



# Hitler's Germany

From Kaiser to Führer: Germany 1900-45

*Wolf Hitler*

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# Nazi Society 1933 - 1939

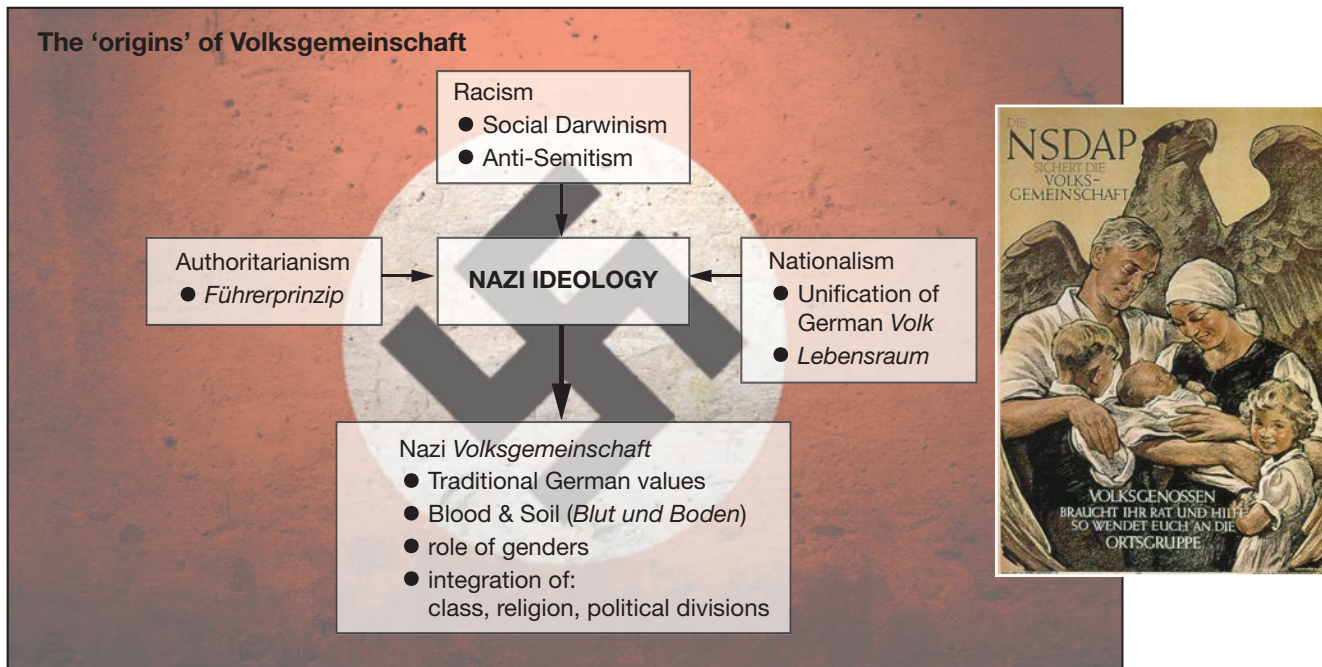
## VOLKSGEMEINSCHAFT

The main concept which the Nazis tried to establish throughout Germany was *Volksgemeinschaft*. Literally this means a 'national community'. It was designed to bring everyone together as a national 'family'.

This concept is vague and includes trying to make the German people reconsider the divisions in German society, and go back to the agricultural roots of Germany, and to create a national feeling of belonging.

It was a fake concept, forced upon the people by the strong and heavy use of propaganda. The ideas came from:

- **Social Darwinism** - using Darwin's theory to prove racial superiority
- **Anti-Semitism** - blaming a certain section of the community
- **Führerprinzip** - belief that the Führer has a God-given right to lead
- **Unification of all German people (Volk)** - dissolving class and social divisions
- **Lebensraum** - that the German people should have literal space in which to spread
- **Traditional Germanic values** - of hard work, dedication, belief
- **Blood & Soil (*Blut und Boden*)** - going back to original agricultural values
- **Gender roles** - Men work, women keep house and raise the family
- **Integration of class, religion and politics** - uniting the people into single units of belief



This diagram shows the ideas from which Volksgemeinschaft came.

### Vocabulary

**vague:** unclear

**reconsider:** to think again

**propaganda:** an item which promotes a specific idea against other ideas

## 2. Social Groups

# SOCIAL GROUPS

Social groups are the groups in society, such as miners, students, bus drivers, teachers, monks, or any group which is not military.

### 2.1 Industrial workers

**Question: did workers benefit under National Socialism?**

**Base answer: Yes and no; they became a cohesive group, but lost the right to self-determination.**

**Main idea: join the country together under one ideology**

**Leader: Robert Ley - drunk, lacked intelligence and dedication**

Industrial workers are those who work in an industry - a manufacturing, processing or 'creating' job. These workers had, in their geographical locations, created Trades Unions to try to ensure they had fair working conditions. 'Trade' means the area of work - such as engineering or textiles. The Nazis wanted to get rid of the various unions and so they banned them. The workers had only one choice - join the DAP (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*) - created by the Nazis, government controlled. It was not compulsory to join but if you wanted better work conditions, you had to join.

#### The benefits of the DAP

- Setting working hours and wages.
- Dealing harshly with any sign of disobedience, strikes or absenteeism.
- Running training schemes for apprenticeships.
- Setting stable rents for housing.
- Supervising working conditions through the DAF subsection called the Beauty of Labour (*SdA, Schönheit der Arbeit*). The SdA aimed to provide cleaning, meals, exercise, etc.

#### Vocabulary

**Union** - when workers join together and are able to improve their working conditions. If the employer does not accept their demands, they can stop work (strike) and stop output until the employer agrees.

**Cohesive** - the ability to join together

**Self-determination** - the right to decide what happens to you, your work and your life

### Strength Through Joy (KdF, Kraft durch Freude)

The Strength Through Joy programme was designed to provide social activities, holidays, tours, and social activities to encourage health and well-being. Most facilities were either free or very inexpensive. **Membership:** 2.3 million in 1934 to 10.3 million in 1939.



Two Nazi propaganda posters advertising the benefits of saving for 'Your own KdF car'. Workers enthusiastically paid millions of marks to the scheme but mass production of the Volkswagen, planned for 1939, was stopped until after the war.



#### Was it all good?

- Average workers' real wages only rose above 1929 levels in 1938.
- Workers were forced to pay large contributions for DAF and insurance/tax.
- The biggest gains were made by the workers associated with the boom in the rearmament industries.
- Those in consumer goods industries struggled to maintain their real incomes.
- Working hours increased over time. The average working week was officially increased from 43 hours in 1933 to 47 hours in 1939 – and as military demands grew, there was pressure on many workers to do more overtime.
- The fall in unemployment figures from the statistics owed much to the removal of women and Jews, and the introduction of male conscription of the army and labour service.

#### Vocabulary

**rearmament** - building up the army, navy and air force, making more guns, ammunition and tanks etc

**conscription** - forcing men to join the armed forces or go to jail as a coward

## 2.2 Peasants and small farmers

**Question: did Peasants and small farmers benefit under National Socialism?**

**Base answer: Yes and no; they were held up as the best example of being German at first, but then they lost out to the need for more soldiers.**

**Main idea: Blood and Soil (*Blut und Boden*)**

**Leader: Richard Darré - intellectual, sensible, devoted and professional**

The farming community had been attracted to the Nazis by the promise of financial aid. Peasants felt that they were losing out to the growing urban society of industrial Germany. The Nazi ideology of 'Blood and Soil' promoted by Richard Darré suggested real sympathy for the peasants. It portrayed them as racially the purest element of the Volk, the providers of Germany's food and the symbol of traditional German values.



Richard Darré

### Main elements:

- to restore the role and values of the countryside and to reverse the drive towards urbanisation by promoting the concept of 'Blood and Soil'.
- to support the expansionist policy of *Lebensraum* and to create a German racial aristocracy based on selective breeding.
- Many farm debts and mortgages were written off and small farmers were given low interest rates and a range of tax allowances.
- The government maintained extensive tariffs to reduce imports.
- The Reich Entailed Farm Law of 1933 gave security of tenure to the occupiers of medium-sized farms between 7.5 and 125 hectares, and forbade the division of farms, in order to promote efficient agriculture.
- The Reich Food Estate, established in 1933, supervised every aspect of agricultural production and distribution, especially food prices and working wages.
- The impact of Nazi agricultural policy was mixed. At first, all farmers benefited from an increase in prices between 1933 and 1936 and so farmers' incomes did improve markedly, although they only recovered to 1928 levels in 1938.

However, it seems that by 1936–7 any benefits were giving way to growing peasant disillusionment.

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### Vocabulary

**urbanisation** - when the population generally moves into towns and cities, away from the countryside

**expansionist** - to increase the size of something, usually an intangible. In this context, the idea of increasing the land available for German people - "Lebensraum".

