

# Analysis of Denazification Categories in the Western Occupation Zones (1949-1950)

## Abstract

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This statistical overview of denazification in the three Western occupation zones should be interpreted with great caution. It is difficult to draw comparisons among zones, since the completeness of the data varied from zone to zone, as did the specific composition of the five groups (major offenders, offenders, lesser offenders, followers, and exonerated persons) and the manner in which data was collected. For example, in the British zone, Groups I and II were left blank because the military government was responsible for those categories and no data was available. Thus, the high number of “exonerated persons” in the British zone is based on the fact that the groups were pushed downward. In general, denazification was harshest in the American zone and most lenient under the French, as evidenced by the high number of suspended proceedings in the French zone.

## Source

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### Notes on the Analysis of Denazification Cases in the Western Zones

The statistics reproduced here, which reflect the status of denazification as of August 31, 1949, in the American zone, and as of February 28, 1950, in the French and British zones, constitute the only compilation available from the Federal Ministry of the Interior. In a supplementary statement, the ministry pointed out the inherent inadequacy of the statistics:

“The statistics from the British zone are incomplete. Firstly, the British military government is responsible for assigning people to Categories I and II, and figures for these categories are not disclosed. Secondly, the *Länder* [federal states] could not disclose the number of Category III, IV, and V proceedings that had already been completed by the British military government before the creation of the German denazification authorities in February 1947.

The state of North Rhine-Westphalia produced no statistics regarding proceedings that were suspended because the affected persons did not meet the specifications for denazification, or were suspended on other grounds. Therefore, these figures could not be reported.

In Rhineland-Palatinate, 500 petitions by the public prosecutor concerning Categories I and II are still outstanding.

In the American Zone, 3,623,112 persons were deemed subject to the Law for Liberation. The denazification courts handled 950,126 of these cases; the public prosecutor has already suspended the rest without charges. 2,504,686 were amnestied.”

Any statistical tabulation on denazification that aims to include comparable data for all zones is beset by insurmountable difficulties on account of variations in practices and procedures. Keep in mind that there was no compulsory registration in the British zone, and that mandatory registration was

reserved for a much narrower group in the French zone than in the American zone. Also, unlike the other *Länder*, Baden, Württemberg-Hohenzollern, North Rhine-Westphalia and Hamburg had no public prosecutor.

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Nevertheless, when taken with a grain of salt [*cum grano salis*], these statistics can provide interesting clues about the results of denazification. Of all those subject to close examination, only a minimal number were deemed seriously guilty [major offenders and offenders]: 2.5% in the American zone; 0.1% in the French zone; and the 1.3% of those classified in Group III in the British zone, this classification being based on a lack of other options. On the basis of these rough statistics, one can hardly make conclusive statements about the vigor with which denazification was pursued in individual zones. That it was implemented most harshly in the American zone and most leniently in the French zone is confirmed by many commentaries, however. The high number of exonerated persons in the British zone is explained through the downward shift resulting from the absence of Groups I and II. There, the category “exonerated persons” had to include those classified as “followers” in the other zones. On the basis of amnesties, and Decrees No. 133 and 165, the majority of followers in the French zone, had the good fortune to avoid sanction.

Group I and II: Major Offenders and Offenders

Group III: Lesser Offenders

Group IV: Followers

Group V: Exonerated Persons

Source: Justus Fürstenau, *Entnazifizierung. Ein Kapitel deutscher Nachkriegspolitik*. Luchterhand: Neuwied and Berlin, 1969, p. 227.

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