

Nazi Germany and Anti-Jewish Policy



Boycott entries before Jewish department store, 1933

The Nazi Party rose to power with an antisemitic racial ideology. However, the anti-Jewish campaign was not conducted according to a blueprint, rather it evolved. Before the outbreak of the war, political and economic factors, as well as public opinion both inside and outside Germany influenced the evolution of Nazi anti-Jewish laws and measures.

The main purpose of the anti-Jewish policy between 1933 and 1939 according to the racial theory was to isolate German Jewry from German society. These laws sought to uproot and dispossess Jews economically from daily life in Germany and encourage them to leave their homeland. These laws limited and humiliated Jews on a daily basis.

Anti-Jewish Policy (1933–1939) Divided Into Three Periods

- **The first period**, 1933–1934, included boycotts against Jews and the Civil Service Law that dismissed Jews from government jobs.
- **The second period** began in the spring of 1935 and was marked by the establishment of the racially based Nuremberg Laws. Jews were no longer German citizens.
- **The third period** from 1937–1939 was a time of increasing anti-Jewish violence, confiscation of Jewish property, and the forbidding of Jewish ownership of business concerns. The turning point of this period was the *Kristallnacht Pogrom*.

Anti-Jewish Policy by Year

1933

- All non-“Aryans” were dismissed from holding government jobs. This regulation applied to public school teachers, university professors, doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. — all Jews who held government positions of any kind. Non-“Aryans” were defined as Jews, the children of Jews, and the grandchildren of Jews.
- A general boycott of all Jewish-owned businesses was proclaimed. Officially it lasted for one day, but actually it continued for much longer in many localities.
- Membership in the Reich Chamber of Culture was prohibited. This meant that Jews could not hold jobs in radio, in the theaters, or sell paintings or sculptures.
- Mass bonfires were ignited throughout Germany. Books written by Jews and anti-Nazis were burned.
- Jews were prohibited from owning land.
- Jewish lawyers and judges were barred from their professions.
- Jewish doctors were barred from treating “Aryan” patients.
- Jews were prohibited from producing kosher meat.

1935

- The Reichstag adopted the Nuremberg Laws, which declared that Jews could no longer be citizens of Germany.
- Marriage and intimate relations between Jews and those of “Aryan” blood were declared criminal acts.
- German females under the age of 45 were prohibited from being employed by Jews.
- Jews were forbidden to wave the Reich’s flag or to display the flag’s colors.

1936

- Hitler temporarily relaxed the antisemitic propaganda and other measures against Jews in order to avoid criticism by foreign visitors attending the summer Olympic Games in Berlin.

1937

- “Aryanization,” the confiscation of Jewish businesses and property, intensified greatly.

1938

- The Reich Supreme Court declared that being a Jew was cause for dismissal from a job.
- The Nuremberg Laws were extended to Austria after the *Anschluss*, the annexation of Austria.
- All Jews had to add the names “Israel” and “Sarah” to their identification papers, and passports were marked with the red letter J, for *Jude* (Jew).
- Jews could no longer attend plays and concerts, own phones, or have drivers’ licenses, car registrations, etc.
- *Kristallnacht Pogrom* (Night of Broken Glass): approximately 1,400 synagogues were burned and 7,000 stores owned by Jews and hundreds of homes were damaged and looted.
- 30,000 Jews, most of them leaders in the Jewish communities, were sent to concentration camps. Many were offered the opportunity to leave the camps provided they could prove they had arranged their emigration from Germany.
- Very few Jewish children remained in German schools.
- All Jewish shops were ordered to close by December 31, 1938.
- Jews had to abide by curfews.

Between 1933 and 1938, nearly 150,000 Jews managed to leave Nazi Germany. This number represented approximately 30 percent of the total Jewish population. In order for Jews to legally emigrate from Germany, they were required to have both German passports and visas permitting them to enter another country. Most countries however, had quotas that limited the number of immigrants allowed to enter and required that those entering were able to support themselves. Very few countries admitted German-Jewish refugees, and after the *Kristallnacht Pogrom*, it became extremely difficult for Jews to leave Germany. Most of the Jews who fled Germany went to other European countries that were occupied by the Nazis months or a few years later.

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