans" were forbidden to take final state exams for many occupations. This last clause was also adopted by private firms, societies, and clubs. Another set of laws discriminated against the Jewish religion. By 1935, Jewish life had been severely restricted in Germany.

The second wave of anti-Jewish legislation began in September 1935, with the passage of two laws by the German parliament, termed the Nuremberg Laws. According to the first law, Jews were stripped of their citizenship and were denied the right to vote. Within a few months 13 additional decrees were attached to this law. The second law, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, prohibited marriage and sexual contact between Germans and Jews. This legislation led the Germans to clearly define who was an "Aryan," Jew, or part-Jew (and to what degree; see also *Mischlinge*).

The third group of anti-Jewish laws restricted Jews from the German economy. The Germans began issuing this legislation as early as 1936 and 1937, but timed most severe measures to coincide with the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 1938. The government made it legal to confiscate

Jewish property through Aryanization. On November 9, 1938 Reinhard Heydrich became the chief of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration (*Zentralstelle Fuer Juedische Auswanderung*). The creation of this office empowered the SS to make all decisions regarding the Jews and their fate.

World War II broke out in September 1939. At that time, the Germans expanded all existing anti-Jewish measures. Later, in September 1941, the Jews were forced to wear the Jewish badge any time they went out in public (see also Badge, Jewish), and by October 23 of that year Jewish emigration from Germany was strictly forbidden. On December 12, 1941 Hitler told a gathering of his intimates that the murder of the Jews, which had begun in the east, would be extended to German Jews as well.

Within the countries that allied themselves with Germany and those that were invaded and occupied by Germany, anti-Jewish laws were enacted to different degrees based on the type of occupation regime established by the Germans, how much pressure Germany put on the country, how antisemitic the country's government was to begin with, or how successfully the country could convince Germany to leave it alone to make its own rules. Racial laws were enacted at lightning speed in Austria, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (see also Bohemia and Moravia, Protectorate of), and Poland. In Germany's satellite states or in countries defeated by the German army, Jews were generally excluded from economic activities, and laws were made which defined exactly who was to be considered a Jew. Only in Denmark, where the government did not resist German occupation but insisted on protecting its Jews, were no anti-Jewish measures put into effect, until the attempt to deport the Jews in October 1943.