



SA soldier near a Jewish-owned store on the day of the boycott, Germany. Yad Vashem Photo Archive (1652/11)

The Nazi Party rose to power with an antisemitic racial ideology that viewed national and ethnic groups in terms of race. This ideology posited that the so-called “Aryan” race (primarily the North Europeans) was superior and that Jews, in complete contrast, were a kind of “anti-race,” dangerous inhuman beings in seemingly human form. This racialized belief system drove the anti-Jewish policies and persecution that escalated beginning in 1933.

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 1938 according to the racial theory was to isolate German Jewry from German society and ultimately encourage them to leave their homeland. Through 1938 and into 1939, more and more force was used to push Jews out of German territory.

In addition to the fact that the laws and decrees were issued chronologically, they should also be understood for how they affected different spheres of life for Jews, as individuals and for the Jewish community as a whole. They affected personal status, the interaction of Jews with general society, and their economic situation. Jews were not only limited by the flurry of laws and decrees, they also frequently felt deeply humiliated by them and betrayed by a country which had been home, for some, for many generations and to which they were loyal citizens.

BUILD UP OF ANTI-JEWISH POLICY (1933-1938)

1933-1934 marked by boycotts against Jews and the exclusion of Jews from all government related jobs, including serving as judges and teachers.

1935 marked by the Nuremberg Laws which classified Jews according to racial criteria and deprived them of German citizenship.

1937-1938 marked by increasing anti-Jewish violence, confiscation of Jewish property, and the forbidding of Jewish ownership of businesses. The culmination of violence was the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* in November 1938.

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 defined Jews by racial criteria and determined 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*: 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 the autumn of 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 German passports and visas permitting them to enter another country and a long list of other official documents. In addition, most countries had quotas that limited the number of immigrants allowed to enter and required that those entering were able to support themselves, which posed a particular problem since the German authorities severely restricted the amount of money emigrating Jews could take with them. In short, leaving Nazi Germany and finding a place of refuge was extremely difficult. After the *Kristallnacht Pogrom*, a panicked exit of the remaining German Jews began. Despite all the difficulties involved, until October 1941—as long as the German authorities allowed Jews to leave—nearly 60 percent managed to do so. Ironically, many of the Jews who fled Germany went to other European countries that were occupied by the Nazis months or a few years later.