**Tariff** - a tax on imports

**Tenure** - a permanent right to work somewhere particular

This was for several reasons:

- Agricultural production increased by 20 per cent from 1928 to 1938, but urbanisation continued – 3 per cent of the population. Wages were higher there, and agriculture just did not have the economic power to compete with other sectors of the economy.
- The positive aspects of the Reich Food Estate were accepted, but the regulations became increasingly resented. The Reich Entailed Farm Law also meant that a farm must be passed to one child and not split amongst all children in the family.
- With war in 1939 pressures on the peasantry developed: men were increasingly conscripted to the military fronts, so agricultural labour became very short. Pole and Czech imported workers (for the farms) were not even viewed as racially acceptable.

### 2.3 Landowners

**Question: did landowners lose out under the Nazis?**

**Base answer: no, but they were crushed at the end of the war.**

**Main idea: Volksgemeinschaft**

The landed classes had been initially suspicious of radical social change. They resented the political interference of the party, but above all they feared the Nazis would redistribute the large landed estates. However, they soon learned to live quite comfortably with the Nazi regime and in the years before 1939 their economic interests were not really threatened. Indeed, German victories in the early years of the war offered the chance of acquiring more cheap land. The real blow for the landowners actually came in 1945 when the occupation of eastern Germany by the USSR resulted in the nationalisation of land. The traditional social and economic supremacy of the German landowners was broken.

### 2.4 *Mittelstand*

**Question: did the *Mittelstand* benefit from Naziism?**

**Base answer: Not really. They lost income, business and eventually disappeared.**

**Main idea: Volksgemeinschaft**

What was the *Mittelstand*? The *Mittelstand* was the group of medium sized businesses. The main Nazi ideas to support the *Mittelstand* were these:

- Money from the confiscation of Jewish businesses was used to offer low interest rate loans.
- The Law to Protect Retail Trade (1933) banned the opening of new department stores and taxed the existing ones, many of which were owned by Jews.
- Many new trading regulations were imposed to protect small craftsmen.

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#### Vocabulary

**confiscation (confiscate):** to remove for a time or for ever

**acquiring (acquire):** to obtain or get

**Jewish:** of, or belonging to, those who follow the faith of the Jews. Religious, not racial.

However as Germany's re-industrialisation continued, the Mittelstand were unable to compete with even those new businesses which were allowed and they sector began to fail. By the end of the 1930s, when war began, they had almost all gone, giving way to either massive industry or small shops.

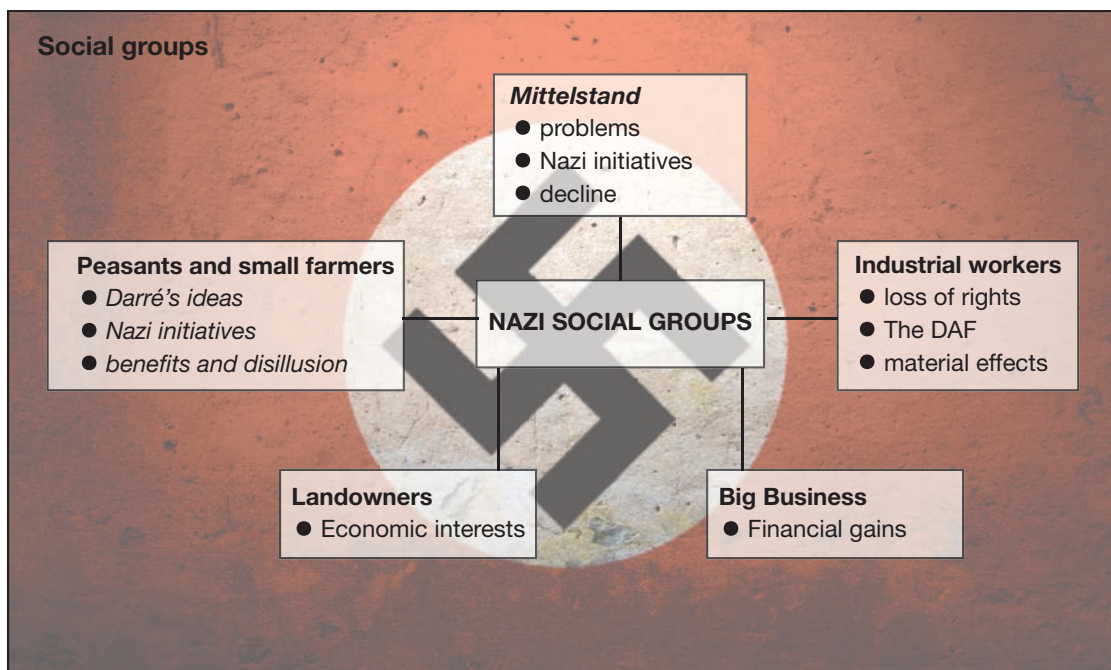
## 2.5 'Big' business

**Question: did Big Business do well under the Nazis?**

**Base answer: Yes, in spite of heavy regulation.**

**Main idea: Volksgemeinschaft**

Big business benefited most under the Nazis of all social groups. Profits increased very much especially in the armaments industry. Government controls increased but financial gains were large. The value of German industry steadily increased from the share price index and the improvement of salaries of management. From 1938 the annexations and the conquests of war provided great opportunities for taking over foreign property, land and companies.



This diagram shows Nazi Social groups and the effects Nazi policies had on them.

### Vocabulary

**re-industrialisation:** developing industry again

**Big Business:** major industries: steel, coal, manufacturing

**share price index:** a measure of economic success

**annexations (annex):** to take over land next to yours

**conquest, conquests:** victory (victories) over your opponents



# 3. Education and Youth

## EDUCATION & YOUTH

**Key question: what did Nazi education want to achieve?**

**Base answer: to ensure that all students followed *exactly*, Nazi ideas**

**Main idea: Nazification and indoctrination**

In 1933 Hitler said:

*“When an opponent declares, ‘I will not come over to your side’, I calmly say, ‘Your child belongs to us already ... What are you? You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.’”*

This just means: **“whatever my opponents think, it’s too late. Children, the next generation, are already Nazis.”** The intention was to make sure that the New Order (the Third Reich) would exist for the whole future. The Nazis achieved this in two main ways: changing the school system and changing the social organisation of young people.

### 3.1 Schools

**Question: how did the Nazis change things to achieve their aims?**

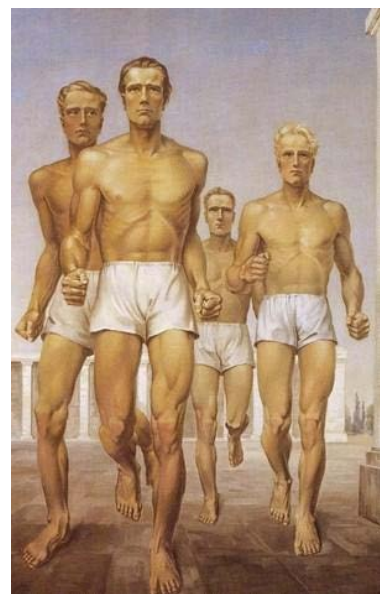
**Base answer: through changing the ways in which subjects were taught.**

**Main idea: Nazification**

In 1934 the Reich Ministry of Education was created, and power over the school system was removed from local people and local government.

#### Now did things change under the Nazis?

First, the teaching profession was ‘reconditioned’. Politically unreliable individuals were removed and Jewish teachers were banned, and women were encouraged to return home. Re-education courses were given to those who did not agree. The National Socialist Teachers’ League (NSLB, Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund) was established and its influence and interference continued to grow. By 1937, it included 97 per cent of all teachers and two-thirds of the profession had been on special month-long courses on Nazi ideology and the changes to the curriculum.



Secondly, the curricula and syllabuses were adapted. To fit the Nazi Aryan ideal, much greater emphasis was placed on physical

#### Vocabulary

**achieve:** to make your plan happen

**Nazification:** the process of becoming a fully believing Nazi

**indoctrination:** to force a point of view on people so

strongly and so often that they believe it, right or wrong  
**re-education:** intensive courses to make people conform

education. Fifteen per cent of school time was given over to it, and games teachers assumed an increased status and importance in the school hierarchy.

On the academic front, Religious Studies was dropped to downgrade the importance of Christianity, whereas German, Biology and History became the focus of special attention:

- **German language and literature** were studied to create 'a consciousness of being German', and to inculcate a martial and nationalistic spirit.
- **Biology** became the means by which to deliver Nazi racial theory: ethnic classification, population policy and racial genetics were all integrated into the syllabus.
- **History** was also given a special place in the Nazi curriculum, so that the glories of German nationalism could be emphasised.

One final innovation was the creation of various types of élite schools. They were intended to prepare the best of Germany's youth for future political leadership, were modelled on the principles of the Hitler Youth, and focused on physical training, paramilitary activities and political education.

## 4. The Hitler Youth

# HITLER YOUTH

**Key question:** how did the Hitler Youth movement indoctrinate young boys?

**Base answer:** by providing a military style 'club' - of which boys wanted to be a member

**Main idea:** Nazification and indoctrination



### Vocabulary

**hierarchy:** the organisation of a social group. The higher up you are, the more power you have

There was already a long and well established tradition of youth organisation in Germany before 1933, but at that time the Hitler Youth (Hitler Jugend) represented only one per cent of the total.

