

3. Nuremberg Laws

Vocabulary (from article)

Antisemitism — Prejudices toward Jews or discrimination against them

Aryan — Originally, a term for peoples speaking the languages of Europe and India. The Nazis twisted the term and used it to refer only to people with a Northern European background. The Nazis, who viewed people with a German background as “superior,” were always concerned with trying to keep the German and European blood “pure” (Museum of Tolerance, Simon Wiesenthal Center).

Reich — the German word for “empire.” The Third Reich refers to Germany during the years of 1933 – 1945 when Hitler was in power. The Holy Roman Empire was considered the first Reich, and the 1871 German Empire the second. The Nazis promoted themselves as the third great empire (Encyclopedia of the Holocaust).

You see you had suddenly become subject to new laws. The Weimar Constitution was declared null and void when Hitler took power in 1933, and when he increased his power in 1934. In 1935, the infamous racial laws became law, where the Jew was declared subhuman, where the Jew was not allowed to become a doctor or a lawyer, or even to have a business. It became impossible for the Jewish community to exist.

— Joseph F., a Holocaust survivor
who was age 18 in 1934.

From “Never Again I Hope,”
produced by the Washington State
Holocaust Education Resource Center.

The Weimar Constitution was the constitution for the German government from 1919 – 1933. This constitution turned the German Republic into a democracy, securing all the basic rights of other democratic countries, including freedom of speech, the press and association. Importantly too, it gave the Jews the complete equality of a German citizen.

New laws created by Hitler allowed and legalized the hatred and ultimate systematic murder of the Jewish people. Hitler and the Nazi party institutionalized in the Third Reich the core belief that all those not of pure Aryan blood should be excluded from citizenship, then from the country, then from all countries under Nazi rule. In Hitler’s system, the “Aryan” represented the perfection of human existence: tall, blond, blue-eyed, and non-Jewish. Racial purity was a Nazi obsession. (From “Never Again I Hope” teacher guide.)

Historian Martin Gilbert noted:

More than 10,000 public health and social workers had been driven out of their posts, 4,000 lawyers were without the right to practice, 2,000 doctors had been expelled from hospitals and clinics, 2,000 actors, singers, and musicians had been driven from their orchestras, clubs and cafés. A further 1,200 editors and journalists had been dismissed, as had 800 university professors and lecturers, and 800 elementary and secondary school teachers.

— Martin Gilbert, “The Holocaust.”
Holt, 1985. Quoted in “Facing History and
Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior.”
1994. p 202

Studying the Holocaust

RESISTANCE, RESCUE AND SURVIVAL

How did the Nazis find the Jews?

The German government periodically conducted a census of all people living in Germany. The census recorded each person's birth date, sex, marital status, religion, and for the first time, race. Race was traced through a person's parents and grandparents.

Also, many local people knew who was Jewish in their area and reported them.

Discussion questions:

- How did these laws affect the Jewish people?
- How did they affect non-Jewish people?
- Why do you think so many anti-Jewish laws were passed?

Resources:

Text of the Nuremberg laws can be found at the links below (or go to yadvashem.org and type "Nuremberg Laws" in the search box):

- **Nuremberg Laws on Reich Citizenship, September 15, 1935**
yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/documents/part1/doc32.html
- **Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, September 15, 1935**
yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/documents/part1/doc33.html
- **First Regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law, November 14, 1935**
yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/documents/part1/doc34.html
- **Extracts from Hitler's Speech in the Reichstag on the Nuremberg Laws, September 1935**
yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/documents/part1/doc35.html
- **Extract from Hitler's Speech on the Importance of the Nuremberg Laws, at a Meeting of Party Leaders**
yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/documents/part1/doc36.html