The term 'Hitler Youth' was a range of youth groups and from 1933 - 1939 the structure and membership of the Hitler Youth grew quickly - parents were pressurised to enrol the children and by 1939 membership became compulsory. By then all other youth organisations had been abolished.

In all four groups shown in the table below there was a great stress on political indoctrination, emphasising the life and achievements of the Führer, German patriotism, athletics and camping. The sexes were moulded for their future roles in Nazi society. Boys did physical and military-type activities, e.g. target shooting, and girls were prepared for their domestic and maternal tasks, e.g. cooking.

### Youth groups

Age group	Name of organisation
Boys 10–14 years old	<b>German Young People</b> (Deutsche Jungvolk)
Boys 14–18 years old	<b>Hitler Youth</b> (Hitler Jugend)
Girls 10–14 years old	<b>League of Young Girls</b> (Jungmädels)
Girls 14–18 years old	<b>League of German Girls</b> (Bund Deutscher Mädel)



### Vocabulary

**abolished:** closed permanently, no longer in existence

**moulded:** shaped into; made to conform to ideas or shapes

# Success or failure?

## SUCCESS OR FAILURE

**Key question: Did Nazi education succeed?**

**Base answer: 'education' is an intangible - therefore it cannot be accurately measured, but it can be said that Nazi education led to traditional subjects being taught less and less well, and physical activities were promoted much more.**

**Main idea: Nazification and indoctrination**

### Teaching

The teaching profession felt under threat. Thirty-two per cent were members of the party in 1936. The anti-academic ethos and the crude indoctrination alienated many. Not surprisingly, standards in traditional academic subjects had fallen by the early years of the war. Standards fell fast, especially in the élite schools, where physical development predominated. By 1938 there were teaching 8000 vacancies, but only 2500 teacher graduates.

### Youth conformity

The impact of the Hitler Youth was mixed. Emphasis on teamwork and extracurricular activities was positive. The provision for sports, camping and music genuinely excited many youngsters, and for those from poorer backgrounds the Hitler Youth offered real opportunities. Significantly, the Hitler Youth successfully conveyed to many youngsters an atmosphere of fun and a sense of belonging to the new Germany, here expressed by a young member, Heinrich Metelmann:

*"The structural system of that youth organisation was based on the military. Our group consisted of about 150–200 boys, subdivided into three troops – just like a company of soldiers. We met together, marched and played together in close comradeship until the age of 18 ... Every company had a Heim [home; often a barn or cellar] which we decorated in a nationalist/militarist style. Swastika flags, and other Nazi emblems had places of honour, as well as decorated pictures of our Führer ... But when we had our close togetherness there, we felt happy on our own. We were sure and proud that we were the future of Germany, come what may."*



### Vocabulary

**predominated:** was the main idea or activity

From Kaiser to Führer: Germany 1900-45



'Youth serves the Führer. Every ten year old - into the Hitler Youth.' The Nazi propaganda poster cleverly plays on the combined images of the young boy and Hitler sharing a common vision. It was produced in 1940, by which time war had started and membership was compulsory.



Few German boys would stand against propaganda as strong as this. However, the Edelweiss Pirates stood against Hitler.

The **Edelweiss Pirates** was a set of groups of youths who disagreed strongly with what they could see was going on. A large movement, they refused to join the Hitler Youth group or the female equivalent and preferred their own ideas and methods of social grouping and interaction. Sometimes they actively fought Hitler Youth members - and the pirates formed the basis of the resistance against Hitler. Shorts, in those days, were quite short shorts.



The Edelweiss Pirates emblem



The Edelweiss Pirates lapel badge



The Edelweiss Pirates sleeve badge

## Vocabulary

## Where it all went wrong

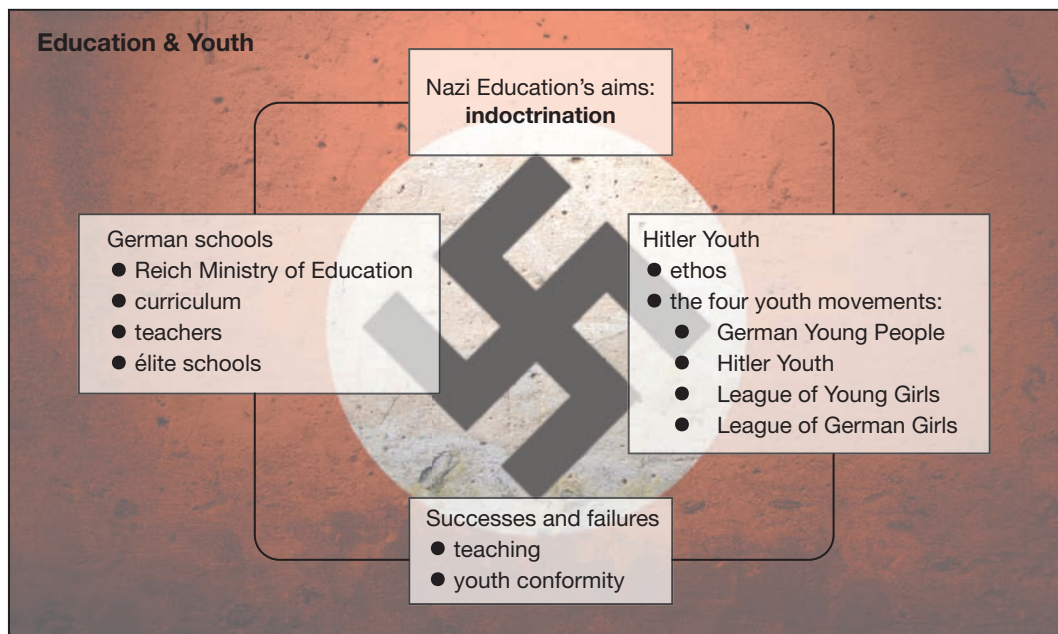
The Hitler Youth suffered from over-rapid expansion and the leadership was inadequate. As membership grew hugely, it became more difficult to run the movement effectively and the increasing Nazi emphasis on military drill and discipline was resented by many adolescents; it was becoming institutionalised by the Nazi regime. When it was fun, it was going well - but the more the Nazis insisted on making it like a 'junior army', the more youths began to dislike it.

Recent research suggests that larger groups of youths had not been won over by 1939 and that alienation and dissent increased quite markedly. *The regime even established a special youth section of the secret police and a youth concentration camp was set up at Neuwied.* The **Edelweiss Piraten** was a general name given to a host of working-class youths who formed gangs, such as the 'Roving Dudes' and 'Navajos'. Their members

had been alienated by the military emphasis and discipline of the Hitler Youth. They met up and organised their own hikes and camps which then came into conflict with the official ones. In several instances, 'Pirates' became involved in more active resistance. In Cologne in 1944,



12 of them were hanged publicly because of their attacks on military targets and the assassination of a Gestapo officer.



### Vocabulary

**resent(ed):** disliked because 'it' was not a choice

**dissent:** disagreeing with policies but not acting on that disagreement

**alienate(d):** a feeling of not belonging to a certain group

**assassination:** the killing of a personal with more authority than the killer

**hike:** a long walk, usually in the countryside or hills and mountains. Healthy.

## 5. Religion

# RELIGION

**Key question: how did the Nazis regard religion?**

**Base answer: with suspicion and a desire to move belief from God to Hitler**

**Main idea: Nazification and indoctrination**

Nazism was a fundamentally anti-Christian philosophy. Nazism glorified strength, violence and war, Christianity taught love, forgiveness and neighbourly respect. Christianity was regarded as the product of an inferior race – Jesus was a Hebrew. Some leading Nazis, such as Himmler and his deputy, Heydrich, openly revealed their contempt for Christianity. Hitler was more cautious, although what were probably his true feelings were revealed in a private conversation in 1933:

*“Neither of the denominations – Catholic or Protestant, they are both the same – has any future left ... That won’t stop me stamping out Christianity in Germany root and branch. One is either a Christian or a German. You can’t be both.”*

### 5.1 What the Nazis wanted instead of normal religion

In place of Christianity, the Nazis wanted ‘teutonic paganism’, which became known as the German Faith Movement. Although a clear Nazi religious ideology was never fully outlined, what there was revolved around four main themes:

- the propagation of the ‘Blood and Soil’ ideology
- the replacement of Christian ceremonies – marriage and baptism – by pagan equivalents
- the rejection of Christian ethics – closely linked to racial and nationalist views
- the cult of Hitler’s personality.

However, even the Nazi government knew that religion was a very delicate issue. At first, the Nazis tried to calm the fears of the Churches, while the Nazi dictatorship was being established.

### 5.1 Conciliation and conflict 1933–5

**Key question: why did conciliation lead to conflict?**

**Base answer: Nazi ideology and guarantees of religious tolerance were unacceptable to the Churches**

At first Hitler agreed that the Churches were a central part of Germany. Nazi members were encouraged to go to Protestant Church services. The reason was to show that the Churches had nothing to fear from the Nazis.

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#### Vocabulary

**teutonic:** connected with ancient German tradition

**paganism:** a system of beliefs based on nature

**conciliation:** actions designed to bring to opposing sides together

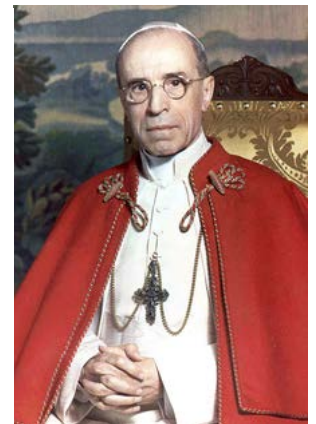
The Catholic Church also responded well to Nazi 'suggestions'. Catholic bishops wanted to safeguard the position of the Church under the Nazis and in July 1933 a Concordat was signed between the Papacy and the regime. In the agreement it was decided that:

- the Nazis would guarantee the Catholic Church religious freedom
- the Nazis would not interfere with the Catholic Church's property and legal rights
- the Nazis would accept the Catholic Church's control over its own education

In return, the Catholic Church would not interfere in politics and would give diplomatic recognition to the Nazi government. Remember that the Roman Catholic Church was not part of the government, and was controlled totally by The Pope in Rome. Essentially the Roman Catholic Church was - and is - an organisation entirely controlled by The Pope, and makes its own laws and rules.



Left:  
 The signing of the Reichskonkordat between Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) (centre) and Franz Baron von Papen (on the left)



His Holiness Pope Pius XII

At first the Concordat seemed to be a great success. However, it was all insincere and by the end of 1933 Nazi interference in religious affairs was already causing resentment and disillusionment in both Catholic and Protestant Churches.

The Nazis hoped that the Protestant Churches would gradually be 'co-ordinated' through the group called the German Christians (Deutsche Christen). This group hoped to reconcile their Protestant ideas with Nazi nationalist and racial thinking by finding common ground. A new Church constitution was created in July 1933 with the Nazi sympathiser Ludwig Müller as the first Reich Bishop – an interesting application of the Führerprinzip.



#### Vocabulary

**Concordat:** an agreement between two potentially opposing forces, in this case the Nazis and the Catholics.

**Papacy:** the position and office of Pope

**diplomatic recognition:** when one country officially says that another country exists

**reconcile:** find similarities in different, opposing beliefs

**Führerprinzip:** the ideas behind providing the best leader for an organisation



## 5.2 Churches and state

### Key question

**How did the relationship between the Churches and state change over time?**

**Base answer: from tolerance to opposition**

**Main idea: Nazification and indoctrination**

By 1935 it was obvious that the Nazi leadership had achieved just limited success in controlling the Churches. The leadership could not make a clear choice between total suppression or limited persecution. Total suppression would alienate too many people and limited persecution would give the church too much freedom.

To destabilise the Churches, the Ministry of Church Affairs adopted a policy of undermining both the Protestant and Catholic Churches by a series of anti-

religious measures, including:

- closure of Church schools undermining of Catholic youth groups
- personal campaigns to discredit and harass the clergy, e.g. monasteries were accused of sexual and financial malpractices
- confiscation of Church funds
- a campaign to remove crucifixes from schools
- the arrest of more and more pastors and priests.



*The Crucifix is a symbol of the Roman Catholic Church. It always shows Christ on the Cross. Empty crosses are a symbol of Protestant churches.*

The Churches were weakened by this approach, but it also stimulated individual declarations of opposition from both Protestants and Catholics.

The Pope, Pius XI, eventually vehemently attacked the Nazi system in his encyclical, or public letter, of 1937 entitled *With Burning Concern (Mit Brennender Sorge)*. The conflict between the Churches and the state continued.

The outbreak of war brought about a cautious policy, as the regime wished to avoid unnecessary tensions. Following the military victories of 1939–40 the persecution intensified, as a result of pressure applied by anti-Christian enthusiasts, such as Bormann and Heydrich and the SS hierarchy. Monasteries were closed, Church property was attacked and Church activities were severely restricted. Even so, religion was such a politically sensitive issue that Hitler did not allow subordination of the Churches to give way to wholesale suppression within Germany.

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### Vocabulary

**persecution:** any means of attacking a certain group of people with the aim of dissolving that group

**encyclical:** a public letter written by The Pope

**subordination (vb):** making sure someone or an

organisation knows that it is 'under' authority

### 5.3 Conclusions

#### Key question

**Did Nazi religious policy succeed in its aims? Did the Churches effectively oppose the Nazis?**

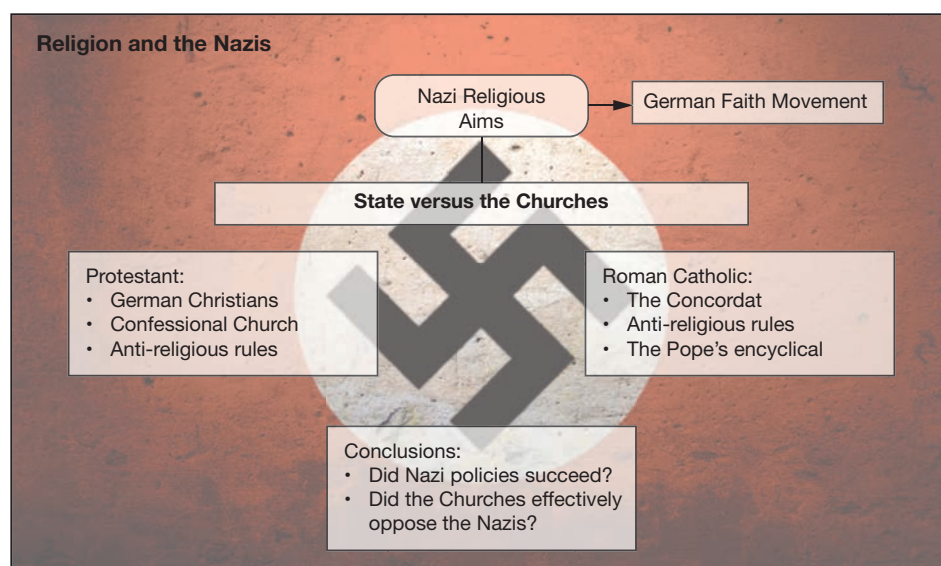
**Base answer: not really. The Nazis limited the freedom of the Churches but did not suppress them.**

The Nazis achieved only limited success in their religious policy. Many individual Christians made brave stands against the Nazis. This made the dictatorship wary of launching a fundamental assault on religion, so German loyalty to Christianity survived in the long term despite Nazism. Hitler killed himself before his programme for taking over the Churches could be made successful.

However, both the Catholic and Protestant Churches failed to provide effective opposition to Nazism. Both could have provided the focus for active resistance. Instead, they preferred, as institutions, to adopt a pragmatic policy towards Nazism. They stood up for their own religious practices and traditions with shows of dissent, but denunciations of the regime were left to individuals. The reasons for the Churches' reluctance to show opposition to the regime lay in their conservatism:

- They distrusted the politics of communism which rejected the existence of religion itself.
- There was a nationalist sympathy for Nazism, especially after the problems of 1918–33.
- Both Churches feared the power of the Nazi state. They believed that any gestures of heroic resistance were likely to have bloody consequences.

In such a situation, their emphasis on pastoral and spiritual comfort was perhaps the most practical and realistic policy for them.



#### Vocabulary

**pragmatic:** to deal with things in a practical way - reacting to the real situation, not making theories

**denunciation:** statements declaring opposition to events

## 6. Women and the Family

**Key question** How and why was the role of women changing in society in the early twentieth century?

The first quarter of the twentieth century witnessed two important social changes in German family life: between 1900-1933 Germany's population *growth* had decelerated markedly. Over the same period female employment expanded by at least a third, outstripping the percentage increase in population. Both of these trends had been partially brought about by long-term changes in social behaviour common to many industrialised countries.

- It was recognised that the use of contraception to limit family size would improve the standard of living and give better educated women the opportunity to have a vocation as well as children.
- Germany's recent past history exaggerated these developments.
- Women entered the factories in WW1, while the post-war difficulties caused by the inflation had encouraged them to stay working out of economic necessity.
- The war had left a surplus of 1.8 million marriageable women, as well as many wives with invalided husbands.
- The changing balance of the economy in the 1920s had led to an increased demand for non-manual labour and the growth of mass-production techniques requiring more unskilled workers. These factors tended to favour the employment of women, who could be paid less than men.



*The ideal women: theory (above), reality (below)*



### 6.1 The Nazi view towards women

**Key question:** What was the ideal role of women in Nazi society?

**Base answer:** a women's place was in the home

The ideology of National Socialism was in contrast to normal social trends. Nazism fundamentally opposed social and economic female emancipation and had the following aims for women:

- To have more children and to take responsibility for bringing them up.
- To care for the house and their husbands.
- To stop paid employment except for very specialist vocations such as midwifery.

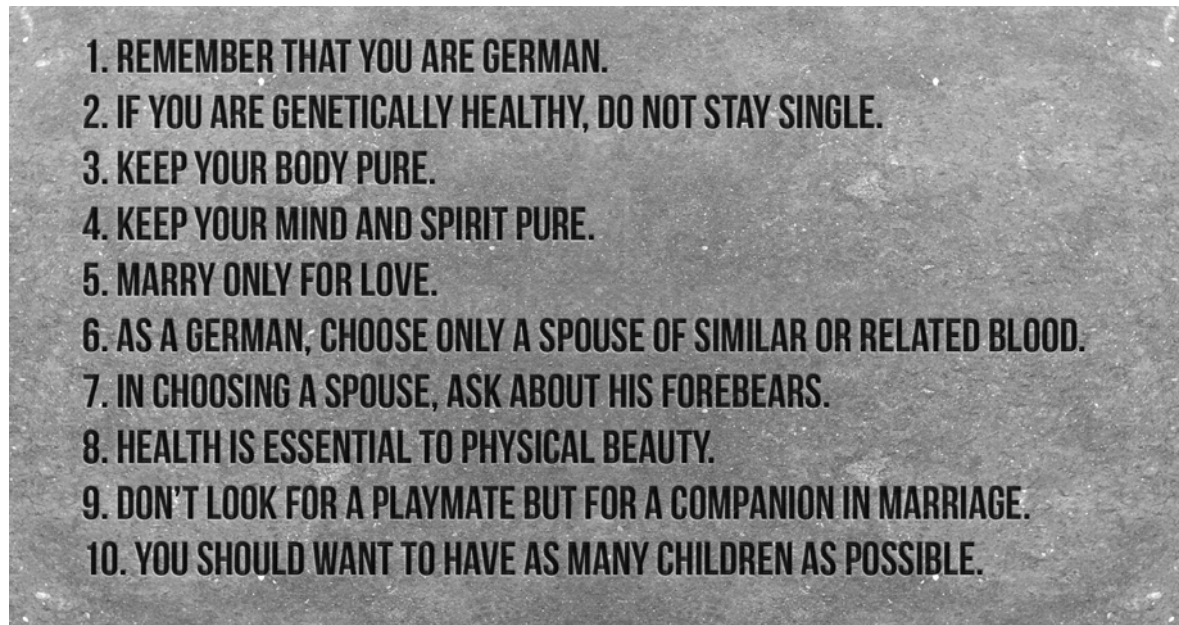
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#### Vocabulary

**ordained:** given by the Creator

In the view of the Nazis, nature had ordained that the two sexes should fulfil different roles, and it was the task of the state to maintain this distinction. As the Nazi slogan presented it, they were to be devoted to the three German Ks: 'Kinder, Küche, Kirche' ('children, kitchen and Church'). Such dogma was upheld by the party, even before 1933 – there was not a single female Nazi deputy in a Reichstag position.

The Nazi “ten commandments” for the choice of a spouse:



A growing population was viewed as a sign of national strength and status. But if the number of Germans was levelling out, how could they demand nationalist expansionism in eastern Europe? It was important to increase the population greatly and, to achieve this, women were portrayed as primarily the mothers of the next generation – an image that suited Nazi anti-feminism.

## 6.2 Female Employment

**Key question: Did the Nazis reduce the number of women in employment?**

**Base answer: Yes, economic necessity forced more women into the workplace**

Initially, attempts to reduce the number of women in work were quite successful. Between 1933 and 1936 married women were in turn debarred from jobs in medicine, law and the higher ranks of the civil service. Moreover, the number of female teachers and university students was reduced – only 10 per cent of university students could be female.



*The ideal German housewife and mother. Girls were trained to perform this function.*

### Vocabulary

**dogma:** ideology given by an authority as being unchangeably true

**debar (debarred):** prevented from being in a certain workplace situation

### **Nazi incentives**

In other sectors of the economy a mixture of party pressure and financial inducements was employed to cajole women out of the workplace and back into the home. Interest free loans of RM600 were made available to young women who left work to get married. The effects of the Depression also worked in favour of Nazi objectives - the Depression enabled the government to justify its campaign for women to give up work for the benefit of unemployed men.

### **Nazi women's organisations**

Women were specifically excluded from Nazi government. The only employment opportunities available to them were within the various Nazi women's organisations, such as the National Socialist Womanhood (NSF, National Sozialistische Frauenschaft) and the German Women's Enterprise (DFW, Deutsches Frauenwerk) - both tools for the propagation of the anti-feminist ideology through cultural, educational and social programmes.

### **Effects**

By 1937 Nazi ideological convictions were threatened by the pressures of economic necessity.

- The introduction of conscription and the rearmament boom from the mid-1930s soon led to an increasing shortage of labour, as the Nazi economy continued to grow.
- The anti-feminist ideology could only be upheld if economic growth was slowed down, and that would restrict the rearmament programme.
- Market forces inevitably began to exploit this readily available pool of labour, and the relative decline in female employment was reversed. Between 1937 and 1939 the percentage of women in work increased from 31 per cent to 33 per cent of the total workforce.

# 7. Anti-Semitism

## ANTI-SEMITISM

There are many theories as to why Hitler 'hated' the Jews. In all likelihood he did not personally bear such a grudge against Jews as to truly desire their extermination, but as shown below, Hitler was the result of prevailing and long-held prejudices against Jewish people.

The emergence of right-wing racist nationalism was apparent before 1914 and was enhanced after WW1:

- the self deception of the 'stab in the back' myth (that the German leadership had betrayed the people by surrendering in WW1)
- the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty
- the political and economic weaknesses of the Weimar Republic.

By the early 1920s, there were many small right-wing parties such as the Nazi Party. Hitler was able to exploit hostility towards the Jews and turn it into a radical ideology of hatred. He was the product, not the creator, of a society that was permeated by such prejudices.

Hitler, though, took this extremism to new heights. Using his charisma, he was able to continuously persuade people that the Jews were at the root of all the problems in Germany after WW1. This suited people, as it is always easier to have a specific social group to blame rather than face the fact that you, yourself, were responsible for electing or allowing leaders to bring about the downfall of your own country.

It can be argued that in 1932 people voted for Hitler *because* he was anti-Semitic, but in fact most of the people who voted for him were motivated by unemployment, the collapse of agricultural prices and the fear of Communism.

In 1934 a survey showed that 60 percent of people, when asked why they voted for Hitler, did not mention anti-Semitism at all.

The action against the Jews was gradual. Many German people believed that the early laws against Jews (such as those prohibiting Jews from being teachers, in government and so on) were justified as the Jews had indeed caused so many problems for Germany.



If you see hatred all around you, subliminally you begin to believe it

### Vocabulary

**subliminal (+ly):** your brain understands what your eyes do not notice

**exploit:** to use a situation for your own benefit

There was no indication of what would happen later.

For those people who did manage to foresee what might happen, it was already too late. The machinery of the dictatorship was already in place and resistance was pointless and anyway almost impossible.

Feelings of hopelessness were soon replaced by those of fear. To show sympathy for, or to protect Jews, was to risk one's own freedom or one's own life.

*Der Stürmer* was an anti-Semitic newspaper, pinned up all over Germany, spouting lies about the Jews. Propaganda against was no more obvious than this newspaper.



## 7.1 Legal discrimination

**Key question: Did Nazi anti-Semitism change over time?**

**Base answer: yes, it became considerably stronger**

**Key dates:**

First official boycott of Jewish shops and professions 1 April 1933

Nuremberg Race Laws introduced: 15 September 1935



*A boycott of Jewish shops was organised for April 1st 1933. Soldiers and members of the Nazi party stood outside Jewish shops and tried to persuade people not to use those shops on those days.*

*However, it did not really succeed and many Jewish shops were used as usual.*

*In addition, it was bad publicity for Germany abroad as other countries could see that there was anti-Semitic action.*

Radical Nazis wanted to take immediate action against Jewish people and their businesses, but even the party's leadership was worried that it could get out of hand - an uprising could easily turn against any authority. A one-day national boycott was organised for 1 April 1933. Jewish-owned shops, cafés and businesses were picketed by the SA, who stood outside urging people not to enter. However, the boycott was not universally accepted by the German people and it caused a lot of bad publicity abroad.

The Nazi leaders developed their anti-Semitism in a more subtle way. Once the Nazi regime had established the legal basis for its dictatorship, it was legally possible to initiate an anti-Jewish policy, most significantly by the creation of the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935. This clearly stood in contrast to the extensive civil rights that Jews had enjoyed in Weimar Germany. The discrimination against Jewish people got worse as an ongoing range of laws was introduced. In this way all the rights of Jews were gradually removed even before the onset of the war.

On the next page there's an illustration showing the Anti-Semitic Laws and their effects.

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### Vocabulary

**boycott:** to stop using something (eg a shop) until a 'situation' is resolved

**picket (picketed):** to stand outside a boycotted business to try to stop people going in





## 7.2 Propaganda and indoctrination

Nazism also set out to change people's attitudes, so that they hated the Jews. Goebbels himself was a committed anti-Semite and he used his skills as the Minister of Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment to indoctrinate the German people.

All aspects of culture associated with the Jews were censored. Even more forceful was the full range of propaganda methods used to advance the anti-Semitic message, such as: posters and signs, e.g. 'Jews are not wanted here' newspapers, e.g. *Der Angriff*; *Der Stürmer*, edited by the Gauleiter Julius Streicher, which was very anti-Semitic with a seedy range of articles devoted to pornography and violence cinema, e.g. *The Eternal Jew*; *Jud Süß* (see page 20).

An aspect of anti-Semitic indoctrination was the emphasis placed on influencing German youth. The message was put across by the Hitler Youth, but all schools also conformed to new revised textbooks and teaching materials, e.g. tasks and exam questions.

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### Vocabulary

## 7.3 Terror and violence

### Key dates

Night of the Long Knives (murder of opponents): June 30–July 2 1934

Kristallnacht (Crystal Night), anti-Jewish pogrom: 9–10 November 1938

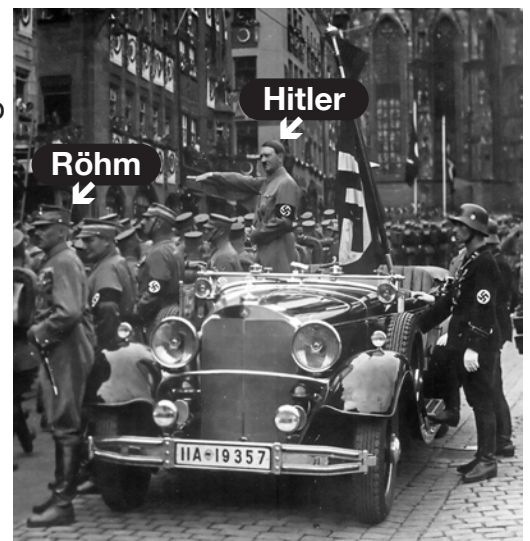
Creation of the Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration: 1939



*The SA or 'Brown Shirts' were basically Hitler's private group of thugs - ready to beat anyone up who tried to speak against Hitler at political rallies. They also had an almost free hand to persecute or attack Jews or destroy their property*

In the early years of the regime, the SA, as the radical left wing of the Nazis, took advantage of their power at local level to use violence against Jews, e.g. damage to property, intimidation and physical attacks.

After the Night of the Long Knives in June 1934 (an organised execution of anyone thought to be against Hitler), anti-Semitic violence became more sporadic for perhaps two reasons. First, in 1936 there was a decline in the anti-Semitic campaign because of the Berlin Olympics and the need to avoid international alienation (see next page). Secondly, conservative forces still had a restraining influence. The events of 1938 were on a different scale. The union with Austria in March 1938 resulted, in the following month, in thousands of attacks on the 200,000 Jews of Vienna.



*In the Night of the Long Knives, Ernst Röhm, Hitler's best friend for years, and 400 other Brown Shirts and the leaders of the Brown Shirts were murdered to consolidate Hitler's grip on power.*

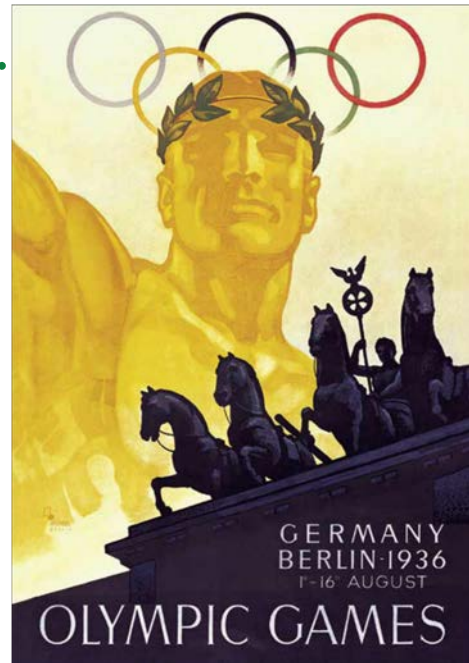
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### Vocabulary

## THE BERLIN OLYMPICS 1936 “HITLER’S OLYMPICS”

The Berlin Olympics of 1936 were supposed to be one of the crowing glories of Hitler’s dictatorship.

The whole of Berlin was cleaned up, bright red, white and black banners were hung all over the city. Any signs of Anti-Semitism were removed, Jews were allowed to live normal lives - from August 1st to August 16th.



Countries who had doubts about the fairness and equality of the Nazi regime were persuaded to “come and have a look at our country” and see for themselves how good everything was. When the representatives of those countries went to see, all was indeed good.

Once again Hitler fooled other countries. Anti-Semitism was as strong as it had ever had been and was getting worse. It was simply hidden during the Olympics.

The Olympics were also designed to show the superiority of the Aryan Race over all other races, especially the “non-humans” - Blacks.

Unfortunately for Hitler, Jesse Owens, a young black athlete won 4 Gold Medals, far beating the best of the Germans.



The Berlin Olympics were not a success for Hitler; although many showed their loyalty to the regime, many did not. Hitler was outraged whenever a non-German won and often became bad tempered.

### Vocabulary

**outrage(d):** a feeling of great personal annoyance

Anti-Semitism in Germany was becoming much worse and in 1938, on 9–10 November there was a 'sudden' violent pogrom against the Jews, which became known as the 'Night of Crystal Glass' (Kristallnacht) because of all the smashed glass.



*Kristallnacht (Crystal Night) was 'sudden' - in fact someone was killed and the murderer was supposed to have been a Jew, but there was no proof at all that the killer was Jewish. The incident was used as an excuse to allow a violent, vicious, destructive outburst against all Jews in the country.*

*Not only were businesses targeted but homes and Synagogues (Jewish places of worship). Hundreds of people were either killed or died afterwards or committed suicides. Thousands of Jews were rounded up and put into concentration camps.*

Kristallnacht started in Berlin and spread throughout Germany with dramatic effects: the destruction of numerous Jewish homes and 100 deaths, attacks on 10,000 Jewish shops and businesses, the burning down of 200 synagogues and the deportation of 20,000 to concentration camps. The excuse for this had been the assassination of Ernst von Rath, a German diplomat in Paris, by Herschel Grünspan, a Jew, on 7 November. Goebbels had hoped that the anti-Semitic actions might also win Hitler's favour, and compensate for Goebbels' disreputable affair with a Czech actress. Most of the anti-Semitic legislation came in the months after the pogrom.

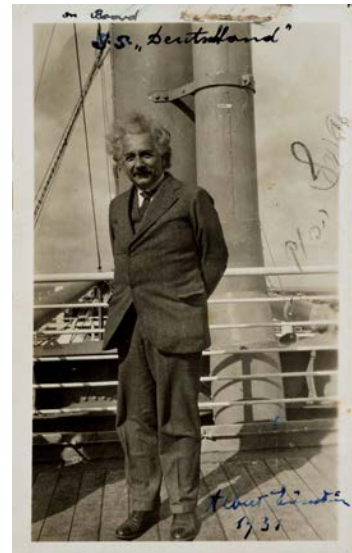
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#### **Vocabulary**

**pogrom:** an organised massacre of a particular group of people, also involving mass destruction of that group's property

### 7.4 Forced emigration

From the start of the Nazi dictatorship, many Jews with influence, high reputation or sufficient wealth could find the means to leave. The most popular destinations were Palestine, Britain and the USA, and among the most renowned émigrés was Albert Einstein.



From 1938, a new style of anti-Semitism developed – **forced emigration**. As a result of the events in Austria, the Central Office for Jewish Emigration was established. Jewish property was confiscated to finance the emigration of poor Jews. Within six months the office had forced the emigration of 45,000 and the

scheme was seen as such a success that, in January 1939, Göring was prompted to create the Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration.

It is estimated that the Nazi persecution led to about half of the Jewish population leaving *before* the war. Technically, the Jews had voluntarily emigrated but they were forced to leave behind all their belongings. Others felt they were so German that they could not choose to live elsewhere. These people decided to take their chances and stay in Germany, rather than lose their homes and all their possessions. It didn't go well for them.

The Jewish community in Germany 1933–45

	Jewish population	Émigrés per year
1933	503 000	38 000
1939	234 000	78 000
1945	20 000	unknown

\* The cumulative figure of Jewish émigrés between 1933 and 1939 was 257,000.

## 7.5 Conclusion

**Key question: Why was the year 1938 so significant?**

**Base answer: that was the year the most radical laws were passed against the Jews**

Before 1938, the attempts to alienate the Jews were not as focussed as they became in 1938. The year 1938 marked a 'radicalisation' of Nazi anti-Semitism. The laws, the violence connected with Kristallnacht and the forced emigration came together, showed that the regime had reached a pivotal year, a fact confirmed by the tone of the speech in the Reichstag by Hitler on 30 January 1939:

*"If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevizing of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."*

It is also interesting to note that Hitler once again blames the "international Jewish financiers" for plunging (getting) the world into war again. This was part of Hitler's strategy for blaming any country - and anyone else - for the war into which he was about to take the world.

It is difficult to discover how popular the anti-Semitic policies of 1933–9 were with non-Jewish Germans. There was much anti-Semitism, and it is likely that the first commercial and social discrimination was accepted well.

After Kristallnacht, though, open opposition from non-Jewish Germans would have been dangerous and there would have been serious consequences for any dissenters. So, no one openly spoke against the anti-Semitism.

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### Vocabulary

**pivotal:** a point at which history can go one or another way, usually for the good or the bad

**financier:** a person or group of people with access to large funds of money to invest in certain activities

### Collective guilt

It is in this way that the collective guilt of the German people is indicated. Most German people, after the war, admitted that they knew at least 'something was very wrong' somewhere, when Jews were gathered in horrific ghettos, made to live there in very cramped and filthy conditions, starving and then deported to concentration camps to almost certain death.

People living near the ghettos obviously saw what was happening; people living near the concentration camps pleaded ignorance but could obviously see and smell the activities of the camps.

When concentration camps were liberated (made free), local Germans were forced to walk through the camps and see what the German people had either **done or allowed to be done in their name**, to the Jews and other people in the camps.

Many of those 'ordinary' Germans were distressed to see what they allowed to happen. Yet they still denied that they were responsible.

There is no doubt that the entire German population was guilty of allowing mass murder, torture and human medical experimentation to take place.



# 8. The Personalities

## 8.1 Adolf Hitler *(taken from Wikipedia)*

A face that so many people recognise - and think of as the face of Evil. In this picture, taken before the war (brown jacket) Hitler sits on the wall at the Berghof, his residence and Headquarters in the Bavarian mountains.



Adolf Hitler was born on 20 April 1889 in Braunau am Inn, a town in Austria-Hungary, close to the border with the German Empire. He was one of six children born to Alois Hitler and Klara Pözl. When Hitler was three, the family moved to Passau, Germany.

There he acquired the distinctive lower Bavarian dialect which marked his speech throughout his life.

In 1897 the family moved to Lambach. The eight-year-old Hitler took singing lessons, sang in the church choir, and even considered becoming a priest. In 1898 Hitler was deeply affected by the death of his younger brother Edmund, who died in 1900 from measles. Hitler

changed from a confident, outgoing, conscientious student to a moody, detached boy who constantly fought with his father and teachers.

Ignoring his son's desire to attend a classical high school and become an artist, Alois sent Hitler to the Realschule in Linz in September 1900. Hitler rebelled against this decision, and in *Mein Kampf* stated that he intentionally did poorly in school, hoping that once his father saw "what little progress I was making at the technical school he would let me devote myself to my dream".

Like many Austrian Germans, Hitler expressed loyalty only to Germany, despising the declining Habsburg Monarchy and its rule over an ethnically variegated empire. Hitler and his friends used the greeting "Heil", and sang the "Deutschlandlied" instead of the Austrian Imperial anthem.

After Alois's death on 3 January 1903, Hitler's performance at school deteriorated and his mother allowed him to leave. He enrolled at the Realschule in Steyr in September 1904,

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### Vocabulary

**variegated:** widely diverse, containing many types



where his behaviour and performance improved. In 1905, after passing a repeat of the final exam, Hitler left the school without any ambitions for further education or clear plans for a career.

### **Early adulthood in Vienna and Munich**

From 1905, Hitler lived a bohemian life in Vienna, financed by orphan's benefits and support from his mother. He worked as a casual labourer and eventually as a painter, selling watercolours of Vienna's sights. The Academy of Fine Arts Vienna rejected him in 1907 and again in 1908, citing "unfitness for painting". The director recommended that Hitler study architecture but he lacked academic credentials as he had not finished secondary school. On 21 December 1907, his mother died of breast cancer at the age of 47. Hitler ran out of money and was forced to live in homeless shelters and men's hostels.

At the time Hitler lived there, Vienna was a hotbed of religious prejudice and racism. Fears of being overrun by immigrants from the East were widespread, and the populist mayor Karl Lueger exploited the rhetoric of virulent anti-Semitism for political effect. German nationalism had a widespread following in the Mariahilf district, where Hitler lived. German nationalists advocated Pan-Germanism, anti-Semitism, anti-Slavism, and anti-Catholicism, and influenced Hitler. Hitler read local newspapers such as the *Deutsches Volksblatt* that fanned prejudice and played on Christian fears of being swamped by an influx of Eastern European Jews.

The origin of Hitler's anti-Semitism remains unclear. Hitler states in *Mein Kampf* that he first became an anti-Semite in Vienna. Several sources provide strong evidence that Hitler had Jewish friends in his hostel and in other places in Vienna. Historian Richard J. Evans states that "historians now generally agree that his notorious, murderous anti-Semitism emerged well after Germany's defeat, as a product of the paranoid "stab-in-the-back" explanation for the catastrophe".

He joined the Bavarian Army - an administrative mistake as he was Austrian - and worked as a messenger in the First World War; was wounded, received a medal from his Jewish superior officer, was gassed, partially blinded for a time and then after the war, stayed in the Army until it too rejected him.

## 8.2 Josef Goebbels

During childhood, Goebbels suffered from ill health, which included a long bout of inflammation of the lungs. He had a deformed right foot that turned inwards, due to a congenital deformity. It was thicker and shorter than his left foot. He underwent a failed operation to correct it just prior to starting grammar school. Goebbels wore a metal brace and special shoe because of his shortened leg, and walked with a limp. He was rejected for military service in World War I due to his deformity.



From Kaiser to Führer: Germany 1900-45  
**Hitler's Germany**

At the University of Heidelberg, Goebbels wrote his doctoral thesis on a minor 19th century romantic dramatist. He had hoped to write his thesis under the supervision of Friedrich Gundolf - a well known literary historian. It did not seem to bother Goebbels that Gundolf was Jewish. However, Gundolf was no longer performing teaching duties, so he directed Goebbels to associate professor Max Freiherr von Waldberg. Waldberg was also Jewish. It was Waldberg who recommended Goebbels write his thesis on Wilhelm von Schütz. After submitting the thesis and passing his oral examination, Goebbels earned his PhD in 1921.

After failing to become a writer, Goebbels turned to the Nazi Party, and gradually slithered his way into the hierarchy. At first, as part of a group different from Hitler's, Goebbels favoured Socialist ideas. However, when he heard Hitler talk about how socialism was created by Jews (an untruth), Goebbels fell for Hitler's charisma and declared:

*"I love him ... He has thought through everything. Such a sparkling mind can be my leader. I bow to the greater one, the political genius."*

From around 1923, it all began to go Goebbels way, with the inevitable result.

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### Vocabulary

**congenital:** a condition which is present since birth

### 8.3 Hermann Göring

Hermann Wilhelm Göring was a German politician, military leader, and leading member of the Nazi Party (NSDAP). A veteran World War I fighter pilot ace, he was a recipient of the coveted Pour le Mérite, also known as the “Blue Max” - a very famous medal awarded for outstanding performance.



A member of the NSDAP from its earliest days, Göring was wounded in 1923 during the failed Beer Hall Putsch. He became addicted to morphine after being treated with the drug for his injuries. After helping Adolf Hitler take power in 1933, he became the second-most powerful man in Germany. He founded the Gestapo in 1933. Göring was appointed commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe in 1935. Before the Allied bombing campaign, he was very popular among the public. By 1940, he was at the peak of his power and influence; he was responsible for much of the functioning of the German economy in the build-up to World War II. Hitler promoted him to the rank of Reichsmarschall - the most senior rank after Hitler, and in 1941 Hitler chose him as his successor.

Göring fell from grace by the beginning of 1943, when the Luftwaffe failed to stop the Allied bombing of German cities and was unable to resupply German forces trapped in the Battle of Stalingrad. Göring largely withdrew from the military and political scene and focused on the acquisition of stolen Jewish property and artwork.

Informed in April 1945 that Hitler intended to commit suicide, Göring sent a telegram to Hitler requesting permission to assume control of the Reich. Considering it an act of treason, Hitler removed Göring from all his positions, expelled him from the party, and ordered his arrest.

After World War II, Göring was convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg trials. He was sentenced to death by hanging, but cowardly committed suicide by taking cyanide the night before the sentence was to be carried out.



#### 8.4 Heinrich Himmler

Heinrich Himmler was Reichsführer of the Schutzstaffel (SS), and a leading member of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) of Germany. Himmler was one of the most powerful men in Nazi Germany and one of the people most directly responsible for the Holocaust.

As a member of a reserve battalion during World War I, Himmler did not see active service. He joined the Nazi Party in 1923 and the SS in 1925. In 1929, he was appointed Reichsführer-SS by Hitler. Over the next 16 years, he developed the SS from a mere 290-man battalion into a million-strong paramilitary group, and, following Hitler's orders, set up and controlled the Nazi concentration camps.

From 1943 onwards, he was both Chief of German Police and Minister of the Interior, overseeing all internal and external police and security forces, including the Gestapo (Secret State Police).

On Hitler's behalf, Himmler formed the Einsatzgruppen (operations groups) and built extermination camps. As overseer of the concentration camps, Himmler directed the killing of some six million Jews, between 200,000 and 500,000 Romani people, and other victims; the total number of civilians killed by the regime is estimated at eleven to fourteen million people. Most of them were Polish and Soviet citizens.

Late in World War II, realising that the war was lost, he attempted to open peace talks with



*Sightseeing at a concentration camp*




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#### Vocabulary

the western Allies without Hitler's knowledge shortly before the war ended.

Hearing of this, Hitler dismissed him from all his posts in April 1945 and ordered



*Himmler made this happen - and far worse*

his arrest. Himmler tried to escape by using an ordinary soldier's uniform, but was recognised, detained and then arrested by British forces once his identity became known. While in British custody, he committed suicide on 23 May 1945.

### 8.5 Karl Dönitz

Karl Dönitz was a German admiral who played a major role in the naval history of World War II.

In 1918, while he was in command of UB-68, the submarine was sunk by British forces and Dönitz was taken prisoner. While in a prisoner of war camp, he formulated what he called Rudeltaktik (also called "wolfpack"). In January 1943, Dönitz achieved the rank of Großadmiral (grand admiral) and was Commander-in-Chief of the Navy.



On 30 April 1945, after the death of Adolf Hitler and in accordance with Hitler's last will and testament, Dönitz was named Hitler's successor as head of state, with the title of President of Germany and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. On 7 May 1945, he ordered Alfred Jodl, Chief of Operations Staff of the OKW, to sign the German surrender in Reims, France. At the Nuremberg trials, he was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment; after his release, he lived quietly in a village near Hamburg until his death in 1980.

Karl Dönitz was perhaps the most honourable of Hitler's High Command; although he was guilty of war crimes, those crimes were not concerned overmuch with the murder of innocent people.

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#### Vocabulary

**B:** German letter pronounced as double 's'

## 9. Conclusion: Defeat and afterwards

### Key question: Did Germany have to lose the war?

By May 1945 Germany lay in ruins. Nazi foreign policy had reached its destructive conclusion. Its ambitions had been extensive:

- To establish a 'greater Germany', which far beyond Germany's 1914 frontiers
- To destroy Bolshevik Russia
- To create a new order based on the concept of Aryan racial supremacy
- The means to these ends had involved the acceptance of violence and bloodshed on a massive scale

Hitler's final failure in his ambitions could be explained by his strategic bungling. Hitler had always believed that a war on two fronts had to be avoided. To this end he needed an alliance with Britain and/or France – or at least their neutrality – so that he could be free to launch an attack in the east. So, when Germany failed to secure either British neutrality or a British surrender in 1940–1, before attacking the USSR, the foundations for defeat were laid.

- Germany was not fully prepared for the war.
- At the start of the war Germany did not exploit the available resources and manpower.
- Italian military weakness in the Balkans and North Africa proved costly, since it diverted German forces away from the main European fronts.

Hitler was driven on to launch an attack on the USSR. The failure to defeat the USSR before winter 1941, combined with the entry of the USA into the war, tipped the balance.

Hitler had militarily misjudged the antagonists, and now all the resources and the industrial capacity of the world's two political giants were directed towards the military defeat of Germany.

The following economic factors counted against Germany:

- The Four-Year Plan. In 1936 it was meant to make Germany 'fit for war within four years' but the German economy was not ready for a long war in 1939. Its capacity was only strong for a couple of short campaigns.
- Anglo-American bombing. German industry peaked in the production of weapons in summer 1944, but German armed forces could not fully benefit from this because of Allied air raids.
- From the start Germany was short of labour. Millions of workers were required to keep up the industrial and agricultural production, and the gaps were only partly filled by forced labourers and an increase in female employment.

- Germany was deeply in debt. The reserves in gold and foreign currencies were almost completely used up by 1939 and the Nazi state had run up a debt of roughly 42 billion Reichsmarks. The US economy was just too powerful. In 1944 the ratio of Germany's fuel supply compared to the supply of the Western Allies was 1:3. The USA sent massive support to the Allies, especially to the USSR which received 13,000 tanks and 15,000 planes.
- Soviet resources. The Soviet economy had undergone a ruthless industrialisation programme in the 1930s under Stalin and despite its limitations, Russia had vast resources of human manpower and raw materials, e.g. oil, coal and iron.

Such explanations might make historical analysis of Germany's defeat in the Second World War seem like a relatively straightforward exercise. However, before accepting such a simple view, it should be borne in mind that, even in 1942, Germany came very close indeed to capturing Stalingrad and to defeating Britain in Egypt. Such successes would have changed the course of the war and the final outcome might have been very different.

## 9.1 Germany in 1945

### Key question: How serious was Germany's condition by 1945?

In the weeks before the capital fell to the Soviets a typical Berliner's joke began to circulate: 'Enjoy the war while you can! The peace is going to be terrible.' The German state had ceased to exist by May 1945. Hitler and Goebbels and a number of other Nazi leaders had committed suicide, while others had fled or been captured and arrested. Central government had broken down. Germany and Berlin had been divided by the Allies into four zones, each one with their own military commander giving orders and guidelines for the local economy and administration. In the short term, the most telling problem facing Germany in that spring was the extent of the social and economic crisis.

## 9.2 Population displacement

At the end of the war it is estimated that one in two Germans were on the move:

- roughly 12 million German refugees fleeing from the east
- 10 million of the so-called 'displaced persons', who had done forced labour or had been prisoners in the various Nazi camps
- over 11 million German soldiers, who had been taken as prisoners of war: 7.7 million in camps in the west were soon released, whereas the 3.3 million in the USSR were kept in captivity until the 1950s, of whom one-third did not survive.

All these people posed a serious problem to the British and the Americans because of the lack of food.



### 9.3

#### **Urban destruction**

Major German cities, especially Cologne, Dresden (above), Hamburg and Berlin, had been reduced to rubble because of Anglo-American bombing and Soviet artillery. Twenty per cent of housing had been destroyed, and a further 30 per cent badly damaged.

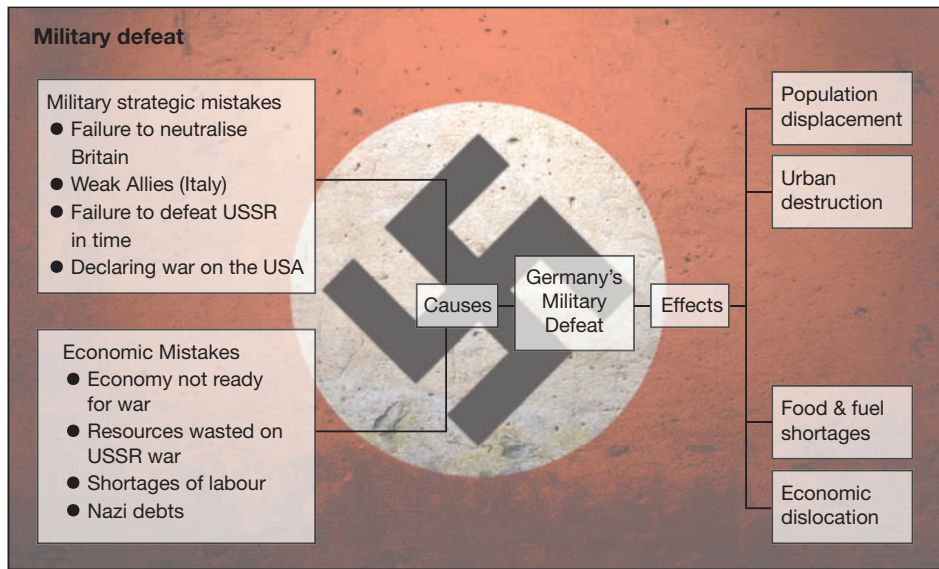
#### **9.4 Food and fuel shortages**

Food was the immediate problem, but it was soon made worse by winter at the end of 1945. If it had not been for emergency relief from the Western Allies and care parcels from charities, starvation would have been far worse. Malnourishment led to illnesses such as typhus, diphtheria and whooping cough.

#### **9.5 Economic dislocation**

The economy had not completely broken down, but it was very badly dislocated. Industrial capacity had declined dramatically. Moreover, the infrastructure of bridges and railways and the utilities, like gas and water, had broken down during the end of the war. The state had massive debts, so Germany was once again facing the problem of a rising inflation causing a major black market in the supply of food and other goods. The Third Reich had been destroyed in May 1945, but that left Germany in ruins. Violence, destruction and dislocation had brought it to zero hour.





We can see then that through Hitler's hopelessly egocentric policies, his hatred and his megalomania, Nazi Germany (The Third Reich) was doomed to failure. No country can continue when the leader attempts to literally 'rule the world'.

What of the 'ordinary' German, after the war? Most, naturally, denied that they had supported Hitler at all but were too scared to speak out; but when they voted during Hitler's reign, it was a secret ballot (no one could see what they voted) - and Hitler was elected with vast majorities.

Germany was not, this time, forced to make reparations as before; the main sanction was the division of the country (half each to the Allies and the Russians) and especially Berlin into sectors (one each for the British, the French the Americans and the Russians).



However the great amount of money intended to renew and revive the German economy and Germany itself after the war led to Germany becoming an economic powerhouse.

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**Vocabulary**

